Covenant Order

Marriage, adultery & fornication in Scripture — on one sheet

Marriage, adultery, and fornication are covenant categories — questions of **whose field, whose seed, and whose claim** — and Scripture answers all three with one structure: **one head, one body, one spirit.**

1 The Root Picture — Seed and Field

Beneath every word Scripture uses for adultery sits one picture: a field, and the seed sown in it. The man is the sower; the woman is the field; and one word — *zera*, seed — covers what is sown, what is given, and what is born. The pattern is planted on the third day: every seed after its kind, every line kept distinct.

Torah speaks of the act in exactly these terms. The command itself reads, literally, "you shall not give your lying *for seed* to your neighbor's wife, to defile yourself with her." The jealousy ordeal weighs a hidden seed, and the wife who is cleared "shall conceive seed." And the chapter that adjudicates the marriage cases opens with the field law — "you shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed, lest the whole yield be defiled" — then walks straight into the cases of the wife, the betrothed, and the virgin. Mixed seed defiles a field; a second seed defiles a marriage. One law, two registers.

English still confesses the concept: to *adulterate* is to mix a pure thing with something foreign. Adultery is the adulteration of a claimed field — a second living seed charged against it. The prophets speak the same way of Israel's unfaithfulness: "I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine?" Hold the picture — whose field, whose seed, whose claim — for every category below sorts by it.

Gen 1:11–12 · Gen 3:15 · Lev 18:20 · Num 5:28 · Deut 22:9 · Lev 19:19 · Jer 2:21

2 What Makes a Marriage

Scripture never makes marriage a product of paperwork. A marriage exists **physically** when the seed enters the field, and **spiritually** when the woman has faith in the head who gives it — a head able to carry the covenant obligation of provision, protection, and leading. Elohim Himself stands witness to the covenant.

"One flesh" is a becoming, not a transaction. The Hebrew of Genesis 2:24 has no numeral — *they shall become one flesh*, *echad*: the unity of many under one, as in "one day" and "YHWH is one." The union is renewed in ongoing faith and provision, the way dominion itself is ongoing.

Torah's proof of a man's ability is the bride-price: the man who takes a virgin "shall surely endow her to be his wife." The father may give or withhold his daughter, and may bind or loose her words. A license, contract, or certificate only records what seed and faith have made or failed to make. **Documents describe a marriage; they do not create one.**

Gen 2:24 · Mal 2:14 · Eph 5:25–29 · Ex 21:10 · 1 Tim 5:8 · Ex 22:16–17 · Deut 22:28–29 · 2 Sam 3:14 · Gen 24:58 · Num 30:3–5

3 One Head, One Body, One Spirit

The order of every covenant body is the same: one head, one body, one spirit. The head is necessarily singular. The body may hold many members — and must hold only one spirit, for two spirits in one body is not unity but possession.

This yields three lawful states: **celibacy** (a head without a body yet), **monogyny** (a two-membered body), and **polygyny** (a many-membered body). Scripture carries two witnesses to the structure, and both testify to the same thing — one head over one body. Torah regulates the plural household without ever condemning it, and YHWH speaks of giving wives, plural, with His own mouth. Polygyny must be possible, because salvation itself gathers many members into one Body under one Head and one Spirit. A woman, by the same structure, can have only one head.

The Greek itself testifies, because "one" inflects toward what it points at. "One body" and "one Spirit" are *hen* (ἕν) — a unity holding many members. "One Lord," "one God and Father," "one husband" are *heis* (εἷς) — the singular head. The only counted wife, *mia* (μιᾶς γυναικός), is a qualification laid on overseers and deacons, not a law laid on every man. The Author delineates, in the very inflection, between a physical limitation and "one" as a concept of unity — literal where He counts, analogous where He gathers.

> **The boundary:** what Scripture regulates, it does not call sin. What it never permits is the inversion — one body claimed by more than one head.

1 Cor 11:3 · Eph 5:23 · 1 Cor 12:12–13 · Eph 4:4–6 · Ex 21:10 · Deut 21:15–17 · Deut 25:5–10 · 2 Sam 12:8 · John 17:20–23 · 2 Cor 11:2 · 1 Tim 3:2, 12

4 Adultery — Na'aph · Moicheia

Adultery is covenant trespass, not generic sexual sin: **a second living seed charged against a field already under another head's claim**. It is an imputation against the claim — which is why an unbetrothed virgin cannot commit adultery, and why a field carrying only one man's line is not adulterated, whatever the manner of entry.

Betrothal proves the point rather than breaking it. A betrothed virgin is already called a neighbor's wife, and trespass against her is judged as adultery — spiritual adultery against the claim — even while a single seed leaves her body unadulterated. Torah's penalty reached stoning, yet Joseph, resolving to put Mary

away quietly, is called righteous and is already called her husband — the quieter way out stood open. And when the man to whom she is betrothed takes her himself, Scripture names no sin at all: the act was never the crime. The trespassed claim is.

The New Testament keeps the categories distinct: *moicheia* and *porneia* are listed side by side, as different things. When Paul warns against uncleanness, the named offense is "that no man go beyond and **defraud his brother** in the matter." Nathan's oracle draws the same line: YHWH Himself gave David his master's wives, and condemned only the stolen ewe lamb — the taking of another man's wife.

> **The crime is always multiple heads over one body.** It is never one head over more than one body.

Ex 20:14 · Lev 20:10 · Deut 22:22–29 · Num 5:11–31 · Matt 1:19 · Mark 7:21 · 1 Thess 4:3–6 · 2 Sam 12:7–9

5 Fornication — Zanah · Porneia

Fornication is the faithless joining: seed entering where no covenant forms or was ever available. The harlot is its pattern — seed enters, but the field has no faith in the head, and the head neither intends nor is able to carry her. That is why Paul says *flee* rather than "too late, you are married": the becoming of one flesh is ongoing, so each joining keeps forming a union with nothing in it. It must be severed, because it never stops forming on its own.

Zanah can also be a state revealed rather than an act committed: a woman presented as available who was never lawfully available — a prior claim or defilement concealed at the threshold. That is the force of the exception in Matthew 19:9 (compare the "uncleanness" of Deuteronomy 24:1): discovered unavailability, not an exit for hard seasons.

Mark 7:21 · 1 Cor 6:15–18 · Matt 19:9 · Deut 24:1

6 The Bond, the Certificate, and Serial Monogamy

The bond holds while both live; death alone is the clean release. Only the two breaches — zanah revealed or na'aph committed — give the head liberty to put away, and liberty is not obligation: Scripture's direction is return. The wife has no self-exit; she is released by death, or by a hard-hearted husband whose own will and guilt free her. Oppression warrants separation, protection, and witnesses — not a new covenant.

The certificate of divorce is **diagnostic, not permissive**. It is mercy that makes covenant status visible: it records that the husband's will released the woman, so the next man can know she is not in rebellion but available. That is the paper's whole function — it represents the will of the man.

Modern law inverts the instrument. Under no-fault divorce a wife can file against her husband, or extract his signature with the threat of his children — divorce, or lose your ability to rear and teach them the ways of Yah. Such coercion was impossible in Israel. A certificate signed under that threat carries no will

of the man, so it severs nothing before Elohim; the state manufactures paper that certifies the opposite of what the certificate exists to signal. David's claim on Michal is the precedent: his bride-price held even after Saul gave her to another man. Where human witnesses fail, judgment goes vertical.

Serial monogamy — shedding a wife to take another while she lives — is therefore no third lawful state. A living body adds members; it does not amputate one to gain one. Each swap stacks adultery, and no ceremony launders it. Measured by Torah, the modern pattern of divorce-and-remarriage is a graver breach than the plural household Scripture regulates.

Rom 7:2–3 · 1 Cor 7:39 · Luke 16:18 · Mark 10:11–12 · Hos 3:1–3 · Jer 3:12–14 · Matt 19:8–9 · 1 Cor 7:10–11 · Deut 19:15 · Deut 24:1–4 · 1 Sam 25:44 · 2 Sam 3:14–16 · Num 5 · 1 Cor 12:12–26

7 The Kingdom This Points To

Covenant order matters because the Kingdom is real and comes first — a reign on this earth before the eternal age. That Kingdom has households: building and planting, marriage and birth, old men in the streets and children at play. "They neither marry nor are given in marriage" restricts the contracting of new covenants among the worthy risen, who cannot die — it does not erase the covenants they kept. The sign arrives at what it signified; marriage is completed, not abolished.

In that day the honor economy inverts: faithfulness is vindicated, trespass exposed, and unresolved claims answered before the King. Isaiah's picture of the aftermath — seven women taking hold of one man, asking only to be called by his name — is the request for covering and a name under one head, in the adoption idiom of the fathers, and the chapter ends under a canopy. Those who will not inherit that Kingdom are named: the *pornoi* and the *moichoi*. Grace forgives the repentant; it does not redefine the field.

Rev 20:4–6 · Rev 21:1 · Isa 65:20–23 · Zech 8:4–5 · Jer 31:27 · Ezek 47:22 · Luke 20:34–36 · Eph 5:31–32 · Rev 19:7 · Eccl 12:14 · 2 Cor 5:10 · Isa 4:1 · Gen 48:16 · Isa 4:5–6 · 1 Cor 6:9–10 · Heb 13:4 · Gal 5:19–21

8 The Verse Spine

The seed-and-field picture	Gen 1:11–12 · Lev 18:20 · Num 5:28 · Deut 22:9 · Jer 2:21
What makes a marriage	Gen 2:24 · Ex 22:16–17 · Mal 2:14 · Num 30:3–5
One head, one body	1 Cor 11:3 · Eph 5:23 · 1 Cor 12:12–13 · Eph 4:4–6
Polygyny regulated, never condemned	Ex 21:10 · Deut 21:15–17 · Deut 25:5–10 · 2 Sam 12:8
Adultery as covenant trespass	Ex 20:14 · Lev 18:20 · Lev 20:10 · Num 5 · Deut 22:22–29 · 1 Thess 4:3–6
Fornication as faithless joining	Mark 7:21 · 1 Cor 6:15–18 · Matt 19:9 · Deut 24:1
The bond until death	Rom 7:2–3 · 1 Cor 7:10–11, 39 · Luke 16:18 · Mark 10:11–12

The certificate's true function	Deut 24:1–4 · Matt 19:8 · Jer 3:8 · 2 Sam 3:14–16
Return preferred over release	Hos 3:1–3 · Jer 3:12–14 · 1 Cor 7:11
The Kingdom with families	Isa 65:20–23 · Zech 8:4–5 · Jer 31:27 · Ezek 47:22 · Luke 20:34–36
Inheritance warnings	1 Cor 6:9–10 · Heb 13:4 · Gal 5:19–21

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