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Week 14: The Role and Priorities of the Husband Ephesians 5: 25-33

Messiah's sacrifice on the cross is the barometer for a husband's love for his wife.



Sacrificial love (5:25b): The Torah model is a **husband** who **loves his wife**. **Rabbi Sha'ul** tells us that **men** are to emulate **Messiah** in **their love** for **their wives**. **He** says: **Husbands, love your wives, just as the Messiah loved the Church, and gave Himself up for her (5:25 NIV).** This is a sacrificial **love**. There is no bullying, there is no forced submission. Instead the biblical **husband** is to nourish and cherish **his wife**. To be **her** number one fan. One cannot cherish a person and at the same time disregard their wishes and opinions. **Messiah-**like headship is defined as servant-hood. Lording it over another person is something that **the Master** attributes to the ways of pagans. **His** disciples are to demonstrate leadership through their humble service: **Yeshua said, "You know that among the Goyim, those who are supposed to rule them become tyrants, and their superiors' become dictators. Among you, it must not be like that. On the contrary, whoever among you wants to be a leader must become your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave! For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve – and to give his life as a**

ransom for many" (Mt 20:25-28). And **Paul** charges married **men** to **love their wives and do not be embittered against them (Colossians 3:19).** Again the key word is **love (First Cor 13:4-7)**.

It is particularly important that we notice that the apostle never commands **husbands** to "make your wives submit to you." The mitzvah of submitting to one's **husband** belongs solely to **the woman**. It is the **wife's** mitzvah, not the **husbands**. A **husband** need not worry that **his wife** is not submitting to **him**. That is **her** business, not **his**. The Bible does not give **a man** license to force **his wife** to obey **him**. Rather, **he** is to **love her** and treat **her** as **a fellow heir**. **She** is **his** partner, not **his** servant. **A man** who does not show **his wife** the dignity of being **his fellow heir** will not even be heard in heaven. **Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered (First Peter 3:7). An** insensitive **man** or harsh authoritarian that does not live with **his wife in an understanding way** is not worthy of even having his prayers answered. After all, **he** does not listen to **his wife's** entreaties, so why should **God** listen to **his**? Thus, we learn that the biblical principles of submission and authority within the home depend upon **a** godly **man** who conducts **himself** according to the highest standards of Torah. A home ruled by the iron fist of harsh authoritarian is not worthy of the name of **Messiah**.

We have proven that **YHVH** is decidedly patriarchal. **Wives** do not have free-agency. **They** are to **submit** to **their husbands as to the Lord** (see my commentary on **Ephesians, to see link click Bw – The Role and Priorities of the Wife**). And **husbands** are to **love their wives, just as the Messiah loved the Church.** The critical question is how did **Messiah love the Church**? Was there anything **He** would not do for **the Church**? What was his attitude toward **the Church**?

Mark answers these questions like this: **For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).** So if **the husband** puts **his wife** first in everything, thinking of **her** first, making sure all **her** needs are met by serving **her**, then that is much easier to **submit** to. But this kind of a relationship seems a lot different from: **he shall rule over you** (see the commentary on **Genesis Bf – Your Desire Will Be for Your Husband, and He Will Rule Over You**), doesn't it? That sounds pretty harsh, not like a servant at all. Which is it? Does **he** come to **serve** or **rule**? Moreover, *how* is **he** to **rule over her**? If you think this is confusing, just look at the state of marital

roles. It is one of the most confused areas in and out of **the Church** today. The main problem is confusion between **man's relationship** with **his wife**, and **his responsibility** with what goes on in the marriage.

Let's look at **relationships** first. The Bible clearly teaches that **men** and **women** are equals socially, psychologically, and spiritually. In other words, **they** are equals in **their** relationship with each other. **God** created us as equals **(1:27-28)**, and we are to be one when married **(2:24).** We are equally sinful **(Romans 3:23)**, and equally saved **(John 1:12-13; Second Corinthians 5:17). Husbands and wives** are to submit to each other sexually **(First Corinthians 7:2-5),** and socially **(Ephesians 5:21).** Furthermore, the Bible teaches that there shall be no sexual discrimination **(Galatians 3:28). Men** and **women** are equally dependent on **God (First Corinthians 11:11-12),** accepted equally as believers **(Acts 5:14),** and co-laborers for **Him (Romans 16:1, 3-6; Philippians 4:3).** So in **their** relationship, **men** and **women** are equals. There is no doubt about that. But there is another area that we need to look at.

The second area the Bible teaches us about is **responsibility**. Even though **men** and **women** are equal in **their** relationship to one another, **men** are ultimately held responsible for what goes on in the marriage. The Bible tells us that when **Abram** lied about **Sarai** being **his wife**, **Pharaoh** held **Abram** responsible **(Genesis 12:17-20).** Later, after **God** changed **their** names, **Abraham** and **Sarah** did the same thing again and **Abimelech** held **Abraham** responsible **(Genesis 20:9)**. And it seems the apple didn't fall too far from the tree, as **Abraham's son Isaac** was held responsible for the lie about **Rebekah (Genesis 26:9).** Much later, **God** held **David** responsible for **his** sin with **Bathsheba** and sent the prophet **Nathan** to rebuke **him**. In **Genesis**, **Adam** and **Eve** both ate of **the tree of knowledge of good and evil**; in fact **Eve** led the way, but **God** held **Adam** responsible **(Genesis 3:9).** This principle is not only taught in the TaNaKh, but also in the B'rit Chadashah where **Paul** tells us that **through one man sin entered the world (Romans 5:12, 14** and **17).** Responsibility begs for accountability, and **God** held **Adam** responsible. Not only was the responsibility not the same for **Adam** and **Eve**, neither were their consequences. With the leader following and the follower leading, **God** declared that **Adam** would **rule over Eve**.

So with this understanding, we come back to the question: *How* shall **the husband rule over his wife**? **Husbands** and **wives** should make important decisions together as a team, but if **they** cannot agree, **he** has to make the call because **he** is responsible before **God**. How **he** handles the situation, how **he** listens to **his wife**

and takes **her** feelings and opinions into consideration are important. **She** needs to be heard. **Husbands** who do not listen to **their wives** are fools, because **Elohim** made **her a helper suitable for him (Genesis 2:18).** If **the wife** does not feel like **she** is being heard or has any input in the marriage, it will crush **her** spirit and/or drive **her** away (physically and/or emotionally).

Purifying love (5:26-27): In order to set it apart for God . . . The Rabbi is no doubt alluding to the **Jewish** name of the marriage covenant – *kiddushin* (sanctified marriage). It is an illustration that every **Jew** would understand. As biblical marriage is a consecration of **a woman** to **a man**, so, too, it reminds every **Jew** of being **set apart** as a people for **God**. In fact, the phrasing of **5:26-27** (and the broader context of **Ephesians**) is reminiscent of the entire **Jewish** wedding ceremony **. . . making it clean through immersion in the mikveh, so to speak (5:26).** Here, **the Rabbi** makes another reference **to the mikveh** as **he** discusses family purity mitzvot, specifically in the **Jewish** wedding traditions. It was and still is a common practice for a **Jewish** groom and bride to separately take a ritual immersion in water at **a mikveh** just before the final step of their wedding. **Rabbinic law dictates that a kosher (acceptable) mikveh must have at least 200 gallons of rainwater funneled into a pool. Each natural body of water (oceans, rivers, or lakes) is already considered acceptable.** We find immersions in Scripture **(Second Kings 5** and **Matthew 3)**.

It should be noted that a person must be thoroughly clean before being totally immersed, thereby showing that the waters of the **mikveh** are not for physical cleansing, but for a spiritual purpose. **In Jewish sources, the act of *tevilah* (immersion or baptism) is akin to *being born again.*** The person who has sinned and becomes impure is transformed; he dies and is resurrected and becomes a new creation.

Rabbi Sha'ul makes an important point here by alluding to the custom of **a mikveh** on one's wedding day. It is the responsibility of **the** new **husband** to make sure both **he** and **his bride** take this symbolic **immersion** as they start **their** lives together. This beautifully parallels **the immersion** of **the Ruach** that makes all believers clean as we become new creatures in Messiah (see the commentary on **Second Corinthians Bd – A New Creation**). **Sha'ul** emphasizes both aspects within the **Jewish** wedding customs. In a literal sense, Messianic **husbands** are to mentor their **wives** spiritually so that **they** are clean and without defect. Similarly, we believers are called to live as faithful **brides** and to participate in this **mikveh** in anticipation of our wedding day with **Messiah**. **In order to present the Church**

to Himself as a bride to be proud of, without a spot, wrinkle or any such thing (Song of Songs 4:7), but holy and without defect (5:27). In so doing, we will be **a** spiritual **bride** this is holy, cleansed, **without defect** and waiting for **Him**.

Caring love (5:28-30): For a **husband's love** for **his wife** to be like **Messiah's love** for **His Body, the Church**, it must also be affectionately caring. **This is how husband's ought to love their wives – like their own bodies; for the man who loves his wife is loving himself.** When **she** needs strength, **he** gives **her** strength. When **she** needs encouragement, **he** gives **her** that. And so with every other need **she** has. **Why, no one ever hated his own flesh! On the contrary, he feeds it well and takes care of it, just as the Messiah does the Church, because we are parts of his Body.**

Unbreakable love (5:31): **Therefore a man will leave his father and mother and remain with his wife, and the two will become one flesh. Rabbi Sha'ul** again refers back to the early verses of the Torah and **God's** design for marriage. Yet, **he** takes it a step further in reminding **the husbands** to be godly leaders in their marriages. It is all illustrated in the **Jewish** understanding of marriage and the final step of the **Jewish** wedding ceremony. As the one-year engagement time draws to a close, the father of the groom initiates the last part of the ceremony with the sounding of the shofar. The general community, and even the bridal party, was never sure of the exact time, so they needed to be ready (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Jw – The Parable of the Ten Virgins**). At the sound of the shofar, the wedding procession would begin from the groom's home to pick up the bride to bring her to *the huppah* (wedding canopy). There, *the ketubah* (written contract) would be signed and vows exchanged. The second cup of wine would be shared along with the seven blessings over the couple. At the completion of the ceremony, the couple would then be fully married and could live together with full conjugal rights.

Today, almost all the above elements are included in one ceremony in the modern **Jewish** wedding. They still speak volumes about our relationship with **God** and **His** plan for the future. Messianic **Jews** and **Gentiles** have become "engaged to **Yeshua**." We currently await the sound of **the shofar** announcing the return of the groom, **Yeshua Messiah** (see the commentary on **Leviticus Ee – Rosh ha'Shanah/Trumpets**), to start the final wedding processional, and be reunited with **Him** to live together for the thousand-year Messianic Kingdom centered in Jerusalem. What a time of rejoicing that will be!

Mysterious love (5:32-33): The final step of the **Jewish** wedding ceremony contains symbolism about our personal relationship with **God**. **There is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Messiah and the Church.** A **mystery** in the bible is something once **hidden**, but now revealed **(Colossians 1:26-27)**? The sacred relationship between believing **husbands** and **wives** is indistinguishably related to the sacred relationship between **Messiah and His Church**. **However, the text also applies to each of you individually: let each man love his wife as he does himself, and see that the wife respects her husband. Husbands**, are **we** fulfilling our roles as servant leaders to our **wives** and family? **Wives**, are you living up to **your** high calling of being a suitable complement to your **husband**? We have all sent out our RSVPs by receiving **Yeshua** as our **Redeemer**. **He** desires for all people to attend this great **Jewish** wedding (see **The Life of Christ Hp – The Parable of the Great Banquet**).