PILLARS OF MARRIAGE

THE CREED OF POLYGAMY IN THE BIBLE

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Introduction

With the Prefix ‘Poly’-meaning ‘Many’, Polygamy is defined as the practice in which Man or Woman has more than one spouse at any given time. In this case if it is a Man marrying numerous wives the relationship is technically known as Polygamy, and if it is a woman, it would be called Polyandry. For the purpose of common usage, the word Polygamy will be used to indicate the practice of a Man marrying several women throughout this article. Also note that this article does not seek to differentiate multiple wives and concubines but indicate them as one, the reason being their social status in the ancient days appeared different from that of a legally married wife.

Concubines were women who had lesser privileges of marriage compared to a wife or wives though, they lived with a man in a situation that was similar to a marriage. Conspicuously the scriptures refer to both multiple wives and concubines as different entities, but to some fusion, concubines were recognized as wives. A perfect example is 2 Samuel 12:11, God through Prophet Nathan gives David a prophecy of what would befall him ....a prophecy that was fulfilled through and by his ten concubines.

Legal Status: Many if not all of the developed western countries have either banned or do not recognize polygamy marriage and only an exception is given to the Muslim since in Islam, polygamy is allowed with a specific limitation that allows men to have up to four wives at any one time. In African countries many cultures and traditions practiced Polygamy in the past and still governments are somewhat compelled to recognize them under customary laws. In Kenya, previously polygamy was recognized under Customary Laws but not under civil Laws with an exception of Islamic Sheriah Laws. In March 2014, Kenya parliament passed a bill allowing men to marry multiple wives, which was later made into Law by President Uhuru Kenyatta on May 1st, 2014. The Law which faced opposition from different factions of women federations and religious groups among them Christian and Muslim leaders allows a man to marry as many wives as he wishes without the consent of the first wife. Previously a Wife was given a right to veto the husband’s choice, perhaps the main reason female Mp’s furiously stormed out the session as the bill was being unanimously by their male counterparts.

Polygamy in Christian World

For all Christians who truly believe on the bible, the morality of any issue hinges not on what man believes might be right or wrong, but solely on God’s view on the matter, in other words The Lords opinion ultimately matters period!

Christians who approve the polygamy and to be specific polygamy and find it as justified, accepted by God usually base their believes on two reasons;

1. The Old testament patriarchs ( chosen Men of God ) practised it and
2. They find nowhere in the entire bible, God condemning the practise.
3. God seems to permit and regulates the practise, so why should he condemn it?

A peculiar point to note is that these Christians polygamist do not believe polyandry is accepted to and by God. It seems to be a one way thing! In favour of the Men

Christians that endorse the practice of polygamy as being scripturally sound do so for several reasons…
1) it was practiced by some of the Old Testament patriarchs 2) The Bible does not specifically condemn it, and 3) Because God permits and regulates the practice, He must condone it.

[Note however that Christian polygamists do not believe that polyandry (women with multiple husbands) is acceptable to God].

Monogamists, on the other hand, believe that the model for marriage, instituted by God Himself, was one man and one woman, and that while Scriptural passages shows God permitting and regulating polygamy, they do not conclusively prove that He condones it.

However those who argue for polygamy usually approach the problem from an entirely unsound angle. Proponents do not usually centre on what God’s will is concerning marriage, but invariably begin with the Biblical record of the practice of polygamy, or those passages that show God’s response to the practice of polygamy. The Bible is a factual written account of important or historical events as they occurred. Just because Scripture records an action or God’s response to that action, does not necessarily mean that God approves of that action. There are a vast number of stories about marriages (and other issues) in the Old Testament that range from the conventional and/or sacred to the bizarre and/or profane. Certainly not all of them can possibly reflect God’s will in the matter.

Even though one cannot possibly determine God’s will by examining the actions and behaviour of man, or even God’s response to some of these actions, the major points made by pro-polygamists are

Examples of Biblical Polygamists: There are several historical accounts of Biblical polygamists. (Note there are only about eighteen specific examples of polygamy throughout the Old Testament, of which several clearly present polygamy in a negative light.)

One key Scripture that gives polygamist a strong basis to justify their argument is 2 Samuel 12:8 – I gave you your Master’s house and your Mater’s wives into your keeping,...

This was Prophet Nathan speaking for God confronting David with Murder of Uriah the Hittite and the Mater in this case is Saul who was already dead. Nowhere in the Bible do we see a clear cut condemnation of Polygamy by God, as a matter of fact, additional spouses appear to be valid in the scriptures (Jesus’ lineage does not have a pattern of going through the first wife.) Some laws given by Moses appear to Give God’s stamp of approval on Polygamy. For example, the rules and guidelines concerning the treatment of multiple wives and specifically the treatment of the first wife after the second marriage.
Exodus 21:10, if he takes another wife, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing and her marriage rights.

If a man has two wives, one loved and the other unloved, and they have borne him children, both the loved and the unloved, and if the firstborn son is of her who is unloved,

Then it shall be, on the day he bequeaths his possessions to his son, that he must not bestow first born status on the son of the Loved wife in the preference to the son of the unloved, the true first born. But he shall acknowledge the son of the unloved wife as the first born, by giving him a double portion of all that he has: [Deuteronomy 21:15-17]

It was also the responsibility of men to marry their widowed sister in law and support her family [Deut 25: 5-10]. The point that has to be considered the brother could as well been marred before the death of his brother.

The Law also prohibited men to certain polygamous marriages; a man could not marry a woman and her daughter or granddaughter (Leviticus 18:17), a woman and her Sister as rival (v. 18), or a woman and her mother ( 20:14).

We will exhaustively address each point one at a time.

**Examples of Biblical Polygamists**

The belief that Polygamy is an acceptable Biblical practice is often largely based on the several examples of polygamy in the Bible. However, as said earlier, just because Scripture records an action, it does not mean that God approves of that action. The Bible is a factual written account of important or historical events as they occurred. One of the factors that makes the Bible very believable is the fact that it does not make any endeavour to minimize or cover up the sins or failings of the people who’s stories are told, nor does it seek to exaggerate their good qualities, but records them just as they happened.

The first case of polygamy chronicled in the Scriptures is when Lamech, a descendant of Cain, “took to himself two wives” [Genesis 4:19]. However among others frequently listed as polygamists are… Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Saul, David and Solomon. Also Ashur the second son of Shem, the son of Noah (The 1st century historian Josephus further believed that it was Ashur who lived at the city of Nineveh, and named his subjects Assyrians)

Esau.. The fraternal twin brother of Jacob the patriarch and founder of the Israelites. Esau and Jacob were the sons of Isaac and Rebekah, and grandsons of Abraham and Sarah. Esau’s wives included daughters of the Canaanites (Hittite and Hivites). Judith and Basemath (Genesis 26:34), Mahalath, daughter of Ishmael (Genesis 28:9), and Adah and Aholibamah (Genesis 36:2).

Elhanan .. Husband of Hannah and of Peninnah and Samuel’s father.

Gideon.. Chosen by God to free the people of Israel, Later he became a judge of Israel presiding over a forty year peace. Gideon is said to have had many wives [Judges 8:30]
Rehoboam. (Only) son of Solomon and successor to the throne. His treatment of the people led to the kingdom being divided. His own tribe Judah, alone remaining faithful to him. 2 Chronicles 12:14 tells us that “He did that which was evil, because he set not his heart to seek Jehovah”. Rehoboam had a total of eighteen wives, and threescore (sixty) concubines [2 Chronicles 11:21] and sought many wives for his 28 sons [2 Chronicles 11:23].


Jehoiada the priest under whom King Joash rightly ruled the kingdom. [2 Chronicles 24:3]

Since the actions of men like Esau and Rehoboam can hardly be seen as exemplary, we will in this article concern ourselves only with the first ones mentioned… Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Solomon, the pillars of the Old Testament. Men who were in a close relationship with God, and who often spoke directly with Him. However it has to be remembered that just because the Bible mentions a trait or particular act of an individual, even an otherwise righteous individual, does not necessarily mean that the Bible endorsed said trait or act.

Far from The Norm: However what is almost completely ignored is the fact that nowhere do we see polygamy as the norm in Scripture. In fact there are only about eighteen specific examples of polygamy throughout the Old Testament. Little is said about the number of Old Testament men of God who had only one wife… For example Adam (Genesis 2-4), Noah (Genesis 6:18), Isaac (Genesis 25:20-23), Joseph Genesis 41:45), Boaz (Ruth 4), Job (Job 1) etc. (Job was, in fact, a prime candidate for multiple marriages since he was very wealthy and considered “the greatest man among all the people of the East”. However even he had only one wife). Next to nothing is known about the personal life of the prophets, but both Isaiah (Isaiah 8:3), and Hosea (Hosea 3:1-3) are specifically said to be married to one woman.

Also ignored is the fact that most examples of polygamy in the Old Testament are far from positive. Polygamy was tolerated, but it almost always had less than desirable consequences, this made evident by taking a closer look at some individual cases.

But first it has to be considered whether some of those that commonly make the polygamist lists, do in fact actually belong there.

Polygamy and The Patriarchs
Among the Patriarchs usually listed as polygamists are two giants of Old Testament history.. Abraham and Moses. Based on isolated verses, most people come to the conclusion that both of them had more than one wife at the same time. However when one examines the circumstances in a little more detail, the picture of polygamy is not quite as clear. In the case of both men it cannot be definitively stated that they were polygamists.

Abraham:
The only reason that Abraham consistently makes the list of Biblical polygamists can only be because he had a son by Sarah’s maid Hagar, and not because of his second marriage to Keturah, since It is not at all clear that he married Keturah before his wife Sarah died. Sarah's death is recorded in Genesis 23:1-2, but it is not until Genesis 25, that we are told that Abraham married Keturah and had six sons by her. While it is true that Hebrew composition...
does not always place events in chronological order, the narrative here does seem to be in the
order of time.

While the fact that Keturah is called a concubine in Genesis 25:6 (She is also called a
concubine in 1 Chronicles 1:32) may imply that Sarah was still alive, one also has to consider
that Abraham took no concubine nor second wife until Sarah herself gave him Hagar. This
fact speaks of a man who did not look elsewhere although concubines, or wives of the second
rank, were perfectly legitimate in those ancient times. While there is no question that
Abraham yielded to temptation, unquestionably Sarah’s action played a key role in the whole
affair.

However it was only the eldest son by a lawful wife that inherited the father’s property,
which is why Abraham gave gifts to his sons by Keturah and sent them away from Isaac, just
as he had done with Hagar and Ishmael. Besides which, from the time Hagar became
pregnant there was tension and jealousy between her and Sarah, which ended only when God
ordered Abraham to send Hagar and her son away. One can only imagine the depth of
bitterness and resentment that this must have caused.

Certainly we are not warranted, much less compelled to place Abraham’s second marriage
before the death of Sarah.

Moses:
Again pro-polygamists believe that the Bible records that Moses had two wives.

And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter.
[Exodus 2:21]

And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had
married; for he had married a Cushite woman. [Numbers 12:1]

While according to the customs of the time period it would not have been unreasonable for
Moses to have more than one wife, the question has to be asked is whether he actually did.
Although the text does not give us details of the situation, there are a number of clues that
bear examining.

The argument has been put forth that when Numbers 12:1 speaks of a “Cushite woman” it is
actually referring to Moses’ wife, Zipporah. However this is extremely unlikely. Why
Zipporah would be called a Cushite in Numbers 12 when her father is called a Midianite in
Numbers 10. Besides which, not only does the text imply that Moses’ marriage to a Cushite
woman was a recent one, but it seems hard to believe that Miriam was objecting to Moses’
marriage to Zipporah which had taken place years earlier, and had already produced two
children.

Others say that perhaps Zipporah had died and Moses had remarried. While this is possible, it
too is unlikely since only a short time had elapsed between the story of the reappearance of
Zipporah [Exodus 18] and Moses marriage to the Cushite wife in Numbers 12.

But let us return to the occasion when the Scriptures tell us that Moses sent Zipporah away to
her father, who later brought her and her two sons back to Moses.
And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent [Heb. shillûach] her away, and her two sons; of whom the name of the one was Gershom; for he said, I have been a sojourner in a foreign land: and the name of the other was Eliezer; for he said, The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh. And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife unto Moses into the wilderness where he was encamped, at the mount of God: and he said unto Moses, I, thy father-in-law Jethro, am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her. [Exodus 18:2-6]

As an aside... It is unlikely that Jethro was Moses’ father in law. The Hebrew word used in ambiguous. See Footnote I.

The text does not say exactly when Moses sent Zipporah away, and we do not find out about this until well after the fact when Jethro brings her back to Moses in Exodus 18. However the point is that the Hebrew word translated as "sent away" frequently refers to divorce. Shillûach means a dismissal, that is, (of a wife) divorce (especially the document); also (of a daughter). It comes from the root word shâlach, which is frequently used for divorce as the following examples show…

then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife, because he hath humbled her; he may not put her away [Heb. shâlach] all his days. [Deuteronomy 22:29]

When a man taketh a wife, and marrieth her, then it shall be, if she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some unseemly thing in her, that he shall write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send [Heb. shâlach] her out of his house. [Deuteronomy 24:1]

And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send [Heb. shâlach] her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, who took her to be his wife; [Deuteronomy 24:3]

They say, If a man put away [Heb. shâlach] his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, will he return unto her again? will not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith Jehovah. [Jeremiah 3:1]

For I hate putting away [Heb. shâlach], saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, and him that covereth his garment with violence, saith Jehovah of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit that ye deal not treacherously. [Malachi 2:16]

Why Moses would divorce his wife is not the subject of this paper. What matters here is that although the Cushite woman was a second wife, it is entirely possible that Moses married her after he sent Zipporah away, but before Jethro brought her back. Stating that Moses knowingly married two women at the same time is no more than an assumption.

Saul
One other name that consistently makes the polygamist list is Saul. This apparently stems from 2 Samuel 12:8 in which the prophet Nathan confronts David with the murder of Uriah the Hittite said that he (God) had given David Saul’s “wives”. However, while the Bible tells us that Saul fell into all manner of sins, including murder, disobedience to direct commands from the Lord, wrong forms of sacrifice, and using a medium to call up the spirit of Samuel,
it also only mentions Saul as having one wife and one concubine. (We will return to this problem later).

and the name of Saul’s wife was Ahinoam the daughter of Ahimaaz.” [1 Samuel 14:50]

Now Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah …” [2 Samuel 3:7]

And it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done. [2 Samuel 21:11]

But what about the men in the Bible who, beyond a shadow of a doubt, were Polygamists.

**Jacob**

Even though Jacob, in his earlier years, seemed to have faults aplenty, was he also guilty of simply taking to wife any woman he fancied? The answer to that is a resounding no! Jacob became a polygamist because 1) of the deception of his father in law Laban then 2) he wound up taking two concubines on the instigation of his two wives. All this against a sad backdrop of favouritism, bitterness, jealousy and rivalry.

Jacob, who’s very name means “supplanter” was patriarch and founder of the twelve tribes of Israel, but did not have very auspicious beginnings. He and Esau were fraternal twins born to Isaac, son of Abraham. Jacob, with the help of his mother Rebekah, deceptively acquired the birthright that lawfully belonged to the first born brother.. Esau.

Later Jacob fell in love with Rachel and worked for her father Laban for many years in order to win her hand. However Laban deceived Jacob and substituted his other daughter Leah in Rachel’s place with the excuse that it was not their custom to give the younger in marriage before the elder.. Since he was the victim of fraud, Jacob probably had grounds to reject this marriage, but did not. He accepted Leah but apparently could not give Rachel up, eventually marrying her as well.

However note that Genesis 29:30-35 tells us that Jacob loved Leah less than Rachel, and when God saw that Leah had less affection shown to her than was her due, He opened her womb, with the result that she bore four sons consecutively.. Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah, but Rachel remained barren. Rachel, becoming jealous of her sister and impatient with her barrenness, unjustly reproaches her husband, who indignantly rebukes her. God, not he, has withheld children from her. It was then that Rachel, following in the footsteps of Sarah, got Jacob to give her children through her handmaid Bilhah, who then bore Dan and Naphtali. At this Leah, who apparently was not getting pregnant again, gave her handmaid Zilpah to Jacob with the result that two more sons, Gad and Asher, were born. Leah herself again bore two more sons Issachar and Zebulun, along with a daughter Dinah. The final act in this scene was written when Rachel finally bore one son herself.. Joseph followed by Benjamin, whom Rachel died giving birth to.

The point of the story is this.. Jacob’s initial polygamous marriage to Rachel was the result of him being deceived by her father Laban. Should Jacob have acted differently? Certainly! But he was not willing to give up the love of his life, and since polygamy was not unknown in the day, rightly or wrongly, decided to marry Rachel as well. While no excuse is made for his
having sons by the handmaids of his two wives, it has to be remembered that a man greater
and far more righteous than he was at the time… a man that had the unparalleled honour of
being called God’s friend, had also given into temptation when offered a woman by his wife
Sarah.

In any case all this took place before Jacob’s conversion and emergence from idolatry,
described in Genesis 32:24-30 and Genesis 35:2-4.

David
King David, a man who walked with God, and was said to be a man “after God’s own heart”
(1 Samuel 13:14; cf. 1 Kings 11:4), certainly had multiple wives and concubines, perhaps
even more than the eight named wives and ten concubines Scripture assigns to him. The eight
named wives were Michal, the daughter of Saul (1 Samuel 18:27), Ahinoam of Jezreel and
Abigail the widow of Nabal (1 Samuel 25:42–43), Maacah, Haggith, Abital, and Eglah (2
Samuel 3:3–5), Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah, (2 Samuel 11:27). However 2 Samuel 5:13
says he took “more concubines and wives from Jerusalem”.

When David had Uriah murdered, and took Uriah’s wife Bathsheba for himself, God’s
punishment was most severe. Even after he deeply repented, he was told that the sword
would never depart from his house and his wives would be defiled by another man.

“Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house, because thou hast despised me,
and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will
raise up evil against thee out of thine own house; and I will take thy wives before thine eyes,
and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. [2
Samuel 12:10-11]

When under threat from his eldest son Absalom, David fled Jerusalem, he took his entire
household with him, except for ten concubines that he left behind to keep house [2 Samuel
15:16]. When Absalom came into Jerusalem he was advised to go in unto his father's
concubines that had been left behind, as taking possession of a harem was an act of
sovereignty, by which the nation would know he was abhorred of his father [2 Samuel
16:15]. Perhaps this advice was given in order to prevent the possibility of reconciliation
between David and his son, since this great insult made reconciliation impossible. One way
or another it fulfilled Nathan’s prophecy, and David tasted the bitterness of the cup which he
had caused Uriah to drink.

Upon returning to Jerusalem shortly after this time, David ended the relationship with his
harem of ten concubines since they had been defiled by his son. He provided for these
women but no longer cohabited with them.

And David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women his concubines,
whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in ward, and provided them with
sustenance, but went not in unto them. So they were shut up unto the day of their death,
living in widowhood. 2Samuel 20:3

The question that arises at this point is if the state of polygamy was not God’s intended
direction for human marriage, and that He only regulated not condoned it, then why did He
appear to give David Saul’s wives?
Did God Really Give David Saul’s Wives?
As He did with the polygamous patriarchs, not only did God never directly condemn David’s polygamy, but one passage in particular seems to indicate that God gave Saul’s *wives* to David as a way of blessing him!

In 2 Samuel 12, after David has committed adultery with Bathsheba, murdered her husband Uriah, and taken her as his wife, Nathan the prophet confronts David with his sin:

Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the word of Jehovah, to do that which is evil in his sight? thou hast smitten Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house, because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith Jehovah. Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house; and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. [2 Samuel 12:7b–12].

In the passages quoted above God recounts all the blessing He has bestowed on David... anointing David king over Israel; delivering David from the hand of Saul; giving David Saul’s house and his “wives”; and giving David the houses of Israel and Judah. God then goes on to tell him that if all those were not enough, He would have added even more. God does not condemn David for taking another wife, but denounces him for committing adultery with Bathsheba who was a married woman, then having her husband Uriah the Hittite murdered.

However, crucial to the pro-polygamy argument is the fact that God does seem to be telling David that Saul’s wives are one of the blessings He had given David, which goes far deeper than God simply tolerating and regulating polygamy. These passages appear to be a clear-cut case of divine approval and even promotion of polygamy. But is this actually the case?

Verse 12:8 has God saying “and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom”. The words translated wife is the Hebrew *'ishshāh*, which can mean *wife or woman*. Used hundreds of times in the Old Testament *'ishshāh* is most often refers to a wife, but there are a large number of cases where the word simply means woman. In the last three of the examples shown below, it is not even known whether the woman or women in question were even married.

And Judah sent the kid of the goats by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive the pledge from the woman's (*'ishshāh*) hand; but he found her not. [Genesis 38:20]

And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women (*'ishshāh*); for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwife come unto them. [Exodus 1:19]
Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call thee a nurse ('ishshâh) of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? ... And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman ('ishshâh) took the child, and nursed it. [Exodus 2:7,9]

But every woman ('ishshâh) shall ask of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall despoil the Egyptians. [Exodus 3:22]

And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women ('ishshâh) went out after her with timbrels and with dances. [Exodus 15:20]

Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there came forth two women ('ishshâh), and the wind was in their wings; now they had wings like the wings of a stork; and they lifted up the ephah between earth and heaven. [Zechariah 5:9]

Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women ('ishshâh); the gates of thy land are set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire hath devoured thy bars. [Nahum 3:13]

The problem with translating 'ishshâh into the English word wife in this case is that the Scriptures only mention Saul as having one wife and one concubine.

and the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam the daughter of Ahimaaz...” [1 Samuel 14:50]

Now Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah ...” [2 Samuel 3:7]

And it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done. [2 Samuel 21:11]

In those days possession of all property including the harem was a sure proof that the successor (or conqueror) had all legal rights. Since God could not have given into David's hands wives that Saul did not have, it is possible that the term “wives” meant Ahinoam... Saul’s legal wife and Rizpah his concubine.

However since the Hebrew word used could very well signify women not wives, and is mentioned in the context of all Saul’s possessions including his House and his kingdom, it is very possible that the verse means no more than that God had given David absolute power over everything possessed by Saul, including female servants.

Certainly there is absolutely no evidence that David had any relations with either Saul’s wife or his concubine. OT laws prohibited relationships that would constitute incest. To my knowledge we are not specifically told whether these rules would apply to a father in law, but defiling his father’s bed caused Reuben and his tribe everlasting problems.

Even though the people of Patriarchal period were not under specific Levitical laws which came later, because Reuben lay with his father concubine Bilhah [Genesis 35:22], his tribe never rose to any eminence in Israel being very small [Numbers 1:21], his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph [1 Chronicles 5:1], and his tribe was among the first that were carried into captivity by the Assyrians [1 Chronicles 5:26].
Solomon and The Three Prohibitions (multiplying horses, wives, and wealth)
Could be called the man who had everything… unparalleled wealth and wisdom and God’s blessings to boot. However Solomon was directly responsible for the division of the kingdom resulting from his ignoring the warning given by God to the kings of Israel… [Emphasis Added]

"But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold" [Deuteronomy 17:16-17].

This warning simply echoes and expands the broader law in Deuteronomy 7, applicable to all the population of Israel.

neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. [Deuteronomy 7:3]

Solomon was arguably one of the most celebrated polygamists in all history, and those arguing in favor of polygamy frequently hold him up as proof for the practice of polygamy being right. On the other hand, monogamists point out that Solomon, being king of Israel was bound by God’s three prohibitions against multiplying horses, wives, and wealth. Solomon who had forty thousand stalls of horses; unparalleled riches; and seven hundred wives (See I Kings 4:26; I Kings10: 14-29, I Kings 11:3) certainly disobeyed in all three areas.

The argument is made that there were a large number of topics that God could have expounded on regarding the morality of the kings, yet He specifically listed only a handful of points (See Deuteronomy 17:16-20) one of which was the prohibition against polygamy.

However, one has to consistently apply the same logic and underlying reasoning behind all three prohibitions. Considering the number of men in the Old Testament that were very wealthy, and that God Himself gave Solomon “both riches and honour” [1Kings 3:13], it is certain that the king of Israel was never meant to be a pauper with one horse. Since God could not have been issuing a blanket warning against wealth, we have to look a little deeper into the principle underlying the express prohibitions against multiplying wives, horses and riches. The last verse in the very chapter provides us with a clue, ending as it does with the words

“that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel”.

In other words, the kings of Israel were being warned against indulging in anything that would divert them from their first responsibility,. their service to God. There can be little doubt that riches, prestige, and pleasures are three of the greatest hindrances to godliness.

Horses and Prestige: Obviously the use and ownership of horses could not have been absolutely prohibited. However, there is little question that the warning against multiplying
horses had some connection with Egypt that abounded in horses, the offensive weapon of ancient warfare. It seems likely that the desire for vast numbers of these animals would induce the king to foster trade with Egypt, leading perhaps to the Israelites being again subjugated by the Egyptians, or at least corrupted by their idolatry and vices, to which they were very prone… although it was totally forbidden.

After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do; neither shall ye walk in their statutes. [Leviticus 18:3]

Besides which in a country where asses and mules were the rule, horses could not only accord the owner with a great deal of prestige, but cause him to trust too much in them.

Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will make mention of the name of Jehovah our God. [Psalm 20:7]

A horse is a vain thing for safety; Neither doth he deliver any by his great power. [Psalm 33:17]

**Riches:** As said earlier, God Himself gave Solomon “both riches and honour” [1 Kings 3:13]. However vast accumulation of treasure by a king could hardly be effected without oppression. This certainly seemed true in the case of Solomon. The Scriptures tell us that when his son Rehoboam returned from Egypt

‘.. Jeroboam and all Israel came, and they spoke to Rehoboam, saying, **Thy father made our yoke grievous:** now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee. [2 Chronicles 10:3-4]

This of course was ignored by Rehoboam, which ultimately led to the division of the country. His own tribe Judah, alone remaining faithful to him. David too multiplied silver and gold, but it was apparently used in the service of God (1 Chronicles 29:3-4). Besides which accumulation of riches can, and all too often does, result in pride and a

“trust in uncertain riches” [1 Timothy: 6:17].

“… If riches increase, set not your heart thereon. [Psalm 62:10]

**Wives and Pleasure:** In Deuteronomy God gives His reasons for barring the nation from marrying people of other nations. He said…

neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For he will turn away thy son from following me that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of Jehovah be kindled against you, and he will destroy thee quickly. [Deuteronomy 7:3-4]

While we see marriage as a unique bond between two people who are in love, European and Eastern rulers frequently married for political, economic, or diplomatic reasons. Arranged marriages between kings or clan leaders were tools to cement political alliances and often seen as an important way to bind together two countries in both peace and war.
However, this also meant that foreign wives could (and frequently did) introduce their own customs and idolatry into the nation. For Israel this would have been a death knell, and therefore intermarriage was strictly forbidden unless the spouse converted and adopted the religion of Israel, trusting in Yahweh alone. We do not know whether Solomon’s marriage to Pharaoh's daughter was a political measure to strengthen his kingdom, but we do know that this marriage seemed to do nothing to draw Solomon away from God into idolatry. He…

…made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of Jehovah, and the wall of Jerusalem round about… And Solomon loved Jehovah, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places. [1 Kings 3:1,3]

Sadly this trend did not continue. As he accumulated more and more wives, he was turned away from the one true God to false ones.

And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with Jehovah his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and went not fully after Jehovah, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, in the mount that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the children of Ammon. And so did he for all his foreign wives, who burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods. [1 Kings 11:3-8]

Which is why, with the exception of one tribe, God took the kingdom out of his hand and his son’s hand. Solomon’s multiple marriages proved the downfall of Israel.

And Jehovah was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned away from Jehovah, the God of Israel, who had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which Jehovah commanded. Wherefore Jehovah said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but I will give one tribe to thy son, for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen. [1 Kings 11:9-13]

The triple prohibition of Deuteronomy 17:16-17 certainly does not seem to be an explicit condemnation of polygamy. As shown, the principle underlying the express prohibitions against the kings multiplying wives, horses and riches was a warning against indulging in anything that would divert them from their first responsibility. Their service to God. Excess and its accompanying baggage was strictly forbidden. Certainly polygamy had many sad and often tragic repercussions…

No Explicit Condemnation
One question that has plagued monogamous Christians is why God didn't stop polygamy, or even directly rebuke the men who practiced it. While it is true that many aspects of the lives of the Patriarchs were closely scrutinized by God, they were never directly charged with any
wrongdoing for having multiple wives. Even David, who God called a man after his own heart, was heavily disciplined by God for his adulterous relationship, but not for his multiple wives.

However two points have to be considered here…

1) Polygamy was not the only wrong doing that is related in the Bible but is otherwise unmentioned by God. Abraham's half-lies about his wife Sarah's relationship to him, Lot's selfishness in choosing the better land, Rebekah's scheming to deceive the then-blind Isaac into giving Jacob the blessing that would otherwise have gone to Esau (Genesis 27:1-40). Rachel's stealing of the teraphim that belonged to her father [Genesis 31:19]. Etc. Etc. Just because there never was a specific rebuke by God on every one of these issues does not mean He approved of it.

2) As Christians should know divorce, except for the cause of adultery, is totally outside of the will of God. Although our Lord is very clear that any divorce falls short of God’s ideal, we are given only two “exceptions” to the no divorce policy of the Bible 1) If a spouse dies [Romans 7:2-3] or 2) commits adultery [Matthew 19:8-9].

However, in ancient days, there was apparently a great license in the matter of divorce. While Genesis: 2:24 indicates the perpetuity and the seriousness of the marriage bond, Deuteronomy 24:1 says

When a man taketh a wife, and marrieth her, then it shall be, if she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some unseemly thing in her, that he shall write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

The Jewish male could put away his wife for any cause that seemed good to himself… a practice that continued even to the time of our Lord. When the Pharisees approached Jesus with a question as to whether or not divorce was lawful, it seems that they were looking for support in their endeavours to end their marriages on a whim. Certainly Jesus’ reply could not have found favor with them, since He brought them back to the basics of marriage, clearly stating that divorce, while tolerated for the time, was wholly inconsistent with the original design of marriage..

And there came unto him Pharisees, trying him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it hath not been so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery. [Matthew 19:3-9]

If divorce went against the original design for marriage but was tolerated for a while, there is absolutely no reason to believe that the practice of polygamy was any different. Why didn’t God directly forbid polygamy? In the words of J.P. Holding of tektonics.org
Then shouldn't God have said something more direct? Not necessarily. Polygamy counts as one of those acts in the hierarchy of morals that has been reckoned at times to be a "necessary evil" -- not meaning, as some say, that God changes his mind about what is moral, but that what is moral may be superseded by what is moral on other grounds. To use the classic example, lying is wrong unless you have Jews in your cellar. Then lying becomes a moral imperative. [10]

Perhaps at one time, social conditions did exist which made polygamy a "necessary evil." However, for the most part, none of those conditions have carried over into our modern world which is vastly different from the ancient Near East.

While it is true that God says He hates divorce, what is prevalent in our so called “civilized” age are situations that make even divorce a "necessary evil" that God would not condemn. Battered spouses and abused children come to mind. Anyone who think that divorce is out of the question in these kind of cases is out of his or her mind, and thinks God is as well.

And here is one more point that has to be considered. While there is NO question that divorce is outside of God’s original plan for marriage, that He Himself has unambiguously stated that He hates divorce, and that Christians are not entitled to get divorced except for a very few reasons, if divorce were a sin then something was very wrong with Moses to allow it. He certainly would not have been the amazing man of God.

My take is God hates divorce of that marriage that he constituted and not that which man constituted...Psalms 127: Unless the LORD builds a house( can mean marriage) they labour in vain who built it ( in other words, it is not a question of if the marriage will be sustained by their efforts, but rather when will it break because eventually their efforts won’t keep that which God has the mandate of keeping)

The question that has to concern the New Testament believer is not what Jacob or Elkanah did, but what God’s original design for marriage was … The answer is clear.

**God’s Blueprint For Marriage**

While it is true that that Jesus’ statements about marriage in Matthew 19 is centered around the issue of divorce, His words can and do add to our overall understanding of God’s original intention for marriage. When asked a question concerning marriage, Jesus does not refer to what Abraham, Jacob or Joash did, but goes to the root of the issue… the marriage of the first man and the first woman, put in place by God Himself. In doing so, Jesus makes it clear that God’s original design for marriage was that it be **both exclusive and permanent**. One has to pay close attention to Jesus’ choice of passages that He quotes from Genesis, starting with Genesis 1:27

And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

**Note** that the very next verse (Genesis 1: 28) says “And God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth”. One **man and one woman were to replenish the earth**. Also **Note** that
just three verses later, we are told that “God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it
was very good”, which includes His creation of one man and one woman. [Genesis 1: 31].

Jesus then immediately quotes Genesis 2:24

“For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife; and the
two shall become one flesh”

Although it is true that in Matthew 19 the immediate issue Jesus addresses is divorce, the
principle He affirms from Genesis applies more broadly. If He condemns divorce as a
breaking of one of the two original principles for marriage (a permanent union), then any act,
including polygamy that would violate the other principle (an exclusive or monogamous
union) would also be condemned.

In other words, God prepared only one wife for Adam [1:27], with the intention that the two
of them should cleave to each other becoming one flesh [2:24]. It is obvious that the first
couple were not given any choice in the matter, but were placed in a monogamous marriage,
so why are we missing the glaring fact that this had to be God’s original blueprint for
marriage, therefore a measuring rod for all future matrimonial unions, regardless of whether
everyone in the Old Testament adhered to it or not?

Notes on Cleave and One Flesh:
The idea of permanence is not implicit in the word cleave, but is used in terms of a
covenantal relationship. The word cleave used in Genesis 2:24 is the Hebrew dâbaq, also
used of man cleaving to God in Deuteronomy 13:4 …

Ye shall walk after Jehovah your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey
his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave (dâbaq) unto him.

…which fully implies that the relationship is supposed to be permanent? Just as one’s
relationship with God ought to be permanent but not always is, saying that marriage ought to
be permanent is not the same as saying it is always permanent.

When Jesus quotes the Genesis verse, He used the Greek word proskollao, in place of the
Hebrew dâbaq. Proskollao has been used only four times in the New Testament. The sole
use, unrelated to marriage, is seen in Acts 5:36 when someone called Theudas attracted about
four hundred followers who joined (proskollao) themselves to him. Clearly neither a
permanent (Theudas was killed) nor a one-flesh relationship.

Kollao is the root word of proskollao which, as shown above, does not necessarily imply a
permanent relationship. Apparently this union can be as meaningful as a covenantal
relationship with God, or as shallow as a sexual encounter with a prostitute, from which the
man must flee… breaking the relationship, which is obviously not permanent.

Or know ye not that he that is joined (kollao) to a harlot is one body? for, The twain, saith he,
shall become one flesh

Polygamists do not dispute that in marriage “two shall be one flesh” [Genesis 2:24]. They
only disagree with the idea that a married man can only be "one flesh" with one woman.
Assuming the man is married, that fact that a man can even be "one flesh" with an harlot, apparently does not negate his being "one flesh" with his wife. However…

1 Corinthians 7: The discussion about marriage in 1 Corinthians 7 is always in the context of "wife" (singular) and "husband" (singular), which does not make sense if it is permissible to have more than one wife, in which case the word "wives" would have to have been used. Note the wording of 1 Corinthians 7:2, which makes it very clear that marriage is between one man and one woman [Emphasis Added]

"But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband." [1 Corinthians 7:2-3 NASB]

In fact the singular word 'wife' (in both Hebrew and Greek) is used throughout the Bible

One Flesh: Also when Jesus said the two shall become one flesh, it is not at all obvious that two individual persons have ceased to exist. In successful and happy marriages one usually sees two clearly separate and independent individuals functioning as one team or unit.

Why Was Polygamy Forbidden to New Testament Leaders? While there is no New Testament example of a godly Christian having more than one wife, there had to have been polygamists that converted to Christianity. The very fact that Paul emphasized that any man who aspired to church leadership had to be the husband of just one wife, means that there were in the church men with more than one wife, who would not qualify for the position of bishop or deacon.

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; (1 Timothy 3:2 )

Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. (1 Timothy 3:12)

If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. (Titus 1:6)

The argument is made that Paul does not label polygamy as sinful, but simply prohibits a polygamist from holding these two offices, and the reason for this prohibition could very well have been because a man with only one wife would be far more free to attend to the duties of his position. However, there could be plenty of issues like too large a family, elderly dependents, poor health (his and his families) that could potentially drain the time and resources of the prospective church leader. It does not make much sense for Paul to focus on just one issue that was not all that common.

What does ring true is that Paul was prohibiting a church leader from having more than one wife simply because monogamy was the example that he wanted promoted in the fledgling church.
Isaac and Rebekah: A Type of Christ and The Church

With the exception of Moses, Isaac was perhaps more a type of Christ than any other person in the Old Testament (Abraham a type of God the father who was willing to sacrifice his son). Both the births of Isaac and Christ were announced beforehand (Genesis 18:10. Luke 1:30-31), and both were miraculous — Isaac was born to a woman who is not only barren but well past the child bearing age (Genesis 17:15-18; 18:11-14) and Jesus to a virgin (Matthew 1:18-25). Both were named before their birth (Genesis 17:19. Luke 1:31).

Isaac was Abraham's son, through whom God promised to make a great nation, and with whom God made and everlasting covenant for his seed after him (Genesis 17:19). Jesus is the promised Messiah through whom God blesses all the nations (Galatians 3:16). Both Jesus and Isaac were obedient to their Fathers to the point of death. Isaac carried the wood for the sacrificial altar up the mount (Genesis 22:6) and Christ carried the wooden cross to Calvary (John 19:17). When God told Abraham to sacrifice his only son He was not asking Abraham to do anything that He Himself would not do. The command to Abraham was but a type of what would occur on Calvary many centuries later. God resurrected Jesus from the dead (Romans 6:4) and when God stopped Abraham from slaying his son, Abraham considered that God raised him from the dead (Hebrews 11:19).

The typology is carried over to the relationship between Isaac and his wife Rebekah, who is clearly a type of the church… the ecclesia, or "called out" virgin bride of Christ (Genesis 24:16; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25-32) while Isaac was a type of the bridegroom who goes out to meet and receive His bride (Genesis 24:63; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17).

Rebekah, who was from a land far away, accepted Isaac to be her husband without ever laying eyes on him, just as the church has never laid eyes on the Christ. Rebekah is given a ring and bracelets which obviously were token gifts given by the envoy of a man of wealth and position, just as the Holy Spirit is given as an earnest of our inheritance. Rebekah had to follow this servant who safely guided her steps to her new home and only after arriving there did she get to see and marry Isaac. Christians are faced with an almost identical situation… each of us has to allow the Holy Spirit to be their guide to our eternal home, after which we will get to see Jesus.

Isaac as a type of Christ, was no polygamist and had but one wife Rebekah, who for many years could not bear children. Faced with this situation Isaac did not take the easy way out and find himself another wife or concubine to bear him a son, but instead took the matter straight to God

“And Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren. And the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.” [Genesis 25:21]

Numerous passages from the New Testament describe or reference how Jesus Christ will marry His Church. In Matthew 22:1-14, Jesus likens the kingdom of Heaven to a marriage. In Matthew 25:1-13 the kingdom of heaven be likened to ten virgins who wait for the coming of the bridegroom. Paul calls the Church the bride of Christ and John speaks of marriage of the Lamb, where the bride is the church and the Lamb is Christ.

For I am jealous over you with Godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one Husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. [2 Corinthians 11:2]
Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Revelation 19:7-8

In Ephesians 5 Paul makes it that the relationship of a husband and his wife is to model the relationship of Christ and His church. Although this bride of Christ (the church) is made up of innumerable Christians, it is never referred to in the plural, but always in the singular. One bride… one wife.

Conclusion:

Do Any of God’s Rules Change?

There are those that believe that God’s rules never change, however this is open to challenge.

“If you take the argument of Galatians 3 that the law was our tutor or schoolmaster, to lead us to Christ (verse 24), then God did change in His dealings with us after the coming of Christ, after we became sons rather than slaves. Our “rules” as parents change as our children mature and grow up, and rightly so. This seems to be Paul’s argument in Galatians. We are no longer slaves, but sons.

It is clear that God does change some rules over time. (Not that God Himself changes, but that He has an eternal plan that includes change. It is logically inconsistent to think that just because God Himself is eternal and does not change, that He cannot bring about change.) It would appear, for example, that Adam and Eve did not eat meat before the flood (Genesis 1:29-30). But after the flood, man was allowed to eat meat (Genesis 9:3-4). When the Law of Moses was given, certain kinds of meat could be eaten, while others were prohibited as unclean. And then, in Mark 7:19 and Acts 10 & 11, God made it clear that “all foods were now clean.” In other words, the unchanging God does incorporate change in the way He deals with men, even though He remains the same. The same could be said for the observance of the Sabbath. Violating the Sabbath was once a capital crime (Numbers 15:32-36), but later became a matter of personal conviction (Romans 14:5). [11]

And here is one more point that has to be considered. While there is no question that divorce is outside of God’s original plan for marriage, that He Himself has unambiguously stated that He hates divorce, and that Christians are not entitled to get divorced except for a very few reasons, divorce itself is not a sin.

Moses was the man chosen by God to bring God’s law to the people. There is absolutely no possibility that Moses would have allowed divorce for any reason whatsoever if it were a sin. To say that Moses allowed many many people to sin because of the ‘hardness of their hearts’ is ludicrous in the extreme. Having said that the point has to be emphasized that …The present day believer has the obligation to determine what God’s will is in every possible matter and follow it to the best of their ability even when the matter does not constitute an actual sin.

And make no mistake, there are probably plenty of selfish, even sinful reasons behind the divorces of many, if not most Christians today all of which will have to be accounted for. It is very difficult to separate the possible selfishness and sinfulness behind the divorce from the
actual divorce itself. Common sense dictates that if sin were the reason for the divorce, then the divorce itself becomes a huge stumbling block in the believer’s life.

What was once overlooked in the Old Testament is no basis for determining our actions and behaviour, especially since it is very clear from Ephesians 5 that that the relationship of a husband and his wife ideally is to model the relationship of Christ and His church. Also to be taken into consideration is the wording of 1 Corinthians 7:2, which makes it very clear that marriage is between one man and one woman. And the fact that in forbidding polygamists from holding church leadership positions, Paul was very likely setting monogamy as example that he wanted followed in the fledgling church.

Neither divorce nor polygamy were ever part of God’s original plan and will for marriage, which is clearly shown by the fact that God prepared only one wife for Adam [1:27], with the intention that the two of them should cleave to each other becoming one flesh [2:24].

The believer cannot marry more than one wife with the sorry excuse that David did it.

All of which leaves us with one remaining problem

A Thorny Problem
Although with the exception of church leaders, polygamy is not directly forbidden in the Bible, monogamy is God’s original and unchanging intention for marriage. However, there is little question that polygamy presents a thorny problem in cases where it is an integral part of local culture and even more of a problem when converts to Christianity already have more than one wife. While no man who has more than one wife can hold an official position in the church, one has to fall back on 1 Corinthians 7, in which Paul instructs the Corinthians to remain in the circumstances in which they came to faith.

There is no question that this does not include remaining in sin (Romans 6:1). For example the prostitute and thief have to repent of and completely forsake their sin. Only if one can biblically prove that polygamy is a sin should saved polygamists be required to forsake their marriages. But since it cannot be Biblically proved that polygamy is sinful, the convert should be allowed to remain in the same situation he or she was in at the time of conversion.

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