

ADULTERY

Conjugal infidelity. An adulterer was a man who had illicit intercourse with a married or a engaged woman, and such a woman was an adulteress. Intercourse between a married man and an unmarried woman was fornication. Adultery was regarded as a great social wrong, as well as a great sin.

The Mosaic law (Num. 5:11-31) prescribed that the suspected wife should be tried by the ordeal of the “water of jealousy.” There is, however, no recorded instance of the application of this law. In subsequent times the Rabbis made various regulations with the view of discovering the guilty party, and of bringing about a divorce. It has been inferred from John 8:1-11 that this sin became very common during the age preceding the destruction of Jerusalem.

Idolatry, covetousness, and apostasy are spoken of as adultery spiritually (Jer. 3:6, 8, 9; Ezek. 16:32; Hos. 1, 2, 3 Rev. 2:22). An apostate church is an adulteress (Isa. 1:21; Ezek. 23:4, 7, 37), and the Jews are styled “an adulterous generation” (Matt. 12:39). (Compare Rev. 12.)

3. The purity of the camp

NUMBERS 5

¹The LORD gave these instructions to Moses: ²“Command the people of Israel to remove anyone from the camp who has a contagious skin disease^o or a discharge, or who has been defiled by touching a dead person. ³This applies to men and women alike. Remove them so they will not defile the camp, where I live among you.” ⁴So the Israelites did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and removed such people from the camp.

⁵Then the LORD said to Moses, ⁶“Give these instructions to the people of Israel: If any of the people—men or women—betray the LORD by doing wrong to another person, they are guilty. ⁷They must confess their sin and make full restitution for what they have done, adding a penalty of 20 percent and returning it to the person who was wronged. ⁸But if the person who was wronged is dead, and there are no near relatives to whom restitution can be made, it belongs to the LORD and must be given to the priest, along with a ram for atonement. ⁹All the sacred gifts that the Israelites bring to a priest will belong to him. ¹⁰Each priest may keep the sacred donations that he receives.”

Protecting Marital Faithfulness

¹¹And the LORD said to Moses, ¹²“Say to the people of Israel: ‘suppose a man’s wife goes astray and is unfaithful to her husband. ¹³Suppose she sleeps with another man, but there is no witness since she was not caught in the act. ¹⁴If her husband becomes jealous and suspicious of his wife, even if she has not defiled herself, ¹⁵the husband must bring his wife to the priest with an offering of two quarts^o of barley flour to be presented on her behalf. Do not mix it with olive oil or frankincense, for it is a jealousy offering—an offering of inquiry to find out if she is guilty.

¹⁶“The priest must then present her before the LORD. ¹⁷He must take some holy water in a clay jar and mix it with dust from the Tabernacle floor. ¹⁸When he has presented her before the LORD, he must unbind her hair and place the offering of inquiry—the jealousy offering—in her hands to determine whether or not her husband’s suspicions are justified. The priest will stand before her, holding the jar of bitter water that brings a curse to those who are guilty. ¹⁹The priest will put the woman under oath and say to her, “If no other man has slept with you, and you have not defiled yourself by being unfaithful, may you be immune from the effects of this bitter water that causes the curse. ²⁰But if you have gone astray while under your husband’s authority and defiled yourself by sleeping with another man”—²¹at this point the priest must put the woman under this oath—“then may the people see that the LORD’s curse is upon you when he makes you infertile.^o ²²Now may this water that brings the curse enter your body and make you infertile.”^o And the woman will be required to say, “Yes, let it be so.” ²³Then the priest will write these curses on a piece of leather and wash them off into the bitter water. ²⁴He will then make the woman drink the bitter water, so it may bring on the curse and cause bitter suffering in cases of guilt.

²⁵“Then the priest will take the jealousy offering from the woman’s hand, lift it up before the LORD, and carry it to the altar. ²⁶He will take a handful as a token portion and burn it on the altar. Then he will require the woman to drink the water. ²⁷If she has defiled herself by being unfaithful to her husband, the water that brings the curse will cause bitter suffering. She will become infertile,^o and her name will

become a curse word among her people. ²⁸But if she has not defiled herself and is pure, she will be unharmed and will still be able to have children.

²⁹“This is the ritual law for dealing with jealousy. If a woman defiles herself by being unfaithful to her husband, ³⁰or if a man is overcome with jealousy and suspicion that his wife has been unfaithful, the husband must present his wife before the LORD, and the priest will apply this entire ritual law to her. ³¹The husband will be innocent of any guilt in this matter, but his wife will be held accountable for her sin.”

JOHN 8

JESUS FORGIVES AN ADULTEROUS WOMAN

¹Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, ²but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. ³As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and Pharisees brought a woman they had caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd.

⁴“Teacher,” they said to Jesus, “this woman was caught in the very act of adultery. ⁵The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?”

⁶They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. ⁷They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, “**All right, stone her. But let those who have never sinned throw the first stones!**” ⁸Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.

⁹When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. ¹⁰Then Jesus stood up again and said to her, “**Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?**”

¹¹“No, Lord,” she said.

And Jesus said, “**Neither do I. Go and sin no more.**”

Avoid Immoral Women

PROVERBS 5

¹My son, pay attention to my wisdom; listen carefully to my wise counsel. ²Then you will learn to be discreet and will store up knowledge.

³The lips of an immoral woman are as sweet as honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil. ⁴But the result is as bitter as poison, sharp as a double-edged sword. ⁵Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave. ⁶For she does not care about the path to life. She staggers down a crooked trail and doesn’t even realize where it leads.

⁷So now, my sons, listen to me. Never stray from what I am about to say: ⁸Run from her! Don’t go near the door of her house! ⁹If you do, you will lose your honor and hand over to merciless people everything you have achieved in life. ¹⁰Strangers will obtain your wealth, and someone else will enjoy the fruit of your labor. ¹¹Afterward you will groan in anguish when disease consumes your body, ¹²and you will say, “How I hated discipline! If only I had not demanded my own way! ¹³Oh, why didn’t I listen to my teachers? Why didn’t I pay attention to those who gave me instruction? ¹⁴I have come to the brink of utter ruin, and now I must face public disgrace.”

¹⁵Drink water from your own well—share your love only with your wife. ¹⁶Why spill the water of your springs in public, having sex with just anyone? ¹⁷You should reserve it for yourselves. Don't share it with strangers.

¹⁸Let your wife be a fountain of blessing for you. Rejoice in the wife of your youth. ¹⁹She is a loving doe, a graceful deer. Let her breasts satisfy you always. May you always be captivated by her love. ²⁰Why be captivated, my son, with an immoral woman, or embrace the breasts of an adulterous woman?

²¹For the LORD sees clearly what a man does, examining every path he takes. ²²An evil man is held captive by his own sins; they are ropes that catch and hold him. ²³He will die for lack of self-control; he will be lost because of his incredible folly.

PROVERBS 6

¹My child, ²if you co-sign a loan for a friend or guarantee the debt of someone you hardly know—³if you have trapped yourself by your agreement and are caught by what you said—⁴quick, get out of it if you possibly can! You have placed yourself at your friend's mercy. Now swallow your pride; go and beg to have your name erased. ⁵Don't put it off. Do it now! Don't rest until you do. ⁶Save yourself like a deer escaping from a hunter, like a bird fleeing from a net.

⁷Take a lesson from the ants, you lazybones. Learn from their ways and be wise! ⁸Even though they have no prince, governor, or ruler to make them work, ⁹they labor hard all summer, gathering food for the winter. ¹⁰But you, lazybones, how long will you sleep? When will you wake up? I want you to learn this lesson: ¹¹A little extra sleep, a little more slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—¹²and poverty will pounce on you like a bandit; scarcity will attack you like an armed robber.

¹³Here is a description of worthless and wicked people: They are constant liars, ¹⁴signaling their true intentions to their friends by making signs with their eyes and feet and fingers. ¹⁵Their perverted hearts plot evil. They stir up trouble constantly. ¹⁶But they will be destroyed suddenly, broken beyond all hope of healing.

¹⁷There are six things the LORD hates—no, seven things he detests:

- ¹⁸ haughty eyes,
- a lying tongue,
- hands that kill the innocent,
- ¹⁹ a heart that plots evil,
- feet that race to do wrong,
- ²⁰ a false witness who pours out lies,
- a person who sows discord among brothers.

²¹My son, obey your father's commands, and don't neglect your mother's teaching. ²²Keep their words always in your heart. Tie them around your neck. ²³Wherever you walk, their counsel can lead you. When you sleep, they will protect you. When you wake up in the morning, they will advise you. ²⁴For these commands and this teaching are a lamp to light the way ahead of you. The correction of discipline is the way to life.

²⁴These commands and this teaching will keep you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of an adulterous woman. ²⁵Don't lust for her beauty. Don't let her coyness seduce you. ²⁶For a prostitute will bring you to poverty, and sleeping with another man's wife may cost you your very life. ²⁷Can a man scoop fire into his lap and not be burned? ²⁸Can he walk on hot coals and not blister his feet? ²⁹So it is with the man who sleeps with another man's wife. He who embraces her will not go unpunished.

³⁰Excuses might be found for a thief who steals because he is starving. ³¹But if he is caught, he will be fined seven times as much as he stole, even if it means selling everything in his house to pay it back.

³²But the man who commits adultery is an utter fool, for he destroys his own soul. ³³Wounds and constant disgrace are his lot. His shame will never be erased. ³⁴For the woman's husband will be furious in his jealousy, and he will have no mercy in his day of vengeance. ³⁵There is no compensation or bribe that will satisfy him.

Another Warning about Immoral Women

PROVERBS 7

¹Follow my advice, my son; always treasure my commands. ²Obey them and live! Guard my teachings as your most precious possession. ³Tie them on your fingers as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart.

⁴Love wisdom like a sister; make insight a beloved member of your family. ⁵Let them hold you back from an affair with an immoral woman, from listening to the flattery of an adulterous woman.

⁶I was looking out the window of my house one day ⁷and saw a simpleminded young man who lacked common sense. ⁸He was crossing the street near the house of an immoral woman. He was strolling down the path by her house ⁹at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in. ¹⁰The woman approached him, dressed seductively and sly of heart. ¹¹She was the brash, rebellious type who never stays at home. ¹²She is often seen in the streets and markets, soliciting at every corner.

¹³She threw her arms around him and kissed him, and with a brazen look she said, ¹⁴"I've offered my sacrifices and just finished my vows. ¹⁵It's you I was looking for! I came out to find you, and here you are! ¹⁶My bed is spread with colored sheets of finest linen imported from Egypt. ¹⁷I've perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. ¹⁸Come, let's drink our fill of love until morning. Let's enjoy each other's caresses, ¹⁹for my husband is not home. He's away on a long trip. ²⁰He has taken a wallet full of money with him, and he won't return until later in the month."

²¹So she seduced him with her pretty speech. With her flattery she enticed him. ²²He followed her at once, like an ox going to the slaughter or like a trapped stag, ²³awaiting the arrow that would pierce its heart. He was like a bird flying into a snare, little knowing it would cost him his life.

²⁴Listen to me, my sons, and pay attention to my words. ²⁵Don't let your hearts stray away toward her. Don't wander down her wayward path. ²⁶For she has been the ruin of many; numerous men have been her victims. ²⁷Her house is the road to the grave. ²⁸Her bedroom is the den of death.