

Hittites) she was anointed on the occasion. This rite symbolized a change of status.

3. The Wedding. Literary texts show how long a wedding must have lasted: from six to nine days (Stol: 95). Often the best man (“friend”) was armed, for he was supposed to protect the bride against both natural and supernatural enemies. In Syria and Assyria, the bride was veiled. After the wedding, the couple had sexual intercourse, an act that marked the consummation of the marriage. The husband assumed authority over his wife, which he took over from her father. This is expressed by *ahāzu*, lit. “to take,” frequently used for “to marry” in Akkadian. The woman remained a “bride” (*kallatu*) until a child was born.

4. Bride-price and Dowry. The bride-price (*ter-ḥatu*) was given by the family of the husband to that of the bride, while the dowry was given to the girl by her father (Westbrook: 89–102). Scholars use the term “bride-price” to indicate that marriage was conceived as a commercial transaction (Stol: 127–32). After the Old Babylonian period, it was a sum of money that the married woman could have in reserve for emergency situations. In Syria (Ugarit and Alalab) the bride-price was the property of the wife. In the Judean colony of Elephantine, a bride-price (*mhr*) of five shekels was added to a dowry (*tkwnh*).

In Ugarit, a *mhr* was given when a woman married (*trḥ*); the woman was thereafter called a *mtrḥt* (Akkadian *marḥītu*; cf. Marsman). The sum could be paid in installments (Stol: 132–33). Contracts state that a man could live in a house for seven or ten years and then “they will let him marry a woman” (cf. Jacob, Gen 29; Stol: 122).

The dowry, called “the gift,” was made up of household goods. In the Neo-Babylonian period, the dowry became a central topic in marriage arrangements among the rich (Roth). The dowry was often paid in installments, sometimes over many years. The husband enjoyed usufruct from it, potentially depleting it.

5. The Second Wife. As a rule, marriage was monogamous. However, in the higher echelons of society, bigamy was not unusual. Having two wives was also common in the West, as indicated by the biblical texts of Deut 21:15 and 1 Sam 1 (Stol: 165–66).

Normally, the reason for taking another wife was childlessness (Westbrook: 103–11). The practice of setting a time limit for producing children, after which a man was allowed to marry a second wife, is only attested in the North and the West of the region. In Assyria it was two years, while in Alalab (Syria) it was seven or ten years (like Abram, Gen 16:3; Stol: 189). The usual way to gain a second wife was to bring in a slave-girl, but a wife could also “adopt a sister” as a second wife (*šugītu*; Old Babylonian; cf. Stol: 172–82) for her husband.

Concubines were called *esirtu* (lit. “a woman imprisoned”) in Akkadian, “little wife” in Sumerian, or “girlfriend.” In Assyria, they had to veil themselves (Stol: 193–99).

Occasionally, women married their husband’s brother after the death of their husband. The Hittites, the Hurrians (in Nuzi), the Assyrians, the Canaanites, and the Israelites all practiced this so-called levirate marriage (Stol: 296–99).

6. Divorce. A man initiating a divorce had to pay “divorce money.” According to certain legal traditions in Babylonia, a wife who “hated” her husband was punished by death (Westbrook: 68–69; Stol: 210–13, 220–21); but in Assyria, Syria, and among the Hittites, women could divorce (Radner: 159–61; Stol: 209–33). The liberal marriage law in Elephantine and in late Egyptian society was informed by traditions originating in the Semitic world.

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Marten Stol

II. Ancient Egypt

In ancient Egypt, being married was normal and socially expected for most adults (Wilfong: 341). Marriage and divorce were informal, private matters, influenced by local customs and social status. Unions were usually between social equals, although some exceptions are documented in literary texts such as the Tale of the Doomed Prince (Lichtheim: 200–3). Marriage defined legal and economic rights and obligations, and had as its primary goals the production of children and the maintenance of a household. In the case of the royal family, marriage alliances were often part of diplomatic strategies (Toivari-Vitala: 6, 8). There is no official documentation of marriage ceremonies or the dissolution of marriage unions, as the state did not concern itself with family matters (Robins: 56; Johnson: 154). Marriages among close relatives and polygamy were no taboo, but evidence from outside the royal family is sparse. Husband and wife were theoretically equal partners within the marriage, although men tended to have a more visible role in society (Wilfong: 340).

Women had considerable rights, including being able to retain control of the assets they brought into the marriage and to inherit at least a part of their husband's property (Pestman).

Literary texts, and in particular didactic works, show that married individuals were expected to not have sex outside marriage. Adultery and sexual offenses could have severe repercussions, including death (Eyre; Johnson: 150–53). Typical in this regard is the Tale of the Two Brothers (Lichtheim: 203–11; Wettengel), in which the older brother's wife attempts unsuccessfully to seduce the younger, unmarried brother and is eventually killed by her husband. The motif of the spurned wife is very popular in ancient literature, having perhaps originated in Egyptian folklore and then become widespread all over the ancient Near East (Redford: 93, n. 3).

A famous parallel is found in the Bible (Gen 39:1–20), where Potiphar's wife tries to seduce Joseph and, angered by his rejection, falsely accuses him of rape, causing his imprisonment. This similarity has attracted the interest of Egyptologists and biblical scholars alike, especially given the apparent familiarity of the author of the Joseph Story with elements of Egyptian civilization (Redford: 189–243; Fieger/Hodel-Hoernes: 91–106). One particularly puzzling detail of the Joseph story is his marriage to an Egyptian girl, Asenath (Gen 41:45), whom Pharaoh gives to Joseph as a bride as part of his promotion in the Egyptian court (Fieger/Hodel-Hoernes: 188–212). Although Joseph's marriage to a non-Jewish woman should have been an issue for the early Jewish community, strongly focused as it was on religious and ethnic exclusiveness, it is not frowned upon here (Redford: 247). This, along with a few other elements of the Joseph Story (e.g., Gen 42:8, 43:32, 44:18, 50:11), has been taken by some as indicating that, although Joseph strived to maintain his Hebrew identity, he was recognized as an Egyptian more than a Hebrew.

The episode might also reflect an Egyptian custom to give foreigners promoted to high court positions a local bride. Examples of this practice, if reversed, are found in the Story of Sinuhe and the Tale of the Doomed Prince, in both of which the Egyptian protagonists, having assumed high ranks in royal courts outside Egypt, are given local women as wives (Fieger/Hodel-Hoernes: 197, 353–57; Toivari-Viitala: 3). In the OT pseudepigraphon *Jos. Asen.*, the solution to the dilemma of Joseph's marriage is found in Asenath's eventual conversion to Judaism (Redford: 247, n. 5; Fieger/Hodel-Hoernes: 254–56).

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Silvia Zago

III. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

In the HB/OT there is no specific word for marriage, no specific words for "husband" and "wife" (the words that are translated as such are usually the words more frequently translated as "man" and "woman"), and no conclusive reference to marriage contracts. There are not, moreover, an abundance of laws that pertain particularly to marriage. At the same time, it is clear that marriage is critically important in the HB/OT, as evidenced by the numerous marriages within it. Thus, while it is difficult to determine an "institution of marriage" in a legal or constitutional sense (with clear regulatory rules), it is obvious that there is an "institution of marriage" in a social or customary sense.

Indeed, the HB/OT reflects a wide variety of marital practices and customs, which sometimes conflict with each other. Biblical marriages, for instance, may be parentally arranged (Gen 24:1–8) though most often no mention is made of parental involvement; they may be matrilineal, in which the couple resides among the wife's kin (Exod 2:16–22), or patrilineal (Gen 24:8, 37–38); and they may be represented as simply a means to an end (reproduction, alliance) or as unions with heartfelt passion (1 Sam 1:8; 2 Sam 3:16). They may also be monogamous or polygynous (there are no biblical examples of polyandrous marriages). Monogamy is the more common, marital form; in the entire primeval history, for example, only Lamech's marriage (Gen 4:23) is explicitly polygynous. Biblical narrative, on the other hand, contains many examples of polygyny, (Gen 16; 29:15–30; 1 Sam 1:2; 2 Sam 3:2–5; 5:13; 1 Kgs 3:1; 11:3; 2 Chr 11:21) and certain biblical laws take for granted that polygynous marriages occur, as in the rule of Levirate marriages in which the brother of a deceased man is obliged to marry his brother's widow seemingly regardless of the brother's own marital status (Deut 25:5–10, see also Gen 38; Ruth 4). One common thread to biblical marriages, however, is the underlying patriarchal ideology in which women are under control of their