

31 – FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.

Paul now quotes Gen 2:24 in support of his admonitions in the previous verses. He does not use a common “quotation formula” such as we find in 1:22; 2:17; 4:25–26; 6:2, but simply quotes the Genesis text itself, most likely because this verse was so regularly referenced in discussions on sex and marriage that it was well known. Moreover, the opening words, “For this reason,” fit perfectly to anchor Paul’s teaching point and thus would have been interrupted if a quotation formula had been used.

MT	Lxx	Ephesians
<p>עַל־כֵּן יַעֲזֹב־אִישׁ אֶת־אָבִיו וְאֶת־אִמּוֹ וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיוּ לְבֶשֶׁר אֶחָד:</p> <p>For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.</p>	<p>ἔνεκεν τούτου καταλείψει ἄνθρωπος τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν.</p> <p>Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh.</p>	<p>ἀντὶ τούτου καταλείψει ἄνθρωπος [τὸν] πατέρα καὶ [τὴν] μητέρα καὶ προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν.</p> <p>Therefore shall a man leave [the] father and [the] mother and shall cleave to his wife, and thy two shall be one flesh.</p>

The Lxx is a close translation of the Hebrew with one obvious exception: the Hebrew does not use the numerical notation “the two” in the final phrase but simply states “they shall be one flesh.” It is interesting to note, however, that not only the Lxx but also the Syriac Peshitta, the Targum Ps-Jonathan, the Vulgate as well as the Samaritan Pentateuch also include the numeric “two shall be one.” While this verse has not been found at Qumran (Dead Sea Scrolls), that the Samaritan Pentateuch as well as the Lxx include the numeral “two” in the phrase “two shall be one” would indicate the tradition of this reading as being ancient. Surely this is the meaning of the Hebrew when it states “they shall become one flesh” and it may be that the added word “two” was a natural extension of the Hebrew when translated in the various versions.

In Paul's quote he also does not include the possessives "his father and his mother" which are in the Hebrew and the Lxx's translation of the Hebrew. The definite article "the," in the phrase "the father and the mother," would substitute for the possessive, but it is a variant in the Greek text of Ephesians (as noted in the table above by being enclosed in square brackets). It is very possible that the added article "the" in some Greek manuscripts is the result of a scribal attempt to make Paul's quote of Gen 2:24 coincide with Yeshua's quoting of the same text (see below). The only other place where Paul deviates from the Lxx translation is in using *ἀντι τούτου* rather than *ἐνεκεν τούτου*, "Therefore..." or "For this reason..." but the two words offer essentially the same sense.

Matthew 9:5 gives notice that Yeshua likewise quoted Gen 2:24 in His discussion with the Pharisees over the question of marriage and divorce.¹

and said, 'for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?

καὶ εἶπεν· ἕνεκα τούτου καταλείψει ἄνθρωπος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὴν μητέρα καὶ κολληθήσεται τῇ γυναικὶ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν.

Here Yeshua essentially quotes the text of the Lxx but excludes the possessive pronoun "his" in the phrase "his father and his mother."

In our Ephesians text, it is obvious that Paul is referring to Gen 2:24 in order to substantiate his primary point, that a husband and wife are so united in the bonds of marriage that they are viewed by God as "one flesh" which parallels the "body" metaphor used of the *ekklesia*, in which Yeshua is the "head" and the *ekklesia* is the "body." Such unity or "oneness" is expressed in the marriage bond as a revelation of the unity that exists between Yeshua and all who are "in Him," i.e., all who are united with Him in His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension and thereby form the body of the elect, all who are eternally saved from the wrath of God.

In the Genesis context, the verse here quoted (2:24) is a statement by Moses which points out the essential importance of the previous narrative, that "woman" was formed from "man," and thus in the divine

1 See the synoptic parallel text in Mk 10:7, in which significant manuscripts leave off the phrase *καὶ προσκολληθήσεται τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ*, "and cling to his wife."

gift of marriage, the two who are individuals return to their primary “oneness.” This also emphasizes the essential equality of being that exists within male and female, for both were created in the image of God. Though their God-given roles may differ in specific areas of life, they equally share the high and unique privilege of being created in God’s image.

This highlights the opening “For this reason...” in Gen 2:24. It is because both male and female are created in the image of God that they are enabled by God Himself to become one in the bonds of marriage, and this “oneness” is therefore to characterize every marriage which seeks to honor God. For being one together means that husband and wife treat each other with the goal of enhancing true unity of life together and such unity is ultimately to reflect the unity that exists between Yeshua and His *ekklesia*.

31–32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Messiah and the *ekklesia*. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

*This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Messiah and the *ekklesia* – Paul uses the word “mystery (μυστήριον, *mustērion*) five other times in this epistle (1:9; 3:3-4, 9; 5:32; 6:19) and in each of these he uses the word to describe something that is hidden but which is revealed through the proclamation of God’s truth as it is in Yeshua.*

He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him...(Eph 1:9)

that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Messiah.... (Eph 3:3–4)

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Messiah, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; (Eph 3:8–9)

and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, (Eph 6:19)

We see the same emphasis in our text when Paul references the unity between husband and wife as a reflection or revelation of the reality that the *ekklesia* and Yeshua the Messiah are united as one. Once again, Paul's unique theological phrase, "in Messiah," highlights this foundational truth.

Thus, the phrase "this mystery is great" refers not only to the unity that God has enabled to exist between husband and wife, nor is the "mystery" singularly attached to the unity of Yeshua and the *ekklesia* as His own body. As Larkin notes:

For Paul, Gen 2:24 provides "one flesh" imagery from the marriage union that may be appropriately applied to the union of Christ and the church, which in turn become the standard for the marital union. The mystery, then, is neither [an] individual element of the comparison, whether marital or ecclesiastical, but rather the entire comparison complex.¹

What Paul is stating, then, is this: it is within the context of those who are believers joined together in marriage, to whom it has been revealed to them as they read and believe the Scriptures, that their marriage, and indeed, marriage itself, is ultimately to reflect and reveal to others the unity that Yeshua Himself has with the *ekklesia*, the very innumerable host of people whom He has drawn, is drawing, and will draw unto Himself as those He has redeemed for all eternity.

Such profound truth and its foundational implications for marriage is hidden from those who deny the truth and turn away from the Savior Himself. But those who are called by God to faith in His Son, have been given the truth through the inspired words of Scripture, and by faith receiving the truth, they see this reality emphasized each year as Pesach is celebrated. For what are the words of our Savior at the Pesach meal with His disciples just before His ascension?

And as they were eating, Yeshua took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. (Matt 26:26, cf. Mk 14:22; Lk 22:19; 1Cor. 10:16)

To "eat His flesh" (cf. Jn 6:51–53) means to recognize one's unity with Yeshua through the exercise of saving faith in Him, fully accepting Him as Lord and Savior, the promised Messiah, and the eternal Immanuel,

1 William J. Larkin, *Ephesians: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Baylor Univ., 2009), p.141.

“God with us.” To those who are “in Messiah,” what would have remained unknown and thus a mystery, has been fully revealed through the work of the Ruach as the truths of the Scriptures are opened to us.

Paul calls this mystery “great” (μέγα, *mega*). By this he obviously means that the truth which is no longer hidden from believers in Yeshua but has been graciously revealed to them contains a wealth of glory and majesty. For to consider that we are united with God Himself is to realize the greatest of truths and yields strength, hope, and blessed privilege for the child of God, a privilege and position that can only be described as infinite, eternal, and beyond our ability to fully describe. Yet as we live day by day exercising the gift of faith, we more and more recognize the bounty of God’s love which has been give to us in our Lord and Savior, Messiah Yeshua.

Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself... – The word here translated “Nevertheless” is πλὴν (*plēn*), which can be used to mean:

“only, in any case, on the other hand, but,” – breaking off a discussion and emphasizing what is important...¹

It seems most likely that this is how Paul is using the term in our context, bringing to a conclusion the former discussion and offering a summary as to how the truths enunciated should be practically applied in the lives of believers who are married. Without diminishing whatsoever the glory and wonder that the *ekklesia* is in perfect union with Messiah Yeshua, Paul wants to emphasize the primary points of the earlier context, namely, how this glorious truth is to be applied in the practical, everyday lives of married couples.

For a husband, this means loving his wife by recognizing that he is to do all in his power to care for her, nourish her, appreciate her, show her respect and love, provide for her, meeting her physical and spiritual needs as a priority in his own life. Moreover, Yeshua is to be the model he must follow, of giving himself for the good of his wife.

and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband. – Even as the primary perspective of the husband is to meet the needs of his wife, so that primary focus of the wife is that she fully appreciate what her husband is doing for her and to willingly submit to his leadership, showing him respect. To show “respect” is the proper understanding of the biblical term “to fear” which is used here, for the Greek actually reads

1 BDAG, “

φοβῆται τὸν ἄνδρα (*phobētai ton andra*), “to fear her husband.” As used in the Scriptures, “to fear” does not always mean “to be afraid” but rather quite often carries the sense of “to give God the honor He deserves” or even to give a person in a position of authority the respect or honor that position deserves. Clearly, as a husband fulfills his role by making it a priority to meet her needs, there would be no sense for a wife in such a loving situation to “be afraid” of her husband. Rather, the admonition of Paul that a wife should “respect” her husband is the manner in which a wife shows her love for him. Indeed, love changes people, and when a husband puts loving his wife as a top priority, her desire to love him in return by showing him respect, is a natural response. And when a wife truly respects her husband, it meets his needs in ways it might often be difficult for him to fully express.

Thus, when we follow God’s divine plan for marriage, and do so through the strength and guidance He supplies, we not only have a meaningful and happy companionship together in our marriages, but we also are privileged to be living witnesses of the relationship between Yeshua and His bride, the *ekklesia*.