

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

508(c)(1)(a) Free Church • Sole Tanakh Authority
A Study for Judaism • Christianity • Islam

DOCUMENT 279

A SCROLL OF CUTTING OFF

A Covenant Deep Dive into Deuteronomy 24:1–4 and the *sefer keritut* (scroll of cutting off)

What Does the Law of Divorce Actually Command, What Is the “Nakedness of a Matter,” Why May the First Husband Never Take Her Back, and How Does Yahweh Apply This Law to Israel and to the Covenant Believer Today? — A Three-Religion Covenant Response

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The Message is Sent to the World

REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

✡ JUDAISM	✝ CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
The written covenant names the <i>sefer keritut</i> (scroll of cutting off) in only four verses (Deuteronomy 24:1, 3; Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:8). On the first of them rabbinic law built the <i>get</i> (bill of divorce), and the schools of Shammai and Hillel and Rabbi Akiva disputed what <i>ervat davar</i> (nakedness of a matter) allows (Mishnah Gittin 9:10). Maimonides counts divorce by a document as a positive command and the ban on return as a prohibition (Sefer HaMitzvot, Positive 222; Negative 356).	The Gospels record Yeshua (Jesus) being questioned on this very passage (Matthew 19:3–9; Mark 10:2–12). The Catholic Church holds a consummated sacramental marriage indissoluble (Code of Canon Law c. 1141); most Protestant confessions allow divorce for adultery or desertion (Westminster Confession 24.5–6). The Tanakh speaks first: what the passage commands, and what it only describes.	The Qur’an regulates <i>talaq</i> (divorce) with a waiting period, witnesses, and a limit on revocable divorces (Q. 2:228–232; 65:1–2). On the precise point of Deuteronomy 24:4 it rules the reverse: after the final divorce the wife is not lawful to her first husband until she has married another man (Q. 2:230). The two texts must be read side by side honestly.

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

The sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the *Tanakh* — the written covenant of **Yahweh**. No Talmudic tractate, Church council decree, papal encyclical, hadith collection, or extra-biblical tradition carries doctrinal weight equal to or greater than the written Torah. Where any tradition conflicts with the written covenant, the written covenant governs without exception. The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority. Miqdash Bethel uses the Written Tanakh as its sole source for four reasons: it is the only text Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize as originally given by **Yahweh**; it predates and underlies the Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an, so testing those traditions against it follows the evidentiary direction of **Deuteronomy 19:15** — the earlier witness governs the later commentary; every later tradition that departs from the Tanakh does so by addition or reinterpretation, never by overturning the text itself, so the text remains the fixed standard; and **Yahweh's** own words declare the covenant unchanging (Malachi 3:6; Psalms 119:89), making the written covenant — not evolving institutional interpretation — the only stable ground for doctrine. All three great covenant traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are addressed simultaneously and equally in every Miqdash Bethel document, because **Yahweh's** covenant belongs to every nation that will receive it. The **Deuteronomy 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual claims in this document.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document applies the sole authority of the written *Tanakh* to four questions about the law of the scroll in **Deuteronomy 24**: what the passage commands and what it only describes; what the *“nakedness of a matter”* is; why the first husband may never take back a wife who has become another man's; and how **Yahweh** applies this law to Israel and to the covenant believer today. **Yahweh** (יהוה) and **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים) appear in bold throughout. Tanakh books and personal names are given in English. Hebrew transliterations appear in ***bold italic*** with the English meaning in parentheses at every occurrence. Scripture references are bold. Verse numbers follow the English version; where the Hebrew numbering differs, it is given in brackets on first citation. Scripture is rendered in a literal working translation from the Hebrew. Each finding is graded under the two-or-three-witness standard as **Corroborated** (two or more independent Tanakh witnesses), **Single witness**, or **Not in the text**. Three audiences are addressed simultaneously: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rabbinic commentary, New Testament texts, church law, the Qur'an and hadith, ancient translations, and historical sources are cited as historical and comparative reference — not as binding authority. The Written Tanakh governs all conclusions.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	The law of the scroll; the war-camp law; the wife's rights; the two men who may never send away; the standing of the woman sent out; the land and its defilement
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Malachi	Narrative test cases; Yahweh's scroll to Israel; <i>"Where is the scroll?"</i> ; the call to return; the new betrothal; the charge of treachery
Ketuvim (Writings)	Psalms, Proverbs, Lamentations, Ezra, Nehemiah	Marriage as covenant; the wife of one's youth; the foreign wives after the exile

COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
New Testament	Matthew 5:31–32; 19:3–9; Mark 10:2–12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:1–4; 1 Corinthians 7:15	The Gospel discussion of this passage, and a modern teaching tested in Section VIII-F
Qur'an and hadith	Q. 2:228–232; 4:35; 65:1–2; Sunan Abi Dawud 2076, 2178	Divorce, the waiting period, witnesses, and return after another marriage in the Islamic witness
Rabbinic literature	Mishnah Gittin 9:10; Talmud Gittin 90a–b; Sifre Deuteronomy 269; Maimonides, Sefer HaMitzvot, Positive 222 and Negative 356; Mishneh Torah, Divorce 1:1–3; the ban attributed to Rabbenu Gershom (about 1000 CE); the ketubah (marriage contract)	How the bill of divorce and its grounds were developed after the Tanakh
Church law and teaching	Council of Trent, Session 24 (1563); Code of Canon Law c. 1141; Catechism of the Catholic Church 2382; Westminster Confession 24.5–6	Where each church stands today on divorce and remarriage

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Ancient translations and manuscripts	Septuagint (Greek) Deuteronomy 24:1 and Malachi 2:16; Dead Sea Scroll 4QXIIa (Malachi 2:16); Targum Jonathan and the Latin Vulgate on Malachi 2:16	How early readers understood <i>“nakedness of a matter”</i> and the difficult words of Malachi 2:16
Historical sources	Laws of Hammurabi §§137–142; Jewish marriage contracts from Elephantine (5th century BCE); Josephus, Antiquities 4.8.23	Divorce in the ancient Near East and in Second Temple practice
Modern scholarship	R. Yaron, <i>The Restoration of Marriage</i> (1966); G. Wenham, <i>The Restoration of Marriage Reconsidered</i> (1979); R. Westbrook, <i>The Prohibition on Restoration of Marriage in Deuteronomy 24:1–4</i> (1986)	Proposed reasons for the ban on return, graded in Section VI-E

I. FRAMING THE QUESTION — ONE SENTENCE, ONE COMMAND

I-A. The Questions as They Are Usually Asked

Four verses in Deuteronomy have carried more weight in the households of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam than almost any other passage of law. They have been used to send wives away for a burnt meal, to forbid the wounded from ever marrying again, and to build whole court systems. The questions put to this Institution are direct:

First: does the covenant command divorce, permit it, or only deal with it where it already exists?

Second: what is the *“nakedness of a matter”* that the husband has found, and is it the only lawful ground?

Third: why may the first husband never take her back once she has been another man’s wife, and what does *“made unclean”* mean?

Fourth: **Yahweh** says He gave Israel a scroll of cutting off. How, then, does He call her to return?

Fifth: what does this law ask of the covenant believer today, who has no elders at the gate and lives under the civil law of the nations?

This study builds on earlier work in the Library and does not repeat it in full. Lesson 02 of the 613 Laws course (*The Covenant of Divorce*, March 2026) set out the two laws and their Hebrew roots, and Lesson 12 cross-referenced the second. Part Eight of the household study (*Sexual Intercourse, Marriage, and Household Life from a Hebrew Perspective*, Sections 36–39) treated the grounds of

divorce and **Malachi 2:16**. Part 11 of *The Government of the Hebrew Nation (The Covenant of Marriage)* set marriage beside the covenant of **Yahweh**. Doc 203 examined the marriage bond, Doc 277 the proverbs of the contentious house, and Doc 259 the reunion of Israel and Judah. The present document reads the four verses word by word, grades each claim, and corrects eleven points in the earlier material (Section XI).

I-B. The Questions in the Tanakh's Own Terms

The Tanakh never says ***“you shall divorce.”*** It never says ***“you shall not divorce.”*** What it gives in **Deuteronomy 24:1–4** is one long sentence: three verses that describe a situation, and one verse that rules on it. The scroll, the hand, and the sending away all stand on the ***“if”*** side of the sentence. The only ***“may not”*** stands at the end.

The five questions therefore become:

1. What is the one thing this law forbids?
2. What does it take for granted without commanding?
3. What do its keywords mean where the Tanakh uses them elsewhere?
4. Where else does the Tanakh restrain a man from sending his wife away?
5. And what does **Yahweh** do when He applies this law to His own people?

Every finding below is graded. A finding is **Corroborated** when two or more independent Tanakh witnesses carry it (**Deuteronomy 19:15**). It is **Single witness** when only one text carries it. It is **Not in the text** when it is taught but the Tanakh does not say it.

II. THE TEXT — FOUR VERSES, ONE SENTENCE

II-A. The Hebrew and a Working Translation

כִּי־יִקַּח אִישׁ אִשָּׁה וּבָעִלָּהּ וְהָיָה אִם־לֹא תִמְצָא־חֵן בְּעֵינָיו כִּי־מָצָא בָּהּ עֶרְוֹת דָּבָר וְכָתַב לָהּ סֵפֶר
כְּרִיתֹת וְנָתַן בְּיָדָהּ וְשָׁלַחָהּ מִבֵּיתוֹ

“When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it comes to pass, if she does not find favor in his eyes because he has found in her the nakedness of a matter, and he writes her a scroll of cutting off, and gives it into her hand, and sends her from his house,” (Deuteronomy 24:1)

וַיֵּצֵאָהּ מִבֵּיתוֹ וְהָלְכָה וְהָיְתָה לְאִישׁ־אַחֵר

“and she goes out from his house, and goes and becomes another man’s,” (Deuteronomy 24:2)

וּשְׁנָאָה הָאִישׁ הָאֲחֵרוֹן וְכָתַב לָהּ סֵפֶר כְּרִיתֶת וְנָתַן בְּיָדָהּ וּשְׁלָחָהּ מִבֵּיתוֹ אוֹ כִּי יָמוּת הָאִישׁ
הָאֲחֵרוֹן אֲשֶׁר־לָקָחָהּ לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה

“and the latter man hates her, and writes her a scroll of cutting off, and gives it into her hand, and sends her from his house — or if the latter man dies, who took her to himself as a wife —” (Deuteronomy 24:3)

לֹא־יִוָּכַל בְּעֵלָהּ הָרִאשׁוֹן אֲשֶׁר־שְׁלָחָהּ לָשׁוּב לְקַחְתָּהּ לִהְיוֹת לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה אַחֲרֵי אֲשֶׁר הִטְמָאָה
כִּי־תוֹעֵבָה הוּא לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְלֹא תַחֲטִיא אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ נַחֲלָה

“her first husband, who sent her away, may not return to take her to be his wife, after she has been made unclean; for that is an abomination before Yahweh, and you shall not bring sin upon the land which Yahweh your Elohim is giving you as an inheritance.”

(Deuteronomy 24:4)

II-B. The Shape of the Sentence

The table sets the clauses in order. The clauses of verses 1–3 run on from one to the next, most of them joined by the same Hebrew *“and”* (as in *vekhataav* (*and he writes*), וְכָתַב). None of them is a command.

#	CLAUSE	VERSE	FUNCTION
1	When a man takes a wife and marries her	24:1	Condition
2	if she does not find favor in his eyes, because he has found in her the nakedness of a matter	24:1	Condition
3	and he writes her a scroll of cutting off, gives it into her hand, and sends her from his house	24:1	Condition
4	and she goes out, and goes and becomes another man’s	24:2	Condition
5	and the latter man hates her and writes her a scroll, or the latter man dies	24:3	Condition
6	her first husband, who sent her away, may not return to take her to be his wife	24:4	The ruling

Some older English versions broke the sentence after verse 1 and wrote *“then let him write her a bill of divorcement,”* which made the writing sound like an order. The Hebrew does not break there. The first and only *lo yukhal* (*he may not*), לֹא־יִוָּכַל, comes in verse 4.

The Tanakh itself reads the law this way. When Jeremiah cites it, he gives the case and then the ruling, in one breath:

“If a man sends away his wife, and she goes from him and becomes another man’s, shall he return to her again? Wouldn’t that land be utterly polluted?” (Jeremiah 3:1)

Finding — what the passage commands: Deuteronomy 24:1–4 contains one command, the prohibition of verse 4. It does not command a man to divorce, and it does not institute divorce; it takes an existing practice and sets a limit on it. **Corroborated** (the grammar of the passage; **Jeremiah 3:1**). That the passage commands the husband to send his wife away is **Not in the text**. That a written scroll was the standing practice in Israel is **Corroborated** (**Deuteronomy 24:1, 3; Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:8**).

III. THE WORD STUDY — WHAT THE HEBREW SAYS

The vocabulary of the passage is exact. The table sets out the terms this study relies on.

HEBREW TERM	STRONG’S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>laqach (to take)</i> , לָקַח	H3947	To take; the ordinary verb for taking a wife	Deuteronomy 24:1, 4; Genesis 24:67
<i>ba’al (to marry / to become husband)</i> , בָּעַל	H1166 / H1167	As a verb, to marry; as a noun, husband	Deuteronomy 24:1, 4; Jeremiah 3:14
<i>chen (favor)</i> , חֵן	H2580	Favor, acceptance in someone’s eyes	Deuteronomy 24:1
<i>matsa (to find)</i> , מָצָא	H4672	To find, to come upon; used of a thing established, not suspected	Deuteronomy 24:1; 22:14, 20
<i>ervat davar (nakedness of a matter)</i> , עֲרוֹת דָּבָר	H6172 + H1697	Something exposed that ought to be covered; an indecent or shameful matter. Two occurrences only	Deuteronomy 23:14 [Hebrew 23:15]; 24:1
<i>sefer keritut (scroll of cutting off)</i> , סֵפֶר כְּרִיתוּת	H5612 + H3748	A written document that cuts the marriage bond. Four occurrences only	Deuteronomy 24:1, 3; Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:8
<i>karat (to cut)</i> , כָּרַת	H3772	To cut; the verb for making a covenant, and the root of <i>keritut (cutting off)</i>	Genesis 15:18; Hosea 2:18 [Hebrew 2:20]

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>shillach (to send away)</i> , שָׁלַח	H7971	To send off, release, let go; the verb for dismissing a wife and for setting free	Deuteronomy 24:1, 3, 4; 15:12–13; Exodus 5:1
<i>gerushah (a woman sent out)</i> , גְּרוּשָׁה	H1644	A divorced woman, from the verb to drive out; a recognized legal standing	Leviticus 21:7, 14; 22:13; Numbers 30:9 [Hebrew 30:10]
<i>sane (to hate)</i> , שָׂנֵא	H8130	To hate; of a wife, to reject or love less	Deuteronomy 24:3; 21:15; Malachi 2:16
<i>lo yukhal (he may not)</i> , לֹא-יֻכַּל	H3201	Literally “ <i>he is not able</i> ”; Deuteronomy’s legal idiom for “ <i>he is not permitted</i> ”	Deuteronomy 24:4; 17:15; 22:19, 29
<i>buttamma’ah (she has been made unclean)</i> , הִטְמְאָה	H2930	A rare passive form of the verb to be unclean	Deuteronomy 24:4; compare Leviticus 18:20; Numbers 5:13
<i>to’evah (abomination)</i> , תּוֹעֵבָה	H8441	What Yahweh rejects as abhorrent	Deuteronomy 24:4; 7:25; 18:12
<i>tachati (you shall cause to sin)</i> , תַּחֲטִיִּיא	H2398	Causative of to sin: to bring sin or guilt upon	Deuteronomy 24:4
<i>bagad (to deal treacherously)</i> , בָּגַד	H898	To betray a bond of trust	Malachi 2:14–16; Exodus 21:8; Jeremiah 3:20
<i>shuv (to return)</i> , שׁוּב	H7725	To turn back, to return	Deuteronomy 24:4; Jeremiah 3:1, 12, 14, 22

Four lexical observations govern what follows.

First, *keritut (cutting off)* appears four times in the Tanakh, always joined to *sefer (scroll)*, and always of the ending of a marriage. It comes from *karat (to cut)*, the verb the Tanakh uses for making a covenant:

“On that day Yahweh cut a covenant with Abram” (Genesis 15:18).

The Tanakh calls marriage a covenant (Malachi 2:14; Proverbs 2:17). What was joined as a covenant is ended by a cutting, and the cutting is put in writing. The verb for divorcing, however, is never *karat (to cut)*. It is *shillach (to send away)*.

Second, *shillach (to send away)* carries no shame in itself. It is the verb for releasing a Hebrew servant with gifts (**Deuteronomy 15:12–13**), for letting the mother bird go (**Deuteronomy 22:7**), and for the word Moses carried to Pharaoh: “*Send My people away*” (**Exodus 5:1**). It is the vocabulary of release.

Third, the passage uses two different descriptions for the two husbands. Of the first, it says she finds no favor *because he has found* something in her. Of the second, it says only that he *sane (hates)* her. The first names a matter; the second names a feeling.

Fourth, *lo yukhal (he may not)* is not a statement that the thing is physically impossible. It is the regular way Deuteronomy says “*it is not permitted*”: of eating the tithe at home (**Deuteronomy 12:17**), of setting a foreigner as king (**Deuteronomy 17:15**), of giving the birthright to the son of the favored wife (**Deuteronomy 21:16**), and of the two men who may never send away their wives (**Deuteronomy 22:19, 29**).

IV. WHAT THE LAW TAKES FOR GRANTED — THE SCROLL, THE HAND, THE HOUSE

The conditions of verses 1–3 are not commands, but they are not idle either. They show how a marriage ended in Israel, and other texts confirm each part.

IV-A. A Scroll: The Marriage Is Ended in Writing

A *sefer (scroll)*, סֵפֶר, is a written document. The word is used of David’s letter to Joab (**2 Samuel 11:14**) and of the deed by which Jeremiah bought the field at Anathoth, which he wrote, sealed, and had witnessed (**Jeremiah 32:10–12**). Nowhere does the Tanakh treat a marriage as lawfully ended by a word spoken in anger, by a man walking out, or by the passing of time. Four texts in three books name the same instrument: **Deuteronomy 24:1** and **24:3**, **Isaiah 50:1**, and **Jeremiah 3:8**.

Two limits must be kept. The Tanakh does not give the wording of the scroll. Hosea’s “*she is not my wife, and I am not her husband*” (**Hosea 2:2** [Hebrew 2:4]) may echo it, but the text nowhere fixes a formula. And **Deuteronomy 24:1** names no witnesses to the scroll. A legal scroll was witnessed in practice (**Jeremiah 32:10–12**), and any disputed matter stands on two or three witnesses (**Deuteronomy 19:15**), so witnesses are sound practice. They are not a stated condition of this law.

Finding: that a marriage in Israel was ended by a written scroll is **Corroborated**. A fixed wording for the scroll, and a requirement that it be signed by witnesses, are **Not in the text**.

IV-B. Into Her Hand

The husband *venatan beyadah* (*gives it into her hand*), וְנָתַן בְּיָדָהּ. The scroll is written for her and it ends in her possession.

The next clause shows why: she “*goes and becomes another man’s*” (Deuteronomy 24:2). Without the scroll, a woman living with a second man would stand under the law of adultery (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22). With it, she can show that she is free. Isaiah confirms that the scroll is the proof one produces:

“Where is the scroll of your mother’s cutting off?” (Isaiah 50:1).

The scroll protects the woman who is sent away. It is her evidence, and it is in her keeping.

IV-C. Out of His House — and Standing on Her Own

The third act is *veshillechah mibeito* (*and he sends her from his house*), וְשָׁלְחָהּ מִבֵּיתוֹ. From that point the Torah treats her as a *gerushah* (*a woman sent out*), גְּרוּשָׁה, and gives that standing legal content in three places.

She may marry again. Priests are told they may not marry “*a woman sent out from her husband*” (Leviticus 21:7; compare 21:14; Ezekiel 44:22). A restriction laid on priests alone shows that other men were free to marry her.

She may return to her father’s house. A priest’s daughter who is “*a widow or sent out, and has no child, and returns to her father’s house as in her youth,*” eats of her father’s bread (Leviticus 22:13).

She answers for herself before Yahweh. “*The vow of a widow or of a woman sent out, everything by which she has bound herself, shall stand against her*” (Numbers 30:9 [Hebrew 30:10]). No father and no husband can annul it. She is her own legal person.

What the passage does not mention is money. It says nothing of a dowry returned or a settlement paid. The Torah knows the *mohar* (*bride-price*) at the making of a marriage (Exodus 22:16–17 [Hebrew 22:15–16]; Genesis 34:12) and the fines of Deuteronomy 22:19, 29. A payment at divorce is **Not in the text**.

Finding: that the woman sent away with a scroll is free, stands on her own before Yahweh, and may lawfully become another man’s wife is **Corroborated** (Deuteronomy 24:2; Leviticus 21:7; 22:13; Numbers 30:9).

IV-D. Who Writes the Scroll, and Before Whom?

In every text the one who writes is the husband. No verse of the Tanakh shows a wife writing a scroll of cutting off. That does not leave the wife without release (Section VII-B), but a wife's scroll is **Not in the text**.

The passage also names no court. Other family laws in Deuteronomy bring the matter to *“the elders of his city”* at the gate (Deuteronomy 21:19; 22:15; 25:7). This one does not. The husband acts, and the scroll makes his act public and provable. A requirement that a court, a priest, or an assembly grant or approve the divorce is **Not in the text**.

V. “THE NAKEDNESS OF A MATTER” — ERVAT DAVAR

V-A. The Two Occurrences

The phrase *ervat davar* (*nakedness of a matter*), עֲרוֹת דָּבָר, occurs twice in the Tanakh, both times in Deuteronomy and one chapter apart. The other occurrence is the law of the war camp:

“For Yahweh your Elohim walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and to give your enemies before you; therefore your camp shall be holy, that He may not see in you the nakedness of a matter and turn away from you.” (Deuteronomy 23:14 [Hebrew 23:15])

The verses before it deal with a man made unclean by a night emission and with covering excrement outside the camp (Deuteronomy 23:10–13 [Hebrew 23:11–14]). Nothing there is sexual sin. The phrase means something indecent left exposed, something that does not belong in the presence of the Holy One. It is serious enough that **Yahweh** would *“turn away.”*

V-B. The Word Family

Ervah (*nakedness*), עֶרְוָה, is the exposure of what ought to be covered. Ham *“saw the nakedness of his father”* (Genesis 9:22–23). The priest must not go up by steps to the altar, *“that your nakedness be not uncovered on it”* (Exodus 20:26; compare 28:42). Throughout Leviticus 18:6–19 to *“uncover the nakedness”* of someone means sexual relations that are forbidden. The prophets use it of public shame:

“Your nakedness shall be uncovered, yes, your shame shall be seen” (Isaiah 47:3; compare Ezekiel 16:36–37; Lamentations 1:8).

Joseph even uses it of a country's undefended places: *“to see the nakedness of the land you have come”* (Genesis 42:9).

The word is often sexual and not always. Its constant sense is exposure that is shameful. Joined to *davar* (*a matter / a thing*), דָּבָר, it means a shameful or indecent matter.

V-C. Three Readings Tested

READING	WHAT IT CLAIMS	TESTED AGAINST THE TEXT	GRADE
Any matter at all	A husband may send his wife away for anything that displeases him.	This keeps <i>davar</i> (<i>matter</i>) and drops <i>ervah</i> (<i>nakedness</i>). In Deuteronomy 23:14 the phrase is something that makes Yahweh turn away from the camp, not a small annoyance.	Not in the text
Adultery, and nothing else	The phrase is a name for adultery.	The Torah has its own word for adultery, <i>na'af</i> (<i>to commit adultery</i>), נָאֵף (Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 20:10), and its own laws for it (Deuteronomy 22:22; Numbers 5:11–31). The camp law is not about adultery at all.	Not in the text as a definition
Something indecent or shameful	A real matter of indecency or shameful exposure, found in her.	This fits both occurrences and the whole word family.	Corroborated as to the general sense

The third reading is where the evidence leads, and it must be held with two cautions. The text does not define the outer edge of the phrase, and no teacher may define it on the text's behalf. And the phrase does not *exclude* unfaithfulness. When **Yahweh** speaks of His own scroll, He names the cause:

“for all the causes for which backsliding Israel committed adultery, I sent her away and gave her the scroll of her cutting off” (Jeremiah 3:8).

Proven adultery had its own penalty under the law of witnesses (**Deuteronomy 17:6; 22:22**). Yet in **Yahweh's** own usage, a wife's unfaithfulness is the very thing that brings the scroll.

V-D. “He Has Found” — a Matter Established, Not Suspected

The husband *matsa* (*has found*), מָצָא, the matter. Where a husband only suspected his wife and had no witness, the Torah gave him a different road: the offering of jealousy before the priest (**Numbers 5:11–31**). Where a husband invented a charge against his bride, the elders fined him and he lost the power to send her away (**Deuteronomy 22:13–19**). The scroll of **Deuteronomy 24:1** belongs to neither case. It speaks of something found.

V-E. Does Verse 1 Make This the Only Lawful Ground?

Here the shape of the sentence matters again. The “*nakedness of a matter*” stands inside the “*if*.” It describes the case; it is not worded as a permission, and it is not worded as a limit. The second husband in verse 3 has no such finding. He simply *sane* (*hates*) her, and the law treats his scroll as fully effective: she is free again, and the ruling of verse 4 applies just the same.

A scroll that is legally effective is not thereby approved. The passage reports what men do and rules on one consequence. **Tanakh’s judgment on why a man sends his wife away is given elsewhere:** in the law that strips a wrongdoer of the power to send away, in the law of the wife’s rights, and in Malachi’s charge of treachery (Section VII).

Finding — the nakedness of a matter: the phrase means a real matter of indecency or shame, found in the wife. **Corroborated (Deuteronomy 23:14; 24:1).** That it means any displeasure whatsoever is **Not in the text.** That it means adultery and nothing else is **Not in the text;** unfaithfulness is included in **Yahweh’s** own use of the scroll (**Jeremiah 3:8**). That verse 1 lays down a legal list of grounds is **Not in the text:** the verse describes, and the Tanakh’s restraint on the husband comes from other witnesses.

VI. THE ONE COMMAND — SHE MAY NOT RETURN TO THE FIRST

VI-A. What Is Forbidden, Exactly

The ruling has five parts, and each one limits it.

#	ELEMENT	HEBREW	WHAT IT LIMITS
1	Her first husband	<i>ba’alah harishon</i> (<i>her first husband</i>), בַּעֲלָהּ הָרִאשׁוֹן	The prohibition is laid on him, not on her and not on any other man.
2	who sent her away	<i>asher shillechah</i> (<i>who sent her away</i>), אֲשֶׁר־שָׁלְחָהּ	He is the one who wrote the scroll. A wife taken from a man against his will is a different case (Section VI-F).
3	after she became another man’s	<i>vehayetah le’ish acher</i> (<i>and she became another man’s</i>), וְהָיְתָה לְאִישׁ־אַחֵר	A second marriage has come between. Without it, the ruling does not apply.

#	ELEMENT	HEBREW	WHAT IT LIMITS
4	whether the second man sent her away or died	Deuteronomy 24:3	Neither a second scroll nor widowhood reopens the first marriage.
5	may not return to take her	<i>lashuv leqachtab (to return to take her)</i> , לָשׁוּב לְקַחְתָּהּ	The first marriage is closed for good.

VI-B. “After She Has Been Made Unclean”

The verb is *buttamma’ah* (*she has been made unclean*), הִטְמְאָה, a rare passive form. The same root describes adultery in the laws of forbidden unions, “*to become unclean with her*” (Leviticus 18:20), and the suspected wife, *nitma’ah* (*she has become unclean*), נִטְמְאָה (Numbers 5:13–14, 20).

Three things in the text keep this word in its place. The second marriage is not condemned; verse 2 reports it without censure, and **Leviticus 21:7** assumes such marriages. She is not called unclean to her second husband, and nothing forbids her a third. And the prohibition falls on the first husband: he may not take her. She is unclean *as regards him*. For the man who sent her away, to take her back after she has been another man’s wife would have the shape of the thing **Leviticus 18:20** forbids. The scroll made her second marriage lawful. It cannot be used to make a passing back and forth lawful.

That reading rests on shared vocabulary, and is graded accordingly: **Single witness**. What is certain is the limit. The word is not a judgment on the woman’s character, and the text lays no penalty on her.

VI-C. “An Abomination Before Yahweh”

To’evah (*abomination*), תּוֹעֵבָה, is Deuteronomy’s word for what **Yahweh** will not have among His people: the idol’s silver and gold (**Deuteronomy 7:25**), the blemished sacrifice (**Deuteronomy 17:1**), the diviner (**Deuteronomy 18:12**), the false weight (**Deuteronomy 25:16**). In verse 4 what is called an abomination is the act, the taking back. It is not the woman.

VI-D. “You Shall Not Bring Sin upon the Land”

The verb is *tachati* (*you shall cause to sin*), תַּחֲטִיִּא, and the “*you*” is singular: Israel addressed as one people. The land is **Yahweh**’s gift, a *nachalah* (*inheritance*), and the Torah holds that certain acts defile it: the forbidden unions for which the land “vomited out its inhabitants” (**Leviticus 18:24–28**), and innocent blood (**Numbers 35:33–34**). Jeremiah joins this law to the same idea:

“Would not that land be utterly polluted?” (Jeremiah 3:1), chanof techenaf (utterly polluted), חֲנוֹף תֶּחֱנַף.

This turns a household matter into the people’s concern. A community that lets wives be sent out and taken back at will is charged with the result.

VI-E. Why? — What the Text States and What It Does Not

The text gives three reasons, and they are its own:

1. she has been made unclean as regards him;
2. the return is an abomination before **Yahweh**;
3. and it brings sin on the land.

Later interpreters have offered further reasons. They are set out here and graded, because several appear in earlier Library material as if the text stated them.

PROPOSED REASON	TESTED AGAINST THE TEXT	GRADE
To protect the second marriage from the first husband	The ruling still applies after the second husband has died, when there is no second marriage left to protect.	Not in the text
To stop a husband from profiting, by sending his wife away and reclaiming her with a second dowry	The passage mentions no dowry, payment, or property.	Not in the text
To make a man think before he writes, since the scroll becomes final once she marries again	This is a true effect of the law. The text does not state it as the reason.	A sound inference; not stated
To keep marriage from becoming an exchange of wives under cover of law	This fits the word <i>“made unclean”</i> (Leviticus 18:20) and the pollution of the land (Jeremiah 3:1).	Single witness (inference from the text’s own words)

VI-F. Where the Law Does Not Reach

Where no second marriage has come between. If the woman sent away has not become another man’s, the ruling of verse 4 has nothing to act on. The Tanakh shows men going after wives who had left or gone astray. The Levite went after his concubine ***“to speak to her heart, to bring her back”*** (**Judges 19:3**). Hosea was told, ***“Go again, love a woman loved by a companion, and an***

adulteress, as Yahweh loves the children of Israel” (Hosea 3:1). These are narratives and a prophetic sign, not statutes. They show that where the door of verse 4 has not shut, return is open.

Where the husband never sent her away. Saul gave “*Michal his daughter, David’s wife, to Palti the son of Laish*” (1 Samuel 25:44), and David later demanded her back and received her (2 Samuel 3:13–16). No scroll from David is recorded; she was taken from him while he was a fugitive. The words “*who sent her away*” were not true of him. Against this stands the other case in David’s house: the ten concubines Absalom went into were kept and provided for, but David “*did not go in to them,*” and they lived “*in widowhood*” until death (2 Samuel 20:3). The Tanakh reports both and rules on neither. No doctrine can be built on them; they are recorded here so that the reader sees the whole evidence.

Finding — the ruling of verse 4: a man who has sent his wife away with a scroll may never take her back once she has become another man’s wife, whether that second marriage ended by a scroll or by death. **Corroborated** (Deuteronomy 24:4; Jeremiah 3:1). That the return brings sin and pollution on the land is **Corroborated** by the same two witnesses. That the woman is morally stained, or barred from any further marriage, is **Not in the text.**

VII. WHERE THE TANAKH RESTRAINS THE SENDING AWAY

Deuteronomy 24:1–4 sets one limit. It is not the only word the Tanakh has for the man who would send his wife away.

VII-A. Two Men Who May Never Send Away

The man who slanders his bride with a false charge is fined, and then:

“she shall be his wife; he may not send her away all his days.” (Deuteronomy 22:19)

The man who seizes an unbetrothed virgin pays her father, and then:

“she shall be his wife, because he has humbled her; he may not send her away all his days.” (Deuteronomy 22:29)

The Hebrew is *lo yukhal lesballechah kol yamav* (*he may not send her away all his days*), *לֹא-יֻכַּל לְשַׁלְּחָהּ כָּל-יָמָיו*, the same “*may not*” as Deuteronomy 24:4. Two things follow. Sending away was otherwise open to a husband, or these exceptions would be pointless. And it was never an absolute right: a man’s own wrong against a woman can cost him the power to send her away, for life.

VII-B. The Wife's Side: Release for the One Deprived

The Torah's first law on a wife's rights concerns a woman with the least standing, the maidservant taken as a wife:

“If he takes another for himself, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, or her marital right. And if he does not do these three for her, she shall go out for nothing, without money.”
(Exodus 21:10–11)

The three are *she'erah*, *kesutah*, *ve'onatah* (*her food, her clothing, and her marital right*), שְׂאֵרָה כְּסוּתָהּ וְעֹנָתָה. The third word occurs only here, and its exact sense is debated; the traditional understanding is her right to her husband. The result is not debated: *veyatse'ah chinnam* (*she shall go out for nothing*), וַיֵּצֵאָה חִנָּם אֵין כֶּסֶף. She leaves free and owes nothing. The same chapter calls the man's failure toward her treachery, using Malachi's word: he may not sell her, *“seeing he has dealt treacherously with her”* (Exodus 21:8).

The captive wife is protected the same way:

“If you have no delight in her, you shall send her away to herself; you shall certainly not sell her for money, and you shall not treat her as a slave, because you have humbled her.”
(Deuteronomy 21:14)

She goes *lenafshah* (*to herself*), לְנַפְשָׁה: she belongs to herself. In both laws the sending away is the woman's protection against being kept, used, or sold.

Finding: that a wife deprived of food, clothing, and her marital right goes out free is a **Single witness** (Exodus 21:10–11), supported in principle by **Deuteronomy 21:14**. That a man's wrong can take away his power to send away is **Corroborated** (Deuteronomy 22:19, 29).

VII-C. Marriage Is Called a Covenant

Malachi calls the wife *esbet beritekha* (*the wife of your covenant*), אֵשֶׁת בְּרִיתְךָ (Malachi 2:14).

Proverbs speaks of the woman *“who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her Elohim”* (Proverbs 2:17).

Yahweh says of Jerusalem, *“I swore to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine”* (Ezekiel 16:8).

And the beginning says a man shall *“cling to his wife, and they shall become one flesh”* (Genesis 2:24). That marriage is a covenant before Yahweh is Corroborated.

One caution belongs here. The Tanakh records no written marriage contract. The only marriage document it names is the scroll of cutting off. Written marriage contracts are known from later Jewish practice and are listed with the comparative texts; they are not in the Tanakh.

VII-D. Malachi 2:10–16 Read in Its Own Setting

No verse is quoted more often on divorce than **Malachi 2:16**, usually as five English words: ***“I hate divorce, says Yahweh.”*** The verse must be read in its paragraph and in its Hebrew.

The setting. Malachi charges Judah with treachery, *bagad (to deal treacherously)*, בָּגַד, five times in seven verses (**Malachi 2:10, 11, 14, 15, 16**). Judah *“has married the daughter of a foreign el”* (**Malachi 2:11**). The men cover **Yahweh’s** altar with tears and ask why He no longer accepts their offering (**Malachi 2:13**). The answer:

“Because Yahweh has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and the wife of your covenant.” (**Malachi 2:14**)

The hard half-verse. Verse 16 opens with three Hebrew words: *ki sane shallach*, כִּי־שָׂנֵא שְׁלַח. Word for word: *“for — he hates (or: he hated) — sending away.”* There is no “I” in the Hebrew. English versions have gone three ways.

READING	WHO HATES	HOW IT TREATS THE HEBREW
<i>“For Yahweh, the Elobim of Israel, says that He hates sending away”</i>	Yahweh , spoken of in the third person	Keeps <i>“he hates”</i> and takes Yahweh as the <i>“he.”</i> Found in the King James Version.
<i>“For I hate divorce, says Yahweh”</i>	Yahweh , in the first person	Supplies an <i>“I”</i> that the Hebrew does not write. Found in many twentieth-century versions.
<i>“For the man who hates and sends away covers his garment with violence”</i>	The husband	Keeps <i>“he hates”</i> and takes the husband as the <i>“he.”</i> Found in several recent versions.

The ancient translations listed among the comparative texts read the words in yet another way, as *“if you hate her, send her away.”* They are noted only to show how old the difficulty is; they carry no authority here.

What is certain. The rest of the paragraph is not in doubt. Yahweh is witness between a man and the wife of his youth (2:14). *“Let none deal treacherously with the wife of your youth”* (2:15).

The verse speaks of *chamas (violence)*, **וּנָחַ**, covering a garment, and ends, *“guard your spirit, and do not deal treacherously”* (2:16).

Nor does Malachi cancel Deuteronomy. **Yahweh** Himself is said to have sent Israel away with a scroll (Jeremiah 3:8). What Malachi condemns is *treachery*: the man who breaks faith with the wife of his covenant.

Finding — Malachi 2:16: the first-person sentence “I hate divorce” is Not in the text as the Hebrew is written. Whether the one who hates is **Yahweh** or the husband, the Hebrew leaves open, and a doctrine may not rest on one disputed half-verse. That Yahweh stands as witness against the man who betrays the wife of his youth is Corroborated (Malachi 2:14, 15, 16; compare Exodus 21:8).

VII-E. A Hard Case: Ezra 9–10

After the exile, men of Judah had married women of the peoples of the land, against Deuteronomy 7:3–4. The assembly made a covenant *“to put away all the wives and those born of them”* (Ezra 10:3), and Ezra told them, *“Separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives”* (Ezra 10:11). Nehemiah met the same sin with rebuke and an oath (Nehemiah 13:23–27).

Three things should be noticed. The verb in Ezra is *“to bring out,”* not the *shillach (to send away)* of Deuteronomy, and no scroll is mentioned. The proposal comes from Shecaniah and the assembly (Ezra 10:2–3); no word of **Yahweh** by a prophet is recorded commanding it. And Malachi, speaking to the same generation, rebukes in one breath both the marrying of *“the daughter of a foreign el”* and treachery against *“the wife of your youth”* (Malachi 2:11, 14).

Finding: what Ezra’s assembly did is recorded by a **Single witness**, as an act of that generation over marriages the Torah had forbidden from the start. As a standing permission to dissolve marriages over differences of worship or assembly, it is **Not in the text**.

VII-F. The Verse That Follows

The law of the scroll ends at verse 4. The next verse reads:

“When a man takes a new wife, he shall not go out with the army, nor shall any duty be laid on him; he shall be free at home one year, and shall gladden his wife whom he has taken.”
(Deuteronomy 24:5)

The Torah sets the law of gladness directly after the law of the scroll. Proverbs holds the same line. For the contentious house it counsels distance, “*a corner of the roof*” or “*a desert land*” (Proverbs 21:9, 19; 25:24), and it says, “*rejoice in the wife of your youth*” (Proverbs 5:18).

VIII. YAHWEH APPLIES THE LAW TO HIMSELF — ISRAEL, JUDAH, AND THE SCROLL

Tanakh’s fullest commentary on **Deuteronomy 24:1–4** is not a legal text. It is the prophets, where **Yahweh** speaks as the husband of His people and holds Himself to His own law.

VIII-A. Jeremiah 3:1 Quotes the Law

הַן יִשְׁלַח אִישׁ אֶת-אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהִלָּכָה מֵאִתּוֹ וְהִיְתָה לְאִישׁ-אַחֵר הַיָּשׁוּב אֵלֶיהָ עוֹד הֲלוֹא חֲנוּף תִּחְנֹף
הָאָרֶץ הִיא וְאֵת זָנִית רַעִים רַבִּים וְשׁוֹב אֵלַי נְאֻם-יְהוָה

“*If a man sends away his wife, and she goes from him and becomes another man’s, shall he return to her again? Would not that land be utterly polluted? But you have played the harlot with many companions — and return to Me! says Yahweh.*” (Jeremiah 3:1)

Jeremiah follows the law phrase by phrase.

DEUTERONOMY 24:1–4	JEREMIAH 3:1
he sends her from his house	If a man sends away his wife
she goes and becomes another man’s — <i>vehayetah le’ish acher</i>	and she goes from him and becomes another man’s — <i>vehayetah le’ish acher</i> (the same Hebrew words)
her first husband may not return to take her	shall he return to her again?
you shall not bring sin upon the land	Would not that land be utterly polluted?

Then the prophet turns the law on Israel. If a wife who lawfully married one other man cannot go back, what of a person who went after “*many companions*”? The last words, *veshov elai* (*and return to Me*), וְשׁוֹב אֵלַי, can be read as a call (“*yet return to Me*”) or as an indignant question (“*and would you return to Me?*”). Either way the point of the verse is the same: under the law of the scroll, Israel has no claim to come back.

VIII-B. Israel Received the Scroll

In the days of Josiah, **Yahweh** speaks of the northern kingdom, long since carried away by Assyria (Jeremiah 3:6; 2 Kings 17:6, 18):

“And I saw that, for all the causes for which backsliding Israel committed adultery, I sent her away and gave her the scroll of her cutting off; yet treacherous Judah her sister did not fear, but she also went and played the harlot.” (Jeremiah 3:8)

The words are those of **Deuteronomy 24:1**: He *shillach* (*sent away*) and gave *sefer keritut* (*a scroll of cutting off*), here *sefer kerituteha* (*the scroll of her cutting off*), סֵפֶר כְּרִיתֻתָּהּ. Hosea, who prophesied to that same kingdom, gives the second witness:

“You are not My people, and I will not be yours” (Hosea 1:9),

and *“she is not My wife, and I am not her husband”* (Hosea 2:2 [Hebrew 2:4]).

The scroll was not given quickly. **Yahweh** *“warned Israel and Judah by the hand of every prophet and every seer, saying, Turn from your evil ways”* (2 Kings 17:13), *“daily rising early and sending them”* (Jeremiah 7:25).

VIII-C. Judah: “Where Is the Scroll?”

To the exiles of Zion, who said, *“Yahweh has forsaken me”* (Isaiah 49:14), the word is different:

“Thus says Yahweh: Where is the scroll of your mother’s cutting off, with which I sent her away? Or which of My creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities you were sold, and for your transgressions your mother was sent away.” (Isaiah 50:1)

The phrase is *sefer keritut immekhem* (*the scroll of your mother’s cutting off*), סֵפֶר כְּרִיתוֹת אִמְכֶּם. The question can be heard two ways. Most readers take it to mean that no scroll can be produced: Zion was sent out for her sins, but the bond was never formally cut. Others take it to mean: produce it, and read the cause for yourselves. On either reading the verse says the same thing about the cause. She was sent away for her transgressions, and not because **Yahweh** tired of her or owed anyone a debt.

Finding: that the northern kingdom was given a scroll of cutting off is **Corroborated** (Jeremiah 3:8; Hosea 1:9; 2:2). That Judah was given one is **Not in the text**; Judah is called the sister who did not learn (Jeremiah 3:8, 10), and Zion is asked where her scroll is (Isaiah 50:1).

VIII-D. “My First Husband”

Hosea puts the words of the law into the wife’s own mouth:

“She shall pursue her lovers but not overtake them, and seek them but not find them. Then she shall say, ‘I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better for me than now.’” (Hosea 2:7 [Hebrew 2:9])

Ishi harishon (my first husband), אִישִׁי הָרִאשׁוֹן, answers to the *ba'alab harishon* (her first husband) of Deuteronomy 24:4, and *shuv* (to return) is the very thing that verse forbids. The prophet has set up the case of the law exactly. By the statute, the answer is no.

VIII-E. “Return” — the Mercy Beyond the Statute

And yet the word to the divorced kingdom is this:

“Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say: Return, backsliding Israel, says Yahweh; I will not make My face fall upon you, for I am merciful, says Yahweh; I will not keep anger forever.” (Jeremiah 3:12)

“Return, backsliding children, says Yahweh, for I am husband to you.” (Jeremiah 3:14)

Shuvah meshuvah Yisrael (Return, backsliding Israel), שׁוּבָה מְשׁוּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל. How the One who gave the law of Deuteronomy 24:4 can say this, the Tanakh answers in four ways. None of them is a legal loophole.

First: the law is not repealed. Jeremiah quotes it as standing (Jeremiah 3:1). It binds the man, and it goes on binding him.

Second: the ground is mercy, not right. *“For I am merciful,”* *ki chasid ani*, כִּי־חָסִיד אֲנִי (Jeremiah 3:12). Israel is told only to *“acknowledge your iniquity”* (Jeremiah 3:13). She brings no claim.

Third: Yahweh is not a man. In the passage where He refuses to give Ephraim up, He gives the reason Himself: *ki El anokhi velo ish* (for I am El, and not a man), כִּי אֵל אֲנֹכִי וְלֹא־אִישׁ (Hosea 11:9). The law says what a man may not do. The Holy One declares what He will do.

Fourth: the restoration is described as a new beginning. Hosea does not say Yahweh will *“take her back.”* He says:

“And I will betroth you to Me forever; I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, in lovingkindness and in compassion; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know Yahweh.” (Hosea 2:19–20 [Hebrew 2:21–22])

Aras (to betroth), אָרַשׁ, is the Torah’s word for a first betrothal (Deuteronomy 20:7; 22:23). In the same passage Yahweh says, *vekharatti labem berit* (and I will cut a covenant for them), וְכָרַטִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית (Hosea 2:18 [Hebrew 2:20]). The root that named the scroll of *cutting off* now names a

covenant *cut* anew. Jeremiah says the same: a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,

“not like the covenant which I cut with their fathers ... which covenant of Mine they broke, though I was husband to them” (Jeremiah 31:31–32 [Hebrew 31:30–31]).

And Isaiah: *“For your Maker is your husband ... For a small moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you”* (Isaiah 54:5–7).

Doc 259 followed the same promise through the two sticks of **Ezekiel 37:15–28**, where the house that received the scroll and the house that did not are made one in **Yahweh**’s hand.

VIII-F. A Teaching Tested: “The Husband Had to Die”

The teaching. Some Two-House and Hebrew Roots fellowships reason this way: **Yahweh** divorced the northern kingdom; by **Deuteronomy 24:4** He could never take her back; a wife is released from the law of her husband only by his death; therefore the Husband had to die so that Israel could be married again. The argument rests on Romans 7:1–4, cited here only as the claim under test.

The test. **Deuteronomy 24:3–4** names a death, and it is the death of the *second* husband; even that does not reopen the first marriage. The death of the first husband as a remedy is not mentioned in the law. The prophets who raise the problem never hint at it: their answer is mercy, return, new betrothal, and a new covenant (Section VIII-E). And the Tanakh’s testimony about **Yahweh** runs the other way:

“El is not a man” (Numbers 23:19); *“I, Yahweh, do not change”* (Malachi 3:6); *“As I live forever”* (Deuteronomy 32:40).

Finding: that **Yahweh**’s restoration of Israel required the death of the Husband is **Not in the text**. That **Yahweh** calls the divorced kingdom to return by His own mercy and by a new covenant is **Corroborated** (Jeremiah 3:12–14; 31:31–34; Hosea 2:14–20; 11:8–9; Isaiah 54:5–8).

IX. WHAT THE LAW ASKS OF THE COVENANT BELIEVER TODAY

IX-A. What No One May Claim

The text gives the writing of the scroll to the husband and names no priest, elder, or court (Section IV-D). It follows that no rabbi, pastor, imam, elder, or institution holds an office over the scroll. This binds Miqdash Bethel by the same standard it applies to others: this Institution issues no scrolls, dissolves no marriages, and sits as no court.

It follows also that no assembly may declare a marriage ended because a husband or wife has left its membership. Part 11 of *The Government of the Hebrew Nation* gave that warning, and this study confirms it. Leaving an assembly is not a **“nakedness of a matter,”** and **Yahweh’s** scroll to Israel was written for adultery after generations of warning (Jeremiah 3:8; 2 Kings 17:13), not for a change of congregation.

IX-B. What Stands — Seven Principles

PRINCIPLE	WHAT IT MEANS NOW	WITNESSES
1. A marriage is ended only by a deliberate, written act	Not by anger, absence, silence, or a word. Until there is a scroll in her hand, the covenant stands.	Deuteronomy 24:1, 3; Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:8
2. The scroll belongs in her hand	The one sent away must be left free, and able to prove it.	Deuteronomy 24:1–2; Isaiah 50:1
3. The one sent away is free	She stands on her own before Yahweh and may marry again. No guilt attaches to her for doing so.	Deuteronomy 24:2; Leviticus 21:7; Numbers 30:9
4. A wife is not passed back and forth	After another marriage, the first is closed. No interval, rite, or ruling reopens it.	Deuteronomy 24:4; Jeremiah 3:1
5. Yahweh is witness to the covenant	Treachery against the wife of one’s youth is seen and answered by Him.	Malachi 2:14–16; Proverbs 2:17; Exodus 21:8
6. Wrongdoing forfeits the power to send away; deprivation frees the wife	The husband’s power is not absolute, and the wife is not without release.	Deuteronomy 22:19, 29; Exodus 21:10–11; Deuteronomy 21:14
7. Where the door is still open, the first word is “Return”	Before any scroll, and after one where no other marriage has come between, the Tanakh’s pattern is to seek the other’s heart.	Jeremiah 3:12–14; Hosea 2:14; 3:1; Judges 19:3

IX-C. To the One Considering the Scroll

You are not commanded to write it. The passage describes; it does not order.

Before you write, weigh four things from the text.

1. **Yahweh** is witness between you and the wife of your covenant (**Malachi 2:14**).

2. Your own wrongs count: the Torah takes the power to send away from the man who has wronged the woman (**Deuteronomy 22:19, 29**).
3. The scroll may become final beyond your recall: once she is another man's, you may never take her back (**Deuteronomy 24:4**).
4. And **Yahweh** Himself, with adultery as the cause, sent prophets "*rising early*" for generations before He wrote (**Jeremiah 7:25; 2 Kings 17:13**).

IX-D. To the One Who Has Been Sent Away

The text lays no stain on you. The scroll in your hand is your freedom, and the Torah assumes you may marry again (**Deuteronomy 24:2; Leviticus 21:7**). You answer to **Yahweh** for yourself (**Numbers 30:9**).

The prophet speaks to you directly: "*Fear not, for you shall not be ashamed ... For Yahweh has called you as a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, a wife of youth when she is refused*" (**Isaiah 54:4, 6**).

IX-E. To Those Who Ask About Going Back

The text divides the question in two. Where no other marriage has come between, the door of verse 4 has not shut, and the prophets' first word is return (**Jeremiah 3:12; Hosea 3:1**). Where the one sent away has since become another's, the law closes the first marriage, and it should not be softened. It follows that a marriage now standing is not to be broken in order to restore a former one. That would be the very exchange the law forbids.

IX-F. Where There Is Violence or Deprivation

Nothing in these four verses commands a wife or a husband to remain in danger. The Torah frees the wife who is denied food, clothing, and her marital right (**Exodus 21:10–11**). It frees even a servant whom a master injures (**Exodus 21:26–27**). Malachi names *chamas (violence)* as the thing that covers the treacherous man's garment (**Malachi 2:16**), and the psalm says of **Yahweh**, "*the one who loves violence His soul hates*" (**Psalms 11:5**). Seek safety first, and the help of those appointed to give it.

IX-G. The Civil Decree and the Scroll

The Tanakh sets marks, not a form: the ending of the marriage is written; it is given to her; and she goes out free. It prescribes no wording, no religious court, and no tribunal. Where a written decree of divorce has been lawfully issued and delivered, those marks are met in substance. That is an application of the text, and it is offered as such. This is covenant teaching, not legal counsel; the civil law of each land governs the legal steps.

Finding — how the law applies today: the one command of the passage, the ban on return after another marriage, stands as written and needs no Temple, priest, or court to be kept. **Corroborated.** The principles around it, a written ending, the freedom of the one sent away, **Yahweh** as witness, and return wherever the door is open, each rests on more than one witness. No office over the scroll is given to any institution: **Not in the text.**

X. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION HANDLES THE LAW OF THE SCROLL

The table sets the three traditions against the Tanakh’s own findings. Comparative texts are cited as historical reference only, in keeping with the standing rule of this document.

ELEMENT	✧ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	✧ ISLAM
Practice today	Divorce is by a <i>get (bill of divorce)</i> : written for the wife by name and handed to her before witnesses, in practice under a rabbinic court (Mishneh Torah, Divorce 1:1–3). On the ground, the Mishnah records three opinions: the school of Shammai, only for unchastity; the school of Hillel, even for a spoiled dish; Rabbi Akiva, even if he finds another more pleasing (Gittin 9:10). A ban attributed to Rabbenu Gershom (about 1000 CE) forbids divorcing a wife against her will among Ashkenazi Jews. Return after another marriage is forbidden (Sefer HaMitzvot, Negative 356).	The Gospels record Yeshua (Jesus) asked about this passage. He answers that Moses “ <i>permitted</i> ” it for hardness of heart and points to Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 (Matthew 19:3–9; Mark 10:2–12). Matthew has an exception for unchastity; Mark and Luke 16:18 have none. Catholic teaching holds a consummated sacramental marriage indissoluble (Council of Trent, Session 24; canon 1141; Catechism 2382), with annulment by tribunal. Most Protestant confessions allow divorce for adultery or desertion (Westminster Confession 24.5–6; 1 Corinthians 7:15).	A husband ends the marriage by <i>talaq (divorce)</i> , followed by a waiting period of three monthly cycles (Q. 2:228). Two divorces may be revoked; the third is final (Q. 2:229–230). Two witnesses are called (Q. 65:2), and arbiters from both families are appointed before a breach (Q. 4:35). A wife may seek release by <i>khul’ (release for compensation)</i> (Q. 2:229). After the final divorce the wife is not lawful to her first husband until she has married another man (Q. 2:230).
Covenant strength	Keeps the two things the text names: a written scroll in the wife’s hand, and the ban on return. The Talmud itself says the altar sheds tears over the man who divorces his first wife	The word “ <i>permitted</i> ,” not “ <i>commanded</i> ,” in Matthew 19:8 matches the grammar of Deuteronomy 24:1–4 . The appeal to Genesis 2:24 matches Tanakh’s own view of marriage as a covenant.	A deliberate process: waiting, witnesses, arbitration, and provision. “ <i>Retain in kindness or release in kindness</i> ” (Q. 2:229) is close to the spirit of Exodus 21:10–11 and

ELEMENT	☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	✱ ISLAM
	(Gittin 90b), citing Malachi 2:13–14 .		Deuteronomy 21:14 . The wife has a route to release.
Covenant departure	Reading <i>ervat davar</i> (<i>nakedness of a matter</i>) as “ <i>any matter</i> ” drops the first word of the phrase. Counting verse 1 as a positive command to divorce by document (Sefer HaMitzvot, Positive 222) turns a condition into a command. The court, the witnesses, and the fixed wording are tradition, not text. Where a husband withholds the <i>get</i> and the wife is left an <i>agunah</i> (<i>chained woman</i>), the scroll meant for her hand is kept from it, against Exodus 21:10–11 .	Absolute indissolubility has no Tanakh witness: Yahweh Himself is said to have given a scroll (Jeremiah 3:8). The teaching that a woman lawfully sent away commits adultery by marrying again (Matthew 5:32; Luke 16:18, as commonly applied) stands against Deuteronomy 24:2 and Leviticus 21:7 . The five words “ <i>I hate divorce</i> ” are quoted as if the Hebrew were certain. Romans 7:1–4 is used in some circles to say the Husband had to die (Section VIII-F).	Divorce by the spoken word needs no scroll; the Tanakh knows only the written one. On the point of Deuteronomy 24:4 , Q. 2:230 runs the other way: the Torah forbids return after another marriage, and the Qur’an requires another marriage before return. Three divorces pronounced at one sitting have been restricted or abolished by law in a number of Muslim-majority countries.
Covenant witness	Rabbinic law preserves the scroll and the ban on return more exactly than any other tradition. Its own tears-of-the-altar saying shows it has heard Malachi.	Read from the Tanakh outward, Matthew 19 is a call back to the beginning (Genesis 2:24) and a refusal of divorce “ <i>for any cause</i> ,” the same refusal Section V reaches from the Hebrew.	Islam itself condemns the marriage arranged only to make a wife lawful again to her first husband (Sunan Abi Dawud 2076). That shows the wrong Deuteronomy 24:4 guards against is recognized there too. A saying that divorce is the most hated of lawful things is also recorded (Sunan Abi Dawud 2178), though its chain is graded weak.

XI. CORRECTIONS TO EARLIER LIBRARY MATERIAL

The Library’s rule is that its own earlier work is tested by the same standard as everyone else’s. Eleven points in earlier studies need correction or refinement.

Correction 1 — the passage has one command, not two. Lesson 02 (Section I-A) headed **Deuteronomy 24:1 “The Commandment to Issue a Formal Written Divorce Document”** and

spoke of ***“four actions required of the husband”*** (it lists three). Verses 1–3 are the conditions of a single sentence; the only command is verse 4 (Section II-B). Lesson 02’s own Section IV-A, which says the passage regulates and does not endorse, was right, and its heading should be brought into line with it. Lesson 02 also labels both laws ***“positive”***; the second is a prohibition, as Lesson 12 calls it.

Correction 2 — a woman sent away is free to marry again. Part 11 of *The Government of the Hebrew Nation* (principle 4) said that ***“a divorced woman is not free to remarry while her husband lives,”*** and quoted the line ***“Is not her former husband permitted to take her again?”*** No such sentence is in Tanakh. **Deuteronomy 24:2**, **Leviticus 21:7**, and **Numbers 30:9** show her free. **Verse 4 forbids one thing only: return to the first husband after another marriage.** The support given was Matthew 5:32, which is not Tanakh authority. Lesson 02 and the household study had this point right. The statement should be withdrawn.

Correction 3 — Malachi 2:16. Lesson 02 (Section IV-A and its closing verse), Part 11 (three times), and the May 2026 study *Covenant Inheritance* (Section V-F) quote ***“I hate divorce”*** as **Yahweh**’s direct speech. Lesson 12 and the household study (Section 37) say instead that the one who hates is certainly the husband, and that a 1984 English version created the first-person reading. Both sides say more than the Hebrew allows. The first-person rendering is found in English versions from the start of the twentieth century, and the King James Version makes **Yahweh** the one who hates, in the third person. The wording of Section VII-D should replace all of these.

Correction 4 — the definition of the *“nakedness of a matter.”* Lesson 02 placed adultery under the heading ***“What it is NOT.”*** That is too strong: **Yahweh**’s own scroll was given for adultery (**Jeremiah 3:8**). Part 11 defined it as ***“the sexual exposure of the wife to another man”*** and called that the only ground. That is narrower than **Deuteronomy 23:14** allows. The household study (Section 36) came closest with ***“serious sexual misconduct falling short of provable adultery,”*** but that too defines what the text leaves undefined. Section V-C should be used in their place.

Correction 5 — “documented grounds.” Lesson 02 (Sections IV-E and V) spoke of ***“Yahweh’s requirement of documented ervat davar grounds.”*** The passage requires no statement of grounds and legislates no list of them (Section V-E). The restraint on the husband comes from **Malachi 2:14–16**, **Exodus 21:8–11**, and **Deuteronomy 22:19, 29**.

Correction 6 — “the strongest possible prohibition.” Lesson 02 described *lo yukhal* (he may not) as ***“the strongest possible prohibition in Hebrew legal language”*** and ***“a covenant impossibility.”*** It is Deuteronomy’s ordinary idiom for ***“he is not permitted”*** (**Deuteronomy 12:17; 17:15; 21:16; 22:19, 29**).

Correction 7 — reasons and details the text does not give. Lesson 02 listed among the reasons for the ban that the first husband would be *“reclaiming the wife after she has acquired a second dowry,”* said that under verse 2 she *“may keep her dowry,”* described **Deuteronomy 21:14** as a *“written release,”* said the scroll *“must be witnessed,”* and summarized verse 3 as *“the second husband must also write a sefer keritut or dies.”* None of these is in the text (Sections IV-A, IV-C, VI-E). Verse 3 says the second husband hates her and writes a scroll, *or* that he dies.

Correction 8 — who received the scroll, and when. Part 11 placed **Jeremiah 3:8** at *“the Babylonian overthrow of the nation of Israel”* and said **Yahweh** waited from the time of Moses until the Babylonian exile before giving the scroll. The verse is dated to the days of Josiah (**Jeremiah 3:6**) and speaks of the northern kingdom, already exiled by Assyria (**2 Kings 17:6**). Judah is the sister who did not take warning, and is never said to have received a scroll (Section VIII-C).

Correction 9 — tradition presented as Torah. The household study (Section 36) used the later word *get* as if it were the Torah’s term, listed Maimonides’ ten requirements of a valid bill as *“Yahweh’s protections,”* called the rabbinic court’s power to compel a husband *“the Torah’s mechanism,”* and cited the Talmud as support in Section 39. Part 11 placed the *ketubah* (marriage contract) *“in ancient Israel,”* and Lesson 02 said the divorce is written *“because the covenant itself was written and witnessed.”* The Tanakh’s term is *sefer keritut* (scroll of cutting off); the ten requirements, the court, and the written marriage contract are later tradition (Section VII-C). Under the standing rule of September 28, 2026, these belong in the comparative tables, labeled as such.

Correction 10 — the Islamic parallel and the ancient codes. Lesson 02 said the three-divorce rule *“partially parallels”* the ban on return. It is the reverse of it (Q. 2:230; Section X). Lesson 02 also called the arranged intervening marriage *“the exact abuse”* the law was designed to prohibit; it should be added that Islamic tradition itself condemns that arrangement (Sunan Abi Dawud 2076). And Lesson 02’s statement that *“no ancient legal code matched”* the Torah’s protection of the divorced wife is broader than the evidence: the Laws of Hammurabi provide the divorced wife her dowry and a payment (§§137–142), and the Jewish marriage contracts from Elephantine let either spouse end the marriage. The claim should be narrowed to what the Tanakh shows: a written scroll, in her hand.

Correction 11 — Lesson 12’s description of Lesson 02. Lesson 12 tells the student that Lesson 02 contains the corrected Hebrew of **Malachi 2:16**, a treatment of repentance through Hosea, and **Ezekiel 18:21–23**. Lesson 02 as it stands in the Library contains none of these. Either Lesson 02 should be revised to include them, or Lesson 12’s list should be amended.

XII. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON THE SCROLL OF CUTTING OFF

Per the **Deuteronomy 19:15** standard, no doctrine may stand on a single text. Each declaration below draws on more than one witness.

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	Deuteronomy 24:1–4 gives one command: a man who has sent his wife away may not take her back once she has become another man's. It commands no divorce.	Deuteronomy 24:4; Jeremiah 3:1
II	A marriage is ended only by a written scroll placed in the wife's hand, never by a word, by anger, or by absence.	Deuteronomy 24:1, 3; Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:8
III	The woman sent away is free. She stands on her own before Yahweh and may become another man's wife.	Deuteronomy 24:2; Leviticus 21:7; 22:13; Numbers 30:9
IV	The <i>“nakedness of a matter”</i> is a real matter of indecency or shame, not any displeasure. The text does not define its limits, and no teacher may.	Deuteronomy 23:14; 24:1; Jeremiah 3:8
V	Yahweh is witness between a man and the wife of his youth. Treachery against her is condemned, and a man's own wrong can take away his power to send her away.	Malachi 2:14–16; Exodus 21:8; Deuteronomy 22:19, 29
VI	Return after another marriage is an abomination that brings sin upon the land. No rite, court, or interval makes it lawful.	Deuteronomy 24:4; Jeremiah 3:1
VII	Yahweh gave Israel the scroll and still calls her to return, by His mercy, by a new betrothal, and by a new covenant, not by any right of hers.	Jeremiah 3:8, 12–14; 31:31–34; Hosea 2:19–20; 11:9

XIII. THE COVENANT RESPONSE — WHAT THE TANAKH SAYS TO THE ONE WHO ASKS

Behind the questions about this passage there is usually a person: a man deciding whether to write, a woman who has been sent away, or two people asking whether a door is still open. Tanakh's answer is fivefold.

First: know what the passage commands. One thing: no return to the first husband after another marriage (**Deuteronomy 24:4**). Everything before that is a description. The Torah did not invent the sending away, and it does not order it.

Second: if a marriage must end, let it end in writing and in her hand. A covenant is not ended by shouting or by leaving. The scroll is the protection of the one sent away (**Deuteronomy 24:1–2; Isaiah 50:1**).

Third: the one sent away carries no stain. She is free, she may marry, and she answers to **Yahweh** for herself (**Leviticus 21:7; Numbers 30:9**). No teaching may bind what the Torah has loosed.

Fourth: Yahweh is witness. He stands between a man and the wife of his covenant, and He sees treachery (**Malachi 2:14**). The man who has wronged a woman may lose the power to send her away (**Deuteronomy 22:19, 29**), and the wife who is deprived goes out free (**Exodus 21:10–11**).

Fifth: where the door is still open, return. The law closes one door, and it closes it for good. Until that door has shut, the word **Yahweh** spoke to His own unfaithful people is the word for every household:

“Return, backsliding Israel, says Yahweh; I will not make My face fall upon you, for I am merciful.” (Jeremiah 3:12)

The scroll is real, and Yahweh has written one. His first word, and His last, is still *“Return.”*

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“And I will betroth you to Me forever; I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, in lovingkindness and in compassion; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know Yahweh.”

Hosea 2:19–20 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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