

Isaac, our English version has it, "They swear one to another"; Genesis xxvi, 31. This gives the true meaning and spirit of the passage. And yet in the original it is, "They swear a man to his brother." In the account given by Moses of the structure of the tabernacle, an order relative to the curtains runs thus: "The five curtains shall be coupled together, *one to another*," Exodus xxv,

3. The original for *one to another* in this passage is, "A woman to her sister." The Hebrew words in this passage of Exodus are identically the same, without the change of a single letter, as those which in Leviticus xviii. 18 are rendered, "a wife to her sister." Common sense shows that the rendering of them given in Exodus, though not perfectly literal, conveys the true meaning and spirit of the original, and that the literal rendering of them would not do so; and they ought, without doubt, to have been so rendered in the passage before us.

In explaining the word *ashe*, here rendered wife, without allusion to this controversy, Parkhurst, in his dictionary, renders it a *being*, or *thing subsisting*, or *existing*. "The word," says he, "has no relation to kind or species; though, according to its different genders, it has to sex, but is applied to almost any distinct *being* or *thing*; as, for instance, to man, Gen. ii. 23-24; to clean and unclean beasts, Gen. vii. 2; to the isles of the Gentiles, Gen. x. 5; to the curtains of the tabernacle, Exod. xxvi. 3-5-6; to the faces of the Cherubim, Exod. xxv. 20; to their wings, Ezekiel i. 9. It may be, and frequently is, rendered *each, every one*."

Every scholar knows that the idioms of one language do not admit of literal translation into another, and it is absurd to attempt it. The passage in Leviticus may, with more propriety, be translated thus: "Neither shalt thou take one wife to another to oppress *them*, to marry one in addition to the other in her life-time." It will be seen from the word *her* being printed, in the authorized version in italics, that it is not in the original; and the verb translated *vex*, more properly signifies to oppress. And when a man marries two wives, the oppression extends to both: he does a wrong to both. The truth is, that this passage has nothing at all to do with the marriage of a wife's sister. It is a clear, simple, and absolute prohibition of polygamy.

We shall just make two remarks more to show the untenableness of the authorized translation of this verse. If the interpretation put upon it by those who use it to support the lawfulness of marriage with a deceased wife's sister be correct, then, by the same process of inference, it goes equally to support the lawfulness of polygamy; for, if a man is only prohibited from marrying the *sister* of his wife during her life-time, it follows that he is not prevented from marrying any other woman who is not his wife's sister. To be consistent, therefore, the man who, from this verse, advocates the lawfulness of marrying the sister of his deceased wife, should also advocate the lawfulness of polygamy. It is true that many of the Jews did practise polygamy; but this was in direct opposition to the divine law, as here plainly enacted.

Again, it would follow, if the translation against which we contend were correct, that it was only when a man married his wife's *sister* that he vexed her, and that his marrying a stranger would not have produced the same effect; in other words, that a woman would have accounted it a greater hardship that her own sister should have been brought into the house to share with her in its comforts and duties, and in the affections of her husband, than that an entire stranger should have shared with her in these privileges; and that two sisters would be more apt to disagree, and quarrel with each other, than two strangers. This is surely inconsistent both with reason and experience. An interpretation, which admits of such an inference, cannot be the correct one.

We trust, then, that it has been satisfactorily established that the Mosaic law gives no uncertain sound in reference to this matter; that it clearly proclaims