

Deuteronomy 22:5

Question: *Would you give me a correct interpretation of Deuteronomy 22:5? Does this mean a woman should not ever wear pants?* J. A., Pennsylvania

Answer: The King James Version translates this passage quite obscurely; therefore, many misconceptions have developed. The verse reads in the King James Version: "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto Yahweh thy Elohim."

To obtain a correct, lucid understanding of this controversial passage, we must closely research the Hebrew text where the answers will be found. Many religious denominations have taken an erroneous interpretation of this verse and other controversial passages through failure to peruse the Hebrew text. The original text of the Bible (as closely as we can return to it), will clear up many misconceptions if we allow the words to speak to us with authority.

To understand this verse correctly, we must scrutinize the

passage in the Hebrew text, word by word. Following you will find each word in the verse parsed and defined using the best available lexicons that are generally given the most prominent scholarly recognition.

לֹא-יִהְיֶה כְּלִי-נָקֵר עַל-אִשָּׁה וְלֹא-יִלְבָּשׁ
נָקֵר שְׂמֹלֶת אִשָּׁה כִּי תוּעֵבַת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
כֹּל-עֵשָׂה אֵלֶיהָ:

(לֹא-יִהְיֶה) The first word we encounter is a negative particle—lo'. (Strong's #3808) Next you find a **maqep** linking it to the third masculine singular imperfect **Qal** form of the verb of existence. (Strong's #1961)

(כְּלִי-נָקֵר) Again we find another unit. The first noun we encounter (**keli**) has been translated in the King James Version as "wear that which pertaineth." (Strong's #3627) Here is where our lexicons bring the Hebrew words into sharp focus and correct errors.

The Holladay Concise Lexicon of Hebrew and Aramaic (hereafter merely designated as Holladay) defines this noun as: 1) vessel, receptacle, gear; 2) equipment, gear; 3) implement; 4) other objects: a) ornaments; b) clothes [here Holladay includes the word **begeg** meaning "various kinds of clothes or garments." However, the word **begeg** is not found at all in this verse. Therefore, Holladay has erred]; 5) weapons; 6) vessel=ship.

The Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon by Tregelles-Gesenius follows the Holladay quite closely except for identifying the word **clothing** as the German **zeug** and English **ornaments**, rather than merely attire made out of fabric. Therefore the definition would lean heavily toward accessories worn with one's dress rather than the actual clothing.

The Brown, Driver, and Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament defines this word

as "article, utensil, vessel." It is frequently specified as meaning "implements of hunting or weapons of war." It is translated "shepherd's bag or wallet, earthenware receptacle, and weapons of any kind." (Notice the relationship to accessories, not clothing.)

This word **keli** is joined to the word **geber** by a **maqep** meaning that the words are closely associated and form one accentual unit.

The word **geber** (גִּבּוֹר) has been translated by Holladay as "young, strong man." The root of the word means "excel, accomplish, swell, arise (in Qal), make superior, exert all one's strength (Pi'el), and be strong (in Hiph'il)." (Strong's #1397) Additionally, it is sometimes written as **gibbor** meaning "manly, vigorous; a hero, champion, warrior; bodyguard, elite troops."

Brown, Driver, Briggs defines the word: "man as strong, distinguished from women, children, and non-combatants whom he is to defend; strong, valiant man; mighty man of valor."

Tregelles-Gesenius renders the word as "a virile man, so-called from his strength, or a soldier." He suggests a comparison with the word **ish** which means "male." **The Brown, Driver, and Briggs Lexicon** defines the word **ish** as "man, as opposed to women, with the emphasis on sexual distinction and relation." **Geber** would carry the distinct connotation of a male who is young and strong, able to fight.

There are actually five Hebrew words (correctly) translated **man** in the **King James Version** of the Bible. The first one is **adam** (the generic term for homo sapiens), second: **ish** (male gender as opposed to **ishah**, female); third: **geber** (a young, mighty man, warrior, or soldier); fourth: **zakar**

(a male, similar to the word **ish**); and fifth: **enosh** (a mortal, hence man, perhaps similar to the word **adam** but less dignified). Note: mention should be made that other words appear, but have been translated differently in later, more modern versions and are usually so noted in the **Strong's Concordance**, comparative section. Those words include **nephesh**, **ba'al**, etc.

An excellent word study on the Hebrew word **geber** and its cognates may be obtained by perusing the **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament**, **Botterweck and Ringgren**. They do a thorough exegetical study of the word. A most enlightening statement appears on page 374 of volume 2. "By far the most frequent use of the word **gibbor** [**geber**] occurs in connection with military activities, especially as a designation for a warrior, either a man who is eligible for military service or is able to bear arms, or one who has actually fought in combat, or who has already distinguished himself by performing heroic deeds." Obviously this is the meaning of the word **geber** in **Deuteronomy 22:5**. This is the basis for the definitions found in the lexicons we have quoted.

The next word is again joined to the following one by a **maqep** forming a close association and one accentual unit. The word 'al (אל), is a preposition, meaning "upon." (Strong's #5921)

The following word is **ishah** (אִשָּׁה). (Strong's #802) We have already discussed this word and it means "a woman, as being female, the converse feminine of the masculine gender **ish**, man."

The next word is the standard Hebrew conjunction attached to the negative particle. Therefore,

we would translate it: **and not**. (וְלֹא)

The associated succeeding word is a verb identified as **Qal** third person, masculine, singular, imperfect — **yilbash** (יִלְבַּשׁ). (Strong's #3847) Since it is joined to the negative particle by a **maqep**, it again forms one accentual unit.

Holladay defines the word as "put on clothes, wear, or be clothed." **The Brown, Driver, and Briggs** defines the word exactly the same, as does the **Tregelles-Gesenius**, which adds "to clothe oneself with a garment."

Therefore, the object of this transitive verb must be clearly identified as the particular type of garment that is indicated. We would translate this Hebrew word group as: "and he shall not put on..."

The following word again is **geber** which we have already discussed. Please see above.

Next we find the word **simlath** (שִׁמְלַת) which is a common noun in construct form, the word in Hebrew is **simlah** (שִׁמְלָה). (Strong's #8071) Most of the Bible translations render this word simply as "clothing." However, this word specifically identifies a specific article or kind of clothing.

The **Holladay Hebrew Lexicon** translates it: "mantle, wrapper." **The Brown, Driver, and Briggs** renders the word exactly the same and comments "usually a square piece of cloth worn as outer garments [their emphasis]." **Tregelles-Gesenius** defines the word: "especially a large outer garment with which at night persons wrap themselves." The transposition of two letters in this word form a later Hebrew word, **salmah**, meaning "clothing." The word **simlah** means only an outer garment. It would be safe to

conclude that the word **simlah** was too restricted in fundamental semantical etymology, therefore the metathesis of these letters as they were shifted was designed to mean any kind of clothes.

Again, we find the word **ishah** following the word **simlah**. Please note above.

Next appears the Hebrew word **ki** (כי), a preposition meaning "because, for." (Strong's #3588)

The following word is the noun in construct, **to'abat** (תועבת). This word means "something abominable, detestable, offensive," according to Holladay. The **Brown, Driver, and Briggs** and the **Tregelles-Gesenius** both translate just as Holladay has. (Strong's #8441) This word has been used to describe Yahweh's feelings concerning idolatry and perversion.

Then the subsequent word is the Name of Yahweh (יהוה) (Strong's #3605), a proper noun, appearing adjacent to the term **'eloheka** (אלהיך) which is the noun **Elohim** (אלהים) in construct with the second masculine singular pronominal suffix. (Strong's #430)

The following two words are again joined together in one accentual unit by a **maqṣep** again showing their close relationship. The word **kal** (כל) (from **kol**), an adjective, means "all or every." (Strong's #3605) Then appears the word **'oseh** (עשה). (Strong's #6213) This is a Qal active participle. The root word means "to do." Therefore, we would translate the participial form—doing.

The final word **'elleh** (אלה) is the near demonstrative pronoun and it means "these." (Strong's #428)

We must now render this verse into a proper English translation so that we can understand it

better. The author would offer the correct translation as follows: "The equipment of a warrior shall not be found upon a woman, nor shall a warrior wear the mantle of a woman, because Yahweh your Elohim detests all doing this."

By this time you should have caught the significance of the message Almighty Yahweh seeks to convey to us in this verse. He intends us to understand first that a woman shall not become a soldier. Whenever the equipment that a soldier uses (weapons of any sort or other paraphernalia used in battle) appear on a woman, Yahweh finds this to be detestable. He intends soldiers to be men, and women to take a subordinate position in the world. He intends them to be feminine, as they were created, doing things a woman was made to do. Outside the position to which she was assigned, a woman will develop masculine qualities unsuitable for motherhood.

Conversely, He directs that a soldier or warrior shall not wear the mantle or cloak commonly worn by women. The reason for this directive is that a warrior would thereby be deceptive, or secondarily, perhaps camouflage or misrepresent himself to avoid service in the army of Israel. Dr. Bullinger points out in the **Companion Bible** note that the cloak of a woman was often red or some other brilliant color which would have also been a liability in battle. Soldiers should not wear garments that would attract attention (remember the British Red Coats in the French and Indian War?).

Almighty Yahweh intends us to understand that the man shall be masculine, do physical things like serving in His army, and be the leader in society. Women shall be subordinate, feminine,

keeping the home and raising the family, Titus 2:4-5. Men will wear coarse cloth with garments cut for hard physical work. Women will wear colorful clothes designed for the female figure and personality.

This verse has no relationship at all with a man wearing skirts (as the Scotchmen wear kilts and Burmese men wear their tropical garments), nor a woman wearing pants suits that have been made strictly for feminine wear (as has been the custom in some cultures, including the Middle East). This passage of Scripture relates strictly to the position of authority men and women respectively shall occupy in the world. This example of Hebrew parallelism refers to accessories worn at certain times, not to the regular clothing one normally wears.

Those who reverse the roles Yahweh has assigned them are detestable and an abomination to Almighty Yahweh our Heavenly Father. That woman is directed not to wear the equipment of a soldier has nothing to do with types of garments worn, but rather to weapons, while the soldier shall not dress in a colorful outer garment which would attract attention from the enemy or try to evade duty by pretending to be a woman.

We should note also that the word **mantle** represents authority (See 2 Kings 2:8, 13, 14). The verse then additionally means that a woman shall not encroach upon the area of authority and responsibility of a man, nor shall a man step into positions where a woman has authority.

We must understand this verse properly and live by it if our personal role in Yahweh's family can be rewardingly fulfilled as He has intended for us when He created the human family. □