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Conducted by  
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The events of recent weeks and months have undoubtedly drawn the attention of more people to the fact that the existence of the Islamic Religion is a reality that must be faced.

Consequently a variety of questions have arisen, one of which I want to deal with in this issue.

A brother writes: *"A tricky issue Muslims raise. We disparage the permission in the Koran allowing Muslims to take any women captives as concubines and wives, yet the same right was given to the Jews under the Law of Moses in Numbers 31:18 and Deuteronomy 21:10-14.*

*Would you tackle it in the 'S.S' Question Box?"*

If you will read these verses - too long to print here - you will see that they reveal that the Israelites were given permission to make slaves of their captives, and were allowed to make wives of certain women.

If you will also read Deut. 20:16-18, you will see that this was not an unrestricted permission. It did not extend to the seven Canaanite tribes named in those verses, but probably related only to the Midianites, mentioned in Numbers 31.

You may remember that the Midianites were descendants of Midia, the son of Abraham by his second wife, Keturah, so there was a racial connection between the Israelites and the Midianites which did not exist between Israel and the Canaanites.

Furthermore, the passages referred to, do not speak of *concubines*. The Midianite women were to be taken as wives, and, as such, the law would require that they be treated as wives. A case in point would be that of Hagar, who bore Abraham's son Ishmael. When Sarah demanded that Hagar be sent away, Abraham was unwilling to yield to this demand, until instructed to do so by God. Even the Nuzu laws of that time decreed that, having given birth to a son, Hagar should be given the respect due to a wife, and Abraham was prepared to honour that law.

However, at the root of this question lies the issue of slavery in the ancient world.

**1st Let us bear in mind that, after the entrance of Sin into our world, man ceased to be the perfect creature that God had first made.** Losing fellowship with God, mankind sank deeper and deeper into sin, Murder, theft, falsehood, immorality became common-place among human beings. Social injustices were created. It was never God's desire that one person should become the slave of another, but as men exercised the free will with which God had blessed them, slavery was established.

**2nd Remember, also, that the Law of Moses did not introduce slavery.** It was wide-spread in the ancient world many centuries before the people of Israel came into existence.

Indeed, for centuries they were themselves slaves in Egypt, and therefore, as a people must have come to accept slavery as a normal state of affairs.

History reveals that slavery was widely practised in the Roman world of New

Testament times. It has been reckoned that 50% of the population of the Roman Empire belonged to the slave class, and this class included doctors, lawyers and scholars.

3rd It is also true that the Law of Moses did not *abolish* slavery. What it did was to set out a law for the protection and treatment of slaves, that was more benign and far higher than anything the world had ever seen. For example, according to the Mosaic Law, one who had become a slave because of debt must be set free in the Year of Jubilee, but provision was made for the slave who loved his masters, to choose to remain in his master's service. The ceremony is described in Ex.21:17.

4th Why did God allow His people to practise slavery? The answer is, for the same reason that He permitted divorce. The Lord Jesus explains this when he says, "*Because of the hardness of your heart*".

In Matt. 19:1-9, and Mark 10:1-12 Jesus points out that from the very beginning God intended marriage to be a life-long commitment. But the Israelites had used a law, which was meant to protect the purity and sanctity of marriage (See Deut.24:1), and were abusing it, and making it an excuse to divorce their wives for the most trivial of reasons, because of their un-spirituality. It was this abuse of the Law which resulted in women being degraded and treated as easily disposable chattels.

It remained for Christianity - and Christianity alone - to elevate womanhood, and to establish the principle that, in the sight of God, men and women are of equal worth.

Similarly, it remained for Christianity to change men's minds about slavery, by changing their hearts and making them realize that, when human beings become Christians they must appreciate that '*in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one*' (Gal. 3:26-27)

5th Finally, whatever was *permitted* under the Law of Moses has no relevance for us today, because when Jesus died on the cross the old Mosaic covenant with its laws and ceremonies, ceased to be valid.

By his sacrificial death Jesus has ratified the New Covenant, under which all men are brought into a personal relationship with God, and this, in its turn has introduced into the world a standard of morality and social justice that is higher than any found elsewhere.

*(Questions to Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfebank Way, Houston, Renfrewshire, Scotland, PA6 7NZ).*

## BE NOT ENTANGLED AGAIN WITH DIGRESSION'S YOKE

"Having been in the bondage of Egypt, and having felt the scorpion lash of sectarianism, I know as those who are freeborn can never know, how sweet a thing it is to enjoy the light and liberty of the gospel truth, both as to faith and practice. Our children think us in our dotage, and that we see ghosts and hob-goblins where no real danger exists. But I know what I am talking about and would turn them against any, even the slightest, departure from the plain teachings of God's Word. I am willing to be liberal, and will be as far as it is lawful; but I must not be liberal at the expense of truth. We may be as liberal as we please with our own things, such as opinions and speculations, for they are private property; but let us be careful how we touch the Ark