

*Shiur L'Yom Revi'i*¹

[Wednesday's Study]

READINGS: **Torah Acharei Mot:** Leviticus 18:1-30
 Haftarah: Ezekiel 22:13-19
 B'rit Chadasha: I Corinthians 6:15-17

You must not do any of these detestable things.

[Leviticus 18:26]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 119:153-160;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition #2, *Teshuvah* [Turning Back to the Path of Torah]

Vayedaber Adonai el-Moshe l'emor - Then the Holy One spoke to Moshe, saying ... **Daber el-b'nei Yisra'el v'amarta aleihem** – Speak to B'nei Yisrael and declare to them ... **Ani Adonai Eloheichem** – I am the Holy One their God ... **K'ma'aseh eretz-Mitzrayim asher yeshavtem-bah lo ta'asu** – you are not to do as was done in Egypt, from whence I delivered you Leviticus 18:1-3a.

The Holy One is preparing to drop the central bombshell revelation of Torah on us. He is about to raise the bar of Covenantal Responsibility from the entry-level theological threshold of personal GOD- and SIN-CONSCIOUSNESS all the way to radical, very, very practical, constantly self-denying 'BROTHER-NEIGHBOR-STRANGER LOVE'. He is about to tell us plainly what being *His people*, and Him being *our God*, is to mean on a *social and interactional level*. More – indeed *much* more - on that in tomorrow's study. But first things first. Before we can receive and embrace the *BROTHER-NEIGHBOR-STRANGER LOVE*' commission we must understand where we came from – and what blinding, debilitating levels of toxicity our brother, our neighbor, and the stranger who has come to live in our midst is dealing with.

Heaven's Great Mysteries Are Meant to Inspire Us to Great Acts of Love and Kindness, Not Make Us Cold-Hearted Judges

The Holy One has been busy at Mount Sinai. He started out teaching us the beautiful mysteries of overcoming the holes in our souls and receiving *kippur* – *i.e. a spiritual covering that binds up our soul-wounds and fosters their healing* – see Leviticus chapters 1-7. He then taught us to go even deeper, into the root causes of those holes, by alerting us to the entry portals of *tumah* – *i.e. destabilizing uncleanness*. See Leviticus chapters 8-10. Then He taught us the secrets of embracing, absorbing, maintaining, and releasing responsibly into the world His Divine energy of *kedusha* [KJV 'holiness']. See Leviticus chapters 11-17. How will He follow that?

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What is next on His Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover Agenda? Buckle your seat belts. This is going to be a bumpy ride!

The next thing on the Holy One's agenda is to have us take a good, long look around us - at the other peoples, cultures, and nations with whom He has called us to share this planet. We are not supposed to hate, despise, be disgusted by, antagonize, or start wars with these other peoples – Heaven forbid! Neither are we supposed to fear them – Heaven forbid! But most importantly, we are not supposed to be – or ever aspire to be – like them. We are called to be markedly, essentially, and beautifully different. We have a *covenant of shalom* with the Holy One. We have the oracles – and the ear - of the Creator of the Universe. We are stewards of the mysteries of the kingdom. We are called to play key roles in the Grand Plan of *tikkun nefesh*, *tikkun adam*, *tikkun aretz*, and *tikkun olam*. In us resides the hope of redemption for mankind as a species and the restoration of all Creation to Edenic-level fruitfulness.

1. What We are to Follow/Do

The first verb we encounter in the opening instruction of our aliyah is often translated into English as “follow”. Our English translations report the Holy One as saying: ***Do not follow the ways of Egypt ... nor of Kana'an ... do not follow any of their customs.*** Leviticus 18:3. The Hebrew verb employed, which our English Bibles translate as “follow/do”, is *asah*. The Holy One prophetically and creatively speaks over us that we are not to *asah* the “ways” or “customs” of Egypt or of Kana'an. What, we may therefore ask, is the Hebraic word picture the Holy One is drawing for us by employing the verb *asah*? The Hebrew picture is actually of *a potter fashioning something recognizable from a lump of clay*. The potter starts with an idea – a blueprint of what he is *asah*-ing – then works with the clay in a very ‘hands-on’, practical manner, until the clay begins to look like - and through a gradual process, actually *becomes* - the item pictured in the blueprint.

What ARE We Called To Asah? What is the Asah Element of our Mission?

We are sons and daughters of the Avrahamic Covenant. As such, we are the duly appointed, commissioned, and empowered ambassadors of the Kingdom of Heaven to all peoples and nations of the earth. These are our primary identities – and these identities are supposed to define for us what it is that we are to and not to *asah*. Concerning our father Avraham the Holy One said: ***I have made Myself known to him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they sh'mar the way of the Holy One, to asah tzedakah u'mishpat*** Genesis 18:19. In general, therefore, the first thing we are to *asah* – *i.e.* cause to take shape in real time for the world to see – in every situation is *tzedakah*. *Tzedakah* is not an abstract concept like Western ideas of ‘righteousness’ or ‘justice’; it is a practical application of the Holy One's plan. It is a covenant term drawn from the

construction trade, meaning basically ‘*true to design and purpose*’, or ‘*within or according to specifications*’. In every situation we encounter, it is what the Holy One wants done to bring about a solution/resolution that advances His Grand Blueprint/Plan. The second thing we are to *asah* in every situation we face is *mishpat*. Usually translated as ‘justice’, *mishpat* is actually a covenant term that means assigning proper restitution, restoration, and repositioning protocols in order to ensure people involved in difficult situations a chance for an effectual resetting and meaningful fresh start.

At Sinai, after the Torah was given, our ancestors declared: ***All the words that the Holy One has said we will asah.*** Exodus 24:7. This clarifies that what we are to *asah* in every situation we ever face is EVERYTHING the Holy One has said in Torah pertaining to that situation, and ONLY what the Holy One has said in Torah that pertains to that situation. That will always have both a *tzedakah element* – which will involve envisioning the restorative plan of the Holy One for the situation - and a *mishpat element* – which will involve repositioning parties and focuses and reallocating assets in such a way as to give the parties involved a chance at a fresh start in the Kingdom Endeavor.

Specifically, our calling is to *asah* the *mitzvot* and *mishpatim* of Torah. For the Holy One describes our function on earth as being to: ***asah My mish’patim ...*** [Leviticus 18:4(a)]. What does it mean to *asah* our Divine Bridegroom’s *mish’patim*? What does that look like in *real time*? It means we will regard the life instructions of the Holy One’s Torah as the potter regards the image on the blueprint in his mind. We will have them in mind as we interact with the “clay” of life – the mundane, common stuff and circumstances that make up our existence on earth. It means we will apply creative energy toward circumstances and mundane matters of life with the blueprint of the Holy One’s Torah as the focus of all our activities, and will thereby, as an act of co-creation with the Holy One, form something visible, tangible and useful from them. It means we will take the Holy One’s *dibrot*, *mitzvot* and *mishpatim* out of the realm of the *theoretical* and into the world of the *practical*. It means we will *progressively* conform our thoughts, priorities, values, words, and conduct to the shape of the Torah, the way a potter conforms the clay with which he works to the blueprint he has in his mind or on his drafting table. The *dibrot*, *mitzvot* and *mishpatim* of Torah are thus not just things to “do”, or ways to “follow”; they are the righteousness of the Holy One, to which we are - with the inspiration and empowering of the Holy One - to conform every aspect of our lives. That is how we will *asah tzedakah* and *mishpat*. We have the technology!

What We Are Not to Asah? What is the Antithesis of our Mission?

What the Holy One tells us we are NOT to *asah* the ways and customs of

foreigners and their cultures. If we do not remain radically different than both the unregenerate and the religious world we will become like *salt that has lost its savor*. We will have nothing substantive to offer. We will be like fashion models who walk the runway bereft of the beautiful designer clothes we have been employed to show off to the world.

So the Holy One says prophetically and creatively over us that we are to *lo asah* the ways/customs of foreign people and their cultures. What does this mean in real life? Well, to *asah* the ways and customs any foreign people or foreign culture would be to *apply/expend our creative energies in the way, and according to the priorities, mindsets, and values, of people whose focuses in life are on something else than the outworking of the Avrahamic and Sinaitic Covenants*. To *asah* the ways and customs of foreigners would mean *to waste our precious allotted time on earth doing what the people in the pagan society around us do*. It would mean *dressing, and eating, and wearing our hair, and seeking and treating mates like the people in the pagan society around us do*. It would mean *valuing what the people in our pagan society around us value*. It would mean *making music and dancing after the pattern of the way the pagans around us make music and dance*. It would mean *arranging our calendars like the pagans arrange theirs*. It would mean *celebrating our holidays on the days they set aside for their celebrations and observances*. To *asah* the ways and customs of foreigners and their cultures would mean *to pattern our activities of “worshipping” our deity after the template set by the people in either the secular or the religious societies around us*. It would mean *expending our energy and our passion on “vain things”, the way the foreigners around us – of whatever stripe or label - do*. And to *asah* the ways and customs of foreigners and their cultures would mean that, whatever we might tell ourselves or the world that we ‘believe’, *the lives we actually lead in real time would become virtually undistinguishable from the lives of people who reject and live outside the Covenant*.

We are, of course, always *to love and be kind to* foreigners. See **Exodus 22:21 and 23:9;** **Leviticus 19:34;** and **Deuteronomy 10:19**. We are to acknowledge them as *fellow human beings* – and we are to bless, not curse, them. We are to see – and treat - them and their children as both *objects of the Holy One’s amazing love* and as *targets of His Grand Redemptive Plan*. But we are NEVER to adopt their mindsets, their values, their priorities, or any of their ways. Never. We are here to model a ‘better way’ for them – *i.e.* the Torah Way established for mankind by our King. We are to bring the ways and thoughts and speech and deeds of Heaven to earth in real ways, in real time. We are therefore never to embrace any foreigner’s or foreign culture’s worldview as our own – whether in part or as a whole. We are never to honor, serve, or call upon any their ‘gods’ – whether those gods present

themselves as *idols*, as *ideas*, as *ideologies*, or even as *ideals*. We are never to adopt their definitions of ‘morality’, of ‘success’, of normalcy’, or of ‘food’ or ‘pleasure’ – much less their warped view of what is ‘good and ‘evil’, what is ‘fair’ and ‘unfair’, or what is ‘true’ and ‘untrue’. We are never to allow ourselves to get caught up in their cultural wars, their interpersonal drama episodes, their inter-family squabbles, their political intrigues, their societal movements, their religious controversies, their intellectual arguments, the outlandish theories they falsely label ‘science’, or their civil wars. We are not to allow ourselves to be conscripted into the service of their political, economic, ideological, or religious systems. We are not to pattern our – or our children’s – education after their hopelessly-flawed educational model. We are not to allow ourselves – or our children – to be seduced by their perverse ideas of entertainment, or humor, or artistry, or ‘romance’, or sexual identity. We are not to succumb to any of their brainwashing, soul-numbing propaganda. We are not to accept their relabeling of opinions and political/ideological talking points as ‘news’. We are not to observe – much less celebrate or get sentimental about - their holidays. We are not to ridicule, mock, or condemn those things – we are just to remain *unstained by them, uncorrupted by them*, and most of all *above them*. We are to follow – and model for them – a better, more joyous, more meaningful, more impactful, and much more fulfilling lifestyle.

We have been given much better – and far more exciting, important and beneficial – things to do. We have a glorious, holy King to commune with and represent at all times. Flesh-obsessed entertainment and sexually-themed conversations should not – cannot – be the norm for the Holy One’s *mamleket kohanim* [*i.e.* kingdom ambassadors]. Angry political, ideological, racial, class-focused, and/or religious rhetoric should not – cannot – be what the members of Holy One’s *goy kadosh* are known for. We have been gloriously redeemed. The Creator of the Universe has *recombined our DNA*. We have a beautiful new identity. Our King has given us beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. We should be of all men most humble, most thankful, most understanding, and most kind. We have a glorious life Partner, and an incredible calling. We have no time – or need – to be either pouty or petty. We have no reason – nor right – to be arrogant. Our mission requires us to increasingly disentangle from the ways and customs of the secular society in which we live. We are commissioned and empowered to *look, think, act, and live different* from the secular society around us. We are to *eat differently*, relate to time differently, choose and relate to our mates differently, worship differently, relate to music differently, dance differently, talk differently, look at things differently, speak differently, treat people differently and relate to the Holy One’s Creation differently. If we do not, we simply cannot *fulfill our purpose* on earth, and will,

quickly forget both *who we are* and *why we are here*.

b. What We Are to ‘Keep’ [Hebrew, *sh’mar*]

The second verb used by the Holy One in the opening announcement of this section of the Discourse to describe our mission is translated as “keep”. Our Beloved King said specifically: ***Keep my statutes ... Therefore keep my statutes and my ordinances ...*** [Leviticus 18:4(b) – 5]. The Hebrew verb English Bibles translate as “keep” is the Hebrew verb *sh’mar*. To *sh’mar* is not to legalistically or ritualistically perform deeds, as our English words “keep” and “observe” have come to imply. To *sh’mar* anything is to *prize it, treasure it, cling to it, stand watch over it, and safeguard it as a sacred trust*. To *sh’mar* a Word spoken by the Holy One therefore means to *prize, treasure, cling to, stand watch over and safeguard as a sacred trust* the Holy One’s words and instructions for life above everything else – and in defiance of all voices which call us to do something different. To *sh’mar* means to prioritize the Holy One’s words above all else, and to spend time, energy and passion focusing on them, and making sure not a word is wasted or “returns to Him void”.

c. What We are To Follow/Walk [Hebrew, *halak*]

The third verb contained within the prophetic announcement under study is translated “follow” in our English Bibles: ***... follow/walk in them*** [*i.e.* the Holy One’s *mishpatim* and *chukot*]. **Leviticus 18:4**. The Hebrew verb translated as “follow/walk in” in this instance is *halak*². One of the earliest usages of this verb found in Torah is informative. *Halak* is what Noah’s ark did on the waters after it was lifted from the earth. It involves transitioning, from a place of potential [the Ark, sitting on the ground, full of potential, but without the medium (water) necessary to bring that potential into reality] to a place of fulfillment of potential – of the Holy One’s will. So when the Holy One prophesies over us that we will *halak* His Torah He is saying we will through His Torah *rise up above the secular society around us like the ark rose up above the ground on which it was constructed*. Ours will not be life characterized by great effort; nor will it consist of a self-determined, self-controlled journey undertaken in our own strength. We will ride His Torah like a surfer rides a great wave. We will be buoyed up by His Empowering Words the way the ark was lifted and carried by the waters of the great flood. The journey of *halak* the Holy One prophesies that we are to take with Him is not controlled by us, or determined by our own efforts, but by the Holy One –and we are propelled through it by the sheer prophetic force of His voice.

d. What Kind of Life We Are to ‘Live’ [Hebrew, *chayei*]

The final verb contained within the prophetic announcement we are studying is translated into English, in our English Bibles, as “live”. Our English Bibles tell us

² *Halak* is *hey, lamed, kaf sofit*. Strong’s Hebrew word # 3212, it is pronounced *haw-lak*’.

the Holy One concluded the prophetic announcement we have been studying by saying: “*by asah-ing* [My *mishpatim* and My *chukot*] *You will live*. Leviticus 18:5. The Hebrew phraseology – and meaning - is vastly different. Transliterated the original text reads: *ya'aseh otam ha-Adam vachai b'hem*. Literally interpreted it says that in the course of *asah-ing* the Holy One's words we *bring life to ha-Adam* [the man into whom the Holy One breathed life in Genesis 2]. *Life*, in Hebrew, is *chai*³. This is much more than mere physical existence won by survival of the fittest. *Chai* is *the kind of life our Creator envisioned for us*. It is *joyful, meaningful, abundant, and atmosphere-shifting* life.

The implications of connecting to our intended level of *chai* are astounding. By *asah-ing*, *sh'mar-ing*, and *halak-ing* the Holy One's Torah the effects of Adam's failure to *asah*, *sh'mar* and *halak* the Holy One's instructions in the Garden are reversed. The name *Adam* – man - Hebraically pictures a doorway of living water, leading to the Tree of Life [*dam*] emanating *from God* [represented by the *alef* with which the name Adam begins].⁴ It is by *asah-ing*, *sh'mar-ing*, and *halak-ing* the Holy One's instructions in Torah – His instructions on how to be a Bride to Him – that we again begin to tap into and release the flow of the Holy One's living water upon the earth, thereby leading mankind to reconnect with the Tree of Life.⁵

The Holy One is our God. His Ways and His Will are our delight. His Torah is our *wisdom*, our compass, our anchor, our *passion*, our *lifestyle*, our *Constitution*, our *entertainment*, our *recreation*, and our *reason to live*. Torah's words of life – not our fleshly urges, appetites, desires, and drives - are what is to define what we spend our time and energy and passion thinking about, talking about, eating, wearing, and drinking. Our Bridegroom-King's wise instructions, not our cultural norms, are to determine how we choose – and treat – companions and mates, how we educate our children, how we make a living, how we define our identity, mission, purpose, and destiny, how we interact with our families and communities, when and why we get together with persons outside our families and communities, and even where we live. We are not to behave like “*wanna-bees*” or emulators of any other culture. We are to be *noticeably different* from all other people-groups. We are from and of and about *another kingdom* altogether. We are not to think, speak, dress, or spend time or money or energy like the Egyptians or the Kena'ani

³ Chai is Strong's Hebrew word #2425 *chai*. It is pronounced *khaw-yah'-ee*.

⁴ Please refer back to Tuesday's Study of parsha *Acharei Mot*, in the section of commentary labeled “*The Nature and Essence of Blood*”.

⁵ That is why in going before us as a forerunner in living the Torah lifestyle Yeshua said: “***I have come that they might have life*** [Hebrew, *chai*] ***and that they might have it abundantly***.” [John 10:10] It is Messiah's absolute, unshakeable commitment to Torah, His building of a human life upon and with the substance of Torah, and His walking out the Words of Torah on earth, that releases the living waters upon the earth and re-opens the watery pathway to the Tree of Life.

– or *any other culture we encounter*. We are to be consistently pure vessels pouring out life, health, hope, gentle wisdom, and our King’s wonderful shalom in the midst of their mindless, self-destructive debauchery. We are to remain calm and on mission in the midst of their outrage. We are to stay joyful even when they make us the butt of their jokes or the victims of their anger. We are to remain gracious in the face of their ingratitude. We are to be content and satisfied in the midst of their binges of materialism. We are to be kind in the midst of their cruelty. We are to be loving in the face of their hatred. We are to be gentle and hopeful in the face of their barbarism. We are to remain Kingdom-focused in the midst of all their ideological, political, racial, class-envious, rants.

This is a Test

So, as we begin a series of studies the essence of which is “being different”, and as to which the maturation of our relationship with the Holy One is the point, step back and examine the society around you honestly - not judgmentally - and ask yourself these questions:

What does it *stand for*? What are its *ideals*?

What does it *esteem as valuable*?

Where is it *going*?

What aspects of it are *poison* – whatever the dosage?

Some may read the above, and think to themselves – the fellow writing this shiur wants me to discriminate against other ethnic groups. He wants me to be an “elitist”. What about ‘*diversity*’? If that is what you are thinking, may I respectfully say that you have totally missed the point. It is one thing to acknowledge and respect other cultures, and to genuinely like and care for individual people within them; it is a wholly other thing to *adopt their ways* and *try to fit in among them*. To do the latter is a form of self-hatred (because you thereby declare the other culture more valuable than your own). It is also a rejection of the plan and purpose the Holy One has ordained for you, because you thereby declare “fitting in” more important than living by the Holy One’s directions.

Take a Look at What Sells in Your Culture - and Why!

The societies of Egypt and Kena’an were intensely self-centered and self-indulgent societies, not at all unlike America, and Europe, and places like Australia and South Africa, today. All cultures of the world which are not based upon and flowing in rhythm with Torah inevitably begin to *obsess over sexuality*. People in such cultures inevitably come to define their identities by what sexual fantasies and desires they allow to run amuck in their minds. In such societies, as the adage goes, ‘sex sells’. Such societies take sexuality – which was given by the Holy One [remember, the first man, Adam, was created as combined male/female, and the feminine aspect was removed from Him when the Holy One made woman from his rib] – and declare “the

more the better”.

In absence of regular meditation upon Torah and our responsibility as human beings to love our Creator and Sustainer with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength, even natural inhibitions such as conscience and ideas of basic morality get stripped away. Sexuality then becomes accepted as the ultimate pleasure-source for man – hence sexual thoughts and talk and conduct begins to infiltrate every relationship – just as people on sitcom television shows in the Western World now introduce sexuality into virtually every conversation.

The root of the problem in collapsing cultures [like modern America, among others] is not the sexually oriented actions in which people engage – *i.e.* acts of adultery, fornication, pornography, homosexuality, bestiality, etc.; the root of the problem is the culture’s *underlying obsession with sexuality*. Why do cultures based upon anything besides Torah inevitably obsess over sexuality? Because they do not know or recognize *a superior pleasure*. They do not set their eyes or their hearts upon anything more than immediate sensual gratification – or at least the fantasy thereof. They have not gazed upon the Breathtaking Beauty of the Holy One. They have not encountered His glory. The lifestyles and conversations and worldviews they have seen among people who claim to know the Holy One and His Ways are not significantly different from the lifestyles, conversations, and worldviews they have seen among themselves. They have never been shown His Beauty or His Glory. They have no concept – or frame of reference for – the JOY and PLEASURE of His Presence. And they are *searching for something*. And the first places they look – since we have given them no transformative witness of His Glory, but only lifeless doctrine, hypocrisy, arrogance and escapism – is to sexuality. They think sexuality – in or outside of marriage – will make them feel more alive, fulfilled, and ‘happy’; but, of course, it won’t. It will do the exact opposite. It will leave them feeling more vulnerable, more used, more unfulfilled, more needy of true purpose in life, more angry, more self-loathing, and increasingly miserable.

Our sexuality is intended to direct us to the Holy One, our ultimate partner. It is union with Him, spiritually, that our souls desire. In that union is our *satisfaction* and our *fulfillment*. But the societies around us – because they are driven by the basest of fleshly urges, appetites, and drives – regularly choose to accept a cheap counterfeit. And they are, in the process, left with nothing of value. They need an example of a better, more fulfilling, way. We *must* be different. The world needs an example of *joyful, vibrant holiness*. The world needs a *witness of hope, wholeness, and shalom*. The world needs a breath of life. We must quit turning up our noses and pointing our bony religious fingers the way others have done. In

love, with dove's eyes and Torah-thoughts, we must actually *show the world a more excellent way*. This is our time to shine the Light of our King's Countenance into the deep darkness of the world. And to do that, we cannot be like that world – we must be thriving in His Love and flowing in His Wisdom.

It is Time for the People of the Covenant to Arise and Shine!

Our Wonderful Bridegroom-King is teaching us what it means and looks like in real time for us to 'be holy' as He is holy. Through interaction with the Holy One's wonderful, powerful, creative, and prophetic Words we are given the opportunity to ascend to yet another level of spiritual consciousness – *and responsibility*. This is by far the most challenging part of the Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover Protocol that He has laid out for us. Ah, but it is joyful to us. Our hearts are still aflutter with passionate love for Him. We are amazed at the undeserved privilege He has extended to us to let us approach and commune with Him. So we take all His teachings – however mundane and unnecessary they seem to us on first glance - to heart. After all, it was not that long ago that, at this same mountain, we experienced the *Glorious Theophany*. At that time the Holy One uttered in the hearing of every man, woman and child in the Camp of the Redeemed ten *prophetic empowerments* that the Western world has come to call '*the Ten Commandments*'.

One of the prophetic utterances the Holy One spoke forth into our souls on that very special day was *Lo tinaf*. This atmosphere-changing empowerment is recorded in Exodus 20:14. English-language translations of the Bible usually render this powerful Hebrew phrase in a very stern, sterile way, as something like '*Thou shalt not commit adultery*'. *Lo tinaf* is actually much broader in scope however, including within its coverage not only the specific anti-social behavior we know in modern times as *adultery*, but also every form of fornication, voyeurism, and every other admixture/dilution involving romantic or sexual intertwining that can arise outside the context of a marriage between one man and one woman as that institution is described in Genesis 2:23-25.

Another of the amazing DNA-reconfiguring pronouncements our Divine Bridegroom proclaimed over us that day was *lo tachmod*. This is found in Exodus 20:17. While we read this in English translations of the Bible as '*do not covet*' it is much more all-encompassing and practical than that. It is a Divine Empowerment to keep ourselves from allowing ourselves to desire, lust after, or seek pleasure inappropriately in or from people or things in this world that He has not ordained for us. Are you ready to learn how to make these empowerments work together in real life, in real time, to help us become – and remain – all He has created us to be, individually and collectively? The Holy One's Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover protocol is not going to disappoint. Our Divine Bridegroom is neither embarrassed

nor ashamed to get down to the nitty-gritty with us. He knows if He does not address these subjects with us, and empower us, our adversary most definitely will.

We Are Called to Be the World's Most Responsible Respecters of Modesty and Privacy

In today's aliyah our Brilliant Creator/Mentor makes some very specific prophetic and creative announcements regarding the limits we need to place on our curiosity to 'look on nakedness', and thereafter to exercise the urge/appetite to express our romanticism, passion, and sexuality. The *lo tikreivu l'galot ervah* instructions of Leviticus 18 are not just – or even primarily - a warning against physical acts of interfamily incest or sexual assault. That is one intended result, of course. But the focus of the Holy One's instructions will be upon *eye-choices*. His instructions constitute pure revelation from the Wisest Being on the planet about 1. *how and with what motive we are to approach the other human beings He brings into or allows in our sphere of influence* and 2. *what aspects of those people we are to take care never to allow our gaze to either look for, think about, or focus upon*.

The Holy One wants to impress upon us the critical importance for representatives of His Kingdom to be extremely respectful of both the privacy and the *ervah* – *i.e.* exposed, vulnerable, shame-inducing 'nakedness' - of others. This does not only relate to their genitalia; it applies to any part of them – or their behavior - that might bring them 'shame' if publicly exposed. Think of Adam and Chava after the fall, and about everything about both their physical bodies and their behavior that they tried to cover after they ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of 'good' and 'evil'. They did not just cover their genitalia with fig leaves. Using the 'cover' of the trees of the Garden, they sought to hide every aspect of themselves, their dalliance with the Serpent, and their ingestion of the fruit - from the Holy One. Now you understand what 'nakedness' means Biblically – and why we are never to uncover it.

We are not to expose anyone's flesh, their idleness, their drunkenness, or their 'sin' [breaches of Covenant]. Nor are we to pry into or invade any one's privacy. We are to do our best to not even let our eyes light upon either another's nakedness or his or her perverse behaviors - no matter how the opportunity or information presents itself. If we are where we are supposed to be – at our assigned post, doing what we are called to do – we will not even see, much less be distracted by such things.

We are not to indulge in voyeurism – or judgmentalism - at any level. When we approach people we are to announce ourselves, lest we see them uncovered - as Cham [Ham] saw Noach. We are to be very, very careful not to think about, uncover, look upon, or make sport of any aspect of any family or clan member's naked bodies – or for that matter any private or embarrassing fact about them. We are to aggressively look

away, and put it out of our mind, if any of such thing is exposed. Why? What is the big deal? Isn't nakedness 'natural'? Isn't the human body beautiful? Oh, Beloved – the Holy One knows a little something about both the human form and the human libido. Let's try for a few minutes to look at both through *His eyes*! The Holy One created us with organs of gender and with urges and appetites and drives corresponding to those organs. He knows what we were made for – and He knows what will derail us from wholeness, wellness, joy, fruitfulness, and shalom. He intentionally made us with both the *capability* and the *subconscious drive* to reproduce after our own kind. He created us to do this through the exercise, according to proper protocol which He taught to Adam and Chava [Genesis 2:23-25], of the physical and emotional masculinity and femininity He graciously bestowed upon us. He wants the sexuality with which He created us to be a blessing to us – and the world. The adversary of our souls wants it to be a curse – and is very good and making that happen.

If we are to serve as the Holy One's Ambassadors to this world – and not as secret subversive agents of our adversary - we therefore must learn to harness and surrender to the Holy One all our bodily appetites and urges. We are betrothed to Him. We are called – and enabled by His Empowering Breath – to love Him with all our hearts, with all our souls [i.e. with all the operations of our minds, our wills, and our emotions], and with all our strength. We should be so totally occupied with loving and enjoying Him, and collaborating with Him in His Divine Plan of Redemption for the World, that we have neither need nor desire to seek any level of pleasure, satisfaction, or excitement in or from any other source but Him. We do not live to indulge, explore, and seek to satisfy our fleshly appetites. We live to take delight in Him, and to let Him take delight in us. We live for Him. We are given the breath of life on earth at such a time as this not in order to do our will but to do HIS Will. He does not disappoint. Joy unspeakable and full of glory is available to us through communing with Him, learning from Him, and walking alongside Him every waking hour of every day. This is, indeed, the kind of abundant, fruitfulness He created us for. He programmed us so that there is absolutely nothing more pleasurable in the world than His Intimate Companionship⁶.

Of course, the Holy One also created us with organs of gender, and with urges and appetites and drives corresponding to those organs. He intentionally made us with both the *capability* and the *subconscious drive* to reproduce after our own kind. He created us to do this through the exercise, according to proper protocol which He taught to Adam and Chava [Genesis 2:23-25], of the physical and emotional masculinity and femininity He graciously bestowed upon us. He wants the sexuality with which He created us to be a blessing to us – and the world. The adversary of our souls wants it to

⁶ Moreover, when the Messiah came into our lives our flesh, with all its desires and urges contrary to the Will of our God were placed on the execution stake with Him and died. We no longer live, but the Messiah lives in us. And the life we live – and the urges we are to cultivate – are HIS urges, not the urges of our 'old man'.

be a curse – and is very good and making that happen.

In its proper place a fire is a wonderful thing; but if the fire escapes the proper place and gets in your living room floor, or into your curtains or walls, that wonderful thing can turn into a disaster. Human romance and sexuality are a lot like fire. And the holy fire of human romance and sexuality has only one proper place – well-grounded in the covenant bond entered into between one man and one woman. Indulging any physical/sexual curiosity outside the bounds of a God-ordained marriage relationship is like lighting a fire in your living room floor or on your curtains or walls. It will quickly turn what the Holy One designed to be a wonderful thing – i.e. partnership in His work of Creation – into an imploding disaster waiting to happen.

***Understanding that the Eyes and the Mind –
Not the Other Body Parts – Are the Key Organs of Human Sexuality***

Our eyes are not merely organs of sight; they *open the doors of our soul to whatever they gaze upon*. Hence the Holy One addresses the sexuality issue not from the standpoint of what we do with our various reproductive organs, but from the standpoint of what we do with our *eyes*. Our eyes, you see, are the most important organs of human sexuality. What we allow ourselves to look at, we ultimately wind up either longing for or treating with disrespect. When the nakedness of another human is what is involved, the danger of someone getting hurt is far too high to chance it. *Look but do not touch* is simply not the Holy One's way. He says *do not even look* – and turn your head if you accidentally catch a glimpse. Why? What's the harm in 'just looking'? Well, let's talk about that. Since our 'soul' includes our *mind*, our *will*, and our *emotions*, it does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that what we allow ourselves to gaze upon will have an effect on our *what kind of thoughts we think*, on *what we want and/or desire*, and *what sensations and emotions we feel*. If we can keep our eyes on what they should be focused on, we can keep our thoughts on what they were created to focus upon. [See Psalm 1:3, Matthew 6:33, and Philippians 4:8]. If we can keep our eyes from straying away from what He has lovingly ordained to be delightful and fulfilling to us, we can keep our physical and spiritual desires, appetites, and urges actively engaged in the Great Adventure of walking and communing with our Bridegroom-King, learning and doing His Will. **Matthew 6:10.**

As Yeshua taught, the Holy One's *lo tinaf instruction*⁷ *does not refer only to physical acts of intimacy – it goes straight to the heart of what we allow ourselves*

⁷ See **Exodus 20:14**. What we read in English translations of the Bible simply as 'do not commit adultery' is actually much broader, including not only what we know as adultery but also what we know as fornication or indeed any other admixture/dilution involving romantic or sexual intertwining outside the context of a marriage between one man and one woman as described in Genesis 2:23-25.

to look at. See Matthew 5:27-30, wherein the Master expounded upon the inseparable relationship between the *lo tinaf* empowerment and the *lo tachmod* [do not covet/lust after] empowerment. Our calling from the Holy One is not only to refrain from acting out our fantasies –but is to so love and occupy ourselves with delighting in Him that we leave no room in our minds, wills, or emotions for the fantasy to even form, much less take root and grow to maturity. The Holy One knows that *whatever we allow ourselves to look at curiously the adversary of our souls will eventually succeed in getting us to lust after sensually*. And He knows that does not ever turn out well – either for *us* or for *the people we care most about*. Matthew 5:27-30; see also Genesis 3:4-6.

The Special Responsibility of Persons Under the Betrothal Covenant To Exercise Self-Control Over Their Thoughts, Words and Actions

The first instruction the Holy One gave man was to ‘be fruitful, and multiply’. The Holy One equipped males and females in such a way that His instruction could be carried out. The mechanics of the process are well known. But in the eyes of the Holy One, not every man and woman are potential mates. The filling of the earth with human beings is to be done according to ‘family planning’. The details of this ‘family planning’ are spelled out in today’s aliyah. Torah says a Redeemed person is not only not to engage in physical acts with a number of persons [fathers, mothers, stepfathers and stepmothers, aunts, uncles, sisters, in-laws, grandchildren, and any woman, including one’s wife, who is menstruating], we are also to be extremely careful not even to “*approach*” them in such a way that we might ‘*uncover*’ *their nakedness*⁸. That means we are to take precautions not to put ourselves into a position to see underneath that person’s clothing, or to invade that person’s privacy while bathing, dressing/undressing, or using the bathroom. Now that we understand this, it is easy to understand Yeshua’s teaching that ‘*any man who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*’ Matthew 5:26. Yeshua was not changing the Torah. He was not announcing a new teaching. He was not even expanding the scope of Torah. He was merely going back to what the Holy One actually said in Torah as opposed to how men had watered down Torah’s instructions by translation into different languages. It is thus not just the physical act of sexual intercourse which the Holy One considers too dangerous and destructive for mankind to negotiate without Divine help – it is every curious or lustful thought that might lead to it. And it is every instance when we choose to *look upon* any person the Holy One has said is not a potential mate in a sensual, self-interested manner.

⁸ The Hebrew words our English Bibles translate as ‘approach’ in this context are two. One is a form of the verb root *qarav*, Strong’s #7126 - the same word from which the word *korban* (approach to the Holy One through a surrogate) is derived. The second is a form of the verb root *laqach*, Strong’s word #3947, meaning to take unto oneself, as a possession (or obsession).

Please do not however think that the Holy One is just giving us a list of “*thou shalt nots*” in this part of today’s aliyah Our Beloved is speaking to us as a wise and loving Bridegroom to His immature but fully committed bride-to-be. These words of the Holy One – like all His Words - are *words of love*, straight from His beautiful heart. He knows what you have to deal with. He knows the images that are presented to you daily on the television, on billboard and magazine covers, on the Internet, and at the movie theater. He knows the immodest ways people proudly – albeit foolishly - present themselves in public at shopping malls, at beaches, and just about everywhere. He wants you to be ready to navigate all these potential danger zone – as well as your own household and family gatherings – without the slightest bit of distraction.

***All Our Passion Belongs To Him –
And Should Be Fully Engaged In Pursuit of Him and His Agenda,
Instead of in the Gratification of our Own Flesh***

A part of being the ‘holy ones’ we are called to be must involve learning to yield to the Bridegroom-King’s cleansing protocols [washing with His Word] and to therefore exercise increasing levels of restraint in regard to all our fleshly appetites and urges – including, of course, those related to sexual curiosity and expression. This should come as no surprise to us. At Sinai, when the Voice of the Holy One shook the Heavens and the Earth, we heard Him proclaim: *Lo tin'af* [i.e. you will not participate in improper and dangerous mixtures in violation of the Covenant (including, but not limited to engaging in thoughts, conversations or actions smacking of adultery)] and “*Lo tachmod eishet rei'eicha v'avdo v'amato v'shoro v'chamoro v'chol asher l'rei'eicha* [i.e. “You will not desire, covet, take pleasure from, or delight over⁹ your neighbor's wife, his slave, his maid, his ox, his donkey, or anything else that is your neighbor's].

The prophetic announcements that reverberated in our ears and across Sinai’s heights on 6 Sivan in the year of the Exodus spell out, in general form, *how the Holy One sees His Betrothed Bride*. They describe *the way we look to Him through His eyes of love*. They explain to us *what He is molding and shaping us to be*. In pronouncing such declarations the Holy One was not just telling us ‘do this, and ‘don’t do that’ like some power-hungry dictator; He was instead, *prophesying over us*, and *reshaping our characters* and *indeed our very natures*, by the sheer power of His spoken words. He was re-creating our natures – such that we would be able to keep all of our appetites, as well as all activities in which we engage in the ‘pursuit of happiness’ confined within proper, wholesome, healthy boundaries. But even more than that, the prophetic empowerments spoken over us by the Holy One at Sinai had – and still have – the Holy One’s Breath of eternal life in them. They

⁹ The Hebrew verb is *chamad, chet, mem, dalet*, Strong’s Hebrew word #2530, pronounced *khaw-mawd*’. This is the verb root which describes the way *Chava* [Eve], after listening to the Serpent, began to look upon the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil right before she took and ate of it.

are *living chunks of pure life energy - seeds of righteousness* which the Creator has planted in our souls. They have enormous quantities of life energy in them, awaiting the right environment. They are constantly looking for a shaft of Divine light to cause them to germinate, a sprinkling of living water to enable them to sprout, and a season of Divine embrace to incubate and nurture them, and cause them to leaf, and to bud, and to flower, and to bear and mature fruit for all the world to eat.

When the Holy One spoke over man *p'ru ur'vu* [*Be Fruitful and multiply!*] He prophetically instilled in us not only the capacity to do so but the *drive* to accomplish this. In other words He *gave* us sexual energy, so that we could fulfill His plan. But mankind, as merely 'be fruitful and multiply'. We have a magnificent mission on earth and an opposed to animals, has other purposes to fulfill than awesome Divine destiny ordained in Heaven which make the 'be fruitful and multiply' empowerment seem tame by comparison.

We who have been redeemed by the Holy One are *not to behave like animals*. We are *not to be controlled by our lusts* like pagans. Just as we have been called to improve and introduce the Kingdom of the Holy One into our world by sanctifying time, sanctifying the Land, sanctifying food, and sanctifying life, we have also been called to *sanctify* the precious gift of sexuality with which we have been entrusted by our Maker. We are the Holy One's chosen vessels to model to the world the Divinely ordained approach to, purpose of, and limitations on, sexually oriented thoughts, words, and deeds. *If the salt has lost its savor, wherewith will the earth be salted?*

Contained in the latter portions of today's aliyah therefore are more specifics as to how we are to incorporate the *lo tinaf* [you will not participate in improper and dangerous mixtures in violation of the Covenant (including, but not limited to engaging in thoughts, conversations or actions smacking of adultery)] and *lo tachmod* [you will not desire, lust after, covet, or take pleasure inappropriately] empowerments of the Holy One. Our Bridegroom-King today makes very specific prophetic and creative announcements regarding the limits His people are to place on the exercise of their God-given sexuality – how we are to harness and curb the drive and energy, and apply the capacity, given to us by the Holy One in order that the species called man may 'be fruitful and multiply' and establish functional families that bring honor and glory to the Creator of life. The basic principle of Torah regarding sexuality is that its exercise is intended to be restricted to the context of healthy, moral, monogamous, life-long relationship - One man, one woman, fully engaged in the great enterprise of uniting as one flesh.

Our Bridegroom Specifically Warns Against ‘Alternative Lifestyles’ That Other Cultures May Find Acceptable

One of the types of self-indulgent romantic/sexual conduct very much in the news and the public eye today – what men like to call ‘same-sex attraction’ or ‘homosexuality’ – is directly addressed by the Holy One in Torah. This destructive, self-obsessed form of debauchery is nothing new. But in days when our culture trains us from childhood that the reason we are alive is to have as much sex as we can, as often as we can, with as many other people as we can, in as many different ways and forms as we can, it behooves us to go back to the Torah, and see what our Creator and Bridegroom-King has to say on the subject. Regarding the mating of male and male, in particular¹⁰, the Holy One says very specifically:

V'et zachar lo tish'kav mish'kevei ishah to'evah hi

Do not lie with a male as you would with a woman; this is an abomination/disgusting perversion.
[Leviticus 18:22]

Our Maker warns us against letting our thoughts, desires, urges, and appetites get control us to the point we engage in sexually oriented behaviors with another person of the same gender in the strongest possible terms. He describes it in one word - *to'evah*. What is *to'evah*, you ask? It is usually translated into English as *abomination*. It means a *disgusting* and dangerous *perversion/twisting/corruption*. It means taking something designed for a Kingdom purpose – i.e. our organs of reproduction – and using them for a different purpose altogether, namely solely to do that which cannot possibly lead to reproduction, and instead serves only to indulge and gratify the most base and destructive fleshly lusts our fallen wills can come up with.

Abomination? ‘Disgusting perversion’? Dangerous? Corrupting? Those are extremely *strong words*. It appears that our Divine Bridegroom looks upon the indulgence in the eyes, the ears, the mind, or the heart of same-sex attraction based thoughts, speech and behavior as in the same category as copulating with an animal. See **Leviticus 18:23**. Why? Because every second spent wasting time, passion, and energy in such vile, worthless, and self-destructive pursuits is a second we are not spending doing anything close to what He designed, created, brought into this world, and breathed His Own Breath into us to empower us to do. The Holy One knows we have plenty of important, life-giving thoughts to think, words to speak, and actions to engage in. He has made sure of it. His Creation

¹⁰ Lesbianism is not specifically addressed in this passage, although the clear implication of the phrase ‘*mish'kevei ishah*’ in Leviticus 18:22 is that sexual relations are to be only between a man and a woman. See also Romans 1:26-27: *God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.*

provides endless opportunities for us to engage in extremely fruitful, meaningful, fulfilling pursuits. For us to choose to ignore all the things He has put us on earth to do simply because we cannot – or do not want to – resist the urge to satiate our basest curiosities and most indulgent sensual/sexual appetites, is nothing but blatant self-idolatry.

Lest we have any misconception about the disastrous end-result such kinds of behavior will have upon our lives, our spheres of influence, and our assigned mission on earth, our Bridegroom-King tells us:

Al-titam'u b'chol-eleh

Do not let yourselves be defiled by any of these acts.

ki v'chol-eleh nitmei'u ha-goyim asher-ani meshalei'ach mipneichem

It was as a result of them that the nations I am driving out before you became defiled.

V'titma ha-aretz v'efkod avonah aleiha

The land became defiled; so I directed My Judgment at the sin committed there,

V'taki ha-aretz et-yoshveiha

And the land vomited out its inhabitants.

[Leviticus 18:24]

The Holy One does not want us to conform to the baseness of any society on earth. We are not to imitate – act and talk like – the people we see in popular music bands, popular television shows, and beer commercials. A holy land groans with eager expectation for a *holy people*. Meanwhile, let us consider one other aspect of our Divine calling.

But Some Say ... 'What's The Harm in 'Just Looking'?'

But, some reply ... what's the harm in 'just looking'? Sometimes the way they dress these days ... you just can't help seeing things, can you? Well, let's talk about that. Since our 'soul' includes our *mind*, our *will*, and our *emotions*, it does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that what we allow ourselves to gaze upon will inevitably have an effect on our *what kind of thoughts we think*, on *what we want and/or desire*, and *what sensations and emotions we feel*. Our calling from the Holy One is not only to refrain from acting out our fantasies –but is to so love and occupy ourselves with delighting in Him that we leave no room in our minds, wills, or emotions for the fantasy to even form, much less take root and grow to maturity. If we can keep our eyes focused upon what our Creator has instructed us they should be focused upon, we can keep our thoughts on Kingdom matters and advancement of the strategic Kingdom objectives of Tikkun and Redemption. [See **Psalm 1:3**, **Matthew 6:33**, and **Philippians 4:8**]. If we can keep our eyes from straying away from what He has lovingly ordained to be delightful and fulfilling to us, we can keep our physical and spiritual desires, appetites, and urges actively engaged in the Great Adventure of walking and communing with

our Bridegroom-King, learning and doing His Will. **Matthew 6:10.**

The Holy One knows that *whatever we allow ourselves to look at curiously the adversary of our souls will eventually succeed in getting us to lust after sensually.* And He knows that does not ever turn out well – either for *us* or for *the people we care most about.* **Matthew 5:27-30; see also Genesis 3:4-6.** So, as Yeshua taught, the ***lo tinaf*** instruction¹¹ does not refer only to physical acts of intimacy – it goes straight to the heart of what we allow ourselves to look at. See Matthew 5:27-30, wherein the Master expounded upon the inseparable relationship between the ***lo tinaf*** empowerment and the ***lo tachmod*** [do not covet/lust after] empowerment.

The Holy One knows that our eyes regularly see, and *zoom in* on, things from the ‘non-Covenant’ realms – especially things ‘unclean’ and ‘common/profane’¹². He knows that these ‘eye insults’ from the *tamei* and *chol* realms are every bit as dangerous to our *nafshot* [souls/psyches – i.e. our minds, our wills, and our emotions] as the ingestion of the flesh of swine, flesh-eaters, blood-sucking insects, or bottom-feeding creatures from the seas is to our physical body. He knows that what we let our organs of vision focus upon tends to affect us in ways that we don’t even begin to understand. He knows that what we see can whip our fleshly urges and appetites into a feeding frenzy. He knows that what our eyes choose to light upon can stimulate fleshly sentiments and trigger negative emotions. He knows it can over-stimulate our folly-prone pseudo-intellect. It can make us afraid. It can get us angry. It can move us to disgust. It can seduce us into becoming judgmental, cynical – even depressed.

The Holy One knows that what we look at can, therefore, interrupt the constant communion with Him we desperately need and distract us from the glorious redemptive, restorative healing mission to which we are called. The Holy One knows that we desperately need Him to touch – and heal – and dramatically redirect the focus of – our eyes. He knows we need Him to breathe on the Divine Seed within us, and stir it back to life the way a breeze brings a smoldering ember back to flame. And so, the Holy One looks at us – sees the ‘good’ though men can see only the ‘evil’ – and smiles. He stretches forth a welcoming Hand. He breathes upon the Words of Torah that we already have inside us, bringing them to their energy to our minds. He causes fresh revelation to leap off the scroll as we read and study. He invites us to step into the revelation flow, follow in His footsteps, and return to the intimate communion

¹¹ See **Exodus 20:14**. What we read in English translations of the Bible simply as ‘do not commit adultery’ is actually much broader, including not only what we know as adultery but also what we know as fornication or indeed any other admixture/dilution involving romantic or sexual intertwining outside the context of a marriage between one man and one woman as described in Genesis 2:23-25.

¹² The *tumah* ‘insults’ wrought upon our souls/psyches by things from the *tamei* and *chol* realms can, of course, enter through other human stimulation-gates – especially the ears, the nose, the mouth, the sensory receptors of the skin, and the brain’s centers of mood, attitude, opinion, and emotion. But the eyes are the main and most vulnerable receptors; hence, they are what the Holy One addresses in this parsha.

with Him our *nafshot* desperately need. He absolutely delights in walking the ancient pathways of Torah with us. If, as, when, and to the extent we train our eyes to focus on Him, instead of gawking at the ‘evil’ that lies in our physical field of vision, He leads us to a well-lived life – a life characterized by *shalom that transcends understanding*; by irrepressible joy; by unshakeable hope, by inexhaustible inspiration; by obstacle-overcoming love; by meaningful interactions with texts and traditions; and by vibrant, purposeful relationships that have redemptive, restorative effects - and stunning levels of cross-generational impact - on people, places, and bloodlines. Messiah’s Way – which starts, of course, with the Way of Torah - is the exceedingly narrow. It is admittedly sometimes difficult. But it leads to, and offers the precious reward of, *life, health, and peace*. As participants in the Avrahamic Covenant, we are called to take up the Master’s easy yoke and walk this great road with Him. Very, very few, however, actually do so. Congratulations and *shalom*, Brother or Sister - you are being offered every opportunity to become one of those few. Through interaction with the Holy One’s wonderful, powerful, creative, and prophetic Words we are given the opportunity to ascend to yet another level of spiritual consciousness – *and responsibility*.

The holy fire of human sexuality has only one proper place – the marriage of one man and one woman. Indulging a physical/sexual attraction outside the bounds of a God-ordained marriage relationship is like lighting a fire in your living room floor or on your curtains or walls. It makes something the Holy One designed to be a wonderful thing – a partnership in His work of Creation – into a potential disaster.

Toxic, Destabilizing, Destructive, and Divisive Forms of Sexuality

Since all *our passion belongs to Him*, the Holy One does not stop this part of the discourse on Holiness with a general discussion of the human tendency to get all strung out on romance and sexually charged thought, speech, and conduct. He goes on to cover what happens when sexual appetite and curiosity become obsession, and hormones and lust run amuck. There are several areas of destabilizing, dangerous, toxic, and divisive forms/manifestations of sexuality that are totally incompatible with our high calling as ambassadors of His Kingdom. The Holy One warns us in the strongest language possible to avoid any adulteration – whether in thought, in voyeuristic viewing, or in actual deed.

The list of toxic, destabilizing, destructive, and divisive forms of sexuality begins with *incest*, which the Holy One wants us to understand comes in many unhealthy forms. **Leviticus 18:6-18.**

The second area/situation in which the Holy One wants us to know that any sexuality in thought, voyeuristic viewing, or deed would be toxic, destabilizing, destructive, and divisive involves when a woman is *niddah* – *i.e.* menstruating. **Leviticus 18:19.**

The next thing the Holy One includes in his ‘warning list’ against destabilizing, destructive, divisive sexuality encounters *common adultery*. This refers to any intimate, romantic, and/or sexual encounters – or thoughts, or voyeuristic viewing – involving a person who is either married to or intended for someone else. **Leviticus 18:20.**

The Holy One also warns us about the destabilizing, destructive, divisive effect of any of us letting our ‘seed’ be surrendered to Molech. **Leviticus 18:21.**

Another area that addressed is what today is commonly called homosexuality today. **Leviticus 18:22.** The Holy One considers this kind of perversion of the capacities of thought, sight, and interaction as an abomination.

Yet another issue the Holy One wants us to know is destabilizing, destructive, and divisive is engaging in, fantasizing about, or viewing voyeuristically any kind of sexually arousing behavior with any species of animal. **Leviticus 18:23.**

The Bridegroom-King – Who designed and created human sexuality - wants to give us HIS PERSPECTIVE on all these very timely topics, at least as they may try to rear their ugly head among His covenant people. Before we listen to the modern media, the all-up-in-the-flesh entertainment industry, filthy street talk, or our own flesh and/or situation- and sensuality-driven hormones, don’t we owe it to our Creator to at least hear Him – the One Who actually invented human sexuality in the first place – out about why He created it and how He designed it to work?

Questions For Today’s Study

1. In Leviticus 18:3 the Holy One, like a loving bridegroom who is trying to prevent his bride-to-be from messing up her life, warns us about something.

[A] What is it He warns us about?

[B] What does that mean for us today?

[C] The last word in Vayikra 18:3 is translated “ordinances”. Look up that word in Strong’s and Gesenius, and write the Hebrew word and its definition(s).

[D] What do you think are the “ordinances” of the Egyptians and the Canaanites that we deal with today?

2. In Leviticus 18:5 the Holy One says that through *asah*-ing the Holy One’s “statutes” [NIV “decrees”] and “judgments” [NIV “laws”] ha-Adam [the man created in the Garden, in the image of the Holy One] shall “live”. The word “statutes/decrees” is the same word used in 18:3 to describe the “ways”, or “customs” or “lifestyle” or “value-system”- in that case, of the Canaanites and Egyptians. This means the Holy One has “ways”, “customs”, a “lifestyle” and a “value-system” that He wants us to walk in that is different than that of “Canaanites” and “Egyptians”. Moshe

asked the Holy One to “... *Teach me Your ways*”

[A] Look up the word in verse 5 that is translated “*judgments*” [NIV “laws”]. Write that word and its definitions.

[B] The word translated “*live*” has as its root the word *chaya*, which is Hebrew word no. 2421 in Strong’s. Using what you find in Gesenius, describe Hebrew concept underlying the word *chaya*.

[C] Considering the concept about which you just wrote, what does The Holy One say will happen to a person who heeds [*sh’mar’s*] His ways and His written instructions for life?

[D] What is the significance of the reference to ha-Adam [the man created in the Garden in the Holy One’s image] in this passage?

3. In the next few verses of Torah the Holy One gives a description of sexually oriented activities outside of the proper, intended relationship, and warns that these practices must be avoided. He starts by warning against sexually oriented relationships between close relatives.

[A] Why did the Holy One create sexuality?

[B] In the context of what relationship did the Holy One bless sexuality? Read Ephesians 5:22-33 and Hebrews 13:4.

[C] What responsibility(ies) did the Holy One intend for a man to undertake toward a woman before sexual intimacy could exist without injury/damage [physical, emotional, and spiritual] to both partners?

[D] Make a list of the different family relationships between which sexually oriented conduct is not ever to occur (example: nephew/aunt; uncle/niece ...).

[E] Next, the Holy One warns against expressing sexuality in certain ways outside the family. List the specific types of perverse sexual activity outside the family which are warned against.

[F] Note the different Hebrew verbs/verb phrases used by the Holy One to describe the various sexually oriented behaviors which He wants us to know are destructive, so we can avoid situations which might tend to bring them about. Torah says a Redeemed person is not to “*approach*” [Hebrew *qarab*, Strong’s #7126, the same word from which the word *korban* (approach to the Holy One through a surrogate) is derived] or “*take*” [Hebrew *laqach*, Strong’s word #3947, meaning to take unto oneself, as a possession (or obsession)] certain people to ‘*uncover*’ *that person’s nakedness* (that is, to put ourselves into a position to see underneath that person’s clothing, or to invade that person’s privacy while bathing, dressing/undressing, or using the bathroom, much less to engage in sexual behavior).

One is also not to “*lie carnally with*” [literally, in Hebrew, “sow seed in”] a neighbor’s wife, or “*lie with*” [Hebrew *shakab*, meaning to lay down, either to sleep or to engage in an act of intercourse] with a person of the same sex, or an animal.

What all do you think Torah is trying to tell us to avoid by using this variety of

verbs/verb phrases, and why do you think the Holy One wants us to avoid such things?

[G] There is one evil practice warned against in Vayikra 18 which seemingly does not involve sexual activity-what is it?

[H] What does the mention of that evil practice tell you about how the Holy One feels about “family”?

[I] What does the Holy One say the land of Israel did to the Canaanites for engaging in these perversions?

[J] What does He say should happen to the individual who engages in any of these perversions?

[K] What does He say will happen to any group of people [nation] who accepts such perversions as a “way” or a lifestyle?

4. In Leviticus 18:6-19 the Holy One gives a description of uses of our gift of vision that lead to the potential for activities outside our purpose and destiny. He starts by warning against looking at the nakedness of other people with whom we are likely to come into contact. Here are some questions upon which to meditate as you study the Holy One’s instructions in this regard.

[A] Why did the Holy One create sexuality? Why did He make us enjoy the sensation of romance?

[B] In the context of what relationship did the Holy One bless romantic and sexual thoughts, conversations, and activities? Read Ephesians 5:22-33 and Hebrews 13:4.

[C] What responsibility(ies) did the Holy One intend for a man to undertake toward a woman before any level of sexual curiosity could be explored without injury/damage [physical, emotional, and spiritual] to both partners?

[D] Make a list of the different family relationships in the context of which looking upon the nakedness of another is not ever to occur (example: nephew/aunt; uncle/niece ...).

[E] Note the different Hebrew verbs/verb phrases used by the Holy One to describe the various sexually oriented behaviors which He wants us to know are destructive, so we can avoid situations which might tend to bring them about. Torah says a Redeemed person is not to “*approach*” [Hebrew *qarab*, Strong’s #7126, the same word from which the word *korban* (approach to the Holy One through a surrogate) is derived] or “*take*” [Hebrew *laqach*, Strong’s word #3947, meaning to take unto oneself, as a possession (or obsession)] certain people to ‘*uncover*’ *that person’s nakedness* (that is, to put ourselves into a position to see underneath that person’s clothing, or to invade that person’s privacy while bathing, dressing/undressing, or using the bathroom, much less to engage in sexual behavior).

What all do you think Torah is trying to tell us to avoid by using this variety of verbs/verb phrases, and why do you think the Holy One wants us to avoid such

things?

5. The people of Egypt and Kena'an were intensely self-centered and self-indulgent, not at all unlike Americans today. The Egyptians and Kena'ani way, like the way of secular Americans today, was to take romance and sexuality – which were given for purposes of human reproduction by the Holy One [remember, the first man, Adam, was created as combined male/female, and the feminine aspect was removed from Him when the Holy One made woman from his rib] – and proclaim “the more the better”. God-given inhibitions were mocked. God’s way was ridiculed as ‘unenlightened’. Sexuality – often labeled innocuously as ‘romance’ or ‘attraction’ – in every relationship was normalized, even encouraged. Why? Because they were searching for something. Our inclination toward romance and our urges of sexuality are intended to direct us to the Holy One, our ultimate partner, for Him to reveal to us His best. It is actually union with Him, spiritually, and consequently getting into the center of His Will physically, in this life, which our souls desire. In that union is our satisfaction, and our fulfillment. But the societies around us accept a cheap counterfeit. And they are left with nothing of value. We *must* be different.

What responsibility(ies) did the Holy One intend for a man to undertake toward a woman before romantic interaction or sexual intimacy could exist without injury/damage [physical, relational, emotional, and spiritual] to both partners?

6. There is one evil practice warned against in today’s aliyah which seemingly does not involve either romantically or sexually oriented thought, speech, or activity.

[A] What is that practice?

[B] What does the mention of that evil practice tell you about how the Holy One feels about raising children and prioritizing “family”?

[C] What does the Holy One say the land of Israel did to the Canaanites for engaging in perversions like same-sex unions?

[D] What does the Holy One say should happen to the individual who engages in any of these perversions?

[E] What does the Holy One say will happen to any group of people [nation] who accepts such perversions as a “way” or a lifestyle?

7. In today’s Haftarah reading we are told that Yechezkiel had a vision. The Holy One appeared to Him and said:

Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to Me; they are all bronze, tin, iron, and lead, in the midst of a furnace; they have become dross from silver.

[Ezekiel 22:19]

[A] What is the ‘house of Israel’?

[B] What is ‘dross’?

[C] What does the Holy One mean when He says the house of Israel has

become as dross to Him?

[D] What does the Holy One intend to do with the 'House of Israel' once He gathers them into the midst of the Holy City?

8. In the B'rit Chadasha reading for today we read:

*Don't you know that your bodies are members of Messiah?
Shall I then take the members of Messiah, and make them members of a prostitute?
May it never be! Or don't you know that he who is joined to a prostitute is one body? For,
"The two," says he, "will become one flesh."
But he who is joined to the Holy One is one spirit.*

[I Corinthians 6:15-17]

[A] What is the Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as 'prostitute'? What is the verb root of that Hebrew word? Research that Hebrew word in Strong's Concordance and Gesenius' Lexicon and describe what action it is talking about.

[B] What does Shaul suggest happens when two people join their bodies together?

[C] Do you think this happens, to any degree, when people hold hands?

[D] Do you think this happens, to any degree, when people kiss?

[E] If you become one with someone, does that just mean physically, or are there abiding and potentially dangerous mind, will, emotional and spiritual issues that flow from this unification?

[F] How do you think the bonding together of people over romantic or sexual encounters like holding hands, kissing, etc. works its way out in the future when the two physical bodies go their separate ways?

[G] What spiritual reasons does Shaul give for not engaging in sexual activity outside God's plan?

[H] In what ways does engaging in sexually oriented conduct outside the bounds set by the Holy One cause injury or damage, and to whom does it cause this damage?

*May passion for the Holy One override all our other passions, appetites, and desires;
And may we model a lifestyle of such immaculate passion to all the world.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 119:153-160 [RESH]

*Consider my affliction, and deliver me, for I don't forget your law.
Plead my cause, and redeem me! Revive me according to your promise.
Salvation is far from the wicked, for they don't seek your statutes.
Great are your tender mercies, O Holy One. Revive me according to your ordinances.
Many are my persecutors and my adversaries. I haven't swerved from your testimonies.*

*I look at the faithless with loathing, because they don't observe your word.
Consider how I love your precepts.
Revive me, O Holy One, according to your lovingkindness.
All of your words are truth. Every one of your righteous ordinances endures forever.*