

# Leviticus on Homosexuality

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## INTRODUCTION

Homosexuals are calling for a reformation of the Christian church much like the theological reformation of Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries. They are determined to completely eradicate any aversion among Christians to same-sex lifestyles and achieve nothing less than full acceptance. They view the Church as a major blockade to their endeavors. Some groups are well organized and well-funded while other voices may represent only determined individuals who are socially influential. The goal is the same, whether passive or contentious.

Writers sympathetic to this movement author books that focus on reinterpreting and dismissing all biblical references to same-sex interactions. It is nothing short of a theological cleansing. God is depicted *only* as a loving God who welcomes everyone to the table. Jesus is presented *only* as the defender of those excluded from the table. The book of Leviticus is generally being dismissed, and its abominations are being reformatted to highlight a few practices that some Christians have embraced. They want a reformation by transformation.

## DISPUTED VERSES OF LEVITICUS

Divinely inspired words do not lend themselves to reinterpretation, for each noun and verb in these disputed verses are the same nouns and verbs as found in the whole of the Hebrew Bible. To reinterpret these words of Leviticus would be tantamount to reinterpreting the entirety of these and similar words throughout the Orthodox Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament. An unconscionable and unwarranted endeavor.

Leviticus 11:45 “*For I am the Lord who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy* (קדוּשׁ, qâdôsh, kaw-doshe', holy, sacred, H6918), *for I am holy.*” (NKJV)

Leviticus 18:22 “*You shall not lie* (שָׁכַב, shâkab, shaw-kab', rest, sexual, H7901) *with a male* (זָכָר, zâkâr, zaw-kawr', male, man, H2145) *as with a woman* (אִשָּׁה, ishshâh, ish-shaw', female, woman, H802). *It is an abomination* (תּוֹעֵבָה, tô'êbah, to-ay-baw', disgusting, abhorrent, H8441).” (NKJV)

Leviticus 20:13 “*If a man lies with a male* (זָכָר, zâkâr, zaw-kawr', male, man, H2145) *as he lies with a woman* (אִשָּׁה, ishshâh, ish-shaw', female, woman, H802), *both of them have committed an abomination* (תּוֹעֵבָה, tô'êbah, to-ay-baw', disgusting, abhorrent, H8441). *They shall surely be put to death* (מוֹת, mûth, mooth, die, kill, H4191). *Their blood* (דָּם, dâm, dawm, blood, mankind or animal, H1818), *shall be upon them.*” (NKJV)

## TEMPLE PROSTITUTE WORDS

Advocates of same-sex relationships argue that the original Hebrew words in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 refer only to male temple prostitutes instead of loving monogamous homosexuals. But the Hebrew words of Leviticus do not refer to temple prostitutes or anything similar. Words of temple prostitution will be found in Deuteronomy 23:17: (קְדֻשָּׁה, q'dêshâh, ked-ay-shaw', female temple prostitute, H6948) and (קְדֻשׁ, qâdêsh, kaw-dashe', male temple prostitute, H6945).

Perhaps we should let the Orthodox Jewish Bible speak for itself in verse 17, “*There shall be no kedeshah (ritual prostitute) of the banot Yisroel, nor a kadesh (sodomite ritual prostitute) of the bnei Yisroel.*” The words of Leviticus 18:22, 20:13 do not refer to temple prostitution. See also [Hebrew Torah View on Homosexuality](http://HebrewTorahView.com/Homosexuality) at [torahweb.org/torah/special/2010/homosexuality.html](http://torahweb.org/torah/special/2010/homosexuality.html) (See the full text of this online document below)

## BIBLICAL RESOURCES

JAMES STRONG (1822-1894) was an American academic, biblical scholar, lexicographer, theologian and Drew Theological Seminary professor of Exegetical Theology. Strong is best known for being the creator of Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible which catalogues 8,674 Hebrew words in the Old Testament and 5,624 Greek words in the New Testament. He spent thirty-five years detailing each word and prefixing the letter "H" for Hebrew words and the letter "G" for Greek words.

James Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Abingdon Press Inc., Nashville, 1894

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia by James Orr, Howard-Severance Company, Chicago, 1915

William Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 2001

Online Bibles:

Bible Gateway ~ 68 English and 4 Hebrew ~ [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com)

Greek Septuagint ~ [ellopos.net/elpenor/greek-texts/septuagint/chapter.asp?book=3](http://ellopos.net/elpenor/greek-texts/septuagint/chapter.asp?book=3)

Hebrew Interlinear Bible ~ [scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/Hebrew\\_Index.htm](http://scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/Hebrew_Index.htm)

Online Bible Commentaries:

Albert Barnes, Adam Clark, John Gill, Carl Keil-Franz Delitzsch

Online Bible Dictionaries:

Matthew Easton, Robert Jamieson, Andrew Fausset, David Brown, Joseph Thayer

### TORAH VIEW ON HOMOSEXUALITY

[torahweb.org/torah/special/2010/homosexuality.html](http://torahweb.org/torah/special/2010/homosexuality.html)

This *dvar Torah* is from TorahWeb's Rabbinic Board: Rav Hershel Schachter, Rav Mayer Twersky, Rav Michael Rosensweig, Rav Mordechai Willig

"*K'maase Eretz Mitzrayim asher yeshavtem ba lo sa'asu* - like the practice of the land of Egypt in which you dwelled do not do" (*Vayikra* 18:3)

This verse prohibits the most immoral forms of behavior - idolatry, incest, adultery, bloodshed, male and female homosexual activity and bestiality<sup>[1]</sup>. The prohibition against male homosexual behavior is repeated in *Vayikra* 18:22. Prohibited homosexual activity includes any non-platonic physical contact; even *yichud* (seclusion) with someone of the same gender is forbidden for homosexually active individuals<sup>[2]</sup>. (Yellow highlight added)

In addition to its legislative content, this verse also provides a fundamental insight into human nature and propensities. The Torah emphasizes "*asher yeshavtem ba* - in which you dwelled"; but Jews of all generations most certainly know that we lived in *Eretz Mitzrayim*. The Torah's statement of the obvious warns us to be on guard against societal influence. We become susceptible to even the most egregious and vile forms of behavior if we do not guard against societal influence. "Human nature is such that a person in his beliefs, character, dispositions, and actions is drawn after his friends and colleagues and acts in the same fashion as his countrymen" (Rambam *Hilchos De'os* 6:1). (How to

take such precautionary measures will, God willing, be discussed below.) Thus a full interpretive translation of the verse reads: the behavior of *Eretz Mitzrayim*, to which, having lived there, you may be inclined, is forbidden to you.

Ramban<sup>[3]</sup> comments that the descent to *Mitzrayim* foreshadows the current *galus*. He highlights the historical symmetry between the descent to *Mitzrayim* and the origins of the current *galus*. Sadly, we can highlight an additional point of symmetry. The "*Mitzrayim*" in which we find ourselves is also plagued by aberrant behavior, including the practice of homosexuality. Here too due to societal influence we have become susceptible to such behavior. Moreover, *Mitzrayim* of old not only engaged in corrupt behavior, it legitimized and mainstreamed such behavior. "Our sages said, what were they (i.e. *Mitzriyim*) accustomed to doing? Men married men and women married women..."<sup>[4]</sup> Similarly, the *Mitzrayim* of today's *galus* seeks to legitimize and mainstream the abominable practice (*toeiva*) of homosexuality. Frighteningly, we who live here are not only practically affected, but also axiologically and ideationally infected. Not only our behavior but our very *Weltanschauung* has been compromised and contaminated.

Let us illustrate and elaborate the effect of society's insidious influence regarding homosexuality. In a Torah society, unaffected and uninfected by today's *Mitzrayim*, what should one's attitude be towards homosexual behavior and homosexual individuals? Homosexual behavior is absolutely prohibited and constitutes an abomination<sup>[5]</sup>. Discreet, unconditionally *halachically* committed Jews who do not practice homosexuality but feel same sex attraction (ssa) should be sympathetically and wholeheartedly supported. They can be wonderful Jews, fully deserving of our love, respect, and support. They should be encouraged to seek professional guidance. Moreover, in an uninfected Torah society, appropriate sympathy for discreet *shomrei Torah u'mitzvos* who experience but do not act upon ssa is clearly distinguished from brazen public identification of their *yetzer hara* for forbidden behavior. In a pure Torah society people would recognize that every individual *neshama* is given its own unique constellation of challenges and some of these challenges consist of feeling an impulse to forbidden behavior. But every individual *neshama* also possesses the resilience and strength to triumph over its challenges<sup>[6]</sup>.

How painful, sad and sobering is the sharp contrast between the clear attitude that should prevail in a pure Torah community and the confusion that exists among well-intentioned individuals within our communities. We are not speaking of the heresy of elements who although identifying themselves as Orthodox demand (sic.) change in the Torah, *rachamanah litzlan*, a clear violation of the thirteen principles of faith. Instead we are speaking of the confusion caused by today's *Mitzrayim* within our communities. Due to the influence of today's *Mitzrayim*, appropriate sympathy in discreet settings has become conflated with public, celebratory identification of people with an urge for forbidden behavior. In today's *galus* ssa is not viewed as a challenge of *kevishas hayetzer* (overcoming and taming

impulses for forbidden behavior), but rather as a troubling *halacha* lacking in compassion, *rachmanah litzlan*.

The influence of today's *Mitzrayim* on our thinking is sadly and dramatically evident. The light of Torah, however, dispels confusion. *Talmud Torah*, when honestly and unconditionally pursued, allows us to recognize societally induced pre/misconceptions and biases. *Talmud Torah* allows us to absorb the divine Weltanschauung. Inevitably, with respect to homosexuality, *Talmud Torah* will place us at odds with political correctness and the temper of the times. Nevertheless, we must be honest with ourselves, and with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, regardless of political correctness, considerations or consequences.

Editor's note: Readers may also be interested in the following audio *shiurim*: [A Response to the Recent "Orthodox" Gay Forum](#) and [Absolute Truth and Alternate Life Styles: The Torah's Position on Homosexuality](#)

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[1] The *Sifra* (*Vayikra* 138:5), cited by Rashi ad loc. refers to the atrocities of *Eretz Mitzrayim* as being the most corrupt of all nations. The *Sifra* (138:7) further provides the list of activities in which the *Mitzriyim* engaged. See also Rambam *Hilchos Isurei Biah* 21:8.

[2] Rambam *Hilchos Isurei Biah* 21:1,2; 22:1,2. See also *Shulchan Aruch, Even HoEzer* 24

[3] Commentary to *Breishis* 43:14, 47:18

[4] Rambam *Hilchos Isurei Biah* 21:8

[5] *Vayikra* 18:22

[6] In the present forum we are not discussing the *halachic* category of *shotim*.