

Sat 28 April 2007
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Congregation Adat Reyim
Torah discussion on Aharei Mot/Kedoshim [Vayikra 16:1-20:27]

Sex

Code of Holiness

Kedoshim tihyu ki kadosh ani Hashem elokechem

You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. [Lev 19:1]

1. Sex With Whom: *Lev 18:7-26.*

-No incest:

-No sex with father, mother, stepmother, sister, grandchild, stepsister, aunt, uncle, uncle's wife, daughter in law, sister in law (*exception: uncle-niece OK*)

-No sex with a woman and her daughter, her son's daughter, her daughter's daughter, her sister

-Before Torah:

-Sarah, Abraham's wife, was his half-sister

-Lot had sex with his daughters, begat Amnon and Moab

-Jacob married two sisters

-Moses' parents were nephew and aunt (*Num. 26:59*)

-**No bestiality:** No sex with animals; 'it is a perversion'

-**No homosexuality:** Men must not have sex with other men; 'it is an abomination'

-Lesbianism forbidden only by rabbis, not Torah (*Rambam, Yad, Issurei Bi'ah, 21:8*)

-**No adultery:** Men must have no sex with married women not their wives ("neighbor's wife")

-If woman is unmarried, sex frowned upon but not prohibited per Torah (*Yad, Ishut 1:14*)

Lev 18:27. For the people of the land who preceded you, did all of these abominations, and the land became defiled.

Why these taboos? Incest may lead to sick children, less variety in society; but the others?

-In US today

-Adultery and homosexuality not illegal (were in the past)

-Incest and bestiality illegal

-In time, they too may become permitted. What are we losing in this process?

-Gentiles have fewer incest restrictions

-Gentiles ('Noahides') may marry any relative except mother, stepmother, and maternal sister (*Rambam, Hilchot Melachim 9:5*)

- A convert to Judaism may marry many of his non-Jewish relatives (*Sanhedrin 57b ff*)
- A Gentile slave to a Jew may marry his daughter and his mother (*Sanhedrin 58b*)
 - He is not fully Jewish and not fully Gentile.

2. What Sex

- Sex is not shameful, sinful or obscene
- Sex is not a necessary evil, not for procreation only; can be for fun
- Sex is a man's duty and a woman's right (he must procreate; she doesn't)
 - Every man must have at least one boy and one girl (*Yevamot 61b*)
 - Hormonal birth control OK: Pills, patches, injections, implants, etc
 - Contraceptive birth control not OK: coitus interruptus, condoms, vasectomy
 - Unless for protection against sexually-transmitted diseases
- Wife has 3 basic rights, which husband may not reduce: food, clothing, and sex
- Husband must give sex when wife desires it (*Pesachim 72b, Eruvin 100b*)
- No Hebrew word for "sex". Closest: 'Yada' (Yod-Dalet-Ayin) means "to know" (involves both body and mind)
- Physical compatibility important: If either finds the other unattractive, they can't marry
- No rape
 - Rapist fined 50 shekels of silver; must marry her if she accepts; may not divorce her
- No sex while drunk or quarreling
- Sex may not be used to manipulate a spouse
- Sex may not be withheld to punish a spouse
- Both must be naked during sex (*Ketubot 48a*) (hole in sheet is a myth)
 - If either disagrees, grounds for divorce (*Shulchan Arukh, Even ha-Ezer 76-13*).
- Frequency of sex specified in Talmud based on husband's occupation
- Husband may not take a vow to abstain from sex, may not take a long journey, without his wife's permission (*Ketubot 62b*)
- If husband refuses sex, he must divorce his wife, even if they already have children
- Husband must contain himself so his wife reaches orgasm first
 - 'If [men] control themselves to allow their wives to have an orgasm first, their children shall be males' (*Niddah 31a*)
- It's a particular mitzvah for scholars to have sex Friday nights, but
 - 'Scholars must not always be with their wives like cocks' (*Berakhot 22a*)
- No sex in public (*Yad, Issurei Bi'ah, 21:14*)
- All forms of consensual sex are allowed:
 - Talmud: R. Johanan b. Dahabai said: The Ministering Angels told me four things: People [have children who are] born lame because they [practice anal sex]; dumb, because they [practice oral sex]; deaf, because they talk during sex; blind, because they look at [the genitals]. R. Johanan said: This is the view of R. Johanan b. Dahabai; but our Sages said: The halachah is not as R. Johanan

b. Dahabai said, but a man may do whatever he pleases with his wife [with her consent]. (*Nedarim 20a-b*)

But what about sin of Onan (wasted seed)?

"It is not considered like the act of Er and Onan unless it is his intention to destroy the seed and it is his habit to always do so. However, if it is occasional and the desire of his heart is to come upon his wife in an unnatural way, it is permitted. (*Tosafot on Yevamoth 34*)."

-Sex is from yetzer hara (evil inclination), but that can be good:

"Were it not for the evil inclination, no man would build a home and marry" (*Gen. R. 9:7*).

-Sex can be learned

-Rabbi Kahana once went in and hid under [his teacher's] Rab's bed. He heard him chatting [with his wife], joking, then [proceeding with sex]... [Rab] said to him: 'Kahana, are you here? Go out, because it is rude.' [Kahana] replied: 'It is a matter of Torah, and I have to learn.' (*Berachot 62a*)

- Rabbis of Talmud disagree on whether husband may fantasize about another woman during sex with wife.

-Sex positions:

'The Rabbis taught: If a man has sex standing, he will be liable to convulsions; if sitting, to spasms; if she is above and he below, to diarrhea (*Gittin 70a*)

-Nevertheless, it's allowed

3. Sex When

-No sex during menstruation (Lev 18:7-26; 20:18)

-From first sign of blood to evening of seventh "clean" day (minimum 12 days)

-Torah says no sex, but rabbis added no touching and no sleeping in the same bed

-Before resuming sex, woman must go to kosher mikvah

-Modern medicine says: To increase fertility, no sex for the two weeks around a woman's period (to increase man's sperm count)

-No sex on Yom Kippur, Tish'a B'Av, during mourning, and on other special days

-Sex must be at night and in the dark (*Niddah 17*)

-R. Hisda ruled: A man is forbidden to perform his marital duty in the day-time, for it is said, 'But you shall love your neighbor as yourself.' [How does that constitute] proof? Abaye replied: He might observe something repulsive in her and she would thereby become loathsome to him (*Niddah 17a*)

but

-"Although sex is reserved for the night, if, because of one's nature, one finds himself forced to sleep at night, and ought not be aroused or excited, or if the

woman's nature is such that she is overtaken by sleep at night and is not sexually receptive at that time, one is permitted to have sex during the day...
(Meiri on Niddah 17a).

Bottom Line:

- Judaism has little to say about **what** you do in the privacy of your bedroom
- It has plenty to say, however, about with **whom** you do it and **when** you do it.