

Christian Faith and Practice Through...Sex

In this way you will separate the people of Isra'el from their uncleanness, so that they will not die in a state of uncleanness for defiling my tabernacle which is there with them. (Lev. 15:31 CJB)

“Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, because all the nations which I am expelling ahead of you are defiled with them. The land has become unclean, and this is why I am punishing it – the land itself will vomit out its inhabitants. But you are to keep my laws and rulings and not engage in any of these disgusting practices, neither the citizen nor the foreigner living with you; for the people of the land have committed all these abominations, and the land is now defiled. If you make the land unclean, it will vomit you out too, just as it is vomiting out the nation that was there before you. For those who engage in any of these disgusting practices, whoever they may be, will be cut off from their people. So keep my charge not to follow any of these abominable customs that others before you have followed and thus defile yourselves by doing them. I am Adonai your God.” (Lev. 18:24-30 CJB)

I thought I'd get your attention with the title. Okay, so sex as God intended is not a disgusting practice, it's disgusting if not done as He intended. This is another in a series of basic articles intended to be an introduction and a help to those of us who are just beginning a Torah submissive walk with the Father. You might want to send the kids out of the room unless you are ready to explain the birds and the bees to them, especially as it pertains to this article. I will try to be as delicate as possible, but most of the time there is just no other way to say it. So if your sensibilities are easily offended perhaps you should put this away for another day.

The Hebrew word for “knowing intimately” is *yadah*. This is also the word for the sex act. In Genesis, Adam “knew” his wife Eve (Gen. 4:1,25) and many other places we are told we should “know” the Lord (Jer. 9:23,24, 31:35; Hos. 2:20, 6:3). The Lord “knows” those who are His (Nah. 1:7). In Matthew 7:21-23 Jesus says that He didn't “know” (Greek *ginosko*) those who talked a lot about what they did for Him, but He does know those who rely on what He did for them. Physical intimacy between husband and wife can be a picture of Spiritual intimacy between the body of the Messiah and the Messiah. Because of this we should keep the marriage bed pure (Heb. 13:4).

There really are no laws pertaining to the sex act itself as practiced between two married people, except for the rule on not sharing sex during the flow of menstruation (Lev. 18:19, 20:18). As far as I know nothing else is prohibited, so

sensitivity and compassion should be the rule for figuring out what's an acceptable activity and what is not. If you want to swing from the chandelier in a Tarzan outfit, go right ahead. If you use a trampoline, more power to ya. If batteries are included, I don't want to know about it. Just remember to communicate and treat the other person as you would want to be treated. And guys, this means making a real effort to slow down and understand your woman. They frequently need a little more "mental" involvement than we do.

There are books out there that are better at these details than I am. I don't claim to be an expert; my wife and I have had to do a lot of talking and thinking and experimenting. Not that I mind the experimenting, that part's kind of fun. But sometimes the talking was kind of frustrating because of the differences between the genders and the difficulty we have trying to understand each other. We try to stay open and receptive to each other, and if we make mistakes we forgive and try it again. Can I get a big "amen" to the trying again. The only other suggestion I have is to guard your thought life, and let other parts of the Torah guide you in your treatment of your spouse.

This is a difficult area. Supposedly the two leading reasons for fights between couples are money (first) and sex. Many marriages have foundered because of the inability to reconcile differences in quality, frequency, timing and particulars. Personally I think people expect way too much from sex. We hear a tremendous amount of talk about it from others, or from sources such as magazines and movies, and to hear these others talk we are supposed to experience an alternate reality or set a new land speed record every time we share physical intimacy with our spouses. So we think that if we don't feel heaven and earth move something must be wrong. Well, give yourself a break and forget all the talk. In my opinion, sex is simply an extension of your relationship, and sometimes it will be good while other times merely adequate or even boring. Every once in a while you may actually feel heaven and earth move. So it varies a little. So what. If your needs are not being met talk with your spouse. See if you can't come to a more equitable arrangement based on your wants and the wants of your spouse. But try to maintain a balance, add a dash of self-restraint where necessary, and above all practice, practice, practice till you get it right. Can I get another amen?

This article isn't all about the sex act, however. I know, I know, you thought it was just getting interesting. But you don't need me to lecture you about these kinds of details. There are also a few other things that we probably don't have to cover here, such as the instructions concerning the prohibition of same-gender relations (Lev. 18:22), or sex with close relatives (Lev. 18:7-18), or with animals (Lev. 18:23). Can you imagine why in the world God would ever have to make a rule on sex and animals?

And speaking of why certain commands are needed, have you ever read through a list of the commands, especially in the area of sex? It reads like a father talking to a teenager. The Father says, "No sex outside of marriage to the opposite gender of sufficiently distant relation." (Perhaps even "No adultery" should be sufficient.) You'd think that would be all He had to say, wouldn't you? But no. We have to say something like, "What about sex with an aunt?" "How about a sister?" "Does that include step-mothers?" "But what about in-laws?" "Who counts as a relative?" I can imagine our Father saying, "GOOD GRIEF! How many times, and how many different ways, do I have to tell you, NO IMPROPER SEX, PERIOD?" Read the list sometime and you'll see what I mean. There is one on the Whole Bible website (www.wholebible.com) under the Study Helps button.

There are other commands that would be beneficial to talk about here. Most of these are listed in Leviticus 15 and have to do with the subject of how a person becomes unclean (Hebrew *tame* (taw-may) or *tumah* (too-maw). It is amazing just how many different ways there are for us to become unclean. Maybe one of the things God is telling us through these Laws is how easy it is to get unclean, and how extensive and contagious sin really is. In regards to sex, women are unclean for a period of seven days (Lev. 15:19) from the start of their monthly cycle (Hebrew *nidah* (knee-daw). If the flow doesn't stop, they continue to be unclean. Women are also unclean after childbirth (one week plus 33 days for male children; Lev. 12:2-4, two weeks plus 66 days for females; Lev. 12:5). Men become unclean, and make a woman unclean, by an emission of semen (Lev. 15:16-18), or other discharges. If the discharge doesn't stop, he continues to be unclean until it stops (Lev. 15:2-15). Fortunately, it's pretty easy to get clean. Most of the time all we have to do is wash our bodies and our clothes, and we are only unclean until evening. Thank the Father for his mercy.

Some people say that being unclean only limited a person's access to the Temple (for instance see Lev. 12:4), so they could not offer a sacrifice. But I am not entirely convinced that uncleanness applied only to sacrifices and offerings at the Tabernacle or Temple. It seems to me, in view of the verses at the head of this article, that uncleanness might just be directly related to our relationship with Him. For instance, Lev. 18:27 says that the people living in the land before Israel took over had done these things and defiled the land so that the land vomited them out. If uncleanness only related to sacrifices, how could this be, seeing as how they did not have a Temple?

What I mean is that perhaps any uncleanness can interfere with the intimacy between me and my Father. For instance, maybe one of the reasons a lot of healing is not taking place within our communities is due to uncleanness. Should an elder who has been called to pray for the sick abstain from the sex act, wash himself and his clothes, confess his sins (make a sacrifice), and otherwise prepare

more thoroughly for the task at hand? I am not saying this has to be true, but it gives one food for thought.

Some Jews refrain from having sex for seven days from the start of a woman's cycle. Others wait two weeks. Some of them even have separate beds so the husband doesn't become "unclean." I think this is a little extreme, myself. Why would it be so important to avoid contact with your wife, when as soon as you have sex the husband makes both people unclean by the emission of semen? It doesn't make a lot of sense to me to get all uptight about the tumah (uncleanness) of a woman and totally ignore the tumah of a man. In another part of the Torah, Paul tells us in I Corinthians 7:1-6 that we should not deny sex to our spouse for an extended period of time.

Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. But this I say by way of concession, not of command. (I Cor. 7:1-6 NASB)

My wife and I do refrain from sex for the week of her nidah, but this is by choice. It tends to recharge the sex life and it seems to help for health reasons. For instance, she says that she hasn't gotten a yeast infection in a long time. I have also heard reports that among the Orthodox Jews there is an extremely low incidence of cervical cancer. Of course, this could be due to other things such as an improvement in the diet (no pork or shellfish) or other factors as well. And I think faith plays a huge roll in the benefits we receive from our Father for obedience to His instructions.

So relax, have fun, enjoy the intimacy with one another, and practice, practice, practice.

The Father bless the intimacy between you
Bruce Bertram