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Covenant Loyalty to ADONAI

18: 24-30

Covenant loyalty to ADONAI DIG: We bear the inherent, mortal uncleanness with which we were born, but we also bear the uncleanness created by our own wayward affections and lusts (Romans 7:24). How has Yeshua Messiah set you free from your uncleanness?

REFLECT: What have you learned from Chapter 18 about maintaining a correct relationship with a holy and jealous God, who redeems you and calls you to a different life? Think about all the ways your life is different now than before you were saved? Who can you help?

One cannot simply legislate righteous acts, they must flow from loyalty to the covenant.

This concluding epilog warned **Isra'el** of the dangers of adopting Canaanite practices. If **they** do, **they** will pollute **themselves** and suffer the same punishment as those who occupied **the Land** before **them (18:28)**. It was customary for ancient treaties (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy**, to see link [click Ah - The Treaty of the Great King](#)), to conclude with a series of **curses** on those who break them. This pattern is found in Scripture also (see **Exodus 23:20-21; Leviticus 26:14ff; Deuteronomy 28:15ff**).³¹² Finally, there was **the call of witnesses**. In the presence of **the Gentile nations**, the choice before **Isra'el** is declared, **life** or **death, blessing** or **cursing**. Therefore, these mitzvot (see [Cy - The Holiness Code](#)) forced **the Israelites** to choose between **the covenant** and **sexual sin**.

Not every form of **sexual** immorality is listed in **Leviticus 18**. Some are learned from other passages of Torah. Others are deduced rationally. A person should beware the rationalization of the flesh. When a person desires to **sin**, he will ask, "Is it really forbidden in the Torah?" Beware of this tendency. Such a person stops at the letter of the mitzvah, making sure he has not explicitly violated the mitzvah, but then goes on to violate the intention of the commandment. **The Master** listed

several such examples in **Matthew 5**. We learn that immortality happens first in the heart. Long before the actual commandment is broken, **sin** is conceived in the heart. **No one being tempted should say, “I am being tempted by God.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, and God himself tempts no one. Rather, each person is being tempted whenever he is being dragged off and enticed by the bait of his own desire. Then, having conceived, the desire gives birth to sin; and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death. Don’t delude yourselves, my dear brothers” (James 1:13-16).**

Do not make yourselves unclean by means of sexual immorality, because all the Gentile 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. How so? **The Land itself will vomit out its inhabitants (18:24-25).** That both **the Land** and **the people** can be made **unclean** through **sin** like **sexual** immorality explains the need for **the Day of Atonement** service (see **Co - Yom Kippur: The Removal of All Sin**). If **the Land itself** is rendered **unclean**, then the Tabernacle/Temple within **the Land** is polluted. So, once a year, an annual cleansing was necessary by which **the Most Holy Place** was cleansed and atoned. **He will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleannesses of the people of Isra’el and because of their transgressions - all their sins; and he is to do the same for the tent of meeting which is there with them right in the middle of their uncleannesses (Leviticus 16:16).**³¹³

Though there is not a literal repetition of the first five verses of this chapter, this conclusion reaffirms the same general points and reinforces them with arguments and warnings. While **18:2-3** compared the forbidden practices with customs in **Egypt** and **Canaan**, **18:24-25** focuses on **the Canaanites** as **sinners**. Here the emphasis is on the implications of **sin**. The nations that have done such things have defiled **the Land** and will be driven from **it**. **The Land itself (18:28)** becomes an agent independent from the people and able to exercise judgment and cleanse itself.³¹⁴

But you are to keep my statutes (Hebrew: *hachukkim*, meaning *to write into law permanently*) **and ordinances** (Hebrew: *hammishpatim*, meaning *a judgment of the court*) **and not engage in any of these disgusting practices, neither the citizen nor the foreigner living with you (18:26).** As in **18:4**, so here, the command to keep **God’s** mitzvot is repeated and forms the heart of the message in this section. Here the note is added that not only **Israelites**, but also **resident**

aliens must keep these **statues and ordinances**. Any violation defies **the Land** and leads to banishment.

If **the Israelites** or **resident aliens** rejected **God’s statutes and ordinances**, and chose instead to copy the pagan nations who had **committed all these abominations**, **the Land** would again be **defiled**. And **if they** made **the Land unclean**, it would **vomit them out too, just as it was vomiting out the Canaanites that were there before them (18:27-28)**. **The rabbis cite a parable of a prince to whom was given a loathsome thing to eat. His stomach, being unable to retain it, vomited it out. Similarly, the Holy Land will not be able to contain sinners.**

The conclusion reaffirms the warning and commands. It insists that the purity of the Land and **Isra’el’s** existence there will be threatened by any disobedient citizen unless that person is **cut off**. **For those who engage in any of these disgusting practices, whoever they may be, will be cut off from their people (18:29)**. **In rabbinic literature the penalty is called *karet*, or “cutting off.” In priestly literature, the penalty of *karet* was understood to include a series of related punishments at the hand of God, ranging from the immediate death of an offender, as in 20:17, to his premature death at a later time, and even to the death of his descendants. In Mishnah Sanhedrin 9:6 and Mishnah Keritot 1:2, this penalty was characterized as *mitah biydei shamayim*, or “death at the hands of heaven.” Since in 7:20-21 *karet* is mentioned in the context as childlessness, there is the implication that it took that course as well.**³¹⁵

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. The sages teach that if Isra’el chose to defile herself with the practices of the Canaanites, and thus remove herself far from God, that He would remove His blessing from her. The message concludes where it began: with a call for people to live in obedience to the mitzvot of **YHVH** and avoid the detestable practices of the Canaanites – because **I am ADONAI your God (18:30)**.

It is amazing to see how modern trends, even in the supposedly Christian world, seem bent on embracing practices that are not too unlike these ancient **abominations**. This modern sophisticated world has come to accept adultery, incest, homosexuality and even bestiality, so long as it does not “hurt anyone.” Pagan goddesses, sensual liturgy, and prohibited practices all keep surfacing within

religious settings - and if they find acceptance there, then religion will have little reason to call people to repentance and salvation.



Leviticus 18 is not hard to correlate with any age in history and certainly not with today. Many Christians are oblivious to the problem and instead desire to be “loving and accepting.” While these are noble virtues, **YHVH** wants obedience to **His Word**, and this requires avoiding wickedness. All the vices listed in this chapter have always been present in the world and are present today as well - even child sacrifice as seen in abortion. **Ha'Shem** warns **His** people again and again to remain pure from the world and to keep faith holy. The description of all the individual prohibitions in **Chapter 18** must be related to the whole message of covenant loyalty to **ADONAI**. For one cannot simply legislate righteous acts - they must flow from faithfulness to the covenant. Nevertheless, we must not overlook individual applications along the way and must not fail to correlate them all to the high standards of the B'rit Chadashah.³¹⁶

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Thank **You** for being a covenant-keeping **God**. **Yes, I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your seed after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, in order to be your God and your seed's God after you. . . God also said to Abraham, “As for you, My covenant you must keep, you and your seed after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant that you must keep between Me and you and your seed after you: all your males must be circumcised” (Genesis 17:7 and 9-10).***

God You who are wise and loving, used **circumcision** as a sign of the love in the heart to follow and obey **You**. It is no good to have only the outward sign without also having inner love. **And He said to him: You shall love ADONAI your God**

with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment (Matthew 22:37-38). Thank **You** for **Your** wisdom to probe into each person’s heart to see if there is really love for **You**. **Circumcision is indeed worthwhile if you keep the Torah; but if you break the Torah, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. . . For one is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision something visible in the flesh. Rather, the Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart - in Spirit not in letter. His praise is not from men, but from God (Romans 2:25 and 28-29).** I want to keep the covenant by pleasing **You**, my **King**, my **Lord** and my **Savior**. In **Yeshua’s** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen

Haftarah Acharei Mot reading (Ezeki’el 22:1-19 (A); 22:1-16 (S): (see the commentary on Deuteronomy [Af](#) - Parashah)

I will scatter you . . . thus I will remove your defilement . . . and you will cause yourselves to be profaned in full view of the Goyim Then you will know that I am ADONAI (Ezeki’el 22:15-16. Eighty times **Ezeki’el** chastises **Isra’el** for violating holy prohibitions regarding **blood**. The people had been debased **bloodsuckers** in all areas of life. As a result, **Ha’Shem** personally shortened the community’s length of days in the Land. **Judah** had become **a city of blood (Ezeki’el 22:2)**. **Her sins** included child sacrifice during Manasseh’s reign, **drunken orgies**, open **idolatry (Ezeki’el 22:9)**, **bloodshed (Ezeki’el 22:2-4, 6, 9 and 12)**, and forbidden relationships which uncovered **their father’s nakedness** (see [Dd](#) - **Incest and Other Uncleaness**). Having succumbed to incest, bestiality, and child sacrifice, **Isra’el** was judged by **YHVH**. In captivity among **the Babylonians** (see the commentary on [Jeremiah Gu](#) - **Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule**), **she** was **profaned in full view of the Goyim (Ezeki’el 22:15-16)**. But all was not lost. At **Jerusalem**, the fires of the siege purified **the nation (Ezeki’el 22:16-22 and 23:25-27)**. Never again would **Isra’el** collectively approve of child sacrifices to a foreign idol.

B’rit Hadashah reading (First Corinthians 6:20):

You were bought at a price. So, use your bodies to glorify Messiah (First Corinthians 6:20). Greeks viewed the body and the material world as headed for destruction. Only the soul was immortal. **The Corinthians** thought the body stood for nothing. As a result, sexual matters were transitory and unimportant. *Porneia* (illicit sex) was widespread in **Corinth (First Corinthians 6:9 and 7:2; Second**

Corinthians 12:21) and condoned by public opinion in Greece and Rome. In fact, the Hellenistic believers in **Corinth** attacked **Paul** for **his** Jewish world view! **Rabbi Sha'ul** stated that the believer was **bought with a price**, much in the same way as purchasing a slave at market (**First Corinthians 7:23; Romans 6:17**). With the change in ownership, believers lack the freedom to practice *proneia*, and join themselves with prostitutes. Rather, sexual matters fit into an abiding, life-creating moral order. The fallen order will be redeemed and made whole. The body must be treated as holy, the temple of the living **God** (see the commentary on **First Corinthians Bc - Failure to Exercise Sexual Purity**).³¹⁷