

5) Chapter 20 seems to again give us the prohibitions against forbidden sexual relations (20:10-14). In what way does this differ from what we read in 16:6-23? What is the message of the Torah here (compared with what you read in chapter 18)?

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The weekly Haftarah Commentary  
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## TORAH SPARKS

### Parashat Aharei mot & Kedoshim

April 30 – May 6 - 10 Iyyar 5777

Annual (Leviticus 16:1-20:27): Etz Hayim p. 679-704; Hertz p. 480-508

Triennial (Leviticus 16:1-17:7): Etz Hayim p. 679-686; Hertz p. 480-486

Haftarah (Amos 9:7-15): Etz Hayim p. 705-708; Hertz p. 509-510

## Wise Sex, Wanton Sex - What Should We Teach?

**Rabbi Peretz Rodman** is a Jerusalem-based writer and translator. He serves as Av Bet Din of the Masorti Bet Din of Eretz Yisrael.

We are warned: “Do not profane your daughter to make a whore of her, lest the land play the whore and the land be filled with depravity” (Lev. 19:29). This being Leviticus, we may read this as a warning against sending our daughters into cultic prostitution. There is no evidence, though, of sex with strangers as a sacred rite to increase fertility in the ancient Near East. That, then, is not the behavior banned by this verse.

What, then, are we to avoid imposing on our daughters, and presumably discourage them from doing even at their own initiative?

The rabbis of classical Judaism needed to interpret the verb here, *le-haznot* (to prostitute someone, make her into a whore), and related verbs, and the noun *zona* (“prostitute”). In a *baraita* [early rabbinic statement not in the Mishnah] in the Talmud (B. Yevamot 61b), the opinion of “the [majority of] Rabbis” is that “the term *zona* applies only to a female convert, a freed maidservant, and one who engages in sexual intercourse of *z’nut*.” That third item, the abstract

noun from the same root, makes this a tautological definition, but one whose meaning we can nonetheless suss out. *Z'nut* is licentious, wanton sexuality. That is what the first two categories are concerned with: the freed slave and the convert, having growing up among non-Israelites or having been in a vulnerable subjugated status, might well or presumably have been involved, willingly or unwillingly, in sexual conduct illegitimate by Israelite standards.

But what makes sexual conduct illegitimate? Other rabbis' views in the same source provide more clues. Rabbi Yehuda says: "A *zona* is a sexually underdeveloped woman." Rav Huna interprets Rabbi Yehuda as teaching that "any intercourse that does not have the possibility to increase the population because the woman is incapable of having children is nothing other than intercourse of *z'nut*." Apparently, in this view, the only legitimate purpose of sexual behavior is procreation, and anything else is in the shameful category of licentiousness.

The Mishnaic sage Rabbi El'azar adopts a view that seems to be more concerned about human relationships and the social order. He says (in the same discussion): "[Even in the case of] an unmarried man who had intercourse with an unmarried woman not for the purpose of marriage, he has caused her to become a *zona*." Procreation is not the issue here, but the commitment that might—or might not—accompany the intimacy of sex. As Carole King put it, "Will you still love me tomorrow?" And, concomitantly, will you continue to see that my material and spiritual needs are met? Sex comes with some level of responsibility and commitment.

In several talmudic passages, a principle is evoked that "a man does not engage in sexual intercourse as intercourse of *z'nut*." The Rabbis impute pure motives to every Jewish man. Maimonides hedges a bit, noting that it is an assumption (*hazaqa*) that "proper" Jewish men have no such improper intentions. About some Jewish men we are apparently not so sure.

The implications for our own lives are unclear, but Rabbi El'azar's view may be pertinent. Even in a world in which many people do indeed indulge in sexual activity without an expectation of commitment, there is a category of out-of-control sexuality that is to be discouraged. We can still draw distinctions between what is permitted and what is forbidden, or at least what is wise and what really is wanton, wasteful and ultimately unwise.

## A Vort for Parashat Aharei mot & Kedoshim

Rabbi Daniel Goldfarb, CY Faculty

Lev 18:3 tells us **not to walk** [*lo telehu*] in the laws of the Egyptians, while the next verse says "to do My ordinances and keep My statutes, **to walk** therein [*lalehet b'hem*]." There is a dynamic, whichever set of laws one chooses to follow – *mitzvah gorreret mitzvah*, one mitzvah leads to another; *avera gorreret avera*, one sin leads to another (Pirkei Avot 4:2). The *Hatam Sofer* (R' Moses Schreiber, 1762–1839, Eastern Europe) said that one must not settle for "the normal routine" in the study of Torah and the observance of mitzvot. One must learn new things, renew the energy, go from *aliya* to *aliya*. One who simply "stands in place" is indeed regressing.

## Table Talk

Vered Hollander-Goldfarb, CY Faculty

*This is another week with a double Parasha (our goal is to reach the book of Bamidbar on the Shabbat before Shavuot). It contains the description of Yom Kippur ceremony and many laws from both public and private spheres of life.*

- 1) Our Parasha opens with the service in the Tabernacle/Temple on Yom Kippur (chapter 16). Who is at the center of the ceremony (16:32-34)? Besides the elaborate ceremony we have instructions for all the people (16:29-31). Why do you think there is a need for the people have to do these things if someone has if the atonement ceremony has been done for everyone?
- 2) The warning not to follow the ways of the nations of Egypt and Canaan (18:1-5) precedes the warnings against forbidden sexual relations (mostly incest). The result of transgressions in this sphere is told at the end (18:27-30). What will happen? Is this a personal or communal punishment? What is the message of the Torah by attributing this result to the crime?
- 3) Chapter 19 is a dense collection of laws. Early on (19:3) appear 2 laws. What are they? Why do you think that the Torah chose to place these laws early on? Why were they placed together?
- 4) Some of the laws refer to our dealings with others. What prohibitions appear in 19:13? Are the 2 parts of the verse connected? If so, how? Are the forces between the parties involved even in both parts of the verse?