

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

## Sex Laws

***A man shall not lie with mankind as with womankind: it is an abomination. Nor with any animal, to defile yourself therewith. Nor shall any woman defile herself thereby: it is perversion.<sup>1</sup>***

***Never defile yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations which I cast out before you are defiled: And the land is defiled. — Leviticus 18:22-25***

**O**f all God's laws, the prohibitions that most people find most difficult to keep are those pertaining to perverse sex.<sup>2</sup> Sheer ignorance has a good deal to do with this. If more people simply knew what His law requires, they would surely find it easier to keep.

Human beings are sexual beings. Our Maker knows it. Based on His total awareness of our actual nature, He doesn't command us to suppress our animal urges but only to express and channel them appropriately. His law simply sets out the line between the wholesome and the unwholesome. Guiding animals by their instincts, the same Holy God who created human sexuality gives us law and not just instinct to guide thinking beings — human beings — in His Ways.

Rather than condemning the union of a man with a woman, the Revolutionary Tradition celebrates heterosexual love.<sup>3</sup> Sexual

intercourse can — and should — be a source of great holiness and purity.<sup>4</sup>

Man does not fulfill his destiny without woman, nor woman without man, nor the two together without the Divine Presence among them. — *Midrash*<sup>5</sup>

Sexual love can bring people much closer to God. Our Creator didn't give us our sexual appetites just to ensure reproduction: the love between a man and a woman expands their capacity to love Him; it can magnify both their power and their inclination to follow Him.<sup>6</sup>

Sex may even be a means to become more directly *like* Him. Mystics say that, just as God has, in a spiritual sense, both masculine and feminine characteristics — He created man and woman “in His own Image,” “male and female He created them”<sup>7</sup> — and would be imperfect except as these two aspects of His Being are perfectly united, a man must join with a woman, and a woman with a man, to unite the two aspects, to make a fully complete human being.<sup>8</sup>

Many scholars disdain this mystical theology. God is universally called “He” rather than “She” or “It” because He is an active, not a passive, conscious Force in the Universe.<sup>9</sup> Otherwise, the Almighty Creator of sex and gender, Who made and sustains the Universe not by sexual means but by His pure Will alone,<sup>10</sup> exists far beyond *any* consideration of sex or gender.

Putting aside, for the moment, the deeper secrets of God's Essence, He speaks quite clearly to us on this point: a man or woman alone is almost like a fractional person, a mere part of what God intends each of them to be.<sup>11</sup> Marriage is the human ideal: a man should “cleave to his wife, and they shall be one flesh.”<sup>12</sup>

Not all love is holy. God commands humanity — all of us; everyone — to refrain from certain acts of perverted love and self-destructive sexuality. We ignore our species' own inherent seasons and limitations at our peril. Just as sex offers us a means to make ourselves more human, it can also reduce us below the level of the animals.