

Lesson 4

ALL IN THE FAMILY

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Section #1

prohibition of:

FORBIDDEN RELATIONSHIPS

“Hence, a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, so they become one flesh.”

Genesis 2:24

INTRO

Every ability we have been granted, as a part of our human experience, has the potential to be holy. Sexuality can be viewed as profane or even sinful; but in actuality, it is the most sacred force we have been endowed with. It is the expression in which we most closely emulate our Creator, by means of producing new life. Much like nuclear energy; the power can be harnessed enabling the highest of positive achievements; or abused resulting in utter destruction. Our guard must be up to refrain from perverting our inherent passions.

The end goal of our sexual energies is meant to be channeled toward a healthy husband and wife relationship, raising children, and holding together the family structure. Relationships that hinder this goal, cheapen household and societal composition and are, therefore, frowned upon under the Seven Laws of Noah.

adultery, etc...

Love expresses itself in various ways toward different people. The love for your parents is unlike the love toward one's spouse. Both of those loves are dissimilar to the love toward a friend. Each love in its own context is both healthy and necessary; but once one kind of love is shown toward another group, that becomes ruinous, harmful and must be avoided. Spousal affection displayed toward another's spouse, immediate family members, or animals is unethical, and both biologically and a psychologically abusive.

homosexuality...

When G-d created man and woman, His Divinity was revealed differently between them. It is the unity of the two complimentary attributes, of which men and women separately possess, that produces a harmony illustrated in the verse, "and they shall become one flesh." It is only through the male and female combination that this oneness is achieved.

Kabbalah explains that the symbiosis in the universe can be broken down into two groups of 'giver' and 'recipient'. G-d, in His interaction with the world plays the role of 'giver' and we are the 'recipient'. The light of the sun gives light during the day because it is a giver of light; while the moon illuminates the night sky by being a recipient of the sun's light. The distinct organs of each gender, attest to a similar parallel in humanity. Therefore, the only natural and healthy pair, is 'giver and 'receiver', or male with female.

Let us also remember that it is the act not the person, which is condemned. A person who, by nature or nurture, has certain tendencies or inclinations is not transgressing until he acts on his impulses. Acting on them will eventually cause emotional, psychological, and spiritual detriment because it skews from the very construct of existence.

Section #2 -

RIGHTEOUS BEHAVIOR

We have mentioned many times that Adam, the root of the grand family tree of humanity, was created in the 'image' of G-d. That persona is nothing to take lightly. We must exert ourselves that not only our actions be devoid of licentiousness, but also our speech and thoughts as well. There are certain fences that we should erect around our activity ensuring not only that we promote tranquility in the world, but secure an inner peace as well.

premarital relations...

Being that intercourse is our G-dly creative power, and a holy deed; engaging in relations before marriage cheapens the act to some lust based pleasure. Premarital relations have contributed to much confusion in our own society; and often lead to other more severe transgressions like abortion.

seeing is believing...

The soul manifests itself in thoughts, speech, and actions. Thoughts are closest to the soul itself and can be spiritually damaging in a way that even action can't reach. One can contemplate or replay immorality, effortlessly, countless times in his head. What we think about says a lot about our character. Thoughts express themselves in our personalities, and will motivate our actions for the better or for the worse. We, therefore, need to control what we see, and put ourselves in positive environments; for our thoughts are usually outcomes of things we've exposed ourselves to.

immodest behavior and dress...

We mentioned the greatness of the human being, and that he is the envy even amongst the angels. We must be sure to garb ourselves with modest attire; both men and women covering themselves properly. Additionally, it is a good idea to avoid tattoos. People should also refrain from acting in a provocative manner that will lead to further degeneracy.

profanity...

It is also a good idea to have clean speech. We mentioned earlier, that you are what you speak; so character improvement is very connected with speaking about the right things.

Section #3-

FAMILY TIES

kids R' us...

The setup achieved through proper marital structure creates a suitable family environment. The culmination of healthy family structure, is when kids are brought into the picture. Illicit relations that produce children cause psychological problems within the parents and the children. It is our duty to provide a healthy setup for kids to grow up in; and educate them in the proper way as well. The pleasure that the parents receive from their child choosing the right things growing up resembles the pleasure G-d experiences from us when we make the right decisions.

“And G-d blessed them, and G-d said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill up the land.”

Genesis 1:28

**...bringing a child into this world
the parents are in a partnership
with G-d: the material substance
is derived from the parents,
while G-d grants the soul.
Talmud Kidushin 30b**

honoring parents...

One has an obligation to respect his/her parents as well. This is a duty which humanity has accepted upon themselves from the beginning. When the family makeup as it should be, it makes it easy for the children to show proper respect.

**"Honor your father and your mother
as the L-rd your G-d has commanded you."
Deuteronomy 5:16**

...Go and see how... Dama ben Netina in Ashdod honored his father, The sages wished to purchase gems from him... but the key (to the box) was under his sleeping father's pillow and he did not trouble his father Dama was rewarded for his virtue the next year when a red heifer was born in his flock. He sold it to the sages, and asked for the amount he had not earned the previous year.
Talmud Kidushin 31a

the wicked Esau's only merit was that he honored his father, through that virtue alone, his descendants (Rome) dominated the world.
Midrash Me'am Loez, Toldos

Section #4.

SUPPLIMENTARY ARTICLES

Why do we fall in love?

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What lies behind the attraction between the sexes? Sexuality is a subject about which no one is neutral. Everyone has a sexual nature, everyone has a need for sexuality, everyone has a sexual personality that has been formed by home, schooling, the trial and error of life experience, and whatever they pick up along the way from the subtle and not-so-subtle influences of the society in which they live.

In seeking to make sense of our sexuality we must look to its origins. Where does our sexuality come from? In this article, I would like to look at two approaches to that question.

Is the mystique and the romance, the music and the moonlight, just nature's way of hoodwinking men and women to reproduce? One is the prevalent, contemporary, scientific approach. And then we'll contrast it with the Torah approach - specifically, the Kabbalistic-Chassidic perspective on Torah.

There are, of course, numerous secular-scientific theories of sexuality. Let us examine what is probably the most dominant one: the biological or evolutionary theory which is essentially based on the idea that "the survival of the fittest" is the primary force in nature and the source of any given creature's particular characteristics, from single cells right up the "evolutionary chain" to animals and humans.

From this perspective, our sexuality derives from the fact that the perpetuation of the species is achieved through a sexual relationship between a male and a female. The male will therefore search for the female that is most fertile, and that will bear the healthiest offspring; and the female will search for a male that provides the healthiest seed, that is the most virile and that will protect the young.

This theory explains many things about our sexuality. It explains why men and women seek out and mate with each other. It explains why certain features in the woman or in the man are extremely enticing to the opposite sex because they reflect on elements of fertility or signs of health that are important for the perpetuation of the species.

What this theory essentially says is that behind the mystique and the beauty, the romance and the sensuality in which human sexuality comes enveloped, behind it all really lies a

primal force: the need to exist, and to perpetuate that existence. Since the human being is an animal with a certain degree of sophistication, human sexuality has evolved to address that sophistication. Modern man is not prepared to think of him or herself merely as production machines to bear children, so in order to entice two people into a union, evolution and biology have conspired to imbue the sexual act not only with pleasure but also with a mystique that compels us along the romantic journey.

Gazing into a loved one's eyes across a candlelit table-for-two, the human being may think that he or she has risen above a survival-of-the-fittest mode of existence; but, in truth, this "rising higher" is just nature's way of packaging that drive. Two human beings courting each other are essentially the same as two bees courting each other. One bee will buzz a certain way or give off a certain scent, but what it comes down to is that these are tactics to get them together to mate and bear offspring. By the same token, the accouterments of human sexuality, the romance, the flowers, the music, the moonlight are really just nature's way of getting two people together.

Sexual attraction between human beings is driven by a completely different force: their search for their divine image

Nature is ruthless. Nature must prevail. So nature finds the means to get a male and a female to mate.

This, basically, is the scientific approach to human sexuality. Let us now contrast this with the Torah's approach.

The Torah's conception of human sexuality is expressed in the opening chapters of Genesis, and states that sexual attraction between human beings is driven by a completely different force: their search for their divine image, for their quintessential self.

The Torah describes man as originally having been created as a "two-sided" being: "Male and female He created them and He called their name: man." G-d then split this two-sided creature into two, and ever since, the divided halves of the divine image seek and yearn for each other.

They're not half individuals; man is a full-fledged personality and woman is a full-fledged personality. But there are elements in their transcendental persona, in their completeness, that remain incomplete if they don't find each other. There's something missing in each of them; they were once part of a greater whole.

To put it in more mystical, or more divine, terms: they're really searching to become one with G-d.

The human race is in essence one entity, a male-female singularity. When man and woman come together and unite in a marital union, they recreate the divine image in

which they were both formed as one.

We have a split of two energies, and a yearning and inclination to become one whole

The teachings of Kabbalah take this a step further, seeing the male/female dynamic not just as two sexes within a species. According to the Kabbalah, these are two forms of energy that, in the most abstract form, are referred to as an internal energy and a projective energy. Feminine energy and masculine energy exist in each man and in each woman, and in every part of nature.

Even G-dliness is sometimes described in the feminine and sometimes in the masculine. Contrary to the common perception of the "patriarchal" G-d of the Bible, many of the divine attributes are feminine, such as the *Shechinah*, which is the feminine dimension of G-dliness.

So what we have here is a split of two energies, and a yearning and inclination to become one whole. The human race was created in the divine image, but that human race is half male and half female, and through their union they become that larger whole, that divine image that searches for union with G-d, that seeks a higher reality.

This is the soul of sexual attraction. This attraction, which manifests itself in many physical sensations, from a faster heartbeat to a physical attraction to another person, is essentially the attraction of male to female and female to male to become a complete, divine whole, connecting to their source in G-d. Not that they've ever been completely disconnected; but consciously, people can go off on their own individual narcissistic, even selfish, path. And here, there's a voice in you saying: I yearn for something greater. When a man is physically attracted to a woman, or a woman to a man, it may seem a very biological thing, but from a Jewish, Torah perspective, it's just a physical manifestation of a very deep spiritual attraction.

This is not to say that the Torah's concept of sexuality is not intrinsically tied in to the objective of creating new life. It certainly is. But perpetuation of the species is not the sole end of our sexuality. Rather, it's the other way around: the divine nature of our sexuality - the fact that the union of male and female completes the divine image in which they were created - is what gives us the power to bring life into the world.

So there is something divine about the union itself. This is reflected in Halachah (Torah law) which extends the sanctity of marriage also to circumstances in which the generation of offspring is not a possibility (such as in the case of a man and/or woman who are beyond childbearing age, or who are physically unable to bear children). If sexuality were simply the mechanism for childbearing, one might argue: "Hey, no perpetuation of the species, what's the point of marriage and sexuality? Just a selfish pleasure? Where's the holiness?" The answer is, yes, sexuality *qua* sexuality is holy. Male and female uniting is a divine act, a divine experience.

The Kabbalah of Marriage

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I. The Cosmic Roots of Marriage

When a man and woman unite in marriage, their personal union draws its power from the cosmic marriage that underlies the whole of existence -- the bonding of the divine masculine and feminine energies emerging from the Creator's Infinite Light to generate existence, a world, and life.

Indeed, the entire *Seder Hishtalshelut*--the kabbalistic blueprint of the spiritual infrastructure of creation--is modeled on a male-female dynamic: masculine "lights" (*orot*) unite with feminine "vessels" (*keilim*), masculine "wisdom" (*chochmah*) unites with feminine "understanding" (*binah*), male "holiness" (*kedushah*) unites with female "immanence" (*shechinah*), and so on. On each level, masculine and feminine energies unite to "give birth" to the next link in the chain of spiritual "worlds" that channel the flow of divine vitality into our world.

This male/female dynamic pervades every level of existence. The relationships between spirit and matter, heaven and earth, G-d and the people of Israel, the Written Torah and the Oral Torah, the Jewish people and the Shabbat, soul and body, mind and heart--all these are "marriages" in which the coming together of contrasting forces results in the creation of life on every level.

The significance of this correspondence is twofold. On the one hand, "From my flesh I perceive G-d" (Job 19:26) -- we can use our own marriages as a metaphor and model through which to better understand the divine reality. This works in the reverse as well: because we know that human marriage derives from the cosmic marriage of G-d and creation, studying the mystical texts which scrutinize these divine processes allows us to better understand the foundations of our gender differences, how to bridge the gender divide, and how to become better husbands and wives to our spouses and better actualize the tremendous potential of marriage.

II. Becoming One

In the first human marriage, Adam and Eve are initially created as "a single, two-faced body." The single being is split in two -- a man and a woman -- creating the essence of sexual tension: a primal memory of original oneness, countered by the strangeness of otherness and difference. Like every groom, Adam is apprehensive; he wants to keep his options open. Married, he sees the light. "This is it!" he proclaims. "A bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh... Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

This process of separation and alienation, and subsequent reunion, is reenacted by the wedding of every couple. A soul which was sheared in half enters two bodies. The attraction between the sexes is a direct result of the soul's deep longing to reunite with its long lost other half; a feat accomplished by the wedding canopy.

The essence of marriage is to *become* one. If man and woman would have simply remained the "single being" that they initially were, there would have been no alienation, no mystery, no reunion; no marriage. If they would have been initially created as two distinct beings, the gap of difference would have been insurmountable -- there would be no way for them to become truly one. It is their intrinsic oneness, coupled with their acquired distinctiveness and difference, that is the secret of marriage, of creation, of life.

III. Love

Love is a paradox. Many paradoxes, in fact.

It is the most altruistic and the most selfish of human emotions. The most giving and the most fulfilling. The most spiritual and the most physical. The most natural and the most irrational. The source of our deepest pleasures and our deepest agonies.

We call it an "emotion," yet love is much more than a feeling. Everywhere we look -- nature, human society, physics -- the giver/recipient equation is the very math of existence. Yet the math doesn't add up. One plus one never equals two. In love, one plus one equals one. And also three.

The key to love is selflessness, and the fulfillment it brings. As counter-intuitive as it may sound, the ostensibly self-consumed, egotistical human being can gain no greater satisfaction than through giving and committing.

The reason? The soul. The soul's selflessness is as great as the body's selfishness.

Perhaps the ability to truly love is the area in life most profoundly impacted by the teachings of Kabbalah. The more in tune a person is with the soul, the greater the capacity for pure love, unsullied by ulterior motives and ego.

Love is the language of the soul. Without an understanding of the soul, we are breaking our teeth, speaking with a horrible accent, and constantly confusing our verbs for nouns... Kabbalah teaches us the language of the soul, and allows us to unleash its unlimited capacity for love.

IV. Intimacy

Look closely at the fabric of the universe, examine it from any angle, probe any cell of its form and you will find the same motif again and again: Two opposites in fission and fusion, parting and reuniting to give birth to change, movement and life. Matter and anti-matter, positive and negative, nucleus and periphery, information and chaos, life and death, mind and body, self and other--will it ever cease to amaze us that these opposites somehow harmonize to create a glorious world?

If we could find the molten core of this paradox and know its secret we could control all of reality. We could make life as beautiful as we wish and realize our sweetest dreams.

Where is that core? The Kabbalists tell us it is in the union of a man and a woman in body and in spirit. When that union is made under the conditions it deserves, with the right preparations and mindful focus, its waves ripple outward through substance of reality. No facet of the cosmos is left untouched, unaltered. Every voice of the Creation resonates in unison as an orchestra plays back the soloist's melody. And so the lives of that man and woman, their children and their children's children are filled with the music of the heavens down on earth.

Nothing is more sacred than this union, the very fount of life itself. And nothing is more crucial to our mission in this world. All of life, all of being, depends on the harmony of male and female, a harmony placed in our hands and hearts. That it is why, for most of us, it presents the greatest challenges we ever face.

were you paying attention...?

- 1.Explain the importance and benefits of a healthy family life.
- 2.Explain the basic kabbalistic idea of male and female aspects in all of creation.
- 3.What are some righteous behaviors that one should refrain from doing, connected with illicit relations?
- 4.Discuss some specific details needed in proper child-rearing?
- 5.Why is so important to respect one's parents?
- 6.How does this command assist with settling the world, and inner peace?