

# Leviticus 18 Commentary

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LEVITICUS THE BOOK OF SANCTIFICATION AND WORSHIP <a href="#">Adapted and modified from C. Swindoll</a>	
Leviticus 1-17	Leviticus 18-27
The Way to God Access	The Walk with God Lifestyle
The Approach: Offerings	Practical Guidelines
The Representative: Priest	Chronological Observances
The Laws: Cleansing Physically & Spiritually	Severe Consequences Verbal promises
Ritual for Worship Worshipping a Holy God	Practical for Walking Living a Holy Life

<b>Location:</b> Mt Sinai for one full year
<b>Theme:</b> How sinful humanity can approach and worship a holy God
<b>Key Verses:</b> Lev 17:11, 19:2, 20:7-8
<b>Christ in Leviticus:</b> In every sacrifice, every ritual, every feast
<b>Time:</b> about 1446BC

## Leviticus 18:1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Notice the interesting pattern in Leviticus 18 - In Lev 18:1-23 Moses is to tell the people what not to do. Then in Lev 18:24-30 he is to tell them why not to do it.

**Leviticus 18:1-30** Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. - Leviticus 18:24

**TODAY IN THE WORD** - Last summer, a new book was released with the provocative title, *The 50-Mile Rule: Your Guide to Infidelity and Extramarital Etiquette*. The author told one interviewer that the book contains “serious information presented in a fun way. There are no books out there on this subject in a format that is not judgmental. I want to help people make smart decisions. . . . Affairs are wrong. But the reality is that people are having them anyway. So you have to meet people where they are. For a lot of people morality doesn’t end up in [the equation]. If you are going about your business in a discreet way and you are continuing to take care of your wife and, most importantly, your children, there is no reason to feel guilt.” Certainly our culture is confused about standards of right and wrong! The people of Israel faced a Canaanite culture that was even worse, however. Against the subjectivism, permissiveness, and outright perverseness of sexual behavior in the world, the Law set clear standards and boundaries for the people of God. Forbidden behavior included incest, child sacrifice, homosexuality, bestiality, and adultery. Incest included sex with close relatives and family members (verse 18 may have the Jacob-Leah-Rachel episode in mind). Child sacrifice was done by the Ammonites as part of the worship of Molech, and from its placement here we might infer that the ritual involved sexuality in some way. As for the practice of homosexuality, God’s Word is clear and unequivocal that it is sin (cf. Ro 1:26, 27; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10). What was the punishment for disobedience in this area? If the Israelites wanted to see a demonstration of the answer, they simply needed to see how God was about to judge the Canaanites! Their immoral behavior was so despicable that the land itself needed purifying—colorfully, God said it would vomit out the wickedness of those people (Leviticus 18:24, 25).

**TODAY ALONG THE WAY** In our society, in which promiscuity, pornography, and sexually transmitted diseases are relatively common, the call to sexual purity and marital faithfulness is more urgent than ever. We need God’s help to guard our bodies, minds, and souls from pervasive immorality.

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**[William MacDonald](#) Notes on Leviticus 18** - This chapter deals with various forms of unlawful marriages with which the Israelites had become familiar in Egypt but which they were to completely renounce in the land of Canaan (Lev 18:1-5).

The expression “to uncover the nakedness” means to have sexual intercourse. Lev 18:6 states the general principle. Marriage with a blood relative was forbidden. The following verses specify the relationships included: mother (Lev 18:7); stepmother (Lev 18:8); sister or half-sister (Lev 18:9); granddaughter (Lev 18:10); the daughter of a stepmother (Lev 18:11); aunt (Lev 18:12-14); daughter-in-law (Lev 18:15); sister-in-law (Lev 18:16); a woman and her daughter or granddaughter, both at the same time (Lev 18:17); two sisters at the same time (Lev 18:18). Lev 18:16 was modified by Deuteronomy 25:5: If a man died without leaving children, his brother was obliged to marry the widow. Although not all the above relationships are “blood relatives,” they are treated as such. Modern medicine confirms that in marriages of blood relatives, the physical or mental weaknesses of parents tend to be magnified in the children.

Intercourse with a woman was forbidden during menstruation (Lev 18:19). Adultery with a neighbor’s wife was prohibited (Lev 18:20). Also banned were the terrible practices connected with the worship of the idol Molech (Lev 18:21), causing newborn babies to pass through fire. Molech was the god of the Ammonites: His idol-image was in the Valley of Hinnom. “According to one tradition there was an opening at the back of the brazen idol, and after a fire was made within it, each parent had to come and with his own hands place his firstborn child in the white-hot, outstretched arms of Molech. According to this tradition, the parent was not allowed to show emotion, and drums were beaten so that the baby’s cries could not be heard as the baby died in the arms of Molech.”

Sodomy or homosexuality was forbidden (Lev 18:22), as well as sexual intercourse with an animal (Lev 18:23).

Lev 18:1-23 tell the people what not to do; Lev 18:24-30 tell them why not to do it. It is no accident that impurity and idolatry are found together in the same chapter (see also Lev 20). A person's morality is always the fruit of his theology, his concept of God. The Canaanites were a graphic illustration of the degradation that idolatry produces (Lev 18:24-27). When the children of Israel took possession of the land, they killed thousands of these people at Jehovah's command. When we consider the moral degradation of the Canaanites, as described in Lev 18:24-30, we can understand why God dealt so harshly with them.

#### Leviticus 18:2 "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'I am the LORD your God.

- Lev 18:4 11:44 19:3,4,10,34 20:7 Ge 17:7 Ex 6:7 20:2 Ps 33:12 Eze 20:5,7,19,20

**I Am the LORD** - It all begins with God, the great "I Am." He is reminding them of the fact that He is their covenant keeping God. He brought them out (redeemed them out) of Egypt to bring them into the land. This phrase occurs repeatedly in Leviticus (49x out of 161x in entire OT) - Lev 11:44, 45; 18:2, 4, 5, 6, 21, 30; 19:3, 4, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 25, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37; 20:7, 8, 24; 21:12, 15, 23; 22:2, 3, 8, 9, 16, 30, 31, 32, 33; 23:22, 43; 24:22; 25:17, 38, 55; 26:1, 2, 13, 44, 45;

This phrase occurs 3x in this beginning section (Lev 18:2, 4-5). This phrase should awaken our conscience to listen carefully and heed assiduously, for this statement of God's authority is all we need for the high moral standards to which God's people are called. Clearly this spoke directly to Israel but by way of application, it speaks directly to every believer whether they are in the United States or the jungles of Africa. Our holy behavior is to be like a spiritual "lighthouse" - as Moody said lighthouses don't warn by making noise but by shining their lights! Paul says

Do all things without grumbling or disputing (A command to make this our daily practice - something ONLY possible by continual jettisoning of fleshly reliance and casting of one's self upon the enabling power of the indwelling Holy Spirit - see Php 2:12-13) (Now Paul explains why holy conduct is so important) 15 that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world (Php 2:14, cp Mt 5:14-16)

The Lord warned Israel not to **look back** and imitate the sins they saw in Egypt, nor to **look around** and imitate the sins of the godless, pagan Gentile nations (Lev 18:3). When the Jews entered Canaan, they would discover that the people there were unspeakably immoral (archaeologists have verified this truth). Israel would have to maintain a position of separation in order to abstain from fleshly lusts (1Pe 2:12) and be pleasing to the Lord. The church today must maintain that same position - not a "holier than thou" attitude but a sweet aroma of morality that is attractive to the world inebriated by unspeakable sexual immorality (cp 2Cor 6:14-7:1; Ep 5:1-14; Col 3:1-7).

**House** comments that

Leviticus 17-27 emphasizes holiness as an undergirding principle. Israel is to be different from the Canaanite nations they will dispossess (Lev 18:1-5). The Israelites must be holy because their God is holy (Lev 19:2; 20:7, 26) and has set them apart as a holy, chosen people (Lev 20:26). God makes the rules here based on personal holiness (Lev 21:23), makes the rules themselves holy (Lev 22:16), makes the people holy (Lev 22:31-33) and makes specially chosen religious festivals holy (Lev 23:1-25:54). God's purposes in revealing this material go back at least as far as Exodus 19:5-6, for the commands in these chapters intend to make Israel the distinct and separate people God chose and delivered them to become...

Israel can be holy only as it obeys the word of the Holy One who has chosen and delivered them. Their holiness will derive from their relationship with Yahweh and will thereby extend to their activities and relationship with other human beings. It would be pointless for God to deliver Israel so that the chosen people could engage in the same practices that cause the world to sink into ever-greater depravity. One more nation like all the others hardly improves the moral climate on earth. (Old Testament theology. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press)

#### Leviticus 18:3 'You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you; you shall not walk in their statutes.

- **Shall not do:** Ps 106:35 Eze 20:7,8 23:8 Eph 5:7-11 1Pe 4:2-4
- and after: Lev 20:23 Ex 23:24 Dt 12:4,30,31 Jer 10:2,3 Ro 12:2

**The land of Egypt** - God had redeemed them from Egyptian bondage (and Egyptian idolatry) even as He had prophesied to Moses declaring "and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. " (Ex 6:6) And so the people of Israel were His possession (Ex 19:5, Dt 4:20, 9:29), by right of having paid the redemption price.

For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for **His own possession** out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. (Dt 7:6)

And in a sense they were redeemed with the blood of a Passover Lamb (cf "with great judgments" Ex 6:6. Ex 12:7, 11-13, 17, 22-23, 51). God had been able to get them out of Egypt, but He had not gotten Egypt out of them. These specific warnings and commands were the means to that latter end, so that they might be a distinctive, set apart (holy) people to Him and for His glory. One is reminded of God's words in Deuteronomy...

And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today. (Dt 15:15, cf 2Ki 17:36)

**I am bringing you** - It is notable that God is bringing them to the land He promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but it was a land occupied by fallen men. Forewarned is forearmed. There are clear parallels with God's redemption of a sinner to a saint in the New Testament. He could simply jettison us out of here to heaven, but He leaves us in the land with with godless paganism and idol worship. One reason He does this is because He is a compassionate God Who does not want these pagan souls to pass into a godless eternity and so He sets us apart (the body of Christ, the Church) that we might be His witnesses (Acts 1:8), His "salt" (Mt 5:13), His light (Mt 5:14-16, Phil 2:14), His "aroma" (2Cor 2:14-16), His ambassadors of reconciliation (2Cor 5:18-20) to a world in bondage to sin, Satan and self. Paul quotes Isaiah 42:6 to show God's purpose for redeeming Israel and bringing them to the land of Canaan, Dr. Luke recording...

For thus the Lord has commanded us, 'I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, THAT YOU SHOULD BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.'" (Acts 13:47)

**You shall not walk in their statutes** - While we do not have a record of these pagan '**statutes**' clearly they were essentially the antithesis of God's statutes in Leviticus 18-22. By implication their godless statutes must have "legalized" practices that God considered detestable or otherwise He would not have had to warn them in such painfully intimate detail! Extra-Biblical writings attest to the "sex saturated" society of the idol worshipping pagans who participated in so called [Fertility Cults](#). (cf [History and Religion of Canaan](#))

Tragically Israel failed to heed these clear warnings and commands and as the Psalmist summed it up...

they mingled with the nations, and learned their practices, (Ps 106:35)

**Disciple's Study Bible** - God is aware of the individual differences history brings to people. Historical differences do not change God's moral foundations. Living in Egypt or Canaan did not justify Israel's acceptance of their morality even though their cultural and educational systems had much older roots than did the young nation Israel's. Each person is free to make moral choices. Those choices should be made within the responsible boundaries of what God has declared as moral and immoral. Persons and societies outside God's people offer choices which may entice, but such choices are not options if we trust and follow God. Ungodly society tempts God's people with immoral sexual practices. No human logic can make it right for us to go beyond God's limits in our sexual behavior.

**Criswell** - God forbade the Israelites to practice the abominable and licentious customs of the Egyptians and Canaanites. Lev 18-20 delineate the prohibitions placed upon the Israelites, all of which serve to point out the utter degradation of the heathen worship, both in the land which Israel left and in the land to which she journeyed.

**Leviticus 18:4 'You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the LORD your God.**

**NLT** - You must obey all my regulations and be careful to keep my laws, for I, the LORD, am your God.

**Perform...keep** - He is not saying one can earn salvation (see comments on next verse).

**Your God** - Not the God of the other nations, but Israel's God. And it works both ways, for they are His people. They cannot act like all the other nations, but must act as He decrees. And remember God never asks anything of us that He does not also enable us to obey. In Leviticus 20-22 there is a phrase which alludes to this truth for seven times God declares that He is the LORD Who

**SANCTIFIES** them. For example in Lev 20:7-8 God says...

'You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. And you shall keep My statutes and practice them; **I am the LORD Who sanctifies** (Lxx = **hagiazō** = present tense, active participle = God's Spirit is the One Who is continually, actively, moment by moment setting us apart from Profanity unto Holy) you.

**Comment:** God's very name speaks of what He desires to do to His people and what He alone is capable of accomplishing in them. His Name here is JEHOVAH M'KADDESH: following the call to consecration and obedience in Lev 20:7-8, the last part of verse 8 links man's responsibility with His ability. In short, our responsibility is "Keep my decrees," while His provision is grace to carry it out "I am the LORD, Who makes you holy."

So while Israel had the responsibility to lovingly choose to obey His commands, He was the One Who was setting them apart (See Lev 20:8, 21:8, 22:32). He provided the sanctifying power. They were responsible to make the "sanctified" choices to live godly in a godless society! Why? Because the Canaanite practices (perversions) appealed to the deepest desires (in the area of sexuality) of fallen men, and Israel would have had no chance whatsoever to survive and thrive in such a sensually charged environment had not the LORD God been their Sanctifier (**And beloved, the same truth applies to all God's children today! Are you relying solely on the Spirit to enable you to fight the good fight of faith or are you relying on "your best efforts?" If the latter, then "Look Out!"**). Surely this is a picture of the New Testament truth that it is His Spirit Who sanctifies us (1Pe 1:2-note, 2Thes 2:13, cp 2Cor 3:18-note). The writer of Hebrews says...

For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are (present tense, passive voice = continually being) **sanctified** (This speaks of day to day, yea, even moment by moment, setting apart). (Heb 10:14-note)

**Leviticus 18:5 'So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD.**

- **Does them:** Eze 20:11,13,21 Lk 10:28 Ro 10:5 Ga 3:12
- **I am the Lord:** Ex 6:2,6,29 Mal 3:6)

**NIV** - Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD.

This verse is quoted in the NT...

Luke 10:28 And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; **DO** (present imperative = a command to "do" continually! Clearly this is not naturally possible. It is only supernaturally possible. This command [as are all 1500+ commands in the NT!] is an "invitation" to jettison self reliance and surrender to Spirit enablement!) **THIS, AND YOU WILL LIVE"**

**Comment:** Notice that Jesus' command to "Do" was not a charge to "work for your salvation." As noted above, a natural man, still unregenerate and dead in his trespasses and sins, could no more keep this command continually than the "man in the moon" could! So in a sense this "impossible command" is a call to receive Jesus, be born again, receive His indwelling Spirit, Who alone can enable us to keep such a command! Are you trying to obey the command to "DO" and failing miserably? There are only two possibilities - (1) You have no supernatural power source, no indwelling Spirit of Christ or (2) You have the Source but are not partaking of it. Perhaps no one has instructed you. You may be like the man who bought a new car and pushed it around until one day someone told him to put the key in the ignition!

Gal 3:12-note However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, **'HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM.'**

## **A WAY OF LIFE NOT A WAY OF SALVATION**

**BY WHICH A MAN MAY LIVE IF HE DOES THEM** The law was the way of life for the redeemed (Eze 20:11,13, 21), not a way of salvation for the lost (Ro 10:5; Gal 3:12 Jas 2:10). Certainly this is still a Truth...a life of obedience will be blessed of the Lord with real life. But it is not the road to salvation...that is only by faith. But as both Paul and James teach faith alone saves but the faith that genuinely saves is not alone but brings forth fruit in keeping with repentance. So genuine faith is a faith manifest by a lifestyle of obedience (not so-called "Christian perfection" but a habitual tendency toward a holy life).

**I am the Lord** - "I have the right, the authority and the might, to command you to keep My statutes and judgments."

**Warren Wiersbe adds:** Obedience to God's commandments brings life. Indeed, other biblical writers often quoted this verse (Neh 9:29 Luke 10:28 Ro 10:5 Gal 3:12). If people could perfectly obey God's law, their obedience would save them, but, of course, nobody can. Therefore, salvation is wholly by faith, totally apart from the works of the law (Ro 3:19-31). However, after we're saved, our obedience to the will of God, as revealed in the Word of God, is the basis for fellowshiping with God (**Ed:** Intimacy, communion, freedom, clarity of conscience, etc) and enjoying the abundant life He wants us to have.

**MacArthur writes:** Special blessing was promised to the Israelites on the condition of their obedience to God's law. This promise was remarkably verified in particular eras of their history, in the national prosperity they enjoyed when pure and undefiled religion prevailed among them. Obedience to God's law always insures temporal blessings, as this verse indicates. But these words have a higher reference to spiritual life as indicated by the Lord (cf. Luke 10:28) and Paul (cf. Ro 10:5). Obedience does not save from sin and hell, but it does mark those who are saved (cf. Ep 2:8-10; Ro 2:6-10).

**Wycliffe Bible Commentary:** The commandments were not given without a promise. The obedient individual would live. The same expression is to be found in [Ezek 20:11, 13, 21] without making clear the exact meaning. It is felt, however, that the meaning is to be found in the NT (Lk 20:38; Ro10:5; Gal 3:12), where the "abundant," "full," or "true" life seems to be signified.

**Leviticus 18:6 'None of you shall approach any blood relative of his to uncover nakedness; I am the LORD.**

- **uncover:** Lev 18:7-19 20:11,12,17-21

## **INCESTUOUS RELATIONSHIPS**

### **Leviticus 18:6-18**

**International Children's Bible (ICB)** - No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the LORD.

**None of you** - No incest allowed. Period! No exceptions. This is the general prohibition against incest and the following passages give specific commands. Sexual perversion among a people who are called to be holy perverts the Name and Character of the thrice Holy God! And the principle flows over to the New Covenant - God's people do the most good for the world when they are least like the world. How tragic that today so many churches have deceptively reasoned that they must imitate the world in order to reach the world! Beloved, when Israel failed to follow God's clear decrees and instead adopted the lifestyle of the pathetic pagan nations around them, they effectively blunted the effect of their witness. Beloved a nation decays not because of the sinners doing what comes naturally, but when the saints cease to be salty salt and clear lights. Are you as convicted as I am? I hope so. Joshua's parting charge is apropos...

If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:15).

## **BE DISTINCT! BE HOLY!**

**A holy life is a voice—  
it speaks when the tongue is silent and  
is either a constant attraction or  
a perpetual reproof!**

**James Orr** rightly observes that

No other form of sin is mentioned with disapproval and threats more frequently than the various forms of carnal vice (carnal = related to the physical body, especially crude bodily pleasures and appetites), for no other sin is more natural or widespread. (ISBE - 1915)

**To uncover nakedness** - "uncovering the nakedness" of another does not mean merely seeing them in the nude, but is a euphemism for sexual intimacy.



Lev 20:11 also describes "a man who lies with his father's wife, he has **uncovered his father's nakedness**." In context these passages clearly speak of incest. And lest we think man's dark heart has "evolved" beyond this plague, all we need do is read Paul's words over 1500 years later to the saints at Corinth...

It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. (1Cor 5:1)

Sexual relations with members of both the primary and extended family were unashamedly practiced by the Canaanites in the land that the Israelites were to possess. God instructed His covenant people not to do them, not because He is an "Orge", but because He is the all wise God who knows that engaging in such perverted sexual activities was destructive to family relationships but even more importantly would be destructive to their relationship with God. Recall that God had covenanted with Israel at Mt Sinai (Ex 24:1-7, Read especially Ex 24:8 in which **blood** was sprinkled to ratify the covenant!) and they were His **"WIFE"** by covenant agreement (Read their own words in Ex 24:3) and He was their Husband (Isa 54:5) as portrayed several times in the Old Testament...

"For long ago I broke your yoke And tore off your bonds (a picture of their defective loyalty to their "Husband"); But you said, 'I will not serve!' For on every high hill And under every green tree You have lain down as a harlot (**Israel God's "wife" perverted herself like a prostitute committing spiritual adultery with the other so-called gods, the detestable idols of the Canaanites and other pagan nations**) (Jer 2:20)

"If a man divorces a woman and she marries someone else, he is not to take her back again, for that would surely corrupt the land. But you (**Jehovah as "Husband" speaking to His "wife" Israel**) have prostituted yourself with many lovers, says the LORD. Yet I am still calling you to come back to me. (Jer 3:1NLT)

(In the context of Jehovah promising Israel and Judah the New Covenant in the future) "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke (referring to the Old Covenant, the Covenant of the Law at Mt Sinai), although **I was a Husband to them**," declares the LORD. "But this is the covenant (referring to the New Covenant) which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (Jer 31:31-33)

**Leviticus 18:7 'You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, that is, the nakedness of your mother. She is your mother; you are not to uncover her nakedness.**

- Lev 20:11 Eze 22:10

**ICB** - 'You must not shame your father by having sexual relations with your mother. She is your mother. Do not have sexual relations with her.

**NIV** - 'Do not dishonor your father by having sexual relations with your mother. She is your mother; do not have relations with her.

**NLT** - Do not violate your father by having sexual intercourse with your mother. She is your mother; you must never have intercourse with her.

God sums up the punishment for the list of sexual sins in Leviticus 18 this way...

Leviticus 18:29 'For whoever does any of these abominations, those persons who do so shall be **cut off** from among their people.

See discussion of Lev 18:8 regarding the punishment for this specific sexual sin.

**Leviticus 18: 8 'You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is your father's nakedness.**

- Lev 20:11 Ge 35:22 49:4 Dt 22:30 27:20 2Sa 16:21,22 Eze 22:10 Am 2:7 1 Co 5:1

**NIV** - 'Do not have sexual relations with your father's wife; that would dishonor your father.

We see a similar perversion in Genesis, at the beginning (not to mention what transpired in Genesis 6:5-6 and in Sodom and Gomorrah in Ge 18:1-33, Ge 19:5-9, both receiving God's just decree of the death sentence)...

Ge 35:22 And it came about while Israel was dwelling in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard of it. Now there were twelve sons of Jacob--

To reiterate, the punishment for the sexual sins in Leviticus 18 is clear...

For whoever does any of these abominations, those persons who do so shall be **cut off** from among their people. (Leviticus 18:29)

The question arises "**What does 'cut off' mean?**" Does it mean ex-communication from the congregation or does it mean that the guilty parties are to be put to death? For some of these sexual sins, there is no doubt as to the meaning of "**cut off**" because God clarifies the meaning in another passage (**the best commentary on Scripture is always Scripture! See Compare Scripture with Scripture**). And so in regard to the incestuous relation described here in Lev 18:8 (and presumably also in Lev 18:7), **cut off** means the guilty parties are to be "**put to death**" as prescribed in Lev 20:11...

If there is a man who lies with his father's wife, he has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall **surely be put to death**, their bloodguiltiness is upon them.

**Leviticus 18:9 'The nakedness of your sister, either your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether born at home or born outside, their nakedness you shall not uncover.**

- Lev 20:17 Dt 27:22 2Sa 13:11-14 Eze 22:11

**ICB** - You must not have sexual relations with your sister. She may be the daughter of your father or your mother. It doesn't matter if she was born in your house or somewhere else.

**NLT** - Do not have sexual intercourse with your sister or half sister, whether she is your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether she was brought up in the same family or somewhere else.

God sums up the punishment for the list of sexual sins in Leviticus 18 that "whoever does any of these abominations, those persons who do so shall be **cut off** from among their people." (Lev 18:29) For other sexual sins, the prescribed punishment is not completely clear. For example, in Lev 20:17 the text says "**cut off**" but it does not definitely state they are to be put to death as in other passages in close context. However, given the similarity of the sin, this would strongly suggest that the punishment of cutting off in this passage in Lev 18:9 is also death.

If there is a man who takes his sister, his father's daughter or his mother's daughter, so that he sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it is a disgrace; and they shall be **cut off** in the sight of the sons of their people. He has uncovered his sister's nakedness; he bears his guilt. (Lev 20:17)

**Leviticus 18:10 'The nakedness of your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter, their nakedness you shall not uncover; for their nakedness is yours.**

**NLT** - "Do not have sexual intercourse with your granddaughter, whether your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter; that would violate you.

**ICB** - You must not have sexual relations with your granddaughter. She may be your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter. That would bring shame on you.

**Leviticus 18:11 'The nakedness of your father's wife's daughter, born to your father, she is your sister, you shall not uncover her nakedness.**

**NLT** - Do not have sexual intercourse with the daughter of any of your father's wives; she is your half sister.

**ICB** - 'If your father and his wife have a daughter, she is your sister. You must not have sexual relations with



her.

**Leviticus 18:12 'You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's sister; she is your father's blood relative.'**

**NIV** - Do not have sexual relations with your father's sister; she is your father's close relative.

**NLT** - Do not have intercourse with your aunt, your father's sister, because she is your father's close relative.

**ICB** - You must not have sexual relations with your father's sister. She is your father's close relative.

**Leviticus 18:13 'You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister, for she is your mother's blood relative.'**

**NIV** - Do not have sexual relations with your mother's sister, because she is your mother's close relative.

**NLT** - Do not have sexual intercourse with your aunt, your mother's sister, because she is your mother's close relative.

**Leviticus 18:14 'You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother; you shall not approach his wife, she is your aunt. (Lev 20:20)'**

**NLT** - And do not violate your uncle, your father's brother, by having sexual intercourse with his wife; she also is your aunt.

**ICB** - You must not have sexual relations with the wife of your father's brother. This would shame him. His wife is your aunt.

The "**cutting off**" (Lev 18:24) for this specific sin is described in Leviticus 20...

If there is a man who lies with his uncle's wife he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness;**they shall bear their sin**. They shall die childless. (Lev 20:20)

**Leviticus 18:15 'You shall not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law; she is your son's wife, you shall not uncover her nakedness.'**

- Lev 20:12 Ge 38:18,19,26 Eze 22:11

God sums up the punishment for the list of sexual sins in Leviticus 18:29. In regard to the incestuous relation described here in Lev 18:15, **cut off** means the guilty parties are to be "**put to death**" as prescribed in Lev 20:12...

If there is a man who lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death; they have committed incest, their bloodguiltiness is upon them. (**ICB** = A man must not have sexual relations with his uncle's wife. That would shame his uncle. That man and his uncle's wife would die without children. They are guilty of sin.)

**Leviticus 18:16 'You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness.'**

- Lev 20:21 Dt 25:5 Mt 14:3,4 Mt 22:24 Mk 6:17 Mk 12:19 Lk 3:19

**NLT** - Do not have intercourse with your brother's wife; this would violate your brother.

**ICB** - 'You must not have sexual relations with your brother's wife. That would shame your brother.

**Criswell** - If the brother died, however, the law of levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5-10) became applicable.

The "**cutting off**" (Lev 18:29) for this specific sin is specified in Leviticus 20...

If there is a man who takes his brother's wife, it is abhorrent; he has uncovered his brother's nakedness. **They shall be childless.** (Lev 20:21)

**Comment:** What does **cut off** mean in Lev 20:21? Since it does not state they are to be **put to death**, it appears that this is a lesser penalty. Being **childless** however would mean that this man's lineage would die when he died.

**Leviticus 18:17 'You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and of her daughter, nor shall you take her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness; they are blood relatives. It is lewdness.'**

- **woman:** Lev 20:14 Dt 27:23 Amos 2:7
- **lewdness:** Lev 20:14

**NLT** - Do not have sexual intercourse with both a woman and her daughter or marry both a woman and her granddaughter, whether her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter. They are close relatives, and to do this would be a horrible wickedness.

As noted above, God sums up the punishment for the list of sexual sins in Leviticus 18:29. What does "cut off" mean in this passage? Does it mean ex-communication from the congregation or does it mean that the guilty parties are to be put to death? For some of these sexual sins, there is no doubt as to the meaning of "**cut off**" because God clarifies the meaning in another passage (**the best commentary on Scripture is always Scripture! See Compare Scripture with Scripture**). And so in regard to the incestuous relation described here in Lev 18:17, **cut off** means the guilty parties are to be **put to death** as prescribed in Lev 20:14...

If there is a man who marries a woman and her mother, it is immorality; both he and **they shall be burned with fire**, that there may be no **immorality (zimmah - lewdness)** in your midst. (**NLT** - If a man has intercourse with both a woman and her mother, such an act is terribly wicked. All three of them must be burned to death to wipe out such wickedness from among you.) (Lev 20:14)

**Lewdnness** ([02154](#)) (**zimmah**) means an evil plan, purpose, or scheme; a wicked thought, especially with reference to sexual unchastity; lewdness, ideas and practices that are indecent and disgraceful. Lust; sexual unchastity; licentiousness.

**Septuagint (Lxx)** - The Lxx translates **zimmah** in Lev 18:17 with the noun **asebema** which means an impious or profane act (cf other uses of **asebema** Dt 9:27, Lam 1:14, Lam 4:22). This word is not found in the NT, but it's cognates are used. E.g., **asebeia** is a related noun which means lack of reverence and awe for God and as a result, living in a way that denies God's existence and His right as Supreme Ruler and Authority. The idea is rejection of all that has to do with God and consequently disobeying His rule. **Asebeia** suggests a disregard of the existence of God, a refusal to retain Him in knowledge; that habit of mind leads to open rebellion. The related adjective **asebes** describes an individual who is devoid of all reverence for God, one who is unrestrained by the awe due Him. **Asebes** describes the basic nature of evil men (of all men not redeemed and restrained by the Gospel of Jesus Christ!) It is notable that these words do not necessary describe one who is irreligious. They may practice religious acts or acts they claim as worship, albeit not worship of the one true Living God! Thus many if not most of the ancient "religious" cults wantonly practiced cultic prostitution, unashamedly holding that sexual acts with both male and female prostitutes were tantamount to acts of worship! O thank God for the Gospel's redemption of our heart and minds from the abominations of lewdness that are rapidly become "accepted practices" in our modern "open minded" society! Come Lord Jesus. Amen!

**Zimmah** refers to the plans and purposes of the mind which give rise to one's actions. Yet the word rarely pertains to good intentions (Job 17:11). It is used in reference to the evil plotting of the wicked (Isa. 32:7); the thoughts of foolish people (Pr 24:9); and mischievous motivations (Ps. 119:150). Moreover, it relates to sexual sins that spring from lustful intentions - incest (Lev. 18:17); prostitution (Lev. 19:29); adultery (Job 31:11); and rape (Jdg. 20:6). Figuratively, the word represents the wickedness of the people of Israel in their idolatry, calling to mind the connection with adultery (Jer. 13:27; Ezek. 16:27).

**Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary** notes that "Most often lewdness is used figuratively for **idolatry** (Jer. 11:15; 13:27; Ezek. 16:43, 58; 22:9; 23:21, 27, 29, 35, 48-49; 24:13; Hos. 2:10). Since the cults of many of Israel's neighboring peoples were fertility cults that employed sexual acts as part of worship, the application of lewdness to idolatry or unfaithfulness is easily understood. See [EXCURSUS on Fertility Cults](#) at the end of this page. ([Holman Bible Dictionary](#); Related resource - [Lewd; Lewdnness - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#))

**English definition of lewdness** - one who is sexually unchaste or licentious, one who has a preoccupation with sex and gratification of sexual desires. Characterized by or intended to excite crude sexual desire; obscene **Webster's 1828 dictionary** adds that lewdness is "The unlawful indulgence of lust; fornication, or adultery. **In Scripture, it generally denotes idolatry.** Licentiousness; shamelessness." I would add that degradation to lewdness begins with denying God is God and choosing to worship an idol of one's own choosing (in this case essentially the "idol" of self - cf 2Ti 3:1-2). We see this godless mindset come to a crescendo among God's chosen people in the spiritually (and morally) dark days of Judges (200+ years) where they actually carve a concubine into pieces and send the pieces throughout the territory of Israel (Jdg 20:6)! And what was the root problem or heart "pathology" that led to such despicable lewdness?

In those days there was no king in Israel (God was not on the throne of their hearts! O, how we moderns need to hear and heed, lest we too fall into this deadly, tempting snare!); everyone did what was right in his own eyes (Don't miss the profound truth here: Their doing of **wrong** was perceived by themselves as **right**! We live in a culture which is saying "Just do it!" Values clarification is the watchword. No moral absolutes is the mantra! Oh my! God warned Israel that the land would spew them out! Woe!). (Jdg 21:25) (You might also read Ezek 16:27, 43, 58 where zimmah is used 3x in one chapter! What was the consequence? God's **Shekinah Glory** cloud, His presence in their midst, had departed and soon He would take them all to Babylonian captivity and destroy the Temple which had been so horribly defiled!)

**Vine** - "loose conduct; lewdness." The 28 occurrences of this noun are all in legal and poetical books of the Bible, except for a single occurrence in Judges. This noun signifies "loose or infamous conduct" and is used most often with regard to illicit sexual conduct: "Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, ... or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness; for they are her near kinswomen: it is wickedness" (Lev. 18:17—the first occurrence). Rejection of God's law or spiritual adultery may be represented by zimmah (Ps. 119:150; cf. Ezek. 16:12-28). A plan or scheme identified by the word is, therefore, a "harlotrous" plan (Ps. 26:10).

**Zimmah** - 27x - Lev 18:17; 19:29; 20:14; Jdg 20:6; Job 17:11; 31:11; Ps 26:10; 119:150; Pr 10:23; 21:27; 24:9; Isa 32:7; Jer 13:27; Ezek 16:27, 43, 58; 22:9, 11; 23:21, 27, 29, 35, 44, 48f; 24:13; Hos 6:9 -

**Translated in NAS** - acts of lewdness(1), crime(m)(1), devising(1), evil intent(1), immorality(2), lewd(3), lewdly(1), lewdness(13), lustful crime(1), plans(1), wicked scheme(1), wicked schemes(1), wickedness(2).

**Zimmah** is also used in Leviticus 19...

Do not profane your daughter by making her a harlot, so that the land may not fall to harlotry, and the land become full of **lewdness** (Zimmah). (Lev 19:29)

**Leviticus 18:18 'You shall not marry a woman in addition to her sister as a rival while she is alive, to uncover her nakedness.**

- **Marry:** Ge 4:19 Ge 29:28 Ex 26:3
- **Rival:** Ge 30:15 1Sa 1:6-8 Mal 2:15

**NIV** - "'Do not take your wife's sister as a rival wife and have sexual relations with her while your wife is living.

**Ryrie** - Polygamous marriage to living sisters is forbidden.

**Leviticus 18:19 'Also you shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness during her menstrual impurity.**

- Lev 15:19,24 Lev 20:18, 2Sa 11:4, Eze 18:6 Ezek 22:10

Earlier we read...

Lev 15:19 'When a woman has a discharge, if her discharge in her body is blood, she shall continue in her menstrual impurity for seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening.

Lev 15:24 'And if a man actually lies with her, so that her menstrual impurity is on him, he shall be unclean seven days, and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: Since sexual intercourse was forbidden during a woman's period (Lev 18:19; 20:18), Lev 15:24 probably means that if a woman's period commenced while she was having intercourse with her husband, he would be unclean like her and would also be a source of secondary pollution (as in vv. 2-12).

The punishment is described in Lev 20:18...

If there is a man who lies with a menstruous woman and uncovers her nakedness, he has laid bare her flow, and she has exposed the flow of her blood; thus both of them shall be cut off from among their people.

**Comment:** In this situation the cutting off seems to be ex-communication from the congregation.

**Boa** - Violating a woman during her menstrual period (v. 19). It is unlikely that this verse is referring to sex between a husband and wife during her menstrual period, as Spong and others assume. A few chapters earlier such an act is regarded as making the man ritually unclean for seven days (Lev 15:24). Here, though (compare Lev 18:29), and explicitly in a related text (Lev 20:18), the act is punishable by death. Thus, the act in view here must be different from the one in Lev 15 and must be regarded as a more serious kind of offense. It is therefore most likely that the act forbidden here is one that took place between persons who were not married, and probably one in which the man violated the woman (since she is not likely to have consented freely during that time). We are therefore not dealing here with a matter of ritual purity, but of morality.

**Leviticus 18:20 'You shall not have intercourse with your neighbor's wife, to be defiled with her.**

- Ex. 20:14; Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22

## ADULTERY PROHIBITED

**Rooker comments:** Leviticus 18:20 prohibits adultery, that is, sexual intercourse between a man and his neighbor's wife. Adultery was also prohibited in Ex 20:14; Dt 5:18; Jn 8:2-5 and was punished by death for both of the guilty parties (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22). The seriousness of this offense results from the fact that the marriage relationship was instituted by God (Gen 2:18, 24; Pr 2:17; 18:22; Mal 2:14)....Adultery was often used metaphorically in the Bible to refer to infidelity to the Lord (Jer 7:9; 23:10; Ezek 23:45; Rev 2:22). Israel, like a wife, was to be exclusively loyal to her husband. That the relationship between God and Israel was like that of a marriage is the background for references to God's jealousy (אֲדֵרָא) for Israel (Ex 20:5; Deut 5:9). (New American Commentary).

**Boa-** Adultery...is also said to be defiling. There is no denying that this refers to a consensual sexual act. Moreover, the general description of all of these acts as detestable to God (Lev 18:26-30) shows that God considers heterosexual adultery to be detestable, too, and not merely homosexual acts. Adulterers in the church (and there are many) who openly condemn homosexuality as an abomination but refuse to repent of their sin of adultery are **hypocrites**. The hypocrite is still right in his view of homosexuality, though. The problem with the hypocrite is generally not that he is wrong about others, but that he is wrong about himself (cf. Matt. 23).

See - [Immorality, Sexual - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)

The cutting off that Leviticus 20 prescribes for **adultery** is death...

Leviticus 20:10 If there is a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

**Leviticus 18:21 'You shall not give any of your offspring to offer them to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God; I am the LORD.**

- Lev 20:2 De 12:31 18:10 2Ki 16:3 21:6 23:10 Ps 106:37,38 Jer 7:31 Jer 19:5 Eze 20:31 23:37
- **Molech:** 1Ki 11:7,33 Am 5:26 Ac 7:43, Moloch
- **profane:** Lev 19:12 Lev 20:2-5 Lev 21:6 Lev 22:2,32 Eze 36:20-23 Mal 1:12 Ro 1:23 Ro 2:24

## GOD'S HOLY

## NAME

**ICB** - You must not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech. This will show that you do not respect your God. I am the Lord.

**NIV** - "Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

**NLT** - "Do not give any of your children as a sacrifice to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

**KJV** - And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.

- Related Resource: God's Name - A Strong Tower (Links to Multiple Holy Names)
- For Moloch see: [Gods and Goddesses, Pagan - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)

**You profane the name of your God** - This despicable act (child sacrifice) would bring down the Name (and the Holy Character) of Jehovah in the eyes of the surrounding pagan nations. Israel was to be a light to the nations, shining forth the glory of the Name (and majestic character) of their great and mighty God. Clearly child sacrifice would result in the antithesis of bringing glory to the Name Yahweh! The psalmist alludes to how important is a proper understanding of **God's Name** writing...

Ps 9:10 And those who KNOW Thy **NAME** will put their TRUST in Thee; for Thou, O LORD, hast not forsaken those who seek Thee.

**Spurgeon** - Ignorance is worst when it amounts to ignorance of God, and knowledge is best when it exercises itself upon the name of God. This most excellent knowledge leads to the most excellent grace of faith. O, to learn more of the attributes and character of God. Unbelief, that hooting nightbird, cannot live in the light of divine knowledge, it flies before the sun of God's great and gracious name. If we read this verse literally, there is, no doubt, a glorious fulness of assurance in the names of God. We have recounted them in the "Hints for Preachers," and would direct the reader's attention to them. By knowing his name is also meant an experimental acquaintance with the attributes of God, which are every one of them anchors to hold the soul from drifting in seasons of peril. The Lord may hide his face for a season from his people, but he never has utterly, finally, really, or angrily forsaken them that seek him. Let the poor seekers draw comfort from this fact, and let the finders rejoice yet more exceedingly, for what must be the Lord's faithfulness to those who find if he is so gracious to those who seek.

Lest we miss the application - Believers today are in ever present danger of profaning the great Name of Jesus in the eyes of the pagans spiritually dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1). The "antidote" for the poison of profaning His Name (and giving the pagans a wrong impression of Who Jesus is) is to in all our behavior, be holy as He is Holy, enabled by His Spirit Who will glorify His greatName in and through us (read Jn 16:14) (Pause and worship Him for [Holy is Our God](#). Sing from your heart the great old hymn [Holy, Holy, Holy](#))

**Profane** (02490)(**chahal** - **click word study**). The **Septuagint (Lxx)** uses **bebeloo** (see related word **bebelos**) meaning to make something which is otherwise highly revered and honored to become identified with that which is common and thus to desecrate or defile it.

**Seven times in Leviticus 18-22 God makes reference to His Holy Name and every time it is associated with the word profane.** God's "Name is Jealous, (He) is a jealous God". (Ex 34:14). God's Name is Jehovah Qanna. The instructions on holiness in Leviticus 18-22 are for Israel's **GOOD** but ultimately for Jehovah's **GLORY**. Beloved, some of these laws seem archaic and even trivial and unrelated to us as New Covenant believers. However our God is still Jehovah Qanna and He still desires a holy people to give a proper opinion of His Holy Character. Are there some little areas in your walk where you are compromising, reasoning that surely He would not expect me to forgo that pleasure or that experience? Beloved, He is the same yesterday, today and forever and His urgent command is the same as it was to His Chosen People living in the midst of paganism...

**Let** your light **shine** (**aoist imperative** = command to "Just do it!" Do not delay. Don't compromise!) before men in such a way that they may see your **Good Works**, and glorify (doxazo) your Father who is in heaven. (Mt 5:16-note)

**Comment:** Do not miss what Jesus is saying here - when the lost (and saved) see the supernatural works (initiated and empowered by the indwelling Spirit), they are getting a visible portrayal of the invisible God Who "does not wish for any of them to perish but for

all come to repentance." (2Peter 3:9-note)

**Rooker** - Support for the interpretation that **child sacrifice** is what is in view is provided by 2 Kgs 23:10 and Jer 7:31. In these texts "burning" is equated with the expression to cause the children to "pass through the fire." (The New American Commentary)

**To Molech** (Moloch or Milcom - see [Dictionary Articles](#)) (Lev 20:2-5; see Acts 7:43, 1Ki 11:5, 7, 33; 2Ki 23:10, 13; Jer 32:35; Jer 49:1-3; Zep 1:5) : detestable god of the Ammonites, the worship of whom was characterized by the gruesome sacrifice of children. Human sacrifice was never sanctioned in Israel, though it was wrongly practiced at times (Jdg 11:29-40; 2Ki 3:27; 16:3; 17:31; 21:6; 2Chr 33:6; Ezek 16:20, 21).

**Molech** was a title for various Canaanite deities to whom human sacrifices were offered. The highlight of King Josiah's reforms was his elimination of child sacrifice by defiling the valley of Hinnom where children had regularly been forced to pass through the fire burning in the outstretched arms of the "god" Molech. The valley was made the garbage dump of the city and kept continually burning, giving it the perpetual appearance of an eternal lake of fire. The valley's name finally became the name gehenna meaning "hell," the lake of fire "prepared for the devil" and all those who reject God's salvation through Jesus Christ (Mt 25:41; Rev 20:15). It appears this same perversion of worship was carried out at the Mayan and Aztec temples where human sacrifice and blood were offered to their so-called gods. They understood that the life was in the blood, but they did not understand only the Giver of life was to be approached with blood as an atoning sacrifice and only at the place He had authorized. In that way, the Mayan and Aztec sacrifices on the apices of their temples remind one of the perverted practice of the Israelites to sacrifice on the "high places."

This **despicable false god** is mentioned in Stephen's scathing sermon which caused him to be stoned to death...

Acts 7:43 'YOU ALSO TOOK ALONG THE TABERNACLE OF MOLOCH AND THE STAR OF THE GOD ROMPHA, THE IMAGES WHICH YOU MADE TO WORSHIP THEM. I ALSO WILL REMOVE YOU BEYOND BABYLON.'

**NET Glossary:** Molech - a pagan god worshiped in the ancient Near East in the 2nd millennium B.C. and associated with death and the underworld; Molech was worshiped by the Ammonites as their national deity (1Kgs 11:7, 33) and especially associated with child sacrifice (Lev 18:21; 20:2-5; 2Kgs 23:10); "Milcom" and "Malcam" are variations of the name Molech

While the text does not state it specifically, the mention of Molech in the context suggests some aspect of sexual perversion.

**Boa** - I think it safe to assume we all know this (child sacrifice) is an offense to God; if we have any doubts, such an act is said here to "profane the name of your God." This is the one sin condemned in Leviticus 18 that is not overtly sexual in nature, though evidently child sacrifice to Molech was part of pagan rituals that included sexual immorality (cf. Lev. 20:4-5). This is also the one prohibition dealing with acts that clearly did take place in a pagan context—but presumably no one is prepared to say that child sacrifice was condemned only when the children were sacrificed to the wrong god! Surely the horrific abuse of the children is itself being condemned. Would it be permissible to kill innocent children today, as long as it was not in a pagan ritual? (Come to think of it, that is happening now—it's called abortion.)

**Freeman...**

Molech (sometimes written Moloch) was an old Canaanite idol, **into whose worship the Israelites gradually became drawn**. Similar rites were performed among other nations, probably varying at different times and in different places. The usual description given of this god is that of a hollow image made of brass, and having a human body with the head of an ox. **The idol sat on a brazen throne with hands extended. In sacrificing to it the image was heated to redness by a fire built within. The parents then placed their children in the heated arms, while the noise of drums and cymbals drowned the cries of the little sufferers.** It is also said that there were seven chapels connected with the idol, which were to be entered according to the relative value of the offering presented; only those who offered children being allowed to enter the seventh. Miniatures of these are supposed to be the "tabernacle" referred to in Amos 5:26 (see Acts 7:43). Others think the "tabernacle" was a shrine or ark in which the god was carried in procession.

Some eminent writers deny that the description above given refers to the Molech of the Old Testament. The Bible itself gives no account of the idol save that children were made to "pass through the fire" to it. A diversity of opinion prevails as to the meaning of this expression. Most Jewish writers claim that it does not imply the actual sacrificing or burning of the children, but merely an idolatrous ceremonial purification; a fire baptism, which was accomplished by carrying the children between fires, or leaping over fires with them, or causing them to do the same. However this may have been in earlier times, it is certain that the service of Moloch implied more than this at some periods of Jewish history. In the days of Ezekiel God's testimony was, "Thou hast slain My children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them. (Ezek 16:21). Here passing through the fire is evidently synonymous with death. See also 2 Chr. 28:3; Ps 106:37, 38; Jer 7:31.



Frequent reference is made in the Scriptures to this heathen abomination. See 2Kings 16:3, 18:17, 21:6, 2Ki 23:10; Jer 32:35 ; Ezek 20:31. The crime was threatened with the severest punishment. Lev. 20:1-5. Human sacrifices were anciently known to the Phoenicians, Egyptians, Carthaginians, and other nations. Some writers have sought to identify the worship of Molech with that of Baal. Others suppose that, according to the well-known astrological character of the Phoenician and Syrian religions, Molech was the planet Saturn. Winer says : "The dearest ones might well be sacrificed to a star so dreaded as Saturn, in order to appease it, especially by nations who were by no means strangers to human sacrifices." ([Handbook of Bible manners and customs - published in 1875](#))

**Leviticus 18:22 'You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.**

- Lev 20:13 Ge 19:5 Judges 19:22 1Ki 14:24 Ro 1:26,27 1Co 6:9 1Ti 1:10 Jude 1:7

1Kgs 14:24 And there were also male cult prostitutes in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel.

As noted above, God sums up the punishment for the list of sexual sins in Leviticus 18:29. Homosexual acts are clearly denounced here as detestable to God. The penalty given at Lev 20:13 is capital punishment, Moses recording "'If [there is] a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them." Homosexuality is clearly denounced (and judged) also in Ro 1:26-27 for the participants shall receive "in their own persons the due penalty of their error." The sin of homosexuality was well known in Canaan -- witness Sodom (Ge 19:5) and Gibeah (Jdg 19:22) -- but it was no less wicked in God's sight in those pagan settings. How much greater is this sin in the context of greater light of God's holy standards!

- See - [Homosexuality - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)

**Norman Geisler** - LEVITICUS 18:22-24—Haven't the laws against homosexuality been abolished along with laws against eating pork? Weren't those laws attached to the fear of the curse of barrenness anyway? **MISINTERPRETATION:** The law against homosexuality is found in Leviticus 18:22, alongside ceremonial and dietary laws. These laws have been done away with (Acts 10:15). This being so, it would seem logical that the laws prohibiting homosexual activity are no longer binding either. Also, according to Jewish belief, barrenness was a curse (Gen. 16:1; 1 Sam. 1:3-8). Children were considered God's blessing (Ps. 127:3). The blessing of the land was connected with the children (Gen. 15:5). It would then be unsurprising that Old Testament law in such a culture would frown on homosexual activity from which no children came. Perhaps what is being condemned is not homosexual activity so much as the refusal to have children. **CORRECTING THE MISINTERPRETATION:** Simply because the Mosaic prohibition against homosexuality is in Leviticus does not make it part of the passing ceremonial law. If that were true, the same could be said about rape, incest, and bestiality in the same chapter (Lev. 18:6-14, 22-23). And nowhere are sexual laws connected with the procreation of children. If homosexuals were put to death because they were barren, that would hardly solve the problem of producing more children. Heterosexual marriage would have been a more appropriate punishment. Laws against homosexuality extend beyond the covenant nation to Gentiles at any rate (Rom. 1:26). Gentiles do not have the ceremonial law (Rom. 2:12-15), nor was there a covenant stake in producing a new generation. It was for this very reason that God brought judgment on the Canaanites (Lev. 18:1-3, 24-25). A Jew caught in homosexuality was destroyed brutally. Yet violators of the dietary laws were considered unclean and had to live outside the camp for a brief time. If barrenness was a divine curse, then singleness would be sinful. But both our Lord (Matt. 19:11-12) and the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 7:8) sanctioned singlehood by both precept and practice. Yet prohibitions against homosexual practice continue to be promulgated throughout the Epistles (Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10; and Jude 7). ([When Cultists Ask- A Popular Handbook on Cultic Misinterpretations](#))

**Abomination** (08441) (toebah) see **word study on toebah**. (Lxx translates toebah with Greek word **bdelugma** - see the **interesting derivation which gives a strong word picture**)

**Henry Morris** - Homosexuality has become so common today, as in the ancient pagan tribes, that it is considered an acceptable--or even preferable--life style. God, however, who created men and women and ordained the proper and fruitful institution of marriage and the family unit, calls it abomination. Despite modern theories, it is not a natural condition. It is a learned behavior which, like any other sin prohibited by a holy God, can become a very difficult behavior to change when long practiced. Nevertheless, the Bible clearly forbids--and nowhere more forcefully than here in this 18th chapter of Leviticus--not only homosexuality but also adultery, incest, bestiality and any other type of sexual commerce except that in monogamous, life-long marriage. God can and does forgive these and other sins (that is what the Levitical offerings in this same book teach). Persistent and unrepentant continuance however,



will eventually result in the judgment implicit in Romans 1:27, "receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet."

**Norman Geisler** tackles an argument which is frequently raised regarding this OT passage and others that strictly prohibit homosexual relations. The reasoning goes something like this: "Since Leviticus prohibits eating pork, but the New Testament allows one to eat pork, having the laws against homosexuality also been abolished along with laws against eating pork?" Here is Geisler's analysis...

**PROBLEM:** The law against homosexuality is found in the Levitical law (Lev. 18:22) along with laws against eating pork and shrimp (Lev. 11:2–3, 10). But these ceremonial laws have been done away with (Acts 10:15). This being the case, some insist that the laws prohibiting homosexual activity are no longer binding either.

**SOLUTION:** The laws against homosexual practices are **not merely ceremonial**. Simply because the Mosaic prohibition against homosexuality is mentioned in Leviticus does not mean that it was part of the ceremonial law that has passed away. **First**, if laws against homosexuality were merely ceremonial (and therefore abolished), then rape, incest, and bestiality would not be morally wrong either, since they are condemned in the same chapter with homosexual sins (Lev. 18:6–14, 22–23). **Second**, homosexual sins among Gentiles were also condemned by God (Ro 1:26), and they did not have the ceremonial law (Ro 2:12–15). It was for this very reason that God brought judgment on the Canaanites (Ge 18:1–3, 25). **Third**, even in the Jewish Levitical law there was a difference in punishment for violating the ceremonial law of eating pork or shrimp (which was a few days isolation) and that for homosexuality which was capital punishment (Lev. 18:29). **Fourth**, Jesus changed the dietary laws of the OT (Mark 7:18; Acts 10:15), but the moral prohibitions against homosexuality are still enjoined on believers in the NT (Rom. 1:26–27; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10; Jude 7). (When critics ask : a popular handbook on Bible difficulties)

**Kenneth Boa and R. Bowman** make several observations on Lev 18:26-30 where the Hebrew word **toebah** is used 3x. ..

Leviticus asserts that God Himself finds such practices abominable, and makes that the reason they are so strongly forbidden....

(1) God speaking. The passage is thus an expression of God's judgment of homosexual and other acts, not the Israelites' judgment about them.

(2) What God calls detestable (abominable) acts are said to be customary in Canaan. The obvious implication is that the Canaanites, at least, did not find these behaviors abominable. Thus the test of sexual morality is not how it makes us feel, but rather how it makes God "feel."

(3) Twice in this passage the description of the acts as "abominations" is linked to the land and the people becoming "defiled." Defilement is a religious concept, not a sociological one. The point again is that these acts were an offense to God, whether or not they were offensive to human beings.

(4) This reference to defilement has been taken to prove the theory that homosexuality is being condemned only in some ritual or ceremonial religious context. But this will not work. For one thing, nothing is said to indicate that a pagan ritual association was even part of the rationale for the prohibition. Besides, sex acts between men and women were also (indeed, more commonly) part of pagan rituals. It makes no sense for language specifying same-sex acts to be used if the problem that was really being targeted was not limited to such acts. Moreover, the pagans practiced homosexual acts both in ritual settings and outside them. Since such a distinction would have been familiar in that culture, there is no reason why Leviticus might not have allowed for non-ritual homosexual acts if they were deemed morally permissible. In any case, that homosexual acts are being condemned here for reasons unrelated to pagan rituals is clear in the larger context of the chapter. It is not merely homosexuality, but all of the acts forbidden in this chapter, that are considered abominable (as Lev 18:26–30 say)....The prohibitions here are as general and categorical as they could be. All such sexual acts are forbidden, regardless of how the two people involved feel about each other, or how old or young they are.

If we regard biblical morality as normative, then all such behaviors are just as wrong today as they were three thousand years ago. Again, if we have a problem with that, it is an indicator of our own moral compass being "off" rather than of any defect in biblical teaching. (**An unchanging faith in a changing world: understanding and responding to critical issues that Christians face today**)

an animal to mate with it; it is a perversion.

**Boa** - Bestiality This act is described as a “perversion,” a term which connotes that the act is utterly unnatural. It is clear from surveying all of the forbidden acts in Leviticus 18 that all of them are condemned as categorically immoral. The term “abomination” in this context clearly means something that is particularly offensive in the sight of God. This is true of the word “**abomination**” in general.

**Apologetics Study Bible** - Hittite laws assign the death penalty to lying with some animals, but lying with a horse or a mule carried no penalty. (**Ed**: When truth is distorted it results in some bizarre statements such as these Hittite laws. One wonders how much lower America will decline in her moral/ethical standards such that that which is abominable to God's eyes is gradually and increasingly more acceptable (and even legalized) in the eyes of a largely unregenerate, progressively more decadent society.)

It is interesting that **Wikipedia** refers to this sin somewhat euphemistically as **Zoophilia** (love of animals!).

**Leviticus 18:24** 'Do not **defile** yourselves by any of these things; for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled.

- **Defile**: Lev 18:6-23,30 Jer 44:4 Mt 15:18-20 Mk 7:10-23 1Co 3:17
- **for**: Lev 20:22,23 Dt 12:31, 18:12)

God had prophesied of this day to Abraham "Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, **for** (term of explanation) the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete." (Ge 15:16) Those who condemn Israel (and God) for the way the Canaanites were treated seem to forget that God gave them several centuries to repent of their wickedness.

Recall the interesting pattern in Leviticus 18 - In Lev 18:1-23 Moses is to tell the people **what** not to do. Then in Lev 18:24-30 he is to tell them **why** not to do it. Notice that do not defile is not a suggestion but a commandment, a commandment not to destroy our joy of life, but to the contrary given that we might enjoy true life, life indeed, life as God intended it to be lived. But indwelling sin warps and distorts God's desire for us, even believers, which is why we continually need to have our minds renewed.

**The Abominations of the Canaanites**: Lev 18:24-30: Recent years have seen an increase in occult practices and Satanic rituals. But these things are nothing new. Somewhat similar rites were taking place in Canaan at the time when Israel left Egypt. God referred to the Canaanite practices as “abominations” for which “the land vomits out its inhabitants” (Lev 18:25,26). The historical context of Lev 18 shows that God's concern had to do with religious as well as sexual purity. The chapter opens and closes with warnings to avoid the ways of the Canaanites (Lev 18:3, 30). The practices mentioned—incest, adultery, fornication, intercourse during a woman's menstrual flow, child sacrifice, sodomy, bestiality—were all acts committed as part of the Canaanite religion. That religion was essentially a fertility cult. Worshipers appealed to their gods to help their women reproduce and to make their lands fertile. Thus sexual intercourse played a major role in the worship. There were other “abominations” involved, such as idolatry and the use of mediums and witchcraft. For all of these things, the Lord promised to VOMIT the Canaanites out of the land. In their place He planned to install His people living according to His ways and worshiping according to His holy practices. The Canaanites worshiped more than seventy deities (not because that was perfect number though!). **When one living God does not satisfy, man will seek an endless number of dead "gods" in a vain, futile attempt to satisfy the deepest needs of his soul. And no one or no thing satisfies fallen men -- only Jesus satisfies the thirsty soul!** (cp Jn 7:37-39)

**Defile** (02930)(**tame**) is found predominantly (and not surprisingly) in Leviticus and means to be foul or unclean (ceremonially and/or morally), to be contaminated, to be polluted. To make impure, to desecrate, to make impure. The corruption or contamination is primarily in the context of the sight of God! In Leviticus (and other books) the object (food - Hos 9:4, idol worship - Ps 106:39, Hos 5:3) or person who was "tame" (sexual sins - Ge 34:5, Nu 5:13, Ezek 18:6) was unacceptable to and could not please the Holy (set apart from profane) God. In Leviticus even touching unclean objects or persons made one unclean (Lev 5:3, 18:24, 19:31). The Levitical priests were charged with the duty of discerning that which was unclean (Lev 13:3, Hag 2:13) and also to instruct and oversee the strict rituals that must be carried out to return to a state of purity.

**Defile** (**tame**) is clearly a "key verb" in Leviticus 18 - Lev 18:20, 23-25, 27-28, 30

**Defiled** occurs twice in Lev 18:24 and in the **Lxx** is translated both times with the verb **miaino** = defiled, unacceptable (Jn 18:28, Heb 12:15).

**Tame** is translated in **NAS** as - became unclean(1), become defiled(3), become unclean(6), becomes unclean(13), becoming unclean(1), been defiled(2), defile(25), **defiled**(38), defilement(1), defiles(5), defiling(2), made unclean(3), make himself unclean(1),

make yourselves unclean(1), make...unclean(1), pronounce him unclean(9), pronounced them unclean(1), remain unclean(2), surely pronounce(1), surely pronounce him unclean(1), **unclean**(44).

**Tame** - 161x in 141v - Gen 34:5, 13, 27; Lev 5:3; 11:24-28, 31-36, 39-40, 43-44; 12:2, 5; 13:3, 8, 11, 14-15, 20, 22, 25, 27, 30, 44, 46, 59; 14:36, 46; 15:4-11, 16-24, 27, 31-32; 17:15; 18:20, 23-25, 27-28, 30; 19:31; 20:3, 25; 21:1, 3f, 11; 22:5f, 8; Num 5:3, 13f, 20, 27ff; 6:7, 9, 12; 19:7f, 10f, 13f, 16, 20ff; 35:34; Deut 21:23; 24:4; 2 Kgs 23:8, 10, 13, 16; 2 Chr 36:14; Ps 79:1; 106:39; Isa 30:22; Jer 2:7, 23; 7:30; 32:34; Ezek 4:14; 5:11; 9:7; 14:11; 18:6, 11, 15; 20:7, 18, 26, 30f, 43; 22:3f, 11; 23:7, 13, 17, 30, 38; 33:26; 36:17f; 37:23; 43:7f; 44:25; Hos 5:3; 6:10; 9:4; Hag 2:13

**For** - Always be alert to this small but strategic conjunction, especially when it functions (as it does here) as a **term of explanation** - let "for" become an opportunity to pause and ponder the text, prayerfully (in dependence on your Teacher the Spirit) asking at least what the writer is explaining. Some instances, such as this passage, are very straight forward, but others (especially Paul's use of for, e.g., in Romans 8) are a bit more complex. The point is that you will always be blessed when you "cease striving" (Ps 46:10) and focus on God with this "mini-meditation!" (See **Meditate** or **Primer on Biblical Meditation**)

**Casting out** (0791)(**shalach**) means simply to send. The **Lxx** translated it with **exapostello** which means to send out (used of sending out missionaries in the NT, quite the contrast with sending out defiled men! cp use in Act 22:21)

In a parallel passage we read - (Dt 18:12) "For whoever does these things is **detestable** (**toebah** = abomination; Lxx = **bdelugma**) to the LORD; and because of these **detestable** (**toebah** = abomination; Lxx = **bdelugma**) things the LORD your God will drive (Heb = yarash = dispossess; Lxx = **exolothreuo** = utterly destroyed, completely rooted out, cp Acts 3:23) them out before you. (**NOTE**: Israel was commanded to drive the Canaanites out [Dt 9:3], but here we see God's part - He would drive them out - God's sovereignty does not relieve man of his responsibility.)

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**Leviticus 18:24 - Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways.** = TODAY IN THE WORD - Boethius, a philosopher from the sixth century, wrote, "Who would give a law to lovers? Love is unto itself a higher law." Gay rights activists use it as a slogan endorsing homosexuality and transgender lifestyles. They take offense at any effort to place restrictions on whom they love or how they express it. Scripture supports the notion that law cannot prohibit love (Gal. 5:22-23-**note**). But it's a mistake to equate sexual activity with love. While love is a universal command to be obeyed, the Bible clearly condemns certain sexual behaviors. The people of Canaan had been guilty of sexual immorality, and God warned Israel to abstain from that perversion. Their sin violated the land to the point that it vomited out the people to rid itself of their evil. At that time, God demanded the death penalty or at the very least a form of social excommunication for anyone who violated these commands against incest, homosexuality, or bestiality (Lev. 20:10ff). These commands weren't just special "Old Testament only" restrictions reserved for Israel alone to set them apart. God repeatedly called the acts detestable or an abomination. God's views on homosexuality haven't changed. But the method of punishment from the Old Testament was specifically assigned to Israel as an extension of God's judgment. Today, we are not called to be executors of God's wrath. We are followers of Christ, who was sent to save the world, not to judge it (John 3:17). And if Jesus, who is blameless in every way, was not on a mission of judgment, how can we who still wrestle with our own sin accuse anyone? Paul chastised his readers who passed judgment on immoral people, because no one is faultless (Ro 2:1-**note**). We need to recognize today's reading for what it is and is not. It does declare that sexual perversion is an abomination in God's eyes. Not all sex between consenting adults is permissible (even most gay rights activists condemn incest or adultery). But this passage is not a waiver of the command to love. If we loved only the righteous, we would love no one (Ro 3:10-**note**). TODAY ALONG THE WAY - Debate is rampant in political and religious circles about what rights should be granted to homosexuals, but one right that no one should have to fight for is the right to receive love from the body of Christ. If you have a hard time feeling compassion for people trapped in sin, ask God to soften your heart. Remember that the blood of Christ has paid the penalty for your sin, and you, too, have been the recipient of unspeakable grace. (Moody Bible Institute)

**Leviticus 18:25 'For the land has become defiled, therefore I have brought its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants.**

- **the land**: Nu 35:33,34 Ps 106:38 Isa 24:5 Jer 2:7 16:18 Eze 36:17,18 Ro 8:22
- **therefore**: Ps 89:32 Isa 26:21 Jer 5:9,29 9:9 14:10 23:2 Ho 2:13 8:13 9:9
- **spew**: Lev 18:28 Lev 20:22

Lev 20:22 'You (Israel) are therefore to keep all My statutes and all My ordinances and do them, so that the land to which I am bringing you to live will not spew you out.

God made an interesting statement in Deuteronomy (lest the Israelites think they were receiving the Land of Canaan because they

were so righteous!)

Deut 9:5 "It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but **it is because of the wickedness of these nations** that the LORD your God is driving them out before you, in order to confirm the oath which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

**The land has become defiled** - Even the land becomes polluted by sexual misbehavior among the people. One only has to witness the modern day scourge of AIDS in Central Africa where a huge percentage of the young adult population has been destroyed leaving behind thousands of homeless orphans - indeed their land has been tragically defiled!

The land of Canaan, which had long before been promised by God to Abraham and his seed, had become so defiled by the time of Joshua that God was completely vindicated in ordering the extermination of its incorrigibly wicked inhabitants, lest the people of Israel and eventually the whole world be corrupted by their influence, as in the world before the flood. This chapter gives a representative listing of their pervasive sins -- promiscuity, incest, homosexuality, bestiality, even burning their children in sacrifice to a pagan god (Lv18:21) and blaspheming the true God. God had been long-suffering for four hundred years, but now their iniquity was full and their time was up (Ge15:13-15, 16).

**SO THE LAND SPEWED OUT ITS INHABITANTS** (Nu 35:33,34, Dt 9:5, Lev 20:22): The warning is clear. The land had become so defiled by the perverted practices of the Canaanites that it was vomiting them out. For that reason, the land would be available to Israel to settle. The Israelites, however, needed to be careful to live as God's holy people in the land or it would vomit them out as well. God was casting out the Canaanites, Amorites, and others because the cup of their iniquity was full (Ge 15:16). One day, sad to say, Israel would exceed the wickedness of those they were going to replace (2Ki 21:11)!

**Henry Morris** - The land of Canaan, which had long before been promised by God to Abraham and his seed, had become so defiled by the time of Joshua that God was completely vindicated in ordering the extermination of its incorrigibly wicked inhabitants, lest the people of Israel and eventually the whole world be corrupted by their influence, as in the world before the flood. This chapter gives a representative listing of their pervasive sins--promiscuity, incest, homosexuality, bestiality, even burning their children in sacrifice to a pagan god (Leviticus 18:21) and blaspheming the true God. God had been long-suffering for four hundred years, but now their iniquity was full and their time was up (Genesis 15:13-16).

**Leviticus 18:26 'But as for you, you are to keep My statutes and My judgments and shall not do any of these abominations, neither the native, nor the alien who sojourns among you**

- **keep:** Lev 18:5,30 De 4:1,2,40 12:32 Ps 105:44,45 Lk 8:15 11:28 John 14:15,21-23 15:14
- **alien:** Lev 17:8,10

**Abominations** (08441) (**toebah**) see **word study on toebah**.

The perverted sexual practices are lumped together here as "**abominations**" and again are strictly forbidden. Notice that the next verse begins with "**for**" (**term of explanation**) which introduces the explanation of why these perverted practices are strictly prohibited (this explanation continues into Lev 18:28).

**Leviticus 18:27 (for the men of the land who have been before you have done all these abominations, and the land has become defiled);**

- Lev 18:24 De 20:18 23:18 25:16 27:15 1Ki 14:24 2Ki 16:3 2Ki 21:2 2Ch 36:14 Eze 16:50 22:11 Hos 9:10

**Abominations** (08441) (**toebah**) see **word study on toebah**.

Simply put the Canaanites practiced these perversions as a way of life and thus the land was defiled. The next verse continues the explanation that the consequence of Canaanite practices was that the land spewed them out!

**Leviticus 18:28 so that the land will not spew you out, should you defile it, as it has spewed out the nation which has been before you.**

- Lev 18:25 20:22 Jer 9:19 Eze 36:13,17 Ro 8:22 Rev 3:16

**So that (terms of purpose or result) the land will not spew you out** - The Canaanites were a defiled people who had defiled the land and were being "spewed out" of the land by God's "instruments" the nation of Israel. However God is an impartial judge and here His warning is clear - if Israel becomes a defiled people, that will defile the land and they will be spewed out. This is exactly what happened in two stages - The Northern 10 Tribes were spewed out in 722BC when they were defeated by God's "instruments", the Assyrians (2Kings 17:6) and the Southern 2 Tribes (Judah and Benjamin) were spewed out in 586BC (2Kings 25:8-21) when they were defeated by God's "instruments", the Babylonians (cp Jer 25:9, 27:6).

**Leviticus 18:29 'For whoever does any of these abominations, those persons who do so shall be cut off from among their people.'**

- Lev 17:10, 20:6 Ex 12:15

**For (term of explanation)** - explains what will happen to those who participate in these perversions.

**Cut off** - (20x in Lev 7:20, 21, 25, 27; 17:4, 9, 10, 14; 18:29; 19:8; 20:3, 5, 6, 17, 18; 22:3, 24; 23:29; 26:22, 30). As discussed in Lev 18 and Lev 20, the meaning of "**cut off**" can range from being "ex-communicated" to becoming childless to being burned to death or being put to death.

**Cut off** (03772)(**karath**) means literally to cut or sever something from something else by cutting with blade - to cut off, to cut down, to fell. (cf Zipporah's action of cutting her son's foreskin, which saved Moses' life - Ex 4:24-25, 1Sa 5:4).

**Karath** is used most often in the book of Leviticus (20 times out of a total of 283 OT uses). In Da 9:26 we read the prophecy that the Messiah would be "cut off and have nothing" which was fulfilled at His Crucifixion which resulting in His being temporarily "cut off" (difficult to comprehend) or separated from His Father (cf His words Ps 22:1, Mt 27:46).

**In the first OT use of Karath** in Ge 9:11 we read that all flesh shall never again be "cut off" by the water which there conveys the sense that "cut off" means to die and is so translated in the Septuagint or Lxx version (the Greek translation of the Hebrew text) of Ge 9:11 with the Greek verb **apothnesko** which means literally to suffer death (to cease to have vital functions at an earthly level).

**In the second OT use of Karath** we find it combined with **berith** (covenant) which literally means to "cut a covenant" and so to make a covenant (first use Ge 15:18, 21:27, 32, 26:26, 31:44, Ex 23:32, 24:8). In the context of "cutting a covenant" recall that when a covenant was "cut," there was often the shedding of blood! In the ancient world to cut a covenant was a bond of "life and death" and was dramatically depicted by cutting an animal in two and having the parties making to covenant (or declaring an oath) to pass between the pieces of dead flesh, in essence declaring "May it happen to me (death) as it has happened to this animal if I break covenant." Stated another way, to "karath berith" was to make a bond in blood and therefore a bond that is a pledge to the death (for the life is in the blood, Lev 17:11). As Kay Arthur says "To make a covenant is to take a walk into death." Henry Clay Trumbull adds that "the rite of blood-covenanting ... by which two persons enter into the closest, (is) the most enduring, and the most sacred of compacts, as friends and brothers, or as more than brothers, through the inter-commingling of their blood."

**In the third OT use of karath** in Ge 17:14 we see that individuals who were not circumcised were to "be cut off from" their people because they had broken the LORD's covenant, and the Lxx uses the verb [exolothreuo](#) which means to destroy (utterly), to root out, to completely cut off. There is a similar use of karath indicating a cutting off of one who disobeyed the Passover instruction to eat no leaven (Ex 12:15, 19; Lxx again is [exolothreuo](#)) In Ex 8:9 **karath** (Lxx - aphanizo = snatch out of sight, cause to disappear) conveys the sense of the frogs being removed from the houses of the Egyptians and remain in the Nile River (thus they were alive but removed from the houses).

**Elmer Smick** in the TWOT adds that the figurative meaning of karath includes the sense of...

to root out, eliminate, remove, excommunicate or destroy by a violent act of man or nature. It is sometimes difficult in a given context to know whether the person(s) who is "cut off" is to be killed or only excommunicated. Verses like Ge 9:11, "Neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood" clearly refer to destruction, but Ex 12:15 appears to refer to exclusion from the community. (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Moody Press, 1999)

**In Psalm 37:9, 34** we read about the wicked being "cut off" (in context means to die or cause to die) and the question some have asked "Are they annihilated?" The answer is clear from Scripture - the wicked are cut off from this earthly life but not from an eternal life of separation from God. As noted above, even Messiah was "cut off" (karath) (Da 9:26), but far from being annihilated, He was



resurrected Himself testifying that "(I am) the Living One, was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

**Karath** - 283x in the NAS -

Gen 9:11; 15:18; 17:14; 21:27, 32; 26:28; 31:44; 41:36; Ex 4:25; 8:9; 12:15, 19; 23:32; 24:8; 30:33, 38; 31:14; 34:10, 12f, 15, 27; Lev 7:20f, 25, 27; 17:4, 9f, 14; 18:29; 19:8; 20:3, 5f, 17f; 22:3, 24; 23:29; 26:22, 30; Num 4:18; 9:13; 11:33; 13:23f; 15:30f; 19:13, 20; Deut 4:23; 5:2f; 7:2; 9:9; 12:29; 19:1, 5; 20:19f; 23:1; 29:1, 12, 14, 25; 31:16; Josh 3:13, 16; 4:7; 7:9; 9:6f, 11, 15f, 23; 11:21; 23:4; 24:25; Judg 2:2; 4:24; 6:25f, 28, 30; 9:48f; Ruth 4:10; 1 Sam 2:33; 5:4; 11:1f; 17:51; 18:3; 20:15f; 22:8; 23:18; 24:4f, 11, 21; 28:9; 31:9; 2 Sam 3:12f, 21, 29; 5:3; 7:9; 10:4; 20:22; 1 Kgs 2:4; 5:6, 12; 6:36; 7:2, 12; 8:9, 21, 25; 9:5, 7; 11:16; 14:10, 14; 15:13; 18:4f; 20:34; 21:21; 2 Kgs 9:8; 11:4, 17; 17:15, 35, 38; 18:4; 19:23; 23:3, 14; 1 Chr 11:3; 16:16; 17:8; 19:4; 2 Chr 2:8, 10, 16; 5:10; 6:11, 16; 7:18; 15:16; 21:7; 22:7; 23:3, 16; 29:10; 34:31; Ezra 10:3; Neh 9:8, 38; Job 14:7; 31:1; 41:4; Ps 12:3; 34:16; 37:9, 22, 28, 34, 38; 50:5; 83:5; 89:3; 101:8; 105:9; 109:13, 15; Prov 2:22; 10:31; 23:18; 24:14; Isa 9:14; 10:7; 11:13; 14:8, 22; 18:5; 22:25; 28:15; 29:20; 37:24; 44:14; 48:9, 19; 55:3, 13; 56:5; 57:8; 61:8; Jer 6:6; 7:28; 9:21; 10:3; 11:10, 19; 22:7; 31:31ff; 32:40; 33:17f; 34:8, 13, 15, 18; 35:19; 44:7f, 11; 46:23; 47:4; 48:2; 50:16; 51:62; Ezek 14:8, 13, 17, 19, 21; 16:4; 17:13, 17; 21:3f; 25:7, 13, 16; 29:8; 30:15; 31:12; 34:25; 35:7; 37:26; Dan 9:26; Hos 2:18; 8:4; 10:4; 12:1; Joel 1:5, 9, 16; Amos 1:5, 8; 2:3; Obad 1:9f, 14; Mic 5:9f; Nah 1:14f; 2:13; 3:15; Zeph 1:3f, 11; 3:6f; Hag 2:5; Zech 9:6, 10; 11:10; 13:2, 8; 14:2; Mal 2:12

**NAS** translates karath -

beams(3), cease(1), chewed(1), completely cut off(1), covenanted(1), cut(10), cut her off(1), cut him off(5), cut it down(1), cut it off(1), cut them down(1), cut you down(1), cut you off(2), cut down(23), cut off(129), cuts(1), cuts off(4), cutter(1), destroy(1), destroyed(3), fail(1), kill(1), lack(8), made(52), make(31), makes(2), making(2), making an in writing(1), perish(1).

**Leviticus 18:30 'Thus you are to keep My charge, that you do not practice any of the abominable customs yourselves with them; I am the LORD your God.'**

- Lev 18:3,26,27 20:23 Dt 18:9-12
- Lev 18:24
- I am: Lev 18:2,4

**I Am the LORD** - It all begins with God, the great "I Am." He is reminding them of the fact that He is their covenant keeping God. He brought them out (redeemed them out) of Egypt to bring them into the land. This phrase occurs repeatedly in Leviticus (49x out of 161x in entire OT) - Lev 11:44, 45; 18:2, 4, 5, 6, 21, 30; 19:3, 4, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 25, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37; 20:7, 8, 24; 21:12, 15, 23; 22:2, 3, 8, 9, 16, 30, 31, 32, 33; 23:22, 43; 24:22; 25:17, 38, 55; 26:1, 2, 13, 44, 45;

## EXCURSUS FERTILITY CULT

### Holman Bible Dictionary

**Fertility Cult** - A general term for religions marked by rites which reenact a myth accounting for the orderly change of the seasons and the earth's fruitfulness. Such myths often involve a great mother-goddess as a symbol of fertility and a male deity, usually her consort but sometimes a son, who like vegetation dies and returns to life again. In Mesopotamia the divine couple was Ishtar and Tammuz (who is mourned in Ezekiel 8:14 ), in Egypt Isis and her son Osiris, in Asia Minor Cybele and Attis. In Syria the Ugaritic myths of the second millenium B.C. pictured Baal-Hadad, the storm god, as the dying and rising god. (A local manifestation of this god is mourned in Zechariah 12:11 ; Syrian kings derived their names from this deity, 1 Kings 15:18 ; 2 Kings 6:24 ; 2 Kings 13:24 ). His wife was the goddess Anath. In the earliest Ugaritic myth Asherah, the great mother-goddess, was the consort of El, the chief god in the pantheon. As Baal replaced El as the major deity, he became associated with Asherah (Judges 6:25-30 ; 1 Kings 18:19 ). Ashtoroth, the daughter of Asherah, is used as the Hebrew word for womb or the fruit of the womb (Deuteronomy 7:13 ; Deuteronomy 28:4 ,Deuteronomy 28:4,28:18 ,Deuteronomy 28:18,28:51 ).

Fertility cults attribute the fertility of the cropland and herds to the sexual relations of the divine couple. Sacral

sexual intercourse by priests and priestesses or by cult prostitutes was an act of worship intended to emulate the gods and share in their powers of procreation or else an act of imitative magic by which the gods were compelled to preserve the earth's fertility (1 Kings 14:23 ; 1 Kings 15:12 ; Hosea 4:14 ). Transvestism (prohibited in Deuteronomy 22:5 ) may have been part of a fertility rite like that practiced by the Hittites. Sacrifices of produce, livestock, and even children (2 Kings 17:31 ; 2 Kings 23:10 ) represented giving the god what was most precious in life in an attempt to restore order to the cosmos and ensure fertility.

Elijah's struggle with the priests of Baal and Asherah at Mount Carmel is the best known conflict between worship of Yahweh and a fertility cult (1 Kings 18:17-40 ). Under Ahab, Baalism had become the state religion (1 Kings 16:31 ). The account of the priests of Baal lacerating themselves (1 Kings 18:28 ) is illuminated by the Ugaritic myths where El gashes his arms, chest, and back at the news of Baal's death. The priests of Baal customarily reenacted this scene from the myth at plowing time. Both skin and earth were cut as a sign of mourning (prohibited by Deuteronomy 14:1 ). Baal's resurrection came with the return of the rains. The biblical narrative is clear that —Yahweh, not Baal, is the Lord who withholds and gives rain (1 Kings 17:1 ; 1 Kings 18:20-45 ).

The Israelites' sacred calendar celebrated the same seasons as their neighbors (barley harvests feast of unleavened bread; wheat harvests Pentecost; fruit harvests booths). The Israelites interpreted these seasons in light of God's redemptive acts in their history. Israel recognized the one God as the one responsible for rain (1 Kings 18:1 ), grain, wine, oil, wool, and flax (Hosea 2:8-9 ). Israel conceived of the earth's fruitfulness in a way quite unlike that of her neighbors. Yahweh had no consort; thus fertility was not tied to Yahweh's return to life and sexual functioning. Rather, the ability of plants and animals to reproduce their own kind was rooted in creation (Genesis 1:11-12 ,Genesis 1:11-12,1:22 ,Genesis 1:22,1:28 ). The orderly progression of the seasons was not traced to a primordial battle but was rooted in God's promise to Noah (Genesis 8:22 ). The fertility of the land was ensured not by ritual reenactment of the sacred marriage but by obedience to the demands of the covenant (Deuteronomy 28:1 ,Deuteronomy 28:1,28:3-4 ,Deuteronomy 28:3-4,28:11-12 ).

In the New Testament, Diana or Artemis of the Ephesians (Acts 19:35 ) was a many-breasted fertility goddess. Aphrodite was also associated with fertility. Her temple at Corinth was the home of cult prostitutes responsible for the city's reputation for immorality. (Compare 1 Corinthians 6:15-20 .) Many of the mystery religions which competed with Christianity in the early centuries of the church developed the myths of the older fertility cults. (See [Asherah](#) ; [Baal](#) ; [Canaan, History and Religion of](#) ; [Dagon](#) ; [Diana](#) ; [Gods, Pagan](#) ; [High Place](#) ; [Prostitution](#) ; [Tammuz](#) ; [Ugarit](#) ) .