

香港循道衛理聯合教會：  
同性戀講座系列  
「一面聽、一面問」

第六講：  
「聖經有話兒」

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JONATHAN LOVINGLY TAKETH HIS LEAVE OF DAVID. (I. SAMUEL, XX., 41.) FROM AN ORIGINAL WOODCUT PUBLISHED IN 1869 BY GEORG WIGAND, LEIPZIG

Julius Schnorr, German School  
Died in 1872

## “Homosexuality” in the Hebrew Bible

- Can we find a concept of “homosexuality” in the Hebrew Bible?
- How does it differ from the modern concept of “homosexuality”?
- What are the implications of the difference?
- What are the sociocultural codes and institutional logic underlying the Hebrew Bible concept of “homosexuality”?
- What are the underlying principles of the biblical concept of “homosexuality”?

# “Homosexuality” in the Legal Texts

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

Leviticus 1-16 Priestly Law

Leviticus 17-26 Holiness Law

「你要吩咐以色列人，對他們說：我是耶和華－你們的上帝。你們不可做你們從前住埃及地的人所做的，也不可做我要領你們去的迦南地的人所做的。你們不可照他們的習俗行。你們要遵行我的典章，謹守我的律例，按此而行。我是耶和華－你們的上帝。你們要謹守我的律例典章；遵行的人就必因此得生。我是耶和華。」(18:2-5)

## “Homosexuality” in the Legal Texts

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

「在這一切的事上，你們都不可玷污自己，因為我在你們面前所逐出的列國，在這一切的事上玷污了自己。連地也玷污了，我懲罰那地的罪孽，地就吐出它的居民來。但你們要遵守我的律例典章。這一切可憎惡的事，無論是本地人或寄居在你們中間的外人，都不可以做。在你們之前居住那地的人做了這一切可憎惡的事，地就玷污了。不要讓地因你們玷污了它而把你們吐出來，像吐出在你們之前的國一樣。無論是誰，若做了這其中一件可憎惡的事，必從百姓中剪除。你們要遵守我的吩咐，免得你們隨從那些可憎的習俗，就是在你們之前的人所做的，玷污了自己。我是耶和華—你們的上帝。」(18:24-30)

# “Homosexuality” in the Legal Texts

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

6 「**任何人**都不可親近骨肉之親，露其下體。我是耶和華。

7 你父親的下體，就是你母親的下體，你不可露；她是你的母親，不可露她的下體。

8 不可露你繼母的下體，就是你父親的下體。

9 你姊妹的下體，或是同父異母的，或是同母異父的，無論生在家或生在外的，都不可露她們的下體。

10 不可露你孫女或外孫女的下體，因為她們的下體就是你自己的下體。

# “Homosexuality” in the Legal Texts

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

**11** 你繼母為你父親所生的女兒是你的姊妹，不可露她的下體。

**12** 不可露你姑母的下體；她是你父親的骨肉之親。

**13** 不可露你姨母的下體；她是你母親的骨肉之親。

**14** 不可露你叔伯的下體，不可親近他的妻子；她是你的叔母、伯母。

**15** 不可露你媳婦的下體，她是你兒子的妻，不可露她的下體。

## “Homosexuality” in the Legal Texts

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

- 16** 不可露你兄弟妻子的下體，這是你兄弟的下體。
- 17** 不可露婦人的下體，又露她女兒的下體，也不可娶她的孫女或外孫女，露她們的下體；她們是骨肉之親。這是邪惡的事。
- 18** 你妻子還活著的時候，不可另娶她的姊妹與她作對，露她姊妹的下體。
- 19** 「不可親近經期中不潔淨的女人，露她的下體。不可跟鄰舍的妻交合，因她玷污自己。」

## “Homosexuality” in the Legal Texts

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

**21** 不可使你兒女經火獻給摩洛，也不可褻瀆你上帝的名。我是耶和華。

**22** 不可跟男人同寢，像跟女人同寢；這是可憎惡的事。

**23** 不可跟獸交合，因牠玷污自己。女人也不可站在獸前，與牠交合；這是逆性的事。(18:6-23)



# “Homosexuality” in the Legal Texts

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

- Textual Observations
  - Prohibitive law: It tells you the “Don’t’s” , but not the “Do’s”
  - Incest, Molech worship, “homosexuality,” bestiality
  - Assumption: What is not prohibited is permissible or tolerated.

## “Homosexuality” in the Legal Texts

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

- No prohibition on father-daughter incestuous relationship
- No mention of lesbianism
- Homosexuality is strictly defined as penetrative sex between two male members of the community.
- It does not deal with sexual desire (orientation), homoromanticism

# “Homosexuality” in the Legal Texts

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

- Underlying Presuppositions
  - Addressees: Male members of the Israelite community
  - Ethnic Particularity: Israel’s covenantal relationship with Yahweh
  - Holiness of Yahweh > Holiness of the people > Holiness of the land
  - Rationale: Cultural differentiation; Perseveration of Purity

# “Homosexuality” in the Legal Texts

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

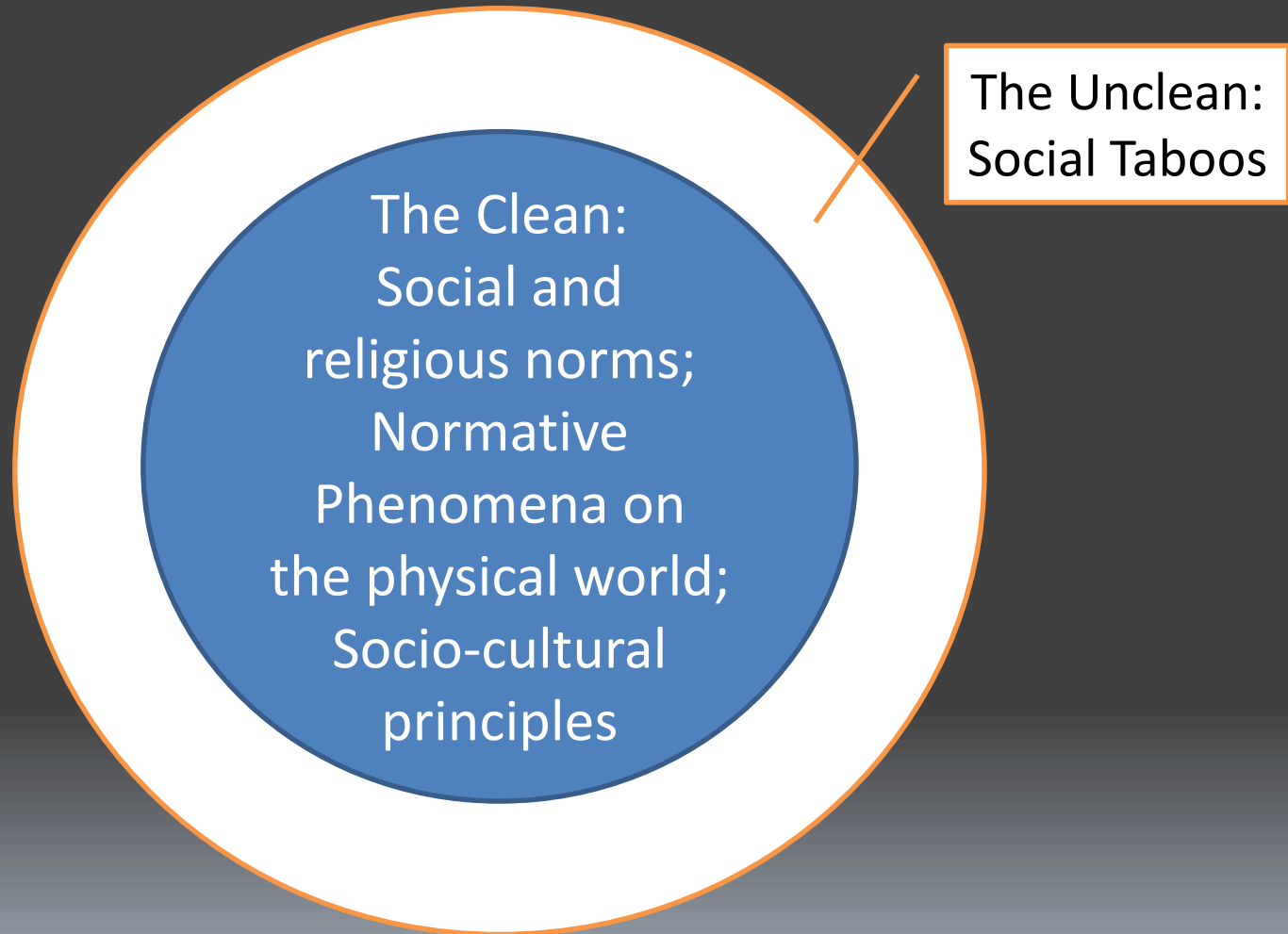
- Underlying Principles
  - Consequence of Breach: Capital punishment; ostracism; deprivation of progeny; demise of the nation
  - The distinction between Clean/Pure and Unclean/Impure within the Common; with differences in gravity
  - The distinction between the Sacred and the Common; with differences in gravity
  - Based on social and cultural taboos (E.g., Leviticus 11, 15)
  - Issue: Boundary transgression and the gloomy consequence

# “Homosexuality” in the Legal Texts

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

- Underlying Principles
  - The prohibitive law codes on sexual practices deal mainly with maintaining the Purity of the community, not morality
  - No differentiation between perpetrator and victim
  - No differentiation between violation/rape and consensual sex
  - Semen pollution and semen economy
  - Phallus as a sign of dominance
  - Male honor and shame

# The Priestly Cosmology: The Clean and Unclean



## The Institution of Marriage in Ancient Southwest Asia

- A homosocial and economical transaction
- A father holds the custodianship of his daughter's sexuality (Deut 22:28-30)
- A husband holds the ownership of his wife's sexuality.
- A master holds the ownership of his slave girl.
- Aim: reproduction and continuation of patrilineage (Gen 1:22; Priestly genealogies)

# The Institution of Marriage in Ancient Southwest Asia

- The husband has the exclusive sexual rights over the wife, but not vice versa. The husband may enjoy sexual relations with other women, prostitutes or concubines, as long as he does not violate the sexual right of another man.
- The wife is under the authority of the husband and dependent on him for subsistence (Hos 2:10-15 [Eng. 2:8-13]).



## The Institution of Marriage in Ancient Southwest Asia

- Monogamy is general practiced, but polygamy is also accepted.
- In the biblical world, the husband has the right to divorce the wife, but not vice versa.
- Adultery is a gendered crime involving a married woman punishable by divorce, death, laceration, and public exposure of the wife's naked body (Hos 2:5-6 [Eng. 2:3-4]; Num 5:11-31; Deut 22:22-24).

# The Institution of Marriage in Ancient Southwest Asia

- Code of honor and shame A husband's honor is threatened if the women under his authority are sexually violated. In adjudicating a case, precedence is given to male honor (Deut 25:11-12)
- Gender hierarchy
- Patriarchal authority
- Male superiority

# “Homosexuality” in the Legal Texts

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

Do Leviticus 18 and 22 reflect these sociocultural codes and institutional logic?

- Is polygamy accepted?
- Is male honor the main issue? Infringement of the sexual right of another man or its sexual integrity
- Why is the father-daughter incestuous relationship missing?
- Why is it an issue if a man penetrates another man?
- Why is lesbianism not mentioned?

## Genesis 1-3: “Male and Female He Created”

- Traditional view: A blueprint of or creation order
- Reflecting the divine intent, according to which the universal is created.
- Prooftexts for: gender complementarity and monogamy

## Genesis 1-3: “Male and Female He Created”

- Alternative view: A model/analogy of creation order
- Reflecting the human experience and cognitive limitations
- Built on general, normative conception of the creation order, but not all particulars
- Basics, but not the complicated details
- A microcosm of how the Priestly and Yahwist authors understand the creation of the universe.
- Not a science book; not an encyclopaedia; not authoritative in this regard
- Neither support nor invalidate “homosexuality”

## Biblical Instances of “Homosexuality”

- Sodom’s case (Gen 19:1-11)
  - Inhospitality, gang rape, or male honor?
  - The theme of xenophobia and cultural differentiation
  - Ending: The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah
- The Levite’s case (Judg 19:22-30)
  - Inhospitality, gang rape, or male honor?
  - The theme of xenophobia and cultural assimilation?
  - Ending: The near annihilation of Benjaminites

## Biblical Instances of “Homosexuality”

- Noah and Ham (Gen 9:20-27)
  - Exhibitionism, voyeurism, father-son incest
  - “And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness [*ervah*] of his father.” (v.22)
  - The theme of defaming the ancestor of Canaanites
- Naomi and Ruth
  - Ruth’s pledge to Naomi, see Ruth 1:14-18 (cf. Gen 2:24)
- David and Jonathan
  - Is there homoeroticism involved? (See 1Sam 18:3; 19:1; 20:17, 30, 41; 2 Sam 1:26)
  - The rhetoric of effeminacy
  - The legitimation of David’s ascendance

## The Risk of Anachronism

- The biblical theologians build their theology based on their sociocultural contexts, institutional logic, experiential world, and cognitive capacity.
  - The distinction between the clean and unclean based on social taboos.
  - Semen (and menstrual blood) pollution and contagion
  - Semen economy (procreational use)
  - Patriarchal authority over women's sexuality



## The Risk of Anachronism

- Gender hierarchy (The inferiority of women)
- Gender disparity (Treatment of adultery, divorce, polygyny)
- Male honor and shame
- We cannot expect them to hold some knowledge and expectations that we have.
  - Marrying for love, spousal choice, equal partnership

## Implications and Challenges to Us

- Theological response: The era of new covenant
  - No differentiation between Israelites and the Gentiles
  - Divine sovereignty is beyond the land of Canaan
  - No differentiation between the clean and the unclean based on sociocultural taboos

## Implications and Challenges to Us

- Ethnical response: The biblical standards on “homosexuality,” or other sexual practices, cannot be endorsed wholesale.
- The law codes reflect the sociocultural and institutional assumptions of the time, which may be anachronistic to us.

## Implications and Challenges to Us

- The laws reflect their limited knowledge and pre-critical view of the experiential world.
- The meaning of the texts must be sought within their cultural and discursive contexts, if we want to understand their relevance to the original readers/auditors.
- How do you come up with your biblical view on “homosexuality”? By authoritative claim or faith-seeking understanding? Given or searching? Passively or actively?

## Implications to Greco-Roman Period

- Roman 1:26-27
- 1 Cor 5:1-7:2
  - Cultural differentiation
    - Moral act (incest) worse than “pagans” (5:1)
    - Bringing lawsuit “before the unrighteous instead of the saints?” (6:1) “...against brother, and that before unbelievers?” (6:6)
    - Choice over defrauded by brothers than defraud your brothers (6:8)
    - The character of the “unrighteous” (6:9-10)

## Implications to Greco-Roman Period

- Paul's reconstructionist theology
  - "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful...." The challenge against the distinction between the clean and unclean (6:12ff.)
  - Celibacy is preferred to marriage (7:1-2, 26)