

Inspired Bible Reading
Session 2: The Old Testament

How we talk is important. We must remember that we are not only discussing texts and ideas, we are also discussing people and a matter very central to their identity as personhood. *Whether you know it or not, those people are in this room and represented by people in this room. We will conduct our conversations accordingly.*

1. Leviticus 18: 22 and 20: 13
 - a) On the surface: (partial list from last week)
 - i) Leviticus 11: 10 (shellfish)
 - ii) Leviticus 19: 19 (two crops, two fabrics)
 - iii) Leviticus 19: 26-28 (prime rib au jus)
 - b) Digging deeper:
 - i) Holiness Code and meaning of “toevah” as “unclean:”
 - ii) “The Hebrew word ‘toevah,’ here translated ‘abomination,’ [KJV] does not usually signify something intrinsically evil, like rape or theft (discussed elsewhere in Leviticus), but something which is ritually unclean for Jews, like eating pork or engaging in intercourse during menstruation, both of which are prohibited in these same chapters.” (Boswell, John. *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century*. Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1980.)
 - iii) Purpose of Holiness Code is separation from other peoples: Leviticus 20: 2-5, 22-26

This was a word given to a particular people at a particular time, for a particular purpose. While some parts of the Holiness Code may inform and instruct us, they are not defining for us as modern Christians.

When Leviticus was written (and indeed, all of the bible), there was no concept of someone “being homosexual.” Homosexuality was an act, not a sexual orientation. Given that, how do we apply these verses to modern day questions of sexual orientation?

2. Genesis 19: 1-11, Sodom and Gomorrah
 - a) On the surface:
 - i) Ezekiel 16: 48-50
 - ii) Isaiah 1: 1, 10-12, 16-17
 - iii) Jeremiah 23: 14
 - iv) Matthew 10: 15 and Luke 10: 12
 - v) (Compare/contrast with Judges 19:16-30)

- b) Digging deeper:
 - i) “yada” meaning “to know” appears 943 times in Old Testament, only 10 times is used to refer to sexual intercourse
 - ii) Lot offers daughters in place of visitors
 - iii) Angels were sent to investigate city in the first place

Is sex of any kind central to this story, or even necessary for the story? How can we conclude definitely that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah wanted to rape the visitors when Biblical writers much more contemporary with the story leave sex out of the explanation completely?

3. Genesis 2:24, man united to wife, become one flesh

- a) On the surface:
 - i) Translational issues: Genesis 2:18 “It is not good that the [earth creature – *adam*] should be alone; I will make [him/her/it – *low*] a helper [as his/her/its partner – *kenegdow* = suitable].”
 - ii) In Genesis 2:19-20 the earth creature, *ha adam*, is given the power to name the options, and choose the right one to be this helper.
- b) Digging Deeper:
 - i) Is the companionship that is described here one that for some reason is only applicable to heterosexual relationships? Or is the need for companionship reflected here one that seems relevant to gltbq people as well?
 - ii) Is it relevant that the first options, before the one chosen, are all animals? If these are serious options that God offered, what does that say about the kind of companionship intended?
 - iii) In Genesis 1 and 2, God describes creation as “good,” never as perfect or even finished. God then gives humans power over the earth. God wants us to be part of the ongoing creation process. Does that participation extend to altering a traditional interpretation of this verse and permitting homosexuality? (See Matthew 19:3-6, Jesus on divorce, and Matthew 16:18-19 and Matthew 18:18-20 on binding and loosing.)