

Leviticus 18(Flee From Sexual Immorality)

Lev 18:1 The LORD said to Moses,

Lev 18:2 "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'I am the LORD your God.

Lev 18:3 You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices.

Lev 18:4 You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the LORD your God.

Lev 18:5 Keep my decrees and laws, for the person who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD.

Lev 18:6 "'No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the LORD.

Lev 18:7 "'Do not dishonor your father by having sexual relations with your mother. She is your mother; do not have relations with her.

Lev 18:8 "'Do not have sexual relations with your father's wife; that would dishonor your father.

Lev 18:9 "'Do not have sexual relations with your sister, either your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether she was born in the same home or elsewhere.

Lev 18:10 "'Do not have sexual relations with your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter; that would dishonor you.

Lev 18:11 "'Do not have sexual relations with the daughter of your father's wife, born to your father; she is your sister.

Lev 18:12 "'Do not have sexual relations with your father's sister; she is your father's close relative.

Lev 18:13 "'Do not have sexual relations with your mother's sister, because she is your mother's close relative.

Lev 18:14 "'Do not dishonor your father's brother by approaching his wife to have sexual relations; she is your aunt.

Lev 18:15 "'Do not have sexual relations with your daughter-in-law. She is your son's wife; do not have relations with her.

Lev 18:16 "'Do not have sexual relations with your brother's wife; that would dishonor your brother.

Lev 18:17 "'Do not have sexual relations with both a woman and her daughter. Do not have sexual relations with either her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter; they are her close relatives. That is wickedness.

Lev 18:18 "'Do not take your wife's sister as a rival wife and have sexual relations with her while your wife is living.

Lev 18:19 "'Do not approach a woman to have sexual relations during the uncleanness of her monthly period.

Lev 18:20 "'Do not have sexual relations with your neighbor's wife and defile yourself with her.

Lev 18:21 "'Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molek, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

Lev 18:22 "'Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable.

Lev 18:23 "'Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion.

Lev 18:24 "'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.

Lev 18:25 Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.

Lev 18:26 But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the foreigners residing among you must not do any of these detestable things,

Lev 18:27 for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled.

Lev 18:28 And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you.

Lev 18:29 "'Everyone who does any of these detestable things--such persons must be cut off from their people.

Lev 18:30 Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. I am the LORD your God.'"

Leviticus 18 is a foundational biblical chapter in the Holiness Code that sets strict moral and sexual boundaries for ancient Israel, distinguishing them from surrounding pagan cultures.

Core Themes and Prohibitions

- **Separation from Culture:** God warns the Israelites not to copy the sexual practices of Egypt (where they left) or Canaan (where they are going).

Rom 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship.

Rom 12:2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

2Co 6:17 Therefore, "Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you."

2Co 6:18 And, "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

- **Incest Laws:** The chapter strictly forbids uncovering nakedness—meaning engaging in sexual relations—with close blood relatives and in-laws, including parents, siblings, aunts, and grandchildren.
- **General Sexual Morality:** It prohibits adultery, sexual relations during a woman's menstrual period, bestiality, and male-with-male sexual intercourse (verse 22).

Act 21:25 As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality."

- **Idolatry and Child Sacrifice:** It forbids sacrificing children to the false god Molech, an abomination associated with surrounding nations.

Molech (also spelled Moloch or Milcom) is an ancient Near Eastern deity heavily condemned in the Hebrew Bible for practices associated with child sacrifice.

Abortion is the spirit of Molech

- **Name origin:** The word comes from the Hebrew root *melech*, meaning "king". The vowels of the Hebrew word for "shame" (*bosheth*) were often superimposed on it to show contempt.

- **National god:** He was closely connected to the Ammonites, and his worship was shared among various Canaanite and Phoenician groups.
- **Depiction:** Tradition often pictures him as a bronze, bull-headed human statue with outstretched arms and a heated furnace belly, though scholars debate whether this was literal or symbolic.

Significance and Consequences

- **Divine Judgment:** The text warns that the Canaanite nations practiced these things and were "vomited out" of the land as a result, establishing the principle that systemic sexual immorality invites divine judgment.
- **Human Flourishing:** Traditional interpreters view these rules as a protective boundary designed by God for family stability and human safety.

Lev 18:22 "Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable.

Rom 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness,

Rom 1:19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

Rom 1:20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

Rom 1:21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Rom 1:22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools

Rom 1:23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

Rom 1:24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

Rom 1:25 They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen.

Rom 1:26 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones.

Rom 1:27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Rom 1:28 Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done.

Rom 1:29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips,

Rom 1:30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents;

Rom 1:31 they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy.

Rom 1:32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

The New Testament treats Leviticus 18 as an enduring expression of God's moral standards regarding human sexuality, even though believers are no longer under the ceremonial or civil penalties of the Mosaic Law.

The Shift from Old to New Covenant

- **Fulfillment in Christ:** The New Testament teaches that Jesus Christ fulfilled the Old Testament law, meaning Christians are not bound by the specific national, ceremonial, or judicial codes of ancient Israel (such as civil punishments).
- **Mat 5:17** "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.
- **Mat 5:18** For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.
- **Mat 5:19** Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

- **Mat 5:20** For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.
- **The Jerusalem Council:** In [Acts 15](#), Gentile believers are released from keeping the whole law of Moses, but they are explicitly commanded to abstain from *porneia* (sexual immorality)—a broad Greek term that encompasses the illicit sexual relations forbidden in Leviticus 18.

Act 15:19 "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.

Act 15:20 Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.

Continuity of Moral Prohibitions

- **Reaffirming Sexual Ethics:** New Testament writers consistently look back to the moral boundaries of Leviticus 18 when addressing sexual sin in the early church. For example, Paul rebukes incest in [1 Corinthians 5](#) using standards rooted in the Levitical code.

1Co 5:1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father's wife.

1Co 5:2 And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have gone into mourning and have put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this?

1Co 5:3 For my part, even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. As one who is present with you in this way, I have already passed judgment in the name of our Lord Jesus on the one who has been doing this.

1Co 5:4 So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present,

1Co 5:5 hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.

1Co 5:6 Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough?

1Co 5:7 Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch--as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

- **Creation Design:** Jesus and New Testament authors anchor sexual ethics in the original creation design (male-female union in Genesis) rather than just temporary cultural rules. Passages like [Romans 1](#) and [1 Corinthians 6](#) echo the prohibitions against same-sex relations found in Leviticus 18:22, treating them as continuing moral truths.

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Rom 1:19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

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1Co 6:12 "I have the right to do anything," you say--but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"--but I will not be mastered by anything.

1Co 6:13 You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both." The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

1Co 6:14 By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.

1Co 6:15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!

1Co 6:16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh."

1Co 6:17 But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

1Co 6:18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.

1Co 6:19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;

1Co 6:20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

Grace and Empowerment

- **Transformed Hearts:** While Leviticus 18 defines moral boundaries and exposes guilt, the New Testament emphasizes that strict commands cannot change a human heart.

What "Fulfill" Means

- **Completing the Story:** The Old Testament law and prophets pointed forward to a Savior. Jesus finished that narrative by living a perfectly obedient life and dying as the final, complete sacrifice for sin.
- **Not Destroying:** Jesus did not toss out God's moral truths or treat them as useless. Instead, He showed their true, deep meaning.
- **Changing the Focus:** In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus showed that true obedience is a matter of the heart—such as loving your neighbor and guarding against anger—rather than just following external rules.

Eze 36:26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

Eze 36:27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

2Co 5:14 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

2Co 5:15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

2Co 5:16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.

2Co 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

Rom 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship.

Rom 12:2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

What This Means Today

- **Atonement:** Because Jesus paid the price for sin on the cross, believers no longer need to offer animal sacrifices.

- **Faith in Christ:** Christians are justified by faith in Jesus, realizing that keeping the law perfectly is something humans cannot do on their own.
- **Living by Love:** The core intent of the law—loving God and loving others—remains the guiding principle for believers through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- **The Role of the Spirit:** Through the New Covenant, Christ bears the penalty for sin, and the Holy Spirit provides believers with the internal power to turn away from ungodliness and honor God with their bodies.

Joh 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Joh 3:17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Joh 3:18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Joh 3:19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

Joh 3:20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.

Joh 3:21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.