

Worldly Wisdom in a Fallen World

¹Adonai said to Moses: ²“Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: I am Adonai your God. ³You are not to act as they do in the land of Egypt, where you used to live. Nor are you to act as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, nor are you to walk in their customs. ⁴You are to obey My ordinances and keep My statutes and walk in them – I am Adonai your God. ⁵So you are to keep My statutes and My ordinances. The one who does them will live by them. I am Adonai (Lev. 18:1-5)... “¹⁹You are not to approach a woman to uncover her nakedness while she is in the impurity of her niddah ²⁰You are not to lie sexually with your neighbor’s wife and defile yourself with her. ²¹You are not to give any of your children in sacrifice to Molech, and defile the Name of your God. I am Adonai. ²²You are not to lie with a man, as with a woman – that is an abomination. ²³You are not to lie with any animal to defile yourself with it, nor is any woman to give herself to an animal, to lie down with it – that is a perversion. ²⁴Do not defile yourselves in any of these things, for in all of these ways the nations which I am casting out before you were defiled. ²⁵The land has become defiled, so I will punish its iniquity, and the land will vomit out its inhabitants. ²⁶You, however, are to keep My statutes and My ordinances, and do none of these abominations, neither the native-born, nor the outsider dwelling among you. ²⁷For all these abominations were done by the men of the land who were before you, and the land became defiled. ²⁸If you defile it, the land will vomit you out as it vomited out the nation that was before you. ²⁹For whoever does any of these detestable things, the souls that do them are to be cut off from the midst of their people. ³⁰Therefore you are to keep My charge, so that you do not practice any of these detestable customs that were practiced before you, so that you do not defile yourselves by them. I am Adonai your God” (vv 19-30)

It is valuable and important to consider *Adonai’s Word* which resides (buried?) in *Leviticus* which is probably the most ignored Book of the *Torah* by Believers. While it might be *polite* to follow the customs of a society you are living (sojourning) in, for Israel (and consequently for us as Believers grafted into Israel) it is definitely not advantageous (it is disobedience) or wise to abide and follow the customs of the fallen world we find ourselves in. This world we live in is definitely not wise. In fact, we can safely say that in this world they call good what is clearly satanic and evil and call evil *Adonai’s Word*. There is a satanic strategy to keep people ignorant of The Book of Leviticus which stands in great contrast to worldly wisdom. Verses in this week’s *Torah Portion (Kedoshim)* illustrate this great dichotomy.

Out of curiosity I checked the meaning and origin of the expression: *When in Rome, do as the Romans do*. I was surprised to find the following in Wikipedia: “*When in Rome, do as the Romans do* or a later version *when in Rome, do as the Pope does*, is a proverb attributed to Saint Ambrose. The proverb means that it is best to follow the traditions or customs of a place being visited. Saint Monica and her son, Saint Augustine (Letter 54 to Januarius, circa 390 A.D.), discovered that Saturday was observed as a fast day in Rome, where they planned to visit. However, it was not a fast day where they lived in Milan. They consulted Saint Ambrose who said “*When I go to Rome, I fast on Saturday, but here [in Milan] I do not. You also do follow the custom of whatever church you attend, if you do not want to give or receive scandal.*” That reply is said to have brought about the saying *When in Rome, do as the Romans do.*” In Google the meaning given is: *It is polite, and possibly also advantageous, to abide by the customs of a society when one is a visitor.* While it might be *polite and advantageous* to follow the customs of the society you are living in it is not profitable! We were commanded not to! So, *when in Rome, do not do as the Romans do.*

Look at the captions on the TLV Bible for Lev. 18: *Incest Forbidden and Other Forbidden Relations*. Yes, Virginia, the Bible does expound on certain human relationships that are abominations to *Adonai*. I am sure I do not have to remind us that incestuous relations are forbidden even in our permissible society. But have we forgotten that there are *Other Forbidden Relations*? The *Torah* tells us things a person should not do, warning that anyone who does them would be *cut off* from among his people. The term *cut off from the midst of their people* refers to *death, expulsion from the community/excommunication*. Whatever the case, this is serious! There is personal as well as national consequences to such disobedience – it is all sin! If you read through this list, you’ll conclude with me that *our country is in trouble!* In the *Torah* we see the nation of Israel (God’s Chosen People) getting ready to possess a land that *Adonai* was going bring them

into – a prosperous land, a spacious land where they would benefit from someone else’s efforts and live in houses they did not have to build. Was this a judgment on those nations? Yes, because they practiced all those the things that He was warning Israel not to do. That should really speak to us because it implies that the US and nearly every country on planet earth including Modern Israel is prepared for judgment.

How far have we (our society) fallen from the morality of *Adonai*? Verily He would have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah if He does not judge us (*Matt. 10:15; Romans 9:29; 2 Peter 2:6, Jude 1:7*). Are we being judged? Are we experiencing the birth pangs of the Messiah’s Return? What is your response?

Some of the things happening these days are not very happy. There has been an explosion of porn and sexual addiction and while many of us have suffered by the loss of wages and income, the porn industry is raking in unprecedented profits. In many states, abortion has continued undeterred and there are no signs of anyone in our society attributing any of the distress we are suffering to our society’s abhorrent behavior. In contrast, we have been given explicit instructions about living in a greater level of holiness and obedience: *"You shall be kedoshim (holy), for I, Adonai your God, am holy" (Lev. 19:1)*.

The holiness of Israel had to stand in contrast to the lifestyle of the idolatrous nations that surrounded them: *"³Each one of you is to respect his mother and his father, and keep My Shabbatot. I am Adonai your God. ⁴Do not turn to idols, or make molten gods for yourselves. I am Adonai your God" (Lev. 19:3-4)*. Beginning with the command to be holy and through the end of Chapter 19, we see another exposition of the Ten Commandments (see J. H. Hertz). In particular, verses 26-31 give specific instructions about certain Canaanite practices. Mentioned are *prohibitions against bodily mutilation* (verses 27, 28), harlotry (verse 29), the worship of false gods, and the participation in demonic activity (verses 26, 31). The TLV accurately chooses to use the word *tattoo marks* in verse 28 and our society must consider the validity of this practice. There are many Believers who have tattoos, some in the Messianic Movement. There may be some who perhaps had this done in ignorance to Scripture. But what happens if it were done in direct disobedience? In all cases there is forgiveness in *Yeshua* to all who have asked Him for it. Any act of disobedience is sin and we do not impute to this particular act the label of being the *"unpardonable sin."* We all need to move on in *Yeshua*’s compassion in any and all cases (remember Mary Magdalene and her multiple adulteries). However, I would like to caution all to consider what *Leviticus 19:28* says before embarking in any such practice. My intent is to speak to the heart of a person and let the Holy Spirit do His job. I am a redeemed sinner, I do not practice the things I did prior to my salvation experience, but neither am I exempt from its consequences. Violating the *Almighty’s Word* is a bad idea, no matter in what area of anyone’s life. Verse 30 (*"³⁰You are to keep My Shabbatot, and reverence My Sanctuary. I am Adonai"*) is enlightening because we know from history that other religions from the ancient Near East also had sacred days, even so-called *Sabbaths (Shabbatot)*. *Adonai* wanted Israel to observe only His Holy Days, not the *Sabbaths of the Canaanites* (the holy days of the society they were surrounded by).

The *Torah* speaks frequently about a certain group of people called in Hebrew, *gerim*, (sojourners). Here in verses 33-34 the *Torah* shares excellent information about them. Who are the sojourners? The Children of Israel were Hebrews in a land in which they were not natives. We must, therefore, understand the outsider/alien/sojourner in this passage the same way. A Gentile who resides in the land of Israel is a sojourner, not a proselyte, just as Israel lived in the land of Egypt. Sojourners are a typology of Gentile Believers. *Adonai* permitted them! He allowed/permitted any Gentile that desired so to live in the land of Israel (it is not this way in modern Israeli law, practice, and attitudes). He made it clear that they must treat sojourners with goodness, kindness, and love. In fact, they are to love sojourners the same way they loved the native-born. There is a flip side to this relationship in that the *Torah* also specifically instructed sojourners that when they choose to live in the land of Israel, they also must abide by the same *Torah* as the native-born. *Torah* teaches justice and fairness for all. *Torah* was to be *THE Law of the Land of Israel* (both native born and sojourners). It should also be so in a Messianic Congregation...*Shabbat Shalom!*