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MINISTRIES

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Parashah Points: Acharei Mot – Why God Cares About Physical Intimacy

Welcome to another episode of Parashah Points—short thoughts from the weekly Torah Portion.

Before we continue, we would like to note that this teaching covers content that may not be suitable for younger audiences. Please consider using discretion.

This week’s Parashah Point comes from Acharei Mot, which is Hebrew for “After the death,” and it goes from Leviticus 16:1 to Leviticus 18:30.

This Torah portion gives instructions for Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement. It also discusses general rules with regard to the sanctuary, laws against eating blood, as well as laws prohibiting certain sexual relationships.

There’s a lot we can talk about in this Torah Portion. Today we’re going to talk God’s design for sex.

One of the most controversial chapters in the entire Bible is Leviticus 18, which lists God’s restrictions on sexual activity. The chapter begins like this:

Leviticus 18:1-5

And the Lord [YHWH] spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, I am the Lord [YHWH] your God. You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the Lord [YHWH] your God. You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the Lord [YHWH].

The rest of the chapter goes on to list prohibited sexual relationships. For instance, incest, homosexuality, adultery, and so forth, are forbidden.

These commandments raise a common question: why does God care so much about our sex life? This question is becoming more relevant as our culture becomes more secular and accepting of things like

same-sex marriage. A lot of people struggle with some of God's standards regarding sex. And as believers, we have a duty to know what we believe and why we believe it so we can intelligently and lovingly respond to those who have questions (1 Peter 3:15).

So why *does* God care? Well, why wouldn't he? He created sex. And just like he created everything with a particular purpose in mind, he has a purpose for sex. So, of course, he would have an opinion on it.

We *all* make moral judgments when it comes to sex. While the secular world might consider some of the Bible's restrictions on sexual activity to be bizarre, it's really not that strange that the Bible speaks to the issue. If God wanted to teach us right human behavior and how to have a just and moral society, it's perfectly reasonable that he would give us laws restricting sexual activity.

For instance, even secular society restricts sexual activity in many ways. There are laws against public sex, for example, because everyone generally agrees that sex is a private matter. There are laws prohibiting sex with close relatives, minors, and non-consenting adults. Religious and non-religious people generally agree that these are good laws that protect society.

Thus, since the Bible represents God's will for mankind and how we are to live and structure society, it really shouldn't surprise us that God has laws regarding sexual behavior. These laws are for our good and our protection.

Furthermore, the fact that even secular society has restrictions on sexual behavior demonstrates that we regard sex as meaningful. Everyone seems to agree that sex matters in a deep way. While sex is a physical act, how we behave sexually is somehow different and much more significant than how we shake hands with someone or dance with someone or so forth.

This goes back to the fact that God is the one who created sex, and he created it with a purpose. We all seem to intuitively acknowledge that sex is more than just the physical act itself but reflects a deeper reality. Scripture affirms this deeper reality and offers us a coherent and purpose-driven vision of sexuality.

According to the Bible, sex is to be enjoyed only within the boundaries of a marriage between husband and wife (1 Corinthians 7:8-9). Within this exclusive marriage covenant established on the promise of love and faithfulness, husband and wife both feel secure, cherished, and honored, allowing them to experience God's gift of sex in all the wholeness and joy that he intends. The sexual union also has the potential to bring forth children, and God's will is that children be protected and grow up in a loving, stable family.

Any deviation from God's sexual standards ultimately ends up distorting the purposes and goals God intends for sex. That's why God cares about sex—because he cares about *us*. He wants us to be blessed, safe, and to experience his great love for us expressed in the gift he's given us in marital sex.

Thank you for joining us for another Parashah Point!

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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