

Declaration On The Torah Approach To Homosexuality

Societal Developments On Homosexuality

There has been a monumental shift in the secular world's attitude towards homosexuality over the past few decades. In particular over the past fifteen years there has been a major public campaign to gain acceptance for homosexuality. Legalizing same-sex marriage has become the end goal of the campaign to equate homosexuality with heterosexuality.

A propaganda blitz has been sweeping the world using political tactics to persuade the public about the legitimacy of homosexuality. The media is rife with negative labels implying that one is "hateful" or "homophobic" if they do not accept the homosexual lifestyle as legitimate. This political coercion has silenced many into acquiescence. Unfortunately this attitude has seeped into the Torah community and many have become confused or have accepted the media's portrayal of this issue.

The Torah's Unequivocal And Eternal Message

The Torah makes a clear statement that homosexuality is not an acceptable lifestyle or a genuine identity by severely prohibiting its conduct. Furthermore, the Torah, ever prescient about negative secular influences, warns us in *Vayikra* (Leviticus) 20:23 "Do not follow the traditions of the nations that I expel from before you..." Particularly the Torah writes this in regards to homosexuality and other forbidden sexual liaisons.

Same-Sex Attractions Can Be Modified And Healed

From a Torah perspective, the question whether homosexual inclinations and behaviors are changeable is extremely relevant. The concept that G-d created a human being who is unable to find happiness in a loving relationship unless he violates a biblical prohibition is neither plausible nor acceptable. G-d is loving and merciful. Struggles, and yes, difficult struggles, along with healing and personal growth are part and parcel of this world. Impossible, life long, Torah prohibited situations with no achievable solutions are not.

We emphatically reject the notion that a homosexually inclined person cannot overcome his or her inclination and desire. Behaviors are changeable. The Torah does not forbid something which is impossible to avoid. Abandoning people to lifelong loneliness and despair by denying all hope of overcoming and healing their same-sex attraction is heartlessly cruel. Such an attitude also violates the biblical prohibition in *Vayikra* (Leviticus) 19:14 "and you shall not place a stumbling block before the blind."

The Process Of Healing

The only viable course of action that is consistent with the Torah is therapy and *teshuvah*. The therapy consists of reinforcing the natural gender-identity of the individual by helping him or her understand and repair the emotional wounds that led to its disorientation and weakening, thus enabling the resumption and completion of the individual's emotional development. *Teshuvah* is a Torah-mandated, self-motivated process of turning away from any transgression or sin and returning to G-d and one's spiritual essence. This includes refining and reintegrating the personality and allowing it to grow in a healthy and wholesome manner.

These processes are typically facilitated and coordinated with the help of a specially trained counselor or therapist working in conjunction with a qualified spiritual teacher or guide. There is no other practical, Torah-sanctioned solution for this issue.

The Mitzvah Of Love And Compassion

It requires tremendous bravery and fortitude for a person to confront and deal with same-sex attraction. For example a sixteen-year-old who is struggling with this issue may be confused and afraid and not know whom to speak to or what steps to take. We must create an atmosphere where this teenager (or anyone) can speak freely to a parent, rabbi, or mentor and be treated with love and compassion. Authority figures can then guide same-sex strugglers towards a path of healing and overcoming their inclinations.

The key point to remember is that these individuals are primarily innocent victims of childhood emotional wounds. They deserve our full love, support and encouragement in their striving towards healing. Struggling individuals who seek health and wellness should not be confused with the homosexual movement and their agenda. This distinction is crucial. It reflects the difference between what G-d asks from all of us and what He unambiguously prohibits.

We need to do everything in our power to lovingly uplift struggling individuals towards a full and healthy life that is filled with love, joy and the wisdom of the Torah.

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