

**The Committee for the
Declaration on the Torah Approach to Homosexuality**
www.TorahDec.org

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**Therapy to Help Homosexuals Change Orientation:
Hundreds of Rabbis Say It's the Only Torah-Approved Way**

A coalition of more than 150 Orthodox rabbis, community organizers and leaders, and respected mental-health professionals have released a statement declaring that, political correctness notwithstanding, the only Torah-approved course of action with regard to homosexuality is psychological therapy coupled with *teshuva*, or repentance.

The document, entitled "Declaration on the Torah Approach to Homosexuality," seeks to clarify the theological understanding of the Biblically mandated prohibition. It also presents what the authors and signators see as a practical and achievable solution for those faced with same-sex attractions. Its position is that same-sex attractions can be modified and healed.

"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," says the Declaration, which views same-sex attractions as any other behavior that can be controlled and altered, such as addictions or weight control.

The signators represent the broad spectrum of the Torah-observant world, including Modern Orthodox rabbis, ultra-Orthodox roshai yeshivas as well as some from Yeshiva University, pulpit rabbis, yeshivish and chassidish rabbis, organizational rabbis, Sephardic rabbis, rebbetzins, community organizers, and mental-health professionals.

The timing of the Declaration to coincide with Chanukah, which celebrates the Jews' resistance to forced Hellenization, was not coincidental. Homosexuality was one of the hallmarks of ancient Greek culture.

The timeless and immutable Torah-based conviction regarding the unacceptability of homosexual behavior motivated the authors and signators of the Declaration.

Dismissing the modern trend, even in some religious circles, to view homosexuality as a permanent, unchangeable characteristic or trait, the statement "emphatically rejects 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," says the statement.

The Declaration, which was written by a 25-member committee consisting of rabbis, parents, "strugglers" (those still undergoing therapy), and "success stories" (those who underwent therapy and today are living heterosexual lives, many with spouses and children), rejects efforts by secularists and some in the religious community to downplay or deny totally the possibility of change. Further, the Declaration

recognizes that those who dismiss the possibility of change are forcing individuals with same-sex attractions to live their lives as either homosexuals or celibates.

“Abandoning people to lifelong loneliness and despair by denying all hope of overcoming and healing their same-sex attraction is heartlessly cruel,” says the statement.

The treatment recommended in the statement is reparative or gender-affirming therapy, which the Declaration defines as “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.”

Teshuva, which the statement sees as a necessary component, is the Torah-mandated “self-motivated process of turning away from any transgression or sin and returning to G-d and one’s spiritual essence.” “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,” says the statement.

The statement goes out of its way to caution against castigation of the individual suffering from an unwanted same-sex attraction. “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,” says the Declaration.

Because so many of the committee’s members have either formerly dealt with the issue or are still undergoing therapy, the entire committee decided to keep its membership anonymous.

“Our identity isn’t important; our message is,” said one of the members.

According to the member, the purpose of the Torah Declaration is to help Jews who “have become confused on this issue and have become accepting of some false notions,” including the concept “that a person cannot control his ‘nature’ and, therefore, should accept his prohibited inclination as something natural and normal that does not need to be worked on and healed.”

The member said that many of the committee’s “success stories” are now married to women who are fully aware of their husbands’ backgrounds and are living family-oriented lives in the mainstream Orthodox community.

While the members of the committee have requested anonymity, the signators, many of them world-renowned, have gone public with the Declaration. Their names and affiliations, as well as the full Declaration on the Torah Approach to Homosexuality and other pertinent information, can be accessed at www.TorahDec.org.

For more information, members of the press can contact our press representative, who has agreed to field questions from the press, act as a liaison between members of the committee and the press, and, when possible, facilitate interviews with signators. Our press representative can be reached at Press@torahdec.org.