# THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT: You shall not commit adultery

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Two months ago, before the start of the month of Elul, we began to study the Ten Commandments (see this ), and we got to the Sixth: "You shall not murder". Today we will continue with the seventh commandment: "You shall not commit adultery", i.e., the prohibition of having intimate relations with any other person other than your spouse.

There is much to talk about this commandment, so B'H we will spend more than one email on it.

Let us clarify first that the Jewish view of sexuality, unlike other religions, is extremely positive. Our Sages explained that our behavior, in general, should lead us to be like God. He is compassionate, fair and generous, so we must also be compassionate, fair, generous, etc. This "imitation of God" reaches its maximum level when husband and wife become "creators" of a new life. Procreation allows us, more than any other act, to resemble HaShem.

In addition, sexuality has to do with reaching our physical and emotional fulfillment as individuals. When the Tora describes sexuality for the first time it says: "And man … will unite with his wife (this is a euphemism for sexual intimacy) and become one flesh (Genesis 2:24)." Hence a man or a woman are seen in Judaism as half a human being (Pelag Gufa). An individual reaches his or her fullness only when marrying. And in the sexual act, this fullness reaches its peak.

It is also very interesting to note that the first time the Tora describes the sexual act it says, "And Adam KNEW Eve his wife" (Gen. 4: 1). This word "knew" associated with sex, does not function here as a euphemism. It might be said that for Judaism the most important sexual organ is the brain. "Knowing" the other person, sharing the same ideals, values, objectives it is a *sine qua non* prerequisite for sexual intimacy. That is, there must be a common mental and spiritual goal shared between man and woman, and a mutual and formal commitment of both parties to create and maintain a family.

This, of course, is marriage.
Because of its importance and its creative powers sexuality needs to be regulated. This Shabbat we read in the Tora the portion of Noah and the flood. Sexual violence and sexual abuse were the first symptoms of the moral degradation of the generation of the flood. For those individuals, sex was no longer an act that brings humans closer to the Divine. And it no longer had to do with love or the sacred. For that generation sexuality consisted in the unscrupulous search for satisfying a hormonal instinct, like animals.
Sexuality is a sacred act, but it is also vulnerable and corruptible. Here is a simple illustration to better understand this concept. Wine is a very important element in Jewish liturgy. We used wine to perform the Qiddush (sanctifying the Shabbat), the ceremony of marriage (sanctifying our commitment to our spouse) in a Berit Mila, in the Pesah Seder, etc. In all these occasions wine is associated with holiness or sanctification, joy, and celebration. But when we abuse wine, or when alcohol is overused in other frameworks, the association of wine with holiness (qedusha) disappears. And alcohol can lead to profanity, and immorality and destruction. We read this Shabbat how alcohol excess led Noah to lose his scruples, his conscience, and his decency.
The same happens with sexuality (multiplied by 100!). Sexuality has its proper context: marriage. Within marriage, sexuality is an act of holiness, which allows us to imitate the Creator, and brings us closer than any other act to the person we love the most.
But in the case of adultery, outside of marriage, sex is destructive (in the modern world, in most cases of divorce, infidelity plays a vital role and usually represents the last red line that has been crossed). Cheating makes us lose our conscience, our decency, and our family. It drives us away, more than any other act, from HaShem and from the ones we love the most.
*(To be continued)*