



Acharei – Mot

Leviticus 16:1 – 18:30

We can influence our secular neighbors to embrace the Biblical values that have held our nation together for centuries.

Chapter 18 of Leviticus is seemingly a list of dos and don'ts, not unlike many of the rules of purity and impurity listed throughout Leviticus. But at closer examination, there is something different about the instructions listed here. The chapter begins with the verse:

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. (Leviticus 18:3)

Following this introductory verse is a list of incestual relationships that are forbidden. Included as well, however, are the prohibition against homosexuality and the prohibition against human sacrifice to the Molech.

Clearly, what connects all of these prohibitions is the fact that they were common in Egypt or in Canaan, or both. God's instruction, therefore, is not just about what is proper and improper behavior. It is an instruction against evil influences. It is these deeds that they have encountered in Egypt and will encounter in Canaan. In those countries, they are considered legitimate, but God brands them as abominations (Leviticus 18:29-30) and considers them to be a source of impurity for the nation (Leviticus 18:30). There is a dynamic going on here that the Children of Israel were probably not even aware of at the time. They have just been selected out of the bonds of slavery in Egypt; they are living a supernatural existence in the desert; and they are preparing to enter the Promised Land. They may not yet realize that they are entering a land that is full of other nations, whose ways are unlike theirs and forbidden to the Children of Israel. God is warning them, in advance, not to be influenced by them – to shun the ways of the local peoples once they enter the Land.

The chapter ends with an incredible, spiritual statement that takes the previous admonition far beyond the issue of negative societal influences. *“For the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean, lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you...”* (Leviticus 18:27-28) The land itself is affected by the abominations. It is unable to tolerate the presence of nations who so defile themselves and the land, that there is a physical reaction of the land itself – it vomits up those who have defiled it. God admonishes the Jewish people not to do the same as those nations before it. For if the Jewish people engage in the same sort of abominations, they too will be vomited out of the land.

In fact, we know from Jewish history, that the Jewish people were vomited out of the land. Particularly the first exile, the destruction of the First Temple, is recorded in the prophets as a punishment for abominations that defiled the land and forced the exile upon them. *“And I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things. But when you came in, you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination”* (Jeremiah 2:7). There is something very special, very supernatural about the Land of Israel, for it cannot tolerate the defilement.

Today, those of us who live in the Land of Israel and who read the Bible and take these verses seriously, are horrified at the growing level of “abominations” that exist in our holy land. Sexual impropriety and homosexuality are present in the land. Our Arab neighbors thrive on a modern form of worshipping the Molech – as they send their sons to be suicide bombers. The Bible is clear that all those who engage in these forbidden activities will be punished (Leviticus 18:29) but once the number of abominations reach a critical level, the people themselves will be vomited out.

The Jewish people are divided between secular and religious, and family values are not embraced by everyone. Will the balance shift in the negative direction? I hope and pray not. I hope that we can influence our secular neighbors to embrace the Biblical values that have held our nation together for centuries. God has promised us that He will return us to our land even after we have been thrown out. He has promised to help us return to Him and follow His ways. (Deuteronomy 30) I believe that we are here to stay and that He will not throw us out again. But it is incumbent upon us to do whatever we can to ensure that the land is kept pure – that the abominations are eradicated.