

## Hands Off! (Bli Yadayim!)



*"The need for a Biblical treatment of lust and masturbation is necessary. Satan has conveniently disguised this "awful" topic as something that ought not to be mentioned, and never to be preached. The church's response to this is a deafening silence." - C. Matthew McMahon (Lust, Purity and the Christian Man)*

The Bible teaches that all sexual activity is the gift of God given: to those existing in a biblically-defined marriage only, to be enjoyed with each other only<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, all sexual activity that is not exclusive to one's spouse, is either immoral or adulterous (Heb 13:4). This includes then, masturbation<sup>2</sup> which is not in relation to one's spouse (i.e. immoral masturbation or "IM").

### 1. Historical views of masturbation (in general) within Judaism and the Church:

#### 1.1. Talmud: Early Jewish Commentary (200-500 AD) – Oral Tradition of the Jews since the second Temple (516 BC)

##### 1.1.1. (Niddah [genital purity] 13a)

**"MISHNAH [instruction]**. EVERY HAND THAT MAKES FREQUENT EXAMINATION IS IN THE CASE OF WOMEN PRAISEWORTHY,<sup>1</sup> BUT IN THE CASE OF MEN IT [his hand] OUGHT TO BE CUT OFF.<sup>2</sup>

**GEMARA [commentary]**. Wherein [in this respect]<sup>3</sup> do women differ from men?<sup>4</sup> — Women [in this matter] are not sensitive,<sup>5</sup> hence they are praiseworthy,<sup>1</sup> but in the case of men who are highly sensitive [their hands] ought to be cut off.<sup>2</sup> But, if so,<sup>2</sup> what was the point in saying 'MAKES FREQUENT' [seeing that the same reason<sup>2</sup> applies] also where [the examinations are] infrequent? — When 'MAKES FREQUENT' was mentioned it was intended to refer to women only."

1. Since the wife is thereby saved from unknown discharge making her unclean and committing unnecessary transgression (Lev 15)
2. Because of masturbation [Deu 25:11-12].
3. FREQUENT EXAMINATION for the purpose of discerning a discharge that would make one unclean.
4. In other words, why is the hand of the former PRAISEWORTHY while that of the latter OUGHT TO BE CUT OFF?
5. I.e., the examination does not unduly excite their passions.

##### 1.1.2. (Niddah 13b)

"R. Eleazar stated: A man who willfully causes erection should be placed under the ban [Deu 7:25-26, 13:12-17; Jos 22:20] because the man merely incites his evil inclination against himself.

R. Ammi, however, stated: He is called a renegade, because such is the art of the evil inclination: To-day it incites man to do one wrong thing, and to-morrow, it incites him to worship idols and he proceeds to worship them.

R. Ammi stated, He who excites himself by lustful thoughts will not be allowed to enter the division of the Holy One, blessed be He. For here it is written, 'Was evil in the sight of the Lord, and elsewhere it is written, 'For Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; evil shall not sojourn with Thee'.

R. Eleazar stated: Who are referred to in the Scriptural text, Your hands are full of blood? Those that commit masturbation with their hands [Deu 25:11-12].

It was taught at the school of R. Ishmael, Thou shalt not commit adultery implies, Thou shalt not practice masturbation either with hand or with foot."

#### 1.2. Early Christian Church

1.2.1. St. Clement of Alexandria, "Because of its divine institution for the propagation of man, the seed is not to be vainly ejaculated, nor is it to be damaged, nor is it to be wasted."

1.2.2. St. Peter Damian, in his *Book of Gomorrah* wrote that masturbation is the lowest grade of homosexual sin.

1.2.3. St. Thomas Aquinas believed masturbation to be an "unnatural vice," which is "a species of lust like bestiality, sodomy, and pederasty", and that by "procuring pollution [i.e., ejaculation apart from intercourse], without any copulation, for the sake of venereal pleasure ... pertains to the sin of uncleanness which some call effeminacy".

1.3. It wasn't until the 20<sup>th</sup> century that views regarding masturbation changed from intolerant to tolerant within (so-called) Christianity.

In other words, for almost two thousand years, it has been viewed as serious sin! Even within the unbelieving world, masturbation has been viewed negatively. Until, the sexual revolution of the late 60's, Psychology viewed masturbation as a disorder/neurosis (per the DSM II, 1968).

### 2. The Bible's explicit teaching on the subject of (IM) (Mat 5:27-32)

Though it may not be obvious at first, Jesus not only refers to (IM) in these verses, but also teaches us several important things about it.

#### 2.1. Where Jesus refers to (IM) = (30)

<sup>1</sup> See "Biblical Sexual Ethics" by R. Scott Jarrett

<sup>2</sup> Masturbation (def.) the sexual stimulation of one's own genitals for sexual arousal or other sexual pleasure. (Wikipedia)

## Support:

2.1.1. The entire context is dealing with sexual sin (27 – “adultery”, 28 – “lustful intent, adultery”, 32 – “sexual immorality, adultery”)

2.1.2. It is clear that Jesus’ mention of tearing out your “eye” (29) is in response to his statement regarding the sin of lustful looking in the previous verse (28). Good hermeneutics demand that we view the prescription regarding the “hand” (30) in the same way; as that member of a person’s body which is also oftentimes guilty when that person is sinfully lusting in their heart (i.e. they commit IM).

2.1.3. The context of (27-30) is concerned only with those sexual sins a person commits w/themselves. Hence the mention of “adultery...in his heart”. IOW: their act of adultery is not shared w/another (IM is often a solo sexual act)

2.1.4. Jesus’ prescription to, “cut it off” in relation to the hand is not meant to illicit our imagination or be viewed as simply symbolic of taking drastic measures in relation to sexual sin (the context). It is instead a direct allusion to (IM) based on:

2.1.4.1. Oral tradition/teaching on the subject w/in Judaism (e.g. Talmud, Niddah 13a; consider also Mat 18:8 w/ Niddah 13b; the NT regularly refers to oral tradition or teaching – e.g. Mat 2:23; 2Ti 3:8; Jam 5:17; Jud 1:9, 14-15)

2.1.4.2. Deu 25:11-12 = notice the place where the sin of the person’s hand is committed. It is the genitals. This text is the only place in the Bible (besides Mat 5 and 18) that mentions cutting off the hand. Early Judaism viewed this passage as referring to any sinful handling of one’s genitals (see again Niddah 13a, Mishnah)<sup>3</sup>

## 2.2. There are 4 things Jesus teaches us about (IM) in this text:

2.2.1. (IM) is often the result of wandering eyes and minds (28; Jam 1:13-15)

2.2.2. (IM) will send you to Hell if you continue to practice it (29-30)

2.2.3. (IM) is grounds for divorce (31-32 – “sexual immorality”/πορνεία = all physical sexual activity not in re: to your spouse which includes then, IM)

2.2.4. (IM) is a capital crime (πορνεία destroys marriage – physical and spiritual. It is a covenant-breaking crime).

## 2.3. Additional considerations:

2.3.1. How hard something seems or how the culture views it (e.g. IM is healthy) is not what determines our actions. Rather it is determining what God says. IOW: we are to continue seeking Christ’s Lordship over every aspect of our lives and never tolerating what He calls sin (esp. cap crimes). This is also what designates faithful pastors/churches and fathers/homes (1Ti 3:4-5)

2.3.2. (Gen 2:18-23) and (1Co 7:2) does not say God created man’s hands as the means to fulfilling his sexual desires.

2.3.3. Your body is to be viewed as sacred ground NOT a sexual playground (1Co 6:19-20– Are you a faithful guard of God’s Temple or its chief violator?). God will destroy those who destroy/defile their temples (1Co 3:16-17 w/6:9).

2.3.4. (IM) reflects the “Spirit of an Apostate Age” (2Ti 3:1-5, 7-9 – Notice the power/ability to do right is there. No excuse – Deu 30:11; 2Pe 1:3! The problem is the will of the person which chooses to deny such power and follow its own desires. In so doing, Christ’ Lordship is exchanged for the lordship of the person in rebellion).

2.3.5. If you have been practicing this (though you knew for a long time that it was sin – which YOU DID if you are in this church!), then the problem is not the you now realize it is a capital crime but the fact that you have been embracing a false gospel (the “ghetto gospel” of easy-believism - i.e. you thought you could continue practicing this sin as something God would overlook as “minor”; IOW: what I do in the present won’t affect my future; You have become selective in your obedience like king Saul whom God condemned; You are either all in [body/spirit, mind/will/emptions] or not in at all).

2.3.6. Repentance does not mean rehab. Rehab implies a gradual withdraw from former activity. This is not repentance! When you repent you turn from the sin and stop doing it.

2.3.7. The war is w/in you – who is winning? God requires us to be victorious over our flesh if we are to be used by Him and gain heaven as the prize (1Co 9:24-27; consider Paul’s words to Timothy and regarding himself – 2Ti 2:19-22, 4:7).

2.3.8. God will never force you to do the right thing (i.e. you are free to obey and disobey). Understand however that what God (and His people) will always do is make you eat the fruit of your choices (good or bad). Hence why there will be a judgment day and the Bible promises we will reap what we sow (Gal 6:7-10). IOW: there is no free lunch.

2.3.9. Those things God designates as capital crimes are not something you can “struggle with” (e.g. I struggle w/murdering people). IOW: They are considered (by God) to be crimes that require more will-power to do than other sins. They are therefore crimes which most true Christians will never commit *and* those which demonstrate how far the heart of the person who commits them really is from loving and fearing God<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> That Jesus is indeed speaking literally in his prescription regarding physical amputation is supported by not only its literal prescription in Deu 25, but also His prescription regarding sexual immorality in general in Mat 19:10-12. This text also establishes the fact that just b/c something is tough doesn’t make it untrue.

<sup>4</sup> Per JUDCO 4/10: If you have been guilty of (IM) since the JUDCO adoption of it as a capital crime, you need to confess it to the elders and serve justice to make it and get back into a right standing w/God, otherwise you will remain in unrepentant state and most assuredly go to Hell should you die.