

COALITION OF TORAH OBSERVANT MESSIANIC CONGREGATIONS

STATEMENT AS TO SEXUALITY AND TORAH OBSERVANCE

1. Sex is not shameful, sinful or obscene. Nor is it a necessary evil for the sole purpose of procreation, though the ultimate purpose of marriage is the proper rearing of a family. Although sexual desire comes from the *yetzer hara*, it is no more evil than hunger or thirst, which also come from the *yetzer hara*. Like hunger, thirst or other basic instincts, sexual desire must be controlled and channeled, satisfied at the proper time, place and manner. But when sexual desire is satisfied between a husband and wife at the proper time, out of mutual love and desire, sex is a *mitzvah*. As we are commanded “be fruitful and multiply” (*B'reishit* 1:28).
2. Sex is permissible only within the context of the solemnized marriage covenant. It is an act of immense significance, requiring commitment and responsibility. The requirement of marriage before sex ensures that sense of commitment and responsibility.
3. Sexual immorality is never permissible (*Sh'mot* 20:14; *Devarim* 23:18; *Ivrim* 13:4; Gal. 5:19-21; I Cor. 6:18). The husband prohibits his wife to the whole world like an object that has been dedicated to the Sanctuary (*Kid.* 2b). When husband and wife are worthy, the *Shechinah* is with them, when they are not worthy, fire consumes them (*Sot.* 17a).
4. The primary purpose of sex is to reinforce the loving marital bond between husband and wife. The first and foremost purpose of marriage is companionship, and sexual relations play an important role. Procreation is a reason for sex, but not the only reason. Thus sex between husband and wife is permitted at times when conception is impossible, such as when the woman is pregnant, after menopause, or when the woman is using a permissible form of contraception.
5. In *Torah*, the word used for sex between husband and wife comes from the root meaning “to know” (*yada*) which vividly illustrates that proper sexuality involves both the heart and mind, not merely the body.
6. Sex should only be experienced in a time of joy. Sex for selfish personal satisfaction, without regard for the partner's pleasure, is wrong and evil. A man may never force his wife to have sex. A couple may not have sexual relations while drunk or quarreling. Sex may never be used as a weapon against a spouse, either by depriving the spouse of sex or by compelling it. It is a serious offence to use sex (or lack thereof) to punish or manipulate a spouse.
7. Sex is a right of each spouse (II Cor. 7:3-5). Spouses have a duty to give each other sex regularly and to ensure that sex is pleasurable for the other. A spouse may not withhold sex from the other as a form of punishment. The woman's right to sexual intercourse is referred to as *onah*, and it is one of a wife's three basic rights (along with food and clothing). Spouses should not abstain from sex for an extended period of time. A husband's consistent refusal to engage in sexual relations is grounds for compelling a man to divorce her, even if the couple has already fulfilled the halakhic obligation to procreate.
8. Foreplay also is permissible (*Nedarim* 20a).
9. Oral sex before marriage is immorality. Within the confines of marriage, oral sex is free from sin as long as there is mutual consent.

Niddah

Torah observance includes practice of the law of *niddah* (separation of husband and wife during the woman's menstrual period) and *taharat ha-mishpachah* (family purity). A husband is forbidden from having sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman. The time of separation begins at the first sign of blood and ends in the evening of the woman's seventh "clean day," a minimum of 12 days. CTOMC rabbis must schedule weddings carefully so that the woman is not in a state of *niddah* on her wedding night. At the end of the period of *niddah*, as soon as possible after nightfall after the seventh clean day, the woman should immerse herself in a *mikvah*.

Birth Control

1. Birth control is permitted, so long as the couple is committed to eventually fulfilling the *mitzvah* to be fruitful and multiply. The greater issue in birth control is not whether it is permitted, but what method is permitted, and under what circumstances.
2. It is clearly permitted where pregnancy would pose a medical risk to the mother or her other children, by very young wives, pregnant women or nursing women.
3. While some rabbinic authorities forbid birth control methods that destroy the seed or block the passage of the seed, such as condoms. even these rabbis agree that condom use is permissible to prevent sexually transmitted diseases. Preserving the life of an uninfected spouse always takes priority.
4. The pill as an acceptable form of birth control.
5. The prohibition against condom use is derived from an exceptionally broad reading of the story of Onan (*B'reishit* 38:8-10), who used practiced coitus interruptus to avoid fathering a child for his deceased brother. G-d killed Onan for the sin of refusing to father a child for his deceased brother, not for a "sin" of masturbation or coitus interruptus.

Abortion

1. Abortion is permitted (and indeed mandatory) **only** in cases where the mother's life is in jeopardy because of the unborn child.
2. An unborn child has the status of "potential human life" until the majority of the body has emerged from the mother.
3. Potential human life is valuable, and may not be terminated casually, but it does not have as much value as a life in existence.

Homosexuality

1. Torah specifically forbids sexual relations between men in the strongest possible terms, as abhorrent (*Vayikra* 18:22). The only other sexual sin described in such strong terms is the sin of remarrying a woman you had divorced after she had been married to another man. (*Devarim* 24:4). Sexual relations between men is punishable by death (*Vayikra* 20:13), as are the sins of adultery and incest.

2. While the homosexual act is forbidden, the *orientation* is not. The law of *Moshe* focused on a person's actions, rather than his or her desires. Talmud said that a man who feels forbidden desires but does not act upon them is worthy of more merit than a man who does not feel such desires at all. The analogy is that one who refrains from pork because it is forbidden deserves more merit than one who refrains from pork because he doesn't like the taste.
3. However, Messiah *Yeshua* clearly taught that G-d also considers the sinful intentions of our hearts to be sin (*Mattityahu* 5:28).
4. *Torah* does not specifically forbid female same-sex relations, but Rambam asserts that lesbian practices are forbidden as a practice of Egypt that constitutes rebelliousness.

Masturbation

Orthodox Rabbinic law generally forbids any act of *ha-sh'cha'tat zerah* (destruction of the seed), or ejaculation outside of the vagina. The prohibition is so strict that *Talmud (Niddah 13a)* says, "in the case of a man, the hand that reaches below the navel should be chopped off." While it does not condemn this position and generally frowns on this behaviour, CTOMC does not elevate the Orthodox rabbinic prohibition against masturbation to the status of a *Torah* commandment. *Yeshua* was very critical of rabbinic hypocrisy.