

Bible often misinterpreted on homosexuality

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Sun, July 23, 2023 at 5:03 AM CDT

Over 100 years ago the Scottish writer Andrew Lang famously remarked: “Most people use statistics like a drunk man uses a lamppost; more for support than illumination.” The same is true many times over when it comes

to the Bible.

Rabbi Bruce Diamond

And since I am in a Gaelic frame of mind, let's all remember Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan's "You're entitled to your own opinion, but you are not entitled to your own facts."

Of course everybody is free to have an opinion about the Bible and its content, and I respect everybody's opinion about that, no matter how ignorant and backwards. But when a passage in the Bible is incorrectly cited or quoted totally out of context in order to oppress others, it is a kind of blasphemy. Hanging personal bigotry and prejudice on what is regarded as the word of God does not add glory to the Source of All. It brings

add glory to the source of All. It brings God down into the same mud in which the bigot wallows.

So on to the meaning of Leviticus Chapter 20, verse 13: "Should a man lie with a male as lying with a woman -- they both did a detestable act; they must be put to death -- their blood guilt is on themselves" (my translation).

Now don't let the fact that I read it in the original language easier than you are reading this, that I have been studying and teaching this on an advanced level for over 50 years, or that my ancestors wrote this stuff and passed on what they meant through the tradition, persuade you that I must be correct. I don't buy that "argument from authority," and my supposed expertise does not

automatically make me right. Even a

automatically make me right. Even a blind squirrel can occasionally find a nut, right? Who knows? Maybe those homophobes understand Leviticus better than I do, but I wouldn't count on it.

A key to understanding the meaning in Scripture, especially in those legal parts, is to grasp the context in which each law is stated. Often there is something like a “chapter heading” before laws are presented or a summation at the end to help the reader get their purpose and rationale.

All of Leviticus Chapter 20 is about the same thing -- not adopting the practices of the heathens around them. “Ye shall therefore keep all My statutes, and all Mine ordinances, and do them, that the land, whither I bring you to dwell therein, vomit you not out. And ye shall not walk in the customs of the nation, which I am casting out before you; for they did all these things, and therefore I abhorred them.”

My ancestors were aware of the rampant homosexuality that was characteristic, tolerated and even “hard wired” into Mediterranean

cultures encircling them. They perceived that the peoples around them engaged in all sorts of practices that violated the absolute sanctity of family that was at the bedrock of their own Israelite culture. They believed that God brought them into the land to dispossess the inhabitants whose practices were defiling the land that was God's special domain. They understood that if they emulated those practices, they too would be thrown off the land.

The homosexuality outlawed along with all other practices on the list of what our tradition calls "The deeds of the Amorites" is the kind that is a voluntary cultural choice. It has nothing do with homosexual proclivities that are with a person from early childhood, if not from birth

birth.

Careful research shows that around 5% of a population is “organically” homosexual. But in ancient Greek culture it was accepted that upper class men enter into homosexual relationships with younger men and slaves. It was all about exhibiting dominance and status. In hyper-masculine Sparta young men were required to be in a sexual relationship with their mentors. For most men it was a social and cultural choice, not really a matter of true sexual preference.

The Scriptures are not condemning people who really don't have a choice in this matter, who "are what they are." For that matter, it says nothing at all about lesbians since it's really not about sexual preference.

But let me be in earnest with you. There can be little doubt that back then "organic homosexuals" were likely regarded as afflicted and placed in the same circle as "lunatics" and others with deformities from birth, not very "woke" by our standards. They were treated like other "unfortunates" and were given an opportunity to be sustained in the

community.

I can assure you that these were not the people condemned in Leviticus, and there is not one recorded instance of gay men being executed over their personal sexual predispositions and preferences.

The Scripture condemns certain cultural “lifestyles” that people choose to adopt. If the Bible does not consign actual gays to stoning, how dare we stone them from the pulpits?

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This article originally appeared on Fort Myers News-Press: [Bible often misinterpreted on homosexuality](#)

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