

Human Sexuality among the Jews of the Old Testament: A Lesson for Nigerian Youths

Ogunmoroti B.S

Abstract

The paper examined human sexuality among the Jews of the Old Testament with a view of drawing salient lessons for the 21st century youths whose lives negate sexual morality. Unlike in the old time when virginity was a pride and virtue most especially among the Jewish people of the Old Testament, the subject matter is now grossly and shamelessly abused so much that, the few who are trying to *keep themselves now* cannot even rear their heads in the public for the fear of being derogatorily named by the teeming youths who have seen virginity cum sexual morality as illness in this 21st century. Besides, this work made a distinction between the lifestyles of the Jews in the Old Testament and youths of today with special bias to their lifespans to puncture the popular notion that generational curses, ailments, and even hazardous use of technological inventions are the causes of the pre-mature death of 21st century youths. While the work was carried out via secondary source of information, it found out that that sexual immorality is the major cause of untimely death among today's youth because of its both esoteric and medical implications. Hence, the paper recommended that the 21st century youths should embrace sexual morality like the Jews of Old Testament as this is the will of Yahweh.

Introduction

Sexuality is a creative power and like the other natural forces, it must be rightly channelled. It must be curbed to serve and not destroy man because if it is not properly managed, it may turn into source of servitude, frustration, disgust, and even annihilation. The special nature and dynamism of human sexuality makes it imperative for man never to drift with it but handle it with utmost maturity and discipline.

Besides, it is no gainsaying that where there is gross indiscipline, misuse, and abuse of human sexuality, then the hope of a moral and dynamic society which ordinarily should give birth to existence of formidable youths in a society is dampened. This goes without saying that immoral sexual habit begat immoral society while moral sexual habit begat moral and healthy society.

It is against this background that the paper wishes to examine human sexuality among the Jewish people of the Old Testament with the aim of deriving some viable lessons for the 21st century youths. To press home this aim, the work shall be broken down into the meaning of sexuality, divine purpose of sexuality, laws guiding sexuality in the Old Testament among others.

What is Sexuality?

Sexuality denotes the state of being sexual, the condition of having sex or sexual activities. It may mean an expression of sexual receptivity or interest especially when excessive. Thus human sexuality in this work denotes a state or quality of being sexual or the condition of having sex. However, we shall focus majorly on the Jewish people of the Old Testament.

The purpose of sex as designed by Yahweh

It is pertinent to note that when the purpose of a thing is not known or understood, abuse, they say, is inevitable. Hence, the need to consider the position and purpose of Yahweh (God) about sex in the Old Testament.

Firstly, it is clear that the fundamental purpose of sex is fruitfulness and multiplicity which may otherwise be called procreation. This is established in the first book of the Bible, Genesis 1v27-28:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them; he created them both male and female. And God blessed them and said unto them be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it; and dominion over the fish of the sea, and the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth

Thus, Yahweh purposed sexuality primarily for procreation in the Old Testament and other reasons can just be addendum. However the spontaneity of love is not missing altogether. The free ardent love between man and woman finds a poetic portrayal in Song of Songs (i.e. proverbs and Song of Solomon). These songs are clear indicators that the Jews of the Old Testament considered human sexuality as a gift to pleasure with honourably and enjoy themselves with as well. This position was buttressed in Proverbs 5v18-19 that says:

Let thy fountain be blessed rejoice with the wife of your youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy you at all times and be ravished always with her love

In this same vein, Song of Solomon describes the love of a king's wife as being the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys. Song of Solomon 2v1. The book of Ecclesiastes is not left out in shedding light on the love between man and woman or better put, the expected disposition of a man (hubby) to a woman as recorded

in Ecclesiastes 9v9:

Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your life of vanity which he (God) has given you under the sun, all the days of your vanity; for that (your love) is your portion in this life and in your labour under the sun

It is noteworthy that sexual pleasure derivable in sexual activities is not without the knowledge of Yahweh as he has embedded in mankind from creation sexual instincts and emotions to enable them procreate so as to replenish the universe. The Old Testament Jews were well acquitted with the aforementioned Yahwistic or scriptural purposes about sexuality and in view of this; they checkmated their sexual activities majorly with the divine guiding law. This law covers periods before, during and even after marriage. A quick look at the guiding law cum the people's tradition or culture will not only enrich our intellect but it will also avail viable lessons for the 21st century youths

Divine Law Guiding Singles in the Old Testament

There is ample number of Old Testament Jewish youths who followed the divinely laid down regulation guiding sexuality and the regulation became part of their tradition. The divine law soundly warned that singles should not engage in pre-marital sex and equally abstain from sex until they are lawfully married as good conduct is the surest way of escaping sexual transmitted diseases. The Jews imbibed this not just as guiding principle but as a tradition and this accounted for why majority of them especially the female folks remained virgins until they were married. It is however unfortunate that the youths of this 21st century are too loose so much that virginity cannot be traced to an elephant percentage of them. Most ladies today are cheaply lured to bed through cheap deceitful promises of some male folks that they will marry them if only they allow them have sexual intercourse. Though some are ladies are simply dogs as they are too promiscuous to be deceived before they are defiled and ditto to some guys.

The prevalent phenomenon of pre-marital sex among 21st century youths was considered by the Old Testament Jews as an abomination, sacrilege, and absolutely unacceptable both to God and man. This is buttressed in the defilement of Dinah, a daughter of Jacob by Schechem, the son Hammer, the Hivite as chronicled in Genesis 34 v 2-7. Both Jacob and his twelve sons, being Jews, saw this act as ungodly and unacceptable and as result, planned to kill both the perpetrator, Schechem and all young men of the city which could mean that the act of illegitimate sexual intercourse is murderous among the Jews of the Old Testament. Hence, the need for patience.

Marriage in Jewish Custom

The Old Testament Jewish law enjoins Jewish youths to marry but a virgin as virginity is highly cherished and greatly celebrated mostly among the female folks. Whenever a Jewish lady was to be married, the mother of such lady was obliged by the custom to give her child a white cloth which the lady must necessarily lay on the bed on the first night of the mating with her husband. The white cloth, after use, would be returned to the mother to ascertain the virginity or otherwise of the daughter. If the result is positive, that is, if she is found a virgin, there would be a lot celebration both by her parents, relatives and friends because it is believed that such a lady has brought glory to the family. However, the story will be unpalatable if the lady is found deflowered already. The penalty, among others, is that she will be brought to her parents and be stoned to death in their presence. This is captured in the Mosaic Law that is chronicled in Deuteronomy 22v13-21:

Suppose a man marries a woman and after sleeping with her, changes his mind about her and falsely accuses her of having slept with another man, he might say, I discovered she was not a virgin when I married her. If the man does this, the woman's father and mother must bring the proof of her virginity to the leaders of the town. Her father must tell them, I gave my daughter to this man to be his wife, and now he has turned against her. He has accused her of shameful things, claiming that she was not a virgin when he married her. But here is the proof of my daughter's virginity. Then they must spread the cloth before the judges. Then the judges must punish the man. They will fine him one hundred pieces of silver for he falsely accused the virgin of Israel

But suppose the man's accusations are true and her virginity could not be proved, the judges shall bring the girl to the door of her father's home and the men of the town will stone her to death. She has committed a disgraceful crime in Israel by being promiscuous while living in her parents' home. Such evil must be cleansed from among you. (NIV)

Sexuality in Marriage

Faithfulness even when married is highly emphasised in the Old Testament and any form of sexual immorality is seen as an abomination and a grievous sin customarily visited with capital punishment against the perpetrators. To this end, Deuteronomy 22v22 states that 'if a man is found lying with a married woman, then they shall both die...' This shows that the Old Testament Law greatly frowns at extra-marital affairs.

Also considered as abominable is a sexual affair between a man and a man otherwise called homosexual or gay; sexual affair between female and a female also known as lesbianism; and intercourse between human and beast known as bestialism. All these unions are contrary to the will of Yahweh.

Having looked at the human sexuality among the Jewish people of the Old Testament, it is now imperative to draw out some cogent lessons for 21st century youths.

Lessons for 21st century Youths

The first lesson to be learnt is that all the youths of today should abstain from sex. By this, we mean indefinite, comprehensive and total abstinence from sexual activities until they are lawfully married and even remain faithful to their spouses when they are eventually married. This lesson is predicated on the basis that, the same God that gave the Jews laws and frowned at immoral sexuality, is the same today and even forever more.

Besides, the rising and spreading scourge of the HIV/AIDS has been medically proven to spread rapidly via sex more than other means combined together and many youths are victims of this scourge already through this means. Hence, it is imperative for the youths of this century to keep themselves from immoral sexuality to halt the spreading of the deadly virus for their own sake and the sake of their community in general.

More so, if the youths of today can imbibe culture of virginity as it was a practice in the land of Israel, the case of rape will drastically reduce because everybody will be cautioned with the fear of consequences of being caught in the act in addition to the fear of God who has said it is an abomination to be sexually immoral.

Furthermore, the 21st century youths should not allow the joy and glory that virginity brings to die though what we experience is that, many of today's youths seem not to see any glory or importance in virginity as some consider it infirmity while some believe it is uncivilised act. We however implore the youths never to throw virginity into dustbin rather make it highly prized like the Jewish Youths of the Old Testament as virginity, in real sense, is a pride, glory and honour.

To a great extent also, virginity reduces suspicion in that, when a lady is married as a virgin the level of trust, fidelity and respect her husband will have for her will be high and even if she reported immoral, it will be difficult to suspect her. This is because, how will a girl who refused to defile herself as single with immoral act now begin to indulge in the act in marriage. It is simply illogical to do that, I suppose. But the story cannot be the same with someone (lady) who has been grossly deflowered before marriage. Hence the need for the youths of today to maintain their virginity under any circumstances.

Also, virginity will automatically halt the syndrome of 'use and dump' which is common among the 21st century youths. With this, we mean the rate at which young men entice young women to bed for defilement though they call it fun with trivial promises and later dump them in search of other preys will reduce or even stop. This phenomenon has resulted in broken home, terrible vengeance, showering of curses which later work against the parties involved among others. Hence, the direct beneficiaries of abstinence are human beings and not God. Then both man and woman must oppose to sex before marriage.

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