

**“Maimonides 613 Series”**  
**The Ten Commandments:**  
**Seventh Commandment: Do Not Commit Adultery**

**Exodus 20:13**

לֹא תִנְאֹף

You shall not commit adultery

**Maimonides Negative Commandment #347**

The 347th prohibition is that one is forbidden to have relations with one's neighbor's wife. The source of this commandment is G-d's statement, "do not lie carnally with your neighbor's wife."

**Pshat - The Surface Level**

Rashi tells us that the prohibition of adultery refers primarily to a married woman. The Ibn Ezra says this commandment, *lo tinof* in Hebrew, refers not only to adultery but to any immorality. He quotes Rabbi Saadya Gaon, who teaches that there are six levels of immorality:

1. Intimacy out of wedlock
2. Intimacy with a *niddah*
3. Intimacy with another man's wife
4. Intimacy between a Jew and non-Jew
5. Intimacy between two men
6. Intimacy between man and an animal

G-d gave the Ten Commandments on two tablets. The first five Commandments, engraved on the first tablet, deal with the relationship between man and G-d. The second five, on the second tablet, deal with man's relationship with his fellow. The Kli Yakar explains that the First Commandment corresponds to the Sixth, and so on. The commandment against adultery therefore corresponds to the Second Commandment, *You shall have no other gods before me*. What is the connection? We are taught that in *parshas Balak*, after Bilaam realized that the Jews could not be cursed, he saw that the only way to cause the Jews to be punished was to bring the sin of immorality upon them. He advised the daughters of Moav to go out and seduce the Jewish men in order to bring them to immorality. As the Moavite women enticed the men, they would pull out a statue of the idol Baal Peor and say,

“Before you have me, you must bow down to this. This is the connection between the Second and Seventh Commandments. Similarly in Deuteronomy 7:3, we are warned against intermarriage; the Torah says that if a woman intermarries, her son will go astray and serve idols.

It is interesting to note that from this passage we derive that the mother determines the nationality of the child. If the mother is Jewish but the father is not, the child is Jewish. If, however, only the father is Jewish, even if he is a great Jew, the child is not Jewish. A Jewish child born to a non-Jewish father tends to stray after his father.

### **Remez - The Level of Hints**

*Lo tinof* is not only a command, but a promise. It represents a time in the future when there will be no more immorality in the world, the time when Moshiach comes. In reverse, this mitzvah represents having a good marriage, which alludes to the ultimate marriage between G-d and the Jewish people. In the blessings that we recite for the bride and groom, known as the "*Sheva Brochas*", we say the words *kol sasson*, *v'kol simcha*, *kol chosson*, *v'kol kallah* (voice of gladness, and voice of joy; voice of the groom, and voice of the bride). We say the word *kol*, which has the *gematria* of 136 and is mentioned five times:  $136 \times 5 = 680$ , which equals the word *Poras*, the Euphrates, one of the borders of Israel which will be restored when Moshiach comes. We also mention in this *brocho* the Cities of Judah and the Courtyard of Jerusalem, where the Temple was and will be once again, with the coming of Moshiach.

### **Drush - The Homiletic Level**

Rambam says that there is nothing more difficult for the Jews than the Laws of Chastity, to refrain from prohibited relations as the Torah dictates. In fact, when the Jews heard the Laws of Chastity, they began to cry. In Numbers, it says that Moses heard the nation, and they were crying because of the Laws of Intimacy. They cried about these laws, but not about the laws of Pesach or Yom Kippur. “Eat matzah on Pesach? Fine! Fast on Yom Kippur? Fine! We’ll do everything else, but these laws of intimacy are too hard for us!” they wept. But for every commandment G-d gives us, He grants us the strength to carry it out to the fullest, to live a perfect life of modesty and holiness.

### **Sod - The Level of Secrets**

In Chapter 7 of Tanya, the Alter Rebbe asks: What is the sin that one cannot correct? If one has relations with a married woman, and she gives birth to a bastard child, even teshuvah cannot help this. The Rebbe, however, says that nothing stands in the way of teshuvah. In this case, average teshuvah does not help; only teshuvah inspired by a purely altruistic connection to and love for G-d washes this

sin away. The kabbalah says this is because the seed of man descends into the *nukva* of *kelippah*, the feminine aspect of the spiritual “husks”.

### **Chassidus - The Essential Level**

In general, chassidus believes that the relationship between man and G-d is not essentially that of a king and subject, or even of a father and son, but of husband and wife. Based on this concept, that G-d is our husband and we are His bride, the parallel between the Second and Seventh Commandments is even clearer. If we have other gods and don't serve ours properly, it is tantamount to adultery. Our intense love relationship with G-d is so powerful that if we do anything outside of Torah, it is adultery. The Talmud says that a person does not sin unless a spirit of folly enters them; i.e. a Jew by nature cannot and does not want to sever their relationship with G-d through sin. How then can one sin? The Gemara brings proof from Torah in the passage that reads, “If a man's wife goes astray and (a spirit of folly enters, only then she) will be suspected of infidelity...” Why does the Gemara need to bring this passage as proof? How can all sins, even small ones, be compared to the capital crime of adultery? There are three answers:

- 1) Since our relationship with G-d is like that of husband and wife, even a small sin is violation of the marriage. With a husband and wife, a seemingly small act of disrespect can be as damaging as adultery.
- 2) Even the suspicion of wrongdoing is inappropriate for a Jew. If we are going to do something that may look wrong or suspicious to others, even if we think it is good, we must refrain. We are G-d's bride, His Queen, and so our actions must be completely clean and pure of suspicion.
- 3) A *sotah*, a woman suspected of adultery, must temporarily leave her husband until she drinks the holy waters and is proven innocent. She can then reunite with her husband, and upon this reunion, their bond is even better and stronger than it was before. If she gave birth with difficulty before, she will now give birth with ease. It is the same between G-d and man: if we accidentally do something prohibited and damage our relationship with G-d, we are like a *sotah*, and the damage is only temporary. Eventually we are going to see how every Jew loves, is connected to, and wants to be one with G-d.

May the marriage between G-d and the Jewish people soon come to fruition, when we will sing songs of *kol sasson*, *v'kol simcha*, *kol chosson*, *V'kol kallah* with the rebuilding of the Temple. May it be immediately! Amen!