

Some perspectives on the seven Biblical verses/stories that seem to refer to homosexuality, by Rev. Beth Galbreath <a href="http://www.bethgalbreath.com">www.bethgalbreath.com</a>		
Scripture	Context	Comment
<p>Genesis 19: <sup>1</sup>The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground. <sup>2</sup>He said, “Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant’s house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way.” They said, “No; we will spend the night in the square.” <sup>3</sup>But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. <sup>4</sup>But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; <sup>5</sup>and they called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them.” <sup>6</sup>Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, <sup>7</sup>and said, “I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. <sup>8</sup>Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.”</p>	<p>Sodom and Gomorrah, “Cities of the Plain,” represent all that is sinful against Yahweh in the eyes of herders like Abraham and his descendents, who are telling this story to explain the two ruined cities they can see down near the Jordan and the Dead Sea.</p> <p>The angels come to scope it out and Lot, the virtuous former herder (Abraham’s nephew) is the only one to offer them hospitality. Hospitality is sacred. Lot is even willing to let his daughters be raped rather than let his guests be attacked, and the teller of the story approves of this viewpoint.</p> <p>The issue here, the great sin that horrifies the storyteller, is the issue of <i>hospitality</i>, of <i>guest-rape</i>.</p>	<p>This story is not primarily about homosexual behavior, but about breaking the bond of hospitality by attempted rape. We today would hardly approve of serving up young women to gang rape to save men, which the teller approves as the act of a righteous man. So we shouldn’t take this story as an example of God’s intended rules of sexual morality.</p>
<p>Leviticus 18: <sup>19</sup>You shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness while she is in her menstrual uncleanness. <sup>20</sup>You shall not have sexual relations with your kinsman’s wife, and defile yourself with her. <sup>21</sup>You shall not give any of your offspring to sacrifice them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD. <sup>22</sup>You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. <sup>23</sup>You shall not have sexual relations with any animal and defile yourself with it, nor shall any woman give herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it: it is perversion.</p> <p><sup>24</sup>Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, for by all these practices the nations I am casting out before you have defiled themselves. <sup>25</sup>Thus the land became defiled; and I punished it for its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.</p>	<p>This passage is at the end of a list of warnings about Canaanite sexual practices and is embedded in a list of Canaanite religious and religio-sexual practices. The warning is “not to be like them” by participating in worship of the Baals and Astarte through religious prostitution.</p> <p>In this cultural world, <i>all things</i> that are good are seen as limited, including semen. Thus temple prostitution is a way of joining oneself to the god or goddess through his/her priest/ess, and also giving a very real sacrifice of semen that might otherwise have gone to produce children.</p>	<p>This section is about temple prostitution, (not committed homosexual relationships between adults, of which they had no concept). Since the most urgent need of the tribes was people, all semen must be put to work as intended (this is also the basis of the story of Judah and Tamar and the “sin of Onan” in Genesis 38). The result will be a shrinking population (through not enough semen) which cannot defend the land and will be “cast out.”</p> <p>Scholars have also noted that the whole Levitical code had a horror of mixing unlike things: flax and wool, crops, a man wearing woman’s clothing, etc. Since the male’s role as head of a household implied dominant behavior in sex as well, and same-sex relations involve a male “acting like a female” or a female “acting like a male,” such behavior cut at the identity of the passive man or the active woman.</p>

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<p>Romans 1: <sup>24</sup>Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, <sup>25</sup>because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.</p> <p><sup>26</sup>For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, <sup>27</sup>and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.</p>	<p>Paul’s opening description of the results of the Fall, human rebellion. He is writing to Christians in Rome. Culturally, though Romans practiced less homosexuality than Greeks, he is addressing a Greco-Roman world in which it was common for heterosexual men with wives at home to use male and female prostitutes (temple and otherwise). Before Rome conquered Greece, Greek soldiers would take young recruits as “shieldmates.” They not only trained their partners but also used them sexually. Our world “lesbian” comes from the island of Lesbos, where the female philosopher Sappho lived. As one of the very few independently wealthy women of her day, she and probably others would have emulated the male practice to avoid marriage.</p>	<p>Paul is condemning “unnatural” homosexual behavior by “naturally” heterosexual people.</p> <p>Not until the 18<sup>th</sup> century did people begin to suspect that some people might be born with a sexual orientation toward their own gender which is a deep-rooted part of their identity.</p>
<p>1 Corinthians 6: <sup>9</sup>Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, <sup>10</sup>thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup>And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.</p>	<p>The words translated “male prostitute” and “sodomite” here refer to the passive and active partners respectively. Paul is emphasizing that it doesn’t matter whether you are behaving in the “male” (dominant) or “female” (passive) role, unnatural behavior is still a sin.</p>	<p>Again, Paul is right – but he’s talking about “unnatural” behavior by heterosexuals, including abuse of minors. He’s addressing the same evil thinking that leads men in prison (and elsewhere) today to think that “I’m not gay; I’m still acting straight as long as I’m the one doing the raping. You’re only gay if you’re weak enough to get raped.” Biblical scholar James Fleming says the word translated “homosexual” in some versions or “sodomite” here literally meant “One who abuses young boys in the [public] steam baths.”</p>
<p>Jude: <sup>3</sup>Beloved, while eagerly preparing to write to you about the salvation we share, I find it necessary to write and appeal to you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. <sup>4</sup>For certain intruders have stolen in among you, people who long ago were designated for this condemnation as ungodly, who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.</p> <p><sup>5</sup>Now I desire to remind you, though you are fully informed, that the Lord, who once for all saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. ... <sup>7</sup>Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which, in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. <sup>8</sup>Yet in the same way these dreamers also defile the flesh, reject authority, and slander the glorious ones.</p>	<p>This early letter from Jude, the brother of James and Jesus, is in the context of an emergence of false teachers who claim that because Christians are no longer “under the Law,” anything goes morally. He lists Bible stories to prove that God still judges sin.</p> <p>The addressees are unclear but the letter addresses this early Gnostic heretical viewpoint. He is writing in the context of Greek culture, as detailed above. In 1 Corinthians 6 Paul addresses the same heretical attitude.</p>	<p>Jude reinterprets the Sodom and Gomorrah story to emphasize the <i>unnatural</i> lust of the rapists rather than the attempt at guest-rape which is emphasized in Genesis. This is an appropriate reuse of Biblical materials. Again, Jude is assuming that all people are naturally heterosexual-oriented.</p>

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<p>II Peter 2: <sup>4</sup>For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of deepest darkness to be kept until the judgment; ...<sup>6</sup>and if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction and made them an example of what is coming to the ungodly; <sup>7</sup>and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the lawless <sup>8</sup>(for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by their lawless deeds that he saw and heard), <sup>9</sup>then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment <sup>10</sup>—especially those who indulge their flesh in depraved lust, and who despise authority. Bold and willful, they are not afraid to slander the glorious ones.</p>		<p>The writer of Second Peter (who is not Simon Peter or the writer of First Peter, but wishes to interpret the apostolic tradition for his hearers) collects materials from many sources. The second chapter is apparently taken in large part from Jude, and the same context and comments apply.</p>

In other Biblical condemnations of “fornication,” especially in the New Testament, various kinds of sexual immorality but primarily Temple prostitution and prostitution in general are meant. This certainly includes homosexual prostitution but cannot be divorced from the heterosexual kind – anything that attacks the sanctity of marriage, committed, loving relationships between adults, is condemned.

One’s interpretation of all these passages depends on whether one sees homosexual *orientation* as a choice or a “natural” part of one’s creation. Scripture clearly condemns behavior that corrupts or goes against one’s own created identity. Even if some of us are created lesbian or gay, the *choice* of homosexual behavior by *heterosexual* people is sin. If your relationships with homosexual friends and study of the so-far limited science surrounding the issue have convinced you that some persons are *created* with a same-sex orientation, then your conclusion will be that *heterosexual* behavior is sin *for them*.

This does *not* extend to the claims by some that pedophilia is “natural” too. As James Fleming notes, Paul specifically condemns “those who abuse young boys in the [public] steam baths.” Christ’s commands that we love, respect and care for one another and especially protect children, his teaching about marriage and indeed the sacredness of children (who were counted as less persons even than women in his day), and the experience of the Church lead us to adamantly affirm that imbalanced power relationships in sex are *always* fornication, whether approved by society (as in child marriage, sexual slavery, etc) and in the Bible (as in Abraham and Hagar, Jacob/Bilhah/Zilpah) or not. Good Sex is about *Committed, loving, Consenting Adults* who share sexual power in their relationship.