

**SEXUAL IMMORALITY AMONG THE YOUTH AND THE STAND OF THE OLD  
TESTAMENT: TOWARDS WAYS OF CURBING IT**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The unarguable truth remains that sexual immorality generally and premarital sex in particular has numerous consequences. Yet, upon all the impending doom prevalent from sexual immorality there is still high rate of cases of premarital sex across the society. For instance, Robert Byrd as quoted by Iduma estimates that in the rural communities, among eight graders, about six out of ten boys (61%) and five out of ten girls (47%) would have had sex; by the time they are seniors, 72% of youths would have had sex (74-75). This view is not far different from Iduma's when he estimates, "86% of unmarried nineteen-year-old males and 75% of nineteen-year-old unmarried females would have had premarital sexual intercourse (75). Consequent upon the foregoing, the youth are seriously faced with the problem of premature death, frustration, teenage pregnancy, jeopardizing future plans, loss of integrity and infidelity in marriage. This paper laments these and looks into the menace from the Old Testament perspective.*

**REFLECTION ON THE CONCEPT OF SEXUAL IMMORALITY**

Sexual immorality according to Rust entails any sexual activity outside of a husband and wife enjoying each other with mutual respect for God and each other (n.pg). With Rust view, it can be deduced that sex is for enjoyment. However, such enjoyment as its legality within the confine of two persons – husband and wife. And these husband and wife are not only interested in enjoying themselves but at the same time should use their sexual activity to respect God and each other. "Each other" as seen here presupposes that apart from the two who as agreed in marriage having sex, it is very wrong for any of the two to have multiple sex partners.

In a similar view, Harrison asserts that sexual immorality denotes interpersonal activity involving sex organs that does not conform to God's revealed laws governing sexuality (1125). Interpersonal activity as appeared in Harrison's view would be true under normal circumstance. However, it should not be looked down that in the present dispensation, sexual immorality may not be an interpersonal affair as those who practice masturbation do not usually involve others. It therefore means that sexual immorality may be personal or interpersonal activity. Harrison also notes that sexual immorality involves sex organs, as true as this may be, it is practicable in the present world where people use body organs, such as mouth and others, that are not sexually made to practice sex. And if Harrison asserts that what makes it an immorality is that it does not "conform to God's revealed laws governing sexuality," it is certain that the aforementioned must be inclusive because using mouth for sex is a deviation. On the other hand, the phrase, "conform to God's revealed laws governing sexuality" depicts that, religious books (Bible, Quran, etc) should be what humanity should use to predict what is sexually moral or not. If this is true, it means that what is sexual immorality in a Christian setting may not be in a Muslim certain.

Amazon Online Dictionary says that Sexual immorality is the "selling off" of sexual purity and involves any type of sexual expression outside the boundaries of a biblically defined marriage relationship (n.pg). This explanation portrays that sexual activity ought to be free from all imperfections, flaws and uncleanness, and this realizable in a marriage relationship. Another aspect that is vital here is the side that talks about "selling off." Let it be specifically stated here that it may not be in terms of getting money or items but should be for the purpose of getting rid of sexual purity rather than maximizing its profits in marriage. Also, this definition seems to favor Christianity as a religion of purity which places much emphasis on sexual purify, as any who violates the stipulated rules is bound to be punished by God.

Lockyer also emphasizes on sexual purity when he opines that sexual immorality is any act of sexual impurity (n.pg). This means that as soon as a person or persons indulges into sexual activities that are devoid of perfections, cleanliness, faultless, and many more, the person has committed sexual immorality. Thus, what makes it immorality is that the person or persons involved, through the act defile themselves.

The foregoing is not far from Bromiley's who takes sexual immorality to denote sexual behavior that is not in accord with Old and New Testaments regulations and the teaching of the apostles and other leaders in the primitive Church (n.p). Apart from emphasis on the place of the Bible in judging sexual immorality, Bromiley is of the view that church tradition must as well be a considerable factor when talking of what is sexually moral or immoral. In other words, adding to what is contained in the Bible should be how the primitive church and apostles interpreted the Bible portions which contain issues regarding sexual immorality.

Sumrall asserts that sexual immorality is sexual perversion and all sexual behavior that is motivated by twisted lust (116). Two issues are peculiar in Sumrall's view. Firstly, it is a pervasion, which has to do with turning down or turning away from the moral rules that govern sex. Secondly, something motivates sexual immorality and that is lust, not just in ordinary sense but twisted lust – that is lust that is contorted into a strained or violent manner. It presupposes that what motivates sexual immorality according to Sumrall is a feeling of strong desire driven by sexual arousal. The motivator, lust, as seen here is not all, as other factors such as barbaric culture and lack of parental care can also motivate sexual immorality. Hence, Ajeh states that sexual immorality is sexual sin which parents make many ladies to become victims of (2).

Lastly on this, Kris Vallotton and Jason Vallotton see sexual immorality as a sexual deviation which causes guilt, disgrace and emotional pain in matrimony (112). Very important as established here is that sexual immorality is an act of wandering off the correct or true path or road of having sex. Secondly, the Vallotton's do well to enumerate some of the consequences of sexual immorality which are guilt, disgrace and emotional pain in matrimony. Guilt possibly comes when the victim begins to blame him/herself for indulging in the act, while that of the disgrace may emanate from unwanted pregnancy, school dropout, poverty and others. And as it concerns pains in matrimony, those involve in it hardly enjoin their matrimonial homes, as they hardly remain on one sex partner.

### **OLD TESTAMENT AND SEXUAL IMMORALITY**

In the Old Testament, several specific sexual relationships are forbidden. Among these are homosexuality (having sex with same gender), bestiality (sex with animals), incest (sexual relations with close family members, including ones' mother, sister, niece, aunt, daughter-in-law, and sister-in-law), fornication (sexual relations outside of marriage) and adultery (sexual relations with another person's spouse), and rape (forced sex). To emphasize the seriousness of these kinds of offenses, Collins asserts that the penalty was death in the Old Testament (34).

As seen in Leviticus 18:1-20 texts dealing with sexual sin. According to Collins, "Sexual immorality is not called abominable here or anywhere else in the Old Testament" (35). This is because for him abomination simply means a ritual offense: goat herders were an abomination to the Egyptians; dead bugs, pork chops and stale sacrificial food were specifically listed as abominations to the Hebrews. Often, an idol is called an abomination but Sexual sin is immoral. There are many other words used in place of sexual sin. For instance, to seduce, especially a virgin is regarded as a sin (Collins 36).

In Hebrew culture to be engaged was the same as marriage, except for the consummation of the marriage: sexual intercourse. If a woman was engaged, she was to be treated the same as a married woman. Having sex with someone other than her spouse, the penalty for both consenting parties was death by stoning: The word in the Hebrew for seduce is "yiphateh" meaning "to entice or seduce." the words in Hebrew for virgin are "bethulah" and "almah." "Yiphateh" is to deceive, seduce, entice as in Exodus 22:16. "Bethulah": a virgin meaning: a girl or woman who has never had sexual intercourse. Collins tries to assert that "almah" is not referring to a virgin but to a maid (36). This is easily cleared up by Greek Septuagint, These Hebrew scribes translated the word "almah" into the Greek word "parthenos". The word means: a girl or woman

who has never had sexual intercourse, a virgin. The Hebrew translators of the Septuagint understood the Hebrew Word “*almah*” to mean a virgin, a girl or woman who has never had sexual intercourse. To seduce such a woman, the penalty is death (Collins 37).

Also, in the Old Testament moral purity and spiritual commitment to their Creator had to keep Israelites as a separate people to witness God’s love to the surrounding nations. As one part of the Moral Code, marriage unity had to be kept clean and unbroken, for family represents society. In spite of God’s given law, prescriptions, and suggestions to keep the marriage bonds unspotted, throughout history human beings have rebelled and continually committed adultery and other sexual perversions (immorality). Most of the adulterous cases and their perversions found in the Old Testament testify of a sexual relationship with a member of the opposite sex. The seventh commandment of the Decalogue clearly testifies, “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). This law presupposes that there had been cases of sexual immorality among the Israelites such as witnessed among the children of Jacob –Ruben and Dinah (Genesis 34 and 35). The law here applies to both men and women, and in Israel if a couple was caught in a violation of this commandment, punishment for both of them was death: “The man who commits adultery with another man’s wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death” (Lev 20:10) (Larue 82).

In Israel the tragic consequences of all forms of sexual immorality are clearly narrated in the Old Testament. The Ammonites and the Moabites were the fighting enemies of the Israelites, and Reuben was cursed by his father and lost his privileges as first-born son (Genesis 49:2). Also David did not go scout free when he slept with Bathsheba, Uriah’s wife (2 Samuel 11: 1-6; 12: 10).

Rape and prostitution are another cruel part of sexual perversions (immorality). When biblical writers describe rape, they tell of the man seizing (*tapas*) a woman or overpowering (*hezik*) her before he lies with her (Larue 102). This is evident from the story of David’s son Amnon raping his half-sister Tamar (2 Sam 13:11-14). The Hebrew term for prostitute or harlot is *zonah*, which comes from a root that suggests a person who is wanton, on the outside, and perhaps even repugnant. It is important to note here that a priest could not marry such a woman, for she was unfit for service (Lev 21:7, 14; 19:29), and even her money from prostitution could not be used for temple dues (Deut 23:18). These ladies were part of the society, yet apart from it. The Bible (especially Old Testament) has nothing good to say about prostitution, but there are many narratives where prostitutes left their adulterous ways and through faith became new creatures. For example, Rahab from Jericho (SDA 764-767).

In the Old Testament are also several indications of bestiality, when a man or a woman had sexual relationships with an animal. Moses clearly writes about such a distortion: “Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It is perversion” (Lev 18:23). The outcome of bestiality in the Old Testament is very clear: anyone, man or woman, who engages in sexual relations with an animal, deserves death. Leviticus 18:24 reveals even more that because of these sexual perversions entire nations were wiped out. Such sins not only have the power to absolutely distort the image of God in the mind of human beings, but also to destroy them physically. Therefore, the Lord’s straight message regarding bestiality has an annotation to protect His own people from physical, mental, and spiritual disorders.

Another aspect of sexual immorality in the Old Testament is homosexuality which is known as the sin of Sodom. The scripture records that the Sodomites were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord. They threatened Lot and his two guests – angels (Gen 19:4-11). They were seeking to get the visitors out of Lot’s house in order “to know them” (verse 5). The Hebrew word *yāda’* in this verse has raised numerous arguments from pro-homosexual movements. For example, Sherwin Bailey as quoted by Ukleja argues that this story has nothing to do with homosexuality. He opines that the Sodomites were just a mob who interrogated visitors to find out who they were, or they just wanted to get acquainted with them (259). His standpoint is the following: the word *yāda’* occurs 943 times in the Old Testament, while only 12 times does it mean “to have intercourse with” someone. In other occurrences it is translated as “get acquainted with” or

“have knowledge of.” Bailey explains that intercourse, as a means to personal knowledge, depends on more than copulation. Thus, that narrative of Sodom could not fit the sexual implications of the word *yāda’*.

Bailey also argues that the rest of the Old Testament in no place suggests that the sin of Sodom was homosexuality. Instead, he presents that Isaiah (1:10-17, 3:8-9), Jeremiah (23:12-14), and Ezekiel (16:48-50) speak of such sins as hypocrisy, social injustice, adultery, general wickedness, arrogance, greed, and indifference to the poor and in no place of homosexuality. He concludes that imposing homosexuality on Sodom’s story derived later as a Christian tradition from apocryphal Jewish sources (Scott 21).

However, Bailey’s arguments regarding the sin of Sodom may convince only a person who does not know the Scriptures very well. To his first argument about the word *yāda’* is a very strong counterargument. Of the 12 times this word occurs in Genesis, 10 times it means “to have intercourse with” someone and, by the way, once in the current passage. It tells about Lot’s offering of his two virgin daughters who had not *yāda’* a man (Gen 19:8). It would be an absurd gesture to make such an offer if Sodomites wanted only a social knowledge of Lot’s guests. Ukleja points out that “In narrative literature of this sort it would be very unlikely to use one verb with two different meanings so close together unless the author made the difference quite obvious. In both verses 5 and 8 *yāda’* should be translated ‘to have sexual intercourse with.’ The context does not lend itself to any other credible interpretation” (262).

When Bailey presents the sins of Sodom taken from the Prophets, he does this only partially. For the prophet Ezekiel writes, “they were haughty and committed abomination” before the Lord (16:50). Kittel’s Hebrew Bible uses four separate words for abomination. The word used in this passage has the thought of inherent repulsiveness to God in whatever act the word is referring to. Also, this particular word for abomination, *toevah*, is found in Leviticus (18:22, 26, 27, 29, 30; 20:13) in the command to abstain from lying with a man as with a woman (Ukleja 149). This word comes from the root meaning “to hate” or “abhor” and therefore it is something that is hated by God and is detestable (Kaiser 196).

And issue that shall be raised against sexual immorality in the Old Testament is the Holiness Code. The two following texts in Leviticus belong to the Holiness Code: “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination” (Lev 18:22); “If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them” (Lev 20:13). These biblical verses are set in the context of God’s judgment upon sexual misdemeanors and are an expansion of the God’s holy law. The Canaanites’ idolatrous practices were on the verge of being spread among the Israelites. God, through Moses, had to build walls of protection to prevent His people from idolatry with all its violent and vicious practices. Throughout these two chapters God strictly forbids temple prostitution, where homosexuality is one of the crimes. But is this only one side of such a strong homosexual prohibition? According to some scholars it is. For example, Blair writes, The children didn’t go for the holidays again included in the priestly Holiness Code of Leviticus (18:22 and 20:13) is significant because the concern of the priests was one of the ritual purity. It was not the moral preaching of the prophets. From this priestly point of view, it is clear that above all else, Israel was to be uncontaminated by her pagan neighbors. In all things, she was to remain a separate “pure vessel unto the Lord.” At this time, male prostitutes in the temples of the Canaanites, Babylonians, and other neighboring peoples, were common features of the pagan rites. There, it is understandable that this “homosexuality” connected with the worship of false gods would certainly color Israel’s perspective on any and all homosexual activity (3).

In order to argue with Blair regarding these passages, it should be understood that ritual purity and morality go together. In no place does the Bible differentiate between these aspects. In contrast to understanding, Blair divides the priests with their ritual purity from the prophets with their morality. “But the prophets preached to the needs of their day. Anything not included in their teachings is more logically explained by that particular sin’s absence among the sins of that generation, rather than by a rigid distinction between ceremonial and moral purity” (Ukleja 263).

Therefore, the Lord’s straight message regarding sexual immorality in the Old Testament has an annotation to protect His own people from physical, mental, and spiritual disorders. There is no place that the Old

Testament gave room for any of God's people to indulge into any form of sexual immorality; neither does any verse in the Old Testament showcases that God spares any who indulge in sexual immorality.

#### **Youths and the Menace of Sexual Immorality**

Youths are more vulnerable to sexual immorality more than other human beings. This implies that the number of youths that get involve in sexual immorality is at high increase. Robert Byrd as quoted by Iduma estimates that in the rural communities, among eight graders, about six out of ten boys (61%) and five out of ten girls (47%) would have had sex; by the time they are seniors, 72% of youths would have had sex (74-75). Iduma then estimates, "86% of unmarried nineteen-year-old males and 75% of nineteen-year-old unmarried females would have had premarital sexual intercourse (75).

As rapidly seen in the society today, many female youths give birth to children out of wedlock as there is a geometric rise in population of children with unknown fathers ravaging the society and even churches. There is a reduction in the number of youths who come for Holy matrimony undefiled. Little wonder, Iduma asserts that over 70% of Christian youths that had come to his counseling sessions are those who have had sex at least with their partner before coming for wedding (76). Also, all the incessant cases of family crises witnessed among husbands and wives emanated from being sexually abused for at least once in their youthful age before marriage. Hence, Okeke asserts that when one has sex before marriage, one will have no respect or keep one's marriage holy when one eventually marries (37).

Gary argues that America adolescents are becoming sexually active than previous generation. Teenagers gave a medium age of 18 as the "light age" permissiveness that is doing what one wishes to do he or she wants without being guided by any moral principle, permissiveness was the chief reason given by 73% of girls and 50% of boys who engage in sexual immorality as a result of permissiveness (111). Comparing the estimate given by Gary and that of Iduma, it should be summed up that youths in the developed countries (America for example) and developing countries including Nigeria is at the increase.

Michael states categorically the effects of sexual immorality among the youth such as contraction of HIV/AIDs, unwanted pregnancies to ladies and some of them resort to abortion which also has the effects for example loss of respect and over bleeding (233). He adds that sexual immorality causes some young ones to become street kids. These street kids are the ones who later sell their bodies to sugar mummies and sugar daddies survival during their adolescence age and even before adolescence (235). It therefore presupposes that the effects of sexual immorality instead of curtailing the rate of youths that indulge in it increases it. Thus, sexual immorality begets more sexual immorality. Iduma agrees with Michael on contraction of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), adding that sexual immorality also cause guilt and heartache to the victims (78-82).

Okeke spells out more dangers to include premature death, frustration, teenage pregnancy, jeopardizing future plans, loss of integrity and infidelity in marriage (35-39). However, the list is endless as other negative effects may include school dropout, overpopulation, sex unsatisfaction in marriage, abortion, and high rate of impotent and bareness in marriage. All these are to face any youth who indulges in sexual immorality.

#### **WAYS OF CURBING SEXUAL IMMORALITY AMONG THE YOUTHS**

- **Seminar/Teaching on Sex Education**

There is a saying that if one is not informed, one is deformed. What brings perish according to the scripture is lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). Virtually, all that were engaged in an interview for this research agreed unanimously that engaging the youth in seminars and teachings on sex education would go a long way to curb sexual immorality among the youth. This teaching should cut across all the social institutions such as families, churches and schools, including the seminary in the presbytery . added that the rightful age to commence the teaching should be right from infancy; while the duration for such seminars should be quarterly. This teaching should be geared towards unveiling what the word of God has concerning or against sexual immorality. These teachings and seminars would enable the youth to know the consequences of sexual immorality and thus desist from it.

- **Offer of Empowerment/Skill Acquisition and Employment to the Youth:**

It is commonly said among the lettered that idleness is a devil's workshop. The groaning of all and sundry across the country concerning scarcity of employment exempted not youth out of it. Many of the youth, even graduates, are without reasonable works, from which they can earn their living. And since government could not provide work for them, most of them allowed devil to provide one for them by luring them into the sin of sexual immorality. To curb this menace therefore, the church should not leave job creation only in the hand of the government. To this end, the youth in the presbytery should be engaged in one form of skill acquisition or the other. Where the church cannot offer permanent employment for the youth, empowerment schemes should be made available to them. He concluded his suggestion by saying that if this is implemented, it would keep the youths busy, capable of erasing evil mindset and giving them no time to mingle with opposite sex that would result sexual immorality.

- **Avoidance of Pornography and Indecent Dressing**

It is a belief these days that internet and social media is a place where all evils are buried. And youths are easily deceived by what they watch often with their eyes. Thus, inasmuch as it is wise to watch closely the type of friends the youth keep, it is more expedient to regulate what they watch in the television and smart phones. Thus, over-interest in viewing television should be avoided by the youth as it would lead them watching sexual activities which would lead them to conceive the spirit of practicing it someday, somewhere. On the aspect of indecent dressing, the youth in the presbytery should underscore the fact that it is the way they dress that people would address them. If they must do away with sexual immorality, they should first thing in first do away with all those dressing format that would arouse sexual feelings from the opposite sex. Such dressing patterns include but not limited to short skirt, hot mini skirt, show-back, pinging, offhand, bowshot and many others. All these dressing patterns are prevalent among the youth and one of the leading factors of sexual immorality. Worse still, many of the youth put on those dresses to churches on Sundays, without caution from the parents and even church leaders. It may be very hard for the youth on their own to salvage themselves from the evil of nudity. Therefore, parent should buy good cloths for the youth and in a situation whereby the youth buy indecent cloth on their own, they should be stopped from using it. The churches in the presbytery on the other hand should ensure that any youth, who dresses indecently to church, are denied entrance into the western door.

- **Proper Parental Upbringing and Exemplary Life**

There is always need for parents to properly bring up the youth in the way of God. Just as in the case of Dinah in Genesis, who some scholars suggested that she met danger of sexual immorality because of parental over-pampering and improper upbringing, many youths get involve into sexual immorality because of the mentioned reason. To eschew this, parents should avoid over-pampering of their children but rather bring them up with discipline. This proper upbringing would be realizable when the parents live out exemplary life that worth emulating. For me, it would be hard for a youth whose parents are involved in sexual immorality to curb the child to desist from it.

- **Surveillance on the Friends to Keep and Books to Read**

From the scripture, bad company ruins good morals (1 Corinthians 15:33). If sexual immorality should be curbed among youth, parents and guidance should regulate the friends their children keep and the book they read. By this it means that if any youth within the presbytery associated themselves with sexually corrupt friends, there is every tendency that such youth would be corrupted sexually. And such books that teach how to have sex, the best styles of sex and other books that advocate or promote sex before marriage should be avoided in-to-to.

### **Disciplined Life**

Self-discipline is the best teacher and habit one can form in life. The truth is that every normal person inasmuch as you are in your youthful stage must be disturbed by certain level of libido. And sometime it

may be high, wherein the youth need to maintain a high sense of disciplined life or call itself control. Thus, the youth should not see the menace of sexual immorality as light but with a disciplined life, it can be curbed (Interview). By this, it means that every youth should decide not to have sex with an opposite sex until after marriage and at the same time maintain the decision.

- **Deterrent Measures**

In most cases in life, if deterrent measures are not put in place, lawlessness becomes inevitable. One of the reasons many youths indulge into sexual immorality is that most parishes have slacked in taking disciplinary measures against the offenders. The reason behind this slack is that the youth in the presbytery at seeing that they are pregnant stop coming to church so as to avoid suspension. It is not as if the church has forgotten suspension but in the world of today, suspension is nothing to the youth. He added that the youth in the area would always want to argue with the session why they should be suspended and if worst comes to worst, they can join another denomination before the suspension could be announced.

Sequel to the foregoing, deterrent measures to curb sexual immorality should not be left in the hands of the church alone; that the community should make laws to deter the youths from the act. On the side of the church, he advises that discipline should be followed duly. By this it means that the position of the parents of the youth who are caught in sexual immorality should not scare the minister in charge not to give the suspension in the time the case is discovered. And whether the person leaves the church to another denomination, the church with every sense of ecumenism, should write to the abbot of the new denomination about the case of the youth who leaves the church.

## **CONCLUSION**

Man is a sexual being. God, who created humanity, is also the creator of sex. He designed humanity to be a sexual being with the ideals concerning human sexuality. Thus, God places sex and sexual activities within the larger context of holiness and faithfulness. It can be explicitly stated herewith that God did not only create humanity along with sex, he also stipulated diverse rules that would regulate every sexual activity so as to ensure that sexual intercourse and other sexual activities are appropriated in accordance to God's orderliness and eternal decree. Hence, it is observed in this paper that sexual immorality and its forms are condemnable in the scriptures and even present society. In the scriptures because God abhors it and in the society because its devastating effects bring societal unrest as the victims almost becomes vulnerable, useless and outcast in the society wherein they live.

It therefore recommends that, the youths on their own should decide to live a disciplined life, avoid evil companies, indecent dressing and watching of pornography as these are capable of arousing their sexual urge and make them to attempt having sex before marriage; and all pastors and the church should not take sexual immorality as a light matter but should apply discipline wisely in the way it would serve as deterrent to others. The community on her own can set certain laws that would guide and guard against sexual immorality and violators severely punished to serve as warning to others.

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