



Lecture # 7 Part 1

The Ten Commandments, The Laws Governing Man's Duty To Others (Part 7): Commandment Seven Concerns Man's Family—Never Commit Adultery or Immorality, Exodus 20:14

The Seventh Commandment The Sanctity of Marriage “Lo Tineaf” (Exodus 20:14) “Thou shalt not commit adultery”

Exodus 20:14 (BHS)

¹⁴ לֹא תִנְאֵף: ס

Lo Tineaf

Exodus 20:14 (KJV)

¹⁴ “Thou shalt not commit **adultery.**”

Exodus 20:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ “You shall not commit **adultery.**”

The sages considered violation of this commandment and its likely consequences to be so serious as to be considered the equivalent of a violation of the entire Decalogue, something destructive of family life and the moral health of the community.

Adultery, like murder, is considered a capital offense, as it states:

Leviticus 20:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ **If there is a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.**

Although adultery was defined in ancient societies as sexual intercourse between a married woman and a man not her lawful husband, the biblical approach to dealing with the perpetrators was clearly different from that of the surrounding societies in which adultery was considered a private wrong committed against the husband. It was viewed as an infringement of his property rights, and the punishment or pardon of the perpetrators was left to his discretion. It was, in effect, a private secular matter that did not involve the gods.

In the biblical view, by contrast, marriage is considered a sacramental bond and the prohibition of adultery a matter of divine concern. Because adultery is considered both an affront to God and a public wrong, the aggrieved husband has no voice or power to forgive or pardon either party to it.

Indeed, the phrase “**one who commits adultery with his friend's wife**”, which would seem to have been already encompassed by the preceding phrase, “**If there is a man who**



Lecture # 7 Part 1

commits adultery with another man's wife", has been understood to imply that adultery is prohibited even among consenting couples.

As **Hertz** pointed out, "The consent of the husband is quite immaterial. Marriage is not merely a 'contract'; it is consecration, and adultery is far more than merely an offense against one of the parties to the contract." It is noteworthy that some sages expanded the scope of the commandment to admonish **"thou shalt not cause adultery to be committed,"** thus prohibiting acting as a procurer of prostitutes who may in fact be married and thereby contribute to adultery.

Whereas the biblical term **"niuf"** clearly means adultery, which is a capital offense, the word is also used in some instances as a synonym for **"zenut"** or fornication or lewdness, and that the prohibition of **"niuf"** in the Decalogue is held to include a variety of perverse sexual acts in addition to adultery. Thus, according to one sage, "You are not to say that only he is called adulterer who uses his body in the act. We find scripture saying that even he who visualizes himself in the act of adultery is called adulterer. And the proof? The verse,

Job 24:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ **"The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, Saying, 'No eye will see me.' And he disguises his face."**

That is, the person who contemplates adultery is considered as an adulterer even before the act takes place, although he is not liable before the act is committed.

There are a number of prophetic references to **"niuf"** with regard to the fertility rites associated with pagan religions, such as she [Israel] committed adultery [**vatineaf**] **"with stones and with stocks"** (**Jeremiah 3:9**), and therefore your daughters commit harlotry, and your daughters-in-law commit adultery [**tenaafnah**] (**Hosea 4:13**).

Jeremiah 3:9 (NASB)

⁹ **"Because of the lightness of her harlotry, she polluted the land and committed adultery ["niuf"] with stones and trees."**

Hosea 4:13 (NASB)

¹³ **"They offer sacrifices on the tops of the mountains And burn incense on the hills, Under oak, poplar and terebinth, Because their shade is pleasant. Therefore your daughters play the harlot And your brides commit adultery ["niuf"]."**

Accordingly, some have argued that the prohibition of [**"niuf"**] extends to the whole range of prohibited relations proscribed by Scripture, as well as to others.

(Exodus 20:14) Introduction— Adultery— Immorality— Sin: How serious a problem is adultery? In just a moment we shall see that this commandment refers to all forms of immorality. In light of that, how serious a problem is immorality in our society?