



1. Naomi Grossman, *Gay and Orthodox*, Moment Magazine April 2001

Later this year with the release of the documentary film *Trembling Before G-d*, the painful lives of gay Orthodox Jews will play out unflinchingly on movie screens nationwide. The film, which is slated to open in New York this month, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in Utah in January. It "stirred much emotion in the audience and immediate interest from buyers," according to a report in the *Washington Post*, putting the gay Orthodox community in an unfamiliar position: the limelight.

And with this exposure comes the growing realization by gay Orthodox Jews that there are others like them out there. Five years ago, when three gay Orthodox friends founded a support group called the Gay and Lesbian Yeshiva Day School Alumni Association (GLYDSA), Orthodox homosexuals were much more isolated. "Gay Orthodox people didn't exist in the eyes of the Orthodox world then," says "Chaim," a New York area professional who was at the group's first meeting. "If you didn't know any other gay Orthodox Jews, you carried around this really dark secret." Today, says Chaim, all of that is changing. The underground community is growing, allowing gay Orthodox Jews to associate with each other. "We come from all kinds of families and all kinds of backgrounds," Chaim says. "We are everywhere."

2. Adam Jessel, *Unsung Heroes*, Jewish Action February 2003

The problem with *Trembling* is not so much what it shows as what it leaves out. Where are the stories of those who don't act on their homosexual attractions, those who simply feel that sexual desire is not a license to violate a Divine imperative? Aren't their struggles powerful and inspiring as well? Here again, the liberal mantra of "diversity and inclusion" does not apply to those who strive to adhere to the halachah (Jewish law).

The Stance of Jewish Law

3. Leviticus 18:22

And with a male you shall not live as you live with a woman; it is *to'evah*.

Why is this such a big issue?

4. Genesis 1:1

In the beginning of G-d's creation of the heavens and the earth...

5. Genesis 1:22

And G-d blessed them, saying: Bear fruit and multiply and fill the water in the seas...

6. Genesis 1:28

And G-d blessed them, and G-d told them: Bear fruit and multiply and fill the land...

7. Rabbi Aharon halevi (13th century Spain), *Sefer haChinuch* 209

Among the roots of this mitzvah is this: G-d wishes the world He created to be settled. Therefore he commanded that they not waste seed in homosexual relations...

8. Talmud, Nedarim 51a

תועבה = תועה אתה בה

9. Commentary of Rabbeinu Asher and Rabbeinu Nisim to Nedarim 51a

"You wander in it" abandoning lying with a woman, to go to a man.

10. Rabbi Joel Wolowelsky & Rabbi Bernard Weinstein, *Initial Religious Counseling for a Male Orthodox Adolescent Homosexual*, Tradition 29:2 (1995)

It is interesting to speculate why the Torah stresses that homosexual acts are an "abomination" (Lev. 18:22; 20:13) along with the other prohibited abominable sexual acts (Lev. 18:26-29), just as it labels unkosher food "abominations" (Dt. 14:3). But that is neither here nor there. The Torah forbids these because they are quite normal but in the Torah's view improper. Sometimes we can understand the reason for a prohibition; indeed, the argument against homosexuality is as cogent as that in support of kashrut. But whether or not we understand the rationale of a specific prohibition, we can assume that any Torah prohibition implies that it is something which is part of the common human situation that is being prohibited.

If it's biological, how could it be prohibited?

11. Will Dahlgreen, *1 in 2 young people say they are not 100% heterosexual*, YouGov.uk (2015)

With each generation, people see their sexuality as less fixed in stone. The results for 18-24 year-olds are particularly striking, as 43% place themselves in the non-binary area between 1 and 5 and 52% place themselves at one end or the other. Of these, only 46% say they are completely heterosexual and 6% as completely homosexual.

12. Talmud, Eruvin 18a

ווייצר - Woe to me from my nature (*yetzer*), woe to me from my Creator (*yotzei*)!

13. Rabbi Tzaddok haKohen of Lublin (19th century Poland), Tzidkat haTzaddik 43

Sometimes a person will face a test which is so great that it is impossible for him not to sin; it is as the Sages said, "What could the boy do, to avoid sinning?"

What does the Torah expect from this person, and from the community?

14. Maimonides (12th century Egypt), Letter to the Jews of Morocco, Part 3

Achav ben Omri, who denied G-d and worshipped idols – and about whom G-d testified, "There was never another like Achav" – fasted for two and a half hours, and then, the sages taught, the decree upon him was voided... G-d did not cheat him of the reward... If G-d would give good reward for small good deeds for these well-known heretics, then how could G-d not reward Jews who were forced into *shmad* and who performed mitzvot in private?

15. Talmud, Erchin 16b

How far does one go to educate? Rav said, "Until he hits." Shemuel said, "Until he curses." Rabbi Yochanan said, "Until he is angered."

16. Talmud, Berachot 19b

Dignity is so great that it overrides a biblical prohibition... The prohibition here is that of, "Do not stray [from the words of the sages]."

17. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (20th century USA), Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim 3:22

If someone denies Torah, then giving him an aliyah is actually a transgression, for his blessing is nothing... Even when he mentions G-d's Name, these are just words, and one should not consider it a blessing...

A Closing Thought

18. Jerusalem Talmud, Nedarim 9:4

It is written, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Rabbi Akiva commented: This is a great, overarching principle in the Torah. Ben Azzai taught: "This is the book of the genealogy of Man; Man was created in the image of G-d.' This is an even greater overarching principle."