

CHAPTER 18

INTRODUCTION TO LEVITICUS 18

In this chapter the Israelites are directed in general not to imitate the customs and practices of the Egyptians and Canaanites, but to keep the ordinances, statutes, and judgments of the Lord, (~~(BR16)~~ Leviticus 18:1-5); and they are instructed particularly to avoid incestuous marriages, (~~(BR16)~~ Leviticus 18:6-18); carnal copulation with a menstruous woman, (~~(BR19)~~ Leviticus 18:19); adultery, (~~(BR20)~~ Leviticus 18:20); letting any of their seed pass through the fire to Molech, (~~(BR21)~~ Leviticus 18:21); sodomy, (~~(BR22)~~ Leviticus 18:22); and bestiality, (~~(BR23)~~ Leviticus 18:23); and they are deterred from these things by observing to them the pollution and destruction which they brought on the inhabitants of Canaan, and would bring the same on them should they commit them, (~~(BR24)~~ Leviticus 18:24-30).

Ver. 1. *And the Lord spake unto Moses*, etc.] He continued speaking to him, after he had delivered to him the laws respecting the day of atonement, and the bringing of the sacrifices to the door of the tabernacle, and particularly concerning the Israelites not worshipping devils, as they had done in Egypt: the Lord proceeds to deliver out others, the more effectually to guard against both the immoral and idolatrous practice, of the Egyptians and Canaanites:

saying, as follows.

Ver. 2. *Speak unto the children of Israel*, etc.] To the heads of their tribes, that they might deliver to them the following laws; or Moses is bid to publish them among them, either by word of mouth, or by writing, or both:

and say unto them, I am the Lord your God; with which they were to be introduced; showing the right he had to enact and enjoin such laws, since he was Jehovah, the Being of beings, and from whom they received their beings; their sovereign Lord and King, who had a right to rule over them, and command what he pleased; and also the obligation they lay under to him to regard them, and yield a cheerful obedience to them, since he was their God, not only that had made them, but had redeemed them out of Egypt; and who had made a covenant with them, and had taken special

care of them, and had bestowed many wonderful favours on them; and for this purpose is this phrase often used in this chapter, and very frequently in the next. (see ^{<BIB>}Leviticus 18:2,4,30) (^{<BIB>}Leviticus 19:3,4,10,25,31,34,36).

Ver. 3. *After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do*, etc.] Where they had dwelt many years, and were just come out from thence, and where they had learned many of their evil practices; not only their idolatrous ones referred to in the preceding chapter, which it is certain they followed, (^{<BIB>}Ezekiel 20:7,8); but also their immoral practices, particularly respecting incestuous marriages, after insisted on, some of which were established by a law among them; so Diodorus Siculus relates ^{f614}, that it passed into a law with the Egyptians, contrary to the common custom of all others, that men might marry their own sisters; which is one of the incestuous marriages taken notice of in this chapter, and forbid:

and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: which land had been promised to their ancestors and to them long ago, and whither they were now going under divine direction and guidance, to inherit it, and are here particularly warned of the evil practices among them, that they might avoid them: Maimonides ^{f615} says, these are what our Rabbins call “the ways of the Amorites” (the principal people of the nations of the land of Canaan), and which, he adds, are as branches of the magic art; namely, such which do not follow from natural reason, but from magical operation, and depend upon the dispositions and orders of the stars, and so were necessarily led to worship them: hence, they say, in whatsoever is anything of medicine, in it is nothing of the way of the Amorites; by which they mean nothing else than this, that everything is lawful in which there appears a natural reason for it; and on the contrary, all others are unlawful: but here respect is had not to magical operations but to incestuous marriages, which prevailed among that people, and which they might have received from their ancestor Canaan, who learned them from his father Ham, of whom Berosus ^{f616} writes, that even before the flood he corrupted mankind; asserting and putting it in practice, that men might lie with their mothers, sisters, daughters, and with males and brutes, or any other, for which he was cast out by Noah:

neither shall ye walk in their ordinances: which they ordained, appointed, and settled, for they were such a people the Psalmist speaks of, which framed mischief or wickedness by a law, (^{<BIB>}Psalm 94:2); so Diodorus

Siculus says of the incestuous marriage before referred to, and which the above writer, Berosus, derives from Ham their ancestor, that they are said *νομοψετῆσαι*, “to pass into a law”; but Aben Ezra puts another sense on these words, let no man use himself to walk in this way until it becomes an ordinance or statute unto him; custom is second nature, and in course of time has the force of a law, wherefore bad customs should be strictly guarded against.

Ver. 4. *Ye shall do my judgments*, etc.] Which are just and right, and according to the rules of justice and equity; these are things, as Jarchi observes, which are said in the law with judgment, or are laws framed with the highest reason, even by the judgment of God himself, whose judgment is always according to truth: Aben Ezra thinks, these are the judicial laws in (^{<1200>}Exodus 21:1-23:33); but though they may include them, they have more particular respect to the following laws:

and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: which he had ordained and appointed of his own will and pleasure, which Jarchi calls the decree of the king, or which he decreed and determined as a king, having absolute power over his subjects to enact and enjoin what he pleased; wherefore some think these refer to ceremonial laws, which depended upon the will of the lawgiver, and were not founded in any natural sense or reason, wherefore it follows:

I [am] the Lord your God: who had a right to make what laws he pleased, being their Sovereign, and which they in gratitude as well as in justice ought to obey, he being their God, their covenant God, who had done great and good things for them.

Ver. 5. *Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments*, etc.] The same as before; these they were to keep in their minds and memories, and to observe them and do them:

which if a man do he shall live in them; live a long life in the land of Canaan, in great happiness and prosperity, (see ^{<1310>}Deuteronomy 30:20 ^{<3019>}Isaiah 1:19); for as for eternal life, that was never intended to be had, nor was it possible it could be had and enjoyed by obedience to the law, which fallen man is unable to keep; but is what was graciously promised and provided the covenant of grace, before the world was, to come through Christ, as a free gift to all that believe in him, (see ^{<1311>}Galatians

3:11,12,21); though some Jewish writers interpret this of eternal life, as Jarchi, Aben Ezra, and Ben Gersom:

I [am] the Lord; that has enjoined these statutes and judgments, and promised life to the doers of them, able and faithful to perform what is promised.

Ver. 6. *None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him*, etc.] Or to all “the rest of his flesh”^{f617}, which together with his make one flesh, who are of the same flesh and blood with him, and are united together in the bonds of consanguinity; and such, with respect to a man, are his mother, sister, and daughter; his mother, of whom he was born, his sister, who lay in and sprung from the same “venter” he did, and his daughter, who is his own flesh; and with respect to a woman, her father brother, and son, who are in the same degree of relation, and both sexes are included in this prohibition; for though in the original text it is “a man, a man”^{f618}, yet as it takes in every man, so every woman: hence, as Jarchi observes, it is expressed in the plural number, “do not ye approach”, to caution both male and female; and it is also understood by the Talmudists^{f619} of Gentiles as well as Israelites, for they ask, what is the meaning of the phrase “a man, a man?” the design of it is, they say, to comprehend the Gentiles, who are equally cautioned against incests as the Israelites; and indeed the inhabitants of the land of Canaan are said to defile the land with the incests and other abominations hereafter mentioned, and for which they were driven out of it: now when man and woman are forbidden to “approach” to those of the same flesh and blood with them, the sense is not that they may not come into each other’s company, or make use of any civil or friendly salutations, or have a free and familiar conversation with each other, provided that modesty and chastity be preserved; but they are not so to draw near as to lie with, or have carnal knowledge of one another, in which sense the phrase is used, (^{<01204>}Genesis 20:4 ^{<2083>}Isaiah 8:3 ^{<2086>}Ezekiel 18:6); or to tempt to it or solicit it, and as it follows, which explains the meaning of it,

to uncover [their] nakedness; that is, those parts, which, by a contrary way of speaking, are so called, which should never be naked or exposed to view; but should be always covered, as nature teaches to do, and as our first parents did, when they perceived themselves naked, and were ashamed, (^{<0037>}Genesis 3:7,10): this phrase signifies the same as to lie with another, or have carnal knowledge of them, wherefore the following laws

are generally understood of incestuous marriages; for if such an action is not to be done between persons standing in such a relation, as here in general, and afterwards more particularly described, then there ought to be no intermarriages between them; and if such marriages are forbidden, and such actions unlawful in a married state, then much more in an unmarried one; wherefore the several following instances are so many breaches of the seventh command, (^{Exodus} Exodus 20:14), and so many explications and illustrations of it, and consequently of a moral nature, and binding upon all men, Jews and Gentiles:

I [am] the Lord; that gave this caution, and enjoined this prohibition, and would greatly resent and severely revenge the neglect of it: the particulars follow.

Ver. 7. *The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shall thou not uncover*, etc.] By uncovering a father's nakedness is not meant anything similar to what befell Noah, which Ham beheld with pleasure, and the other two sons of Noah studiously and with reverence to their father covered; nor any sodomitical practice of a son with his father; as Gersom interprets it; but the same is meant by both phrases, and the words are by many interpreters thus rendered, "the nakedness of thy father, that is ^{f620}, the nakedness of thy mother thou shalt not uncover": for what is the mother's is the father's, and uncovering the one is uncovering the other; wherefore the mother only is made mention of in the next clause, where the reason of this prohibition is given:

she [is] thy mother, thou shalt not uncover her nakedness; that is, not lie with her, nor marry her, because she is his mother that bore him, of whom he was born, and therefore ought not to become his wife, or be taken into his bed; such a marriage must be incestuous and shocking; such were the marriages of Oedipus with his mother Jocasta, and of Nero with Agrippina; though the words will bear another sense, that a woman may not marry her father, which may be meant by the first clause, nor a man his mother, intended in the next; and where indeed it is not expressed, females in the same degree of relation are included with the males, and under the same prohibition; and so the Targum of Jonathan explains this, a woman shall not have to do with her father, nor a man with his mother; as Lot's two daughters had with him, and the Persians with their mothers; among whom such incestuous marriages and copulations were frequent, and especially among their Magi ^{f621} who might not perform their office unless they had

lain with their mothers, sisters, and daughters ^{f622}, or were begotten in such incest ^{f623}: a man guilty of such incestuous copulations was cursed by the law of Moses, (^{<f622>}Deuteronomy 27:20); this is contrary to nature, what the brute creation abhors; a camel will not cover its dam: Aristotle ^{f624} reports of one who was betrayed into it by his keeper, who, after he had discovered it, fixed his teeth in him and slew him; and he also relates of a horse after that he had ignorantly done the same, ran away in great haste and cast himself down from a precipice headlong.

Ver. 8. *The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover*, etc.] That is, who is indeed a man's father's wife, but not his own mother, but a stepmother or mother-in-law; or otherwise this law would coincide with the former; a man lying with such an one is accursed by the law, (^{<f623>}Deuteronomy 27:23); such an incestuous copulation was that of Reuben with Bilhah, and Absalom with his father's concubines or secondary wives, and such an incestuous marriage was that of the Corinthians, (^{<f624>}1 Corinthians 5:1); and of Antiochus Soter, king of Syria, with Stratonice his mother-in-law ^{f625}: and even it was criminal to do this after a father's death, as Jarchi interprets it; and though she was only betrothed, and not married, and the father dead after such betrothing; as Gersom; nay, though she was divorced by the father, yet was not lawful for the son to have, no, not after his death:

it is thy father's nakedness; being espoused to him, and so one flesh with him; and the son and father being one flesh, such a mixture must be unlawful; and since then the nakedness of a mother-in-law is the father's, then surely that of an own mother's must be so likewise, which confirms a sense given of it in (^{<f625>}Leviticus 18:7): Cicero ^{f626} exclaims against such marriages as incredible and unheard of, as instances of unbridled lust and singular impudence.

Ver. 9. *The nakedness of thy sister*, etc.] To lie with one in so near a relation is exceeding criminal, and for which the law curses a man, (^{<f626>}Deuteronomy 27:22); and to marry her is not lawful; for though it was necessary for the propagation of mankind that a man should marry his sister, for who else could Cain and Abel marry? yet afterwards, when there was an increase of mankind, and there were people enough remote from each other, it became unlawful for persons in such near ties of consanguinity to marry with each other; though the Egyptians did, in

imitation of Isis and Osiris^{f627}, and so the Persians, following the example of Cambyses^{f628}:

the daughter of thy father, or the daughter of thy mother; whether she is a sister both by father and mother's side, or whether only by the father's side and not the mother's, as Sarah was to Abraham, (^{<0012>}Genesis 20:12); or only by the mother's side and not the father's:

[whether she be] born at home or born abroad; not whether born and brought up in his and her father's house, or born and brought up in another place and province; though there were some, as Aben Ezra observes, that so interpreted it, according to the sense of the word in (^{<0013>}Genesis 50:23); but rather the sense is, as that writer gives it, whether born according to the law of the house of Israel, after espousals and marriage, or without it; that is, whether begotten in lawful marriage or not, whether a legitimate offspring or spurious, born in adultery and whoredom, whether on the father or mother's side; so the Targum of Jonathan, whom thy father begat of another woman, or of thy mother, or whom thy mother bore or brought forth, of thy father, or of another man; and to the same purpose Onkelos:

[even] their nakedness thou shalt not uncover; neither lie with, or have carnal knowledge of, nor marry one or the other.

Ver. 10. *The nakedness of thy son's daughter, or of thy daughter's daughter*, etc.] A man might not marry his granddaughter, whether a descendant of his son or of his daughter, nor any further off descending from him in a right line, not his great-granddaughter, and so on; and if he might not marry his granddaughter, much less his own daughter, as Jarchi observes, for the relation is still nearer; therefore that being prohibited, this in course must, though not mentioned:

[even] their nakedness thou shalt not uncover; neither debauch nor marry such an one:

for theirs [is] thine own nakedness; which sprung from his, being the descendants either of his son or daughter; the Targum of Jonathan is,

“for they are as thy nakedness,”

his own flesh and blood.

Ver. 11. *The nakedness of thy father's wife's daughter*, etc.] Either the daughter of his father by another wife, which seems to be countenanced by what follows:

begotten of thy father, she [is] thy sister; but then this coincides with what is prohibited, (^{<BRD>}Leviticus 18:9), “the daughter of thy father”; that is, by another woman than a man’s mother, only with this difference, that there is added, or “daughter of thy mother”, that is, by another man than a man’s own father; so that there is a prohibition of a sister whether by father or mother’s side; here only as by the father’s side, and so is only a part of that law; and, as some think, is for the confirmation of it, as Aben Ezra observes; or else the sense, as he thinks, is, that if a man marries a woman, and she has a little daughter by a former husband, that daughter may not be given in marriage to his son; and so the Septuagint version finishes this clause first, before it gives the other, which it considers as distinct from it, thus, “the shame of thy father’s, wife’s daughter thou shalt not uncover”; and then makes a distinct law of the latter; “she that is begotten of thy father is thy sister, thou shalt not uncover her shame”; but then this last falls in with (^{<BRD>}Leviticus 18:9), the Sadducees, as Aben Ezra also observes, by whom he means the Karaites, interpret it not of a mother’s daughter, but of one brought up and educated by a man’s father, and so is his adopted daughter, whom his son might not marry; and thus with the Romans it is said ^{f629}, that adoptive kindred hindered marriage between parents and children altogether; and among brethren so far forth as the loss of freedom did not intervene: some understand this law in this light, as De Dieu, that in (^{<BRD>}Leviticus 18:9); the son of a second marriage is forbidden to marry with an half sister of the first marriage, whether she is the father’s daughter, that is, which the father had by his deceased wife, or the mother’s daughter, that is, which his mother had by a deceased husband; but here the son of a first marriage is forbidden with a half sister of a second marriage, which his mother-in-law has bore to his father, and is therefore called “the daughter of thy father’s wife”; that is, of thy stepmother, but so the same may be said to be “begotten of thy father”; and therefore one begotten in a former marriage may not be understood; but then as this forbids the marriage of a brother with a sister, that is, of the same father, though not of the same mother, it falls in within the former law; wherefore some ^{f630} have been of opinion, that this law forbids a man to marry the daughter of a woman whom his father has taken to wife, who was his deceased brother’s wife, upon the law in (^{<BRD>}Deuteronomy 25:5);

by which marriage she became the father's daughter, and the son's sister; wherefore they take the phrase, "begotten of thy father", to signify "being akin" to thy father; which, if it can be established, makes a distinct law: Jarchi observes, on this phrase, "the daughter of thy father's wife",

"this teaches that a man is not guilty concerning his sister that is by an handmaid or stranger; therefore it is said, the daughter of thy father's wife, namely, one that was fit for marriage."

thou shalt not uncover her nakedness; (see Gill on "^{<BRID>}Leviticus 18:9").

Ver. 12. *Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's sister*, etc.] His aunt by his father's side, an instance of which we have in Amram, (^{<BRID>}Exodus 6:20); and Maimonides says ^{f631}, an aunt was forbidden whether she was a father's sister in lawful wedlock or in fornication:

she [is] thy father's near kinswoman; or, the rest of thy father ^{f632}; the residue of his flesh, one of the same flesh and blood with him; wherefore, as he could not marry her himself, so his son likewise was too near akin to enter into such a relation with her.

Ver. 13. *Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister*, etc.] Which is the same relation as before, an aunt by the mother's side; wherefore, if such a marriage was unlawful, this must also, and for the same reason:

for she [is] thy mother's near kinswoman; the same phraseology is used here as in the preceding verse; (see Gill on "^{<BRID>}Leviticus 18:12"); and by the same rule a woman might not marry her uncle, whether by father or mother's side, the relation being the same, and this reaches to great-uncle and great-aunt; instances of women marrying their uncles, and men their aunts, among the Heathens, have been given, as among the Persians and Lacedaemonians by Herodotus ^{f633}, and among the Romans by Tacitus ^{f634}, but were, in his time, new things with the latter.

Ver. 14. *Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's brother*, etc.] Which Gersom understands of committing sodomy with him, on which account he was doubly guilty, partly because of lying with a male, and partly because of uncovering the nakedness of his father's brother; but it rather seems at first sight as if the sense was, that a woman should not marry her father's brother, that is, her uncle, as a man might not marry his aunt, whether by father or mother's side, as in (^{<BRID>}Leviticus 18:12,13); but

Jarchi directs to a better sense than either, when he asks, what is his nakedness? in answer to which he recites the following clause as explanative of it:

thou shall not approach to his wife; in the use of the bed, as the Targum of Jonathan adds, that is, to lie with her, her husband being living, or to marry her, he being dead:

she [is] thine aunt: even as a father's or mother's sister, only they are aunts by blood, this by marriage or affinity: in the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan it is, she is the wife of thy father's brother; and as Aben Ezra, she is accounted as thine aunt, and so marriage with her prohibited; and the same holds good of a father's brother's wife, which being not mentioned, the same writer says, we have need of the tradition which expresses that and also of a father's sister's husband; for if marriage with a father's brother's wife is unlawful, then marriage with a father's sister's husband must be so too; for a father's sister's husband stands in the same degree or line of affinity as a father's brother's wife; and it is a sure rule, that in whatsoever degree or line of affinity males are forbid to marry females, in the same females are forbid to marry males.

Ver. 15. *Thou shall not uncover the nakedness of thy daughter in law*, etc.] Shall not he with her in his son's lifetime, or marry her after his death:

she [is] that son's wife; and so one flesh with him, and who is of the same flesh and blood with his father, and therefore the nearness of the relation forbids such incestuous copulation or marriage:

thou shall not uncover her nakedness; or have carnal knowledge of her, whether in the life or after the death of his son, even then marriage with her is not lawful.

Ver. 16. *Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife*, etc.] Neither debauch her nor after the death of the brother marry her, that is, unless he dies without issue; and then, by another law, he was obliged to marry her, (⁽¹²³⁵⁾Deuteronomy 25:5); hence the Targum of Jonathan adds; by way of explanation.

“in the life of thy brother, or after his death, if he has children,”

but then that law was but an exception from this general rule, and so did not make it void in other respects, but bound it the more strongly; and

besides, it was a special and peculiar law to the Jews, until the Messiah came to make it manifest of what tribe and family he came; and the reason of it ceasing, the law itself is ceased, and so neither binding on Jews nor Gentiles: hence John the Baptist boldly told Herod to his face, that it was not lawful for him to have his brother's wife (~~404B~~ Matthew 14:3,4); and even such marriages were condemned by the very Heathens: Dionysius Halicarnassensis ^{f635} relates, that Lucius Tarquinius, Superbus, his brother being removed by poison, took Tullia to wife, whom his brother Aruntus had before married; but the historian calls it *ανοσιον γαμον*, "an unholy marriage", and abominable both among Greeks and Barbarians: Plutarch also reports ^{f636}, that Marcus Crassus married the wife of his deceased brother; but such marriages are condemned by the same writer, as they are by the ancient Christians in their councils and canons ^{f637}; now by this same law, if it is not lawful for a man to have his brother's wife, then it is not lawful for her to have her sister's husband; or, in other words, if it is not lawful for a woman to marry two brothers, then it is not lawful for a man to marry two sisters: the case of Jacob will not countenance such a marriage, since he was imposed upon and deceived; and such marriages have also been disapproved of by the Heathens and Christians: Honorius the emperor married two daughters of Stilico, one after another, but the unhappy exit of both sisters showed that those marriages were not approved of by God, for they both died premature deaths, leaving no children ^{f638};

it [is] thy brother's nakedness; that is, his wife is, being by marriage one flesh with him, and his brother being so to him, the relation is too near to intermarry, and more especially when there is issue by the first, which connects them strongly.

Ver. 17. *Thou shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter*, etc.] That is, if a man marries a woman, and she has a daughter, which is the man's daughter-in-law, after the death of his wife he may not marry this daughter; for this daughter is of the same flesh with her mother, who became one flesh with the man she married, and therefore his relation to her daughter is too near to marry her: Jarchi says, if he does not marry the woman, but only deflower her, it is free for him to marry her daughter; but Aben Ezra says, if he has lain with the mother, the daughter is forbidden; however, if he married either of them, the other was forbidden; he could not marry them both, neither in the lifetime of them both, nor after the death of either of them:

neither shalt thou take her son's daughter, or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness; not any of her granddaughters, either in the line of her son or daughter; that is, might not lie with either of them, or marry them, and much less then marry her own daughter, these being a further remove from her:

[for] they [are] her near kinswomen; one or other of them, even every one of them, “the rest” and residue “of her”^{f639}, of her flesh, who together made one flesh with her; and therefore not to be married to her husband, either in her life, or after her death:

it [is] wickedness: a very great wickedness, abominable in the sight of God, and to be detested by man as vile and impious; it is whoredom, as the Targum of Jonathan renders it.

Ver. 18. *Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister*, etc.] Both of them together, as Jarchi; two sisters at one and the same time; so the Targum of Jonathan,

“a woman in the life of her sister thou shall not take;”

that is, in marriage, that sister being his wife; for the sense of the Targumist can never be that a man might not take a woman for his wife, she having a sister living, but not to take one sister to another, or marry his first wife's sister, whether, as Maimonides^{f640} says, she was sister by father or mother's side, in marriage or in fornication:

to vex [her], to uncover her nakedness; two reasons are given, why, though polygamy, or having more wives than one, was connived at, yet it was not allowed that a man should have two sisters; partly, because they would be more apt to quarrel, and be more jealous and impatient of one another, if more favour was shown or thought to be shown to one more than another; and partly, because it was a filthy and unbecoming action to uncover the nakedness of one, or lie with one so nearly related to his wife:

besides her in her life [time]; from whence some have concluded, and so many of the Jewish writers^{f641}, that a man might marry his wife's sister after her death, but not while she was living; but the phrase, “in her lifetime”, is not to be joined to the phrase “thou shall not take a wife”; but to the phrases more near, “to vex her in her lifetime”, or as long as she lived, and “to uncover her nakedness by her”^{f642}, on the side of her, as long as she lived; for that a wife's sister may be married to her husband, even

after her death, cannot be lawful, as appears from the general prohibition, (^(-B1816)Leviticus 18:6); “none of you shall approach to him that is near of kin to him”; and yet it is certain that a wife’s sister is near akin to a man; and from the prohibition of marriage with an uncle’s wife, with the daughter of a son-in-law, or of a daughter-in-law, (^(-B1814)Leviticus 18:14,17); now a wife’s sister is nearer of kin than either of these; and from the confusion that must follow in case of issue by both, not only of degrees but appellation of kindred; one and the same man, who as a father of children, and the husband of their mother’s sister, stands in the relation both of a father and an uncle to his own children; the woman to the children of the deceased sister stands in the relation both of a stepmother, and of a mother’s sister or aunt, and to the children that were born of her, she stands in the relation both of a mother and an uncle’s wife; and the two sorts of children are both brethren and own cousins by the mother’s side, but of this (see Gill on “^(-B1816)Leviticus 18:16”) for more; some understand this of a prohibition of polygamy, rendering the words, “thou shall not take one wife to another”; but the former sense is best; polygamy being not expressly forbidden by the law of Moses, but supposed in it, and winked at by it; and words of relation being always used in all these laws of marriage, in a proper and not in an improper sense: there is a pretty good deal of agreement between these laws of Moses and the Roman laws; by an edict of Dioclesian and Maximian ^{f643}, it was made unlawful to contract matrimony with a daughter, with a niece, with a niece’s daughter, with a grandmother, with a great-grandmother, with an aunt by the father’s side, with an aunt by the mother’s side, with a sister’s daughter, and a niece from her, with a daughter-in-law to a second husband, with a mother-in-law, with a wife or husband’s mother, and with a son’s wife; and several of these laws are recommended by Phocylydes, an Heathen poet, at least in a poem that hears his name; and the marriage of a wife’s sister after her death has been condemned by several Christian councils ^{f644}.

Ver. 19. *Also thou shall not approach unto a woman*, etc.] Not even a man to his own wife, and much less to another woman:

to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is put apart for her uncleanness; in her monthly courses; and the time of her separation from her husband on that account was seven days, (^(-B1519)Leviticus 15:19); if a man lay with a woman when in such circumstances, they were both to be cut off from their people, (^(-B1818)Leviticus 20:18); and such an action is reckoned among sins, and uncleanness of the worst sort, (^(-B210)Ezekiel 22:10).

Ver. 20. *Moreover, thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbour's wife,* etc.] Which is adultery, and a breach of the seventh command, (^{<0214>}Exodus 20:14):

to defile thyself with her; not only adultery is a defiling a man's wife, as it is sometimes called, but the adulterer defiles himself: all sin is of a defiling nature, but especially this, which defiles a man both in soul and body, and brings a blot and stain upon his character, which shall not be wiped off, (^{<2162>}Proverbs 6:32,33).

Ver. 21. *And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through [the fire] to Molech,* etc.] The name of an image or idol, according to Aben Ezra, who observes, that their wise men interpret it as a general name for everyone whom they made to reign over them; and it is right, he says, that it is the abomination of the children of Ammon, and so the same with Milcom, (^{<1115>}1 Kings 11:5); and with Baal, as appears from (^{<2825>}Jeremiah 32:35); and they are both of much the same signification, the one signifies a king, the other a lord; and perhaps is the same with the Melicarthus of Sanchoniatho ^{f645}, who is also Hercules; to whom Pliny says ^{f646} that the Phoenicians offered human sacrifices every year: of Molech, (see Gill on "^{<2075>}Jeremiah 7:31") (see Gill on "^{<3101>}Amos 1:13"); by "seed" is meant children and offspring; and because the word "fire" is not in the original text, some, as Aben Ezra observes, explain the phrase, "let to pass through", of their causing them to pass from the law of God to the religion of Molech, or of devoting them to his service and worship; but the word "fire" is rightly supplied, as it may be from (^{<6180>}Deuteronomy 18:10); and the same writer says, the phrase to pass through is the same as to burn; but though this they sometimes did, even burn their infants, and sacrificed them to idols, (^{<1438>}2 Chronicles 28:3 ^{<1967>}Psalm 106:37,38 ^{<2660>}Ezekiel 16:20,21); yet this seems to be something short of that, and to be done in the manner, as Jarchi and other Jewish writers ^{f647} relate; who say, the father delivered his son to the priests (of Molech) and they made two great fires, and caused the son to pass on foot between the two fires, which was a kind of a lustration, and so of a dedication of them to the idol; though it must be owned that both were done; yea, that both the phrases of passing through the fire, and of burning, are used promiscuously of the same, (see ^{<1218>}2 Kings 16:3); compared with (^{<1438>}2 Chronicles 28:3) and also (^{<2660>}Ezekiel 16:20,21); and they might be both done at different times, or the one previous and in order to the other; and perhaps they might cause the child

so often and so long to pass through the fire, as that at last it was burnt and destroyed:

neither shall thou profane the name of thy God; who had given them children, and to whom they ought to have devoted them, and in whose service they should have trained them up to the honour of his name; but instead of that profaned it, by the above idolatrous and cruel usages:

I [am] the Lord; who would avenge such a profanation of his name.

Ver. 22. *Thou shall not lie with mankind as with womankind*, etc.] By carnal knowledge of them, and carnal copulation with them, and mixing bodies in like manner: this is the sin commonly called sodomy, from the inhabitants of Sodom, greatly addicted to it, for which their city was destroyed by fire: those that are guilty of this sin, are, by the apostle, called “abusers of themselves with mankind”, (~~489~~1 Corinthians 6:9);

it [is] abomination; it is so to God, as the above instance of his vengeance shows, and ought to be abominable to men, as being not only contrary to the law of God, but even contrary to nature itself, and what is never to be observed among brute creatures.

Ver. 23. *Neither shall thou lie with any beast, to defile thyself therewith*, etc.] A female one, as Aben Ezra notes, as a mare, cow, or ewe, or any other beast, small or great, as Ben Gersom, or whether tame or wild, as Maimonides ^{f648}; and even fowls are comprehended, as the same writers observe:

neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: that is, stand before a beast, and by a lascivious and obscene behaviour solicit the beast to a congress with her, and then lie down after the manner of four-footed beasts, as the word signifies, that it may have carnal copulation with her: for a man to lie with a beast is most shocking and detestable, but for a woman to solicit such an unnatural mixture is most horrible and astonishing: perhaps reference may be had to a most shocking practice among the Egyptians, from among whom the Israelites were lately come, and whose doings they were not to imitate, (~~488B~~Leviticus 18:3); and which may account for this law, as Bishop Patrick observes: at Mendes, in Egypt, a goat was worshipped, as has been remarked (~~488B~~Leviticus 18:7); and where the women used to lie with such creatures, as Strabo ^{f649} and Aelianus ^{f650} from Pindar have related; yea, Herodotus ^{f651} reports, of his own knowledge, that a goat had carnal copulation with a woman openly, in

the view of all, in his time; and though that creature is a most lascivious and lustful one, yet, as Bochart^{f652} from Plutarch has observed, when it is provoked by many and beautiful women, is not inclined and ready to come into their embraces, but shows some abhorrence of it: nature in brutes, as that learned man observes, is often more prevalent in them than in mankind:

it [is] confusion; a mixing of the seed of man and beast together, a blending of different kinds of creatures, a perverting the order of nature, and introducing the utmost confusion of beings, from whence monsters in nature may arise.

Ver. 24. *Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things*, etc.] In incestuous copulations and marriages, in adultery, corporeal and spiritual, and bestiality:

for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you; that is, the seven nations of the land of Canaan, which God was about to eject out of their land to make room for the Israelites, and that on account of the above shocking vices which abounded among them; so that in some sense the land they dwelt upon was defiled by them, and called for vengeance on them, as even loathing its inhabitants, as afterwards suggested.

Ver. 25. *And the land is defiled*, etc.] The inhabitants of it, with the immoralities and idolatries before mentioned:

therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it; or punish the inhabitants that are on it for their sins:

and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants; as a stomach loaded with corrupt and bad food it has taken in, nauseates it, and cannot bear and retain it, but casts it up, and never receives it again; so the land of Canaan is represented as loathing its inhabitants, and as having an aversion to them, and indignation against them, and as not being able to bear them, but entirely willing to be rid of them and throw them out of their places in it, never to be admitted more, being as nauseous and as useless as the cast of a man's stomach; (see ⁴¹⁸⁶Revelation 3:16).

Ver. 26. *Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments*, etc.] Before observed to them, whether of a ceremonial nature, and enjoined them according to his sovereign will and pleasure; or of a moral nature, and founded in justice and equity, and so worthy of their regard, and

obligatory upon them; as well as in their own nature they recommended themselves to their regard, as being the reverse of those loathsome and abominable things before dehorted from:

and shall not commit [any] of these abominations; such as incest, adultery, idolatry, and bestiality, which are in themselves abominable things, execrable to God, and to be detested by men:

[neither] any of your own nation; that belonged to any of their own tribes, or should be born to them in the land of Canaan when they came thither, and were properly natives of it:

nor any stranger that sojourneth among you; any proselyte, and especially a proselyte of righteousness, who conformed to the Jewish religion, and had laid himself under obligation to do everything that was binding upon an Israelite.

Ver. 27. *For all these abominations have the men of the land done*, etc.]

The then present inhabitants of Canaan, who dwelt in it before the Israelites came into it; these were guilty of unclean copulations, of incestuous marriages, of fornication and adultery, and of bestiality and idolatry:

which [were] before you; lived in the land before them, had long dwelt there, but now about to be cast out for their sins; and therefore they who were going to succeed them should take warning by them, lest, committing the same sins, they should be cast out likewise:

and the land is defiled; (see Gill on “~~CHRS~~ Leviticus 18:25”).

Ver. 28. *That the land spew not you out also, when ye defile it*, etc.] By sinning on it, and so rendering it obnoxious to the curse of God, as the whole earth originally was for the sin of man; and so be cast out of it, as Adam was out of paradise, and as the Israelites might expect to be cast out of Canaan, as the old inhabitants of it had been:

as it spewed out the nations that [were] before you; which for the certainty of it is spoken of as done, though it was as yet future; and what the Lord did is ascribed to the land, the more to aggravate their crying sins and abominations, for which the land mourned, and which it could not bear.

Ver. 29. *For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations,* etc.]

Before particularly forbid, any of them, be it which it will, they all being very heinous and vile, and especially these last mentioned:

even the souls that commit [them]; whether male or female, as Jarchi observes; for the above things concern them both for the most part, however some one, and some another; and though most, if not all the said crimes are committed by the members of the body, yet since under the influence and direction of the soul, the commission of them is attributed to that, and the punishment threatened respects both:

shall be cut off from among the people; be removed from their church state, and deprived of ecclesiastical privileges, and from their civil state, and reckoned no more of the commonwealth of Israel; and if known and convicted, to be punished by the civil magistrate, and if not, by the immediate hand of God.

Ver. 30. *Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance,* etc.] Whatever the Lord appointed them and commanded, whether contained in this chapter, or elsewhere:

that [ye] commit not [anyone] of these abominable customs; for attending to the ordinances of God, and a close in them, they would be preserved from the commission of such abominable things, and giving in to such detestable customs as before warned against:

which were committed before you; by the inhabitants of Canaan; and by the punishment on them for them they might be deterred from doing the same:

and that ye defile not yourselves therein; for though the land is so often said to be defiled, yet, properly speaking, and chiefly, it was the inhabitants that were defiled by their abominable customs; and so would the Israelites also, should they observe the same, and thereby become abominable in the sight of God, and incur his displeasure, and be liable to his vengeance:

I [am] the Lord your God; who had a sovereign authority over them, and a right to give out what commands he pleased, both negative and affirmative; and to whom they were under obligations to obey, as the God of nature and providence, from whom they had their beings, and were supported in them, and as their covenant God, who had bestowed special and spiritual favours on them.