

**Subject: Interesting Article by Orthodox Jewish Rabbi**

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**Dr. Laura Misguided On Homosexuality**

**By: Shmuley Boteach**

Dr. Laura Schlesinger, the popular radio talk-show host, deserves much credit for serving as an authoritative, moral force on a plethora of social issues in the United States.

Religion, however, is designed to speak not only with the inflection of opprobrium but with the voice of compassion.

Dr. Laura's pronouncements of homosexuality as deviant and derivative of biological error are unjust, first because of the harm and hurt they cause to individuals who are gay.

I grew up with a close relative who was a gay Orthodox Jew, and watched his torment and suffering when pronouncements of this kind were made by people of influence. But more important, Dr. Laura's comments are misguided precisely because they reinforce an erroneous view of homosexuality in the Bible and reflect more of her personal opinion on this issue than that of traditional religion in whose voice she claims to speak.

Religionists like to isolate homosexuals for special opprobrium because the Bible calls homosexuality an abomination. What they often intentionally fail to point out is that the Bible uses the very same word for eating non-kosher animals, as in Thou shalt not eat any abominable things (Deut. 14:3).

Likewise, the Bible uses the word abomination to describe the act of a man remarrying his previously divorced wife after she has been married to another man. Furthermore, the act of bringing a blemished sacrifice to God's altar is called an abomination (Deut. 17:1).

And the book of Proverbs declares that there are seven things the Lord hates and are an abomination to Him, including a proud look, a lying tongue and hands that shed innocent blood.

Given that all these things are an abomination, we really have to ask why religionists don't condemn people who lie with the same vehemence that they condemn homosexuals? Would Dr Laura describe those who are arrogant as derivative of biological error?

One justification that Dr Laura could offer as to her vehement condemnation of homosexuality is that it is a sin against nature. But what Professor David Greenberg of the University of Chicago demonstrated in his landmark 1988 study *The Construct of*

Homosexuality, the most methodical sociological study of homosexuality, is that through every era, and especially in ancient times, homosexuality was as common as heterosexuality, if not more so.

The mistake that people like Dr. Laura make is simple. The Bible contains two kinds of laws: religious and moral. For example, the crime of murder is not only a sin against God (religious), it is also a sin against humanity (moral). The same would not be true of the prohibition not to eat a cheeseburger, which is a religious law but violates no ethical norms.

Dr. Laura's error is to treat the biblical prohibition against homosexuality as the latter rather than the former. Homosexual sex (rather than being gay) is prohibited in the Bible on religious grounds only and is analogous to the prohibition that a Jew may not smoke a cigarette on the Sabbath. There is nothing deviant about either. Rather, they are religiously prohibited because of a biblical injunction.

Marriage between a man and a woman is similarly a religious rather than a moral imperative, unless we want to decry all bachelors as being immoral.

Gay men and women should stop being treated by religious people as though they are biologically deviant or distant from God. Indeed, the gay relative I mentioned earlier is closer to God than me, I believe, generous and respectful and ritually observant. In our frequent discussions about his relationship with another man, I tell him that while I cannot condone homosexual unions " these are God's laws " he should understand that the Bible consists of 613 commandments. While he is not living in accordance with two of them " the commandments to marry and have children " there are 611 others he can faithfully keep.

I have spent my life and career trying to promote the institution of marriage and the beauty of having children, and reversing the high rate of divorce. If this statement offends the many homosexual men and women who are my close friends, than I apologize, but I cannot alter my religious convictions. Most of the Jewish men and women who are guests at my home for Friday night dinner drive there by car, though I cannot condone that either. And yet, one is not more serious than the other. Case closed.

Religious people should finally get over their all-too-apparent homophobia and reverse the discriminatory policy which says that homosexuality is an aberration marked by God for special censure.

Like heterosexual men and women, gays are God's children, capable of bringing light and love to a planet whose darkness is caused not only by sin but also misguided judgmentalism.