

Feeling Gay

Contributed by Rabbi Elyakim Levanon
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Question:

I am 32. For several years I have been looking for a wife, but it never gets anywhere because I don't feel any strong desire to be with women. I confided this to a friend, and he took me to a group meeting with men who have homosexual leanings, and who are learning to be proud. Apparently, this is my situation too. Is there anything I can do to strengthen my attraction to the opposite sex so that I will be able to marry?

Answer:

(by Rabbi Elyakim Levanon)

To begin, we must note that there exists within man a lust for unnatural relationships.

The Torah mentions three different types of sexual relationships:

- The first is between a man and woman, and this is limited to a relationship sanctified by marriage and the tenets of Jewish Law.
- The Torah also mentions the possibility of a man being with a beast and rejects this outright as being strictly forbidden. Our Sages teach that Bilaam polluted himself in this manner.
- The third relationship mentioned is between two men, which the Torah absolutely forbids. Because the prohibition is recorded, we can assume that there exists a desire for this type of connection. Nevertheless, the Torah does not allow any leniency in this matter whatsoever.

For us, who strive to be faithful to the path of the Torah, this means that even though there may be a lust of this sort, we have the wherewithal to overcome it, just like with every other prohibition of the Torah. For instance, there is a prohibition of eating milk products and meat together. While a cheeseburger may be very tasty to the palette, we nevertheless overcome any desire we have for eating combinations of this nature.

The Midrash teaches that we shouldn't say, "I don't have the possibility of eating milk and meat together, or I don't have the possibility of engaging in incestuous acts." Rather, we should say, "I have the capability of doing these things, but what can I do? My Father in Heaven has forbidden them to me." The Torah teaches us to choose good and to distance ourselves from evil.

Furthermore, the Torah defines for us what is good and what is evil. There is a natural inclination in the world that pushes us toward engaging in evil actions, but through the strength that the Torah gives us, we overcome our evil inclination and choose to do the proper things instead.

This preface comes to let you know that you should not feel abnormal for the situation you describe. But just as we relate to other lusts, we must relate to this lust in the same manner.

Going to a meeting with other men who share this same inclination seems to me to be a negative thing to do. Meets of this sort can only be beneficial if their intent is to help the person overcome his problem. Thus, an overweight person can attend a gathering of other overweight people if the intent is to support one another in undertaking a diet. But if the intent of the meeting is to encourage one another that being overweight is healthy and beautiful, then something is wrong.

Someone with an addiction to cigarettes, or alcohol, or drugs, can benefit from a support group when the intent is to break free of the addiction. If people with homosexual feelings come together to overcome their lusts by supporting one another to align their lives with the Torah, this can be certainly beneficial.

However, if the group assembles to encourage homosexual feelings and give them justification and legitimacy, this is a negative encounter, because we are obligated to overcome our weaknesses and not give in to them. It is a grave mistake to take weaknesses and turn them into kosher ideologies.

You don't have to consider yourself weird or some kind of social leper, but rather like any other person who has negative inclinations. Someone who walks through a supermarket and thinks about stealing something, he is a normal person who must overcome his inclination.

The way to overcome negative inclinations like the one you describe is consulting with a counselor experienced with this problem, or by attending a support group the goal of which is to re-channel negative desires to the proper path, which is the male-female relationship that leads to marriage.

From my experience, I can attest to cases of men like you who received counseling and guidance, and who are happily married today with families of their own. The main points: don't accept the negative inclination as the way things must be, don't say "this is who you are," but rather to summon the courage and strength to reach the true solution through the guidance and path of the Torah.

[Editor: For starters, check out this website: [Jews Offering New Alternatives to Homosexuality](http://www.jewishsexuality.com)]