

Some Preliminary Considerations Regarding Sex Education, Counseling and Sex Therapy and the Jewish Tradition.

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Sexual experience reflects both the desires of the individual and the attitudes of the group to which he or she belongs. This paper sketches the changing nature of the Jewish community and presents some of the sexual attitudes of the Jewish tradition. Some of these attitudes are enhancing and some inhibiting in terms of sexual functioning and the modalities of sex therapy. The therapist should be aware of the varying links of individuals with the Jewish community and the variegated nature of the Jewish tradition. It is hoped that sex education, counseling, and sex therapy may strengthen Jewish family life.

However intense and personal sexual experience may be, it is not a private matter alone. It reflects the values and attitudes of the group to which the individual belongs or imagines that he/she belongs. Individual and community come together and come into conflict in the arena of sexual experience; the desires of the individual confront the needs of the community; pleasure is placed against procreation; desire against order; the solitary individual against the family and beyond the family, the community. That sense of self created by family and community struggles with that part of self that asserts its own independence.

For individuals within the Jewish community, sexual conflicts have been complicated by the changing nature of the Jewish community. Sharp changes, societal and psychological, have occurred to that community within the last two hundred years.

Prior to the French Revolution, Jewish communities existed as separate enclaves within the larger societies in which they were found. That separate status was established by law, external and internal. Each individual within the community saw himself/herself as a

member of that community and was so regarded; each facet of life was regulated by internal Jewish law with appropriate this- and other- worldly sanctions.

The French Revolution brought Emancipation in Western Europe; the Jew became a citizen. He left the legal control of the Jewish community and entered the identity structures of the larger society. Even so, Jewish communal pressures persisted.

In Eastern Europe, separate legal status continued until the Russian Revolution. Though for many Jews, there was a diminution of the theological basis for the internal Jewish legal system, the maintenance of the external legal system was sufficient to maintain group identity. A Jew might forsake Moses for Marx; it did not affect the fact that upon his passport was stamped the word "Jew."

The great wave of Jewish immigration to the United States from 1885 to 1924 brought over entire communities which settled in particular neighborhoods. The community, now neighborhood, was both fortress and refuge for the immigrant. The German Jewish immigrants of the '30's also settled in neighborhood com-

munities. The neighborhood containing the extended family imprinted the communities' values upon the individual. The neighborhood was the carrier of Jewish identity. That sense of identity was intensified by the worsening international status of the Jew between the Two World Wars which culminated in the Holocaust.

Fate, faith, and folk-feeling would have their impact with regard to values related to sexuality. Consciously conveyed in the literary tradition and unconsciously conveyed in the mores of the community, these values did affect the attitudes and behavior of the individual Jew.

Jewish tradition put an enormous stress on the family. According to the Bible, the first man Adam was given a wife Eve that she might be his help mate. To the first couple was given the commandment to be fruitful and multiply. On-going rabbinic elaboration of scripture would deduce that the normal status of subsequent men and women was to be married, that indeed a man without a wife lacked life and he without children was considered as if dead.

Since wife and children were considered life and since the Jewish tradition was held to be a guide to life, we are not surprised to read the Talmudic story of the rabbi who having intercourse with his wife was startled to discover his disciple beneath the bed. Upbraiding his student that such voyeuristic behavior was not proper; the master was answered that what the rabbi was doing was Torah and the student was therefore obligated to learn it.

The Torah and its interpretation were the bases of Talmudic tradition and was that which was studied at an early age in the Medieval world and even in some parts of the Jewish community to the present day. A great deal of information dealing with sexual functioning would be presented; for example a lad might learn about signs of virginity or might be told on the basis of the interpretation of a verse of Leviticus that if the husband delays his ejaculation until after his wife has had her orgasm, then the couple will beget a

male child. Interestingly enough, some studies have shown that certain Orthodox Jewish communities do have a higher proportion of male to female children.

It should be noted that along with an openness in discussing sexual matters in a religious context, there was a reticence in discussing sexual matters in any other context. As one rabbi put it, everyone knows for what purpose the bride enters the nuptial bower, but cursed be the mouth that speaks of it. Still sexual matters were spoken of. That part of Jewish tradition that prescribed the reading of the Song of Songs with its rich sexual imagery on the Sabbath Eve when coitus was one element of the enhancement of the Sabbath and yet demanded that that text would be understood as the allegory of God's love for Israel, was speaking of one thing and thinking of another.

Openness and reticence, texts and allegories point to a tension within the tradition itself with regard to sexuality, a tension which may reflect itself upon individual Jews depending on their linkage to the tradition. On the one hand, we may find that the frequency of intercourse is enjoined by law upon the husband and on the other hand, the wife is prohibited from verbally suggesting intercourse.

These contradictory instructions may produce problems of sexual functioning. The prohibition against intercourse during the period of menstruation and for a week following the cessation of the flow may create tensions both psychological and physiological within and between the husband and the wife.

The prohibition against masturbation may be problematical in determining a course of treatment for those suffering with a sexual dysfunction.

Withal, the fact that the tradition does provide some lines of entrance to the discussion of sexual matters may be helpful to the therapist. The therapist on his/her part must attempt to place the client within the context of his/her linkage to the Jewish tradition.

Men and women with an untreated sexual dysfunction will carry the problem into subsequent relationships. It thus becomes critical

for the educator and the therapist who wish to help to reverse this pattern to include in their teaching modern scientific knowledge with regard to sexuality.

We consider the case of the sexually unsatisfied female who avoids further sexual relations because of her frustration and feelings of anger toward her husband. She reflects these emotions in dealing with her children and thereby creates an atmosphere of tension among all family members. These children in turn might carry over unnecessary problems into their own adulthood, creating potential conflict in their own marriage relationships.

Such dysfunction may be a factor in the rapidly accelerating trend toward divorce and family dissolution in a group which exemplified stable marriage and family integrity.

One important first step in the teaching of members of the helping professions, including clergy, is to establish a series of workshops dealing with questions of human sexuality. The purposes of these workshops are first, to establish an openness in dealing with matters sexual and second, to develop a cadre of professionals who are sufficiently informed and sensitive to make appropriate referrals.

Within such settings, members of the group will discuss all aspects of human sexuality and their relationships to a well functioning family unit. Experience has indicated that in order to achieve a relaxed and trusting atmosphere, which is necessary for this type of learning to occur, a statement at the beginning that no personal questions will be asked is most effective. As the group develops, such personal questions do emerge and, of course, are dealt with appropriately.

In these discussions, it is also essential to establish at the start that the leader is aware of and sensitive to the cultural and religious concerns of the participants. This adds to the trusting climate so important to such learning situations as it is for therapeutic interventions.

Let us cite a few examples to illustrate our points.

We know that masturbation is an effective therapeutic modality; we know too that masturbation evokes strong feelings in most people. Therefore, we must proceed with caution in discussions, especially when we deal with those sexual dysfunctions where the prescription for "homework" include masturbatory activities. We have to be sensitive to the anxiety laden aspects of self-stimulation whether in private or in the presence of the partner. Mutual masturbation may also present problems. For the woman who has the dysfunction of vaginismus where sexual intercourse is difficult or impossible, gradual dilation does involve touching the vagina whether by the gynecologist, the husband or the woman herself.

Now we do know that for the man and woman steeped in much of the western religious traditions, such open looking and touching are proscribed.

Another example is that of a rather frequent male dysfunction—premature ejaculation. Dr. Helen Singer Kaplan reports that in her experience in treating Orthodox Jewish males for this dysfunction, she modifies her original suggested treatment plan which involved ejaculation outside the vagina. In her modification, ejaculation occurs inside the vagina after certain homework prescriptions—exercises, which do not include any ejaculation—have been successfully completed.

For the dysfunctions of erectile difficulties and retarded ejaculation where often prescriptions include permission and instruction in the use of fantasies, here too we must find certain accommodations for the observant Jew.

It is obvious that much more research is needed into the issues of sensitivity in sex education, sex counseling and sex therapy with the many different socio-ethnic and religious groups that make up our population in order to enhance our understanding and their sexual enjoyment.

The Integration of an Orthodox Unit into a Federation Sponsored Day Camp

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The Orthodox are not usually reached by the organized services of the Jewish community. They tend to be isolated and to use only orthodox institutions and agencies. Integrating these people in the community camp has been a step towards furthering the very important ideal of Klal Israel.

History of the Camp

The Jacob and Rose Grossman Camp was built in 1972. It was designed with very clear Jewish purposes as an instrument of informal Jewish education, and has become one of the foremost Jewish educational institutions for young children in the Boston community. The administrators of the camp have been open to a variety of Jewish programming, and they have staffed the camp with young people whose Jewish commitment is well established and whose Jewish educational background is sufficient to create a meaningful Jewish environment in the camp. The camp was built to accommodate 600 campers, and in 1972, there were fewer than 300 enrolled.

During the winter of 1973, the camp director was approached by the Bostoner Rebbe, (leader of Boston's largest Hasidic group), who was planning to run a camp program for the children of his congregation. The program was to be Orthodox and specifically Hasidic in character. Several hours each day of formal learning were to be the core of the program, plus some outdoor activity, including sports and swimming. It became clear that the program would involve mainly boys, and would serve primarily those children of the Rebbe's congregation whose parents would have seen the Grossman Camp to be insuf-

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ficiently observant. The Associated Jewish Community Centers committee responsible for the Grossman camp decided to rent one of its unused shelter buildings to Rabbi Horowitz. There was to be no connection between Rabbi Horowitz's camp and Grossman. The program was instituted in July, 1973. The staff consisted of teachers and counselors. Some of the counselors were not Jewish. The Grossman Camp provided program space and lifeguards. The children's swimming hours were after the regular Grossman campers had gone home and did not include instruction. After two summers of operation, it was clear that it was not a viable program. The fees that were charged were inadequate to cover the costs of the program. The Grossman administration was dissatisfied with the quality of the program and the level of supervision.

Rabbi Horowitz introduced us to several members of the Orthodox community whose children had been in his program. These parents were most anxious to continue to provide summer activities for the Orthodox community. The main problems Rabbi Horowitz had faced were in recruiting and financing. Any program they sponsored had to appeal to the whole Orthodox community. In order to develop a broader base of support for the Orthodox camping program the parents formed a committee called Kehilla Day Camp. They saw themselves as a body which could integrate the different factions within the