

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT ASSEMBLY

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TORAH LAW EDUCATIONAL COURSE

The 613 Mitzvot of Yahweh

Bereishit • Shemot • Vayikra • Bamidbar • Devarim | The Tanakh Writings

LESSON 08

Negative Law #168

Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:17 — Not with a Woman and Her Daughter

עֲרוֹת אִשָּׁה וּבִתָּהּ לֹא תִגְלֶה

*Ervat ishah u'vitah lo t'galeh***"You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter."***Zimmaḥ: The Covenant Network of the Family Protects Every Generation — and the Mercy of Return***Four Spheres: Individual • Community • Nation • World****Authority: The Tanakh — The Word of Yahweh Alone**

Standard: Devarim 19:15 — Two or Three Witnesses

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SECTION I — THE HEBREW TEXT

Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:17 — Full verse: *"You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, nor shall you take her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter to uncover her nakedness; they are close relatives — it is zimmah."*

The Sexuality Household Study (Section 35) documents this: "V. 17 — A woman and her daughter or granddaughter: You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and of her daughter, or of her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter. They are close relatives; it is zimmah (lewdness)."

The designation zimmah: **זִמְמָה (zimmah, H2154)** — BDB: "lewdness, wickedness, a plot, a device." HALOT: "a plan, malicious plan; lewdness, obscenity." Gesenius: "counsel, device; wickedness, infamy; whoredom, lewdness." The word appears 29 times in the Tanakh. Of those appearances, the majority describe particularly grave sexual crimes (Yechezkel 22:9,11; 23:21,27; Vayikra 19:29; 20:14; Yechezkel 16:27). **Yahweh** uses the elevated term **zimmah** specifically for this violation, communicating a level of depravity beyond the standard **ervah** designation. The term itself conveys the premeditated, scheming character of this violation — using access to one family member as a pathway to violate others.

What this law prohibits precisely: A man who has sexual relations with a woman may not also have sexual relations with her daughter (from any husband or father) or her granddaughter. The family network of mother-daughter-granddaughter is a single covenant-protected unit. Sexual union with any one of them creates a covenant bond that prohibits all the others. The prohibition covers all three generations simultaneously within the verse itself.

The covenant principle at work: Marriage creates covenant bonds not only between the two immediate parties but across the family network. Law #161 established this (the father's wife — not a blood relative but covenant-protected through the father's marriage). Law #168 extends the same principle: sexual union creates covenant network bonds that cannot be violated. The man who has relations with a woman has entered a covenant network relationship with her entire family line — and that covenant network must not be violated.

A. Lexical Analysis — The zimmah Designation vs. Standard ervah

The standard term for the arayot violations is **עֲרוּהָ (ervah)** — "nakedness" — the prohibition on uncovering the nakedness of a prohibited person. Law #168 uses **זִמְמָה (zimmah)** — a significant lexical step up. BDB documents zimmah appearing in contexts of the most severe sexual violations:

- **Vayikra 20:14**: "If a man takes a woman and her mother, it is zimmah" — the identical situation from the man's side (taking both mother and daughter), which draws the most severe penalty in the arayot list — burning.
- **Vayikra 19:29**: "Do not profane your daughter by making her a prostitute, lest the land fall into harlotry and the land become full of zimmah."
- **Yechezkel 22:9**: Yahweh's indictment of Yerushalayim for "zimmah" — the most severe sexual violations including incest.

The zimmah designation communicates that this violation combines sexual violation with treachery — using access to one family member as a pathway to violate others. It has a scheming, predatory character that the standard ervah prohibition does not specifically designate. This is why Vayikra 20:14 assigns the most severe arayot penalty — burning — to the man who takes both a woman and her mother.

B. The Granddaughter Extension

The verse explicitly extends the prohibition to the granddaughter — **בת-בנה** (son's daughter) and **בת-בתה** (daughter's daughter). This connects Law #168 directly to Laws #163 and #164 (Lesson 06). The protection of the granddaughter category is confirmed from two different angles in the same chapter of Vayikra: directly in verse 10 (the grandfather-granddaughter prohibition) and indirectly in verse 17 (the mother-daughter-granddaughter chain prohibition). Two Written Torah witnesses to the granddaughter's protection within the same chapter.

D. The Covenant Mercy of Yahweh — Sincere Repentance

Even where the Torah states the judgment of death, the covenant mercy of **Yahweh** is always extended to a person who sincerely repents. This is not a contradiction of the law — it is a covenant truth that runs through the entire Tanakh and must be stated plainly in every study.

Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 18:21-23 establishes this directly: ***"But if the wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed and observes all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness, he shall surely live; he shall not die. All his transgressions which he has committed will not be remembered against him; because of his righteousness which he has practiced, he shall live. Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked,' declares the Lord Yahweh, 'rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?"***

This is the covenant position of **Yahweh** Himself — not a weakening of the law, but the full covenant framework. The death penalty is the Torah's declaration of the **gravity** of the sin. Yahweh's mercy through genuine repentance is the Torah's declaration of His **covenant character**. Both are true simultaneously. The Hoshea narrative is the clearest demonstration: **Yahweh** pursued covenant restoration with Yisra'el after centuries of

spiritual adultery — not because the sin was less serious, but because His covenant love is greater than His judgment, for those who genuinely return.

The Sexuality Household Study (Section 46) states: *"Yahweh's covenant with Yisra'el did not end when Yisra'el committed adultery against Him — spiritually, repeatedly, across centuries. Yahweh pursued covenant restoration through every prophet He sent. The word to every person in covenant community who has violated zimmah — the violation of the covenant family network is the same word Yahweh gave through Hoshea: return. The door of covenant restoration is the same door that stands open before Yisra'el in every prophetic book. What Yahweh requires is not performance — it is the sincere turning of the heart, the genuine abandonment of the covenant violation, and the humble return to the covenant structure He designed."* That is **Yahweh's** covenant: judgment is real, mercy is greater, and repentance is the bridge between the two.

Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 18:23 — JPS 1985

"Is it My desire that a wicked person shall die? — says the Lord Yahweh. It is rather that he shall turn back from his ways and live."

Witness: Yahweh's own stated desire — not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn and live. The judgment of the law establishes the gravity. The mercy of Yahweh through repentance establishes the covenant character. Both stand together in every lesson of this course.

SECTION II — TWO/THREE WITNESS CORROBORATION

Reference	Teaching / Witness
Vayikra (Lev.) 18:17	Primary text — the zimmah designation for this violation. Three generations protected. First witness.
Vayikra (Lev.) 20:14	"If a man takes a woman and her mother, it is zimmah; they shall be burned with fire." The elevated penalty — burning — confirms the elevated zimmah designation. The most severe penalty in the arayot list. Second witness.
Vayikra (Lev.) 19:29	"Do not profane your daughter by making her a prostitute, lest the land fall into harlotry and the land become full of zimmah." Zimmah designates the degradation of the entire covenant community through sexual violation. Third witness confirming the term's weight and scope.
Vayikra (Lev.) 18:10	Laws #163 & #164 — the granddaughter protection. Law #168 extends the same protection to the granddaughter of a sexual partner — confirming the granddaughter protection from two different angles within the same chapter.
Yechezkel (Ez.) 22:9-11	Yahweh's prophetic indictment of Yerushalayim includes zimmah — grave sexual violations including incest. The prophetic use confirms the term's consistent designation for the most severe sexual covenant crimes at the national level.
Yechezkel (Ez.) 18:21-23	Yahweh's covenant mercy — sincere repentance opens the door even from zimmah violations. The judgment is real; the mercy is greater for those who genuinely return.

SECTION III — FOUR-SPHERE APPLICATION

Level	Sphere	Application	Torah Witness
INDIVIDUAL	Covenant Network Bonds — Three Generations	Sexual union creates covenant bonds across the family network. A man who has relations with a mother has entered a covenant network that prohibits her daughters and granddaughters. The Torah protects every generation of that network simultaneously.	Vayikra 18:17
INDIVIDUAL	Zimmah — Premeditated Covenant Treachery	The zimmah designation communicates the scheming, predatory character of this violation — using access to one family member as a pathway to violate others. This is not merely a covenant violation; it is a calculated covenant betrayal.	Vayikra 18:17; 20:14
INDIVIDUAL	Sincere Repentance — Yahweh's Covenant Mercy	Even for zimmah violations, Yahweh's covenant mercy is extended to sincere repentance (Yechezkel 18:21-23). The judgment of burning (Vayikra 20:14) establishes the gravity. The mercy of Yahweh through genuine return establishes the covenant character.	Yechezkel 18:21-23
COMMUNITY	Adjudicate Covenant Network Violations	Where a covenant community member has had sexual access to a woman and then	Vayikra 18:29; Devarim 19:15

		approaches her daughters or granddaughters, this is a zimmah violation requiring the full covenant response — not merely private counseling.	
COMMUNITY	Protect Every Generation	The covenant community's protection obligation extends to every generation within the family network. A daughter who reports that her mother's partner has approached her is making a zimmah accusation — the community must respond with the full seriousness of that designation.	Vayikra 18:17
COMMUNITY	Care for the Violated	Those who have been violated through zimmah — daughters or granddaughters exploited through the man's access to their mother — require the covenant community's full pastoral care. They are image-bearers of Yahweh whose covenant dignity is inviolable even when violated.	Bereishit 1:27; Hoshea 2:14-20
NATION	Prosecute Step-Family Violations	Many cases of this violation occur in step-family and blended-family contexts — a man who has sexual access to a woman and then violates her daughter(s). National law must treat these as aggravated violations of the family covenant	Vayikra 20:14

		structure, not ordinary sexual crimes.	
NATION	Three-Generation Protection in National Law	National child protection law must extend to daughters and granddaughters of sexual partners — recognizing that predatory access patterns frequently exploit blended family structures.	Vayikra 18:17
WORLD	Covenant Network Protection is Universal	Every culture has recognized that sexual predators exploit access to families to reach multiple members. Yahweh's covenant law prohibiting this pattern is universal covenant law — confirmed by universal cross-cultural moral consensus against it.	Vayikra 18:24-28
WORLD	The Most Severe Arayot Penalty — A World Witness	The burning penalty of Vayikra 20:14 — the most severe in the arayot list — is Yahweh's world-level declaration of the gravity of zimmah. When national legal systems fail to prosecute this pattern aggressively, they depart from the covenant standard Yahweh established.	Vayikra 20:14; 18:24-28

SECTION IV — THREE-RELIGION AUDIT

Judaism

Upholds Torah: The prohibition is upheld within the full arayot framework. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 76b) discusses the zimmah designation and confirms the elevated severity of this violation. The highest penalty — burning — is preserved in the legal tradition as the covenant designation even where it cannot be executed. **Consistent application:** No halakhic authority permits a man to have sexual relations with both a woman and her daughter or granddaughter. The three-generation protection is fully maintained.

Christianity

Upholds Torah: Step-family incest of this pattern is universally condemned across all Christian traditions. **Departs from Torah:** The absence of the Torah's zimmah covenant-legal framework — which designates this as the most severe category of arayot violation — means the condemnation often lacks its full covenant grounding. Without the Torah's framework, the pattern is treated as generic sexual abuse rather than the specific covenant network betrayal the Torah designates.

Islam

Upholds Torah: An-Nisa 4:22-23 explicitly prohibits marrying two sisters and a woman and her daughter — extending the family-network-protection principle. The prohibition on a woman and her daughter is maintained in Islamic jurisprudence as part of the mahram (forbidden) framework. The Islamic parallel tracks the Torah closely. **World witness:** The convergence of all three traditions on this prohibition — including the three-generation extension — is a three-tradition witness to the universal covenant force of Law #168.

STUDY REVIEW & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Individual Level

1. The Torah uses the term **זָמְמָה (zimmah)** for this violation rather than the standard **עֲרֻוָּה (ervah)** designation. Using BDB, HALOT, and Gesenius, explain what the zimmah designation communicates that the standard ervah designation does not. What does this tell us about how **Yahweh** views the predatory, scheming character of this violation?
2. Vayikra 20:14 assigns the most severe penalty in the arayot list — burning — to the man who takes a woman and her mother. How does this most-severe penalty designation function as a world-level declaration of the gravity of zimmah violations?
3. Yechezkel 18:21-23 establishes Yahweh's covenant mercy for sincere repentance. How does the zimmah designation — the most severe arayot category — interact with Yahweh's mercy framework? Can a person who has committed zimmah be genuinely restored through repentance?

Community Level

4. A woman reports to covenant community leadership that her mother's long-term partner has now approached her sexually. Using the zimmah framework of Vayikra 18:17 and the witness standard of Devarim 19:15, what is the community's immediate covenant obligation?
5. The community discovers that a man has had sexual relations with a woman and subsequently with her adult daughter — both are now in the community. What does the covenant community do — and in what order of priority?

National Level

6. Step-parent incest — a man who has sexual access to a woman's children through the relationship — is among the most common patterns of this zimmah violation in modern society. How should national law treat this pattern — and how does the Torah's zimmah designation (most severe arayot category) inform the appropriate legal response?

World Level

7. The convergence of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam on the prohibition of a man having sexual relations with both a woman and her daughter constitutes a three-tradition world witness to the law's universal covenant force. How does this convergence function under the Devarim 19:15 standard?

SCRIPTURE INDEX — LESSON 08

Reference	Teaching / Witness
Bereishit (Gen.) 1:27	Every person in the covenant network is an image-bearer of Yahweh — violated persons retain their covenant dignity.
Vayikra (Lev.) 18:10	Laws #163 & #164 — granddaughter protection confirmed from a second angle within the same chapter.
Vayikra (Lev.) 18:17	Law #168 — primary text. Zimmah designation. Three generations protected simultaneously.
Vayikra (Lev.) 19:29	Zimmah as national-level defilement — the term's scope confirmed.
Vayikra (Lev.) 20:14	Capital penalty — burning — for taking a woman and her mother. The most severe arayot penalty. Confirms the zimmah designation's weight.
Devarim (Deut.) 19:15	Two or three witnesses — governs all adjudication.
Yechezkel (Ez.) 22:9-11	Prophetic indictment of Yerushalayim for zimmah — national covenant judgment.
Yechezkel (Ez.) 18:21-23	Yahweh's covenant mercy — the door of sincere repentance remains open even from zimmah.
Hoshea (Hosea) 2:14-20	The covenant pursuit of restoration — the mercy framework applied to those who have been violated and to those who genuinely repent.

""Is it My desire that a wicked person shall die? — says the Lord Yahweh. It is rather that he shall turn back from his ways and live.""

Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 18:23

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Next: Lesson 09 — Law #169 — Vayikra 18:18 — Wife and Her Sister as Rivals