

## Jewish Values and Human Sexuality

### 1. *B 'tzelem Elohim*

The Torah teaches that humans are created in God's image. This implies the "the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual parts of our being are inherently neither dirty nor base" Dorff 1995. Judaism views sexuality in its proper context as holy.

### 2. *Kedushah*

Jewish tradition views sex as a vehicle for holiness. While Judaism acknowledges the biological and physiological aspects of sexuality, it strives to add a sense of discipline and responsibility to how we behave toward ourselves and others. Because it is holy, the expression of sexuality must not be manipulative, abusive, or self-destructive.

### 3. *Pikuach Nefesh*

The value of safe-guarding all life. When applied to sexual behavior this implies making responsible choices about risky behavior.

### 4. *Kavod Habriyot*

Respect for fellow human beings. This value obligates us to focus on what is best for our sexual partner as well as for ourselves. With all intimate relationships, honest and open communication are essential. Sexual relationships have to be seen as a decision between equals.

### 5. *Tzeniyut*

Modesty or Decorum. In a sexual context *tzeniyut* may be expressed in our behavior in a public setting. This value, often associated with appearance and dress, can also be applied to actions and words.

### 6. *Pleasure*

While procreation is an important component of sexuality, Judaism places importance upon gratification and pleasure. Rashi (12th c.) explains having sexual relations on Shabbat eve as an obligation, because Shabbat is for "pleasure, rest and physical enjoyment". This implies that even those incapable of having children should marry and engage in sexual behavior for pleasure and companionship.