

# Zîmmâh זִמָּה [pronounced zim-MAWH]

1. Zîmmâh (Strong's #2154, 2161 BDB #273) is very close to the word zâmam (זָמַם) [pronounced zaw-MAM], which is a verb for *plan, devise, purpose* (Strong's #2161 BDB #273) and to m'zîmmâh (זִמָּה) [pronounced m'zim-MAWH] which seems to mean *well-thought out wickedness or evil* and is possibly the same word essentially (Strong's 4209 BDB #273).<sup>1</sup> My hypothesis would be that this word would refer to that which is immoral, degenerate and absolutely wrong, but well-thought out or planned and that this word and m'zîmmâh are the same word but employed by different writers.
2. Unfortunately, this word is translated almost as many different ways as it is found:
  - a. KJV: *wickedness, lewdness, purposes, heinous crime, mischief, thought, wicked devices, lewd [way]*, and an inexplicable margined note *enormity*.
  - b. NASB: *lewdness, immorality, plans, lustful crime, wicked scheme, wickedness, evil intent, lewd conduct, crime*.
3. Zîmmâh is first found in Lev. 18:17 and is associated with incest between a man and his step-children or his step-grand children.
4. Making one's own daughter into a prostitute is associated with zîmmâh in Lev. 19:29.
5. If a man has two wives, both a mother and her daughter, such an act is so *immoral* (zîmmâh) that both are to be burned with fire (Lev. 20:14). That is a capital offense for an act of immorality.
6. I would have expected to find this word often in the book of Judges but it occurs one time. A Levite comes into the land of Gilead with his concubine and she is raped by several of the men of that area to the point that she dies—the husband classifies this as zîmmâh (Judges 20:6).
7. Job 17:11 is a problem because this word is found and translated *plan* and there is no evil or immorality either real or implied in context. Job is likely a coterminous or an older book than Leviticus. We also find m'zîmmâh in Job 21:27 and 42:2. However, it is possible that the addition of the m' turned this word into a word for *planned out evil* as gross immorality is not associated with either word in Job; furthermore, the last reference deals with the *plans* of God. Someday I will get to Job. The Hebrew language in it may have its own peculiarities and be a dialect or be almost a prototype Hebrew, depending upon when it was written. I would have first attributed this to a *typo*, if you will, because if you remove the bottom portion of the mêm (מ), it would look as much like hêh (ה) as anything else (recall that the vowel points were not found in the original manuscripts). However, such a thing occurring twice would be unlikely. For this reason, since these two words are found in Job with absolutely no connection to immorality, yet they are found in Leviticus with a definite connection to gross immorality, that the word either has two different coterminous meanings or Job is written in a slightly different dialect a prototype Hebrew, if you will. Zîmmâh is also found in Job 31:11 and it is tied directly to immorality there.
8. This word is associated with a gang of men devoted to bloodshed, bribes, and hands full of zîmmâh in Psalm 26:10.
9. Those who are far from God's Law are associated with this word in Psalm 119:150.
10. We all recognize that certain individuals look upon acts of crime and immorality as a game of sorts. This is not new; such activity was found in Solomon's day in Prov. 10:23 and associated with this word. This certainly would associate this word with some that is *planned out* as these criminals treat this sort of activity as a sport, a challenge, something to do for fun. *Pre-planning* also seems to be the underlying thread of the use of zîmmâh in Prov. 24:9.
11. A different use of the word is found in Prov. 21:27, but the same pre-planning seems to be there. This word is associated with trying to *strap it on God*, as Thieme used to say.
12. Isa. 32:7 seems to lean toward more *pre-planning* as an emphasis rather than *immorality* (although they could both be very well involved) in the use of zîmmâh.
13. Jeremiah, however, clearly associates this word with gross immorality in Jer. 13:27 (*lewdness*).
14. It is interesting to examine the vocabularies of certain prophets. Jeremiah and Isaiah both used this word but once, yet Ezekiel liked it, found it appropriate to his historical perspective and he used it 13 times. The similarities in the vocabulary found in Leviticus and Numbers and Ezekiel lead me to believe that he concentrated his own personal studies in these two books.

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<sup>1</sup> I need to examine m'zîmmâh separately at a different time, as this word seems to be truly schizophrenic as it is found in Prov. 1:4 2:11 cpw 12:2 14:17.

- a. Ezek. 16:27, 57: The immorality of the Jews has gotten to the point that even the daughters of the Philistines are ashamed of their *lewdness*. They despise the Jews for this *lewdness* and the Jews would bear the penalty for their own *lewdness*.
  - b. Ezek. 16:43: On top of all their abominations, the Jews commit acts of *lewdness*.
  - c. Ezek. 22:9–11: *Zîmmâh* is associated with certain acts of immorality.
  - d. Ezek. 23:21: *Zîmmâh* is associated with one's youthful immorality in a wistful way.
  - e. Ezek. 23:27–29, 35, 49: Israel will be punished for these acts of immorality.
  - f. Ezek. 23:44: This word is associated with immoral women.
  - g. Ezek. 23:48: God will put an end to this *lewdness*.
  - h. Ezek. 24:13: This *planned immorality and lewdness* seemed to be Israel's articular brand of sin during Ezekial's time.
15. It's final usage in Hos. 6:9 is not an association with sexual immorality, per se, but with planned immorality. A group of priests are guilty of murder; this would make them immoral in relation to God and their position as one's who represent man to God and God's provisions to man.
  16. In conclusion, with the exception of the difficult passages in Job, I would say that this word has two primary components: *planning* and *gross immorality*. Therefore, it should be rendered [*carefully-planned gross*] *immorality*.