

A Happy Ending to my Daughter's Situational Lesbianism

By Hope

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For two long years I dreamed about being able to write this letter. My story is that of a mother who fought with the proverbial "nails and teeth" to "rescue" her now 40 year old daughter from the tentacles of what I believe was a woman looking to take advantage of the tragedy my daughter had suffered.

Since her days in High school, my daughter Leeron was what you'd call a very attractive and popular teenager. Girls wanted to be her friends, boys wanted to date her. She was popular and well accepted by her peers. Leeron is not only beautiful but also smart; she was always an overachiever in school. Not once during her growing up years however, did I get any indication or suspicion that she might have same sex sexual inclinations.

When she met and married Shai in 2001, we all shared their happiness. Leeron and Shai built a beautiful family in a few short years; G-d blessed them with four beautiful children. But then something terrible happened, Shai was diagnosed with colon cancer and all their dreams and hopes for a beautiful future came crushing down. He passed away in 2008. That was one of those instances in which people try to make sense of something very painful and ask themselves, why? Why did this tragedy happen to such a nice, complete, and happy family?

The following two years were very challenging for the young family. Shai fought for his life like a lion. For Leeron and the children, watching him getting consumed by the cancer day by day was like living a nightmare. Leeron was now the only bread winner in the family. In her desperation, she clung to her family and her work friends for moral support. She was devastated by life's circumstances and sought comfort and support wherever she could find it.

Maureen was a colleague at the company where Leeron worked. It was only a few months later (after Shai's death) that I noticed something new going on in my daughter's life. At first I thought she was dating a male colleague but soon enough the shocking reality revealed itself in its full colors. Her "friend" was a WOMAN. Once I got over the initial shock, I decided to approach my daughter, questioning her reasoning over her decision to experience a same sex emotional and sexual relationship. Leeron never came clear about the facts. She did not care to explain or to reason with her own mother. She felt that she had gone through so much pain and suffering, that nobody had the right to dictate her how to live her life. I could only assume certain things, based upon the advice and reading materials provided to me by JONAH. And, I was determined to discover what caused this loving and devoted wife and mother of 4 children to enter into a lesbian relationship and to also do whatever I could to help her overcome this relationship.

Deep down, she was dealing with a sense of emotional neediness, having spent so much emotion on Shai's care over the last two years. She felt empty and lost without him. Along came a newfound friend who preyed upon my bewildered, frightened and angry daughter; they shared a mutual confidence level while exploring their deepest feelings. At the same time, however, I believe Maureen, the new friend, used the confidences shared by my daughter as a way to meet her own emotional needs for attachment to a woman while simultaneously providing Leeron with what appeared to be empathetic and unconditional love for the pain she was suffering. In this process, Maureen subtly encouraged my daughter to find love, acceptance and satisfaction in her lesbian lifestyle. I also believe she encouraged my daughter to distance herself from others like me who would or could have voiced an opinion about this new life she was embarking upon. With Maureen's encouragement, she had consciously alienated herself from our entire family. Leeron did not want to be confronted about what she was doing or to be criticized. And, she would not communicate with me about her deep wounds. Bottom line, I believe that Maureen deliberately encouraged Leeron to be emotionally dependent upon her.

One of the things the therapist Janelle Hallman has said really resonated with me: "When another woman comes along that triggers a sense of familiarity or presents herself to be a strong and competent woman, the lesbian literally wants to lose herself in this woman, hoping to find rest, receive the care and nurture she craves and to finally appropriate, albeit vicariously, an identity." I saw Leeron feeling totally reliant on this other woman, both for safety and in order to continue to function. This is distinguished from an emotionally healthy relationship where two people know who they are and recognize themselves as individuals. This "emotional dependency" is characteristic of lesbian relationships and often is the consequence of a woman's deep fear of or inability to sustain intimacy.

Another relevant factor became evident from a different article. Therapist Diane Eller-Boyko (who is also an ex-lesbian) wrote, "In falling in love with another woman, [Leeron] is really seeking to connect with herself... A woman is [often] drawn to other women because she seeks heart and soul connection." Or, in Leeron's case, I believe my daughter was trying to replenish a heart and soul connection that was depleted or was no longer visible to her through the years of Shai's illness. In this process, such women often reject their own femininity and effectively end up seeking it through another. "In seeking to unite with [another] women, she is trying to unite with herself, and this type of union will not, ultimately, heal the psyche. With another woman, she will have only the illusion of wholeness. The shadow, representing those real developmental needs that were never met, will continue to haunt her."

During this time, I was still worried about the mental health of my 4 young grandchildren after they lost their beloved father, but now I had to also deal with their stories about what was going on at home. One time I witnessed a bitter argument between 2 of the siblings about whether Maureen was a "boy" or a "girl". My life became hell on earth. Not only was I still grieving for

my beloved son-in-law but now I had to worry about the psychological implications of my daughter's actions upon my grandchildren.

These kinds of situations teach a human being that we are stronger than we think we are. To me this situation felt like "the end of the world" but I still survived. I took comfort in praying, sometimes softly and sometimes desperately. I'll never forget that time when I felt so desolated that I needed to be alone and away from the concerned eyes of my own husband. I locked myself in the bathroom and got on my knees in prayer... Some of you might say that it is not the end of the world, but for me it was. As a religious person, I truly believe that the SSA condition should be fought because it is inconsistent with G-d's commandments for us. Many rabbis have commented how everyone is capable of transforming and that psychological counseling can be immensely beneficial to someone dealing with this condition. (The most recent pronouncement to this effect is from the noted Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetsky in *Hakirah: the Flatbush Journal of Jewish Law and Thought*, Vol. 12, Fall, 2011.)

I truly believe that G-d heard my prayers and took pity on my misery. Something miraculous happened! About a year ago, Leeron met David and the rest is history. David is a wonderful man who cares enough about Leeron to be willing to help her raise her 4 children. I am unaware whether Leeron had the courage to tell David about her experience with lesbianism. (I believe my daughter knows, deep inside, that her relationship with Maureen was wrong.) I hope she informs David about her past activity as I fear he may find out through a third party or from the children, and finding out that way could destroy the trust and love that has been built up between them. Without a doubt, however, I am extremely happy with her relationship with David. My prayers have been answered. Moreover, David is helping her shed her grief, anger, and loneliness. He is assisting her in tearing down the walls of distrust she had built after the loss of her husband.

As a religious person, I recognize how part of our hunger for G-d, that we as humans seek, is to truly experience our innermost selves, our souls if you will. Lesbianism can provide a false sense of connected souls but only authentic man-woman relationships provide a sense of completion as well as a connection of souls that truly represents a gift provided to us by G-d.

I got my life back. My grandchildren are happy again. No one can substitute for a real father, but a loving stepfather is the next best thing. And, my daughter appears to be in a relatively good space. Her lesbian affair is behind her and she appears very happy with David. She is still somewhat detached from her family, most likely because of the guilt and shame she may still be feeling. I continue to pray that she will engage in counseling to understand where she came from and where she is going and in the process to totally reconnect with all who truly love her.

Why am I telling my story? Because I am convinced that among same sex couples, there are those who got there because of their own difficult life circumstances. I have seen in my community that some lesbians take satisfaction and pride in "converting" otherwise completely "normal" women into lesbians. What a better way to obtain this than to prey on a distressed woman who is going through a tragedy in her life. I believe that my daughter was so vulnerable that any kind of "gentle" attention attracted her to the attention giver. Thank G-d, Leeron was able to see the light, and walk away from lesbianism.