



Review

References to the paraphilias and sexual crimes in the Bible

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ABSTRACT

While writing a book on paraphilias, the author made a thorough search of early references to paraphilias in literature, especially the Bible. Surprisingly just one published paper was available in the literature having any discussion on the references of paraphilia in the Bible, and that too was in French. [Bieder J. The polymorphous sexual deviant: a reading of Freud and the Bible. *Ann Med Psychol* (Paris) 1973;2(2):274–81 [in French]]. For the readers in English language, nothing was available on this interesting topic. The author undertook the task of reading the original Bible and finding out instances of paraphilias mentioned therein. Main paraphilias, abnormal sexual behavior and sexual crimes to which explicit allusions were present in the Holy Bible were adultery, incest, sexual harassment, drug facilitated sexual assault, rape, gang rape, homosexuality, transvestism, voyeurism, bestiality, exhibitionism and necrophilia.

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1. Introduction

Few topics in the realm of human behavior are more fascinating, exciting, or perhaps contentious and controversial than sex. It is interesting, intriguing and sometimes even disturbing. It has stimulated more attention than any other aspect of human behavior. Still more curiosity is aroused by sexual practices deemed unusual, deviant or deplorable. Known variously as sexual perversions, sexual deviations or more commonly paraphilias, these practices range from the commonly known sadism, masochism, fetishism and voyeurism to such uncommon and esoteric as homophilia (sexual arousal from hearing or giving sermons), choreophilia (sexual arousal from dancing) and tripsolagnia (sexual arousal from having hair shampooed).^{2,3}

According to the revised fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV-TR),⁴ all sexual disorders are divided into three groups (i) *The Sexual Dysfunctions*, characterized by inhibitions in sexual desire or dysfunction of

the psychophysiological changes that characterize the sexual response cycle. These are the most common of all sexual disorders⁵ (ii) *The Paraphilias*, characterized by arousal in response to sexual objects or situations not part of normal arousal-activity patterns, and which may interfere with a capacity for reciprocal, affectionate sexual activity and (iii) *The Gender Identity Disorders*, characterized by distinct and continuous identification with the opposite sex and persistent discomfort with one's own.

Paraphilias, according to DSM-IV-TR are diagnosed by two criteria. It states:

The essential features of a Paraphilia are recurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviors generally involving (1) nonhuman objects, (2) the suffering or humiliation of oneself or one's partner, or (3) children or other nonconsenting persons, that occur over a period of at least 6 months (**Criterion A**). For some individuals, paraphiliac fantasies or stimuli are obligatory for erotic arousal and are always included in sexual activity. In other cases, the paraphiliac preferences occur only episodically (e.g. perhaps during periods of stress), whereas at other times, the person is able to function sexually without paraphiliac fantasies or stimuli. The behavior, sexual

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urges, or fantasies cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning (**Criterion B**).

There are certain other behaviors, which the DSM-IV-TR does not recognize as paraphilias, e.g. incest, where both partners are adults, making it out of bounds of pedophilia. In most societies however, these are considered crimes of a sexual nature and are punishable. Paraphilias and sex crimes actually seem to form a continuum with one end relatively innocuous, and the other criminal. Some relatively harmless paraphilias, such as fetishism seem to occupy the innocuous end, while heinous sexual crimes, such as lust murder occupy the criminal end. Most paraphilias and sexual crimes would occupy places somewhere within this continuum. Some behaviors are pure paraphilias (e.g. fetishism), others pure sex crimes (e.g. adultery, rape, incest, prostitution, pornography) and still others have elements of both (e.g. exhibitionism, voyeurism). How old are the paraphilic behaviors and sexual crimes in relation to human history? Have they evolved in response to our more free sexual society, or were they present in the earliest society too? Several cave pictures of men having intercourse with animals would indicate that at least bestiality was common even in prehistoric men. For the behavior patterns prevalent in historical times, it is only prudent to fall back upon earliest written historical documents. One of the earliest written historical document is the Holy Bible.

A thorough search of the medical literature revealed that just one reference was available in the literature having any discussion on the references of paraphilia in the Bible, and that too was in French.¹ For the readers in English language, nothing was available on this interesting topic. The author undertook the task to reading the original Bible and finding out instances of paraphilias mentioned.

2. Adultery

Adultery is prohibited according to the Bible. Exodus, the Second Book of Moses says:

Thou shalt not commit adultery.⁶

Leviticus, the Third Book of Moses, prescribes penalties for several acts of immorality. Among them is adultery.

And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.⁷

Intercourse with one's neighbor's wife is specifically prohibited.

Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbor's wife, to defile thyself with her.⁸

3. Incest

The very first instance of incest is supposed to be in the Bible itself.

And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch.⁹

Since at that time, there were no other females except Eve, it is thought that Cain had a union with his mother, or perhaps a sister who has been unnamed.

Moses, the great leader of Israel, was himself born as a result of an incestuous relationship.

And Amram took him Joch'ebed his father's sister to wife; and she bare him Aaron and Moses: and the years of the life of Amram were a hundred and thirty and seven years.¹⁰

One of the most famous instance of father-daughter incest (when incidentally the initiative was taken by daughters instead of the father), is when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for their perversion and terrible sinfulness. Lot's wife is turned into a pillar of salt and he is left only with his two daughters. In order to repopulate a devastated world, the daughters decide to have sexual intercourse with their father.

And Lot went up out of Zo'ar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zo'ar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters. And the first-born said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth: come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father. And the firstborn bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto this day. And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Ben-am'mi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day.¹¹

In later references however, incest is specifically prohibited in the Bible. Sexual intercourse with one's mother (biological or otherwise) and daughter-in-law is prohibited. The penalty is death for both.

And the man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man lie with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death: they have wrought confusion; their blood shall be upon them.¹²

Chapter 27 of Deuteronomy, the Fifth Book of Moses, prohibits one's sexual union with father's wife, sister (biological or step sister), and mother-in-law:

Cursed be he that lieth with his father's wife; because he uncovereth his father's skirt: and all the people shall say, Amen.¹³

Cursed be he that lieth with his sister, the daughter of his father, or the daughter of his mother: and all the people shall say, Amen.¹⁴

Cursed be he that lieth with his mother-in-law: and all the people shall say, Amen.¹⁵

4. Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is a serious issue today, with most nations having laws against this behavior. Mostly it is the females who are sexually harassed by males. However in the very first case of sexual harassment, it was a female who sexually harassed a male. The case occurred in Biblical times, when sexual advances were made on Joseph by his employer Potiphar's wife. Joseph had been taken from the Promised Land to Egypt by Ishmaelite traders, where Potiphar, a senior officer in Pharaoh's court, bought him

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