



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 firstborn 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

from them. Joseph turned out to be quite a bargain for Potiphar. He began to make all kinds of money for his master, so much so that Potiphar gave over the running of his estate to him. One day, as Potiphar was away, his wife looked at Joseph with desire, and said, "Lie with me." But he refused and told her, "Behold, with me around, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil, and sin against God?" But such refusals had little effect on her, and she requested Joseph day after day to lie with her. Seeing that her requests had little effect on Joseph, one day she caught him by his garment and said again, "Lie with me." Joseph left his garment in her hand and fled outside. Stung by his refusal, she complained to her husband, when he came home, that Joseph had wanted to sleep with her, and when she raised her voice, left his garment and fled outside. Potiphar believed his wife's story and had Joseph thrown into jail.¹⁶ If we go through the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) 1980 regulations regarding the definition of sexual harassment, we can well understand why Potiphar's wife invitations to Joseph to "lie with her" was a case of sexual harassment. The EEOC guidelines state that sexual harassment constitutes "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment".¹⁷

5. Drug facilitated sexual assault

One would instinctively imagine that this is one area whose references may not be available in the Bible. However Kutz¹⁸ thinks, that the sexual intercourse of Lot with his daughters would today be taken as drug rape. Lot's daughters used wine to drug him, before "lying" with him to extract his seed. The elder daughter had sexual intercourse with Lot on the first day and the younger on the next day. Lot was drugged with wine on both days. Both liaisons resulted in pregnancies.

6. Rape

The Bible clearly lays down the law of rape. If the woman who was raped was already married, then the penalty was death. If she was unmarried, the ravisher must pay 50 shekels of silver to her as well as marry her.

And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife. If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins.¹⁹

Deuteronomy also sheds some light on the laws of rape:

If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto a husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbor's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you. But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her; then the man only that lay with her shall die: but unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death: for as when a man riseth against his neighbor, and slayeth him, even so is this matter: for he found her in the field, and the betrothed damsel cried, and there was none to save her. If a man find a damsel that is

a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days.²⁰

The last sentence signifies that such a culprit would never be allowed to divorce his wife. Despite the punishments prescribed for rape, there are several instances of rape in the Bible. Perhaps the most telling of them all is where Amnon, the son of David and Ahinoam rapes his half sister Tamar (daughter of David and Maachah). Amnon was so much infatuated with Tamar that he became physically ill as a result of his amorous ardor. He wanted to see her privately, but because of the custom of segregating young men and women from one another, he couldn't get to see her. Finally his crafty cousin Jonadab suggested him a trick to get to meet Tamar. The suggestion was that Amnon would feign illness and request his father David to send Tamar to him to nurse him. Amnon succeeded and Tamar finally came to his room. Amnon sent all the men away from his sick chamber so that he and Tamar could be alone. As soon as they were alone, Amnon asked Tamar to go to bed with him. Tamar – quite rightly – refused, saying that it would amount to a crime of incest. She however suggested that Amnon speak to David and ask him for her hand in marriage, so that there would be no scandal about the affair. In Biblical times, it was okay to have sexual intercourse with close relatives, if they were married, but not otherwise. Amnon however did not listen to Tamar and forcibly raped her. And after he was through, he expelled Tamar from his chamber, because he hated her, for she had refused his request for sexual intercourse.

And when she had brought them unto him to eat, he took hold of her, and said unto her, Come lie with me, my sister. And she answered him, Nay, my brother, do not force me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel: do not thou this folly. And I, whither shall I cause my shame to go? and as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, I pray thee, speak unto the king; for he will not withhold me from thee. Howbeit he would not hearken unto her voice: but, being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her. Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her. And Amnon said unto her, Arise, be gone. And she said unto him, There is no cause: this evil in sending me away is greater than the other that thou didst unto me. But he would not hearken unto her. Then he called his servant that ministered unto him, and said, Put now this woman out from me, and bolt the door after her. And she had a garment of divers colors upon her: for with such robes were the king's daughters that were virgins appareled. Then his servant brought her out, and bolted the door after her. And Tamar put ashes on her head, and rent her garment of divers colors that was on her, and laid her hand on her head, and went on crying.²¹

Another notable instance of rape occurs when Dinah, Jacob's only daughter is raped by Shechem, although he did try to make amends by offering marriage to her afterwards. Shechem was the son of Hamor, the Hivite, who ravished Dinah as she was roaming out.

And Dinah the daughter of Le'ah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her. And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel. And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife.²²

Jacob's sons (and Dinah's brothers) were quite resentful of this rape. They did agree to Shechem's request of giving Dinah to him in marriage, but with retribution in mind. They put up a precondition that Shechem and all people of his tribe agree to be circumcised. All of them agree to their demand. On the third day of circumcision, when all Hivites were weak and suffering from fever as a result of aftereffects of circumcision, Simeon and Levi, two brothers of Dinah enter the city and kill all Hivites including Shechem and his father Hamor. When Jacob, their father pleaded with them, that they should not have dealt with Hivites so barbarously, Simeon and Levi came up with this famous answer, "Should he deal with our sister as with a harlot?"²³

7. Gang rape

Instances of gang rape too can be found in the Bible. In one instance, the act of gang rape even kills the victim. A certain Levite, was returning home from his father-in-law's house in Bethlehem, along with his concubine-wife and his servant. They travel as far as Jebus when the sun sets, but they decide against spending the night there since it was not a city of Israel. They continue on to Gibeah, a city of the tribe of Benjamin. Upon their arrival in Gibeah, an old man offers them lodging for the night at his home. Soon many men of the city surround the house and demand the host to hand his male guests over to them so they could sodomise them. Since the old man wanted to protect his guests, he offered them his own virgin daughter, but they reject her. Finally they agree to take the Levite's concubine-wife, whom they rape the whole night. The next day the Levite finds that his wife is lying dead at his host's doorstep. In grief he loads her body onto his jack-ass, and on arrival home, dismembers her body into twelve parts, and sends one part each to the twelve tribes of Israel to apprise them of what had happened to his wife at the hands of the Benjaminites of Gibeah.²⁴

8. Homosexuality

Homosexuality is prohibited in the Bible.

If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.²⁵

The punishment is death for both partners.

Yet, there are several allusions to homosexuality in the Bible. Perhaps the most famous is the homosexual liaison between David and Jonathan, the eldest son of Saul. Jonathan is struck with love for David on their first meeting:

And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.²⁶

When Jonathan is slain on Mt. Gilboa by the Philistines, David laments his death by saying that his love for him surpassed the love of women, indicating that it was an attraction of the sexual kind between the two.

O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.²⁷

9. Transvestism

Transvestism was prohibited in the Bible. Deuteronomy, the Fifth Book of Moses says:

The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God.²⁸

10. Voyeurism

Some instances of voyeurism can be found in the Bible. The Book of Genesis mentions that once Noah was lying naked when his son Ham sees him naked.

And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan. These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread. And Noah began to be a husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: and he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. and he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.²⁹

Curiously though it is Ham who sees his father naked, it is Canaan, his son, who gets the punishment. Thus for this act of voyeurism, all the descendants of Ham's son Canaan were relegated to a position of perpetual servitude to the descendant's of Noah's two other sons, Japheth and Shem. Ham was black according to tradition, and this represented the beginning of the subjugation of the Negro race. However this view is now widely disputed.

Another instance of voyeurism in the Bible is when David gets up from his bed, walks around the roof of his palace and sees Bathsheba taking a bath. He gets so sexually aroused that he sends messengers to get her, so he could have sexual intercourse with her:

In the spring of the year, at the time when kings normally conduct wars, David sent out Joab with his officers and the entire Israelite army. They defeated the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed behind in Jerusalem. One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of his palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. Now this woman was very attractive. So David sent someone to inquire about the woman. The messenger said, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness (menstruation): and she returned unto her house."³⁰

In yet another Biblical instance of voyeurism, Abimelech of Gerar peeps out of his palace window and sees Isaac and Rebekah petting.

And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife.³¹

11. Bestiality

The Holy Bible has several allusions to sex with animals.

For she doted upon their paramours, whose flesh is as the flesh of asses, and whose issue is like the issue of horses.³²

Reference is being made here to Oholibah, the younger sister of Oholah. Both Oholah and Oholibah, became prostitutes and became infatuated with their neighbors, the Assyrians.

In the verse above, Ezekiel refers to the younger sister Oholibah, becoming so oversexed that she lusted after her lovers, whose flesh (penis) were like those of asses and whose issue (the amount of semen produced) was like that of horses."

The Bible here appears to be praising the lovers by comparing the size of their penises with the asses' and the power and speed that the semen come out with that of horses'.

At several places, the Bible proscribes sexual contact with animals.

Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion.³³

The penalty of bestiality is death for both the offender as well as the beast.

And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death; and ye shall slay the beast.³⁴

The beast was to be killed perhaps because it was feared, the sexual union between man and animal could give rise to monsters.

A woman committing bestiality is also to be put to death along with the beast.

And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.³⁵

The Old Testament states, "cursed be he that lieth with any manner of beast" (*Deuteronomy 27:21*) and "whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death" (*Exodus 22:19*).

12. Exhibitionism

Exhibitionism as a disorder was first described in a scientific journal in 1877 by a French physician and psychiatrist Charles Lasègue (1809–1883).³⁶ Although first described in 1877, instances of this could be found in the Bible. It is a case of exhibitionism, where a jubilant David engages in this activity.

The incident appears in the Bible like this. When David heard that the Lord had blessed Obed-edom the Gittite, because of the presence of the Ark of the Covenant in his house, he decided it to bring it home to the land of Zion. Since this was a festive occasion, David girded himself with a linen ephod (a garment, quite meager in size, commonly worn by priests in ancient Israelite culture), and "danced before the Lord with all his might". This garment was so scanty in size (David was not wearing any underwear too) that when priests approached the altar during religious ceremonies in the temple, they were warned not to ascend the steps of the altar, lest they would see his nakedness. Yet David, clad only in his ephod, leaped and danced so wildly that his wife Michal (daughter of Saul), who was watching from her window, could see his nakedness and despised him in her heart for his blatant exhibitionism.

And it was told king David, saying, The Lord hath blessed the house of O'bed-e'dom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of O'bed-e'dom into the city of David with gladness. And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of

the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart.³⁷

As soon as David came home, Michal, his wife accused him of exposing himself like a common pervert or flasher, because maidens of the city had also lined the road of the royal procession.

Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself.³⁸

However David, like a true exhibitionist, did not take her remarks kindly, and never had sexual relations with her afterwards, so Michal remained childless thereafter. Jehovah also objected to the frequent acts of exhibitionism which accompanied the pagan ceremonies. He wanted to be sure that his priests were always properly attired and that no exposure of the genitals would be possible as it was with the pagan priests. In Biblical times, a short skirt was the usual attire for a Hebrew priest, and it was possible that if the priest was careless, his genitals would become visible to others. In Exodus, the God specifically prohibits the priests from engaging in this form of exhibitionism.

Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.³⁹

When the Israelites later worshipped in a tent, where there were no steps at the entrance, God gave specific instructions for the priests to properly cover themselves, so no exhibitionistic acts could occur.

And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach.⁴⁰

13. Necrophilia

There are no references to necrophilia in the Bible directly, but some indirect references are there. One very clear example where shades of sadism and necrophilia can be seen is the famous dance of seven veils performed by Salomé. Salomé was the daughter of Herodias and Philip. Herodias began having an adulterous love affair with her brother-in-law Herod Antipas (brother of Philip). In order to marry each other, each of them divorced their spouses. John the Baptist spoke out publicly against this marriage, partly because both of them discarded their spouses and partly because marrying her ex-husband's brother was viewed as incestuous.

Both Herod Antipas and Herodias (who were now husband and wife) disliked it and wanted to silence him. But since the masses believed that John was a prophet, they were afraid to harm him in any way. Herod was especially afraid of him, and simply imprisoned him (John the Baptist) so he could remain silent. He did not put him to death for fear of reprisals from the masses. Herodias however loathed him, and wanted him killed.

Salomé, Herodias' daughter from her first marriage, lived with her and her new husband at his palace. Once at a celebration of Herod's birthday, the young and beautiful Salomé danced for Herod, and his guests. It was a very erotic dance, in which she peeled off each of her seven veils in turn until she was wearing little or nothing. Herod was so pleased by her dance (who incidentally was her step daughter) that he made a solemn oath in front of

all his guests to give her whatever she desired. At her mother's prompting, Salomé asked for John the Baptist's head on a plate. Herod was quite taken aback. He did not want to do this obviously, but he felt he needed to make good on the oath he had made in front of everyone, so he had John the Baptist beheaded and the head delivered to Salomé.

This is how the story is told in the Bible.⁴¹ However Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) wrote a play based on this story, where he showed that Salomé took a perverse fancy for John the Baptist, and caused him to be executed because John spurned her affections. In the finale, Salomé takes up John's severed head and kisses it, an act she was unable to do when John was living. In doing this, she reveals her sadistic and necrophiliac interests.

14. Conclusion

This review examines some of the references to paraphilias and sex crimes occurring in the Bible. It shows that these kinds of sexual behaviors were prevalent during Biblical times too. No attempt is made to deduce levels of morality prevalent during Biblical times from these instances. It is important to understand and visualize all such behaviors in a proper perspective. It is equally important to realize and appreciate that what is moral in one age and time, may at some other time, may begin to be seen as immoral and vice-versa. There was a time when it was considered immoral for even gynecologists to have a direct look at women's genitals. For this reason, any procedures they had to do on female genitals had to be done, looking in a mirror. Today this sounds laughable, even to an ordinary medical student. Similarly it is quite possible that what we consider today as moral and acceptable, may at some future date be condemned as being immoral, and vice-versa.

Finally it may be added that culture and sexuality are intimately intertwined, one influencing the other profoundly. Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin remarked quite aptly, "the ancient religious codes are still the prime sources of the attitudes, the ideas, the ideals, and the rationalizations by which most individuals pattern their sexual lives."⁴² It is quite possible our current sexual behavioral patterns are influenced – albeit subconsciously – by such ancient texts.

Conflict of interest

None declared.

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