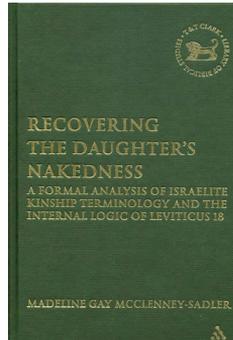


○ **REVIEW OF MADELINE GAY
MCCLENNEY-SADLER, *RECOVERING THE
DAUGHTER'S NAKEDNESS: A FORMAL
ANALYSIS OF ISRAELITE KINSHIP
TERMINOLOGY AND THE INTERNAL LOGIC OF
LEVITICUS 18***

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It has long been my belief that there is no edict against father-daughter incest in the Hebrew Bible. This is not the case, McClenney-Sadler argues in her book. Not only is father-daughter incest prohibited, so too is full-sister incest. Indeed, ‘One must avoid relations with close kin, if for no other reason than it is an infringement upon the rights of Yahweh. To do so is above all amoral [sic]; it is depravity’ (p. 110).

McClenney-Sadler sets aside two chapters to establish her methodology, which she summarises as ‘a social-structural reading of the biblical text that utilizes comparative ethnography and cognitive dissonance theory to illumine Lev. 18, to explain apparent inconsistencies in biblical law and narratives, and to reconstruct Israel’s kinship system’ (pp. 13–14), and which explores ‘the purpose and function of Israel’s incest prohibitions in light of its kinship system’ (p. 15). In chapter 3, McClenney-Sadler outlines three major theories regarding the origin of incest prohibitions, while in chapter 2 she discusses points of contact between anthropology and biblical studies, and especially biblical kinship studies which overlap with the social sciences (p. 10). Though she notes that there are some critics of the use of cross-cultural evidence, McClenney-Sadler does not engage with these criticisms (p. 12). Rather, she says, ‘the permanence of kinship systems ... and the kinship focus of the Pentateuch’, particularly Genesis, means this text more than any other deserves scrutiny for kinship system markers (p. 12). She suspends source criticism (p. 4), and excludes only ‘very late’ Pentateuchal texts (p. 12). McClenney-Sadler assumes com-

positional and intertextual unity, a 'tendentious kinship focus' which 'can be isolated from the ideological aims of other texts', and a pre-exilic setting (p. 12).

In chapter 5, McClenney-Sadler studies seven marriages in the Pentateuch from which she develops a theory of the preferred marriage form (pp. 57–63). She concludes that parallel cousin marriage was the preferred marriage type (although uncle-niece marriage is also present in the narratives she studies). In chapter 4, McClenney-Sadler conducts a formal analysis of Israel's kinship terminology and kinship system, syntagmatically and paradigmatically analysing such Hebrew kin terms as *'ab*, *'im*, *'ah*, *'ahot*, *ben*, *bat*, *hatan*, *calah*, and *dodah* for the determination of their lexical range (pp. 38–52). McClenney-Sadler differentiates between descriptive or denotative (the term changes from one page to the next) and classificatory kinship terms. A denotative/descriptive term 'limits the range of application to a single kinship category' (p. 34), while a classificatory term can apply to a person of two or more kinship categories (p. 35). For instance, in English 'sister' is a denotative/descriptive term, in that sister/s have an identical kinship to 'Ego' (p. 35), while in Hebrew, McClenney-Sadler proposes, it is classificatory, so 'does not *only* mean a female blood-related relative who shares the same parents' (p. 35). She determines that sister is 'a term of reference for any lineally or collaterally blood-related female' (p. 46).

If, however, this lexical field for 'sister' was retained in the incest prohibitions of Leviticus 18, parallel cousin marriage would in fact be prohibited. If 'sister' is a classificatory term referring to any lineally or collaterally blood related female, thereby including cousins, and one is not allowed to have a sexual relationship one's 'sister' (Lev. 18:9), how could one marry one's sister/cousin? McClenney-Sadler finds three prohibited relationships in the verse: sister, mother's daughter, and father's daughter. She argues that the range of application of the first term, 'sister', is classificatory while the following two terms, 'father's daughter' and 'mother's daughter', are descriptive. The first term is elucidated by the compiler in order to avoid confusion between a full sister and a cousin, all of whom would be addressed as 'sister' (p. 81). In this way the 'distinctions in v. 9 direct us away from the genealogical position of cousin' and indicate that the verse does not prohibit cousin marriage (p. 82).

Less convincing is McClenney-Sadler's analysis of the father-daughter prohibitions. The daughter is prohibited implicitly in Lev. 18:6 in that one cannot have sex with one's 'flesh', a term denoting the nuclear family, but McClenney-Sadler considers Lev. 18:17 to be an explicit daughter prohibition (p. 79). McClenney-Sadler translates *'ishah* as 'wife' rather than 'woman', and so is able to structure Lev. 18:7–17 as beginning and ending with the rights of a wife and conclude that the wife's rights are second only to Yahweh's. She argues that Lev. 18:17 focuses on the rights of the wife in relation to her daughters and granddaughters (p. 86). Lev. 18:18 also protects the rights of a wife in relation to her female kin. Lev. 18:17–18 therefore 'form a synthetic parallel unit' with both verses protecting the rights of a wife in relation to her 'consanguineal female kinspeople' (p. 87). That Lev. 18:17 is an explicit daughter prohibition is certain, McClenney-Sadler says, for two reasons: one cannot have sex with one's daughter without transgressing this rule, and; the literary form and structure of Lev. 18:6–18 'warrant this conclusion in every respect' (pp. 86–87). But Lev. 18:17 is no more an explicit daughter prohibition than is Lev. 18:6. A daughter is prohibited in Lev. 18:6 as a member of the nuclear family, and in Lev. 18:17 as the daughter of a woman in a sexual relationship with the man in question, Ego. Lev. 18:17 protects the inter-relationship of the two women involved (p. 87), but it does not protect the

daughter herself. Though there is no 'missing' daughter prohibition, as such, the daughter still is not actually listed in the incest prohibitions in her own right.

In chapter 6 also, McClenney-Sadler reads the Genesis narratives in light of the Leviticus incest prohibitions. Though the cognitive dissonance theory was used to good effect in her treatment of the Sarah-Abraham-Abimelech narratives in Genesis 12 and 20 (pp. 57–60), here McClenney-Sadler's readings are sometimes problematic. She argues that 'narratives addressing incest endogamy mitigate the rigidity of written legal traditions or explicate them' (93). The Genesis narratives she addresses serve to show that it is 'only in the absence of mitigating circumstances' that the most severe punishments would be inflicted (p. 110). In the case of Noah's son Ham, she says, a redactor misunderstood the meaning of the 'father's nakedness' and so added Gen. 9:23. The 'real meaning', in light of Leviticus 18, is that Ham had sexual relations with his father's wife or his own mother (p. 94). However, in Lev 20:11 the penalty for lying with the wife of one's father is death (p. 81). Being as there are no mitigating circumstances here, why is Ham cursed and not killed? Lot's daughters are not killed for their incest as Lev 20:11 requires because they were ensuring lineal continuation but a curse is implied in that their children will be estranged from the clan (p. 96). Jacob's marriage to Leah and Rachel is prohibited in Lev 18:18, and though there are no punishments listed for this practice, it is shown in the narrative to be 'a bad idea' (p. 98). Tamar's prohibited sexual relation with Judah is vindicated through the narrator's placing her story alongside Joseph's (pp. 98–102), and Jacob's curse on Reuben in Gen. 49:3–4 indicates that at the time of redaction a custom prohibited intercourse with one's father's concubine (p. 102).

It makes sense that the Israelite kinship system would be normative, and would prohibit father-daughter and brother-sister incest like most other cultures, but at times McClenney-Sadler's reasoning is unconvincing. Attempts to prove jural equality between men and women have resulted in occasional misreadings or forced readings of particular Pentateuchal texts. I find unwarranted McClenney-Sadler's declaration that 'A mother or wife is the legal head of the Iron Age household next to Yahweh' and 'All texts relating to women's authority will need to be reread in this light' (p. 110). Too much weight is given to scant textual evidence, and counter-evidence is ignored. The cursory treatments of the case against cross-cultural kinship studies (p. 12) and of the relation between law (Leviticus) and narrative (Genesis) (pp. 92–93), the assumptions about dating and textual unity (p. 12), as well as evidence that the book was not adequately proof-read, undermine the book's authority. It seems that there are several lines of thought running through the book, all competing for thesis status: establishing the purpose and function of the incest laws of Leviticus 18; comparing and contrasting incest laws and stories containing incest in Genesis (and explaining away the disparities); establishing Israel's kinship system within an anthropological model, and; conducting a feminist treatment of the kinship system and the incest laws, resulting in the titular re-covering of the daughter's nakedness. All these strands lie side by side but are not satisfactorily woven together. Consequently the reader is often left unclear as to where they are in the argument. Nevertheless, this is an interesting attempt to grapple with the incest prohibitions between particular family members. McClenney-Sadler presents a firm case for a brother-sister prohibition and does challenge the notion that a man may engage in sexual acts with his daughter with impunity.