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WHOLENESS AND HOLINESS — SYNERGY OR TENSION?

MEDICINE, DISEASE AND THE PURITY LAWS OF

ANCIENT ISRAEL

by

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I confirm that I was the originator and author of all of the work presented in this dissertation.

Financial support has neither been sought nor obtained for this work.

I have not previously submitted this dissertation at this or at another University.

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ABSTRACT

The Book of Leviticus has been described as the ‘first hygiene text’ based upon the observation that Leviticus contains a great deal of matter relating to two conditions. The first is צרעת translated in the Septuagint as λέπρα and confused in English translations with modern leprosy. The second, זוב was misused as a generic term for a whole spectrum of genital discharges. Apart from these, Leviticus contains nothing of a ‘medical’ nature. The question arises, as to whether these terms implied any sort of medical context or whether their only significance was as markers of ritual impurity to the priesthood.

In Chapter 1 this question is developed and an hypothesis arrived at. A hermeneutic and methodology for the study are introduced and discussed.

Chapter 2 is a review of the state of developing ‘medical practice’ in the Ancient Near East. Chapter 3 is concerned with the ideology of the levitical priesthood and their worldview in particular in respect of the establishment and operation of practice of ritual.

Chapter 4 treats on the Levitical notion of impurity considered from both taxonomical and sociological standpoints and these approaches are discussed in the context of the present study.

Chapters 5 and 6 each contain a detailed ‘medical exegesis’ of chapters 13 and 15 of Leviticus dealing with צרעת and זוב.

Chapter 7 contains a similar treatment of the biblical notion of blemish and addresses the question of whether this was a mark of impurity like צרעת and זוב.

In Chapter 8 embodies idea of contagion in the context of the ‘hygienic’ theme in Leviticus and the priests’ concern with what might imperil sacred objects.

Chapter 9 employs context logometrical analysis in a detailed study of the word צרעת and whether there was, in Ancient Israel, any relationship, adverse or synergic between the activities of the priests in preserving purity, and early healthcare practice.

Chapter 10 is a discussion of how צרעת has been seen from a theological perspective. While the exact nature of צרעת remains unknown, its biblical context — levitical and non levitical — is considered in relation to modern theories of the relationship of the impurity laws, sin and the wholeness↔ healthcare dynamic.

Chapter 11 is a presentation of the conclusions that may be drawn from this study in respect of the wholeness↔ holiness paradigm posited in the hypothesis.

It is concluded that there is no clear evidence to suggest that the priesthood saw צרעת and זוב in any terms commensurate with modern pathology and clinical medicine. Consequently it would be wrong to suppose, as many authors have, that in the levitical context, countermeasures to these conditions, though diagnostic, were hygienic in the modern, medical, — they were not, nor were they ever envisaged to be. That some of these measures subsequently found a significant place in preventive medicine appears to have been both fortuitous and fortunate.

CHAPTER 1 — INTRODUCTION — WHOLENESS.

HOLINESS AND HEALTHCARE

THE purpose of the present thesis is to investigate whether the *Levitical Purity Laws* of Ancient Israel were established and maintained solely as measures against defilement of sacred objects and places or whether they were also seen as public health measures contributing to the wellbeing of individuals and society. The Book of Leviticus has often been described as the ‘Earliest textbook of medical hygiene’. It is pertinent to ask if this appellation reflects intent on the part of the priests or is simply the result of an accretion of later redaction, exegesis and opinion, perhaps inappropriately. Gorman¹ has made the point that scholarship relating to the levitical priesthood has concentrated upon textual analysis with inadequate concern for the conceptual, ideological and theological aspects of the priestly cult. If the purity laws are to be seen as based largely upon ritual, this is an omission requiring remedy. Equally, it may be said that the medical aspects of the purity laws, if they existed at all, might have been emphasized by an overzealous desire to interpret them in terms of modern medical and scientific understanding.

OBJECTIVE

To investigate the relationship between the levitical, priestly, wholeness↔holiness paradigm for ritual purity and the development of medical practice in ancient Israel.

Within this objective it is possible to envisage certain specific aims and to relate these to a working hypothesis for the study.

¹ Frank H. Gorman, *The ideology of ritual: space, time and status in the priestly theology* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990).

AIMS

The present work is intended to concern itself with evaluating the levitical material to assess whether or not the priestly *Weltanschauung* provided a substrate permitting the development of a rudimentary form of public healthcare or was simply concerned with the establishment and maintenance of sacramental hygiene. In order to do this it is necessary to consider:

1. *The priestly world view and the place of ritual within it. (Chs 1 and 3)*
2. *The extent to which medicine/healthcare as we understand it today, had developed in the Ancient Near East (ANE) in general and in particular in Ancient Israel. (Chs 2, 3 and Appendices 2 and 5)*
3. *The nature of purity/impurity as seen by the levitical priesthood. (Ch 4)*
4. *The nature and provenance of the available textual material. (Appendix 3)*
5. *Those diseases/quasi-diseases and forms of blemish seen by the priests as causing ritual impurity. (Chs 5, 6, 7 and Appendices 4,5,6)*
6. *The transmissibility of risk to people, society and sacred objects by the contagious nature of such conditions. (Ch 8)*

As a working hypothesis for this thesis, the following is proposed. The specific aims to be considered in each category of the hypothesis are in square brackets:

HYPOTHESIS

1. *That in the worldview of the levitical priesthood, holiness was established and maintained through ritual purity.[Aims 1,2,3]*
2. *That ritual purity in individuals depended upon their organic integrity — wholeness. [Aims 1,2,3,4]*
3. *That wholeness was manifested in terms of bodily appearance and reproductive capacity and, to a lesser extent, by the absence of blemish. [Aims 5,6]*
4. *That wholeness, and therefore ritual purity, was compromised by violation of these categories. [Aims 3,5,6]*
5. *That the most serious of these violations, צרעת and זוב were characterized by their being contagious. [Aims 6]*
6. *That both צרעת and זוב had features in common with, but were not wholly identifiable as, diseases known today. [Aims 5,6]*
7. *That the priestly countermeasures— sacramental hygiene — taken against these infractions of wholeness were aimed solely at the preservation of holiness and should not be interpreted as rudimentary public health medicine. [Aims 1,3]*
8. *That their later adoption into the field of medical care was fortunate but unintentional. [Aims 1,2,3,4,5]*

From a consideration of this it may be seen that *wholeness* and *holiness* are the *parameters* governing all of the *variables* that may be considered in this investigation. It is necessary, therefore, to begin with an attempt to put these into an appropriate context.

HERMENEUTICS OF THE STUDY

The most tangible and available resource for a study of this kind is textual material.² It has been said by Jenson³ that no theological or historical study of textual material can be totally disinterested, and that the difficulty in attempting to overcome this intrinsic problem has led to an embarrassing plethora of supposedly diverse approaches. Of these, Jenson cites the following:

1. *Lexical* — *key words*
2. *Thematic* — *important ideas*
3. *Comparative* — *other ANE contexts*
4. *Historical* — *in Israelite and related civilizations*
5. *Kerygmatic* — *entailing a message for a specific community*
6. *Canonical* — *a finalized theological text aimed at a specific community*
7. *Apologetic* — *explanatory especially for later civilizations*
8. *Dimensional* — *ordering of a cult in space, society, action time etc.*

Jenson supposes that because each of these asks a specific question, each is *ipso facto* limited in the conclusion that can be reached: this is almost certainly the case. In the present work, it is, therefore, necessary to go a step further and attempt to investigate the relationship between the priestly worldview and priestly activity in ancient Israel to see if this included any medical practice — conveniently but inelegantly termed *healthcare*.⁴ The central question is therefore, whether the priestly worldview encompassed any sort of medical thinking and whether the priests had any *sense* that their practices might have had a role beyond the preservation of the purity of sacred objects and sites. The difficulty in answering this

² See Appendix 3 for a full consideration.

³ Philip Peter Jenson, *Graded holiness: a key to the priestly conception of the world* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992). Pg 212.

⁴ Defined in the OED as: '*health care* orig. U.S., care for the general health of a person, community'. For present purposes it is not intended that a more specific definition should be considered.

question is that it is not intellectually legitimate to extrapolate from a priestly worldview in ancient Israel to a medical worldview in modern times. Even if the priestly worldview encompassed ‘medical thought’ we have no legitimate reason to suppose that it necessarily operated in any modern sense. These strictures will severely curtail any conventional deductive scientific method. Textual evidence, considered alongside historical material may be interpreted in a medical context only as far as this is possible without entraining the pitfalls enumerated below. It is, nevertheless important to address Jenson’s categories 1, 2, 3, 4 and (in respect of the priestly worldview) 8, in order to cover appropriate aspects of the problem. The plan is to combine review and analysis and to avoid unjustified speculation. This will involve a survey of the state of medicine in the Ancient Near East with particular emphasis on Syria-Palestine and a consideration of what this subsequently became. This is not intended to be a ‘reception historical’ approach but simply a means of testing the intention behind earlier practices. The ideology of the levitical priests and the nature of their rituals will also be considered. Analysis will involve a lexical, semantic and etymological approach to important words and their usage concerned with health, wholeness and holiness will use the technique of *context logometrics*. In addition, the nature of those conditions that appear to be *category violaters* of the wholeness↔holiness relationship and which in modern thought *may be* true diseases, will be considered by *medical exegesis*. The central role of צרעת and זוב as substrates for priestly activity, what these were and what they were seen as under the priestly worldview, is the focal point of the study.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AND PITFALLS

An author with an experimental scientific background is bound to feel most comfortable with an approach that involves deductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning must, nevertheless be employed in dealing with material from ancient times where incontrovertible and

independently verifiable detailed factual evidence is unlikely to be available. Inductive reasoning is very helpful if care is taken to keep as close as possible to the textual material and to avoid speculation and anachronism, the latter especially where medical matters are concerned.⁵ In a study of this nature there are two areas where it is especially important to be vigilant for these pitfalls, they are the use of medical exegesis and unintended lapses into reception history.

Medical exegesis

It is proposed that Chapters 13 and 15 of the Book of Leviticus should be subjected to this treatment by which is meant an analysis of those elements of content that appear *prima facie* to be of medical interest. It is important to consider whether it is intellectually permissible to conclude from such textual evidence that the levitical usage of certain words, especially the elusive weasel-words צרעת and זוב implied a medical context or whether these words simply referred to a generic moral or spiritual uncleanness and to nothing pathological beyond their observable physical characteristics.

The distinction perhaps understandably, risks the projection of modern ideas and definitions on to ancient events. The priests may have practised a form of diagnosis and preventive medicine but the notion of the physician as a therapeutic agent and the idea of cure may never have been considered. Did their worldview, therefore, encompass any sort of ‘medical sense’?

Those who, like the present author, were school children in the 1950s were, on the whole, discouraged from reading Leviticus for fear of awkward questions that might embarrass parents and teachers. Attention was preferentially directed to the more wholesome narrative

⁵ Any reasoning may, however, prove difficult given the inexactitude of the relevant information and the ‘pious licence’ that often pervades later biblical writings and writings about biblical writings. The considerable imbalance between the greater mass of biblical and the lesser mass of secular material that has persisted to modern times may skew the making of rational judgements with any realistic degree of probability.

passages of the Old Testament. Nevertheless, it was fashionable, at that time, to make the very positive assertion that the levitical text was the 'first textbook of hygiene'. A modern alternative viewpoint suggests that priests 'invented hygiene' by default. This question is central to the present study but in all probability can never be answered simply by referral to textual material. Undoubtedly, word analysis and logometrics will play a significant part and additionally the present author having a medical background, is theoretically in an ideal position to execute such an approach. It is nevertheless important to assure that such a background does not lead to inappropriate thinking embodying such risks as anachronism and *hyperdiagnosis*: the tendency to over-interpret the medical data available in ancient texts in a modern way. *Medical exegesis* must entail the combination of a degree of medical and historical interpretation that is accepted as legitimate, with a semantic/etymological/linguistic approach and wherever possible, avoid hindsight. It was a failure to apply such principles in an informed and self-critical way that led to the confusion of צרעת with leprosy by the early translators of the Hebrew Bible and Septuagint into English.⁶

Reception history

Historical material used in this study is no less at risk from a potential source of error that parallels *hyperdiagnosis*. This is *reception history*, a relatively recent and controversial approach to history. It concentrates preferentially on meanings that have been imputed to historical events by tracing the ways in which participants, observers, historians and other retrospective interpreters have attempted to make sense of events, not only as they occurred but also over the time that has elapsed since.⁷ The intention is supposedly to make these events more meaningful for the present.

⁶ See Glasby, "What was Biblical Leprosy?".

⁷ Hans Robert Jauss, *Aesthetic experience and literary hermeneutics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); Hans Robert Jauss and Timothy Bahti, *Toward an aesthetic of reception* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

The problem with reception history is that retrospective interpretation risks both colouration and harmonization either by emphasis of what the ultimate recipients (e.g. faith communities) believe to be important and/or by the presentation of exhaustive *florilegia* of others' interpretations. There is a subtle distinction, therefore, between *reception history* and the scholarly *review* of others' work. Where for example, a survey is made of alternative forms of contemporaneous healthcare in the Ancient Near East, it may be difficult to avoid the criticism of reception history. However, presentation of multiple examples is surely legitimate where the objective (Chapter 2 and Appendix 2) is to emphasize how one particular culture stands out from others because of its uncharacteristically involving a tightly-knit priesthood and well-developed cosmic, social and cultic *Lebensformen*.

PARAMETERS OF THE INVESTIGATION

It was stated above that the two central parameters of the present study are *wholeness* and *holiness* as perceived in the worldview of the levitical priesthood. This worldview is more fully considered in Chapter 3 but the two parametric working definitions must be considered at the outset.

Wholeness

The worldview of the levitical priesthood was religious, concerned with the structure of the cosmos and also with the appropriate way to live in the created world. Self-awareness for individuals in such a society and their resultant acting upon that self-awareness, was mediated in priestly society through *ritual* which was always symbolic and directed ultimately at the avoidance of chaos and the maintenance of the social order demanded by the priestly *Weltanschauung*. In order to participate fully and effectively in ritual, the individual must be free of anything that might compromise his wholeness. The term is, therefore, used quite specifically as something that is demanded of individuals for the maintenance of their ritual

purity. In the Hebrew Bible, there is no clear definition of wholeness; Leviticus more customarily takes the antithetical view so that un-wholeness is more available as subject matter. *Prima facie*, three major factors appear to be operational as infractions of wholeness. These comprise disfigurement of the (visible) body surface, compromise of reproductive capacity and, to a lesser extent the presence of blemish. The relationship of these factors is complex and penetration into the density of this relationship is a major aim of this thesis. As an initial working definition it should be noted that although the same organic precipitating factors (צִרְעָתָהּ, זֹבָה and מוֹם) operate universally, two somewhat different models of the symbolic nature of wholeness have been proposed by later authors. These models of *wholeness* are, therefore:

1. *Anthropological/Sociological model* — absence of any antitypicality of appearance (visible body parts) or compromise of reproductive function.
2. *Taxonomical model* — a maintained state of sacramental hygiene.

In either case wholeness is the organic cause and manifestation of ritual purity and at the root of its positive symbolism. Here, in both cases wholeness is seen as a *category prerequisite* for ritual purity to exert its symbolism for the attainment of holiness.

The anthropological/sociological model is based somewhat upon the idea of *taboo* with *wholeness* and *un-wholeness* seen as *type* and *antitype*.

The taxonomical model, preferred by most ancient and modern Jewish authors, although recognizing the same causative factors (צִרְעָתָהּ, זֹבָה and מוֹם), has focussed less upon the aetiology of impurity than upon its scope. As a result, categories of impurity (major and minor, metaphorical) have been postulated and from this classification corresponding antidotal categories of ritual necessary for expiation have been formulated.

Holiness

A general definition of the word from the OED is, ‘The quality of being holy; spiritual perfection or purity; sanctity, saintliness; sacredness.’ This is unsatisfactory for present purposes as it is too general. The priest-mediated society of ancient Israel had as a fundamental consequence of its established tripartite⁸ order, the immanence of Yahweh in the holy shrine, (ultimately) at the heart of the nation. This indwelling may be thought of as the primary constitutive element of the priestly world order and this is *holiness* in its encompassing priestly form. It was put at risk by a loss of ritual purity in individuals whose wholeness was compromised. It was the priests’ job to preserve holiness by guarding sacred objects and places, diagnosing loss of personal wholeness in individuals⁹ and taking appropriate action through the enactment of restoration rituals so that the order of creation might be preserved.

SUMMARY

Did the levitical priesthood knowingly practise a rudimentary form of medical care or were they driven purely by ritual designed for the preservation of operational sanctity? In this chapter is set out an hypothesis and a methodology¹⁰ aimed at answering this question. Potential pitfalls, in applying hermeneutical and exegetical analysis to ancient texts, and the risk in a modern setting, of hyperdiagnostic and reception historical interpretation, are discussed.

In Chapter 2 (and Appendix 2) it is proposed to investigate the development of true medical practice in the Ancient Near East (ANE) and in Israel, apart from the priesthood. Such a

⁸ The three parts were *cosmic*, *social* and *cultic* — see Chapter 3

⁹ And of course, objects and even buildings that might become afflicted by צרעת

¹⁰ Textual resources and technical matters are considered in Appendix 1.

survey is intended as a basis for comparison with the priestly worldview and practices of Israel which is to be the subject matter of Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2 — WHOLENESS AND HEALTHCARE IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

ALL societies are confronted by disease and illness and are obliged to develop appropriate strategies in order to respond. These have recently acquired for themselves the collective, useful, though inelegant, name *healthcare*. This confronts *disease* and *illness* which technically are different¹ It is important to understand this difference when reviewing practices and attitudes in the healthcare of different societies and civilizations over generations.

Disease and illness

Disease is the malfunctioning of biological processes as a result of a congeries of causative factors. It is principally the transition in a biological system from the *physiological* to the *pathological*.² The precise nature of any disease is the summated effect of the causative agent(s) on the body/mind, its pathological *sequelae* and the ability of the patient to resist and recover from this attack. Disease is manifested by *symptoms* that the patient reports, and *signs* that are observed or elicited by others. The specific nature of a disease is altered absolutely only by genetic mutation; its effects may be altered relatively by neglect, treatment and the passage of time. Over historical time, the apparent nature of diseases has changed with better understanding, experimental research and with the application of scientific principles. In some cases this has, gratifyingly, resulted in more effective treatment.³

¹In current usage a taste for imprecision, cliché and ‘Humpty Dumpty hermeneutics’ has led, to a convergence of their meanings. (C L Dodgson) Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass* (London: The Folio Society, 1962). Pg 75, Humpty Dumpty says, ‘When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean— neither more nor less.’

² Within the term *biological* must be understood the idea of *psychological* malfunction also.

³ These should be specifically borne in mind when considering Chapters 6 and 7.

Illness is the psychosocial experience and the meaning of perceived disease. It is *not*, therefore, independent of the affected subject as disease is. Its definition is, accordingly, more fluid than that of disease and depends upon the society in which it occurs. So, for example, if we are thinking about צרעת, we may suppose that its physical nature as a *disease*⁴ will not have changed dramatically over the years whereas its perception as *illness* may be expected to have varied among societies and over time.⁵

Good, modern medical practice must, ideally, be directed both at the disease and the illness. However, this distinction has not necessarily been made by past generations and cultures. If anything, in the past and especially in ancient times, greater attention was given to illness than to disease. This may have been particularly true where there were religious or cultic perceptions of the causative agent. Although illness is a less clearly defined term than disease, its nature may be easier to understand when dealing with ancient texts because an accurate vocabulary to describe disease was either absent or un[der]developed at the time. Because of this it is always dangerous — though tempting — to try to make precise diagnoses from biblical symptomatology. This is the so-called *hyperdiagnostic* approach whose very significant limitations have taken too long a time to be recognized in scholarship. The study of medical practice in Ancient Israel is to some extent a subtractive process. There is a considerable dearth of medical literature compared with the relative wealth of such material from Egypt or Mesopotamia. Where authors wishing to investigate the relationship of medical and biblical material have considered biblical material — mainly in Leviticus — associations have been drawn perhaps too often and too loosely. It has been said frequently that the Biblical Priestly Code embodies the best hygienic principles of any ancient civilization. However, all too often this relationship has been posited without due regard for

⁴ Whatever that was and, indeed, *iff* it was a single disease.

⁵ Compare, Biblical צרעת; *Elephantiasis Graecorum* of Hellenic and Roman times; ‘leprosy’ of the medieval period and modern ‘Hansen’s Disease’.

the intensely ritualistic and cultic nature demanded by the priestly worldview and it has been all too easy to view the situation through the lens of modern medicine. It is in fact, almost impossible to find clear evidence from texts of any sort of ‘healthcare edifice’ and one is forced to consider the possibility that the priests only interested themselves in conditions that they believed had important ritual cultic significance and even then did not see them in any form of medical context. Of course as in any and every society, and Ancient Israel is no exception, many diseases not to mention injuries, *must* have been prevalent and common. Some would have been ineluctably fatal but others not. Who dealt with these: where and how?⁶

INFLUENCES FROM OTHER CULTURES

Egypt and Mesopotamia were the two civilizations adjacent to ancient Syria-Palestine and it might be expected that there would have been diffusion of medical techniques among all of these cultures. However, whereas medical practice in Egypt and Mesopotamia is well documented, (see Appendix 2), we have little textual evidence concerning healthcare in Israel. Moreover, the medical literature of later Hellenic and Arabian civilizations shows no sign of medical antecedents from Israel whereas their significant medical antecedents were inherited from Egypt and Mesopotamia.

HEALTHCARE IN ANCIENT ISRAEL OUTSIDE THE PRIESTLY SOCIETY

It has been widely and perhaps unfairly held that Ancient Israel was relatively backward in both the art and science of medicine when compared with its neighbours Egypt and Mesopotamia. Several explanations have been put forward to explain this apparent difference. For example, it has been suggested that the progression from magic and mantic through botanical medicine to scientific medical thought was stifled by the progression

⁶ For a fuller consideration of this see footnote 4 in Appendix 3, page, 403.

towards monotheism and the subsuming of therapeutic practices into the province of the priest and the temple such that a profession of physicians and surgeons never developed.⁷ A more likely explanation might be the disparity between the mass of religious and secular literature that has survived.⁸ A considerable majority of authors addressing this subject has written from a second-temple viewpoint, unsurprisingly, as a comparative wealth of both textual and other evidence is more plentiful from this period than from pre-exilic times. This stance assumes a Yahwistic milieu whereas early medical influences coming from Egypt and Mesopotamia undoubtedly had a polytheistic background which remained a significant element into Hellenic/Greek medicine. We have no clear evidence as to how and at what rate this polytheism became attenuated as it became incorporated into Israelite society. Knowledge of the true date of the writing of the levitical P and H material becomes vitally important in addressing this problem.⁹ If one argues from first principles, it is axiomatic that minor survivable medical conditions and injuries existed in ancient Syria-Palestine and were treated by someone. The question is, therefore, whether these events were simply not interesting enough to be included in Scripture whose purpose was not, after all, historical reportage or narrative beyond that necessary for the establishment and inculcation of an extended creation myth. Equally they were irrelevant in the priestly *Weltanschauung* and code of religious law and ritual considered desirable for a developing society. An account of the treatment of minor ailments and injuries hardly gels with such lofty purpose. A side effect of this might have been the priesthood's reserving for itself a powerful and extensive element of control within the developing society. However although we may suppose the

⁷ If one's reading on the subject is confined to the Bible, this *prima facie* conclusion is entirely understandable. See, Maurice Bear Gordon, "Medicine among the Ancient Hebrews," *Isis* 33, no. 4 (1941): 454-85. Edward Neufeld, "Hygiene Conditions in Ancient Israel (Iron Age)," *Bib Arch* 34, no. 2 (1971): 42-66. Roderick Saxey, "A Physician's Reflections on Old Testament Medicine," *Dlge* 17, no. 3 (1984): 122-28. Charles Weiss, "Medicine in the Bible," *Sci Mth* 50, no. 3 (1940): 266-71.

⁸ If indeed any secular literature ever existed.

⁹ See Appendix 3

existence of minor healthcare held no interest for the priests and merited no place in their worldview, we have no evidence to make us suppose that they actively opposed it.¹⁰

It is unlikely that secular healthcare did not exist in ancient Israel: any useful analysis of its presence must address specific spheres of activity which were common to healthcare in coeval cultures. These are magic and botanical medicine and the rise of the apothecary. We have little idea of how, and how far, such activities were utilized as modes of healthcare by ordinary people but it is probably safe to suppose that the work of magicians and apothecaries existed, at least initially, to much the same degree in Israel as in other Mediterranean civilizations. We are therefore, looking for reasons for these having remained unrecorded for posterity. They may have been ignored or suppressed or may have gone unrecorded simply as a result of the illiteracy of its practitioners.

Magic and manticism

Magic and divination and demonology have been traditionally viewed as being separate from and indeed even as perversions of, science, logic and religion. Unsurprisingly, among Christian Western civilizations, they have not been a popular substrate for academic and scholarly interest and there is a relatively sparse literature. An excellent starting-point is Toorn's compendious account.¹¹ It was never in the [Western] Church's interest to allow such subjects to become popular with the common people and we have all grown up familiar with stories of the triumph of the righteous over magic and evil. Magicians or sorcerers, (חרטם) appear in Exodus where they are portrayed in a bad light as evil, yet incompetent, instruments of Pharaoh. Nevertheless, it is likely that in most, if not all, ancient civilizations, much use was made of magicians and diviners and undoubtedly by Roman times,

¹⁰ For similar reasons we cannot know whether the ordinary people liked or disliked priests or if they respected or feared them. Recourse to the doctrine of *oderint dum metuant* has, however, always been popular with those having power as a method of control.

¹¹ K.van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter Willem van der Horst, *Dictionary of deities and demons in the Bible (DDD)* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

haruspication and especially hepatoscopy, were as commonplace as the quotidian Weather Forecast today. They had become an essential part of a polytheistic civilization. We are indebted to Thomas Witton Davies, (1851 – 1923),¹² Baptist minister, Semitic scholar and Professor of Hebrew at Bangor University (1905 – 21), for his interest in this subject. Despite a distinguished career as a teacher, he published very little: his most noted work, however, was on magic among the Hebrews and this book has remained a corner-stone of scholarship on this subject.¹³

Witton Davies follows the traditional view that magic/sorcery was the practice of using secret or hidden powers to manipulate individuals or events. Divination was the art of reading signs in order to foretell the future. This view has been challenged by Jeffers as simplistic, on the grounds that it presupposes a sequential evolution of ideas that has not been formally demonstrated and takes no account of any *ontology* or *cosmogony* and so of any *Weltanschauung*, proper to the various participants.¹⁴ She accepts, however, that after Witton Davies's mantle at Bangor fell upon Islwyn Blythin, he, and so the 'Bangor School', took an increasingly holistic approach to the idea of magic in order to incorporate the *cosmology* appropriate to whatever civilization was under consideration.¹⁵ It will be necessary to return to and expand this approach in Chapter 3 in respect of the levitical priesthood and the cosmology underlying their rituals.¹⁶ The following table is an attempt to summarize these viewpoints.

¹² For reasons that are unclear, in his early publications he uses the spelling Wytton Davies. T. Wytton Davies, "Bible Leprosy," *ONTS* 11, no. 3 (1890): 142-52. The present author was acquainted with his son the Venerable Carlyle Witton Davies who always insisted upon the 'i' spelling.

¹³ Thomas Witton Davies, *Magic, Divination, and Demonology among the Hebrews and their Neighbours, including an examination of biblical references and of the biblical terms.* [A thesis.] (London; Leipzig: James Clarke & Co.: M. Spirgatis: , 1898).

¹⁴ Ann Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria* (Leiden: Brill, 1996). Pg2

¹⁵ Islwyn Blythin, "Magic and Methodology," *Numen* 17, no. 1 (1970): 45-59.

¹⁶ Frank H. Gorman, *The ideology of ritual: space, time and status in the priestly theology* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990).

	Magic	Divination	Demonology
Witton-Davies	Man's attempt at intercourse with spiritual and supernatural beings and to influence them for benefit	Man's attempt to obtain from the spiritual world super-normal or superhuman knowledge [of the future]	The belief that there exist evil spirits responsible for the misfortunes that assail men
Blythin & Jeffers	A self-contained system of rationality through which men realize their independence from the behaviour of natural phenomena	The ability to relate the parts (i.e. signs) of a cosmic framework to the whole	

In the light of an absence of non-biblical material from Israel on this subject, we may as starting point look at instances where the Bible mentions magic. Witton Davies has, most helpfully, compiled a list of Hebrew words for and in relation to magic.¹⁷ These words may be used in analytical software such as *Bibleworks* and *Accordance*¹⁸ to identify all instances of their usage in the canon. Witton Davies further relates these words to other Semitic languages, notably Akkadian and Arabic, and their occurrence in those languages. Witton Davies's thesis — which, if correct, is of signal importance — is to show that many of the words used in a cultic or religious sense in the Hebrew Bible may have been derived from earlier usages in the sphere of magic; the implication being that aspects of priestly ritual may also have derived from earlier profane practices. A good example is the idea that the serpent is associated in many ancient civilizations with evil, misfortune and unhappiness: serpents were implicated frequently in divination. The Hebrew for serpent is שָׂחָ and Witton Davies suggests that the word שָׁחַל to 'whisper' or to 'hiss' found in later Rabbinic Hebrew and in

¹⁷ Thomas Witton Davies, *Old Testament Words for Magic or in Relation to it* (London; Leipzig: James Clarke & Co; M. Spirgatis, 1898).

¹⁸ Bibleworks, "Software for Biblical Exegesis and Research." Accordance, "Bible Software."

Aramaic, may be a dialectical variant or a confusion of the two liquids נ and ל which both may fall-out in *Pe nun* verbs. He further cites the parallel from Arabic of لَحَسَ (lāḥāsā), meaning ‘lick’ in the metaphorical sense of ‘licked by the serpent’s tongue’ and therefore ‘cursed’, with نَحَسَ (nāḥāsā), meaning ‘jinx’: the ‘l’ (ل) and ‘n’ (ن) consonants are transposed without losing the overall sense of misfortune. Witton Davies is, presumably, implying that לחש may be used as a *denominative* with a meaning invoking notions of a serpent or of ‘serpentine evil’ or ‘misfortune through serpentine malevolence and guile’. This use of the serpent was a common metaphor throughout the ancient world, indeed Ecclesiastes (10:11) makes a pun of the two Hebrew words לחש and נחש in the context of a snake and a snake-charm(er).¹⁹

אם-ישך הנחש בלוא-לחש ואין יתרון לבעל הלשון

If the serpent bite before it be charmed, then is there no advantage in the charmer.

And Jeremiah (8:17) uses the two words together in a similar way but as a threat of divine punishment:

כי הנני משלח בכם נחשים צפענים אשר אין-להם לחש ונשכו אתכם נאם-יהוה

For, behold, I will send serpents, basilisks, among you, which will not be charmed; and they shall bite you, saith the Lord.

In both cases the serpent has been retained from early superstition and is being used metaphorically or symbolically in Yahwistic religion.

Jeffers, has written extensively on diviners, magicians and other such specialists using an etymological study of their titles and job-descriptions to understand their function in

¹⁹ But note the use of Hermes’ messenger’s rod (καρπούκειον) eventually became identified with the *Rod of Asclepius* entwined with a single snake, in Greek and later in Roman medical iconography. In more recent times the *caduceus*, with two entwined snakes appears to have usurped this role.

society.²⁰ She takes as her starting point two verses of Deuteronomy (18:10 – 11) in which she finds nine such categories listed:

לֹא־יִמְצָא בְךָ מְעַבֵּיר בְּנוֹ-וּבִתּוֹ בְּאֵשׁ קֶסֶם קְסָמִים מְעוֹנָן וּמְנַחֵשׁ וּמְכַשֵּׁף

There shall not be found with thee any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, one that useth divination, one that practiseth augury, or an enchanter, or a sorcerer,

וְחֹבֵר חֵבֶר וְשֹׂאֵל אוֹב וַיִּדְעֵנִי וְדֹרֵשׁ אֱלֹהִים

or a charmer, or a consulter with a familiar spirit, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

Jeffers's view is that if one consults both canonical and non-canonical textual material more carefully, this emerges as too simple a classification. She divides the magicians into two major categories. The first category, *undisputed cases*, consisted of skilled individuals who offered their services as it were professionally, while the second category consisted of *disputed cases* where the data are insufficient to ascribe a magical or divinatory role to these individuals in any professional sense. Within the first group, Jeffers identifies eighteen different classes of individual and within the second group eight. Their definitions have been arrived at by a consideration of the occurrence of these Hebrew nouns in the Hebrew Bible and other available non-canonical texts. The differences are summarized in the table below.

²⁰ Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria*. Chapter 2, pp 25 – 124

UNDISPUTED	HEBREW TITLE	DESCRIPTION
1	איש אלהים	Man of God
2	אשפין	Professional Exorcists
3	גזרין	Sacrificial Diviners Dream Analysts
4	חבר	A Spell Binder
5	חוזה	A Court Seer
6	חכמים	Professional Wise Magicians
7	חרתמים	Miracle Performers Dream Interpreters
8	חרשים	Medicine Men
9	כהן	Oracular Functions of Priest
10	כשדים	Dream Interpreters of Nebuchadrezzar
11	לוי	Oracular Attendant & Healer
12	(מ)כשף	Magician, Semitic Herbalist
13	מלחשים	Enchanter, snake charmer
14	מנחש	One who Observes Omens
15	מעוננים	Soothsayers
16	נביא	Prophet Channel of Gods Power
17	קסמים	Those who Obtain an Oracle by Drawing Lots
18	ראה	A Seer
DISPUTED		
1	פועלי עון	Evildoers
2	אריאל	An Oracle Attendant
3	טפסר	Astrologer
4	מנזרים	Diviners
5	נקד	Sheep-tender or Hepatoscopist
6	סתרים	Those who Ensnare
7	רשעים	Wicked Ones
8	רכלים	Magicians or Traders

Certain of these titles and descriptions correspond to those in Deuteronomy 18:9 – 10 and others, notably חרשים and (מ)כשפים deserve, in the light of the present study, further

exploration for they are, seemingly, the likely ancestors of apothecaries and herbalists. It is noteworthy that these two categories are not proscribed in the above verses from Deuteronomy. Jeffers²¹ finds a commonality of her classification derived from the Hebrew Bible, Caananite, Ugaritic and Assyrio-Babylonian cultures and so postulates a *Semitic mentality* which allows for no clear distinction's having been made between science, religion and magic. It is important to stress that this conclusion is arrived at from inspection of what textual evidence we have and from a semantic analysis of the respective languages of these cultures. Since there is no evidence to be had from non-textual/linguistic sources and since languages evolve at quite a rapid rate, we have to accept a substantial degree of entropy in any systematic survey of this nature. Such a philological approach is limited by the availability of surviving literary and linguistic material.

It seems likely that the secular practice of magic and divination was taking place in levitical times but it was kept out of the scriptures either because it was thought irrelevant or a bad influence. Curses, vows and predictions, in a religious context, form a considerable part of the narrative of the Hebrew Bible but it may be that the [priestly] authors of the scriptures maintained, in their dealings with lay individuals, a relationship akin to that often seen today between orthodox medical practitioners and those practising various kinds of alternative medicine.

Botanical Medicine in Ancient Syria–Palestine

Botanical or Herbal Medicine has a long history. One can speculate that it grew out of the need of a foraging, prehistoric man to recognize which plants were good to eat and which were poisonous. It is known that in Sumerian and Babylo-Assyrian cultures, plants had been used as perfumes, incense and cosmetics as early as 3000 BCE. It is not difficult to suppose that from such familiarity came the observation that some plants might also have therapeutic

²¹ Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria*. Pg 16.

value if applied locally or even taken enterally.²² Eventually, herbs were combined to form flavourings, perfumes, dyes and medicines and so arose the need to lay-up stores of fresh and dried plants for future and out-of-season use. From such beginnings came the art of the apothecary.²³

The earliest literature describing the therapeutic qualities of plants is from the time of Aristotle²⁴ who himself, made a significant contribution to botanical writing. Later authors such as Pliny further contributed to botanical knowledge and by the Middle Ages, the role of the apothecary was well established and important, especially in the monasteries, where the resources for maintaining a *Physick-garden* and the appropriate books could be found and skills developed and passed on. In ancient times in Egypt, botanical preparations were used for the embalming of cadavers. Herodotus describes this in some detail and the subject has been extensively investigated and reviewed by Baumann²⁵ who lists the plants that were used and available on the Nile flood-plain at that time. It is almost certain that these would have been available to Egyptian proto-apothecaries as well as to the embalmers and it is interesting to look up the history of their use in medical, culinary and cosmetic practices over time.²⁶ Plants are mentioned in the Bible and their appearances there have been reviewed extensively by Zohary.²⁷ In his book Zohary, who is both a linguist and botanist considers every *plant pericope* of the Hebrew Bible, LXX, Vulgate and Targum Onkelos. This is a fascinating book which, besides discussing the pharmacological aspects of the plants, considers also the climate and vegetation of different regions, crop cultivation, herbs in cooking and incense

²² And later, of course, parenterally.

²³ ἀποτιθέναι = to lay-up; ἀποθήκη = storehouse. The Worshipful Society of Apothecaries, (of which the present author is a Liveryman), is one of the oldest and most respected Livery Companies in the City of London.

²⁴ Wilfrid Blunt and Sandra Raphael, *The Illustrated Herbal* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994).

²⁵ Herodotus, *The Persian Wars*; with an English translation by: Godley, A. D. Baumann, "The Botanical Aspects of Ancient Egyptian Embalming and Burial."

²⁶ Maud Grieve and C. F. Leyel, *A modern herbal the medicinal, culinary, cosmetic and economic properties, cultivation and folklore of herbs, grasses, fungi, shrubs and trees with all their modern scientific uses* (London: Tiger Books International, 1998).

²⁷ M Zohary, *Plants of the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

and perfume. Zohary identifies the Biblical plants mainly by the use of comparative linguistics of the Semitic languages, though reference to the Septuagint and Vulgate has been helpful also. In particular, Arabic among Semitic languages, has changed relatively little over time and so, in the naming of plants, cognates with Hebrew and Aramaic can be found with relative ease. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for Akkadian. The English translators of the Bible were unhelpfully imaginative in this respect and took outrageous liberties over their translations, perhaps with an overzealous view to Anglicizing them. Thus chestnut, hazel and heather have appeared in exotic guise although they are not indigenous to the Biblical lands. Worse, however, is the wide-ranging inconsistency of the English translators who have employed inappropriate terms such as ‘briar’, ‘bramble’ ‘thorn’ and ‘thistle’ in a wholly indiscriminate manner.

Despite all of this, Zohary makes the all-important point that nowhere in the Bible is *healing* by plants specifically mentioned.²⁸ He is, nevertheless, adamant that herbal remedies would have been commonplace, numerous and used in a highly specific way to treat specific conditions. The reasoning for their non-inclusion, in the scripture, he offers, is the same as that proposed for the non-inclusion of secular magic, namely that it could lead to polytheism and idolatry. The ultimate healer was God, (Psalms 41:3), and so in cases of illness, the proper remedy was prayer.

²⁸ Rachel and Leah (Genesis 30:14) make the pharmacological error of using mandrake (דַּוְדָּאִים) *Mandragora officinarum*, which belongs to the nightshade family (Solanaceae) as a means of promoting fertility. Mandrake in fact, contains deliriant hallucinogenic tropane alkaloids such as atropine, scopolamine, apoatropine, and hyoscyamine. Ginseng has a pedigree in folklore as an aphrodisiac and an appearance similar to mandrake. It is possible that it is ginseng that is being implicated. In Song of Songs (7:13) mandrake appears again as a source of fragrance along with henna (בִּפְרָר) *Lawsonia inermis* as a cosmetic dye. Brenner (Brenner, *The intercourse of knowledge: on gendering desire and 'sexuality' in the Hebrew Bible*, vii, 190 p.) has suggested that ‘A number of the plants mentioned in the Song of Songs were used by women in the ancient Mediterranean world as contraceptives and abortifacients. These include pomegranates (רִמּוֹן), wine (עֵנָב), myrrh (מוֹר), spikenard (נֵרְד) and cinnamon (קִנְמוֹן)’. However it is not always possible to to make positive identifications of these plants from the Hebrew texts. Moreover it is doubtful if an appropriate concentration of their active principles would be obtainable in the domestic environment.

יהוה יסעדנו על-ערש דוי כל-משכבו הפכת בחליו

*The Lord will support him upon the couch of languishing:
thou makest all his bed in his sickness.*

Today, approximately one hundred plants have been identified as being used for medicinal purposes by the modern Bedouin.²⁹ Moreover, the climatic conditions and therefore the native vegetation of the region have hardly changed over millennia and so this seems a good place to start. Zohary points out that of these plants still in use today, the following, all native to the region, may be identified by comparative linguistic analysis as being of medicinal use and specifically mentioned in the Bible:³⁰ *hemlock, henbane, mandrake, aloe, white wormwood, mallow, castor oil bean, cassia, laudanum, laurel, vine, olive, fig, almond, pomegranate, wild gourd, hyssop, acacia, cedar, terebinth,*³¹ *myrrh, (Commiphora myrrha), frankincense, (Boswellia sacra), balm, myrtle, tamarisk, tragacanth,*³² *storax, ginger-grass, caper, garlic, cinnamon, turmeric, cumin, spikenard and saffron.* Some of these are, of course poisonous and feature thus in Biblical narratives. It is significant also to note the high frequency of laxatives among all these worts and it seems likely that the Egyptian idea of relating illness to the congestive effect of the retention of foodstuffs may also have been popular in ancient Israel. Zohary's list of Biblical plants — after allowing for the Akkadian — bears a significant relationship to a *Materia Medica*, of Assyrian royal families, documented by Thompson³³ and it seems entirely likely that, given the similarity of terrain and climate, the [hypothetical] physick-gardens of Syria-Palestine, Egypt and Mesopotamia might be expected to have shown a correspondence of native flora. Although Thompson's

²⁹ Naomi Feinbrun and Michael Zohary, *Flora of the land of Israel* (Jerusalem: Weizmann Science Press, 1956); Naomi Feinbrun-Dothan and Michael Zohary, *Flora Palaestina* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1981). Daniel Zohary and Maria Hopf, *Domestication of plants in the old world* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Michael Zohary, *The Flora of Iraq and its Phytogeographical Subdivision* (Baghdad, 1946).

³⁰ Zohary, gives chapter and verse for each of these and several more Zohary, *Plants of the Bible*. Isaiah has the largest botanical vocabulary.

³¹ אֵלוֹן מוֹרֶה, usually translated into English as 'oak' as in the 'oak of Moreh' Gen 12:6; but clearly **not** oak.

³² Probably the *gum* of Gen 37:25 RSV. Gum tragacanth is still used in confectionary.

³³ R. Campbell Thompson, *A Dictionary of Assyrian Botany* (London: British Academy, 1949).

Herbal is specifically derived from material relating to Assyrian royalty, he postulates that the remedies it contains could equally be expected to have been used by ordinary people as the plants were wild and not cultivated in physic gardens. We cannot be sure of this but, as with much from Mesopotamia, as a rule it was only royalty that figured in the Cuneiform tablets that have been preserved and translated; the *plebes*, were unlikely to have been the objects of much scribal effort.

It seems probable that botanical medicine was, in the Ancient Near East, *the* predominant form of secular medical practice; or, at any rate the form of medical practice that would have produced positive results and even, perhaps, saved lives. It should be noted, in passing, that some plants also served religious functions or were objects of awe. In the former category fruit and seeds were used as offerings, especially at harvest times (the festivals of *Pesah*, *Shavuoth* and *Sukkoth*) and incense was used in the tabernacle. Great trees, groves and woodlands were variously objects of veneration among ancient peoples and woods as places of worship are mentioned specifically in Deuteronomy 12:2 and 16:21 and in 2 Kings 16:4 and 17:10, in relation to Josiah's centralizing reforms.

As a working hypothesis therefore, we must assume that, without some form of healthcare, the day-to-day activities of ordinary people would have been sorely incommoded; even so whatever *was* operational was thought of insufficient significance to be recorded by the priestly authors. The evolution of botanical medicine by the hand of a developing cohort of apothecaries might be expected to have overtaken the less effective remedies of the magicians. But human beings even today are apt to prefer tradition to innovation and folklore to science when they have been appropriately indoctrinated. It is quite probable that in the day-to-day running of Israelite civilization both of these systems of healthcare were in operation.

SUMMARY

The simplest notion of *wholeness* that we would understand today is good health: the absence of disease and illness. In the priestly society of Ancient Israel the notion of wholeness appears to have been quite different, presumably because it was governed by a worldview that operated through ritual. An investigation of this association is the subject of the next chapter. In adjacent civilizations in the ANE, wholeness appears to have been often regarded more simply as normal good health rather than conformity to a particular worldview and the demands of specific rituals.³⁴ As a result, we have evidence that healthcare there was of a more practical nature though it was not, of course, necessarily successful. All this took place in a highly polytheistic environment where certain gods were specifically seen as operating in the sphere of health. It is difficult not to suppose that some of these practices either found their way into Israel or were developed *de novo* in. However there is very little documentary evidence to confirm this.

The purpose of the present chapter along with Appendix 3, has been to present a factual review of evolving healthcare in these adjacent civilizations that may be compared in the chapter that follows with practices under the umbrella of the priestly *Weltanschauung*. No apology is made for the inclusion in Appendix 3, of material relating to periods later than that of the levitical priests. A consideration of what a rudimentary system grew into invariably sheds light on the evolutionary mechanism. In many instances we owe a debt to the medical establishments of later civilizations for the transmission of information from earlier times and places. With this in mind, it is now necessary to consider specifically the priestly worldview and ritual operating in Leviticus and if the *wholeness*↔*holiness* relationship embodied a medical view of healthcare.

³⁴ See Appendix 2

CHAPTER 3 — WHOLENESS AND HEALTHCARE IN

THE PRIESTLY SOCIETY OF ISRAEL

IF *wholeness* was the prerequisite of *holiness* in ancient Israel, its definition and operation would have been established and maintained within an ideology proper to those who carried out these tasks, namely the priesthood. Such an ideology would have existed within a specific and unique worldview. From the evidence that we have, it is apparent that a central pillar of this priestly *Weltanschauung* was ritual and so it must be supposed that the enactment of ritual occupied a central place among the priestly duties and activities pertaining to *wholeness* and *holiness* and *ipso facto* to *purity* and *impurity*. In order to understand such associations, it is essential to consider the nature of priestly ideology and the nature of priestly ritual.

PRIESTLY IDEOLOGY AND RITUAL

The levitical priesthood operated in such a way as to connect the divinity with the people of Israel through the medium of ritual. In this way they transmitted the cosmic order of creation into the social and cultic order of the Israelite people. How these factors interacted is central to the way in which the priests saw and managed wholeness and holiness and the effects of impurity.

The priestly *Weltanschauung*

Worldview is the socio-cultural context within which ritual operates. As the entirety of evidential material on this subject is textual, we can only arrive at definitions of worldview by an indirect means. Most simply, worldview has been seen as the way in which a given society attempts to impose structure on the world and upon human

existence and behaviour within the world. Worldview has been described by Turner¹ as a dynamic concept embodying three elements:

1. *A body of knowledge that serves to identify, categorize and organize the cosmos.*
2. *A set of meanings related to the structure of the world that locates human existence and gives it meaning within the cosmos.*
3. *A system of conduct (praxis) that directs proper and appropriate actions within a specific world of meaning. Ritual is an essential component of this praxis.*

Consequently, it may be supposed that a particular view of the world order is necessary to define and enact a particular system of conduct. In the case of the levitical priesthood, the particular worldview was religious and its central tenet was that the world order was an order created by Yahweh. The priests themselves became intermediaries between Yahweh and society and their rituals were an enactment of their obligation to bring order to human existence on Yahweh's behalf. This idea of order was extended to embody Yahweh's dwelling among the Israelites in their holy shrine(s), and in their given land. Any violation of this dynamic relationship between creation and cult would be seen as both implausible and impossible within the worldview/ideology because its integrity was essential to maintain the Yahweh-enabled transition from chaos to cosmos.

From the priestly writings — especially Leviticus — it can be seen that there were two potential threats to this sort of order: they were *defilement* and *sin*.² These specifically threatened the three components of created order seen by the priests. These components were, *cosmic*, *social* and *cultic*: they were interrelated and interacted with one another. A further secondary aspect of the priestly worldview was that the establishment of order by Yahweh was mediated through *speech*. It

¹ Victor W. Turner and Richard Schechner, *The anthropology of performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986) Pg 76.

² See Chapter 10

was, therefore through the medium, first of Yahweh's and secondarily the priests' speech that the cosmological, societal and cultic elements of order were formulated merged and enacted. Societal and cultic orders were, themselves further regarded as subsets of the cosmological order and this gave rise to a hierarchy within the divinely created order such that:

- *Cosmological order* → a system of identification
- *Social order* → a system of meaning and value.
- *Cultic order* → a system of praxis

Gorman³ proposes that the conceptual notion that binds these three orders together is that of 'order through separation'. By this he means the establishment of *boundaries* between *categories* of created things. Once again, as already encountered in Douglas's interpretation of wholeness, we see the enthusiasm shown widely in the ancient world for categories [and their violation]. This is nowhere more clearly expressed in the context of the present work than in Leviticus 10:10:

ולהבדיל בין הקדש ובין החל ובין הטמא ובין הטהור:

...and that ye may put difference between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean;

Within priestly ritual (see below) these categories were themselves identified and compartmentalized in terms of *space*, *time* and *status*. These sub-categories operated parametrically in terms of separation so that:

- *Space* → the separation of the holy of holies from all other places.
- *Time* → the separation of the Sabbath from all other days.
- *Status* → the separation of the priests from all other persons.

We may conclude from this that the central pillar of the priestly worldview was that order could be established and maintained through the sedulous observation of categorization, i.e. the recognition and observance of boundaries. It was sin and

³ Frank H. Gorman, *The ideology of ritual: space, time and status in the priestly theology* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990).

defilement that could confuse these distinctions and so obfuscate the boundaries and categories and compromise world order itself.

Priestly duties

Within the priestly *Weltanschauung* as laid out above, the priest would be required to carry out specific duties to maintain the separations demanded by the idea of *order through categorization*. Foremost among these would have been the need to make distinctions between the holy and non-holy and the clean and the unclean. The texts pertaining to this process are notable for their inclusion of $\sqrt{\text{בדל}}$, *hiph'il* = הַבְּדִיל = *distinguish*. This triage was directed at the preservation of sacred space particularly and required a diagnostic ability not dissimilar to that of the physician — both are roughly based on a system of questioning using a *protasis* ↔ *apodosis* algorithm. It is possible that it is because of this observation that so much effort has been spent on trying to show a ‘hygienic’ and/or ‘medical’ role for Leviticus.

והזרתם את־בני־ישראל מטמאתם ולא ימתו בטמאתם בטמאם את־משכני אשר
בתוכם:

Thus shall ye separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness; that they die not in their uncleanness, when they defile my tabernacle that is in the midst of them.

(Leviticus 15:31)

In maintaining ritual societal and cultic order in the world, the priests would have seen themselves as keeping in contact and interacting dynamically with the divinely created cosmic order and so with Yahweh. This activity was aimed ultimately at preserving the central pillar of their worldview and thereby ensuring Yahweh’s continued dwelling in the tabernacle and in the land.

If one accepts this idea of a priestly worldview aimed at the establishment of a set of categories necessary to preserve world order, it is difficult to see in such a worldview any place for medicine as we think of it today.

The priestly concept of ritual

Definitions of ritual

There are many definitions of ritual to be found in the extensive literature of anthropology. These range from the general to the highly specific. For present purposes where there is a specific concern with the levitical priestly society, a composite definition from the writings of Turner and Gorman seems appropriate.⁴ Thus, ‘Ritual may be defined as a social act that takes place in a specific and dynamic socio-cultural context [worldview].’ And so, ‘Ritual acts may be secular, sacred, private or communal and are about symbols, and meaning through which the ritual is conceptualized constructed and enacted.’⁵ Rituals that are related in form or purpose may be considered as a *ritual system* as in the case of priestly rituals where they effectively represent the complex performance of symbolic acts.

Gorman has emphasized the fact that ‘Priestly rituals come to us in texts without any observable social context... .. this demands a methodological shift from a text oriented analysis to a socio-cultural analysis’.⁶ Since the only substantive evidence we have *is* textual — from the Hebrew Bible — he accepts, therefore, that his approach must be largely theoretical and believes that, ‘Models provide a framework for interpretation.’ This logic and methodology, in the absence of anything better,

⁴ V Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (Picataway NJ: Transaction Rutgers, 1969). Frank H. Gorman, *The ideology of ritual: space, time and status in the priestly theology* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990).

⁵ Where a specific purpose can be ascribed to a ritual, it may also be called a *rite*.

⁶ Frank H. Gorman, *The ideology of ritual: space, time and status in the priestly theology* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990).Pg 13.

has been widely adopted today by workers in the field and has led to the following ideas.

Purpose of ritual

Turner has said that ‘Ritual is social drama... ..One may well ask why it is that liminal situations and roles are almost everywhere attributed with magico-religious properties, or why these should so often be regarded as dangerous, inauspicious, or polluting to persons, objects events and relationships that have not been ritually incorporated into the liminal contest. My view is briefly that from the perspectival viewpoint of those concerns with the maintenance of “structure” all sustained manifestations of *communitas* must appear as dangerous and anarchical and have to be hedged around with proscriptions, prohibitions and conditions.’⁷ This seemingly mildly paranoid view of Turner’s is appropriate because it emphasizes the dependence of human nature upon a perception that structure and order will be maintained, coupled with fear lest it be not. Such a dualistic tendency within the human psyche extends far beyond the concepts of purity and impurity. In the current context it is seen to be, not just at the centre of Douglas’s idea of wholeness, but entailed to some degree by all of the other ideas of purity and impurity to be discussed in the next chapter.⁸

The nature of priestly ritual

Gorman has suggested that in the priestly society where rituals were aimed at the preservation of the cosmic order under the priestly worldview, the following categories of ritual were in operation:

⁷ V Turner, *Ibid*, Pages 108-9

⁸ See also: Freud, et al., *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*.

Types of ritual

1. *Preventative rituals* —to obviate threat of social disruption.
2. *Rites of passage* —to alter the status of the individual or society.
3. *Founding rituals* — to bring into being a state, institution or situation.
4. *Maintenance rituals* — to preserve/maintain the established order.
5. *Restoration rituals* — to restore the broken order of creation

Category 5 is of particular importance as this would include purification rituals for זוב and צרעת.

As mentioned above, the priestly worldview demanded that ritual be sub-categorized into elements of *space*, *time* and *status*.

Ritual space

Ritual space has real dimensions and is a clearly defined type of social space. Examples are the map of the tabernacle/temple, the inclusion/exclusion of lepers in respect of the camp, and clean and unclean places. All of these spaces have physical boundaries that can be transgressed *pari passu* with the violation of the spatial categories that they represent and the holiness that is entailed. For example the specific architectural geometry of the tabernacle encompasses different categories of space dependent on the depth of penetration in relation to the כפרת and commensurate with different grades of holiness.

Ritual Time

Ritual time is seen from both a qualitative and a quantitative viewpoint. There is the time — on the calendar — at which other specific rituals must take place; the time to be taken for the enactment of a specific ritual and the cycle of time during which specific rituals are scheduled to take place. It was through the idea of ritual time that the priests identified meaningful experience for the created order. For example, founding rituals might be expected to be associated with specific times, sacrifices

with recurring specified times and there would be undefined times where unexpected disorder occurred and required an appropriate restoration ritual to be instituted. It is interesting to note the importance of the number seven in defining rituals associated with time. This is particularly the case in relation to quarantine periods prescribed by the priests in cases of *צרעת* where in reality, such a short period would be wholly inadequate for virtually all known infectious diseases. The supposition is that the number seven reflects the number of days taken for the creation and that this time-span has been projected upon rituals so that the social and cultic (praxis) aspects of the ritual reflect the cosmic.

Ritual status

The priestly ritual process often entails a declaration by the priest of the status of the individual or object involved. This is particularly the case in communal rituals such as the Day of Atonement ritual where the scapegoat assumes the status of those shedding their guilt. Ritual status, furthermore, can be seen to have included the status of all three components of the priestly *Weltanschauung*: *cosmos*, *society* and *cult*. As such it offers a mechanism by which persons and objects, especially sacred objects, may have their status defined and, if necessary, re-formulated within the cosmic order. It is likely that the priesthood saw status as indicating the separation of categories for the proper maintenance of cosmic, social and cultural boundaries. In particular this would be the holy status of sacred places and the set-apart status of the priests themselves.

From a theological point of view, ritual may be considered to have operated for the priests as a direct means of interaction with Yahweh and his created order.

MEDICINE IN THE PRIESTLY SOCIETY

Israelite healthcare and the theology it entailed, was not monolithic. The sentiment of Deuteronomy 28:28 admittedly displays patently utopian undertones such that we are left in no doubt that unrighteousness causes illness and righteousness is the pathway to good health.⁹

As Israelite healthcare developed, there were significant changes. Most notable was a shift of the assurance of immortality from the individual to the population as a whole, as a result of accepting Yahweh's omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence as underpinning the Yahwistic principles implicit in the Covenant Psalm:¹⁰

כרתי ברית לבחירי נשבעתי לדוד עבדי

I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant;

(Psalm 89:4)

עד-עולם אכין זרעך ובניתי לדור-דור בסאך סלה

Thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations. [Selah]

(Psalm 89:5)

This embodies a shared responsibility such that dependence upon Yahweh was conditional upon maintaining a state of righteousness and thereby ensuring good health. Breach of this responsibility resulted in affliction. It became, therefore, the duty of the individual to adhere to his part in the Covenant and so help to ensure the

⁹ In contrast to this view from the *Torah* the *Ketuvim* take a more realistic approach and in Job — who is righteous *and* ill — Yahweh uses illness more subtly and for reasons beyond the comprehension of the patient. Job (13:4) appears to have had little faith in physicians and was not easily fooled by their arts: וְאִלֵּיםּוֹם אַתֶּם טַפְלֵי־שָׁקֶר רַפְאֵי אֱלֹהִים כֻּלְּכֶם | ὅμηρος δὲ ἔσται ἰατροὶ ἄδοκοι καὶ ἰατρὰι κακῶν πάντες | *ERV* → *But ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value. | NETS* → *But you are injurious physicians and wrongful healers, all of you.* For Job, an entirely modern view is found to prevail: psychological support from family and friends is an essential part of healthcare. J Kahn and H Solomon, *Job's Illness: Loss, Grief and Integration. A Psychological Interpretation.* (London: Gaskell/Royal College of Psychiatrists, 1986). See also Appendix 4.

¹⁰ Psalms 89:4–5 in the Hebrew Bible, LXX and Vulgate but vv 3–4 in English Bibles

health of the community and population as a whole. A parallel responsibility for the priests was to disseminate this idea by propaganda and the maintenance of ritual and to deal with any compromise or infraction of this arrangement that might occur.

Medical language in the Hebrew Bible

We may ask what medical facts are evident in the Bible. A good place to start is with the trilateral Hebrew root $\sqrt{\text{רפא}}$ (*rp*) which has the sense *heal, repair or make whole*¹¹ This root is unattested in Akkadian but the cognate Arabic word for *repair* or *unite* is $\sqrt{\text{رَفَا}}$ (*rafaa*),¹² and the root also appears in Aramaic as $\sqrt{\text{רפיל}}$.¹³ In addition, the feminine noun ארוכה is sometimes used as the substantive *health* for example in the Jeremiah 8:22 quotation (see below). In Jeremiah 30:17 and 33:6 we find the noun and verb juxtaposed as *health* and *heal/cure*:

כי אעלה ארכה לך וממכותיך ארפאך נא־סִיְהוּה ...

*For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds,
saith the Lord*

(Jeremiah 30:17)

הנני מעלה־לה ארכה ומרפא ורפאתים ...

I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them;

(Jeremiah 33:6)

The association of *healing* with *wholeness* is well established in Semitic languages and extends in Hebrew beyond the simple curing of diseases to the healing of

¹¹ Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Vol VII, pp 533 – 535. Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Vol XIII, pp 593 – 602. In the Hebrew Bible this root appears, in this context, 67 times — *Qal* 38, *niph'al* 17, *pi'el* 9, *hithpa'el* 3 and also 19 times as a participle (*marpe'*, מרפא).

¹² Although the usual Arabic word for 'healing' is الشفاء. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*.

¹³ Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods*; Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Judean Aramaic*; Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period*. Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature*.

wounds and to the curing of psychological illness or madness.¹⁴ Physicians in the Bible were sometimes sought out and put to use. The *Qal* participle רָפָא was used to describe them, as in Jeremiah's plea, (8:22):

הצרי אין בגלעד אס־רפא אין שם כי מדוע לא עלתה ארכת בת־עמי

*Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?
Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*

Clearly, there were physicians in Gilead of a sort who dispensed balm and were sufficiently widely known about that the infirm consulted them there to seek their help. Nevertheless, Jeremiah appears to have had little faith in their ability,

עלי גלעד וקחי צרי בתולת בת־מצרים לשוא (הרבית) [הרבית] רפאות תעלה אין
לך
*Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin daughter of Egypt: in vain
dost thou use many medicines; there is no healing for thee.
(Jeremiah 46:11)*

In a strictly Yahwistic society, healing ultimately became the province of the deity — as indeed did the infliction of disease and illness. Philo summarizes this rather well, when he describes Yahweh as τὸν μόνον ἰατρὸν ψυχῆς ἀρρωσθημάτων¹⁵ — *the only physician for the diseases of the soul*. Yahweh's was a healing monopoly. However, a more thorough reading of the scriptures discloses what might be seen as a conflict with this view. Gordon,¹⁶ understands Exodus 21:18–19 to confer upon mortals the *right* to practice medicine:

וכי־יריבן אנשים והכה־איש את־רעהו באבן או באגרף ולא ימות ונפל למשכב

And if men contend, and one smiteth the other with a stone, or with his fist, and he die not, but keep his bed:

¹⁴ Clines *op cit* pg 534.

¹⁵ *De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini* 1:70

¹⁶ Gordon, "Medicine among the Ancient Hebrews."

אם-יקום והתהלך בחוץ על-משענתו ונקה המכה רק שבתו יתן ורפא ירפא

if he rise again, and walk abroad upon his staff, then shall he that smote him be quit: only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed.

And we should note the emphasis on *thorough healing* conveyed by the use of the *pi'el binyan* **and** the *pi'el* infinitive absolute. It is, nevertheless, difficult to see this as an instruction to go out and practise medicine, especially in the light of Yahweh's healing monopoly. Gordon, in 1941, made an extensive study of almost everything that might conceivably be thought medical in the Bible.¹⁷ His paper was, at the time, considered to be ground-breaking but today it would be seen as oversimplified. It suffers from having made no effort to go beyond the traditional concepts of ancient Israelite civilization and look into the worldview of the priesthood who were the interface between Yahweh and the proletariat. Nevertheless, it is a useful collecting-together of the medical material in the Bible and offers a platform for further study. In accounting for the importance of Yahweh's healing monopoly Gordon has made the initially rather attractive suggestion that there is documentary evidence for the Hebrews' belief that disease was a divine dispensation. He believes this to come from as early and as lithographic a source as the *Lachish ii* letter where, in the defective line 5, it says:

פ * פ אגגג אגגג אגג א
ע בדה יבכר יהוה את א

His translation of this line is '[...his servant.] May Yahweh afflict those...', but it is difficult to see how he arrives at this meaning. It all depends on the meaning of **יבכר**. The Hebrew **בכר** usually means to 'be early' or to 'treat preferentially' or to

¹⁷ Gordon *op cit*

‘bring about quickly.’¹⁸ Gibson¹⁹ clearly prefers this idea of ‘earliness’ as he translates the phrase, ‘[...his servant.] Let Yahweh send an early sign’; but he acknowledges the alternative possibility of עֵכָר ‘Let Yahweh discomfit’ on the grounds that in the Paleo-Hebrew inscription it is difficult to be sure that the word is not from $\sqrt{\text{עכר}}$ = to discomfit. Clines, supports this view or at least recognizes the uncertainty.²⁰ Aḥituv, perhaps with the advantage of more recent evidence and scholarship, takes an entirely different view and prefers to vocalize the line thus:²¹

עֲבֹדָה יִבְכַּר יְהוָה אֶת אֲדֹנָי

He then translates it as: ‘[...his servant.] May Yahweh make known to my lord...’.

Aḥituv agrees with Clines that the meaning of יִבְכַּר is to confer something quickly or preferentially and he, therefore, chooses to say ‘make known’ although there is no verb of *knowing* in the clause. This is a translation based solely on context: he does not mention the alternative possibility of עֵכָר.

Whichever translation we prefer, there is little real support for Gordon’s hypothesis. It would have been nice to have had such an ancient justification for Yahweh’s monopolizing healthcare but the explanation that this came about gradually and as a consequence of the ultimate decline of polytheism is much more likely.

Much of Gordon’s paper is devoted to recording medical events that occur in the Bible. Where Gordon attempts to answer the questions *why?* and *how?* he invariably

¹⁸ Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*.

¹⁹ John C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions* (Syrian Semitic inscriptions; Oxford: Clarendon Press, , 1971).

²⁰ Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Vol 2 pg 173 a,b.

²¹ Shmuel Ahituv, *Echoes from the past: Hebrew and cognate inscriptions from the biblical period* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008).

falls foul of *hyperdiagnosis*.²² However where he simply presents illustrative examples, he provides a useful compendium of medicine at the time. Some of these examples are worthy of consideration here.

1. Cause of death

Old age is the commonest recorded cause of death in the Bible. Longevity was wildly over-emphasized and so meaningless. Otherwise, few causes of death are recorded. 2 Chronicles 21:15 probably describes a form of dysentery and the amoebic form is known to be prevalent in the Near East.

Lieber²³ has suggested that Uzziah's death (2 Chronicles 26:21) was from Hansen's disease. She does not, however equate this with צרעת in general and regards Uzziah's as a unique case.²⁴

2. Hygiene

Hygienic ablution is closely connected with the maintenance of ritual purity. In Chapters 5 and 6 these measures are discussed in relation to צרעת and זוב. Either whole body washing or washing of the hands and feet was prescribed for ritual purification. The מקוה is still in use today for this purpose.

²² The present author must declare guilt in this respect inasmuch as he has offered an explanation for Jacob's 'groin strain' in Genesis 32:24 – 33. Glasby, "An Assessment of the Predictive Value of Laboratory Studies in the Management of Peripheral Nerve Injuries". Appendix 1.

²³ E Lieber, "Old Testament 'Leprosy', Contagion and Sin,," in *Contagion, Perspectives in Pre-modern Societies*. (ed. L I; Wujastyk Conrad, D; Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2000).

²⁴ This view is doubted by the present author on the grounds that this would imply that Hansen's disease existed in Israel before the time it is thought to have been imported by Alexander's troops returning from the Indus valley (c. 333 BCE). Admittedly, this might have been possible but if so, this is the only reported case of צרעת's being fatal. In any case Hansen's disease does not really fit the symptoms as it is usually drawn-out and chronic rather than acutely fatal. Glasby, "What was Biblical Leprosy?".

3. Barrenness

This was an important consideration in ancient Israel where childlessness was considered a major social disadvantage and stigma. The Hebrew adjective for 'barren' is עקר (Greek *στεῖρα*), and derives from $\sqrt{\text{עקר}}$ meaning *uproot*²⁵ which reflects the state of misfortune supposed to be visited upon those not blessed with progeny. Ancient Israelite society was a very tribalistic and materialistic society where the presence of numerous [male] children and kinsmen was seen as a measure of prosperity both present and future. A specific duty of children was to be present to perform the funeral rites of their parents and without children these rites could not be fulfilled adequately and souls could not be at rest.

There are several stories in the Bible of barren women who eventually bear children as the result of divine providence. No medical cause of infertility was ever mentioned or contemplated: barrenness and its reversal were entirely at the dispensation of Yahweh.

4. Obstetrics

Some of the most accurate medical accounts of the Hebrew Bible are in the field of obstetrics. By their very commonness, obstetrical procedures would have been familiar to ordinary people. We come across twins (תאומים) in the story of Tamar (Genesis 38: 27 – 30) and breech-delivery in the story of Rachel who died as a consequence, (Genesis 35:16 17).²⁶ The *lanugo* is described in relation to the birth of Esau. We are told in Exodus 1:15 – 16 that midwives such as *Shiphrah* and *Puah*

²⁵ Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Vol VI, pg 543b.

²⁶ The terminology is confusing. In the story of Tamar the baby 'breaks out' and is named after this 'breach' (פרק) *sic*. Rachel's case, by contrast is, in obstetrical terms a 'breech delivery' meaning that the part of the child destined to wear 'breeches' presents first and may be difficult to deliver. The advent of obstetrical forceps improved this prospect but breech-presentation remains associated with risk. This is made clear by the fact that the midwife was able to tell the sex of the child early on in the delivery before its head presented.

used a *birthstool* (אבנים) as an aid to delivery;²⁷ however this does not appear to have been invariably the case as a number of passages suggest that the mother gave birth not squatting but in a semi-erect position with the midwife squatting before her. The child was delivered, it is thought, onto the knees of the midwife and this process has appeared in metaphorical usage in a number of instances in the Hebrew Bible, perhaps most memorably Job 3:12:

מדוע קדמוני ברכים ומה־שדים כי אינק

Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts, that I should suck?

Puerperal fever caused by *Streptococcus pyogenes* would have been common and most probably fatal then and, indeed up to the 20th century, it was a common cause of maternal septicaemic death in the *post-partum* period.²⁸

5. *Infant mortality and stillbirth*

Both were, undoubtedly, highly prevalent throughout the Ancient World. Poor nutrition, poor hygiene, infection and undeveloped obstetric practice would have been major contributors. Failure to thrive among neonates would have been commonplace and failure of lactation among mothers would have, in the absence of an available wet-nurse, almost certainly have resulted in infant death.

6. *Anatomy*

A number of anatomical terms appear in the Hebrew Bible though not necessarily used in a strictly anatomical or medical sense. As might be expected, the majority of these describe visible parts of the body (hand, finger, thumb, breast etc) or anatomical structures used in sacrifices as in Exodus 29:17. Many occurrences are in poetry and employ anatomical terms in a metaphorical sense in, for example,

²⁷ Such contraptions persisted right up to the 20th century. This word is also attested as a potter's wheel and a euphemism for the female and male genitals.

²⁸ cf Jane Seymour, wife of Henry VIII.

Job 16:13 and 21:24 or in Psalms 69:4. Notable examples of Hebrew anatomical terminology are given in the table below:

Anatomical Structure	Hebrew Word	Biblical Text
Abdominal muscles	שרירי בטנו	Job 40:16
Blood [? = soul]	דם	Genesis 9:4 <i>et al</i>
Bone [= self, strength]	גם / עצם	Genesis 2:23 <i>et al</i>
Bowels	מעיה	Genesis 15:4 <i>et al</i>
Brain/mind [= heart]	לב (Aram = לבב)	Daniel 4:13 <i>et al</i>
Breast (female)	שד [dual = שדים]	Song of Songs 4:5
Caul	יתרת	Exodus 29:13 & 22
Flesh	בשר	Genesis 17:11 <i>et al</i>
Foreskin	ערלה	Genesis 17:11
Gall	מררה	Job 16:13
Heart	לב	Exodus 7:3 <i>et al</i>
Hip joint [?]	כף הירך	Genesis 32:32
Kidney	כליה	Exodus 29:13 & 22
Liver	כבד	Exodus 29:13 & 22
Loins / hips	מתנים	Job 40:16
Marrow	מח	Job 21:24
Omental fat	חלב מכסה הקרב	Exodus 29:22
Pericardium	סגור לבם	Hosea 13:8
Peri-renal fat	חלב	Exodus 29:13 & 22
Sinew [??nerve]	גיד	Job 40:17 [Genesis 32:32]
Throat	גרון	Psalms 64:9
Tooth	שן	Leviticus 24:20 <i>et al</i>
Vagina	חר	Song of Songs 5:4
Womb	בטן/רחם	Exodus 13:15 / Job 1:21

7. Wounds

Wounds must have been commonplace in every ancient civilization, not just from war but from everyday activities such as chopping wood or masonry. Where the wound was not exsanguinating or otherwise fatal, the most likely risk was that of septicæmia. Although the wound may have occurred accidentally, the septic consequences were, nevertheless, seen as divine punishment for foolishness and carelessness.

הבאישו נמקו חבורתי מפני אולתי

My wounds stink and are corrupt, because of my foolishness.

(Psalms 38:6)

One of the very few passages in the Hebrew Bible that gives any inkling of practical medical treatment — presumably by relatives, bystanders or by secular medical practitioners — is to be found in Isaiah (1: 5–6) and relates to wounds.

על מה תכו עוד תוסיפו סרה כל־ראש לחלי וכל־לבב דוי

Why will ye be still stricken, that ye revolt more and more? the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

מכף־רגל ועד־ראש אין־בו מתם פצע וחבורה ומכה טריה לא־זרו ולא חבשו ולא
רככה בשמן

From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and festering sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with oil.

Olive oil, besides acting as an emollient, would perhaps have reduced the local effects of aerobic bacteria and binding, by applying pressure, would stem bleeding. As a simple measure, this treatment — apart from taking little or no account of cleanliness and sterility — has much in common with the modern first-line treatment of wounds. If the patient did not bleed to death or develop sepsis, such

treatment would have been effective and one must suppose that it was used with great frequency in minor domestic accidents.

8. Boils

This subject is considered at considerable length in Chapter 5 in relation to צרעת; and the medical vocabulary employed by the Hebrew Bible to describe skin lesions is considerably bigger than that available for other medical conditions.²⁹ Undoubtedly, the ancients paid particular attention to dermatological conditions presumably on account of their obviously disfiguring nature.³⁰ There are very few references to conditions that are simply painful without being visible to add shame to the sufferer's misery. Apart from זוב which belonged in the priestly sphere, we only have the famous verse from Deuteronomy (28:27) which is thought to describe *inter alia*, haemorrhoids.

יככה יהוה בשחין מצרים (ובעפלים) [ובטחרים] ובגרב ובחרס אשר לא־תוכל
להרפא

*The Lord shall smite thee with the boil of Egypt, and with the emerods,
and with the scurvy, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed.*

This verse, besides being wonderfully descriptive, raises a number of questions. The term שחין is widely used to mean an *inflamed spot*. It occurs in Leviticus 13 in reference to צרעת but here it is being used quite differently to refer to the *boil of Egypt* which was almost certainly acute cutaneous *leishmaniasis*.³¹ This disease is common, disfiguring but transiently so and usually resolves spontaneously in 3 – 12 months. That it was *not* צרעת has been considered in a lengthy disquisition by the

²⁹ Glasby, "What was Biblical Leprosy?".

³⁰ See Chapter 7

³¹ We can suppose this because the name has persisted in various forms such as: *Baghdad boil*, *Oriental sore*, *Aleppo boil*, *Delhi boil*.

present author. In contrast, within this verse stands הרס which ‘cannot be healed’.

This statement has usually been interpreted as meaning that הרס was fatal but that it cannot be cured does not necessarily imply this. This word is not used for צרעת and so may have referred to an enduring or recurrent dermatological condition such as scabies or psoriasis.

9. Infestations

Unsurprisingly, infestations would have been common in ancient Israel. Food hygiene would have been rudimentary particularly in respect of the water used for food preparation and for washing. Many helminthic infestations are caused by worms that have a stage of their life-cycle in either stagnant or running water. Guinea worm and a number of other intestinal worms; both platyhelminth and nematode, are today still very common in the Middle East. It has been suggested that the avoidance of the pork tape-worm (*Taenia solium*) was the reason for which the Israelites were forbidden from eating pork though it would be surprising if this connection could have been made at such an early date.

10. Surgical procedures

Circumcision³² which was mandatory (Genesis 17:10–11), and castration which was forbidden (Deuteronomy 23:2), are the only surgical procedures mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. The precise technique for the former is nowhere mentioned but was even then probably more technically advanced than that used as an emergency measure by Zipporah, (Exodus 4:25).

³² See also Chapter 7

11. Pharmacology

Botanical medicine and early chemistry have been discussed above.

12. Insanity

Instances of mental dysfunction abound in the Hebrew Bible.³³ The concept of the brain did not exist and mental function of a conscious nature was usually ascribed to the heart. ‘Bewilderment of the heart’ appears in Deuteronomy 28:28 along with madness proper, שגעון. As usual, these were dispensations from Yahweh in punishment of waywardness:

יככה יהוה בשגעון ובעורון ובתמהון לבב

The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and with blindness, and with astonishment of heart.

13. Ophthalmology

By the time of the *Mishnah* and the *Talmud*, ophthalmic medicine was relatively well developed and is widely discussed in these works. This was not the case, however, in earlier writings and the Hebrew Bible makes no reference to ophthalmology. We know, however, that trachoma was [and still is] rampantly endemic in the Near East and that the Egyptians made much of diseases of the eye. One might suppose, therefore, that these conditions were common in Syria-Palestine and known to the Hebrew secular medical practitioners. Acquired gonorrhoeal infection of the eye and particularly congenital *Ophthalmia neonatorum* were widespread in ancient times — see Chapter 7 and Appendix 2 for further discussion. Blindness was also common and due to a variety of causes, most frequently trachoma. The Hebrew terminology, סגורים (e.g. Genesis 19:11), and עורון

³³ See Chapter 7 and Appendix 6

(Zechariah 12:4) is vague about the precise causes of the blindness. Senile cataract must have been the foremost contender.³⁴

14. Communicable diseases,

If we restrict our sources to biblical texts, only two diseases, צרעת and זיב qualify for consideration under this heading. It is noteworthy that only these two conditions are mentioned in the levitical writings wherein none of the above categories 1 – 13 appear as significant.³⁵ Gordon also notes the important point that the progress of צרעת if it were Hansen's disease (and most other infectious dermatoses) most certainly could not have been tracked by the priests in seven-day intervals as is suggested by a reading of Leviticus.³⁶ There is little evidence to suggest the priests were interested in therapeutic measures. Regarding quarantine, Gordon³⁶ has pointed out, 'This isolation of "lepers" demanded by the Old Testament is of less importance as a hygienic measure than it is as an influencing factor on medical history.' and indeed, on the wielding of power by successive theocracies and church hierarchies.

From these few biblical examples, it can be seen that the earliest medical events were purely observational. For example, Jacob's injury (Genesis 32:32) is described in the Hebrew, purely in anatomical terms relating to what might have been visible to Jacob himself or at least to a confidante. Because, in a Yahwistic society, the cause and relief of disease was seen as a matter for Yahweh alone, it was not for priests to speculate about aetiology. The dearth of any recorded data makes one suppose that practitioners of secular healthcare were not party to priestly

³⁴ M. A. Glasby, "New Testament Diagnoses," 122, no. 2 (2010): 98. J. K. Howard, *Medicine, Miracle and Myth in the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010).

³⁵ Although categories 2 and 8 are relevant.

³⁶ Gordon, "Medicine among the Ancient Hebrews." Pg 484

deliberations and were unlikely either to be educated or motivated sufficiently to make textual recordings of their ideas and activities.

We must conclude that in Israel as in Egypt and Mesopotamia, what medical practice existed was essentially supernaturalistic. The activities of the priests were restricted to the two communicable diseases, צרעת and זוב which, one feels obliged to conclude, they did not regard as disease or illness in the modern sense. They were exclusively concerned with the impact of these conditions on the maintenance of the *wholeness ↔ holiness* equilibrium. .

SUMMARY

Priestly ritual furnishes the means by which society can maintain its order and re-establish that order if it has been compromised. In any society ritual must operate within a particular worldview that encompasses cosmic, societal and cultic elements proper to that society. For the levitical priests, their worldview set the parameters for their priestly rituals and priestly duties.

Rituals are the social acts that are operational within a particular worldview. Priestly rituals can be categorized into five broad classes. Each operates in the spheres of space, time and status in relation both to those enacting and in receipt of the rituals.

In contrast to the purely ritualistic activities of the levitical priests, it is possible to identify within the Hebrew Bible some clearly medical material. This appears to have no obvious interaction with the ritualistic activities and worldview of the priesthood. It seems likely that this represents simple narrative relating to occasions where medical events were identifiable in their own right. Such incidences never involve צרעת and/or זוב which appear to have been regarded exclusively as in the ritualistic province of the priesthood and not as pathophysiological phenomena.

While צרעת and זוב imperilled the idea of ritual purity, other purely medical conditions did not.

It is now necessary to consider more carefully the nature of the *purity-impurity* relationship within the priestly milieu in order to understand their role in the synergy or tension between wholeness and holiness

CHAPTER 4 — PURITY AND IMPURITY IN THE

PRIESTLY SOCIETY

ARRIVING at useful, working definitions of purity and impurity as seen in biblical times and particularly within the levitical priestly *Weltanschauung*, is a difficult task. The relevant literature is extensive and many different approaches have been used. For present purposes, the objective is to examine the reasons for the inclusion of צרעת and זוב in the *purity laws* and to ask if, in the priestly milieu, these were envisaged as illness and disease, or if they were seen purely as infractions of *sacramental wholeness*. The nature of biblical purity has been approached by different authors in markedly different ways. Time and place are important factors: we might, for example, expect to find differing views of purity and impurity in levitical times, exilic times, the Second-Temple period, the Qumran society, in rabbinical times and, of course, in any writings deriving or redacted at any of these times. It is vitally important therefore, to try to confine conclusions exclusively to historical, textual and even ‘medical’ material from within the priestly worldview and to distinguish original writings from later additions and redactions. That is not to say that a consideration of later developments and evolutionary processes are not valuable (if reception history is avoided) in shedding light on the evolutionary process. Major modern authors such as Neusner, Milgrom, Douglas, Frymer-Kensky, Klawans and Jenson have all contributed substantially to the debate on impurity, but each has employed a particular approach and attributed a different

weighting to the specifics of צרעת and זוב so that each of these viewpoints may be usefully considered and evaluated here.

The tension between being *pure* (טהור) and being *impure* (טמא) must, for present purposes, be seen first and foremost as a creature of the priestly milieu.¹ The majority of authors have tended to examine the purity laws in a Second-Temple context, taking this as a starting point and working backwards and forwards in time. It is difficult to see a logic in this approach though an explanation might be that this period has attracted a greater mass of scholarship than any other in Biblical Studies. The problem that particularly faces the student new to this field is that, whereas there is an undoubted mass of opinion and literature, this has not always been a critical mass and it is nigh impossible to extract a single, convincing, explanatory thread running through the impurity-purity tension. In particular the application of an informed medical viewpoint to the problem has been infrequent and the resulting exegesis unsatisfactory.

A key point is the question of when and how Israel established itself as a specifically Yahwistic society. By Second-Temple times it may be supposed that the dynamic between polytheism and monotheism was moving towards the latter under the influence of the priestly worldview. This argument has been extended by some authors to suggest that the genesis of any systematic medical practice in Israel would have challenged priestly monopoly and so the priesthood was sedulous in keeping to itself the diagnosis and treatment of carefully selected, prevalent diseases. This argument breaks down, however, when one is thinking about pre-exilic times when it

¹ The priestly contribution to the Hebrew Bible has itself been divided into P and H material and there still exists a healthy debate about the value of such categorization, whether P or H holds primacy and what the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* for each might be. This is discussed at greater length in Appendix 3 of this thesis.

is almost certain that there was persisting polytheism *pari passu* with the emergence of a specifically Yahwistic culture and that priest-operated sanctuaries were widespread in the land up to the time of Josiah's centralization. There is argument to this day as to the extent of this and the situation is rendered impossible to resolve because of the uncertainties about the time and authorship of the relevant texts. Whether there was active suppression of medical and scientific development by the priests fearing it might lead to polytheism and idolatry remains to be seen. It is important to remember that even if the priests opposed the development of medicine and science, this does not mean that they were also interested in it.

The Priestly View of Purity and Impurity

Within the priestly Weltanschauung where ritual was paramount, it was one of the foremost duties of the priest to *distinguish* (בדל, *hiph'il* = הבדיל) between what was ritually unclean, (impure, defiled) and what was clean (pure, undefiled). This was because ritual (cultic) uncleanness could not be reconciled in any way with the holiness of Yahweh.

ולהבדיל בין הקדש ובין החל ובין הטמא ובין הטהור

...and that ye may put difference between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean;

(Leviticus 10:10)

Material things that conferred impurity were certain animals and groups of animals, זוב, צרעת, sexual aberrations, especially among other races, death and some activities associated with alien cults. However, nowhere in the Hebrew Bible do we find any convincing attempt to explain precisely *why* these particular things conferred uncleanness whilst other things did not — it appears they simply broke ritual and

that was enough. Unsurprisingly, this has led to wide [and sometimes wild] speculation on the matter by exegetes over many years. It is possible that death, in a rather broad sense, may have been a common factor inasmuch as a sense of ‘deadness’ could [at a stretch] be imagined for all of the defiling proscriptions. For example, *dermopaths*² were kept separate like corpses, and live, ritually clean animals were the only ones permitted to be used for sacrifices, offerings of first-fruits and for food. A genital discharge, it has been suggested,³ was seen as the potential life that, because it remained unrealized, became transmogrified to equate with death and thereby uncleanness.⁴ There is an interesting parallel here with the notion that dirt is simply *matter in the wrong place*.⁵

As noted above, the precise nature of either of the components of the טהור↔טמא relationship remain *definienda* throughout the entire Hebrew Bible. It is unclear whether this is because it was assumed by its authors that these terms would be universally understood or because their definition(s) represented an inconvenient task that was better avoided. For any attempt at a definition, we have to rely on later interpreters and therefore, of course, second-hand opinions: these have been many and various. A significant component of this second-level commentary comprises a vast rabbinical hermeneutic evolving over a considerable time. We are, thus, in the [arguably] fortunate position of being able to use twenty-first century scholarship and technology as a means of distilling the fruits of many authors’ and many centuries’ exegesis.

² A *neologism*, used for convenience here to conceal ignorance about humans afflicted with צרעת.

³ See chapter 6

⁴ However this view fails in the case of sexual intercourse and parturition which were self-evidently *life-producing* but nevertheless regarded as unclean.

⁵ cf V Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (Picataway NJ: Transaction Rutgers, 1969). Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of concepts of Pollution and Taboo*.

Terminology

Old Testament *purity* is significantly different from the *purity* (ἀγνότης/ἀγνεία) of the New Testament where the word is more often than not, used in the sense of ‘chastity’. Editions of the Bible in English vary enormously in their usage of the relevant words and so must be viewed in the present quest, with especial caution.⁶ A search⁷ for the lexeme *purity* in English translations of the whole Bible yields only three citations, (2Cor 11:3, 1Tim 4:12, 1Tim 5:2) all in the New Testament.⁸ In contrast, the lexeme *impurity* yields nine examples, all in Leviticus, and all referring to menstruation. There is, quite clearly, no implied antithesis between these two lexemes. In contrast, if we search for the lexeme *unclean* we get 35 ‘hits’ in the New Testament and 176 ‘hits’ in the Old Testament of which 112 are in Leviticus. From this we may suppose the levitical view of what is, as a rule, in English commentaries called *impurity*, and used to translate the Hebrew word טמא, may be, perhaps, better represented by the term *uncleanness/uncleanliness*. Its antonym, [strictly *antithet*] *pure/clean*, at least in respect of ritual purity, is almost always טהור. The etymologies, semantic fields and usages of these adjectives and related verbal forms are considered by Clines⁹ and in even greater detail by Botterweck *et al.*¹⁰ The latter group of authors looks extensively at cognates from Akkadian, Ugaritic and Arabic to underline their exegesis.

⁶ Although far from universally popular, the [English] Revised Version (ERV) of 1885 has much to recommend it as it is more linguistically accurate than the KJV and embodies a more literal translation of the Hebrew words than later versions (e.g. the RSV) which offer [perhaps] a more theologically-orientated interpretation.

⁷ Bibleworks, "Software for Biblical Exegesis and Research."

⁸ However *pure* occurs 1213 times but mainly in expressions such as *pure gold*. One exception is Ezra 6:20.

⁹ Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Vol III, pg. 342b *et seq* and pg 368b *et seq*.

¹⁰ Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Vol V, pp 287–296 and 330–342.

Impurity and Defilement

It is important to know if these two terms are used synonymously in the Hebrew Bible. The former implies a persisting state and the latter an active process. Does defilement therefore, necessarily confer impurity and is this always the case? The translators of the Bible into English appear to have reserved this word for the New Testament and used it to translate the Greek words *μίασμα* or *μόλυσμα* but not the Hebrew טמא; the Septuagint uses the adjective *ἀκάθαρτος* to mean *defiled*. Nevertheless, defilement appears in the Hebrew Bible to be the process by which impurity is acquired and this is true of both ritual and moral impurity (see below). Therefore, the question becomes ‘What causes defilement?’ In the case of moral impurity the answer is ‘Sin’ and it is relatively easy to understand this association in the context of most societies that may be envisaged. In the case of ritual impurity the answer must take account specifically of the ritual-based priestly worldview within which the defiling influences are clearly demarcated but poorly explained. In particular, priestly ritual looks to two contagious and severely defiling influences: זוב and צרעת.

Ideas of Ritual Impurity and Moral Impurity

Within the *Torah*, we may clearly distinguish two different kinds of purity/impurity. Although the P material in Leviticus, more or less exclusively, deals with ritual impurity, the H material and much else in the *Torah* is concerned with moral impurity. To explain either it is necessary to consider both. Most of the textual material that might be considered as the *purity laws* is concentrated in [P and H] Leviticus but there are verses in Genesis, Exodus and Numbers that deal with these

topics in a similar way.¹¹ If we subscribe to the *Documentary Hypothesis*, all those parts that were influenced by the P (and H), as opposed to the D, authors appear to treat purity/impurity in a like manner so that within the Levitical corpus, the differentiation into *ritual purity/impurity* and *moral purity/impurity* is clearly made. Both are seen as *defilement* though in English translations, as we have already noted, the word *impurity* rarely appears; it is restricted in its use and gives way to the much more common expression, *uncleanness*. The sense of *defilement*, though unstated, nevertheless emerges because the emphasis is almost always upon what begets and constitutes *impurity* rather than *purity*. Leviticus is, essentially, a very negative text: it is about the mechanisms and consequences of *transgression* rather than the acquisition of grace.¹² Both ritual impurity and moral impurity entail defilement:¹³ in the case of ritual impurity through contagion — a process that can be entirely passive¹⁴ — and in the case of moral impurity through sin. Sin as the antithesis of moral purity was, in practical terms, mostly the eating of forbidden foods, idolatry, malicious bloodshed and violation of sexual prohibitions and so must have entailed both an active and a personal element. There is no textual indication, for example, that moral impurity brought on by sinful acts might cross over into ritual impurity. Surprisingly, this appears to be so even for cases of *נִזְוֵה* with apparently venereal origins. Some authors prefer to equate moral impurity with *sin per se*,¹⁵ others see it

¹¹ The situation concerning Deuteronomy is rather different and will be dealt with in Chapter 11, page 347

¹² Though it is not to be suggested that such an acquisition was not a specific goal for the levitical priesthood.

¹³ Making this differentiation, of course, hinges upon when we believe the P and the H material were first produced. There is considerable dispute over this: see Chapter 4.

¹⁴ At least in respect of the sufferer. See Ch 8. The active agent here is the divinity, showing his displeasure.

¹⁵ Though how this may be defined remains a matter for speculation. Probably not St Augustine's 'original sin'. See Chapter 11.

as the *consequences* of sin such that divine displeasure at sin may lead to such contagious afflictions as צרעת and זוב, which are, strictly, forms of ritual impurity.

A dualistic nature of impurity was central to the view taken by David Hoffmann around the middle of the twentieth century. Hoffmann acquired his ideas from texts using purely syntactical study-methods. He made the observation in the levitical text, that those instances of the word טמא that were followed by a preposition, exhibited a bimodal distribution.¹⁶ Hoffman thus recognized two forms of impurity which were identifiable, each by its conjoined preposition, as being able to stand in opposition *either* to *purity*, by which he meant ritual purity, or to *holiness*. The first case was identifiable by the attachment of the inseparable preposition -ל to signify the object or instrument of the impurity [hypothetical example X-ל]:

ויהי אנשים אשר היו טמאים לנפש אדם

And there were certain men, who were unclean by the dead body of a man...

(Numbers 9:6)

This arrangement represented bodily defilement (טומא הגויות). The second case was characterized by the preposition -ב, [as in X-ב]. Here it is attached to the object of the impurity and it represented the defilement of something that was sacred or holy (טומאת הקדושות). Furthermore, Hoffmann divided up bodily defilement¹⁷ into three levels of seriousness. Each of these involved a transferable contagion but was reversible through a process of purification defined in scripture and carried out at the

¹⁶ David Hoffmann, Tsevi Har-Shefer, and Aharon Liberman, *Sefer va-Yikra Meforash* (2vols.; Yerushalayim: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1963). 1:236.

¹⁷ *Ibid* 1:212–213.

behest of, and by, the priests. Hoffman's three levels of bodily defilement resulted from contact with or, in the cases of diseases, the acquisition of:

1. *Death of humans (Num 19) and certain animal carcasses (Lev 11:24–40; 22:5)*
2. *צִרְעָת (Lev 13, 14), זֹבַח (Lev 15) and childbirth (Lev 12),*
3. *Ritual objects conferring impurity e.g. scapegoat (Lev 16:26), burnt or sin-offering (Lev 16:27–28), ashes and water used in sacrifices (Num 19:7–10).*

Hoffmann's somewhat rigid, textually-based system for defining impurity has fallen from favour today but must be seen as the first attempt at a classification based entirely on textual sources. In this respect it stimulated a lasting curiosity among scholars that has led to a very considerable amount of later work in a similar vein: especially that of Milgrom¹⁵ whose highly analytical style constitutes a substantial development of that of Hoffmann, but is intrinsically similar.¹⁸

For present purposes, we wish to investigate and understand the question of whether, since the integrity of *ritual impurity* depended upon *wholeness*, *wholeness* itself depended upon *health*. In other words, did priestly duties involve active *healthcare*? In what follows, no specific distinctions will be made between the terms *impurity*, *uncleanness*, *uncleanliness* and *defilement* when they are used to translate the Hebrew word טָמֵא as this word was used in the Hebrew Bible.

[Im]Purity and [Un]Holiness

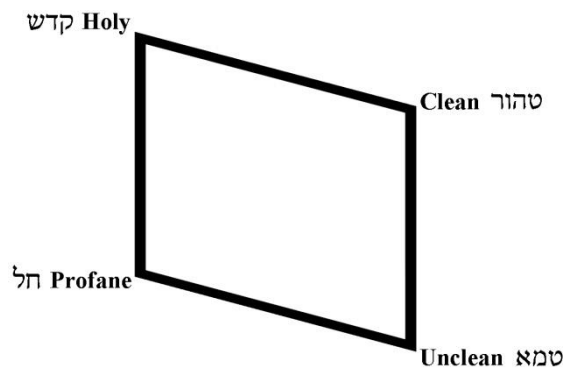
It is important not to confuse טָהוֹר with קֹדֶשׁ; uncleanliness was always seen as unholy but cleanliness was not necessarily holiness.¹⁹

¹⁸ Jacob Milgrom, "Two kinds of hattā't," 26, no. 3 (1976): 333-37; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (3 vols.; New York: Anchor Bible; Doubleday, 1991); J. Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

¹⁹ See, Isaiah 35:8. There is but a single situation where holiness and uncleanliness appear to interact and this is described in the *Mishnah* where Holy Scriptures are said to defile the hands:

כל כתבי הקודש מטמין את הידים (*Yadayim* 3:5)

Leviticus (10:10), implicates two pairs of words in opposition: *holy* and *profane* (where profane = common), against *clean* and *unclean*. We have already seen that the latter pair may be equated with *pure* and *impure*. Barr²⁰ has proposed a two-dimensional relationship for these four words, in the shape of a rhombus.



The choice of the rhombic geometry is supposed to imply a tighter and more well-defined relationship of the word pairs in the [truly] vertical dimension than in the [displaced] ‘horizontal’ dimension.

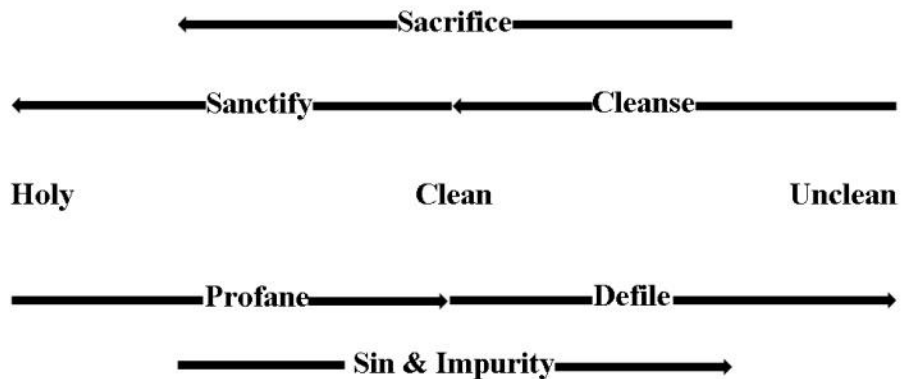
Jenson has introduced the concept of a purely lexical *holiness spectrum* as central to his concept of *graded holiness* and so peculiar to the P texts.²¹ Jenson’s spectrum embodies the same four words: *holy* (קדש), *profane* (חל), *clean* (טהור), *unclean* (טמא), which he calls the ‘holiness word group’. Unlike Barr, he sees a dynamic relationship in which the four terms at the corners of Barr’s rhombus, besides defining status, additionally define the transitions between these four states. Thus, a

Traditionally, this has been construed as meaning that the scriptures are so very holy that even the hands of otherwise ‘clean’ individuals must be unclean by comparison. However, a more recent view of this is that holy scriptures confer a ‘sacred contagion’ by virtue of their association with the Ark of the Covenant which was seen as a cultic object, a palladium and repository for holy things. To touch it evoked the lethal wrath of God — 2 Sam 6:6–7. Presumably this was extended to the holy texts it contained and to texts subsequently derived from them. See, T H Lim, "The defilement of the hands as a principle determining the holiness of scriptures," *JThS* 61, no. Pr 2 (2010): 501 - 15.

²⁰ J. Barr, *Semantics and Biblical Theology, a Contribution to the Discussion*. (Vetus Testamentum Supplement 22; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972).

²¹ Jenson, *Graded holiness: a key to the priestly conception of the world*.

temporal dimension is added. Wenham²² has proposed a simple diagrammatic scheme to portray Jenson's spectrum. The transitions are indicated by arrows.



The scheme does not imply any linear proportionality in the steps between states and does not, therefore, adequately represent the temporal dimension or embody true vector quantities. However, it is a good diagrammatic model for illustrating the active causative and restorative factors: *sin* and *sacrifice* that must be brought into play in order to move between the various states.

The rabbis were always enthusiastic about classification, and it is worth noting in passing, that a scheme for categorizing impurity and its severity was eventually bound to emerge. This happened, of course, much later than the levitical writings but it involved the notion of *major impurity* and *minor impurity* which although not formally classified are implied in the more constrained milieu of biblical texts. Danby, in his translation of the Mishnah,²³ summarizes the rabbinic *Rules of Uncleaness* as formally laid down in the *Eliyahu Rabbah*, a commentary on the *Tahoroth* by Elijah, who was the Gaon of Wilna, (1720–97). This Appendix runs to twenty-three substantial paragraphs which may be crudely summarized in the following table.

²² Gordon J. Wenham, *The book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans, 1979).

²³ Danby, *The Mishnah*. Appendix IV, page 800.

Cause	Hebrew	Translation
Contact with corpse	אב אבות הטומאה	father of fathers of impurity
Major impurity (Contagious)	אב הטומאה	father of impurity
Minor Impurity (Non-contagious)	טומאה	impurity
Secondary effect of major impurity (by contagion)	ילד טומאה	child of impurity

This is really no more than a formalized and slightly expanded re-statement of what may be deduced from a careful reading of the text of Leviticus. The notion of a *family of impurities* probably has no more significance than its being a convenient way of formulating a hierarchy. Ricoeur in his work *The Symbolism of Evil*²⁴ notes the divergence in meaning between defilement and sin. The former is phenomenological whereas the latter is historical but in the Bible and associated works a transition of one to the other is frequently observable.

Sin

Especially in the light of its association with moral impurity, it is expedient to make a brief *excursus* into the specific nature of sin as encountered in the Hebrew Bible

²⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (trans. E Buchanan; Boston: Beacon Press, 1969). Pg 47 *et seq.*

and associated texts.²⁵ At the risk of being judged simplistic, one may note that the word ‘sin’ (חַטָּאת/ἁμαρτία), in these contexts is almost invariably used as a trope, and most often as a metaphor. There are two metaphors that were used for sin and a time-dependent dichotomy in their usage has arisen. In the Hebrew Bible, the common metaphor for sin is that of either a *weight/burden* or of a *stain*. In either case this must be borne by the afflicted individual(s), or by society, or by a *scapegoat* conveniently appointed to bear their collective burden or stain. For example:

וּנְשָׂא הַשְּׂעִיר עָלָיו אֶת־כָּל־עֲוֹנוֹתֵם אֶל־אֶרֶץ גְּזֵרָה וְשָׁלַח אֶת־הַשְּׂעִיר בַּמִּדְבָּר

*And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a solitary land:
and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness*

(Leviticus 16:22)

In the Hebrew Bible the *weight* metaphor occurs six times more often than the *stain* metaphor. In the latter case, the idea is that the stain can be eradicated by washing or bathing as in:

וְרָבַח [הַרְבֵּה] כְּבַסְנִי מֵעֲוֹנֵי וּמִחַטָּאתַי טְהַרֵּנִי

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

(Psalm 51:4 HB; LXX = 50:4; ERV = 51:2)

Anderson has studied extensively the language used in this metaphor.²⁶ He takes the view that the noun for sin, which in both of the above instances is עֲוֹן, does not determine the *metaphorical unit*. Rather, Anderson believes, it is the verb for the *removal* of the sin that fulfils this role. There are three verbs commonly found in

²⁵ Achieving brevity in reviewing the extensive subject-matter on this topic in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament along with the considerably more extensive body of thinking and writing from theologians and philosophers of subsequent generations, is no easy task.

²⁶ Gary A. Anderson, *Sin: a history* (New Haven, Conn; London: Yale University Press, 2009).

this context: $\sqrt{\text{נשא}}$ (108 times), $\sqrt{\text{סלח}}$ (17 times) and $\sqrt{\text{כפר}}$ (6 times).²⁷ Ricoeur has argued backwards from this position that these mechanisms for the removal of sin necessarily entail the notion that sin was being viewed by Israelite priestly culture as a concrete entity with ‘mass and weight’.²⁸ It is by way of the covenant with God that arrangements for the alleviation of this weight are made so that it may be transferred to the goat and sent away into oblivion.

The alternative metaphor is thought to represent the evolution in both language and thought that came about as the First-Temple Period and Exile gave way to the period of Persian rule (538 – 333 BCE) and the Second-Temple Period, and thereafter, in the writings of the Rabbis, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament. Here, the metaphor changes from the *burden/stain* idea to one about *debt* and its *repayment*. Anderson²⁹ has linked this change in metaphorical usage to the influence of the Imperial dialect of the Aramaic language which had become the *lingua franca* of the Persian Empire. An example quoted by Anderson is:

להן מלכא מלכי ישפר (עליד) [עלד] [וחטיד] [וחטאד] בצדקה פרק ועויתד במחן
ענין הן תהוא ארכה לשלותד

Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if there may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

(Daniel 4:24, LXX & ERV = 4:27)

Nebuchadnezzar can, according to Daniel, redeem his sin by giving alms to the poor.

²⁷ For the extensive range of meanings attested by these verbs see: Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. and Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*.

²⁸ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*. Pg 81 *et seq.* Ricoeur is unclear as to whether ‘weight’ is simply ‘mass’ multiplied by the *Constant of Gravitation*, or whether he is imputing some higher distinction to these physical terms.

²⁹ Anderson, *Sin: a history*. Pg 6 and 27–39.

The important verb is פָּרַק (Aramaic *pe'al* imperative 2nd person masculine singular of פָּרַק = wipe away, remove³⁰); this verb is also used in the sense of ‘redeem’ and ‘buy out of slavery’. Anderson points out that if one compares texts from the Hebrew Bible with the equivalent Targums one finds that the *weight* idea of the Hebrew gives way to the *debt* idea of the Aramaic so that, in Leviticus 5:1, where the Hebrew reads,

ונפש כִּי־תחטא ושמעה קול אלה והוא עד או ראה או ידע אס־לוא יגיד ונשא עונו

And if any one sin, in that he heareth the voice of adjuration, he being a witness, whether he hath seen or known, if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity:

The Aramaic reads,

ואנש ארי יחוב וישמע קל מומ[מומתא] והוא סהיד או חזא או ידע אם לא יחוי ויקביל חוביה:

The Aramaic noun חוב, in the Imperial Aramaic of the book of Daniel, has the specific meaning *debt* or *obligation*, so that the expression, ‘he shall bear the weight of his sin’ (ונשא עונו) there becomes ‘he shall take on a debt’ (ויקביל חוביה).

By the time of the New Testament, the idea of sin as debt was ubiquitous and the idea of sin as a burden no longer found favour. Anderson³¹ has suggested that, when Ricoeur remarked that these metaphors were important because they stimulated thinking, he meant that they formed the semantic framework for the many extensive narratives³² on subjects like forgiveness and punishment. These stories, in turn led to the ethical and philosophical views we hold today about these subjects

³⁰ Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature*. Pg 1239a.

³¹ Anderson, *Sin: a history*. Pg 38.

³² For example the Exile might be seen as the consequence of Israel’s spiritual indebtedness.

and the processes by which we can atone for them. The concept of sin in whatever form was, and remains so central to all biblical literature that it is often difficult to separate it from other aspects of religious philosophy. In particular there has been a degree of confusion regarding the place of sin in the priestly worldview and its ritual enactment. It is, however, important that such a distinction is made and this will be considered again in Chapter 10 in relation to that primary defiling agent, צרעת, in priestly ideology.

MODERN VIEWS OF BIBLICAL IMPURITY

It would be impossible to do justice even to twentieth and twenty-first century writings on the subject of levitical and Second-Temple purity and impurity in the space available here. However, if consideration is carefully restricted to the question in hand, namely the role of צרעת and זוב as determinants of unwholeness and impurity, and the critique furthermore restricted to ideas from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, there immediately appears a group of authors each one of whom merits individual consideration. None of these has taken a specifically medical exegetical view of the biblical material but each has dealt with its consequences and formulated a viewpoint of impurity as a generality.

Here follows a brief summary of the approaches to biblical impurity from a selection of important twentieth-century authors. The epithets appended to their names reflect, entirely, the views of the present author.

Douglas — a sociological approach.

The earliest, and perhaps the most controversial of the recent authors to consider the question of Biblical impurity was Mary Douglas (1921 – 2007), a British, Roman

Catholic social anthropologist with a particular interest in symbolism within cultures. Her seminal work in respect of impurity was published in 1966³³ but she made a further two contributions on the specific subject of Leviticus three decades later, whereby she significantly revised her former approach.³⁴ Much of this revision resulted from Jacob Milgrom's having largely discredited Douglas's interpretation of certain aspects of levitical dogma: in particular the dietary laws. Nevertheless, as a behavioural study, Douglas's work has much to commend it as it implicates *impurity* as society's explanation for the distaste (and fear) aroused in the human psyche by *anomalous* people, objects or situations.³⁵ Anomalies that are manifested to society-at-large in a visual way figure particularly prominently in Douglas's systematic analysis and one might suppose that in ancient civilizations, such anomalies would have been the widely apparent in daily life. Douglas's formal statement of her viewpoint was therefore, that 'Human beings tend to reject things that fall outside certain categories dictated by their society.' This has acquired for itself the appellation *category violation*. Of prime importance, in this context is the notion of unwholeness and/or *blemish*³⁶ which Douglas sees as an intensely powerful '...socio-symbolic taboo'. Thus, [especially visible] blemishes and related phenomena confer impurity upon individuals by a process of setting them apart. Different societies achieve this in different ways that develop to become customs and practices specifically associated with impurity.³⁷ Such physical causation must, by definition, be either congenital or acquired and though the latter case can be easily

³³ Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of concepts of Pollution and Taboo*.

³⁴ Douglas, "The Forbidden Animals in Leviticus."; Douglas, *Leviticus as literature*.

³⁵ This is the '*Dirt is simply matter in the wrong place*.' idea: see above.

³⁶ For more on this subject see Chapter 7.

³⁷ This viewpoint has been strongly supported by the extensive anthropological work of Victor Turner, see: V Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (Picataway NJ: Transaction Rutgers, 1969).

extrapolated to be the wages of sin (or divine displeasure), it is difficult for us in today's social climate to see why congenitally afflicted individuals should have been so heavily stigmatized and marginalized. Nevertheless, we well recognize today that in bygone societies, the sins of the fathers were, to a very great degree, held to account for the afflictions and misfortunes of their children. Douglas and Turner both take the view that socio-symbolic taboos of this kind have been a function of all societies at all times. Douglas strongly refuted the idea of the levitical purity laws having been formulated specifically and absolutely as a hygienic measure rather than to fulfil the ideological needs of a ritual-driven society. She is adamant that, *mutatis mutandis*, these taboos persist into modern society: '...are our ideas hygienic where theirs are symbolic? Not a bit of it... ...the difference between pollution and behaviour in one part of the world and another is only a matter of detail'.³⁸ Modern society has tempered this equivalence because it has knowledge and experience of hygiene and of bacteriology: consequently this particular taboo, although it persists, has become dislocated from religious practice and consigned to *healthcare* by modernist thought. Douglas extended the simple equation *dirt = matter in the wrong place* to mean *defilement/impurity = purity in the wrong place* where *wrong place* implies *category violation* — anything outside the socially-defined compass of a specific society. This is, therefore, a symbolic system of impurity which, because it influences and/or controls behaviour, fulfils a function for society as a whole and thereby defines its morality. Within this definition, Douglas takes the view that 'A polluting person is always in the wrong'³⁹ and it is above all, this somewhat dogmatic statement that led later, to substantial criticism of her views especially by Neusner and Milgrom. Central to the argument is the unanswered question of

³⁸ Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. Pg 43.

³⁹ *Ibid* page 140 where 'always' presumably meant '*de facto*' and '*de jure*'

whether by *matter* Douglas meant all matter or merely those objects, people and situations already seen as anomalous/impure. Douglas appears not to have been paying attention to the difference between ritual impurity and moral impurity and was simply considering the former as a largely undefined subset of the latter. Both Neusner and Milgrom (*vide infra*), nevertheless, based their own ideas of impurity loosely on Douglas but made significantly more of this distinction. Douglas herself, influenced by the ideas of Milgrom especially, latterly revised her work⁴⁰ with an emphasis on Leviticus and Numbers. She came to the conclusion that the universality of her earlier ideas simply could not apply in the case of the laws of Judaism. This was a complete re-appraisal of the notion of ritual impurity as being specific to the Israelite system. It and its consequences have been carefully and critically considered by Klawans.⁴¹ Undoubtedly, Douglas seems to have missed the point about ritual impurity but this should not diminish her overall contribution. Douglas's anthropological analysis placed the purity laws firmly within a socio-symbolic framework which she found to be present, *aliquantum*, within all societies. She underestimated, however, the extent to which super-added influences might alter the basic symbolism and in particular she underestimated this effect in a priest-dominated Israelite society. In fairness to Douglas, and in the context of the present study, it should be emphasized that she based her arguments particularly on dietary practices and taboos relating to congenital blemishes and not upon צרעת or זוב. In fact the word 'leprosy' does not appear at all in the index to her book, *Purity and Danger*.

⁴⁰ Douglas, "The Forbidden Animals in Leviticus."; Douglas, *Leviticus as literature*.

⁴¹ Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Pp 18–19.

Despite this, Douglas and Turner represent the anthropological viewpoint regarding purity/impurity and it is from them that we can most readily formulate an idea of *wholeness* as a working definition for the present study where it must be seen in relation to our understanding of the priestly ideology. The authors that follow stand apart from Douglas in that their appreciation of the purity/impurity relationship is largely taxonomical and directed at formal categorization of effect rather than cause. All appear, nevertheless to be based to some degree — perhaps in some cases tacitly — upon the Douglas/Turner anthropological model of category violation as the causative agent of impurity-through-unwholeness.

Neusner — a working hypothesis.

Jacob Neusner (1932–), the American Jewish scholar, is particularly noted for his analytical work on the rabbinic period, the Mishnah and the Talmud. He has written extensively between 1973 and 2005 on the subject of purity/impurity. This work necessarily also encompasses the biblical and Second-Temple Periods.⁴² An important thread running through this work is Neusner's assertion that later developments relating to purity and impurity within Jewish culture, were all founded upon a biblical legacy this being largely the P texts of Leviticus and Numbers. Purity and impurity, in Neusner's opinion, are primarily cultic matters but secondarily may have functioned in the priestly environment as metaphorical exemplars for moral and religious behaviour.

Above all, it is important to understand that Neusner's analysis of purity/impurity is derived wholly from a study of textual sources. Where he is concerned with purity/impurity in the biblical period, it should be noted that Neusner considers the

⁴² Jacob Neusner, *The idea of purity in ancient Judaism* (v 1; Leiden: Brill, 1973). Jacob Neusner, "The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism," 43, no. 1 (1975): 15-26. Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peck, *Encyclopaedia of Midrash: Biblical interpretation in formative Judaism* (2vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2005).

Book of Leviticus as a single unit of priestly law: as such he makes no distinction between P and H.⁴³

Neusner's idea of cultic purity/impurity

By his use of the terms *cult* and *cultic purity*, Neusner is thinking primarily, in a Second-Temple context and so is particularly concerned with the *Temple Cult* by which he means, the establishment of a philosophy and ethic of purity to be embodied within the code of practice of the temple, but also to be extended to the יִהְיֶה , or community.⁴⁴ He notes that a later Pharisaic viewpoint would assert that ‘...the purity observed in the Temple should be observed in the home and the hearth.’ Neusner makes the point that, during the Second-Temple Period, it is to be expected that the ancient biblical texts would have been well known. Therefore, he sees no reason why such a philosophy and ethic should not have been inherited from the earlier times where the centrifugal spread of purity law was not so much, *temple* → *home and hearth* → *land*, but rather, *priestly ideology and influence* → *home and hearth* → *land*. Ultimately, it was הַאֲרֶזֶק that had to be protected from impurity as failure to do this would necessarily result in divine departure, desolation and exile of the people. Such protection would only have been possible if the ethic and *Weltanschauung* of the priests was *mutatis mutandis* appropriately transmitted to and inculcated in the people.

Neusner's central thesis for cultic purity, is that *participation in the cult* and thereby contact with what is sacred, should be available to the pure but proscribed to the impure.

⁴³ See Appendix 3

⁴⁴ Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Vol IV pg 196.

Neusner lists the causes of cultic impurity, as he sees them in the biblical, P writings as follows:⁴⁵

	Cause	Biblical reference
1	Forbidden foods	Lev. 11:1–47, 17:15–16,
2	Childbirth	Lev. 12:1–8
3	‘Leprosy’ = dermatopathy	Lev. 13:1–46, 13:59
4	‘Leprosy’ = moulds, mildew	Lev. 13:47–59
5	Bodily discharges	Lev. 15:1–33, Deut 23:10
6	Sexual misdeeds & murder	Lev. 18:6–25, Num. 35:32–34
7	Corpses	Lev. 21:1–24, Num. 31:19–20

Neusner’s idea of metaphorical purity/impurity

In addition to the above notion of cultic purity and impurity, Neusner takes the view that within biblical literature can be found a usage of the terms טהור and טמא as metaphors for [im]moral behaviour. Where there is a [personal and cultic] maintenance of purity through adherence to religious prescriptions and dogma, this is indicative of an acceptance *of* God and is a reciprocal process by which the pure are within the cult and so are accepted *by* God. In contrast, impurity is the failure to follow such prescriptions and is indicative of an active rejection *of* God punishable with rejection *by* God. Metaphorical purity/impurity stands, in Neusner’s view, in contrast with cultic purity/impurity because the former entails no consideration of the details of priestly law whereas the latter entails specific questions about how, within a priestly worldview, to achieve, maintain and restore purity. Douglas specifically rejected Neusner’s view of metaphorical impurity because she saw the entirety of the biblical purity texts as a single [priestly] symbolic system. More recently, Klawans has felt that Neusner’s dichotomy is oversimplified, there is no

⁴⁵ Adapted from: Neusner, *The idea of purity in ancient Judaism*. Pp18 –23

requirement for metaphor, and that his specific association of purity and impurity with the priesthood and/or temple is unhelpful.⁴⁶

Neusner considered a wealth of literature in arriving at his understanding of purity/impurity but, unlike Milgrom, he did not make a direct analysis of Leviticus and Numbers. His Hebrew Bible scholarship relates specifically to Ezra and Nehemiah and he also used the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Philo and Josephus as textual sources. Pollution of the temple cult by idolatry is a major theme throughout much of this and Philo⁴⁷ and Josephus⁴⁸ offer some thoughts — important to

⁴⁶ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*. See below.

⁴⁷ Philo sticks very closely to the Hebrew Bible or, more probably, the Septuagint. Almost all occurrences are in the context of commentary upon Leviticus and offer no insight into what **תערע**, and **λέπρα** actually meant. Miriam's affliction is mentioned, but only in commentary upon Numbers. In several instances the word **λέπρα** appears as a metaphor for unpleasant things, progressive nastiness and 'vice'. Philo sees 'leprosy', like gonorrhoea, as the reward of the 'evil man': 'ἐν τῷ φαύλῳ ἢ ἀληθῆς περι θεου δόξα ἐπεσκίασται καὶ ἀποκρύπτεται ... ὁ δὲ τοιοῦτος πεφυγάδευται θείου χοροῦ, καθάπερ ὁ λεπρὸς καὶ γονορρυῆς.' (*Philo, Legum Allegoriarum, III: 7*). So the 'leper' is one who is deprived of divine company, seemingly through his own iniquity rather than through misfortune. This was a view which was to continue for a very long time. Neusner supposes that Philo is treating the purity law first, as a second-level metaphor for moral cleanliness and secondly, by a process of allegorization, as a metaphor for self-control. In Neusner's interpretation, Philo's view of **תערע** or **λέπρα** is not so much that of a disease but rather as symptomatic and symbolic of instability of sound judgement, moral purpose and *Lebensstil*.

⁴⁸ Josephus, a former priest and a historian rather than a philosopher, takes a more down-to-earth approach to impurity than Philo, as is exemplified by his view of 'leprosy'; offering practical advice about things for lepers to do or have done to them rather than a discourse upon divine influence. In the majority of cases he is reporting or interpreting Levitical law but from a characteristically personal viewpoint.⁴⁸ Josephus is especially interested in whether or not Moses himself had leprosy and, if so, how this impinged on his law-making. Nevertheless, with a single exception, it is clear that to have **λέπρα** makes one impure and casts one amid social detritus. The word often appears in the company of **γονορρυῆς**⁴⁸ and sufferers from either affliction are the subject of many social prohibitions: in particular the ruling that they should abide outside the city walls. Josephus takes a surprisingly compassionate and pragmatic view of 'lepers': '... καὶ ταῦτα παρὰ πολλοῦς ὄντων λαπρῶν ἔθνεσι καὶ τιμῆς ἀπολαούντων, οὗ μόνον ὕβρεως καὶ φυγῆς ἀπηλλαγμένων, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς ἐπιστημοτάτας στρτείας στρατευομένων καὶ τὰς πολιτικὰς ἀρχὰς πιστευομένων καὶ εἰς ἱερὰ καὶ ναοὺς ἐχόντων ἐξουσίαν εἰσιέναι.' (*Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, III:266*. And in stark contrast to the opacity of Leviticus (P) on this subject, makes a single, if rather unconvincing, suggestion that leprosy may be the result of excessive exposure to the sun's rays: '... ἡλίου λαμπρὸν ἐξέλαμψε καὶ τῇ τοῦ βασιλέως ὄψει προσέπεσεν, ὡς τῷ μὲν εὐθέως λέπραν ἐπιδραμεῖν...' (*Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, IX:225*). It is unfortunate that Josephus, often so useful in interpreting detail, is of so little help with 'leprosy'. Most likely, the idea of ritual impurity engendered by the very thought of this disease was so ingrained — he had, after all, been a Jewish priest — and of such cultic significance that alternative views simply did not come to mind.

Neusner's argument — on צרעת and זוב which Neusner relates to the levitical heritage.

It is difficult to see what Neusner believes to have been added by later sources to the corpus of purity/impurity law handed down in the biblical texts. Perhaps he is simply using later textual sources, not so much as a restatement of Leviticus and Numbers, but rather to reinforce his notional dichotomy of cultic and metaphorical purity/impurity. In fact, Josephus quite specifically refers to purity outside the temple among the Essenes.⁴⁹ This allows Neusner to conclude that Josephus considered that the purity laws not only governed the temple but were more or less universally accepted *outside* the temple. However, Haber has suggested that careful study of the word *μίανσμα* that Josephus uses for *impurity*, *pollution* and *defilement* suggests that his concept of these entities was influenced by rather different, Graeco-Roman ideas of purity, in addition to those originating in P and transmitted abroad through the medium of the temple.⁵⁰

Neusner's work offers a very considerable mass of interpretative information on the Jewish purity laws. However, we must be very circumspect in understanding how much of this is specifically interpretation of the biblical canon and how much is only referable to later times. Nevertheless, Neusner remains an extensive and stimulating writer on the subject.

Milgrom — an exhaustive analysis

Jacob Milgrom, (1923 – 2010), an American rabbi and scholar, has written extensively on the Torah and, in particular on Leviticus. Between 1970 and 2004,

⁴⁹ Jewish War, II, 120–61; Antiquities, XVIII 18–22. Titus Flavius Josephus, *Josephus, (Joseph ben Matityahu), Collected Works; with English translations by Thackeray, H St J & Feldman, L.* (13 vols.; Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁵⁰ Susan Haber and Adele Reinhartz, *"They shall purify themselves": essays on purity in early Judaism* (EJ&L no 24; Atlanta, Ga: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008).

Milgrom produced his monumental commentary on Leviticus⁵¹ and its smaller, follow-up volume.⁵² Together, these must be considered the most extensive and scholarly corpus of work on Leviticus and, by association, upon the Torah purity laws. Milgrom's analytical style and, where the purity laws are concerned, interpretation, owes much to Hoffman: both are text-based. However, Milgrom's exposition is both more thorough and more in depth. Milgrom is exhaustive in his consideration of later Jewish, Mishnaic and Talmudic exegesis of the biblical texts.⁵³ Among many new ideas brought by Milgrom to the study of biblical purity is the notion that sinfulness has the power to defile the sanctuary from afar. This can occur way of major forms of both ritual and moral impurity, but Milgrom attaches a somewhat different distinction to this dichotomy from that of Neusner and Klawans. Purification, necessary to remedy such defilement is required, therefore, for the altar and the sanctuary more particularly than for the sinner. Milgrom arrives at this view by his exegesis of the word חטאת, (√ חטא = incur guilt).⁵⁴ Traditionally, this word has been translated as *sin-offering* as, for example:

ועשה אתם הכהן אחד חטאת והאחד עלה וכפר עליו הכהן לפני יהוה מזוֹבֹו

...and the priest shall offer them, the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him before the Lord for his issue.

(Leviticus 15:15)

Milgrom argues that this translation is inappropriate because the ritual being carried out is a ritual of purification, — not of the sinner but of the altar and sanctuary, — rather than a ritual of atonement on the part of the sinner. The word חטאת should,

⁵¹ Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*.

⁵² Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Continental Commentary*.

⁵³ A similar strategy — at risk of criticism for *reception history* and illicit extrapolation — has been adopted in the present study in the hope that it may find justification by such an authority as Milgrom.

⁵⁴ Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Vol III, pp 198a – 200b. Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Vol IV, pp 309 – 319.

therefore, be translated as *purification-offering*. Milgrom goes on to identify two sets of circumstances in which purification by *הטאת* is required. In both cases the personal purification of the individual must be brought about before the sacrificial offering of *הטאת*. A variety of means necessary to carry out this personal ‘pre-purification’ is listed in the priestly writings. In Milgrom’s first case, the impurity in the individual may have been incurred in, for example, childbirth, *צרעת*, or *זוב*. The affected individual is then required to undertake personal purification by ritual ablution before bringing the *הטאת* to the sanctuary. Milgrom’s second situation is concerned with impurity acquired inadvertently. Here, personal purification is ‘internal’ — Milgrom describes it as ‘spiritually’ purifying the individual — inasmuch as the individual’s guilt, combined with the intrinsic inadvertency of the sinful act, serves instead of ablution. There is still, however, an eventual requirement at the sanctuary, for *הטאת*. In both cases, Milgrom postulates the ultimate target of *הטאת* to be the sanctuary, for it is there that the blood of the sacrificial beast is shed and utilized in the act of purgation.

Milgrom also identifies a hierarchy of sacrificial ritual activity at the temple after real or potential defilement of the sanctuary. This occurs on three levels⁵⁵ each of which entails a distinct category of severity counteracted by a specific process of purgation. At the lowest level of seriousness, it is the outer altar of the temple that is at risk. Established physical impurity such as childbirth, *צרעת*, or *זוב* but also the inadvertent assumption of impurity/sin, as discussed above, can both cause defilement of the altar in this way. The blood from the *הטאת* is used by the priest to

⁵⁵ Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol 1 pg 257.

purge this pollution. He is required to paint the horns of the altar, (Exodus 27:2) and dispose of the blood at the base of the outer altar.

ולקח הכהן מדמה באצבעו ונתן על-קרנת מזבח העלה ואת-כל-דמה ישפך אל-
יסוד המזבח

And the priest shall take of the blood thereof with his finger, and put it upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and all the blood thereof shall he pour out at the base of the altar.

(Leviticus 4:30)

This ritual is further described at Leviticus 4:25 and 9:9. Milgrom's second level of seriousness involves the same impurity/sin, both intentional and inadvertent, but now the sinner is the high priest himself or the community as a whole. The ritual of purification also involves the blood of the חטאת in much the same way, but now involves the inner altar in front of the veil.

וטבל הכהן אצבעו מן-הדם והזה שבע פעמים לפני יהוה את פני הפרכת

and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle it seven times before the Lord, before the veil.

(Leviticus 4:17)

In the third and most serious of Milgrom's categories, the mechanism of acquiring impurity/sin involves wanton actions which remain un-repentant. Un-repentant sin triggers a different and more complex set of rituals for its purification because it causes more extensive defilement of the sanctuary. This defilement involves both the outer and inner altars, and penetrates the veil, so polluting the sacred ark and the holy of holies, (קדש קדשים). There are two consequences of this form of pollution of the sanctuary that did not apply to the lesser forms of defilement. First, the wanton sinner may not now offer חטאת at the temple in expiation of his impurity, indeed, '...that soul must be utterly cut off and bear his shame upon him.'

כי דבר־יהוה בזה ואת־מצותו הפר הכרת תכרת הנפש ההוא עונה בה

Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment; that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him.

(Numbers 15:31).

Secondly, because both inner and outer altars have been desecrated, defilement of this gravity can only be counteracted by the purification rituals reserved for the Day of Atonement, (Leviticus 16:16–19).

If we consider all of these situations, we can see that Milgrom is postulating a proportional relationship between the severity of the impurity/sin and the degree to which it penetrates the sanctuary thus:

Severity of impurity ∝ Extent of penetration of sanctuary

Milgrom also considers that the pollution of the sanctuary can be brought about remotely by sinfulness. He furthermore, makes a distinction between two types of impurity which he considers as *ritually-generated* and *morally-generated*.⁵⁶ The distinction still taxonomical, is not quite the same as that of Neusner or Klawans (*qv*). As ever with Milgrom, the distinction is founded upon a lexical observation. Ritually-generated impurity, טמאה, he considers to be physical defilement such as congenital or acquired blemishes or צרעת or זוב. The sinner himself is not involved in the purification ritual for טמאה beyond providing the חטאת. It is then up to the priest to bring about ritual purgation:

⁵⁶ Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol 1 pp 253 – 92.

ועשה הכהן את־החטאת וכפר על־המטהר מטמאתו ואחר ישחט את־העלה

And the priest shall offer the sin offering, and make atonement for him that is to be cleansed because of his uncleanness; and afterward he shall kill the burnt offering:

(Leviticus 14:19)

For the inadvertent sinner, it is not merely purification but also forgiveness that is the necessary antidote. In such cases, Milgrom sees the term טמא as describing the sin or moral impurity and the verb סלח (in the *nif'al* נִסְלַח = be forgiven), describing the specific process of forgiving.

ואת־כל־חלבו יקטיר המזבחה כחלב זבח השלמים וכפר עליו הכהן מחטאתו ונסלח לו

And all the fat thereof shall he burn upon the altar, as the fat of the sacrifice of peace offerings: and the priest shall make atonement for him as concerning his sin, and he shall be forgiven.

(Leviticus 4:26)

Where the sinfulness is wanton and un-repented, the Day of Atonement ritual must take place in order to effect adequate purgation. This involves the sacrifice of two goats one of which (for God) provides the liquid blood necessary to purge the sanctuary and so operates as the *חטאת* and another is the *scapegoat* upon which the priest confesses all of the iniquities of the community. This implies that the impurity is of such a degree of seriousness that it has already polluted the people and so urgent action is necessary to prevent extension of this pollution to the land. Untreated, this would have the inevitable consequence of provoking the departure of the deity so as to leave the people in desolation and ultimately bring about their exile.⁵⁷ The sins of the people Milgrom regards as moral impurity. In the Day of

⁵⁷ Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol 1 pp 258 – 9.

Atonement ritual, the priest confesses all these iniquities (עון) of the people, and in so doing, they become heaped upon the unfortunate scapegoat who is then sent away into the wilderness: this is mass purgation. Milgrom, in his analysis, associates טמאה with the first goat and with חטאת, and he associates עונת with the second goat and with the טמא of the people.⁵⁸

וסמך אהרן את־שתי (ידו) [ידיו] על ראש השעיר החי והתודה עליו את־כל־עונת
 בני ישראל ואת־כל־פשעיהם לכל־חטאתם ונתן אתם על־ראש השעיר ושלח ביד־
 איש עתי המדברה

...and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a man that is in readiness into the wilderness:

(Leviticus 16:21)

It must be admitted that Milgrom's account of the levitical purity laws, though *prima facie* seemingly exhaustive, contains a number of ambiguities that remain unclear. In particular, these relate to his distinction between ritual (i.e. physically-generated) impurity and moral impurity. For example, in Volume 2 of his commentary⁵⁹ Milgrom suggests that the distinction between ritual and moral impurity is primarily dependent upon the distinction between P and H elements of the levitical text. P impurity he describes as 'concrete, cultic-ritual impurity' whereas H impurity is 'abstract, inexpungeable-moral impurity'.⁶⁰ These somewhat cumbersome distinctions are not particularly helpful. The latter definition might be supposed to imply a metaphorical usage but Milgrom takes pains to point out that it is as 'real and potent as P's impurity'. One is left feeling the need for a more concise

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, Vol 2 1571 – 84

⁵⁹ Milgrom *Op cit*, Vol 2 pg 1578.

⁶⁰ See also Chapter 10 and Appendix 3; also I. Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). and D. P. Wright, "Holiness in Leviticus and Beyond," *Interpretation* 53, no. 4 (1999): 351-64.

differentiation of the two types of impurity and particularly a need for further clarification in the matter of moral impurity. Milgrom defines this latter as embodying idolatry, sexual sin and homicide but fails to fit them together to produce a single concept and theology in the way that he so adeptly and thoroughly does in the case of ritual impurity.

Several other scholars have also taken a largely taxonomical stance in concerning themselves with levitical impurity. These may be considered now.

Frymer-Kensky — a classification of impurity.

Tikva Frymer-Kensky (1943 – 2006), was an American Jewish theologian with a particular interest in the Ancient Near East. Her approach to impurity will always appeal to those who are tidy-minded and seek formality: it is based largely upon Milgrom but is more logical. The central feature of her analysis is that ritual pollutions that are *contagious*, can be divided into major and minor classes principally on the basis of their duration.⁶¹ Frymer-Kensky makes the important point, often not appreciated, that in the Israel of biblical times, the need and desire for purity was so intense that it was the essential force behind the establishment of a particular social class, the priesthood, to provide a mechanism for both controlling and educating about this phenomenon. In this respect Frymer-Kensky stands apart from the other authors considered in this chapter. She is suggesting that the intense need for purity brought about the priestly worldview rather than the converse. Frymer-Kensky retains Milgrom's and others' hierarchy of pollution's growing in seriousness from individual → sanctuary/temple → the land. In this respect Frymer-Kensky saw pollution and attitudes towards it, as having been central determinants

⁶¹ Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Pollution, Purification and Purgation in Biblical Israel: Major and Minor Pollutions," in *The Word of the Lord shall go forth : essays in honor of David Noel Freedman in celebration of his sixtieth birthday. Special volume series/American Schools of Oriental Research* (ed. Carol L. Meyers, et al.; Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 1983).

of Israel's history. Therefore, the biblical purity laws and the related activities of the priesthood were to be seen, collectively and principally, as a national strategy for *catastrophe-avoidance*. Within this strategy could be identified curative practices, remedial for specific polluting events. Each would be based specifically upon the level of seriousness attributed to each particular infraction of the rules. Thus, if and when contact was made with a particular polluting influence, a time-period of uncleanness would begin immediately. In the case of minor pollutions this extended until the same evening or, with major pollution, for seven days. This time-period was, in either case, a period of *contagion* during which contact with other individuals and with any sacred places or objects was to be sedulously eschewed.

Minor impurity.

For Frymer-Kensky, minor pollution consisted of the acquisition of טמא usually from external sources⁶² and usually by direct physical contact. There was one major exception to this activity which was contact with a corpse: that instigated a major pollution. In addition contact with someone who was already suffering a major pollution could bring about a minor pollution in any individual who made physical contact. Obviously, this process is somewhat at variance with modern ideas of contagion but, of course, any notion of an infective agent was completely absent from levitical thinking. Frymer-Kensky supplies an extensive table of minor pollutions⁶³ and the remedial ritual actions to be taken in order to regain a pure state. These all involve waiting until evening of the same day; washing of the clothes in a majority of cases and bathing in about 50% of cases. The rationale for how these treatments were arrived at is unclear and perhaps somewhat illogical in the light of

⁶² There was only one 'internal' source of minor pollution, namely seminal discharge — Chapter 6.

⁶³ Frymer-Kensky, "Pollution, Purification and Purgation in Biblical Israel: Major and Minor Pollutions." Page 402.

present day thinking. For example, if one touches a menstruating woman, this demands only waiting until evening for purification. However, if one comes into contact with her seat or her bedding, it becomes necessary in addition, to bathe and to wash one's clothes.

Major impurity

Frymer-Kensky stresses that although major impurities are contagious, they are not dangerous: nor is any moral opprobrium attached to any of them, with the signal exception of צרעת. She suggests that this exception may stem from the view taken in certain instances in the Torah that צרעת is a form of divine punishment.⁶⁴ However, Frymer-Kensky is at pains to point out that, apart from these few instances, there is no textual evidence to suggest wrongdoing as being a feature of all cases of צרעת and there is nothing to suggest a moral deficiency in *dermopaths*. Any such idea may have originated from suspicious folklore, from prejudice or from inculcated bigotry.

Major impurities can be subdivided into those which have external causes and those with internal causes. External causes are more usually associated with minor pollutions but there are two significant exceptions: צרעת and contact with a corpse.

Major internal pollutions are specifically those involved with emissions from the body: childbirth, menstruation and genital discharges, (זוב). Frymer-Kensky notes, along with Douglas, that other bodily physiological and pathological products such as blood,⁶⁵ saliva, pus, nasal mucus, sputum and all forms of excreta do not produce, on contact, ritual major or minor pollution. Although these natural *exuviae* did cross

⁶⁴ E.g. Num 12:10-15, 2Kgs 5:27, 2Chr 26:19-21.

⁶⁵ As distinct from 'bloodshed'.

the body's boundaries, they were not associated with *life* in the sense that childbirth, menstrual blood and semen were thought to have been. Nor were the natural *exuviae* associated with *un-life*, i.e. death as would be the case with a corpse.⁶⁶ It is interesting to compare elements of these ideas with those of Freud whose decidedly more colourful approach to taboo was centred in the developmental excursions of the individual rather than being seen as metaphors for avoidance of ills destined to fall upon society as a whole.⁶⁷

The common factor, for all major impurities, in levitical thought, is that they are contagious. However, according to Frymer-Kensky, although these pollutions are *contagious*, they are not *dangerous*, nor should they be expected to be. Neither is guilt attached to them in any biblical context. However, they can be transmitted to others and more importantly to sacred objects and to the land, and so a strategy for avoiding this sequence of events had to be part of Israelite society's rules. Normal life in any society would be impossible without childbirth or disposal of the dead, faeces, urine, other natural *exuviae* and the associated, unavoidable functions. It is only when *some* of these things come into contact with the sacred that danger results and it is this above all, that must be avoided if the society is to flourish. It is a matter of some debate how much צרעת can be thought of as natural and unavoidable; however, צרעת appears to have been adopted into the category of major ritual impurity and so merits the same treatment as other impurities in this category. Medieval and later views about the nature of 'leprosy' are in stark contrast to this accommodating and intelligent view of dermatopathic problems. They fit the *mores* of

⁶⁶ Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. Pg 150 *et seq.*

⁶⁷ Sigmund Freud, Angela Richards, and James Strachey, *Introductory lectures on psychoanalysis* (1; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973). Pp 187-202, 357-370. Sigmund Freud, James Strachey, and Angela Richards, *On sexuality: three essays on the theory of sexuality and other works* (Volume 7; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977). Pp 107-8, 127-8, 131-143.

a later civilization and presumably reflect a desire on the part of The Church to wield a terrifying threat to keep the proletariat in thralldom.

Danger-beliefs and catastrophe-deeds

Frymer-Kensky, in addition, to major and minor impurity, recognizes a further subset of impurities which she calls *danger beliefs*. The deeds that are involved have a clear implication of wrong-doing and the danger is that into which the individual places himself as perpetrator. It is, of course, the danger of divine punishment and it cannot be ameliorated by any ritual activity. Frymer-Kensky supposes that where *danger beliefs* are held, *catastrophe-deeds* may follow and divine punishment is then unavoidable. She puts this view in a Hebrew Bible context by suggesting a textual indicator for *catastrophe-deeds* which is the phrase usually translated as: 'he shall bear his iniquity' (עוֹנוֹ יִשֵּׂא). The penalty for *catastrophe-deeds* is כרת, the cutting-off of the individual from his people⁶⁸ which, more particularly, means from his lineage. However, it would be wrong to infer that the execution of the penalty of כרת is always an active process brought about by human members of society. Rather it is to be seen as an automatic penalty imposed by the will of God — it is divine extirpation.⁶⁹ Wrong-doings that incur this penalty have been described by Frymer-Kensky as '...fundamental principles of Israelite cosmology; in particular, acts that blur the most vital distinction in the Israelite classificatory system, the separation of sacred and profane'.⁷⁰ Unsurprisingly, they are to be found listed in the H chapters of the Book of Leviticus and must be thought of as corresponding to the

⁶⁸ Usually *nif'al* (but sometimes *hif'il*) as in, וְנִכְרְתוּ שְׂגֵיהֶם מִקִּרְבֵּי עַמָּם. See Clines, ed., Dictionary of Classical Hebrew. Vol IV, p 465, 2b. Also, Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament. Vol VII, pp 339 - 352

⁶⁹ Nevertheless, miscreants were often stoned to death in anticipation of divine action.

⁷⁰ Frymer-Kensky, "Pollution, Purification and Purgation in Biblical Israel: Major and Minor Pollutions." Page 404.

‘...abstract, inexpungeable-moral impurity’ described by Milgrom, (*qv*). It is arguable how far they fit into the priestly worldview. The general sense of the כרת penalty goes beyond the levitical and other purity laws, and must be seen in the generality as the proper penalty for offences against the Abrahamic covenant with God. This point is made perfectly clear in Genesis:

וערל זכר אשר לא־ימול את־בשר ערלתו ונכרתה הנפש ההוא מעמיה את־בריתי
הפר

And the uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

(Genesis 17:14)

It is interesting to note that there is but a single case of overlap between the ritual impurity of Frymer-Kensky’s *major impurities* and the violation of holiness exemplified by *catastrophe deeds* and, therefore, an overlap in P and H material. This single instance is detailed in:

ואיש אשר־ישכב את־אשה דוה וגלה את־ערוותה את־מקרה הערה והיא גלתה את־
מקור דמיה ונכרתו שניהם מקרב עמם

And if a man shall lie with a woman having her sickness, and shall uncover her nakedness; he hath made naked her fountain, and she hath uncovered the fountain of her blood: and both of them shall be cut off from among their people.

(Leviticus 20:18)

Here, in what is undoubted H material, there is a clear demand for the penalty of כרת, but apparently no requirement for the usual ritual ablution and time-serving necessary for the cleansing of a major impurity.

The punishment of כרת must be regarded as existing in order to protect those things regarded as sacred. In so doing it not only contributes to defining the boundaries

between what is sacred and what is profane, but also provides a sanction against the violation of those very boundaries. We can, perhaps, see a parallel between these ideas of Frymer-Kensky and those of Mary Douglas in respect of the defining and maintenance of socio-religious boundaries.

Capital punishment in levitical law — כרת

Capital punishment in the Ancient Near East was widespread and differed from society to society. The subject has been extensively investigated and reported by Good.⁷¹ Good recognizes seven law codes as having existed at different times in the Ancient Near East that of the Hebrew Bible is number seven.⁷² It is seen by Good as embodying:

- The *Code of the Covenant* — *Exodus* 20:22–23:19 — probably from between the twelfth and the tenth or ninth century BCE.
- The *Code of Deuteronomy* — *Deuteronomy* 12–28 — possibly compiled in the seventh century BCE.
- The *Priestly Code* — P and H, see Appendix 3.

Good further classifies offences, defined in these law-codes and punishable by death, into 5 categories:

1. *Offences against persons.*
2. *Offences involving property*
3. *Defiance of authority*⁷³
4. *Religious offences*
5. *Procedural requirements*⁷⁴

Category 1 (and to a lesser extent category 4)⁷⁵ concerns us here with regard to the imposition of the penalty of כרת for infractions of the purity laws. There is biblical

⁷¹ Edwin M. Good, "Capital Punishment and Its Alternatives in Ancient near Eastern Law," 19, no. 5 (1967): 947-77.

⁷² The others are the law codes of: (1) *Ur-Nammu*, (2) *Lipit-Ishtar*, (3) *Eshnunna*, (4) *Hammurabi*, (5) *Middle Assyrian*, and (6) *Hittite*.

⁷³ especially kings

⁷⁴ especially in relation to legal procedure but also involving trial by ordeal which often resulted in death.

textual justification for the death penalty in murder (Ex 21:12; Lev 24:17); manslaughter (Num 35:16-18);⁷⁶ kidnapping (Deut 24:7); causing death by negligence (Exo 21:29–31); sorcery (Exo 22:17);⁷⁷ rape, (Deut 22:23–27);⁷⁸ Adultery⁷⁹ — both parties to be executed, (Lev 20:10, Deut 22:22); harlotry, in the singular case where the offender is the daughter of a priest (Lev 21:9); incest (Lev 18:6, generally, and with one's father's wife 20:11,⁸⁰); homosexuality (Lev 20:13) and bestiality (Lev 20:15–16).

It is particularly difficult to draw generalizations from all of this. Good suggests that, whereas the Babylonians were especially severe in dealing with offences against property, the Hebrews were more concerned with offences against the person, but overwhelmingly so, with those crimes that were of a sexual nature. This fits in well with their stringent application of the purity/impurity laws. Good remarks that in the Ancient Near East, '...as evidenced by legislation, purity of religion was incomparably more important to the Hebrews than to any of the other people ...'.⁸¹ He goes on to suggest that in many cases it is possible that the death penalty was not routinely carried out but it was the formal statement of its mandatory requirement in the codified laws that led to its adoption by society as ethical dogma and thereby to a clearer and more formal definition of the moral, ethical and behavioural boundaries with which that society proposed to invest itself.

⁷⁵ And also category 2, inasmuch as wives and daughters were regarded as 'property' in those times.

⁷⁶ Although the Hebrew Bible makes the distinction between murder and manslaughter, the penalty remains the same.

⁷⁷ In the Hebrew texts this is specifically referring to a sorceress (מְכַשְׁפָּה) however the LXX has *φαρμακός* which it must be supposed is the conventional use of the plural and the masculine gender to include both sexes.

⁷⁸ But only if force is used and the woman is married or formally betrothed

⁷⁹ But not 'fornication' which was intercourse in which at least one of the parties was not married, *cf* Deut 22:13-21.

⁸⁰ This is strictly and strangely an offence against one's father because it 'uncovers *his* nakedness'.

⁸¹ Good, "Capital Punishment and Its Alternatives in Ancient near Eastern Law." Pg 947.

Where it took place, the mechanism of formal execution is not clear though in some cases burning and stoning were specifically prescribed. The term כרת does not refer to the process of execution itself but rather to the cutting off of the individual from society, his family and his lineage. The terms ‘extirpation’ and ‘eradication’ and ‘uprooting’ have all been widely used as a translation of כרת but ‘eradication’ and ‘uprooting’ seem quite inappropriate inasmuch as uprooting is quite different from cutting off. There is no suggestion that his lineage, his ‘stock’ is, in any way deleted: it is his personal attachment to it that is to be ended. ‘Extirpation’ (Latin ‘*stirps*’ = stock’) or ‘deracination’ (Latin ‘*radix*’, French ‘*racine*’ = root), might be thought better words than ‘eradication’, as they less imply uprooting than separation from one’s root-stock. The sentiment of how כרת operates as a punishment is, perhaps more properly to be seen as one of excommunication than of annihilation.⁸²

Wright — permitted and prohibited impurities.

David P Wright⁸³ has contributed to the debate on the levitical purity laws by suggesting a different classification. His work is based particularly upon that of Hoffmann, Büchler and Frymer-Kensky but postulates a spectrum of *purity*↔*impurity* or, more particularly one ranging from *permitted impurities* to *prohibited impurities*.⁸⁴ The word ‘permitted’ is perhaps better understood as ‘tolerated’ and Wright eventually came to prefer this epithet in his writings. Wright’s category of tolerated impurities corresponds, more or less, to the major impurities of Frymer-Kensky: death-related, sexual-related, disease-related and

⁸² Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Vol VII, pg 347

⁸³ *qv* Chapter 4

⁸⁴ D.P. Wright, "Two Types of Impurity in the Priestly Writings of the Bible," *Koroth* 9 (1988): 180-93. D P Wright, "The Spectrum of Priestly Impurity," in *Priesthood and Cult in Ancient Israel* (ed. G.A. Anderson and S. M. Olyan; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991).

cultic. Wright classifies these together because they are all free from any form of what he calls ‘blanket prohibition’ in the priestly laws. It is difficult to extract from Wright’s writings exactly where each specific impurity lies along the length of the spectrum and this seems a major deficiency in his work. However in the category of prohibited impurities he is more circumscribed. This category contains two sub-categories. The first of these embodies those impurities that arise unintentionally, often from mis-management of tolerated impurities for example as in the inadvertent contact with a corpse or prohibited animal.⁸⁵ Wright sees these offences as equivalent to those of other writers that involve the outer altar and require a sacrifice of חטאת in order to bring about appropriate purgation. Wright’s second sub-category is the more serious case of deliberate sin. This corresponds most nearly to Frymer-Kensky’s *catastrophe-deeds*. For Wright, there are two consequences of this form of misconduct. First the perpetrator must pay the penalty of כרת and, secondly because the קדש קדשים has been defiled, the purification must be that of the Day of Atonement ritual. Although Wright is rather opaque about the specific nature of each grade of impurity, at least it is clear that his spectrum has four grades, they are, in increasing order of severity:

1. *Those requiring no sacrificial expiation*
2. *Those requiring sacrificial expiation by the individual*
3. *Those requiring sacrificial expiation by the community*
4. *Those requiring the Day of Atonement sacrifice.*

Wright’s analysis has these four categories corresponding specifically to a progression in the *locus of pollution*; so, in the same order as above, this sequence would be:

⁸⁵ Examples might be: Lev 4:1-5; Lev 5:2-3; Num 6:6-7; Num 15:22-29.

1. *The person*
2. *The outer altar + the person*
3. *The outer altar + the shrine (± the person)*
4. *The קדש קדשים ± the person.*

There is, moreover, a corresponding inverse relationship in the degree to which the defiled individual is excluded from elements of society. Again in corresponding order:

1. *Exclusion of the individual from those things and places that are sacred*
2. *Exclusion from sacred places ± some forms of profane habitation.*
3. *Exclusion from sacred places + all forms of profane habitation.*
4. *Permanent exclusion from all human society + הארץ*

Wright's interpretation of the impurity laws has a clear moral basis which he believes indicates a priestly, systematic legislative scheme directed at sustaining the priestly worldview and ideology and so the moral order of Israelite society.⁸⁶ Wright has been criticized from the entirely logical standpoint that his system is over-categorized and thereby lacks the progressive continuity necessary for a spectrum.⁸⁷

Jenson — a holiness spectrum

Philip P. Jenson has been more specifically concerned with holiness *per se* than with the *purity ↔ impurity* tension. His spectrum of holiness has been briefly considered above. However Jenson is the first to admit that any spectrum for holiness must concern itself with impurity. Jenson, for the most part, leans toward Douglas's viewpoint and rejects as simplistic, a purely *hygenic* or *cultic* basis for the impurity laws of Leviticus 11 – 15. As in the case of Douglas, Jenson takes an anthropological approach and considers impurity/pollution/defilement as characteristic of those things that blur the boundaries of the body. Because they are anomalous, they present a danger to ordered society. They challenge the God-given

⁸⁶ Wright, "The Spectrum of Priestly Impurity." Pg 170.

⁸⁷ Haber and Reinhartz, "They shall purify themselves": essays on purity in early Judaism. Pg 27.

perfection of the body and so disqualify the individual from approaching God.⁸⁸ Jenson sees the dynamics of pollution as conferring a temporary blemish upon an afflicted individual. The worst case is, of course, death where the blemish is irreversible. Jenson discusses two theories that he suggests account for the way in which impurity and holiness were seen in biblical times. The first of these he calls the *structural theory* which he describes as idealist and focused upon the human ability to classify the world in such a way as to combine cultural, social and theological aspects into a single structure. Holiness here *is* wholeness — Douglas's view — and wholeness means freedom from anomaly or imperfection. The converse is impurity i.e. defect and mongrelism. This theory assumes a structured system with fixed and stable parameters and processes from which deviations may be seen and measurable in their degree of significance.

The second theory, Jenson calls the *death theory* and describes it as 'realist' because it involves the inescapable qualities of life and death and holds the latter as an endpoint for impurity. All impurities direct the individual inescapably towards death and are to be seen by the priests as a quantifiable negative exposition of life before God. Because it is concerned with irreversible events, Jenson supposes this theory to have a clearer referential content and to be less amenable to a static structural analysis than the first theory. However, he remains sitting firmly on the fence as to which theory he prefers, saying, 'Anomaly is as much an offence against an ordered world as is the destructive power of death'.⁸⁹

Klawans — ritual and moral impurity, revised

Jonathan Klawans, between 1995 and the present time, has been a prolific writer on the subject of the Jewish purity laws. His work builds on, and clarifies, Frymer-

⁸⁸ This will be dealt with more fully in Chapter 7 where 'Blemish' is considered.

⁸⁹ Jenson, *Graded holiness: a key to the priestly conception of the world*. Pg 88.

Kensky but additionally is integrated with the thinking of Milgrom and Neusner and, to a lesser extent, Douglas.

Klawans's interest has been focused mainly on the exilic, Second-Temple⁹⁰ and rabbinical⁹¹ periods but he has, of necessity, had to consider the biblical period also.⁹² There, in particular, Klawans has made three highly specific contributions to the understanding of biblical purity law. First, being the most recent of the authors to be considered here, it is not surprising that Klawans's account is both up-to-date and comprehensive as he has been able to draw upon, and conflate previous scholarship. Secondly, in doing this, he has been able to arrive at and focus upon a personal and particular viewpoint regarding the matter of ritual and moral impurity. It is for his rationalizing of this dichotomy that he is best known and for which we must be grateful. Klawans has, furthermore, produced a study of the interaction between gentiles and the Jewish purity laws⁹³ and also has extensively considered the association of violence, defilement and sacrifice.⁹⁴

Klawans's third contribution to modern scholarship in this field has been his highly convincing argument against the metaphorical nature of moral impurity (*qv*).

Klawans's terminology for the sub-categories of impurity is not new. He recognizes *ritual impurity* and *moral impurity* in much the same way as others already have.

These are summarized in Klawans's 2010 book⁹⁵ in a useful table.

⁹⁰ Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, sacrifice, and the temple: symbolism and supersessionism in the study of ancient Judaism* (New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁹¹ Klawans believes that in Tannaitic times the dichotomy became somewhat simplified: ritual impurity was *halakhic* while moral impurity was *aggadic*.

⁹² Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*.

⁹³ Jonathan Klawans, "Notions of Gentile Impurity in Ancient Judaism," *AJS Rev* 20, no. 2 (1995): 285-312.

⁹⁴ Jonathan Klawans, "Pure Violence: Sacrifice and Defilement in Ancient Israel," *Harvard Th Rev* 94, no. 2 (2001): 133-55.

⁹⁵ Klawans, *Purity, sacrifice, and the temple: symbolism and supersessionism in the study of ancient Judaism*. Pg 56.

Impurity Type	Source	Effect	Resolution
Ritual	Natural processes and substances such as birth, death, bodily flows, certain animal carcasses, human corpses	Temporary, contagious defilement of persons and objects	Ritual purification, which can include bathing, washing and sacrifices
Moral	Sins: idolatry, sexual transgressions, bloodshed	Long-lasting defilement of sinners, land and sanctuary	Atonement or punishment and ultimately, exile.

Thus, as with Frymer-Kensky, *ritual impurities* are natural, often unavoidable, sometimes even desirable, not proscribed as sin and, although contagious, neither permanent nor dangerous. To contract any of these is not a sin⁹⁶ though the consequences, in certain cases (צִרְעָתָהּ), and for certain people (priests — Lev 21: 1–4) may be more severe than for the generality.

Klawans dismisses the idea that צִרְעָתָהּ is a mark of sin although he recognizes that certain biblical narratives appear to imply this, (Num 12; 2 Chron 26), and no less an authority than Milgrom has suggested as much.⁹⁷ Milgrom bases his argument on the dermatologist's requirement to provide חֲטָאָהּ, but Klawans argues that this is less to address moral sin than as an expiatory precaution against the probability of the dermatologist's having inadvertently defiled holy objects whilst polluted with צִרְעָתָהּ.

However, Klawans does recognize two instances where ritual impurity leads to sin. The first of these is a refusal to purify oneself after defilement by a corpse, (Numbers 19:13; 19:20): this defiles the sanctuary, even from afar, and in such a case the punishment is כָּרַת. Presumably, there is an element of *moral impurity* ↔ *sin* here,

⁹⁶ Contrast Zoroastrianism where impurity is identified as a great evil

⁹⁷ Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol 1, pp 822, 857.

inasmuch as a decision not to purify must surely be the product of sinful thinking. The second case, deserving of the same penalty, is defilement of the sanctuary and/or coming into contact with holy foods while knowingly in a state of ritual impurity, (Leviticus 7:20–21; 15:31; 22:3–7). Priests may be at especial risk of committing this misdeed.

Central to Klawans's argument about ritual impurities, is that they affect the ritual status of the individual within the community. This is manifested by prohibitions and exclusions. Klawans speculates that by following the regulations for ritual purity and thereby ostracizing oneself and avoiding, for example, sex and, as far as one can, death, one is voluntarily isolating oneself from those things that would make one least like God. The effect of this tidying-up of one's personal *imitatio Dei* is, in Klawans's own words, '...nothing other than the theological underpinning of the entire Holiness Code: *imitatio Dei*. Only a heightened god-like state — the state of ritual purity — made one eligible to enter the sanctuary, God's holy residence on earth.'

In his approach to moral impurity Klawans is more outspoken and differs more obviously in his views from those of his predecessors. In Klawans's view, moral impurity is acquired by committing *abominations* (תועבות). These are the usual trio of, sexual transgression, bloodshed⁹⁸ and idolatry:⁹⁹ they bring about moral (but not ritual) defilement which involves sequentially, the sinner, the land, the sanctuary of God and ultimately they bring about depopulation and desolation of the land of

⁹⁸ Murder was seen as a moral impurity but clearly not as a ritual impurity because murderers were admitted to the sanctuary, see: A Buchler, *Studies in Sin and Atonement in the Rabbinic Literature of the First Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1928). Pg 235.

⁹⁹ And, although this is not formally stated, necromancy and the somewhat esoteric sin of Molech worship.

Israel.¹⁰⁰ The (five) specific differences seen by Klawans as distinguishing ritual from moral impurity are summarized in the table above. Of especial note is that moral impurity is not contagious and ritual impurity is never transmitted to the land.¹⁰¹ Additionally, Klawans introduces a semantic dimension to distinguish between ritual and moral impurity. He observes that sources of both types of impurity are described in the Torah as טמא (unclean) but the terms תועבה (abomination) and חָנַף (pollute) are reserved specifically for reference to sources of [what Klawans defines as] moral impurity. Klawans draws a parallel between moral impurity, [as he sees it], and the Greek concept of *μίασμα*:¹⁰² a form of pollution caused by blood-guilt.¹⁰³ From this he arrives at a working definition of moral impurity that is: ‘Moral impurity is best understood as a potent force unleashed by certain sinful human actions. The force defiles the sinner, the sanctuary and the land, even though the sinner is not ritually impure and does not ritually defile... ..yet the sinner is seen as morally impure’.¹⁰⁴ It is interesting to note that, although moral impurity defiles the sanctuary, the sinner is not excluded from the sanctuary because he is not ritually defiled. Klawans gets round this seemingly anomalous situation by suggesting that moral defilement is an all-pervading influence that can operate even from afar but its effect is not such that it enters the sanctuary along with the sinner himself. However, neither Klawans nor the biblical texts themselves offer any explanation as to *why* this should be so. Unfortunately, the repeated failing of the

¹⁰⁰ Lev 18:24-25; Ezek 36:17; Lev 20:3; Ezek 5:11, Lev 18:28; Ezek 36:19.

¹⁰¹ See below.

¹⁰² Liddell and Scott, *Greek English Lexicon*. Pg 1132a; Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*. Pg 462a; Bauer et al., *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*. Pg 650b.

¹⁰³ Kittel, Friedrich, and Pitkin, *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. Vol IV, pg 646. Robert Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and purification in early Greek religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983). Pp 104-125.

¹⁰⁴ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*. Pg 29.

biblical authors to concern themselves with answering the questions ‘*how?*’ and ‘*why?*’ is a recurrent, major problem for scholars in this field.

Moral impurity, according to Klawans, degrades the status of both individual and land and this degradation is not easily purged. There is nothing in the Holiness Code to direct how this might be done. Nor is it clear if there is a hierarchy of moral impurities and of consequences to match. It must, therefore, be supposed that, in the case of the sinner, he must retain his moral impurity and degradation throughout the remainder of his life or suffer the penalty of כרת. Likewise, the land retains its polluted state. However, the Day of Atonement ritual does effectively purge the sanctuary and its environs so that they can be used again.

Defilement of the land — הארץ

Most modern authors agree with Klawans that whereas ritual impurity is never conveyed to, or contracted from the land, the obligatory end-point of moral impurity, (sexual sins, idolatry, bloodshed, apostasy, necromancy and Molech-worship), as far as the levitical laws were concerned, was a long-lasting, non-contagious, defilement and pollution of the land (הארץ) and of the sanctuary of God. This idea persisted throughout the Exile and into the rabbinic period.¹⁰⁵ However, there is a degree of unclarity about what precisely this means. Some authors consider that once the land becomes defiled by moral impurity, God departs from it and so leaves the population of Israel in metaphorical exile *in situ*. A more widely held view is that once the land has become defiled, the people are, literally, expelled from the land into exile.

¹⁰⁵ Buchler, *Studies in Sin and Atonement in the Rabbinic Literature of the First Century*. Pp 216-7. Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*. Pg 27. Frymer-Kensky, "Pollution, Purification and Purgation in Biblical Israel: Major and Minor Pollutions." Pp 406-9.

ותטמא הארץ ואפקד עונה עליה ותקא הארץ את־ישביה

And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land vomiteth out her inhabitants.

(Leviticus 18:25)

This view, of course, has served a useful purpose in that it has been used to justify the Exodus — a return from previous oppression to a land vacated by sinners as a punishment by God. The Babylonian exile itself — undoubtedly, in the eyes of the prophets — was brought about by moral impurity. The philosophy underlying the Israelites' claim of a right to possess the land of Israel, which God protects as his own, stems from the idea that it was the Israelites' God Yahweh who dispossessed the original inhabitants of this land as a punishment for their misdeeds and sinfulness:

לא בצדקתך ובישר לבבך אתה בא לרשת את־ארצם כי ברשעת הגוים האלה יהוה
אלהיך מורישים מפניך ולמען הקים את־הדבר אשר נשבע יהוה לאבת־ך לאברהם
ליצחק וליעקב

Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go in to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may establish the word which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

(Deuteronomy 9:5)

The Israelites' right of occupation of הארץ is, therefore, not contingent upon *their* past behaviour but results from God's punishing the misbehaviour of former occupants. The Israelites have yet to earn and justify in the eyes of God, this right of occupation, for themselves.

By the time of the prophets, Israel is seen to have become fully polluted by the actions of the people and, in particular, by the actions of their kings. Israel is down-trodden by bloody footprints (עקבה מדם — *Hosea 6:8*); Judah is beset with violence

(חמס — *Ezekiel* 8:17); Jerusalem is described by Isaiah in colourful terms as being a harlot (איכה היתה לזונה קריה) — *Isaiah* 1:21): an unhygienic, menstruous woman (טמאתה בשוליה — *Lamentations* 1:9; היתה ירושלם לנדה ביניהם — 1:17). The land and the nation as a whole have become invested by the ultimate imagery of squalor, degradation, dereliction, depravity and defilement. It has become regarded in the way that a ‘leper’ is seen: ostracized and despised, sitting apart and alone, wanton and unwanted, (איכה ישבה בדד העיר) — *Lamentations* 1:1).

Moral impurity as metaphor; ritual impurity as a reality

A number of scholars have, over the years, come to regard the notion of moral impurity as figurative or metaphorical. Prominent among these is Neusner¹⁰⁶ but Milgrom¹⁰⁷ and Wright¹⁰⁸ have both entertained the possibility and discussed it at some length. Klawans, however, is sceptical. In the first place, he says that, ‘...none of the scholars... states clearly what is meant by the terms “metaphorical” or “figurative”.’. The problem, for Klawans, is that the use of figurative or metaphorical language must obligatorily require the transference of words or phrases that are applicable literally, onto a context where they may not be applicable literally. Klawans’s definition of metaphor is therefore, language that is, ‘...a secondary, non-literal (or non-technical) usage that is informed by the prior, literal usage of the language in question.’ Of metaphor in the present context, he goes on to say, ‘What it boils down to is that when purity language is used metaphorically, then no real defilement of purification is actually taking place.’

¹⁰⁶ Neusner, *The idea of purity in ancient Judaism*.

¹⁰⁷ Milgrom *Op cit*, Vol 1, pg 37 *et seq*.

¹⁰⁸ Wright, "The Spectrum of Priestly Impurity." Pg 163 *et seq*.

Klawans is unable to see any rationale for considering moral impurity to be any less real — and therefore metaphorical — than ritual impurity. He cites the following passage (Leviticus 18:24) that has been widely used as a reason for postulating a metaphorical basis for moral impurity:

אל־תִּטְמְאוּ בְּכָל־אֱלֹהִים כִּי בְּכָל־אֱלֹהִים נִטְמְאוּ הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־אֲנִי מַשְׁלַח מִפְּנֵיכֶם

Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out from before you:

The consequence of this was, of course, that the land was defiled (Lev 18:25). If we apply Klawans's definition above, for this to be metaphorical, it should not be able to be taken literally and the usage of purity language ('defiled' etc) should be secondary. Klawans argues that it is difficult to see how this *cannot* be taken literally because self-defilement by doing sinful things is entirely plausible and if that is so, why should not defilement of nation and land likewise, be literally possible? Moreover, Klawans argues that if, by the definitions provided by the Holiness Code, the land of Israel is Yahweh's habitation, then it must be a holy place. And, if it is holy it is, *de facto*, capable of being defiled.

וְלֹא תִטְמְאֵ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם יֹשְׁבִים בָּהּ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי שֹׁכֵן בְּתוֹכָהּ כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה שֹׁכֵן
בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

And thou shalt not defile the land which ye inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell: for I the Lord dwell in the midst of the children of Israel.
(Numbers 35:34)

Klawans considers that the entire concept of impurity in the context of sin is to be understood as standing in opposition to holiness. This was a view first suggested a century ago by D.Z. Hoffmann. If this idea is correct, there is no reason why Leviticus 18:24–30 cannot be interpreted literally and there is no need for metaphor — sexual misdeeds, by their intrinsic opposition to holiness, defile what is holy and

that includes the land. Moreover, this cannot be ritual defilement because it is a permanent and non-contagious falling-off of status.

Although Klawans has elsewhere¹⁰⁹ made the point that, whereas later rabbinical authors saw ritual impurity as *halakhah* and moral impurity as *aggadah*, the latter, nevertheless may also be seen to have practical legal implications. While the ritually impure person is legally obliged to eschew sacred things and places, the morally impure individual may be faced with the prospect of capital punishment and, if female, of a significant diminution in marriage prospects. The land, in its own way, is legally affected by exile when banishment of its inhabitants is imposed in punishment for moral sin. There is really no need here for metaphor or figurative language. It is the opinion of the present author that Klawans makes this case well and although there is undoubtedly a very considerable amount of metaphorical language in the Hebrew Bible, this is not an example. Klawans, however, does not help his own argument when he re-introduces the word *contagion* into the melting-pot in an altogether new context. He had previously made the categorical statement that *contagion* is a function only of ritual impurity: not of moral impurity. He now ends his argument against the metaphorical and figurative nature of moral impurity with the sentence: ‘Though the sources and modes of transfer of moral and ritual impurity differ, we are dealing, nonetheless, with two analogous perceptions of *contagion*, each of which brings about effects of legal and social consequence.’ Klawans does not make clear the precise nature of his analogy¹¹⁰ which is unhelpful¹¹¹ for it is the non-analogical social and legal consequences of moral impurity that most effectively militate against any metaphorical origin.

¹⁰⁹ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*. Pg 160.

¹¹⁰ See for an informative, somewhat mathematical, account of analogies, E. L. Mascall, *Existence and analogy* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1949).

¹¹¹ The matter of ‘contagion’ will be discussed in Chapter 8

It is interesting to note that, in contrast to his view on impurity itself, Klawans appears to regard sacrifice — the antidote for impurity — as a metaphor. Klawans sees the process of sacrifice as a metaphor for the act of *imitatio Dei*.¹¹² An important example of this is to be found in the significance attached to *shepherding* in biblical narrative. The ritualistic elements of raising and caring for livestock as a prelude to the sacrificial process can be seen as a metaphorical *imitatio Dei* applicable to the notion of God's caring for the whole people of Israel. Anderson¹¹³ has suggested six ritualistic steps in the practical side of this process:

1. *Bringing the animal to the sanctuary*
2. *Laying hands on the animal*
3. *Slaughter and dismemberment*
4. *Scattering/tossing/sprinkling the blood*
5. *Burning the animal*
6. *Disposal of the remains*

Other authors have variously suggested different numbers of steps though the differences are largely in minor detail. Surprisingly, all of these omit the actual process of ritual purification and say nothing of the method of selection of the specific animal. In Klawans's view, this is, once again analogical. The sacrifice and/or the priest are seen in the role of God and sacrificial animals taken from the flock are seen in the role of the people. The sacrificial ritual thereby plays-out what 'ought to be' in God's society and as such qualifies as *imitatio Dei*. It has been suggested that Klawans's metaphorical interpretation of sacrifice is an oversimplification: it certainly presents something of a 'chicken-and-egg' dilemma. Klawans does not make it entirely clear if he believes the process of ritual sacrifice and the *mores* attendant upon it were set up *de novo* by the Israelites in order that, by providing an *imitatio Dei* for themselves from within their own society, they might,

¹¹² Klawans, *Purity, sacrifice, and the temple: symbolism and supersessionism in the study of ancient Judaism*. Pg 61 *et seq.*

¹¹³ Anderson, *Sin: a history*.

thereby, become more holy. Alternatively, is *imitatio Dei* simply a retrospective construct of modern exegetes used, in this instance by Klawans,¹¹⁴ to justify *post hoc*, his notion that ritual sacrifice was symbolic?

A second, viewpoint held by Klawans on the matter of ritual sacrifice as metaphor is that it functions as a symbolic means of attracting and maintaining the divine presence both within the sanctuary and, by extension, within the populace.¹¹⁵ In this context, Klawans believes the daily burnt-offering sacrifice cannot be an expiatory process as has been widely held. Daily sacrifice is neither expiatory nor apotropaic but is symbolic and there to maintain God's presence in a renewable relationship that is constantly at risk of becoming fractured by sin.

SUMMARY

The above is a brief attempt to review the biblical concept of purity and impurity and modern opinion thereon. While the output from commentators is helpful in understanding the importance of the purity laws, it must always be remembered that these, often complex systems of classification are all modern constructs. For the present study it is ritual purity/impurity within the priestly ideology that is of especial interest. Moral impurity, though not central to the ritualistic priestly worldview, was nevertheless of importance by the time of H. Knowledge of its causes and effects is, therefore, of the greatest help in understanding what ritual impurity is not. We cannot know if the priests operated a systematic and practical sub-classification of impurity and pollution nor whether, if such were the case, it would have been along the lines of the sub-classifications proposed by these modern authors.

¹¹⁴ And, of course Mary Douglas.

¹¹⁵ Klawans, *Purity, sacrifice, and the temple: symbolism and supersessionism in the study of ancient Judaism*. Pg 68 *et seq.*

Some permutation of the Douglas/Turner anthropological idea of *wholeness* as the prerequisite for maintaining purity (and thereby holiness) offers a possible basis for priest-mediated ritual impurity but an exact priestly definition of *wholeness* remains elusive. It could be argued that the Douglas/Turner hypothesis sees *wholeness* as the absence of *category violation* — the possession of untypical (and therefore undesirable) physical attributes. The question immediately arises as to the nature and number of such categories and the process by which they have been defined. This idea does not go far enough because it does not explain why it is only certain atypicalities — *צרעת*, *זוב* the two contagious afflictions and blemishes that specifically affect the body surface and the genitals — that qualify as appropriate category violaters and precipitants of impurity through unwholeness.

Those proponents of a taxonomical approach to impurity offer a detailed and useful categorization of grades of impurity but no explanation as to a specific cause of a loss of *sacramental hygiene* such that sacred objects and places are put at risk of defilement. We are given by these authors a clear effect but no mechanism of cause. This admittedly does not rule out an infraction of wholeness by category violation as in the Douglas/Turner model but it seems unlikely that such an important mechanism would have been tacitly assumed. As a working hypothesis for causation in ritual impurity, the Douglas/Turner model remains the best we have.

Turning from cause to effect, it is appropriate, now to investigate specifically those categories — *צרעת*, *זוב*, blemish and contagiousness — that have been implicated in causing unwholeness/impurity and thereby unholiness. However, before doing so, it is necessary to consider — from a medical point of view — the nature and origin of the textual material upon which any such analysis must, ultimately, be based.

CHAPTER 5 — צרעת, A MEDICAL EXEGESIS OF

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 13

CHAPTER thirteen of the book of Leviticus contains the fullest account in the Hebrew Bible of צרעת. Chapter 13 may be thought to operate as what, today, is called a ‘checklist’ to enable the identification of the symptoms and signs of צרעת and guidance for dealing with what is found. For both exegete and physician, this chapter raises questions about the nature of צרעת which are difficult to answer: perhaps unanswerable. Central to understanding the place of צרעת, both in ancient ritual and in ancient medicine, is evidence as to its nature and an important corollary is the question of why the translators of the Septuagint (LXX) chose λέπρα to translate this Hebrew word since the precise meaning of the Greek word itself is equivocal.¹ In this chapter, the question is considered of how far we can extract from the Hebrew text of Chapter 13, and its LXX equivalent in Greek, an inkling of symptoms, signs or syndrome(s) identifiable today and how far we may equate these with צרעת/λέπρα. Much has been written and little concluded in this respect, largely because we have had no corroborating evidence as to what צרעת and λέπρα meant in everyday parlance, or even in the esoteric, worldview and language of the priest or

¹ Modern leprosy, Hansen’s disease, was almost certainly unknown in the Ancient Near East at that time and appeared only after Alexander’s return from the Indus Valley. It was then known as *Elephantiasis Graecorum* and was quite distinct from λέπρα. Its arrival in the West was with the return of the Crusaders and it, no doubt, suited the Church Establishment at the time to conflate this condition with biblical צרעת/λέπρα in order to terrify the masses. See Glasby, "What was Biblical Leprosy?".

healer. The difficulty with the seemingly simple, yet elusive, meanings of these words and the condition(s) they represent, has further been complicated in English and other modern-language translations of the Bible, by their misrepresentation as leprosy — *Elephantiasis Graecorum* or Hansen's disease.

ETYMOLOGY OF צרעת

For the purposes of the present study we must begin by asking 'how is the word צרעת used by the author(s) of Leviticus?' Chapter 13 is the obvious place to begin as the word occurs 17 times here and is, effectively, the subject of the chapter. In order to maintain a disinterested scientific approach, no attempt will be made at this stage to ascribe any specific meaning to the word צרעת.² That would be premature, inappropriate and begging the question — the Hebrew צרעת and/or the Greek λέπρα will, therefore, be used throughout this chapter without translation.

However, it may be profitable to digress briefly into a survey of previous attempts to understand the etymology and meaning of the Hebrew word צרעת as, in theory, this would be the key to biblical 'leprosy' — it has always proved impossible among authors to agree on a definition but several major ideas have emerged. Contenders of a medical nature have been discussed elsewhere, by many scholars in exhaustive detail, and their findings have themselves been the subject of analysis by the present author.³

² E. V. Hulse, "Nature of Biblical leprosy and the use of alternative medical terms in modern translations of the Bible," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 107 (1975): 87-105.

³ Glasby, "What was Biblical Leprosy?".

For a formal appraisal of the generally perceived and conventionally accepted origins and definition of this word the reader should consult one of the larger Hebrew dictionaries.^{4,5}

The obvious trilateral root for צרעת is $\sqrt{\text{צִרַע}}$ ⁶ and the dictionary of Brown Driver and Briggs (BDB),⁷ defines $\sqrt{\text{צִרַע}}$ and its verb צָרַע as ‘fall down, humble or prostrate oneself’. In this respect it is, however, used in Classical Hebrew much less commonly than $\sqrt{\text{נִפְלַל}}$. BDB and TDOT, favour a derivation from, or common ancestor with the Arabic cognate *صَرَعَة*, (= *throw down, prostrate*).⁸ It has been suggested that צרעת is being used metaphorically to signify a fall from grace because there are no skin diseases that cause falling or prostration and many other diseases that do, (e.g. epilepsy for which the Arabic word *صَرَع* is attested). However, this view has been strongly opposed by Sawyer.⁹

DCH includes this root as of the verb צָרַע and meaning quite specifically ‘to be afflicted with a rash’. This is a definition presumably derived by association and all of the given examples of its use are in the context of ‘leprosy’. The argument seems inherently circular since DCH offers no alternative usages for this verb. צרעת is a noun of the *qattal* type; also used as nouns are the *Qal* passive participle צָרוּע

⁴ Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. (DCH)

⁵ Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. (TDOT).

⁶ J Contineau, "Racines et schèmes dans les langues Sémitiques.," (1949): 93 – 95. Angel Sáenz-Badillos, *A history of the Hebrew language* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁷ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

⁸ Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*. Vol 2, pg 1678b – 1680a.

⁹ J. F. A. Sawyer, "A Note on the etymology of sara'at," 26, no. 2 (1976): 241-45.

(הַצָּרוּעַ) and the *Pu'al* participle מְצַרֵּעַ — famously (and inaccurately if referring to true leprosy), in Exodus 4:6 — וְהָיָה יָדוֹ מִצָּרְעַת כַּשֵּׁלֶג

Dictionaries, therefore, tell us that צָרְעַת was unpleasant, affected the skin and possibly occurred suddenly ‘like a blow’; but it also affected fabrics and the fabric of buildings. Its diagnosis and treatment primarily involved priests not physicians and it is unsurprising, therefore, that remedial measures were sacrifice and ablution.¹⁰ Milgrom¹¹ has translated צָרְעַת as *scale-disease* but there is relatively little textual evidence to suggest scaliness specifically and distinct from other dermatoses. The justification of צָרְעַת as a skin disease, reiterated by many authors over many years, has been a single verse from Leviticus (13:2 — and see below *passim*) which, in fact, mentions neither scaliness nor a rash and where whiteness is specifically limited to the hair:

אָדָם כִּי־יִהְיֶה בְעוֹר־בָּשָׂרוֹ שֵׂאת אֹר־סַפְחַת אוֹ בְהִרְתּוֹ וְהָיָה בְעוֹר־בָּשָׂרוֹ לְנֹגַע צָרְעַת
וְהוּבָא אֶל־אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן אוֹ אֶל־אֶחָד מִבְּנֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים

When a man shall have in the skin of his flesh a rising, or a scab, or a bright spot, and it become in the skin of his flesh the plague of leprosy, then he shall be brought unto Aaron the priest, or unto one of his sons the priests:

It is worth noting that in every case throughout the entire corpus of etymological study of this difficult word, meanings have been found for צָרְעַת and for צָרְעָה by inductive reasoning and —there is no ‘hard’ evidence — it has never been possible to arrive at a definition by a deductive route.

¹⁰ Poorthuis and Schwartz, *Purity and Holiness: the Heritage of Leviticus*; Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*.

¹¹ Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*; Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Continental Commentary*.

An intriguing, alternative etymology for צרעה has been discussed, with little conviction, by Milgrom and others,¹² on the basis of ambiguous vocalization. This is the suggestion that צרעה may be a mis-pointing of the word צרעה which means a hornet or large wasp.¹³ It is well attested, both in Classical Hebrew¹⁴ and Rabbinical Hebrew,¹⁵ that צרעה, besides referring to the insect, may signify and describe sudden and unpleasant events which befall an individual. Wasp-stings occur suddenly¹⁶ and combine an unpleasant and possibly dangerous pathological process with an 'assault', 'strike' or 'blow'. It is possible, with the eye of faith perhaps, to draw a parallel both literally and metaphorically between צרעה and צרעה at least as seen in the Hebrew Bible. Moreover, the angioneurotic oedema that may result from the allergic reaction to a wasp sting, presents itself, in the face particularly, as a severe pachydermatous swelling and induration very similar to the *facies leonina* seen in the lepomatous form of Hansen's disease but this may be no more than coincidental. The 'wasp-sting' hypothesis returns again and again, with every new author.

Cognate languages of the Ancient Near East

Cognate Semitic Languages

It is unlikely that an examination of cognate Semitic languages will shed light upon what צרעה actually was, but it may be helpful, nevertheless, to try to seek-out etymological connections in the hope that nuances of meaning may be revealed.

¹² Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*; Sawyer, "A Note on the etymology of sara'at."

¹³ Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*.

¹⁴ Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*.

¹⁵ Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature*.

¹⁶ A hornet's sting would be much worse!

Akkadian

TDOT¹⁷ suggests that the Babylonian Akkadian word *ṣennītu* meaning a ‘skin disease’¹⁸ underwent an n→r sound-shift and eventually become equivalent to צרעת.

Sawyer¹⁹ has suggested the Akkadian word was *ṣerretu* 𒌦𒌦𒌦𒌦 meaning ‘radiance’ and it referred to the *rubor* of the inflammatory response. Kinnear-Wilson, however, doubts both of these derivations.²⁰

The Akkadian word 𒌦𒌦𒌦 — or *epqu(m)* — referred to a skin disease or diseases.

The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary translates the word *epqu(m)*, 𒌦𒌦𒌦, as *leprosy* and suggests that *epqu(m)* was a specific form of a class of skin diseases for which the generic term was *epqennu/epeqennu*, (*ep-qé-en-nu*, 𒌦𒌦𒌦𒌦𒌦𒌦). Other texts use the term, *simmu(m)* *si-im-mu/GIG* (𒌦𒌦𒌦𒌦𒌦 / 𒌦𒌦𒌦𒌦), for *skin disease* and it is possible that *simmu* and *epqennu* were synonyms.^{21,22} Nothing is known about its symptoms and signs but *epqu* was, at least, thought serious enough for it to be strongly recommended to young males to refrain from marrying girls suffering from this condition.

Lieber²³ has suggested an alternative Akkadian derivation for צרעת. This word reads *sa ḥar šub bū* (𒌦𒌦𒌦𒌦𒌦𒌦𒌦) or *saḥar šubbū* (𒌦𒌦𒌦𒌦𒌦𒌦𒌦𒌦) which was

¹⁷ Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*.

¹⁸ Soden and Meissner, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (3 vols); Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon*; R; Malbran-Labat Labat, F, *Manuel d'Épigraphie Akkadienne — Signes Syllabaire Idéogrammes* (ed. Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner; Paris: Geuthner S.A., 1988).

¹⁹ Sawyer, "A Note on the etymology of sara'at."

²⁰ Kinnier-Wilson, "Diseases of Babylon: an examination of selected texts."

²¹ A L Oppenheim and E Reiner, eds., *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (vol. 4 (E) of; Chicago II: Oriental Institute, 1958). See also Chapter 8.

²² Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon*; Soden and Meissner, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (3 vols); Labat, *Manuel d'Épigraphie Akkadienne — Signes Syllabaire Idéogrammes*. See also Chapter 6

²³ Lieber, "Old Testament 'Leprosy', Contagion and Sin,."

thought to refer to some disease that ‘covered the skin with white dust’.²⁴ The question of whiteness and its place in צרעת and in true leprosy will be discussed later in this chapter.

Ugaritic

The Epic of Aqhat from Ugarit was written in Ugaritic (alphabetic) Cuneiform in the 13th century BCE and tells how the childless King Daniel acquired a son (Aqhat) thanks to the beneficence of the god El.²⁵ Aqhat’s own son is killed in turn and the grieving father curses the places where his son’s murder may have taken place. Hillers²⁶ has translated one of these curses as containing the phrase, ‘May you be clothed with the leprosy of El’ though it is unclear whether the god El suffered from leprosy or dispensed it to malefactors. The relevant Ugaritic words are *grbt il* (𐎒𐎗𐎒𐎗𐎒𐎗) and the root √grb is thought to mean the acquisition of a skin disease. The corresponding noun in the construct state is *grbt* (𐎒𐎗𐎒).²⁷ This word is thought to be a cognate of the Hebrew גָּרַב as in Deuteronomy 28:27 and used in the sense of an afflicting ‘blow’:

יככה יהוה בשחין מצרים (ובעפלים) [ובטחרים] ובגרב ובחרס אשר לא-תוכל
להרפא

*The Lord shall smite thee with the boil of Egypt, and with the emerods,
and with the scurvy, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed.*

²⁴ Kinnier-Wilson *op cit*

²⁵ P. Bienkowski and A. Millard, *Dictionary of the Ancient Near East* (Philadelphia PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

²⁶ D R Hillers, "A Difficult Curse in Aqht," in *Biblical and Related Studies Presented to Samuel Iwry*. (ed. A; Morschauer Kort, S;; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1985).. El (𐎒𐎗𐎒) presumably corresponds to the Hebrew לָ.

²⁷ G del; Sanmartin Olmo Lete, J; (Translated by Watson, W G E), *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*. (2vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2004). page 306 It is interesting that the verb grb originally meant to ‘protect’ in the sense of to ‘set apart from harm’ and the ‘setting apart’ may be significant in respect of what was done to lepers.

Aramaic

The importance of Aramaic in the ‘leprosy controversy’ is in evaluating the Targums and Talmud and exegetical material of the Rabbinic period as these [may] offer insight into the precise meaning of the Hebrew צרעת.

There is agreement among the various Aramaic lexicons²⁸ that the verbal root $\sqrt{\text{צרע}}$ and the verb צָרַע in Aramaic lexicons refer to the action of ‘striking’ but also mean ‘make/be/become leprous’. The noun צרעת ‘a plague’ or ‘leprosy’ is also found in the Targums. In contrast, in the Talmud $\sqrt{\text{סגר}}$ is widely used to denote all things ‘leprous’ and this verb more usually means ‘to shut out’²⁹ originally in the sense of ‘bar/bolt/lock a door’ but later in the general sense of ‘exclude’. It is thought that the verb סָגַר ‘to be leprous’ which is used in the Talmud, is a late stative form of סָגַר which specifically implies the ‘shut-out’, ostracized nature of the leper.³⁰ The word סָגִיר (with the definite article סָגִירָא) is also used as both a noun and an adjective to mean ‘leper/leprous’ as are the derived participial forms סָגִירָא and סָגִירָא (Hebrew $\equiv \text{הַמְצִיֵּע}$). A ‘leprous man’ is usually rendered by גְּבֵר סָגִיר (Hebrew $\equiv \text{אִישׁ-צָרוּע}$).

In Rabbinical Jewish writings, the preferred Aramaic forms are those derived from $\sqrt{\text{סגר}}$; צרעת is also used, especially when referring to Biblical passages where it

²⁸ Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature*; Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Judean Aramaic*; Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods*; Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*; A Tal, *A Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2000).

²⁹ Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*; Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature*; Tal, *A Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic*.

³⁰ See remarks about German and Welsh languages in: Glasby, "What was Biblical Leprosy?". Chapter 5

occurred in the original text. It should be noted that $\sqrt{\text{סגר}}$ exists in Hebrew also and is widely used in the sense of ‘shut’ etc.³¹ It does not, however, appear in Hebrew, to mean ‘leprosy’.

Arabic

In Arabic the letter ص is a velarized ‘s’ (š) equivalent to the Hebrew צ . On this basis, Dols³² has suggested that the Arabic root صرع meaning ‘throw down’ or, in its causative form ‘make prostrate’, may be equivalent to צרעת .³³

The Arabic letters ر and ع are equivalent to Hebrew ר and ע respectively. The Arabic feminine ending (š — *taa marbutaa*) would add a terminal ‘-at’ sound if the word were followed by a vowel or if it was in the construct state — صرعة . It is thus easy to see a similarity with צרעת . One can see a possible analogy of usage here with the Hebrew נגע and נִגַּף meaning a ‘stroke’, ‘blow’, ‘affliction’ and by association a ‘plague’.³⁴

An alternative suggestion from Sawyer,³⁵ has been that words such as صرعة and صرع are more likely to mean something akin to epilepsy on account of the ‘falling’ or ‘prostrating’ element.³⁶ However there is no clear evidence for this association.

The modern Arabic word for ‘leprosy’ is جذام whose root has the sense of

³¹ Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*.

³² M. W. Dols, "Leprosy in Medieval Arabic Medicine," 34 (1979): 314-33.

³³ This is the derivation favoured by Brown, Driver and Briggs, Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

³⁴ See Exodus 11:1 and 12:13 respectively

³⁵ Sawyer, "A Note on the etymology of sara'at."

³⁶ Annie Nicolette Zadoks, *Ancestral portraiture in Rome and the art of the last century of the Republic* (Deel 1, *Archaeologische-historische bijdragen*; Amsterdam: N. v. Noord-Hollandsche uitgevers-mij., 1932). Once called ‘falling sickness’

‘mutilated’. This suggests a more modern aetiology for significantly, nowhere in the ancient references³⁷ is specific mention made of ‘disfigurement’. This omission is perhaps the most telling evidence against biblical leprosy’s having been Hansen’s disease. The term *جُذام* is found in pre-Islamic Arabic writings from the early Common Era and is also to be found extensively in medieval Arabic medical texts.³⁸ It is unequivocal there, that *جُذام* refers to lepomatous leprosy (i.e. *Elephantiasis Graecorum*/Hansen’s Disease) and Arabic medical descriptions using the word, make much of the disfiguring nature of the disease.

Another Arabic word *بَرَص* appears to be equally old³⁹ and is the only disease specifically mentioned in the Qur’an⁴⁰ — in relation to Jesus. It may be considered, therefore, equivalent to the New Testament *λέπρα* which is unlikely itself to have been equivalent to *צרעת*. The root from which *بَرَص* is derived means ‘white’ or ‘shiny’ but as Dols⁴¹ has suggested, this is unlikely to refer to Hansen’s disease where whiteness and shininess are not pathognomonic. Beyond a degree of homophony, therefore, it is impossible to find any etymological relationship between *צרעת* and *بَرَص* or *صَرَعَة/صَرَع* and *جُذام*.

³⁷ As indeed it is not in Hebrew texts.

³⁸ Shvitiel and Niessen, eds., *Arabic and Judaeo-arabic Manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah Collections*.








³⁹ Dols, "Leprosy in Medieval Arabic Medicine."

⁴⁰ Surah 5:110

⁴¹ *Op cit*

Non-semitic Near Eastern languages

Candidates that might be considered are Sumerian and Egyptian.⁴² There is nothing among available Sumerian records that is in any way helpful and therefore we cannot draw any conclusions about that civilization.

In Egyptian, four words to describe skin diseases can be found in standard lexicons and grammar books.⁴³ They come exclusively from the Ebers Papyrus⁴⁴ and the Edwin Smith Papyrus.^{45,46} These words are: *uashesh* = a skin disease , *nesit* = a kind of skin disease  , *wbnw* = a wound , and *hxyt* = disease   . All are non-specific for *dermatoses* generally and their appearance, in the two papyri, is in an avowedly medical context — there is no association with impurity. No parallel with *צרעת*, therefore, seems legitimate.

With these etymological details in mind, it is necessary now to proceed to a detailed examination of Leviticus Chapter 13.

A MEDICAL EXEGESIS OF LEVITICUS CHAPTER 13

13:1

In noteworthy contrast to Chapter 15, the introductory command does not extend to demanding the direct passing on of the message of Chapter 13 to the Children of Israel. Chapter 13 is for the ears of Moses and Aaron only. Milgrom⁴⁷ has suggested that this restriction is a measure to guard against amateur [mis-]diagnosis within the community. In contrast, it is supposed that the concealed nature of genital

⁴² Sanskrit, though of not the Ancient Near East, might also be considered since *Elephantiasis Graecorum* probably came from the Indus valley.

⁴³ Budge, *Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary*; Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*.

⁴⁴ Bryan, *The Papyrus Ebers*.

⁴⁵ Breasted, *The Edwin Smith Surgical Papyrus (Facsimile, hieroglyphic transliteration and translation)*.

⁴⁶ See Appendix 2

⁴⁷ Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol 1, p 772.

discharges, (Chapter 15), requires early recognition by the patient of the need to consult the priest. Dermatological conditions, by contrast, become and remain evident early on, especially when the head is involved. This idea, however, cannot adequately explain what triggers the consultation with the priest if the patient is unaware of the gravity of his symptoms if he has צרעת which may, not necessarily, be present on areas of the body open to public view.

13:2 – 17: Symptoms and signs

This section has been described by Milgrom⁴⁸ as the *first subject* of the chapter on the basis of it's being introduced by כי which does not occur again until it introduces the *second subject* at verse eighteen. These verses mark out a list of symptoms and signs that characterize צרעת and also the appropriate actions to be taken by the Aaronic Priest (הכהן) in diagnosing the condition and thereafter. The latter most certainly cannot be considered to be treatment in the modern sense. The variability of these symptoms and signs goes a long way to suggesting that צרעת cannot be so much a disease as a group of [visible] symptoms and signs⁴⁹ that qualify for inclusion in one or other of the levitical categories of impurity.⁵⁰ The famous *Tetrad of Celsus* — *tumor, rubor, calor, dolor* — is called to mind by these descriptions; it accounted for almost the whole of pathology until the nineteenth century and remains central today to any consideration of inflammation or immunity.⁵¹ However, there is a degree of imprecision and non-correspondence with current terminology that leaves the present-day clinician unable to regard them as

⁴⁸ Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. P 768

⁴⁹ For a fuller discussion of the etymology of this word see: Glasby, "What was Biblical Leprosy?".

⁵⁰ See Chapter 4

⁵¹ Aulus Cornelius Celsus, *De medicina. With an English translation by W. G. Spencer* (London: William Heinemann ; Cambridge, 1935).

acknowledged identifiable syndromes. The best course, therefore, is to try to establish the semantic domains of the descriptive terms within the specific Hebrew and Greek biblical sources and then try to arrive at as near a correspondence with established pathology as is possible.⁵² Consulting non-biblical sources, if available, may be additionally helpful.

13:2: skin lesions

An important anatomical term עור־בשר *the skin of (his) flesh* appears here. The Septuagint (LXX) reads δέρματι χρωτὸς. Both of these pairings, *prima facie*, seem to be tautologous. However in both cases the second term is probably a refining addition as both of the first terms commonly refer to animal pelts bearing fur, hair etc.⁵³ The second term in each case more specifically refers to flesh and the pairing has, therefore, been taken to mean ‘hairless skin’. This view is, perhaps, reinforced by the way in which verse 2 stands in contrast to verse 3.⁵⁴

Three dermatological signs are introduced in this verse; these are, ספחת שאת and בהרת.⁵⁵ They are separated by the conjunction או = ‘or’ but it is unclear whether this means that they are alternative descriptions of the same lesion or that they are different lesions each of which might be seen separately, or together, in צרעת. They

⁵² The same practice must apply in considering the various skin lesions in Chapter 13 and elsewhere.

⁵³ Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature*. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods*; Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period*; Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Judean Aramaic*. Bauer et al., *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*.

⁵⁴ However that is not to say that hairy skin is spared, see v 31 where the word נִתְקָה (LXX = θραύσμα), implies ‘scab’ (KJV = ‘scall’), and has been assumed to refer to *favus*.

⁵⁵ בְּהֶרֶת is the lexical form, however Clines notes in the DCH that in the Codex Leningradensis the form בְּהֶרֶת is used; Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Vol 2; pg 101.

have traditionally been considered as different lesions, all, may be described by *Celsus' Tetrad*.

The feminine noun תִּשְׁבֹּץ in the Rabbinic literature has been customarily defined as a 'swelling' (*Celsus' tumor*) with the assumed root (√תִּשְׁבֹּץ). However, Milgrom,⁵⁶ points out that this would not fit in with the idea of the lesion's having penetrated deeper than the surface of the skin, as suggested in verse 3: a description that suggests active ulceration.⁵⁷ However, he notes also that the Arabic cognate شِبَاءٌ meaning a 'mark' has a similar root. Outside Leviticus the word תִּשְׁבֹּץ occurs nine times in the Hebrew Bible. In all but one of these instances it is as the *Qal* infinitive construct of √תִּשְׁבֹּץ = 'to bear'. The exception is Genesis 49:3 where it is a noun meaning 'excellence'.

The noun סִפְחָה is usually taken to mean a 'scab' and there appears to be more agreement here. 'Scab' implies an excoriating lesion that is healing. In verses 6, 7 and 8 the related noun מִסְפַּחָה appears and it is clear from the context that this represents a form of the lesion associated with a lesser degree of impurity. We can therefore classify these terms as *major scab* and *minor scab*⁵⁸ and it is interesting to speculate about whether they represent stages in a process that was either developing or resolving. If so, they would have supplied the priest with a rudimentary clinical history from which he might be able to predict outcome.

⁵⁶ Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol 1 p 773.

⁵⁷ O.E.D. Ulcer — An erosive solution of continuity in any external or internal surface of the body, forming an open sore attended with a secretion of pus or other morbid matter.

⁵⁸ It should be noted that no classification of this kind is made, or implied in the text itself. The differentiation has been made on the basis of the consequences for the patient and the procedure that has to be followed in his purification. Haber and Reinhartz, "*They shall purify themselves*": essays on purity in early Judaism. Neusner, "The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism." Klawans, "Notions of Gentile Impurity in Ancient Judaism."

The third clinical sign in verse 2, בהרת is customarily translated as a ‘spot’ or ‘shiny/bright mark’, (Celsus’ = *tumor + rubor + calor*); this implies active inflammation. This traditional view has been challenged on the authority of the Mishnah (*Neg 1:1*)⁵⁹ where it is clear that ‘bright’ = ‘white’.⁶⁰

‘The colours of ‘leprosy’-signs [that appear in the bare — non-hair-covered — skin] are two⁶¹ which are, in fact, four [colours]: the bright spot, intensely white like snow, [and] the second [shade] to it is [as white] as the lime [used for the walls] of the Sanctuary; and the swelling, [that is as white] as the skin in an egg, [and] the second [shade] of it is [as white] as white wool, according to the view of R. Meir; but the Sages say, “The swelling is [as white] as white wool, [and] the second [shade] of it is [as white] as the skin of an egg”.’

Hulse⁶² has made the suggestion that all of these lesions are at times shiny, i.e. inflamed, and that the *rubor* (and *tumor*) has subsided with healing so that, *red-shiny* → *white-shiny*. He justifies this by saying that in verses 6, 21, 26 and 39, the lesions are described by the adjective בהה meaning ‘dull’ ‘faint’ ‘colourless’ or ‘faded’ (LXX = ἀμαυρός), and that with this fading, the condition ceases to be fulminating צרעת but nevertheless requires a week of quarantine as a precautionary measure.

The Septuagint lumps all three lesions together as, οὐλή σημασίας τηλαυγής. Both Liddell and Scott’s Lexicon, (L&L)⁶³ and Bauer’s Lexicon (BDAG)⁶⁴ define οὐλή quite specifically as a ‘wound scarred over’. The noun σημασίας, L&L defines as ‘an indication/-tor’ or ‘a mark’ and τηλαυγής as ‘conspicuous from afar by its shining whiteness’. BDAG is in agreement with these definitions. It would seem, therefore, that here, in contrast to the Hebrew text, we do not have an inflammatory

⁵⁹ Blackman, ed., *Mishnayoth*

⁶⁰ The Rabbinic view was that ‘whiteness’ was the cardinal sign of צרעת

⁶¹ בִּהָרַת and בְּהָרַת

⁶² Hulse, "Nature of Biblical leprosy and the use of alternative medical terms in modern translations of the Bible."

⁶³ Liddell and Scott, *Greek English Lexicon*.

⁶⁴ Bauer et al., *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*.

lesion glowing red but an area of white scarring. This suggests an old lesion that has healed.⁶⁵ Pietersma and Wright's recent English translation of the Septuagint (NETS) sits squarely on the fence of non-commitment by translating this phrase as '...a conspicuous lesion indicating disease'.⁶⁶ If we turn to non-biblical Greek sources, Hippocrates reinforces the idea of scarring in an account of a child born with an omphalocele which became ulcerated so '...the navel did not form a scar'.⁶⁷

... ὁ ὀμφαλὸς οὐ μάλα οὐλὴ ἐγεγονει, ...

(Hippocrates, *Epidemics IV*, 171)

Verse 2 is packed with terminology and introduces, at once, the most important and most difficult term צרעת. So much has been written about the meaning of this word and so little concluded, that it would be wearisomely *ultra vires* to embark on further analysis here. What is clear is that this disease is neither modern leprosy — Hansen's Disease — nor *Elephantiasis Graecorum*, the name given in Hellenic times to the disease, (almost certainly Hansen's disease), brought back by the troops of Alexander's expedition to the Indus valley. It is probably unhelpful to speculate beyond this: the reader should consult the extensive disquisitions by Milgrom⁶⁸ and

⁶⁵ The diagnostic test should be the presence of *calor*, but we are told nothing about it.

⁶⁶ Pietersma and Wright, *A new English translation of the Septuagint: and the other Greek translations traditionally included under that title*.

⁶⁷ Hippocrates et al., *Hippocrates*. Vol VII, p 128. An omphalocele is a herniation of the gut at the umbilicus resulting from incomplete closure of the latter by scarring, during foetal development. Omphaloceles become secondarily infected and show an inflammatory response.

⁶⁸ Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol 1, pp. 774 – 775 and 816 – 826.

Glasby,⁶⁹ neither of whom is able to come up with a definitive diagnosis because the symptoms and signs described in the texts do not fit any known symptomatology.⁷⁰

It is important, however, to note the coupling, in Lev 13:2, of צרעת with the noun נגע in construct, as נגע צרעת. This is usually rendered as the ‘plague of leprosy’ or sometimes ‘affliction of leprosy’, but, of course, leprosy has never behaved as a plague. Nevertheless, in ancient times any misfortune might have been seen as descending suddenly upon the unfortunate recipient as if by a blow struck by God and נגע significantly has the meaning ‘touch/attack/befall/strike a blow’.⁷¹ The LXX supports this with the slightly milder ἀφή λέπρας, (ἀφή = a touch). Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, God is always the originator of a נגע and so the affliction of צרעת may, in all probability, be the result of God’s displeasure.

We have, therefore, at the end of verse 2 three clinical signs appearing on hairless flesh that individually, or together, are suggestive of God’s having brought צרעת upon an individual and this is such a potentially serious breach of purity that it *must* be reported to a priest. It, therefore, appears to be a biblical *communicable disease*.

13:3: hair

The hair plays an important part in the priestly diagnosis of צרעת. Hair colour is defined by the ratio of *pheomelanin* (red pigment) to *eumelanin* (black/brown pigment) in the melanocytes of the hair and their presence or absence is genetically

⁶⁹ Glasby, "What was Biblical Leprosy?".

⁷⁰ For the present it would only add to the general unclarity to attempt a translation of צרעת. Milgrom has suggested *scale disease* and Glasby, *leproidosis*. The Septuagint uses λέπρα which we know cannot be leprosy. None of these is entirely accurate nor helpful. However the term *dermopath* may have some value in describing the sufferer with any sort of (visible) skin complaint.

⁷¹ And by extension the terms ‘affection’ or ‘lesion’ have been used by various commentators.

determined. The number of melanocytes in any hair follicle declines with age from about thirty years onwards but relatively few diseases cause greying or whitening of the hair. In pathological states, hair whitening and loss of hair, are likely to be due to poor nutrition of the hair follicles by unsatisfactory circulatory or metabolic conditions. Hypothyroidism and malnutrition may cause whitening and thinning of the hair but Hansen's disease does not. Among the candidates for צרעת, only *bejel*, *favus* and *vitiligo* are associated with whitening and loss of hair.⁷²

There appears to be an immediate problem with verse 3. If, as Milgrom suggests, the expression עור־בשר (δέρματι χρωτὸς), means 'hairless skin', why is this expression used here in a verse specifically referring to hair? This raises the question of whether it is referring to abnormal hair growth within the lesion but this is known to be so rare as to be highly unlikely. It seems, therefore, that two situations are being considered, and at the same time confused in this verse. One is that which pertains to hairy skin, the head and beard area; the other is a description of ulceration taking place in hairless skin such as was considered in the previous verse. The word מראה, however, introduces a further element of confusion. This word usually means 'seeing' or 'appearance' and thus begs the question about whether ulceration is really present or only appears to be present. Milgrom⁷³ suggests the rabbinic view was that white lesions *appeared* to be deeper than the skin surface and this idea has been used by others to justify the relatively benign conditions of *psoriasis* and *favus* as being צרעת. However, it is very difficult to suppose that a white scar or skin flake could be confused with an ulcer even by the untrained eye. What can be said with certainty here is that if either of these

⁷² Glasby, "What was Biblical Leprosy?". See table pg 74

⁷³ Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol 1 pg 778

affections was found to be present, this would be — to the priest — pathognomonic of צרעת and so, call for him to declare the *dermopath* unclean/impure/טמא.⁷⁴ At this point no mention is made of precisely what such a declaration entails.

13:4: diagnostic pointers

The next five verses are about what is, today, called *differential diagnosis* i.e. those observations, made over time, that allow the examiner to arrive at a clear diagnosis by the inclusion and exclusion of evidence. Whiteness of the skin without ulceration or any change in hair colour is not enough to declare the patient טמא, but it does arouse suspicion and so demands further investigation. How the condition progresses, is the information that would be required to confirm the diagnosis. Therefore, so as not to risk spreading the disease by contagion, it becomes necessary for the priest to quarantine the patient. In the LXX, ἀφορίζω = ‘separate’ fits the idea of quarantining in the modern sense but the Hebrew uses הִסְגִּיר the *hiph’il* of סָגַר = ‘cause to be shut up’ and so it is unclear whether some enforced form of separation/isolation was intended. The quarantine period of seven days appears to be arbitrary and probably a reflection of the ritualistic/mystical association with the number seven in P-writings — a reflection in the cosmic element of the priestly worldview in which creation took seven days..

There is no indication as to where the quarantine was to take place. Two possible explanations have been put forward from biblical examples. Either, like Miriam (Num 12:14–15), the unfortunate *dermopath* is sent outside the camp or, like Uzziah (2 Chr 26:21), he is removed to isolation in special quarters. Whether his social status may have been significant in making this differentiation is unknown.

⁷⁴ The LXX uses the verb *μαίνω* = ‘be defiled’

13:5: והנה

In this verse we encounter, for the first time, the Hebrew expression והנה ('behold'); a much-used word in the Hebrew Bible that occurs 20 times in Leviticus Chapter 13, where there is some dispute as to its significance. Milgrom⁷⁵ citing Joüon⁷⁶ suggests that the ...ו.....ו sequence (exemplified here by והנה ...→...והסגירו), represents the *protasis* and *apodosis* of a conditional clause and this arrangement is to be found in P text, used in a particular way, after the verb ראה. These clauses are, therefore, often translated with an 'if.....then' formulation which commentators have suggested would fit in well with the diagnostic process. However, an alternative viewpoint has been put forward⁷⁷ that the recurrent והנה is a marker for meta-representation.⁷⁸ This is then considered to be a higher-order presentation with a lower-order representation⁷⁹ embedded within it — the whole thing is then re-presented in entirety as the *meta-re-presentation*. The term והנה is functioning as a *parametric operator* telling the *reader* to process the ensuing string as a *re-presentation* of a perception, thought or comment from an earlier time. In the present verse this is quite clearly the exposition to the reader of an earlier clinical observation — again after the verb ראה. In all probability these two approaches add up to the same thing with the practical manifestation that, as the condition has persisted, a further period of seven days' quarantine has become necessary.

⁷⁵ Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*.

⁷⁶ Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*. Vol 2, p 651 §177i.

⁷⁷ T. Muraoka, M. F. J. Baasten, and W. Th van Peursen, *Hamlet on a hill: Semitic and Greek studies presented to Professor T. Muraoka on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday* (118; Leuven ; Dudley, Mass.: Peeters, 2003).

⁷⁸ Note the second hyphen — *re-presentation* has the sense of 'present again'

⁷⁹ Note the lack of hyphen — *representation* as in an image etc.

However, an important additional factor is the notion that the lesion may have *spread*, פשה.

13:6: reassessment of the patient

The patient is reassessed at a third meeting with the priest on the fourteenth day after his initial presentation. This verse sets out the criteria for confirming the condition as being a *minor impurity*. For this to be the case, the lesion must have faded and must not have spread in the skin, כהה הנגע ולא־פשה; the ‘official diagnosis’ is, therefore, מספחת (LXX = σημασία) i.e. a scab; and the priest may, as a result, declare him clean/cleansed/pure/purified. The verb that is used is the *pi’el* of טהר, i.e. טהר which is considered to be a *declarative pi’el*.⁸⁰ The Septuagint says καθαριεῖ αὐτὸν ὁ ἱερεὺς using the simple future indicative active of καθαριζω = cleanse, presumably also in a declarative sense, though this is not attested in L&S. Importantly now, we are told the ritual procedure that **must** follow the diagnosis of a *minor impurity* in order to obtain full purification. This involves bathing and laundering of one’s clothes. From this we may infer that the degree of impurity here is equivalent to that seen after, for example, eating or transporting forbidden foodstuffs.⁸¹ However, whereas the process of recognition and ritual purification of these other peccadillos is completed within a single day, there is, with מספחת, the additional burden of a week’s quarantine.

By this point in the chapter, we have been introduced to three ‘clinical scenarios’.

⁸⁰ Gesenius et al., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar: with a facsimile of the Siloam inscription by J. Euting and a table of alphabets by M. Lidzbarski*. Pg 141, §52g.

⁸¹ This is in contrast to the much more elaborate procedure that must be undertaken in dealing with a *major impurity* and which is described in Leviticus Chapter 14.

1. *Suspected but unproven/unconfirmed impurity* → 1 week of quarantine → if no further development → patient declared טהור .
2. *Minor impurity* מספחת, → טמא → 2 weeks of quarantine + bathing and laundering
3. *Major impurity*, צרעת, → טמא → the treatment of this is ritualistic not medical and is described, at some length, in Leviticus Chapter 14.

13:7 – 46: Further symptoms and signs

This group of verses deals with reappearing signs and more specific features seen in the differential diagnosis of צרעת. There is a substantial amount of repetition in the text, but also pointers to additional diagnostic features and presentations in specific anatomical situations.

13:7 – 9: spread

Spreading of a מספחת after the above declaration of purity has taken place, demands a further visit to the priest who, if he finds clear evidence that the lesion has spread, must declare the patient unclean טמא — again by means of a *declarative pi'el* — but now with the certainty that this is צרעת נגע. In verse 7 the use of the passive, *niph'al* נִרְאָה implies that the patient 'be seen' by the priest perhaps even unwillingly.

13:10 – 12: whiteness

Whiteness is emphasized here; a white swelling in the skin that has turned (הפך) the hair white. There is no obvious physiological or pathological reason why this should have happened. Moreover, the association made here with raw flesh seems unlikely. Whiteness is usually associated with old scarring, scarred, or avascular flesh. Raw or ulcerating flesh, in contrast, exposes granulation tissue which usually has a good blood supply and a velvety-red appearance. Very frequently it becomes secondarily

infected by bacterial invasion and the presence of pus may mislead one into believing it to be turning white.

However, in verse 11 the whiteness, but not the ulceration, is perhaps justified in referring to it as a chronic condition צרעת נושנת or λέπρα παλαιουμένη. But even the word ‘chronic’ seems unlikely given the context of this verse. More likely would be the translation ‘established’, meaning that the lesion has had time to develop. Either way, an important point is made here: the patient has overt צרעת, there is therefore, no need to quarantine this patient for diagnostic purposes, as his uncleanness is clearly evident for all to see and the Hebrew word טמא implies that major form of impurity that is beyond the ability of man to undo.

The question of spread is again considered in verse 12. In both the Hebrew and the Greek, the analogy with a budding/sprouting/blossoming flourishing plant is made: פרח and ἐξανθέω. No indication is given as to whether the spread is a manifestation of the chronicity of the condition or a fulminating acute phase. Extent appears to matter more, yet only inasmuch as it is immediately visible to the priest, presumably without the patient’s having to undress and with no concern being given to a history from the patient himself. While the spread of the dermatological signs may — or even perhaps must — be from head to foot⁸² it may be considered only where the priest can see it without unduly compromising the patient’s modesty.⁸³ This extraordinarily un-clinical approach was later justified by the Rabbis⁸⁴ who indicated twenty four anatomical sites where טמא *should not/could not* be diagnosed on the

⁸² מראשו ועד רגליו / ἀπὸ κεφαλῆς ἕως ποδῶν

⁸³ עיני הכהן / καθ’ ὄλγον τὴν ὄρασιν τοῦ ἱερέως

⁸⁴ Blackman, ed., *Mishnayoth*, *Negaim* 6:7; vol 6, pg 345.

basis of raw flesh.⁸⁵ Moreover, raw flesh not extending more than the diameter of a lentil, was not to be diagnosed as צרעת and therefore did not imply that the patient was טמא.

13:13: extensive spread and whiteness

Verse 13 is, at first, very confusing. The inclusion of והנה suggests a conditional clause with the protasis referring back to the symptoms and signs seen by the priest in the patient of verse 12 — ‘if the צרעת /λέπρα has spread so as to cover all his flesh’. In the apodosis, however, he is declared טהור on the grounds that it has all turned white. The Hebrew is confusing at first because the והנה appears to refer to the צרעת ‘covering all the flesh’,⁸⁶ rather than to the *whiteness* covering the whole body but it makes sense to suppose that the declaration of recovered purity is due to the צרעת having turned white. There is no such confusion in the Septuagint which makes the point quite clearly that the priest is required to declare the patient clean because everything has turned white — *ὅτι πᾶν μετέβαλεν λευκόν καθαρὸν ἐστίν*. We can only speculate as to what this whiteness was in pathological terms. It is rather a strong argument against צרעת being psoriasis, as has been suggested, because the white scaly appearance would be indicative of active disease and the description here seems to imply a late, healing phase. Milgrom⁸⁷ suggests healing has occurred by desquamation of now-dead skin cells but for this to be the case, we still need a

⁸⁵ It is interesting to note that several of these are precisely those anatomical points where Hansen’s disease reveals itself most prominently.

⁸⁶ כִּסְתָה הַצִּרְעָת אֶת־כָּל־בְּשָׂרוֹ

⁸⁷ Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol 1, pg 785.

diagnosis to identify the desquamatory disease that has healed. Moreover, for this to have involved almost the entire body seems very unlikely. For this reason, Hulse's suggestion of *exfoliative dermatitis* seems equally improbable.⁸⁸ The viewpoint shared by Milgrom and Hulse and indeed a majority of scholars writing on *תַּעַר/λέπρα*, is that somehow *whiteness* = *scales*. The analogy is, perhaps, made with fish scales which, seen in appropriate light, may appear white. But fish scales also commonly show iridescence and no mention of this phenomenon is made anywhere. An alternative view, suggested by Wevers,⁸⁹ is that *whiteness* = *normal skin colour*¹⁷ and so, as the scabs have healed, the appearance of the skin has returned to its normal [white] colour and the patient must, therefore, be clean. This view is supported in the text of the LXX by the *πᾶν* of *πᾶν μετέβαλεν λευκὸν καθαρὸν ἔστιν* being in agreement with *τὸ δέρμα τοῦ χρωτός* which is neuter and *not* in agreement with either *λέπρα* or *ἀφή*, both of which are feminine. This ingenious suggestion perhaps makes greater medical sense than the more conventional view, but it has not been widely accepted. This is almost certainly because of the poorly thought-out but entrenched view that *תַּעַר* was invariably associated with *whiteness*: any alternative view would conflict with important textual references such as Exodus 4:6, Numbers 12:10 and 2 Kings 5:27. However, it might be argued that the comparison with snow, made on these occasions, reflects its flakiness and not its whiteness. We must ask about the evidence that *תַּעַר* really was associated with scaliness too. It seems entirely likely that this idea owes its existence simply to the translation, by the authors of the Septuagint, of *תַּעַר* by *λέπρα*. The origins of the

⁸⁸ Hulse, "Nature of Biblical leprosy and the use of alternative medical terms in modern translations of the Bible."

⁸⁹ Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Leviticus*. Pg 176. This viewpoint, of course, rests on Wevers' assumption that the natural skin colour of those who wrote Leviticus was 'white'.

λεπ- morpheme in Greek are unclear. A group of related words containing this morpheme are all associated with the idea of a ‘rind’, ‘husk’ or ‘skin’ and those containing the λεπτ- morpheme by extension a thin ‘film’.⁹⁰ The notion of scales or scaliness is, therefore but one of many possible ideas that λεπ-words convey. It is even possible that the word simply means ‘skin’ and that צרעת in the eyes of the LXX translators was intended to convey no more than *dermatosis* conveys in modern medicine.

13:14 – 17: ulceration

These verses are a consideration of what should happen if the disease breaks out again in the form of ulcerating flesh. By ביום, is meant ‘whenever’ with ‘if ever’ implicit and in the form found in the text, וביום, the ו signifies a continuation of the previous string and is usually translated as ‘but’. New ulceration, therefore appears to result in the patient’s being declared טמא but whiteness triggers a declaration of טהור.

13:18 – 28: boils and burns

In the second half of the chapter which Milgrom describes as his *second subject* we are introduced to a further case of צרעת resulting from a pre-existing ‘boil’ שחין. Today, the expression *boil* is taken to mean an acute infective lesion usually due to an infecting bacterial agent such as *Staphylococcus aureus* and producing a localized inflammatory swelling showing at least all of Celsus’ original signs (*tumor + rubor*

⁹⁰ Cf for example, ‘*leptomeninges*’, *leptospirosis*’, where the *lep-* morpheme implies, ‘filminess’ rather than ‘scaliness’.

+ *calor* + *dolor* ± *functio laesa*).⁹¹ The lesion progressively becomes distended with pus and resolves to a scar once the swelling has ruptured or has been incised and the pus has drained. Boils are associated with poor skin hygiene and there is nothing to suggest their specific association with any of the traditional contenders for צרעת. In the Hebrew Bible, boils are viewed as a dreaded condition imposed upon an individual who has ignited the wrath of God. This idea is to be found especially in violation of the covenant, (Exodus 9:9 – 11, 2 Kings 20:7, Isaiah 38:21, Job 2:7 and most emphatically, Deuteronomy 28:27, 35). It is very easy, in an age where antibiotics are taken for granted, to dismiss the seriousness of such a condition. One should note that in the LXX the word that corresponds to שחין is ἔλκος which is usually translated as ‘ulcer’ — but an *ulcer* is quite a different thing from a *boil*.⁹² It is unclear, therefore, whether in this verse, we are dealing with a different presenting lesion or whether this is simply repetition. The latter seems more likely given the fact that the author has already dwelt at some length upon the presentation of צרעת as ספחת שאת.

13:19: spots

The two Hebrew words, שחין and בהרת remain to be further elucidated. The former, as we have just seen, is probably a white purulent spot or *boil*. בהרת (is usually translated as a ‘shiny spot’, by which it may be supposed we mean a reddish inflamed swelling: Celsus’ *tumor* + *rubor* ± *calor* ± *dolor*. It may be no more than

⁹¹ *Functio laesa*, loss of function may occur as a direct result of the disease process i.e. by destruction of tissue *or* as a side effect of the *tumor* or *dolor*. A swollen hot, painful joint, for example, cannot function normally.

⁹² For the definition of an ulcer, see above. A *boil* is a lay term indicating a hot red swelling on the skin that may or may not contain pus. It is a simple manifestation of the inflammatory process and is usually the result of bacterial infection by agents such as *Staphylococcus aureus*.

the early manifestation of this same condition, before the invasion by inflammatory cells and the formation of pus. We are re-entering the field of confusion brought about by the term ‘white’. In the likely pathology, there are two very distinct processes that are associated with whitening of the flesh. One of these is healing, whereby the tissues are rendered avascular by the fibrosis of scarring and so become white. The other process is the development of pus as a result of the invasion of the lesion by inflammatory leucocytes, monocytes and macrophages. All of these cells, in the business of engulfing bacterial invaders and the products of local necrosis, themselves die and their remains form the pus characteristic of advanced inflammation. The colour of pus varies from whitish to a yellowish green or, in the case of infection with *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, even a fluorescent green. The difference in the presentation of these two processes would be that in healing by scar-formation the lesion is white and dry while purulent tissue would be white and wet. It seems likely here that we are dealing with the latter — true boils — whereas in earlier verses we were dealing with a healing/scarring process. This makes sense as a further reason for a consultation with the priest. However, it does not fit in with a diagnosis of an autoimmune condition for צרעת such as psoriasis; if we accept this presentation, we must think of an acute inflammatory condition.

13:20 – 23: persistent spots

The sequence of events, consequent upon the presentation of בהרת/שחין symptoms to the priest, is similar to those observed with a מספחת/ספחת/שאת presentation.

White hair in the lesion indicates clear צרעת but its absence, fading of the redness

and lack of ulceration, calls for a further seven days' quarantine. As before, overt spread requires a declaration of טמא whereas a single, healing lesion does not.

13:24 – 28: pre-existing burns

These verses deal with the somewhat unlikely situation in which צרעת may develop in a pre-existing burn מכות-אש. It might be supposed that minor burns were a not uncommon consequence of routine domestic activities in the Israelites' daily life and secondary infection of burnt skin would be a frequent and potentially serious complication. The priest is here looking for the same signs as hitherto. White hair and ulceration breaking out in the burnt area are pathognomonic of צרעת; their absence and fading of the lesion necessitate a further seven days' quarantine and if spread has occurred after that time, the condition is confirmed as צרעת. Failure to spread and fading indicate, by contrast, that this is simply the resolving burn and the patient must be טהור.

13:29 – 32: lesions on the head and beard-area

Lesions affecting hair-bearing skin, notably the head and beard, are considered next. A new masculine noun, נתק is introduced here. It is translated in the ERV and KJV as 'scall'⁹³ but in the RSV and NRSV simply as an 'itch' though in all these cases it is qualified as *leprosy of the head and beard*, צרעת הראש או הזקן. The introduction of נתק has led a number of authors to suggest that a different disease is under consideration here. *Psoriasis*, *scabies* and *favus* have been particular favourites

⁹³ Which the O.E.D., perhaps unhelpfully, describes as a 'scabby disease of the skin, especially the scalp' and indicates two forms, a 'dry scall' = *psoriasis* and 'humid- or moist scall' = *eczema*. However, *ringworm* is also mentioned but not *favus* which must surely be the best contender.

though the first two of these seem unlikely. Favus, named because of its ‘honeycomb’ presentation, is a fungal disease caused by *Tricophyton schoenleinii*. It is a recurrent, persistent infection of the scalp and beard area that causes highly disfiguring encrustations (*scutula*) which periodically drop off to reveal shiny red and white areas. These *scutula* have frequently been confused with the pachydermatous thickening — e.g. the *facies leonina* — seen in Hansen’s disease. Today, treatment is relatively straightforward with anti-fungal drugs.

In such cases, the procedure that priest and patient must follow is the same as that laid out previously with the exception that fine yellow hair, שער צהב דק (LXX: θριξ ξανθίζουσα λεπτή), is now held to be pathognomonic of צרעת and black hair along with failure of the lesions to spread delivers the ‘all-clear’. The yellow hair, it has been suggested, might indicate *favus* on the grounds that, in this condition, the hair turns a yellowish colour and then drops out; however, this is open to dispute.

13:33 – 37: scall

Unsurprisingly, shaving is advocated along with seven days’ quarantine. The *hithpa’el* הִתְגַּלַּח implies that the patient must shave himself but how extensive this shaving must be we are not told. It is emphasized that the scall itself must not be included in the shaving, ואת־הנתק לא יגלח. Thereafter follows a further seven days’ quarantine after which a further examination is carried out as before, to look for spread and ulceration.

If these observations are negative, the patient is declared clean but must still launder his clothes but oddly, no mention is made of his having to wash himself. If spread or ulceration is shown to recur after this cleansing, he is undoubtedly טמא and there is

no need to continue the examination in search of yellow hair. But if the spread of lesions appears static and only black hair is to be found in the remains of the scall, he may be declared טהור.

13:38 – 39: *tetters*

These verses introduce the term *tetter*⁹⁴ (בהק) in the ERV and RSV. This is translated as ‘freckled spot’ in the KJV and ‘rash’ in the NRSV. Here is our first clear instance of differential diagnosis. The *tetter*, (בהק) is **not** צרעת because it is dull white and not shiny white. This suggests it is not an inflammatory spot: *tumor without calor, rubor or dolor*. The important point here is that the white spot is dull-white (LXX = ἀλφός) which Hulse⁹⁵ has suggested means *leukoderma* or *vitiligo*: both benign, though not particularly common, conditions. Both the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint make the point that this condition — *tetters* — does not confer impurity.

13:40 – 44: *baldness*

Again, the head is a special case. Baldness, as a result of hair falling out (*niph'al* ימרט; μαδάσκειν) is not *per se* indicative of any disease process and there is no impurity. This is apparently also the case if the baldness occurs on the forehead.⁹⁶ In Hebrew and in Greek there is a clear distinction between קרן (φαλακρός) which is baldness on the crown of the head and גבה (ἀναφάλαντος) which is baldness of the

⁹⁴ The O.E.D. defines *tetter* as: ‘A general term for any pustular herpetiform eruption of the skin, as eczema, herpes, impetigo, ringworm, etc.’

⁹⁵ Hulse, "Nature of Biblical leprosy and the use of alternative medical terms in modern translations of the Bible."

⁹⁶ And, according to the Rabbis, the temples.

forehead. Neither of these implies צרעת unless either appears to be accompanied by נגע לבן אדמדם (ἀφή λευκή ἢ πυρρίζουσα). This, a clear sign of צרעת, is variously described as ‘a reddish white mark’ or ‘a reddening white infection’. Milgrom⁹⁷ suggests that it is the *brightness* of the lesion, regardless of whether *bright white* or *bright red*, that is pathognomonic of צרעת of the head.

13: 45 – 46: צרעת

The next two verses make generalizations about צרעת and about the behaviour of anyone diagnosed as having the condition, (הצרוע). We see in the Septuagint that ὁ ἄνθρωπος λεπρός has now become ὁ λεπρός. He is not looked-upon kindly by society nor by his compatriots. His clothing, perhaps seen as a source of contagion, must be destroyed. He must dishevel his hair ראשו יהיה פרוע or perhaps as the Septuagint says, his head should be uncovered (ἡ κεφαλὴ αὐτοῦ ἀκατακάλυπτος). But his mouth must be covered על-שפם יעטה⁹⁸ presumably as a guard against infection. Most humiliatingly of all, he must announce his presence to the world by crying out ‘*unclean, unclean!*’ — יקרא טמא וטמא (ἀκάθαρτος κεκλήσεται).⁹⁹

On a more practical point, the ‘leper’ must also, for the duration of his period of enforced impurity, dwell alone and outside the camp, בודד ישב מחוץ למחנה מושבו.

⁹⁷ Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol 1, pg 801.

⁹⁸ Technically שפם is a moustache. It is sometimes translated as ‘upper lip’ but ‘mouth’ is the translation that makes the most sense here.

⁹⁹ A rare use of the Classical future-perfect tense in late Greek.

13:47 – 58: צרעת upon fabrics

The text now turns to the medically unlikely, if not absurd, state of צרעת affecting fabrics such as cloth and leather, clothing, furnishings and sails. It is this notion, along with that of צרעת's affecting buildings, (Lev 14: 34 – 53) that is, perhaps the strongest argument for the case that צרעת cannot be a disease, in the modern sense but refers to any visible and unsightly affection of a surface in both animal and mineral material — *platydysmorphism*. As such it would encompass diseases, especially those with dermatological involvement, moulds growing upon fabrics and foodstuffs and fungal or lichenaceous growths upon the walls of damp buildings.¹⁰⁰ While the aetiologies of these may be widely-differing, the common factor, to the Israelite mind would be that of [visible] disfigurement and the likely explanation for this would be that offence had been caused to the deity.

Whereas the modern exegete might incline towards translating צרעת/λέπρα in these latter verses as 'mould/mouldiness' mouldy' etc. the Hebrew Bible and LXX continue to use צרעת and λέπρα and the KJV and ERV are unwavering in rendering these as 'leprosy'. Even the RSV and NRSV, somewhat half-heartedly, say 'leprous disease'. Milgrom,¹⁰¹ at this point, exchanges *scale-disease* for *mould-disease* noting that in semi-tropical latitudes any dampness will often facilitate the growth of fungal mycelia upon fabrics of animal or plant origin. One must suppose that the appearance of the fungal hyphae and fruiting bodies must somehow have resembled that of צרעת/λέπρα in human subjects. Today, this is a difficult assumption to make;

¹⁰⁰ Typically 'mildew' for which the OED gives: A morbid destructive growth upon plants, consisting of minute fungi, and having usually the appearance of a thin whitish coating. Also, a similar growth on paper, leather, wood, etc., when exposed to damp.

¹⁰¹ Milgrom *Op cit*, Pg 809

our familiarity with, and discernment of, these things is based on a greater awareness of the world about us than might be expected of an ancient Israelite. Milgrom suggests that the symptoms of צרעת affecting both humans and fabrics can easily be confused because the surface appearances are similar [Milgrom's mildew?] but this seems unlikely and tendentious. Fungal mycelia and fruiting bodies give a furry appearance to the surfaces upon which they live and this is totally different from scaliness or the peeling or scarring of skin. It seems very unlikely that anyone could confuse the two. However, we should note that both may be white in colour although, in verse 49, Leviticus notes that upon fabric תערצ/λέπρα may present as red or green¹⁰² ירקרק או אדמדם (χλωρίζουσα ἢ πυρρίζουσα) both of which colours occur in fungal infestations such as *dry-rot* and species of the *Penicillium* mould. Much is made in these verses of the involvement of both the warp and the weft/woof of the cloth. This may be no more than poetic licence but it has led Milgrom to suggest it indicates that it may be the yarns — wool and linen were almost exclusively used in these times — rather than the woven cloth that becomes affected by the צרעת. His reasoning for this is that, in the woven cloth, there would be cross-infection of warp by weft or *vice versa*, and it would be impossible to identify which component part(s) of the finished cloth was the causative agent.

13:50 – 9

As with the human patient, the mouldy fabric must be examined by the priest who, seemingly whatever the appearance, must shut-up the affected thing for seven days at which point he must re-examine it, looking for spread.

¹⁰² It has been suggested that no distinction was made between yellow and green in ANE cultures.

13:51 – 52

If the affection has spread, the remedy is the simple one of burning¹⁰³ the garment (or whatever it was) for the spreading of צרעת characterizes the condition immediately as צרעת ממארת הנגע. The KJV and ERV translate ממארת by the somewhat archaic term *fretting*,¹⁰⁴ the RSV says, ‘malignant’ and the NRSV as ever sits on the fence of dubiety with ‘spreading’. The DCH¹⁰⁵ defines מֵאֵר ‘be painful’ or in the *hiph^{‘il}* as here ‘cause pain’. It is difficult to know what this means with reference to a fabric but one must suppose that it is something akin to ‘serious’ or ‘severe’ though for whom — the fabric itself, its owner or the world in general — remains unclear. In contrast, the LXX says λέπρα ἔμμονός ἐστίν which implies chronicity rather than severity. The word ἔμμονός (= continual, persistent), occurs only four times in the LXX and on three of these occasions it is with λέπρα: there appears to be no apparent reason for choosing it to translate ממארת about whose meaning there is no uncertainty.

13:53 – 58

If no spread has occurred, the article must be washed and quarantined for a further seven days after which time it is inspected again. If, either no change in colour is seen and/or spread has occurred, the item must nevertheless still be burnt as it is irretrievably damaged with impurity.

¹⁰³ This can occur within the camp as burning brings about total destruction and there is no risk of further contagion.

¹⁰⁴ OED = A slow gnawing or eating away; erosion, corrosion; also, the process of decaying or wasting.

¹⁰⁵ Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*.

However, if the affection has faded,¹⁰⁶ the priest can cut out or tear out the affected part from the whole with no concern as to whether this renders it useless. It must now be washed once again before it can be declared טהור. However, if, after this treatment, the mildew appears again, the entire item must be burnt immediately.

With regard to the tearing out of the affected area, both the HB and the LXX say that it can be torn quite specifically out of the garment or skin or out of the warp *or* out of the weft, מן־העור או מן־השתי או מן־העור או מן־הבגד (ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱματίου ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ δέρματος ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ στῆμονος ἢ ἀπὸ τῆς κρόαης): this last feat is clearly impossible and reinforces the suggestion that this, in fact, refers to the individual yarns before they reach the loom.

13:59: a summary verse

The final verse is a statement that this chapter summarizes the law and procedures for צרעת/λέπρα.

What then, can we conclude from Chapter 13 about the nature of צרעת/λέπρα? The array of symptoms and signs is so diverse that it is impossible to assemble them into any known modern syndrome or disease. The contenders have been summarized by Glasby¹⁰⁷ according to their symptoms and signs but the point is made that nothing fits exactly and that צרעת almost certainly did not refer to a specific disease but to a range of conditions that the untrained and uncritical Israelite mind perceived as being similar to one another. It remains unclear as to whether these conditions were characterized by scaliness or by whiteness. The present author believes that Milgrom's *scale disease*, though admittedly a useful terminology, cannot be justified

¹⁰⁶ Was this simply due to the washing?

¹⁰⁷ Glasby, "What was Biblical Leprosy?". Table pg 74.

by the symptomatology. Moreover the switch from *scale-disease* to *mould-disease* simply because of the change of subject is unacceptable as either a logical or a pathological possibility. The only justification we have for ‘scaliness’ is that the translators of the LXX chose λέπρα to translate צרעת. But the λέπ* morpheme, besides alluding to *scales*, can also refer to *rind, coating, surface, skin, peel* etc. We have no clear idea as to which of these meanings the authors of the Septuagint had in mind when using λέπρα to translate צרעת. The only thing they all have in common is that they refer to the external surface of a plant or animal. In this respect they may do no more than equate the *dermato-* prefix of modern pathology. The same may be said of Glasby’s *leproidosis* which, though a less specific term than *scale-disease*, nevertheless is entrammelled in the same dubious etymology. Another neologism, (*dermopathic*) *platydysmorphism* which means nothing more precise than ‘disruption/misshapeness/disfigurement of a (skin) surface, though cumbersome, has a certain attractiveness because it is appropriately descriptive and at the same time wholly non-specific.

Particularly controversial, is the reference to *whiteness* in the various descriptions of צרעת. Whiteness, is the single epithet most consistently applied to צרעת/λέπρα in the HB and LXX. It has been dismissed by commentators, perhaps too readily, because of the lack of any association of whiteness with modern Hansen’s disease. Moreover, the appearance of whiteness may be due both to the scarring process and/or the flakiness of desquamating skin. These two appearances are to be seen in many of the contenders for צרעת and so may have led to the dismissal of this important sign as being confusing on account of its non-specific nature. There can be little doubt that even those of the most modest intellect in the ANE knew what

‘white’ meant. It is, hard to dismiss whiteness as being relevant to צרעת because it is the adjective that recurs in this context in *all* of the relevant texts from Exodus to the Mishnah and Talmud.

Lieber has proposed a highly specific *scenario* for biblical ‘leprosy’. She bases her argument on the observation that the levitical rules for dealing with צרעת suggest a more serious affliction than one might expect from a perusal of the biblical case-histories for the condition. Lieber suggests that there may have been at least two categories of צרעת one being a more serious condition than the other. She postulates that during the Exodus and the period of wanderings in the desert, צרעת was probably the highly contagious disease *bejel*¹⁰⁸ (one of the non-venereal *treponematoses*), that is a common *sequela* of poorly-hygienic living, in hot dry environments. It was and is today rarely seen in towns. Once the Israelites had settled in Canaan, Lieber suggests that *bejel* ceased to be prevalent but chronic *psoriasis* became prevalent and the two conditions became confused. This theory is attractive but has no direct evidence to support it particularly regarding the Exodus and the wanderings. Nevertheless, Lieber has pointed out that in Leviticus Chapter 13, the diagnostic assessment of צרעת practised by the priests was based, principally, upon visible skin signs and these allowed for a differentiation into what Lieber has called ‘unclean’ and ‘clean’ cases inasmuch as they do, or do not, require the full treatment with isolation etc. She supposes that the ‘unclean’ cases may have been *bejel* whilst those designated ‘clean’ were probably chronic *psoriasis* or something

¹⁰⁸ And much more contagious than Hansen’s disease with similar signs, such as: depigmentation, ulceration, scaliness, deformity of the face and nose — *gangosa* — but not *facies leonina*. Also unlike leprosy this disease exhibits periods of latency and has a remitting course

related.¹⁰⁹ Lieber suggests that, by deliberately collecting these conditions together as צרעת, they were all subjected to a process of triage which reduced the possibility of both false negatives and false positives.¹¹⁰ If this is correct, it suggests that the priests were operating a public-sacramental-health policy designed to protect their sanctuary at least if not the community as a whole.

THE LEVITICUS RABBAH & צרעת

While one must be cautious of extrapolation from one period and one worldview to another, the Leviticus Rabbah (LR) offers an irresistible opportunity to enlarge the lamentably meagre understanding of the word צרעת. This step may be partially justified by the fact that Leviticus Rabbah is quite specifically a rabbinic attempt to explain Biblical levitical material. Admittedly the attraction of the LR material is that it fits in somewhat with the Hellenic → Medieval ‘medical’ *theory of humours*. Of course it is therefore open to the criticism of invoking *hyperdiagnosis* and *anachronism* and at best we are allowed to conclude that LR is nothing more than a late interpretation brought about by progress. This is probably so, but it nevertheless highlights an interesting point. In Chapter 9 under the heading *Context Logometrics* it is suggested that statistical analysis of the biblical usage of the word צרעת suggests that even if its meaning is completely lost to us, the writer(s) of Leviticus had a clear and specific understanding of its meaning. By rabbinic times it is possible that Hellenic and other influences had affected the

¹⁰⁹ See: Glasby, "What was Biblical Leprosy?". Ch 7.

¹¹⁰ Lieber, "Old Testament 'Leprosy', Contagion and Sin,." Pp 132-133.

interpretation given to this pathophysiological situation so that its original meaning had become enlarged or altered. In either case the possibility of retrojecting this meaning must not be overlooked.

The way in which *Leviticus Rabbah* deals with צרעת has been extensively discussed by Ostrer¹¹¹ in a paper that shows great insight and imagination. We are, however, dealing twice with a ‘sample of one’ as both LR and Ostrer’s paper stand alone and unchallenged. Uniquely, chapters 15 and 16 of LR offer some insight into what may be called, very loosely, ‘diagnosis’ though hardly in the modern sense.¹¹² For the modern leprologist, this is perhaps the most interesting passage to be found in Hebrew/Aramaic literature. Chapter 15 of the *Leviticus Rabbah* deals extensively with skin diseases: the first two verses read:

1. *When a man shall have in the skin of his flesh a rising, or a scab, or a bright spot, and it become in the skin of his flesh the plague of leprosy.*
2. *This is [alluded to in] what is written, ‘He appointeth a weight for the wind, and meteth out the waters by measure’.*

(Leviticus Rabbah 15:1 – 2)

The quotation is from the Book of Job, (Job 28 25):

לעשות לרוח משקל ומים תכן במדה

To make a weight for the wind; yea, he meteth out the waters by measure.

The Rabbinical view of disease-processes in general appears to have been akin to that of the Hippocratic School of Medicine and was based upon the notion of a

¹¹¹ B. S. Ostrer, "Leprosy: Medical Views of Leviticus Rabba," *ES&M* 7, no. 2 (2002): 138-54.

¹¹² Hulse, "Nature of Biblical leprosy and the use of alternative medical terms in modern translations of the Bible."

maintained but dynamic equilibrium between certain bodily components.¹¹³ Two such quantities-in-equilibrium were wind רוח and water מים, which were natural phenomena ‘measured out’, i.e. dispensed, for humans by God. In the body it is necessary to postulate the materialization of the רוח (wind/spirit) into a physical form. Water (מים) was supposed to constitute 50% of the body’s total make-up while the remaining 50% was made up apparently, by blood, (דם).¹¹⁴ It is interesting to speculate how the ancients reconciled this duality of liquids with what they could have observed in *post mortem* examination of bodies.¹¹⁵ It was essential that this 50:50 equilibrium was maintained for the good health of both body and soul and the means by which the equilibrium was maintained intact was meritorious behaviour and the avoidance of sin. When the equilibrium was upset in the direction of an excess of water, dropsy¹¹⁶ occurred and when there was an excess of blood, צרעת was the result. This is quite explicitly stated in the final *derashah* of 15:2:

אדם היה משוקל חציו מים וחציו דם בשעה שהוא זוכה לא המים רבין על הדם ולא
הדם רבין על המים ובזמן שחוטא פעמים שהמים רבין על הדם ונעשה אדרפיקוס
ופעמים שהדם רבין על המים ונעשה מצורע הה"ד אדם או דם

Man is evenly balanced, half of him is water, and the other half is blood. When he is deserving, the water does not exceed the blood, nor does the blood exceed the water; but when he sins, it sometimes happens that the water gains over the blood and he then becomes a sufferer from dropsy; at other times the blood gains over the water and he then becomes leprous. This is [indicated by] what is written, ADAM [i.e. A MAN.] read as if O dam.¹¹⁷ ' Or [if it be] blood [that exceeds].

¹¹³ A view that persisted generally for a very long time and which, in certain instances still holds today.

¹¹⁴ Ostrer points out that we have to accept that the terms ‘blood’, ‘heat’, and ‘spirit’ are synonymous. Ostrer, "Leprosy: Medical Views of Leviticus Rabba." pg 153.

¹¹⁵ It is possible that levitical laws relating to corpses meant that such examinations were rare or even non-existent.

¹¹⁶ ὑδρωπικος in Hippocratic medicine. Hippocrates et al., *Hippocrates*.

¹¹⁷ Not the vocative! In Hebrew אֹר means ‘or’.

Menstruation¹¹⁸, though apparently not a pathological genital discharge, was viewed similarly, as an upset of the water/blood equilibrium, and the conception¹¹⁹ of a child by a mother whilst in such a ritually impure state was supposed to result in the [still]birth of a child afflicted with צרעת. As stillborn children were thought to have a scaly appearance, this provided a convenient pathological explanation and a means of apportioning blame. As Job contemplates his dermatological afflictions he asks why he was not stillborn¹²⁰.

או כנפל טמון לא אהיה כעללים לא־ראו אור

Or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants which never saw light.

(Job 3:16)

The idea of a water/blood dis-equilibrium presented for the rabbis a means of explaining the spots, scabs, scales and blisters and the whitening of the hair all described (but not explained), in Leviticus Chapter 13, as symptomatic of צרעת. An excess of blood over water in the body (*plethora*) occurs as a result of some aspect of sin or impure living. The plethora causes such a degree of engorgement that the boundaries of the body become fractured and large quantities of blood pour forth.¹²¹ The result is a generalized *anaemia* that causes the hair to turn white and all of the the various dermatological lesions to develop.¹²² While this sequence of events makes no pathological sense today, one can see how such an explanation might have satisfied curiosity at the time, and indeed such an explanation would have been quite acceptable later, in Greek medicine.

¹¹⁸ See also Chapter 7 of this thesis.

¹¹⁹ Unlikely, though not impossible.

¹²⁰ Cf, μὴ φῦναι τὸν ἅπαντα νικᾷ λογόν. (Sophocles: *Oedipus at Colonus*, 1224–5).

¹²¹ However, there seem to be no accounts of serious haemorrhage associated with צרעת and we have to suppose a process perhaps akin to evaporation. These ‘boundaries’ do not appear to be defined in any anatomical sense.

¹²² Anoxic necrosis?

Ostrer,¹²³ in his study of the Leviticus Rabbah — which he describes as an *allegorical commentary* — has tried to bring a sense of *Gleichschaltung* to the idea of biblical ‘leprosy’ by drawing particularly upon material from Douglas, Milgrom and Neusner. Ostrer draws also upon Hippocratic medicine to postulate that the levitical priests were operating a rudimentary system of health awareness parallel to, but less sophisticated than, the Greek educational principle of *παιδεία*. By ‘health’, of course, in the Jewish view was still meant principally, the avoidance of impurity. For the Greek, there was a much wider purview: there was, in the Greek mentality, a notion of unity between microcosm and macrocosm: individual and universe. The Greek doctor, through *παιδεία*, was supposed to make the individual aware of the universe. Ostrer believes that, with a different concept of universe and *mutatis mutandis*, this was also the duty of the levitical priest. To the Israelite, this notion stretched no further than the society to which he belonged. Douglas¹²⁴ has suggested that there was a clear correspondence in the mind of individuals between the social macrocosm and the individual microcosm and that any situation in which their boundaries were transgressed, either legitimately or otherwise, represented a potential or real violation of the purity of both individual and society (אָרֶץ). Therefore, the rules that govern what enters or leaves the body, become a reflection of the rules for society as a whole.¹²⁵ Violation of one set of boundaries, *ipso facto*, entails a violation of the other set. One can see that, since the number of individuals and the variation among them is very large compared with only a single limited

¹²³ Ostrer, "Leprosy: Medical Views of Leviticus Rabba."

¹²⁴ Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of concepts of Pollution and Taboo*; T. M. Lemos, "The universal and the particular: Mary Douglas and the politics of impurity," *J.Rel* 89, no. 2 (2009): 236-51.

¹²⁵ Cf. رمضان (*Ramaḍān*), in Islam

society, the probability of violation beginning with the individual and diffusing to society as a whole, is significantly greater than the reverse.

However fanciful all this might appear today, we must be grateful to the Rabbis for this insight into their thought-processes. They may have been uncomfortable with *צרעת* in purely levitical terms and so were attempting to find a [quasi]-rational explanation for what was overwhelmingly seen as an act of God. Alternatively they were conscious of a need to upgrade their thoughts in the light of Greek medicine and its *theory of humours*. They probably were not wholly unaware of the fact that there might be some organic basis for *צרעת* and, in a different worldview from the levitical priests saw no reason not to develop this idea. Nevertheless, disease as divine punishment, remained the order of the day.

צרעת — IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

For purposes of comparison this important later source is also helpful. Feder has reviewed the case for *צרעת* on the basis of a study of *4QMMT*.¹²⁶ His thesis is that in the late Tannaitic and early Amoraic periods there was, among the rabbis, a change of attitude regarding *צרעת*. Feder's wider aim which uses *צרעת* as a paradigm, is to understand how the process of *halakah* — by which he means the conversion of legalistic text into practice — was brought to bear in the matter of purity/impurity in a non-priestly milieu. Feder suggests that by the time of *4QMMT*, rabbinical attitudes towards *צרעת* had softened considerably from the levitical position and the

¹²⁶ Y Feder, "The polemic regarding skin diseases in 4QMMT," *DSD* 19 (2012): 55-70. 4QMMT is sometimes called the '*Halachic Letter*' and is supposed by some to have been directed to the priests in Jerusalem. Another view is that it was a letter written by Qumran's '*Teacher of Righteousness*' and/or his followers, to his rival, the '*Wicked Priest*'.

treatment by the priesthood of the individual afflicted with this condition had changed from that demanded in Leviticus 13:46 and 14:8. In particular, the rules had changed regarding his dwelling outside his tent. Two seminal texts from the Hebrew Bible are:

כל־ימי אשר הנגע בו יטמא טמא הוא בדד ישב מחוץ למחנה מושבו

All the days wherein the plague is in him he shall be unclean; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his dwelling be.

(Leviticus 13:46)

וכבס המטהר את־בגדיו וגלח את־כל־שערו ורחץ במים וטהר ואחר יבוא אל־
המחנה וישב מחוץ לאהלו שבעת ימים

And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and bathe himself in water, and he shall be clean: and after that he shall come into the camp, but shall dwell outside his tent seven days.

(Leviticus 14:8)

The new stricture, imposed by the rabbis, was that the *dermopath*¹²⁷, although he could return to his tent, should abstain from sexual intercourse during the period of his purification.

This exegesis, Feder suggests, is the result of interpreting a passage from the *Sifra* covering similar topics¹²⁸ along with Feder bases his idea upon Deuteronomy 5:30,

לך אמר להם שובו לכם לאהליכם

Go say to them, Return ye to your tents.

(Deuteronomy 5:30)

And he extends this by means of a text from the *Sifra*¹²⁹

¹²⁷ It is almost impossible to find an appropriate word in English. To use *leper* or even 'leper' (cf Feder) would seem counterintuitive to the spirit of this study. The word **צִרְעָת** in participial form is too general as it would include inanimate objects besides humans. The rather unattractive word *dermopath* at least is correctly derived and implies a human sufferer from a skin disease and fits in with other modern neologisms such as *arteriopath* and *sociopath*.

¹²⁸ The *Sifra*, (Aramaic: ספרא), is an *halakic midrash* devoted specifically to Leviticus. It was traditionally studied after the *Mishnah*. Its original authorship is uncertain but its redaction into the version studied by rabbis along with the *Mishnah* and widely quoted in the *Talmud*, is attributed to Rabbi Hiyya (c. 180-230 BCE).

וישב מחוץ לאהלו ישב מחוץ לאוהלו. יהא כמנודה ויהא אסור בתשמיש המיטה.
אהלו אין אהלו אלא אשתו שנ' שובו לכם לאהליכם.

'...and he shall dwell outside his tent' — He shall dwell outside his tent, (meaning) he shall be like an ostracized person and be forbidden in sexual relations. 'his tent' — there is no other tent besides his wife, as it is said: 'Go back to your tents'.

Feder's contention is that the rabbis saw 'tent' (or 'house') as a metaphor for 'wife' and so by extension for sexual intercourse. There is some small literary precedent for this, for example, we find in relation to Noah's drunken episode (Genesis 9:21):

וישת מן־היין וישכר ויתגל בתוך אהלה

...and he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.

Although it may not be obvious in the text of the Hebrew Bible, in the Genesis Rabbah 36:4,¹³⁰ the following explanation is proffered:

בתוך אהלו אהלה כתיב בתוך אהלה של אשתו

'...within his tent (ahaloh): this is written ahalah, (her tent), viz. his wife's tent....'

The author of the *Genesis Rabbah* is suggesting that Noah, through his drunkenness and in contradistinction to the canonical tale, failed in his sexual advances towards his wife.

The word 'house' is also found as a metaphor for 'wife' in the *Talmud*, although not necessarily in a sexual context. For example, in relation to the rules for *Yom Kippur*, (*Mas Yoma 2a:1*) we find the phrase:

שנאמר וכפר בעדו ובעד ביתו ביתו זו אשתו

...it is written, 'and he shall make atonement for himself and for his house.' 'His house' that means 'his wife'.¹³¹

¹²⁹ MSS Vatican 66.

¹³⁰ Soncino, *The Soncino Classics Collection — Judaic Texts; Talmud, Mishnah, Midrash Rabbah and Zohar in Hebrew, Aramaic and English.*

¹³¹ *Ibid*, there is nothing in the ensuing *Gemara* to explain this usage, so we may suppose it was a common metaphor.

Words such as ‘house’ or ‘tent’ are, therefore attested as being used metaphorically for ‘wife’ in both a sexual and a domestic context. If one accepts this idea, the *dermopath* did not, literally, have to dwell outside his tent but merely refrain from coition. However, it seems particularly curious that there is no parallel passage relating to those afflicted with any of the genital effluxions mentioned in Leviticus Chapter 15. These individuals, and especially those with venereal associations, would be expected today to be at the top of any list of coital prohibitions. Of course the canonical *Sifra* and the *Mishnah* and *Talmud* were written after the Qumran community ended in 68 CE. Nevertheless, we may suppose that halakic principles therein might well have been handed down to the rabbis, perhaps from their pharisaic forebears in Jerusalem who were extant during the period of the Qumran community. Feder makes an assumption along these lines and supposes that the passage in *4QMMT* (below) was a specific polemic from the Qumran community, challenging this ‘plunge into leniency’ on the part of the Jerusalem Pharisees, who were later to become rabbis. The passage he cites is:

4. ...And also concerning lepers: we
5. s[ay that] they should [not] enter (a place) with hol[y] purity, but in isolation
6. [they shall stay outside a house. And] also it is written that ^{from} the moment he shaves and washes he should stay outside
7. [his tent for seven d]ays. But now, even when they are still unclean
8. [lepers approach (a place) wi]th holy purity, to the house. And you know
9. [] and it is taken away from him, must bring it
10. [a sin-offering. And concerning him who acts offensively it is wri]tten that he is a slanderer and a blasp[he]mer.
11. [And also: when they have the uncleanness of leprosy] they should not eat any of the ho[l]y things

(4Q396 (4QMMT-c) III:4—11)

This instruction, Feder argues, is unequivocal in its adherence to the message of Leviticus 13:46 and 14:8 (above), which it reaffirms as the view which should be that of those belonging to the Qumran community. The rabbis, with their mollifying

approach are, therefore, taking inappropriate and unjustified liberties with biblical exegesis. Feder's argument is strengthened by the observation that elsewhere, there can be found no evidence of a requirement placed upon any sort of ostracized individual (מנודה) to abandon his home. More likely, he might be expected to take refuge there and remain therein in either isolation/quarantine or banishment. In the absence of such an instruction, the equation of 'tent' or 'house' with 'wife' seems both feasible and likely. The undoubted notion of the Hebrew Bible where, in levitical priestly dogma, a dermopath, at any time, could cause *defilement by habitation* appears to have been revised by rabbinical times where it became limited to the pre-purificatory period (מוחלט), before the cleansing protocol formulated in Leviticus 14:8. Some uncertainty has, however, been mooted about this idea on the basis of a passage from the *Mishnah*. After the shaving and washing, Leviticus (14:8), demands that 'he shall come into the camp, but shall dwell outside his tent seven days.' In contrast the *Mishnah* (*Mas Nega'im 14:2*), has the following to say:

טהור מלטמא בביאה והרי הוא מטמא כשרץ נכנס לפנים מן החומה מנודה מביתו
שבעת ימים ואסור בתשמיש המטה

*...he is then clean so far as not to convey uncleanness by entering in, but he still conveys uncleanness like a creeping thing. He may enter within the wall, but must keep away from his **house** for seven days, and he is forbidden marital intercourse*

It is irritatingly unclear whether two different sets of instructions are combined in operation here or whether 'house' is again a metaphor for 'wife' and the words that follow are explicative and/or emphatic. Whatever the case may have been, there is clear evidence that the strictures imposed upon the dermopath by levitical law, in particular those relating to defilement by habitation, were attenuated by time and the midrashic processing of the rabbis. Moreover in addition, the rabbis decreed that

there was a hierarchy of ‘camps’ inasmuch as walled cities were considered to be more holy, (and therefore more defilable), than less permanent encampments or settlements.

עירות המוקפות חומה מקודשות ממנה. שמשלחין מתוכן את המצורעים. ומסבין לתוכן מת עד שירצו. יצא. אין מחזירין אותו

...cities that are walled are holier, for lepers must be sent out of them and a corpse, though it may be carried about within them as long as it is desired, may not be brought back once it has been taken out

(Mishnah, Kelim 1:7)

This rather goes against Feder’s argument for the metaphorical usage of ‘camp/tent/house’ to mean wife. By Second-Temple times, it must be supposed that, because Yahweh occupied the Temple and the priests and levites occupied the Temple Mount that was walled, this, they felt, created for themselves a precinct that demanded a higher standard of attention where prevention of contagion was concerned.

From a medical point of view, all of this is very interesting because it appears to show a greater concern, on the part of written *halakah*, for the risk of contagion for the community above that for the individual. The act of sexual intercourse today would be seen as undoubtedly putting the individual more at risk of acquiring a contagious disease — venereal or non-venereal and not merely a skin disease — than would the sharing of commodities and commonalities of existence under the same roof. Were the rabbis then, themselves having no modern idea of infection or contagion, simply more concerned for the health of the community than for that of the individual? This seems likely if we accept a hierarchy — inherited from the priestly worldview — in the purity laws from individual to community to land.¹³²

¹³² See Chapter 3.

This is well summed-up in two verses from Numbers (5:2–3) which bear the fullest quoting here:

צו את־בני ישראל וישלחו מן־המחנה כל־צרוע וכל־זב וכל טמא לנפש

Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is unclean by the dead:

מזכר עד־נקבה תשלחו אל־מחוץ למחנה תשלחום ולא יטמאו את־מחניהם אשר
אני שכן בתוכם

both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camp, in the midst whereof I dwell.

Two important points are made here. First, there is a triad of states that demands the ostracizing of the individual from the camp. These are, in what appears to be a descending order of seriousness, skin disease, צרעת, a genital discharge זב, or defilement by touching a dead body. The second point is that Yahweh dwells in the land, within the [walled] camp even, and so any defilement puts this arrangement at risk. The loss of Yahweh's presence was, in the eyes of the ancient Israelites and especially their priests, the ultimate catastrophe for a land bereft of Yahweh would be bereft of his covenant and the inhabitants would lose their status as a chosen people.

SUMMARY

One of the most disappointing and indeed irritating problems associated with any attempt to understand צרעת is the complete absence in the Hebrew Bible of any evidence to suggest incidence or prevalence. Admittedly a great deal of text-space was given to צרעת both in the Hebrew Bible and especially in later Jewish literature but never is there an indication of how often any given priest might encounter a case.

In considering any form of pathology the first things one wants to know are who is at risk, what is the geographical extent of the disease and how many cases might one expect to see? We have no idea how often the priests were called upon to use their diagnostic skills and so we cannot know whether צרעת was something they encountered daily or only infrequently, in isolated cases or in ‘clumps’..

In addition it is impossible from the textual evidence to decide if the priests used their skills in a truly differential way to arrive at a specific diagnosis or whether they were content simply to accept the presence of platydysmorphism as pathognomonic of defilement without needing to know anything about its specific nature. It appears that only establishment of the presence of צרעת was necessary for them to institute appropriate ritual measures.

What can we conclude from this medical exegesis of Leviticus 13? The evidence available in this chapter although highly descriptive, allows us no more than to arrive at the proposition that צרעת is a *portmanteaulogism*¹³³ used to describe a congeries of conditions that, collectively, exhibit [roughly] those symptoms exemplified by [another portmanteau word], *platydysmorphism*. By its very nature, this is usefully, non-specific, widely inclusive, and appropriate to what [little] we know of צרעת under the ancient priestly worldview: but it cannot be translocated to a modern, medical environment.

What then are we entitled to say about צרעת/λέπρα?

1. *It is a visible disfigurement of a surface upon which it may spread — platydysmorphism.*

¹³³ Or, *portmanteau word*, O.E.D → Applied attributively to a general description or category, or to a word or expression which has a general or generalized meaning. Originally applied by “Lewis Carroll” to a factitious word made up of the blended sounds of two distinct words and combining the meanings of both’.

2. *It exhibits a range of symptoms which are not consistent with any modern, recognizable disease.*
3. *Whiteness may be a feature in human cases*

This strongly suggests that the Israelite perception of צרעת was of a very non-specific thing that, serving as a general determinant of טמא, was more important to Hebrew priestly thoughts and deeds directed at the establishment and preservation of sacramental ritual than was any consideration of its medical/pathological nature. We must energetically no longer try to think of צרעת as a disease, rather it should be seen as a spectrum — perhaps of *affections* rather than *afflictions* — all of which contribute to the ritual impurity of the individual. We may profitably employ the terms *dermopath*¹³⁴ and *platydysmorphism*¹³⁵ to describe the condition in a highly appropriate but entirely non-specific way.

The word itself will be discussed further in Chapter 9 and its theological implications in Chapter 10 of the present thesis.

Chapter 14 of the Book of Leviticus deals at length with the sacrificial duties of both priest and מצרע. It has nothing significant to add to the present investigation.

Chapter 15, contains a detailed consideration of another ‘medical’ condition that came within the province of the priesthood. This is זוב, a term used to describe a number of physiological and pathological genital effluxions whose presence conferred varying degrees of impurity upon the sufferer. It is proposed to discuss this in the following chapter.

¹³⁴ But only where human *skin* is involved

¹³⁵ Wherever any sort of *surface* is involved

CHAPTER 6 — זִב, GENITAL EFFLUXION

A MEDICAL EXEGESIS OF LEVITICUS CHAPTER 15

CHAPTER 15 of the Book of Leviticus is concerned with the second supposedly medical reason for being *טמט/ἀκάθαρτός*, namely, genital discharge. It is part of the P material in Leviticus and, if we subscribe to the views of Milgrom, Knohl *et al.*,¹ this dates it before the H material of Chapters 17 to 26.² The above authors cite the absence of any mention of the *sojourner* or *resident alien* (גר) as being indicative of an origin earlier than H. Because of this, it is reasonable to suppose that the chapter was written for, and concerns only Israelites and that non-Israelites were either thought not to be susceptible to the impurity conferred by these discharges, or were not considered worthy of and/or appropriate for consideration. It is not strictly accurate to refer to these conditions collectively as pathological because effluxes such as menstruation and involuntary seminal emissions are known today to be physiological. Clearly, this fact was not appreciated in the ANE. Modern commentaries such as those of Milgrom,³ are sedulous in differentiating *pathological* from *physiological* or ‘abnormal’ from ‘normal’ discharges. However, neither the Hebrew Bible (HB), nor the Septuagint, (LXX), makes any such distinction which, therefore, rests entirely upon modern medical knowledge. The essential point about genital discharges collectively, is that they all were seen to confer impurity (טמט)

¹ Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*; Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Continental Commentary*. Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*.

² See Appendix 3

³ Milgrom *Op cit*

and that this impurity was *contagious* and transferable to other individuals both venereally and by non-venereal practices, such as spitting.

It is important to note also that it is only a *genital* discharge (בז/רָטוּסִיס) that qualifies for אַטְמָט/ἀκάθαρτός in the Hebrew Bible and later Jewish religious writings and for the scrupulous attention of the priesthood. This puts it alongside that other pathological cause of impurity, צַרְעָת/λέπρα. Surprisingly, other bodily discharges that today would undoubtedly be regarded as unpleasant, if not defiling, are not considered. One might imagine a variety of unpleasant effluxions or suppurations, both visible and invisible, such as perianal abscess, Bartholin's cyst, haemorrhoidal bleeding, abnormal salivation, dental infections, urinary and faecal incontinence, to be considered as leading to impurity but, (in contrast to those lesions defined in Chapter 15 and צַרְעָת), they are not. The physiological processes of micturition and defaecation and their products are nowhere mentioned in either the Hebrew Bible or the Septuagint as being connected with impurity.⁴ It appears to be the association of the discharge specifically with the *genitalia* — when and where these are seen as behaving specifically as *organs of generation* but not when operating in their excretory/defaecatory capacity — that defines these discharges as causing impurity. So, (despite this medical illogicality, at least in present-day terms), this moves them from the sphere of medicine into the priestly worldview of ritual purity and impurity. In searching for a reason as to why this very specific association should obtain, there appear to be two possibilities. It seems likely that the ancients were fearful that any progeny conceived when either parent was in a state of בז/רָטוּסִיס and therefore

⁴ It was not to say, however, that these were not considered unattractive. For example cf Ezekiel 4:12; and 2 Kings 18:27.

אָמֵט/ἀκάθαρτος, would, in some way, be irretrievably damaged, perhaps even permanently damned, by an irreversible form of both spiritual and physical defilement. In the priestly worldview, such an individual would challenge the maintenance of the cosmic order. In support of this view, Milgrom⁵ has noted that the very clear bipartite structure of Chapter 15 of Leviticus has, at its centre, a single verse (18) prohibiting sexual intercourse — or more precisely, intercourse at which internal ejaculation takes place — in the presence of any of the specified forms of זִוּב/ῥύσις. He believes this declaration of *caveat* to be pivotal for this chapter and the *raison d'être* for the participant's becoming אָמֵט/ἀκάθαρτος in this way. Surprisingly however, the consequences of this activity — considered more fully below — are only those expected of *minor impurities*,⁶ namely bathing and remaining unclean until sunset.

וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב אִישׁ אִתָּהּ שִׁכְבַּת־זֵרַע וּרְחִצּוּ בַמַּיִם וְטִמְאוּ עַד־הָעֶרֶב

The woman also with whom a man shall lie with seed of copulation, they shall both bathe themselves in water, and be unclean until the even.

(Leviticus 15:18)

An alternative, though not mutually exclusive, view that contrasts significantly with modern ideas about genital discharges, requires the observer to consider them as *something lost* rather than *something gained*. Today, we talk of getting/picking-up, for example, a ‘dose’ of gonorrhoea, and so see the condition as something we have gained by incautiousness, poor hygiene or even sinfulness. Such an approach could not possibly apply to the physiological discharges and it is important to note that the levitical viewpoint never suggests this. The only way in which levitical impurity can

⁵ Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Pg 905

⁶ See Chapter 4

be reconciled with both physiological and pathological discharges as described in Chapter 15, is if we consider *all* of these forms of genital discharge to represent *something lost*. The ‘something’ is, of course, the *seed of generation* i.e. semen, which is seen as the potential *life force*. In support of this idea we have already noted that no watery discharges nor urine itself ever incur impurity. It is always the loss of this easily identifiable life-giving body-fluid that results in impurity.⁷ There is a further implication that, not only are life-giving body-fluid(s) lost from the body when genital discharges occur, but they are also destroyed in the course of the effluxion/ejaculation. Whether the emission is intentional or not, the destruction appears to be an ineluctable consequence, and in every case it is defiling. In the story of Onan and Tamar, (Genesis 38:9), most English translations (and also the LXX), speak of Onan’s merely ‘spilling his seed’ upon the ground, (ἐξέχεεν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν). The Hebrew Bible uses the *pi’el* form of the verb תחש that quite specifically means ‘spoil’ or ‘ruin’ and it has been suggested that this is to emphasize that the life-giving potential of his seed has been ruined utterly. However, the verb √תחש has no recorded *Qal* form and is normally found in the *niph’al* (תחשׁוּ) with the sense of ‘be destroyed’.⁸ The *pi’el* (תחשׁ) may, therefore, simply operate as the normal active voice. Nevertheless, as Joüon and Muraoka have pointed out, the meaning of the *pi’el* is still something of a mystery and almost certainly has a more complex role to play than being merely emphatic.⁹ Perhaps in this case it is being used in a *factive* sense where one might more usually expect the *hiph’il*. The implication is,

⁷ A parallel idea but in a different context, would be loss of blood.

⁸ Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*.

⁹ Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*. §52 a & d.

nevertheless, considerably more than Onan's simply missing the target; it is the intentional destruction of his semen not only as a contraceptive measure, as we may assume —from the Masoretic vocalization — that *נָתַן-זֶרַע לְאָחָיו* implies, but also to avoid the totality of the responsibilities that would be conferred by an unwanted levirate marriage. It thus amounted to a crime for which the punishment of death would be fitting, or at least not unreasonable, in the climate of legalistic thought entailed by the priestly worldview and levitical ideology.

STRUCTURE OF LEVITICUS CHAPTER 15

The structure of Chapter 13 in the Book of Leviticus is as follows:

- *Pathological male (♂) discharges, (vv 2 – 15)*
- *Physiological male (♂) discharges, (vv 16 – 17)*
- *Verse 18*
- *Physiological female (♀) discharges, (vv 19 – 24)*
- *Pathological female (♀) discharges, (vv 25 – 30)*

There is a clear symmetry around verse 18 which perhaps supports Milgrom's view. Given the relatively large portion of the Book of Leviticus, and of the Torah in general, that is concerned with *צִרְעָת*/*λέπρα* and with *זִב*/*ρύσις*, one might think, *prima facie*, these matters shared a wide prevalence and considerable importance in the ANE. However, nowhere is there any indication as to the incidence or prevalence of these conditions and we are left to make rather ill-informed guesses as to the magnitude of these variables. This does not go unnoticed either in the many highly speculative accounts of what these conditions might have been, or in critical responses to such accounts.¹⁰ We cannot legitimately conclude that the large amount of space given over to them in the Torah was in any way a reflection of their being commonplace — they may have been rare — but nevertheless because of their

¹⁰ See the preceding chapter for similar thoughts about *צִרְעָת*

inherent nastiness and their potential for contagion, they were considered important and fearsome enough to warrant a substantial degree of consideration in the ritual prescriptions and proscriptions issuing from the priesthood. Likewise, although it is perfectly clear, *what* they were, we are not told anything about the incidence of physiological seminal emissions and little distinction is made as to whether these were voluntary (masturbation, *coitus interruptus*), or involuntary.¹¹ Neither should we use present day *mores* or criteria to presume that menstruation was thought of as it is today; and, even more importantly, nor should we imagine it to have been as common as it is today.¹² The Israelite wife spent a much greater proportion of her reproductive life than is common today, in either pregnancy or lactation, (Hosea 1:8). Normal menstruation, which is suppressed by these conditions, would not, therefore, have been seen as the regular monthly event expected by most women today.¹³

It is the question of genital *infections* that causes the greatest controversy. What these may have been is a matter of considerable dispute.

However, we can draw some conclusions about the various forms of genital effluxion that are the subject of this chapter but are left, nevertheless, with some uncertainties that will be considered below in relation to their occurring in specific verses.

¹¹ It would probably be just as difficult today to obtain meaningful statistics about the incidence of these conditions and the practices relating to them.

¹² The Islamic view of menstruation was also that it conferred impurity. Tawil, *An Akkadian Lexical Companion for Biblical Hebrew*. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an (text and translation)* (Birmingham: IPCI: Islamic Vision, 1999). 2:222

¹³ It is highly unlikely that the ancients had any idea of the physiological significance of menstruation. They almost certainly saw it at least as semi-pathological. Moreover, puberty would have been later and overall life-expectancy shorter then. Goodman has suggested that the Israelites eschewed any form of contraception and also the practises of abortion and infanticide that were common at the time among other Mediterranean communities. Geller, *Ancient Babylonian Medicine: Theory and Practice*. Pg 61.

For the moment we may suppose:

- *Pathological (♂) discharges: infections — see discussion below*
- *Physiological (♂) discharges: voluntary or involuntary emissions of semen*
- *Physiological (♀) discharges: menstruation, (post partum lochia)*
- *Pathological (♀) discharges: infections + menorrhagia /metrorrhagia.*¹⁴

It has been suggested by Milgrom that, with the exception of the final three somewhat homiletical verses, Chapter 15 was written by a single author.¹⁵ He bases this conclusion on observations of style, syntax and vocabulary and particularly upon the way in which the second half of the chapter is wholly dependent on the first half and that both pivot around the all-important verse 18. If this is correct, we at least can assume that we have a unified view about the nature of the various types of discharge as well as their place in early Israelite society.

On the larger scale of the Book of Leviticus, Milgrom sees an interesting structure in the block of chapters 12 to 15. This is based upon their specifying a descending order for the times taken for purification after the acquisition of טמא/ἀκάθαρτος.

- *Chapter 12 — Post-parturient — ♂ child — 40 days; ♀ child 80 days.*
- *Chapter 13 & 14 — צרעת/λέπρα ♂ or ♀ — 8 days + 4 sacrifices + anointing.*
- *Chapter 15— Genital discharges*
 - *Pathological discharge ♂ or ♀— 8 days + 2 sacrifices*
 - *Menstruation — 7 days*
 - *Seminal emission — 1 day*

The individual verses of Chapter 15 may now be considered using the same format — medical exegesis — as in the preceding chapter.

¹⁴ *Menorrhagia* = prolonged or excessive menstruation; *metrorrhagia* = abnormal uterine bleeding. The distinction is one of time as well as pathology: the former being a cyclical phenomenon and the latter being random.

¹⁵ Milgrom *Op cit*, Vol 1, pg 905

A MEDICAL EXEGESIS OF LEVITICUS CHAPTER 15

15:1 – 2: pathological discharge in males — nature of the condition

The involvement of Aaron is in response to the need for sacrifices to be made. Because these conditions, in contrast one supposes to צרעת, are not exposed and obvious for all to see, there is a clear and vital need for the patients themselves to recognize the problem and to initiate its treatment. As mentioned above, this chapter is quite specifically aimed at Israelites. Later, and as a supposed deterrent to sodomy, the Rabbis decreed that all non-Israelite males above the age of nine years should also be included.

Several important facts about the nature of the discharges can be gleaned from the grammar employed in these verses. The use of the imperfect tense of the verb ‘to be’ plus a participle, forms a compound tense indicating the continuing nature of the discharge — יִהְיֶה זָב — we are, therefore, dealing here with *chronic* conditions that may be expected to persist into the future. We are introduced here also to the term describing male and female sufferers, זָבָה/זָב literally ‘one discharging’ from the Hebrew זָב¹⁶ and the Akkadian cognate *zābu* (𒍪𒍪𒍪𒍪𒍪), meaning ‘ooze’.^{17,18,19,20}

In verse 2 we are asked to accept the usage of בָּשָׂר, normally translated as skin/flesh/meat/body, as being here a euphemism for genitals. The KJV and ERV nevertheless persist in translating this word as ‘flesh’ and the RSV as ‘body’; only the NRSV says ‘member’. The evidence that has been cited for translating this

¹⁶ Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Note also Exodus 3:17, זָבַת הַלֵּב וְדָבַשׁ

¹⁷ Tawil, *An Akkadian Lexical Companion for Biblical Hebrew*. Pg 90a.

¹⁸ Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon*. Pg 390 #641

¹⁹ Soden and Meissner, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch (3 vols)*. Vol 3, pg 1501b

²⁰ H. F. Lutz, "A Contribution to the Knowledge of Assyro-Babylonian Medicine," *AmJSLL* 36, no. 1 (1919): 67-83.

word as ‘genitals/penis’ is very tenuous indeed: Genesis 17:11, Exodus 28:42, Ezekiel 23:20; and it is not supported by the LXX which uses the word *σῶμα*. Despite this lack of hard evidence, Wevers²¹ is, nevertheless, firmly of the view that ‘member/penis’ is what was intended and we must perhaps put away modern clinical thoughts about suppurating flesh and try to see this problem as it would have appeared in the Ancient World. Milgrom²² is helpful here in pointing us in the direction of the Rabbis who — agreeing for once — in elucidating the nature of the male discharges, make it quite clear whence they originate. The physiological and pathological male discharges are demarcated by the fact that the words זרע and זב, although they may occur in the same verse (Leviticus 22:4), are clearly referring to different things. Moreover, in the Talmud (*Nidah 35b*), we find the following observation:

Rabbi Huna stated: The discharge of a zab resembles the dough-water of barley. The discharge of the zab issues from dead flesh while semen issues from live flesh. The former is watery and resembles the white of a crushed egg while the latter is viscous and resembles the white of a sound egg.

We must suppose, since *post mortem* events are not under consideration, that ‘dead flesh’, is a somewhat over-dramatic euphemism for *membro flaccido* and ‘live flesh’, in contrast, refers to a state of *membro erecto*. This would cohere with the analogies chosen for the discharges. What we are dealing with, therefore, seems perfectly clear although there is nothing to identify the pathological discharge specifically except to say that it has a less viscid consistency than semen.²³

²¹ Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Leviticus*. Pg 224

²² Milgrom *Op cit*, Pg 907. Milgrom’s helpfulness is not, however, unlimited. The sheer mass of Rabbinic material on this matter and its wide variability is overwhelming.

²³ It has been said earlier that watery discharges in the sense of urine, serum, plasma etc are not relevant to what is being considered here. By ‘watery’, in the levitical context, we must suppose is meant something with a lower coefficient of viscosity than semen which, like all proteinaceous body fluids (*and* egg-white!), itself becomes less viscous with time and exposure to air.

The most immediately obvious contender for the pathological discharge is the condition that we know today as *gonorrhoea*. Older exegetes left the reader in no doubt that זִבּ *was* gonorrhoea. Later work, both theological and medical, has thrown doubt upon this conclusion and making the connection, (or not), of gonorrhoea with the pathological discharge(s) of Leviticus 15 has become central to an understanding of this chapter.

The present-day definition of gonorrhoea is that it is a sexually-transmitted infectious disease of the lining mucosa of the genito-urinary tract. It is caused by the gonococcus, *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, which was identified by Albert Neisser in 1879.²⁴ Non-venereal transmission is sometimes seen, most usually during parturition, and apart from the genito-urinary tract, the rectum, oropharynx, eyes, epididymis, Fallopian tubes and perihepatic tissues may become infected. Dissemination, to produce lesions in joints, skin, meninges and endocardium, has also been reported. The Gram-negative diplococcus, *N. gonorrhoeae*, has been described as a *fastidious bacterium* because it does not survive for long outside the body. Traditionally it has always been sensitive to the tetracycline class of antibiotics though resistant strains are beginning to appear as a result of antibiotic over/mis-use and the incidence of the disease is once again rising. The disease is most common today in heterosexual men, though both sexes can be affected and, although less common in females, the disease there is often more severe because it is harder to recognize and diagnose, especially early-on. It may consequently, persist and lead to pelvic inflammatory disease and to sterility. In the uncomplicated case, the

²⁴ G W Csonka, "Gonorrhoea," in *Oxford Textbook of Medicine* (ed. D.J. Weatherall; J.G.G. Ledingham; D.A. Warrell; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). V Bevan, "Gonorrhoea: an unlikely love affair," *Microbiologist* December (2004): 30 – 31.

presenting symptoms, after a short incubation period (range: 1 – 12 days), are dysuria and a purulent urethral discharge that may be noticed first as cloudy urine.²⁵ Milgrom²⁶ is over-generalizing, perhaps too emphatic, and certainly misleading, in his statement that ‘Scientific opinion is nearly unanimous that the only illness we know of that can be referred to here is gonorrhoea.’ He goes on to say that the identification of זוב as gonorrhoea ‘has been already made by the LXX and Josephus (Ant 3:261; Wars 5:273 and 6:426).’ If not wholly wrong, this is very confusing because of the considerable historical unclarity that surrounded this condition before Neisser’s identification of the gonococcus in 1879. The situation is somewhat parallel to that for צרעת/λέπρα and ‘leprosy’.²⁷

Milgrom does not help by going on to say that biblical gonorrhoea is not gonorrhoea as it is known today and also by using terminology which has been out-of-date since the early nineteenth century. To understand his position — unsurprisingly more that of an etymologist than a venereologist — we must bear in mind that the word *gonorrhoea* ultimately has its origins in γόνος, meaning ‘that which is begotten’ and by extension ‘seed’ as in the ‘seed of generation’. Thus, the basic etymology of gonorrhoea implies a flowing of seed and it is to this etymology, rather than to modern venereology, that Milgrom appears to be looking for an explanation of pathological זוב/ρύσις.

Milgrom,²⁸ compounds the problem by the use of undefinable archaisms. He asserts that זוב was ‘*not* Gonorrhoea virulenta’²⁹ by which he intends us to understand that

²⁵ 5 – 10 % of cases may be entirely asymptomatic and so the individual may spread the disease unwittingly. As the disease progresses the discharge becomes more purulent and viscid — not watery!

²⁶ Milgrom, *Op cit*, Pg 907.

²⁷ Glasby, "What was Biblical Leprosy?".

²⁸ *Op cit* pg 907

he means not neisserial gonorrhoea, but something else. Milgrom makes the point that *Gonorrhoea virulenta* was unknown before the fifteenth century, though this is open to question. The appellation, *Gonorrhoea virulenta* was, indeed in the past, used for severe but otherwise un-specified venereal disease, but it was abandoned in the first half of the nineteenth century, even before Neisser's discovery of the gonococcus. Its virtue was, possibly, to contrast recognizable and relatively virulent venereal infection(s) with other conditions that were more benign. However, we must remember that in 'pre-antibiotic' days, what are today considered as innocuous infections all had the potential, if left untreated, to become serious and even life-threatening.³⁰ It seems unfortunate that Milgrom should feel it necessary to resurrect out-of-date terminology to explain that זוב was probably not gonorrhoea. This could have been achieved more elegantly and with proper respect for modern bacteriological scientific-rigour by more careful attention to medical terminology that was in everyday use at the time of Milgrom's writing. Milgrom's choice of obsolete, nineteenth-century medical terms for benign venereal diseases seems entirely out of character for an author who is usually so fastidious. Nevertheless, so significant is Milgrom's exegetical work that these terms have become entrenched and the reader needs to be disabused of them.

Chief amongst these relatively benign conditions were so-called *Gonorrhoea benigna* and *Blenorrhoea urethrae*.³¹ It is all very well for Milgrom to implicate these conditions as 'possibles' for זוב but in fact today, neither of them can be

²⁹ His words! *Gonorrhoea virulenta* is unknown in modern medicine but probably the term was used in the past for neisserial gonorrhoea, but also for a range of venereal diseases. It is, therefore, unsafe to use this term as a means of identifying זוב

³⁰ It was quite possible too, that common treatments for these ailments usually involving mercury and arsenic could cause as much, if not more, morbidity and mortality than the infections themselves.

³¹ These conditions were almost certainly what was commonly diagnosed as *gleet* up until the end of the nineteenth century though it was quite likely that neisserial gonorrhoea was included in this term also. With no systematic, established, bacteriology, mis-diagnosis would have been common.

identified as a specific disease. In nineteenth century European medicine, especially in Victorian Britain, there was a somewhat sanctimonious element among doctors who held that the ‘solitary and unholy’ practice of *onania* — ‘self abuse’, or masturbation — was harmful and resulted in disease, even blindness.³² The premonitory symptoms and signs of an overindulgent practice of *onania* were apparently genital discharges of a muco-serous nature.³³ In British medical practice this early sign of *onania* became [over]frequently diagnosed and known as *spermatorrhoea*;³⁴ a word that has also been used to describe involuntary nocturnal emissions of semen and which, thereby has added, even more, to the confusion.³⁵ The term *blennorrhoea* is even more obfuscating as it has been employed very loosely indeed with different meanings at different times. The Greek word βλέννος means ‘slime’ and by extension ‘mucus’. Today blennorrhoea is a generic term meaning an excessive discharge of mucus from any source. It is most frequently used as the term *ophthalmic blennorrhoea* to describe the conjunctivitis that may be seen in cases of congenital [true] gonorrhoea, (*Ophthalmia neonatorum*). However, the term *Blennorrhoea urethrae* was used loosely in nineteenth century medicine initially to describe **any** [muco-purulent] genital discharge and, after 1879, any such discharge that was **not** neisserial gonorrhoea. We cannot, therefore, in the quest for גזז, safely use any of the terms: *Gonorrhoea*, *Spermatorrhoea*, *Gonorrhoea benigna* or *Blennorrhoea urethrae*, in the knowledge that we are describing a particular disease, past or present. The common denominator of all these is quite simply that of a mucous or muco-purulent urethral discharge and there are many causes of this.

³² There was no thought of infection here.

³³ Michael Stolberg, "Self-Pollution, Moral Reform, and the Venereal Trade: Notes on the Sources and Historical Context of Onania (1716)," JHS 9, no. 1/2 (2000): 37-61.

³⁴ Efforts to remove this word from the medical vocabulary and literature have encountered a resistance out of all proportion to the ease with which the condition itself may be eradicated.

³⁵ G G Gascoyen, "On spermatorrhoea and its treatment," 1(577), no. January 20th (1871): 67 – 69.

For once, we cannot rely on Milgrom because he does not cite any convincing or particular evidence for his assertion that true gonorrhoea, which he calls *Gonorrhoea virulenta*, was unknown before the fifteenth century and there is a considerable body of evidence to suggest that this may not be so.³⁶

Some evidence may be evinced from records of treatment for genital discharges. Nothing exists from Biblical times but if we consult the Talmud, a 'cure' for זב is described. Of course, we have no idea of whether this remedy existed in levitical times. This 'cure' does, however, show quite an advanced knowledge of herbal pharmacology and since it was applied by the Rabbis to what we may assume was the same זב as that described in levitical texts, we must conclude that it was viewed and treated with a rationale much the same as that applied to infectious diseases today.

R. Johanan: A potion of roots: the weight of a zuz of Alexandrian gum is brought, a zuz weight of liquid alum and a zuz weight of garden crocus, and they are powdered together. For a zab, two thirds thereof [mixed] with beer [is drunk], and he [the sufferer] then becomes impotent. 'For a zabah, a third thereof [mixed] with wine [is efficacious] that she shall not become barren.

(Talmud Shabbat 110)

The Rabbis, presumably by chance, hit upon what seems to be an appropriate treatment for an infectious bacterial disease. Alum, (potassium aluminium sulphate), is well known to be a mild antiseptic. In ancient times it would have been used primarily in the tanning of leather: its effect, in high doses or long-term, upon the urethral mucosa would have been similar to that in the tannery! The use of the garden crocus indicates a relatively advanced knowledge of what herbs can do. The garden crocus, (or autumn crocus), *Colchicum autumnale* is different from the

³⁶ R H Boyd, "Origin of gonorrhoea and non-specific urethritis," 31 (1955): 246 - 48.

saffron crocus not least in its being very poisonous.³⁷ This is because it contains the compound *colchicine* which is a powerful anti-mitotic agent. It is widely used today in chemotherapeutic treatment of malignant disease because of its power to inhibit cell division. In very low concentrations, it would have a similar effect on bacteria and so be effective in controlling the proliferation of bacterial colonies. Together with an antiseptic such as alum, this, in theory at least, would be a most effective (pre-antibiotic) treatment for bacterial diseases such as gonorrhoea. The Rabbis clearly recognized the potency of this mixture and that large doses in females might result in sterility. It would be fascinating to know how effective this treatment was; it is entirely probable that, side-effects apart, it would have had some beneficial effect.

We must then, look for contenders for צו besides true gonorrhoea which, despite Milgrom, we cannot entirely discount. There are two principal contenders and the evidence for both is compelling. These are *non-specific urethritis* (NSU) or, as it is more often called these days, *non-gonococcal urethritis* (NGU),³⁸ and *schistosomiasis* (or *bilharzia*). Although he does not make the point specifically, it is possible that Milgrom's *Gonorrhoea benigna* or *Blennorrhoea urethrae* might have been NGU if indeed it was a venereally transmitted disease — but we cannot be certain of this. Non-gonococcal infectious urethritis is, as its name suggests, an inflammation of the urethral mucosa caused by an [originally unspecified] organism other than *N.gonorrhoeae*.³⁹ It was originally, strictly defined as a group of conditions and a number of, bacterial, viral and parasitic agents was identified as

³⁷ It is vital not to confuse them! The saffron (spring) crocus, *Crocus sativus* (Hebrew כַּרְפָּס — see Song of Solomon 4:13 – 14) is harmless and widely used in cookery. Zohary, *Plants of the Bible*.

³⁸ Probably this was the condition classified as 'gleet' up until the mid-twentieth century. It had no aetiological connection with the *Peccatum Onanum*.

³⁹ J. Allen McCutchan, "Epidemiology of Venereal Urethritis: Comparison of Gonorrhea and Nongonococcal Urethritis," 6, no. 5 (1984): 669-88.

causing the eponymous symptomatology. However, by far the most commonly seen causative agent is *Chlamydia trachomatis* and today NGU/NSU and *chlamydial urethritis* are considered to be synonymous in all but the most exceptional circumstances. This condition is widespread and becoming more prevalent in Western society. Chlamydial urethritis is symptomatically similar to gonorrhoea though much less fulminant. It is readily treatable with antibiotics and often resolves spontaneously. Complications seen in men are proctitis, prostatitis and epididymitis. In women, proctitis, cervicitis, pelvic inflammatory disease with subsequent sterility and secondary risk of ectopic pregnancy, are encountered. Dysuria and acute or chronic pelvic pain are frequently seen. *C. trachomatis* is also an important neonatal pathogen, where it can lead to lung infections. The infecting organism may spread to the eye and cause *trachoma*: it is the single most important infectious agent associated, worldwide, with blindness, of which it is the commonest cause.⁴⁰

There is no clear evidence for the incidence or prevalence of either gonorrhoea or NGU in the Ancient Near East as neither disease leaves any archaeological trace. Nor is it possible from paleo-anthropological studies to gain any insight into the frequency of practices that might result in sexually-transmitted infections among peoples of the Ancient Near East.

On the grounds that its symptomatology *can* include the excessive secretion of mucus from the urethra, Milgrom⁴¹ has suggested *bilharzia* as a possible cause of זוב.

He appears to attribute this view to no less an authority than Kinnier-Wilson.⁴² It is unclear, however, whether he is implying that bilharzia is what he means by

⁴⁰ Affecting 41,000,000, worldwide today. The *C. trachomatis* initially affects the eyelid mucosa just as it does the urethral mucosa in NGU, causing chronic granulomatous change. It is friction from this that causes corneal erosion and blindness.

⁴¹ *Op cit* pg 907

⁴² Kinnier-Wilson, "Medicine in the Land and Times of the Old Testament."

Gonorrhoea benigna/Blenorrhoea urethrae [which he surely does not!] or that he is suggesting bilharzia *per se* as an alternative, non-venereal, cause of זזב. Milgrom refers to the condition as ‘urinary bilharzia.’ the correct generic term for the disease today is *schistosomiasis*. This condition was originally known as ‘snail fever’ and the infecting agent was first characterized by Theodor Bilharz in 1851. The complicated life cycle of the infecting and host organisms was described by Pirajá da Silva in 1908. Schistosomiasis is a parasitic disease caused by platyhelminth trematode worms of the genus *Schistosoma*. It involves two hosts, the fresh-water snail and the human.

Outside the human body the trematodes infect and develop in fresh-water snails. Having completed this stage of their life-cycle in the snail, they are released into the surrounding water where, as larval forms, *miricidia*, they may infect humans who use the water. The *miricidia* secrete enzymes that allow them to penetrate human skin and so infection is a very simple process with an incidence proportional both to the [vast] number of organisms in the water and the frequency of human usage of that water. It is, therefore, very difficult to remain free of this disease if one utilizes water populated by snails. The Nile delta⁴³ is infamous as a source of bilharzia and the disease was certainly known in ancient Egyptian times. Archaeological evidence has been found both in the form of snail shells which have been carbon-dated and more importantly, calcified schistosome ova have been found in the urinary tracts of mummies.

Once the human is infected, the schistosome parasites congregate in small veins, especially the pelvic veins around the bladder and in the bladder wall itself. Here

⁴³ But also Upper Egypt. It seems likely that the disease originated in central Africa and spread north along the Nile.

they lay eggs which are excreted as *cercariae* in the faeces or urine. If these reach water, they hatch and re-infect the snails, so beginning the cycle again.

Schistosomiasis is a chronic disease and in endemic areas re-infection follows recovery with relentless certainty. There are several species of schistosome and the symptoms and signs each produces are characteristic. *S.mansoni* and *S.haematobium* are the commonest species to infect man.⁴⁴ The former of these shows a predilection for the lower digestive tract and the latter for the genito-urinary tract. So, if זב were schistosomiasis, it would most likely have been caused by *S.haematobium*. There is, however cause for some uncertainty here. The presence of large numbers of schistosomes in the urinary bladder is known to stimulate the deposition of calcium salts so that bladder stones are formed. This is not necessarily so in all cases, but it is relatively common. Bladder stones, consequently, have been frequently observed in those mummies from Egypt that also contained *S. haematobium* ova. The effect of stones in the bladder is that they cause chronic abrasion and bleeding. Thus the cardinal sign of *S.haematobium* bilharzia is haematuria. There is no mention at all in the levitical texts of the זב being bloodstained and, given the fascination with blood shown by all ancient peoples and the Israelites and the later Rabbis in particular, it seems almost impossible that they would fail to mention this important sign. It is, therefore, very difficult to agree with Milgrom that זב was schistosomiasis: nevertheless we should keep an open mind. Adamson,⁴⁵ has reviewed the subject with great thoroughness and provided convincing evidence to support the view that schistosomiasis, besides being widely endemic in Egypt, almost certainly spread

⁴⁴ And other primates and some monkeys. Monkeys have undoubtedly been involved with the spread of the disease and monkeys kept as pets have been implicated in the spread of the disease to distant parts.

⁴⁵ P. B. Adamson, "Schistosomiasis in antiquity," *Med Hist* 20, no. 2 (1976): 176-88.

through Syria-Palestine to Mesopotamia. However, he points out that there is only circumstantial evidence for this. Hulse,⁴⁶ on the other hand, has suggested schistosomiasis as being endemic in Jericho at the time of Joshua and that the plague of the Philistines (1Samuel 6:4) was due to *S.mansoni*.⁴⁷

To summarize therefore, in trying to identify the pathology of צור when it is the result of an infection, we must consider two possibilities. If the discharges had a venereal origin, then the two principle contenders are *Neisserial gonorrhoea* [despite Milgrom] and *non-gonococcal urethritis*. We know nothing about the incidence and prevalence of these diseases in the Ancient Near East, but the symptoms and signs do appear to fit the descriptions in the texts and in the extensive Talmudic discourses.

If, however, the disease was not sexually transmitted, endemic infection by *Schistosoma haematobium*, remains a possibility. However, in contrast to the two venereal infections, while we have a good provenance for the disease's incidence and prevalence in the Ancient Near East at the appropriate time, the absence of any mention of bladder stones, or particularly of haematuria, militates very strongly against a disease of which these are the cardinal signs.

Whatever the condition, the view taken by the Rabbis was that it was entirely absent among the Hebrews when they arrived at Mount Sinai:

Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai taught: When Israel stood at mount Sinai, and said, 'All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and obey' (Exodus 24:7). There was none among them with an issue, or leprous, or lame, or blind, or dumb, or deaf, or imbecile.

(Midrash Rabbah, Leviticus 18:4)

⁴⁶ E V Hulse, "Joshua's curse and the abandonment of ancient Jericho: schistosomiasis as a possible medical explanation.," 15, no. 4 (1971): 376-86.

⁴⁷ The more usual explanation has been a *Yersinia pestis* infection such as bubonic or pneumonic plague.

15:3: זִבּ — *properties of the flow*

This verse is difficult to interpret. English translations imply that uncleanness occurs with genital discharges regardless of whether they are flowing or have flowed and dried up. If we understand בשרו ('from his flesh') to be euphemism for 'from his penis', we must ask what 'stopped' means. Clearly, it is used in apposition to 'flowing' and the implication is 'dried up'. Nevertheless, effluxions such as occur in venereal diseases are not necessarily continuous and would be expected to show a sporadic occurrence at the exterior. However, when we consult the Masoretic Text, (MT), we see that the verb הִתְחַמֵּם is used.⁴⁸ This is the *hiph'il* perfect of חָתַם meaning 'to seal' with a causative sense. This would seem to imply more than a simple drying up of the discharge; however blockage of the urethra is not a feature of any of these diseases⁴⁹ the effect of this on the urinary system, if prolonged, would lead to renal failure. The LXX⁵⁰ uses the verb στυοστυμι here and this verb is usually taken to mean 'stand together'. It may be being used here in the sense of 'cohere' or 'dry up'. The modern term for the cessation of flow in a viscus, whether physiological or pathological is of course, *stasis*. As with any secretory process the rate of discharge is inconsistent and among other things depends on the over-all state of hydration of the subject. It may be unwise, despite the MT therefore, to speak of 'blockage' and to read anything more into this verse beyond that the discharge is intermittent and its volume is variable. The important point is that the state of impurity is maintained throughout the time of these fluctuations.

⁴⁸ This is also the case in the Samaritan Pentateuch and in 11QLev.

⁴⁹ Very occasionally blockage of the urethra by *cercariae* has been reported in schistosomiasis, but this is exceptionally rare.

⁵⁰ In the LXX, Samaritan Pentateuch and 11QLev this verse is almost twice the length of the MT but this is largely due to repetition and no additional information is added.

15:4 – 10: spread of infection

The next eight verses are concerned with potential transmission of the infection. We should note, however, that nowhere is it specifically asserted that a venereal cause is to be assumed for זִבָּה. By Rabbinic times, even over-indulgence in food had been implicated though it is not clear whether this was the primary cause or the trigger of an acute attack:

Our Rabbis taught: To one afflicted with gonorrhoea one assigns food or too many kinds of food as the cause of an attack of gonorrhoea.

(Talmud Yoma 18a)

The prescription for the individual who has acquired secondary impurity in any of these ways is that he must bathe, launder his clothes and remain unclean until the evening. Anything the זִבָּה/זִבָּה may have touched,⁵¹ slept on, or sat upon, becomes unclean and anyone who touches them or touches the flesh of the זִבָּה/זִבָּה becomes similarly tainted. The same prescriptions apply to anyone unfortunate enough to have been spat upon by a זִבָּה/זִבָּה or with whom a saddle has been shared.

In verse 4 the LXX introduces the word ὁ γονορρηγῆς which Wevers⁵² describes as, ‘...a neologism to designate one suffering from γονόρροια, “spermatorrhoea” not to be confused with “gonorrhoea” an infectious sexual disease.’ This exegesis is unhelpful for the reasons discussed, at length, above. There is an interesting syntactical point to be made from the MT. The phrase כִּלְיֵה־מִשְׁכָּב is open to two alternative translations. There is a strong syntactical case to be made for כִּלְ plus the

⁵¹ Milgrom, assumes, with good reason, that the זִבָּה is likely to have touched his genitals during micturition. *Op cit* pg 911.

⁵² Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Leviticus*. Pg 226

definite article's being translated as 'any' or 'every' [bed]⁵³ and an alternative case for the simpler translation as 'all the', 'the entire' [bed]. The safe translation here might seem to be the latter: infection first spreads locally and it would seem unnecessarily pedantic to specify the general case. However the former translation, 'every bed' is that preferred by the ERV, KJV, RSV and NRSV.

Milgrom⁵⁴ derives an interesting conclusion from the use, throughout the chapter, of the imperfect tense in phrases such as, **וּכְלֵה־כָּלִי אֲשֶׁר־יֵשֵׁב עָלָיו יִטְמָא**. He believes that this choice of tense indicates that the **זֶב/זָבָה** in contrast to the sufferer from **צִרְעָת** remains at home and is not isolated from the community. This levitical leniency is in contrast to Numbers 5:2 – 4 where both 'leper' and **זֶב** are banished.⁵⁵ If this speculation is correct, it seems that **זָבָה**, was, therefore, considered to be less of a risk as a communicable disease than **צִרְעָת**. Nevertheless in Chapter 15, **זָבָה** is afforded a more logical chain of impurity in its passage to subsequent generations by whatever means of contagion. In surprising contrast, there is no mention made of whether or not impurity is passed on if, for example, a man enters a house infested with the fungous variety of **צִרְעָת**: we are not told if he remains contagious when he goes elsewhere. In addition, the use of **יִטְמָא**, the imperfect tense, is likewise supposed by

⁵³ Gesenius et al., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar: with a facsimile of the Siloam inscription by J. Euting and a table of alphabets by M. Lidzbarski*. This is the preferred translation in ERV, KJV, RSV and NRSV.

⁵⁴ Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol 1, pg 909

⁵⁵ Deuteronomy 23: 10 – 12, goes even further and banishes those having nocturnal emissions of semen.

Milgrom, to indicate the temporary nature of the impurity, (compare with טמא הוא in verse 2).⁵⁶

15:11 – 13: hygienic measures

These three verses deal with the actions the זב/זבה must take after having touched something without first having washed his hands. If he has touched another person, that person takes on the same impurity and must perform the same ritual ablution of himself and his clothing. He too shall remain unclean until the evening.

There is an interesting linguistic point to be made concerning the various verbs used in Hebrew and in Greek for ‘wash’. Three senses of ‘washing’ appear in this verse. First, there is washing of hands, then the washing of clothes and finally the bathing of the whole body. Both Hebrew and Greek have three quite specific verbs: $\eta\psi\omega/\nu\acute{\iota}\pi\tau\omega$ = to wash one’s hands; $\kappa\alpha\theta\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega/\pi\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\nu\omega$ = to wash one’s clothes; $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\omega/\λου\acute{\upsilon}\omega$ = to wash/bathe oneself; and these are all used precisely in these contexts in verse 11. This degree of attention to detail underlines the importance of these processes in the acquisition and treatment of טמא/ἀκάθαρτος.

In verse 12 we find, in surprising contradistinction to what we might imagine today, that ceramic vessels touched by a זב/זבה must be destroyed whereas wooden vessels can simply be washed. Modern considerations of hygiene would lead one to expect quite the opposite on account of the wooden vessel’s being more porous and one must suppose that the rules here were a reflection of the respective cost of manufacture and availability of these utensils.

⁵⁶ Milgrom makes the interesting point that in Islamic law, transference of impurity by objects does not exist whereas in ancient Arabia it did. *Op cit* pg 910. However, with reference to the Rabbis, he goes on to say (pg 919), that this passage provides ‘...a golden opportunity for fanciful exegesis.’

There is some uncertainty as to the water that is to be used for cleansing. The LXX is content to use the word ὕδατι (Dative case of ὕδωρ) whereas the MT is more specific with מים חיים literally = ‘living water’. This has variously been interpreted ‘fresh water’, ‘running water’, ‘spring water’.⁵⁷ It is unclear whether the water needs to be ‘fresh’ in order to effect purification or ‘running’ in order to remove potentially infectious material. It is used, similarly, on the first day of purification for sufferers of צרעת and for houses, or with fungal צרעת, (Leviticus 14: 5 – 6) and also in the purifications of those contaminated by handling human or animal corpses (Numbers 19:17). Milgrom is inconsistent here: having stated his preference for ‘spring water’ as a translation for מים חיים, he rather has his cake and eats it by suggesting that the term ‘living water’ emphasizes the contrasting symbolism of a ‘living’ or ‘life-giving’ force with impurity which, in all forms, symbolizes death.⁵⁸ As justification for this idea, he notes that in the Mishnah, the Rabbis classified water to be used in ritual cleansing baths into six grades of which מים חיים was the sixth and most efficacious.⁵⁹ It seems likely that the choice of whatever this water was arose, not out of modern principles of hygiene, but rather for its symbolizing purity.

15:14 – 15: rituals to follow quarantine

As with צרעת, the hygienic treatment of זוב must be followed by ritual purification and this is outlined in verses 14 – 15. Verse 14, once again deals specifically with the זוב sufferer. After the washing, seven days must elapse: a quarantine period

⁵⁷ See classically John 4:10 – 11; but also Jeremiah 2:13 and Leviticus 14:52.

⁵⁸ Milgrom *Op cit* pp 923 and 924. Milgrom, prefers ‘spring water’ from an artesian well and believes that the important point is that the water is not ‘stored’ water drawn from collected, static water, in a cistern.

⁵⁹ Mikva’oth 1:1 – 8

identical to that required for the individual with צרעת. The formula is very much like that dealt with in great detail in Chapter 14 of the Book of Leviticus (and elsewhere by the Rabbis) and presumably reflects time-period of creation according to the cosmic ritual requirement of the priestly worldview. On the eighth day, two turtle-doves or young pigeons must be ‘brought before the Lord’ (לפני יהוה/ἐναντι κυρίου). By this is meant that they are to be presented to the priest at the entrance to the sanctuary or tent of meeting. The priest subsequently, ‘makes atonement for the issue before the Lord’ by sacrificing the two birds, the one of them as a sin offering (πὲρὶ ἁμαρτίας/טאת), and the other as a burnt offering (עלה/δλοκαύτωμα).

15:16 – 17: *physiological discharges in males*

The text turns briefly now to physiological male discharges. In fact only one is considered, namely that of semen. It is clear that the discharge of semen during conventional sexual intercourse is not being considered in these verses; that is reserved for verse 18. Nor is it immediately obvious whether the discharge of semen leading to impurity is voluntary (*manu*)⁶⁰ or involuntary, as in a nocturnal emission (קרה-לילה, cf Deuteronomy 23:11). However, examination of the grammar suggests that both are being considered. Verse 16 says:

ואיש כִּי־תצא ממנו שכבת־זרע ורחץ במים את־כל־בשרו וטמא עד־הערב

And if any man's seed of copulation go out from him, then he shall bathe all his flesh in water, and be unclean until the even.

(Lev 15:16)

⁶⁰ The notion of masturbation in order to produce a gratuitous orgasm is nowhere considered. No explanation is ever offered as to why involuntary seminal emissions seemingly, always took place at night.

The verb תִּצַּא is *Qal* imperfect, third person feminine singular and must, therefore be intransitive and have זרע as its subject, *not* איש. If the voluntary process alone were being considered, one would expect the verb to be *hiph'il* (יִצִּיא) agreeing with איש as its subject.

There is a clear technical term for this seminal emission in Hebrew though not in Greek, where the authors of the LXX resorted to using the phrase *κοίτη σπέρματος* as a calque for the Hebrew שכבת-זרע.⁶¹ The feminine noun שכבה properly means ‘a coating’ or ‘that which is laid down’ [in a layer], often in the sense of ‘the morning dew’.⁶² However, the parent verb (שכב) simply means ‘to lie’ and it is also frequently used in the sense of ‘to copulate’. Thus, it is unclear whether the incorporation of the noun into the technical term שכבת-זרע occurs by virtue of its allusion to the sexual act or to the ‘deposited seed’. Most authors and exegetes conflate the two ideas. The KJV and ERV translate it as ‘seed of copulation’ and the RSV and NRSV as ‘emission of semen’. We cannot tell for sure, therefore, if ritual impurity was conferred by both voluntary acts: the one, the *Peccatum Onanum*, in its exact, biblical sense as a means of contraception, or the other, simple masturbation, the *Peccatum Onanum* that Victorian moralists vilified as ‘solitary and unholy’. Whatever the case, the remedial treatment is a relatively minor one, being simply the subject’s bathing himself — his clothes are not mentioned as he presumably slept naked — and remaining unclean until the evening. The same goes (verse 17) for any article contaminated by the spilt semen.

⁶¹ Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*.

⁶² See Exodus 16:13, הטל סביב למחנה

15:18: sexual intercourse

It might be thought that the transmission of semen in normal, sexual intercourse would be entirely desirable and would/should *not* result in impurity. However, verse 18 very clearly suggests otherwise.

ואשה אשר ישכב איש אתה שכבת-זרע ורחצו במים וטמאו עד-הערב

The woman also with whom a man shall lie with seed of copulation, they shall both bathe themselves in water, and be unclean until the even.

(Leviticus 15:18)

This verse contains nothing to suggest infection with זוב nor does it seem to imply *Peccatum Onanum/coitus interruptus*. The difference — that the one process begets life whilst the others ‘waste life’ — has already been discussed. However, if we consider other ancient, and some modern civilizations, it is apparent that in many cultures the act of [normal] copulation was/is always profaning and requiring to be followed by some form of ablution and/or other forms of [ritual] purification. In particular, sexual activity should not take place in or near sacred places and, in some cultures, before sacred events. Herodotus noted with characteristic snobbishness that apart from the Egyptians and Greeks, many of what he considered to be ‘more primitive’ peoples copulated in sacred places and did not wash afterwards.⁶³ However, as was not unusual, Herodotus was wrong and there is evidence besides that from Leviticus, to indicate that other civilizations in the Ancient Near East were as, if not more, scrupulous in engaging in post-coital purification.⁶⁴ This has persisted not only in Judaism but into the Hindu religion and into Islam where the process is known as ‘ghusl’ (غسل). Milgrom states that ‘...the entire ancient world

⁶³ Herodotus, *The Persian Wars; with an English translation by: Godley, A D.* Vol 2:64; pg 351.

⁶⁴ Such rules were clearly operative in ancient Sabean culture in Southern Arabia. See: J B Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (3 ed.; Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969). Page 665.

is unanimous in its concern for cultic purity... . . . in all cultures sexual intercourse disqualifies a person from participating in the cult... . . .and the same rite, bathing, is prescribed for purification from sexual impurity.⁶⁵ This does not, however, explain the seemingly paradoxical situation of why ‘normal’ sexual intercourse — with the implicit intention of procreation — should be so widely regarded as defiling: for procreation is, after all, a supposedly desirable process — even God’s will — to be encouraged enthusiastically, within the legal and religious framework of marriage and society in virtually every religion. The mechanism of its achievement logically would be expected not to cause defilement. Milgrom⁶⁶ turns to Maimonides⁶⁷ for an explanation and this, which although of a much later date, appears to be based in Exodus 21:10:

אם־אחרת יקח־לוֹ שארה כסותה וענתה לא יגרע

If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish.

The critical word is ענה (ὀμιλία) defined as ‘cohabitation’ and, by extension, ‘conjugal rights’. It is a husband’s legal and moral obligation, upon marriage, to supply this and other commodities.⁶⁸ Such an obligation persists, even if the wife is too young to bear children, barren, pregnant or post-menopausal. And, according to Maimonides, (*Mishneh Torah, Issurei Biyah 21:Halacha 9*) and at considerable variance with present-day attitudes to the rights of individuals:

A man's wife is permitted to him. Therefore a man may do whatever he desires with his wife. He may engage in relations whenever he desires, kiss any organ he desires, engage in vaginal or anal intercourse or

⁶⁵ Milgrom *Op cit*, Pg 933. Milgrom reaches this conclusion after citing numerous examples of post-coital impurity/purification from Greek, Egyptian, Arab, Persian and Hittite civilizations and all social classes amongst them.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, Pg 934

⁶⁷ F Rosner, *Encyclopaedia of Medicine in the Bible and the Talmud* (Northvale NJ: Jason Aronson Inc, 2000).

⁶⁸ Ten such obligations are specified in Jewish Law.

engage in physical intimacy without relations, provided he does not release seed in vain.

‘In vain’ quite clearly means that measures must not be taken against the opportunity and potential for the act’s resulting in conception. There is, therefore, a conflict of obligation between these two passages because some of these activities, whether undertaken by choice and to fulfil the husband’s conjugal duties, will involve the emission of semen at times or in situations, where conception cannot take place nor procreation ensue. Moreover, copulation is never a process guaranteed to be 100% successful in conception and the provision of offspring: there is always an element of probability. It might therefore, reasonably be argued that as it is impossible to know which acts of copulation will result in conception, and also that those that do not are, *de facto*, ‘wasting seed in vain’ and therefore defiling; the logical course of action is to treat *every* act as potentially defiling.⁶⁹

Wenham has taken a different approach to the exegesis of this verse.⁷⁰ For the ‘wasting of seed’ idea he coins the phrase ‘loss of life liquids’ (LLL) and relates this to Douglas’s thinking that the levitical laws were expressions of the notion of physical wholeness and perfection in the created order.⁷¹ LLLs, therefore, become associated with movement, on the part of the organism, away from life towards death, and defilement is due to the fact that the organism, in so doing, acquires an ‘aura of death’. A body, free from any sort of discharge would, according to Wenham, preserve its ‘fullness of life intact’ but the impending defilement caused by the ‘aura of death’ — which is itself caused by the LLL— would be such as to necessitate legislation in order to vouchsafe the perfect holiness that is to be the nation’s character. This is not an easy argument to understand or to accept.

⁶⁹ There is perhaps a parallel in this logic with today’s use of the ‘morning after pill’.

⁷⁰ G Wenham, "Why does sexual intercourse defile?, (Lev 15:18)," *ZAW* 95 (1983): 432 - 34.

⁷¹ Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of concepts of Pollution and Taboo*; Douglas, *Leviticus as literature*.

Wenham pitches the LLL argument almost entirely in respect of blood-loss claiming that, ultimately this would lead to death and so constitute an aura of such. One cannot argue with the pathophysiology of *that* statement. However, it does not seem to hold for the loss of semen, about which he is somewhat opaque and fails to project his argument onto hypothetical unborn children. How something that is only *in posse* and not yet *in esse* might have an aura of death about it is difficult to understand.

Whitekettle,⁷² in contrast to Wenham, suggests that because the sexual union of husband and wife is designated ‘one flesh’, there can be no loss of seed during marital intercourse because the entire process takes place within this one ‘composite body’. He postulates that in such circumstances there can be no LLL because the semen moves only from an ‘environment of origin to an environment of growth’. Defilement cannot, therefore, occur in the way Wenham suggests because no ‘body boundaries’ have been crossed. This conveniently destroys part of Wenham’s argument but even so, is scarcely helpful as it leaves us no further forward in explaining verse 18. Whitekettle’s counter-argument that follows his critique of Wenham’s proposition is, to this author, interesting but equally unconvincing. It entails a lengthy and perhaps tendentious, discourse on the perceived chiasmic structure of chapter 15 as a whole. Whitekettle eventually arrives at the conclusion that the chapter is concerned — in a highly structured, almost diagrammatic way — with the ‘physiological functioning of the reproductive system’. In answer to the question ‘Is the reproductive system functioning so as to bring about reproduction?’, Whitekettle sees a divergence away from the perfection of the procreative copulation of verse 18 in both directions, schematically:

⁷² Richard Whitekettle, "Leviticus 15:18 reconsidered: chiasm, spatial structure and the body," *JSOT*, no. 49 (1991): 31-45.

The degree of malfunction apparently increases with distance from verse 18. Whitekettle sees this continuum as an homology with the way the sanctity of the tabernacle wanes linearly with distance through the encampment and onward, away into the wilderness:



However, it is hard to see where this gets us in explaining verse 18. In a somewhat tangential way, Whitekettle now invokes the duplex function of the penis to explain the polluting effect of marital coition. In his scheme the wilderness is equated to ‘non-life’ or ‘waste’ and the tabernacle to ideal sexual function i.e. the production of new life. Douglas has suggested that holiness demands the separation of distinct categories of creation⁷³ and this entails both anatomical structures and physiological processes. The penis fulfils both a reproductive and an micturatory *physiological* role; but while these can be seen as functionally distinct and separate, there is no way they can be separated *anatomically*. The unfortunate penis is damned by its embryological heritage *and* by its structural efficiency! This is notwithstanding the fact that nowhere in the levitical code is it suggested that urine⁷⁴ is a pollutant and cause of defilement and impurity.⁷⁵ Whitekettle sidesteps this argument by means of an opaque statement suggesting that urine is ‘of the periphery’: it is akin to the wilderness in the above scheme. It is, therefore, the rôle of the penis, with its ambiguous structure and ambivalent function that defiles marital sexual conjugation

⁷³ Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. Pp 51 – 71

⁷⁴ Or faeces for that matter.

⁷⁵ Frymer-Kensky, "Pollution, Purification and Purgation in Biblical Israel: Major and Minor Pollutions."

and this is what Whitekettle believes to be the message of verse 18. One is apt to wonder if Whitekettle has, perhaps, read a little too much into some of Freud's more colourful ideas.

One final point about this verse is the contrast, and therefore a possible difference in meaning, between the Masoretic Text and the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP).⁷⁶ The former reads:

וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב אִישׁ אֶתָּה שְׁכַבְתָּ זֶרַע וּרְחִצּוּ בְּמִים וְטָמְאוּ עַד־הָעֶרֶב

And the SP reads:

וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב אִישָׁה אֶתָּה שְׁכַבְתָּ זֶרַע וּרְחִצּוּ בְּמִים וְטָמְאוּ עַד הָעֶרֶב

While the first word (blue) in each case clearly means 'a woman' and is the referent of אֲשֶׁר as in 'A woman who...'; the subject of the sentence (red) and of the verb יִשְׁכַּב (to lie) is different in the two cases. The traditional translation, shown by the ERV and the KJV⁷⁷ begins with the relative clause:

The woman also with whom a man shall lie with seed of copulation, they shall both bathe themselves in water, and be unclean until the even.

This is a perfectly proper usage of אֲשֶׁר and the syntax of beginning the sentence in this way is relatively common in Hebrew.⁷⁸ In the unvocalized text of the Samaritan Pentateuch, the unpointed אִישָׁה must, from the context, be אִישָׁה 'her man' = 'her

⁷⁶ Mark Shoulson, *The Torah: Jewish and Samaritan versions compared* (Leac an Anfa, Co. Mhaigh Eo, Éire: Evertree, 2008). A Sperber, ed., *The Bible in Aramaic Based on Old Manuscripts and printed Texts* (5 vols.; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973).

⁷⁷ The RSV and NRSV, make the man the subject of the whole sentence and remove the relative clause this: 'If a man lies with a woman and has an emission of semen, both of them shall bathe themselves in water, and be unclean until the evening.'

⁷⁸ Gesenius et al., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar: with a facsimile of the Siloam inscription by J. Euting and a table of alphabets by M. Lidzbarski*. §36, pg 112 & §155pg 485; Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*. §38, pg118 & §158, pg 591.

husband⁷⁹ and this has a legal and moral implication. It is generally supposed that levitical law was not concerned with legal formulations in the sense of halachic law. While Mosaic, halachic, law technically did not prohibit polygamy, Samaritan law did.⁸⁰

15:19 – 24: menstruation

The remainder of chapter 15 is concerned with physiological and pathological discharges affecting females. The first of these categories deals solely with menstruation. Uterine haemorrhage that was irregular and/or excessive was always considered to be abnormal and so considered together with genital infections. It is not difficult, however, given the contrasting knowledge about menstruation, then and now, to understand how and why these distinctions came about.

Verses 19 to 23 outline the typical prohibitions that might be expected for the menstruant. Verse 19 reads:

ואשה כי־תהיה זבה דם יהיה זבה בבשרה שבעת ימים תהיה בנדתה וכל־הנגע בה
יטמא עד־הערב

And if a woman have an issue, and her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be in her impurity seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even.

Milgrom⁸¹ draws our attention to the word בבשרה, literally ‘in her flesh/body’ and the use therein of the inseparable pronoun ב- ‘in’ rather than מן- ‘from’. He suggests that this implies that, even if the woman senses her incipient menstruation before there is any visible evidence, her impurity is upon her from that time. This argument seems somewhat tendentious; the ב- perhaps rather more simply indicates

⁷⁹ Not, of course, to be confused with אִשָּׁה ‘a woman’

⁸⁰ A. Cowley, "Some Remarks on Samaritan Literature and Religion," *JQR* 8, no. 4 (1896): 562-75; Kerr B. Tupper, "The Samaritan Pentateuch," *Heb Stud* 1, no. 2 (1882): 7-8.

⁸¹ Milgrom *Op cit*, Pg 934.

that the flow begins within her body; although of course, this could be said for all discharges. It is true, nevertheless, that while the menstruant is referred to as זבה the term זב in males was restricted to those with pathological discharges and was not applied to those having seminal emissions.⁸²

A feminist approach to both parturition⁸³ and menstruation in Leviticus has been posited by a number of authors, notably Brenner.⁸⁴ However this work has been challenged by Tribble as being overly tendentious.⁸⁵ Although it is possible that a particular feminist view of menstruation may have obtained or equally that the prevalent male attitude to women in Biblical times either over- or under-stated the case, it seems likely for the reasons stated above⁸⁶ that menstruation as זוב would not have been specifically differentiated in terms of its effects, from those other forms of זוב categorized in Leviticus Chapter 15. Notwithstanding this, in the second half of verse 19 we note that although the menstruant woman is called a זבה, the *condition* is not referred to as זוב but rather as נדה.

Verses 20 to 23 follow what has now become an expected formula. Verse 20 implicates anything upon which the זבה lies or sits and verses 21, 22 and 23, anyone who has touched any such *fomites*. In all of these cases the contaminated individual must wash his/her clothes and him/herself and remain unclean until the evening. There is, however, no indication that the *fomites* themselves have to be decontaminated — this would have been an extraordinarily difficult business to carry

⁸² Milgrom suggests that the distinction may have been made according to the velocity of flow!

⁸³ Cf Leviticus Chapter 12

⁸⁴ Athalya Brenner, *The Israelite woman: social role and literary type in Biblical narrative*.

⁸⁵ Phyllis Tribble, "The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative by Athalya Brenner Review — by Phyllis Tribble.," *JBL* 106, no. 4 (1987): 700-01.

⁸⁶ See footnote Page 171

out especially at monthly intervals. The same might be said for sacrifices of which no mention is made with respect to נדה. Neither, is mention made of the menstruant's having to perform specific acts of ablution or laundering, though we are told that her impurity will last for seven days (v19). A similar period of seven days' impurity is imposed upon any man who 'lies with her' and upon the bed upon which this act takes place. Thus, contamination by menstrual blood during intercourse confers impurity for seven days in contrast to that of a single day conferred by the shedding of semen during copulation — (v18).⁸⁷

This completes the instructions for the זבה in her נדה. Over the years there has been much dispute about what 'seven days' means. Some count from the first sighting of the discharge, others begin counting from a notional time twenty-four hours before this, supposing a recognizable 'internal flow' prior to its manifestation. Later some, Rabbinic⁸⁸ authors suppose that the 'seven days' refers to a separate period of 'clean-days' after the flow has abated and there is no visible evidence remaining. The implications of this variation are significant and their understanding is not entirely helped by the extensive debate on the subject to be found in the Talmud. It seems likely that in levitical times at least, the seven day period began at the first sighting externally of the menstrual flow and to add a further seven 'clean-days' would have aligned the menstruant with the pathological זבה — see verse 28 below. It would seem that this alignment by the addition of the further seven 'clean-days' came about later in Amoraim times,⁸⁹ possibly as a means of differentiating between normal menstruation and menorrhagia/metrorrhagia. In any case, the observance of seven

⁸⁷ See Ezekiel 18:6.

⁸⁸ The *Niddah* section of the Talmud is extensive.

⁸⁹ Talmud Mas. Niddah 2a, 31a, 57b, 68a – 69a

additional ‘clean-days’ has persisted into modern times for Orthodox and Conservative Jews.⁹⁰

15:25 – 30: pathological discharges in females

This group of verses deals with abnormal/pathological discharges in women and in contrast to those verses dealing with נדה, we see here that sacrifices are included in the treatment. This is almost certainly a reflection of the more sporadic nature of זוב compared with נדה. In the first place, a menstruating woman would not be permitted to enter the temple⁹¹ and, even if the sacrifice were delayed until after menstruation had ceased, the imposition of such a duty every month would be excessive. The distinction between נדה and זוב appears to have been made more in respect of the timing and length of the bloody discharge rather than upon either its amount or its quality.¹⁴ In verse 15:25,

ואשה כִּי־זוב זוב דמה ימים רבים בלא עת־נדתה או כִּי־זוב על־נדתה כל־ימי זוב
טמאתה כימי נדתה תהיה טמאה הוא

καὶ γυνή ἐὰν ῥέῃ ῥύσει αἵματος ἡμέρας πλείους οὐκ ἐν καιρῷ τῆς ἀφέδρου
αὐτῆς ἐὰν καὶ ῥέῃ μετὰ τὴν ἀφεδρον αὐτῆς πᾶσαι αἱ ἡμέραι ῥύσεως
ἀκαθαρσίας αὐτῆς καθάπερ αἱ ἡμέραι τῆς ἀφέδρου ἀκάθαρτος ἔσται

And if a woman have an issue of her blood many days not in the time of her impurity, or if she have an issue beyond the time of her impurity; all the days of the issue of her uncleanness she shall be as in the days of her impurity: she is unclean.

the key-words are, בלא ‘not in’ and על־ ‘beyond’. The differential diagnosis of זוב and נדה depends upon the former’s being either at a different time from the expected

⁹⁰ In the Ashkenazic tradition the *niddah* state lasts at least twelve days calculated as 5 days for the flow + 7 ‘clean days’ after menstruation has been shown to have ceased. The Sephardic tradition favours a minimum of 11 days.

⁹¹ This rule persists in many religions today. The Man Mo temple in Hong Kong has a large and explicit notice outside to enforce this.

menstrual period or an abnormal prolongation of it. In the LXX there is a specific word ἡ ἄφαισις for ‘menstruation’,⁹² with *time how long* being expressed by the accusative case and *time when* by the genitive case.

This verse encompasses both of the modern diagnoses of menorrhagia and metrorrhagia¹⁴ but it is interesting that no attention was paid to the nature of the flow itself, which, today, would be of the utmost importance in reaching any diagnosis. This is undoubtedly illustrative of the somewhat fixated priestly [world]view that it was *that* these things occurred that mattered rather than *why* or *how* they came about. Unsurprisingly, the text (v26), goes on to say that anything upon which the זבה lies, sits or by implication rides upon becomes contaminated and (v27), that anyone who comes into contact with these things must bathe, launder his/her clothes and remain unclean until the evening. We may note the increased severity in response to having touched a זבה that incurs the need to launder one’s clothes. This was not obligatory (vv21 – 23), after contact with a נדה.

In the case of a זבה it is made quite clear (v28) that the seven day clean period can only begin after the discharge has abated and she is not טהורה until this time has passed. Furthermore, on the eighth day, she must make a sacrifice by presenting to the priest at the tabernacle/tent of meeting (אהל מועד), two turtle doves or young pigeons. One of the pair is to be a sin-offering (חטאת), and the other a burnt-offering (עלה). This is the formula we have already encountered in the expiation of the more serious instances of טמאה.

⁹² Liddell and Scott, *Greek English Lexicon*.

Some support for this formula, with minor variations, can be acquired from other sources. In the Qumran Community the זב/זבה went through a similar cleansing process but was required to wait for eight rather than seven days before entering the temple for the atonement sacrifice.⁹³ The passage, 4Q274 f1i:0–4Q274 f2ii:1, in particular deals extensively with much of the subject matter in Leviticus Chapter 15 and the approach is very much the same. The fate of the זב/זבה is spelt out in no uncertain terms:

[-- אל]

יחל להפיל את תחנונו. משכב יג[ו]ן ישכ[ב ו]מושב אנחה ישב. בדד לכול
הטמאים ישב ורחוק מן
הטהרה שתים עשרה באמה בדברו אליו. ומערב צפון לכול בית מושב ישב רחוק
כמדה הזות.

[Let him not]

*begin to present his suppli[cati]on. He shall lie down on a bed of sorrow,
and in a seat of sighing he shall sit. He shall sit apart from all those who
are unclean and at a distance
of twelve cubits from the purity when he speaks to them. He shall dwell
to the northwest of any habitation at a distance of the same
measurement.*

(4Q274 f1i:0–f1i:2)

Josephus says that both the זב/זבה and the נדה (and the parturient), were banished from the city for seven days.⁹⁴ This is in contradistinction to Leviticus who demands this quarantine only from those with צרעת.

15:31: an interpolation from H?

There is some debate in the literature as to whether this verse was interpolated either by the author of H or by some later redactor. Milgrom⁹⁵ adds the *caveat* that the

⁹³ 4Q266 (4QD^a 6i 4), 4Q397 (4QMMT-d II 10), 11Q19 (11QT 45:7 – 17). See also: Devorah Dimant and Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Time to prepare the way in the wilderness: papers on the Qumran scrolls* (vol 16; Leiden: Brill, 1995).

⁹⁴ Josephus, *Josephus Collected Works (13 vols) with English translations by Thackeray, H St J & Feldman, L.*

⁹⁵ Milgrom *Op cit*, pp 945 – 947.

verse is specifically about the purity of the sanctuary — typically a priestly concern — and not about the purity of the land, which would be more in keeping with H. Verses 15:32 and 15:33 provide a summary of what has been said already but they lack force as a concluding statement. The question regarding verse 31 is perhaps less to do with what it is about (defilement of the sanctuary), than to whom it is directed, (*Leviticus 15:31*):

והזרתם את־בני־ישראל מטמאתם ולא ימתו בטמאתם בטמאם את־משכני אשר
בתוכם

Thus shall ye separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness; that they die not in their uncleanness, when they defile my tabernacle that is in the midst of them.

This verse is the chapter's summarizing motive statement and clearly a parænetic for the sons of Israel. Its style is characteristic and, therefore, highly suggestive of H material.⁹⁶ In particular it contains two important, potential, stylistic identifiers of H. The first of these is the use of the first person singular. This is referring to Yahweh who is saying 'my sanctuary' (משכני) when he addresses to Moses and Aaron and through them the priesthood as a whole. There is a parallel to the undoubted H material of Leviticus 26:11:

ונתתי משכני בתוכם ולא־תגעל נפשי אתכם

And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you.

While P concerns itself with the priesthood and their activities, it is generally thought that H is for transmission either directly or, more usually, through the priests to the population as a whole.⁹⁷ Yahweh, therefore speaks in the first person to his

⁹⁶ See Appendix 3

⁹⁷ See *Ibid*

priestly audience and thus speaks of ‘my sanctuary’. There is no corresponding usage of the first person in the levitical P material.

The second stylistic feature of 15:31 suggesting H material, is the particular use of the verb $\sqrt{\text{נזר}}$. It is in verse 15:31 in the *hiph'il* which, (also with the *niph'al*) followed by מן , implies separation and withdrawal.⁹⁸ The causative *hiph'il* ‘make separate’, suggests a command to someone other than the sons of Israel and we must suppose this to be Moses, Aaron and the priesthood. Yahweh is instructing them to clean up the Israelites’ shoddy practices in order to prevent them from defiling his sanctuary. Moreover, he is warning them that not to do so risks the punishment of death by divine agency.

The translators of the Septuagint clearly had some difficulty with: *καὶ εὐλαβεῖς ποιήσετε τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἰσραὴλ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀκαθαρσιῶν αὐτῶν...* but arrived at the same end-point because they realized that the second person plural *ποιήσετε* was a command from God to Moses and Aaron (*cf* 15:2), and thereby to priests in general to act in a way that was *εὐλαβεῖς* = ‘cautious’ or ‘discreet’, in their dealings with the Israelites whose uncleanness was at risk of defiling the sanctuary.⁹⁹

The verb $\sqrt{\text{נזר}}$ appears in a similar context in Leviticus 22:2, which is undoubted H material. Both verses are hortatory and from the mouth of Yahweh. In verse 31, we must surely translate ולא in the sense of ‘lest’, warning of impending death ימתו for those who persist in their uncleanness. It might be argued today, that a penalty of death is rather severe for the misdeed of acquiring a genital issue. However, this would be to miss the point and verse 31 makes the point quite clearly — the

⁹⁸ Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*.

⁹⁹ *Cf* Leviticus 10:10 – 11 and Ezekiel 44:23 for a similar instruction.

acquisition of the זִב under the circumstances outlined in the preceding verses of this chapter, results in the defilement of the sanctuary and it is *that* which is punishable by death. Verse 31, therefore becomes a summary of the *direction* of the whole chapter and it may be surmised that the later H redactor felt that such a rounding-up was necessary to focus the mind of the reader.

15:32 – 33

These two verses make for a rather anticlimactic ending after verse 31. They do nothing more than rather weakly summarize (זאת תורת הזב) the foregoing verses. In all probability, they were the summarizing conclusion of the original P text before the interpolation of H in the form of verse 31. It remains to be seen why they were retained as stylistically, they offer no improvement. It is possible that their removal would have been seen as defacing a sacred text so that only addition was possible: there is a strong precedent for this view.

THE LEVITICUS RABBAH & GENITAL DISCHARGES

The *zab** morpheme does not appear in the Leviticus Rabbah but the word *issue* used in the appropriate context occurs 25 times. Unfortunately, none of these occurrences offers any insight beyond what is to be found in biblical Leviticus. As a *midrash* on scriptural Leviticus, the *Leviticus Rabbah* operates along strictly Talmudic lines, going to great lengths to expound upon and interpret the biblical text but contributing little or nothing new to the understanding of the pathophysiology of these conditions.

For the modern medical mind the idea of זִב is much easier to grasp than that of צרעת. All of the instances of זִב that have been discussed above are explicable in

terms of modern medical symptomatology whether physiological or pathological. The specific incidence of venereal disease in Ancient Israel is quite unknown but it is quite likely that conditions such as non-specific urethritis were relatively common. All of this makes it easier to see a relationship between conditions of this sort, the potential compromise of reproductive capacity that they bring about, and the notion of uncleanness and impurity. It is unlikely that the early Israelite mind made any distinction between these physiological and pathological symptoms and signs in any consideration of contagious transmission (see Chapter 8).

SUMMARY

As in the case of צרעת, the Hebrew Bible offers no clue to the incidence or prevalence of this group of conditions, especially those of a solitary or of a venereal nature. However, from the symptomatology described in the texts, it is much easier to make a provisional differential diagnosis in both physiological and pathological cases especially as there is a much closer correspondence with present-day diseases. The physiological seminal and menstrual discharges are entirely clear and there is strong evidence to suggest that pathological discharges were likely to have been either non-gonococcal urethritis or schistosomiasis.

There is also clear evidence that other seemingly unpleasant discharges from the nether regions (urine and faeces) did not result in ritual impurity. This is a clear pointer that the underlying principle regarding זוב as compromise of either reproductive function *per se* or the more complex notion that the discharge is evidence of some sort of 'anti-life' or 'life-wasting' process. That the Israelites may have considered anything issuing from the genitalia as concerned with the generation of new life is not especially difficult to understand.

Because of the strictures on sexual intercourse during זוב it is suggested that it was compromise of quality rather than quantity of reproductive capacity that was feared. Clearly it was held that it was still possible to conceive in a state of זוב but the result should be expected to be abortion, stillbirth and disfigurement.

In the previous chapter and the present one, the conditions that caused the priests to make a diagnosis of major ritual impurity have been discussed at length with a view to elucidating their nature and the way they were viewed within the priestly ideology. A further group of conditions, blemishes, occupies a considerable amount of textual space in the Hebrew Bible but these afflictions do not incur the same level of priestly attention as צרעת and זוב. Nevertheless, they were undoubtedly seen within the priestly worldview as stigmatizing in a different way. These conditions will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7 — BLEMISH, DEFORMITY

& DISABILITY

BLEMISH occupies a significant but equivocal place in the Hebrew Bible and Septuagint and the purpose of the present chapter is to investigate whether this reflects a parallel ambiguity in the priestly ideology. The definition of blemish to be found in the levitical writings is somewhat different from that of modern usage where it has in any case, largely fallen from favour as a descriptive term.¹ Like צרעת and זוב, *blemish*, (מום/μῶμος), was viewed in a very negative light. Today most examples of blemish reported in the scriptures would be seen unequivocally in a medical context. In biblical times however, מום — or at least certain specified cases of מום — appears to have occupied the province of priests. It is necessary to ask why and how מום fitted into the priestly worldview and the ritual practice of sacramental hygiene and why מומים necessitated a different priestly response from זוב and צרעת.

TERMINOLOGY AND LOGOMETRICS

The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the following definitions for the noun ‘blemish’:

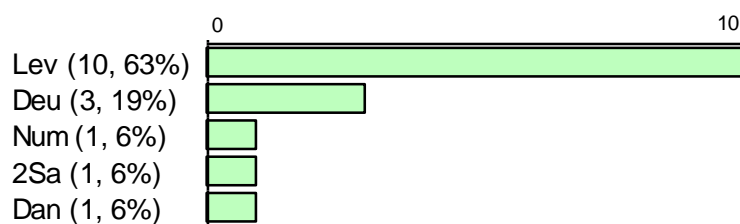
- 1 *Physical defect or disfigurement; a stain.*
- 2 (transferable) *A defect, imperfection, flaw, in any object, matter, condition, or work.*
- 3 (figurative) *A moral defect or stain; a flaw, fault, blot, slur.*

¹ Butterfield, Fowler's dictionary of modern english usage. Pg 219

From a medical point of view, blemishes can be both congenital and acquired. Congenital blemishes have traditionally been called ‘deformities’ though today both words are increasingly avoided and seen as indelicate.² Acquired blemishes have traditionally been referred to as ‘disabilities’ especially when they are the result of injury. This word persists in usage today but has become stretched to include congenital deformities.

The ancients did not mince their words: the Hebrew Bible uses the word מום for ‘blemish’ almost exclusively. The Greek equivalent to be found in the LXX is μῶμος. However, it should be noted and seen as significant,³ that the phrase ‘without blemish’ is used at least as often. In this case the word תמים (ἄμωμος) is found. It is interesting to search out the number of instances of these terms in the Bible as a whole and this becomes a simple task if one uses electronic concordances.⁴

The following graph shows the results of searching the entire Hebrew Bible for instances of the Hebrew word, מום



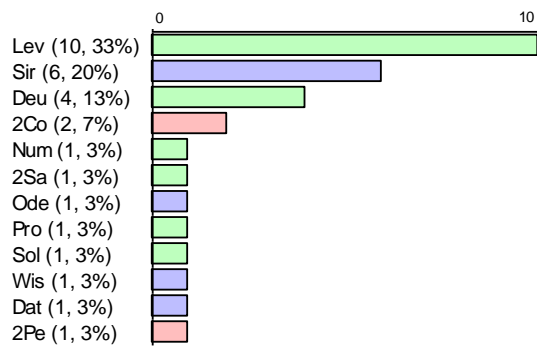
We can search the Septuagint and the New Testament if we use the lexeme μῶμ* which allows for cases, numbers and genders in the Greek declension of μῶμος.

² Today, the words ‘blemish’ and ‘deformity’ have lost favour and are often seen as derogatory. With the current, modish predilection for clichés and word-mincing, a plethora of euphemisms has evolved to replace it, not always effectively; see, Butterfield, Fowler’s dictionary of modern english usage. Pg 219

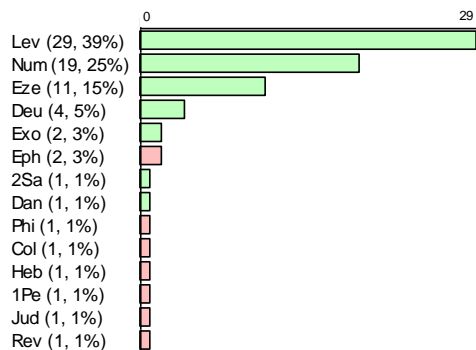
³ See below for attitudes to beauty and ugliness.

⁴ Bibleworks, "Software for Biblical Exegesis and Research." Accordance, "Bible Software."

This produces the following distribution:



Searching for ‘without blemish’ $\alpha\mu\omega\mu\iota$ we get:



In a very small number of instances (e.g. Exodus 12:5), the LXX uses $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma$ instead of $\alpha\mu\omega\mu\omicron\varsigma$ but this is very rare; the use of $\mu\omicron\varsigma$ / $\mu\omega\tilde{\omega}\mu\omicron\varsigma$ and its antithet $\alpha\mu\omega\mu\iota$ / $\alpha\mu\omega\mu\omicron\varsigma$ is remarkably consistent.

NEGATIVE IMAGERY AND DISABILITY

The negative imagery of disability and deformity is a key feature of the Hebrew Bible and indeed, of a great deal of other literature from the Ancient World. This attitude stretched into the Middle Ages and well beyond. Sullivan, has drawn attention to the fact that whereas the negative stereotype of the disabled person or cripple has generally been considered to have its origins in the cultural ethos of Greek civilization, an association of disability with ritualistic and religious practices

can be found in more ancient cultural groups, notably in Egypt.⁵ However, in Egyptian culture, disability appears never to have been viewed in a negative way and was sometimes seen even as a positive feature. For example, dwarves were esteemed and allowed to hold high positions and they featured particularly in the worship of Seneb. Deformed individuals were often mentioned in a positive way in religious and magical texts. Their deformity made them unusual and thereby objects of curiosity, respect and even veneration. They were never stigmatized or ostracized except where the mutilation had been brought about by their own society as a sanctioned act of retribution, vengeance or punishment. Sullivan's conclusion is that it was in Greek culture, where there developed a necessary and desirable philosophical relationship between form and actuality and consequently an ideology of perfection, that deformity/disability/blemish eventually became a full-blown stigma. In the context of the Greek world, physical perfection was seen as all-important. Sullivan's review is scholarly and interesting and makes a good case for the persistence of the Greek view of disability into later art and thinking and perhaps further as a basis for modern attitudes. Unfortunately, Sullivan misses out the Ancient Near East completely and so makes no comment on the very obviously and easily-observed negative attitudes to disability that are found in the Hebrew Bible. It is curious to speculate upon why Sullivan allowed this lacuna in his survey. It leaves open the very important question of whether Israelite culture's negative attitude arose *de novo*, or whether it may have been influenced by neighbouring cultures. An appropriate substrate for investigation might have been priestly ideology, at least in the case of the levitical material. The priestly *Weltanschauung* held no particular place for an ideology of perfection such as that of Greek culture

⁵ R Sullivan, "Deformity — a modern western prejudice with ancient origins," *Proc RCPE* 31 (2001): 262–66.

but it was intensely concerned with the preservation through ritual, of the cosmic order. Whatever the case, Olyan⁶ has suggested that ideas about blemishes and deformities might have been equated with the observation of the [necessary] motor and sensory dysfunctionality of idols. Olyan turns to the Psalms for textual evidence in support of his suggestion.

פּה־לֵהֶם וְלֹא יִדְבְּרוּ עֵינַיִם לֵהֶם וְלֹא יִרְאוּ
אָזְנַיִם לֵהֶם וְלֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ אֶף לֵהֶם וְלֹא יִרְיָחוּן
יָדֵיהֶם וְלֹא יִמְשֹׁן רַגְלֵיהֶם וְלֹא יִהְלְכוּ לֹא־יִהְיוּ בְּגִרוֹנָם
כְּמוֹהֶם יִהְיוּ עֹשִׂיהֶם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־בָּטַח בָּהֶם

*They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not;
They have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not;
They have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not;
neither speak they through their throat.
They that make them shall be like unto them; yea, every one that trusteth
in them.*

(Psalms, HB & ERV 115:5–8; LXX 113:13–16)

These disabilities leave the idols helpless and unable to do those things that Yahweh, who possesses these faculties, *can* do:

וְאֱלֹהֵינוּ בַשָּׁמַיִם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־חָפֵץ עָשָׂה

But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he pleased.

(Psalms, HB & ERV 115:3; LXX 113:11)

It is possible that Sullivan was drawing overgenerous conclusions from his small number of examples from Egyptian culture. Olyan, who has studied extensively the specific case of disability both in the Hebrew Bible and in the wider world in which it was written, concludes,⁷ ‘...the representations of disability in the non-Israelite

⁶ Saul M. Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: interpreting mental and physical differences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Pg 8. S. M. Olyan, "The Ascription of Physical Disability as a Stigmatizing Strategy in Biblical iconic Polemics," in *Disability Studies and Biblical Literature* (ed. Candida R. Moss and Jeremy Schipper; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

⁷ Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: interpreting mental and physical differences*. Pg 120.

West Asian texts that I have compared with biblical materials resemble biblical representations more than they differ from them...’.

If this is correct, we may suppose that those with disabilities were seen in Israelite society as a specific group wherein they appear to have been the recipients of prejudice and to have found themselves significantly disadvantaged in both religious and social environments.

Margolis and Shapiro⁸ have studied the negative imagery of disability and deformity in literature, especially that of the Classical World. They stress the association of disability with induced fear, shame and debasement. This is in stark contrast with the supposedly civilized present-day attitudes of Western societies, where toleration of disabilities is encouraged and the principal negative association, if any, is more likely to be that of embarrassment.

Margolis and Shapiro categorize those fruits of society that have been historically and traditionally denied or withheld from the disabled: *right to life, freedom, education, shelter, and employment*. They believe that the stereotypical negative imagery of disablement operates subliminally and is implanted at an early age: children have been found to accept negative subliminal attitudes easily, learning to despise early in life from parents, peer-groups, literature and the mass media.

Lemos⁹ has considered an important practical application of stigmatization by disfigurement which operated in the Ancient Near East and is to be seen widely in Israelite culture and in the Hebrew Bible. This is the practice of mutilating one’s enemies, usually carried out by victors in battle but seen also on a domestic level. This practice was widespread in Mesopotamia and in Egypt. Lemos supposes that

⁸ Howard Margolis and Arthur Shapiro, "Countering Negative Images of Disability in Classical Literature," *Eng J* 76, no. 3 (1987): 18-22.

⁹ T. M. Lemos, "Shame and Mutilation of Enemies in the Hebrew Bible," *JBL* 125, no. 2 (2006): 225-41.

the mutilation of enemies was more than simple brutality and revenge and that it discharged a very specific symbolic function by signalling the establishment of a new power-dynamic between aggressor and vanquished. We are perhaps familiar with the following two verses from Leviticus (24:19–20) in the context of retaliation applied to murder but in fact, it is in the context of blemish that the *lex talionis* is first encountered.

ואיש כי־יתן מום בעמיתו כאשר עשה כן יעשה לו

And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him;

שבר תחת שבר עין תחת עין שן תחת שן כאשר יתן מום באדם כן ינתן בו

breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be rendered unto him.

Mutilation brought shame not merely upon the victim, but also on his family and his community. The act of mutilation¹⁰ left the defeated individual with the *appearance* of one with a *natural* deformity or blemish and so indicated his having fallen into a lower status-group such as would be occupied by cripples. Thus, mutilation becomes a blemish¹¹ and is subject to the full compass of stigmata attached thereunto. The key ingredient of this stigmatization is *shame* which Lemos defines in three ways:¹²

- (1) *The (internal) experience of disgrace together with fear that others will see how we have dishonoured ourselves.*
- (2) *The feeling that others are looking on with contempt and scorn at everything we do and don't do.*
- (3) *A preventative attitude (hiding or disappearing in order not to be disgraced).*

¹⁰ Which Lemos defines, rather prolixly, as ‘a negatively constructed somatic alteration’

¹¹ Though, of course, not all blemishes are mutilations.

¹² Lemos gives examples from the Hebrew Bible which include: 1 Samuel 10:27–11:11; 2 Samuel 5:8; 2 Samuel 10; Judith 13–14; Judges 1-1–7; Jeremiah 34:18–20.

Lemos's arguments about shame and mutilation can, at times, seem tendentious but we can discern, nevertheless, a theme familiar in the Hebrew Bible concerning negative imagery. Importantly, mutilation and natural blemishes along with the levitical disease-stigmata (צִרְעָתָהּ and זֹבַח), all have one or the other of *only two* features in common. The affliction must either be *visible* and so on public display or, if not visible, *it must involve the genitals*. In the former category we also have most of the biblical examples of מוּם (and צִרְעָתָהּ) and in the second category we have זֹבַח and, as an example of מוּם, 'He that is wounded in the stones or with his privy member cut off', (פְּצוּעֵ־דַכָּא וְכִרְוֹת שִׁפְכָה) — Deuteronomy 23:2 in HB and LXX; 23:1 in English translations).

BEAUTY AND UGLINESS IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

Whereas Greek thinking on this subject has been widely written about, there is significantly little textual material on the subject in the Hebrew Bible and nothing substantive to explain the meaning of the words *beauty* and *ugliness*. In the ERV translation of the Hebrew Bible the word 'beauty' (תִּפְאָרֶת) occurs 47 times and 'beautiful' (יָפֵה), 23 times. In contrast, words for 'ugliness' and 'ugly' do not occur at all in English translations. The nearest Hebrew adjective appears to be רָע which is generally translated as 'bad'. Olyan¹³ has compiled a list of those positive physical attributes that, in the Hebrew Bible, are associated with human beauty. They are: plumpness, thick hair on the head, ruddy clear skin, dark eyes, symmetrical teeth and breasts, significant height, agility of movement and physical

¹³ Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: interpreting mental and physical differences*. Pg 18.

strength. The idea of being ‘well fleshed-out’ appears to have been particularly important and can be found in (Daniel 1:15):¹⁴

ומקצת ימים עשרה נראה מראיהם טוב ובריאי בשר מן-כל-הילדים האכלים את
פתג המלך

And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer, and they were fatter in flesh, than all the youths which did eat of the king's meat.

Within the Hebrew Bible the The Song of Songs offers perhaps the most useful source material. A later specific case is that mentioned in the Genesis Apocryphon, written in Qumranic Aramaic.¹⁵ Although from a time and milieu different from that of the levitical priests it is helpful because as Fitzmyer¹⁶ in his commentary on the Genesis Apocryphon from Qumran suggests, it introduces a descriptive style that makes much of ‘*the beautiful fair-skinned female*’.¹⁷ It is thought to be an extension of a literary genre that may have migrated from ancient Arabic literature.¹⁸

¹⁴ A catalogue of the prerequisites of beauty can be found in a later text (4Q186) from Qumran. This passage, (4Q186 f1i:4–f2i:9), in several ways is at variance with Olyan’s account. *Anyone, the ha[ir of whose head] shall be [... and whose head and forehead] are broad and curved [...] intermediate, but the rest of [his] head is not [...] [...] unclean [... his stone is] granite. [And] anyone [whose] eyes are [... and lo]ng, but th[e]y are fix[e]d, whose thighs are long and slender, whose toes are slender and long, and who was born during the second phase of the moon: he possesses a spirit with six parts light, but three parts in the house of Darkness. This is the birth sign under which such a person shall be born: the haunch of Taurus. He will be poor. This is his animal: the bull. and whose head [...] [whose] ey[es] inspire fear [and are [...] whose teeth protrude (?), whose fingers are thick, whose thighs are thick and extremely hairy, and whose toes are thick and short: he possesses a spirit with [ei]ght parts in the House of [Darkness] and one from the House of Light regula[r], whose [e]yes are neither dark n[or] light (?), whose beard is sp[arse] and medium curly, whose voice resonates, whose teeth are fine and regular, who is neither tall nor short but is well built, whose fingers are thin and long, whose thighs are hairless, the soles of whose feet [and whose to]es are as they should be: he possesses a spirit [...] eight parts [from the House of Light] and o[ne] [in the House of Darkness. This is the birth sign under which] such a person shall be born ...* Translation from: Michael Owen Wise, Martin G. Abegg, and Edward M. Cook, *The Dead Sea scrolls: a new translation* (London: HarperCollins, 1996).

¹⁵ Muraoka, *A Grammar of Qumran Aramaic*. Ursula Schattner-Rieser, *L'araméen des manuscrits de la mer Morte* (IELOA 5; [Lausanne]: Editions du Zèbre, 2004).

¹⁶ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave I* (B&O 18a; Rome: Biblical institute press, 1971). Pg 119 *et seq.*

¹⁷ Fair skin was particularly admired by the dark-skinned Mediterranean and Near Eastern races. This point is made repeatedly in Homer and by the Greek Tragic Dramatists.

¹⁸ The subject of this eulogy is Sarai/Sarah, the wife of Abraham whose beauty is being recounted to Pharaoh by his courtiers.

A similar proposition comes from Greenfield¹⁹ and both of these accounts appear to have been based on the earlier work of Goshen-Gottstein.²⁰ These authors suggest that this passage describing Sarai's beauty belongs to a genre of Arabic literature known as *wasf* (وصف) which, in literal translation, means 'description' but in the present context is a technical term for passages that highlight the personal charms of a beloved one. Goshen-Gottstein believes this to be the only such usage in Jewish writings outside the Canticles; its purpose being to encomionize Sarai before Pharaoh. There is no reason to suppose that the epithets used had not evolved over time and were still thought appropriate. It is noteworthy, in the light of any consideration of blemishes such as deafness (see below), that all of these positive attributes of beauty are mediated through the visual system.

All of this stands in opposition to biblical images of emaciation, where such dysphemisms as 'weak' (דל) and 'thin' (דק), are to be found. Shaving the head was

[] כמה ושפיר לה צלם אנפיהא וכמא	2
[נ]עים וכמא רקיק לה שער ראישה כמא יאין להון לה עיניהא ומא רגג הוא לה אנפהא וכול נץ	3
אנפיהא כמא יאא לה חדיה וכמא שפיר לה כול לבנהא	4
דרעיהא מא שפירן וידיהא כמא	
כלילן וחמיד כול מחזה יד[י]הא כמא יאין כפיהא ומא אריכן וקטינן כול אצבעת ידיהא רגליהא	5
כמא שפירן וכמא שלמא להן לה שקיהא וכל בתולן וכלאן די יעלן לגנון לא ישפרן מנהא ועל כול	6
נשין שופר שפרה ועליא שפרהא לעלא מן כולהן ועם כול שפרא דן חכמא שגיא עמהא ודלידיהא	7
יאא	8

2. "[]how and beautiful is the aspect of her face, and how[]

3. [pl]easant and how supple is the hair of her head. How lovely are her eyes; how pleasant her nose and all the radiance of

4. her face . How shapely is her breast, how gorgeous all her fairness! Her arms, how comely! Her hands,

5. how perfect—How [lovely] is every aspect of her hands! How exquisite are her palms, how long and delicate all her fingers! Her feet,

6. how attractive! How perfect are her thighs! Neither virgins nor brides entering the bridal chamber exceed her charms. Over all

7. women is her beauty supreme, her loveliness far above them all. Yet with all this comeliness, she possesses great wisdom, and all that she has

8. is beautiful."(1Q20 (1QapGenar) XX:2—8) See: Martinez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls. Study Edition.*

¹⁹ J.C. Greenfield, "Early Aramaic Poetry " *JANES* 11 (Bravmann Memorial Volume) (1979): 45-51.

²⁰ M. Goshen-Gottstein, "Philologische Miscellen zu den Qumrantexten," *RQ* 2 (1959-60): 43-51.

also a form of self-debasement that was a common, expected and tolerated sign of mourning in Israelite culture. Natural baldness, in contrast, probably because of its association with this debasement, appears to have been considered as unattractive.

Ugliness *per se* is seldom described in biblical texts; where it does occur it is largely confined to descriptions of animals and the adjective רע is the most common rendering. Olyan²¹ has considered the relationship of beauty and ugliness in Israelite society as depicted in the Hebrew Bible. He believes that although it would be reasonable to conclude, from analysis of the texts, that the most generally and widely-applied criterion for beauty was simply the absence of visible physical defects (מומים), he nevertheless, considers it an over-simplification to believe that physical, somatic beauty was seen by the Israelites *always and only* as a lack of such physical flaws. Despite this, Olyan finds two verses in the Hebrew Bible that may be thought to justify this proposition:

כלך יפה רעיתי ומום אין בך

Thou art all fair, my love; and there is no spot in thee.

(Song of Songs 4:7)

וכאבשלום לא־היה איש־יפה בכל־ישראל להלל מאד מכף רגלו ועד קדקדו לא־היה
בו מום

Now in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him

(2 Samuel 14:25)

The relationship, according to Olyan, must have been more complex than the above idea which, he believes, does not go far enough. A more logical case would, almost

²¹ Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: interpreting mental and physical differences*. Pp 21–25

certainly, be that while ‘...it is possible to lack “defects” and still be deficient with respect to beauty,those who are described as beautiful must be without “defects”.’²²

Recently, evidence has accrued from studies using functional magnetic resonance imaging (*fMRI*) of the existence within the human brain of ‘hard wiring’ relating to those things we all perceive as beautiful and ugly.²³ If this is so and given the rate of human evolution, it is entirely probable that there has always been an organic element of the appreciation of beauty operating alongside that engendered by culture and society. In other words our reactions to beauty and ugliness are most probably *conditioned reflexes*.

MORTAL FLESH AS A SYMBOL OF DEFILEMENT

Trevaskis²⁴ has argued that *צִרְעָת*, *זֹב* and *מוֹם*, whatever they may actually represent in modern medical terms, were all used by the P authors in the way suggested by Douglas, namely as *antitypes of wholeness*. The afflicted person then becomes an *antitype of holiness*. If we make a small allowance for *זֹב*, Trevaskis suggests that *צִרְעָת*, *זֹב* and all the subsets of *מוֹם* might have been selected — perhaps arbitrarily — by the P authors as [specifically visual] symbols of a more over-reaching anti-typical tension between flesh and defilement.

טמא ↔ בשר

However, it is important that we understand the usage of the idea of *flesh* in the Hebrew Bible. The word for flesh, (*בשר*) appears in Hebrew, two hundred and sixty-

²² Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: interpreting mental and physical differences*. Pg 21.

²³ See Appendix 2

²⁴ Leigh M. Trevaskis, *Holiness, ethics and ritual in Leviticus* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press 2010). Ch4.

seven times in the singular, and once in the plural in the Hebrew Bible. Sixty-one of these occurrences are in Leviticus. It also appears three times in Aramaic. A great deal has been written on the meaning of this word²⁵ and, at the very least, it is necessary to consider it in both secular and theological-cultic usage. In the simplest form of its secular guise, בשר is used for ‘meat’ — flesh as food — but this usage extends beyond food to the meat used for sacrifice in cultic practices. Commonly, בשר is used both to mean ‘the body’, often in conjunction with עצם (bone), and variously also to mean ‘body parts’ such as skin. Leviticus 13:2 uses the expression, בעור-בשרו, literally, ‘in the skin of his flesh’, to describe symptoms of צרעת. Other secular usages of בשר are ‘man’ and as a euphemism for genitals.²⁶ The theological-cultic usage of בשר, apart from referring to sacrificial meat and to circumcision, is restricted to the idea of, ‘man’ and ‘man’s body’. In particular, the form כל-בשר, ‘humanity’, ‘everyone’, ‘any man’ is used as an idiom to represent those things which all humans share in their essence but which distinguishes their essence from the essence of Yahweh.²⁷

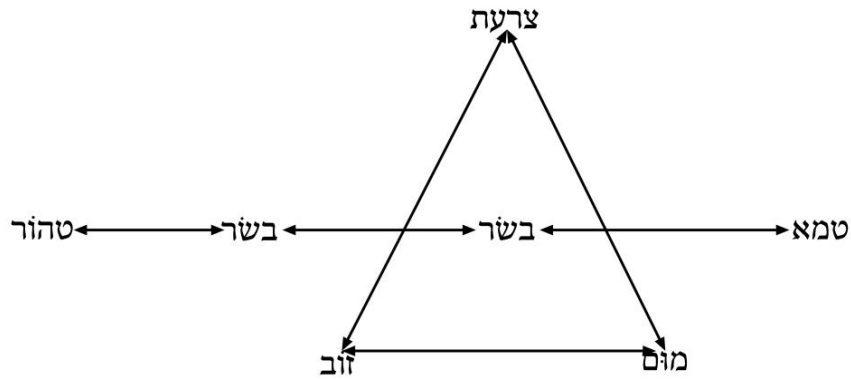
If we ponder Douglas’s analogy of dirt with *matter out of place*,²⁸ so we may think of צרעת, זוב and מום as representations of *flesh out of place*. This displacement occurs in such a way as to convert the relationship between בשר and טהור to one between בשר and טמא. A diagrammatic scheme might be:

²⁵ See: Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Vol II, pp 277a–280a. Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Vol II, pp 317–332. Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature*. Pg 199.

²⁶ Much has been written about this last usage and even more assumed. The question remains unclear though less unclear than the supposed usage of ‘feet’ to euphemize the same anatomical structures.

²⁷ Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Vol II, pg 327.

²⁸ Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. Pp 43–50.



Where: the equilateral triangle represents a *zone of impurity* affecting flesh, caused by interaction of the stigmatizing factors at its apices, and operating upon the linear relationship, טמא ↔ בשר ↔ טהור as a whole.

If this idea is reasonable, צרעת, זוב and מום were perhaps being used by the P authors as *exemplars* of בשר in its טמא state. The choice of example may have been made purely on the dramatic and visible appearance of these conditions or, in the case of זוב, its association with other people's sexual activity, always a favourite topic of interest and discussion.

When the perfection of flesh becomes deranged by whatever mechanism, so as to result in טמא, this uncleanness visited upon the individual becomes symbolic of his exclusion from Yahweh's immediate presence.²⁹ Trevaskis proposes that although צרעת, זוב and מום may have been considered by the P authors as the consequence of divine judgement upon flesh, this does not mean that they considered these afflictions to be specific punishments imposed from on high for specific sins. Trevaskis sees them rather as an educational contrivance, *pour encourager les*

²⁹ See also Chapter 4.

autres. Deranged flesh, therefore, becomes a metaphor for sinful humanity standing under Yahweh's judgement.³⁰

BLEMISHES IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

In the context of the present study it is important to investigate those physical blemishes that impinge upon the priestly concepts of *ritual impurity*³¹ and equally, to question those that do not. It would seem reasonable to begin by examining blemishes in search of qualities in parallel with צרעת and זוב; ie having the qualities of *platydysmorphism* and/or *reproductive compromise* involving the genitalia. In present-day thought, blemish/disfigurement/disability or whatever we choose to call it can, as noted above, be either congenital or acquired. The Hebrew Bible makes no such distinction regarding the stigma(ta) that blemish imparts. However, certain very clear distinctions are made in the text regarding specific forms of blemish/disability.

Classification of Blemishes in the Hebrew Bible

Leviticus, followed by Deuteronomy, contains the most extensive textual material dealing with specific blemishes and the important biblical texts outlining these blemishes have become called, in the jargon, *mum-lists*.³²

The Mum-lists

The most significant mum-list appears at Leviticus 21:17–23 and is, therefore, part of the Holiness Code (H).³³ Here and elsewhere it is important to distinguish animal

³⁰ Trevaskis, *Holiness, ethics and ritual in Leviticus*. Pg 170.

³¹ See Chapter 4.

³² The Talmud expands the 12 blemishes listed in Leviticus to a total of 90 conditions, (*Bekoroth 43–46*). These include conditions which might reasonably be expected such as epilepsy, and more exotic conditions such as the absence of eyebrows.

³³ While H is not P, the influence of P upon H is debateable. See Appendix 3

and human lists of מומים but also to note their similarities. While the human lists are presented with little real anatomical and physiological detail, considerably more scribal attention was given to the regulations and prohibitions concerning animals, in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The majority of these regulations and prohibitions concerning blemish in animals relates to their fitness for sacrifice. The principal mum-list regarding animal sacrifice appears at Lev 22:22–24; this is H material:

עורת או שבור או־חרוץ או־יבלת או גרב או ילפת לא־תקריבו אלה ליהוה ואשה לא־תתנו
מהם על־המזבח ליהוה

Blind, or broken, or maimed, or having a wen, or scurvy, or scabbed, ye shall not offer these unto the Lord, nor make an offering by fire of them upon the altar unto the Lord.

ושור ושה שרוע וקלוט נדבה תעשה אתו ולגדר לא ירצה

Either a bullock or a lamb that hath any thing superfluous or lacking in his parts, that mayest thou offer for a freewill offering; but for a vow it shall not be accepted.

ומעוד וכתות ונתוק וכרות לא תקריבו ליהוה ובארצכם לא תעשו

That which hath its stones bruised, or crushed, or broken, or cut, ye shall not offer unto the Lord; neither shall ye do thus in your land.

This is partially restated in Deuteronomy 15:21:

וכי־יהיה בו מום פסח או עור כל מום רע לא תזבחנו ליהוה אלהיך

And if it have any blemish, as if it be lame or blind, any ill blemish whatsoever, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the Lord thy God.

and the terrible consequences of offering a blemished animal for sacrifice are recorded in Malachi 1:14:

וארור נוכל ויש בעדרו זכר ונדר וזבח משחת לאדני כי מלך גדול אני אמר יהוה
צבאות ושמי נורא בגוים

*But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth,
and sacrificeth unto the Lord a blemished thing: for I am a great king,
saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is terrible among the Gentiles.*

We should compare the blemishes here with the very similar list for humans to be
found in H, at Leviticus 21:17–20:

דבר אל־אהרן לאמר איש מזרעך לדרתם אשר יהיה בו מום לא יקרב להקריב
לחם אלהיו

*Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever he be of thy seed throughout their
generations that hath a blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread
of his God.*

כי כל־איש אשר־בו מום לא יקרב איש עור או פסח או חרם או שרוע

*For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a
blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing
superfluous,*

או איש אשר־יהיה בו שבר רגל או שבר יד

or a man that is brokenfooted, or brokenhanded,

או־גבן או־דק או תבלל בעינו או גרב או ילפת או מרוח אש ך

*or crookbackt, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or is scurvy,
or scabbed, or hath his stones broken;*

The possession of a blemish by a human prevents that individual from making
sacrificial offerings although he may partake of the propitiatory bread as long as he
does not enter the sanctuary, penetrate the veil or approach the altar. Lev 21:21–23
is seen as the best summary of the legal position regarding sacrifice and blemish
though it should be noted that this portion of the Holiness Code deals specifically
with priests — the seed of Aaron.

כל־איש אשר־בו מום מזרע אהרן הכהן לא יגש להקריב את־אשי יהוה מום בו את
לחם אלהיו לא יגש להקריב

*No man of the seed of Aaron the priest, that hath a blemish, shall come
nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire: he hath a blemish; he
shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God.*

לחם אלהיו מקדשי הקדשים ומן־הקדשים יאכל

He shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy, and of the holy.

אך אל־הפרכת לא יבא ואל־המזבח לא יגש כי־מום בו ולא יחלל את־מקדשי כי
אני יהוה מקדשם

*Only he shall not go in unto the veil, nor come nigh unto the altar,
because he hath a blemish; that he profane not my sanctuaries: for I am
the Lord which sanctify them.*

From a study largely of the mum-lists, Olyan has written extensively on the types of blemish to be found in the Hebrew Bible³⁴ The term מום/μῶμος he considers to be a native category of classification largely, but not exclusively, occurring in legal texts concerned with the cult. His preferred translation ‘defect’ he defines as ‘...a technical term in biblical usage, referring to a specific set of negatively constructed physical characteristics inconsistent with biblical notions of beauty.’ Olyan’s interest in blemish is more specifically concerned with the Israelite concept of beauty than with the purity/impurity tension. However, it rapidly becomes clear that certain of his ‘defects’ impinge less upon the aesthetic and more upon the socio-cultic milieu in a manner strikingly akin to that of זוב and צרעת. In such cases, the ‘defect’, as with זוב and צרעת, becomes the object of stigmatization but, in the case of מומים, it is

³⁴ Saul M. Olyan, "Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and Its Environment," *JBL* 115, no. 2 (1996): 201-18; Saul M. Olyan, "What Do Shaving Rites Accomplish and What Do They Signal in Biblical Ritual Contexts?," *JBL* 117, no. 4 (1998): 611-22; Saul M. Olyan, "The Exegetical Dimensions of Restrictions on the Blind and the Lame in Texts from Qumran," *DSD* 8, no. 1 (2001): 38-50; Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: interpreting mental and physical differences*.

more closely and specifically associated with the business of sacrifice and the entry of the individual into the sanctuary of the Lord's assembly (קהל). This prohibition is formally stated in Deuteronomy 23:2:

לֹא־יָבֹא פְצוּע־דָּכָא וְכִרְוֹת שִׁפְכָה בַקְהֵל יְהוָה

He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord.

For the modern reader, it is surprising and interesting to note that any notion of personal misfortune in the acquisition of disability appears to have been a totally alien concept.

Somatic Defects — מומים

Olyan supposes that, for the Israelites, the cardinal sign of a 'defect' was a 'lack of symmetry' This is interesting since symmetry has, particularly in Western civilization and art, so often been held up as a sign of beauty. However we may equate a lack of symmetry with what Olyan calls a 'blurring of physical boundaries' and it has already been noted that a similar set of criteria operated for Mary Douglas in her understanding of taboo and impurity. From the mum-lists, Olyan identifies the following conditions: blindness, lameness, loss of body parts (eye, tooth etc), deformity (flat nose), superfluous parts, fractured limbs, kypho-scoliosis, dwarfism, *coloboma iridis*, dermatitis (but see צרעת Chapter 6) and, of course, injury or abnormality of the genitalia.

It is important to understand that neither צרעת nor זוב were seen as *blemishes* or *defects* although they share the same two defining criteria either of being a visible sign of [usually dermopathic] *platydysmorphism* or of involvement of the genitals. Moreover, there is no textual evidence to suggest that any distinction was made as to

the extent of these physical defects either, in time, or space, nor to whether they were congenital or acquired. The only possible distinction appears to have been between naturally-occurring blemishes and those inflicted judicially under the *lex talionis* or upon those vanquished in battle. This lack of distinction was, of course, shared by זוב and צרעת. Nor was asymmetry obligatorily a prerequisite of stigmatization by a defect.³⁵

In the Hebrew Bible, therefore, a defect appears to have been definable no more precisely than by saying it was a congenital or acquired blurring of somatic physical boundaries, not necessarily visible (if we include genital afflictions), and not necessarily with any clear asymmetry, time-course, degree of severity or associated dysfunction. One cannot help but marvel at this imprecision which must have offered great scope and convenience for stigmatizing others.

Priests with defects were destined for a miserable lot: a high priest fared even worse. Since the acquisition of congenital defects is a function of parental genetics and the presence of acquired defects an entirely fortuitous consequence of life-style and its misfortunes, it was inevitable that some priests would necessarily exhibit defects. The stigma of this was undoubtedly made worse by the closed shop restricting the priesthood to the seed of Aaron. This arrangement had the advantage of providing guaranteed employment and status for Levi family members but also the disadvantages of inbreeding. An afflicted priest was not, however, totally barred from practising. As long as he did not offer sacrifices or approach the veil of the tabernacle, his condition did not imperil the sanctuary and its offerings, and we can assume he could find other more menial sacerdotal tasks to occupy his time. His

³⁵ This has, in the past been seen as having been the case by reference to Numbers 12:12 *Let her not, I pray, be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb:* אל־נָא תְהִי כַמֵּת אֲשֶׁר בְּצִאתוֹ מֵרַחֵם אִמּוֹ וַיֹּאכַל חֲצִי בִשְׂרוֹ

stigmatization, in the eyes of his fellows, was that he had much greater potential than they to pollute the sanctuary and his marginalization and/or relegation to a lower status was, for them, prophylactic sacramental hygiene, justifiable as an apotropaic measure in the interest of society as a whole. This is not to suggest that the defective priest's lot was a happy one, for banishment from the sanctuary distanced him from the deity. This was in cultic terms, a significant social and religious disadvantage for any individual, not least a professional hierophant.

The above treatment combines as *מומים*, visible anatomical blemishes and genital affections. Olyan is less willing to make this conflation and although he broadly subscribes to the above ideas, he is quite specific that the individual with any sort of genital affliction was stigmatized for an entirely different reason. He also asserts that the prohibition that those with blemishes may not enter the assembly of Yahweh (קהל יהוה) implied a greater geographical involvement than the sanctuary. The principal misfortune of the genitally disabled, according to Olyan, is that they cannot reproduce and this capacity was a *sine qua non* for the eugenic management and maintenance of the cult of the Israelite community. Whatever the mechanism by which they acquired their genital mutilation, they were no longer *eiusdem generis*. Whatever the pathology of *מומים* involving the genitalia, the result was to put the sufferer exactly on a par with the *זב/זבה* of Leviticus Chapter 15.

Circumcision, an exception

Olyan points out the interesting exception of circumcision.³⁶ This procedure undoubtedly shares, with some defects, the fact that it is an imposed physical

³⁶ Olyan, "Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and Its Environment."; Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: interpreting mental and physical differences*. Pp 36–38

alteration of the body and involves the genitals to boot.³⁷ Circumcision was viewed as a barbarous mutilation by Greek and Roman cultures yet in other cultures it was the foreskin (ערלה/ἀκροβυστία)³⁸ that was viewed as abhorrent and consequently it became an object of stigmatization associated with disgrace (הרפה — Genesis 34:14). Circumcision was seen by the Israelites as an *enabling rite*: the definitive sign, at the level of the individual, of the covenant made for them between God and Abraham, ברית מילה, (Genesis 17:13),

המול ימול יליד ביתך ומקנת כספך והיתה בריתי בבשרכם לברית עולם

περιτομῆ περιτομηθήσεται ὁ οἰκογενῆς τῆς οἰκίας σου καὶ ὁ ἀργυρώνητος καὶ ἔσται ἡ διαθήκη μου ἐπὶ τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν εἰς διαθήκη αἰώνιον³⁹

He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

The state of remaining uncircumcised within the Israelite community was, therefore, a misdeed deserving of ostracism and even the punishment of כרת — termination of one's lineage, (Genesis 17:14). This applied not only to natives but to their imported slaves and retainers.

וערל זכר אשר לא-ימול את-בשר ערלתו ונכרתה הנפש ההוא מעמיה את-בריתי הפר

And the uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

³⁷ However we should note that tattoos were not seen as 'defects'. This is mildly ironical since *στιγμα* was any injury caused by a sharp pointed instrument and particularly a tattoo.

³⁸ *ἀκροποσθία* in Classical Greek, and it is this form that has been used in medical terms such as *posthitis*

³⁹ It is interesting to note that Greek distaste for circumcision appears to have had no influence on the authors of the Septuagint.

Such prohibition obviously extended to the metaphorical usage of uncircumcision (in heart) as we can see from Ezekiel 44:9,

כה־אמר אדני יהוה כל־בן־נכר ערל לב וערל בשר לא יבוא אל־מקדשי לכל־בן־נכר
אשר בתוך בני ישראל

Thus saith the Lord God, No alien, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any alien that is among the children of Israel.

And we are left in no doubt as to the consequences of failing to apply this extension from anatomical circumcision to its metaphorical counterpart in Jeremiah 4:4,

המלו ליהוה והסרו ערלות לבבכם איש יהודה וישבי ירושלם פן־תצא כאש חמתי
ובערה ואין מכבה מפני רע מעלליכם

Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury go forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

Unsurprisingly then, the state of being circumcised would have been viewed as normal in Israelite society and as such it would not have been seen as a blemish in the way that another form of somatic re-arrangement of might have been seen.

The contrasting, Graeco–Roman view of circumcision, has been extensively and fascinatingly reviewed by Hodges.⁴⁰ The Hellenistic world was so vehemently against the mutilation of circumcision that, among others, Celsus devised an operation⁴¹ to reverse the condition and this and related procedures later became referred to as *epispasm* by association with the notion of ‘drawing-out’. Celsus’s

⁴⁰ F M Hodges, "The Ideal Prepuce in Ancient Greece and Rome: Male Genital Aesthetics and Their Relation to Lipodermos, Circumcision, Foreskin Restoration, and the Kynodesme," *Bull Hist Med* 75 (2001): 375–405.

⁴¹ Celsus, *De medicina*. With an English translation by W. G. Spencer. Vol III, Book VII:25, Pp 420–425.

operation has been variously improved upon and compared, by a number of surgical authors, with modern techniques of preputial reconstruction, (*acrobustioplasty*).⁴²

Non-defects

It is important now, to consider those conditions which, intuitively, might be thought to have been seen and treated as מומים but which were not. Most notable for their absence from the mum-lists are deafness, mutism and all forms of mental disability. Nowhere in the Hebrew Bible or Septuagint are any of these specifically defined and stigmatized as מומים yet deafness and mutism are nevertheless stigmatized in a lesser way. In the Hebrew Bible, deaf (חרש) and mute/dumb (אלם) individuals were not restricted by any cited law, in any way, from access to any cultic place or sacred activity. This is the case both for priests and for members of the general population. Despite this lack of restriction, as Olyan points out, deaf and dumb individuals frequently find themselves, in the biblical texts, associated with those suffering from other מומים; especially the blind and lame. This happens often and is surely not a random process. Olyan surmises that although deaf and dumb individuals were not seen as *somatically defective* in the way that e.g. the blind and lame and those with other listed מומים undoubtedly were, at the time there may have existed a wider generic classification that stretched so as to encompass both of these sub-categories. If there was any such sub-classification, it has not survived. There is no clear evidence to substantiate this idea; Olyan bases his assumptions on the fact that in

⁴² S B Brandes and J W McAninch, "Surgical methods of restoring the prepuce: a critical review," *BJU* 83, no. Suppl 1 (1999): 109-13. D M Greer, P C Mohl, and K A Sheley, "A Technique for Foreskin Reconstruction and Some Preliminary Results," *J Sex Res* 18, no. 4 (1982): 324-30. J P Rubin, "Celsus' decircumcision operation. Medical and historical implications," *Urol* 16, no. 1 (1980): 121-24.

Exodus 4:11, Yahweh takes responsibility for the creation of the disabled along with the able-bodied,

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלָיו מִי שָׁם פֶּה לְאָדָם אוּ מִי־יָשׁוּם אֶלֶם אוּ חָרַשׁ אוּ פֶקַח אוּ עוֹר הַלֵּא
אֲנִכִי יְהוָה

And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh a man dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? is it not I the Lord?

This statement by Yahweh is a specific parænetic aimed at Moses who is dithering at the prospect of confronting Pharaoh and his henchmen, and it is difficult to see a more specific intention. Nevertheless, the deity's role as creator of all things is a central pillar of Yahwistic theology. Leviticus 19:14 showers further confusion upon the question by appearing to associate blindness, which is clearly a מום, with deafness which clearly is not. However, although he counsels not to trip-up the blind on purpose, his remarks are not in any way of a legalistic nature nor do they, in any way, imply stigmatization.

לֹא־תִקְלַל חָרֵשׁ וּלְפָנָיו עוֹר לֹא תִתֵּן מִכְשַׁל וִירְאֵת מֵאֲלֵהֶיךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה

Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but thou shalt fear thy God: I am the Lord.

It seems possible that the priests, in formulating the levitical laws, may have treated *sensory* dysfunction with a more lenient viewpoint than *motor* defects. Perhaps they saw an association of these sensory deficits with weakness, dependence and vulnerability in a way that aroused their sympathy. The consequence of this sympathy⁴³ might have been the real or tacit operation of a sub-category of deficiencies combining established מומים with inherent sensorimotor elements with non-defects having similar properties. In contrast, we also find in the Hebrew Bible, instances of a less generous appreciation of these defects and non-defects where they

⁴³ Not a quality to be found in abundance in the Torah and entirely untypical of the priesthood

are used figuratively so that deafness and blindness become metaphors for incomprehension and ignorance. This metaphorical association of sensorimotor deficiency with intellectual dysfunction was widespread throughout the Ancient Near East and, as seen above (Psalm 115), it proved a useful argument against idolatry.

Unfortunately, we are left with no explanation that fully encompasses the observed textual instances that combine Olyan's *defects* and *non-defects*. It is possible that this sub-classification was overly pedantic and that the mum-lists could better be seen as having encompassed all of the physical and sensorimotor dysfunctions that are mentioned in the texts. If so, we have to postulate that there was a spectral gradation of the seriousness of all of these and, likewise, of the degree of stigmatization they engendered. This is an attractive theory but unfortunately there is no 'hard' evidence to support it.

The barren female

Olyan avoids this special case but it has been considered in some detail by Ackerman.⁴⁴ There is no question but that the זב or any male with a specific מום involving his genitalia, would be stigmatized on account of the real or perceived compromise of his reproductive capability. If we may paraphrase Isaiah 56:3, the male sufferer from any such reproductive dysfunction becomes, like the eunuch, a 'dried-up tree', (עץ יבש). In the female, we know that זוב, menstruation and parturition are all associated with a relatively low-level of stigmatization and impurity that precludes the woman in question from entering the sanctuary.⁴⁵ This

⁴⁴ S Ackerman, "The blind, the lame and the barren shall not come into the house " in *Disability Studies and Biblical Literature* (ed. Candida R. Moss and Jeremy Schipper; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

⁴⁵ See Chapter 6.

proscription for women is, therefore, precisely equivalent to that imposed upon both זב and זבה, having those מומים involving genital mutilation and, by implication, reproductive incapacitation. In the case of barrenness, the most obvious case of reproductive incapacitation in the female, the situation becomes complicated by the time-course of the condition. Barrenness is an oft-recurring subject in the Hebrew Bible and the centrepiece of a number of important narratives.⁴⁶ Ackerman has, from the viewpoint of the Documentary Hypothesis, examined all of the *barren woman stories* in the Hebrew Bible.⁴⁷ Her conclusion, based on these texts, is that the specific prohibitions of Deuteronomy 23:2 are in principle, equally applicable to barren women in that access to the sanctuary becomes forbidden to them. However, this prohibition differs in that it is not immediate but requires the passage of a certain time without the production of children before the woman can be formally declared to be barren, (1 Samuel 1:7). Olyan⁴⁸ too, agrees that barrenness, alone among what might be categorized as female genital blemishes, results in prohibitions and stigmatization commensurate with זב and the genital מומים seen in men, but, again, *only* after an appropriate period has elapsed in order to prove the chronicity and/or irreversibility of the barrenness. Ackermann summarizes this viewpoint by concluding that ‘The cult, even when providing some leeway, still marginalized barren women as a particular subgroup on account of their reproductive inability.’⁴⁹

⁴⁶ J.S. Baden, "The Nature of Barrenness in the Hebrew Bible," in *Disability Studies and Biblical Literature* (ed. Candida R. Moss and Jeremy Schipper; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). For an exhaustive account of the Greek view on this subject, see *περι αφορων*, in: Hippocrates et al., *Hippocrates*. Volume X, pp 327-395.

⁴⁷ Ackerman, "The blind, the lame and the barren shall not come into the house".

⁴⁸ Saul M. Olyan, *Rites and rank: hierarchy in biblical representations of cult* (Princeton, N.J Chichester: Princeton University Press, 2000).

⁴⁹ Ackerman, "The blind, the lame and the barren shall not come into the house". Pg 43.

The emphasis on sexual function and dysfunction

It is impossible not to notice the very considerable emphasis given to sexual function and dysfunction among the מומים and also in the broader field of the purity/impurity laws. Sexual disability, for the most part, is treated in a negative way throughout the Hebrew Bible and sexual activity in one form or another is a frequently recurring theme therein.^{50, 51}

Stewart has raised the question of why a whole and sexually perfect body should be regarded as ritually pure in the first place.⁵² In attempting to answer this question he rehearses the mum-lists in some detail and in relation to textual examples from the Hebrew Bible. He sees an initial contradiction between the effusive praise given to the blemish-free (female) body that is תמה:

כלך יפה רעיתי ומום אין בך

Thou art all fair, my love; and there is no spot in thee.

(Song of Songs 4:7)

and the more matter-of-fact levitical usage of תמים to denote those persons, or items, which by virtue of the absence of disqualifying מומים are acceptable for sacrificial rituals and as sacrificial animals but apparently fail to reach the empyrean of beauty.

⁵⁰ There is however, in the Hebrew Bible in general, a refreshing lack of the polar opposites of vulgarity and prurience served up in equal measure with hypocritical sanctimony and hyper-genteelness, such as we may find elsewhere in relation to the over-worked subject of sexuality and sexual peccadillos.

⁵¹ Ullendorff, in a scholarly yet highly amusing paper, has investigated the *Bawdy Bible* from a lexical and linguistic point of view. He concludes, '...there is in the Hebrew Bible, in prose and in poetry, in religious admonition and in secular love songs, a healthy and unabashed outspokenness which, in a sense, constitutes one of the great glories of the Old Testament. It can and does touch upon subjects and issues, candidly and ingenuously and with unvarnished vigour, and will give offence only to the squeamish and the lecherous.' Edward Ullendorff, "The Bawdy Bible," *Bull SOAS* 42, no. 3 (1979): 425-56.

⁵² D.T. Stewart, "Sexual Disabilities in the Hebrew Bible," in *Disability Studies and Biblical Literature* (ed. Candida R. Moss and Jeremy Schipper; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Pg 67 *et seq.*

However, if we consider the notion of *wholeness* as having the meaning of *perfect somatic integrity and outward appearance* and thus paving the way to *perfect holiness*, we can see the special case for sexual disorders of all forms representing a real or perceived category-violation of the *wholeness* necessary for proper reproductive function. As Douglas has pointed out, there appears to have been ‘a clear relationship between wholeness and holiness’,⁵³ such that where:

Absence of all מומים → somatic wholeness → purity → holiness

we may draw the parallel:

Absence of genital מומים → wholeness of reproductive potential →

purity → holiness

Today, we are universally concerned⁵⁴ with sexual performance and it is deficiencies in this capacity that are, today, seen as stigmatizing. In the Hebrew Bible, by contrast, it was the endpoint of sexual function, reproductive success, that was central to the achieving of *wholeness* and, thereby, *holiness*.

Of course, we know today, that some of the levitical מומים would not necessarily result in reproductive failure but it is easy to see how the ancients might have thought otherwise.

We can be reasonably certain also, that זוב did not carry the stigma that later generations applied to venereal diseases:⁵⁵ it would have been seen entirely as a manifestation of a failure of reproductive capacity.⁵⁶

⁵³ Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. Pp 64–71. See also, Poorthuis and Schwartz, *Purity and Holiness: the Heritage of Leviticus*.

⁵⁴ Indeed, obsessively fascinated, especially in the popular *media*.

⁵⁵ It was only with the advent of the *AIDS* pandemic in the 1980s that *VD Clinics* emerged from deepest obscurity, usually in dark corners of hospital grounds and were re-named *Departments of Sexually Transmitted Diseases* The abbreviation *STD* thereby took something of a downturn from its former, *Sacrae Theologiae Doctor*.

The menstrual taboo has been largely dealt with in Chapter 6. Phipps believes it to be a significant and continuing reason why women in Judaism and Islam — and even Christianity which has no impurity axe to grind, are to this day, excluded from positions of authority.⁵⁷

A passing mention must be made of ‘female circumcision’ since Cohen has raised the question of why Jewish females are *not* circumcised.^{58,59} There is no evidence, from any source, that procedures of this kind have ever been performed for ritualistic reasons among Jews. However, Cohen questions whether, if circumcision is the cardinal symbol of the Abrahamic covenant with God, the absence of any equivalent anatomical sign in females means that they are excluded from the covenant *or* that they are partakers in it but to a lesser degree. This observation may imply one or more of three things: (1) men have a privileged position within the covenant; (2) circumcision has become theologically over-rated; (3) women already possess some quality that is conferred upon men by circumcision. Cohen’s analysis of this situation relies most heavily on material from rabbinic texts but it is his consideration of the Torah that matters here. He notes a decline over time in the symbolic nature of the foreskin and its replacement, in symbolic importance, by the

⁵⁶ See Chapter 7 for a more detailed consideration.

⁵⁷ William E. Phipps, "The Menstrual Taboo in the Judeo-Christian Tradition," *J R&H* 19, no. 4 (1980): 298-303.

⁵⁸ Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Why aren't Jewish women circumcised? Gender and covenant in Judaism* (Berkeley ; London: University of California Press, 2005).

⁵⁹ Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a particularly topical, indeed one might almost say fashionable, subject in 2015 and the World Health Organization today recognizes four categories of this mutilation. Type I is partial clitoridectomy i.e. excision of the clitoral prepuce and it is this procedure that is, presumably, being considered by Cohen because it would be anatomically the near-equivalent of conventional circumcision in the male W.H.O. Type II is the removal of the clitoris and *labia minora*; Type III (infibulation), is partial external vulvectomy with midline closure to leave a small orifice for urine and menses. Type IV encompasses a range of symbolic piercing of the clitoris, and cutting into the vagina to widen it. World Health Organization, *Eliminating female genital mutilation: an interagency statement* (W.H.O., 2008).

*blood of circumcision.*⁶⁰ The later rabbis considered the shedding of menstrual blood to be the female equivalent of this necessary blood-loss of circumcision and argued for a symbolic equivalence. However, there is no evidence of such sophistry in biblical times and the inescapable conclusion is that circumcision, as the prime indicator of Israelitishness/Jewishness, lay exclusively with the male and relegated the female to a lower status. The briefest consideration of many cultures, before and after the Ancient Near East, and even today, does not make this a difficult proposition to accept.

Mental disability

Mental disability in the Hebrew Bible does not figure in the mum-lists but it was undoubtedly a stigmatized condition which usually led to the ostracism or at least marginalization of the affected individual. The mentally disabled individual was described, as a rule, as either a *fool* or a *madman* and was always the subject of contempt. There is a precedent for this in the Ancient Near East, in Babylonian wisdom literature, where it is made clear that it was the fate of the mentally disabled to be marginalized and consigned to lowly rank. The underlying reason for this rejection and/or contempt in Israelite society was, presumably, that the mentally disabled were rejected by Yahweh as inferior and/or imperfect beings. The classic example of this is Saul's madness in 1 Samuel 16;14,

ורוח יהוה סרה מעם שאול ובעתו רוח־רעה מאת יהוה

Now the spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.

⁶⁰ In ritual Jewish circumcision, — בְּרִית מִלָּה — the *mohel* is obliged to supply visual evidence of blood-shedding. In the more Orthodox communities, this precludes the use of a crushing clamp which might be applied, in conventional surgical practice, to reduce blood-loss on excision of the prepuce.

Madness appears along with a number of other מומים in the extended covenantal curse to be found in Deuteronomy 28:28–34.

יככה יהוה בשגעון ובעורון ובתמהון לבב

The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and with blindness, and with astonishment of heart:

(Deuteronomy 28:28)

The priestly authors appear to have been somewhat eclectic in their interpretation of the nature of mental disability and, on some occasions, they cast it in the form of florid psychosis while at other times they imply mild neurosis, feeble-mindedness or modesty of intellect.⁶¹ The latter interpretation is also favoured by the author(s) of Proverbs where fools figure prominently and where *fool* implies one who fails to apply common sense, understanding and sometimes, one unwilling to toe the line of orthodoxy.

In the Wisdom Literature of Proverbs and Qoheleth, the preferred words for *fool* are אויל, כסיל and סבל. These frequently stand in opposition to *wisdom* (חכמה).

Similarly, a word to be found in Psalms and Proverbs specifically meaning ‘simple-minded’ is פתי. Outside the wisdom literature, the idea of a fool is more often

established using a verb such as סבל or גבל. The more serious state of *madness* is

also rendered verbally (שגען or הלל), usually in the form of a *pu'al* participle (*po'al*

מְהוּלָל or מְשֻׁגָּע *pu'al*). However, these choices cannot be categorized with any

certainty and the language of mental disability in the Hebrew Bible must be

⁶¹ Until quite recently the terms *moron*, *imbecile* and *idiot* were used in psychiatry as technical terms to classify increasing levels of mental deficiency and to distinguish them from *psychoses*, *neuroses* and *personality disorders*. These categories have, today, acquired wholly pejorative meanings and so are considered indelicate and have fallen into desuetude.

considered both complex and ambiguous.⁶² Nevertheless, we can deduce that all of the words used throughout the Hebrew Bible to describe the various facets of mental disability have some common denominators. They all imply a loss of self-control in one form or another and to a greater or lesser degree. Words such as, anger, shock, anguish drunkenness, insanity, hot-headedness, carelessness, risk-taking, and intellectual retardation may all qualify as appropriate to describe the מהולל or the משוגע at one place and time or another.

Biblical narratives containing accounts of mental disability are much less common than those involving somatic מומים.⁶³ It is interesting to speculate how far the notion of מומים requiring a visual component may or may not be relevant. Mental disability is, traditionally, associated with devaluing qualities such as weakness, vulnerability, over-dependency. This is true throughout the Hebrew Bible and in much literature from other quarters up until modern times. In literature generally, we encounter two reactions⁶⁴ to the mentally disabled and in either case, it is to these same qualities that each reaction takes place. Both are *ex grege* in the sense of the sufferer's failing to achieve Douglas's wholeness. Either, mentally disabled individuals were seen as a threat, or as a menace to the individual, community or land; or as an object requiring care and attention. In some cases of the latter, which on the whole belongs to more recent times, we even see the simpleton surrounded by an aura of mystique and becoming an object of religious veneration.

⁶² Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: interpreting mental and physical differences*. Pg 64. Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*.

⁶³ But see Appendix 4

⁶⁴ Never equal and opposite!

The moron as a menace.

The Hebrew Bible certainly does not see anything good in the mental defective. However, there appears to be two different reactions to mental deficiency. In the P texts and worldview it has been seen that mental disability was not a מום but was stigmatizing to a lesser degree. Perhaps it was sub-classified in a wider scheme of categories that has been lost to us. The best we can do, since neither ‘fool’ nor ‘mad’ nor ‘madness’ appear anywhere in Leviticus, is to suppose that the level of stigmatization afforded by priests to the mentally disabled was quite low. Most likely, neurosis went unnoticed except perhaps by the immediate family; psychosis was almost certainly perceived [visually] as ‘raving madness’ and incurable.

From the story of Saul (1 Samuel 16:14–23), we know that mental disability was seen as a specific sign of divine rejection. It was clearly something to be noticed but equally clearly, not a matter for the priests and their rituals.

More difficult to understand is the inclusion of *madness* in the malediction of Deuteronomy 28:28–34. To be included in a curse would surely be highly stigmatizing and, therefore, important. Admittedly, this is D material from a later date when it may have been seen fit, for political reasons, to stiffen-up the consequences of misbehaviour. It is interesting, nevertheless, to see the close association in verse 28 (above) of madness, not a מום, and blindness, one of the true מומים. The association of madness and vision continues into verse 34:

והיית משגע ממראה עיניך אשר תראה
so that thou shalt be mad for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.

This literally means that what the cursed one ‘*sees in his blindness*’ will drive him mad: this is surely describing an unpleasant hallucination, possibly schizophrenia.

We have to go back to verse 15 to find out for what crime this was condign punishment. It turns out, unsurprisingly, to be a failure to observe all of the Lord's commandments and statutes. Here then, we see, not punishment *for* madness, but punishment *by* madness. Either way it is madness that stigmatizes and threatens individuals, society and, ultimately, הארץ.

The innocent simpleton

The *pure fool* or *holy fool* is a well-known literary and artistic device. We are all familiar with the simple-minded but innocent, kindly and generous *Quasimodo* of Victor Hugo;⁶⁵ or *Parsifal*⁶⁶ — the *Pure Fool* — totally innocent until enlightened by compassion, ('*Durch Mitleid wissend, der reine Tor*') — in Wagner's eponymous *Gesamtkunstwerk*; or the *Holy Fool* (юродивый) in Mussorgsky's opera, *Boris Godonov*. The last of these characters is a well known feature of the ascetic wing of the Eastern (especially Russian) Orthodox Church and has been considered in detail by Ivanov.⁶⁷ The 'official' view of the Eastern Orthodox Church is that holy fools feign insanity in order to conceal their perfection from the world. They thus avoid praise which would be unacceptable to their austere and abstinent ethic. A more likely explanation, according to Ivanov, is that the юродивый, in order to achieve his aim, behaves as an innocent and feeble-minded simpleton to stimulate, among his gullible audience, a misplaced perception and empathy, towards his [supposed] sobriety, morality and piety, unsullied by the detritus of run-of-the-mill humanity.

⁶⁵ *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1831)

⁶⁶ The innocent and ill-fated 'Sir Percival' of Arthurian legend.

⁶⁷ S. A. Ivanov, *Holy fools in Byzantium and beyond* (English; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

This idea of the innocent yet ingenuous and benign simpleton is wholly absent from the Hebrew Bible. It is a construct of later thought processes requiring a more abstract philosophical mental temperament.

Blemished individuals in Israelite society.

Blemished individuals, though consigned to a lower social degree were, nevertheless, widely tolerated and not necessarily ill-treated. Olyan has suggested that they were seen as sub-human⁶⁸ only inasmuch as they were restricted in their fulfilling *all* of the functions one should expect of whole human beings.⁶⁹ This is Douglas's viewpoint also, but Olyan goes a step further and suggests the paradigm for this departure from wholeness was derived from a consideration of the negative features of idols. This association has been mentioned above (Psalm 115:5–8) in relation to sensorimotor dysfunction. The blemished and idols may be seen as *sui generis*: innocuous and not objects of fear, as we are told in Jeremiah 10:5,

כתמר מקשה המה ולא ידברו נשוא ינשוא כי לא יצעדו אל־תיראו מהם כִּי־לא ירעו
וגם־היטיב אין אותם

They are like a palm tree, of turned work, and speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good.

Olyan, therefore, supposes that the holders of מומים and those with related disabilities are analogous to idols by virtue of their inertia. Society is, nevertheless, saddled with them and, although they may be non-contributors within the community, they are harmless and, most importantly, their defects are not contagious.

⁶⁸ There is an unattractive odour of 'Untermenschen' here.

⁶⁹ Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: interpreting mental and physical differences*. Pg 127

An important conclusion based on the above is that we cannot view מומים in relation to the טהור/טמא tension in the way we have come to view צרעת and זוב. In general, cases of physical and mental disability, while undoubtedly lowering the social standing of the afflicted individual, were treated by a policy of *laissez faire*.

SUMMARY

Mutilation, natural blemishes and the levitical disease-stigmata (צרעת and זוב) all have in common one or the other of *only two* features. They must either be *visible* and so on public display or, if not visible, they *must involve the genitals*.

In the Hebrew Bible, the possession of both physical and mental disabilities clearly resulted, to a variable degree, in the marginalization and stigmatization of affected individuals. We can distinguish a hierarchical spectrum of defilement to simple disfigurement ranging from those conditions, צרעת and זוב, that unequivocally caused overt ritual impurity, to those that merited a lesser and often rather opaque form of marginalization and stigmatization. At the more serious end of the spectrum were the two overarching categories, (1) visible major disfigurement of the body's surface *dermopathic platydysmorphism* (צרעת) and (2) involvement of the genitalia so as to compromise reproductive capacity (זוב). The texts suggest that blemish, although stigmatizing, occupied a lower order within the hierarchy and so appears to have interested the priests only when it affected one of their own number and in such cases, restrictions were imposed exclusively over entering the sanctuary.

The deaf are seen nowhere in the Hebrew Bible as ritually impure but were undoubtedly viewed as socially inferior to the whole-bodied. This distinction is more often implied than specified and it is never formally quantified in the texts.

Among the ordinary people, such a response was, perhaps, simply a fear of ugliness, weakness, incapacity, ignorance, immobility and those things that Douglas has classified as *antitypes* of an ingrained, mentally-programmed *wholeness paradigm*. Blemish, tells us therefore, that not every category violation of wholeness went on to cause ritual impurity. These lesser category-violations were still antitypes of wholeness and so consigned the sufferer to a lower social stratum. However, as far as we can tell from the available evidence, they did not transgress the strict purity requirements of the priestly *Weltanschauung*. This may be because blemish is never associated with contagion which is the cardinal feature of those major causes of ritual impurity *צרעת* and *זוב*. Contagion, therefore, must be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8 — CONTAGION

CONTAGION today, for us, is a feature of certain disease processes; for the Israelites, it appears to have been an important function of ritual impurity. The Oxford English Dictionary¹ defines contagion as ‘The communication of disease from body to body by contact direct or mediate.’ and this is, perhaps, the most widely understood definition. However, one should also be mindful of the noun ‘contagion’s’ usage to mean, ‘a contagious disease or sickness; a plague or pestilence;’ for this is a usage that was more common in former times than it is today.

*And of thy light my soule in prison lighte
That troubled is by the contagioun
Of my body, and also by the wighte
Of earthly luste and fals affeccioun;*

(Chaucer, Prologue to The Second Nun’s Tale c.1386)

The central question to be addressed in this chapter is whether, for the Israelites, contagion was seen as intrinsic to the essence of ritual impurity (i.e the concept of impurity *per se*), or whether it was regarded primarily as part of the pathology of the specific impurifying disease process (צִרְעָת, זֹב, etc), thereby becoming entailed secondarily as a feature of ritual impurity. In either case it was a sign of major rather than minor impurity. This dilemma calls into question the role of the priest as mediator of both theological and public-health matters, since it was he who identified the presence and risks of contagion and dictated the course of action to be taken.

¹ J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED; 20 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press., 1989).

In previous chapters, consideration has been given to healthcare in Ancient Israel, the levitical purity laws and their textual representations, and to the spectrum of levitical stigmata, (מום and זוב, צרעת). The first two of these, if we apply the modern definition that has been given above, quite clearly share the common features either of *contagion* itself or of the *fear of contagion*. The priestly ideology appears to have understood a spectrum of contagion running in the direction of decreasing severity thus: צרעת → זוב (→ מום). This relationship needs further investigation, beginning with words used to imply transmission and how their semantic usage differed among Ancient Near Eastern civilizations and from usage in modern times. Such a process must logically begin along comparative lines and contain an account of how modern terminology regarding *contagion* evolved within the nosologies of the Ancient Near East and its daughter civilizations.

NOSOLOGIES OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Each of the Ancient Near Eastern civilizations² had its own approach to, and understanding of, illness and disease and the notion of contagion would inevitably have figured, to some degree in all of these.

If we seek a common origin for the concept of contagion and the transmissibility of disease, we should look first to the largely pastoral nature of ancient societies. This would have entailed the care of animals in addition to crops. It may be hard today, to imagine the social importance of the herd in ancient society; but this cannot be overstressed. Healthy animals were essential for the livelihood of the individual and the community. The seasonal transfer of grazing animals to different pastures, often over substantial distances and known as the *transhumance*, must have been

² See also Appendix 2.


associated with a considerable risk of injury and disease among the flocks. It is not difficult to imagine that a need for at least a rudimentary system of animal healthcare must have evolved and how the notion of contagion might, over time, have arisen from observation of the behaviour of healthy and unhealthy domestic animals and the need to nourish and protect them.

A comparative approach

It is debateable how far, even if the regular caveats are applied, *a posteriori* arguments can be expected to contribute significantly to studies of this kind. The risk of criticism for reception history and revisionism is always present. A potential virtue is the opportunity a comparative approach give us to identify ethnological and ecological *parallels* which, while not necessarily identical across civilizations, may, nevertheless, point to common features. For example, we have a great deal of nosological information from the Mesopotamian civilizations (see below) which can be followed-through sequentially into pre-Islamic Arab civilization, the *Golden Age of Islam* and then into modern Islamic culture. This is invaluable in any study of the evolution of medical practice especially, since it offers the bonus of a near-continuum from a highly polytheistic civilization to a firmly monotheistic one. In contrast, we know very little regarding the parallel nosology of early Canaanite/Israelite civilization. Second-Temple texts and those from the Rabbis tend to be interpretative rather than innovative and so offer only half the picture.³ A brief review of other ANE cultures and what they became is an appropriate starting point for comparison.

³ L I Conrad and D Wujastyk, *Contagion, Perspectives in Pre-modern Societies* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2000). Preface xiii.

Egypt

There is no textual evidence that the concept of contagion figures in Egyptian medicine, at least not in its present sense. The word  (i3dt)⁴ is often seen to mean ‘pestilence’, ‘disease’, ‘scourge’ or ‘plague’ and this is the nearest that one comes at least to the alternative, modern meaning of contagion. The famous Egyptian *Medical Papyri* make no mention of the specific idea of the transmission of disease by contagion.⁵

Mesopotamia

Mesopotamia is quite another matter. There is a wealth of cuneiform material, much of it still untranslated and some, of what has been translated, is concerned with medical matters. What has been described as the ‘...earliest written account, [so far recorded], of a case of contagious disease’⁶ is to be found on one of the tablets from Mari in present-day Syria.⁷ The Mari tablets, most of which are to be found in the Aleppo National Museum,⁸ date from the 18th century BCE.

It has been claimed by Neufeld that the Mari Tablet *ARM X*, 129 contains examples of the following, all of which were recorded in Akkadian cuneiform, here for the first time:

- i. *The association of contagion with disease*
- ii. *Recognition of direct and indirect transmission of diseases*
- iii. *The idea of isolation for the protection of uninfected individuals*
- iv. *Infection by fomites*⁹

⁴ Budge, *Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary*. Budge, *Egyptian Language. Easy Lessons in Egyptian Hieroglyphics with Sign List*. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*.

⁵ Bryan, *The Papyrus Ebers*. Breasted, *The Edwin Smith Surgical Papyrus (Facsimile, hieroglyphic transliteration and translation)*.

⁶ Edward Neufeld, "The Earliest Document of a Case of Contagious Disease in Mesopotamia, (Mari Tablet ARM X, 129)," *JANES* 18 (1986): 53-66.

⁷ W Heimpel, *Letters to the King of Mari* (Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003).

⁸ Assuming it is still standing. At the time of writing, a civil war is raging in Syria and the town of Aleppo has sustained some of the worst fighting and artillery-damage.

⁹O.E.D. → Latin *fōmes*, *fōmitis* touchwood, tinder: The morbidic matter (of a disease). More commonly, in medicine today, a technical term for any porous substance capable of absorbing and retaining contagious effluvia.

- v. *The neologistic usage of the Akkadian word ‘muštaḥḥiz’ (𒌦 𒌦𒌦 𒌦𒌦𒌦 𒌦𒌦𒌦 𒌦𒌦𒌦) = ‘catching’ applied to disease in the sense of its being transmissible.*

The importance of the Mari tablets and their primacy in the establishment of the above concepts and principles for future medical practice, cannot be overstressed.

Tablet A2099 was unearthed in Room 108 of the palace at Mari and is a letter from the king of Mari, Zimrilim (a contemporary of Hammurabi), to one of his wives Queen Šibtu. It is worth recording the whole text¹⁰ here and noting its complete lack of either moral tone or sympathy for the unfortunate Nanname. The translation here is by W.L. Moran, (1980).¹¹

Line	Akkadian Transliteration	Translation
1	[a-na ^m] Ši-ib-tu	[To] Šibtu (my wife)
2	[qi-b] i-ma	[s]ay:
3	[um-m]a be-el-ki-i-ma	your lord (husband) says:
4	eš-me-e-ma ^{mi} Na-an-na-me	I have heard that Nanname
5	si-im-ma-am mar-ša-at	is suffering from a skin lesion
6	u it-ti ekallim ^{lim}	yet she frequents
7	ma-ga-al wa-aš-ba-at-ma	the palace
8	sinnišatim ^{mes} ma-da-tim it-ti-ša-ma	it will infect many
9	i-sa-ab-bi-ik	women with her (ailment)
10	i-na-an-na dan-na-tim lu-uk-ni-ma	Now, then give strict orders
11	i-na ka-as i-ša-at-tu-ú	that no one drink
12	ma-am-ma-an la i-ša-at-ti	from the cup she uses
13	i-na ^{gis} kussem la úš-ša-bu	and no one sit
14	ma-am-ma-an la úš-ša-ab	on the seat on which she sits
15	ú i-na ^{gis} eršim ša it-ti-il-lu	and no one lie
16	ma-am-ma-an la it-te-e-el-ma	on the bed on which she lies
17	sinnišatim ^{mes} ma-da-tim	so it should not infect
18	it-ti-ša-ma	many women
19	[f]a i-sa-ab-bi-ik	with her (ailment)
20	[si-im-m]u-um šu-ú mu-uš-ta-aḥ-ḥi-iz	that [skin les]ion is catching.

Zimrilim appears to have been away from Mari at the time of writing so it is unclear how he knew of the illness of one of the women there. Neufeld has suggested that the rather matter-of-fact tone of this document could mean that it was concerned with procedures and activities that were well known and understood in the society of

¹⁰ Which should be compared with the *hygiene* regulations in Leviticus 13, 14 and 15.

¹¹ W L Moran, "Review of ARMTX," *JAOS* 100 (1980): 186-89.

Mari and that, while communicable diseases were seen as a serious problem, they were something which was entirely customary in Mesopotamian society. Neufeld goes on to observe that the document is lacking in four, seemingly important, points about which it would have been interesting to know more. These are:

- i. Any indication as to the duration of the proposed period of isolation.
- ii. The proposed location of any quarantine
- iii. How one should deal with any fomites
- iv. Any indication of the time/season which might help in identifying the disease.

These questions are, of course, raised and answered, to some degree, in Leviticus. The language of Tablet ARM X 129 is, classical Akkadian, with the single exception of the proper name of the sufferer *Nanname*, which appears nowhere else in Akkadian or any other Semitic language. Moran translates the word *simmu(m)* (*si-im-mu/GIG* = 𒌦 𒌦𒌦 𒌦𒌦 / 𒌦𒌦𒌦𒌦) specifically as ‘skin lesion’ and in line twenty he associates it with another Akkadian word *muštahhiz*, (𒌦𒌦 𒌦𒌦 𒌦𒌦𒌦 𒌦𒌦𒌦 𒌦𒌦𒌦 = ‘catching’), so that we are left in no doubt as to the contagious nature of this condition. However, other authorities give a more general translation of *simmu(m)* as ‘wound’ or ‘disease’.¹² Neufeld suggests that this may, therefore, signify a wound that has become infected. However, he appears to regard *simmu* as a relatively mild disease on the grounds of the existence, in Akkadian, of another word *epqu(m)*, 𒌦𒌦 𒌦𒌦, which is widely thought to be equivalent to the Hebrew צרעת. In the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary,¹³ the word *epqu(m)*, 𒌦𒌦 𒌦𒌦 is translated simply [and unhelpfully] as ‘leprosy’. It appears to be a specific case of the generic *epqennu/epqennu*, (*ep-qé-en-nu* 𒌦𒌦 𒌦𒌦𒌦 𒌦𒌦) meaning ‘skin disease’ which itself is

¹² Soden and Meissner, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (3 vols). Vol 2, pg 1045b. Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon*. Pg586, #705.

¹³ See Chapter 6 and also, Oppenheim and Reiner, eds., *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* Pg 246.

noted as a synonym for *simmu(m)* (*si-im-mu/GIG* = 𒌷 𒌵𒍪 𒌶/𒌷𒌵𒍪). In Von Soden's Akkadian Dictionary,¹⁴ *epqu(m)* is translated simply as 'Aussatz'. Its precise meaning, however, appears to be as obscure as 𒅗𒅗𒅗, and several alternatives, from Old Babylonian, are attested, for example, ^{lú}*saḫar-šub-ba*, (𒌷𒌵𒍪 𒌶𒌷𒌵𒍪 𒌶𒌷𒌵𒍪 𒌶𒌷𒌵𒍪). The phrase, *ša e-ep[ib]-qa-am ma-lu-ú*, (𒌷𒌵𒍪 𒅗𒅗𒅗 𒌶𒌷𒌵𒍪 𒌶𒌷𒌵𒍪 𒌶𒌷𒌵𒍪 𒌶𒌷𒌵𒍪 𒌶𒌷𒌵𒍪 𒌶𒌷𒌵𒍪), which means 'become covered with *epqu*', is also attested in several tablets. The question is whether there is, indeed, an 'equation', 𒅗𒅗𒅗 = *epqu(m)* = *simmu*, but if so, it remains unsolved and probably unsolvable. Neufeld is almost certainly correct in his rejection of the suggestion by several authors that 𒅗𒅗𒅗/*epqu(m)* was the lepromatous form of Hansen's disease [true leprosy], while *simmu* was the milder tuberculoid form. This reasoning would seem both unjustifiably tendentious and highly improbable, given numerous arguments *passim*, in this thesis and elsewhere, about the nosology of *Elephantiasis Graecorum* and Hansen's disease. Huehnergard, in the vocabulary provided with his Akkadian Grammar Book,¹⁵ defines *epqu* as 'leprosy' [*sic*], and *simmu* as 'skin disease'.

It is, however, the presumed neologism, *muštahḫiz* (𒌶𒌷𒌵𒍪 𒌶𒌷𒌵𒍪 𒌶𒌷𒌵𒍪 𒌶𒌷𒌵𒍪) that is of particular interest in Tablet ARM X 129 because it is used (in line 20), in conjunction with *simmu*. This combination of a disease and the notion of transmissibility clearly implies contagion and/or infection. Although the word in line 20 of the tablet is *muštahḫiz*, (*mu-uš-ta-aḫ-ḫi-iz*, 𒌶𒌷𒌵𒍪 𒌶𒌷𒌵𒍪 𒌶𒌷𒌵𒍪 𒌶𒌷𒌵𒍪), Neufeld suggests that this may be a variant, or scribal error for the similar word *muštanḫiz*, (*mu-uš-ta-an-ḫi-iz*,

¹⁴ Soden and Meissner, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (3 vols). Vol 1 pg 230.

¹⁵ Huehnergard, *A Grammar of Akkadian*.

𒀭𒀭𒀭𒀭𒀭𒀭𒀭𒀭𒀭𒀭). His rationale for making this assertion, is that the latter can be linked semantically to the *Štn* verbal stem, which is the iterative stem, of *Š* verbs in Akkadian.¹⁶ Huehnergard, notes that the use of the *Štn* stem is especially common in Old Babylonian and, therefore, highly characteristic of the Mari letters.¹⁷ The parent verb, according to Neufeld, is *aḥazu* (𒀭𒀭𒀭𒀭𒀭) when the word is spelt syllabically. However it may alternatively be represented by a single ideogram (dab₅/ku, 𒀭𒀭).¹⁸ This word *aḥazu* is a cognate of the Hebrew verb $\sqrt{חזק}$ ¹⁹ and means, in both languages, to ‘hold’, ‘seize’ or ‘grasp’.²⁰ Neufeld argues that if we add the additional meaning of the iterative *Štn* stem and use the participial, (i.e. adjectival), form, *muštanḥiz*, we can arrive at meanings something like, ‘always infectious’ or ‘continually communicable’, ‘ever catching’ and, therefore, by extension, ‘contagious’. However, since this word is effectively a *hapax legomenon*²¹ in Akkadian, we are obliged to take regard of the speculative nature of Neufeld’s argument. Nevertheless, Zimrilim, in ordering the isolation of the unfortunate Nanname, quite clearly perceived her affliction as *muštahḥiz*, (‘catching’) and this undoubtedly caused him alarm and raised concern and a need for the institution of some urgent community health measures.

Unus testis, nullus testis notwithstanding, this single text, may go a long way towards, convincing us that the notion of contagion, isolation/quarantine and the idea of fomites was extant and active as early as Mesopotamian tradition.

¹⁶ Huehnergard, *A Grammar of Akkadian*. §36.2 pg 436.

¹⁷ Ibid §29.4, pg 326.

¹⁸ Neufeld, "The Earliest Document of a Case of Contagious Disease in Mesopotamia, (Mari Tablet ARM X, 129)." Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon*.

¹⁹ Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*.

²⁰ Also ‘learn’ and ‘begin’. For the various stems for this verb, see: King, *First Steps in Assyrian*. Pg 319. Soden and Meissner, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (3 vols).

²¹ The only other known occurrence is on Tablet ARM X 130.

Arabia

The medical traditions of both pre-Islamic and Islamic Arabia, are important because they represent the end-point of what began in Mesopotamia. The interest in the present context is to compare the history of *contagion* in this progression with the parallel progression from Israelite to later Jewish medicine. Arabian and early Islamic medicine once, in the ‘Golden Age’ the most well-developed and forward-looking, declined over time into the Dark Ages.

In pre-Islamic society, Arab tribal tradition considered epidemics and diseases to have been caused by demons and other forms of evil spirit. Modern Islam, except in the most extremely fundamentalist instances, fully embraces modern medicine and must, of course, concern itself with the modern pathological concepts of contagion and infection. The Arabic word for contagion, which has remained unchanged from the time of the Prophet and is used today in both religious and medical circles, is *عدوى* (*‘adwā*) from *عدو* (= run, course). It undoubtedly has, over time, enjoyed a much wider usage than the ‘contagion’ of modern English. In particular, the *عدو* is associated with ephemeral actions and transitivity and especially in the passage of something from one locus to another.

لَيْسَ عَلَى الْأَعْمَى حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْأَعْرَجِ حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى

‘It is no fault in the blind, nor in the lame, nor in one afflicted with illness....’

(Qur’an, Surat 24, al-Nur v 61)²²

On account of this absence of fault, the Prophet Muḥammad is said to have proclaimed ‘No contagion’ (*لاعدوى* *‘la‘adwā*), and as a result the more fundamentalist among Islamic religious scholars have felt unable to accept the idea

²² Ali, *The Holy Qur’an (text and translation)*.

of contagion's being a *purely* medical concept and so deny any notion of the transmissibility of disease from afflicted to healthy human individuals. Such a stance has been seen as reinforcing a much more fundamental and important doctrine of Islam, namely, the denial of any possibility that events occurring in the world are independent of the will of God/Allah. The situation is further compounded by the doctrine of the immutability of the words of the Prophet.²³ We have no direct evidence to make us suppose that a parallel approach was taken under the priestly worldview. However this must remain as a possibility.

Greece and Rome

There is no obvious word in Greek for *contagion*; a number of authors have suggested the noun ἐπαφή = 'touch', 'touching', 'handling' and the verb ἐπαφάω = 'touch on the surface', 'stroke'; or the noun, [συν-] ἀναχρωσις = 'discolouring', 'taint', 'infection', possibly from the verb ἀναχρώννυμι = 'colour anew', 'discolour'.²⁴ There is scant evidence to attest to this usage in either Hippocrates or Galen. However, the word عدوى (*adwā*, see above), does appear in translations of Galen into Arabic and appears to imply transmission by contagion as understood in modern medicine. The Latin *contagio*, unsurprisingly, appears in Roman medical writings but is nowhere specifically defined. It has been suggested that, as far as the Greeks concerned themselves with contagion, as we see it today, they embodied it in metaphors of sharing and pollution. With the translation of Greek medical writings

²³ A Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Folio Society, 2009). L I Conrad, "A Ninth-Century Muslim Scholar's Discussion of Contagion," in *Contagion, Perspectives in Pre-modern Societies*. (ed. L I; Wujastyk Conrad, D; Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2000); L I Conrad and D Wujastyk, *Contagion, Perspectives in Pre-modern Societies* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2000).

²⁴ Liddell and Scott, *Greek English Lexicon*.

into Latin and Arabic, these metaphors became substantivized into the more concrete ideas of touching and transferring.²⁵

It is important to remember that both Greek and Roman nosologies, subscribed to the *humoral theory of disease* which saw disease as the result of *emanations* or *miasmata*, (Greek, *μίασμα* ‘pollution’, and *μιάλνεν* ‘to pollute’). Such a system of transmission might be loosely compatible with the modern notion of airborne infection but it does not fit in with the modern idea of contagion. It has been suggested that the establishment and development of the doctrine of *miasma* was sufficient, for the Greeks, as an explanation of the dissemination of disease and there was, therefore, no need for the idea of contagion.²⁶

All of this suggests that Greek and Roman medicine embodied a completely separate and different etymological and nosological concept of contagion that was entirely distinct from those of Egypt, Mesopotamia or Syria-Palestine and was, therefore, in all probability not the result of its having been handed down from any of these sources. We must suppose that by the time of Hellenic influence in Israel, an opportunity for the mingling of these contrasting views had arisen. How far this may have influenced the redactors of priestly writings is a matter for speculation and further investigation.

By the time of Pliny the Elder, (23CE – August 25th, 79 CE), the modern understanding of contagion had become firmly established in both Greek and Roman thought. Pliny gives an account of a skin disease called *mentagra*,²⁷ which he says was transmitted by kissing and exhibited a most unlikely social prevalence.

²⁵ V Nutton, "Did the Greeks Have a Word for It? Contagion and Contagion Theory in Classical Antiquity," in *Contagion, Perspectives in Pre-modern Societies*. (ed. L I; Wujastyk Conrad, D; Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2000).

²⁶ Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and purification in early Greek religion*.

²⁷ O.E.D., sycosis — an eruption about the chin, caused by inflammation of the hair follicles of the beard; also known as *chin gout*. *Mentagra* was probably a fungal disease, possibly *lichen λέιχην*, ‘the

Non fuerat haec lues apud maiores patresque nostros... ..nec sensere id malum feminae aut servitia plebesque humilis aut media, sed proceres veloci transitu osculi maxime.

This plague was unknown to our fathers and forefathers... ..Women were not liable to the disease, or slaves and the lower and middle classes, but the nobles were very much infected through the momentary contact of a kiss.

(*Plinii, Naturalis Historiae, Liber XXVI, iii*)

It is easy to see that women, [without beards], would be spared, but why slaves and the *plebes* should likewise be immune is unclear. The upper classes may have indulged themselves in an excess of kissing — perhaps as in the fashionable and ostentatious mode of greeting that is gaining popularity in present-day society — and by so doing put themselves at greater risk of contagious diseases.

ANCIENT SYRIA-PALESTINE

It is necessary now to grasp the nettle of the understanding of contagion in Israelite society. Lieber, makes the point that the inference of contagion, in the modern sense, can only be made ‘unequivocally’²⁸ from a single reference in the Hebrew Bible. This comprises two verses from Leviticus (14:46-47), and even then, it somewhat stretches the imagination to believe contagion as a [unlikely] mode of transmission for צרעת between a house and its occupant.

והבא אל-הבית כל-ימי הסגיר אתו יטמא עדי-הערב
והשכב בבית יכבס את-בגדיו והאכל בבית יכבס את-בגדיו

Moreover he that goeth into the house all the while that it is shut up shall be unclean until the even.

And he that lieth in the house shall wash his clothes; and he that eateth in the house shall wash his clothes.

despair of the medical historian’ — indeed one of many! See, Glasby, "What was Biblical Leprosy?". Also *passim* in, Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia; with an English translation by H Rackham*. (10 vols.; Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1938).

²⁸ Lieber, "Old Testament 'Leprosy', Contagion and Sin,." Pg 100.

Snaith,²⁹ in contrast, dismisses any notion of ‘medical contagion’ in respect of צרעת as irrelevant and says: ‘Whether they are medically contagious is not the point at issue; what matters here is that they are ritually contagious. The resultant contagion is ritual, not medical.’ Snaith believes that any implication of contagion made from the Hebrew Bible necessarily refers *only* to the transmission of ritual impurity and that any inferences about hygiene or community health are spurious and have no cause-and-effect relationship with ritual impurity.

Lieber’s view of contagion

Lieber, taking an opposite viewpoint, remains a firm protagonist for a medical interpretation of contagion in the Hebrew Bible especially in relation to צרעת. While Lieber sedulously tries to avoid any taint of a hyperdiagnostic approach, she inclines, nevertheless, towards what must be a medical/hygienic explanation and justifies this, against the opposing view of Snaith *et al*, by proposing a difference between the Levitical text of the P authors, that she believes was intentionally parænetic, and those non-P texts that involve צרעת, found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.³⁰ These latter she describes as ‘narrative case histories’³¹ standing in contrast to Leviticus Chapter 13 (and, presumably, Chapter 15), which is an index of differential diagnosis for priests. Its purpose was to answer legalistic/ritualistic questions pertaining to the relationship טמא/טהור, but, for Lieber, this in no way, denies, or makes less important, the underlying medical and hygienic principles it embodies. In this way, it served a real, if rudimentary and perhaps secondary, public health function, by identifying any risk of spread within the community. The futility of any

²⁹ N. H. Snaith, *Leviticus and Numbers* (London: Nelson, 1967).

³⁰ e.g. Exodus 4:6, Numbers 12:10, II Chronicles 26:19

³¹ For a fuller discussion of this idea see: Chapter 9 and also Glasby, "What was Biblical Leprosy?".

attempt to classify צרעת as a single disease or syndrome was entirely irrelevant because it was the *contagion* of *any* condition that mattered. For Lieber, and in contrast to Snaith's view, a cause-and-effect relationship between pathology and impurity *was* identifiable, and the only, but crucial, question for the priest to answer, was whether, in any given case, the sufferer, was טמא (unclean/impure) or טהור (clean/pure).³² The priest, therefore, became responsible, not merely for diagnosing incipient contagion, but also for determining whether each diagnosed instance of צרעת would be susceptible to containment by simple hygienic measures such as washing and quarantine, or whether more stringent measures — usually sacrificial and, paradoxically, not at all medical — would be necessary. Such a view makes it virtually impossible — in Lieber's view — to suppose that this activity, on the part of the priests, could have come about with no thought as to what the symptoms and signs of צרעת conferred. *Even* if the affliction were seen to be the result of divine wrath, this ritual impurity showed itself in symptoms and signs that were manifestly pathological. Lieber further justifies her stance by suggesting that an examination of Leviticus (Chapter 13 in particular), reveals *diagnostic tests* intended for use by the priests. These were typically arranged in a binary *protasis*→*apodosis* configuration and so required simple *yes* or *no* answers. Similar binary tests often beginning with the phrase 'If a man...', are to be seen elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible and in texts from the Ancient Near East, especially in the *omen texts* from Mesopotamia.

³² Poorthuis and Schwartz, *Purity and Holiness: the Heritage of Leviticus*.

Lieber's argument is, therefore, that *fear of contagion in a clearly medical sense* was absolutely central to the priestly concept of צרעת (?and זוב?) and, because of this, doubt must be cast upon any notion that the priestly view of צרעת was nothing more than ritualistic.

In comparing Lieber's viewpoint with that of Snaith, the crucial but unanswerable question is, 'What was going on in the minds of the priests?'. It is quite possible to believe that, although the priests may have been operating valuable public-health measures, they were completely unaware of their practical potential and significance as they were wholly absorbed by the necessity to diagnose and treat ritual impurity. It is possible, therefore, to suggest, three scenarios that might have been operating.

1. *The priests identified צרעת and זוב specifically as afflictions/diseases, albeit with a divine aetiology, and were operating a policy of preventative medicine within their society.*
2. *The priests had no conception of public-health/hygiene and were solely concerned with protecting the individual, the sanctuary and the land from the effects of ritual impurity.*
3. *The priests saw צרעת and זוב as the physical manifestation in the form of disease, of ritual impurity. They were concerned primarily with the diagnosis and treatment of ritual impurity and had no particular interest in medical matters. However, the quarantining and cleansing measures they instituted proved incidentally, to be advantageous in the field of public-health.*

From what has been discussed in earlier chapters of this thesis, option (1) seems unlikely, but it is so far impossible to arrive at any clear conclusion as to distinction between (2) and (3). Perhaps we should not repine at this difficulty but rather note that the idea that *controlling contagion* is the, highly desirable, common denominator in all three of these scenarios.

CONTAGION AS SYMBOLISM AND METAPHOR

In view of Mary Douglas's interpretation of the purity laws as a system of social symbolism, it is pertinent to inquire into the symbolic nature of the notion of contagion, in the society of ancient Israel. In a more wide-reaching study of *evil* in general, Ricœur, has stated the view that, since [he believes] religious experience is mediated through symbolism: an analysis of the symbols from past civilizations will reveal useful historical information.³³ Ricœur says, '...defilement was never literally a stain; impurity was never literally filthiness, dirtiness... ...[impurity] never attains the abstract level of unworthiness, otherwise the magic of contact and contagion would have disappeared. The representation of defilement dwells in the half-light of a quasi-physical infection that points toward a quasi-moral unworthiness. This ambiguity is not expressed conceptually but is experienced intentionally in the very quality of the half-physical, half-ethical fear that clings to the representation of the impure.' If this is so, defilement, as the object of ritual suppression and a symbol of evil, becomes a *symbolic stain* which, according to Ricœur, enters the human sphere through speech and the word so that the resultant development of a related vocabulary educates the individual into a feeling of guilt.

The particular difficulty with Ricœur's theory of *symbolic stain* is that he argues it with examples entirely from early Greek culture. Tantalizingly he admits, 'The Hebrew example is still more striking... ...it might be alleged that the Greeks never attained the feeling of sin in its peculiar quality and with the intensity of which only the people of Israel supply an example, and that is why the Greeks had no recourse than to "transpose philosophically" the schema of defilement.' This can be no more than rather bold speculation given that Ricœur thereafter leaves the matter alone and

³³ Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*. Especially: 'The symbolism of stain'; pp 33-40.

supplies no evidential material, textual or otherwise, from Israelite civilization, nor indeed from any civilization previous to that of the Greeks. In failing to take account of the very real differences between these early civilizations and that of the Greeks Ricœur leaves his suppositions dangerously exposed.

Feder working more recently, has taken up the germ of Ricœur's premises to apply them in an investigation of the situation in ancient Israel. Feder suggests that the linguistic symbolism found in biblical texts relating to impurity and contagion, is evidence of its all having been grounded in bodily experience. His hypothesis is, therefore, that the biblical representation of the concept of pollution (טמאה) is an example of what he calls 'embodied rationality'.³⁴ This idea entails the belief that several types of ritual pollution began their existence in the bodily experience of infectious diseases. Noting the absence of any Israelite secular medical literature, he seeks a parallel elsewhere and finds it in evidence supplied by the Mari tablets. The justification for this extrapolation may raise questions, if not eyebrows, but Feder is careful to protect his position by pointing-out the ever-present risk of ambiguity. This, he affirms, is especially the case in the heterogeneous³⁵ usage in Semitic languages of cognate words, for example two highly pertinent words, צרעת and טמאה which appear in the relevant Hebrew texts. This heterogeneity, emanating from a '...lexicographic predisposition towards the abstract', he further indicts as, '...blurring the domains of hygiene and morality' and so resisting systematic analysis, — this comes as no surprise to anyone investigating this phenomenon!

³⁴ Feder, "The polemic regarding skin diseases in 4QMMT." Y Feder, "Contagion and Cognition: Bodily Experience and the Conceptualization of Pollution (ṭamah) in the Hebrew Bible," *JNES* 72, no. 2 (2013): 151-67.

³⁵ For a fuller discussion of heterogeneity in Hebrew word-usage, see Chapter 10.

Mary Douglas's symbolic view of the purity/impurity tension demands that, before one can identify a specific instance of defilement, one must first identify the specific system of categorization that is being violated. For example, those animal foodstuffs that confer impurity do so because they all have in common some anomalous characteristic, (scales, a creeping gait, absence of fins etc.), that leaves them outside the socially accepted paradigms. In a biblical context, Douglas argues, these *ex grege* anomalies threatened the equation of *wholeness* with *holiness*.³⁶ Douglas's approach is akin to the classical view of categorization expressed by Aristotle,³⁷ but such a theory necessarily demands that all categories are clearly defined, mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive. This notion is inherently weakened by the demonstration of *any* exceptional case and this problem appears often, to have been open to convenient circumvention by the serial addition, of further categories and sub-categories, *pro re nata*. Feder remarks that one cannot help but be impressed by the [futile] efforts expended in attempting to preserve established abstract categories by deriving, more and more concrete rules relating to bodily conditions as when, for example, the explicative dichotomies life/death, control/loss of control etc., simply fail to fit the observed data. As a result, further distinctions are invoked, *ad hoc*, in order to preserve the categorization but, in reality, the situation is obfuscated rather than clarified.³⁸ It is because of the absolutely necessary requirement of *category violation* that Douglas's view of symbolic impurity might be seen to fail. An alternative, emotional and/or intuitive viewpoint stemming largely from inductive

³⁶ Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. Douglas, "The Forbidden Animals in Leviticus."; Douglas, *Leviticus as literature*.

³⁷ Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (ed. J Barnes; 2 vols.; Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984). Vol 1, pp 3-24.

³⁸ Feder, "Contagion and Cognition: Bodily Experience and the Conceptualization of Pollution (tumah) in the Hebrew Bible." Pg 155.

reasoning has been suggested by a number of other authors, for example, Meigs.³⁹ For Meigs, an anthropologist studying present-day Papuan civilization, defilement is perceived as *embodied cognition* where the cognitive element has been triggered by an innate visceral distaste for such things as death, decay and waste matter. However, if this were the case, the argument would seem to fail, just as Douglas's argument fails, because it is too selective and does not include things like rotting food, vomit, urine, faeces, phlegm, mucus and pus. Its illogicality is illustrated by Feder in a colourful example: the dog-walker who, 'hygienically', picks up his pet's faeces, with an inverted [assumed to be clean] plastic bag, but then, nevertheless, feels an obligation to wash his hands. This is illogical, since no direct contamination of the hand can have taken place and yet, it is probable that more people will wash than will not. Feder's conclusion is that contagion operates in the cognitive sphere as an *emotional bias*, according to ontological assumptions embodied in the subject's cultural make-up and which the individual does not, necessarily, feel the need to accept as consistent with logic and the application of scientific rigour.

There is no doubt that it has become fashionable among modern biblical commentators to reject the idea of an ontological relationship between hygiene and purity. Typical arguments from example, used to support this view are, (1) that the Israelites could not possibly have known about, let alone taken prophylactic measures against *Taenia solium* infestation, by not eating pork; and (2) the lack of any evidence to suggest that Jews, on account of their dietary habits, were healthier than Gentiles.⁴⁰

³⁹ A S Meigs, "A Papuan Perspective on Pollution," *Man* 13 (1978): 304-18.

⁴⁰ If health was not behind the *dietary* laws it is hard to imagine what was!

From early times until relatively recently,⁴¹ notions of infectious diseases relied almost totally on metaphor and some of these persist in modern quasi-medical usage. Wootton has written recently, ‘Our language is littered with the flotsam and jetsam of a vast historical catastrophe, the collapse of ancient medicine, which has left us with half-understood turns of phrase that we continue to use because metaphorical habits have an extraordinary capacity for endurance’.⁴²

Because of this, the risk to the biblical scholar is that of imposing modern, and therefore anachronistic, category-distinctions on the [sparsely] available evidence. For example, Smith comments that, ‘Distancing yourself from poisons, dust and dirt is one thing; but distancing yourself from invisibly “unclean” people and objects is quite an achievement of the imagination... ...Religious purity has a distinct role in the history of personal hygiene... not functional, not rational... ...but a key component that determined the lives and cleansing behaviour of very large numbers of people.’⁴³ This view contrasts noticeably with that of Parker, who believes that all of these effects may be ascribed to no more than an aspect of popular perception, which he terms the ‘contagiousness of misfortune’.⁴⁴

The contagiousness of bad luck appears often as a theme in Greek drama — undesirable qualities are able to be wiped-off the hands and thereby can contaminate others. Pentheus, in *The Bacchae*, addressing Cadmus and fearing the contamination of contagion cries,

⁴¹ In some cases as recently as the mid nineteenth century.

⁴² David Wootton, *Bad medicine: doctors doing harm since Hippocrates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Such metaphors might be: ‘cold-blooded’, ‘hysterical’, ‘melancholic’) Pg 13.

⁴³ Virginia Smith, *Clean: a history of personal hygiene and purity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Pp 29-30.

⁴⁴ Albeit in a study of *miasma* in Greek culture: Robert Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and purification in early Greek religion*. Pp 218-220.

οὐ μὴ προσόσεις χεῖρα,
Keep your hands to yourself!

(*Euripides, Bacchae, 344*)⁴⁵

Such a viewpoint requires the making of the metaphysical assumption that the contagiousness of misfortune is ontologically real and culture-specific and can be transmitted in either a tangible or a miasmatic form. Whereas Greek culture might be appropriate for taking such a philosophical step, it is doubtful if one could discover any justification for such an explanation in the worldview of the priests and the culture of ancient Israel.

Reaching once again for a parallel, we might consider the *contagion of curses* that figured significantly in Mesopotamian culture. It seems both possible and likely that the ideas of a curse and of an illness often became conflated. In the Mari tablets (and elsewhere in cuneiform literature) the term *māmītu* (𒄠 𒄠𒀭 𒄠𒀭),⁴⁶ was used to mean both an *oath-curse* and an illness and, significantly, the two of them appear to have been indistinguishable from one another. Transmission (of either/both) was supposedly effected by contact with the accursed/infected person. This argument is reinforced by the finding that the Akkadian verb *la-pā-tu(m)* (𒀭 𒀭𒀭 𒀭𒀭), usually translated as ‘touch’ (*anfassen*),⁴⁷ is a cognate of the Hebrew verb נָגַע (נָגַע/√נָגַע) or the Aramaic verb, נָגַע which are widely used in the sense of ‘strike down’ with a curse *or* with an illness, throughout the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew noun (נָגַע) is also widely used to mean ‘plague’ as well as ‘blow’ and indeed is one of the several biblical words used as an alternative for צָרַעַת and, therefore, [mis-]translated into

⁴⁵ Euripides, *Bacchae; with an English translation by D. Kovacs*. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁴⁶ Soden and Meissner, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch (3 vols)*. Vol 2, pg 599b.

⁴⁷ Soden and Meissner, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch (3 vols)*. Vol1, pp 535a-537b

English as ‘leprosy’. It seems likely that in both Mesopotamian culture and in that of ancient Israel, it was divine punishment that produced the pathological manifestations of טמאה (or *māmītu*, 𒍪 𒌶 𒍪), **and** was contagious.

Feder has suggested that, in Israel, defilement, (טמאה), operated in society as a *judgment heuristic*. In practical terms, this means that external events, and an intuitive, cognitive certainty about טמאה, trigger appropriate behavioural responses.

In the text of the Hebrew Bible, Feder believes, it is possible to identify three basic forms of טמאה that may all be classified as *embodied rationality*. That is, in the minds of the ancient Israelites, as models or images, of bodily experiences causing טמאה along with the emotional responses engendered by those experiences. Feder asks us to consider three specific models of טמאה in increasing order of seriousness.

The first of these models is the simple *cleanliness model* in which the object or person requires only to be kept at a distance from God and the sacred realm. What is at risk of being transgressed here is the need to be pure when approaching God. An exact parallel is to be found in a number of other cultures both ancient and modern and it figured significantly in the culture of Mesopotamia. The second model, the *infection model* is associated with more stringent purificatory requirements and importantly, it embodies the central notion of contagion. The third model, termed by Feder the *stain of transgression model*, is the most serious. It is a derivative of both the cleanliness model and the infection model and pertains to such violations of cultural standards as sexual misconduct and murder. As such it encompasses the ideas of both ritual impurity **and** moral impurity. This model cannot be mitigated by ritual cleansing; it ultimately defiles the land and demands the penalty כרת, the

extirpation of lineage. The priests' employment of the binary, *protasis*→*apodosis*, diagnostic tools mentioned above, would have been important in distinguishing between these models. There will be a familiarity about these models if the reader has assimilated Chapter 4. They are little more than variants and compilations of the classes of impurity described, *passim*, by Milgrom, Frymer-Kensky, Klawans *et al.* Feder's contribution has been to consider them as the single entity of *embodied rationality*'. The overwhelming problem with Feder's idea, however, is that to some extent, we are once again, confronted with the notion of *category violation* with all its attendant baggage. Nevertheless, Feder's approach is helpful because it implies that, if the purity laws were based on specific models of contagion themselves derived from bodily experiences, then the much sought-after and elusive idea of an underlying abstract logic becomes unnecessary. To a degree at least, the identification of parallel models in coeval civilizations, reinforces this understanding of טמאה and its role within the genesis of contagion.

SUMMARY

Evidence from the Mari tablets shows, quite clearly, that the notion of contagion existed at that time. The idea was not however, specifically confined to disease processes and in Mesopotamian society could be applied to curses. Within the ideology of the levitical priests, contagion appears to have been the most important deciding factor in differentiating what later classifiers such as Klawans have termed major and minor ritual impurity. However the inclusion of any idea of contagion in the rituals of the priesthood does not necessarily imply that they regarded it in any sort of medical way. In their view, contagion was more likely, a mechanism for disseminating ritual impurity itself rather than whatever [disease] caused ritual impurity. However, Lieber takes the view that the priests saw contagion with the eye

of modern medicine as a means of differential diagnosis so that they could act appropriately to limit spread of the impurifying principle. It is important to note that Lieber's view, although couched throughout in medical language is entirely consistent with a priestly diagnostic process designed only to investigate and categorize risk to sacred sites and objects from ritual impurity. Her argument could be applied satisfactorily without any need to consider, צרעת and זוב as she does, as specific diseases. Given the priestly *Weltanschauung* and priestly ideology entrenched in ritual, a medical interpretation is greatly at risk of the indictment of hyperdiagnosis.

In contradistinction to the views of many earlier writers, it is the view of the present author that the way in which the priests viewed צרעת (and זוב) as determinants of major pollution was less to do with the nature of these afflictions than with the unifying fact of their contagiousness. Whatever the case, there can be little doubt that the priests saw a signal need to control contagion so as to reduce the risk of pollution and its attendant infraction of ritual purity. This control was carried out in the form of ritual.

CHAPTER 9 — צרעת AND UN-WHOLENESS

IN the present chapter and that which follows, particular attention will be given to צרעת because of the pride of place that it occupies as the most serious and the most contagious cause of ritual impurity under the *Weltanschauung* of the levitical priesthood. As the most virulent causative factor of impurity it therefore must be supposed to have had a commensurate effect in generating un-wholeness and un-holiness. In the present chapter the place of צרעת in un-wholeness will be considered from an etymological and literary standpoint and in the following chapter, the effects of צרעת on un-holiness will be investigated from a theological viewpoint.

The problem of ascribing a precise date, either to the *Vorlage* or the redaction(s) of the levitical text, is considered in detail in Appendix 3. Without at least an idea of this date, it is impossible to analyse textual material in its proper historical context. In the present thesis, the *working hypothesis* attributes to the Book of Leviticus some material of considerable antiquity but also a long evolutionary process of textual accretion and redaction that came to an end when the text reached its present form in the post-exilic, *Persian period*, (538–332 BCE).¹

Lewis has remarked, ‘The lamentable history of social attitudes to leprosy [*sic*] is a lesson on the consequences of paying great attention to words but small attention to facts.’² Unfortunately, when one collects together the available material, there is a significant nimety of words (both primary and secondary) to weigh against a depressing dearth of facts. Nevertheless, **words** must be the starting point.

¹ See this author’s attempt to present this in diagrammatic form in Appendix 3

² Gilbert Lewis, "A Lesson from Leviticus: Leprosy," *Man* 22, no. 4 (1987): 593-612.

For the present study, two approaches will be adopted in an attempt to frame, within a literary context, the textual, medical and historical evidence that has been presented in the above chapters. At the same time and effort will be made to refer this to the priestly worldview. First, the particularities of the language pertinent to the question will be examined to assess certain words that may be relevant to the question and to quantify their relative theological and medical import. Once these words have been categorized, we may consider how other, more recent, authors have chosen to interpret their biblical standing.

EVIDENCE FROM THE LANGUAGE OF THE TEXTS

Much scholarly activity, sometimes impeded by sophistry, fashion and religious zeal has been directed at the textual exegesis both of the levitical purity laws in general and at the 'leprosy problem'. However, little of this has approached the question so as to include a *medical* standpoint. The present analysis is offered in the hope that the background and experience of the author may, to some extent, enable such an approach and even prove novel. In any case, it must begin with exhaustive searching, within the text, for historical, grammatical, syntactical and stylistic clues.

An approach, used here *inter alia*, is that of *context logometrics*, (see below), where the usage of a word in a particular context is examined and expressed as a fraction (or percentage) of its overall usage in a given text. Where a word has been used in a particular context, it may have been employed to identify something specific rather than a generality.³ By examining key words in this way, it may be possible to elucidate the *wholeness*↔*holiness* relationship further.

³ The Ancients were not altogether blameless when it came to 'Humpty Dumpty hermeneutics'. Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*.

Language and thought in the Hebrew Bible

Although his work may now have been superseded (or seen as unfashionable), in the field of advanced linguistics, there is wisdom in the writings of James Barr on matters of language, especially in the context of the present study. Barr has commented, ‘Language and thought (or language and culture — for our present purposes either term will suffice) are connected; but the connection is logically haphazard... . . . One does not dispute the possibility that cultures may be found in which the common language was accompanied by a uniform way of thinking; but ancient Israelite society was not such a culture’.⁴ Barr is implying an inherent ambiguity in the use of words in Biblical Hebrew and this may be difficult to understand for someone used to modern English. Three factors must be in operation. First there is the significantly different structural, grammatical and syntactical nature of Semitic languages when compared with those of Indo-European origin. Secondly, there is the effect of changes brought about by the elapse of time and thirdly, there is the difference in Western and ancient Hebrew thinking *per se*. James Barr has written at length on the subject of Hebrew thought and its relationship to language.⁵ He writes of Greek ‘analytical thought’ and Semitic ‘totality-thought’ and especially of the Hebrews’ penchant for ‘revelation through history’. Not that Barr subscribed slavishly to this distinction: he found it an oversimplification that, ‘Greatly, and for the worse has affected the examination of linguistic evidence from the OT.’ He acknowledges certain differing features common to the cognitive process in each of these cultures, but cautions against over-valuing their place in scholarship.

⁴ James Barr, John Barton, and Ernest W. Nicholson, *Bible and Interpretation: the Collected Essays of James Barr* (3vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Vol 1, pp 227–228. See also ‘Barr’s Rhombus’ in Chapter 4.

⁵Barr, *Semantics and Biblical Theology, a Contribution to the Discussion*; J Barr, *History and Ideology in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Barr, Barton, and Nicholson, *Bible and Interpretation: the Collected Essays of James Barr*. Vol 1, pg 236; vol 2, pp, 16, 125; vol 3, 269–376.

Elsewhere too, the Greek mind has been considered supposedly ‘static’, ‘conceptualizing’, and ‘preferring abstractions’ where, in contrast, the Semitic mind has been supposed to be ‘dynamic’, ‘actualizing’ and ‘preferring concrete facts’. For the Greek, *man* was a duality of body and soul; for the Hebrew, *soul* and *flesh* were inseparable in both space and time. This noetic dichotomy has sometimes been extrapolated to suppose that, since language is the vehicle of thought, Hebrew favours the verb and Greek the noun. Barr warns that this is simplistic: in studying the Hebrew Bible we should not be making negative comparisons with Greek but should be, ‘...attempting to establish a correlation between a dynamic way of thought and a grammatical phenomenon.’ In order to find the precise meanings of words in Hebrew texts, therefore, one must surely consider each word in its [highly] specific space-time [worldview] context, at the same time being aware that any given word may have several context-driven meanings and that these may be no more than very loosely related to one another. Feder⁶ has approached the same problem from a more modern linguistic standpoint and avows: ‘One can distinguish between a “top-down” model of semantics, whereby the lexicon of a given language is governed by rules dictated by the rational mind and a “bottom-up” model whereby the linguistic system is the result of countless localized instances of semantic development.’ He goes on to opine, ‘...only the latter model is appropriate for a natural language.’⁷ However, he is somewhat unclear as to precisely what he means by a ‘natural language’.

Top-down logic (deductive reasoning) and bottom-up logic (inductive reasoning) are polar opposites but can complement one another in problems of the present kind. In **deductive** reasoning, a conclusion is reached **reductively** by applying general rules

⁶ Feder, "Contagion and Cognition: Bodily Experience and the Conceptualization of Pollution (ṭumah) in the Hebrew Bible."

⁷ Which Feder, perhaps conveniently, does not define.

that are valid over the entirety of a closed domain of discourse. This process narrows the range under consideration until only the conclusion is left — it is the only permissible way of reasoning for the experimental scientist once an experiment has been devised. In **inductive** reasoning, the conclusion is reached by generalizing or extrapolating from initial information: the conclusion is, therefore, not necessarily tested but, as can be seen from Bacon's important contribution to scientific thought, it is usually as a result of inductive reasoning that the hypothesis and experiment are devised in the first place. Bacon was wise enough to add the caveat, '*Quod enim mavult homo verum esse, id potius credit,*'⁸ — testing any hypothesis ultimately requires an experiment and analysis of its results by a deductive approach. All of this must be borne in mind, alongside the priestly worldview, when attempting to see ancient textual material from the standpoint of the modern thinker or present day physician.

Context Logometrics

Context-logometrics is an attempt to extract and quantify, from a corpus of literature, those instances in which a given word is used in a specific way.⁹ In the present study, we are particularly interested in, the Hebrew words זֹבַב and צִרְעָתָה and *en route* to these, words such as 'doctor/physician' or 'apothecary' (רופא, רוקח). As an example of the technique we may look at 'holiness' (קדוּשָׁה), as used particularly in the H portion of Leviticus. The process is much simplified by the use of the *search-engines* included in proprietary biblical software.¹⁰ One must first specify an example of the word used, in the context that one wishes to investigate. A search is

⁸ Francis Bacon, *Novum Organon*.

⁹ The search may be extended by the inclusion of Boolean operators.

¹⁰ Accordance, "Bible Software." Bibleworks, "Software for Biblical Exegesis and Research."

then made throughout the text(s) for all instances of the word in all of its contexts. There follows the [necessarily laborious] detailed examination of every one of these instances, both in the original language and in translation,¹¹ and their sorting into specific *context-bins*. The result may be displayed in a table or graphically as a bar-chart or pie-chart and/or the frequency of any particular context may be expressed as a fraction or percentage of all the contexts in the whole sample.

A potential major source of error in dealing with Hebrew words is, of course, their vocalization and the presence of proclitics and pronominal suffixes. In such cases exhaustive scrutinization becomes even more time-consuming as every permutation must be tested. It may not be a simple matter in Hebrew to use a *wild-card* search term as it is in English or Greek (e.g. *lep**, or *λέπ**) to include different parts of speech and case-endings.

In the example of the unvocalized Hebrew word **שדק** the context in which it is used to mean ‘holy’ or ‘abstract holiness’ is chosen as the starting point.

The choice of search-material largely depends upon what is available though both of the common biblical search-engines¹² offer an extremely wide range of options — see table(s) below. It makes sense, however, to restrict one’s search to relevant material especially avoiding examples from widely differing eras and where possible agreement across sources should be supportive

The paradigmatic example given in the table below is taken from the H material of Leviticus e.g. (19:24). The choice of sources here is particularly wide as an illustration of the scope of the technique.

¹¹ In the present study the ERV, KJV, RSV and NRSV.

¹² *Accordance* and *Bibleworks* were used in this study and were cross-referenced with one another.

Word = קדש — Context = ‘Abstract Holiness’				
Source	Total	Context	Other	% Context
Qumran	714	97	617	13.6
Targums	678	73	605	10.8
Hebrew Bible (BHS)	583	40	543	6.9
Mishna	362	8	354	2.2
DSSB	345	8	337	2.3
Jesus Ben Sira	19	2	17	10.5
Judean Desert Manuscripts	8	0	8	0
North West Semitic Inscriptions	3	0	3	0
Aramaic Inscriptions Egypt	1	0	1	0

In this example it can be seen that this context is not one in frequent use; the Hebrew Bible has only 7% of nearly 600 ‘hits’ and there is a similar low percentage of correlation in both of the sources from Qumran.¹³

One should not impute too great an importance to study of this sort nor draw too specific a conclusion. *Context-logometrics* is but a semi-scientific, inexact tool at best: it is a means of arriving at a quasi-semantic domain in a more simplified and less formal way than that employed by professional linguists. What it does usefully, is to identify the variability¹⁴ of meaning that may be attached to a given word and the frequency of usage of a particular word in a particular context, text, time and place. Where it will be most helpful, of course, is where it illustrates large, undisputable differences. As it turns out, this is the case with צרעת.

¹³ The term ‘Qumran’ is used to refer to non-biblical material from Qumran; the term DSSB refers to biblical material of similar origin.

¹⁴ % specificity or % ambiguity

Doctors and Physicians

The evidence presented in Chapter 2 leads inevitably to the conclusion that, whatever non-priestly *healthcare* existed in ancient Israel, it was unlikely to have been much more than *ad hoc* first aid. If sorcerers and magicians, like the *āšipu* of Mesopotamia were involved, they were afforded little space by the writers of the Hebrew Bible. This view is supported by context-logometrics.

There are 66 ‘possibles’ returned by a search for permutations of what reduces algebraically to *±א*פ*ר±* in the Hebrew Bible. Nine, (13.6%), are found on examination to be context-related to the idea of ‘healing’ ‘healer’ or ‘healthcare’ but most of these are verbal forms of the רפא√. When a parallel English search of the ERV is performed to focus specifically upon the noun ‘physician’, the result reduces to only a single ‘hit’ in this exact context, (Jeremiah 8:22)¹⁵.

Word = רפא — Context = ‘Physician/Surgeon’				
Source	Total	Context	Other	% Context
Hebrew Bible (BHS)	66	9	57	13.6
DSSB	38	1	37	2.6
Qumran	25	0	25	0
Mishna	16	6	10	37.5
Jesus Ben Sira	11	6	5	54.5
Hebrew Inscriptions	6	0	6	0
Aramaic Inscriptions Egypt	1	0	1	0
Targums	1	1	0	100

¹⁵ And only 5 in the New Testament.

In contrast, a search of the Hebrew text of Jesus Ben Sira¹⁶ reveals a correlation of 55% using the same search parameters. Moreover, a new word *apothecary*¹⁷ appears twice with a correlation of 100%. Elsewhere, this word, רקה, is quite widely used in the sense of *perfumer*. The word is derived from the late Latin *apothecarius* meaning ‘One who kept a store or shop of non-perishable commodities, spices, drugs, comfits, preserves, etc.’ An apothecary is not strictly the same thing as a pharmacist, the former diagnoses the condition then prescribes *and* dispenses drugs whereas the later only dispenses remedies. However, it seems unlikely that this distinction operated in ancient times. Before 1617 when the Apothecaries' Company of London was founded, apothecaries in London had belonged to the Grocers' Company. It was, at the time of the *Enlightenment* that apothecaries took on a specific medical and pharmacological role.

Word = רקה — Context = ‘Apothecary’				
Source	Total	Context	Other	% Context
Hebrew Bible (BHS)	14	0	14	0
DSSB	7	0	7	0
Jesus Ben Sira	2	2	0	100
North West Semitic Inscriptions	1	0	1	0
Qumran	1	0	1	0
Aramaic Inscriptions Egypt	1	0	1	0

While these observations hardly add up to scientific precision, they add weight to the suggestion that the medical practitioner may have been a late-comer in the Israelite

¹⁶ See Appendix 5

¹⁷ O.E.D. → *One who prepared and sold drugs for medicinal purposes — the business now (since about 1800) conducted by a druggist or pharmaceutical chemist. From about 1700 apothecaries gradually took a place as general medical practitioners, and the modern apothecary holds this status legally, by examination and licence of the Apothecaries' Company; but in popular usage the term is archaic.*

world. Much has been made (*passim*) of the appearance of the physician in the writings of Jesus Ben Sira and Ben Sira *nepos*. By Jesus Ben Sira's time, Hippocrates' writings might have been available in Palestine. They would certainly have been available to Ben Sira *nepos* in Alexandria. The Greek notion of the physician was, almost certainly, eventually known to the Israelites although we do not know how well it had become established in Israelite culture either in Judah or with the exiled Jews in Babylon. The Ben Sira sources are discussed at length in Appendix 5. Furthermore, we must remember that the Ben Sira text was to a large extent a panegyric upon important people and their important job-descriptions, (Jesus Ben Sira, 44:1).¹⁸

[אהללה נא] אנ[שי] חסד [[]] את אב[ותינו בדורותם]:

Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us.

If as seems likely, the pre-exilic *Vorlage(n)* for Leviticus did not specifically mention physicians, we must ask why, if they existed at all, they were not considered important enough to appear in the so-called 'hygiene' passages of the Book. The priestly worldview would not have contemplated them as *eiusdem generis* and even if, during the exile, contact with Mesopotamian medicine had been influential upon the population at large, the priestly exilic redactors of Leviticus, may have seen no reason to incorporate such inclusions in their writings and rituals.

The two 'disease words' of Leviticus, **זוב** and **צרעת**, may be considered now.

זוב

One may begin with the word **זוב** because it is easier to understand how the Israelites used it (as opposed to **צרעת**). For the modern mind, problems and even stigmata

¹⁸ Or for Ben Sira *nepos*: αἰνέσωμεν δὲ ἄνδρας ἐνδόξους καὶ τοὺς πατέρας ἡμῶν τῇ γενέσει

relating to the compromise of reproductive capacity persist especially in some less well-developed communities. As the priests were exponents of the virtue of expanding the Israelite population, the degree of space afforded to זוב in Leviticus (and other biblical books) makes sense. Failure of reproductive capacity both in the individual and in society as a whole was wholly undesirable and was seen as failure both in the context of the individual, and by extension the community. There is a wealth of literature that has accrued over the ages which involves reasoning of this kind with, and without, elements of *pietic licence*. Today, prejudices still abound in this sphere of thought so that even in self-proclaiming ‘civilized’ societies such as our own Western society, eyebrows may be raised, noses looked down and tongues wagged at those who fail to reproduce, or choose not to.

It is obvious that the terms זוב/זבה/זב are used much more precisely than רפא. Where they are used in another, (non-medical) context, this is generally related to everyday things that ‘flow’ in some way or another. In the Hebrew Bible, in about half, (53%), of the instances in which the terms are used, the context is that of *dischargeman with a discharge/woman with discharge*. There is even a relatively high degree of correlation in the Talmud where the words appear many times in the lengthy and exhaustive[-ing] disquisitions aimed at interpreting the levitical text. These are secondary and derivative and hence of no particular relevance to the problem in question here. It is, nevertheless, interesting to speculate that the rabbis clearly attached such great significance to these terms that they expended a great deal of effort in explaining them: the same, of course, holds true for צרעה. It is interesting to note that זוב does not appear in Jesus Ben Sira, or Ben Sira *nepos* at all in the context of any sort of pathological or physiological discharge. We must

assume that it was omitted from these texts simply because it was not relevant to the subject matter.

When *Context-logometrics* is applied to זוב and its English equivalent ‘genital discharge’ it yields the following relationships.

Word = זוב/זבה/זוב — Context = ‘[Genital] discharge’				
Source	Total	Context	Other	% Context
Talmud	578 ¹⁹	180 ²⁰	398	31.1
Mishna	68	5	63	7.4
DSSB	58	14	44	24.1
Hebrew Bible (BHS)	51	27	24	52.9
Targums	26	25	1	96.2
Qumran	32	0	32	0
Jesus Ben Sira	2	0	2	0

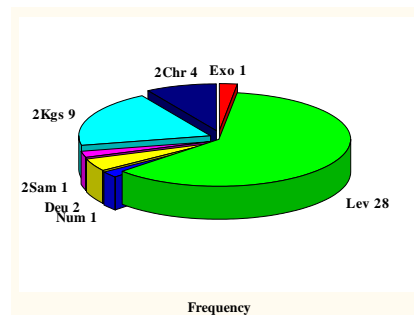
It seems probable that these words, where they appear in Leviticus, are being used specifically to describe a *discharge, emission, effluxion* or *effluvium, menstruum* or *lochia* all of which have a clearly apparent common factor in that they may be considered as issuant from the genitalia. Because there was no common understanding of the pathophysiology of such discharges, what *was* considered to be a hallmark of all instances of זוב, was that it always, in one way or another, compromised reproductive capacity in a way that was unacceptable because it put at risk the future of Israelite society. This stance, which combined fear and disapproval, was maintained even more rigorously in the case of צרעת.

¹⁹ Seminal discharge = 261; Emission = 177; Menstrual = 140.

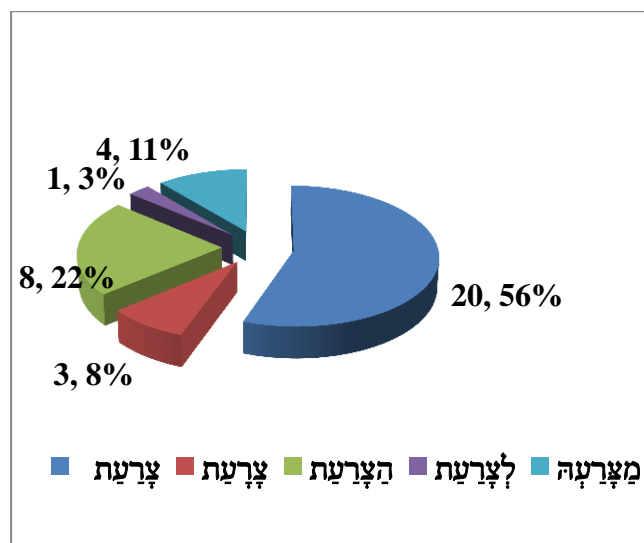
²⁰ Menstruation = 99; Discharge/emission of semen = 81.

צִרְעַת

In earlier chapters, the point has been made repeatedly that this word is virtually untranslatable: moreover, its root $\sqrt{\text{צִרְעַת}}$ is equally unyielding to explication. This is principally because we do not have adequate collateral textual data from which to extrapolate and so make it possible to arrive at a definition by an indirect route. The word is relatively rare in the Hebrew Bible. The frequency distribution for the noun צִרְעַת in its pure lexical form and vocalized as in Leviticus 13:2 throughout the books of the Hebrew Bible is as follows:



If we search for the various inflected forms for $\sqrt{\text{צִרְעַת}}$ expressed as hits $\times 10^{-3}$ words and as percentages, we get the following:



If asked, ‘What do we suppose to be special about צרעת?’ we might reply, ‘Almost everything and yet nothing; it is a very general term for a very important defiling thing.’ An examination of its backward-cognates (Akkadian, Ugaritic, Egyptian) or its forward-cognates, (Arabic, Aramaic, Syriac and Coptic) is of no help either: there is no clear evidence about where the Hebrew word came from or that it turned into anything recognizable in any of these languages.²¹ Various attempts have been made by linguists, lexicographers and exegetes to fill this etymological gap and arrive at both meaning and derivation: none is convincing.²² What is striking, however, is that given all this uncertainty about meaning and etymology for צרעת, an exceptionally high correlation is obtained when צרעת and its participial form, מצרע are subjected to context-logometric scrutiny.

Word²³ = מצרע/צרעת				
Context = [Dermopathic] platydysmorphism				
Source	Total	Context	Other	% Context
Hebrew Bible (BHS)	70	68	2	97.1
Mishna	53	40	13	75.5
DSSB	26	20	6	76.9
Qumran	23	14	9	60.9

Prima facie, this might seem paradoxical: צרעת is a word that appears to be untranslatable yet analysis of its usage in the Hebrew Bible indicates an

²¹ Glasby, "What was Biblical Leprosy?". See also Chapter 5.

²² For example in Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Also extensively in TDOT pp 468–475; Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*.

²³ The Talmud is not included as both Hebrew and Aramaic terms are used there. Neusner’s English edition has 668 instances of ‘leper’ and 392 instances of ‘leprosy’.

exceptionally high degree of correlation (97%) in every instance to be found there. Even if we cannot arrive at an appropriate definition of the word, it is clear that the ancient Israelites could and so we must accept that they — or at least the priestly authors of the biblical texts — knew exactly what they meant. The strong correlation, found by context-logometrics, appears to be relatively well-maintained throughout the DSSB, non-biblical texts from Qumran and important midrashic texts such as the Mishnah. One may surmise, therefore, that the word underwent little or no change of meaning during the elapse of time for the evolution of those texts.²⁴ What is more, the later commentators, because they nowhere offer a definition or explanation of this word, must be supposed to have known its meaning beyond equivocation.

It is clear, for reasons discussed elsewhere,²⁵ that צרעת in the Hebrew Bible is not referring to Hansen's disease/*Elephantiasis Graecorum* and its appearance upon inanimate objects such as masonry and fabrics makes its definition as any known *dermatosis* impossible. In the present work, it has been suggested that the [admittedly cumbersome] term *platydysmorphism* might be useful because all it signifies is a disruption or corruption of a previously smooth surface. It is probably fair to say that this is the only common factor in all ascriptions of the word. When all textual accretions have been chipped away from biblical examples of צרעת including the lengthy discourses in Leviticus Chapter 13, this is, in fact, all that is left. The problem with Leviticus Chapter 13 is that the symptoms and signs simply do not add up to anything known to pathology. Therefore, we are, forced into seeking a consistent lowest common factor among the symptoms and signs, to

²⁴ This is true also of the Talmud where an English search for '*lepr**' scores 576 hits.

²⁵ Glasby, "What was Biblical Leprosy?".

describe something that affects animate *and* non-animate objects and is free from the wide equivocations and confusing repetitions within Leviticus. The only contender, when as far as possible all dubiety and conflict are removed, must, inductively, be something along the lines of *platydysmorphism*. Where human cases are involved, we may logically and reasonably allow ourselves to add an epithet to localize the condition to skin, (i.e. *body surface*) and so arrive at *dermopathic platydysmorphism*. Anatomists and physiologists know, from studying the phenomenon of *referred pain*, that the human brain is unable to perceive or formulate sensory images of the body's interior and so refers sensations generated by, for example, internal pathology to the body's surface.²⁶ As the body's surface is essentially skin, it is easy to speculate that the scientifically untutored mind might somewhat reverse the process and perceive those things affecting the body's surface as projecting deeper goings-on to a mentally constructed *whole-body-image* or map and so to an understanding of *body-wholeness*. In its turn, perception of disturbed body-image impinges psychologically upon the psyche to engender abstract feelings such as low-self-esteem, depression, inadequacy and doubts about one's place among one's family and tribe in society as a whole. The defilement of a surface, *צרעת*, when identified within a set of socially unacceptable conditions, may be the only symptomatology necessary to trigger this chain of events.

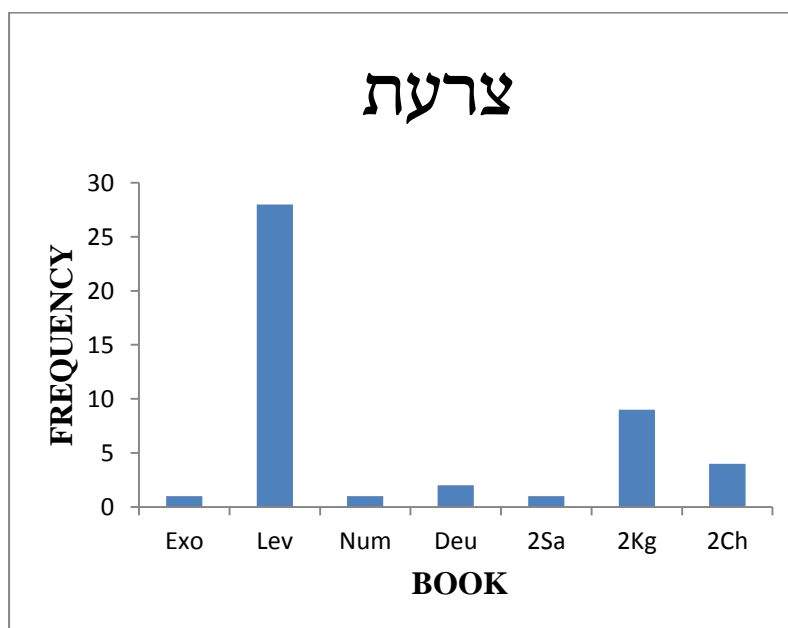
It is now important to examine specific examples of how these words may have been used in an Israel largely influenced by the rituals of a priestly ideology.

²⁶ A classic example is the pain of appendicitis which begins in the middle of the abdomen and localizes to the right iliac fossa.

צִרְעָתָא — evidence from the Hebrew Bible

Examples of the word צִרְעָתָא are to be found in other biblical books besides Leviticus.

There seems to be little doubt from context-logometrics that the same primary meaning is intended. However, several authors have suggested nuances of meaning that may be revealing. If a search is made by book for occurrences of the word צִרְעָתָא, the following frequencies are obtained:



These frequencies tally perfectly with those obtained from a search of the Septuagint using λέπρ*. A search of the ERV, KJV, RSV and NRSV using *lep**, also corresponds exactly.²⁷ If we accept the notion that exceptions prove the rule — or at least shed light upon it — it is important further to explore the extra-levitical cases, even though the logometrics imply similarity — in search of helpful nuances.

If we consider how the word, צִרְעָתָא and/or the idea it represented, was used in a wider context and in particular its interrelationship with religious and social events taking place in Ancient Israelite society, the most obvious differentiating factor

²⁷ Glasby, "What was Biblical Leprosy?".

might be supposed to be the use of the word צרעת in a priestly and non priestly context. This approach has been a central factor in the two major studies to be considered below. A secondary aim would be to see if any sort of notion of *healthcare* was actively involved in these interrelationships. The distinction, priestly/non-priestly material has, in the eyes of some authors, been interpreted as strictly Levitical (P) *versus* non-levitical material within which most authors have included H. There have emerged several important lines of thought and two of these which are specific about levitical and non-levitical usage of צרעת, offer important interpretative information. The first of these is from Lieber and approaches the subject from a largely medical point of view. As ever, with such an approach, it potentially incurs, but takes great pains to avoid, criticism for *hyperdiagnosis*. The second, from Baden and Moss,²⁸ takes a theological stance with *sin* as the discriminator. It too may be criticized as being somewhat eclectic about the inclusion of sin in ritual impurity. Nevertheless, both studies make important substrates for further discussion. For comparison we should also note Feder's view that, notwithstanding context logometrics, the meaning of צרעת changed significantly over time because its role was not to define a disease but rather a process, *contagion*. Contagion Feder supposes to be the defiling principle as it operates as an *emotional bias* and is therefore not a concrete entity but a property of cognition.²⁹

Lieber's medical view of צרעת

As mentioned in Chapter 8, Lieber has suggested that a distinction should be made between levitical and non-levitical צרעת on the grounds that the former is integral to

²⁸ See Chapter 10

²⁹ See Chapter 8 and the evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls in Chapter 6 Page 201

the priestly concept of ritual impurity whereas *all* instances of the latter may be considered simply as case-histories. Lieber believes non-levitical צרעת most probably and commonly to have been psoriasis, although she excepts from this the story of King Uzziah, (2 Chronicles 26:19), because the circumstances of Uzziah's death are suggestive [to her] of Hansen's disease.³⁰ This seems highly unlikely to the present author, given what is known of the origins, aetiology, incidence and prevalence of Hansen's disease. Possibly, if Uzziah's affliction were manifestly more serious than everyday צרעת, it could have been the exacerbation of chronic psoriasis to produce *acute generalized pustular psoriasis (AGPP)*. Equally possible is *bejel*, (بَجَل/البَجَل), one of the non-venereal treponematoses endemic to the Middle East: highly contagious and associated, then and today, with poor hygiene.³¹ Bejel can be as disfiguring as Hansen's disease for both may exhibit *gangosa*. In bejel, but not in Hansen's disease, the hair may turn white. Bejel *per se* is not usually fatal and may remit spontaneously. However, super-added bacterial infection is possible and likely in bejel and may result in a fatal outcome.³² Whatever we think of poor Uzziah's lot, we put ourselves at grave risk of hyperdiagnosis.

Lieber makes a good case for psoriasis as the צרעת of the non-levitical case histories. However, her argument that levitical צרעת was bejel and not psoriasis, though attractive, is less convincing. This idea would seem to be further weakened by her later suggestion that, it was during the Exodus and the Israelites' sojourn in the desert — reported in Exodus and Numbers — they may have become exposed to

³⁰ E. Lieber, "Leprosy in the lands of the Bible, and the demons Bes and Pazuzu. Part I: Ancient Egypt and the Bes-image," 10 (1993): 25-43; E. Lieber, "Cleansing the Leper in the Old and New Testaments," *Korot*. 13 (1998): 77-101; Lieber, "Old Testament 'Leprosy', Contagion and Sin,,"

³¹ Occurring almost exclusively in the countryside but rarely found in towns. The reason for this is unknown.

³² Glasby, "What was Biblical Leprosy?". Chapter 7.

highly contagious, endemic bejel. Her logic for a different levitical צרעת is based upon the idea that the various tests and rituals of Leviticus Chapter 13 are directed specifically at making a differential diagnosis. She cannot, therefore, reasonably postulate bejel as being responsible for some of the non-levitical צרעת events and all of the levitical events as this would make a nonsense of the Chapter 13 priestly tests. Lieber is not, therefore, altogether logical in justifying her textual dichotomy. *That* levitical and non-levitical צרעת were different seems a valid conclusion, *what* each was is a step too far.

Lieber³³ has produced a table of characteristics of symptoms and signs that appear in Leviticus Chapter 13 and might account for צרעת. In column 6 she suggests modern diseases that *might* account for the symptomatology. The danger of this approach has been pointed out in Chapter 5 of this thesis.. This table has been modified and extended by the present author and is presented below. While columns 1 to 6 are useful in summarizing Leviticus Chapter 13, it is column 7 of the table that is indicative of the end point of any priestly diagnostic testing as to whether each situation results in major (טמא) or minor impurity (טהור). In column 8 is recorded the equally important contagiousness or otherwise of the condition. If we omit column 6, this table becomes a diagnostic tool for the priests to use in deciding who did or did not imperil their ritual purity. As such it would be operating with no truly medical function whatsoever. This is not what Lieber's intends, but it is important to note that her ideas, stripped of all 'medicinity' are not in any way incompatible with priestly ideology and function as recorded in Leviticus.

³³ *Op cit*

Leviticus Chapter 13	Scales?	Depigmented skin lesions	Whitening of Hair?	Subdermal invasion?	Modern Disease	טמא or טהור	Contagious?
9 – 11 18 – 20 24 – 25	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Bejel	טמא	Yes
43 – 46	Yes	Pale	Uncertain	Yes	Bejel	טמא	Yes, very
ditto	No	Never white as snow	Never in HD	Yes	?? Hansen's disease	טמא	Yes mildly
29 – 37	No	Pale scalp encrustations (scutula)	Yellowish colour then hair loss	Scutula fall off to leave shiny skin	Favus	טהור ? טמא	No Yes if 2° infection
6	No	Yes (pure white)	Yes	No	Vitiligo	טהור	No
12 – 13	Yes	White scales upon salmon pink skin	No	No but NB (Auspitz's sign)	Chronic psoriasis	טהור	No
17	Yes	White scales upon salmon pink skin	No	No but NB (Auspitz's sign)	Chronic psoriasis	טהור	No
14 – 16	Yes	Old scales may persist	No	Yes extensive	Acute generalized pustular psoriasis	טמא	Uncertain
4 – 6 7 – 8 22 – 23 26 – 28	No	No	No	Yes shiny furuncles and diffuse scarring	Diffuse cutaneous Leishmaniasis (Baghdad boils)	טמא	'Yes' i.e. infectious by sandfly vector

The important points to note are that:

- *There is no single symptom/sign (or constellation of these) that fits all cases.*
- *This suggests that צרעת **cannot be a single disease.***
- *The symptomatology is consistent with צרעת's being sundry observable symptoms and signs all of which involve the disruption and disfigurement of all or part the body's surface — **platydysmorphism***
- *The priests regarded these symptoms and signs as permitting a differential diagnosis of major impurity (טמא) or minor impurity (טהור).*
- *All of those symptoms seen as producing major impurity (טמא) share the property of **contagion.***

SUMMARY

Word analysis tells us nothing medical about צרעת but the use of context logometrics strongly suggests that that the priests knew exactly what they meant by צרעת. Moreover, the later rabbis presumably understood what was meant because they attempted first to interpret צרעת and latterly to extend its meaning. Within the Hebrew Bible we are justified in assuming a clear and consistent intended meaning for the word. This evidence does not, however, support the conclusion that every case of צרעת seen by every priest was necessarily the same. It seems likely that צרעת 'represented' a spectrum of conditions all platydysmorphic in symptomatology but not necessarily of similar aetiology. Priestly differential diagnosis allowed for decision-making about what ritual anti-צרעת procedure should be instituted.

The compact neatness of Lieber's analysis *prima facie* raises suspicions of hyperdiagnosis. Hers is, nevertheless, a highly attractive theory *iff* we do *not* try to believe that צרעת was a single condition or that the priests had any particular interest in medical matters. Lieber's work is important because it sets out a framework based upon protasis/apodosis questioning, for the priests could to operate a system of differential diagnosis for טהור/טמא and *contagious/not contagious*. Lieber's approach, therefore, makes a strong case for levitical צרעת to have been a construct within the priestly *Weltanschauung* which had the properties of *contagiousness* and causing *major defilement*. The evidence for her view that non-levitical צרעת represented a congeries of symptoms and signs of a host of major or minor diseases is more difficult to accept. The lack of continuity in these accounts militates against

anything specific and is perhaps suggestive of inconsistency in authorship and redaction.

Whatever צרעה might have been, it imperilled wholeness and thereby the ritual purity that was necessary for the holiness required for Yahweh's continued presence in the sanctuary and in the land.

CHAPTER 10 — צרעת AND UN-HOLINESS

IN the previous five chapters, a linguistic and medical approach has taken in consideration of the way in which wholeness and purity may have been compromised by צרעת particularly and, to a lesser extent by זוב and perhaps even by מום. A majority of authors has, however, not taken a medical approach but been concerned with the theological effects of צרעת and by extension זוב (or perhaps more often, ‘leprosy’), as a factor in the causation of impurity and in especially the relationship [or not] of this defiling mechanism with sin. If we accept from the previous chapters that צרעת and זוב were seen in the worldview of the Levitical priesthood to beget un-wholeness, it now becomes necessary to investigate how that situation was seen as extending into un-holiness. In the present chapter, modern views about this idea will be outlined and discussed in relation to the hypothesis and parameters of wholeness and holiness posited in Chapter 1.

First, the relationship of צרעת and sin as seen by Baden and Moss will be discussed.

This will be followed by a consideration of the work of Regev who extends the understanding of the *wholeness*↔*holiness* relationship by comparing Leviticus with Deuteronomy. Finally, how this may have fitted into the priestly, ritual-dominated milieu of ancient Israel and the Hebrew Bible will be considered.

Baden's and Moss's view — צרעת and sin

In Chapter 4, it was seen that Klawans generally dismisses the idea that צרעת is the fruit of sin although he tends to sit on the fence by accepting that there are some biblical textual examples that, nevertheless, may imply this, (Num 12; 2 Chron 26). Klawans attempts to circumvent this difficulty by suggesting that the problem is less about moral sin *per se* than about reducing the probability of the מצרע's inadvertently defiling holy objects whilst in a state of personal pollution.

Klawans sees two occasions on which ritual impurity does lead to sin. If an individual voluntarily omits to purify himself after defilement by a corpse, (Num 19:13; 19:20); this causes remote defilement of the sanctuary and the punishment is כרת. Klawans justifies this proposition by suggesting that the dynamic *ritual-impurity↔moral-impurity↔sin* is in operation here, because any voluntary decision not to purify must surely be the product of sinful thinking. The second case, afforded the same penalty of כרת, is defilement of the sanctuary by contact with holy foods while knowingly in a state of ritual impurity, (Lev 7:20–21; 15:31; 22:3–7).

This viewpoint is at odds with that recently posited by Baden and Moss.¹ These authors believe that, from the very start, it is necessary to postulate a different kind of sin-צרעת relationship in levitical and non-levitical material in the Hebrew Bible and also, within the P and H material of Leviticus. The latter distinction must be made because levitical H quite clearly lumps צרעת together with sin and so is closer to the non-levitical examples of Klawans and possibly Lieber. Baden and Moss

¹ J.S. Baden and Candida R. Moss, "The origin and Interpretation of sara'at in Leviticus 13–14," *JBL* 130, no. 4 (2011): 643-62.

indicate that nowhere in Leviticus chapters 13 and 14 — the two P chapters dealing specifically with צרעת — is it implied that צרעת is caused by sin[fullness]. Although Baden and Moss do not specifically address the possibility that their ideas operate also for זוב it seems entirely probable that this differential may apply to both conditions. In the following ‘equations’ one should therefore read צרעת (and זוב) for each occurrence of צרעת.

Baden and Moss’s thesis is based upon the proposition that if:

צרעת ≡ direct result of sin

This thinking would entail an intrinsic problem because:

- צרעת (and זוב) *has been widely defined and accepted as ritual impurity which defiles by contagion but cannot defile the land.*
- Sin *has been widely defined and accepted as moral impurity which is not contagious but can defile the land.*

The solution to this problem proposed by Klawans and others has been to suppose that צרעת can remain a ritual impurity because it is not sin in itself that causes צרעת but certain corollaries of sin such as sinful thinking. So:

צרעת ≠ sin (*per se*)

And therefore, we may suppose that, for Klawans, צרעת (and מום ± זוב) are the *divine consequences of*, but not necessarily the *divine punishment for*, sin — this seems rather tendentious and difficult to accept as logical.

Baden and Moss are completely in agreement that צרעת is associated with sin in the following textual examples: Numbers 12:10,11 (E); Deuteronomy 24:8 (D); 2

Samuel 3:29 (DtrH); 2 Kings 5:3,6,7,27; 15:5 (DtrH); 2 Chronicles 26:19,20,21 (Chlr). The letters in brackets after each reference denote the supposed origins of these texts according to the *Documentary Hypothesis* and these are also the categories accepted by Baden and Moss.² It is interesting to note there is no J example.³ They also find two examples from Leviticus: (14:34 and 26:16, 25). The second of these examples has always been viewed as H text and the former is peculiar in that it is claimed to be the only suggestion of a divine origin for צרעת in Leviticus. Baden and Moss share with Knohl and Milgrom the view that this verse is a late interpolation of H material into what is otherwise undiluted P text.⁴ In contrast to this, Baden and Moss point out that everywhere else in Leviticus — and particularly in chapters 13 and 14 — the context makes it clear that undoubtedly:

צרעת ≠ sin

In support of this hypothesis, they note that in Leviticus (P) where:

- צרעת *affects fabrics; this may be thought of as having a divine causation but this does not necessarily imply divine punishment for the owner's sin.*

And where:

- *In non-P narrative texts ([J],E,D,DtrH, Chlr, H), when צרעת affects a human, it is **always** as divine punishment for sin.*

But since:

- *Both of these sources entail the same dermatological/mycological signs and symptoms, (i.e. platydysmorphism), and so are pathologically identical.*

² Baden and Moss, "The origin and Interpretation of sara'at in Leviticus 13–14." Pg 644, footnotes 1 and 2.

³ See scheme in Appendix 3

⁴ Baden and Moss, "The origin and Interpretation of sara'at in Leviticus 13–14." Pg 652. Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*. Pg 95, note 119. Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol 1, pp 886-887.

It must follow that in Leviticus P, for the *same condition*:

$$\text{צִרְעָה} \neq \text{sin}$$

Baden and Moss have lamented, ‘Scholars continue to try to understand the priestly concept of צִרְעָה as if it is not only related to the non-priestly texts but, in fact, identical to it.’ They postulate that there has been a clear and continuing confusion which has operated to bring about an artificial distinction of ritual and moral impurity and the specific involvement of sin in the causation of both of these states.

In summary, the Baden and Moss view is in Leviticus P:

$$\text{צִרְעָה} \neq \text{sin}$$

But, in Leviticus H and elsewhere:

$$\text{צִרְעָה} \equiv \text{sin}$$

It is, of course, as one becomes used to reading and writing about or speaking of levitical P material, easy to forget that this is an expression of the viewpoint of the priests operating within their particular *Weltanschauung*⁵ and so it is, therefore, in literary terms, a *priestly genre*. The equation above is a behavioural formula by which the priests operated ritually in their dealings with other members of society as diagnosticians of צִרְעָה and protectors of sacred things. In their world of ritual there was no need for this affliction to bear any religious or moral stigma or to invoke guilt. It was, quite simply (and like מוֹם and זוֹב), a fact of everyday life.

When viewed against authors such as Milgrom and Klawans, Baden and Moss’s view demands clarification of the nature of חֲטָאָה. This term is to be found both in relation to levitical and non-levitical צִרְעָה but in particular in Leviticus Chapter 14 relating to the latter. They note that חֲטָאָה is has traditionally been seen as

⁵ See Chapter 3

[atonement by] a *sin offering* — in most English translations of the Hebrew Bible — but this cannot, in fact, be the case if we believe their hypothesis. Milgrom has considered **הטאת** in minute detail and written at length on the subject. He too concludes that **הטאת** cannot be a *sin-offering* but must be a *purification-offering* and the requirement is placed, (in a priest-dominated environment) upon the **מצרע** to provide **הטאת**.⁶ Baden and Moss entirely support this viewpoint as far as the priestly levitical P-textual material is concerned. Wherever **מצרעים** are to be found, there follows the remote pollution of the sanctuary. If it is **צרעת** that causes this polluting ritual impurity it is necessarily requiring to be purged by the provision of a purificatory offering and not by a sin offering.

The nature of the sacrifice known as **אשם** also prescribed by the priests (Leviticus 14:12), must be addressed in addition. This is usually referred to as a *guilt-offering* but if we accept that **צרעת** is not a sin, this cannot logically be an accurate definition as, in the biblical world, it is sin that begets guilt. Baden and Moss agree with Milgrom that *reparation offering* would be more appropriate. This view is based upon the fact that the **אשם** is offered only *after* the subject has already been cleansed. This arrangement would make no sense if it were a *guilt-offering* because in that case, one would expect healing not to have begun, nor the guilt to have been assuaged, until *after* the sacrificial dues of **אשם** had been paid.

⁶ Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol 1, pp 253–292 and 822–857.

Baden and Moss consider their viewpoint to be supported by what they call the ‘...theological singularity of the priestly writings.’, but add that by focussing unduly upon this, scholars may have failed to regard and appreciate the significance of the dichotomy between priestly and non-priestly צרעת each of which is representative of a different worldview and ideology. Baden and Moss argue that perhaps also, a failure adequately to appreciate the significance of monotheism in Israelite culture may have led to over-extrapolation from the cultures of polytheistic societies — for example, Mesopotamia. Much of Baden and Moss’s paper is of necessity directed at recounting and refuting specific examples of the pre-existing counter-viewpoint that they regard as traditional and even entrenched. They have something of an exegetical hill to climb, given the authorship involved, but their novel view seems entirely logical and makes considerable sense.⁷

If we accept the views of Baden and Moss, we see a fundamental difference between the priest and the physician that impinges upon the central hypothesis of the present work. Priests and physicians initially had in common the job of being diagnosticians but thereafter their job-descriptions divaricated. The physician’s role after making a

⁷ The final part of Baden’s and Moss’s paper is concerned with *Disability Studies* that embody the idea that disability in biblical times was thought to have been engendered by sin. Caveats relating to disability studies have been raised already in Chapter 7 of this thesis; tendentious arguments must always be avoided and strict *validity* in the strict philosophical sense established in arguments used to support the point of view of any special-interest group. See: Julian Baggini and Peter S. Fosl, *The philosopher's toolkit: a compendium of philosophical concepts and methods* (Malden, MA ; Oxford.: Blackwell Publishers, 2003).

Baden and Moss cite an example worthy of this criticism of the view of צרעת taken in many biblical disability studies. This is Melcher’s likening of צרעת to the Greek *στύγμα* as a sign of moral failure deserving of and receiving divine punishment. See, S J Melcher, "Visualizing the Perfect Cult," in *Human disability and the service of God: reassessing religious practice* (ed. Nancy L. Eiesland and Don E. Saliers; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998). They point out that Melcher is widely using non-P data to support her argument about levitical P-matters. Olyan too, may be guilty of transposition and conflation of textual sources when he works from a generalized definition of צרעת which he applies throughout the entire gamut of texts. See, Olyan, "Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and Its Environment."; Olyan, "The Exegetical Dimensions of Restrictions on the Blind and the Lame in Texts from Qumran."; Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: interpreting mental and physical differences*; Olyan, "The Ascription of Physical Disability as a Stigmatizing Strategy in Biblical iconic Polemics."

diagnosis is, as far as possible to cure, or at least treat, the individual: his patient. For the priest, the objective that followed diagnosis was not to treat a patient but rather to protect sacred objects and places from further contamination. The object of a priest's duties was *contagion* whereas a physician's was *disease*. Priests were obliged to achieve the decontamination of sacred places by organizing purification offerings on the part of the carrier of the *צרעת*. There was no obligation upon the part of the priests themselves to care, in any way, for the health or well-being of their 'parishioners' or for any individual *מצרע*.

IMPURITY AND HOLINESS: THE INFLUENCE OF DEUTERONOMY

In the Torah we may observe that because Leviticus and Deuteronomy share a legalistic viewpoint and approach to purity, sin and *צרעת* but not a priestly worldview, it may be profitable to consider their similarities and differences in some detail.

The word *צרעת* occurs only once in the book of Deuteronomy, where the author advises that the well-known levitical rules and interdictions should be followed.

השמר בנגעה־הצרעת לשמר מאד ולעשות ככל אשר־יורו אתכם הכהנים הלויים
כאשר צויתם תשמרו לעשות

Take heed in the plague of leprosy, that thou observe diligently, and do according to all that the priests the Levites shall teach you: as I commanded them, so ye shall observe to do.

(Deuteronomy 24:8)

Despite this however, there is an important difference in the ideas of [im]purity and holiness in the Book of Deuteronomy compared with Leviticus. It is likely that the writing of the Book of Deuteronomy and the beginning of the redaction of Leviticus took place at roughly the same time. Further redaction of either or both went on

through the Exile and into the Second-Temple period. There were thus manifold opportunities for conflation of the two viewpoints to satisfy the needs of the *Zeitgeist*, the changing influence of the priesthood and the centralization required by deuteronomic doctrine and dogma. Such changes might be expected to have involved the *wholeness*↔*holiness* interrelationship.

Levitical dynamic-holiness and Deuteronomic static-holiness

An extensive and detailed comparison of levitical and deuteronomic impurity and holiness has been made by Regev.⁸ This impinges significantly upon the *wholeness*↔*holiness* tension and secondarily upon the relationship of disease/medicine with priestly activity. Regev's argument reduces to the idea that if *P-impurity* and *D-impurity* can be shown to be different, it follows that *P-wholeness* and *D-wholeness* must also be different and so there **must** be a corresponding difference between *P-holiness* and *D-holiness*. Of course, this association can also be argued in the reverse direction and it is specifically, in the dynamics of holiness that the differences are perceived by Regev. He considers the priestly/levitical concept of holiness to be dynamic hence, *Dynamic-P-holiness*, whereas the deuteronomic concept is static hence, *Static-D-holiness*.⁹ Regev's argument does not specifically include mention of צרעת but it is tacitly implicated in *impurity*, when he draws a distinction between the P-stated and the D-stated attitudes applied to the *purity/impurity*↔*wholeness*↔*holiness* relationship. As a result of his study, Regev identifies three major and six minor areas of difference:¹⁰

⁸ Regev, "Priestly Dynamic Holiness and Deuteronomic Static Holiness." See also, Poorthuis and Schwartz, *Purity and Holiness: the Heritage of Leviticus*.

⁹ Regev avoids the P/H distinction in Leviticus by regarding them as 'one school'. The present author does not regard this distinction as safe but accepts Regev's view where the comparison is strictly P with D.

¹⁰ For details see: Regev, "Priestly Dynamic Holiness and Deuteronomic Static Holiness." Pp 245 – 253.

1. *Cultic differences (6 subsections):*

- i. *Centrality of the temple/tabernacle P>>D.¹¹*
- ii. *Sacrifice, P → חטאת and אשם, and Day of Atonement; D → protection of sacredness and sanctuary not implied: sacrifices reflect personal gratitude.*
- iii. *Priests and priestly dues P>>D. D emphasizes holiness of people of Israel.*
- iv. *P-impurity, D-abomination, see below.*
- v. *P → heavenly glory (כבוד) dwells in temple/tabernacle; D → the divine presence cannot be localized.*
- vi. *P → people are sanctified in a continual process by the observance of given commands. D → holiness of the people is de facto consequence of God's election of Israel.*

2. *Typology of holiness: P= theocentric, D = anthropocentric.*

3. *P → worldview presupposes a divine order with emphasis on creating orderliness by ritual and assigning individuals to their status in the holiness spectrum. D → God has already created a permanent cosmic system of holiness and so there is no need for ritual.*

Regev's holiness models, therefore suppose distinct differences in the way in which the P and D authors viewed impurity and how this impinged upon the P and D typology of holiness.

Dynamic and static impurity: P-impurity (טמא) and D-abomination (תועבה)

In Chapter 4, it was seen that levitical impurity/defilement/pollution was everywhere characterized by its intensely destructive force which was able to imperil the sanctuary by violating its holiness. As Milgrom and most of the authors who have considered the levitical purity laws have noted, the primary purpose of the levitical interdictions was to protect the sacred places, people and objects from such defilement and so ultimately to prevent the desecration and desolation of the land of Israel itself and the departure of the deity. As far as possible, this was policed

¹¹ The >> signs indicate which textual form gives greater or lesser weight to the matter in question.

through ritual by the priests whose methods involved principally *identification*, *segregation* and *isolation* but also *cleansing* and *sacrifice*.

In contrast, we find that Deuteronomy has a less strict interpretation of impurity/defilement/pollution than that found in Leviticus: in particular the emphasis on ritual is not present and the terminology, significantly, is different also. Whereas Leviticus uses טמא to imply impurity, the preferred term in Deuteronomy is תועבה, (תעב) which is traditionally translated into English as ‘abomination’.¹² This is identified by Regev who describes it as, ‘Intolerable filth, both physically repulsive and morally disgraceful. It is an obligation which holiness imposes upon the people of Israel.’ The word occurs in Deuteronomy sixteen times in relation to five categories of abomination.¹³

These are:

- i. *Idolatry, Molech-worship, sorcery and magic.*
- ii. *Animals unfit to be eaten; unworthy sacrifice; payment of sanctuary dues with tainted money.*
- iii. *Bigamy; inappropriate (re-)marriage.*
- iv. *Cross-dressing.*
- v. *Dishonesty applied to weights and measures.*

In Deuteronomy, תועבה clearly always implies something flawed, faulty and undesirable. The noun either appears alone or in construct with a [subjective or objective] genitive or with a preposition (before/unto), or prepositional clause indicating by whom it is found to be abominable or to whom it is abominable. This last is most commonly, (תועבת יהוה אלהיך) ‘The Lord your God’ — as might be expected.

¹² Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Pg 607a–609b. Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Pp 591–604.

¹³ Deuteronomy 7:25,26; 12:31; 13:15; 14:3; 17:1,4; 18:9,12; 20:18; 22:5; 23:19; 24:4; 25:16; 27:15; 32:16.

What is perhaps a more important distinction to be drawn between P-impurity and D-impurity is that nowhere in Deuteronomy are any strictly forensic consequences enumerated. This is in stark contrast to the lengthy and exhaustive levitical legalistic discourses on such matters. Deuteronomical תועבה is much less specific and defined and everywhere remains a generalization and an abstraction.

The word תועבה does not appear in P-leviticus: it does appear in H-leviticus six times (18:22, 26,27,29,30 and 20:13), but its usage here is quite different from that in Deuteronomy. It was noted above that Regev specifically chose not to include H as a separate sub-category when he made a distinction between *P-dynamic* and *D-static* holiness. This may be seen as mildly advantageous when he then elects to differentiate levitical *P-impurity* from *H-impurity* by their respective exclusion and inclusion of the deuteronomic word תועבה. It is very obvious, even to the casual reader, that תועבה enjoys a very much more specific usage throughout H-leviticus than it does in Deuteronomy. H-תועבה is used to refer to *sexual sins*, such as homosexuality, sodomy, buggery and incest. Moreover, unlike D-תועבה, H-תועבה can, if sufficiently intensive, defile the land and it demands, for the transgressor, the ultimate punishment of כרת. H-תועבה therefore, is not an abstraction but has the destructive force and consequences of P-טמא (i.e. ritual impurity). It is, however, engendered not by צרעת or זוב but by what Klawans and others have classified as *moral impurity*.¹⁴

¹⁴ See Chapter 4.

Typology of holiness: P-dynamic and D-static holiness

According to Regev, *P-impurity* (טמא) and *D-abomination* (תועבה) each entail an equivalent form of holiness. Regev bases his argument for this correspondence on Durkheim's view that *holiness* is the foundation of every religion and cult.¹⁵ It therefore becomes crucial to any discourse on holiness and its relationship to wholeness, to establish its definition and scope and to enumerate those things that may obtrude into it and cause compromise.¹⁶ Regev's model makes some headway into doing this by seeing P-holiness as 'Dynamic, sensitive and dangerous with limited access to the sacred', where in contrast, D-holiness is 'Static, not dangerous or threatening and with less restriction of access to the sacred.'

This division of holiness into dynamic or static forms is not envisaged, either by Regev or other authors, simply to depend upon ideas of impurity/abomination. The initial binary division entails two further sub-classifications. These sub-classifications themselves entail the nature of the being around whom the holiness centres and the origins of the holiness itself.

P-theocentricity and D-anthropocentricity

Regev's model envisages dynamic holiness as essentially theocentric whereas static holiness is anthropocentric.¹⁷ Because, for the reasons considered in the preceding paragraph, P-impurity imperils P-holiness, their dynamic *must* be shared. This is not the case with תועבה and D-anthropocentric holiness.

¹⁵ E. Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse French text* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979). Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

¹⁶ Jeffrey Stackert, *Rewriting the Torah: literary revision in Deuteronomy and the holiness legislation* (52; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

¹⁷ This distinction perhaps calls to mind the similar, later parallel of katabatic and anabatic Christology.

In the P worldview, the requirements upon the person that the attainment of holiness demands are particularly, obedience to God and the performance of certain highly-specified and priest-mediated rituals such as those involved in the relationship to priests and the sanctuary, sacrifices and observance of the Day of Atonement. These observances are treated even more rigorously when the subject is not an ordinary individual but a priest. Dynamic holiness, therefore, fits into the priestly, divine cosmic order and it may be violated by its anti-type, dynamic impurity, but may be protected and preserved by the adoption of ritual anti-impurity counter-measures.¹⁸

In contrast, D-impurity and D-holiness reflect an anthropocentric weighting by implicating and emphasizing the role of the ordinary Israelite operating in all things, *under the will of God*. Static D-holiness must be seen as a permanent fixture affecting the Israelites in much the same way as the Law itself. It therefore does not change from day to day and so does not reflect behaviour and failures of obedience. Static holiness depends entirely on the relationship between God and the people who make up the nation of Israel: it is essentially a defining statement of what is allowed or prohibited, proper or improper. Because God has created a permanent system of holiness, any ritual practised under this system can and must only happen if so ordered by God: ritual is not necessary to create or preserve what God has ordained. Static holiness, being derived solely from God's will and representing a *legal status* has, therefore, no dependence upon worldview and cosmic order or any other form

¹⁸ See Chapter 3.

of orderliness and so it is not directly imperilled by static impurity which is, quite simply, a statement of the fact that rules have been broken. Static holiness and static impurity, while co-existing in the deuteronomic milieu, may not be regarded as type and anti-type like their P-counterparts.

P-ontological (dynamic) holiness and D-deontological (static) holiness

The priests' inclination to grade holiness has been discussed in Chapter 4 in relation to Jenson's ideas.¹⁹ However, as Regev points out, it is important to recognize that only dynamic holiness can be graded. Static holiness requires that everything must be one of either of two polar opposites, *sacred* or *not sacred*, where 'sacred' means ordained by God's will, embodied in God's law and destined specifically for the Israelites. With only two absolute categories, grading is impossible.

Regev speculates upon how the perceptions of what he has classified as dynamic and static holiness may have come about.²⁰ He supposes that they each reflect a different *Weltanschauung*, derived from different socially and temporally defined *mores* of Israelite society and so formulating historical patterns for the relationship between God and mankind. He classifies these patterns as *ontological* and *deontological*.

In the priestly *Weltanschauung*, all holiness was derivative save only the holiness of God; but unclean things were intrinsically unclean so this quality had to be primary and not derivative. Dynamic holiness was, therefore, seen by the priests and so in P-Leviticus, as *ontological* because it relates to nature, both human nature and that which makes up the natural world around. The inter-relationship between man's nature and the universe²¹ — in other words his behaviour — is *de facto* a dynamic

¹⁹ Jenson, *Graded holiness: a key to the priestly conception of the world*.

²⁰ Regev, "Priestly Dynamic Holiness and Deuteronomic Static Holiness."

²¹ See Chapter 3

process because the behaviour of humans affects the nature of the environment and thereby ontology.

In Regev's *deontological* model which corresponds to static-holiness, there are only two behavioural options, *obedience* and *reward* and both relate directly to God. These qualities may be existent or non-existent but they do not have specifiable anti-types. Disciplined behaviour in obedience to the will of God is the deontological pattern for the relationship between God and mankind and, therefore, is static and has no effect upon nature or the environment.

Stackert, working from a literary starting-point, has emphasized the difference between P-holiness on the one hand and D-holiness along with H-holiness on the other. He sees considerable overlap in a shared legalistic component in D-holiness and H-holiness.²²

Stackert identifies areas of correspondence in D and H textual sources both in overall structure and in details, along with similarities in the treatment of legal topics and the sequence of law-making over time. He also identifies areas of lexical, grammatical and syntactical congruence. Stackert does not specifically concern himself with the matter of impurity but bases his argument around the laws on asylum, manumission and [especially] tithes. Nevertheless, the identification of such similarities opens up the way for speculation that the undoubtedly observed correspondences between D-holiness/abomination and H-holiness/moral-impurity may signify, if not common authorship, a common hortatory purpose such that the H material may be an update of aspects of D-Torah. Stackert suggests that legislation for holiness practices, as documented in H specifically though not entirely, depended on prior knowledge of Deuteronomy. He postulates that '...Holiness legislators... ...employ a method of

²² Stackert, *Rewriting the Torah: literary revision in Deuteronomy and the holiness legislation*.

literary revision in which they reconceptualize source material according to their own ideological biases.’ In other words as suggested in Appendix 3, the H-code in Leviticus may be seen as parænetic for the people: effectively re-writing the P-material *ad captandum vulgus*. Stackert calls this ‘super law’ and supposes that the intention of the H authors was to supersede P-law by something more universal and possibly more appealing and up-to-date. This task involved using a multi-source approach where the importing of D material in particular allowed for a reformulation which better fitted the currently perceived best objectives.

When considering all of these differences between Leviticus and Deuteronomy, it is important to bear in mind the mechanisms that have taken place in their transmission. Significant difficulty must have presented itself to redactors in the form of the traditions demanding that sacred texts may not be altered. We know from examples such as the story of the creation or that of Noah, that the remedy for this was generally the simplistic ploy of interdigitating new material with old in a way that sometimes defied logic.

צִרְעָתָא IN BIBLICAL PASSAGES BEYOND THE TORAH

A search for the lexeme *lep** in the Hebrew Bible beyond the Torah produces only fourteen ‘hits’ in the נביאים and the כתובים. Of these, 10 ‘hits’ are in the Deuteronomic History and 4 ‘hits’ are in Chronicles. These are the narrative examples of צִרְעָתָא that Lieber considers to be case-histories of psoriasis and Baden and Moss consider to be associated with sin. Mention should be made, however, of one interesting, further case about which there has been much speculation over the years.

Job's illness — was it צרעת?

Many authors have written on Job and some have suggested that Job's illness may have been צרעת or even 'leprosy' [*sic*] even though the word צרעת is nowhere to be found in that biblical book.²³ The most often cited reasoning for this proposition is the presence, in the Book of Job (2:7), of the word שחין, which also appears in Leviticus (13:23). The two instances may be compared:

ויצא השטן מאת פני יהוה ויד את־איוב בַּשְּׁחִין רַע מִכַּף רַגְלוֹ (עד) [ועד] קדקדו

ἐξῆλθεν δὲ ὁ διάβολος ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου καὶ ἔπαισεν τὸν Ἰωβ ἔλκει πονηρῶ ἀπὸ ποδῶν ἕως κεφαλῆς

So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.

(Job 2:7)

ואם־תחתיה תעמד הבהרת לא פשתה צִרְבַת הַשְּׁחִין הוא וטהרו הכהן

ἐὰν δὲ κατὰ χώραν μείνη τὸ τηλαύγημα καὶ μὴ διαχέηται οὐλὴ τοῦ ἔλκου ἐστὶν καὶ καθαριεῖ αὐτὸν ὁ ἱερεύς

But if the bright spot stay in its place, and be not spread, it is the scar of the boil; and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

(Leviticus 13:23)

In the case of Leviticus, the word צרבת is usually translated as 'scar' and is a quite different word from צרעת.²⁴ It is a noun in the construct state and is used in the expression שחין צרבת which quite clearly refers to a *physical sign and not a*

²³ See *variatio*: D J. A. Clines, *Job 1-20* (WBC v 17; Dallas, Tex: Word Books, 1989); D J. A. Clines, *Job 21-37* (WBC v 18a; Nashville: T. Nelson, 2006); D. J. A. Clines, *Job 38-42* (WBC v 18b; Nashville: T. Nelson, 2011). E. P. Dhorme and H D. Knight, *A commentary on the book of Job; [by] E. Dhorme; translated [from "Le livre de Job"] by Harold Knight, with a prefatory note by H. H. Rowley* (London: Nelson, 1967). C. L. Seow, *Job 1-21 : Interpretation and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2013).

²⁴ For more details see Chapter 6 and also, Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*.

disease. The term refers to the scarring left behind in the aftermath of an abscess — a boil — which has completely or partially healed, probably after spontaneous disembodying of pus or as the result of surgical drainage by lancing. This abscess is likely originally to have been the consequence of a bacterial infection, but there is nothing to suggest any direct causative association with צרעת particularly in Job's case. Boils themselves were very common in pre-antibiotic days²⁵ and were often seen as being associated with misfortune and as a divine consequence of misdeeds.²⁶ There are two notable non-levitical biblical references to boils besides those affecting Job (2:7). Both of these, (Exodus 9:11; Deuteronomy 28:27), use the word שחין which is almost universally translated as 'boils' or 'ulcers'; (LXX = ἔλκος -εος, τό; Vulgate = *ulcus -eris, n*). Both boils and ulcers would be expected to heal by scarring and צרבת השחין would seem a very proper and accurate way of describing the end-point of this sequence of events. In none of these cases is there any implication or suggestion of צרעת or 'leprosy'.

THE CASE OF ANCIENT ISRAEL

יהוה נתן ויהוה לקח יהי

...the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away...

This famous quotation from the Book of Job (1:21), effectively, though unintentionally, summarizes any concept of *healthcare* that ancient Israel might have had. This understanding entails, even today, certain potential difficulties for all three of the Abrahamic faiths, especially where there is a tendency to

²⁵ Hippocrates et al., *Hippocrates*.

²⁶ Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East: the role of the temple in Greece, Mesopotamia, and Israel*. Prioreshi, *A History of Medicine*

fundamentalism. This difficulty pertains even to the present time and has been well summed-up by Lord (Jonathan) Sacks, the recently retired Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, who has said, ‘The historic danger in monotheism has been the willingness of believers to divide humanity into the redeemed against the infidel.’²⁷ The important dogmatic statement known as the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4),

שמע ישראל יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד

Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord:

does not differentiate between, for example, monotheism and monolatry.²⁸ It is probably unhelpful, therefore, to invoke the notion of monotheism in its modern sense, in relation to the subject-matter under consideration in this thesis. We are obliged, nevertheless, to consider the view — perhaps, employing the less controversial umbrella of *Yahwism* — that God both dispenses and alleviates disease, as having been essential to the development of any interrelationship between priestly activities and inchoate healthcare.²⁹ The development of Yahwism and its priesthood undoubtedly must be implicated in the genesis of

²⁷ *The Times* 16th August 2014. It is important, however to be clear about what is meant by *monotheism*. It should not, in particular, be confused with *monolatry* or *henotheism* and, in the case of Ancient Israel, we must be particularly judicious with regard to any assertions made in either context with respect to era. Although by Second-Temple times the religion of Israel was embracing monotheism, it is not entirely clear that this process had, by any means, reached the end-point of present day Judaism: there is no doubt that the process was a gradual one. The difficulties we have in dating the Book of Leviticus, immediately call into question any associated comments we might choose to make on the evolution of monotheism out of polytheism in Israelite/Jewish religion. While today we recognize and describe the three Abrahamic faiths as *monotheistic*, applying a particular meaning to the word, practices in pre-exilic times may not have permitted such a clear-cut definition.

²⁸ We must look to Deutero-Isaiah for the textual roots of true monotheism.

²⁹ Of all the major religions and cultures both monotheistic and polytheistic, Christianity is the only one that does *not* concern itself with ritual defilement and its alleviation. Sunni Islam is also unique in that its purity/impurity regulations do not recognize — let alone emphasize — ceremonially contagious contamination of human beings Ze'ev Maghen, "Close Encounters: Some Preliminary Observations on the Transmission of Impurity in Early Sunnī Jurisprudence," *IL&S* 6, no. 3 (1999): 348-92. See also, M S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Chapter 10, pp 167–178. See also, F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

attitudes to both priestly ritual and the development or failure of development of any kind of healthcare profession(s).³⁰

If we believe that the levitical purity laws, at least in seminal form, go back to the pre-exilic *Vorlage(n)* of Leviticus, and that they include the oldest interdictions relating to צרעה and זוב, we may *not* suppose them to have had a wholly, purely Yahwistic origin.³¹

We are obliged to suppose, then, that the *Vorlage* of Leviticus was likely to have been written in a polytheistic hierarchical milieu where other, lesser, gods or godlets were undoubtedly recognized and in some sense worshipped, perhaps, in some cases, specifically in relation to medical matters. Yahweh, nevertheless, became increasingly seen as יהוה צבאות and may eventually have come to occupy a

³⁰ Smith and others have written at length on the evolutionary processes necessary to establish an Israelite godhead and Judaism. He postulates a gradual development from early ideas of royal gods through an Israelite national god (or gods) into three models deriving from earlier myths and re-using these myths for specific new purposes. Smith believes that the three models for the functional nature of an otherwise indeterminate godhead evolved. These were (1) a priestly model, where the cosmos was seen as a *holy place* analogous to the sanctuary. This is the model that best fits in with ideas of priestly ritual purity/impurity and it has the particular advantage in being independent of number where god(s) are involved. (2) A wisdom model where wisdom takes on a female *persona* as in Proverbs, and (3) an apocalyptic model. See: M. S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Chapter 10, pp 167–178. See also, F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

³¹ Yahwism presumably came about by degrees so that the establishment of genuine monotheism in Judaism has a *terminus a quo* generally accepted as no earlier than the Second-Temple period. There it came to occupy as important a place in worship as it did in doctrine. In the pre-exilic period, however, other deities besides Yahweh undoubtedly persisted and were worshipped to a variable degree both in Israel and Judah. Biblical evidence for this is traditionally held to be the expression יהוה צבאות, 'Lord of Hosts'. It is entirely possible that now forgotten deities, specifically involved with medical matters, may have been included in any such pantheon, just as they were in Egypt or Mesopotamia and, much later, in Greece. It is likely that the social circumstances of the Exile may have been the stimulus which triggered a gradual consolidation of such ideas about worship towards strict monotheistic Yahwism. Equally, it has been suggested that members of a pre-existing purely Yahwistic sub-group among the exiled Israelites may have selectively prospered by either actively or passively ingratiating themselves with their captors. There is, however, no doubt that a pre-exilic minority of Yahweh-worshippers had become a powerful and active majority by the Hellenic period. Consolidation of monotheism was undoubtedly further brought about by the Maccabean reaction against the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes and by the time of the Roman period, Jewish monotheism was firmly established.

See, L. W. Hurtado, "Monotheism," in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* (ed. John Joseph Collins and Daniel C. Harlow; Grand Rapids Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2010).

presidential role so as in time to become considerably more than simply *primus inter pares*.

Over the time of the evolution of the Book Leviticus from *Vorlage* to redacted final text in exilic or post-exilic times, the priestly worldview had been instituted and its influence established, but having reached its peak of efficacy was latterly on the wane. It seems likely that during such a period of evolution, the priesthood moved more quickly towards the idea of a single, or at least presidential god, than the population at large but it is unclear when and how far this viewpoint became incorporated into priestly texts. Coincidentally the activities of the priests gradually took on a more pyramidal shape with an increasing concentration of power in the Jerusalem temple and a decline in the number of the individual sanctuaries throughout the land. Priestly activity and ritual were thus significantly changed by the Second-Temple period, and such a change would have reduced the opportunity for the priest to be involved in diagnostic activities and so increased the need for some form of written regulations containing advice about צרעת and זוב that could be readily available for the indoctrination of the masses. One might, therefore, imagine that in a levitical *Vorlage*, צרעת and זוב could have had an early association with medical deities and so appeared in a context less directly associated with Yahweh. However, for the late redactors who operated in an environment where a single god was preeminent and who were faced with the indefeasible nature of scripture, the tolerance — even encouragement — of petic licence, and a geographical concentration of the priesthood, the specifics of the aetiology of these conditions almost certainly needed adjustment to fit in with the *Zeitgeist*.³²

³² The late Cuthbert Simpson is one of a few writers who have tackled, from a textual standpoint, the progression of polytheism into Yahwism in earliest Israel. His extensive book of 675 pages deals

An exponent of what might be called the traditional view of the relationship between attribution of the genesis and cure of disease to a single deity and the evolution of medical thinking is that of W.A. Mason.³³ Mason believes that in ancient civilizations there operated variously mantic, animist, demonological, metaphysical and theurgic attitudes to, and interpretations of, sickness and death.³⁴ He believes the theurgic approach to have been central in Hebrew medicine and asserts, ‘The theocratic principle dominated the moral, social and political life of the Jewish people. ...There [was seen to be] but one God the source of all goodness and health, but also of all sickness and imperfection of body and mind. Such concepts and religious ideals submerge, though they do not entirely eradicate the animistic and demonic concepts and the magic medicine that followed in their wake.’ As evidence for the retention of at least some of the old magic and manticism by the Hebrews, Mason cites the following passage from Isaiah (47:13),

primarily with the emergence of the Jahvist [*sic*] tradition and so tends to dwell particularly on J and E material. Its being based around and so championing the *Documentary Hypothesis* makes it rather unfashionable today. Although Simpson makes relatively few comments about the priesthood, one of these offers some insight. Regarding the origins of the levitical priesthood, Simpson states, ‘It seems likely that many local priesthoods, later regarded as levitical, were levitical only by a kind of legal fiction; that is, they had been admitted into the priestly caste of Levi, and so had come to be reckoned as members of the "tribe". In view of the fact, indicated by Joshua 24:1-25, 8:30-34, that as late as the date of the compilation of the E document one of the salient features of the cult of the Oak of Moreh seems to have been a ceremony which had originated in the pre-Jahvist days of the sanctuary, it is by no means impossible that its priesthood was originally a non-Jahvist priesthood which, like the Levites at Kadesh, had identified themselves with Jahvism.’ Was this an early example of social climbing as a career move? If the priests had had to enter Israelite society as if intruders from outside, they would undoubtedly have had first to operate a system of give-and-take in order to become absorbed into the *genius loci* and to establish themselves as credible and ultimately *eiusdem generis*. See, Simpson, *The Early Traditions of Israel*. Footnote 3, page 456.

³³ W. A. Mason, "The Monotheistic Concept and the Evolution of Medical Thought," *Phylon* 12, no. 3 (1951): 255-63. Today, Mason's paper might be considered to be euphuistic and overly florid in its use of language and thought rather tendentious. It is certainly dogmatic in its approach but, unlike much that has been written on Israelite religious practices, Mason, at least, considers the medical implications as more than an 'aside'.

³⁴ See also, M. J. Geller, "Taboo in Mesopotamia: A Review Article," *JCS* 42, no. 1 (1990): 105-17. And Geller, *Ancient Babylonian Medicine: Theory and Practice*. These two articles offer a direct comparison between Mesopotamia and Israel as regards the inter-reactions between religion and medicine.

נְלֵאִית בְּרַב עֲצָתֶיךָ יַעֲמִדוּנָא וְיִוְשִׁיעֶךָ (הַבְּרוּ) [הַבְּרִי] שְׁמַיִם הַחַזִּים בְּכֹכְבֵּי
מוֹדִיעִם לְחֻדְשֵׁי מֵאֲשֶׁר יִבְאוּ עֲלֶיךָ

Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels: let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from the things that shall come upon thee.

It is perhaps because of the indefeasibility of sacred texts that this message persists; it was clearly countermanded by the time of H-leviticus (19:26).

לֹא תֹאכְלוּ עַל־הַדָּם לֹא תִנְחֲשׂוּ וְלֹא תַעֲוֹנֻנּוּ

Ye shall not eat any thing with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantments, nor practise augury.

It is important to realize that Mason is not postulating Yahwism as specifically having brought about the Hebrews' attitudes to medical matters: given the sparsity of evidence, that would be a step too far. After all, he argues that although, for the Hebrews, these effects were held to be the result of direct divine or spiritual action, this explanation was, in fact, no different from that held by certain polytheistic societies. Such is suggested *prima facie* to the reader of Homer, Vergil and other such authors. However, according to Mason, the difference between what he calls, the Greek, 'Universe of natural law' and the Hebrew 'Universe of moral law' was that only the latter embodied a [strong] element of ritual. It was for the priests to codify and administrate the operation of this ritual as they were effectively God's representatives on earth and symbols of his power. From them the entire structure of Jewish social and political culture was to develop and it follows logically that if health and disease were controlled by God in the cosmic, universal sphere then in the local sphere, these processes and everything to do with them should devolve upon the priests. By its very nature of clinging to a worldview embodying cosmic, social and cultic elements, priestly doctrine became rigid and ritualized with little or no regard for any aetiologically or pathophysiological ideas that might have entailed. In

such a situation it is easy to suppose that those diseases that appeared to violate categories of cleanliness, appearance and reproductive capacity of the body — i.e. those physiological aspects of life that most obviously [and visibly?] interacted with religion — should have been given priority in the daily dealings of the priests around the sanctuary. Minor ailments, because they did not impinge upon priestly activities and worldview, were simply not important enough for the priests to be bothered with.

A similar, if rather simplistic, viewpoint was expressed by Barton, writing in 1930³⁵ where he attributes [somehow] to Yahwism that, ‘All savages have fixed traditions and taboos about foods’. Because of this viewpoint, which Barton extends to other taboos, all that he believes to be necessary are two verses, Exodus 15:26:

ויאמר אִם־שִׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמַע לְקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְהִישַׁר בְּעֵינָיו תַּעֲשֶׂה וְהֵאֲזַנְתָּ לְמִצְוֹתָיו
וְשִׁמְרַת כְּלִיחֻקָיו כְּלִי־מַחְלָה אֲשֶׁר־שִׁמְתִי בַּמִּצְרִים לְאֲ־אֲשִׁים עֲלֶיךָ כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה
רַפָּאךְ

and he said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his eyes, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon thee, which I have put upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee.

and Deuteronomy 32:39:

רְאוּ עַתָּה כִּי אֲנִי הוּא וְאֵין אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי אֲנִי אֲמִית וְאֲחִיָּה מִחַצְתִּי וְאֲנִי אֲרַפָּא
וְאֵין מִיָּדִי מְצִיל

See now that I, even I, am he, And there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I have wounded, and I heal: And there is none that can deliver out of my hand.

³⁵ George Aaron Barton, *A History of the Hebrew People from the earliest times to the year 70 A.D., largely in the language of the Bible. Prepared by George A. Barton* (New York ; London: Century Co., 1930).

God alone dispenses and heals all diseases; there is no need as in other cultures for physicians — or perhaps even priests — to practise medicine.³⁶

On the evidence that is available, we cannot comment intelligently on whether the levitical purity laws and rituals presented in the Hebrew Bible were devised and formulated to operate in a wholly Yahwistic society or were inherited from their polytheistic antecedents. We must conclude that, in the whole spectrum of evolution of the Israelite religion and of the Hebrew Bible, it would be a great mistake to draw any factitious distinction between natural phenomena and the work of Yahweh — and this applies unequivocally and absolutely to disease and its treatment.³⁷

Whatever conclusions we may draw about the relationships between *healthcare* and the levitical purity laws, the influence of Yahwism is unavoidable but *not* overwhelming. Equally important may have been gradual changes in the priestly worldview through the Second-Temple period into the period of Persian and Hellenic influence. Another possible effect was the evolution of priestly rituals from the essentially parochial, taking place in a multitude of sanctuaries, to centralization in the Temple of Jerusalem.³⁸

³⁶ In a civilization where death was not uncommon, even at an early age, it is unlikely that mortality statistics would have been collected to measure the success of any healthcare regimen.

³⁷ Josephus, with the eye of retrospection clearly believed that monotheism was *the* essential ingredient of Judaism and of the Israelite people. Θεὸς γὰρ εἷς καὶ τὸ Ἑβραίων γένος ἓν. But such a view is now known to be hopelessly oversimplified and indeed, historically inaccurate, not least because Josephus is unclear about what he means by monotheism in the context of Yahwism. (*Josephus, Antiquities, 4:201*).

³⁸ Nevertheless, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the priests felt empowered to operate and even modify the simple idea of divine influence insofar as the social and political aspects of their work demanded it and it was with such modifications that the levitical laws were formulated and the levitical texts written. The practices relating to contagion and isolation were probably of priestly origin and contingent upon the obligations imposed upon them by their perception of divine law in the conduct of their everyday duties. This is, in effect, the principle of *precedence at law* which has a distinguished pedigree in underpinning the better legal systems even up to the present day.

We remain totally ignorant of how far those aspects of healthcare with which the priests elected not to concern themselves flourished or perished in Israelite society with changing *mores* and the passage of time.

The priests concerned themselves intently with events that appeared to interfere with their rituals and practices; they ignored anything that did not. It may therefore be concluded that if they had any concept of *hygiene* it was purely *sacramental hygiene*.

SUMMARY

The approach to צרעת in Chapter 5 was directed at its medical associations and in Chapter 9 at its etymological, semantic and literary status. Also in Chapter 9 Lieber's 'medical' approach to צרעת has been discussed for comparison with theological views presented in this chapter.

In the priestly worldview צרעת was undoubtedly seen as the most virulent cause of ritual impurity, but it is difficult to understand this role not least because the word appears to be undefinable. As a first step in the exegesis of this condition, a series of situations upon which it impinges — or in certain instances, surprisingly, fails to impinge — has been discussed in some detail. From the evidence in Chapters 5, 9 and 10 it is possible to see, — from a medical and from a theological point of view — a dichotomy of usage between the levitical and non-levitical Torah texts and also a difference between usage in the Torah and in the Hebrew Bible outwith the Torah. The work of Lieber sees a *pathological* distinction between Torah and non-Torah צרעת while Baden and Moss and Feder see a *theological* distinction. The specific notion of צרעת in relation to ritual impurity under the worldview of the levitical

priesthood differs again from that in Deuteronomy, yet each sees צרעת as causing a potential infraction of its particular brand of holiness.

In the non-Torah context we see Lieber's belief that צרעת pericopes should be regarded as case-histories while Baden and Moss's theological approach perceives these instances of צרעת as the consequences of sin. The question of Job is also important because several authors have suggested 'leprosy' as his diagnosis.³⁹

All of this sheds light on the the nature of the Ancient Israelites' response to these *impurifying conditions* which they most probably did not see as *diseases* in the way that we do today. The question remains, 'Did the priesthood, *import* the principles of what today we perceive (in a medical context) as *hygiene* and apply them within their particular worldview as *sacramental hygiene* specifically for the preservation of holy things? Or, conversely, did those principles originate with the priests as *sacramental hygiene* and subsequently become *exported* from the hierophantic milieu into general usage by the population at large where they ultimately became incorporated as important principles of medical practice?' In the following chapter an attempt will be made to answer this question in the light of the evidence and opinion presented in the preceding chapters.

³⁹ See Chapter 8 and Appendix 4

CHAPTER 11 — CONCLUSIONS

THE foregoing chapters have contained separate investigations into particular aspects of the relationship between wholeness and holiness. These were seen in terms of the interaction of on the one hand, nosology and practical medicine and on the other hand, the priestly worldview and ideology of ritual underlying the levitical purity laws, their formulation, transmission, doctrinal purpose and day-to-day application.

HEALTHCARE ↔ WHOLENESS ↔ HOLINESS

At the end of a *thesis*, one must return to and reconsider its *hypothesis*. This was stated in Chapter 1 in relation to the aims and objectives of the study:

1. *That in the worldview of the levitical priesthood, holiness was established and maintained through ritual purity. [Aims 1,2,3]*
2. *That ritual purity in individuals depended upon their organic integrity — wholeness. [Aims 1,2,3,4]*
3. *That wholeness was manifested in terms of bodily appearance and reproductive capacity and, to a lesser extent, by the absence of blemish. [Aims 5,6]*
4. *That wholeness, and therefore ritual purity, was compromised by violation of these categories. [Aims 3,5,6]*
5. *That the most serious of these violations, צרעת and זוב were characterized by their being contagious. [Aims 6]*
6. *That both צרעת and זוב had features in common with, but were not wholly identifiable as, diseases known today. [Aims 5,6]*
7. *That the priestly countermeasures— sacramental hygiene — taken against these infractions of wholeness were aimed solely at the preservation of holiness and should not be interpreted as rudimentary public health medicine. [Aims 1,3]*
8. *That their later adoption into the field of medical care was fortunate but unintentional. [Aims 1,2,3,4,5]*

It can now be considered in three stages:

Healthcare ↔ wholeness

This interaction has been investigated in Chapter 2. Rudimentary practices of medical care such as those of Egypt and Mesopotamia *may* have been passed on. However, almost nothing has been handed down to indicate if this was the case and how it operated in Israel. This failure was probably due to the following factors:

1. *Medical care, such as it was, may have variously involved magicians, diviners, mantics, sorcerers and the priests.*
2. *The magicians, diviners, mantics and sorcerers had no tradition of producing written texts so that no account of their practices has survived for scrutiny.*
3. *The priests, who did leave a textual heritage, may have wished to preserve for themselves the business of dealing with צרעת and זוב for reasons discussed above (passim) and/or never made the connection that these conditions were in the nature of organic disease or injury.*

In fact it seems there was no formalized practice of *healthcare* in ancient Israel. What the magicians and mantics did was unlikely to effect anything curative unless by chance. Rudimentary first-aid, perhaps even to the extent of encompassing bone-setting, was presumably available in the domestic sphere. All of this was probably *ad hoc* and unrefined.

Wholeness ↔ holiness

Two models for wholeness necessary for the establishment and maintenance of ritual purity within the worldview of the levitical priesthood have been postulated:

1. *Sociological model (Turner, Douglas) — ritual purity entails the absence of any antitypicality of appearance (visible body parts) or compromise of reproductive function*
2. *Taxonomical model (various authors) — ritual purity is a maintained state of sacramental hygiene*

There is no evidence to support one of these models over the other but what is important is that in either model, it is the same conditions that ultimately trigger impurity. In the first case it is the presence of antitypicality *per se* that sets the individual apart in a state of impurity. In the second case the antitypicality is seen less as an affection of the individual and more as a potential for upsetting directly the priest-mediated state of sacramental hygiene.

As far back as early Mesopotamian civilization, there appears to have been a perceived association between *holiness* and *cleanliness*.¹ In Akkadian, the word *ellu* (Ideogram = KUG = 𒂍),² denoted both of these states with *cleanliness* implying not only the absence of dirt but also the positive attribute of brilliance or luminosity. Smith has seen this dualistic idea continued through Ugaritic where the same meaning is given to the word *thr* (𐎗𐎒𐎗𐎒 = adj = pure, sparkling),³ into Aramaic (טהר = verb = be ritually clean),⁴ and eventually into Hebrew to appear in the Hebrew Bible as טהור in the verse:

ויראו את אלהי ישראל ותחת רגליו כמעשה לבנת הספיר וכעצם השמים לטהר:

and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the very heaven for clearness.

(Exodus 24:10)

¹ Geller, *Ancient Babylonian Medicine: Theory and Practice*; Geller, "Taboo in Mesopotamia: A Review Article."

² Oppenheim and Reiner, eds., *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* E, vol 4, pp 102b–106b. Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon*. Pg 194.

³Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*. Olmo Lete, Sanmartín, and Watson, *A dictionary of the Ugaritic language in the Alphabetic tradition*. Vol 2, pg 888.

⁴ Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods*. Pg 494b.

Smith's conclusion is that the idea of purity — which is cultic holiness — is 'Based analogically upon the profane notion of cleanliness both in its negative connotation as free of dirt and in its positive connotation of brilliance.'⁵

If, with Mary Douglas, we suppose 'free of dirt' to mean 'all matter in the right place', this idea seems not too far removed from Douglas's and Turner's appreciation of the *wholeness*↔*holiness* interrelationship and its primarily sociological undertones. However, as a notion it sits less harmoniously with the interaction of the *wholeness*↔*holiness* tension and the טהור↔טמא relationship as seen by authors such as Milgrom, Neusner, Frymer-Kensky and Klawans. This is, surely, because their appreciation of and approach to the situation has been largely taxonomical whilst that of Mary Douglas's has been aetiological.⁶ In all cases, however, the relationship of un-cleanness (\equiv *un-wholeness* \equiv *antitypicality*) to holiness is one of reciprocal exclusion and so holiness cannot exist where there is un-wholeness.

In the levitical writings of the Hebrew Bible, all holiness apart from the holiness of God is seen to be derivative but unclean things are regarded as intrinsically unclean and not derivatively unclean. Uncleanliness is, therefore, a primary quality of intrinsically unclean things that offend the eye or compromise the life-force. Examples of each might be צרעת, [*dermopathic*] *platydysmorphism*, — which was seen as being defiling like the flesh of the dead — and זב which was seen as jeopardizing the future of Israel. They confer the sort of social antitypicality Mary Douglas recognized and so they probably functioned in the priests' minds, not as

⁵ For an interesting, semi-mathematical and highly informative discourse on analogy see, Mascall, *Existence and analogy*.

⁶ See Chapter 4

indicators of illness or disease, but as *delible marks of impurity*. Both of these infractions of holiness have persisted into later Christianity, though their importance became altered with the geographical spread of religion(s) and with measures to control disease. Over time, and particularly after the crusades, צרעת became confused with true leprosy and thereby served the Church well, providing ecclesial power by means of the induction and control of religious fear and obedience. Equally widespread but more persistent in reaching into present-day religious practices, was the influence of זוב which fitted so well into the near universal obsession of religious thinkers — ancient and modern — with sexual sin. The reasoning behind the persistence of the unholy consequences of זוב has been well summed-up by MacCulloch: ‘A man’s semen contained the entire foetus in embryo: so anything which stopped male seed doing its job was an act of murder — anything, from masturbation to contraception to same-sex sexual relations. The idea was taken up by the second-century Christian teacher Clement of Alexandria, and it has become deeply embedded in the Christian moral tradition.’⁷ Holiness, therefore, everywhere apart from the holiness of God, was derived as a direct consequence of the wholeness (≡ cleanliness) of the subject-matter. The priests held themselves to be the arbiters and guardians of wholeness/cleanliness among their own kind and among the population at large. As such their role was diagnostic and preventive but never therapeutic. The text of Leviticus is the priests’ formal statement — strictly contained within their worldview — of the doctrine of the *wholeness↔holiness* relationship and of any dogma to be derived therefrom.

⁷ D MacCulloch, *Reformation, Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* (2vols.; London: Folio Society, 2013). Vol 2 pp 650-651.

Healthcare ↔ holiness

Smith has defined holiness in the West Semitic world as, ‘A general characteristic adhering to material realia and social processes in shrines, including theophany.’⁸

The question that faces us here is how far, if at all, the priests considered *healthcare* as one of those *realia*. This in turn, leads to a pair of opposing propositions as to whether the priests:

1. *Formulated the purity laws by applying prior knowledge of diseases and their management.*

Or

2. *Formulated the purity laws de novo and incidentally incorporated practices nowadays associated with preventive medicine.*

It has been suggested in Chapters 2 to 10 that features of disease might have been applied to curses and that the *contagion of misfortune* might have arisen and become associated with those interdictions already applied to impurity. Working along these lines, Kaplan has suggested, on the grounds that isolation for צרעת was required only for what he calls ‘moral contagion’ and that the symptoms and signs described in Leviticus were intentionally contrived to fit no known disease. This idea seems highly tendentious and it is most unlikely that the priesthood of the time would have had the knowledge and experience [and deviousness] to think up such a ploy. This arrangement would, theoretically, exclude those whose only sin was to be affected by an obvious cutaneous disease. In any case, it is virtually impossible to accept this view when, from the dearth of evidential material from secular sources, we can have no possible idea of what, if any, diseases were known at the times of both the levitical *Vorlage* and its later redaction(s).⁹ This viewpoint, like that of many other

⁸ Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*. Pg 93.

⁹ D. L. Kaplan, "Biblical leprosy: an anachronism whose time has come," *J Am Ac Derm* 28, no. 3 (1993): 507-10.

authors, credits the priests with more technical knowledge than they can possibly have had.

A more difficult question is whether those — later-to-become medical — principles such as diagnosis, contagion and quarantine arose purely out of the priestly ethos of purity legislation and practices or whether they were observed by the priests as coming from earlier civilizations, like Mesopotamia, where there was a relatively well-developed medical tradition. Equally, the priests could have observed them in a developing secular healthcare milieu of which no evidence remains. If either was the case, we have to find a reason why the Israelite priesthood chose to concern itself with medical matters in the first place. On balance, it seems unlikely that they would see any purpose or virtue in this. It does not, however, rule out the possibility that they identified principles and practices from these other sources as offering useful tools for the management of ritual impurity.

Historically, in any society, ancient and modern, it has been the priests' job to maintain holiness and the physicians' job to maintain wholeness (in the anatomical, physiological and psychological sense). If a society chooses to adopt the duality of the *wholeness↔holiness/type↔antitype* arrangement and physicians do not really exist in any powerful or effective way, the entire *wholeness↔holiness* problem might fall to the priests. It does not really matter whether the practices relating to diagnosis, contagion and quarantine, as applied to ritual impurity, were formulated by the priests *de novo* or borrowed from other more medically competent societies. In either case, it is easy to see how they might have become embodied in an existing intellectual framework, with which the priests were already familiar, to end up as a *wholeness↔holiness* paradigm for incorporation into the levitical (im)purity laws.

It was noted above, that there appear to be several possible explanations as to why we have so little material concerned with *healthcare* in Ancient Israel. It may now be possible to expand that reasoning a little further by suggesting that passive and active elements may have been in operation in formulating the (im)purity laws to include צרעת and זוב and quasi-medical practices such as diagnosis, contagion and isolation without coincidentally requiring the parallel development of true medical practices. Important influences might have been:

A. Passive

1. *Bias in transmission* — where, out of religious or pious zeal or for other reasons, it has been seen by later redactors as necessary either to boost the role of the priesthood or to play down the role of secular healthcare workers. An example might be the Essenes at Qumran.
2. *Literary* — it is possible that if a physician class existed, it may not have been sufficiently educated to leave behind textual evidence.
3. *Geographical* — The majority of textual material is from Judah the Southern Kingdom. We have little information about practices in the Northern Kingdom.

B. Active

1. *There was an active suppression by the priesthood of either medical practices or medical reporting.*

Nevertheless, whether or not the priests thought of צרעת and זוב specifically as afflictions/diseases as we would think of them today, they invariably attributed to them a divine aetiology. It seems unlikely that they were operating in such a way as to try specifically to control disease, public health or the general hygiene of the population as they almost certainly had no notion of these concepts or any idea of therapeutic methods or principles of preventive medicine. Rather, they were operating a preventive policy designed *only* to control the incidence and spread of

(non-physical) ritual impurity and so protect individuals, society and the Israelite homeland from its defiling effects. As such they were operating within the framework of the cosmic, social and cultic principles demanded by their established worldview, so as both to vouchsafe and safeguard *sacramental hygiene*. It follows that they were not in any way, concerned with *hygiene* as it is understood today.

A system of *sacramental hygiene* first requires a means of recognizing and measuring ritual impurity within the individual and within the population. It is easy to see, in the light of such reasoning, how failure of the reproductive process and how זוב might have been used to explain infertility and a dearth of progeny or how visible disfigurement, as manifested by a class of major and/or minor afflictions of the (dermopathic) platydysmorphic type, might have become mentally associated and thereafter identified as צרעת. Because priests operated in the sphere of *the holy*, their actions would have been seen, above all, as tending to preserve holy dogma embodying the ultimate requirement that *life and death should not and must not be mixed*. Those things that the priests worked to prevent, would most likely have been seen as *unholy* and so the sufferers from צרעת and זוב would have been readily identifiable as antitypes of holiness.

Although it seems to have been with the diagnosis and treatment of ritual impurity, and not with medical matters that the priests were concerned, their activities must have overlapped with certain practices, that were inchoate at that time but which we see today as central to and routine within medical care. In their zeal to preserve טהור and to protect against טמא and תועבה, they, perhaps unconsciously, developed the concepts of contagion and quarantine and instituted what they perceived as cleansing

measures — usually sacrificial — to combat these violations of purity. Incidentally these measures may have proved, ultimately, to be advantageous in the field of public-health.

Because of the signal imbalance of evidence, when we compare the copious formal hortative levitical texts and other, purely narrative, writings from the Hebrew Bible and also later Jewish sources with the exiguous measure of material from equivalent secular sources, it is almost impossible to be convinced that a fair appraisal of the entire evidential mass can ever be arrived at. Even if the secular data are boosted by extrapolation from the recorded practices of other cultures, it can never be more than hypothesis — and hypotheses are never without their limitations. It is necessary to accept Newton's advice about hypotheses and the handling of evidence in general:

*Hypotheses non fingo. Quicquid enim ex phaenomenis non deducitur, hypothesis vocanda est; et hypotheses seu metaphysicae, seu physicae, seu qualitatem occultarum, seu mechanicae, in philosophia experimentalis locum non habent. In hac philosophia propositiones deducuntur ex phaenomenis, et redduntur generales per inductionem*¹⁰.

Or, as Pliny the Elder said, in pithier and more elegant Latin, — *Ne supra crepidam sutor iudicaret* — telling us that we should not draw conclusions beyond the available evidence.¹¹ With such caveats in operation, it is impossible to apply deductive logic in an even-handed way. So, as far as can be seen from this imbalance of evidence, where *tension* existed between any putative medical establishment of ancient Israel and the substantive priesthood, it was unlikely to have been a result of disagreement over the management of צרעת or זוב or even about the

¹⁰ *I feign no hypotheses. For whatever is not deduced from the phenomena must be called a hypothesis; and hypotheses, whether metaphysical or physical, or based on occult qualities, or mechanical, have no place in experimental philosophy. In this philosophy particular propositions are inferred from the phenomena, and afterwards rendered general by induction.* (Scholium Generale, Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica. Isaac Newton 1713.)

¹¹ 'Let a shoemaker not judge above his last' (Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historiae* XXXV, xxxvi, 85).

conflict of טמא and טהור: they were simply cultures apart and had no reason to interact either additively or subtractively. As for *synergy*, this happened, but was probably unintended. Its effect was to impinge passively, as a consequence of priestly measures envisaged solely for the preservation of ritual purity, by generating an ethic and operating practical measures for *sacramental hygiene*. These concepts, nevertheless, eventually percolated into the world of ordinary people and there, being applied at a different time, under a different worldview and in a different place and society, gave rise to the immensely important and practically valuable modern hygienic principles of *contagion* and *isolation*.¹² It would be wrong to suppose, as many authors have, that in the levitical context, these should be thought of as hygienic measures in the modern, medical, sense because they were not, nor were they ever envisaged to be. That they subsequently found a significant place in preventive medicine appears to have been both fortuitous and fortunate.

SUMMARY

Chapter 1 — The hypothesis, hermeneutical approach, methodology and medical exegesis; definitions of wholeness and holiness are discussed and posited as parameters of the study.

Chapter 2 — Healthcare in the Ancient Near East existed most commonly in a polytheistic milieu and embodied magic and manticism alongside a delveloping interest in botanic remedies. [Aims 1,2,4]

¹² It is thought-provoking to note that, at the time of writing, there is a near pandemic of Ebola haemorrhagic fever in Western Africa. This disease has a $\gg 90\%$ mortality rate and there is currently no specific treatment or way of contriving immunity. In Western countries a very few cases have survived after maintenance with costly and highly specialized intensive barrier nursing. The only practical way, therefore, to deal with this disease in Africa is identical to that practised in the 1348 Black Death and the 1664 Great Plague of London — a clear understanding of the principles of *contagion* and *isolation*, and their rigorous application.

Chapter 3 — The priestly worldview is discussed and shown to embody cosmic, social and cultic elements and to be centred around ritual. The nature of ritual is considered. What truly medical information can be gleaned from the Hebrew Bible is discussed. [Aims 1,2,3,4]]

Chapter 4 — The nature of the Levitical ideas of purity and impurity and their modern interpretations, are outlined and discussed. [Aims 1,3,4]

Chapters 5 and 6 — Medical exegesis of Leviticus Chapters 13 and 15 — צרעת and זוב were, for the priests, determinants of major impurity. Although they had features in common with what today are recognized as diseases, it has proved impossible to categorize them in present-day pathology. [Aims 2,4,5,6]

Chapter 7 — Blemishes were seen as compromising wholeness to a lesser degree than צרעת and זוב and with the exception of cases involving the priesthood, did not demand such stringent expiatory rituals. [Aims 2,4,5]

Chapter 8 — Contagion was the cardinal feature of those infractions of wholeness — צרעת and זוב — that caused major impurity. Contagion was viewed as it is today but rather as a pollution of sanctity than as conjunct to disease processes. [Aims 2,4,5, 6]

Chapter 9 — An exploration of the etymology of צרעת sheds no light upon its pathology, but suggests different viewpoints in P and non-P material within the Hebrew Bible. [Aims 3,4,5]

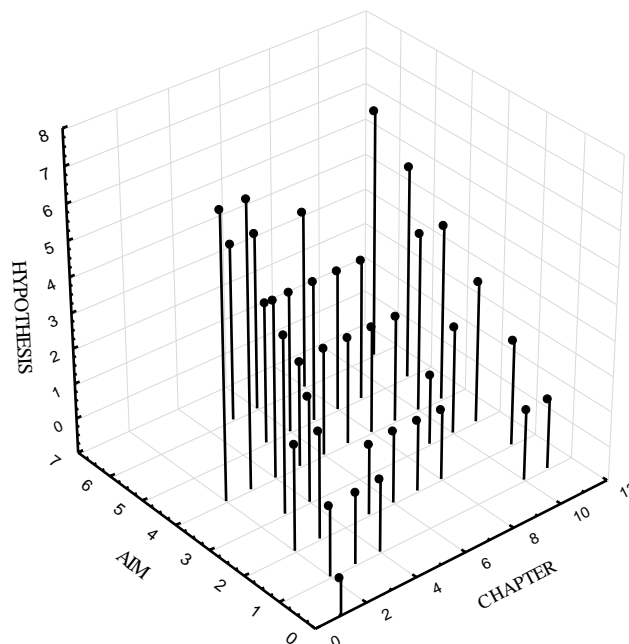
Chapter 10 — In the priestly worldview, צרעת (and זוב) bore no direct relationship to sin. However in the H material of Leviticus and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, a relationship between these major pollutants and sin was evinced. A comparison with

Deuteronomy reveals further information about the priestly ideas of wholeness, holiness and ritual purity. [Aims 1,3,4]

Chapter 11 — The conditions צרעת and זוב fitted into the ideology and worldview of the levitical priesthood entirely as determinants of a state of infraction of wholeness. The wholeness was necessary for the establishment and maintenance of holiness, not merely of individuals, but of sacred objects and places, society as a whole and the land of Israel. These conditions were contagious and transmissible among all of these. In this way they put at risk the continued presence of Yahweh in the land of Israel. There is no clear evidence to suggest that the priesthood saw these conditions in any terms commensurate with modern pathology and clinical medicine. [Aims 1,2,3,4,5,6]

The following is guide to those chapters in which the relationship between the aims set out at the beginning of this study and the overall hypothesis have been considered.

Correlation of Aims and Hypothesis by Chapter



APPENDIX I — RESOURCES AND METHODS.

TEXTUAL AND REFERENCE SOURCES

Biblical texts¹

THE critical edition of the Hebrew Bible used throughout was the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*² which is based primarily on the *Codex Leningradensis*. As the critical edition of *Leviticus* for the more recent series, *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (based also on the *Aleppo Codex*), has yet to appear, it was thought appropriate to use the older (*Stuttgartensia*), critical edition throughout. The Masoretic vocalization of that edition has been included only where it is specifically explicative.

For the Septuagint, the edition used was that of Hanhart *et al*³ based on Rahlfs's edition.⁴ This was complemented by the *Göttingen Critical Edition*⁵ and by Wevers's *Notes on the Greek Texts* series.⁶

For the New Testament, the Nestlé–Aland 28th Edition⁷ has been used along with the *Center for New Testament Textual Studies' New Testament Critical Apparatus*, (CNTTS), which is available electronically in *Bibleworks*⁸ and *Accordance*.⁹

¹ See also Appendix 3

² Karl Elliger et al., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007).

³ Robert Hanhart et al., *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1931- 2014).

⁴ Alfred Rahlfs, "Ἡ Παλαιὰ Διαθήκη: Septuaginta," (1979).

⁵ Septuaginta-Unternehmen (Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen) et al., *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1931); Joseph Ziegler et al., *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Göttingensis ditum* (Göttingen.; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967).

⁶ For example, John William Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Leviticus* (44; ed. Bernard A Taylor; Atlanta Ga: Scholars' Press 1997).

⁷ E Nestle and B Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Münster Institute For New Testament Textual Research 2014).

⁸ Bibleworks, "Software for Biblical Exegesis and Research," (Norfolk VA: BibleWorks LLC, 2011).

Other Jewish texts

Complete texts and translations of the Dead Sea Scrolls are available in print¹⁰ and electronically either from *Accordance* or in the edition from Brigham Young University.¹¹ Likewise, the Talmud, Mishnah, Leviticus Rabbah and related literature are available in *Accordance* and in the *Soncino* edition of Judaic Classical Texts.¹² The Mishnah was also consulted in the printed form both as Hebrew text and in Danby's translation.¹³ Unvocalized versions are quoted but any significant differences due to variant vocalization have been pointed out. In the case of צרעת controversies regarding bee stings have been considered at length elsewhere.¹⁴

Quotations

Non-Biblical quotations

Non-biblical quotations in English have, for the most part been incorporated, non-italicized, into the body of text. Where such quotations are in other languages, famous, apophthegmatic, aphoristic etc, they have been separated into indented paragraphs.

Biblical quotations

Biblical quotations throughout have been separated into indented paragraphs. Where the Masoretic Text (MT) and the Greek text of the Septuagint are at variance, the Hebrew Bible (HB) verses, translated by ERV, have been accompanied by the

⁹ Accordance, "Bible Software," (Altamonte Springs, FL 32701 USA: Oaktree Software, 2013).

¹⁰ F. G. Martinez and E. J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls. Study Edition* (2; Leiden, Boston, [MA]: E.J. Brill, 1998).

¹¹ Dead Sea Scrolls, "Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Library," (Provo Utah USA: Brigham Young University, 2006).

¹² Soncino, *The Soncino Classics Collection — Judaic Texts; Talmud, Mishnah, Midrash Rabbah and Zohar in Hebrew, Aramaic and English* (Jud Cl; Chicago IL: Davka Corporation and Soncino Press, 2009).

¹³ Philip Blackman, ed., *Mishnayoth* (3 ed.; 6 vols.; New York: Judaica Press Inc., 1965). H. Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933).

¹⁴ Michael A Glasby, "What was Biblical Leprosy?" (MTh thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2011). Pg 33.

equivalent text from the Septuagint (LXX) translated by NETS, so that both versions may be compared. For the most part, such variations are few. Where there is conflict between HB and LXX sources, this has been discussed in the accompanying text.

English translations of Biblical quotations are from the Revised Version of the Bible (English Revised Version, ERV).¹⁵ This may seem an unusual choice given the infrequent use of the ERV today. The ERV is lacking in some of the majesty, dignity and poetry of the 1611 King James Version (KJV) and also lacks the greater imprint of later theological scholarship to be found in the Revised Standard Version (1946, 1952, 1957) and the New Revised Standard Version (1989). However, the ERV which is often described as ‘literal and flat’, because of this very quality, adheres more closely to the original Hebrew and Greek. For the linguistic interpreter, rather than the ecclesiastical exegete, this offers significant advantages. While other more deeply interpretative versions may have been used for exegetical purposes in the surrounding text, it is the ERV that has been used in quotations along with the Hebrew and Greek.

English translations of the Septuagint are from the *New English Translation of the Septuagint*, (NETS).¹⁶

Dictionaries and grammars

Hebrew and Aramaic

It was fortunate that the genesis of this thesis coincided with the completion of Clines’s monumental and excellent *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*¹⁷ and this has

¹⁵ New Testament, 1881; Old Testament, 1885; Apocrypha, 1894.

¹⁶ Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, *A new English translation of the Septuagint: and the other Greek translations traditionally included under that title* (New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). T Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Louvain: Peeters, 2009).

been used here as the first port of call in all matters of Hebrew etymology. This dictionary is ordered in (Hebrew) alphabetical order of words. For word-finding by means of trilateral roots the dictionary of Brown Driver and Briggs (BDB), was used.¹⁸ More detailed exegetical information about Hebrew words was to be found in the fifteen-volume *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, (TDOT).¹⁹ For Aramaic words the standard dictionary is that of Köhler *et al* (HALOT).²⁰ However, in dealing with later Jewish textual material such as the Mishnah and Talmud, the lexica by Jastrow²¹ and Sokoloff²² proved to be of greater value. Matters of Grammar were referred to Gesenius's or Muraoka's comprehensive grammar books.²³ Where an Old Testament concordance was called for, the need was usually satisfied by the electronic means provided by *Accordance* and *Bibleworks*. Where conflict arose or confirmation was necessary the standard concordance of Mandelkern, (written in Latin), was consulted.²⁴

¹⁷ D J A Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (8vols.; Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2010).

¹⁸ F Brown, S R Driver, and C A Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960).

¹⁹ G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H. J. Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (15 vols.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995).

²⁰ Ludwig Köhler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

²¹ M Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006).

²² M Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat-Gan, Israel; Baltimore, MA; London: Bar Ilan University Press; Johns Hopkins Press, 2002); M. 2002. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic* (Ramat-Gan, Israel; Baltimore, MA; London: Bar Ilan University Press; Johns Hopkins Press., 2002); M Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (Ramat-Gat, Israel; Baltimore; London: Bar Ilan University Press; Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); M Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Judean Aramaic* (Ramat-Gat, Israel: Bar Ilan University Press, 2003).

²³ Wilhelm Gesenius et al., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar: with a facsimile of the Siloam inscription by J. Euting and a table of alphabets by M. Lidzbarski* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910). P Joüon and T Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (2vols.; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 2005); T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Qumran Aramaic* (ANES 38; Leuven ; Walpole, Mass: Peeters, 2011).

²⁴ S Mandelkern, *Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae* (2vols.; Gratz: Akademische Druck U. Verlagsanstalt, 1896).

Greek

The most comprehensive lexicon available is that of Liddell and Scott²⁵ but as this is aimed at Classical Greek it was supplemented by lexica specifically targeted at biblical texts.²⁶ For a more extensive exegetical approach the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (TDNT), was found to be helpful.²⁷ Occasionally, although aimed at the Patristic Greek corpus, Lampe's dictionary²⁸ provided some surprisingly helpful points. Matters of Greek grammar were referred to Smyth's Grammar.²⁹ The concordance to the Septuagint by Hatch and Redpath³⁰ was used as necessary.

Latin

The recently published *Oxford Latin Dictionary*³¹ contains the most detailed etymological information but is aimed primarily at the Classical period. The long-serving dictionary of Lewis and Short³² remains a stalwart companion along with Gildersleeve's Latin Grammar.³³

²⁵ H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *Greek English Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940).

²⁶ Walter Bauer et al., *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979). G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961). Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*.

²⁷ G. Kittel, G. Friedrich, and R. Pitkin, *Theological dictionary of the New Testament* (10 vols.; Grand Rapids MI: William B Eerdmans, 1976).

²⁸ Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*.

²⁹ Herbert Weir Smyth and Gordon M. Messing, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984).

³⁰ Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A concordance to the Septuagint and the other Greek versions of the Old Testament (including the Apocryphal books)* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983).

³¹ P. G. W. Glare, *Oxford Latin dictionary* (2vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

³² Charlton Thomas Lewis, Charles Short, and William Freund, *A Latin dictionary: founded on Andrews' edition of Freund's Latin dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

³³ Basil L. Gildersleeve and Gonzalez Lodge, *Latin grammar* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1997).

Akkadian

For the transliterated language, Tawil's *Akkadian Lexical Companion for Biblical Hebrew*³⁴ is particularly useful but while it helpfully includes the word זֹב, it does not, unfortunately, include צִרְעָת. More comprehensive Akkadian dictionaries are that of von Soden³⁵ and the massive *Assyrian Dictionary* from the University of Chicago³⁶ which, by good fortune, is available in its entirety, on-line. For the cuneiform characters, the classic works are those of Borger and Labat.³⁷ Akkadian grammar books used here were those of Huehnergard and King.³⁸

Ugaritic, Egyptian, Arabic

These exotic languages were of importance specifically in the search for cognates. Standard reference works were used throughout.³⁹

Statistics

Statistical calculations were made and graphs plotted using the statistical and graphics programme *Statistica*. A discussion of its use and merits by the present author may be found elsewhere.⁴⁰

³⁴ Hayim ben Yosef Tawil, *An Akkadian Lexical Companion for Biblical Hebrew* (Jersey City NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 2009).

³⁵ W. von Soden and B. Meissner, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch (3 vols)* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1965).

³⁶ Ignace J. Gelb and University of Chicago. Oriental Institute., *Assyrian dictionary* (Chicago,: 1956).

³⁷ R. Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2004). R Labat and F Malbran-Labat, *Manuel d'Épigraphie Akkadienne — Signes Syllabaire Idéogrammes* (ed. Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner; Paris: Geuthner S.A., 1988).

³⁸ John Huehnergard, *A Grammar of Akkadian* (Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 2005). L W King, *First Steps in Assyrian* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, Ltd, 1898).

³⁹ Gregorio del Olmo Lete, Joaquín Sanmartín, and Wilfred G. E. Watson, *A dictionary of the Ugaritic language in the Alphabetic tradition* (Diccionario de la lengua ugarítica. English; 2 vols.; Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2004). A. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, Asmolean Museum, 1927). E A Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary* (2vols.; New York: Dover, 1920); E A Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Language. Easy Lessons in Egyptian Hieroglyphics with Sign List* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1910). A. F. L. Beeston, *The Arabic language today* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1970); A. F. L. Beeston, *Written Arabic: an approach to the basic structures* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1968). Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (Cambridge : Islamic Texts Society, 1984 (2003 [printing]), 1863).

Style and format

Matters of style and format were referred to the SBL Handbook of Style⁴¹ which is that used routinely in the Department of Divinity, New College, University of Edinburgh. As a consequence of this, the Masoretic vocalization of quotations from the Hebrew Bible and from elsewhere has not been included except where it has been necessary to make a grammatical, syntactical or exegetical point.

Bibliography

References are presented in the style used routinely in the Department of Divinity, New College, University of Edinburgh, which is that of the Society for Biblical Literature.⁴¹ The database was compiled using 'Endnote' software⁴² references were uploaded wherever possible from the Bodleian Library, Oxford to preserve continuity of format.

⁴⁰ Michael A Glasby, "An Assessment of the Predictive Value of Laboratory Studies in the Management of Peripheral Nerve Injuries" (MD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2005).

⁴¹ Patrick H. Alexander and Society of Biblical Literature., *The SBL handbook of style : for ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and early Christian studies* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999).

⁴² Endnote, Adept Scientific plc. Amor Way, Letchworth, Hertfordshire, SG6 1ZA

APPENDIX 2 — MEDICINE IN OTHER CULTURES

OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

IN all societies and cultures, the development of medical healthcare practice has been a lengthy, evolutionary process. A perusal of the Bible suggests that the everyday medicine of ancient Syria-Palestine was either not well developed or not well reported. In considering how medical practice in ancient Syria-Palestine developed, we must carefully examine external influences and these fall roughly into two categories. First, are those cultures dating from an earlier period and with an established medical tradition of their own: namely Egypt and Mesopotamia. Both of these appear to have had, (each in its own way), well-developed medical traditions and, because of their geographical proximity, might be expected to have influenced Israel. By post-exilic times, Greek (Hellenic) medicine was emerging and would, have been at least, also a potentially significant influence. As a result of the work of Hippocrates (c.460 BCE – c. 370 BCE) and through the time of Alexander (356 BCE – 323 BCE) and into the Roman Period, Greek medicine became very highly developed and was widely exported. All of these influences operated coincidentally with the final redactions of biblical books. By the time of the *Mishnah* and the *Talmud*, a further variable in the form of Arabian Medicine was emerging and it is through this medium that much ancient material pertaining to medical matters has been preserved but, possibly redacted. Arabian medicine both complemented and challenged Greek

(and Roman) medicine so that they all must be considered together as significantly contributing to the foundation of modern, Western medicine.¹

The two civilizations, Egypt and Mesopotamia, that pre-dated that of Syria-Palestine both had well-developed medical traditions. Both were highly polytheistic civilizations and this must be expected to have had a crucial impact upon the degree to which their practices became acceptable for absorption into a burgeoning Israelite culture.

Egypt

It would be a mistake to suppose, as many have, that Egyptian medicine consisted of little more than *post mortem* practices. It is true that in a culture where the after-life was central and all-important, preparation for it necessitated the development and perfection of embalming. The Egyptians were, as we well know, particularly good at this, but much of their apparent success was due to the preserving qualities of the land and its warm, dry climate as has been shown to be the case for the preservation of papyri. The name most associated with ancient Egyptian medicine is *Imhotep*, vizier to the pharaoh *Djoser* of the Third Dynasty (c2650 – 2560 BCE) of the Old Kingdom (2700 – 2200 BCE). Imhotep is described as having been a skilled physician in respect of living patients and is sometimes claimed to be the founder of Egyptian Medicine.² However, there is no textual evidence from these early times and the present day view of Egyptian medicine is compounded largely from two sources, the one, a small number of nevertheless very informative papyri and the

¹ J V Kinnier-Wilson, "Medicine in the Land and Times of the Old Testament," in *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays* (ed. T Ishida; Winona Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1982). Plinio Prioreschi, *A History of Medicine* (2vols.; Omaha NE: Horatius Press, 1996).

² Prioreschi, *A History of Medicine*

other, speculative accounts by writers from later civilizations, notably Hippocrates, (c. 460 – c. 370 BCE)³ and Herodotus, (c. 484 – c. 425 BCE).⁴

The Greeks held Egypt in great regard and recognized that Egypt's achievement was largely due to the presence and exploitation of the Nile. It was an emphatically riparian civilization then, and remains so today. Herodotus described Egypt as: δῶρον τοῦ ποταμοῦ and even Homer believed the land of Egypt to be a great source of botanical medicines and a place where every man was, to some extent, skilled in the art of the physician. Egypt, for Homer, is the place that:

τῇ πλεῖστα φέρει ζείδωρος ἄρουρα
φάρμακα, πολλὰ μὲν ἐσθλὰ μεμιγμενα πολλὰ δὲ λυγρά·
ἰητρος δὲ ἕκαστος ἐπισταμενος περὶ πάντων ἀνθρώπων.

*Bears the greatest store of drugs,
many that are healing when mixed
and many that are baneful;
there, every man is a physician.*

(Homer *Odyssey* IV 229-232)⁵

Kinnier-Wilson,⁶ has identified two kinds of doctor in ancient Egypt. The first was the *hry-h3b*,⁷ (literally, *carrier of the ritual book*): with *ritual* referring to magic. These doctors were, therefore magicians, exorcists and sorcerers.⁸ In contrast, members of the second group, the *synw*⁹ were, to a degree, practical physicians and surgeons in the modern sense. Both physician/surgeon and embalmer would be

³ Hippocrates et al., *Hippocrates* (10 vols.; Cambridge, Mass, London: Harvard University Press; William Heinemann, 1923-2012).

⁴ Herodotus, *The Persian Wars; with an English translation by: Godley, A D* (4vols.; Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

⁵ Homer, George Dimock, and A. T. Murray, *The Odyssey* (2vols.; Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁶ Kinnier-Wilson, "Medicine in the Land and Times of the Old Testament." pg 338

⁷ Budge, *Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary*. Pg 849a. Note that as the nature of Egyptian vowels remains uncertain it is customary to vocalize with 'e's except for the glottal stops which use 'a's. Thus *hry-h3b* becomes 'heri-ha' ab' and *synw* is spoken as *seynu*.

⁸ Equivalent to the Mesopotamian *āšipu[m]*, see below.

⁹ Budge, *Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary*. Pg 605b, and equivalent to the Mesopotamian *asû*.

versed in botanical medicine and in minor surgical procedures along with the dissection necessary for embalming.¹⁰

Avalos,¹¹ has set great store by the *locus of healthcare* by which he means the place where healer and patient interact. This can be the home, the temple, outside the encampment, in the wilderness etc. The implication is that, from a consideration of the *locus*, some idea can be obtained as to the way healthcare was perceived as being a domestic matter or one of divine propitiation. In the case of the Egyptians, the *locus* was clearly the home, making healthcare a purely domestic matter.

Present-day knowledge of Egyptian medicine comes from two sources, *paleopathology* and *papyrology*. The former has been less helpful than might be expected, largely because of the processing and the removal of organs prior to mummification. The preservation of the internal organs in canopic jars was not of a high standard compared with mummification and little of interpretative value remains from this practice today. Dermatological and musculo-skeletal evidence has emerged from the examination of mummies in some cases and from the use of modern techniques such as magnetic resonance imaging and computerized tomographic examination. This has proved particularly helpful in the case of bone diseases and fractures that have healed. It is clear from such studies that traction and splinting of fractures was known and used routinely.¹²

There are about a dozen *medical papyri* from Egypt.¹³ They describe mostly magical spells and recipes but two stand out and are of considerable size and importance.

These are the *Ebers Papyrus* and the *Edwin Smith Papyrus*. Neither has any

¹⁰ Bill B. Baumann, "The Botanical Aspects of Ancient Egyptian Embalming and Burial," *Eco Botany* 14, no. 1 (1960): 84-104.

¹¹ Hector Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East: the role of the temple in Greece, Mesopotamia, and Israel* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).

¹² This is not entirely surprising. By the time of Hippocrates, fracture treatment by external fixation had reached a degree of refinement not far short of the present time. Hippocrates et al., *Hippocrates*.

¹³ Kinnier-Wilson, "Medicine in the Land and Times of the Old Testament." Pg 342.

religious or cultic content and both appear to be very serious, purely medical textbooks. The *Ebers Papyrus*,¹⁴ has been dated to approximately 1550 BCE: it is extensive as it contains 877 sections. There is a detailed pharmacopœia involving not merely botanical remedies but also prescriptions using animal and mineral substances. There follow sections easily identifiable as gastroenterology, minor surgery, urology, gynaecology, dermatology, ophthalmology, otorhinolaryngology, neurology and cardiology; also advice on diagnosis, hair-care, cosmetics and domestic hygiene. All of these are, of course, rudimentary by present-day standards but it is important to recognize that the systematic development of medicine into an art and science was already taking place. One small section is devoted to the gods of Egypt. They are not in any way seen as the authors of disease and illness which itself, in turn, is not seen as punishment for sin or for anything else. The involvement of the Egyptian gods is purely as divine reinforcement of the potency of earthly remedies. Of these, some are specifically attributed to a particular god, for example a headache cure purporting to have been invented by Isis. However, it was never supposed that the remedy would be effective, on its own, without the divine component.¹⁵

A significant medical theme of the *Ebers Papyrus* is that illness often results from the retention of excess food within the body.¹⁶ Consequently, remedies for purgation and emetics figure prominently among the prescriptions. The descriptions of a few conditions are sufficiently detailed to allow a clear diagnosis and it is interesting to note that these are diseases that are still indigenous to, and prevalent in, Egypt; they

¹⁴ C. P. Bryan, *The Papyrus Ebers* (Chesapeake NY: E.C.A. Associates, African Heritage Classical Research Studies Series, 1990).

¹⁵ Its inclusion was, most probably, no more than the modern expedient of employing so-called celebrities to promote the sale of branded goods.

¹⁶ This became a central pillar of medical practice in many societies and persisted in some degree, up until the nineteenth century. It was not a diagnosis customarily made by the Israelite priesthood.

are nematode infestation (*hf3.t*), tapeworm (*pnd*) and, more seriously, trachoma (*nh3.t*), and schistosomiasis (*ʿ3ʿ*).¹⁷ The *Ebers Papyrus* is a truly scientifically orientated piece of work and points clearly to a well-developed medical tradition which, we must assume, went hand in hand with more dubious practices such as magic, divination and sorcery.

The *Edwin Smith Papyrus* is a lengthy exposition on mainly surgical topics and it has been hailed as the *fons et origo* of Surgery while the *Ebers Papyrus* holds a corresponding place in Medicine. It is incomplete and, being arranged anatomically beginning at the head, it is missing any discussion of some structures below the lumbar region. Unsurprisingly, the interest and concern [near obsession?] shown by so many ancient civilizations towards the genitalia is well represented throughout the text. The *Edwin Smith Papyrus* was translated and produced in a critical edition by Breasted in 1930.¹⁸ Its scope as a surgical treatise is very much limited to the treatment of wounds and fractures. Pillars of treatment that remain in place today can be identified in the text. Some examples are the cleansing of wounds, reduction and immobilization of fractures by traction and/or splinting and suturing. There is no invocation of the Egyptian gods in what is strictly a surgical textbook.

Neither the *Ebers Papyrus* nor the *Edwin Smith Papyrus* is at all concerned with embalming. These show us that the Egyptian civilization had a well-developed system of healthcare for living patients and that it was in a state of evolution. The *locus* of healthcare was undoubtedly the home, but we remain uncertain as to the precise relationship between the *hry-h3b* and the *synw*. It is unclear under what

¹⁷ See Chapter 7

¹⁸ J. H. Breasted, *The Edwin Smith Surgical Papyrus (Facsimile, hieroglyphic transliteration and translation)* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1930).

circumstances either would be ‘called-out’; whether they worked in harmony or conflict and whether they enjoyed an equivalent social standing.

The extent to which Egyptian medical practice may have influenced the Syria-Palestinian civilization remains an open question. It depends ultimately upon one’s beliefs regarding the Exodus. It is hard to understand why, if the Exodus took place as described in the Hebrew Bible, there is so little evidence for the adoption of Egyptian medical techniques by the Israelites. There are several possibilities for why this might have been so. One possibility is that it simply did not fit into the priestly ideology. Egyptian medical practices *may* have been transported to Israel but there been neglected or suppressed. Alternatively, as seems more likely, if the Exodus was a minor affair or if it did not occur at all, then it is quite plausible that Egyptian medical influence in Syria-Palestine would have been minimal or non-existent.

Mesopotamia

While the Exodus remains a matter for doubt, there is no such unclarity about the Assyrian invasion of Israel (722 BCE) or the Babylonian Exile (587–538 BCE) both of which provided ample opportunity for the interaction of Mesopotamian and Israelite (medical) cultures. Times of war and strife have traditionally been associated with advances in medical care and this remains, very much, the case today with the most striking examples having occurred in the twentieth century.

The most recent and comprehensive study of medicine in ancient Mesopotamia is that of Geller,¹⁹ though this study is somewhat restricted to the Neo-Assyrian (935 – 612 BCE), Neo-Babylonian (626 – 539 BCE) and Persian (539 – 332 BCE) periods.

¹⁹ M J. Geller, *Ancient Babylonian Medicine: Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

For a detailed account of earlier times, back to the Sumerian period, one must consult Pioreschi and Kinnier-Wilson, Van de Mieroop and Mykytiuk.²⁰

The Mesopotamian civilizations, like the Egyptian, were dependent upon rivers but whereas the seasonal hydrological behaviour of the Nile was relatively predictable, the Tigris and Euphrates were erratic so that the riparian settlements experienced an irregular oscillation from drought to flooding.²¹ There are no extant images of Mesopotamian doctors and the oldest reference we have is the cylinder-seal of the physician *Ur-lugal-edinna*²² now in the Louvre. *Ur-lugal-edinna* was an *asûm* which, Kinnier-Wilson informs us, was the equivalent of the Egyptian *synw*. It appears that in the Sumerian period, this was the only kind of physician to be found. The *āšipu*²³ (Egyptian \equiv *hry-h3b*), did not emerge until Old-Babylonian times. They were diviners and specialists in incantations and spells. The *asû*, by contrast, were entirely practical doctors and it seems likely that in the early Mesopotamian period the healthcare over which they presided was a purely domestic matter with the *locus* being the home which *asû* would visit as and when they were needed.

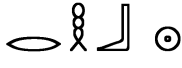



²⁰ Pioreschi, *A History of Medicine* ; J. V. Kinnier-Wilson, "Diseases of Babylon: an examination of selected texts," *J Roy Soc Med* 89 (1996): 135-40; Kinnier-Wilson, "Medicine in the Land and Times of the Old Testament." Marc Van de Mieroop, *A history of the ancient Near East, ca. 3000-323 B.C* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007). Lawrence J. Mykytiuk, *Identifying Biblical persons in Northwest Semitic inscriptions of 1200-539 B.C.E* (no 12; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004).




²¹ The incidental advantage of this to Babylo-Assyriologists is that, because mud was plentiful, it became the vehicle for the written word. A wealth of baked mud tablets bearing cuneiform writing exists. Some tablets bear medical information but much is still un-translated and it remains to be seen how much more information may, one day, emerge. The politico-religious vicissitudes of modern Middle-Eastern civilizations makes this goal seem still a long way off.

²² He is delightfully represented on the seal by his personal symbol as a physician — a forceps.

²³ Nominative singular *āšipum* and the singular of *asû* is *asûm* in *Old Babylonian* which is the usual paradigm for Akkadian grammar books. However, later usage from *Assyrian* to *Neo-Babylonian* times often formed the nominative singular in ‘-u’ like the nominative plural. Huehnergard, *A Grammar of Akkadian*. Douglas B. Miller and R. Mark Shipp, *An Akkadian handbook: paradigms, helps, glossary, logograms, and sign list* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1996).

The Egyptian and Mesopotamian terminologies may be compared thus:²⁴

EGYPT		MESOPOTAMIA	
<i>ḥry-ḥ3b</i>		<i>āšipu(m)</i>	
<i>synw</i>		<i>asû(m)</i>	

Medicine in Mesopotamia almost certainly, over time, developed a greater theological component than that in ancient Egypt. This was especially the case once the *āšipu* became established as an alternative, or at least an additional, medical force in society. Some *āšipu* became associated with specific gods and therefore operated out of their temples. By the end of the *Old-Babylonian Period* and into the *Assyrian Period*, there was a multiplicity of gods and the *āšipu* were likely to have been seen as being able to read from the symptoms and signs of diseases the hand of divine involvement or even of divine punishment. If nothing else, this appears to have given rise to a rudimentary form of diagnosis based upon a *protasis–apodosis* algorithm directed at the patient.²⁵ Relevant cuneiform inscriptions from this time frequently contain the words *qātum* (construct, *qāt/šū* = ) meaning ‘the hand’ and *DINGIR* (*DN* = ) , a *determinative*, (∴ written uppercase or as a ^{superscript}), for ‘deity’ in Akkadian, so that ‘*qāt DN*’ () or ‘hand of god’ appears both as the

²⁴ Budge, *Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary*. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*. Labat and Malbran-Labat, *Manuel d'Épigraphie Akkadienne — Signes Syllabaire Idéogrammes*. Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon*. Soden and Meissner, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (3 vols).

²⁵ This technique, is still very much in use and today is described as ‘taking a medical history’.

An important dermatological condition is often to be found recorded in Akkadian inscriptions on boundary stones. This is *saḫaršuppû*,²⁸ probably derived from the Sumerian *saḫar-šub-ba*. Some authors, perhaps with well-developed eyes of faith, see from variants of this word a degree of phonetic similarity to צרעת. This disease appears to have been so serious that sufferers were prohibited from entering settlements and the boundary stones were erected to inform passers-by and to prohibit this.²⁹ It appears also that this affliction could be imposed as a punishment by disaffected divine beings. There is a notable example of this in the *Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon* where *saḫar-šub-ba-e* appears amid a torrent of maledictions, from a pantheon of gods, and invoked in response to particular infractions of the treaty.



419 [dXXX n]a-an-nar [AN-e U KI-ti SAHAR.SUB.BA-e]

419 [*May Sin*], *the brightness of heaven and earth, clothe you with*

420 [ii-h4al-iip-ki-n [ma IGI DINGIR.MES U LUGAL e-rab-ku-nu a-a iq-bi]

420 [*a lep*]rosy; [*may he forbid your entering into the presence of the gods*]

421 [ki-]ma sir-ri-me MAS.DA [ia EDIN ru-np-d]a

421 [*or king (saying): 'Roam the desert] like the wild-ass (and) the gazelle.'*

²⁸ Von Soden, gives the following recorded variants: *saḫar-šub-ba-e*, *saḫar-šup-pû*, *saḫar-šub-bû*, *saḫar-tu*, *saḫaru*, *saḫharu*. Soden and Meissner, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (3 vols). Vol 2 Pg 1005.

²⁹ Kinnier-Wilson, "Medicine in the Land and Times of the Old Testament." Pg 355 K-W suggests that *saḫaršuppû* was, most probably, scurvy.

There are too few translations of this treaty for extensive textual criticism but that above, from Wiseman,³⁰ is part of a study carried out with sedulous and scholarly attention to detail. Wiseman is cautious in implicating *saḫar-šub-ba-e* as *leprosy* and rehearses all the usual *caveats*. However, he thinks the similarities to צרעת are too obvious to be ignored. Whatever *saḫar-šub-ba-e/צרעת* may have been, the important point is that skin diseases such as this were seen in Mesopotamia, quite clearly as divine punishment. In dealing with this the *āšipu* operated in a fully polytheistic milieu that involved all the gods and godlets of Assyrian society. Unlike Israel where there was a single set of rituals defined and operated within the priestly worldview, in Mesopotamia a pantheon of gods was to be found, alongside a panoply of ritual.

Perhaps therefore, we are already beginning to see similarities with the levitical view of skin diseases and the emphasis on treatment by segregation from normal society rather than by any effort to heal. While Mesopotamian civilization appears to have regarded *leprosy/saḫar-šub-ba-e/צרעת* as very serious, it is interesting to note that it appears not to have paid the same attention to genital discharges that we see in the levitical canon. This is surprising in view of the fact that schistosomiasis, so common in the Nile valley and endemic in Egypt, was also widely recognized on the flood-plains of the Tigris and the Euphrates and remains so today. The Akkadian word *mūšu* appears to have been used to describe both haematuria and bladder calculi and both of these are pathognomonic for infection by *S.haematobium*.³¹

³⁰ D. J. Wiseman, "The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon," *BISl* 20, no. 1 (1958): i-99.

³¹ See Chapter 6

While the primary locus of healthcare in Mesopotamia was undoubtedly the home we must note also that a secondary locus — at least as a temporary measure — was the river. This was because the river was the place where rituals were performed. With the rise in importance of the *āšipu*, this temporary site became more frequently used though it is clear from inscriptions, that the *āšipu* invariably visited their patients at home in the first instance and even maintained a form of follow-up by way of home visits. In contrast to what we find later, in both Israelite and Greek medical practice, there is no textual evidence from Mesopotamia to suggest that patients were ever encouraged to visit the temple when they were ill.³²

In summary, therefore, Mesopotamia had a medical theology wherein two key factors operated. The first was that illness was regarded, throughout Mesopotamian civilization, as not merely affecting the patient, but also as an attack on the entire household. This partly explains the logic of the home as the *locus* for healthcare for whatever sin or impurity might have caused the illness, it was most likely to have originated or been compounded by events in the home. It is interesting to speculate upon whether an extension of this idea resulted in the levitical view that צרעת could infect fabrics and buildings. The second key factor was that, as the influence of the *āšipu* increased, ultimately, the large variety and number of divine beings who could inflict sickness upon humankind and/or subsequently control it, grew in parallel. Propitiation of the correct agency(-ies) was, theoretically the treatment for a disease and identification of the causative god was a central part of the *āšipu*'s job as 'theognostician'. Because of this multifactorial divine aetiology, there was no opportunity for the development of a unified system of temple-mediated healthcare,

³² Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East: the role of the temple in Greece, Mesopotamia, and Israel*. Pg 172 – 3.

nor any real place for a single generic healing deity as his/her role could never be sufficiently specific. This diversity doubtless kept the *āšipu* in work but was of little substantive help either for patient care or public health.

This somewhat unhelpful situation was perhaps offset by the work of the *asû*. We know from textual evidence that there was also a well defined realist viewpoint in operation and that as a result, rudimentary approaches to aetiology, diagnosis and prognosis were beginning to emerge. While the *āšipu* worked to assign the appropriate *qāt DN* to the symptoms and signs and so arrive at a *theognosis*; the *asû* would be able to administer temporizing measures based on, botanical or chemical treatments or minor surgical procedures such as blood-letting or cupping. This dualistic approach satisfied both ritualistic and propitiatory needs and provided some practical measures that developed, over time, into therapeutic regimens.

Greece

Greek medicine, although it overlapped the Second-Temple Period, obviously cannot have directly influenced the genesis and evolution of the much earlier medicine of ancient Syria-Palestine which, for the purposes of the present study, has been termed *Biblical Medicine*. However, Greek medicine ultimately made such an impact on society in the whole of the Ancient World that it very likely influenced the redactors of earlier Semitic material and so it may have changed the textual evidence available to us today.

The literature on Greek medicine is vast.³³ For present purposes, we can divide Greek medicine into three phases. There was an early phase which centred on the

³³Prioreschi has devoted the whole of Volume 2, (673 pages) of his *History of Medicine* entirely to the Greeks. It would be *ultra vires* in the present work to attempt anything more than the briefest summary.

temple cult of Aesculapius (*aka* Asclepius) and which, in many respects, incorporated features of Egyptian and Mesopotamian medical practice. The second phase is that of Hippocratic medicine of which there is an extensive surviving literature,³⁴ The third phase of Greek medicine was based on Hippocratic medicine but modernized and extended by the works of later physicians who were often working in the Roman Empire.³⁵ It is particularly important to note that the development of the latter two phases of Greek medicine took place hand in hand with both the evolution of Greek philosophy and the rise of Rome. This adds a new dimension to the medical thought of writers of that period. In Rome, medical practice became almost exclusively the province of expatriate Greeks. Galen studied under Greek teachers and would have been instructed, not only in the works of Hippocrates, but also in the philosophies of the Platonic, Peripatetic, Stoic and Epicurean Schools and the biological writings of Aristotle and Pliny. He travelled widely around Greece and visited Egypt.

The latter two phases of Greek medicine also drew upon Greek philosophy and the early dawning of Greek scientific thought, and so embodied the notion of *παιδεία* which derived from the Greek idea that education should begin in childhood and include both body and mind. Just as both were important in Greek philosophy for the normal relationship of body and soul, both were also thought to become deranged by disease and so to a varying degree, medical treatment for the first time became aimed at both of these components. As time passed, the idea of the professional physician/surgeon emerged and medical treatment became dislocated from

³⁴ Not least the complete works of Hippocrates of Kos (c. 460 BCE – c. 370 BCE) which runs to ten volumes in the Loeb edition and of which so much remains relevant to this day.

³⁵ Foremost among these was Galen of Pergamum (129/30 CE – 215/6 CE), a Roman of Greek ethnicity. In particular see, Galen, Ian Johnston, and G. H. R. Horsley, *Method of medicine* (3vols.; Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 2011); I. Johnston, *Galen: On Diseases and Symptoms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Aesculapian temples so that the *locus* of healthcare moved, much later in Greece than elsewhere, into the home. Nevertheless, Greek medicine never abandoned its philosophical elements nor the notion of *παιδεία* in relation to medical education which, for the first time, was seen as an entity in its own right. Hippocrates clearly believed that the physician's role embodied wisdom as well as factual knowledge when he averred, *ἰητρός φιλόσοφος ἰσύθεος*.³⁶

The pre-Hippocratic phase of Greek medicine has come to be called *Aesculapian Medicine* on account of its having been operated within the cult of Aesculapius and practised in Aesculapian temples — the *locus* of healthcare of the time. Early Greek medicine, in contrast to that in Egypt and Mesopotamia, placed divine beings at its centre from the very beginning. According to Homer, Aesculapius was the son of Apollo; he began life as a mortal but became a demigod and eventually a god. His two sons Podalirus and Machaon feature in the *Iliad* as physicians/surgeons during the siege of Troy. Physicians are also mentioned by Hesiod and by Pindar (c 518 to 438 BCE).³⁷ It is only from early writings such as these that the origins of Greek naturalistic medicine have been placed, by convention, in the 6th century BCE and centred around the cult of Asculapius.³⁸ Within this culture, disease was *never* considered to be a defilement of the body nor any kind of *impurity* and so it *never* prevented attendance by the sick at sacred places. Thus, the temples of Asclepius and the dwelling places of an assortment of gods, demigods and even heroes became, from the earliest times, the Greek *locus* of healthcare. However the Greek temples, and those that operated out of them, bore no resemblance to the levitical priesthood and there are no clear parallels to be drawn between the role of the temple which was

³⁶ Here in Hippocrates' Ionic dialect. For the Attic purist this would be, *ιατρός φιλόσοφος ἰσύθεος*.

³⁷ Pythiae III

³⁸ Prioreschi, *A History of Medicine*. Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East: the role of the temple in Greece, Mesopotamia, and Israel*.

the undoubted *locus* in Greek medical practice and the *tent-of-meeting/sanctuary/tabernacle*, (משכן/מקדש/מועד אהל) which served as the *locus* in ancient Syria-Palestine and the Hebrew Bible, before the building of the temple in Jerusalem.

Arabia

Arabian medicine impinges upon that of ancient Syria-Palestine like Greek medicine and is indirect in that its only possible effect can have been upon redactors of earlier writings and upon later Jewish and other commentators. However, the effects of Arabian medicine, both on later Jewish medicine and world-wide, were very considerable. Arabian medicine began and flourished in the *Islamic Golden Age* which began in the Umayyad Caliphate (661–750 CE) and extended throughout the Abbasid Caliphate (750 – 1258 CE). During this period, the capital was moved from Damascus to Baghdad and there developed, over time, a rigorous dependency on the Qurʾān, (القرآن) and upon the recorded homiletic pronouncement(s) of the Prophet,

(*ḥadīth*, حديث) In contrast to more recent times, this imposed no stricture; scientific exploration burgeoned and medicine underwent a great surge of development so that from just after the fall of the Roman Empire until the Renaissance of Western culture in the 15th century, the Islamic world dominated science and medicine.³⁹ The Jewish diaspora, especially in countries where Arab influence was present (e.g. Spain), benefitted from and contributed significantly to this age of scientific progress.⁴⁰

³⁹ Many texts from Greek medicine lost to the Western World in the Dark Ages were preserved only by having been translated into Arabic. At the Renaissance, they were re-translated into Latin and so Greek medical thought was preserved and augmented through the offices of Islamic physicians.

⁴⁰This can be seen from the works of, for example, Avicenna and Maimonides. It became quite difficult to distinguish between Jewish and Muslim contributions towards Arabian medicine. Many

Particularly strong was ophthalmological medicine which was of particular interest to the Arabs probably because trachoma (التراخوما) was (and remains), endemic in Arabia. The Arabian physicians were also particularly distinguished in the practice of pharmacy which was growing to include chemistry as well as botany and many Arabic medicinal terms such as *drug*, *syrup*, *alcohol*, *alkali*, have migrated and been preserved in western languages. Arabian medicine also gave rise to the establishment of formal medical training and qualifications and the testing by examination of aspirants thereto.

While, none of these later happenings could have had a direct influence upon the subject of the present study, it is important nevertheless to learn to what extent these later developments influenced commentators on the Biblical texts and reportage generally. It is always difficult to put oneself in the place of an ancient and not to interpret through the lens of later developments. Any study of Israelite Medicine must perforce be a speculative process because so little textual information has come down to us and where it has, it may have been heavily redacted.

Jews knew Arabic and wrote in that language but Judeo-Arabic — the Arabic language written in Hebrew script — was much favoured also by Jewish writers. At later times, Hebrew proper was used but the mixture of languages has imposed a burden upon modern scholarship which has led to difficulty. See: Moses Maimonides and Gerrit Bos, *Medical aphorisms. Treatises 10-15 : a parallel Arabic-English edition* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2010); Moses Maimonides and Gerrit (Ed) Bos, *Medical aphorisms. Treatises 1-5 : a parallel Arabic-English edition* (2vols.; Provo, Utah ; [Great Britain]: Brigham Young University Press, 2004); Moses Maimonides and Gerrit (Ed) Bos, *Medical aphorisms. Treatises 6-9 : a parallel Arabic-English edition* (2vols.; Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2007). Elinor Lieber, "Asaf's "Book of Medicines": A Hebrew Encyclopedia of Greek and Jewish Medicine, Possibly Compiled in Byzantium on an Indian Model," *DOPs* 38 (1984): 233-49. One of the best collections of medical manuscripts in all these forms is from the Cairo Genizah now in the Library of Cambridge University. H D Isaacs, ed., *Medical and Para-medical Manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah Collections* (vol. 11 of *Cambridge University Library Genizah Series*; ed. S C Reif; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). A Shvitiel and F Niessen, eds., *Arabic and Judaeo-arabic Manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah Collections* (vol. 14 of *Cambridge University Library Genizah Series*; ed. S C Reif; 1 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

APPENDIX 3 — RELEVANT LEVITICAL AND ASSOCIATED TEXTS

THE levitical writings embody the laws relating to the practicalities of Israelite life. The most important of these is, of course, the biblical Book of Leviticus which, in contrast to the preceding and succeeding biblical books, contains instructions about life-style rather than narrative. There, the avoidance of sin is considered paramount because its presence disrupts the harmony between God and his chosen people. The maintenance of purity, therefore, entails *inter alia* the avoidance of sin. The Book of Leviticus is self-contained and deals with the formulation and enactment of laws of behaviour, food-hygiene and especially sexual matters. The two conditions (possibly diseases) צרעת and זוב are the subject each of a chapter of the Book and it is an investigation into the specific nature of these conditions and the way they were regarded within the priestly worldview that is the objective of the present study. As might be expected, a very considerable body of interpretative literature that deals with similar subject matter has grown up surrounding the Book of Leviticus and for this reason has been termed *levitical writings*. This in particular includes the Leviticus Rabbah,¹ a homiletic midrash thought to have been written or, more likely redacted, out of older texts in the 5th century and there is ‘levitical’ material concerned with healthcare matters to be

¹ Jacob Neusner, "Studying Synoptic Texts Synoptically the Case of Leviticus Rabbah," *PAAJR* 53 (1986): 111-45; Neusner and Avery-Peck, *Encyclopaedia of Midrash: Biblical interpretation in formative Judaism*; Burton L. Visotzky, *Golden bells and pomegranates: studies in Midrash Leviticus Rabbah* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

found in the Dead Sea Scrolls.² However, by far the greatest volume of interpretative, *secondary* levitical literature is to be found in the Talmud.³

THE BIBLICAL BOOK OF LEVITICUS

Liber Leviticus or ἡ βιβλίον των λειυτιων in the Septuagint (LXX), is the third book of the *Torah* (*Pentateuch*).⁴ While its Hebrew title ספר ויקרא suggests instructions to Moses about the Covenant between God and Israel, these Latin and Greek appellations more accurately imply its destination in defining laws and rituals for the obedience and use of priests⁵ and levites.⁶ The instructions to Moses and Aaron are, to a large extent, couched in the form of divine speeches, in some cases presented in the first person, but more usually in the third person. Because of this distinction and other more minor differences, it is generally agreed that the Book in its final form contains two units⁷ the smaller of which, Chapters 17 – 26, has been termed the *Holiness Code* (H). H was originally thought to be unique to the Book of Leviticus but recent authors have identified small islands of H text embedded in other biblical books — see below. This H material lies in contradistinction to Chapters 1 – 16 and 27 which are generally referred to as the *Priestly Material*⁸ (P) of which a great deal more is to be found elsewhere in the biblical books of Genesis, Exodus, and

² M; Flint Abegg, P; Ulrich, E., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999); E. Ulrich, *The Biblical Qumran Scrolls* (ed. H. M. Barstad, et al.; Leiden, Boston, [MA]: E.J.Brill, 2010); Martinez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls. Study Edition*.

³ John Joseph Collins and Daniel C. Harlow, *The Eerdmans dictionary of early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2010); Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee, *The Cambridge companion to the Talmud and rabbinic literature* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); H. L. Strack, Gunter Stemberger, and Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch. English; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

⁴ Michael David Coogan, *The Oxford encyclopedia of the books of the Bible* (2vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁵ And, though not *prima facie*, for transmission to the chosen people. The Rabbinic name for the Leviticus is, תּוֹרַת כֹּהֲנִים

⁶ Levites are, in fact, represented more specifically in the Book of Numbers.

⁷ For want of a better name: their nature is the subject of discussion and must not be prejudged.

⁸ Sometimes the *Priestly Code*.

Numbers. This corresponds to the P source of the *Documentary Hypothesis*⁹ which, since its promulgation in 1885, has enjoyed an oscillating popularity dependent on the scholarly fashions of the day.¹⁰ The problem has been well reviewed by Propp and by Kratz.¹¹ The important point for the exegete is that the H and P material show linguistic and stylistic similarities and differences that help in identifying their dates, origins and purpose.¹²

All linguistic studies of ancient texts risk wreckage by entrapment in a *circulus in probando*. Linguistic (and stylistic) variation is a function of time, or at least ‘the times’, and if we are uncertain about these variables, we may not legitimately use any one to predict another.¹³ We should remember two wise exhortations: Pliny’s, ‘*Ne supra crepidam sutor iudicaret*’¹⁴ and William of Occam’s, ‘*Numquam ponenda est pluralitas sine necessitate.*’ and choose, only as evidence permits, one measurable quantity to be the *independent variable* against which all other, *dependent variables*, are assayed.

From the earliest days of levitical studies, it has been important to establish the dates of P and H relative to one another. This task was not, and still is not, helped, by disagreement among scholars. Wellhausen originally postulated a late date for P of around 500 BCE. He surmised that the P source emanated from exiled Aaronid

⁹ Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena To the History of Israel* ([S.l.]: Black, 1885).

¹⁰ Antony F. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch: texts, introductions, annotations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); R. E. Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2003); Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981); Martin Noth, *The History of Israel* (London: Xpress Reprints, 1996).

¹¹ William H. C. Propp, "The Priestly Source Recovered Intact?," *VT* 46, no. 4 (1996): 458-78.) Kratz, *The Growth of the Old Testament*. 459-88.

¹² Ian Young, Robert Rezetko, and Martin Ehrensverd, *Linguistic dating of biblical texts* (2vols.; London ; Oakville, CT: Equinox Pub., 2008). vol 2, pg 144.

¹³ If we substitute *date* and *style*, for *position* and *momentum*, there is a parallel with Heisenberg’s *Uncertainty Principle* in which there is a limit on the precision with which we can know, (for an elementary particle), simultaneously, the magnitude of two related quantities.

¹⁴ Pliny The Elder, A.D. 23–79, *Historia Naturalis* 85.

priests in Babylon who would have been familiar with J and E and JE material.¹⁵ They set out to produce a formalized working edition with additions of a halakhic or legalistic¹⁶ nature. Wellhausen reached this conclusion largely because the P material makes no mention of the Prophets and neither do the Prophets refer to specific P events. He concluded that P was, therefore, from a time after the Prophets and, by a similar inductive process, that references to the Tabernacle in P were metaphors for the Temple which had been established by that time. These views have, today, come to be regarded as without foundation and have been largely discarded on the likely grounds that the priests might well have wished to avoid any mention of the Prophets in an attempt to emphasize and improve their own position and importance. Authors such as Wenham,¹⁷ have even suggested that some of the J narrative drew upon an earlier P source, but this seems unlikely and remains an atypical and perhaps idiosyncratic viewpoint.

Later scholars noted that the authors of P were almost certainly acquainted with aspects of JE but, where they used JE material in their writings, the Hebrew language took on a later form. It was, therefore, argued that if the author(s) of P knew JE, this defines a *terminus a quo* for P around the time of the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE.

Yehezkel Kaufmann¹⁸ has argued for a date of P after 722 BCE, but before the reign of Josiah.¹⁹ Kaufmann believes P's role to have been central in the establishment of Judaism and notes that the idea of *cultic centralization* everywhere pervades the P text making it Jewish parænetic, or even Jewish proto-dogma rather than historical

¹⁵ The combined *and* redacted form of J and E, which is supposed to have been produced around the time of the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BCE.

¹⁶ Since priestliness and the interpretation of the law were regarded as the same thing.

¹⁷ G J Wenham, "The priority of P," 19, no. 2 (1999): 240 - 58.

¹⁸ Y. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1961).

¹⁹ 649–609 BCE; and therefore also before D.

narrative. This is a very important observation in relation to the levitical material. Lane²⁰ has noted that, 'Leviticus is a book of repetitions and technical terms, with only the briefest of narrative elements... ..and comparatively little in the way of sustained discourse. ... [This] gives a good chance to observe a translator at work and to detect... ..his cast of mind.' This is a good summary of Leviticus, though not necessarily of all the P material in the Torah. The strictly legalistic nature of P is less evident in, for example, Genesis and Exodus but nevertheless, if one adheres to the idea of form criticism and the Documentary Hypothesis, P is, probably, the easiest textual form to identify.

Post-Babylonian prophets like Ezekiel²¹ quote directly from P and imply that as the temple was constructed to have the same dimensions as the Tabernacle it was likely that it was to be either housed separately within or incorporated into the fabric of the Temple (Ezekiel 41:1). The implication is, therefore, that P was available for quotation or redaction at the time of the Babylonian Exile.

Haran²² has said of the P source, 'Anyone who moves this source back to pre-exilic times, imposes on himself the obligation to write biblical history practically anew.' In saying this, he is agreeing with Wellhausen's original view and with Kaufmann that P is not an historical retrospective like J/E/JE but a specific, defining characteristic of burgeoning Judaism. However, he does not agree with Kaufmann's view that P originated at the time of Hezekiah nor with the view that it is post-Ezekielian and so, as some have suggested, influenced by the law-code of Ezekiel (40-48). Haran strives to reconcile three seemingly conflicting observations: first,

²⁰ D. J. Lane, "The Best Words in the Best Order: Some Comments on the "Syriacing" of Leviticus," *VT* 39, no. 4 (1989): 468-79.

²¹ Ezekiel 1:1&2 suggest that having begun as a prophet in Judah in his thirtieth year which was the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile: he was probably born around 622 BCE.

²² Mehaem Haran, "Behind the Scenes of History: Determining the Date of the Priestly Source," 100, no. 3 (1981): 321-33.

the clear dependence of P on J/E/JE; secondly the fact that any evidence for P is undetectable in the pre-exilic period and thirdly, that P cannot be satisfactorily explained as a product of post-exilic times. To achieve a reconciliation of these disparities, Haran supposes that there must have been a gap in time between P's original formulation and/or composition, which he presumes began in Hezekiah's reign, and the production of a 'publication version' at a later date. This view has been supported by the work of Hurwitz²³ which has approached the question purely from a consideration of the language. Arriving thus by two different routes has given force to this argument which is now generally accepted as the most likely pedigree for P. Helpful though this may be in understanding the development of the text, it does not supply any unequivocal dates for either origin or redaction.

As is so often the case, fashions change with old arguments rehearsed and new arguments aired. In expectation of the recurrence of such controversy, the best we can do in setting a *terminus ad quem* for P is to suppose that it was completed by the end of the Exile. There is thus a space of approximately 200 years during which P might have been composed and redacted so as to achieve its final state. During this period we must suppose that changes in history, language and written style all occurred *pari passu* with changes in the worldview of the authors. A graphical attempt to summarize this situation is as follows. It is an attempt by the present author at a conflation of the various theories and explanations that are currently on offer and no claim of authority is made for it. The origin of P cannot be more accurately defined than to say that it most probably occurred at one time or in stages in the period between the two dates for P shown here.

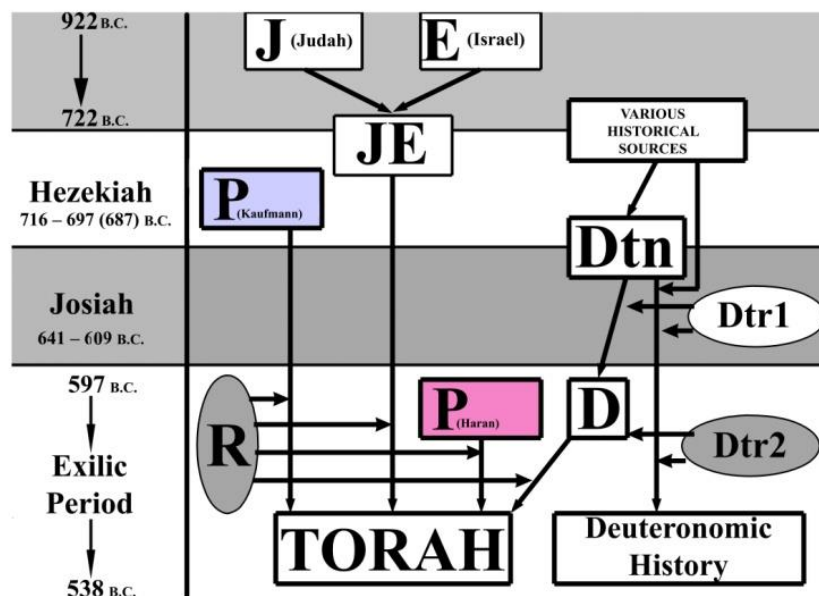
²³ A Hurwitz, "Dating the priestly source in light of the historical study of biblical Hebrew a century after Wellhausen," *ZAW* 100 (1988): 88-99; A Hurwitz, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel* (CRB; vol. 20; Paris: J. Gabala, 1982).

In the diagram:

- J = *Jahwist*,
- E = *Elohist*,
- JE = *combined/redacted, (J+E)*,
- D = *Deuteronomic source*,
- P = *Priestly source*,
- Dtn = *Source of Deuteronomistic History*,
- Dtr1 & Dtr2 = *Deuteronomistic redactors*,
- R = *a congeries of general redactors*.

Plan of the Documentary Hypothesis

(With alternative dates of origin of P)



A final but important point in the matter of P material in Leviticus is to note the P-Leviticus standpoint on purity and impurity, (טמא/טהור).²⁴ Their worldview steeped in the establishment and maintenance of ritual meant that purity (טהור) was quite simply the absence of impurity²⁵ (טמא), which was invisible but real and able to

²⁴ See Chapter 4 for a fuller description

²⁵ Ritual impurity was not, always or necessarily, the result of sin and in such cases carried no moral stigma. See Chapters 3,4 and 10

affect, and be communicable among, both persons and objects. The levitical view was that the sanctuary/tabernacle somehow was constantly at risk of attracting ritual impurity to itself and the build-up therein of this undesirable quality, ultimately threatened the continuing presence of God within the sanctuary: — indeed, impurity actively drove God out. It was thus the foremost duty of the priest to cleanse individuals and objects of impurity and thus preserve the presence of the deity within an appropriately sanitized, holy place. The Book of Leviticus was the ‘instruction manual’ for priests in respect of this.

As indicated in Chapters 3 and 4, the P view of purity was, therefore, of an imperative that had to be maintained in order to protect God, who is holy, from all threats of impurity. Holiness, in the priestly view, was a property of the deity but one which can also be attributed to persons, places and objects particularly associated with, or reserved for, God. The sanctuary is an obvious example. We can, therefore see that in the priestly worldview and in the P writings, holiness means *ritual holiness*. The Book of Leviticus also, however, contains the contrasting view in it H material where the idea of *theological holiness* emerges. If we are to suppose that H belongs to a different time from P, we may also suppose a different or changed body of priests and/or a different or changed worldview. Theological (H) holiness was, in contrast to ritual holiness, available to all the Israelites, for them to earn and attain by their appropriate adherence to the commandments of God and therefore, to the priestly laws and ordinances.²⁶ *H holiness* does not, *ipso facto*, confer *P holiness* upon the masses: the priests, therefore, by this mechanism, retain for themselves the many rights and privileges they are accustomed to enjoy. If this is the case, we must add to our list of possibilities a two-tiered system in which priests

²⁶ *Op cit*

and people operated different codes of behaviour. Whatever the case, H material stands in clear distinction to P material as to content and this distinction naturally leads us to question the relative dating of H, and P. We must ask, ‘Which came first?’ The view that H is earlier than P was championed by, among others, Yehezkel Kaufmann²⁷ and Samuel Rolles Driver;²⁸ but it is probably fair to say that current fashion favours a later date for H: though there is dispute over what that date may be. It is worth rehearsing the arguments for the various cases.

Kaufmann bases his conclusions largely on the absence, within H, of any mention of the cultic centralization so prominent in P and upon the prohibition of sacrifice and worship in *high places*. However, it is always meet to remember the adage that, *Absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence*. Kaufmann’s inference is that the authorship of H must have pre-dated Hezekiah’s attempts to ‘clean-up’ polytheistic practices in order to restore unquestioning monotheism. If this is correct, it would thereby, also have pre-dated P which Kaufmann, as we have seen, places within Hezekiah’s reign, citing the following as evidence for this:

הוא הסיר את־הבמות ושבר את־המצבת וכתת את־האשרה וכתת נחש הנחשת
 אשר־עשה משה כי ע־הימים ההמה היו בני־ישראל מקטרים לו ויקרא־לו נחשתן

He removed the high places, and brake the pillars, and cut down the Asherah: And he brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it; and he called it Nehushtan.

(2 Kings 18:4)

Indeed, the only reference to *high places* in the Holiness Code indicates that *high-places* were popular, fully operational and deserving of divine destruction:

²⁷ Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*.

²⁸ S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916): originally 1897 with later editions 1909 and 1916.

והשמדתי את־במתיכם והכרתי את־חמניכם ונתתי את־פגריכם על־פגרי גלוליכם
וגעלה נפשי אתכם

And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your sun-images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols; and my soul shall abhor you.

(Leviticus 26:30)

Driver's argument is more literary; he writes at some length on chapters 17 – 26 of Leviticus which he calls the *Law of Holiness*.²⁹ This, he identifies as distinct from P by the '...presence of a foreign element' manifested both in style and phraseology and by the presence of motive clauses. He considers that this points to an early and independent collection of laws which were edited at some later date and then added into the P material.

The editing consisted largely of re-phrasing the laws in a more appropriately hortatory style.³⁰ Therefore Driver, with Kaufmann, opts for H's having existed before P and, importantly, having been seen as worthy of incorporation into P. Driver makes no attempt to identify the agent of these changes as being either the author of P or a later redactor(s), or both.

The contrary argument for H's having been written after P owes its popularity mainly to the work of Israel Knohl³¹ and, perhaps more significantly, to the fact that his ideas were embraced — hesitatingly at first — by Jacob Milgrom. Knohl's is a well-argued thesis: his central point is that H was written as both an explicatory and a hortatory message for non-members of a 'priestly club', i.e. the Israelite population as a whole. Furthermore, Knohl rejects the Driver–Kaufmann view when he makes the observation that the very literary characteristics these authors identify as H

²⁹ The term *Das Heiligkeitsgesets* was coined by Klostermann in 1877.

³⁰ If, as has been suggested, the reason for this was to extend the laws relating to holiness beyond the priestly/levitical group to the entire population of Israel, one might even say this was 'popularizing'.

³¹ Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*.

material are, on wider searching,³² to be found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Knohl believes H shows a broader and more inclusive awareness of the non-Priestly sources in the Torah (J, E and D), in contrast to the seemingly limited awareness that gives rise to the isolationist viewpoint of P. In particular, incorporation of material from the E and D sources appears to have been used to revise P.³³ Such characteristics embody not only language and style but also doctrinal, ritual and legal matters. There is, however, in the H material, almost nothing to be said of quasi-medical matters such as occupy so much space in the P material of Leviticus chapters 13, 14 and 15. An exception is the following verse which, quite efficiently summarizes those lengthy P discourses.

אִישׁ אִישׁ מִזֶּרַע אַהֲרֹן וְהוּא צָרוּעַ אֹד זֶב בַּקִּדְשִׁים לֹא יֵאָכֵל עַד אֲשֶׁר יִטְהַר וְהִנָּגַע
בְּכָל־טִמְאַת־נֶפֶשׁ אֹד אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־תִּצָּא מִמֶּנּוּ שִׁכְבַּת־זֶרַע

What man soever of the seed of Aaron is a leper, or hath an issue; he shall not eat of the holy things, until he be clean. And whoso toucheth any thing that is unclean by the dead, or a man whose seed goeth from him;

(Leviticus 22:4),

It seems curious, even so, that if H is an attempt, as Knohl claims, to ‘Bring P to the people’ it does not contain any encouragement for preventive measures, self-diagnosis or even self treatment for such afflictions as צָרוּעַת and זֶב.

So Knohl sees H as being more practical than P: for where P concentrates on ritual and offers no practical advice about, for example, social and agricultural matters, H brings together laws relating to the temple, to sacrifice and to legal, social and particularly agricultural aspects of life: it exists, therefore, surely not so much for

³² One must remember that the means of searching, using for example computers, is a quite different thing today from what it was in Driver’s time.

³³ Coogan, *The Oxford encyclopedia of the books of the Bible*. Pg 574.

priestly consumption and ritualistic repetition, but rather, *ad captandum vulgus and pour encourager les autres!*

Where Wellhausen argued for H's antedating P by acting as a sort of parænetic bridge between the older J/E/JE/D material and P; Knohl takes the diametrically opposite view, that a consideration of the established, un-redacted P reveals a need for the inclusion and publication of guidance beyond the esoteric and purely ritualistic and aimed at a wider audience than the priesthood. Moreover, taking this view along with his observation of H-like material elsewhere in the *Torah*,³⁴ Knohl postulates the existence of a *Holiness School* (HS), a subset³⁵ of the *Priestly School*'(PS). Knohl's view may be summarized thus:

Priestly School (PS) → Priestly source (P) → Priestly Torah (PT)

Holiness School (HS) → Holiness Source (H) → Holiness Code (H)

Both schools probably originated among priests, but whereas P differentiated and reserved its views on dogma, doctrine and ritual as being inappropriate for the masses, H sought to integrate them with popular customs and traditions in order to emphasize the holiness of the entire nation and especially of the land. Knohl suggests that HS may even have been redactors of the *Torah* and it was they who incorporated *inter alia*, the H material. If this were the case, he postulates *a terminus ad quem* for H late in Hezekiah's reign, (c.741 – c.686/7 BCE), but of course, after the completion of P.³⁶ The evidence he cites for this is the treatment by H of matters such as the incursion of idolatrous practices into Israel, soothsaying, ejection of tenant farmers for enslavement by the wealthy, the general separation of morality

³⁴ Perhaps this should extend to the Hexateuch. See, C A Simpson, *The Early Traditions of Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948).

³⁵ But nevertheless quite separate.

³⁶ That is not to say that a later redaction of the combined P and H did not also take place.

from the cult and, in particular, Molech-worship.³⁷ All of these things Knohl notes as having been recorded during the reign of Hezekiah's father Ahaz (734 – 728 BCE) and in the early part of Hezekiah's reign (728 – 686/7 BCE). Knohl is thus in agreement with Driver and Kaufmann as to *era* but in disagreement as to *order* regarding the origins of P and H. We should not forget, however, Haran's³⁸ suggestion of a gap between authorship and publication but Knohl's hypothesis about the dates and relationship of H and P has been supported in a well-argued article by Hess³⁹ which is also a review of Milgrom's contribution. It should be noted also that Knohl's hypothesis does not rule out a further, later redaction.

It must have been comforting for Knohl to receive Jacob Milgrom's endorsement of his views.⁴⁰ Milgrom says of the H material in comparing it with P: 'Two critical changes occur: ritual impurity becomes moral impurity; and the domain of the sacred expands, embracing the entire land, not just the sanctuary, and all of Israel, not just the priesthood'.⁴¹ If we are looking for a summary of H's purpose, this remains the best but the word 'becomes' causes trouble from the first. It seems unlikely that Milgrom means 'turns into' by this. This would only be possible if the entire priestly worldview had changed. None of the authors considered in Chapter 4 has contemplated this view. Milgrom probably means that it was the question of *moral impurity* generally addressed by H whereas P concentrated entirely on *ritual impurity*. He never appears to have implied any conflation or dynamic between the two forms of impurity and this is the view taken subsequently by a majority of commentators. Milgrom's final position is the suggestion that H sets out to define

³⁷ N. H. Snaitch, "The Cult of Molech," *VT* 16, no. 1 (1966): 123-24.

³⁸ Haran, "Behind the Scenes of History: Determining the Date of the Priestly Source."

³⁹ R S Hess, "A Reassessment of the priestly and cultic and legal texts," 17, no. 1/2 (2002): 375 - 91.

⁴⁰ In fact he devoted a chapter of his book to this, Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*., Excursus 5.

⁴¹ Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Continental Commentary*. page 175.

the rules by which Israel is to isolate itself from the *nations* and so develop its own *imitatio Dei* which will eventually become a model for a universal *imitatio Dei*.⁴²

Recently, this view has encountered a challenge from David Wright who, while broadly agreeing with the Knohl – Milgrom hypothesis, dates the Holiness School later, to the time of the exile with additional, even later, updating in the early post-exilic period. Wright considers the major function of the *Holiness Code* was to amplify the Priestly *Torah* by **including the land**, (הארץ), as a potential *locus of pollution*, where the pollution is necessarily caused by sin. However, in an article⁴³ which, in so many respects, minutely differentiates H and P, he is irritatingly vague⁴⁴ about the precise grounds upon which he chooses to place H at this late date.

If we consider those linguistic and stylistic characteristics that allow us to differentiate H from P, the most comprehensive listings are from Driver⁴⁵ followed closely by Knohl.⁴⁶ They are the two major protagonists in the argument but, whereas *prima facie*, Driver approaches the problem from a purely linguistic viewpoint, Knohl tends to favour an analysis based upon style. We should not be hasty in criticizing either without understanding that between them time had elapsed, research methods improved and attitudes changed. At the centre of both approaches lies קדש^ו and its very specific meaning (or, more accurately, range of meanings) in Jewish scripture.⁴⁷ The differences appear to be less to do with vocabulary and

⁴² *Op cit* page 180.

⁴³ Wright, "Holiness in Leviticus and Beyond."

⁴⁴ In a footnote, all he says is that he differs from foregoing authors by dating the Holiness School to the Exile.

⁴⁵ Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*. pp 49 – 50.

⁴⁶ Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*. pp 106 – 110.

⁴⁷ Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. Clines, ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*; Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*; Mandelkern, *Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae*; Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*; J P Peters, "The Hebrew idea of holiness," *Biblical World* 14, no. 5 (1899): 344 - 55; Marcel Poorthuis and Joshua Schwartz, *Purity and Holiness: the Heritage of*

grammar than with the *usage* of particular words, phrases and formulae. Driver⁴⁸ provides a list of those words and phrases he identifies in Leviticus as specifically characteristic of H whereas Knohl⁴⁹ makes a very clear distinction between words and phrases characteristic of HS and PT but sees them both as extending *beyond* Leviticus. Driver's work has been the subject of an extensive critique by Paton⁵⁰ and he has enlarged upon this in his own, *The Original Form of Leviticus*.⁵¹ This extensive work is, however, mainly exegetical and is not in conflict with Driver over either the dating or the nature of the *Holiness Code*.

Driver would have compiled his analysis from a painstaking, direct examination of the texts with the aid of a concordance such as that of Solomon Mandelkern.⁵² Today, searches can be carried out more efficiently, more extensively and with greater speed and rigor using Biblical software such as *Bibleworks* or *Accordance*⁵³ and this advancement in methods has not been without very considerable effects on interpretation.

While Driver, writes extensively on *The Priestly Narrative of the Hexateuch*,⁵⁴ he concerns himself primarily with differentiating J, E, P and D. H he regards as a subset of P, and lists twenty phrases characteristic and in his view *diagnostic* of H. It is not within the scope of this study to examine them all, but two examples suffice to show how they may be used by researchers in different ways. If we consider the first of these phrases: אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם — an injunction — Driver says that this form

Leviticus (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2000); Eyal Regev, "Priestly Dynamic Holiness and Deuteronomic Static Holiness," 51, no. 2 (2001): 243-61.

⁴⁸ Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*. pp 49 – 50

⁴⁹ Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*. page 106 *et seq.*

⁵⁰ Lewis B. Paton, "Notes on Driver's Leviticus," *JBL* 14, no. 1/2 (1895): 48-56.

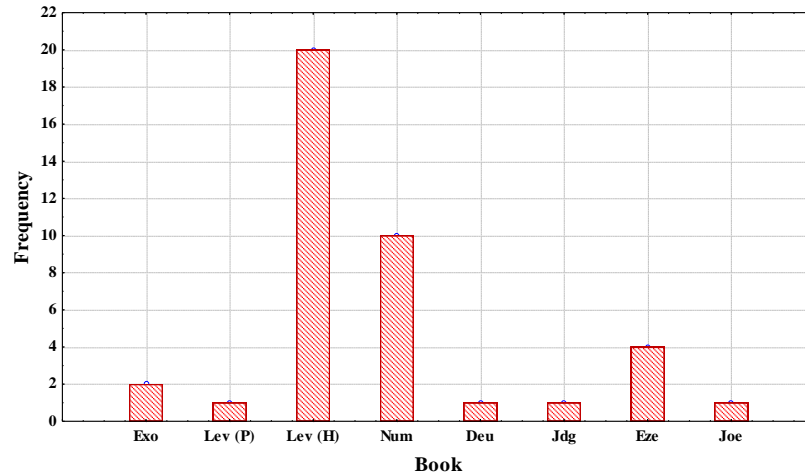
⁵¹ L. B. Paton, "The Original Form of Leviticus xxiii., xxv," *JBL* 18, no. 1/2 (1899): 35-60; L. B. Paton, "The Original Form of Leviticus xvii.-xix.," *JBL* 16, no. 1/2 (1897): 31-77; L. B. Paton, "The Original Form of Leviticus xxi., xxii.," *JBL* 17, no. 2 (1898): 149-75.

⁵² Mandelkern, *Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae*.

⁵³ Bibleworks, "Software for Biblical Exegesis and Research." Accordance, "Bible Software."

⁵⁴ *Op cit*, pp 126 – 159. See also: Simpson, *The Early Traditions of Israel*.

occurs ‘...nearly fifty times’.⁵⁵ We find, for the entire Hebrew Bible, if we look for matching cases *by Biblical Book*, (for convenience dividing Leviticus into H and P), the following distribution:



The above phrase occurs 50% more times in H than in any of the other books where it is to be found and it is because of this excess that Driver believes it is characteristic of H. He is curiously silent about the ten instances of the phrase in Numbers but makes much of the similarities he finds with Ezekiel whom he calls the ‘Priestly Prophet’. In particular, Driver notes Ezekiel’s ‘affinities with P and even more strikingly with H’ and argues that H was a fundamental *Pentateuchal Code* which subsequently became incorporated, *mutatis mutandis*, elsewhere:

$$H \rightarrow P \rightarrow Ezekiel$$

or alternatively

$$H \rightarrow \sum_{?}^P \rightarrow Ezekiel$$

Haran,⁵⁶ criticizes such orthodox research where P has been regarded as a post-Ezekelian work, influenced by the law-code of Ezekiel (vv 40-48)⁵⁷ and developed

⁵⁵ In fact 40 times in the entire Hebrew Bible.

⁵⁶ Haran, "Behind the Scenes of History: Determining the Date of the Priestly Source."

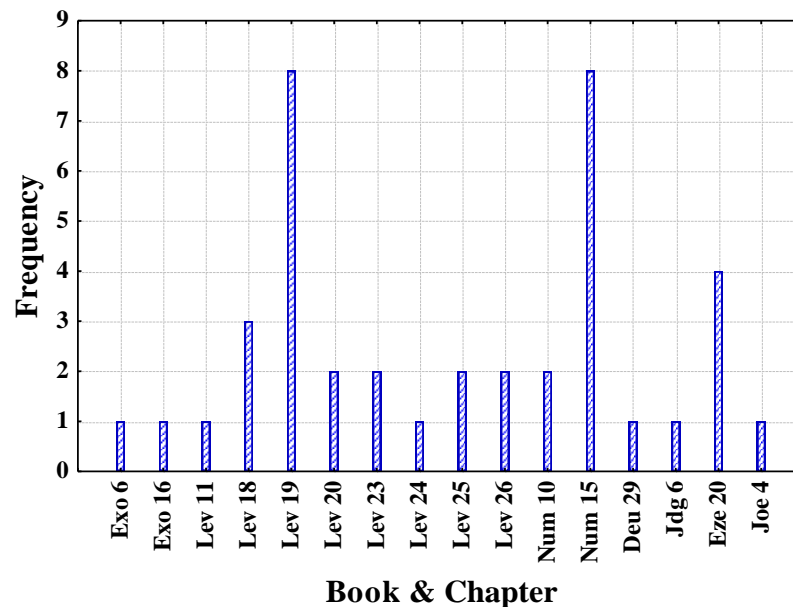
⁵⁷ So much so that Ezekiel is sometimes depicted as ‘the spiritual father of Judaism’

thence as the embodiment of Judaism. In contrast, Haran’s view is that P is, much earlier and, displays ‘...far more perfection and originality than Ezek 40-48, to such an extent that Ezekiel's code looks merely as an epigonic outgrowth of the priestly school.’⁵⁸ P is thus *not* supposed to be a product of the Second-Temple Period and is likely to have pre-dated H, in which case H’s characteristic phraseology is a *de novo* event, so:

$$P \pm (\text{Ezekiel}) \rightarrow H$$

Driver, is postulating that the phrase **אני יהוה אלהיכם**, by its overwhelming predominance in Leviticus (H), is a defining characteristic of H and the non-Levitical and P-Levitical instances of the phrase are so few as to be, effectively, random events.

However, a quite different picture appears if we re-plot the graph to show the distribution of the phrase **אני יהוה אלהיכם** within the Hebrew Bible by chapter .



⁵⁸ See also, Hurwitz, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel*.

This graph is unconvincing as evidence that the phrase is H-specific but might be in accord with Knohl's idea of a Holiness School favouring certain phrases used *pro rata* among books containing HS material. It comes as no surprise, given the nature of the intensely similar content of Leviticus 19 and Numbers 15 that these two chapters score highly for matches. Elsewhere, the traditional H material compared with other chapters contains this phrase in the ratio of at least 2:1 which hardly defines a *Sitz im Leben*.

A second, interesting phrase, which Driver regards as characteristic of H includes the well-known 'Setting face against and cutting off' formula. Examples of the two key phrases quoted by Driver are: ונתתי פני בנפש, to be found in Lev 17:10; 20:5,6; 26:17, and והכרתיו אתה מקרב עמה (Lev 17:10,; 20:3, 5,6). Driver's point is that only in the H material and in the single verse of Ezekiel 14:8 do the verbs carry the first person common singular pronominal suffix.⁵⁹

ונתתי פני באיש ההוא והשמתי⁵⁹הו לאות ולמשלים והרתיו מתוך עמי וידעתם כי־אני
יהוה:

and I will set my face against that man, and will make him an astonishment, for a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

Yahweh is saying 'I will set my face/cut him off' and thereby making a highly emphatic and personal statement. Elsewhere, Driver says, these phrases which are diagnostic characteristics of P, are always rendered in the passive, (*nif'al*)⁶⁰ *he/she/it/they shall be cut off*, for example:

⁵⁹ Highlighted in red.

⁶⁰ Highlighted in blue.

וערל זכר אשר לא־ימול את־בשר ערלתו ו נְכַרְתָּהּ הנפש ההוא מעמיה
את־בריתי הפר

And the uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

(Genesis 17:14)

איש אשר ירקח כמהו ואשר יתן ממנו על־זר ונְכַרְתָּהּ מעמיו

Whosoever compoundeth any like it, or whosoever putteth any of it upon a stranger, he shall be cut off from his people.

(Exodus 30:33)

והנפש אשר־תאכל בשר מזבח השלמים אשר ליהוה וטמאתו עליו ונְכַרְתָּהּ הפש
ההוא מעמיה

but the soul that eateth of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, that pertain unto the Lord, having his uncleanness upon him, that soul shall be cut off from his people.

(Leviticus 7:20)⁶¹

If H uses the first person active and P uses the passive voice, it becomes necessary for Driver to explain why Ezekiel follows H and not P, given that he, [Driver], believes H to be earlier than P and Ezekiel to be P material. His explanation falls back upon the idea of a *Law Code*, of which H was [Driver claims], an early example, predating P, but usefully incorporated into it, along with Ezekiel — a late addition to P — so that both used established characteristics of H for purposes of emphasis. This would seem a more plausible argument than that used by Driver to justify his conclusions about the first of the supposedly characterizing phrases; but it cannot obtain if we believe H to be later than P. It seems more likely that the authors of H, as Milgrom has suggested,⁶² were trying, in a spasm of social conscience perhaps, to extend their Law Code — the inchoate P — from being relevant to a

⁶¹ See also Lev 7:21, 25,27;

⁶² Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Continental Commentary*; Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*.

purely priestly/levite minority audience to the broader auditorium of the Israelite people in general. Nothing, therefore, might have been considered more appropriate and motivating, than a first-person exhortation from the mouth of the deity himself. Knohl⁶³ describes the PT material in the Hexteuch⁶⁴ as having a ‘...schematic, measured and restrained’ style throughout: by which he means including narrative passages. Where laws are formulated or stated, he finds scrupulous attention given to the choice of words and phrases and cites as an important example the distinction made between purity laws and sacrificial laws by the using of different nouns/pronouns for the subject of the sentence. So, in purity laws, the subject is always either **אִישׁ** (or **אִשָּׁה**) whereas in sacrificial laws it is **נֶפֶשׁ**. Knohl, agrees with Driver, that the use of the *nif'al* in the *cutting off formula* is diagnostic of PT and in contrast to HS.

Knohl makes two further and important assertions about style: that ‘Hortatory motive clauses are completely absent from PT laws’ and ‘There are no points of contact at all between PT language and JE language’. Even more significantly, Knohl suggests that because scholars formerly believed H to have pre-dated P and to have been assimilated into it, they consequently found, within H, no evidence of any literary creativity. Knohl believes this is unfair and that HS, though undoubtedly lacking PT’s precision of rhythm and fastidious use of language, does offer certain identifiable, characteristic stylistic features. These, he believes, are closer to JE than P and consequently, within HS, moralizing passages and attempts at ideological justification may be found. Moreover, HS is inconsistent — Knohl suggests almost to the point of carelessness — in distinguishing, as P does, between **אִישׁ** and **נֶפֶשׁ**.

⁶³ Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*.

⁶⁴ See also, Simpson, *The Early Traditions of Israel*.

In Leviticus, Knohl, like Milgrom, concentrates upon the *differences* between what he sees as HS and PT material rather than simply attempting to define their characteristics as Driver does. Of course, this immediately extends the scope of the argument by asking questions about the *reasons* for these differences. The result is certainly more convincing when sampled in the light of modern exegetical, linguistic and stylistic tastes. An example is Knohl's re-thinking of the business of אֲנִי in Driver's first phrase above. Knohl, like Driver, accepts this pronoun as emphatic but believes that if one considers the P/PT/HS sources together and extending beyond Leviticus, one can demonstrate a temporal relationship with the revelation of the Holy Name (Exodus 3:13 *et seq.*).

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֲהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲהִיָּה
שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם

And God said unto Moses, I am that I am: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you.
(Exodus 3:14)

In P/PT אֲנִי is used very sparingly and only in God's conversation with Moses; never in his addresses to the congregation of Israel. After the revelation of the *Holy Name* (Exodus 3:14), it is *never* used again. This is in contradistinction to the HS material where, as already noted, אֲנִי is more widely used especially in addressing the congregation of Israel. The importance of Knohl's observation over Driver's is that the latter did not believe that examples of H-sounding language outside Leviticus 17 – 27 were anything more than coincidental. Knohl, in contrast, sees the whole of the HS material, scattered throughout the *Torah* and indeed the *Hexateuch* as super-

added *propaganda*,⁶⁵ aimed beyond the esoteric and formulaic style of the priestly cadre at the Israelite people as a whole.

As Knohl remarks, these different forms of divine speech used by the two schools express their different theological viewpoints. This may be further illustrated by their different usages of the word for (the) Tabernacle *המשכן/משכן*. In HS this appears in the construct state juxtaposed to the name of God (or appropriate pronoun) and, therefore, indicating *possession* of the sacrifices, for example in the phrase: *ונתתי משכני בתוכם* (Leviticus 26:11).

The Tabernacle and sacrifice thereon is God's and also God's gift to the Israelite people — a symbol of his dwelling amongst them. No such inclusivity is implied in P/PT material where *משכן* appears always without possessives and God is never described as dwelling (*שכן*) among his people. Statutes and ordinances relating to the Tabernacle in respect of its construction and use are, in P/PT, addressed to Moses alone and not, as in H/HS, to the people.

A final example by which Knohl differentiates PT from HS is that the latter represented a more human, all-embracing and egalitarian ethic than that embraced by priests and levites. HS frequently ascribes to the Israelite and to the resident alien (sojourner) equality before the Lord whereas P/PT is manifestly less generous to the resident alien. This may be seen in the following verse from Leviticus 19:34:

כאזרח מכם יהיה לגר הגר אתכם ואהבת לו כמוך כי-גרים הייתם בארץ
מצרים אני יהוה אלהיכם

The stranger that sojourneth with you shall be unto you as the homeborn among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

⁶⁵ Used non-pejoratively, in its original sense as a neuter plural gerundive.

There are many recorded instances of phrases and styles that have led authors to differentiate between H and P and those discussed here are but a few. It is probably fair to say that the work of Driver and Knohl illustrates the two principal [opposing] viewpoints in the argument. While they are clearly in disagreement about, for example, the dates and sequence of P and H, one must ask how much that may be a function of the respective times at which their accounts were written and therefore of the different methods of research that were available to them. If we accept that because of this, the later view — that H followed P as Knohl,⁶⁶ Haran⁶⁷ and Wright⁶⁸ have suggested — is more likely; then it is possible to see that Driver and Knohl are not so far apart in their appreciation of what the Holiness Code was *about*. Both authors see it as hortatory for the people; an extension of the *Torah* from a introspective priestly worldview into the province of the whole Congregation of Israel and even beyond that to the sojourners.⁶⁹ It is *practical, user-friendly, advertising, parænetic, propaganda, understandable, acceptable and believable* — a step away from esoteric priestly, ritualistic law-making and control — towards a practical Jewish doctrine. The H material extends Leviticus beyond a rubric to a manifesto for the land and for all its people, as a blueprint for establishing their *imitatio Dei*.⁷⁰

With all of the above in mind, we must ask, in the context of the present study, why then, did H pay so little attention to צרעת and to זֹב? As a crude illustration of the

⁶⁶ Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*.

⁶⁷ Haran, "Behind the Scenes of History: Determining the Date of the Priestly Source."

⁶⁸ Wright, "Holiness in Leviticus and Beyond."

⁶⁹ Dare we say: '*Ad captandum vulgus*'?

⁷⁰ There may be here a parallel to the *Covenantal Nomism* of Pauline scholars. Cf. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: a comparison of patterns of religion* (London: SCM, 1977); E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: practice and belief, 63 BCE-66 CE* (London Philadelphia, Pa.: SCM ; Trinity Press International, 1994).

P/H differential for these conditions we may do a simple *Bibleworks* search⁷¹ in English for the *lep** morpheme within the P and H components of Leviticus. English is chosen to embody all variants of the *lep** morpheme such as *leprosy*, *leper*, *leprous* etc with no regard to precise meaning. In the ERV⁷² there are 31 ‘hits’ for *lep** of which only 1 is in H material (Lev 22:4), and this verse is clearly a summary of material already presented much more extensively in P:

אִישׁ אִישׁ מִזֶּרַע אַהֲרֹן וְהוּא צָרוּעַ אוֹ זֶבֶב בְּקִדְשִׁים לֹא יֵאָכֵל עַד אֲשֶׁר יִטְהַר וְהִגַּע
בְּכָל־טִמְאַת־נֶפֶשׁ אוֹ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־תִּצָּא מִמֶּנּוּ שִׁכְבַּת־זֶרַע

What man so-ever of the seed of Aaron is a leper, or hath an issue; he shall not eat of the holy things, until he be clean. And whoso toucheth any thing that is unclean by the dead, or a man whose seed goeth from him...

Likewise, if we search Leviticus for the word *issue*⁷³ and exclude inappropriate usages of this word, we find it used 19 times, (ERV), in the book as a whole but only once in H — again at 22:4. Observations made after simple analyses such as this, have been widely used to reinforce the notion that P was for priests while H was for the ordinary people who did not need to know much about the specific nature of *צָרוּעַ* and *זֶבֶב*. A favourite alternative explanation is that the priests and levites were operating a ‘closed shop’ on all rituals and especially on purity/impurity regulation(s) and secondarily on certain medical matters — a monopoly of knowledge always guarantees a monopoly of control. However this view is not substantiated, or at least becomes unnecessary, if we accept Milgrom’s reasoning for

⁷¹ Bibleworks, "Software for Biblical Exegesis and Research."

⁷² P:H = ERV 30:1; KJV 30:1; RSV 31:1; NRSV 29:1. In each case the variability is in P and the single instance in H is invariable 22:4. The ERV, for reasons outlined in Appendix 1, seems most appropriate for this task.

⁷³ Searching is more difficult here as the newer translations prefer the word ‘discharge’. Today, ‘issue’ has become, almost, ‘the universal noun’!

the differences between Lev 13:1 and 15:2.⁷⁴ Milgrom notes that both of these chapters open with the following identical verse:

וידבר יהוה אל-משה ואל-אהרן לאמר

And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

(Leviticus 13:1 & 15:1)

Moses and Aaron are, we must suppose, being used as metaphors for the entire priesthood,⁷⁵ now and in the future. Whereas it is to them alone, in chapters 13 and 14 that instructions are given for dealing with צרעת; in chapter 15:2 relating to זוב, there is the important further instruction that Moses and Aaron must inform the children of Israel:

דברו אל-בני ישראל ואמרתם אלהם איש איש כי יהיה זב מבשרו זובו טמא הוא

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When any man hath an issue out of his flesh, because of his issue he is unclean.

(Leviticus 15:2)

In other words, the priests are to pass on at least some information about genital discharges to the people themselves — these latter should be *actively* on the lookout.⁷⁶ Milgrom⁷⁷ accounts for this difference by supposing that while צרעת would surely be apparent to all onlookers, a genital discharge would be concealed by clothing and by modesty. Why Milgrom should attribute a lesser degree of observational effort and wit to those with genital discharges than to the rest of the population is unclear. Perhaps the reasoning is that shame and fear would discourage them from seeking treatment — a problem still found, all too often,

⁷⁴ See also Chs 6 and 7.

⁷⁵ 13:2 makes this clear by invoking their successors.

⁷⁶ If this is correct, one must applaud the priests for advocating self-examination.

⁷⁷ Milgrom, *Leviticus, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*; Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Continental Commentary*.

today. Milgrom, nevertheless, is suggesting that the זֶבַח sufferer needs more information in order for him to initiate appropriate precautionary and therapeutic measures.⁷⁸ This is a difficult argument to accept — it seems absurd to suppose that an individual should fail to notice the symptoms of a skin disease and even more absurd that this should have to wait for recognition until sufficiently developed to become a public spectacle. Admittedly, many of the contenders for צִרְעָה affect the head and looking-glasses would have been unusual; reflections could be observed in water and these conditions also affect the extremities. In the early stages of these diseases it is likely that they would be more apparent to the sufferer than to his associates. Also, it is difficult to understand why, if both conditions ultimately need referral to the priest, the need to do this should not be equally urgent. Milgrom, therefore, appears to be making a distinction on the highly dubious grounds that, if one has contracted צִרְעָה, one's associates are likely to notice it first and so active vigilance is unimportant!

There were almost certainly constraints placed by the conventions of the day, upon what parts of the body could and could not be exposed within the limits of decency.⁷⁹ We have to view this, of course in the context of the dress-code for male

⁷⁸ Admittedly, genital discharges may be less noticeable especially early on in females for obvious anatomical reasons. However the opposite is true for circumcised males compared with uncircumcised males.

⁷⁹ We are not informed in the scriptures what these might be. However in the much later *Leviticus Rabbah* (*qv infra*), we find two passages that are suggestive of the fact that constraints did operate. First, on the anatomical level See: Leviticus Rabbah 15:8:

How [much of a person's body] is [to be visible at] an examination for leprosy? In the case of a man, as [much as is visible] when one digs, and as when one plucks olives; as when one digs, for [the examination of] the privy parts, and as when one plucks olives, for [the examination of] the arm-pit. In the case of a woman, as [much as is visible] when she is preparing bread, and as when she is suckling her child; [as when she is preparing bread, for the examination of the privy parts, and as when she is suckling her child] for the examination under the breasts...

and female Israelites at the time and also in the context of the priest himself having acquire the affliction.⁸⁰

By any rational argument, early referral to the priest could be thought to be an important anti-contagion measure and so one might think that widespread public awareness would be advantageous; and what better medium by which to distribute this information than H? Why then was anti-contagion awareness or at least diagnostic indicators for early referral to the priesthood, not given greater pride of place in H which, after all, was intended to make the general public more aware of impurity/purity and other priestly matters and thus more able to interact with their priests?

While the Hebrew Bible leaves us unable to answer this question, we are left in no doubt about the enthusiasm later generations had for interpreting the levitical writings on צרעת and on זוב. We should not, in the context of the present study, expect to encounter much new information about צרעת and on זוב. This is a shame

⁸⁰ Also, we find in the *Leviticus Rabbah*, evidence for the priests' closed shop where the diagnosis of צרעת was concerned. See *Leviticus Rabbah* 15:8

...*We have learnt in the Mishnah*⁸⁰: *One is entitled to examine for [and pronounce on] any leprosy except his own leprosy. R. Meir said: Not even for the leprosy of one's relatives*

This appears to be in conflict with the scriptures where diagnosis of 'leprosy' is exclusively for the priests. The situation is not helped by a piece of rationalization (or even sophistry) which is typical of the convoluted argumentation seen in the rabbinical writings See: *Leviticus Rabbah* 15:8)

Who then examined the leprosy of Miriam? If you should say it was Moses who examined, why, a non-priest may not examine for leprosy. If you should say it was Aaron who examined her, why, a relative may not examine for leprosy. [The answer is]: The Holy One, blessed be He, said: 'I am a priest, I shut her up and I shall declare her clean.' This is indicated by what is written, And the Lord said, 'Let her be shut up without the camp seven days, and after that she shall be brought in again'... and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again (Num. XII, 14 f.). Since it is the case that the people [halted and journeyed] with the Shechinah, it follows that the Shechinah waited for her [i.e. Miriam].

R. Levi said in the name of R. Hama b. R. Hanina: Moses was much grieved on account of this matter, saying: 'Is it in accordance with the dignity of my brother Aaron that he should have to examine for leprosy?' Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: 'Does he not [by way of recompense] have the benefit of the twenty-four gifts [which are the prescribed perquisites] of the priesthood?' The proverb says: 'He who eats of the palm's heart will be beaten with the stick of the dried up palm.'

This does nothing to clarify the situation.

because these works of interpretation were produced over a lengthy period of time in which, elsewhere, great medical advances were being made.

JEWISH MATERIAL FROM LATER TIMES AND A LATER WORLDVIEW.

There is a great deal of largely interpretative material to be found in later Jewish literature. These texts cannot be compared directly with Biblical texts on account of the different worldviews that would have been prevalent in later times. The argument here however, is the same as that applied in Chapter 2: as long as the appropriate hermeneutical caveats about reception history are in place, it is helpful to see the whole evolutionary process in order to understand its early phases.

The Talmud

It might be thought, given the very extensive nature of the Talmud⁸¹ that it would be particularly helpful in the quest to differentiate true medical practice as it developed from early ritual concerning צרעת and זוב: this turns out not to be the case. While admittedly extensive — indeed exhaustingly so — on these topics, the information in the Talmud is disappointingly familiar and repetitive and consists mainly of many

⁸¹ The Talmud is a work of interpretation for the Jewish faith written by a succession of Rabbis over a considerable time encompassing the Tannaite and Amorite and later Geonic rabbinical periods. It is concerned with history, law, ethics, religious customs, philosophy and the Jewish way of life generally. It comprises two parts, the *Mishnah*, (2nd century CE) and the *Gemara*, (5th century CE) and has a supplement, the *Tosefta*. It is, as it were, an interpretation within an interpretation. See: Halivni and Rubenstein, *The formation of the Babylonian Talmud*. Fonrobert and Jaffee, *The Cambridge companion to the Talmud and rabbinic literature*. Strack, Stemberger, and Bockmuehl, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*.

This work, designed first to state and then to upgrade the *Mishnah* by means of interpretative notes — the *Gemara* — took place in two locations that were centres of Jewish scholarship at the time. Thus came about the Palestinian Talmud (*Talmud Yerushalmi*) and the later Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*). The latter is both more complete and more extensive and it is the Babylonian Talmud that is most often referred to. Within this work the *Mishnah* is written in *Mishnaic Hebrew*⁸¹ and the *Gemara* is written in *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*. See: W. B. Stevenson, *Grammar of Palestinian Jewish Aramaic* (vol. 2; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962). Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Judean Aramaic*; Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period*. Franz Rosenthal, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* (neue Serie, Bd 5; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995). Caspar Leviau, *A Grammar of the Aramaic Idiom contained in the Babylonian Talmud. With constant reference to Gaonic Literature* (Cincinnati: Bloch Publishing & Printing Co., 1896). Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods*. Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature*.

and varied rabbinical opinions as to the interpretation of what has already been said, in the Hebrew Bible. There are a very few new and original allusions in the Talmud to medical matters; notable perhaps is the prescription found at *Shabbath 110a* for treating the זב or זבה in such a way that the latter does not become barren. Generally the Talmud faithfully preserves the *Weltanschauung* of the levitical priesthood⁸² the rabbis appear to have been less concerned with passing on *propositional knowledge* or insight than *procedural knowledge* in the very greatest of detail.

יראת יהוה ראשית דעת חכמה ומוסר אילים בזו

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but the foolish despise wisdom and instruction.

(*Proverbs 1:7*)

For the purpose of the present study, therefore, the very considerable mass of literature embodied in the Talmud is mentioned only to say that it has little to offer. In contrast other late material indicates that by the time of its writing when the influence of the priesthood had waned or was defunct, a somewhat more physiological approach was being taken.

Leviticus Rabbah

It is unsurprising that the *Leviticus Rabbah*,⁸³ for the most part, reiterates the levitical viewpoint. An electronic search⁸⁴ of the *Leviticus Rabbah* discloses 133

⁸² For example, an electronic search using the *lep** morpheme results in 1415 ‘hits’ and a search using *zab** in 691 ‘hits’. Soncino, *The Soncino Classics Collection — Judaic Texts; Talmud, Mishnah, Midrash Rabbah and Zohar in Hebrew, Aramaic and English*.

⁸³ The *Leviticus Rabbah* is often called the *V/Wayikrah Rabbah*. Much of the early *midrash* of Jewish biblical exegesis was transmitted orally but eventually a written *midrash* emerged alongside the Talmud. The *Midrash Rabbah* (Great Midrash) covers the Torah, Esther, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations and Qoheleth and thus includes the *Leviticus Rabbah*. The *Midrash Rabbah* is a collection of homilies and exegetical discourses on particular subjects. Both major forms of *midrashim* are represented: *halakhic midrash* which is concerned with the law and *aggadic midrash*, concerned with non-legal exegesis. The *Leviticus Rabbah*, is among the most developed and well-edited of the *homiletic aggadic midrashim*. It dates from the 4th – 5th centuries CE and embodies the

pericopes containing the *lep** morpheme. The *zab** morpheme does not appear but *issue* used in the context of effluxion delivers 25 ‘hits’ none of which offers any insight beyond what is to be found in Leviticus itself.

The *Leviticus Rabbah* is significantly more helpful in the matter of צרעת, where it offers the most — perhaps the only — pathophysiological consideration of this condition to be encountered in early Jewish literature. It seems appropriate, however, to deal with this at the end of Chapter 6, (*qv infra*). It is, important to remember that the *Weltanschauungen* of the levitical priesthood and the later rabbis cannot be assumed to have been the same. However this evidence strongly suggests that by the time of the *Leviticus Rabbah*, it was thought necessary to try to formulate some sort of physiological explanation for צרעת. It seems likely that in arriving at such a formulation earlier ideas of what the word meant would have been taken into account.

The Dead Sea Scrolls — a later viewpoint.

The same argument may be applied in the case of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the Qumran fragment 4Q272, there is an allusion to the fact that an intact circulation is necessary for good health whereas a bad spirit blocks the circulation of the blood and causes צרעת. It should be noted that the word ‘circulation’ is not meant in this context to indicate a circulation in the Harveian sense. It would have been well

teachings of Jewish sages accumulated and modified over four centuries. The elements of *midrash* presenting a commentary, view or story are called *derashoth* and the homiletical elements are called *pethichoth*. From the 4th and 5th centuries, a *pethichah* was included in an aggadic *midrashim* as an introductory paragraph. Ostrer, refers to the *Leviticus Rabbah* — and to *midrashim* generally — as an ‘allegorical commentary’. Pg 154

⁸⁴ Soncino, *The Soncino Classics Collection — Judaic Texts; Talmud, Mishnah, Midrash Rabbah and Zohar in Hebrew, Aramaic and English.*

noted that serious cuts resulted in the ejection of blood with some force and this is probably all that is meant.

1. [ו]הגיד נמלא דם ורוח החיים עולה וי[ורדת בו נרפא מן]

2. [הנ]גע זה [משפט הצ]רע[ת לב]ני אהרון [להבדיל ל

1. *[And] the artery is filled with blood and the spirit of life pulsates up and d[own in it, the plague is healed.]*

2. *This is the [rule of ša]ra 'a[t for the s]ons of Aaron [to separate]*

(4Q272 (4QD-g) 1ii:1—2)

This fragment, part of the *Damascus Document*, is concerned with Community Rules. Even here, with such physiological advancements as a rudimentary awareness of the circulation of the blood, 'leprosy' is still seen as an infringement of the *status quo* for religious purity.

APPENDIX 4 — A NEURO-BIOLOGICAL APPROACH

TO BLEMISH

A neuro-biological, evolutionary approach to blemish and disability appears to have developed along the lines of the oft-quoted, but never attributed, adage that while ‘Fear evolved to keep us away from large animals that want to eat us from the outside, disgust evolved to keep us away from smaller animals that kill us from the inside.’ It is easy from this clever but rather generalized viewpoint to understand disgust as a protective mechanism if we consider, for example, the stimulation of nausea and the vomiting reflex by noxious smells, unpleasant sights and ingested bacteria and their toxins. However, in the human, we must go beyond the simple reflex and consider this response to have evolved into a Pavlovian *conditioned reflex* where the conditioning is the result of our evolution into gregarious and social animals. The most extreme forms of stimuli that trigger such reflexes will never be overcome by training or social *mores*. However, further back in the evolutionary spectrum of triggering events, it is quite possible to imagine sights and other sensory experiences that have become active triggers as a result of fear, social habituation or even fashion. This semi-physiological distaste for what Mary Douglas has called the ‘out of place’¹ has traditionally been seen as the reason behind the aversion shown by ancient societies to physical deformity and disfigurement resulting from disease or injury. Today, we take a mildly smug pride in believing that we can be much more selective in choosing our conditioning factors to fit in with perceived morality,

¹ See Chapter 4, also, Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. Ch 2 Pp 36 – 50.

social customs, *Zeitgeist* and even fashion. To this end, the overused, convenient but frequently meaningless word-duality *appropriate/inappropriate* is endlessly defined and re-defined to suit the particular pleadings of any *special interest group*.

Disability studies, nowadays widely seen as an academic discipline, is fast becoming a modish and popular subject for study, both in its present-day and historical contexts. The idea that the human response to disability is the product of a [very highly] conditioned reflex is a particularly favoured viewpoint because it can be seen in both of these time-contexts. *Disability Studies* as a discipline has, however, been criticized on the grounds that that the philosophical and sociological standpoint has often been established *before* the evidence is examined. Recently, this approach has been questioned on the logical and concrete grounds that, not only is it oversimplified and overly convenient to followers of present-day fashions and attitudes but, more significantly, there may, in reality, be a permanent element of *hard-wiring* within the brain that, at least to an extent, defines *ab initio*, our aversive and pleasurable reactions to particular sensory inputs. While such an element may be considered to be *hard-wired* inasmuch as its neural connections are defined initially by anatomical development, it will always be susceptible to modification by learning in a manner analogous to the learning of e.g. motor skills. This will involve input-convergence, into sensory, memory and effector pathways in which spatial and temporal summation of new inputs with data stored in existing circuitry takes place. This process is known to stimulate dendritic and synaptic proliferation which, along with positive and negative feed-back and feed-forward systems, is the anatomical basis of both *data-storage* and *functional integrative activity* in the brain.²

² See, M. A. Glasby, "The Control of Posture and Movement " in *Applied Physiology for Surgery and Critical Care* (ed. M. A. Glasby and C. L-H. Huang; Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1995).

A diffuse interconnected network of grey-matter nuclei and white-matter tracts within the brain and known as the *limbic system* is the most likely candidate for this role. The anatomy and wiring of the limbic system was worked out from dissection, ablation studies and examination of neurological dysfunction long ago.³ Its association with emotional status and memory was established later,⁴ but it is only since the advent of *functional nuclear-magnetic resonance* imaging studies (*fMRI*)⁵ that it has been possible to demonstrate, in conscious individuals, a direct association between electrical activity in the limbic system and specific sensory inputs of an unpleasant or unaesthetic nature. While no researcher, perhaps understandably, appears to have gone so far as to define ugly faces and employ their unfortunate owners in his experiments, there has been a considerable degree of study of facial recognition using both normal individuals and those who, through congenital or acquired neurological causes, have lost the ability to recognize and/or memorize faces — *prosopagnosia*. From these studies has emerged the idea that facial recognition is dependent upon two neural sub-processes: *recognition* and *memory*. Intuitively, one might suppose the former to be associated with the visual processing system⁶ and the latter with those parts of the brain that serve memory. In particular the *hippocampal-limbic* connections in the temporal lobe have been implicated both in the processing of short-term memories into long-term memories and in the association and integration of memory with emotion. Eimer⁷ using electroencephalographic techniques to investigate brain activity, after facial

³ Stephen Walter Ranson and Sam Lillard Clark, *The Anatomy of the Nervous System . Revised by Sam Lillard Clark* (Philadelphia; London: W. B. Saunders Co., 1959).

⁴ A. Brodal, *Neurological Anatomy: in relation to clinical medicine* (Oxford: University Press, 1972).

⁵ Henry Gray and Susan Standring, *Gray's Anatomy: the anatomical basis of clinical practice* (Anatomy; Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 2008).

⁶ Not the parts of the brain that enable us to *see* images but rather those parts that allow us to *interpret* them.

⁷ Eimer M, Gosling A., and Duchaine B., "Electrophysiological markers of covert face recognition in developmental prosopagnosia.," *Brain* 135 (2012): 542-54.

recognition in normal and prosopagnostic subjects, found that the activation of stored visual representations of familiar faces was not sufficient for conscious, explicit, facial recognition and that prosopagnosia was, therefore, a disconnection between visual and memory sites for faces. It followed that multiple brain sites were necessary to recognize faces. Observations carried out on patients with identifiable, specific neural lesions and on animals with neural ablations, implicated the *amygdaloid*⁸ nucleus as being vital for this memory element of facial recognition.

Fox⁹ and others have located an area close to the *parahippocampal gyrus* (Brodmann area 37)¹⁰ on the ventral surface of the temporal lobe and on the lateral side of the *fusiform gyrus* which they have shown by *fMRI* to be specific for the visual part of facial recognition and which is malfunctional in prosopagnostic patients. This has been called the *fusiform face area* (FFA) and has been shown to be preferentially activated when faces are seen before the eyes of an observer. It has been suggested, as a result of these and similar studies, that the FFA operates as a *neural centre for identity* by encoding multiple types of visual information, such as, expression, gaze-direction, age, and sex, among others.

It is the limbic system and, in particular, the *amygdala*, that integrates this identifying information with appropriately related memories and thereby with neural and hormonal effector systems. Adolphs¹¹ extended this idea to involve unpleasant stimuli: specifically fear and anger, but he again fell short of including ugliness, deformity or blemish in his catalogue of stimuli for amygdalar activation.

⁸ Named thus because it is shaped like an almond — *ἀμύγδαλος*, ἡ = almond tree

⁹ CJ Fox, Hanif, HM, Iaria, G, Duchaine, B, & Barton, JJS, "Perceptual and anatomic patterns of selective deficits in facial identity and expression processing," *Npa* 49, no. 12 (2011): 3188-200.

¹⁰ Brodal, *Neurological Anatomy: in relation to clinical medicine*.

¹¹ Ralph Adolphs, James A. Russell, and Daniel Tranel, "A Role for the Human Amygdala in Recognizing Emotional Arousal from Unpleasant Stimuli," *Psy Sci*, no. 2 (1999): 167-71.

Nevertheless, Adolphs widened the field significantly by showing that the amygdala was specifically involved with the arousal of at least some negative emotions.

Anderson and Phelps¹² added to the observation that the amygdala may be a critical neural substrate for visual/emotional processing, by demonstrating that damage to the human amygdala impairs the normal appraisal of social signals of emotion. He postulated that effective social communication depends on both the ability to receive (emotional appraisal) and the ability to send (emotional expression) signals of emotional states. Patients with bilateral amygdalar lesions, despite a severe deficit in *interpreting* facial expressions of emotion including fear, exhibited an intact ability to *express* this and other basic emotions. This dissociation suggested that a single neural integrating module did not support all aspects of the social communication of emotional status. One well-established function of the amygdala is its contribution to emotional learning and memory and so it may be important for the acquisition of understanding and formulation of response to the significance of facial expressions of whatever form.

Kawabata¹³ continuing to avoid the 'hot potato' of living human ugliness, chose to examine its antithesis beauty, using *art* as a stimulus for brain activity to be assessed by *fMRI*. This study set out to address the question of whether there are brain areas that became specifically engaged when subjects viewed paintings of male and female faces that were considered to be beautiful or ugly, presumably in the opinion of experts. Within this framework, it was found that the perception of different categories of paintings was associated with distinct and specialized visual areas of the brain, and specifically that the *orbito-frontal cortex* was differentially engaged

¹² Adam K. Anderson and Elizabeth A. Phelps, "Expression without Recognition: Contributions of the Human Amygdala to Emotional Communication," *Psy Sci*, no. 2 (2000): 106-11.

¹³ Hideaki Kawabata and Semir Zeki, "Neural Correlates of Beauty," *J Neurophys* 91, no. 4 (2004): 1699-705.

during the perception of ‘beautiful’ and ‘ugly’ stimuli. An important finding in this study was that, although there was a differential response in the *fMRI* to the presentation of various examples of artwork for visual delectation, the results showed that there was no separate structure specifically engaged when stimuli were perceived as ugly.

From all of this we cannot draw any definite conclusions about the brain’s response to unpleasant images such as might be presented by the sight of ugliness, deformity, disfigurement or blemish. However, we *can* conclude that the brain does have specific areas dedicated to the recognition of new sights, particularly faces, and to their association with data acquired in the past — memory — and also to the motor or effector responses to these processed and updated memories. It remains, therefore, a matter for debate whether we are fully pre-programmed to show aversive activity when confronted by unpleasant sights. However it seems likely that we have at least evolved the neural hardware and software to do so.

APPENDIX 5 — BEN SIRA

A UNIQUE EXAMPLE OF AN ISRAELITE PHYSICIAN FROM A LATER PERIOD

IT was not until the time of the Talmud¹ that Hebrew writings begin to show the beginnings of rudimentary science. However, with the passage of time, a tolerance appears to have developed of those outside the priesthood who practised medicine. By the 2nd century BCE, at the time when the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sira appeared in the Septuagint, physicians and their art appear to have become better thought of:

¹ τίμα ἰατρὸν πρὸς τὰς χρείας αὐτοῦ τιμαῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸν ἔκτισεν κύριος

² παρὰ γὰρ ὑψίστου ἐστὶν ἴασις καὶ παρὰ βασιλέως λήμψεται δόμα

³ ἐπιστήμη ἰατροῦ ἀνυψώσει κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔναντι μεγιστάνων θαυμασθήσεται

⁴ κύριος ἔκτισεν ἐκ γῆς φάρμακα καὶ ἀνὴρ φρόνιμος οὐ προσοχθεῖ αὐτοῖς

⁵ οὐκ ἀπὸ ξύλου ἐγλυκάνθη ὕδωρ εἰς τὸ γνωσθῆναι τὴν ἰσχὺν αὐτοῦ

⁶ καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν ἀνθρώποις ἐπιστήμην ἐνδοξάζεσθαι ἐν τοῖς θαυμασίοις αὐτοῦ

⁷ ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐθεράπευσεν καὶ ἤρην τὸν πόνον αὐτοῦ μυρεψὸς ἐν τούτοις ποιήσει μείγμα

⁸ καὶ οὐ μὴ συντελεσθῆ ἔργα αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰρήνη παρ' αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν ἐπὶ προσώπου τῆς γῆς

⁹ τέκνον ἐν ἀρρωσθήματί σου μὴ παράβλεπε ἀλλ' εὔξαι κυρίῳ καὶ αὐτὸς ἰάσεται σε

¹⁰ ἀπόστησον πλημμέλειαν καὶ εὐθυνον χεῖρας καὶ ἀπὸ πάσης ἀμαρτίας καθάρισον καρδίαν

¹¹ δὸς εὐωδῖαν καὶ μνημόσυνον σεμιδάλεως καὶ λίπανον προσφορὰν ὡς μὴ ὑπάρχων

¹² καὶ ἰατρῶ δὸς τόπον καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸν ἔκτισεν κύριος καὶ μὴ ἀποστήτω σου καὶ γὰρ αὐτοῦ χρεία

¹³ ἔστιν καιρὸς ὅτε καὶ ἐν χερσὶν αὐτῶν εὐοδία

¹⁴ καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ κυρίου δεηθήσονται ἵνα εὐοδώσῃ αὐτοῖς ἀνάπαυσιν καὶ ἴασιν χάριν ἐμβιώσεως

¹⁵ ὁ ἀμαρτάνων ἔναντι τοῦ ποιήσαντος αὐτὸν ἐμπέσοι εἰς χεῖρας ἰατροῦ

¹ David Halivni and Jeffrey L. translator editor Rubenstein, *The formation of the Babylonian Talmud* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

- ¹ Honor the physician with the honor due him, according to your need of him, for the Lord created him;
- ² for healing comes from the Most High, and he will receive a gift from the king.
- ³ The skill of the physician lifts up his head, and in the presence of great men he is admired.
- ⁴ The Lord created medicines from the earth, and a sensible man will not despise them.
- ⁵ Was not water made sweet with a tree in order that his power might be known?
- ⁶ And he gave skill to men that he might be glorified in his marvelous works.
- ⁷ By them he heals and takes away pain;
- ⁸ the pharmacist makes of them a compound. His works will never be finished; and from him health is upon the face of the earth.
- ⁹ My son, when you are sick do not be negligent, but pray to the Lord, and he will heal you.
- ¹⁰ Give up your faults and direct your hands aright, and cleanse your heart from all sin.
- ¹¹ Offer a sweet-smelling sacrifice, and a memorial portion of fine flour, and pour oil on your offering, as much as you can afford.
- ¹² And give the physician his place, for the Lord created him; let him not leave you, for there is need of him.
- ¹³ There is a time when success lies in the hands of physicians,
- ¹⁴ for they too will pray to the Lord that he should grant them success in diagnosis and in healing, for the sake of preserving life.
- ¹⁵ He who sins before his Maker, may he fall into the care of a physician.

It seems worthwhile to quote all of this rather fulsome eulogy (Sira 38:1–15) as it is so untypical of the Hebrew Bible and associated writings. That is, perhaps unsurprising given that it is the account written in Greek by Ben Sira *nepos* that appears in the Septuagint. The original text of Jesus Ben Sira was written in Palestine, in Hebrew and is traditionally dated as 175 – 200 BCE. The translation and redaction into Greek by Ben Sira *nepos*, that appears in the Septuagint was written approximately two generations later. It almost certainly reflects a milieu quite different from that of Palestine and different again from the pre-exilic times of the levitical *Grundlage*. Given that uncorroborated, unitary examples invoke the old legal adage ‘*unus testis, nullus testis*’, it is impossible to draw firm conclusions from these writings by any deductive process. However arguing

inductively, it seems unlikely that a single author and his translator would create the idea of doctors and their work *ex aethere*. If this is correct, it is highly suggestive of the fact that physicians existed at this time. As we no longer have the complete, original Hebrew text of Jesus Ben Sira² it is impossible to know if and how terms appearing in the Greek, were rendered by Ben Sira in the original in Hebrew. For example the word *μυρεψός*,³ almost universally translated into English as pharmacist, must be supposed to be Ben Sira *nepos*'s rendering of his grandfather's word *רקח* (see Chapter 9), which is usually translated as 'apothecary'. Strictly, the two are different so it is unclear whether this represents an historical change between versions or simply a lack of attention to detail or Ben Sira *nepos*'s loose translation. It is likely that apothecaries were a common ancestor to both physicians and pharmacists, though by the time of Ben Sira *nepos*, at least in Hellenic culture, the two were separately identifiable. More importantly we have no knowledge as to whether the writing of Jesus Ben Sira and Ben Sira *nepos* were unique or one such text among many, now lost. Much as the idea might appeal, it would be unsafe to describe the text of either version as a counteracting parænesis against negative views of physicians. This idea comes largely from Collins⁴ who has dated the Greek text of Ben Sira *nepos* to a somewhat later date (c. 117 BCE) than is the traditional view and what remains of the Jesus Ben Sira's Hebrew original, he dates to sometime in the first quarter of the second century BCE. He supposes that since the book purports to be an accumulation of wisdom, it is unlikely to have been written by a young man. As

² Fragments exist in the Cairo Geniza which, it has been suggested amount to 68% of the text.

³ *ὁ μυρεψός*, (*μύρον*, *ἔψω*). Properly *one who boils and prepares unguents, perfumer*. Liddell and Scott, *Greek English Lexicon*.

⁴ J J Collins, "Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach," in *The Oxford Bible commentary* (ed. John Barton and John Muddiman; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

with Proverbs, Collins supposes an Egyptian influence from the genre which embodies observations and prohibitions along with comparisons. He notes, perhaps importantly for the present context, that ‘One of the hallmarks of the biblical wisdom tradition, as found in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job, is a lack of reference to the distinctive traditions of Israel. The concern is with humanity as such, not with the special status of one people... ..Ben Sira breaks with the tradition of biblical wisdom by devoting extensive attention to the history of Israel. This history is not presented, however as the history of the acts of God or even as sequential narrative. Instead it is cast as the praise of famous men who stand as examples for future generations’. In this encomiastical genre, besides famous men, Ben Sira tackles professions such as those of the physician and the scribe. This all makes one doubt that there is any scope for justifiable backward extrapolation to the society of the levitical purity laws. The germ of what is said would surely have derived from Jesus Ben Sira himself but on balance, it seems likely that Ben Sira *nepos* conflated his grandfather’s ideas with his own observations and so was commenting on the *mores* of a later civilization, beyond even that of the Second-Temple Period. It must be remembered also that Ben Sira *nepos* may well have encountered Greek medicine and its central concept of *παιδεία*.

It is in Chapter 38 of Ben Sira that we learn about physicians. Collins draws a comparison between Ben Sira and the Hebrew Bible where he says ‘Physicians are rarely mentioned and regarded as unreliable’. The justification for this stance he finds in quotations such as 2 Chronicles 16:12,

ויחלא אסא בשנת שלושים ותשע למלכותו ברגליו עד-למעלה חליו וגם-בחליו
לא־דרש את־יהוה כי ברפאים

*And in the thirty and ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet;
his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the
Lord, but to the physicians.*

a mistaken strategy, with a fatal outcome for Asa as it turned out, (16:13):

וישכב אסא עם־אבתיו וימת בשנת ארבעים ואחת למלכו

*And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of
his reign.*

One might argue that Collins's choice of Chronicles is not properly representative of the Hebrew Bible as a whole. The dates of Chronicles and Ben Sira are not very far apart in time, both being products of a late period.

Collins⁵ makes the entirely plausible suggestion that Ben Sira *nepos* had seen the results of the well-established medical traditions of Greece and Egypt and felt the need of a counteracting parænesis aimed at the negative view of physicians that he supposed had been habitually taken in Israel. To avoid the problem that disease and its cure were dispensed solely by the hand of God, Ben Sira tactfully suggests (38:4) that the healing powers of God are secondarily mediated through physicians working with, for example, botanical remedies.⁶ Such remedies by this time, would have been well tested and established in Greek Medical practice⁷ and it would have been impossible to deny their existence and efficacy. Nevertheless, Ben Sira still cannot completely detach himself from the idea that illness is due to sin (38:10), and so predictably advocates the offering of sacrifices (38:11) to cleanse impurity before a physician can act. The physician himself is driven by divine will (38:14) and so

⁵ Collins, "Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach." Pg 691.

⁶ He does not imply any such mediated powers of divination, or magic

⁷ Hippocrates et al., *Hippocrates*.

heals, as it were, by proxy. The physician in Israel remains, in the end, no more than the instrument through which Yahweh operates. The Greek text of Ben Sira *nepos* undoubtedly proves to be helpful in a consideration of the hypothetical problem of having, under Yahwism, an omniscient and omnipotent deity who is seen to dispense and to alleviate disease so that both the positive and negative aspects of healthcare were, doctrinally-speaking, exclusively in the hands of the deity.

τίμα ἰατρὸν πρὸς τὰς χρείας αὐτοῦ τιμαῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸν ἔκτισεν
κύριος παρὰ γὰρ ὑψίστου ἐστὶν ἴασις καὶ παρὰ βασιλέως λήμψεται δόμα

Honour physicians for their services, for the Lord created them; for their gift of healing comes from the Most High, and they are rewarded by the king.

(Ben Sira nepos 38:1-2)

In this verse Ben Sira *nepos* cleverly attributes the practicalities of the physician's art, along with its pecuniary rewards, to the deity from whom ultimately they emanate as a gift, delegated to physicians. As seen above, this is an enduring proposition in the Abrahamic religions, but there is no evidence that such a formula was ever applied in Leviticus. There, responsibility and credit were vested entirely in the deity who was *πρῶτον κινουῦν ἀκίνητον*. Ben Sira's formula has proved, nevertheless, useful and enduring and, in more fundamentalistic faiths, his idea continues to prove, indispensable as a means of circumventing the difficulty in overcoming the doctrinal and dogmatic assertion that there is no possibility that events, (including healthcare), occurring in the world, are independent of the will of a single omnipotent deity.

APPENDIX 6 — JOB

AN EXAMPLE OF PSYCHIATRIC ILLNESS

WHILE boils appear to occupy a central place in the constellation of misfortunes afflicting Job, a psychiatric diagnosis seems more appropriate given the symptomatology and such was suggested by Jung¹ and more recently by Kahn.² Given the dearth of evidence relating to psychiatric illness in the Hebrew Bible, this singular example is worth considering in respect of the biblical *healthcare↔wholeness↔holiness* relationship.

The clue to a psychiatric diagnosis first appears at the beginning of the Book when Job's premorbid personality is described, (Job 1:1), as 'perfect/whole/integrated' but clearly also obsessional and therefore fragile. As Job's misfortunes accrue, his symptomatology progresses through *psychosomatic→psychoneurotic→psychotic* phases to which *obsessional neurosis*, *reactive-depression* and *paranoia* become super-added. These states represent different and deepening expressions of the same underlying morbidity. Job's decline accords with Freud's (and Melanie Klein's) view that the *ego*, under pressure, gives way to overwhelming doubt and uncertainty. This manifests itself as Job's forceful and repeated questioning of accepted viewpoints.

While the evidence for dermatological and systemic disease reported from the Land of Uz is so non-specific as to be baffling to the present-day physician (or surgeon), the modern psychiatrist could easily identify Job's mental state from the biblical account. Job's obsessional personality is a case in point: his total identification by

¹ C. G. Jung and R. F. C. Hull, *Answer to Job* (Antwort auf Hiob. English; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979).

² Kahn and Solomon, *Job's Illness: Loss, Grief and Integration. A Psychological Interpretation.*

himself and others as **צדק** means that he has an impossible task in living up to expectations. In an attempt to achieve this, he becomes obsessional even in the smallest thing. Such a fragile personality under pressure easily succumbs to neurosis and ultimately to psychosis.

A rudimentary form of psychotherapy is instituted when the ‘friends’ — scarcely psychotherapists — seek to end Job’s isolation on the ash-heap; but the actual cure comes from within Job himself. As in all psychotherapy, the crucial factor is the development of *insight*. There are clues in the text as to how this is acquired but the result is quite different from the simple picture of the old Job restored to health. A new Job-description reveals that his obsessional insistence on exact measure (‘skin for skin’) in his dealings with man and God has given way to a new integrated, personality. The new Job is willing to settle for less than his due or graciously to accept more than his due.

Job’s ‘cure’ appears to have been effected through a sort of DIY-psychotherapy in which he derives insight by talking to a variety of people: notably the ‘friends’, Elihu and God. There is no clear strategy for directing the patient to acquire his own insight so this is not good psychotherapy. Eventually it seems the tit-for-tat, ‘skin-for-skin’ obligations of a perfect man and his God no longer obsess him and he has renewed his mental integrity. This is clear from the story, but if we are to accept this as treatment we must be able to see a progression-in-reverse of Job’s symptoms. Such a progression is not to be found from evidence in the text. A mortal psychiatrist may understand and quantify Job’s mental decline, but to comprehend the *auto-psychotherapy* behind his recovery is *ultra vires virorum*.

While a psychiatric diagnosis for Job seems to be well supported by the Hebrew text, we may be tempted, nevertheless, to ask, ‘Do we need a psychiatric view of Job?’

The question parallels that for a medical/pathological view of צרעת and provides endless opportunity for speculation and argument. In the end it must depend upon whether or not we favour a naturalistic, analytical, deductive, approach to biblical medical conundrums or not. We must ask, bearing in mind earlier caveats about *hyperdiagnosis*, ‘Is the “medical” approach at variance with the literary and theological aspects?’ In the case of Job the answer ‘Probably not’ has been very effectively argued by Kahn³ and this argument has been re-stated effectively, by Howard⁴ who sets out to diagnose and to de-mythologize biblical medical events — albeit in the New Testament. Howard’s central observation is that malignant disease, tuberculosis, neuro-degenerative disorders and conditions requiring surgery *never* appear in biblical narratives. The conditions that *do* figure are mainly chronic and functional; the majority comprising (*quondam*, ‘hysterical’) psychogenic or psychosomatic, *dissociation* or *conversion disorders* treatable by abreaction therapy. Additionally, minor organic conditions were known to have been treated, at the time, by acquired practical techniques such as *manual couching*.⁵ More often than not, it was *symptoms* that were treated rather than the underlying disease process. Such treatments were well-established (and still are), within the repertoire of contemporary faith healers. Of these, there were many, and Jesus and the disciples were examples.

Because of the pious exaggeration, afforded to these New Testament medical reportings, especially where speed and extent of recovery was concerned, Howard believes their role in biblical texts to have been primarily hortatory. This New

³ Kahn and Solomon, *Job’s Illness: Loss, Grief and Integration. A Psychological Interpretation*.

⁴ Howard, *Medicine, Miracle and Myth in the New Testament*.

⁵ Dislocation of the lens by manual pressure upon the eyeball. By forcibly dislocating the opacified lens out of the visual axis, some degree of vision might be recovered albeit such that people might appear as ‘trees, walking’. See (Mark 8:23-24)

Testament material is mentioned here particularly to stress its contrast with Old Testament and Apocryphal textual material. Given that a comparable role for physicians is nowhere evident in the Hebrew Bible, its emergence in New Testament writings must reflect a significant change in attitude towards healthcare and possibly the emergence of a medical profession. This change perhaps had roots in Ben Sira but more probably was the result of Babylonian influence during the Exile, together with a concomitant decline in priestly influence. The eventual most likely influence of all was, of course, *Hellenization*. It is to be hoped that these observations justify this brief *excursus* from Leviticus to Job and back; the clear inference being that Job's psychiatric history could never have been compiled under the priestly worldview P-Leviticus.

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