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**Special Issue:** Medicine and Health: Perspectives from the Ancient World  
**Research Articles**

**007 Illness, Possession and Healing in the Second Temple Period:  
An Overview**

Anna Angelini

**Abstract** This essay examines the relation between demons and disease and the role of demons in the origins of illness in the literature of Second Temple period. It analyses some evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls (1Q20; 4Q560<sup>a</sup>, 11Q11; CD 6, and others), Jewish Hellenistic Literature (*Tobit*; Josephus), and Enochic traditions (*1 Enoch*, *Jubilees*), and highlights similarities and differences concerning the relationship between demonic attack, possession and therapy in each corpus. It shows that demonic attacks and subsequent treatments can be appropriately grouped, along with other practices, under the label “medicine”. It also considers the role of demons in confrontation with Hellenistic healing practices, showing that Jewish sources of this period do not take a unified or coherent position towards Hellenistic traditions, but rather express a diversity of tendencies, which vary from rejection, to forms of dialogue, negotiation, and competition. Among the main implications of this study the following aspects are considered: 1) the association between demons and diseases implying a state of impurity as a specific concern of the literature from this period; 2) the distinction between different forms of disease imputable to demons and demonic possession; 3) the emergence of traditional figures of healers; 4) the

investigation of the social context behind “demonic” beliefs, and the relationship between the picture provided by the texts and current medical practices.

**024 Second Temple Jewish Attitudes to Medicine: Evidence from Ben Sira, Qumran, and Economic Trade**

Lindsey A. Askin

**Abstract** It is here proposed that ancient Jewish attitudes towards medicine and physicians were by far more positive and supportive than has been previously thought. Focusing on Judea within the Second Temple period of Judaism (515 BCE to 70 CE), a new analysis is given of Ben Sira’s poem on the physician (Sir 38: 1 – 15) as well as both archaeological and literary evidence concerning the production, trade, and reputation of pharmacological products from Judea. The audience of Ben Sira’s poem is here proven to be potential readers who are not sceptical of medicine, but rather using medicine too liberally without considering personal piety—iniquity being a common cause of illness throughout the ancient Mediterranean and Near East. Furthermore, it is demonstrated that, far from harbouring widespread negative scepticism towards medicine, as is commonly supposed in modern scholarship, Second Temple Jews were familiar with, and depended upon, the far-reaching reputation of Judean pharmacological goods such as balsam, soap-ash (lye) from *Atriplex halimus*, and bitumen extracted from the Dead Sea. The argument that Judeans rejected medicine is less likely due to the famous reputation of many of the natural resources being produced in Judea for medicine and other uses, contributing towards economic trade and international reputation as these goods were traded across the Greek and Roman world. The findings suggest that Second Temple Judea did have an important role to play in the history of medicine in the ancient Mediterranean world.

**039 Health Care in the Levant**

Hector Avalos

**Abstract** This article introduces the reader to the world of Health Care in the ancient Near East and the heuristic importance of Disability Studies for studies on these matters and then surveys the evidence on these matters from the Levant, since Neolithic times to the end of the first millennium BCE. All in all, the advance of “civilization”, and urbanization in particular, posed new challenges to human health. Challenges included the management of chronically ill populations, determining the level of state investment in public health, and maintaining a supply of consultants and medications, especially for the elite. In addition, governments recognized that epidemics could hasten the demise of an entire city or empire. The parallel and overlapping health care systems in the Near East provided a variety of responses to these challenges. In fact, many of the basic problems and responses pertaining to health care (e. g. , level of state investment, regulation of medical fees) were first articulated in the ancient Near East.

**048 Ancient Medicine and World Construction among the Literati of Late Persian Period/Early Hellenistic Judah**

Ehud Ben Zvi

**Abstract** This contribution to the social history of medicine and healing practitioners addresses the question of why is it that the within the world of memory evoked by readings and rereadings of the core repertoire of the Jerusalem-centred literati of the late Persian-early Hellenistic period, medical practices, physicians, medical lore, and with a few exemptions even shamanistic healers are, for the most part, absent? The search for an answer sheds light on the social world shared by the literati and the healing practitioners, the role of social memory, and draws attention to the historically contingent character of the mentioned, relative “absence” whose roots and implications are here explored.

**058 (In) Fertility and Birth Control in the Hebrew Bible and in Early Judaism: A Re-Visit**

Athalya Brenner-Idan

**Abstract** Does the bible forbid birth control and abortion? Hard to say; it is not forbidden explicitly. Female fertility is a crucial yet sensitive issue in the bible, as witnessed by the several stories of woman figures allegedly desperate for sons (Sarah, Rachel, Hannah and Samson's nameless mother, for example). Infertility is seldom if at all assumed of males, and natural maternal feelings are attributed to females, even though their ambition is extended to having sons, not daughters. The bible pretends to contain no direct information about birth control or pregnancy termination, even though knowledge of those is available on the space (other ANE groups in neighboring lands) and time (during biblical times and beyond, also in Judaism itself) axes. A possible exception is a list of so-called Aromatics in *Song of Songs* 4. In this paper I shall return to this still culturally explosive topic, building upon what I've written about it in my book, *The Intercourse of Knowledge*, in order to re-examine the documented passages and to weigh on the question: Is proactive (birth control) and reactive (abortion) regulation of female fertility implicitly prohibited? If so, why? And finally, should the concerns embedded in the biblical stories still be considered valid for contemporary cultures?

**081 A Survey of Maimonides' Medical Works and Thought**

Xiuyuan Dong

**Abstract** Moses Maimonides represents the highest intellectual achievement in Medieval Jewish communities; He is not only the greatest jurist-theologian but also the most outstanding physician. Maimonides the court physician even overshadowed Maimonides the philosopher in the broader milieu of Arabic Islamic world where he and his circle lived. Maimonides' medical works can be divided into two categories; one includes the treatises commissioned by some Muslim patrons, which deal with certain diseases or regimens that the patrons were con-

cerned with, such as *On Asthma*, the *Regimen of Health*, and *On Poisons and Their Antidotes*; the other comprises the compositions out of the author's own knowledge interest, such as *Commentary on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates* and *The Aphorisms of Moses*. These two genres reflect respectively his double self-images as a clinical doctor and as a medical scientist. For our purpose, the latter is more relevant. In the field of medical science, Maimonides, though adhering to the basic framework of Greek medicine, criticized the classical authorities represented by Hippocrates and Galen in term of scientific methodology. Following al-Fārābī, he identified medicine as an art but not a science in its true sense. But unlike other arts, medicine—in Maimonides' view—depends more on scientific principles and syllogism. In fact he was introducing the Aristotelian paradigm of science into the medical study and practice in order to promote the certainty/reliability of medicine. Maimonides' methodological critique of classical medicine centers on two concepts, experience/experiment (*tajriba*) and pseudo-science (*hadhayān*), which also played a significant role in Maimonides' campaign against the mystical trend (he tagged as revival of idolatry) and in his agenda of reconstructing Judaic tradition.

#### 094 Notes on Healing in the Old Testament

Erhard S. Gerstenberger

**Abstract** This article discusses what the Hebrew Scriptures may reveal about healing experts and rehabilitating procedures in ancient Israel. To achieve this goal, it examines textual, comparative literary, comparative anthropological, and archaeological data. Among its conclusions, (a) shamanistic healers might have existed in pre-exilic Israel, (b) the post-exilic Torah-community later tried to purge them from Israelite life, (c) this said, some sort of healing activities continued in that period; (d) ancient prayers (individual laments) may have been transformed into word-rituals for casual rites of healing, and (e) there is good reason to think traditional healing rituals, led by mediators between humans and the divine, played a main role in ancient Israel.

## 111 Fighting Poison with Poison: Poisoning as Argument in Cicero's Speech *Pro Cluentio*

Sven Günther

**Abstract** Poison and poisoning were common phenomena in Rome. Given the many poison-murders recorded in ancient sources it is not surprising that an own standing court on assassins and poisoners (*quaestio de sicariis et veneficis*) dealing with such cases was introduced in the Late Roman Republic. While the original purpose of the *quaestiones* might have been to remove spectacular and particularly political cases from a public that was easily agitated, many speeches of Cicero show us how a skilled orator attempted to influence the judge, the jury and the audience with a mixture of rhetorical devices and legal as well as socio-political argument. In his speech *Pro Cluentio*, Cicero defends Aulus Cluentius Habitus in 66 BC who was accused of having poisoned his stepfather, Oppianicus the Elder some years before. In creating morally depraved pictures of both, his mother Sassia and his stepfather, who are said to violate every socio-political and moral frame of the Roman upper class society, Cicero achieves to cast the accusation of Cluentius into doubt. Poisoning with toxic substances plays an important role for Cicero's argument. The article analyzes the rhetorical arrangement of the speech by examining the antithetic pictures constructed in respect of the alleged poisonings: First, the one of the "anti-parents" Oppianicus and Sassia with the examples of how and when Oppianicus poisoned. Then, the rhetorical bridge of how Oppianicus tried to poison Cluentius. At last, the refutation that Cluentius tried to poison Oppianicus. In conclusion, the article shows how the topic of poison and poisoning is used in a functional way by Cicero to create politico-social frames that constituted not only his view of a good commonwealth (*res publica*) as well as exclusion of its opponents but also shaped our understanding of the Late Roman Republic.

### 133 Esagil-kin-apli and the Ancient Mesopotamian Medical Tradition

Changyu Liu

**Abstract** The ancient Mesopotamian civilization was one of the earliest civilizations in the history of mankind. A large number of medical texts written by Sumerian or Akkadian cuneiform were unearthed from hundreds of sites in modern Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran. The ancient Mesopotamian medicine tradition with its roots in Sumer and Akkad and developed by Assyrians and Babylonians survived until at least the first and possibly as late as the third century AD, and had a major impact on classical medicine. The Babylonian scholar Esagil-kin-apli, who lived in the eleventh century BC, redacted the well-known series *Diagnostic Handbook* (also *Sakkikū* in Akkadian) in the way of re-ordering the entries and structure and combining the “medical” (*asūtu*) with the “magic” (*āšipūtu*) which was the two-valued diagnostic and therapeutic system.

### 143 Medicine and Magic in Ancient Egypt: Reassessing Their Relationship

Thomas Schneider

**Abstract** This contribution attempts to present a reassessment of the relationship of ancient Egyptian medicine and magic. Crucial to this is a new understanding of Egyptian magic that puts it in explicit contrast to conventional views influenced by religious and anthropological discourses of the 19th and 20th centuries. Rather than being a negative and irrational component of ancient Egyptian religious and ritual practices, Egyptian magic was a comprehensive regulatory system aimed at stabilizing the existing world order. This system, used across all areas of human activity, functioned according to rational mechanisms that attempted to reintegrate threatened or chaotic parts of the world into the normative order. In past scholarly treatments of ancient Egyptian medicine, modern biases are obvious that aim to separate (purportedly superior) medical from (purportedly inferior) magical parts of texts, that minimize the application of magic or explain its use as purely psychological or suggestive. It can be shown that the use

of magic in medicine relied on a system of quasi-technical analogies that established a link between the patient suffering from a disease and the absolute (divine, or mythical) order, e. g. , between the patient and Horus. Recently, it has similarly been demonstrated that the prescriptions of drugs operated on more than just the pharmaceutical level. The production of drugs replicated and mirrored features of the disease itself; this provided the drugs not only with pharmaceutical but also magical efficacy. Further systematic and meticulous study of these mechanisms will allow us to unravel the Egyptian-emic-understanding and to develop a coherent functional theory of the interface of medical and magical practices in ancient Egypt.

**161 Israel's First Physician or the World's First Physician? The Image of Noah in *Jub. 10: 1–14* and the *Book of Asaph***

Chontel Syfox

**Abstract** A curious phenomenon in the *Book of Jubilees* is the attribution of medical knowledge to the patriarch, Noah. The only other attestation of this tradition is found in the much later *Book of Noah* (that is, the introduction to the medieval *Book of Asaph the Physician*). The intention of the present study is to compare and contrast these accounts of Noah's acquisition of medical knowledge, highlighting the nuances in each and how these serve the different purposes of each writer. It will be argued that whilst *Jubilees* creates a licit category of medicine specifically for its audience by painting Noah as Israel's first physician, the *Book of Asaph* paints Noah as the world's first physician and thereby asserts a Jewish provenance for medical knowledge across different cultures.

**Book Reviews**

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