

**Illness and health care in ancient Israel:
the role of the social-cultural context in interpreting
2 Chronicles 26:11-23**

by

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY	4
OPSOMMING	6
1 INTRODUCTION	8
1.1 Problem formulation	8
1.2 Hypothesis	11
1.3 Research method(s)	11
1.4 Possible outcomes	13
2 LITERARY STUDY OF 2 CHRONICLES 26:11-23	14
2.1 The context of 2 Chronicles 26:11-23	14
2.2 Text, translation and interpretation	20
2.3 An intertextual perspective on 2 Chronicles 26:11-23	25
3 THE IDEOLOGICAL THOUGHT OF THE CHRONICLER	29
3.1 The theology of immediate retribution	29
3.2 The possible ideology behind the formulation of the laws concerning access to the temple in Chronicles and the Priestly Stratum (P)	33
4 SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS OF 2 CHRONICLES 26:11-23	36
4.1 The ancient Near East's understanding of health and illness in the light of an Ancient Near Eastern depiction	36
4.2 Ancient Israel's views on Yahweh and illness	40
4.3 Ancient Israel's views on illness and purity	41



4.4	The home as the main locus of therapy in Ancient Israel	45
4.5	The role of the temple in the health care system in Ancient Israel	46
4.6	Disease in ancient Israel	48
4.7	Disease and honour in Ancient Israel	50
4.8	The consultative options outside of the temple and the family in Ancient Israel	51
5	CONCLUSION	68
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	72

SUMMARY

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Degree: Magister Artium

Understanding illness and health care in the ancient world, and especially within ancient Israel, is not an easy undertaking. Most of the research done on Israelite health care focuses on the identification of disease rather than their sociological implications. This study hypothesises that to truly understand ancient Israel's thoughts on illness and health care it is important to take the wider social context, in which a sick person would have found himself, into account. This study analyses the illness of King Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:11-23) against the backdrop of the ancient Near East's understanding of illness and health care, Israel's view of Yahweh's role in illness, as well as the interwovenness between illness and the social values of honour and shame. The notions of purity and impurity and the role they played in Israel's understanding of illness, as well as the role of the temple and other consultative options are also taken into account in the study. In so doing the study intends to shed some light on the interwovenness between illness and social values in ancient Israel and thus enabling a better



understanding of 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 and illness and health care in ancient Israel.

KEY TERMS

Illness

Health care

Leprosy

Ancient Israel

Temple

Social values

Purity

Impurity

Honour

Shame

OPSOMMING

**Siekte en gesondheidsorg in antieke Israel:
die rol van die sosiale-kulturele konteks in die interpretasie van
2 Kronieke 26:11-26**

deur

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Om siekte en gesondheidsorg binne die antieke wêreld, en in besonder binne antieke Israel, te verstaan, is nie eenvoudig nie. Meeste van die navorsing oor antieke Israel se gesondheidsorg fokus op die identifisering van siektes en nie op die sosiologiese implikasies van daardie siektes nie. Hierdie studie veronderstel dat om siekte en gesondheidsorg in antieke Israel werklik te verstaan, dit nodig is om die wyer sosiale konteks waarin die siek persoon homself bevind het, in ag te neem. Die studie analiseer die siekte van koning Ussia (2 Kronieke 26:11-23) teen die agtergrond van die antieke wêreld se verstaan van siekte en gesondheidsorg, antieke Israel se verstaan van Jahwe se rol in siekte, asook die verband tussen siekte en die sosiale waardes van eer en skaamte. Die begrippe reinheid en onreinheid se rol in Israel se verstaan van siekte, asook die rol van die tempel en ander raadgewende moontlikhede word ook in die studie in ag geneem. Met die bogenoemde poog die studie om die verband tussen siekte en sosiale waardes in antieke Israel uit te lig en sodoende 'n bydrae te maak tot 'n



beter verstaan van 2 Kronieke 26:11-23 asook siekte en gesondheidsorg in antieke Israel.

SLEUTELTERME

Siekte

Gesondheidsorg

Melaatsheid

Antieke Israel

Tempel

Sosiale waardes

Reinheid

Onrein

Eer

Skaamte

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem formulation

Illness must be one of the most constant human experiences. Some of the earliest written languages evolved in the ancient Near East, and it was also there that people first began writing about illness and health care. The earliest civilizations (Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece) all produced an extensive corpus of medical literature. The literature of Israel, particularly the Bible, also produced a variety of ideas about illness and health care. Extensive studies have been done on the medical literature of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece, but the nature and complexity of health care in ancient Israel have not received the proper attention. When scholars do venture into this field of research they do not approach health care in Israel as a system at all¹. Most of the research done on Israelite health care focuses on the identification of disease rather than their sociological implications.

If one wishes to understand health care and illness in Ancient Israel, one must first become aware of several difficulties that could prevent any direct access to this understanding. One must first be aware that our understanding of the word 'sick', of what sickness really is, and who can be classified as sick, is largely determined by our modern context, and that understanding is also historically conditioned. That means our understanding is relative, and that relativity only emerges when a historical comparison is made (Seybold & Mueller; 1981:9).

¹ For example, Seybold & Mueller's "Sickness and Healing" (cf. Seybold & Mueller; 1981) in which they only give cursory attention to the sociological aspects of illness and health care in ancient Israel.

Secondly, one must remember that sickness has a history. Sicknesses emerge, gain hold, and then die out. There are young and old diseases. Modern times do not know the diseases of antiquity, and similarly many of today's diseases did not exist in the ancient world.

In the third place the historical distance from the speakers of the biblical tradition and the linguistic, mental, and social differences obstruct any understanding of the statements or accounts of sickness. This can be aggravated by the vagueness of some biblical terminology, accounts, and diagnoses referring to sickness or disease. Because of the above mentioned difficulties in defining sickness, this study will make use of a heuristic model whose constitutive elements can be described phenomenologically. The heuristic model described by Seybold & Mueller (1981:11) contains the following points.

- a. Sickness is experienced and described as a psychological and physical reality by a person in pain.
- b. Sickness suggests some kind of therapeutic effort as a reaction to the sickness; this is usually done by medical science or its antecedents. The goal of the therapeutic effort is healing as the reestablishment of the previous condition. The person with the sickness assumes the role of the patient.
- c. In sickness the end of life – death as the limit of life – becomes visible, and disease causes a crisis in the life of the patient.
- d. Sickness causes questions to arise – questions concerning the situation as well as diagnoses, theories, interpretations, and other remarks concerning the situation.

This study would add to Seybold and Mueller's heuristic model one more phenomenon of sickness.

- e. Sickness creates a desire for a god or a higher power that the patient or intermediary can approach for healing or help.

The above mentioned model offers a method of differentiating this understanding of sickness from similar anthropological phenomena, such as suffering or death (Seybold & Mueller; 1981: 11).

What makes ancient Israel's understanding of illness and health even more complicated is the fact that the illness and health interacted with social values, such as purity and impurity (Avalos; 1995:249). The social value of purity was responsible for giving each member of the society direction in respecting and observing the system of space and time that had been developed to have everything and everyone in its place and a place for everything (Pilch; 1998:170). In ancient Israel, purity marked a person who knew how to be clean rather than unclean, and how to maintain honour and avoid shame.

According to 2 Chronicles 26:19 King Uzziah, after becoming enraged with the priest, was punished with a skin disease. The above mentioned understanding of illness and purity are clearly visible in the story of Uzziah's illness. According to purity laws found in Leviticus 13 he was not bodily whole and thus impure in the eyes of Yahweh. From the text we learn that he is '*excluded from the house of Yahweh*' (2 Chronicles 26:21) which points without a doubt to his impurity.

Through the history scholars have speculated which of the many skin diseases could have infected the king, but very few scholars have touched on the socio-cultural context as backdrop to 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 and the social values that are so deeply imbedded in this text. According to many scholars the 'leprosy' that the Chronicler speaks of is not Hansen's disease, as true leprosy is now called, but some other form of skin disease (Coggins; 1976: 252), whereas other scholars are convinced that King Uzziah's disease was indeed Hansen's disease (Heaton; 1987:99). Whatever disease King Uzziah was struck with, this disease

had serious implications for the way people regarded and reacted towards him as well as grave religious implications for the king. This study aims to do more than identify the king's disease: it aims to understand what impact this disease had on the king in a holistic light.

1.2 Hypothesis

The purpose of this study is to investigate the light that can be shed on the interpretation of 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 by its socio-cultural context. Thus for a good understanding of 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 it is important that we have a good understanding of illness, the health care system of Israel and the role social values played in Israel's understanding of illness. For the purpose of the study the focus will fall especially on verses 15 to 23 of the pericope.

This study hypothesises that an analysis of both the literary features of the text and the social-historical context in which such a text would have originated is necessary to understand ancient Israel's thoughts on illness and health care. Thus a true understanding of ancient Israel's thoughts on illness and health care has to take social values such as purity/impurity and honour/shame into account. In this study the illness of King Uzziah is analysed, in so doing the study intends to shed some light on the interwovenness between illness and social values in ancient Israel. This will enable a better understanding of 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 as well as a better understanding of how illness and health care functioned in ancient Israel.

1.3 Research method(s)

The books of Chronicles are among the least known and read books in the Bible. At a quick glance the books of Chronicles seem to be a mere retelling of the earlier historical material found especially in the books of Samuel and Kings. According to Mangan (1982:1) the Chronicler's purpose with his retelling is to

make the message of the past relevant to a new age and this gives the books of Chronicles importance within the Bible. The narrative of Uzziah's leprosy can also be found in 2 Kings 17:5-7. This study chose 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 simply because the author of 2 Kings only records that Uzziah was a leper, while the Chronicler adds the cause of this disease, which he finds in Uzziah's presumptuous burning of the incense, a sacred right reserved for priests.

The research will rest upon three pillars – a literary analysis, an ideological analysis, as well as a social-scientific analysis.

A thorough literary study of 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 will be done. The literary study will include an analysis of the context in which the text was written, by doing so the study hopes to understand the text and the traditions in which it was written better. With an intertextual analysis the text's relationship to the Book of Kings will become clear.

The study will investigate the possibilities offered by a social-scientific analysis of 2 Chronicles 26:11-23. According to Elliott (1993:70) the aim of social-scientific criticism can be seen as

the analysis, synthesis, and interpretation of the social as well as literary and ideological (theological) dimensions of a text, the correlation of these textual features, and the manner in which it was designed as a persuasive vehicle of communication and social interaction, and thus an instrument of social as well as literary and theological consequence.

This social-scientific analysis will consider both the ideology and social values behind the story of Uzziah. True understanding of the text can only take place by reading the text as an ideological production, by interpreting the text from within a particular ideological formation, and accepting that the ideologies of ancient

Israel are historically and culturally far removed from our own ideologies (Clines; 1995:12). By making use of ideological criticism the study aims to open the text to new interpretations and a better understanding of illness in ancient Israel. Social values are also of utmost importance if one truly wants to understand the story of Uzziah's illness. In this study the social values that are so deeply imbedded in this text will be investigated.

1.4 Possible outcomes

In order to explore illness and healthcare in ancient Israel one must understand that illness and social values are intertwined. The intention of this study is to provide some light on the precise relationship between Israel's understanding of illness and how this society's social values influenced this understanding. By studying Uzziah's illness in 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 in the light of the above mentioned social values the study hopes to contribute to a greater understanding of illness and health care in ancient Israel.

CHAPTER 2

LITERARY STUDY OF 2 CHRONICLES 26:11-23

A literary study of 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 will take the context of the text into consideration. The literary study will also contain a translation and interpretation of the text, as well as an intertextual analysis of the text. The integration of information gathered from the above mentioned approach will be a valuable aid in a better understanding of 2 Chronicles 26:11-23.

2.1 The context of 2 Chronicles 26:11-23

In working with any ancient texts, modern scholars and interpreters need to understand the context in which the text was written.

The sources of Chronicles

Chronicles, like any other historical work, were dependant on sources. The question of the sources the Chronicler used is a question that has caused heated debates among biblical scholars. It seems that most authors will agree that the Chronicler used the redacted forms of the canonical books and not their traditions – a position adopted in this study. According to Japhet (1993:14) the sources should be approached from two different angles: the internal evidence of the book and the explicit statements of the author. For the purpose of this study the different sources will be mentioned briefly.

a. The sources of Chronicles

I. Genesis

It is clear from the Chronicler's introductory chapter (1 Chron. 1:1-2:2) that the book of Genesis was scanned systematically – all the genealogies that directly link Adam to Israel, including all the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have been taken out, restructured and included into the book

(Japhet, 1993:15). Thus it seems that Chapter 1 is the Chronicler's way of representing the book of Genesis.

II. Joshua

According to Japhet (1993:16) only two sections of the material of Joshua have been used: the Simeonite cities (Josh. 19:2-8 // 1 Chron. 4:28-33), and the priestly and levitical cities (Josh. 21:10-39 // 1 Chron. 6:54-81). Jones (1993:74) is of opinion that David's charge to Solomon (1 Chron. 22) was influenced by the earlier model of the transition from Moses to Joshua, with some parts (e.g. specifically 22:13b) echoing Deuteronomy 31 and Joshua 1.

III. The book of Kings

Most scholars will agree that the book of Kings is the most important of the biblical sources in the writing of Chronicles². Comparative research shows that almost half of the text of Chronicles has parallels in the books of Samuel and Kings (Kalimi; 2005:1). According to Japhet (1993:17) the book of Kings is the main source for the Chronicler's history of Solomon and also forms the basis for the Chronicler's history of the kings of Judah. The Chronicler follows the chronological statements of Kings and does not deviate from it, even when it clashes with his theology. The Chronicler may add some additional detail, but he never changes the basic Deuteronomistic chronological pattern.

IV. Ezra-Nehemiah

Schmidt (1984:160) finds that Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah make use, to a large extent, of the same styles, intentions and basic ideas. The Chronicler sites two sections from Ezra-Nehemiah: the beginning of the edict of Cyrus (2 Chron. 36:22-23 // Ezra 1:1-3a), as well as a list of

² According to Driver (1961:531-32) there is a more complex relationship of common sources behind both the canonical Kings and post-exilic 'Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah', and he suggests that these two works both served as sources for the Chronicler.

inhabitants of Jerusalem (1 Chron. 9:2-17a // Neh. 11:3-19) (Japhet; 1993:18).

b. Sources mentioned in Chronicles

The Chronicler also makes explicit references to written sources, for example works that are mentioned in the conclusions of kings' reigns. They refer the reader to an additional source by the repeated formula 'the rest of the acts of... are written in...'

Author and Date

Early statements about the authorship of Chronicles ascribe it to Ezra the scribe. Mediaeval writers, Jewish and Christian, also shared this view. Kimhi³ and many Christian exegetes regarded the book as earlier than Ezra, thus viewing him as editor (Japhet; 1993:24).

There is a difference of opinion as to whether the author who composed Chronicles was also responsible for Ezra and Nehemiah. The theory of this common authorship is based on the supposed similarities between the books in vocabulary, style and theology (Henry; 837). According to Mangan (1982:9) research points to many differences between these books, so much so that she suggests that Chronicles is a completely separate work from Ezra-Nehemiah. De Vries (1989:10) believes that the weight of evidence points strongly against a common authorship. Most modern scholars do not regard 'the Chronicler' as the author of both his book and Ezra-Nehemiah.

Modern scholars' suggestions concerning the date of Chronicles have ranged from the first half of the sixth century (parallel to Ezekiel and the Deuteronomistic history), to the second century (some time in the Maccabean period). According to Japhet (1993:24) an earlier dating of Chronicles must involve a certain view of the literary work, regarding extensive parts as secondary or later editions. It

³ Mediaeval Jewish exegete (1160-1236).

seems that a later dating is commended by a scholar's general understanding of the chronology of the biblical literature.

On the whole, however, most scholars would see the late Persian period (400-333 B.C.) as a significant time in the composition of Chronicles (Mangan; 1982:9).

Content and basic structure

According to Japhet (1993:8) the Chronicles contain the history of Israel from beginning to 'beginning'. Chronicles describes Israel's history from the start of human existence with Adam, through the destruction during the reign of Zedekiah, to the new beginning with the declaration of Cyrus. Making it a comprehensive parallel to the Deuteronomistic history (Schmidt; 1984:161). The Chronicles are composed of three parts, clearly distinguished by content, literary features and main historical and theological emphases:

1 Chronicles 1-9: Introduction

1 Chronicles – 2 Chronicles 9: the history of Israel under the rule of David and Solomon⁴.

2 Chronicles 10-36: the history of the kingdom of Judah from the defection of the Northern tribes.

It is not within the scope of this study to provide a comprehensive study of the whole structure of Chronicles. The study will only discuss the part that is of importance for the scope of the study, that being 2 Chronicles 10-36.

2 Chronicles 10-36 arranges the history of the kings of Judah into smaller units (Japhet; 1993:13). It is prefaced by an introduction explaining its setting: the story of the revolt of the northern tribes. Then it follows the historical order and

⁴ The Chronicler portrays David and Solomon as the ideal kings. This portrayal gives him a standard by which he could measure their successors' achievements and their activities as kings (Jones; 1993:48).

the chronological framework of the book Kings. The longest units are devoted to Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah:

- | | | |
|----|-------------|-------------------------------|
| a. | 10:1-11:4 | Revolt of the northern tribes |
| b. | 11:5-12:16 | Rehoboam |
| c. | 13:1-14:1a | Abijah |
| d. | 14:1b-16:14 | Asa |
| e. | 17:1-21:1 | Jehoshaphat |
| f. | 21:1-20 | Jehoram |
| g. | 22:1-9 | Ahaziah |
| h. | 22:10-24:27 | Joash |
| i. | 25:1-26:2 | Amaziah |
| j. | 26:3-23 | Uzziah |
| k. | 27 | Jotham |
| l. | 28 | Ahaz |
| m. | 29-32 | Hezekiah |
| n. | 33:1-20 | Manasseh |
| o. | 33:21-25 | Amon |
| p. | 34-35 | Josiah |
| q. | 36:1-21 | The last kings of Judah |
| r. | 36:22-23 | The edict of Cyrus |

Uzziah's story is situated in the central part (2 Chron. 10-36) of the Chronicler's work in which he presents the accounts of the kings of Judah in quick succession (Duke; 1988:77). This central part contains the portrayal of the monarchical period from the death of Solomon to the exile and shows a skilful patterning. This same method can be seen in the older presentation in 2 Kings where contrasting rulers follow one another - Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Josiah, Jehoiakim - thus suggesting that history is at least in some measure subordinate to interpretation (Ackroyd; 1991:277).

The Chronicler often divides the reign of an individual king into two halves, good and bad. These two portions are ordinarily separated by a chronological note (Dillard; 1987:210-211). In Chronicles 26 we meet king Uzziah. In verses 1-14 we read of Uzziah the great king: during his reign Judah reclaimed in the South much of the territorial extent of the Solomonic empire and through many conquests Uzziah's kingdom prospered. Yet isn't it ironic that Uzziah is largely remembered for what we read of in verses 15-23: his pride that led to a disease and ultimately his downfall. The chapter is structured by the usual paragraphing devices used by the Chronicler:

- (1) an explicit subject, usually a king's name (26:1,9,14,19,20);
- (2) וַיְהִי-clause with some indicator of time (26:5,11,21).

The verb חזק is also used for the structuring of some portions:

- (1) the repetition of the statement that "Uzziah became strong" ends one paragraph and begins the next, this use is often called tail-head linkage (26:15-16);
- (2) the same verb ends two paragraphs, one concerning the external affairs of Uzziah's rule (26:8), and the other his internal policies (26:15); this is often called tail-tail linkage (Dillard; 1987:207).

Tuell (2001:876) proposes that the structure of Uzziah's story may be illustrated as follows:

- (a) 3-5 Introduction
- (b) 6-15 Uzziah's enterprises
 - 6-8 military and international activity
 - 9-10 construction and economic activity
 - 11-15a organization and equipment of the army
 - 15b conclusion
- (c) 16-21 Uzziah's sin and punishment
- (d) 22-23 Conclusion

2.2 Text, translation and interpretation

11 וַיְהִי לְעֻזִּיָּהוּ חֵיָל	11 And Uzziah had an army
עֹשֶׂה מִלְחָמָה	waging war,
וַיֵּצְאֵי צְבָא לְגִדּוּד בְּמִסְפַּר פְּקֻדָּתָם בְּיַד יַעֲיָאֵל הַסּוֹפֵר וּמַעֲשִׂיָהוּ הַשּׁוֹטֵר עַל יַד־חַנְנִיָּהוּ מִשְׂרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:	going out in warfare by divisions according to the number of their mustering by Jeiel the secretary and Maaseiah the officer under the direction of Hananiah, one of the officials of the king.
12 כָּל מִסְפַּר רֵאשֵׁי הָאָבוֹת לְגִבּוֹרֵי חֵיָל אֲלָפִים וְשֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת:	12 The total number of family heads over the fighting men was 2600.
13 וְעַל־יָדָם חֵיָל צְבָא שֶׁלֹּשׁ מֵאוֹת אֲלָף וְשִׁבְעַת אֲלָפִים וַחֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת עוֹשֵׂי מִלְחָמָה בְּכַח חֵיָל לְעֹזֵר לַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־הָאוֹיֵב:	13 Under their command was an army of 307 500 men who could wage war with mighty power to support the king against his enemies.
14 וַיִּכֶן לָהֶם עֻזִּיָּהוּ לְכָל־הַצָּבָא מִגָּנִים וּרְמָחִים וְכוּבָעִים וְשָׂרִינּוֹת וּקְשָׁתוֹת וְלֶאֱבָנֵי קַלְעִים:	14 Uzziah provided for them, for the entire army, shields, spears, helmets, coats of armour, bows and slinfstones.
15 וַיַּעַשׂ בִּירוּשָׁלַם חֲשִׁבְנוֹת מְחֻשְׁבֹּת חוֹשֵׁב לְהִיּוֹת עַל־הַמִּגְדָּלִים וְעַל־הַפְּנּוֹת לִירוּא בַחֲצִים וּבְאֲבָנִים גְּדֹלוֹת וַיֵּצֵא שְׁמוֹ עַד־לְמִרְחֹק כִּי־הִפְלִיא לְהַעֲזֹר עַד כִּי־חָזַק	15 He also set up in Jerusalem skilfully contrived devices ⁵ to be on the towers and corners [from which] to shoot arrows and [hurl] large stones. Hence his fame spread far and wide For he was miraculously assisted until he became strong.
16 וְכַחֲזֻקָתוֹ נָבַה לְבוֹ עַד־לְהִשְׁחִית וַיִּמְעַל בַּיהוָה אֱלֹהָיו וַיָּבֵא אֶל־הֵיכַל יְהוָה לְהַקְטִיר עַל־מִזְבֵּחַ הַקְטָרֶת	16 But when he was strong, his arrogance was so great that it led to his downfall; he was disobedient toward Yahweh his God: he entered the temple of Yahweh to burn incense upon the incense altar.
17 וַיָּבֵא אַחֲרָיו עֶזְרִיָּהוּ הַכֹּהֵן וְעִמּוֹ כֹּהֲנִים לַיהוָה שְׁמוֹנִים בְּנֵי־חֵיָל:	17 Azariah the priest accompanied by eighty valiant priests ⁶ of Yahweh went in after him.

⁵ *skillfully contrived devices*. Such engines of warfare are not mentioned elsewhere in the canonical Old Testament (Curtis & Madsen; 1965:451). According to Meyers (1965:150) catapulting devices were unknown then, the defenses of Lachish illustrate the nature of the constructions of Uzziah. They were thus protective or shielding devices from which the defenders could hurl stones and shoot arrows at the attackers.

וַיַּעֲמְדוּ עַל-עֲזִיָּהוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ ¹⁸	18 They confronted King Uzziah
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לּוֹ	And said to him:
לֹא-לְךָ עֲזִיָּהוּ	'It is not for you, Uzziah,
לְהַקְטִיר לַיהוָה	to burn incense' to Yahweh
כִּי לַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי-אַהֲרֹן	- rather it is for the priests, the sons of Aaron,
הַמְּקֻדָּשִׁים	Who have been consecrated
לְהַקְטִיר	To burn incense.
צֵא מִן-הַמִּקְדָּשׁ	Leave the sanctuary,
כִּי מַעֲלָתָּ	For you have been unfaithful,
וְלֹא-לְךָ לְכָבוֹד מִיְהוָה אֱלֹהִים:	and you will not receive honour from Yahweh God.
וַיִּזְעַף עֲזִיָּהוּ ¹⁹	19 Uzziah became enraged ⁸
וּבְיָדוֹ מִקְטֹרֶת לְהַקְטִיר	while he had in his hand a censer for burning incense.
וּבִזְעַפּוֹ עִם-הַכֹּהֲנִים	While he was enraged with the priests,
וְהַצֹּרֶעַת זָרְחָה בְּמַצְחוֹ לְפָנֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּבַיִת יְהוָה מֵעַל לְמִזְבֵּחַ הַקְטֹרֶת:	lesion (leprosy) ⁹ broke out on the skin of his forehead ¹⁰ in the presence of the priests, before the incense altar in the temple of Yahweh.
וַיִּפֹּן אֵלָיו עֲזַרְיָהוּ כֹהֵן הָרֹאשׁ וְכָל-הַכֹּהֲנִים	20 So when Azariah the chief priest and all the priests turned toward him -
וְהִנֵּה-הוּא מִצֹּרֶע בְּמַצְחוֹ	behold leprosy was on his forehead
וַיִּבְהֲלוּהוּ מִשָּׁם	And they hurried him out of there;
וְגַם-הוּא נִדְחָף	and he also was anxious
לְצֵאת	to get out

⁶ *eighty valiant priests* is a rather large number. It seems we have no data regarding the amount of priests in a priestly 'division' (cf. I Chron. 24); the number of an officiating 'division' of singers was twelve (I Chron 25: 7-31) (Tuell; 2001:886).

⁷ *Only incense*. For the priestly regulations see Exod 30:7-10; Num 18:1-7.

⁸ *Enraged*. It seems that it was not the mere attempt to burn incense that brought the disease on him, but his officiousness, his pride and his stubbornness to resist the prohibitions of the priests (guardians of the temple) (De Vries; 1989:357).

⁹ *צרעת* is translated by some as 'leprosy'. *צרעת* was in the Biblical sense a generic term under which were included all kinds of skin ailments. Only one group of these would correspond to modern leprosy. We do not know what Uzziah had but it must have been a very loathsome disease. It must have been especially disabling or it happened under extraordinary circumstances, otherwise it difficult to see why he withdrew from active service. Naaman who had a similar disease, apparently continued as commander. Uzziah must have retired for cultic reasons (Jotham took over official duties while Uzziah apparently continued in charge of foreign policy) or he must have been very ill (Myers; 1965:150).

¹⁰ *his forehead*. It is significant that the 'leprosy' makes its appearance on the king's forehead, the most conspicuous place on his body, almost announcing his impurity to the whole world (Tuell; 2001:885).

כי נגעו יהוה:	Because Yahweh had afflicted him.
21 ויהי עזיהו המלך מצרע עד יום מותו	21 Uzziah the king was thus a leper to the day of his death
וישב בית החפשית מצרע	And lived in a house of quarantine ¹¹ as a leper
כי נגזר מבית יהוה	because he was excluded from the house of Yahweh ¹² .
ויותם בנו על בית המלך שופט את עם הארץ:	Jotham his son, who was in charge of the royal palace, governed the people of the land.
22 ויתר דברי עזיהו הראשנים והאחרנים כתב ישעיהו בן אמוץ הנביא:	22 The rest of the acts of Uzziah, from beginning to end, were recorded by the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz.
23 וישכב עזיהו עם אבתיו	23 Uzziah rested with his fathers ¹³
ויקברו אתו עם אבתיו בשדה הקבורה אשר למלכים	They buried him with his fathers in a burial field that belonged to the kings.
כי אמרו	For they said,
מצרע הוא	"He was a leper."
וימלך יותם בנו תחתיו:	Jotham his son ruled in his place.

Structure

The structure of the pericope can be summarised as follows:

- I. The king's success 11-15b
 - A. The army and its armour 11-15a
 - 1. Army 11-13
 - a. Organised and ready for battle 11a

¹¹ חפשית in Hebrew has the meaning 'free'. בית החפשית 'house of freedom', could refer to (1) Uzziah being released from his duties and functions as king or (2) a euphemism for confinement, 'free house' being in fact 'isolation'. This same phrase occurs in an Ugaritic text where emissaries of Baal are sent to the netherworld; unless it is also a euphemistic use. The Ugaritic word בת הפתת seems to mean 'house of corruption, filth' (Dillard, 1987:206).

¹² According to Curtis this was a natural observation from the Chronicler, who laid great stress on worship (Curtis; 1965:453).

¹³ A few Heb. MSS, Arab, Syr, and Vg omit the second occurrence of the phrase 'with his fathers' (Tuell; 2001:887). Its inclusion in MT could be the result of an unconscious scribal harmonization with other passages using the phrase with the verb 'bury', so that it should be deleted. However, since 'with his fathers' occurs twice in the parallel text at 2 Kgs 15:7, it is more probable that the phrase was originally included by the author who then substituted 'in a burial field belonging to the kings' for 2 Kgs 15:7 "in the city of David." The omission would then be a scribal correction since the Chronicler's point seems to be that Uzziah was in fact not buried with his fathers in the royal tombs but in a separate field (Dillard; 1987:206).

b. Preparation by officers	11b
c. Assemble roll	12-13
1. Tally of chieftains	12
2. The troops	13
i. Tally	13a
ii. Appellations	13b
2. Arms	14
3. Skilfully contrived devices in Jerusalem	15a
B. Fame	15b
II. Uzziah's foolishness	16-21
A. Introduction	16a
B. Uzziah in the temple	16b-19a
1. The king presumes to burn incense	16b
2. Azariah and priests follow him	17
3. Prevention and Azariah's speech	18
a. Rebuke	18a
b. Command to leave	18b
c. Condemnation	18c
4. Angered Uzziah prepares to disobey	19a
C. Expulsion as a leper	19b-21
1. Forehead becomes full of leprosy	19b
2. Priests see leprosy	20a
3. Banishment of Uzziah	20b
a. Priests expel Uzziah	20b(i)
b. Uzziah flees	20b(ii)
c. Awareness of divine punishment	20b(iii)
4. Permanent banishment of the king	21
a. Separate life as leper	21a(i)
b. Excluded from temple	21a(ii)
c. Jotham successor	21b
III. The end of Uzziah	22-23

A. Citation formula	22
B. Death and burial	23a
1. Death	23a(i)
2. Burial as a leper	23a(ii)
C. Succession formula	23b

Interpretation

I. The king's success (vv. 11-15b)

The Chronicler substitutes the name 'Azariah' for the name 'Uzziah'. De Vries (1989:358) believes that 'Azariah' may have been the king's familiar name and 'Uzziah' the throne name. Both of the names mean 'Yahweh is strong' or 'Yahweh helps.'

In vv. 11-15 the main theme seems to be Uzziah's military strengths. Coggins (1976:251) accepts the reorganization of the army, but believes the numbers in verse 13 to be an exaggeration. Scholars, such as De Vries (1989:356), also question whether this account can be taken as historical. Japhet (1993:202) believes the Chronicler's reports of the special 'inventions' the king had erected on Jerusalem's towers to be historical. While Meyers (1965:150) is suspicious of Uzziah's war engines, because according to him they reflect a much later period than the time of Uzziah.

II. Uzziah's foolishness (vv. 16-21)

The Chronicler attributes Uzziah's success to his faithfulness to Yahweh. Unfortunately Uzziah's success, prosperity and pride led to his destruction. Uzziah usurps the authority of the priests and enters the temple to make an offering of incense. His actions are contrary to the regulations in the Pentateuch that limited the offering of incense to the priesthood (Coggins; 1976:252). According to Selman (1994:470) the king's offence was not attempting to offer the incense, but his misunderstanding of the true nature of Yahweh's holiness.

Uzziah is punished with leprosy. The disease the king is struck with is not Hanson's disease, as leprosy is called today (Coggins; 1976:252). In the Bible 'leprosy' is a catcall term for a variety of disfiguring skin diseases that involved some kind of discoloration of or discharge from the skin (Japhet; 1993:203). Leprosy rendered a person ritually unclean and required isolation (Dillard; 1987:211). Chronicler makes it clear that Jotham acts as regent for his father.

III. The end of Uzziah (vv. 22-23)

According to De Vries (1989:357) the citation formula found in verse 22 is in the form of a verbal clause, differing from the usual wording of citation formulas. The notice of the king's death in verse 23 uses the formula 'he slept with his fathers', implying the king had an honourable and peaceful death. The Chronicler emphasises the king's shame by repeating 'he is a leper' at the end of verse 23.

2.3 An intertextual perspective on 2 Chronicles 26:11-23

A study of the context of the book Chronicles, as well as an interpretation of 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 is a fruitful exercise. However it does leave some questions unanswered. An intertextual reading may prove to be an equally fruitful exercise. Prinsloo (2003:402) broadly defines intertextuality as the literary relationship between texts. This intertextual study is twofold. Firstly the broad parallels and differences¹⁴ between the Book of Kings and Chronicles will briefly be discussed, and secondly a specific and thorough intertextual analysis of 2 Kings 15:1-5 and 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 will be done.

The book of Chronicles is dependent in large measure on the earlier history of Israel that we find in Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings - often called the Deuteronomistic History because of these books' close relationship, in style and theme, with the book of Deuteronomy. From comparative research it is clear that almost half of the text of Chronicles has parallels in the books of Samuel and Kings. Thus, explaining the many parallels between the Book of

¹⁴ Only the parallels, similarities and differences that are applicable to the study will be discussed.

Kings and Chronicles. One of the important parallels between these books is the chronology. As mentioned earlier in the chapter the Chronicler follows the chronological statements of Kings and does not deviate from it.

There is an interesting difference of emphasis between Chronicles and Kings with regard to the temple. The Book of Kings pays a lot of attention to the structure of the Temple itself and not much attention to its internal organization. Whereas the Chronicler is primarily concerned with the form of the ritual in the temple and the way in which it was implemented (Jones; 1993:55). We find details of daily worship and sacrifices in Chronicles which are absent in Kings, for example the caring of the golden lampstands and the setting out of the shewbread that are mentioned in Abijah's speech (2 Chron.13:11).

Unlike the Book of Kings, which gives an account of both northern and southern kings and synchronises the reign of each king with his contemporary in the other kingdom, the Chronicler chooses to only concentrate on the southern kings (Jones; 1993:49). Of course it was impossible for the Chronicler to completely ignore the existence of another kingdom or the secession of the northern tribes. However when he does write about the secession of the northern kingdom his accounts do differ in some of its details from that given in the Book of Kings. For example, the Book of Kings' (1 Kings 11) criticism on Solomon is completely unnoticed by the Chronicler. The events in the north are attributed to Rehoboam's folly, rather than the unavoidable result of the policies of Solomon.

Most authors agree that the Chronicler used the Book of Kings as source. One may assume that the Chronicler would have used 2 Kings 15:1-5 as source for his account of king Uzziah's illness, yet there are some definite differences between the two texts. The parallels and differences between these two texts will briefly be discussed.

There is a difference in the names that the authors of Chronicles and the Book of Kings choose to use. The author of Chronicles uses the name Uzziah, meaning ‘Yahweh is strong’ or ‘Yahweh helps’. In 1 Chronicles 3:12 and 2 Kings 15:1-7 he is called Azariah. The most satisfactory explanation of this variation is that one was a birth-name, and the other a name given on accession to the throne (Coggins; 1976:249).

While the author of Chronicles emphasises king Uzziah’s army in a very descriptive manner, the author of the Book of Kings chooses to say nothing of the Uzziah’s army or military strength. A possible explanation for the Chronicles’ attention to this matter could be ascribed to his theology of immediate retribution. In 2 Chronicles 26:5 the author himself makes it clear that when the king sought Yahweh’s will he was blessed. This blessing is described in military terms. By emphasizing the king’s blessing the author also emphasises the king’s later disobedients, punishment and disease. According to De Vries (1989:357) the story of Uzziah gives the Chronicler the opportunity to show how a model rule can be ruined by pride and sinfulness.

Both the Chronicler (verse 20) and the Book of Kings (verse 5) affirm that נִגְעוּ יְהוָה (Yahweh had afflicted him). It is clear that both authors deemed his sickness as a punishment from Yahweh. It seems the authors do differ when explaining the transgression that led to the king’s punishment. The author of the Book of Kings does not give a direct explanation for Uzziah’s illness. One may assume that the king’s negligence to remove the ‘highs’ was enough reason for the author of the Book of Kings. The Chronicler explains the king’s illness as a cultic transgression. Perhaps the Chronicler’s emphasis on worship explains why Uzziah’s transgression takes place within the temple and the parameters of worship.

Both texts make it clear that the king had leprosy until the day of his death (מִתְּחִלָּה בְּיָמָיו). Yahweh does not choose to heal the king. In both of the texts the king lives in a ‘house of quarantine’ until his death and his son Jotham is named as his successor.

From the intertextual analysis of 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 and 2 Kings 15:1-7 it is clear that there are many parallels as well as differences in these texts. One difference particularly stands out – an explanation with regard to the king’s punishment. In contrast to 2 Kings 15:1-7, the Chronicler chooses to explain the reason for the king’s punishment and disease. It is clear from the intertextual analysis that the Chronicler’s theology of immediate retribution plays an important role in his understanding of king Uzziah’s illness.

CHAPTER 3

THE IDEOLOGICAL THOUGHT OF THE CHRONICLER

Although there are many similarities between Chronicles and the Deuteronomic History, especially 1 and 2 Kings, there are also differences, especially concerning the ideological thoughts in these books. Every literary work has an ideology whether it is acknowledged or not. Literary works all have a certain message they want to communicate and so doing bring about a certain change, whether it be a subtle or bold change. The book of Chronicles is no exception. The Chronicler had a certain ideology in mind when writing his book. He attempted to reinterpret the history and by doing so make it more relevant, or perhaps acceptable, for a new generation. By taking the Chronicler's theology of immediate retribution and the possible ideology behind the formulation of the laws concerning access to the temple into consideration, the study hopes to shed more light on Uzziah's illness and its consequences.

3.1 The theology of immediate retribution

In the Book of Kings one of the major concerns is to show the accumulating history of wrongdoing that led to the Exile; for example: "*They have done evil in my eyes and have provoked me to anger from the day their forefathers came out of Egypt until this day*" (2 Kings 21:15). Naturally the exiles did not appreciate this explanation; they complained that they were being punished for sins they had not committed: "*The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge*" (Jer.31:29). When the Chronicler retells the history of Judah, he is concerned to show that punishment for sin is not always deferred, but rather each generation will receive judgement or blessing in terms of its own actions. This characteristic of the Chronicler is commonly known as his "theology of immediate retribution" (Dillard; 1995:176). The doctrine of immediate retribution is often seen as the heart of the Chronicler's theology (Japhet; 1993:12). This

theology is not confined to his account of the post-schism kings, but it is more frequently used there.

The Chronicler's theology of immediate retribution can be seen at its best in the accounts of the kings of Judah. Unlike the Deuteronomist that placed the godly retribution on the nation, the Chronicler applies it to the individual (Van Dyk; 1996:98). Most of the material that is unique to Chronicles provides a theological explanation for the events he narrates or shows how God does indeed bless or judge each generation in terms of their own actions (Kelly; 1996:35). The Chronicler makes use of a fairly constant set of motifs for showing divine approval or disapproval (Van Rooy; 1994:175). Acts of obedience and piety are rewarded with prosperity, success and victory in warfare. Military defeat and illness are caused by disobedience and disloyalty (Dillard; 1995:177). Examples from each of these above mentioned motifs will be discussed below.

1. Motifs of Divine Reward

(i) Building notices

The Chronicler only refers to the building works of those reigns (or portions thereof) that are judged positively. Such works are ascribed to Rehoboam's positive period (11.5-12; cf. vv. 13-17; although no chronological notice is given), and to Asa (14.5-6 [E 6-7], cf. v. 2), Jehoshaphat (17.12-13; cf. 3-10), Uzziah (26.2, 6c, 9-10a; cf. v. 4), Hezekiah (32.5, 29-30) and Manasseh, following repentance (33.14; cf. v. 12). Of the above mentioned reigns, the first and last are judged negatively by the Chronicler, while the others are on the whole judged positively (Kelly; 1996:115).

(ii) Army notices

The Chronicler gives a number of notices that inform the reader/hearer on the composition and equipment of Judah's army at different times during the monarchy (Kelly; 1996:118). It seems that many of these army notices are seen as historically suspect by many scholars, such as Welten (De Vries; 1989:358).

Despite the uncertainty surrounding the historicity, these army notices still have ideological importance - because according to the Chronicler only obedient kings were permitted to command great armies.

(iii) *Military victories*

The Chronicler makes it very clear that military victories are reserved for those kings that are devoted and obedient to Yahweh (e.g., Abijah's defeat in 2 Chronicles 13:13-18) (Dillard; 1995:177).

(iv) *Other motifs of blessing*

Other Chronistic motives of blessing include large families, tribute and wealth (e.g., the account of Rehoboam's large family – 11:18-23). It seems that the writer assigned these blessings to those parts of reigns that were judged positively (Kelly; 1996:127).

Motives of Divine Punishment

Motives of divine punishment generally are seen in the form of sickness or death of the individual, military defeat, flagging power and exile of nations. According to Kelly (1996:128) the author follows Kings in the majority of these reports, but he does insert additional material or rewrites what is available to him.

(i) *Sickness and death*

Three accounts in Chronicles suggest that sickness is visited on kings for disobedience. The first example, the sickness of Jehoram (21:18-19), has no parallel in the *Vorlage*. The question is asked whether the writer's report here reflects an earlier tradition. It seems that recent discussions agree that the author did draw on other sources for at least parts of Jehoram's sickness.

In the other two incidents the question does not concern the illness but the nature of the preceding interpolated material. In Chronicles 16:7-10 Asa's foot disease is preceded by the king's mistreatment of the prophet Hanani. Kelly (1996:128) is not certain that the Chronicler understood Asa's illness as retribution for his

behaviour toward Hanani, thus according to him it need not be concluded that the incident was invented to justify a doctrine.

Similarly, Uzziah's leprosy is preceded by a cultic trespass. The Chronicler is at one with 2 Kings 15.5 in affirming that 'Yahweh struck him', a phrase that can only refer to punishment. It seems that the historical nature of the Chronicler's account is queried, partly because it is largely formed by earlier traditions in which sickness or death is inflicted for certain cultic transgressions, and partly because it is believed to reflect post-exilic cultic regulations. Despite the above mentioned it seems that cultic irregularity, divine punishment and leprosy feature together (Kelly; 1996:128-129).

(ii) *Military defeat*

The Chronicler gives four passages that recount military defeat. In all of these passages he makes it very clear that disobedient kings do not win wars (Kelly; 1996:130).

In the Chronicler's emphasis on immediate retribution he is warning the community against any complacency or assumption that punishment might be deferred as it had been in the past. As far as he is concerned survival and blessing were found through seeking God and humbling oneself before him (Dillard, 1995:177).

According to Japhet (1993:13) a better approach to the Chronicler's theology is through his attitude towards Scripture. In Chronicles, "the word of the Lord" always refers to either the prophetic revelation or to the word of Scripture, specifically the Law of Moses. It is also significant that the plan for the temple and its worship is also revealed to David as a written text (1 Chron. 28:19). According to the Chronicler the purpose of life is to seek God, only those that seek God can find God's purpose for their lives and living accordingly, experience blessing. To ignore God's word means to ignore God, and thus cut

oneself off from His blessing (Japhet; 1993:13). When reading the story of Uzziah's illness it is of utmost importance to keep the theology of immediate retribution in mind.

3.2 The possible ideology behind the formulation of the laws concerning access to the temple in Chronicles and the Priestly Stratum (P)

With the implementation of the laws in P, the petitionary and therapeutic functions of the temple (which are discussed in the next chapter) were eliminated. The amount of conditions encompassed by צדעת alone would have excluded a wide range of patients. What ideology and socio-historical developments might have led to the formulation of the laws concerning illness and health care in Chronicles and P? A few possible reasons are suggested.

Avalos (1995:381) suggests that the centralization of the cult¹⁵ was probably a significant factor in the limitation of access to the temple. To limit the access to the temple it was necessary to select a type of user that could be eliminated, and the ill were the most vulnerable to elimination. Such a restriction could have simply begun by encouraging the ill to use the temple as a "long distance therapeutic device", much like the bronze serpent that had been destroyed.

But these physical limitations in sacred space and the omnipresence of Yahweh weren't the only factors which led to the Priestly regulations concerning illness. The exclusion of the ill included some socio-political factors that were linked to the laws of purity (Avalos; 1995:382). These laws of purity were used to express status differences, especially in die wake of the Exile. The control of physical space was used as a vehicle for expressing differences in status, power and prestige in human societies. Thus the temple functioned as a symbolic system that signified status differences in terms of access to physical space. The deity

¹⁵ The abolition of all cultic institutions outside Jerusalem, as well as the restriction of cultic activity to the Jerusalem temple alone (Haran; 1978:132).

had the highest status and the temple (and the Holy of Holies) was reserved as his special place. A person's degree of purity corresponds with the person's degree of access to the special place of the deity. The healthy Aaronite priests were at the top of Israelite society and controlled the degrees of purity as well as the temple. Below the priests in status were the Levites and other temple servants (who were not allowed into the temple building) and below them were the healthy Israelites (who were only allowed into the courtyard). Factors like fear of contagion as well as economic productivity led to lesser status and access for the ill. It is very clear that there is a very intimate relationship between socio-economic worth and the assignment of the degrees of purity. One may express this relationship as:

economic worth = degree of impurity = degree of omission from the temple.

Thus the lowest status in society was given to those who were least productive to the socio-economic system – the person that was chronically ill. *“Evidence that exclusion from the temple was correlated with socio-economic productivity may be seen in the types of patients that were “singled out” for the most extreme exclusion by P and other biblical traditions. These types include those with “long-term disabilities”- the blind, the lame and the ‘leper’ (Avalos; 1995:388). By introducing these limitations the burden of the ill was minimised by excluding them altogether from the temple and/or the community. And the thanksgiving function was promoted (at the expense of the petitionary and therapeutic functions) that provided an economic contribution to the temple and had the added advantage that the dangers of any “contagion” was prevented.*

If one accepts this hypothetical explanation, one could conclude that the diagnosis of leprosy would have been a powerful tool for social control. Thus king Uzziah was a victim of the priestly bureaucracy and their regulations concerning status, purity and illness. Even as king his disease would have made him less productive to the socio-economic system, thus making him (according

to Priestly regulations) impure and excluding him from the temple. And so Uzziah's very successful reign is brought to an end by his "leprosy" because of his attempts to accrue to himself, or to his office, priestly rights and privileges (Japhet; 1993:204).

It is clear that the Chronicler interprets king Uzziah's illness within his theology of immediate retribution. King Uzziah's illness is a good example that Yahweh blesses or judges each generation, as well as individuals, in terms of their own actions. King Uzziah's illness is seen as a punishment for his cultic trespass. According to the laws in Chronicles and the Priestly Stratum the king's trespass cost him his purity, a loss of status and exclusion from the temple. It is clear that the king's disease had more implications than just the physical. To truly understand these implications it is necessary to take the underlying social context into account.

CHAPTER 4

SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS OF 2 CHRONICLES 26:11-23

It is a *sine qua non* of scholarship that a text may never be interpreted in isolation (Prinsloo, 2003:401). The importance of the context for a good interpretation of the text can never be emphasised enough.

For a good understanding of 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 it is important that we first understand the social context in which it was written. Here the study will concentrate on the ancient Near East's understanding of illness and health care by studying an ancient Near Eastern depiction and how this understanding coincided and effected ancient Israel's understanding of illness and health care. The study will also outline the important role social values played in Israel's understanding of illness and how the concept of Yahweh, views of illness and various therapeutic options available in ancient Israel interacted with the role of the temple.

4.1 The ancient Near East's understanding of health and illness in the light of an Ancient Near Eastern depiction

In ancient Near Eastern art, specifically in Mesopotamian and Egyptian art, healthcare and illness and the beliefs surrounding illness have been depicted in various ways. This study will examine one of these depictions from Mesopotamia. The hypothesis is that this depiction¹⁶ will enhance our understanding of illness and healthcare in Israel and of 2 Chronicles 26:11-23.

¹⁶ http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lamashtu_plaque_9162.



Man of the ancient near East was constantly under threat by a host of hostile powers. In Mesopotamia one of these hostile powers was known as Pazuzu, an evil demon who manifested himself in the hot, southwest wind which blew out of the Arabian Desert bringing all kinds of sickness with it (Lockyer; 1986:294). Pazuzu's image was hung around a sick person's neck to ward off the attacking Pazuzu. The Mesopotamians believed that Pazuzu would be warded off by the sudden confrontation with his own image. Figure 1 shows a small bronze tablet that served as an amulet against powers such as Pazuzu (Keel, 1978:80). As seen at the lower left of figure 1, the Pazuzu-figure wards off not only Pazuzu, but also other demons such as Lamashtu. Lamashtu was the fever-demon who specifically attacked mothers in childbirth and newborn infants, but was dangerous to everyone. Lamashtu, shown in a boat kneeling on a horse like animal, is depicted fleeing from Pazuzu through a thicket of reeds. She is about to leave a bearded man who is lying on a bed with one hand raised toward heaven.

On the middle register priests of Ea¹⁷, recognizable by the fish costume, stand at the head and feet of the sick man. The priests have vessels filled with purificatory water. The priest at the head of the bed is sprinkling something over the patient. To the left of the priest there is an oil lamp sitting on a tall stand. According to Keel (1978:81) the lamp symbolises Nusku, the fire god, whose light drives away demons. To Lamashtu's right are a number of objects. These objects were used in exorcism and could possible be gifts to persuade the demon to withdraw. To the right of the priest at the sick man's feet, two lion-headed demons attack each other, while a god with an upraised arm appears to be fighting off more demons.

In the register second from top, there are seven (probably good) demons or priests with animal masks. Their function is to ward off the seven evil spirits that are mentioned in many Mesopotamian texts. In the top register we see the

¹⁷ Ea was the god of the fresh-water ocean.

symbols of the great gods: (from left to right) horned cap (Anu), the ram's head on a stake (Ea), the lightning bolts (Adad), the digging-stick (Marduk), the writing implements (Nabu), the eight-beamed star (Ishtar), the winged sun (Shamash), the moon (Sin), and the seven circles (the Pleiades). Interestingly the good or beneficial powers are represented in the upper registers, the harmful ones in the lower registers (Keel; 1978:81).

This depiction gives some interesting insights into the health care of ancient Near East and possibly Israel. For the scope of this study a few remarks will suffice. It is clear from the depiction that illness and disease in Mesopotamia were attributed to spiritual forces, such as demons. In ancient Israel illness and diseases were not attributed to demons, as in Mesopotamia, but to the wrath of Yahweh. Some texts (e.g., Pss 38:3, 41:4) clearly state that the sick person provoked the divine wrath by his own sins. Although the cause of disease seems to differ in Mesopotamia and Israel, one may conclude that in Israel as well as in Mesopotamia illness and disease were viewed primarily as a spiritual state and needing religious intervention. In Israel and Mesopotamia gods are entreated to heal the sick. In Mesopotamia many different gods are called upon, but Israel only trusted Yahweh to bring healing.

In the depiction we see the Ea priests sprinkling something, probably water for purification, on the sick man. One may conclude that the priests in Mesopotamia, and probably in the wider ancient Near East, had a therapeutic role. The priest at the feet of the sick man seems to have one hand extended in entreaty toward heaven. This gesture could be interpreted as a petitionary gesture. This interpretation points to the petitionary role of priests in Mesopotamia and the ancient Near East in the whole.

4.2 Ancient Israel's views on Yahweh and illness

According to Thielman (1998:4) religion and healing have been intertwined since the beginning of recorded history. The relationship between the Israelite health care system and its religious history was marked by a tension between strict monotheism and the belief that there were many other divine beings who could act as his agents in healing (and bringing plagues). These beings could act on their own desires, a desire that was sometimes contrary to that of Yahweh (Avalos; 1995:241). The study will concentrate on the effects of a theology that viewed Yahweh as the only healer.

As many deities in other cultures of the ancient Near East, Yahweh used illness as an instrument. Yahweh especially used illness to enforce covenants made with humans. These covenants promised health and longevity to those who followed Yahweh's stipulations, but illness and death to those who didn't (Avalos; 1995:242). In Deuteronomy 28.15 we find a classic example of this theology:

"If you do not obey the voice of Yahweh, your God, to observe all his commandments and statutes, which I am commanding you today, then there shall come upon you all the following curses, they shall overtake you."

Among these curses many illnesses are included. Verse 35 threatens illnesses such as severe "boil(s)" (שחין רע) that can't be cured. Whereas in Mesopotamia the gods may use illness for a variety of reasons, which may be entirely arbitrary from a human standpoint, Deuteronomy 28 limits the use of illness to the enforcement of covenants. According to Deuteronomy 28 illness is not caused by any arbitrary reason that the deity may hide from the patient. Thus Yahweh only uses illness to enforce stipulations that have been fully disclosed to the patient (Avalos; 1995:243).

This above mentioned way of thought can be seen very clearly in Uzziah's illness. In Exodus 30:1-10 burning incense in Israel's worship was reserved for the priests¹⁸. According to traditional biblical criticism the passages confining the offering of incense to priests are all found in the priestly (P) stratum of the Pentateuch. P is commonly seen as a document/school of thought that defined cultic regulations and protected priestly interests as they existed in the post-exilic period. Many scholars feel that the regulations regarding the incense offerings and priestly prerogatives should be dated late and that Uzziah is judged by an anachronistic standard: the rules of the post-exilic hierarchy were retrojected to provide the basis for the condemnation of Uzziah (Dillard; 1987:210). Apart from the question of the nature and date of P, there can be no real doubt that incense offerings played an important role in many temple services of the ancient Near East. This can be seen in many texts from Mesopotamia dealing with the purchase of incense for temples. Where incense was important for cultic use, we can expect regulations to have developed regarding its use, blending and quality. The fact that such regulations are present in Chronicles, irrespective of the questions regarding P, reflects a reliable tradition regarding the action of Uzziah (Dillard; 1987:210). Thus we see that Uzziah's sin was a cultic transgression and Yahweh brought immediate retribution in the appearance of a skin disease (Keil; 1974:18). Uzziah's pride brought him to seize the glory and honour of the priest's role (which he probably knew was not allowed by Yahweh), but he would not receive any glory or honour from Yahweh.

4.3 Ancient Israel's views on illness and purity

Ancient Israel's idea of 'health' is complicated by the fact that the idea interacted with notions of purity and impurity (Avalos; 1995:249). *"The social value of purity directed each member of a society to respect and observe the system of space and time lines that human groups develop to have everything in its place and a*

¹⁸ According to Haran (1978: 241) burning incense was a priestly prerogative and it was confined to the temple precinct, although the priests would certainly have performed the rite outside those precincts on certain occasions.

place for everything' (Pilch; 1998:170). In ancient Israel, purity marked a person who knew how to be clean rather than unclean - how to maintain honour and avoid shame. A person/group's purity was threatened in four ways (Pilch; 1998:171):

(i) *From outside*

God's pure (holy) people polluted themselves by taking foreign women as their wives. In Ezra 9:2 a marriage to a woman outside the community is described as *מַעַל*.¹⁹ It was seen as an act of infidelity and unfaithful conduct. According to Blenkinsopp (1989:176) the result of seduction by the alien 'abominations' (*תועבות*)²⁰ is the corruption of the 'holy race,' literally, 'holy seed' (cf. Nehemiah 9:2; Malachi 2:15; and the late gloss at Isaiah 6:13).

In Ezra 9-10 all foreign wives and the children born of them were to be dismissed, in doing so the impurity that came 'from outside' was removed. The pure (holy) community was polluted by the foreign women that were brought inside from outside. By eliminating the foreign women from the inside, and prohibiting marriages with other foreign women, God's people were pure (holy) again, because the inside had been purified (Pilch; 1998: 171).

(ii) *From inside*

In this society's system there were lines that created distinct places and roles for each person. By crossing these lines a person became impure and unclean. Sex-linked roles were part of this purity concern. According to these roles men had to behave like men and women had to behave like women. Members of the society that disregarded these internal lines were seen as impure and unclean (Pilch; 1998:171).

¹⁹ *מַעַל* is a key term characteristic of C (1 Chronicles 2:7; 5:27; 9:1; 10:13; 2 Chronicles 12:2; 26:1; 28:19, 22; 29:6, 19; 30:7; 33:19; 36:14; cf. Ezra 10:2, 5, 10; Nehemiah 1:8; 13:27) (Blenkinsopp, 1989:176).

²⁰ *תועבות* – A Deuteronomic term for false gods and their cults (Blenkinsopp; 1989:176).

(iii) *Purity is threatened at the margins when boundaries become penetrable and porous*

Leviticus 11 (clean and unclean foods), 12 (childbirth), 13-14 (repulsive scaly condition) and 15 (male and female bodily effluvia) all concern body openings at the boundaries of the human body. These laws are precisely about purity: how it is threatened and how it can be regained (Pilch; 1998:205).

(iv) *From inconsistencies or internal contradictions*

Putting a system, such as the system in ancient Israel at war with itself, is perhaps the most common threat to purity (Pilch; 1998:206).

Thus for example some skin conditions might not pose much of a physical danger to a person, or that would not render them physically unfit for most tasks. Yet in the Israelite ideology they would be viewed as “sick” because there was a visible abnormality, which, even if not regarded as physically dangerous by modern Western physicians, was “dangerous” in other ways. For the Israelites wholeness was very important. Wholeness found expression in terms of the human body. One aspect of a ‘holy’ body is that it must be bodily whole: blemished or defective bodies lack wholeness and so are not qualified for the presence of Yahweh (Neyrey; 1998:205). The presence of physically “defective” persons in the temple could perhaps bring the wrath of Yahweh upon the nation (Avalos; 1995:249).

The dividing line between a person who was defined as ‘ill’ and someone who was simply impure in the Israelite society is not always easy to define. One could say that to be categorised as ‘ill’, the person had to show visible signs/symptoms that were regarded as indicative of a certain conditions that would render that person unable to execute the roles assigned to them, for example, a lack of children may be a symptom of an illness in ancient Israel. Illness rendered a person physically or mentally unfit to execute a social role defined as ‘normal’ by the society. Impurity, while overlapping with conditions

regarded as ‘illness’, was viewed as that aspect of a person (thing or place) that made him/her (it) fit or unfit to participate in the cult (Avalos; 1995:249). In the minds of the ancients there was a close connection between the notion of ritual impurity and the notion of being consecrated to Yahweh. There was a mind boggling and frightening force in all things that were impure and in things that were sacred and these two forces had an effect on everything they came in contact with. Everything they touched came under a kind of interdict. Impure and pure were ‘untouchable’, and any person that touched them became ‘untouchable’. Impurity is not to be understood as a physical or moral defilement, but rather a ‘condition’ or ‘state’ from which a person must emerge in order to re-enter ‘normal’ life (De Vaux; 1978:460). This impurity didn’t need to be physically visible, and it could exist even after the visible signs of an illness had disappeared (Avalos; 1995:249).

These aspects of Israel’s understanding of illness and purity are clearly visible in the story of Uzziah’s illness. Because of king Uzziah’s sin he is punished with a skin disease²¹. According to Leviticus 13 he is not bodily whole and thus impure in the eyes of Yahweh. From the text we learn that he is ‘*excluded from the house of Yahweh*’ which points without a doubt to his impurity. This exclusion is also a requirement we find in Leviticus 13:46. As an impure person Uzziah is forced to live in a special dwelling, as the phrase בית החפשיה suggests. But it doesn’t seem that Uzziah, as king, was ostracised to the same degree that most common citizens might have been (Avalos; 1995:254). It seems that Uzziah was also buried in separate field, next to the graves of his fathers, because of his condition. Whether Uzziah’s condition was only seen as impurity, and not an illness, we cannot be sure of.

²¹ Chronicles emphasises the fact that kings are human. They are like all other men. In the Chronicler’s eyes the king is mortal and reveals every human weakness. They are fearful, arrogant and ungrateful. Sometimes they even succumb to temptations. Kings fall ill and die as a result of sickness - thus they exemplify human weaknesses and strengths (Japhet; 1989:415).

4.4 The home as the main locus of therapy

In many ancient societies, the home was the first locus of health care for the patient. But in ancient Israel the home was the only or main locus of health care for most of the duration of a patient's illness (Avalos; 1995:251). There are a variety of passages that point to the importance of the home as main locus for the care of the ill. These passages speak of many different socio-economic classes.

In the story of Amnon and Tamar (2 Sam13) we get a glimpse into the health care of the royal family. This story provides a portrayal of the normal or accepted way in which a patient was treated. Amnon, pretending to be ill, is placed under the care of a family member, his sister. She is expected to care for him and prepare his food. It seems that despite the many servants in the royal household, "*illness was a situation in which family members were expected, or even obligated, to bring personal care to the sick person*" (Avalos; 1995:252). We could go further and regard the family in the Ancient Near East as essentially a mechanism for the support of non-productive persons: young children, the sick and the aged (Westbrook; 1996:242).

However it seems that home care was not an accepted procedure for illnesses such as "leprosy". Persons with "leprosy" were excluded from the "normal, healthy" community altogether in the medical theology of P, although it might not have been the case in all periods. These regulations meant that "lepers" had to form their own new communities and modes of livelihood. When king Uzziah is struck with "leprosy" he is forced to live in a special dwelling. Although we are not sure if he was completely quarantined and ostracised, as common citizens were.

4.5 The role of the temple in the health care system

Although the main locus of health care was in the home, the temple may have been a feasible petitionary or therapeutic locus prior to the full implementation of P.

According to Avalos (1995:377) the temple in the pre-Exilic period probably had a petitionary role for many illnesses. This can be seen in Hannah's use of the shrine of Shiloh as a petitionary locus for her infertility (1 Sam 1). The priests' involvement in the provision of oracles and divination may also have added to the value of shrines as petitionary loci in the pre-Exilic period.

The temple's therapeutic role can be seen in the presence of the bronze serpent (2 Kings 18:4) and in the prayer of Solomon (1 Kings 8). *"The link of the bronze serpent with Moses even by its detractors suggests that the therapeutic function of the object (and the temple locus) was regarded as legitimate and Yahwistic at some points in Israel's history"* (Avalos; 1995:378). It is not certain for how long the temple had a therapeutic role, but we do know that the bronze serpent was destroyed during Hezekiah's reign. In the Prayer of Solomon the temple is described as a "long distance" therapeutic device which operates very much like the bronze serpent. Indirect evidence for the existence of these above mentioned functions can be found in P itself. P commands people not to come to the temple when they are ill, this suggests that people might have done so in earlier times, for the text would not prohibit behaviour which has never been practiced.

It seems the thanksgiving function of the temple after an illness is probably the most common and least problematic function of the temple, even when the strict laws of purity were enforced during the pre-Exilic period. The thanksgiving function of the temple after an illness was promoted by P. This function seemed

to have remained throughout the history of Yahwistic shrines, probably because it was a source of income for the temple (Avalos; 1995:379).

The temple it seems had one more role in Israel's health care system, and this was as the headquarters for the "guardians" of purity. The priestly establishment was responsible for deciding whether a person had illnesses which required exclusion from the temple and the community. Although there is no mention of therapy, the priest was seen as a health care consultant (Lev 13-14), insofar as he was consulted to judge the seriousness of certain illnesses, for example צרעה. The priest had to see if the person was fit to enter the temple or live among 'healthy' people. Leviticus 13-14 is very clear about the role of the priest as health care consultant for צרעה. The priest had to examine the afflicted and declare him 'clean' or 'unclean' (Avalos; 1995:362). Leviticus 13 speaks of different cases and quarantine periods encompassed by the word צרעה (Stander & Louw; 1990:182).

In 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 we do not read anything about the petitionary, therapeutic or thanksgiving function of the temple, but we do get a glimpse of the temple as the headquarters for the "guardians" of purity. In verse 20 the priests become aware of the "leprosy" on the king's forehead and they act immediately. Realizing that he was impure they shoved him out of the temple as quickly as possible. Here we see the priests as health care consultants that make a judgment concerning the king: he is not fit to enter the temple or live in the "healthy" community. According to Japhet (1989:187) the priests not only act as "guardians" of purity but also have a warning function. In verse 18 it is the priests and not the prophets that warn Uzziah that he has done wrong. Thus we see that in this narrative the Chronicler attributes the function of warning to priests as well (Japhet; 1989:189).

4.6 Disease in ancient Israel

The Hebrew Bible mentions many ‘illnesses’ for example infertility, consumption, fever, inflammation, a disease of the bowel (amoebic dysentery- 2 Chronicles 21:15, 18-19), boils or tumours (perhaps bubonic plague in 1 Sam 5:6-12), “leprosy” and many more (Matthews; 1991:125). This study will only concentrate on the disease known as “leprosy”.

There seems to be consensus that צרעת is not the modern disease, leprosy, also known as Hansen’s Disease (Selman; 1994:471). Hansen’s disease is an affliction of the nervous system that effects a person’s ability to feel pressure or pain. Resulting in terrible accidental disfigurement of the patient (Japhet; 1993:203). Nor is צרעת the disease(s) denominated by the Greek word *lepra* (Avalos; 1995:312).

The word צרעת probably refers to a wide range of conditions which result in an abnormal discoloration and disfigurement of surfaces - including human skin (Japhet; 1993:203)). Among the conditions that might have been included under צרעת are diseases that modern science has identified as: lupus erythematosus, nutritional deficiencies which result in dermatological changes; psoriasis; smallpox; skin cancer and vitiligo (Avalos; 1995:3150. It was the priest that had to decide whether a person was infected with “leprosy”; he made his decision not as a physician, but rather as an interpreter of the Law (De Vaux; 1978:462). According to the Law of Purity (Lev 13-14) a person with “leprosy” was declared impure, cut off from the community and forced to live at a distance from the town until he was cured (Stander & Louw; 1990:182).

It was also the priest that decided when a man was cured (Japhet; 1993:201). But before the person with “leprosy” could return to his normal life, he had to undergo a ceremony of purification. Water from a stream or a spring was used to fill a vessel and then a bird was slaughtered over the vessel, so that its blood

dripped into the water. Another bird was then thrust into the water alive; red cochineal; hyssop and cedar-wood were put into the water. Then the live bird was released in the open country (it carried the evil away) and the “leper” was sprinkled with the water and pronounced clean (De Vaux; 1978; 463). After seven days he then shaved all the hair off his body, took a bath, washed his clothes and then he was finally clean (Lev 14:2-9). But the text continues: on the eighth day the person must offer a sacrifice of reparation, a sacrifice for sin and a holocaust. The priest then took the blood from the sacrifice of reparation and smeared it on the right ear, the right thumb and the right big toe of the person who had been cured; he then anointed the same parts with oil and poured the remainder of the oil on the head of the person who had been a “leper” (De Vaux; 1978:463).

Many articles were also subject to “leprosy”: mildew on clothes, on textiles or leather-work was called “leprosy” and was impure (Japhet; 1993:204). It was also the priest’s duty to make the decision and to isolate the object. If the “leprosy” did not disappear after a washing, then the object had to be burnt, but if the marks disappeared after a washing, then the object was washed a second time and declared as pure (Lev 13:47-59). “Leprosy” also infected houses: if the walls of the house became covered in saltpetre or moss they might have been seen as “leprosy” (Lev 14:33-53). If the priest decided that the house was infected, the infected stones were removed and the walls were scraped. If the signs of “leprosy” spread, the house was demolished, but if they disappeared, the house was declared pure. In both cases the “sin of the house” had to be expiated, and the ritual for purification was the same as the ritual for the purification of a “leper” (De Vaux; 1978:463).

2 Chronicles 26:20 tells us that Uzziah was struck with צרעת, but what of the many possible skin diseases he had, we can’t be sure of. We do know that his skin disease made him impure and forced him to lead a separate life - separate

from the temple and possibly the community. We do not read of Uzziah's "leprosy" ever being healed, according to the text he died as a "leper".

4.7 Disease and honour

Perhaps even worse than his quarantine, was the loss of honour that Uzziah's disobedience to Yahweh and his disease caused.

Honour and shame were the core values in the Mediterranean world and in ancient Israel as well. Honour was a person's claim to worth that had to be publicly acknowledged. To "have honour" was to have publicly acknowledged worth. To "be honoured" was to be attributed such worth or be acclaimed for it. Shame, as the opposite of honour, was a claim to worth that was publicly denied (Plevnik; 1998:106-107).

Honour was primarily a group value. Individual members of a group shared in the group's honour. Kinship groups are said to inherit honour from their honourable ancestors. This inherited honour had to be maintained and defended by the current generation. To "be shamed" was always negative; it meant that a person was denied honour or his honour was diminished. For a male, "to lose honour" was "to be shamed" (Plevnik; 1998:107). "To be shamed" involved a loss of repute and worth in the eyes of others, especially one's peers. Shame was a result of a public exposure of a man's weakness or cowardice or pretension or foolishness. A righteous person's claim to honour was evidence of a special relationship with God, because of reliance on God's help. A disaster pointed in the opposite direction and considered as a denial of God's concern (Plevnik; 1998:109).

Thus we see that Uzziah's arrogance was his downfall. Perhaps he thought he could do anything in his kingdom; that priestly qualities were natural to royalty, and that in exercising them he revived suspended rights, and restored primitive

customs (Wolfendale; 1974: 268). But these thoughts led to disobedience against Yahweh and according to the Chronicler this was the reason for Yahweh's rejection and punishment. Yahweh's punishment resulted in a loss of honour for Uzziah and thus shame before others.

4.8 The consultative options outside of the temple and the family

There seemed to be many consultative options in the health care system of ancient Israel. These options are divided into legitimate and illegitimate consultative options (Avalos; 1995:260). It is important to note that by using the word legitimate we are expressing the views of the authors of the canonical texts, but most of the Israelite population may have had, and most likely did have, different views on what made a option legitimate or illegitimate.

a) *Legitimate options*

(i) *Yahwistic prophet*

In many of the ancient societies in which temples had a petitionary or therapeutic function there usually was a consultant who operated outside of the temple. In Israel the most common legitimate health care consultant outside the temple was the prophet or 'the man of God'. Exactly what the role of the prophet was is still disputed, but most scholars agree that the prophet was a person who claimed to be an intermediary that acted on behalf of Yahweh. Prophets were seen as persons who had special access to a deity and were the natural candidates for consultation by the sick.

The Biblical texts are uniform in giving these figures a role as health care consultants. These figures include Elijah and Elisha who operated outside the ruling political structures in the North and Isaiah who operated within the royal court. In order to define the role and modus operandi of the prophet in the health

care system, we will examine a number of accounts that provide information on the role of these consultants in illnesses (Avalos; 1995:260-277).

a) Infertility

Genesis 20:1-18 contains the narrative of Abimelech's attempt to marry Sarah²². Since Sarah was Abraham's wife, Yahweh punished the king of Gerar with the infertility of his wife and female slaves.²³ Yahweh instructs Abimelech to call upon Abraham to help heal his wife and slaves, because '*he is a prophet*'. Although the Pentateuchal sources do not usually characterise Abraham as a prophet, it is clear that the author of Genesis 20 casts him in this role (Von Rad; 1972:228)²⁴. In Genesis 20:7 Abraham is described as a נביא הוא²⁵. Therefore it seems reasonable to assume that the author ascribes the same role to Abraham as to others with the same title נביא. As נביא Abraham does act much like other persons designated by that Hebrew term who pray for those whom Yahweh has punished with illness (e.g., Moses in Num 12:13). In Genesis 20 Abraham functions as an intermediary between Yahweh and King Abimelech. His actions as prophet do not extend beyond a prayer to Yahweh (Wenham; 1994:71). According to older conceptions (Numbers 12:13; 21:7; Deuteronomy 9:26; 1 Samuel 12:19-23) the gift of effective intercession was what made a man a real prophet (Von Rad; 1972: 229).

²² Von Rad (1972: 226) ascribes Genesis 20:1-18 to the Elohist. It corresponds materially in detail to the Yahwist's periscope about the endangering of the ancestress (Genesis 12:10-20).

²³ According to scholars Yahweh did not strike Abimelech's wife and slaves with infertility, but Yahweh struck Abimelech with impotency, to prevent him from having intercourse with Sarah. Wenham (1994: 75) argues that the king was struck with a sickness of some sort underlining that Isaac was not conceived illegitimately.

²⁴ Genesis 18 does show Abraham as a forerunner of great prophetic intercessors such as Moses, Samuel, Jeremiah and Amos (Wenham; 1994:71).

²⁵ According to Von Rad (1972:228) the designation of Abraham as נביא can be explained from the viewpoint of the text: the E source is presumably close to prophetic circles described in 2 Kings 2-4. In this phase of the history this movement was very closely connected to the cult and the sanctuary than at the time of the major prophets. The prophet's office at that time was more focused on authorised intercession and less focused on the proclamation of eschatological messages.

It seems that Abraham's role as prophet and health care consultant lies in his personal relationship with Yahweh, and not in elaborate rituals or techniques. Although Abimelech is able to communicate with Yahweh directly, (evinced by Abimelech's dialogue with Yahweh) the text indicates that the therapeutic process must involve an appeal by the prophet. It can thus be concluded that Yahweh's willingness to heal is linked directly to his inclination to heed the prophet's plea.

According to Avalos (1995: 262) this text's wider implications for the understanding of Israel's health care system, lies in understanding that this system sometimes required a consultation with the prophet-as-intermediary regardless of the existence of the patient's ability to contact Yahweh directly through prayer.

b) 'Leprosy'

The story of Naaman (2 Kings 5:1-19) attests to the consultation of the prophet for 'leprosy'²⁶. Although the motive of the story is to indicate there was a God in Israel, the story clearly ascribes to the prophet a role as a principal, if not the principal, health care consultant in Israel (Avalos; 1995:263). The servant girl's statement in 2 Kings 5:3 divulges that the prophet was the person to consult for 'leprosy.'

ותאמר אל־גברתה ³	3 And she said to her mistress:
אחלי אדני לפני הנביא	"If only my master would see the prophet
אשר בשמרון	who is in Samaria,
אז יאסף אתו מצרעתו	then he would cure him of his leprosy!"

The author of 2 Kings 5 ignores the role of the temple or considers it of no value in the therapeutic process in the North. In verses 7-8 Naaman is directed to the prophet and not the temple. Verses 10-11 give some insight into the consultative

²⁶ According to Gray (1985:504) Naaman's leprosy was not of the kind that debarred him from society (*leprē*), but rather the kind that Herodotus calls *Leukē*.

and therapeutic procedures of the prophet, as well as Naaman's expectation of the prophet.

וַיִּשְׁלַח אֵלָיו אֱלִישָׁע מַלְאָךְ לֵאמֹר	10. Elisha sent to him a messenger, saying:
הֲלוֹךְ וְרַחֲצַת שִׁבְעַ־פְּעָמִים בִּירְדֵּן	"Go wash yourself seven times in the Jordan,
וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּשָׂרְךָ לָךְ	then your flesh will be restored to you
וְטָהַר:	and you will be clean."
וַיִּקְצַף נַעֲמָן	Naaman became angry
וַיֵּלֶךְ	and went away
וַיֹּאמֶר	and said:
הֲנֵה אָמַרְתִּי אֵלַי	"I indeed thought:
יֵצֵא יָצוֹא	he would surely come out,
וְעָמַד	and stand,
וְקָרָא בְּשֵׁם־יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו	and call on the name of YHWH his God,
וְהִנִּיף יָדוֹ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם	and wave his hand over the spot,
וַאֲסַף הַמִּצְרָע	and cure the leprosy."

Although the procedure given by the prophet is placed in the mouth of an Aramean, it is probable that it is the procedure that the Israelite listener/reader would have expected or possible the current procedure in Israel at the time the story was composed (Avalos; 1995:264). The ritual that Elisha prescribes consists of dipping oneself seven times in the river Jordan²⁷. Although Elisha's prescription was not the expected one, it worked because it was the prophet of Jahweh who provided it. According to verse 14 it was obeying the word of the prophet that made the prescription successful.

Another aspect of the prophet's consultative process that is interesting is that the offer of a gift to the consultant seems a usual assumption on the part of the patient. In this case Elisha rejects Naaman's gifts. The reason for this may be that the author did not want to portray the prophets as healing for profit, but one could surmise that giving of gifts was probably customarily.

²⁷ Note that the prescribed procedure does not seem to be concerned with the laws of purity found in Leviticus (Avalos; 1995:264).

c) *'Terminal' illnesses*

Terminal illnesses are frequently found in the biblical accounts of prophetic consultation. According to Avalos (1995:266) it is difficult to determine how many of these accounts are due to biblical authors' tendency to glorify the feats of the prophets. However, prophetic consultations must have been conceivable in view of the human incentive to search for all means of healing in the case of potentially life threatening illnesses. The book of Kings contains a large series of narratives involving prophets and their involvement in terminal illness. These narratives involve kings, terminal illnesses and the consultation of prophets.

The Book of Kings usually reports the deaths of Israel and Judah's kings without much clangour. Very few narratives report that a king was slain in battle (e.g., 1 Kings 16:10), and occasionally the fatal battle will be described in much detail (1 Kings 22:33-40). But with four exceptions, kings that are not killed in war, enjoy no finale scenes and there is no commentary on their passing (Cohn, 1985:603). These four exceptions – Jeroboam (1 Kings 14), Ahaziah (2 Kings 1), Ben-hadad (2 Kings 8), and Hezekiah (2 Kings 20) – are featured in episodes which are variations on one pattern. The pattern which Long (1973; 341-45) calls the 'prophetic inquiry schema'²⁸ can be schematised as follows:

- I. Setting and preparation for inquiry
- II. Audience with the prophet
 - a. request for oracle
 - b. delivery of oracle
- III. Fulfilment of oracle

²⁸ According to Cohn (1985:604) this pattern shapes various other prophetic narratives, for example: King Saul asking Samuel the location of his father's donkeys (1 Samuel 9); the inquiry of Josiah about the meaning of the law book found in the temple (2 Kings 22:11-20); and the royal request to know the outcome of a future battle (2 Kings 3).

This pattern is unique to the book of Kings, and it is associated with four prophets: Abijah, Elijah, Elisha and Isaiah²⁹. According to Cohn (1985: 603) these prophet-stories belong to the main, preexilic stratum of the Deuteronomic history. For the purpose of this study, we assume that the pattern was selected by the author of DtrH because it describes how consultations would have proceeded.

The story of Abijah, the son of Jeroboam, illustrates the use of a prophet in the case of the terminal illness of a royal infant. Although Schley (1989:166) views the function of Ahijah as part of the tradition of oracular priests at Shiloh, it is clear that the author refers to Ahijah as a נביא³⁰. The story once again illustrates the custom of offering the נביא some sort of gift or meal³¹ when consultation was sought. In this case, ten loaves of bread, cakes, and a bottle of honey (Gray; 1985: 336). One should also note that the prophet is not consulted to diagnose what illness Abijah had, but whether the child would recover or die.

Another story of terminal illness is found in 1 Kings 17:17-24. According to Cohn (1982:333-350) this story is part of a larger Coherent narrative (1 Kings 17-19). Cohn argues that this larger narrative focuses on Elijah as Yahweh's instrument in fighting the forces of Baal. Regardless of the origin of 1 Kings 17, the narrative illustrates a number of issues of importance to understanding illness and health care in ancient Israel.

Firstly, the conception here is that the boy's sickness was the divine punishment for some vague sin and that this state was irreconcilable with the divine presence, of which the spirit in the man of God was the extension (Gray; 1985:381). Secondly, the boy is not taken to a shrine or temple of Jahweh.

²⁹ Interestingly all four of the tales are eliminated in Chronicles: no kings inquire to prophets about illnesses. Only Hezekiah's illness is mentioned, but the tale is fleetingly mentioned in one verse (2 Chronicles 32:24).

³⁰ According to Gray (1985:333) 1 Kings 14 is part of a local tradition, probably associated with the prophetic circle of Shiloh, and having Ahijah as its central figure.

³¹ In 1 Sam 9:7 food is first thought of when a person considers visiting a prophet (Gray; 1985:336).

Therapy was administered in the home. The prophet does not engage in any complex rituals. Elijah simply leans over the boy three times. Then a prayer is recited, and it is said that Yahweh heard Elijah's prayer.

One may argue that the story exaggerates the role of Elijah. Even if 1 Kings 17:17-24 does depict an idealised role of the prophet, it seems that the author would at least like to see the prophet as the intermediary of choice in this case of illness (Avalos; 1995:269). In this text the prophet prays the prayer that causes Yahweh to act. Yahweh does not act on his own. Therefore it is clear that this text promotes the prophet as the main intermediary in terminal illness.

Ahaziah's terminal illness in 2 Kings 1:1-18 clearly illustrates the notion that not all consultants were regarded as acceptable or legitimate. The story of Ahaziah argues for the use of Yahweh, and his prophets, as the primary consultants in healing of the sick (Avalos; 1995:269). The author promotes the role of the prophet as primary health care consultant by clearly presenting the prophet as the legitimate Yahwistic alternative to Ahaziah's illegitimate consultation of the oracle of Baal.

The story of Ben-hadad's illness (2 Kings 8:7-25) gives the reader another glimpse into the nature of the prophet's role as a consultant. When the Aramean king becomes sick, a messenger is sent to obtain the services of the prophet, and such procurement included a gift. The question that is asked is: "Shall I recover from this illness?" (האצחיה מחלי זה). Through the prophet, Elisha, the king learns that his illness is life threatening.

The illness of Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:1ff)³² gives us great insight into the thoughts about illness and health care within the biblical materials. The precise nature of Hezekiah's illness is not clear, but the independent tradition in verse 7 admits the possibility that it was some type of skin ailment (שִׁחִין) that may have been categorised among the illnesses that required the patient to go to the temple after he had been healed.³³ According to Avalos (1995:273) it is best to interpret the three day period as one associated with the regulations regarding purification or thanksgiving rituals after healing.

In the story of Hezekiah an interesting aspect of the prophet's role as health care consultant can be seen. Unlike the previous mentioned stories, the prophet does not recite a prayer or give a prognosis. In this case the prophet prescribes a medicinal treatment. Isaiah instructed that cakes of figs be placed on the king's skin.³⁴ From this text it seems that the prescription of certain 'medicines' would have been part of the prophet's role as consultant in health care.

According to Avalos (1995:272) the story follows a familiar biblical scheme that describes a crisis which is followed by a request for help from Yahweh, and the reply from Yahweh. In the story of Hezekiah's illness the direct instrument of therapeutic efficacy is Hezekiah's prayer. Hezekiah prayed directly to Yahweh, and Yahweh acted directly upon his prayer. In this story, unlike the previous stories, the prophet does not have a direct role in convincing Yahweh to save

³² Note that the narrative concerning Hezekiah's illness exists in two parallel (Isaiah 38:1-22 & 2 Chronicles 32:24-26) versions that exhibit some literary differences. The main discontinuity in the version in Kings is 2 Kings 20:7, which reports that Isaiah applied an ointment made of fig cakes, and Hezekiah recovered. However, the recovery reported as a past event in verse 7, has not yet taken place in verse 8. The parallel version in Isaiah 38:21-22 places the application of the fig ointment at the end of the narrative. The parallel version in 2 Chronicles 32 makes a brief reference to the king's illness and Yahweh's miraculous healing.

³³ Verse 7 says Hezekiah was suffering from שִׁחִין which can be translated as 'boil' and in its other occurrences (e.g., Lev 13:18, Job 2:7) is regarded as painful, but not deadly (Avalos; 1995:273).

³⁴ According to Gray (1985:698) the use of figs to draw ulcers is attested by Pliny, and in two veterinary texts from Ras Shamra 'a matured fig-cake with matured raisins and bean-flour' is prescribed to be injected into the nose of a horse.

Hezekiah's life. In this case the prophet serves only as a messenger (Grabbe; 1995:75).

The story of Hezekiah indicates that, while the patient could relay messages to Yahweh without the help of an intermediary, Yahweh's messages to the patient were through the prophet (Grabbe; 1995:75). Thus making the prophet's role in the consultative process still necessary in order to interpret omens, and provide a report on the patient's request to Yahweh.

(ii) Musicians

Musicians were deemed appropriate consultants for King Saul's "mental disturbance" (1 Samuel 16:14ff).

The precise nature of King Saul's illness is not clear, but it prevented him from functioning effectively and he appeared in jeopardy of being totally disabled as a king.³⁵ 1 Samuel 16 describes King Saul as being "terrified and frightened" and "raving within his house". We can but speculate what Saul's malady might have been, but it definitely involved signs of emotional stress. The author makes it very clear that only when David played the lyre did the king become calm. The music appeared to calm him down and he felt refreshed and well. The narrator says: "And the evil spirit departed from him." It seems that the musical melody had a therapeutic value (Seybold & Mueller; 1981:75).

In sum, the portrayal of Saul's illness seems to be consistent with what might be classified today as a psychiatric disorder, insofar as he suffered a type of distress that resulted in a definite change in his behaviour and ability to function. Whatever King Saul's malady was, this text is very clear that musicians were a customary or preferred mode of treatment for illnesses that manifested themselves in this manner.

³⁵ According to Seybold & Mueller (1981:74) some traditions diagnose King Saul with having depression/melancholy or some spiritual illness.

(iii) *Midwife*

It seems that the midwife (מילדת) was an acceptable consultant in Israel. Childs (1979: 16) suggests that there may have been a professional guild to which midwives would have belonged. Midwives' tasks included cutting the umbilical cord, bathing the baby, rubbing it down with salt, and swaddling it (Ezekiel 16:4). The midwife also marked which twin was the firstborn (Genesis 38:28). In two of the text where midwives are mentioned (Genesis 35:17 and 1 Samuel 4:20) they are providing psychological support to women (Lockyer; 1986:777). We may also conclude that the מילדת was consulted on matters concerning childbirth and the care of babies. According to Avalos (1995:280) the midwife may have been one of the most omnipresent health care consultants in the Ancient world.

b. *Illegitimate options*

There seemed to have been many illegitimate health care consultants available in ancient Israel. For the purpose of this study, both human and divine consultative options will be explored.

(i) *Pagan temples*

Patients have the tendency, both in ancient and modern times, to maximise all possible health care options when it is economically possible. Therefore one would not be surprised that the consultation of foreign temples would be a reoccurring practice in Israel, especially if therapy consistent with 'Yahwism' did not achieve the results wanted.

King Ahaziah's fall (2 Kings 1:2) is an example of the practice of consulting foreign temples. The narrative begins with the news that king Ahaziah fell from a height and was injured. The injured king then decides to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron³⁶. This consultation most probably took place at the temple of Baal-

³⁶ Scholars, such as Gray (1985:463), suggest that Baal-Zebub is the local god of Ekron who was associated with flies as the bearers of disease.

Zebub, because gods were usually found at their main place of residence (i.e., temples) (Avalos; 1995:281). Ahaziah inquired if he would survive his injury. It seems that the physical diagnosis was not of great importance in the consultation of Baal-Zebub.

It is uncertain if the temple of Baal-Zebub was known for its petitionary or therapeutic function or whether the king's question could have been answered by any temple of Baal. It seems though the geography suggests that Baal-Zebub of Ekron may have had a greater significance, because it was not the nearest temple of Baal to Samaria.

Ekron may not have been the only pagan temple in Philistia that had a role in health care. Excavations on the coast of southern Palestine, in the city of Ashkelon, have uncovered a massive wall and glacis combined structure that was built during the Middle Bronze period. At the base of this ascent a small 'sanctuary' was discovered. The sanctuary housed a ceramic model shrine in which a bronze model of a horned calf was found. Traces show that the calf was covered with a thick overlay of pure silver. In Ugaritic mythology and Canaanite iconography the calf was associated with Baal (Hess; 2007:157). Thus possibly identifying Ashkelon as a city where Baal was worshiped.

Excavations in Ashkelon also revealed a dog cemetery (5th c BCE) with hundreds of dog skeletons. This cemetery may indicate the presence of the temple of a healing deity that parallels Gula or Asclepius, at least insofar the importance of dogs in healing cults is concerned (Avalos; 1995:283). If these dogs are proof of the existence of a healing cult, then it could have provided yet another 'illegitimate' option that the Bible does not explicitly discuss.

It is clear from 2 Kings 1:2 that consultations at pagan temple were a common practice in Israel, although it was regarded as illegitimate and an expression of doubt in Yahweh's power and ability to heal. Such doubt was considered sinful.

(ii) **The רפא**

The רפא seems to be considered by some as an illegitimate consultant in health care. The Hebrew term רפא does not exhibit uniformity in all the biblical texts. There seems to be a difference between the רפא we find in Genesis 50:2 and the רפא we find in other texts. The study will explore the term רפא using Genesis 50:2; the book of Jeremiah and 2 Chronicles 16:12.

a. The רפא in Genesis 50:2

The רפאים mentioned in this text are primarily concerned with the embalming of the dead, while elsewhere in the Bible רפא refers to people that are involved in the treatment of live patients (Avalos; 1995:284). The author does not seem to view the Egyptian consultants in a negative light, in contrast with the rest of the Old Testament which views anyone labelled as רפאים negatively. The רפאים in Genesis are involved in embalming Jacob. The embalming process usually was performed by priests in an Egyptian temple and was usually accompanied by rituals to the gods. It is clear from detail, such as the length of the embalming process, that the author was familiar with the embalming process. Thus, it would be unlikely that the author would not know that the embalming process would involve rituals in a pagan temple.

But why then does the author not view the רפאים in Genesis 50:2 in a negative light. Perhaps because the embalming of Jacob was an effort from the author to portray Jacob as a man of high stature in Egypt (Von Rad; 1972:430).

b. The רפא in Jeremiah

Jeremiah was part of a tradition that viewed Yahweh as the only genuine רפא (Van Selms; 1979:229). Jeremiah makes it very clear that healing is one thing for which Yahweh and his rightful intermediaries, and no one else, should be

consulted (e.g., Jeremiah 17:5, 17:14, 33:6)³⁷. Jeremiah makes many sarcastic and taunting references to *materia medica* and Gilead (e.g., Jeremiah 46:11 and 51:8-9). These texts give some interesting insights into the health care of ancient Israel. One insight is that Gilead was a center for medicinal resins such as 'balsam.'³⁸ It seems likely that the רפאים of Gilead were famous for their knowledge of these resins (Avalos; 1995:290). The above mentioned texts characterise the רפאים in Jeremiah as a group of non-Yahwistic health consultants who specialised in *materia medica* and who were not considered to be legitimate health care consultants.

c. Asa's consultants (2 Chronicles 16:12)

2 Chronicles 16:12 says clearly that Asa did not consult Yahweh in his illness, but the רפאים. The nature of Asa's disease is unclear and what specific sin he committed is not obvious. But from the phraseology of v 12 it is clear that the Chronicler does not view the רפאים as a Yahwistic consultant.

There is a lot of evidence that DtrH and most biblical traditions, with the exception of Genesis 50:2, regard the רפא negatively. Most biblical texts regard the term רפא as one which can only be legitimately applied to Yahweh. Yahweh is the only the רפא in heaven and earth. As we have seen when the term is applied to others, it is usually in a sarcastic manner, or on the illegitimacy of the רפא as a healing consultant.

(iii) *The sorcerers*

According to Avalos (1995:295) there is evidence that divination seen in Mesopotamia was also available in Canaan before the formation of Israel, and there is no doubt that it continued to exist throughout the Israelite period. Such divination may also have been used in the treatment of illness. In Deuteronomy

³⁷ Although these texts refer to Israel as the patient, it is clear that these references are part of a theology that believes Yahweh to be the only רפא that can be trusted to heal.

³⁸ According to Genesis 37:25 and Jeremiah 46:11 such medicinal resins were exported from Gilead to Egypt.

18:10-11 many types of practices are denounced, which may have provided consultative services to the sick, though one can only adduce indirect evidence.³⁹ The fact that these professions are juxtaposed with the legitimacy of the Yahwistic prophet in Deuteronomy 18:15-22 could be seen as evidence that the 'illegitimate' consultants may have been consulted for the same or similar services to those that should have sought from a נביא (Avalos; 1995:295).

The practices/professions found in Deuteronomy 18:10-11 include: קסם קסמים (one who practices divination); מענן (a soothsayer), מנחש (an augur); מכשף (a sorcerer); חבֵר חבֵר (a wizard); שאל אוב (a medium); ידעני (spiritist); דרש אלהמותים (one who consults ghosts).

קסם קסמים (one who practices divination): This is the first practice to be condemned in Deuteronomy 18 and it appears to be the most inclusive term. קסם קסמים was one who was able to extract information or guidance from a pagan god (Lockyer; 1986:667). קסם קסמים is used to describe the diviner who was hired to curse Israel (Numbers 22:7; 23:23; Joshua 13:22). From Numbers 22:7 one can conclude that the diviner would have expected to be paid for their services. It seems that diviners could be male or female (Ezekiel 13:23). There is not much known about techniques of divination in Israel, but whatever techniques or actions were performed it eventuated in a message to the client (Blenkinsopp; 1995:126). From the narrative in Numbers 22-24 it is clear that the קסם קסמים was thought capable of inflicting psychic and physical harm, and thus one could surmise that the קסם קסמים was also thought to be capable of healing.

מענן (soothsayer): The occurrences of this term do not provide much guidance as to its precise meaning (Leviticus 19:26; Deuteronomy 18:10, 14; 2 Kings 21:6;

³⁹ Deuteronomy 18:10-11 is part of a larger narrative concerning the comprehensive laws concerning the prophets. The narrative first deals with mantic practices (vv. 9-14), which were not allowed, then positively with the office of the prophet (vv. 15-18), and finally with disobedience to the prophet's word, as well as the possible corruption of the prophet's office (vv. 19-22) (Von Rad; 1966:122).

Isaiah 2:6; 57:3; Micah 5:11). The related activity is proscribed but was definitely known in Israel. A late passage in Isaiah (57:3-10) describes a female soothsayer/sorceress (עננה) who engaged in sexual rites, sacrificed children and had commerce with the underworld (Blenkinsopp; 1995:126).

מנחש (augur): Some suggest that this describes a kind of magic that involved the manipulation of snakes (נחש), but this suggestion is without any basis, because it is only mentioned in a few texts. From these texts (Genesis 30:27; 44:5; 15; 1 Kings 20:33) it can be deduced that it was a way of discovering secrets (Lockyer; 1986:667).

מכשף (sorcerer): While this term is masculine most of the references to sorcery, real or symbolic, are female practitioners (Babylon, Isaiah 47:9,12; Nineveh, Nahum 3:4, both represented as women). Sorcery is forbidden in the Law of Moses (Exodus 22:18), but we do read of the kings of Israel and Judah practicing sorcery (2 Kings 9:22; 2 Chronicles 33:6). Such practises are denounced by the prophets (Nahum 3:4) (Lockyer; 1986:887).

חבר חבר (wizard, caster of spells): According to Blenkinsopp (1995:127) a חבר can be a snake charmer (Psalm 58:6) and, by analogy, it could be a person who uses sorcery to hex people or cast a spell on people (Isaiah 47:9, 12).

שאל אוב (one who consults ghosts): The word אוב⁴⁰ is used for the spirit or ghost of a person (often an ancestor) and for the medium who conjures it up for a client (Blenkinsopp, 1995:127). The witch of Endor is a אשת בעלת אוב (1 Samuel 28:7), which can literally be translated as a 'mistress of the ghost.' It seems that this role was predominantly female (Leviticus 19:31; 20:6; 2 Kings 21:6; 23:24; Isaiah 8:19; 19:3). After muttering incantations and conjurations (Isaiah 8:19) the

⁴⁰ Some scholars suggest that the Hebrew word אוב can be connected to the Sumerian word for 'pit', because of evidence that a pit was part of the ceremony in consulting the dead (Grabbe; 1995:124).

medium seemed to relay the whisperings of the ghost, perhaps by ventriloquistic means (Isaiah 29:4), to the client (Lockyer; 1986:668).

ידעני (medium): Most scholars agree that ידעני refers to a living practitioner of the necromantic arts (Lockyer; 1986:668). The word occurs in tandem with ארוב and is associated with the verbal stem ידע ('to know').

דרש אל-המתים (one who consults the dead, necromancer): The term only occurs in Deuteronomy 18:11. According to Lockyer (1986:668) the Bible gives us no indication that people can expect to communicate with people who have died.

As mentioned above Deuteronomy 18:10-11 may be seen as a charter for the Yahwistic נביא (Avalos; 1995:297). Since consultation on illness was one of the services the נביא provided, one may conclude that the 'illegitimate' consultants were also consulted in cases of illness and that the text may be a witness to a struggle in Israel's healthcare system, in which alternative (illegitimate) consultants competed for clients. If these consultative options, both legitimate and illegitimate, were available in ancient Israel and to king Uzziah, why then did he choose (according to the text) not to make use of any of these options. One would think that being king and a powerful man he would have used any possible option to rid himself of this disease. The study would like to suggest one possible answer to this question. In verse 20 we read that Uzziah was anxious to leave the temple because he knew that the disease that had afflicted him was a punishment from Yahweh (Keil; 1975: 430). Perhaps this knowledge prevented him from seeking any 'medical' help, thus almost forcing him to accept that he was punished by Yahweh and that he had to live with this punishment until his death.

One may conclude that the social context in which 2 Chronicles 26 was written plays an important role in the understanding of the text as well as ancient Israel's beliefs concerning illness and health care. It is also clear that one can not

understand illness and health without taking into account the important role honour and shame played in ancient Israel.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The historical distance between today and ancient Israel impedes a true understanding of illness and health care in ancient Israel. Thus one must be very careful with the biblical terminology, accounts and diagnoses referring to illness. Understand illness in the ancient world means understanding the whole system in which illness and health care functioned. Understanding the account of king Uzziah's illness through a modern perspective would be a fruitless endeavour. For this reason this study strove to examine illness and health care in the wider context of the ancient world and its understanding of what illness was.

The hypothesis was that an analysis of both the literary features of the text and the socio-historical context in which such a text would have originated is necessary to understand ancient Israel's thoughts on illness and health care. The research rested upon three pillars – a literary and ideological analysis, as well as a social-scientific analysis of 2 Chronicles 26:11-23. By analysing the illness of King Uzziah in 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 the study intended to shed some light on the interwovenness between illness and social values in ancient Israel, thus enabling a better understanding 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 as well as illness and health care in ancient Israel.

The literary analysis of 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 consists of an analysis of the intratextual and intertextual dimensions of the text. It is clear from the intratextual analysis that the Chronicler used the redacted forms of canonical books such as Genesis, Joshua, Ezra-Nehemiah and the Book of Kings. Most scholars agree that the Book of Kings is the most important of the biblical sources in the writing of Chronicles and view the late Persian period (400-333 B.C.) as a significant time in the composition of Chronicles. The Chronicler often divides the reign of a king into two halves, good and bad. In Chronicles 26 we meet king Uzziah. In verses 1-14 we read of Uzziah the great king and his flourishing kingdom. Yet it

seems ironic that Uzziah is largely remembered for his pride that led to a disease and ultimately his downfall (2 Chron. 26:11-23).

From an intertextual perspective there are many differences between 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 and its parallel text, 2 Kings 15:1-5. One of the parallelisms that is worth taking note of it that both the Book Kings (2 Kings 15:1-5) as well as the Chronicler (2 Chronicles 26:11-23) recognise the king's illness as a punishment from Yahweh. Both texts make it very clear that Yahweh does not heal Uzziah and he dies a leper. Perhaps emphasizing the ancient's thoughts on illness and the role Yahweh (and other gods) played in illness and health care.

In the ideological analysis of 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 it is clear that the Chronicler had a certain theology and ideology in mind when writing his book. By taking the Chronicler's theology of immediate retribution and the possible ideology behind the formulation of the laws concerning access to the temple the study attempted to shed more light on Uzziah's illness and its consequences. By using the theology of immediate retribution the Chronicler attempts to show that punishment for sin is not always deferred, but rather each generation will experience judgment or blessing in terms of its own actions. 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 is a very good example of immediate retribution. Yahweh punishes Uzziah for his cultic trespass by striking him with 'leprosy'. Uzziah is judged and punished for his own action and not for the trespasses of generations before him.

One may also summarise the ideology behind the laws concerning the access to the temple as follows:

economic worth = degree of impurity = degree of exclusion from the temple.

The study hypothesises that there was an ideology behind the formulation of the laws concerning illness and health care in Chronicles and P. Because of the centralization of the cult it became necessary to limit the access to the temple.

The priests had to select people that could be denied access to the temple. The study suggests that the ill were the most vulnerable in such an elimination process. By introducing these limitations the priestly bureaucracy minimised the burden by excluding them altogether from the temple and/or the community. And the thanksgiving function was promoted, that provided an economic contribution to the temple and had the added advantage that it prevented “contagion”. It seems as if king Uzziah might have been a victim of the priestly bureaucracy and their regulations concerning status, purity and illness. Even as king his disease would have made him less productive to the socio-economic system, thus making him impure and excluding him from the temple.

From the social scientific analysis it is clear that ancient Israel (like many other ancient societies) considered illness as a punishment from a deity, in Israel’s case from Yahweh. In 2 Chronicles 26 Uzziah is punished for a cultic transgression and Yahweh brought immediate retribution in the appearance of a skin disease. Ancient Israel’s understanding of illness and healthcare is complicated by the fact that the idea interacted with notions of purity and impurity. The role that purity and impurity played in understanding of illness and purity are clearly visible in the story of Uzziah’s illness. Because of king Uzziah’s sin he is punished with a skin disease making him impure. 2 Chronicles 26:20 tells us that Uzziah was struck with צדעת, but what of the many possible skin diseases he had, we can’t be sure of. We do know that his skin disease made him impure. Not only did Uzziah’s disease brand him impure, but his illness also cost him his honour. Honour and shame were the core values in ancient Israel. Honour was a person’s claim to worth that was publicly acknowledged. Uzziah’s disobedience against Yahweh, resulted in Yahweh’s punishment that led to a loss of honour for Uzziah and thus shame before others. It is thus clear that illness in ancient Israel was more than a physical ailment – it affected a person’s whole life as a social being. It is also clear from the study that there were many therapeutic options available to king Uzziah – the prophet, as intermediary, being the best option.

To summarise: it is clear that modern scholars and readers will not be able to understand illness and health care as seen in 2 Chronicles 26:11-23 (or any other biblical text) without taking many social factors into account. It is clear from the study that illness in ancient Israel cannot be isolated from social values such as purity and impurity as well as honour and shame. By understanding illness in a holistic manner the historical distance between our understanding of illness and that of ancient Israel becomes less, thus enabling a better understanding.

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