


2009

Physician

Hector Avalos

Iowa State University, havalos@iastate.edu

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Physician

Abstract

In the modern sense of a person certified to engage in diagnosis and therapy through naturalistic/scientific means, physician has no exact equivalent in the Bible. The Hebrew term *rofe'* refers to a person who treats bodily injuries with medicinal substances (Jer 8:22; compare Exod 21: 19), as well as embalmers (Gen 50:2). Yahweh is called a *rofe'* in Exod 15:26 ("the LORD who heals you").

Disciplines

Biblical Studies | Christianity | History of Religion | History of Science, Technology, and Medicine

Comments

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PHYSICIAN [רֹפֵא׳ rofeʾ; ἰατρός iatros]. In the modern sense of a person certified to engage in diagnosis and therapy through naturalistic/scientific means, *physician* has no exact equivalent in the Bible. The Hebrew term rofeʾ refers to a person who treats bodily injuries with medicinal substances (Jer 8:22; compare Exod 21:19), as well as embalmers (Gen 50:2). Yahweh is called a rofeʾ in Exod 15:26 (“the LORD who heals you”).

The Greek term *iatros* probably refers to a person who, for a fee, heals through naturalistic and/or religious therapies (Mark 5:26). Church fathers, such as Ignatius (Ign. *Eph.* 7.2), deemed Christ a fleshly and spiritual physician *par excellence* (compare Matt 9:12; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31).

Physicians in the biblical world are part of a broader group best described as HEALTH CARE consultants, which includes midwives (Exod 1:15-16), prophets (2 Kgs 20:1-7), and priests (Lev 13), and perhaps a wide array of pagan sorcerers (Deut 18:10-11). Attitudes toward physicians range from positive (Luke in Col 4:14; Sir 38) to negative (2 Chr 16:12; Job 13:4; Luke 8:43).

Archaeologically, the activities of HEALING specialists are reflected in trephinated skulls from various periods and in the implantation of a bronze wire in a tooth at Horvat En Ziq, a Nabatean fortress in the northern Negev in the Hellenistic era. Attested medical instruments include bone spatulas at Tell Jemmeh (near Gaza, early 1st millennium BCE), and possible probes and medicinal vessels at Bethsaida in the Roman period.

Bibliography: Hector Avalos. *Health Care and the Rise of Christianity* (1999).

HECTOR AVALOS

PI [π ρ, Π Ρ]. The seventeenth letter of the Greek alphabet, based on the Phoenician *pe. See ALPHA-BET.

PI-BESETH pi-beeʾsith [פִּי־בֶסֶת pi-veseth; Βουβάστος Boubastos]. An Egyptian city in the eastern Nile Delta mentioned along with ON in Ezekiel's oracle against Egypt (Ezek 30:17). The archaeological site (Tell Basta) demonstrates that the city thrived from the Fourth Dynasty through the Roman period. The city was the chief cultic site of the cat-headed goddess Bastet and the home of Libyan pharaohs of the Twenty-second and Twenty-third Dynasties such as SHISHAK. Based on its Greek name, it is also known as Bubastis.

STEVE COOK

PICK [בַּחַר bakhar, קַחַרִּית kharits; τρυγάω trygaō]. The NRSV translates kharits as an iron “pick” (2 Sam 12:31; 1 Chr 20:3), suggesting a tool with a sharp point attached to a handle. Semitic cognate words indicate a cutting instrument, although not necessarily a pick (see TOOLS). As a verb, *pick* means

to pluck (Job 30:4; Jer 43:12; Luke 6:44) or select, especially in a military context (e.g., Exod 14:7; Judg 20:16; 2 Sam 10:9; 2 Chr 13:3; Dan 11:15).

KEVIN A. WILSON

PICTURE [דְמוּת demuth]. An image or likeness of someone or something. The term appears in Ezek 23:15 describing Assyrian bas-reliefs depicting Babylonian officers. It is the same term used to denote the image of God in Gen 1:26. In 2 Esd 5:37, in a dialogue between Ezra and an angel, the angel indicates that Ezra can no more understand God's ways than he can produce a “picture of a voice.”

DEREK E. WITTMAN

PIETY [יִרְאַת׳ yirʾah; δικαιοσύνη dikaiosynē, εὐσέβεια eusebeia]. Piety is devout reverence for God portrayed through righteousness. The OT view of piety is “fear of the Lord,” understood as active obedience to God (Gen 20:11; 2 Sam 23:3; Prov 1:7; 8:13; Isa 11:2-3; 33:6; compare Job 22:4). Piety in the NT includes appropriate, well-intentioned, outward religious activity. Jesus declared that overt “piety” for popularity will go unrewarded (Matt 6:1-18). Piety may have produced miracles, although this is denied by Peter (Acts 3:12). Piety is the result of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, not self-imposed righteousness that is helpless for personal discipline (Col 2:23). See HOLY, HOLINESS, NT.

MICHAEL G. VANZANT

PIGEON [יוֹנָה yonah; περιστέρα peristera]. Pigeons are members of the family Columbidae and are found in some 300 species worldwide. In the Bible, the terms DOVE and *pigeon* are often interchangeable and sometimes indistinguishable.

Pigeons are about 12 in. long and have plump bodies that were prized in Israel as food. The rich provided large cotes of pottery for their domesticated birds. People of moderate means had cotes of oven-baked clay, while the poor often cut holes over their house doors to allow pigeons to enter (Isa 60:8). Pigeons were used for sacrifice (Gen 15:9), especially by the poor in Israel without the means to offer larger animals (Lev 1:14). They were sold in the Second Temple (Mark 11:15 and par.). In Lev 5:7-10, the poor were to bring “two turtledoves or two pigeons” for a sin offering and a burnt offering. Pigeons or turtledoves were brought for purification of women after childbirth (Lev 12:6-8; Luke 2:24). See BIRDS OF THE BIBLE; TURTLEDOVE.

ROBERT E. VAN VOORST

PI-HAHIROTH piʾhuh-hiʾroth [פִּי־הַחִירוֹת pi hakhiroth]. A location in the eastern Nile delta between MIGDOL and the Sea of Reeds, east of Baal-zephon (Exod 14:2; Num 33:7). The Israelites reach Pi-hahiroth after turning back from Etham, a site probably located in the Wadi Tumilat (Exod 13:20). Pi-hahiroth