

# ANCIENT MEDICINE AND WORLD CONSTRUCTION AMONG THE LITERATI OF LATE PERSIAN PERIOD/EARLY HELLENISTIC JUDAH

EHUD BEN ZVI

*ehud.benzvi@ualberta.ca*

*University of Alberta*

*Edmonton, Canadá*

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

Medical practices, physicians, medical lore, and with a few obvious exceptions even shamanistic healers are for the most part absent from the world of memory evoked by readings and rereadings of the core repertoire of the Jerusalem-centered literati of the late Persian-Early Hellenistic Period. Why is this so? The search for an answer to this question sheds light on the social world shared by these literati and the healing practitioners, the role of social memory and draws attention to the historically contingent character of world-constructions among the literati.

**Keywords:** Yehud – Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Judah – Ancient Judean Medicine – Social Memory – Ancient Cultural History – *rûah*

## **Resumen: Medicina antigua y la construcción del mundo entre los literati de Judá durante el período Persa Tardío y el Helenístico Temprano**

Las prácticas médicas, los médicos, la tradición médica y, con algunas excepciones obvias, incluso los curanderos chamánicos se encuentran en su mayor parte ausentes de la memoria que evocan las lecturas y relecturas del repertorio de los *literati* ubicados en Jerusalén durante el período Persa Tardío y el Helenístico Temprano.

Article received: September 11<sup>th</sup> 2019; approved: November 14<sup>th</sup> 2019.

---

*Antiguo Oriente*, volumen 17, 2019, pp. 115–130.

¿Por qué es esto así? La búsqueda de una respuesta a esta pregunta arroja luz sobre el mundo social compartido por estos *literati*, sobre quienes practicaban la curación a la vez que ilumina el rol de la memoria social y llama la atención sobre el carácter históricamente contingente de las construcciones mundiales entre los *literati*.

**Palabras clave:** Yehud – Persa Tardío/Período Helenístico Temprano – Medicina antigua judahíta – Memoria Social – Historia Cultural Antigua – *rûah*

## SETTING THE STAGE: THE MORE OR LESS PREDICTABLE

There is no doubt that the *literati* mentioned in the title of this essay (and anyone else in their community) suffered, like all humans, from diseases, wounds, various types of injuries and the like. Moreover, like any other human group, they shared a body of knowledge concerning, *e.g.*, cures, diseases, healing/curing activities and concepts, and expectations of healing/curing agents and professionals. Further, like any other human group, they shared memories about illnesses, injuries, cures and deaths that affected persons in their past.<sup>1</sup>

It is thus not surprising at all that as these *literati* construed and evoked their shared memory of the past through readings and rereadings within their core, authoritative literary repertoire,<sup>2</sup> they shaped and recalled, *inter alia*, images of personages of old who suffered various types of diseases and injuries, and thus, were in need of healing/cure, and who were or were not eventually cured. During

<sup>1</sup> This is a revised English version of an article published first in Chinese in the *Journal of the Social History of Medicine and Health* 3/2, 48–57.

<sup>2</sup> Although it is impossible to fully reconstruct the whole core repertoire of the *literati* of the late Persian/early Hellenistic period in Judah, most of the texts that eventually became part of the Hebrew Bible, with some significant exceptions (*e.g.*, Daniel, Esther) provide a sufficiently representative approximation of the general contours of that repertoire. This repertoire included both books and collections of books, such as the Primary History Collection (Genesis–2 Kings), the Deuteronomistic Historical Collection (Deuteronomy–2 Kings), and the Prophetic Book Collection (Isaiah–Malachi).

this process, the literati often generated a world of memory that included a range of potential diseases,<sup>3</sup> images of bandages,<sup>4</sup> places appropriate to facilitate the healing process (of elite members) or for segregation,<sup>5</sup> medicines,<sup>6</sup> shamanistic activities,<sup>7</sup> and all together a vast realm associated with what we may call today “medicine.”<sup>8</sup>

Like other ancient cultures both in West Asia and elsewhere—and many cultures up to the present—these literati did not imagine an hermetic gap separating the “seen” and the “unseen” worlds, and for them both injuries and diseases as well as their cures involved—one way or another—divine agency. Given the monotheizing tendencies<sup>9</sup> that existed within the literati’s worldview, it is only to be expected that they consistently construed, imagined and remembered their deity (*i.e.*, YHWH) as directly or indirectly involved, as the ultimate source and agent for both disease/injury creation and curing and healing.<sup>10</sup> Thus, unsurprisingly again, YHWH was construed by and among these literati as both the ultimate physician and the most

<sup>3</sup> *E.g.*, Gen 12:17; Lev 26:16; Deut 28:21–22; 1 Sam 5:11–12; 1 Kgs 13:4; 2 Kgs 4:18–20; Ezek 21:11; Prov 14:30, and, of course, various plagues (*e.g.*, Num 14:37; 2 Chr 21:14).

<sup>4</sup> *E.g.*, 1 Kgs 20:35–38; Isa 30:26; Ezek 30:21; Hos 6:1; Job 5:18; cf. Isa 3:7.

<sup>5</sup> *E.g.*, 2 Kgs 8:29; 9:15; 2 Chr 26:21.

<sup>6</sup> *E.g.*, Jer 8:22; 30:13; 46:11; cf. Ezek 47:12; Prov 3:8.

<sup>7</sup> See Gerstenberger 2018: 94–110.

<sup>8</sup> For a recent discussion on medicine in ancient Israel, both during the Iron Age and the Second Temple periods, and about scholarly debates on this topic, with relevant bibliography see L. Askin (2018: 186–231).

<sup>9</sup> In the sense of construing a world in which there is only one divine king over all the world, the ultimate source of everything, good and evil, and whose authority and power has no rival to the point that such a divine king stands as a taxonomic genus that can, by definition, be populated only by their deity, YHWH.

<sup>10</sup> As a source of injury/disease see, *e.g.*, Exod 15:26; Deut 28:27, 35; 32:39; Isa 19:22; 30:26; 57:17; Job 5:18; and as a source for curing see, *e.g.*, Gen 20:17; Num 12:13; Deut 32:39; 2 Kgs 2:21–22; 20:1–11 (esp. vv. 5, 8); Isa 19:22; 30:26; 57:18–19; Jer 17:14; 30:17; 33: 6; Hos 11:3; Ps 6:3; 103:3; Job 5:18).

dangerous injury/disease maker (sometimes, in the form of a mighty warrior). Moreover, some texts explicitly contrasted, YHWH's power to cure with the "fake" power of alternative, ideologically inappropriate sources for healing, for rhetorical and didactic purposes. In doing so, these texts shaped and recalled socially shared memories about the tragic fate of those characters in the past who relied on those who "cannot" cure them (*e.g.*, Hos 5:13; 2 Chr 16:12).

In addition, a dichotomy between "soul" and "body" was not part of the discourse of these literati (or their society at large), and thus sicknesses did not have to be restricted to physical matters. For instance, the literati could and did shape and evoke images of sicknesses of "moral" or "religious" character (see, *e.g.*, Hos 7:1; 14:5). Further, since the concept of healing or curing was directly associated with the image of returning the "object" that requires "healing/curing" to its "appropriate," "natural," or "default" status, it is not surprising that the literati construed a concept and recalled cases involving the "healing" of objects other than humans or animals. For instance, they could conceptualize the "healing" of the land (2 Chr 7:14) or of water (2 Kgs 2:21–22; Ezek 47:8–9). In their literary repertoire, there is even a reference to a potter's vessel, which once broken cannot be "healed" (Jer 19:11). In the context of this image, it is worth noting that the very opposite of "healing" was not harming as in causing an injury or a disease (see *e.g.*, Exod 15:26), but, explicitly and emphatically, killing (see Qoh 3:3).

To be sure, conceptualizing YHWH as the ultimate and main healer does not mean that the literati's world of memory failed to include plenty of characters who performed acts of curing/healing or enabled them. For instance, the literati remembered that Abraham, the "prophet" (Gen 20:8), prayed to the deity and it healed Abimelech, his wives and female slaves (Gen 20:17), or that David, the musician (and future king), relieved Saul from his suffering with his playing, because when David played, the harmful *rûah* affecting Saul

would depart from him (1 Sam 16:23),<sup>11</sup> or that Elijah, the prophet, once stretched over a dead child three times and prayed to YHWH that the child's *nepeš* ("the life-force") be returned to him and YHWH fulfilled Elijah's request (1 Kgs 17:21–22). Through their readings and encyclopedic knowledge, the literati also recalled a similar story associated with his successor, Elisha, the prophet, who revived the son of the Shunammite woman through prayer and shamanistic behaviour (2 Kgs 4:32–38; 8:1). In addition, they remembered that the same prophet (Elisha) healed Na'aman from a skin disease without invoking YHWH or moving his hand over the spot, but just by ordering Na'aman to go and wash seven times in the Jordan River (2 Kgs 5:9–14). In another case, a mere look at a bronze serpent on a pole that Moses made in fulfillment of YHWH's command cured those who were bitten by snakes (Num 21:8).

### SOME REMARKABLE "ABSENCES"

All in all, the "presences" discussed above are within the expected boundaries for a community that existed in an ancient Near Eastern milieu and in which there were strong ideological monotheizing tendencies. But both those memories which are actively evoked and remembered (see above), and those which are not, contribute significantly to the construction of worlds of memory and to messages embodied and communicated within them. Often the "absences," namely that which is to be bracketed out or forgotten, or at least considered not worth recalling, provide the most significant clues for exploring the world of thought—the shared (social) memory of a group and its ideological landscape.

The most obvious, and thus most remarkable of these "absences" relates to the fact that the world construed, imagined and vic-

<sup>11</sup> More on *rûaḥ* below.

ariously experienced by the literati through their readings and rereadings of the relevant texts fails to draw any real attention to existing medical lore. This stands in contrast with what one finds in the general ancient Near Eastern milieu, and particularly in ancient Mesopotamia.

Similarly, whereas it is certain that human “physicians” existed and were counted upon to perform their duties within the society in which the literati lived, they were almost completely absent from the world of memory about Israel (and the world in general, see, *e.g.*, Genesis 1–11) evoked by their readings. The few explicit references to human *rop'im*, physicians, are marginal within the entire corpus, and appear within stories where healing does not take place (see Jer 8:22; Job 13:4; 2 Chr 16:12).<sup>12</sup>

Given the two observations made above, it is also not surprising that there is nothing in the world evoked and remembered through the reading of this repertoire about the (mythical) origin and the communication of such medical knowledge from generation to generation. There is decidedly nothing explicit in all this textual repertoire that would “legitimize” any existing medical knowledge in the community.

These “absences” are even more remarkable when one compares the situation within the mentioned repertoire and later texts in communities that saw themselves in continuity with the literati in Yehud. For instance, Sirach lionizes the trade of the physician and physicians (see Sirach 38). Moreover, according to Sirach, not only did YHWH establish their profession (38:1), but also the deity’s healing is mediated through them, as they perform YHWH’s (creative) work spreading health through their work (38:7). Additionally, in the

<sup>12</sup> *rop'im* in Gen 50:2 are not tasked with healing Jacob but embalming his dead body. Exod 21:19 does not directly refer to physicians, and even in the later book of Tobit, the one who succeeds in healing him is Raphael, an angel whose name appropriately means “God has healed” (Tob 3:17; 6:7–9; 11:7, 10–14; on Raphael as a healer, see also 1 Enoch 40:9). The physicians, however, fail at that task (2:10).

world evoked by Sirach, physicians pray for (and receive) the ability to successfully make a diagnosis and cure patients (38:14).<sup>13</sup>

The book of Jubilees constructs a world in which Noah was the first physician. Moreover, the knowledge of how to heal from the herbs of the earth is depicted as divine revelation, and along with several other divine revelations, this knowledge was written in a book (by Noah) and then passed on to the next generation/s through Shem (see Jub 10:10–14).<sup>14</sup>

In passing, one may notice that, centuries later, Jewish sages in the late Roman and late Antiquity period also found something amiss in a world representing monarchic Israel in which no book of cures or medical lore was present. Thus, there appeared voices embodied in the Talmuds and related literature, referring to a book of cures that existed in ancient Israel and asking the readers to remember that King Hezekiah, in an act of piety, removed it from circulation (see b. Pesah. 56a; b. Ber. 10b; y. Pesah. 9.1, 36c-d; y. Ned. 7.13, 40a; Sanh. 1.2, 18d—in the Jerusalem/Palestinian Talmud, the text reads *רפואות טבלא של רפואות* instead of *רפואות ספר*; *טבלא* might be translated as “writing” or even “notebook,” as Neusner does).<sup>15</sup> Of course, constructing and remembering Hezekiah’s act only led to additional questions, such as how old was the book? Who wrote it (Solomon?) Why was it such a good idea to conceal it? Later commentators answered these questions in their own ways.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> For the image of the pious physician in Sirach 38 and the literary and ideological context of this chapter see Askin 2018: 186–231.

<sup>14</sup> Syfox 2018: 161–181. Contrast this text with 1 Enoch 7:1; 8:3.

<sup>15</sup> It is usually agreed that the reference in m. Pesah. 4.9 represents a late addition. On traditions about this “lost” book that never existed, see Halperin 1982: 269–292.

<sup>16</sup> It is worth noting that one of the common responses to this question among traditional, medieval Jewish commentators is that the book was so reliable that people could easily be healed from their illnesses and therefore, when they were sick, they did not turn to YHWH. For a brief survey of all these matters see Rosner

In any event, the question remains, why is it that within the world of memory evoked by readings and rereadings of the core repertoire of the Jerusalem-centred literati of the late Persian/early Hellenistic period, medical practices, physicians, medical lore, and with a few exemptions even shamanistic healers are, for the most part, absent? Why is it that the few times *human* physicians are mentioned, the context is negative, such as in 2 Chr 26:12? Given the size of the corpus and given that medical practices, physicians, medical lore and the like did exist within the societies in which these texts emerged and were part and parcel of the “real” world inhabited by the literati, the mentioned bracketing and marginalization of them cannot be explained as simply the result of “blind” chance. Instead, it seems that this was the outcome of a generative grammar advancing claims about what matters and what does not, about what types of characters are (preferred to be) remembered and those which are not. It points to figures and practices which are demed worthy of being remembered and those that are not. But if so, why was there such a strong dis-preference for including human medical practitioners and medical knowledge within the construed world of memory of the literati?

On the surface, 2 Chr 26:12 might hint at a potential way to respond to these matters. The text reads: “[King] Asa suffered from an acute foot ailment; but ill as he was, he still did not turn to YHWH but to physicians.” As expected within this discourse, Asa’s attitude led to his death. This text seems to advance an implied basic, binary, oppositional contrast between YHWH and the physicians. Within this logic, if people would contact the physicians and be cured, then they would not turn to YHWH and in fact, would be rejecting him.<sup>17</sup>

1977: 81–88. These responses constitute an excellent example for studies of intellectual sub-altern explorations of potential dystopian outcomes for imagined and imaginary situations that would have looked to them as realized utopia. I plan to address these issues elsewhere.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. the later medieval commentators explaining why the supposed book of cures



But as memorable as this text is,<sup>18</sup> and leaving completely aside questions about whether it actually advances such a position, it is difficult to argue that the mentioned grammars of memory bracketing are rooted in an underlying binary oppositional contrast between YHWH and the physicians. After all, YHWH was not only the ultimate physician, but also the ultimate king, legislator, teacher of divine messages, warrior and so on. Yet the world that the literati construed certainly included human kings, legislators, teachers of divine messages, warriors and so on, at central positions, with much social mind-share and dealt with many of the above in positive terms. In addition, it is difficult to imagine, particularly in the context of the ancient Near East, that medical practitioners in the Israel of the literati—or in monarchic Judah, for that matter—would have ever imagined themselves as acting independently of the deity or that those being cured by these medical practitioners would have conceived them as standing in opposition to YHWH (see, the far more contextually appropriate construction of the physician in Sir 38). The literati were certainly aware that such was the case.

Moreover, had there been physicians associated, at least by the literati, with or construed to “embody” the power of other/non-deities, why would the literati’s world of memory fail to include any memorable scenes of confrontations between the good, YHWH’s practitioners, and the others? One may easily compare and contrast the present case with, *e.g.*, the magicians’ contests in Exod 7, the prophets’ contest in 1 Kgs 18, the dream diviners’ contest in Genesis 41 and so on. Furthermore, why in the world of the literati would

was concealed by Hezekiah. See note 13.

<sup>18</sup> One may notice the pun on words that makes the episode far more memorable and didactically useful for the community. The name of the king evokes the Aramaic term for physician—Aramaic was the spoken language in Judah at the time. Moreover, it is possible to understand the name as an hypocoristic form of a name meaning “God is my physician.”

there be no reference to the divine origin of medical knowledge? Or, within the context of an Israel that is construed around the motifs of divine instructions given to it by the deity, why, in this corpus of literature, are there no references to medical lore given to ancestral or foundational characters, or to Israel? The contrast with significant traditions and socially-shared memories that are attested to in later periods about divine medical lore imparted to Noah, and then transmitted to Shem, and thus, eventually, to Israel<sup>19</sup> is particularly telling. The case of Asa in 2 Chr 26:12 is interesting, but it cannot provide an explanation for the root causes for the preference to bracket medical practices, physicians, medical lore and so on out of the world of imagination and memory shaped and evoked by the authoritative textual repertoire of these literati.

An alternative and more promising approach emerges out of considerations about social, cultural, mnemonic, and symbolic capital in the society in which the literati lived (or imagined themselves to live).<sup>20</sup> The very concept of Israel as a text-centered community, which stands at the center of the ideological discourse of, at least, these literati provided them with much of all these capitals and with what amounts to a literatidicy.<sup>21</sup> To accept this basic concept of Israel was tantamount to construct the literati's role as absolutely essential to the existence of the community, given that only they could directly access the authoritative textual repertoire, and all others could access it only through them. To be sure, prophets, kings, diviners and certainly a character such as Moses are all central characters in the Israel of the past. However, by the time of the literati and within the present

<sup>19</sup> See Syfox 2018: 161–181.

<sup>20</sup> On these capitals and the socio-anthropological study of the literati, see Ben Zvi (2019: 631–654).

<sup>21</sup> Including a social and ideological justification for the central role of this group and for the provision of the necessary resources for its maintenance and social reproduction over time.

world in which they construed themselves to be living, there was no room for a new Moses, new prophets or new godly rulers of Israel with the authority to complement via instructions Moses' *tōrā*. Further, in their world, all that was worth remembering about Moses, David and the prophets of old was accessible only through the corpus of texts that they (*i.e.*, the literati) read among themselves and communicated to others who did not have direct access to it. Thus, although they kept a legitimizing and mnemonically anticipated distance from the great heroes of the past, they were, for all practical purposes, their voices in the present. This is the case both metaphorically and practically as the literati were those who voiced these great characters of old and their stories to others who could not read their sophisticated texts by themselves.

Against this context, it is easy to understand the (at least, potential) challenge presented to these literati, and to the Jerusalem temple's ideologically totalizing project of the time with which they identified and which they advanced, by physicians who were not literati and were not necessarily associated with or supported by the Jerusalem temple and its social networks, and thus likely not socialized ideologically as the literati.

These physicians were likely to have had some significant social, cultural and perhaps even symbolic capital, since they cured people.<sup>22</sup> Most likely, they cured people in their own places of dwellings, that is, in the vast majority of cases outside not only the Temple, but also outside Jerusalem and the Jerusalem area.<sup>23</sup> Given the ancient Near Eastern milieu, at least some these physicians likely had some

<sup>22</sup> From the perspective of the literati, compare this with the textual space given to the Jerusalem-Temple priests' dealings with various skin diseases in Leviticus 13–14. Purity and temple played a central role in the social mindscape of these, Jerusalem/temple-centred literati, whereas healings by physicians in various localities in Yehud did not.

<sup>23</sup> The vast majority of the population of Yehud lived outside Jerusalem and the Jerusalem area during the Persian period.

shamanistic behaviours. Moreover, the Yehudite physicians certainly maintained that their cures were rooted in YHWH, directly or indirectly or both. In any event, these physicians would have claimed, explicitly or implicitly, that YHWH channeled (some of) the deity's powers (and/or knowledge, which is in itself a form of power) through them. Furthermore, such a claim would have been accepted by those who were cured by them or even approached them for a cure. The same, of course, held true for (inspired) musicians who through their music may heal by causing a harmful, tormenting *rûah* to depart from the body of a suffering person (cf. 1 Sam 16:23).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> There existed, within the world of knowledge of these literati, various types of empowering "spirits" or "breaths" or perhaps in more contemporary English, "energies" (Heb. sg. *rûah*, a word that carries many other meanings as well), none of which was or could be even imagined as of human origin. It is a *rûah* that makes a human alive (e.g., Isa 42:5; Ezek 37, passim, Zech 12:1; Ps 104:29–30; 146:4; cf. Gen 6:17; 7:15 in relation to animals, and in the context of the absence of this vital energy, see Jer 10:14; 51:17; Hab 2:19; Ps 135:17). When a person's *rûah* 'returns to his "owner," the person is "revived" (e.g., after dehydration; see Judg 15:19; cf. 1 Sam 30:12). A *rûah* may cause a person to behave in particular ways (e.g., when the *rûah* of a person ends up resting on another, see 2 Kgs 2:15; or one causes someone to "fear YHWH," see Isa 11:2, but see also, e.g., Hos 4:12; 5:4), to make someone a leader (passim in Judges; and elsewhere, e.g., Isa 42:1), courageous (passim in Judges; see also, e.g., Isa 11:2); or particularly skillful (e.g., Exod 28:3) or wise (e.g., Deut 34:9; 11:2) or grant someone, for a time, superhuman power (e.g., Judg 14:6; 15:14), but also may make a person sick (e.g., 1 Sam 16:14–15), jealous (e.g., Num 5:14), confused (e.g., Isa 19:14), asleep (e.g., Isa 29:10), angry or even make a person believe something completely false (e.g., 1 Kgs 22:22–23). See for instance, and of particular relevance, "Saul's servants said to him, 'see now, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our lord now command the servants who attend you to look for someone who is skillful in playing the lyre; and when the evil spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will feel better' ... and whenever the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand, and Saul would be relieved and feel better, and the evil spirit would depart from him" (1 Sam 16:15–16, 23). See also some underlying awareness of something somewhat akin to what today we would call

In sum, physicians and especially those with shamanistic-rooted authority or for that matter with authority based on their knowledge of some cures<sup>25</sup> would have represented at a least a potential challenge to the text-based authority of the literati, and their *tôrâ*-centred, Jerusalem-centred totalizing ideology. In other words, the literati's attitude towards physicians would have been similar to their attitude to prophets contemporary to them,<sup>26</sup> shamanistic characters, and the like.

In this context, it is worth noting that the very few memories of cures the literati included in their narratives about the past were substantially re-signified through memory complementation. For instance, when they recalled the bronze serpent on a pole that Moses made (Num 21:8), they also remembered that it was removed by the pious king Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:4), whose main achievement was to lead and keep Israel faithful to YHWH and YHWH's *tôrâ*, which is exactly the social role that, from their perspective, the literati fulfilled in their own times. It is also worth noting, in this regard, that no book of Elisha or Elijah (two of the most important healers-prophets of memory) emerged among them, and none was included in the literati's collection of prophetic books (Isaiah–Malachi). Moreover, the reference to Elijah in Mal 3:23–24 represents a reconfiguration of the image of the prophet in ways that de-emphasize and decrease

the biopsychosocial model of health and illness, as expressed in Prov 15:13, and the role of *rûah* there. Any healer able to manipulate, even if indirectly, a *rûah*, could not be but construed as an individual through whom YHWH channels divine powers. (Cf. later constructions of Jesus the healer.)

<sup>25</sup> The medical knowledge of the non-literati physicians would have been kept among them, as is usually the case, and thus would have stood separate from that of the *tôrâ* of the literati, providing an additional source of authority.

<sup>26</sup> In strong contradistinction to the prophets of old whose memory was shaped, encoded and communicated through the core repertoire of the texts that the literati held, read, reread, composed, edited, and so on, and thus of whose memory and message, the literati were in control, at least within the world they wished to project.

the weight of the image of the shaman healer of 1 Kgs 17:21–22 within the Elijah of memory for the community.<sup>27</sup>

## INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION

The world constructed by the literati may not represent the “actual” world of the past nor display a mimetic image of their own in relation to physicians and medical lore, but the study of the *generative grammars* of inclusion and exclusion that play such important roles in shaping the world they constructed sheds light not only on the world they construed, but also some light on their actual worlds. Moreover, the drastic difference between the construction of medical knowledge, practice and practitioners in the world of imagination of these literati and the one shaped by Ben Sira later in the Hellenistic period suggest that “something” of significance has changed in between them on these matters. Substantial changes in generative grammars and thus in constructed worlds imply substantial social-historical changes.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Cf. the reconfiguration of the image of Elijah in Chronicles, see 2 Chr 21:12–15. To the examples above, one may add that the image of David, the *healing* harpist was always quite marginal compared to other images of David. In any event, it is worth noting that there is no reference to it in either Chronicles or in Psalms, even though the latter includes at times references to episodes in the “life” of David (e.g., Ps 3:1) and of interactions between David and Saul (see Ps 18:1; 52:2; 54:2; 57:1; 59:1). Although late, these superscriptions reflect a continuation of preferences in terms of what is more and less worth recalling from David’s “life,” and thus in terms of shaping David as a site of memory. (Significantly, even the LXX Psalter contains no reference to David’s healing Saul in its superscriptions.)

<sup>28</sup> It is worth stressing that even after Ben Sira, multiple tendencies towards physicians continued and continued to influence the discourse of the Hellenistic period. For the contrast between, for instance, Sirach and Tobit on the matter, see M. Chrystovergi (2011: 37–54); and see C. Hezser (2016: 173–97). On Sirach and the physician, see O. Wischmeyer (1995: 37–46 and esp. 46–47); see also 288, and Askin (2018: 186–231). This diversity represents, of course, a drastic change from the state of affairs among the literati of Yehud and within their attested repertoire. This shift and the factors that contributed to it require a separate study.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- ASKIN, L.A. 2018. *Scribal Culture in Ben Sira*. Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 184. Leiden and New York, Brill.
- BEN ZVI, E. 2019. "Potential Intersections Between Research Frames Informed by Social-Memory and 'Bourdieuian' Approaches/Concepts: The Study of Socio-Historical Features of the Literati of the early Second Temple Period." In: *Social Memory among the Literati of Yehud*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 509. Berlin, de Gruyter, pp. 631–654.
- CHRYSOVERGI, M. 2011. "Contrasting Views on Physicians in Tobit and Sirach." In: *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 21/1, pp. 37–54.
- GERSTENBERGER, E.S. 2018. "Notes on Healing in the Old Testament." In: *Journal of the Social History of Medicine and Health* 3/2, *Special Issue: Medicine and Health: Perspectives from the Ancient World*. Huang, W. and E. Ben Zvi (eds.), pp. 94–110 (in Chinese).
- HALPERIN, D. J. 1982. "The Book of Remedies, the Canonization of the Solomonic Writings, and the Riddle of Pseudo-Eusebius." In: *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 72, pp. 269–292.
- HEZSER, C. 2016. "Representations of the Physician in Jewish Literature from Hellenistic and Roman Times." In: W.V. HARRIS (ed.), *Popular Medicine in Graeco-Roman Antiquity: Explorations*. Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition. Leiden, Brill, pp. 173–197.
- ROSNER, F. 1977. *Medicine in the Bible and the Talmud*. Hoboken, New Jersey, KTAV Publishing House/Yeshiva University Press, pp. 81–88.
- SYFOX, C. 2018. "Israel's First Physician or the World's First Physician? The Image of Noah in Jub. 10:1–14 and the Book of Asaph." In: *Journal of the Social History of Medicine and Health* 3/2, *Special Issue: Medicine and Health: Perspectives from the Ancient World*. Huang, W. and E. Ben Zvi (eds.), pp. 161–181 (in Chinese).
- WISCHMEYER, O. 1995. *Die Kultur des Buches Jesus Sirach*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 77. Berlin, de Gruyter.