

02 - NONE OF THESE DISEASES

A basic Biblical premise is: “The curse causeless shall not come.” (Proverbs 26:2) The Biblical approach was prevention of disease in place of cure. Yet the Old Testament clearly teaches that not all illness is directly our fault. This is most clearly illustrated in the story of Job, where Satan is seen as the one primarily responsible for humanity’s ills.

Old Testament prophets illustrated spiritual lessons from Jewish doctors. Thus, Ezekiel spoke of binding up a fracture. Isaiah taught a spiritual lesson in illustrating how open ulcers were treated. A poultice of figs was used to treat Hezekiah’s boil. And Jeremiah used the Balm of Gilead to represent God’s healing power as the Great Physician. “Is there no balm In Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?” Mental attitude was recognized as important to recovery.

The basic health document of the Old Testament is the Mosaic Health Code. Hanlon, author of a basic textbook used by schools of public health in the United States, calls Leviticus the world’s first hygienic code, and Mustard, another renowned author in public health, calls Moses the world’s greatest sanitary engineer. “Percival. Wood, chief British medical officer for the armed services, says, - preventive medicine began with Moses. The Mosaic Health Code is the most complete health document from ancient times. Twelve basic areas are dealt with in the code, and include preventive measures for every major Egyptian disease.

A major section concerns disease prevention. An example is the prohibition against tattooing which prevented hepatitis and tetanus common in Egypt where tattooing was practiced as a remembrance to the dead. Another section was concerned with personal hygiene. Sanitation, including the burial of human excreta, occupied a major section. Identification of disease was dealt with. Control of communicable diseases consumed a large portion of the document. This section introduced quarantine for the first time in history.

Public house inspection and control of disease in garments were given prominence in the document. Purification by water or fire are still recognized as valid today. A strict code of moral ethics prevented venereal infections common in Egypt, especially gonorrhoeal infection which was responsible for much of the blindness in Egypt. Environment control included a Sabbath rest for the land every seven years. The importance of exercise was stressed in the need for manual labour. Many medical historians consider the seventh-day Sabbath as Moses’ greatest contribution to the welfare of the human race. Another major area, diet comes in a later presentation.