

Women, Leprosy and Jesus
Feminist Reconstruction
in the context
of women with HIV-AIDS
in
South Africa

By

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PREFACE

Declaration:

I declare that whole dissertation, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text is my own work.

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Dedication:

To my children may they grow up to respect all people equally

To all women may they teach their children from young equality and respect for both boys and girls.

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INTRODUCTION

Women have been oppressed for centuries. The religious have fared none the better, in fact in my opinion religious men at times have been the worse perpetrators. The image of women in the bible is reflected through the eyes of males because, the Bible was written by men. When we read the Bible, we find that women usually remain nameless. They are not recognised as people who belong in the text. The problem is even worse in the case of women with leprosy because their stories are not told within the New Testament writings.

In the Old Testament, besides the Levitical laws, there is only the story of Miriam and, in this case, the woman received leprosy as a punishment because she spoke her mind. Women with leprosy and, more important, information about what happened to them during the time of being considered outcasts, are nowhere to be found within the Bible. This is indeed a problem for me as a woman today because their exclusion means my exclusion. The experiences of women are excluded, so we do not have the full picture of various stories because the perspectives of the women are missing. We do not know how they felt, their sadness, their pain or their joy.

In the Bible, there are stories in which Jesus healed lepers, as in the case of Luke 17:11-14 where ten men who had leprosy called him for healing. However there is no story given in the Bible, where Jesus cured women. What would it have meant for a woman leper to be cured by Jesus? What is her experience with Jesus have been? What impact would Jesus have had on a woman leper? I am sure it would have been the same experience as with the woman with the flow of blood in Luke 8:40-48, Mt. 9:18-22, Mark 5:21-34.

Women have been used, and abused, but most important for my study, ignored for far too long. The aim of this investigation is to find out what happened to women with leprosy during biblical times. Where did they go? Were they alone? Were they exposed to or attacked by wild animals? Were they used and raped by other male

lepers? My interest is to find out what happened to them and to fill in the missing gaps to make the silence speak.

While there are many models available for a feminist reading of biblical texts, some of which reject the bible as unusable for women in their struggle, others of which focus on the role of women in the bible without challenging the androcentric nature of the bible itself, I have found the “revisionist” model of feminist historical reconstruction adopted by Elizabeth Schuessler Fiorenza most helpful to me. Thus, I use Fiorenza’s hermeneutic, as outlined in her book *In Memory of Her* (1989), which makes the silence speak. In this book she leads us towards a Feminist Critical Hermeneutics and I will set out her model here in some detail, as it underlies my own approach in this thesis.

In her search towards a Feminist Critical Hermeneutics, Fiorenza realizes what a struggle it would be to discuss the relationship between biblical-historical interpretation and feminist reconstruction of women’s history in biblical times. It would require scholars to examine and reveal the contradictions and tensions between historical exegesis and systematic-theological tenets, the reactions and emotions elicited by the prospect of “historical-critical” exegesis of the Bible, the relationship between academic work and political-societal forces and condition, between so-called value-neutral scientific investigation and “advocacy”, which can cause some theoretical problems (:3).

Fiorenza acknowledges that women in general share a common experience and feminists are committed to the struggle for the liberation of women, but the individual perception and interpretation of women’s experience of oppression, and the concrete formulation of the values and goals for women’s liberation differ considerably. She finds it necessary to explore the theoretical models and heuristic concepts proposed by feminist scholarship. These models are imaginative theoretical re-constructs that help us to understand the world and reality. Their main function is the correlation of a set of observations and the symbolic selection and accentuation of certain aspects of reality. These interpretive models are heuristic devices used to interpret human and Christian historical reality. They provide a framework within which a variety of approaches can be integrated. These analytical categories are used interchangeably. If

such reconstructions want to transform and re-conceptualise early Christianity then they must explore their interplay with biblical-historical theoretical approaches before a integrative heuristic model can be formulated (:4).

She continues to say that the formulation of a feminist historical hermeneutics must also discuss the theoretical models of biblical hermeneutics and their implications for the feminist cultural paradigm, instead of just tracing the overall cultural shift from an androcentric to a feminist paradigm of reality construction and change. Many theological interpretations have been developed to justify the tension between the theological and historical claims of the bible. The same tension is experienced in a feminist historical reconstruction. She therefore finds it necessary to review the different theoretical models developed by biblical historical scholarship (:4).

She calls the first model the doctrinal approach, which understands the bible in terms of divine revelation and canonical authority. This approach claims that the bible is inerrant, the bible is the revelation of God itself, and so the bible is the Word of God. It uses proof texts to provide theological authority or rationalization for a position already taken. It claims the bible to be an absolute oracle revealing timeless truths and definite answers to problems of all times (:5).

The second model is positivist historical exegesis. It seeks to achieve a purely objective reading and a scientific presentation of the historical facts.

The third model is that of dialogical-hermeneutical interpretation. This model is influenced by the historical methods developed by the second model, while simultaneously reflecting on the interaction between text and community. In this model dialogical interpretation is the increasing factor. Form and redaction criticism elaborate how the early Christian communities and writers were in constant dialogue and argument with their living tradition and the problems of their communities, the hermeneutical circle continues the dialogue endeavour in the contemporary act of interpretation. She therefore suggests that this hermeneutical model can be combined with the neo-orthodox theological enterprise (:6).

Liberation theology is the last model of biblical interpretation. Liberation theology including feminist theology is the recognition that all theologies are always engaged

for or against the oppressed. Biblical theological scholarship often serves the political interests of the academy, which not only makes males normative subjects of scholarships but also serves theoretically to legitimise societal structures of oppression (:6).

For Fiorenza, no matter in what capacity the bible is used, its function is to legitimise societal and ecclesiastical patriarchy and women's divinely ordained place in it. The bible has and still plays a central role against women's emancipation. In the woman's Bible Elizabeth Cady Stanton draws on two insights for a feminist theological hermeneutics, "The bible is not a neutral book, but a political weapon against women's struggle for liberation." and "This is so because the bible bears the imprint of men who never saw or talk with God" (:7).

Stanton's edition of the woman's bible was opposed because it was politically inopportune and because of its radical hermeneutical perspectives which expanded and replaced the main apologetic argument of other suffragists that the true message of the bible was obstructed by the translations and interpretations of men. For Stanton the bible is male inspired and needs to be de-patriarchalised.

However, she argues that the bible is not just misunderstood or badly interpreted but it is patriarchal and androcentric in itself, for it reflects the male interests of its authors, over against the understanding that it is the direct word of God. She does not believe that man ever saw or talked with God, and says that the degrading texts about woman and the patriarchal injunctions for their submission comes from their own heads. Candy however says that some of the religious and ethical principles in the bible are still valid today. Therefore she concludes that the bible cannot be accepted or rejected as a whole but that each biblical text on women have to be carefully examined and valued for its androcentric implications.

For Candy the biblical text is androcentric for man has put his stamp on biblical revelation. For the bible is not just interpreted from a male perspective but it is written by men and is the expression of a patriarchal culture. She, thus, confirmed that that divine revelation is articulated in historically limited and culturally conditioned human language. To top it the language in the bible is male and the cultural conditions

and perspectives of the bible are patriarchal. This leads to the third model of biblical interpretation, which emphasises the interaction between text and situation.

Thus, Fiorenza concludes: “This hermeneutic-contextual model has established the canon as a pluriform root model of Christian communities and has shown that the bible has contradictory responses and therefore not all biblical statements have equal truth claim and authority”. Therefore arises the need for the doctrinal model of interpretation that appeals to the teaching authority of the Church or the canon within the canon to highlight truths (:12, 13).

Fiorenza then continues in chapter 2 of *In Memory of Her*, entitled “Towards a Feminist Critical Method”, arguing that it is necessary to develop critical historical methods for feminist readings of biblical text, since one is placing the locus of revelatory text in the life and ministry of Jesus and not in the androcentric text. Thus, since the text of the early Christian movement does not speak of women’s contribution or historical, or theological experience, it becomes imperative to find ways to break the silence concerning woman’s historical and theological contributions and experience, as generated from historical text and theological redaction (:41).

This methodology requires a search for clues and allusions that direct us to the reality about which the text is silent, and in the case here specifically, the history and contribution of women. It means that one has not just to accept the text and its data as correct and accurate, but one has to read the silence of the androcentric texts and find clues to the egalitarian reality of the early Christian movement. In so doing the blueprint of androcentric design is challenged, and women as well as men are placed into the centre of early Christian history. Such a feminist critical method is possible when one not only relies on historical fact or invents evidence but when one engages in an imaginative reconstruction of historical reality. In others words one has to dig deep to bring to light the essentials. Fiorenza rightly calls this an act of feminist transformation, which would be very much reliant on a thorough critical analysis of the past (:42).

For Fiorenza, a feminist critical analysis of a biblical text on woman is not enough, for women and not men are always the object of historical critical enquiry and theological discussion. She suggests then that a thorough critique of the androcentric

framework that has thus far not had any critical reflection on their systemic presuppositions and implications. She feels that the historical role of women is problematic because maleness is the norm (:42)

And since most often things are understood in terms of maleness, being the norm. Whenever we refer to man as the scientific and historical subject, we mean male. Thus, male existence is the standard for human existence. Woman on the other hand is then viewed as a shift from the norm. She is seen as the outsider, and as such is not an autonomous being but is defined relative to man. He is the absolute; she is the other. Society has also followed this mindset. Thus, then it is not surprising to find that women in such a worldview are extremely marginalized. This continues both in the original biblical sources and the androcentric interpretation owing to its patriarchal reconstructions. Thus, it is imperative that feminist analysis should pay attention to androcentrism of historical text, contemporary scholarly reconstruction of text and their social context (:43).

Fiorenza's analysis is structured into following categories, namely androcentric translations and interpretations, androcentric selection of historical traditions, patriarchal canonization and function, androcentric projection and historical imagination (:43-57)

In her discussion concerning androcentric translations and interpretations, Fiorenza points out that the biblical language is androcentric language. The biblical text and the liturgy in the church constantly portray the male bias and exclusiveness of our own culture and language. She questions whether this is deliberate exclusivity. She calls for biblical translators to confront the issue by ensuring that the translation historically fits its context and is interpreted correctly. She makes a valid point here, saying that while appropriate translation of masculine metaphors and androcentric language remains a difficult task, and is important in ensuring contemporary language, these translations are to provide, but also to take serious note of, its implications of our understanding of the biblical text as historical sources (:43).

Therefore, a historically adequate translation must take into consideration the culture in which interpretations functioned. In this case patriarchal culture, which only

mentioned women in exceptional or problematic situations, but fails to mention women in normal situations. Fiorenza argues further, stating that a historically adequate translation and interpretation must also acknowledge the limitations of androcentric language and reject the topical approach to women in the New Testament as methodically inadequate. She considers a good translation is one that is perceptive in its interpretation in that it transfers meaning from one language context to another. She also remarks that every translation is also influenced by the contemporary perspective, of the translators, as evidenced by the different contemporary Bible translations (:44-46).

In her next section concerning androcentric selection of historical traditions, Fiorenza argues that one could maintain that androcentric interpretation of early Christianity was relevant to its sources that speak about women and their role in the early church, which was rare and mostly in polemic argument. Thus, one could argue that the historical marginality of women is not created by contemporary exegesis or interpretation but rather presents the historical fact, that women were indeed, marginal in the fellowship of Jesus and in early Christianity (:48).

Fiorenza counters this argument by pointing to the evidence from the insights gained from form criticism, source criticism, and redaction criticism, which have pointed out that early Christian writings are all not factual, objective transcripts. The early Christian authors have arranged and selected their sources and materials according to their theological intentions and practical objectives. And since these authors lived in a predominantly patriarchal world, their work is conditioned by this mentality. Thus, information concerning women's activities would be scarce owing to it being deemed unimportant or threatening. Further evidence is found in the contradictions of the sources and their lack of clarity and division concerning the role of women in early Christianity, as evident in the comparisons of New Testament writings. Fiorenza's other piece of evidence is found in a textual-critical study of New Testament texts and variant readings that show an active elimination of women from the text has been done (:49-52).

Patriarchal canonization and function argues that textual and historical marginalisation of women is a by-product of the patristic selection and canonization

process of scripture. She argues that this is so, since the canonization of early Christian writings took place during the time when there was a struggle for or against women's leadership among different parts of the church. Therefore, the need arises to question the patristic model of interpretation of women's leadership and orthodoxy with patriarchal structures (:53).

Fiorenza's points out that both the patristic church as well as other groups and those advocates for the ecclesial leadership of women share the orthodox understanding of history that Jesus founded the church and gave his revelation to the apostles who proclaimed this to the world. Both claim succession and apostolic tradition for such leadership, to affirm their own authenticity. With each choosing passages of scripture that support their particular case. This gives rise to a hermeneutics of suspicion, since the information on women is not accurate or adequately portrayed (:54-55).

Therefore, there is the need for the broadening of sources and information that is used as the historical and theological basis for reconstruction of early Christian history. A history that is truly ecumenical, and that includes all Christian groups and their activities and which involves the testing of their preservation and transmission of apostolic inclusiveness and equality (:56).

Fiorenza moves onto the question of androcentric projection, and begins with a discussion of the work of Jacob Neusner, who applies the analytic-heuristic concept of androcentrism to patristic texts. She draws the following conclusions. First she mentions the aspects that need to be considered when discussing statements by Greco-Roman writers' on women as pointed out by K. Thraede. First, the texts are to be seen in their immediate textual context. Second, texts must also be analysed in their specific social –political context in order to establish its function. And thirdly one must keep in mind that normative text often maintain that something is a historical fact and a given reality, while often it is not so (:57-59).

As such, androcentric- patriarchal text cannot be taken at face value and the systematic analysis must go together with feminist hermeneutics of suspicion. Therefore, it is always good to remember that as androcentric texts, early Christian sources are theological interpretations, arguments, projections and selections rooted in patriarchal culture. So, such texts must always be evaluated historically in their

particular time and culture and assessed theologically in terms of feminist scale of values (:60).

Fiorenza concludes her methodological introduction with a discussion on historical imagination and androcentric texts. With the discovery that some early Christian writings are less androcentric and contain more material on women than others, female authorship for such writings becomes a possibility. Fiorenza sees this suggestion as having much imaginative-theological value since it opens up the possibility to claim the attribution of female apostolic authority and theological authority for women. However, she is mindful of the fact that women as well as men have been socialised into the same androcentric culture and mindset (:61).

Thus, all early Christian writings either by male or female authorship, must be analysed or tested critically. In an attempt to break the hold of androcentric text on our historical imagination, she has encouraged students to write stories and letters from the view of leading women in early Christianity. Such an exercise is seen to help in balance the impact of androcentric texts and their unarticulated patriarchal mindset. One such exercise highlighted the educational and imaginative value of retelling and rewriting biblical androcentric texts from a feminist critical perspective (:61).

Thus in order to reach the aim of this paper will, it take the following shape. We shall begin with a search into the origins of leprosy in order gain an understanding of how it was understood in antiquity in comparison to our understanding today. This search includes a search into the Jewish and Hellenistic literature.

This is followed by an investigation into the Old Testament Laws for evidence of leprosy, its treatment and the effects that this had upon the society at that time. This is followed by an investigation into the time of Jesus and the people of his time and their approach to healing and to those who suffered from leprosy. Our final chapter looks at what would Jesus' approach have been to people with AIDS, judging from his approach to those who were suffering with leprosy.

MOTIVATION

Leprosy in biblical times was a stigmatised skin disease. It was not an easily recognisable skin disease because any skin disease was suspected of being leprosy. However leprosy as a skin disease could not be hidden, because it showed quite easily. People who had contracted leprosy were considered impure and unclean and were cast out of society. Today however, we have a cure for people with leprosy and it is not considered a terminal disease. However, we have indeed an incurable disease, namely AIDS.

My question is, how do we consider people with AIDS today, especially women. Are they being treated as unclean, even though we cannot see the disease, or are they also the outcasts of our society today? My guess is that women are the victims today, as much as they were in biblical times, rather than the perpetrators. Women living with AIDS today is what motivated me to investigate the ancient biblical times to see how women at that time coped with an incurable disease in a society that treated them as outcasts. Thus, my study will focus on women with leprosy in ancient biblical times, but also will include a section on women with AIDS today for the sake of relevance.

CHAPTER ONE

THE STUDY OF LEPROSY AS A MEDICAL CONDITION IN THE ANCIENT WORLD AND TODAY

This chapter seeks to understand leprosy as a medical condition as it was known in the ancient world and how we have come to understand it today. It also seeks to find its effects on women if any during that time. In taking such an approach, it is imperative that we look into the various terms used to describe leprosy in its particular time frame and make connections with our modern understanding of leprosy. We also find it necessary to explain the differences in our understanding of sickness, illness and disease.

1.1 Study of leprosy in the ancient world

Seybold and Mueller (1981:67) mention that several medical historical investigations have been done concerning leprosy in the ancient world. In the Hebrew language, it is called *sara 'at* and in the Greek, it is called *lepra*. The investigation proved that one, can be sure that the terms used biblically (*lepra*, *sara 'at* known as 'scaly white rash') had nothing in common with modern day leprosy also known as Hansen's disease discovered in 1868 (Browne 1977:18,19). This disease was known in India during antiquity and was first brought into the Near East by the troops of Alexander the Great. No earlier evidence was found in the Near East in spite of comprehensive investigation.

The Arabian physician John of Damascus documented in 777-857 C.E. that, during the Middle Ages the term *lepra* was equated with *elephas* (elephantiasis) by the Greeks. These terms became synonymous with scandalous consequences. The contempt of biblical leprosy was transferred to those with actual leprosy. Thus, the World Health Organisation opposed the use of the term leprosy in order to protect those suffering from it (Browne 1977: 20, 25).

The Old Testament disease called *sara'at* was diagnosed as “wasp sting”. Both *sara'art* and *lepra* found in the Bible encompasses a group of diseases modern medicine can identify. None of these diagnoses point clearly to true leprosy.

Seybold and Mueller (1981: 69) suggest that these diagnoses included psoriasis (scaliness), *favus* or *vitiligo* and other diseases with similar symptoms (eczema, erysipelas, growths and rashes). Psoriasis can be described as ‘a chronic, non-infectious skin disease characterised by well marked, highly raised red spots of various sizes, covered with dry, grey-white or silver scales. The infected places itch and if they are scratched, the scales come off as flakes and reveal a moist, reddish surface with tiny bleeding spots-like insect bites’ (Seybold and Mueller 1981: 69).

He also describes *vitiligo*, or *favus* as a much more dangerous disease affecting the skin of the head or the hair itself causing a yellow encrustation around the individuals hairs. It affects the deeper levels of the skin, causes a loss of hair and leaves behind a slick, shiny, thin white spot. According to Leviticus 13:29-37 *favus* is considered a part of *sara'at* although here *neteq* is meant’ (Seybold and Mueller 1981: 70).

Seybold and Mueller (1981: 70) maintain that the symptoms of *sara'at* are described according to customary comparisons, e.g. referring to the flake-like skin ‘(flake, not white) as snow’ (Exod.4: 6; Num.12: 10b; 2 Kings 5: 27). According to Hulse in Seybold and Mueller (1981:70), in Leviticus 13, the priest is given a detailed diagnosis in order to differentiate *sara'at* from other diseases that are similar but are not considered culturally impure. The signs are usually silver scales, a flesh-coloured under layer, with a white powdered non-coloured hair on the infected spots.

Both the Septuagint and the New Testament translate *sara'at* as *lepra* (the white-scaled’ disease); *lepsis* –scale’, and *lepo*-to peel or scale, thus, describing characteristics of psoriasis. This is evident in the Old Testament account of the situation of the leper, Miriam in Numbers 12 when struck with leprosy became ‘as snow’ she pleaded with Moses to pray that she does ‘not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mothers womb’. Browne (1977: 22) says the words, ‘flesh is half consumed’ suggest a serious mutilating disease that could mean true leprosy.

However, for Seybold and Mueller (1981:72) God's answer to Moses is that Miriam's case is like that of a woman whose father spat on her as punishment and thus is publicly denounced. Thus, she was 'shamed' for seven days and shut up 'outside the camp'. Only after this could she come back to be part of the community.

Seybold and Mueller (1981: 73) are correct in pointing out that these archaic-sounding features, the ideas and behaviour, show how those in ancient Israel viewed leprosy and how they acted towards it. Leprosy was considered a punishment and disgrace and a threat to life, an impurity of the highest order. Sadly, some today view Aids sufferers in the same manner. Therefore, it was important that the healing process was mediated by intercession resulting above all in rites of re-integration. It was primarily a cultic-religious, social problem. Those fighting the Aids pandemic today are faced with similar challenges and as in the case of leprosy, the healing process has to include integration and acceptance into the normal life of society.

1.2 Biblical Leprosy

It seems as though the writers of the bible viewed leprosy in much the same way as the rest of society. The Hebrew word *sara'at* has been much debated as to find its true meaning. Lepers in the bible are declared unclean and are shunned from society. Every person with a shiny spot on the skin, a swelling, or a scab is under suspicion of being afflicted with a lesion of *sara'at* and has to be examined by the priest to see if certain signs are present or not. Depending on the signs the person is declared unclean where upon s/he is isolated for seven days, after which he has to be examined again. If the signs are still there without change s/he is isolated again for another seven days after which s/he has to come for an examination again, in which s/he will be declared clean or unclean. If unclean, s/he must withdraw from the community and wear torn clothes and live alone apart from society, (Grmek, 1989: 160).

Philo a Jew who wrote in the 1st century C.E. said, that the demands on the purity of the priests were even greater. The above paragraph makes it clear that *sara'at*, which is known as the mark of divine wrath, is not a medical notion but a ritual one. It not only applies to a person but also to a house and clothing. The priest diagnoses the condition not the doctor. The ritual number seven determines the period of isolation.

The details and clinical pictures given by Leviticus do not prove true leprosy, but a set of skin diseases. Thus, Grmek with a few other authorities on the subject rejects a pure and simple identification of biblical *sara'at* with leprosy (1989: 161).

Grmek (1989: 161) draws attention to the findings of Hulse concerning certain biblical interpretations that describe a skin infected with *sara'at*. The passage usually read, 'white as snow' actually says 'like snow', also the scales that detach themselves from the skin are like snowflakes, not the white colour of diseased skin. Grmek in support of Hulse says: "This interpretation of *sara'at* is particularly a scaling disease whose ritual impurity stems precisely from such waste or loss of integument".

The book of Leviticus is a text of rules and specification of early diagnoses of a physical state of uncleanness, thus a medical analysis is out of the question. Leviticus is only interested in the initial doubtful stages of leprosy. Therefore, certain important signs of leprosy have escaped their attention. However, the commentators of the Talmud knew that spots of *sara'at* are numb thus for them the disease included true leprosy (Grmek 1989:161).

It has been asserted that the morphology of *sara'at* is akin to *dalleget* 'inflammation' (Deut 28:22) and *qarahat* 'baldness' (v24) (Sawyer in Milgrom 1991:775). This disease however cannot be identified with leprosy for even the LXX call it by a distinctive term, *lepra* 'scaly condition', not by *elephantiasis* 'leprosy.' According to the most recent investigation, the disease that fulfils most of the characteristics of this chapter is psoriasis, with the exception of *neteq* (v31) which, describes *favus* Hulse (in Milgrom 1991:775)

Hulse (in Milgrom 1991:775) suggests another translation for the sores in this chapter, which is 'a repulsive scaly skin disease'. Scaling is the common denominator in all the sores described in this chapter. However 'repulsive' must be rejected because *sara'at* is a medical term thus neutral without an aesthetic component. *Sara'at* 'scale disease' is the equivalent of the LXX *lepra*. *Sara'at* is a ritually impure affection in the bible, which implies that there are other affections. Rabbinic Hebrew

abstains from the term *sara'at* in favor of *nega* (m. Neg. 1:1) which suggest that they are aware that *sara'at* cannot be identified with one particular disease but comprises multiple diseases.

1.3 Defining Health and Sickness, Disease, Illness and Healing

The terms sickness, illness and disease are often used interchangeably on the assumption that they refer more or less to one and the same thing. This however is not the case.

Pilch (2000:24) is of the view that health as understood from an anthropological perspective is a condition of well-being as understood by a given culture. In other words, every community has its own understanding of health and its own well-established ways of maintaining health based upon that community's definition of well-being.

Pilch (2000: 24) defines sickness as a blanket term used to label real human experience of disease or illness. Gilbert (1996:8) argues that while disease is a physical concept linked mainly to the body, illness is a psychological concept linked to the individual, while sickness on the other hand is a sociological concept linked to society. Thus, sickness can be defined as a social condition that applies to people who are considered by others as sick or diseased.

Disease for Pilch (2000:24) is then understood not as a reality but rather as a way of explaining abnormalities in the structure/s or function/s of human organs and systems. The concept of disease attempts to correlate constellations of signs and symptoms for the purpose of explanation, prediction and control. For Gilbert (1996:7) the term disease is used to refer to objective conditions in which the internal functioning of the body as a biological organism weakens, thus only licensed health professionals can diagnose and treat it.

Pilch (2000:24) understands illness as a concept that societies use to help their description and understanding of illness and certain socially disvalued states including but not limited to disease. Illness is both a personal and social reality therefore a

cultural construct. Culture dictates what to perceive, value, and express, and then how to live with illness.

Gilbert (1996:8) on the other hand takes illness to mean the experience of the disease, and therefore it relates to a way of being for the individual. He further describes it as subjective phenomena, where the individual describes her/himself as not well.

Healing then is understood as an attempt to provide personal and social meaning for the life problems created by sickness. In his research, Pilch found that modern biomedicine is only concerned with curing the disease while the person is searching for healing of the illness.

This is evident in the following story Gilbert relates:

“An African mother took her child, who was suffering from a disease commonly associated with malnutrition, to a local clinic. The doctor diagnosed the disease and prescribed appropriate medication. Two days later, the child is much improved, but after a few weeks, the symptoms return. As a result, the mother decides that the western medicine was not effective, and seeks help from a indigenous African healer.

This healer who knows the background of the family quite well, divines the cause of the illness to wrath of the ancestors. The ancestors who watch over the living, are displeased with the father’s behaviour – he has been drinking excessively and consequently lost his job a few months previously. He is therefore neglecting his responsibilities as father and breadwinner, and the ancestors are punishing him by causing his child to become ill. The cure involves mending his ways”(Gilbert 1996: 77, 78).

From this tract one can see that both Gilbert and Pilch view illness as a personal and social reality therefore a cultural construct. Therefore, culture dictates what to perceive, what to value, how express, and then how to live with illness.

Comaroff (1982:52) in her article on medicine; symbol and ideology in problem of medical knowledge (Wright and Treacher), did her study among Tshidi-Barolong of

Southern Africa, and finds the same understanding of illness. She found that the Tshidi-Barolong, perceive illness as a unified cosmological scheme, she writes that “The relationship between man, woman and spirit and nature are articulated through a symbolic order, which configures perceptions of self, society and causality in a manner very different from that of our own mode of thought, and entails a very different epistemology.”

Illness, or more precisely ‘affliction’ is experienced as a dislocation in the ordered set of social relations and cosmological categories, which encompass the subject. Though it is made manifest in the being of a particular sufferer, such illness expresses a wider disturbance in the web of relations of which the victim is a part – relations which are once physical, social and moral. Illness is thus a comment upon the state of accommodation between a particular sufferer and his wider context.

Pilch and Comaroff use the term illness as an overarching concept into which the terms sickness and disease are incorporated. For them illness is defined and understood in the context of one’s society and their perception of the particular illness. Gilbert sees illness as a matter for the individual to decide. Thus, for Gilbert the disease is to be diagnosed and treated by health professionals only. However, for both Comaroff, Gilbert and Pilch a holistic understanding that includes the view of the wider society and the health professional is needed.

Thus, the relevant question for us to ask here would be where does leprosy fit in? Is it to be understood as an illness that takes into consideration the views of the whole of society or as a disease that affects only the individual and concerns only the affected persons? I chose to follow Pilch and Comaroff, for I find that leprosy is an illness that affects not only the individual but also his/ her whole society as well. The person may have contracted the disease but the illness affects the whole community. Thus, holistic healing is required.

1.4 Summary of Findings

In our search for leprosy as a medical condition and how it has been understood then and today, we found that leprosy did exist in India and was first brought to the Near East by the troops of Alexander. However, the terms *lepra* and *sara'at*, which the bible uses, may sometimes have nothing to do with the way we understand leprosy today, though there may be significant overlaps at times.

Our search though did not find any specific evidence on the effects of leprosy on woman from a medical point of view.

We also found that illness must be understood within the context of one's cultural setting and background. Both the view of the individual and his/her particular cultural setting is to be considered, thus requiring a holistic approach. This holistic approach is required for our understanding of leprosy as an illness for the people of the ancient world, since they were community orientated. The same applies to the people of the bible who were of the ancient world.

This then brings us to our next chapter on Old Testament laws concerning leprosy, which seeks to find out how they understood leprosy as a skin disease and how it affected the people who carried the disease and their society.

CHAPTER TWO

OLD TESTAMENT LAWS CONCERNING LEPROSY

This chapter focuses on four different texts, firstly to see what they have to say concerning leprosy as a skin disease, its treatment, its effects on the life of the person who contracts it, its effects on the religious community during biblical times. The relationship between the text and its sources will be explored in order to gain insight as to intentions of the writers concerning moral and purity issues as leprosy would have been dealt with under this category. I firstly begin with a discussion of the texts and their background, and how the Pentateuch was shaped in order to identify the relevant sources.

2.1 The Shaping of the Pentateuch

Although these texts come from four different sources, they all are part of the Pentateuch, (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). These books have different sources and meanings, and are written by different people or groups at different times. The texts from Leviticus 13: 1-47; 14:1-32 are from the Priestly source, the text of Numbers 12: 1-16 is either from the Yahwist source or the Elohist source and the text from Deuteronomy 24: 8,9 is from the Deuteronomist source.

The sources then are:

1. The Yahwist (J)
2. The Elohist (E)
3. The Priestly (P)
4. The Deuteronomist (D)

From here on their initials, J, E, P, and D will refer to each.

2.1.1 The Yahwist

The J source was the earliest. It began with Gen.2.4b, and its various parts are found in Genesis, Exodus and Numbers, (Whybray1987: 20,21). J recorded the complete story of God's actions from the beginning of the world. According to Boadt (1984:98) the J source forms the heart of the structure of the Pentateuch. All the other traditions

are built around J. It covers only the books of Genesis through Numbers. It is not a collection of individual events, but one complete story. The theology of J was to explain the religious faith and the spirit of the nation. His writings became the foundation for Israel's future meditation upon Yahweh's love (Boadt 1984:98).

2.1.2 The Elohist

E is the second major source in the Pentateuch. It is a reworked account of J. It is believed that this work took place in the Northern kingdom after Solomon's death. E begins with the story of Abraham in Genesis chapter 15 and then follows the same general course as found in J. J and E were later combined to form 'JE' by a redactor (RJE). The redaction process involved the omission of parts of J and E, especially of the latter.

It is not always easy to distinguish J from E because both cover the same material, and the overlapping of the sources especially after (Exodus 3) when God revealed his name to Moses, then both E and P call God Yahweh just like J had done all along (Boadt 1984: 102,103). The text from the book of Numbers 12:1-16 is either from J or E. P covers from Num.1-10, J and E covers most of the other parts of Num. In E God keeps, his divine distance and majesty and communicates through messengers and dreams (Genesis 20:3) (Boadt 1984:101,102). The themes of submission to God and the willingness to accept his will and testing is strong in E. E is more concerned about ethical and moral issues than J.

2.1.3 The Deuteronomist

The D source consisted, mainly of the book of Deuteronomy. D was later added to JE by a second redactor (RD), who also inserted a few passages into JE and incorporated a few passages from JE into D. D is a mixture of references to the old covenant laws of the Book of Exodus and later of idolatry and unfaithfulness in the promised land. (Boadt 1984:354). Boadt (1984: 354) says that it claims to be from the lips of Moses, but there is no evidence of the early style or flavour of the old Yahwist or Elohist traditions that tell the story of Moses. Rather it is full of war images, calling the people to 'holy war, especially the following sections of chapter 20:1-20, 21:10-14,

23:10-15 and almost all of chapter 7, it speaks of the coming exile and disaster (Deuteronomy 4:26-31, 28:47-53 and 30:1-10) (Boadt 1984:354). For Layman (1992:1090) the laws in the D source are moral exhortations owing to its inward nature.

2.1.4 The Priestly source

P was the last narrative source. The Priestly source (P) began with Gen.1.1 and followed the same chronological order as the J. material and P was found to be the sole source of Exodus 25-31, 35-40 and Leviticus. The reason for P was to supplement J and E concerning the historical traditions of Israel with special material on worship, observance of the covenant in day to day living, and social structures of Israelite community. P seems to have been written while the Israelites were in exile. P wrote to help the people keep their faith in Yahweh, at a time when all seemed lost. Therefore, he chose to outline aspects of Israel's faith that were valid (Boadt 1984: 103).

These included the reasons for keeping the Sabbath in Genesis.1 and its observance Genesis.2- 3. The origins of circumcision in Gen.17 the divine commands, to obey all the cultic and religious laws in Lev.1-27, and Num.1-10, 25-36. The important role of the high priest next to Moses in Exodus 4:28; and Numbers 1. The giving of the law at Sinai and the building of the tent and the ark is central to the tradition of P (Boadt 1984:103,104)

The call to obedience to the divine commands in cultic and religious laws, especially issues concerning purity, was important to P. This importance was so because of P's stress on holiness in the sanctuary for the people of Israel (Milgrom (1991:791). Leprosy is one of those issues that was associated with purity, as outlined in the book of Leviticus.

Whybray (1987: 20,21) says that it is probable that P was combined with JED by a third redactor (RP) to form the present Pentateuch. A few passages (e.g. Genesis 14) are not derived from any of the main four sources but must be regarded as

independent pieces. A few other passages were added after the bulk of the Pentateuch was completed.

2.1.5 Summary

From our discussion of the shaping of the Pentateuch, our conclusions are as follows. Firstly, we notice that the position of D is different from the other sources. While JEP run together from Genesis through Numbers and are interwoven into one another, D however takes an attached position, and is concerned mainly with the history of Moses and the liberation.

The P source is mainly concerned with moral and purity issues. This stems from the holiness code and the priestly code, which was motivated by the desire for divine holiness for the people and the priesthood. P chose to strengthen the faith of the people in Yahweh.

The J source is concerned primarily with the faith and love of Yahweh for Israel, in spite of Israel's disobedience. J motivates and encourages Israel to be faithful to Yahweh in spite of difficult circumstances.

The E source is concerned with ethical issues. E stresses upon Israel's submission to Yahweh and tries to increase faith by showing Yahweh's interest in his people by sending his messengers and communicating with them by means of dreams.

2.2 Leviticus 13: 1-46

This text of Leviticus 13:1-47 was written by the priestly source. As we have seen from our previous section the priestly source is concerned with moral and purity issues, with which the issue of leprosy is associated. This text would help us in our search for evidence of leprosy, its treatment, effect on the individual and the community, especially the women.

2.2.1 Leviticus 13: 2-17

¹ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron,

² “If someone has on his skin a scab or pustule or blotch which appears to be the sore of leprosy, he shall be brought to Aaron, the priest, or to one of the priests among his descendants,

³ who shall examine the sore on his skin. If the hair on the sore has turned white and the sore itself shows that it has penetrated below the skin, it is indeed the sore of leprosy; the priest, on seeing this, shall declare the man unclean.

⁴ If, however, the blotch on the skin is white, but does not seem to have penetrated below the skin, nor has the hair turned white, the priest shall quarantine the stricken man for seven days.

⁵ On the seventh day the priest shall again examine him. If he judges that the sore has remained unchanged and has not spread on the skin, the priest shall quarantine him for another seven days,

⁶ and once more examine him on the seventh day. If the sore is now dying out and has not spread on the skin, the priest shall declare the man clean; it was merely eczema. The man shall wash his garments and so become clean.

⁷ But if, after he has shown himself to the priest to be declared clean, the eczema spreads at all on his skin, he shall once more show himself to the priest.

⁸ Should the priest, on examining it, find that the eczema has indeed spread on the skin, he shall declare the man unclean; it is leprosy.

b. Discolorations

⁹ “When someone is stricken with leprosy, he shall be brought to the priest.

¹⁰ Should the priest, on examining him, find that there is a white scab on the skin which, has turned the hair white and that there is raw flesh in it,

¹¹ it is skin leprosy that has long developed. The priest shall declare the man unclean without first quarantining him, since he is certainly unclean.

¹² If leprosy breaks out on the skin and, as far as the priest can see, covers all the skin of the stricken man from head to foot,

¹³ should the priest then, on examining him, find that the leprosy does cover his whole body, he shall declare the stricken man clean; since it has all turned white, the man is clean.

¹⁴ But as soon as raw flesh appears on him, he is unclean;

¹⁵ on observing the raw flesh, the priest shall declare him unclean, because raw flesh is unclean; it is leprosy.

¹⁶ If, however, the raw flesh again turns white, he shall return to the priest;

¹⁷ should the latter, on examining him, find that the sore has indeed turned white, he shall declare the stricken man clean, and thus he will be clean. 1

¹ *The New American Bible*. (Nashville, Tennessee: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) 1997.

2.2.1.1 Discussion on verses 2-17

“ *a person* ” - According to Milgrom (1991:791) this expression includes women and children but excludes resident aliens, and all non-Israelites. Such a person is allowed to move around but is not allowed into the temple until the period of quarantine. This is so because chapter thirteen belongs to P – a source that restricts holiness to the sanctuary.

“ *Discolorations, scabs, and shiny marks* ” – These are the main criteria used for diagnosing leprosy. If the hair changed to white and the affection was deeper than the skin, the priest declares the person impure. In the case of white shiny marks when the scaliness appears only on the surface and the hair is not changed to white, the priest isolates the person for one week. After that week, if the leprosy had not spread s/he is isolated for another week. After this second week if the leprosy has faded and not spread, it is considered a scab, and the priest pronounces him/her pure.

“ *Scab (sappahat)* ” – This term only occurs here and in 14:59 and in the variant (*mispahat* in vs 6,7,8). The wound is declared pure if it does not spread. Scab formation is important in determining the healing process (Milgrom 1991: 774). *But if the scab should spread* – the scab is impure irrespective of its appearance but it is only declared impure if it spreads. Fading is a necessary aspect in declaring the sore healed.

“ *Shiny mark (baheret)* ” this term only appears in this context (vv 2,4,19, 23,24, 25, 26, 28, 38; 39; 14: 56). This is related to *bi aru*, which means ‘spot on the skin’ (Milgrom 1991: 774).

“ *Develops, on the skin of his body* ” - It starts with a skin eruption, but the spots must grow to a certain size before it turns into leprosy. And the sores must appear on the fleshy part of the body not the head because this is disease of the skin.

“ *It shall be reported to Aaron or to one of his sons, the priests* ”: - This means to any one of the priests. There is no need to go to the main temple.

“He shall pronounce” – The person suspected of leprosy is in a state of impurity and the priests are given the responsibility of diagnosing a person. And are the ones who declare the person impure. I agree with Matthews’ (1997: 19) suggestion that leprosy as a plague was rather an uncleanness than a disease; or, at least, so the law considered it, and therefore priests were seeing to it not physicians.

And if the priest sees – The symptoms of v7 are repeated in order to emphasise that only the priest can determine whether the disease has returned.

Walton and Matthews (1997: 19) argue further that Christ is said to cleanse lepers, not to cure them. They also says that we do not read of anyone who died of the disease. Walton and Matthews (1997: 19, 20) were further convinced that this uncleanness was immediately inflicted by the hand of God, and came not from natural causes, as other diseases; and therefore must be managed according to a divine law. They cite the examples of Miriam’s leprosy, and Gehazi’s, and king Uzziah’s, which they believe were all the punishments of particular sins: “and, if generally this was so, much care was taken to distinguish it from a common disease, so that no one would suffer unless it was really so”.

“Shall quarantine” – once a person is declared impure by the priests, the person is separated from the unaffected people and from normal everyday life. The separation means that the affected person has to move outside the camp for example Mariam, Num 12:14-15. In other cases as in the case of King Uzziah, 2 Kings15: 5; 2 Chr. 26:21, the person is separated and placed in a special area outside the camp. However, we see on (page 29) that this separation did not apply to King Uzziah, to the extent of being placed outside the camp, because he was only banished from the royal compound not from the city of Jerusalem.

“For seven days” – a period of seven days is time given in determining whether the disease has cleared up or if more time was required. Milgrom (1991:780) is of the understanding that that this period of seven days has been greatly influenced by the seven-day ritual of the priestly writers. For example: priestly consecration (8:33,35); severe impurity (12:2; 13; 15:13,19,24); purificatory periods (14:8,9,15:28); festivals (23:6, 18,34); sabbaticals (23:3; 25:4,8).

“And been pronounced pure” – after the end of the second week s/he presents him/herself to the priest in order that the priest would pronounce him pure.

He shall wash his clothes – this is a sign that the impurity was minor. Although the person ends up pure, he is still separated. During the time of separation, the impurity contaminates not only his clothes but also everything in the house. No matter how small the infection as far as the rabbis were concerned the person still had to be separated (Milgrom 1991:781).

When a person has – These words are a repetition of the introduction in verse two. It is needed to make a distinction between the two cases. In other words after the shiny spots are healed in verse 6 a white discoloration occurs. S/he is brought to the priest by the family or friends on whom s/he dependant.

A scaly affection - The words scaly affection is used because it does not describe the actual disease but only its symptoms as in v2.

Chronic – meaning: ‘be old’ figuratively speaking ‘be residing for a long time’ (Deut 4:25). Here however the sore is not old, it just erupted, (Ehrlich in Milgrom 1991: 783) but is bound to recur and remain, so it is ‘chronic.’

For he is impure – The adjective *tame*’ implies indefinite impurity, which is irreversible by man.

Wherever the priest can see - According to the rabbis, the priest must see the discoloration at a glance. On this basis, they released twenty- four points on the outside area of the body, excluding the private parts. This weakens the rabbi’s argument and insistence that only the priest not the testimony of the victim or anyone else is decisive (see v3 when the priest see; Jastrow in Milgrom 1991:784). The priest do not examine the private parts of the individual, and is therefore not able to give an accurate diagnoses. But the victim who suffers with it knows exactly where s/he is affected.

Because he has turned all white, he is pure – The scaly crust peels off, leaving white beneath (Driver 1963: 576a). It is a sign of exfoliative dermatitis (Hulse in Milgrom 1991:785). The term all white signifies that the person is clean, thus meaning s/he is whole. In the O.T. when a person is whole, or without blemish s/he is considered holy and acceptable to God.

He shall be impure - refers to brief, temporary impurity.

He shall come - means 'he himself will come'. No one will bring him to the priest or the priest will not go to him, but he himself will go on his own accord because he sees his sores are healing and he worthily returns to his community.

2.2.2- Leviticus 13: 18-28

¹⁸“If a man who had a boil on his skin which later healed,

¹⁹ should now in the place of the boil have a white scab or a pink blotch, he shall show himself to the priest.

²⁰ If the latter, on examination, sees that it is deeper than the skin and that the hair has turned white, he shall declare the man unclean; it is the sore of leprosy that has broken out in the boil.

²¹ But if the priest, on examining him, finds that there is no white hair in it and that it is not deeper than the skin and is already dying out, the priest shall quarantine him for seven days.

²² If it has then spread on the skin, the priest shall declare him unclean; the man is stricken.

²³ But if the blotch remains in its place without spreading, it is merely the scar of the boil; the priest shall therefore declare him clean.

Burns

²⁴“If a man had a burn on his skin, and the proud flesh of the burn now becomes a pink or a white blotch,

²⁵ the priest shall examine it. If the hair has turned white on the blotch and this seems to have penetrated below the skin, it is leprosy that has broken out in the burn; the priest shall therefore declare him unclean and stricken with leprosy.

²⁶ But if the priest, on examining it, finds that there is no white hair on the blotch and that this is not deeper than the skin and is already dying out, the priest shall quarantine him for seven days.

²⁷ Should the priest, when examining it on the seventh day, find that it has spread at all on the skin, he shall declare the man unclean and stricken with leprosy.

²⁸ But if the blotch remains in its place without spreading on the skin and is already dying out, it is merely the scab of the burn; the priest shall therefore declare the man clean, since it is only the scar of the burn²

² *The New American Bible*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) 1997

2.2.2.1 Discussion on Boils and Burns 18-28

These verses deal with boils and burns and gives similar guidance on how to determine whether they had turned into leprosy. In order to make sure whether it was leprosy a second look was always needed, after which the priest shall separate the person up seven days (vs. 26).

Leprosy that appears when a boil is getting healed and when a person is burned by hot coals or ashes, is to be treated more leniently than leprosy caused by other infections. Leprosy of the boils and burns appears in white discolorations or reddish white shiny marks. If the hair has not turned white and the sores appears not to be deeper than the surrounding skin the patient is isolated only for one week. After the week of mandatory separation period if the sore did not spread, it is taken to be a scab as a result from the boil or burn and the patient is pronounced pure.

According to Milgrom (1991:791) the reason for the occurrences of boils in scripture is because of it being visible and is considered a dreaded disease sent by God, because of the breaking of the covenant, (Exodus 9:9, 10, 11; 2 Kings 20:7; Isaiah 38:21; Job 2: 7; Deuteronomy 28:27, 35).

2.2.3 Leviticus 13: 29-37 - Scalls

²⁹ “When a man or a woman has a sore on the head or cheek,

³⁰ should the priest, on examining it, find that the sore has penetrated below the skin and that there is fine yellow hair on it, the priest shall declare the person unclean, for this is scall, a leprous disease of the head or cheek.

³¹ But if the priest, on examining the scall sore, finds that it has not penetrated below the skin, though the hair on it may not be black, the priest shall quarantine the person with scall sore for seven days,

³² and on the seventh day again examine the sore. If the scall has not spread and has no yellow hair on it and does not seem to have penetrated below the skin,

³³ the man shall shave himself, but not on the diseased spot. Then the priest shall quarantine him for another seven days.

³⁴ If the priest, when examining the scall on the seventh day, finds that it has not spread on the skin and that it has not penetrated below the skin, he shall declare the man clean; the latter shall wash his garments, and thus he will be clean.

³⁵ But if the scall spreads at all on his skin after he has been declared clean,

³⁶ the priest shall again examine it. If the scall has indeed spread on the skin, he need not look for yellow hair; the man is surely unclean.

³⁷ If, however, he judges that the scall has remained in its place and that black hair has grown on it, the disease has been healed; the man is clean, and the priest shall declare him clean³

2.2.3.1. Discussion on Scalls 29-37

These verses deal with the infections of the hairy parts of the head, the scalp and the beard. The symptom for this is that the hair turns yellow. The yellowing of hair is diagnosed as *favus*. The treatment is the same as for scale disease describe in vv2-8. Again, we also notice that the instructions given by the priests, is the same as for the others. Separation for the required period of seven days followed by another seven if needed.

2.2.4 Leviticus 13: 38-39- Tetter

³⁸ “When the skin of a man or a woman is spotted with white blotches,
³⁹ the priest shall make an examination. If the blotches on the skin are white and already dying out, it is only tetter that has broken out on the skin, and the person therefore is clean⁴

2.2.4.1 Discussion on Leviticus 13:38-39 -Tetter

These verses give guidelines to the priests on how to consider numerous shiny marks found on the skin. A white faded skin eruption is considered pure and need no quarantine. It might be related to scale *vitiligo or leukoderma*. It is not contagious or dangerous (Milgrom 1991: 799).

2.2.5 Leviticus 13: 40-44 – Baldness

⁴⁰ “When a man loses the hair of his head, he is not unclean merely because of his bald crown.

⁴¹ So too, if he loses the hair on the front of his head, he is not unclean merely because of his bald forehead.

⁴² But when there is a pink sore on his bald crown or bald forehead, it is leprosy that is breaking out there.

⁴³ The priest shall examine him; and if the scab on the sore of the bald spot has the same pink appearance as that of skin leprosy of the fleshy part of the body,

³ *The New American Bible*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) 1997

⁴ *The New American Bible*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) 1997

⁴⁴ the man is leprous and unclean, and the priest shall declare him unclean by reason of the sore on his head⁵

2.2.5.1 Discussion on Baldness 40-44

These verses give instruction to priests regarding affections that appear upon baldheads. Ordinary baldness is impure when reddish-white patches mark it

When a man's hair –this shows that women are seldom affected by baldness as we also know and have experienced.

Bald on the forehead – Lack of hair from the crown forward over against the hair above the face. When King Uzziah was struck with, scale disease and his forehead shone, he was bald on his forehead, but his affection was impure.

Reddish-white -It is a form of *psoriasis*- the brightness of this colour that makes it impure (Milgrom 1991: 800).

2.2.6 Leviticus 13: 45-46 -A Certified Carrier

⁴⁵ “The one who bears the sore of leprosy shall keep his garments rent and his head bare, and shall muffle his beard; he shall cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean!’

⁴⁶ As long as the sore is on him he shall declare himself unclean, since he is in fact unclean. He shall dwell apart, making his abode outside the camp⁶

2.2.6.1 Discussion on verses 45-46

When the priest has confirmed the sufferer unclean, the unclean person must tear his/her clothes, leave his/her hair uncombed, cover his/her mouth with a veil, shout a warning to the people that s/he is impure, and be isolated outside the camp. These and certain features of his/her purification are strikingly similar to person that is contaminated when touching a dead person. In both cases, they rent their clothes, dishevel their hair (Lev.10: 6) and in both cases, they can contaminate others they or

⁵ *The New American Bible*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) 1997

⁶ *The New American Bible*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) 1997

their shadows pass over others (others are affected/become unclean just by being in the presence of the unclean person) and involve rituals utilizing cedar, hyssop, and crimson yarn (14:6; Num 19:6). The difference is that the corpse-contaminated person does not veil his mouth, warn others of his presence, or offer sacrifices for his purification (contrast 14:1-32) but requires the ashes of a red heifer (Num 19:1-12).

However the leprous person must put him/herself into the position of a mourner and cry, *Unclean, unclean*, in order to warn anyone not to come near, not for medical reasons as to say that the disease is contagious, but to keep them from becoming ritually unclean by touch or by his/her breath smell (Falwell 1997 50; Snaith 1967: 97; Wenham 1979: 200; Milgrom 1991: 804, 805).

“S/he shall dwell apart” – According to Wenham (1979: 200) this means that he must live by himself outside the camp as someone who is permanently unclean. For Snaith (1967: 97) the afflicted person has to stay permanently outside the camp.

In other words, s/he must live alone even separate from those who have other impurities, but not necessarily with the same disease (Milgrom 1991: 805). For me the question is: Why banish the person if the disease is not contagious, what difference does it make if s/he is ritually contagious and contaminates the whole community? For Milgrom the banishing is necessary because, it depends upon the ability of a person’s impurity to contaminate by overhang. For if the person remained among the people, they may come in contact with him/her without knowing it and then enter the sanctuary or eat sacred food. This contact between the impure and the sacred had to be avoided at all cost (Milgrom 1991:806).

Thus, Wenham (1979: 201) regards outside the camp as the place where one is furthest removed from God, the place to which the sinner and the impure were banished, (10:4-5; Num. 5:1-4; 12:14-15; 31:19-24) and the place where wrong doers were executed (Num.15: 35-36). So to live outside the camp meant one was cut off from the blessings of the covenant.

For Falwell (1997: 50) leprosy was not itself a sin, but a sad token of God’s displeasure and a terrible affliction to the suffering person. It brought shame to the

person's name, terminated his working life and cut the person from conversation with his friends and relations. All this came resulted from the banishment of the affected person until he/she was declared clean. Wenham (1979: 201) insists that the unclean person had to go into mourning, because s/he is considered good as dead because his/her life as a member of God's people is no more and experienced God's blessings no more since being outside the camp the unclean person was deprived of the usual covenant mercies.

The term "outside the camp" brings to mind an interesting question. Where was King Uzziah banished or confined to? Milgrom once again will help us to answer this question. Many scholars had attempted over the years to find the location of this confinement whether inside or outside the city but without success. According to 2 Chronicles 26:21 he was cut off from the house of the Lord the Temple, which was the royal chapel (Amos 7:13) adjoined to the royal palace (Ezek. 43:7-8). What one can draw from this explanation is that he was banished from the royal compound not from the city of Jerusalem. He also was buried with his fathers in the city of David (2 Kings 15:7) but not in the tombs of the Kings, which was adjacent to the royal sepulchre (2 Chronicles 21: 20; 24: 25; 28: 27) (Milgrom 1991: 807,808).

This banishment from society and the mainstream of everyday life gives the clear understanding that, in this particular culture, illness existed in a relationship to everyday life. Being diagnosed with a serious illness such as leprosy meant that one's relationship to others in your society had changed. It took on a new meaning. This new status of being ill changed one's status in the community, in society. In this particular culture it meant banishment with the further consequences of being spiritually cut-off from a right relationship with God as well. Being cut-off from God's blessings and the benefits of the covenant blessings.

Jean Comaroff (1982:51) in her paper on Medicine: symbol and ideology, attempts to show this interconnection of knowledge, symbol and ideology. She rightly points out that healing means human intervention in disorder. And she rightly states that illness calls into question particular cultural concepts and values. In this particular context here it is an intervention that calls for separation from everyday life until the sufferer

is deemed fit according to the cultural norms set by this particular community for re-entry into the mainstream of everyday life.

Comaroff (1982:63) continues by pointing out that illness also tests the system of relationships between the sufferer and his particular cultural system. It brings new meaning to the sufferer and to his/her cultural system. This is evident in this situation of leprosy. For leprosy had caused tensions among the people and had thus forced them to make boundaries separating each other even though the illness was not contagious. It brought about a change to their accepted system of socio-cultural relations.

Further still, this context also illustrates the point that healing does indeed play upon the relationship between physical and social and it forces human intervention and interaction. The physical body impacts on the social body in that what happens in the physical arena is acted out in society. And what happens in society is acted out on the physical body, so that the body becomes a “social map” According to Douglas in her book *purity and danger* 1966, all margins are dangerous. Any structure is vulnerable at its margins this was also the case for the Israelite community. Thus, the orifices of the body symbolises its vulnerable points. Matter issuing from the body’s open skin is most obvious and leprosy as a skin disease displayed danger to the whole community. And more so for the Israelites, to whom holiness meant wholeness and a person with leprosy posed a danger to the purity of the nation.

2.3 Leviticus 14: 1-32

¹ The LORD said to Moses,

² “This is the law for the victim of leprosy at the time of his purification. He shall be brought to the priest,

³ who is to go outside the camp to examine him. If the priest finds that the sore of leprosy has healed in the leper,

⁴ he shall order the man who is to be purified, to get two live, clean birds, as well as some cedar wood, scarlet yarn, and hyssop.

⁵ The priest shall then order him to slay one of the birds over an earthen vessel with spring water in it.

⁶ Taking the living bird with the cedar wood, the scarlet yarn and the hyssop, the priest shall dip them all in the blood of the bird that was slain over the spring water,

⁷ and then sprinkle seven times the man to be purified from his leprosy. When he has thus purified him, he shall let the living bird fly away over the countryside.

⁸ The man being purified shall then wash his garments and shave off all his hair and bathe in water; only when he is thus made clean may he come inside the camp; but he shall still remain outside his tent for seven days.

⁹ On the seventh day he shall again shave off all the hair of his head, his beard, his eyebrows, and any other hair he may have, and also wash his garments and bathe his body in water; and so he will be clean.

¹⁰ “On the eighth day he shall take two unblemished male lambs, one unblemished yearling ewe lamb, three tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for a cereal offering, and one log of oil.

¹¹ The priest who performs the purification ceremony shall place the man who is being purified, as well as all these offerings, before the LORD at the entrance of the meeting tent.

¹² Taking one of the male lambs, the priest shall present it as a guilt offering, along with the log of oil, waving them as a wave offering before the LORD.

¹³ (This lamb he shall slaughter in the sacred place where the sin offering and the holocaust are slaughtered; because, like the sin offering, the guilt offering belongs to the priest and is most sacred.)

¹⁴ Then the priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the tip of the man’s right ear, the thumb of his right hand, and the big toe of his right foot.

¹⁵ The priest shall also take the log of oil and pour some of it into the palm of his own left hand;

¹⁶ then, dipping his right forefinger in it, he shall sprinkle it seven times before the LORD.

¹⁷ Of the oil left in his hand the priest shall put some on the tip of the man’s right ear, the thumb of his right hand, and the big toe of his right foot, over the blood of the guilt offering.

¹⁸ The rest of the oil in his hand the priest shall put on the head of the man being purified. Thus shall the priest make atonement for him before the LORD.

¹⁹ Only after he has offered the sin offering in atonement for the man’s uncleanness shall the priest slaughter the holocaust

²⁰ and offer it, together with the cereal offering, on the altar before the LORD.

When the priest has thus made atonement for him, the man will be clean.

²¹ “If a man is poor and cannot afford so much, he shall take one male lamb for a guilt offering, to be used as a wave offering in atonement for himself, one tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for a cereal offering, a log of oil,

²² and two turtledoves or pigeons, which he can more easily afford, the one as a sin offering and the other as a holocaust.

²³ On the eighth day of his purification he shall bring them to the priest, at the entrance of the meeting tent before the LORD.

²⁴ Taking the guilt-offering lamb, along with the log of oil, the priest shall wave them as a wave offering before the LORD.

²⁵ When he has slaughtered the guilt-offering lamb, he shall take some of its blood, and put it on the tip of the right ear of the man being purified, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot.

²⁶ The priest shall then pour some of the oil into the palm of his own left hand

²⁷ and with his right forefinger sprinkle it seven times before the LORD.

²⁸ Some of the oil in his hand the priest shall also put on the tip of the man’s right ear, the thumb of his right hand, and the big toe of his right foot, over the blood of the guilt offering.

²⁹ The rest of the oil in his hand the priest shall put on the man's head. Thus shall he make atonement for him before the LORD.

³⁰ Then, of the turtledoves or pigeons, such as the man can afford,

³¹ the priest shall offer up one as a sin offering and the other as a holocaust, along with the cereal offering. Thus shall the priest make atonement before the LORD for the man who is to be purified.

³² This is the law for one afflicted with leprosy who has insufficient means for his purification”⁷

2.3.1 Discussion on Leviticus 14:1-32

These verses focus upon the rites of purification and the sacrifices. The priest is entirely responsible for the cleansing rite.

“*Outside the camp*” – The person who is cleared from scale disease has to undergo a change in status. From being a banished member to being a normal member of society, from uncleanness to cleanness and has to make the transition from one considered dead to life, by undergoing a ritual ceremony outside the camp. The priest has to go out of the camp to the person and examine him/her. The person remains unclean until the priest verifies that s/he is cured (Wenham 1979: 207; Milgrom 1991:831). If he finds the person physically healed (the affliction, rather than the afflicted is healed) he orders two clean birds to be brought.

For Milgrom (1991:834) the use of the bird ritual is taken from a pagan practice to invoke their gods in order to cure their diseases. Wenham (1979: 207) argues that in this regard Israel was different from her neighbours because the priest only diagnosed the disease (as leprosy) but has nothing to do with curing it. The patient has to totally rely on God for healing and not depend on magical rites and exorcism to be cured like her neighbours.

One of the two birds that are brought to the priest is killed and its blood is mixed with spring water in an earthenware vessel⁸. Some of the blood is sprinkled over the person using cedar, scarlet and hyssop. The living bird is dipped into the blood and then set

⁷ *The New American Bible*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) 1997

⁸ In Negaim 14:1 It is called living water

free⁹. The person has to shave all over and bath and wash his/her cloths. S/he can then enter the camp but not his/her house.

According to Milgrom (1991: 833) the birds used are wild birds and not domesticated ones in order to avoid them from returning to the community, with the impurities of the scale diseased person after it has been set free. Milgrom (1991:834) further points out that birds are chosen because: “ they transport the assumed freight of impurity upward and outward, to far-off distances whence the impurities cannot return”

Wenham (1979:208,209) associates the bird rite with the Day of Atonement ritual, where goats were used. With this ritual, one goat was used as a purification offering and the other as the scapegoat, which was driven into the wilderness bearing the nation’s sin symbolically. The other aspect that Wenham sees as similar to the Day of Atonement’s purification ritual is that the worshippers are being sprinkled seven times and the priest declares him/her clean (14: 7; 5: 7-10), except that the purification ritual was in the court of the tabernacle.

Cedar wood, scarlet and hyssop – the scarlet thread was used to tie together the cedar wood and hyssop. According to Jewish tradition, cedar was used because it was a high tree and the cause of leprosy was pride, and hyssop and ‘worm’ was used because the cure was humility. Scarlet- crimson yarn means the red of the worm. Cedar wood-stick, twig- colour is red. Hyssop – popular spice and herb in the near east, in the bible it is used to sprinkle (Moore 2000:21). The use of birds according to Snaith (1969: 100) (because in Hebrew the word for bird means cheep and twitter) is because the disease is a punishment for a chattering slander.

Calvin (in Wenham 1979:209) parallels this re-entry into normal everyday life with circumcision being on the eighth day after birth. Just as the baby was integrated into the community on the eighth day, so also, those who received healing from the scale disease are being born again, for they were considered dead and now they are alive again and are being accepted back into the community as new born. Milgrom (1991: 843) parallels this re-entry with a new mother, the menstruant, and a corpse-

⁹ Negaim 14:1 The tips of the wings and the tips of the tail are dipped in the blood of the slaughtered bird. The blood is also sprinkled seven times on the back of the leper’s hand.

contaminated person at the commencement of their purification period who contaminated by direct contact and must wait for seven days for the next stage of their purification.

These rituals of re-entry can also be paralleled with covenant rituals in Exodus 24. Four different sacrifices were required in the covenant ritual: burnt offering (Lev.1), cereal offering (Lev. 2), purification offering (Lev.4), and reparation offering (Lev.5). Three lambs were required, however if the person could not afford it, it could be substituted with doves in the case of the burnt and the purification offering. However, the reparation offering could not be less than a lamb (Wenham 1979:210; Negaim 14: 7).

According to Negaim 14:12 a man may bring a poor man's offering on behalf of his son or daughter or his bondsman or bondswoman. Rabbi Judah says that: "he must bring a rich man's offering on behalf of his wife; and the same applies to whatsoever other offerings she may be liable". One can gather from text like these that leprosy and its harsh effects also affected women.

The purpose of the sacrifices is as follows: Any unclean person who has been cleaned had to prepare a purification offering in order to clean the sanctuary, and a burnt offering, that brought reconciliation with God and symbolized a rededication of his/her life to God's service.

Thus, reparation offering was required of the cured person because his skin disease might have been caused by a trespass, even though he might not be able to identify his sin. This is also evident in Numbers 12:9ff; 2 Kings 5: 27; 2 Chronicles 26:17ff. The reparation offering also served as compensation to God for loss in the sense that at the time of the person's unclean state s/he was unable to bring sacrifices, tithes and first fruits. The blood of the reparation offering is smeared on the right ear, thumb, and toe of the cured person (vv. 14, 17; 8: 23ff.). This is to bring the purifying process, which started outside the camp, to a completion. The blood that was sprinkled on the altar was also smeared on the person to indicate his contact with the grace of God.

Wenham (1979:209) argues that this message was underlined in the next step where oil was dedicated to God, poured in the left hand of the priest and sprinkled before the Lord. The oil was put on the cured person's right ear, thumb and big toe and over his head¹⁰ (vv. 15-17, 26-29). Here the blood was used to unite the cleansed person with the altar and the oil served to bring union between God, the cleansed person and the priest, (Wenham 1979: 209; Negaim 14:7f.).

2.4 Numbers 12:1-16

¹ While they were in Hazeroth, Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses on the pretext of the marriage he had contracted with a Cushite woman.

² They complained, "Is it through Moses alone that the LORD speaks? Does he not speak through us also?" And the LORD heard this.

³ Now, Moses himself was by far the meekest man on the face of the earth.

⁴ So at once the LORD said to Moses and Aaron and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the meeting tent." And the three of them went.

⁵ Then the LORD came down in the column of cloud, and standing at the entrance of the tent, called Aaron and Miriam. When both came forward,

⁶ he said, "Now listen to the words of the LORD:

Should there be a prophet among you,
in visions will I reveal myself to him,
in dreams will I speak to him;

⁷ Not so with my servant Moses!

Throughout my house he bears my trust:

⁸ face to face I speak to him, plainly and not in riddles. The presence of the LORD he beholds. Why, then, did you not fear to speak against my servant Moses?"

⁹ So angry was the LORD against them that when he departed,

¹⁰ and the cloud withdrew from the tent, there was Miriam, a snow-white leper! When Aaron turned and saw her a leper,

¹¹ "Ah, my lord!" he said to Moses, "please do not charge us with the sin that we have foolishly committed!

¹² Let her not thus be like the stillborn babe that comes forth from its mother's womb with its flesh half consumed."

¹³ Then Moses cried to the LORD, "Please, not this! Pray, heal her!"

¹⁴ But the LORD answered Moses, "Suppose her father had spit in her face, would she not hide in shame for seven days? Let her be confined outside the camp for seven days; only then may she be brought back."

¹⁵ So Miriam was confined outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not start out again until she was brought back.

¹⁶ After that the people set out from Hazeroth and encamped in the desert of Paran ¹¹

2.4.1 Discussion on Numbers 12:1-16

¹⁰ Negaim 14:9 Rabbi Judah says, "If he had not a thumb on his hand or a great toe on his foot, or a right ear, he could never have purification".

¹¹ *The New American Bible*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) 1997

Miriam and Aaron complained against Moses on two accounts: Firstly against his Cushite wife and secondly against his position as a servant of God. They question whether God is only speaking through Moses. They ask: “Has he not spoken with us as well”. Sturdy (1976:89) understands this phrase as implying that Miriam is a prophetess. Miriam and Aaron seem not to deny Moses’ position and inspiration by God, but claimed equality with him, a claim, which is denied by the story.

Binns (1927:75) argues that the word “*spake*” as the verb in the original is in the feminine singular, which suggests that Aaron is an afterthought; and the fact that only Miriam is punished points in the same direction. Thus, he says, that Aaron did not complain against Moses and only Miriam is guilty of that sin. I might agree that Miriam complained against her sister in law but believe that Aaron might have taken the lead in complaining against the position of Moses. It is clear that Miriam and Aaron wanted their brother Moses to have married someone from their fold, an Israelite, not an outsider, (a Medianite). I believe that Aaron complained against Moses because he is not depicted in the narrative as the most faithful brother one could have, as we have seen once before when Moses went up to mount Sinai, Aaron did not even attempt to convince the people that Moses will return shortly. Thus, he made a golden calf for the people, (Exod. 32:24,25). There was an opportunity for power and he took it.

We see in v11 in Aaron’s appeal to Moses on behalf of Miriam when he said, “Oh, Lord don’t punish us because we have done foolishly and sinned”. This shows his admission of guilt, that he is as guilty as she is and deserved the same punishment. However, Miriam as a woman represents “the other” and hence is earmarked for punishment, for how could she be a leader on the same level as Moses an Aaron, *the men*.

“As the sea closes with the enemy in it Moses sang and Miriam danced” (Camp 2000: 228). It seems the writer cannot stand the fact that Miriam is in the forefront leading with Moses. Because he already picks her out here as Miriam the rebellious leader and she is since viewed as the greater threat.

Miriam was leprous – Leprosy is a punishment for offences against God. For Binns (1927:27) the words: “white as snow” seems to be a description to add to the horror of the disease but in fact, it suggests a milder form of leprosy. According to Sturdy (1976: 92) there is a tradition in the O.T. that men are smitten with skin disease as a punishment from God as seen in 2 Kings 5: 27 and 2 Chronicles 26:16-21. Thus, he suggests that it is a male disease.

Miriam was placed outside the camp following the ritual of a person cleansed from leprosy. Binns (1927: 78) feels that rank or position was no protection for the leper, all those with leprosy were excluded from the camp, no exceptions were made. Even though God healed her immediately on Moses’ request. Miriam was disgraced and the intention was to humiliate and disgrace her. This we see in the response that God gave when he compared her to a daughter whose father has spat her in the face. This is her punishment. Douglas (1993:197) argues that Miriam here must be seen as a rhetorical symbol, representing the people of Israel. I agree that this can be done but would not do it, because for far too long Israel has been always symbolized as an unfaithful wife of God. Israel is portrayed as a wife that never appreciated whatever God has done for her.

Why has Israel never been symbolized as an unfaithful husband who does not know how to care for his wife, or appreciate what God as the wife has done for him? Women thus have always been used to show the negative response of a people who do not know how to relate to a Loving God (the man). I would hate to see Miriam (the woman Israel) being run down as the only person guilty of the sin committed. Therefore, I would rather agree with Camp that the writer is biased in his choice of whom to support and whom to undermine. This is made clear when Miriam was publicly humiliated while Aaron grew in stature (Camp 2000:229).

Camp (2000: 230) used Eilberg-Schwartz on priestly ideology to suggest that the writer never justified the privileged status of Aaronite priests vis-a-vis other Israelites in terms of performance. She also highlights that the priestly writers offer no explanation as to why God preferred Aaron’s genealogical line over others. Thus, she

further suggests that the same level of reasoning seems to apply in Numbers 12¹², where God made a personal preference in punishing Miriam not Aaron, just as he makes a fine distinction between the Levites and the other tribes of Israel and between the lineages within that tribe (Aaron not Korah) so also God picks and chooses within that lineage; Aaron and not Miriam. She adds and that the “ascribed status – a matter of birthright” – is by definition arbitrary; it is just as arbitrary as the punishment of Miriam and not Aaron, and is, in fact, reflected by the fates of those two characters.

For Camp (2000:230) unlike Douglas (1993: 197), Miriam’s gender played a definite role in her being punished instead of Aaron. For her, female gender signifies the other. Thus, she argues that Miriam’s female impurity, her being different manifest the reality of her strangeness to the patrilineage, exposing the illusion of her insider blood. The Priestly writer knew that women have a part to play as necessary as it is unfortunate. According to Eilberg–Schwartz (in Camp 200: 231) the production of the male descendants, to perpetuate the patriarchal lineage, underlies a major part of the priestly world- view and system of self-justification. In the patriarchal system it is the male of all the descendants that count. What the male says and does matters. Therefore, Aaron as the senior male, the brother, pleads for her restoration (Camp 200:231).

“And the people did not set out on the march till Miriam was brought back in”- Nisham 1: 9 relates the waiting of the people for seven days with the fact that Miriam waited afar while Moses as a baby was in the basket. This seems as if the people, for what she had done for Moses when he was a baby, honours Miriam in this hour. Is this however enough for the humiliation and pain that she had to go through as a dishonoured prophetess? So much so, that she was remembered for generations to come as evident in the Deuteronomy source.

2.5 Deuteronomy 24: 8,9

⁸ “In an attack of leprosy you shall be careful to observe exactly and to carry out all the directions of the Levitical priests. Take care to act in accordance with the instructions I have given them.

¹² Although I agree with Camp that Miriam is discriminated against along gender lines, I do not agree with the implication that the priestly source is behind Numbers 12.

⁹ Remember what the LORD, your God, did to Miriam on the journey after you left Egypt¹³

2.5.1 Discussion on Deuteronomy 24:8-9

According to Clifford (1982:130) these verses are not much concerned with leprosy, rather with obedience to the priest. The priest needed to be obeyed precisely since public order was at stake, because hygiene and holiness are closely related. Phillips (1973:162) feels, that this is indeed a call to be careful to avoid leprosy. However, the Deuteronomic historian has changed it into a caution to act in accordance with priestly regulations, indicated by the plural form of address.

Driver (1963: 275), argues that the Law as it stands in the text cannot be taken as proof that Leviticus 13-14 existed in its present shape at the time when Deuteronomy was written. He found the evidence sufficient to suggest that a law on the subject was in the possession of the priests, and the principle was of recognized authority and referred to a divine origin '*as I have commanded them*'. Craigie (1989: 308) found most important the fact that these verses spoke about the legislation of leprosy as if it were known to the audience. Thus, Moses simply exhorts the people to observe the legislation.

Mayes (1981: 324) says that a post-Deuteronomy editor has considerably edited the law on leprosy. He argues that the sudden appearance of the second person plural form of address is an indication of this. Furthermore the reference is to an already given direction of Moses to the Levitical priests, thus making it probable that it was an intended as a general reference to the existing Deuteronomic law that points to late Deuteronomistic editing here.

I quote as he elaborates further on the original Deuteronomic law:

“The original deuteronomic law, in singular address form, may have been (cf. Merendino, *op. cit.*, 301): ‘ Take heed in an attack of leprosy; remember what the Lord your God did to Miriam’. The reference of the law would have been to Num. 12:14f, where, at the divine direction,

¹³ *The New American Bible*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) 1997

Miriam when suffering from leprosy was excluded from the camp for seven days. This was edited through the introduction of the Levitical priests understood as successors of Moses, whose directions are to be followed. It was for rebellion against Moses that Miriam was stricken with leprosy, and it was through the divine command mediated that she was excluded from the camp. The law in its original form is then closely linked with earlier laws in the complex 23:1ff'(Mayes1981: 324,325).

According to Hammer (1986: 269) the connection to Miriam in verse 9 of Deuteronomy chapter 24 and Numbers 12 is to show that plagues only come as a result of evil talk. Regarding this verse Craigie (1989:309) says it highlights the procedure of purification by which the people dealt with leprosy. This verse was placed there in order to illustrate and emphasize obedience to the law concerning leprosy.

For Driver (1963: 275), the people are admonished not to only remember how Miriam was suffered with leprosy, but also to remember how seriously it was treated, such that she was excluded from the camp for seven days. Clifford (1982:130) argues that Miriam in Numbers 12:10-15 was not cured until the time, which was determined by divine decree, had passed. For Hammer (1986: 269) the words *as you came forth out of Egypt* is connected with Miriam in that the banners did not journey forth until Miriam went before them, as declared in Micah. 6:40, '*And I sent before thee Moses, Aaron and Miriam*'.

2.6 Summary of Findings

Our search for the evidence of leprosy among these four texts has proven to be successful. We have also found out that indeed women also suffered from the disease. We have also noticed that although the individual had contracted the disease, it had also had an effect upon his/her community. The effects were mainly in regards to the relationships changes that took place between sufferer and the community. In this regards the suffering person was the one who had more to lose.

The person suffered banishment from his community, his God and lost out on his covenant blessings. The person was stripped of his status and forced to live a life of separation and thereby robbed of normal everyday living.

We have also found that it is the responsibility of the priests to banish and to restore persons to and from the community. The priests were given guidelines on diagnoses of the disease, its treatment, and the purification rites that had to be done for re-entry into the community and reconciliation into the covenant. It is interesting to note that this disease is more about uncleanness and how this separates a person from their community and from the covenant blessings. The treatment does not in any way involve ointments or medicines that are used to cure the disease. All that is done is banishment of the suffering person and a re-examination takes place after a period of seven days, if the person is deemed pure, then rites of re-entry are conducted.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE SEARCH OF JEWISH SOURCES

This chapter searches Jewish sources namely the rabbinic, wisdom and the apocryphal writings for any evidence concerning leprosy.

3.1 Rabbinic Judaism

In the Tosefta, Negaim 3:1,2 it says: “ A. He who uproots the tokens of uncleanness from his plague,

- a. whether he uprooted it in its entirety or whether he uprooted part of it,
- b. whether [he did so before he came to a priest, or whether [he did so] after he came before a priest,
- c. whether [he did so] during quarantine, or whether [he did so] after he was declared clear
- d. lo, such a one is smitten with forty stripes.”

3:2 C. “Take heed, in an attack of leprosy, to be very careful to do according to all that the Levitical priests shall direct you [Deut.24: 8]” (Neusner 1990: 143).

The above passage makes it clear that it was indeed a very serious offence for a person with leprosy to hide it from the priest by means of nursing the wounds at any given time, whether he was declared clean by the priest or whether during the time while s/he was expelled from his/her community. The law through the priest provided guidelines on how leprosy should be dealt with for the one who does not do according to the Levitical priest forty lashes are prescribed. It seems that it was an offence against the law and the one implementing the law.

In the Tosefta, Negaim 8:6 says: “A leper may engage in sexual relations during the days when he is completely unclean and is prohibited during the days of his counting”.

B. R. Yose b. R. Judah says, “If he is prohibited during the days of his counting, all the more so is he to be prohibited during the days when he is completely unclean.”

D. Said R. Hitta, “I said before Rabbi, ‘You, have taught us, Our Rabbi, that Jotham was born to Uzziah [2 Kings 15:5] only during the days of his certification’” (Neusner 1990:166).

The Rabbis have a debate on when it is permissible for a person with leprosy to be sexually active. I agree with R. Yose and R. Judah that lepers should be totally prohibited from sexual activity. In that way a vulnerable woman with leprosy might be protected. For who want to have sexual relations with a leper? Maybe another male leper, but what if she does not want or is out numbered by many male lepers whom all might have needs. For the Tosefta does not say with whom the leper may have sexual relations. I do not quite understand whether R.Hitta’s implies that Uzziah did not have sexual relations during the days of his counting for Jotham was born to them during the time of Uzziah’s certification. For the baby could have been conceived during counting and born when he was certified and could have been conceived before counting.

According to the Ketubot 3:4 when a woman had been raped her seducer must compensate her either in cash or by marrying her even if she was afflicted with boils (leprosy) as seen in Ketubot 3:5 “[He must marry her] even if she was lame; even if she was blind, and even if she was afflicted with boils (leprosy)”. Boils here can refer to leprosy for it is a skin disease.

This tractate provides us with information that women were also afflicted with leprosy, in that the law makes provision for a woman who is raped while having leprosy. I dread to think of the fact of any woman who have to marry her predator, but when one looks into the context of the Old Testament where a woman got her identity through marriage and that no man will want to marry her after she had been raped by another, I would say that, even though it is a raw deal, it is provides women with opportunities. For the woman might be able to change her husband’s heart in that he might learn to truly love her, as have happened in so many old traditional arranged marriages. In this way, her status is protected, and thus she is protected.

According to Sanders (1990: 2) leprosy is not covered by the general rule that impurity consist of a change of status, and claims that it is better described as an

improper mixture, (i.e. of unhealthy skin with normal skin). He quotes Leviticus 13:13 'If the leprosy has covered all his body, the priest shall pronounce the leper pure' So, the person whose skin turned entirely white no longer had an improper mixture. For him leprosy shows the degree to which the ancient idea of purity was different to our modern understanding of health and impurity.

From the above text we understand that a person is cleansed from leprosy when his /her whole body turns white, because for the ancient people white meant cleansing, and once cleansed you are whole again and as a whole person you can present yourself as holy acceptable unto the Lord.

Moore (2000: 20) argues that with the end of polytheistic demons as the cause of sickness and misfortunes, the only possible explanation was a moral one that is, a failure to obey God's will. Moore' sees this as the reason why leprosy was so severely punished. For him the Hebrew lack any other way of thinking after the end of polytheism. They were anxious about leprosy for it looked quite frightening and was especially contagious. It also was a prolonged disease and there was not enough knowledge as to its treatment, so that some forms of leprosy were incurable. But most of all it was linked with sin against God. Thus, it was considered as a punishment from God.

3.2 Essenism and the Dead Sea Scrolls

According to the Dead Sea Scrolls priests with any speech defects, those prisoners of war or those who were being active among gentiles were disqualified from priestly duties or eating sacred food. However, they emphasise that under no circumstances can the priest be replaced when it come to applying the laws of leprosy (Vermes 1997: 36).

According to the Dead Sea Scrolls the lepers shall not be exposed to the sacred pure food for they must be separated. From the time, the leper has shaved and washed, he shall stay outside for seven days. They shall not come into contact, with the food of the house, while their impurities are with them. He is to bring a sin offering. The person who does everything with a high hand is one who despises and reviles God

(Num 15:30-31) they are not to eat from the holy things. (Vermes 1997: 226). For it is believed that leprosy is caused by the sin of pride, and gossip as seen on pages 33/34.

Damascus Rule 13:3-7

But should there be a case of applying the law of leprosy to a man, then the Priest shall come and shall stand in the camp and the Guardian shall instruct him in the exact interpretation of the Law. Even if the Priest is a simpleton it is he who shall lock up (the leper); for theirs is the judgement (Vermes 1997:97).

The tractates from the Dead Sea Scroll once again exclaim the importance of the role of the priest for applying the laws of leprosy. No other person is ever allowed to perform this task, no matter the circumstances of the priest whether he has deformities or is inadequate. In such a case, the guardian will direct the priest in to the right application of the law. For only the priest can enforce the law of leprosy. For the whole process up to the final decision is with the priest on whether or not to quarantine the person.

The Dead Sea Scrolls also points out the fact that immediately after the priest inspected the potential leper he was separated from everything sacred especially food. S/He is judged, as one who is abusive towards God, as one who treats God with contempt, and therefore must be kept away from everything holy or things and people who might be exposed to that which is sacred. For it was also believed, that leprosy was the manifestation of a pride and obnoxious spirit. According to Snaith (1969: 100) the disease is a punishment for a chattering slander.

3.3 Hellenistic Judaism

In this section, I used the writings of Philo and Josephus to enlighten us concerning leprosy during the Hellenistic/Judaic period. Before I go into that, I give a brief introduction on the background of Philo and Josephus.

3.3.1 Philo

Philo was a Jew by birth and was known as Philo the Jew or Philo of Alexandria. What we do not know is his date of birth and death. However, in his writings he describes himself as aged and grey. His lifetime extended over the period from the time of Herod the Great and covers some of the great Jewish rabbis such as Hillel, Shammai, Gamaliel and Paul. He also was a contemporary of Jesus Christ of Nazareth of whom he makes no mention in his writings. Philo thought of himself as a good Jew one by religion not just by race (Williamson 1989: 1,2).

Philo seems to be a Jack-of-all-Trades, for scholars defines him as a great pharisaic system builder and philosopher, a representative of anti-normative Hellenistic Judaism, he was into Jewish mystery religion, he also was a representative of gnosticism, or a representative of Middle Platonism. His writings are reflective of the different beliefs and traditions that were present in Alexandrian Judaism. Philo was part of a small elite group in the Jewish community in Alexandria. He took part in debates and conflicts in different Jewish streams. He believed himself to represent traditions and interpretations of the synagogues and the Jewish school of philosophy. Philo viewed the Egyptians as pagans in contrast to the Jewish nation.

The Egyptians represent the evil body whereas the Jewish nation has the heavenly quality of the soul. For Philo the Jews mediate between God and humanity. For him the high priest in the temple of Jerusalem is the true portrait of man. The Levites and the Jewish nation are the priesthood of all nations, and therefore worship on behalf of all nations. Philo remained unknown until the 16th century. The Christian church preserved his work. Philo is used as a study of Greek philosophy, second temple Judaism and a forerunner of early Christian thought (Freedman 1992:339,340,341).

Philo wrote on leprosy

Sobr 49.1 to Sobr 50.3 διὰ τοῦτο μέντοι κἀν τῷ νόμῳ τῆς λέπρας ὁ μέγας πάντα Μωυσῆς τὴν μὲν κίνησιν καὶ ἐπὶ πλέον αὐτῆς φορὰν καὶ χύσιν ἀκάθαρτον, τὴν δ' ἡρεμίαν

καθαράν ἀναγράφει: λέγει γὰρ ὅτι "ἐὰν διαχέηται ἐν τῷ δέρματι, μιανεῖ ὁ ἱερεὺς. ἐὰν δὲ κατὰ χώραν μείνη τὸ τηλαύγημα καὶ μὴ διαχέηται, καθαριεῖ (Lev. 13, 22. 23))

And therefore, too, in the law of leprosy Moses with his never failing greatness lays down that the movement and wider extension and diffusion of the disease is unclean, but the quiescence is clean. For he says, "if it spread abroad in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean. But if the bright spot stay in one place and be not spread abroad, he shall pronounce him clean (Philo iii, on sobriety, 1954: 469).

Philo indicates that the skin disease does not necessarily refer to a particular skin disease but certain skin diseases can turn leprous when he writes on how a skin should be scrutinised for any infection on the body.

Spec 1.80. Νόμοι δὲ ἱερέων εἰσὶν οἷδε. παντελῆ καὶ ὀλόκληρον εἶναι τὸν ἱερέα προστέτακται, μηδεμίαν ἐν τῷ σώματι λώβην ἔχοντα, μήτε κατ' ἔνδειαν ἐπιλείποντος ἢ ἀκρωτηριασθέντος μέρους μήτε κατὰ πλεονασμὸν ἅμα τῇ γενέσει περιττεύσαντος ἢ ὕστερον ἐκ νόσου προσφύοντος μήτε τῆς χροῆς μεταβαλούσης εἰς λέπραν ἢ λειχήνας ἀγρίους ἢ μυρμηκίας ἢ τινὰς ἄλλας ἐξανθημάτων ἐκφύσεις: ἅ μοι δοκεῖ πάντα σύμβολα τῆς περὶ ψυχῆν εἶναι τελειότητος. εἰ γὰρ τὸ φύσει θνητὸν σῶμα τοῦ ἱερέως ἐπισκεπτέον

It is ordained that the priest should be perfectly sound throughout, without any bodily deformity. No parts, which are, must be lacking or have been mutilated, nor on the other hand redundant, whether the excrescence is congenital or an after growth due to disease. Nor must the skin have been changed into a leprous state or into malignant tetter or warts or any other eruptive growth. All these seem to me to symbolize perfection of soul (Philo vii, Special laws, 1950: 147).

For Philo all these concerns with the outward body are actually a concern for the soul. For he felt that if the body, which is mortal, receive so much attention, how much more the soul, which is eternal. According to the following text, Philo seems to think that the body needs to be *immunize* against leprosy since it is such a subtle disease, for it takes so many forms until the harm becomes visible under the skin.

Post 47.2 ἡ μὲν οὖν προτέρα γίνεται κατ' ἀσθένειαν, εἶδος τῆς πολυμόρφου καὶ πολυτρόπου λέπρας οὖσα: ὅταν γὰρ ἡ ὄψις ταπεινότερα φαίνεται τὴν ὁμαλὴν καὶ εὐτονον κλασθεῖσα φαντασίαν, τὴν χαλεπὴν νόσον λέπραν ὁ νομοθέτης φησὶ γενέσθαι

The former kind of being brought low is due to weakness, and is a species of leprosy, that changeful disease which assumes so many different forms. For when the uniform and healthy appearance of the flesh is impaired and the mischief is visible below the surface, the lawgiver says that, the cruel disease of leprosy has set in (Lev. Xiii.3), (Philo, The prosterity and exile of Cain (Philo1950: 353).

Philo here describes leprosy as it takes on different forms and that the process of leprosy in that it is hidden for a time but when it makes its appearance it is a matter for the priest (law giver).

3.3.2 Josephus

Josephus was a politician, soldier and historian during the first century. His writings serve as a source for biblical history and the political history of Roman Palestine during the 1st century C.E. Josephus was born a Jew in 37C.E., by the name Joseph ben Mattathias, a priest by birthright. He led a delegation to the court of the Roman Emperor Nero in 64C.E. The Romans captured him during a revolt that was led by him against Rome.

He became a Roman citizen and pensioner of the Flavian emperors Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian. He is well known by his Roman name Flavius Josephus. He devoted

much of his time writing in his department, which was situated in the emperor's house. He addressed some of his work to his fellow Jews in an attempt to justify Roman conduct during the war and his switching of loyalties. He also wrote to justify Jewish culture and religion to the Romans. Christians preserved his writings and in his writings, 'Against Arion' Josephus challenged the anti-Semite movements in their charge that the Jews came late into civilization. In his writings on 'Jewish Law', Josephus declared that the testimony of a woman is unacceptable (Freedman 1992:981, 982,992). This proves once again that patriarchy was deep seated, accepted and encouraged.

Josephus wrote

Ap 1.229 ἔπειτα δὲ δοὺς ἐξουσίαν αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ φάναι γράψειν τὰ μυθεύόμενα καὶ λεγόμενα περὶ τῶν Ἰουδαίων λόγους ἀπιθάνους παρενέβαλεν, ἀναμίξαι βουλόμενος ἡμῖν πλῆθος Αἰγυπτίων λεπρῶν καὶ ἐπὶ ἄλλοις ἀρρωστή1.230 μασιν, ὡς φησι, φυγεῖν ἐκ τῆς Αἰγύπτου καταγνωσθέντων.

“But at this point, under pretext of recording fables and current reports about the Jews, he took the liberty of introducing some incredible tales, wishing to represent us as mixed up with a crowd of Egyptian lepers and others, who for various maladies were condemned, as he asserts, to banishment from the country” (Josephus, *Against Arion*, 1965: 157)

This is one of the extracts from Manetho's work (a Heliopolitan priest from the third century B.C.E.). Josephus cited his work in order to correct the stories that the Jews were the one's to have brought leprosy from Egypt (see also page 58,59).

3.4 Summary of Findings

My search in this section was to find any information in the Jewish, Rabbinic and Apocryphal writings concerning leprosy especially of woman. In this short chapter I have found some interesting facts concerning people with leprosy. What is clear is that only the priests are qualified to diagnose leprosy. The other interesting point is

that there is severe punishment for a person who tries to clean up his sores. This is so because of the understanding of leprosy as a punishment from God. Regrettably no written evidence on woman with leprosy was found.

This however is not to say that there was no woman with leprosy but that the writers as we have noticed are men and they write from a male perspective and probably did not find it necessary to record the experience of a woman leper. What I do find interesting from my above findings is the text Ketubot 3:5 which makes provision for a woman with ailments like leprosy in the case of rape and that part of the compensation is to marry the raped woman. I only hope that she is given the choice to take up the option of marrying her perpetrator.

I also investigated Philo and Josephus who were Jewish writers that lived during the Hellenistic times. For Philo the focus of the outward is actually concerned with the perfection of soul and leprosy for the ancient Jews is a disease that reveals a person's standing with his God. Josephus on the other hand wrote to protect the reputation of the Jews, or to correct the wrong propaganda by Jewish opponents concerning the Jews and leprosy.

CHAPTER FOUR

LITERATURE SEARCH OF HELLENISTIC AND OTHER SOURCES

This chapter searches Hellenistic sources for information concerning leprosy. We begin with a description of Hansen's disease as it was known in the ancient world, followed by a search into the literatures of the Greeks and the Romans and close with a search for the origin of leprosy.

4.1 Description of Hansen's disease in the ancient world

Mycobacterial leprosy results from an infection with *Mycobacterium leprae* discovered in 1874 by Hansen (Davies 1991: 49). Grmek (1989: 152) describes leprosy as a chronic, infectious disease that affects the skin, the peripheral nervous system, and the bones. Thus, he describes Hansen's disease, as we know it today, and *elephantiasis* as the Greeks knew it then

Despite its low pathogenicity, leprosy may be spread widely because of its long period of incubation. It can take as long as ten years for the characteristic symptoms and physical features to develop after contracting the disease. In places where leprosy is endemic people who contracted it seem to have done so without any clear contact with other cases of the diseases. However, where it is endemic, a large number of the population possesses antibodies to leprosy without having developed the disease in clinical terms.

In this case, the person had antibodies of leprosy but it did not develop into full leprosy as such. Leprosy in general does not cause epidemics, it occurs sporadically even when it is endemic. The development of the disease depends heavily on immunogenetic factors, and is assisted by protein-calory malnutrition (Sallares 1991: 240, 241).

4.2 Greek literature

4.2.1 Terminology: Lepra, Leuke, Elephantiasis.

4.2.1.1 Lepra in Hippocratic writings

The Greek noun *lepra* is derived from the adjective *lepros* meaning, “rough or scab” with its root as a verb meaning “peel, strip off bark or skin”. The word *lepra* in the Hippocratic corpus occurs in a technical sense. It refers to a particular pathology of the skin and not the scaly aspect of surfaces in general.

In the Hippocratic texts the disease called *lepra* comes up often, but unfortunately is never the subject of a description precise enough to ensure its identification with a clinical entity of modern medicine. It is not a mutilating disease like the one caused by Hansen’s bacillus and suggests relatively benign skin ailments. For Grmek (1989:165) leprosy is on the same scale as arthritis and liches, for they bring changes in health without serious consequences, they do not cause death.

Hippocratic Leprosy shows itself firstly as an eruption on the skin, an abscession that results from the expulsion of humors in disequilibrium. When the abscession of corrupt humors does not go downwards various dangerous pathological phenomena as suppurations, ulcers, exanthemata, peeling of the skin (*lopoi*), loss of hair, loss of skin pigmentation, leprosy can occur (Davies, 1991: 46; Grmek 1989:165).

The term *leprai* refers to skin and mucous membranes of a particular appearance that may correspond to a variety of pathologies. Thus, Greek physicians spoke of a leprosy infection of the bladder in the case of inflammation with exfoliation. The Hippocratic term *lepra* is so complex that it even includes phenomena outside the proper domain of pathology. In its chronic condition, the skin’s leprosy appearance shows neither abscession, nor disease but represents an aesthetic blemish, (Grmek 1989: 166, 167).

4.2.1.2 Leuke

The term *lepra* in the classical period was often associated with two other skin diseases, *leuke* and *alphos*. The Hippocratic texts, do not agree that *leuke* and *lepra*

are affections that often occur together in particular persons but the relation of their names is due to a similarity in their nature. *Lepra* and *leuke* are included in the same class as lichens, scabies, exfoliation, and ulcerations in Hippocrates. Acquired *leuke* does not develop before puberty, and must be separated from congenital *leuke*. According to Aristotelian text the terms *leuke* and *alphos* do not apply to serious diseases. Aristotle's *leuke* was not completely the same as the nosological area of the Hippocratic term. *Leuke* is considered as a fatal disease on the same basis as the Phoenician disease (*elephantiasis*, see below) (Grmek 1989: 167).

4.2.1.3 *Elephantiasis*

Mycobacterial leprosy was recognised as a new disease by the Greek physicians in the second and third centuries B.C. and given the name *Elephantiasis graecorum* because of the thickening of the skin (Davies 1991: 47,48).

The disease *Elephantiasis* is also called Phoenician disease because it was common in Phoenicia. *Elephantiasis* according to medieval authors is the leprosy, what we know today as Hansen's disease. This disease belongs to the same clinical category as *leuke* and *mycobacterial lepra*. It was an exotic disease, which belonged to the eastern countries and came to Greece at intervals. The symptoms are that the hair grew white, the faces are full of leuke, the necks and chest swollen, no great fever or pain is felt; the lower limbs were always harmed (Grmek 1989: 167,168).

In the medical encyclopaedia of Oribasius we find leprosy described as *Elephantiasis* in the follows manner;

“The physicians called leprosy in its early stages *leoniasis*, because those affected with it take on a bad odour, and their cheeks collapse, and their lips thicken, but when their eyebrows swell and their cheeks are flushed and they are seized with a desire for sexual gratification, these physicians call it *satyriasis*, which, however, is different from the disease of the genitals called by the same name: for the latter has gotten its name from a continual erection of the genitals, while the former has its also from its

character: when the symptoms invade the whole body, the physicians in question call it *elephantiasis*.”

Its symptoms are not hidden: they consist in livid and black embossments that resemble ecchymoses: some on the face, others on the arms, and the legs, on the back, the chest, and the stomach, at first the embossments are not ulcerous: later, they ulcerate in the most hideous way, since their ulceration is accompanied by a swelling of the lips and so deep a decay that in some cases the tips of the fingers fall off and the ulcers never succeed in scarring. So it appears to be a superficial disease, since it makes its appearances on the skin: but the difficulty of curing it, a difficulty that comes close to impossibility, suggests to us that it has a deeper origin, an origin not easy to penetrate: it is even as deep as that of *carcinoma*, by common opinion in truth, *Praxagoras* accepts a deep origin above all for *carcinoma* (Straton in Grmek 1989: 169).

Grmek (1989:170) finds this detailed description of elephantiasis by Rufus of Ephesus corresponds perfectly with the clinical profile of low immune resistance leprosy. He continues to say that Straton was the first person to provide Alexandria with such information but only Greek physicians who shortly before Rufus, (not until Roman times) 100 B.C. get credit for describing it well. However, *elephantiasis* was not related to or identified with the Hippocratic *lepra* even though these names were still used in Greek medical literature of the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

4.3 Roman Literature

Leprosy was not a known disease in Rome around the first century B.C. Authors dating to the Roman period discuss leprosy as a new disease, which was not known to their classical predecessors (Sallares 1991: 240). Therefore, Lucretius, a Roman poet and philosopher who died in 55 B.C.E believed that *Elephasmorbus* as the Romans called it was still a strange and foreign disease that was confined to the banks of the Nile.

Celsus about two generations after him confirmed that *elephantiasis* was hardly known in Italy (Sallares1991: 240) and common in certain lands and so Pliny agrees when he says that it is a new disease unknown in past years, not only in Italy but also, in almost the whole of Europe (Grmek 1989: 169). *Elephantiasis* did occur in Italy before the time of Pompeius Magnus, but died out quickly.

Aretaeus of Cappadocia, 70 C.E a physician who might have studied in Alexandria and lived in Rome had given a thorough description of the clinical characteristics of *elephantiasis*. He knew the main symptoms of the disease, their clinical course, and their hopeless prognosis. He masterfully describes the start of the disease and gives a vague description of dimorphic leprosy. He also communicates the fear that leprosy brought upon common people. And evident in his writings is how he only mentions males as the people affected with leprosy.

“Who would not wish to escape these diseased people, and who does not turn away from them in horror, even if one’s own son, father, or brother is among them? We fear the transmission of the disease. For this reason, there are those who abandon their most cherished relatives in the desert and the mountains, from time to time bring them provisions, or they leave off doing even that and let them perish” (Aretaeus in Grmek 1989: 171).

The underlying motivation for flight from lepers and their forced isolation was at first, magico-religious in nature. Many centuries later (643 C.E), the edict of Lombard king Rothari, declared social death on lepers and imposed their residing on the margins of society. The lepers of Rome were squeezed into Saint Lazarus hospice (Grmek1989: 171).

Lepers were thought to be incurables. Interesting is the fact that lepers were not forced or locked up in a certain place. That means that it was out of fear and their religious beliefs that the families marginalized those infected with leprosy. It was possible for lepers to move around in the regions but not in urban areas. They had to announce their presence from afar and were not allowed to enter houses or churches. In certain areas, they had to wear white, (Grmek 1989: 172). Leprosy was a feared

disease it was the same as if when one had tuberculosis, which was also incurable then.

4.4 The search for the origin of leprosy

In order for us to find the origin of leprosy, we have to investigate a variety of different researches, which have been done in particular countries.

4.4.1 Origin of leprosy in Africa

Grmek (1989: 172) reckons that Black Africa is the most favourable location for the origin of the disease. This estimation is made on the basis that leprosy is an infection with a mycobacterium inherited directly from the ancestors of humanity. T.A. Cockburn (1989:174) places the origin of the human race as situated in east Africa, thus coinciding with the origin of leprosy. Another argument in favour of Africa is the high frequency of high immune resistance leprosy among the inhabitants in black Africa. Although Africa is a strong candidate for the origin of the disease, they knew nothing of the different names that the disease bore.

4.4.2 Origin of leprosy in India

Leprosy had long been known in the literature of ancient India. In the Sanskrit medical treatises, called the *Susruta and Charaka*, Hansen's disease has been described as *kustha*. It can be understood in two senses; first, in its wider sense, it distinguishes nineteen different cutaneous diseases of which leprosy is just a subset. Secondly, in a narrower sense it applies to leprosy proper in its various clinical forms. Grmek argues that because leprosy was already diagnosed in the fourth century B.C.E Hansen's bacillus must have been rampant in India during the first millennium B.C.E and severe during the last centuries of that era (Grmek 1989; 158). It has been suggested that Alexander's armies carried it from India to the Mediterranean region in 327-326 B.C.E. Davies (1991:51) agrees that this is most attractive theory for the origin of leprosy that it was introduced by the armies of Alexander the Great on their return from their campaign from Northern India where the disease was prevalent, in 324-322 B.C.E

4.4.3 Origin of leprosy in China

Literary references imply that leprosy was present in China in the first millennium B.C.E. This is so because the oldest medical treatises in China mention leprosy. The *Neiching* describes a disease that swells and ulcerates the flesh, produces *paresthesias*, spoils the blood, which becomes cloudy, and causes the nasal structure to collapse, as well as a change in skin colour, and skin ulceration. Although Chinese medical historians agree that this passage refers to true leprosy, they disagree on the date. It is speculated that the text goes back to the third millennium B.C. However, modern historians feel that its origin cannot precede the fourth century B.C. and date it to the second century B.C. (Sallares 1991: 239; Grmek 1989: 154,158).

In the *Lun Yu* there is a story by the disciples of Confucius, about one of his disciples's, Po-niu, who got infected with leprosy. Confucius did not wish to see him because his face was disfigured, only touched his hand through a window and exclaimed, "Fate kills him for such a man to have such a disease!" This is a moral story, which took place during the sixth century B.C.E and does not contain much medical, information. His disease is described as *chi* disease (Grmek 1998:158).

4.4.4 Origin of leprosy in Mesopotamia

Leprosy was known in Mesopotamia in the second millennium B.C.E. Oppert and Belser proposed translating the *Akkadian* terms *saharsubbu*, *isrubu*, and *garabu* as leprosy. The disease in question is inscribed on milestones from the *Kassite* period.

The passage reads as follows:

A Babylonian *omen* text published in 1957 indicates the presence of true leprosy in Mesopotamia.

If the skin of a man exhibits white patches or is dotted with nodules (*nuqdu*), such a man has been rejected by his god and is to be rejected by mankind (Wilson in Grmek 1989: 159)

For Kinnier Wilson this text is enough proof of the existence of leprosy in Mesopotamia. Grmek suggest that the *omen text VAT 7525* be reviewed for

information concerning leprosy among the Hebrews. For he feels that Babylonian evidence and the biblical prescriptions, have a common origin and they clarify each other (Grmek 1989:160)

4.4.5 Origin of leprosy in Palestine and Canaan

Grmek (1989:162) says that some recent writers doubt the biblical knowledge of leprosy on the basis of the lack of *osteoarchaeological* evidence in Palestine. Grmek considers this a weak argument. He counter argues that the absence of leprosy remains in a cemetery in the Jordan Valley could be due to segregation of the diseased. For Grmek the important question is whether there is evidence of the existence of leprosy among the Jews at the time they were enslaved by the Egyptians or whether it spread only after their arrival in Canaan. One thing is certain the biblical remedies for *sara'at* are inspired by ancient Babylonian beliefs and practices.

Thus, the Jews could not have carried it to Canaan from Egypt. If this is true then it means that the Jews made contact with leprosy in Phoenicia/Palestine, and learned magico hygienic prescripts against it from their Canaanite neighbours who learned it from Babylonian sources.

However, the historical sources believe that the Jews knew leprosy before the exodus and even before their departure from Chaldea (Grmek1989: 162). Manetho, a Heliopolitan priest, of the third century before Christ, the oldest among the historical sources, wrote in Greek a history of Egypt, "according to the sacred books of his land". Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian cited extracts on lepers at the time of the exodus, from his work and that of Clairemon and Lysimachus, who wrote after him.

In the story of Manetho, a Pharaoh gathered 80 000 lepers in one day and made them work far from the rest of the Egyptians. Several learned priests were also part of the diseased. The priests guided them out of Egypt especially one whose name was changed to Moses and joined the shepherd-kings of Jerusalem and declared war against Pharaoh. Clairemon's story tells of 250 000 men who were exiled from Egypt because of being polluted, because of Amenophis's prophetic dream.

As for Lysimachus, he says that the Jewish people who were afflicted with leprosy scabies and other diseases were eliminated from Egypt in the time of King Bocchoris. The “leprous” and “ichy” were drowned, while the others were chased into the desert.

For Grmek (1989:162.163) these accounts were untrue and deliberate slander against the Jews. Josephus identifies their inconsistencies and contradictions but has no doubt that leprosy was present in Egypt at such an early period and was offended by statements that Moses was afflicted with leprosy and that only the Jews suffered with it. He was also angered that Manetho deliberately confused the Jews with lepers and other diseased Egyptians. Other historical sources like Diodorus continue with the slander and still explain that the exodus took place because of a plague that broke out in Egypt and Jews were to blame.

4.4.6 Origin of leprosy in Egypt

4.4.6.1 Bones

There is no trace of leprosy on the human remains from Pharaonic Egypt (Grmek 1989: 154,159). The earliest osteological evidence comprises four leprous skulls from a Ptolemaic cemetery at the Dakhleh Oasis, Egypt, of the second century B.C. E. It is believe that this oasis was used as a deportation zone for lepers of the Egyptian elite during the reign of Lagides (Grmek 1989: 154; Jackson 1988: 182). Although leprosy was known, it appears to be of a limited extent in the first century B.C.E (Jackson 1988:182).

4.4.6.2 Art

A Canaanite clay jar was found during excavations in *Bet-She'an* (in Israel) dating back thirteen or fourteen centuries B.C.E. This jar represented a deformed god Bes, featuring *facies leontina* and thus strongly suggesting *lepromatous* leprosy. (Feeny 1964: 15; Grmek 1989:157). Grmek (1989:157) argues that this is dated before the Hebrews conquered the promised land. However, Feeny suggests that the god Bes was an Egyptian god and the Hebrews brought it to Canaan from Egypt. Some literary evidence found in the Greek text of Josephus, *Against Arion*, supports this theory..

4.4.6.3 Literary Evidence

Manetho also tells of two expulsions from Egypt. The one of the Hycsos who founded Jerusalem and the second where the Jews were mixed up with a crowd of Egyptian lepers and others who were condemned to banishment from their country. This might prove that Feeny was right that the disease came from Egypt to Canaan. However it was brought not by the Jews but by Egyptian lepers banished from their country. Feeny (1964:15) further suggests that since leprosy was a Phoenician disease and the face of Bes was found on the figure -heads of Phoenician barques, it can be a clue to the birthplace of the disease.

The papyrus Ebers, included an Egyptian medical treatise of the sixteenth century B.C., which gives the oldest literary description of leprosy. This has been criticized and rejected, since there is no sign of leprosy in Pharaonic Egypt without this evidence (Grmek 1989: 159).

4.4.6.4 Summary of findings

In searching the Hellenistic Literature, I investigated the understanding of Hansen's disease in the ancient world.

I found that Hansen's disease is a chronic infectious disease, which affects the skin, on the edges of the nervous system and the bones. According to the Hippocratic writings Elephantiasis and Hansen's disease refers to the same disease.

A search was also conducted on the different terminologies such as *lepra*, *leuke* and elephantiasis. I found that the word *lepra* refers to a certain bacterium(although the concept was unknown in the Greek world at that time) of the skin and not the scaly appearances of the skin. According to the Hippocrates, *leuke and lepra* are in the same class as lichens, scabies, exfoliation and ulceration. *Leuke* however can result in death. Another name for elephantiasis is the Phoenician disease. Elephantiasis then is the leprosy what we know as Hansen's disease today.

However, *elephantiasis* was not related to or identified with the Hippocratic *lepra* even though these names were still used in Greek medical literature of the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

I also investigated Roman literature and found that the Romans did not know leprosy during the first century. The disease was well known by 70 B.C.E. for Aretaeas of Cappadocia gave an accurate description of the main symptoms of the disease during that period. Lepers suffered severe discrimination during that period. I also investigated the origins of leprosy in Africa, India, China, Mesopotamia, Palestine, Canaan and Egypt. My findings on are that it is believed that the troops of Alexander brought the disease from India to the Mediterranean region in 327-326 B.C.E.

However, evidence of the existence of the disease during the thirteen and fourteen century B.C.E. had been discovered on a clay jar of the god Bes, an Egyptian god brought to Canaan from Egypt.

CHAPTER FIVE

JESUS APPROACH TO HEALING

This chapter focuses on Jesus' approach to healing and its relation to the issues of purity. My hope in this is to gain a clearer understanding as to why purity issues played such an important role in biblical times and the effect this had on the sufferers of leprosy especially women. In order to gain insight into the background of Jesus' relation to and understanding of holiness, I have looked into the socio – economic background during the time of Jesus and how this affected the people's understanding of purity in relation to holiness.

Women then and now with their menstrual ability are very much affected by the purity laws of their day thus it would be imperative that we consider Jesus' healing of women and his attitude towards them. This is followed by a look at Jesus' attitude to leprosy and its carriers.

A reconstruction of Luke 17:11-19 is undertaken where I read women into the text, in order to weigh the effects of the conditions under which women suffered with leprosy as compared to men during antiquity.

5.1 The socio-economic background during the time of the Jesus.

Palestine during the time of Jesus was under colonial rule and oppression by the Romans. Pixley (1983:381) points out that it was in 63 B.C.E that the Romans entered into Palestine and incorporated it into the province of Syria, which was governed by a Roman proconsul.

It is only logical then that Palestinian society would undergo changes due to the presence of their colonial rulers. According to Borg (1984:2-3) the presence of the new rulers brought about a situation of conflict and gave rise to different responses within Jewish society. It is important to note that the situation of conflict was compounded by promises that were made to the society Jesus was a part of. Not least of which was the promise of universal sovereignty. Thus, finding herself under a mighty and ruthless power with their claims of sovereignty increased the conflict even

further. The other important aspect that added to the conflict is the class systems that were present. Pixley (1983: 381) observes that the temple continued to be the dominant class and that power over the people still rested with them, since traditional village life still continued. These authorities in turn were under domination of the Roman authorities.

The conflict was further made worse by the Roman influence upon Jewish religious, social, political and economic life. The Torah stated that Israel was to be a theocracy ruled by God through his chosen one, the king, or, after the exile, the priest. Roman rule clearly violated the Torah, for no foreigner was to rule over Israel. Herod and Rome undermined the high priesthood by changing it from a lifetime office to an appointment, which could be changed at their convenience (Borg 1984:27; Pixley 1983:381).

Another issue was the land; the Torah stated that the land was holy and it prohibited gentile religious practices and gentile ownership of land. Under the Romans, the Jewish people were powerless to enforce these rules. Pilate violated the law against graven images and Caligula's plan to put a statue of himself in the holy of holies in the temple corrupted Jewish religious and ethnic identity (Borg 1984: 29,30; Pixley 1983:383).

In 6 B.C.E Roman taxation was imposed upon the people, which further increased their situation of conflict and misery. The Jews protested against Pilate's and Caligula's scheme but to no avail. The Jews were now under double taxation of which one was Temple tax required by the Torah and the other the Roman tax. Both these systems had their greatest effect on the farmers of which Jews were the majority as small holders (Borg 1984:30).

This made the burden on the people very, very heavy. The double taxation required 40% of the farmers' produce. If he had a bad year, he would lose everything and end up a hireling, creating in the process a growing number of landless hirelings and a social class of robbers and beggars. Since many could not afford to pay both the taxes, further conflict was created in them having to choose whether to remain loyal to the temple taxes, because they could not avoid the Roman tax without fear of violent

reprisals. Roman rule, as one can see, brought crisis into all aspects of Jewish life, whether religious, social, political or economic. The conflict seemed incapable of being resolved (Borg 1984:33).

Jewish conflict with the colonial powers was widespread and they used different means to protest like the dispatching of official delegations, non-violent protests, and guerrilla warfare which lead up to the tragic war of liberation of 66-70 B.C.E. In this time Jesus spoke frequently of the Kingdom of God, a term which expressed the hope of Israel for universal sovereignty (Borg 1984:2-3). Pixley (1983:384) says the preaching of a kingdom of justice and peace had fired Jewish imagination and all the groups, the Essenes, Pharisees and Zealots, except the Sadducees expected the coming of the new kingdom.

Pixley (1983:384) continues further saying that although there were differences as to expectations of the coming kingdom, the main differences lay in the analysis of the social structure and the action taken in regard to the strengthening of the faith of the people. Borg (1984: 19) points out that the renewal movements during the time of Jesus competed for the religious loyalty of the Jewish people. Each renewal movement offered a program defining what it meant to be the people of God in that setting. However, they produced greater division within Jewish society.

The Essenes were concerned for the purity of the temple and believed that an unworthy priesthood defiled it, so they removed themselves from mainstream life and waited for the coming kingdom. The Sadducees fell in line with foreign rule and accepted its position and always looked for a settlement with the Roman authorities. The Zealots took up arms against the Romans; their understanding was that they could not recognise a human ruler next to God (Pixley 1983:382-383).

The Pharisees saw the fulfilment of the Law of Moses as the most important requirement. They were the religious leaders and were based in the villages. The Jesus movement also was based in the villages, with emphasis on the Torah, which became the “peace party” an inclusive movement of outcasts within Jewish society and gentile as well. (Borg 1984: 19; Horsley 1989: 114-115).

Draper (1994:40) outlines the objectives of the Jesus movement as renewal of local community in the villages and the towns. This renewal was to take place through the strengthening of family and community relations. Draper continues to further point out that one of the key aspects of renewal was the removal of the burden of debt. Draper (1994:40) rightly also points out that closely associated with debt was the problem of purity; for in order to restore and maintain purity it required finances; payment into the temple treasury system. The purity system with its understanding that sickness and misfortune were punishments for sin added to the burden of the people while at the same time maintained the exclusiveness of the wealth and privilege of the lords of the system, and reason enough for the Pharisees to uphold them.

The renewal movement of Jesus found itself in conflict with the other renewal movements in that Jesus' sayings and stories implied a different understanding of holiness and purity (Borg 1984:134). This brings us to our next section concerning the understanding of the Pharisees and Jesus concerning holiness (purity) of the Jewish people.

5.2 The Pharisees and Jesus understanding concerning the holiness (purity) of the Jewish people

The Pharisee's quest to instil holiness in national life saw its goal formed in the recurrent theme of the priestly code.

“Speak to all the community of Israel: You shall be holy, because I, Yahweh your God, am holy” (Leviticus 19:2)

As far as they were concerned the future security of the nation depended upon the achievement of holiness. Just as the holiness of God was understood as the separation from everything that defiles, so the holiness of Israel meant separation. The quest for holiness had its emphasis on Sabbath observance, proper tithing, prohibition of marriage with non- Hebrews, and the increasing separation from other nations (Borg 1984:52).

Although both the Pharisees and the Essenes represented the quest for purity, each followed a different path of renewal. The Essenes withdrew from the mainstream of life, while the Pharisees chose the path of renewal through teaching. For the Pharisees, Israel was to be a 'Kingdom of priests and a holy nation', following the same laws of purity that normally applied only to priests in the Temple. Thus, the Pharisees intensified the Torah by extending to the people as a whole the requirements of holiness that once applied only to the priesthood. Their intention was not to be a party within Israel but they intended to be Israel itself. They saw themselves as the bearers for the quest for holiness in public life (Borg 1984:57).

Purity laws required separation from all that was unclean, including gentiles and gentile practices. The emphasis on purity was intended to separate Israel from the practices of the non- Israelites, the idea being to protect her against corruption. The Pharisees' major sanction was social and religious separation that created divisions within society and many people felt alienated and worthless (Borg 1984: 58,69).

5.3 Jesus' understanding of holiness

Jesus' understanding of holiness and hence purity was quite different to that of the Pharisees. His criticism of the Pharisees as leaven (Mt 16.6,11-12; Luke 12:1; Mark 8:15) and unmarked graves (Luke 11:44; Mt. 23:27,28) was to show that Israel was to be the people of God and he thus criticized Pharisees as defiling and corrupting Israel. It also shows that holiness was to be understood differently from the post- exilic quest after holiness. The Pharisees were of the understanding that the holiness of God needed protection from sources of defilement in the same way they saw Israel needing separation from the contagion of uncleanness.

Borg (1984:135) explains that uncleanness was not simply a lack of cleanness but a power, which positively defiled. He continues saying that in the teaching of Jesus holiness, rather than uncleanness, was to be understood as contagious. Holiness was to be understood as a transforming power, not a power that needed protection through separation. In Mark 2:17 this was implied by the metaphor of the physician, that those who were ill did not overcome the physician rather the physician overcame the illness. Holiness as a contagious power can be interpreted in the same manner.

We also see in the gospel of Mark 1:40-45 says, 'Jesus stretched out his hand and touched the leper and said, 'Be clean'. Lepers were banished from their communities for they were considered unclean and everything they touched became unclean. Borg (1984:136) says that for Jesus to touch a leper would have made him unclean just as in touching a corpse. However, the narrative reversed this in that Jesus did not become unclean in touching the leper, but rather the leper was made clean.

The same transformation occurs in the story of the woman with the flow of blood in Mark 5:25-34. She and all that she touched were unclean because of her condition. However when she touched the garment of Jesus, it was not uncleanness that was transferred but "power came forth" from Jesus and she was transformed: healed and as such cleansed, because it is an active power that over come uncleanness, and can overcome any confrontation (Borg 1984:136).

5.4 Jesus' approach to purity issues

The issues of purity touched many aspects of Jewish life. This included any unclean or incomplete state that the body might be in. In other words, for Israel as a nation to be holy meant that they needed to be whole and complete in all respects including physical perfection and purity.

The temple as the centre of the life and worship of Israel was considered holy. Therefore, it meant that everything and everyone coming to the temple needed to be in perfect condition. A Jewish person is required to wash his/her hands before eating, the animal offered in sacrifice must be without blemish, a person who touched a dead person was unclean, a priest could only be in contact with the dead when his own close relative dies. The high priest must never have contact with death. A woman during childbirth was considered unclean. All bodily discharges are defiling, persons with discharges were not allowed to approach the temple (Douglas 1992:51).

In an attempt to find Jesus' approach to the issue of purity I will use the text from Mark 7:1-23, then, bring in other texts to help this process. The scribes and Pharisees

who came from Jerusalem¹⁴ approached Jesus and questioned him on why his disciples transgressed the laws of the elders, in particular why they do not wash their hands before eating¹⁵.

Waetjen (1989: 131-133) feels that this situation in Mark 7:1-23 provided the opportunity for another direct confrontation of ritual washing to the general issue of the oral law, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders” although it includes, “eat bread with impure hands”, the real argument of the controversy was because of the disciples’ non observance of the oral law.

Witherington (2001:225) points out that the oral law in question was that, which the Pharisees had added to, particularized or expanded from the Torah.

Mark explains that the Pharisees washed not only their hands but also the utensils like cups and pots. In this then, the first part of the question refers to the halakah¹⁶ that the Pharisees follow. Thus, Jesus response to the Halakah in 7:6-13 and to the eating of unwashed hands, in 7:14 (Waetjen 1989:132).

Jesus’ responded from Isaiah 29:13:

“This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me, in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men”.

¹⁴ Emerton (1991:519) argues in Mark it can be taken that the Pharisees are from Galilee and the scribes from Jerusalem. In Matthew it seems both groups are from Jerusalem. It seems that the appearance of Jerusalem reinforces its hostile character towards Jesus and points ahead to the passion narrative.

¹⁵ Branscomb (1937:121) argues that the older law required only the priest and his families when they ate ‘holy food’ – meaning food that came to the priest from sacrifices to the temple. By the second century, the Pharisaic on ceremonial purity extended the practice to the entire laity and made it obligatory for all foods. All references to the custom are second century, the earliest ones being in connection with the rebellion of the Jews under Hadrian, a century after Jesus’ death. Some Jewish scholars insisted that the account is anachronistic or that Jesus’ disciples were all priests so they were obligated to the rite at an earlier period. There is also a record of a discussion by the rabbinic schools in the second half of the century, that some Pharisaic leaders in Jesus day that those who were especially religious should not eat without purifying their hands. This evidence made it clear that this rite was not practiced by all Jew in Jesus’ day-not even all the Pharisees.

¹⁶ Emerton (1991:529) argues that Mk. 7:15, was composed as a moral pronouncement or exhortation, not halakah. It was aimed at people who was preoccupied with the literal observance of the Torah and tradition to the neglect of the more important matters of the law (cf.23:23). The immediate literary context in Mt 15:1-23 does not encourage an interpretation in food laws. The gospel as a whole does not encourage this, for its emphasis is on the continuing validity of the law and the prophets 5:17-20. Mark thus must have understood 15:11 in a relative not an absolute sense: ‘what counts above all is the heart.’

Jesus makes the point that giving of lip service or more precisely in this case external cleansing means nothing if one is not inwardly pure towards God. The Pharisees perhaps had forgotten that while man looks at the outside God looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

Witherington (2001:225) believes that the heart of the quote is that the Pharisees in their concern for external observance had substituted the observance for heart religion, which amounted to substituting the traditions of human beings for God's word. Jesus accused them of not only neglecting the commandments of God but rejecting the will of God as well. Jesus makes the point that God requires mercy more than he requires judgement.

In 2 Chronicles 30:18-20, it reads:

'For a multitude of the people, many of them from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than as prescribed. For Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, "The good Lord pardon every one who sets his heart to seek God, the Lord the God of his fathers, even though not according to the sanctuary's rules of cleanness," And the Lord heard Hezekiah, and healed the people'.

This text shows us that to seek the Lord with sincere hearts is more acceptable than cultural laws or being clean. Not that we must not follow cultural or religious laws but it must not take up a greater place than the law of God in our hearts (v9). Otherwise, it becomes an obstacle to a real encounter with God as Witherington (2001:225) says: "the means have been mistaken for the ends".

Branscomb (1937:124) argues that Jesus then brings in Corban¹⁷ (the term means dedication, oath or vow) in order to justify his charge against them.

¹⁷ Corban means that one denies one's parents a piece of land or asset because it had been set aside maybe to be dedicated to the temple treasury. In Jesus' day however this procedure has been used to keep property out of the parental use, without the intention to use it for religious purposes

One can ask the question, what does Corban have to do with the issue of purity? It is important to understand that here Jesus¹⁸ is affirming the essence of a Mosaic commandment at the expense of a legislation which nullifies something that was at the heart of the law of God. Jesus uses this as an example to show the impurity of heart of the Pharisees and scribes who opted for the keeping a vow at the expense of rejecting the law of honouring their parents for their own benefits and selfish gain. The intentions of their hearts are being judged, because the intention of the heart is what makes a person pure or impure.

Waetjen (1989:132) says that their subversion of God's will makes both their authority and their tradition invalid. Service to God cannot be disengaged from commitment of genuine human need. Jesus turned to the crowd in verse 15 and said, 'Nothing from outside a person that goes into him can defile him. Only those things that comes from the heart defile'¹⁹.

For Witherington (2001: 227) this means that, 'Jesus saw a significant portion of the Levitical law code as no longer applicable now that God's divine saving activity, his eschatological dominion, was breaking into human history. Jesus approach to holiness was not going to focus on the ritual part of the holiness code'.

Mark in 7: 19 adds the explanation, "thus he declares all foods clean", for the sake of his audience of whom most are gentiles and might not understand the legal Jewish disputes of clean and unclean. In this regard, Jesus is not merely declaring Pharisaic halakah defunct or invalid but he is also declaring some portions of Leviticus obsolete as well. Jesus believes not physical things, but moral attitudes, defile a person.

Branscomb (1937:24) on the same issue says that it would be too much to maintain that Jesus shifted the food codes of Leviticus and declared that one could eat swine or camel with freedom.

(Witherington 2001: 226). Branscomb (1937:124) argues that this passage 7:1-23, is evidence that in 28 B.C.E the scribal ruling upheld the validity of such oaths. In 90 B.C.E the scribes agreed where the matter was between parents and sons the vow could be annulled (Ned.ix.i) – in other words, the same position as Jesus maintained.

¹⁸ Witherington (2001:225) using Taylor argues for the authenticity of the words in Mark 7:9-13 saying: " There can be no reasonable that the words were spoken by Jesus and illustrates his attitude towards the oral law".

¹⁹ Branscomb, (1937:24) argues that the sayings of verse 15 are authentic but the original utterance was less sweeping and categorical than it appears here.

The disciples ask Jesus for the meaning of the saying found in Mark 7:15. The disciples are accused of lacking understanding. Food, which enters a person is not dirty; it is the excretion (that which comes out) that is dirty. The heart is seen as the source and centre of human action determining its character. So, what comes out of the heart of a person reveals who he/she truly is and thus his state of purity as made known by God depending on his/her relationship with God.

5.5 Ritual cleansing

Sanders (1990: 2), on the issue from Mark 1:40-44 where Jesus after cleansing the leper commanded him to go and show himself to the priest to be certified as ritually clean, says that Jesus acts in general conformity with the law, meaning that Jesus showed obedience to the law.

Banks (1975:103) says: "This phrase is in fact decisive for a proper understanding of Jesus' intention" He continues, "It can scarcely refer simply to the Israelites to whom the original Law was given, as some have suggested, nor to the fact of the cure before the eyes of the priests, as others have contended, for in every instance in which it occurs in the gospels it relates to the mission and message of Christ". It is less easy to decide whether it should be interpreted with Mark 6:11 (cf. esp. Luke 9:5) in terms of a 'testimony against Israel' or in a positive sense (cf. Matt. 10:18 and pars. 24:14) as a testimony to Israel'.

In view of the Old Testament and post Christian usage (Deut.31: 26; Josh. 24:27; Ign., Tr. 12:3; Phld.6: 3) it is more likely to be the former, but we cannot be certain. In either case, it becomes clear that the instruction was given not to highlight Jesus' faithfulness to the Mosaic Law, but that through its observance its adherents might be brought face to face with their own failure and with the corresponding reality of Christ's power.

The reverse, however, has especially been insisted upon for Matthew's presentation. It has been suggested that his positioning of the pericope immediately after the Sermon on the Mount is consciously designed to illustrate the truth of Matt. 5:17 (I came not to destroy.... but to fulfil') in practice. But this presumes a conservative

understanding of Matt. 5:17. Matthew's omission of what the healed man does in response to the command of Jesus means that the latter must be understood less as a command than in the sense of an attestation of himself. In this way, Mathew underlines the christological direction of the pericope that is already present in the Marcan account.

5.6 Table fellowship

Table fellowship had a very deep and importance significance attached to it in the Old Testament for it was regarded as socially binding people to one another but more importantly binding them to God. The Pharisees were convinced that eating with gentiles and other Jewish people meant that they had transgressed the Law, especially rules concerning defilement and, by implication the non-payment of tithes. Jesus on the other hand on numerous occasions ate with publicans and sinners and was judged for that (Luke 7: 34, 19:7; 15: 2 Matt 11:19). He was only once challenged in Matt.9: 9-13 by the Pharisees and the scribes on this issue.

In response to the criticism of Jesus' eating with 'ordinary' people, he quotes Hosea 6:6, 'I desire mercy not sacrifice', showing what his ministry is all about. This quotation was not intended as an evaluation of the law or a definition of the character of God. It does not have even much to do with the Pharisees' concern for obedience and lack of mercy as their failure to associate with publicans and sinners but it has everything to do with their inability to discern the presence of God at work in the ministry of Jesus. Thus, this statement is simply that Jesus has come as the Old Testament anticipated, that his mission would be one of mercy (Banks 1975:110-111).

In the issue of Jesus eating with sinners in Mt 11:19, Sanders (1990: 5) considered it as not a very serious conflict. For he argues that Jesus offered the kingdom to those outside the law, without effect for they remained outside the prescribed law not repenting and becoming observant.

5.7 Jesus' healing of women

5.7.1 Mark 5: 21-43

²¹ When Jesus had crossed again (in the boat) to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him, and he stayed close to the sea.

²² One of the synagogue officials, named Jairus, came forward. Seeing him he fell at his feet

²³ and pleaded earnestly with him, saying, "My daughter is at the point of death. Please, come lay your hands on her that she may get well and live."

²⁴ He went off with him, and a large crowd followed him and pressed upon him.

²⁵ There was a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years.

²⁶ She had suffered greatly at the hands of many doctors and had spent all that she had. Yet she was not helped but only grew worse.

²⁷ She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak.

²⁸ She said, "If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured."

²⁹ Immediately her flow of blood dried up. She felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.

³⁰ Jesus, aware at once that power had gone out from him, turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who has touched my clothes?"

³¹ But his disciples said to him, "You see how the crowd is pressing upon you, and yet you ask, 'Who touched me?'"

³² And he looked around to see who had done it.

³³ The woman, realizing what had happened to her, approached in fear and trembling. She fell down before Jesus and told him the whole truth.

³⁴ He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction."

³⁵ While he was still speaking, people from the synagogue official's house arrived and said, "Your daughter has died; why trouble the teacher any longer?"

³⁶ Disregarding the message that was reported, Jesus said to the synagogue official, "Do not be afraid; just have faith."

³⁷ He did not allow anyone to accompany him inside except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James.

³⁸ When they arrived at the house of the synagogue official, he caught sight of a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly.

³⁹ So he went in and said to them, "Why this commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep."

⁴⁰ And they ridiculed him. Then he put them all out. He took along the child's father and mother and those who were with him and entered the room where the child was.

⁴¹ He took the child by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!"

⁴² The girl, a child of twelve, arose immediately and walked around. (At that) they were utterly astounded.

⁴³ He gave strict orders that no one should know this and said that she should be given something to eat.²⁰

²⁰ *The New American Bible*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) 1997

A great crowd of people surrounded Jesus on his way to Galilee; Jairus, a chief officer of a synagogue, (a man of high status) approached him. Jairus fell on his knees and begged Jesus to help him, for his twelve years old daughter was dying. Dornish (1996:102) sees that Jairus' daughter as an only child had a unique relationship with her parents. She reminds us that Jesus in John's gospel is the only begotten son. She is excited that with Jairus it is an "only begotten daughter not an only begotten son" (Dornish 1996:102).

As Jesus follows Jairus to his home the crowd presses on almost crushing him and a woman who had been suffering with a flow of blood for twelve years touched the hem of his garment. One can speculate that she is a middle-aged woman but due to her problem had been unable to reach her menopause (Dornish 1996: 102; Waetjen (1989:120).

According to Waetjen (1989:120), the writer reveals his lower-class bias with the bitter accusation that she had suffered many things by many physicians and spent everything she had but only became more impoverished than well. For the whole duration of the twelve years while she was suffering with the hemorrhage she was stigmatised as unclean for in the book of Leviticus 15:25-27 it declares that,

"If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness; as in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean. Every bed on which she lies, all the days of her discharge, shall be to her as the bed of her impurity; and everything on which she sits shall be unclean, as in the uncleanness of her impurity. And whoever touches these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself, in water, and be unclean until the evening.

This woman has been forced into an oppressive confinement within her home, isolated from society and physical contact with her family. And as a wife, she has been barred from sexual intercourse with her husband (Waetjen 1989:120). She was a social outcast. One can only imagine the strain that this must have caused in the

family especially between her and her husband. If she had children, she could not hug them. As a wife and mother myself I can only imagine her experience!

According to Dornish (1996:102), the young woman was at the beginning of menstruation, on the threshold of life, and yet she was dying. On the other hand we find an older woman who should be enjoying the fullness of her womanhood, who were oppressed not only by the fact that she was a woman but who suffered because no one could heal her. And because of her unclean state she was ostracized from all social interaction.

As we have seen Jairus in all his humility approached Jesus from the front as most men do, as a position of dignity, this woman however comes from behind to touch the fringes or tassel of his garment²¹. She is doing something illegal and as Dornish (1996:102 says: “ordinarily offensive”).

Instantaneous with the touching she received the healing, she stopped bleeding. With the touch, power went out from Jesus. Jesus immediately asked : “who touched Me?”

Jesus insisted that someone touched him, for power went out from him (Luke 8: 46). The woman sees that she is not hidden; Dornish (1996:104) reminds us once again that ²²there are so many women who takes the position of the hidden, in that they do not show their pain and suffering, when it is almost too late they reach out. The woman came forth and stood before Jesus just as the ruler of the synagogue did. In this action, the woman is in parallel with the synagogue ruler. She professed before everyone that she had touched him and how she received healing at once Luke 8:47 (Dornish 1996:104)

²¹ A Jew who observes the torah would wear a tassel (Witherington 2001:187; Num. 15:38-40; Deuteronomy 22:12; Mark 6:56).

²² Marshal (1978:342) argues that the mighty works of Jesus was accomplished by a divine power, which emanated from him. This could easily be regarded in a superstitious fashion as something magical is however lifted up to a higher level by Jesus insisting on faith as the means of a cure both for the woman and for Jairus' daughter. Therefore, the cure extended beyond the healing of the body: for the woman it involved personal confrontation with Jesus. Marshal further suggest that the words “your faith has saved you” we must detect a deeper meaning than just a mere physical healing.

The woman had taken a risk of being publicly condemned and ostracized by being in the crowd never mind touching a holy rabbi, Jesus (Witherington 2001:188). Instead of rebuking her for violation of the law, Jesus instead commended her for risking her vulnerability in order to be liberated from her oppressive condition (Waetjen 1989:121).

Jesus addressed her with honour, by calling her “Daughter” as in “Daughter of Israel”. For Dornish (1996:103) Jesus showed the woman great respect in attributing her healing to her power and her faith. For Dornish (1996:103) the irony is strong in that Peter called Jesus “faith master” but the woman was the one who has the faith. For it was she who reached out in faith and was healed by that faith.

The first story of Jairus’ daughter is now picked up again. ‘While Jesus was still speaking someone comes from the synagogue rulers house, saying that the daughter has died. The word daughter weaves the two stories together (Witherington 2001:189). Jesus hears the messenger saying not to trouble him, he responded saying “do not fear only believe and she will be made well”. At the house, Jesus allowed Peter, James and John and the parents to enter the house with him (Luke8: 53).

All were weeping. The funeral rites had already started. Then Jesus said, do not weep, for she did not die, she is only sleeping (Luke 8:52). They ridiculed him. They knew that she indeed died. Jesus held her hand and called out “child arise”. Her spirit returned to her and she rose up at once. Jesus commanded that she be given something to eat. The parents were amazed but Jesus charged them not to tell anyone what had happened.

Here we have two stories that are inter-related with one another. From the outset they seem like two stories, with the one interrupting the other in order to build up a climax for the interrupted story. However, a closer look shows that there is more to it than that. Witherington (2001: 184), using Dibelius and Pesch, points out that the delay caused by the healing of the woman is integral to the Jairus story. Marshal 1978: 341 says the construction of the two stories is noteworthy but is widely regarded as secondary. He continues to say that the significance of the double story stands out in

this that the power of Jesus is seen to extent not only to curing of disease but, also to the raising of the dead (Marshall1978: 342; Witherington 2001:184).

Jesus helped both a male of high social status (Jairus) and a woman who was considered an outcast and was marginalized because of her physical condition. From this we learn that Jesus was prepared to help anyone. For Witherington (2001:185) the story illustrates how the gospel reaches both those at the bottom and the top of the social scale.

5.8 Jesus' attitude to leprosy

5.8.1 Mark 1:40-44

⁴⁰ A leper came to him (and kneeling down) begged him and said, "If you wish, you can make me clean."

⁴¹ Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, "I do will it. Be made clean."

⁴² The leprosy left him immediately, and he was made clean.

⁴³ Then, warning him sternly, he dismissed him at once.

⁴⁴ Then he said to him, "See that you tell no one anything, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them"²³

Our findings in Leviticus 13-14, Numbers 12:1-16 and others texts like, Num.5: 2; 11 Chronicles. 26:16ff show that leprosy was regarded with a particular horror as defiling the holiness of the people and as a visitation from God.

In the passages of Mark 1:40-44 and Luke17: 11-19, Jesus' attitude was that of compassion towards the afflicted persons. In Mark 1:40-45 when the leper fell on his face and pleaded to be cleansed Jesus, stretched out his hand, and touched him, saying 'I will, be clean'. Evans (1990:295) believes that this was no ordinary healing and that the touching was not just simply part of the technique as in Luke7: 14, 13:13.

²³ *The New American Bible*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) 1997

Leiva-Merikakis (1996: 324) suggests that Jesus reciprocates the leper's gesture of kneeling to him, by stretching out his hand. He does not reject the lepers' act of adoration with false humility but responded to it with divine mercy and condescension. Leiva-Merikakis, continues and says that only a mad man or God would touch a leper in the ancient world, for contagion was believed to be instantaneous.

One can only conclude from this passage that Jesus fully identifies with the leper and he is prepared to empty himself out for the wholeness of the leper. For his response is instantaneous, in Mark 1:41 he stretched out his hand and touched him saying, "I will, be clean". There was indeed no hesitation to be in contact with them. For his love and compassion for them and their situation were greater.

In both Mark 1:40-45 and Luke 17:11-19 Jesus referred the lepers to present themselves to the priest. For Evans (1990:295) the law made no provision for the healing of leprosy. The function of the priest was to pronounce the lepers clean and able to partake in sacrifices after examination. Evans (1990:295) believes that Jesus did this as proof to the people in the community, that this was the end of the purificatory sacrifice, since Jesus touched the leper and did not become unclean, thus did not see the need to show himself to the priest. Indeed Jesus was greater than the priest and the law that the priest upheld. The men were restored back into their community in order to resume normal life with their families.

5.8.2 The Attitude of the Healed Lepers

5.8.2.1 Luke 17:11-19

¹¹ As he continued his journey to Jerusalem, he traveled through Samaria and Galilee.

¹² As he was entering a village, ten lepers met (him). They stood at a distance from him

¹³ and raised their voice, saying, "Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!"

¹⁴ And when he saw them, he said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." As they were going they were cleansed.

¹⁵ And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice;

¹⁶ and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. He was a Samaritan.

¹⁷ Jesus said in reply, "Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine?"

¹⁸ Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?"

¹⁹ Then he said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has saved you,"²⁴

This story of the ten lepers is only found here in Luke. However there are some uncertainties as to whether it is solely Luke's composition or both a composition by Luke and a redaction by Luke (Fitzmyer 1985: 1149). Fitzmyer (1985:1149) continues pointing out that some commentators understand verses 11 and 19 to be clearly of Luke's composition while verses 12-18 could have been from a pre-Lucan source. Fitzmeyer (1985:1149) argues that there is no clarity about the matter.

Fitzmeyer (1985:1149-1150) summarised the various comments in the following manner: Some commentators saw it as a biographical pronouncement story, others placed it in a special grouping as a "legend of Jesus" that is one of the religious stories in which Jesus brings to light His purity, wisdom, and virtue; others as a miracle story with a pronouncement; some saw it as a story that gives Jesus prophetic power; and another as a miracle story with the addition of the pronouncement. "The legend of Jesus" reasoning seems very appealing for us here.

For our purposes, here what is important is the encounter itself between Jesus and the lepers and the transactions that had taken place between them as Luke has recorded it. Our focus is on the words of Jesus and the attitudes of the lepers.

In spite of the fact that this disease was often seen as a divine punishment for serious sins, Jesus did not judge the lepers. As the ten lepers stood from a far in Luke 17: 11-19 and pleaded for mercy. Jesus responded immediately, 'go and show yourself to the priest'. On their way, they found that they were cleansed. They had received healing without judgment. If this was the case why does Jesus question the fact that the nine did not go back but proceeded to the priest where he had sent them. Why did he only tell the Samaritan that his faith had made him well? Did Jesus indeed judge the nine?

The ten lepers did indeed receive healing without judgment. Jesus did not judge them for having the disease. They asked for mercy and he showed mercy to them, by referring them to the priest to be certified as clean. However, the nine are being

²⁴ *The New American Bible*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) 1997

judged because they did not show any gratitude to the one who had showed mercy on them. Marshall (1978: 649) says the story is not simply a testimony to the ability to cure lepers as in 5:12-14 but is also concerned with the attitude of the person who had received healing.

Another way to look at the response of the nine can be that, just because they did not return immediately, does not mean that they were not grateful. Because this does not mean that they were not grateful in their hearts and that they did not say thank you the following day or week. Maybe they first wanted to go to the priest and be certified as clean before they went back to Jesus to say thank you. It is exactly for this reason that Jesus judged them. They did not recognize their time of salvation therefore they delayed their need of praising God and thus of showing their gratitude. The Samaritan returned to give thanks to Jesus for healing him and glorified God. He received a declaration of salvation because of his faith (Marshall 1978:648).

The nine however, did not follow his example, in spite of the fact that they had a shared experience of being outcasts, of being unloved, uncared for, of hunger and pain and humiliation. However, when healing came this experience was forgotten. They were no more in the same boat. Their experience if it taught them anything did not matter anymore or it did not make sense anymore. The moment when they realized that they were clean, they could not associate with the Samaritan any more because he would make them unclean.

Another aspect was also that the Samaritan could not go with them to the same priest for he would defile the sanctuary. Thus, one can say their experience, whatever it was, did not change anything, because it did not humble them. For when they realized that they were clean they were happy to return to their community as unchanged persons. They were not prepared to stand for unity and thus to improve the long standing broken relationship that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans but they still judged him according to cultural, and religious standards.

Their experience did not impact on society. They in asking Jesus to have mercy in their afflicted situation were unable to show mercy after they were helped. If the belief that leprosy was a divine punishment because of particular sins, like pride was

true, than the nine indeed did not turn from their ways, but persisted in them after healing, for their experience did not humble them. It only humbled them up to the point of asking for mercy since it was to their own benefit.

If they were waiting for the priest to certify them as clean then it shows that they did not trust Jesus' healing, although they were obeying Jesus' instruction. It shows they had greater trust in their oppressive system than in the one who truly cleaned them. For the priest could not cleanse them but could only certify them as clean.

5.9 A reconstruction of Luke 17:11-19- Reading the woman into the text.

Fiorenza in chapter 2 of her book "*In Memory of Her*", entitled towards a Feminist Critical method, argues that it is necessary to develop critical historical methods for feminist readings of biblical text, since one is placing the locus of revelatory text in the life and ministry of Jesus and not in the androcentric text. Thus, she continues that, since the text of the early Christian movement does not speak of women's contribution or historical, or theological experience, it becomes imperative to find ways to break the silence concerning woman's historical and theological contributions and experience, as generated from historical text and theological redaction. It requires a search for clues and allusions that direct us to the reality about which the text is silent, and in the case here specifically, the history and contribution of women.

For this reason, I reconstruct the text of the ten lepers in Luke 17:11-19 in order to read a woman into the text. In reading, the text I want to suggest that the Samaritan man be read as a woman leper. Since in the New Testament there is no mention of a woman leper, it is difficult for us to know her experience. We thus have to make the silence speak! What could be the worse case scenario?

Imagine what happened to women when they were declared as being infected with leprosy and were being drove out of their communities, away from their homes, their families, their children. Imagine the ten lepers, all outcasts all defiled because of the same disease. The story in Luke 17:11 starts where Jesus was about to enter a town, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices and said, ‘

Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.' When he saw them he said to them, " Go and show yourself to the priest'

If one of the ten were a woman, would Jesus still have seen ten lepers standing at a distance or nine male lepers and a female leper standing at a distance from the nine. The Samaritan in the story in Luke 17: 11 did not show much of a difference to the nine Jews because he was a man like them and thus could be accepted among them as one of them. But the woman and her otherness is a problem even in the desert, outside the walls of the society.

Would the nine have received mercy from Jesus without judgment as they did when they had the Samaritan as their companion; if the woman were with them but not really a part of them? One can only imagine what could have been the situation of ten people all lepers, all outcasts, driven from their community, all experiencing the same pain, cold, longing and anxiety about the cruel reality of what the future holds for them. They share the same experiences, but is it really the same? One of them is with them, but different from them for she is a woman. Would they accept her among them? Would they care for her when it is cold in the winter?

Being in the same situation, how would her experience be different from theirs? The woman's experience with leprosy might have been quite different from that of a man, in that she is not a man but a woman. She is much more sensitive to the way her skin is presented. She would have been very much ashamed of condition of her skin, the sores that might have been on it. The availability of water to wash especially when she was menstruating, what would she do? She would then be double cast out because she could not or would not want to be amongst them. For as much as they are lepers and thus already unclean they remain men and Jewish men at that! Speaking about men, they might see in her an opportunity to satisfy their sexual needs. She might be raped by one or all of them and be left to fend for herself. What about wild animals? Would they care to give her a second thought after they had their way with her?

There are endless possibilities to what might have been the experience of a woman leper among nine male lepers. Maybe the story in Luke 17:11-19 would not even have

been about ten lepers but about nine whose conscious might not allowed them to raise their voices and ask “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us”.

What would have happened if she was part of the ten approaching Jesus from afar. Would her family have accepted her back unconditionally? What would her husband’s attitude have been towards her if she should have told him of her experiences especially of the possible rape? Even if nothing had, happened to her as a social outcast, would things ever be the same?

One can never be sure to what situation she would have gone back to for she might not have been expected back at all. One can say that this woman might have taken a step further than that of the Good Samaritan by following Jesus as so many other women in the New Testament did whom Jesus had healed.

Another point to consider is that the Samaritan man came to Jesus after being healed because he could not go the Priest, for according to Jewish understanding all Samaritans were unclean and his mere presence would have defiled the priest. In the same way the woman would have returned to Jesus, since she also would have been considered unclean for she would not have had a chance to wash herself after being cleansed by Jesus. Thus, she was not fit to present herself to the priest.

5.10 Summary of findings

In this chapter, we have found that purity for the people of Jesus time was understood in connection with holiness. We have also found that the motivating factors for the focus upon holiness resulted from the socio-economic conditions that the people found themselves in, due to the situation of the colonial powers. Various resistance movements arose in opposition to the ruling powers. Namely the Essenes, Sadducees the Pharisees the Zealots and the Jesus movement. Each wanted to institute their forms of renewal that they saw as important for the survival of Israel as a nation.

From among these groups, the Pharisees pushed for the quest of holiness. They emphasised separation from the gentiles, especially from Roman behaviour in order to

protect the people and the temple from being defiled. Thus, they wanted to protect the holiness from contagion. For them the holiness of God was something that needed to be protected from outside forces. Therefore, they established strict laws in order to keep the people loyal to the temple. However, this failed because most of the people felt excluded and unloved and useless for they were unable to keep up with both the demands from the Romans and that of the temple especially the taxes.

We found that Jesus' understanding of holiness was far different from their understanding of holiness. Where the Pharisees emphasised on the verse "Be holy for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). Jesus incorporates this verse with "Be merciful for I the Lord your God am merciful" (Luke 6:36). In doing that, Jesus proclaimed that the holiness of God did not need protection but those who were outcasts were brought back into the fold of God. Jesus demonstrated this understanding in his compassionate openness towards those who were suffering. He further complimented his compassion with action in that he brought comfort through healing. Jesus' approach is the one that all humans are called to aspire to.

The final part of this chapter was the reconstruction of the Luke 17:11-19 passage where woman is read into the text owing to the fact that the New Testament had no story of women lepers. This exercise served to highlight that woman would have suffered even greater for the sake of being a woman. Her sexuality would have made her situation even more dangerous and more problems

CHAPTER SIX

JESUS ATTITUDE TOWARDS WOMEN WITH AIDS

This chapter seeks to understand what Jesus' attitude towards women with AIDS today would have been. We begin with a brief definition of the disease, followed by its impact on society with special attention on the impact upon woman.

6.1 Definition of AIDS

AIDS is a relatively new and fatal disease. Like leprosy in the time of Jesus, it affects not only the individual but has far reaching consequences on the community as a whole. It stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. It is understood as caused by HIV, Human Immunodeficiency Virus.

HIV is a disease that attacks the body's immune system. When the body's immune system is weak and it is unable to fight off infections and cancers. These infections are often caused by organisms, which are found in everyone's body but cause no problem as long as the immune system is working well. A rare form of pneumonia known as pneumocysticarinii pneumonia (PCP), and a rare form of skin cancer called Kaposi's sarcoma (KS) are common illnesses found in people with AIDS. It is the cancers and opportunistic infections that cause death. This usually occurs within two to three years after being diagnosed with AIDS (Richardson 1987:1).

Richardson (1987: xiv) adds that AIDS is a tragic illness. It is disfiguring and debilitating to those who have it. It affects the young and is ultimately fatal.

She continues and says:

“AIDS is not a gay disease; a virus does not discriminate. It affects those who are heterosexual and gay, white and black, the wealthy and the poor, women and men, and also children. It is a social problem which we all need to be concerned about”

6.2 The impact of AIDS on society with special reference to woman

According to Denis (2000: 4), in the early years of the pandemic HIV/AIDS was regarded as a biomedical problem. However, with time it became clear that HIV/AIDS was more than a medical problem. The disease impacted all areas of life. It has a direct affect on the economy and the demographic structure of the population. It affects the quality of life of the people. It also has political, cultural and religious implications. For Marcus (2000: 6) what is important is that how we live with the disease will depend on how we will respond as individuals and as a society to the disease.

Nicolson (1995:11,12) argues that it is the behavioural and cultural issues, in Africa that has made AIDS a pandemic. He acknowledges that poverty is a major factor in shaping behaviour, but says that there are other factors as well and quotes Susan LeClerc who pointed out:

“AIDS has spread in sub-Saharan Africa because of cultural beliefs and in particular the belief that men need, and are entitled to, frequent sex, with a variety of partners”.

In response to this he says:

“Even if we can be immune against AIDS, even if we find a cure for AIDS, issues such as the commercialisation of sex, the expectation amongst men that women have a duty to provide them with casual sexual gratification, the belief amongst young women that their worth is determined primarily by satisfying the demands of their partners, remain. Young girls are initiated into sexual intercourse before they are biologically ready for it. Rape and sexual violence are common in our society. Women are not given rights over their own bodies. Even if AIDS disappears (as it may do), the abuse of women, the widespread assumptions that men are by nature entitled to sexual gratification, will continue to disfigure our society and we shall still be sick – not of a virus but of diseased human relationships which are perhaps even more damaging than the virus. AIDS is the medical consequence of a network of implicit and unstated cultural attitudes and of

badly skewed social relationships, which will still persist, even if the virus is defeated. Lives will still be damaged, gender power relationships will still be distorted, women young and old will still be exploited”

According to (Richardson 1987: 108), there has been very little analysis concerning the experience of woman who lives with AIDS. Richardson believes that the problems that AIDS creates for women are different from those facing men. This is so because, woman’s access to health care, the support system available to them, the ability to make changes in their sex life and their reaction to physical decline and disfigurement are likely to be different to that of men. Added to this is the specific problem of pregnancy for women with AIDS. She feels that it is important to discover how women feel but it is difficult. Most women with the virus are reluctant to be interviewed. This is understandable for AIDS is a stigmatised disease therefore they have a lot to lose if their status becomes public knowledge.

✎ Women and men (my focus is on women) with HIV/AIDS face many problems this is seen in the way they are treated. There are cases where nurses refused to feed, wash, change bedpans or even talk to patients in their care. Some people have been evicted, lost their jobs once their status became known. Insurance companies refuse to give life cover for AIDS sufferers. Some AIDS sufferers have been abandoned from their friends, relatives, lovers, children were excluded from school and doctors refused medical care (Richardson 1987:114,115).

Women with AIDS are often socially isolated because of the way people who are misinformed about the transmission of the disease treat them. They feel dirty, unclean and rejected and thus isolate themselves. They experience anxiety and depression and feel that they cannot or do not want to be sexually active. They feel sexually dirty and unloved. Woman experience the anxiety of becoming pregnant while having intercourse. Thus, they are not free. A woman who has children has other worries. Her traditional position in the family as caregiver is affected and threatened. She has to deal with a life threatening disease and the impact it might have on her family. Single parents and women with careless husbands have the added worry about what will happen to their children when they become ill and eventually die. They fear infecting them, losing custody or seeing them ostracised because of their condition. They might

also feel guilty and ashamed, as mothers they failed. There are no or few existing services for woman in these situation, in order to assist them with their feelings, to help them plan for the future care of their children in case they become sick and die (Richardson 1987: 116,122,127,129).

6.3 Jesus Attitude towards women with Aids

In our previous chapter, we looked at Jesus' attitude towards leprosy and we his attitude towards purity issues because a person with leprosy was considered impure and thus was included in the whole concept of being clean and unclean, and especially what makes you clean and unclean. We saw how Jesus in his time dealt with these issues. The question for us today is whether we can apply the same responses of Jesus in his time to issues facing us in our time? Would Jesus response be the same for AIDS victims today as it was for victims of leprosy in his time? Before one responds with and emphatic, 'Yes!' I would suggest a look at what his response was to leprosy and on what basis did he give that response. Together with this goes the crucial question:

What is the response that AIDS victims need today? Our response here is focused on women with AIDS since our paper is about women and because we believe that women's experience is different in that it is more intense and demanding than that of men with AIDS as we have seen in the section above on its social impact.

6.3.1 What does leprosy and AIDS have in common?

1. We notice that leprosy was considered a visitation from God, AIDS is also seen in this light.
2. Both leprosy and AIDS were severely stigmatised diseases in that people who contracted them were ostracised by others. For leprosy sufferers it was because of the purity law codes and the understanding that it defiled the holiness of the people. For people infected with AIDS it is the fears that others have of being infected because they are uninformed concerning the ways of contracting the disease.

3. Women in the case of both leprosy and AIDS have the most to lose when contracting these diseases. The fundamental reason for this is that in most cases women have leading roles in their homes and at times are the sole managers of their homes.
4. Leprosy had no known cure just like AIDS. The understanding was that since God was the one responsible for the affliction, he should also be the one to heal the affliction. I have found some people today also understand AIDS as a punishment from God; in any case God is called upon to heal.

6.3.2 The Response of Jesus

The response of Jesus was one of compassion. This we notice when he was faced with the healing of lepers in the accounts in Mark 1:40-44 and Luke 17:11-19.

In Mark 1:40-43, the response to the person with the severely stigmatised disease was indeed astonishing. What did Jesus do? Did he walk around him? Did he try to take another route when he saw the leper approaching him? Did he command his disciples to deal with the leper, like in telling him to go away? Did he pretend that he did not see him? No! He did not. What was his response? He stretched out his hand. This act of love was accompanied by the words: "I will". These are words that every sufferer yearns to hear. Erasmon Leiva-Meikakis (1996:324) says it well it is worth repeating his words:

“ The sick man had asked Jesus only for a movement of the will; instead Jesus accompanies his assenting will with an assenting Heart, eager to embrace and communicate life intimately, fully, in body and spirit. He touches the man in his concreteness, in his individuality. He enters with his divine light the pestiferous ambit of a leper’s solitude. The glory of God gravitates towards misery, takes up its dwelling in the low places that have been hallowed out to prepare its arrival”

We notice this kind of love and compassion as the purpose for Jesus coming to the earth in his answer to the Pharisees who criticised him for eating with sinners in Matt. 9:9-13. He quotes from the book of Hosea in answering them:

“I desire mercy not sacrifices”.

Jesus has come just as the Old Testament prophesied and his mission was to have mercy. Indeed we are still experiencing his mercy today even in the AIDS pandemic. Because of this and many more stands that Jesus took in his time, we can indeed say: “Yes! Jesus attitude to AIDS today would have been the same as his attitude was towards the lepers”. For they were the low, the marginalized, the outcast, the defenceless, for whom he had come, and on whom he will have mercy. Jesus’ response is relevant not only to his time but for all time. Not only can he not be restricted by time and space, compassion and love is for all time and all situations of suffering, marginalisation.

Jesus attitude towards women with AIDS is no different to his response to all situations and circumstances that require healing, irrespective as to who required the healing. This we notice in the encounter where he healed the woman with the flow of blood and of the healing of the daughter of Jairus. Jairus was an important man and she was an ordinary woman Jesus helped them both at their point of need. In the same way today he meets us male and female at our point of need. This is even more clearer when Jesus healed the man with leprosy at his point of need. Jesus did not heal him because he was a man but he healed him because he was a person with a need. He saw the person’s sincere heart in his plea for mercy. Jesus might not heal many or anybody (for that matter) with AIDS today but he wants to meet them at their point of need. Society tends to judge people with AIDS in the same way as people with leprosy have been judged, that their disease is a punishment from God in the case of AIDS for their promiscuous lifestyle²⁵

²⁵ Some people are of the understanding that people, who have contracted AIDS, have only done so because they have had more than one sexual partner, and they have ignored or are ignorant of the other ways one can contract the disease.

Nurnberger (2000:4) quoting Luther says that in creation, we experience only the fearful power and majesty of God not his love. And if we want to discover the true intentions of God, we must look at the cross of Christ. Here a terrible human catastrophe is proclaimed to be God's act of salvation. If he can turn such a disaster into his tool of redemption, then he can also turn our own disasters into tools of redemption. Looking at the cross, Christians believe that, in spite of all the evil encountered in this world, God is for us, and with us and not against us. In Christ, he leads us through suffering to glory, through death to life.

Nurnberger (2000:4) again quoting Luther says: that faith is a stubborn refusal to succumb to hopelessness, despondency and fatalism. Faith is trust in the love of God in the face of all the calamities we experience. Faith appeals to the God of mercy against the same God who seemingly wants to destroy us. Faith struggles with God for his protection and blessings as Jacob did at the Jabbok. Faith is like a little girl who has done mischief and is cornered by her furious father. She has nowhere to flee to; so she flings herself into his lap crying, "Daddy, daddy, but you are my daddy!" Even Jesus struggled with God in Gethsemane, sweating blood, until he understood that what was going to happen was part of God's redemptive will. We need this faith if not we may be overwhelmed by the onslaught of the AIDS pandemic. Furthermore, God's acceptance of the unacceptable means that God suffers as well and that is what the cross of Christ is all about. When we become God's instruments of acceptance and transformation, we share God's suffering (Nurnberger 2000: 5).

Jesus showed in practice what it means to be in relationship with God and with others. Jesus showed openness to all people, without barriers of class race or gender or being diseased. Jesus went among the poor telling them that God loved them, even if they had not been able to keep the law scrupulously. He dined with a rich Pharisee, and told another that he needed new vision and needed to be born again (John3: 3). He healed Jewish lepers and a Roman soldier's servant. There were women in the group that travelled with him, and unlike many holy men, he did not shrink from the touch of a prostitute. In all this, Jesus demonstrated the accessibility of God, who showed no partiality (Acts10 34; Rom.2: 11), but is open to all – rich or poor, sick or healthy, old or young, male or female.

Two crucial aspects concerning Jesus response to those who were suffering with leprosy stand out. They are firstly his compassion for those who were suffering. And secondly his openness towards them that demonstrated his compassion. This, I understand is the way in which we ought to go. We are to be moved with pity and deep compassion and not remain there but do something about it. We may not be able to cure these people, but if we embrace them lovingly through our actions of compassion and care giving, we just might enable them to experience respect, self worth and dignity. In so doing, they could feel that in spite of their predicament they still belong to the human race.

7. CONCLUSION

Our search for women with leprosy took us on a journey to antiquity and brought us back to modernity. We have searched for an understanding of leprosy in all lands and languages and have noticed the various reactions that this has brought upon humans. It seems as if nothing has changed. Women all over the world still suffer from being women. Her burden has not really eased. She still has many challenges and obstacles to overcome. Our search has underlined this point. Our search has also provided us with much food for thought, things that we need to repeat to each other so as to lighten our burdens and to show compassion and to genuinely reach out to those who are suffering so as to restore their dignity and self worth as the people of God, especially those who suffer with HIV/AIDS.

We began with a search for leprosy as a medical condition and how it has been understood then and today, we found that leprosy did very well exist and the way we understand leprosy today is far different from that of antiquity. Our search though did not find any specific evidence on the effects of leprosy on women from a medical point of view. We have also realised that illness must be understood within the context of one's cultural setting and background. Both the view of the individual and his/her particular cultural setting must be understood, thus requiring a holistic approach.

Through our search for the evidence of leprosy among these four texts of the Old Testament we have shown that indeed women did suffer from the disease. We have also noticed that although the individual had contracted the disease, it also had had an effect upon his/her community. The effects were mainly in regards to the relationship changes that took place between sufferer and the community. In this regard the suffering person was the one who had more to lose. And the women had the most to lose. The leper suffered banishment from his/her community, his/her God and lost out on his/her covenant blessings. The person was stripped of his/her status and was forced to live a life of separation and thereby robbed of normal everyday living.

We have found it interesting to note that this disease for the biblical times was more about uncleanness and how this separates a person from their community and from

the covenant blessings. This type of thinking continued during the time of Jesus. Here again we notice how one's society and cultural setting affected one's view.

Their political setting influenced the people of Jesus' time and the groups in their society that wanted to shape society according to their understanding without having regard for those who were suffering. However, we found that Jesus' understanding was far different and he sought the good for those who were suffering.

We have found that the approach that Jesus took is the one that all humans are called to aspire to. The two crucial aspects were firstly his compassion for those who were suffering, and secondly his openness towards those whom he healed. According to the evidence from our search on Jesus' attitude towards lepers and other impurities I conclude that Jesus' attitude towards woman with AIDS today is no different to his response to all situations and circumstances that require healing, irrespective as to who required the healing. For Jesus sees the heart of a person and not just a man or a woman.

Our search has revealed and reminds us that we as the human race are still human and we need to learn from our mistakes and the mistakes of others. We need to train ourselves to respect women more and to help all those who are suffering. We may not heal them but can bring inner healing by being compassionate and lending a helping hand where we can.

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