

Blood, Medicine and the Bible



other bodily fluids were regarded as ‘humours’ which needed to remain in good balance to maintain health.

It may surprise us now to think that mostly this was carried out by barbers, though it was recommended by physicians, and this led to the distinction we still see

today between surgeons and physicians. The red-and-white striped pole often seen outside a British barber’s shop today derives from this very activity – the red for the blood and the white for the bandages.

THIS grand but damaged building is Sinai Park House in Burton (UK), and it has a long history. The hilltop site was ideally situated a day’s march from both Lichfield and Derby. First the Romans and then the Saxons used the location as a convenient place for a stronghold.

It is thought this practice may account for the name still in use today: Sinai could be derived from *saignée*, the French term for bloodletting.

Eventually Sinai Park was given to the monks of Burton Abbey, which was built in 1004 and was at that time a highly significant monastic seat in England. In 1334, Abbot William Bromley of Burton Abbey allowed his monks a time of ‘indulgence’, or rest and recuperation at Sinai Park, after what he called their ‘bloodletting activities’.

Primitive Healthcare

We now know that, although sometimes it may have helped reduce blood pressure, in the vast majority of cases this was harmful to the patient, and thankfully bloodletting is no longer practised as a medical treatment.

The idea of bloodletting was to cure disease in patients by withdrawing some of their blood. It was based on the ancient system of medicine in which blood and

Sinai Park House was owned by the Paget Family after the Dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII, and it then became a hunting lodge and a farm. The main building still standing today dates mostly from the mid-Seventeenth Century.

Meanwhile the name, whatever the origin of it, was fixed as Sinai Park.

Earlier, More Modern Medicine

The word Sinai itself is actually a Bible word. Mount Sinai, in the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula in modern-day Egypt, was where God gave His Law to the people of Israel. They had just departed from Egypt and were on their way to the Promised Land of Canaan, which we now know as Israel.

This Law covers a wide range of the human experience, including farming, food, and medicine. It is perhaps most famous today for the Ten Commandments, which were revealed to Moses in Exodus chapter 20.

This Law was very much ahead of its time. Given well over 3,000 years ago, it included some very modern ideas:

He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; then he will be clean (Numbers 19:11–12).

Until about a hundred years ago, surgeons did not wash their hands between patients on whom they were operating. Many of their patients died from infections spread in this way, rather than from their original injuries.

The leper on whom the sore is, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare ... He is unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp (Leviticus 13:45–46).

Here we can see that lepers (a term which covered a variety of skin diseases in those days) had to live separately from others – in quarantine. The way in which modern patients are isolated was derived directly from this ancient Jewish law.

These you may eat of all that are in the water: whatever in the water has fins and scales, whether in the seas or in the rivers – that you may eat. But all in the seas or in the rivers that do not have fins and scales ... they are an abomination to you (Leviticus 11:9–10).

We might wonder why there were such strict regulations on what Jews could eat. But consider that very often food poisoning today comes from seafood such as shrimps and crustaceans, which live in shallow, often polluted water, and contain bugs and viruses which are only killed by proper cooking. This law seems extremely wise.

This is one of the many reasons why we can believe that the Bible really was inspired by God, and it's worth investigating further. The monks who went to stay at Sinai Park in the Middle Ages should have known all about this Law and made this connection with the Bible – at least when they'd been revived after their painful treatments!

For more information on this law ahead of its time, and other good reasons to believe the Bible is the Word of God, you might like to look at the 'Evidence' website:

www.theevidence.org.uk

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