MICE AND RITES IN 1 SAMUEL V-VI
by
JOHN B. GEYER
Little Baddow, Essex

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1 Samuel v-vi tells of the sufferings of the Philistines after they had captured the ark from the Israelites. These sufferings include "tumours" (NEB) and a plague of "mice" (AV) or "rats" (NEB; 'kbrym could be either). A textual difficulty arises from the fact that although "tumours" are always mentioned, reference is made to mice in some places, but not in others. The present article tries to explain the reference to mice 1).

The presence of mice in the Ark Narrative 2) at 1 Sam. v 6-vii 1 has been a problem since ancient times, as may be seen in the divergence between the LXX and the MT. The mice occur in the LXX but not in the MT at v 6 and vi 1 3), in the MT but not in the LXX at vi 4, and in both texts at vi 5, 11, 18.

Both texts assert that there was one plague which afflicted the Philistines (vi 4) and the MT is almost consistent in depicting that plague as "tumours" (NEB) 4). Exceptionally, mice are said to be

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2) 1 Sam iv 1 — vii 1 and 2 Sam vi 1-23 was designated "The Ark Narrative" by L. Rost, Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids (Stuttgart, 1926), reprinted in his Das kleine Credo und andere Studien zum AT (Heidelberg, 1965), pp. 119-253. Subsequent discussion has been described by A. F. Campbell, The Ark Narrative (Missoula, 1975). We are concerned with v 6-12 and vi 1 — vii 1, two sections which conflict in details and cannot have belonged together originally. vi 1 — vii 1 is not a unity,

3) Smith's citation of mice in O.L. at v 10 is puzzling.

4) v 6, 9, 12, vi 4, 5. Kt. ʻplym, Qr. thrym. The meaning of these words is not clear. For ancient interpretations cf. S. Bochart (ed. F. F. C. Rosenmüller),
"ravaging the land" in vi 5. Since this phrase occurs in connection with the models of mice, which is the only sort of mice otherwise referred to in the MT, it must have crept in because of the complexity of the late literary recension. The verb *rp* (heal) in vi 3 must refer to "tumours" only and not mice 5).

It is quite otherwise with the LXX. Despite its own statement in vi 4, two independent plagues are presented, one of "tumours" and one of mice (v 6, vi 1). The LXX case is weakened by the fact that it does not include mice in its addition at v 3. Nor does 4QSama leave room in vi 1 for the LXX addition to the MT 6).

A number of recent commentators have favoured the LXX's two plagues over against the MT's one and they have done so for a variety of reasons.

Hierozoicon 1 (Leipzig, 1793), pp. 381 ff. *thrym* occurs only in the passages cited, usually as Qt. though in vi 11, 17 in Kt. I am unable to follow Mauchline's argument when he says that because *thrym* occurs in vi 11 the MT has retained the traditional word. The exact translation of this term is immaterial for the present article unless it can be shown to designate the bubonic plague. Evidence will be given in the article for rejecting such a theory. The verb *jur* is used only here. Bodenheimer (p. 201) may well be right in saying that this verb means "splitting, erupting", but his claim that the noun must therefore mean "boils" is not substantiated. I agree with Nowack that *thrym* is probably a more decent name for *plym* (contra Stoebe). Whilst "boils" erupt, so do piles. A reference to piles would be in keeping with the somewhat vulgar humour maintained towards the Philistines in the Ark Narrative. The problem remains that piles are not infectious and cannot cause an epidemic such as is described in our text. The solution has been found by G. R. Driver. His own expertise in Semitic philology led him to believe that *plym* meant "piles", and after consultation with the medical faculty of the University of Birmingham, he discovered that piles are a late symptom of dysentry, and it is noticable that some died before *plym* developed (v 12). The epidemic was dysentry and the *plym* were a late symptom (G. R. Driver, "The Plague of the Philistines (1 Sam v 6 — vi 16)", JRAS [1950], pp. 50-2). Whatever *plym* means, it is a physical complaint distinct from the plague of mice. In the MT it is the only plague.

5) *rp* refers to the act of divination (cf. n. 12), not to the return of the ark. The text may be faulty (cf. Smith, Budde), or possibly niph. *yd* is correctly translated by the LXX as "atonement shall be made (for you)" in line with certain senses of the Arabic root — so D. W. Thomas, "A Note on w*nādā* lāhem in 1 Samuel VI. 3", JTS, NS 11 (1960), p. 52. In any case, assurance of healing is premature as the priests are not yet sure that Yahweh is the sender of the plague (vi 9).