

Medicine, Science, and Ethics in a World of Uncertainty—Reflections from Religious Traditions

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- I. **Introduction: Studying Lament in three faiths, a practice of Scriptural Reasoning in the Pandemic Winter of 2020-2021**
 - A. The texts
 - B. Brief introduction to SRU practices
 - C. What we discovered in the practice
 - D. Stability in instability

- II. **The uncertainty of our present situation.**
 - A. Many external forces that require collective action
 - i. Climate change
 - ii. Pandemic
 - iii. Financial
 - iv. Coups in Africa and war in Europe
 - v. Whatever AI will mean.
 - B. Yet predictions about the future are famously difficult to make.
 - C. The case of Haldane, and Steven’s empirical solution, The Iron Rule.

- III. **Science has an Iron Rule; Religion has Acknowledgements.**
 - A. Aporetic conditions
 - B. Language: speech and text
 - C. Acknowledgement of our aporesis
 - i. Of the problem of epistemic or incomplete uncertainty
 - ii. Of the problem of disagreement and the definition of moral Goodness and Rightness
 - iii. Of the problem of deep uncertainty—all that is beyond knowing.

- IV. **Our plighted condition – we cannot not act.**
 - A. Essential premises of ethics
 - i. Rationality
 - ii. Belief in causality, scientists, and science
 - iii. Consent in all its problematized use.
 - B. For example: the case study of morality and malaria

Judaism: From the Hebrew Bible: Jeremiah

Zion's very roads are in mourning.
Empty of festival pilgrims.
All her gates are deserted.
Her priest sighing.
Her maidens sighing.
She is utterly disconsolate.

...

Hear, O women, the word of GOD,
Let your ears receive the divine word,
And teach your daughters wailing,
And one another lamentation.
For death has climbed through our windows,
Has entered our fortresses,

Bava Kamma 60b Babylonia Talmud

The Sages taught: If there is plague in the city, gather your feet, i.e., limit the time you spend out of the house, as it is stated in the verse: "And none of you shall go out of the opening of his house until the morning." And it says in another verse: "Come, my people, enter into your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourself for a little moment, until the anger has passed by" ([Isaiah 26:20](#)). And it says: "Outside the sword will bereave, and in the chambers terror" ([Deuteronomy 32:25](#))....At a time when there was a plague, Rava would close the windows of his house, as it is written: "For death is come up into our windows" ([Jeremiah 9:20](#))....The Sages taught: If there is a plague in the city, a person should not walk in the middle of the road, due to the fact that the Angel of Death walks in the middle of the road, as, since in Heaven they have given him permission to kill within the city, he goes openly in the middle of the road.

Islam: From a Hadith on Plague

It is narrated by Aisha – May God be pleased with her- she said:

"I asked the Messenger of God -God's blessings be upon him- about the Plague, so he told me that it is: A suffering sent by God upon whomever he wills, and God has made it into a compassion upon the faithful; As the Plague happens, one who remains in his town, patient and hopeful, confident that nothing will befall him except that which God decreed for him, will receive a reward equivalent to that of a martyr." Narrated by Bukhari.

Christianity: From Revelation 9:13- 21.

¹³ Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God, ¹⁴ saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." ¹⁵ So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind. ¹⁶ The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number. ¹⁷ And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the colour of fire and of sapphire^[a] and of sulphur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulphur came out of their mouths. ¹⁸ By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulphur coming out of their mouths. ¹⁹ For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound.

²⁰ The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, ²¹ nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.