

ידע אפידמיולוגי של מתרגמי התנך ליוונית

אבנר רמו



The plague of Ashdod, Nicolas Poussin 1630 (in the Louvre).

We read in the Book of Samuel:

וַתִּכְבַּד יְד-יְהוָה אֶל-הָאֲשְׁדּוּדִים וַיִּשְׁמַם; וַיִּדָּא אֶתְּם בַּעֲפָלִים (בַּטְּחָרִים), אֶת-אֲשְׁדּוּד וְאֶת-גְּבוּלֶיהָ.

“And YHWH’s hand was heavy the Ashdodites, and He destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, Ashdod and its borders” (1 Sam 5:6).

The Greeks wrote: “And the hand of the Lord was heavy upon Azotus and brought trouble upon them. And it broke out upon them into the ships and mice grew up in the midst of its territory and there was a great and indiscriminate death.”

The knowledge displayed here by the Greek translator suggests that he was aware of the epidemiology of (probably) the Bubonic Plague, whether as a medical professional or someone who lived through one of its bouts.

About the Plague of Athens: 430 B.C. Thucydides (460-400 B.C.) wrote that "people in good health were all of a sudden attacked by violent heats in the head, and redness and inflammation in the eyes, the inward parts, such as the throat or tongue, becoming bloody and emitting an unnatural and fetid breath."