Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary 24.1–2 (2023): 41–68

Whole-Person Care in the Teachings of the Three Abrahamic Faiths

ZDRAVKO STEFANOVIC

AdventHealth University, USA

Abstract

This article focuses on the wholistic view of caring for human beings as taught by the three Abrahamic Faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It deals with pertinent questions such as: What does it mean to be human in a wholistic sense? What are the key terms found in the texts sacred to the three great monotheistic faiths that express wholeness? Is it right to say that God is the source of illness and pain? Since human beings reflect God's image and likeness, how do they experience wholeness and wellness? How does wholeness relate to spirituality and devotion?

The concluding points of the article show that, despite some differences, the teachings of the three Abrahamic faiths about whole-person care complement one another. All three faiths affirm that wholeness, wellness, and health are great gifts to humanity given by the Creator God. In addition to this, the three faiths view the practice of healthcare as being "prophetic" in character. This is because the calling and the ministry of both the prophets and healthcare practitioners are about complete healing and the restoration of wholeness.

Keywords: Wholeness, wellness, healing, Judaism, Christianity, Islam

1. Introduction

While there is a wide semantic overlap between the concepts of wholeness and wellness, there are nuances as well. A helpful observation on the two

concepts was proposed by Garth Ludwig, who found connections between wholeness and life's purpose. Ludwig suggested that *wellness* "means the ability to function," while *wholeness* "means to live for a purpose."[1]

Etymologically, the English word "health" is based on an Anglo-Saxon word "hal/hale," meaning "whole."[2] Thus the English term "holy" is based on the same root as "whole." To be healthy is to be whole (cf. Hebrew term *shalem*).

In his monograph on wholeness in nature, Henri Bortoft has proposed that there is a "fundamental distinction between whole and totality." Totality is the sum of all parts, but there are no parts that are independent of the whole. In this way, the whole can be reflected in all the parts.[3] For David Bohm, "all this indicates that man has sensed always that wholeness or integrity is an absolute necessity to make life worth living. Yet, over the ages, he has generally lived in fragmentation."[4] This is the reason why the faithful look to God for a complete restoration of wholeness at individual and cosmic levels. The definitions above are very helpful, and that is how the concept of wholeness will be used in this article.

In this article, I will summarize the findings of a bibliographic study that focuses on searching for answers to the following questions: How are wholeness and wellness perceived in the Hebrew Bible and defined by followers of the three Abrahamic faiths, namely, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam? Are there similarities?[5] What are some of the characteristic perceptions? Given the scope of my study, this article will focus more on similarities between the three faiths.

1 Garth Ludwig, *Order Restored: A Biblical Interpretation of Health, Medicine and Healing* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1999), 128. See also, Farzaneh Yazdani, *Occupational Wholeness for Health and Wellbeing: A Guide for Re-Thinking and Re-Planning Life* (Milton: Taylor & Francis, 2023).

2 *Chrestomathy of Gothic and Anglo-Saxon Written Records*, s.v. "*hál*," https://germanic.ge-/en.

3 Henri Bortoft, *The Wholeness of Nature* (Herndon, VA: Lindisfarne Books, 1996), 6–7. This proposition can be very intriguing when applied to God's image borne by individual human beings.

4 David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (New York: Routledge, 1980), 3–4.

5 Darla Schum and Michael Stoltzus, eds., *Disability in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam's Sacred Texts, Historical Traditions, and Social Analysis* (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2011).

2. Three Faiths from One Parent

Rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity grew out of common origins found in the faith of ancient Israel and recorded in the Hebrew Bible. Each has a distinct emphasis resulting in differing concepts and practices. Since both faiths came into being around the same time in history, such expressions as "twin birth" and "siblings" seem appropriate when the two are described, compared, and contrasted.[6] This thesis was advanced by two professors, one Jewish and the other Christian. It proposes that both Judaism and Christianity are daughters of a common parent, the ancient Hebrew faith presented in the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible.[7]

Centuries later, yet another world faith was born claiming the status of a legitimate child of the ancient Hebrew faith by confessing a firm belief in the God of the Patriarchs and affirming that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah[8] who was followed by God's messenger (*rasul*) Muhammad.[9] Thus, with the emergence of Islam on the Arabian Peninsula, the Abrahamic family house was further expanded through a renewed spiritual emphasis brought by this "third child." In this way, to the old, well-trodden revelations, concepts, and practices were added many that were new.[10]

The Muslim tradition has used the phrase "the people of the book," to refer to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. The members of all three faiths "are

6 One group fled the destruction of the temple by going westward, thanks to permission granted by the Roman commander to Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai. This group was allowed to settle in Jamnia on the Mediterranean coast. The other group escaped by traveling eastward, having been forewarned by Jesus Christ (Mark 13:14–16; Luke 21:20–22); they went to the city of Pella in Transjordan. In this way it became apparent that Yahweh, whose traditional residence was believed to be the temple in Jerusalem, became, so-to-say, "a portable God."

7 Lisa Levitt Kohn and Rebecca Moore, *A Portable God* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

8 Among numerous Qur'anic references to Jesus, several include the title "Messiah" (*al Masih*) or "Christ" (Qu'ran An-Nisa 4:171–72 [2x]). Also, some chapters (*suras*) in the Qur'an are named in reference to Jesus (Qur'an Maryam).

9 Muslims maintain that John the Baptist prepared the place for Christ's ministry on earth, while the Comforter who Jesus promised would come after him "is the Prophet Mohammad [peace be upon him]" (B. Rogerson, *The Prophet Mohammad: A Biography* [Mahwa, NJ: Hidden Spring, 2004], 142).

10 It is widely recognized that all three faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, share traditions that stem from "the holy books" attested first in the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament. To these were added later documents that were considered inspired and authoritative. While the emphases among these traditions often differ, there are also clear similarities.

children of Abraham, part of a Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition."[11] The three faiths consider their "respective sacred texts as authoritative sources regarding questions of tradition, membership within the community, belief, ethical conduct, and social customs."[12]

The followers of the three Abrahamic faiths view wholeness as the cornerstone of spirituality and devotion, whether in reference to an individual or a community of believers.[13] Can this view on wholeness that includes the spiritual component be corroborated by modern science? Thanks to the pioneering work of Victor Frankl, an Austrian psychiatrist who survived the Holocaust, it is widely recognized today[14] that faith or religion can provide an effective way to (re)gain a meaning and purpose in life.[15] It has been

[11] J. L. Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), xv.

[12] D. Schumm and M. Stoltzfus, *Disability in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 1.

[13] J. Ryce-Menuhin, *Jung and the Monotheisms: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (London: Routledge, 1994). See especially chapter 3, "The Dream of Wholeness," 33–42.

[14] K. F. Ferraro and C. M. Albrecht-Jensen, "Does Religion Influence Adult Health?," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30.2 (1991): 193–202; H. Benson, *Timeless Healing: The Power and Biology of Belief* (New York: Scribner, 1996); Jeff Levin, *God, Faith, and Health: Exploring the Spirituality-Healing Connection* (New York: Wiley & Sons, 2001); A. Bussing, T. Ostermann, and P. F. Matthiessen, "Roles of Religion and Spirituality in Medical Patients," *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes* 3.10 (2005): 1–10; C. R. Cloninger, "Fostering Spirituality and Well-Being in Clinical Practice," *Psychiatric Annals* 36.3 (2006): 1–6; W. Alexander, *Innerweave: Making the Spiritual-Faith Connections in Whole Person Medicine* (Loma Linda, CA: Loma Linda University Press), 2008); C. M. Puchalski and B. Ferrell, *Making Health Care Whole: Integrating Spirituality into Patient Care* (New Brunswick, NJ: Templeton Press, 2010); T. Greenwood and T. Delgado, "A Journey Toward Wholeness, a Journey to God: Physical Fitness as Embodied Spirituality," *Journal of Religion & Health* 52.3 (2013): 941–54; H. Koenig, *Spirituality in Patient Care: Why, How, When, and What* (New Brunswick, NJ: Templeton Press, 2013); C. S. Keener, *Miracles Today: The Supernatural Work of God in the Modern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021).

[15] Even to the ancient Egyptians, for example, "it was absolutely rational to recite prayers while administering drugs or bandaging wounds. Both activities were essential to the success of the treatment" (Kent Weeks, "Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health in Ancient Egypt," in Jack M. Sasson et al., eds., *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, vol. 3 [New York: Scribner's Sons, 1995], 1787–88). Similarly in ancient Mesopotamia, physician and magician worked side by side on the same cases. "There is no hint in the ancient texts that one approach was more legitimate than the other. In fact, the two types of healers seem to have had equal legitimacy" (Robert D. Biggs, "Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* 3:1911.

rightly observed that an "understanding that our life on earth is not our ultimate existence unites faiths."[16] As the dominance of a purely materialistic approach to life is fading away in the developed world, a more humanitarian and altruistic emphasis, accompanied by spiritual values, informs us what it truly means to be human.

3. Wholeness and Wellness in the Hebrew Bible

For the people who lived in biblical times, their wellness and wholeness faced daily potential hazards such as "blowing dust, domestic dirt, contaminated food, impure water, city and town sewage, refuse, and garbage."[17] The organs that were particularly at risk of infection were the eyes, ears, and skin.[18] To this, various types of mental instability could be added. To be or become sick or diseased (Heb. *halah*) was synonymous with being weak (1 Kgs 15:23),[19] in contrast with the feeling of wholeness and strength expressed by the Hebrew term *shalem* (or *shalom*), which is pregnant with meaning and is best rendered as "completeness, wellbeing, and soundness." One could also add Hebrew words like *kol*, meaning "all" or "every," and *tam* and *tamim*, meaning "whole, well-done, right, complete, finished."[20]

From God, the Creator and Sustainer of life, come all blessings that primarily include wellness and wholeness.[21] It has been rightly said that "a central concept of biblical religion is that health and well-being are the design of God, and that illness in whatever form it appears is not an established part of the divine order of reality."[22] Since the Lord's ownership embraces the totality of the earth (Exod 19:5; Ps 24:1), He alone is worthy of

[16] A. Thompson, *Jesus of Arabia: Christ Through Middle Eastern Eyes* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), ix.

[17] Roger W. Uitti, "Health and Wholeness in the Old Testament," *Consensus* 17.2 (1991): 47.

[18] People in ancient Mesopotamia recognized "the natural origin of some illnesses, which might occur as a result of overexposure to heat or cold, overeating, eating spoiled food, or drinking too much of an alcoholic beverage" (Biggs, "Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health in Ancient Mesopotamia," 1912).

[19] Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotations are taken from NIV.

[20] Ernest Jenni and Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 3:1424–25.

[21] A. Basson, "Just Skin and Bones: The Longing for Wholeness of the Body in the Book of Job," *VT* 58.3 (2008): 287–99; J. Penzenstadler, "Teaching the Book of Job with a View to Human Wholeness," *Religious Education* 89.2 (1994): 223–31.

[22] G. F. Hasel, "Health and Healing in the Old Testament," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 21 (1983): 191.

complete human devotion (Ps 119:2, 10). On the vertical level, God is the supreme example of wholeness, while people are whole in relation to Him (Deut 6:5–6). On the horizontal level, people's wholeness and wellness rest on healthy interpersonal relationships that are motivated by love rather than hate (Lev 19:17–18).[23]

Roger Uitti has rightly identified the following three rich concepts that serve as "the contours of health and wholeness in the Old Testament."[24] They are (1) shalom, (2) Sabbath rest, and (3) self or being (Heb. *nephesh*). These key concepts need to be positively defined in their contextual relationships of wholeness and harmony.

3.1 Shalom

In ancient Israel, shalom was a foundational concept used to indicate everything that constituted a healthy and harmonious life.[25] As such, the term embodied "the warmest and most comprehensive vision of health and wholeness in the Old Testament."[26] In fact, "the idea of wholeness and completeness forms the basic content of the Hebrew word *shalom*, which can be translated as 'wholeness,' 'completeness,' and also as 'peace.'"[27] Though usually translated as "peace,"[28] shalom very frequently means health and/or wellbeing (Gen 29:6 [2x]; 37:14 [2x]; 43:28).[29] This fact has led scholars to conclude that "the biblical peacemaker is physician as well as prophet."[30] In brief, shalom is the greatest possible blessing that encompasses all other blessings.

Regarding etymological observations, "the root *shlm* is attested since the earliest times in all branches of Semitic [family of languages], in a wealth of forms with a broad range of meanings."[31] The Hebrew noun *shalom* is related

[23] J. Wilkinson, *The Bible and Healing: A Medicinal and Theological Commentary* (Edinburg: Handsel, 1998).

[24] Uitti, "Health and Wholeness in the Old Testament," 49.

[25] J. Pedersen, *Israel, Its Life and Culture*, *TLOT* 3:1339.

[26] Uitti, "Health and Wholeness in the Old Testament," 56.

[27] Hasel, "Health and Healing in the Old Testament," 191.

[28] See Walter Brueggemann, *Peace* (St. Louis, MS: Chalice Press, 2001).

[29] F. Skolnik and M. Berenbaum, eds., *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., vol. 15 (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 2007), 700. In Isa 52:7, shalom stands in synonymous parallelism with "good" (Heb. *tov*), in the sense of physical good (cf. Ps 34:15).

[30] L. Ryken et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 632.

[31] F. J. Stendebach, "Shalom," *TDOT* 15:15.

to the Akkadian (Assyrian and Babylonian) terms *shalamu* or *salamu* expressing "peace and friendliness." Arabic has the noun *salam* signifying "intactness, wholeness, welfare, peace and security." In ancient Aramaic texts, the same noun is used in formulaic beginnings of letters, meaning "greetings" or "welfare."[32]

Lexical evidence shows that in biblical Hebrew and Aramaic the root *shlm* occurs as nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs.[33] The semantic range of the root *shlm* is very wide and multifaceted. Generally, the term can be characterized as stative (not static but pertaining to the state of being), dynamic, and relational. Its closest cognate is *sedeq* "righteousness." Thus, in Ps 85:10 these two concepts are personified as they embrace (or kiss) each other, a biblical picture of reconciliation. In fact, shalom *is* the fruit of righteousness (Isa 32:17), and the prophet Isaiah pairs the two terms: "If only you had paid attention to my commands, your *peace* [*shalom*] would have been like a river, your *righteousness* [*tsedeq*] like the waves of the sea" (Isa 48:18, emphasis supplied). While it is not always possible to make a clear distinction between secular and religious usages of the two terms, one thing seems certain: doing what is right (*sedeq*) and good (*tov*) will result in shalom!

The most prominent antonym of shalom is *ḥaser*, the word that describes "one who is deficient," "inadequate," "someone in want of," or "lacking something." A widely known occurrence of the related verb is in Ps 23:1: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not be *in want*" (emphasis supplied). The psalmist's words express "a security based on God's promise, that enjoys his guidance, protection, care, deliverance, and presence."[34] The authors of the biblical books quote the Lord saying that the wicked have no shalom (Isa 48:22). The cognate word *ḥassir* from biblical Aramaic is found in Dan 5:27, where it describes King Belshazzar's behavior as "defective" or "of poor quality."

When used in the Bible, the Hebrew noun *shalom*, together with other terms built on the same root, relate to the following concepts in English:

[32] Jenni and Westermann, *TLOT* 3:1337.

[33] M. V. Van Pelt and G. D Pratico, *The Vocabulary Guide to Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 128. There are 474 occurrences of words that are based on the root *shlm*. Of these, 237 are nouns, while 358 occurrences also include other forms, such as adjectives and adverbs, that are mostly found in the three longest books of the Bible: Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Psalms. The verbal forms occur 116 times, mostly in Psalms and Exodus. Finally, in biblical Aramaic this root's total occurrence is 7, 4 nouns and 3 verbs.

[34] Heinz-Josef, "חָסֵד," *TDOT* 5:88.

1. Completeness, totality, entirety, wholeness, and good health. Examples are as follows: To Joseph's inquiry about Jacob's wellbeing, the brothers replied: "Thy servant our father is in *good health*" (Gen 43:28 KJV, emphasis supplied). The prophet Jeremiah warned the king and queen in Jerusalem that "all Judah will be carried into exile, carried *completely* away (Jer 13:19, emphasis supplied). There is a wordplay in 1 Kgs 9:25 where it says that King Solomon, whose name was built on the noun shalom, "completed" [Heb. verb *shlm*] the house of the Lord, that is, the temple in Jerusalem.

2. Satisfaction, both (a) internal, such as desire, joy, and pleasure; and (b) external, such as sufficiency ("to have enough"),[35] good fortune, success, and prosperity. Examples are as follows: Asaph, one of the chief musicians in Israel, was greatly troubled when he "saw the *prosperity* of the wicked" (Ps 73:3, emphasis supplied). The promises of blessings given by God through the prophet Zechariah included this one: "The seed *will grow well*, the vine will yield its fruit, the ground will produce its crops, and the heavens will drop their dew" (Zech 8:12, emphasis supplied).

3. Safety,[36] security, peace, rest, favor, contentment, cessation of hostilities between nations.[37] Examples are as follows: Jacob arrived (*shalem*) in the city of Shechem, and this means that he arrived safe.[38] "The people of Gibeon had made a treaty of *peace* with Israel and had become their allies" (Josh 10:1, emphasis supplied). Hadadezer and David later did the same thing (2 Sam 10:19). The pilgrims going to Jerusalem prayed: "*May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels.* For the sake of my family and friends, I will say, 'Peace be within you'" (Ps 122:7; cf. Lev 26:6; Deut 23:6). Not knowing that his son had died in battle, King David asked the messenger: "Is the young man Absalom *safe*?" (2 Sam 18:29, 32, emphasis supplied). During Solomon's reign in Israel, "there was *peace* on all sides" (1 Kgs 4:24, emphasis supplied). In the book of Isaiah, one of the prominent titles given to the future Deliverer was "Prince of *Peace*" (Isa 9:6, emphasis supplied).

4. Welfare, wellbeing, company, salutation, or greetings. Examples are as follows: Jacob sent Joseph to "go and see if *all is well* with your brothers and with the flocks and bring word back to me" (Gen 37:14, emphasis sup-

[35] Jenni and Westermann, *TLOT* 3:1337.

[36] Safety from wild beasts or invaders (Lev 26:6).

[37] Jacob Neusner and W. S. Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period*, vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan, 1996), 574.

[38] Skolnik and Berenbaum, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 15:700.

plied). In other words, Joseph was sent to check on his brother's "well-being" or "state of health." Just before facing the giant Goliath, David "ran to the battle lines and *greeted* his brothers" (1 Sam 17:22, emphasis supplied).

5. Integrity and an "undivided heart," in the moral sense, regarding God and fellow human beings; welfare in administrative or social relationships. Examples are as follows: To be *shalem* with somebody means to be loyal to him (Gen 34:21). King Solomon urged his people to make their hearts *fully committed* to God (1 Kgs 8:61; cf. 11:4). When "heart" or "mind" is combined with adjective *shalem*, it describes a pure or undivided heart/mind. King Solomon and Hiram, king of Tyre, made a treaty because "there were *peaceful* relations between ... the two of them" (1 Kgs 5:12, emphasis supplied). The psalmist prayed that God would save him from wicked people "who speak *cordially* with their neighbors but harbor malice in their hearts" (Ps 28:3, emphasis supplied).

6. Wholesomeness and peace are the ultimate goals of history. Examples are as follows: The prophets saw the day when "the fruit of righteousness will be *peace*; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever. [Their] people will live in *peaceful* dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest" (Isa 32:17–18, emphasis supplied). The covenant of shalom will usher in a time of blessing and security (Ezek 34:25–31). "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation…. He will proclaim *peace* to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth" (Zech 9:9–10, emphasis supplied).

The time of the eschaton will be characterized by "the perfection to which the creation longs to return, that world of being in which every individual and people are full and complete, free of injustice, oppression, pain and sickness, that world where social relationships no longer exploit or are exploited for personal or corporate gain, but rather are enriched and enhanced. Shalom is that place and state where God, humanity, and environment are one in harmony and peace."[39] In the Bible, the concept of peace is closely related to rest, especially on the day divinely appointed for rest.

3.2 Sabbath Rest

The weekly rest, called "the Sabbath" in the Bible, can be "a venerable agent

[39] Uitti, "Health and Wholeness in the Old Testament," 56. See also Walter Bruegegemann, *Living Toward a Vision: Biblical Reflections on Shalom* (New York: United Church Press, 1982).

for health, renewal, and freedom."[40] This is because from the beginning the Creator intended the Sabbath to be a wholesome resource for blessing. The original verb *shabat* that means "to cease" or "to rest" and its related noun *shabbat* "cessation" or "rest" occur frequently in the Hebrew Bible.[41]

The first use of this verb in Gen 2:1–3 has God as its subject: "By the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing; so on the se-venth day He rested from all His work." The creation of weekly rest is the climax of the first story in the Bible. Being the only feast mentioned in the Decalogue (Exod 20:8–11; Deut 5:12–15), the Sabbath celebrates God's creative and liberating types of work. It also commemorates the day on which God rested after the six days of creation.[42]

Humans were told to rest just as the Lord did at the end of His creative work, a concept called by some scholars a "restful imitation."[43] The Sabbath was to be the basis for the continual life and well-being of humans and the rest of creation. Ceasing from work on the Sabbath refreshed a person (Exod 31:16–17) because renewal was "part of sabbath rest."[44] If one was to borrow the language of psychology, this weekly rest offers humans an opportunity for regular mental hygiene.

According to Exod 16, even "the manna should not be gathered on the 7th day, [because] the ration for the 6th day will be sufficient for two days."[45] It is possible to talk about the "Sabbath principle" that extended beyond the weekly rest to encompass the sabbatical year (Exod 23; Lev 25) and the year of Jubilee (Lev 25). All three festivals commemorate the Lord's ownership of the earth and everything in it. Thus, the "sabbath raises vital questions about our relationship with God as well as to God's world. The sabbath

[40] Niels-Erik Andreasen, "Recent Studies of the Old Testament Sabbath: Some Observations," *ZAW* 86 (1974): 453–69. See also Niels-Erik Andreasen, *Rest and Redemption*, Andrews University Monograph 11 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1978); G. Robinson, "The Idea of Rest in the Old Testament and the Search for the Basic Character of the Sabbath," *ZAW* 92 (1980): 32–42; S. Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness: A Theological Study of the Good News of the Sabbath for Today* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1988); Sigve K. Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009).

[41] Van Pelt and Pratico, *The Vocabulary Guide to Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic*, 127. The verb is found 71 times in the Hebrew Bible, while the noun occurs 111 times.

[42] Neusner and Green, *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* 2:572.

[43] Uitti, "Health and Wholeness in the Old Testament," 53.

[44] Ryken, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 747.

[45] Jenni and Westermann, *TLOT* 3:1300.

command motivates us to look more closely at ourselves and our relationship with others, especially those who are less fortunate."[46]

The Sabbath is often paired with other celebrations, such as the New Moon (Isa 1:13; Hos 2:13). The prophet Amos preached against greedy business people who could not wait for the end of the Sabbath to increase their profit (Amos 8:5). In many cases where the verbal forms of *shabat* are transitive (requiring direct objects), the subject is the Lord who announces judgment through the promise of bringing an end to arrogance (Ezek 7:24) and idol worship (Ezek 16:41), as well as hostility coming from foreign nations (Isa 13:11). During the exile, the loss of the Sabbath celebration in the temple was profoundly felt by the captives (Lam 2:6).

Considering the enduring qualities of the Sabbath, it is an institution that primarily points to the past, based on its humanitarian quality. This is evident from passages like Exod 23:10–12 that express concern for poor people and hungry wild animals. But the day of rest also points to the present through its societal aspect (Exod 20:10). In ancient Israel, the Sabbath was to be "an agent of restoration, health, and wholeness" for society as a whole.[47] It was a perfect time for worship, praise, and equity before God. Finally, the Sabbath pointed to the future since it was firmly grounded in the biblical promise of rest and wholeness for all of God's creation. Its restorative aspect pointed to the final and wholesome recreation of all nature by the God who had called it into existence in the beginning.

The prophet Isaiah foresaw the day when non-Israelites who worship the Lord and keep the Sabbath would belong to the community of God's people (Isa 56:1–8). The Lord promises to bring them to His "holy mountain and give them joy in [His] house of prayer" (Isa 56:7). The future era of salvation, which is characterized by wholeness, will include pilgrimages to New Zion on every Sabbath and New Moon (Isa 66:23). Abraham J. Heschel rightly stated that "a world without sabbath is a world without the vision of a window in eternity that opens into time."[48] This is how the Sabbath becomes a foretaste of the world to come where the redeemed will be living forever. Now we turn to an important Hebrew word that describes "living beings."

[46] Uitti, "Health and Wholeness in the Old Testament," 55.

[47] Uitti, 54. See also Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014).

[48] Abraham J. Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1951), 16.

3.3 Self or Being

In the Hebrew Bible, the concept of restoration is view as *shalom* because it consists of a renewal of one's whole *nephesh*, or person. Although commonly rendered as "soul," the Hebrew feminine noun *nephesh* is best translated as "self" or "person" and is one of the most studied words in the Bible.[49] This word "has counterparts in all Semitic languages,"[50] with meanings such as "throat," "breath," "life," and so on. The related verbal root *npsh* can mean "to blow, breathe, or exhale." Linguists maintain that the original meaning of this word was "throat," from which were derived such meanings as "self," "life," or "being." H. W. Wolff wrote: "The *nephesh* referred to what was alive and vital in a person,"[51] a basic aspect of human beings. It is life standing in opposition to death, suggesting that "no quality makes life precious—life itself is precious" (cf. Gen 9:6; Exod 21:23; 2 Sam 14:7; Jon 1:14).[52]

Scholars agree that in the Hebrew Bible the meaning "life" better fits this noun because it is "attested more often, more densely, and more uniformly than the meaning 'soul.'"[53] In other words, *nephesh* is life itself, the very nature of humans, not merely their possession. Throughout the Bible, there are numerous examples of God's acts of saving and preserving human *nephesh* or life (Ps 116:4–8). In a similar manner, a person can save someone else's *life* (2 Sam 19:6) or one's own *life* (1 Sam 19:18).

The first human created by God was described as a "living being" (Heb. *nephesh ḥayya*) in Gen 2:7. According to biblical authors, humans could be vulnerable to rejoicing, grieving, hungering, being troubled, and even dying or ceasing to exist:[54] in short, the complete human experience in life. Together with other nouns translated as "heart," "bone," or "flesh," *nephesh* was often used in the Hebrew Bible to point to a person's completeness or totality.

An in-depth consideration of the Hebrew *nephesh* "self" gives an insight into "the totality and indivisibility of individual and corporate being."[55] In

[49] Van Pelt and Pratico, *The Vocabulary Guide to Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic*, 171. It occurs 757 times in the Hebrew Bible (Leviticus, 60 times; Proverbs, 56 times; Psalms, 144 times; Jeremiah, 62 times).

[50] Jenni and Westermann, *TLOT* 2:743.

[51] H. W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 10–25.

[52] Jenni and Westermann, *TLOT* 2:753.

[53] Jenni and Westermann, *TLOT* 2:752.

[54] Robert Laurin, "The Concept of Man as a Soul," *Expository Times* 72 (1961): 131–34.

[55] Uitti, "Health and Wholeness in the Old Testament," 57. See also Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge &

general, there is "no clear-cut distinction in biblical literature between a person's 'soul' or 'spirit' and 'body': the person is a unified whole."[56] As Roland de Vaux states: "The distinction between soul and body is something foreign to the Hebrew mentality, and death, therefore, is not regarded as the separation between these two elements. A live man is a living 'soul' (*nephesh*), and a dead man is a dead 'soul,' a dead *nephesh* (Nb 6:6; Lv 21:11; cf. Nb 19:13)."[57] Encyclopedia Judaica expresses it aptly: "The personality was considered as a whole in the biblical period [of history]."[58] In the Septuagint, for example, in about 90% of the cases, *nephesh* is translated with the Greek word *psyche* whose prevalent meaning is "person." This best-known translation of the Hebrew Bible does not go in the direction in which "soul" is understood as something opposite of the body, as proposed by Platonic dualism.[59] The following is a list of meanings applied to this rich Hebrew term (*nephesh*):

1. Life, breath, living being, person, creature, lifeless body.[60] Examples are as follows: Adam was the first living *being* (Gen 2:7) and as such he was privileged to name every living *creature* (Gen 2:19). According to the Pentateuch, throughout a Nazirite's period of dedication to the Lord, he was not to go near a *dead body* (Num 6:6). The prophet Elijah prayed: "LORD, my God, let this boy's *life* return to him!" (1 Kgs 17:21, emphasis supplied).

2. Force, vitality, yearning, refreshment, restoration. Examples are as follows: For the psalmist (David, according to the superscript), the LORD was the one who regularly *revived* him or who restored his *whole being* (Ps 23:3). The weeping poet, traditionally identified as Jeremiah, complained that "no one is near to comfort me, no one to *restore my spirit*" (Lam 1:16, emphasis supplied).

3. Will, heart, mind, one's inner being, wish, choice. Examples are as follows: Abraham entreated the elders in Canaan: "If you are *willing* to let me bury my dead [wife Sarah]" (Gen 23:8, emphasis supplied). Abner, David's army commander, urged the king to make a covenant with all Israel so that

Kegan Paul, 1970).

56 Neusner and Green, *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* 2:599.

57 Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 56. New Testament scholar Oscar Cullmann argues the same point regarding the nature of humans in *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead: The Witness of the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2000).

58 Skolnik and Berenbaum, *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 19:33.

59 Jenni and Westermann, *TLOT* 2:759.

60 It is worth noting that in the Septuagint (LXX), when *psyche* translates *nephesh*, its meaning is best rendered as "breath, life, or a person."

he "may rule over all that your *heart* desires" (2 Sam 3:21, emphasis supplied).

4. Desire (negative or positive), pleasure, delight, want, craving, lust, appetite. Examples are as follows: The wise man taught that it is "better what the eye sees than the roving of the *appetite*" (Eccl 6:9, emphasis supplied). In Isa 42:1, the Lord promises to uphold His servant because he "is my chosen one in whom I *delight*" (emphasis supplied).

5. Hope, love, joy, praise (to God), satisfaction, longing for God[61] or God's house. Examples are as follows: Isa 26:9 describes one's love for God in the following manner: "My *soul* [or my *inner being*] yearns for you in the night" (emphasis supplied). Jeremiah said that the remnant who went to live in Egypt would not return to the land of Judah, where they "[*longed*] to return and live" (Jer 44:14, emphasis supplied). In like manner, the psalmist *longed* to pay a visit to God's temple: "My *soul* yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God" (Ps 84:2, emphasis supplied).

Individuals in ancient Israel found their true selves in their interactions with other members of their community. In addition to having their separate individualities, each of them could represent the whole group they belonged to. This concept was labeled by H. W. Robinson as "corporate personality."[62] No individual was intended to be an island isolated from their various communities, such as the household, extended family, clan, or tribe. Even Yahweh's *nephesh* was described in some Bible passages as having close family members on earth (Judg 10:16; Isa 1:14; Jer 12:7; Amos 6:8). The people of Israel are therefore called His "spouse" or "child," while He was their Parent, Husband, and Kinsman.

In contrast to ancient Israel, where the one "lived in and for the many … we live [today] in a world where individuals and communities tend to live and care only for themselves, where the sick, the aged and infirm, the disadvantaged, and the poor and homeless are often shamefully marginalized and forgotten." Uitti goes on to say: "Contemporary groups, including the churches, might ask themselves whether it is better to characterize and model themselves as an *'am* (Heb. 'people' [who feel like being] a family of related and committed persons who transcend international barriers) or as a *goy* ('nation' [which is] a political institution proud of its distinctiveness

[61] George V. Wigram, *The Englishman's Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 831.

[62] H. Wheeler Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964).

and insistent upon maintaining lines of demarcation)."[63] From ancient Israel we now turn to Judaism's teachings about whole-person care and wellness.

4. Wholeness and Wellness in Judaism

There is a Jewish story about a powerful king who imprisoned his physician and fed him only a morsel of barley bread and water. Several months passed before the physician's relatives were allowed to visit him. To their great surprise, he looked happy and healthy in his prison cell. This he credited to his drink, which he described as a blend of seven herbs that he had brought with him to prison and managed to drink a few drops of a day. These "seven magic herbs" were: trust in God, hope, patience, awareness of sins, joy from knowing that present suffering will end in the world to come, the possibility that suffering could be worse, and the knowledge that God's power could free him from prison at any time.[64]

For centuries, physical well-being has been understood in Judaism as being closely bound to spiritual wholeness, each dependent upon and affecting the other. For this reason, "Jewish society and literature have always valued and promoted healthfulness. As a result, ascetism, prolonged fasts, isolation, and self-denial have not been primary modes of Jewish spiritual expression."[65] Fasting on the Sabbath, for example, was discouraged because that day was intended to be a time of rest (*menuha*), filled with shalom, joy, and other divine blessings.[66]

Building on the rich Hebraic heritage in the Scriptures, Judaism confesses that God is the Creator and Sustainer of people and all else in the universe. Because life is a precious gift, healthcare decisions reflect a mandate to respect and preserve life. Since the human body was created by God, it is on loan throughout the duration of life. For this reason, physical happiness is to be enjoyed.[67] Central to the Jewish perspective on healthcare is the belief that human beings are created in God's likeness, and as such they should be treated with great respect. The Jewish wholistic view recognizes that the physical and spiritual realms are inseparable. Illness is not only a

63 Uitti, "Health and Wholeness in the Old Testament," 52.

64 J. Z. Abrams and D. I. Freeman, *Illness and Health in the Jewish Tradition: Writings from the Bible to Today* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1999), 9–10.

65 Abrams and Freeman, *Illness and Health in the Jewish Tradition*, 248.

66 Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 30.

67 E. J. Taylor, *Spiritual Care: Nursing Theory, Research, and Practice* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), 254.

clinical or physical state. It is also a spiritual challenge to many devout people.[68]

Shalom in Judaism is viewed as the greatest possible blessing that encompasses all other divine blessings.[69] Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel said: "By these three things the world is preserved, by truth, by judgment, and by peace."[70] The Talmud teaches that Shalom is one of the names of God and achieving shalom is the purpose of the entire Torah.[71] It is permitted to deviate from the strict line of truth in order to establish peace.[72] In other words, to assure peace, even truth may be sacrificed. Rabbi Hillel defined the heart of Judaism with the maxim, "Love shalom and pursue it!"[73]

In their sourcebook on Jewish writings on health, illness, and healing titled *Illness and Health in Jewish Tradition*,[74] the editors list Judaism's most fundamental commonalities as: (1) a search for God, (2) a reverence for life, (3) a belief in the sacredness of health, and (4) a life-defining conviction that illness is an evil to be banished. The book addresses some key questions often posed by all spiritual persons, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. Questions like "How can one cope with illness?" or "What constitutes good health?" are very important for any discussion on the concepts of wholeness and wellness in Judaism.

The section of the book *Illness and Health in Jewish Tradition* that stands out is titled "The Patient as a Person," because it is filled with veritable gems.[75] In it, Abraham J. Heschel challenges physicians to see the patient not as a machine but as a human being who is "the disclosure of the divine." The practice of medicine is more than a profession because "medicine has a soul," and it is all about service to others. The doctor's mission is prophetic.

[68] H. S. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981); David Kramer, *Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); J. D. Kark et al., "Does Religious Observance Promote Health? Mortality in Secular vs Religious Kibbutzim in Israel," *American Journal of Public Health* 86.3 (1996): 341–46. Frank Boehm, *Doctors Cry, Too: Essays from the Heart of a Physician* (New York: Hay House, 2003).

[69] In Judaism, Moses exemplifies the ideal of justice, while his brother Aaron exemplifies the ideal of peace (M. Avot 1:12).

[70] M. Avot 1:18.

[71] B. Shabbat 10b; Gittin 59b. For this and the next two references from Judaica, I am indebted to Neusner and Green, *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period*.

[72] B. Yevamot 65b.

[73] M. Avot 1:12.

[74] Abrams is a Talmudic theologian, while Freeman is a physician and professor of medicine.

[75] A. J. Heschel, "The Patient as a Person," *Conservative Judaism* 19 (1964): 1–20.

Says Heschel: "To minister to the sick is to minister to God." There is "a prophetic ingredient" in the calling of a healthcare worker. In summary, the physician is "a prophet, a watchman, and a messenger." He or she should be considered God's partner in the struggle between life and death. There is no greater ministry than to save human life. This is the very work of God. The physician "may be a saint without knowing it, and without pretending to be one."

From the perspective of divine love, "the work of medicine and the work of religion are one. The body is the sanctuary, the doctor is a priest." A human being should not be defined as "an ingenious assembly of portable plumbing." Nor is he or she "a combination of body and soul but rather body and soul as one." While diet and physical exercise are important, "so are the capacity to praise, the power to revere, self-discipline, and the taste of self-transcendence. All are qualities of being human." For this reason, the physician's main task is to treat the whole person, the total individual. Complete health goes beyond mere physical fitness. Longevity is not the only purpose of living. "*Quality* of living is as important as quantity of living."[76]

The question is often asked if a person can feel whole when experiencing pain and suffering. Heschel's answer is that it can be a positive opportunity to feel "more empathetic to others who suffer and to perform increased acts of lovingkindness, [and] act as God's partner, giving meaning to the inherently meaningless…. This experience may allow me to enable my own life by acting as God's partner in bringing healing not just to myself, but to others as well…. I would not have known how much suffering hurts if not for this experience."[77] The Jewish scholar Hermann Cohen wrote that true immortality of the soul is its spirit, which is "the possibility and the obligation to effect the principles of truth and morality in this world."[78]

Ultimately, the complete and universal healing and restoration will be accomplished by a divine act. In an ancient midrash, the Messiah is portrayed as sitting in paradise and shedding rivers of tears over all the suffering present in the world. The prophet Elijah, who is sitting next to the Messiah, offers these comforting words as he wipes his tears away: "Do not weep my son, for soon God will open His heart of grace."[79] The idea that

[76] Heschel, "The Patient as a Person," 1–20.

[77] This type of confession could be labeled as "extreme empathy." See Abrams and Freeman, *Illness and Health in the Jewish Tradition*, 56–57.

[78] Skolnik and Berenbaum, *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 19:33.

[79] Abrams and Freedman, *Illness and Health in the Jewish Tradition*, 20.

grace is an essential component of wholeness and healing is also prominent in Christian teachings.

5. Wholeness and Wellness in Christianity

Augustine of Hippo, a great Christian theologian known to most Christians as Saint Augustine, has also been called "the patron saint of restless hearts."[80] This peculiar title derives from Augustine's long search for God out of his spiritual and emotional brokenness that resulted in some outstanding works such as *Confessions*. Carl Vaught maintains that this timeless Christian classic should be interpreted as an attempt to address *the human being as a whole person* rather than through purely intellectual or volitional dimensions.[81]

The end of Augustine's journey is eloquently stated in a sentence found in the opening chapter of his *Confessions*: "You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it finds rest in you."[82] The words penned by this great Christian theologian express so eloquently human yearnings for peace and wholeness that come from finding God and communing with Him. In other words, a human being can find freedom, truth, and other blessings when they find themselves in God's story. Augustine's teachings were based primarily on passages from New Testament books.

The authors of the New Testament[83] expanded the concept of wholeness grounded in the theology of the Hebrew Bible.[84] An important word found in the Greek translation of the Bible known as the Septuagint (LXX) and in the New Testament is *holokleros*. It means "whole, intact, or healthy" and describes the state of being complete and with integrity. The noun built on

[80] James K. A. Smith, *On the Road with Saint Augustine* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2019).

[81] Carl G. Vaught, *The Journey Toward God in Augustine's Confessions*, books I–IV (New York: Suny Press, 2003).

[82] Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.

[83] A. Rush Ryan and B. H. Aboul-Enein, "Health, Healing, and Well-being according to the New Testament," *The ABNF Journal* 27.2 (2016): 44–47; M. C. Albi, "'Are Any among You Sick?' The Health Care System in the Letter of James," *JBL* 121.1 (2002): 123–43; F. J. Gaiser, "'Are Any among You Sick?': The Church's Healing Mandate (James 5:13–20)," *Word & World* 35.3 (2015): 241–50.

[84] A. Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); H. Avalos, *Healthcare and the Rise of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999); F. J. Gaiser, *Healing in the Bible: Theological Insight for Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010); Gaiser, "In Touch with Jesus: Healing in Mark 5:21–43," *Word & World* 30.1 (2010): 5–15.

the same word root is *holokleria*, meaning "wholeness, health,"[85] and "*soundness* in all parts."[86] For example, the word is used to describe *rough* stones, unshaped by iron tools, that were used to build the altar of the Lord (Deut 27:6; Josh 8:31). It is also used for seven *full* weeks (Lev 23:15) or for wood *untouched* by fire (Ezek 15:5). Throughout the Septuagint, the word describes sacrificed animals without defect and physically whole.

The apostle Peter uses the noun *holokleria* when explaining how faith gave the sick man *complete* healing (Acts 3:16). James, in his letter to the followers of Christ, encouraged the believers to endure difficulties and thus become *complete*, lacking in nothing (Jam 1:4). The Greek words *haplous* and *haplotes*, on the other hand, describe persons who are morally whole, faithful, peaceful, and innocent.[87] These individuals exhibit simplicity of heart (cf. 1 Chr 29:17), and they obey God with a sincere heart (Eph 6:5; Col 3:22). "The man of integrity walks securely," argued the wise man (Prov 10:9), while James states that God gives wisdom *generously* (Jam 1:5). The noun *haplotes* is also used to point to one's simplicity and purity with respect to Christ (2 Cor 11:3).[88]

Believers look up to the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer, and they maintain a relationship with the One who is their supreme example of completeness. "God is the embodiment of self-sufficient (Acts 17:25) wholeness. His actions express perfect balance, the infinite beauty and symmetry of his person."[89] In Exod 19:26, God says that He is "the LORD who heals you." Mark 12:28–30 reiterates the Deuteronomic exhortation to love God and wholly belong to Him. On the horizontal level, people's wholeness rests on healthy interpersonal relationships characterized by love (John 13:35), mutual respect (Gal 6:1–10), and peace (Eph 4:25–5:2). While God is the supreme healer, He uses human agents as well as nature in the process of restoring wholeness (Matt 10:1). The Christian position is that "those who seek healing by prayer should not neglect to make use of the remedial agencies within their reach. It is not a denial of faith to use such remedies as God has provided to alleviate pain and to aid nature in her work of restoration."[90]

[85] C. Spicq, *TLNT* 2:578.

[86] Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature,* 2nd ed., trans. W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979), 564.

[87] Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 86.

[88] Jenni and Westermann, TLOT 2:759, also mention the following Greek words: *holos, pas, hygieys, sodzo*.

[89] Ryken, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 944.

[90] Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1942), 231–32.

Unfortunately, the fall into sin brought a fracture of wholeness, so now all of nature longs for redemption and a restoration of the primeval wholeness. That is why statements about the universal sinfulness of humankind (Rom 3:19; 8:18) point to the need of the Messiah's work of restoring physical and mental health (Matt 9:22).[91] Being human, "we have a persistent yearning to interact with a sympathetic healer who knows our unique selves as reflected in our infirmities."[92] As promised in the Hebrew Bible, the punishment of the Suffering Servant can make believers whole (Isa 53:5), thus giving them fullness of life in Christ (Col 2:10).[93]

It is worth noticing how the Gospel narratives fittingly frame the recreative work of God's kingdom in accordance with the work of the LORD's servant described in Isa 61. Jesus Christ's healing ministry brought wholeness to human brokenness.[94] Many of His healing miracles took place on the Sabbath day, showing the true purpose of the day of rest (cf. Isa 58). Sigve Tonstad, who is by profession both a physician and a biblical scholar, presents the Sabbath as a sacred time when we are invited to celebrate God's work of creation and His intent to heal and restore all that is broken.[95]

Christ's invitation recorded in Matt 11:28–30 is cherished by many of His followers: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." How did this work in practice? The answer may be found in the following quote: "The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"[96]

The New Testament letter to the Hebrews pictures what Jesus is doing for faithful people today. He is in the heavenly sanctuary ministering on behalf of the believers (Heb 8:1–2). Filled with assurance, the author invites

[91] W. S. Kurz, "The Scriptural Foundations of 'The Theology of the Body,'" in *Pope John Paul II on the Body*, ed. J. McDermott and J. Gavin (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2006), 27–46; F. J. M. Deschene, "The Mystic and the Monk: Holiness and Wholeness," *Review for Religions* 38.4 (1974): 547–55.

[92] Gaiser, "Are Any among You Sick?," 243.

[93] K. J. Vanhoozer, "Hocus Totus: The Elusive Wholeness of Christ," *Pro Ecclesia* 29.1 (2020): 31–42.

[94] Ryken, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 748. See also Jan-Olav Henriksen and Karl Olav Sandnes, *Jesus as Healer: A Gospel for the Body* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).

[95] Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day*.

[96] White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 143. See also Jon Paulien, *The Ministry of Healing Study Guide* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2016).

the faithful to approach God boldly, without fear of condemnation: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet He did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb 4:15–16). Thus, the author does not focus on something essentially negative, like overcoming a list of sins. Instead, the readers are told that "the life to which the Master calls us—the One that He modeled for us—wasn't an absence of sin, but one of wholeness."[97]

From the eschatological perspective, wholeness will be fully realized when the redeemed are one with God throughout eternity (Rev 21:3). In anticipation of such blessings, the apostle Paul offered a prayer that is considered a significant Christian passage on wholeness: "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and He will do it" (1 Thess 5:23–24, emphasis supplied). In conclusion, the concepts of healing and wholeness run like golden threads through both the Old and New Testaments. We now turn to the Muslim teachings about health and wholeness.

6. Wholeness and Wellness in Islam

Rumi was a thirteenth-century Persian poet and Sufi Islamic scholar.[98] He was called by his followers Mevlana, meaning "our master." He described himself simply as "a lover of God" who created and sustains everything. After an extensive period of fasting and seclusion, he was ready to begin his influential work in accordance with the following commission from his spiritual mentor: "Go and flood the souls of men with new life and immeasurable grace. Revive the dead of this world with your message of love."[99]

In one of his poetic stories, Rumi talks about a sober-minded man who said to Jesus: "What in this existence is hardest to bear?" Jesus replied: "O dear soul, the hardest is God's anger, from which Hell is trembling as we

[97] William G. Johnsson, *Hebrews*, Bible Amplifier (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1994), 104.

[98] Sufism arose as a reaction to the formulation of Islam in purely legal and theological terms. The Sufis argued that faith essentially deals with the inner life of humans, with the "tendency of the soul." Though neither lawyers nor theologians cared for this aspect of the religion, for the Sufi this was its essence. See F. Rahman, *Health and Medicine in the Islamic Tradition* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 6.

[99] The words of this commission are posted in one of the exhibits at the Islamic Cultural Center in Konya, Turkey.

are." The man continued: "And what is the protection against God's anger?" According to Rumi, Jesus answered: "To abandon your own anger at once."[100] Islam's high esteem for Jesus Christ is best formulated in this statement from the Qur'an: "Then we followed up [the earlier prophets] with Jesus son of Mary, and we gave him the Evangel, and we put in the hearts of his followers kindness and mercy."[101]

Muslims consider themselves to be the recipients of the same divine guidance that had been entrusted to Jews and Christians.[102] The starting point of historical, scriptural, and theological continuity is the fact that "*Allah* is the Arabic word for the God of the Jewish and Christian Bibles." All three faiths "proclaim one God. All teach about a common humanity created in the image of the same God and respect for all humanity. All emphasize the importance of communal values over selfish individualism…. All struggle with both script and tradition in the light of modern insights."[103] The concept of the day of rest and devotion is present in Islam, though not in the form of the biblical Sabbath.

The person of the Creator God, His character, greatness, and compassion are central to the Muslim faith. Human beings are God's noblest creatures. The Qur'an states that humans were created "in the best of molds"[104] and that Adam was placed on earth to be the viceregent of God Himself.[105] As the first human being, he was created as a single organism with body and

[100] Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, *Jewels of Remembrance*, trans. Kabir and Camille Helminski, (Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications, 2000), iv, 113–16.

[101] Qur'an Al-Hadid 57:27. In the Qur'an, there are multiple references to Jesus, son of Mary. Mary is the only woman mentioned by name in the Qur'an. An entire chapter in the Qur'an (Surah 19) "is dedicated to her and her history" (Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam*, 31). There are also chapters (*surahs*) in the Qur'an that are named in reference to Jesus. In several references, Jesus's name is followed by the title "Messiah" (*al Masih*) or "Christ."

[106] "Abrahamic Family House" is a project in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, that is intended to affirm the foundation on which the three Abrahamic faiths are established. Through its architectural design, this complex tries to capture the shared values of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, so it includes a mosque, church, synagogue, and an educational center. The project is intended to be "a beacon of mutual understanding, harmonious coexistence and peace among people of faith and goodwill." Its goal is to serve as "a powerful platform for inspiring and nurturing understanding and acceptance between people of goodwill." For more info, check the following website: www.forhumanfraternity.org/abrahamic-family-house.

[103] Schumm and Stoltzfus, *Disability in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, xii–iii.

[104] Qur'an At-Tin 95:4–5.

[105] Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:30.

mind that were intended to function as "one organized unit." In all creation, only they were given free choice, something withheld from nature and even angels. Being God's viceregents, humans "must preserve and develop and beautify God's creation, including human life, and not destroy or spoil it."[106]

Islam proposes a cohesive approach to life with human well-being at its center.[107] The counterpart of the classical Hebrew term *shalom* is the Arabic noun *salam*, which is commonly used as a greeting. It expresses the notion of safety, salvation, and peace.[108] The word is often understood to be a short prayer for "peace and wholeness." The root *slm*, from which this noun is derived, means "to be safe, whole, or integral." Thus safety, wholeness, and integrality are basic teachings in Islam. A related word in Islam is *iman* ("faith or faithfulness"), a noun built on the root *amn*, which means "to be at peace" and "to be safe." In the Qur'an, God is referred to as As-Shafi, the Restorer of Health.[109]

When Adam and Eve sinned, they lost their innocence. This fall caused the weakness of humans expressed in pettiness, narrow-mindedness, and selfishness. Fortunately, God opened the door of repentance (*tauba*). The three "vicious ailments"[110] listed above may be cured when a person discovers something greater than oneself by self-giving to others. The primary role of the divine revelation in the Qur'an is to function as the "restorer of health" and thus lead humans to spiritual, mental, and physical well-being. A point of view totally foreign to the Qur'an is that the "soul" can be healthy while the body is sick or vice versa. In fact, the Arabic word *nafs* (Heb. *nephesh*), which is commonly rendered as "soul," is instead best translated as "person."

The genre of literature and research[111] called "Prophetic Medicine" (Arab. *Tibb Nabawi*) was an attempt to spiritualize medicine and set high

[106] Rahman, *Health and Medicine in the Islamic Tradition*, 29.

[107] Shahid Athar, ed., *Islamic Perspectives in Medicine: Achievements and Contemporary Issues* (New York: Kazi, 1996); Cyril Glassé, *The New Encyclopedia of Islam* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); F. Javaheri, "Prayer Healing: An Experiential Description of Iranian Prayer Healing," *Journal of Religion & Health*, 45.2 (2006): 171–82; D. F. Baharudin et al., "Potential Integration of *Naqli* and *Aqli* Knowledge in Counseling by Understanding the Concept of Wellness," *Ulum Islamiyyah* 20 (2017): 1–9; N. Alimohammadi et al., "Laying the Foundations of Lifelong Health at the Beginning of Life: Islamic Perspective," *Journal of Religion & Health* 59.1 (2020): 570–83.

[108] P. J. Bearman et al., eds., *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2013), s.v. "*salām*."

[109] Qur'an Fussilat 41:44.

[110] Rahman, *Health and Medicine in the Islamic Tradition*, 13.

[111] Salih Yucel, *Prayer and Healing in Islam* (Clifton, NJ: Tughra Books, 2010).

religious value on it. It deals primarily with general health principles, with scientific medicine filling in the details. F. Rahman says: "The integrality of the health of the whole person—spiritual, psychological, physical, and moral—is the essence of the message" of Prophetic Medicine.[112] It includes physical, spiritual, and, occasionally, magical cures.

The official tradition, Hadith, preserves a good number of sayings that exalt prophetic medicine. These are only a few examples: Health is the most excellent of God's blessings upon man after the faith. "Ask of God His forgiveness and health: for, after faith, no one can get a greater good than health." To the comment, "I much prefer to be in good health and be grateful for it than be affected with ill health and bear it with patience," this prophetic advice was spelled out: "God prefers you to be in good health."[113]

The practice of medicine is a religious vocation of the first order, next only to religion in importance. This is because medicine helps men and women to help others preserve and restore their health. After faith, the art and practice of medicine is the most meritorious service in God's sight.[114] The Qur'an states that whoever saves one human life, it is as though he saved all humanity.[115] A doctor first tries his best by way of treatment and then puts his trust in God for his success. It's like a farmer who tills the soil, sows the seed, and then trusts in God that the crop will grow. In brief, medicines are part of the decree of God.

Since for a Muslim believer the basic tenets of faith are closely related to health, it is widely believed that a physical illness may be cured by the recitation of Qur'anic verses or other prayers.[116] Unlike many other religions, Islamic prayer includes the exercise of the body. The postures used in prayer are standing upright, bending the knee, falling prostrate, relaxing, and concentrating.[117] Along with prayers, singing is considered the most exalted spiritual medicine. Music is the soul's pleasure, the heart's delight, and food

[112] Rahman, *Health and Medicine in the Islamic Tradition*, 45.

[113] Al-Dhahabi, *al-Tibb al-Nabawi* (Cairo: n.a., 1961), 7.

[114] In Doha, the capital of Qatar, there is a large and impressive compound named "Education City" where several universities and schools are located. On this compound, there is also a garden called "Qur'anic Botanic Garden" where plants, mentioned in the Qur'an as beneficial for health, are cultivated. In the same garden are also displayed samples of nutritious and healthy cereals and seeds which are mentioned in the Qur'an. For more information, check the following website: https://qbg.org.qa/.

[115] Qur'an Al-Ma'idah 5:32.

[116] For an excellent overview of the material presented here, see F. Rahman's book *Health and Medicine in the Islamic Tradition*.

[117] See Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam*, 24–25.

for the spirit. It beautifies and refreshes the body, as the example of David's proverbial singing of psalms shows. Finally, the custom of visiting a sick person is highly commendable because doing that is like visiting the Lord Himself.

Community is very important to Muslims in accordance with the following reasoning: Since God is one, humanity should be one, too. It is governed by five basic human rights: Protection of life, property, faith, honor, and reason. Muslims treasure the prophetic sayings about community that have been preserved by ancient traditions (Hadith). Here are a few of the best-known: "When an orphan cries, God's throne shakes." "A person who helps the widows and the helpless is fighting a Holy War [jihad]." The question, "How can I know if I am a good man or not?" was readily answered in this way: "Find out from your neighbors what they think of you, whether you are a good person or not."[118]

Muslims believe that a person who does not have good, positive, and balanced morals cannot be healthy. From the global perspective, the basic causes of the rise and decline of civilizations are moral in nature. In the Qur'an,[119] at the end of the story of Cain and Abel, the following statement is recorded: "For this reason we decreed it for the children of Israel that whosoever kills a [single] human for other than murder or other than the corruption of the earth [war], it is as though he has killed all humankind and whosoever has saved one human, it is as though he has saved all humankind."

This is not to say that the religious teachings and practices of Islam always agree with those of Christian and Jewish theologians. For example, Muslims do not have a Sabbath day like Jews and Christians do. Rather than being a day of rest, Friday (*juma*) is the day of community prayer and worship, as well as time for socializing.[120] Michael Lodahl argues for a respectful interfaith engagement that he calls "Similarity-in-difference."[121] This type of a positive approach is the key to a constructive dialogue because each faith will prove illuminating in understanding the other. Islam presents itself as

[118] For examples from Muhammad's own life, see Barnaby Rogerson, *The Prophet Muhammad: A Biography* (Mahwah, NJ: Hidden Springs, 2003), 216–17.

[119] Qur'an Al-Ma'idah 5:32.

[120] Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam*, 32–34.

[121] Michael Lodahl, *Claiming Abraham: Reading the Bible and the Qur'an Side by Side* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010).

a faith that offers its followers the so-called "practical moral trend,"[122] or a very practical attitude toward life.

The Muslim approach to health has been influenced by practices from Iran, India, and Greece. In Greek tradition, for example, medicine is closely tied with philosophy (and ethics), and the same is true of Muslim traditions. Hippocrates, who is often called "the father of modern medicine," taught that before the physician could treat the patient as a whole, he or she should be whole. Based on this philosophy, Islam affirms that the physician must lead a balanced and moderate life and not waste time and energy indulging in pleasures or amusements. All Abrahamic religions are unanimous in honoring physicians, so healthcare practitioners should live up to that high standard.[123] The Arabic title for a physician is *hakim*, which means someone full of knowledge and wisdom. The honorific title *hakim*, "The Wise," is in fact one of the names of God in Islam.

7. Concluding Points

The wholistic view considers the human being as a total person, an individual with physical, mental, spiritual, and social needs. In a wholistic sense, to be human means to live for a cause or a purpose that is greater than oneself. To take an example, this was the capstone experience of the renowned writer and Christian apologist C. S. Lewis. After going through some of the most challenging tests of faith, he was able to regain a sense of wholistic healing and a renewed purpose in life.[124] He, in the end, thrust himself into

[122] Rahman, *Health and Medicine in the Islamic Tradition*, 11.

[123] Cf. Michelle J. Cox, *Doctors Are Not Gods: Taking Responsibility for Our Own Health and Wellbeing* (Solon: Wabi Sabi Publications, 2020); Boehm, *Doctors Cry, Too.*

[124] C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2015); Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961). Lewis authored the book *The Problem of Pain*, that was published in 1940. Twenty years later, another book on the same topic, considered by many to be his best, titled *A Grief Observed*, was colored by a dramatic personal experience. Unlike his previous book on the problem of pain, this one left him a wounded, sobered man who carried the grief of his wife's [prolonged suffering and eventual] death to his own grave three years later. His descent into darkness broke him, but the break made him a better man and a wiser Christian. During the rest of his days on earth, Lewis gradually regained life's purpose through his courageous resolve to trust God and to be steadfastly loyal to the possibility that *life could be meaningful* despite the blow that had shattered his earlier hopes. This breakthrough, in the end, brought back a sense of healing and wholeness. It is very unlikely that Lewis, called by some "the most reluctant convert," could have regained this sense of

the caring hands of the Creator God. This article presents the following concluding points:

1. Shalom or "wholeness" is a comprehensive expression denoting all that the people in biblical times wished for. It is the substance of blessing that describes a state of being "unimpaired and unthreatened, of ease and security, of felicity and wholeness in the broadest possible sense." In brief, shalom has "a semantic breadth that cannot be conveyed adequately by any single English word."[125]

2. All three Abrahamic faiths teach that God is not the source of illness or pain. On the contrary, there is a general agreement that the divine heart is filled with grace and compassion and that God is the Great Healer. The Hebrew Bible presents the weekly Sabbath rest as a sacred time when we are invited to claim God's promised intent to heal and restore all that is broken.

3. An important common trait in the three Abrahamic faiths is that their members view wholeness as the cornerstone of spirituality and devotion, whether of an individual or of a community of believers.[126] While wholeness and wellness are important for health, prayers for healing are equally important.

4. All three faiths believe in whole-person care, which is often tied to the expressions "prophetic healing" and "prophetic medicine." This may explain why the reading and studying of sacred texts, such as passages from the Torah or the Qur'an, is believed to have curative effects.[127] In some cases, incantation and even magic are acceptable for the purpose of healing.[128]

5. Since humans reflect God's image and likeness[129] (cf. Gen 1:26–27; 9:5–6), and God encompasses the entire world, destroying a single person is like

wholistic healing and a renewed purpose in life without a firm trust in the caring Creator God.

125 Friedrich J. Stendebach, "שָׁלוֹם," *TDOT* 15:15.

126 J. Ryce-Menuhin, *Jung and the Monotheisms: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (London: Routledge, 1994). See especially chapter 3, "The Dream of Wholeness," 33–42.

127 This view is strongly emphasized in Judaism (Abrams and Freeman, *Illness and Health in the Jewish Tradition*, 4) and in the Muslim traditions (Hadith).

128 Abrams and Freeman, *Illness and Health in the Jewish Tradition*, 139–42. If the sacred text inside a mezuzah is defective (damaged or written incorrectly), those who live in the house are more vulnerable to illnesses and tragedies (Abrams and Freeman, *Illness and Health in the Jewish Tradition*, 96).

129 See Paul Brandley & Philip Yancey, *Fearfully and Wonderful: The Marvel of Bearing God's Image* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2019).

130 M. Sanhedrin 4:5; Qur'an (Al-Ma'idah 5:32).

destroying the entire world. On the contrary, saving one person's life is like saving the whole of humanity.[130] This is why it is by "our deeds that we express our faith and make it real in the lives of others and the world."[130] An active faith means that in lieu of the prevailing disorder and brokenness, we need to search for a renewed wholeness. Humanity in its brokenness looks forward to the promised intervention by its Creator and the ultimate Restorer of wholeness who says: "Look! I am making all things new" (Rev 21:5).

[131] Jonathan Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World: The Ethics of Responsibility* (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 5.