

Abstract:

In Mediterranean cultures during the fifteenth and sixteenth century there was a resurgence of interest in the ancient Greek physician Hippocrates. Among the texts in the Hippocratic corpus that received the most attention was *Airs, Waters, Places* (AWP): a guide for practicing physicians that stressed knowledge of local environments as a precondition to practicing medicine. While modern scholarship has explored the ways in which Renaissance writers working in the Latin tradition absorbed and applied Hippocratic notions of environmental determinism (for example Nancy Siraisi's work on Girolamo Cardano), much less is known about how Hebrew literature in this period applied and grappled with Hippocratic ideas. Using a range of Hebrew sources including a late medieval Hebrew translation of a Galenic commentary on AWP; Iberian- and Italian-Jewish bible commentaries; dictionaries and encyclopedias; and legal *responsa* literature concerning ritual baths (*miqva'ot*); this paper will use Hebrew texts as a case study for the dissemination and application of Hippocratic ideas concerning the importance of physical environment. Hebrew authors, like their peers writing in Latin and romance vernaculars, understood Hippocratic ideas regarding the environment as crucial not only to medical practice, but to the formation of culture and human character.