

SOME DIURETIC PLANTS CITED IN THE BIBLE AND IN THE *MORETUM* POEM FROM THE *APPENDIX VERGILIANA*.

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Aim: About three-quarters of the biologically active plant-derived compounds presently in use worldwide have been discovered through follow-up research to verify the authenticity of data from folk and ethnomedicinal uses. Nowadays, cultural and demographic changes threaten the conservation of this patrimony. The purpose of this study is to identify some diuretic plants listed in both the Bible and the *Moretum* poem.

Method: Besides the religious importance of the Bible, because of its ancient origin it represents a relevant witness of the way of life of the people mentioned. The Holy Scripture is also the first text revealing the utility of plants for man, as natural sources of food, wood, fibers, oils and medicinal herbs. In the last 60 years, several distinguished botanists have attempted to identify the scientific names of the plants cited in the Bible. Nonetheless, these scholars have provided different lists of plants appearing in the Bible, none of which could be accepted as indisputable. Moreover, a valuable account on the lifestyle and the diet of farmers in ancient Rome is provided by the *Moretum*, a poem from the so called *Appendix vergiliana*, which also describes in details a cultivated field at that time. It has to be considered that the botanical nomenclature was a confusing issue before the time of Linneo, therefore it wasn't rare that one species was indicated with different names and the same name was used to indicate different plants. The identification of the plants and their chemicals has been carried out through an historical analysis of the literature on this issue.

Results: The present state of research allows the listing of 206 species of Bible plants, of which 95 are recognized by all the contemporary researchers of biblical flora. We have identified some diuretic plants mentioned in both the Bible and the *Moretum*, such as: Garlic (*Allium sativum* L.), Leek (*Allium porrum* L.), Coriander (*Coriandrum sativum* L.), Lettuce (*Lactuca sativa* L.), Lagenaria (*Lagenaria syceraria* Standl.), Malva (*Malva sylvestris* L.), Radish (*Raphanus sativus* L.) and Rue (*Ruta graveolens* L.), and discussed their ethnological aspects in ancient and modern contexts.



Conclusions: People have always attracted to food rich in calories, fat and protein, yet the biblical admonition “they shall eat the flesh that night roasted, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall it eat (EXODUS 12,8), suggests that unpalatable plants play an important role in our diet. The connection between botany and medicine was central to the origin of the science of pharmacology. Finally, the loss of the empirical wisdom developed from human interactions with the environment over millennia is the loss of a fundamental part of our cultural heritage.