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Magic in Antiquity

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD

This volume owes its origin to a conference. Most of the essays in this volume were first delivered at a memorable gathering of scholars organized by the Institute of Jewish Studies of University College London at the Warburg Institute in 1999.

The topics discussed in these essays range over a wide spectrum. They touch upon ancient Mesopotamian magical practices and particularly discuss the question relating to the survival and continuity of Mesopotamian culture in the later period, especially as regards the magic of the Talmud and of the magic bowls. Some of the essays deal with topics of Jewish magic in various periods: the Aramaic incantation bowls, the Jewish tradition in Mediaeval manuscripts, which partly reflects early themes, and the fragments of the Geniza, which testify to the role played by magic in the life of the period. One of the contributions to this volume deals with Zoroastrian omen texts, and two with magical artifacts from Late Antiquity.

Two of the papers deal with the underlying questions of the theory and method of studying the magical tradition. The work of Yuval Harari devotes special attention to the situation in Judaism. These are questions which have already exercised the minds of numerous scholars, and which are likely to go on occupying a central position in the scholarly debate on the elusive problems of the definition and phenomenology of magical practices and their place in society in the years to come.

The conference of 1999 was conceived with the aim of marking the conclusion of a period of intensive work carried out under the auspices of the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at University College London on Aramaic magical texts, chiefly written on earthenware bowls, and deriving presumably from Mesopotamia. Some of the members of the Department were involved in this effort. The texts, written in a variety of forms of Aramaic, namely Jewish Aramaic, Mandaic, Syriac, as well as in a group of artificial scripts, some of which resemble Pahlavi, presented a serious challenge of decipherment and interpretation, and caused the work to be protracted beyond what is desirable. Dr. Dan Levene, then a student in the Department, took an active part in studying these texts, and later presented a

Ph.D. thesis on some of those which form part of the Shlomo Moussaieff Collection (his work was published in 2003 under the title *A corpus of magical bowls. Incantation texts in Jewish Aramaic from Late Antiquity*, London: Kegan Paul). The present editor, with the encouragement of M.J. Geller, and with the help of Dan Levene and Siam Bhayro, has been working for a number of years on the bowls in the very large Schøyen Collection, and some of these texts are quoted in his article. This project is not yet finished.

Work on the Geniza fragments of magic, carried out in collaboration between Peter Schäfer, Shaul Shaked, and a team of scholars at the Freie Universität Berlin, resulting in the three volumes published to date in the series *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, is reflected by the articles in this volume written by some former members of the Berlin group, among them Giuseppe Veltri (now in Halle), Reimund Leicht (now in Potsdam), and Klaus Herrmann. Owing to a regrettable misunderstanding, the essays by Giuseppe Veltri and Klaus Herrmann were earlier printed in a volume in honour of Peter Schäfer (*Jewish studies between the disciplines*, Leiden: Brill, 2003). The error was discovered too late for correction.

Ms. Ginny Mathias saw the volume through the press on behalf of the Institute of Jewish Studies. Her meticulous work is clearly reflected in this volume. We wish to express our heartfelt gratitude for her expert handling of the volume and for the preparation of the index. The Director of the Institute, Professor M.J. Geller, was the organizer of the workshop in 1999, and it is his involvement in the preparation of the present volume, and his enthusiasm for the subject, that made the publication of this book possible.

FORM AND PURPOSE IN ARAMAIC SPELLS:
SOME JEWISH THEMES
[The poetics of magic texts][1]

Shaul Shaked

The Aramaic magic texts from Babylonia, which belong to the end of the Sasanian period or the late Talmudic period, are now available in dramatically increased quantities, with about 800 new texts that have now joined those already published.[2] The present paper is the outcome of work carried out by the present writer on the collection of incantation bowls in the Schøyen Collection, Oslo and London, but some further unpublished material is quoted from other sources. It is too early to attempt at this stage a general synthesis of the texts available, as many of them have not yet been read and interpreted in a definitive manner. Still, it is possible already at this stage to single out certain patterns that keep coming up, and some that are so far unique, and to try to make some sense out of them. Everything said on the basis of the material so far available is subject to revision when the full corpus has been properly studied.

I should like to concentrate here on some specifically Jewish material in the texts under consideration.[3] This may lead us to a discussion of the relationship between the Jewish themes and the common syncretistic stock that characterized the popular religion of Sasanian Babylonia.[4] It is quite clear that we are dealing with a type of religion that does not directly represent any of the established religious groups. The Jewish magic texts, although they have undeniable

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[1] This is an expanded version of a paper delivered in 1995 at a conference on "Magic and magic in Judaism", held in Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv. Other papers in this series are Shaked 1997; 1999a; 2002c. A more general presentation of the material is in Shaked 1999b. Relevant to the theme of this article are also the publications Shaked 2000a; 2002b.

[2] Previously published texts make up not much more than about 100 texts.

[3] An edition and a translation of these texts are to be provided in a separate publication (Shaked, forthcoming). Full documentation, with all the known variants of any given text, will be listed there.

[4] On this point cf. Shaked 1997.

affinities with the liturgy and canon of scriptures of Judaism, have
never been recognized as part of the "legitimate" Jewish literature.
If normative Jewish texts contain magic sections (and they do), they
usually occur in marginal situations and in books which do not have
full canonical standing.[5] The same applies to Christian and Mandaean
texts (although the borderline is more difficult to define with the
Mandaean material). While they are not in any sense heretical or
sectarian, they are also not part of mainstream Judaism, Christianity,
Manichaeism or Mandaism. It is impossible to define the notion of
popular religion in the present context except by using such negative
descriptions. By popular religion we do not necessarily mean the
faith and practice of the unlearned or underprivileged layers of sociey.
For all we know, some of the learned and influential were actively
engaged in, and may have zealously promoted, the composition and
copying of magic texts. One can only understand this notion in terms
of the type of worship and belief that was considered unsuitable to
be incorporated into the mainstream order of prayer and study.

The existence of a specifically Jewish stock of themes and motifs
in the magic texts of Late Antiquity has been noticed before. It is
particularly prominent in the Greek magical papyri and amulets,[6]
and examples for this can also be found in Syriac magic texts.

The Jewish brand of Aramaic, written in Hebrew characters, is a
typical Jewish language. It frequently contains a mixture of Hebrew
phrases with the Aramaic, and makes use of biblical quotations in
the original Hebrew (sometimes, though seldom, in Aramaic para-
phrase). The quotations, while quite faithful to the Hebrew original,
contain spelling variations indicating that they were not normally
copied from a written model but from memory, derived to all appear-
ances from oral recitation.[7] It seems possible to establish that Jewish
and Mandaean bowls were written respectively by Jews or Mandaeans,

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[5] These remarks are not clear-cut. The marginal situations are typically those of
healing and personal distress, which are very close to the magic usage, but there
is a certain amount of sharing of material between "normative" texts and magic
writings.
[6] Cf. recently Betz 1997. It is possible to quote Marcel Simon's formulation: "In
the opinion of the ancients, magic was, as it were, congenital in Israel" (Simon
1996:349).
[7] Cf. the striking case of Naveh and Shaked 1985:27, B3, which contains a quo-
tation from Num 10:35 with many deviations from the standard spelling. For com-
ments on the transmission of the spells, cf. Naveh and Shaked 1985:140.

in other words, by writers well versed in their religious traditions, often at the order of members of other population groups.[8]

Several examples may be mentioned for formulae that are evidently derived from Jewish sources but which are not preserved in the extant Jewish literature. One of these is the frequent allusion to Joshua ben Peraḥya, a prominent Talmudic figure (second century BCE), who is said to have initiated the practice of a deed of divorce served on the demons. The use of the formula of an act of divorce "that comes from across the sea", a *halakhic* construct that was applied to the situation of the combat against the demons, is another example.[9] The occasional use of prayer formulae, like those occurring in the Jewish prayer book, also betrays the Jewish background of the texts.[10]

One or two further points are relevant to the present discussion. The existence of a considerable body of texts that belong to the genre of *Hekhalot* literature raises the question of the relationship between Jewish magic and the early Jewish mystical literature known as *Hekhalot*. It is also relevant to the discussion as to the history of the *Hekhalot* literature, its place and time. The presence of such themes in the bowl texts[11] shows that the Jewish magical literature in Babylonia had close affinity with this genre of Jewish literature. Since the discovery of that text, two other versions of the same formula have come to light in other bowls.[12]

Of particular interest is the occurrence of mishnaic texts in two of the incantation bowls. Although some talmudic phrases have already been noticed in the Jewish Aramaic texts, this is the first time that a complete text is given, and these are the earliest Mishna manuscripts known so far.[13] Their interest is enhanced by the fact that they come from Babylonia. The bowls presumably belong to the late Sasanian period, that is to say, between the fourth and the seventh centuries CE;[14] the use of bowls for writing Aramaic incantation

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[8] The same conclusion is also that of Harviainen 1993.

[9] Cf. Shaked 1999a.

[10] Further to this point Naveh and Shaked 1985:17f.; Naveh and Shaked 1993:22–31.

[11] Cf. Shaked 1995.

[12] These are MS 1927/63; 2046. A full publication will be included in Shaked (forthcoming).

[13] The other early attestation of a Mishna text is on a mosaic from Rehob, near Beit Shean, which is probably later than our bowls; cf. Sussmann 1974, 1975, 1976.

[14] The first evidence of a dated bowl (in the sixth century CE) has now come to light. It will be published separately soon.

texts seems to have stopped, for some unknown reason, with the advent of Islam.[15] The fact that during that period mishnaic passages could already serve as a sacred text to be quoted and used like verses from the Bible adds to the interest of this find. Its use is even more striking when we consider the fact that it serves not merely as a sacred text, but as a powerful name.

I. *MS 1929/6*[16]

1 Bound and sealed are the demons and *dēv*s and liliths and destructive spirits

2 and sorcerers and shutting-up spirits and curses and vows and misfortunes. May you be removed from this

3 house of Adib son of Bat-Šabbeta and from the dwelling of Fra<da>dukh daughter of Mamai, his wife. By the name of: "The sin-offerings

4 of the congregation and of individuals. These are the sin-offerings of the congregation: the he-goats offered at the new moons and at the set feasts[17] are to be slaughtered

5 on the north side, and their blood is received in a vessel of ministry <on> the north side. Their blood is required to be sprinkled by four acts of sprinkling on the four horns (of the altar). In what manner? The priest goes up the ramp and goes around

6 the circuit. He comes to the south-eastern horn, then to the north-eastern, then to the north-western, and then to the south-western. The residue of the blood he would

7 pour over the southern base. The offerings were consumed within the curtains, by males of the priestly stock, and cooked for food in any fashion during that day and night until midnight".[18]

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[15] Some bowls written in Arabic in the early Islamic period and now kept at the British Museum have come to light.

[16] All numbers with the prefix MS denote bowls in the Schøyen Collection, Oslo and London.

[17] Cf. Num 28:15, 22, 30; 29:5, 11, 16, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 38.

[18] Mishna *Zebaḥim* 5:3. The English version of Danby 1933 has been used with slight modifications.

II. *MS 2053/170*

1 . . . evil thing. Healing from heaven . . .
2 . . . and the house . . .
3 . . . by the seal of . . . not . . . in . . .
4 . . . lfa (?), his wife. By the name of: "The burnt offering [is (in) the holy of ho]lies. It [is slaught]ered in the no[rth and its blood is received in a vessel of] offering
5 in the north. Its blood requires t[w]o sacrificial gifts [that are fou]r, and they require stripping (of the skin) and dis[membering] and whole-offering [in fire]".[19] . . . Amen, Selah,
6 Hallelujah.

The name of the client is not visible in the badly preserved Bowl II, but it could well be the same as that of Bowl I. The same client, Adib son of Bat-Shabbeta, is the owner of a third bowl, which may have been written by the same hand (this is uncertain), and which shares a few other peculiarities with this bowl.[20] The importance of this text from our present point of view is that it makes use of a non-biblical authoritative Jewish text. The text is quoted here perhaps not as a Mishna passage, but probably from the Jewish liturgy; it figures even today as part of the morning service.[21] Its earliest attestation seems to be in the *Seder* of Rav 'Amram Ga'on (9th century CE).[22] The text is associated with the sacrifice service in the Temple. It reflects the fact that worship in the synagogue is based on a re-enactment of the sacrifices performed in the Jerusalem Temple. Its occurrence in this magic context shows that one of the most powerful symbols of Jewish sanctity, the Temple, is used as a weapon

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[19] Mishna *Zebaḥim* 5:4.
[20] Moussaieff 108; see Appendix, Text IIa. Some of the features that are common are: the quotation of a sacred text with the introductory formula "By the name of" (*be-šum*), as if the text were a powerful name to be invoked; this is very unusual in other bowl texts (perhaps unique to these two bowls); the fact that the spell, after a brief introduction stating the purpose of the formula, consists solely of quotations, with no other magic formula added.
[21] Cf. for example Baer 1937:50f.
[22] Cf. Albeck 1956, *Seder qodašim*, 9; *Encyclopaedia Judaica* II:891ff. Cf. Goldschmidt 1971, p. *dalet*; an English translation is in Hedegård 1951:6, 16. The history of the text of 'Amram Ga'on's prayer-book is rather complicated and somewhat debatable, but it may be assumed that by the ninth century CE the text of Zebaḥim 5 had been incorporated in the normative order of prayer. Our Aramaic bowl may suggest that this was already the case in the sixth century, if not earlier.

against the onslaught of the demons. It was readily available to a
Jewish sorcerer presumably because he was in the habit of reciting
it daily. It may be pointed out that another *Mishna* text used in the
Jewish liturgy occurs in a magical manuscript; this is Shabbat 2:7,
contained in a mediaeval book of magic from the Cairo Geniza.[23]

Two further points may be made. Who are the clients of this
bowl, and what can we deduce from their names? The suggestion
that they were Jewish, Christian, or pagan should be considered.
The man is called Adib (Adyab?, Adayyab?); this is not an Iranian
name, and may be of Arabic origin. His mother's name is clearly
Aramaic with a Jewish-Christian association, Bat-Šabbeta, "daugh-
ter of the Sabbath". One cannot exclude the possibility that the man
and his mother were Jewish, but these names and, in particular, the
name-pattern of the mother's name, are not otherwise attested for
Jews. The name of his wife and her mother are Persian: *Fradadukh.[24]
It is possible to assume, with a certain degree of probability, as has
been done for the majority of the Jewish bowls,[25] that the bowl could
have been manufactured for non-Jewish clients. The family in ques-
tion may represent a mixed Persian-Semitic household, a situation
often encountered among the clients of incantation bowls at this
period. Onomastics, however, cannot be a safe guide to the ethnic
or religious affiliation of individuals, because we do not know to
what extent Persian or Semitic names were used by members of the
various linguistic and religious communities. The name Bat-Šabbeta
has a chance of being Christian rather than Jewish, as names based
on the days of the week, and in particular Sabbath and Sunday,
seem to have been common among Christians of the period.[26]

The other point concerns the structure of this incantation. The
text is rather unusual in that it has two clearly distinguishable parts.

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[23] Cf. Naveh and Shaked 1993:193, 206 (G18:11) for that text and some further
comments.

[24] Written **prdwk**, perhaps to be read alternatively Farra-dukh, *Paridukh, *Frayād-
dukh, or *Pīr-dukh. For the reading Frādadukh cf. the well-attested names Frāda,
Frādad-xwarra, etc., Justi 1895:101; for Frayād-dukh, cf. Justi 1895:101 ff., s.v.
Frahāta; Gignoux 1986, No. 373 (where Gignoux reads Frahād, though it seems
better to read Frayād "help, assistance"); for Pīr-dukh cf. Gignoux 1986, No. 770.

[25] Cf. Naveh and Shaked 1985:18.

[26] Cf. the names Bar-Šabba (e.g. Hoffmann 1880:270, where it is transcribed Bar
Šabbē), Bar-Ḥad-be-Šabba (e.g. Hoffmann 1880:49, 115).

An introduction, contained in Part I, sets out the purpose of the spell: to protect the household from the threats presented by various demons. These threats are not defined in more detail, and we may take it that they refer to health hazards. The introduction also specifies the names of the persons for whom the spell was prepared. The main part of the spell (Part II) consists of only one magic "name", a name that happens to be a long quotation from the *Mishna* or from a liturgical text. The spell text breaks off abruptly at the end of the *Mishna*. We could normally expect a further part or parts, where some additional elaboration of the spell might occur. This could contain a repetition of some of the elements contained in Part I, or a further adjuration of the powers, and perhaps a proper conclusion, with words such as "Amen, Amen, Selah" or the like, that are often employed at the ending of spells. In contrast to most other bowl texts, the formula stops here.

This structure constitutes a departure from the majority of texts, although there are no strict rules about structure and length in the spell texts. Some texts can run to considerable length, with many repetitions, or they may contain several model-formulae combined in a string, while others are quite short. The way in which different formulae are put together in a single text should be the object of a separate study, which has not yet been undertaken. One has the feeling, though, that a long text can evolve out of a fairly free juxtaposition of separate elements, that are used like building blocks. The present text is not typical in that it is based on a single theme and in being rather abrupt. We may indeed wonder whether this special style has a significance. Since this text is so far unique, it is difficult to comment further on its style.

Another spell formula, so far without parallels, may be quoted. It serves a purpose not often served by bowls: it is designed for gaining popularity and favour with people in general and with people in a position of high power and authority in particular. This aim of magic activity becomes quite popular in the mediaeval period; a large number of amulets and spell formulae from the Cairo Geniza are dedicated to this purpose. In Late Antiquity, however, this theme is seldom attested. The most prominent single purpose of spells in Late Antiquity is to help with health problems, while social or economic motives are much less conspicuous.

III. *MS 1927/2*

1   'Aniel, answer her,[27] i.e. Mahdukh daughter of Ispendarmed;
     Michael, teach (her) by a visitation (?);[28] Hadariel, clothe her with
     glory; Karmiel, clothe her with mercy;[29] Ziviel, add your splen-
     dour to Mahdukh daughter of Ispendarmed.

2   Waḥi, Yaḥuš, . . ., Yaḥuš, ᴙʜᴡʜ Sabaoth, 'Ipuzrael, Zartael, Qanael,
     Qantael: You, holy angels, who are appointed over the shape of
     the countenance of a person, and who give that person grace
     and love: put

3   grace in Mahdukh daughter of Ispendarmed in the eyes of all
     those who see her and gaze at her. May she speak and be heard,
     may she come to trial and win it, may she ask and take (that
     which she has asked for), may she say (something) and be lis-
     tened to. By the name of Ruspa, Salṭa, Ṭum'a.

4   This magic act is for reviving . . . of Mirdukh daughter of Mamai,
     of Gušnazdukh daughter of Mama, of Burzanai, Gušnazdad and
     Bustai sons of Mirdukh, of Zebina and 'Abda sons of Gušnazdukh,

5   so that their eyes should not be torn open (?) . . . Namuel, Laqoṭe.
     (By that which) was said (in the scripture): "And may he find
     grace and good understanding in the eyes of God and man"
     (*Prov 3:4*). This is the mystery that Zarpiel,

6   the prince of the countenance, revealed to Moses . . . all the mys-
     teries, when he ascended Mount Sinai, and the people of Israel
     asked that his eyes be filled[30] with love. They said

7   to him: "O Son of Amram! May they be filled by our love! We
     shall (then) hold you and fulfil your desire. For our soul is smashed
     within yours, and our spirit within

8   your splendour". So you too, Zarpiel the angel, give grace to
     Ḥilion[31] daughter of Ispendarmed in the eyes of all those who
     see her and gaze at her.

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[27] **ytyh** is the form of the third person masculine singular.

[28] The translation is doubtful.

[29] Many of the requests here are based on a play of sounds. With Karmiel this
would work only if we assume that the name Karmiel is here a corruption of
Raḥmiel.

[30] The translation is uncertain. The verb may be taken to be from the root ᴋᴡʟ,
which means, among other things "to contain, have within it". Cf. the phrase **myṭly
dlmykl ml'kyn qdyšyn** "covers which are for encompassing holy angels" (Mont-
gomery 1913, No. 4:1, and Sokoloff 2002:559). In line 8 we may assume an ellip-
tical expression: **yk(w)lw <'ynyk> brḥmyn**.

[31] One might have expected here **lmhdwk**, as in line 1.

9   By the name of two mysteries, one of desire and the other of
      burning.[32] May that (mystery) of burning turn for her to good
10   and not to evil, and may that (mystery) of desire (also) turn for
      her to good and not to evil. And by four
11   mysteries that stand over the division of the sky.

In a separate section, close to the outer rim:

12   Burzanai, Gušnazdad and Bustai sons of Mirdukh
13   and Zebina and ʿAbda sons of Gušnazdukh.

There are several difficulties in the interpretation of this text, but it
is remarkable for a number of reasons. It contains an otherwise
unknown *midrash* concerning Moses, a *midrash* based on a dialogue
in which Moses took part when he went up Mount Sinai. Unlike
some of the other legends told about Moses, however, this is not a
conversation conducted with the angels or God, but one between
the people of Israel and Moses, where they ask him to plead on
their behalf to gain favour with God. The midrashic *historiola* draws
on the analogy of this story for the purpose of the spell: the client
of the amulet seeks to gain favour with the people around.
   The incantation consists of four parts:

> Part I presents a group of angels and their functions, with a strong
> emphasis on those functions that have to do with the ultimate pur-
> pose of the amulet, namely, to acquire good-will and popularity for
> the client. The functions of the angels are usually related to them by
> verbal associations, by way of etymology or pseudo-etymologies.[33] This
> section may well have existed independently of the amulet.
>   Part II consists of a direct appeal to a group of angels who are
> requested to grant the client her desire.
>   Part III contains the legendary story of Moses. The theme of the
> amulet is presented indirectly by the words of the people of Israel to
> Moses.
>   Part IV, the final part, makes again an appeal to the angel Zarpiel,
> with a similar request.

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[32] For **šyḥʾ** and **šgrʾ** cf. Montgomery 1913, bowl 28:4 (reading according to
Epstein 1921:55): **ʿd dnyštwḥn wnyštbb btr ʾḥt [bt nbʾzk bšyg]r[ʾ] wybšyḥʾh
wbrzy rḥmth**.
[33] It is possible that the name Karmiel, which carries no association with what
follows, is a corruption from *Raḥmiel, see above, note 29.

The text is based on angel names taken from the Jewish tradition, on a quotation from the Hebrew Bible, and on a legend connected with Moses, which may well derive from a lost Jewish source, probably oral, like the rest of the midrashic literature. We may again raise the question of the identity of the clients. They could easily be non-Jews of Persian or Semitic stock. It is typical of many Mesopotamian bowls that the names of the women are Persian, while the names of at least some of the men in the same family are Semitic. This observation is not based on an exhaustive study of the names on bowls, but it may indicate a peculiar situation of cross marriages between Semites and Persians. It could alternatively indicate a fashion for Persian names in the Babylonian population.

The Persian names in this particular text are connected with notions derived from the Zoroastrian tradition. The name Māhdukh denotes "daughter of the Moon", a Zoroastrian deity; her mother's name, Ispendarmed, is that of the Zoroastrian deity of the earth, Spenta Ārmati. Gušnazdukh signifies "the daughter of Gušnasp"; the latter is a venerable name in Zoroastrian history. The name of her mother, Mamai, is a Persian term of endearment for "mother". Among the other names, Burzanai is a Persian name that signifies "high", "elevated". Gušnazdad, *Gušnasp-dād, "created by Gušnasp", is another typically Zoroastrian name. The name Bōstai (or Khwāstai?) is more difficult to interpret. Khwāstai may be explained as a fond form from the word Khwāst, "desired, wanted"; if the reading Bōstai is correct, it could be a shortened form of Bōstān "a garden". Mirdukh is probably Mihrdukh, "daughter of the deity Mihr" (or, in his older form, Mithra). Zebina and 'Abda are two Semitic names that are almost synonymous in sense. Both can denote something like "slave", a person bought for money, and may indicate piety in whatever religious tradition, if the names are shortened from theophoric names which signify "slave of . . .". A preponderance of Iranian names is at any rate evident.

Another Jewish Aramaic bowl that deserves to be analyzed in this context belongs to a lady who left us a whole archive of bowls made at her command. Her name is Māhdukh (a Persian name signifying "daughter of the Zoroastrian Moon-deity") daughter of Nēwāndukh (Persian: "daughter of the brave, of the valiant"). The translation is as follows:

IV. *MS 1927/8*

1   By your name I act, great
2   holy one. May there be healing from heaven to Mahdukh daugh-
    ter of
3   Newandukh. May she be healed and protected from all spirits,
    from all blast-demons and harmful beings
4   that exist in the world. By the name of Yah, King of all kings
    of kings, Raphael, Miṭal Milas, who are appointed over the
    smiting
5   of evil spirits: the spirit that lies among the graves, the spirit
    that lies among the roofs, the spirit that lies in the body, the
    head,
6   the temples, the ear, and the sockets of the eyes of Mahdukh
    daughter of Newandukh, and the spirit whose name is Agag
    daughter of Baroq daughter of Baroqta daughter of
7   Naqor daughter of Namon, daughter of the evil eye. They call
    you the Blinding one, the Shaker (?),[34] the Blind one; they call
    you the Lame one, they call you the Itchy one, they call you
    the Crushed one.
8   I adjure you, you, evil spirit, [who met Rabbi Ḥanina ben
    Dosa], and at that time Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa said to her
    the verse
9   that is written: "You make darkness [and it becomes night, a
    time at which] all the animals of the forest creep" (*Ps 104:20*).
    Again I adjure you, and again I beswear you, you, evil spirit,
    that you should not go or become to Mahdukh daughter of
    Newandukh, either
10 a companion by night or a companion by day or by night. [If
    you go] and pursue the body, head, temples, ear, thigh, and
    sockets of the eye of Mahdukh daughter of Newandukh, you,
    [evil spirit]
11 [you will be banned and broken and set apart just as] mighty
    cities were broken, against whom Nura'el, Raphael and Michael
    were sent. By the name of Yah Yah, "YHWH mighty in battle"
    (*Ex 15:3*). YHWH is his name. "YHWH

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[34] **mṭryt'** is perhaps from the root ṬRY.

12   [mighty and strong, ʏʜᴡʜ mighty in battle" (*Ex 15:3*). The Lord
     reigns,] the Lord reigned, ["the Lord] shall reign for ever and
     for ever" (*Ex 15:18*). [*Magic words*]
13   [*Magic words*]
14   [*Magic words*]

This spell consists of several distinct parts:

    I   A general address (line 1).
   II   The purpose of the invocation: to heal the client from all
       the harmful spirits that are in the world.
   III The names of the individual spirits or groups of spirits that
       cause damage to the health of the person in question. Some
       of these names, or nicknames, are peculiar to this spell (or
       rather to this group of spells).
   IV This is the backbone of the spell: a *historiola*, a little mag-
       ical story, concerning a Talmudic sage, Rabbi Ḥanina ben
       Dosa, who met an evil spirit. The evil spirit is addressed
       in the feminine gender (perhaps because the word for spirit,
       ruḥa in Aramaic, is feminine) and quoted a powerful verse
       that was meant to divest her of her power.
    V An invocation against the evil spirit, spoken by the prac-
       titioner, who follows the model of Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa.
   VI Some additional verses quoted, and some *nomina barbara.*

The Jewish character of the spell is incontestable. It is based on a
midrash-story involving a well-known talmudic sage, Rabbi Ḥanina
ben Dosa, a Tanna of the first century ᴄᴇ. The only patently non-
Jewish element in the text is the name of the client which is, as we
have seen, Persian.

The figure of Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa has attracted considerable
scholarly attention.[35] One of the prominent features of his personal-
ity in the Tannaitic and Amoraic literature consists of the fact that
a large number of wonder stories are connected with his person.
They involve healing, the ability to bring rain, the ability to stop
the plague, miraculous far-sightedness, miraculously fast journeys.
These are coupled with accounts of great piety and voluntary poverty.
He is characterized as one of the last of the "men of praxis" (*anše*

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[35] Cf. especially Sarfatti 1957; Hyman 1964:481–484; Vermes 1975:178–214;
Urbach 1979:109–110; Freyne 1980; Bokser 1985; Safrai 1985:135ff.; Bar-Ilan
1995:19–21.

maʿaśe), an obscure expression that refers to holy men of extraordinary powers. One of the hyperbolic expressions about him says that a heavenly voice proclaimed: "The whole world is nourished through the existence of my son, Ḥanina ben Dosa, but my son, Ḥanina, finds sufficiency in eating one *qab* of carobs from one sabbath eve to the other".[36]

Some stories make him an associate of angels.[37] It is possible to interpret this figure, and other Talmudic figures like him, as being used in the rabbinic sources mostly in order to demonstrate God's power, as Urbach is inclined to do.[38] It is equally legitimate to regard the stories as demonstrating the idea that certain exceptional men in the Talmudic period were considered to possess powers beyond the ordinary, powers that were given to them because of their great piety and intimate relationship to God and to the angels. Bokser (1985) tried to differentiate between the treatment of some of these stories in Palestinian and Babylonian sources. The emphasis on the virtuoso power of Ḥanina ben Dosa seems to be more prominent in the latter than in the former, in line with the general difference between the two Talmuds. Bokser tries to account for this contrast by assuming a difference in the status of rabbis as part of more general social phenomena, but it is doubtful whether this can account for the problem. We do know that magic practices were as much in evidence in Palestine as in Babylonia.[39] Bokser may have tried to read too much into literary differences, assuming as a matter of course that they reflect a contrast in real life, but this may not be warranted.

The story in our bowl concerns an encounter of Ḥanina ben Dosa with an unnamed evil spirit, and the dialogue between them, in which Ḥanina chides the spirit away by quoting an appropriate biblical verse. This version of the story seems like a shortened allusion to what might have possibly been a more elaborate exchange of words between the sage and the female demon. It is extremely popular in the magic bowls, appearing as it does in well over ten texts. Although the story as told here is unknown from Talmudic literature, the Babylonian Talmud carries a related story:

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[36] Bavli Taʿanit 24b.
[37] *Šir ha-Širim Rabba* 1:4.
[38] Cf. Urbach 1979:104, and throughout chapter 6 of his book.
[39] See Naveh and Shaked 1993:20–22.

A man should not go out alone at night, either on the eves of
Wednesdays or on the eves of Sabbaths, because Agrat bat Maḥlat,
she (herself) together with one hundred and eighty thousand injurious
angels, go out (on those nights), and each one of them separately has
the authority to cause damage on their own.

Originally, they were out and about every day, but once she (Agrat
bat Maḥlat) encountered Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa, and said to him:
Were it not for the fact that there is a proclamation about you in
heaven, "Be careful with Ḥanina and his learning!", I would be caus-
ing you trouble.

Ḥanina said to her: If I am valued in heaven, I decree against you
that you should never pass through an inhabited place.

She said to him: By your favour, allow me a little space. He there-
upon allowed her Sabbath eves and Wednesday eves.[40]

This is an etiological story. According to popular belief two nights
in the week are particularly dangerous, and the story of Ḥanina ben
Dosa provides the fictional background to this faith. At the same
time, however, it seems clear that a theme associated with the figure
of Ḥanina ben Dosa was that he had mysterious encounters with a
female demon, or with more than one such demon, and that he had
the power to curb their activity. This is the common denominator
between the two stories.

A story of another encounter of this same sage with an evil spirit
occurs in a late rabbinical source:

There is a story that occurred with R. Ḥanina ben Dosa. He went
down to bathe in a cave, and then some Kutheans came and placed
a big stone at the entrance to the cave, but certain spirits came and
rolled it away. When an evil spirit took possession of a poor woman
in the neighbourhood of R. Ḥanina ben Dosa, his disciples said to
him: Rabbi, look at how this poor woman is tormented by an evil
spirit. R. Ḥanina said to the spirit: Why do you torment this daugh-
ter of Abraham? The spirit replied: Is it not you who went down to
bathe in a cave, [and . .], and then I came with my brothers and the
family of my father, and we rolled it [= the stone] away. Is this the
way you reward me for the favour I rendered you? He said to her: I
decree . . .[41]

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[40] Bavli Pesaḥim 112b.
[41] The story ends abruptly at this point. (R. Judah berabbi Kalonimos 1963:438;
cf. Bar-Ilan 1995:19f.).

The version of the story quoted in this mediaeval source is strongly abbreviated. It deliberately skips parts of the direct speech of the two parties. It has been suggested that despite the late source in which this story is quoted it has a chance of being an early story that was excised from the talmudic literature.[42] For our purpose, we notice again a variant on the theme of the encounter of Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa. Here he tries to restrict the power of the female spirit, but has to contend with the argument that he is in debt to the spirit. We do not know the final part of the story, which may have ended in a compromise, as in the preceding text from Pesaḥim.

The R. Ḥanina ben Dosa story with its different variants recalls a very popular *historiola* of later Jewish magic, where the person who goes out and meets a terrifying female demon is the Prophet Elijah, who enquires of the demon's business and when he finds out that she is going to kill a woman in childbirth and strangle her baby, he casts a spell against her. That story seems like a composite of the theme of the encounter of the holy man with a female demon with another theme, that of the baby-snatching and baby-killing witch.[43] It is not easy to tell whether the figure of R. Ḥanina ben Dosa was grafted on a story that was originally associated with Elijah the Prophet, or whether these are two independent versions of a similar story. Ultimately it makes little difference.[44]

The *historiolae* in these spells can be regarded as foundation-myths, giving as they do the mythical precedents for the procedures followed by the spell. Narrating them is part of the spell itself: the narration is supposed to bring about the desired effect. The act of reciting these stories causes them to be re-enacted. It re-establishes the power that was brought to bear on a difficult situation by a mighty saint, a great hero of magic, like R. Ḥanina ben Dosa. There is a certain analogy between the telling of the stories and the recitation of the details of the temple sacrifice in the daily service of the synagogue, which is also borrowed as a magical device in Text I above. Talking of the temple sacrifice brings it to life and makes it

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[42] Cf. Safrai 1985:133–154; 1990:1–7.

[43] Cf. Naveh and Shaked 1985:118f. The text was originally edited in Shachar 1971, Nos. 2,3,4. A recent discussion is in Yassif 1985:63–71.

[44] An essay in comparing the stories of Ḥanina ben Dosa and other *anše maʿaśe* ("men of praxis") with those of the early prophets is made by Sarfatti 1957.

present, whether this is done in the liturgy or in magic. No negative power can stand against the power inherent in the holiness of the Temple. No impure spirit can pursue its aim when the story of the holy man is invoked.

Some of the allusions in the bowls concern King Solomon, who is known to have been a favourite figure for stories of associations with supernatural beings. With him is connected the cycle of stories about Ashmedai. A cryptic allusion to a piece of magical lore that is otherwise lost is contained in the following text:

V. *MS 1927/9*

1   May there be healing from heaven to Mahdukh
2   daughter of Newandukh. Šekobit Šekobanita, who snatches sons away from women,
3   roasts them and drinks of their fat, daughter of Ṭasat Lilita. Shut yourself away from Mahdukh daughter
4   of Newandukh. Do not drink of her fat, do not knead it together with your blood. Turn back on your path just as the primordial demon turned back,
5   the one who was at the time of King Solomon son of David. If you do not turn back from your path, I shall cast you to the axe that has cut the log at the place of [45] all the Dudman
6   demons.[46] By the name of Yukson, Yukson, be strong and reliant. O Dudman demons, accept this charm of ours and take away the evil spirit from the entrails of this Mahdukh daughter of
7   Newandukh, and (remove) your shape from her front. The shape of the maiden, the daughter of fornication, sits in the sand (?),[47] I smashed (?) (it) in the presence of the demon and the male **'wdns'** (?), and she raises also the daughter of Ṭasat Lilita.
8   Go away, move away, be rebuked, go out, leave, be banished, pass away, go up, be off, move out of Mahdukh daughter of Newandukh, from her house, from her dwelling, from her . . ., from her grandsons,

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[45] Or: "after, in the manner of" (?). This translation would be based on the assumption that **'tr** equals **b'tr**.

[46] The translation of this phrase is not entirely certain. The text seems to allude to a story that is unknown to us. Dudman, which is used here like a proper name, is probably derived from the Persian word *dūdmān* "family".

[47] Or: "in vinegar" (?).

9   from her great-grandsons, and from the 66 limbs of her body.
    May she be healed by the mercy of heaven from this day and
    for ever, in speed and and in the shortest time. Amen Amen
    Selah. May Mahdukh daughter of Newandukh be sealed and
    doubly sealed

10 with regard to all evil things, all idols, no-good-ones, *yaror*s, evil
    pebble-spirits, malicious spirits. By the name of the Lord, Yehoya,
    Yehoya is his great and exalted name. Gil Yagil [*nomina barbara*].

11 [. . .] "This is my name for ever and this is my remembrance
    for generation after generation" [*Ex 3:15*]. Yah Yah Yah Yah
    Yah Yah YYY is his blessed name [. . .] for ever (?). And say:
    ["The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face
    shine upon you] and be gracious unto you. [The Lord lift up
    his countenance towards you and give you peace"] [*Num 6:24–26*].

The allusion in line 5 may be to a story concerning demons, which
might have been in some details similar to that in which a prophet,
Isaiah, was hiding in a tree and being cut in two by the king's men:

> "Elijah took twelve stones"—this is what was said by God to Israel:
> "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my foot-rest" (*Is 66:1*). This
> verse was spoken by prophecy at the end of Isaiah's prophethood.
> When was that? At the time of Menasseh. When Menasseh introduced
> an idol into the Temple, Isaiah started to speak prophecies to Israel,
> saying: "Why do you boast of this house that you built for me? As
> neither the superior nor the inferior (parts of the universe) hold me,
> do I need this house that you have built for me? What is the house
> that you should build for me? (*cf. Is 66*). Nebuchadnezzar will surely
> come up, destroy it and drive you into exile!" Menasseh thereupon
> was filled with anger against him and told (his people): "Catch him!".
> They hurried after him to catch him, but he ran away and the carob-
> tree opened itself and swallowed him. Rabbi Isaac son of Ḥanina son
> of Papa son of Isaac said: "He brought carpenters and (bade them)
> saw the carob tree. Blood was spilling (out of the tree). This is (the
> sense) of the verse: "Menasse spilt so much innocent blood that he
> filled Jerusalem full to the brim" (*2 Kings 21:16*). Is this thing possi-
> ble? No, but he killed Isaiah, who was the equal of Moses, with whom
> (God) spoke "face to face", as it is written: "I speak to him face to
> face" (*Nu 12:8*).[48]

It is conceivable that there existed a story concerning certain demons
who hid in a log and who were cut in two by an axe. A somewhat
similar story is known from the Zoroastrian tradition concerning

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[48] *Pesiqta Rabbati*, ed. Ish-Shalom, Parasha 4, section beginning: *Wayyiqqaḥ Eliyyahu*.

Jamšēd,[49] who had committed a sin and tried to escape punishment
by hiding in a tree. The place where the demons are to be cut up
is specified as that of the Dudman demons, who, I suggest, are a
group called by the Persian word for "family".[50] The demons in this
culture are regularly grouped in families and tribes; cf., for exam-
ple, the constant reference to the family and companions of the
demons in the *Hekhalot*-type incantation.[51]

   Another allusion where we miss the background is one in which
"mighty cities" that were broken is mentioned; cf. Text IV, quoted
above, line 11. The way these cities are alluded to suggests that their
story was quite familiar to the milieu of the writer. The story of the
three angels Nura'el, Raphael and Michael sent against the cities
could be a *midrashic* amplification of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah
in the Bible, or a different narrative.

   An otherwise lost midrash seems also to lie at the background of
the following text:

VI. *MS 2053/183*

14   I adjure you and beswear you, you, O evil spirit, and (evil)
     encounters and no-good ones and demons and *yarod*s and error-
     spirits and idols and complaint-spirits and imaginings. By the
     name of the great Yahoq Yahoq,
15   who pushed his chariot over the Sea of Reeds, (I adjure you)
     that you may move away and flee and change your place and
     remove yourselves and go out and be annulled [and be sealed
     away] from Mihranahid daughter of Aḥat, known as Kuṭus,
     from the two hundred and fifty-two limbs that she has, from
     the two hundred and six (?) limbs of
16   her body, and may she be healed by heaven from this day and
     for ever, swiftly and at a near period of time. By the name of
     the great Yah, YHWH Sabaoth, sanctified and exalted over the
     elevated and lofty throne.[52]

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[49] Cf. Christensen 1934:73–74.
[50] Cf. the bowl in the Schøyen Collection, MS 2053/175:6–7 and parallel texts.
[51] Cf. Moussaieff Bowl 6, published and translated in Shaked 1995:211–216 [note
however that in line 20, the word read **dytqyk** should read **dwtqyk** and trans-
lated: "your family", from Middle Persian *dūtak, dūdag*].
[52] The quotation given here is from a composite text. The first part of the text
contains the story of Ḥanina ben Dosa, as in Text IV above.

There are a number of points that are worth making with regard to this text. God is here mentioned by the peculiar name Yahoq Yahoq, or, if transliterated as it is written in Hebrew characters, **yhwq** repeated twice. The transliteration shows that we probably have a deliberate play on the sequence of letters that constitute the tetragrammaton, **yhwh**. It is this person who is said to have pushed his chariot[53] over the Red Sea. This presumably alludes to a midrashic tale that may have explained how the Egyptians initially hesitated whether they should enter the Red Sea in pursuit of the Israelites, but then became bold when they saw the chariot of **yhwq yhwq** being pushed across the sea. A similar notion underlies Ex. 15:1.

Apart from the crumbs of legendary Jewish lore that the bowls contain, there is one other aspect of Jewish relevance in some of these texts. We of course would like to get as much information as possible about the practitioners who wrote these texts, and to know to what extent they may have been lay people or members of the religious and intellectual elite, represented mainly by the rabbis. The information provided by the texts on bowls is very scanty, and we may have to wait before some more concrete information turns up. That ambivalent feelings were often expressed among the rabbis concerning magical practices[54] does not tell us much about their attitude with regard to texts such as we have on bowls. They are "magical" in our classification, but they may not have been seen in the same light by the sages of the Talmud, who could have regarded them as inoffensive acts of healing or even as acts of piety.

A few people with the title "rabbi" come up in the texts. In one of the bowls there is a client by the name of Rav Aḥma son of Aḥat.[55] Another person carrying such a title is Rav Maḥlafa son of Khwardukh.[56] On a Palestinian amulet we have the name Rabbi Elʿazar son of Esther.[57] None of these names is familiar to us from any other source, but it may be assumed that the title Rav or Rabbi was not used lightly in the period under consideration. The bowl

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[53] The language of the text is very pithy and may be elliptical. It is thus possible to explain the possessive pronoun as referring not to **yhwq yhwq** but to Pharaoh, although the latter is not mentioned in the text.

[54] Cf. Urbach 1979:97 and further on in chapter VI.

[55] Schøyen Collection, bowl No. MS 1927/49.

[56] Schøyen Collection, MS 2053/222.

[57] Cf. Naveh and Shaked 1985, A3.

texts avoid, as a rule, honorific titles; the social position of the person seems to be irrelevant to them. The rare occurrence of the title 'Rav' is therefore all the more striking. It may be surmised that some other clients on amulets and bowls may have belonged to the group called rabbis, but that the title was left out. We should recall that clients are mentioned not with their patronymics, which were the standard way of identifying people socially, but are only identified by their mother's name, a much more private and intimate mode of identifying a person, one which may have been particularly useful in polygamous families—and the society of this period was familiar with sporadic polygamy. I tend to explain the predilection for using the matronym in Jewish magical texts, as well as in liturgical texts for healing a sick person, by recalling the custom widespread in many cultures of invoking the mother in contexts of great emotional stress, hence more particularly in blessings, expressions of terror, and curses. This usage is not restricted to Jewish texts. It is also prevalent in Christian and pagan texts of the period.

Apart from these rabbis there is one other figure that gets the title of rabbi. That is Rav Yosef Šeda,[58] known also from the Talmud,[59] where however he is not endowed with the title Rav. For all we know, he is a fictitious figure.

One curious case of a person with a rabbinical title that has come up in one of the bowls is Rav Aḥa bar Rav Huna, where both the person himself and his father carry the title of Rav. The text of the bowl in question is badly faded, and at first it was not clear what his function was in the text. Closer reading made it clear that he does not figure as a client or a practitioner, but as what may be termed an innocent bystander:

VII. *MS 1928/49*

1   . . .
2   . . . demons, *dēv*s, afflictions and satans, from the four . . . borders,
3   and in the eight corners. In the external border . . . Adai son of
     Dukrai, and the other

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[58] Schøeyn Collection, MS 1928/43.
[59] Bavli Eruvin 43a; Pesaḥim 110a.

4 border is the house of Rabi son of Baraš . . ., [and the other
   bord]er is the house of Rav Aḥa
5 son of Rav Huna, and the other border is . . . Sealed is
6 this house by the name of Anparimta (?) . . . . from this
7 **'yprst rmrst** . . . this other
8 . . .

The writing is largely washed off, and yet it is clear that a famous
name of the Babylonian Talmud figures in this text. Rav Aḥa bar
Rav Huna, who is called in exactly the same form and with the
same two honorific titles, is quoted about twelve times in various
tractates of the Talmud. He comes up in this bowl not as a sor-
cerer or owner of the bowl, but merely as the landlord of a house
adjacent to that of the client, and his property helps in delineating
the borders of the land to be magically protected by the bowl. The
text, which is unique in specifying the borders of a land property in
this manner, is of great historical interest. Rav Aḥa bar Rav Huna
was a contemporary of Rava and of Rav Ḥisda, which means that
he flourished in the fourth century CE. We know that his son's name
was Rava. If this is the person mentioned in our text, we can date
the bowl to the fourth century. Unfortunately we have no informa-
tion about the place of his activity, or, for that matter, about the
exact location where the bowl was discovered.

We have no way of establishing the authenticity of pottery ves-
sels, apart from certain considerations of form as used by archaeol-
ogists. The form of the vessels is simple enough, and a modern
imitation is not difficult to make. The writing is a different matter.
It takes considerable skill to compose a text that would have the
shape of letters, the appearance of the ink, and the style of inscrip-
tion as found on authentic bowls. Skilful forgers, who can of course
be found, would obviously go for more valuable objects in terms of
the antiquities market. Incantation bowls do not belong to this cat-
egory. The bowl in question was purchased as part of a large lot,
without either seller or buyer being aware of any special significance
that it possessed. The script and language, as well as the ink, con-
form well to the style of the other bowls of the same provenance.

The name Aḥa as well as his father's name, Huna, are both fairly
common in Jewish Babylonia of the Talmudic period. It is not unlikely
that there may have been more than one person with this name
and patronymic. One such person can indeed be recalled. In the

chronicle of events contained in the Epistle of Rav Sherira Gaon
(fl. 906–1006 CE) we read of a sage, Rav Aḥai son of Rav Huna, who
died on Sunday, 4 Adar, 816 Sel., which corresponds to 505 CE.[60]
The slight difference between the name of this person and the one
on our bowl is not very significant: Aḥai is a hypocoristicon of Aḥa,
and the variation between them may have been common. The lat-
ter date is slightly more likely, as we have now two dated bowls
within the sixth century CE, but this does not necessarily impose a
sixth-century dating on all Babylonian bowls. The possibility that
there were other father-and-son sequences with the same popular
names, Huna and Aḥa, cannot be excluded. But the fact that both
father and son were members of the rabbinical establishment, as evi-
denced by their titles, must somewhat narrow down the possibilities.
We may conclude that in all probability the bowl was written at the
time of one of the two historical persons: Rav Aḥa bar Rav Huna of
the fourth century, or Rav Aḥai bar Rav Huna of the sixth century.

There is another bowl with an inscription that seems to be writ-
ten by the same quite distinctive handwriting as the one mentioning
Rav Aḥa bar Rav Huna:

IX. *MS 2053/125*

1 By your name I act. May this seal be for healing to the house
   of Simru Khusro and of . . . Farrokhdad son of Dukhtbeh and of
   Tilula (?)
2 daughter of Midia, his wife. And may he be sealed from all
   demons and dēvs and afflictions and satans and from all spirits
   and from[61] all mysteries and all
3 the *limbs[62] of his (?) body. May this house be bound and sealed
   by seven bonds and by eight seals. By the name of
4 **'npr** the prince, of **ṣrh pṣy rz 'ḥyṭ rz 'dm zmn qdwm zdwn
   'yprst**
5 **rmrst mhydwst 'tydwst**. "And so you shall draw water with
   joy from the springs of deliverance" (Is. 12:3). Amen, Amen,
   Selah. True.

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[60] Rav Sherira Gaon, *Epistle*, p. 89.
[61] For **wmd** read **wmn**.
[62] For **ywmy** read **hdmy**.

We have seen that the confessional boundaries between Jews and members of other religions were not very rigidly observed in so far as the use of magical material was concerned. Non-Jews often availed themeselves of the magical materials that originated in the Jewish milieu in the same geographic area, and Jews, for their part, borrowed magical themes from their neighbours. When we are talking of "magical themes" or "magical materials" the reference is to materials that were often used in a magical context, although they were also part of the culture in general. One can hardly assume that there were themes that were considered suitable for use only in magical situations, or that were never referred to in other circumstances.

The sharing of materials between Jews and other communities of Late Antiquity is one aspect of the magic phenomenon. Another aspect that is important to emphasize is the fact that Jews seem to have been regarded as expert amulet-writers, and that non-Jews must have often turned to them when they wanted amuletic texts. The Jewish practitioners, for their part, felt no inhibitions about using the most intimate Jewish materials in texts that were prepared for use by members of other religious groups. Among the most powerful magical weapons in their arsenal were such devices as recounting significant incidents from the lives of some of the ancient Jewish sages, quoting biblical and liturgical texts in Hebrew and Aramaic, and alluding to midrashic materials that circulated, one imagines, orally within the community.

Appendix

I. *MS 1929/6*

1 אסירין וחתימין שידי ודיוי וליליתה ומבכלתה

2 וחרשי וסכרתה ולוטהא ונידרא ואישתקופתה דתיזיהון מן הדין

3 ביתיה דאדיב בר בתשבתה ומן דירתה דפרדוך בת ממא איתתיה בשום
   חטאות

4 הציבור והיחיד ואילו הן חטאות הציבור שעירי ראשי חודשים ושל
   מועדות שחיטתן

5 בצפון וקיבול דמן בכלי שרת צפון ודמן טעון ארבע מ[תנו]ת על ארבע
   קרנות כאיזה צד עלה בכבש ופניו

6 לסובב בא לו לקרן דרומית מזרחית מזרחית צפונ[ית צפונית] מערבית
   מערבית דרומית [שיר]י הדם היה

שופיך אל יסוד דרומי נאכלין לפני מן הקלעין לזכרי [כהונה בכל   7
מא]כל יום [ולי]לה עד חצות

II. *MS 2053/170*

. . . [אסוחה מן ש[מיה] . . .   1
. . . ניסתת . . . . ודיני . . .   2
. . . א . . . . . . דוסתי וד . . . . . . חון . . לאי . . . 3
. . . א איתהיה בשום העולה קדשי קדשים [שחיט]תה בצפ[ון ו]קיבול 4
[דמה בכלי] שרת
בצפון ודמה טעון שתי מח<נ>ות שהאן ארבע [וט]ענ[ה] הפשט ונ[תוח] 5
וכליל [לאשים] . . . אמין סלה
הללויה   6

IIa. *Moussaieff Collection 108*[63]

הושיעינו יהוה אלהינו וקבצינו והצילינו מן הגוים להודות לשם קדשך 1
להשתבח בתהַלָתיך
קמיעה למיסר שידי וַדיוי וסיוטי וסטני מן הדין ביתיה דאדיב בר   2
בתשבתהֶ מן [. .]
בשום ויאמר יהוה אל הסטן ינער יהוה בך הסטן ינער יהוה בך הַבחר 3
בירושלים
הלוא זה אוד מוצלֵ מאש ברוך יהוה לעולם אמן אמן ברוך יהוה   4
אלהי ישראל מן העולם ועד העלם ואמר כל העם אמן הללויה   5
ברוך יהוה אלַהִים אלוהי ישראל עושה נפלאות לבדו   6
וברוך שם כבודו לעולם וימלא כבודו את   7
כל הארץ אמן אמן מן יהי כבוד יהוה לעולם   8
ישמח יהוה במעשיו   9

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[63] This text was edited by Dan Levene (Levene, 2003: 71–72). It is only given here for comparison with the other texts.

Translation

1 "Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us together, and deliver
us from the nations, that we may give thanks to thy holy name
and glory in thy praise" (*1Chr 16:35, conflated with Ps 106:47*).

2 An amulet for binding demons, *dēv*s, frights and satans away from
this house of Adib son of Bat-Shabbeta, from . . .

3 By the name of: "And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke
you, O Satan, even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke
you.

4 Is this not a brand plucked out of the fire?" (*Zach 3:2*). "Blessed
be the Lord for ever, Amen and Amen" (*Ps 89:53*). "Blessed be
the Lord

5 God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting, and let all the peo-
ple say, Amen, Hallelujah" (*Ps 106:48*).

6 "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only does won-
drous things.

7 And blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole
earth be filled

8 with his glory, Amen and Amen" (*Ps 72:18–19*). "The glory of
the Lord shall endure for ever,

9 the Lord shall rejoice in his works" (*Ps 104:31*).

III. *MS 1927/2*

1 עניאל עני יתיה [ל]מהדוך בת איצפינדרדמיד מיכאל תני בסערה הדריאל
אלביש יתה הדרא כרמיאל אלביש יתה רחמתא זיויאל אטיף זיוך על
מהדוך בת איצפינדרדמיד

2 וחי יהוש א . . . יהוש יהוה צבאות עיפוזראל זרתאל קנאל קנהאל אתון
מלאכין קדישין דיממנן על צורת אפוהי דאינשא ויהבין עלוהי חיסדה
ורחמי אתון טעוניה

3 חיסדה למהדוך בת איצפינדרדמיד באפי כל חזה ומחזה תימר ותישתמע
תידון ותיזכי תישאול ותיסב ותישתעי ותיתנצית בשום רוספא סלטה טומאה

4 הדין עובדא למינפש . . . דמירדוך בת מאמי ודנושנודוך בת ממא ודבורוני
ונושנודד ובוסתי ובני מירדוך ודזבינא ועבדא בני נושנודוך

5 ועיניהון דלא יפרעון . . . ן . . . נמואל לקוטי נאמר ומצא חן ושכל טוב
בעיני אלהים ואדם דין הוא רוא דינלא ליה זרפיאל

6 סר הפנים למשה . . . . . . אין כל רויא כד סליק לטורא דסיני ובעו עמא
דבית ישראל דניכל עיניה ברחמתא אמרו

7 ליה בר עמרם יכלו בר[ה]מין ונחסן לך ונעביד בעותך דישחקת נפשנא
בת נפשך ורוחנא⁶⁴ בת

8 זיוך ואף אנתה זרפיאל מלאכה נמול חיסדה לחיליון בת איצפינדרמיד
באפי כל חזה ומחזה

9 בשום תרין רזין חד דשיחא וחד דשנרא דשיחא ליהפיך עליה לטב

10 ולא לביש ודשנרא ליהפיך עליה לטב ולא לביש ובשום ארבעה

11 רזין דקימין [על] פלנותה דרקיעה

*Written on the margin near the rim in two groups, each one consisting of two
lines. Each group is here given, for the sake of clarity, as one line, and the lim-
its of the lines in each group are marked by a vertical stroke:*

12 בורוני⁶⁵ ונושנזדד | ובוסתי בני מירדוך

13 ונושנזדוך בת ממא | ובינא ועבדא בני נושנזדוך

IV. *MS 1927/8*

1 לשמך אני עושה קדישה

2 רבה אסותא מן שמיה תיהוי לה למהדוך בת

3 ניונדוך ותיחסי ויתנטר מן כל רוחין מן כול זיקין ומזיקין

4 דאית בעלמא בשום יה מלך מלכי מלכיה רפאל מיטל מילס דמפקדין
אינון על מחת

5 רוחתא בישתא רוחא דשכבא בן קברי ורוחא דשכבא בין אינירי רוחא
דשכבא בפנרה בראשה

6 בצידעה באודנה ובבית נילנלוהי דעינה דמהדוך בת ניונדוך ורוחא
דישמה אנג בת ברוק בת ברוקתא בת

7 נקור בת נמון בת עין רעה מסמיחא מטריחא עויירתא קרן לכי מחנרתא
קרן לכי נרבניתא קרן לכי שפופתי קרן לכי

8 מומינה עלכי אנתי רוחא בישתא [די פנע ביה ב]רבי חנינא בן דוסא
ואמר לה רבי חנינא בן דוסא לרוחא בישתא דיפנע ביה בהה{ה}יא
שעתא קראה

9 די כתיב תשית חושך . . . כל חיתו יער ותוב מומינה ותוב משבענא
עלכי אנתי רוחא בישתא דלא תיזלין ולא תיהוין לה למהדוך בת
ניונדוך לא

10 צותא דליליה ולא צותא דליליה ודיממא דאם אזלת ודרפת בפנרה
בראישה בצידעה באודנה באטמה ובבית נילנלוהי דעינה דמהדוך בת
ניונדוך אנת[י רוחא בישתא]

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⁶⁴ This seems the only possible reading. One might have expected **wzywn'**.

⁶⁵ The two lines 12–13 are written near the rim, apparently without relationship
to the main inscription.

11 [ישמחון יתיכי ויתברון יתיכי ויחרמון יתיכי כמה ד]איתברו כרכין
תקיפין ⁱⁱˢשתדרו עליהון נוראל רפאל ומיכאל בשמיה דיהיה יהוה
{ו}איש מלחמה יהוה שמו יהוה

12 [עיזוז וניבור יהוה ניבור מלחמה יהוה מלך] יהוה מ[לך יהוה י]מלוך
[לעול]ם ועד האש אשתוק סשמורו מטמון פסקון פסקו[ן] ... קלשק ...

14 ... [מט]מון אטרינל אטרינל | קלשק קלשק קלשק חיתחית היתחית ...

15 חית חית אם עפר בני[ן]

V. *Schøyen Collection, MS 1927/9*

1 אסותא מן שמיה תיהוי לה למהדוך

2 בת ניונדוך שכובית שכוביתא דנסבא בנין מן נשיא

3 וקליא יתהון ושתיא מן חלביהון בת מסת ליליתא סכוריכי מן מהדוך בת

4 ניונדוך ולא תישתין מן חלבה ולא תלושין יתיה בידמכי שנא שבילכי
כמה דשני שידא קדמאה

5 דהוא ביומי שלמה מלכא בר דויד שבילכי אם לא תשני אירמי יתיכי
להצין דחצב נובא אתר דודמן שידייא

6 כולהון בשום יוכסן יוכסן אתחזקון תסמוכו שידייא דודמן קבילו קיבלא
דנן וסבו ית רוחא בישתא מן מעה דמהדוך בת

7 ניונדוך דא וצורת אפכי מן אפה וצורת בת נוריתא רביתא בחלה יתבא
פילקית קמי שידא ואודנסא דיכרא מסקא אף בת מסת ליליתא

8 זהי וזעי נעורי ופוקי ועיקורי ואטירדי וחלופי ואיסתליקי ואיפטירי
ועיקורי מן מהדוך בת ניונדוך מן ביתה מן דירתה מן ש ... ה מן
נינה מן

9 ניכדה מן שיתין ושיחא הדמי קומתה ותיחסי ברחמי שמיה מן יומה
דן ולעלם בעגלה ובזמן קריב אמן סלה חתימה וימחתמה מ[הדוך
בת] ניונדוך

10 מן מ[ידעם] ביש מן כל פתכרין מן לטבין מן ירוורין מן הומרין בישן
מן רוחן זידנין בשום אדון יהויה יהויה שמו הנדול והניכבד ניל יניל
ידונסיה [...]

11 ... זה שמי לעלם וזה זכרי לדר דר יה יה יה יה יה יה יה ייי שמו
מבורך ... לעלם ואמרת א ... ויהניך ...

VI. *MS 2053/183*

14 מומינא ליכי ומשבענה עלכי אנתי רוחא בישתא ופנעין ולטבין ושידין
ירודין וטעון ויפתכרין ונאלין והרהורין בשמיה דיהוק יהוק רבה

15 די דחק מרכבתיה על ימה דסוף דתיזחון ותינוזחון ותיתחלפון ותעדון
ומיפקון (!) ותיתבטלון ות ... ון מינה מן מיהרנהיד בת אחת דמיתקריא

כוטוס מן מתין חמשין ותרין הדמין דאית לה מן מתן חמשין ותרין

הדמין דאית לה מן מאתין ושיתא הדמי

16   קומתה ותיחסי מן שמיה מן יומה דן ולעלם בעגלה ובזמן קריב בשום

יה רבה יהוה צבאת מקודש ומפואר על כיסי רם ונישא

VII. *MS 1928/49*

1   . . . חתמא . . .

2   . . . . . . [שי]די ודיוי ופנעי וסטני מן ארב[עה] . . . מיצרייה

3   ובתחמי זויתה במיצרא דבריתא . . . אדי בר דוכרי ומיצרא

4   אוחרנא ביתא דראבי בר בראש . . . . . . [ומיצרא אוחר]נא ביתא דרב
אחא

5   בר רב הונא ומיצרא אוחרנא מט . . . . . . די חתים הדין

6   ביתא בשום אנפרימתא . . . אדי מן דין

7   איפרסת רמרס[ת] . . . [ה]דין אהרן

8   . . . וַאֲ

VIII. *MS 2053/125*

1   לשמך אני עושה {ה} הדין חתמא יהי לאסו לביתא דסימרו כוסרו
ודמ . . . . . . פֵּרוֹכְדד בר דוכתביה ודתחלֵוַלָּא

2   בת מידיה אינתחתיה ויתחתם מן כל שידי ודיוי ופנעי וסטני ומן כל רוחי
ומד (!) כל ראזי וכל

3   יומי קמחא אסיר וחתים הדין ביתא בשבעה איסרין וביתחמניא חתמין
בשום

4   אנפר איסרה דצרה פצי רז אחיט רז אדם זַמן קדום זַדון איפרסת

5   רמרסת מהידוסת אתידוסת וש<א>בתם מים

6   בששון ממעיני הישועה אמן

7   אמן סלה שרירה

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INCANTATIONS IN SOUTHERN MESOPOTAMIA—
FROM CLAY TABLETS TO MAGICAL BOWLS
(Thoughts on the Decline of the Babylonian Culture)

Joachim Oelsner

It is an often repeated, but nevertheless wrong assumption that after the end of the Neo-Babylonian kingdom in the Achaemenid period Babylonian culture declined; also that the Akkadian language was superseded by Aramaic. Regarding Hellenistic Babylonia often the same is postulated, e.g. recently: „Der schon in der Perserzeit immer seltener werdende Gebrauch der akkadischen Sprache nahm freilich unter den Seleukiden weiter zugunsten des Aramäischen ab". But it has also been stated: „Das alte kulturelle Wissen wurde von den Gelehrten ungebrochen weiter tradiert, die Astronomie nahm beträchtlichen Aufschwung" (Hrouda 1997: 57). In such statements one sees the problem: nobody would deny that in everyday life Aramaic was widely used, but as nearly all the texts written in Aramaic are lost, this only can be seen by the Aramaic endorsements on cuneiform documents (recent edition: Blasberg 1997). In the Hellenistic period this practice was used more rarely than in the preceding Achaemenid one, on the other hand, we know of a considerable and steadily increasing number of cuneiform tablets of the later Achaemenid, Hellenistic (Seleucid), and Parthian periods. The fields in which one or the other of the languages was used will not be discussed here in detail, as it is difficult to define these exactly anyway; but the fact must be stressed that the cuneiform script, as well as the traditions in the Sumerian and Akkadian languages survived well into the Christian era.

In the context of the topic "Officina Magica" some remarks on the latest cuneiform traditions are relevant. Foremost one may have in mind the magical literature, i.e. incantations and rituals. Let me start with a tablet written at Uruk in the late fifth century BC, about one century after the end of the Neo-Babylonian Empire and more than half a millennium before the end of the cuneiform tradition. It is a copy of the so-called "Manual of Exorcism" (*Leitfaden der Beschwörungskunst*), which again demonstrates that texts used in the

Neo-Assyrian period (i.e. the eighth and seventh centuries BC), are also known from the Late Babylonian tradition. The best preserved example of that "Leitfaden" is from Assur, and was published about 80 years ago (Ebeling 1919 [= KAR]: no. 44).[1] The Uruk copy (von Weiher 1983–98: no. 231) has a dated, but partly broken, colophon mentioning an Achaemenid king Darius (regnal year lost), presumably the second one of this name, reigning from 424 to 405 BC.[2] The owner or scribe is a well known person, namely Rīmūt-Ani, son of Šamaš-iddin, of the Šangû-Ninurta family. He and his father Šamaš-iddin, son of Nādinu, and his (presumably younger) brother Anu-ikṣur, are known as scribes and owners of a considerable number of clay tablets excavated in a dwelling house in the southeast of Uruk (located in Ue 18 of the archaeological city plan).[3] These tablets are a good example of private libraries containing collections of texts relating to the profession of their owners, in this case members of the so-called *mašmaššu* or *āšipu* "exorcist" group.[4] Listed in that text are a number of incantations and ritual tablets, hinting at the vitality of Sumero-Akkadian magical literature in the later Achaemenid period. A large part of the texts owned by that family is made up of compilations of this kind.

The tablets mentioned above seem to me to be well suited as an introduction into the latest Babylonian tradition of magical literature in cuneiform, and in both the Sumerian and the Akkadian languages. They are a clear proof that this kind of text was still used after the end of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. As we shall see later, magical texts were written practically to the end of the cuneiform tradition.

At the same find spot at Uruk, in an upper level, was stored also the library of Iqīšâ, son of Ištar-šuma-ēreš, member of another fam-

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[1] Edited by Zimmern 1915/16: 204ff. (for further studies see HKL sub Ebeling, E., KAR 44) and Bottero, 1985: 65–112. For late copies from Babylon see also Oelsner 2001: 480 and below at n. 17.

[2] The royal title is only *šarru* (LUGAL) instead of *šar mātāte* (LUGAL KUR.KUR) which one would expect in that period. But see OECT 10: no. 194 (Uruk, Artaxerxes year 7). Another contemporary example for the title "king" instead of "king of the lands" may be Stolper 1990: 585f., 619 no. 20 (broken after LUGAL; without royal name, but late 5th cent. BC, like von Weiher, 1983–98: nos. 303 and 304, but there the title is LUGAL KUR.KUR).

[3] The texts of this find complex have been published by Hunger 1976, and von Weiher 1983–1998. Cf. also the tablet catalogues: Hunger 1972; von Weiher 1979. For the dating of the tablets see my reviews: Oelsner 1983; Oelsner 1986–2001; see also the discussion in Oelsner 1996; Oelsner 2000; Oelsner 2000a; Oelsner 2002.

[4] For the reading of the title of this profession see Oelsner, 1993: 235.

ily, the well known Ekur-zakir clan. He lived in the last quarter of the fourth century BC, and like the persons mentioned above also acted as "exorcist" (*mašmaššu*/*āšipu*). His tablets are largely of the same character as those of the Šamaš-iddin family: there is a considerable number of magical texts—rituals and incantations, others are of medical relevance. In addition, the tablet collections mentioned above contained other types of cuneiform texts as well, for example the numerous omina of various types.

At Uruk the traditional cuneiform literature was copied continuously until at least the second century BC, even if at present there are fewer magical texts available from the Seleucid period than from the preceding one.[5] There is also an undated Aramaic incantation text written in cuneiform, presumably also from Uruk (TU 58). It may be of the third, or the first half of the second century BC, but an even earlier date cannot be excluded. As the tablet comes from illegal excavations the archaeological context is unknown.[6]

The latest cuneiform tablet of literary character from Uruk which is known to the author is dated 162 SE, corresponding to 150/149 BC (for contracts see below). It is part of the terrestrial omen series *šumma ālu* "If a city" (A 3449+3540, unpublished, with high probability to be joined to TU 8).[7]

In addition to the literary cuneiform tablets, including the magical ones, from Uruk there are texts of other genres too:

– astronomical texts, mostly to be dated to the first half of the second century BC,[8]
– a few administrative texts,[9]

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[5] For the texts available up to that time see Oelsner 1986: 172f.

[6] The text, known for many years, has generally been dated to the Seleucid period, as it was acquired with a collection of Hellenistic texts from Uruk. But in this lot were included e.g. some tablets of the above-mentioned Iqīšâ and others. TU 58 was re-edited in Geller 1997–2000, see also the photos in Müller-Kessler 2002: 197, 200. The tablet is not a library exemplar, but more hastily made, nevertheless written neatly. This is a result of an autopsy made by M. Geller and the author in July 2000. For the permission thanks are due to B. André-Salvini, Département des Antiquités Orientales, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

[7] Mentioned by Moren 1978: 181 (see also p. 180). Date according to own collation. For the permission I would like to thank J.A. Brinkman, Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

[8] Most of them published by Neugebauer 1955. A large part of them was written between the years 115 and 130 SE, computed dates go up to 303 SE (ibid. p. 329 no. 401).

[9] See Beaulieu, 1989; for further examples see Oelsner 1986: 153; Doty, 1977: 38–42.

– hundreds of private contracts, the latest one dated to the year 109/8 BC (139 AE = 203 SE).[10] It mentions both of the well-known Uruk sanctuaries of the Hellenistic period, the Rēš and the Irigal/Ešgal.

The last-mentioned tablet shows that the temple cults must have existed at the place at least to the end of the second century BC. A fragmentary astronomical diary, dated 100 BC, may also come from Uruk,[11] and the city itself is mentioned in some other astronomical diaries even in the first century BC.[12] Settlement within the former city wall is archaeologically proven at least up to the first half of the third century AD, although it seems that after the first decades of the first century BC cuneiform was no longer used at Uruk, from that time the cults of the local gods are no longer attested here, and they may have been dead.[13]

There are other places from which cuneiform texts of the later Achaemenid and the Hellenistic periods are known too. Without going into details it can be stated that cuneiform was still used in most of the important Babylonian cities like Dilbat (attested to the end of the 5th century), Ur (attested to the end of the 4th century BC), Kiš-Hursagkalama (attested to the first quarter of the 3rd century BC), as well as in the Hellenistic period in Larsa, Nippur, Cutha, Borsippa, Babylon.[14]

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[10] Kessler 1984, see also Boehmer 1984. For an overview of the material known at that time see Oelsner, 1986: 146–162. See also Weisberg 1991; Wallenfels 1994: 172–176; Wallenfels 1998. Further additions can be made there.

[11] Sachs & Hunger, 1988–96, no. −99C.

[12] The latest attestations in astronomical diaries are for the years 97, 88, 83 BC, see Oelsner 1989−1999: (1999) 329; Oelsner 2002a: 17.

[13] The sanctuaries (Rēš and Irigal) were destroyed by fire, but an exact date for this event cannot be given. Afterwards domestic installations were erected in the ruins. For a summary see Kose 1998: 415–418. His conclusions cannot be discussed here.

[14] In contrast to these places, at Sippar cuneiform tablets are attested only to Xerxes year 2 (Ebabbar archive), or year 6 (a single private contract, Joannès, 1982: no. 89). But Sippar is mentioned in diaries at the time of Alexander the Great and the end of the second century BC (Sachs and Hunger 1988–1996: no. −330 rev. 6'; −105A rev. 4'). According to van der Spek 1992: 240ff. the so-called Ker-Porter tablet (BM 68610, first published by R.K. Porter 1822: pl. 77g) refers to the Ebabbar of Sippar, not Larsa (for additional literature on BM 68610 see Oelsner 1986: 234f.; where the tablet had been written cannot be ascertained; according to Porter 1822: 421ff. it was found at Babylon). Regarding Nippur and Larsa see below n. 26 and n. 30 respectively.

From Borsippa, besides the tablets of Hellenistic date, special mention should be made of a group of literary tablets of various kinds dated to an Achaemenid king Artaxerxes (presumably the first one of this name, i.e. they were written in the fifth century BC).[15]

The most important site for late cuneiform tablets, and in this respect comparable to Uruk, is the city of Babylon. Here the old traditions were preserved even longer than in other places—presumably up until the end of the Parthian period, if not the beginning of the Sasanian one, i.e. to the first half of the third century AD.[16] Here there are also text types which are not attested in Uruk.

From Babylon too there are late-Babylonian copies of the "Manual of Exorcism" mentioned at the beginning of this paper,[17] showing that in the field of magical literature there was a common tradition in Southern Mesopotamia. It may be that they are to be dated as late as the Hellenistic-Parthian period.

There are other groups of cuneiform tablets from Babylon, corresponding to the Uruk texts of the fifth and fourth centuries. First may be mentioned a number of tablets written or owned by members of the Ēṭiru family (mostly unpublished). Some of them bear dates of an Artaxerxes, which makes them more or less contemporary with the libraries of the Šangû-Ninurta family in Uruk, with which I began this review, and the texts from Borsippa already mentioned.[18]

A further group of texts forms part of another private library, comparable to and contemporary with that of the Iqīšâ mentioned earlier, a member of the Ekur-zakir family in Uruk.[19] The dated texts in this group had been written in the later years of the reign of Alexander the Great, i.e. in the twenties of the fourth century BC, only some years earlier than the Iqīšâ tablets, which are dated to Philip Arrhidaios (323–316 BC). All this shows that at the beginning

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[15] Or the fourth century if referring to Artaxerxes II or III. For examples see Hunger 1968: nos. 124–133 (and p. 149 sub "Ḫuṣābi, Vf. d. Bēl-erība, V. d. Nabû-kuṣur-šu"). In other cuneiform tablets the colophons are broken or missing. Additional texts of this complex, mainly in the British Museum, remain unpublished, and in addition there are other groups of late Achaemenid tablets from this place.

[16] See Geller 1997; 1999, and the literature cited in n. 22. See also the discussion below.

[17] Rm 717+ and BM 55148+ (see Finkel 1988: 150), published in Geller 2000: 242–254.

[18] Finkel 1988, especially the list of texts pp. 153–155.

[19] Finkel 1991.

of the Hellenistic period Babylonian traditions were still alive—a fact which must be taken into consideration when evaluating the work of Berossos, a Babylonian priest writing in Greek.[20]

Besides administrative texts, contracts, letters, and above all astronomical texts from Babylon, there are also literary cuneiform tablets written in the Seleucid period, i.e. in the third and the first half of the second centuries BC, among them incantations.[21] A considerable part of the material, much of it stored in the British Museum, remains unpublished.

In the Parthian period Babylon was still a reasonably flourishing place.[22] Nevertheless during the first century BC the number of dated or datable cuneiform texts diminishes, as will be seen below. The fact that in Babylon cuneiform traditions (and presumably the temple cults connected with them) survived longer than at Uruk makes an essential difference between the two places. Nevertheless, the cultural situation in the two cities is comparable. In my eyes the continuation of the cuneiform tradition in general is a clear proof of a living Babylonian culture with functioning sanctuaries.

At both places the cuneiform texts cover nearly all fields of cuneiform literature in the widest sense. Whereas the character of the contracts and the administrative documents differs in some respects, a number of literary compositions of the same type is attested at both places. That means there is a continuous cuneiform tradition, in which the texts known from the first half of the first millennium BC are transmitted, with a few additions.

At present there are many more astronomical cuneiform texts from Babylon than from Uruk, and their content is more diversified.[23] In the historical parts of the recently published astronomical diaries,[24] besides Babylon, where most of the texts of this kind come from, a number of other Babylonian cities are also mentioned. Uruk is attested

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[20] Translation and study: Verbrugghe and Wickersham 1996: 13–91. See also the most recent study by De Breucker 2003.

[21] Cf. Oelsner 1986: 209–211.

[22] Hauser 1999. An analysis of the late Babylonian sources from the Arsacid period has been given in Oelsner 2002a. This study should be consulted also for the following statements.

[23] The fundamental classification of the late astronomical cuneiform texts given by Sachs 1947 is still valid. Text catalogue and copies of a considerable number of them: Sachs 1955. See also Hunger & Pingree 1999.

[24] Sachs and Hunger 1988–96 (3 vols.). Translation of the historical parts (with short commentary): Del Monte 1997. The series is continued in Hunger 2001.

there until the beginning of the first century BC.[25] The latest texts mentioning Nippur are from the years 142 and 138 BC (no. −141C l. 11; no. −137D rev. l. 24). In an even later text there is a mention for the year 73 BC of an official with the title *šandabakku* ([lú]GÚ.EN.NA), which is specific to Nippur. It is followed by the word "chief" ([lú]GAL), then the tablet is broken (no. −72 l. 10'). The passage can perhaps be restored as "chief of [Nippur]".[26] Sippar is still attested in the year 106 BC, even though cuneiform tablets from here are known only until the early years of king Xerxes, i.e. the first quarter of the fifth century.[27] Other places mentioned are Marad and Kār-Aššur, situated on the Tigris.[28] Seleucia on the Tigris frequently occurs in the texts,[29] but Larsa is not mentioned in the diaries even though it was settled in the Seleucid period and a contemporary cuneiform tablet written there is known.[30]

Borsippa is often attested, more than once in combination with Babylon and Cutha.[31] The latest mention in an astronomical diary of the people of Cutha together with the people of Borsippa occurs in an example for the year 78 BC (no. −77A l. 29'). Unfortunately the context is broken. As already stated there is a number of tablets of Hellenistic date from Borsippa and Cutha.[32]

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[25] For Uruk see above n. 12. For the following see also Oelsner 1989−1999: (1999) 328.

[26] Hellenistic cuneiform texts from Nippur are published by van der Spek 1992: 250−260. See also Oelsner 1986: 233f. For the archaeological remains of late Nippur see below n. 51.

[27] Regarding Sippar see also above n. 14. The passage Sachs and Hunger 1988−1996: no. −105 rev. l. 4' perhaps may be restored as: ". . . went [from Si]ppar to Babylon".

[28] Also known in the 8th and 7th century BC, see Brinkman 1968: 276 and nn. 1789f.; Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: 57f. sub O.43 (Babylonian tablet excavated at Kalhu, published by Dalley and Postgate 1984: 121f. no. 62). Kār-Assur in diaries: nos. −107A l. 12; −90 rev. l. 18; −87A rev. l. 16'; −77B l. 27'). The place should be located somewhere near the Diyala river. For Marad see ibidem no. −232 lower edge l. 2. The place is also mentioned in a contract which may be Hellenistic: CT 49, 169 (date broken; see also CT 51, 56—Darius I).

[29] A cuneiform tablet from here was excavated by the Italian expedition, published by Doty 1978, newly edited by Oelsner 1992: 345f. It may have been written at Cutha, see Oelsner 1992: 341f., 345f.

[30] OECT 9,26 (dated Adar 24, 86 SE = March 7, 225 BC; according to the hand-copy nothing is missing in the year number). Other Larsa texts are of the 4th century. For a summary of the archaeological results see Lecomte 1993: 17−39 (with additional literature); cf. Finkbeiner 1993: 281.

[31] The combination of these three cities occurs already in Neo-Assyrian times (9th and 8th century), see e.g. Brinkman 1968: 197, 212, 217, 351.

[32] For late texts from Borsippa see Oelsner 1986: 224−231; from Cutha see

Most often we hear of Babylon in the diaries, of course, and there are as already stated many texts from this place. Of the literary cuneiform texts from Babylon only two groups should be mentioned.

Firstly: a number of hymns and prayers became known at the end of the 19th century. Those acquired by the Berlin Museum had been published by George Reisner (Reisner, 1896). Other texts of the group, e.g. examples in the Metropolitan Museum of Arts, New York, are still unpublished, but the publication is scheduled for the near future.

What makes these texts interesting in our context is the fact that a considerable number of the tablets is dated. From these dates we can identify two groups: an older one is dated to the years 148 to 164 SE (= 164 to 148 BC), i.e. to the late Seleucid period; the other one is later and was written in the Arsacid period between 175 and 231 SE (corresponding to 111 to 167 AE), attesting some generations of scribes and owners of cuneiform tablets. The former texts were written and owned by members of different clans, the latter ones all originate from a Babylonian family of cultic singers by the name of Nanna-Ù.TU, which is also mentioned in some astronomical texts. As the tablets had been acquired on the Antiquities market, we do not know whether both come from one and the same find spot, or from different places in the city of Babylon. But there is no doubt that both groups were written for use in the cult of the deities.[33]

Secondly, there is a further text group of varied contents: besides literary and astronomical texts there are some legal documents as well. According to their colophons the tablets were owned by members of the Mušēzib family (*tuppi* . . . etc. "tablet of . . .") or had been written (*qāt* . . . "hand of . . .) by them within a longer period.[34] One can identify seven generations, to be dated from the third to the end of the second centuries BC. The documents are dated up to the years 185 and 193 SE, i.e. 127 and 119 BC. Some decades later another individual of this clan is attested in a copy of the so-called

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Oelsner 1986: 231f.; cf. also Edzard & Gallery 1980−1983: 385 (and p. 387 § 8: Hebrew and Arabic evidence). For Parthian remains at Borsippa cf. Anonymous 1999: 196f.

[33] See Reisner 1896: XIIIf.; references also at Hunger 1968: 187f. sub SBH. For persons of that family in colophons of astronomical texts, see Neugebauer 1955: 22f. colophons Zm and Zq. The evidence is summarized in Oelsner 2000a: 801 and nn. 13 and 14.

[34] The material has been collected in Oelsner 2000a: 802ff.

"Topography of Babylon" (series TIN.TIR.KI), dated to 251 SE (corresponding to 187 AE), i.e. 61/60 BC.[35]

As a considerable number of the cuneiform tablets in the D.T. (= Daily Telegraph) collection of the British Museum can be dated to that late period—of course part of that collection is earlier, e.g. of Neo-Assyrian date—it cannot be excluded that some of the undated tablets were written at approximately the same time, e.g. the "New year's ritual" tablets (Thureau-Dangin, 1921: 127 ss.; Linssen 2004: 215 ss.). If they were, then this would be another example of the cult of Esangila in Babylon being practised at the turn of the second and first centuries BC.

Another group of tablets which speaks in favor of active Babylonian temple cults at the beginning of the first century BC is the Rahimesu archive—called by the name of one of the persons involved (recently edited by van der Spek, 1998). It seems to be part of the administrative archives of the Gula temple of Babylon. The tablets were written within a short period in the years 218 and 219 SE, i.e. 94 and 93 BC, and thus are contemporary to the cultic songs mentioned earlier. They are also the latest examples of cuneiform tablets of legal or administrative character available to date.

From about 80 BC the number of dated or datable cuneiform tablets diminishes, but there are some examples of literary ones written in the first century BC. The latest one of which I know is dated to the year 35 BC (BM 45746).[36] If the bulk of the astronomical texts really are late copies, then the time within the last two decades of the second and the first two decades of the first centuries BC, i.e. between 120 and 80 BC, may have been a period of intense scribal activity. But some of these texts may have been copied even earlier or later on.[37] In any case a number of them must by their contents have been written later. As far as we can see at present, the tradition of some of the astronomical types comes to an end at about

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[35] George 1992: 71 sub a (n. 39). Another copy (BM 87224, unpublished duplicate, courtesy A.R. George) is dated 212 SE = 100 BC, see Oelsner 2002a: 27, n. 12 sub c.

[36] Unpublished, courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum, London. Cf. also CT 51, 93 (dated 22.12.242 SE = March 20, 69 BC), see Oelsner 2002a: 27 n. 12 sub g, and cf. above n. 35.

[37] For the astronomical tablets often a general statement "Arsacid copy" is given, and repeated in the literature, but for the moment it is very difficult to date the tablets palaeographically.

60 BC. By about the middle of the first century BC widespread use of the cuneiform on clay tablets is no longer attested—but cuneiform script did not stop altogether, as there are later examples of cuneiform script. The following should be mentioned:

First: apart from the scattered examples of literary texts written after 80 BC there is a number of astronomical texts to be dated to the later first century BC and at least one type of them—the so-called almanacs—runs through the first century BC into the first century AD (Sachs, 1976). The latest of these concerns the year 75 AD, and often is considered to be the latest cuneiform document of all.[38]

Second: to these astronomical texts can be added other examples preserved in the cuneiform script—the so-called "Graeco-Babyloniaca". These are fragments of clay tablets which have on the one side (to be taken as the obverse) an Akkadian or a bilingual Sumero-Akkadian text written in cuneiform, and on the other (the reverse) the same text passage transliterated into Greek letters. Recently they have been studied by Mark Geller (Geller, 1997; see Oelsner 2002a: 14–17). By means of Greek palaeography he dated these transliterations between the first century BC and the second or even the early third centuries AD. If this holds true—and I am convinced the tradition at least goes into the second century AD—that means this way of writing Sumerian and Akkadian was in use for a longer time than hitherto suggested. In detail Geller's results are as follows.

Of 18 fragments treated by Geller, 16 are clearly Akkadian or Sumerian-Akkadian. Eight of them had been written in the first century BC, and six in the first century AD. The remaining two he dates even later, namely to the first/second century AD (Geller, 1997, no. 14) or second/early third centuries AD (ibidem, no. 10; or first century AD?). The place of origin of two others remains doubtful (nos. 17–18), though one (no. 17) has been interpreted as a bilingual

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[38] For the other types in the field of non-mathematical astronomy (according to the classification by Sachs 1947) the latest dates are: diaries 61 BC (Sachs and Hunger 1988–1996); goal year texts: 24 BC or: 41 AD (with question mark, = Sachs 1955: XXVI no. 1305); normal star almanacs: 100 BC (Sachs 1955: XXII); cf. also the horoscopes, attested to 69 BC (Rochberg 1998: 136–140). There are some examples of the 1st century BC in the field of eclipse reports and planetary observations (Hunger 2001: nos. 23–31, 84), as well as mathematical astronomical texts. As the dates of the latter are computed it is difficult to say when the tablets were written. Hunger 2001: no. 103 may be dated to the Christian era (Oelsner 2003: 88).

Sumero-Akkadian incantation.[39] No. 18 has been given an Aramaic interpretation by Manfred Krebernik (Krebernik 2002). But it is not even proved that they come from Babylonia itself.[40] As their exact character cannot be determined they will be set aside.

The contents of these "Graeco-Babyloniaca" are interesting too. A number of them are elementary exercises, namely excerpts of the so-called syllabaries S^a and S^b, of the S^a vocabulary, the lexical series ḪAR.RA (or better UR$_5$.RA) = ḫubullu [tablet II, III] and the topographical composition TIN.TIR.KI "Babylon" (no. 16).[41] Geller dates the latter piece to the first century AD. As some tablets excerpt some lines of this composition on the one side, and lines of the lexical series ḪAR.RA = ḫubullu on the other,[42] this proves that the series TIN.TIR.KI was used as scribal exercise. Thus it can be concluded: the "Sitz im Leben" of these transliterations was in the school.

If we ask what was the purpose of the transliterations, I do not hesitate to say that it was for training how to write Sumerian and Akkadian on writing materials which were suited only for alphabetical scripts, but not for cuneiform, like leather, parchment, papyrus and—maybe—also potsherds, i.e. ostraka (for writing on waxed wooden boards both cuneiform and alphabetical scripts could be used). That there must also have existed longer transliterated texts, normally transmitted in cuneiform, which were written on "soft" writing material, follows in my eyes from the colophon of an omen text stating, "What follows is written on a leather scroll, a copy from Borsippa."[43] If one wanted to write cuneiform signs on such material it could only be done by drawing, and this would be a very complicated procedure. Transliterations into the Greek alphabetic

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[39] Maul 1991, interpretation rejected by Geller 1997: 84. Reproduction of the tablet also: Sherwin-White & Kuhrt 1993: pl. 10.

[40] A fragmentary clay tablet written in Greek and excavated at Susa (Cumont, 1928: 97 no. 7 and pl. VI 4; also reproduced by Sherwin-White & Kuhrt 1993: pl. 9), indicates that this kind of writing material was not exclusively used for Sumerian and Akkadian or even outside of Babylonia.

[41] The series was already mentioned above at n. 35f., because it is also attested in cuneiform copies dated to the first century BC.

[42] For examples of school tablets combining excerpts from ḪAR.RA = ḫubullu (and other compositions) and TIN.TIR.KI see George 1992: 495–500 (index of sources).

[43] BM 41548 = Hunger 1968: no. 481. For the text see Leichty 1970: 200f. See also Oelsner 2002a: 16 fn. 46. For the term arki-šu see also Hunger nos. 47, 182, 412, and glossary sub warkû; AHw 1469 sub warki 4c.

script make good sense. The existence of transliterations into the Aramaic script, also well suited for these writing materials, may be supposed too, even if there is no example preserved.

Two other texts (nos. 14, 15), dated to the first or first/second centuries AD, were identified as colophons—colophons of a literary type which is best known from a number of tablets which have been excavated in the city of Babylon in the temple of Nabû ša ḫarê (mentioned in a cuneiform astronomical diary as late as the year 78 BC: Sachs & Hunger 1988–1996, no. −77 rev. l. 16'). These texts were dedicated to the scribal god Nabû, presumably at a certain stage or at the end of the education.[44] If Geller's interpretation is correct, this is an additional hint of the existence of this temple at the time of the writing of these Greek transliterations.

Mention still has to be made of another kind of texts among the Graeco-Babyloniaca: those of the literary genre, which also includes examples with a magical content like incantations (nos. 10, 11). Here also belongs part of a Šamaš hymn (no. 12) and a fragment which may be of ritual character (no. 13). They may be dated to the first century BC, the first century AD or even the second/early third centuries AD. If this holds good—and it is an interesting point in the context of "officina magica"—they too prove that ancient Mesopotamian magic and incantations still affected life in that period. As recitations of Šamaš hymns are often part of incantation rituals, the fragment mentioned above can be seen in this context too.[45]

The writing of Akkadian and Sumerian texts makes sense only if they are of some importance to their users. Therefore the material which has been mentioned above shows that we must reckon with a survival of the Babylonian culture, and with it the traditional magical literature, as long as cuneiform texts were written. But this also leads to another conclusion: the use of such texts is related to the Babylonian temples and the practice of the corresponding cults; or *vice versa*: if there were such texts, the temples still existed!

It has been argued that the Babylonian temples did not survive beyond the middle of the third century AD. The year 256 was con-

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[44] Part of the excavated texts was published by Cavigneaux 1981. For some examples of unknown origin see Cavigneaux 1996 (with additional literature). Cf. also Cavigneaux 1999.

[45] Reiner 1995: 65f., 68, 79 (divination); 85f., 93f. (apotropaic rites); 135, 137, 141f. (rituals). Šamaš also occurs in combination with Ea. Regarding the "Graeco-Babyloniaca" see also the remarks in Oelsner 2002a: 14–17.

sidered as a date for the destruction (Geller, 1997: 63). I am not sure whether it is possible to give such an exact dating, but in my eyes the situation in the early Sasanian period would fit.[46] And it should be noted that the latest Babylonian remains are centred in the area of Babylon, Borsippa, and Cutha, whereas at Uruk they ended some time before.

I have limited myself to the material from Babylonia itself, and excluded the spread of Babylonian deities and ideas to surrounding regions like Susa, Dura-Europos or Palmyra, or references to Babylonian culture outside the cuneiform traditions.[47]

With the extinction of cuneiform writing there begins a gap in the written sources from Southern Mesopotamia itself, which is only partly filled later on by the Aramaic magical bowls and metal scrolls from that area, generally to be dated to the 6th and 7th centuries AD. They have been found at many sites inhabited at that time.[48] Recent research by Christa Müller-Kessler on the Mandaic metal scrolls and magical bowls has shown that there are texts, especially among the metal scrolls, which have preserved reminiscences of Babylonian ideas and deities going back to the second or third centuries AD.[49] If this holds true then the precursors of these texts and the latest cuneiform traditions would be contemporary. She states that Babylonian astronomical material and incantations had an afterlife in the Mandaean texts, and that the *Vorlagen* of a number of the incantations go back before the Sasanian period, i.e. into Parthian

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[46] For examples of Sasanian period buildings in former Babylonian cities (4th century AD) see Kose 1998: 71f., 411; for the use of Greek in inscriptions of the Sasanian kings see e.g. Huyse 1996: 72.

[47] Besides combining evidence for late remains of Babylonian culture outside the cuneiform tradition itself, some of the material showing the spread of Babylonian ideas is collected in Geller 1997. See also e.g. Dalley 1995.

[48] E.g. Babylon, Borsippa, Cutha, Kish, Sippar, Uruk (only scattered pieces), and above all Nippur, and also at minor places, some references in Oelsner 1986: 547 sub "Zauberschalen". As is well known, there are many examples from uncontrolled excavations, as well as unpublished examples from the places mentioned above, e.g. a collection of more than 60 inventory numbers (partly fragments) of the Hilprecht Collection of Near Eastern Antiquities of the Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena, coming from the Nippur excavations of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, in the years 1888–1900. They are being prepared for publication by Christa Müller-Kessler.

[49] See Müller-Kessler: 1998; 1999; 1999a. Among the many articles by the authoress in this field, Müller-Kessler 1999b and Müller-Kessler 2002 may be also mentioned.

times. She also has shown that some of the Babylonian deities sur-
vived in name, but had changed into demons in the Mandaean mag-
ical texts. They originate in the area of Babylon, Borsippa and Cutha,
which—and this is my addition—in the Seleucid period too were in
some way or other closely connected, as mentioned earlier.[50] And
this is also the region were the latest examples of cuneiform come
from. In the incantations Christa Müller-Kessler is dealing with,
traces of the deities of Kish, Uruk, or Nippur like Zababa, Anu or
Enlil are missing. This corresponds to the situation we see in the
cuneiform texts: at Kish texts disappear from our eyes already about
275 BC, at Uruk at the beginning of the first century BC, as we have
seen. More problematic is Nippur, which was an important site in
the Parthian period. The Babylonian-style Inanna temple was dated
by the excavators to the first century AD, leading them to the state-
ment that Nippur was a centre of Babylonian culture at that time.
But there are no longer any cuneiform texts. The latest known exam-
ples from here are dated to about the middle of the second century
BC, i.e. to the late Seleucid period.[51]

   We have to wait for the publication of the Mandaic metal scrolls
before final conclusions can be made. This also applies to the ques-
tion of whether the Mandaic faith could be a refugium for the last
"Babylonians".[52] In addition one must not forget that Manichaeism
started in the third century AD in Babylonia, in a cultural milieu
where Babylonian traditions still survived for a long time, as we now
see. There should be reflections of them in the teachings of Mani.[53]

   To sum up: we now can be sure that well into the Parthian period
Babylonian cults and culture were still alive in several places, fore-
most around the city of Babylon. The last traces disappear only with
the political changes brought by the Sasanian rulers. The question
whether this happened by force, or for other reasons, cannot be

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[50] See above n. 31.
[51] See above n. 26. For Parthian remains at Nippur (with earlier literature) see
e.g. Bergamini 1987: 205–209; McGuire Gibson 1992: 50–54; Ciuk 2000; summary
of the earlier state of excavations in Oelsner 1986: 100–109. For the date of the
Inanna temple see also Heinrich 1982: 303. 334f. He questions the date given by
the excavators and prefers a Seleucid one.
[52] An idea of Christa Müller-Kessler (e.g. in Müller-Kessler 1999a).
[53] Widengren 1946 is now hopelessly outdated, as nowadays Babylonian culture
is much better known. But as far as I can see, no comprehensive studies of the
topic have been published since then.

answered by the available sources. In any case, side by side with the "pagan" Babylonians in the second and third centuries AD there were other religions. Mandaeans and Manichaeans have already been mentioned. There was also the spread of Christianity, and many Jews lived in the country. In addition Iranian cults and beliefs must be taken into consideration. The latter may have been restricted to certain population groups, but Iranian deities are also mentioned in the Mandaean texts. Some information on Sasanian-period Babylonia can be gained from the literary traditions of the Christians in Syriac or Greek, as well as those of the Jews in the Talmud. But in all these sources nothing speaks in favour of a still living Babylonian culture and religion in that period, and only a few survivals of it can be seen. The situation had changed, and after cuneiform writing on clay tablets had ended, for some centuries there is a nearly complete lack, apart from the aforementioned magical texts, of written material from Babylonia itself (due to the fact that writing materials like leather, parchment, or papyrus are perishable and are not preserved). But should it be proved that the Mandaeans recruited some of their believers among the former Babylonian population and the heirs of the Sumerian culture, then we begin to understand what happened to that people after a famous history of some thousand years.[54]

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[54] Remarks on the end of Babylonian culture have been recently made e.g. by Joannès 2004: 253 s.

Abbreviations

A   Inventory number, Tablet Collection of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago
AE   Arsacid era
AHw   von Soden, W. 1956–81, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden
AO   Inventory number, Tablet Collection of the Louvre, Paris, Antiquités Orientales
AOAT   *Alter Orient und Altes Testament*, Butzon & Bercker/Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, Kevelaer and Neukirchen-Vluyn
AUWE   *Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka, Endberichte*, Philipp Zabern, Mainz
BaM   *Baghdader Mitteilungen*, Gebr. Mann, Berlin
BCSMS   *Bulletin of the Canadian Society of Mesopotamian Studies*, Quebec
CT   Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum, Trustees of the British Museum, London [= Kennedy 1968; Walker 1972]
JCS   *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, New Haven
HKL   Borger, R., 1967: *Handbuch der Keilschriftliteratur*, Vol. 1. de Gruyter, Berlin
KAR   Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts [= Ebeling 1919]
OLZ   *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*, Leipzig and Berlin
RA   *Revue d'Assyriologie*, Paris
SE   Seleucid era
TCL   Textes cunéiformes du Louvre
TU   Tablettes d'Uruk [= Thureau-Dangin 1922]
UVB   *Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft in Uruk-Warka*, Gebr. Mann, Berlin
ZA   *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie*, Leipzig and Berlin

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TABLETS AND MAGIC BOWLS

M.J. Geller*

Now that more Aramaic incantation bowls are being catalogued and
published, we are in a better position than ever before to assess par-
allels between Mesopotamian magic and the later Aramaic magic
bowls from the same region. It might be logical to assume that such
a lengthy literary tradition from Mesopotamia, which included many
types of incantations, would have survived at least through oral trans-
mission if not in written form; in other words, Sumerian and Akkadian
incantations from Mesopotamia could certainly have appeared in
Aramaic magic in a slightly later period and in the same locations.
The popular needs and uses for magic were the same, some of the
demons are identical, the appeals to higher divine authority against
demons is standard, and the use of oath formulae is comparable in
all periods of Mesopotamian magic, from earliest to latest periods.
Moreover, given that the overall structure of magic is a unified and
consistent one, we should expect the details of Sumerian and Akkadian
incantations to have been reproduced in late antiquity in the form
of Aramaic magic.

It is therefore somewhat surprising, and even disappointing, that
relatively few traces of Mespotamian magic can be identified in the
later magic bowls. Reasons for the break in the magical traditions
in Mesopotamia are easy to find. Sassanian rule probably ushered
in a period of religious intolerance reflected in the demise of the
Babylon temples.[1] The temples were the last bastions of Babylonian
culture, preserving the use of cuneiform script, and these temples
thrived throughout the Parthian period at centres like Babylon and
Assur, into the 3rd cent. AD, if the archaeological reports are to be
believed.[2] After the advent of Sassanian rule in the third century, a

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[1] G. Gnoli, *The Idea of Iran* (Rome, 1989), 140.
[2] W. Andrae, *Das wiedererstandene Assur* (München, 1977), 171. See M.J. Geller,
'The Last Wedge', *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 87 (1997), 43–95.

cultural gulf was created which meant that relatively little was trans-
mitted from Akkadian literature into Aramaic, Greek, or Arabic.

What is true, however, for the magic bowls does not necessarily
apply to the Babylonian Talmud, although the role of the Babylonian
Talmud in the transmission of older Babylonian culture remains to
be more fully researched.[3] There are other examples of Akkadian
loanwords in the Babylonian Talmud and even Akkadian expres-
sions adopted from Akkadian incantations into Talmud magic. This
situation might well reflect the fact that the Talmud records traditions
from an earlier period when Akkadian was still a living language.

The particularly Jewish character of the magic bowls—such as the
many citations of biblical verses and the invocations to Jewish angels
as well as to God himself may hark back to Palestine, in the same
way that the Mishnah and Tosephta (and other Palestinian texts)
were transmitted to Babylonia. The popularity of Jewish magic in
the Hellenistic world can be seen from the Greek magical papyri,
which not only invoked the archangels Michael and Gabriel, but fre-
quently call upon Iao Sabbaoth.[4] It may be plausible to consider
whether the Babylonian magic bowls drew some of their essential
sources from Jewish magic from Palestine, while adapting the incan-
tations to certain Babylonian forms of magic.[5]

On the surface, there is little common ground between the Sumerian-
Akkadian incantation texts and Aramaic magic bowls. The entire
system of magic in the cuneiform tradition has certain fundamental

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[3] At least one example of a medical handbook (b. Gittin 68b–70a) appears in
the Babylonian Talmud with Akkadian loanwords, and may indicate that much of
this technical medical information derived from an Akkadian original. For a dis-
cussion of this text, see G. Veltri, *Magie und Halakha* (Tübingen, 1997), 221–249;
M.J. Geller, 'An Akkadian Vademecum in the Babylonian Talmud', in *From Athens
to Jerusalem, Medicine in Hellenized Jewish Lore and in Early Christian Literature*, ed. S. Kottek,
M. Horstmanshoff, G. Baader, and G. Ferngren (Erasmus, Rotterdam, 2000), pp.
13–32, and M.J. Geller, *Akkadian Healing Therapies in the Babylonian Talmud*, Max-
Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte, Preprint 259 (2004).

[4] H.D. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago, 1986), xlvii, observ-
ing that the 'the god most often employed is Iao, the Jewish god'.

[5] The main argument against Palestinian influence on Aramaic magic bowls is
the fact that so few Greek loanwords appear in Babylonian Jewish Aramaic of the
bowls, in contrast to Palmyrene Aramaic of a slightly earlier period, in which Greek
loanwords proliferate, cf. D.R. Hillers and E. Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts* (Baltimore
and London, 1996). Although occasionally a Greek word might appear in a magic
bowl, it tends to be glossed, as in the word *pelagos*, 'sea', which is glossed by Aramaic
ym'. For a different view, see J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*
(Jerusalem, 1985), 110 and 190, and idem, *Magic Spells and Formulae* (Jerusalem,
1993), 20–22.

features which cannot be found in Aramaic magic. The most striking difference, for instance, is the lack of references in magic bowls to ghosts. In Mesopotamia two distinct types of malevolent agents were thought to affect humans adversely, namely demons and ghosts. The differences between these two groups could be described as 'professionals' as opposed to 'amateurs'. Demons themselves are usually neutral: good demons protect humans, while evil demons bring disease and misfortune; evil demons are the Enforcers, i.e. creatures sent by the gods specifically to punish humans. Ghosts, on the other hand, are strictly amateurs. They have some problem in the Netherworld, usually because they have died childless or unburied without leaving anyone to perform the necessary funerary offerings for them, so they are forced to return to the habitations of living men to seek a solution—which usually means that ghosts return to find a substitute for themselves in the Netherworld, or at least someone who will provide them with funerary offerings. Long lists of types of ghosts appear in cuneiform incantations, and so-called Totengeist incantations are specifically devoted to warding off ghosts.[6] It is puzzling that this distinction is not represented in the Aramaic incantation bowls.

Secondly, the teleology of Mesopotamian magic cannot be found in the magic bowls. The basis for Mesopotamian magic is that gods protect mankind from misfortune until men commit some act of transgression upsetting to the gods. The withdrawal of divine protection means that demons are free to attack their human victim. There are various ways to remedy the situation, apart from the usual method of reciting prayers to appease angry gods. Built into the system is some sympathy for the plight of man, that he may not always know what he has done wrong, or may have sinned without knowing it, or simply that human error is unavoidable, or even that the wrath of gods cannot always be fathomed or explained.[7] Two gods, namely Ea and his son Marduk, take special interest in human suffering, and Mesopotamian incantations often record a dialogue between Ea and his son Marduk in which Marduk brings the victim's suffering to Ea's attention, and asks for advice as to how to remedy the trouble.[8] Ea's advice is transmitted through the incantation in

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[6] A. Tsukimoto, *Untersuchungen zur Totenpflege (kispum) in alten Mesopotamien* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1985).

[7] W.G. Lambert, 'Dingir.šà.dib.ba Incantations', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 33 (1974), 267–322.

[8] A. Falkenstein, *Haupttypen der sumerischen Beschwörung* (Leipzig, 1968), 44ff.

the form of a magical ritual, which lets the patient know that the
magic and associated rituals come from the god Ea himself. This
dialogue is a recurrent motif in Mesopotamian incantations, but there
is no trace of it in the magic bowls.[9]

The reverse proposition is that some common themes in magic
have no counterpart in Mesopotamia, such as demonic possession,[10]
which is often graphically described in the Gospels, as in Luke 4.
34–36, in which Jesus addresses the demon to 'be quiet and come
out of him', or in Mark 9:25, in which Jesus, having met a lad
suffering from epilepsy, spoke directly to the demon, 'I order you to
go out from him and never return!' Similar dialogues are also known
from the Babylonian Talmud, such as the anecdote in which a rabbi
en route to Rome encounters a demon named Ben Tmalion, whom
he exorcised from his victim by simply ordering the demon to "go
out!" (Meilah 17b). Such examples of demonic possession are not
found in cuneiform sources, although demons can be characterised
as 'infection' or 'headache' which inhabit the victim's body, and as
such need to be removed.[11] Nevertheless, no Mesopotamian demons
speak dibbuk-like through the mouths of their victims, nor are dia-
logues recorded between the exorcist and a demon inhabiting his
victim's body.

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[9] E. Yamauchi, in *Mandaic Incantation Texts* (New Haven, 1967), 42–43 attempts
to find a parallel to the Marduk-Ea dialogue in his bowl no. 22, but the text bears
little resemblance to Sumerian-Akkadian incantations. The only point of compari-
son is that the Mandaic bowl consists of a dialogue between a magician who, speak-
ing in the first person, asks a divine being for help in healing the client. In the
Marduk-Ea dialogue, however, it is Marduk who approaches his father Ea to explain
what has happened to the victim, but Ea modestly responds with the claim that
he, Ea, knows no more about healing than Marduk; nevertheless he prescribes a
ritual to heal the patient.

This does not rule out other important parallels between Mandaic literature and
Akkadian omens, many of which have been collected by C. Müller-Kessler, 'Aramäische
Beschwörungen und astronomische Omina in nachbabylonischer Zeit: Das Fortleben
mesopotamischer Kultur im vorderen Orient', in *Babylon: Focus mesopotamischer Geschichte,
Wiege früher Gelehrsamkeit, Mythos in der Moderne*, ed. J. Renger (Saarbrucken, 1999),
427–443.

[10] This point was first made by M. Stol, *Epilepsy in Babylonia* (Groningen, 1993),
144f.

[11] Akkadian incantations occasionally demand the removal of demons from inside
the body of its victim, in language similar to demonic possession:

Reiss (den Dämon) 'Jegliches Böse', der in meinem Leibe ist, heraus; vernichte
den Feind, wirf den Asakku-Dämon zu Boden, beseitige die schädlichen
Machenschaften der Menschen! Aus meinem Leibe vertreibe den bösen Namtar-
Dämon, der darauf ausgeht, mir das Leben abzuschneiden, so wie das neue
Flusswasser das alte verdrängt! (translation W. Mayer, *Orientalia* 59 (1990), 473).

Certain features of magic were common to both early and late Mesopotamian incantations, but the fact that these parallels were exceptional underscores the point that relatively little was transmitted directly from tablets to bowls. There is, for instance, one good example in an incantation bowl from the British Museum[12] of stock phrases which may be based upon an Akkadian Vorlage. The opening lines begin,

<div dir="rtl">

אכבי יתבנא אנה נושנזדוכת בת אחת

לבבליתא דמינא באסופי יתבנא אנה נושנזדוכת בת אחת לבורספיתא

</div>

I, Gušnazdukt daughter of Aḥat, am sitting at my gate, like a Babylonian (fem.),
I, Gušnazdukt daughter of Aḥat, am sitting in my hut, like a Borsippean (fem.).[13]

The text then continues as follows, when the client Gušnazdukt addresses the evil demons:

<div dir="rtl">

דתיאכול מי דא<כ>ילנא ותיאישתי מי דשיתנא' ותישוף מי דשיפנא

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[12] BM 135563, now published by C. Müller-Kessler and T. Kwasman, 'A Unique Talmudic Aramaic Incantation Bowl', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 120 (2000), 159–165, although the bowl was previously known to the present writer, courtesy of Ms. Julia Gallager, who had originally transliterated it. The reference to Babylon and Borsippa is one indication of an earlier Babylonian origin for this incantation, since both cities housed late temple libraries of cuneiform tablets.

[13] Müller-Kessler and Kwasman, op. cit. 162, translate 'am sitting at my gate, resembling Bablita, . . . resembling Borsipita', and in their note (ibid.) explain that Bablita is a reference to Ištar and Borsipita is a reference to Nanaya, patron goddesses of each city. There is no evidence to support these identifications, nor is it ever attested in Akkadian or Aramaic magic that a 'client' in an incantation identifies himself or herself with a god or goddess. The reference here to 'resembling a Babylonian (woman)' or Borsippean (woman) is simply a reference to the *Sitz im Leben* for this incantation, and the expression 'Babylonian . . . Borsippean' is known from the Talmud. See b. Sanh. 109a, '"Babylon" and "Borsip" are evil omens for the Torah'. See also b. Ab. Zar. 11b:

> There are five appointed Temples of idol-worship: they are: The Temple of Bel in Babel, The Temple of Nebo in Borsi(p) [text Kursi(!)], Tar'ata which is in Mapug [i.e. Mabug = Hieropolis], Zerifa [= Serapis] which is in Askelon, and Ništra which is in Arabia.

The passage, ascribed to Rab, who died in Sura in 247 CE, indicates that these temples were still active in the Parthian period, and may have been some of the few sites remaining in Babylonia in which the ancient institutions survived. The reference, therefore, in our magic bowl refers to the fact that the client resembles a native Babylonian woman, although she has a Persian name.

that you will eat what I eat and you will drink what I drink and you
will anoint what I anoint (l. 7)

which is repeated in the converse way,

חיכי ניכו מי דאכלת מי ונישתי מ<>י< דשתי<ת< ונישוף מ<>י< דשיפת

let my palate eat what you eat and drink what you drink and (let me)
anoint what you anoint (l. 8)

Müller-Kessler and Kwasman have proposed Akkadian parallels for
this Aramaic bowl, mostly from Maqlû, but there are other texts
which fit this incantation much more aptly. One such is the Sumerian-
Akkadian bilingual incantation Udug-hul, which identifies the ghost
or demon as one with whom the victim ate, drank, got dressed, or
anointed himself. The text reads:[14]

158'   u₄-šú-uš ga-ba-da-an-g[u₇ hé-me-en]
          lu-u šá u₄-ma it-ti-šú l[u-kul at-ta]
159'   u₄-šú-uš ga-ba-da-an-n[ag hé-me-en]
          lu-u šá u₄-ma it-ti-šú l[u-uš-ti at-ta]
160'   u₄-šú-uš ga-ba-da-an-šéš [hé-me-en]
          lu-u šá u₄-ma it-ti-šú lu-[up]-pa-šiš a[t-ta]

158'   whether you are the 'let me eat with him daily'—demon,
159'   or whether you are the 'let me drink with him daily'—demon,
160'   [whether] you [are the] 'let me be anointed with him daily'—
          demon. . . .

The text repeats itself and then says,

174'   a-a-ab-ba a du₁₀ -ga a šeš-a a ᶦᵈidigna
          mê tam-tì me-e ṭa-bu-tú mê mar-ru-tú mê i-di-ig-lat
175'   a ᶦᵈburanun-na a pú-ta a íd-da ba-ra-an-šú-šú-dè
          mê pu-rat-tú mê bu-ri mê na-a-ri la te-le-me

174'   Neither sea water, nor sweet water, nor bitter water, nor Tigris
          water,
175'   nor Euphrates water, well water, nor river water may you
          taste!

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[14] Udug-hul Tablet IV (forthcoming). For the Sumerian of these lines cf. M.J.
Geller, *Forerunners to Udug-hul: Sumerian Exorcistic Incantations* (Stuttgart, 1985), 38f.,
ll. 328–333.

This last couplet corresponds to another line in our magic bowl, which reads:

נהר מרדי אנה דאניש לא שתי מיני

'I am the bitter river so that no one drinks from me' (l. 5), and conversely later, 'you are the bitter river so that no one drinks from you' (l. 10).

A further parallel presents itself within the Akkadian Diagnostic Handbook, which reads:

maškim sìg-*su* ta tag-*ma* ki-*šú* kéš *ina* ninda *ik-ka-lu* gu₇ *ina* a nag-*ú* nag, 'the "bailiff-demon" has seized (the patient), from the time that he attacked (the patient), he is bound to (the patient), and (the demon) eats from the bread that (the patient) eats and (the demon) drinks from the water that (the patient) drinks . . .' (N. Heeßel, *Babylonisch-assyrische Diagnostik* (Münster 2000), 196: 12–13 [see fn. 26]).

These texts, including the Aramaic bowl, describe the fact that the demon and patient share the same food, drink, and anointing oil. We cannot expect precise correspondence in wording between these incantations, but there is enough similarity to suggest either oral transmission of stock phrases, or an Aramaic translation of (originally) Akkadian incantations cited by the writer of this magic bowl.

This is not the only Akkadian parallel with the magic bowl BM 135563. The Aramaic bowl also includes a ritual, which is rare among magic bowl incantations but common in Akkadian magic.[15] The ritual section begins as follows:

'(As for) your (ritual) practitioners[16] and 'reciters':[17] Regarding your cake[18] of flour:

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[15] According to Müller-Kessler and Kwasman, op. cit., 163, the ritual gives instructions regarding the scattering of flour, which they relate to the use of Akk. *maṣhatu*-flour, although no such instruction is actually given in the text, as shown below.

[16] *ʾbdnykw*, lit. 'your doers' [note spelling with initial *aleph* rather than *ayin*], but the editors are correct in associating this term with Akk. *epēšu*, 'to make, do', which has a technical meaning of performing a ritual; see Müller-Kessler and Kwasman, op. cit. 163.

[17] Although translated, ibid., as 'scatterers', the word really means 'to throw' (Jastrow, *Dictionary* 1526), used here as a calque on Akk. *nadû*, 'to throw', but with a technical sense meaning to 'recite (an incantation)'.

[18] *ṭhy qmḥykw*, see Müller-Kessler and Kwasman, op. cit. 163, in which they note that *ṭhy* is a cake smeared with oil, although they translated the word otherwise in the text, 'the spreading of flour'.

go and drop it (*zylw wpylw lh*) into a basket of bread so that one eats
from it and let him put [lit. give] it (*wnyhbn*) in a pitcher of water so
that one drinks from it (the water) and let him put it in a flask of oil
so that he can anoint himself from it and let him put it' [and here
the sense abruptly stops].[19]

The ritual instruction is for oily-cakes of flour, the main offering
material, to be eaten and then added to water to be drunk and
added to oil to be rubbed on the body. Who is the subject here? A
relevant variant ritual is cited by Müller-Kessler and Kwasman from
another magic bowl, which has a similar ritual but also adds the
phrase, 'return on the way by which you came, and go into the
house from which you went out'; it is this last statement which sug-
gests that the 'client' of the incantation is the one performing the
ritual, and this reference also provides a crucial clue to the origins
of the Aramaic ritual.

There are several parallels to this Aramaic bowl ritual among
Akkadian Namburbî incantations, although it should be borne in
mind that Akkadian rituals arise out of a completely different con-
text. Namburbî rituals, which are alluded to elsewhere in the
Babylonian Talmud,[20] are intended to ward off the evil portended
by a bad omen. One of the main Namburbî rituals involves offerings
provided for the invoked gods to eat and drink, consisting mostly of
breads, mixed with *mirsu*, a flour dish mixed with date syrup and
butter.[21] There seems little doubt that *mirsu* is a good parallel to *ṭhy
qmḥykw*, the oily cakes of flour. According to Maul, the bread and
mirsu are offered in a basket, and the bread and *mirsu* are served
together.[22] Furthermore, although the usual drink in Mesopotamian
ritual is beer, water is served as an alternative beverage,[23] as in our
Aramaic text. The libation beverage in Namburbî texts was often a
mixture of beer, wine, oil, syrup, and butter, which may explain the
mixture of cakes and water as a libation in the Aramaic bowl. A
further ritual instruction in Namburbî rituals concerns rubbing the
body with oils, but in this case as a way of purifying and cleansing

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[19] BM 135563: 11.
[20] b. Shab. 110a, see Geller, Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte,
Preprint 259 (2004), 46–53.
[21] See S. Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung* (Mainz, 1994), 50ff.
[22] Ibid., 51f.
[23] Ibid., 54.

the client, in order to free him from the impurity or the evil portent, or as a prophylactic measure.[24] The other prophylactic measure frequently mentioned in Namburbî rituals is that the client must not return home to his own house along the same path that he took to the place where the ritual was performed,[25] which is exactly the opposite of the instruction given in a magic bowl, as mentioned above.

There are enough comparable details in common between the Aramaic bowls and Namburbî incantations to suggest that we are dealing with similar types of ritual instructions, or to state the case more precisely, the Aramaic ritual instructions seem to have derived from Namburbî rituals. The fact that the Aramaic rituals are different is understandable, since there is no longer the context of Babylonian gods to offer protection and receive libations, nor would such a context have necessarily been understood in later periods. Instead of gods receiving libations, it is the client himself or herself who has the ritual meal and anointing, in order to be protected from consuming food and drink contaminated by demons.[26] The client now eats the ritual meal as a means of reversing this process. The instruction in the second magic bowl telling the client to 'return by the way you came and go into the house from which you came out' (see Müller-Kessler and Kwasman, 163), is simply a corruption or misunderstanding of the same formula from Akkadian Namburbî-rituals. So although these ritual instructions, as expected, are both abbreviated and corrupted in the Aramaic magic bowls, enough remains for us to recognise the original form of such instructions from Akkadian, in the very few cases in magic bowls in which such rituals occur.

A second point of comparison between Sumero-Akkadian incantations and later Aramaic spells revolves around the use of the oath and oath formulae in both genres, since the force of the law was perceived in both systems to override the boundaries between natural and supernatural; demons, like humans, were subject to the rule

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[24] Ibid., 95f. and 107.
[25] Ibid., 107, the idea being that the evil cannot pursue or find the client again.
[26] See N. Heeßel, *Babylonisch-assyrische Diagnostik* (Münster, 2000), 258: 5, which offers the diagnosis that the patient has 'been fed magic' (*kiš-pi šu-kul*). See also M.-L. Thomsen, *Zauberdiagnose und Schwarze Magie in Mesopotamien* (Copenhagen, 1987), 31, citing a medical text in which the diagnosis is that the patient has 'eaten or drunk magic', i.e. behexed foodstuffs.

of law. Magic bowls adjure demons with the traditional formulae, including the 'amen' of official acquiesence at the end of the incantation, which is the same formulation which one finds in the Mishnah (M. Sheb. 4:3). Sumerian and Akkadian incantations also employed the adjuring of demons in the name of a host of gods and benevolent forces.[27] The most common formula for ending many such incantations is the command to the demons to 'be adjured by heaven and earth, be adjured by the great gods, so that you may depart'.[28] In both the Sumero-Akkadian and Aramaic systems of magic, the force of swearing by the names of gods was considered to be sufficiently powerful as a sanction, in that the demon's oath was binding in the same way that a legal oath among humans was binding. Nevertheless, the similarities are general and superficial, since no actual Akkadian (or Sumerian) oath formulae can be found in Aramaic incantations.

One legal formula which is best known from the Aramaic magic bowls is the form of the divorce writ, the *geṭ*, against the demon Lilith. As if well known, Lilith appears to her human victim in the guise of a woman he may recognise, and the result of their sexual union is responsible for propagating a new generation of demons. Since such activity casts Lilith in the role of an adulterous or promiscuous wife or concubine, the victim is entitled to rid himself of her attentions by the use of a writ of divorce. As a divorced wife who is accused of adultery, Lilith is no longer entitled to return to the house, which is another example of legal strictures being binding even against the demonic world. The bowls often state that Lilith is being divorced just as demons divorce their own wives, to emphasise the binding nature of a divorce writ between a human and demonic client.

Although no divorce writ is ever mentioned in magical texts from Mesopotamia, Marten Stol traces the magical *geṭ* in the incantation bowls back to a Mesopotamian incantation ritual in which a figurine representing the sick man is fashioned and its hem is cut; 'cutting of the hem' is a ritual act known from Mesopotamian divorce cases.[29]

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[27] See R. Borger, 'Die erste Teiltafel der zi-pàd Beschwörungen (ASKT 11)', *Lišān mithurti, Festschrift W. von Soden*, ed. M. Dietrich (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1969), 1–22.

[28] See A. Falkenstein, *Haupttypen*, 34.

[29] See Stol, *Epilepsy*, 100. See also the recent article by W. Farber, 'How to Marry a Disease: Epidemics, Contagion, and a Magic Ritual against the "Hand of a Ghost"', in *Magic and Rationality in Ancient Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman Medicine*, ed. H.F.J. Horstmanshoff and M. Stol (Leiden/Boston, 2004), 117–132. There is also an allusion to divorce used in Akkadian magic, edited by D. Schwemer, *Akkadische*

This symbolic allusion to divorce in Akkadian rituals[30] is not, however, reinforced by Akkadian or Sumerian incantations, which contain no references to writs of divorce being issued against demons or ghosts. Nevertheless, the appearance of the *geṭ* in Aramaic magic bowls may have a precedent in early cuneiform incantations, but in the form of marriage rather than divorce. It is our contention that the *geṭ* of the magic bowls ultimately derived from cuneiform incantations, as suggested by Stol, but that the route of transmission only becomes obvious when one reviews the treatment of female demons in Sumero-Akkadian incantations.

Lilith and Lamaštu

It has long been recognised that Lilith of Jewish tradition claims Babylonian ancestry.[31] The history of the Lilith demon is unusual in that this demon changed considerably during the course of its long history. Sumerian incantations from the early second millennium (Old Babylonian) refer to a male Sumerian líl-demon, a 'spirit' or 'wraith' (cf. Latin *spiritus*), who is not mentioned with a spouse.[32] The term 'Lilith' appears in an early second millennium (Old Babylonian) bilingual incantation against witchcraft, in which the demon is described in Sumerian as hul-gál (evil), but rendered in Akkadian as *lilītu*.[33] At the same time as the Sumerian Lil-demon appeared in Akkadian guise as *lilû*, a female counterpart appeared named *lilītu*, together with a third female demon, the *ardat lilî*, 'maiden of Lil', whose own origins are obscure. These three male and female demons often

appear in bilingual incantations with both their Sumerian and Akkadian
names, but the correspondences between the Sumerian and Akkadian
translations of these three demons are noticeably inconsistent:

Sumerian	Akkadian		
líl	// *lilû*	= Lil-demon	// Lilû-demon
ki-sikil-líl-lá	// *lilītu*	= Maiden of Lil	// Lilith (Female Lil)
ki-sikil-líl-lá-ud-da-kar-ra	// *ardat lilî*	= ???	// Maiden of Lilû

The second term ki-sikil-líl-la actually means, in Sumerian, 'maiden
of Lil', and hence should have corresponded to Akk. *ardat lilî*. Instead,
Sum. ki-sikil-líl-lá was translated by Akk. *lilītu*, which has no counter-
part in Sumerian.[34] The third correspondence, ki-sikil-líl-lá-ud-da-
kar-ra = *ardat lilî* has recently been resolved by a late bilingual
incantation, published by E. von Weiher.[35] Directed against the *ardat
lilî*, the Seleucid period incantation translates the term ki-sikil-ud-da-
kar-ra as *ar-da-at šá u₄-ma i-hi-ru-ši*, 'maiden, whom the storm demon
chose'.[36] The text offers an etiology of the name 'ki-sikil-ud-da-kar-
ra': a maiden (ki-sikil) who was chosen (kar) by the storm demon
(ud). The text continues that the maiden wanders off to the Lil-
demon in the steppe (lú-líl-lá-ke₄ edin-na mu-un-gen, *a-na li-li-i šá*
EDIN *i-šar-ra-bu*), presumably in order to escape from the Storm
demon.

The *ardat lilî* is thus described in the Uruk text as a maiden 'whom
the *lilû*-demon chose' (Sum. kar = Akk. *hiāru*). The Akkadian word
for 'choosing' in this context has sexual overtones, since it can refer
to 'betrothal' or 'espousal', but in any case sex is implied.[37] The

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[34] Only in later first millennium texts did the Sumerian logogram ^(mí)líl-lá appear
for *lilītu*, as a way of introducing consistency into these correspondences between
the Sumerian and Akkadian terminology.

[35] *Spätbabylonische Texte aus Uruk*, II, (Berlin, 1982), no. 6.

[36] Ibid., 41:1, although this reading has been re-interpreted by the present writer
in a review article of von Weiher's volume in *Archiv für Orientforschung* 35 (1988), 7.
A different interpretation of these lines has been offered by W. Farber in *Festschrift
Sjöberg* [see fn. 33], 149–153.

[37] An example of the use of the term in a prognostic omen (in this case not sex-
ual): "If a baby's inner (organs) are swollen and when offered a breast he cannot
drink (lit. eat), that baby has been 'espoused' (*hi-rat-su*) to a witch", see R. Labat,
Traite accadien de Diagnostics et Pronostics Médicaux (Paris, 1951), 218–219, and M.-L.
Thomsen, *Zauberdiagnose*, 54 [no. 131]). See also Borger, *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
21, (1967), 4: 30: ki-sikil-líl-lá igi ba-an-ši-kár, *šá ár-da-at li-li-i i-hi-ru-šú*, 'whom the

maiden, the so-called *ardat lilî*, or 'maiden of Lilû', runs away into the steppe to escape. Instead of being the demon herself, she is the victim, perhaps in danger of what we might today consider to be sexual abuse. The descriptions of the *ardat lilî* are pathetic: she never had a husband, nor lover, no young man who ever undid the clasp of her dress, nor did she ever have children; she is, in fact, the *virgo intacta* who never had normal sexual relations before she died.[38] She has no milk in her breasts, but only bitter liquid; she never celebrated festivals with other young girls, and was thrown out of the wedding house.

However, before being inclined to see the *ardat lilî* in too sympathetic a light, we also find other descriptions of the *ardat lilî* in the same incantation as a lady of ill repute; she always leans out of windows or stands in corners, and sits in recesses.[39] In other contexts the young maiden is described as a hierodule (*qadištu*)[40] or as Kilili,[41] the female demon who is characteristically described as leaning out of windows, like a shameless woman, who pushes the young woman out of the wedding house, and who has been associated both with Ištar[42]

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maiden of Lili chose', i.e. espoused. Another good example of this term appears in a text edited by W. Mayer, *Orientalia* 59 (1990), 472, in which the victim claims to be suffering from a hex and black magic, and that 'I am engaged (*hi-ra-ku*) to the Mimma Lemnu [lit. 'any evil'] demon'. See also Stol, *Epilepsy*, 100–101, citing cases in which the patient is 'married' to evil.

[38] See Geller, *Archiv für Orientforschung* 35 (1988), 14.

[39] Geller, ibid., 8, and von Weiher, SBTU II 41. The description of the *ardat lilî* goes back to much earlier Sumerian prototypes, such as the Old Babylonian Sumerian incantation describing the ki-sikil as a prostitute of Inanna; see S. Langdon, *Babylonian Liturgies* (Paris, 1913), no. 4.

[40] The *qadištu* is a 'sacred woman', and although *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* Q, 50, claims that she is not a prostitute, she may be compared to the Hebrew *qdšh*, see W. Fauth, 'Aphrodite Parakyptusa', *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur* (Mainz, 1966), 331–437, see especially 402f. The act of having sex with a priestess is referred to in the Diagnostic Handbook, which mentions that a man who returns from having sex with a priestess has inflamed testicles and a penis covered with sores, with difficulty urinating, indications of venereal disease, see R. Labat, *Traité accadien*, 136–138. Whether the *qadištu* performed this role or not, she appears to be a temple priestess without a normal family life. See now S.C. Budin, 'A Reconstruction of the Aphrodite-Ashtart Syncretism', *NUMEN* 51 (2004), 102f.

[41] *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* K, 357.

[42] W. Farber, *Beschwörungsrituale an Ištar und Dumuzi* (Wiesbaden, 1977), 65–66, in which Ištar is described as a Kilili-demon leaning out of the window:

Beschwörung: Du bist Kilīli, die sich durchs Fenster beugt, die Klügste der Klugen, die sich mit den Angelegenheiten der Menschen befasst, die auswählt [das Haus] für die Heirat (*nāsiqat bīt emūti*), die das Mädchen ihr (eigenes) Schlafgemach verlassen macht (translation Farber).

and Aphrodite *parakyptusa*.[43] The incantation literature seems uncon-
cerned about any logical contradictions here, since the 'maiden of
Lilû' can be described on one hand as a young maiden who has
never had sexual intercourse, or alternatively as a harlot or hierodule.
The common feature of all of these descriptions is that she has lacked
normal family life. Moroever, with a separate series of incantations
devoted specifically to her problems, it is the *ardat lilî* who plays the
dominant role in Mesopotamian incantations, almost completely over-
shadowing both the *lilû* and *lilītu* demons. It is therefore no coinci-
dence that Lilith features more prominently in later Jewish legend
and magic than her male counterpart (Aramaic *lîlî*), who is known
from the incantation bowls but only in a general listing of types of
demons.[44]

A remarkable ruse was employed against the *ardat lilî* succubus.
In Mesopotamian ritual style, a figurine of *ardat lilî* is fashioned with
an accompanying figurine of her male counterpart, a young man
who is also sexually naïve. Both of the statues are dressed up in
wedding garments, and a marriage ceremony is then performed
between the two statues, with the actual wording of a real wedding:
'Will you be my husband?' 'Will you be my wife?' Once married
to each other, the two ghosts would hopefully lose all interest in
their human victims, and the problem would be solved.[45]

The *ardat lilî*, then, is not a demon, but a ghost, who returns to
earth to seek the sexual fulfilment which she missed out on in life.
She stands in contrast to Lamaštu, who strangles young children at
childbirth or offers them milk from her poisonous breasts. The incan-
tation series known as Lamaštu[46] incorporates a myth about the
demon, namely that she was originally a heavenly goddess who came
from a good family, being the daughter of the chief god Anu (god
of heaven), with close contacts to other main gods such as Ea and

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[43] Cf. W. Fauth, 'Aphrodite Parakyptusa', 331–437.
[44] Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*, 76, claims that liliths 'enjoy the great-
est individual vogue in our demonology'.
[45] See S. Lackenbacher, *Revue d'Assyriologie* 65 (1971), 124, and Geller, *AfO* 35
(1988), 21.
[46] See F.A.M. Wiggermann, 'Lamaštu, Daughter of Anu, a Profile', apud M. Stol,
Birth in Babylonia and the Bible, its Mediterranean Setting (Groningen, 2000), 217–249,
replacing his previous discussion of the text in M. Stol, *Zwangerschap en Geboorte bij
de Babyloniërs en in de Bijbel* (Leiden, 1983), 100ff.

Enlil. For some unknown reason Lamaštu was thrown out of heaven, and she was banned from heaven by the mother goddess Aruru. As a result, Lamaštu took revenge on mankind by attacking newborn children, by convincing the mothers that she should act as wetnurse. As soon as mothers gave Lamaštu their babies, she poisoned them.[47]

There are two characteristics of Lamaštu in the incantations which are relevant to our discussion. First, Lamaštu is described, like *ardat lilî*, as a *qadištu*, a hierodule. As Frans Wiggermann has suggested, just as the *qadištu*-priestess as a single woman often took on the role of midwife, Lamaštu—ironically—also poses as a midwife in order to harm the newborn.[48] Second, the Lamaštu-ritual comprised an arranged marriage for the Lamaštu demon, although with a black dog, and amulets depict her with pigs and dogs sucking at her breasts.[49]

The relationship between the two dangerous female figures was already noted by ancient Babylonian scholars, since in one list of gods Lamaštu is described as 'Lilith of the night', an equation which is based upon a pun between the Akkadian term *lilītu* and West Semitic *lylh*, 'night',[50] the same pun which appears in Rabbinic literature on *lîlît* and *laylah*.[51] Both of these demonic females were *qadištu*-hierodules, both were kept at bay by marriage rituals, and both had parallels within Mesopotamian mythology.

Ardat lilî and Lamaštu have associations with the goddess Ištar. Similarities between Lamaštu and Ištar have already been documented by W. Fauth,[52] mostly based upon descriptions of Ištar as Kilili, the demon as *parakyptusa* who alluringly hangs out of windows,[53] and alternatively as ki-sikil or *ardatu*, 'maiden', but other parallels abound. In the Gilgamesh Epic, Gilgamesh refuses Ištar's offer

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[47] Cf. A. Falkenstein, *Literarische Keilschrift aus Uruk* (Hildesheim, 1979), 9ff., translation 11ff., and Wiggermann, 'Profile', 226.

[48] Wiggermann, 'Profile', 230f. and n. 92.

[49] Ibid., 238f.

[50] Ibid., 227f., also citing a late incantation from Uruk which actually labels Lamaštu as *ardat lilî*, although this is a learned text which simply associates these two spirits with each other.

[51] J. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic*, 36; cf. b. Sanh. 96a.

[52] 'Ištar als Löwengöttin und die löwenköpfige Lamaštu', *Welt des Orients* 12 (1981), 21–36.

[53] See C.E. Suter, 'Die Frau am Fenster in der orientalischen Elfenbein-Schnitzkunst des frühen I. Jahrtausends v. Chr.', *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden-Württemberg* 19 (1992), 7–28, and W. Fauth, 'Aphrodite Parakyptusa', 417.

of marriage (or sexual union) since all of her previous husbands and paramours had been killed, which contradicts her role as a goddess of love. This attribute of Ištar relates to her double nature in incantations both as benevolent goddess to whom one prays, and at the same time as one who brings on illness.

The myth of the Descent of Ištar, based upon the earlier Sumerian myth of Inanna's Journey to the Netherworld,[54] describes how Ištar was released from the Netherworld to find her lover Dumuzi adorned and cavorting with prostitutes (Ištar's Descent, ll. 127–130),[55] and the inference to be drawn from the text is that she chose Dumuzi as her substitute in the Netherworld. In this capacity, Ištar is acting in the role of ghost and succubus, since she emanates from the Netherworld, seeking out her former lover to send him to the Netherworld in her stead.

Another close parallel between mythology and incantations appears in the myth Nergal and Ereškigal, in which Nergal is enticed into the Netherworld and has sex with Ereškigal, but still tries to return to his former heavenly status and abode. Ereškigal, incensed at being abandoned, sends a message to the chief gods complaining that

> Since I was a young girl,
> I have not known the play of maidens,
> Nor have I known the frolic of little girls.[56]

After Ereškigal demanded that Nergal return as her husband,[57] he was forced to return as lord of the Netherworld. The parallel here

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[54] In the Sumerian myth, Inanna's behaviour towards her husband Dumuzi is in stark contrast to the cycle of Inanna-Dumuzi love songs in which she is wooed as bride and ideal spouse. In the myth, Inanna is trapped in the Netherworld after trying to overthrow the rule of her sister Ereškigal, queen of the Netherworld, and Inanna must be rescued by the god Enki. Since one cannot simply leave the Netherworld, the so-called 'Land-of-no-return', she must seek a substitute for herself, which she finds in her husband Dumuzi. According to B. Alster, the recently discovered ending lines of Inanna's Descent appear to show Inanna's concern for Dumuzi, another indication of Inanna's contradictory character. See B. Alster, 'Inanna Repenting: the conclusion of Inanna's Descent', *Acta Sumerologica* 18 (1996), 1–18. We would argue that Inanna's mourning is in recognition of her new status of childless widow (after Dumuzi is sent to the Netherworld), rather than concern for Dumuzi's welfare. These lines further reinforce Inanna's image as the model for *ardat lilî*, a childless and husbandless ghost returning from the Netherworld.

[55] See B. Foster, *Before the Muses* (Bethesda, 1993), I, 409.

[56] Ibid., 425.

[57] Ereškigal used the same threat which her sister Ištar had also used, namely to open the Netherworld and release the ghosts upon the living (ibid., 425: 9'–12', 25'–27').

is between Ereškigal and the description of *ardat lilî*, as one who never danced with other young girls at festivals, as described above. Like the maiden Lilith, Ereškigal never had normal sexual or family relationships, but like a succubus offered her charms in exchange for a dire fate, namely death and residence in the Netherworld.[58]

These myths allow us to trace the etiology and role of Lilith within Jewish magic, which is clearly Mesopotamian in origin. Lilith in Jewish sources is both succubus and baby-snatcher, the traditional role of Lamaštu demon in Babylonia. It is easy to see why. Without any distinctions between demons and ghosts in Jewish magic, the difference between the Mesopotamian *ardat lilî* or maiden ghost and Lamaštu, or demon baby-strangler, was blurred.[59] This is why Lilith in Midrash becomes Adam's first wife, whom he divorces because of her keen interest in dominant sex.[60] Motivated by jealousy and revenge, the demon Lilith attacks Eve's children in childbirth, which is, of course, the traditional threat of Lamaštu in Mesopotamian magic.[61] Lilith's role in later Jewish legend as the spurned and vengeful wife of Adam corresponds to the Lamaštu myth in Akkadian sources, in which Lamaštu herself was expelled from heaven and became a demon.

Lilith in Aramaic sources thus represents the conflation of two separate Mesopotamian traditions in a single figure, namely the ghost *ardat lilî* and the demon Lamaštu, which coalesced once the distinction between ghost and demon had been lost. These distinctions are not a feature of Palestinian Jewish magic, nor do they appear in Greek contexts, but represent Babylonian magic in Aramaic magic bowls.

As mentioned above, the prescribed ritual for both *ardat lilî* and *lamaštu* was a symbolic marriage, either in the form of a ceremony between a male and female figurine, or marriage to a dog. Of course, in Jewish magic no such solution could be possible. Figurines cannot

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[58] This myth may have been more widely known in late periods than has been recognised, since Ereškigal is the only Mesopotamian god to feature prominently in the later Greek Magical Papyri, see H.D. Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri*, xlvi and 334.

[59] The comparisons between Lamaštu and Lilith were even noted in the *lamaštu* incantations, cf. Falkenstein, *Literarische Keilschrift aus Uruk*, 9: 15 ('Mit Flügeln ist sie versehen, wie eine *lilītu*-Dämonen [fliegt sie]' (translation Falkenstein). See Wiggermann, 'Profile', 227ff.

[60] See Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic*, 36.

[61] Cf. W. Farber, *Schlaf, Kindchen, Schlaf* (Winona Lake, 1989), 102–103.

be fashioned, nor would such a wedding ceremony sit well within the framework of Jewish magic, which does not recognize the distinction between demons and ghosts (and hence the conflation between Lilith and Lamaštu). However, a divorce is simply the reverse of a wedding ceremony, and marrying off a ghost is not so very different from divorcing a demon. The ceremonial words of the marriage and divorce as well as the legal terminology of the documents are complementary, indicating how closely marriage and divorce were considered to be related.[62] The authority of law and custom is harnessed in magic to get the desired result, namely the exclusion of the succubus from the victim's house and bed.

However, any such parallels between Sumerian-Akkadian incantations and later magic bowls are deceptive. It is unlikely that we have a complete record of Aramaic magic in the Sassanian period at our disposal, since much could have been written on parchment or perishable materials. The emphasis which I have placed upon the etiology of Lilith and the use of the *geṭ* in magic bowls is based upon an almost exclusive correspondence between this one feature of Aramaic magic and earlier cuneiform sources. Although some other general parallels can also be demonstrated between tablets and bowls, many more differences abound. The practice of using bowls for writing incantations is unknown from earlier Mesopotamia, nor is this surprising considering the nature of cuneiform script and the writing materials involved.[63] The prophylactic nature of the bowls, or even the standard phrases of 'sealing' or 'binding' the house cannot be considered calques on Akkadian formulae. The use of biblical verses within incantations is also unprecedented. The many differences, therefore, between the tablets and bowls, whatever the corpus which survives in these forms, does not encourage us to conclude that the magic bowls preserved anything more than a scant few of the ancient magical traditions of Sumer and Akkad.

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[62] See S. Greengus, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89 (1969), 517.

[63] It is possible that the practice of writing on clay bowls from Mesopotamia arose out of a cultural milieu which was accustomed to writing on clay, even after the demise of cuneiform script.

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LUNAR AND SNAKE OMENS AMONG
THE ZOROASTRIANS

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In a contribution published in the Memorial Volume in honour of Prof. Ahmad Tafazzoli (Panaino 2004) I started to study a little group of *nērangs*, that is to say a sort of "incantations or charms" belonging to a class of magic texts which, although not very frequently attested, was very important in the life of common Zoroastrians. One of these *nērangs* was in Pahlavi and the other three in Pāzand; all these texts were already published by K.E. Kanga over one century ago (1900). The Pahlavi *nērang* (against evil mouths)[1] and the second of the Pāzand texts (against the evil eye) appeared to me very interesting, because they respectively contained: (the first) a reference to a specific day of the year and an invocation of the most important stars of the Zoroastrian tradition, which is normal in this religious context, and (the second) another invocation of both the stars and the planets, which is on the contrary very peculiar (see also Brunner, 1987: 867). The first invocation to the stars in the first *nērang* is in fact in complete agreement with the Zoroastrian tradition, in which the stars normally fight against the Yātus "Wizards, sorcerers" and the Pairikās "witches and bitches"; we may note that the Pairikās[2] in particular represented a sort of "shooting stars" in Avestan literature (Av. *stārō kərəmå*, lit. "star(red) worms"),[3] and with their chief, the Pairikā Dužyāiryā,[4] they were defeated by Tištrya, the god of the star Sirius. On the other hand the planets were considered demons in the Zoroastrian tradition, because they were associated with the "star(red) worms", which in the Avesta fight against

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[1] The first text contains the expression *bastōm zafar* "I have tied down the mouths", while the second one *hama cašmīca basta-hōm* "I have tied down all the (evil) eyes".

[2] Panaino, 1990: 92, 97–98, 106, 139; 19; 1995a. See also Christensen, 1941: 14–15, 31, 33.

[3] See Windfuhr, 1983. On this tradition see Panaino, 1990: 97; 1995a: 15–23, 1995b: 207–209.

[4] Panaino, 1990: 75–78, 139–141, 144; 1995a, 1, 19, 37–41; 1996a. See also Christensen, 1941: 15.

the fixed stars. The orderly movement of the fixed stars was actually considered absolutely positive, as a sort of witness of the cosmic order of Ahura Mazdā, while that of the shooting stars appeared to be absolutely negative and dangerous; thus the fixed stars were considered *afš.ciθra-*, "the stars which have the origin or the seed of the waters" [in Yt. XII, the stars are also called *uruuarō.ciθra-* "(stars) with nature/seed of plants" and *zəmas.ciθra-*, usually translated "(stars) with nature/seed of earth" also], while, according to the *Tištar Yašt*, i.e. the Avestan hymn to the star Sirius, the *stārō kərəmå* or *pairikās* were specifically sent by Aŋra Mainyu against the fixed stars in order to disrupt the cosmic order, bringing about also famine, drought and disorder. In the Sasanian period, with the diffusion of Graeco-Hellenistic astrology in Iran, the apparently irregular movement of the planets and in particular the fact that sometimes they are seen to retrogradate with respect to the so called *motus diurnus*, favoured a dualistic subdivision of the astral influences; the good influences were attributed to the stars and Zodiacal constellations, while the bad ones to the planets which took the place of the shooting stars; in fact they are represented as fighting against the cardinal stars of the Zoroastrian tradition in the World Horoscope contained in *Bundahišn*, chapter V (see MacKenzie, 1964). The continuity between the two traditions is shown by many facts, but it is evident in particular because the planets are sometimes called the *haft parīg*, i.e. the seven *pairikās*, which was the common epithet of the shooting stars in Avesta. On the other hand we have to note that the presence of astrological doctrines in Sasanian Iran became very significant, and many documents, some of them recently emerging from the Arabic translations[5] of Pahlavi astrological texts, show unorthodox trends.

For instance, in an Arabic text of Hermetic tradition,[6] a *Kitāb al-mawālīd* attributed to Zarādušt (and published by Paul Kunitzsch, 1993), where some Iranian (partly Zoroastrian) astral elements (see Panaino, 1996b) are attested, there is also a peculiar doctrine concerning a dualistic opposition between "positive" and "negative" stars (and not between positive stars and negative planets); this peculiar

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[5] Pingree, 1963; 1975; 1986; 1987c; 1989; Sezgin, 1978; 1979; Burnett & al-Hamdi, 1991–92.

[6] About Hermetic traditions in Arabic astrological literature with connection with Sasanian Iran see Kunitzsch, 1968, 1970, 1972, 1981; Pingree, 1989.

pattern should be attributed to an Iranian astrological tradition ultimately depending on an old astrological doctrine of Graeco-Babylonian origin.[7]

In addition we have to mention that astrology and magic did not follow the pattern of any strict orthodox tradition, and that the impact of these mantic forms of divination on Zoroastrianism is very interesting, because we see how difficult it was to reconcile an agelong tradition with a new doctrine, like e.g. astrology, which was not at all dualistic. Thus we see in the Zoroastrian text that the planets became negative by association with the shooting stars, while it was impossible to attribute the same role to the stars which were traditionally divine beings. On the other hand we note some contradictions; in fact the Pahlavi texts know the astrological doctrine of the positive and negative planets, while only Mercury is *anceps* or neutral; in addition the planets, which are demons, have mostly divine names, like Ohrmazd, which is Jupiter. It is clear that these names were originally given during the Achaemenid period according to the *interpraetatio mesopotamica*, as also happened in the Greek world. In fact, it is quite possible that the Iranians discovered the planets under the Mesopotamian influence, because we do not have any clear reference to these astral bodies in the Avestan texts. Only in a later epoch, when Greek astrology entered Iran and the planets were associated with the shooting stars, they became demons but maintained their original and traditional names.

Getting back to our *nērangs*, we may assume that it was possible that magic charms included stars and planets, simply because both were assumed to be astrologically responsible for good and bad events, and their relative position was considered to be very significant for the destiny of the person for which the *nērang* was recited. In addition, the reference of the Pāzand *nērangs* to the day of Spandarmad was very intriguing, because the reason for the choice of a very precise date such as "the day of Spandarmad, in the month of Spandarmad" was unclear.[8] The same tradition is attested, for instance, in another *nērang* for the killing of the *xrafstras*, i.e. the demoniac animals and beings of Ahreman (Ms. K27 f. 6b, lines 5–13; Hampel, 1974: 20–21;

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[7] For a direct reference to this unorthodox subdivision (from the point of view of the Zoroastrian theology) of the stars in Ohrmazdian and Ahremanian see the Persian *Riwāyats* of Framarz (Dhabhar, 1932: 431).

[8] This is the fifth day of the last month in the traditional Zoroastrian calendar.

Mirza, 1992: 79). However we can realise that this specific date is not arbitrary, but appears to be substantiated by an interesting tradition preserved by al-Bīrūnī in his *Tafhīm* (ed. and translation by Wright, 1934: 182, chapter 309) and in the *Chronology* (Sachau, 1879: 216–219), in chapter IX ("On the Festivals in the Months of the Persians", section "Isfandârmadh-Mâh"). In the first text from the *Tafhīm* we find in fact the following statement:

> On the fifth day of Isfandārmadh, the writing of papers to ward off the stings of scorpions takes place. The papers are attached to the doors of houses in the evening. This is not an original Persian custom, but has been introduced anew by the common people. It is also a day, *mardīgān*, on which wives have authority over their husbands and claim the satisfaction of their wishes and extravagant demands (*iqtirāḥāt*).

On the other hand, in the *Chronology* we find a longer description of this feast:

> "On the 5th, or Isfandârmadh-Rôz, there is a feast on account of the identity of the names of the month and the day. (. . .) This day is famous for the inscribing of pieces of papers. For on this day common people eat sun-raisins and the kernels and pomegranates unmoistened and not kneaded with water, but pulverized, believing that to be an antidote against the bite of the scorpions, and, besides, they write in the time between dawnrise and sunrise upon square pieces of paper the following charm: "*In the name of God the gracious, the merciful—Isfandârmadhmâh and Isfandârmadhrôz—I have bound (by the charm) the going and coming—below and above—except the cows—in the name of the Yazatas and in the name of Jam and Frêdûn—in the name of God—(I swear) by Adam and Eve, God alone is sufficient to me!*".[9]

Al-Bīrūnī concluded his long description by noting that:

> The Persians divide all the days of the year into preferable and lucky days and into unlucky and detested ones. Besides they have other days, bearing names which are common to them in every month, which are festival days for one class of the people to the exclusion of the other. Further, they have certain rules regarding the appearance of snakes on the different days of the month, which we unite in the following *Jadwal-al-ikhtiyârât* (Table of Selections).

Two interesting traditions are clearly referred to by al-Bīrūnī: the existence of hemerologies among the Persian Zoroastrians, which is

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[9] My italics.

not very peculiar, and that of omina based on the appearance of
snakes, which is very striking, because snakes and serpents are con-
sidered among the worst negative and devilish animals of Ahreman,
i.e. they are considered to be *xrafstras* animals. These demons were
also associated, in Pahlavi astral literature, with the planets, which
are demons too. In addition, the Avestan star Vanaṇt in its *Yašt*
(hymn 22)[10] is strictly associated to the function of destroying the
*xrafstra*s, which are the first Ahremanic beings to be mentioned in
this text.

In any case both traditions mentioned by al-Bīrūnī are confirmed
by Zoroastrian sources; we have in fact a Pahlavi text, attributed to
Adurbad son of Māraspand, which is attached (in the ms. MK edited
by Jamasp-Asana in his *Pahlavi Texts*, Bombay 1913, pp. 69–72) as
an appendix to the text of the "Counsels" of the same Adurbad
Māraspandān (*Handarz ī anōšag-ruwān Adurbād Māraspandān*). This text,
already published by Jamasp-Asana and translated by Zaehner (1956:
107–109), contains a real hemerology. We can read the translation
of some passages concerning the first thirteen days of the Zoroastrian
month:

(119)   *ohrmazd rōz may xwar ud huram bāš.* "On the day of Ohrmazd
           drink wine and make merry".
(120)   *wahman rōz wistarag ǰāmag ī nōg paymōz.* "On the day of Wahman
           put on new clothes".
(121)   *ardwahišt rōz ō mān ī ātaxšān šaw.* "On the day of Ardwahišt
           go to the Fire Temple".
(122)   *šahrēwar rōz šād bāš.* "On the day of Šahrēwar rejoice".
(123)   *spandarmad rōz warz ī zamīg kun.* "On the day of Spandarmad
           till your land".
(124)   *hordād rōz ǰōy kan.* "On the day of Hordād dig your irrigation
           channels".
(125)   *amurdād rōz dār ud draxt nišān.* "On the day of Amurdād plant
           shrubs and trees".

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[10] See my article dedicated to this text (Panaino, 1989). Wanand is expressly
mentioned against the *xrafstra*s in the *Škand Gumānīg Wizār*, IV, 34: *Wanand ī xrafstar-
zadār* (see de Menasce, 1945: 52–53). For other references in Pahlavi literature see
Brunner, 1987: 866. This tradition concerning Wanand is also preserved in the
Pāzand formulas attached to the *Wanand Yašt*, where Wanand is invoked together
with the clapping of hands against the *xrafstra*s. See Panaino, 1989: 28–30.

(126)   *day pad ādur rōz sar šōy ud mōy ud nāxun wirāy.* "On the day of
        Day-pad-Ādur wash your head and trim your hair and nails".

(127)   *ādur rōz pad rāh šaw ud nān ma paz čē wināh ī garān bawēd.* "On
        the day of Ādur (Fire) go for a walk and do not bake bread
        for it is a grievous sin".

(128)   *ābān rōz az āb pāhrēz kun ud āb ma āzār.* "On the day of Ābān
        (the Waters) abstain from water and do not vex the waters".

(129)   *xwar rōz kōdak ō dibīrestān kun tā dibīr ud frazānag bawēd.* "On
        the day of Xwar (the Sun) take your children to the grammar-
        school so that they may become literate and wise".

(130)   *māh rōz may xwar ud abāg dōstān wiyufsišn kun ud az māh ī xwadāy
        āyaft xwāh.* "On the day of Māh (the Moon) drink wine and
        hold converse with your friends and ask a boon from King
        Moon".

(131)   *tīr rōz kōdak ō tīr wistan ud nibard ud aswārīh hammōxtan frēst.*
        "On the day of Tīr (Sirius) send your children to learn archery
        and jousting and horsemanship". Etc.

Mostly this hemerology reflects Zoroastrian traditions; for instance
the link between the Amahraspand Hordād and the channels, Amurdād
and the plants, or Tīr and archery can be quite simply explained;
on the other hand, the pattern or the background—if you prefer—
is probably related to the Mesopotamian world, as I will try to show
in the following pages.

   In a table which al-Bīrūnī (trans. Sachau 1879: 218) inserted in
his *Chronology*, it is stated that the day Isfandârmadh of the month
Isfandârmadh was unlucky, and that the appearance of a snake on
this very day signified "reputation and praise". We know that the
use of deducing omens through ophiomancy[11] belongs to an age-old
tradition, probably going back to the Babylonian milieu,[12] as already
suggested by Gray (1918: 462–464). Babylonian omen-literature, as
we will see, contained in fact many references to the appearance of
snakes and scorpions, and in particular to the appearance of snakes
in certain months and days.[13]

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[11] That is to say, divination from snakes.
[12] On the ramification of the Babylonian omens see below. Cf. Reiner, 1995:
112–118 for the Mesopotamian hemerologies and menologies.
[13] Cf. Gray, 1918: 463–464; Bezold, 1889: 410; see now Hunger, 1992, tablets
n. 162, 237, 243, 269, 567.

This tradition is attested also in a New Persian text of the Zoro-astrians, the *Mār Nāmah* "The Book of the Snakes";[14] it is a short poetical text (32 couplets), embedded in the Persian *Riwāyats* of Dastūr Dārāb Hormazdyār, which date from the year 1679 (A.Y. 1048) according to the colophon, but which is surely older, because Hormazdyār was not the original composer. The importance of this text was underlined for the first time by Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, in a communication read in Bombay on the 30th November 1892, and published in the *Journal of the Anthropological Society* of Bombay, with the title "The Persian Mâr-Nâmeh or The Book for taking omens from snakes".[15] In the *Dastur Hoshang Memorial Volume*, Bombay 1918, in an article titled "Alleged Zoroastrian Ophiomancy and its possi-ble origin", Louis H. Gray rightly compared the *Mār Nāmah* with a parallel list of omens given by al-Bīrūnī in his *Chronology* (tr. Sachau, 1879: 218); as Gray wrote (1918: 454), "The principle of these two lists is the same, but the details occasionally diverge". I would like simply to quote some verse-lines from this *Mār Nāmah*:

> *agar mār bini be ruz-e hormazd*
> *ziyād-at šawad ḥormat o māl o mozd*
> "If you see a snake on the day Hormazd,
> your honour, property and income will increase"
> *agar ruz-e bahman bebini to mār*
> *gham-i saxt bini dar ān ruzgār.*
> If you see a snake on the day of Bahman, you will
> meet with great grief at the time.
> *agar mār bini be ordibehešt*
> *šawad xᵛiš-e to yek be suy-e behešt.*
> If you see a snake on the day of Ardibehešt
> a relative of yours will go to heaven.
> *be šahriwar andar bebini to mār*
> *yek-i ghāyeb-i rā begiri kanār*
> "If you see a snake on the day of Šahrevar, you will
> (soon) find an absent (friend) in your arms".
> Etc.

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[14] See Modi 1911a: 34–42; see also Modi's contributions on omina: 1911b; Gray, 1918: 454–455; Rosenberg, 1909, II: 49; West, 1904: 128 (par. 126; ms. Bu 26, fol. 64). Cf. Unvala, 1922, II: 164–192, 194; Dhabhar, 1932: 579. See also Shukla, 1977: 113–116. Darmesteter (1893: 153) quoted a formula to be recited when killing snakes, from the *Avestā-i mār zadan*.

[15] See Modi, 1911a.

As already noted by Modi, the text is surely Zoroastrian because of the calendar here used and of its inclusion in the Zoroastrian *Rewāyats*. The correspondences with the hemerology attested in the similar list of al-Bīrūnī show that in any case this tradition was already known in Iran about the end of the first millennium, and, as we will note, dates back to very early periods.

We know also another Persian Zoroastrian text attested in the Persian *Riwāyats* of Dārāb Hormazdyār (in the ms. BU 29 it immediately follows the *Mār Nāmah*); it is the *Borǰ Nāmah* "Book of the Zodiacal Signs",[16] which was published for the first time by Gray in *JAOS* 30, 1909–1910, in an article titled "The Parsī-Persian Burǰ-Nāmah, or Book of Omens from the Moon". This document also presents a sort of poetical structure in 26 couplets, and, as we will emphasise below, it shows a possible Babylonian background.[17] This document, in fact, stated what the appearance of the new moon portended in each sign of the zodiac, as already noted by West (in his article about the Pahlavi Literature in the *Grundriß der iranischen Philologie*; 1904: 129).

Thus we can quote some couplets from this text as an example:

be nām-e yazd-e mehrabān-e dādgar
"In the name of God, Compassionate, Creator"

ze loṭf-e xodāwand-e ruzirasān   beguyam ze har māh-e now mitawān

"By the grace of the Lord I shall tell, so far so far as possible, what the days bring according to each New Moon".

ze borǰ-e ḥamal čo bebini now māh   bekon andar ān dam be ātaš negāh

"When you see the New Moon from the sign of the Aries (Ḥamal), at that instant gaze into the fire". Etc.

I agree with Gray in noting that the tone of this text is more explicitly Zoroastrian than the *Mār Nāmah*; in fact here the *besmellāh* is typically Zoroastrian.[18] In the text some specific references to the recitation

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[16] We may define that *borǰ* here means "zodiacal constellation" (see Steingass, 1892: 170), and it seems to be a loan-word from the Arabic *burūǰ* "star, constellation, and zodiacal constellation" (see Lane, 1863, I: 180b; and in particular Nallino, 1944: 171–175).

[17] See Gray, 1909–10: 340–342 (text and translation); 1918: 464 (ms. Bu, fol. 64).

[18] In any case the use of *yazd* and not of *yazdān* should be noted.

of Avestan texts occur; I can list, e.g., the mention of the *Ašəm Vohū* to be performed three times) at the verse-line n. 20:

az borǰ-e ǰady čo bebini now mah / ašim ahu (sic) *bar xᵛān hamāngah se rah.*

"When you see the New Moon in Capricorn, straightway recite the *ašəm vohū* three times".[19] Or that of the *yaθā ahū vairiiō* at the verse-line n. 22:

čo dalv dar bini hami māh-e now / aytā ahū vayr mixᵛān to inhā šenow.

"When you see the New Moon in Aquarius, recite the *yaθā ahū vairiiō*; listen unto these (words)".[20]

I think of course that the reference to the appearance of the New Moon in the Zodiacal sign has to be understood as to its first visibility, because the real New Moon is invisible. About the present subject we may note that in the Mesopotamian tradition we have a number of references to the New Moon on the 1st day or on the 30th day of the month like, e.g., in the *Diaries* or in the series published by H. Hunger (1992) under the title of *Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings.*

We know also two New Persian *mathnawis* (attested in the Dolgoruki ms. of St. Petersburg, fol. 57v;[21] written in Kirmān about the beginning of the nineteenth century but with older material), published for the first time without translation and comments by Carl Salemann (1876: 497–498). The first *mathnawi* contained omens taken from seeing a snake on the seven week days, the second one omens taken at the time of the entering or of the appearance of the moon into the twelve zodiacal signs. These short texts were studied again by Gray (1918: 456–458); we can read just some parts of them:

didan-e mār az xub-o bad-e hafte

"The sight of a snake according to the good and bad of the week"

be šanbe mār bini ruz-e kaywān   rasad bar āsmān-at qaṣar-o eywān

"On the Sabbath, the day of Saturn (Kaywān) (if) you see a snake, there for you come to heaven a palace and a balcony".

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[19] We could also interpret the final part as "recite . . . with three different tonalities", because this is another value of N.P. *rah*, as Daniela Meneghini kindly remarks.

[20] I.e. "listen unto this prayer", the plural *inhā* being probably referred to the first three words of the *yaθā ahū vairiiō*.

[21] This text was published by Salemann (1879: 502–503); see Rosenberg, 1909, II: 49.

be yekšanbe ke ru(z-e) āftāb ast   *bebini mār rā mikoš t̲h̲avāb ast*

"On the day after the Sabbath, which is the day of the Sun, (if) you see a snake, kill him (because) it is a merit".

došanbe ruz ruz-e māh bāšad   *čo didi mār rā delxᵛāh bāšad*

"Two days after the Sabbath, it would be the day of the Moon, when you saw a snake, the desire of your heart should come to pass". Etc.

    The other *mat̲h̲nawi* runs as follows:

> *didan-e mār rā az xub-o bad-e dawāzdah borǰ ke māh bāšad*
> "The sight of a snake according to the good and bad of the
>   twelve (zodiacal) signs, (according to) what moon it is"

čo dar borǰ-e ḥamal bāšad mah ay dust   *bebini mār rā besyār niku-st*

"When the moon should be in the sign of Aries (Ḥamal), O friend, (if) you see a snake, much good it is".

be borǰ-e θowr niku minemāyad   *to rā az mār niru minemāyad*

"In the sign of Taurus (Thowr) good did it (i.e. the moon) show; for you from a snake strength did it show".

māh andar borǰ-e ǰowzā nik bāšad   *sar-aš dar zir-e sang o čub bāšad.*

"The moon in the sign of the Gemini (Jowzā), should be good, his (the snake's) head should be under stone and stock".

    And thus for the other 10 signs of the Zodiac.

    In this case it is only the presence in a Zoroastrian manuscript of these texts that allows us to connect them with the Zardoštis; in fact the names of the days of the week and those of most of the Zodiacal constellations are Muslim.[22]

    At the end of this contribution I desire to mention other modern brief Zoroastrian texts which show an extended continuity of the same tradition concerning ophiomancy, and which I discovered thanks to the help of Dr. Eric Phalippou (Paris). These documents are attested in a modern Persian Zoroastrian *Book of the Counsels* (*Pandnāme-ye Molla Fairuz ben Molla Kawus*, third ed. published by Ardashir Bonshāhi, Soltani Press, 1957—1327).[23]

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[22] See, e.g., for Ar. *ḥamal, at̲-t̲awr, al-ǰawzā'*, Kunitzsch, 1961: 21–22.
[23] Here we can find a "Seasonal and zodiacal variations in the interpretation of

Thus, we should underline that the above-quoted hemerology and the practice of ophiomancy are not the kinds of tradition we would expect in Zoroastrian culture. This is especially true for the subdivision into lucky and unlucky days, which contradicts the dedications of the thirty days to the highest Zoroastrian divinities.[24] Thus, if already in Sasanian times we can find evident contradictions between Zoroastrian theological patterns and purely astrological notions, while in later texts deriving from Middle Persian astrological works the existence of absolutely anti-orthodox doctrines is clearly attested (like the dualistic opposition between good and bad stars), how much more confusion and tolerance can we expect in later times? And if al-Bīrūnī was right in his statement in the *Tafhīm*, that the writing of charms on the day of Spandarmad was not originally Persian, but 'has been introduced anew from common people", we should admit that we cannot expect a strictly orthodox orientation in these magic charms as in the case of the ophiomancy and of the connected hemerologies.

After more than one century of Assyriological researches we are deeply conscious of the fact that terrestrial omens can be connected and combined with celestial omens, as happened for instance in the Babylonian tradition, where the omens of the series *Šumma ālu* (terrestrial omens) were associated with those of the series *Enūma Anu Enlil* (celestial omens), in particular on a monthly basis in the *Diaries*.[25] In particular in the series *Šumma ālu* already mentioned (according to the edition of Nötscher, 1929: 83–154) we find a number of snake-omens such as those of Tablet 21a [KAR 386 (Nötscher, 1929: 83)],

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the Snake and of the Moon" (p. 103). Another text concerns ophiomancy according to the seven days of the week (p. 104); another again, larger than the others (pp. 104–107), is a real hemerology connected with the appearance of the snakes day by day.

[24] Apart from the *Sīh Rōzags* and the *Stāyišn ī Sīh Rōzag*, we find many Pahlavi texts dedicated to the thirty days of the calendar, like the *Hakikat ī Rōzhā* "The Statement of the days", dedicated to suitable actions for each day of the month; the *Mādayān ī Sīh Rōz* "The Book about the Thirty days" (Jamasp-Asana, 1913: 128–129), which develops the contents of the previous book. See also the texts published by Nyberg, 1934: 48–53; Hampel 1974: 8–17; Mirza, 1992: 76–78. It is also worthwhile quoting the *Māh ī Frawardīn Rōz ī Hordād* "The Day Hordād of Month Frawardīn" (Jamasp-Asana, 1913: 102–108), which describes the most important events occurring on that day from the creation to the final resurrection. On these texts and other ones related to them, see West, 1904: 110–111. We may remember that in the Parthian amulet or *zāwar* already mentioned each hour was ruled by a Yakṣa. See again Henning, 1947: 47–57 (1977, 2: 281–291) with literature.

[25] Oppenheim, 1974: 207–210; Pingree, 1982: 614; Reiner, 1995: 83–96.

or those of Tablet 22b (CCT 38, 33–36), where a menology and an hemerology occur, both based on the appearance of snakes; this tablet presents sentences like: (Nötscher, 1929: 110–111):

> šumma ina ᵃʳᵃʰnisanni ûm 1kám ṣîru amêla îmur ina libbi šatti
> šîâti imât: uš-ta-pa-áš-šaq-ma ibaluṭ

"Wenn an 1. Nisan eine Schlange jemand anblickt, stirbt er im Laufe jenes Jahres, er wird Beschwerden haben, oder genesen" (AHW 842a).

As noted by Labat (1965: 124–125), we can find in the series *Šumma ālu* and *Iqqur îpuš* three different types of hypotheses (of which only the last one was probably more specific for the series *Iqqur îpuš*):

a) "if a snake sees a man"
b) "if a snake falls on" (or "before" or "behind") "a man"
c) "if a man sees a snake".

See e.g. § 58 (Labat, 1965: 124–127):

DIŠ *ina* ZAG.MUG *ina Nisanni* UD.1.KÁM *lu ina Aiari* UD.1.KÁM
lu ina kal u₄-*mi lu ina kal* GE₆ MUŠ NA IGI
NA.BI *ina* ŠÀ MU.BI (BA.)ÚŠ
DIŠ *ina Aiari* TA UD.1.KÁM EN UD.15.KÁM MUŠ NA IGI
NA.BI UD.ME(Š)-*šú* LÚGÚD.(DA)ME(Š) I.BÍ.ZA IGI*(-mar)*
DIŠ *ina Simâni* MUŠ *ana* IGI NA *lu ana* EGIR NA ŠUB-*ut ni-ziq-tú*
DIŠ *ina Du'uzi* (NA MUŠ) IGI *ni-ziq-tú*
DIŠ *ina Abi* MIN (/IGI)   KI.MIN
DIŠ *ina Ulûli* MIN (/IGI) KI.MIN

"Si, au début de l'année, en Nisan, le 1ᵉʳ jour, ou au mois d'Aiar, le 1ᵉʳ jour, au cours de toute la journée ou de toute la nuit, un serpent voit un homme: cet homme mourra dans le courant de cette année.
Si, au mois d'Aiar, du 1ᵉʳ au 15ᵉ jour, un serpent voit un homme: cet homme, ses jours seront courts; il éprouvera un dommage.
Si, au mois de Siwan, un serpent tombe devant ou derrière un homme: dommage.
Si, au mois de Du'uzu, (un homme) voit (un serpent): dommage.
Si, au mois d'Ab, *ditto* (*var.*: il voit): *ditto*.
Si, au mois d'Elul, *ditto* (*var.*: il voit): *ditto*." Etc.

It is clear that the pattern based on the third hypothesis (if a man sees a snake) was the same as that attested in the Zoroastrian hemerology of the *Mār Nāmah* (e.g.: *agar mār bini be ruz-e hormazd / ziyād-at*

šawad ḥormat o māl o mozd "If you see a snake on the day Hormazd, your honour, property and income will increase").

In the *Assyrian Reports to the Kings* we find (see now Hunger, 1992, tablets n. 162, 237, 243, 269, 567) a number of omens based on the appearance of a snake: e.g., tabl. 162 (p. 97) lists the auspicious days in Iyyar and states: "The 20th day: let him kill a snake" (. . .) he will reach the first rank; The 28th day: let him kill a snake." Tablet 243 contains only snake-omens: "If a snake is seen in a temple: the offerings of that temple will continue for a long time. If a snake keeps scaring (people) in a temple: angry gods will return to the country". Etc. (p. 132). In tablet 269 we read: "On the 20th day of Iyyar (II) let him kill a snake; he will receive the highest rank" (p. 149).

In addition I think it worthwhile noting that in some tablets of the series *Iqqur îpuš* we can also find references to a group of omens devised through the New Moon which appear to be denominated as *bi-bil-a-ni*, perhaps pl. of *biblu*, then "présages de la Nouvelle Lune".[26] A propos we can quote § 68 of the series *Iqur îpuš* (Labat, 1965: 140–143):

DIŠ *ina Nisanni Sin* UD.XXX.KÁM IGI(.LAL-*ir*) URI.KI MAR. TU.KIKÚ
DIŠ *ina Aiari* (MIN) MAR.TU.KI SU.BIR₄.KI *ina* GIŠ.TUKUL GAZ
DIŠ *ina Simâni* (MIN)   *taḫ-da* MAR.TU.KI *Aḫ-la-mu-(ú)* KÚ
DIŠ *ina Du'uzi* (MIN)   BIR-*aḫ* KUR.KUR

"Si, au mois de Nisan, la Lune est vue le 30ᵉ jour: Akkad dévorera Amurrû.
Si (c'est) au mois d'Aiar: Amurrû vaincra Subartu à la guerre.
Si (c'est) au mois de Siwan: l'Aḫlaméen dévorera l'Amorrhéen.
Si (c'est) au mois de Du'uzu; effondrement d'Akkad". Etc.

Here the pattern does not fit well with that of the *Borǰ Nāmah*, but it is in any case interesting to underline that the same importance is given to the vision of the New Moon as an ominous sign in both traditions. I think that the present comparison will appear closer in the light of a Christian Sogdian group of omens concerning calendrical (monthly) prognostics based on the appearance of natural phenomena such as thunder, earthquakes, rainbows and eclipses,

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[26] See Labat, 1965: 6–7.

which has been recently (re-)discovered by N. Sims-Williams (1995: 291–297). Sims-Williams has rightly compared these omen-texts with Mesopotamian models, in particular the meteorological sections of the texts published by Labat (1965: 140–197).

These important aspects of astral and terrestrial divination exerted a profound influence in many other traditions, for instance in Ancient India, as Pingree has clearly shown in numerous publications;[27] and they also survived (directly or throughout the intermediary of other cultures) in Iran and Central Asia, among the communities of the Sabeans, Mandeans, and Manichaeans; but we know that Buddhists too accepted many of these originally Mesopotamian mantic doctrines. Thus, the supposition advanced by Gray, who invoked comparison with a series of Akkadian texts with omens from snakes and scorpions in the Tablets of the Kouyunjik Collection of the British Museum,[28] and who assumed that the Zoroastrian ophiomancy was substantially derived from the Mesopotamian world, seems to me still to be seminal.

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[27] Pingree, 1982; 1987a; 1987b; 1992; 1993. See also for the Iranian area, Sims-Willians, 1995; 1996; Reck & Sundermann (1997).

[28] See in particular the tablet 79–7–8, no. 158 with an omen text on the appearance of snakes in certain months; or the tablet KK 2128, which begins almost throughout with "if a man sees a snake and . . . ".

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WHAT IS A MAGICAL TEXT?
METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS AIMED
AT REDEFINING EARLY JEWISH MAGIC*

Yuval Harari

It is customary to date the inauguration of the branch of study known today as Comparative Religion to the appearance of the first of Tylor's studies about 130 years ago.[1] Since then, the discussion concerning the definition of magic and its significance to religion has continued unabated. I shall not describe this debate in detail here as I have already discussed it elsewhere.[2] Yet, whilst I will need, firstly, to briefly clarify the development of the academic discussion on this issue, my primary purpose is to continue this discussion from where it stands today. I would like to propose a new methodological approach, supported by the work of Versnel from the beginning of the last decade,[3] that will help to unravel the entanglement surrounding the question of the relationship between magic and religion. More importantly, this approach will provide criteria with which to justify, methodologically, the selection of texts on which one may base a phenomenological characterization of ancient Jewish magic.

A. *The magic-religion question: a brief history of solutions*

The start of the debate concerning the distinction between magic and religion is to be found in the works of those scholars later

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[1] For a historic survey of research in the field of Comparative Religion see Sharpe 1975. Extensive discussion on the schools of thought within the Comparative Study of Religion in the nineteenth century can be found in Jordan 1986.

[2] See Harari 1998, p. 20ff. The comments offered here are just an allusion. Two further comprehensive surveys have been written on this subject in recent years: Cryer 1994, pp. 42–123; Tambiah 1995.

[3] Versnel 1991, and see further below.

described as "armchair anthropologists" when the Comparative Study of Religion was just beginning.[4] The more prominent among them were E.B. Tylor, H. Spencer, and J.G. Frazer. They collected information on various "primitive"[5] tribes from travelers, merchants and missionaries, from which they attempted to learn about the origins of humanity and its development, whilst occasionally also comparing this information to ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Greek writings.[6] One of the main foci in their research was the issue of the development of religion and its relationship to magic. All three made a clear phenomenological, and thereby also historical-evolutionary distinction between the phenomena. Tylor, who proposed seeing in animism (from *anima*, spirit, soul), that is, belief in the existence of incorporeal beings, a minimalist definition for religion, and, historically, the beginning of religion in humanity,[7] saw magic as its practical side—"the strategy of animism", as S. Reinach later called it.[8] He wished to anchor the origins of magic, which he connected to what he called "the occult sciences", to the confusion between the relationship of association of human thought and the relationship between objects in reality.[9] He ascribed both these phenomena, which

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[4] For views censuring "the scissors-and-paste method of compilation by the armchair scholars at home" and other methodological flaws that characterized anthropological research prior to the field study era, see, for instance, Evans-Pritchard 1965, p. 1ff. The citation is from p. 9.

[5] Being the term generally used at that time, I use 'primitive' to designate that which later on was termed as 'illiterate tribes' or 'indigenous tribes'. However, I would like to emphasize that I use these term to designate people or societies of a culture differing from Western culture, but must stress that I have no intention of implying by their use the slightest value-judgment with respect to their culture *vis-à-vis* Western culture.

[6] The assumption that primitive tribes represent an initial stage in humanity is problematic in that it assumes that whilst the "cultured" world underwent a process of development the culture of the primitives remained frozen and fossilized for thousands of years. This issue was already raised by Marett at the beginning of the twentieth century: Marett 1916, p. 247. See also Kuper's comprehensive discussion on this issue (Kuper 1988). For a summary of the criticism see pp. 1–14.

[7] The idea was first proposed by Tylor in an article entitled 'The Religion of Savages' that was published in 1866 (See Sharpe 1987, p. 107). It was developed in detail in his book: Tylor 1874, chs. 11–17. For the notion that animism is 'natural religion' and the origins of all human religion see *ibid.* vol. 1, pp. 424–427. For concise discussion on animism see D'Alviella 1925; Bolle 1987; Cryer 1994, pp. 43–47; Tambiah 1995, pp. 42–51.

[8] Reinach 1941, p. 23.

[9] Tylor 1874, vol. 1, pp. 115–116. Compare *idem* 1964, pp. 111, 114–115. For criticism of Tylor's view on magic in general, and the notion regarding confusion between human thinking and reality amongst primitives see Tambiah 1995, p. 51.

were related to each other and at the same time distinct from one another as systems of belief (religion) and praxis (magic), to an initial stage in the development of human culture.[10]

Spencer and Frazer made a sharper distinction between magic and religion and saw in them, each in accordance with his own approach, consecutive historic stages in the evolution of human thought and culture. In their view, religion is a later and more developed stage than magic. Spencer understood the development as the replacement of incidental rituals for controlling the spirits and their manipulation for ones needs, by a fixed system of ceremonies to appease them and gain a constant positive relationship with them. The transition from magic to religion was merely one further step, albeit an important one, on the path of the development of the rational thinking of the primitive man.[11] Religion was born from magic yet left it a place by its side.[12]

Frazer added to the two initial stages, magic and religion, a third stage which was science. In his view, this stage had characterized the secular thought of the western world since the very beginnings of the development of modern science. In magic he saw a form of man's elementary thinking accompanied by characteristic activity, whilst science was the climax of the process of humanity's conceptual development. Frazer explained the historic transition from one stage to another as being the result of human despair of the efficacy of the previous stage, whereas the difference between them he based on the perception of the character of the forces that govern the world. Both magic and science share their perception as impersonal laws. Yet, whereas science is based on the true laws, those by which the earth is trully governed (according to Frazer's and his contemporaries'

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[10] Tylor 1874, vol. 1, p. 112.

[11] For the notion of the origin of magic and religion in the perception of the primitive as a primeval meditator, whose pondering about the world (especially about the experiences of sleep and death), led him to the distinction between body and soul, which is at the basis of magic and religious belief, see Spencer 1897, vol. 1, chs. 9–17. On the development of magical practice and belief from the belief in the existance of incorporeal spirits see *ibid.*, ch. 18. For the early development of religion see ch. 19.

[12] According to Spencer, at a later stage of human development witch-doctors and priests would both be practicing at the same time. Both would attempt to enlist the supernatural forces for the good of man, only that the former would do so resolutely and as rivals whilst the latter would act as supportive and friendly (*ibid.* vol. 3, pp. 37–43). M. Weber suggested a close view, yet he focused on the social aspect. See below, n. 30.

belief, of course), magic sees reality as founded on sympathetic laws: the Law of Similarity and the Law of Contact.[13] According to Frazer, these are false laws, and therefore magic is not true science, but merely pseudo-science.[14] Religion, however is qualitatively different from these two, as it perceives the forces that affect reality and govern it as independent-willed personal beings.[15]

    W. Wundt and S. Freud also applied the evolutionary approach to the study of magic and religion, whilst using psychological methods in accordance with their field of work. Wundt, who was the first to study magic and religion with these methods, divided human development into four historical stages. Magic was the most ancient stage. The novelty in his approach was in the fact that he did not ascribe the source of the stage of magic to a rational analysis of existence by primitive man, as if, being a kind of a "primitive philosopher",[16] he molded his life through intellectual reflection on the surrounding world. Instead, he attributed this stage to the feelings and fears that reality had awakened in him. Magic, in his view, was first and foremost an emotional human response to a threatening reality. The meditational stage of magic only developed later. These two stages

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[13] The two laws establish a relationship of influence between objects. The first establishes that similar (and occasionally also opposite) objects influence one another. The second establishes that objects that were in contact with one another continue to influence each other even after their separation. Frazer, following Tylor but rather more systematically, wished to attribute the source of the laws to primitive confusion between human ways of association and relationship between objects in reality. See Frazer 1911, vol. 1, pp. 52ff. Regarding the cultural development 'magic-religion-science' see *ibid.*, and pp. 220–243. See further Harari, 1998, pp. 22–24.

[14] A few anthropologists have tried to switch the perception of magic as science with one that sees it as a kind of technology. See, for example, Benedict 1933, p. 40; *idem* 1938, pp. 637–639. Compare further Firth 1956, pp. 152–185; Norbeck 1961, p. 50. See, on the other hand, the reservations expressed by Hammond (Hammond 1970, p. 1354), and by Horton (Horton 1968, pp. 668ff.). Regarding the ancient world in general, and Jewish culture of that time in particular, I believe that magic may indeed be considered a kind of technology. That is in the sense that it offered a comprehensive system of practical applications of the perception of the way by which reality is run, for the purpose of improving the human condition.

[15] This depiction is inappropriate for distinguishing magic and religion in Judaism. At the core of Jewish magical practice is the belief that non-human personal and immensely powerful beings are involved in what goes on in the world. In practice this led to an attempt to rule them by adjurations. Therefore ancient Jewish magic was not founded on impersonal laws but on a belief in the ability of man to impose his will upon supernatural personal beings.

[16] On the use of this term within the context of the development of religious and magical ideas among the primitives, see, for example, Frazer 1911, vol. 1, p. 238. Compare Tylor 1874, vol. 1, pp. 426–427, and above, n. 11.

of magic are characterized by a human relationship with impersonal demons, that is, the forces surrounding a person and threatening him. At later stages of development, when man ceased to concentrate on what was exceptional and threatening, and started to contemplate that which was fixed and familiar in nature, the belief in heroes was born, and from there came the belief in gods which are personal supernatural fixed beings, which is religion.[17]

Freud, who opposed the non-analytical psychological research of Wundt, intended to apply his psychoanalytical approach to ethnographic research, and in particular, that relating to magic. He adopted the three-stage law of Frazer, yet presented it as a model that was parallel to that of the psychological development of the individual. At its centre he placed the issue of human relationship to the omnipotence of thoughts. This matter, believed Freud, provided the missing explanation in Frazer's approach, for the confusion between the connections of thought and the connections between objects in reality that produced the sympathetic laws.[18] According to Freud, the magical stage was characterized by an attempt to control reality by means of thought and will. At this stage, man ascribed to himself, as an infant, in accordance with the Freudian model of the psychological development of the individual, the omnipotence of thoughts, and assumed that he had the ability to influence reality with his very will. At the second, religious, stage, Freud claimed, man attributed this power to the gods (= the parents, according to the model of the development of the individual) and thought that they are capable of controlling reality at will. For himself he reserved the ability to evoke the gods in order to affect reality through them. The third, scientific, stage may be characterized by a relinquishing of the notion of the omnipotence of thoughts, and by man's view that the world is governed by impersonal laws of nature which he, or any other personal factor is unable to influence.[19]

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[17] Wundt 1916, pp. 75–94, 281–286. In accordance with his understanding of magic as primarily emotional activity, Wundt connected it to art, especially to the dance that the primitives had developed to a high level, in his view (p. 94ff.). Marett adopted a similar point of view. See below.

[18] Above, n. 13.

[19] See Freud 1957, esp. pp. 75–99. For a discussion on the contribution of Freud and his students to the study of magic see O'Keefe 1982, pp. 264–267.

The evolutionary approach and its point of departure, seeing in
magic and religion the result of rational reflection on reality, were
already severely criticized by Marett at the beginning of the twentieth
century. "My own view", he wrote in a famous phrase, "is that sav-
age religion is something not so much thought out as danced out".[20]
It is not essentially founded on the belief in spirits, but rather in
belief in Mana—a tremendous impersonal force existing in every-
thing[21]—and serving the psychological needs of man, whose origin is
in the difficulties and fears that reality awakens in him. Evolution was
not, according to Marett, from magic to religion, but within the one
comprehensive social symbolic "magico-religious" activity. Within it
one may discern two stages: "basic magic", and a more developed
magic. In basic magic man acts with regard to a symbol whilst imbued
with emotional intent regarding that which is symbolized, as a result
of emotional impulses and unaware of the symbolism in his actions;
and in a more developed magic man is aware of the symbolic char-
acter of his actions, yet because of their psychological importance
he develops a theoretical system to justify them.[22] This system helped
primitives to convince themselves of the efficacy of magic-religious
ritual, to the extent of their becoming influenced by it.[23]

Many scholars have adopted the approach of Marett,[24] yet they,
as their colleagues who had subscribed to Frazerian interpretation,
have continued to examine the phenomena with phenomenological
tools. Both schools of thought held that the correct way to under-
stand the essence of magic and religion was to examine the two phe-
nomena in their own right, to compare them and then to unravel
the question of their mutual relationship. Significant change in the

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[20] Marett 1979, p. xxxi. For Marett's view regarding magic, its relationship with
religion, and its connection to the belief in Mana, see his articles *ibid.*, pp. 1–28,
29–72, 99–121.

[21] Marett suggested exchanging (Tylor's) 'animism' with 'animatism', that is, the
belief in Mana, as the historic beginning of human "magico-religious" activity (Marett
1979 pp. 1–28). Evans-Pritchard strongly opposed the use of the concept and the
term 'Mana' in general theories of magic. This was in accord with his rejection of
generalizations based upon local findings that create theories concerning pan-human
magic (Evans-Pritchard 1965, pp. 32–35).

[22] Marett was the first to analyze magic in a positive light and to see it as an
important factor in the primitives' lives. This attitude, which opposed the negative
view of magic that characterized the intellectualist school of thought, was also to
be characteristic of the work of Malinowski. See below.

[23] Marett 1979, pp. 41–45. Compare: Marett 1916, p. 247.

[24] See references in Harari 1998, p. 29 and n. 66.

attitude of scholars to the question occurred only with the publication of *The Religion of the Semites* by W. Robertson Smith,[25] and the development of the sociological study of religion by Durkheim and his contemporary *L'Année Sociologique* school.[26] One may note, quite briefly, that the methodological starting point of the scholars of that school of thought was that religion, and thereby also magic, are social facts. In their view, religion is not the concern of the individual, such as the "intellectualist" view of Tylor, Spencer and Frazer,[27] but a community matter. Without society, they claimed, religion is inconceivable.[28] Following Robertson Smith they saw in religion a given cultural situation into which man is born, and which, after being studied and assimilated by him throughout his life within his community, becomes a basis for his world outlook, that is, for the reality in which he lives.[29] For this reason these scholars (of which the more prominent ones, concerning the debate over the magic-religion problem, were Robertson Smith, Durkheim, and Hubert and Mauss) related to the question of the distinction between the two not on the basis of an essential-phenomenological comparison between them, but rather by way of examining their place and function within the social fabric.[30]

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[25] Robertson Smith 1972.

[26] On the Durkheimian school of sociology see, for example: Besnard 1983. See further below, n. 28. I shall not discuss here the vast and interesting work by D.L. O'Keefe, *Stolen Lightening: The Sociological Theory of Magic* (O'Keefe 1982). The subtitle testifies to the enormous task the author took upon himself—to formulate a comprehensive social theory of magic. This is the broadest and, perhaps, most ambitious attempt to date in this direction. However, in comparison with other scholars who will be noted below, he has not made an impact on present studies of magic. For a survey of O'Keefe's study, see Harari 1998, pp. 35–40.

[27] For an explicit criticism of their views as 'intellectualist', see Evans-Pritchard 1933. In his book: *Theories of Primitive Religion*, these theories appear under the heading 'psychological' but there, too, they are treated in the same way (Evans-Pritchard 1965, p. 20ff., esp. p. 29).

[28] Much has been written about the development of the study of the sociology of religion. See, for example, O'Dea 1966; Robertson 1970. For further bibliography, see the references in Winston 1987, pp. 400–401. The interpretation of the British functionalist anthropologist, Radcliffe-Brown was particularly radical. He understood religion as a social institution whose sole purpose was to preserve the community and make its functioning more efficient. According to him, every society symbolises itself in its gods, and thereby makes itself an object for the continuing cult of its members. See Radcliffe-Brown 1965, pp. 117–132; *idem* 1958, pp. 108–129. For an extensive discussion on his views see Kuper 1983, pp. 51–88. Evans-Pritchard severely criticized such views. See Evans-Pritchard 1965, pp. 73–75.

[29] Robertson Smith 1972, pp. 21, 30.

[30] In addition to the views surveyed briefly here one should also mention

For Robertson Smith, the distinction between magic and religion lies in their respective objectives. Religion, as a social collective institution, serves the community and therefore has no place for personal needs. The aspirations of the individual cannot, therefore, be addressed within its framework. This is particularly significant when they do not fall in line with the good of society as a whole, and in particular, when they contradict it. Magic exists, claimed Robertson Smith, to satisfy these needs. It enables man to enlist the assistance of supernatural powers, unaroused by religion,[31] to satisfy his personal needs.[32]

Durkheim, who explicitly rejected the possibility of differentiating between magic and religion on a phenomenological basis, that is, on the basis of contents or structure,[33] held that the essential distinction between them is established by the notion of community and their place in relation to it.[34] In his view, religion is a system of beliefs that constitute the community, define its unity, and create the feeling of partnership among its members.[35] Magic, however, is by its very essence the concern of the individual. The fundamental difference between the occasions of their practice derives from this: the former is public, whilst the latter is always personal. Even if the magic belief is common to the entire membership of the community, it has no

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M. Weber. His approach contains evolutionary and social elements woven together. In his book, *The Sociology of Religion* (Weber 1965), he proposes seeing in religion a later historical stage than magic. Yet he doesn't identify the transition to this stage in the phenomenological components of the activity that characterizes magic or religion, but rather in the changes that relate to the social strata responsible for the contact with the supernatural forces. That is to say, the explanation is to be found in the growth of the status of the institutionalized priesthood that perform regular cultic activity in place of the sporadic acts done by sorcerers who happen to be around. Nevertheless, the development of the priesthood and its cult (= religion) did not entirely replace magical practice, so that the latter remained on the margins of society as an aid in the fulfilment of personal aspirations (*ibid.*, pp. 1, 26–31).

[31] Religion turned to those forces considered to be beneficial and friendly, placed at the pinnacle of the superhuman hierarchy. Magic was left with the lower forces, that were occasionally, in accordance with the anti-social nature of magic, negative. See Robertson Smith 1972, pp. 54–55, 90–91.

[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 263–264.

[33] Durkheim 1967, pp. 57–58.

[34] Durkheim did not relate to magic much in his work. His view may be understood through isolated comments on the subject. See especially: *ibid.*, pp. 57–63.

[35] For criticism of this view, and in effect, of that of Robertson Smith, too, based on contradictory anthropological evidence, see Horton 1960, pp. 203–204, 218–219.

part in its construction, and therefore, as opposed to religion, it remains the concern of individuals within it, and is practiced privately. Religion, however, by its very social function, serves the entire community and is always practiced in a public fashion. Durkheim, therefore, diverts the social distinction between individual and community, which Robertson Smith pointed to within the context of the purpose of practice, to the context of the occasions of practice, as a basis for the distinction between religion and magic. His view, which puts society before the individual, has, in principle, religion anticipating magic, and as opposed to the approach of the evolutionists, sees in the latter a secondary branch of religion founded upon religious principles.[36]

Mauss adopted the methodological tools of Durkheim but not his conclusions.[37] In his view magic was subject to stiff social rules and constitutes a defined and ordered social field no less than religion. Therefore, no entirely private matter, that is, disconnected from the institutionalized frameworks of social activity, can be considered as magic. This being the situation, and assuming that phenomenological criteria (that is, contents and types of activity) indeed cannot serve to distinguish between the phenomena, Mauss embarked upon a new way of research. Firstly, he attempted to point out those phenomena which are the most outstanding expressions of religion and magic,[38] and established that these are the sacrifice (religion) and "black magic", meaning harmful sorcery (magic). Mauss, then, examined these two phenomena in an attempt to establish the essential factor which distinguishes between them. His conclusion was that this factor is society's attitude to the action. Sacrifice is the ritual that society commands, whereas harmful sorcery is a forbidden ritual. It is from this, he claimed, that all the other social characteristics of the

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[36] Durkheim 1967, pp. 398–405, and n. 26.

[37] Mauss 1972. This book is a reworked translation of his joint work with H. Hubert written a few decades earlier under a more hesitant title: 'Esquisse d'Une Théorie Général de la Magie' (Hubert and Mauss 1902/3). This is the first, and almost the only attempt to formulate a general theory of magic. One should also mention the works by Malinowski and O'Keefe (Malinowski 1948, pp. 1–71; O'Keefe 1982).

[38] In doing so, in effect, Mauss investigated the common usage of the terms 'magic' and 'religion' in his own culture. Such a study is close in style to the notion of language and its connection to reality that the philosopher, Wittgenstein, developed in his later work. See more on this later.

ceremonies stem. "A magical rite", he claimed, "is *any rite which does not play a part in organized cults*—it is private, secret, mysterious and approaches the limit of a prohibited rite."[39] With this declaration Mauss removed the distinction between magic and religion from even the social aspects of the purpose of the action or the occasions of its practice, and basically confined it solely to society's attitude towards it.

This rather extreme stand was welcomed by many scholars, in particular by those in recent decades specializing in the study of magic of the Greco-Roman world. These scholars indeed exchanged the term 'society's attitude' for the phrase 'the religious-political official institution's attitude', but besides this, generally adopted the view that magic is the potent ritual activity carried out on the fringe of society, whilst religion is the potent ritual activity carried out by the institution. The threat embodied by non-institutional foci of power was that which made their ritual activity 'magic', that is, forbidden. Magic, according to this approach, is the very ritualized activity for the purpose of attaining power that is forbidden by society's religious-political institution. All this is unconnected to the question of whether its essence, objectives, or the occasions when it is practiced are different, similar, or even identical to the ritual activity carried out by the representatives of this institution.[40] This approach was connected to the assertion that had been voiced in a few studies from the mid-twentieth century, which summed up, to some extent, thirty years of anthropological study of magic and religion, according to which the very notion of a distinction between magic and religion is culture-dependent.

The studies of B. Malinowski, one of the pioneers who extricated anthropological research from the armchair, among the Trobriand islanders during the 1920s and 1930s, were the first field-studies of magic and its association with religion. Malinowski devoted much

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[39] Mauss 1972, p. 24 (italics in original).
[40] This idea is lucidly expressed regarding magic in antiquity by Morton Smith, as cited by Neusner: 'In antiquity, the practice of magic was a criminal offense and the term magician was a term of abuse . . . the magician was conceived of as a man who, by acquiring supernatural powers, had become a potential danger to the established authority and to the order that they sought to maintain' (Neusner 1969, p. 12). Gager expressed this idea in an extreme sense, in the same cultural-historic context. See below. For a survey of the research, analysis, and more bibliographical references on this subject, see Harari 1998, pp. 55–57.

attention to the magic of the tribes he studied and even made his findings the basis for a more comprehensive study of the place of magic, science and religion in the lives of primitives.[41] His position was based on long periods of time spent among the natives whom he studied, in other words, on direct observation that had a firm credible basis. In the interpretation of his findings he tended more towards the direction of Durkheim and Marett than to that of the 'intellectualist' school of thought.[42] Nevertheless, he was the only prominent anthropologist to adopt Frazer's tripartite division between magic, religion, and science, viewing magic and science on one hand, and religion on the other. Yet, above all, Malinowski's work was characterized by its functionalist approach.[43] He wished to explain the phenomena which he came across by pointing out their function and contribution to the life of the individual and society. This is also the foundation of his understanding of magic, religion and science. He claimed that they served one beside the other in the life of the primitives, with each one having its own unique function. As with Marett, he, too, firmly connected magic to the human emotional system. He thought that it was the product of social institutionalization of types of spontaneous body and tongue response to strong outbreaks of feeling or desire, to the extent of being a fixed and crystallized ceremonial social system.[44] Therefore, its source is not to be found in a false projection of the laws of association onto reality, which itself originates in a rational analysis of that which occurs in it, but rather in spontaneous pan-human reactions which accompany the day-to-day emotional coping of man with this reality. Appropriately, the institutionalized ceremony is not meant to

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[41] See Malinowski 1948, pp. 1–71. Evans-Pritchard came out early on against Malinowski's attempt to transform his specific findings of the Trobriandian islands into a general theory. See Evans-Pritchard 1967.

[42] This tendency is expressed, for example, in the following statement: 'Magic and religion are not merely a doctrine or philosophy, not merely an intellectual body of opinion, but a special mode of behavior, a pragmatic attitude built up of reason, feeling, and will alike. It is a mode of action as well as a system of belief, and a sociological phenomenon as well as a personal experience' (Malinowski 1948, p. 8).

[43] On the functionalist school of thought in the study of religion see: Robertson 1970, pp. 17–24, 38–42; Robertson 1987, and the bibliography cited there. It would appear that the most radical proponent of this school of thought is Radcliffe-Brown. See above, n. 28.

[44] Malinowski 1948, p. 62.

symbolize the desired sympathetic connections, but rather to exter-
nalize the emotions of the one who acts towards the object of his
action. From here stems the functional importance of magic: it fur-
nishes for man an alternative way of action in situations where his
regular efforts of coping have been unsuccessful. This way, it encour-
ages him to carry out his tasks and preserve his stability where, oth-
erwise, desperation, fear and hatred would have discouraged him.[45]
In other words, Malinowski's as well: "The function of magic is to
ritualize man's optimism".[46] Religion, on the other hand, has a
different function according to his approach. It is intended to pro-
duce social harmonization between all members of the tribe. Science,
the third of the vertices of the triangle, furnishes the tribe with the
knowledge on which day-to-day activity is based. Historically, each
of the three does not, therefore, exclude or replace the others, but
rather functions beside the others as one system in which each has
its own place in the preservation of society and of its individual
members.

Another milestone in the anthropological study of magic was the
research by E.E. Evans-Pritchard among the Azande in Sudan. The
main motivation for his study was Levi-Bruhl's outlook concerning
the category of thinking which characterized the primitives.[47] Evans-
Pritchard did not deal explicitly with the issue of the connection, or
difference between religion and magic, yet the methodology that he
endowed to anthropological research comprised fundamental princi-
ples in this subject, too. The most important principle in this context,
which he impressed upon this field of study by his own work, was
the distinction between witchcraft and sorcery, according to the con-
ceptual-cultural system of objects of the research themselves. In that,

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[45] *Ibid.*, p. 116. On the mixed responses of scholars to this hypothesis, see Harari
1998, p. 242, n. 134.
[46] Malinowski 1948, p. 70.
[47] Levy-Bruhl claimed that humanity is divided into peoples that belong to one
of two distinct thinking types: one based on a logical-scientific category, and the
other, on a "supernatural", "pre-logical", "magical-religious" category, characteristic
of primitive tribes. Evans-Prichard ascribed great importance to the question that
Levy-Bruhl had raised, and attempted to prove in his study that the primitive
thought, that of the Azande which he studied, is rational once we accept the fun-
damentals on which it is based (Evans-Pritchard 1970a; *idem* 1981, pp. 119–131;
idem 1965, pp. 78–99). Compare further, with regard to the attempt to undermine
Levy-Bruhl's theory, *idem* 1951, p. 98; *idem* 1937, pp. 540–541. For discussion on
the works of Levy-Bruhl, Evans-Pritchard, and Tambiah concerning the question
of magic and rationality, see Harari 1998, pp. 46–51.

he intended to rescue the debate on magic from the pre-perception of the researcher regarding its essence, based in his own culture, and founded it instead, both in fact and methodologically, on the study of those who are being examined. The outcome of this fundamental approach also expressed itself in Evans-Pritchard's studies on the issue of the relationship between magic and religion. He devoted a comprehensive study to witchcraft and sorcery among the Azande without connecting them to the discussion regarding their religion, and a profound study on the religion of the Nuer without relating to their magic. This testifies that he did not think it right to combine the two phenomena so long as the primitives, themselves, did not do so. This approach is stated explicitly in his discussion of the Nuer: "The rites these people [Nuer] perform might be classed, according to some definitions of the term, as magic, but in the Nuer classification, which is the one we have to follow if we are to delineate their thought and not our own, we are still concerned with a relationship between man and *kwoth*."[48] This method led Evans-Pritchard to oppose any attempts to formulate a general theory about magic. The question of its essence in general, and the kind of relationship it has with religion in particular, as with any other subject being examined by the anthropologist, is always dependent on cultural context. The imposition of the conceptual world of one culture upon another that is being examined, let alone that of the conceptual world of the researcher himself, on the culture being studied by him, is a methodological flaw, that causes the attempt to examine magic as a pan-human phenomenon to fail.[49]

Although Evans-Pritchard's approach greatly influenced the anthropological study of magic, it did not put an end to the debate regarding the character of magic and religion and the nature of the relationship between them. The two schools of thought, one that differentiates, and the other that unifies, remained in place, yet the balance of power seemed to shift in favour of the latter. Attempts at a phenomenological differentiation of magic continued to be published. The more interesting and useful ones amongst them were by

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[48] Evans-Pritchard 1956, p. 95. On the central role of the 'kwoth'—god, spirit—in the Nuer culture and religion see p. vi, and *passim*.

[49] The fundamentals of his approach already found expression early on in an article where he compared his findings with those of Malinowski. See Evans-Pritchard 1937, p. 23; *idem* 1967.

Goode and Titiev. Goode, relying on the work of Benedict, pro-
posed to examine every phenomenon as located on a *continuum* between
the extremes of 'magic' and 'religion'.[50] Titiev proposed a clear phe-
nomenological distinction between calendrical rituals, that is, fixed
and periodic in nature (religion) and sporadic rituals (magic).[51] However,
most anthropologists who professed an opinion in this matter inclined
towards unification. Werner, Firth, Horton, Herskovitz, Beattie, Hsu,
and many others came to the conclusion that no distinction between
magic and religion is possible within the societies that they examined.[52]
In the course of the second half of the last century this tendency
has acquired methodological clarification and summarization. Scholars
like R. Wax and M. Wax, and D. Hammond, asserted explicitly (as
Evans-Pritchard's words of warning a few decades earlier) that the
source of the distinction between magic and religion is not to be
found in the world of the tribes where these phenomena were being
examined, but rather in the cultural world of the researchers them-
selves, that is to say, the Christian European culture of the late nine-
teenth and early twentieth centuries.[53] This methodology gained its
most extreme expression in the well-known words of Peterson: "The
study of comparative religion would win on clearness, honesty and
stringency, the aspects of valuation would be avoided etc. if the term
'magic' were given a decent burial . . . in the scientific debate of the
nature of religion".[54]

   This approach was warmly adopted by experts in the magic of
the Hellenistic world. They believed, as Evans-Pritchard (if, indeed,
they were not relying directly on his work) that one must not search
for the meaning of 'magic' in preconceived perceptions of the
researcher, but in the culture that is being studied. The difference
was that these scholars did not have before them an active, live,
dynamic culture, but merely texts that reflected such a culture. On
the other hand, in these texts themselves the very term, *mageia*
appeared. Nothing could be better than such texts, in this sense, for

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[50] Goode 1949.
[51] Titiev 1960.
[52] For detailed references see Harari 1998, pp. 52–53 and notes.
[53] See Wax and Wax, 1961/2; *idem* 1963; Hammond 1970. Later on, works by
Rosengren (1976) and by Winkleman (1982) revealed this tendency, too. See also
below, note 72.
[54] Peterson 1957, p. 119.

studying the essence of magic in the culture in which these texts were created. Their research led them, almost as one,[55] although in varying degrees of radicalism, to the conclusion that in the context of Hellenistic culture, there is no point in phenomenological distinctions between magic and religion. The vast majority of them felt that one must understand the term magic in this culture in a clear social context. The anthropological approach regarding the relationship between magic and religion was mixed in the study of Hellenistic magic with the conclusions that had been expressed by Durkheim and his disciples. This led to the assertion mentioned above, that within Hellenistic culture magic was that activity whose objective was to attain supernatural power and was forbidden by the central religious and ruling institutions; whereas religion was such activity carried out by the representatives of these institutions, and is therefore permitted. A clear and radical expression of this view was offered by J.G. Gager with the following words: "It is our conviction that magic, as a definable and consistent category of human experience, simply does not exist . . . the beliefs and practices of 'the other' will always be dubbed as 'magic', 'superstition' and the like . . . the sentence, 'X is/was a magician!' tells us nothing about the beliefs and practices of X; the only solid information that can be derived from it concerns the *speaker's* attitude toward X and their relative social relationship—that X is viewed by the speaker as powerful, peripheral, and dangerous".[56] Through a clarification of the usage of the term 'magic' and similar terms in writings from the Greco-Roman period, the distinction between magic and religion was transferred from the phenomenological level to that of social relations between individuals or groups.[57] At this level, the scholars saw no reason to continue

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[55] The exception was Versnel, whose work will be discussed below.

[56] Gager 1992, pp. 24–25 (italics in original). Smith already anticipated this direction at the beginning of the twentieth century (Smith K.F. 1915, p. 269).

[57] A brilliant article by P. Brown (1970) had decisive influence in this direction. Brown wished to attribute the large number of witchcraft accusations in the fourth to sixth centuries CE to the social instability of that period. This instability, he claimed, led to fear of the 'other' and created an interest in witchcraft accusations. That is to say, Brown associated the witchcraft accusations with a climate of social hostility, and not with an actual rise in magical activity in that period. Many other scholars have since offered a similar view of the accusations of witchcraft in the Greco-Roman world. See Harari 1998, p. 254, notes 18–19. In the field of Jewish magic this theory has been applied by Fishbane (1993) and Bar-Ilan (1993) in their studies of witchcraft accusations against women.

using the term to indicate a distinctly defined phenomenon, and also taking into account anthropologists' claims that the term is "plagued" with modern-western-Christian perceptions, they tended to entirely abandon it.

Research into Jewish magic of the ancient era, that until twenty years ago had only been undertaken sporadically, suffered from a lack of systematic discussion concerning the nature of magic, and in particular, its relationship to religion. I do not intend to elaborate here on the history of the study of that field.[58] Nevertheless, it is possible to delineate in general terms a course of change in attitude towards magic and its relationship to religion, which runs parallel to that made in the field of comparative religion. Such a course begins with scholars like E. Urbach and S. Lieberman, for example, who accepted the notion of a phenomenological distinction between the phenomena. They distinguished between the purer religion of the rabbis, in which there was no place for magic, and the "superstition", including magic, of the "the masses" originating in "foreign influences" and absorbed by the ignorant strata of society. Next, one may note the social approaches of researchers such as J. Neusner, J. Goldin, S. Fishbane, and J. Seidel, who dealt with the subject in the context of struggles within Jewish society for the legitimization of power and knowledge. And finally, the works of recent years by R. Lesses and M.D. Swartz, who presented very sympathetically, and even applied (mainly Lesses) the common methodological outlook of the last generation of research into Hellenistic magic mentioned above.[59]

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[58] I have done this elsewhere (Harari 1998, pp. 58–110). The beginnings of that study were in the mid-nineteenth century, however, apart from the few publications by Gaster (1971, vol. 1, pp. 288–337, vol. 3, 69–103. First published in 1898), Blau (1898), Margalioth (1966), and Scholem (1980/81), devoted to the subject, this field of Jewish culture has not been favoured by scholars of Judaism. In the last two decades major change has been felt regarding the academic attitude to the subject, and a growing stream of publications is noticeable.

[59] For a detailed survey and references see Harari, *ibid.*

B. *Magic and religion: a case of family resemblance*

It is from this point that I wish to continue the discussion on the nature of magic and its relationship with religion in general, and within Judaism in particular. First, I shall attempt to understand the difficulty raised by the new notions with regard to the use of the term 'magic', and to the possibility of understanding the nature of the phenomenon which it indicates when used in the writings of the culture being studied. Next, I shall offer my own view regarding the use of the term, and my proposal for a new, quasi-ostensive[60] definition for the field of culture that it indicates (and in the process also for a definition of the relationship between magic and religion). Finally, as a part of the dialectic process of defining magic, I shall formulate textual rules for establishing any given Jewish text as a magical one.

Fritz Graf, one the most prominent scholars of Hellenistic magic in our times, concluded his discussion on the definition of magic as follows:[61]

> There are only two possible attitudes: either a modern definition of the term is created and the ancient and Frazerian are resolutely cast aside, or the term *magic* is used in the sense that the ancients gave it, avoiding not only the Frazerian notion, but also all the other etymological notions of the term.

Graf opted for the second choice. In his view 'magic' is a term originating in Hellenistic culture, which he studied, and thus it was best to examine its meaning and usage within this culture by examining

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[60] I mean by 'ostensive definition' a definition that explains the meaning of the given term by way of indicating a specific object, accompanied by a statement such as "this". For example, upon being required to define what 'red' is, we can (and it would seem that in this case, such would be the best method of definition) point to a variety of objects and say: "this colour". This form of definition is not, of course, free of problems. For example, how will the listener know which of the features within a given object we are referring to when we say "this"? And when we reduce the ambiguity by saying "this colour" we are required to define the word 'colour' and we are back to where we started from. And further, how are we to define the word "this"? Such questions have been discussed in surveys of linguistic philosophy during the twentieth century, and there is no need for us to elaborate on them here. When using the term 'quasi-ostensive' I wish to clarify the use I am making of the term 'ostensive definition' in the present context. This is because the pointing, at the end of the process offered here, is not at an object, but at a cultural phenomenon that is textually described.

[61] Graf 1997, p. 18.

its use in Hellenistic writings. I believe that this approach raises not inconsiderable difficulties.

As we come to examine magic as a phenomenon or while writing a book entitled *Magic in the Ancient World*, we address the audience of readers in a language we have in common. In Graf's case, that language is English (or, originally, French) reflecting a conceptual-cultural system, in which 'magic' indicates a certain range of phenomena. Even if the limits of this range are not clear, and even if it is difficult to point to the distinctions which lead us to refer to a specific phenomenon as 'religion' and to another as 'magic', it is impossible to ignore the common use of these terms in our culture. When Graf attempts, today, to describe the magic of the ancient world according to the meaning of 'magic' in the Hellenistic literature, he is doing two things: a) he assumes that the word 'magic' indicates in our language a specific phenomenon (which he wishes to investigate) and that his readers, like him, know, more or less, what this phenomenon is.[62] b) He assumes that there is a meaningful enough connection between the modern English use of 'magic' and the use of the variety of Greek and Roman terms, made by people in the ancient world to denote aspects of the phenomenon to which he is referring.[63] The first assumption is self-evidence. It is the basis for all language communication. The fact that the boundaries of the concept of magic and, consequently, the conditions of use of the term 'magic' are not sufficiently delineated, does not prevent us from holding meaningful discourse about magic. Indeed, as the discussion attains greater precision and refinement, greater demands are made upon us to better clarify the use of terminology. Yet, a lack of clarity is not a barrier to our ability to hold the discussion. The second assumption is more problematic. In my view, it creates a dangerous illusion of authenticity. Even without recalling the whole range of Greek and Roman terms with which it is possible to examine the essence of magic in the ancient world, the question arises: What is the criterion for selecting them? From where is the confidence that there is any connection, for example, between the English *magic* and the Greek *mageia*? It goes without saying that the basis for this

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[62] Versnel expressed a similar argument. See Versnel 1991, especially pp. 181, 185.
[63] On such terms see, for example, in Graf's own impressive attempt to delineate the development of the Greek concept of magic (Graf 1995). But compare Smith J.Z. 1995, p. 20.

connection is not merely to be found in the similarity of sound between the two words. Firstly, one may ask, is this similarity significant? Secondly, the scholars rely on the mention of other terms such as *pharmakeia, theurgia* and *goeteia* in Greek, or of *defixiones* and *magus* in Latin, for studying their areas of interest. The assumption that there is a common meaning or even any meaningful relationship between English 'magic' and Greek *mageia* stems from the necessary(!) precondition that is awareness of the conceptual capacity implicit in the use of 'magic'. It is only through an understanding the use of 'magic', 'sorcery', 'witchcraft' and alike in our own language, that one may establish whether specific Greek or Latin terms were used by the speakers of those languages to denote, more or less, the same phenomena which we denote by these terms. By identifying the common use of terms then and now, one can, then, refine the discussion and achieve a more precise understanding of the limits of the use of the term *mageia*, for example, in the ancient world, of the concept that it represented, and even of the phenomena it indicated. The belief that it is possible to use the term 'magic' "in the sense that the ancients gave it", as Graf proposed to do, is but an illusion. Not even the ancients themselves could do this. The term 'magic' did not exist in their vocabulary. Terms like magic, magie, Zauberwesen, or the Hebrew *kishuf* (כישוף) or *keshafim* (כשפים) and so on, serve members of our own culture and contain a specific semantic meaning given by our culture. Without knowing this specific semantic meaning, it is possible neither to use them in day-to-day speech, nor, for instance, to describe magic in the ancient world. Even if we need to clarify the conditions of use of such terms, that is, their meaning, and even if this is a particularly challenging task, still these are the tools available for any given human dialogue. The starting point for discussion regarding the definition of magic (and also religion) must necessarily be our usage of the terms which signify these phenomena. It will only be after we have resolved this matter that we will be able to continue examining the characteristics of the use that the ancients made of the terms signifying those phenomena which we have defined in our own language as magic.

The celebrated philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein proposed in his work, *Philosophical Investigations*,[64] a new and revolutionary theory of

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[64] Wittgenstein 1984.

meaning, one of the central foci of which was "the principle of family resemblance".[65] Wittgenstein pointed out the difficulty in defining precisely the limits of application of terms in a language, and the fact that we are capable of using them well in spite of their vague limits. The example he used to explain this linguistic principle has become a major guiding principle of 20th century philosophy of language:[66]

> [66] Consider for example the proceedings that we call "games". I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic-games, and so on. What is common to them all? Don't say: "there *must* be something common, or they would not all be called 'games' "—but *look and see* where there is anything common to all. For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look! Look, for example, at board-games, with their multifarious relationships. Now pass to card-games; here you find many correspondences with the first group, but many common features drop out, and others appear. When we pass next to ball-games, much that is common is retained, but much is lost . . . and we can go through the many, many other groups of games in the same way; can see how similarities crop up and disappear. And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and crisscrossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities in detail.

> [67] I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than "family resemblances"; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc., etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. And I shall say: 'games' form a family. And for instance the kinds of number form a family in the same way. Why do we call something a "number"? Well, perhaps because it has a—direct—relationship with several things that have hitherto been called number; and this can be said to give it an indirect relationship to other things we call the same name. And we extend our concept of number as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres.

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[65] *Ibid.*, § 66ff. There has been much discussion on the language theory proposed by Wittgenstein in these and the following sections of his book. See, for example, Hallett 1977, pp. 14–157; Baker and Hacker 1983, pp. 185–227; Rundel 1990, pp. 40–63. In the present framework I shall not go beyond presenting the principle of family resemblance by Wittgenstein himself.

[66] Wittgenstein 1984, §§ 66–67, (italics in original).

I believe that the principle of family resemblance is a particularly efficient tool for clarifying the relationship between the phenomena we call 'magic' or 'religion'.

In an exceptional article which appeared some years ago, relating to the above mentioned tendency of recent decades to deny any phenomenological distinction between magic and religion in general, and within the Greco-Roman world in particular, H.S. Versnel suggested leaving aside the "decent burial" of the term 'magic'[67] and, instead, characterizing the field of magic ritual according to a series of phenomenological criteria.[68] The point of departure for his research was his recognition of the necessity of using the term 'magic' for scientific study of the phenomenon of magic. This requirement, he asserted, implies the inability to ignore the conceptual capacity connected to the use of the term within the culture of the researcher and his language. Since it is impossible to completely avoid using it, Versnel felt one is better off trying to define the term even at the cost of a certain vagueness. Following Alston's definition of religion,[69] he proposed using the principle of family resemblance to characterize the range of phenomena that we refer to by the term 'magic'. In his view, the phenomenon of magic, as it is generally perceived by the "common sense" in our culture, based on collection of several features. These include instrumentality, manipulativity, mechanicalness, non-personality, coercion, concrete and generally individual goals, and so on. Drawing on the family resemblance principle, when enough of these features are present in a given phenomenon it is magic.[70]

Adopting the principle of family resemblance with regard to the range of phenomena denoted by the term 'magic', is to be welcomed. I believe that there is no better way to define the field of application of such terms. Nevertheless, such definition raises clear difficulties (which, indeed, characterize Wittgenstein's later theory of language in general): Is there really "common-sense" agreement regarding the phenomenological characteristics whose presence may establish the magic nature of any given phenomenon? Whose "common-sense"

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[67] See above, near note 54.
[68] Versnel 1991.
[69] Alston 1967. Alton's definition is based on the principle of family resemblance.
[70] Versnel 1991, p. 186.

are we referring to? Is it the average speaker of a language or the scholar? Even more serious than this is the question of who will decide whether these characteristics are found in any given phenomenon? What will be the basis of his decision? Are not the concepts of manipulativity, coercion, mechanicalness vague in themselves? Finally, can these characteristics really help distinguish between religion and magic? Of these questions, Versnel only related to the last one, which was at the centre of his study, yet did so with reservations regarding the importance generally granted to it:[71]

> The question whether distinctions should be drawn between magic *and* religion or magic and other features *within* religion is . . . of minor importance. What is important is to make a distinction between magic and non-magic.

I believe that this methodological standpoint is a good point of departure for clarifying the issue of the definition of magic and its relationship to religion. My view also stems from a similar viewpoint, but I wish to expand upon, and improve it to remove some of the difficulties it raises.

  The very investigation of the connection between magic and religion assumes two separate phenomena, or, perhaps, two separate concepts, warranting two separate terms in a language. Whatever the reason might be for the existence of the two terms in our culture, their existence alongside one another is a fact. Obviously, this fact cannot serve as the final conclusion in the discussion on magic and its relationship to religion, but it seems to me that not merely ignoring it but even the attempts to circumvent it, are not helpful in clarifying the issue. Scientifically speaking, disregarding it is disastrous. It drags into the research one or both of the following: a) distinctions originating in internal-religious (Christian or Jewish) perceptions with relation to the ideal nature of the religion, in comparison to which is set the nature and place of magic;[72] b) Elitist intellectual perceptions with regard to the ideal science, to which is compared and set the nature and place of magic.[73] These approaches have been attacked

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[71] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

[72] On the influence of Protestantism and the image of religion that it imprinted on the perceptions of magic in western culture in modern times, including those of scholars of religion and magic, see Tambiah 1995, pp. 1–31.

[73] An outstanding example of this is the approach of Frazer, the most typical representative of the evolutionist school of thought in the study of religion.

in the past and all but totally abandoned. Still, their shadow, and together with this perhaps also apprehension from unintentionally using something of them, continues to hover over the skies of research and disturb the scholars' rest. These scholars, especially those of the magic of the Hellenistic world of recent decades, have not satisfied themselves with an awareness of the difficulties that use of the terms 'magic' and 'religion' raise, but, as noted, attempt to solve the problem by relinquishing the use of 'magic' altogether.[74] According to them the very use of this term, conceptually value-laden in the manner that is in our own culture, is methodologically flawed and is likely to fail the discussion of the phenomenon wished to be signified by it. Yet this tendency has created new problems of its own. Relinquishing the use of the term 'magic' has left a vacuum to which inevitably other no less problematic terms have been drawn. In the final analysis, one can not investigate Hellenistic magic without the use of the concept 'magic', that is, without having some general concept, however broad and vague it may be, concerning the phenomenon that we wish to examine. It is no coincidence that matters of agriculture, sailing, architecture, army, administration, economy, theatre, philosophy, and many other like areas of Greco-Roman culture are not discussed in studies of Hellenistic magic. These studies focus on a specific area of this culture, even when it is difficult to precisely define its parameters. The choice of texts on which scholars base their works testify to a preconceived perception of the particular phenomenon that they are interested in. If one does not denote this phenomenon as 'magic', then one must use new terms. Indeed, in the last decade many researchers of ancient magic tended to define their field of research by new terminology. They did not deal in magic but in objects or certain kinds of texts such as *defixiones*[75] or adjurations,[76] specific rituals such as "rituals for gaining power" or in a phenomenon which they tended to call "ritual power".[77] Whilst these solutions might be beneficial in that they free us from "the yoke of magic", this is only on condition that the researcher elaborates precisely what

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[74] Along with what was mentioned above and the references in the following notes, see Smith J.Z. 1995.

[75] Gager 1992.

[76] Lesses 1998.

[77] For examples of salient solutions of this kind see: Meyer and Smith 1994; Lesses 1998, and a number of articles in the book edited by Meyer and Mirecki (Meyer and Mirecki 1995).

he has in mind with regard to each one of these terms. As far as I am aware no discussion has yet been devoted to the problems raised by the new terminology.[78]

The perplexity and uncertainty entailed by the use of 'magic' are well understood. In a similar manner that many other terms in our language, such as 'love', 'happiness', 'art', or 'game' express a wide range of phenomena with vague boundaries, so, too, with 'magic'. However, I do not share the distress entailed by its use, even in research literature. The fact that the boundaries of its application are vague need not prevent us from discussing the phenomenon which we wish to refer to. Nor need it prevent us from examining its relationship to other phenomena we refer to through terms that are no less vague in themselves, like 'religion', 'mysticism', or 'ritual'. Versnel's view regarding family resemblance among the range of magic phenomena is an expression of this kind of notion. It recognizes the difficulties raised by the use of 'magic', yet still uses the term. The phenomena which we wish to consider as magic do indeed share a family resemblance, as well as displaying differences. There is no one essential feature, nor any particular combination of essential features, that confirm the phenomena as magic to the extent of being a necessary and sufficient condition. What we have is a number of features that, when combined in one way or another, create an expression of magic. Identifying these features, in varying compositions, in certain phenomena is what leads us to term them 'magic'.

Accepting the principle of family resemblance means forgoing the aspiration for a precise dictionary definition of magic, for a more hazy grasp of it, based on what I wish to call a quasi-ostensive definition. That is to say, a descriptive pointing out of what we wish to term 'magic' and determine that these and other similar phenomena are magic. We exchange the experience of a clear delimitation of phenomena, based on essential pre-set and defined features, in an ongoing learning and refining process of the use of the term 'magic', constituted upon as wide a description as possible of the phenomena we wish to denote by that term. The boundaries will remain vague. On the one hand, phenomena will always be found to have loose links with other magic phenomena intertwined together in a tight net of resemblance, or, on the other hand, to be tied par-

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[78] For a beginning of such discussion, see Smith J.Z. 1995.

tially to other phenomena such as 'religion', 'mysticism', 'ritual', and the like. Phenomena from these fields are also not defined through any particular substantial unifying characteristic, but by the principle of family resemblance, as applied by Alston to religion.

In this way one can also explain the relationship between magic and religion. It is my belief that not only are there phenomena bound in a network of partial resemblances, whether called 'magical' or 'religious', and this has led astray those researchers who wished to categorize them either way, but that many phenomena which fit into both the spheres which we designate by these terms, maintain between them partial relations of resemblance. It appears to me that the process developed by Alston in the sphere of religion and by Versnel regarding magic should be completed by determining that between the two—religion and magic—there is a family resemblance. That seems to me to be the most efficient way to describe the complex relationship between the phenomena which we denote by these words. It is better than the view that identifies them as phenomenologically separated (an approach which is almost unacceptable these days in research) or the approach which suggests the two are a continuum, as has been proposed in the past in the field of anthropology and recently even in the field of Jewish magic.[79] A continuum is the transition between two extremities that eventually have to be defined on account of essential opposition. Family resemblance, by contrast, does not define the essential extremities of magic or religion. In place of this it states that between all the components of the phenomena we call 'magic' and 'religion' there is a partial resemblance. Each phenomenon resembles others in certain ways and differs from them in other ways. The density of the web of partial resemblance ties is what determines whether they are definitively more or less magical or religious. However, there is nothing preventing ties of resemblance between phenomena from the "dense" areas of magic and religion. The web of partial resemblance creates a fabric, varying in its density, in which religious and magic phenomena are tied together.

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[79] See Schäfer 1997, p. 24.

C. *'Adjuration text' and redefining early Jewish magic*

Thus far, we have dealt with the fundamental question of the rela-
tionship between magic and religion. I have tried to show that the
principle of family resemblance can function as an efficacious means
for describing the boundaries of the phenomena described by us as
magical or religious, and even to describe the connection between
them. This is despite the fact that there are no essential definitions
of religion or magic, and in effect, it is inconceivable that there
would be any. Nevertheless, one must bear in mind that one is only
justified in using the principle of family resemblance when we have
some notion, even the most general, of what we mean by 'magic'
or 'religion'; in the words of Wittgenstein: when we know how to
use these terms. This is the basis for the dialectic methodological
step that I would now like to propose.

S. Shaked began a recent article on the textual ties between Jew-
ish liturgy, Hekhalot literature, and incantation bowls with the
following:[80]

> Anyone working within the field of magic in Judaism in Late Antiquity
> and the early Middle Ages knows the difficulties besetting any attempt
> to define it. Despite these difficulties . . . there are not many cases of
> hesitation when one tries to identify magic texts in practice.

This expresses well the situation where we know what we mean by
the terms 'magic' or 'magic text', despite the fact that we do not
know how to define them precisely. The vague term 'magic' is
sufficiently common to members of contemporary Western culture,
including even the academic community, to enable a comprehensive,
profound, and ongoing discussion on the subject. As a starting point,
then, it is not bad at all. Yet if we wish to advance beyond this, we
must search for tools which will lead us to a more precise and refined
use of the term in question. The way to achieve this is not through
looking for more precise dictionary definitions, but on the contrary,
by offering as wide-ranging and detailed a description as possible of
the phenomena which constitute the field of magic. After this, in a
quasi-ostensive definition it will be possible to state: These and sim-
ilar phenomena are magic. That is the ultimate goal we should be
aiming for.

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[80] Shaked 1995, p. 197.

In my opinion it would not be wise to make a detailed phenom-enological description of magic as a universal phenomenon. This is not only due to the huge extent of such a task, but mainly because of the fact, already noted in earlier research, that different cultures have developed individual magical outlooks and practices.[81] An osten-sive definition of magic can only be achieved seriously in a limited and well-defined cultural sphere. In line with my own research inter-est, I will focus on Jewish magic, and further limit the discussion to the magic of the Jews of Palestine and its environs in antiquity and the early Middle Ages. The starting point for the methodological course that I shall propose will therefore be a natural, common and more or less agreed use of the general and vague term 'magic' in the context of the above-mentioned culture, time, and region. In the first step I will use it to identify Jewish 'magic' texts of the relevant period. The second stage will entail examining those texts and point-ing out that adjuration is the central rhetorical motif in them. In the third stage I shall characterize the adjuration according to tex-tual features and define a Jewish 'adjuration text'. As a fourth stage I shall determine the wider cycles of Jewish 'magic texts', based upon our definition of a Jewish adjuration text. Lastly, I shall propose to describe ancient Jewish magic on the basis of the entire corpus of magic texts that were produced by Jews in the region and era we are dealing with.

The beginning and end of this dialectic process is magic as a cul-tural phenomenon. Initially it is used for a general definition of the field to be discussed as perceived in our system of concepts. Ultimately, it is described in great detail in the context of defined culture, time and place. The dialectic also pertains to the texts. We progress from the general notion of *magic* to Jewish *magic* texts, from there to a Jewish *adjuration text* and on to Jewish *magic texts*, finally arriving at *Jewish magic*. This course allows us firstly to justify the choice of texts that serve as a basis for the phenomenological study of magic in the specified cultural context. Next, it allows us to expand our textual pool of the study based on the principle of family resemblance.

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[81] Only a tiny number of comparative studies depict magic as a pan-human phe-nomenon. In particular, Malinowski 1948, pp. 1–71; Mauss 1972; O'Keefe 1982; Tambiah 1995. The difficulty in defining magic as a phenomenon has deterred scholars from such discussions. Phenomenological studies of magic in recent decades have been limited to its description within a limited and defined cultural frame-work.

Finally, it enables us to offer a broad phenomenological description
of early Jewish magic based on Jewish magic texts.

   Almost all our knowledge about Jewish magical activity in late
Antiquity and the early Middle Ages stems from texts that have sur-
vived to this day. The material findings testify to the use of metal
and clay amulets in Palestine throughout the fifth to seventh cen-
turies, and clay magic bowls in Babylonia for roughly the same
period. Archeological findings teach us that the Palestinian use of
amulets was occasionally connected to the synagogue,[82] and that
Babylonian Jews primarily made use of bowls in their homes.[83] A
love amulet written on soft clay and thrown into a fire provides evi-
dence of the practice of ritual burning of amulets to achieve a sym-
pathetic effect: kindling the fire of love in the heart of the desired
one.[84] Discoveries from the Cairo *Geniza* show the use of cloth, parch-
ment, and paper amulets in the first centuries of the second mil-
lennium. All the rest of our information about early Jewish magic,
that is, its objectives, the actions used to achieve them, and the belief
system that gave these actions meaning for their users, comes from
the contents of texts we define as magical; that is to say, those texts
that express the phenomenon of magic amongst the Jews of the said
time and place. The study of early Jewish magic is therefore first
and foremost textual.[85] To describe it we must first indicate those
texts that we wish to term as magical, and by them describe the
cultural phenomenon that they express. As we hoped to clarify above,
the initial selection of Jewish magic texts must be based on the pop-
ular usage of the general and vague term, 'magic'. In the words of
Shaked, the choice is perhaps hard to justify but easy to make.
Knowledge of the conditions of use of 'magic', on the one hand,

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[82] See, for example, Naveh and Shaked 1993, pp. 45–46; *idem* 1987. Compare,
further, Naveh 1989, pp. 302–303; Naveh 1992, pp. 152–153.
   [83] See Montgomery 1913, pp. 13–14. Use of the bowls was not only restricted
to the home. We have at least one example of a bowl found in a burial area. See
ibid.
   [84] See Naveh and Shaked, 1987, pp. 84–89. On Jewish love magic see Harari
2000a.
   [85] Shiffman and Swartz were the only scholars who have explicitly considered
this matter and drawn from it relevant conclusions (Shiffman and Swartz 1992).
They attempted to explain the rhetoric of the amulets from the Cairo *Geniza*, and
basing themselves on it, to delineate the "theory of magic" that they express, (*ibid.*
especially pp. 32–62). Swartz already advanced their approach two years earlier in
an article (Swartz 1990). For discussion on these studies see Harari 1998, pp.
105–107.

and the difficulty to precisely define them, are responsible for this situation. At this stage, then, we shall not define those texts but only examine them.

The examination of Jewish magic texts from Palestine and its environs from antiquity and the early Middle Ages (textually speaking, that is from *Sefer HaRazim* [The Book of Mysteries] to the Cairo *Geniza* documents) indicates that their most prominent characteristic is the adjuration. Adjuration is the focus of magic texts, and as far as may be judged by them, they are also the very heart of the magic acts described therein. In light of this, I believe that a Jewish magic text in its clearest and most reduced sense is an adjuration text. Thus, if we wish to prepare a solid basis for selecting Jewish magic texts, we must define as clearly as possible an 'adjuration text'. I should stress that there is no point in venturing beyond the textual framework of the discussion, at this stage, and characterizing an adjuration text on the basis of the phenomenon it expresses. Such an attempt requires a definition of adjuration as a phenomenon, and in terms of textual study this means to interpret the text for the purpose of phenomenological description. While such interpretation is the very goal of the methodological process proposed here, at the present stage it is necessary to focus only on the text, that is, to define adjuration through its textual features as a text. Below, I would like to suggest eight textual features which may serve for determining whether any given Jewish text, from the given region and period, is an adjuration text. I am not claiming that all those features have to exist in the text for it to be considered an adjuration text. In fact, only in a few cases are all of them found. Yet I believe that our ability to consider a text as an adjuration text is directly proportional to the number of these features found in it. Below are listed the features by which, in my view, we can identify a Jewish *adjuration text*:

a) A self definition of the text or of the object on which it is written as an adjuration [השבעה], writ [כתב], seal [חותם], or amulet [קמיע];

b) An appeal to supernatural powers, usually to angels, princes [שרים], names [שמות], letters [אותיות], or demons, to fulfill a request made;

c) The address to these powers in the first person singular;

d) Use of verbs deriving from the roots שב״ע, זק״ק, קי״ם, נז״ר, or use of expressions of restriction and expulsion generally deriving from the roots קמ״ע, כב״ש, אס״ר, בט״ל, נע״ר, נד״ר, חת״ם, in the formulation of the appeal to the supernatural powers;

e) Use of the language בשם [in the name of] followed by holy names, epithets of God, or biblical verses that describe his actions (generally those that testify to his power);

f) Use of accelerating and threatening phrases towards the supernatural powers;

g) Absence of language that expresses request such as phrases deriving from the roots פל״ל, חנ״ן, בק״ש, or the words אנא, נא from the address to those powers;

h) Naming the person on whose behalf the appeal is made by his own name, and his mother's name, or, in the case of literature for instruction, with the label פב״פ (פלוני בן פלונית, so-and-so, the son of so-and-so).

Not all these features have equal value. Some of them are more important than others for determining whether a given text is an adjuration. Nevertheless, measuring their relative value is not only impossible but, according to the method of definition proposed here, is not even required. I am not seeking to find a bottom line to distinguish between what is an adjuration and what is not. On the contrary, I wish to indicate a dynamic situation in which an accumulation of the features listed above constitutes the extent to which a specific text may be considered one of adjuration. As I have said, the more of those textual features that appear, the clearer it is to identify the inclination of the text towards being an adjuration text.

Having determined that adjuration is at the focus of Jewish *magic* texts, and having given a textual definition for adjuration, we can move on to the next stage, which is redefining the Jewish *magic text*. I propose a three circle definition that draws on the definition of adjuration text. In my view, a magic text is, in its clearest and most reduced sense of the term, an adjuration text. This is the innermost circle. Such texts exist in amulets, magic bowls, the Hekhalot literature, and even occasionally within Rabbinic literature. In a broader sense, a magic text is one that incorporates adjurations. This is the middle circle which is more extensive than the first. It includes primarily the magic instruction literature but also sections of Hekhalot literature and *Midrash*. In the widest sense, a magic text is one that expresses an outlook and practices that characterize magic texts in a more narrow sense, or include literary components that characterize these texts. This circle includes many texts that are not in the magic literature itself, such as Rabbinic traditions about the powers

of sages and their struggles with heretical sorcerers, or demonic beliefs and related acts, and even parts of the liturgy, such as the Bed-time Recitation of the *Shemaʿ*, which are magical in character. All these can contribute towards creating a phenomenological description of early Jewish magic.

Relying on our definition of Jewish magic texts, as based on the definition of adjuration texts, we can now state that the more textual features relating to adjuration that can be found in a text, the greater its inclination towards the direction of magic. This then allows us to discern, albeit not precisely (which is not necessary in our method) the degree of magic of a text, whether or not included in the canonized Jewish literary or liturgical corpus. On the one hand, this enables us to examine the magic features in the comprehensive framework of Jewish texts (dealt with in this study), and on the other, to verify the texts on which we can characterize and describe the cultural phenomenon in question: early Jewish magic.

The notion of magic that I propose starts with the identification of Jewish texts as magical, according to our understanding of the term; discerns adjuration as their focus; textually characterizes it; and defines through them the entirety of Jewish magic texts. On the basis of these texts we can now get down to the task of a phenomenological description of the beliefs, actions and objectives that characterized early Jewish magic. I have been working on this task in recent years,[86] and expect that when it will be completed, it will be possible to forgo the general and vague use of 'magic' in the present context, exchanging it for a detailed and well-defined concept, accompanied by the assertion: This phenomenon is the magic of the Jews of Palestine and its environs in antiquity and the early Middle Ages. The need for a more precise and refined concept of magic, which could not have been reached by an *a priori* dictionary definition, will be achieved at the end of the methodological course offered here, by a quasi-ostensive definition, based on the broad phenomenological description of phenomena documented in the Jewish texts identified by us as magic.

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[86] The first part of it, systematic description of the objectives of the magic acts may be found in my dissertation (Harari 1998, p. 133ff.). Parts of it have been (and are to be) published in the following articles: Harari 1997b; *idem* 2000a; *idem* 2000b. Compare further, *idem* 1997a; *idem* 1997/8, p. 378ff.

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DRAWING AND WRITING:
A FOURTH-CENTURY MAGICAL SPELL
FROM OXYRHYNCHUS

Hagit Amirav*

This volume, dedicated to ancient magic, is a further recognition in the scholarly world of the significance of ancient magic and its relevance to the understanding of the ancient world at large. The days are past when the rationalism of the modern scholar, and one may say, justifiable disbelief in the effectiveness of magic, also entailed the dismissal of its textual and plastic evidence. Deciphering and analysing the material, whether on papyri, tablets, or bowls, is one important aspect. This is essentially what I intend to do in the following discussion. But there is another aspect to the scholarship of ancient magic which, to my mind, has yet to be fully explored: that is, the extent of the appropriation of ancient magic by contemporary writers.

Indeed, if scholars of all branches of classical scholarship, not only specialists on magic, analyse and re-analyse the wide-ranging corpus of classical writings, while bearing in mind the genuine belief which contemporary writers must have held in magic, our findings may prove to be both surprising and refreshing. For example, listen to Plato's Phaedrus in the beginning of the dialogue: "Ah . . . Socrates, . . . Imagine! Lysias has written down the name of one of those pretty-faced lads, to try and seduce him by means other than a lover, bragging that it is a far greater challenge to win grace with someone who does not love you, than with someone who does."[1] I should think that the context of Phaedrus' remark is the effectiveness and legitimacy of magic. Phaedrus describes here Lysias' practice of magical rituals, beginning with writing a spell similar to the one which

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[1] Plato, *Phaedrus* 227c, ed. Robin 1947: 2.

I would like to deal with now. Yet ancient society was to be immersed in magic for many more centuries.

Evidence for the unchallenged position of magic is reflected in the writings of classical as well as Byzantine writers: pagan, Jewish, and Christian alike. For example, a magical formula of invocation echoes in a Philonian treatise. Here, Philo chose to conclude his exposition on πνεῦμα with an almost personal prayer to keep it. In this "prayer", the soul is presented as the unfortunate object of φίλτρα, magical charms or potions:[2] "Oh, my spirit, whenever one of those magical spells (attempts) to call you, turn your sight away, where you shall find the noble beauty of virtue. Then, (I beg), stay where you are, until (virtue) shall be poured into you like a molten iron, and until it allures you like a lode stone, and until it shall draw you near, and attach you (tightly)." In fact, one may say that the whole passage is reconstructed as a protective charm against the workings of harmful magic.[3]

A Christian example in which the contact with magic may be illustrated is found in the writings of Didymus the blind. This third-century biblical exegete refers to the practice of inscribing magical drawings, and even acknowledges their activating power:[4] "By no means do (the words) of the Scriptures keep one alive (or render life in any way), if they are understood plainly and according to the (sole interpretation of the senses). It is as if (one) would say that those (magical) geometrical drawings are helpful in any way. Indeed, unless these were drawn (with a specific intention), their maker is nothing more than a painter." Didymus does not wish to undermine the effectiveness of magical practices *per se*. Rather, he reinforces them by comparing the correct interpretation of the Scriptures to the "useful" application of magic.

One can see how magic surfaces in the least expected places, and in contexts as varied as magic itself. It has been, and still is, a scholarly as well as popular convention to look for evidence of magical practices in their obvious, designated places i.e. the corpora of magical papyri, tablets, and amulets.[5] However, even the very few exam-

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[2] Philo, *De gigantibus*, ed. Moses 1963: 42.
[3] See below discussion of the magical formula of invocation: 133.
[4] Didymus, *In Genesim*, eds. Nautin and Doutreleau 1978: 26.
[5] The main corpus of Greek magical papyri was edited by Preisendanz 1928, 1931, *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, quoted hereafter as *PGM*. Translations of the *PGM*

ples discussed above demonstrate that the potential for further schol-
arly exploration and analysis of ancient magic may go beyond the
analysis of the literary output of professional magicians and the com-
mon practitioners of magic.

Perhaps the most prominent feature of ancient magic is its pro-
fessional practice and technical execution—without which the her-
itage of ancient magic could not have filtrated into literary writings
and religious treatises as it actually has. Magical practices, akin to
medical practices and often overlapping with them,[6] are not difficult
to reconstruct. Magic as a τέχνη is attested in the magical formula-
ries, or handbooks, in which the "correct" execution of magic is pre-
scribed, and "recipes" for magical or even medical concoctions are
meticulously described. However, at this stage, it may be worthwhile
to note that such "recipes" and "prescriptions" were not always
meant to be taken at their face value: strange and fantastic ingre-
dients such as "a lion's hairs" were meant to be replaced with more
common and accessible ingredients.[7]

The gain in acknowledging the existence of "substitutes" for mag-
ical ingredients is twofold. First, practitioners of ancient magic should
no longer be seen as detached from everyday reality, i.e. they based
their magical practices on known objects and materials which, some-
times, were perceived in a symbolic way. Second, providing a proof
of widespread contemporary use of common materials and ingredi-
ents brings the practice of magic down to people's everyday lives.
Indeed, if the practice of magic is to be perceived as a traditionally
transmitted, practical heritage, one should acknowledge two facts:
first, that magicians did learn their craft, and second that the magi-
cians as craftsmen provided solutions for the many rather than the
few. In many cases, scholars are left with either the mute testimony
of plastic evidence, or with the literary and theoretical outputs of
elite circles. However, scholars of ancient magic are in quite a differ-
ent position. In addition to literary writings, which clearly reflect

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(and magical drawings) are found in Betz 1986. Another collection of magical papyri
was edited by Daniel and Maltomini 1990, *Supplementum Magicum* (quoted hereafter
as *Suppl. Mag.*). See also Audollent 1904, *Defixionum Tabellae* and Kotanski 1994,
Greek Magical Amulets. For discussion about this matter and about general features
of ancient magic, see Brashear 1995: 3380–3684; Graf 1997.

    [6] Phillips 1991: 260–276.
    [7] For a list of "substitutes" see *PGM* XII.401–404.

contemporary magical practices,[8] scholars of ancient magic have at
their disposal both the theoretical and practical corpus of formularies,
and the applied magical papyri, the actual spells, which were exe-
cuted and used in accordance with the guidance of the formularies.

At this stage, I would like to go into one particular applied mag-
ical papyrus: into its meaning in its own right, and also its position
in the broader context of contemporary magical beliefs and practices.
The text contains a magical spell and, needless to say, it is written
on papyrus.[9] It is an erotic magical spell, whose type may be classified
as an ἀγωγή. In a magical context, the straightforward meaning of
this word is "carrying off" or "abduction."[10] This word reflects the
coercive intentions of the commissioner i.e. literally pushing, driving
away, and dragging the desired person out of his or her home into
the arms of the commissioner. It encapsulates the rather violent
nature of some contemporary magical conceptions and practices
which, in turn, under pagan and Christian emperors alike, led to
occasional outbreaks of general oppression of magical practices and
of magicians.[11] Indeed, coercive magical spells may be easily misunder-
stood unless modern tastes are put aside. Despite their classification
as "love charms", these spells are still violent. The commissioner, en
route to the sexual consummation of his love, executes on his beloved
object, or rather, victim an equal measure of ritual violence, by word
or deed, as he would employ in any other case for which magic was
commonly employed.[12]

In order to establish the position of ancient magic as a vocation,
with prescribed techniques of execution and professional etiquette,

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[8] Magical rites are reflected, for example, in Theocritus' Idyll no. 2, ed. Gow
1950: 16–29. However, one may take into account the possibility that Theocritus
also followed his literary imagination and did not necessarily intend to give an exact
account of contemporary magical practices.

[9] An *editio princeps* of the papyrus, which formed the basis for this discussion is
The Oxyrhynchus Papyri, vol. 68, eds. N. Gonis, D. Obbink and P.J. Parsons (London
2004) no. 4673, pp. 114–17.

[10] See Faraone 1999: esp. 25–28, 41–95; Moke 1975: 27f.

[11] Persecutions of astrologers and magicians occurred under Tiberius (16 AD),
Claudius (52 AD), Nero (59 AD), and Marcus Aurelius (175 AD). For discussion,
see Cramer 1954. Under Christian emperors, most notorious are the trials and per-
secutions for the practice of magic, which were carried out by Valentinian and
Valens. See Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae* 28.1.1–57, 29.2.1–20, ed. Seyfarth
1978: 60–71, 104–108.

[12] Moke, for example, seems to regard the combination of sex and violence as
a peculiar duality, rather than an integral part of ancient magical practices and
beliefs (183–191).

one may point to the striking similarities between various types of magical texts, from different places, times and social milieus. Indeed, our papyrus shows all the features distinctive to magical spells: it has *characteres, voces magicae*, and also a *figura magica*. Other typical features are the long palindrome at the beginning, a request in the form of a prayer, and the 'masskelli masskello' formula which appears in the end.[13] However, attempts to identify this formula and similar formulas with specific deities (for example, with the moon-goddess, Hekate) are bound to be highly conjectural because of their limited philological basis. One may also note that for the contemporary worshiper, the activating power of magical formulas may lie precisely in their possibly already obscure meaning and their position in the magical vocabulary.[14]

Unlike in many other cases,[15] here the scribe does not mark the figure's name on the drawing. Also, the name of the deity or deities invoked cannot be reconstructed from the extant text. Therefore, identification is to be made on the basis of the figure's general representation in art. A human, ass-headed figure coincides with the representation of the Egyptian God, Seth.[16] Other artistic features will be discussed further on. In view of the mythical tradition surrounding Seth, the role of this deity in coercive erotic magical spells is self-evident: as is well known, Seth brought about the end of the famous love affair between Isis and Osiris. This Seth achieved by murdering Osiris and hence, depriving Isis of her beloved partner.[17] Seth's mythology is a mirror reflection of the desires and objectives of the common commissioner of love spells. These objectives are destruction of an existing relationship—even by harming the beloved party—and to bring about a sexual union to the immediate benefit of the commissioner.[18] Furthermore, we may note that the ass imagery

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[13] Maskelli maskellō formula is a frequent magical spell and appears here in an abbreviated version (see *Suppl. Mag.* nos. 12, 45, 54). See discussion in the edition, *op. cit.*

[14] General discussions on this particular formula are cited in Betz 1986: 336.

[15] For example, *PGM* XII.449–52, XXXVI.1–34, 69–101.

[16] Te Velde 1977: 8–12; Gager 1992: 69, 72.

[17] The aggressive characteristics of Seth are also reflected in other types of spells, for example, in spells to induce separation (*PGM* XII.365–75, 445–48). In these cases as well, the myth of Isis and Osiris and Seth's obvious part in separating the two lovers plays an obvious role (see Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, ed. Griffiths 1970). In many erotic spells there is an explicit reference to this mythological couple. A discussion of the use of myths in magical spells is found in Frankfurter 1995: 457–476.

[18] *PGM* LXXVIII.1–14.

and the asinine characteristics, which are attributed to Seth, espe-
cially those which imply boundless and lascivious sexuality, may add
to our understanding of the role of this deity in erotic spells.[19]

The text reveals the simple invocation of one Helenus to a cer-
tain demon, whose name has not survived, to help him in his efforts
to subdue a certain woman to his erotic desires. Like many other
magical papyri, there is no direct reference in the text itself to any
particular date or place. The papyrus was found in Oxyrhynchus,
and hence belongs to a collection in which the bulk of the texts is
dated to the first six centuries AD. Our papyrus displays an informal,
semi-cursive hand, typical of documentary papyri and private cor-
respondence, and may be dated to the period between the late third
century and mid-fourth century AD.

The papyrus contains the top and bottom of a sheet with around
34 lines. The difficulties which I have encountered in deciphering it
are concerned mainly with careless execution: for example, the smudg-
ing of ink, but also, as is usually the case, with obvious lacunae due
to material damage. In addition to the extant Greek text, the recon-
struction of the possible content of lines 19–26 is based on other
papyri, which reflect similar formulas of invocation and binding. The
Greek text which will be discussed here runs as follows:

19   εξορκιζω σαι .[. . . .].υσο.[.].υσο

(Much damaged remains of four lines)

24   [. . . .].ετεκ[ε]ν Εισι[δωρα . . . . . .]
[   ] . [   ]

(Papyrus is broken at this point)

. [. .] . [. .] . ο[   ] . [

27   αυτην τω Ελενω ον ετεκεν
Ταπιαμ εστ αν χιλησιν χιλη[α]
συναψουσιν και το λευκον τω

30   μελανι οτι εξορκιζω σαι κατ[ὰ]
τησ κρατεασ Ανα<γ>κησ

_____

[19] Other examples of erotic aggressive spells in which the function of Seth or
Typhon-Seth is the principal deity are *PGM* XXXVI.69–101, and possibly *PGM*
IV.3260.

> I adjure you [A: drive/bring/bind B whom] Isidora bore [to Helenus, whom Tapiam bore; since I adjure you A: bring] her to Helenus, whom Tapiam bore until they (i.e. Helenus and the woman) join together lips to lips and white to black, since I adjure you by mighty Necessity.

The scribe followed well-established contemporary conventions in so far as the typical formula of invocation is concerned. He addresses the deity using the verb ἐξορκίζω (line 19), "I adjure" whose simple form, ὁρκίζω is also common in all types of magical spells. The scribe follows a standard formula of invocation, which is used in a variety of contexts. It may include the following parts: address to the deity, the actual request or set of requests (usually in the imperative form), the name of the desired person, and the name of the desiring one, usually the commissioner; both are identified by their mothers' names.

The formula may run as follows: I adjure A (= name of deity sometimes followed by magical names and formulas): bring / bind, etc. B (= name of the sexual object) whom C (= the mother's name) bore, to D (= name of commissioner) whom E (= mother's name) bore, until X (happens).[20] In our papyrus, the verb in the temporal clause (συνάψουσιν) refers to the woman and Helenus. The use of the verb in the plural, rather than the singular is less common.[21] The commissioner may mention himself or herself: "until she (less commonly, he) comes to me."[22] However, examples in which only the victim is mentioned are equally amply attested: "until he does X."[23] The use of the 3rd person, or reference to the victim alone rarely implies the involvement of either the magician or another third party, and one may assume that in this case too, there is no implication to such involvement.

At the centre of such an address stands the commissioner's or magician's desire to force the deity into fulfilling a particular task or tasks. This "binding" process is reflected here in several features. First, one may reconstruct the rite as involving ceremonial gestures, beginning with the reading of the papyrus out loud. Second, the

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[20] For example, *Suppl. Mag.* no. 48.5–28, and also the formularies *PGM* VII.973–80, XVI.1–75, XXXVI.134–60.

[21] See Faraone 1999: 23 esp. note 102, citing another example in which the 3rd person plural is used (in Audollent, 1904: 375).

[22] *Suppl. Mag.* nos. 39, 41, 46 and *PGM* IV.404.

[23] *Suppl. Mag.* nos. 40, 45, 48.

simultaneous use of symbolic objects, such as dolls, which would here represent the two lovers-to-be, is also quite probable. Third, it is possible that the magician or Helenus, the commissioner, performed other accompanying rites taken from the magician's "recipe" book, that is the formulary. Whether all of these possible rites were actually performed here cannot be established with certainty. It is clear, however, that Helenus and his magician did whatever they could to activate the spell, or in other words, to make the binding and subjugation of the deity work.

One can imagine the impact which the uttering of the *voces magicae* would have had: this magical language was perceived as effective precisely because of its incomprehensibility: a language which is to be understood only by the magician and the deity. Another aspect, which was surely part of the effectiveness of magic, was the establishment of magical formulae as a traditional language. The specific combination of vowels attested here, the palindrome and the magical formula are all attested also in other spells of all kinds and from many places: these features are the best testimony for the contemporary perception of magic as a τέχνη, and an effective one.

What else could make the spell work? To be sure, magicians and their clients attached great importance to the issue of the personal identification of all those involved: the commissioner, the object or victim, and also the deities, which were in charge of the activation of the spell. In fact, it is not difficult to explain why this issue was so important: our commissioner, Helenus, must have wanted to make sure, first that the deity was addressed clearly and knew its prospective tasks. To that one may add the binding force which the sheer uttering of the deity's name must have had. Second, Helenus would not want the deity to get confused, and inflict its powers on the wrong objects, or to the advantage of someone other than himself. Although the demon's name is not preserved, it is very likely that the drawing represents an image of it. We shall come to this point later.

Returning to the issue of personal names, here the commissioner's name has survived, but not the name of the woman. We know, however, that the object is a female by the personal pronoun, which refers to her. Both Helenus and the woman are identified by their mother's name. The name of the woman's mother was most likely Isidora.

It is almost certain that Helenus' mother was called Tapiam, (anal-

ogous to Mariam?) which is very rarely attested.[24] Its derivatives are more common, but not to a great extent.[25] Perhaps the most peculiar aspect of this issue is the identification by matriarchal descent. This phenomenon is both highly common in magical texts and distinctive to them. One may note that the identification in documentary texts such as contracts, wills etc., is usually made according to patriarchal descent, perhaps because only men were legally accountable. We could ask whether the identification by matriarchal descent has any social significance.

The identity of one deity has survived, and that is Ἀνάγκη or Necessity. But Necessity is by no means the principal deity. Here, as in many other examples, Necessity functions as an "assistant demon", whose function, as is revealed by its attributive, is to assist the commissioner in binding the principal deity to fulfilling the required task. It is not surprising that Necessity, of all deities, should play such an important role in the gallery of possible assistant demons: all that the commissioner wants is to bring about the activation of powerful forces to suit his or her ends. And these are best represented in the figure of Necessity. In accordance with the forceful nature of Ἀνάγκη this deity is employed quite frequently in spells of the ἀγωγή type.[26]

We now come to the erotic features of the spell. Again, some of these features are common to a large number of erotic spells. One feature, however, is unique to this particular spell. Beginning with the common features, the classification of this spell as erotic is based on lines 28–30: "until they join together lips to lips and white to black". In other words, Helenus implores the deity to bring about a sexual union between him and the woman at issue. Here, the catalogue is only partial. Other erotic papyri also refer to "thighs", "cheeks", "stomachs", etc.[27] Such catalogues are also a literary commonplace, in both Greek and Latin erotic poetry, e.g. in Theocritus, Archilochus, Anacreon, Tibullus, and Ovid.[28] In fact, this may be

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[24] Another attestation is found in *P.Neph.* 1.2,10 (Kramer and Shelton 1987: I 35f.).

[25] The derivatives are Ταπία, Ταπιᾶμα, Ταπιᾶμις, Ταπιαμέως (Preisigke 1922: 129), and Ταπίας (*Suppl. Mag.* no. 44).

[26] For example, see *Suppl. Mag.* no. 45, and *PGM* VII.647,689, XV.13, LXI.27.

[27] *PGM* IV.400–5: κεφαλὴν κεφαλῇ κολλήσῃ κὰ γαστέρα γαστρὶ κολλήσῃ καὶ μηρὸν μηρῷ πελάσῃ καὶ τὸ μέλαν τῷ μέλανι συναρμόσῃ. Also see *PGM* XVII a.23.

[28] Archilochus, *Carmina*, no. 112, ed. Tarditi 1968: 126; Anacreon, no. 124, ed.

further evidence for the possible literary influences to which the magi-
cians, a literate and thus educated class by definition of their voca-
tion, must have been exposed.

Helenus wishes the deity to bring together "lips to lips" and "white
to black". The first part is self-evident, but what could the "white"
and the "black" be? The "black", τὸ μέλαν is a clear reference to
pubic hair. This is also attested in other erotic texts on papyri.[29] The
literary use of this word in an erotic context is very well documented,
notably in texts as early as the fifth century BC, in the literary cor-
pus of Attic comedy.[30] Understanding λευκόν as referring to human
semen, is not very likely, since all other attestations follow the pat-
tern of a polyptoton. If we take this line as reflecting only minor
deviation from the usual polyptoton, "white" should be taken here
as referring to white pubic hair, possibly denoting Helenus' old age.
Such imagery may go back to Anacreon.[31] In summation, it is clear
that the context of λευκόν is sexual, and seems to reflect the gen-
eral nature of this particular spell.

We shall now move on to the drawing and the possible identification
of the figure as Seth. The fact that there is a drawing is, of course,
nothing new: drawings, like all representational iconography, were
considered a powerful activation-device, and as such are well attested
in magical papyri, pagan, Jewish, and Christian alike. As has already
been pointed out, the drawing does not bear any attribution. In this
case, as in many others, we find ourselves totally dependent on appar-
ently analogous contemporary representations in art, and on attes-
tations in literary sources.

The figure's head has a few equine features i.e. a mane-like shape
and a bridle. However, the drawing is generally rather crude and
limited artistic skill should be taken into account. In its right hand,
the figure is clearly holding a whip. The diamond-shaped item in
the figure's left hand is probably a spear. Indeed, the shaft does not
extend to the ground, but in this case, one should take into account

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Gentili 1958: 78.; Lucilius, *Satyra* 8.306, ed. Marx 1904: 22; Tibullus, *Elegiae* 1.8.26,
ed. Smith 1913: 126; Ovid, *Amores*. 1.4.43, ed. Kenney 1961: 11.

[29] See note 27 and *Suppl. Mag.* nos. 71, fr. 5 and 73.7–8. For discussion, see
Maltomini 1979: 275f. One may note that other words are also used in the same
sense and context e.g. φύσις (*Suppl. Mag.* no. 38).

[30] See Henderson 1975: 143, note 163a.

[31] Anacreon, no. 13: τὴν μὲν ἐμὴν κόμην, λευκὴ γάρ, καταμέμφεται (ed. Gentili
1958: 12), Anacreon, no. 36: κάρη τε λευκόν (ed. Gentili 1958: 28).

the material damage to the papyrus. An alternative interpretation
may be that the figure is holding a torch, represented here in a
stylised form. In either case, whips, torches, and military weapons
are common in the representation of angry deities, whether gener-
ally typified as violent e.g. Erinys, or momentarily characterised as
such e.g. Zeus, Pan, and even Eros.[32] In accordance with Seth's
mythology, the whip (as well as the torch) indicate the perception
of Seth as a powerful and thus as a menacing and potentially harm-
ful deity.[33]

As mentioned above, the general impression that one gets from
the drawing is that of a military figure, i.e. a soldier, wearing a
cuirass and what seem to be thigh-guards strapped on above laced
boots. Representation of Egyptians deities as soldiers is not unusual.[34]
According to Bonner, in some cases, this representation might reflect
the influence of imperial sculpture in which the emperors were often
depicted as soldiers.[35] Another example of the representation of deities
as soldiers is that of Anubis. The late antique representation of Anubis
as a canine-headed soldier is very common and may be regarded as
distinctive to this deity.[36]

A parallel example of possible identification of a figure with either
Seth or Anubis is a Roman gem found in the British Museum,[37]
which also seems to exhibit a mixture of Sethian and Anubian fea-
tures.[38] The representation of the soldier-Seth as it appears in our
papyrus, does not entirely accord with typical descriptions of Imperial
Roman soldiers, nor with the archaeological evidence.[39] The indi-
cation of nipples and navel on the torso could accord with a cuirass,
as suggested above. However, the cross lines are difficult to under-
stand in this particular context. Furthermore, cuirasses were distinc-
tive to high-ranking officers, and one may hardly expect the magician

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[32] Discussion in Faraone 1999: 45–6, 60–61. In the magical papyri, similar depic-
tion of other menacing deities, holding whips, spears, and wands is attested in *PGM*
III.65, XXXVI.102–3, XXXVI.231–55, XXIX.1–21, *PDM* XII.62–75.

[33] *PGM* VIII.64–110, XXXVI.1–34, XXXVI.69–101; Delatte 1914: 191–200; La
Blanchère, du Coudray, Gauckler 1897: 127–8, nos. 31,32,33.

[34] *PGM* XXXVI.69–101, XXXVI.231–55. Drawings in Betz 1986.

[35] Bonner 1950: 40, 56.

[36] Grenier 1977: 39–40, esp. plate XIVb, discussion in Edgar 1904: 16, pls. IVb
and IVc.

[37] No. 48954.

[38] Discussion in Barb 1953: 193–238; Griffiths and Barb 1959: 367–371.

[39] For a general discussion, see Robinson 1975: 185.

to opt for another depiction of a Roman soldier, rather than the
common and standard one. A greater difficulty derives here from
the lack of the most common feature in Roman military dresses i.e.
the lack of a military skirt. However, a skirt-dressed Seth is attested
in other parallels.[40]

The pattern drawn on the papyrus is in itself difficult to identify.
Laced boots are indeed an option. However, based on the general
impression of the pattern, one cannot avoid the parallel with the
distinctive depiction in papyri of mummified figures.[41] Perhaps the
answer to these difficulties lies in the fact that they are there: the magi-
cian may have wanted to depict a traditional, soldier-like Seth, but
may have not wanted to depict Seth as a regular, common soldier.
The uniqueness of this drawing may be more acceptable if under-
stood in the context of a magical fantasy.

Let us return to the classification of the spell. In forceful erotic
spells, it would be reasonable on the part of the commissioner to
adjure or activate an equally forceful deity. Several examples of erotic
spells in which Seth is adjured were mentioned above in the intro-
duction. Reference to Seth, as well as to any other deity, may be
also reflected in the type of magical ritual, which one often finds in
instructive formularies. For example, an instruction to use Seth's or
Typhon's blood as writing ink (which translates into practice as ass'
blood) automatically brings Seth to the picture. Use of "Seth's ink"
in erotic spells is amply attested.[42]

The representation of Seth as an ass-headed figure has clear sexual
connotations. The characteristics of the ass are primarily negative:
"irrationality", i.e. stubbornness, reflected in "fits of anger", and stu-
pidity, to name but a few. One example may be noted here where
the image of the ass is used in a contemptuous rather than a fearful
way.[43] Perhaps an equally typical asinine characteristic is a legendary
and almost boundless sexual appetite and ability.[44] Evidently, the
association of Seth with the ass imagery confers on this deity some
if not all of these asinine characteristics. Indeed, the menacing figure

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[40] *PGM* XII.449–52, XXXVI.69–101, XXXVI.231–55; La Blanchère 1897: no. 33.
[41] *PGM* XII.474–79.
[42] *PGM* VII.300a–310.
[43] See the example of a graffito found in the *paedagogium* in Rome: Correa 1893:
245–60. Further discussion and drawing in Lambert 1984: 62–3, fig. 15.
[44] For a survey of the ass-mythology, see Closse 1998: 27–39.

of an ass-headed Seth, holding a whip and dressed as a Roman sol-
dier, assisted, as we shall see, by 'mighty Necessity', makes much
sense in the context of a coercive, erotic magic.

This is a simple spell, commissioned and executed in the fashion
of so many other magical papyri, whether erotic or not. It reinforces
two observations reflected also in these other magical papyri. First,
that the magician, like any other professional craftsman, had to
acquire specific qualifications. These included writing itself—the knowl-
edge of particular sets of rituals associated with specific deities, needs,
and objectives—and memorising conventional formulae and other
aspects of professional-technical language. Second, we may suggest
that the practice of magic contributed in some way to literacy; it
was a text-based religion, in the sense that it fostered a professional
literate class, people sought the services of this class, and the writ-
ten text itself was a source of religious inspiration. I hope that the
tiny contribution of Helenus, Isidora, Tapiam, and the anonymous
scribe to this widespread contemporary culture has appealed to you.
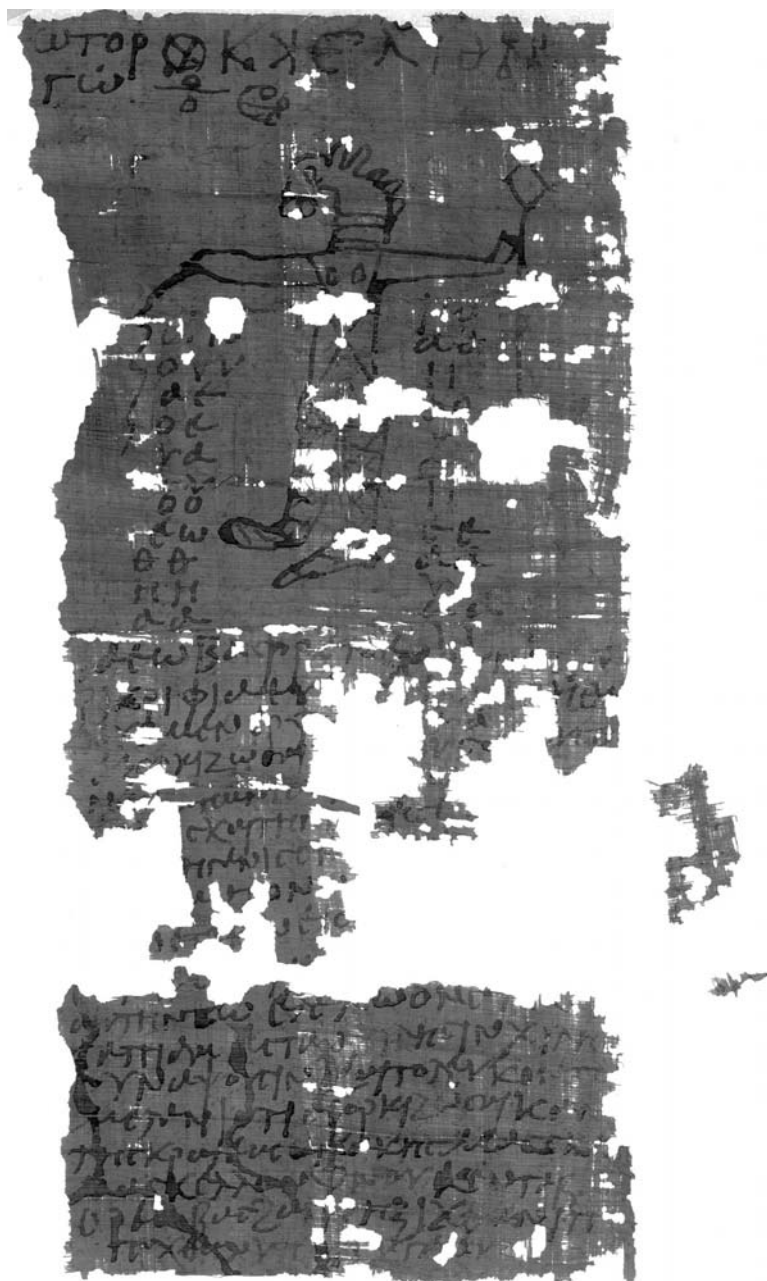
Erotic Magical Spell, Oxyrhynchus, No. 4673 (late fourth/early fifth century). By
courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society.

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(RE)INTERPRETING MAGICAL GEMS, ANCIENT AND MODERN

Simone Michel

It is estimated that roughly 5,000 'magical gems' have come down to us from the ancient world,[1] the single largest collection of which, numbering about 700 items, is to be found in the British Museum, London.[2] The present essay offers a selective overview of the results of my work on nearly three thousand magical gems in all of the accessible collections in Europe, the USA and in private possession.[3]

Magical gems are about 1.5 to 3 cm long and made of semi-precious stones, mainly jasper—green, brown, red, yellow, multicoloured or interspersed with chalcedony—but also haematite, magnetite and chalcedony, just to mention a few. Some—albeit less than three percent of the total—are made of glass, a fact which raises the status of the amulets made of the different varieties of genuine stones. Moreover, as a general rule, it is a particular colour that seems to have been the main criterion of selection, since, for example, the two red stones cornelian and red jasper are occasionally interchangeable; and the tints of the amulets made of glass regularly conform to those of the stone preferred for a particular group (e.g. blue glass = lapislazuli, etc.).

The designs and inscriptions are not reversed, but carved to be viewed directly, which shows that these gems were not intended to be used as seals, but worn as amulets and talismans.[4] The shapes of the amulets suggest that they were worn as ringstones or pendants,[5]

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[1] Smith 1979: 131; Philipp 1986: 4.

[2] Michel 2001a.

[3] Michel 2004. I would like to thank Ann Schaadt and Richard Gordon for help with references and improving my English.

[4] The word 'amulet' is derived from lat. *amuletum*, cf. *amoliri*, avert, fend off. Amulets are intended to fend off (hostile forces), while talismans are supposed to bring luck. But the two are not always easily distinguished in practice. Luck 1990: 67; Biedermann 1991: 44ff. s.v. Amulett, 416ff. s.v. Talisman; Hansmann and Kriss-Rettenbeck 1977.

[5] Cf. Gager 1992: 219 n. 8: 'Amulets were called *periapta* and *periammata*—'things tied around' parts of the body, usually the neck, an arm, or a leg. These

larger and rounded shapes, as well as the evidence of wear, indicate that some were held in the hand and rubbed—a kind of manipulation to increase their efficacy.[6] Magical gems generally were employed in three areas: as medical remedies or for prophylaxis, as love charms, and, as we shall see further below, as talismans for rebirth and redemption in the afterlife. As a rule, colour, material, design and inscription all follow a consistent pattern.

The imagery and inscriptions indicate a variety of influences—Egyptian, Oriental, Greek and Roman, as well as Jewish and Christian.[7] Similarly, the designers of the gems drew upon a body of more or less systematic learning, sometimes of an esoteric character, in a variety of fields, for example medicine, astrology, religion, magic, gnostic lore. In addition to designs and inscriptions there are also code-like secret writings[8] and a frequent use of magical signs, so called charakteres, which took on a life of their own and are to be seen as representing great power.[9]

Since the provenance of the magical gems is in most cases unknown,[10] their place of origin is thought to be the ancient melting pot of Alexandria; moreover Hellenistic and Roman Egypt is con-

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objects might be simple pieces of string, colorful embroidered bands, engraved stones and rings, or strips of metal, papyrus, and other materials inscribed with special formulas, then rolled up or folded and carried about on a string, in a pouch or in tubular containers'.

[6] Knuf and Knuf 1984: 186; Philipp 1986: 23f.

[7] Bonner 1950: 22ff. (National Influences).

[8] Since the letters of the Greek, and the Hebrew, alphabets expressed not merely sounds but numerals, apparently meaningless sequences of letters may conceal isopsephic numerical values: Cf. PGM VIII 46ff., Betz 1985: 146: 'This is your name with fifteen letters, a number corresponding to the days of the rising moon; and the second name with the number 7, corresponding to those who rule the world, with the exact number 365, corresponding to the days of the year. Truly Abrasax'. On number-magic, see Biedermann 1991: 177f. s.v. Gematrie, 242f. s.v. Kabbala fig. p. 243, 465ff. s.v. Zahlenmagie (Lit.); Kroll 1914: 204f.; Friesenhahn 1935.

[9] On charakteres: Bonner 1950: 194f.; Barb 1969a: 301f.; Pieper 1934: 125f.; Eitrem 1939: 60; Barb 1964: 14 n. 81; Philipp 1986: 20 n. 66; Biedermann 1991: 111 s.v. Charakteres; Gager 1992: 10f., 220, 11; Kotansky and Spier 1995: 324. Pseudo-inscriptions also often occur, and may be considered a constituent element in the iconographic design: Smith 1981: 188 n. 4; Kotansky 1991c: 237.

[10] For gems with documented provenances, see Philipp 1986: 8ff. n. 18; Rahmani 1972–1975: 15f. Pl. 1, 4; Rahmani 1981: 387ff., fig. 1, Pl. 1; Dauphin 1993: 145 fig. 1; Stern and Sharon 1995: 32f. fig. 5; Bilkei 1979: passim, 31 no. 23.24 Pl. 2,1; Benea—Schiopu—Vlassa 1974: 115–141; Ocheseanu 1971: 303–309; see also Sass 1990: 187f. fig. 5.

sidered to be the origin of the occult sciences.[11] The production of magical gems peaked in the second and third centuries CE, a period of known syncretistic tendencies. But they continued to be produced well into the fourth century CE, and indeed had a considerable after-life in the mediaeval and early-modern periods.[12]

These gems are deeply syncretistic, their imagery intentionally obscure and mystificatory. They therefore arouse the speculative faculty; and their elucidation requires familiarity with a range of different disciplines. The Enlightenment put an end to the scholarly interest in them that had gradually increased in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: the classicizing mentality viewed magic as the sheer antithesis of the spiritual world of Hellenism.[13] Scholarly work on the gems stagnated and, in the nineteenth century, collections of them, partly at least because no one was quite certain to which specialism to allocate them.[14] Access to them thus became difficult. Interest in magic, and so in the gems, began to grow again in the twentieth century; by mid-century very considerable progress had been made in understanding the procedures of ancient learned magic. This development was largely due to Karl Preisendanz, whose publication and edition of the magical papyri (PGM) of Roman date greatly contributed to the understanding of Graeco-Egyptian learned magic in general and put the study of the amulets on an entirely new footing. The intimate connection between gems and the papyri was recognised through the scholarly study and translation of these texts in the course of the century; as a result the term 'magical gems' is nowadays preferred to the older terms 'gnostic' or 'Basilidian' gems, and 'Abraxas-gems'.[15] All this work culminated in the publication of Campbell Bonner's standard 'Studies in Magical Amulets'

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[11] Philipp 1986: 11f.; Luck 1990: 51; Mandel-Elzinga 1985: 243ff.; Zwierlein-Diehl 1992: 15.

[12] Zazoff and Zazoff 1983: 30; Zwierlein-Diehl 1989: 373ff.; Kieckhefer 1992: 29ff.

[13] For the history of the subject see Michel 2004.

[14] Furtwängler, for example passed the magical gems in the collection in Berlin over to the Oriental department: Philipp 1986: 2. The collection in the British Museum was initially also assigned to the department of Egyptian Antiquities, and then to the department of British and Mediaeval Antiquities, where it still is even today.

[15] Eitrem 1939: 58. Pieper 1934: 135; Bonner 1950: 133f., 138f.; Barb 1969a: 298 n. 4.5; Zazoff 1983: 350; Philipp 1986: 8; Zwierlein-Diehl 1992: 14; Kotansky and Spier 1995: 315 n. 3.

(1950), which rightly treated the iconography and inscriptions of the gems in close relation to the names and recipes of the papyri. Since then considerable energy has been invested in the study of individual themes and problems; numerous catalogues of museum collections were published in the 1960s and 1970s,[16] thus making the gems better known and more available to scholars. It is this opening up of the material which more than any other factor now makes it possible to examine the magical gems afresh, and to gain further understanding of them by classifying them into convincing groups and carefully comparing their iconography and inscriptions.

The character of the relationship between magical gems and Greek magical papyri bears closer attention.[17] Although the prescriptions of texts which require the use of carved stones and describe the necessary motifs and inscriptions very seldom coincide exactly with surviving examples of magical gems,[18] there clearly is a common intellectual background between the magical papyri and the gems. The following example will illustrate the point:

> . . . This is how to make the phylactery: Taking Etruscan wax, mold a statue three handbreadths high. Let it be three-headed. Let the middle head be that of a sea falcon; the right, of a baboon; the left, of an ibis. Let it have four extended wings and its two arms stretched on its breast; in them it should hold a scepter. And let it be wrapped [as a mummy] like Osiris. Let the falcon wear the crown of Horus; the baboon, the crown of Hermanubis; and let the ibis wear the crown of Isis. Put into the hollow inside it a heart [made] of magnetite, and write the following names on a piece of hieratic papyrus and put it into the hollow. . . . The names to be written and recited are these: 'Bichô Bichôbi chôbibeu Nassounainthi nounaith mour sourpheô mourêth animokeô arpaêr sani soumarta akermorthôouth animi mimnouêr ieri animi mimnimeu'.[19]

The design of a haematite in the British Museum (fig. 1)[20] corresponds very closely to the description of the wax figure here: a figure

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[16] Delatte and Derchain 1964; Zazoff 1965; Sena Chiesa 1966; Scherf et al. 1970; Brandt et al. 1972; Schlüter et al. 1975; Gramatopol 1974; Henig 1975; Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978; Forbes 1978.

[17] Smith 1979: 132; Schwartz 1981: 485ff.; Brashear 1995 (with further literature).

[18] Philipp 1986: 25 suggests that the reason for this lack of congruence may be that almost all surviving magical papyri are of a later date than the gems.

[19] PGM IV 3125ff., Betz 1985: 98f. (translated by M. Smith).

[20] Haematite, Michel 2001a: 173, 2001b; King 1872: 47 Pl. 9, 2; King 1860: 358 (fig.); Bonner 1951: 332 Pl. 98, 45. For the image see also black jasper, Delatte and Derchain 1964: 209 no. 285.

with four wings, and three heads, of a baboon, a falcon and an ibis, each bearing a crown, and clothed in a garment recalling the bandages of mummified Osiris, with his arms crossed over the chest. Even the inscription on the reverse agrees with the *voces magicae* prescribed in the text: BIXW BIXW BEY BEY XWBI XWBI BEY COYMAPTA. The inscription—taken by Bonner as a 'fairly typical 'babbling' legend'—contains anagrammatic variations upon the Egyptian-Coptic word for falcon (e.g. *bjk ꜥ*—'Great Falcon'), alluding to Horus, the falcon-headed sun-god,[21] and then the word COYMAPTA, which is rooted in Hebrew and assumed to be a request for protection.[22] We may therefore assume that the gem, presumably intended to protect a house or an individual wearer, was created in accordance with the recipe, substituting an engraved figure for the wax figurine with a heart of magnetite, containing an inscribed scrap of papyrus.

In point of method, then, the magical papyri constitute the basic resource for establishing the general connections of, and sometimes even precise analogies to, any given magical amulet. But where the papyri fail or are solely of marginal value, we can make further progress only by the comparative method. In what follows, I propose to exemplify the value of proper contextualisation, based on the adduction of analogous exemplars, by discussing a small number of amulets that will illustrate each of the three domains that I mentioned earlier, rebirth and redemption, healing and medical prophylaxis, and love-magic, for which magical gems were regularly prepared.

A jasper, once again in the British Museum collection, can be cited in connection with the theme of rebirth (fig. 2).[23] Obverse and reverse have virtually the same design: a highly stylized mummy

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[21] Bonner 1951: 332 zu No. 45. The syllable BEY, on the other hand, evokes the Egyptian word *bꜣ* [*bai*], 'soul' or 'soul-bird'. Moreover the sevenfold variation of the syllable suggests that this is an address to, or a name of, the Sun-god, who was invoked, 'Great Falcon, Soul-bird, protect me!'. There are also allusions to the names BIXYX/BAXYX ('Soul or Ram (of) Darkness') and XWXI ('Darkness'), which evoke different manifestations of the Sun-god and are often used in the context of the Pantheos-figure. On XYX/BAXYX, see Bonner 1950: 111; Philipp 1986: 118 no. 191; Merkelbach and Totti 1990: 186 XIII 813, 108 IV 1634, 158, 169 XII 218; Brashear 1995: 3582 s.v. βαχυχ (Lit.), s.v. βακαξιχυχ (Lit.); Kotansky and Spier: 1995: 319 n. 15.

[22] *šmr*, 'watch over, protect': Bonner 1951: 331 no. 41; Barb 1968: 488; Philipp 1986: 52 no. 50 (Lit.); Brashear 1995: 3599 s.v. σουμαρθα (Lit.).

[23] Michel 2001a: 8 = Bonner 1950: 278 Pl. 7, 151.

wearing a headdress of three projections with small rings at the top. The figure on the obverse has the feet turned to the left, while on the reverse they are turned to the right. Under the mummy's feet is an object consisting of a staff with a small circle at each end and a hook near the mid-point. In each case, the design is surrounded by an inscription stating [among other things] that 'Memnon, child of Hemera ('Day'), sleeps (= lies dead)', and on the reverse 'Antipater, Philippa's child, sleeps'.[24] The inscription on the front is a mere statement of a mythological tradition. Memnon, the hero of the Aithiopis, is the son of the dawn goddess Eos, here identified with Hemera, Day.[25] His death in battle with Achilles and his mother's mourning is a well-known topic. Antipater and Philippa, who take the places of Memnon and Hemera on the reverse side, bear names that were given to many people. Like other specialists in the field, Campbell Bonner took this inscription as an example of black magic:[26]

> One can scarcely escape the conviction that this gem is actually an unusual sort of defixio. The person who made it, or had it made, proceeded upon a well-known principle of homoeopathic magic; as Memnon is dead, so is Antipatros to die. The vivid wish becomes a statement of actual fact, κοιμᾶται being present, all the more naturally because the mummy represents the victim as dead. This interpretation is borne out by the frequent occurrence of mummified figures on the lead curse tablets. Several of them are represented with head decorations similar to those seen on the British Museum gem, though the arrangement is never exactly the same.[27]

Among Bonner's papers, I found a letter regarding the gem and the 'head decorations' of the engraved image:

> The headdress must be the one worn by the Nile-god and the goddess of the inundation. It is a plant, and might be worn by Osiris as a symbol of germination. . . .[28]

In his book Bonner then expands upon this thought:

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[24] Ἡμέρας γόνος Μέμνων κοιμᾶται ΚΡΑΒΑΖΑΖΗΡΑΒΙΡΑΘΚΗΒΑ ΙΑΩ ΕΩ, Φιλίππας γόνος᾽ Ἀντίπατρος κοιμᾶται ΚΡΑΒΑΖΑΖΗΡΑΒΙΡΑΘΚΗΒΑ ΙΑΩ ΕΩ ὁ ὤν ἐγώ. For ὁ ὤν ἐγω see n. 38.

[25] Drexler 1886–90: 2032; Pausanias I 3,1.

[26] Bonner 1950: 89 n. 46, 108ff., 278 Pl. 7, 151.

[27] Bonner 1950: 108; Engemann 1979: 148f. Pl. 6, 14; Kieckhefer 1992: 30 fig. 3a.

[28] Letter from E. Stefanski, Editorial Assistant, The Oriental Institute, April 19th 1932.

> The decoration on the head of the mummy on the London gem may be regarded as a crown, or it may be an inexact representation of the three water plants which are regularly seen on the head of the Nile god. In either case the use of such a decoration for a mummy would be explained by the identification of the dead person with Osiris, who is king of the dead, and is also often connected with the Nile and with moisture in general.

Nevertheless in a footnote on the same page he also mentions that the three stalks

> might be considered as nails, which were so commonly used in a defixio.[29]

In my view, however, the headdress as well as the mummy-bandages indicate that the dead person is identified with Osiris, the symbol of resurrection.[30] Memnon was also resurrected: according to the myth his ashes were transformed into birds, and rose as the phoenix did.[31] Hemera, the name of Memnon's mother, sometimes occurs on magical gems in combination with Isis-designs,[32] so Memnon can be equated to Osiris, and his mourning mother Hemera to Isis. Like Memnon and Osiris, Antipater hopes to overcome death and to be resurrected.[33] Further support for this interpretation is provided by the object under the mummy's feet, identified by Bonner as an anchor or a sceptre.[34] Magical gems sometimes show the mummy standing on a crocodile, an Egyptian symbol of darkness and also time, which means that the dead person identified with Osiris will conquer darkness, time and death by being resurrected.[35] Here the crocodile is replaced by a sign that looks like the sickle-sword usually carried by Kronos-Saturn, or by figures identified with him,[36] and which also is known to be a symbol of time. Further, it should be noted that

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[29] Bonner 1950: 109 n. 24.

[30] For Osiris, see: Michel 2001a: 1–11; Sternberg 1982; Clerc and Leclant 1994; mummies with similar headgear: Michel 2001a: 6, 216, 217, 219.

[31] Ovid Metamorphosen 13, 587ff.

[32] Lapislazuli-frgt., Brandt et al. 1972: 122 Pl. 282, 2914.

[33] Similarly, Wortman 1966: 106. On the myth of Osiris: Wortman 1966: 62ff.; Griffiths 1982: 623ff.; Brunner-Traut 1989: 121ff.

[34] Bonner 1950: 108 n. 23.

[35] Black jasper, Michel 2001a: 3. On the crocodile: Seele 1947; Kákosy 1965; Brunner-Traut 1980: 796f. n. 96–99.

[36] Saturn's sickle: Obsidian, Michel 2001a: 48; black jasper, Delatte 1914; black jasper, Skoluda no. 100; mosaic in Mithraeum of Felicissimus, Ostia: Merkelbach 1983/84: 128 fig. 53; Merkelbach 1984: 295 fig. 38.

on magical gems mummies are often turned to the left, like the feet of the Memnon-mummy, because this direction is associated with the East, where the sun rises.[37] The right, on the other hand, symbolizes the west where the kingdom of the dead is located (as in the case of the feet of the Antipater-mummy). Finally the material of this gem is green jasper, a material often used for Osiris-themes: green—symbolizing vegetation and succession—is in general the colour of resurrection, and Egyptian wall-paintings therefore often show Osiris with a green face.[38] The amulet signifies that Antipater, being dead, hopes to be resurrected by being identified with Memnon and Osiris.[39] In general, indeed, I should observe that there is no black, aggressive or harmful magic in the magical gems, which are amulets and talismans.[40] They were carried by people who believed in their power, not buried and hidden like curse tablets; and of course, because of the small space they afforded, they were not suited to carry long spells.[41] Each of the rather small number of cases, like this jasper, that have been claimed to be instances of black magic has in my view simply been misinterpreted.[42]

Another haematite from the British Museum collection may be used to illustrate the field of medical magic (fig. 3).[43] The stone belongs to a group of four other haematite gems of the same shape

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[37] Erman 1934: 411; Grimm 1974: 78; Philipp 1986: 11f.; cf. magnetite, Bonner 1950: 255 Pl. 1, 13; Schwartz and Schwartz 1979: 168 on Pl. 35, 19.

[38] Hornung 1982: 180, 188 fig. 153, 190 fig. 155.

[39] This amulet differs in a number of respects from the usual configuration of such gems: 1) virtually identical repetition of the motif on obverse and reverse, as well as the style in which it has been carried out; 2) citation of the Graeco-Roman mythological parallel of Memnon; 3) inscription in Greek and use of the word κοιμᾶται, and finally inclusion of the phrase ὁ ὢν ἐγώ, which Bonner considered to be of Jewish origin (Exodus 3,14): Bonner 1950: 109, 225; Bonner 1951: 333f., Pl. 98, 50; Michel 2001a: 456. This item is therefore likely to derive from a different ethnic-religious context from the Egyptian-influenced gems that carry representations of Osiris or, more generally, mummies, but it draws upon analogous magico-religious ideas.

[40] We should however note that love-magic in general borders on malign magic. See below and n. 59.

[41] Gager 1992: 18: 'Defixiones differed from amulets in one fundamental respect; once they were inscribed, they were deposited in special locations where their powers took effect' . . . . 'yet the folding, rolling, and nailing was not designed primarily to prevent human eyes from reading the tablet's contents, for in virtually all cases the tablet would have been deposited where no human could have found it', 220ff.; PGM VII 451f. lists a number of typical sites; cf. also PGM IX Pl. I,7.

[42] For agressive and black magic on gems see Bonner 1950: 110ff.; Zwierlein-Diehl 1992: 97ff. on no. 28; Michel 2004.

[43] Michel 2001a: 179 = Bonner 1951: 328 Pl. 97, 30 = Smith 1981: 192f. fig. 8.

and size—an elongated, oblong oval, about four centimetres high—
with similiar designs (fig. 4–6).[44] On the obverse is a six-winged figure
with a cock's head—in other cases a donkey's or a lion's head. All
the gems of this group show the pantheistic creature holding a tablet
aloft with both hands inscribed IAW—an abbreviated form of Yahwe.[45]
Two small figures seem to caper around his knees; in other exam-
ples, these are replaced by palm trees. This group can be dated to
the fourth, maybe even the fifth, century CE. Morton Smith, well
known for his controversial study of 'Jesus the Magician', referred
this type to a Jewish context, Moses with the tablets of the Law:[46]
The two figures at the knees of Pantheos he interpreted as the Israeli-
tes dancing before the Golden Calf as Moses returned from Mt.
Sinai with the tablets (Exodus 32, 19 cf. 6); the variant with the
palm trees he referred to Elim, where the Children of Israel camped
because they found 'twelve springs of water and seventy palm-trees'
(Exodus 15, 27). The fact that the reverse of some of these stones
reads 'Stomach, digest' or 'for the stomach' is commented upon by
Morton Smith as follows:

> It's good to know that the revelation of the Law was not wholly use-
> less. The relation between great spiritual powers and trivial physical
> purposes is one of the perpetual paradoxes of magic; one explanation
> of it may be that stomach trouble does not seem trivial to those who
> suffer from it.[47]

The gems do not depict Moses surrounded by the dancing Israelites,
but a spiritual force or god driving out a demon of disease by hold-
ing aloft a tablet with the powerful divine name, in other words, a
form of exorcism.[48] Because diseases were personified as demons,
exorcism and power over demons were closely connected to power
over illness, and thus healing in general.[49] Similar demons of disease

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[44] Haematite, Michel 2001a: 180; haematites, Skoluda nos. 24.25 (unpubl.);
haematite, De Ridder 1911: 771 Pl. 29, 3456.
[45] Ganschinietz 1916: 715, Bonner 1950: 135; Fauth 1967: 131 (Lit.); Brashear
1995: 3588 s.v. iaw (Lit.).
[46] Smith 1981: 192.
[47] Smith ibid.
[48] On exorcism in general: Blau 1898: 23; Bonner 1943; Bonner 1944; Thraede
1969; Brown 1971; Kotansky 1988; Luck 1990: 206; Kotansky 1995a: 243ff., 261,
272f. n. 66; Ritoók 1992: 503ff. n. 17. Exorcism-inscriptions on gems: Kotansky
1994: no. 52, 270–300; chalcedony, Kotansky 1995b fig. p. 143; cornelian, Delatte
and Derchain 1964: 316f. no. 460 = Robert 1981 = Gager 1992: 234f.; Jordan
1991; Jordan and Kotansky 1997: 53ff.; Michel 2002.
[49] Solomon, for instance, who enjoyed power over demons, is for this reason also

are also to be found on two haematite fragments, an unpublished
one from the Getty collection in Malibu (fig. 7) and another one
from the British Museum (fig. 8).[50] These demons have their hands
bound behind them and turn to flee like the small figures of the
gem already mentioned. But instead of a tablet, here the demons
are trying to elude a long pterygoma-inscription: Τάνταλ(ε) διψάς
αἷμα πίε.[51] A pterygoma—an inscription, in which the first line is
repeated, dropping the initial letter at each repetition, until only the
final letter remains at the lowest point of the pattern—is also a form
of exorcism:[52] just as the inscription becomes progressively shorter
until it disappears, so the demon or disease should decrease and
finally disappear (*deletio morbi*).[53] Whereas, for example, on two amulets
made of agate the 'wing' is employed against fever and headache,[54]
in the case of our haematite fragments, the flowing blood is seen as
a demon and threatened by the inscription, which commands Tantalos
who in myth is always thirsty, to drink the blood. In other words,
he is a threat to the blood-demon, which either must stop flowing

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able to heal: Önnerfors 1991: 13ff. (exorcism, expulsion of diseases), 15ff. (threat
directed against a fever, 'Solomon is after you!'), 30ff. (exorcism, *evocationes morbo-
rum*), 31f. no.5 (against sore throat); id. 1993: 173f. n. 36, 178f.; Duling 1983: 946f.;
Vikan 1984: 79 n. 93; Walter 1989/90: 35ff.; copper-foil lamella from Evron in
W. Galilee: Kotansky 1991a: 117f. Anm.78 (Lit.), id. 1991b (prayer against a fever
personified as a demon) = id. 1994: 312–25 no. 56; id. 1995: 268; Jordan and
Kotansky 1997: 70ff. (spell for aching feet). Iatromagical amuletic gems for exor-
cism: greenish jasper, van den Hoek et al. 1994: 49f. n. 32 (ΦΥΤΕ ΔΑΙΜWΝ ΥΔΡΟ-
ΦΟΒΑ ΑΠΟ ΤΟΥ ΦΟΡΟΥΝΤΟC ΤΟΥΤΟ ΤΟ ΦΥΛΑΚΤΗΡΙ[Ο]Ν) = Bonner 1950: 78;
glass, Harrauer 1992: 40f. Pl. 8,1; lapislazuli, Daniel and Maltomini 1989: 93f. Pl.3,
a.b; agate, Neverov 1978: 833f. Pl. 176, 50; agate, Kotansky 1980: 184f. fig. 3.4 =
Geissen 1984: 223–228 Pl. 16a.b; unidentified green stone, Bonner 1950: 67f., 271
Pl. 5, 111.

[50] Michel 2001a: 382.

[51] For the inscription: Heim 1892: 276, 18ff.; Seyrig 1923: 1ff.; Bonner 1950:
88, 276 on Pl. 7, 144; Barb 1952: 271ff., 273 n. 5; Delatte and Derchain 1964:
258f. on no. 364; Önnerfors 1993: 207 n. 106 App. 9.

[52] Kropp 1930: 139; Dornseiff 1922: 63.

[53] The principle is applied particularly in the case of fevers; thus Quintus
Serenus Sammonicus (c. 200 CE) recommends writing out the word Abracadabra
in a wing-formation to drive out a malaria (Lib. Medic. 944–949): Pépin 1950:
89f., Önnerfors 1991: 19f., 25ff., 62f. (Lit.); PGM XVIIIb; Metzger 1968: 104;
Rothschuh 1978: 23 n. 26; Kotansky 1980: 184ff. on fig. 3.4. Examples of 'wing-
figures' in medical or prophylactic contexts: Daniel and Maltomini 1990–92: I no. 1,
no. 3, no. 9, no. 11, II 7–11. In general on the iatromagical texts among the mag-
ical papyri, see Brashear 1995: 3499 (Lit.).

[54] Agate, Neverov 1978: 833f. Pl. 176, 50; Agate, Kotansky 1980: 184f. fig. 3.4 =
Geissen 1984: 223–228 Pl. 16a.b.

or be quenched by Tantalos.[55] That both stones are amulets against bleeding is also implied by the material haematite, which was believed able to stop the flow of blood.[56] This belief persisted into the sixteenth century, as is shown by a woodcut in the *Hortus sanitatis* (c. 1507) in which a nosebleed is being stopped by a haematite (fig. 9). Image, inscription and material all complement one another. In the case of the Pantheos-gem discussed above (fig. 3), by contrast, demons (of illness) are driven away not by means of a reducing inscription but by demonstrative display of the name of the Highest God.[57]

The third function of magical gems is their use as love-charms. Due to their small size, however, gems were not particularly well-suited to this kind of magical task. *Philtrokatadesmoi* and *agogai*, forcible love spells, as we know them from the magical papyri, consist of long incantations, texts to be written out, and the use of *ousiai*, items, such as hair or nail-clippings, belonging to the physical body of the subject.[58] But such wider contexts are missing in the case of the surviving gems.[59] A serpentine in a German private-collection (fig. 10),

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[55] For the Tantalus-charm employed against bleeding: Heim 1892: 276, 18ff.: *in tria folia lauri scribis de sanguine ipsius (sc. qui patitur)* '*Tantale pie, pie Tantale, Tantale pie, et de suco porri virginis lavas folia ipsa, et das ei bibere*'; see also Önnerfors 1993: 207 n. 106, App. 9; Seyrig 1923: 1ff.; Bonner 1950: 87f., 276 on Pl. 7, 144; Barb 1952: 271ff.; Delatte and Derchain 1964: 258f. on no. 364; Michel 1995: 383f. on fig. 14. Cf.: haematite, Bonner 1950: 276 Pl. 7, 144; haematite, Delatte and Derchain 1964: 258f. no. 364; haematite, Sternberg, 1990: 73 Pl. 27, 459; haematite, Michel 1995: 385, fig. 14a.b; other examples—haematite, Festugière 1960/61: 287f. Pl. 1, 1; haematite, Michel 2001a: 383, 384.

[56] Hopfner 1927: 748 s.v. Lithika; PGM XII 410; Gundel 1969: 391; Barb 1969a: 305f., 1969b: 78 n. 4, 80 n. 3.

[57] The small flanking trees are often found on fifth- and sixth century Coptic funerary stelai, which carry a female orant, dressed in a *palla* and veil, between two palm-trees. The earliest examples date from the late fourth cent.; the type is known already in the third. Funerary stelai from the Fayyûm: Kamel 1987: 164, Pl. 82, 173; Jonas sarcophagus: Sichtermann 1983: 247, fig. 83.

[58] On *philtrokatadesmoi (defixiones amatoriae)* and *agogai*: Graf 1996: 160f.; Winkler 1991; Luck 1990: 111f. On love-magic in the papyri: Brashear 1995: 3502. For binding and binding-magic in general: Brashear 1990: 55 on 47 (Lit.).

[59] Love-magic on gems, e.g. Eros or Psyche, bound, standing in front of a pillar on which there stands the female griffin of Nemesis, bearing the inscription ΔIKAIWC. (a) Psyche bound: red jasper, Schwartz and Schwartz 1979: 192 Pl. 39, 58; green jasper, Delatte and Derchain 1964: 238 no. 328; brown jasper, Skoluda no. 33. (b). Eros bound: haematite, Abd El-Mohsen and El-Khashab 1963: 153 no. 21, Pl. 25, 20; cornelian, Berry 1969: 71 no. 130; cornelian, Mandrioli Bizzarri 1987: 136 no. 272; green jasper, Neverov 1978 844 Pl. 174, 35; green jasper, Bonner 1950: 279 Pl. 8, 161; green jasper, Private collection Germany; green, red and black jaspers as well as glass, Le Blant 1896: 62f. no. 161–164, 167 Pl. 1, 165.166; bloodstone, Schwartz and Schwartz 1979: 193 Pl. 39, 60; bloodstone,

published by Blanchet in 1923,[60] shows (though the mottling of the stone renders the scene almost unrecognisable) Aphrodite, the goddess of love, bound, and her lover Ares, who is fully armed and shown as Mars Gradivus, holding the end of the chain.[61] A long inscription (the so called Iaeô-palindrome) is carved on the reverse.[62] Bonner thought that a stone like this '*might be appropriate for a soldier who wished to withdraw from an embarrassing love affair*'.[63] But such an interpretation is quite beside the point. We must once again look at the evidence of the magical papyri. The Great Codex Paris gives this 'wondrous spell for binding a lover':

> Take wax [or clay] from a potter´s wheel and make two figures, a male and a female. Make the male in the form of Ares fully armed, holding a sword in his left hand and threatening to plunge it into the right side of her neck. And make her with her arms behind her back and down on her knees.[64]

The praxis is to be continued by piercing the female figure with thirteen copper needles and writing a long spell on a lead tablet. Finally, the Iaeô-palindrome is to be written on the other side of the lead tablet. Figurines and lead tablets nearly identical to the one described here have indeed been found.[65] The gem-design however represents the central act of binding straightforwardly in place of the pierced clay figure in the text: Aphrodite is bound and held by Ares. The Iaeô-palindrome is carved on the reverse, which conforms to part of the instructions in the codex-recipe. Although Bonner rejected Blanchet's claim that the palindrome is an essential part of love charms, the correspondence on this point between recipe and gem

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Skoluda no. 32; red jasper, Dimitrova-Milceva 1980: 99f. no. 280; also green jasper, Southesk 1908: 185 Pl. 14, N 67. In general: Michel 2004.

[60] Green yellow and black spotted serpentine, Skoluda no. 98 = Delatte and Derchain 1964: 241 no. 330; = Blanchet 1923: 220ff.

[61] For this design as well as Ares as the one who is bound and held by Aphrodite see: perforated quarz, and green jaspers, Delatte and Derchain 1964: 241f. nos. 331–333; green jasper, Firence Museo Archeologico Inv. amulets 21 (unpubl.); lapis-lazuli and haematite, Delatte and Derchain 1964: 243 nos. 334, 335.

[62] ΙΑΕΩΒΑΦΡΕΝΕΜΟΥΝΟΘΙΛΑΡΙΚΡΙΦΙΑΕΥΕΑΙΦΙΡΚΙΡΑΛΙΘΟΝ ΥΟΜΕΝΕΡΦΑΒ-WEAI: PGM I 140, 195f.; Blanchet 1923: 227; Bonner 1950: 141, 204; Brashear 1995: 3587 s.v. οθιλαρι κριφι (Lit.), 3594 s.v. πεκρηφ (Lit.), 3596 s.v. pekrhf (Lit.).

[63] Bonner 1950: 43.

[64] PGM IV. 296, Betz 1985: 44.

[65] du Bourguet 1975: 255–57; Kambitsis 1976: 213–223 Pl. 30.31. Text and activated analogues: Martinez 1991: 8–15; Daniel and Maltomini 1990–1992: no. 46–51; Gager 1992: 94ff. On the theme in general: Brashear 1992: 81f.; Graf 1996: 121ff., 124ff., 137f.

speaks in its favour.[66] We may then say that the gem represents a radically simplified version of the essential elements of the *philtro-katadesmos*, in keeping with its limited resources.[67] Forcible love magic is fairly often symbolised on the magical gems by way of an assim-ilation between the female object of desire and bound Aphrodite (fig. 11).[68] The motif of Ares and Aphrodite, with the two deities embracing one another, or simply standing side by side, is also pre-ferred for ordinary love magic (fig. 12).[69] The frequent choice of these particular divinities in the context of love magic may also have been prompted by an astrological consideration: although the plan-ets Venus and Mars had opposed effects and areas of responsibility, in some systems both are associated with the liver, which was believed to be the seat of desires and passions.[70]

The modern after-life of magical gems must not be neglected. The first serious account of magical gems, written by Macarius and Chiflet, appeared in 1657, and was illustrated by numerous copper-plate engravings:[71] The book quickly became famous and their simplified copperplates have served as models for many lapidaries right up to the present day. In every large collection in the world are to be found gems which are copies of these plates. An impressive chal-cedony in the collection of the University Museum of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, for example, is a copy made from Chiflet (fig. 13–14).[72] Another example is the well-known amulet from the collection of the Kelsey Museum in Ann Arbor with the design of the cock-headed, snake-legged god 'Abrasax' (fig. 15–16).[73] The reverse bears an identical copy of the inscription. One might wonder whether the

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[66] Bonner 1950: 204; Blanchet 1923: 232.

[67] Cf. Kotansky 1995b.

[68] Haematites, Bonner 1950: 279 Pl. 8, 157.158; green jasper, Michel 2001a: 75; another green jasper, Delatte and Derchain 1964: 238 no. 328.

[69] Haematite, Delatte and Derchain 1964: 244 no. 335bis (no fig.); haematite, Michel 2001a: 83, 84; blue glass, Bonner 1950: 279 Pl. 8, 159; haematite, Zwierlein-Diehl 1991: 152 Pl. 87, 2181.

[70] On systems of melothesia: Gundel 1969 286f.; Michel 1995: 380 n. 2. The notion that the interaction of the two might compensate for their respective harmful effects is still to be found in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century astrological texts: Gundel 1969: 279, 368, 390; Biedermann 1991: 293f. s.v. Mars, 441f. s.v. Venus; Michel 2004. For Ares associated with the liver on amulets: Michel 1995: 383f.; id. 2001a: 385–386.

[71] Chiflet and Macarius 1657.

[72] Vermeule 1957: 307. On a copy cut by the Nuremberg lapidary C. Dorsch for the Ebermayer collection: Michel 2001b.

[73] Bonner 1950: 281f. Pl. 8, 173.

gem was not made first, and the plate might just be an illustration of it, but the material—pink agate—is not common for ancient gems and implies that the piece is modern. The manner of polishing, technically perfect execution, and on occasion even the gem's size are characteristic of magical amulets that were made in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Another modern gem, a highly polished bloodstone in the British Museum (fig. 17) also corresponds to one of the engravings in Chiflet (fig. 18).[74] On the obverse a large objected figure stands on a column-base, its grave-clothes denoted by cross-hatching. The feet are pressed together, forming a sort of *rilievo* base, with the body spreading out above. The figure's arms are crossed over the breast like a mummy's, but the hands are untrammelled, and carefully worked. The deeply-moulded, bearded face, framed by long strands of hair, is plain to the viewer. Four naked figures with arms crossed are arranged on a lunette whose base forms the ground of the entire design, and seem to be bowing to one another. The one at either end has a single large wing and is joined by two lines to the main figure. There are stars within the lunette or globe-segment, which is divided into several sectors by lines, and a single star above to right and left. Finally, the objected figure is flanked by inscriptions.[75] On the reverse is a cross-hatched mummy-figure similar to that on the obverse. The figure is surrounded by eight stars and also charakteres and letters.

The cutting is superb: the body of the naked figures is cleverly built up in relief, all details carefully represented. The profiles of the miniature figures are finely modelled, as is the face of the main one, with finely detailed eyes and mouth. The large-scale composition, with its axial symmetry and extensive voids round the figures, and the way the figures surge together to form a close-knit group, recall Trecento composition (e.g. Giotto), while the pyramidal arrangement of figures above the cosmic globe gives the scheme a Renaissance air. This amulet is so similar in material and design to a copper-plate engraving of Chiflet's (fig. 18) that we may take it as the original from which the illustration was taken: Chiflet says that it was in fact drawn from a bloodstone then in his possession.[76] The illustration reverses the design and inscription, but the correspondence

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[74] Michel 2001a: 609 = Smith 1981: 189.
[75] A.A. Barb took similar signs on an analogous gem, Michel 2001a: 611, as Hebrew letters denoting the name of Yahwe: Barb 1953: 218.
[76] Chiflet and Macarius 1657: 52, 123ff. Pl. 19, 78.

between the two can be traced in detail, apart from a few minimal differences in the upper register of the inscription, which may be ascribed to oversights or copyist's errors on the part of the engraver Jacobus Verdius (Giovanni Verdi).

According to Chiflet, the design represented the 'Πατὴρ τῶν ολῶν', whose stance symbolises utter tranquillity in Epicurus' sense; the winged genii as angels praying on the cosmic globe.[77] King suspected that it was a symbol of the Templars or the Rosicrucians.[78] On the other hand, Bonner considered that *'it probably represents some Renaissance scholar's conception of a Gnostic 'universal father' with a group of cosmic spirits dancing on the celestial sphere'*,[79] while Morton Smith wanted to link it to Psalm 99, *'Dominus regnavit . . qui sedet super Cherubim . . .'* (The Lord reigns . . . He sits enthroned upon the Cherubim).[80] The main figure appears on a good number of gems, some of which give the impression of being mechanical imitations of this piece, or which represent only one of the two images here, or again associate it with different motifs—other symbols: the pentagram, even in some cases a horoscope (fig. 19–20).[81] Since these motives were extremely widespread, we may take it that the gem was a well-known emblem belonging to some appropriate group or association in the seventeenth century. The circle which often appears in the field was a symbol of the Freemasons, for example.

The designs and inscriptions of the gems that were created in the (early) modern period continue in the tradition of antique magical gems, and are so many testimonies to the close interest in antiquity and magic evinced and nurtured by alchemists and magicians during the mediaeval period, and indeed throughout the centuries to our own day.[82] They were not made primarily to deceive or to cheat either dealers or customers, but were often intended as amulets in the tradition of ancient magic, and worn because people believed in their efficacy.

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[77] Ibid.

[78] King 1887: 373ff., 404, 407 Pl. H, 5; Zwierlein-Diehl 1991: 291 on no. 2698.

[79] Bonner 1951: 305f., 338 on Pl. 99, 62, esp. 306; Zwierlein-Diehl 1991: 291 on no. 2698 (the genii symbolising the four seasons).

[80] Smith 1981: 189.

[81] Chiflet and Macarius 1657: 52 Pl. 19, 77; bloodstone imitating plasma, Zwierlein-Diehl 1991: 290f. Pl. 210, 2698; cornelian, obsidian, moss agate, grey-green jasper, bloodstone, Michel 2001a: 611, 612, 614–616. Variant with a dragon-like creature, or a bird: chalcedony fragment, Delatte and Derchain 1964: 159 no. 207; sardonyx, Michel 2001a: 613. For a full collection of analogous pieces: Michel 2004.

[82] Zazoff and Zazoff 1984: 30ff.

Abbreviations

ASOR: American Society for Oriental Research
BAR: *British Archaeological Reports*
EPRO: *Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain*,
                         Leiden
LÄ: *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* I–VI (Wiesbaden 1975–1986)
LIMC: *Lexikon iconographicum mythologiae classicae* I–VIII (Zürich
                         1981–1997)
Ovid Metamorphosen: Tassilo von Scheffer 1948, *Ovid, Metamorphosen* (Wiesbaden)
Pausanias: E. Meyer 1954, *Pausanias, Beschreibung Griechenlands* (Zürich)
PGM: Preisendanz K. 1941, *Papyri Graecae Magicae* II u. III (Leipzig,
                         Berlin, hrsg. A. Henrichs Stuttgart 1973/73, Index 1944
                         ungedruckt)
RE: *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*
Skoluda: Private colletion W. Skoluda, Hamburg, Germany
Sternberg 1990:   'Geschnittene Steine und Schmuck der Antike', *Auktionskatalog
                         Frank Sternberg, Auktion XXIV, 19. und 20. Nov. 1990* (Zürich)

Figure 1. Haematite, 2,3 × 1,9 × 0,35 cm, British Museum, London, Inv. G 191,
Michel 2001a: 173, Drawings: British Museum.
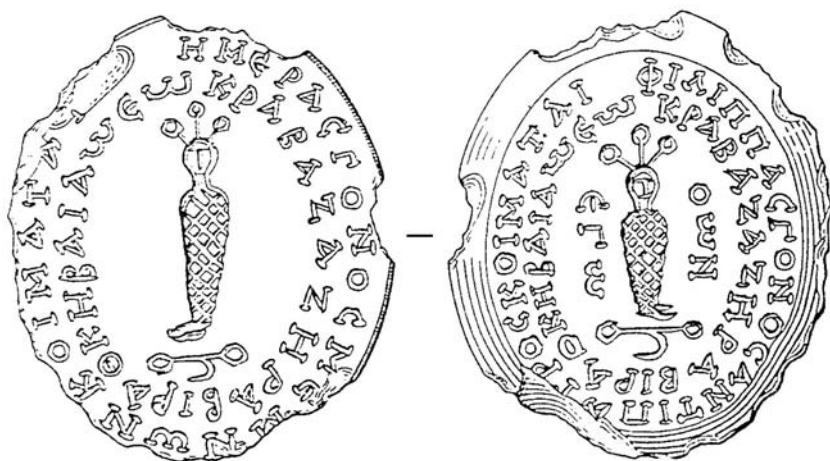
Figure 2. Jasper, 2,6 × 2,2 × 0,3 cm, British Museum, London, Inv. G 241, Michel
2001a: 8, Drawings: British Museum.

SIMONE MICHEL
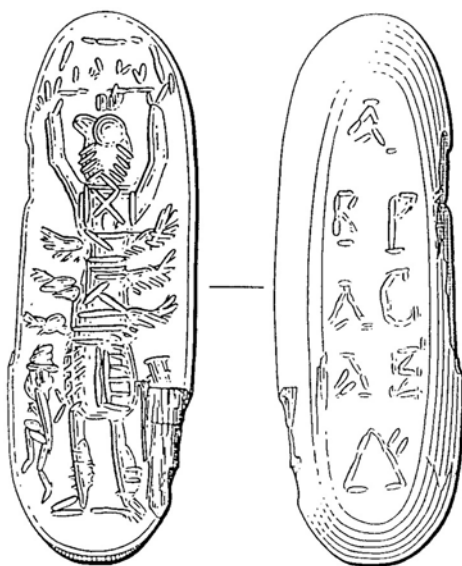
Figure 3. Haematite, 4,1 × 1,3 × 0,3 cm, British Museum, London, Inv. G 470,
Michel 2001a: 179, Drawings: British Museum.
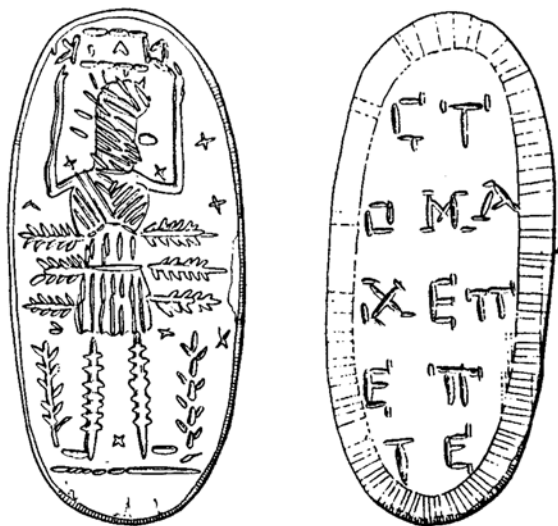
Figure 4. Haematite, 4,4 × 1,9 × 0,3 cm, British Museum, London, Inv. G 497,
Michel 2001a: 180, Drawings: British Museum.

Figure 5. Haematite, 2,7 × 1,78 cm, Skoluda no. 24, Photos: S. Michel.

Figure 6. Haematite, 3,8 × 1,33 cm, Skoluda no. 25, Photos: S. Michel.

Figure 7. Haematite fragment, 2,5 ×
1,15 cm, J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu,
Inv. 83.AN.437.50, Photos: S. Michel.

Figure 8. Haematite fragment, 3,1 ×
1,35 cm, British Museum, London, Inv.
G 1986, 1–5, 108, Michel 2001a: 382,
Drawings: British Museum.

Figure 9. Woodcut from *Hortus sanitatis*, Rothschuh 1978: 48 fig. 10.

Figure 10. Serpentine, 3, 49 × 3, 06 cm, Skoluda no. 98, Delatte & Derchain 1964: 241 no. 330, Photos: S. Michel.

Figure 12. Blue glass, 2,3 × 2,1 cm, Kelsey Museum, Ann Arbor, Inv. 26084, Bonner 1950: D 159, Photo: S. Michel.

Figure 11. Haematite, 2,18 × 1,75, American Numismatic Society, New York, Inv. Newell 32, Bonner 1950: D 157, Photo: S. Michel.
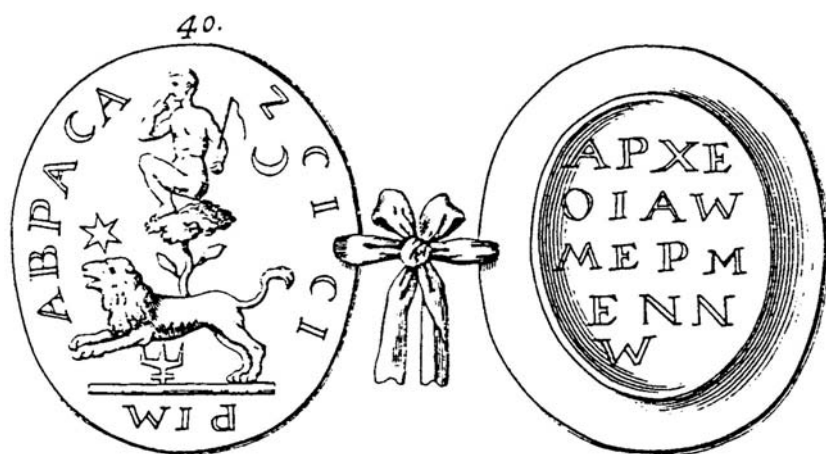
Figure 13. Copperplate Chiflet & Macarius 1657: Pl. 10, 40.

Figure 14. Chalcedony, 3, 21 × 2, 7 cm, University Museum of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Inv. 29−128−2141, Vermeule 1957: 307, Photo: S. Michel.

Figure 15. Copperplate Chiflet & Macarius 1657: Pl. 3, 14.

Figure 16. Pink agate, 3,6 × 3,1, Kelsey Museum, Ann Arbor, Inv. 26169, Bonner 1950: D 173, Photos: S. Michel.

Figure 17. Bloodstone, 4,4 × 3,4 × 0,6 cm, British Museum, London, Inv.
G 25, Michel 2001a: 609, Photos: S. Michel.

Figure 18. Copperplate Chiflet & Macarius 1657: Pl. 19, 77.78.

Figure 19. Cornelian, 2,9 × 1,9 × 0,6, British Museum, London, Inv. G 360, Michel 2001a: 611, Drawings: British Museum.

Figure 20. Moss agate, 4, 25 × 2,5 × 0, 9, British Museum, London, Inv. G 144, Michel 2001a: 614, Drawings: British Museum.

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JEWISH MYSTICISM IN THE GEONIC PERIOD:
THE PRAYER OF RAV HAMNUNA SAVA*

Klaus Herrmann

Introduction

In the last 20 years not many other areas of Jewish studies have experienced the boom that early Jewish mysticism has. The interest in this field was in no small measure spurred on by the publication of the *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, edited by Peter Schäfer in 1981, which became the textual basis for all further scholarly works in the field.[1] Ever since, several monographs and numerous essays have been appearing on the subject every year—apparently this not very extensive body of writings continues to exert a quite strong fascination on scholars. Those who are active in this special field are always astonished to note that just when it seems that all the theses imaginable on the origins and social background of these writings have been discussed, a new explanation is offered. It is well-known that Gershom Scholem tried to place early Jewish mysticism, which found its literary voice in the Hekhalot writings, in the center of Rabbinic Judaism, whereby we should remember that he formulated his thesis in obvious opposition to 19th-century scholars of Judaism, from whom he wanted to disassociate himself.[2] As indicated by the title, *Jewish*

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[1] In collaboration with M. Schlüter und H.G. von Mutius, Tübingen 1981; the Synopse was followed by the edition of the *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen, 1984), a concordance in two volumes (*Konkordanz zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, Tübingen 1986 und 1988) and four volumes of the German translation (*Übersetzung der Hekhalot Literatur*, Tübingen 1987–1994). I would like to thank Peter Schäfer, who gave me full access to the database of the Hekhalot project and the ongoing project to work out a comprehensive picture of the magical texts from the Cairo Genizah collection.

[2] See Scholem's pamphlet מתוך הירהורים על חכמת ישראל, first published in לוח הארץ, Tel Aviv 1944, pp. 94–112, and republished by A. Shapira in דברים בנו, vol. II,

Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition, which Scholem chose for his major contribution to this field, published in 1960,[3] it is evident that according to him the three mentioned areas have to be seen in a close relationship.[4]

Ephraim Urbach, renowned for his standard work on the intellectual world of the Rabbis *Haz"l—Emunot we-Deot*, known in English as *The Sages. Their Concepts and Their Beliefs*,[5] published his criticism of Scholem's thesis in, of all places, the Jubilee volume honoring Scholem on the occasion of his 70th birthday in 1967.[6] Scholem knew very well how to appreciate this birthday present: at any rate in his personal copy of this Jubilee volume (now in the Scholem Library in Jerusalem) we find some interesting marginal notes on this criticism,[7] only one of which, unlike all his other corrections and notations, is not penned in Hebrew, namely the one commenting on the passages where Urbach analyses the famous story of "the four rabbis who entered the *pardes*" which is transmitted in the rabbinical (*Tosefta, Yerushalmi* and *Bavli*)[8] as well as in the mystical tradition (*Hekhalot Zuṭarti* and *Merkavah Rabbah*)[9] and therefore serves as a cornerstone of Scholem's interpretation of Talmudic lore in the light of the mystical one.[10] Scholem reasoned that the *pardes* story should

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Tel Aviv 1985, pp. 385–403. This pamphlet was recently translated into English by A. Shapira, *On the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time & Other Essays*, Philadelphia 1997, and into German by P. Schäfer (in collaboration with G. Necker and U. Hirschfelder) under the title *Die Wissenschaft vom Judentum. Gershom Scholem Judaica 6*, Frankfurt a.M. 1999.

[3] A second revised edition was published in 1965.

[4] Especially the term "Jewish Gnosticism" was questioned again and again, but this is not the place to look more closely at the problem of Judaism and Gnosticism; on this subject see J. Dan's article "Jewish Gnosticism", first published in *JSQ* 2, 1995, pp. 309–328, and now republished in id., *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. I: Late Antiquity, Northvale NJ—London 1998, pp. 1–25.

[5] Jerusalem, 1969; the English translation by I. Abrahams is based on the second Hebrew edition and was published 1979 in Jerusalem.

[6] המסורות על תורת הסוד בתקופת התנאים, in: *Studies in Mysticism and Religion presented to Gershom G. Scholem on his Seventieth Birthday*, Jerusalem 1967, pp. 1–28 (Hebrew section), here p. 14. See also J. Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. I: Late Antiquity, Northvale NJ—London, 1998, p. XXVI.

[7] Scholem's marginal glosses could form the basis for several dissertations, with respect not only to scholarly questions but also to biographical-psychological ones.

[8] tHag 2,1 (fol. 77b); yHag 2,1 (fol. 77b); bHag 14–15b; cf. also ShirR on Song 1:4. On the whole subject see the analyses by Halperin, *The Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature*, New Haven 1983, pp. 86–92.

[9] *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §§ 344f. (*Hekhalot Zuṭarti*) und §§671f. (*Merkavah Rabbah*).

[10] Cf. J. Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. I: Late Antiquity, Northvale NJ—London, 1998, p. XXIIIf.

be assigned to the mystical tradition particularly because of Aqiva's warning to his companions (recorded only in the Bavli) which, according to him, was a direct precursor of the ecstatic-visionary ascent tradition and, in fact, only made sense in the context of this tradition.

> R. Aqiva said: When you come to the stones of pure marble say not "Water! Water!. For it is written: *None who speaks lies may endure before my eyes*.[11]

When Urbach discusses this crucial phrase, he argues: "These words appear neither in the Tosefta nor in the Yerushalmi. This fact, plus the change brought about in the Bavli tradition through the handing down of the beginning of the baraita, resulting in the loss of the link between the visual and the factual half [German: *Bild und Sachhälfte*], are reason enough to doubt that this sentence is at all an integral part of the tradition of the four [rabbis]." Thus, in contrast to Scholem, Urbach emphasizes the disparity between the image conveyed by rabbinical sources and that found in Hekhalot literature. At this point Scholem could not help but express his astonishment in the margin of the text with the German exclamation "Oho!" As a matter of fact, we could say that to a certain extent Scholem's reaction seems to anticipate later studies on this question, which, however, only started after his death in 1982.

Urbach's argument was first supported by David Halperin in his form-critical study *The Merkavah in Rabbinic Literature*,[12] in which he argued that the rabbinical Merkavah texts show no evidence of ecstatic mysticism. Later on, in his 1988 monograph, *The Faces of the Chariot*,[13] he developed this argument into an antithesis, according to which the *'Am ha-'ares*, the uneducated masses who opposed the Rabbis, were the real-life adherents of Hekhalot literature. This literature, Halperin wrote, was really nothing but the "revolutionary manifesto of the Jewish masses," which reflected their struggle against the rabbinical elite as well as for recognition in Jewish society in antiquity—"an unequal and frustrating struggle which they waged with magic as their chief weapon."[14]

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[11] Ps 101:7.
[12] New Haven 1983.
[13] *The Faces of the Chariot. Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision*, Tübingen 1988.
[14] It is interesting to note that this class struggle thesis was formulated just one year before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Peter Schäfer also emphasizes the anti-rabbinical tendency as well as the magical radicalness of these writings, which, however, are to be seen as the expression of the opposition of elitist circles and in no way as the protest of the *'Am ha-'areṣ*. In his study, *The Hidden and Manifest God*, first published in German under the title *Der Verborgene und Offenbare Gott* (Tübingen 1991), he writes:

> The circles that formed this literature were engaged in nothing less than a radical transformation of the conception of the so-called classical or normative Judaism, which for centuries was determined by the rabbis; and this transformation, which in reality equals a revolution, is inadequately understood by the term *mysticism*.[15]

The rebellious character of the Hekhalot literature is also recognized by Joseph Dan, who sees the evidence for this, however, not so much in the magic components of the texts as in a variety of elements, in particular their special and unique terminology,[16] which hint at the existence of a well-defined, distinctive group of spiritualists who somehow separated from the mainstream body of rabbinic culture and created its own matrix of activities, literary creativity, terminology and spiritual endeavors.[17]

Extremist positions virtually provoke a mediatory position, a synthesis. This is what Michael Swartz believed he had found, as he formulated it in his *Scholastic Magic. Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton NY 1996); whereby he concentrates on the so-called *Śar Torah* tradition:

> The *Śar Torah* literature thus cannot be characterized either as the product of the ignorant masses or of the scholarly class. For Jewish society in late antiquity was not composed merely of an elite and a lower class of *am ha-'arez*; we have seen that there were synagogue functionaries, scribes, non-intellectual professional reciters (*tannaim*), and a complex network of professions and social groups. These groups were literate and acquainted with much rabbinic law and lore; and yet they still stood outside the central circles of the rabbinic academy and may at times have been in tension with them.[18]

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[15] Quoted according to the English translation by Aubrey Pomerance, Albany, 1992, p. 5.

[16] Cf. also A. Kuyt, *The 'Descent' to the Chariot*, Tübingen 1995.

[17] *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. V, p. XIX.

[18] Here p. 220. One almost feels tempted to ask—with tongue in cheek—whether the American middle-class as the actual upholders of their society served as the model for Swartz's thesis.

Could the number of possible and impossible theses now be exhausted? In recent years Rachel Elior has tried to locate Merkavah mysticism within the priestly tradition, thereby interpreting the Hekhalot texts above all, to put it briefly, as an answer to the destruction of the Second Temple. The thesis about the origin of mystical movements as a response to crises and catastrophes is, of course, not new, but even in the field of mystical studies the "revolutionary phase" (as expressed by Halperin and Schäfer) seems to have given way to a more conservative one.[19]

The Prayer of Hamnuna Sava, the magical texts of the Cairo Genizah and mysticism in the Geonic period

It is thus all the more astonishing that despite the great interest in this literature there are still several smaller works associated with it which have been completely neglected by scholars up to now. As it happens, the previously cited study by Michael Swartz is devoted to precisely the theme which is also the main motif of *Tefillat Hamnuna Sava* (henceforth: THS), the prayer by Hamnuna the Elder: namely, attaining a better understanding of the Torah with the aid of magic practices.[20]

There are various reasons for the complete neglect of the *THS* in research on early Jewish mysticism. The first and main reason: The prayer is still in manuscript form and was not edited in the *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, which forms the textual basis for scholarship in this field, because none of the manuscripts selected for the *Synopse* contains this writing.[21] For those scholars familiar with manuscripts

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[19] Cf., e.g., her article "From Earthly Temple to Heavenly Shrines. Prayer and Sacred Song in the Hekhalot Literature and Its Relation to Temple Traditions", *JSQ* 4, 1997, p. 223: ". . . it was in reaction to the destruction of the earthly Temple that the creators of the tradition of the 'descent to the Merkavah' and the 'ascent to the Hekahlot' conceived the heavenly shrines, as depicted in the Hekhalot literature, in a degree of detail and variety unparalleled in any Jewish literary work of Late Antiquity. These constructs of the imagination arose as a spiritual response to the sense of loss, desolation and deprivation caused by the horrors of reality".

[20] Parallel to M. Swartz's *Scholastic Magic* another study by Rebecca Lesses, the doctoral thesis which she submitted to Brandeis University in 1995, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power*, was written. Despite the different approaches both scholars agree on one point: not to include the *THS* in their work.

[21] I would like to note that Professor Schäfer had already collected MSS containing

it is not difficult to find *THS*. At present, at least five Genizah fragments of the prayer are known to me, the oldest dating back to the 11th century, and it is extant in more than two dozen medieval manuscripts. Therefore the prayer is better documented in manuscripts than other well-known Hekhalot writings such as *Hekhalot Zutarti, Ma'aseh Merkavah* or *Merkavah Rabbah*.[22] The manuscript tradition reveals a vivid picture of the transmission of the *THS*, which belongs both to the Oriental tradition of esoteric writings as well as to the European mystical lore of the *ḥaside ashkenaz* and Kabbalistic circles.[23] But even if the *THS* had already been published, it would hardly have played a major role in the ongoing debate on early Jewish mysticism for this—as we have seen—is still focused on the question of the origin and beginnings of Merkavah mysticism, trying to establish an overall picture of this phenomenon.

We only need to take a brief look at the *THS* text to realize that the prayer was clearly composed at a different time than most of the texts contained in the *Synopse* and can thus be dated in that phase of Jewish mysticism which has yet to be duly treated by researchers in mysticism—the Geonic period. A reader of Scholem's epochal work *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*[24] will register with astonishment that there was apparently no mysticism in that period—at least not in the *Major Trends*. Scholem jumps from the chapter on the beginnings of Jewish mysticism in the rabbinic period directly to the chapter depicting the world of the *ḥaside askenaz* ("the pious of Germany"), who flourished in the 11th–12th centuries, as if there had been a gap of 500 years when mysticism ceased to exist.[25] Not until 1971 does Scholem's entry on the "Kabbalah" in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* provide a brief historical overview of this time, under the subheading "Mysticism in the Geonic period", albeit an extremely

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this prayer of incantation, but then, because of my interest in it, refrained from doing redactional work on the *THS* within the framework of the Berlin project on early Jewish mysticism and magic.

[22] On the manuscript tradition see P. Schäfer, *Handschriften zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, in: id., *Hekhalot-Studien*, Tübingen 1988, pp. 154–233, as well as the introductions to the German translation of the Hekhalot corpus *Übersetzung der Hekhalot-Literatur*, vol. I–IV, ed. by P. Schäfer in collaboration with H.-J. Becker, K. Herrmann, L. Renner, C. Rohrbacher-Stickers and St. Siebers, Tübingen 1987–1994.

[23] The textual history will be discussed in detail in the forthcoming edition of *THS*, which I am going to prepare for publication.

[24] First published New York 1941.

[25] Cf. J. Dan, *Gershom Scholem and the Mystical Dimension of Jewish History*, New York 1987, p. 77.

brief item to fit the encyclopaedia space requirements.[26] In Scholem's other works we find merely occasional references to the mysticism of the Geonic era, above all in his pioneering work, *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbala*, which mentions *THS*, but only marginally.[27]

Recently, in connection with the research on the magic bowls and especially with the systematic and comprehensive analysis of the text fragments on magic in the Cairo Genizah collection, a project directed by Peter Schäfer and Shaul Shaked at the Berlin Institut für Judaistik, a special interest in this epoch has arisen. Up to now three volumes have been published. Within the framework of these investigations new, more in-depth questions are being posed, relating, in particular, to the links between Hekhalot literature, magic and liturgy. Most of all, the tradition of recording statutory prayers in magical-mystical texts raises questions directly analogous to those often presented and discussed in the controversy about the links between rabbinic texts and Hekhalot literature.

Within the magical material of the Cairo Genizah Peter Schäfer found several fragments of the Eighteen Benedictions in the Palestinian version which forms the basis for the magical ritual. In his analysis of these prayers he has questioned the historical setting of these traditions as follows:

> Hence, we may conclude again that the circles behind our prayer are close to those who composed the Hekhalot literature. Whether this implies that they actually belonged to the initiates of Merkavah mysticism, is a different question. The latter probably is the easiest way out: one immediately thinks of the *ḥaside ashkenaz*, the German Pietists, who were very convinced of their own purity and piety.[28]

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[26] It is interesting to compare this article with the preceding version which Scholem wrote for the German *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, published in 1932, col. 630–732. It is obvious that Scholem at that time had not yet worked out a more detailed time concept for dating early Jewish mystical writings.

[27] 1962, p. 279; cf. also the revised English edition *Origins of the Kabbalah*, ed. R.J.Z. Werblowsky, Princeton 1988. It only states that this prayer contains a secret name that achieved a certain significance in the so-called early kabbalistic *Iyyun Circle*. Another reference is to be found in Scholem's *Das Buch Bahir. Ein Schriftdenkmal aus der Frühzeit der Kabbala . . .*, Darmstadt 1980, p. 68, where he stated: "Aber auch manche andere Autoritäten . . ., die man der Erfindungsgabe der Kabbalistengeneration von 1300 aufs Schuldkonto gesetzt hat, lassen sich schon als Autoritäten in der gaonäischen Mystik nachweisen, wie z.B. Rab Hamuma der Alte, von dem schon Elasar von Worms (in Cod. Man. 81f. 190b) ein Zaubergebet überliefert".

[28] "Jewish Liturgy and Magic", in H. Cancik, H. Lichtenberger und P. Schäfer (eds.), *Geschichte—Tradition—Reflexion. Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag*, vol. I: *Judentum*, Tübingen 1996, pp. 541–556, here p. 549.

Evident in those magic prayers is their closeness to the traditions of the medieval *ḥaside ashkenaz*, a feature which might even lead one to search for their authors in the very circles of the *ḥaside ashkenaz*—something impossible, however, for purely chronological reasons, as Peter Schäfer himself has shown: the oldest Genizah fragments date back already to the 10th and 11th centuries. This proximity indicates the problem area of the possible links between Hekhalot mysticism, magic and prayer, which is especially relevant when we look at the further development of mysticism in mediaeval Europe.[29]

In his article " 'Peace Be Upon You, Exalted Angels': on Hekhalot, Liturgy and Incantation Bowls," published in 1995 in *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, Professor Shaked made the following observation about the relationship between the magic texts, Hekhalot literature and Jewish liturgy on the basis of his research on the bowls:

> There is a considerable affinity between the Jewish liturgical tradition, which was in the final stages of redaction in the period just before the advent of Islam, and the magic texts. At the same time there was also considerable affinity between those liturgical texts and the Hekhalot literature.[30]

Within the framework of the Berlin project *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza* more textual evidence was published which confirms the above-mentioned links between the different streams of tradition. In the introduction to the second volume the attempt was made to define the *status questionis* of the relationship between liturgy, mysticism and magic by pointing out that

> the phenomenon of the magical use of liturgical texts in connection with *nomina barbara* can be grasped only sketchily as yet. A comparison with the use of *nomina barbara* in the incantations of the *śar ha-panim* or in

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[29] Cf. Schäfer's remarks on the liturgical tradition within the Hekhalot literature, whose mystical character described by Schäfer with the term *unio liturgica*; id., *The Hidden and Manifest God*, New York 1994, p. 163.

[30] See p. 204; cf. also the following remark on this subject in the collection of amulets and incantation bowls which Shaked published together with Joseph Naveh in *Magic Spells and Formulae. Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*, Jerusalem 1993: "There can be little doubt that there were certain connections between the practice of magic in Palestine in the period of Late Antiquity and the literature of the *Hekhalot*, although the details of these connections have not yet been precisely determined . . . The *Hekhalot* literature constituted a new trend which may have exercised influence over some writers of amulets, while traditional formulae went on being used without showing any influence on the *Hekhalot* school".

the prayers of the Hekhalot literature will doubtless play a central role here. In any case a more detailed analysis of this phenomenon will be able to help to clarify an important aspect of the relationship between magic and liturgy.[31]

In my article I would like to stress that there could be no better text illustrating the question of the relationship between Hekhalot, liturgy and magic texts than the *THS*. What has been noted as a truly striking phenomenon—the merging of different worlds and traditions in the mystical and magical texts as well as the inscribed bowls—seems, indeed, to have been the programme of the author of this prayer.

Analysis of the Main Features of THS

The Preparation of the Ritual

THS provides a complete ritual, helping the adept to gain a better understanding of the Torah. Like the procedures described in other *Śar Torah* texts, the one here has two main stages. The ritual preparation (fasting, special diet, and some other elements) and the incantation prayer itself.

Our first question is: Why was this prayer ascribed to Rav Hamnuna Sava? Almost all the other Hekhalot texts are attributed to Rabbi Aqiva, Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Nehunyah. As Shaked has pointed out: "these texts quote Palestinan sages of the Mishnaic period, but never any Babylonian figures."[32] Here for the first time a Babylonian *amora* of the third and fourth century is mentioned. But why Hamnuna Sava? We could even ask more generally: Why was this prayer written at all? Despite the fact that there are always good reasons to compose a prayer, in this case the work seems to have been a waste of time. Dozen of similar traditions are scattered all over the Hekhalot literature and it is obvious that the author of the *THS* was familiar with at least some of them. From a historical point of view, the choice of a Babylonian *amora* could indicate the transmission of some

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[31] See p. 10.
[32] " 'Peace be Upon You, Exalted Angels': on Hekhalot, Liturgy and Incantation Bowls," JSQ 2, 1995, p. 205.

Hekhalot material from Palestine to Babylonia, a process which is
sporadically reflected in the Hekhalot literature itself.[33] With regard
to the pseudepigraphic character of Hekhalot literature Michael
Swartz has pointed out: "There is little in rabbinic literature to sup-
port the depiction of Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi Nehuniah as mas-
ters of magical secrets."[34] Only in the case of R. Aqiva do we have
to take into account that he is mentioned in the story of the four
rabbis who entered *pardes*, which served, as we have seen, scholars
like Scholem as a link between rabbinic literature and the Hekhalot
tradition. A close inspection of all the rituals within the framework
of Merkavah mysticism shows that R. Aqiva and R. Yishmael are
linked to many different and sometimes contradictory traditions which
are the basis of at least some of the divergent positions in modern
scholarship. Of course, the author of *THS* was not a modern scholar,
but he might very well have had a similar impression of the com-
plexity and often contradictory nature of the various traditions. The
name Hamnuna therefore does not only reflect the transmission of
some Hekhalot traditions from Palestine to Babylonia but could also
indicate a conscious distance to those traditions on which *THS* is
based. If the prayer represents, as I have stated above, a programme
intended to balance Hekhalot-, liturgical, magical and, as we will see,
some haggadic traditions, there could be hardly a better choice to
represent this programme than Hamnuna Sava. Traditional descriptions
of the rabbis and their world as well as modern encyclopedia articles
single out at least two major features of his personality: that he was
both a master of Torah as well as a liturgical scholar.

Among the many traditions ascribed to him in the rabbinic liter-
ature we find the following in Talmud Bavli Shabbat 10a:

> Rava saw R. Hamnuna prolonging his prayers. He said, They for-
> sake eternal life and occupy themselves with temporal life. But he
> [R. Hamnuna] held, the times for prayer and [study the] Torah are
> distinct from each other.

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[33] Compare the phrase "The wise form the house of the master in Babylonia"
in T.-S. K 21.95.C, fol. 2a, line 13ff. = *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, p. 103,
and the difficult section 305 in *Hekhlaot Rabbati*, in which the use of the *Sar Torah*
ritual practiced in Babylonia is to be legitimized by the authority of the Palestinan
court of law; see Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God*, p. 160.

[34] *Scholastic Magic*, p. 217.

He strongly advocated the study of the Law, which, according to him, should precede everything, even good deeds. In Bavli Shabbat 119b it is stated that God decreed the destruction of Jerusalem solely because children were not trained in the Torah, as it is written: *I will pour it out upon the children in the streets* (Jer 6:11), which is a reference meaning that the children are in the streets and not in the schools.[35] The destruction of the Temple and the study of Torah are linked in the prayer as well.

Hamnuna also appeared in the Talmudic tradition as a considerable liturgical scholar. Several benedictions are ascribed to him: five to be spoken at the sight of different Babylonian ruins (Ber 57b), two on seeing large ruins (Ber 57b), two on seeing large armies (Ber 58a), and one before engaging in the study of the Torah (Ber 11b); the last one I would like to quote here:

> R. Hamnuna said: [Blessed art Thou . . .] who has chosen us from all the nations and given us Thy Torah, Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who has given the Torah. R. Hamnuna said: This is the best of all blessings.

This blessing has been universally adopted, and is still recited at the public readings of the Torah.[36] Various other prayers are ascribed to him (Ber 17a).

But Hamnuna as a magican who tried to achieve a better understanding of the Torah with the aid of magical practices? There are other rabbis who could fill the bill more easily. And yet: In the incantation prayer itself we find some links to those liturgical traditions which are connected to him in the Talmudic lore. In Ber 57b we find the following tradition:

> Rav Hamnuna preached: A person seeing wicked Babylon must pronounce five blessings. Seeing Babylon, he says, Blessed be He who destroyed wicked Babylon . . . On seeing the place from which dust being carried away [the ruins were quarried for building materials] he says, Blessed be He who says and does, who decrees and carries out . . .[37]

The phrase "He who says and does, who decrees and carries out" (אומר ועושה גוזר ומקיים) in the last Berakha, which found its way into

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the morning prayer, is also cited in the Berakha introducing Hamnuna
Sava's incantation prayer. Moreover, the two concepts, נוזר and מקיים,
are found typically in magical procedures and turn up several times
in *THS* incantations along with the terms אני משביע ("I adjure") and
אקרא ("I call"). One might even be tempted to consider it a pure
coincidence, the appearance in the introductory Berakha of this
prayer wording which the Talmud Bavli attributes to Hamnuna, if
the same formulation did not crop up at the end of the prayer. The
prayer closes with a hymn of praise, derived from *Hekhalot Rabbati*,
which concludes as follows: "Praise be to Thee, Lord, Wise of the
secrets and Lord of the Hidden," which belongs to a larger quotation
from a Hekhalot text. In Margarete Schlüter's article, "Untersuchungen
zur Form und Funktion der Berakha in der Hekhlaot-Literatur"
["Investigations on the Form and Function of the Berakha in Hekhalot
Literature"], which appeared in the *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* in
1985,[38] the author emphasizes that "the Sage of the secrets" really
does not fit in with the preceding hymn of praise. She writes:

> The Berakha has no real connection with the hymn, making no men-
> tion of secrets. The theme is not God as "the Sage of the secrets,"
> but as Lord of the evidence of power . . . it thus turns out that the
> Berakha's role in the hymn celebrating God as Lord of the accou-
> trements of power appears out of place.

In *THS* the effect is entirely different. Here the formula corresponds
with the Torah magic of the prayer and establishes a direct link to
Hamnuna Sava. Exactly the same statement attributed to Hamnuna
Sava in the prayer is also found in Talmud *Bavli Berakhot* 58a:

> Further Rav Hamnuna said: He who sees the hosts of Israel, speaks:
> Praise be to the wise of the secrets.

In his explanation on this text, Rashi pointed out that the term "Wise
of the secrets" means nothing but the knowledge of the thoughts of
the human heart. The *THS* author was far from espousing such an
antimagical interpretation. On the contrary: this phrase provided a
good opportunity for him to connect the Torah teacher and litur-
gical scholar of the rabbinic tradition Hamnuna with the magical
prayer and Torah ritual.

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[38] Vol. 13, 1985, pp. 83–146, here p. 117.

The prayer is revealed by the angel Sagnasgi'el: "This prayer presented to me Sagnasgi'el, the prince of the countenance, and he said . . ."[39] This angelic name is well known from Hekhalot literature, magical texts and bowls. On a bowl published by James A. Montgomery in 1913, we find the name within the following phrase:

> Blessed be you, YHWH, they hurry (to carry out) his word. By the name Yofi'el—your name, Yehoel (this is what) you are called, šsngy'l (Sasangi'el which is obviously a variant of Sagnasgi'el),[40] YHWH, and all the rest of their names: ['r]ms' (= Hermes), Meṭaṭron, Yah . . .[41]

On this bowl as well as in Hekhalot literature the angel is identified with Meṭaṭron. In a Hekhalot text where Meṭaṭron acts as the leader of the heavenly liturgy we find the following tradition: "This is the prince who is called Yofi'el, Yahdari'el. In the holy camps he is called Meṭaṭron, he is called Sasangi'el."[42] The tradition of the 70 names of Meṭaṭron, which is handed down to us in 3 Enoch as well as in the *Alphabet of Rabbi Aqiva*, ends with this very same angelic name to which the following explanation is added:

> . . . faithful youth, lesser YHWH (יהוה קטן), named after his Lord, as it is written: *My name is in him*,[43] Rakhrakhi'el, Na'ami'el, Sagnasgi'el. Why is his name called Sagnasgi'el? Because all the storehouses of wisdom were committed into his hand. All of them were opened for Moses on Sinai, until he had learned, in the forty days that he stood on the mount, Torah in the seventy aspects of the seventy languages; the Prophets in the seventy aspects of the seventy languages; the Writings in the seventy aspects of the seventy languages; halakhot in the seventy aspects of the seventy languages; haggadot in the seventy aspects of the seventy languages; traditions in the seventy aspects of the seventy languages; tosafot in the seventy aspects of the seventy languages. As soon as they were completed, at the end of forty days, he forgot them all in a moment—until the Holy One, blessed be he, summoned Yefefiah, the Prince of Torah, and he gave them as a gift to Moses, as it is written: *The Lord gave them to me*.[44] After that he remembered the Torah.[45]

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[39] תפלה זו מסר לי סננסניאל שר הפנים ואמר.
[40] Cf. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, p. 425 and the endnote ff on p. 544.
[41] Quoted according to Shaked "'Peace be Upon You, Exalted Angels": on Hekhalot, Liturgy and Incantation Bowls", *JSQ* 2, 1995, p. 201.
[42] *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, § 397.
[43] Exod 23:21.
[44] Deut 10:4.
[45] *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, § 76f.

In some manuscripts of the *THS* this tradition was quoted at the beginning of the prayer. The later redactor did nothing but strengthen the original intention of the *THS* author. He chose this angelic figure because it best fits the central theme of the prayer: the Torah ritual.

Perhaps we might even go one step further by asking why Sagnasgi'el and not Meṭaṭron is mentioned or why they are not linked with one another, as in the above-mentioned quotation from the bowl and in the Hekhalot tradition—this question will be treated below.

The preparatory procedure revealed by Sagnasgi'el runs as follows:

> Everyone who knows this secret by himself[46] should perform it in holiness, in purity and in cleanliness. He should sit in cleanliness three days long and wash himself every day with living water. He should neither eat meat nor drink wine, but he should take only pure bread with water. In the 3rd night he should rise from his bed at the time of the morning watch after the crowing of the cock. He should wash his face, his hands, his feet and he should don clean clothes. He should anoint his whole body from head to foot in a clean place with olive oil (in the European textual tradition olive oil was replaced in part by attar of roses). Then he should sit and speak: I will bless the Lord at all time—the whole psalm (Ps 34) three times. Afterwards, three times [the passage] from "happy" until "bless his holy name" (the reference here is to the so-called *Ashre*-prayer consisting of Ps 145 surrounded by the last verse of the preceding psalm, with Ps 84:5 added at the end). Afterwards, he should stand on his feet in a pure place and pray this prayer with the correct [prayer] intention between himself and his Creator. And so the angel swears to him that he cannot flee from there before his desire and his request have been fulfilled.[47]

The main features of this precedure (fasting, special diet, clothing) are quite common in the *Śar Torah* tradition and have many parallels in magical texts. Without going into details I would like to mention only those elements which are not typical for the other *Śar Torah* rituals. Of the liturgical terms: אשמורת ("vigil"), קרית נבר ("the crowing of the cock") and כוונה ("intention/devotion"), only the first one

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[46] This phrase reminds us of Mishna Hag 2,1.

[47] MS London 737, fol. 298b/23–299a/11:

היודע בעצמו שיעשה דבר זה בקדושה (299א) ובטהרה ובנקיות ישב נ׳ ימים בנקיות
וירחץ בכל יום במים חיים ולא יאכל בשר ולא ישתה יין אלא פת נקיה במים. ובלילה נ׳
יעמוד ממטתו באשמורת הבקר לאחר קריאת הנבר וירחץ פניו ידיו ורנליו וילבש בנדים
וקיים. ואחר כך יסוך בשמן זית כל נופו מראשו עד רנלו במקום נקי וישב ויאמר אברכה את
יי׳ בכל עת בכל המימור נ׳ פעמים. ואחר כך ינמור תהלה לדוד נ׳ פעמים מן אשרי עד שם
קדשו לעולם ועד ואחר כך יעמוד על רנליו במקום נקי ויתפלל תפלה זו בכוונה בינו לבין
קונו. וכך נשבע לו המלאך שאינו זז משם עד שעושין חפצו ושאלתו.

occurs in another Hekhalot work known as *Merkavah Rabbah*; this text is very close to *THS* in the way it connects numerous elements from the broader world of magic and many liturgical traditons with the adjuration of the *Śar Torah*. It runs as follows:

> R. Yishma'el said: Every scholar who knows this great mystery should lie in his bed in the evening and recite the *Shema‛*, and [likewise] in the morning. At the first vigil (אשמורה) and at the ninth hour of each day and in the night, he should get out of his bed, wash his hands and feet two times with water and anoint himself with oil, put on *tefillin* and pray standing before his bed. When he has ended his prayer, he should sit again on his bed and say, interpret, adjure, mention, decree, and fulfill . . . (various names follow which are equated with the name of Meṭaṭron).[48]

A certain closeness of these traditions derived from *Merkavah Rabbah* to the *THS* is evident, whereby the *Merkavah Rabbah* tradition is even more embedded within the traditional liturgy. Both traditions, *Merkavah Rabbah* and *THS* have the tendency to connect *Śar Torah* traditions with liturgical concepts.[49] The term *kavvanah* in the context of mystical-magical tradition reminds one directly of the prayer mysticism of the *ḥaside ashkenaz* and, above all, of the Lurianic Kabbalah. To be sure, the *THS* is remote from these traditions. In a manuscript tradition of the *THS* which originated in kabbalistic circles, precisely this concept has been interpreted in a speculative manner.[50] It illustrates the interest shown by later transmitters of this tradition in this magic prayer. Inherent in the prayer itself, in fact, is a further interpretation of this concept, which extends beyond the rabbinic linguistic usage and aims at a magic-theurgic prayer practice. Evidence that this concept also achieved a certain significance in other aspects of the mysticism of the Geonic era is indicated by those post-Talmudic traditions with *nomina barbara* and sacred names, many of them fairly unimportant, which were interpreted according to their numerological value, by means of gematria. Interpreters were thus able to impart mystical meanings and intentions (*kavvanot*) to such names—a widespread practice later found in medieval esoteric texts.[51]

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[48] *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, § 682.
[49] See Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God*, pp. 110f.
[50] MS Leiden Warn. 25, Or. 4762, fol 169b/10.
[51] Cf. G. Scholem's article "Kabbalah" in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 10, 1971, col. 510.

Psalms and quotations from these play an important role, not in
the *Śar Torah* tradition, but in the magical world. There is even a
special magical tradition, known as *Shimush Tehillim*, in which every
psalm is tied to a special magic purpose.[52] According to this tradi-
tion Ps 34 is good for securing the favor of princes and govern-
ments, and Ps 145 is recommended against sudden fright. It is obvious
that the author of the *THS* was not inspired by these magical tra-
ditions when he included both psalms in the preparatory ceremony.
His choice of the two psalms seems to have been influenced by the
liturgical custom according to which both are linked to the recita-
tion of the Torah, whereas Psalm 145 generally plays an important
liturgical role. But this was by no means the only reason. The two
psalms correspond to the basic structure of the prayer itself: they
are composed according to the Hebrew alphabet, and the alphabet
in conjunction with two secret names of God forms the basic struc-
ture of this prayer. These names, ṬYGʻṢ (חינעץ) and Ṭʻ\ṢŠ (טעצש),
occur 22 times in the prayer, and always together with a third name
consisting of a letter of the Hebrew alphabet and the divine name YH:
also: ʾYH, BYH, GYH and so on. The double name טעצש חינעץ is
attested in some magical writings, but none of them could be linked
thematically to the *THS*.[53] The second name, ṬʻṢŠ, is prominent in
the so-called *gedullah*-hymns of *Hekhalot Rabbati*, in which the supe-
rior knowledge of the mystic is extolled. The first one, ṬYGʻṢ, occurs
in a Hekhalot tradition blessing the apotropaic character of the di-
vine name (§393). This name also found its way into the angelo-
logical tradition of 3 Enoch and the cosmological text *Seder Rabbah
di-Bereshit*, where the following Aramaic phrase was added to it: "The
Prince, great and honored in song and praised at the head of all
the celestials."[54] These Hekhalot traditions are likely to have been

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[52] Bill Rebiger, a staff member of the Berlin Project on the Magical fragments
of the Cairo Genizah, is analysing this text for his doctoral dissertation. I would
like to acknowledge his drawing my attention to the traditions connected with Psalms
34 and 145.

[53] Cf. *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, vol. I, pp. 163 and 170; vol. II, pp.
171 and 174, pp. 228 and 230 and pp. 329 and 332. Only in the very late mag-
ical fragment (16th century!) T.-S. New Ser. 324.92, fol.1b/9ff., published in *Magische
Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, vol. III, pp. 357–365, is the divine name YH, in com-
bination with the Hebrew alphabet, mentioned as useful against forgetfulness. This
recipe seems to be directly influenced by *THS*, whereby the author has skipped the
magical procedure itself and combined the divine name with biblical phrases.

[54] *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, § 25.

the origin for both of the central secret names of God in the *THS*, which structure the prayer and correspond to Psalms 34 and 145. However, the extent to which the *THS* author was familiar with these Hekhalot texts is, in the end, beyond our ken. The occurrence of this name in the *THS* nevertheless seems to locate it within a context of linked traditions, meaning that all of the traditions associated with mystics' ascents were somehow integrated within a *Śar Torah* ritual.[55] The preparatory procedure ends with the statement that the adept who has completed this prayer is assured of a place in the world to come. In rabbinic tradition we find the maxim that "Whoever recites 'A Psalm of David' (Ps 145) three times a day is assured of belonging to the world to come."[56]

The tendency—already apparent in the first section of the *THS*—to connect different traditions with one another, emerges even more clearly in the prayer itself, and this is what I shall now describe.

The Incantation Prayer

The incantation prayer begins with the formula "In Thy name Lord, God of Israel. Praise be to Thee Lord, our God, King of the world, Rock of all worlds, Lord of all creatures, everlasting God, who says and does, who decrees and establishes living life"[57]—it is composed in the language of the Jewish prayer book, indeed, the phrasing can be found almost verbatim in the morning prayer, which does not seem astonishing for a magical prayer to be spoken in the morning. As we have seen above, the phrasing אומר ועושה נוזר ומקיים links this prayer with Hamnuna Sava in the Talmudic tradition.

Next comes the following hymn:

> Be adorned, be uplifted, be holy, be praised, be unique, be lauded,
> be exalted, be extolled, be adorned, be elevated, ṬYG'Ṣ Ṭ'ṢŠ 'YH,

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[55] This does not mean that the *Śar Torah* tradition is to be interpreted merely as a further development or even as a substitute for the ascent of the mystic. That the historical traditional and religious links are much more complex is demonstrated by Daphna Arbel's article "'Understanding of the Heart.' Spiritual Transformation and Divine Revelations in the Hekhalot and Merkavah Literature" published in *JSQ* 6, 1999, pp. 320–344; see also below.

[56] b Ber 4b.

[57] MS London 737, fol. 299a/14–17:
בשם יי' אלהי ישראל בא'י אמ'ה צור כל העולמים אדון כל הבריות האל הנאמן אומר
ועושה נוזר ומקיים חי החיים.

God of Israel, King of the Kings (of Kings),[58] praised be Thy Name, magnificent King, for Thou dwellest on a high and exalted throne, in the chambers on high and in the palace of exaltation. For Thou hast revealed your great secret (סודך הגדול) to Thy people.[59]

This hymn is part of the Hekhalot tradition, deriving from the Qedusha songs of mystical writing *Hekhalot Rabbati*, where the enthroned Godhead is praised in a quite similar manner:

Be adorned, be uplifted, be exalted, magnificent King, for Thou dwellest on a high and exalted, awesome and terrifying throne, in the chambers of the palace of exaltation. The servants of Thy throne are terrified and shake the *ʿaravot*, the stool of Thy feet every day with jubilant voice and tumultuous song and loud hymn, thus, as it says:[60] *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the entire earth is filled with His glory*.[61]

Whereas the hymn in *Hekhalot Rabbati* merges flowingly into the heavenly Qedusha of the angels, the hymn of praise in *THS* lauds the revelation of the divine secret (סוד) to Israel. How did this hymn praising the divine throne, a hymn, to judge by its origins, belonging to the ascent traditions of the Hekhalot literature and having nothing at all to do with magical practices, how did it turn up in an incantation prayer like *THS*? Or—and here I pick up Shaul Shaked's question, which I cited earlier—to put it more generally: How did Hekhalot hymns turn up on magic bowls and amulets? Although in many cases we cannot answer this question here, nevertheless, we are in the happy position of being able to trace the transmission process of this particular poetic puzzle-piece from *Hekhalot Rabbati*. In fact, this hymn of praise crops up several times in the Hekhalot literature. For instance, the same hymn forms the poetic conclusion of that *Śar Torah* complex which was linked to *Hekhalot Rabbati* in many manuscripts.[62] After an exact description of the magical procedure comes this very same hymn praising God on His throne. It is connected with the incantation ritual as follows:

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[58] This word is missing in MS London 737.
[59] MS London 737, fol. 299a/17–299b/1:

תתהדר תתרומם תתקדש תשתבה תתיחד תתפאר תתעטר תתעלה תתקלס תתנשא תתנשא.
תינעץ מעצש איה יי׳ אלהי ישר׳ מלך מלכים ברוך שמו מלך מפואר כי על כסא רם
ונשא אתה שוכן בחדרי מרום ובהיכל נאוה כי אתה גלית סוד הגדול לעמך.

[60] Isa 6:3.
[61] *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, § 153.
[62] *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, § 306.

R. Yishma'el said: How does a person begin before he prays to this Prince of the Torah (*Śar Torah*)? When he stands up he should say: Be adorned, be elevated, be exalted, magnificent king, for Thou dwellest on a high and exalted, awesome and terrifying throne, in the chambers of the palace of exaltation. The servants of your throne are terrified and shake the *'aravot*, the stool of Thy feet, every day with jubilant voice and tumultuous songs and loud hymns, thus, as it is said:[63] *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the entire world is filled with his glory.* He should adjure and say: Who will not elevate you, awesome and terrifying king, over all your attendants! With trembling and shaking do they serve you, with alarm and quaking they are terrified by the decree. (As if) with one mouth they bring forth your name, awesome One, because of the terror and the fear. They stand before you, none too early and none too late. And whoever prevents the voice of his colleague during (the pronouncement) of your name, (even if only) by the width of a hair, is knocked down and a flame of fire pushes him aside, thus, as it is said:[64] *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the entire world is filled by his glory.*[65]

This piece clearly shows the link between the two once independent traditions, on the one hand, the hymn to God on the Throne of God and, on the other, the incantation ritual. From being attached at one time to the incantation of the *Śar Torah*, this hymn of praise to God's throne hereby turns into one extolling Him who has revealed the secret of the Torah magic. It has thus become an integral part of the magical activity. So this hymn appears at the beginning of the Hekhalot composition *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, where *Śar Torah* rituals and ascent traditions are very closely intertwined, in the following guise:

R. Yishma'el said: I asked R. 'Aqiva: A prayer that a man recites in order to give praise to RWZYY, Lord, God of Israel[66]—who knows what it is? He said to me: May holiness and purity be in your heart! And he recited (the following) prayer: Praise be to Thee forever on the Throne of Glory. For Thou dwellest in the chambers on high and in the palace of exaltation. For Thou hast revealed to Moses the secrets

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[63] Isa 6:3.

[64] Isa 6:3.

[65] Elsewhere, the hymn of praise actually marks the introduction of a prayer whose theme is closely related to the *Śar Torah* tradition, but which, unlike *THS*, seems largely to exclude the magic element; cf. *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §§ 322–334, here § 322.

[66] It is interesting to note that this paragraph is introduced in MS New York JTS 8128 as follows: ". . . the prayer that one recites when he ascends to the Merkavah (כשעולה למרכבה) and I asked of him the praise of RWZYY . . ." In this textual tradition the link between the ascent and the magical Torah ritual is obvious.

(רזים) and the secrets of the secrets (רזי רזים), the mysteries (כבשים) and the mysteries of the mysteries (כבשי כבשים), and Moses has revealed them to Israel, so that they can engage in Torah with them, and increase study (תלמוד) with them.[67]

An even clearer parallel to *THS* is found in the writing *Merkavah Rabbah*, where the *Śar Torah* myth seems completely to blot out the ascent—a closeness which had already been noticed in connection with the magical procedures introducing this prayer. The parallel text runs as follows:

> R. Yishma'el said: "Happy is the man who learns this secret from morning prayer to morning prayer. He gains this world and the world to come and many, many worlds . . . be holy, be praised and be exalted in eternity, Lord, God of Israel, King of the Kings of Kings, praise be to Him. For Thou dwellest on a high and exalted throne, in the chambers on high, (in the) palace of exaltation. For Thou hast revealed the secrets (רזים) and the secrets of the secrets (רזי רזים), the hidden (סתרים) and the hidden of the hidden (סתרי סתרים)."[68]

In another passage in *Merkavah Rabbah*, just before the *Sh'iur Qomah* description of the enthroned divinity, we find the following:

> This is the great, powerful and terrifying, mighty and pure, honored and holy name. Be praised, be holy, be lauded, be exalted in eternity, Lord, God of Israel, King of the Kings of Kings, praise be to Him. For Thou dwellest on a high and an exalted throne, in the chambers on high, (in the) palace of exaltation. For you have revealed to Moses how one glorifies Thy name in fear, in purity and in holiness.[69]

This hymn in *Merkavah Rabbah* marks the end of an extensive text on the exaltation of the divine name, which consists mainly of Tetragramm permutations and evidences a clear affinity to the exaltation of God's name and corresponding Tetragramm permutations in *THS*.

A short quotation from this *Hekhalot Rabbati* hymn also turns up in a Genizah fragment located within the context of the *Śar Torah* tradition. The practices mentioned in this fragment—fasting, a "bread

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[67] *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, § 544.

[68] *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, § 675. In the following paragraph further parallel features to *THS* are found, esp. the wording "Wise of the secrets and Lord of all the hidden" (יי׳ חכם הרזים ואדון כל הסתרים).

[69] *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, § 694.

and water" diet, new clothes—are especially close to those in *THS*. Moreover, this Genizah fragment names the angel-prince Sagasgi'el, who, as we have seen, acts as the revelation angel of *THS*, expressly referring to him as the "Prince of the Talmud" (שר התלמוד), in other words, as the "Prince of Study":

> Rabbi Yishma'el said: (there are times) when he is called QRBS'L and there are times when he is called QRBSB'L who is near to SGSG'L (= Sagasgi'el)... the Prince of Talmud... be adorned, be uplifted, be exalted, magnificent king, for Thou dwellest on a high and an exalted throne... (The servants of) Thy throne are terrified and shake the *'aravot*, the stool of your feet every day with (jubilant) voice...[70]

All the traditions mentioned so far connect this hymn with the *Śar Torah* theme. One of the manuscripts edited in the *Synopse zur Hekhalot Literatur*, the famous Hekhalot manuscript housed in the Jewish Theological Seminary and registered as no. 8128,[71] illustrates that this hymn of praise could also have been quite commonly associated with other magic contents. After detailing some technical instructions on the correct use of the Ineffable Name,[72] the text continues:

> This is the name that is named on every occasion so that it [the occasion] is successful, [the name] that is even spoken over a dead man so that he lives again. Be holy, be praised, be exalted in eternity [Two secret names are following], Lord, God of Israel, king of the kings of kings, praise be to him on the high and exalted throne, (for) Thou dwellest in the chambers of the chambers on high, in the palace of exaltation, for Thou hast revealed secrets (רזים) and the secrets of secrets (רזי רזים). We, the creatures of heaven and of earth, should give thanks to Thee. Praise be to Thee Lord, Lord of all secrets (רזים) and Lord of the hidden (סתרים).[73]

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[70] *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, p. 185 (see also the commentary on p. 188). Another hymn from *Hekhalot Rabbati* (§ 94) follows.

[71] See K. Herrmann, "Re-Written Mystical Texts: The Transmission of the Hekhalot Literature in the Middle-Ages", in: *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 75, 1993, pp. 97–116.

[72] "Call it [the name] not seated, but standing: LTY'H' Z'G'H'. The sum is 72. Pronounce it thus and learn with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might (cf. Deut 6:5) in order to do my will. Be on your guard against every transgression, bless yourself against every sin, against every blame and every transgression, for I shall be with you on every occasion, in every hour, in every moment and at all times".

[73] *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, § 512 (MS New York JTS 8128). The last formula is, as we have seen, very close to the end of *THS*, which links this prayer with Hamnuna Sava in the rabbinic tradition.

A similar magical use of this Hekhalot fragment is also found in one
of the Hekhalot fragments from the Cairo Genizah; here, too, there
is no reference to the *Śar Torah* complex; instead we find links to
other *Hekhhalot Rabbati* traditions[74] and also to *Sefer ha-Razim*.[75] The
text runs as follows:

> And this is what you should write: In Thy Name, Lord, God of Israel,
> the strong (Tetragramm permutations follow together with the divine
> names Zebaot, I am, who I am, the Living and the constant One,
> who was and will be), be adorned, be uplifted, be exalted, magnificent
> king, for Thou dwellest on a high (and exalted) throne, in the cham-
> bers of exaltation . . . angels, heros, ruthless, powerful and severe higher
> than mountains and sharper than hills are standing . . .[76]

Therefore I would not be surprised if this hymn were also to be
found now in other magic fragments from the Cairo Genizah or
even on a magic bowl. At any rate, in the case at hand we have been
able to follow in detail the trail of a Hekhalot song into the world
of magic. As one example out of an array of puzzle-piece items it
serves to document the appearance of similarly isolated Hekhalot
pieces on magical fragments, amulets and magic bowls—a process for
which Shaul Shaked has correctly drawn an analogy to the Kabbalah:

> In the absence of further detailed information (on the relationship
> between Hekhalot and magic texts), one may have recourse to the
> analogy of late mediaeval and modern magic and its relationship with
> the Kabbalah. With the spread of the kabbalistic schools in the six-
> teenth century and afterwards, many writers of amulets were deeply
> influenced by the knowledge they derived from the Spanish Kabbalah
> and referred in their texts to some ideas that were typical of the
> Kabbalah writings.[77]

And now we can add: *THS* is one example of this process in the
pre-kabbalistic world.

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[74] *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §§ 213f.: description of the powerful and terrify-
ing guardian angels at the entrance of the seventh palace together with their no
less dangerous horses.

[75] See the description of this fragment in *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, pp.
82–85.

[76] The last sentence (its first words are missing in the fragment) marks the begin-
ning of § 213 in the *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*.

[77] J. Naveh and Sh. Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae. Aramaic Incantations of Late
Antiquity*, Jerusalem 1993, p. 17.

The first magical invocation in *THS* is connected with an historical event: the destruction of the Temple. The link between this event and the *Śar Torah* myth was clearly not the invention of the author of *THS*. At the end of *Hekhalot Rabbati*, the most famous *Śar Torah* text—the one already mentioned before—links the magical procedure with a highly poetical introduction in order to locate the *Śar Torah* myth on the historical map of Israel. This introduction is composed as a dialogue between God, the angels and Israel. God accepts Israel's complaint that rebuilding the Temple and studying the Torah at the same time cannot be fulfilled, and reveals the secret of the *Śar Torah*: to promise to study the Torah "not by toil and effort, but through the name of this seal and the mentioning of my crown," as the magical practice is termed here.[78] The intervention by the angels who want to prevent the revelation of this secret ("this secret (רז) should not be let out of your treasure house . . . people should wrestle with the Torah as they have always done for generations . . .")[79] is answered by God with a clear rejection of their protest:

> No, my servants, no my attendants, don't press me in this matter! This secret (רז) will leave my treasure house, the hidden wisdom (ערמה) will leave my storehouses. I revealed it to [my] beloved people . . . Up to now it didn't occur to me to tell any of the generations since the days of Moses. It has been reserved to this generation to be made use of it until the end of all generations.[80]

Peter Schäfer has pointed out that this dialogue is based on the rabbinic tradition dealing with the rivalry between the angels and men.[81] Just as the angels tried to prevent the revelation of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai in the rabbinic tradition, so they objected to the disclosure of the secrets of the *Śar Torah* in the mystical lore. On the other hand, however, there is a certain tension between this mystical tradition and the rabbinic tradition. The circumstance that the revelation of the *Śar Torah* was supposed to decisively enhance the status of the Second Temple vis-à-vis that of the First Temple conflicts with those rabbinic traditions which, though linking the First and Second Temples with each other, only emphasize the deficiencies

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[78] *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, § 289.
[79] *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, § 292.
[80] *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, § 293.
[81] "Engel und Menschen in der Hekhalot-Literatur" in: id., *Hekhalot-Studien*, pp. 250–276, here pp. 271f.

of the Second Temple by comparison with Solomon's building. Despite these differences the whole text serves as a fine example of the adaptation of rabbinical traditions within the framework of the mystical lore.

Thus the connection between the revelation of the *Śar Torah* secret and the Temple was obviously familiar to the author of *THS* when he composed the following part of the prayer:

> In[82] the hour when his (God's) people sinned against him, he arose,[83] carried out the resolution of the destruction of his city, his house and his sons, and ordered them (the angels): Close your gates so that their (Israel's) prayer does not reach me. (Immediately)[84] YHWZṬQYH arose in front of him, together with YṬHWZQYH, the angels of mercy who intercede for Israel, in front of ṬYGʿṢ ṬʿṢŠ DYH, Lord, God of Israel, at the time of his wrath, and they spoke in his presence: After the exile and the scattering of your people Israel amongst the nations, you are now locking the gates of prayer?! At once he revealed this holy name to them and spoke: Every hour that my people adjure (משביעים) with this name, I hear their prayer. And so I ordered you (the angels): When you hear the adjuration of my holy name, open your gates and allow the prayer of my people to reach me—do not halt the prayer of my sons![85]

It is obvious that the author of *THS* is falling back on popular haggadic motifs in composing this incantation prayer. The wording כלה ונחרצה derives from Isa 28:22 and is also found in the *Śar Torah* section at the end of *Hekahlot Rabbati* in the following context:

> For you (Israel) did not act appropriately by opposing me (God), so that I was angry with you, and I arose and carried out the resolution

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[82] In MS London the text moves back and forth several times between the 2nd and the 3rd person—the scribe corrected the 2nd person as the 3rd one in serveral places, but not at all consistently. Elsewhere, too, the text contains several corruptions, therefore other MSS were consulted for the translation as well.

[83] In other MS traditions we find the additional tradition "seated himself on his judgement throne".

[84] מיד is missing in MS London.

[85] MS London 737, fol. 299b/7–17:

בשעה שחטאו לפניך עמד ועשה כלה ונחרצה על עיר {ך} (ו) ועל בית{ך} (ו) ועל בניו
וצוו אתכם סגרו דלתותכם כדי שלא תכנס תפלתכם לפני ועמך לפניך יהוזטקיה ועמו
יטהוזקיה מלאכי רחמים מלמדי זכותן של ישראל לפני תינעץ טעצש דיה יי׳ אלהי יש {ש} (ר׳)
בעת זעפו אמרו לפניו אחר גלות וטלטול עמך ישר׳ בין הגוים תסגור להם שערי תפלה מיד
נלה להם שם הקדוש ואמר כל שעה שמשביעים עמו בזה השם אני אשמע תפלתם וכך צוה אף
אתם כך צוה אתכם תשמעו שבועות שמי הקדוש הזה פתחו דלתותיכם ותכנס תפלת עמי לפני
ולא תעכבו בתפלת בני

to destroy my city, my house and my sons. And I did not act appro-
priately by rising against you and sealing a judicial verdict over you . . .[86]

The main item relevant here in the rabbinical tradition is the fol-
lowing tradition from Talmud Bavli Berakhot (32b):

> R. El‘azar said: Ever since the day when the sanctuary was destroyed,
> the gates of prayer have been shut, as it says: *Even when I cry and call
> [for help], he stops up my prayer*[87] . . . Ever since the day when the sanc-
> tuary was destroyed, a wall of iron builds a partitioning wall between
> Israel and her father in heaven . . .[88]

Notwithstanding all the rivalry between angels and human beings
recorded in rabbinic literature, one area does stand out even here,
where angels appear less as opponents than as advocates of human
beings and actively support them: during prayer. Here rabbinic tra-
dition ascribes to angels the role already mapped out for them by
the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha: that of carrying out the task
of bringing human prayers to God.[89] In the rabbinic tradition adopt-
ing this complex, the issue is not of course, as in *THS*, to introduce
magical practices aimed at inducing favorable answers to prayers.
Another rabbinic tradition inserts itself here, however, one that could
be regarded as the link joining the motives of the locking of the
prayer gates and the revelation of God's name. In the twenty-second
chapter of the homily Midrash *Pesiqta Rabbati* we find the following
tradition:

> Why is it that when Israel pray they are given no answer? R. Yoshua
> b. Levi replied in the name of R. Pinhas ben Yair: Because they do
> not revere the mystery of the Ineffable Name (סוד שם המפורש). And
> there are several verses to support his reply: *Therefore my people shall
> know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that speaks:
> Behold, here I am* (Isa 52:6); *And I will betroth thee to me in faithfulness: and*

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[86] *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, § 283.
[87] Lam 3:8.
[88] Ezek 4:3 follows.
[89] See P. Schäfer, *Rivalität zwischen Engeln und Menschen. Untersuchungen zur rabbini-
schen Engelvorstellung*, Berlin-New York 1975, pp. 62ff. Evidence that this complex of
traditions, too, was associated with the rivalry between the angels and Israel is to
be found in the rabbinic lore. Some of these traditions was then taken up in the
Hekhalot literature; see *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §§ 173, 787ff. and P. Schäfer,
"Engel und Menschen in der Hekhalot-Literatur", in id., *Hekhalot-Studien*, Tübingen
1988, pp. 266ff.

thou shalt know the Lord (Hos 2:22); *I will set him on high, because he has known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him* (Ps 91:14f.). In this world Israel swear in God's name even when they lie, but in the time-to-come they swear and fulfill (and will always abide by what they undertake), as it is said: *And wilt swear: "As the Lord liveth," in truth, in justice, and in righteousness; then shall the nations bless themselves by Him, and in Him shall they glory* (Jer 4:2).[90]

In the parallel tradition of the *Midrash Tehillim* to Psalm 91 the eschatological aspect is accented somewhat differently:

R. Jehoshua b. Levi said in the name of Pinhas b. Yair, Why does Israel pray in this world and is not heard? Because they do not know the Ineffable Name, but in the time-to-come the Holy One, blessed be He, let them know his name, as it is said (according to Isa 52:6), In that hour they pray and are heard.

In the *THS* the revelation of the Name is not viewed as a future occurrence, but rather the potent effect of the divine name is seen as having already been in force since the destruction of the Temple. The idea behind this understanding of the effective power of the divine name could not be better expressed than in that hymn of a magic fragment now published by Peter Schäfer and Shaul Shaked. Here we find the following benediction:

Praised be Thou, Lord, our God, King of the World, who has sanctifed us through His commandments and has commanded us to pronounce His great name in love.[91]

Corresponding to the adaptation of haggadic materials in mystical and magical texts of the gaonic period are echoes of esoteric traditions in late midrashic works. Here we should mention above all the writings *Alfabeta de R. Aqiva, Midrash Mishle* (chapter 10 contains a summary of major Merkavah themes), *Pirqe de-R. Eliezer* (esp. the description of the world of the Divine Throne in chapter 4, which has many links to the mystical writings) as well as some "minor" midrashic texts which were published in Jellinek's *Beit ha-Midrash*. Among these "minor" writings is the post-Talmudic *Midrash Petirat Moshe* (Midrash on the Death of Moses),[92] which contains edited versions of tradi-

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[90] Quoted from *Pesikta Rabbati. Discourses for Feasts, Fasts, and Special Sabbaths*, vol. 1, transl. W. G. Braude, New Haven and London 1968, p. 469.

[91] Westminster College Misc. 59, fol. 1a/1–3 published in *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, vol. III, Tübingen 1999, pp. 179ff.

[92] Cf. G. Stemberger, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch*, München ⁸1992, p. 328;

tions directly reminiscent of *THS* and thus hinting at a common tra-
dition-history background.[93] Moses' stubborn resistance to the deci-
sion forbidding him ever to set foot in the Holy Land again finally
prompts God to issue the following order to the "princes of the
firmament" (שרי הרקיע):

> And when God saw that Moses made light of the matter and that he
> did not want to pray for himself, at once the Holy One, blessed be
> He, became angry and decreed and sealed judgment over him and
> swore by his great name (נשבע בשמו הגדול), that Moses should not
> enter the Land (of Israel), as it is said:[94] *Therefore* (לכן) *ye shall not bring*
> *this assembly . . .*,[95] When Moses saw that the decree against him had
> been sealed, he took a resolve to fast and stood up in order to pray,[96]
> and said: I will not move from here until Thou annullest that decree.
> What (else) did Moses do? He donned sackcloth[97] and rolled himself
> in the dust and stood in prayer[98] before God, until the heaven, the
> earth and the foundations of creation were shaken. They said: Perhaps
> it is the desire of God to create His world anew?! Whereupon a heav-
> enly voice was heard proclaiming: His desire to renew the world has
> not yet come, but, *In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the*
> *breath of all mankind*[99] (איש), and 'man' (איש) must surely refer to Moses,
> as it is said:[100] *Now the man Moses was very meek, (above all men that were*
> *upon the face of the earth).* What did God do? He proclaimed in every
> heaven,[101] and in every heavenly Court, that they should not receive
> Moses' prayer, and not appoint any angel to bring the prayer of Moses
> before me, because I have sealed the death decree against him.[102]
> Go down and shut all the gates (of heaven) so that Moses' prayer can

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Eng. transl. of the 1982 ed. *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* authored by H.L.
Strack & G. Stemberger, transl. by M. Bockmuehl, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1991,
p. 362: "The 'midrash of the passing of Moses' is preserved in several recensions
to be dated between the seventh and the tenth or eleventh century".

[93] BHM, vol. I, pp. 115–129; this tradition was also added to DevR; see
G. Stemberger, *ibid.* [Ger. ed.], p. 328.

[94] Num 20:12.

[95] DevR adds: "and לכן always implies an oath, as it is said: *And therefore* (לכן)
I have sworn unto the house of Eli".

[96] The parallel version in DevR reminds one directly to the story of *Ḥoni ha-*
Meaggel ("the Circle Drawer"): "and drew a small circle and stood therein and
said . . ."; cf. b Taan 23a.

[97] DevR adds: "and wrapped himself with sackcloth".

[98] DevR adds: "and supplications".

[99] Job 12:10.

[100] Num 12:3.

[101] DevR: "in every gate of each heaven".

[102] In DevR an angelic figure, the "angel of proclamation" is introduced: "Now
at that hour God hastily summoned the Angel in charge of Proclamation, Achzeriel
by name, and He commanded the ministering angels . . ."

no longer come up (to me). At that hour heaven and earth and all
the fortresses of the earth and all the constructions of creation trem-
bled because of Moses' prayer, which was like a sword that tears and
cuts to pieces and does not halt, because Moses' prayer sounded like
the Ineffable name (שם המפורש) of God that he had learnt from the
mouth of his teacher, the angel Zagzag'el. About this hour Ezekiel
said:[103] *And I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing—a voice of a great
rushing* refers to Moses, as it is said:[104] *Moreover the man Moses was very
great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of
the people.* What is the meaning of *Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His
place*? When the wheels of the Chariot and the fiery Seraphim saw
that God commanded that Moses' prayer should not be accepted and
that He did not respect (Moses') person, nor did he grant him more
life, nor did he bring him into the land of Israel, they exclaimed:
Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place, for before Him there is no
respecting of persons, great or small . . .[105]

The shutting of the prayer gates, the effect of God's name, the mag-
ical use of the sword and the revelation of the Name through the
angel Zagzag'el[106] are motives very close to *THS*. The magical pro-
cedure designed to promote the forcible access of the prayer to God
is missing in the Midrash, albeit even here distinct echoes of these
traditions (the angel Zagzag'el as the revealer of the divine secret,
the powerful divine name) can be discerned. Therefore we can expand
Shaul Shaked's observation: Not only in the fields of prayer, Merkavah
Mysticism and magic but also within the Haggadic tradition a coming
together is visible: magic and mystical traditions are echoed in mid-
rashic compositions and, on the other hand, mystical and magic texts
adapted midrashic elements. No doubt about it: We are still far away
from kabbalistic writings like the *Bahir* and, in particular, the *Zohar*. But
the tendency, so characteristic for the mystical literature of the High
Middle Ages is already present in the writings of the Geonic period.

In *THS* the motives discussed are taken up in the next incanta-
tion and worked over further. Here it says:

I Mr. X adjure, decree and establish, I Mr. X over you, heaven and
heaven of the heavens by means of this holy, pure and everlasting

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[103] Ezek 3:12.
[104] Exod 11:3.
[105] BHM, vol. I, pp. 120f.
[106] This angelic figure is very close to Sagnasgi'el, who serves as the angel of
revelation in *THS*—in several MSS we find both angels expressly identified with
one another or even hybrid forms of their names.

name, whose pronouncement is as follows: . . . (Tetragramm permutations follow): Open your doors and receive my prayer and my praying, let my prayer enter before the King of the World . . . I adjure you YHWZṬQYH (and) YṬHWZQYH, the angels of mercy . . . and the 211 myriads of angels who stand under your order; you let them all enter and bring my prayer and my pleading before ṬYGʿṢ ṬʿŠŠ ḤʾH, Lord, God of Israel. . . . I call before you your beloved, lovely and pleasant name, for all secrets of your Torah (סתרי תורתך) hang on it and it has been a great mystery (סוד) since the days of (the creation of) the world, for you said: When they call my name, then I shall turn neither to the right nor to the left before I have opened the treasure vaults of wisdom, my storehouses of understanding and the secrets of the Torah (סתרי תורה) (for them). I connect you HQṬWSYH YH WHW HW HH, *for my name is in him.*[107] I have employed him over you, for he hears you at all times and on every occasion, for my people pray to me. With this name I call before you, I (Mr.) X, your servant, fulfill my wish, my desire, my will and my request . . . (once again Tetragramm permutations follow).[108]

The last section of this quotation reminds one directly of a Hekhalot tradition contained in the text *Hekhalot Ẓuṭarti* and in a fragment from the Cairo Genizah. Here it states about Prince ʿAnafiʾel:

> ʿAnafiʾel said: If anyone wants to pray this prayer and contemplate the work of his creator, let him mention just one of these letters and I will not turn to my right or my left before I turn to him and do whatever he wants. I will wipe out anyone who slanders him, apart from an angel who is an emissary of the king of glory . . .[109]

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[107] Ezek. 3:14.
[108] MS London 737, fol. 299b/17–300b/9:

אני פלו׳ משביע ונוזר ומקיים אני פלו׳ עליכם שמים ושמי השמים בשם הקדוש הזה
והטהור והנאמן שכך פירושו אהו אהי הי וה הי וה יה היה וה יה הוי היהי פתחו דלתותיכם וקבלו תפלתי
ועתירתי והכניסו תפילותי לפני מלכו של עולם . . . אני משביע אתכם ונוזר אני ומקיים בשם
השם הקדוש והטהור והאדיר הזה שכך פירושו . . . הוה יהי אההה יה אה יהו הי יהה אהו יה אה
והה בשם הנדול והנורא הכניסו תפלתי ושועתי וסדרו את תחנתי לפני תינעץ טעצעש ויה. יי׳
אלהי ישר׳ ולא תעכב בנזרת יי׳ תינעץ טעצעש ויה יי׳ אלהי ישר׳ כן אני משביע עליכם אתם
יהוזטקיה יטהוזיקיה מלאכי רחמים מלמדי זכות הוקיקון לי אני פלו׳ ועשו חפצי ושאלתי אתם
ומאתים ואחת עשרה רבבות מלאכי רחמים מלמדי זכותם של ישר מחת ותחת המה הכניסו
כולכם ותביאו תפלתי ושועתי לפני תינעץ טעצעש חיה יי׳ אלהי ישר׳ ולמדו עלי זכות ולא תעבבו
חפצי ושאלתי ובקשתי בנזרת השם הזה. יה יה אה יה הה וה ההו ההי יהו היה אל חי האל
ההוה אדון האדונים שלא תעכבו מחפצי אערוך לפניך תפלתי ותחינתי ועתירתי לפני תינעץ
טעצעש טיה. יי׳ אלהי ישר׳אזכיר לפניך שמך האהוב החביב הנעים הזה שכל סתרי תורתך
תלויים בו וסוד נדול הוא מימות עולם שאמרת אם יזכרו בו שמי לפני כשם שאינו נפנה לא
לימין ולא לשמאל עד שאפתח אוצרי הכמה ונוי בינה וסתרי תורה אני אזקיק לכם את הקסטחסיה
יהוהו הו הה ששמי בקרבו שמיתי אותו עליכם שישמע לכם בכל עת ובכל עונה שהתפללו
אלי עמי בזה השם אקרא לפניך אני פלו׳ עבדך תל תן לי שאלתי וחפצי רצוני ובקשתי וה יה יה
והיה אה יהה או הה או יה או יה הה הה או הוה אה יהה או הה או יה.

[109] *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, § 421. It is interesting to note that in the Genizah

Whereas in the early Hekhalot texts, which include *Hekhalot Zuṭarti*, the difference between God and the angel princes is not always clearly marked—indeed, as in the case of the angel princes Meṭaṭron or 'Anafi'el, they sometimes appear as a second heavenly power or deity—for the *THS* author God remains the supreme ruler to whom prayers are directed and who links up with his servants, the people of Israel. Here we should return to the question whether Meṭaṭron has possibly been deliberately ignored in the prayer. It is well known that Meṭaṭron, an important figure in the mystical and magical tradition, is also a highly problematic angelic figure. In the Babylonian Talmud he is mentioned only three times and two of these traditions attack a clearly negative connotation of his name.[110] There is the famous story of Aḥer ("the Other"), a pseudonym for Elishaʿ b. Avuyya (in order to avoid the pronouncement of his name), which polemicizes against traditions in which Meṭaṭron is seen as a second divine power in heaven. In the end the consequence of Aḥer's question, "Are there in fact two powers in heaven?" is not only his own punishment, but also Meṭaṭron's degradation. On the other hand, Meṭaṭron is very much present in this prayer, if not expressly by name. The phrase "I (God) connect you (Israel) (this angel), for my name is in him" is a clear reference to him, and the following name HQṬWSYH YH (with some differences in the manuscripts) is obviously fashioned from his most provocative name: יהוה קטן = "the lesser Lord." Could it have been that the *THS* author did not mention him intentionally, that he even censored his name? Indeed, it is conspicuous that the angel's role in the *THS* is, as we have seen, much closer to the rabbinic tradition than to all those Hekhalot traditions which often make only a blurred distinction between the angel princes and God.

The prayer now to be cited, with its request that the gates of the Torah, the gates of Wisdom etc. be opened, presents the aim of the first section of *THS*:

> I call before you, Creator of mercy, Lord of mercy, Leader (of the world) in mercy, full of mercy over all your creatures, open the gates

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fragment, on the other hand, 'Anafi'el reacts negatively to the incantation; cf. *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, p. 105, and *Übersetzung zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, vol. III, p. 179f.

[110] Cf. G. Scholem's article "Meṭaṭron", in: *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 11, col. 1143–1146.

of the Torah to me, the gates of wisdom, the gates of understanding, the gates of knowledge, the gates of justice, the gates of mercy, the gates of peace, the gates of entreaty, the gates of life, the gates of sustenance, the gates of support, the gates of forgiveness, the gates of excuse, the gates of joy, the gates of rejoicing . . . for you, Lord, know my heart and my kidneys, for the sake of your great and holy name. Open my heart for your Torah and teach me your Torah, and all the secrets of your Torah (סתרי תורתך) are revealed before me and I shall be knowledgeable in everything, and connect HQWSṬYH with me, and may he fulfill my desire, my will and my wish, for me your servant, with this name . . . (Tetragramm permutations follow).[111]

The opening of the gates, as an image for grasping and understanding the Torah, is a theme which crops up several times in Hekhalot literature. The closest that *THS* comes to this is seen in a prayer text handed down as part of the context of the *Shi'ur Qoma* tradition:

And I, (Mr.) X, son of (Mr.) Y, your servant, dust and ashes, . . . have come to lay before you my supplication and my prayer, in order to find grace, mercy, righteousness and compassion before the throne of the glory of Your kingdom. For you are close to them who call upon you and may be found by all those who seek you, holy One and awesome One. Blessed are you, full of compassion. Blessed are you, and splendid. Do my desire and request and favor before the throne of your glory. Open, also for me, your servant, the gates of prayer, the gates of repentence, the gates of Torah, the gates of wisdom, the gates of understanding, the gates of knowledge, the gates of righteousness . . . And inscribe me for a good life for the sake of your great, mighty, awesome, ineffable, courageous, strong, exalted, wonderful, holy and honored Name. *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the entire earth is filled with His glory.*[112]

Although, unlike the *THS*, this prayer contains no conjuration elements, in his article "Prayer in the Hekhalot Literature" Philip Alexander expressed the hypothesis, on the grounds of the introductory formula typical of magical texts: "And I, Mr. X, son of Mr.

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[111] MS London 737, fol. 300b/10–301a/4:

אקרא אני לפניך בורא רחמים ובעל רחמים ומתנהג ברחמ' ומלא רחמים על כל בריותיך
אתה פתח לי שערי תורה שערי חכמ' שערי בינה שערי דעה שערי צדקה שערי רחמים שערי
שלום שערי תחינה שערי חיים שערי פרנסה שערי כלכלה שערי מחילה שערי סליח'שערי ששון
שערי שמח.. . כי אתה י' ידעת לבי וכליותי למען שמך הנדול והקדוש הזה פתח לבי בתורתך.
ולמדני תורתך ויהיו כל סתרי תורתך נלויים לפני ואהיה בקי בכולם והזקיק לי את הקוסטיה
ויעשה את הפצי ורצוני ושאלתי ובקשתי לי אני עבדך בשם השם הזה. וה יה אה יה או{א}(ה)
או יה ההו הה איה הה אהיה יה יה יה

[112] Isa 6:3.

Y . . .", that this prayer, too, could be placed with magical writings
such as *Sefer ha-Razim* and *Harba de-Moshe*.[113] In *THS* (which Philip
Alexander was not familiar with) we actually have an incantation
prayer that not only confirms this hypothesis, but also leads us directly
to the literary venue in which this prayer is likely to have originated.
Thus this prayer stands as a contrast to the *THS* and for the tendency
in the process of developing tradition to strip incantation prayers of
their magical components and to recompose them analogously to the
standard prayers of the Siddur.

The *Śar Torah* procedures within the Hekhalot literature prayers
would normally end here. The opening of the gates of the Torah
and Knowledge are the goal and the climax of the *Śar Torah* tradi-
tion. *THS*, however, takes up a further central theme of Jewish
prayer: the request for forgiveness and the atonement of sins. The
beginning of this passage reads as follows:

> Again I call ṬYGʿṢ ṬʿṢŠ Yʾh, Lord, God of Israel, before you and
> pronounce before you this only name HYH YH YH, which since time
> immemorial you have engraved on the throne of your glory. For when
> (your sons)[114] come and rise before you—thus have you spoken: When
> I see my sons who are standing before me, then the measure of divine
> judgement is raised in order to plunge the world into *tohu vabohu* [=
> chaos]. (Then) I look at the measure of divine judgement and at the
> measure of mercy, and your mercy overcomes your rage, and let your-
> self repent evil and you speak up for those who say DHH ʾH, for you
> have ordered your servants who write down the books of life and the
> books of death before you: When my sons pronounce my only name
> and you hear it out of the mouth of my people—their sins should be
> made white at once, and write down by the power of that name their
> merit(s). I call before you . . . (long lines of Tetragramm permutations
> follow) . . . excuse me, forgive me, I, Mr. X, your servant, expiate all
> my sins, (my guilt and my offences,)[115] and I shall be pure for the life
> of the coming world . . .[116]

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[113] Published in R. Goetschel (ed.), *Prière, mystique et judaïsme. Colloque de Strasbourg
(septembre 1984)*, Paris 1987, pp. 43–64.

[114] As with the other MSS.

[115] As with the other MSS.

[116] MS London 737, fol. 301a/5–21:

שוב אקרא אני לפניך תינעץ טעצש ייה יי׳ אלהי ישר׳ אזכיר לפניך שם היחיד הזה היה יה
יה אשר מאז

חקקתו על כסא כבודך כשהו באים ועומדים לפניך וכן אמרת אם ראית בני עומדים לפניך
ותעמוד מדת הדין

ותחזור עולם לתהו ובהו מסתכל אני במדת הדין ובמדת רחמים וכובשין רחמך את כעסך
ואתה נחם על הרעה

The liturgical formulas at the end of this part of the prayer remind one directly of Yom Kippur. The guiding thought of the final prayer of Yom Kippur, known as *Ne'ila*, is to plead for the sealing of the Book of Forgiveness and of Life before the heavenly gates are shut at the onset of night. It should be noted that *Ne'ila* opens with Psalm 145, which is also one of the preparatory practices of the *THS*, and with the *Kedushah*.

It is therefore no wonder that in the manuscript transmission of the *THS* we find a tradition that states that the night of Yom Kippur is the appropriate time for the Hamnuna Sava prayer.[117] Another extant incantation text from the Geonic period expressly connects the *Śar Torah* tradition with Yom Kippur.[118] This part of THS reminds one also of those magical prayers in which the confession of sins and the plea for fulfillment of one's own wishes are intertwined. From the second volume of *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, the following text is given here as an especially typical example:

> And also I your servant, son of your maid stand at this hour with everyone, to say a prayer and to ask for mercy and support before the throne of your glory, so that you (may) forgive my sins, and pardon my misdemeanors and transgressions, (and) may you be full of mercy towards me, hear my cry for help and fulfil my request and my desire. . . .[119]

This much is clear at any rate: in *THS* the Torah magic is associated from the outset with the aspect of forgiving and atoning for sins. God's name, which in the *THS* enables the prayer to reach God above and opens the Torah gates is, above all, also the name which was said to result in the forgiveness and the atonement of sins when it used to be uttered by the High Priest in the Temple on Yom Kippur. In this way *THS* belongs to that tradition of the

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מלמדי זכות מזכירין דהה אה וכך ציווית את משרתך הכוהבי׳ לפניך ספרי חיים וספרי
מתים אם יזכירו בני שמי
היחיד ותשמעו אותו מפי עמי מיד הלבינו עוונתיהם וכתבו את זכוחם באותו השם אני
קורא לפניך יהו הוה
יאו ההיה אהו הוה יהו הוה אה הו הו או הה הה הה הי אה יה וה אה וה יהו והה
הוה והו יו והי מחול וסלח
לי אני פלו׳ עבדך וכפר על חטאי ואהיה נקי לחיי ע׳ה

Hekhalot writings which automatically connect magical procedures directly to certain liturgical events. In *Merkavah Rabbah*, that *Hekhalot* text whose closeness to *THS* has been emphasized several times, we find the same tendency, whereby Aseret, New Year, Each Month and the First of Adar are listed as special days for the magic ritual.[120]

It can be seen in the whole passage that again the *THS* author in turn harks back to common haggadic traditions, which he brings together in a kind of shorthand, but with true craftsmanship. The concept of the letters of the divine name being engraved on the throne is found in both the Hekhalot and the Midrash tradition. The motifs about the possible relapse of the world into *tohu vabohu* and about God's conflicting attributes, mirrored in his punitive judgement-court (מדת הדין) and his mercy (מדת הרחמים), have numerous parallels in the rabbinic tradition.[121] An important parallel text to the latter complex of traditions is the following quotation from the Talmud Bavli Berakhot 7a, which had been included in the Hekhalot tradition as well:[122]

> R. Yohanan says in the name of R. Jose: How do we know that the Holy One, blessed be He, says prayers? Because it says: Even them will I bring to My holy montain and make them joyful in My house of prayer (Is. 56:7). It is not said 'their prayer' but 'my prayer'; hence (you learn) that the Holy One, blessed be He, says prayers. What does He pray? R. Zutra b. Tobi said in the name of Rav: May it be My will that My mercy conquers My anger, and that My mercy prevail over My (other) attributes, so that I may deal with My children in the attribute of mercy and, on their behalf, stop short of the limit of strict justice'. It was taught: R. Yishmael b. Elisha says: I once entered into the innermost part (of the Sanctuary) to offer incense and saw Akatri'el YH, the Lord of Hosts, seated upon a high and exalted throne. He said to me: Yishmael, My son, bless Me! I replied: May it be Thy will that Thy mercy may suppress Thy anger and Thy mercy may prevail over Thy other attributes, so that Thou mayest deal with Thy children according to the attribute of mercy and mayest, on their behalf, stop short of the limit of strict justice!

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[120] Cf. Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God*, pp. 110f.

[121] See K. Grözinger, "*Middat ha-din* und *Middat ha-rahamim*; die sogenannten Gottesattribute 'Gerechtigkeit' und 'Barmherzigkeit' in der rabbinischen Literatur", in *FJB* 8, 1980, pp. 95–114.

[122] *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, § 151. See Daniel Abrams, "From Divine Shape to Angelic Being; the Career of Akatriel in Jewish Literature," *Journal of Religion* 76, 1996, pp. 43–63.

The liturgical formula יהי רצון מלפניך in connection with the apotropaic character of God's name has also be included in a liturgical fragment of the Hekhalot tradition:

> May it be your will, Lord, our God, that your mercy conquers your anger at the hour when we mention your great and awesome name, so that we will not drown in fire, for all your attendants blaze (like) fire.[123] May it be your will, compassionate and good father, that we will be saved in that hour from the evil spirits, for your name is pleasing to you, your name is holy to you, your name is pure to you, your name is great, your name is awesome, your name is splendid, and Israel is holy and pure through you. And you did not reveal your name to all the nations of the world, but to us alone. You called us sons and servants for the sake of your name. Blessed be your name for ever and ever, you who made us so . . . expounded (is the name) that is on the crown, expounded is his name (Tetragramm permutations follow).[124]

The idea of whitewashing one's sins is widely found in the Midrash, whereby the concept "*Lebanon*", identified with the Temple in Deut. 3:25 and containing the Hebrew root לבן = "white," plays a special part. This tradition can be expressly linked with Yom Kippur as is illustrated by the Midrash on Psalm 9:1 ("but his [= Israel's] Father in heaven makes white their sins on the Day of Atonement, pardons and forgive him").

The whitewashing force of the Temple and its rites corresponds in *THS* to the powerful efficacy of the Tetragrammaton, whereby the reciter of the magical prayer replaces the High Priest in the Temple.

The following part of *THS* contains elements which we have already found in the first part, in particular, the plea that the prayer be heard, that the gates of the Torah be opened, whereby the piece is concluded by a warning against the abuse of the divine name.[125]

Just as a hymn of praise from the Hekhalot tradition forms the prayer's introduction, so the author lets the prayer conclude, too, with an extensive hymn derived from the Hekhalot literature. In *Hekhalot Rabbati* we find the following praise of God within the framework of the so-called songs of the Throne:[126]

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[123] Literally: "for all Your attendants are fire (and) blaze"; cf. Ps. 104:4.

[124] *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, § 393.

[125] I hope to publish a comprehensive analysis of *THS*, including the whole manuscript tradition, in the near future.

[126] *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, § 268.

Who is like Thee, Lord, God of Israel, Lord of powerful deeds, Lord, God of Israel, superiors and inferiors kneel and throw themselves down before Thee, Lord, God of Israel. *Serafim* glorify and rejoice before Thee, God of Israel. The throne of Thy glory extols Thee and gives Thee pride and dignity, strength and splendor for Thyself, Lord God of Israel. Thy servants crown Thee with crowns and sing to Thee a new song. They appoint Thee king for ever, and Thou shalt be named One for ever and ever ... Blessed art Thou, Lord, Wise of the secrets (חכם הרזים) and Lord of the Hidden (אדון הסתרים).

In *THS*, the beginning and the end of this hymn is nearly identical, but the middle part has been changed. By the time the *THS* author wanted to incorporate the hymn, he happened to have reached the letter *mem* according to the prayer's alphabetical structure. So he molded the hymn to praise God's secret name ṬYGʻṢ ṬʻṢŠ *alef/bet/gimel/dalet* ... YH another eight times and to complete the Hebrew alphabet. In the original version of this hymn of praise God's name is already extolled five times ("Lord, God of Israel"). Using this eulogy as a basis, the *THS* author incorporated different angel groups, dropping, however, the extolment of the throne of glory in *Hekhalot Rabbati* ("The throne of Thy glory extols Thee ..."), which originally pointed to the throne songs and the throne mysticism of this Hekhalot writing. In *THS* the hymn took on the following form:

Who is like Thee, ṬYGʻṢ ṬʻṢŠ NYH, Lord, God of Israel, Lord of powerful deeds and Lord of all wonders, for Thou are ṬYGʻṢ ṬʻṢŠ SYH, Lord, God of Israel, superiors and inferiors kneel, for Thou are ṬYGʻṢ ṬʻṢŠ ʻYH, Lord, God of Israel. *śerafim* and *ḥayyot ha-qodesh* sing to Thee in fear and terror, for Thy name is ṬYGʻṢ ṬʻṢŠ PYH, Lord, God of Israel; they rejoice before Thee with praise, song and hymns of praise, for none is beside Thee, ṬYGʻṢ ṬʻṢŠ ṢYH, Lord, God of Israel, Thy servants laud and praise Thy blessed name (other readings: holy name; name of Thy glory) ṬYGʻṢ ṬʻṢŠ QYH, Lord, God of Israel; the *galgalim* of Thy Merkavah answer Thee, ṬYGʻṢ ṬʻṢŠ RYH, Lord, God of Israel, to Thee they present a hymn of praise, the *ḥayyot*, the bearers of the throne of Thy glory, the *Ofannim* and the *Keruvim* praise Thy name, ṬYGʻṢ ṬʻṢŠ ŠYH, Lord, God of Israel, Thy servants crown Thee with crowns and sing to Thee a new song. They appoint Thee king for ever and ever, and Thou shalt be named One God for ever, for Thou ṬYGʻṢ ṬʻṢŠ TYH, Lord, God of Israel. Praise be to Thee, ṬYGʻṢ ṬʻṢŠ ṢŠMʼṢ, Lord, God of Israel, King of the secrets (מלך הרזים) and Lord of the Hidden (אדון הסתרים).[127]

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[127] In MS London 737, fol. 301b/23–302a/9 some text is missing, indicated by

We can view the reworking of this final Hekhalot hymn as directly analogous to the beginning of the prayer of praise, which begins with a hymn of praise found in *Hekhalot Rabbati* as well. The last words, as we have seen, point to Hamnuna Sava just as the first ones do.

Conclusions

Our starting point in the analysis of the THS consisted of questions arising out of the ongoing work on the Hekhalot texts and the magic text-fragments found in the Cairo Genizah. To help recall these questions let us once more cite Shaul Shaked here:

> In the mediaeval period, as we can see from the Geniza material, a measure of harmony was achieved between Hekhalot, liturgy and the magic texts . . . It probably demonstrates a secondary coming-together of the two or rather three domains: Hekhalot, magic, and liturgy (domains that had never been kept entirely apart), a meeting that forms yet another synthesis. Along a stretch of time, it is possible to notice how groups of literary traditions seem periodically to drift together and again break away from each other.[128]

No question about it: if a text reflecting such a harmony exists, then it is *THS*. Indeed one could say that it was the overall design of its author to create a synthesis between Hekhalot, magic, liturgy and, as we have seen during our analysis, Haggada. Thereby it is not difficult

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the copyist with the phrase נ׳ל הסר הצ׳ וק׳ (that means the phrases with the divine names ציה and קיה are omitted). The Genizah fragment T.-S. New Ser. 322.49, fol. 1a/9–2b/8, and the London manuscript 736 (see K. Herrmann, *Massekhet Hekhalot. Traktat von den himmlischen Palästen. Edition, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, Tübingen 1994, pp. 38–39) have preserved a much better version of the text, and were used to reconstruct the missing text:

מי כמוך אתה תינעץ טעצש ניה יי׳ אלהי ישר׳ ארון נבורות ובעל כל נפלאות כי אתה תינעץ טעצש סיה ייי׳ אלהי ישר׳ לך יכרעו עליוני׳ ותחתוני׳ כי אתה תינעץ טעצש עיה יי׳ אלהי ישר׳ לך יהללו שרפים וחיות הקודש כבודך באימה וביראה כי שמך תינעץ טעצש פיה יי׳ אלהי ישראל לך יביעו בהלל ובזמר ובשרה שאין זולתך תינעץ טעצש ציה יי׳ אלהי ישר׳ יפארו משרתיך ומהללים שם מבורך \ קדשך \ כבודך תינעץ טעצש קיה יי׳ אלהי ישראל נלנלי מרכבותיך יענו לך תינעץ טעצש ריה יי׳ אלהי׳ ישר׳ לך יתנו שירה חיות נושאות כסא כבודך והאופנ׳י׳ והכרובי׳ מקדישי׳ שמך תינעץ טעצש שיה יי׳ אלהי ישר׳ יכתירו לך משרתיך כתרים וישירו לך שיר חדש וימליכוך לנצח נצחים ותקרא אל אחד לעולם ועד כי אתה תינעץ טעצש תיה יי׳ אלהי ישר׳ ברוך אתה תינעץ צשמנעץ מנעץ יי׳ אלה׳ מלך הרום ואדון כל הסחרים.

[128] "'Peace be Upon You, Exalted Angels': on Hekhalot, Liturgy and Incantation Bowls", *JSQ* 2, 1995, p. 207.

to figure out the building blocks which form the basis of this incantation prayer and were fitted together to shape an editorially well reflected literary composition.

Indeed, much of the older Hekhalot tradition seems imbalanced: the names of the rabbis who do not seem to be deeply involved with the sayings that are attributed to them; the standard prayers and liturgical formulas, incorporated every so often into Hekhalot tradition, whose literary tie to the context, however, appears unmotivated; at times, Midrash traditions are cited before a magical ritual itself, supposedly to enhance the legitimization of these traditions, which themselves, however, seem to be more a negation of Midrash. All of these inconsistencies in the end help to explain the emergence of *THS*: here, the rabbi's name fits the prayer and its contents; here, the wordings of the daily prayer are associated with Hekhalot hymns and incantation formulas, and finally the haggadic element here is not inserted as a preliminary element, but incorporated into the main body of the prayer itself.

Traces of the tendency apparent in this prayer are also recognizable in other Hekhalot writings. Indeed, we can say that, in a certain sense, some of the still highly controversial scholarly positions on the origins and the social context of this literature, which we mentioned at the outset, ultimately reflect these very divergent tendencies. It should be pointed out, however, that these positions often do not take sufficient account of the internal developmental process of Merkavah mysticism, or they absolutize a tendency emerging in a work and use it as a basis to explain the entire literature. To mention only one example, alongside texts which evidence a markedly elitist, exclusivist consciousness, we find traditions with a starkly contrary orientation that promise a magic Torah spell for everyone. In any case, care should be taken to avoid rash generalizations: anyone who, e.g., supposes the ʿam ha-ʾarez or all of Israel to stand behind the Torah ritual and views Hekhalot literature as the revolutionary manifesto of the Jewish masses in their struggle against the rabbinic establishment, misjudges the inner dialectic of these traditions, which are obviously directed against those tendencies of Merkavah mysticism that reveal a markedly elitist, even quasi-messianic consciousness. Also the "magical radicalness" found in numerous Hekhalot texts should not be rashly played off against traditional rabbinic Torah piety—these magic texts are oriented towards rabbinic moral concepts, if not in the

practices they describe, at least in their aim of achieving a better understanding of the Torah or of keeping the Torah alive in people's memories. As such, they therefore tend to be at odds with those mystical texts which have no more to offer than "displaying the king in his beauty" (לראות את המלך ביופיו). A special feature of gaonic mysticism seems to be its wish to balance these tensions and to harmonize quite diverse bundles of tradition with one another. On the other hand, it would be prudent not to attribute a model character to these harmonizing tendencies, to claim that what Hekhalot literature *per se* represents is a product of the Jewish middle class, sandwiched, so to speak, between the uneducated lower class and the rabbinic upper class. That much is clear in any case: whoever originated the Hekhalot literary traditions concerning the ascent of the mystic, the magic Torah rite or the speculation about the "mystic figure of the Godhead," however and wherever one may place this literature in a historical or social-historical perspective, those who later passed on the traditions felt very strongly the need to tie these mystical and magical traditions together. Nevertheless, corrective and polemic tendencies are quite visible in this harmonization process.

THS is thus closely linked to other texts of the Geonic era which similarly demonstrate the coming together of strands from various traditions, whereby it is quite possible to recognize the different tendencies of the respective authors or redactors. For example, the magic element, intrinsic to the *THS* and the magical texts from the Cairo Genizah, takes a back seat in mystical writings like 3 Enoch and *Massekhet Hekhalot*, or is even absent altogether in midrashic compostions like *Alfabeta de-Rabbi Aqiva, Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer*, and *Midrash Mishle*, in which mystical elements were included. All this indicates the relevance of the mysticism of the Geonic era, especially when we look at the further development of the esoteric tradition in mediaeval Europe. Moreover, when we look at *THS* it is evident that this prayer contains many elements that became important to this tradition: Hekhalot, *Śar Torah*, liturgy, magic, Haggadah, the alphabet in combination with secret names and Tetragramm permutations. So it is certainly no accident that Eleazar of Worms cited this prayer several times in his esoteric work *Sode Razayya* and, indeed, included the complete text (along with some peculiar renditions, which almost certainly originated with the *ḥaside ashkenaz*) in the section entitled *Sefer ha-Shem* of this work. Besides, Hamnuna Sava is one of the leading

lights of the Zohar tradition. The medieval interest in the *THS* is reflected by the very considerable redactional changes which this prayer underwent in the course of its reception. However, the story of the prayer's reception deserves to be the subject of a separate study. And, more important, the missing chapter of Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*: "Mysticism in the Geonic Period" needs to be filled in.

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SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE DIFFUSION OF JEWISH MAGICAL TEXTS FROM LATE ANTIQUITY AND THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES IN MANUSCRIPTS FROM THE CAIRO GENIZAH AND ASHKENAZ*

Reimund Leicht

Introduction

The Cairo Genizah is the richest source for research in almost every field of Jewish history. Studies in the Masora, Rabbinic literature and Apocryphal traditions, early and medieval Piyyut, liturgy, Jewish Philosophy, mysticism, Jewish languages, social history etc., all have greatly profited from the innumerable fragments and manuscripts from the Genizah. Time and again we are astonished to note the enormous diversity of traditions attested in the Genizah. However, for a long time research on Jewish magic had lagged considerably behind that in other fields of Genizah studies before J. Naveh, Sh. Shaked, L.H. Schiffman, M.D. Swartz and P. Schäfer over the last fifteen years began to draw our attention to the richness and diversity of Genizah magic as well.[1]

The subject of this paper has grown out of observations made during the research on Genizah manuscripts which came to light in the Berlin project on Genizah magic directed by P. Schäfer and Sh. Shaked. Jewish magic is a field of research where the number of edited texts is rather small. Therefore, at first sight almost every fragment seems to reveal something hitherto unknown. But the more we learn about Genizah magic, the more it becomes evident that (just like in any other field of Genizah research) the manuscripts found

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[1] Cf. Naveh and Shaked 1985 and 1993; Schiffman and Swartz 1992; Schäfer and Shaked 1994, 1997 and 1999.

here cannot be interpreted separately from the evidence found in other manuscripts. This, however, implies numerous difficulties.

Let me illustrate this with a famous example: Mordecai Margalioth's publication of *Sefer ha-Razim* in 1966 was a scholarly sensation. His edition had an enormous impact on modern research on Jewish magic and mysticism. In spite of Margalioth's own strongly apologetical opinions about the role of magic in Talmudic Judaism,[2] it was hailed almost unanimously as a major step towards a better understanding of the cultural world of Judaism in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages.

It is sometimes forgotten that major parts of the text were always easily available in printed form in the famous *Sefer Raziel*, and numerous Ashkenazi manuscripts in European libraries contain it as well. Indeed, the main reason for the sensation was not so much the discovery of the text itself but the fact that Margalioth based his edition on Genizah fragments which he collated with Ashkenazi manuscripts of *Sefer ha-Razim*. In addition, he identified and successfully deciphered some Greek passages in the book—among them a prayer to Helios.[3] This remarkable discovery, together with the existence of early Genizah manuscripts, encouraged Margalioth to formulate his basic thesis that *Sefer ha-Razim* is an authentic document of (admittedly heretical) Jewish magic during the Talmudic period.

What will concern us here is the pattern of evidence from which Margalioth drew his conclusions. On the one hand, he had to rely on Ashkenazi manuscripts in reconstructing the text of *Sefer ha-Razim*. On the other hand, the Genizah fragments added a formidable proof that he was indeed dealing with an authentic ancient text. This constellation—Ashkenazi manuscripts combined with Genizah fragments—has become a standard pattern for manuscript evidence in many fields of early Jewish mysticism and magic: The bulk of Hekhalot-literature such as that edited by P. Schäfer in the *Synopse der Hekhalot-Literatur*,[4] for example, is drawn from Ashkenazi sources, but early Genizah fragments not only contribute the dignity of their antiquity but also reveal some highly interesting aspects of the redactional reworking of these texts.[5] The same holds true for *Harba de Mosheh* in

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[2] On a critical reappraisal of Mordecai's arguments cf. Schäfer 1997: 38ff.
[3] Margalioth 1966: 12.
[4] Schäfer 1981.
[5] Schäfer 1984 and 1988: 104–117; cf. also Dan 1984.

its different redactional forms.[6] Gaonic texts like the *Pishra de-Hanina ben Dosa* and *Havdala de-Rabbi 'Aqiva* were even attested by Ashkenazi sources only until Genizah parallels were discovered recently.[7]

Within this pattern of manuscript evidence, Genizah fragments enjoy a very high esteem. The bare fact that a certain text or redaction is attested in the Genizah is sometimes the only evidence we possess when dealing with questions of absolute and relative dating of texts and their redactions. It is well-known, however, that the Cairo Genizah contains both highly important ancient and rather late manuscripts. This raises a couple of questions for further research: What can Genizah manuscripts contribute to a historical inquiry into Jewish magical literature? What is the historical structure and value of Genizah manuscript evidence for Jewish magic? How can we determine the relative value of Ashkenazi manuscripts and Genizah fragments for the history of Jewish magical literature?

The scope of this paper is thus a historical one. What I attempt to do here is to analyse the manuscript evidence for a few examples of magical texts which turned up among the treasures of the Cairo Genizah. With regard to paleography, language or content these texts seem to belong to late Antiquity or the Early Middle Ages.[8] Many of them have parallels in Ashkenazi manuscripts and, as we have seen above, these are important sources which need to be considered seriously. The guideline in analysing this double evidence will always be the question whether it is possible to trace back the ways certain magical traditions were transmitted in accordance with this manuscript evidence, and what this teaches us about the texts.

An enormous number of these magic spells could be considered here, but for practical reasons I will concentrate on some larger literary units such as complete treatises of astrology, the magical application of Psalms, magical prayers and *Harba de-Mosheh*. The concentration on certain texts makes generalizations difficult and the observations described here are no exception. I have tried, however, to choose examples which—I believe—represent not just individual cases but seem to be paradigmatic for Genizah magic as a whole.

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[6] Cf. Gaster 1896 and 1971, Schäfer 1981 (= SHL §§598–622, 640–650), Schäfer 1991: VII–XVII, 1–17, 42–50 and Harari 1997.

[7] Schäfer and Shaked 1997 (= MTKG II, Nr. 22 and 32); cf. also Tocci 1986 and Scholem 1980/81.

[8] Defining these chronological terms exactly is, of course, extremely difficult. In speaking about Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages I refer to a period from the beginning of the Common Era until the 12th/13th centuries.

1. *Astrology*

In 1966, H.-G. Gundel boldly stated that the "Hebrew texts of astro-
logumena of the Hellenistic period were obviously all lost".[9] Indeed, a
deep gap of several centuries yawns between Qumran and Jewish
astrology in the Middle Ages. Some Talmudic passages, archeo-
logical evidence, Greek sources of Jewish origin etc. indicate that the
assumption that astrology was altogether unknown within Judaism
during this period is outright apologetical.[10] Notwithstanding this,
first-hand evidence for the practice of astrology by Jews is rare. Can
Genizah manuscripts help us to fill this gap?[11]

   The vast majority of astrological texts from the Genizah are written
in Arabic or Judeo-Arabic.[12] Most of them belong to later periods.
But as far as I can see, there are still more than a dozen fragments
which are possible sources for ancient Jewish astrological traditions
either because of the antiquity of the manuscripts and/or because
of the character of the text. Some of them have been published in
recent years.

   Sh. Shaked dealt with a Palestinian Jewish Aramaic Lunary (Sele-
nodromion)[13] he discovered on an old parchment manuscript (11th
century or earlier?). It explains the properties of each day of the lunar
month. There can be no doubt "that the text is strongly influenced
by the non-Jewish environment",[14] as Shaked puts it. Most striking
is its use of a large number of Greek loan words and references to
Greek mythology (birthdays of pagan deities!) which is a very common
feature in Greek versions of this genre.[15]

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[9] Gundel and Gundel 1966: 53.
[10] Cf. for a general survey Charlesworth 1987.
[11] Cf. for a comprehensive analysis of the Genizah evidence for Jewish astrolog-
ical literature Leicht (forthcoming) ch. 3.
[12] Cf., e.g., Goldstein and Pingree 1977 and 1979; Gottheil 1927 and 1929.
[13] Shaked 1992.
[14] Shaked 1992: 29.
[15] Cf. Gundel and Gundel 1966: 263–269. Shaked refers to a number of orien-
tal parallels (Babylonian, Syriac, Mandaic, Pahlavi). To these some Greek astro-
logical texts can be added, though none of them can be taken as direct sources for
the Aramaic and Judeo-Arabic texts. The Greek *selenodromia* (CCAG III: 33ff.; IV:
142ff.; VIII.4: 102ff.; X: 122ff.; XI.1: 134ff.; XI.2: 157ff.) are strikingly similar to
each other and to the one found in the astrological section of the Syriac *Book of
Medicines* edited by E.A.W. Budge 1913, vol. 1: 476–480 (= vol. 2: 560–365). Later
adaptations sometimes replace the birthdays of pagan deities with biblical figures;
cf. Cumont in CCAG X: 121f., and Cumont 1933, with a list of pagan deities and

A few years earlier, J.C. Greenfield and M. Sokoloff[16] had discussed another astrological text from a Palestinian Aramaic manuscript previously edited by M. Klein.[17] It contains seventeen omens based on the appearance of the moon on a certain day of the year. Such *omina*-texts have an old and honorable pedigree which leads us beyond Hellenistic traditions back to ancient Babylonian sources. Stimulated by these close parallels, the translators seem to assume that this Palestinian Aramaic text might indeed be a direct successor of old Babylonian sources—unmediated through Hellenistic traditions. This is a highly questionable conclusion, but the text indeed indicates that techniques of lunar astrology penetrated Palestinian Jewry some time from Late Antiquity up to the Early Middle Ages.

In the forthcoming volume of *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza* (MTKG IV),[18] an additional selection of about ten Hebrew and Aramaic astrological texts will be published. One of them, a relatively old Hebrew parchment fragment (12th century) contains instructions for making horoscopes and employs the Syriac names of the planets. An obviously early Hebrew *brontologion* (11th century) resembles similar handbooks of popular astrology in Late Antiquity in every detail. A Palestinian Aramaic fragment from a large magical codex contains, among other texts, a handbook on predictions based on lunar eclipses on certain days, and another fragment in Palestinian Aramaic (11th century) relates omens deduced from the weather (dew, wind) at the beginning of the year in the month Tishre. A Hebrew fragment on astrological ethnography is almost identical with an ethnographical list found in Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblios* (II.3) and the popular handbook *De Ostentis* collected by the sixth-century writer Laurentius Lydius.

One of the most exciting discoveries in this field, however, is the identification of several manuscripts containing the so-called *Treatise of Shem*.[19] It is a kind of "farmer's almanac" dealing with predictions on agriculture, meteorology, political events, economic developments

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their biblical substitutes. Occasionally, the birthdays mentioned in the pagan versions coincide with those found in Shaked's Genizah text (cf. e.g. the Nymphs on the 26th day). For a Coptic version cf. Till 1936.

[16] Greenfield and Sokoloff 1989.

[17] Klein 1986, vol. 1: 96–201.

[18] Cf. for the previous volumes Schäfer and Shaked 1994, 1997, 1999.

[19] This text was partly published in Schäfer and Shaked 1999: 261–284 (= MTKG III, Nr. 80).

and public and private health. Texts of this genre are generally called
dodekaetris because outstanding events within a cycle of twelve years are
described. The opening sentence of each chapter is "if the New Year
is born in X", namely in a certain sign of the zodiac, "Y and Z
happens". As becomes clear in the introduction to the *Treatise of Shem*,
the New Year's day meant here was the 25th of Tammuz. This day
was obviously identified with the 25th of Epiphi, which was celebrated
in ancient Egypt as the day of the heliacal rise of the Dog Star
(Sirius, Sothis) and was thus seen as the beginning of the agricultural
year. Hephaistion Thebanis describes this Egyptian practice in his
Apotelesmatica and it is not surprising that the earliest evidence for it
comes from the land of the Nile.[20]

The *Treatise of Shem* was not unknown before the Genizah fragments
were discovered. Nearly ninety years ago, A. Mingana published a
Syriac version of this text based on a 15th-century manuscript, the only
one surviving in this language.[21] Nearly seventy years later, J. Charles-
worth dealt with this text again. He considered it to be a basically
apocalyptical document of the first century BC[22] This interpretation
was sharply criticized by S. Brock and others who could not follow
Charlesworth in his dating based on "exceedingly flimsy ground".[23]
I have dealt with these questions elsewhere, and for the moment
suffice it to say here that according to the Genizah evidence, the
Treatise of Shem was written some time between the fourth and sev-
enth centuries.[24]

The importance of the Genizah manuscripts goes well beyond a
more precise dating of the text. As far as I can see, the *Treatise of
Shem* was one of the most popular astrological handbooks in the
Jewish community of Cairo. No less than two manuscripts of the
Palestinian Aramaic text and fragments of three *different* early Judeo-
Arabic versions have been identified up till now. In the field of mag-
ical texts, this is a pretty big number. Moreover, in addition to the
Syriac version and Genizah manuscripts, the title and introduction
of this work can be found in the Ashkenazi mystical *Sammelhandschrift*
Oxford Michael 9, which probably originated in a circle of the

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[20] For a comprehensive analysis of the material, cf. Leicht (forthcoming).
[21] Mingana 1917.
[22] Charlesworth 1983 and 1987.
[23] Brock 1984: 204.
[24] Cf. Leicht (forthcoming).

Haside Ashkenaz. We can consequently find traces of the *Treatise of Shem* in such different areas and periods as 15th-century Christian Syria/Iraq, early 14th-century Germany, and 11th-century Egypt, if the oldest Genizah manuscript was indeed written there.

Other fragments from the Genizah attest a handbook which defines good and bad hours for beginning certain actions, and combines this with predictions for the newborn child. The theoretical basis for these predictions is taken from the concept that every hour of the day is ruled by a certain planet. Texts of this kind are enormously widespread:[25] they follow stereotyped patterns and generally do not reveal anything exciting. In the case of this text, however, the manuscript evidence is interesting. In addition to a Hebrew parchment fragment from the Genizah (13th century) we possess an Aramaic Genizah-version written on a leaf of paper (14th–15th century) and 16th-century Ashkenazi manuscripts which draw on sources of the Haside Ashkenaz.[26]

How should we interpret this evidence? Although it is a general rule that Aramaic texts from the Genizah are often older than Hebrew ones, the language of the Aramaic version is pretty awkward, so we cannot rule out the possibility that we are dealing with a later "artificial" Aramaic translation. Therefore, the seemingly similar pattern of manuscript evidence does not allow us to draw conclusions like the ones we could draw in the case of the *Treatise of Shem*. Strictly speaking, there is no way to decide whether this handbook is of oriental or European origin and whether it is medieval or ancient. Since the astrological knowledge of this kind is attested by El'azar of Worms in his book *Sode Razaya*, it is not at all inconceivable that this text originated in Europe. More evidence to be discussed later will show that the existence of a Genizah fragment alone does not prove anything here. We will have to come back to this problem. The only thing we may state for the moment is that once again the Cairo Genizah and Ashkenazi manuscripts are complementary sources.

This shows that there is no simple answer to the question of the origins of astrological traditions from the Genizah. As far as I can see, the Genizah indeed preserves a layer of texts which can be

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[25] Cf. mainly for the Greek sources, Gundel and Gundel 1966: 270–274.

[26] British Library Add. 27,199 and München 81. Both manuscripts are almost identical as to their content and were both compiled by Eliah Levita. The first part of this manuscipt contains the *Sode Razaya* of El'azar of Worms.

dated back with some certainty to the Byzantine period. The *Treatise of Shem* is a fine example of this. Jewish astrology during this period seems to have perpetuated models provided by Hellenistic traditions. Most of these fragments were written in "pure" Palestinian Aramaic, although some Hebrew texts may be attributed to this category as well. The language and content of the astrological Genizah manuscripts do not confirm the hypothesis put forward by Greenfield and Sokoloff that the Aramaic traditions would go back *directly* to Babylonian origins. Instead, they indicate a thorough penetration of Greek popular astrology into Western-Aramaic-speaking Judaism.

But what happened to these astrological texts and traditions within Judaism? Although the Genizah alone cannot be taken as a fully representative source for the evolution of astrology in Judaism, some manuscripts may tell us interesting things about the fate of ancient astrology within the Jewish community of Cairo. As I pointed out above, the *Treatise of Shem* has been preserved in two Palestinian Aramaic manuscripts and three *different* Judeo-Arabic translations. This indicates that at a certain stage old Aramaic texts were translated into Judeo-Arabic. As far as we can see from the manuscript evidence, this must have happened during the 11th and 12th centuries. This date coincides perfectly with the observation made by Sh. Goitein that in this period Aramaic vanished from different parts of Jewish life in the Cairo community.[27]

Nevertheless, the endeavors to protect these texts from oblivion do not seem to have been fully successful. No fragment dated later than the 13th century contains the *Treatise of Shem* any more. Instead, we find fragments written in Sephardic script and pure, "classical" Judeo-Arabic, which obviously represent different, originally Arabic traditions. In addition, nothing of the older Hebrew and Aramaic texts mentioned above seem to have survived the 14th century.[28]

We can only speculate about the reasons for this rupture, but there are some indicators which reveal that the 13th century was not only a period of a flourishing Jewish culture in Egypt but also a period of loss of ancient traditions. I will give more examples for this obser-

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[27] Cf., e.g., Goitein 1967: 15.
[28] It has to be kept in mind that we cannot be sure about the exact dating of the handbook described above.

vation later on. On the other hand, at least in the case of the *Treatise of Shem*, it can be shown that certain traditions continued to be known in Ashkenaz.[29]

2. Shimmush Tehillim

The magical manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah contain a great number of fragments for the magical application of Psalms (*Shimmush Tehillim*). They represent almost entirely a text similar to the one found in the Hebrew handbook for *shimmush tehillim* printed in Sabbioneta in 1551.[30] G. Scholem attributed considerable importance to the magical use of Divine Names deduced from certain Psalms in this book. He was obviously convinced that the identification of Psalms with Divine Names in the *Sefer Shimmush Tehillim* is a pointer that the later *kabbalistic* theory of names hidden in the text of the Hebrew Bible has its roots at least in the Gaonic period, if not earlier.[31]

Unfortunately, Scholem's hypothesis proves to be untenable. Two redactions of the handbook for the magical application of Psalms are attested in the Cairo Genizah. Among these, all the older fragments attest a redaction which does *not* mention Divine Names at all, whereas all fragments which *do* contain names of God belong to a second, later layer. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the Ashkenazi manuscript Oxford Michael 9 attests the older redaction without Divine Names as well. Equally, 12th and 13th century Judeo-Arabic fragments from the Genizah do not translate the recension with names, but the version *without* names. This shows once again that these early translations have to be considered seriously as sources for ancient texts.[32]

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[29] An analysis of the surviving astrological text in Ashkenazi manuscripts can be found in Leicht (forthcoming), ch. 4.

[30] The third volume of the *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Genizah* (Schäfer and Shaked 1999) is largely dedicated to *Shimmush Tehillim*. The reader interested in this genre will find an edition of all the important Genizah fragments and an extensive commentary on the texts there. Cf. for a survey and analysis of the manuscript evidence for the *Sefer Shimmush Tehillim* Rebiger 1998.

[31] Cf. Scholem 1970: 27; Scholem 1989: 56f.

[32] It is worth noticing that the oldest Genizah fragment for *Shimmush Tehillim* is as early as the 10th century. The text itself is difficult to date, but if we consider that this manuscript also contains the *Treatise of Shem* (4th to 7th century) discussed above, we may assume that it is a reliable source for Palestinian Aramaic magic

This pattern of manuscript evidence sounds again familiar to us: firstly, similar to the case of the *Treatise of Shem*, we possess Genizah evidence for an old (Palestinian Aramaic) text. Secondly, this text was translated into Judeo-Arabic during the 12th century, obviously because people could not read Aramaic properly any more. Thirdly, we find a new and clearly distinct layer of 13th-century manuscripts which represent the second redaction of *Sefer Shimmush Tehillim*. This second layer supersedes the old traditions and progressively replaces them. And finally, we can observe that an Ashkenazi manuscript provides an older text than at least some of the Genizah fragments.

For several reasons, it can be assumed that the second redaction of *Sefer Shimmush Tehillim* with Divine Names originates in Europe.[33] In Ashkenazi manuscripts, for example, we find theoretical treatises which explain methods for deducing secret names from the Psalms which are completely lacking from the Genizah.[34] We therefore have evidence that Genizah manuscripts later than the watershed of the 13th century cannot be taken automatically as evidence for ancient Jewish magic.[35] At least from this period onwards, we have to reckon with European magical texts in the Genizah. Conversely, we have to take into consideration that Ashkenazi manuscripts such as Ms Oxford Michael 9 may well preserve older versions than certain Genizah fragments.

3. *Magical Prayers*

This leads us to another example chosen for this paper: magical prayers. Much has been said in the past few years about the inter-mingling of Jewish liturgical patterns with magic.[36] The stimulus for

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during the Byzantine period. This, however, does not necessarily imply that both texts were originally written in this language. The magical application of Psalms was a rather widespread phenomenon in the Mediterranean during late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, and a comprehensive comparative analysis still needs to be done; cf. also Schäfer and Shaked 1999: 10–13.

[33] Cf. Schäfer and Shaked 1999: 9.

[34] Cf. Rebiger 1999, who publishes a theoretical text dealing with *Shimmush Tehillim* from Ms Oxford Michael 9. A different version of this text can be found in manuscripts of El'azar of Worms's *Sefer ha-Shem* (British Library Add. 29,199, and München 81).

[35] This is the reason for my scepticism as to the question where the astrological handbook discussed above originates.

[36] Cf. Schäfer and Shaked 1997: 1–10, and Schäfer 1996.

these discussions were a number of manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah which give evidence for the adaptation of Judaism's central prayers, namely the Seven- and Eighteen-Benedictions-Prayers, for magical purposes.[37] We possess a total of no less than ten Genizah manuscripts which attest such works, and it is no surprise any more that most of these texts are attested in the Ashkenazi Ms Oxford Michael 9 as well.[38] Furthermore, one of the Palestinian Aramaic prayers can be found, for example, in the Ashkenazi Ms Cambridge 505.2 as well, although is was thoroughly reworked and translated into Babylonian Aramaic here.[39] Once again, Ashkenazi manuscripts and Genizah fragments prove to be complementary sources.

What can we say about the origin of these traditions? Interpreting these texts, P. Schäfer has argued that we have the "choice between the German Pietists and the much earlier Merkavah mystics", and finally assumes that "in view not only of the rather early date of the fragments (11th century?) but also of the strong Merkavah flavor of the prayer there is much in favor of a close connection, in terms of contents and time, to Merkavah mysticism".[40]

In order to cast some light on the difficulties inherent in this question, I would like to draw the reader's attention to one of the oldest magical fragments from the Genizah hitherto published. It is a fine parchment manuscript consisting of six folios written in a clear, old script. The manuscript probably dates back to the 11th century in Southern Italy.[41] The importance of this manuscript lies less in its age than its exciting content. The last eight pages contain the magical applications of Jewish liturgical prayers mentioned above. In addition, however, the first two folios contain the well-known *Pishra de-Hanina ben Dosa*,[42] a prayer attributed to Abraham, a Prayer of Jacob and a hitherto unknown Hebrew version of the apocryphal Prayer of Manasseh.[43]

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[37] Schäfer 1984 and Schäfer and Shaked 1997: 27–152.

[38] Similar texts can be found in numerous Ashkenazi manuscripts. No systematic inquiry into these sources has been made yet.

[39] Ms Cambridge 505.2 was first mentioned by Scholem 1930: 9 among other manuscripts which contain magical applications of the *Shemoneh-Esreh*.

[40] Schäfer 1996: 552f.

[41] Cf. Schäfer and Shaked 1997: 46.

[42] Tocci 1986.

[43] Leicht 1999.

What deserves our attention here, however, is the Prayer of Jacob.[44] This text was hitherto attested in Old Church Slavonic apocryphal traditions only. It is part of a text called Ladder of Jacob found in the so-called *Tolkovaja Paleja*. The Prayer of Jacob such as attested in the Genizah fragment is a request for a dream (fol. 2a/22). In an analysis of the prayer, I have tried to argue that the Hebrew version is not the original one and that it is probably based on Greek traditions. One of the main reasons for this assumption is that the whole prayer is modeled according to the liturgical pattern of the Christian *Sanctus* rather than the Jewish *Qedushah*.

Be this as it may, it is fascinating to observe that within this liturgical pattern, the composer of the prayer has inserted elements originating in pagan solar worship. This influence can be felt in the designation of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as "twelve-topped" and "twelve faced" (fol. 2a/10) just like Helios, who is reported in the PGM and other sources as changing his appearance according to the signs of the zodiac. Furthermore, God is called "many-named", again an attribute widely used for Apollo, who was identified with Helios, but also for Helios himself. Finally the description of God as "holding the four corners of the whole world in his arm" (fol. 2a/4–5) can be interpreted as a direct or indirect influence of Helios, who is repeatedly represented in ancient iconography as a charioteer holding a globe in his arm. Consequently, the Prayer of Jacob seems to be another example of the syncretistic identification of IAÔ and Helios.

On the other hand, some formulations of the Prayer recur almost verbatim in medieval midrashic sources. *Midrash Tadsheh* and *Bereshit Rabbati*, both attributed to the eleventh-century scholar Mosheh ha-Darshan from Southern France, make use of the motif that God causes sun, moon and stars to change so that "they may not be deemed a God" (fol. 2a/8).

Without going more into detail here, we may say that the Genizah manuscript provides more than an early source of the magical adaptation of Jewish liturgical forms. It also represents a link which binds together different traditions like the pagan solar cult, apocryphal literature, Hekhalot and cognate texts with Slavo-Byzantine traditions, possibly of Gnostic Bogomil provenence. It is therefore essential to

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[44] Leicht 1996.

keep in mind that the manuscript is probably of Byzantine origin, more specifically, Southern Italy. We should therefore again try not to be rash in drawing conclusions. Although Genizah mansucript always *can* represent authentic Palestinian traditions, even manuscripts as early as the 11th century may be better sources for what was going on in Southern Italy and Byzantium rather than in ancient Palestine and medieval Egypt. Any inquiry into the history of Jewish magic has to take this into account.[45]

4. Harba de-Mosheh

Harba de-Mosheh is one of the central sources for Jewish magic hitherto known. It is widely accepted that it belongs to those works of Jewish magic which can be dated back at least to the Gaonic period, if not earlier.[46] An important argument in favor of this assumption is the fact that Hai Gaon (d. 1038) mentions it and quotes from this work in his famous responsum to the Jewish community of Kairouan. As pointed out above, the manuscript basis for *Harba de-Mosheh* mainly consists of Ashkenazi manuscripts (Sassoon 290,[47] New York JTS 8128, Oxford Michael 9). This in itself poses no major difficulties because it has been shown that Ashkenazi traditions may well preserve old material. The case of *Harba de-Mosheh*, however, is more complicated.

Harba de-Mosheh is, in fact, not a single text but a collection of four different redactional entities bearing this title. One of them, only attested by a single hitherto unpublished Genizah fragment, seems to be totally distinct from the others and does not need to be considered here.[48] The others follow a common pattern which consists

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[45] In this context it is worth mentioning that one of the oldest Genizah fragments of *Sefer ha-Razim* (Oxford Heb. C. 18/30) strongly resembles the Byzantine manuscript discussed here!

[46] Cf. Alexander 1986: 350f. In his profound analysis of *Harba de-Mosheh*, Y. Harari deliberately concentrates on the final literary composition and the inner unity of the version he analyzes, and takes a rather neutral stance on its exact dating; cf. Harari 1997: 52f.

[47] The manuscript itself was written in the Orient, but largely relies on Ashkenazi material; cf. for an analysis of Ms Sassoon 290, Benayahu 1972.

[48] The text preserved in the fragments JTSL ENA 2124.28, JTSL ENA 3296.16, and JTSL ENA 3319.3 bears the title "This is the Sword of Moses the Prophet, son of Amram, Peace be on him". What follows, however, is a kind of patchwork of common liturgical formulae. We hope to be able to publish it soon.

of an introduction, a section of *nomina barbara* and finally a collection of *segullot* for different purposes. These basic similarities sufficiently prove that they did not come into existence independently of each other.[49]

Only one of these three versions is attested by Genizah manuscripts, whereas the others are known from Ashkenazi manuscripts only. Nevertheless, this should not entice us to draw rash conclusions on the age of this version. It has been argued that the Genizah text represents the oldest version of *Harba de-Mosheh*, which originated in Palestine before being reworked in Babylonia.[50] This hypothesis, however, neither takes into consideration the complicated redactional relations between the different versions of *Harba de-Mosheh*, nor is it fully compelling in itself. If we take a look at the other versions found in the Ashkenazi Hekhalot-manuscripts, we find that the *segullot* are not written in Babylonian but in Palestinian Aramaic.[51] It is therefore absolutely conceivable that an early version like this one migrated to Europe and was reworked there rather than in Babylonia. This reworking may have included the assimilation of the Aramaic passages to the Babylonian dialect with which medieval Jews were so much more familiar.[52] As we have seen above, such texts may well have migrated back to the Orient at a pretty early stage, so that one single Genizah-fragment is insufficient proof of the Gaonic or even Talmudic origin of this redaction of the text.

Taking such a cautious stance on the age and origin of certain magical texts and their redactions is more than idle scepticism. It is rather based on the observation that certain results of the research on the major works of early Jewish mysticism can be applied to Jewish magic as well. The main idea behind the *Synopsis der Hekhalot-Literatur* was the assumption that no clear-cut distinction can be made between an original text (*Urtext*) and later redactional and scribal reworking.[53] This nowhere proves to be more useful than in the field

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[49] Cf. Schäfer 1991: VIII.

[50] Cf. Alexander 1986: 351.

[51] Schäfer 1981: §§598–622 and 640–650.

[52] A similar phenomenon can be observed with the magical prayer in Ms Cambridge 505.2, which I have mentioned above, and *Shimmush Tehillim*. The early Genizah fragments of *Shimmush Tehillim* are all written in pure Palestinian Aramaic, whereas the second (European) redaction partly translates it into Hebrew and partly adjusts the Aramaic forms to Babylonian patterns.

[53] Cf. Schäfer 1988: 50–74; for a fine example of a redactional insertion of magical traditions into the corpus of Hekhalot-texts cf. Herrmann and Rohrbacher-Sticker 1991/92.

of magic. The different versions of *Shimmush Tehillim*, of *Harba de-Mosheh* or the Genizah evidence for pieces of the *Havdala de-Rabbi ʿAqiva*[54] provide fine examples of redactional processes which can be observed best in a synoptic reading of the textual evidence.[55]

Conclusions

In this paper, I have tried to discuss a number of magical texts from the Cairo Genizah which belong to a wide range of genres: popular astrology, the magical application of Scripture (*Shimmush Tehillim*), magical prayers and a magical handbook (*Harba de-Mosheh*). All these have their own characteristics, their own history, and each of them would deserve a comprehensive analysis of its own. Nevertheless, let me try to summarize my observations as to their diffusion in the Genizah and Ashkenazi manuscripts. It goes without saying that the hypotheses formulated here are *not* the *ultima ratio* of research on Genizah magic, let alone on the Genizah as a whole. They are meant to be working hypotheses for further research on the history of Jewish magic.

1. No doubt, Genizah fragments considerably enlarge our knowledge of Jewish Magic in late Antiquity and the Byzantine period up to the beginning of the Middle Ages. This can be observed best in the case of the *Treatise of Shem* and a few other astrological texts, which are undoubtedly rather old. A careful analysis of manuscript evidence, however, reveals that a Genizah fragment should not *eo ipso* be considered a sufficient proof for the assumption that a certain text or redaction of a text is "old". This is not a totally new insight but has to be kept in mind. The complicated situation in the case of *Sefer Shimmush Tehillim* should be a warning for us. Just imagine that for some reason the Genizah fragments of the first redaction (without names) had not survived among the Genizah texts. I am afraid that this could have led us to the rash conclusion that the 13th-century Genizah manuscripts with names represented a reliable source for ancient Jewish magic.

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[54] MTKG II, Nr. 32, and MTKG III, Nr. 82.
[55] P. Schäfer has recently initiated a new project on *Sefer ha-Razim* at the Freie Universität Berlin. One of the most important aims of this project will be the publication of the complete manuscript evidence of *Sefer ha-Razim* in a manner which allows a synoptic reading of different versions of this text.

2. On the basis of several texts (i.e. the *Treatise of Shem, Shimmush Tehillim*, and some of the books for casting lots—*Sifre Goralot*—could be added)[56] it can be shown that during the 12th century there was a broad tendency to translate Hebrew and Aramaic texts into Judeo-Arabic. These early translations sometimes represent an older redactional stage of a text than manuscripts in the "original" language. The Genizah itself thus provides a means which may help us to decide whether a certain redaction of a text is "old". A more careful treatment of early Judeo-Arabic material from the Genizah is therefore required.

3. Genizah magic and Ashkenazi magic are complementary entities. It has been shown that in several cases Ashkenazi sources can be seen as fully reliable evidence for early works. They can even be more important for determining an early stage of redaction than Genizah manuscripts themselves (e.g. *Shimmush Tehillim*). For a better understanding of ancient Jewish magic, we should therefore do more research on Ashkenazi manuscripts as well.[57]

4. Even the earliest Genizah manuscripts cannot be taken as a guarantee that we are dealing with direct evidence for ancient (Palestinian) traditions. One of the earliest magical Genizah manuscripts we know may represent South Italian or Byzantine traditions and evolutions[58] rather than old Palestinian ones.[59]

5. The 13th century has turned out to be a kind of watershed for magical traditions such as represented in the Cairo Genizah. Older traditions disappear whereas others, sometimes European or Sephardic, start to spread. Although this phenomenon needs more careful inves-

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[56] Some of the *Sifre Goralot* will be published in the fourth volume of *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*.

[57] I am currently preparing a handlist of Ashkenazi manuscripts with magical texts, which hopefully will serve as a useful tool for more research into the history of Jewish magic.

[58] Cf. for more evidence of Byzantine influence on the Genizah deLange 1996, and in Piyyut-studies van Bekkum 1998: xiiff.

[59] If Byzantine influence is indeed stronger than hitherto assumed, this may have serious consequences for the dating of some texts. Greek loanwords and transcribed Greek texts such as found in *Sefer ha-Razim* and *Harba de-Mosheh* (cf. Rohrbacher-Sticker 1996) have been important arguments in favour of the antiquity of certain texts. The Prayer to Helios is an example in case. It has to be noted, however, that prayers to planets were known in Byzantine traditions in the Middle Ages as well, so that this argument may turn out to be much less compelling than generally believed; cf. CCAG VIII.2: 154–157.

tigation from a historian's point of view, this date might serve us as a guideline for the future evaluation of magical manuscripts.

Genizah magic, it becomes clear, is far from being a unified, monolithic historical phenomenon. Rather than providing ultimate arguments for determining ancient texts, the Cairo Genizah presents a multifarious mixture of different texts and redactions of texts. This renders Genizah research a fascinating business, but this knowledge is also of crucial importance for a correct historical evaluation of our evidence.

Magic has always been seen as a complementary, practical side of Jewish mysticism, and the historiography of Jewish mysticism was always working with one eye to magical traditions. It is therefore not accidental that many of the crucial historical questions debated by scholars of early Jewish mysticism recur in the context of the history of Jewish magic. Does there exist a layer of ancient Palestinian traditions in Jewish magic known from Genizah fragments and Ashkenazi manuscripts? What is the role of Byzantium and Southern Italy in the transmission and creation of magic and mysticism in Europe? What was the role of the Ashkenazi Jewry in the production or remolding of magical knowledge? On the basis of Genizah evidence we may say that a few texts could be very ancient indeed, but the number of texts which can be attributed to this period with certainty is very small. Furthermore, some fragments indicate that Byzantine influence may have been crucial for the development of Jewish magic, although much more research needs to be done in the field. And finally, we may observe that the influence of Ashkenazi Jewry on medieval Jewish magic can be even felt in rather early layers of the Cairo Genizah.

As in any other field of Jewish Studies, Genizah research has always been and will remain the main source for discovering unknown texts and traditions. Much important work has been done in this field, yielding undisputed results. Genizah texts, however, have to be handled with care. A single Genizah manuscript may revolutionize our opinion on a certain topic, but it may also be of little more value than any other manuscript. Some consequences of this I have tried to illustrate in this paper. Caution in drawing historical conclusions, and the necessity for a close analysis of every single text, are an absolute prerequisite whenever we are working with magical texts from the Cairo Genizah and Ashkenazi manuscripts. Otherwise, the results may finally prove to be built on shaky ground.

Abbreviations

AION	*Annali dell' Istituto Orientale di Napoli*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*
CCAG	*Catalogus Codicum Astrologicorum Graecorum*
FJB	*Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JSAI	*Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*
JSQ	*Jewish Studies Quaterly*
MTKG	*Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*

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UNDERSTANDING RITUAL IN JEWISH MAGIC: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE GENIZAH AND RELATED SOURCES

Michael D. Swartz

The study of magic is arguably the study of ritual in its most concentrated form. Indeed, recently some scholars who are concerned that the category magic is a dubious one have proposed to substitute the term "ritual power."[1] Ultimately what confronts scholars of magic is what confronts scholars of ritual at large: where are the sources by which we understand ritual? How can we know what it meant to its participants, its literary framers, its imagined objects of devotion? These questions make the study of magic of significance to the history of religions and the social sciences in general.

The study of magic carries with it all the puzzles of ritual studies and then some. This is due to one factor above others: the tendency of magicians to engage in willful mystification. Yet as Catherine Bell has pointed out, there are many cases in which ritual is invalidated if it is understood; indeed, the successful operation of a ritual involves what she calls a "strategic 'misrecognition' of the relationship of one's ends and means" (Bell, 1992: 108–10, 114–17). Presumably, if we understood the supposedly "real" reasons why we shake hands, knock on wood, or throw rice at a wedding, there would be no reason to do so. If we take the notion that ritual is necessarily opaque to its extreme, we might end up calling it, with Frits Staal, "Rules without Meaning" (Staal 1989).

But rituals are in fact interpreted by participants and theorists. These include not only modern social scientists and historians of religion, but ancient teachers and religious leaders. Ritual theory is a phenomenon that takes place within religious communities especially when the social or conceptual context of a ritual system changes, when

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[1] See, for example, Meyer and Smith 1994; on the terminology see pp. 1–6; cf. Meyer and Mirecki 1995, 2–5. On the use of the term magic for the purposes of this study see Swartz 1996: 18–22.

a culture takes a hermeneutical turn, or when a key institution is in crisis. We see ancient ritual theory operating in Mimamsa Hinduism, Patristic theology, Neoplatonic philosophy and theurgy, and in Judaism of Late Antiquity.[2]

We can illustrate the complexity of ancient ritual interpretation through a well-known story told by the ancient Rabbis about interpretation of sacrifice. The story is found in *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahanah*, a fifth-century Palestinian Midrash. Sacrifice, as we will see, shares much with magic in how we think of it, and in specific details. This story is emblematic in how it deals with the presumed borders between magic and religion, the multivalence and interpretability of ritual, and the enterprise of comparison. It concerns one of the founders of Rabbinic Judaism, Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, and how he was challenged to interpret one of the most opaque rituals in biblical religion. The question here is about the purification ritual of the red heifer in Num. 19—a particularly puzzling case because the priest who performs the ceremony is contaminated, while the ashes of the heifer itself have the power to purify:

> A gentile asked Yoḥanan ben Zakkai: "These things that you (Jews) do seem like a kind of witchcraft.[3] You take a heifer and slaughter it, burn it, grind it up, take its ashes, and if one of you is contaminated by the dead, they sprinkle two or three drops of it and say 'You are pure.'"
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> He said to him, "Has a *tezazit*[4] spirit ever entered you?" He said, "No." He said, "Have you never seen someone in whom a *tezazit* spirit has entered?" He said, "Yes." He said: "What do you do?" He said, "We bring roots and fumigate under him, and spray water on it and it flees." He said to him, "Don't your ears hear what your lips are saying? This spirit is like the spirit of impurity, as it is written, 'I will also make the prophets and the impure spirit vanish from the land'" (Zech 13:2).
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> When [the gentile] left, [Yoḥanan ben Zakkai's] students said to him, "You pushed him away with a reed. But what will you say to us?" He said to them, "By your life! The dead does not contaminate nor the water purify, but it is the decree of the Holy One, blessed be He."[5]

This story is usually quoted to demonstrate how rational the Rabbis were and how they rejected "magic."[6] But it provides us with an

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[2] Cf. especially Clooney 1990.

[3] Aram. *keshafin*, usually referring to forbidden magic.

[4] This term refers to a demonic spirit that causes madness.

[5] *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, Parah* (ed. Mandelbaum 1962: 74). Cf. Midrash Tanḥuma *Ḥuqat* 8; Tanḥuma Buber *Ḥuqat* 26; Num. R. 19:8; Pesiqta Rabbati *Parah*.

[6] For example, Urbach 1979: 98; cf. Goldin 1988: 342–43.

opportunity to see how a ritual provokes both interpretation and comparison. The comparison between the effectiveness of the sacrifice and that of the "pagan" exorcism is easy, for as Jonathan Z. Smith, Sarah Iles Johnston, and others have pointed out, much magical ritual in the Greco-Roman world was domesticated cult (Smith 1995; Johnston 2002). Notice also that the Rabbi can offer two levels of interpretation for his different audiences, and that for his elite students the interpretation is more "conceptual" and "theological:" the ashes do not really have the power to purify, but we follow the ritual because God has commanded it. But from the perspective of modern ritual theory, we might say that Rabbi Yoḥanan's first answer is more rational than his second. That is, the first answer, being "comparative," interprets the ritual itself more intelligibly than his second answer, which leaves the *content* of the Red Heifer unexplained and its mystery intact. It is the very opacity of the ritual that allows for both interpretations.

Yet at times a ritual explicitly interprets itself, as when a practitioner, presenting the Eucharist, announces that it is the body and blood of Christ; or, when another, holding up a Torah scroll, announces, "This is the Torah, which Moses placed before the children of Israel from the mouth of God, by the hand of Moses." More to the point, rituals are invented at one point by human beings, even if their originators must necessarily remain obscure. If ritual practitioners are what Jerome Rothenberg called "technicians of the sacred" (Rothenberg 1985), they are capable of imbuing their technology with reason and intention. This can happen when rituals encode meaning to be deciphered.

One way of understanding ritual is therefore to see it as a form of semiotic exchange—that is, a mutual conveyance of codes. The ritual participant encodes meaning in the details of the ritual. These codes are meant for the social environment, and also for the powers being importuned. At the same time, the deity encodes signs of heaven's relationship to the individual. These are detected in the presumed immediate responses to the ritual, and in natural signs or events that serve as omens for the future. This essay will focus on a particular aspect of how magical rituals manage to carry signification by encoding it by means of letters, words, and images, and how they anticipate a response in kind on the part of the angels, demons, and deity.

As can be seen from Yoḥanan ben Zakkai's analysis of the Red Heifer ritual, sacrifice and magic have much in common. Therefore

we will begin with an examination of sacrificial procedures in magical texts. As we shall see, work on the place of sacrifice in magic in antiquity has yielded interesting results in recent years. This study will attempt to take some of these findings a bit further and speak about how signification is encoded in sacrificial offerings and encounters with the divine in Jewish magic. Our sources for this consideration will be the medieval Hebrew and Aramaic magical *grimoires* preserved largely in fragments from the Cairo Genizah and other collections. We will also refer to the Greek Magical Papyri (PGM), which can tell us much about the cultural environment in which Jewish magic operated in late antiquity.

At this point a couple of methodological remarks are in order. The first is that it is notoriously difficult to edit fragments of a magical handbook in such a way that we can see how the entire composition looked. There is often no clear organizing principal, no easy way of identifying the order of the fragments, and the texts are extremely unstable. Mordechai Margaliot's controversial reconstruction of the ancient Jewish magical handbook *Sefer ha-Razim* (Margaliot 1966) is a case in point.[7] But this enterprise is a *desideratum*; to this end the recent systematic editions of magical texts from the Genizah by Peter Schäfer and Shaul Shaked are of considerable value (Schäfer and Shaked 1994–1997), as well as Yuval Harari's edition of the posttalmudic Aramaic magical manual *Ḥarba de-Moshe* (Harari 1997). In particular, identification of the provenance of the documents will also help us understand if there were specific local traditions within the wide geographic orbit of the Genizah.[8] This study will employ both published and unpublished documents, taking advantage of these steps forward in publication.

When we study rituals in magical texts, we are confronted with another problem: How do we know which rituals were actually implemented? The question is not a simple one. In *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah*, Lawrence Schiffman and this writer addressed this question by selecting amulets that had clearly been used—that is, amulets with the name of a client written in (Schiffman

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[7] On this text and the textual problems involved in its study and editing see Niggemeyer 1975 and Lesses 1998: 422–25. For an English translation of *Sefer ha-Razim* see Morgan 1983.

[8] Especially intriguing is the question of whether a specifically Egyptian strain of Jewish magic can be detected; cf. Steven Wasserstrom's remarks in this volume.

and Swartz 1992: 20–21). When we did this, we found that amulets were distributed along lines that reflected day-to-day needs of people in Genizah society: healing, "favor," that is, social acceptance, reconciliation between husband and wife, and so on (Schiffman and Swartz 1992: 46–48). When we look at magical manuals, we often encounter instructions so exotic and purposes so strange that we cannot help but wonder if they were ever performed.[9] But although we do not know which rituals described in these *grimoires* were actually put to use or how, their presentation in those texts allows us to see the process of creation and interpretation in magical rituals. This gives us insight into the enterprise of understanding how meaning is lodged in otherwise opaque instructions.

I. *Sacrifice and Magic*

Sacrifice and ritual offerings constitute one significant means of communication with divine beings in Jewish magic. Sacrifice and magic do have many affinities, not the least of which has been their common status as the type of religious practice that traditionally distinguished modern religion from so-called primitive religions, as well as Protestantism from Catholicism.[10] More important, it is possible that much of what we call magic in the ancient Mediterranean is actually a domesticated form of sacrificial cult. This argument has been made recently by Jonathan Z. Smith (1995), in his attempt to show that the term magic has no heuristic value. Most procedures in the PGM involve offerings of incense, plants, and occasional fowl—for example, white roosters.[11] In fact, Fritz Graf (1997), Sarah Iles Johnston (2002), and others have now taken the important step of

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[9] But here too we should not jump to conclusions. There are, for example, incantations for invisibility in which the name of an individual has been written, indicating that a client had intended to use them. Cf. autobiography of Solomon Maimon (Hadas 1947: 30–40), in which he tries out a formula for invisibility and is shocked when he is recognized by his comrades. My thanks to Moshe Idel for this reference.

[10] See Thomas 1971; Clark 1967; Smith 1990, especially pp. 33–35 and 45. Relationships between magic and sacrifice are explored more thoroughly in Swartz 2000 and 2002; for sacrifice in Greco-Roman magic cf. Johnston 2002. The observations presented here owe much to the insights presented in Johnston's article, as well as those of Smith 1995 and Graf 1997.

[11] See for example the use of a white rooster in PGM iv 26–51 and a white dove in PGM iv 2891–2940.

analyzing these procedures in detail. Their analyses teach us that these rituals can be decoded within the context of their culture.

In Jewish magic, sacrifice *per se* is not nearly so frequent as in Greco-Roman magic. For one thing, there was no domestic sacrificial cult in post-biblical Judaism. There are unauthorized religious procedures that involve the expiatory death of an animal; the best known of these is the expiation ritual known as *kapparot*, in which a rooster is slaughtered before the High Holidays, the owner having transferred his sins to the animal and swung it around his head. Jacob Lauterbach (1951, 1970) argued that in slaughtering the rooster the practitioner makes a sacrifice to Satan.[12] Although Satan plays no part in the magical rituals we will examine here, magical texts do occasionally prescribe the ritual slaughter of an animal.

One of the most striking examples can be found in *Sefer ha-Razim*.[13] It is worth looking at this ritual closely to see how it operates:

> If you wish to converse with the moon and with the stars about any matter, take a white rooster and fine flour and slaughter the rooster into living water. In the blood and water knead the fine flour and make three cakes and put them in the sun, and write on them in blood the name of the fifth (heavenly) camp (of angels) and the name of its overseer. Then place the three of them on a table of myrtle-wood and stand[14] facing the moon or facing the stars and say: "I adjure you to bring the planet of N and his star to be his lover, bound to the heart of N son of N." Then say: "Place a fire from your fire into the heart of this (male) N or this (female) N. Let her leave her father's and mother's house for the love of this (male) N or this (female) N."
>
> Then take the two cakes and place them with the rooster in a new flask and seal its mouth with wax and bury the flask in a place where there is no sun. (*Sefer ha-Razim* 1:160–69)

The text goes on to say that an incantation recited over the remaining cake can bring kind acts (*gemilut ḥasadim*) from other people.

On closer inspection, this ritual for "conversing with the moon and stars" is really a love formula in which the moon and stars act as heavenly matchmakers. The object of the adjuration, the angels lodged in the fifth heavenly camp, is inscribed on the cakes; note

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[12] Lauterbach's extensive studies of this custom are suggestive for many Jewish magical rituals. Cf. also Aptowitzer 1923: 92–94.

[13] Although, as we have seen, the redactional status of this text is unclear, this does not affect the analysis of this passage presented here; see note 7 above.

[14] Reading עמוד for אמור with Margaliot.

here that their names are not part of the incantation, but engraved graphically. There are affinities here with the Jewish magical practice of writing letters on cakes and eating them to instill memory, a practice that has been discussed in recent studies (Marcus 1996, Swartz 1996). The idea behind those rituals is that the ingestion of the letters of the alphabet mirrors the anticipated ingestion of Torah. This practice also appears in Greek magical rituals for memory. But here the practitioner does not eat the cakes. At the same time, several rituals in PGM involve the baking of cakes or pellets to be used as offerings to various spirits.[15] Their advantage is that they are easily transportable while containing the proper substance for the offering.

But what is the role of the slaughter of the rooster here? The rooster is not slaughtered on an altar. A place of living water suffices— a place that would be read by a Jewish reader as a place of purification. The water might also carry biblical echoes of the numinous encounters with divine beings at the rivers Jabbok and Chebar.[16] Lauterbach (1951: 309–41) argued that the Jewish custom of casting breadcrumbs on water on the high holidays (*tashlikh*) reflected an ancient popular practice of presenting offerings to deities dwelling at bodies of water.[17] In our passage the cakes are to be presented on a table of myrtle-wood, which may function here as a kind of altar, perhaps reminiscent of the table for the "bread of presentation" in the ancient Temple.[18] The water also serves to catch the blood and mix with it for the cakes.

The slaughter of the rooster thus serves to provide blood to be mixed into the cakes and "ink" for engraving the name of the camps. The rooster itself also carries a couple of valences. Fowl is the poor person's sacrificial animal. Roosters, doves, and other fowl are used for minor offerings or because they are available to people who cannot afford larger animals. They therefore serve many cults, from the turtledove sacrificed on behalf of a new mother in Leviticus 12:6 to the crossroads sacrifices common in the contemporary religion of the Caribbean African diaspora known as Santeria. So too, fowl are the

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[15] See for example PGM iv 2891.

[16] Gen. 32:23–33; Ezek. 1–3. For numerous other examples see Lauterbach 1951: 304–9.

[17] Cf. also the initiation ceremony for schoolchildren described in Marcus 1996 and Kanarfogel 1992 and the practice of the Ashkenazic pietists (*Haside Ashkenaz*) of initiating a mystical adept into the mysteries of the Divine name over water (Dan 1968: 74–76).

[18] Cf. Lev. 24:5–9.

most common sacrificial animals in PGM. Furthermore, in inter-
pretations of the *kapparot* ritual, it is often pointed out that another
word for rooster is *gever*, which is also the word for man.[19] What is
telling about this play on words is that it articulates a straightforward
theory of substitution as the basis of animal sacrifice.[20] In fact, the
practitioner in that ceremony recites the phrase "life for life" in the
course of the ceremony. So it is likely that the rooster in our ritual
represents the practitioner himself. So too, the three cakes correspond
to three parties, the practitioner and the couple he wishes to unite.
Thus the burial of the two elements, the dead rooster and the cake,
constitutes a form of offering. More precisely, the rooster constitutes
the offering and the cake constitutes the "address," so to speak, to
which the offering is to be delivered. It might be said that they are
offerings to a chthonic deity, but the given address is in heaven, in
the fifth angelic camp.

   Thus the ritual of sacrifice in this magical procedure serves two
main purposes: to present an animal as an offering, and to provide
blood with which to write a formula. The latter function is quite
common in Mediterranean magical texts. Another Genizah text, MS.
TS K1.117, published by Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked (1993: 176),
requires that an incantation for causing fire in a person's body (*shiluah
'esh*) be written with the blood of a fowl. But more exotic animal
substances often serve as ingredients. Some of these stem from med-
ical traditions.[21] The most dramatic slaughter of an animal in *Sefer
ha Razim* involves the slaughter of a lion cub and the use of its
blood.[22] One question raised by such instructions is where the prac-
titioner is going to find a lion cub for the ceremony. It must be
remembered that exotic rituals often appear in magical books sim-
ply to lend mystery and power to the formula. Moreover, since, as
we have seen, an important function of ritual killing in magical texts
seems to be the collection of the animal's blood for ink or as an
ingredient in an offering, it is likely that practitioners, pharmacists,
and the like sold such substances for use by practitioners.[23]

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[19] Lauterbach 1951: 355–56; see the responsum of Sheshna Gaon quoted there;
cf. Trachtenberg 1939: 163.

[20] On the implications of this idea see Spiegel 1967.

[21] For an abundance of examples, see the medical manual *Sefer ha-Nisyonot*, attrib-
uted to Abraham Ibn Ezra (Liebowitz and Marcus 1984).

[22] *Sefer ha-Razim* 1:119–121.

[23] Cf. PGM XII.401–44, which contains a table of common substances and their

But we should consider why the blood is used to write magical names at all. In Mediterranean magic, blood and other unorthodox substances are used for ink, which is used for inscribing magical names on amulets, shards, and other surfaces. In a very rich article, David Frankfurter (1994) has pointed out that writing carries many levels of significance in magical procedures; magical texts often emphasize the role of the magical book itself as an object of power.[24] In the case of letters written with special substances, the medium is also the message. Writing a name with blood says not only that an incantation, *materia magica*, or icon is designated for a specific purpose or figure, but also that it carries with it the gravity of another life.

It is also common both in PGM and Jewish magic to offer incense, often composed of aromatic plants mixed with substances such as dried animal blood or organs. Thus for example, MS. TS K1.143, published by Naveh and Shaked (1993: 196–97 [Genizah 18] fol. 19 lines 4–10), prescribes a daily offering of incense composed of blossoms from a cedar tree, grapes, garlic, and the gall of a female ox. At that point a mixture of roots, gall, and the blood of a white chicken is placed over a woman for an unspecified purpose. Incense is quite a rich category of offerings. It is a routine offering in Mediterranean domestic cults, and for Jews is redolent of the Temple. In fact, it is the offering of incense on Yom Kippur in the Holy of Holies (Lev. 16:12–13) that served as the ritual occasion for the most intimate encounter between a human being and God in the biblical cult. Moreover, there are indications that incense played a part in the Palestinian synagogue of late antiquity (Fine 1997: 85).

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exotic nicknames used by practitioners. The author introduces them as "interpretations which the temple scribes employ, from the holy writings, in translation. Because of the curiosity of the masses they [i.e., the scribes] inscribed the names of the herbs and other things which they employed on the statues of the gods so that they [i.e., the masses] since they do not take precaution, might not practice magic, [being prevented] by the consequence of their misunderstanding. But we have collected the explanations [of these names] from many copies of the sacred writings, all of them secret." (translation by Betz 1986: 167). My thanks to Professor Sarah Iles Johnston for this reference.

[24] Cf. also Swartz 1994a.

II. *Rituals of Apparition*

What these rituals make possible is contact and communication between human beings and supernatural beings. Likewise, magical rituals of purification are designed to prepare the practitioner for the presence of angelic beings (Swartz 1994b). We now turn to another type of magical ritual, that which involves the apparition of an angel or other divine being. As we will see, these procedures allow the process of signification to work in the other direction—from the realm of the divine to the realm of the human.

A. *The golden plate*

One such ritual is particularly interesting for its use of priestly imagery as well as its visionary nature. This passage, an unpublished Genizah fragment in the Adler collection of the Jewish Theological Seminary Library, apparently comes from a manual for reciting magical names according to times of the year.[25] It includes a ritual in which the practitioner clothes himself, as it were, with the name of God. The manual's instructions are transcribed and translated here:

ועשית את כל אלה ביראת אלהים שמור
נפשך מאד מכל דבר רע ובעשותך את כל
אלה ויצאת על הרהט והרבית בתפילה ובוב[26]
ובתחינה ובקש שלא תכלם עוד ודבר את נבורת
השם הזה ביראה ורעד ואם ראית ברהט דמ[27]
דמות אריה אש דע כי צדקת ללבוש את השם
הקדוש הזה ולקחת ציץ הזהב שחקוק בו
השם הקדוש הזה וקשרתו בצוארך[28] ועל לבבך
השמר שלא תטמא עוד כשהוא עליך פן
תענש וכן תעשה כל דבר והצליח

> You shall perform all of these (procedures) in the fear of God. Protect yourself well from any bad thing. And when you perform all of these (procedures) you should go out to the trough and say many prayers and supplications, and ask that you not fail again. Then speak this glorious name in fear and trembling. If you see the image of a lion

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[25] MS. JTSA ENA 6643.4. A fuller transcription and analysis also appears in Swartz 2000: 67–69.

[26] These letters and those at the end of line 6 represent words that were not completed and were written in full at the next line.

[27] See the previous note.

[28] The letter *aleph* is written above the line.

of fire in the trough, know that you have succeeded in wearing this holy name. Then you shall take the golden plate (*ṣiṣ*) on which this holy name is engraved and tie it around your neck and on your heart. Take care not to become impure again when it is on you, lest you be punished. Then you may do anything and you will succeed.

MS. JTSA ENA 6643.4 lines 4–13

In its larger purpose, this procedure resembles countless others in which the practitioner prepares for the use of the divine name through a regimen of sequestration, fasting, ablution, and prayer.[29] In the course of this regimen, the practitioner is to "go out to the trough"—presumably for watering his cattle—where he is to pronounce the divine names, apparently provided by the text. Success is assured by the appearance of the image of a lion of fire in the water. The most likely association for this image is with the lions' heads that appeared on the Cherubim in the vision of Ezekiel (Ezek 1:10). Indeed, this part of the ritual could be read as a kind of evocation of Ezekiel's vision, the trough standing for the body of water. A unique text in Babylonian Aramaic, preserved in manuscripts of the early Jewish mystical tradition known as Hekhalot literature, provides similar instructions for reciting the powerful names recorded in the book without being harmed:

> Any man who reads this book must go by himself to the river to a place that is concealed from human beings and from the spirits that go out into the world. There he will see a man, and he will survive by His mercy, and by his prayer he will be saved.[30]

Again, safety is assured by the appearance of a "man." This procedure has affinities with many other divination and visionary practices that involve looking into a body of water or other fluid such as oil or wine in a bowl (lychnomancy).[31] One of the best known of these is the age-old practice of oil divination, attested in sources from ancient Babylonia to medieval Europe and described in Samuel Daiches' monograph on Babylonian oil and egg magic (Daiches 1913), as well as the cultivation of the Princes of the Cup and of the Thumb (*Sare Kos ve-Sare Bohen*) mentioned in the Talmud[32] and described by Joseph

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[29] On these rituals see Swartz 1994b.
[30] Schäfer 1981 §495. For an English translation of the entire work see Swartz 2001.
[31] For examples from Greco-Roman magic see PGM iv 222–260, 3209–3354; v 1–53, 54–69; vii 319–34. On these practices see Graf 1999; Johnston, 2001.
[32] B. Sanhedrin 101a.

Dan (1963). We have seen above that bodies of water can serve as
the locus of ritual. Likewise, several ancient prophetic and magical
texts deal with the revelation of secrets and the appearance of rev-
elatory figures over water.[33]

The practice of achieving magical empowerment by "wearing" the
name is also well attested in medieval Jewish magic. This practice
plays a particularly important role in the ritual of the medieval
Ashkenazic pietists known as *Ḥaside Ashkenaz*. A text known as *Sefer
ha-Malbush u-Meʿil ha-Ṣedaqah*, "The Book of the Putting on and the
Fashioning of the Mantle of Righteousness,"[34] resembles our ritual
in many ways. This text, like ours, presents a ritual whereby wear-
ing the name ensures protection from all troubles and obstacles:[35] It
instructs the practitioner to make a garment of deerskin, fashioned
like the ephod of the priest and inscribed with extensive magical
names, which he then wears as he calls out those names. At that
point he will see either a green form or a red one. The green indi-
cates that he is still impure and the red indicates that he is pure.

In the ritual quoted here, the key ingredient is an object called a
ṣiṣ—a gold plate on which the Divine name is engraved. In the Bible
this term refers to the gold frontlet, a strip of gold engraved with
the Divine name that the High Priest wore on his forehead when he
served in the Temple. Here the magician ties it around his neck like
an amulet. In *Sefer ha-Malbush u-Meʿil ha-Ṣedaqah*, the text also instructs:

<div dir="rtl">

וזה השם הנכתב על הכובע בעיגול

כעין ציץ[36] סביב המצנפת ואם תתפרץ לעשות ציץ זהב כתוב עליו

השם מוטב וזה השם אשר תכתוב על הציץ או על המצנפת של

הבגד

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> This is the name which is written on the hood in a circle like a dia-
> dem (*ṣiṣ*) around the headdress.[37] And if you dare to make a gold dia-
> dem, write the name well. This is the name that you should write on
> the diadem and the headdress of the garment.[38]

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[33] On these see Lesses 1998: 215–18.

[34] This text, which bears no relation to the text entitled *Sefer ha-Malbush* in the
Book of Raziel, appears in MS. British Library Add. 15299 fols. 92a–93a. Much
of it has been published in Scholem 1976: 130 and Lesses 1998: 217; for English
translations see Scholem 1976: 136–37 and Lesses 1998: 216–17; cf, also MS Oxford
1960 (= Michael 473) fols. 110a–111a.

[35] Fol. 92a lines 36–37.

[36] Probably to be read as ציץ.

[37] Cf. Exod. 28:37.

[38] MS Brit. Mus. Or. Add 15299 fol. 92b lines 17–20.

The magical name follows. The garment fashioned in *Sefer ha-Malbush u-Me'il ha-Sedaqah* is explicitly modeled on the ephod,[39] and may include a golden *ṣiṣ*. So too the *ṣiṣ* in our ceremony recalls the priest's frontlet. Thus while the magician cannot become the High Priest, he takes on some of his power, vested in him by virtue of the name of God engraved on gold and worn on his person.

Once again, then, the "medium," the gold plate, on which the "message," the divine name, is written, is of significance. It carries the authorization provided by the Tetragrammaton, which assures the supernal forces that God Himself has sanctioned the magician's request. Its affinity with the diadem of the priest gives it an added power, evident to both the magician and the supernatural powers he wishes to impress. But in this case, the procedure is prompted by a more direct form of authorization: the figure of a man with a lion's head, a sign of God's approval of the magician's efforts. But we should pay close attention to his function in this scenario. He is not a revelatory angel *per se*. He imparts no secrets to the magician. Nor does he descend to protect the practitioner from harm. Rather, he functions largely as a sign—an omen, so to speak, of the practitioner's successful operation of the ritual.

B. *A Ritual for Revelation*

A ritual text that bears some similarities appears in another Genizah fragment, MS TS K1.2, following a document called the "Treatise on the Four Elements." This text was published in Schäfer and Shaked's first volume of magical texts from the Genizah (Schäfer and Shaked 1994: 46–54), and was first brought to the attention of scholars by Norman Golb (1967: 15). The "Treatise on the Four Elements" apparently deals with four entities, names of God or other forces, two of which are benevolent and carry no moral or legal danger, and two of which are illicit. This cryptic treatise, which appears in two manuscripts,[40] is followed by our fragment in only one of those manuscripts, MS TS. K1.2. At the point where the extant fragment begins, there is an incantation directed to entities

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[39] *Ibid.* lines 3–4.
[40] MS. K1.2, published Schäfer and Shaked 1994 1:46–54 and MS. TS K1.37, published in Schäfer and Shaked 1994 1:55–66.

whose identity is apparently lost from the extant text. This incanta-
tion uses several magical names in Greek or pseudo-Greek, includ-
ing one called "Heteroglossia." (הדרונלוסיה).[41]

   At that point the practitioner commands these entities to

> descend by the authority of these names and clothe me in a small
> cloud and cover me with the glory and majesty; and do not wait one
> moment. Quickly—let it be like a twinkling of an eye. And let my
> spirit be saved and my life be protected. Amen.[42]

The text then instructs:

> Then look and see. If you have recited up to here and nothing[43] comes
> to you, do not be ashamed because of those standing before you.[44]
> Recite the prayer again so that you not [   ][45] to recite half of it,
> until they seize y[ou.]

At this point the fragment is torn. The extant portion of the next
lines reads:

> the earth and descends to you
> and will lead you to [   ]
> when [   ] on the earth.

The lacunae prevent us from finding out the identity of the one who
descends. On the next page the practitioner is instructed:

> to stand on your feet so you can see the world turning before you.
> Set your face toward the earth for a moment and the dizziness will
> subside and your mind will return to the way it was. But look and
> watch out for your life if you have made evil plans for that year or
> have some transgressions on your hands. Purify your soul from the
> previous year of these sins and of all corruption and iniquity. And if
> you know that there is no sin deserving of divine punishment[46] between
> you and your neighbor, commence and perform (the procedure) with
> the help of the Creator, and He will help you.

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[41] MS. TS K1.2 fol. 2a line 1.
[42] *Ibid.* lines 4–8. This translation is based on the Schäfer and Shaked's edition
(1994: 46–54), which also includes a German translation; cf. Golb's translation of
several lines (Golb 1967: 15).
[43] Or "no one".
[44] Golb (1967: 15) supposes that this refers to people "standing in the room"
while the practitioner recites the incantation.
[45] This word, transcribed by Schäfer and Shaked as תאבד, is fragmentary. Golb
(1967: 15) translates, "before thou art half finished," perhaps restoring it as תגמר.
[46] Heb. *karet.*

The fragmentary lines that follow seem to be saying that the practitioner's wishes will be granted.

Norman Golb (1967: 14–15) uses this text as evidence that some of these rituals were performed in a trance. And indeed this would be indicated by the reference to dizziness and the return to consciousness. But the text also indicates a more complex picture of the ritual's theory of operation. Like our previous example, the successful ritual will result in a visitation of some beings who will assure the participant's success. This text resembles Jewish rituals for angelic revelation such as the adjuration of the Prince of the Presence (*Sar ha-Panim*) found among the Hekhalot texts.[47] But it also has features in common with the so-called Mithras liturgy in the Great Magical Papyrus of Paris (PGM iv 475–829).[48] In that mysterious and complex ritual text, a series of invocations results in the adept's being lifted up into midair and visited by various classes of deities, from divine "Pole Lords" to Helios himself. Like our text, which promises protection for the period covered by the procedure, the Mithras liturgy grants the initiate temporary status among the immortals.[49] In both cases, the ritual offers protection from the effects of the encounter with powerful forces. It is this encounter that the ritual promises—an immediate, mutual relationship between the human and divine parties.

We have seen that many magical rituals presuppose an exchange of signifiers between the spheres of the human and the divine, on both the verbal and nonverbal levels. At the same time, rituals convey meaning in another realm: the level of society. In each of these cases, we can detect a message about who the practitioner is. This message is intended for his human neighbors, and for himself. The celestial matchmaking ritual shows him to be a powerful figure with control over life, death, and love; the ritual of the gold plate shows him to be the heir of the High Priest himself; and the revelatory ritual following the treatise on the four elements places him above

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[47] Published in Schäfer 1981 §§623–39. For analyses of this and similar ritual texts see Lesses 1998.

[48] For an edition and translation see Meyer 1976; for a revised translation and annotation (also by Meyer) see Betz 1986: 48–54. On the process of ascent and revelation in this and similar texts see Johnston 1997.

[49] Cf. PGM iv 747. On the notion that appears in the Mithras liturgy of "becoming immortal" temporarily see Johnston 1997: 179–80.

his peers (perhaps "those standing before him") as one worthy to be transported by divine beings.

C. *Other messages*

There is one category of ritual practice in which the signifiers are initiated by the deity himself: the category of divination. In divination rituals, the intent is to uncover hidden meaning in human action, natural phenomena, dumb animals, or the utterings of children. Divination has a long history in the Mediterranean and Mesopotamia. Divination systems played an honored role in civilizations from Old Babylonia to Rome.[50] In ancient Israel, divination was institutionalized in the priestly oracles, especially the Urim and Thummim. But with the loss of the cult, divination had no official status in Judaism. Although Talmudic literature is full of statements interpreting omens (*simanim*) in a person's life, in nature, and in the animal world, the early Rabbis seem to have regarded it with genuine ambivalence.[51] At the same time, there is a rich literature of divination in the Jewish magical tradition, encompassing such subjects as the meanings of astronomical signs, body tremors, and so on.[52]

A particularly ancient and interesting example of a Jewish divination text is an Aramaic astrological text from the Cairo Genizah, published by Michael Sokoloff and the late Jonas Greenfield (1989). This text takes the form of a liturgical poem (*piyyut*) composed for the sanctification of the new moon at the month of Nisan.[53] Appropriately to this liturgical function, the poem is a lunar omen text. The text adapts the formulaic style of such omen texts to the rhyme scheme of the liturgical poem. What is notable about it is how it

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[50] For a recent list of sources for Mesopotamian divination, see Greenfield and Sokoloff 1989: 201–2.

[51] On divination in talmudic literature see Lieberman 1942: 97–100, and 1950: 194–99; Rabbinowitz 1971; cf. Swartz 2003. The idea expressed in talmudic literature that divinitory sources should not always be taken at face value has ancient precedents. Cf. Abusch 1987: 20, on the possibility raised in an Akkadian source that the gods may not always provide reliable omens.

[52] On the literature of divination see Trachtenberg 1939: 208–29.

[53] The full poem, with its strophic arrangement and full lexicographic notes, is published in Sokoloff and Yahalom 1999: 222–229. Besides the plethora of ancient Near Eastern astrological texts and weather omens, more immediate antecedents to such texts can be found at Qumran, where a brontological text (4Q318) has been discovered. See Wise 1994: 13–60 and especially Geller 1998.

relates not to the fate of the individual but to the fate of Israel as a whole:

> The moon is never eclipsed in Tishri. But if it is eclipsed, it is a bad sign for the "enemies of the Jews."[54] Religious persecution will issue from the kingdom and woeful destruction will be upon the Jews.[55]

The human body and its peculiarities also serve as a source of divination in many cultures. The Dead Sea community at Qumran may have used physiognomy in determining admission and rank in the sect.[56] There is also evidence that esoteric circles in late antiquity took physiognomic and chiromantic factors into consideration when passing on traditions of the divine name.[57] The assumption behind types of divination that rely on the body is that the outer appearance of a person reflects the inner soul. In the case of these specific traditions, not only is the personality reflected in physical features, but destiny in the holy community as well. Later traditions interpret body tremors and similar physical phenomena to tell the fate of the individual.[58]

A particularly popular form of divination text is the book of lots, or *goralot*, which proliferated in the middle ages and modern times. Several of them circulate throughout the Jewish world under the titles *Goralot Aḥitofel, Sefer Urim ve-Tumim*, and books attributed to Abraham ibn Ezra.[59] This genre relies on random acts performed by the practitioner on a set of data. The usual practice is to place one's finger randomly on one of a number of lettered squares, which then refer to messages printed in the back of the book. This procedure is usually preceded by the recitation of a prayer petitioning God in pious language to accept his request for information. In the course of the petition, the practitioner or client asks a specific question. The answer then corresponds to the place on the lettered grid

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[54] A euphemism for the Jews.

[55] Lines 11–12, trans. Greeenfield and Sokoloff 1989.

[56] For surveys of the evidence see Schiffman 1994: 362–64 and Alexander 1996.

[57] On physiognomy and chiromancy in late antiquity and the early middle ages see Scholem 1953, Gruenwald 1980:218–224 and the texts published in Schafer 1988: 84–95.

[58] See *Sefer Ḥasidim* §162 (Margaliot 1957: 166–67) and Margaliot's notes there; cf. the 18th-century compilation *Midrash Talpiyot* (Elijah ha-Kohen 1860) fols. 10b–11b.

[59] These books have become particularly popular in recent years, in part thanks to Meir Backal, who publishes them in miniature editions sold all over Israel and New York, based on available manuscripts (Backal 1965 [a], 1965 [b], 1995).

where the finger has landed. Other techniques include sand divina-
tion or geomancy,[60] weather omens, and bibliomancy.

These techniques are based on a semiotic conception of creation.
That is, in the world-view in which divination techniques operate,
the deity has embedded meaning in the world in such a way that
human beings can interpret it. In each of these traditions, a physi-
cal matrix—a flight pattern, the terrain of the earth, and the body—
becomes a map of the inquirer's nature and future. Likewise seemingly
random actions, such as the placement of a finger or the opening
of a book, can reveal information both about the nature of the per-
son performing those actions and about his or her relationship to
the universe. This information, however, is not immediately manifest.
It has been encoded and requires the mediation of an interpreter or
manual. In contrast to the types of rituals we have seen, these div-
inatory procedures are based on the premise of an immediate encounter
between human and deity—rather, the deity has lodged the information
in the world, and the process is designed to recover it.

We have examined three stages in magical rituals of a process
whereby magician and deity communicate through encoded actions
and objects. In the first, the magician sends a message to the divine
powers sealed with the blood of living things. In the second, the
message conveyed by wearing the name or adjuring the powers brings
an immediate visitation. In the third, a procedure prompts the mes-
sage—that is, disclosure of divine secrets. All three examples show
us that as products of human creativity and imagination, rituals and
their interpretation are intimately related.

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[60] A particularly rich Jewish sand divination text going directly back to an Islamic
model is currently being studied by Yael Okun of the Jewish National Library; cf.
Savage-Smith and Smith 1980. My thanks to Ms. Okun for her advice regarding
this subject.

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"WATERMARKS" IN THE MS MUNICH, HEBR. 95:
MAGICAL RECIPES IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Giuseppe Veltri[1]

At the end of Massekhet Berakhot which is transmitted in the Manuscript Munich Hebr. 95 after the Seder Moʿed, the scribe copied out some magical recipes nearly all of which deal with the topic of water and the creation of living beings.[2] In his catalogue, Moritz Steinschneider did not pay any attention to this last text but described the manuscript in toto as «vielleicht de(n) *wertvollste(n)* hebr. Cod. in München».[3] This is not surprising when we take into account the very negative opinion of magic held by the great bibliographer,[4] also shared by other contemporaries such as Heinrich Graetz or David Heymann Joël.[5] The description of the manuscript by Moritz Altschüler,[6] which is notoriously inaccurate, adds no relevant information to it. The more precise introduction to the facsimile by Hermann L. Strack mentions only that on fol. 157b there is no text (i.e. of the Gemara).[7]

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[1] This is a slightly modified version of a lecture held at the Symposium "Officina Magica", organised by the Institute of Jewish Studies at University College, London and hosted by the Warburg Institute, London. The symposium was concerned with the question of how magical texts, procedures, uses, amulets etc. work. The main purpose was to investigate the tools, the instrumenta of the magical discourse within the writer's or magicians's world of connections. The text here analysed and for the first time edited and translated is not important for its contents—for almost all the recipes are attested in other contexts—but rather for its very practical use. I thank my assistants Gert Wildensee for a first transcription of the text and some helpful bibliographical references, and Kerstin Ipta for a critical reading of a draft of this paper.

[2] The Manuscript Munich, Hebr. 95, fol. 157b, facsimile, p. 306.

[3] Moritz Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen Handschriften der K. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek in München*, 2nd ed., München: Palm'sche Hofbuchhandlung 1895, p. 60.

[4] See his unequivocal position in his popular publication *Der Aberglaube* (Sammlung gemeinverständlicher wissenschaftlicher Vorträge, 346), Berlin 1900.

[5] On the history of the evaluation of magic in the "Wissenschaft des Judentums" see the introduction to my book *Magie und Halakha. Ansätze zu einem empirischen Wissenschaftsbegriff in spätantiken und frühmittelalterlichen Judentum*, Tübingen: Mohr 1997 (Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum, 62), pp. 1–18.

[6] See Moritz Altschüler (ed.), *Cod. Hebr. Monac. 95. Die Pfersee-Handschrift*, Heft I, Leipzig and Wien: Lumen 1908.

[7] *Talmud Babylonicum codicis Hebraici Monacensis 95. Der Babylonische Talmud nach der Münchener Handschrift Cod. Hebr. 95*, mittelst Facsimile-Lichtdrucks herausgegeben von Hermann L. Strack, Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff's Uitgevers Maatschappij 1912, p. III.

In the description of the manuscript and its text in his edition of Mishna Zeraim, Nissin Sacks does not refer to the content of this page, although he evaluates the colophon at the bottom.[8]

The editors of the Babylonian Talmud have adopted an attitude of reserve towards the most complete manuscript of the Babylonian Gemara. This attitude is understandable only in the case of Strack, taking into consideration that he published the reproduction of Munich 95 with the explicit intention of averting anti-Semitic prejudices against the Talmud. However, there is no excuse for the other scholars because the writer of the Gemara, Shelomo ben Shimshon, is, without any doubt, also the writer (but more than likely not the author) of the magical recipes. By considering the fact that there are several empty pages in the manuscript and that only this page was filled with this particular magical material, we have to conclude that the writer must have had a very good reason to include them. Considering the content of the recipes, we may suppose that Shimshon added these texts because he thought they were exceptionally important for either preserving the manuscript or himself. That is what I try to demonstrate in the following.

1. *Text and Vorlage*

1.1   *Some Descriptive Notes on the Manuscript*

The text is transmitted at the end of Massekhet Berakhot (in this manuscript this is also the end of Seder Moʻed: וסליקא מסכת ברכות ואשור כוליה סדר מועד). It consists of (1) a column, graphically at the left side of the closing lines of the text of the Gemara (13 lines), (2) a continuous text of 3 lines after the Gemara, ending with (3) two columns (at the left 12 lines, at the right 9 lines). The right column consists of divine names, framed by little boxes, mainly permutations of the Tetragram and other divine names and attributes. At the margin of this column there are two glosses (in the second and fifth line).

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[8] *Mishna Zeraim* (in Hebrew), ed. by Nissin Sacks, vol. 1, Jerusalem: Institute of the Complete Israeli Talmud 1972, pp. 69–70.

The writer uses common abbreviations, charaterized by a double dot on the designed letters (something like a *ṣere*): ז״פ for ז׳ פעמים (line 1), מא׳פ׳ב׳פ׳ (lines 5 and 9) for משביע אני פלוני בן פלוני; also the common abbreviation מא׳ע for משביע אני עליך (line 23) is used. Numbers are also abbreviated: see for example ז׳ (line 1); ל״ו (line 27); מ״ב and כ״ב (line 26).

As usual for magical texts in general and amulets in particular, biblical verses are also presented in abridged form.[9] The peculiarity of this text is that the writer or his *Vorlage* gives not only the full text but also the abridged form: see line 17 (full text) and line 18 (abridged form); but see line 21 (abridged form) and line 22 (full text). Moreover, in the full text the abridged characters of the abbreviation are particulary stressed by little dots.

1.2 *A Page or Fragments of a Handbook?*

The writer copied the text from a *Vorlage*, probably a handbook made of different recipes. There are some hints to confirm this working hypothesis.

1. Line 3 is, or could be, incomplete: במשך is vocalized as a *nomen barbarum*, but may also be an indirect indication of the continuation of the practice: "After so and so one has to say 'so and so' while you . . ." (or 'during').

2. The chain of tradition (lines 15–16) is clearly abridged and very peculiar. To my knowledge it is also unique in that it runs from Michael to Yehuda and "the sons of Hasmonai".

3. Line 19/20: The sentence בזה הצורך ובזה הדחק ויתענה, written as an introduction to ויאמר belongs, perhaps, to the precedent *segulla*. At any rate, it makes no sense if it is really an introduction to the instruction: "say".

4. The word *Seleq* in line 21 indicates that the *segulla* ends at lines 21, or, perhaps better, that the verse from Gen. 1:9 was inserted from another context.

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[9] For a list of abridged biblical verses see Theodore Schrire, *Hebrew Magic Amulets: Their Decipherment and Interpretation*, New York: Behrman House 1982, passim; Eli Davis and David A. Frenkel, *The Hebrew Amulet. Biblical-Medical-General* (in Hebrew), Jerusalem: The Institute for Jewish Studies 1995, pp. 171–209.

2. *Text*

1a

1 לרוח סערה בים יאמר ז״פ וַתַּ

2 יַּעַל אֹהֲיֵ מֹשֶׁה רֻחֶם

3 אהד זֶמַע זְעַן בֶּמֶשַׁך:

4 לעבור כל מיני מים בלא נשׁר

5 ובלא ספינה יאמר מ׳א׳פ׳ב׳פ׳

6 עליך הֵ וכל כחך הַרְכַיַּאל

7 לְאִיכַרַך דְצִיהַו עַפָנָא צ׳ט׳:

8 ולהעמיד כל נהר ים ומצולה

9 ולשבר נלים יאמר מאפ׳ב׳פ׳

10 עליך דַּו וכל כחך הַרְנִיַאל

11 ויש אומרים הַרֹנִיַאל לְאַיְנַרַך

12 הַחְפִיַאל לְאִיפְהַד

13 צֵעִיפַיַן מְמַמֵלְנָא:

14 כתוב על חרש חדש בטהרה שמות אלו והשלך במים ויבשו ותעבר

ביבשה וכשתסקה החרס יהזרו לאיתנם ואם תשׁימהו על המת יחיה וכש

15 תסירנו ישוב לעפרו . . ואם תכתבנו על ציץ או טס זהב ותשׂאנו בזרועך

כל סוס רודף אחריך יפוֹל וכל הרב חן לא יזיקוף מיכאל

16 מסרו ליהודה ויהודה לבני השמונאי . . ואם תרצה לפעול מהם קח

עץ קטן ויזה עליו מן טל של כשירים מן נטף שחלת וחלבנה ותשאנו

17 להקות מים ויאמר אלהים יְ׳קְוֹוֹ הַמִּים מִתַ׳ח׳ת הַ׳שַמַים׳ אל מקום

18 אחד ותראה היבשה ויהי כן: יְקָהַם מַתְהַ הַם משביעכם

19 אני פבכ׳פ׳ שתראוני כחכם   בזה הצורך

20 ובזֹה הדהק ויתענה ויאמר משביעכם אני שתהבראו לי

21 . . . בַּר בַּר אל אַלי אַהֲוֹהַ יְקָהַם מַתְהַ הַם. סליק

22 בְ׳רֵ׳אשית ב׳רֵ׳א אֵ׳לֹ׳הִים אֵ׳ת הַ׳שׁמים וְאֵת הַ׳אֵרֵץ

23 בַּך בַּך אל אַלי אַהֲוַהַ מֵ׳אֵ׳עֵ׳ שמות הקדושים שתבראו לי

24 את הבריאה הזאת והנה היא שם הבריאה:

25 להעלות המים במורדן ישביע אַסַיו בשם יְיֵו אלהי ישראל

26 ובשם המפורש ממ׳׳ב ומכ׳׳ב שיעלו המים למקום שירדו:

27 לסער הים עַלְבְּבִיַאל ל׳׳ו פעמים ויאמר קודם יֹ׳׳ן פעמים יְיֵו רועי לא

28 אהסר

1b

1 | אֶהְיֶה | הֵי | הָא | אוֹ | אוֹ | אוֹ | אוֹת | אוֹ | אַה | אֶהֱיֶה |

2 | הֵי | אַה | יהוה | אַהָא | [??] | (אֵל) | אֱלֹהִים | צָה | הוּ |

3 | הֵי | אַדִּיר | צְבִי | צְבָאוֹת | אַדִּירִים | אָיֹם | וְנוֹרָא |

4 | יָה | וְהוּ | אָרוֹ | בְּיָה | בְּהוּ | צָה | חַן | וַן | פַּן | יְהוּ |

5 | וַח | זָבַק (יש אמ׳ זבך) | רַלְיָה | אַהֱיֶה | צְבָא | הָיָה | שְׁמוֹ |
שָׂרֵי | שׁוֹכֵן |

6 | עַד | צִיָּה | אִישׁ | מִלְחָמָה | לְעוֹלָם | צְבִי | אַנָּא | נוֹרָא | יָה |

7 | שׁוֹכֵן | שְׁחָקִים | וְהַ | יהוה | וְהַ | יְהָא | וַהֲוָה | וַיְהִיוּ | יְהָא | וְהַ | יָה |

8 | זְרַח | יֻמְּין | אָמֹן | אָמוֹן | סַל | סַל | סַל | סַל | סַל | סַל | סַל | וְהַ | וְהַ |
יֻמְּין | אָמוֹן | אָמֹן | סַל | סַל | סַל | סַל | סַל | סַל | סַל | וְהַ | וְהַ | והַ |

9 | וְהַ וַהַ וְהַ וֹהַ וַהַ וַהַ | וַהַ וְהַ וַהַ וֹהַ וְהַ וְהַ וַהַ וְהַ |

3. *Translation*

1a

1 For (against) a storm-wind on the sea:[10]
2 one has to say seven times[11]
   WZG | YYL
   ʿHY MŠH RWM
3 after that [say]
   ZMʿ ZʿN BMŠK
4 To cross every kind of water
5 without a bridge | and without a ship
   one has to say: I, N.N., conjure

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[10] ויאמר ויעמד רוח סערה ותרומם גליו, see Ps. 107:25: לרוח סערה בים. See bBer 24b; Semaḥot 1:4. This text belongs to the "enumeration" example "Four should praise the Lord": אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: ארבע צריכין להודות—יורדי הים הולכי מדברות ומי שהיה חולה ונתרפא ומי שהיה חבוש בבית האסורים ויצא. יורדי הים מנלן—דכתיב יורדי הים באניות וגו׳. On the storm-wind see Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, New York: Atheneum 1939, p. 34. See also yHag 1,1 (87a) (on the top): God created a wind-storm as an amulet; *Harba de-Moshe*, ed. by Peter Schäfer in *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, Tübingen: Mohr 1981 (Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum, 2), §619: ואם היית בים וקם סער עליך עמוד נכח הגלים ואמור חרב והם נוטשים וכת׳ בטס או בחרס או בעץ ותלי יתיה לפני הספינה ולא תטבע.

[11] The number "seven" is supposed to help against sorcery, see bShab 66b; see also bShab 65b.

6 you D(W)[12] and all your power
7 DRKY'L | L'YKRD
   DṢYHW 'PN' ṢṬ
8 To let stay every river, sea and the depths[13]
9 and to break waves one has to say:
10 I, N.N., conjure
   | you DW and all your power
   DRNY'L
11 some say DRNY'L
   L'YNRD
12 DḤPY'L L'YPḤD
13 Ṣ'YPYṢ MMMLN'
14 Write on a new vessel in purity these names
   and cast (it) into the water
   and in this manner it will be dried and you can go ashore.
   If you take the vessel away
   it again obtains its normal condition.[14]
   If you put it on a dead person,
   he/she will live.
15 If you take it away
   he will return to dust.
   If you write them on a gold plate or foil
   and wear it on your arm
   you will be in security.
   Every horse which runs after you will fall down.
   Neither sword nor arrow will hurt you.
16 Michael | transmitted (it) to Yehuda and Yehuda to the sons
   of Hasmonai.
   If you want to use (it)
   take a small piece of wood
   and sprinkle on this ritually permitted *dew of (sweet spices) stacte,
   onycha, and galbanum* (cp. Ex. 30:34) and wear it.

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[12] If this text was written in Ashkenazi, it is possible to read the nomen as German du ("you"). Another possible interpretation is "Deu(s)".

[13] On a parallel tradition see Irina Wandrey, *Das "Buch des Gewandes" und das "Buch des Aufrechten". Zwei hebräische magische Texte aus dem Mittelalter*, Ph.D. Berlin 1997, pp. 200ff.

[14] חזר לאיתנם, halakhic terms, see bNid 48b.

17 To gather water [say]:
    And God said: "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place,
18 *and let the dry land appear". And it was so* (Gen. 1:9).[15]
    YQHM MTH HM
    I conjure you,
19 I, N.N., that you show me your power.
    In this time of need
20 and in the case of emergency.
    And he shall fast
    and has to say:
    I conjure you that you create for me:
21 *In the beginning God* my God *created the heavens and the earth* (Gen. 1:1).
    And let the water be gathered under the heavens (Gen. 1:9). Seleq.
22 *In the beginning God* my God *created the heavens and the earth* (Gen. 1:1)
23 *In the beginning God* my God *created the heavens and the earth* (Gen. 1:1).
    I conjure you, holy names, that you create for me
24 this creation. And this creation is there.
25 To let the waters rise, when they come down:
    One has to say conjure
    'SYW with the name YYW the God Israel, and
26 with the *shem ha-meforash* of forty-two and twenty-two (letters),
    that the waters rise to the place where they come down.
27 For (against) a sea-storm: (say) thirty-six times 'LBYB'L.
    First you should say thirteen times *My God is my shepherd, I will not perish* (Psalm 23:1).

1b

1 'HYH HY H'
   'W 'W 'W
   'WT 'W
   'H 'HYH

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[15] The Revised Standard Version, 2nd ed., Nashville 1952, was used for English translations from the Bible; several slight modifications were made.

2 HY ’H
   YHWH ’H’ [??] (’L)
   ‘LHYM ṢḤ HW
3 ḤY ’DYR ṢBY
   ṢB’WT ’DYRYM
   ’YWM WNWR’
4 YH WHW ’RW
   BYH BHW
   ṢḤ ḤṢ WṢ PṢ
   YHYW
5 WT ZBQ
   (some say ZBK)
   RLYH ’HYH ṢB’
   HYH ŠMW ŠDY ŠWKN
6 ‘D ṢYH
   ’YŠ MLḤMH
   L’WLM
   ṢBY ’G’ NWR’ YH
7 ŠWKN ŠḤQYM WH YHWH WYHYW
   YH’ WHWH WH YH
8 ZRH YZMYN ’MWN ’MWN
   SL SL SL
   SL SL SL
   WH WH
9 WH WH
   WH WH WH WH
   WH WH WH WH
   WH WH WH

4. *Water, Waters, Creation, and other Mirabilia*

The recipes of Shelomo ben Shimshon are concentrated on a pre-
cise topic: the water(s). Let us examine this very curious collection.
The *segullot* are structured following the typical *Lamed*-formula which
serves as the structural keyword:

1a/1–3: "For (against) a storm-wind on the sea" (לרוח סערה בים);
1a/4–6: "To cross every kind of water without a bridge and with-
         out a ship" (לעבור כל מיני מים בלא נשר ובלא ספינה);

1a/8–15:   "To let stay every river, sea and the depths and to break waves" (להעמיד כל נהר ים ומצולה ולשבר נלים)

1a/15–16:   Intermezzo with the *Im tirṣe*-formula and a chain of tradition (אם תרצה לפעול מהם);

1a/17–24:   "To gather" (להקות מים);

1a/25–27:   "To let the waters rise, when they come down" (לעלות המים במורדן);

1a/27:   "For (against) a sea-storm" (לסער הים).

Although one might think that there could not be much speculation about the nature of recipes taken from a handbook, surprisingly enough our text ends with a text of recipe (*segulla*) that is the exact opposite of the first one (a kind of rhetorical *inclusio*). For the first *segulla* is concerned with the question of how to *master* a storm on the sea, while the last one deals with the opposite situation, namely how to *provoke* a sea-storm. To pacify a sea-storm was of course a necessity of life and death in a period of time when the navigation on seas and on rivers was not safe at all. The reason why anyone would want to provoke a storm at sea is enigmatic, especially in light of the verse used for this purpose which is taken from Psalm 23:1. This speaks of "God as Shepherd". The author intended perhaps to provoke a storm for his enemy on the assumption that God would rescue him from this danger. In fact, the psalmist goes on: "He leads me beside still water, he restores my soul" (על מי מנוחות ינהלני).[16]

The formula to "let stay every river, sea and depths and to break the waves" is of course an imitation of the Exodus story where Moses divided the waves. To understand this *segulla*, it is necessary to refer to Psalm 107:23–30:[17]

23   *Some went down to the sea in ships,*
     doing business on the great waters,
24   *they saw the deeds of the LORD,*
     his wondrous works in the deep.
25   *For he commanded, and raised the stormy wind,*
     which lifted up the waves of the sea.

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[16] The Psalm is used in the Shimmushe Tehillim for oneiromantic purposes, see MS Oxford Michael 9, fol. 183b/19; MS New York JTSL 1878, fol. 81a/7; MS London Wellcome Institute Hebr. 34, fol. 7a/15; all of them in Bill Rebiger, *Der magische Gebrauch der Psalmen im Judentum. Sefer Shimmush Tehillim*, MA Berlin 1998.

[17] In Shimmushe Tehillim, the Psalm is used against fever, see Rebiger, *Gebrauch.*

26   *they mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths;*
     their courage melted away in their evil plight;
29   *. . . he made the storm be still,*
     and the waves of the sea were hushed.
30   *Then they were glad because they had quiet,*
     and he brought them to their desired haven.

The procedure according to which names are to be written on a new
vessel in purity which is then cast into water is also attested. According
to Mekh.Y. beshallaḥ petiḥta,[18] Moses wrote the holy name on a
golden plaque and cast it into the Nile to find the bones of Joseph[19]
(לוח זהב וחקק בה שם המפורש וזרק לתוכו). In a text from the Cairo
Genizah, a very similar procedure is described (T.-S. AS 142.13, fol.
1a/7–11: "Take a clay shard from the sea (חרס מן הים) and write
on it: *And an angel of the LORD arose* (Ex. 14:19.) etc. *And he came
between the camps of Egypt* (Ex. 14:20) etc. *And Moses stretched out his hand*
(Ex. 10:22) etc. You holy names, bring to me with your great strength
a fish which weighs so and so many pounds. Amen. Amen. Sela."[20]

    The property of the golden plaque with the divine name put on
a dead person is also known as a kind of "mantic procedure." We
read in TPSY on Gen. 31:19 and PRE 36 that it was a pagan cus-
tom to put a golden plaque with the holy name under the tongue
of a slaughtered first-born. The mantic procedure was directed at
obtaining responses to questions.[21] In our *segulla*, the aim of the pro-
cedure is to bring a dead person to life. Taking it away will cause
him/her to return to dust. This procedure is nothing other than the
actualization of San 65b: "Rava created a man and sent him to
R. Zera. (R. Zera) spoke to him but he did not answer. Thereupon he
said to him: You are coming from the fellows—return to your dust".

    The use of Gen. 1:1 to create a creature is embedded in a *seg-
ulla* "to collect water", itself based on Gen. 1:9: "Let the water under
the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry

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[18] See Arthur Marmorstein, "Beiträge zur Religionsgeschichte und Volkskunde",
in *Jahrbuch für jüdische Volkskunde* 1 (1923), pp. 281–287.

[19] See also *Oṣar Midrashim* 356.

[20] The text was published by Peter Schäfer and Shaul Shaked, *Magische Texte aus
der Kairoer Geniza III*, Tübingen: Mohr (1999), pp. 143–152.

[21] Johann Maier, Magisch-theurgische Überlieferungen im mittelalterlichen Judentum:
Beobachtungen zu "Terafim" und "Golem", in: H. Birkhan (ed.), *Die Juden in ihrer
mittelalterlichen Umwelt. Protokolle einer Ringvorlesung gehalten im Sommersemester 1989 an der
Universität Wien*, Bern 1992, pp. 263 and ff. For other parallel traditions: Veltri,
Magie, pp. 74–75.

land appear". This is not an exegetical failure for it is precisely in this verse that the heavens, dry land and water are named together, the elements from which a "golem" is formed. Gen. 1:1 supplies the writer with the holy names needed to create the creature. "And this creation is there".[22]

5. *A Veritable "Watermark"*

The custom of both using free pages and filling free spaces of tractates with magical materials is neither new nor surprising. It occurs also in Medieval Latin sources, as D'Alverny has already observed: "Il arrive aussi que des scribes perverses tracent des formules, des recettes ou des invocations dans les espaces blancs d'une marge ou de la fin d'un cahier."[23] By using the adjective "perverse", perhaps to be translated as "outrageous", for a widespread scribal procedure, the author reveals her attitude to magic: in her opinion, it should be considered scandalous and dangerous material. That was, of course, not the opinion of ancient and medieval writers and their clients, who evidently did not protest against this custom. The same procedure can be found, for example, also in Hebrew and Aramaic documents from the Cairo Genizah. In T.-S. AS 143.340, fol. 1a–2b, mYom 5,3–4 and several *segullot* are transmitted together.[24] In some cases, the writer of the manuscript has to be considered also as the

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[22] On the Golem in Jewish Magic and Mysticim, there has recently been a very fertile discussion. The following (alphabetically arranged) articles and books are recommended: Moshe Idel, "The Golem in Jewish Magic and Mysticism", in: Emil D. Bilsky (ed.), *Golem! Danger, Deliverance and Art*, New York 1988, pp. 15–35; idem, *Golem. Jewish Magical and Mystical Traditions on the Artificial Anthropoid*, Albany (NY) 1990; idem, *Golem* (in Hebrew), Schocken: Jerusalem 1996; Gerold Necker, "Warnung vor der Schöpfermacht. Die Reflexion der Golem-Tradition in der Vorrede des Pseudo-Saʿadya-Kommentars zum *Sefer Yeṣira*", in: *FJB* 21 (1994), pp. 31–67; Peter Schäfer, "The Magic of Golem: The Early Development of the Golem Legend", in: *JSJ* 46 (1995), pp. 249–261; Maria Incarnaciòn Varela Moreno, "La Leyenda del 'golem': origenes y modernas derivaciones", in: *Miscelanea de estudios Arabes y Hebraicos* 44 (1995), pp. 61–79; Gerd A. Wewers, "Die Wissenschaft von der Natur im rabbinischen Judentum", in: *Kairos* 14 (1972), 1–21.

[23] See M.-T. D'Alverny, "Survivance de la magie antique", in: P. Wilpert (ed.), *Antike und Orient im Mittelalter*, (Vorträge der Kölner Mediaevistentagungen), Berlin 1962, p. 157.

[24] The text was published by Peter Schäfer and Shaul Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza III*, Tübingen: Mohr (1999), pp. 127–133.

writer (and perhaps author) of the magical texts, and this is the case with the MS Munich, partly written by Shlomo b. Shimshon.

The reason for this usage can be attributed to the scarcity of parchment or of paper. But it must be remembered that magical and non-magical sectors of life in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages were not separated from each other. A "handbook" was first of all a collection of material used for the multifarious aspects of life. At the beginning or end of a book or a tractate, a magical or imprecatory text could be used as a magical defence against a probable misuse of the text as, for instance, the writer of T.-S. 12.41 put it: "[the Sefer Tora] should not be sold or redeemed. Whoever sells it, steals it, or takes it out in order to sell or steal it, shall be under the ban of the God of Hosts . . .".[25]

The text of Munich 95 is, on the contrary, peculiar. If we take a look at the contents of the examined *segullot*, transmitted in the MS Munich 95, we note with astonishment that they involve two special topics, some recipes which have something to do with water and the creation of living beings in connection with the primordial water. It is, of course, known that the Babylonian Gemara was the first source of material to provide traces of the idea of creating a living being[26] in connection with the so-called *hilkhot yeṣira*. For this was the main Shabbat activity of Rabbi Ḥanina and R. Oshaʿya, according to Bavli Sanhedrin 67b. Yet the insertion of the creation of a living being into the water-recipes and especially the reference to Gen. 1:9 (dry land and the primordial water) are somewhat awkward.

The fomulae transmitted by the Babylonian Gemara in the Munich Manuscript Hebr. 95 are very interesting, not only because they are in the Gemara of this manuscript of the Talmud Bavli but, and in my opinion above all, because they bind together some traditions about the Golem. The structure of the little handbook directs the reader to the topic of water being the main element which Jews have to deal with. Water is not there for purification, but as a hostile element to be contended with or as a powerful tool to be made use of. The Golem traditions are embedded in this context and refer implicitly to other traditional materials as, for instance, the *Sefer ha-Malbush*

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[25] Text and translation in Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae. Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*, Jerusalem: Magnes, Hebrew University 1993, pp. 212–214.
[26] But see my *Magie und Halakha*, pp. 40–42.

and the *Sefer ha-Yashar*, where water, the golden plaque and the appearance of beings play a big role.

The most peculiar aspect is the mention of the creation of living beings in connection with Gen. 1:9: *And let the water be gathered under the heavens*. Of course, it is possible that the writer copied out some recipes, but he did not care for meaning or for meaningful texts. On the other hand, it may be that this text was influenced by the traditions of the *Ḥaside Ashkenaz* which stressed especially the role of running water in cultic and revelatory practices. According to *Sefer ha-Malbush*, running waters are a very essential element to conjure up a living being.[27]

But what was the real necessity to copy some water-*segullot* on a page of this valuable manuscript of the Babylonian Talmud? I suppose that it was to preserve it from the not uncommon floods in Northen Europen countries. If we look at the year of trancription of the man-uscript, 1342 in Paris, we can find an historical reason for the writer's preoccupation with water(s). From Paris to the Baltic sea, the period between 1340 and 1380 was a little "ice age" with continous floods and deluges. In August 1342 Germany, for instance, was afflicted by a disastrous flood which was the worst in the entire century. These circumstances explain the preoccupation of the writer with copying several "water"-*segullot* and powerful names as an apotropaic, namely to avert the danger of water from the manuscript and, I dare say, he succeeded bequeathing to us a veritable example of a "water-mark" in historical context.

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[27] On the Sefer ha-Malbush and its traditions see Irina Wandrey, *Das "Buch des Gewandes"*.

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THE UNWRITTEN CHAPTER:
NOTES TOWARDS A SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF GENIZA MAGIC

Steven M. Wasserstrom

The Notion of a Cultural History of Geniza Magic

The present essay will not attempt to define the category "magic."[1] More useful for present purposes is the definition of a cultural and religious history of Geniza magic.[2] Since it has been done elsewhere, this essay also will not review the literature on Geniza magic as such.[3] Instead, and with reference to magic in the Geniza documents, I will raise the question: how might the historian of religions write

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[1] I thank the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for the support that made this research possible. The present essay was originally presented as a lecture at the international conference on magic, "Officina Magica," organized by Shaul Shaked and Mark Geller at the University of London, June 1999, and was subsequently published in Hebrew as "Ha-Perek She-Terem Nikhtav. He'arot likrat Historia Hevratit ve-Datit shel Ha-Magia be-Mismekh Genizat Kahir," *Pe'amin* 85 (2000): 43–61. For a current review of relevant theoretical issues, see now Graham Cunningham, *Religion and Magic: Approaches and Theories* (New York: NYU Press, 1999). It is significant that the most valuable general study of religion to emerge in recent years virtually ignores so-called "magic": Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). The closest Rappaport comes is some shrewd observations on "occult efficacy" (149–150). For reviews of the significance of magic in classical antiquity, see now Jan Bremmer, "The Birth of the Term 'Magic'," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 126 (1999): 1–12; Harold Remus, "'Magic', Method, and Madness," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 11 (1999): 258–298; and Graf, "Panel Discussion: *Magic in the Ancient World* by Fritz Graf," *Numen* 46 (1999): 291–325. Please note that circumstances precluded the inclusion of diacritical marks for Arabic and Hebrew.

[2] I have dealt with some of these questions in my review of *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo* Genizah, *Selected Texts from Taylor-Schechter Box K1*, by Lawrence H. Schiffman and Michael D. Swartz, in *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 20 (1995): 199–202. A study of Metatron in Islamicate magic can be found in my *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 194–200.

[3] Steven Wasserstrom, "The Magical Texts in the Cairo Genizah," *Genizah Research After Ninety Years: The Case of Judaeo-Arabic*, ed. Joshua Blau and Stefan Reif (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 160–166. The literature is reviewed more recently by Gideon Bohak, "Greek, Coptic, and Jewish Magic in the Cairo Genizah," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 36 (1999): 27–44. I thank Professor Bohak for sending me an offprint of this article.

a social and religious history of Jewish magic in the medieval Islamicate world? Thanks to the labors of Peter Schäfer, Shaul Shaked and Moshe Idel, among others, one can now proclaim that that quintessential *magical* act of academic transformation—the paradigm-shift—has taken place. The very notion of a religious history of Jewish magic, after all, presupposes this new view of magic as a religious system, a view that supplants older models of magic as religion's *other*.[4]

Even Gershom Scholem, for all his sophistication in these matters, could revert to such distinctions late in life. Scholem's attitude toward the distinction between magic and religion, presented in an interview conducted in the late 1960s, may be taken as a case in point.

> We know that there is magic in West Africa today, and that *it works*. There is a closed society there . . . [O]f course we cannot perform magic, but in West Africa they can because it is an ethnically and culturally homogeneous community . . . But even mysticism, the individual mystic vision, becomes coarsened, turns into magic and wild crudity . . . The true mystics were men of exceptional gifts. Others that came after turned it all into crude folk-magic.[5]

With this background in mind, the present essay submits a barebones outline for framing Geniza magic, not as Scholem's "wild crudity," but rather as a Jewish religious system in historical context. At present, we possess neither the identities of the actors, nor even their confirmed dates, with which to craft a fullblown history.[6] Thus what

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[4] See the influential arguments of J. van Baal, "Magic as a Religious System," *Higher Education and Research in the Netherlands* 7 (1963): 10–21. For an important review of the problem of the status of ancient Jewish magic see Yuval Harari, "Early Jewish Magic: Methodological and Phenomenological Studies," PhD thesis, Hebrew University, 1998 [in Hebrew]. I thank Dr. Harari for sharing his work with me.

[5] "Conversation with a Cabalist: Gershom Scholem at Seventy," interview with Lea Ben Dor, *Jerusalem Post* (December 5, 1967), pp. 1–3, at pp. 2–3; emphasis is in original. Elsewhere Scholem was rather more nuanced on the question of magic. In *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, for example, he registered concern over the "facile distinction between magic and so-called true mysticism," *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946 [reprint, 1961]), p. 277. Later he emphasized the uselessness of this distinction: "In all periods, Kabbalah is associated to a greater or lesser extent with both popular and learned magic," in *On the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in our Time and Other Essays*, edited and selected with an introduction by Avraham Shapira; translated by Jonathan Chipman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publications Society, 1997), p. 124. Eventually he was to publish a major early medieval Jewish magical text as one of his very last publications. See Scholem, "*Havdalah de Rabbi Akiba*: A Source for the Jewish Magical Tradition in the Geonic Age," *Tarbitz* 50 (1980–1): 243–282 [in Hebrew].

[6] In 1998, Professor Seth Schwartz reviewed this problem with regard to the

is attempted here is little more than a series of topic headings, with some justification for the sequence and substance of those topics. While I may venture a few speculations, I intend to present questions, not answers.

By "Geniza" I refer to the Judaeo-Arabic Geniza, primarily from the ninth through the twelfth centuries, leaving aside the changes after the thirteenth-century appearance of Kabbalah in Spain.[7] Second, the following will not survey the Arabic magic texts of the Cairo Geniza.[8] I will refer to them, but I have not undertaken a systematic study of them. So far as I know, no one has studied them. Third, as my first two points suggest, this will not be a systematic survey, but rather a selective and thematic one.

Social Location

Literary and Documentary Magic in the Geniza Period

External resources for the study of Geniza magic include a wide range of medieval Islamicate letters, both Jewish and Muslim. Even here, where there is so much more evidence, we have little in the way of reliable guides. Since we possess no cultural history of medieval Islamicate magic, we are still largely groping in research darkness; the contrast between the plethora of sources and the paucity of our general knowledge is stark.

That being said, I shall distinguish between literary and documentary magical texts. This distinction is borrowed from Shlomo

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Byzantine period, at the annual meeting of the AAR. I thank Professor Schwartz for sharing with me his typescript, entitled "Who Wrote Amulets in Late Antique Palestine?"

[7] I thus also leave aside the question of magic as a Jewish religious system in antiquity. I might just note that Philo speaks of "true magic." See John Gager's comments in Graf, "Panel Discussion: *Magic in the Ancient World* by Fritz Graf". Nor was such an attitude restricted to non-Rabbinic Jews. For the period under consideration here, one could take the example of Nahmanides. See the recent discussion by José Faur, "A Crisis of Categories: *Kabbalah* and the Rise of Apostasy in Spain," in *The Jews of Spain and the Expulsion of 1492*, eds Moshe Lazar and Stephen Haliczer (Lancaster, CA: Labyrinthos, 1997), pp. 41–63, esp. pp. 50–54. Faur suggests that for Ramban, "magic and demonology constitute the very basis of religion and spirituality." (p. 51)

[8] For an authoritative review of Arabic magical texts, see Manfred Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1972). That an analogous volume devoted to Jewish magic remains a desideratum should go without saying.

Goitein, who employed it rather differently in his justly celebrated Geniza studies. By "literary magic" I refer to books, treatises, pamphlets and the like written on the theory of magic, magical beliefs or practitioners.[9] I thus use "literary magic" to refer to descriptions and theories of magic as found in historical, poetic and theological works. Thus, from the Muslim side, not only *kalam*, for example, but also *adab* and history, and even *hadith* and *rijal* books, pious traditions and biographical dictionaries, contain relevant materials.[10]

The theological critiques are especially important. For example, al-'Amiri's tenth-century critique of magic is analogous to contemporaneous theological polemics composed by the Karaite Ya'qub al-Qirqisani.[11] In fact, it may be said that these Mu'tazilite and post-Mu'tazilite Jewish and Muslim criticisms initiate a kind of Augustinian stream in non-Christian monotheistic theological rejections of magic.[12] They are, however, infrequent, and culminate only in Maimonides' *Guide.*

In the realm of folklore, there are numerous works identifying ancient Babylon as "A City of Witchcraft and Wine," which are replete with tales of magic.[13] Comic works, parodies and satires, such as Ibn Daniyal's street theater, Ibn Sahula's lampoons of occultists,

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[9] Pingree employs the related category of "learned magic." See David Pingree, "The Diffusion of Arabic Magical Texts in Western Europe," *La Diffusione delle Scienze Islamiche nel Medio Evo Europeo* (Roma, 2–4 Ottobre 1984): 57–99, at p. 58.

[10] For some traditions on Jews as sorcerers in the time of the Prophet Muhammad, see Michael Lecker, "The Bewitching of the Prophet Muhammad by the Jews: A Note a Propos 'Abd al-Malik b. Habib's *Mukhtasar fi l-Tibb*," *al-Qantara* 13 (1992): 561–569.

[11] For Qirqisani's rich treatment of the occult sciences, see Georges Vajda, "Études sur Qirqisani," *Revue des Études Juives* 106 (1946): 87–123. These sections, excerpted by Vajda, are translated in full into English by Leon Nemoy in "Al-Qirqisani on the Occult Sciences," *JQR* 76 (1986): 29–67. For al-'Amiri's views on magic, see E.K. Rowson, *A Muslim Philosopher on the Soul and its Fate: Al-'Amiri's al-amad 'ala'l-abad* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1988), chapter 12. A useful comparison can also be made with the roughly contemporaneous Ikhwan al-Safa'. See Pierre Lory, "La magie chez le Ihwan Al-Safa'," *Bulletin des Études Orientales* 44 (1993): 147–159.

[12] For the influence of Augustine's views on subsequent demonologists, see Gareth Roberts in "The Descendents of Circe: Witches and Renaissance Fictions," in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester and Gareth Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 185, n. 10. For Augustine's views themselves, see Robert A. Markus, "Augustine on Magic: A Neglected Semiotic Theory," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 40 (1994): 375–388.

[13] C. Janssen, *Babil, The City of Witchcraft and Wine: The Name and Fame of Babylon in Medieval Arabic Geographical Texts* (Gent: Universiteit Gent, 1995). A number of the stories studied by Janssen have Judaic elements or Jews as characters.

'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi's satirical debate between an alchemist and a philosopher, or of course the *1001 Nights*, are only a sampling of the rich literary materials remaining to be surveyed.[14] Taken together, such literary resources can provide a cultural profile of medieval Islamicate magic, and hence of the broader cultural context of Geniza literary magic.

In contrast to such "literary magic," I use "documentary magic" to refer to original working documents of magical practice. The best-known—if far more sparse than the literary evidence—are, of course, the Geniza amulets. There is, as is well-known, considerable overlap in the material substance of documentary magic and literary magic. *Sefer ha-Razim* and the other "handbooks" or "recipe-books" would seem to fall into the category of "documentary magic." So would *Ghayat al-Hakim*. Better known as *Picatrix*, one of the most widely reproduced of such texts, *Ghayat al-Hakim* was translated into Latin at the court of the Spanish king Alfonso el Sabio by Yehuda ben Moshe in 1256.[15] These documents are not only handbooks, but also crafted literary productions.

From the Muslim side, the voluminous *Shams al-Ma'arif* of al-Buni of the mid-thirteenth century, whose work sheds so much light on Geniza magical procedures and genres, is drawn from and intended for practice but redacted, again, literarily as a book.[16] Buni's specialized concern with occult properties of objects (*khawass*) owes much

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[14] A fragment of *1001 Nights* in Judaeo-Arabic is found in T.S. Ar. 36.68. See Colin F. Baker, "Judaeo-Arabic Material in the Cambridge Genizah Collections," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 58:3 (1995): 445–455. On the 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi dialogue, see Johann Christoph Bürgel, *The Feather of Simurgh, The 'Licit Magic' of the Arts of Medieval Islam* (New York: NYU Press, 1988), ch. 2, at 45–47. For Isaac ibn Abi Sahula's entertaining *Meshal ha-Qadmoni*, see Samuel Stern, "Rationalists and Kabbalists in Medieval Allegory," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 6 (1955): 73–86. For another example of a literary lampoon of the occult sciences, see Raymond P. Scheindlin, "Al-Harizi's Astrologer: A Document of Jewish-Islamic Relations," *Studies in Muslim-Jewish Relations* 1 (1993): 165–177.

[15] Pingree, "Diffusion," p. 90. See Toufic Fahd, "Sciences naturelles et magie dans 'Gayat al-Hakim' du Pseudo-Mayriti," in *Ciencas de la Naturaleza en al-Andalus. Textos y Estudios*, (2 vols) ed. E. García Sánchez (Granada: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas/Escuela de Estudios Arabes, 1990), vol. 1, pp. 11–23.

[16] While we have some recent studies on al-Buni, his work remains a relative *terra incognita*. See the studies by Pierre Lory, "Magie et Religion dans l'oeuvre de (Muhiy Al-Dîn Al-Bûnî)", *Horizons maghrebins* 7:84 (1986): 4–15, and "La Magie des Lettres dans le *Shams al-ma'ârif* d'al-Bûnî," *Bulletin des Études Orientales* 39–40 (1989): 97–111. See also Constant Hamès, "Entre Recette Magique d'Al-Bûnî et Prière Islamique d'Al-Ghazâlî: Textes Talismaniques d'Afrique Occidentale," *Fétiches II*, ed. Albert de Surgy (Paris: Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, 1993), pp. 187–225.

to none other than Ghazali.[17] In other words, there were some magicians who were invested neither in street-level sorcery nor in salon-level rationalism. As we will see, the exponents of "astral magic" between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries, most especially, attempted to position magic as a serious *religious* alternative.

In terms of the relation between "documentary" and "literary" magic, a basic question remains: should it be said that literary magic develops from documentary magic? Certainly, in some cases, but Shaked, Sperber, Rohrbacker-Sticker and others have also shown the reverse—from ancient literary formulae, later magical documents misunderstood and thus generated nonsense from sense.[18] Accordingly, the relation between "documentary" and "literary" magic must be treated cautiously and on a case-by-case basis.

Cultural Location

We cannot adequately answer such questions, in any case, until spadework is undertaken. To move to my next topic, I suggest that this preparatory labor must concern all the various cultural expressions of magic. I consider these particular inquiries into *cultural location* to be the most pressing desiderata in terms of an immediate research agenda.

Among such cultural inquiries the first is the relation of Geniza magic to contemporaneous Muslim magic. Professor Shaul Shaked authoritatively summarized this important question in 1985:

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[17] See Constant Hamès, "Entre Recette Magique," p. 194, n. 5.

[18] Rohrbacher-Sticker takes the example of the usage of the name of Jesus in Geniza magic, which was misunderstood. See Claudia Rohrbacher-Sticker, "From Sense to Non-Sense, From Incantation Prayer to Magical Spell," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 3 (1996): 24–46. See also, on this point, Bohak, "Greek, Coptic, and Jewish Magic in the Cairo Genizah," p. 36. Recent discoveries from the Aramaic Incantation Bowls reveal a related phenomenon. See Dan Levene, "'. . . and by the name of Jesus . . .' An Unpublished Magic Bowl in Jewish Aramaic," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 6 (1999): 283–308, and Shaul Shaked, "Jesus in the Magic Bowls. Apropos Dan Levene's '. . . and by the name of Jesus . . .'" *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 6 (1999): 309–319. For a more recent example of this phenomenon, see the excerpt from Yaakov Sapir Halevy's *Even Sapir* (Lyck, 1866) cited by Daniel Sperber. In nineteenth-century Yemen a Jewish traveller came upon a Ba'al Shem who had copied Arabic Muslim spells, including "Jesus son of Mary," not having read them for content. Sperber, *Magic and Folklore in Rabbinic Literature* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1994), pp. 89–90.

> Among the fragments of texts in Muslim Arabic (in Arabic charac-
> ters), we again find a certain number of fragments representing the
> main types of Muslim literature, and their study and identification may
> enrich our knowledge of the transmission of magic lore in Islam. The
> study of these texts amplifies our knowledge of pre-Kabbala Jewish
> mysticism and shows both the continuity of the magic tradition from
> Talmudic to the Islamic period, as well as the effects of the encounter
> with Muslim magic (which in its turn was also profoundly affected by
> Jewish elements).[19]

In fact, the "creative symbiosis" between Muslim and Jew extended
deeply into the magical realm. For example, the high angel Metatron
was employed for centuries both by Jewish and by Muslim magi-
cians.[20] Such sharing was noticeable. In the eighteenth century, the
Muslim magician and mathemetician Muhammad al-Kishnawi al-
Fulani observed that "the magic of Jews, Copts and Arabs was the
same, because, in order to achieve its desired aims, it used words
of unknown meaning and sought the help of angels."[21]

Moving next to other cultural sectors, I know of no study of Geniza
magical texts which concentrates on the question of gender.[22] *Pirke
Avot* asserts that "the more women, the more witchcraft" (2, 7), but
it is by no means the case that Geniza magic was the province of
women.[23] There are some important clues, however, to the gender-
significance of these practices. As Schäfer points out, the largest

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[19] Shaul Shaked, "Magic moments," *Genizah Fragments: The Newsletter of Cambridge University's Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit at Cambridge University Library* 9 (April 1985), p. 3.

[20] Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew*, pp. 167–205. Vincent Cornell has recently discovered in a manuscript held at the Staatsbibliotek zu Berlin an invocation of Metatron by Ibn Sabʿin. I thank Professor Cornell for sharing this discovery with me.

[21] A. Fodor, *Amulets from the Islamic World*, catalogue of the exhibition held in Budapest during the 14th Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants in 1988 (Budapest, 1990), p. 2, paraphrasing from al-Fulani, *al-Durr al-manzum wa khulasat al-sirr al-maktum* (Cairo: Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1961), p. 32. I thank J. Vahid Brown for guiding me to this source. On the non-semantic power of language, see the relevant remarks of Claudia Rohrbacker-Sticker, "From Sense to Non-Sense," pp. 25–29.

[22] For an earlier period we now have Melissa M. Aubin, *Gendering Magic in Late Antique Judaism*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Duke University, 1998. See especially the useful appendix, which lists the gender-identifiable names in the Palestinian and Babylonian amulets (223–251). Such work ought to be done for Geniza magic.

[23] For women in the Geniza texts, see for example Joel Kraemer, "Spanish Ladies from the Cairo Geniza," in *Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Mediterranean World after 1492*, ed. Alisa Meyuhas Ginio (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1992), pp. 237–267. I thank Professor Kraemer for sending me a copy of this article.

number of Geniza magical fragments come from the recipe-books; of these, the dominant themes are barren women, losing a child, difficulty with birth, children dying in the womb, and abortion.[24]

Beyond gender, we still know very little about the relation of Geniza magic to economic life, to class and status. To be sure, magic is barely invoked in the hundreds of business letters preserved in the Geniza, just as it is not invoked in the many trousseau-lists found there. Are we therefore to conclude that it was marginal or that it was "lower class"? Contemporary observers derided the merely performative aspects of popular magic.[25] This comic tradition, reminiscent of Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*, mocks charlatans in a way that reminds the reader that magic was, to say the least, not always reputable.[26]

But how are *we* to assess magic: as performance? As theatrics? As entertainment?[27] Again, at the risk of tedium, I repeat that this work likewise remains to be carefully undertaken. I submit one observation on ritual magic as entertainment. While we distinguish our religious magic from the ropetricks, swordswallowing, and sleight of hand derided in literary texts, ritual magic retained its own entertainment value, as distinct from, or at least complementary to, its value as a belief system. While it seems counter-intuitive, it is not necessarily the case that the writers of amulets "believed in" magic, in the physical reality of angels, in the efficacy of healing, and the like. Their practice of ritual magic, vivid and diverting as it undoubtedly was, may have had as its justification just this vividness and diversion, and not a fully autonomous belief system. In other words, even in the Geniza period, we need not necessarily *assume* that magic required an autonomous belief system: put differently, taking seriously its value as entertaining diversion is not to dismiss magic as a religious system.

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[24] "Jewish Magic Literature in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 41 (1990): 75–91.

[25] See Abu al-Faraj Ibn al-Nadim, *The Fihrist of Al-Nadim: A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, trans. Bayard Dodge (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 732, for jugglery, sleight of hand, and sword-swallowing. For an important study see F.M. Corrao, "The Culture of Laughter and the Anti-heroes in Ibn Daniyal's *Tayf al-Hayl* (XIII Cent.)," in *Philosophy and the Arts in the Islamic World*, ed. U. Vermeulen and D. de Smet (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), pp. 123–135. See p. 132 for Ibn Daniyal's satire of a magician.

[26] Schäfer has pointed to an interesting possible occurrence of Apuleius in a Jewish magical text. See his "Jewish Magic Literature," p. 89 (citing T.S. K. 1.3).

[27] For an eventual reversal of direction, see Leigh Eric Schmidt, "From Demon Possession to Magic Show: Ventriloquism, Religion, and the Enlightenment," *Church History* 76:2 (June 1998): 274–304.

Such observations remain abstract, of course, until we can iden-
tify the actors involved. Towards this end, as I have said, basic labors
remain to be undertaken. We have not yet compiled a classified or
categorized prosopography. When we do so, we might be able to
find correlations with some of the issues addressed in the *Sheelot
u-teshuvot*. In this way we might home in on social location. Similarly,
we might then be able to identify the scribes involved.

As for other cultural areas, Geniza magic has some bearing on
the history of medicine.[28] For my purposes as a historian of religions,
the most important results would be to integrate religious healing
into a social and religious history. Towards this end, research might
be directed toward compiling the sorts of ills being healed, psycho-
logical as well as physical. Ultimately, we might then address a gen-
eral theory of needs. That is, a social and religious history of Geniza
magic could eventually, perhaps, take proper account of the hopes,
wishes, fears and desires, as well as physical ailments, of this Medi-
terranean society.

Before I leave the context of cultural location, I must say something
concerning the relation of this subject matter to material culture. We
must search broadly for evidence. Apparently magical formulae in
Jewish Aramaic have been identified by Donald Whitcomb on so-
called Mahish ware, from the early 'Abbasid occupation of Southern
Jordan.[29] As translated by Mark Geller, this eighth-century ceramic
pottery displays the protective banner, "As for *mahish* [troublemaker]
this demon and any (demon) that is angry with me—overturn!" Here
is a precious documentary witness to the bridge-period between the
Aramaic Incantation Bowls and Geniza magic. This suggests that a
closer look at early Islamic archeology may be in order.

There is, as well, the still almost undiscussed question of clothing.
We know that some amulets were designed to be worn, and we
know of instances in Islamic magic where vestments, with magical
writing in them or on them, were in fact worn for apotropaic pur-
poses. Finally, there is in all this an aesthetic dimension. Especially
in later periods, amulets took on the function of a kind of folkart.[30]

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[28] See generally, Claudine M. Dauphin, "Illness and Healing: Review Article,"
Palestine Exploration Quarterly 130 (1998): 63–67. More specifically, see Haskell S.
Isaacs, "Medieval Judaeo-Arabic Medicine as Described in the Cairo Geniza," *Bulletin
of the Royal Society of Medicine* 83 (1990): 734–37.

[29] Donald Whitcomb, "Mahesh Ware: Evidence of Early Abbasid Occupation
From Southern Jordan," *Annual of the Department of Antiquities* 33 (1989): 269–285.

[30] For examples, see Marlous Willemsen, "A dish full of magic," in *Dreaming of*

Religious Location

The foregoing remarks concerning *social location* are entirely prelim-
inary, as is only appropriate at this stage of research. So too are the
following observations on the *religious location* of Geniza magic.
Fortunately, we are on rather firmer ground here, if for no other
reason than that this area is naturally much more fully documented.

The example of "Astral Magic"

Following the important work of Shlomo Pines and his student Moshe
Idel, and now more recently Dov Schwartz, it has become clear that
the discussion of so-called "astral magic" was a primary philosophical
trope shared by Jewish and Muslim thinkers in the twelfth and thir-
teenth centuries.[31] As antiquarian research progressed during this
period, it became a standard reflex to identify theological enemies and
philosophical weaknesses with ancient communities.[32] Of these, per-
haps the best known were the Sabians. The ancient Babylonians and
Egyptians were also identified as experts in so-called astral religion.[33]

In this connection, David Pingree has asserted that "[t]he astral
magic of al-Kindi and of the *Picatrix* are surely the highest forms of

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Paradise: Islamic Art from the Collection of the Museum of Ethnology Rotterdam, ed. P. Faber
et al. (Rotterdam: Martial & Snoeck, 1993), pp. 133–140. Several striking examples
of magical clothing are reproduced there.

[31] S. Pines, "Le *Sefer Ha-Tamar* et les Maggidim des Kabbalistes," *Hommage à
Georges Vajda*, ed. Gerard Nahon and Charles Touati (Louvain: Peeters, 1980), pp.
333–363; Dov Schwartz, "La Magie Astrale dans la Pensée Juive Rationaliste en
Provence au XIVᵉ Siècle," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 61 (1994):
31–55; *idem*, "The Debate on Astral Magic in Provence in the Fourteenth Century,"
Tzion 58 (1993): 141–174 [in Hebrew]; *idem*, "Astrology and Astral Magic in the
Writings of Solomon Alconstantin," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore* 15 (1993): 37–82
[in Hebrew]; Moshe Idel, "An Astral-Magical Pneumatic Anthropoid," *Incognita* 2
(1991): 9–31.

[32] I reviewed these issues in detail in "Conversations with the Pagan King: An
Esoteric Motif in Twelfth Century Comparative Religion," an unpublished paper
delivered at the 1998 annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion.

[33] Ibn Khaldun thus saw Babylon and Egypt as ancient astral centers. See Ibn
Khaldun, *The Muqaddimmah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton:
Princeton University Press, 1967), vol. 3, p. 160. On the Sabians see Sarah Stroumsa,
"Sabians of Haran and Sabians in Rambam: On the Development of Religion
According to Rambam," *Sefunot 7* (1999): 277–295 [in Hebrew], reprinted in French
as "Sabéens de Harran et Sabéens de Maïmonide," in *Maïmonide: Philosophe et savant
(1138–1204)*, ed. T. Lévy and R. Rashed (Leuven: Peeters, forthcoming).

magic, intellectually, that were developed in the Middle Ages."[34] According to Pingree, the particular significance of this elite magic is that the theory and the practice of infusing a talisman with a spirit drawn down from a celestial entity derives from Sabian traditions that entered Islamicate culture in the ninth century.[35] For present purposes, the crucial point is that these sophisticated magic practices were recognized by contemporary opponents to have had such ancient religious roots. I would emphasize this key point from my perspective as an historian of religions. It would appear to be the case that contemporary "learned magic" was in some cases derived from ancient texts, for example from the celebrated Ibn Wahshiyya. The critiques therefore had some basis in fact: theological critics recognized rightly that magic was an ancient religious system, and as such posed a perennial theological threat.

The key works of learned magic prided themselves precisely on such venerable genealogies; moreover, those key works of learned magic were in important instances shared by Jews and Muslims. Take the example of the best known learned magician of the period, al-Buni. Al-Buni is sufficiently well-known that Ibn Khaldun identifies him as a kind of superstar of the occult sciences.[36] According to Ibn Khaldun, Buni's magic encyclopedia *Shams al-Ma'arif* was a kind of copy of the *Ghayat al-Hakim*, the well-known guide to 'learned magic' that greatly influenced later European sages.[37] *Ghayat al-Hakim*, we know, was translated by a Jew and had been used by Jews. Buni's work also contains elements taken from Jewish and pseudo-Jewish traditions, as Vajda showed fifty years ago.[38] Buni also places himself in

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[34] "Diffusion," p. 59. See also Charles Burnett, "Talismans: Magic as Science? Necromancy Among the Seven Liberal Arts," in *Magic and Divination in the Middle Ages: Texts and Techniques in the Islamic and Christian Worlds*, ed. Charles Burnett (Aldershot, Great Britain: Variorum, 1996), pp. 1–15.

[35] Pingree, *op. cit.* See also idem, "Some Sources of the *Ghayat al-hakim*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43 (1980): 1–15. For a revisionary treatment of the historical repercussions of "astral magic" in early modern Europe, see Wouter Hanegraaff, "Sympathy or the Devil: Renaissance Magic and the Ambivalence of Idols," *Esoterica* 2 (2000): 1–44, on the World Wide Web at [http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeII/Sympdevil.html].

[36] *Muqadimmah* (Rosenthal trans.), vol. 3, p. 172.

[37] Hamès, "Entre Recette Magique," p. 213.

[38] "De quelques éléments juifs et pseudo-juifs dans l'encyclopédie magique de Buni," *Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume*, ed. D. Samuel Loewinger and Joseph Somogy (Budapest, 1948), vol. 1, pp. 387–392.

a lineage with Ibn Wahshiyya and Ibn Sab'in, two other esoteric writers who themselves interacted with Jews and/or were studied by Jews.[39]

Another example helps confirm this point. Letter magic, *jafr* in Arabic, was a key feature of the learned magical tradition.[40] It was also a key component of the overlap between Jewish and Muslim magical traditions. Elsewhere I have tried to show that the *locus classicus* of Jewish letter magic, *Sefer Yetzira*, was redacted in the ninth century, in a milieu fully conversant with Muslim occult sciences of this sort.[41] I would now add that of the superstars of letter magic specified by Ibn Khaldun—Jabir ibn Hayyan, al-Majriti, al-Buni—all were known to Jews and/or used materials from Jewish sources.

The small but influential subculture of learned magic and astral religion, then, was well-known to Jewish specialists in the Geniza period. In short, this learned tradition, especially as reflected in the systemized form known as Hermeticism, may be considered a kind of "third force" between mysticism and philosophy at this time.[42]

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[39] See Lory, "Magie et Religion," p. 10.

[40] See my "*Sefer Yesira* and Early Islam: A Reappraisal," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 3 (1993): 1–30. See also now on *gematria*, Idel, "Gematria," *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1994), vol. 3, pp. 1346–1347. For *Sefer Yetzira's* fate in the Geniza, see for example Nehemiah Aloni, "*Sefer Yetzirah* of R. Sa'adiah in the form of a scroll from the Cairo Genizah," *Temirin: Texts and Studies in Kabbalah and Hasidism*, ed. Israel Weinstock (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1981), vol. 2, pp. 9–31 [in Hebrew].

[41] "*Sefer Yetzirah* and Early Islam." Since completing my study of *Sefer Yesira*, several articles have emerged which have a bearing on my argument, especially concerning the influence of the Arabic translation of the arithmology of Nicomachus of Gerasa. For the background in late antiquity, see Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 289–304, esp. pp. 294–6; Gregory Shaw, "Eros and Arithmos: Pythagorean Theurgy in Iamblichus and Plotinus," *Ancient Philosophy* 19 (1999): 121–143, at pp. 129–134. 'Ali ibn Ahmad al-Antaki (d. 987) wrote a commentary on the *Arithmetic* of Nicomachus. See Jacques Sesiano, "Le traité d'Abû'l-Wafa' sur les carrés magiques," *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften* 12 (1998): 121–245. Such ninth- and tenth-century interest in Pythagorean arithmology stimulated the early Isma'ili interest in these matters, including, significantly, both Nicomachus and *Sefer Yesira*. The most extensive study of this Isma'ili' reception is D. De Smet, *La Quiétude de l'intellect: Néoplatonisme et gnose ismaélienne dans l'oeuvre de Hamid ad-Din al-Kirmani (X^e/XIe s.)* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters/Departement Oosterse Studies, 1995), pp. 289–305.

[42] See now the work being done by Vincent Cornell on Ibn Sab'in, for example "The Way of the Axial Intellect: The Islamic Hermetism of Ibn Sab'in," *Journal of the Muhyiddin ibn 'Arabi Society* 22 (1997): 41–79. I thank Professor Cornell for sharing an offprint with me.

The Occult Sciences: The Example of Divination

The occult sciences, properly speaking, emerge as individuated modes of operation simultaneously only with the rise of early modern science. That is, what the Florentine Renaissance eventually witnessed as a differentiation of discrete, named practices—numerology, astrology, alchemy, and the like—in the period of Geniza magic remained largely fused into an occult complex. This comparatively un-differentiated supernaturalism is exemplified in *Sefer Yetzirah*.[43] By the time of the Renaissance, however, these occult sciences separate out into distinctive approaches.

That being said, there is a substantial amount of material devoted to the occult sciences, for example to divination, found in the Cairo Geniza. We need a history of Jewish divination before we will know how such divinatory practices fit into Jewish religious life.[44] The Geniza contains a variety of divination writings.[45] Obviously these profuse remnants must tell us something religious about a Jewish view of agency and human action, though exactly what remains to be determined.

Imaginal Location

Moving now to an equally murky realm, which might be termed the "imaginal location," one might ask how the distinctive expressions of Geniza magic—Names of God, angels, demons, magical characters

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[43] See my "*Sefer Yesira* and Early Islam."

[44] We have nothing in Judaic Studies to compare with Toufic Fahd, *La divina-tion arabe* (Leiden: Brill, 1966).

[45] See for example Shaul Shaked, "A Palestinian Jewish Aramaic Hemerologion," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 15 (1992): 28–42. I thank Professor Shaked for sending me an offprint of this article. For horoscopes, see David Pingree and Bernard Goldstein, "Horoscopes from the Cairo Geniza," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 36 (1977): 113–144; *idem*, "Astrological Almanacs from the Cairo Geniza," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 38 (1979): 153–175, 231–256. For a general study see Ron Barkai, "L'astrologie juive médiévale: aspects théoriques et pratiques," *Le Moyen Age* 93 (1987): 325–348; and, for the Geniza materials, Paul Fenton, "Les manuscrits astrologiques de la *Guenizah* du Caire," *Le monde juif et l'astrologie*, ed. Jacques Halbronn (Milan: Arché, 1985), pp. iii–xix. For a major new study of astrology and magic in Jewish culture in the Middle Ages, see Dov Schwartz, *Astral Magic in Medieval Jewish Thought* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1999) [in Hebrew]. For the pre-sent discussion, the Islamicate context is also relevant. On this, see George Saliba, "The Role of the Astrologer in Medieval Islamic Society," *Bulletin des Études Orientales* 44 (1992): 45–67.

of imaginary alphabets, and the like—fit into a history of the Jewish religious imagination. To start with, a comprehensive angelological onomasticon is in order. Characters in magical alphabets such as the so-called *Alphabet of Metatron*,[46] must be compared with the important *Ancient Alphabets* of Ibn Wahshiyya.[47] So too, the systematic comparison of magical alphabets recorded in al-Buni and in *Sefer Raziel*, work which has just begun, also appears to be a profitable exercise.[48]

Theological Location

The first thing, perhaps, that strikes the observer is that the amulet-writer strives for a Biblicized poetic: overwhelmingly, the Bible is cited, but not Rabbinic traditions. The Bible is not only cited, of course, but also emulated. The amulets were designed to sound, so to speak, resoundingly revelational. Still, in no reasonable sense can they be said to be "non-rabbinic" *per se*. After all, they exist in a rabbinic milieu, exhibit knowledge of rabbinic formulae, *halakhot*, *tefillot*, etc.

They are, in other words, neither sectarian nor heretical, neither schismatic nor revolutionary, neither anti-rabbinic nor, for that matter, ideologically rabbinic. This seeming invisibility may be to the point. The archaicizing and scripturalizing tone of the amulet's rhetoric was not designed explicitly to criticize existing authority structures, but neither did it draw on them for legitimation. Rather, it purported to draw from the roots of revelation itself, that is, from the highest celestial forces possible to adjure. Here, I think, we can approach the curious but significant autonomy of magical praxis. This stance is nominally independent of society, living as it did inside the conceit of direct access to heavenly power while offering no organized challenge to institutionalized social arrangements.

Along these lines, more specifically, it is interesting to note the

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[46] Weinstock, "The Alphabet of Metatron and Its Explanation," in *Temirin: Texts and Studies in Kabbalah and Hasidism*, ed. Israel Weinstock (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1980), vol. 2, pp. 51–77 [in Hebrew].

[47] *Ancient Alphabets and Hieroglyphic Characters Explained; With an Account of the Egyptian Priests, Their Classes, Initiation, and Sacrifices*, trans. Joseph Hammer-Purgstall (London, 1806). For a more recent French translation of this text, see Sylvain Matton, trans., *La Magie arabe traditionnelle* (Paris: Retz Bibliotheca Hermetica, 1976).

[48] For a beginning, see Muriel Dejeribi, "L'incantation mythique: noms et écriture," *Ethnologie française* 23 (1993): 94–103, at pp. 96–97. See also David Rouach, *Les Talismans. Magie et tradition juives* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1989), pp. 250–257.

extent to which the amulet-writers, by means of the *similia/similibus* formulae, performatively identified themselves with Moses.[49] This seeming hubris may only mean that Jewish (and, by the way, Muslim) practitioners of ritual magic shared a necessary identification, a reca-pitulation of the foundational myth, with their ancestral hero-prophet. The prominence of this quasi-prophetic posture resonated, in any case, with its scripturalizing effect. Taken together, such effects might usefully be considered in light of Moshe Idel's important new study of messianism. Here we find in the mystical tradition a surprising number of aspiring messiahs. Idel shows just how many mystics— and not only an Abulafia or a Luria—claimed for himself a kind of messiah-ship.[50]

If every man could be his own messiah, then the apocalyptic dimension of eschatological expectation incrementally shades into the humanistic; each striving religious believer himself progressively bears the possibility of collective redemption now. What this presumption seems historically to suggest is that, like contemporaneous mysticism, Geniza magic may reveal the beginning of a rationalization process, even perhaps hints of a kind of proto-humanism. If Goitein is accu-rate that Jewish society of this period is hardheaded and bourgeois, then this magic may be a reaction to or *perhaps an expression of* this rationalization. This *latent* crossfertilization between enchantment and demythologization eventually becomes *manifest* when Kabbalah and Renaissance magic unmistakably stimulate the rise of early modern science. I make this last point mindful of the controversies surrounding the Yates hypothesis.[51]

The enormous realm of study known as Halakha must be surveyed by specialists in rabbinic literature.[52] I have only a few inadequate

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[49] For some background in antiquity, see John G. Gager, "Moses the Magician: Hero of An Ancient Counter-Culture?" *Helios* 21 (1994): 179–188.

[50] Moshe Idel, *Messianic Mystics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998).

[51] For a useful review of the controversy, see H. Floris Cohen, *The Scientific Revolution: A Historiographical Inquiry* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 169–182.

[52] A brief review is found in Brigitte (Rivka) Kern-Ulmer, "The Description of Magic in Rabbinic Texts: The Rabbinic and the Greek Concept of Magic," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 27 (1996): 289–303. Veltri has now undertaken a more sys-tematic study: Giuseppe Veltri, "Defining Forbidden Foreign Customs: Some Remarks on the Rabbinic Halakhah of Magic," *Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Division C, Volume 1 (Jerusalem, 1994); and idem, *Magie und Halakha* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1997).

remarks to make in this connection. First, there are in this period what might be called pseudo-Halakhic texts, such as the *Havdala de Rabbi Akiba*.[53] Moreover, sometimes rabbis explicitly permitted the fashioning of talismans, as for example was the case in a Responsum of Shlomo Ibn Adret.[54] Without detailed research, it would be dangerous to generalize about the relationship between rabbis and the magical practices documented in the Geniza, but the breadth of presence of magic in the Geniza does seem to indicate that these practices were tolerated by rabbis.

My survey of the religious location of Geniza magic ends with what one might call the Kabbalization of Jewish magic. I have not addressed the relation of Geniza magic to mysticism, especially to Merkava or Hekhalot mysticism.[55] Here I follow Professor Shaked, who recently observed that "[i]n the medieval period, as we can see from the Geniza material, a measure of harmony was achieved between *Hekhalot*, liturgy and magic texts."[56]

Once Kabbalistic idioms were superimposed on ancient practice, Kabbalists appropriated these techniques as their own. The Maggidic phenomenon of personal revealing angels seems to be pronounced only after the period of my concern here.[57] However, scholarship being done on Maggidic and spirit possession in Jewish societies of the sixteenth century suggests yet another avenue of research relevant for our earlier period.[58] The question of incubated trance, ecstatic states of consciousness, possession and exorcism, raise the issues of the applicability of social and psychological history to our period.[59]

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[53] Scholem, "Havdalah de Rabbi Akiba."

[54] See no. 167 and 413 of his responsa. For this information I thank Jonathan Seidel (personal communication, 5 Dec. 1993). For Shlomo ibn Adret's rejection of Maimonides' position, see Dov Schwartz, "Magic, Experimental Science and Scientific Method in Maimonides' Teaching," in *Joseph Baruch Sermoneta Memorial Volume*, ed. Aviezer Ravitzky (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought, 1998), vol. 14, pp. 25–47 [in Hebrew].

[55] See for example Rachel Elior, "The *Merkavah* Tradition and the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism," *Sino-Judaica: Jews and Chinese in Historical Dialogue*, ed. Aharon Oppenheimer (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1999), pp. 101–158. I thank Professor Elior for sharing an offprint with me.

[56] " 'Peace be Upon You, Exalted Angels': on Hekhalot, Liturgy and Incantation Bowls," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 2 (1995): 197–219, at p. 207.

[57] Yoni Garb, "Trance Techniques in the Kabbalistic Tradition of Jerusalem," *Pe'amim* 70 (Winter 1997): 47–67 [in Hebrew].

[58] J.H. Chajes, "Judgments Sweetened: Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern Jewish Culture," *Journal of Early Modern History* 1 (1997): 124–169. See also the papers delivered at the 1997 AJS meeting, on spirit possession.

[59] See the comparison of Sufi *dhikr* with the breathing techniques of Abraham

Historical Location

I move now to my final context, that of *historial location*. I under-
stand the *historical* to subsume the *social, cultural* and *theological*.

The first problem is one of rudimentary historical orienteering:
synchronically speaking, what groups, communities or interests are
represented in literary and documentary magic of the Cairo Geniza?
And, put diachronically, can we discern any significant development
across the Geniza period, say, from the tenth to the twelfth centuries?
To these two basic questions—who are the actors and how did they
change?—we possess almost no answers, nor are satisfying answers
likely to be forthcoming soon. To these I would add a related ques-
tion of superstructural orientation: how *Egyptian* was Geniza magic?[60]
More broadly formulated, how does it fit into comparative Jewish
societies?

Ultimately, for the historian, these macroform questions pertain
to the larger historical description of the Jewish community in this
period. Such description, beyond Goitein's "sociography," may best
be rendered in terms not only of social history but also, as I have
suggested, of religious history.

Where does Geniza magic fit in a developmental history of Judaism?[61]

My survey here concerns, as I have said, pre-thirteenth-century
Islamicate culture. While I confess that there may here be an implicit
periodization, one which moreover assumes important changes in the
early modern period, I do not want however to suggest that this
implies a progress toward science. That being said, and with the ques-
tion of rationalization in mind, I want now to consider the history

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Abulafia, as discussed in F.M. Tocci, "Una Tecnica Recitativa e Respiratoria di
Tipo Sufico nel Libro *La Luce Dell'Intelletto* di Abraham Abulafia," *Annali di Ca' Foscari*
14 (1975): 221–236.
    [60] Ibn al-Nadim identifies magic as "common practice in Egypt and the nearby
regions; the books which are written there are many and extant. The Babylon of
the magicians is in the land of Egypt. A person who has seen this [state of affairs]
has told me that there still remain men and women magicians and that all of the
exorcists and magicians assert that they have seals, charms of paper, sandal, *jazab*,
and other things used in their arts." (*Fihrist* [Dodge trans.], p. 726) For important
background, see David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance*
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
    [61] See the lecture by Elliot R. Wolfson on Geniza magic delivered at the annual
AJS meeting of 1997.

of technology as an appropriate topic for my proposed social and religious history. Without falling prey to the teleological fallacy, it remains the case that chemistry does separate from alchemy, and the various technologies eventually achieve a semi-autonomous status. In this light it is important to compare the later works written on the technology of talismans, say by Ficino, with the earlier technical treatises on astral magic.[62]

We need, in this light, to look hard at works widely read in the Geniza period, which address the technology of talismans. The best-known of these, perhaps, was the *Sirr al-Asrar*.[63] This collection, along with *Sefer Yetzira, Sefer ha-Razim* and *Sefer Raziel*, then contributed to the widely-read *Secreta Secretorum*.[64] This fact is significant for its testimony to the possession of these collections by one learned magician of the thirteenth century. Such collections can then be studied in light of the numerous booklists in the Geniza, in order to gain insight into the transmission of these forms of knowledge.[65]

On a mechanical level, there are questions still to be asked about the technology of magic: how much, for example, do the amulets reveal of the history of their respective technologies?[66] I mean by this both form and content: what do amulets and talismans tell us both about their proposed magical techniques and about the technical

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[62] Pines and Idel have pointed in this direction. See Pines, "On the Term *Ruhaniyyut* and its Sources, and on Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*," *Tarbitz* 57 (1989): 511–540 [in Hebrew]; and Idel, "On Judaism, Jewish Mysticism, and Magic," *Envisioning Magic*, ed. Peter Schafer and Hans Kippenberg (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 195–215.

[63] Mahmoud Manzalaoui, "The Pseudo-Aristotelian *Kitab Sirr al-Asrar*," *Oriens* 23–24 (1974): 147–257.

[64] Alfred Büchler, "A Twelfth-Century Physician's Desk Book: The *Secreta Secretorum* of Petrus Alphonsi Quondam Moses Sephardi," *JJS* 37 (1986): 206–212.

[65] Shlomo D. Goitein, "Books: Migrant and Stationary. A Geniza Study," in *Occident and Orient. A Tribute to the Memory of A. Scheiber*, ed. R. Dan (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó/Leiden: Brill, 1988), pp. 179–98; Moshe Sokolow, "Arabic Books in Jewish Libraries: The Evidence of Genizah Booklists," in *The Medieval Mediterranean: Cross-Cultural Contacts*, eds M.J. Chiat and K.L. Reyerson (St. Cloud, Minnesota: Medieval Studies at Minnesota, 1988), pp. 96–100; and Miriam Frenkel, "Book Lists from the Geniza as a Source for the Cultural and Social History of the Jews in Mediterranean Society," in *A Century of Geniza Research*, ed. Mordechai A. Friedman [= *Teʿuda* XV] (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1999), pp. 333–351 [in Hebrew].

[66] As is well-known from the Geniza materials, recipes are standard, as they had been since antiquity. Compare, for example, the recipe for an amulet by Oswald Croll (1610), as found in *The Occult in Early Modern Europe*, ed. and trans. by P.G. Maxwell-Stuart (New York: St.-Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 127–128. A study of the materials listed in such recipes would be useful.

modes of production that went into making them themselves? Here
again, I think we ought to seek guidance in Islamic studies. Generally
speaking, in both respects, the techniques and technologies were
shared interconfessionally. This interconfessionalism is well-attested
in the sixteenth century. Hayyim Vital credits Muslim magicians for
techniques of oil divination.[67] In 1579 Vital approached a Muslim
in Jerusalem to write down a few words as an amulet to be worn
around the neck. Around the same time, Shimon Lavi, in his com-
mentary on the *Zohar*, described firsthand a number of interconfes-
sional magical activities. He tells the story, for example, of "one of
the masters of Torah who sits with me here in the Yeshiva [in
Tripoli, who saw] a certain Arab, a great sorcerer who did what-
ever he wished and succeeded."[68]

The history of books is particularly significant for understanding
the history of magic, especially in the early modern period.[69] Magic
has been a scribal art since antiquity, and so the technologies of ink,
papyrus, and eventually the book must be integrated into a social
and religious history of Geniza magic.[70] Medieval Arabic block prints
are found in the Geniza, long strips that were possibly used as
amulets.[71] If, to take another example, *Sefer ha-Razim* is to be under-
stood as a book, how does it relate to the history of other magical

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[67] For the sharing of these techniques, see Fodor, *Amulets from the Islamic World*
p. 74, and Dan, "Thumb and Cup Songs," *Tarbiz* 32 (1963): 359–369 [in Hebrew].

[68] Boaz Huss, "R. Shim'on Lavi's Conception of Magic in his Commentary to
the *Zohar*," in *Jewish Responses to Early Modern Science: Jewish Treatments of Science from
De Revolutionibus to the Principia and Beyond* (Tel Aviv, 1995), pp. 143–151, at p. 149.
It should be noted that contemporary Muslim magicians also continue to draw on
ancient techniques. See for example al-Tukhi in Cairo, as described by Fodor, and
in Constant Hamès, "Magie, morale et religion dans les pratiques talismaniques
d'Afrique occidentale," *Religiologiques* 18 (1998) [Marges contemporaines de la reli-
gion] 1–10. See al-Tukhi's work, *Al-Sihr al-ahmar* (Beirut 1988).

[69] Richard W. Bulliet, "Medieval Arabic *Tarsh*: A Forgotten Chapter in the History
of Printing", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107 (1987): 427–438. Constant
Hamès, "Taktub ou la magie de l'ecriture Islamique. Textes Soninké à usage mag-
ique," *Arabica* 34 (1987): 305–325.

[70] On this question see especially the work of Michael Swartz, "Scribal Magic
and its Rhetoric: Formal Patterns in Medieval Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation
Texts from the Cairo Genizah," *Harvard Theological Review* 83:2 (1990): 163–80. See
more fully his monograph, *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism*
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[71] T.S. Ar. 38.135, Ar. 41.102. See Geoffrey A. Khan, "The Arabic Fragments
in the Cambridge Genizah Collections," *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 1 (1986):
54–60.

"books," from the *Greek Magical Papyri* to the *Shams al-Ma'rif* of al-Buni?[72] Do we in fact have any evidence that it functioned as a "book" during the period under discussion?

Conclusion

A social and religious history, properly rendered, written with these practices appropriately represented, within a humanistically-grounded historical framework, might provide students of religious history with an importantly unfamiliar thing. I have of course raised questions and not answers here. We might not be able to complete this work ourselves, but we ought to prepare, at least, for these shocks of recognition.[73]

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[72] William Brashear, "Magical Papyri: Magic in Bookform," in *Das Buch als magisches und als Repräsentationsobjekt*, ed. Peter Ganz (Harrossowitz: Wiesbaden, 1992), pp. 25–59.

[73] I thank J. Vahid Brown for his help in preparing this paper for publication.

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MAGIC AND HUMAN REASON

Marcel Sigrist

"It is therefore a truism, almost a tautology, to say that all magic is necessarily false and barren; for were it ever to become true and fruitful, it would no longer be magic, but science."[1]

"Witchcraft, divinations, and possessions were, for a long time, universally accounted the most certain things in the world. What numberless crowds have seen all those fine things, and have been certain of them! but at present, such certainty begins to lose its credit."[2]

Similar negative statements on magic are plentiful, although today studies and researches abound on the subject.[3] One can read many interesting, fascinating and even bizarre observations, but rarely integrated into the general system of human activities. All these studies describe but don't explain the logic behind magical actions. It is considered admissible, almost justified, to classify magical activities as non-scientific, non-logical, non-rational, remnants of the distant past of humanity.

Magic is most often, if not always, connected with religion, thus unjustifiably introducing the separation of sacred and profane in this matter, magic being on the sacred side, especially black magic. Magic appears connected with mysteries, hidden spiritual powers. It is used as a technique to manipulate the invisible, to apprehend a universe which exists beyond human capabilities, and to make it conform to our wishes; or a way to force the hand of the gods.

Understood in this way, magic is close to charlatanism, to all that is non-scientific and therefore not serious. For a scholar it still remains interesting to collect and describe minutely all the practices and magical rituals, to compare them and if possible to follow their development through ages and places, in fact like any other sort of literary analysis.

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[1] James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough, A Study in Magic and Religion*, 1 vol. abridged edition, New York, The Macmillan company, 1940, 50.

[2] M. de Voltaire, *The Philosophical Dictionary for the Pocket*, London 1802; article: Certain, certainty, 72.

[3] Series: *Ancient Magic and Divination*, Brill-Styx.

Nevertheless even those who follow this path either do not understand that since they are dealing with magical texts, magic is an important part of the text, or else they feel that magic belongs to another age and mentality, and therefore only recognize in it the first fumblings of primitive man in the face of a universe he cannot yet control through his science and knowledge. The magical universe is taken as anti-scientific, because of a false concept of the universe and its laws, and is therefore not considered worthy of study.

It would be easy to continue in this vein with critical and negative statements on the irrationality of magic. It should just be noted that a description of human languages would give a similar picture of the most diverse or even contradictory practices from one linguistic system to another. But this could not be called linguistics. The same is true for magic. One can describe all kinds of magical rituals, finding opposite and antithetic practices used to achieve the same effect, without having explained anything of the nature of magic and the apparent contradictions in these procedures.

It is my aim to show that magic is an integral part of human rationality.

Human rationality

This presentation follows closely the research of Jean Gagnepain.[4] Rationality characterizes mankind; to be more precise one should speak about "embodied rationality". But reason, one of its principles, remains as such even when it is modified in its modalities. In other words, the same rationality is at work when we speak, plan a house, organize our social life or behave ethically. There is only one power of reason, but diffracted in the human existence into four levels which function in an analogous way, each one connected with the others:

1) The level of the *logos*, of the "sign and signification" which through language makes us *homo logicos*;
2) The level of technology and the fabrication of tools which makes us *homo faber*;

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[4] Jean Gagnepain, *Du vouloir dire*, I, II, III, DeBoeck Université, 1995; *ibid.*, *Leçons d'Introduction à la Théorie de la Médiation, Anthropo-logiques* 5, Peeters, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1994.

3) The level of the person, of the social, which makes us *homo ethnicos*;
4) The level of the norm, of the ethic which makes us *homo ethicos*.

Without having time or space to say more about these four levels, it should be noted that language is not above the others, even if it is placed first. We are equally and totally human and rational in each of these four planes. The same power of reasoning is at work in each of these levels although in modalities specific to each of them.

Furthermore it is only for the sake of study that each level is presented separately. When I say something (in a group or to one person), my words are not only subject to linguistic study but also to social and ethical considerations, e.g. if I use a profanity.

This theory of rationality, and not solely of language, presents the sum of the processes with the help of which man is able to analyse his thinking (logic), his activity (technology), his existence (society) and his will (ethics) through a network of signs, tools, persons and norms.

I am going to develop only the first two points: logic and technology, in order to situate magic in this frame.

A   *Language*

In the present analysis of speech I am not considering the complex situation in which the one who speaks is involved: not the one who speaks, nor the one to whom the speech is addressed, nor the situation in which he speaks, nor the communication of the message. In short, either speaker or listener are considered separately (but neither is ignored).

Similarly language is not firstly a means of communication, as so many like to say, but the permanent dialectical synthesis between sound and meaning. This aspect too cannot be followed more closely here. I restrict myself to the three modalities through which the speaker produces his message, which are as many manifestations of the same practical reasoning, each manifestation being as valid as the others, and no more nor less true.

The pragmatic realisation of this dialectic can be simply, normally and usually, the adaptation of the universe of words to the universe of the things of the world; but it can also be—and this is the innovation of this presentation—the reduction of the universe of things to the language itself, necessary to define the world.

1. One can manipulate words to adjust them to the reality to be expressed; *this is the goal of science*. To put it another way, when we talk we seek the transparency of the words in regard to the reality these words should express.

2. But conversely one can manipulate things in order to turn them into what one wants to say; *this is the goal of mythology*.

3. And in order to be complete in my presentation, one can deal with the words as such, without any reference to the world, and *this is poetry*.

In these three ways of dealing with language: science, mythology and poetry, the first two function in a way directly contradictory to one another, and it is irrelevant to ask about the superiority or truth of one above the other. Science, mythology and poetry are only different forms of the activity of language. We will find that we live as much in a mythological as a scientific world. Mythology is not an aberration of language, fruit of the primitive mind, designed to make us better or less anxious about events to come, but a normal although different form of the activity of language.

Let us deal further with these three points, as the demonstration may reveal itself very useful for a better understanding of magic.

1. *The scientific goal or the scientific aim*

I speak about science specifically in the relation of linguistic activity to the world. Science is not, contrary to some beliefs, the modification of pre-existing language. Science is a speech which spontaneously modifies itself in order to adapt to the experiment, thereby making a determination of the things observed, which makes possible a meta-language. There is no object that is not perceived and put into a concept. Language is the source of all knowledge. Therefore the concept can never be reduced to the object it expresses. Scientifically there is no object which cannot be elaborated with words. One cannot conceive anything as long as one has no words to say it.

If the connection happens through words, we will have to try to formulate the message in such a way as to reflect in speech the relationships we believe we see in the things themselves. This is called scientific rhetoric, which tries to be as transparent as possible to the

observed reality, transparency we then try to show at the level of
the formulation.

The scientific aim is to make the relationships of words conform
to the relationships seen in things. The result is a rhetorical trans-
formation of language, although it does not happen all the time. We
still speak about the rising and setting of the sun, without really tak-
ing into account the discoveries and scientific revolutions of Copernicus,
Galileo and many others.

In short, scientific rhetoric formalizes more and more the com-
mon terminology. This is a meta-language, which is only the trans-
formation of language to make it conform more scientifically to the
relationships detected in things. By doing so the scientist aims to
eliminate all polysemy from words, to keep only one meaning. If
this line were followed perfectly to the end, we would only speak
mathematically, a word for a thing; speech would be adequate, but
we would no longer be able to think.

2. *The mythological aim*

Understanding the nature of mythology is possible only at the level
of language. Mythology is far from being the result of the fantasies
of the primitive mentality—this can never be repeated enough—it
is not the result of daydreams. That assertion has prevented a fair
approach to this human activity, and any linguistic research.

The opposite of scientific procedure is to manipulate things to make
them be, or equate to, what the words say about them. In the battle
of Tiamat against Enki, and later Marduk, in the poem called *Enuma
elish*, the great gods create a number of monsters which all have
names, like the flying dragon, the wolf-lion, etc. In fact their name
is their being. These creatures are exactly what the words used sug-
gest that they are. Another simple example is the unicorn, a horse
with a horn. Although nobody had ever seen one, nothing was more
easy to represent, and to give all the attributes of a horse.

That is how all the monsters of the world are created, such as
our modern flying saucers, which we call science-fiction, so as not
to give the impression that we are still interested in mythology. But
the rhetorical activity is exactly the same in composing science-fiction
as mythology, especially as mythology has nothing to do with religion.

In mythology it is no longer a matter of formulation, but of *hyposta-sis*. The word creates the object we are talking about. The word is *hypostasized*, it stands for the reality it expresses. This is meta-physics.

In Greece the nymphae, daughters of the waters, are the small clouds hanging over the swamps of Mémé. As they could not be explained, these clouds were simply personified. What cannot be explained is hypostasized or personified.

Before going any further it must be repeated once more that mythology, like science, is a product of words, of the language. The mythological rhetoric has to justify the use of the words produced, and therefore creates a reality (a living being) justifying this use, as in the case of the nymphae.

All the gods and goddesses of Antiquity, as far as they can be traced in their original language, are the product of this mythological aim. The Mesopotamian gods exist only through their names: An (god of the heavens), Enki (god of the netherworld), Enlil (god of the atmosphere), Nintu (goddess of birth), Ninhursag (goddess of the mountain). They are personified after their names have been hypostasized, and only then acquire their autonomy and start to function like real beings in the image of human creatures.

The mythical mind creates a number of realities, only sometimes to justify the polysemy of words, because nobody can accept that words have no meaning. I think that it is in this sense that tablet 5, the names of Marduk, should be read. Each segment of a word becomes a new reality, a new insight into the person of Marduk. The mythical speech hypostasizes the word, bringing into existence what the word says.

Every nomen turns out to be an omen. A world well organized corresponds to a language well fit, and the rigor of the evocation is no less stringent than a scientific formulation. Mentioning the wolf is to see its tail.

In addition, if the myth only has meaning in the language in which it was initially formulated it is obvious that, once cut from its linguistic roots, it no longer has any other reality than its writing and its function, the totality of the rites through which it gives direction to a given society. Myths pass from one country to another and thereby lose their point of reference and specific intelligibility, which lay only in the original words.

Myths come into being when a word suggests a concept, in which in turn it becomes incorporated. Therefore the myth excludes

synonymy, because every *sème* hypostasizes itself separately. In the myth a cat is a cat, and nothing more than what this word means.

Mythology has its own history. These Mesopotamian gods have their own life, their families, their fights, etc. This is only natural. Once the hypostasis exists, it gains its own consistency, much as the creations of science-fiction are presented in movies and even talked about in serious lectures. This is perfectly possible because they are only human and linguistic creations.

3. *The poetic aim*

There is a third aim, besides the scientific and mythic rhetorics. The speaker can try to formulate his message according to the situation he wants to present (science), he can conversely formulate the reality according to the available capacity to define it (mythology); but he can also adapt the message to himself to take the first message as the basis for the next. The speaker encloses himself in his own ingenuity, he is not referring the message to the outside world, but taking the message as a model for his speech. This is poetry, wherefore the great importance of rhyme, rhythm and all the other poetic devices to express the message without the need for reference to the external world.

B   *Technology*, homo faber

It was necessary to develop at length this first point about rhetoric, because the linguistic field is the best known, and the three other levels of rationality function in a way analogous to this one. Therefore knowledge and understanding of the first will be a help in approaching the next level, the technical world.

Our first point was about the message of man, which I called the rhetorical aim, which is all about language, but language only, not so far seen in relation to the other levels.

But human reason diffracts itself into four levels. The second is the technical level, characterizing man insofar as he is technically active, *homo faber* distinguished from *homo logicos, ethicos* and *ethnicos*. What these distinctions aim to make clear is not that man works, but that the reasoning faculty involved in speech is the same one which leads us to make tools to alleviate labour, both things that animals

cannot do. Technology and industry are the way reason extends our natural powers, making machines to do the work for us.

Homo faber is not inferior to *homo logicos*, because the same rationality is at the origin of thinking as of work, through the mediation of the sign in the one case and the tool in the other.

By means of this faculty man can change the world with the help of technology, through work directed by reason. The principles governing this level are analogous to those at the linguistic level, because technology functions analogously to logic, although the proof of this cannot be given here.

As previously for language and rhetoric, I will not take into consideration the receiver and the originator of the message. I am considering only the way industry utilises technology. It is here that we are going to meet magic.

One tries magically or empirically to reduce, foresee, and turn to one's advantage, hazard or chance. If one tries to know, it is not primarily for speculation, but for one's own benefit. It is less to find signs as such, than to guarantee one's future, one's destiny. Early astronomy was not intended to understand the sky, but rather to organize offerings to the divinities represented by the stars and so to obtain their benevolence.

The observations of the first astrologers had goals no different from present-day spacecraft missions, and the inspection of the haruspices aimed at the same result as the doctors' stethoscopes and scanners do today. They are portents answering the questions which were previously asked. The essential point is to integrate our wish into the fate of the world.

If a man does not have the 'right' tool for a given task, he does not give up his project. He creates something that can more or less do the job. Human ingenuity has been infinite since the beginning of time. This means that the perfect solution is not always possible. We say that as long as it achieves what we want, that is good enough. In contrast to empiricism, I call this magic: getting results from an incomplete analysis of the causes.

We see in Mesopotamia that in early periods the activities of the diviner (*ashipu*) and doctor (*asû*) are identical; diagnostic and prescription are identical. Only later does it happen that the one will rely more on his powers, while the other adapts to the situation he meets and a progressive analysis of the world.

a—*Experimental knowledge*

Man, as he continually tries to define the world, in the same way cannot stop changing and transforming it, continually making a new world. An animal just lives in a world it doesn't inhabit. Humans inhabit the world by organizing it. Nothing will stop man from organizing the world, even if he has only the most primitive tools at his disposal. Man does something because he has the ability, and not simply because he needs to do it. That is, in fact, how civilization started. Animals may also need things, but they don't organise because they are incapable of organisation. Need does not create ability, but the other way round. Archaeologists would have us believe that early man only used his flint tools for cutting and scraping. As he was as clever as we are, and had the ability to create tools, he started to do whatever he could to alleviate the difficulties of his life; he created tools which gave more efficiency with less effort. He probably did many other things with the tools at his disposal whose purpose we don't understand. Just think of all the uses of a paperclip. It is a tool, I would say more: a magical tool.

Analogously to the scientific goal, one can operate with a tool in such a way that it becomes adapted for transforming the world. The tool is the analysis of the means available and the goal to reach, just as the sign is the analysis of sound and meaning. This is the empiric, the experimental knowledge which adapts the available technology to the work to be done. The physician adapts the remedies not only according to his medical knowledge, the diagnostic, but also to the medicine available. The technician always tries to go further in creating better tools to achieve the set goal, as the scientist tries to find better formulations to explain his experiments, or as we try to find the right word to express our perception. The tool becomes always more utilitarian, a utensil. In other words the technician adapts and adjusts the tool to the task he wants to perform, which implies a double and dialectical analysis of the goal to be attained and of the ways to attain it.

b—*Magic*

Finally we have reached the object of this presentation: magic. It surely seems strange to classify magic with technology, the science of *homo faber*.

Actuality of magic

Magic seems something of the past, only for the uneducated. With
the advances of knowledge, man believes he knows better than his
ancestors. This means that the magician suffers more from positivism,
from the belief of permanent progress than from the scientist, who
knows that he can never analyse all the causes, but often only some
quantitative ones, those most easily measurable. Every positivist is sure
of his world, while a little part of magic remains in every scientist.
Seeming antiquated does not stop magicians from functioning, and
as we can see they are present in this technological society more
than ever.

Analogy between mythology and magic

Analogically, magic is to empiricism what myth is to science. Myth
tends to reduce the idea, the concept we have about things to the
words used to define them. Words are hypostasized. Words become
realities like the monsters and the nymphs, just as they do in modern
science-fiction. The myth incorporates the polysemy of the word, in
other words it makes a thing out of every meaning of a word.

By analogy, instead of transforming the world through technology
and the creation of better performing tools, one can do the oppo-
site. The magician acts on the whole universe by putting the world
at the disposal of the only tools available to him. This type of activ-
ity is magic.

A modern example is most evocative. At the beginning of the
electronic age the use of computers was the secret garden of tech-
nicians who knew all about programming. The same was true for
the driving of the first cars.

But one day someone invented what was called a user-friendly com-
puter; everybody could use it, without understanding anything of what
is going on inside the frame. One could say it functions like magic.

Science creates tools to change the world, tools adapted for the
specific job to be done. Magic follows the opposite movement. The
world comes to the magician and fits his skills. The computer comes
to the user and fits his abilities. He doesn't need to know pro-
gramming. His literacy is sufficient to operate the instrument. The
machine is said to be friendly. In fact it is magic. The world with
all its complexity can be mastered without any special knowledge.

The technician tries to find a *tour de main* to achieve his specific goal. The magician on the contrary has reduced the world to the technique he possesses, to his *tour de main.*

Magic and mythology are analogous functions of glossology and ergology, and both have their place in the human functions of speech and work. We live as much in magic (as I understand it) as in science, in mythology as in logical scientific speech. Neither is the negation of the other. Each time we deal with tools or machines we don't understand we are performing magic, operating something without knowing how it functions.

Magic and religion

Making tools or acting as a magician takes place in a godless world, and magic is not theistic. Of course in a theistic environment it is obvious that the gods or god should find their place. They simply enhance the power of the tools and of the operation to be performed. But in the end it is the magician, whose powers may be increased and even guaranteed by gods, who performs according to his technical knowledge the acts that are effective.

Magic cannot be confused with any transcendental dimension of the human being. Its aim is no less pragmatic than that of an experiment. As the myth is authentically part of the rhetoric, in the same way magic is an integral part of human industry. The proof of this is seen in the close identity between diviner and physician in Mesopotamia. Only later developments closely connected religion to magic through the supposed knowledge and use of special divine powers.

Magic and ergology

Magic is not the "technology of the invisible"; but it is technology, a tool to obtain an effect, but not at all from the hands of divine powers. Magic analyses the universe and creates suitable tools to transform the world or achieve the desired goals. One should in this perspective never connect religion, the sacred or even the *tabu*, to magic even if historically they very often appear connected.

Magic is technology, the act of doing and not of saying. Very often during its long history magic seems reduced to words, as in the magical spells or cabalistic formulae. But one cannot understand

the authentic nature of magic by using the spells as a starting-point
and then adding a physical action. The opposite is true. First the
act, accompanied frequently by words, and later reduced to the words
only. If this were not true, how would it be possible to speak about
a magical stone, or a bracelet, often without even an inscription?
The act makes magic and not the word. The *ashipu* was proposing
a prescription for the sick person, without any incantation. The means
proposed was operative.

One must always distinguish what comes from the ergological level
from the possible irrationality of the content.

If the magical act works, then error, non-success, must come from
bad observation or from miscalculation, but can never be imputed
to the tool, which acts *ex opere operato*. The *ashipu* purifies himself but
never questions his tools, his censer, his holy water. He may be
impure and therefore unable to produce the expected result, but his
tools are never in question.

Similarity of worlds

In this same ergological spectrum of comparison between technology
and magic, one completely misses the point about magic if through
a punctilious description of its uses one omits to underline the anti-
nomic but nevertheless similar character of the two worlds. For
instance, the similar character of the chemical properties of some
plants and of the elements is the same world the magician and the
physicist are dealing with, like the *ashipu* and the *asû* did in ancient
Mesopotamia. Our medicines are often only the artificial strength-
ening of the powers already inherent in some plants. In therapies as
diverse as are the means employed, a state of ecstasy or electroshock
treatment aim for the same goal; every treatment is magic when the
terror it inspires produces an effect beyond the normal.

The world is not what it seems to be, and as it is technically irrel-
evant whether the world is as we make it (industry) or whether we
make it as it is (magic), there is no good reason to call one version
inept.

One should be careful in the use of the concept of participation,
culminating in a mysterious cosmic integration. The concept of par-
ticipation simply means that the totality is present in its parts, in the

smallest of these fragments, like iron in the iron filings, the fabric in a sample, the sulphur in the laboratory dish.

Is this not the principle of homeopathy, as is the utilisation of someone's hair, nails, or clothes in order to obtain a hold over him? In homeopathy an infinitesimal part of a substance can have effect on the body, just as the sorceress believes that her magic liquid can poison a whole well.

There is nothing mystical in all this. The technician has a different view of the world. He wants to produce results, either by adjusting his techniques and tools to the task to be performed or by reducing the task to the power of the tools at his disposal. In both cases the result is guaranteed and he has no doubts about his success.

Human needs

Magic too cares for the direct needs of man. The technician wants to change the world, directly or indirectly for the good of man. Magic is most often intended simply and directly for the wellbeing of a man, even if it is a means to kill his enemy or, more curiously, to gain invisibility from his enemy in the street. This immensely restricts its applications, but also shows the extravagant convictions held by some of what is possible for them.

The world of the magician is reduced to one vector: forces of evil, active agents (whatever that may mean), demons, magnetism, evil eye, stars, ozone layer. The magician is the technician of one of these elements. Instead of going out into the world and creating the tool to change things, he does the opposite. With the specialized tool, or power he is endowed with, he reduces and reads the world according to his specific skill, and is therefore also able to obtain results, like the *ashipu* and the *asû*. Both must have obtained results—if not they wouldn't have had patrons. Should not the comparison between medicine and homeopathy be suggested in this case? The same patient is analysed in different ways, and different prescriptions are offered. The specialist reduces the investigation of his patient to his field of competence, and often deals only with the results thus obtained.

In some way the magical world is as complex as the technical one, but based on a different analysis. We may not detect magnetism in our house; some do, or say they do. The diviner with his rod finds

streams of water under a house, all harmful to the health of the occupier, and often succeeds in selling him the tools (the gadget) to remedy the possible damage these streams may cause.

Magician—technician

But as in every field there are specialists, so also for mythology, technology and magic. Witches, seers, alchemists, faith-healers, touchhealers, parallel-medicine-practitioners—all these persons are sometimes said to have a special gift for the performances in which they succeed. They use unconventional tools or means for healing. With the tools at their disposal they perform what is for them the requisite operation to reach the required goal. We can say it works at least from time to time, even if not always, but they believe they possess the requisite tool.

All these persons are technicians of a world reduced to their peculiar ability or skill. Specialists of a given world, they have the tools to manipulate it. These bizarre manipulations are capable of being catalogued, the result of historical developments and the ingenuity of the magician in making his trade worthwhile and mysterious. But his trade remains feasible only because he perfectly controls a world reduced to his skills.

The magician is often equivalent to the charlatan. In the present perspective he is also a technician, establishing an analysis between the means available and the goal to be achieved, as in the case of the *ashipu* and the *asû*. Charlatanism happens each time a magician pretends to exceed his skills. Knowing perhaps how to treat some illnesses, the magician turns charlatan when he claims to cure every illness. Often this type of *hubris* exposes magic to ridicule, when everyone knows that these claims are excessive because they are in fact impossible: to cure every illness, to make someone invisible, to foretell the future, to make two persons fall in love with each other, etc.

We are not comparing the authenticity of the two methods, but just trying to understand the process. Just as mythology identifies the polysemy of words, magic identifies the polytropy, the numerous vectors constituting reality. It means the magician creates tools for the only vector he recognizes in his reality. If it is magnetism, he knows all the tricks to get rid of the harm. If it is the power of the stars, he tells you how to prevent their evil, or how to use their beneficial influence. Of course one may question the validity of this particu-

lar vector, but still some people claim know-how which others don't have and which enables them to act as 'magicians'.

In prehistoric times, men painted bisons on the walls of the caves they inhabited. It was a magic act. As bisons could not easily be caught in the wild, they painted them on the wall, thinking that by evoking them in the cave it would in some way help to catch them in the wild. It was for the hunter to put the game at his disposal.

The main difference between technician and magician

The magician lets the world come to him, and he sees in it only what his senses or instincts let him recognize. He has special powers through which he achieves what he is requested to do, and for this he creates the tools for the task to be performed.

For the magician there was a time when his knowledge of the world was as advanced or equivalent to that of the 'scientists' of our time. His ability was adequate for his world. But for him there is no history. His world has not changed and his skill has not developed, or in other words his world remains equated to his skill. This situation inspires a deep sense of strangeness, it concerns ideas and practices coming from another age, and reflects a world view which has not changed. If there were some results in the past, it should still be possible to obtain them in the present age and time.

By contrast the technician analyses the world and creates tools in conformity with what the present state of science lets him know about the world. As his knowledge progresses, his tools have to be adapted to the new situation.

A comparison of the two successive stages of knowledge allows us to call the first antiquated, while the second claims to be real and scientific. But this latter one too will be one day be old-fashioned (see the history of medicine, astronomy, or physics). Without too much exaggeration the previous stages of knowledge could be called magic, as they too were built on a still inadequate analysis of the world.

Tools

Industry is an analysis of causalities and a choice of tools in order to obtain the expected result. Technology and industry combine

analysis of causality and creation of a procedure to reproduce through tools this connection of causes. The history of science is only the shifting of causes better analysed. When medicine treats microbes, antibiotics are needed; when it tackles allergies, antihistamines are proposed. If the universe, as in the Renaissance times, is said to be composed of dry, humid, cold and warm humours, the medical analysis will yield different results from the microscope, which shows viruses and microbes. In science normally one vector, the quantitative, mathematical one is selected, because it yields the best results, and those which can be monitored.

Magic works in the same logical way. An analysis of reality takes place and, according to the chosen criteria, suitable tools are made and used. But it is not the same reality which is being investigated. The reality is seen according to what the magician is sensitive to: magnetism, rays, stars, etc. He creates the suitable tools to answer these needs. He makes the drugs, the unguents from what is known from the vantage point of his skill. Ultimately the tool is combined with the word, to show the significance of what is done, and later the word alone becomes the tool and the magician creates the spell with power against demons, sickness, etc.

All these actions of the magician seem to be fake. This is surely the case sometimes. But who could accuse the *ashipu* of being a fake while saying the *asû* was not? They were doing the same operations. What was considered absolutely scientific before Pasteur became obsolete with his discoveries. These doctors were no fakes, they simply practised according to the knowledge of their time, which they believed was the best possible. They were analysing a world which became irrelevant with Pasteur's discoveries, but they acted in good faith.

Fetishes

We see that the magician uses some items which appear odd to us. Such items are no longer tools but fetishes, which means in Portuguese: "thing that is done". The fetish is the medium which puts the reality of the world at the disposal of the efficacy of the tools available. The best known and classical example in magic is the representation of the other, the enemy, through a wax figurine. A person cannot be reached directly, therefore the magician makes a replica, and in this way the person is at his disposal exactly as if he were there in reality.

The fetish, reduced now to the role of symbol, was very important in magic; it was a tool and as such had no aesthetic significance.

c—*Aesthetic*

Aesthetic is the third aim of the industry making not only tools and fetishes, but also art. As the poem is its own reference, similarly the representation is its own measure.

Conclusion

From the rhetorical point of view, in language as far as it expresses something, there are three possible directions: science, myth and poem; in the domain in which we are now, the technical level, there are also three analogous directions:

1. The empirical aim produces the utensil, the tools through which rationally planned work is achieved;

2. The magical aim produces the fetish, a tool through which the world too is touched (see the effigies produced by the magician); through this tool the world is put at the disposal of the magician;

3. The plastic aim which produces art, i.e. representations.

C   *Writing*

This presentation of magic would not be complete without considering a specific situation, i.e. the meeting in one single operation of the two levels: speaking and doing.

Writing is the overlapping of the first and second level of rationality: the meeting of glossology and ergology. Writing is using technology to put down the signal of a sign.

Writing is a special dimension of the ergon. We write language, but writing is better analysed in the field of the technology/ergon than in that of language. The one does not necessarily need the other. Writing without language is not possible, but the opposite was true for thousands of years.

To speak about writing or reading is to speak about technology in a peculiar case, when the tool is about something already cultural, the language. Writing is creating the signal of a sign. In the same way as the car allows the feet to rest, writing allows the voice to rest.

Without going deeper into writing and the signalisation it represents, we can add the following points. Writing plays an important role in magic because it was for a long time the preserve of specialists, but also because it combines in the most astute way the word and the act, glossology and ergology. As magic is technology, so writing is the technology of the sign, the signal of a sign. Magic bowls seem to be completely out of the sphere of the practical, but in fact are not, because the magic written in the bowl is the tool used for the performance. In magic the tool comes first, to be connected later to language, and both finally amalgamated in writing. A bracelet can be magical without writing, but is surely more so when bearing an inscription which adds specification or powers.

1. *Meta-language*

For a scientific aim, a meta-language is created through which one can work in the language to achieve the aim, or to demonstrate the relations seen in reality. Meta-language helps to formulate the representation, to put it into numbers, to write it down.

2. *The ritual, the incantation*

In the same way myth, which is the second aim of language, i.e. to transform the universe by hypostasizing the word to make it conform to its meanings, also finds its manifestation. But instead of being written, the myth is played. The myth when written is an ideodrama, and expressed in the ritual. The ritual is the way societies other than ours write down their thinking, their tradition. The ritual, namely the ritual dances, are their libraries.

Therefore we can say, in the same way that numbers are the writing of science, that ritual is the writing of myth.

Many Mesopotamian incantations start with a cosmogony, the standard recitation of history from the beginning, in order to reach by means of the word or the fetish to the magical incantation, which drives away the sickness from the patient.

3. *The plastic picture*

The plastic picture is the writing down of what is produced at the aesthetic level.

D   *Three aims of writing*

As we presented three aims of speech at the glossological level, and three corresponding ones at the ergological level, we would expect to find three corresponding ones for writing, with the overlapping of the two domains of language and technology.

1. *The empirical aim: the handbook*

The equivalent in the domain of writing of the empirical aim in the making of a tool is a way to transmit the written message as easily as possible, i.e. the reference book. The handbook today has empirically the function of delivering the message in the best, fastest and cheapest way to the reader.

2. *The magical aim: the grimoire*

In the magical aim, writing is the means to make an impression on others by concealing something which has autoritative value; it is called a 'grimoire', the wizard's book of spells, or black book. People who could not read always had an immense respect for the written message. We speak about inscribed amulets which the owner cannot read; he only knows that the writing is potent. There is at least something similar in the case of the rock-reliefs left by the Assyrian and Babylonian kings. Often they are in places which nobody could reach, and therefore where the text could not be read. But its presence reflected the power of the king who had it written in this inaccessible place.

3. *The plastic aim: calligraphy*

In the third aim we have found art, and in connection with writing this will be calligraphy.

Conclusion

1. Magic is not irrational behaviour. Were this the case, only psychiatrists would be qualified to work on this material. That reasonable persons work on it is an indication that even magic is considered rational, and therefore belongs with the human sciences.

Curious behaviour, dealings or speeches of magicians are only a screen hiding the reality of their activities.

Their activity is in line with any other technology, an analysis of the world in order to produce the specialised tool, or a reduction of the world to the available skill. The same sophistication can be found in both cases. The magician is no less ingenious than the technician when he applies his skill to the world.

The strangeness of the magician is twofold:

A. Magic brings to light the distance between a world reduced to certain elements and the more technical world in which we live today. It should be remembered that Newton was as much interested in magic and sorcery as he was in the science of physics he was creating. He was simply at the point of divergence of these two worlds, and he didn't feel the strangeness between them as we feel it today.

B. The magician often exhibits a pretension which seems foolish, and claims to be able to accomplish 'miracles', to do things which are surely beyond human ability.

But mythology and scientific language are no less antithetic than are magic and technology. Both constitute the normal aims of technology and speech.

2. The four levels of rationality (glossology, ergology, axiology, sociology) always interact. Therefore we can expect to find speech rapidly connected to magical performance. To the tool are added spells and incantations. This material is of course the most easy to study, like any other literary text. One tries to find its origins, to follow its developments and trace the various possible influences on the text.

This oral part of magic developed greatly, and represents for some the essence of magic.

Writing was no more important for the advancement of science than for the extension of magic. In both cases it enhances the powers put to work. In science, writing permits the creation of meta-language. In magic, writing adds to a simple act the whole culture of the time, especially the religious beliefs. What was a simple medical preparation of herbs turns into a sophisticated religious ceremony, which by the same token is a guarantee of absolute efficacy.

Writing brings the permanent seal of divine power to an object. Writing preserves in books powers which can be utilised in every difficult situation. It guarantees the permanence and transmission of these powers. As such these books evoke reverence and fear.

3. Following on from my view of anthropology, it is obvious that a statement could have been made about the social position of the magician. Feared for his powers, ridiculed for his extravagant pretensions to be able to do anything, he remains even today the last recourse in extreme cases of sickness or other confused situations. If a lost person cannot be found, the man with the divining-rod is called in. The magician is still present in the most scientific society, because he represents a living memory of our past.

The ethical question is about the self-awareness of the magician. Is he a fake making a joke out of the credulity of others, or does he believe in his powers? Both cases exist. But just as Hippocrates believed in his knowledge and wanted it to be effective, knowledge now totally superseded, the magician feels that his approach to the world is justified. Some even adopt a language more suited for their time, avoiding the huge gap between the present and some earlier forms of the expression of his knowledge.

Magic, delivered from all its false trappings, is of all times. Magic will stay alive in much the same way as mythology does under new names like science-fiction.

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INDEX

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