

DEMONS, SCRIBES, AND EXORCISTS IN QUMRAN

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Editing the texts from Qumran Cave 4 meant that many hitherto unknown works became known to scholars. The publication of these texts brings not a mere quantitative change in the number of known Qumran texts. New texts always raise new questions. New points of view emerge, and new horizons open, while, together with answering new questions, the assessment of the 'old' texts changes.

4Q560, an Aramaic text from cave 4 has been published recently in several editions¹. It is an apotropaic incantation, written against demons breaking in upon human beings during the night. The text preserved an Aramaic magic formula typical in the ancient Near East that mentions concerns common to other similar texts: childbirth, demons, and the diseases associated with them, sleep or dreams and perhaps the safety of possessions. The offending spirit's name is Beelzebub. The text further seems to connect security from these evils with forgiveness of sin. 4Q560 also contains a quotation from Exod 34:7. The contributors of the most recent edition, Penney and Wise state that the formula found in 4Q560 "clearly stands within the broad tradition of amulets and incantation texts that spanned the ancient Near East both geographically and chronologically. 4Q560 is therefore an important witness to the development of magical traditions in the Greco-Roman world generally, and among Second Temple Jews specifically" (Penney & Wise 1994:649).

They regard 4Q560 to be in no respect "sectarian". On the contrary, it fits comfortably within the magical tradition of the ancient Near East. However, in all probability, the manuscript may not have served as an amulet in Qumran. The physical evidence contradicts this supposition, since "the photograph reveals no signs of rolling or traces of similar systematic distress to the leather such as appear, for instance, in the Qumran phylacteries" (Penney & Wise 1994:650). The editors suggest that the formula derives from a 'recipe book' containing other similar formulas that once belonged to a person of at least minimal learning about demons and magic – perhaps a Qumran *maskil* or "a village scribe".

The content and vocabulary of the text may have its roots in the ancient Near Eastern tradition of apotropaic texts, but its owner was a Jewish person or a Jewish community. The ancient Near East had no uniform religion, even if formulas of apotropaic texts offer a rather uniform picture. Formulas in every culture must have been adopted to local religions. The text was written in Aramaic, the *lingua franca*

¹ Its editions are Eisenman & Wise 1992:265-267; Beyer 1994:129-130; Penney & Wise 1994.

of the ancient Near East since the 6th century BCE, the rise of the Persian Empire. Aramaic became gradually the everyday language in Palestine during the Persian and Hellenistic periods. The legators and users of the Aramaic incantation known as 4Q560 were Jews, adherents of the Jewish religion, and supposedly members of the Qumran community. The phenomenon of magic and magic formulas were in all probability not unknown to them, but the practice of magic was not permitted in their religion. Magical practice in general is repeatedly and strictly prohibited in the Bible².

On the other hand, the prohibition itself serves to show that magic was practised among the member of the religious community. The presence of magical practice in the pre-exile period is sparsely documented in the Bible, but no exact formulas or description of any special ritual have remained to us³. All that we know is that probably there was a belief in demons and there was a magical practice. Demons are mentioned in the Bible by a general term as *šedim* (Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37; cf. I Cor. 10:20)⁴. The *seirim* were, in all probability, "hairy demons, satyrs" (Lev. 17:7; II Chron. 11:15). These creatures haunted ruins, along with the demon known by name, Lilith (Isa. 13: 21; 34:14). Lilith⁵ was originally a succubus, believed to cohabit with mortals. She is represented as a winged figure and her name is mentioned in an incantation written on a tablet found in Arslan Tash. This text identifies her with the child-stealing demon, a character she retains in later folklore. The tradition that the name means "screech-owl" (in so many translations) reflects a very ancient association of birds, especially owls, with the demonic. In all probability there were incantations against them.

The Qumran library also offers further examples of apotropaic texts. 11Q11 demonstrates the use of psalms for apotropaic purpose (Puech 1992). The Qumran apotropaic texts are the earliest first-hand evidence for apotropaic practice, and as such are of immense importance. Phylacteries (*tefillin*) and *mezuzot* found in Qumran represent a special kind of apotropaic texts. They contain Biblical citations without mentioning any demon. However, it is clear that the pieces of parchment unrolled served apotropaic purposes using the Biblical text itself as an effective power against

² Lev 19:31 "Do not resort to ghosts and spirits or make yourselves unclean by seeking them out. I am the Lord your God"; Lev 20:6 "I shall set my face against anyone who wantonly resorts to ghosts and spirits, and I shall cut that person off from his people"; Ex. 22:17: "You must not allow a witch to live". Deut 18:9-14 gives a long list of sorcerers. Their practices are abominable to the Lord, and "...it is on account of these abominable practices that the Lord your God is driving them (i.e. the Canaanites) out before you".

³ An exception is 1Sam 28 where in the story of the witch of En-Dor the practice of necromancy is remembered.

⁴ The word is related to Akkadian *šedū* ("demon"; good or evil).

⁵ The name comes ultimately from Sumerian *lil*, "air", not from Hebrew LYLH, "night".

evil. The high number of the copies found in the caves indicates that these texts may have been copied not only for people living in the Qumran site, but also for the use of external groups. No other kind of amulets were found in the archaeological material from Qumran.

The practice of exorcism is also known from Qumran literary texts. Examples for it are Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen)⁶ and The Prayer of Nabunai (4Q242)⁷. Both works were written in Aramaic, similarly to 4Q560. Both texts mention cases of healing. The method of healing is the laying on of hands (SMYKT YDYM). Both in Nabunai and Genesis Apocryphon the healer cured the patient with divine help, and exorcised the demon causing the illness through releasing the patient's sins.

Demons are genuine beings in the world view of ancient cultures – the existence of demons is accepted, and their role in the world is considered natural. Amulets, incantations, and descriptions of apotropaic practices illustrate an unbroken practice of magic in Mesopotamian culture from the Sumerian age. Defence against evil spirits was a concern in Mesopotamia. Much of the terminology and praxis connected with demons may be traced through the ages. Incantations often list several classes of demons. Demons are described in literary texts as messengers of the lord of the underworld, and march before him. They live in deserts and near graves, and many of them are ghosts, spirits of the dead, especially of those who died by violence or were not properly buried. Sickness may be thought of as caused by demonic possession, and some demons have the name of the specific disease they bring, thus "Headache," or "Fever". There are no stories in Mesopotamian literature about the origin of the demons. A vague tradition in Mesopotamian mythology claims that demons are the progeny of Anu; he created them with the Earth (Ersetu) and then, determining their fate, he gave them over to be the helpers of Erra, the god of pestilence⁸.

Ancient Jewish culture tried to eliminate magic and belief in demons as is demonstrated by the Biblical prohibitions of magic. To legitimize any magical practice, demonology was needed. In Qumran a special process connected with demonology can be traced in the narrative texts. It is an artificial system which came into being in order to place the demons in the world, and to determine their exact origin and function.

The group of Aramaic manuscripts containing the first part (chs. 1-36) of the book of Enoch (1Enoch) belongs to the earliest layer of the Qumran manuscript tradition. Formerly, the work was only known as a part of the pseudepigraphic tradi-

⁶ Its first edition is Avigad & Yadin 1956. A later edition with a thorough commentary is Fitzmyer 1971.

⁷ The text has been published in several editions. The editio princeps is Milik 1956. The text has recently been edited by J. Collins (*DJD* XXII, 83-93).

⁸ Erra Epic, Lugalbanda Epic and the collection of incantations entitled 'The evil utukku-demons'.

tion, in Greek or Ethiopian translation. It was supposed that the original language may have been Hebrew or Aramaic, and that the Greek translation⁹ had been produced from this, only a part of which survived; luckily the Ethiopic (Ge'ez) translation has preserved a much longer text. The work known formerly only in translations was uniformly dated to the middle of the second century BCE. Some parts of it (chs. 37-70) were dated to a somewhat later time¹⁰. The finding of fragments of the Aramaic original of the work among the Qumran texts (Milik 1976) was a turning point in research. The manuscript fragments found at Qumran not only answered certain questions about the history of the origin of the text, but also provided an insight into the kind of role the work played in the literary tradition of the group which left behind the library preserved in the caves¹¹. Based on the number of fragments found¹² we may suppose that the work was not merely known at Qumran, but that it must have been an important work in the tradition of the community. This is also indicated by the fact that numerous other works found at Qumran, some already known from the pseudepigraphic literature and some not, contain a tradition similar to that known from 1Enoch, or mention or use 1Enoch¹³. No fragments of chs. 37-70 of the work appear among the Qumran fragments – it has already been suggested that these chapters are of a later origin than the other parts of 1Enoch, and that at least they show traces of a Christian revision; this lack proved these suppositions right.

The earliest Enochic tradition does not know of demons. On the other hand, the story of the Watchers is connected on several points with magic. The scene of the story is set in the antediluvian era, and it relates the story of the rebellion of the Watchers (Aramaic ʿYRYN). The two hundred celestial beings, “the sons of heaven”, decide to descend to the “daughters of men”. Their leader Shemihazah (ŠMYH̄ZH) considers the plan to be sinful and wants not to bear responsibility alone (6.3);

⁹ Flemming & Radermacher 1901; Black 1970. On the Greek manuscripts see also Denis 1970.

¹⁰ For the prior dating of 1Enoch see Schürer & Vermes 1973-79: III.1, 256.

¹¹ On the significance of the Aramaic fragments, see García-Martínez 1992:45-96.

¹² In his edition Milik identified seven manuscript copies on the basis of the fragments found in Cave IV, see Milik 1976.

¹³ To mention just a few important examples: the Book of Jubilees (whose Hebrew fragments were also found in Qumran), known earlier from the pseudepigraphic literature, uses and explicitly quotes the book (see Charles 1913: II, 18-19), and elements originating from 1Enoch play an important role in its entire narrative. The Damascus Document, fragments of which were also found at Qumran, also alludes to the Enochic tradition in its historical overview; similarly the historical schema outlined in 4Q180-81 is also based on the story of the Watchers of the Enochic tradition.

therefore the Watchers, in order to fulfil their plan, swear¹⁴ to unite on Mount Hermon¹⁵ (1En 6.6). Then the Watchers "began [to go in to them and to defile themselves with them and (they began) to teach them sorcery and spellbinding [and the cutting of roots¹⁶; and to show them plants ...]" (7.1). The women became pregnant from them and bore children, who grow up to become giants. The giants "were devouring [the labour of all the children of men and men were unable to supply them]" (7.4). After this, the giants begin to devour men, then "they began to sin against all birds and beasts on the earth and reptiles ... and the fish of the sea, and to devour the flesh of another; and they were] drinking blood. [Then the earth made the accusation against the wicked concerning everything] which was done upon it" (7.5-6)¹⁷.

The evaluation of the teachings given to the earthly women is, of course, negative in the work, as in the Biblical literature which condemns all activities connected with magic. The evaluation of the bearing of the union is also negative. The punishment of the sinners is, on the one hand, the Flood where the killer giants perish together with mankind. On the other hand their fathers are punished by the four archangels who bind them and cast them into the depths of the earth. The teachings of the Watchers are supplemented with the interpretation of the signs of the earth and sky (stars, thunders, sun and moon, etc.) in what follows (1En 7). The Asael story (1En 8) attributes to them the teaching of metallurgy and making cosmetics from minerals. General understanding connected both kinds of activity with magic.

The transformation of the tradition of the Watchers already began in the later tradition of the Enochic book. Those parts of the Enochic tradition which came into being later, and those pieces of the apocryphal and pseudepigraphic literature also known from Qumran which were familiar with this tradition show changes in their interpretation of the tradition about the origin of evil. The text of 1En. 15.8-12 complements the Shemihazah tradition¹⁸. According to this, the descendants of the Watchers and the daughters of men are evil spirits, demons (Ethiopian *nafsat*, Greek *pneumata*, 1En. 15.8). These beings are spiritual in nature, following their fathers' characteristics: they do not eat, are not thirsty and know no obstacles. Their

¹⁴ The root YM' ("to swear", "bind"), and the noun MWM' ("oath", "binding") are usual terms in the incantation-texts.

¹⁵ Pun based on the similarity of the Aramaic word ḤRM, meaning "root", and the place name ḤRMWN.

¹⁶ The word has been preserved only in the Greek and Ethiopic translations.

¹⁷ Translated by Milik, based on the Aramaic text reconstructed by him; see Milik 1976:166-167.

¹⁸ This part of the text is only known from Ethiopian and Greek translations; judging by the tiny fragments of 4QEn ar/c, however, it definitely belonged to the Enoch tradition, which was created before the second century BCE.

destructiveness first and foremost affects children and women, as they were born of women. This is a kind of complementary explanation to the tradition of chs. 6-7 of the text.

The Book of Jubilees is later than the above-mentioned part of the Enochic tradition. Dating the book is not an easy task; the suggested dates for the creation of Jubilees range between the third and first centuries BCE. Based on the later manuscript tradition it may be supposed that the work had definitely come into being before the turn of the second and first centuries BCE¹⁹. The history of its text is similar to that of the Enochic collection: the only complete extant text of Jubilees is the Ethiopic translation (Charles 1895). It has long been supposed that the original of the work may have been in Hebrew – and this theory was proved correct when Hebrew fragments of Jubilees were identified among the manuscripts found in the Qumran caves²⁰. It can be supposed that the spiritual milieu from which Jubilees emerged was not far from that of the Qumran community. Beside the striking similarities of the calendar of Jubilees and of some calendrical Qumranic text there is a similarity between Jubilees and various literary texts from Qumran. The Book of Jubilees is probably the earliest example of a rewritten Bible: a work which systematically adapts the material of the Biblical narrative tradition, sometimes supplementing, sometimes contradicting it, or leaving out certain parts. The author of Jubilees discusses the tradition of Genesis 6.1-4 from a point of view similar to that of the Enochic collection (Jub. 5.1-19). At the same time there are also significant variations from this tradition: according to Jubilees the angels (as the Watchers are called in this work) came to the earth in order to teach righteousness to mankind, but their intent turned to the opposite (Jub 4.15). The children born to the angels and the daughters of men are giants; however, they have nothing to do with the proliferation of sins following their birth (Jub. 5.1-2). Following the Flood “polluted demons began to lead astray the children of Noah’s sons and to lead them to folly and to destroy them”. The demons were blinding and killing Noah’s grandchildren. The fathers of the spirits are told to be the Watchers (Jub 10.4-5). According to Noah’s prayer, the Lord let bind nine tenth of the demons; one tenth, subject to Mastema²¹, were allowed to work in the world (Jub 10.7-14).

¹⁹ The earliest Hebrew fragments from Qumran have been defined as ‘late Hasmonean’, and as such they are dated to between 100-75 BCE. As the writing of the fragments is semicursive, according to J.C. VanderKam they must have been preceded by an earlier written tradition, see VanderKam 1977:215-217.

²⁰ The work must have played an important role in the spiritual life of the Qumran community; 12 fragmentary copies were found in the caves. A comprehensive edition by J. C. VanderKam and J. T. Milik is to be found in *DJD XIII*.

²¹ Name of the prince of the demons in the Book of Jubilees. It originates from the Hebrew root STM ‘bear a grudge, cherish animosity, against’; cf. Ar. STN.

1En 15 and Jub 10 witness the 'canonization' of the belief in the existence of the demons and the idea of a Lilith-type child-bed demon²². On the other hand, their leader Mastema in Jubilees does not represent the type of demons causing illness; he is rather 'the adversary', like the Satan of the book of Job, who initiates the trial of human beings by God. In Jubilees it is Mastema who suggests to God that he ask Abraham to sacrifice Isaac to him in order to test Abraham's faithfulness (Jub. 17:16).

The mixed tradition of the Jubilees – a folk-tradition on the demons causing illness and a reflexive tradition on Mastema as an adversary – is present in other Qumran works like 4Q510-11²³. 4Q510-11 is a collection of several fragments of two manuscripts. 4Q510 has only one major fragment and 11 minor ones; 4Q511 represents a much longer exemplary of the same work. On the basis of the palaeography both manuscripts are dated to the end of the 1st c. B.C. Formerly, the songs were considered to belong to the group of the Hodayot, i.e. to hymns composed in the Qumran community. The Songs of the Sage are so-called Sectarian texts, i.e. work composed in the community, and representing ruling ideas of the community. They are authored by the *maskil*, the sage. The main themes of the songs are: the glory of God, the activity of the righteous, and the works of the evil demons in the world. The parts mentioning demons are not exorcisms; they may not have been parts of any ritual. They were not written with any practical purpose (against bewitching, etc.). The structure of the text is completely different from that of the exorcisms. It has a philosophic character, its subject is the world and the powers ruling it. A dichotomic world view emerges from the songs, where God is called the King of Glory, (MLK HKBWD, 4Q510 frg. 1.1), God of knowledge ('LWHY D'WT 4Q510 frg.1.2); Lord of all the holy ones ('L 'LYM), Lord of the divine beings ('DWN LKWL QWDŠYM, 4Q510 frg.1.2). His realm is above the powerful and mighty one (4Q510 frg.1.3). Sometimes God is called El Shaddai (4Q 511 frg. 8.6), a name especially used in magical texts. Divine beings are also mentioned in the hymns.

The Sage (*maskil*) is characterized by the knowledge he has received from God. He loathes all deeds of impurity (i.e. practice resulting in impurity) (4Q511 frg. 18, II.). Associates of the Sage are: 'those who follow the path of God', (ŠWMRY DRK 'LWHYM 4Q511, frg.2, I.6) which means in the Qumran vocabulary the interpretation and practice of the Mosaic Law according to the tradition of the community. Other names for them are: 'who know justice', (YWD'Y ŠDQ 4Q511 frg.2, I.2), 'the holy ones' (QDWŠYM 4Q511 frg. 35.2-3). Knowledge, purity, and holiness are the characteristics of this group (the latter two were thought to result

²² This viewpoint is similar to that of the Qumran community. In their view, the demons causing illness can be chased away by certain people with special powers, through the laying on of hands, and the 'release of sins'; cf. Jesus' dynmis, that is to say, power to heal, see e.g. Mk 6.2, 14; Acts 8.10, 19.

²³ Edition: Baillet 1982:215-262.

from the right practice of the Law). They receive their knowledge from God. As to the third element of the picture, the demons are listed in both copies of the work (4Q510, frg.1, 5-8; 4Q511 frg.10, 1-5). They are:

spirits of the ravaging angels: RWHY ML'KY HBL,

the bastard spirits: RHWHT MMZRYM,

demons: ŠDYM,

Lilith: LYLYT,

owls and jackals: 'HYM WSYYM,

and those who strike unexpectedly to lead astray the spirit of knowledge (4Q511 frg.1. 5-6).

The activity of the demons is, according to the Songs, not eternal, and lasts only for the period of the rule of wickedness and the periods of the humiliation of the sons of light. Periods (called QS, pl. QSYM) of human history are often mentioned in several Qumran works (e.g. 4Q180181, entitled *Pesher 'al ha-qissim*, a 'theoretical' work on these periods in human history). The various periods are characterized by the activity of various groups – the righteous or the evil. In accordance with this, they are labelled as periods of righteousness, or periods of sin (which mean, of course, periods of oppression for the righteous). So, the demons mentioned in the Songs of the Sage are subject to God's power and are tools of divine plans. As to the origin of the various categories of demons mentioned in the text, some of them are known from Biblical tradition, like Lilith (Isa 34:14), known in later Jewish tradition as a female night-demon killing newborn babies. Together with Lilith, owls and jackals are mentioned as evil spirits living at deserted ruins (Isa 13:21; 34:14).

Elements of the demonological system of the Songs of the Sage (4Q510-11) originate from various traditions. One of the sources is a longer tradition which can be detected in so-called Pseudepigraphic works – otherwise very well-known in the manuscript tradition of the Qumran community. The idea of the 'bastard spirits' (RHWHT MMZRYM) comes from the Enochic tradition. The temptational function of the demons, and the idea of the opposition of impure and pure, light and darkness, identified with the human and demonic worlds, come from other spiritual traditions of the community. This reflexive tradition is amalgamated with the widely known popular tradition on Lilith and other demons. The texts we cited are only a few examples to illustrate the many-sidedness of the sources of Qumran demonology and apotropaic practices. It is our future task to analyse this sophisticated system.

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