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Gideon Bohak
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ANCIENT JEWISH MAGIC

This is a pioneering attempt to write a broad history of ancient Jewish magic, from the Second Temple to the rabbinic period. It is based both on the ancient magicians' own compositions (and products) in Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek, and on the descriptions and prescriptions of non-magicians, in an effort to reconstruct a historical picture that is as balanced and nuanced as possible. The book's main focus is on the cultural make-up of ancient Jewish magic, with special attention paid to processes of cross-cultural contacts and borrowings between Jews and non-Jews and to inner-Jewish creativity. Other major issues are the place of magic within ancient Jewish society, contemporary Jewish attitudes to magic and the identity of its practitioners. Throughout, it seeks to explain the methodological underpinnings of all sound research in this demanding field, and to point out areas where further research is likely to prove fruitful.

GIDEON BOHAK teaches in the Department of Jewish Culture, University of Tel Aviv. He is author of *Joseph and Aseneth and the Jewish Temple in Heliopolis* (1996).

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Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	page vi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	vii
Introduction	I
1 Jewish magic: a contradiction in terms?	8
2 Jewish magic in the Second Temple period	70
3 Jewish magic in late antiquity – the “insider” evidence	143
4 Non-Jewish elements in late-antique Jewish magic	227
5 How “Jewish” was ancient Jewish magic?	291
6 Magic and magicians in rabbinic literature	351
<i>Epilogue</i>	426
<i>Bibliography</i>	435
<i>Index</i>	480

Figures

3.1 A bronze amulet from Sepphoris. IAA negative no. 331414. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.	<i>page</i> 151
3.2 Amulets found in Ḥorvat Ma'on. IAA negative no. 19171. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.	152
3.3 Inscribed clay sherds from Ḥorvat Rimmon. IAA negative no. 138528. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.	157
3.4 A magical gem showing Daniel feeding the Babylonian snake-god. KM 26125, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, the University of Michigan.	160
3.5 An amuletic bronze ring with a holy rider. KM 26165, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, the University of Michigan.	163
3.6 A Babylonian incantation bowl with two bound male demons. KM 33756, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, the University of Michigan.	186
3.7 A magical gem with hybrid deities. KM 26054, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, the University of Michigan.	188
3.8 A magical gem with King Solomon. KM 26092, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, the University of Michigan.	213
3.9 A Genizah fragment of a magical recipe book, Cambridge University Library, Taylor-Schechter AS 142.146. Courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.	218
4.1 A Genizah amulet, Cambridge University Library, Or. 1080.14.13. Courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.	273
4.2 A Genizah magical fragment, Cambridge University Library, Taylor-Schechter K 12.60. Courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.	275

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Scholarship is an eminently social thing, and the present study is no exception. Its ultimate origins lie in my Princeton days, when John Gager initiated me into the study of ancient magic. Its initial growth took place in Ann Arbor, when I was allowed to teach several courses on ancient magic and to curate an exhibition of ancient magical artifacts from the University of Michigan's rich archeological and papyrological collections (see Bohak 1996). But the book itself began to take shape here, at Tel-Aviv University, while teaching at the Department of Jewish Philosophy and the Program in Religious Studies and enjoying constant feedback from colleagues and students alike.

Many people have helped me along the way, with criticism and advice, and it is both a duty and a pleasure to thank them here. Ithamar Gruenwald, Yuval Harari, Reimund Leicht, and Dan Levene have been arguing with me on different aspects of ancient Jewish magic for many years now, and have commented on several chapters of this book when still in draft form. Shaul Shaked shared with me his unpublished work on the Genizah magical texts, without which this study would have been much the poorer, and provided helpful advice on numerous other occasions. And the anonymous readers of the original manuscript, who have left no stone unturned in their searching criticism, have surely helped me build a sounder scholarly structure. Finally, my students Ortal-Paz Saar and Bar Belinitzkey read the entire manuscript and improved it with many useful comments and suggestions, and my colleague Meir Shahar read it and assured me that some of it would make sense even to a Sinologist.

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[More information](#)

Acknowledgments

ix

financial security, and enabled me to write the kind of book I have always had in mind. At a time when young academics are often forced to prostitute their half-baked wares to the goddess of productivity, I have been blessed with the challenge to produce the kind of monograph that would justify a prize I have already won, and with the opportunity to do so. I will always cherish the experience, but whether the final product indeed justifies the initial investment is only for you, the reader, to decide.

This history of ancient Jewish magic, from the Second Temple to the rabbinic period, is based both on the ancient magicians' own compositions and on the descriptions and prescriptions of non-magicians. It studies developments arising within the Jewish tradition as well as cross-cultural borrowings from Greco-Egyptian sources.

Not merely forbidden, magic was often constructed as a taboo in Jewish culture; its practice was restricted to particular persons while forbidden to general use. At once inviolable, sacred, and unlawful, magic is the object of what Freud called "holy dread." Traditionally, magic was closely linked to the activities of the priestly caste and in this context associated with knowledge, correct procedures, and skills customarily taught in the temple. The study of Jewish magic has important historical value outside the light it sheds on the religious nature of ancient Jewish society. Understanding Jewish magic additionally allows one to understand a major component of the lives and ideas of the rabbinic class. Anthropologists and historians of religion have come to question whether the mere use of the term "magic" prejudices the reader to accept the phenomenon under study as more primitive or inferior to official religious expression. This item: Ancient Jewish Magic: A History by Gideon Bohak Paperback \$60.99. In Stock. Ships from and sold by Amazon.com. FREE Shipping. Details. Jewish Magic before the Rise of Kabbalah (Raphael Patai Series in Jewish Folklore and Anthropology) by Yuval Harari Hardcover \$64.99. Only 1 left in stock (more on the way). Ships from and sold by Amazon.com. FREE Shipping. Details. Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion by Joshua Trachtenberg Paperback \$9.95. In Stock.