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# A Jewish Aramaic Circus Curse Tablet from Antioch

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## Abstract

In this contribution we publish a lead circus curse tablet written in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (Princeton Art Museum excavation no. 3608-I57). The tablet was found in 1935 during excavations near the first turning-post at the hippodrome of Antioch on the Orontes (modern-day Antakya, Turkey). The use of Greek and Latin *defixiones agonisticae* (agonistic binding spells) in chariot races was a wide-spread phenomenon during the Roman Byzantine Period. Curse tablets were inscribed with aggressive incantations that aimed at the defeat of rivals in the chariot races. The tablet under discussion is a unique piece: It is the only known lead circus curse tablet that was written in a Jewish language and script. The tablet is datable to the fifth or sixth century CE.

## Keywords

## 1    Introduction

In this paper, we publish a lead circus curse tablet written in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic. The tablet should be viewed in light of the widespread use of so-called *defixiones agonisticae* (agonistic binding spells) in chariot races during the Roman Byzantine Period. Such curse tablets were prepared against chari-

oteers, horses, and circus factions.[1] They consist of thin lead sheets inscribed with aggressive incantations that include the names of the victims and which seek their failure in the races. The tablets were folded and buried or deposited at various points around the circus or in nearby cemeteries or wells.

Most of the documented circus curse tablets that survive are inscribed in Greek or Latin. The tablet under discussion, however, was written in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic using the Aramaic square script. This strongly suggests that the person who produced/inscribed the tablet was Jewish.[2] This is the first known example of a Jewish Aramaic circus curse and one of a very small number of Jewish curse tablets (see below 3. Circus Magic in Jewish Magical Literature).

## 2    Archaeological Context and Description of the Tablet

Our tablet (Princeton Art Museum excavation no. 3608-I57; Princeton University Art Museum accession no. 2011–143) was found in 1935 during one of the

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1    See, e.g., F. Heintz, 'Circus Curses and Their Archaeological Contexts', *JRA* 11 (1998), pp. 337–342; R. Gordon, 'Fixing the Race: Managing Risks in the Circus at Carthage and Hadrumetum', in M. Piranomonte and F. Marco Simón (eds.), *Contesti magici/Contextos mágicos* (Rome: De Luca, 2013) pp. 35–64. For the circus factions in the Roman and Byzantine Empires, see A. Cameron, *Circus Factions—Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976). For the Levant more specifically, see Z. Weiss, *Public Spectacles in Roman and Late Antique Palestine* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014) pp. 154–157. For important collections of curse tablets, see J.G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); J. Tremel, *Magica agonistica: Fluchtafeln im antiken Sport* (Nikephoros Beiheft 10, Hildesheim: Weidmann, 2004); R. Daniel and A. Hollmann, *Magica Levantina* (forthcoming). See also *Religion in the Roman Empire* 7 (2021), which collects a number of articles on curses in the eastern and North African provinces of the Roman Empire (project by C.A. Faraone). A brief introduction to the tablet under discussion here will be published in Daniel and Hollmann, *Magica Levantina*; their curse tablets nos. 27–31 were found in the hippodrome of Antioch; no. 31 is written in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, and the others in Greek. On this project, see https://papyri.uni-koeln.de/magica-levantina/about.html.

2    Another Greek curse tablet from Antioch contains *historiolae* drawn from the Book of Exodus, perhaps reflecting a Jewish source for the curse (Daniel and Hollmann, *Magica Levantina*, no. 22; this is a revised edition of A. Hollmann, 'A Curse Tablet from Antioch against Babylas the Greengrocer', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 177 [2011], pp. 157–165). It is not possible to conclusively identify a text as Jewish on the basis of such biblical elements alone, however, though the presence of Hebrew or Jewish Aramaic in a text is almost certainly an indication of Jewish authorship. For a detailed discussion of the characteristics of Jewish authorship, see G. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) pp. 209–214.

excavations conducted by W.A. Campbell in Antioch on the Orontes (Syria) and is datable to the fifth or sixth century CE.[3] It was deposited in a drain near the *meta prima* (first turning-post).[4] Its placement at this point is significant not just because the turning-posts represent the most dangerous part of the hippodrome but also because the drains were believed to provide a connection with the netherworld.[5]

The lead tablet itself measures 20.0 cm wide by 9.8 cm high. It was found rolled up seven times and pierced with a nail.[6] The nail damaged the upper part of the tablet, in particular the left edge, from which a fragment is missing. The left bottom part of the tablet is also missing.

The upper part of the tablet shows three heads in frontal view (marked as HEADS 1–3). These consist of two small heads with long hair on either side of a larger oblong head with curls or a head cover. Heads depicted on circus tablets usually represent the charioteers who are the targets of the curse.[7] The closest parallel to our drawing is PGM XXXV, a papyrus amulet for victory that includes a similar composition featuring three heads. This papyrus also includes two proper names; these are written from left to right between the first and the second head and have been identified as the names of the amulet's beneficiary.[8] In our tablet, the nail was driven into the upper half of the rolled tablet. If the three faces represent the intended victims of the curse, then it is pos-

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3  For a photo of the tablet, see https://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/39263.

4  The turning-post is also mentioned in the tablet (see the commentary to block D and l. 13). For a brief description of the excavations at Antioch and nearby Daphnae, see C. Kondoleon (ed.), *Antioch the Lost Ancient City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) pp. 5–8. F.F. Jones (curator of the collections at the Princeton Art Museum) identified our tablet as one of the five lead circus curse tablets mentioned in J.H. Humphrey, 'Prolegomena to the Study of the Hippodrome at Caesarea Maritima', *BASOR* 213 (1974), pp. 2–45 (40). See also D.R. Jordan, 'A Survey of Greek Defixiones Not Included in the Special Corpora', *GRBS* 26 (1985), pp. 151–197 (193). Three Greek tablets were found near the first turning-post, and one of the Greek tablets was found in a drain near the second turning-post. The drains were part of a drainage system around the *spina*.

5  See also F. Heintz, 'Circus Curses'.

6  The nail is broken off towards the bottom and is currently 5.0 cm. Its head is 1.0 cm in diameter. On the practice of piercing curse-tablets with nails, see W.T. Wilburn, *Materia Magica: The Archaeology of Magic in Roman Egypt, Cyprus, and Spain* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2012) pp. 74, 82, 186–187, 213–215; Gager, *Curse Tablets*, p. 18.

7  It is more common, however, to represent the targets of such curses with a full body. See the recent discussion by R. Martín-Hernández, 'The Figural Representation of Victims on Agonistic Late-Antique Curse Tablets', *Religion in the Roman Empire* 7 (2021), pp. 96–124.

8  The Greek spell on the papyrus mentions the biblical name Balaam, which is also found in our Jewish Aramaic tablet (see below 5. Balaam and His She-Ass). For a further discussion of the Greek papyrus, see Martín-Hernández, 'Figural Representation', pp. 102–110. Martín-

sible that this was done purposefully in order to pierce their faces with the nail and thereby achieve the total destruction of these three individuals. That said, it seems more likely that the faces represent angels or other heavenly forces. This interpretation is based on the word *bšmh* ('in the name of') which was inscribed next to HEAD 1 and seems to relate to the drawings.

## 3      Circus Magic in Jewish Magical Literature

Jewish magical literature preserves two recipes for chariot races involving the use of *lamellae* (thin metal sheets).[9] The most prominent example is to be found in *Sefer ha-Razim* (The Book of Mysteries), a Jewish magical book written in Hebrew in Palestine or Egypt sometime in Late Antiquity. The recipe in question reads as follows:

> If you wish to race horses (even) when they are exhausted, so that they will not stumble in their running, that they will be swift as the wind, and the foot of no living thing will pass them, and they will win popularity in their running, take a silver *lamella* and write upon it the names of the horses and the names of the angels and the name of the prince who is over them and say: I adjure you, angels of running who run amid the stars, that you gird with strength and courage the horses that N is racing and his charioteer (*hnywkws*) who is racing them. Let them run and not become weary nor stumble. Let them run and be swift as an eagle. Let no animals stand before them, and let no other magic or witchcraft affect them. Take the *lamella* and conceal it in the racing lane (of the one) you wish to win.[10]

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Hernández suggests that, in some cases, heads depicted without a body should be interpreted as decapitated heads.

9    See Y. Harari, 'Power and Money: Economic Aspects of the Use of Magic by Jews in Ancient Times and the Early Middle Ages', *Pe'amim* 85 (2000), pp. 14–42 (33–36) [in Hebrew]. The Jewish interest in the production of circus curse tablets is noteworthy in light of the lack of theoretical magical instructions for this common practice in the Greek magical literature. On this, see Gordon, 'Fixing the Race', pp. 35–64. Some Greek recipes were intended for chariot races (e.g., PGM III, ll. 30 ff.; VII, ll. 390 ff.), but they do not involve the use of inscribed *lamellae*.

10   M.A. Morgan, *Sepher ha-Razim / The Book of the Mysteries* (Pseudepigrapha Series, 11, Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983) p. 64. See also M. Margalioth, *Sepher Ha-Razim: A Newly Recovered Book of Magic from the Talmudic Period Collected from Genizah Fragments and Other Sources* (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1966) pp. 94, 3:35–42

This recipe reflects a close acquaintance with the practice of producing circus curse tablets. Certain details in the magical instructions, such as inscribing the names of the charioteers and hiding the tablet beneath the racing lane, suggest that the author of this recipe in *Sefer ha-Razim* was familiar with different elements of this specific practice. The Greek term for charioteer, ἡνίοχος, which appears in transliterated form (*hnywkws*) in this text, also shows that the author was aware of the professional jargon of the circus.[11]

Another Jewish recipe for chariot races is documented in a text related to the magical sword literature.[12] Although this text has been translated and discussed by a few scholars in the past, we propose a new translation of it here that is based on a new reading as well as findings from our Aramaic circus curse tablet:

> And if you wish to race (horses) well, write the sword (i.e., certain magical words) on a sheet of papyrus,[13] and put wine in a new clay (vessel), and they (the charioteers) shall drink and wash their faces, and they will win. If you wish to break him (the horse/charioteer), write the sword on a copper[14] *lamella* and bury[15] it in *qmṭwn*, and they will be broken.[16]

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[in Hebrew] (= B. Rebiger and P. Schäfer [eds.], *Sefer ha-Razim I und II | Das Buch der Geheimnisse I und II* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009] §§ 193–194).

11    The word is also found in Syriac. See S. Brock, 'Greek Words in Ephrem and Narsai: A Comparative Sampling', *ARAM* 11–12 (1999–2000), pp. 447–448; see also *SL*, p. 348 (s.v. *hnywkʾ*).

12    *Ḥarba de-Moshe* (*The Sword of Moses*) is an ancient Jewish magical treatise which contains a 'sword' consisting of holy names and magical words, along with an operative part. See M. Gaster, 'The Sword of Moses', *JRAS* (1896), pp. 149–198; reprinted in M. Gaster, *Studies and Texts in Folklore, Magic, Mediaeval Romance, Hebrew Apocrypha and Samaritan Archaeology*, vol. 1 and vol. 3 (3 vols.; New York: Ktav, 1971) pp. 288–337 and pp. 69–103, respectively; Y. Harari, *The Sword of Moses: A New Edition and Study* (Jerusalem: Academon, 1997) [in Hebrew]; Y. Harari, 'The Sword of Moses (*Ḥarba de-Moshe*): A New Translation and Introduction', *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 7 (2012), pp. 58–98. The term 'magical sword literature' is taken from the latter (p. 65), where Harari uses it to refer to fragments of texts that are clearly related to *Ḥarba de-Moshe* but which were not included in the main body of the treatise.

13    The Hebrew text has *krtys ʾy ʾdʾ ṭyqwn*. This is a corrupted form of *krtys ʾyrṭyqwn*, which in turn is a Hebrew transliteration of the Greek χάρτης ἱερατικόν, used in the Greek magical papyri for 'papyrus'. See Margalioth, *Sepher Ha-Razim*, pp. 1–2; P. Schäfer, *Übersetzung der Hekhalot-Literatur*, vol. 4 (TSAJ, 29, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991) p. 12.

14    The Hebrew text reads *qprynwn*. See Schäfer, *Übersetzung der Hekhalot-Literatur*, p. 12, no. 3.

15    The form *smwn* is a corrupted form of *ṭmwn*, as suggested by Margalioth, *Sepher Ha-Razim*, p. x, n. 3.

16    The Hebrew text is to be found in Gaster, 'The Sword of Moses', XXII, ll. 9–12. Compare this with Schäfer's version in P. Schäfer (ed.), *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (TSAJ, 2, Tübingen:

This recipe is comprised of two potential magical manipulations of the race. The first, which involves drinking and washing the charioteer's face with wine, is meant for gaining victory. The second is designed to destroy (literally 'to break') the rival in the race, that is, to result in his defeat. In agreement with the recipe from *Sefer ha-Razim* cited above, it involves the use of an inscribed *lamella* that should be buried in a certain spot: *qmṭwn*. This word has intrigued scholars, as it is unparalleled in Rabbinic literature and in other contemporary Hebrew texts. Margalioth suggested correcting the reading to *qmpwn*, a word documented in Rabbinic literature with the meaning of 'field', 'open area', and usually explained as deriving from Latin *campus*.[17] Weiss has shown that, in some cases, this word was specifically connected to chariot races and further suggested a different etymology for *qmpwn*, namely the Greek word καμπή— the turning-post at the hippodrome.[18] Below, we will show that the word *qmṭh*, which occurs twice in our curse tablet, reflects the Greek word καμπτός. In light of this, we suggest that the word *qmṭwn* in the sword fragment is not corrupt, as previously claimed, but is an accusative form of the Greek word καμπτός (see further the commentary to block D). This fragment from the sword literature thus reflects professional knowledge of circus magic and preserves the tradition—popular among practitioners—of burying curse tablets near the turning-post of the hippodrome.

Another echo of circus magic is found in the magical composition *Havdala de-Rabbi Aqiva*. In this text, a spell for overturning curses and evil magic is accompanied by a poetic set of allegories for overturning the regular order of things. The relevant section starts as follows: 'Their horse will be killed and

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Mohr Siebeck, 1981) §§ 609–610: *w'm rṣyt lhryṣ yph kt" hḥrb bkrṭys 'y 'd' ṭyqwn wtn yyn bḥrś ḥḥdš wyštw wyrḥṣw pnyhm wnwṣḥyn. 'm rṣyt lšbwr 'wtw kt" ḥrb 'l ṭṣ qpyrnwn wsmwn bqmṭwn wmštbryn.* Gaster's translation of this fragment ('The Sword of Moses', p. 46) shows that he did not recognise its relation to chariot races. This connection was first made by Margalioth, *Sepher Ha-Razim*, p. x, n. 3. Schäfer (*Übersetzung der Hekhalot-Literatur*, pp. 11–12) interpreted the first half of this paragraph as a recipe for chariot races, but believed the second half to reflect a new recipe meant to destroy another person ('Wenn du jemanden zugrunde richten willst'). The second half of the paragraph was also left out of Harari's discussion (Harari, 'Power and Money', pp. 35–36).

17    Margalioth, *Sepher Ha-Razim*, p. x. For the Latin etymology, see, e.g., S. Krauss, *Griechische und lateinische Lehnwörter im Talmud, Midrasch und Targum*, vol. 1 (2 vols.; Berlin: Calvary, 1898) p. 510.

18    Z. Weiss, 'New Light on the Rehov Inscription: Identifying "The Gate of Campon" at Bet Shean', in L.V. Rutgers (ed.), *What Athens Has to Do with Jerusalem: Essays on Classical, Jewish, and Early Christian Art and Archaeology in Honor of Gideon Foerster* (Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture and Religion, 1, Leuven: Peeters, 2002) pp. 37–42 [in Hebrew].

break, the charioteer will fall, and the chariot will be overturned' (12:13).[19] As Harari has suggested, though this phrase is not explicitly designed to defeat one's rivals in a chariot race, it might reflect a quotation from a lost Hebrew magical incantation for the purpose of victory in the hippodrome.[20]

Archaeological evidence reflects the fact that the practice of writing amulets on *lamellae* was well-developed within Jewish tradition from the Early Byzantine period. More than one hundred Jewish Aramaic amulets datable from the fourth century to the beginning of the seventh century CE are known to date.[21] Nearly all of these *lamellae* were written for apotropaic purposes, and they were commonly worn on their owner's person in order to extend their protective function. An exception is a bronze *lamella* that was excavated from beneath the threshold of the ancient synagogue at Ḥorvat Marish in northern Israel. This *lamella*, datable to the beginning of the seventh century CE, was written with the aim of subjugating the townspeople to the amulet's beneficiary. Naveh, who published this text, pointed out that, unlike most of the other bronze and copper *lamellae*, this artifact consisted of a relatively thick metal leaf, which may reflect an attempt to imitate a lead tablet.[22] Another aggressive magical object known to scholars is a love spell written on a potsherd that was found in Ḥorvat Rimmon in southern Israel, datable to the fifth or sixth century CE.[23] However, both of these objects clearly do not form part of the group of lead curse tablets that were widespread in the Roman-Byzantine world.[24]

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19    G. Scholem, 'Havdala de-Rabbi Aqiva: A Source for the Tradition of Jewish Magic During the Geonic Period', *Tarbiz* 50 (1980–1981), pp. 243–281 (277) [in Hebrew].

20    Harari, 'Power and Money', p. 35. This might also be the case with respect to a Hebrew incantation written on a clay tablet that contains similar allusions: 'every reed shall be broken, every bone shall be broken, every horse shall be broken'. See G.J. Hamilton, 'A New Hebrew-Aramaic Incantation Text from Galilee: "Rebuking the Sea"', *JSS* 41 (1996), pp. 215–249 (221).

21    The most important publications are J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem, Leiden: Magnes, Hebrew University, Brill, 1985); J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1993); see also H. Eshel and R. Leiman, 'Jewish Amulets Written on Metal Scrolls', *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 1 (2010), pp. 189–199. See now also R. Elitzur-Leiman, 'Jewish Metal Amulets from Late Antiquity' (PhD Diss., Tel Aviv University, 2022) [in Hebrew].

22    J. Naveh, '"A Good Subduing, There is None Like It": An Ancient Amulet from Ḥorvat Marish in the Galilee', *Tarbiz* 54 (1985), pp. 367–382 (380) [in Hebrew]. See also Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, no. A16.

23    Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, no. A10.

24    For a recent survey of Jewish curses, see O.P. Saar, 'Jewish Curse Tablets?', *Religion in the Roman Empire* 7 (2021), pp. 149–166.

The Aramaic circus text discussed here is thus the only documented example of a curse tablet in the Jewish tradition.

## 4 Antiochene Jews and Chariot Races

The Jewish community in Antioch has a long and well-documented history.[25] The Jews of Antioch attended chariot races and were dedicated supporters of the different factions. In his polemical anti-Jewish work *Adversus Judaeos*, John Chrysostom (d. 407) describes the Jews as active partisans (*PG* 48.848). Several other Late Antique sources suggest that the Jews in the Byzantine Empire were generally identified with the Blue faction,[26] while John Malalas, an Antiochian chronicler of the sixth century, gives a report about fighting that took place between the Green and the Blue factions at the end of the fifth century and which resulted in rioting, the desecration of Jewish graves, and the burning of synagogues.[27] The Aramaic tablet under discussion mentions the Blue faction several times, but the context is unclear, and it is not possible to state whether the tablet was written for or against the Blue faction.

In a few places in his writings, John Chrysostom also refers to the Jews as powerful exorcists and complains that their charms and amulets attracted Antiochian Christians to their synagogues for healing.[28] Although Chrysostom's accusations should be approached with an appropriate degree of caution, they nonetheless suggest that some Antiochian Jews were involved in magical practices. They may also shed further light on the circumstances of the production of our Aramaic circus tablet, even suggesting the possibility that the

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25    For a survey of the Jewish community in Antioch, see B.J. Brooten, 'The Jews of Ancient Antioch', in C. Kondoleon (ed.), *Antioch the Lost Ancient City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) pp. 29–37; R.L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century* (The Transformation of the Classical Heritage, 4, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983) pp. 34–65; A. Sharf, 'Byzantine Jewry in the Seventh Century', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 48 (1971), pp. 103–115.

26    See P.W. van der Horst, 'Jews and Blues in Late Antiquity', in P.W. van der Horst, *Jews and Christians in Their Graeco-Roman Context: Selected Essays on Early Judaism, Samaritanism, Hellenism, and Christianity* (WUNT, 196, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006) pp. 53–58.

27    I. Thurn, *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, 35, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012) 10.20 (p. 185) and 15.15 (p. 316). For a recent discussion of the events at the end of the fifth century CE in Antioch, see O.E. Rance, '"The Impious Actions of the Greens against the Jews": The Riots of 491 in Antioch—Between Reality and Fiction', *Zion* 84 (2019), pp. 463–488 [in Hebrew].

28    John Chrysostom, *Adversus Judaeos, PG* 48.935 and *PG* 48.490–941.

tablet was ordered from a Jewish practitioner by non-Jewish clients in the very fashion criticised by Chrysostom.

## 5      Balaam and His She-Ass

Balaam and his she-ass, known from the Balaam narrative in Numbers 22–24, are referred to in line 14 of the tablet. This line invokes the angel that positioned itself before Balaam's she-ass as Balaam was on his way to Balak the king of Moab. According to the biblical text, Balaam was a non-Israelite seer from Petor, located on the River in the land of the Ammonites.[29] He is said to have had knowledge of the Most High (Num. 24.16), and when asked by Balak to curse the invading Israelites, he blesses them instead (Num. 23.7).

Balaam's she-ass plays an important role in this biblical text. As Balaam journeys to Moab on her back, it is she and not Balaam who sees the angel of God barring their way. Three times she shies away from the angel of God, and three times Balaam strikes her in order to spur her to continue on their way. After the third beating, the she-ass opens her mouth and speaks to Balaam ('What have I done to you that you have beaten me these three times', Num. 22.28 [JPS]). Following her speech, God opens Balaam's eyes whereupon Balaam also sees the angel and acknowledges his sin. He is commanded by the angel to continue on his way to Moab and to tell Balak the words that God will put in his mouth. In three subsequent oracles (Numbers 23–24), Balaam blesses the Israelites three times.

Balaam is a complex and ambiguous figure in Jewish tradition. Already within the Hebrew Bible itself there are clear instances of the negative reception of his figure.[30] Both Num. 31.8 and Josh. 13.22 mention that he was killed by the Israelites, apparently because he led them astray (see Num. 31.16). According to Deut. 23.3–5 and Josh. 24.9–10, Balaam had *the intention* to curse the Israelites, but God turned the curse into a blessing. In Josh. 13.22, Balaam is

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29      Thus the literal translation of the Hebrew. We do not discuss here the problems of Balaam's provenance. Although he is never referred to as 'a seer' in the Balaam cycle, the verbs *ḥzh* 'to see', *r'h* 'to see', and *šwr* 'to see' in Num. 24.16–17 strongly suggest that he was a seer by profession.

30      Outside the Balaam narrative in Numbers 22–24, the only text in the Hebrew Bible that does not take a negative view of Balaam is Mic. 6.5. On the negative reinterpretation of Balaam in the Hebrew Bible, see E. Noort, 'Balaam the Villain: The History of Reception of the Balaam Narrative in the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets', in G.H. van Kooten and J. van Ruiten (eds.), *The Prestige of the Pagan Prophet Balaam in Judaism, Early Christianity and Islam* (Themes in Biblical Narrative, 11, Leiden: Brill, 2008) pp. 3–23 (10–23).

referred to as a *qōsem* 'diviner', one of the professions in the list in Deut. 18.10–11 whose practitioners the Israelites should neither appoint nor consult.[31]

Interpretational problems and ambiguities within the Hebrew text of Numbers 22–24 as well as Balaam's negative reception in the Hebrew Bible itself (outside of the Balaam cycle) furnish the basis for his predominantly negative reception in post-biblical Jewish literature.[32] In this literature he is also associated with the practice of divination and magic, while a good example of his negative reception is to be found in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. According to Pseudo-Jonathan, Balaam travelled to Balak with the intention of cursing the Israelites. In this way, the translator of the Aramaic Targum seeks to explain why, according to the Biblical Hebrew text, God was angry about Balaam's leaving (Num. 22.5). Pseudo-Jonathan also states that Balaam was accompanied on his journey by Jannes and Jambres (TgPsJ Num. 22.22), who are described in the Targum as the chiefs of the magicians in Egypt (TgPsJ Exod. 1.15; 7.11; Balaam himself is also linked to Egypt in TgPsJ Exod. 9.21). In its description of Balaam's death (Num. 31.8), Targum Pseudo-Jonathan describes how Balaam tried to escape death by using a magical word to enable him to fly away (thereby depicting him as a demon).[33] In this Targum, Balaam is also referred to as *bl'm ršy'* 'Balaam the villain' (TgPsJ Num. 23.9, 21; 24.25) and *bl'm ḥyb* 'Balaam the sinner' (TgPsJ Num. 23.10; Num. 31.8). This Targum also makes a connection between the name Balaam (*bl'm*) and the verb *bl'* 'to swallow', as Balaam's intention was to swallow the House of Israel according to Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (Num. 22.5).[34] In addition, Balaam is identified with Laban (*lbn*) the Aramean (Num. 22.5; 31.8), who is described as a deceiver in the biblical story about Jacob and Laban's daughters Rachel and Leah (Genesis 29–31); according to later Jewish tradition, Laban was also a 'villain' (*lbn ršy'*). The traditions connecting the name Balaam to the verb *bl'* and identifying Balaam with Laban are also found in TgPsJ Num. 22.5:

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31    See Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, p. 14.

32    See also J.L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998) pp. 799–803.

33    See J.N. Ford, 'New Light from Babylonia on the Story of Smamit', *Eretz-Israel* 32 (2016) (Joseph Naveh volume), pp. 149–161 [in Hebrew].

34    The Hebrew Bible often says of the earth that it swallows human beings: Gen. 4.10; Exod. 15.12; Num. 16.30, 32, 34; 17.27; 26.10. See also the discussion of Exod. 15.12 in the commentary to line 12 below. The verb *bl'* is also used in the Hebrew Bible in the famous contest of magicians in Exod. 7.8–12, where the staff of Aaron is said to have swallowed the staffs of the Egyptian magicians (Exod. 7.12).

He (= Balak) sent messengers to Laban the Aramean, that is Balaam (for he sought to swallow the people of the House of Israel), the son of Beor, who acted foolishly from the greatness of his wisdom. He did not spare Israel, the descendants of the sons of his daughters; and his dwelling house was in Padan, that is Pethor, according to its name, "Interpreter of Dreams." And it was built in Aram on the Euphrates, a land in which the population served and worshiped him—(and Balak sent) to call him, saying: Behold, a people has come out from Egypt, and behold, it obscures the view of this land and is encamped before me.[35]

When we compare this translation with the biblical text of Num. 22.5, the differences become apparent:

And he (= Balak) sent messengers to Balaam son of Beor in Pethor, which is by the Euphrates (lit. 'the River'), in the land of his kinsfolk, to invite him, saying, "There is a people that came out of Egypt; it hides the earth from view, and it is settled next to me."

                                                                              JPS

In contrast to the negative receptions of Balaam's figure outlined above, there also exists an altogether positive depiction of the figure of Balaam in post-biblical literature (both in Jewish and in Christian sources). It is based on a Messianic interpretation of Num 24.17–19, and on vs. 17 in particular (Balaam's last oracle).[36] In this passage, Balaam foresees the coming of a great leader: 'A star shall proceed from Jacob, and a scepter shall rise from Israel' (cf. also Gen. 49.10: 'The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet'). In later times, these verses in Numbers 24 were interpreted as Balaam's prediction of the arrival of the Messiah.

The figure of Balaam is clearly linked with divination and magic (see above) in the Hebrew Bible and in post-biblical Jewish literature, though Balaam does not appear very frequently in the Jewish magical tradition. The following instances are known to us.

First, the name Balaam is mentioned in one of the Greek magical papyri (*PGM* XXXV, l. 36). In line 36 of this text, the name Balaam (Βιλιάμ) forms part of an adjuration.[37] Remarkably, just as in our tablet, this text contains

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35    Translation by E.G. Clarke, *The Aramaic Bible*, vol. 4: *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Numbers* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995) p. 252.

36    On this point, see, e.g., Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, pp. 803–808.

37    H.D. Betz (ed.), *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986) p. 268.

drawings of three heads (see also above 2. Archaeological Context and Description of the Tablet). The function of Balaam's name in this particular context, however, as well as the connection between Balaam and the three heads is unclear.

Second, the she-ass of Balaam the diviner appears in a Syriac remedy for colic.[38] This Christian remedy includes a *historiola* that narrates an encounter between Solomon and a talking she-ass, a descendant of the she-ass of Balaam the diviner. Meetings between a human and a demon are often narrated in *historiolae* in Jewish magical texts.[39] Examples include the meetings between the prophet Elijah and Lilith as well as Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa and Agrat daughter of Maḥlat.[40] These parallels suggest that the she-ass in the Syriac text is a demon as well.[41] According to Zellmann-Rohrer, there may have been an analogy at work between the stopping of the movement of the she-ass by the angel and the stopping of the motion of the bowels.[42]

Third, as mentioned previously, the Jewish tradition (see above on Targum Pseudo-Jonathan) connects Balaam with the Egyptian magicians Jannes and Jambres.[43] This connection is also made in the magical treatise *Havdala de-Rabbi Aqiva*, in an incantation against sorcery (referred to above in 3. Circus Magic in Jewish Magical Literature):

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[38] M. Zellmann-Rohrer, 'More on the "Book of Protection" and the Syriac Charms: New Texts and Perspectives for the Study of Magic and Religion', in M. Moriggi and S. Bhayro (eds.), *Studies in the Syriac Magical Traditions* (MRLA, 9, Leiden: Brill, 2022) pp. 77–140 (118–119).

[39] For a recent in-depth study of the *historiola* in magical texts, see D.J. Waller, '"I Descended to the Depths of the Earth": A Rhetorical Poetics of the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Incantation Bowls' (Ph.D. Diss., Groningen University, 2020). See also the classic study by D. Frankfurter, 'Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magical *Historiola* in Ritual Spells', in R. van den Broek, H.J.W. Drijvers, and H.S. Versnel (eds.), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, 129, Leiden: Brill, 1995) pp. 457–476.

[40] On Ḥanina ben Dosa and Agrat daughter of Maḥlat, see, e.g., S. Shaked, J.N. Ford, and S. Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells: Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls*, vol. 1 (MRLA, 1, Leiden: Brill, 2013), nos. 1–10; on Eliah and Lilit, see, e.g., M.L. Folmer, 'A Jewish Childbirth Amulet for a Girl', in M.F.J. Baasten and R. Munk (eds.), *Studies in Hebrew Language and Culture, Presented to Albert van der Heide on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Amsterdam: Springer, 2007) pp. 41–56 (48–53).

[41] The text has not been recognised as a *historiola* by Zellmann-Rohrer, 'More on the "Book of Protection"'.

[42] Zellmann-Rohrer, 'More on the "Book of Protection"', p. 119.

[43] On the wider distribution of this tradition, see S. Gero, 'The Enigma of the Magician Lotapes (Pliny, Naturalis Historia XXX, 11)', *JSJ* 27 (1996), pp. 304–323 (317).

FIGURE 1      Princeton Art Museum excavation no. 3608-I57

> Just as the (magical) acts of Joannis and Joanbris before Moses in Egypt
> did not come out so will also (the works) of people that practice sorcery,
> whisper (incantations), foretell the future, and give evil advice against us
> not come out. Their horse will be killed and crushed, the charioteer will
> fall, and the chariot will be overturned.[44]

With respect to the interpretation of our tablet, it is significant that in later
Jewish literature the figure of Balaam is linked with the story in Exodus 15 not
just through the magicians Jannes and Jambres, but through the verb *bl'* and
the notion 'to sink' (on the verb *ṭm'*, which appears in our tablet and in several
Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible, see the commentary to l. 4). This
link between the two passages is also made in our tablet, which clearly evokes
the story of Balaam, though the tablet places more emphasis on the angel that
stood in the way of Balaam and his she-ass than it does on the figure of Balaam
or his she-ass. There are several points to be made concerning the role of the
angel, the she-ass, and Balaam in our text. First, the angel is in all likelihood
invoked in the tablet in order to impede certain horses in the circus. Second,
the text appears to draw an analogical connection between the circus horses,
the horses of Pharaoh at the Reed Sea, and Balaam's she-ass in that they all need
to be stopped.[45]

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44    See Scholem, 'Havdala de-Rabbi Aqiva', p. 277 (12:11–13). In the last sentence of this incant-
      ation, the verbs and their respective subjects are in the singular, though they may be
      interpreted as generic.
45    There is no suggestion in our text that Balaam's she-ass was seen as a type of demon (as
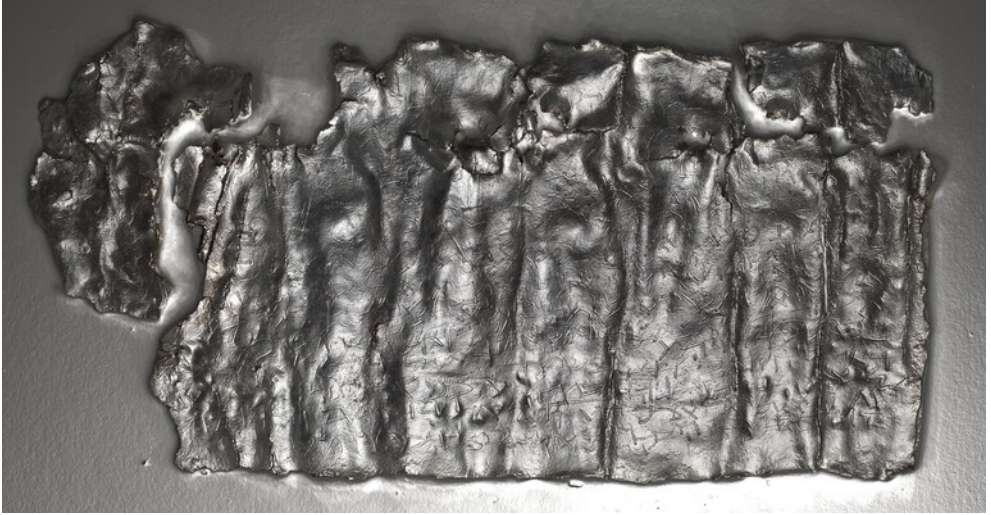      in the Syriac text discussed above).

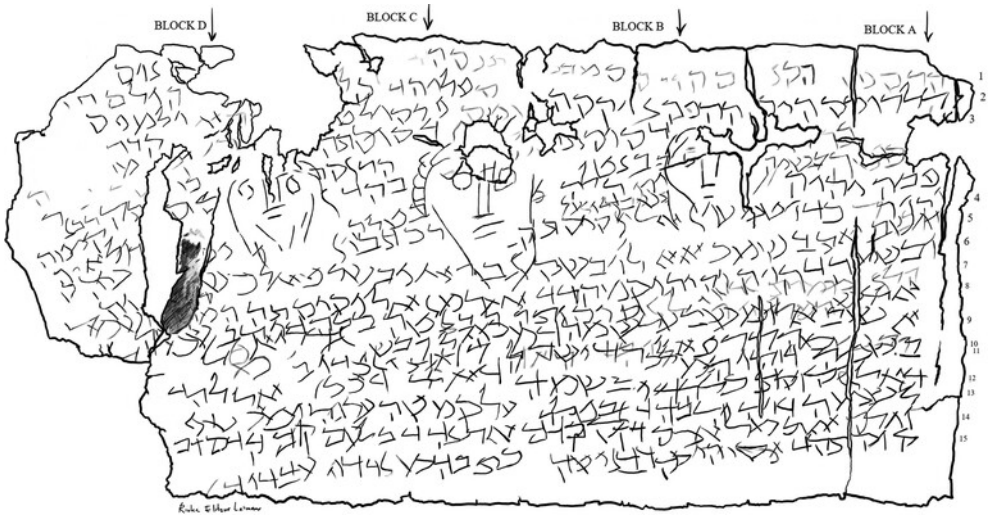FIGURE 2      Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) of Princeton Art Museum excavation no. 3608-I57



FIGURE 3      Hand-copy of Princeton Art Museum excavation no. 3608-I57

## 6        The Inscription on the Tablet

The inscription was engraved superficially onto the surface of our lead tablet and is almost invisible to the naked eye. We have been able to decipher it thanks to photos taken with Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI).[46] The two upper lines of the inscription and the left fragment are heavily damaged, and the reading of these sections is highly uncertain. In addition, the lower left part is completely missing. The lines of the text curve downwards, especially towards the left edge of the tablet, while a straight margin characterises the right-hand side of the text. In line 7, it seems that the person who inscribed the tablet began incising before stopping after two words and tried to erase the letters he had written by abrasing the surface; he then inscribed the next line (l. 8) over line 7. Line 8 overlaps partially with line 9, and line 10 overlaps partially with line 11.

The reconstruction of the layout of the upper part of the tablet is complicated. A study of the strokes shows that HEADS 1–3 were drawn first; only then did the person who inscribed the tablet add the text. The heads separate the area that surrounds them into four small blocks of text that should be read from top to bottom. We have marked these segments as blocks A–D. Blocks B, C, and D appear to relate to the drawings to their right. In what follows, we 'read' the drawings together with the blocks of text: As in a picture book, we view the heads as 'words' in a continuous text.[47] The word *bšmh*, which appears in the area of block A to the right of HEAD 1, should be read as part of block B. This is clear from the size and direction of the letters, which does not correspond with other words in block A. The leftmost part of the tablet is poorly preserved which makes it hard to determine where block D begins. We interpret it as consisting of eight short lines beginning right under line 3. That said, it is equally possible that this block begins nearer to the bottom of the tablet, and that line 3 accordingly extends into another small 'block' of a few lines (see also the commentary to block D).

## 7        The Script

The tablet is written in the Aramaic square script (see Fig. 4). The letters' height is 3–6 mm. The hand is cursive and somewhat sloppy. Some letters have the

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46    The RTI photos were taken by Paula Artal-Isbrand, conservator at the Worcester Art Museum.

47    See the commentary to block B for a detailed discussion.

FIGURE 4    Script chart

same form, such as *b* and *k*; *d* and *r*; *h*, *ḥ*, and *q*; *w* and *y*; *s*, final *m*, and sometimes *q*; and *n* and *l* in a few cases. At some points, it is virtually impossible to differentiate between these letters. In one case at least, the letter *h* was written in cursive fashion and looks like *s*. In this inscription, final letter forms of *m* and *n* are attested. In general, the words are separated by small blank spaces, but sometimes the letters are squeezed together without apparent blanks. Despite all of this, it seems that the inscription was written by an experienced person. Certain habits can be identified, such as the ligature of ʾ and *l* (*gbrʾl*, l. 5; *mhddʾl*, l. 6).

## 8       Linguistic and Orthographic Characteristics of the Text

The Aramaic text displays several characteristics of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic.

### 8.1      *Phonology*

Weakening of the gutturals. There is some evidence in the text for the weakening of ʿ into ʾ, as in *šbʾt* (l. 5) and *šbʾ* (l. 9), with both instances of the verb *šbʿ* written with ʾ instead of ʿ. Several other examples of weakening of the gutturals are known from other Jewish Palestinian Aramaic inscriptions, including the synagogue inscriptions from Bet-Shean. One of the Aramaic Bet-Shean inscriptions reads: *dkr lṭb ʾwmnh dʿbd ḥdh ʾbydtʾ* 'remembered for good be the craftsman who made this mosaic'.[48] A contemporary Hebrew synagogue inscription from nearby Reḥov also attests the weakening of gutturals.[49] According to Beyer, the person who drew up the text model for the Reḥov mosaic text ('der Verfasser') did not distinguish in the spoken language between ʾ, *h*, *ḥ* and ʿ.[50] The weakening of gutturals is also attested in other dialects of Palestinian Aramaic, namely Samaritan Aramaic (where it is a wide-spread phenomenon) and Christian Palestinian Aramaic (where it is relatively rare).[51] According to Kutscher, the weakening of the gutturals in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic began in the Galilee towards the end of the second century CE with the change *ḥ* > ʿ.[52] Only from the sixth century CE onwards is there evidence from the Galilee for the weakening of other gutturals, including ʿ > ʾ.[53] This would fit well with the evidence from our tablet.

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48    *ʾbydtʾ*, with ʾ instead of ʿ. For the text, see J. Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic* (Jerusalem: Sifriyat Maʿariv, 1978), no. 47 [in Hebrew] (= K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer*, vol. 1 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984] p. 378, ggBS 2).

49    Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic*, no. 49, ll. 1, 14, 15. Line 1, for instance, contains the Hebrew word *mtʾsryn* 'tithed', with ʾ instead of ʿ (the spelling *mtʿsrn* occurs in l. 19); other examples include Aramaic place names.

50    K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte*, vol. 1, p. 378.

51    E.Y. Kutscher, *Studies in Galilean Aramaic* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1976) pp. 75–77. Cf. also the widespread phenomenon of the weakening of the gutturals in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (M.L. Margolis, *Lehrbuch der aramäischen Sprache des babylonischen Talmuds* [Clavis Linguarum Semiticarum, 3, Munich: Beck, 1910] p. 8, § 4) and Mandaic (Th. Nöldeke, *Mandäische Grammatik* [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, reprint, 1964] pp. 57–60, § 57).

52    Kutscher, *Galilean Aramaic*, pp. 67–96. Cf. the famous passage in b. ʿErub. 53b: 'A certain Galilean once went about inquiring "Who has *amar*? Who has *amar*?" "Foolish Galilean," they said to him, "do you mean an 'ass' (*ḥmr*) for riding, 'wine' (*ḥmr*) to drink, 'wool' (*ʿmr*) for clothing, or a 'lamb' (*ʾmr*) for slaughtering?"' (translation adapted from Kutscher, *Galilean Aramaic*, p. 69).

53    For a detailed study of this phenomenon, see Kutscher, *Galilean Aramaic*, pp. 67–96, in particular pp. 78–79.

There is no clear graphic distinction between *h* and *ḥ* in our tablet The person who drafted the text apparently did not distinguish between *h* and *ḥ* in his writing, which is not uncommon for this period.[54] Several instances of *h* may in fact provide evidence for the weakening of *ḥ* (*ḥ > h*), as in the case of *hd* instead of *ḥd* in lines 8 and 12.[55]

## 8.2    *Morphology*[56]

1.   The demonstrative pronouns in this text are typical for Jewish Palestinian Aramaic: *hdn* (sg. m.) and *ʾln / hln* (pl. c.).[57] Jewish Palestinian Aramaic possesses a series of pronouns with a prefixed deictic element *h-* (*hdyn* [sg. m.], *hdh* [sg. f.], and *hʾlyn*), and a series of pronouns without this prefixed element (*dyn, dh,* and *ʾlyn*).[58] The demonstratives of both series are used indiscriminately in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, that is, with an attributive as well as a substantive function.[59]

2.   The afformative of the imper. pl. 2m. is *-wn*, with *-n* (*ṭmʿwn* l. 4), the regular form in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic.

## 8.3    *Orthography*

1.   The spelling *-h* for the emphatic state ending *-ā* (*sws[w]th / swsth* blocks C, D; ll. 4.6.8.15; *mlkh* l. 11; *bṭlh* block C; l. 13; *qmṭh* block D; l. 13; *mlʾkh* l. 14; *ʿlyh* l. 13; *ktbh* l. 15 and probably *bn[y]th* ll. 8.15). This is the regular spelling of the emphatic state in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (sg. m. and f.; pl. m. and f.). This sometimes leads to ambiguity of certain forms, because the sg. f. absolute state ending is also spelled with *-h*. In addition, the ending *-h* can indicate both the pron. sf. sg.3m. and the pron. sf. sg.3f.

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54    See, e.g., Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, nos. 23, 31, 28 (amulets).

55    For examples of *h* instead of *ḥ* in reliable Jewish Palestinian Aramaic manuscripts, see Kutscher, *Galilean Aramaic*, p. 81.

56    In addition to the features mentioned, the text may contain an instance of the pron. sf. sg. 3m. *-wy* (*ddwy* in l. 15), though both this reading and interpretation are highly uncertain. This form of the pronominal suffix (combined with plural nouns) is a characteristic of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic. In the commentary it will be clarified why we prefer the reading *ddyy*.

57    See *DJPA*³, p. 148f. (s.v. *dn*).

58    There is a great deal of variation in the use of vowel-letters in the spelling of these pronouns. Defective spellings of *ʾlyn* are rare. On these two series of demonstratives, see also M.L. Folmer, 'Rare Demonstrative Pronouns in Targum Onqelos: דנן and דיכי', in A.F. Botta (ed.), *In the Shadow of Bezalel: Aramaic, Biblical, and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Bezalel Porten* (CHANE, 60, Leiden: Brill, 2013) pp. 89–124 (95).

59    For examples, see *DJPA*³, p. 149.

2.    The spelling *lh* for *lʾ* (negation). This spelling is sometimes found in Jewish
      Palestinian Aramaic.[60]

## 8.4    *Other Peculiarities of the Spelling*

A specific orthographic feature to be mentioned is the use of the shortened
form *bš* for *bšmh* (ll. 5 and 9) in combination with the names of the archangels
Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. These spellings will be discussed below.

## 9    Transliteration of the Text[61]

1    *ḣrṣṗẏ hṡṅ.ṁ ḣẇ.ṁ smḱ. .ṫṅṡḣ...*[            ]*nyṡ.*[
2    *q̇lrwḱs hy..q̇ḥ ṗḣẏnyqs ḣ. .ṡplyh ḋ.sl*[     ]*ḣylṡ ..*
3          [ ] *ṫṁṡ prsy lṭ*[                      ]. *ʾwlmps*

Block A
[          ] *ḱṙ..*[     ]
[          ].*ḱẏ.h pṁh yhwh*

Block B
*bšṁh* (HEAD 1) *dswsṫ*[*h*]
*dbnṭ ẏḣẇḣ lh*
*ṫšbq̇ lwn ʿl*

Block C
(HEAD 2) *dswsth*
*hdn sr*
*bhdn*
*bṭlh*

Block D
[    ]*.. q̇ṙṙ*
[ ].*m....*
*.....h*
*k.....r*

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60    See *DJPA*³, p. 295. The evidence for this spelling in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic amulets is
      noteworthy.
61    Uncertain letters are marked with a dot above the letter; unidentifiable letters are repres-
      ented by a dot.

(head 3) *sws*[*w*]*th ḋbn*[*ṭh*]
.. [      ] .. *qmṭh*
[        ] ..*lʾyh*
*w.*[    ]*kyh ṡ*

4    *l̇qwrṙ kdw ṭmʿwn ʾl̇yn swsth ḋktbyn*
5    *ʾ*{*b*}*šbʾt bš mkʾʾl wbšm gbrʾl wbš rpʾl ḃš* [      ]*yh ṡ*
6    *wbšmh dhw hwh yhwq mhdḋl ṙmnʾl wswsth hm*[   ].*šmḣ*
7    erased: {*hln ṁmrtṅ ḋ*||||}
8    *ʾln šhmṙ..* [ʾ]*ln swswth dbnṭh k̇lḥd w*{*h*}*ḃšṁḣ ḋ*[
9    *ʾšbʾ wmšbʿ lšmh dmkʾl wbš gḃryʾl* [
10   *wbšmh drpʾl wḃ..ʾl̇*
11   *bšmh dẏhwh mlkh dyšḋh ḋ...yṅ ṣḋw bm*    [
12   *dʾln swst klḥd wbšmh dʾl̇ṅ dṣ.. ʾl lhdḋ*[
13   *lšmh dyhwh bhdn bṭlh ʿl qmṭh ʿl̇yh wmk̇šp.*[
14   *ẏ̇yl̇ṡ ʾt mlʾkh dqm qdm ʾtnh dblʿm qwm qdm ḋḃ*[
15   *swsth dṣ.yh wk̇ḣ dbnyṭh        ktbh mṅ ddẏẏ̇ ʿbdy*[*t.*

## 10    Translation of the Text[62]

1     ... Symmach[os] (?) ...
2     Klearchos (?) ... Hipponikos (?) ... [A]sphaleia (?) ... Hel(i)os (?) ...
3     Parsāy (?) ... Olymp(i)os

Block A
...
... the mouth (of) *yhwh* (?)

Block B
**In the name (of) (head 1) of [the] horses
of (the) Blue (faction).** *Yhwh,* do not
let them ...

---

62    Text highlighted with bold font marks the text segments which in our opinion are connec-
      ted. For a discussion of the location of the noun phrase *bšṁh* 'in the name of' in block B,
      see 6. The Inscription on the Tablet and the commentary to blocks A and B.

Block C
**(in the name of HEAD 2) of the horses**
this angel
on this
*lamella*

Block D[63]
… charioteer …
…
…
…
**(in the name of HEAD 3 of) the horses of [the] Blue (faction)**
… the turning-post
…
…
…

4    for a charioteer (?). Now, sink these horses that are written (= whose
      names are written).
5    I adjure in the name of Michael and in the name of Gabriel and in the
      name of Raphael, (and) in the na[me of …
6    and in the name of *hw hwh yhwq mhdd'l* (?) *rmn'l* (?) and the horses …
      the (or: his) name
7    erased: {these …}
8    these … [th]ese horses of the Blue (faction) each one (?) and in the
      name of …
9    I will adjure and I adjure in the name of Michael and in the name of
      Gabriel (?) …
10   and in the name of Raphael and in …
11   in the name of *yhwh* the king, who cast (?) … desolation (?) …
12   of these horse(s) each one (?) and in the name of these …
13   in the name of *yhwh*, on this *lamella*, at the upper turning-post …
14   … You, the angel that stood in front of the she-ass of Balaam, stand in
      front of …
15   the horse(s) which … and here/so of the Blue (faction) *vacat* [I] made
      the writing from my own (possessions) (?).

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63    On the first four lines of this block, see also 6. The Inscription on the Tablet and the com-
      ment on *sws[w]th ḏbn[ṯh]* 'the horses of [the] Blue (faction)' in block D.

## 11        Commentary to the Text

*Lines 1–3*
The first three lines probably contain hipponyms rather than the names of charioteers.[64] Among these in all likelihood are many Greek hipponyms; this is suggested by the high number of words containing an emphatic consonant *q* or *ṭ*, and/or an *-s* at the end of the word, which may reflect the Greek nominative ending -ος in at least some of the cases.[65] In what follows, those readings that defy explanation will not be commented on.

*Line 1*[66]
*smk̇.*—This may reflect the beginning of a hipponym that commences with the Greek name element σύν 'with'. Such names are attested in Greek tablets from Antioch.[67] A good candidate here would be Σύμμαχος 'allied fighter',[68] but this well-known name is not to our knowledge attested as a hipponym.

]*nyṡ.*[—Probably part of another hipponym. The final *-s* may indicate a Greek hipponym that we are unable to identify. It is also possible to read ]*nyq.*[ here (on *s* and *q*, see 7. The Script) and to argue that it forms the last part of the names Ἱππονίκος or Ἑλληνίκος, either in a m. or a f. form (see also the commentary on the hipponyms in l. 2). The Greek word νίκη 'victory' (and derived forms) is a frequent element in hipponyms.[69]

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64    In a recent paper, Christopher Faraone has convincingly shown that the focus shifts from the charioteers to the horses in curse tablets from the Eastern Mediterranean (Conference Curses in Context 2: Curses and Curse Tablets in the Roman Provinces, September 17th and 18th 2018, Paris Center of the University of Chicago, organised by C.A. Faraone and S. Torallas). See now also C.A. Faraone, 'Cursing Chariot Horses instead of Drivers in the Hippodromes of the Eastern Roman Empire', in C.S. Sánchez Natalías (ed.), *Litterae Magicae: Studies in Honour of Roger S.O. Tomlin* (Supplementa мнин, 2, Zaragoza: Libros Pórtico, 2019) pp. 83–101.

65    A.M. Butts, *Language Change in the Wake of Empire: Syriac in Its Greco-Roman Context* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016) p. 96.

66    The reading *ḥrṩẏ* at the beginning of l. 1 does not allow for Robert Daniel's interesting suggestion that we read Haruspex, Haruspicis, or Haruspikos, a name that would describe 'the horse's ability to foretell the future'.

67    A good example is the name Συμπότης in Daniel and Hollmann, *Magica Levantina*, no. 28, l. 20.

68    See T. Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity*, part 1: *Palestine 330 BCE–200 CE* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002) p. 307; T. Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity*, part 3: *The Western Diaspora, 330 BCE–650 CE* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009) p. 375.

69    See M. Darder Lissón, *De nominibus equorum circensium: Pars occidentis* (Barcelona: Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres, 1996) pp. 189–190. This element is also found in hipponyms

*Line 2*

*q̇lrwk̇s*—Note that the reading of the first letter is uncertain. The final *-s* suggests that this is a Greek hipponym. If this is the case, it may represent a scribal error for *qlrkws* and reflect the Greek name Κλέαρχος, which occurs in a list of hipponyms in a Greek curse tablet from Antioch. The horses mentioned in the list on this Greek tablet belong to the Blue faction of the city.[70]

*hy..q̇h*—This possibly reflects the name Ἱππονίκη or Ἑλληνίκη, f. forms of Ἱππονίκος and Ἑλληνίκος, respectively,[71] both of which are known as hipponyms.[72] Female hipponyms have also been raised as a possibility in one of the Greek curse tablets from Antioch.[73]

*ṗḣẏnyqs*—The reading is highly uncertain, though this word seems to reflect a Greek hipponym. One wonders if *phynyqs* is a scribal error for *hypnyqs*, Greek Ἱππονίκος.[74] A related form of this name is found in a Greek curse tablet from Antioch.[75] Alternatively, one might think of the well-known hipponym Φοῖνιξ / Phoenix.[76] It must be stressed, however, that the Aramaic letter *h* in general is not used to render the spirantisation of the Greek consonant *phi*.[77] Either way, the spelling is not what one would expect.

*.ṡplyh*—Possibly another hipponym. It may reflect the Greek noun ἀσφάλεια, 'security against stumbling or falling' and may be compared with the hipponym Securus which is found in a Latin curse tablet from Hadrumetum (second century CE).[78] As a Greek loanword, it is found in an adverbial phrase in the Aramaic Bar Kosiba letters from Naḥal Ḥever, datable to the first half of the second century CE (no. 54: 5, 9, 15 *b'splyh* and *b'sply'* 'in security'); the noun is

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in other tablets from Antioch. See Daniel and Hollmann, *Magica Levantina*, no. 29, which is a revised edition of A. Hollmann, 'A Curse Tablet from the Circus at Antioch', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 145 (2003), pp. 67–82.

70    See Daniel and Hollmann, *Magica Levantina*, no. 29, ll. 57–58.

71    See *LSJ*, p. 835 and p. 536, respectively.

72    See Darder Lissón, *De nominibus equorum*, p. 116 and p. 146, respectively.

73    See Daniel and Hollmann, *Magica Levantina*, no. 29, ll. 51, 57; see also n. 75.

74    On this hipponym, see Darder Lissón, *De nominibus equorum*, p. 116.

75    Daniel and Hollmann, *Magica Levantina* restore the name Ἱππον⟨ίκ⟩ην in no. 29, l. 57, either from Ἱππονίκη (mare) or from Ἱππονίκης (stallion).

76    See Darder Lissón, *De nominibus equorum*, p. 212.

77    For the situation in Syriac, which reflects in this regard Aramaic more broadly, see A.M. Butts, 'The Integration of Greek Loanwords in Syriac', *Aramaic Studies* 14 (2016), pp. 1–35 (28).

78    *LSJ*, p. 266. On Securus, see Tremel, *Magica agonistica*, p. 257.

also known from Syriac (*ʾsply*).[79] As a result, the possibility that the word functions as a noun in our tablet (and does not represent a hipponym) cannot be excluded.

*ḥylś*—We assume that this word reflects the name Ἥλιος, even though the expected spelling would be *h(y)lys* or *h(y)lyws*. The name Helios is well known as a hipponym and as the name of charioteers.[80] The spelling *hylws* is to be found in a new Genizah manuscript of *Sefer ha-Razim*.[81]

## Line 3

*prsy* 'Persian'—Probably a hipponym (possibly with the Aramaic gentilic ending sg. m. -*āy* of the absolute state).[82] One of the semantic fields represented in hipponyms is the origin of the horse (divine descent, actual sire, ethnic provenance, or some other source).[83] Other interpretations are less likely.[84]

*lṭ*[—In light of the hipponyms in this section of the tablet we should probably assume a hipponym here as well, but the damage to the tablet at this point is too extensive to make any convincing suggestions in this regard.[85]

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79    *SL*, p. 76.
80    Darder Lissón, *De nominibus equorum*, pp. 146, 346. See also the hipponym Ἡλιόδρομος in curse tablets from the Levant (Daniel and Hollmann, *Magica Levantina*, nos. 04, l. 9; 06, l. 12; 09, ll. 14–15, 66; 10, ll. 11, 28, [60]; 16, ll. 23; 17, l. 3; 19b, l. 3).
81    See G. Bohak and A. Bellusci, 'The Greek Prayer to Helios in *Sefer ha-Razim*, in Light of New Textual Evidence', in L.M. Bortolani, W. Furley, J.F. Quack, and S. Nagel (eds.), *Cultural Plurality in Ancient Magical Texts and Practices* (Orientalische Religionen in der Antike, 32, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019) pp. 259–275 (266).
82    For *prsy* in Late Aramaic, see *DJPA*³, p. 509 (s.v. *prsyy*) 'Persian'; *DJBA*, p. 936 (s.v. *prsʾh*) 'Persian', e.g., *gmlʾ prsʾh* 'a Persian camel'; *MD*, p. 364 (s.v. parsaia). One would expect the emphatic state *prsyh* 'the Persian', but see also the Greek name Περσικός (which is not known as a hipponym; see *LGPN*, accessed 9-1-2022 at https://www.lgpn.ox.ac.uk/).
83    See Darder Lissón, *De nominibus equorum*, pp. 30–31; see also F. Heintz, 'On Race-horse's Names', *JRA* 12 (1999), pp. 667–669 (667) (review of Darder Lissón, *De nominibus equorum*).
84    Interpretations that we have considered but rejected include: a connection with the noun *prsh*, emph. *prstʾ* 'hoof' (*GTO*, p. 229; *DJPA*³, p. 509; *SL*, p. 1246; also said of horses: Peshitta to 2 Kgs. 19.24 *bprstʾ drkšy* 'with the hooves of my horses'; cf. also the adjective *prstn* 'with [good] hoofs' [*SL*, p. 1247]) and a connection with the Greek word *prasinon* 'green'. In Syriac, the Greek loanword *prasinon* (*prʾsynwn*) 'leek-green' occurs. Its plural form is *prsynw/ʾ* which reflects Greek πράσινοι and refers to the members of the green faction (*SL*, p. 1226). The consonants of πράσιν- (*LSJ*, p. 1460) are usually all represented in writing in Syriac.
85    Robert Daniel's suggestion to restore the hipponym Altus here (see Darder Lissón, *De nominibus equorum*, p. 59) is possible but highly speculative.

We also note that this is the only point in the tablet where a form of the Common Aramaic root *lwṭ* might appear—either a verbal form (*lwṭ* 'to curse') or a form of the related f. noun *lūṭā* 'curse'. The form could reflect a defective spelling of the passive participle (*līṭ* 'cursed') or a defective spelling of the noun; any inflectional endings are not legible. For obvious reasons, this suggestion is highly tentative.[86]

*ʾwlmps*—This is probably the Greek hipponym Ὄλυμπιος or Ὀλύμπιος. To date, this name is known only as that of a charioteer and not as a hipponym.[87] The hipponym Olypius (error for Olympius) 'originating from the Olympus', however, appears in a Latin mosaic inscription.[88] The hipponym Ὀλυμπιο-νίκη 'victory at Olympia' is more common and appears in circus curse tablets.[89]

### Block A

*bšmh*—We assume that this word should be read with the text of block B; see below.[90]

*pṁh yhwh* 'the mouth ⟨of⟩ *yhwh*' (?)[91]—The word *pmh* is either an emphatic sg. m. form ('the mouth') or a pron. sf. sg. 3m. ('his mouth'). It is not immediately clear to whose mouth the text refers. Neither is it clear whether the form represents an isolated word or not. As an isolated word, *pmh* might refer to a human mouth, such as the mouth of the charioteer in the next line, or perhaps even to the mouth of Balaam's she-ass, as she is probably mentioned in line 14

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86    For Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, see *DJPA*³, p. 301 f. (s.v. *lwṭ*).

87    See Darder Lissón, *De nominibus equorum*, p. 287 (s.v. Olymp): 'un *possessor* o de la quadra o de la *familia quadrigaria*'; see also G. Horsmann, *Die Wagenlenker der römischen Kaiserzeit: Untersuchungen zu ihrer sozialen Stellung* (Forschungen zur antiken Sklaverei, 29, Stuttgart: Steiner, 1998) pp. 261–262, no. 145 (Olympius), no. 146 (Olympos), no. 147 (Claudius Olympus), no. 148 (Olympus).

88    Darder Lissón, *De nominibus equorum*, p. 197.

89    Darder Lissón, *De nominibus equorum*, p. 196.

90    We initially understood *pṁh yhwh* to form part of an invocation formula beginning with *bšmh ⟨d⟩*, written just above the divine name ('in the name of the mouth of *yhwh*'). We subsequently abandoned this interpretation due to the smaller size of the letters used to write *bšmh* and believe that *bšmh* should probably be connected with HEAD 1.

91    It is unlikely that the word *yhwh* is a form of the verb *hwh* 'to be', as the imperfect of this verb in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic produces both a shortened form (*yhy*) and a form with final *-y* (*yhwy*) (with variant spellings); see G. Dalman, *Grammatik des jüdisch-palästinischen Aramäisch nach den Idiomen des palästinischen Talmud, des Onkelostargum und Prophetentargum und der jerusalemischen Targume* [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche

(*qdm 'tnh dbl'm* 'before the she-ass of Balaam'; see also 5. Balaam and His She-Ass).[92] The word *pmh* might equally have been intended to evoke the biblical image of 'the (mouth of the) earth', which takes/swallows human beings (see Gen. 4.11, Exod. 15.12, and other texts). It should be noted that the mouth of *yhwh*, the mouth of Balaam's she-ass, and the mouth of the earth all play a role in the Balaam narrative and its reception; even Balaam's own name, according to tradition, is connected with an action of the mouth ('to swallow'; see 5. Balaam and His She-Ass).

If *pmh* is not an isolated word, then it must be connected with the divine name written on the same line. It is possible that we are dealing here with a *lapsus* on the part of the person who inscribed the tablet, who may have intended to write *pmh dyhwh* 'the mouth of *yhwh*' but forgot the genitive particle *d*. This phrase would echo the biblical phrase *ky py yhwh dbr* 'because the mouth of *yhwh* has spoken' (Isa. 40.5). The phrase 'the mouth of *yhwh*' is also found in the Balaam narrative in Num. 22.18 (see 5. Balaam and His She-Ass).

*Block B*

*bšṁh* (HEAD 1) *dswst*[*h*] *dbnṭ* 'In the name of HEAD 1 of the horses of the Blue faction'—On this reading of the different segments of the text that surround the three heads, see 6. The Inscription on the Tablet, and the commentary to block A. Our interpretation is complicated by the fact that we remain unsure about the referents of the heads and the relation between the text and the drawings. The heads may represent the three archangels, but we cannot exclude the possibility that they represent three charioteers (regardless of whether they are referred to in the text or not). An argument in favor of the latter interpretation is the fact that the heads were pierced with a nail after the tablet had been rolled up. An argument in favor of the former interpretation is the fact that the name of an archangel appears to have been written below each of the heads. If the angelic interpretation is correct, the piercing of the heads—though unfortunate—was surely unintentional.[93] We suggest that the text in this portion of the tablet can be read profitably as a kind of picture book, and that the word *bšṁh*, which is written to the right of HEAD 1, represents the

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Buchgesellschaft, reprint of the 2nd edn., 1960] pp. 252–254; see also the discussion in S.E. Fassberg, *Grammar of the Palestinian Targum Fragments* [HSS, 38, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990] p. 192, §151a).

92  The mouth of the she-ass has a special place in Jewish tradition: It is among the ten things said to have been created during twilight on the eve of the first Shabbat (m. Avot 5:6).

93  Possibly the person who wrote the tablet was different from the person who pierced the tablet with the nail.

beginning of a spell that is followed by HEAD 1 *dswst*[*h*] *dbnṭ*, continued by
HEAD 2 *dswsth*, and followed by HEAD 3 *dswsth dbn*[*ṭh*]. The phrase *bšmh* 'in
the name of' is familiar as part of the opening formula in many spells, and it
would represent the first appearance in our text of such an introductory for-
mula.[94]

Note, however, that there is no trace of the particle *d-* ('of') following *bšmh*.
Nonetheless, if we render the picture-book format of this section of the tab-
let in the form of a running text, we arrive at the following fluent reading:
'In the name of Michael (HEAD 1) of the horses of the Blue faction, (in the
name of) Gabriel (HEAD 2) of the horses, (in the name of Raphael) (HEAD
3) of the horses of the Blue (faction)'. If, in contrast, the heads represent a
trio of charioteers targeted by our tablet, the text may still be read as a pic-
ture book, though the word *bšmh* would then form part of the text in block
A.

*dswst*[*h*] *dbnṭ* 'of the horses of the Blue (faction)'—As would be expected of a
lead tablet found in a circus, there is frequent reference to horses in our text.
The form *swsth* occurs several times in this tablet (ll. 4, 6, 15; block C); in addi-
tion, the forms *swswth* (in l. 8; perhaps also in block D: *sws*[*w*]*th*) and *swst* (l. 12)
are attested.

The vocal ending of the sg. m. absolute form of the word for horse (writ-
ten with *-y* or *-h* and representing the vowel *-ē*) is characteristic of Aramaic.
The emphatic form of this word is usually *sws*(*y*)*y'* (in Jewish Palestinian Ara-
maic *sws*[*y*]*yh*). The plural of the m. noun is largely formed with the ending
*-wān* (spelled *-wn*) in the absolute form, *-wāt* (spelled *-wt*) in the construct form,
and *-wātā* (spelled *-wt'* or *-wth*) in the emphatic form.[95] There is a considerable
amount of variation in the spelling of this noun across the different dialects of
Aramaic.

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94    In spells *bšmh* is followed by (one of the names of) God, angelic names, or other holy
      names. See Y. Harari, *Jewish Magic Before the Rise of Kabbalah* (Detroit: Wayne State Uni-
      versity Press, 2017) p. 173.

95    For this phenomenon in Syriac nouns with an ending *-y'* in the emphatic sg. m., see
      Th. Nöldeke, *Kurzgefasste Syrische Grammatik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesell-
      schaft, reprint of the 2nd edn, 1966) p. 52, § 79. There is some evidence that in older Ara-
      maic the masculine plural form of the noun was construed with the ending *-īn*: *sws*(*y*)*n*.
      For Official Aramaic, see for example *swsyn* (TAD C2.1: 44). In Samaritan Aramaic, the evid-
      ence is less clear-cut: In addition to the Aramaic formation that is found in other dialects
      of Late Aramaic, Samaritan Aramaic also evidences the Hebrew forms *sws* (sg. m.) and
      *swsym* (pl. m.). See on this, DSA, p. 574.

The f. form of the noun (*swsh*, with a f. ending *-ā*) is not widely attested in Aramaic but examples are known of the sg. f. emphatic form *swst'* and the pl. emphatic form *swsyt'*.[96]

All the attestations of this noun in our text are probably based on the pl. m. formation of the noun, with nominal endings that are normally used for f. nouns (absolute: *-n*; construct state: *-t*; emphatic state: *-th*). From a formal point of view, only the form *swswth* in line 8 can be identified as a pl. m. (due to the medial consonant *-w-*), though it is possible and even probable that the plural is implied in each occurrence of the noun in this text. This assumption is based on the use of the demonstrative pronoun *'l(y)n* 'these' (pl. c.), which modifies both *swsth* and *swst* in the tablet (l. 4 *'lyn swsth*; l. 12 *d'ln swst*). However, the possibility that several of these forms are in fact f. 'mare(s)' (especially in l. 15; see the commentary to this line) cannot be excluded.

In three cases, the word for horse is found in a *d*-phrase (a genitive construction). In each case, the second term in the construction refers to the Blue faction (block B *dswst*[*h*] *dbnṭ*; block D *sws*[*w*]*th dbn*[*ṭh*]; l. 8 *swswth dbnṭh*). The word *dbnṭ* also appears in line 15 where it is preceded by *wkh* 'and here'/'and so' and followed by *dṣyh* (meaning uncertain; see the commentary to ll. 12 and 15). In lines 8 and 15 the word *bnṭ* probably occurs in the sg. emphatic form (with the ending *-h*; l. 8 *swswth dbnṭh*; l. 15 *swsth dṣyh wkh dbnyṭh*), but in Syriac the word *bnṭ'* is a pl. m. (marked with the *syāmē*) and reflects the Greek plural form Βένετοι '*Veneti*, members of the Blue faction in the Byzantine circus'.[97]

*ẏhẇḣ*—It is possible that *yhwh* is invoked here and that the divine name should be connected with the following words.

*lh tšbq̇ lwn ʿl*—The reading is tentative. The second word is a verbal form and should perhaps be connected with the word *lh* 'not',[98] which is written above the last part of this line and which slants downwards (see drawing). It should be noted, however, that the letters of *lh tšbq lwn* are smaller in size than the rest of text. The *l* which follows the verbal form could be the preposition *l-*, in which case we might be looking at the preposition *l-* combined with a pron. sf. pl. 3m.[99] The phrase could thus be read as 'do not let/allow them (to enter/to

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96   *DJBA*, p. 986 (s.v. *swst'*); *SL*, p. 795 (s.v. *swst'*). The f. pl. emphatic form *swsyt'* only occurs in Syriac (*SL*, p. 795) and in Mandaic (*MD*, p. 232 records susiata 'mares').

97   See *SL*, p. 161 (s.v. *bnṭ'*).

98   On the spelling *lh* for *l'*, see 8. Linguistic and Orthographic Characteristics of the Text.

99   The form *-wn* occasionally appears instead of *-hwn* in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic. For examples with prepositions, see Dalman, *Grammatik*, p. 225 f. See also Sh. Heijmans, 'Mor-

win)'.[100] Similar short commands to a divinity to impede the horses in a race are also found in a Greek curse tablet discovered in the circus at Antioch.[101] It should be noted that the line *tšbq lwn ʿl* was added after the following line was written. The interpretation of the last word of the line is equally slippery. A connection with the verb *ʿll* 'to enter' is attractive due to the context, but this is grammatically impossible, as one would expect *lmʿl* 'to enter', or the like.

*Block C*
*dswsth* 'of the horses'—The word is located at the top of block C, just as in block B and probably in block D as well (where it appears in a damaged form), and is read as part of a spell. Note that in block B and D this noun phrase is followed by *dbnṭ(h)* 'of (the) Blue faction' (*dbnṭ* in block B; *dbn[ṭh]* in block D; see also *dbnṭh* in l. 8). On the interpretation of this part of the text in block C, see the commentary to blocks A and B.

*hdn sr* 'this angel'—The demonstrative pronoun *hdn* occurs in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic with an attributive function as well as a substantive function (see also 8. Linguistic and Orthographic Characteristics of the Text).[102] Attributive demonstrative pronouns are usually found in an initial position in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic.[103] The meaning 'angel' is not absolutely certain here, and the interpretation is somewhat problematic due to the fact that the three heads drawn on the tablet were pierced by the nail, though the possibility that this happened accidentally cannot be excluded, regardless of the negligence this might suggest (see also the commentary to block B above). If correct, however, this noun phrase may point to the adjacent head (either HEAD 2 or HEAD 3). The word is found here in the spelling with *s*, though the older spelling with *ś* is the regular spelling in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic.[104] It has the meaning

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phology of the Aramaic Dialect in the Palestinian Talmud According to Geniza Manuscripts' (MA Thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2005), p. 38 [in Hebrew]. According to Heijmans, *-wn* and *-hwn* are varied freely in reliable manuscripts of the Palestinian Talmud from the Cairo Genizah.

100   On *šbq*, see DJPA³, p. 616f.

101   Daniel and Hollmann, *Magica Levantina*, no. 30.

102   For examples, see DJPA³, p. 148 (s.v. *dn*).

103   DJPA³, p. 149 (s.v. *dn*) (see especially the remark at the end of the entry).

104   The spelling *sr* is not attested with any certainty in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (no attestations are mentioned in DJPA³, p. 662 [s.v. *śr*]; see also DJPA³, p. 435 [s.v. *(sr)*]: 'unclear'). The spelling with *s* is attested in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (in addition to the spelling with *ś*). There are several occurrences of this spelling in magic bowls (see below, n. 106).

'lord', 'prince'[105] and 'angel, guardian angel'[106] and is considered to be a loan-word from Biblical Hebrew due to the frequent spelling of the word with *ś* in several dialects of Aramaic. The word is known in other magical contexts, for instance, in the following text from the Palestinian Talmud (p. San. 7:11 [25d]): 'Rabbi Yehoshua commanded the angel of the sea and he swallowed him (the magician)' (*gzr r″ yhwšʿ ʾl śrh dymʾ wblʿyh*).[107] There are no visible traces of an emphatic state ending attached to *sr*, and such an ending may have been omitted by the person who drafted the text of the tablet (see also *dʾln swst* in l. 12).[108] It is also possible to translate this phrase as a nominal clause ('this is an angel'), though this reading is less likely.

*bhdn bṭlh* 'on this *lamella*'—The word *bṭlh* is probably related to Greek πέταλον '*lamella*', a word that is often applied to the metal sheets used for the inscription of magical texts.[109] The word appears twice in the self-designation *bhdn bṭlh* 'on this *lamella*' (block C; l. 13). The related word *pṭlwn* (*pslyn*) is documented already in the Tosefta, with the same technical meaning as the Greek: *ʾpslyn* on which one writes the amulet' (*pslyn šhwʾ kwtb ʿlyw ʾt hqmyʿ*). It also appears in later Jewish magical material.[110] The word *pṭlʾ* / *pʾṭlʾ* is also known from Syriac (pl. m. < πέταλα; marked with a *syāmē*). It is modified by a noun designating copper (*pṭlʾ dnḥšʾ*), tin (*pṭlʾ dʾnkʾ*) and lead (*pṭlʾ dʿprʾ*).[111] Noteworthy is the fact

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105   So, e.g., in Palmyrene Aramaic. See *DNWSI*, p. 1190 (s.v. *śr*).

106   So, e.g., in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic. See *DJBA*, p. 1190 (s.v. *śrʾ, srʾ*) 'angel', 'guardian angel'.

107   Note also the following Hebrew passage in an amulet for healing: *bšm šmʿll hsr hgdwl* 'in the name of *šmʿll* the great prince/angel' (Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, no. A24:13). The word is perhaps related to the word *srrw* 'dominion', which is found in the phrase *srrw rbh* 'great dominion' in an Aramaic amulet (see Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, no. A7:3). Note, however, that the word is not included in *DJPA*³.

108   Note that the emphatic ending is attached to a Greek loanword in the noun phrase *bhdn bṭlh* (*bṭlh* in block C and l. 13). The emphatic ending is also attached to other Greek loan-words (*qmṭh* in block D and l. 13; *bnṭh* in ll. 8.15).

109   This is equivalent to the Hebrew term *ṭs*, which occurs in the Jewish magical recipes discussed above (from *Sefer ha-Razim* and *Ḥarba de-Moshe*; see 3. Circus Magic in Jewish Magical Literature).

110   T. Kel. B. Meṣ. 1:11. On *pslyn* for *pṭlwn* in this text, see Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, p. 374, n. 64; on the etymology of *pṭlwn* and *pslyn*, see also G. Bohak, 'Magic in the Land of Israel in the Period of the Mishna and Talmud', in M. Kahana, V. Noam, M. Kister, D. Rosenthal (eds.), *The Literature of the Sages in the Land of Israel*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi, 2018) p. 711, n. 13. The word *pṭlwn* is also known from the late Targum Job (TgJob 28.19 *pyṭlwn*). With reference to tin (*pyṭlwn dksyṭ*) in a recipe from the Cairo Genizah, see G. Bohak, 'The Magical Rotuli From The Cairo Genizah', in G. Bohak (ed.), *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2011) pp. 335–336 (with n. 35).

111   See *SL*, p. 1182 (with references); see also *LS*, p. 564 'petala laminae'.

that, in all the Aramaic sources, the Greek π in this word is regularly rendered
with *p*,[112] as is the normal practice in Aramaic for the rendering of Greek loan-
words with the voiceless labial stop π. There are, however, several instances in
Rabbinic literature where Greek π is rendered with the voiced labial stop *b* in
loanwords.[113] We might add that the change *p* > *b* is in general a well-known
feature in many Semitic languages, including Hebrew and Aramaic.

*Block D*
*q̇ṙṙ*—Possibly 'charioteer', a word which occurs in Syriac and which is derived
from Latin *carrarius*.[114] It appears, for instance, in the Peshitta of 2 Macc. 9.4,
where it renders Greek ἀρματηλάτης.[115]

*sws*[*w*]*th ḋbn*[*ṭh*]—See blocks A, B, and C for the interpretation of this phrase
as part of a spell beginning with *bšmh*. This accords with the location of the
word *sws*[*w*]*th* to the left of HEAD 3. In fact, block D may start at this point (see
also 6. The Inscription on the Tablet).

*qmṭh*—The same form of the word also occurs in line 13. The word is probably
based on the Greek καμπτός 'flexible' and may be interpreted in this context
as a substantivised form of this Greek adjective.[116] The Greek ending has been
removed and the final -*h* reflects the emphatic state ending -*ā*.[117] The spelling
also reflects the deletion of π in the input form (see n. 118). Both *qmpṭws* and
*qmṭws* (with deletion of π) are attested in Syriac.[118] As our tablet was excavated

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112    For Syriac, see Butts, *Language Change in the Wake of Empire*, p. 73.
113    See Sh. Heijmans, 'Greek and Latin Loanwords in the Mishna: Lexicon and Phonology'
       (PhD Diss., Tel Aviv University, 2013), pp. 235–236 [in Hebrew], with references to literat-
       ure.
114    See A.M. Butts, 'Latin Words in Classical Syriac', *Hugoye* 19.1 (2016), pp. 123–192 (130, 135);
       *SL*, p. 1417 (s.v. *qrrʾ*).
115    The word *qrr* is also attested in Rabbinic Hebrew; see J. Levy, *Wörterbuch über die Tal-
       mudim und Midraschim*, vol. 4 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, reprint,
       1963), 392 (s.v. *qārār*) (spelled *qrr*, *qrʾr*). On the related noun *qrwn* 'wagon' in Mishnaic
       Hebrew, see Heijmans, 'Greek and Latin Loanwords in the Mishna', p. 226.
116    See *LSJ*, p. 873 (s.v. καμπτήρ). Cf. the verb κάμπτω 'to bend, curve' and 'to turn or guide
       a horse or chariot around the turning post' (*LSJ*, p. 873). According to Robert Daniel, the
       word *qmṭh* in the tablet is less likely to reflect the Greek καμπή, a less familiar term for the
       turning-post at the circus (see *LSJ*, p. 873).
117    On accommodation strategies for Greek case endings in Syriac, see Butts, *Language
       Change in the Wake of Empire*, p. 102.
118    *SL*, pp. 1379 and 1377 'turning-point', 'goal'. Deletion of π in the consonantal cluster μπτ is
       a feature of Koinè Greek. For a technical description of this phenomenon, see Butts, *Lan-*

near the first turning-post (see 2. Archaeological Context and Description of the Tablet), this reading would fit well with the context of the tablet.[119]

*Line 4*

*l̇qwrṙ–qwrr* may be a variant spelling of *qrr* 'charioteer' (see above block D). The presence of the vowel letter *w* for *u* or *o* in our tablet can be explained by the close proximity of *q* and a liquid.[120] The phenomenon as such is not limited to loanwords. There may be another example of the word in block D (*q̇ṙṙ*), but note that the reading of the word is uncertain (on the similarity of *d* and *r*, see 7. The Script).

Another possibility is to derive *l̇qwrṙ* from the well-known verb *qrr* 'to freeze', but the form defies further interpretation, and it is therefore unclear how the word would exactly fit in the context.[121] For a possible parallel in a Greek curse tablet, see, e.g., the curse directed at Babylas the Greengrocer from Antioch. In that tablet, 'to drown' and 'to chill' occur in close proximity: 'Just as you are sinking and are chilled in the disused cistern, so too sink and chill the soul of Babylas'.[122]

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*guage Change in the Wake of Empire*, pp. 62, 72. The same phenomenon is also found in the Greek loanword *qamṭrā / qumṭrā* (*qmṭrʾ / qwmṭrʾ*) 'box, chest', which is attested in Targumic Aramaic (TgJon 2 Kgs. 10.22) and in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (*DJBA*, p. 1024), and which in Syriac appears as *qmṭryn* 'small chest' (for Attic κάμπτριον; see Butts, *Language Change in the Wake of Empire*, pp. 62, 72; *SL*, p. 1377). A related noun with the Aramaic *nisba* ending *-yy* is found in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (*qmṭryy* 'chest maker'; see *DJPA*³, p. 566). For the same phenomenon in Mishnaic Hebrew, see Heijmans, 'Greek and Latin Loanwords in the Mishna', p. 236.

119    See also the occurrence of the word *qmṭwn* in a magical recipe from the sword literature mentioned above; this particular occurrence can be interpreted as an accusative of the same word (see 3. Circus Magic in Jewish Magical Literature). In light of the preceding interpretation of the word *qmṭh*, it is unlikely that there is a connection with the Aramaic root *qmṭ*.

120    The same phenomenon is found, for instance, in the word *qwlmws* 'scribe's reed' in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (*DJPA*³, p. 546) and in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (*DJBA*, p. 991), derived from Greek κάλαμος (< Latin *calamus*); cf. also *qwlms* in TgJon Jer. 8:8. For an example in the Mishna, see Heijmans, 'Greek and Latin Loanwords in the Mishna', p. 260 (*qwrdyyqws* = Greek καρδιακός).

121    See, e.g., *DJPA*, p. 580 (s.v. *qrr*).

122    Daniel and Hollmann, *Magica Levantina*, no. 22, ll. 32–37. This tablet was found in a cistern in the courtyard of a house. On the Greek words used in the tablets, see the commentary to no. 09, ll. 23–24 in Daniel and Hollmann, *Magica Levantina* (with references to other curse tablets).

*kdw ṭmʿwn ʾlyn swsth*—Because the forms of *w* and *y* are so similar in our text, there are several ways to read this line. Alternatively, the first word may be read as *kd* 'when' (instead of *kdw* 'now'[123]), in which case the third letter would be a *y* representing the prefix of a pref. form (*kd yṭmʿwn*). The verb form derives from the root *ṭmʿ*. This verb is well known from the western dialects of Late Aramaic (Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, Christian Palestinian Aramaic, and Samaritan Aramaic).[124] In Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, the *peʿal* of the verb has only intransitive meanings, such as 'to be swallowed up', 'to drown', 'to sink', and 'to set' (said of the sun); in the *paʿel*, it has transitive meanings, such as 'to bury', 'to cause to drown', and 'to sink'.[125] We have interpreted the form here as a *paʿel* imperative pl. 2m.[126] Imperative forms of Greek verbs that denote 'to sink' (βολίζω) and 'to submerge' (καταβολοθρίζω) are frequently attested in Greek circus curses from Antioch and Caesarea.[127] All these tablets were found

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123    For *kdw(n)* 'now', see *DJPA*[3], p. 268.

124    See *DSA*, p. 316; *DCPA*, p. 151. The verb is absent in Targum Onqelos but present in Targum Jonathan to the Later Prophets; in the Former Prophets it is found in a textual variant of TgJon 1 Sam. 17.49. A cognate verb with the same meaning is notably absent in dialects of Eastern Aramaic (Syriac, Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, and Mandaic).

125    See *DJPA*[3], p. 238. The meaning 'to be swallowed' is probably based on traditions of the verb *blʿ* instead of *ṭmʿ* in several Aramaic translations of Exod. 15.4 (see the following discussion).

126    With the ending -*wn*, which is characteristic of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (see Dalman, *Grammatik*, § 62, p. 277). It is unclear who is addressed here. The absence of the direct object marker before a definite direct object with an animate referent is remarkable but has parallels. See on this M.L. Folmer, 'The Use and Form of the *Nota Objecti* in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic Inscriptions', in H. Gzella and M.L. Folmer (eds.), *Aramaic in its Historical and Linguistic Setting* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008) pp. 130–158 (151). Other possibilities here are to read the verb form as an active participle of the *peʿal* (*ṭmʿyn*) or as a *peʿal* / *paʿel* pref. conj. form pl. 2m. (*yṭmʿwn*): *kdw ṭmʿyn ʾlyn swsth* 'now these horses are sinking' or *kd yṭmʿwn ʾlyn swsth* 'when these horses will sink' / 'when they will drown these horses'. With respect to the latter possibility, it becomes necessary to read the conjunction *kd* 'when' before the verb form.

127    See Daniel and Hollmann, *Magica Levantina*: βολίζω in nos. 05, ll. 2–4, 4–6, 7–8; 06, ll. 6, 9; 07, l. 5; 30, l. 7; καταβολοθρίζω: nos. 04, l. 1; 06, ll. 3–4, 7–8; 07, ll. 5–6. No. 30 is a circus curse from Antioch. Its text reads: 'sink them' (the horses). The verb βολίζω 'to sink' is also found in two curses against Babylas the greengrocer from Antioch: 'I sink you on account of the lawless and impious Babylas the greengrocer; just as you are sinking and are chilled in the disused cistern, so too sink and chill the soul of Babylas, whom Dionysia, also called Hesychia, gave birth to' (no. 22, ll. 29–38; similar to no. 23, ll. 24–25). Most of the Greek verb forms in these texts are transitive imperative forms, often with the noun for horses as their object, e.g., no. 05 (Caesarea), ll. 2–4 and ll. 4–6, which read: 'sink, sink, overturn every soul of the horses (whose names are) inscribed on this lamella'. Sometimes intransitive instead of transitive forms are used. See also the commentary to the texts quoted above in Daniel and Hollmann, *Magica Levantina*.

in drains, cisterns, or wells, and there must presumably have been an analogy at work between the sinking of the tablets and the sinking of the tablets' victims.

At the same time, the verb *ṭmʿ* in our tablet also evokes the Hebrew text of Exodus 15 (see also 5. Balaam and His She-Ass), a song about the destruction of Pharaoh's cavalry, which 'sank as lead into the mighty waters' (JPS) (Exod. 15.10: *ṣllw kʿprt bmym ʾdyrym*). The correspondence between the sinking of the cavalry and of lead is an excellent example of analogical magic, especially in our equine context. Presumably the exposure of the lead tablet to the water in the drainage channel where it was deposited was seen as sufficient for the purposes of the effective analogy.[128] According to Exod. 15.12, and contra Exod. 15.10, it was the earth and not the sea that swallowed the Egyptians ('you stretched your right hand and the earth swallowed them'). One of the Rabbinic traditions that tries to explain this discrepancy recounts a dispute between the earth and the sea about who will receive the slain Egyptians. This dispute is found in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and all the extant Palestinian Targums to Exod. 15.12 (Fragmentary Targum [ms. P and ms. V]; Targum Cairo ms. W; Targum Neofiti I). The rabbis use this dispute in order to try and explain that, according to the biblical text, it was the earth and not the sea that swallowed the Egyptians:

> The land and the sea were arguing together, one with the other. The sea said to the land, 'Receive your children'. And the land was saying to the sea, 'Receive your slain'. The sea did not want to sink them (*ṭmʿ*)[129] and the earth did not want to swallow (*blʿ*) them. Immediately, O Lord, you inclined your right hand over the earth with an oath that they would not be demanded of her in the world to come. The earth then opened its mouth and swallowed them.[130]
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> Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

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128    For another example, see Daniel and Hollmann, *Magica Levantina*, no. 22, ll. 11–12.

129    The Palestinian Targums have the verb *qbl* 'to accept' at this point.

130    The translation is by M. Maher, *The Aramaic Bible*, vol. 2: *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Exodus* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994) p. 204. For a similar interpretation, see, e.g., Pirqe deRabbi Eliezer (G. Friedlander, *Pirḳê de-Rabbi Eliezer* [New York: Hermon, 1970] p. 334 f.) and the midrash Mekilta deRabbi Ishmael to Exod. 15.12 (J.Z. Lauterbach, *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, vol. 2 [Philadelphia 1976], p. 67 f.; third century CE). Note, however, that in these two texts the problem is not addressed in the form of a dispute. For other references to Rabbinic literature, see M.S.C. McNamara, *The Aramaic Bible*, vol. 2: *Targum Neofiti 1: Exodus* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994) p. 66, n. 12 (TgNeof Exod. 15.12) and Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Exodus*, p. 204, n. 23 (TgPsJ Exod. 15.12).

The Palestinian Targums and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan use the verb *ṭmʿ* to translate the Hebrew verb *ṭbʿ* in Exod. 15.4 ('they were sunk [*puʿal* perfect] in the Sea of Reeds').[131] Most of the Palestinian Targums and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to Exod. 15.1 and 15.21 also use the verb *ṭmʿ* in an expansion of the Hebrew text,[132] apparently in order to create a parallel with the biblical text of Exod. 15.4 which reads: 'Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has thrown into the sea and the best of his officers were sunk in the Sea of Reeds' (translation Folmer). The biblical text of verses 1 and 21 has only 'the horse and its rider(s) he has thrown into the sea'.

There is a reference to Pharaoh's chariots in one of the Greek curse tablets from Antioch: ὡς ἔβαλες τὼ ἄ⟨ρ⟩μα τοῦ Φαραῶνος οὕτος βάλη τὶν δύσ[ω]ληψιν αὐτοῦ 'As you smote the chariot of Pharaoh, so smite his (Babylas') obstinacy (or trickery)'.[133] 'The chariot of Pharaoh' in the Greek tablet is an explicit reference to the story in Exodus 15.[134] The image of God as a charioteer pushing his chariot over the Sea of Reeds is also found in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic magic bowls, e.g., in the following adjuration: *bšmyh dyhwq yhwq dydḥq mrkbtyh ʿl ymʾ dswp* 'in the name of God who pushes his chariot over the Sea of Reeds'.[135] The Sea of Reeds also appears in a Syriac bowl: *ʾyk dʾmr mwšʾ lymʾ dswp wqmw ʾyk šwrʾ dmn trwyhwn gyšʾ* 'just as Moses said to the Sea of Reeds and walls (of water) stood from two sides'.[136] In the following amulet from Ḥorvath Marish, written in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic and intended for the subjugation of the fellow townspeople of Yose son of Zenobia, God is depicted as the God who subdued the sea with his horses: *hyk dkbšt ymh bswsyk* 'just as you have subdued the sea with your horses'.[137]

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131 An exception is Targum Cairo ms. 4 which has the verb *ṭbʿ* (as in the Hebrew text and in Targum Onqelos).

132 Exod. 15.1: Fragmentary Targum ms. P; Targum Cairo; Targum Pseudo-Jonathan; Exod. 15.21: Targum Neofiti I; Fragmentary Targum ms. P; Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. In TgNeof Exod. 18.11, one finds the verb *ṭmʿ* in an expansion: 'and he has sunk their chariots in the Sea of Reeds'.

133 Daniel and Hollmann, *Magica Levantina*, no. 22, ll. 11–12.

134 For this reference to Exod. 15.4, see also P.W. van der Horst, 'The God Who Drowned the King of Egypt: A Short Note on an Exorcistic Formula', in P.W. van der Horst, *Jews and Christians in Their Graeco-Roman Context: Selected Essays on Early Judaism, Samaritanism, Hellenism, and Christianity* (WUNT, 196, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006) pp. 180–184.

135 Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls*, vol. 1, nos. 4:14; 6:15; 9:15.

136 Moriggi, *Syriac Incantation Bowls*, no. 6:4. The translation of the second clause differs from the translation in Moriggi.

137 Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, no. A16:4–5.

*Line 5*

’{*b*}*šb’t*—The person who inscribed the tablet erred after ’ and wrote *b*. He then wrote the *š* over the *b*. This verbal form (*afʿel* sf. conj. sg. 1c. of the verb *šbʿ* 'to adjure') is not spelled with ʿ but with ’. The same spelling is used in *’šb’* (l. 9), which is a pref. conj. form of the same verb (*afʿel* pref. conj. sg. 1c. of *šbʿ* 'to adjure') (see the discussion in 8. Linguistic and Orthographic Characteristics of the Text). In this verb's third appearance, it is spelled with ʿ (l. 9 *mšbʿ*, *afʿel* part. sg. m.). This form misses an overt expression of the subject, but note that the subject can be inferred from *’šb’*, to which it is juxtaposed.

*bš mk”l*—This is an abbreviation of *bšm mk’l* rather than a case of haplography (see also *bš rp’l* in l. 5 and *bš gḃry.’l* in l. 9).[138] Note that the angelic name Michael is written without the vowel letter *y*, and that the ’ is written twice.[139]

*gbr’l*—The shape of the ’ with two additional strokes in the shape of a Greek *lambda* is unusual. We have interpreted this as a ligature of ’ and *l*. Another example of this ligature appears in line 6, in the word *mhdd’l*.

*bš rp’l* 'in the name of Raphael'—This is another instance of the abbreviation of *bšm*. Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael are often grouped together in Jewish literature from the Second Temple period onwards—typically in groups of four or seven special angels.[140] The names Michael, Sariel,[141] Raphael, and Gab-

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138  Similar abbreviations for *bšm* and *šm* can be found in other magical texts. For an example in a Jewish amulet, see Elitzur-Leiman, 'Jewish Metal Amulets', no. 77:12, pp. 11, 14, 149 (*brwk š kbwd mlkwtw* [Hebrew]). For examples in Mandaic amulets, see O. Abudraham, *A Grammar of Early Mandaic* (Studies in Language, 30, Jerusalem: The Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2022) p. 106 [in Hebrew]: *bš dḥyy’*.

139  For examples of the use of double ’ in angelic names in a magical context, see D. Levene, 'Calvariae Magicae: The Berlin, Philadelphia and Moussaieff Skulls', *Orientalia* 75 (2006), pp. 359–379: *nwr[y]”l ml’kh* 'Nuriel the angel', *ḥšty”l ml’kh* 'Hastiel the angel', and *šyby”l ml’kh* 'Shibiel the angel' (skull no. 2, ll. 9–10).

140  *DDD*, p. 81; Larson, 'Michael', p. 546. The tradition of four archangels probably developed out of Ezekiel 1, whereas the tradition of seven archangels probably goes back to Ezekiel 9. The tradition of seven is also found in Tob. 12.15, where Raphael refers to himself as one of the seven (*DDD*, p. 81). Michael and Gabriel—the only angels called by name in the Hebrew Bible—both appear in the biblical Book of Daniel as important angels (Michael: Dan. 10.13, 21; 12.1; Gabriel: Dan. 8.15–26). Raphael does not appear in the Hebrew Bible, but he does appear in the deuterocanonical Book of Tobit, where he is a prominent figure.

141  In later traditions of the four archangels, one usually finds Uriel (as in the Greek version of 1 En. 9; see *DDD*, p. 81).

riel appear in Aramaic fragments of 1 En. 9:1 from Qumran (4Q202 col. iii:7) which probably belong to the oldest strand of this tradition (cf. 1QM ix.15–16).[142] Qumran also witnesses the tradition of seven archangels.[143] Even though the ordering of the archangels is not always the same, there is a clear tendency to name Michael first.[144] Parallels to the order Michael, Gabriel, Raphael—as in our tablet—can be found in a Greek curse tablet from Antioch.[145] This order is also found in Jewish magical texts from Late Antiquity and the Cairo Genizah,[146] alongside the order Michael, Raphael, Gabriel.[147] The three names sometimes appear in a sequence consisting of only these three angels. There are also examples of this in the magic bowls.[148]

*Line 6*

*wbšmh dhw hwh yhwq* 'and in the name of *hw hwh yhwq*'—The name *yhwq* is known from a magical *historiola* that appears in some magic bowls and which recalls the crossing of the Sea of Reeds in Exodus 15: *bšmyh dyhwq yhwq ddḥyq*

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142    Cf. *PGM* III, ll. 146–150, where the four angels appear in a sequence of magical names within a magical formula with multiple purposes (including 'to restrain charioteers in a race'): 'I conjure you by the god IAŌ, by the god ABAŌTH, by the god ADŌNAI, by the god MICHAĒL, by the god SOURIĒL, by the god GABRIĒL, by the god RAPHAĒL …' (Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, p. 22).

143    See *DDD*, p. 81.

144    The prominent position of Michael among the angels is clear already in texts from Qumran (esp. 1QM xvii.6–7) (see E.W. Larson, 'Michael', in L. Schiffman and J.C. Vanderkam [eds.], *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, vol. 1 [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000] pp. 546–548 [546]). In Dan. 12.1, Michael is referred to as *myk'l hśr hgdwl* 'Michael, the great prince'.

145    Daniel and Hollmann, *Magica Levantina*, no. 28.

146    For Late Antique materials, see, e.g., Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, no. 31; for Cairo Genizah materials, see, e.g., Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, nos. 15:1–2, 29:5–7.

147    See, e.g., Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, no. 28:16–17, followed by four other angelic names.

148    See Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls*, vol. 1, no. 21:13: *gbry'l wmyk'l wrp'yl ḥtymn 'l hdyn gyṭ'* 'Gabriel, Michael and Raphael sign on this legal document'; the same formula appears in D. Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls*: *Incantation Texts in Jewish Aramaic from Late Antiquity* (London: Kegan Paul, 2003), M50:7 and M59:14; see also J.A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1913), no. 9:11; see also Levene, *Corpus of Magic Bowls*, M155:6–7: *'l ydy gbry'l wmyk'l wrp'l* 'by means of Gabriel and Michael and Raphael'. In these cases, Gabriel is listed first; see also Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, no. 20:11–12 (a text from the Cairo Genizah), where the names are followed by four other angelic names.

*mrkbtyh ʿl ymʾ dswpʾ* 'in the name of *yhwq yhwq* who pushed his chariot over the Sea of Reeds'.[149]

*mhddʾl rmnʾl*—The final element *-ʾl* attached to both of these words suggests that they are possibly angelic names. We have no direct parallels for such names of angels, but there are several remarks that can be made.

The interpretation of *mhddʾl* or *mḥddʾl* is problematic.[150] There are many angelic names that somehow echo in this name, but it is difficult to draw any etymological connection with these other names. From an etymological point of view, it makes sense to connect the name with the root *ḥdd* (*paʿel* 'to sharpen').[151] The name *mhddʾl* / *mḥddʾl* may have echos in *hdd*[*ʾl* or *ḥdd*[*ʾl* (l. 12), but this is very speculative.

From a semantic point of view, it is attractive to attempt a connection with the angelic name *yhdʾl*, attested in an Aramaic fragment from Qumran, but this is not warranted from an etymological point of view, as *yhdʾl* seems to derive from *hdy* 'to lead' (*paʿel*).[152]

There may be a connection between *rmnʾl* and the Aramean divinity Ramman.[153] A connection with the name *rmyʾl* is not very likely from an etymological point of view but should be considered nonetheless.[154]

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149    Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls*, vol. 1, nos. 4:14; 6:15; 9:15. Also in Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*, p. 183, no. 14. See J.N. Ford and M. Morgenstern, 'On Some Readings and Interpretations in the Aramaic Incantation Bowls and Related Texts', *BSOAS* 80.2 (2017), pp. 191–231 (205).

150    A combination of the medial *m* (and the subsequent *h*) with the preceding *q* does not elicit any satisfactory interpretations.

151    *DJPA*³, p. 190.

152    The name *yhdʾl* appears in 1 En. 6:7. This fragment tells the story of the twenty fallen angels (4Q202 col. ii:17) (= 4Qen^b col. ii:17). The twentieth angel is *yhdy*[*ʾl* 'Yehadiel' or perhaps *hdy*[*ʾl*] 'Haddiel'. For the latter reading, see Beyer, who suggests that the angelic name is preceded by the conjunction *w* 'and' (Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte*, vol. 1, p. 235). For the etymology of Yehadiel, see J.T. Milik (ed.), *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumrân Cave 1* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) p. 156 (Yehadiel = 'God will guide'). The Aramaic verb *hdy* 'to lead' (*paʿel*) is well known from Eastern Aramaic dialects.

153    On Ramman, see *DDD*, pp. 380–381. He appears in 2 Kgs. 5.18 as Rimmon; the name is combined with Hadad in Zech. 12.11 (Hadad Rimmon).

154    For this name, see Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, no. A4:3 (amulet); D. Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts from Late-Antique Mesopotamia: May These Curses Go Out and Flee* (*MRLA*, 2, Leiden: Brill, 2013), VA.2814:4; see also Rebiger and Schäfer, *Sefer ha-Razim*, §107 (mss. F44, P849, M249, M738).

*Lines 7–8*

Line 7 and the beginning of line 8 are almost incomprehensible. Line 7 seems to be a false start. The nine or ten letters in this line look faded and were apparently erased. It is possible that line 8 is a new attempt to write the same text, as the initial words in both lines are almost identical (*hln* and *ʾln*, respectively, possibly the plural demonstrative pronoun).

*Line 8*

.*ln swswth dbnyṭh*—The reading of the first word is uncertain, but it probably reflects the demonstrative pronoun *ʾln*, attested elsewhere in this inscription (for *ʾlyn*, see l. 4; for the defective spelling *ʾln*, see l. 12).[155]

*k̇lḥd*—The reading of this word is uncertain. The same sequence of letters also appears in line 12 (*klḥd*). At present, the most satisfactory solution seems to be to read *klḥd* or *kl ḥd* and to interpret this as 'every one' or 'each one'.[156]

*Line 9*

*šbʾ wmšbʿ*—On the weakening of the gutturals, see 8. Linguistic and Orthographic Characteristics of the Text and the commentary on line 5. The *afʿel* pref. conj. sg. 1 is followed by an *afʿel* participle (sg. m.). Both participles and sf. conj. forms sg. 1 (the latter with performative function; also in l. 5 of this tablet) of this verb are common in adjurations. To our knowledge, there are no parallels for pref. conj. forms of this verb in incantations.[157]

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155   On the initial position of attributive demonstrative pronouns in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, see the commentary to *hdn sr* in block C. It is also possible in theory to interpret the phrase as a nominal clause ('these are the horses of the Veneta'), but the pronoun *ʾlyn*—to the best of our knowledge—is normally used in a cataphoric way when it appears as the subject in a nominal clause. In other words, one would expect a list of hipponyms in what follows, which is not the case.

156   R. Payne Smith and J. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903) p. 214, refers to *klḥd* 'every one', 'each one' (s.v. *kl* 2) 'in construction with a pronoun or substantive'; see also the noun phrase *kl ḥd wḥd* 'every one', 'each one' in DJPA³, p. 277 (s.v. *kl*); for Christian Palestinian Aramaic, see DCPA, p. 174 (s.v. *kwl ḥd* 'each one').

157   For references in bowls, see DJBA, p. 1103 (s.v. *šbʿ*); for references to amulets, see DJPA, p. 616 (s.v. *šbʿ*). This is confirmed by the evidence in the indexes in Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls*, vol. 1; Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts*; Moriggi, *Syriac Incantation Bowls*; S. Bhayro, J.N. Ford, D. Levene, and O.P. Saar, *Aramaic Magic Bowls in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin* (MRLA, 7, Leiden: Brill 2018); J.N. Ford and M. Morgenstern, *Aramaic Incantation Bowls in Museum Collections*, vol. 1: *The Frau Professor Hilprecht Collection of Babylonian Antiquities, Jena* (MRLA, 8, Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020); S. Shaked, J.N. Ford, S. Bhayro, *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls*, vol. 2 (MRLA, 10,

*lšmh*—The preposition *l* in this formula is unusual; the expected formula is *bšmh* 'in the name of'. The combination with *l* also appears in line 13,[158] though it is also possible to read a corrupted *b* in line 13 instead.

*wbš gḃry'.l*—This is presumably another instance of the abbreviation of *bšm* to *bš*, which also occurs in line 5 in combination with the angelic names *mk"l* and *rp'l*. The name that follows *bš* in line 9 is probably that of an angel: It ends with the typical element *-'l* and could be Gabriel, but the reading is uncertain. The lower stroke of the *b* is omitted, and a letter or a sign appears between *'* and *l* that we are unable to identify. If the name *gbry'l* does indeed appear here, line 9 would contain a further instance of the trio Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael in addition to their appearance in line 5. It is also possible to read *gdry'.l* here; the angelic name *gdry'l* is known from several mss. of *Sefer ha-Razim*.[159]

*Line 10*

*wbšmh drp'l*—'and in the name of Raphael'

What follows after this phrase is difficult to decipher because either line 10 or line 11 was written over the other, and we cannot tell which of the two lines the letters *-'l* belong to (see l. 11 below). It is possible that another angelic name follows *rp'l* as the ending *-'l* can be identified here.

*Line 11*

*bšmh dẏhwh mlkh dyšḋh*—'in the name of *yhwh* the king,[160] who cast (?) …'

The reading of the last word is uncertain. It seems most plausible to interpret the word *dyšdh* as a form of the verb *šdy* (*pe'al*) 'to throw', 'to cast down',

Leiden: Brill, 2022). The remarkable sequence of a pref. conj. (future tense) and a participle (present tense) possibly reflects a phenomenon in ancient Jewish magic which has been described by Shaked as an 'obsession of accuracy'. According to Shaked, magical texts often show 'exhaustive modes of expression', such as multiple names of adversaries or demons, in order to achieve the broadest protection possible. See S. Shaked, 'Time Designations and other Recurrent Themes in Aramaic Incantation Bowls', in J. Stackert, B. Nevling Porter, and D.P. Wright (eds.), *Gazing on the Deep: Ancient Near Eastern and Other Studies in Honor of Tzvi Abusch* (Bethesda, MD: Eisenbrauns, 2018) pp. 221–234.

158 The combination of *šmh* with the preposition *l* appears in an amulet published by Naveh and Shaked (no. A8:1 in Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*), but it does not form part of an invocation there.

159 Rebiger and Schäfer, *Sefer ha-Razim*, §107: G22, P849, N8117; other variants: *grry'l* in M738 and F44; *grdy'l* in TA42; *ndry'l* in M248.

160 For the phrase *yhwh mlkh*, see Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, no. A31:6: *bšm hmlk yhwh* 'in the name of king *yhwh*' (Hebrew).

represented by a pref. conj. preceded by *d-* or a sf. conj. preceded by a plene spelling of *d-*.[161] A sf. conj. would suit the context best as it would link this sentence to Exodus 15. The verb *šdy* is a Common Aramaic verb; it occurs in Official Aramaic, Qumran Aramaic, and in several dialects of Late Aramaic.[162] It also appears in Targum Onqelos to Exod. 15.4:[163] *rtyky prʿh wmšrytyh šdy bymʾ* 'The chariots of Pharaoh and his armies he has thrown into the sea'. For a similar usage of the verb *šdy* in the *peʿal*, see the following magic bowl: *šdynʾ lkyn lʿwmqy ʾrʿh tḥtytʾ dlyt ʾypšr lmysq mynh* 'and I shall throw you to the depths of the netherworld, from which it is not possible to ascend'.[164] Exodus 15 is often referred to in Jewish magical texts, and a reference to Exodus 15 is also to be found in a Greek tablet from Antioch (see the commentary to l. 4 above).[165]

Another possibility is to read the sequence *dyšdh* as 'of the demon' (featuring either a *plene* spelling of the genitive particle *də-* or, less likely, the older form of this particle: *dy*). This would give 'the king of the demon' (*mlkh dyšdh*), a title which is more often found in Jewish magical literature, but as far as we know it is never given to God.[166]

As mentioned in the commentary to line 10, the reading of lines 10 and 11 is complicated by the fact that they overlap partially; the reading of the word following *mlkh* in line 11 is complicated by the problematic positioning of the letters ʾ and *l*. It is exactly at the point of these two letters that line 10 and the last part of the word *dyšdh* in line 11 overlap, and it is possible that these two letters belong not to line 10 but to a word in line 11. If the two letters belong to line 11, then the word following *mlkh* should be read *dyśrʾl*: *bšmh dyhwh mlkh*

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161　*DJPA*[3], p. 137.

162　*DNWSI*, p. 1111; *DQA*, p. 230; *DJPA*[3], p. 619; *DCPA*, p. 413; *SL*, p. 1512; *DJBA*, p. 1109b; *MD*, p. 449 (s.v. šda I).

163　The Palestinian Targums to Exod. 15.4 have *rmʾ/y* at this point; TgPsJ Exod. 15.4 has both *šdʾ* and *rmʾ*. All the Targums have *rmʾ / rmy* in Exod. 15.1, 21.

164　Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls*, vol. 1, no. 55:7–8.

165　Daniel and Hollmann, *Magica Levantina*, no. 22, ll. 11–13.

166　The title 'the king of the demons' / 'the king of *dēvs*' is often given to the demons Asmodeus (in magic bowls *mlk šydy* and *mlk ʾ dywy*; with variant spellings) and Bagadana (in magic bowls *mlkhwn dšydy* 'the king of the demons' and *mlkhwn ddywy* 'the king of *dēvs*'; in different combinations and with variant spellings). On Asmodeus, see, e.g., b. Giṭ. 68a; b. Pes. 110a; for examples in magic bowls, see, e.g., Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls*, vol. 2, section I.1.3 (The seals of Ashmedai). On Bagadana, see S. Shaked, 'Bagdana, King of the Demons, and other terms in Babylonian Aramaic Magic', *Acta Iranica* 24 (1985), pp. 511–525; for examples in magic bowls, see, e.g., Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic* Bowls, vol. 1, sections I.2.2 (Divorce Texts: Elisur Bagdana) and I.2.4 (Divorce Texts: Other Divorce Texts).

*dyśr'l* 'in the name of *yhwh* the king of Israel …'. This interpretation suits the context best, but because of the difficulties mentioned we do not present it as our primary reading.

The last part of line 11 defies interpretation. Only the word *ṣdw*, 'desolation' or 'affliction' can be read with some confidence.[167] The related adjective *ṣdy* is found in the phrase *'tr ṣdy* 'a desolate place' in a magic bowl.[168]

*Line 12*

*d'ln swst*—Probably a scribal error for *sws(w)th* (l. 8 *swswth*) as one would expect the emphatic form in an attributive noun phrase with a deictic pronoun as the modifying element.

*dṣ.*—We also encounter a word that begins with *dṣ*[ in line 15. It is possible that these two forms derive from the same root, possibly a *pe'al* passive participle of a form of a root with initial *ṣ* and a final *y* (for the *y*, see l. 15), preceded by the particle *d*. Unfortunately, the second root consonant is unclear (both here and in l. 15).

*lhdḋ*[—For this word, see the comments on *mhdd'l* in line 6. We might hypothesise another angelic name here, but this is highly tentative for obvious reasons. We do not have a direct parallel for this name.

Given the regional context of our tablet, a connection with the foremost Aramean weather-god Hadad—even at this late period—should be considered. There is evidence in a letter written to the Antiochene rhetorician Libanios (d. 363 CE) for the continuity of the cult of Hadad at Aleppo at least until the middle of the fourth century CE.[169] A connection with Hadad is possible, but it must be stressed that this is highly speculative. See also the comments on Ramman in line 6.

It is also possible, instead of *hdd*[*'l*, to interpret the second *d* of the word as a *r* and to read *hdr*[*'l* or *ḥdr*[*'l*. The angelic name *ḥdry'l* in a magic bowl text might be related.[170]

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167 See *DJPA*³, p. 520: 'desolation'; *DSA*, p. 723: 'affliction' (and other meanings). In the sense of 'affliction', *ṣdw* is recorded in a few Jewish metal amulets, e.g., in a silver amulet written against *kl 'šh w'r'yy wkl ṣdw wkl lylyn wkl pg'yn* 'every fever and shivering, and every affliction, and all Lilis, and all harms' (Elitzur-Leiman, 'Jewish Metal Amulets', no. 69:10–11, pp. 61, 64).

168 See Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls*, vol. 1, no. 55:6.

169 On this, see H. Niehr, 'Religion', in H. Niehr (ed.), *The Aramaeans of Ancient Syria* (HdO, 106, Leiden: Brill, 2014) pp. 154, 201.

170 Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, no. 6:8.

An alternative possibility is to set aside angelic names altogether and to interpret *ḥdd* as a form of the verb *ḥdd*. The root *ḥdd* is known in Aramaic from the verb 'to sharpen' (*pa'el*) and from several nominal formations,[171] but it is not clear which form and function would fit in this context (see also the commentary on *mhdd'l* in l. 6).

Finally, it is also possible to interpret *lḥd* as *ḥd* 'one'[172] preceded by the preposition *l*. In this case, the second *d* should be connected with the following, damaged part of the line.

*Line 13*
*lšmh dyhwh* 'in the name of *yhwh*'—On the preposition *l* in this formula, see the commentary to line 9.

*bhdn bṭlh* 'on this *lamella*'—On this noun phrase, see block C.

*'l qmṭh 'lyh* 'at the upper turning-post'—On the word *qmṭh*, see block D.

*'lyh*—The reading of this word is uncertain. The word is possibly an emphatic form of the word *'lyh* 'upper' modifying the preceding word *qmṭh* (emphatic sg. m.).[173] In that case, 'the upper turning-post' would represent a technical term referring to the first turning-post (where the tablet was found) or to the second turning-post.[174] The word *'lyh* possibly reflects the word ἄνω in the noun phrase ὁ ἄνω καμπτός 'the upper turning-post' which is found in the work of the Antiochene writer Malalas.[175]

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171    See *DJPA*³, p. 190 (s.v. *ḥdd*). See also *DJPA*³, p. 190 (s.v. *ḥdwd*), always in *ḥdwd 'ynyn* 'sharp eyed one', said of a type of magician.

172    *DJPA*³, p. 189.

173    See *DJPA*³, p. 456 (s.v. *'lyy*).

174    See also the use of *'ly* 'upper' and *tḥty* 'lower' to refer to cardinal points in Old Aramaic and Official Aramaic (for Old Aramaic, see *KAI* no. 202:6; for Official Aramaic, see *DNWSI*, p. 854 [s.v. *'lyh*] and p. 1211 [s.v. *tḥtyh*]). Robert Daniel is of the opinion that the phrase in our tablet refers to the first turning-post, which is the turning-post furthest from the starting boxes.

175    Malalas, *Chronographia* 13.8 (p. 247) (description of a ceremony in the hippodrome of Constantinople in the fourth century CE). It is worth mentioning that the words ἄνω 'upper' and κάτω 'lower' refer to the limits of a metaphorical race course used by foot-runners in Plato, *Rep.* 10 (613b–c). See also *LSJ*, p. 169 (s.v. ἄνω g) and p. 931 (s.v. κάτω d). Because the reading of the second letter of the word is uncertain, however, the word might also be read as *'ryh*, a form derived from the verbal root *'ry* 'to hold', 'to freeze', possibly a passive part. sg. f. (*pe'al*). A possible translation would be 'frozen' (or 'seized', 'held'), which might be part of a curse to disable the horses' legs, but it is unclear how this word would

*wmkŝp*[—The reading of this word is also uncertain. If this reading were correct, then the form could be a participle of *kšp* 'to practice sorcery'. This root is more common in Hebrew than in Aramaic (where in all likelihood it is a loan from Hebrew).[176]

## Line 14

*żẏlṡ*—Unfortunately, the reading of this word, especially its first letter, is highly tentative. The final *-s* suggests that a Greek loanword might provide a possible explanation. We have considered ζῆλος 'jealousy', 'rivalry',[177] but not enough of the context is preserved to comment any further on the plausibility of this suggestion.

*ʾt mlʾkh dqm qdm blʿm qwm qdm ḋḃ*[... 'you the angel that stood before Balaam stand before *ḋḃ*[...'

*ʾt*—This probably reflects the personal pronoun sg. 2m. 'you'. This is the regular spelling of this pronoun in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic.[178] For the direct address 'You, the angel that stood before the she-ass of Balaam, now stand before *ḋḃ*[...' see, for instance, the direct address in the following magical text: *ʾtwn mlʾkyh qdšyh dqymy*[*n*] *qdm krsyh dʾlh rbh* 'you, the holy angels who stand in front of the throne of the Great God'.[179]

The invocation of the angel that stood before the she-ass of Balaam is a reference to the biblical story of Balaam son of Beor and his she-ass in Num. 22.1–35.[180] The name Balaam might be linked with the events recounted in Exodus

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fit in the context. See *DJPA*³, p. 473. For equivalents in Greek curse tablets, see, e.g., the examples quoted in the commentary to *l̇qwrṙ* in l. 4 (with n. 122); cf. also the adjective *ʿry* 'cold'. Alternatively, *ʿryh* may be a nominal form of the same root, indicating an infliction that is often mentioned in magical texts (*DJPA*³ [s.v. *ʿryyh* 2#], 'cold weather', 'chill').

176   For Hebrew, see *HALOT*, vol. 2, p. 503 (s.v. *kšp*); for Aramaic, see, e.g., *DSA*, p. 413 (s.v. *kšp*): *mkšp* 'sorcerer'; see also *DSA*, p. 788 (s.v. *qsm*); *MD*, p. 225 (s.v. kšp) (*afʿel*).

177   *LSJ*, p. 755.

178   See *DJPA*³, p. 57. Another possibility here is to read the noun *ʾt* 'letter' (*DJPA*³, p. 57 [s.v. *ʾt*] 'sign', 'letter'). This is used in Jewish magical literature as one of the names of God (see, e.g., Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, no. A 22:4.7).

179   Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, no. 7:4.

180   The figure of Balaam is also known from the Deir ʿAlla plaster text in Aramaic (eighth century BCE). For this very fragmentary text, see the *editio princeps* by Hoftijzer and Van der Kooij (J. Hoftijzer and G. van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla* [Leiden: Brill, 1976]). It is clear that the plaster text concerns the same Balaam, as he is referred to as 'the son of Beor' (*brbʿr*). According to the text's opening line, he is a seer (*ḥzh ʾlhn* 'seer of the gods'; the definite article is not used in this text).

15 (see 5. Balaam and His She-Ass) through the association of the name Balaam
with the verb *blʿ* 'to swallow'. This verb is also found in Exod. 15.12, where the
earth is said to have swallowed up the Egyptians, while the verb *ṭmʿ* is used to
translate *blʿ* in several Aramaic versions of Exod. 15.12. The same verb is also
found in line 4 of our tablet. As such, both line 4 and line 14 may evoke the nar-
rative of Balaam and the events related in Exodus 15. For further details on the
figure of Balaam in the Hebrew Bible and in later Jewish tradition, see above 5.
Balaam and His She-Ass.

What follows after *qdm* is unclear as the reading of both the *d* and the *b*
are uncertain. The fact that the angel in Num. 22.1–35 blocked the path of Bal-
aam's she-ass and its rider leads us to believe that what follows after *qdm* is the
name of the horse and/or charioteer whose course was to be blocked. For that
reason, the sequence *ḋḃ*[ should perhaps be restored as *ḋḃ*[*nṭh* '(those) of the
Veneta', but this is very tentative. Alternatively, the text can be restored as *ḋḃ*[*b*
'adversary'.[181]

## Line 15

*swsth dṣ.yh*—The word *dṣ.yh* is possibly connected to the word *dṣ..* in line 12
(see the commentary to l. 12). The ending -*h* is suggestive of a sg. f. absolute
form, but this does not sit well with the preceding m. noun *swsth*, unless this
instance represents a sg. f. form of the noun ('mare'; see also the commentary
to l. 2 on the possible appearance of the names of mares in curse tablets from
Antioch).

*wkḣ* 'and here'—A word pointing to the here and now would fit well with the
context of a magical text, but its precise relation with what follows is unclear.
An alternative interpretation is not self-evident.

*ktbh mṅ ddẏġ ʿdy*[*t*.—'The (this) inscription I made from my own [funds/pos-
sessions]'

The phrase is preceded by a small *vacat*, and it is attractive to read this final
part of the text as a kind of colophon, though its reading and interpretation are
far from certain.

The word *ktbh* is probably a noun in the singular with the emphatic ending
('the writing', 'the document'). If this interpretation is correct, then it is similar
in function to the self-designation *hdn bṭlh* that appears elsewhere in our text

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181    See *DSA*, p. 164 (s.v. *dbb*) 'enemy'. See also *bʿyl dbbʾ* 'enemy, foe' (< Akkadian *bēl dābābi*) in
       *DJBA*, p. 227 (s.v. *bʿl*). We are thankful to the anonymous reviewer of this article for this
       suggestion.

(block C and l. 13), albeit without a demonstrative pronoun. See also the phrase *hdn ktbh* in the magic bowls.[182]

The presence of the verb *ʿbd* 'to make' seems certain here.[183] The *y* following *ʿbd* may be interpreted either as the beginning of a new word, perhaps a short personal name, or as part of the preceding word. The remains of another letter are visible following the *y*, possibly a *t*. If so, it is possible that the text here reads *ʿbdy[t]*, a sf. conj. 1c. with the *plene* spelling of the afformative (*ʿbdy[t]* 'I made').

At first glance, the reading *ddwy* seems more likely than *ddyy* due to the different lengths of the last two letters. The latter reading—*ddyy*, with a shorter *y* following the first—should nevertheless be given serious consideration. The word *ddyy* / *ddwy* should probably be understood as a word derived from *yd* 'hand', most likely the possessive particle *dyd* (< *d-* + *yd*) with a pron. sf. sg. 1c. or perhaps sg. 3m.[184] Each of these two interpretations is problematic in one way or another. First, the possessive particle is usually spelled in *plene* fashion (*dyd-*). Second, the possessive particle is normally combined with pronouns that in turn are combined with singular masculine nouns (i.e, *-h* instead of *-wy*; *-y* instead of *-yy*; see the text quoted below). Our tablet, however, presents us with either *-wy* or with *-yy*, both of which are normally attached to plural masculine nouns (on the typical form of the pron. sf. *-wy* in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, see n. 56). Third, one would not expect the vowel-letter *y* (representing the original consonant of *yd* 'hand') to be dropped in either of these cases. Despite these problems, the interpretation of *ddyy* / *ddwy* as a noun which developed from a possessive particle seems to be the most likely option. It is possible that the double *y* in *ddyy* is an instance of dittography, or that the person who inscribed the tablet perhaps intended to write *dydy* but made a mistake.

The form *ddwy* cannot be explained in a similar manner (as a scribal error), and it is for this reason that the interpretation 'The (this) inscription I made from my own [funds/possessions]' is to be preferred over the interpretation 'The (this) inscription PN (*y[...]*) made (*ʿbd*) from his own [funds/possessions]

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182    Levene, *Corpus of Magic Bowls*, M101:1: *hdn ktbh*; Ford and Morgenstern, *Aramaic Incantation Bowls in Museum Collections*, vol. 1, no. 13 (*hdyn ktbʾ* 'this text').

183    Alternatively, one could think of a defective spelling of *ʿwbd*, 'deed', also found in the specific meaning of 'magical act' (*DJPA*³, p. 447 [s.v. *ʿwbd*]).

184    For Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, see *DJPA*³, p. 139; for Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, see *DJBA*, p. 327; for Mandaic, see *MD*, p. 106. In Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, this possessive particle is usually found in combination with indeclinable Greek words (*DJPA*³, p. 139). The literal interpretation of *yd*, e.g., in a phrase like 'with his hands'/'with my hands', is not very likely in light of *mn d-*.

(*mn ddwy*)'.[185] Whether or not the sentence is phrased in the first person remains somewhat uncertain, though this question is obviously of importance to the interpretation of the tablet.

The phrase calls to mind the following line from an ancient mosaic inscription in the synagogue at No'ara ('Ayn Dūk, sixth century CE), where *mn* precedes *dydh*: *dyhb ṭymy psypsh mn dydh* 'who gave the price of the mosaic from his own (possessions)'.[186]

### Acknowledgements

### Abbreviations

DCPA    M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Christian Palestinian Aramaic* (OLA, 235, Leuven: Peeters, 2014)

DDD     K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, and P.W. van der Horst (eds.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (2nd revised edition, Leiden: Brill, 1999)

DJBA    M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002)

DJPA³   M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (3rd revised and expanded edition, Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2017)

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185    Note, however, the fronted position of the direct object, and the prepositional phrase *mn ddyy* which precedes the verb form.

186    Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic*, no. 58:3. Cf. *'bd mn kysh PN* 'PN made at his own expense' (lit. 'from his purse') in an inscription from Palmyra (*PAT* 0247:1).

*DNWSI*  J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions* (2 vols.; HdO 21, Leiden: Brill, 1995)

*DQA*  E.M. Cook, *Dictionary of Qumran Aramaic* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015)

*DSA*  A. Tal, *A Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic* (2 vols.; HdO 50, Leiden: Brill, 2000)

*GTO*  E.M. Cook, *A Glossary of Targum Onqelos According to Alexander Sperber's Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 2008)

*HALOT*  L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (5 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000; revised edition W. Baumgartner and J.J. Stamm, translation M.E.J. Richardson [2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2001])

*KAI*  H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*, vol. 1: *Texte* (5th revised and expanded edition, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002)

*LS*  C. Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacum* (Hildesheim: Olms, reprint, 1995)

*LSJ*  H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, revised and augmented by H. Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (9th edition with a revised supplement, Oxford: Clarendon, 1996)

*MD*  E. Drower and R. Macuch, *A Mandaic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963)

*PAT*  D.R. Hillers and E. Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996)

*PG*  J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completes: Series graeca* (166 vols.; Paris: Petit-Montrouge, 1857–1883)

*PGM*  K. Preisendanz (ed.), *Papyri graecae magicae / Die griechischen Zauberpapyri* (2 vols; Stuttgart: Teubner, 2nd revised edition, Henrichs, 1973–1974)

*SL*  M. Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon: A Translation from the Latin, Correction, Expansion, and Update of C. Brockelmann's Lexicon Syriacum* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009)

*TAD* C  B. Porten and A. Yardeni. *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt, Newly Copied, Edited and Translated into Hebrew and English*, vol. 3: *Literature, Accounts, Lists* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1993)