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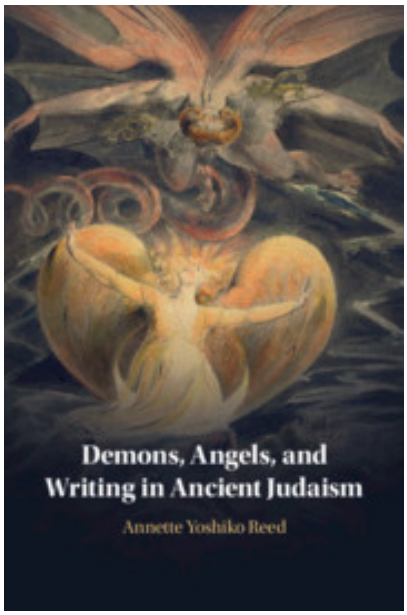

Annette Yoshiko Reed

Demons, Angels, and Writing in Ancient Judaism

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The focus of this important book is the Aramaic Jewish literature of the early Hellenistic period (333–167 BCE). Reed joins those pleading for these so-called pseudepigrapha to be studied on their own terms, free from the "tyranny of canonical assumptions" (ix). In the introduction (1–40), she lists several reasons why this is crucial. First, the recent publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls in their entirety has meant that scholars have only begun to appreciate the salient characteristics of the Aramaic literature as a corpus. Second, these texts testify to an interest in angels and demons that far surpasses most of the compositions eventually included in the Hebrew Bible, prompting Reed to differentiate between "belief" in angels and demons (what we see in the biblical texts) and the beginnings of systematic angelologies and demonologies (what we see in the Aramaic texts). Integral to Reed's study is the recognition that the Aramaic literature also contains many references to writing, books, reading, and pedagogy. One of the most unique aspects of this volume, however, is Reed's observation that similar anthologizing, systematizing, totalizing, and pedagogical concerns characterize contemporaneous Greek and Mediterranean texts and are therefore invaluable yet underutilized for a contextualized appreciation of the Aramaic literature. Moreover, the Aramaic texts often portray angels as interpreting, recording, reading, and revealing. Thus, the "tightly intertwined" phenomena of writing and intermediate spirits are not easily separated (27)—and best addressed together—hence the book's title and scope.

Chapter 1, "Multiplicity, Monotheism, and Memory in Ancient Israel" (41–86), investigates the paucity of angelology and demonology in ancient Israel. Interacting with the work of Mark Smith and others, Reed suggests that the lack of systematized treatments of intermediate spirits in the Hebrew Bible may be partially a function of a complex monotheizing process that sought to reframe polytheistic elements of Israel's past (e.g., Deut 32:8–9). The rhetoric of this monotheizing included the downplaying of intermediate spirits to members of YHWH's entourage or reduced them to their functions in the service of God. Likewise, gods associated with other nations were denigrated as *shedim*—traditionally translated as "demons"—who are vastly inferior to YHWH yet corrupting and to be avoided (e.g., Deut 32:17–18). Reed argues, however, that it is not so much the outright suppression of angelology or demonology but their displacement in favor of genealogies, which were a preferred means of fostering collective identity from local and family histories. In Reed's words, "if there is anything akin to the *Listenwissenschaft* of scribal and priestly demonologies in neighboring cultures…, it pertains not to intermediate spirits but rather to human ancestors. Genealogy structures the writing of collective memory to the degree that it perhaps obviates demonology as an organizing principle for cosmological, historical, and theological theorization" (84).

Chapter 2, "Rethinking Scribalism and Change in Second Temple Judaism" (87–131), explores the when, why, and how of early Jewish systematic reflection and writing on angels and demons. Reed challenges the use of the catch-all postexilic label often applied to early Jewish texts, arguing for a more nuanced approach that seeks to differentiate the literature of the Ptolemaic, Seleucid, Hasmonean, and Roman eras. This differentiation serves to check the unhelpful assumptions that theological fallout from Babylonian exile was the lingering impetus for later compositions or that third-century BCE works were anticipatory prefaces to the concerns of the Maccabean Revolt (91–105). Instead, Reed examines the Jewish Aramaic texts within their third-century BCE milieu, highlighting that, when one compares earlier biblical material with the Aramaic texts, the distinguishing features of the latter "resonate with intellectual trends and concerns in the Hellenistic Near East" (124–25). Examples include angelological and demonological *Listenwissenschaft*, increased value granted to writing and books via "the explicit textualization of a pointedly scribal perspective" (113), and cultural competition that manifested itself in "a globalizing claim to possess a totality of knowledge from the distant past" (123). This was not, however, the competition that would mark later "isolationist" groups who had anti-Hellenism axes to grind; it was subtler and more deliberate, what Seth Schwartz refers to as "cultural orientation," in that it was a response to globalizing and totalizing efforts of the Ptolemies such as Greek *paideia* (128–30). Indeed, the choice to write in Aramaic may also have been prompted by these concerns, since the use of the language was effectively an attempt to tap into "its status as a Near Eastern *koine* for a translocal cosmopolitan scholasticism" (127). Comparisons of Aramaic testamentary texts (e.g., Visions of Amram), which focus on the written transmission of knowledge in the pre-Sinaitic past, and Berossus's *Babyloniaca*, which tells of the array of insights disclosed by the

ancient beast Oannes, illustrates well the competitive affinities between third-century BCE compositions (122). Not to be missed, however, is that a unique contribution of the Jewish Aramaic texts is their boasts that the ancient knowledge celebrated therein has celestial origins; indeed, it is the angelic transmission of this knowledge that safeguards its "truth and totality" (125).

Chapter 3, "Writing Angels, Astronomy, and Aramaic in the Early Hellenistic Age" (132–88), zooms in on the Enochic Astronomical Book as a product of the Ptolemaic period. Reed stresses that the adoption of Babylonian "science" in Astronomical Book demonstrates its importance as a Jewish witness to "the place of astronomy in the power-knowledge complex of the ancient Mediterranean world" (142). Endeavoring to make sense of its complicated scribal tradition, Reed charts the development of Astronomical Book primarily utilizing the Aramaic manuscripts from Qumran (4Q208–211). She proposes that this "tradition in motion" began with the sketching of astronomical "didactic lists," which were then reworked into "treatises," which in turn spurred a "compound text" marked by an enhanced structure, angelic oversight of astronomical phenomena, and the introduction of both the trope of father-son knowledge transmission and first-person framing. Continued editing and additions, including the explicit associations of the material with Enoch and Uriel, helped to shape the tradition into what David Carr has referred to as a "long-duration" text and eventually into what we now know as chapters 72–82 of the Ethiopic Book of 1 Enoch (145–52). The boldness of the Astronomical Book tradition is thus not only in Jewish scribes recasting foreign astronomy as their own but especially in the implicit claim that these scribes, who had access to the most ancient of insights, were "akin to the very angels who lead the celestial cycles and, as such, uniquely tradents and guardians of true heavenly knowledge here on earth" (187).

Chapter 4, "Textualizing Demonology as Jewish Knowledge and Scribal Expertise" (189–246), focuses on the Enochic Book of Watchers. Though likely later than Astronomical Book, Book of Watchers is similar in that it is a competitive response to the totalizing and globalizing trends of the Ptolemies. But Book of Watchers goes beyond Astronomical Book not least in the way it integrates "magical" materials that address demonic subject matter. Reed proposes that "local" themes of certain texts (e.g., 4Q560, 11Q11) were the kinds of things in Book of Watchers "universalized into an aetiology of all evils spirits," and this local/universal distinction can again be categorized with Carr's designations of "context-specific" and "long-duration" texts, respectively (208). In addition to its innovative demonology, Book of Watchers contains the earliest extant listing of the archangels, their God-commissioned roles in responding to the wickedness of the watchers, and Enoch's extensive celestial tour. The effect of "rewriting the cosmos with the Land of Israel at its center and even its most distant peripheries brought into order by the scribes and spirits of Israel's God" is to claim a level of knowledge for Enoch that surpasses that envisioned in Astronomical Book and thus the Jewish scribes who stand behind him (243). In short, Reed moves away from efforts to pinpoint the historical figures or theological controversies that are ostensibly represented by the watchers and giants to ask what role contemporaneous

writing practices may have played in the emergence of Book of Watchers and how it functioned as a confident Jewish alternative to grandiose knowledge claims of the Hellenistic world (194).

Chapter 5, "Rewriting Angels, Demons, and the Ancestral Archive of Jewish Knowledge" (247–308), investigates the Book of Jubilees. Written in Hebrew, Jubilees is best-known as a creative retelling of Genesis and the first part of Exodus, but the focus here is on Jubilees as an exemplar of second-century BCE reception of the Aramaic texts. According to Reed, "*Jubilees* does not so much jettison [its] pre-Maccabean Aramaic Jewish heritage as much as recast it with an eye to new concerns" (306). For instance, as per Astronomical Book and Book of Watchers, Jubilees holds the scribal office in high esteem, which can be witnessed in the scribe-like role granted to the book's angelic narrator, who makes known the contents of the heavenly tablets to Moses. It is even implied that this "angel of the presence" outranks Astronomical Book*'s* Uriel, who is an angel of natural phenomena, and thus, according to Jubilees, lower in the angelic hierarchy (273). However, scribes are not the only ones who can claim the elite "angels of the presence" as their heavenly counterparts; one of the hallmarks of Jubilees is the extension of "the angel-like profile and prerogatives of scribes more broadly to Israel as a whole" (305). Similarly, Jubilees has a role for demons, but its demonology is transformed in the service of distinguishing between Israel and the gentiles: God rules the former directly, whereas God has decreed that the latter be ruled by demons (Jub. 15.30–32). With no middle ground—demons cannot negatively impact faithful Israel—the resultant picture is that Jubilees has "diminished" yet "dramatically expanded" the demonological outlook of the Aramaic texts (304). Indeed, Jubilees' stark division between Jew and gentile is only underscored by the language choice of Hebrew over the more "cosmopolitan" Aramaic (303).

Demons, Angels, and Writing in Ancient Judaism brims with the erudition for which Reed is known. Worthy of special note is the deliberate effort to look not only to "inner-Jewish dynamics but also to broader patterns and practices across the ancient Mediterranean world" (27). Her interaction with the compositions and scholars of the third century BCE is illuminating and not only serves as a challenge to Second Temple period researchers to move beyond familiar texts but also heralds the possibilities of a synchronic approach. An equally illuminating aspect of Reed's study is the examination of Jubilees as a "rewriting" of the Aramaic texts, and she rightly calls for investigation into how the latter were received in other texts, including those penned by the Qumran sect (315–16). These studies will shed further light on religious identity at Qumran and make meaningful contributions to the discussions of designations such as nonsectarian and sectarian texts.

One of the most interesting sections of the book is Reed's proposal of Astronomical Book*'s* development from lists into a "long-duration" text, including the incorporation of Enoch and Uriel. Since no extant Aramaic fragments mention the patriarch or the archangel, scholars are forced to examine other compositions to determine what form of Astronomical Book they presuppose and thus when these figures first entered the tradition. While Reed briefly mentions that there is evidence that the authors of the Book of Watchers, Jubilees, and the Epistle of Enoch were aware

of a form of Astronomical Book associated with Enoch (161), a review of the details here would have been helpful. Another fascinating discussion is the comparison of the angelologies of the Aramaic texts and Jubilees. Somewhat surprisingly, Reed states that, despite its many references to angels, Jubilees ultimately places them "outside of God's special relationship to Israel" (305). Though the role of angels in Jubilees is admittedly complex, given that Jubilees casts Israel as the earthly counterparts of the elite "angels of the presence," this conclusion may not sufficiently capture Jubilees' puzzling angelological outlook. Regardless, Reed's discussion, like the rest of this volume, will foster renewed engagement of an important cross-section of ancient Jewish literature: the Aramaic corpus and its reception in Jubilees and other texts.