

**PAGAN DEALINGS WITH JEWISH ANGELS:  
P. BERLIN 5025b, P. LOUVRE 2391**

Professor Pippidi has done so much to show us the actual men and women of the ancient world that we who come after, in honoring his achievement, are almost forced to turn to that world's imaginary population, some of whose members, fortunately, have also been important throughout later history. Particularly important were a minority group of invisible immigrants who entered Europe from the Near East quite obscurely about the beginning of the present era, eventually prospered, became the ruling class, and were often said to drive out or imprison the earlier imaginary inhabitants. I refer to the angels, who often behaved much like earlier Greek and Roman colonists, save that they did not often intermarry with the natives.

Whether the angels were at first exclusively Jewish, or were aborigines of most of the Syro-Palestinian coast, is a question complicated by the ambiguity of the Greek and Semitic terms used to refer to them. As everyone knows, *angelos* means simply 'messenger'; its common Semitic equivalent, *mal'ak*, means 'envoy' or 'agent', and both words were regularly used for any men or minor deities who ran errands for their superiors. So things were in the beginning. However, when we now speak of 'the angels' we mean a special class of beings, commonly conceived as a sort of racial group distinct from gods, fairies, demons, etc.

Between these extremes lies a transition too long and complex for summarization here. We must content ourselves with a single case documented in the magical papyri by two invocations, one which I shall call P, in P. Louvre 2391<sup>1</sup>, the other, B, in P. Berlin 5025b<sup>2</sup>. In both papyri these have been run together with other metrical passages and therefore have not, so far as I know, been considered separately, in spite of their differences from their contexts. P follows a hymn to the sun (who is addressed as 'Titan'), and is followed — after two lines of uncertain content — by a conjuration of some single individual; the purpose of the conjuration is not stated. B follows a brief invocation of the Pythian Apollo, and is immediately followed by a conjuration related to that in P. Here too, the conjuration has no stated purpose and no apparent connexion with the invocation of the angels. Both P and B have been reprinted as verse, along with their quasi-metrical contexts, in the appendix to *PGM*<sup>2</sup>. The versions given there are based on the observations and conjectures of many scholars who have tried to make sense and hexameters of the letters in the papyri<sup>3</sup>. Let us suppose the results of their scholarship

<sup>1</sup> Lines 211 — 24, according to the numeration of K. Preisendanz, *Papyri graecae magicae*<sup>2</sup> ed. A. Henrichs, Stuttgart, 1973—4, 2 v. (henceforth *PGM*<sup>2</sup>), in which P. Louvre 2391 is n° III, often called P. Mimaüt: its fragments have been arranged and its lines numbered in various ways by various editors, see the table by G. Moeller in *PGM*<sup>2</sup> 1.32f.

<sup>2</sup> *PGM*<sup>2</sup> no. I, lines 300 — 304.

<sup>3</sup> Notably: G. Parthey, *Zwei griechische Zauberpapyri des Berliner Museums*, Berlin, 1865 = Abhdl. AWB, Ph.-H. Klasse, 1865, pp. 109 — 49; E. Abel, *Orphica*, Leipzig, 1885, p. 286; L. Fahz, *Ein neues Stück Zauberpapyrus*, ARW 15(1912) 409 — 21; S. Eitrem, *Les*

approximately correct. If so, those elements of the content which will concern us most are mostly reliable; serious uncertainty about them occurs only in reference to P, about the preserved initial of the lost name at the end of line 2, and about considerable elements in lines 4, 5, 7, and 13. We may therefore put these problems aside till we come to them, and may here pass over the general questions of palaeography, wording, and grammar (which have hitherto had most attention) so as to come to those of composition and content (hitherto comparatively neglected). The two texts, as printed in the appendix to *PGM*<sup>2</sup>, read as follows<sup>4</sup>:

- B:** ἄγγελε πρῶτε θεοῦ, Ζηνὸς μέγалоιο, Ἰάω,  
καὶ σὲ τὸν οὐράνιον κόσμον κατέχοντα, Μιχαήλ,  
καὶ σὲ καλῶ, Γαβριήλ, πρωτάγγελε, δεῦρ' ἀπ' Ὀλύμπου,  
ἀντολίης Ἀβρασάξ κεχαρημένος, Ἰλαος ἔλθοις,  
5 ὅς δύσιν ἀντολήθην ἐπισκοπιάζῃ, Ἀδωναί.  
πᾶσα φύσις τρομέει σε, πάτερ κόσμοιο, Πακερβήθ.
- P:** κλήζω πρῶτο[ν τ]ὸν Διὸς ἄγγελον, θε[ῶ]ν Ἰάω,  
καὶ σε τὸν οὐράνιον κόσμον κατέχοντα, Ρ[αφαήλ,  
ἀντολίης χαίρω], θεὸς Ἰλαος ἔσ[ς]ο, Ἀβρασάξ,  
καὶ σε, μέγιστε <καὶ> αἰθέριε, κλήζω {α[ρ]ῶγον σου} <σε>  
Μ[ιχαήλ],  
5 καὶ σώζοντα βί[ου]ς ἰδίω[ν], Δι[ὸς] ὅμμα τέλειον,  
καὶ φύσιν ἀέζοντα καὶ ἐκ φύσεως φύσιν αὔθις,  
καὶ κλήζω ἀθανάτων [ . . . . . ] σεσε[ν]γενβ[α]ρφαραγγῆς  
παντοκράτωρ θεὸς ἔσσι, σὺ δ', ἀθάνατ', ἔσσι μέγιστος.  
ἱκνοῦμαι νῦν λάμψον, ἄναξ κόσμοιο Σα[β]αώθ,  
10 ὅς δύσιν ἀντολήσιν ἐπισκεπάζε[ι]ς, Ἀδωναί[ι],  
κόσμος ἐὼν κόσμον μόνος ἀθανάτων ἐ[φ]οδε[ῖ]υεις,  
αὐτομαθής, ἀδίδακτος, μέσον <τὸν> κόσμον ἐλ[α]ύνων  
(?) τῇ[ς] νυκτὸς <κ>αιρούς ἰδὲ ἡοῦς, Ἀκραμμαχ[ά]ρι

From this juxtaposition it is clear that we have two versions of an original invocation of five angels. Lines 1 and 2 of both are obvious variants; line 3 of B is probably a remote variant of line 4 of P (see below); line 4 of B and line 3 of P are variants; so are lines 5 of B and 10 of P. These are the only lines of which variants appear in both texts, and in four cases of five they invoke the same angels: Iao, Michael, Abrasax, and Adonai. Except for one inversion, the lines occur in the same order in both texts. No angel, save those attached to matching lines, appears in both texts, and with two exceptions, no pairs of lines occur save with identical angels. A clearer case of common source and independent developments could hardly be found.

The Michael-Raphael-Gabriel exchange is puzzling, the more so because doubt as to the name in line P2 (where the alleged initial R has

*Papyrus magiques grecs de Paris*, Kristiana, 1923 (= VSK Skrifter II, H — F Klasse, 1923.1); K. Preisendanz, *PGM*<sup>2</sup>; E. Heitsch, *Die griechische Dichterfragmente der röm. Kaiserzeit*, Göttingen, 1923 (= Abhdl. AWG, Ph — H Klasse, 3. Folge, 49). Further bibliography in *PGM*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> B = II, p. 284, no. 23, lines 3 — 8; P = II.241 f., no. 5, lines 14 — 26, a reprint of Heitsch No. LIX. 5, lines 14 — 26. The apparatus given by Preisendanz and Heitsch do not suffice for accurate determination of the texts of the papyri, nor for a history of the proposed emendations; hence it does not seem worth while to reprint them here.

also been read as *M*), and serious corruption in P4, make the wording uncertain. That the line of which B3 and P4 are different descendants was part of the original is likely because the verb in it is essential for B. That B1 and 2 and P1 and 2 were in the original is clear from their similarity. The angel invoked in B2 was probably at first Michael because the function specified — maintaining order in heaven — is one appropriate to him<sup>5</sup>, not to Raphael, a medical specialist, as his name ('God heals') declares. One may guess that Raphael was introduced because of the importance of cures to the magicians who used these texts, and Michael was therefore shifted to the end of P4, displacing Gabriel, his less colorful second in command<sup>6</sup>. The original list will have been Iao, Michael, Gabriel, Abrasax, Adonai — an all-Jewish team, if one accept Barb's derivation of Abrasax from 'arba'<sup>7</sup>.

Barb's argument, however, would also persuade us that Abrasax was *YHWH*, the god of the tetragrammaton, whose sacred number was four<sup>8</sup>, whose throne was borne by four holy beasts and attended by four archangels. But here we have five! Admittedly, the pentagram was occasionally used by Jews in antiquity, perhaps as an apotropaic symbol. However, the number five had strong ties with paganism<sup>9</sup>. So do the angels of this text: Iao appears as an angel of Zeus; Gabriel is called from Olympus. The original text was written by a pagan who invoked these Jewish angels as powerful, albeit subordinate, members of the imaginary supernatural society.

Perhaps the original text had a conclusion now lost. To take *Adonai* as the final word leaves things in the air. Indeed, it is so unsatisfactory that the strongest reason for thinking it the end of the original is that both independent developments left the original here.

That the last line of B is a later addition is argued not only by its absence from P, but also by the fact that *Pakerbeth* is not a Jewish angel but a fusion of words from a formulaic invocation of the Egyptian god Seth. The whole formula is described in *PGM*<sup>2</sup> XIVc. 21 as his "authentic" name and the word(s) here taken from it may stand as *pars pro toto* for the whole, thus adding Seth (who was often identified with Iao) to this list of Iao and his affiliates. Alternatively, *Pakerbeth* may have been used here, as Bonner claims it often was<sup>10</sup>, merely as a 'word of power', a sort of 'Amen' to validate the preceding invocation (of which the clause ending, 'father of the world', would then refer to *Adonai*). A further consideration is the fact that addition of *Pakerbeth* as an angel's name would produce a list of six names, and 6, falling between Greek 5 and Hebrew 7,

<sup>5</sup> W. Lueken, *Michael*, Göttingen, 1898, 32 ff. For Michael's cosmic rule see I Enoch, 69.14ff.; he is regularly 'the chief commander' of the heavenly armies, *Tosefta Hullin* 2.18, etc., anticipated in Dan. 12.1.

<sup>6</sup> Lueken, *Michael*, loc. cit.

<sup>7</sup> A. Barb, *Abrasax Studien*, in *Hommages à W. Deonna*, Latomus 28(1957) 67ff.

<sup>8</sup> Barb, op. cit., 81ff.

<sup>9</sup> J. Schouten. *The Pentagram as a Medical Symbol*, Nieuwkoop, 1968, 20 — 27.

<sup>10</sup> C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets*, Ann Arbor, 1950 (= U. of Michigan Studies, Humanistic Series, 49), 163ff.

was comparatively neglected in magic<sup>11</sup>. Given these contrary considerations, the question must be left open, though the prior structure of the invocation — one line per angel — argues strongly for supposing that the word is here used as a name. So much for B.

The development of P is yet more uncertain, because of the uncertainty of its text. 'Perfect eye of Zeus' is a brilliant conjecture — it has the brilliance of thin ice. *Sesengenbarpharanges* is perhaps a marginal gloss<sup>12</sup> and certainly hard to adapt to the meter. *Pantokrator* may be either an epithet or the name of an angel; in magical usage the word was in the tadpole stage. That it was placed at the beginning of the line, while all the angelic names come at the ends, may indicate that it was to be read as an epithet of the angel whose lost name preceded it. On the other hand, its Hebrew equivalent, *Sabaoth*<sup>13</sup>, is almost certainly here the name of another angel. Though in the Old Testament it was merely an epithet of YHWH (The Lord 'of hosts'), in magical texts it commonly refers to an independent god<sup>14</sup>. This argues that *Pantokrator*, too, should be taken as a noun; so again does the prior structure of the invocation<sup>15</sup>. After *Sabaoth*, however, the one-line-per-angel structure seems to be abandoned and the 'who' of line 10 apparently carried the sentence on. But this appearance is misleading. Comparison with B shows that we now return to the original text and that the 'who' should be taken as referring to *Adonai* ('<And> thou who . . . , <O> *Adonai*'), here a second vocative after 'shine forth'. Consequently *Adonai* should be followed by a period. Lines 10 — 13 (which indisputably break the structure, as did lines 5 — 7) would seem by analogy to lead to *Akrammachari* as the name of a final angel. However, this name is a variant of *Akrammachamari* which has been convincingly explained by Scholem as an imperative, 'uproot the spells'<sup>16</sup>. This imperative makes good sense as the conclusion of the invocation, whereas if the word were taken as an angel's name the invocation would end without coming to any point. Its purpose would be merely to call the angels. After they came, further prayers or commands would be needed to make them do what was wanted. This is true, but such mere invocations are not uncommon, and *Akrammachamari* is often used by itself as if it were a name; it may have been thought to be one by this glossator who did not even know how to spell it (if we can trust the meter of the 'restored'

<sup>11</sup> The unpublished index of *PGM*<sup>2</sup> lists 32 uses of *pente*, 24 of *hex*, and 99 of *hepta*. These figures include both names and numerals (letters) and also uses in compounds, except in other numbers (e.g. *pentegrammaton*, but not *dekapente*). My single counts of the passages cited in Preisendanz's lists may be somewhat off, but hardly enough to misrepresent the relative infrequency of *six*.

<sup>12</sup> *PGM*<sup>2</sup> on III. 217, 'von *σεσε* an auf den Rand geschrieben', is not clear on this.

<sup>13</sup> *Pantokrator* is the regular translation of Hebrew *Seba'ot*, see E. Hatch and H. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint*, Oxford, 1897, 2 v., s.v.

<sup>14</sup> This will be shown fully by the *index uerborum* of the forthcoming Chicago translation of the magical papyri.

<sup>15</sup> The proposal of E. Heitsch in *Drei Helioshymnen*, *Hermes* 88(1960) 154 f., to read the names as various epithets for one solar deity, founders on the undoubted distinction of the figures in the original text.

<sup>16</sup> G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition*<sup>2</sup>, New York, 1965, 97.

line). Thus we come to another open question, and this time numerical considerations are less telling. Since *Sesengenbarpharanges*, although marginal, was probably intended to replace or identify some name in the text, the angels invoked (if we take both *Pantokrator* and *Akrammachamari* as names) would have numbered nine, the number of the holy ennead. But the ogdoad and the hebdomad were hardly less holy; therefore — as often in numerology — any of the possible numbers will suit the purpose.

More significant is the fact that all the names added in this expanded text come from the same Jewish magical background as do those of the original text, *but* the identification of Iao as 'angel of Zeus' has not been eliminated, and 'eye of Zeus' — if correctly discerned — appears as a new pagan epithet. The angels now have active roles in physical creation (line 6). they are also rulers of the world (8), drive it, and oversee it (10 — 12), as do the angels and visible gods (celestial bodies) of neo-Platonism. All this recalls the Palestinian synagogue mosaics with the angel of the sun in their centers, and the other material, both Jewish and Christian, that indicates Jewish worship of the angels<sup>17</sup>. The pagans may have learned angelolatry, as well as monotheism, from Jews as well as Christians.

Finally, dates: P. Louvre 2391 was written about A.D. 300 or a bit later; P. Berlin 5025, about 400. Both are probably copies of earlier collections, and the invocations must have been older than the collections in which they were used. The two steps from present manuscript back to archetypal collection, and from the collection back to the composition of the included invocation, may have taken a century. But the included invocations were themselves expansions of an original text perhaps half a century older than the first expansion. In sum, we may go back about a hundred and fifty years before the date of our earlier papyrus, P. Louvre. That brings us to about A. D. 150, when the magicians of Egypt had been generally out of touch with Jews for a generation (since the mutual massacres of 115 — 7) and were building into their own compositions — with **expectable errors** — the Jewish material they found in their old manuscripts and in the spells they had learned from their teachers. The visible Jews were gone, but in Egypt's enormous invisible population the adaptable Jewish angels were alive and well and available for business as usual.

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<sup>17</sup> See M. Smith. *Helios in Palestine*, Eretz-Israel 16 (Orlinsky Volume), 1982, 199\* — 214\*, esp. 209 f.