

## TRANSMISSION AND TRANSFORMATION OF SPELLS: THE CASE OF THE JEWISH BABYLONIAN ARAMAIC BOWLS<sup>1</sup>

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The Aramaic magic bowls from Mesopotamia do not contain names of authors, nor do they have references to sources from which the authors of these texts culled their materials. They contain, as a rule, the names of their owners, people for whom they were prepared; a few of them have dates, very few have names that can be assigned to historical figures, and very few indeed, if any, give us a hint as to their place of provenance. And yet, we may already be in a position at this stage to enquire what sources the authors of the texts used, how they learned their texts and how they transmitted them, and what is the structure of a text. The information is not explicit in the texts; it must be teased out of them, and the conclusions are at this stage merely tentative.

The authors of the Jewish bowl texts use among their sources the corpus of the Hebrew Bible, which they often quote, as a rule in the original Hebrew, rarely in an Aramaic version, including the Onkelos Targum; and in some cases Mishna passages, but so far we know only of such passages which were incorporated in the Jewish daily liturgy.<sup>2</sup> They also use non-canonical texts which form part of the Jewish liturgy, such as the formula known as *Qeri'at šema' 'al hammiṭṭa*, the prayer before going to sleep, with an invocation of angels who stand on all sides of the person for protection; they sometimes quote passages of Hekhalot compositions and of poetic pieces which may have belonged to the same genre; and they give evidence of their acquaintance with the midrashic literature, sometimes alluding to otherwise unattested *midrashim*. The authors of the bowl texts were clearly familiar with a wide array of Jewish source material. This may give us an idea as to the range of literature that formed part of the Jewish religious discourse

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<sup>1</sup> The present contribution is part of a series started by Shaked 1999a. The first paper in this series was published under the title "Poetics of Spells" in Shaked (1999a). Other items in this series are listed in Shaked (2006). I wish to thank Yuval Harari for his careful reading of a draft of this paper and for helpful comments.

<sup>2</sup> For *Mishna* passages incorporated in the Jewish prayer book cf. Shaked 2005:4–5.

of the period. If we add to this the fact that the names of owners of some bowls are adorned with the title “rabbi”, a form of address which in all likelihood was not employed lightly at that time,<sup>3</sup> one gets an impression of how much the literary and religious activity represented by the magic bowls was embedded in the Jewish tradition. At the same time it is evident that the people who composed the texts of the bowls were open to non-Jewish environment, including Mandaean,<sup>4</sup> Christian,<sup>5</sup> and to some degree also Iranian,<sup>6</sup> and often to vestiges of older Babylonian elements<sup>7</sup> which must have been still alive in late antique Babylonia.

We are here particularly interested in the ways in which the texts were composed and transmitted. One way of arriving at this information is to arrange the texts in thematic groups and identify bowl texts which have the same formula, even if what we call the “same” is never quite identical. Each bowl is written at the order of a specific client, and is in its way an independent composition. We can thus try to understand the degree of fidelity in the transmission of the text, on the one hand, and, on the other, the text variations in different bowls, thus perhaps discovering the limits implicitly imposed on the freedom to invent new expressions, new motifs and new combinations.

We shall have to introduce into our enquiry some new terms, which, in order to serve our purposes, should be given precise and unequivocal definitions. The text of a bowl will be called an *incantation*. An incantation may consist of one or more segments (which we shall call “spells”), and these can turn up on occasion in other incantations as well.

A spell reflects, with greater or lesser fidelity, what I should like to call a *formula*. This term denotes an *ideal structure of a text* which the practitioner aims at reproducing. A formula may be envisioned as the text that could have been placed in a carefully written model book of spells, even though no such composition is known to have existed

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<sup>3</sup> Such texts will be published in a separate study.

<sup>4</sup> The influence of Mandaic elements on JBA magic texts has been pointed out chiefly by Ch. Müller-Kessler (1999a) and other publications.

<sup>5</sup> The Christian element is explicitly present in the few bowls where the trinity is invoked; cf. Levene 1999, and Shaked 1999b. Other unpublished bowls with similar formulae have been noticed.

<sup>6</sup> On the Iranian elements see Shaked 1985, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Ch. Müller-Kessler 1999b.

in Sasanian Babylonia.<sup>8</sup> A formula is thus a construct, not a concrete text. Borrowing an idea from linguistics, a formula would represent the *langue*, while a spell, which constitutes the performance of a formula, corresponds to the *parole* of the text.

As indicated above, an incantation as written in a bowl is usually made up of one or several **spells**, which serve as its building blocks. If there are several spells in an incantation, each one represents a different formula. Each spell (and its corresponding formula) will be given a name for the convenience of our discussion. In the example given below, three bowls share one spell: “I descended to the depths of the earth,” a name derived from the opening words of the spell. Bowl I contains only this major spell (marked in our table by the letter C). Bowl II makes also use of the spell which we call “The great primordial father” (G). Bowl III introduces instead two other spells: “Shkobit Shkobita” (H), and “Your countenance is that of a vile creature” (J). A spell is, in principle, an adaptation or a quotation of a formula, but an incantation is as a rule a larger composition; it typically contains, in addition to the spell(s), introductory and concluding segments, and various other elements which will be mentioned below.

**Segments** are phrases or sections to which a spell can be subdivided. Segments can also fulfil structural functions in the incantation outside the spell texts. They can, for example, introduce a text of the incantation or of a spell (cf. A and B in the table below); form a textual bridge between spells (cf. D and F in the table below), conclude an incantation (J5 in the table below), or present an independent invocation. In a given incantation, the order of the segments may undergo a transformation when compared to a parallel incantation on another bowl. Our ability to reconstruct a formula depends to a large extent on the stability and consistency of the segments in different parallel bowls.

The term **invocation** means a direct appeal to different powers or persons,<sup>9</sup> sometimes with a supplication that they should act in a manner sought by the practitioner or the client. In the Table below,

<sup>8</sup> Such collections of spells are quite well attested from the Cairo Geniza, and several examples can be found in the two volumes by Naveh and Shaked (1985, 1993) and in the volumes of Schäfer and Shaked (1994, 1997, 1999). The various compositions going under such names as *Šimmuš Tehillim*, *Sefer ha-Razim*, or *Ḥarba de-Mošē*, which no doubt belong to an age earlier than most Geniza documents, belong also to this genre, but they should be assigned to the Palestinian, rather than the Babylonian, tradition. On these books cf. Bohak 2008:169ff.; Harari 2010:200–225.

<sup>9</sup> For this term see further below.

B, E, H4 and J5 provide examples for invocations embedded in the incantation.

We shall reserve the use of the term *theme* to the main contents of an incantation or a spell. The theme of the divorce document served on the demons,<sup>10</sup> a widespread topic which appears in several bowl texts, might serve here as an example.

The term *motif* will designate the contents of a magical story (or *historiola*). Here we may quote as an example the story of Semamit (a female person designated as a lizard or a spider)<sup>11</sup> who gave birth to twelve children and lost them to the evil Sideros (a mythical person the meaning of whose name is "Iron"). With the motifs, as with the themes, a certain fluidity in the phrasing and in the order of the segments is often observed. There is however a difference in the mode of functioning of motifs as opposed to themes: the same theme can underlie different spells, but not all the divorce texts, for example, can be described as deriving from the same formula. All texts with the same motif, e.g. the story of Semamit or that of R. Ḥanina ben Dosa, may however be claimed to be variants of the same basic spell or formula.

The term *person* indicates the various entities which come up in the texts, whether they are human or animal figures, whether they are divine or demonic, whether they are historically attested, mythical or fantastic. Examples for persons are Semamit, King Solomon, Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa, or any of the large number of entities using divine names, or carrying angel or demonic names, that come up in the formulae.

A *practitioner* is someone who composes, transmits or copies an incantation, or one who engages in any other activity connected with the magic practice. A *client* is a person who orders the text to be written and his name to be inserted in it, and who owns the bowl. The client is the person for whom the incantation seeks health, well being, success in business, society, or love relationship, or who aims to achieve victory over enemies. The practitioner and the client can conceivably be in some cases a single person, but one gets the impression

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Shaked 1999a.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Naveh and Shaked (1985) (= *AMB*, B12). Spells based on the same formula occur elsewhere as well; cf. Oelsner (1989); Müller-Kessler (1994); and Hunter (1995:69–65), for a brief discussion of the incantation in the bowl from Nippur, 18 N 98.

that as a rule the practitioner acts as a professional who offers services to clients.

The term *formula* denotes in our discussion, as has already been noted, the ideal form of a spell. We may aim at reconstructing a formula on the basis of text variants, but in many cases we shall have to admit our inability to reconstruct the ideal form which lies behind the spells. Two or more textual variants attested in parallel bowl texts are often equally valid, and the researcher has no way of forming a preference. This inability may point to a deeper structural feature of the genre of incantations, for the practitioners are conventionally allowed a certain freedom in moulding the text they are using according to their personal preference. In practice however the range of variation is rather limited, and it does not look as if the practitioner is free from restrictions.

It is to be hoped that a consistent use of this terminology will make our discourse somewhat clearer. In order to examine the usefulness of this terminology we shall analyze three sample texts. The examples presented in the table below show how one formula comes up as a spell in three different incantations, and how other formulae are associated with it in some of the parallel incantations.<sup>12</sup> It will be seen from this presentation: (1) that a formula can be used in different incantations on its own, or in company with other formulae; and (2) that segments outside the spells serve several aims: as a link between the spells, to identify the clients, to incorporate invocations and biblical quotations, and so on.

It may be noted that all three bowls were made for the same person, a lady by the name of Māhdukh(t) daughter of Nēwāndukh(t),<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The formula is attested also in other incantations, but quoting too many variants may not be helpful for this discussion.

<sup>13</sup> The two names, that of the client as well as that of her mother, are Persian. The client's name can be rendered "daughter of the Moon (god)"; her mother's name means "daughter of the brave." The name is usually spelled without the final *t*, reflecting no doubt the actual pronunciation of the word. Māhdukh(t) daughter of Nēwāndukh(t) is recorded as the owner of some 34 bowls in the Schøyen Collection (in three cases the attribution is uncertain), as well as of about six bowls in the Moussaieff Collection. To this large number there may be added a further number of bowls made for other members of her family, e.g. Burzaq son of Mahdukh (who has four bowls under his name in the Schøyen Collection, and two in the Moussaieff Collection). That this client is the son of our Mahdukh seems likely, judging by the quality of the writing and by the handwriting itself, which seems to stem from the same scribal school, if not from the same scribe. The bowls of Burzaq are also close to those of Mahdukh in the sense that they share the same spells as the latter. As bowls are rather fragile and often

and quite possibly by the same scribe. The fact that the bowls were manufactured for a single person and perhaps in the same workshop may arguably diminish from the usefulness of this comparison. The variations seen in the different spells however indicate the degree of freedom in the transmission of the texts even within such a closed circle of texts. This stands in contrast to the practice of manuscript copyists. The bowl texts do not always display the same degree of care as manuscript copies, but in our case they carry texts that are so close to those in the parallel bowls that one can't help feeling that copying from a written model is nevertheless involved.<sup>14</sup>

### *Three incantations compared*

<i>Spells, segments</i>	Bowl I. <sup>15</sup> MS 1927/61	Bowl II. <sup>16</sup> MS 2053/188	Bowl III. <sup>17</sup> MS 2053/13
A. Introductory invocation	(1) May there be healing from heaven to Mahdukh (2) daughter of Newandukh.		(1) May there be healing from heaven (2) to Mahdukh daughter of Newandukh, and may she be healed.
B. Invocation	By the name of Abrah̄sasia. <sup>18</sup>	(1) By the name of Abraxas, Yorba rabba.	By the name of <b>'brssbyh</b> .

poorly preserved, and as some of the bowls prepared for this lady may have found their way to unknown private collections, it may be assumed that the total number of bowls made out for Mahdukh daughter of Newandukh was even larger. The fact that the bowls are so widely dispersed is partly the result of the undertaking of museums and public institutions not to acquire unprovenanced ancient artifacts. The wisdom of this policy may be questioned. It is uncertain whether this can stop illegal digging, but it will certainly cause a loss of precious evidence.

<sup>14</sup> On the mode of transmission of bowl texts cf. also Müller-Kessler 1994:8–9; Levene 2003:24–30; Häberl (forthcoming).

<sup>15</sup> The Aramaic text is in Appendix 1. See Plate 1. The line divisions are given in parentheses in each of the three bowls.

<sup>16</sup> The Aramaic text is in Appendix 2. See Plates 2–4.

<sup>17</sup> The Aramaic text is in Appendix 3. See Plate 5.

<sup>18</sup> This is evidently a variant spelling of **'brhsy**; note that it corresponds to Abraxas in Text II, and that a similar spelling is found in Text III.

Table (cont.)

Spells, segments	Bowl I. MS 1927/61	Bowl II. MS 2053/188	Bowl III. MS 2053/13
C. "I descended to the depths of the earth". <i>C1, journey and vision</i>	I descended to the depths (3) of the earth, I saw the foundations of the world with my eyes. (As for) the tremors of the world, I looked at them.	I descended to depths of the earth, (2) I saw the foundations of the world with my eyes. (As for) the tremors of the world, I looked at them.	(3) I descended to the depths of the earth, I saw the foundations of the world with my eyes. (4) (As for) the tremors of the world, I looked at them.
<i>C2, Speech of Segan</i>	(4) And lo, I heard a voice [of a speech] that spoke from the midst of the <i>electrum</i> . It spoke and thus did it say: "I am Segai, <sup>19</sup> (5) the swift angel, who stands in the presence of the Lord of the World in the matter of the children of the women who are snatched away." It starts off <sup>20</sup> and thus does it say: (6) "I sat at the tombs of the dead and lo, I heard the voice of women who were moaning and sighing, who were crying and weeping, and who were shouting and screaming, and who burst out in unison saying thus:	And lo, I heard a voice of speech, that spoke (3) from the midst of the <i>electrum</i> . It spoke, spoke, and thus did it say: "I am Segan, the swift (4) angel, who stands in the presence of the Lord of the World, in the matter of the children of the women who are snatched away. It starts off and thus does it say: "I sat at the tombs of the dead (5) and lo, I heard the voice of women who were moaning and sighing, who were crying and weeping, and who were shouting, saying thus:	And lo, I heard a voice of speech that spoke from the midst of the <i>electrum</i> . (5) It spoke and thus did it say: I am [Segan] the swift angel, who stands in the presence of the Lord of the World, [in the matter of the children of women] who are snatched away, and it starts off (6) and thus does it say: "I sat at the tombs of the dead, and I heard the voice of women who were moaning (7) and sighing, who were shouting and screaming, who were weeping and crying, and who started off saying thus:
<i>C3, Speech of the crying women</i>	(7) "We were in the form of lightning, we were born in the form of clouds.	"We were in the form of lightning, we were born in the form of (6) clouds.	"We were in the form of lightning, we were born in the form of clouds,

<sup>19</sup> Segai corresponds to Segan in the other bowls.

<sup>20</sup> The translation of the verb **ṢḤ** (in *pa'el* or *af'el*) in this context is conjectural. It is generally used in Aramaic to denote "to tear".

Table (*cont.*)

<i>Spells, segments</i>	Bowl I. MS 1927/61	Bowl II. MS 2053/188	Bowl III. MS 2053/13
<i>C4, The four living beings</i>	And lo, (there were) four great living beings who were sent out against the children, who strangle, snatch, crush and devour (8) like a lion that snatches, strangles, crushes and devours. These are the ones who strangle, snatch, crush and devour.”	And lo, (there were) four great living beings who were sent out against our children, who strangle, snatch, crush and devour, like a lion that snatches, strangles (7) crushes [and devours]. These are the ones who strangle, snatch, crush and devour.”	(8) and lo, (there were) four great living beings who were sent out against our children, who strangle, snatch, crush and devour, like a lion that snatches, strangles, crushes and devours.”
D. resultant invocation	Now, you are bound and sealed by his Great Name, by the signet-ring (9) of the Holy One, by the name of the Supreme One, and by the speech of Shaddai: that you may not harm or injure or damage the children that Mahdukh daughter of Newandukh has and those that she will have and everything that exists in the world.	Now, you are bound and sealed by his Great Name and by the signet ring of the Holy One, and by the name of the Supreme One, and by the word (8) [of Shaddai]. (That you) do not [harm...] the children that Mahdukh daughter of Newandukh has, and (her) grandchildren, <sup>21</sup> and her seed, and the seed of her seed, that which she has, and that which she will have.	Now, you are bound and sealed (9) by his Great Name and by the signet-ring of Shaddai and by the name of the Supreme One, and by the word of Shaddai, that you should not [snatch?] the sons that Mahdukh daughter of Newandukh has and that she will have... (10)...from this Indas son of Rašewandukh, from her house and from her dwelling and from her doorway.
E. invocations	(10) By the name of <b>tyhṭ</b> <b>’tttṭ ḥwššḥ mrmntṭ</b> . Amen, Amen, Selah. [ <i>A series of nomina barbara</i> ] (11)...by the hand of Satan. [ <i>Incomprehensible words</i> ] Amen, Amen, Selah..... princes of spells (?).	By the name of Sansan Saqsan, and...	

<sup>21</sup> One may wonder whether the reference to grandchildren in this bowl, a reference that is not found in Bowls I and III, may be used to indicate that this bowl was made later than the other two.

Table (*cont.*)

<i>Spells, segments</i>	Bowl I. MS 1927/61	Bowl II. MS 2053/188	Bowl III. MS 2053/13
F. segment leading to another spell		(9) ...and may they seal and doubly seal Mahdukh daughter of Newandukh by the signet-ring 'yzdn and by the signet-ring <b>zhrn</b> , and by the seal of the Great King, by the three great mysteries. (10) ...for his soul is sealed, (the soul of) the Great Primordial Father, and there stands upright in front of him a shield of pure steel, and there stands upright [in front of] the Great Primordial Father, [...] (11) ...he took care of it. They threw it to him (?), he took care of it. He who was out of it, took care of it.	By the name of <b>šbyryt</b> <b>šbyryt ywrg' ywrb'</b>
G. "The great primordial father": <sup>22</sup> G1, "a shield of pure steel"		Not these over these, nor these over these (?). <sup>23</sup> For I rub them from all that is rubbed, for (12) ...from all that is broken.	
G2, "Not these over these"			

<sup>22</sup> Another incantation containing a close variant of this formula (based on the Moussaieff bowl M4) was published in Shaked 2006:373–374. The translation here is modified in some points.

<sup>23</sup> This phrase is difficult to interpret. **hnyh** may be assumed to be a pseudo-historical spelling for the demonstrative pronoun **hny** "these" (common in BTA, but apparently never attested in the bowls); **hnyh** (this, if it is similar to BTA **hny**, serves there as a variant of **hny**) could be interpreted as the attached preposition "on". This preposition, common in Talmudic Aramaic, is very rarely attested in the bowls: it is attested in a bowl from the British Museum, published by Müller-Kessler and Kwasman 2000, and in MS 2053/159 and M145, published in Levene 2003:100–102. The sense of the phrase remains obscure. **hnyh** could also be taken to be a *nomen actionis* from **HNY**, like **b'y'**, **ksy'**, **zky'** etc. The phrase could be rendered: "There is no enjoyment to these, and no enjoyment to these". None of these readings is really illuminating.

Table (*cont.*)

<i>Spells, segments</i>	Bowl I. MS 1927/61	Bowl II. MS 2053/188	Bowl III. MS 2053/13
G3, <i>Messengers and envoys</i>		For of the messengers that I sent, and the emissaries that I am sending, he who injures it, may fire injure him, he who causes it injury, may the sword [cause him injury]. He who takes up [arms], and comes up against me, [may he be seized by] the tresses of his head.	
G4, <i>ban and decree</i>		(13) ... [if] you do not accept [these oaths], there will be upon you the ban and the decree which is on Mount Hermon (14) ... fate ... on mountains, deeds of divorce ...	
H. "Shkobit Shkobita". H1, <i>introductory segment, invocation</i>			š[k]wby <sup>t</sup> škwby[t', <sup>24</sup> who takes away children] (11) from women, roasts them and drinks of their fat, <sup>25</sup> daughter of Ṭasat L[ilita]. Shut yourself away from Mahdukh daughter of Newan[dukh, do not drink of her fat,] do not knead it with your [own blood]. Alter [your path, just as] (12) [the primordial demon] altered his path, the one who was at the time of King Solomon son of David. <sup>26</sup>
H2, <i>explaining the situation</i>			

<sup>24</sup> The name may be explained as "a woman of loose morals", literally: "one (f.) who sleeps (around)".

<sup>25</sup> The word as written can also be translated "milk".

<sup>26</sup> This could be an allusion to Ashmedai, popularly associated with King Solomon.

Table (cont.)

Spells, segments	Bowl I. MS 1927/61	Bowl II. MS 2053/188	Bowl III. MS 2053/13
<i>H3, a menace addressed to the demon</i>			If you do not alter your path, I shall hurl you to the axe that dug [up a pit in the place of the demons Dudman,] all of them.
<i>H4, an invocation</i>			[By the name] of Yokson, Yokson. Be [strong, support the demons Dudman, accept this counter-spell] (13) and take away the evil spirit from the entrails of this Mahdukh daughter of Newandukh, and the shape of your countenance from her countenance, and the shape of <b>bt gwdyt'</b> , [whose house is in the sand, the axe is seen by the] demon, and he lifts a male [ <b>wdn</b> ] s'. You too, Daughter of Tāsāt the L[ilith, move off, stir,] (14) [go away,] go out, move away, be bound, be gone, go away from Mahdukh daughter of Newandukh, from her house, her sons and her daughters, and from her door[way... from the two hundred and fifty two] limbs that are in her, from the sixty six [limbs of her body ...] (15)... Amen, Amen, Selah. I adjure you, may you suppress them, may you suppress them.

Table (*cont.*)

<i>Spells, segments</i>	Bowl I. MS 1927/61	Bowl II. MS 2053/188	Bowl III. MS 2053/13
<b>J. “Your countenance is that of a vile creature”.</b> <i>J1, main part</i>			Your countenance is that of a vile creature, your horn is that of living beings. May God smite you and annihilate (?) you, for you shall die if you come [near and if you touch...]
<i>J2, biblical quotations</i>			“And the Lord [said] unto Satan, The Lord [rebuke] you, O Satan, even the Lord (16) [that has chosen] Jerusalem [rebuke you]. Is this not a brand plucked out of the fire?” ( <i>Zach 3:2</i> )....
<i>J3, reduced writing device</i>			Kephalargia, phalargia, [largia,] rgia, gia, ia. Mahdukh daughter of New[andukh. ...
<i>J4, biblical quotations</i>			“The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make] his face [shine] upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord [lift up his countenance towards you and give you peace]” ( <i>Num 6:24–26</i> ). <sup>27</sup> ...
<i>J5, Concluding invocation</i>			(17) May there be healing from heaven to Ma[hdukh daughter of Newandukh] and may she be protected from all evil things... all... all...

<sup>27</sup> This is the Priestly Blessing which is included in the regular Jewish liturgy.

*Comments on the texts in the table*

The spell which is central to the incantation in Bowl I (section C), is surrounded by the invocations in sections B and D. That the sections A and E are not part of the spell can be seen by the fact that they are not present in the parallel texts; the parallel invocations have different sections in this place, or none at all.<sup>28</sup> The essential part of the spell contained in section C is a text which is known from several other bowls, and must have been quite popular. It is attested in something like half a dozen bowls in the Schøyen Collection, and possibly in further unpublished texts. The main theme of the spell in section C is a vision recounted in the first person singular, and it has the form of a rather elaborate *historiola*.

The occurrence of so many parallel texts is a mixed boon. It enables us to correct and supplement the readings of the badly faded text, and reach something like a satisfactory edition and translation. At the same time it makes the preparation of a critical text so much more complicated.<sup>29</sup> The existence of several parallel texts for most spells is exceptional in the history of magic texts of Antiquity. The Cairo Geniza provides a somewhat similar abundance, although the spells used in Geniza texts are generally not the same as those found in the bowls.<sup>30</sup> The interest of the large corpus of bowls lies precisely in its repetitiveness, which affords the possibility to study the methods of transmission; it also lies, paradoxically, in the diversity found within this mass of repetitive material.

The spell in section C is based on a vision. Although it is introduced in the first person singular, this is not an individual experience. The speaker is not identical with the person who writes the present bowl, but is an anonymous author who serves as a prototype with whom the practitioner and client can identify. The aim of the incantation is obviously the protection of the children of the house. The identity of the hostile person is not specified in the text; he remains a rather nebulous character. His action is done by four large “animals” or “animate

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<sup>28</sup> The invocation in section A, which is a common opening text in many bowls, occurs in an expanded form also in Bowl III.

<sup>29</sup> The fluidity of the texts makes them less amenable to being edited by simply noting variants of orthography or word order, as is done in the regular treatment of manuscript texts.

<sup>30</sup> On this point see Shaked 2006.

beings" (*hayyot*), that are "sent" against the children, but it is not specified by whom. They act like a lion who snatches, strangles, crushes the bones and devours the children. In terms of contemporary children's stories this is reminiscent of a Gruffalo,<sup>31</sup> or perhaps rather, the African monster in Chukovski's Russian kids' tale.<sup>32</sup> Unlike the monster of the modern stories, the lion-like figures in the spell do not have a change of heart, or undergo a transformation which causes them to start loving children. They need to be chased away and prevented from pursuing their horrific deeds.

The vision and the *historiola* framework are not meant to represent an individual experience, but are part of a liturgical convention of incantation writing. This spell gets its force from the narration of the vision seen and the voices heard; they are made to be present as an experience that could have been undergone by the practitioner or the owner. It does not seem likely that the practitioner would have tried personally to replicate the experience of the vision and the voices, although this is not entirely excluded. The vision is essentially brought to life by the narration; the retelling of the *historiola* makes the experience real, present and effective on each occasion at which the spell is written or recited. In this sense, the story falls within the same bracket as any religious ceremony in which an event of great significance is recounted, as for example in the Passover eve gathering in which the events of the Exodus are recited and, in some Jewish traditions, also enacted.

The positive figure in the story is a voice belonging to an invisible person, who presents himself as an angel, called Segan (or, as in Bowl 1:4, Segai), a designation which refers to a position of power and authority. The angel, appropriately enough, resides inside the *electrum*, a rarefied atmospheric substance which presumably surrounds the deity.

The *historiola* is quite elaborate and contains a story within a story. The practitioner tells of an audial experience, the result of his descent to the deep foundations of the earth; there he hears the voice which comes out of the ether-like envelope of the deity. The angel speaker

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<sup>31</sup> Written by Julia Donaldson and first published in the UK in 1999. The Gruffalo does not entirely conform to the image of monstrous animals in the bowls, inasmuch as it is presented as an ambiguous figure: its existence hovers deliberately between that of a playful imaginary invention and that of a real entity.

<sup>32</sup> In Kornei Chukovski, *Barmalei*, first published in the USSR in 1925.

tells a story of his own: he was sitting on the tombs of the dead and heard women crying. The women, for their part, tell of their vision, where they saw something like clouds, out of which perhaps come four animals. At the end of this story, which operates like a Russian matryoshka doll, in which within each figure another one is hidden, we come to the operative part of the incantation: may you be bound and sealed by the Great Name, by the signet-ring, by the name, by the speech, all of which items refer to different names of the highest deity. The structure of this formula, the fact that it encompasses several layers of embedded stories, is reminiscent, perhaps not accidentally, of the graphic layout of the bowls themselves, where the circular writing embodies several lines of text which are ensconced and wrapped within each other.

The movement of the story seems to go downward: "I descended to the depths of the earth." At a certain point in the text one finds the scene shifting and one encounters the person in the narrative listening to a voice coming from the midst of the *electrum*. An angel who serves in the presence of the Lord of the Universe joins the narrative. Are we now high up in the divine universe, or are we still in the depth? We then encounter women sitting on graves and describing forms of lightning, of clouds and of living beings, all presumably coming from high up.

The spell is marked by this confusing to-and-fro movement on a vertical axis. It is not clear whether the story can be described as an *anabasis* or a *katabasis*. It may be supposed that the underground vision and the experience of the upper world are complementary in this narrative.

The performative part of the formula begins with section D: "Now, you are bound and sealed by his Great Name, by the signet-ring of the Holy One, by the name of the Supreme One, and by the speech of Shaddai: that you should not harm or injure or damage the children of Mahdukh daughter of Newandukh and those that will be born to her in the future, and everything that exists in the world".<sup>33</sup> Let us recall that Mahdukh daughter of Newandukh is one of the few great tycoons of the bowl world of Babylonia. She and certain members of her family possess a very large collection of bowls.<sup>34</sup> This may reflect

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<sup>33</sup> Quoted from Bowl I.

<sup>34</sup> See above, note 13.

the fact that she is hypochondriac and paranoid, or that she is pious and dedicated to private rituals of this kind, or that she is relatively affluent and feels that having bowls around the house radiated a desirable social message and a certain kind of power.

The *historiola* which precedes the final section is not a mere introduction; it serves to identify the perpetrators of the crime which has to be redressed, for if they are not made known, the work of forcing them to desist cannot be accomplished.

The early parts of the inscription serve to prepare the mood. The criminals are not merely introduced, they are presented to the highest judicial instance, the most powerful authority, the Master of the World. This act serves to instill in them, and possibly also in the human audience, if the text was read out aloud, a feeling of awe and humility. This is enhanced by the dramatic props used: the depths of the earth, the foundations of the universe, the tombs of the dead and the tremors of the earth, which make it possible to gaze into things that are normally hidden.

The protagonist is the angel called Segan, a title of administrative or military eminence borrowed from ancient Mesopotamia.<sup>35</sup> This angel is the link connecting the two poles, the highest point (the divine presence) with the netherworld. He "stands in the presence of the Master of the World," and he reports on things heard over the tombs of the dead, which represent the world underneath. Tombs and cemeteries often stand in the language of the bowls for channels enabling humans to communicate with the other world(s). The vision of the women refers in its turn to the upper world: the world of lightning, of clouds and of animated beings, the latter suggesting the animated beings surrounding the Throne of Glory. These animals (*hayyot*) are apparently instruments in the hands of the dark powers, although they owe their literary existence to the figures of living beings in the presence of God.<sup>36</sup> If this interpretation is correct, the crime committed is not merely a transgression against the proper order of things, but also an act of disobedience, a breaking away of the great animated beings from the subservience which they owe to their divine master. The death of small

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<sup>35</sup> Petit (1988) and Wiesehöfer (1991) try to interpret the sense of the term *seگان* in the Achaemenian period. As the term occurs also in the Aramaic inscriptions on chert objects from Persepolis, it may be useful to refer to the remarks on this term in Naveh and Shaked (1973).

<sup>36</sup> Cf., e.g., Ez. 1:13–15.

children is regarded as a breaking down of the universal order and at the same time as an act of insubordination. Quite appropriately, the names invoked are all different appellations of God, who is called upon in an effort to re-establish the broken order as well as His own authority.

The four animal figures are characteristically ambiguous. It is a feature of the incantations that the definition of persons across the dividing line between good and evil is left opaque. The animals are close to the source of divine power, but at the same time they seem also to serve the evil powers.

The variant texts of this story are quite consistent and show little divergence, and we may tentatively conclude that the spell as transmitted may be reasonably close to the *urtext*, at least as known and quoted within the circle of scribes employed by Mahdukh daughter of Newandukh.

The spell "I descended to the depths of the earth" is combined in Bowl II with another one, "The Great Primordial Father." This is also a popular spell, attested on several different bowls, but much of its meaning is unfortunately obscure.

The two formulae grouped together on the same bowl do not seem to be closely related to one another. We may enquire whether the combination of the two was planned, or whether the scribe wrote the first spell, "I descended to the depths of the earth," then realized that the bowl had some blank space, and decided to put in another spell which he had ready in his memory or somewhere in writing, which he could use to cover the rest of the surface. We need not take a stand on this issue, except in order to observe that the combination of two or more spells in one incantation is by no means rare. This is perhaps due to a certain *horror vacui*, a reluctance to leave a blank space on the bowl; or to the pecuniary consideration that leaving a blank area may not look good in the eyes of the client, who after all ordered a whole bowl covered by writing. The inner surface of the bowl is usually covered by an inscription or a drawing or both. It was evidently considered important that the surface of the bowl should be utilized in full. It must have been assumed that if there is space available the full arsenal at the disposal of the practitioner should be brought to bear on the demons.

In Bowl III other elements are added to fill up the space. The base spell "I descended to the depths of the earth" is supplemented by two other well-known texts, the spells "Škobit škobita" (in section H), and

“Your countenance is that of a vile creature” (Section J). This is followed by the very common citation of the verse from Zachariah 3:2 (Section J2), which is followed by the reduced writing of Kephalaria, the Greek word for “headache” (section J3) and by the text of the Blessing of the Priests, taken from Num. 6:24–26 (Section J4).

Other incantations have other elements added to the formula “I descended to the depths of the earth.” Two examples are given in Appendix 4 and 5.

These elements are added as a padding to the main text of the incantation, and the same biblical verse is cited in the two examples; it may have been considered particularly appropriate for this formula. It seems that the drawings and large magical characters may have been put on the surface of the bowl before the text was written in, for it seems that the text goes round the drawings.

The urge to add textual elements as much as the space allows is significant. It belongs together with an observation already made: despite the assumption often heard that a magical utterance has a power all its own, it appears that this faith has its limitations. In order to strengthen the incantation, one must resort to repetition, hyperbole and pleonasm. The heaping of various formulae indicates that the practitioner wants to throw into the battle all available weapons. If saying a phrase once does not produce the desired effect, saying it twice, or saying it backward, may add power. The power is felt to reside in words, but we do not always know what would be the best order of words, or whether a particular choice of words will bring the result intended. If we say a phrase straight, it may force the demons to run forward and perhaps avoid our grasp; saying it backwards may block their way of escape and place them in a closed box or a bowl-like trap, from which it will be difficult for them to find a way out. Far from breathing an air of confidence, the practice of writing on the bowls suggests a certain *angst*.

Can we draw any conclusions from the restricted sample of texts quoted concerning the mode of transmission of magical formulae? Our examples cannot decide the issue between oral or written transmission. There can hardly be a doubt to my mind that both forms of transmission played a role in the communication of incantations. When we think of the bowl scribes, we are dealing with a literate group of people. There are differences as regards their level of proficiency. Some bowls are written in a good scribal hand such as is known from manuscripts of Late Antiquity and the Medieval period, others display

a crude hand, often with many spelling errors. This external difference usually goes together with the contrast regarding the textual quality of the incantations. Certain prolific scribes have a hand that is easy to recognize and remember. Mahdukh daughter of Newandukh, owner of Bowls I–III, must have paid particular attention to the quality of the scribes she employed. Their texts tend to be rich in vocabulary and to consist of elaborate phraseology.

It is quite possible that the scribes quoted at times from memory. Several errors in Aramaic and Hebrew can best be explained as mistakes of oral transmission.<sup>37</sup> In other cases the errors can be diagnosed as copying mistakes. Were the written prototypes from which some texts were copied available in the form of books, or were they chiefly extant on bowls? This is a question to which no clear answer can be given at this stage. In the period when the bowls were produced, between the fourth and seventh centuries CE, there existed in the Jewish world books of magical instruction with formulae of magic texts, and some of them have survived. None of these books was composed in Babylonia, but the sections in the Babylonian Talmud dealing with spells may suggest the possible existence of magic handbooks.<sup>38</sup> It may be assumed that bowls previously inscribed were easily accessible as a source of texts. Practitioners acquired their knowledge and skill no doubt by being apprentices to well established masters. They may have written down spells as an *aide-memoire*, and may have kept notebooks of spells, in whatever form. This practice is known from the Geniza collections, where, besides structured books of magic, we also have private notations of magic texts.<sup>39</sup> Paper was not yet available in the period of the bowls, nor was papyrus a real option in Babylonia, so leather, pottery and possibly metal seem to have been the major

<sup>37</sup> See in particular the recent works of Matthew Morgenstern, especially 2007. Cf. also an example such as the spelling of *wayyehi binsoa' ha-aron* etc., Num. 10:35, in Naveh and Shaked 1985, B3:5, where the Hebrew words are given in the following bizarre form: **whyhy byn nsw' h'rwn wymr mwšh qwm' yhw h wywšw 'yb'k wynsw m[vacat] mypnk**, a spelling that surely betrays poor knowledge of the way Hebrew is written.

<sup>38</sup> Two recent surveys of this literature may be mentioned: Bohak 2008:351ff.; Harari 2010:272ff.

<sup>39</sup> An example for such a notebook, with texts for different purposes in Judeo-Arabic and in Hebrew-Aramaic, is JTSL ENA 2871.7–8, published in Schäfer and Shaked 1997:126–131 (text 28). I should like to correct on this occasion two points in the latter publication. On p. 130, line 8b:1, read: “Wenn du einen Mann vor seiner Frau (*an ahlihi*) binden willst”; read in line 8b:5: “bis zu der Zeit, die wir wünschen.”

alternatives. Leather may have been too expensive, and besides, it is a perishable material; metal sheets, though commonly available and long-lasting, have left no traces among the archaeological finds of incantations from Babylonia.

The language of the incantations shows many instances of archaic Aramaic, in some cases used artificially and inconsistently, revealing to us that they must have been quite far removed from the current Aramaic used in speech and writing. The authors of the texts tried to reproduce what seemed to them a higher and more prestigious language, perhaps influenced by the Targum or other learned texts. That it was an artificial language emerges from a series of hypercorrections and from their inconsistency in the use of certain forms.<sup>40</sup>

Despite the chaotic appearance of the texts quoted, we may come to the conclusion that there are rules that govern the confusion, and that these rules are followed by the writers of bowls. The texts, as we have seen, are on the whole quite faithfully and consistently transmitted, but there is a range of toleration for certain additions before and after the main text (and sometimes inside it), and for combining two or three spells in one incantation.

The consistent wording of the spells in different bowls may teach us something about the way incantations were composed and spells transmitted. The transmission of the magical texts is not much dif-

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<sup>40</sup> This emerges, for example, from an examination of the spelling deviations detected by Morgenstern (2007). Among our three bowls, it may be noted, Bowl 2 stands out as presenting a number of peculiarities. Cf. the spellings **hwyn'**, **'ytylydn'** (Bowl 1:7; Bowl 3:7) with **hwyn'h**, **'ytylydn'h** (Bowl 2:5–6); **mmryq**, **mmrqn** (Bowl 1:7; Bowl 3:8) with **m'mryq**, **m'mrqn** (Bowl 2:7). Bowl 2:9 has **bḥtm'h**, **bylt'h**, spellings which look like instances of hypercorrection; Bowls 1 and 3 do not have anything similar. Ch. Müller-Kessler, in a series of articles, has adopted the term 'Standard Literary Babylonian Aramaic' to designate the language of most bowls in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic. It is not clear whether she wishes to imply that this form of language was standard for members of all religious groups in Sasanian Babylonia. If this is the claim, one could argue that Christians, Manichaeans and pagans probably used Syriac as their vehicle of literary communication, and that Mandaean employed the Mandaic language and script. For all we know, the square Hebrew script was used for Aramaic exclusively by Jews, and this is corroborated by the fact that most bowls in this script contain peculiar Jewish elements, such as quotations from the Hebrew Bible and the Jewish prayer book as well as midrashic allusions (cf. also the remarks in the same direction by Harviainen 1995, esp. note 1). The Aramaic used in these bowls shows in general signs of a high literary and archaic language. The important affinities of phrases and expressions between Mandaic and the JBA incantations, which Müller-Kessler has discovered (e.g. in Müller-Kessler 1999/2000; also Greenfield and Naveh 1985) show that certain Mandaic themes were borrowed from Mandaean formulae, but they do not prove, to my mind, that Mandaic is the source of all the common themes.

ferent from the way liturgical texts have been transmitted in Judaism, relying on repetition and memory, before they were codified in a prayer-book form.

It is impossible to ignore the literary quality of many of the spells. This is eminently noticeable in the formula “I descended to the depths of the earth”, with its high language, its peculiar poetic structure, and its double-edged vision, downwards and upwards. There is also a marked tendency to high drama, conveyed by the spatial movement of the narrator, by the visions seen, and by the dialogue. A similar observation can be made on the highly structured and complex spell “the Great Primordial Father”. One can’t help feeling that the demons had a highly developed sensitivity to poetic figures of speech, which acted upon them, we might say, like magic. They had no choice but to flee or be subdued.

### *Appendix: The Aramaic Texts*

#### 1. *Schøyen Collection, MS 1927/61*<sup>41</sup>

- אסותא מן שמיה תיהוי לה למהדוד 1  
 בת ניונדוד בשום אברחססיה לחיקרי ארעה 2  
 נחתית עיקרי ת[יביל ח]זיתי בעיני<sup>42</sup> רעשי<sup>42</sup> תיביל א[י]סתכל[ית] בהון 3  
 והא שמעית קל מי[לול]יה דיממליל מיגו חשמלא ממליל וכן אמר אנה 4  
 הוא סגי  
 מלאכה קלילאה דקאים קודם מריה דעלמה על ולדי נשייא דמיתחטפין 5  
 ומפשח וכן אמר  
 על קברי מיתי יתיבית והא שמעית קל נשיא דתוחן ומתוחן בכין 6  
 ומב[כין] צוחן [ומצוח]ן מפשחן בחד קלא וכן אמר  
 43-----  
 בידמות ברקא הוינא<sup>44</sup> בדמות ענגין איתילידנא והא ארבע חיון רברבן 7  
 דמישדרן על ולדיא דחאנקן וחטפן מממרקן<sup>45</sup> ואכלן

<sup>41</sup> I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Dr. J. N. Ford, who revised the readings of these texts and suggested important improvements to the translation. It has proven complicated to indicate doubtful readings in this edition; this will be put right in the comprehensive edition of the Schøyen bowls; cf. Shaked, Ford and Bhayro (forthcoming). Brackets ([---]) indicate supplements by the editor, as a rule on the basis of parallel texts.

<sup>42</sup> Written d'sy.

<sup>43</sup> A dividing line occurs here in the text.

<sup>44</sup> Written hnyn'.

<sup>45</sup> The spelling with three *mems* occurs here more than once (cf. line 8, **mmrmryq**), and is also common in the parallel texts. It cannot be dismissed as an error.

- 8 כאריה דחטיף וחניק מממריק ואכיל אילין אינון דחנקן וחטפן ממרקן ואכלן כען  
אסיריתון וחתימיתון בשמיה <sup>46</sup>רבה<sup>46</sup> ובעזקתיה  
9 <sup>47</sup>דקדוש<sup>47</sup> ובשמיה דעיליון ובמילוליה דשדי דלא תסכלון ולא תחבלון ולא  
תנז[ק]ון ביבנין דאית לה ודהון לה למהד[ו]ך בת ניונדוד מן {י} כל דאית  
בעלממ<sup>48</sup>  
10 בשום תיחט אתתתט חוששח סרמנטט אמן אמן סלה חשגם גסל חקשגח חלח  
חחמעג דרוסת מחשרה ט[---] יישווי [---] דשי וסדק שטן  
11 [---] לקחת את השכוי שלח [---] וילל תפלותיו ל[---] אמן אמן סלה [---]  
לחש

## 2. Schøyen Collection, MS 2053/188

- 1 בשום אברכסס יורבא רבה נחתית לחיקרי ארעא  
2 נחתית עיקרי תיביל חזיתי בעיני רעשי תיביל איסתכלית בהון והא שמעית קל  
מילולה די ממליל  
3 מיגו חשמלה ממליל ממליל וכן אמר א[נה הוא] סגן מלאכה  
4 קלילא דקאים קודם מריה דעלמה על ולדי נשיא דמיתחטפין ומפשח וכין אמר  
על קברי [מיתי יתיב] ית  
5 והא [שמעית] קל [נשיא ד] תוחן ומתוחן בכין ומבכין ומפשחן וצוחן וכין א[מרן]  
כי[דמות] איתי[לי] דנאה והא ארבע חיון רברבן דמשתדרן על ולדנאה דחאנקן  
6 עננין איתי[לי] דנאה והא ארבע חיון רברבן דמשתדרן על ולדנאה דחאנקן  
ו[חט]פן מממרקן ואכלן כאריה דחטיף וחאניק  
7 מאמר[יק ואכיל] [אי]ל[י]ן אינון [ד]חנקן וחטפן ממארקן ואכלן כען אסיריתון  
וחתימיתון בשמיה [ר]בה ובעזקתיה דקדוש ובשמיה דעיליון ובמלוליה  
8 [דשדי] ולא תח[בלון] [---] בבנין דאית לה למהדוד [ב]ת ניונדוד ובני בנין  
ובזרעה ויבזרעה דזרעה דאית לה ויהוון לה בשום סנסן סקסן וק[---]  
9 [---] וחתמ[ין] לה וימחתמין לה למהדוד בת ניונדוד באיזון איזקתא בזהרן  
איזקתאה בחתמאה דמלכא רבה ביתלתאה רזי רזי[רבי]  
10 [---] ל[ניה] נפשיה מיטול דחתימה ליה נפשיה לא[בא] רבה קדמאה ותריצא  
ליה קמיה מגינא דאדמסא דכייא ות[ר]יצ[א] ליה לאב[א] ר[בה] קדמאה [---]  
11 [...] ביה ידיה איזדהר רמיניה לוי בה ידיה איזדהר דבר מינ[יה] ביה ידיה  
איזדהר לא הניה אהניה [ו]לא הניה אהניה מיטול דשיפנא אנן מיכול דשייף  
מיטול  
12 [---] דקריט מיטול דשליחייא אינן דשלחת ואשגנדייא אינן דמשרדנה דחטי  
ביה גורא תיחטי ביה ודחביל ביה ח[רב]ה ת[יחביל] ביה דשקי זי[ניה] ולאפי  
אתי בא[יתקא דרישיה]  
13 [---] אוקמה [---] [לא] תקבלו תיהוי אליכוה אחרמתא וגזרתא דהוי  
אחירמון טו[רא]  
14 [---] חילקה ט[---] בטורין גיטי [---] הון גטי[---] ון [---]

<sup>46</sup> Written **dbh**, perhaps as an error for **\*drbh**.

<sup>47</sup> Thus written, as in Hebrew (in Aramaic we might expect the form **dqdyš**). The following words, **lywn** and **šdy**, are also in Hebrew.

<sup>48</sup> For **b'lm'**.

3. *Schøyen Collection, MS 2053/13*

- 1 אסותא מן שמה תיה[וי] לה
- 2 למהדוך בת ניונדוך ותיטסי בש[ום] אברססביה
- 3 לחיקרי ארעא נחתית עיקרי תיב[י]ל ח[זי]תי בעיני
- 4 רעשי תיביל איסתכל[ית] בהון והא שמעית קל מילולא [דיממ]ליל מיגו חשמ[לא]
- 5 [מ]מליל וכין אמר אנה הוא [...] מלאכה קלילא דקאי[ם] קודם מ[רי]ה דעלמה [על ולדי נשי]א דמיתח[ט]פין ומפ[שח]
- 6 [וכן אמר] על קברי מיתי יתיב[י]ת והא שמעית קל נשיא דתוחן
- 7 ומת[ו]חן צ[ו]חן ומצוחן בכין ומבכ[ין] ומפשחן [ו]כין אמרן בידמות ברק[א] הוינא בידמות עננ[ין] איתי[ל]ידנא
- 8 וה[א] ארבע חיון רברבן דמישדרן<sup>49</sup> על ולדנא דחנקן וחטפן ממרקן ו[א]כלן כאריה [ד]חטיף וחניק ממריק ואכיל כען אסיריתון וחתימיתון
- 9 בישמ[יה] ברה ובעזיקתיה דשדי ובשמה יבמילוליה דשדי דלא ת[---] בבנין דאית לה וידהון לה למהדוך בת ניונדוך [...] [---] הדא מן הדין אינדס בר רשיונדוך מן ב[ית]ה מן דירתה מן פיתחה בשום [צ]בירית צבירית יורגא יורבא ש[ב]ובית שכובי[ת]א דנסבא בנין [מ]ן נשיא וקליא יתהון ושתיא מן חלביהון בת טסת ל[יליתא] סכוריכ[י] מן מהדוך בת ניונדוך ולא תישתין מן חל[ב]ה ולא תלושין יתיה [בדמיכ]י שנא [שבילכי כמה דשני]
- 12 [שידא קדמ]א דהוא ביומי שלמה מלכא בר דויד [שבי]ל[כי]א לא תשני אירמי [י]תיכי לחצין דח[צב] גובא אתר דודמן שידיא [כולהון] בשו[ם] יוכסון יוכסון אתח[זקו] תסמוכו [ש]דייא דודמן קבילו קובל[א]
- 13 דנן וסבו ית רוח רעה מן מעה דמהדוך בת ניונדוך דא וצורת אפכי מן אפה [ו] צור[ת] בת גודיתא ד[ביתא] בחלה יתבא פילק יתח[מי] שידא [ואודנ]סא דיכרא מסקא א[ף] בת טסת ל[יליתא] זחי וזעי
- 14 [געור]י ופוקי ועיקורי ואסורי ויחלופי ואיסתליקי מן מהדוך בת ניונדוך מן ביתה ומ[ן] ב[נה] מן [ב]נתה ומן פית[חה]... מן מתן חמשין ותרין [הדמין] דאית [ב]ה [מ]ן שיתין ושיתא [הדמי] קומתה [...]
- 15 [...] אמן אמן סלה אשבעית אתכם הכניע[י]ם והכניעים פניך פנ[י] שפל קרנד קרן חיות יככה יהוה ו[י]ספסכא כי תמות אס תי[קר]ב ואס תיגע.....ויאמר [יהוה] אל השטן [יגער] יהוה בך השטן [יגער] יהוה
- 16 בך [הבוחר] בירושלים הלו זה אוד מוצל מיאש [...] יפולו מה קפלרגיה פלרגיה ל[רגיה] רגיה גיה יה מהדוך בת ניונדוך...יברכך יהוה וישמרך יאר יהוה פניו אליך ו[יחנך] [ישא] יהוה פניו אליך [ישא] יהוה פניו אלך וישם לך שלום [...]
- 17 [א]סותא מ[ן] שמה תיהוי לה למ[הדוך] בת ניונדוך ותנטר מן כל מידיעם ביש [...] כל [...] כל ה[...]

4. *Schøyen Collection, MS 2053/257*

The bowl contains the text of the formula “I descended to the depths of the earth,” supplemented in conclusion by the following phrases:

<sup>49</sup> The *t* of the *itpa'al* formation is apparently merged in the *š* of the root; this could also be a scribal error.

- 5 אסיריתון וחתימיתון לאנפי בר כותסיה ובישמיה דקדוש ובמימריה  
 6 דשדי ובמילולא דע<sup>50</sup> דלא {ג} תיגעון ולא תיקרבון ולא תחבלון בבנין דאית  
 להון... לדאראי בר אנוהדאג... תא בת די...  
 7 בנין דאית ליה ודהון ליה לאטש בת קאקאי מן גונדאס אינתתיה... ובבנין דאית  
 להון ודהון להון ל... בר קאקיי מן מזודנגא אינתתיה ובבנין  
 8 דאית ליה ודהון ליה למ... בר חונדאש מן כודוש אינתתיה לא בזרעיה דיממא  
 ולא בפיריה [דליליה]... סורקין וסקסנסין וקוי ייזי יחליפו כוח יעלו אבר  
 כנשרים  
 9 [ירוצ]ו ולא יגעו ילכו ולא [ייעפו]... אמן סלא איס... ואסותא תיהוי מן  
 שמיה] אמן אמן סלא

*Outside:*

10 איספלידא

### Translation

- 5 [---] Bound and sealed are you in the presence of Bar Kutasia (?), and by  
 the name of the Holy One, and by the word  
 6 of Shaddai, and by the uttering of 'E<lyon>, that you should not touch,  
 or come near, or injure the sons that they have... Darai son of  
 Anuhdag... (and)... ta daughter of Di...  
 7 the children that he has and that he will have, Ataš daughter (!) of Qaqai,  
 from Gundas his wife ... and the children that they have and that will  
 have.....son of Qaqai, from Mazda-danga (?) his wife, and the chil-  
 dren  
 8 that he has and that he will have, M...son of Hundaš from Kuduš his  
 wife, neither his seed of the day nor his fruit [of the night]... **swrqyn**  
**wsqsnsyn**. "And those who look to the Lord will win new strength, they  
 will grow wings like eagles,  
 9 they will run and not be weary, they will march on and never grow faint"  
 (Is 40:31)... Amen, Selah... and may there be healing [from heaven].  
 Amen, Amen, Selah.

*Outside:*

- 10 (For the) hall (of the house).

### 5. MS 2053/61

The concluding lines, after the formula "I descended to the depths of the earth," are:

- 8 [---] כען אסיריתון וחתימיתון בשמיה רבה ובעזקתיה  
 9 דקדוש ובשמיה דעיליון ובמילוליה דשדי דלא תסכלון ולא תחבלון ולא תנזו [ק]  
 ון ביבנין דאית לה ודהון לה למהד[ו]ך בת ניונדוד מן {י} כל דאית בעלמא  
 10 בשום תיחט אתתת חוששח סרמנטט אמן אמן סלה חשגם גסל חקשגח חלח  
 חחמעג דרוסת מחשרה ט[---] יישוי [-----] דשי וסדק שטן

<sup>50</sup> For d'ylywn.

11 [---] לקחת אם חשבי ישלח [--- ---] וילל תפלותיו ל[---] אמן אמן סלה  
[---] לחש

## Translation

- 8 [---] Now, may you (pl.) be bound and sealed by his great name and by  
the signet-ring  
9 of the Holy One and by the name of the Supreme One, and by the speech  
of Shaddai, that you may not harm or injure or damage the children that  
Mahdikh daughter of Newandikh has and those that she will have, and  
everything that exists in the world.  
10 By the name of **tyht** **ṭṭṭ** **ḥwššḥ** **mrṃrntṭ**. Amen, Amen, Selah. [*A series  
of nomina barbara*]  
11 [---] Amen, Amen, Selah. [---]

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Bowl 1



Bowl 2



Bowl 3



Bowl 4



Bowl 5

