

The Aramaic Astronomical Book From Qumran: Text, Translation, And Commentary

THEOLOGY AND DEMONOLOGY IN QUMRAN TEXTS

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Demons are mentioned in a number of texts that have survived in the library of the Qumran community. Some of these texts are narrative works while others belong to the genre of wisdom literature. There are also texts that were written for practical purposes. This article provides a short outline of the theme of demonology in Qumran literature, presenting the phenomenon of belief in demons in the written tradition, its background, the question of the influence of Babylonian culture, the attitude toward demons and magical methods, and the formation of a new method of dealing with the demonic part of the world mirrored in various Qumran texts.

4Q510-11 (Songs of the Sage)

4Q510-11¹ is a collection of fragments of two manuscripts. 4Q510 has only one major fragment and 11 minor ones; 4Q511 represents a much longer copy of the same work. On paleographical grounds both manuscripts are dated to the end of the 1st century BCE. The work is thought to be sectarian, that is, a work composed in the community, and representing vocabulary and ruling ideas of the community. The songs are authored by the *maskil*, the sage. The songs are hymnic poems of wisdom reflecting on the world order and the role of human beings. Their main themes are the glory of God, the activity of the righteous, and the works of evil demons in the world. The songs reflect a dichotomous worldview. God is called the King of Glory (4Q510 1. 1); God of knowledge (4Q510 1. 2); Lord of the divine beings (*ʿl ʿlym*), and Lord of all the holy ones (*ʿl qdyšym*) (4Q510 1. 2). His realm is above the powerfully mighty (4Q510 1. 3). However, God is once called *El Shaddai* (4Q 511 8. 6), a name used especially in magical texts. Divine beings are also mentioned several times in the hymns.

The Sage (*maskil*) is characterized by the knowledge he received from God. He loathes all deeds of impurity, that is, practices resulting in impurity (4Q511 18. l. 7). There is a group mentioned in the Songs as the associates of the Sage: "those who follow the path of God" (4Q511 2. l. 6). This means in Qumran vocabulary the right interpretation and practice of the Mosaic Law, namely, interpretation according to the tradition of the community. Other names for this group are those who know justice, (4Q511 2. l. 2) and the holy

¹ M. Baillet, "Cantiques du Sage (i) (PI LV)," "Cantiques du Sage (ii) (PI LVI-LXXI)," in *Qumran Grotte 4, II (4Q242-4Q250)*, ed. M. Baillet, (DSD 7; Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), pp. 215-62.

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