Staying over night in a house of study,\(^1\) crushing a louse on one's clothing,\(^2\) sitting under a drainpipe\(^3\) – in the first centuries many seemingly simple activities exposed people to danger from evil spirits. At the same time other supernatural figures aided and watched over humans. In a world where all sorts of powers were at work it was hard to sort them all out.\(^4\)

Angels, though they could bring blessings into one's life, could also be "fallen angels" who caused harm.\(^5\) Other malevolent beings were referred to in Hebrew (and Aramaic) texts as נמרים: "spirits"\(^6\) or בֹּשֶׁלֶת: "damagers"\(^7\) and in Greek texts as δαίμων: "daimons" (Latin: daimon). Augustine thought that all daimons were evil, and the term is often translated accordingly in Christian texts as "demons." This was not however, the most common usage in the first centuries. Augustine himself cited earlier Latin writers who used the word interchangeably with angels (CivDei 9.19). In this study, therefore, the more neutral transliteration "daimon" will be used.

The activities of angels and daimons were so "infinitely diverse" it is hard to find any situation for which they were not held responsible (Gumont 1907: 173). All types of misfortunes – sudden illness, the loss of an important item, trouble in love – were likely to be the result of daimonic activity. All types of blessings were the work of an angel.

These explanations were deemed true regardless of religious tradition. Jews, Christian and pagans all looked towards both angels and daimons as integral parts of their lives. Sometimes the obsession with these figures led opponents to claim, for example, that Jews worshipped angels (Col 2:18).\(^8\) At the same time claims about angels were claims of closeness to the supernatural world. Celsus protested the Jews' claim that God sent angels only to them (CC 5.41).

Studying daimons is a challenge since daimons as such cannot be
studied directly. A person getting off a plane and asking to see Hollywood is often surprised that there is no single place that constitutes Hollywood. Seeing Hollywood involves a cluster of activities such as touring the homes of stars, visiting studios, and viewing the famous sign in the Hollywood Hills. So too we never see daimons directly, but must trace the secondary evidence of their existence through the eyes of people in the first three centuries CE. They draw our attention to the evidence of the work of daimons: overturned pots, odd markings on the floors, and the wear and tear of rabbis’ clothes.

The rise of angelology and daimonology

The rich multitude of supernatural figures who flourished in texts from the first three centuries CE was to some extent familiar from earlier periods. The ancient Greek world had known numerous gods, daimons, angelic messengers (Hesiod, Theb 781; Pindar, Olym 8.82), and shades of the dead. Despite modern stereotypes of ancient Israelite monotheism, Biblical texts mention the gods of other nations and a repertoire of other supernatural figures.

We find general references to large groups of angels supplemented by specific references to the cherubim, seraphim (Isa 6:1–2), “creatures” (Ezek 1:5), and the angel of the Lord. These are contrasted, on the negative side, by threatening figures such as shedim (Deut 32:17; Ps 106:37) and ser’im (Isa 13:21; 34:14; Lev 17:7; 2 Chron 11:15). Lilith, who will become a major figure in later centuries, is mentioned once (Isa 34:14). Figures such as the sons of God (Gen 6:4; Job 1:6; 21:38:7; Ps 29:1 and Wis 5:5) and the female consort of Yahweh known as Asherah remain obscure, probably repressed due to the increasingly monotheistic view of the Biblical editors.

Most important for our investigation, in the Bible angels are primarily messengers who bring messages from the deity to humanity (Newson 1992: 248). These messengers had the physical appearances of humans in both Biblical and Greek texts. It was impossible to tell at first glance whether a stranger was simply a foreigner or an angel.

None of these figures were individualized with specific names and personalities until late Biblical texts such as Daniel. The divine messengers operate as nameless visitors or groups of “hosts” who praise or accompany the deity. They lack histories or personalities and do not interact with humans as part of daily life. The shocking story of the sons of God coming down to earth and having intercourse with humans results in freakish beings and is placed ominously by the Biblical editor right before the declaration of the corruption of earth (Gen 6:1–4).

Later Biblical texts were increasingly less likely to have the deity appear on earth himself, instead delegating interactions with humans to some form of representative. These supernatural representatives were described as either the deity’s Name (1 Kings 8:16,29) or his angel. The use of these substitutes engendered endless theological speculation (and debate) since the manner in which they represent or stand for the deity is not always clear: Is the Name the same as the deity himself? What is the difference between the deity and his angelic presence?

By the first centuries CE religious texts presupposed a very different vision of the world than the earliest Biblical texts, including both the place of human beings and the roles of deity, angels and daimons. In short, a much more complex angelology and daimonology developed. Later Biblical texts, the texts from the Qumran library and early apocryphal and pseudepigraphic texts all expand on Biblical terminology, delineating new supernatural figures. Familiar sons of heaven (1 Enoch 6:2; 13:8; 14:3) and דָּרִישׁ “gods” (War Scroll IQM 1:10; 14:15; 17:7; Hymns IQH 10:8) are joined by watchers (Jub 4:15, 21; 1 Enoch 1:4; Test of the XII Pat 1:5; 8:3) and spirits (Jub 15:31; 2 Macc 3:24). These are joined by the angel of death, rulers of the cosmos (John 12:31; Eph 2:2), figures allied with specific nations and, the area of greatest development, endless daimons and angels with specific names such as Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, Raziel, and Samiel. Keeping track of all the angels and daimons, knowing their names and their roles had become a formidable task.

Late antique writers puzzled over the rise of such rich angelology and daimonology. The rabbis, alert to the gulf between the few named angels in the Bible and the much richer angelology of their day, posited that the Jews brought the names of angels back from Babylonia (JRH 1.2; GenRab 48). Modern scholars repeat this theory, since some of the angel names used in the first centuries closely parallel Babylonian angel names and roles (Kohut 1866). This explanation is not sufficient. Where the names come from does not explain why they were borrowed and continued to have importance. That is, had daimons not assumed such a central role in the cosmology at that time, there would have been no reason to borrow names for them. The expanded angelology does clarify and fill in the
gaps of obscure Biblical texts (Olyan 1993). But we have to ask what it was about the historical setting that made these types of embellishments plausible and meaningful.

A preliminary and modest goal is to outline some of the main contours of thought which accompanied the increasing interest in angels and daemons. Late antique religious traditions were based on textual themes which were centuries old, many of them dating back to the Ancient Near Eastern religions (J. Z. Smith 1979). The cosmology of these ancient religions, a positively evaluated three-tiered structure of heaven above, earth in the middle, and the underworld beneath, is labeled “locative” due to its emphasis on knowing one’s place in the cosmic hierarchy and abiding by it (J. Z. Smith 1978b).

By the third century BCE this view was supplemented by a newer picture in which the earth was conceived as a sphere which hung suspended in the middle of a many layered cosmos, a theme elaborated already in the Greek writer Eudoxus (350—340 BCE) and mirrored in endless subsequent Greco-Roman Jewish and Christian texts. Here the old visions were supplemented by talk of multiple heavens, a far-off deity, and escape from earthly existence to an eternal after-life in heaven.14 Jonathan Smith calls this cosmology “utopian” due to its otherworldly emphasis (1978b: 45).

In broad strokes, Hebrew notions of “national monotheism” seen, for example, in Isaiah, parallel to Greek “philosophical monotheism” in Xenocrates, revised the older, traditional model of one highest deity for each city/nation ruling over a divine council.15 It was no longer thought appropriate for a deity to talk to, interact with, guide, command and reprimand his followers directly.16

The deity was still the focus of certain prayers and was not thought to be so far beyond the realm of humans that he was not involved in their lives. It did mean, as outlined here, that some of the supernatural manifestations on earth which might earlier have been thought to be the work of the deity were now considered the work of angels and daemons. Apuleius reflects mid-second century CE etiquette when he negates the possibility that the Gods themselves sent a dream to Hannibal. “It is not,” he claimed, “becoming that the Gods of heaven should condescend to things of this nature” (deDeosSoc 7).

In the emerging view humans lived at the center of a gigantic cosmic network of rotating planets and stars. Nilsson summarized the shift in relation to Greek religion, but it also applied to emerging Jewish and Christian religious thought.

The old cosmology was shattered and the universe expanded dizzyly. Earth was at the dead center, surrounded by the atmosphere and the seven spheres each with their heavenly bodies. The moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn all shuttled around the earth, as did the fixed stars that composed the Zodiac.

(1948: 99)

The positive and orderly image of earthly existence, so thoroughly propagandized by the earlier royal and priestly writers in the locative worldview, was supplemented by this new vision of the earth as a negative and confining place. Life on earth was radically different from that in the heaven above. On earth people lived and died, all of existence was in flux and thus inferior; far above earth was the realm of the deity, the realm of the eternal where everything is beyond change. The atmosphere between the far-off eternal realm and the world of human existence was like a vast no-man’s land in which all sorts of supernatural beings flourished.

The divine presence no longer dwelt in a Temple. For the prophet Ezekiel the sins of the Israelites caused this relocation; for others it was simply impossible to conceive of a deity who dwelt in a specific locale. Instead the deity was everywhere, with a special cultic abode in the highest reaches of heaven.

The Ancient Near Eastern theological staple that the deity/deities are pleased by and partake of animal sacrifice was rejected throughout the Mediterranean basin. The ancient practice was given numerous new interpretations. A common reinterpretation was that sacrifices were directed at the lower level supernatural figures such as angels and daemons and not at the highest God (LXX Deut 32:17). Henry Chadwick calls the trope that daemons feed on sacrifices “universal” (1965: 146 n.1). According to Porphyry daemons “rejoice in libations, and the savour of sacrifices” (De Abst 2.42).17 Jewish texts also describe the hunger of daemons for sacrifices.18

The hereditary priest who watched over the cult lost his domain of expertise and power. Classical prophecy died out as well. The shift from temple to charismatic individual signaled the end of the classical world.19 More audacious figures emerged, individuals who displayed their special status based on their esoteric knowledge and their ability to put divine power into play. They knew the coveted secrets of creation, the fate of the world and of the people who lived in it. These specialists operated individually or in schools centered around a specific teacher, no longer dependent on the fixed sacred locales of the traditional temples.
THE WORLD OF EXORCISM

The ancient cosmologies with their messenger-angels did not disappear. Biblical texts and traditional Greek texts such as Homer continued to inspire devotion and careful reading. The centuries-old picture of the world was supplemented by the new, often darker, vision. Texts from the first three centuries CE, many of which were exegesis of the earlier texts, reflected complex mixtures of elements from the ancient cosmology combined with the newer visions. Messenger-angels gained importance and operated as distinct individuals who could interact with humans in endlessly varying ways. Humans were much more likely to encounter the divine world via these active figures than by any direct interaction with the deity. Rabbinic interpretations of the book of Esther, for example, inserted roles for angels in the story (EsthRab 1.10, 3.12, 3.15, 4.2, 7.13). Angels supplied all the aid to the heroine and their interventions reshaped the story to fit rabbinic concerns. Mirroring the narrative role of the angels and daemons, the vicissitudes of daily life were most likely the result of daemonic activity. Life had to be lived with at least one eye out for them at all times.

Thus we come back to the question of the rise of angelology and daemonicology and see that just as a body is needed in a murder mystery, so daemons and angels had crucial roles in making the cosmology of the first centuries operational.

Even as we have met the modest goal of outlining the cosmological imperatives that point to rich complexes of angels and daemons, we are still left with the prior question of why this cosmology arose. Diffusionist theories posit the borrowing of the new cosmology from neighboring cultures (such as the cyclically popular option of Persia). Scientific discoveries may also drive the changing cosmologies, since the shifting worldview articulated with Eudoxus' mathematical description of planetary orbits. Julia Annas, for example, argues that the widespread use of notions of pneuma/spirit by the Hellenistic philosophers was their way of hooking into the prestige of the advancements of empirical medicine (1992).

Whatever the causes for the shifts, endless numbers of daemons and angels populated the cosmos in the first three centuries and interacted with humans in every conceivable way. Rabbis worried that female daemons might lie in wait for men who slept alone (bShab 1516). No woman was likely to approach childbirth without worrying about daemons who might come after her newborn child.

Many different theories about the specific origins of daemons circulated. They could be either souls of the dead (Plato, Crat 397e–398c), specifically the dead from the Golden Age (Hesiod, Works and Days 397). They could be the souls of the unrighteous (Josephus, BJ 7.185). The gods of other people are daemons, according to the Septuagint, offering another theory.

Yet another source for the origin of daemons was found in the widely cited story of the beings borne from the intercourse between the sons of God and the daughters of men described in Genesis 6:1–4. The story was lovingly elaborated to include nefarious roles for daemons as the original bearers of many common ills (1Enoch 6–21). The offspring from these illicit liaisons were neither human nor divine, and hence fit perfectly into the search for a daemonic genealogy (Justin, Apol 5).

The tendency in both ancient and modern writers when presented with such rich daemon lore is to try to systematize the data. Plutarch's lucid discussions, for example, summarize state-of-the-art theorizing about daemons in the mid-second century CE. Plutarch collected what he considered to be the most authoritative ideas about daemons from his best sources. His synthesis forms the basis of much modern discussion as well. When Plutarch looked around for possible origins, he included Thrace, Egypt and Persia; modern scholars have repeated all of these options.

Plutarch did not even consider the possibility that the contemporary daemonicology was Greek in origin, despite the fact that the term “daemon” appears in older Greek texts. Homer, for example, used the term daemons indistinguishably from the term for god (theos). Both referred to a type of divine power with no distinct form, no personal history, and no parentage or ancestry (Brenk 1986: 2081). Homer's usage was a far cry from the complex daemonicology which confronted Plutarch centuries later.

By Plutarch's time the intermediary role of daemons had received extensive elaboration. Plutarch found particularly useful Plato's statement that daemons are intermediaries between gods and men. This role was familiar from older Greek stories, just as it was from Biblical stories. Plutarch also used Xenocrates' treatise Epinomis which organized and explained the hierarchy of gods and daemons more clearly than Plato had done. Just as Plato posits matter and nature as the underlying basis of all existence, for Plutarch daemons are fundamental components of the cosmic hierarchy (De Defectu 10). Souls can work their way up the ladder, and with sufficient purification, become totally divine. Less fortunate souls fall farther down the scale into mortality. Daemons are a structural necessity since they are the "interpreters and ministering nature" between gods and humans (De Defectu 13). Their existence offers explanations...
for all questionable rites such as eating raw flesh and human sacrifice, actions which were never done on behalf of the higher gods (DeDefectu 14). So, too, all questionable stories about gods are really just stories about daemons. The exact distinction between daemons and greater gods is a subject for debate; daemons die, but some, such as the Stoics, argue that only one god is truly eternal (DeDefectu 19).

The intermediary roles of daemons were a cliché since these roles reflected so closely the cosmology.27 Apuleius, a mid-second century CE philosopher, explained that there are certain divine powers of a middle nature, situating in this interval of the air between highest ether and earth below, through whom our aspirations and our desires are conveyed to the Gods. The Greeks call them “daemons”.

(DeDefectu 6)28

Numerous authors besides these attempted to systematize the endless angels and daemons, presenting them in specific ranks and modes of organization, often with military motifs. Sometimes the ranks were simply lists of names while in other cases they included the special tasks of each type of angels. These descriptions varied from author to author. The neo-Platonist Proclus described the ranks and tasks of angels who were arrayed under specific gods.29 Apollo, for example, was the supervisor of prophetic, musical, and healing angels.30 The Hebrew text The Book of Secrets outlines the names and tasks of the angels arrayed in the first six of the seven heavens under their angelic leaders.31

Despite all the attempts by ancient authors to systematize a “daemonology,” conceptions of daemons varied widely even within the writings of one author. All these figures were tools of the ancient imagination used to organize, filter, and explain relationships between daily life and the supernatural world. The particular conceptualization depended on the type of text an author was writing and the specific points he was trying to make.

Since the gods were thought to be “entirely different from men” (Apuleius, DeDefectu 7) they were not good tools of the imagination for thinking about the similarities between humans and divine beings. Daemons, on the other hand, share many human characteristics: they have gender, personalities, special interests and abilities. As plastic forces daemons could be utilized in an endless variety of speculations.

Apuleius speculated on daemons and offered more than one theory at the same time (DeDefectu 9). He said that while in the human body, the human soul could be called a daemon, as in the famous case of Socrates’ “genius.” The human soul after death could be a daemon too. There was yet another type of daemon who was forever free from having a body and possessed special power of “another nature.” These were referred to as “Sleep,” “Love,” etc.

Even as simple a question as whether or not daemons have bodies offered much opportunity for speculation and human/divine comparison. Daemons are like angels in that they have wings, fly from one end of the earth to another, and have foreknowledge of events but also like humans in that they eat, drink and propagate (bHag 16a). Daemons might be described as having bodies of innumerable forms (bBer 6a). If the appearance of daemons looks to humans as if they cast a shadow, then what daemons teach us is that appearances are deceiving (bYeb 122a). They have a nature which is not as sluggish as terrestrial beings, but not as light as ethereal beings (Apuleius, DeDefectu 7).

The personalities were also conceived of as variations on familiar human traits, reminiscent of earlier portrayals of the Greek gods and narrative depictions of the Israelite deity. Daemons exhibit human passions, which makes them much more interesting to us. If their rites are neglected, they are likely to become jealous (Porphyry, deAbst 2.37). And they are ambitious, instituting false worship “for they wish to be considered as God and the power which presides over them is ambitious to appear to be the greatest God” (deAbst 2.42).

In the end no single picture of daemons emerges even in one writer. As mentioned above in relation to Augustine, with the rise of Christianity daemons became more clearly identified as evil forces. Their roles as disrupters of the cosmic order also become more dramatic as daemons came to bear more of the weight of responsibility for evil in the unfolding Christian theology (Wey 1957).

Life with daemons was as close as with one’s neighbours. They could be employed by those who know how to put them to work. The most intimate interactions were imagined, such as sexual intercourse with daemons.32 Given the opportunity, a daemon would take up residence in a human body. If this happened, the remedy would involve a cosmic battle. We turn now to two such battles, one Christian and the other from a Jewish-influenced ritual preserved in a Greek text.
The World of Exorcism

Daimons, possession and exorcism

In the popular movie "At Black," an intergalactic alien is apprehended by making an ancient human samurai appear as a ghost, which is then used to confuse the alien's crew. However, the movie's depiction of possession and exorcism is not entirely accurate, as it omits the role of the possessed individual in controlling their own actions.

The concept of possession is not limited to the supernatural world, but can also be found in various cultural contexts. In many societies, possession is seen as a way to communicate with the divine or to access a higher state of consciousness.

The role of the exorcist is to help the possessed individual return to their normal state of being. This can be achieved through various methods, such as chanting, meditation, or the use of sacred objects.

In some cultures, possession is seen as a positive force, as it can bring about healing or a deeper understanding of oneself. However, in other cultures, possession is viewed as a curse or a threat to society.

The exorcist must be skilled in both the spiritual and cultural aspects of their work, as they must be able to understand the needs and desires of the possessed individual.

In the end, the role of the exorcist is to bring about a transformation in the individual, through a process of inner change and spiritual awakening.
human passions, which were liable to lead individuals astray. Controlling the body was a means of controlling all the evils of bodily existence.

Since controlling the body was so important, in the first centuries any type of spontaneous and unwilling bodily gesture might be a sign of possession by a hostile being. Signs of daimonic possession in the New Testament include falling into fire and water (Matt 17:15), convulsions (Mark 1:26; 9:20; Luke 4:35), foaming at the mouth (Luke 9:39), raving (Mark 5:6), grinding of teeth (Mark 9:18), or showing great fierceness and abnormal strength (Matt 8:28; Mark 5:4; Luke 8:29). Acting in a crazy or insane manner was also evidence of possession (John 8:48; 10:20).

The standard vocabulary of exorcism emerged in the first centuries CE (Kotansky 1995). The first extant uses of the verb ἐκζωγορίζω: “drive out (by oath)” and the noun “exorcist” both appear in the writings of the mid-second century satirist Lucian. In one of his satires Lucian described a Syrian exorcist famed for his power over spirits. The exorcist claimed to heal possessed individuals by directly questioning the spirits who make people foam at the mouth and fall down in moonlight (Lover of Lies 16).

Lucian mocked the entire procedure. Skeptical of the proceedings, one of the characters comments ironically that daemons are just about as visible as Platonic forms. Another unflattering portrait by Lucian of an exorcist, preserved only in fragmentary form, refers to the stinking mouth of the exorcist (AnibPal 11.427).

The term “exorcist” also appears in an astrological text, Astrological Influences, written by Ptolemy in the second half of the second century. Ptolemy explained that in certain phases the planets produce “persons inspired by the gods, interpreters of dreams and exorcists” (14.4). The term is listed as one of several types of experts on divine matters and appears to have no explanation.

The Book of Acts includes the earliest extant Christian use of the term “exorcist” in a striking story about itinerant Jewish exorcists (Acts 19:11–16). This usage is perhaps somewhat earlier than the first appearances in Greco-Roman texts. Three brothers, described as sons of the chief priest, try to perform an exorcism using Jesus’ name. They attempt to drive out the daimon with a common formula of adjuration “I adjure you by . . . .” The spirit turns back on them and taunts them “Jesus I recognize, and Paul I know, but who are you?” Their attempt fails and they are driven naked out of the house of the possessed man.

In contrast Paul’s healings, mentioned in the previous verses, are presented as miracles coming from the deity via Paul. Even the cloth he touched is effective in healings (Acts 19:11–12). The Jewish exorcists used only the divine name “Jesus”, one that might appear to be an odd choice for Jews. As unlikely as this seems, a Jewish-influenced exorcism discussed below includes an adjuration of daimons by the “God of the Hebrews, Jesus.”

In Acts the emphasis is not on the daimon, but on the all-too-human exorcists. These figures were of high status, identified as sons of the Jewish chief priest Sceva. No chief priest by that name is known from other sources and even the title is suspect; the import of the name was as a way of referring to a high ranked, cultic Jewish figure. Josephus tells us about a contemporary named Eleazar who did exorcisms using techniques associated with Solomon (Ant 8.46–9). Eleazar’s claim to authority is not noted, other than the fact that he had access to ancient wisdom. The story from Acts, in contrast, is about high-ranking Jewish ritual failure. This, as it were, reverse exorcism leads not to getting rid of daimons but instead to a supernatural expulsion of the would-be-exorcists. While other New Testament exorcisms reveal the heavenly status of the individual carrying it out, here the story reveals the human status of the exorcists. The priests turn out to be fully human and they themselves are subjected to supernatural control. The point is the same, since it is in the context of the exorcism that we are able to for a moment to see the truth about exactly who is a supernatural power and who is not.

The anecdote from Acts is very compressed, presupposing a familiarity by the reader with more detailed exorcism stories. From other stories in the New Testament, Greco-Roman and rabbinic texts we can reconstruct a fairly standard repertoire of exorcistic techniques. These included looking upwards, sighing or groaning, making hand gestures (such as making the sign of the cross), spitting, invoking the deity and speaking “nonsense” words or letter strings. Sometimes the daimon was commanded to speak as a way of demonstrating both his presence in the human body and the practitioner’s control over him.

Use of divine names in rituals, including exorcisms, is an immense topic. The efficacy of names is a sub-set of the general ability of words to have effects on their contexts of use; it is a mistake to see the use of names as qualitatively distinct from other effective uses of words. Promises, legal formulas, namings, and religious formulas
such as "I now pronounce you man and wife" are all examples of uses of words to "do things."45

Socially conceived effects of language on the contexts of use are culture-specific. Legal and religious formulas, for example, do not translate easily from culture to culture. Great care must be taken in finding out the specific notions by which words are socially understood to have contextual implications.44 Texts from the first three centuries include a wide variety of ideas, some quite old, about effective and unusual language uses that had implications for rituals. Gods, or daemons, might speak a distinct language which may or may not be comprehensible by humans; inspired speech might also sound like nonsense to humans.45

Already in the fourth century BCE a group of words referred to as the Ephesian Letters were used on tablets and rings: ἀσκοῦς; κατάκτων; λές; αὐτράξ; δυσήιμος.46 Athenaeus preserves for us Anaxilas' fourth century BCE unflattering picture of a country snob who wears the letters engraved on little bits of leather (Deip 12.548). Their special relationship to exorcisms is evident in Plutarch's disparaging association of them with "magi" who tell people to recite the words over themselves in order to get rid of daemons (QuesCon 7.5).

The origin of these words was unknown in antiquity, though there are many theories. Given their murky origins, explanations of their efficacy probably varied with different ancient authors. Common tropes in late antiquity for the power of letter-strings included that they were foreign words, divine names or the names of daemons. As daemon names, for example, they were ready for use to control and exorcise any wayward daemon. Clement of Alexandria believed that they had symbolic import (Strom 5.8).

The names of divine beings, including gods, angels and daemons, were thought to have special roles. Divine names did not merely refer to the objects (beings) they named; instead they were direct manifestations of the divine forces. They function similarly to signatures and signature guarantees in our culture, which are understood to be legally binding representations. In modern terminology, their function is not based on their semantics, that is, their reference to some specific object or idea but instead on their relationship to the contexts of use. Each utterance of a divine name activates that force within the ritual, supplying the power to make the ritual effective. These ideas were particularly important in rabbinic traditions where the divine name was understood to be the creative and ordering word par excellence (Janowitz 2001).

Jesus is presented in the New Testament as being able to drive out a daemon by speaking a single word (Matt 8:16).47 His ability to speak in this effective manner is an index of his power. His disciples drive out daemons using Jesus' name, which was widely recognized in Jewish and Christian circles as having special power.48 In a rabbinic exorcism Rabbi Simon ben Yohai meets a daemon on the road who later possesses a member of the Emperor's family. The rabbi is able to exorcise the daemon simply by uttering his name and telling him to depart (bMeil 17b).49

The phrase "Jesus, God of the Hebrews," as mentioned above, occurs in an exorcism text from the set of Greek papyri referred to in modern scholarship as Greek Magical Papyri (PGM) (4.3007–86).50 Here we find not a condensed reference to a failed rite as in Acts, but a detailed outline of how to carry out a successful one. The exorcism is structured as follows:

1 Opening instructions:
   A tested charm of Pibechis for those possessed by daemons.
   Take oil of unripe olives with the herb mastigia and the fruit pulp of the lotus, and boil them with colorless marjoram while saying, "IOEL . . . come out from NN."

2 Instruction for making an amulet:
   The phylactery: On a tin lamella write "IAEO . . . " And hang it on the patient . . . place [the patient] opposite you, adjure . . .

3 A verbal formula for recitation:
   This is the adjuration: I adjure you by the God of the Hebrews, Jesus IABA . . . who appears in fire . . .
   I adjure you by the one who appeared to Osran in a shining pillar and a cloud by night who saved his people from the Pharaoh [list of additional wonders].
   I adjure you by the seal which Solomon placed on the tongue of Jeremiah [long list of more wonders by the deity]

4 Closing instructions:
   And I adjure you, the one who receives this adjuration, not to eat pork, and every spirit and daemon, whatever sort it may be, will be subject to you. And while adjuring, blow once, blowing air from the tips of the feet up to the face, and it will be assigned. Keep yourself pure, for this charm is Hebraic and is preserved among pure men.
The exorcism is attributed to an Egyptian wonder-worker named Pibehus, meaning falcon. The Greek Magical Papyri are replete with Egyptian deities such as the sun god Amon, Osiris, the jackal-headed god of mummification Anubis, and Thoth, the Egyptian god of wisdom often associated with Hermes. References to these gods, their priests, animals associated with Egyptian religious practice and hieroglyphics are all means of incorporating the ancient, secret and powerful traditions of Egypt. The papyrus itself, we must remember, was found in Egypt, preserved due to the favorable weather conditions.

In this particular exorcism there are few obviously Egyptian elements in the rest of the rite beyond the reference to Pibehus. The rite shows several other signs of being a composite of more than one exorcism, perhaps one of which was Jewish. The complex of actions places us squarely in the realm of a ritual expert, with a great disparity between the knowledge demanded of the one doing the exorcism versus the one who is possessed. The casual reader of the papyrus would find much of the text technical and obscure, requiring extensive knowledge of the animal and vegetable world as well as knowledge about daemons and their roles.

The first section produces a concoction, which presumably was applied to the patient. Anointing sick people with olive oil or herbal mixtures was a widespread practice. In this case a complex mixture is created which itself requires both mixing ingredients and knowing formulas to say over them. The insertion of the patient’s name in the formula is followed by “etc.” implying that the practitioner must know enough to complete the rite on his own.

Herbs were thought to be particularly effective in drawing out daemons, in addition to the numerous other roles they played in healing. The herbs themselves might have been gathered with the recitation of a special formula such as found elsewhere in the papyri (PGM 4.286–95). Josephus mentioned a root named Baaras after the ravine where it is found. This root, which had to be extracted with great care due to its lethal potency, was used in exorcisms. It expelled daemons when used on an afflicted person (BJ 7.180–5). So too the rabbis ruled that it is permissible to wear an amulet on the Sabbath that contains writings or herbs (Shab 6.2).

The construction and use of amulets (section 2) was widespread in the first centuries and will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter. The amulet produced for this exorcism comes with its own guarantee; it is of the type, which is “terrifying to every daemon, a thing he fears” (3017–18).

Section 3 of the rite incorporates the power of divine names, as discussed above. In this exorcism divine names appear in both the easily recognizable form, such as Jesus, and as strings of letters. The letter strings alternate with short descriptions of the deity’s actions, one of which describes the creation of the daimon in “holy paradise.” Since the deity made the daimon, he should be able to re-assert his control over the wayward being.

This section also contains a long list of wonders which are a mini-summary of Israelite history (hitoria). The summary simultaneously establishes the power of the deity who stands behind the exorcist and the genealogy of the exorcist himself. Each story of divine aid given in the past makes it more likely that divine aid will come again, shifting the historical precedents into the present episode. A similar goal is reached in Navaho healing ceremonies via elaborate sand paintings depicting mythical themes, each one constructed specifically for a certain rite. The patient then sits in the middle of the painting, literally embedding his or her personal story directly into the myth portrayed in the sand painting (Gill 1981).

In a Christian-influenced Mayan exorcism recorded recently in the Yucatan the altar is transformed from an everyday shelf into a place where the spirits appear (Hanks 1996: 184). The officiant calls upon the earth spirits to come and force out the winds which are harming the patient from the area of the altar. In contrast, in just the same way the body of the beneficiary is swept clean of the winds. In our late antique exorcism the contested space is the patient’s body. He is not brought into contact with sacred space in order to focus divine power on him. Instead it is the divine power manifest in the person of the exorcist which “sweeps clean” the daimon. The daimon may only be banished as far as the next body. Often this is a human body since daemons are looking for human bodies to use as homes.

The Mayan healing ceremony effects “the production and transformation of lived space,” by “creating a universal space.” The story of the specific patient is universalized and the universal spirits make a particular appearance in the rite. In the Pibehus exorcism we see a similar universalizing of the patient’s story, as it is placed within the history of the Israelite deity, and a particularizing of the deity’s story by manifesting his power for the benefit of the specific patient. The rite itself also transforms the setting. The participation of the supernatural power is manifested by the use of the third person (the One who . . . ) just as in the Mayan exorcism.

The exorcist employs the seal of Solomon, that is, a ring with the
seal of Solomon on it (section 4). As daimon lore grew in the first
centuries, a vast part of it was associated with Solomon and his seal.
The brief Biblical reference to Solomon's great wisdom, his proverbs
and songs and his knowledge of plants and animals (1 Kings
4:29–34) was expanded to include his encyclopedic knowledge of
astrology, the power of roots and the forces of spirits (Wis 7:15–22).
An entire text, The Testament of Solomon, recounts Solomon's power
over the daemons as he puts them to work at building the Temple.

While the deity ruled the world, Solomon ruled the world of
daemons (ApocAdam 7.13) and inherited special esoteric music from
David (Ps-Philo, LiberAntBib 60).54 References to Solomon and his
powers over daemons decorate amulets,55 door lintels,56 and ceramic
amulet bowls buried outside houses.57 Numerous Christian writers
such as Origen (ComMatt 23.110; PG 13, col 1757) and "On the
Origin of the World" (NHC II, 5.107,3) from the Christian library
found at Nag Hammadi refer to Solomon and his power over
daemons.

The rabbis repeat the trope as well, describing Solomon's power
over beasts and birds (Targum Sheni to Esther).58 Later tradition
attributes the Book of Healings destroyed by Hexekiah to Solomon
(1Jer 10a, bPcs 56a; Duling 1975: 16). Solomon was often pitted
against Asmodeaus, known in rabbinic literature as the "king of
daemons."59

Exorcism stories from the first centuries are replete with refer-
cences to Solomon's mysterious ring. It was presumed to have been
passed down through the generations to contemporary wise men.
The ring accrued to itself the power of these generations of men
who employed it, as well as the initial power it received from
Solomon. Josephus described an exorcist named Eleazar who held a
ring under the nose of the possessed person while reciting Solomon's
name (Josephus, Ant 8.46–9). According to a rabbinic story the
ring had the name of God written on it, not at all surprising given
the centrality of the divine name in Judaism.60 Early Christian
pilgrims were told that St Sylvia was able to see Solomon's ring
among the relics which the church owned.61

Solomon is not invoked often in the PGM which contain many
classical names such as Aphrodite and Artemis (M. Smith 1979:
133). Many more references to Solomon are found on the numerous
gemstones extant from late antiquity. These precious and semi-
precious stones, engraved with a stereotyped mode of decorations,
were worn as amulets. They invoke primarily Egyptian and Jewish
names (M. Smith 1979: 133). Their particular vocabulary of
decoration (lion-headed serpent, "attacked" eye) appears to be
distinct from the references to stones in the Greek papyri. The
surprisingly strict divide between the gemstones used for curing
digestion, gout and aching back and the references to stones in the
PGM is valuable evidence of the specialization of esoteric know-
ledge. Solomon and his seal were so famous that he is a crossover
figure, appearing in both the PGM and on the gems.

The closing of the text clearly identifies it with Hebrews and
Hebrew traditions, as does the historiola and many of the divine
names. The references are sometimes distorted, or based on stereo-
types as in the references to not eating pork and staying pure, as if
the editor had limited direct knowledge of Jewish traditions.

Decades ago Knox argued that the text could have been employed
in synagogues.62 The Pibechus rite as preserved, however, is part of an
extensive collection of rituals edited in Greco-Roman circles but not
Jewish ones (unlike The Book of Secrets discussed in the next chapter).
These references point us to the international reputation of the
Hebrews/Jews for secret wisdom (Chapter 1). The ritual combines
two of the great stereotypes from the first centuries: the centrality
of both Hebrews and Egypt as sources of powerful wisdom.

The Pibechus exorcism contrasts with the exorcism of the daimon
Asmodeus described in the wry novel Tobit, often presented as the first
Jewish possession story.63 In this novel, which pokes fun at all the
characters, a pious man from Judah named Tobit is blinded when
bird-droppings fall into his eyes while he naps under a tree. His
regular religious activities, including zacual burial of neglected
corpses, do not protect him from this humiliating calamity. He is
rescued through the help of the angel Raphael, who, disguised as a
fellow traveler, helps Tobit's son to procure a fish whose entrails cure
his blindness and furthermore smokes out a daimon who has been
haunting his daughter-in-law-to-be's bridal chamber. The exorcism in
Tobit is a modified sacrifice.64 Reversing the "pleasing odor" of the
Biblical sacrifices, the odor of the fish's liver and heart drives off
the daimon before he can make the new bridegroom his eighth victim.

The papyrus exorcism is a highly professionalized version that
seems far removed from the simple story in Tobit. The human
exorcist, who procures the items he needs based on his training (and
the written instructions he uses), has displaced the divine inter-
vention represented by the angel. The entire procedure is more
elaborate, especially the verbal formulas. We find few exorcisms from
the first centuries CE that have no verbal formulas at all, as in Tobit.
The war of words between the exorcist and the daimon is too central.
The *Tobit* exorcism still has links with the older locative worldview. The daimon has to be driven off from human society, bound by Raphael so that he can never return to bother humans again. In both our examples of exorcism rituals the supernatural forces gathered to combat the daimon had to out weigh its power, either by the power of a divine name alone or by the rite which combined an amulet with the recitation of stories of divine power. The human world exists in the sphere of the daimons and their natural homes are in human bodies. In this finely calibrated fight the true status of each combatant is revealed only in the battle itself. Our examples of exorcism are presented as daring attempts to rear off disguises and show the world as it really is. In the process of the exorcism itself, a human is brought once more within the protecting realm of the good supernatural powers, but not without effort.

The focus on bodies that marked the first centuries leads us to expect an emphasis on exorcism. That is, stories of exorcism lead us inexorably to bodies. "The very notion of possession," Janice Boddy reminds us, "indicates from the outset that the body is the locus of negotiation between the spirits and the initiate and of the redefinition of her identity" (1989: 89).

With the rise of the utopian worldview, the human body gained prominence as the battleground for conflicts between human and supernatural forces. Evil forces were so closely intertwined with life on earth the war had to be fought one body at a time. It is in this context that baptism came to include an exorcism, marking the body of the new Christian as aligned with Christ. The daimon is not being sent back to his home. Instead, getting rid of the evil force is dependent on a miraculous intervention by the deity, since the human world is the natural place for daimons to lurk. Tremendous effort must be made to intervene. The deity has not so much to retake space that was already his as to manifest his divine power in the midst of the world of the daimonic. The deity and the exorcist are the intruders here since it is natural for human bodies to house daimons. If the exorcist fails, he himself can be driven out, as in the story in Acts, and the reign of the daimonic continues.

Through this whole discussion we are far from the realm of magic, until we find some of these rituals being labeled magic in the modern period. Exorcism was too integral a part of the late antique world to be cast in doubt. A person's body was the finest instrument for gauging just how corrupt the world had become and the battle against evil was fought one body at a time.