While the above cases pertain to difficulties related to allusions defined as such in relation to specific verses, there are also issues related to scriptural books. What scriptural books were considered authoritative or at least worth engaging in the Manichaean tradition? The editors delimit their task by excluding the so-called 'parabiblical' literature (p. xiii), a designation used for non-canonical literature in which biblical personages are prominent (such as the *Ascension of Isaiah*). They also exclude the standard Old Testament apocrypha (such as Judith or the Wisdom of Solomon) on the grounds that not all Christians agree about the canonical status of this material. The core question it seems to me is not what books all Christians consider scriptural but rather what books were interpreted or alluded to by Manichaeans. Many ancient iterations of books that comprise scripture include the apocrypha, even as some authors question their importance (note for example what Jerome says in his preface to the Books of Kings in his Vulgate). Perhaps our extant sources show no Manichaean engagement with the apocrypha at all, but it seems this topic should at some level be addressed in a book devoted to Manichean interpretation of the Bible 'in the widest possible sense'. Excluding 'parabiblical' literature raises the issue of what books Manichaeans considered biblical. This issue is particularly germane with regard to another of the editors' 'clusters' of biblical texts, Gen. 6:1–5. As they note, some Manichaean sources resonate with material in *1 Enoch* and the Qumran *Book of Giants*, both of which include narratives that relate to this pericope (p. xxxvii). While it is fully reasonable to relate texts such as *Keph*. 92, 25–32 to Genesis 6 (p. 57), in the case of *1 Enoch* it is by no means clear that the Manichaeans considered this book 'parabiblical'. At a minimum the issue should be adjudicated; the editors proceed from the position that *1 Enoch* is 'parabiblical' without extensive discussion of this designation (p. xxxvii). As numerous studies in recent years have demonstrated, *1 Enoch* had a degree of scriptural authority in the early Church. Some early Christian authors cite Enochic writings as authoritative while others contend that they should not have this status. It seems that the designation of *1 Enoch* as 'parabiblical' assumes the standard canonical Bible.

This raises the issue of whose Bible one has in mind when looking for allusions to scripture. It seems that the project is at times defined by the search for allusions in Manichaean sources to verses in scripture, as most moderns would recognize it. Despite this anachronism, there is much to commend this volume.

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ORTAL-PAZ SAAR, *Jewish Love Magic. From Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity 6). Brill, Leiden 2017. Pp. 316 + 8 figs. Price: €105.00/$121.00 hardback. ISBN: 978-90-04-34789-2.

Many Jewish sources on ancient magic have been published in recent years, highlighting that, in the premodern world, people often turned to magic to deal with different issues pertaining to their lives. Among the most common magical goals were those concerning the sphere of love and affection, which prove to be also among the most interesting for scholars interested in cultural and social history, as they open a window onto the feelings, expectations and passions of the ancients. Written in a very pleasant style, Saar's important volume, which is a revised version of her 2009 dissertation (Tel Aviv University), is the first scholarly attempt to reconstruct the history of love magic as practiced by late antique and medieval Jews, based on the analysis of a rich corpus of approximately three hundred manuscript excerpts,

mostly from the Cairo genizah and — to a lesser extent — from medieval European codices.

The scientific accuracy of the book is evident already from its introduction, where Saar provides the theoretical and methodological background for her study, explaining the meaning and implications of key terms such as 'magic', 'love' and 'Jewish love magic' in the context of her specific research, discussing the scope and delimitations of her project, and outlining the most relevant sources on which she relies. Saar points out that, considering the marked continuity and conservative nature of the traditions of Jewish love magic throughout the centuries, her study does not focus on a specific epoch or area, but follows diachronically the phenomenon within a broader chronological and geographical framework. The study has, though, also a synchronic angle, as the author heavily relies on comparative analysis, relating the different practices of Jewish love magic to analogous phenomena developed in Graeco-Roman, Christian and Islamic traditions.

Attention to cross-cultural analysis is particularly evident in the first chapter of the volume, which will perhaps be the most interesting for those focusing on religious studies, as well as for a larger audience. The chapter offers, in fact, an erudite and fluid historical excursus on love magic which exposes readers to a large number of literary and documentary excerpts spanning from a third millennium BCE erotic spell in Old Akkadian to a sixteenth century story on a German Jew who allegedly used magic to obtain the favour of the Prince Elector Joachim II of Brandenburg, passing through a Ramesside incantation, Graeco-Roman binding spells, Apuleius' *Apologia*, Hagiographical texts, Picatrix and many other outstanding sources. Saar uses this heterogeneous corpus to isolate the most distinctive features of love magic developed cross-culturally and throughout time as opposed to other branches of magic (i.e. aggressive magic), as well as to grasp the logic and the actual ends of love magical techniques. According to this overview, love magic does not vary much across cultures and periods with regard to both its goals — i.e. instilling (sexual and/or emotional) love between (actual or potential) partners, obtaining grace and favour in the eyes of other individuals, spreading hate — and its means of achievement, which involve both the manipulation of elements and the use of verbal devices (e.g. adjuration). Saar correctly identifies the similarity between love magical practices developed in different geographical and chronological frameworks in the universal human experience of love, hate, affection, passion, need of social recognition, etc. Among the most interesting findings emerging form this chapter, stands out the 'silence' of victims targeted with love magic, who apparently did not engage in self-defence or counter-attacks against the perpetrators (at least not with magical means), as well as the (mis)use of love magic to explain and mask non-magical phenomena such as impotence or adultery.

With the second chapter, we arrive at the heart of Saar's work, a detailed analysis of Jewish sources on love magic — many of which previously unpublished — which extends over three chapters of the volume (Ch. 2, 3 and 4). After briefly discussing Maimonides' distinction between the three main aspects of magic — i.e. the materials used in the practice, the time chosen for engaging in the magical activity, and the actual content of the magical praxis — Saar explains that her reconstruction of Jewish love magic will follow this threefold categorization, albeit in a slightly different order, with Chapter 2 devoted to manipulative aspects of magic, Chapter 3 to verbal devices used in the praxis and Chapter 4 focused on the right time for performing magical techniques. In each of the following chapters, Saar uses the rich corpus of Jewish sources as a starting point to understand the rationale behind the

magical practices and behaviours, as well as to discuss related issues pertaining to social and cultural history, such as reconstructing the identity and the commercial relations of the individuals involved in Jewish love magic. Similarly, the author completes her investigation with cross-cultural analysis, mainly comparing the Jewish material to Graeco-Roman, Christian and Islamic texts.

From the data gathered in Chapter 2, it emerges that Jewish love magic is a combination of manipulative and verbal actions. Writing upon or inscribing a given surface is by far the most common instruction in the context of Jewish love magic. Most of the direct sources — mainly, magical recipes preserved among the Cairo genizah fragments or in Oriental and European codices — instruct magicians or customers to write incantations and formulae on (and with) different materials, most commonly on (gazelle) parchments and unbaked clay, seldom on metal tablets, eggs, leaves, cloths and even animal and human (?) bones. Saar discusses the logic of choosing a specific writing surface or ink (e.g. writing with blood), showing that sometimes there are deeper links between the chosen materials and the written text or the magical praxis itself, such as in the case of wet clay, while in other instances certain elements were favoured among others due to their marked cultural symbolism, such as in the case of eggs. Saar notes that instructions of exclusively uttering magical formulae (without writing them down) are very rare in Jewish love magic, a feature that can be explained both taking into account the relationship/opposition between magic and religion and the 'commercial' nature of magic. Saar notes that, both in Jewish and non-Jewish direct sources, instructions for the sole manipulation of elements (eggs, hairs, fingernails, blood, etc.) unaccompanied by the prescription of uttering/writing down magical formulae are also rare: they are mainly documented in literary texts and most probably reflect magical techniques that were transmitted orally. Before closing the chapter with her concluding remarks, Saar discusses the few finished products of Jewish love magic that have come down to us, noting that they were usually produced according to the same instructions found in the recipes, although with some liberties. These documents are the living proof that love magical techniques were indeed performed and not merely transmitted for literary or theoretical purposes.

The third chapter is perhaps the most remarkable for those specifically focusing on the history of the transmission of Jewish magic, as it includes the edition — often for the first time — of many formulae, *historiolae* and other literary and verbal devices used in Jewish love magic. After discussing some linguistic features observed in her research corpus (i.e. bilingualism, use of specific grammatical persons, etc.), which become also the starting point for broader considerations related to gender and the identity of those involved in the art of magic, Saar examines the different components of the magical discourse, showing how this is often very lyrical and elaborate from a literary perspective. Following Saar's attempt to understand the logic of the language of love magic, we come across the most common magical formulae, quotations from Scripture, metaphors (mainly, that of 'burning fire'), analogies — either based on Biblical characters (where Joseph indisputably sets the record in recipes for grace and favour), Biblical cities (i.e. Sodom and Gomorrah) or animals (dogs and pigs as examples of the greatest hate), as well as non-verbal signs (i.e. the famous *charakteres* attested to in Jewish and non-Jewish sources since the earliest centuries of the first millennium CE) documented in the corpus.

With the fourth chapter, Saar concludes her excursus on the features of Jewish love magic, focusing on the temporal aspects relevant to the performance of magical

actions. After a cross-cultural overview on calendars, horoscopic and astrological beliefs and the general assumption of the existence of propitious timing for performing specific actions, Saar discusses excerpts from her research corpus recommending a specific hour, day of the week (usually, Friday, the day of the goddess of love) — more rarely, month, day of the month or lunar phase — to engage in love magic. While temporal indications are relatively rare in Jewish recipes and amulets for love magic, sometimes they can be reconstructed by the specific entities evoked in the rituals or in the magical formulae, such as angels appointed to specific hours or days. There is no way, though, to confirm whether users actually followed these temporal indications in the actual praxis. Furthermore, Saar notes that, when we do encounter temporal indications, those are quite uniform within Jewish and non-Jewish traditions, as they were influenced by astrological considerations.

With the last chapter, the author returns to some of the questions left open at the beginning of the volume. In particular, she re-examines the data which emerged throughout the study (Ch. 2, 3 and 4) attempting to isolate the distinctive character of Jewish love magic in comparison to love magical behaviours and practices developed in neighbouring cultures as outlined in the incipit (Ch. 1). The chapter opens with an interesting overview on the very few Talmudic and Geonic sources addressing — rarely in an explicit way — the legitimacy of love magical practices, in order to assess the relationship between Jewish love magic and halakhah. While, unfortunately, we cannot reconstruct the general rabbinic and geonic stand towards love magic, it seems that certain practices were tolerated by the religious leadership, provided that they were performed for noble ethical purposes, such as preventing the rabbis from sinning, or curing impotence in the context of a married couple. The examples from medieval responsa literature are particularly insightful, as they document the belief of some rabbis in magically induced impotence and in the danger of polygamous marriage for the sake of the husband, who could end being the target of magical spells devised by his jealous wives competing for his love. Furthermore, the author discusses, on the one hand, the main traits of Jewish love magical practices — such as, logocentrism/textocentrism, use of Biblical analogies and verses, mild and imploring attitude towards God and the adjured entities — and, on the other hand, those features that determine the 'Jewishness' of Jewish love magic — such as, the abstention from desecrating the Shabbat and ingesting non-kosher food, as well as the avoidance of a marked sexual language. Before concluding that Jewish love magical practices were indeed 'fashioned by their users in a distinctive way, corresponding to their religion and their cultural identity' (p. 265), Saar shows how specific features of love magic attested to in the neighbouring traditions (i.e. binding/curse tablets; use of Christian *materia magica*, such as the holy host; baptism for magically enhancing an object, etc.) were, in fact, not adopted by Jews. Besides a useful summary, the volume contains a rich bibliography and indices of manuscripts and subjects.

Due to the general neglect of the topic in previous scholarship, the richness of the research corpus and the scientific precision of the author, Saar's *Jewish Love Magic* is an important volume that should be on the shelf of every scholar focusing on ancient Jewish magic, but also on Jewish culture and cultural history in general. Furthermore, the book is an enjoyable read also for a non-specialist audience thanks to its clarity and fluency.

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