



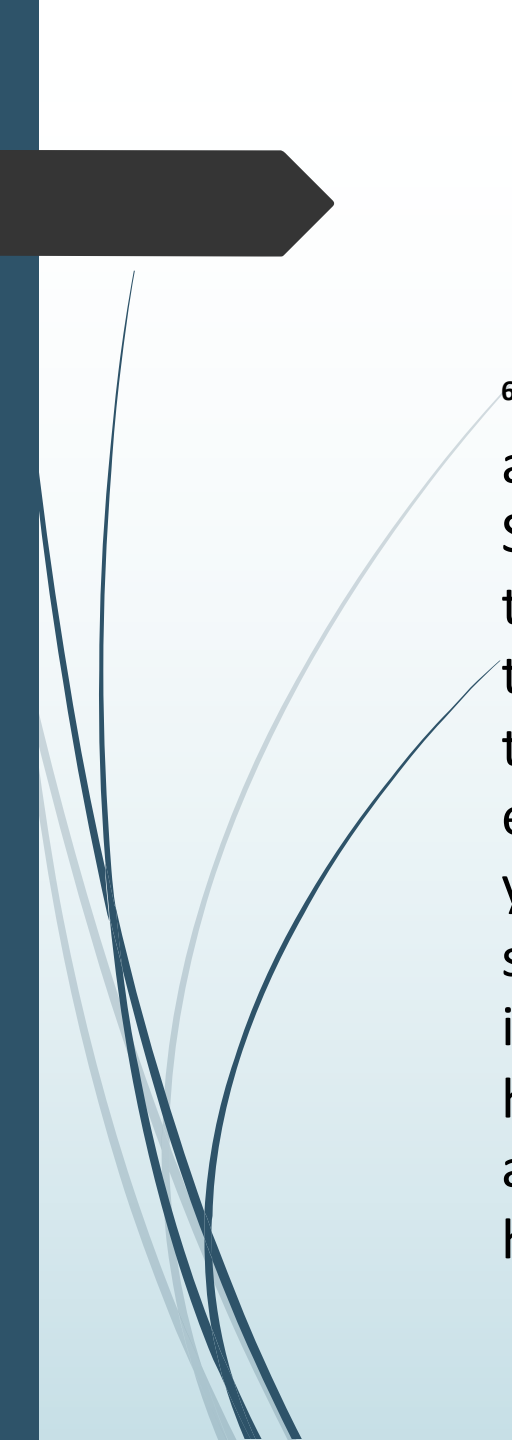
Myth and the Origins of Evil in Ancient Judaism

Myth and Mythology HPHP4006



Biblical Sharpening of Images of Evil

- Only hazy contours of the origins and representatives of evil in the Hebrew Bible
- *Ha-satan* = ‘the accuser’, ‘the one who brings the charges’ (I Kings 1:22; Job 1-2).
- Only one possible use of ‘Satan’ as a proper noun (I Chronicles 21:1).



Job 1:6-12

⁶One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before the Lord, and the Accuser / Satan (*ha-satan*) also came among them. ⁷The Lord said to Satan, 'Where have you come from?' Satan answered the Lord, 'From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.' ⁸The Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil.' ⁹Then Satan answered the Lord, 'Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰Have you not put a fence around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹But stretch out your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.' ¹²The Lord said to Satan, 'Very well, all that he has is in your power; only do not stretch out your hand against him!' Therefore Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.



Second Temple Judaism

- Intertestamental Judaism
- Judaism of the late Second Temple period (250 BCE - 70 CE)
- History of the Jews in Palestine during this period is one of unrest and domination by foreign powers:

Persians

Greeks

Romans

Sufferings of the Jews under foreign rule promoted an intense concern with the problem of evil and the powers of evil.

Key Events and Figures

- 333 BCE - Alexander the Great defeats the Persians in Asia Minor
- Relations with Jews deteriorate due to enforced Hellenization
- 167 BCE - eruption of the Maccabean revolt
- 164 BCE - rededication of the Temple
- 64 BCE - Roman consul Pompey enters Jerusalem
- 37 BCE - Herod becomes client king of Judaea



Turmoil in Judaea

- 4 BCE - death of Herod the Great
- Roman rule characterized by heavy taxes and lack of religious sensitivity
- 66 CE - Florus takes money from the Temple treasury
- 70 CE - destruction of the Temple







Texts from Late Second Temple Judaism

- Book of Daniel
- Apocrypha ('hidden writings'; e.g., 1-2 Maccabees, Wisdom of Ben Sira, Wisdom of Solomon)
- Pseudepigrapha ('pseudonymous writings'; e.g. I Enoch, 2 Baruch, IV Ezra, Testament of Abraham)
- Dead Sea Scrolls
- Josephus: Jewish Antiquities, Jewish War

Various Explanations of Evil



- The serpent of Genesis 3 is identified as the devil:
 - But through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it' (Wisdom of Solomon 2:4)
 - Eve carries the blame for the devil's work (Wisdom of Ben Sira 25:24)
- The identification of the serpent with Satan is an attempt to address the problem of evil.
- Human freedom, goaded by Satan, led to a moral evil that God could not prevent.

Book of Daniel: Cosmic Conflict

7 In the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head as he lay in bed. Then he wrote down the dream: ²I, Daniel, saw in my vision by night the four winds of heaven stirring up the great sea, ³and four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. ⁴The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then, as I watched, its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a human being; and a human mind was given to it. ⁵Another beast appeared, a second one, that looked like a bear. It was raised up on one side, had three tusks in its mouth among its teeth and was told, 'Arise, devour many bodies!' ⁶After this, as I watched, another appeared, like a leopard. The beast had four wings of a bird on its back and four heads; and dominion was given to it. ⁷After this I saw in the visions by night a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth and was devouring, breaking in pieces, and stamping what was left with its feet.

¹⁷ 'As for these four great beasts, four kings shall arise out of the earth. ¹⁸ But the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever—for ever and ever.'



Book of Daniel: Cosmic Conflict

- Apocalyptic visions in Daniel 7-12 (ca. 167-164 BCE).
- Four beasts symbolize earthly kings and kingdoms with cosmic significance.
- Struggle between the Jews and the Greeks (Seleucids) reflects a cosmic battle in which angelic forces are involved.
- Jews are supported by an unnamed angelic leader (10:4-11:2) and Michael, their guardian angel (10:13, 20; 12:1).
- Battle of the angels against evil forces, including the angelic Prince of Persia and Prince of Greece.

Interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4



When people began to multiply on the face of the ground and daughters were born to them, sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose. Then Yahweh said, 'My spirit shall not abide in mortals forever, for they are flesh; their days shall be 120 years'. The giants were on the earth in those days - and afterwards - when the sons of God went into the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown.

The Story of the Watchers

- Book of the Watchers - I Enoch 6-11, 17-36 (ca. 200 BCE).
- 200 angels or 'watchers' rebel by desiring and cohabiting with earthly women.
- They bring sin, violence and magic to the world, thus defiling the land.
- Enoch is shown the coming judgment of these angels.

'Enoch walked with God and then he was no more because God took him' (Genesis 5:24).



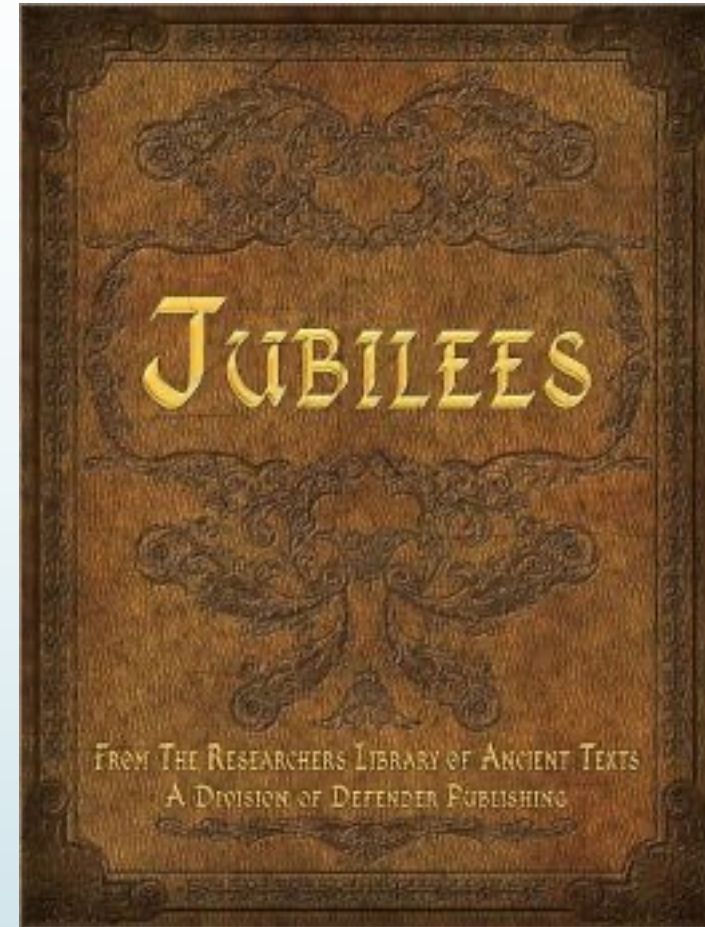


Key Features

- The offspring of the illegitimate union between angels and women are known as ‘giants’ and become evil spirits (‘demons’; I Enoch 15)
- Parallels with ancient Near Eastern (Mesopotamian) demonology:
 - roam in groups
 - attack their victims
 - devour the flesh of animals and humans
 - born of relations between heavenly and earthly figures.
- Myth of the origin of evil: impurity and chaos that leads to the Flood.

Expansion on the Myth of the Watchers

- Book of Jubilees (around 105 BCE)
- Extensive retelling of the stories of Genesis and the first parts of Exodus.
- Greater prominence for angels and demons (in comparison with the biblical narrative).





Jubilees and the Origin of Evil and Sin

- The watchers (Gen. 6:1-4) are angels who descended to teach righteousness but brought sinfulness (Jubilees 4:15).
- They are then bound by the Angel of Presence in the depths of the earth (5:6).
- Appear again after the Flood; impure demons lead astray the children of Noah's sons (10:4-5).
- Noah's grandchildren sin and are then blinded and killed (10:1).
- Spirits are again bound (10:1-7).



Mastema

- Portrait of the adversary begins to emerge in which he is the head of a band of evil angels in rebellion against God and humanity.
- Leader of the ‘watchers’
- *Mastema* = instigator, one who raises enmity or animosity.
- God grants him permission to retain one tenths of the spirits under his command to corrupt people and lead them astray (Jubilees 10:7-14)

O Lord, Creator, leave some of them before me, and let them obey my voice. And let them do everything which I tell them, because if some of them are not left with me, I will not be able to exercise the authority of my will among the children of men. For they are intended to corrupt and lead astray, before my judgment, because the evil of men is great (Jubilees 10:8).

The Dead Sea Scrolls



Fragments of around 800 manuscripts (Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic) from the last three centuries BCE to around 70 CE.

The manuscripts were the library of the Qumran community, consisting of

- Biblical books
- Copies of other late Second Temple Jewish writings
- Sectarian texts (e.g., Manual of Discipline, War Scroll)

The Essenes and the Qumran Sectarians



Common Features

- Emphasis on purity
- Separation from communities and Temple priesthood
- Wilderness communities (celibate men)
- Sharing of property
- Strict observance of the Sabbath



Qumran and the Origins of Evil

- Influence of dualistic language and imagery
- Cosmic struggle between light and darkness
- Spiritual forces that oppose the sons of the light.
- **Manual of Discipline - Community Rule (1QS - Serekh ha-yahad)**
- **War Scroll (1QM - Milhamah).**
- 5 references to 'Satan' in DSS
- Human or angelic adversary but not always a proper name - 'any/all accusers' (1QHa 4:6; 45:3; 1QSb i 8).
- Prayer of Deliverance (11Q5 19:13-16): 'May Satan not rule over me, or an unclean spirit may neither pain nor evil purpose take possession of my bones' (although it could mean 'any accuser').

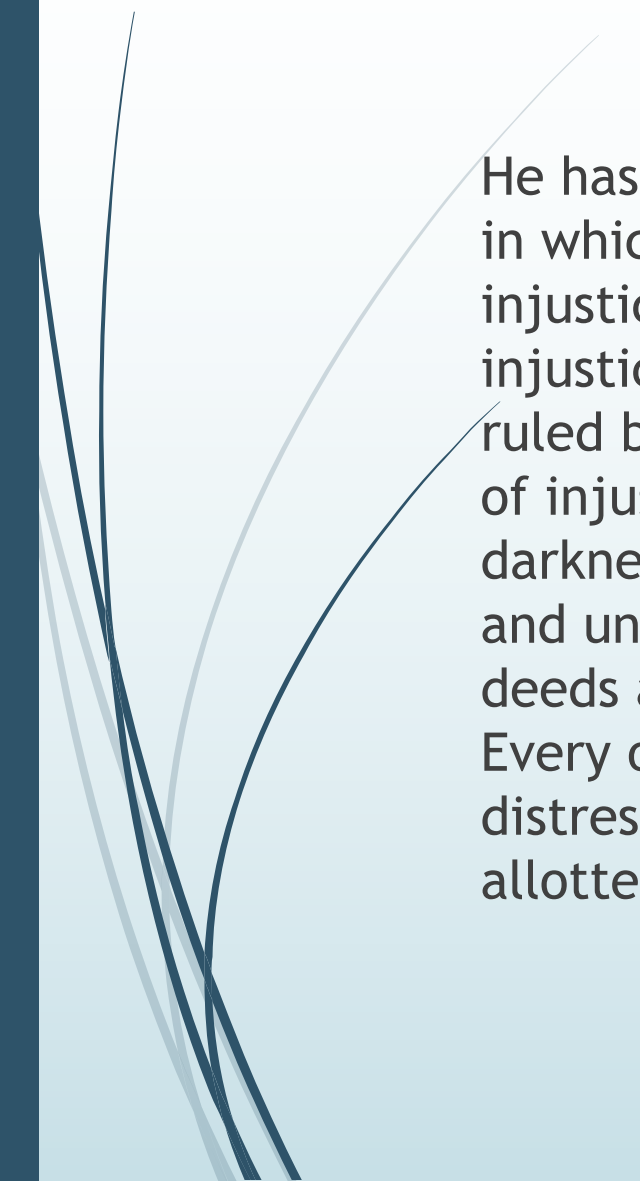


Demonic/Satanic Figures in the Dead Sea Scrolls

- **Mastema** (18 references in the DSS) - animosity/enmity.
- **Belial** (88 references in the DSS) - worthlessness.
- God made Belial for the pit; and in darkness is his rule and his counsel is to bring wickedness and guilt (1QM xii 10-12).
- Numerous references to the dominion of Belial, the sons of Belial, army of Belial, children of Belial.



Treatise of the Two Spirits (1QS 3:13-4:26)



He has created man to govern the world and has appointed for him two spirits in which to walk until the time of his visitation: the spirits of truth and injustice. Those born of truth spring from a fountain of light, but those born of injustice spring from a source of darkness. All the children of righteousness are ruled by the Prince of Light and walk in the ways of light, but all the children of injustice are ruled by the Angel of Darkness and walk in the ways of darkness. The Angel of Darkness leads all the children of righteousness astray, and until his end, all their sin, iniquities, wickedness, and all their unlawful deeds are caused by his dominion in accordance with the mysteries of God. Every one of their chastisements, and every one of the seasons of their distress, shall be brought about by the rule of his persecution; for all his allotted spirits seeks the overthrow of the sons of light.

War between Sons of Light and Sons of Darkness



- God has created two opposing spirits.
- There is eternal enmity between these spirits.
- Every human has been allotted a portion of both spirits, who fight their battle in the human heart.
- Evil portion in a son of light may be removed by their own actions and disappear with the final destruction of the evil spirit.
- Human beings 'walk' with one of these two spirits.



Earthly/Heavenly Conflict

- Ongoing struggle between the heavenly powers (led by Michael, Prince of Light) and Belial, Prince of Darkness (1M).
- Members of the Qumran community are in fellowship with the angels and partake in the eschatological battle.
- Belial is subordinate to God, 'who made Belial to corrupt, an angel of hatred' (1QM 13:11).
- God has ordained a day to destroy the sons of darkness (1QM 13:16).