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978-0-521-87457-1 - Ancient Jewish Magic: A History  
Gideon Bohak  
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## ANCIENT JEWISH MAGIC

This is a pioneering attempt to write a broad history of ancient Jewish magic, from the Second Temple to the rabbinic period. It is based both on the ancient magicians' own compositions (and products) in Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek, and on the descriptions and prescriptions of non-magicians, in an effort to reconstruct a historical picture that is as balanced and nuanced as possible. The book's main focus is on the cultural make-up of ancient Jewish magic, with special attention paid to processes of cross-cultural contacts and borrowings between Jews and non-Jews and to inner-Jewish creativity. Other major issues are the place of magic within ancient Jewish society, contemporary Jewish attitudes to magic and the identity of its practitioners. Throughout, it seeks to explain the methodological underpinnings of all sound research in this demanding field, and to point out areas where further research is likely to prove fruitful.

GIDEON BOHAK teaches in the Department of Jewish Culture, University of Tel Aviv. He is author of *Joseph and Aseneth and the Jewish Temple in Heliopolis* (1996).

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Scholarship is an eminently social thing, and the present study is no exception. Its ultimate origins lie in my Princeton days, when John Gager initiated me into the study of ancient magic. Its initial growth took place in Ann Arbor, when I was allowed to teach several courses on ancient magic and to curate an exhibition of ancient magical artifacts from the University of Michigan's rich archeological and papyrological collections (see Bohak 1996). But the book itself began to take shape here, at Tel-Aviv University, while teaching at the Department of Jewish Philosophy and the Program in Religious Studies and enjoying constant feedback from colleagues and students alike.

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This history of ancient Jewish magic, from the Second Temple to the rabbinic period, is based both on the ancient magicians' own compositions and on the descriptions and prescriptions of non-magicians. It studies developments arising within the Jewish tradition as well as cross-cultural borrowings from Greco-Egyptian sources.