

MAGIC IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST
WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ANCIENT ISRAEL
BY
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The crest of the University of Stellenbosch, featuring a shield with various symbols, topped with a crown and surrounded by a banner.

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any university for a degree.

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ABSTRACT

In this investigation an anthropological and comparative approach was employed in the study of magic in the ancient Near East. Firstly, a survey was presented with regard to anthropological theories throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This forms the background against which evidence on magic with respect to the cultures of the ancient Near East is investigated.

Secondly, examples of magic in the Ancient Near East was discussed, with reference to Egypt, Mesopotamia and Hittite Anatolia. Reference was made to categories such as magic spells, objects, rituals and magical experts (magicians) and various examples were discussed.

Thirdly, an analysis was made about the phenomenon of magic in ancient Israel. In this context magic plays a somewhat different role in comparison to its other ancient Near Eastern neighbours. It was shown that so-called miraculous actions, miracle workers (prophets) and other religious actions (curses and blessings) in the Hebrew Bible could definitely be associated with magic. The frequent prohibitions against magical practises furthermore suggest that magic was indeed been practiced in ancient Israel.

OPSOMMING

In hierdie ondersoek met betrekking tot magie in die ou Nabye Ooste word gebruik gemaak van 'n antropologiese en vergelykende benadering. Eerstens word 'n oorsig aangebied van antropologiese teorieë met betrekking tot magie in die negentiende en twintigste eeue. Dit vorm die agtergrond waarteen die verskynsel van magie in die ou Nabye Ooste ondersoek word.

Tweedens word voorbeelde van magie in die ou Nabye Ooste ondersoek, met verwysing na Egipte, Mesopotamië en die Hetiete. Spesiale aandag word gegee aan kategorieë soos magiese spreuke, magiese objekte, rituele en magiese spesialiste. Dit word toegelig met verskillende toepaslike voorbeelde.

Derdens word 'n ondersoek gedoen na die aard van magie in Oud-Israel. In hierdie konteks het magie ietwat van 'n ander rol vervul in vergelyking met die ander ou Nabye Oosterse bure. Daar word aangedui dat sekere wonderdade, wonderwerkers (profete), en ander religieuse aksies (vervloeking en seënuitsprake) in die Hebreeuse Bybel met magie geassosieer kan word. Die vele verbodinge teen die beoefening van magie is 'n duidelike aanduiding dat magie inderdaad in Israel gepraaktiseer is.

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CHAPTER 1

THE DEFINITION OF MAGIC AND ITS ROLE WITHIN A CULTURAL SYSTEM

1. THE WORD MAGIC

In the subject of magic, the problem of its definition occupies the main place. The term "magic" is ambiguous since it signifies more than one idea. The word magic is derived from the Greek word *màyos* ("magical") which was borrowed from Persian *magi*. Grant and Rowley agree with its Greek meaning as 'sorcerer' or 'thamaturge'. They say that magic and magician are derived from this sense (Grant *et al.* 1963:607). The Greek word *màyos [maji]* is translated as "magi or "wise men" in the New Testament examples. Liddell and Scott explain it as "one of the priests and wise men in Persia who interpreted dreams" (Liddell *et al.* 1969:1071).

Simpson and Weiner agree with the above but that they refer to it in wider sense, as "one skilled in Oriental magic and astrology, an ancient magician or sorcerer" (Simpson *et al.* 1989:185). This word tends to carry with it the associations connected with the notion of witchcraft.

2. THE DEFINITION OF MAGIC

Magic in most societies forms an integral part of the sphere of religious thought and behaviour. Especially in the industrialised west, it is generally accepted as superstition and even as a form of sleight of hand used for entertainment. Although scholars attempted to make a distinction between magic and religion, it is not really feasible to consider magic apart from religion, as many of the definitions of magic derive from their opposition to the non-magical elements of religion.

Magic is defined subjectively for the simple reason that we may perform the same activity, but experience it on different levels, since we universally originate from different backgrounds, cultures, religion, etc. Therefore one can declare that the perception of magic differs from one society to the next, as a word with many definitions.

Most people in the world aim to bring about certain events or conditions in nature or among people through acts that they perform. According to Middleton these "acts typically comprise behaviour such as manipulation of objects and recitation of verbal formulas or spells" which is known as magic. In a given society magic may be performed by a specialist (a magician) (Middleton 1986:82).

There are many kinds of evidence available for the performance and efficacy of magic although most of it is inaccurate, sensational, and inadmissible. Some of the material can be found in the many travellers' tales of mysterious powers possessed by exotic practitioners in late medieval Europe. There are also other kinds of evidence from trained anthropological, scientific, psychological or religious observers.

Magic was also studied and observed by scholars of the late nineteenth and twentieth century within specific cultural systems. For example, Malinowski (1935-1948) witnessed and described *yam* planting and other magical acts in Melanesia among the Trobriands.

Questions asked by scholars with regard to magic include those of its relationship to science and to religion, its instrumental and technical efficacy, its social and psychological functions, its symbolism, and the nature of its thought.

Tylor (1924:338), an anthropologist of the late nineteenth century, is the first important writer on magic, who based much of his work on his opinion of what prehistoric and archaic peoples would have thought about the world. He says that "the student who wishes to compare the mental habits of rude and ancient people with our own, may look into a subject which has now fallen into contempt from its practical uselessness, but which is most instructive in showing how the unscientific mind works". Analogy or reasoning by resemblance always was the

mind's natural guide in the quest of truth, but its results must be put under the control of experience.

Therefore Tylor (1924) suggests that savages must have required a practical knowledge of nature by constantly noticing and trying new things to see how far their behaviour corresponded with that of things partly like them.

Where the matter can be brought to practical trial by experiment, this is a thoroughly scientific method. Pre-industrial man wanted to do and learn far more difficult things such as finding an enemy who is on the way, saving himself from lightning or hurting someone he hates. To the extent that these matters were beyond his limited knowledge he contented himself with working on resemblances or analogies of thought, which thus became the foundation of magic. Tylor regards magic as based on a rational process of analogy that he called the "symbolic principle of magic" (Tylor 1958:117-118).

Tylor described magic as a "pseudo-science" or an occult science. "The principal key to understanding of occult science is to consider it as based on the association of ideas, a faculty which lies at the very foundation of human reasons" (Tylor 1924:338). It is easy to make up principles which are intelligible if one can only bring one's mind down to the childish state they belong to. Tylor is the first scholar who observed that magical practices are frequently attributed to peripheral social groups. He notes that analogy and symbolism play a major part in magical practices. According to Yalman the question of greatest interest to Tylor is the origins of magic as related to the origins of religion. "His work attempts to understand how early man was led in the direction of superstition by faulty observation and reasoning" (Yalman 1968:521). Yalman regards magic as "an aspect of religious belief and practice that takes its special force from the antecedent and deeply rooted recognition in many societies of supernatural or divine power. The places given to practical use of such powers for purposes such as healing or assuming, luck and fertility – which may be referred to as magic - differs from society to society" (Yalman 1968:522). Cryer suggests that for Tylor, the doctrine of "survivals" was a necessary outgrowth of his "evolutionistic methodology" (Cryer 1994:44).

Unlike Tylor, Frazer (1959) elaborated on his notions of association of ideas by similarity and contiguity. He regarded magic as an earlier, primitive form of both religion and science. He rightly observed that "primitive" practice is often based on excellent observation of natural phenomena and involved a theory of causality. He therefore felt that there was a basic similarity between magic and science. Frazer defined magic as resting on two fundamental principles: firstly, the law of similarity - an effect resembling cause, that like produces like. Secondly, the law of contact or contagion - that things which have been in physical contact continue to act on each other.

Application of the law of similarity which manifests itself in charms and spells, is termed as "homeopathic magic" and the law of contact is referred to as "contagious magic". Frazer states that the "primitive magician however, never analyzes the mental assumptions on which his performance is based, never reflects on the abstract principles involved ... he only knows magic as a practical thing, to him it is always an art, never a science, the very idea of science being foreign to his thing" (Frazer 1959:7).

The idea of science never enters his mind. Familiar application of the principle that like produces like includes the following:

- The attempt of peoples to injure or destroy an enemy by injuring or destroying an image of him or her.
 - Making use of images to facilitate childbirth and to procure offspring for barren women.
 - Employing magical images to win love.
 - Measures taken by a hunter or fisherman to secure an abundance of food.
- (Frazer 1959:12-14).

On the principle that like produces like, the system of sympathetic magic is not merely composed of positive precepts. It also comprises a large number of negative precepts or prohibitions. It tells you what to do and what to leave undone. Positive precepts are charms and negative precepts are taboos. "The most familiar example of contagious magic is the magical sympathy that exists between a man and any severed portion of his person, such as his hair or nails;

so that whoever gets possession of human hair or nails may work his will upon the person from whom they were cut" (Frazer 1951:43). Frazer states that the principles underlying magic are "identical with science, governed by recognition of natural law". Both Frazer and Tylor claim to base their definitions and analyses on voluminous ethnographic material. Their study of the phenomenon of magic was based on a comparative method. Their approach was also psychological in the sense that they depend on their own assumptions. These two scholars are the most influential evolutionists from the late nineteenth century that distinguish magic from religion as a "distinct mode of thought and ritual performance" (Middleton 1986:83).

Tylor maintains that magic and religion are complimentary parts of a single cultural institution and are thus not merely stages in the evolutionary development of mankind.

Frazer held different views from Tylor in this regard. He builds up an evolutionary scheme with three main stages of thought. These include magical thought which he saw as the most primitive, then religious thought and then scientific thought. According to this scholar, religion came to join magic as superstition. He states that what he understands by religion is "a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life" (Frazer 1925:50). Thus religion consists of two elements, namely a belief in powers higher than man and an attempt to propitiate or please them (Frazer 1925:50). Frazer states that magic often deals with spirits, which are personal agents of the kind assumed by religion. In considering the fundamental notions of magic and religion one may surmise that magic is older than religion in the history of humanity. Frazer argues that magic on the one hand is a "mistaken application of the 'association of ideas' by virtue of resemblances or contiguity. On the other hand, religion assumes the operation of conscious or personal agents, superior to man" (Frazer 1925:54).

Yalman (1968) maintains that later authors, like Leach, were sceptical about Frazer's reduction of primitive ritual and magic to two principles of thought. The author argues that in retrospect, Frazer's work is generally regarded as having

one crippling difficulty: "similar customs and practices from all cultures of the world were collected and examined under common labels. These labels and their relations exemplified Frazer's own thinking on the subject and did not add to the analysis of the phenomena in any one culture" (Yalman 1968:521).

According to Middleton (1986) the definitions of magic by Tylor and Frazer are erroneous and faulty. The reasons being:

1. They accurately claim to base their findings on voluminous ethnographic material.
2. Their use of a method referred to as "comparative" suffers because the data are not placed in their social and cultural contexts.
3. Their approaches are essentially psychological in the sense that they depend upon their own assumptions about the behaviour of other peoples rather than on categories formulated by those peoples themselves. (Middleton 1986 :83).

It is probable that magic arose before religion. Early sociological theories of magic strongly emphasised the contrast between the social roles of religion and those of magic. In these theories religion is understood as a group practice important for legitimising and sustaining the community as a whole. Magic by contrast is seen as individualistic and anti-social used to advance the individual instead of the whole community. In this respect the works and theories of other kinds of thinkers became more influential than that of the evolutionists like Tylor and Frazer. They were more sociologically-minded scholars like Emile Durkheim and Marcell Mauss. Durkheim accepted the radical distinction between magic and religion. He claims that religion is a communal matter, whereas magic is an affair between a practitioner (magician) and a client. He is mainly concerned to distinguish magic from religion. He emphasises the antipathy expressed by religions towards magic. Durkheim saw magic and religion as embedded in each other. Both contain beliefs and rites. Religious rites are concerned with the sacred; magical rites are directed toward the utilitarian.

According to Durkheim religion is inseparable from the idea of a church. He understands church as "an eminently collective thing." In contrast, magic centres

on the individual practitioner (Durkheim 1926:45). Distinguishing between the magician and the church, Durkheim holds that the magician has a clientele and his clients have no other relations between each other, whereas a church consists of members of the same moral community formed by a shared belief in the same god or by observing the same cultic practices (Durkheim 1926:44).

One can therefore say that Durkheim claims that magic is an affair between a practitioner (the magician) and a client. Therefore it could be said to be a private matter (Durkheim 1926:44).

Another definition which Durkheim arrived at is the following: "A unified system of beliefs and practices, relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them" (Durkheim 1926:47). Durkheim argues that religion works toward communal goals while magic deals with private ends. Religion involves a church operating in public, while magic involves an individual operating in private.

In other parts of the world scholars continue to study magic by applying Frazer's principle belief. Mauss, also a scholar of the twentieth century, discussed magic as a social phenomenon, making use of available power in a variety of different ways.

His is said to be the first structural-functionalist study of the phenomenon of magic. Against the comparative approach of Tylor and Frazer, Mauss maintains that magic should be used to refer to those things which society as a whole considers magical and not those qualified by a single segment of society only (Mauss 1972:18).

Mauss states that magic tends to help with technology and science. He applied Frazer's principle of sympathy but emphasised magic as technique, similar to those of modern science and technology. Mauss maintains that the history of technology proves that there is a genealogical link between techniques and magic. Magic contributed to the growth of techniques, protected techniques and helped with society's progress (Mauss 1972:142). Thus, magic is linked to

science in the same way as it is linked to technology. In primitive societies, a certain section of science has been elaborated by magicians. Mauss also makes use of the concept of "mana" (which is an impersonal supernatural force) to emphasize his point that magic, spiritual power and the sacred are manifestations. "Mana" was introduced by Codrington in 1891: "Mana is power, *par excellence*, the genuine effectiveness annihilating them" (Bowker 1997:598). This is what causes a net to living in a good catch, makes the household solid and keep the canoe sailing smoothly; on the farms it is fertility.

According to Mauss, "mana" expresses such things as "the ability to work magic, the magical power, to be under a spell and to act magically" (Mauss 1978:108). Therefore, "mana" ultimately realized this confusion of the agent, the rite and the object which seems to us to be fundamental to all magic. Mauss has therefore taken a culturally specific concept and interpreted it according to his own ideas to define magic. He concludes that "Magic is the art of doing things, and magicians have taken advantage of their know-how, their dexterity, their manual skills" (Mauss 1972:141). Magic is the domain of pure production, "ex nihil" (Mauss 1972:131). With words and gestures it does what other techniques achieve with labour.

According to Cryer, Mauss contends that magic and religion ultimately tend towards two different poles: "the pole of sacrifice and the pole of malevolence" (Cryer 1994:52). Between them, Cryer adds, there extends a confused mass of facts whose specific character is not immediately apparent (Cryer 1994:52). Mauss holds that there are different personnel for magical and religious phenomena.

In cases where the priest performs magic, he does so in ways which differ markedly from his performance of priestly duties. The magician has a tendency to isolate himself. Due to the malevolence of magic and its tendency to remove itself from the ordinary world Mauss concludes that magic is fundamentally antinominal. He speaks of "the irreligiousness of the magical rite; that its practitioner wants it to be anti-religious" (Mauss 1972:24). Magic is considered to be irregular, abnormal or in some way contemptible. Therefore he defines magic as "any rite

which is not part of an organized cult; it is privative, secret, mysterious and tends, as its limit, towards the prohibited rite" (Mauss 1972:24).

Magical rites refer to the actions of the magicians. They outline the role of sacrifice which plays a much more extensive role in religion than magic. If sacrifice is absent from the cult it will also be absent from the local magic.

Another feature of magic is its tendency to rely on the preparation of special ointments, unguents, brews, and serums. This is seen by Mauss as being, itself, enacted ritual. He argues thus that magic is occasional, while religion is essentially a collective phenomenon in all its parts. Its beliefs and practices are by their very nature obligatory. Religious practices are always predictable, prescribed and official whereas magical rites are considered unauthorized, abnormal and not highly estimable (Mauss 1972:24).

Everything is done by the group or under pressure from the group. The magician and his client in relation to magical ritual play the same role as the priest and the worshipper in relation to sacrifice. They also undergo preliminary rites which involve the individuals alone, their whole families or even the entire community (Mauss 1972:48). Finally, one can say that Mauss defines magic, not in terms of the structure of its rites, but by the circumstances in which these rites occur which determines the place they occupy in the totality of social customs (Mauss 1972:24).

We can conclude that Mauss agrees with Durkheim on the fact that magic is anti-religious, secretive and private. They differ, however, in that Mauss regards religion instead of magic, as social. Durkheim, on the other hand, regards religion as social and magic as individual.

Middleton (1986) refers to the scholars mentioned above as "armchair" scholars since they based their work purely on assumptions. "Their successors based their findings and hypotheses on their own field research, where the importance of what people who believe in magic actually do and say about it and of the social contexts of their actions and statements become evident" (Middleton 1986:86). With reference to the above, magic is regarded as a normal thing in some

societies.

In the Malayan-Polynesian languages and cultures, there are a whole series of very important magical rites dealing with hunting, fishing and war. Writers such as Malinowski (1948) and Evans-Pritchard (1937) try to understand the practice of magic by observing it among various societies during their research and study. Malinowski presents a coherent theory of magic based upon his own field research in the Trobriand Islands of Melanesia.

Since magic is not always successful, Malinowski maintains that magic must be understood primarily as a matter of psychology: magic operates in areas where knowledge or technology is wanting by isolating hidden forces at work. It thereby offers psychological relief. He discovers that magic takes several forms and has several functions for the Trobriand Islanders. Malinowski rejects the general social orientation in favour of focus on the individual as set out by previous scholars. He explains that magic and religion both respond to basic human needs for safety and a sense of control of nature. He emphasizes that "Science ... is based on the normal universal experience of everyday life ... founded on observation, fixed by reason. Magic is based on specific experience of emotional states in which man observed not nature but himself" (Malinowski 1948:84).

In Malinowski's view both magic and religion arise from situations of emotional stress; they are escapes from the vicissitudes of life. Both are based on mythological traditions, stress the miraculous and are hedged about with taboos and other practices which distinguish sanctioned acts from profane ones (Malinowski 1948:67).

The main differences between the two phenomena reside in the fact that magic serves the social function of reinforcing the belief in man's power, while its apparent ends are utilitarian. Religion, by way of contrast, "has no such simple technique, and its unity can be seen ... in the function which it fulfils and in the value of its belief and ritual" (Malinowski 1948:67).

Malinowski holds the view that there is no evolution from magic to religion and ultimately to science. These three facets of human behaviour must be

understood together as aspects of a cultural system (Middleton 1986:86).

Malinowski discovers that magic was of several kinds and has several functions for the Trobriand Islanders. Firstly, the use of magic lessens chance of risk and induces confidence in activities where risk is high or activities may be ineffective. "It is most significant that in the lagoon fishing, where man can rely completely upon his knowledge and skill, magic does not exist, while in the open sea fishing, full of danger and uncertainty, there is extensive magical ritual to secure safety and good results" (Malinowski 1948:14).

The Trobriands yet always believe in the use of magic to ensure these possibilities. Malinowski, Durkheim and Mauss emphasize the practical use of magic as a private act. According to Malinowski magic and religion both respond to basic human needs for safety and sense of control over nature.

In warfare one knows that strength, courage and agility play a decisive part, but magic may also be practiced to master the elements of chance and luck. Malinowski observed that magic plays an enormous part in the life of the Trobriand Islanders. All important economic activities such as gardening, hunting and fishing and canoe-building, are fringed with magic. They all involved magic spells. The whole system of garden magic consist of a series of complex and elaborate rites, each accompanied by a spell (Malinowski 1948:165). Magic seems to make the unknown amenable to human action and therefore provides psychological reassurance for a potentially perilous voyage.

In conclusion, one can conclude from Malinowski's observation that magic is used to protect people from failure and ensure success in their undertakings. Magic raises the psychological self-confidence of its believers, and helps them to achieve higher stages of technological and moral development. Malinowski also stresses that among the Trobriand Islanders the basis of magic lies in the saying and transmission of words and spells. He projects his findings among these people onto all mankind, making their cultural belief, thoughts, motives and actions into universals. It is also possible that he could attempt to project his ideas onto them through the psychological functions of magic which he

considered so central.

In contrast with that of the Trobriand Islanders, Evans-Pritchard (1937) studied Azande magic. He emphasises the social context of magic far more than Malinowski. For Evans-Pritchard magic belongs to an interactive world in which it is possible to ask questions. Thus, the Azande are interested in cause and effect.

To Evans-Pritchard the main use of magic is to combat mystical powers and events caused by other people (Evans-Pritchard 1937:25). Evans-Pritchard holds that magic is a technique that is supposed to achieve its purpose by the use of medicines which operate as a magic rite and are usually accompanied by a spell (Evans-Pritchard 1937:137). He also states that "witchcraft, oracles and magic are three sides to a triangle. Oracles and magic are two different ways of combatting witchcraft" (Evans-Pritchard 1937:387).

According to Azande belief all human death is caused by witchcraft. Even though there is empirical causality to the death of a person, the Azande still claim an attendant causality. Magic is the chief enemy of witchcraft. In Azande opinion some magic may be closed with witchcraft. According to the Azande, a sorcerer uses the technique of magic and derives his power from medicines, while a witch acts without any rites and spells and uses psychological powers to attain his/her ends. Azande magic is therefore based on the use of medicine in which lie magical powers that are inert until they are activated by verbal spells by the magician, which may be used for protection, production and punishment of evil doers. Magic is spread out over the entire Azande community.

The studies of Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard contributed much to the understanding of the social, cultural and psychological functions of magic. This seems sensible since these writers have tried to understand the practice of magic among societies whose systems of thought they do not share, but come to understand during their research (Middleton 1986:82).

One can therefore say that magic is practical and instrumental to a specific end;

religion is an end in itself. Most scholars no longer regard magic and religion as separate. Both use similar means to address supernatural agencies and are complementary to each other.

Later writers on magic enlarged the contrast between open systems of thought and closed systems of thought:

1. In open systems of thought efforts are made objectively to prove or disprove relations between scientific acts and natural consequences;
2. In closed systems of thought, success and failure are seen in the light of the already culturally accepted world view.

In the 1970's this was further enlarged by other writers on social and cultural factors, like literacy or division of labour, especially those in 'Modes of Thought' by Horton and Finnegan (1973). Further discussion suggests that the causal links of magic and science are based on analogy. These claims were made by Frazer and other later writers on magic through the use of terms such as metaphor, metonymy, homeopathy and the like.

Tambiah (1990) distinguishes "scientific" analogy from "persuasive", "rationalizing", or "evocative" analogy (Middleton 1986:88). Tambiah's comment on Tylor's view of magic as an occult science is that he regards the magical arts as "one of the most pernicious delusions that vexed mankind". From an intellectual basis Tylor asserted that magic was based on a general human intellectual propensity, namely the principle of "association of ideas" as mentioned previously. Tambiah questions this since he claims that magic is a product of an erroneous application of these principles of association, especially the relations of analogy. The error being in mistaking "ideal connexions for real connexions" (Tambiah 1990:45).

Tambiah concludes from earlier discussions that magic in comparison to religion, is a class of acts, ranging from sacramental ritualism to false manipulations of the supernatural and occult powers. Religion is said to be "a rational" belief system in sovereign providence" (Tambiah 1990:30).

Tambiah follows an analogical mode of thought. He states that magical acts

usually are made up of verbal utterances and object manipulation, and constitute performative acts by which a property is transferred to a recipient object or person on an analogical basis. Furthermore he states that magical acts are ritual acts, which are in turn performative acts whose positive and creative meaning is missed and whose persuasive validity is misjudged if they are subjected to that kind of empirical verification associated with scientific activity (Tambiah 1973:199). Tambiah is interested in the kind of logic involved in magical activity. He sees this as proceeding very much through the argument from analogy and as something which cannot be divided into thinking as against action, for the two are intimately connected through the concept of performative 'utterances'. Therefore Tambiah clearly points out that the Azande themselves recognize the analogical basis of magical performances that aim to transfer a particular property or quality to a recipient person or object: the magical rite transfers the desirable quality of the one to the other.

With the rise of Protestantism in England a separation occurred between magic and religion in as much that the importance of magic declined. Max Weber (1947) sees the decline as permitting the "rationalization" of economic life. He states that "all the primeval magical ways of influencing spirits and deities have pursued special interest. They have striven for wealth, long life, health, honour, progeny and the improvement of one's fate in the hereafter" (Weber 1947:331). Weber maintains that peasants have been inclined towards magic. They were bound to nature for economic existence which made them dependent upon elemental forces. They believed in compelling sorcery directed against spirits who rule over or through natural forces (Weber 1947:283).

A later historian, Thomas, suggested that factors that led to the decline of magic included the growth of popular literacy and education, greater individual mobility, the development of forms of banking and insurance and the rise of the new disciplines of economics, sociology and statistics that were to remove much chance and uncertainty from everyday life (Middleton 1986:88).

Tambiah agreed with Thomas saying that "the occult arts in England had by the seventeenth century become stereotyped and formulaic, and were mechanically

applied, and lacked a secular and critical attitude that is the guarantee of open-ended scientific knowledge" (Tambiah 1990:31).

Modern scholars like Rosman and Rubel describe magic as based on the belief that if its spells or rituals are performed correctly, the supernatural will act in such a way that the desired end will be achieved in the desired way. They declare that "through magic people attempt to manipulate the supernatural, being able to bend the supernatural to the will of the people" (Rosman 1981:78). Magic is therefore said to be manipulative. The aims of magic are specific and based upon the belief that if one performs a set of specific actions, one will achieve the desired result of that action.

3. CONCLUSION

Looking at the different definitions and taking into account the research and discussions on the phenomenon of magic by the different scholars throughout the centuries, one can say that the most deciding factor lies in their methods of approach. Many scholars based their research on comparative studies of the relationship between magic and religion. Cryer states that magic is notoriously difficult to define. He admits that we tend to make mistakes in the matter, but says "we usually know magic when we see it" (Cryer 1994:42).

Deriving from all the readings, one arrives at a definition of magic as *a process whereby an individual wants to achieve that which is unattainable through natural cause and effect. Therefore magic assists a subject to obtain that which is beyond his/her power. This can take place through spells, incantations based upon a belief system (rituals) or specific actions with the help of a specialist (or magician).*

The discussion of magic has widened in recent years from relationship to religion and science to the mode of culturally determined thought behind it and to the social contexts of magical performances. Therefore one cannot arrive at a final definition or argument about magic. There is no single correct way of conceptualising magic.

CHAPTER 2

MAGICAL PRACTICES IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

1. INTRODUCTION

Magic is a common practice in the Ancient Near East. Cryer states that "magic is the most central religious phenomenon in the great pre-classical civilizations of antiquity" (Cryer 1994:90). According to him magic survived for millennia, especially in Egypt and Mesopotamia (Cryer 1994:90).

A clear distinction is made between black (evil or harmful) magic and white (or defensive) magic. Black magic is normally performed by a sorcerer/sorceress and white magic is performed by legitimate practitioners (Scurlock 1992:465). The use of white magic is normal, since it brings comfort and possibly healing. Magic was also used to insure against, to drive away or to overcome demons; to undo the bad effects of certain sinful actions; to counteract the potential effects of certain portended events; to increase sexual potency; to secure the favours of a loved one; to calm squalling infants and to frustrate the activity of hostile sorcerers. (Bienkowski *et al.* 2000:186). In this chapter we shall be concerned with magical forms and practices in Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Hittite kingdom.

2. MAGIC IN ANCIENT EGYPT

Magic was part of the Egyptian culture from its earliest days. Graf, who claims that magic comes from the East, clearly points out that it is "especially from Egypt" (Graf 1997:169). Two factors enhance the dominance of this country: the Nile, which provided ample food and protect the desert on either side from invasion from the otherside, and second is Egypt's central government. Brier maintains that it is difficult to describe magic apart from religion, but he emphasises the fact that "magic is a never end" (Brier 1981:11). He defines magic as "a direct attempt by the practitioner to control supernatural forces to achieve a specific goal" (Brier 1981:11). He points out three elements as

essential to the magical acts, namely: the spell, the ritual and the magician.

In his 1993 study Ritner seeks to understand the connection between the word (spell) and the act (rite) and the object (magical material) and considered the role of the magician in this connection (Ritner 1993:72).

Borghouts agrees with Brier, but he mentions that the desired effect was to be achieved through an impersonal force. Therefore he states that "Egyptian magical practice aimed to achieve a desired effect by symbolic means in the form of a verbal utterance (a spell), accompanied by a ritualized action involving an object or other ingredients, achieved by an impersonal force of which the most important being *hk'w* or *Heka*" (Borghouts 1995:1775). According to Pinch *Heka* is an Egyptian word translated as "magic" (Pinch 1994:9). *Heka* is said to be the "god of magic". It is practised by the deities as well as by the people. Egyptian kings automatically have *Heka*. Gods were subject to fate and needed *Heka* to overcome misfortunes. Magic and the institution of kingship helped with natural and supernatural forces (Pinch 1994:12).

Ritner states that Egyptians themselves gave a name to the practice which they identified with the Near Eastern concept of magic. He also describes it as "the son of the creator" and states that "*Heka* is in actuality the hypostasis of the creator's own power which begets the natural order" (Ritner 1993:14).

Meyer explains *Heka* as an ancient Egyptian word for ritual power (usually translated "magic"). He says that *Heka* can be personified as a deity which may cast doubt on the Egyptian concept of ritual power as a personal force (Meyer 1999:15).

On account of these contributions mentioned, Egyptian magic will be discussed under the following subheadings: the spell, incantations and amulets; the ritual actions and the magician.

2.1 SPELLS, INCANTATIONS AND AMULETS

The spell is that which must be said in order that the act can have its desired effect. To the ancient Egyptians, words were extremely powerful. The word was the deed. Thus the most reliable information about Egyptian magic and magical practice according to Borghouts comes from the spells. The author maintains that the spells form the chief approach to the understanding of the magical practice. It often mentions objects used in the rite or reveals the attitudes or procedures of the practitioners (Borghouts 1995:1777).

In support of Borghouts' viewpoint on spells, Scurlock describes them as an "unusual feature of Egyptian magic" (Scurlock 1992:466). He says that spells are designed to get the soul safely to the underworld and to help it successfully to pass the native version of the Last Judgment. There were several hundreds of magical spells, but we will discuss a few as examples used in what might be called "everyday magic".

2.1.1 A LOVE CHARM FOR A MAN

"Hail to you, Re'horachte, father of the gods! Hail to you, seven Hathors who are clothed in wrappings of red linen! Hail to you, gods, lords of heaven and earth -let (the woman) NN born of NN come after me like a cow after grass, like a maid-servant after her children, like a herdsman after his cattle. If they fail to make her come after me I will set <fire to> Busiris and burn up <Osiris>!" (Borghouts 1978:1).

This spell promises to make a woman love the client as devotedly as Isis loved Osiris. Jacq explains the spell as follows: "The charm intended to rouse love, the magician greets the Seven Hathors, Re'horachte, the father of the gods and the masters of the heaven and the earth. He makes the following demand - that the woman he loves will seek him as a cow seeks grass, a mother her child, or the shepherd his flock. If these powers would refuse to help, the magician would put Busiris to the torch and burn Osiris" (Jacq 1985: 128).

Love magic was a constant factor in the social and sexual landscape of late antiquity. Magic did not always work to win a woman's love. It is said to be "a complex emotion that this type of magic yields poor results most of the time" (Jacq 1985:130). Therefore Jacq claims that the only true magic of love is in the identification of the magician with Osiris whom Isis raised from the dead.

2.1.2 SPELL FOR SPEEDING UP GIVING OF BIRTH

There are various spells to make birth easier. Here is one:

"Open for me! I am the one whose offering is large, the builder who built the pylon for Hathor, lady of Dendera, who lifts up in order that she may give birth. Hathor, the lady of Dendera is <the> one who is giving birth!" (Borghouts 1978: 40)

This spell is to be said for a woman who is in labour. She can speak directly to Hathor to obtain help.

2.1.3 AMULETS

Holding amulets is said to be part of ritual action, the most famous aspect of Egyptian magic. In Egypt this purpose is extended to larger objects such as headrests which work through physical contact (Pinch 1994:105). Egyptians were lovers of amulets, and placed them under and in their houses and tombs, set them up in their temples, wore them when living and placed on their bodies when dead. Most Egyptian amulets known, come from the tombs of Egypt and were worn by the dead. Among the amulets of special importance by Egyptians were the *vignettes* which are found in the Book of the Dead (Budge 1978:160).

Permanent amulets are mainly worn by women and children because they were thought to be more at risk from supernatural dangers. Brier believes that amulets derive their magical power from several closely related principles. Some that were purely protective derived their power by invoking the gods. Others got their power from "sympathetic magic" (Brier 1981: 142). Wearing the amulet *ankh*, promised that you would continue to live because you wore the hieroglyph for

"life". This ancient Egyptian amulet is still popular today. The word *ankh* means both "life" and "hand mirror" (Brier 1981:145).

Another important amulet one can name is the Eye-of-Horus, which is the most commonly-found of all amulets recovered. The amulet was called "sound eye", because of its association with the regeneration of Horus' eye. Its purpose was to ensure good health. This amulet was also important as a funerary amulet (Brier 1981:145).

For El Mahdy wearing amulets is considered to have the same power as the words or spells used when reciting the sacred rites. He claims that "as speaking has the ability to bring life to the *dead*, and allows humanity to gain the ear of the gods, so the wearing of images of gods or sacred symbols had another kind of power" (El Mahdy 1989:139).

2.1.4 PROTECTIVE SPELLS AND CHARMS

Protective spells aim to create a shield around the subject of the spells, protecting the person from hostile forces in a world rife with them. They are apotropaic. These spells involve the combined invocation of supernatural powers, inscription and manipulation of amulets along with associated gestures and oral utterances (Meyer 1999:105). Here one thinks especially of the protection of the infant. Spells are recited over the child and the seal of the sun-god is the mother's protection (Jacq 1985:133).

2.1.5 SPELLS FOR PERSONS AGAINST REPTILES LIKE CROCODILES, SCORPIONS AND SNAKES

These are the three most dangerous animals, because they are filled with considerable power. Crocodiles are very fearsome. Therefore there are spells to use to drive them away. The scorpion is also frightening. It is said that the magician knows how to use the scorpion to fight against a snake, so that it stings and destroys the snake. The latter is given great importance in the magical texts which are intended to nullify the danger presented by snakes. There are numerous charms against snakes (Jacq 1985:142-145).

2.2 RITUALS AND MAGICAL OBJECTS

2.2.1 RITUALS

In Egyptian cult practice and the activities of deities were accompanied and supported by rituals and the deities themselves were praised in numerous hymns or approached with requests in prayers. The relationships with the divine reflected the integration of most Egyptian gods into nature (Borghouts 1995:1775). In ancient Egypt rituals were performed in temples, during mummification and in state magic.

2.2.1.1 TEMPLE RITUALS

Temple magic is believed to be performed for the benefit of all Egyptians. Temples are great places of miraculous cures. An example of such a place of healing was the Temple of Dendera which provided two different types of treatment (Brier 1981:56). One treatment used magical water to bring about cures. The water was poured over the statues which were placed in a long corridor. The statues were believed to have healing incantations inscribed on them. The water then became empowered by the spells.

Another temple where miraculous cures took place was the mortuary temple of Queen Hatshepsut at Deir el Bahari. She refused to rule as queen and had herself crowned as king. Her mortuary temple which was designed by a royal architect was later used for medical miracles which took place on the upper terrace of the temple.

Jacq claims that magic is omnipresent in temples during the practice of the rituals. One understands the significance of the mortuary temple of Queen Hatshepsut in the meaning of architecture and sculpture, but also by reason of a surprising fact: the images carved in the walls come to life when the ritual words are spoken (Jacq 1985:43). Therefore the temple is protected by amulets and spells to drive away all evil.

2.2.1.2 MUMMIFICATION

Mummification is, according to Brier, another magical act which came from the Egyptian myth of the god Osiris. Isis, the wife of Osiris, brought him back to life by saying magical words. To connect mummification with the temple ritual above, the "valley temple" is associated with the pyramid where mummification of the king's body and the "*opening-of-the-mouth*" ceremony was performed. The body was placed in a burial chamber and the pyramid sealed. The priests made daily offerings for the pharaoh's soul (Brier 1981:104).

2.2.1.3 STATE MAGIC

Magic was considered to be a primordial activity by the ancient state of Egypt. Temple rituals, discussed above, were performed throughout the land. Jacq claims that each act of worship is magic.

He states that "without the magical intervention of the state, the inundation of the Nile would fail, the fields would not be irrigated, the hunters would not kill game, the fishermen would not catch fish, workmen would not finish their tasks and the temples would not carry out their mission" (Jacq 1985:9).

Ritner attempts to give an account of state magic versus private magic. Private and state concerns may overlap sometimes. He concludes that public and private ritual sorcery had no discernible distinctions. "Within Egypt, private no less than public rites were believed to manipulate the genuine force of *hk3*, both could dictate prolonged suffering for a human victim (Ritner 1993:189).

2.3 THE MAGICIAN

In the ancient world, Egypt was generally accepted as "the mother of magicians". Egypt had two kinds of magicians: trained "priest" magicians, based at temples and part of the orthodox hierarchy and the "lay" magicians. The latter are men who practised magic but were not attached to an institution like the priests magicians. They were close to faith healers or occultists (Brier 1981:34).

Therefore Pinch tends to say that the function of priests and magicians overlap. In ancient Egypt, being a priest was merely a job, to make a living and have a status. This is why it is generally accepted that magicians usually come from the ranks of the priests of the temples. Practitioners of magic in ancient Egypt had other functions as well. They belonged to the priesthood (Pinch 1994:50). Magicians are found in the house of life. This is the building where the library of the temple was kept and where custodians of the knowledge of the temple studied. The layman would come here if he had a problem, or needed a magical spell or charm. Magicians are recorded among expedition personnel and in households. Titles indicating the exercise of a magical profession, such as *hk'w* ("magician"), *s'w* ("protector") and *orw'b* (priest) and *orw'b* (priest) could be combined with that of "doctor" (*swnw*, "healer") (Bourghouts 1995:1783).

3. MAGIC IN MESOPOTAMIA

In Mesopotamia magic was integrated into religion. Mesopotamians did not clearly distinguish between religion and magic, but they made a clear distinction between black magic, performed by a sorcerer or sorceresses and white magic (defensive magic), performed by legitimate practitioners. According to Mesopotamians, black magic or sorcery was punishable by death. White magic was "the gift of the gods to mankind" (Reiner 1992:465).

Mesopotamian magic survives in the forms of spells, incantations rituals and amulets, apotropaic figurines or manipulative actions and the magician.

3.1 SPELLS, INCANTATION RITUALS AND AMULETS

The rituals are systematic descriptions (addressed to the magician) of the actions to be followed which include a list of the incantations to be used at certain points, said either by the magician or by the 'patient'. Sorcerers used the same techniques and spells for their illegitimate purposes that victims might use to defend themselves legitimately. The difference, however, is that "evil sorcery was done by secretly invoking the gods or manipulating other supernatural powers, while defense relied on the openness of its acts" (Farber 1995:1898).

Evil demons and human sorcerers could strike an individual with premeditated mischief. Mesopotamian demons played a role in all sorts of evil and sickness. The accompanying rituals were very stereotypical and they mostly showed up in groups of seven, and the same general type of incantation could be used to dispel any of them as follows:

"Seven are they, they are seven,
In the subterranean deep, they are seven,
Perched (?) in the sky, they are seven,
In a section of the subterranean deep they were reared,
They are neither male nor are they female,
They are destructive whirlwinds,
They have no wife, nor do they beget offspring.
Compassion and mercy they do not know,
Prayer and supplication they do not hear,
Horses bred on the mountains, are they,
Hostile to Ea are they,
Powerful ones among the gods are they.
To work mischief in the street they settle themselves in the highway.
Evil are they, they are evil,
Seven are they, they are seven,
seven and again seven are they."

(From a Sumerian spell against the *utukkus*: as quoted by Morris 1949:264).

The number seven had a sacred significance for the Babylonians. Reiner pointed out that "when a fungus that portends evil appears on the walls of a house, a he-goat is sacrificed before the Pleiades, while a prayer to the Seven Gods, that is the seven stars of the constellation, is recited ..." (Reiner 1995:86).

The seven spirits have power even to bewitch the gods. The spirits were, on the whole, hostile. For the Mesopotamians there was only one way to drive them out - that is by means of formulas, and with the help of a priest acting as an exorciser. There are also highly demonic figures such as Lamashtu (daughter of the sky-god, Anu) that can wreak mischief and illness on earth. People were especially

afraid of her acts against pregnant women, young mothers and babies. Many incantations speak of her ugliness and evil deeds (Farber 1995:1897).

The iconography of the goddess Lamashtu can be recognised from her presence on stone and copper plaques, some of which are inscribed with incantations naming her (Finkel & Geller 1997:143). This may be used as an amulet engraved with images of the goddess standing on a snake and surrounded by a dog, scorpion and a pair of divine symbols on a podium (Finkel & Geller 1997:152). Many amulets depicting Lamashtu, have been found. Another demon well known from both incantations and pictorial representations, is Pazuzu. He was often called upon to counteract Lamashtu. On other occasions he was also understood as "an evil force in his own right" (Farber 1995: 1897). Pazuzu is the son of the god Hanbi and king of the evil wind-demons. He is represented by a large number of stone, copper and baked clay figurines which may also be inscribed with incantations bearing his name (Finkel & Geller 1997:143). On some of the Lamashtu plaques, Pazuzu is shown threatening Lamashtu and forcing her back to the underworld, clearly indicated by the river of the underworld on which her boat floats.

Farber states that "the ghost rituals are used against these demons since the main purpose of any ritual is to stop their vengeful acts, to appease the ghosts and to remedy the negligence that had caused them to keep roaming the earth" (Farber 1995:1897). As it is with the demons, many rituals are known dealing with the problem of a sorcerer and a sorceress as performers of black magic. The most famous of all anti-witchcraft rituals is contained in a series of tablets called *Maqlû* or "burning". Below is an extract of a ceremony in which a witch had to stand trial to determine the criminal nature of her acts, after which her likeness is destroyed by fire (Farber 1995:1898). This *Maqlû* ritual is designed to counteract the evil machinations by burning figurines of the person suspected of having wrought sorcery. Black reveals that this ritual is "performed when the patient is convinced he/she has been bewitched" (Black *et al.* 1992: 127).

The ritual begins with a prayer to the "gods of the night": "I invoke you, Gods of the night, the veiled bride, I invoke (the three watches of the night) the evening

watch, the midnight watch, the dawn watch" (Reiner 1995:101). Black (1992) agrees with Reiner above, but they make mention of the fire god, Gibli. The machinations of sorcerers and sorceresses can be documented from such rituals. It is extremely hard to prove an accusation of sorcery which can lead to the death of the accuser himself/herself and was thus probably avoided whenever possible. Should one be found guilty of sorcery, there was no trial by human judges, "but rather an ordeal by immersion into the 'Divine River' whereby the accuser was drowned, if pronounced guilty" (Farber 1995:1898).

The previous analysis prompts the following question: Who used these rituals? Who resorted to the magician? Black answers that the rituals were performed only for socially very highly placed, wealthy people like the king (Black *et al.* 1992:127).

Another collection of spells and rituals which also means "burning" is called *Šurpu*. These spells and rituals are different from *Maqlû* since they explore all conceivable types of behaviour, such as cultic negligence, domestic trouble-making, lack of care for the poor, violence against animals and inadvertent contact with unclean people or places. *Šurpu* is mainly concerned with purification of the offender-victim, while *Maqlû* is concerned with the destruction of the figurine. A scholar such as Graf, says that if a figurine is placed under the doorstep, it is a way of making certain that the victim will come into contact with it (Graf 1997: 171).

The rituals involved the disassembling and discarding of such objects as an onion, a strip of dates, or a flock of wool that the patient had to hold in his hand during ceremonies (Farber 1995:1899). The spell follows:

Just as this flock of wool is plucked apart and
thrown into the fire,
and just as the Firegod consumes it
altogether,
just as it will not return to its sheep,
will not be used for the clothing of god or

king:

May invocation, oath, retaliation, questioning,
the illness which is due to my suffering, sin,
crime, injustice, and shortcoming,
the sickness that is in my body, flesh and
veins,
be plucked apart like this flock of wool, and
may the Firegod on this very day consume it
altogether.

May the ban go away, and may I (again) see
light!

(From *Šurpu*, table V/VI, as quoted by Farber 1995:1899).

This could result in releasing the patient from evil effects from former actions. *Šurpu* is performed when the magician's client does not know how he has offended the gods and disturbed the world order. The client or patient arrives at the magician "in a critical state: worried, sleepless, ill" (Black *et al.* 1992:126). According to Mesopotamian scholars, *Šurpu* is one of the best-preserved Babylonian magical collections.

3.2 AMULETS

Amulets are usually inscribed with specialists of well-known incantations and worn around the neck, or hung on walls of a house (Black *et al.* 1992:30). The Sumerians lived in anxiety and were in perpetual fear of the attacks of hosts of hostile and evil spirits attempting to do them harm. To protect themselves against these they employed charms and spells and incantations. They wore amulets of various kinds to destroy the operations of the Evil Eye which is "an ancient Mediterranean belief in the threatening power cast by an envious gaze. The evil eye thus required apotropaic precautions" (Meyer *et al.* 1999:391). To protect their houses they buried clay figures in the foundations or in the walls (Budge 1978:82).

Amulets appeared in different forms: e.g.

- A. Amulets in the forms of animals, birds and fish. Figures of animals which were used as amulets were sometimes engraved on their bases with protective designs, animals and men (Budge 1978:96)
- B. Amulets in the form of cylinder-seals are a large and important class and are of special interest. They were made of precious stones, for example, agate, amethyst, crystals, emerald, marble, sand, etc. Each stone was believed to possess qualities peculiar to itself and have power to protect the wearer from evils and troubles. A seal could help to destroy an enemy and would possess a god (Budge 1978:96).
- C. Inscribed stone amulets of later dates include those worn to protect against the demon, Lamashtu, mentioned earlier.

Apart from amulets, Sumerians, Babylonians and Assyrians "protected themselves and their houses from sickness and evil spirits by the use of prophylactic figures of gods and men, goddesses and women, animals and reptiles" (Budge 1978:97).

3.3 RITUAL MANIPULATIVE ACTIONS AND APOTROPAIC FIGURINES

Magic in Mesopotamia also used prophylactic, apotropaic or manipulative actions. These involved potency rituals, omens and incantations for private use.

3.3.1 POTENCY RITUALS

These are the most prominent examples of manipulative magic. The potency rituals are known as *Šaziga*. The literal meaning of *Šaziga* refers to the erection or restoration of physical potency of the male. This group of spells and instructions was used to induce, or rekindle, love in an unresponsive individual and to enable the male partner to sustain an erection. In this way it seems quite likely that the short term results achieved might not matter in the long term interest of the person magically induced to such involuntary love or love-making. *Šaziga* is the only genre of Mesopotamian ritual that would accept a negative

result for the person at whom it was aimed (Farber 1995:1900).

The aspect of seduction therefore plays a very significant role in family life. Marriages were not generally based on love, but a pre-arrangement by families. Magic makes it possible to make life more agreeable by inducing sexual desire where it was necessary. The wording of the spells is clearly aimed at pre-intercourse stimulation and arousal (Farber 1995:1901).

3.3.2 OMENS

An omen is a divine sign given to a person as a warning about a specific danger (Farber 1995:1899). According to Farber, omens are the most important way by which Mesopotamian gods showed their will, intentions or fateful decisions to people. This category of magic is concerned with averting the ill effects of a predetermined situation.

Omens came in two forms: solicited and unsolicited. Solicited omens involved examination by a professional specialist where one could ask the gods for advice - for example, the slaughtering of an animal specifically for this purpose. If the answer was negative it means that the planned action would not be carried out. Suitable situations might be a wedding, a battle, the construction of a new temple, etc.

An unsolicited omen was an event such as a solar eclipse, the birth of a baby with two heads, or a wild animal appearing in the city. They could be observed by any one with an open eye.

Omens predicting disaster for an individual, called for the speedy performance of a specific apotropaic rite to prevent the threat from becoming a reality. Rituals of this kind were handed down on individual tablets for a specific situation. They were included in the omen series at the appropriate places enabling the omen specialist to come up with the necessary countermeasure. According to Reiner, Namburba is a Sumerian verb *búr*, from which the name is taken for the "ritual for undoing evil" (Reiner 1995:82). The author also stresses that it is a loan word into Akkadian due to the suffix character of *bi*, *-su* (its) and *-sunu* (their). Reiner

maintains that the Namburbu ritual itself can be called apotropaic, a name that appears at the beginning or as subscript at the end. This is introduced by a phrase which states its purpose, normally "apotropaic for the evil of such-and-such", for example, "of a snake" (Reiner 1995:83).

Numerous apotropaic rituals which are concerned with everyday occurrences are listed in the two omen series *summa alu* ("if a city") and *summa izby* ("if a creature") which affect the common man in whose household they are observed (Reiner 1995:83).

Livingstone refers to Namburbu, the cult of the common man, as a wider aspect of the Namburbu rituals which employ the device of releasing animals to absolve from supposed misdemeanour or uncleanness of various kinds. Here the animal release as a cultic building block constitutes a common element but the context is otherwise completely different (Livingstone 1977:219).

Black *et al.* (1992:127) point out that a Namburbu ritual involves five rites:

- enclosure rites to separate the ritual site from the world outside, performed inside a hut or within a magic circle;
- purification rites: washing or bathing or saving the patient;
- food and aromatic spices offered to gods and the deified river;
- apotropaic rites - the principal rites consist of destruction;
- final rites involve further purification, unravelling plants or actions restoring the patient to the outside world.

Other Namburbu rituals were used in contexts not related to ominous portents, e.g. to ask a divine power for assistance or protection in a problem situation. These Namburbu prayers were sometimes called "Undoing of any Conceivable Evil" (Farber 1995:1900).

Prophylactic and manipulative purposes are intertwined here. The high level of direct divine involvement with the god or goddess is the most prominent feature in all Namburbu texts.

3.4 THE MAGICIAN

The magical acts in Mesopotamia were performed by a magical expert known as the *āšīpu*, who cooperated with the cultic personnel such as the chanters or the singers. These magical experts also served as scholarly advisers to Neo-Assyrian kings. The professions of the *āšīpu* were handed down from generation to generation within the family (Farber 1995:1903). In contrast with Farber, Black *et al.* define the *āšīpu* as "magicians specialising in medical and magical rites to ensure protection from demons, disease and sorcery" (Black *et al.* 1992:149). The authors clearly state that magic is very close to medicine and divination. The cause of sickness was often thought to be demons and therefore magic was often used in addition to medicines.

An *āšīpu* was needed to avert the effects of ill portents. *Āšīpu* could also be attached to temples as part of their clergy, due to the role played by magic in the foundation of temples and other buildings.

4. HITTITE MAGICAL PRACTICE

Magic also play a great role among the Hittites as with the other peoples of the ancient Near East. The human being sought to repair the disturbance in the cosmos with the help of magic and witchcraft. Some aspects of Hittite magical incantations and rituals were borrowed from Mesopotamian or Hurrian culture while others derived from popular beliefs of indigenous Hittite origin. According to Scurlock Hittite magic was very similar to that of the Mesopotamians. The phenomenon of magic appeared in two opposing forms, namely black magic (witchcraft) and white magic (or defensive) magics (Scurlock 1992:465). Black magic was harmful and could damage an individual, a society as well as the state. For this reason the practice of magical acts was under state control and was performed by a sorcerer.

In the old Hittite period about 1500 BCE witchcraft and illegal magic was subject to punishment in the Hittite Laws:

If someone within a family knows about magic,

you shall remove him from his family and bring him to the palace gate. Whoever does not bring him - it will come about that things will go badly for that person. (Telipinu Proclamation, Section 50; cf. Frantz- Szabò 1995:2008)

If someone purifies a person (ritually), he must also transport the ritual remains to the place of burning. If he transports them to someone's field or house (plot), this is sorcery and (a case for) the royal law court. (Hittite Laws 44b as quoted by Frantz- Szabò 1995:2008).

In contrast to the opposing forms of black magic, white magic was performed by legitimate practitioners. White magic was a divine gift and could legitimately be used to placate angry gods, usually in the form of evocation rituals. Hittite magic followed the principle of analogy and contiguity (direct contact). Frantz-Szabò found that although there was much significant magical literature, the most important and most extensive texts are the magical rituals that deal almost exclusively with magical matter (Frantz-Szabò 1995:2008).

As a comparative study I will now compare aspects of the incantations and spells, magical rituals and apotropaic manipulative actions and the magician among the Hittite with those of the Babylonians. Scholars also claim strongly that the Hittites took many of their magical practices from the Hittite people, the Hurrians, the Luvians, the Babylonians, and from other peoples unknown to us.

4.1 SPELLS

In Hittite magic the spell did not play such a vital role as it did in Egyptian magic. A Hittite incantation ritual was usually the private commission of an offerant (*EN BÉL SISKUR*, literally, "lord of the ritual") for whose magical purification it was especially composed (Frantz-Szabò 1995:2008). This was also known as a form of white magic which was performed by legitimate practitioners. It was a divine gift and could legitimately be used to placate angry gods, usually in the form of evocation rituals.

4.2 INCANTATIONS AND RITUALS

Hittite magic followed the principle of analogy and contiguity (direct contact).

4.2.1 ANALOGY

This was one of the most popular types of magical practice among the Hittites. It was performed on materials prepared beforehand. The effect of the magical procedure was then transferred to the offerant. For example, objects could be melted, crushed or burnt to represent the elimination of evil. These actions were then seen as diverting the evil from the offerant. An unusual feature of analogy was the prominence of the "old woman" (Frantz-Szabò 1995:2012). The wise (old) woman was the most important of the incantation priestesses. She appeared most often in Luvian incantations. She was not a priestess in the sense of temple employee, but rather a magic practitioner. She worked alone or with other incantation specialists such as the physician, the seer or bird observer. Her profession in Hittite terms was known to be *h 𐎶ašawaš*. According to Gurney this word may be synonymous with *h 𐎶ašnupallaš* "midwife" (Gurney 1976:45). Gurney mentions that thirteen such women were known to function as sorceresses in countless rituals. In the old Hittite period the physician was consulted in cases of bodily injury and was compensated for his services.

Beckman agrees with Gurney, but he refers to several other words from which midwife is derived in Hittite texts. He reveals that the title "old woman" is often borne by female ritual practitioners in Hittite texts (Beckman 1983:233).

Furthermore Beckman comments that the activities of the midwife could be divided into two categories. Firstly there were the physical tasks where the midwife performed the delivery. Secondly, the midwife recited incantations on behalf of the newborn beseeching the gods to remove evil influences and to grant a desirable fate to the child. One of these incantations reads, in part:

"Sun-goddess of the Earth [... (various evils)] may you seize! And further [...] you shall [no]t let (them) loose (again)! But for the child life, fitness (and) long years continually give!" (Quoted by Beckman 1983:234).

Furthermore Beckman describes the functioning of the midwife as a "general incantation priestess" (1983:234) that must be viewed as an extension of her role as spokesperson for the new-born child.

4.2.2 RITES OF CONTACT

Here there is direct contact between the offerant or the object to be purified and the material for magic. This may happen through touching, lifting up or waving of an object or through magic involving wool cords (Frantz-Szabò 1995:2012).

According to Gurney the Levitic ritual is basically a purely magical procedure. He explains that "in its primitive form the device is free from the ethical element of sin. Simply evil is transferred, usually in fact an illness. The process of transference is effected, on the principle of contagious magic, simply by the physical touch of the patient, for which the priest or other officiant later acts as intermediary" (Gurney 1976:48).

4.2.3 RITES OF IDENTIFICATION AND SUBSTITUTION

Forms of identification and substitution were used to establish contact between the magical material and the magician or the object to be purified. Afterwards the substitute material could be manipulated at will. In this way evil could be unloaded onto the substitute to send it away, to destroy it or to kill it (in the case of a living substitute). The Hittite word for substitute is *tarpalli* (Gurney 1976:52).

4.2.4 APOTROPAIC OR MANIPULATIVE MAGICAL ACTIONS

The Hittites sought to attract good supernatural forces and to repel evil ones through attraction magic, apotropaic magic and deflection magic. Attraction magic was used to summon deities who had disappeared. Divine food and drink such as honey, fine oil, and wine were placed on a table and the paths that the deities were expected to follow on their return were decorated with leafy branches and coloured textiles stretched out in all directions. The gods were then summoned. "They set up a table in front ... They fashioned seven springs and fill them with water. Then they pour beer, sweet wine, ... honey, fine oil, butter, and sweet milk

into them" (Frantz-Szabò 1995:2012). The use of magic was also essential at the foundation of temples and buildings. It was used to assist in childbirth, burial, to avoid evil, impurity and to keep ghosts and demons at a distance (Scurlock 1992:466).

4.3 THE MAGICIAN

Frequently the offerant was the king. Rituals could be for purification purposes. The rituals could be commissioned by high palace officials. Clients could consist of the king and queen, princes and ordinary citizens. Here we can refer to the birth ritual, the ritual of the "wise woman" (*mashtiga*) of Arzawa against family strife or that of Pashkhuwatti and Arzawa against male impotence (Gurney 1976:44). The wise woman (ŠU.GI; HITTITE *HĀAŠŠAWA-*, lit. "old woman") was the most important of the incantation priestesses (Beckman 1983:232). She is not a priestess in the sense of a temple employee, but rather a magical practitioner. She worked alone or in the company of other incantation specialists, such as the physician (A.ZU), the seer or the bird observer.

The physician was consulted in cases of bodily injury but he had a close connection with magic in the old Hittite ritual where he helped a priest to interpret an omen or ritual against plague where the practitioner bore the title of physician, but solely engaged in magic.

5. CONCLUSION

From the analysis of magic in the ancient Near East it was established that magic was commonly practiced in all important ancient Near Eastern civilizations. In Egypt, for example, magic featured in almost all walks of life (even in the afterlife). Here one can conclude that the spells had a much more prominent role than the rituals used in Mesopotamia and Hittite Anatolia.

Magicians played a very important role in all these cultures in carrying out the spells or incantation rituals. They filled the role of magical specialists and carry out the spells and incantations upon which a belief system was based. In Egypt the magician also played the role of a priest, a protector as well as a healer. In

Mesopotamia the magical expert performed medical and magical rites. The Hittite magical practitioner bore the title of physician and incantation priests or priestesses, who were not temple employees but engaged in magic solely.

CHAPTER 3

THE ROLE OF MAGIC IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter was concerned with a study of magic in the ancient Near East. Many scholars claim that the history and culture of ancient Israel are embedded in the ancient Near East. These scholars also follow the lead of the Deuteronomists. The only source we have, however, of ancient Israel is the Hebrew Bible. Therefore we will examine the role of magic in the Hebrew Bible. Contact with neighbouring peoples also had great influence on Israelite society. The Hebrew Bible shows that Israelite religion was well aware of the importance of magic in the religion of Egypt and Babylon, but on the whole it viewed magic negatively.

Budge claims that the Israelites inherited much of their magic from the Sumerians and Babylonians (1978:212). One can probably conclude from the magical practices mentioned earlier that the Israelite society was constantly confronted with magic by neighbouring peoples. There are several cases of miraculous and magic actions in the Hebrew Bible. We will particularly pay attention to the use of magical words and objects, magical actions and the magician.

2. MAGICAL WORDS, FORMULAE AND OBJECTS

The power of the word (spell) is very prominent in Israelite religion. Israelites believed in the power of words, especially that of blessings and curses. Kaufmann mentions that "the magical power of the word is everywhere evident: with a spell, for example, Joshua stops the sun. The belief in the efficacy of blessings and curses is a pervasive element in the whole of the Israelite religion" (Kaufmann 1961:81). An aspect that must be made clear, is the conviction of religious Israelites that, to them, Yahweh is exalted above all power. He does not use any formula for the effectiveness of His word.

Magic by spells or the tying of knots in a rope accompanied by a spell was common in Babylonia. Magical power was also held to be present in the reiteration of spells or prayers as in the case of the priests of Baal (1 Kings 18:26). In close connexion with the power of spells was the belief in the efficacy of cursing and blessing when these were uttered by specially endowed persons.

2.1 BLESSINGS AND CURSES

Blessings and curses are of utmost importance in the book of the law. An example of this can be taken from a text in the Hebrew Bible which reads: "And afterwards he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law" (Joshua 8:34). With regard to blessings, there is a remarkable difference in magical practice. The Hebrew Bible was not concerned with a "specialist" (e.g. a magician) that performed a specific practice. One finds in Joshua 8:33 that "...Moses commanded that they should bless the people of Israel." This was also done in Genesis 28:1-6 when Isaac blesses. So does Jacob (Genesis 49:28) and Moses in Exodus 38:43.

According to Fohrer (1972) priests had special authority to pronounce blessings and curses. As read in Numbers 6:27 when the priests put the name Yahweh "upon the people of Israel" during a cultic ceremony, divine blessing was effected. Fohrer regards this originally as being a magical blessing or curse formula which generally became a wish associated with Yahweh: "May so-and-so be blessed (or cursed) by (or before) Yahweh" (Fohrer 1972:210).

On the other hand, Ringgren (1979) later stated "the old efficacy of a blessing: the aged Isaac blesses Jacob instead of his first born, Esau, and cannot retract the blessing; the word has been spoken and must be fulfilled" (Ringgren 1979:99). Jacob's blessing is regarded as a prophecy to his children, as well as the curse which Joshua laid on the re-building of Jericho (1 Kings 16:34). The blessing by the God of Israel (Numbers 6:22) is according to Kaufmann "a fixed formula and seems to be close to an incantation" which has a magical ring (Kaufmann 1961:85).

Like the blessing, the curse is regarded as a word of power. An enemy may be conquered in advance by uttering a curse against him before the fight. The curse is capable of attaining its end by its own inherent virtue, without the intervention of a god. It is said to be a magic weapon (Lods 1978:213).

David and Goliath cursed each other before coming to blow (Samuel 21:21). The oracles of the prophets against the nations are an outgrowth or extension of these malediction of war. The ancient story of Balaam suggests that this practice had long been familiar with the inhabitants of Palestine and that it was a regular institution among them. Lods claims that Balaam was a renowned magician (1978:213).

He adds furthermore that "those whom he blesses are blessed, and those whom he curses are cursed (Numbers 22:6)" (Lods 1978:213). Therefore Yahweh compelled Balaam to bless Israel instead of cursing them. In this way he saved the Israelites. If Balaam had uttered a curse, Yahweh himself would not have been able to annul it (Numbers 22-24). Lods also mentions other examples of curses such as the *h^{erem}* and the oath. The *h^{erem}* is the vow of utter destruction upon the enemy and all that he possesses, is no doubt magical rather than religious. It could be a kind of reinforced curse. The oath is also an essentially magical act, which is a conditional curse, capable of acting without the intervention of a god. Today it still plays a great part among the Israelites. (Lods 1978:214).

An incident which one can discuss under the umbrella of the curse is that of an ordeal which is referred to by Weber as "the business of priests" (Weber 1947:84). According to him until Deuteronomic times the ordeal retained its place only for a few cases, especially for testing the marital fidelity of a wife" (Weber 1947:166). Lods emphasized the ordeal as "another essentially magical practice" (Lods 1978: 214).

One specific case in the Hebrew Bible where the ordeal for a woman suspected of infidelity is recorded, is Numbers 5:11-13 (De Tarragon 1995:2078). The

woman was suspected of unfaithfulness. The priest had to write down certain curses and then wash them off into water. He had to make the woman drink the water. If the woman was guilty, the water would produce painful and unpleasant effects; if she was not guilty, the water would do her no harm (Lindblom 1962:119). Here the priest plays a very important role. With regard to the woman different situations are portrayed. She might even be innocent and the spirit of jealousy could have come upon her husband who accused his wife of infidelity. The priest led the woman to the altar where she appeared in the presence of God. Lods on the other hand states that "the primitive nature of the ceremony is apparent in a form of ordeal which is used in the temple at Jerusalem and was sanctioned by Jewish law" (Lods 1978: 214). He joins the other authors on the issue of infidelity but he argues that practices of this kind must have been current already among the ancient Israelites. He states that throughout the Semitic region there are many springs and rivers which had the reputation of exposing and even of punishing the guilty. They give decisions either by rejecting the guilty person or by drowning him, as it is the case in Babylonia (Lods 1978:214).

Lindblom (1962) also mentions the vision in which Zechariah sees a scroll flying over the land. The roll contains the words of a curse upon the sinners in the land. It is sent forth that it may enter the house of the thief and the house of him who swore falsely by Yahweh's name and settle in the midst of his house and consume it with its woodwork and its stonework (Zechariah 9:1-4). Lindblom maintains that this description reflects old ideas of the magic writing which acts "ex opere operato" (Lindblom 1962:119). He is of the opinion that this may be compared with Numbers 5:11 about the ordeal applied to a woman suspected of unfaithfulness.

Another example of an ordeal occurs in Jericho where the content of the scroll is to be read aloud in Babylon. A stone is then tied to the scroll and thrown into the Euphrates. This story presupposes ultimately the idea of "a writing filled with power which exercised its disastrous effect in the midst of the doomed land" (Lindblom 1962:119). Since the curses in Babylon were recited when no one was present to hear them, the throwing of the scroll into the Euphrates cannot have

been merely symbolic. A symbolic action presupposes spectators. The idea is that both the recitation of the curses and the sinking of the scroll were intended to bring about the downfall of Babylon. The words of verse 64 are conceived as a curse accompanying the sinking of the stone, not as an interpretation of a symbolic action. The magical character of the action is confined to the outward form. According to Lindblom such magical usages are common among more ancient people (Lindblom 1962:119).

Sabbatucci(1986) defines the ordeal as a divinatory practice and emphasizes its judiciary function as mentioned above. He agrees with Lindblom that the accused is placed in mortal risk. If he escapes death, he is judged innocent; if he dies, his death is considered the due punishment of proven guilt. Sabbatucci gives us a very clear description of the ordeal as used in the text of Numbers 5:11-31. In this case an ordeal was called for in cases of suspected adultery and was carried out as if it was an offering to God. This is the so-called "oblation of jealousy". The suspected woman swore to her innocence in front of God. He points out that ordeals are still used in forms - such as the administration of poison in countries like Sudan (Sabbatucci 1986: 97). He concludes that in Maydaism an ordeal is not an accessory element but can rather be considered a rite or ritual of this religion. Therefore it is referred under the heading of ritual or magical action here.

According to De Tarragon (1995), "the water of bitterness brings the curse and the dust of the sanctuary thrown on pure water binds the litigant to the divinity who is obliged to bring about judgement" (De Tarragon 1995:2078). The priest writes the curses in a book and washes them off into the water of bitterness. We will see that the magic, the cult and the ethical component work together, with purification as the pivotal notion.

2.2 MAGICAL FORMULAE

In ancient Israel the practice of formalized cursing was also well established. The blessings and curses concluded the giving of the Mosaic covenant in Deuteronomy. There are a number of biblical prophecies that appear in curse formulae in other Near Eastern cultures. These curse formulae are directed

against enemies of Israel. Gager (1992) claims that about six biblical curses (Judges 17:1-2; 2 Kings 13:17-19; Jeremiah 51:60-64; Ezekiel 4:1-3; Zechariah 5:2-4; Malachi 3:8-9) may be identified. He says that all these texts "contain all principal elements of defixions and that the Hebrews were familiar with the written curse, or near kin to defixio, as early as the first part of the sixth century B.C." (Gager 1992:16). Defixions are curse tablets and binding spells which are inscribed normally on thin metal sheets (Gager 1992:25).

Magical formulae are sometimes used together with amulets (which will be dealt with below). Where inscriptions on amulets are intended to cure a particular sickness or disease, the formula is used to heal such sickness or disease. Budge points out that in Deuteronomy 6:4-5 an amulet was inscribed with a special formula: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Budge 1978:216). Formulae are used with amulets, which leads us to the following discussion, i.e amulets.

2.3 AMULETS

In all Palestinian excavations great quantities of small objects have been found which has certainly been used as amulets (Lods 1978:104). Budge (1978) states that the ancient Israelites used the amulets to protect them from the Evil Eye and from other hostile influences. The amulets are made of precious stones which possessed peculiar shapes or form, berries of trees and plants and grain of various kinds (Budge 1978:212). Most private homes contain various trinkets and amulets which are used to repel malevolent forces. A person who fears to express allegiance to foreign gods openly, for fear of persecution, could have felt free to carry an amulet mentioning such a god, since the amulet was small enough to conceal. The only divine name found in this inscription to date is Yahweh, which appears in it twice (Tigay 1986:35).

Amulets are common throughout the ancient Near East, and are particularly

popular in Egypt. Archaeology points to the fact that amulets were imported in huge amounts from Egypt. In the Hebrew Bible jealousy and envy figure prominently. Therefore people endeavoured to protect themselves against prospective dangers through the use of amulets. There are numerous references in the Hebrew Bible with regard to the use of charms and ornaments.

One of these references appears in Genesis 35:2 when Jacob demands that his household remove the foreign gods among them and purify themselves. "So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had and the rings that were in their ears; ... Jacob hid them under the oak, near Shechem" (Genesis 35:4). These rings are associated with idols and therefore has a religious value (De Tarragon 1995:2078). Jacob did not destroy the "amulets" completely. The archaeological recovery of amulets has enriched our knowledge of actual religious customs.

Amulets are condemned by the prophets in the Hebrew Bible. Their objections descend from the prohibition of magic in Deuteronomy 18 which include the things that are used to induce magical results.

In Isaiah 3:16-24 the prophet objects to the ornaments of a woman. He mentions pendants, bracelets, scarfs, armlets, sashes, amulets, signet rings and nose rings, the festal robes, the mantles, the cloaks and the handbags. One can conclude that the use of these charms was related to magical practices. They are also used to provide protection to particular body parts. There are different types of amulets. Some were made of pieces of metal or parchment on which one could find inscriptions while others are in the form of rings. Herbal and other brews were also used as amulets (Budge 1978:212).

2.3.1 TYPES OF ISRAELITE AMULETS

According to Budge, the Israelites made use of uninscribed amulets to protect themselves from the Evil Eye and from hostile influence of every kind (Budge 1978:212). Lods (1978) adds that the fear of the evil eye is very common in the ancient world. Budge (1978) made a survey of the different kinds of Hebrew amulets which feature in the Bible:

2.3.1.1 THE SAHARÔN

This amulet is made of metal in the form of a crescent moon. It is worn by women (Isaiah 3:18), and by kings (Judges 8:26) and tied to the necks of camels to protect them from the Evil Eye (Budge 1978:213).

2.3.1.2 TERÂPHÎM

These are small figures of men or of gods made of clay and were intended to be worn on the body. They are mentioned in Genesis 31:19, 30, where we read that "Rachel, the daughter of Laban, stole the teraphim of her father and went away with them when she accompanied her husband, Jacob, when he fled from Laban's house" (Budge 1978:214). Budge holds that Laban evidently regarded these figures highly, as he called them "my gods". Rachel hid the *teraphim* in her camel's saddle, which tells us that they must have been easily portable. Men like David (1 Samuel 19:13) and Micah (Judges 18:14) kept *teraphim* in their houses. They are regarded as profane things and are associated with the heathen practice of divination. Compare also the passage in Genesis 35:4 mentioned above where they are referred to as "strange gods" and earrings. Budge maintains that the "Israelites derived the use of the teraphim from the inhabitants of Lower Mesopotamia where the prophylactic and apotropaic figures in a house were regarded as house property, and were sold with the house" (Budge 1978:214).

Cryer (1994) regards the nature of the *teraphim* as problematical. He states that it appears fifteen times in the Hebrew Bible. The various references fall into two categories: those which view the *teraphim* as an idol (Genesis 31:19, 34, 35; Judges 17:5; 1 Samuel 19:13, 16) and those which mention them as an instrument of divination (Hosea 3:4; Ezekiel 21:21, Zechariah 10:2) (Cryer 1994:272).

According to Lemche (1998) the *teraphim* is normally translated as "household gods" (Lemche 1998:200). He differs slightly from the above mentioned scholars in that he states that people use it in their homes to repel demons. He agrees,

however, with Budge on the matter that people carry charms in the house or placed them on walls for protection.

2.3.1.3 *LEH ḤĀSHIM* – "AMULETS"

The singular word is *lahash* which is ascribed to any object or ornament associated with the whispering of incantations, spells charms, prayers, etc. and which is used as an amulet. In Isaiah 3:20 the jewellery and ornaments of the daughters of Jerusalem are criticized and condemned. These objects are earrings, bracelets, stepping-chains, girdles, finger rings, scent tubes, mirrors, etc.

2.3.1.4 *T ḤÔT ḤĀPHÔTH*

These are also known as phylacteries. They are frontlet bands which are worn between the eyes (Exodus 13:9-16 and Deuteronomy 6:8; 11:18). These are made of a sort of skin and are inscribed with the special formulas, mentioned earlier (Deuteronomy 6:4,5).

2.3.1.5 *MEZŪZĀH*

This is a strip of leather which is inscribed with the verses from Deuteronomy 6:9; 11:20 and then attached to the door-post of the house.

2.3.1.6 *S ḤĪS ḤITH*

This is a "tassel" or "lock" (of hair) which is made like a phylactery or a fringe. "... bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations..." (Numbers 15:38) (Budge 1978:213-217).

According to Budge (1978) there is no doubt that the *t Ḥôt Ḥaphôth*, *mezûzâh* and the *s Ḥis Ḥith* are amulets. Their use goes back to prehistoric times. The *t Ḥôṭaphôth* are precious stones which possess the power to drive away evil spirits. Budge believes that the true history of the use of Israelite amulets is "only to be derived from the Kabbalah", a very ancient work which deals with Jewish mysticism (Budge 1978:218).

De Tarragon (1995) follows the same line as Budge in that he states that *t 𐤏𐤕 𐤏𐤏𐤕* and the *mezûzâh* have originally been types of amulets, respectively for the body and for the home (De Tarragon 1995:2079).

2.3.2 INDIRECT EVIDENCE OF AMULETS

We mentioned earlier that the use of amulets is sometimes understood by inference. An example of this is found in Exodus 32:2. When the people asked Aaron to make them gods Aaron demanded them to "take off the rings of gold which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them to me." The people obeyed and Aaron received the gold and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a molten calf. According to Davies, these gold earrings were undoubtedly amulets (Davies 1979:127).

An allusion also appears in Genesis 30:14-17 when Reuben brings mandrakes to his mother, Leah and Rachel obtains them from her sister. Rachel conceives a son that same night. At that stage Rachel was childless. She recognizes the fruit and asks Leah to exchange it with her to spend the evening with Jacob. The fact that Rachel asks for it immediately shows very clearly that mandrakes could have been perceived as both aurative - for infertility - and aphrodisiac (De Tarragon 1995:2078). At an earlier stage Lods also quoted the mandrakes in Genesis and argues that it goes back to nomadic times. He refers to that the Arabs make philtres, with mandrogora which they call "the apple of the jinns" (Lods 1978:216). The Israelites wear charms against snake-bite or against the evil eye. On the other hand, Verbi wants us to believe that Leah placed the mandrakes under her bed to increase her fertility. According to Verbi, "the superstition about the mandrakes was first made known and then disproved by declaration of God's answer to Leah's prayer to bear children" (Verbi 1989:41).

Mandrakes are also mentioned in the Song of Solomon (7:13) where they are defined as fruit that gives forth a fragrance, called *mandragora*. This reference is connected to the idea of caressing. Since ancient time this odorous plant was a symbol of love and thus it was believed that it stimulated sexual urge and increased fertility as mentioned in Genesis 30:14-16. The fact that the fruit spread

its odour implies that the circumstances offered an opportunity for a love affair (Verbi 1989:743).

In Egyptian magic plants like mandrakes are selected because they resemble parts of the body or have other significant shapes (Brier 1978:88). Brier is of the opinion that mandrakes are aphrodisiac and that they are believed to promote fertility because one species is shaped like the male genitals. The Arabic name for the plant is "devil's testicle" (Brier 1978:66). Brier quotes an extract from one of the great authorities on ancient Egyptian magic, Paul Ghalioungui, whereby he gives an account of how mandrakes were picked in antiquity. "Mandrakes could be picked only on certain nights, by moonlight, or with the morning dew ..." (Ghalioungui 1973:143). Thus, the entire mystique of mandrakes fits well with their magical aspects.

Magical objects were also found in tombs with apotropaic significance. Thus conjuring and exorcising evil during a person's life and after his death points at another religious custom. In 1979 two small silver scrolls were found in a tomb in Jerusalem, at Ketef Hinnom. These scrolls were engraved with ancient Hebrew writing. According to De Tarragon this was an abbreviated version of the sacerdotal benedictions of Numbers 6:24-26, "May Yahweh blesses [you] and keep you' (De Tarragon 1995:2079). These scrolls were amulets that invoke the four letter name of God, YHWH, as an apotropaic power.

3. MAGICAL ACTIONS OR RITUALS IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

It is mostly difficult to distinguish between miraculous powers and magical acts. Therefore the analysis of this subject will consist of the rituals carried out by prominent figures in the Hebrew Bible, like Moses, Aaron, Elijah and Elisha and other acts of magic. Under this heading of magical actions we will investigate miraculous actions, imitative magic and sympathetic magic.

3.1 MIRACULOUS ACTIONS

There are several accounts of miraculous actions in the Hebrew Bible which appear to be similar to magic actions. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish

between miraculous powers and magic acts. Lindblom (1962) states that often the prophetic miracles bear a great resemblance to ancient magic. He uses the example where Elisha ordered Joash, king of Israel, to take a bow and arrows and lay his hand upon the bow. Then the prophet put his own hands upon the king's hands in order to make the magic action still more effective, whereupon the king shot an arrow towards the east to secure victory over Syria. After that the king was told to take the arrows and strike on the ground. He struck three times and stopped. The prophet was angry with him and said, "You should have struck five to six times, then you would have struck the waters of the Jordan with the prophetic mantle and divided them so that the prophets could pass over" (Lindblom 1962:51).

A prophet sometimes performed his miraculous acts by external means. Everything that belonged to him was charged with power, even his clothes possessed power, e.g. Elijah's mantle. Lindblom quoted the example where Elisha took the mantle of Elijah, struck the water of the Jordan and prayed saying, "Where now is Yahweh, the God of Elijah?" Then the waters were divided so that Elisha could pass over. Lindblom regards these as "magical acts that were combined with prayer to Yahweh" (Lindblom 1962:54).

Moses is also well-known as a miracle worker. Therefore one can also compare his role as similar to that of a magician. De Tarragon (1995) refers to Moses as well-known for his miraculous activities. As a man of God, he accomplished various wonders with the help of the rod. In Exodus 4:1-9, "The Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A rod." And he said, "Cast it on the ground" ... and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. The Lord said to Moses ... " ... take it by the tail" - so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand". Anderson points to another example in which Aaron did the same thing with the same result (Exodus 7:8-13). However, he emphasizes that "neither action is treated as extraordinary, for the magicians of Egypt, who specialized in serpent magic, are said to have accomplished as much by their secret arts" (Anderson 1978:60).

According to De Tarragon (1995) the marvels that Moses accomplishes are not magic, since they are accomplished in conformity with the orders of God" (De Tarragon 1995:2075). He maintains that they are not an attempt to dominate on the part of Moses, but a "mark of obedience" (De Tarragon 1995:2075). What leads one to relate them to magic is the parallel made in Exodus with the actions of the "wise men and sorcerers ..., the magicians of Egypt," who did the same by their secret arts (Exodus 7:10-11 and parallels).

Goldammer (as quoted by Overholt 1996:65) speaks of "shamanistic elements" in the narratives about Moses and mentions Moses's staff. Furthermore he states that the narratives about the escape from Egypt mention a wonder-working staff twenty four times in Exodus 4-10, 14, 17; Numbers 20). Overholt (1996:65) states that there are 252 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible of the use of the staff, all with different meanings.

Overholt also gives his viewpoint with regard to the figure of Moses as presented in the Hebrew Bible which seems to him "less susceptible to interpretation in terms of the world view of Shamanism" (Overholt 1996:65-66). The latter brings us to another explanation of the phenomenon of shamanism which Grabbe, relying on Hultkrantz, describes as a "means of contact with the supernatural world by the ecstatic experience of a professional and inspired intermediary, the shaman" (Grabbe 1995:149). He reveals that the services of a shaman are sometimes the same as those for diviners and prophets in Israel. These two authors apparently associate the acts of magic in the Hebrew Bible with shamanism. The role of shamanism will be investigated below.

With regard to the acts of Moses, the story of the rod continues in Exodus 7:8-12 where Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh, the Egyptian king: "Aaron took his rod and cast it down before Pharaoh and his servant and it became a serpent. Pharaoh then summoned the wise men and sorcerers ... the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts" (De Tarragon 1995:2076). What is interesting in this respect is that Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of the Egyptian magicians. There is, however, a difference between Moses and the Egyptian magicians. The Egyptians do not work their magic in the name of any

god. Whereas the rod of Moses is the rod of God. Moses is commanded by the Lord to carry out these activities. Thus, the powers come from God and not through the rod. Staffs are likewise part of the paraphernalia of some Siberian shamans. Overholt also states that shamans used staffs in curing (Overholt 1996:44). They are also referred to as "wonder-workers".

The magic staff is so important that a magician without a rod is like a hunter without a rifle. A magician is generally associated with a magic rod (staff). These findings on the miraculous actions and the use of the magical rod brings one to another use of magic in the Hebrew Bible known as "imitative magic".

3.2 IMITATIVE MAGIC

As noted above, the phenomenon of magic is described by Frazer as "magic by similarity" or "contagion". Frazer supplied as an example the phenomenon of rainmaking. He refers to the people of Eggibu, a district of Abyssinia (today known as Ethiopia), who used to stage sanguinary conflicts with each other, village against village, for a week together every January for the purpose of procuring rain. He compares "the prophets of Baal who, in the famous contest with Elijah, sought to procure rain by cutting themselves with knives till the blood gushed out" (Frazer 1959:39). Frazer explained that these actions may have been based on the same principle. Frazer also points to the episode of Elijah on Mount Carmel under the heading of contagious magic, where he refers to the rain-making rites performed by the priests of Baal in their contest with Elijah (I Kings 18).

Although magical practices were forbidden in the Hebrew Bible, they were widely engaged in. This meant that "Israelites believed in the powers of imitation and contact" (Rogerson 1984: 17). The prosperity of Jacob at the home of his father-in-law, Laban, can be considered to be magical (Genesis 30:32-43). This covers the period when Jacob was in service to Laban as the shepherd of his flock. Jacob and Laban agreed that the speckled and spotted sheep and goats would be given to Jacob. Jacob took fresh rods of poplar and almond and peeled white streaks in them. He set the rods which he had peeled in front of the flocks in the

watering troughs where the flocks came to drink. And since they bred when they came to drink, the flocks bred in front of the rods and the offspring brought forth were striped, speckled and spotted. Whenever the stronger of the flocks were breeding, Jacob laid the rods in the runnels before the eyes of the flock. As a result, they bore striped, speckled or spotted offspring. It is clear that Jacob carried out an artifice with the rods to make these animals reproduce in abnormal colours. The idea was that the animals looked at the "spotted rods" when they bred, so that they gave birth to spotted lambs. One can conclude that the rods were endowed with magic powers.

Another possible example of imitative magic may be found in 2 Kings 6:1-7 where the sons of the prophets felt that their dwelling was too small. They went to Elisha to ask permission to go to the Jordan to get logs to make a place for them to dwell there. While they were busy cutting down the trees, an axe borrowed from another person fell into the river. Elisha came to their rescue. He asked: "Where did it fall?" When he was shown the place, he cut off a stick, and threw it in the river and made the iron float. Here one can consider the act as an example of imitative magic.

An example of imitative magic also occurs in 2 Kings 4:38-41 and is performed by Elisha. A pottage is being brewed by the prophet's followers, and one of them goes out to gather herbs. Among the herbs gathered, there happens to be a poisonous one. This soon becomes apparent when the company begins to partake of the pottage, but Elisha calls for some meal and casts it into the brew. The immediate effect of which is to make the poison innocuous.

In Oesterly's opinion the wood floats, the iron imitates it; the meal is harmless therefore the poisonous herb will become harmless (Oesterley 1933:89). Oesterley (1933) maintains that Elisha's magical powers were very extensive. He points to another instance of imitative magic where Elisha is described as "being able to raise the dead by means of an elaborate ritual" (2 Kings 4:32-35). A similar story is told of Elijah in 1 Kings 17:21, 22. (Oesterley 1933: 90). Rofè (1988) claims that these episodes present miracles "as magical acts" and express "a primitive religious outlook" (Rofè 1988:125).

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De Tarragon (1995) summarizes the above as follows: "The powers of Elisha permitted him to counteract the effect of poison, thanks to some flour, to heal Naaman, the leper, to raise an axe of iron that had fallen into the Jordan by throwing in a piece of wood and causing the iron to float" (De Tarragon 1995: 2076). Should one understand these acts as miracle or magic? The sympathetic magic (which will be dealt with below) is inspired by the rules of similarity – imitative on the one hand, contagious on the other (Booyesen 1979:77).


Johnson (1962) holds that in II Kings 13 Elisha used this method "to secure Joash's triumph over the hereditary enemies of Israel" (Johnson 1962:40). Elisha laid his hands upon those of the king, bade him to shoot an arrow through the window and explained and enforced the act. This example, together with those mentioned above, aptly illustrates the principle of imitative magic.

3.3 SYMPATHETIC MAGIC

Sympathetic magic is based on the principle that like produces like. As previously mentioned, the system is composed of positive and negative precepts (prohibitions) and many of these may be found in the Hebrew Bible with reference to magic. There are a few instances of sympathetic magic which occur in the Hebrew Bible. The episode of the bronze serpent made by Moses that cured people from poisonous snakebite, has a dimension of sympathetic magic. According to Numbers 21:4-9 the people murmur. God sends a plague and the people repent. Moses intercedes and God reconsiders. God said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole. Everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, should live" (Numbers 21:8).

Firstly, one should consider the role of the serpent in the Hebrew Bible from as early as Genesis 3:1-8. The interaction between the serpent and humanity prompts God's questioning of the human couple (Adam and Eve) and the subsequent curse upon the serpent and upon man. Soggin points out that the serpent shows every indication of having been at one time a god himself or a demon who had a very specific aim in mind. He states that "the serpent makes you think of a number of supernatural beings, but it is actually nothing more than

an ordinary animal, subtle, yes, but still a beast belonging to the order of creation" (Soggin 1975:94). Soggin mentions that throughout the whole Near East the serpent is regarded as a wise and gracious animal, a wonder-worker and giver of life. He attempts to prove this by referring to the ample iconographical evidence from archaeological excavations in Syro-Palestinian region which documented the "good" character of the serpent. The material consisted of a series of statuettes and plaques in which the serpent appears in relation with  *Aserah* (called Astarte in the Hebrew Bible) (Soggin 1975:95).

In Phoenicia the serpent was believed to be a divine animal identified with the breath of life, the symbol of eternal youth and everlasting life. In this region the god of medicine,  *Esmun*, was also represented by a serpent (Soggin 1975:98). Soggin's suggestions also enrich us with the knowledge of the serpent as a divinity connected with life and fertility in Palestine.

According to Soggin the passages in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Numbers 21:6-9) refer to the serpent as a wonder-worker. He concludes that the Yahwist's evaluation of the role of the serpent is clearly negative since the serpent helps man to attain certain powers that he lacked but which were his by right (Soggin 1975:100).

Joines (1974) essentially agrees with Soggin when he maintains that the serpent was commonly associated with healing in the ancient Near East. This symbol of the serpent as a healer was universally accepted at all times and in all places. Joines also makes mention of the Greek goddess of health, Hygeia, who may be represented by a serpent (1974:87).

Joines clearly declares that sympathetic magic is a prominent element in the tradition of Moses and the bronze serpent. He describes sympathetic magic as the "belief that the fate of an object or person can be governed by the manipulation of its exact image. Therefore he suggests that a representation of a noxious creature could best be driven off and an adversary could be controlled by the manipulation of an image of him" (Joines 1974:87). The author also mentions that Egypt as an ancient Near Eastern civilization was highly influenced by the

practice of sympathetic magic, especially with regard to the use of amulets as discussed in the previous chapter.

In addition to the authors above, De Tarragon (1995) concludes that Moses is known as someone who makes use of magical apotropaic practices to heal snake-bite. He also agrees with Soggin and Joines in that he states that "all oriental societies feared snakes and that magic was the key to master this fear" (De Tarragon 1995: 2077).

4. THE MAGICIAN

Numerous terms may be found in the Hebrew Bible that refer to magicians. Whether they speak of prohibitions or whether they are identified with other magical aspects, these terms are found throughout the Hebrew Bible. In the other ancient Near Eastern civilizations mentioned, magicians have particular designations by which they are referred to as indicated above with regard to Egypt and Mesopotamia. We have seen thusfar that magic takes place through spells, incantations based upon a belief system (rituals) or specific actions with the help of a specialist, the magician.

In this investigation there was constantly confrontation with divination and magical phenomena that overlap in category to differentiate the use. The same can be said with regard to the practitioners of magic and divination. Grabbe presents an analysis of religious specialists. He identifies different types of religious specialists and states that all prophets are, for example, not described in the same way. For example, Elisha and Elijah fit the characteristics often associated with a shaman (Grabbe 1995:9). Other scholars are, however, of the opinion that they are magicians. This leads many scholars to the following question: Are Elijah and Elisha sorcerers or "witchdoctors"? They arrived at the conclusion that some elements in the narratives of Elijah and Elisha seem to depict them as local "curers" while others describe them as "typical sorcerers or witches". How does the role of the shaman and the prophet then differ from that of the magician?

4.1 THE SHAMAN

In the religions of North Asia where magic and sorcery is of pivotal importance, the shaman is described as a doctor-priest working by magic. Like magic, shamanism is not a religion, but a widespread and very ancient pattern of beliefs and activities. Hultkrantz (1996) describes it as a "complex". He says that it is a "semi-independent segment of an ethnic religion" (Hultkrantz 1996:29). According to Hultkrantz (1996) this complex has several important constituents of which shamanism, for one, is based on a particular ideological premise, namely a cosmology that postulated a supernatural world and means of communication with it. Members of their societies share certain beliefs about shamans, namely that they are intermediaries "between the human group and the supernaturals," and that they receive inspiration from their guardian or helping spirits. In their role as intermediaries shamans can have a variety of functions, such as curing, divination, charming, and the like (Hultkrantz 1996:29).

Overholt demonstrates the role of Elijah and Elisha with regard to shamanism. He states that there are at least two symbolic systems, namely shamanism and Deuteronomistic Yahwism. Elijah and Elisha are pictured as participating in both systems. Frequently shamanistic symbols are dominant. On six occasions Elijah and Elisha are depicted as calling on Yahweh for assistance and receiving it. These are associated with an act of power. Thus these stories may be interpreted in terms of the conceptual world of shamanism. Elijah and Elisha are known to be capable of powerful acts. Therefore Overholt concludes that "Elisha's contact with the divine as well as the use of music (2 Kings 3:15) seems more comfortable in the conceptual world of shamanism than in Deuteronomistic or priestly Yahwism" (Overholt 1996:50).

Grabbe (1995), on the other hand, describes the word "shaman" as being widely used. He is of the opinion that there is no definition that is agreed upon by specialists. He maintains that for Hultkrantz "the central idea of shamanism is to establish means of contacts with the supernatural world by the ecstatic experience of a professional and inspired intermediary, the shaman" (Grabbe 1995:149).

Hultkrantz identifies four constituent parts to shamanism:

1. The shaman's contacts with the supernatural world;
2. the shaman as intermediary between human and supernatural world;
3. inspiration from helping spirits, and
4. the shaman's ecstatic experience. (Hultkrantz 1996:149).

Although Hultkrantz objected to shamans not being found in the Israelite tradition, it was discovered in the tradition of the Hebrew Bible that there are certain features parallel to those of shamanism. The services supplied by the shaman are sometimes the same as those for diviners and prophets in Israel: healing, finding lost objects, looking into the future, etc.

There are also a number of shamanistic characteristics to be found in the prophetic figures of the Hebrew Bible, such as spiritual call and the trance state (ecstasy) in which communication with the supernatural world takes place. The stories of Elijah and Elisha are especially abundant in these, as well as other figures such as finding lost objects or curing illnesses (Grabbe 1995:149).

From the above discussion it may be derived that shamans could serve as curers, but they could also be sorcerers. In 2 King 5:26-27 Elisha proved himself something of a dangerous sorcerer by sending disease on his servant, Gehazi. In 2 Kings 4:23-25 he causes the death of forty-two small boys. Rofè (1988) describes him as both a sorcerer, possessing supernatural powers, who sees and hears from afar and one who himself brings down curses upon his enemies without God's intervention. He is, furthermore, also a prophet who speaks in the name of Yahweh (Overholt 1996:36).

Like the shaman, Elijah and Elisha address the need for order and control by appearing to deal with illness and other matters of concern. They have performed rituals geared to daily life. They were powerful wonder-workers. There are a number of possible events of imitative magic which may be found in 2 Kings 4:1-7; 2 Kings 4:38-41 and 2 Kings 13:30 where the practitioners of the events are referred to as "man of God", or wonder-working episodes. Here Rofè claims that these episodes present miracles "as magical acts" and express "a primitive

religious outlook" (Rofè 1988:125). For this reason the practitioner of these magical acts is non other than a magician.

4.2 PROPHETS

As seen above, the "man of God" is also a wonder-worker, like Moses, Elijah and Elisha who are traditionally described as "prophets". Throughout Bible Hebrew times these characters are fulfilling various roles: they are prophets, shamans, magicians, wonder-workers, diviners etc. Prophets originated as seers or diviners, but by the eighth century diviners were soothsayers and magicians while the prophets were "forth-tellers" or "preachers". They used the name of Yahweh and the Mosaic tradition to protest against those practices in the temple and state milieus which they regarded as corrupt or oppressive. As was mentioned earlier. the power of the word is said to be very prominent in Israelite religion. If the prophets then uttered magical words like blessings and curses they can indeed be regarded as "magicians" fulfilling typical "magical" roles.

Hillers (1964) states, for example, that the futility curse is quite common in the prophets. He refers to the following texts:

- Hosea 4:10 "They shall eat, but not be satisfied; they shall play the harlot, but not increase."
- Amos 5:11 ... echoes the Deuteronomic curse: "You have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them. You have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine" (Hillers 1965:29).

Therefore with reference to the roles played by a shaman and the prophet it naturally leads to the following question: How is the magician referred to in the Hebrew Bible? But before we come to that, a few observations with respect to terminology relating to magicians in the Hebrew Bible is in order.

4.3 TERMINOLOGY REFERRING TO A MAGICIAN

A *me'ōnem* may be seen as "a soothsayer, observer or one who looks for omens, a sorcerer, an enchanter" (McLean 1992:468). It is the first in the series of seemingly specialized terms for various types of magical and divinatory practices. The term is equated with magic practices such as conjuring up spirits (McLean 1992:468).

Mēnah 𐤌𐤍𐤏𐤍 ("augur, diviner, enchanter") is associated with two different roots – *nh* 𐤍𐤏 and *lh* 𐤌𐤏. Those emphasizing the connection with *nh* 𐤍𐤏 associate it with some form of divination related to snakes. The connection with *lh* 𐤌𐤏 tends to associate it more with magic, particularly with the use of charms and enchantments. References may be found in Isaiah 3:3,20; 26:26 and Jeremiah 8:17; Ecclesiastes 10:11 (McLean 1992:468).

According to Cryer (1994) the two roots have different meanings: in Ugaritic they mean "whisper"; in Phoenician they mean "to conjure" and in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic their meaning is to "divine" and "to charm" (Cryer 1994:259). He is of the opinion that the Israelites might have acquired this root from their environment at an early date.

Mēkaššēpīm ("sorcerer" is the general meaning of the root *kšf*.) It is usually translated as "sorcery". Some interpreters employ the negative and antisocial term "sorcery" for references to female practitioners of *kešep*, while employing the more neutral term "magic" for references to male practitioners. The unequal distinction between female and male practitioners seems present in the Hebrew Bible itself.

H 𐤏𐤁𐤅𐤅 ("charmer) is one who casts spells, one who uses charms. According to scholars the root *h 𐤏𐤁𐤅* is related to the use of charms and spells. Many interpreters also relate this concept to the practice of tying or wrapping magical knots or threads around people or objects (McLean 1992:469).

Cryer (1994) agrees with the meaning of the root being well attested in the meanings "to bind together", "to form a community" (Cryer 1994:259). He makes

reference to the fact that it means "conjure" or "charm" in Middle Hebrew, but he differs with respect to its connection with *h=br*. He says that it does not refer to enchantment, but to "community" (Cryer 1994:259).

H=ākāmīm h=ārāšīm is usually translated as "skilful magician, magician, sorcerer". This term occurs only in Isaiah 3:3. It is a list of the leaders in Jerusalem and Judah whom God will destroy. Three categories of diviners and magicians are classified as leaders in Judah along with the more traditional soldier, judge, prophet, and elder (McLean 1992:469).

The Israelite counterpart to the pagan priest-magician, is the "man of God". They are both revealing hidden things, heal the sick, perform wonders, curse and bless. The work of the gods is never accomplished by any technique, craft or art. Magician, king, judge, counsellor, craftsman and dream-interpreter are all called "skilled" (*h=ākām*). Kaufmann claims that the "man of God" or prophet, is not skilled nor praised for his wisdom. The prophet's office is hereditary, personal and is free of all fixed forms. He always depends on divine grace. He works wonders, heals and blesses and curses by God's will. Kaufman goes further and stresses that the miraculous staff of Moses is regarded as an ordinary shepherd's staff that he happened to have in his hand when God appeared to him (Kaufmann 1978:86). While anthropologists opine that the staff of Moses possesses powers of magic, McLean associates the concept "*h=ākām*" with foreign magicians (McLean 1992:469).

In the Balaam story (Numbers 22-24) the pagan magician and the Israelite prophet performed similar acts. Balaam, on the one hand, is a potent dispenser of blessings and curses. This is accepted by the Bible as part of its belief in the reality of non-divine magical forces. Balaam is, however, on the other hand, also a prophet in the typical Israelite style and as such he speaks only the word of God, while others refer to figures like Balaam, Moses, Elijah and Elisha as magicians since they perform the acts that could be described as magic in other societies. In conclusion, one can agree with Cryer who states that "one and the same figure exercised more than one function" (1994:248). He states furthermore that the plethora of terminology for various cultic and magical personnel,

encountered in the Hebrew Bible, probably describes functional, rather than institutional roles (Cryer 1994:248).

5. CONCLUSION

The author of the article in the Encyclopedia of Early Christianity outlines the nature of magic very clearly. He says that "many people practised magic in late antiquity; few admitted it" (Ferguson 1990: 559). This is true, especially with regard to ancient Israel. Although magic was prohibited, it does not mean that it was not used by Israelites. The author also stresses further that "one person's magic, spell or demonic ritual was another person's miracle, prayer or sacrament" (Ferguson 1990:559).

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

One cannot deny the difficulty in defining the concept of magic. Magic is a word with many definitions. Firstly, the perception of magic differs from one society to the next. Secondly, the evidence available for the performance and efficacy of magic differs markedly depending on whether it is material found in the travellers' tales of mysterious power, or the analysis of trained anthropologists, scientists, psychologists or religious observers. Thirdly, magic was studied and observed by scholars of the late nineteenth and twentieth century within specific cultural systems. Each of these observers held different viewpoints of magic or had different experiences in their observations. Some actually attempted to define magic by derivation.

Therefore Tylor (1958) and Frazer's work (1959) is said to be faulty. Although they are meant to be the most influential evolutionists from the late nineteenth century, they based their analyses on a comparative method and depended on their own assumptions. Middleton (1986) regarded this as faulty and erroneous since the data were not placed in their social and cultural contexts. For this reason the work of other scholars like Durkheim (1926) and Mauss (1972) were more influential since they were more sociologically-minded scholars. Durkheim distinguished between religion and magic, claiming that religion is a communal matter which works toward communal goals. He saw magic as an affair between a practitioner (magician) and a client which deals with private ends.

Mauss, on the other hand, did not dismiss the ideas of previous scholars. He used Frazer's principle belief, but he discussed magic as a social phenomenon, that makes use of available power in a variety of different ways. He used the term *mana* (which is an impersonal supernatural force) to emphasize that magic, spiritual power and the sacred are all manifestations of this force. The scholars mentioned above based their work purely on these assumptions. In contrast, their successors (Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard) based their findings and

hypotheses on their own field research. They contributed greatly to the understanding of the social, cultural and psychological function of magic, since these writers have tried to understand the practice of magic among other societies whose systems of thought they do not share. Later authors on the phenomenon of magic highlighted the contrast between systems of thoughts (Tambiah 1990), and later the decline of magic due to social and political developments (Weber 1947). Given the contributions of these different scholars, it is fairly difficult to arrive at one suitable definition for the phenomenon of magic. However, magic may be defined as a process to achieve that which is unattainable through natural mechanisms of cause and effect. Therefore magic assists one to obtain a desired result that is otherwise outside of one's power to achieve. This can take place through spells, incantations based upon a belief system (rituals) or specific actions with the help of a specialist (magician). This is exactly how it was described in Chapter 2 which concentrated on magic in the ancient Near Eastern civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Hittite Anatolia. From this analysis it becomes clear that magic played a vital role in these societies. It was accepted as a common practice in the ancient Near East. For the most modern scholars, like Cryer, Pinch and Graf, magic is at home in the ancient Near East. They see Egypt as an especially magical society. One can almost say that magic is a way of life in Egypt, since they made use of everyday magic such as amulets, spells, cult rituals and deities. In addition to the spells and rituals, there was a specialist to perform these magical acts. In Egypt there were two types of magicians, namely, trained priest magicians and "lay" magicians. Egyptians believed that anything was possible if accompanied by magic.

With regard to Mesopotamia it was illustrated that magic was integrated into religion. Therefore there was no clear distinction between magic and religion. But they distinguished clearly between black (or evil) magic and white (good) magic. Mesopotamian magic survived in the form of spells, incantation rituals, amulets, apotropaic figurines, or manipulative actions. A few objects stood out about their magic. Firstly, the sorcerers and the victims used the same techniques and spells for their purpose to do harm and to protect. The demons performed evil roles and

then incantations were used to dispel the evil. Secondly, the number seven was frequently used in incantation spells and had a sacred significance for the Babylonians. Thirdly, the demonic figures such as Lamashtu and Pazuzu play a vital role in the incantation rituals. The *Maqlû* ritual was designed to counteract the evil machinations. The magical expert in Mesopotamia is known as the *Āšīpu* who cooperated with the cultic personnel such as chanters or the singers.

Among the Hittites, magic likewise plays a significant role. Hittite magic is similar to Mesopotamian magic. Here the two opposing forms, namely black magic and white magic, were once again emphasised. The practice of magical acts is under state control and is subject to punishment in the Hittite Laws. Magic also features through spells, incantations and rituals, but the magician plays a somewhat different role. They are called "incantation priests" or "priestesses" who can also be regarded as physicians. In Egypt, for example, spells and amulets play a more important role than in other Near Eastern civilizations. On the other hand, Mesopotamia concentrates on incantations and rituals, whereas Hittite magic follows the principle of analogy and contiguity (direct contact). Another interesting feature is the names given to magicians and the roles they fulfil in society. The magician could also act as a priest, healer and protector and could therefore also perform medical as well as magical acts.

In ancient Israel magic plays a somewhat different role than in neighbouring societies in the Near East. The discussion focus on the magical words, formulae and objects used in the Hebrew Bible. Reference is made to certain Hebrew Bible texts where magical words appear or formulae are used in spells and amulets. To a great extent the use of these words, formulae and objects is forbidden and one has to infer their magical uses. The Hebrew Bible prohibits a wide range of magical practices. These prohibitions suggest, however, that such practices were practised. Therefore one can say that Israel's various forms of magic are not foreign and that Israel is therefore also a "magical society", like the others around her. Among the practices specifically mentioned are the wearing of amulets and charms associated with witchcraft. Furthermore there are the aspect of blessings and curses. Blessings and curses as performative rituals are said to be of utmost

importance in the Hebrew Bible. Some scholars claim that Yahweh alone had the authority to curse and to bless. The Israelites exalted Yahweh's power above all others. Through Yahweh the prophets also blessed the people.

The Hebrew Bible also exhibits extensive vocabulary for the various types of magic, their practitioners and adherents. Although the use of magic is clearly not a focal point in ancient Israel or the Hebrew Bible, there exists a broad spectrum of magical usages in ancient Israelite society .

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