

Andrei A. Orlov. *Divine Scapegoats: Demonic Mimesis in Early Jewish Mysticism.* New York: SUNY Press, 2015. 352 pp. \$95.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4384-5583-9.



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Serving as Professor of Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity at Marquette University, Andrei A. Orlov specializes in Jewish apocalypticism and early mysticism, Old Testament pseudepigrapha, and Second Temple literature in general. An impressively productive scholar, Orlov is widely regarded as one of the foremost experts in the so-called Slavonic pseudepigrapha, a group of Jewish apocalyptic texts from the Second Temple Period whose origins and transmission history is especially obscure. *Divine Scapegoats: Demonic Mimesis in Early Jewish Mysticism* demonstrates once more Orlov's mastery of these texts, as it continues the investigation initiated in *Dark Mirrors: Azazel and Satanael in Early Jewish Demonology* (2011). While the previous volume explored the parallels between divine and demonic realities by focusing on two central antagonists (Azazel and Satanael) whose features and prerogatives—Orlov argues—mirror those of angels and the Deity, *Divine Scapegoats* concentrates on “sacerdotal, messianic, and creational aspects” (p. 3) of the heavenly/demonic symmetry found in the

Apocalypse of Abraham and *2 Enoch*. The choice to focus on these two specific texts within the corpus of Slavonic pseudepigrapha is central to Orlov's argument that, inasmuch as they exhibit a unique language and a “highly developed mystical imagery” (p. 3), these two works bridge “the matrix of early Jewish apocalypticism as it was manifested in the early Enochic circle with the matrix of early Jewish mysticism as it became manifest in rabbinic Merkabah and Hekhalot materials” (p. 3).

Following an introduction titled “The Right in the Left: The Divine and the Demonic in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and *2 Enoch*,” the volume is divided into two parts containing a total of eight essays. Part 1 consists of five essays devoted to demonic figures and their eschatological and messianic counterparts in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (AA). Part 2 contains three studies concerning divine/demonic dyads in *2 Enoch* (2E), one of which (“Adoil Outside the Cosmos: God Before and After Creation in the Enochic Tradition”) was published in a shorter version in 2013 (“Adoil Outside the

Cosmos: God Before and After Creation in the Enochic Tradition," in *Histories of the Hidden God: Concealment And Revelation in Western Gnostic, Esoteric, and Mystical Traditions*, edited by April D. DeConick and Grant Adamson). A brief but important conclusion ends *Divine Scapegoats*, followed by extensive endnotes and bibliography, and a subject index.

The first essay in part 1, "The Curses of Azazel," investigates the inverse symmetry between Abraham's and Azazel's attire. The former's endowment with the divine Name and the garment of the high priest would correspond to the scapegoat's endowment with cultic curses and a crimson band during the atoning ritual at Yom Kippur. In Orlov's view, the preferred choice of aural elements—Name and voice—to express the divine represents AA's challenge to an anthropomorphic understanding of God (p. 35). "The Cosmological Temple in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*" explores the text's view of the created universe as a macrocosmic Temple in which the demonic sea of the underworld represents the sanctuary's courtyard and the Leviathan its Foundation Stone. Orlov contends that, by presenting the world as an alternative, idealized Temple, AA intends to mitigate the sense of loss for the earthly one its contemporary audience must have experienced (p. 54). The third essay of this section, "The Demise of the Antagonist in the Apocalyptic Scapegoat Tradition," argues that, in its portrayal of the final moments of the atoning rite, AA represents not only the last development in a complex process of reinterpretation of the Yom Kippur ritual that began in early Jewish apocalypses but also a crucial antecedent to early rabbinic and Christian understandings of the scapegoat's end. As a consequence, according to Orlov the Mishnaic interpretation of this ritual should not be seen as pointing to an ideal form of the cult—as most scholars would have it—but rather as the result of the influence of Enochic apocalypses, which transpose biblical material into an eschatological dimension (p. 74). "The Nourishment of Azazel"

explores the role of food as a marker and vehicle of ontological transformation in AA—tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are going to be. While Adam and Eve's eating of earthly food out of Azazel's hand precipitates them out of heaven and into the human condition, Abraham's nourishment through visions and words of Yahoeel return him to a prelapsarian, celestial condition. As Orlov argues, this inverse mirroring of feeding scenes serves as a promise that the lost protological state of the first human couple will be regained in the *eschaton*, through a parallel act of ingestion (p. 101). The fifth and concluding essay in part 1, "The Messianic Scapegoat in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*," continues the analysis of peculiar dyads formed by a divine character and its demonic counterpart, which the author initiated in *Dark Mirrors*. Of the two messiahs portrayed in AA 29, the one depicted as a messianic scapegoat has been often associated with Jesus, thus prompting scholars to view this passage as a later Christian interpolation. Against this reading, Orlov contends that this figure of a messianic scapegoat actually attempts to incorporate both eschatological and cultic dimensions; therefore, to the extent that it incorporates sacerdotal images connected to the cultic tradition (in particular the Yom Kippur ritual), the messianic passage in question belongs to the original text of AA and may serve as polemics against the worship of anthropomorphic images (p. 125).

Of particular interest in this section is the author's highlighting of the sacerdotal and cultic elements that characterize AA's portrayal of Azazel and his celestial counterparts. Orlov's emphasis on the recurrence of images that evoke Temple rituals—especially the Yom Kippur one—situates his reading of the Slavonic apocalypses along the line of interpretation traced by Rachel Elior in her "Three Temples" theory.[1] In this respect, works like AA and 2E would constitute an example of the literature that, alongside the Dead Sea Scrolls, links the biblical traditions about the Temple with

the Hekhalot materials in an uninterrupted continuum of priestly documents.

Part 2 of *Divine Scapegoats* opens with a revised version of “Adoil Outside the Cosmos: God Before and After Creation in the Enochic Tradition.” Now focusing on *2E*, Orlov continues his discussion of divine/demonic dyads—here the primordial aeons of light and darkness, Adoil and Arukhas—and inverse symmetries, in this case between *Urzeit* and *Endzeit*. While the parallels he traces with gnostic and Hekhalot materials are striking, less convincing are the similarities he suggests with Zoharic and Lurianic motifs once historical distance and fundamental differences between *2E* images and later kabbalistic notions are also taken into account. The last two studies in the volume, “The Veneration Motif in the Temptation Narrative of the Gospel of Matthew: Lessons from the Enochic Tradition” and “Primordial Lights: The Logos and Adoil in the Johannine Prologue and *2 Enoch*,” represent two cases in point for Orlov’s argument about the often overlooked yet formative influence of *2E* (and other early Jewish apocalypses) on the Gospels. In particular, while in the former essay the author views Satan’s request for veneration in Matthew as a polemical appropriation of apocalyptic theophanies featuring Enoch and Adam, the concluding piece highlights the parallels between Adoil’s role as demi-urgic light and divine helper at creation in *2E* and certain functions of the *Logos* in the Prologue to John.

As a collection of essays which the author originally wrote independently of one another, but that deal with the same, quite specific topic as it appears in two particular texts, *Divine Scapegoat* displays a certain amount of repetitiveness. To be sure, Orlov’s main arguments come out as clearly (re)stated and supported from different angles and by a variety of case studies; however, better editorial work could have enhanced the volume by limiting the repetition of the same points and examples in nearly every essay—espe-

cially in part 1. Greater attention to editing would have also limited typos, which, although not numerous, may leave the reader puzzled, as is the case with Azazel being mentioned instead of Asael in a passage from *1 Enoch* (p. 61).

Orlov’s numerous studies on the Slavonic pseudepigrapha have doubtlessly contributed to a wider scholarly appreciation for the importance of these Jewish apocalypses as links in the chain of tradition that goes from the Hebrew Bible and early apocalyptic texts to early Rabbinic literature, the Gospels, and Hekhalot materials. In *Divine Scapegoat*, however, Orlov’s attempt to establish *AA* and *2E* as “crucial formative witnesses anticipating later Jewish mystical concepts and imagery” (p. 161) may prove too much of a challenge. While Gershom Scholem, whom the author references, found in these two pseudepigrapha significant traces of notions and images later developed in the Hekhalot materials and Merkavah speculations of the Rabbinic period,[2] Orlov tries to extend the reach of the demonological developments in Slavonic apocalypses to medieval kabbalah and beyond. Not only does he systematically pepper his essays with quotations from the *Zohar*, but he also references the parallel demonic structure of dark *sefirot* (*Sitra Ahra*) developed by a Castilian circle of kabbalists in the thirteenth century, and even the sixteenth-century Lurianic cosmogonical myth of the “Breaking of the Vessels” (*shevirat ha-kelim*). Unfortunately, phenomenological resemblance does not prove actual historical connection, particularly in the case of texts such as the Slavonic pseudepigrapha, which, as Orlov finally admits, exhibit “enigmatic origins and vague transmission history” (p. 186). Even the recently found Coptic fragments of *2E*, which would attest to the circulation of this text between the eighth and tenth centuries (and possibly to its origin) in Egypt, do not *per se* solve the puzzle of how such early apocalyptic literature could have reached southern France and Spain by the twelfth/thirteenth century and been read by local kabbalists. This said, Orlov’s suggestion about the

long reach of Slavonic apocalyptic notions may be given historical grounding—linguistic barriers notwithstanding—once we recall that from the ninth century a variety of Jewish speculative texts (including Hekhalot and Merkavah materials) made their way from Palestine and the Maghreb to northern and western Europe via Italy. While with his *Divine Scapegoats* Orlov has sought to supply an important link to the *shalshelet ha-qabalah* (chain of tradition), yet another one may need to be added in order to bring his argument about Slavonic pseudepigrapha and Jewish mysticism to fruition.

Notes

[1]. Rachel Elijor, *The Three Temples: On the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism* (Oxford/Portland: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004).

[2]. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1995), 43; 67-69.

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