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The Lord of Spirits in the Book of Parables of Enoch from a Levantine Point of View

Abstract: Among the various booklets contained in 1 Enoch, the Book of Parables (BP, chapters 37–71) stands out due to its far-reaching mythological descriptions and radical imagery. To complicate matters further, this is the only booklet not attested in Aramaic or Greek, but rather solely in Ethiopic (Geʿez). BP uses the divine title "Lord of Spirits" as the predominant divine appellation, while this title is not used in other Enochic compositions. The Lord of Spirits appears in the Hebrew Bible with minor variations between MT and the LXX, as well as in a handful of other Jewish sources. The present article examines the performative use of this title on Jewish tombstones from Rheneia (Delos) together with its typical iconography. The main line of argument is to demonstrate the Levantine setting of the epithet using sources from the MAP database. Given that other divine titles in the Enochic tradition are shared by the general non-Jewish environment of the time, I attempt to show that the same is true for the Lord of Spirits. An inscription from Palmyra (*PAT* 0065) that uses similar divine titles and iconography attests to the cultural continuity of the epithet across long periods of time in the wide geographic span of the Levant.

The present article will join together divine names from traditions that stand wide apart in the late first millennium BCE and the early centuries CE across a wide geographical scope.[1] The disparity also involves a broad range of agencies by the various writers, as some of the evidence is preserved in the form of material artefacts with a particular ritual performance in mind while others are preserved only in scriptural form. I aim to connect these rather remote traditions, demonstrating the vitality and dynamic character of divine names as they migrate in the Hellenistic-Roman near East.[2] Since some of the sources lack an anchoring in real life in the form of either a material setting, archaeological context or ritual performance, using them to project on the textual use and vice versa raises methodological issues. What prompted the translators of the Septuagint and the authors of the Book of Parables to use the epithet "Lord of Spirits"? Does this textual usage reflect a live ritual tradition or is it purely exegetical in nature? And how does this usage connect with the iconographical performance of the epithet in various contexts?

1 This article was written with the support of the Israel Science Foundation, grant number 2553/21. I owe my initial acquaintance with the Palmyrene inscription *PAT* 0065 to a discussion with Alexandra Kubiak-Schneider during a visit to Toulouse. I thank her for her hospitality and guidance. I also thank Jeremy Hutton for his advice. I am, of course, responsible for the content herein. See the postscript below about the recently published article by Litvinau 2022.

2 See Smith 2010; Parker 2017; Bonnet/Galoppin 2021.

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Most of the examples covered in this paper are from Jewish sources but one of its aims is to expose the Koinè of divine epithets in Jewish literature and other Levantine sources. Jewish writers in Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek participate in this Koinè as active agents. That is, they are not merely "influenced" by their environment but are rather active generators of epithets, in parallel to other agents who generate the same or similar phraseology. Egyptian Jews, Greek-speaking Samaritans from Delos, Aramaic–speaking apocalyptic writers and Palmyrene petitioners all take part in this Koinè.

1 "Lord of Spirits" In The Book of Parables

The Book of Parables (also: Book of Similitudes) of Enoch is now contained in chapters 37–71 of the Ethiopic Book of Enoch. It is the only section of 1 Enoch that is preserved in neither Aramaic nor Greek, but rather only in the Geʿez (Ethiopic) version of the book.[3] Like other Jewish apocalyptic texts written in Aramaic from the Hellenistic period, it employs a set of divine epithets that avoids the tetragrammaton and other appellations known from Hebrew sources, instead using an Aramaic set of epithets.[4] The Book of Parables (henceforth BP), however, stands out even within this corpus due to its use of epithets. The two most conspicuous epithets in this source are "the Head of Days" (Eth. *rəʾəsa mawāʿəl*, probably Aramaic יומין ראש *rʾš ywmyn*) and "The Lord of Spirits" (Eth. *ʾəgziʾa manāfəst*).[5] While the former title is commonly understood to reflect the title "ancient of days" (Daniel 7:9), the source and meaning of the latter still lack sufficient explanation. The biblical (both Jewish and Greek) usages of this title are thoroughly discussed by Anna Angelini in her essay in this volume, together with pertinent inscriptional evidence. I aim to highlight a different aspect of the discussion, paying special attention to the Levantine setting of its employment in enochic literature.

BP was written around the Turn of the Era in the 1st century BCE or CE.[6] It is an enochic composition inasmuch as significant parts from it recount the content of the Book of Watchers (1 Enoch 1–36) albeit with many variations and adaptations.[7] The book contains three "parables", in chapters 37–44, 45–57, 58–71. The main contents of

3 Scholars debate whether a Greek version existed or whether the book was translated directly from Aramaic. The former option is usually accepted. See Nickelsburg/VanderKam 2012, 28–31 and the bibliography cited therein.

4 These titles are shared with other Aramaic texts from Qumran, most prominently the Genesis Apocryphon 1Q20. See Bernstein 2013.

5 The word *ʾəgziʾa* literally means "lord" ("dominus" in Dillman's dictionary). It can stand as an independent divine name in the Ethiopic Bible but that function is more often fulfilled by the compound *ʾəgziʾabəḥer*. When constructed with other words, the word *əgziʾa* means "lord of", as in the Geʿez version of Mark 2:28 "Lord of the Sabbath".

6 Nickelsburg/VanderKam 2012, 58–63; Knibb 2009, 143–160; Erho 2011.

7 VanderKam 2007; Tigchelaar 2007.

these parables are long elaborations of the standard Aramaic throne scene known from 1 Enoch 14–15, Daniel 7 and the Book of Giants,[8] enmeshed with a mythical-geographical account of heavenly phenomena. The heavenly scenes dwell particularly on the identity of those who take part in the court setting: the multitude of Holy Ones and Watchers, the presiding god and an intermediary figure, the Son of Man. The latter figure has received extensive scholarly attention due to its Christological undertones, but will not concern us here.

Aramaic Jewish literature underscores the sovereignty of God using the title מר, *mr* "Lord, Master" (*e.g.* 1 En 9:3, 12:3; 1QapGen VII 7, XII 17 *et al.*, Greek κύριος [1 Enoch 10:9, 11]). This term often stands in a construct pairing with the realms where sovereignty is practiced. Other epithets express loftiness, as in the title עלאה, *ʿlʾh* "high one", ὕψιστος,[9] or eternality as in the term מרא עלמה, *mrʾ ʿlmh* "eternal lord" (1 En 9:4), τῷ βασιλεῖ τῶν αἰώνων (12:3).[10] Other titles stress God's capacity as the leader of the divine assembly by means of the title קדישא רבא, "the great holy one" (Greek τοῦ ἁγίου τοῦ μεγάλου, 14:1), *i.e.*, the most powerful of all holy ones.[11] His assumption of glory is attested in the title מרא רבותא *mrʾ rbwtʾ*, "Lord of Glory" (36:4), Greek 12:3 τῷ κυρίῳ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης.

BP employs similar titles to the wider enochic Aramaic repertoire, such as "Lord of Glory" (Eth. እግዚአ፡ ስብሐት, *ʾəgziʾa səbḥat*) and "High One" (ልዑል *laʿul*). But in the great majority of cases the preferred title is "Lord of spirits".[12] The title "Lord of Spirits" is used 104 times in BP, through all of its literary sections, even those that Nickelsburg considers to be later interpolations.[13]

Previous exegetes of 1 Enoch mention the precedents of this title in Hebrew literature. The Hebrew Bible uses the epithet "God of spirits for all flesh" אלהי הרוחת לכל בשר, *ʾlhy hrwḥt lkl bśr* twice, in Numbers 16:22 and 27:16.[14] The Septuagint gives a slightly variant reading: θεός τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός "God of spirits *and* all flesh".

8 See Angel 2015 with earlier bibliography.

9 This title was particularly popular in Jewish texts from the second century BCE such as Ben Sira and The Book of Jubilees; see Aitken 2007.

10 The word עלם in Jewish sources of this period is often taken to maintain its older meaning, "eternity", attested *e.g.* in Ugaritic and biblical Hebrew. For the later spatial meaning of this term as "world", see below.

11 See Ben–Dov 2016; this title is attested in Hebrew (גדול וקדוש, *gdwl wqdwš* "Great and Holy", or rather as a *hendiadys*: "the great holy one") in the Hymn to the creator from the psalms scroll 11QPs[a] XXVI 9.

12 According to Nickelsburg/VanderKam 2012, the title "lord" appears 124 times in BP while 104 of them are "Lord of Spirits".

13 Thus those in chapters 65–68, for example, which are often considered a noachic interpolation. The presence of this epithet throughout BP has led Black (1985, 191) to claim that the book's composition was uniform rather than a continuous act of accumulation. Nickelsburg sees numerous layers and modifications in BP while acknowledging that all of them use the same epithet.

14 The former is preceded by the divine name אל, *ʾl*, while the latter uses the tetragram *yhwh*.

The context in both cases is petitionary, within a supplication to the divine by Moses. The exact connotation in chapter 27 is the divine attendance to the mundane needs of the Israelite community in the desert, alluding to human leadership (Moses, Korah, Joshua) that mediates the divine sovereignty over the community. The spirits in this epithet are most likely the human spirits of community members that receive individual providence from the divine.[15] In Numbers 16, the epithet is invoked in an attempt to silence the divine wrath, in which case the spirits may also be divine malevolent beings. Later, in the mid-second century BCE, in the Book of Jubilees 10:3, the epithet appears in a petitionary prayer by Noah who asks to be saved from the evil spirits, in which case the use of this specific epithet is particularly efficacious.[16]

The efficacy of YHWH as represented by this epithet is expressed in a Jewish–Samaritan prayer for vengeance for the untimely death of two girls, preserved on two tombstones from the island of Rheneia near Delos from the late second – early first centuries BCE (*I.Délos* 2532, I–II = *DB MAP* S#10949). This usage is clearly dependent on the Septuagint. On these stones, the title "Lord of spirits and all flesh" serves to intensify the petition, summoning τὸν θεὸν τὸν ὕψιστον τὸν κύριον τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός "God, the Most High, the Lord of Spirits and of all Flesh" to avenge the untimely death of the buried women.[17] The angels of God who are summoned with him (lines 9–10) to carry out the act of vengeance are most likely identical to "the spirits" in the opening epithet, as claimed by van der Horst. Note that the opening title distinguishes the Most High *God* (θεὸν) from the *Lord* (κύριον) of spirits. This distinction verifies that Jews used this epithet with the title "Lord" rather than the "God of Spirits" as in the biblical text, both Hebrew and Greek.

The tombstones from Rheneia show an iconographic motif that exemplifies the efficacy of the deity invoked in the inscription (Fig. 1). A second occurrence of the same motif with an Aramaic inscription is discussed below and will buttress the continuity of the title and its performance. The motif of two hands raised up in prayer is typical on the tombstones of young people who suffered untimely death, the Delos stones being one of its earliest attestations.[18] The addressee of the uplifted hands in the Greco-Roman world is often Helios or other astral deities, or Shamash in Syrian inscriptions, being deities whose sight is all-encompassing. In a Jewish context, this function is fulfilled by God: "you who see everything and your angels".[19]

15 *Pace* Angelini (in this volume), I do not read this epithet in Numbers 27:16 as referring to the multiplicity of divine spirits.

16 For this prayer, see Stuckenbruck 2005.

17 See van der Horst/Newman 2008, 140; Angelini (in this volume); Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 48. Scholars point out a later use of this connotation in 1 Clement 64:1 "The all-seeing God and master of the spirits (δεσπότης τῶν πνευμάτων) and lord of all flesh".

18 Graf 2007; Brugnone 2021.

19 Compare a Jewish or Christian tombstone from Paflagonia with the same motif, where the hands are addressed to Κύριος Παντοκράτωρ (Brugnone 2021, 184–185).

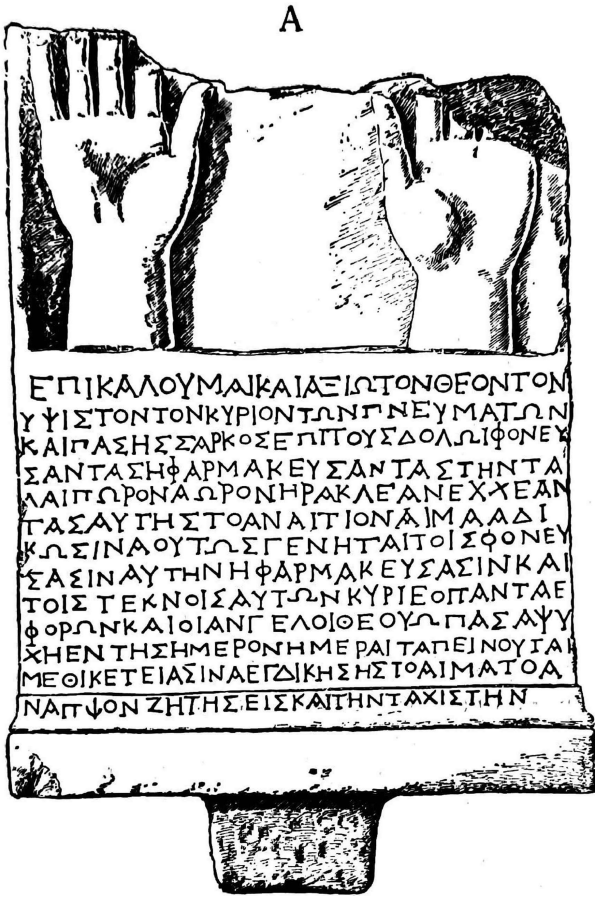

Fig. 1: Front side of a marble tombstone from Rheneia (*I.Délos* 2532). Drawing after Deissmann 1923, 352 Abb. 73.

The efficacy of this epithet is also expressed, albeit in a different context, in the divine reaction to Heliodorus' attempt to ransack the Jerusalem temple treasury (2 Maccabees 3:24). Here, the reaction is produced by the "Ruler of spirits and all the authorities" (ὁ τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης ἐξουσίας δυνάστης), who sends an angelic warrior to attack Heliodorus. The context quite specifically connotes the divine sovereignty over both the human and divine realms, possibly with the spirits representing the latter and the authorities the former (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:24).[20] Finally, the Qumran Hodayot (preceding the BP by a century or so) employ the term אדון לכול רוח, *ʾdwn lkl rwḥ* "Lord of every spirit (*i.e.* all spirits)" in 1QH[a] 18:8 as part of a chain of divine epithets

20 For the interpretation and context of this verse, see Doran 2012, 87.

that underscore the divine sovereignty over all aspects of the world, both human and divine.

August Dillmann, in his 1853 commentary, thought that the spirits in the epithet "Lord of Spirits" are both human and heavenly.[21] For Matthew Black, the pentateuchal precedents are hardly a source of the enochic term, but 2 Maccabees 3:24 and 1QH[a] 18:8 are closer.[22] According to Black, the epithet could reflect the original Hebrew אדון (ל)רוחות, *ʾdwn (l)rwḥwt*, as in the Qumran Hodayot, carrying the theological-cosmological connotations of the Treatise of Two spirits in the Qumranic tradition (1QS 3–4). Alternatively, he suggests that the enochic term is an interpretative transformation of the biblical title יהוה צבאות, *yhwh ṣbʾwt* "YHWH of hosts" or "Lord of hosts" with the hosts connoting the heavenly host, seen here as spirits. Already in the Septuagint, the title צבאות is sometimes represented as κύριος τῶν δυνάμεων.[23]

The transformation of "hosts" to "spirits" is especially apparent in the throne scenes of BP, where the heavenly beings chant various liturgical formulae: the common formula "Blessed be YHWH and blessed be His name forever" (ברוך יהוה וברוך שמו לעולם ועד), *brwk yhwh wbrwk šmw lʿwlm wʿd*, and the *trishagion* of Isaiah 6:13.

Let us compare the first formula as attested in the litany form of Psalm 145 in the scroll 11QPs[a] (one of its numerous occurrences), with its representation in BP. The formula appears twice in BP with variations:

11QPs[a] Blessed be He and Blessed be *His* name for ever and ever

1 En 39:13 Blessed are You and Blessed is the name of the *Lord* for ever and ever

1 En 61:11 Blessed be He, and blessed is the name of the *Lord of Spirits* for ever and ever

While in 39:13 the formula appears as expected, in 61:11 "the Lord" was replaced with "The Lord of Spirits".

A similar situation pertains in 39:12, where the divine name in the *trishagion* is altered:[24]

Isa 6:13 Holy, holy, holy is the *Lord of Hosts*; his *glory* fills the entire earth

1 En 39:12 Holy, holy, holy is the *Lord of spirits*; he fills the earth with *spirits*

21 Dillmann 1853, 140.

22 Black 1985, 190–192. The fact that the epithet is used throughout BP attests, in Black's opinion, to the literary unity of the composition.

23 For the various representations of this title in LXX, see Talshir 1987; recently Angelini (in this volume). For a similar derivation of the "Lord of Spirits", see Olson 2004, 74. Olson (2004, 136) adds references for the afterlife of the epithet: Tertullian's quotation of 2 Cor 3:18; Clement of Alexandria; the Persian apocalypse *Bahman Yašt*; and the Greek–Egyptian magical papyri.

24 For quotations and paraphrases of the *trishagion*, see among many other examples Revelation 4:8, and cf. Nickelsburg/VanderKam 2012, 125–129 and the earlier literature cited there.

Nickelsburg notes the expected use of "Lord" (Aramaic מר, *mr*) in BP, which conveys sovereignty over earthly might. But whence the spirits? From the altered quotation of the *trishagion*, he concludes that the epithet "Lord of Spirits" was created for a liturgical context.[25] This is further supported, he claims, by the frequent collocation "in front of the Lord of Spirits" (*e.g.* 47:4) and by the thirty occurrences of the collocation "the name of the Lord of Spirits", many of them in the context of praise (*e.g.* 39:9, 61:9). In Second Temple Jewish liturgy and later, the name of God is a central object for praise, sometimes even replacing the deity itself, as for example in the doxologies in Psalms 72:18–19, 113:1.[26] The BP thus retains a performative context for the epithet, but this context is not petitionary as in the inscriptional evidence from Delos but rather laudatory, within hymns and liturgies. Songs of praise became the central genre of Second Temple Jewish liturgy, sometimes replacing the roles of other genres of prayer.[27]

Importantly, Nickelsburg observes that the epithet is in fact BP's version of the more common epithet "the Great Holy One" (קדישא רבא, *qdyš' rb'*), *i.e.*, "the greatest of the Holy Ones", with the Holy Ones replaced by spirits. According to him, this would fit the general image of God in BP, who is mostly active only by means of angels and messengers.[28]

A scrutiny of the find may add several further insights. The fact that the Lord of spirits merges in the general enochic set of epithets is made clear in 40:3, where the epithet is interchangeable with "the Lord of Glory" (እግዚአ ስብሐት, *'əgzi'a səbḥat*, probably Aramaic מר כבודא, *mr kbwd'*), and in 58:4 where it parallels the title "Eternal Lord" (እግዚአ፡ ዓለም, *'əgzi'a 'ālam*, probably Aramaic מרא עלמא *mr' 'lmh*; Cf. 4Q202 1 iii 14; 1Q20 XXI 2 מרה עלמיא [pl.]). Further, the divine name serves as a manifestation, even a hypostasis of the divinity in BP. Thus, "the name of the Lord of Spirits" is mentioned not only when it is being praised, but also as an independent agent in the divine interaction. Thus, in 46:7, the wicked people deny *the name* of the Lord of Spirits and in 61:9 God will judge humanity "according to the word of the name of the Lord of Spirits", i.e. the divine *logos*.

Having surveyed the main occurrences of the epithet, a prominent question remains: why does the author of BP cherish the spirits so much? And why is this liturgical epithet so widely employed as an appellation of the divine powers?

One answer for this question would come from the cosmological context of BP, where much emphasis is given to the winds. They, in turn, are designated by the same Hebrew and Aramaic term רוח, as well as by the Greek πνεύμα. The winds are ubiquitous in the cosmological sections scattered throughout BP. For example, a short section in 41:3–4 is expanded into a long treatise in 60:11–22, where six types of wind

25 Nickelsburg/VanderKam 2012, 39, 91.

26 For praising the name of god, see Nitzan 1994, 173–200.

27 Nitzan 1994; Pajunen 2015. A similar practice is attested in Palmyrene inscriptions (see below).

28 Nickelsburg/VanderKam 2012, 40.

(*manfasa*) are recounted – winds of the sea, frost/hail, snow, mist, dew and rain – in vivid mythological terms together with the earthly and heavenly phenomena that they generate.[29] A short recollection of the winds in 69:22–23 resembles the account in 41:3–4; the special part about this recollection is that verse 24 immediately continues with the praise that the winds (*manfasāt*) give in front of the Lord of Spirits.[30] There must therefore be some connection between the cosmological interests of BP and the unique use of spirits in its preferred divine title. To the best of my knowledge, thus far, this matter has not been suggested.[31]

Chapter 41 reveals yet more information about the πνεύματα in BP. While vv. 3–4 describe the winds as weather phenomena, vv. 8–9 discuss the spirits of human beings. Both are contained in chapter 41 alongside the account of the heavenly luminaries, those that are elsewhere known as "the Heavenly Host". This entire array is thus conceptually bound together by the authors of BP, and its constituents can all correspond to the ambiguous "spirits" in the title "Lord of Spirits".

To sum up the discussion thus far, two central options have been raised for the Semitic origin of the title: יהוה צבאות, *yhwh ṣb'wt* (Black) or קדישא רבא, *qdyš' rb'* (Nickelsburg), both denoting the heavenly powers and both connected with a liturgical context. However, attention should be given to all possible meanings of the Hebrew-Aramaic term רוח, *rwḥ*, Greek πνεύμα, which underlies the Ethiopic title. This term may in fact designate three different entities: (a) wind, (b) the human soul, and (c) divine beings, angels. While both proposals cited above favour meaning (c), a case was made for meaning (a) and more could be claimed for meaning (b). In fact, Nickelsburg does mention the human souls (b) as a possible subject of this epithet, in line with the biblical precedents mentioned above.[32] This meaning of the Lord of Spirits may correspond to the account of a storehouse of human souls in the Book of Watchers (1 Enoch 22).

29 This section is quite different from other descriptions of the winds (*e.g.* in the Astronomical Book, chapters 76–77) and thus reflects a unique interest of BP (see VanderKam 2007, 95–96). Nickelsburg (2001, 221–224) repositions it after the cosmological account of 59:1–3. He also notes that the joint section is an expansion of the cosmic account in chapters 41–44.

30 The distinct translations of the same Ethiopic word are discussed by Nickelsburg 2001, 227–228.

31 It might be added that several Greek inscriptions from Delos (*I.Délos* 1754, 2305, 2415, 2416 = *DB MAP* S#9166, 4552, 10655, 10656) invoke Zeus Ourios. *i.e.*, "Zeus of the fair wind". Delos cults are known for their association with oriental deities (see e.g. Moyer 2011), and the inscription *I.Délos* 2305 is presented by an individual from Ascalon. I thank Corinne Bonnet for alerting me to this connection.

32 Nickelsburg/VanderKam 2012, 41.

The problem with meaning (c) is that "spirits" are never used in BP as an appellation for angels or minor divinities. They are called "holy ones", "holy angels", "those who sleep not", "cherubim Seraphim, Ophanim" etc., but never "Spirits".[33]

2 The Levantine Setting

George Nickelsburg paved the way for anchoring enochic divine epithets in the repertoire of Greek and Aramaic inscriptions from the northern Levant of late Antiquity. Since the enochic corpus was conceived and developed in what is now northern Israel, it constitutes part of the mythological and cultic realities of that region.

As part of his wider thesis about the origin of the Book of Watchers in the area of the Hermon slopes and the Dan river in upper Galilee, Nickelsburg studied the epithet קדישא רבא, "The Great Holy One". He noted the appearance of the same name in a Greek inscription from a Roman temple on Mt. Hermon from the third century CE.[34] This inscription is one of many Greek inscriptions from the Roman period found in temples and other ritual edifices in the Hermon region. It is now published as *IGLS* 11, 40 = *MAP DB* S#1474 (T#1896).[35] The inscription was found in the site of Qasr Antar at the summit of Mt. Hermon, near a temple enclosure, in what seems to have been a ritual circumambulation carrying an oath of initiation for those entering.[36] The inscription reads: κατὰ κέλευσιν θεοῦ μεγίστου κὲ ἁγίου οἱ ὀμωύοντες ἐντεῦθεν "According to the command of the greatest a[nd] holy god, those who take an oath [proceed] from here". The title "greatest and holy god" corresponds quite closely to the enochic title *qdyš' rb'*, which sometimes appears in reversed order as רבא וקדישא, *rb' wqdyš'* "great and holy one". Nickelsburg has thus rightly concluded that the traditions of the Watchers were fashioned in the religious climate of the Hermon slopes in the early Hellenistic period. This is supported by the evidence of the Book of Watchers itself, which mentions local toponyms and even names one of the angels חרמני, *ḥrmny*, "The Hermonian".[37] Another inscription from the Hermon region (*IGLS* 11, 1 = *DB MAP* S#1364 from Haloua) mentions the "holy god" from Remala alongside the Angel God Melikertes (κατὰ κέλευσι[ν] θεοῦ ἀνγέλ[ου] Μελικέρτ[ου]). Earlier readers of this

33 Nickelsburg/VanderKam 2012, 40–41. Interestingly, they are never called "watcher and holy one" (עיר וקדיש, *'yr wqdyš*) as is common in the Book of Watchers.

34 Nickelsburg 2001, 238–247, esp. 247. Aliquot 2009, 25. See now Miller 2017.

35 Aliquot 2008a, 72–73.

36 Clermont-Ganneau 1903; Belayche 2001, 188; Aliquot 2008b, 82.

37 See also the sources collected by Aliquot 2008a, 72–73. For some criticism on Nickelsburg, which however does not undermine his thesis, see Eshel/Eshel 2003.

text commented on the association of angels with the Hermon region according to the Book of Watchers.[38]

As we now know thanks to the MAP database, similar epithets are invoked in *IGLS* 7, 4034 = *MAP DB* S#1464 (Θεῷ [μ]εγίστῳ ἁγίῳ ἐπηκόῳ Βαιτοχειχει; Mt. Al-Nabi Saleh, near Tartous) and *MAP DB* T#7908 (ἐκ κ[ελεύ]σεως θεοῦ μεγίστου ἁγίου Βήλου: Apamea). A Roman inscription from the site of Maad (*MAP DB* T#5090) invokes Τῷ κυρίῳ ἁγί<ῳ> κὲ κυ[ρ]ίῳ ὅλου [τ]οῦ κόσ[μ]ου, "The holy Master and Master of the whole universe"; while this does not parallel a specific enochic epithet, it reflects the religious atmosphere of the Book of Watchers, with the holy god and his supremacy over the powers of the cosmos. Associating these inscriptions with the enochic literature that precedes them by three centuries or so requires a sense of *longue durée*, based on the notions that religious traditions persisted in the region through the centuries until they finally found written expression in the Roman period.

3 Palmyra

Can we suggest a similar move with regard to the "Lord of Spirits"? The Hermon region provides no help in this regard, but I suggest stretching the temporal and spatial borders even further, by examining late antique inscriptions from Palmyra. The initial drive to examine Palmyrene inscriptions arose from my recognition that much of their religious language corresponds to the enochic books, written several centuries earlier in a different dialect of Aramaic. I will quote only two prominent parallels. The first one pertains to the liturgical formula "Blessed be His name forever", encountered above in the Jewish sources. Palmyrene inscriptions regularly employ the dedication formula לבריך שמה לעלם, *lbryk šmh l'lm* "To the one whose name is blessed forever" (thus e.g., *IGLS* 17 I, 342 =*PAT* 1559 = *DB MAP* S#6423 to name just one example).[39] The second one is the Jewish epithet מרא עלמ(י)ה, *mrh 'lm(y)h*, "Lord of eternity/ies", which appears several times in the Qumranic corpus (in the enochic texts 4Q202 1 iii 14 [1 En 9:4]; outside them: Testament of Qehat 4Q542 1 i 2 ([אלה עלמיא, *'lh 'lmy'*]; Words of Michael 4Q529 passim [רבי מרי עלמא, *rby mry 'lm'*, "the Great One, eternal lord"]; Genesis Apocryphon 1Q20 XXI 2, and many others). This title, in turn, appears quite a few times in Palmyra as מר עלם, *mr 'lm*, "Lord of Eternity / world".[40] The earliest attestation (114 CE) appears

38 See Aliquot 2009, 20–28.

39 Kubiak-Schneider 2021a, 135–136.

40 See Kubiak-Schneider 2021a, 121–122; 2021b. Kubiak-Schneider also notes its appearance in Nabatean inscriptions. She considers the Palmyrene term עלם to carry both a temporal meaning (as in biblical Hebrew) and a spatial one, "the universe", as in rabbinic Hebrew. However, the Aramaic sources from Qumran attest to the temporal meaning only, as can be learned from the frequent employment of the plural form עלמין. Since a plurality of worlds does not make sense in this context, the temporal meaning is preferable.

in *PAT* 0332 = *DB MAP* T#1355 and others follow in *PAT* 0258, 1917, 1918, 0344, 0335 (= *DB MAP* T#732, 3296, 3299, 1520, 1109). Finally, the divine appellation עלאה, *ʿl'h*, "High(est) One", Hebrew עליון, corresponds to the ubiquitous Greek epithet ὕψιστος, common in Palmyra and throughout the late antique Levant.[41] There is thus significant correspondence between the Qumran Aramaic titles and the late antique Syrian ones.

Given this correspondence, it is worth examining an epithet attested once in Palmyra in the bilingual ex-voto inscription *IGLS* 17 I, 383 (= *PAT* 0065 = *DB MAP* S#307), a third century CE stone blab kept at the Museum of Beirut (Fig. 2).[42] Quite surprisingly, the slab shows the motif of two hands raised up in prayer, the same motif as in the Greek inscriptions from Rheneia (Delos).

Next to a short Greek inscription, an Aramaic inscription expresses the efficacious role played by the god in saving a certain lady Aqamat through various predicaments she encountered during her lifetime.[43] The bottom-right part of the Aramaic inscription disappeared, leading to some disagreements with regard to the reading. I quote the top three lines according to most up-to-date reading in *PAT* 0065 and *IGLS* 17 I, 383.[44]

[א[להא רבא] מ[ר]א נשמתא ולבריך[ל]
[מודיא אקמת ברת [שמה לעלמא
[להבל די קרתה בחשככא[מלא בר א (*PAT* בחשכתא)

[l]ʾ[lhʾ rbʾ] m[r]ʾ nšmtʾ wlbryk
[šmh lʿlmʾ] mwdyʾ ʾqmt brt
[mlʾ br ʾ]lhbl dy qrth bḥškkʾ

[To] the [great] g[od], l[or]d of living things,[45] even to Blessed-Be-
[His-Name–Forever], there offers thanks Aqamat, daughter of
[Male, son of E]lhabel who called to him in darkness.

The reading of the first line is difficult. Milik suggested a different reading, but an examination of better photographs and the expected context confirmed Ingholt's initial reading.[46] Ingholt has offered a philological analysis of the inscription, the only one as far as I can see. The lady Aqamat thanks her god, while invoking his benevo-

41 Kubiak–Schneider 2021a, 187–197.

42 Yon 2012, 304–305 with earlier bibliography.

43 For the iconography, see Drijvers 1976, 15; Cussini 2019. Ingholt 1936 (followed by Heyn 2019, 155) notes that this motif occurs mostly on objects dedicated to the deity "the one whose name is blessed".

44 Translation follows Cussini 2019, 61.

45 The word *nšmh*, "soul, spirit", appears in Biblical Aramaic, Daniel 5:23 in the phrase "the God that your life is in his hand". It is attested in Jewish Aramaic and in the Syriac Peshitta, but PAT 0065 is its only occurrence in Palmyrene, based on the *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon* (https://cal.huc.edu).

46 Yon 2012, 305. Milik 1972, 182 read: א[ל]א קונא א[ע]ר ושמ[י]א[ל]. Kubiak–Schneider 2021a: 231 accepts Yon's reading but doubts the reading of the first letter (n) in *nšmtʾ*. I was not able to find a better image of the inscription in order to check the reading myself.

Fig. 2: Votive slab from Palmyra with bilingual inscription. *PAT* 0065. After Drijvers 1976, plate XXX.

lent epithet as the master of souls, for practicing his sovereignty and redeeming her. As noted by Cussini, this inscription contains some unusual religious formulations which may have been derived from the spoken language.[47] The imagery "calls in the dark" and the unique divine epithet might be part of this repertoire.

Ingholt suggested a connection between מר נשמתא and the subsequent epithet בריך שמה לעלם "He whose name is blessed forever" and with the epithet מר עלם "Lord of Eternity".[48] Precisely those epithets were mentioned above as part of the stock epithets of Aramaic liturgy which find parallels in Jewish texts. But the usage of "Lord of Spirits" in Palmyra also resembles its use in the tombstone inscriptions from Rheneia. Yet while that invocation is based on explicit biblical proof texts (Num 16:22, 27:16), the Palmyrene epithet was apparently not committed to that precedent but rather reflects an independent use of the epithet "Lord of (human) souls". Unfortunately, this epithet is not attested elsewhere in Palmyra and thus its religious usage cannot yet be fully illuminated. The use of the same iconography is suggestive, but given the wide circulation of the raised hands motif it cannot lead us to specific conclusions about the Palmyra slab.

The Palmyrene title closely corresponds to the epithet "Lord of Spirits" from the Book of Parables of Enoch. Its dedication to "the one whose name is blessed forever" also corresponds to the Jewish liturgical formula quoted above, which is also common

47 Cussini 2019, 62.

48 Ingholt 1936, 100–102.

in BP. While there is no clear proof for assuming contact between them, the fact that formulae were shared between Qumran Aramaic and the Palmyrene religious vocabulary posits this connection as possible if not probable.

While the inscriptions from Delos and Palmyra invoke the Lord of Spirits for the sake of an individual speaker and call or thank for individual providence, the context in BP departs from individual concerns to general liturgical formulae and even cosmological traits of the god. The inscriptional evidence uses "spirits" in the sense of (b) human souls and possibly (c) divine beings. The spirits in the BP epithet seem to carry the additional cosmological sense of (a) winds.

4 Conclusion

The present article sought to shed more light on a divine title that is particular to the Book of Parables (1 Enoch 37–71). Past discussions of the epithet were limited to its textual, one may say even scriptural, context, despite the fact that 1 Enoch is not Scripture for the great majority of scholars who studied it. Yet the study of such an epithet calls for a wider toolbox in order to exhaust what can be said about its translation, transmission and their dynamics. For this purpose, I examined the representations of this epithet in the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint (Numbers, 2 Maccabees) as well as in two inscriptions: a tombstone from Delos (Rheneia) and a votive object from Palmyra, the only non-Jewish item in the repertoire.

The variety of uses of this epithet derives from the multivalence of the Semitic (Hebrew and Aramaic) word *rwḥ* and the Greek πνέυμα. The use of this epithet arose in order to denote God's providence over humans who seek his help, usually in a petitionary context. Thus, twice in the Book of Numbers, Moses invokes the deity under this capacity. A prayer in the Book of Jubilees augments the epithet with a new aspect: God's authority over the demons, thus introducing the connotation of this epithet as underscoring the multifacetedness of the divine realm. A narrative in the Book of 2 Maccabees similarly invokes the divine power over other deities, this time in a military context. The inscriptions from Delos stress God's capacity as an avenger, together with the angels, and a much later inscription from Palmyra uses the same epithet to thank a god for his capacity as protector of human beings. The entire array draws the image of a god who provides protection to human beings and masters the divine assembly, and hence can be petitioned in various sorts of prayers.

The Book of Parables builds upon the previous repertoire while significantly augmenting it as it becomes its standard divine title. The epithet continues to underscore the multifactedness of the divine, as typical in the apocalyptic milieu, where the sovereignty of the One is underscored by the multiplicity of the divine assembly.[49] This

49 Ben-Dov 2016.

meaning is also based on the Hebrew title יהוה צבאות, *Yhwh ṣb'wt*. However, the context of individual supplication is transformed into a more wide-ranging context of praise and hymnody, connecting the Lord of Spirits with the *trishagion* and other praise formulae. At the same time, BP expands the meaning of the "spirits". While acknowledging the divine sovereignty over human souls, the epithet is additionally understood to refer to divine spirits and cosmological winds, which are prominent in this book.

The association of the Jewish sources with a much later non-Jewish text from Palmyra reflects my continued efforts to read Early Jewish apocalypticism as part of the wider Levant in the Hellenistic-Roman period.[50] Based on earlier demonstrations of the continuity between enochic traditions and the religious life of the Hermon region, I added some parallels that specifically pertain to the Palmyrene inscriptions.

Jewish apocalyptic texts like the Book of Parables, other sections of 1 Enoch and Qumran writings, are often taken as separatist and insular, lying untouched by the surrounding environment. These texts, moreover, employ harsh antagonist rhetoric against "the gentiles". However, even such polemical texts are, by definition, part of their culture and environment. As I explained elsewhere, Jewish apocalyptic and sectarian writings explicitly connect themselves with the North-Galilean – Syrian environment despite their vehement rhetoric, hence such interaction is only expectable. The present study demonstrates the power of the Greco-Roman Levant as a generative environment for cultural and religious concepts. Jewish authors in Hebrew and Aramaic were not merely passive recipients or "influenced" by their environment, but rather active agents in the generation and transformation of religious imagery.

Postscript

At the very last moment before this article went to print, I came across the recent study of the "Lord of Spirits" by Fiodar Litvinau.[51] In this highly learned article, Litvinau surveys a vast array of sources, from ancient Mesopotamian cuneiform texts to the medieval Christian liturgical tradition, many of them not surveyed here. The Syrian sources mentioned here are not surveyed by Litvinau, nor does he relate to the iconographic context and the performance of this epithet in the various contexts.

The article came too late for me to indulge with it in detail. I will summarize it shortly inasmuch as it pertains to the present argument. His main line of argument is that the spirits in the BP epithet are not angelic but rather only human. For this purpose, he surveys the main sources studied here (mainly LXX Numbers, the Delos tomb inscriptions, 1 En 60) together with many additional sources, and claims that they cannot relate to "winds" or to "heavenly spirits", *i.e.* angels, but rather only to humans. In

50 See Ben-Dov 2016; Ben–Dov 2018–2019; Ben-Dov 2022.

51 Litvinau 2022.

contrast, I allow a wider and more variegated meaning for the spirits in this epithet, building on the ambiguity of the term in both Semitic languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Geʿez) and Greek. Litvinau's article is substantial and merits further discussion, and I acknowledge his superb philological skill. I hope to address some of his specific points in the future, yet on first glance I still retain my position that the spirits in this epithet may convey various meanings.

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