

Magical Practices in Qumran Texts and Ritual Efficacy

Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran texts) include fruitful evidence for the study of magic and magical thinking in the Second Temple period. In this regard, relevant are those practices in which ritual efficacy is particularly important or explicit, such as purification from impurity, divinely set prayer times, exorcism of evil spirits, apotropaic practices for protection from evil spirits, curses and blessings, wearing of amulets, and casting of lots. In this paper, I will discuss some examples of Qumranic magical practices, and pay special attention to ritual efficacy. How did the movement with deterministic beliefs perceive, for example, blessings and curses? How does cognitive science of religion help us to understand ritual efficacy? Why is it important to ask questions on efficacy?