



BRILL

ARAMAIC STUDIES 20 (2022) 154–195

Aramaic  
Studies  
brill.com/arst

# ‘Binding of a Husband’

## *A Syriac Erotic Binding Spell*

*Anna Cherkashina* | ORCID: 0000-0003-4412-4788

Beth Mardutho, The Syriac Institute, Piscataway, NJ, USA  
*tanandajubeo@gmail.com*

*Nikita Kuzin* | ORCID: 0000-0002-1989-3086

Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany  
*nickoskuzin@gmail.com*

### Abstract

This article examines a Syriac erotic binding spell, ‘Binding of a Husband’. We provide a text-critical edition of this spell based on three manuscripts and reconsider previous editions and translations. We also try to establish the aim of the text and its place in the Syriac magical tradition. For this purpose, the evidence from modern Syriac magic manuscripts as well as from other pieces of Syriac literature is addressed. In addition, we discuss possible parallels for ‘Binding of a Husband’ beyond Syriac literature.

### Keywords

Syriac magic – Classical Syriac – binding spells – erotic spells – love charms – modern Syriac manuscripts

### Introduction

This article considers a unique Syriac erotic binding spell with the title ‘Binding of an Adulterous Husband from Another Woman’ (or ‘Binding of a Husband’), which is known in three manuscripts. As the main manuscript for our study, we take the codex from the British Library (BL Or. 5281 = **BLb**).<sup>1</sup> A variant of this

---

<sup>1</sup> For descriptions of all the collated manuscripts and the relevant images, see Appendix 2.

spell can be found in the Houghton Library at Harvard University, MS Syriac 160 (H). The third manuscript is BL Or. 6673 (BLa), which was partly published by Gollancz, but only the Syriac text without a translation.<sup>2</sup> Using Gollancz's edition, Krämer edited, translated, and discussed the spell in his dissertation on the textology of Syriac charms.<sup>3</sup> We provide his translation of that text in footnote 36.

In the first section, we present the yet unpublished text of this charm according to BLb, providing a synopsis of the three versions. The second section contains our observations on the structure and composition of the spell, together with a line-by-line commentary. In the third section, we address the genre of Syriac binding spells to which the spell belongs. We also try to establish its aim and context and, for this purpose, mention three other spells: two more binding spells presumably intended to prevent a wife from having intimate relationships with other men and a spell named 'Protection for Grooms', which we consider to be the opposite of 'Binding of a Husband' (a counter-spell). Since 'Binding of a Husband' occupies a highly marginal position within the Syriac magical tradition, we also address external and often much more ancient sources, such as Greek and Coptic spells, Aramaic magic texts from Late Antiquity, as well as evidence from the Cairo Geniza, in order to establish the broader context of our spell.

Finally, in two appendices we provide another edition of 'Binding of a Husband' according to H, an edition of 'Protection for Grooms', and descriptions of the manuscripts.

## 1 'Binding of a Husband': Edition

### 1.1 *Text and Translation*

Below we edit the text according to our main manuscript, BLb. The discrepancies between the three manuscripts are given in the footnotes.<sup>4</sup> The synoptical comparison of the three versions is provided in the following section, and the

2 H. Gollancz, *The Book of Protection: Being a Collection of Charms, Now Edited for the First Time from Syriac mss* (London: Henry Frowde, Oxford University Press, 1912) pp. 99–100 (Appendix, § 61).

3 K. Krämer, *Textstudien zu ostsyrischen Beschwörungsgebeten, Diss. Phil.* (Berlin, 1924) pp. 144–146, 33–35 (§ 68).

4 In cases when BLa and H have a similar reading with minor variations we cite the text according to one of the manuscripts. The earlier readings provided for BLa by Gollancz are given in the footnotes to the Synopsis below.

full edition of the charm according to yet another unpublished manuscript (H) can be found in Appendix 1.

Blb f. 4 <sup>r</sup>	7	* <sup>6</sup> ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ	Binding of an adulterous husband from another woman.
	8	ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ	I bind so-and-so, son of so-and-so, from so-and-so, daughter of so-and-so.
	9	ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ	By the power of God and by the commandment of our Lord Jesus
	10	ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ	Christ, and by the commandment of those angels who
	11	ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ	stand before the throne of the Creator,
	12	ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ	so-and-so, son of so-and-so, shall be bound. I bind in him the three hundred
	13	ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ	sixty-six body parts that are in
	14	ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ	so-and-so, son of so-and-so. I bind by them and by

5 Missing from H.

6 BLa and H read: ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ 'Binding of a Husband from Another Woman'. The header is almost indiscernible in BLA because the red ink has faded. For this reason, in Gollancz's and Krämer's editions the spell does not have it. The letters of the header were written again in pencil probably when the manuscript came into the possession of the British Museum.

7 This is an irregular vocalization for an active participle, common for this manuscript, cf. *batnā* and *yaldā* (f. 4<sup>v</sup>, l. 9).

8 Both in H and BLA the object is introduced with /-, but BLA reads: ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ 'the bearer of these writs'.

9 This is an irregular form of Syriac *plānītā*, common for this manuscript, cf. *pel(l)ān* in f. 4<sup>r</sup>, l. 14. These forms were most probably influenced by the Neo-Aramaic vernacular of the scribe, cf. <sup>+</sup>*pəllan*, <sup>+</sup>*fəllan* in the Neo-Aramaic dialect of the Assyrian Christians of Urmi, see G. Khan, *The Neo-Aramaic Dialect of the Assyrian Christians of Urmi*, vol. III. *Lexical Studies and Dictionary* (Leiden: Brill, 2016) p. 260; cf. also *fəllan*, *pəllan* in the Neo-Aramaic dialect of Barwar, see G. Khan, *The Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Barwar*, vol. II. *Lexicon* (Leiden: Brill, 2008) p. 1274.

10 Missing from BLA and H.

11 BLA and H read: ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ.

12 BLA and H read: ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ.

13 Missing from BLA and H.

14 BLA reads: ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ 'before the Lord God'; H reads: ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ 'before the Creator'.

15 In H the subject is introduced with /-: ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ. BLA reads: ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ.

16 Missing from BLA and H.

17 BLA and H read: ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ 'in the body of so-and-so, son of so-and-so, from so-and-so, daughter of so-and-so'.

18 BLA and H read: ܡܘܡܩܬܐ ܡܘܡܩܬܐ lit. 'by all these'.

- 15     $\text{ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$  <sup>20</sup>  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$  those angels who drive [away] the clouds so  
that they do not
- 16     $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$  <sup>21</sup>  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$  bring down rain upon the earth. I bind  
him
- 1     $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$  <sup>23</sup>  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$  so that he shall not have desire. Bound is his    f. 4<sup>v</sup>  
*erection.*<sup>25</sup>
- 2     $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$  <sup>26</sup>  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$  Bound by me is his intercourse. I bind the  
veins of his neck
- 3     $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$  <sup>27</sup>  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$  and of his knees. Bound by me is the lock<sup>2</sup> of  
his loins.
- 4     $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$  <sup>30</sup>  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$  Bound by me are the veins of his thighs. I  
bind<sup>?</sup>
- 5     $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$  <sup>32</sup>  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$  from before him and from behind him. He is  
bound by me
- 6     $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$   $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$  by the seal of Solomon. He is bound by me  
by the prophecy
- 7     $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$  <sup>33</sup>  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$  of Ezekiel. Bound by me is so-and-so, son of  
so-and-so, from the womb
- 8     $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$  <sup>34</sup>  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$  of so-and-so, daughter of so-and-so. I bind  
him
- 9     $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$   $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ}$  in the woman who conceives, and may she  
not conceive and may she not bear.

19    BLA and H read:  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$ , lit. 'by these'.

20    Missing from BLA and H.

21    The negation is missing from the other two mss. BLA reads:  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$ . H reads:  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$ . See discussion in 1.2.

22    BLA and H add:  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$  'and hail'.

23    H reads:  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$  'his desire'. BLA reads:  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$ , which is probably a scribal mistake for  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$ .

24    H adds:  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$  '(bound) by me'.

25    Or 'penis'. See discussion in 2.2.

26    In BLA  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$  comes before  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$ .

27    In H  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$  is missing, BLA reads:  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$  'I bind'.

28    BLA and H read:  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$ . On the meaning of the term see section 2.2.

29    The scribe probably started to write  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$  'that is in his loins', but then changed his mind and left  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$  unfinished.

30    Instead of expected  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$ .

31    Probably mistaken for  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$ . BLA and H add:  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$  'him'.

32    BLA and H read:  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$  without  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$ .

33    BLA reads:  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$  'I bind him by the prophecy of Ezekiel'.

34    BLA and H read:  $\text{ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܡܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ}$  'from so-and-so daughter of so-and-so'.

10 **ܝܗܘܢܗܘܘܢ ܘܕܩܠܝܐ ܕܝܐܬܝ ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ** He shall be bound from the womb of so-  
and-so, daughter of so-and-so,  
11 **ܕܡܝܘܬܝܢ ܫܠܫܐ ܡܝܘܬܝܢ** yea, amen.

### 1.2 *Synopsis of the Three Versions*

The three versions are presented here in parallel columns. The numbering of segments differs from that in the text above, with corresponding blocks grouped together.

	BLb BL Or. 5281, f. 4	H H 160, f. 42	BLa <sup>36</sup> BL Or. 6673, ff. 40 <sup>v</sup> -41 <sup>v</sup>
1	<b>ܕܗܘܘܢܐ ܕܝܠܗܘܢܐ ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ</b> <b>ܗܘܘܘܘܢܐ</b> * ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ	<b>ܕܗܘܘܢܐ ܕܝܠܗܘܢܐ ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ</b>	<b>ܕܗܘܘܢܐ [ܕܝܠܗܘܢܐ] ܕܝܠܗܘܢܐ</b> <b>ܗܘܘܘܘܢܐ</b> <sup>37</sup>
2	<b>ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ</b> * ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ	<b>ܕܗܘܘܢܐ ܕܝܠܗܘܢܐ ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ</b>	<b>ܕܗܘܘܢܐ ܕܝܠܗܘܢܐ ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ</b>
3	<b>ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ</b> ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ	<b>ܕܗܘܘܢܐ ܕܝܠܗܘܢܐ ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ</b>	<b>ܕܗܘܘܢܐ ܕܝܠܗܘܢܐ ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ</b> <sup>38</sup>
4	<b>ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ</b> ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ	<b>ܕܗܘܘܢܐ ܕܝܠܗܘܢܐ ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ</b>	<b>ܕܗܘܘܢܐ ܕܝܠܗܘܢܐ ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ</b>
5	<b>ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ</b>	<b>ܕܗܘܘܢܐ ܕܝܠܗܘܢܐ ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ</b>	<b>ܕܗܘܘܢܐ ܕܝܠܗܘܢܐ ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ</b>

35 The text from l. 8 until here is missing from BLa and H. Instead, they read: **ܕܝܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ** 'he is bound (by me) by Elijah the prophet.'  
36 Krämer's translation: 'Ich binde den Träger des Amuletts durch Gotteskraft und den Herrenbefehl an jene Engel, die vor Gott, dem Herrn stehen. Ich binde N.N., den Sohn des N.N. Ich binde die 366 Glieder, die am Leibe des N.N., des Sohnes des N.N., sind, weg von der N.N., der Tochter der N.N. Ich binde [ihn] durch alle diese Engel, die die Wolken herbeiführen, so dass Regen und Hagel auf die Erde herabkommen. Ich binde ihn: nicht soll er Sperma haben, gebunden soll sein Coitus sein, das äusserste Ende seines *lebbā* soll gebunden sein. Ich binde die Sehnen seines Nackens und seines Knies. Ich binde die Abschälung seiner Lende. Gebunden sollen von mir die Sehnen seines Schenkels sein. Ich binde ihn vorne und hinten. Er soll von mir durch des Siegel Salomons gebunden sein. Ich binde ihn bei dem Verdienste Hazqiels. Gebunden soll von mir N.N., der Sohn des N.N. sein weg von der N.N., der Tochter der N.N. Gebunden soll er von mir sein bei dem Profeten Elias. Amen.' (Krämer, *Textstudien zu ostsyrischen Beschwörungsgebeten*, pp. 144-145).  
37 The header is missing from Gollancz's edition.  
38 Gollancz reads: "**ܕܝܘܢܐ** [or **ܕܝܘܢܐ**]"<sup>37</sup>. The scribe has omitted **ܕ** and then corrected the writing to **ܕܝܘܢܐ**.

(cont.)

	BLb BL Or. 5281, f. 4	H H 160, f. 42	BLa BL Or. 6673, ff. 40 <sup>v</sup> -41 <sup>v</sup>
6	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן  אֶת הָאָדָם וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>
7	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>
8	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>
9	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>
10	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>
11	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>
12	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ  וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם כִּי יִשְׁמַע  אֶת קוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה עִנְיָנוּן אֶת הָאָדָם</p>

The three versions of the text available to us undoubtedly belong to the same spell-type, yet there are significant differences between them. As can be deduced from the critical apparatus and the synopsis, H and BLa are closer to each other, sharing a number of specific readings and omissions. BLb, while having to a large extent the same content as the other two, slightly expands it. It cannot be disputed that the three variants go back to a common origin, and it seems to us that the part in which the main body parts of the man are bound

39 Probably mistaken for ד.  
40 Impf. Af. 3 f. pl.  
41 Gollancz reads: דַּמְתָּה.  
42 Probably mistaken for וְהָיָה.  
43 Gollancz reads: דַּמְתָּה.



which is ‘to drive, lead, rule, govern’. We interpret this passage as an invocation to the angels, who are in charge of rain (and hail). Appealing to these angels BLa and H just denote their function. In our spell this invocation occurs because rain is associated with human fertility (see further 3.2.).<sup>45</sup> The spell aims at constraining the fertility of the man and ‘the other woman’. If applied to BLb the common meaning of *dbr* would make the whole sentence sound strange: do the angels *drive* (or *govern*) clouds *so that* the clouds *do not bring down rain* upon the earth? The meaning ‘drive away’ or ‘keep away’, which appears more suitable for BLb, is probably attested for *dbr* in Exod. 14.21:

ܡܢܘܡܪ ܡܫܘܥܝܢ ܠܘܩܝܢܝܢ ܥܠ ܡܝܢ ܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܝܠܝܢ ܕܥܝܠܝܢ ܕܥܝܠܝܢ ܕܥܝܠܝܢ  
ܕܥܝܠܝܢ ܕܥܝܠܝܢ ܕܥܝܠܝܢ ܕܥܝܠܝܢ ܕܥܝܠܝܢ ܕܥܝܠܝܢ ܕܥܝܠܝܢ ܕܥܝܠܝܢ ܕܥܝܠܝܢ ܕܥܝܠܝܢ.

And Moses raised his hand above the sea. And the Lord *was driving* [away?] the sea with a strong hot wind for the whole night, and He made the sea into dry land, and the waters were split.

This interpretation helps to avoid emendation, but we consider the reading of BLb to be a result of later editing. This reading intends to harmonize the aim of the spell with this invocation.

Finally, as already mentioned, a unique ending is present in BLb. This corresponds with the general character of BLb, being more detailed and explicit, as illustrated in the previous paragraphs. In the ending, the focus is shifted from the man towards the other woman to prevent an undesirable consequence of their affair—pregnancy and childbirth.

## 2      General Commentary

### 2.1     Structure and Composition

Depending on the manuscript, the whole text of the charm can be divided into 15 (BLa), 15 (H), or 16 (BLb) binding formulas: performative expressions based on the Syriac verb *ʿesar* ‘to bind’. Each binding formula is based on one of four expressions: either *ʿasīr* (*lī*) ‘bound (by me) is’, *ʿāsarnā l-* ‘I bind’, *nehwē ʿasīr* ‘let him be bound’, or *netʿesar* ‘let him be bound’. The table below shows the figures for each manuscript.

---

<sup>45</sup> As rightfully pointed out by the two anonymous reviewers.



Expression	BLa	H	BLb
<i>ʾasīr (lī)</i>	6	7	7
<i>ʾāsarnā l-</i>	9	7	7
<i>nehwē ʾasīr</i>	–	1	1
<i>netʿesar</i>	–	–	1

As one can see, there is a certain tendency to organize the text symmetrically in using two verbal forms *ʾasīr (lī)* and *ʾāsarnā l-*. This tendency is realized perfectly in **H** (7+7+1) and **BLb** (7+7+1+1), where the symmetry is preserved even though the two manuscripts use different forms in verses 10 and 12. While **BLa** mainly matches the other two manuscripts in this respect, the symmetry dissolves when *ʾāsarnā l-* is used instead of *ʾasīr (lī)* in verses 5 and 9.

The grammatical structure of the binding expressions can be described as follows. Three kinds of arguments can be attached to the verbal form. The first type is either *the object of the action of binding* (direct object or subject of *ʿesar*, depending on which verbal form is used, active or passive), which always introduces the man (the spell target) or something that belongs to him (actions, feelings, or body parts). The second type introduces *the mediators of power*, i.e., God, angels, saints, prophets, and the seal of king Solomon. These are introduced with *b-* ‘with, by’. The same preposition is used twice in **BLb** with the meaning ‘in’: ‘I bind in him three hundred and sixty-six body parts’ (f. 4<sup>r</sup>, l. 12) and ‘I bind him in the woman’ (f. 4<sup>v</sup>, l. 9).<sup>46</sup> Finally, the third type of argument is linked to the first one and follows it: this is *plānītā* ‘so and so’, which is introduced by *men* ‘from’. Depending on the manuscript, it is used only twice or thrice in our text, at the beginning and at the end, to mention a particular woman, the contact with whom must be prevented. In **BLb** it occurs twice at the end, where the word *marbʿā* ‘womb’ stands after *men* and before *plānītā*. As shown, it is always the husband and his body parts, actions, and feelings that are the object of binding, not the woman with whom he is suspected to be in an intimate relationship.

Concerning the mediators of power, in our charm we find no direct invocations asking these powerful figures and objects for assistance. Almost all binding expressions<sup>47</sup> are based either on the first-person verbal form (*ʾāsarnā l-*) or

46 Here, we propose a literal reading of the preposition. The man is understood to be in/inside the woman during intercourse, which may lead to conception.

47 All but one in **H**, all but two in **BLb**.

include the first-person pronoun (*ʿasīr lī*). Applying Faraone’s classification,<sup>48</sup> in these cases we are dealing with *direct binding formulae*, while in one case in **H** and in two cases in **BLb** a *wish-formula* is used, *nehwē ʿasīr* and/or *netʿesar* ‘let him be bound’. Notably, the first wish-formula (verse 5) has no complements, other than the name of the spell target, and appears somewhat out of place with regards to the composition (see below). The second consideration applies to the second wish-formula (verse 12), which is found only in **BLb**.

In all three manuscripts, the text of the spell has a clear and well-structured composition. It can be divided into three blocks:

- o. The heading
1. The first block (verses 1–7), which is comprised of
  - the name of the man and of the woman with whom he is suspected to be in an intimate relationship
  - a list of mediatory powers (God, his commandment, and his angels)
  - a reference to 366 body parts of the man which are intended to be bound
2. The second block (verses 8–9) consists of the binding formulae that include
  - actions (copulation), feelings (desire), and physiological reactions (probably, erection) of the man
  - his body parts (veins, neck, thighs) which are supposedly relevant for intercourse (see 2.2. below)
3. The third block (verses 10–12) contains
  - a list of mediatory powers (Solomon’s ring, Ezekiel’s prophecy, and the prophet Elijah)
  - the names of the man and the woman
  - additional formulae directed against ‘the other woman’ and her ability to bear a child (in **BLb**)

Thus, the first and the last blocks are similar, as both introduce the spell target and the mediators of power, which ensure the efficacy of the charm. The second block, in contrast, does not mention the names of the spell target and ‘the other woman’, but lists the precise feelings, actions, and body parts, which are relevant for their intimate relationship.

---

48 C.A. Faraone, ‘The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells’, in C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds.), *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) p. 5.



f. 4<sup>r</sup>, ll. 12–13: *tlāṭmā we-štin we-štā haddāmē* ‘three hundred sixty-six body parts’ (i.e., ‘his entire body’)

According to Naveh and Shaked,<sup>51</sup> the common number of the limbs of the human body in Jewish literature of the talmudic period is ‘248, but there are other figures.’<sup>52</sup> As Krämer notes, the number 366 has no parallels in the texts he is acquainted with, but 365 (not 366) is well attested in Greek literature used as a round number of types within a category, meaning ‘all (types of)’.<sup>53</sup> Closer to our context, the expression can be found in a lead tablet from Egypt dated to the fourth century CE. This is a binding spell text against an athlete which binds ‘the 365 limbs and sinews of the body.’<sup>54</sup> The same number of body parts (366) occurs in the Syriac amulets on leather dated by some scholars to the ninth–tenth century, published by Gignoux, and in a Syriac magic bowl published by Ford and Abudraham<sup>55</sup> He compares this number with the number of Mandaic Uthras (celestial beings).<sup>56</sup> More parallels to this expression can be found in 3.3.

f. 4<sup>v</sup>, l. 1: *regtā* ‘desire’

BLa reads *rʿth*, which Krämer understands as ‘foam’. BLb clearly reads *rgt*. In our opinion, *rgt* is a better reading as *rʿth* is difficult to make sense of: Krämer interprets *rʿth* as ‘Schaum’, but the proper Syriac word for ‘foam’ is ܪܘܡܐ.<sup>57</sup> Letters ܪ and ܐ can be easily confused while copying.

51 Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, p. 36.

52 Cf. 252 limbs in D. Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls: Incantation Texts in Jewish Aramaic from Late Antiquity* (London: Kegan Paul, 2003) p. 52.

53 Krämer, *Textstudien zu ostsyrischen Beschwörungsgebeten*, p. 33.

54 J. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) pp. 59–60. See also note 57 (p. 60) which may point to the Egyptian origin of this *topos*.

55 Syr. 1:27–28, P. Gignoux, *Incantations magiques syriaques* (Collection de la Revue des Études Juives dirigée par Gérard Nahon et Charles Touati, Leuven: Peeters, 1987) p. 13; Bowl T27996 (Manichean script), J.N. Ford and O. Abudraham, ‘Syriac and Mandaic Incantation Bowls’, in D. Regev and H. Hizmi (eds.), *Finds Gone Astray: ADCA Confiscated Items* (Jerusalem: The Antiquities Department of the Civil Administration, 2018) pp. 75–111 (96–99). The same spell is known in Jewish Babylonian and Mandaic. 366 blood vessels are also mentioned in *The Treatise on the Composition of Man*, attributed to Aḥūdemmeḥ Anṭīpatrōs, which was originally edited and translated by Chabot. See J.-B. Chabot, ‘Notice sur deux manuscrits contenant les oeuvres du moine Isaac de Rabban Isho et du métropolitain Ahoudemmeḥ’, *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale et autres Bibliothèques* 43 (1965), pp. 53–70. Cf. also a Greek parallel to this work, recently discussed in T. Benfy, ‘A Greek Source for the Treatise on the Composition of Man Attributed to Aḥūdemmeḥ Anṭīpatrōs?’, *Hugoye* 22.1 (2019), pp. 3–37 (17–18).

56 Gignoux, *Incantations magiques syriaques*, p. 22.

57 M. Sokoloff, *Syriac lexicon: A translation from the Latin, correction, expansion, and update*

f. 4<sup>v</sup>, l. 1.: *spr lebbēh* ‘his erection?’

*lebbā* for this context (Gollancz’s edition) is translated as ‘penis’ in Sokoloff’s *Syriac Lexicon*.<sup>58</sup> The source of this interpretation is unknown to us. We have not been able to locate any other occurrence of *lebbā* with the meaning ‘penis’, neither in Classical Syriac nor in other Middle Aramaic varieties (judging by the available lexicographic material). Turning to Akkadian, we find šĀ = *lib-bum* ‘heart’ as a euphemism for ‘penis’ in Babylonian magic.<sup>59</sup> Further, the texts published by Biggs are designated by the Sumerian term ŠĀ.ZI.GA, Akk. *nīš libbi*, lit. ‘rising of the heart’, i.e., penis. As argued by Biggs, this term refers to male erection,<sup>60</sup> not desire or sexual attraction in general. In our manuscript, *spr lebbēh* occurs between *regtā* ‘desire’ and *zuwwāgā* ‘intercourse’, which may also indicate that it is an action or state noun, such as ‘erection’, rather than a body part, and the three nouns then are to be understood as components, or steps, of making love: passion or desire, erection?, and intercourse. This interpretation is attractive in view of the Akkadian *nīš libbi* expression, but *spr*, even if understood as the construct form of the infinitive for the root √*spr*, cannot be easily equated to ‘rising’. Sokoloff-Brockelmann’s dictionary has two verbal roots: √*spr* 1 is attested only in Pa’el with the meanings ‘to cut; to shave’,<sup>61</sup> and √*spr* 2 ‘to tell, to relate’<sup>62</sup> is the denominative of *seprā* ‘writing’. Due to the lack of vocalization and diacritic points, *spr* can be understood in two ways: it is the status constructus form of *seprā* ‘writing; book’<sup>63</sup> or of *sparā* ‘bank, shore’.<sup>64</sup> For the second word additional meanings ‘border; edge’ are listed in the *Compendious*

---

of C. Brockelmann’s *Lexicon Syriacum* (Winona Lake—Piscataway: Eisenbrauns—Gorgias Press, 2009) p. 1452. ܠܒܒܐ ‘spumatio’ is listed in R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879–1901) vol. 2, p. 3958, but judging from the examples, the word is attested only in Bar Bahlul’s lexicon—R. Duval, *Lexicon Syriacum auctore Hassano bar Bahlule* (Paris: Reipublicae Typographaeo, 1888–1901) vol. 2, p. 1911—as a variant form of ܠܒܒܐܘܬܐ. The existence of a frequent variant ܠܒܒܐܘܬܐ is, however, rather doubtful, as the verbal root √*r’t* is attested in Af’el in Syriac, and ܠܒܒܐܘܬܐ is not attested in the rest of the textual corpus (i.e., not in lexicons).

58 Sokoloff, *Syriac Lexicon*, p. 666.

59 Text No. 3:22 *man-nu it-bu-uk ana šā-ka* [A.MEŠ *ka*]-*šu-ti* ‘who has poured co[ld water] on your “heart”’ and Text No. 31:61 [*t*]-*bu>-ut šā-ka ul i-na-ħa* ‘your penis will stay erect’. R. Biggs, *ŠĀ.ZI.GA Ancient Mesopotamian Potency Incantations* (Texts from Cuneiforms Sources, New York: J.J. Augustin Publisher, 1967) pp. 19, 48.

60 Biggs, *ŠĀ.ZI.GA*, pp. 2–3. For the most recent discussion see G. Zisa, *The Loss of Male Sexual Desire in Ancient Mesopotamia. Nīš Libbi Therapies* (Medical Traditions, Berlin—Boston: De Gruyter, 2021) pp. 37–52.

61 Sokoloff, *Syriac Lexicon*, p. 1034.

62 Sokoloff, *Syriac Lexicon*, p. 1035.

63 Sokoloff, *Syriac Lexicon*, p. 1035.

64 Sokoloff, *Syriac Lexicon*, p. 1035.

*Syriac Dictionary*.<sup>65</sup> Both meanings take us towards a different interpretation, also unfortunately having no parallels: ‘scroll of his heart (or penis)’ or ‘edge of his heart/penis’.<sup>66</sup>

Another possibility is to understand *lebbā* as ‘belly, abdomen’, and *spr lebbā*, thus, as the outer part of the belly (meaning ‘edge, border’ for *spr*, as above). This is the interpretation proposed in Krämer’s dissertation: ‘zu bedenken ist, dass ܠܒܒܐ nicht bloss Herz, sondern die ganze Bauchgegend bezeichnet; und hier ist der Penis gemeint, indem euphemistisch für den eigentlichen Körperteil, den man nicht nennen will, ein benachbarter genannt wird’.<sup>67</sup>

f. 4<sup>v</sup>, ll. 2–3, 4: *warīdē* ‘veins’<sup>68</sup> (*da-qdālēh* ‘of his neck’, *d-burkāw<sup>hy</sup>* ‘of his knees’, *d-‘aṭmātēh* ‘of his thighs’).

The term means ‘vein, artery’ or ‘nerve, stem, trunk’.<sup>69</sup> The closest match for *warīdē da-qdālēh* is an example from *Sindbad, oder die sieben weisen Meister* cited in *Syriac Lexicon*.<sup>70</sup> The word also occurs once in Gollancz’s volume, Codex A 39:14–15 ܡܘܫܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ‘May God break your teeth, and cut the veins of your head, and the nerves of your teeth ...’.<sup>71</sup>

f. 4<sup>v</sup>, l. 2: *qdālēh* ‘his neck’.

In the *Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, meanings such as ‘orifice’, ‘vent of the bladder’, and ‘stomach’ are given.<sup>72</sup> Again, we are faced with the same problem: either *qdālā* is to be understood literally, as ‘neck’ or some other non-sexual

65 J. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903) p. 387.

66 Possible uses of the root √spr or its derivatives in sexual or anatomic contexts are outside of Aramaic, and are verbs rather than nouns. Cf. the euphemistic use of the verb *sipper* ‘to converse with > to have intercourse’ in Rabbinic Hebrew (S.M. Paul, ‘Euphemistically “Speaking” and a Covetous Eye’, *HAR* 14 [1994], pp. 193–204), and an Akkadian expression *šipram epēšu* ‘to obtain sexual pleasure’, see *CAD* E 221.

67 Krämer, *Textstudien zu ostsyrischen Beschwörungsgebeten*, p. 34. It is worth noting, however, that the meaning ‘belly’ for *lebbā* seems to be quite marginally present in Syriac, but perhaps more widespread in medical texts, see Sokoloff, *Syriac Lexicon*, p. 666, right column. Potentially interesting in this regard is the meaning ‘stomach’, well attested in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, see M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2002) p. 624.

68 It is worth noting that Krämer understands *warīdē* as ‘sinews’ (‘Sehnen’), not as ‘veins’; see Krämer, *Textstudien zu ostsyrischen Beschwörungsgebeten*, pp. 144–145.

69 Sokoloff, *Syriac Lexicon*, p. 360.

70 Sokoloff, *Syriac Lexicon*, p. 360.

71 Gollancz, *Book of Protection*, p. 24.

72 Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, p. 490.

body part, or as a euphemism. In the latter case, however, it is unclear which ‘forbidden’ body part can be hinted at by the word *qdālā*. Unlike *lebbā* ‘heart’ or *burkā* ‘knee’, the word for ‘neck’ is not known to be a euphemism for genitals in Semitic languages.

f. 4<sup>v</sup>, l. 3: *burkāw<sup>hy</sup>* ‘his knees’.

For ‘knees’ as a euphemism for genitals (=loins?) see Akk. *birku*<sup>73</sup> and BH *bir kayim* in Ezek. 7.17 and 21.12.<sup>74</sup> The word does not necessarily have to be understood as a euphemism in our text, but this option is certainly available and has reliable parallels.

f. 4<sup>v</sup>, l. 4: *qwpl-ēh d-ḥaṣṣēh* ‘lock of his loins’.

We have two variants for this word—*qwpl-ēh* in BLb, and *qwlp’* in BLa and H. Let us begin with the first reading. There are two entries for *quplā* in the *Syriac Lexicon*: (1) bolt, bar, lock; (2) band, chain.<sup>75</sup> The two entries should perhaps be merged together. The translation for this expression would be ‘the lock of his loins’ or ‘the chain of his loins’. In the available electronic resources of Classical Syriac, the word occurs only in the literal meaning ‘lock, chain, band’, e.g., in Peshitta 1 Chron. 20.3. A combination of the word *quplā* with the word *ḥaṣṣā* is not attested. Either this variant reading is a mistake, and the correct reading is the one found in the other two manuscripts, i.e., *qwlp’* (see below), or the ‘the lock of his loins’ is to be preferred. This reading looks attractive, because the aim of the spell is to block the man’s body parts. However, without an independent attestation of such an expression in the Syriac corpus it is difficult to decide for one version or the other.

For the alternative reading *qwlp’*, several interpretations are possible. Two slightly different versions were put forward by Krämer.<sup>76</sup> The first idea connects it with the Syriac root  $\sqrt{qlp}$  Pe’al ‘to peel; to scrape off the covering’<sup>77</sup> and similar meanings in the Pa’el stem. Thus, *qwlp’* can be understood as the Pa’el nomen actionis ‘peeling, scraping off’. *Syriac Lexicon* lists two contexts: **ܩܠܦܐ ܕܥܘܪܐ** ‘(the skin) of the body peeleth’ from *The Book of Medicines*, and **ܩܠܦܐ ܕܥܘܪܐ ܕܥܘܪܐ** ‘(they feared) that the peeling off (of the leprosy) was going to harm

73 CAD B 257.

74 See a detailed discussion in S. Schorch, *Euphemismen in der hebräischen Bibel* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000) p. 103.

75 Sokoloff, *Syriac Lexicon*, p. 1340.

76 Krämer, *Textstudien zu ostsyrischen Beschwörungsgebeten*, p. 34.

77 Sokoloff, *Syriac Lexicon*, p. 1374.

his face’ from *Petrus the Iberian* (see references in the dictionary).<sup>78</sup> Thus, *qwlp’ d-ḥṣh* would be understood as ‘the peeling of/from his loins’, so Krämer:

Entweder liegt die Idee zu Grunde, dass das Semen virile sich von den “Lenden” (euphemistisch für “Unterleib”) abschält und dann sich in die Zeugungsorgane ergießt; und dieser “Abschälungs”-Prozess soll gebunden werden. Oder man denkt an die Haut und ganze Muskulatur (dafür euphemistisch ܩܘܠܦܐ) der Geschlechtspartie des Mannes, die “gebunden” d.h. unbeweglich werden soll, so dass sie sich nicht “abschälen”, d.h. bewegen und so auch nicht den Samen herausschaffen kann.<sup>79</sup>

However, such an interpretation is quite forced and is based on hardly any textual evidence. A comparison with Arabic *قلفة* ‘foreskin’ would be a more attractive option.<sup>80</sup>

The list of body parts mentioned in the spell calls for an explanation. Two questions need to be answered:

1. Why are these seemingly random body parts, most of which do not have an established euphemistic reading expected in the context of this spell, named?
2. What is the significance of veins? Why do they appear three times in our text, in conjunction with different body parts: neck, knees, and thighs?

Now, similar to the list of steps preceding sexual intercourse outlined above, we may try to explore a sort of pattern underlying this block of anatomic terms. Using literary translations of the terms in question the following row can be build:

neck blood vessels—‘knee’ blood vessels—‘block/foreskin of loins’—  
thigh blood vessels

Adjusting this list according to our tentative euphemistic interpretation of some of the terms results in:

neck blood vessels—blood vessels in genital area—penis?<sup>2</sup>—thigh blood  
vessels

78 Sokoloff, *Syriac Lexicon*, p. 1330.

79 Krämer, *Textstudien zu ostsyrischen Beschwörungsgebeten*, p. 34.

80 A. de Biberstein Kazimirski. *Dictionnaire arabe-français*, vol. 2 (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1860) p. 805.



The fact that Syriac *warīdā* ‘vessel’ is the main component of the list is remarkable: it is attached to every term except *quṭlēh* (or *qwlp*) *d-ḥaṣṣēh*. This picture recalls the three theories on the origin of male sperm in Greek medicine. Depending on the medical school and/or individual writer, sperm was regarded to be produced in the brain, the whole body, or in the blood.<sup>81</sup> Due to the regrettable state of research in Syriac medical writings,<sup>82</sup> we lack evidence on which theory was the most authoritative among Syriac physicians. The only relevant passage known to us can be found in Budge’s edition of *The Syriac Book of Medicines*:

They stir up the organ which contains the semen so that it may transmit it to the testicles. The kidneys lie on the spinal column, near the loins, and they are enveloped in fat, and they are fixed one on the right and the other on the left; they and the inner parts of the spinal column are surrounded by the veins that bring the seed, and by those that bring the urine.<sup>83</sup>

Though concentrated on the kidneys, the passage refers to the area of loins in connection with semen and mentions the veins that transmit semen. It supports our interpretation of the anatomic block of our charm where the veins occupy the central position. Though most of the terms are concentrated around the genital area, the fact that the neck blood vessels are mentioned may point to the *encephalogenetic* theory.

---

81 According to the *encephalogenetic* theory, proposed by the Pythagoreans and Plato, semen is produced in the brain, from where it passes to the penis through the spinal cord. The pangenetic theory, common to Hippocratic writers, ‘assumed that semen [...] was derived from “the whole body”, that is from vessels containing the four body fluids (the humours in Greek medical theory: phlegm, blood, yellow and black bile). Later, Aristotle developed the haematogenous theory; namely the idea that the male sperm is produced from blood in a process in which the heat in men’s bodies converts blood to white sperms’. See Pernilla Myrne, *Female Sexuality in the Early Medieval Islamic World: Gender and Sex in Arabic Literature* (The Early and Medieval Islamic World, London: I.B. Tauris, 2019) pp. 22–23.

82 According to G. Kessel, ‘from the ninth century onwards Syriac medical scholars and physicians preferred using Arabic to Syriac’, while ‘most of the [Syriac] sources remain unedited and under-studied’. See G. Kessel, ‘The Syriac Medicine’, in D. King (ed.), *The Syriac World* (London: Routledge, 2018) pp. 447, 451.

83 E.A.W. Budge, *The Syriac Book of Medicines*, vol. II. *English Translation and Index* (London: Oxford University Press, 1913) p. 516.

f. 4<sup>v</sup>, ll. 6–7: *ʿasīr lī ba-nḥīyūtēh d-ḥazqīʿel* ‘he is bound by me by the prophecy of Ezekiel’.

As far as the material available to us is concerned, the figure of the prophet Ezekiel and quotations from the biblical book of Ezekiel are very rare in Syriac charms. They are not often found in Coptic or Jewish charms either.<sup>84</sup> The presence of the prophet’s name in our text is thus difficult to explain. It may, however, be noted that the book of Ezekiel is of extreme importance for the *Hekhalot* literature, mostly because of the prophet’s vision described in Ezekiel 10.<sup>85</sup>

f. 4<sup>v</sup>, l. 10: *men marbʿā d-* ‘from off the womb of ...’.

Syriac *Marbʿā* ‘womb’ can be regarded as a keyword in the charms concerning marriage. The word is used twice in our main manuscript **BLb** and once in ‘Protection for Grooms’ from **K4** (f. 51<sup>r</sup>, l. 11). In **BLb** we find a few more charms, intended to bless the new marriage and cast off the binding spells, that could prevent the couple from success, e.g.:

ܬܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ  
 ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ  
 ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܚܘܢܘܢ

By the torment of the pious men, by the honesty of the honest men, by the prophecy of the prophets, by the preaching of the apostles may so-and-so, son of so-and-so, be released upon the womb of his wife, so-and-so, daughter of so-and-so. In the name of the Father and the rest, now, mighty Lord God, let so-and-so, son of so-and-so, approach and be unbound above the womb of his wife, so-and-so, daughter of so-and-so.

‘Loosening of Grooms’, **BLb**, f. 7<sup>v</sup>

Two explanations can be provided for the frequency of *marbʿā* in these texts: it can point either to the success of the consummation of the new marriage, or to that of the consequent impregnation—or, most probably, both. Among the three manuscripts of our text Syriac *marbʿā* is found only in ‘Binding of a Husband’ in **BLb**. This fact seems to be linked with the exclusive attestation of the formula ‘I bind him in the woman, so that she gets pregnant and does not get pregnant and does not give birth’ (f. 4<sup>v</sup>, l. 9). Though the formula seems con-

---

84 For a rare example see Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, p. 131 (B 22:11).  
 85 Especially since the latter is regarded as a part of the wider Merkabah tradition, see references in R. Elior, ‘Mysticism, Magic and Angelology’, *JStQ* 1.1 (1993), pp. 3–53.

tradictory and, most probably, corrupt, it clearly intends to prevent ‘the other woman’ from getting pregnant.

### 3 ‘Binding of a Husband’ in the Context of the Syriac Magical Tradition and Beyond

#### 3.1 *Syriac Tradition*

As far as the genre is concerned, our text belongs to binding spells, a very prominent genre in the corpus of Syriac charms.

Some common features of binding spells,<sup>86</sup> which are also found in our spell, include:

- Normally has the word *’assārā*<sup>87</sup> in the header.<sup>88</sup>
- Anonymous actor performing the binding, usually expressed through 1st person singular forms of the  $\sqrt{\text{sr}}$ .<sup>89</sup>
- List of mediatory powers (God and His various epithets, angels, and saints).<sup>90</sup>

Judging by its form and structure our charm perfectly corresponds to its genre, the binding spell, and, more precisely can be attributed to the second type, i.e., anonymous binding spells if one prefers to use E. Hunter’s classification (see

86 Erica Hunter distinguishes between *binding by an identified person* and *binding by an anonymous person*, but this distinction can be fuzzy and is not relevant for our spell. Thus, we will be referring to it simply as ‘binding spell’. See E. Hunter, ‘Genres of Syriac Amulets: A Study of Cambridge Ms. 3086’, in R. Lavenant (ed.), *V Symposium Syriacum, 1988: Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, 29–31 août 1988* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 236, Rome: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1990) p. 359.

87 We prefer this vocalization (not *’asārā*) considering the term to be a cognate with Jewish Babylonian *’issārā*, see Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, p. 123; cf. West Syriac *’esoro* with *e < \*i* and *esoro* in Turoyo (< *\*essōrō*), see S. Talay, *Šlomo Surayt II—Glossar* (version 1) p. 24, doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4048874>. As for the meaning of the word, we suggest interpreting it as ‘binding spell’. Among Syriac dictionaries this meaning is found only in J. Payne Smith, *Supplement to the Thesaurus Syriacus of R. Payne Smith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927) p. 29, but it can be easily deduced both from its usage in Syriac magic texts and its cognate in Aramaic magic bowls; see Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, p. 123.

88 Though this should be the subject of a separate study, it can be noted that Syriac binding spells are not always titled with Syriac *’assārā*: they can also be titled with *’hermā*, while some of them appear without any hints pointing to their genre: in this case they are introduced either with Syriac *’hrētā d-* ‘another [charm] for’, or simply with Syriac *d-* ‘[the charm] for’.

89 Hunter, ‘Genres of Syriac Amulets’, pp. 361–362.

90 Hunter, ‘Genres of Syriac Amulets’, p. 362.

fn. 86). However, if we consider the common targets of Syriac binding spells, we will see that they are usually directed against the Evil Eye, various demons, maladies, dangerous animals, and various rivals, such as rulers, judges, and troublesome neighbours. In other words, the common targets of Syriac binding spells are hostile towards and potentially dangerous for the spell beneficiary, while in our charm the situation looks completely different.

The title of the spell plays an important role in the identification of the purpose of the spell and its chief actors (spell beneficiary and target). There are two different versions of the title of our spell across the three manuscripts:

- Manuscripts **H** and **BLa** have the header ܡܗܢܢ ܕܝܚܒܢܐ ܡܗ ܡܗܢܢ ܡܗܢܢ ‘binding of a man/husband from another woman’.
- Finally, our main version, **BLb**, displays the most detailed header: ܡܗܢܢ ܕܝܚܒܢܐ ܡܗܢܢ ܡܗܢܢ ܡܗܢܢ ܡܗܢܢ ‘binding of an adulterous husband from another woman’.

The aim of the spell has been discussed for the first time in Krämer’s dissertation.<sup>91</sup> He suggested that it was meant to harm or destroy a marriage by inhibiting the husband’s body parts and, thus, his ability to perform sexually, so that ‘ein Mann von seinem Weibe ferngehalten wird oder doch die Ehe kinderlos bleibt’. However, in Gollancz’s edition, which was also likely used by Krämer, there is no header (the header is poorly discernible and was not rendered in the edition). This might have led Krämer to this mistaken conclusion, as his interpretation cannot be reconciled with the actual header of **BLa** and the two other headers.

The header, as it is given in our main manuscript, **BLb**, leaves no doubt concerning the purpose of the spell (or at least what purpose the scribe or editor who gave this title intended to attribute to the text). It is clearly aimed at a husband and seeks to prevent or stop adultery. The beneficiary of the spell must be the wife, who wants to restrain her husband and keep him out of a love affair.

So far, we have been able to locate only a handful of Syriac spells with similar themes. The basis for comparison is the sexual sphere: the aim of all these texts is to influence and affect it either in a positive, well-meaning manner or the opposite. One spell is called *syāgā d-ḥaṭnē* ‘Protection for Grooms’ (**K4**, f. 52, cf. **StPS**5,<sup>92</sup> ff. 89<sup>v</sup>–90<sup>r</sup>, see Appendix 1). Two additional spells that we have been

91 Krämer, *Textstudien zu ostsyrischen Beschwörungsgebeten*, pp. 144, 34.

92 The manuscript was described by Teule and Kessel, see G. Kessel and H. Teule, ‘The Mikhail Sado Collection of Syriac Manuscripts in St. Petersburg’, in J.P. Monferrer-Sala, H.G.B. Teule, and S. Torallas (eds.), *Eastern Christians and their Written Heritage. Manuscripts, Scribes and Context* (Eastern Christian Studies, 14, Leuven: Peeters, 2012) pp. 52–53. A recent description can be found in the catalogue of Zellmann-Rohrer, see M. Zellmann-

able to find are ‘Binding of her intimate parts’ (BLB, f. 4<sup>v</sup>–5<sup>r</sup>) and ‘[Binding of] a woman’ (Vi7,<sup>93</sup> f. 46<sup>v</sup>). They deserve a separate study and are mentioned here only in passing.<sup>94</sup>

All these spells are distinguished by the use of lexica denoting body parts and, in particular, intimate body parts. Our text uses the largest number of body parts of all the four spells (see 2.2). ‘Protection for Grooms’ mentions *marb’ā* ‘womb’ and *kyānā* ‘penis’, while ‘Binding of her Intimate Parts’ and ‘[Binding of] a Woman’ both use the word *špūlē*, likely to be understood as ‘inner, intimate parts’.<sup>95</sup> The former spell also contains an expression ‘*am bestrāh am qudmēh*’ ‘with her back, with her front’ (cf. verses f. 4<sup>v</sup>, l. 5 in ‘Binding of a Husband’), as well as an explicit formula *d-lā nehwē l-gābrā dammā d-enā šārēnā lāh* ‘So that she will not be with [another] man until I free her’. These features clearly point to the constraining nature of the spell and its focus on the sexual sphere.

‘Protection for Grooms’ can be described as a counter-spell to ‘Binding of a Husband’, as its intention is to ‘unbind’ the genitalia of a bridegroom from evil practices performed against it by someone else. ‘Binding of a Husband’, in contrast, should be interpreted as an aggressive spell (breaking up an already existing love affair). The two texts are opposites to some extent: ‘Protection’ tries to protect the groom so that he can perform sexually in wedlock, while ‘Binding’ aims to restrain him so that he cannot perform sexually in an affair. Both texts gain their meaning only in the context of marriage, and both mention body parts and genitals.

---

Rohrer, ‘More on the “Book of Protection” and the Syriac “Charms”: New Texts and Perspectives for the Study of Magic and Religion’, in M. Moriggi and S. Bhayro (eds.), *Studies in the Syriac Magical Traditions* (Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity, 9, Brill: Leiden, 2022) p. 89. One part of this manuscript is very close to K4, see A. Нуруллина (Черкашина), *Сирийские заклинания как продолжение арамейской заклинательной традиции поздней античности: исследование на материале рукописи ЦНБ КНЦ РАН 4*. Дипломная работа. [A. Nurullina (Cherkashina), *Syriac Charms as Continuation of the Aramaic Magical Tradition: A Research Based on the Manuscript CNB KNC RAN 4*. (unpublished MA Thesis) (RSUH, 2012)], pp. 30–31.

93 Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek cod. Syr. 7. A recent description can be found in the catalogue of Zellmann-Rohrer, see M. Zellmann-Rohrer, ‘More on the “Book of Protection” and the Syriac “Charms”’, p. 90.

94 An edition of these spells with a detailed commentary is currently in preparation.

95 Meanings 1. foot (of a mountain, hill); 2. base; 3. a. innermost part; b. back part; c. farthest part; 4. portico; and 5. hem are listed for Classical Syriac in Sokoloff, *Syriac Lexicon*, p. 1585f., but consider the Mandaic *šipula*: 1. skirt, hem, lower part of skirt and 2. sexual parts, lower part of abdomen; see E.S. Drower and R. Macuch, *A Mandaic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963) p. 462.

In 'Protection for Grooms' we find a list of malicious practices performed against the groom both by humans and by supernatural entities. In addition to formulae intended to annul the malicious effects of such practices, this spell also contains binding formulae, directed against the adversaries who performed the practices. In that respect this spell is similar to the texts written in some Babylonian Aramaic magic bowls, namely the *qybl'*-bowls, where both sources of mischief, humane and demonic, are listed and where aggressive formulae occur side by side with protective ones.<sup>96</sup>

Two questions can be asked concerning the place which 'Binding of a Husband' occupies within the Syriac magical tradition. First, to what category of spells can it be attributed, and second, how was the related magical practice regarded within the tradition.

To answer the first question, we would classify 'Binding of a Husband' together with the binding spells for women mentioned above as a special subset within the category of separation spells—*erotic separation spells*. A succinct description of this type of spells in the Greek tradition is given by Faraone for what he calls 'separation curses' (on which see below in III.3):<sup>97</sup>

These 'separation curses' aim at inhibiting desire and affection, usually in the rival lover but occasionally in the beloved as well. The main purpose is either to restrain any possible erotic attraction or to break any pre-existing bond that the two may have developed.

An example of a different kind of Syriac separation spell, namely the non-erotic one, can be found among the texts cited by Badger in his book.<sup>98</sup> Contrary to erotic spells for attraction, the texts examined in this paper neither mention the spell beneficiary nor contain love-inducing formulae. More precisely, we can attribute 'Binding of a Husband' to the spells for inducing impotence (see further below, 3.3).<sup>99</sup>

Answering the second question, we suggest that even though such binding spells occupy a marginal position in the written Syriac magical tradition (as known from codices and amulets), the magical practices to which they attest

96 Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls*, pp. 2–4, 5–6.

97 Faraone, 'The Agonistic Context', p. 14.

98 G.P. Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals: With the Narrative of a Mission to Mesopotamia and Coordistan in 1842–1844*, vol. 1 (London: Joseph Masters, 1852) p. 239. See also A. Cherkashina, 'Syriac Separation Spells' (forthcoming).

99 This classificational decision is mentioned by Saar, see O.-P. Saar, *Jewish Love Magic: From Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2017) p. 33.

must have played an important role in the daily life of Syriac Christians. Thus, we agree with Krämer's conclusion, namely 'wie sehr das sexuelle Element auch in den ostsyrischen Beschwörungsgebeten eine Rolle spielt'.<sup>100</sup>

To illustrate his point, Krämer compares it with Question 40 in the 'Canons of Jacob of Edessa'. Indeed, there is evidence of various magical practices in the 'Canons of Jacob of Edessa'. This legal work is written in a form of a dialog between a priest named Addai, who consults Jacob on various matters pertaining to religious and spiritual practices of clergy and laymen. The exact details of the magical practice described in Question 40 are not completely clear, but its purpose is stated explicitly: 'damit ein Mann von seinem Weibe ferngehalten wird'.<sup>101</sup>

Krämer also refers to several passages from the *Book of Medicines*. In the chapter about 'the bird of Solomon' (a hoopoe) a different usage is prescribed for each part of its body. Among these we find:<sup>102</sup>

ܘܠܘܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ  
ܘܠܘܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ

His left wing can be used for a man who has been bound by his wife.<sup>103</sup>  
Put<sup>104</sup> one part of it in oil and let him drink and he will be loosened.

*Book of Medicines*, vol. 1, p. 593, ll. 8–10

ܘܠܘܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ  
ܘܠܘܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܢܐ

His lung: if someone drinks (it) a lot with bitter water, never in his life will he be able to approach to the sexual intercourse.

ll. 18–19

100 Krämer, *Textstudien zu ostsyrischen Beschwörungsgebeten*, p. 146.

101 C. Kayser, *Die Canones Jacob's von Edessa, übersetzt und erläutert, zum Theil auch zuerst im Grundtext veröffentlicht von C. Kayser* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1886) p. 25.

102 E.A.W. Budge, *The Syriac Book of Medicines*, Vol. 1. *Introduction. Syriac Text* (London: Oxford University Press, 1913) p. 593, and pp. 589, 590, 592 for other related contexts. For English translation, see E.A.W. Budge *The Syriac Book of Medicines*, vol. II, pp. 702–703. Our translation differs from that of Budge, which can be found in Budge, *The Syriac Book of Medicines*, II, pp. 706–707.

103 Budge translates the expression as: 'the man who is in thrall to his wife' (Budge, *The Syriac Book of Medicines*, II, p. 706), while a similar passage in another recipe he renders as: 'a man who is in bondage through copulation' (Budge, *The Syriac Book of Medicines*, II, p. 702).

104 The translation is based on the context and Neo-Aramaic meaning shift for the verbal root  $\sqrt{\text{br}}$ , cf. *Turoyo ma'bar* 'eintreten lassen'; see O. Jastrow, *Lehrbuch der Turoyo-Sprache* (Semitica Viva Series Didactica, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2002) p. 185.





Aggressive magic practices, which include binding spells intended to constrain female fertility, are thus characterized as ‘evil and foul practices’ (Syriac *‘bādē bišē wa-škirē*), alien to the church. Syriac *‘bādē* ‘magic practices’<sup>106</sup> always has negative connotations in Syriac magic codices, being accompanied by such definitions as *snayyā* ‘wicked’, *nukrāyē* ‘alien’, *srīqē* ‘useless’, *ndīdē* ‘abominable’, etc. The expression *‘bādē škirē* is also found in ‘Protection for Grooms’ (f. 57<sup>v</sup>, ll. 5–6, see Appendix 1 below) in the list of aggressive magic practices from which the spell beneficiary is to be protected and released. In the case of this spell, we suppose that this expression refers to the practice of using binding spells and curses, similar to the one that is the focus of our inquiry. In a similar manner, the magical practices for separation are condemned in the ‘Canons of Jacob of Edessa’, mentioned above, as they are equated to murder, likely because the marriage becomes unfruitful and cannot produce offspring.

To conclude, the scarcity of erotic binding spells and curses targeted against male and women fertility and sexual relations in the magic codices proves our assumption that these practices occupy a marginal position in the Syriac magical tradition—at least in a written form. As shown by both the ‘insider’ (i.e., the magical texts) and ‘outsider’ (i.e., mentions of magical practices found elsewhere) Syriac sources, magic practices of this kind were clearly not approved by a major part of the tradition, and most of the spells attesting to them were probably eliminated from the manuscripts.

### 3.2 *Parallels External to Syriac Literature*

As deduced from the spell content, ‘Binding of a husband’ is designed to prevent a married man from having intimate relationship with another woman. The obvious spell beneficiary, though never mentioned in the text, is the man’s wife.

This section is an attempt to establish the context for this spell beyond the corpus of Syriac magic codices by addressing the ‘insider’ evidence (magical recipes and finished products) from the neighbouring magical traditions. The ‘outsider’ evidence regarding the magical practices for inducing impotence and based on Graeco-Roman, Mesopotamian, and Jewish sources has been extensively presented in the book of Ortal-Paz Saar.<sup>107</sup> Our overview can by no means

106 This specific meaning, well-attested in Syriac charms, is not found in the Syriac dictionaries, cf. M. Sokoloff, *Syriac Lexicon*, p. 1060, where the term is defined as ‘work’, ‘toil’, ‘labour’, ‘thing’. Cf. *‘bd’/‘wbd’* in Aramaic magic bowls, which is most probably related to the term in question. In the texts published by Naveh and Shaked, it is translated as ‘work, magic act’; see Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, p. 275.

107 Saar, *Jewish Love Magic*, pp. 72–76.

be called exhaustive, since it focuses only on close parallels to ‘Binding of a Husband’. In what follows we will address magical texts belonging to different corpora: magic bowls of Late Antiquity, Jewish spells from the Cairo Geniza, and Mandaic charms, as well as binding spells written in Greek and Coptic. Due to the considerable chronological, and in most cases also spatial gap between our text and these corpora, it is difficult to speak about direct influence the latter could have had on Syriac magical tradition attested mostly in handbooks dated to the 18th–20th centuries. We would rather speak of *indirect influence*, being either a result of previous contact, or a trace of a common source and shared heritage.<sup>108</sup>

Erotic binding spells are common in Graeco-Roman magical tradition, as attested in tablets called *defixiones* in Latin and *κατάδεσμοι* in Greek.<sup>109</sup> Like our text, these tablets belong to the genre of binding spells, and many of them are related to love magic. The target of these spells can be a spell beneficiary’s beloved one (*spells for attraction*) or, in the case of *separation spells*, their rival (with or without their partner).

Same as Greek erotic *κατάδεσμοι*, our charm aims at restraining its target by binding his feelings (desire), actions (intercourse), and body parts—all of them (366, verse 6) and precisely those which are supposedly relevant for sexual performance (verse 9).<sup>110</sup>

108 For a recent account of the state of the field see M. Moriggi and S. Bhayro, ‘Syriac Studies and Magic: An Introduction’, in M. Moriggi and S. Bhayro (eds.) *Studies in the Syriac Magical Traditions* (Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity, 9, Leiden: Brill, 2022) pp. 3–4. On the question of continuity between the magical texts from Late Antiquity and modern Christian Syriac booklets and amulets, see G. Abousamra ‘Syriac Magic and the Contemporary Christian Milieu: Continuity or Discontinuity?’, in M. Moriggi and S. Bhayro (eds.) *Studies in the Syriac Magical Traditions*, pp. 191–198; A. Lyavdansky, ‘Syriac Charms in Near Eastern Context: Tracing the Origin of Formulas’, in T.A. Mikhailova, J. Roper, A.L. Toporkov, and D.S. Nikolayev (eds.) *Oral Charms in Structural and Comparative Light. Proceedings of the Conference of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research’s (ISFNR) Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming* (Moscow: Probel-2000, 2011) pp. 15–21.

109 ‘Defixiones, more commonly known as curse tablets, are inscribed pieces of lead, usually in the form of small, thin sheets, intended to influence, by supernatural means, the actions or welfare of persons or animals against their will. They became popular in the fifth century B.C. and continued in use in Mediterranean lands until at least the sixth century of our era’: D. Jordan, ‘A Survey of Greek Defixiones Not Included in the Special Corpora’, *GRBS* 26.2 (1985), pp. 151–197 (151). For the corpus and the archaeological context, see also Faraone, ‘The Agonistic Context’, p. 3.

110 Faraone, ‘The Agonistic Context’, pp. 13–14. In fact, this is true not only for erotic *κατάδεσμοι*, since same categories of objects of binding are found in spells against athletes and charioteers (Faraone, ‘The Agonistic Context’, p. 13).

Among the binding spells belonging to the corpus of Greek magical papyri (*PGM*), an erotic spell can be found which shares a few features with ‘Binding of a Husband’:

Fetch Euphemia, whom Dorothea bore, for Theon, whom his mother Proechia bore, to love me with love and longing and affection and intercourse, with mad love. Burn her members, her liver, her female parts, until she comes to me, longing me and not disobeying me. For I conjure you by the mighty Necessity, [..., *powerful names*], in order that you bind for me Euphemia, for me, Theon, in affection and in love and in longing for a period of ten months from today.

*PGM* CI, ll. 30–37<sup>111</sup>

Being a spell for attraction, this text still aims at controlling and constraining the target’s feelings and body parts—all of them emphasise the parts related to sex.

The closest parallels to ‘Binding of a husband’ we were able to detect are found in Coptic magic. The relevant passage in one of the spells reads:

May that binding be upon the male member of Pharaouō and his flesh so that you (pl.) dry it like wood and you (pl.) make it like a rag upon the dung heap! His penis will not become hard! He will not become erect! He will not ejaculate! He will not have sex with Touaein, the daughter of Kamar, nor any woman, man or animal until I recite, myself (a spell?! But have the male member of Pharaouō, the son of Kiranpales, dry up! He will not have sex with Touaein, the daughter of Kamar, like a corpse lying in a tomb, while Pharaouō, the son of Kiranpoles, will not be able to have sex with Touaein, the daughter of Kamar! Yea, Yea! Quickly, Quickly!

Chicago Oriental Institute E13767<sup>112</sup>

111 Cited according to translation in H.D. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells*, vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992, 2nd edition) p. 308.

112 See K. Dosoo, E.O.D. Love, and M. Preininger (eds.), *Coptic Curses II: Flaccid, Limp, and Lying like a Corpse. Kyprianos Database of Ancient Ritual Texts and Objects*, <https://www.coptic-magic.phil.uni-wuerzburg.de/index.php/2019/11/29/coptic-curses-ii-flaccid-limp-and-lying-like-a-corpse/>. For an earlier translation see M. Meyer and R. Smith (eds.), *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999) pp. 178–179 (Text 85). For very similar formulae, see two other impotence spells: Heidelberg Kopt. 682 (Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, pp. 179–180 [Text 86]) and Strasbourg Coptic Manuscript 135 (Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, p. 181 [Text 87]).

Like our text, this is an impotence spell, which focuses on the sexual function of the spell target (Pharaouo) and mentions a woman, with whom he is evidently engaged in intimate relationship (Touaein daughter of Kamar). Like 'Binding of a husband', it does not mention the spell beneficiary. E. Love assumes that by such spells 'parents aimed to protect their daughters from either losing their virginity, or it becoming known that they had'. He mentions the possibility of another interpretation, that is, that the spell beneficiary is the third party in a love triangle but rejects it: 'in such cases we find instead curses that bind the woman, not the man.' One wonders: what if the third party is not another man, who loves Touaein, but a woman, who loves Pharaouo?

A few differences between our text and this impotence spell can be outlined. The Coptic spell aims very precisely at the sexual parts of the man and his actions related to sexual performance. Unlike our spell and many other parallels, it does not mention his feelings and emotions towards Touaein. Thus, it addresses the relationship between Pharaouo and Touaein in strictly physiological terms, and all the magic formulae are focused on the target's ability to copulate. Also, the spell does not mention the whole body, or all the target's body parts.

The following erotic binding spell from Upper Egypt shows structural similarity to 'Binding of a Husband'. The text contains two similar blocks of terms: first a list of the target's feelings, and next a list of her body parts, which includes sexual parts.

When she drinks, when she eats, when she has intercourse with someone else, I will bewitch her heart, I will bewitch the heart of her, I will bewitch her breath, I will bewitch her 365 members, I will bewitch her inner part.

*PGM IV*, ll. 146–150<sup>113</sup>

Another passage from *PGM* also stems from an erotic binding spell and mentions the same figure, 365. Though we find no mention of body parts, the connection between the number of the knots and that of the members can be easily deduced from the context.

And take a lead tablet and write the same spell and recite it. And tie the lead leaf to the figures with thread from the loom after making 365 knots while saying as you have learned, 'ABRASAX, hold her fast!'

*PGM IV*, ll. 330–333<sup>114</sup>

113 See Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, vol. 1, p. 40.

114 Cited according to translation in Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, vol. 1, p. 44.

If we examine the Aramaic magic texts dating from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages, we also find binding spells, targeted against humans, but compared with apotropaic charms their amount is extremely small. As noticed by O.-P. Saar, even more rarely we find in these texts the self-reference of 'binding' (Jewish Babylonian Aramaic *ʾissārā*).<sup>115</sup> The Aramaic evidence includes a Mandaic charm, invoking Libat (Venus). We cite a passage of this long charm:

He shall be brought into subjection, this man, N., neath the feet of N., woman, by the four limbs of his body, by the eight corners of his stature; his male member<sup>116</sup> and his sinews are subjected, subjected are his incoming and outgoing.

*A Mandaean Book of Black Magic*, p. 162<sup>117</sup>

The second group of Aramaic parallels comes from the Cairo Geniza. Among the material published in the three volumes of *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*<sup>118</sup> one usually finds either love charms aiming to attract another person to the spell beneficiary or protective charms relevant to the sexual sphere, first and foremost protecting the groom or the husband from impotence, akin to 'Protection for grooms' discussed in this paper.<sup>119</sup>

These charms contain listings of body parts and organs, e.g., in T.-S. K 1.162:

Wie es damals, in [den Tagen] von Adam und Eva, [keine] bösen Zauberer [gab] und keine häßlichen Taten, so gebe es (sie) auch nicht für N.N., Sohn von N.N., und für N.N., Tochter von N.N., seine Frau, nicht in den Gefäßen seines Kopfes, nicht in den Gefäßen seines Körpers und nicht in seinem großen Glied, das Penis (?) genannt wird.

T.-S. K 1.162<sup>120</sup>

- 
- 115 O.-P. Saar, 'A Study in Conceptual Parallels: Graeco-Roman Binding Spells and Babylonian Incantation Bowls', *Aramaic Studies* 13 (2015), pp. 24–53 (41).
- 116 Matthew Morgenstern (p.c.) informed us that Drower's reading 'male member' is wrong, instead the text reads 'his bones'.
- 117 E.S. Drower, 'A Mandæan Book of Black Magic', *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 2 (1943) pp. 149–181 (162). On the codex, see p. 149. For the most recent account, see M. Morgenstern and T. Alfia, 'Arabic Magic Texts in Mandaic Script: A Forgotten Chapter in Near-Eastern Magic', in R. Voigt (ed.), *Durch dein Wort ward jegliches Ding!*, Vol. 2. *Mandäistische und samaritanistische Tagung* (Mandaistische Forschungen, 4, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013) pp. 155–156.
- 118 P. Schäfer and S. Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994–1999).
- 119 Cf. Saar, *Jewish Love Magic*, pp. 76–77.
- 120 Schäfer and Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, vol. 3, pp. 65–88.

The presence of a protective charm against impotence must, in our opinion, indicate that an opposite charm (to cause impotence and to prevent intercourse) also existed in this tradition, in the same manner as ‘Protection for grooms’ is a counter-spell to an unattested binding spell similar to ‘Binding of a husband’.

The theme of infidelity, apparent in our charm, as it is directed against *gabrā zannāyā* ‘adulterous husband’ and *ʾaʿttā nukrāytā* ‘another woman (mistress)’, is found in the Cairo Geniza as well, but in a spell directed against women suspect of being unfaithful:

Wisse und verstehe, daß man von diesen verborgenen Namen, die den unaussprechlichen Namen (bilden), der des Ehebruchs verdächtigen Frau zu trinken gab. Durch [die Kraft] eben dieser Namen soll ihr Bauch anschwellen und ihre Hüfte einfallen.

JTSL-ENA-3635-17<sup>121</sup>

As we can see, the spell also focuses on certain body parts of the targeted woman, but here the purpose of mentioning them seems to be different: if the woman had been indeed unfaithful, the spell should affect her belly and knees.

#### 4 Conclusion

In this paper we have considered a rare spell found in three Syriac magic codices. On the one hand, the charm obviously looks very marginal to the Syriac tradition in a few aspects: its rarity in the corpus (only 3 MSS), its unique aim (‘binding’ of a husband), its aggressive nature, and the sexual terminology it uses (though some terms are euphemistic and/or obscure). On the other hand, as we have shown, it has some links inside the Syriac magical tradition, which prove its right to be considered an important piece of evidence for understanding Syriac culture and daily life. Examples of these connections include other texts presented in this article (‘Protection for Grooms’) and parallels within the corpus of Syriac charms.

The parallels from other magical traditions provided above allow us to establish a wider context for the underlying magical practice. However, none of the cited spells can be considered an exact parallel to ‘Binding of a Husband’, which

121 Schäfer and Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, I, pp. 17–28.

underlines the uniqueness of this spell in magical traditions of the Near East and Mediterranean.

Another important aspect of the spell(s) examined here is their unusual lexical content which is difficult to interpret. Some words and expressions, like *spr lebbēh*, present a puzzle, which might be deciphered when more data is uncovered. Other words offer a possibility for a euphemistic interpretation, thus presenting unique readings which, likewise, may be confirmed or disproven in the future. The unusual lexemes found in the spell further emphasize its uniqueness within the Syriac magic tradition.

### Acknowledgements

We thank Alexey Lyavdansky (HSE University, Moscow, Russia) and Dr. Ortal-Paz Saar (Utrecht University, Netherlands) for their help in acquiring the images of the manuscripts. We also thank Maria Cioatǎ for proofreading this article.

### Appendix 1

#### A.1.1 *Binding of a Husband from Another Woman* (H, f. 42)

f. 42 <sup>r</sup>	1	ܕܗܘܐ	Binding
	2	ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ	of a husband from another
	3	ܘܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ	woman. I bind so-and-so, son of so-and-so,
	4	ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ	by the power of God and of the Lord's command-
			ment
	5	ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ	[and the power] of those angels who stand before
	6	ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ	the Creator. Let so-and-so, son of so-and-so, be
	7	ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ	bound. I bind the three hundred sixty-six
	8	ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ	body parts in the body
	9	ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ	of so-and-so, son of so-and-so, from so-and-so,
			daughter
	10	ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ ܕܝܠܗܘܢ	of so-and-so. I bind [him] with all

122 Instead of ܕܝܠܗܘܢ, which is most probably a mistake. Cf. f. 42<sup>v</sup>, l. 5.





f. 52<sup>v</sup>  
(42<sup>v</sup>)

8                                    ܐܘܢܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܘܕܥܘܠܐ ܘܕܥܘܠܐ ܘܕܥܘܠܐ I bind the sorcery, the bonds,  
9                                    ܘܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ the practices,<sup>137</sup> that are being performed by evil  
10                                    ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ people, from the bearer of these writs.  
11                                    ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ Let his penis be released upon the womb of  
12                                    ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ so-an-so, daughter of so-and-so. I release  
13                                    ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ his soul together with his body from all  
14                                    ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ bonds and sorcery knots  
1                                    ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ and from the practices of accursed and banned  
2                                    ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ demons. Let him be released from  
3                                    ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ the bonds, that are in front of him.  
4                                    ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ May cease to [affect] his body and  
5                                    ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ his soul all the foul  
6                                    ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ actions of evil people  
7                                    ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ and artifices of accursed demons.  
8                                    ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ By the prayer of Good blessed  
9                                    ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ Mary, John  
10                                    ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ the Baptist and all the mart[ys]  
11                                    ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ and the Lord's saints. *And write*  
12                                    ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ *ten words from 'In the beginning'*.<sup>138</sup>

---

by Gollancz as 'Ban for the Fold of the Cattle'). ܐܘܢܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܘܕܥܘܠܐ ܘܕܥܘܠܐ ܘܕܥܘܠܐ 'There is one who fasts in order to put a fence on his mouth so that he might not speak hateful words'. The metaphorical usage of the related term is attested even better in Mandaic, cf. *sigia* 'obstacle, precaution, prohibition, guardedness, preventive measures' (Drower and Macuch, *Mandaic Dictionary*, p. 325).

136 Adverb *l-* or *men*, required for introducing the agent in passive constructions (*\*'bīdīn l-/men*), is missing here.

137 The word presumably denotes inappropriate and/or aggressive magical practices. However, its exact meaning is difficult to establish from this context as well as from other passages in Syriac charms. Sokoloff's dictionary suggests 'charm, incantation' (Sokoloff, *Syriac Lexicon*, p. 798), but cf. Jewish Babylonian Aramaic *ma'bādā* 'magical act, sorcery' in Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, p. 693, and Mandaic *mabada* 'deed, act, work, operation' in Drower and Macuch, *Mandaic Dictionary*, p. 238.

138 That is, from the Prologue to John's Gospel. This instruction probably refers not simply to writing the words from the Prologue, but to reproducing a particularly important spell in Syriac magic codices. It can be described as a table or a magic square with cells filled with words from Jn 1.1–5. This table is a part of a long multi-purpose charm which most often occurs under the title 'The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, the preaching of John'. For the charm and the table cf., e.g., Cod. A § 4 (pp. 2–3), Cod. B § 4 (pp. 37–43), and Cod. C § 1 (pp. 77–78) in Gollancz, *Book of Protection*.

## Appendix 2: The Manuscripts

Below we provide short catalogue descriptions of the Syriac manuscripts discussed in the article with the relevant images containing the text of ‘Binding of a Husband’.

### A.2.1 *Houghton Syr. 160*<sup>139</sup> (*H*)

Harvard University (Cambridge MA), Houghton Library, MS Syriac 160. Former owner: I.H. Hall (1837–1896). Title: *kt̄ibtā da-nṭuryā* ‘Protective Amulet’.<sup>140</sup> Paper, 49 leaves, bound, 12×8 cm. Up to 18 lines to page. Script: unvocalized East Syriac. 74 chapters, 17 coloured illustrations. Date and place: 1804, the village of Shibāni, Tergawar district (Hakkari, Turkey). Scribe: Gewargis bar Zay‘a from Shamsdin.

### A.2.2 *BL Or. 6673*<sup>141</sup> (*BLA*<sup>142</sup>)

London, British Library MS Or. 6673. Paper, 12.5×9.0 cm, 48 leaves. Script: unvocalized East Syriac. Date and place: 1804, the village of Shibāni, Tergawar district (Hakkari, Turkey). 67 chapters and illustrations. Up to 18 lines to page. Scribe: Gewargis. Described by Gollancz, who collated the MS with Cod. A, and edited most of the additional content, which was not in Cod. A. This part of the manuscript is available to us only via Gollancz’s edition.

139 Its recent description with further references can be found in Zellmann-Rohrer, ‘More on the “Book of Protection”’, p. 83; and Cherkashina and Lyavdansky, ‘Syriac Love Charms. Part I’, pp. 68–91 (85).

140 We prefer this translation over the common ‘Book of Protection’. Syriac magic codices are very rarely entitled with the Syriac term for ‘book’, i.e., *kt̄ābā* (for which see, e.g., StP18 in Zellmann-Rohrer, ‘More on the “Book of Protection”’, p. 88). Instead, most of them are titled with ܟܬܒܬܐ (so, e.g., H and I), while in NH3 we find its supposedly orthographic variant ܟܬܒܬܐ (NH3). Following Alexey Lyavdansky’s suggestion, we regard these words as rendering the Neo-Aramaic terms for ‘amulet, talisman’: *kt̄awta/kt̄uta* (and similar), see, e.g., Khan, *The Neo-Aramaic Dialect of the Assyrian Christians of Urmi*, vol. 3, p. 123; S. Talay, *Neuramäische Texte in den Dialekten der Khabur-Assyrer in Nordostsyrien* (Semitica Viva, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009) p. 444; and H. Mutzafi, *The Jewish Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Betanure (Province of Dihok)* (Semitica Viva, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008) p. 358.

141 Formerly BM Or. 6673. For description of the manuscript, see Gollancz, *Book of Protection*, p. 93; more recently Zellmann-Rohrer, ‘More on the “Book of Protection”’, pp. 85–86.

142 Gollancz, *The Book of Protection*, pp. 101–102, § 64.

### A.2.3 *BL Or. 5281*<sup>143</sup> (*BLb*)

London, British Library Ms Or. 5281. Paper, 38×23 cm, 146 leaves. A composite volume consisting of three manuscripts written in three different hands. It contains magical, divinatory, and astrological sections. The magical section has no beginning. The first two manuscripts contain magical texts (ff. 1–2 and ff. 2–41). This part consists of 62 chapters with 1 illustration in black. Up to 16 lines per page. Script: sporadically vocalized East Syriac. Date: unknown, paleographically dated to the 18th century. The codex also contains 47 chapters of the *Book of the Bee*.

### A.2.4 *K4*

The Central Scientific Library of the Kazan Scientific Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Kazan, Tatarstan, Russia), MS 4 (Oriental collection). Kept in the library since before 1952, when it was researched by N.V. Pigulevskaya.<sup>144</sup> Title: *sedrā harzāyā* ‘The Book of Amulets’.<sup>145</sup> Paper, 72 leaves, bound, 8.8×5.8 cm. Text block 8.4×4.8 cm, includes 14 lines. 51 chapters, 7 illustrations. Date and place: 1735, village Sequnes, Nordus (Hakkari, Turkey), according to the colophon (f. 70<sup>r</sup>). Scribe: the priest Markos, son of Shem‘on Saqnaya (ibid.). The manuscript exhibits a close affinity to StPS5. Publication: Анна Нуруллина (Черкашина), *Сирийские заклинания как продолжение арамейской заклинательной традиции поздней античности* [Nurullina (Cherkashina), *Syriac Charms as Continuation of the Aramaic Magical Tradition*].

143 For the most recent and full description with further references, see Michael Zellmann-Rohrer, ‘More on the “Book of Protection”’, p. 93.

144 Н. Гараева, ‘Рукопись сирийская, содержит заклинания и молитвы ... [A Syriac Manuscript, Contains Charms and Prayers ...]’, *Гасырлар авазы/Эхо веков*, 32/33 (2003), pp. 47–53 (48).

145 Lit. ‘amuletic book’.

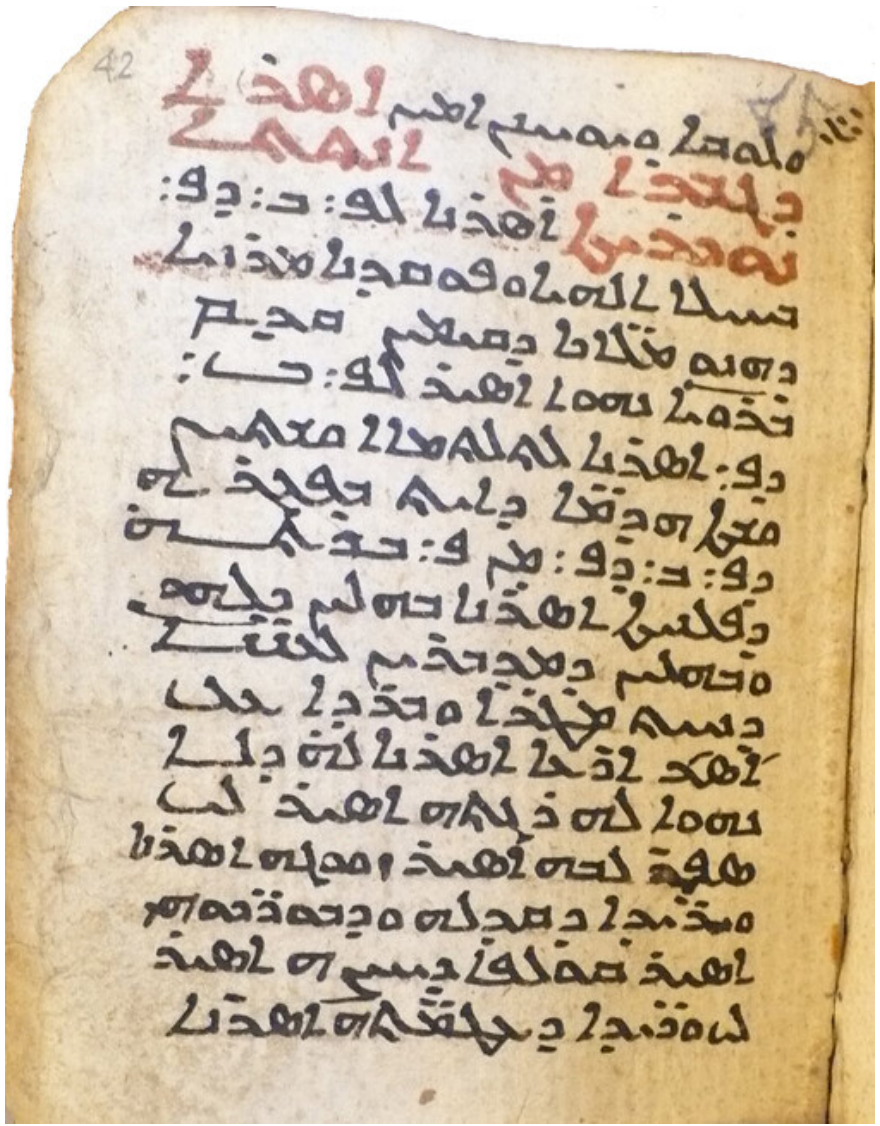


FIGURE 1 MS Syriac 160, Houghton Library, Harvard University, f. 42<sup>r</sup> (H)

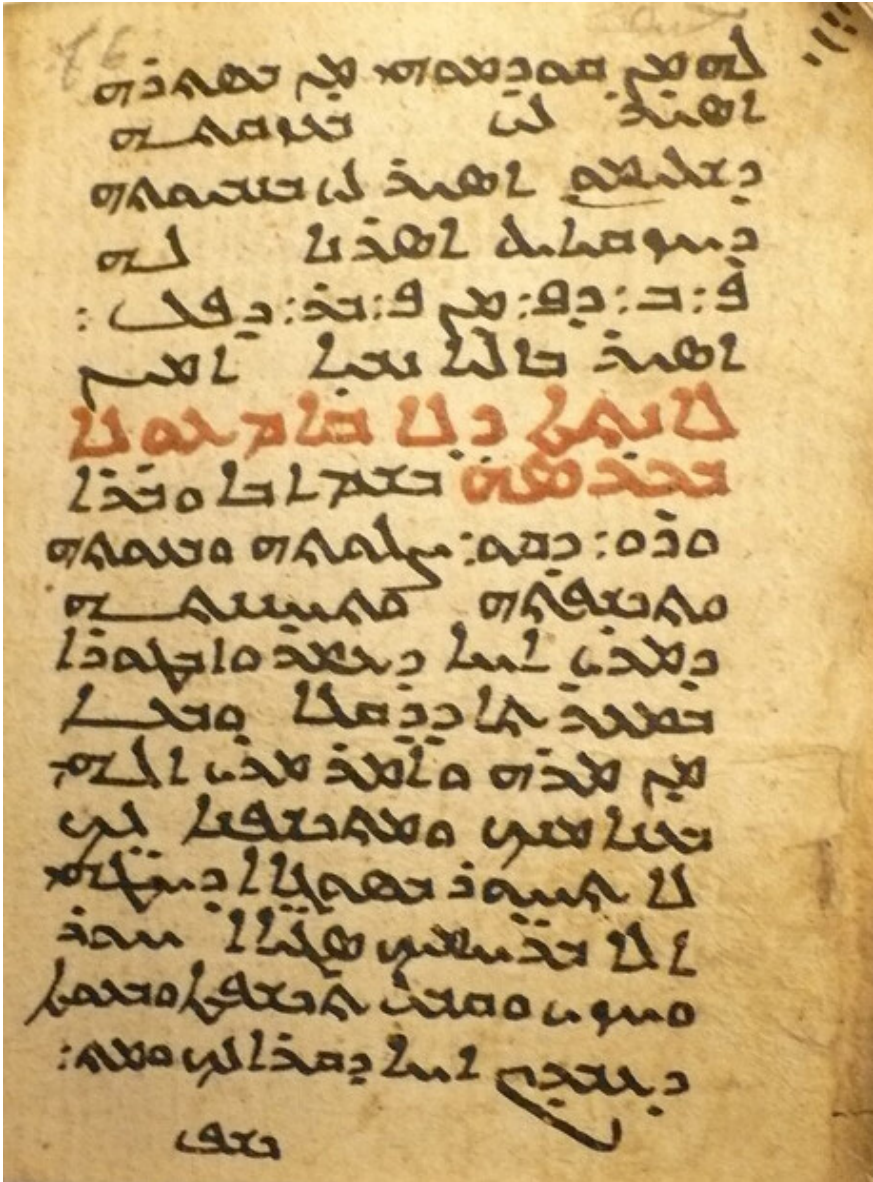


FIGURE 2 MS Syriac 160, Houghton Library, Harvard University, f. 42<sup>v</sup> (H)

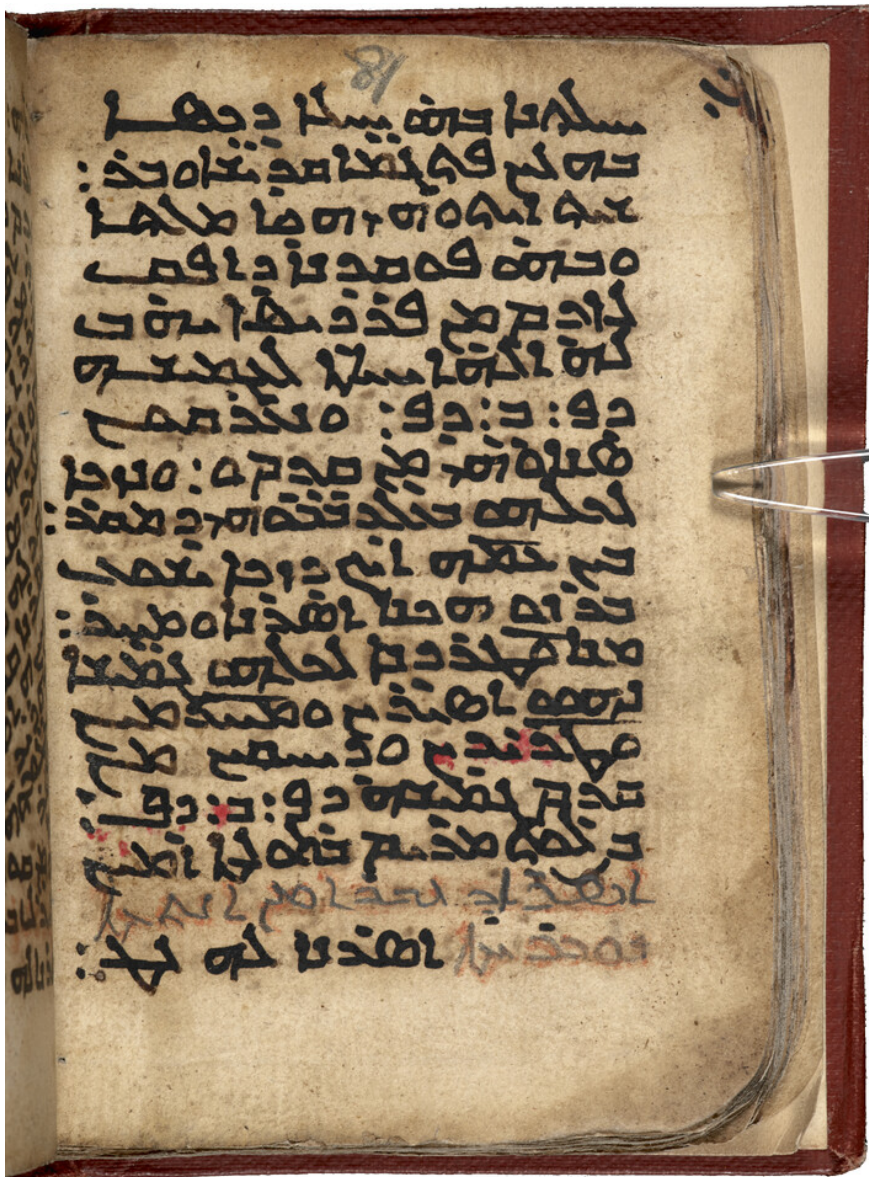


FIGURE 3 BL Or. 6673, f. 40<sup>v</sup> (BLa)  
 © BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD (BL OR. 6673, F. 40<sup>v</sup>)

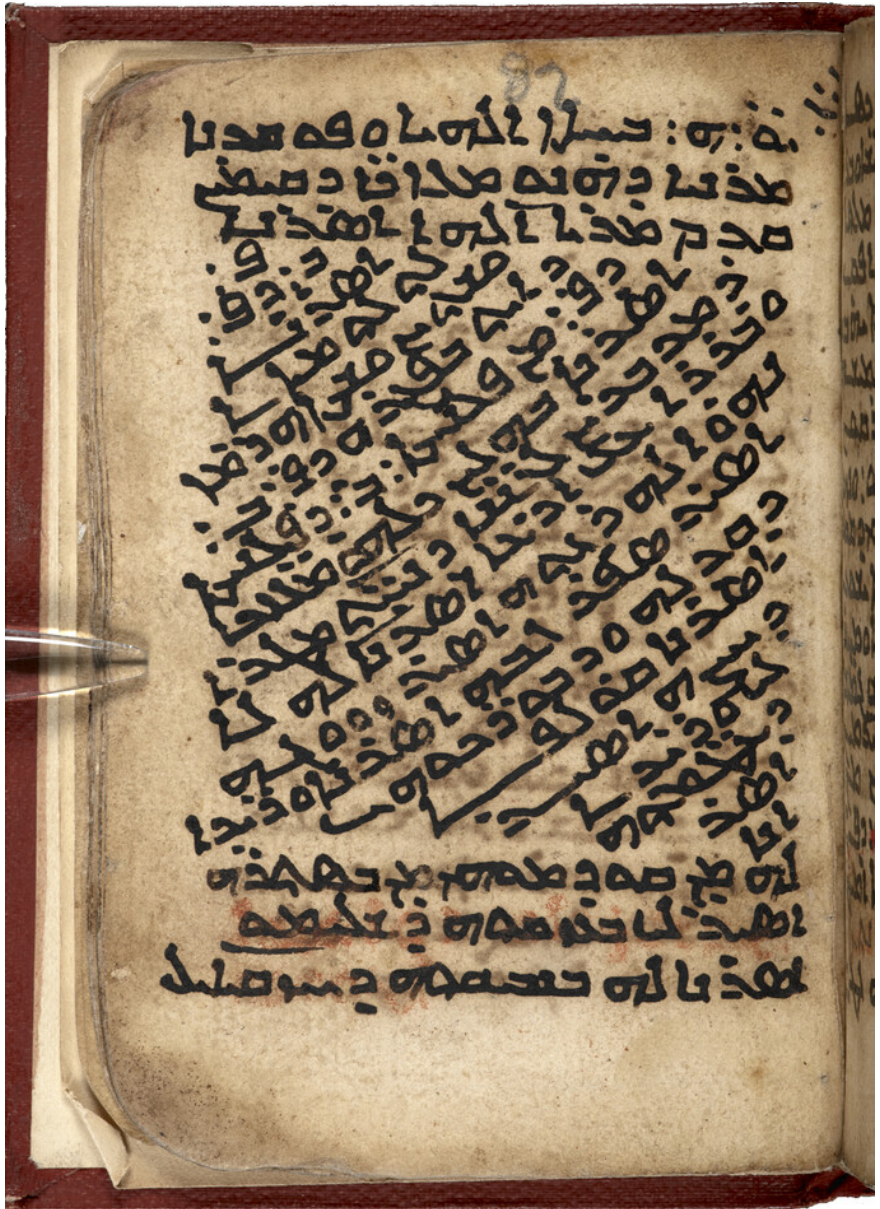


FIGURE 4 BL Or. 6673, f. 41<sup>r</sup> (BLa)  
© BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD (BL OR. 6673, F. 41<sup>R</sup>)

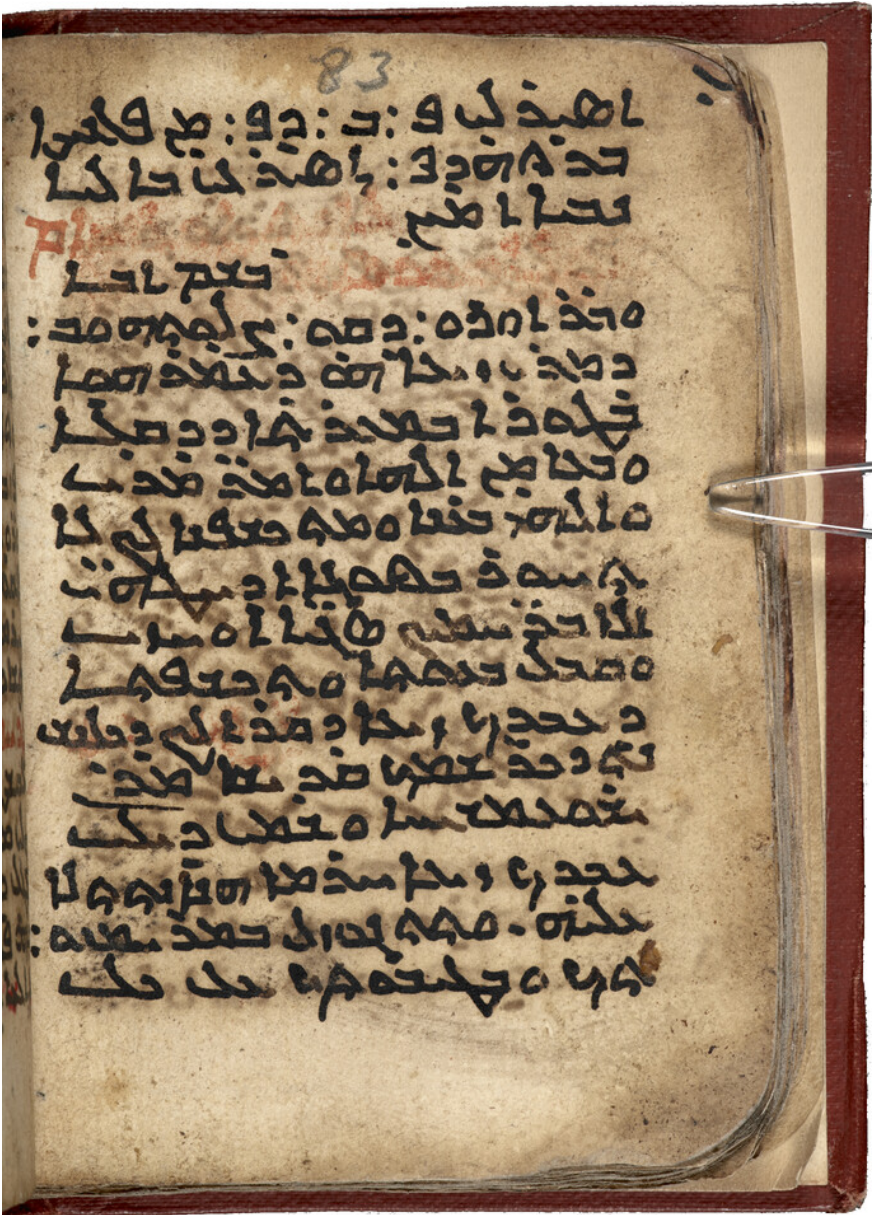


FIGURE 5 BL Or. 6673, f. 41<sup>v</sup> (BLa)  
 © BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD (BL OR. 6673, F. 41<sup>v</sup>)





כ

דלא יסמך לה דלמך. ?הבד מהד לכתה.  
 ?הבד לה וספורה. ?הבד סדתי? דסדלה  
 סדבה דסמה. ?הבד לה סופורה דה בנינה.  
 ?הבד לה סדתי? דילקלוקה. ?הדל מן  
 סה דסמה סה סה סה סה. ?הבד לה  
 סה סה סה סה סה סה. ?הבד לה סה סה סה  
 דס סה סה. ?הבד לה סה סה סה סה סה  
 דילקלוקה סה סה דילקלוקה. ?הבד לה סה  
 סה סה סה דילקלוקה סה סה סה סה סה  
 סה סה סה סה סה סה סה סה סה סה סה  
 סה סה סה סה סה סה סה סה סה סה סה  
 סה סה סה סה סה סה סה סה סה סה סה  
 סה סה סה סה סה סה סה סה סה סה סה  
 סה סה סה סה סה סה סה סה סה סה סה

FIGURE 7 BL Or. 5281, f. 4<sup>v</sup> (BLb)  
 © BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD (BL OR. 5281, F. 4<sup>v</sup>)