THE FUNCTION OF 11QPsApª AS A RITUAL
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Among the manuscripts found in cave 11 near Khirbet Qumran was a small cigar shaped scroll. When the scroll was opened it was revealed that the manuscript, titled now 11QPsApª (11Q11), contains apocryphal psalms.¹ The full contents of the manuscript are hard to define due to large pieces missing from the upper and lower parts of the scroll, but the extant compositions are previously unknown psalms, with one exception. The last psalm on the scroll is a slightly different version of Psalm 91.² The manuscript has been dated on paleographical grounds to c. 50-70 CE,³ but the individual psalms are much older. There is no indication that the psalms would have originated in the Qumran movement.⁴ Émile Puech has suggested that the psalms on the scroll make up a ritual of exorcism and this suggestion has received a near consensus status among scholars.⁵

However, thus far there has not been any discussion on several fundamental questions relating to this recognition and this article is an attempt to answer at least some of them. First of all, it will be discussed, what are the actual indicators in the scroll and the contents of the psalms that point to a ritual use and does the text tell anything about the actual performance of the ritual. After this, the way the ritual proceeds will be explored. In connection with this question it will also be discussed whether the sequence of the psalms is fixed or could it be altered according to different circumstances. And finally it is evaluated whether there is only one fixed usage available for the ritual or would it be possible to use it in several different ways depending on the situation.

¹ For the official edition of the text, see van der Woude 1998: 181–205.
² The reason for these variant readings of Psalm 91 has been discussed in Pajunen 2008: 593-604.
⁴ Most scholars have not dealt with this question at all. The only one to even suggest a Qumran origin for the psalms is Alexander (1997: 328) who proposed that 11Q11 as a whole is a sectarian composition (Psalm 91!). Puech (1990: 402-403), Eshel (2003: 69) and Arnold (2006: 166) have argued that the psalms are non-sectarian with Puech dealing with the issue more thoroughly than the others.
English translation of 11Q11:6

First psalm(s)
Fragment 1
1 ]...[ 2 ]...[ 3 ]...[ 4 ]...[ 5 ]...[ 6 ]booths [ 7 ] and[
Fragment 2
I, 1 ] 2 ] ... 3 ] ... 4 ] ... II, 5 ... [ 6 ... [ 7 seventy[ 8 ... [ Fragment 3
1 ]...[ 2 ] to water [ 3 ]one[ Fragment 4
1 ]...[ 2 ] he emptied [ Column I
2 [...]and weeps for him 3 [...]oath 4 [...]in Yahweh [...] 5 [...]serpent [...] 6 [...] ... [...] 7 [...] ... [...] 8 [...] ... [...] 9 [...]this [...] 10 [...] demon [...] 11 [...] and name [...] A Solomonic Psalm with a Celestial Trial (Col. II, 1- III, 13)
II, 01 --- 1 [...] ... [...] 2 [...] Solomon and he will cry for h[elp] [...] 3 [...] spir]rits and demons [...] 4 [...] These are [the de]mons [...] 5 [...] ... [...] ... [...] 6 [...] ... [...] ... [...] 7 [...] ... [...] 8 [...] ... [...] 9 [...]my [Go]d 7 [...]with me. ... a cure [...] relying [upon] your name and the assem[bly] 9 [...] Is]rael. Support 10 [...] the heavens 11 [...] ... separated[...] 12 [...] ... until[...] 13-III, 01 ---- 1 [...] ... [...] ... [...] 2 the earth and [...]earth. Who m[ade these miracles] 3 and wond[ers on the] earth? He, Yahweh [is the one who] 4 made t[hese through] his [strengt]h, who compels the b[astards] 5 [and] all the see[d of evil ]that have been set before [him], to take an oath. [And he calls ] 6 [all the hea]vens and[ all] the earth [as witnesses against them ]who ...[...]upon 7 [all me]n sin and against all pe[ople] ... ... they know 8 [...] ... which they do not [...] ... if not 9 [...]from before Yahweh ... [...]killing the soul 10 [...]Yahweh and [they] will fear tha[t] great [blow.] 11 [O]ne of you ...[...]compelled to serve me/him. Yahwe[h] 12 [...] g]reat and[...] ... [...] 13 ---

An Incantation for Exorcizing A Demon (Col. IV, 1- V, 3)

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6 The translation is not based on any of the currently published editions of the text, but on readings that have been discussed in a forthcoming article that was presented at the seminar of the OTSEM network in Lund in April 2008 under the title: "11QPsAp", A Communal Ritual Of Exorcism".
IV, 1 [and] great [...]aduring[...] 2 and the great [...]powerful [angel] and [...] 3 all the earth[...] the heavens and[...] 4 Yahweh will smite you with a [great] b[low] to destroy you [...] 5 and in his wrath[ ] he will send[ ] against you a powerful angel[...] 6 [...]... who [will not show] merc[y] to you, wh[o [...] 7 [...] who will, in addition to all this, [take] you [down] to the great abyss 8 [and to the] deepest [Sheol] and [...] [...] and dark 9 [...]... greatly [...]... on the earth 10 [...]forever and [...] with a curse [...] 11 [...]anger of Y[ahweh]...darkness [...] 12 [...]humiliation [...] your gift 13 [...] ... [...] ... [...] 14 --- V, 1 [...] ... [...] ... [...] 2 who[...]stricken[...] 3 depart, go away[...]... completed[... Selah] vacat

A Davidic Incantation to Exorcize Satan (Col. V, 4- VI, 3)

V, 4 Of David. Aga[inst Satan. An incanta]tion in the name of Yahwe[h [...] ... time 5 to Sata[n when he comes to you in the ni[ght. And ]you shall [s]ay to him: 6 ‘Who are you, you [who were born from ]man and the seed of the ho[ly one]s? Your face is only 7 [an illu]sion and your horns just a dre[a]m. Darkness you are, not light, [injusti]ce, not righteousness[...] ... host. Yahweh [will bind ]you 8 [in the ]deepest [Sheol] [and will close the] bronze [ga]tes [which n]o 10 light [penetrates] and [the] sun will not [shine for you] that[ ]rises] 11 [for the ]righteous to [...] and ]you shall say: ... [...] 12 [... the j]ust man, to go [...]evil to him [...] 13 [...] ... [...] is j]ustice for [him ...] 14 [...] and ... [...] ... [...] ... VI, 1 [...] ... [...] ... [...] ... [...] 2 [...] ... [...] ... [...] ... [...] ... [...] ... [...] ... [...] ... forever 3 [...]sons of Bel[ial ...]

Selah [ vacat

Qumranic Psalm 91 (Col. VI, 3- 13)7

VI, 3 [He that dwells] in the shelter [of the Most High, in the shadow of] Shaddai 4 [he passes the night]. He who says: [“Yahweh is my refuge] and [my] fortress, [my God] is the security [I trust!]” 5 [For h]e (God) will deliver you from [the net of the fowl]er from the dea[dly] pestilence. [With] his pinions he will cover [you], and under 6 his [wings] you will reside. [His] kindness will be your buckler and his truth your shield. Selah. V[acat You will not fear 7 the terror of the night or the arrow that flies by day or the plague that rages at [n]oon or the pestilence 8 that stalks[ in the

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7 The word ‘Qumranic’ is used here to designate the place of discovery—not the composer or even user—of this Psalm. It is used as a means of differentiating this version of Psalm 91 from the Masoretic and Septuagint versions.
dark. A thousand may fall on your left, ten thousand at your right, but it will not touch you. Just look with your eyes, and you will see the retribution of the wicked. You have called upon your refuge and you have been precious to him. You will not see evil nor will a pestilence touch your tent. For his angels he will command about you, to guard you on your ways, on their hands they will carry you, lest you strike your foot on a stone. Upon an adder and a lion you will tread, you will trample a young lion and a serpent. You have loved Yahweh and he will rescue you, protect you and show you his salvation. [Selah].

14 And they will answer: Amen, Amen. [Selah] 15

**Indicators for Ritual Use**

The similar genres of the surviving psalms make it likely that the text is either a collection of exorcisms or a ritual. The first psalm(s) that survive only in small fragments cannot be analyzed with any confidence, but the mention of a demon (or demons) (I, 10) and serpent (I, 5) point, in light of the other songs, to the possibility that at least one of the compositions preceding the opened scroll is an exorcism or an apotropaic prayer. The Solomonic psalm (II, 1- III, 13) is either an incantation meant to work in banishing many different ‘lesser’ spirits or an apotropaic prayer meant to provide protection from them. The next two psalms (IV, 1- V, 3 and V, 4-VI, 3) are clear incantations meant to banish specific demons (a demon whose name is now lost and Satan, respectively). The final psalm is a variant version of Psalm 91. Although at first glance the genres of the psalms seem to indicate a certain similarity, there are both material and

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8 The full analysis of the individual psalms is part of the already mentioned forthcoming article (see footnote 6). Only the results of this investigation are presented here, but in the coming article the psalms are analyzed according to their structure and with the aid of two studies dealing with distinguishing features of exorcisms. In an article “Hymns from Qumran—4Q510–4Q511” Nitzan compares 4Q510-511 Songs of the Sage with later Aramaic incantations found in the magic bowl inscriptions of Nahal Heved and finds that they have the same basic elements (Nitzan 1992: 53-63). Some of those elements can be found also on 11QPsAp. And in another article “Apotropaic Prayers in the Second Temple Period,” Eshel makes an important distinction between songs meant to protect people from the attacks of evil spirits and incantations meant to banish the spirits (Eshel 2003: 83). This division is useful also in analyzing 11Q11. For an analysis of Psalm 91 in the context of this scroll, see Pajunen 2008: 602-05.
textual indicators that point toward a ritual use of the scroll instead of a collection of psalms put together because of a similar genre. From the textual perspective these are the inclusion of Psalm 91, the way the term selah is used in the text, the personal forms and the ending of the composition.

Although Psalm 91 can be used, among other things, as protection against demons, its genre cannot be equated with the other psalms. It is clearly distinct from them and its inclusion is hard to justify if this is meant as a collection of exorcisms. It serves a specific ritual function in this scroll, but it does not function as an incantation meant to banish demons.\(^9\)

The term ‘selah’ is used consistently in this manuscript as a division marker (VI, 3, 6, 14 and a likely reconstruction in V, 3; VI, 13), which would not be needful in a mere collection meant for private use. This use of selah does point to a recital of consecutive psalms and furthermore towards an audience being present as the vacats would have been enough to mark the divisions for a reader. Whether the term meant the audience should do something or was used simply to emphasize transitions cannot be answered.

The third textual indicator is the use of personal forms. Although the use varies a bit between the different psalms the ‘characters’ stay the same, i.e., there is a reciter (explicitly present in II, 6-9 and possibly III, 11), the afflicted person (in the last two psalms: V, 5, 11; VI, 5-13), a larger audience (III, 11, VI, 14), evil spirits (addressed in the 2nd person sg. in the two clear incantations in IV, I-VI, 3 and otherwise in a more general way) and God (direct address in II, 6-9, otherwise more general references). The whole text is built so that one person can recite it addressing the afflicted, the demons, the audience and God in turn.

The last textual point is the ending, clearly separated from the rest of the text: “And they shall answer: Amen, Amen. Selah.” Although it is partly in

\(^9\) Alexander (1997: 326) suggests that all of the psalms on 11Q11 should be seen as incantations, but does not really answer why Psalm 91 should be viewed in such a way. Eshel (2003: 84-86) classifies Psalm 91 rather as an apotropaic prayer used as protection against evil spirits and I have shown (see Pajunen 2008: 602-604) that Psalm 91 does not share the features common in incantations and its emphasis is on protection from all of life’s dangers and as such one of its potential uses is as an apotropaic prayer.
a lacuna, there are no convincing alternative reconstructions. The verb is most likely a plural, which would indicate an audience that participates in the ritual at least in this way. Amen, Amen is attested in many texts (e.g., Psalms 41, 72 and 89, 4QBer\textsuperscript{a,b,d}, 4QDibHam) and there are at least two texts that narrate a ritual that has an audience responding in this way, i.e., Nehemiah 8:6, (see also 5:13) and 1QS I, 18- II, 26.

To these textual observations two aspects relating to the manuscript itself must be added. First of all, the scroll would have been easy to handle as it is not very high and it also had an extant wooden handle attached to it (the only one found among the scrolls). The second notable aspect is the script, which is larger than in many scrolls, with large spacing that would have made reciting from the scroll easy.

When these aspects are added up it is likely that this text was meant as a ritual and not as a collection made up of psalms with similar genres, but what ritual is it then? As noted above the contents of the beginning of the manuscript are impossible to decipher. Thus, what remains is only the ending of this ritual, but it can hopefully give an accurate or at least a representative idea about the whole. The first three psalms on the extant scroll all deal with demons and the Qumranic Psalm 91 can be used as protection against them. Thus, Puech’s argument for this being a ritual of exorcism seems to be valid.

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10 Alexander (1997: 326), argues that the ritual is not a communal one, i.e., that the only persons enacting the ritual are the ‘healer’ and the afflicted. Corresponding to this view he reconstructs ‘he shall answer’ instead of ‘they shall answer’. This is not possible as the \( \pi \) would make the word too long for the lacuna. The \( \varsigma \) needed for ‘they’ does not really take much extra space as it is largely written on top of the \( \varsigma \) in this script, but \( \pi \) would require a space of its own. ‘They shall answer’ fills the lacuna perfectly, but fitting ‘he shall answer’ would require the scribe to write in a tighter script than elsewhere and there is no reason to assume this. Furthermore, while Alexander is correct about the afflicted being referred to in the second person singular throughout (although present only in the last two psalms) he fails to notice that the audience is likely present already in III, 11 and not just the ending nor does he explain why the 2\textsuperscript{nd} person singular address of the afflicted (which surely is the most appropriate way to do it) would preclude an audience participating in the ritual as he suggests.

11 See also Deuteronomium 27:15-26. Alexander 1997: 326, also points out the consistent use of amen amen selah in protective amulets, which is an interesting practice, but attested only as a markedly later habit.


The Movement of the Ritual and Its Possible Uses

Even though the text has been identified as a communal ritual of exorcism, it is not clear what it was used for. There is no description of how the ritual was performed as far as gestures and such are concerned. Magical gestures and words used during healing are attested in the New Testament (e.g., Mark 7:31-35) and Josephus (Ant. 8.46-49) tells of a man named Eleazar who banishes a demon with a Solomonic incantation and pulls the demon out through the nostrils of the afflicted. There is no clue in the scroll on whether such things were done in connection with this ritual. The only thing that can be observed is the general way the recitation proceeds, which enables at least two different settings for the use of the ritual depending on whether the ritual is seen more in concrete or metaphorical terms, i.e., dealing with an actual observable attack by an evil spirit (sickness) or as a safeguard against possible (but not evident) demonic intrusion. The two settings are not mutually exclusive and the ritual could have been actualized according to the situation, or the usage might have changed over time from one to the other and even back again.

The first and perhaps the most logical use of the ritual would be the healing of a person stricken by an evil spirit. In this case the ritual would be an answer to an acute situation when it is observed (according to the contemporary knowledge of the time) that someone is under attack/possessed by an evil spirit. The Solomonic psalm (II, 1-III, 13) would be used either to provide protection from many different categories of demons or more likely, in light of the following two psalms, to exorcize them. It is also noteworthy that in this psalm there is a plea to God for a cure and support (II, 6-9) as well as a response to this, i.e., the granting of power over the demons (III, 11). These are aspects that are not found in the other psalms, but which of course are by the use of this psalm also granted for the rest of the ritual. The next psalm (IV, 1-V, 3) is meant to banish a specific demon whose name is now lost and the penultimate psalm exorcizes Satan (V, 4-VI, 3). It seems that the ‘lesser’ demons were cast out first and the most powerful was left as the last. The final part of the ritual is made up of the Qumranic Psalm 91 (VI, 3-13), which gains a different emphasis as part of this scroll than as an individual Psalm. The actual casting out of the demon(s) has already been accomplished by the ritual.

previous psalms. In Psalm 91, the healed person confirms his faith in God (v. 2) and is granted the promise of divine protection against further demonic attacks. It gives an assurance of peace for the person who was healed, i.e., you were cured and since you have relied on God he will watch over you also in the future so you need not fear the return of the demon/affliction. Thus the Qumranic version of Psalm 91 makes a fitting ending for the ritual by offering a release for the cured person.

The apparent order of the exorcisms moving from the least dangerous spirits to the more powerful ones and especially the use of Psalm 91 at the end as a release makes the sequence of the psalms seem fixed. Another point in this direction is that the Solomonic psalm has the plea to God for aid as well as granting of power over the demons that is likely an answer to this plea. They precede the two clear incantations where this power is also obviously needed and would seem to be integral parts in the ritual as a whole. Still other points that speak on behalf of seeing this text as a combination are the already mentioned use of personal forms and the term selah. These observations indicate an intentional sequence of psalms with each psalm having a specific task in the whole. This apparently fixed order of the psalms is also an additional point toward this being a ritual rather than a collection of psalms in a more or less random order.

The thing that makes this particular ritual special is that the sources (i.e., New Testament, Josephus, etc.) tell only of individual exorcists who cure afflicted people with incantations.\(^{15}\) However, this seems to be a complex ritual and a communal one as well. This is quite remarkable in the sense that as people thought to be afflicted by demons were essentially impure they would have been shunned by other people, not welcomed into a communal gathering to be cured. Even if some sources do describe people being present during the exorcism there is no indication that they might have participated in the act. This makes it likely that such a ritual would have been used only by a close-knit assembly who would have seen the exorcism as part of a communal battle against the forces of darkness. This would mean that the group was eschatological/apocalyptic in the way it viewed the world since in an ‘ordinary’ community the point of view would likely have related more to purity issues.

\(^{15}\) Sometimes several of these are traveling together; cf. Mark 6:7, Acts 19:13-16.
Related to such a viewpoint is another, more metaphorical, use of the ritual, which would be to use it when new members are admitted into a sectarian movement. In this case the ritual would be used as a safeguard to prevent possible demonic intrusion for which there is no visible evidence in the admissible members. Sectarian movements drew strict boundaries between the impure outside world and the pure insiders. Demons were the embodiment of impurity.\textsuperscript{16} Moreover, they afflict people with diseases causing ritual impurity, as well as tempt them into acts that generate moral impurity. Thus, it would stand to reason that it was made certain that they did not enter among the pure people of the community. If used in such a context the exorcisms would banish possible evil spirits from the person entering the movement and in Psalm 91 the person would then confirm his faith in God (v. 2) after which he is granted the promise of protection from all evil among those precious to God (vv. 9 and 14-16). Unfortunately there is nothing more concrete to base this suggestion on (except anachronistic early Christian rituals), but purely from the sequence of the psalms/thoughts it is a possibility. Whichever option is chosen as the setting of the ritual (or even if both of them are applicable) it is important to notice that in a sense, regardless of the setting, a ritual of exorcism is at the same time in a way also a ritual of purification.

\textit{Conclusions}

Enough textual and material indicators for ritual use of the text were discovered to conclude that manuscript 11Q11 contains a communal ritual of exorcism. What is left of the manuscript does not hold many clues to the actual performance of the ritual apart from the participants implied by the personal forms and the text that was recited. The ritual consists of at least five psalms in a fixed order, but there might have been also other material in the beginning of the ritual that is now lost. The ritual is meant to banish demons and it could have been used in different settings for this purpose. Two settings were proposed and there might be still other possibilities. The situation with rituals that do not explicitly state the setting is similar to mapping out the use of a particular Psalm. It is usually possible to give a range of uses deriving from the text, but in most cases we try to present just

\textsuperscript{16} Frequently also referred to as unclean spirits in the New Testament, but also several times in Hebrew (e.g., Zechariah 13:2; 11QPs\textsuperscript{a} XIX, 15). For an analysis of the Hebrew (and Aramaic) texts, see Lange 2003: 254-67.
one of them as the one and only setting of the text. In reality the texts were probably used in multiple settings as has been proven by the Qumran finds where the same psalm can be found in many different contexts. Therefore, rather than trying to pinpoint one fixed usage for a psalm or a setting for a ritual it is in cases like these perhaps more fruitful to try and describe the different possibilities rising from the text. The results of such an investigation are not as clear cut but they allow for more diversity in the use of a text between different groups and periods of time.
Bibliography


