

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

THE EIGHTH BOOK OF MOSES AND HOW IT GREW (*PLEID*. J 395)

[683] Since there are so few magical papyri earlier than the third century A.D., and since a great change in magic seems to have occurred about the first century A.D., we are led to hope that by source analysis of the later papyrus texts we may learn something of the content and structure of works of the earlier, critical period.

For this purpose *PLEid*. J 395 (= *PGM* XIII) is particularly valuable because it gives us three different versions of a work with various titles, which is commonly called by one of them *The Eighth Book of Moses*. As a table of contents of the entire papyrus (*Appendix A*) shows, the first 734 lines are filled by these three versions (hereinafter A, B, C), interrupted only by a list of the uses of the text, appended to A, lines 231-343, and a brief invocation of Sarapis, lines 618-45. The remainder of the papyrus contains other texts the compiler thought cognate.

The three versions of *VIII Moses* differ considerably (contrast the common dogma that magical texts had to be preserved and recited without change of a single letter). Here the second version has shifted to the end a long spell which the first version has in the middle, while the third version has almost wholly omitted both this spell and another, referring to them as already known, without giving their texts. Besides these, there are many minor peculiarities of each version, but all versions so often agree verbatim that there can be no reasonable doubt of their all being variants, at various removes, of a single basic text.

The basic text was intended to make the greatest god—the god who contains/controls all things, and who created the world—appear to the magician and give him valuable information. It described the equipment and preliminary purifications necessary for the rite, the proper time for performance and the proper costume, amulets, offerings and invocations to win over the gods of the weeks, hours, and days, and magical proceedings—writing on a plaque of natron the [684] name of the greatest god and an invocation of him, licking off one of these inscriptions and washing off the other into a krater of mixed milk and wine, drinking this mixture and lying down to recite a long invocation that began with the praises of the greatest god and went on to an account of how he had created the cosmos by laughing seven times, each burst of laughter producing a god or pair of gods to

control one or another aspect of the physical, social, or psychological world. This invocation was to end with the seven vowels. Thereupon the god would enter, and the magician was told how to act in his presence and get the desired information. The text then closed with directions for discovering which god ruled any given day.

This reconstruction of the basic text relies on the fact that all the elements specified either stand in all three of the versions now in the papyrus, or stand in two and can be shown by fairly strong arguments to have stood in the source from which the remaining one, version C, was abbreviated. Thus, for instance, version C says nothing of the first long invocation until it orders the magician to recite it, and says nothing of the drawings on the natron plaque, until it orders the magician to wash them off. But these orders indicate that it was abbreviated from a text in which both invocation and drawings had previously been specified and which therefore, in these points, paralleled, at least in the main, versions A and B.

However, the complete basic text, thus identified, is not preserved in any of the versions without some corruptions, both additions and omissions. The additions and omissions that have occurred in only one of the three versions are fairly easy to identify, especially when something essential to the structure has been omitted, as in the examples just considered, or when the material added is clearly a digression, like the dubious information given by the B version about the songs of the crocodile. Often, however, we must remain in doubt, since it is not impossible, nor even unlikely, that two versions sometimes made independently the same omissions, or additions at least similar, or that such changes were made in both by the compiler of the present collection (i.e. the archetype of the preserved papyrus).

An especially important example of such possibilities is given by the directions that, in each version, follow the recitation of the creation story. The A version says (lines 210ff.):

When the god comes in, look down and write what he says and the name for himself that he gives you. And do not go out of your [685] <initiation> tent until he also tells you accurately the things about yourself (i.e., your fate).

The B version (lines 564ff.) has almost exactly the same words (a suspicious fact, because it has no previous reference to any initiation tent). Version C (lines 704ff.) differs widely:

When the god comes in, do not gaze at his face, but look at his feet while beseeching <him> as indicated and thanking <him> that he did not despise you, but that you were thought worthy of the things about to be said to you for correction of <your> life. You, then, ask, 'Master, what is my fate?' and he will tell you both about <your> star, and what sort of *daimon* you have, and which <planet was> sovereign <at your birth>,

and where you will live and where you will die. And if you hear anything bad, do not cry out or lament, but ask that he may wash it out or avert it. For all things are possible to this god (Cp. Matt 19:26).

Here the remarkable thing is that nothing is said in C about the god's telling his true name, or the magician's asking it, and this in spite of the fact that the titles of both the A and the B versions declare that the rite is "about the holy Name" or "the Name that contains/controls all things." But the C conclusion cannot be summarily dismissed, because the B version has a similar conclusion at the end of the spell to be written on the natron—a spell which, as already remarked, B does not give in its directions for the rite, but adds as a postscript at the end where (lines 608ff.) it says:

An angel will come in, and you say to the angel, 'Hail, Lord. Both make me successful in these my affairs, and help me, and let the circumstances of my birth be revealed to me. And if he says anything bad, say, 'Wash away from me the evils of fate. Do not hide yourself, but reveal to me everything, by night and day, and in every hour of the month, to me, so-and-so the son of so-and-so. Let your good form appear to me, for I serve, under your order, your angel *Anagbiathi*, (etc.).

Here too there is nothing about revelation of the god's name. The rite is understood as one to reveal the magician's fate and enable him to avert its unpleasant elements. Yet one of the titles which follows version C again refers to the "Hidden book of Moses about the great Name."

What, then, was the purpose of the basic text? Probably divination [686] and correction of fate, since that appears in all four [? does Smith mean three?—SJDC] versions, whereas revelation of the name, though promised in all the titles, is provided in only two of the actual rites. Moreover, the compiler of the archetype of *PLeid*. J 395 was much interested in the true/great name and its use. He added to version A (unless he already found there) a long list of magical acts that could be performed by saying the name (lines 231-343); he inserted between B and C a formula for invoking Sarapis by use of his true name (lines 618-45); he added after version C two or three spells (the division is uncertain) for calling the great god by his true name, and then a long list of true names as given by assorted authorities (lines 933-1001). Consequently we can probably attribute the references to "the great Name" in the titles of *VIII Moses* and in the conclusion of versions A and B to the compiler of the collection, and say with some likelihood that they did not stand in the basic text.

Another such example is afforded by the numerous prescriptions for sacrifice in version B. Versions A and C do not prescribe sacrifices, but still have the prescriptions for a knife and sacrificial animals. Evidently, therefore, the basic text prescribed sacrifices, but A and C

have eliminated them. The elimination may reflect either the reported Constantinian prohibition of sacrifices, or the increasing prestige of vegetarianism which left similar contradictions in Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* for Eusebius, in ch. X of his attack on the *Life*, to pounce on as evidences of dishonesty.

In *VIII Moses*, however, the discrepancies go beyond such editorial adjustments. The basic text itself was not a single, unified composition. This appears first in the preliminary directions, see the synopsis (*Appendix B*). Versions A and B run roughly parallel until the Name is being written on the natron plaque. After specifying its second element, both interrupt the writing to prescribe invocation of the gods of the hours, days, and weeks—an invocation both had prescribed only a few lines earlier. With this their parallelism breaks off. Version A goes on at once to the invocation that must be written on the natron, but, after this, begins a new set of preliminary directions—equipment, costume, tent for initiation, amulets, etc.—all of which are practically unparalleled in B, but almost exactly paralleled in C, which begins at this point. A and C now go through the rite again, from the beginning, and are joined by B only when they come to the point at which the invocation is written on the natron and licked, or washed off. Since B put the text of the invocation at the end of its version, it has almost [687] nothing between the point where its parallelism with A broke off and the point at which it resumes.

The meaning of all this for source criticism is clear. There were two basically similar, but considerably different, texts giving preliminary prescriptions for the rite. B used one, C used the other, A used both, one after another. Hence its parallelism, first only with B, then only with C, and its jump backwards to the beginning of the rite—a jump that occurs just where the parallelism changes.

A similar conclusion is implied by the appearance of the angel and the revelation at the end of B's appended invocation. In the basic text from which A, B, and C, ultimately derived, that invocation was only the first of two. It was to be written on natron and licked off (eaten) or washed off and drunk by the magician, so that he would have it inside him and could genuinely produce it for the second invocation that would bring the god. Therefore to have an angel come at the end of the first invocation and anticipate the god's revelation is structurally anticlimactic and only to be explained by the supposition that there was an earlier, simpler form which used only one invocation, after which, without any licking, drinking, or repetition, the revelation would occur. The compiler of B used this form, therefore kept the invocation at the end, where it stood in his source, and carelessly kept the appearance and the revelation at the end of it, although he should have delayed them until the end of his second invocation.

This conjecture is confirmed by two facts. One we have already noticed—the magician's appeal to the angel at the end of B's appended invocation is paralleled by that to the god at the end of C's final invocation, and both show the original form, a request for revelation and amendment of the magician's fate, not the secondary request for revelation of the Name, which appears at the ends of A and B. The second fact is that in all three versions the two invocations—that to be written on the natron and the second, which begins the *kosmopoiia*—are essentially identical: I call on you, the supreme, creator god ... I call on you as do your first created gods/angels, notably the sun; I call on you in bird language, in hieroglyphic, in Hebrew, in Egyptian, etc. (each of these categories being filled out, in both invocations, by much the same magical words).

Thus we can go with some confidence a step behind the 'basic form' that was the common source of the A, B and C versions, to an earlier, simpler form in which the god was called by a single invocation. When the notion came in that the magician must get the prayer inside him [688] before he could utter it, the original form was changed by adding the write-and-lick/drink directions, and the original invocation was repeated, with modifications, as conclusion of the rite. At a yet later date this was expanded by addition of the story of creation by laughing, a story which had its own prehistory. But that is another story.¹ [689]

¹ For those to whom the obvious is not obvious, let me add that if the above observations are correct, *PLeid.* J 395 is *at least* the fifth generation of a literary family. The first generation was a simple invocation of the creator god. In the second generation this was doubled, connected by the write-and-consume ritual, and otherwise expanded to produce the common source of the three versions of *VIII Moses*. In the third generation this common source was altered to produce the three versions (for C the alteration involved at least two stages, the second being abbreviation, so probably several generations should be allowed here). In the fourth (by minimal reckoning) generation, the three versions were collected with other material to produce the archetype of the present manuscript. In the final generation this archetype was copied to produce the text we now have. How many years should be allowed for five generations?

APPENDIX A: CONTENT OF *PLEID*. J 395=*PGM* XIII

lines

- 1-230 "Sacred Book called Monad or Eighth of Moses about the holy Name"
- 231-343 "The uses of the Sacred Book which all the *sophistai* practice"
- 343-618 "Sacred Hidden Book of Moses called Eighth or Holy, and this is the rite of the Name that contains/controls all"
- 618-645 An invocation of Sarapis by his genuine name
- 646-734 An abbreviated version of *VIII Moses*, with a terminal title, "Eighth, Hidden <Book> of Moses. In another I found was written <as title> 'Hidden Book of Moses about the great Name'"
- 734-746 Directions about names said to be concealed in the preceding book
- 746-759 Other names and their uses
- 760-911 "Directions for the seven-letter name and the spell the god hears"
- 912-933 A fragment of an invocation cognate to the above, for meeting the god
- 933-1001 Different great names, as given by a dozen authorities, including Orpheus, Egyptians, Zoroaster, Pyrrhus, "Moses in the Archangelic <Book>" and "in Jerusalem"
- 1001-1057 Directions for making and using an amulet to control fear or anger
- 1058-1077 "Moses' Hidden Moon <Book>" (evidently a collection of short spells)
- 1078 "The Hidden or Tenth <Book> of Moses" [690]

APPENDIX B: SYNOPSIS OF THE THREE VERSIONS OF THE EIGHTH BOOK OF MOSES

<i>A. lines 1-230</i>	<i>B. lines 343-618</i>	<i>C. lines 646-734</i>
Title	Title	
40 days' purity	40 days' purity	
new moon in ram	new moon in ram	
clean house, ground floor, etc.	sleep on ground, sacrifice	
ingredients of incense		
Hermes stole names		
incenses & their gods, flowers and their preparation	burn incense (no gods) flowers and preparation, wear cinnamon	
Explanation of <i>Key</i>	breakfast, milk of a black cow and wine tasting the sacrifice when the day comes, ingredients and sacrifice incenses, flowers, and sacrifice tasting the sacrifice, sacrifice again	
invoking the hour gods	invoking the hour and day gods	
initiation to them by cakes	Moses stole (?) names.	
writing the name on natron	initiation to the hour gods	
(1) popping: crocodile and ennead	writing the name on natron	
(2) whistling: ouroboros	(1) popping: crocodile and ennead (songs of the crocodile) (2) whistling: ouroboros	
the 9 names (of?) the hour gods said first	the 9 names (of?) the hour gods said first	
Invocation to be written on the natron	(B puts this after the rest of the text)	
Equipment: pinax, knife <i>if</i> you should sacrifice costume, tent for initiation.		Equipment: pinax, knife <i>if</i> you should sacrifice costume, tent for initiation. [691]

wear cinnamon.
 amulet: Apollo and snake
 Hallow yourself 7 days.
 Sleep on the ground at the
 dark of the moon.
 Rise to greet the sun for
 seven days.
 Entreat hour, week, day
 gods.
 On the 8th day, at
 midnight,
 light altars and lamps,
 have roosters ready,
 recite the invocation
 for the natron, and the
 mystery of the god.
 Have a krater of milk and
 wine.

Write invocation on both
 side of natron
 Lick off one side and wash
 off the other into the
 krater.

The natron is to be written
 with ink of incense and
 flowers.
 Before drinking the milk
 and wine say this (?)
 entreaty.

Lie down with tablet and
 stylus
 and say *Hermaikos*.

Invocation introducing the
 story of creation.
 Story of creation by
 laughter, sputtering and
 hissing.

Having put some flowers
 into the ink,
 write invocation on both
 sides of natron.
 Lick off one side and wash
 off the other into the
 krater.

Before washing off,
 sacrifice one rooster,
 have the other and the
 dove ready,
 then call on the hour gods,

then drink the milk and
 wine.

Invocation introducing the
 story of creation.
 Story of creation by
 laughter, sputtering and
 hissing.

wear cinnamon.
 amulet: Apollo and snake
 Hallow yourself 7 days.
 Sleep on the ground at the
 dark of the moon.
 Rise to greet the sun for
 seven days.
 Entreat hour, week, day
 gods.
 On the 8th day, at
 midnight,
 light altars and lamps,
 have roosters ready,
 recite the invocation
 for the natron, and the
 mystery of the god.
 Have a krater of milk and
 wine.

Write invocation on one
 side of natron only.
 Lick it off.
 Wash off the other side, on
 which are the pictures,
 into the krater.

The natron is to be written
 with ink of incense and
 flowers.
 Before drinking the milk
 and wine say this (?)
 entreaty.

Lie down with tablet and
 stylus
 and say the *kosmopoiia*
 which begins with the
 first line of the
 invocation.

Lord, I imitate the seven
vowels, come in and
hear me.

When the god comes in
look down.

Write the things said and
the name for himself
that he gives.

Do not go out of your tent.

till he tells you about
yourself

When the god comes in
look down.

Write the things said and
the name for himself
that he gives.

Do not go out of your tent.

till he tells you about
yourself

Invocation to be written on
the natron (=A, above,
p. 690)

An angel will come in. Say
to him, 'Hail, Lord.

Prayers for success and
for revelation of fate.

And if he says anything
bad ask him to wash it
off,

and to reveal everything at
all times,

and to appear in a good
form,

"because I serve under
your angel."

When you come to the
seven vowels, say

'Lord, I imitate the seven
vowels, come in and
hear me'. [692]

Then, too, the name of the
27 letters.

And be lying on a rush mat
spread on the ground.

When the god comes in do
not look at his face, but
at his feet,

both beseeching and giving
thanks ... (for) the
things to be said for
correction of life.

Ask, 'What is my destiny?'
and he will tell you.

And if you hear anything
bad ask him to wash it
out or avert it.

When you learn, give
thanks.

Always sacrifice thus, for
thus he hears.

How to determine which
star controls the pole
(table).

I have set forth for you
these things which not
even kings were able to
grasp (cp. Luke 10:24).

Write on the natron with
ink made of flowers and
incense. [693]

Similarly make the “vetch”
of which I spoke
allegorically in my *Key*.

I have set forth for you, my
child, the complete
initiation of the *Monad*.

How to determine which
star controls the pole
(table).

<The> *Eighth Hidden*
<Book> of *Moses*. I
found written in
another <copy> <The>
Hidden Book of Moses
concerning the great
Name (etc.).