

GREEK MAGICAL PAPYRI

I. ACQUIRING A SUPERNATURAL ASSISTANT

Discussion/Preparation

1. What equipment do you need to call a supernatural assistant? (Make a shopping list; it will be a long one). Which of these things might be readily available, which not?
2. How long does this process take, start to finish?
3. How do you treat the assistant?
4. What is the balance of power and respect between you and the assistant, given that he is immensely powerful and divine, but is apparently committed to fulfilling your wishes?
5. What can he do for you, and how do you get him to do it?
6. How does magic align with religion in this text?

THE TEXT:

Pnouthios to Keryx, a god[-fearing man], greetings. As one who knows, I have prescribed for you [this spell for acquiring an assistant] to prevent your failing / as you carry out [this rite]. After detaching all the prescriptions [bequeathed to us in] countless books, [one out of all. . .] I have shown you this spell for acquiring an assistant [as one that is serviceable] to you . . . for you to take this holy [assistant] and only . . . O friend of aerial / spirits [that move]. . . having persuaded me with god-given spells . . . but [not] I have dispatched this book so that you may learn thoroughly. For the spell of Pnouthis [has the power] to persuade the gods and all [the goddesses]. And [I shall write] you from it about [acquiring] an assistant.

[The] traditional rite [for acquiring an assistant]: After the preliminary purifications, / [abstain from animal food] and from all uncleanness and, on whatever [night] you want to, go [up] onto a lofty roof after you have clothed yourself in a pure garment . . . [and say] the first spell of encounter as the sun's orb is disappearing . . . with a [wholly] black Isis band on [your eyes], and in your right hand / grasp a falcon's head [and . . .] when the sun rises, hail it as you shake its head [and] . . . recite this sacred spell as you burn [uncut] frankincense and pure rose oil, making the sacrifice [in an earthen] censer on ashes from the [plant] heliotrope. And as you recite the spell there will be / this sign for you: a falcon will [fly down and] stand in front of [you], and after flapping its wings in [mid-air and dropping] an oblong stone, it will immediately take flight and [ascend] to heaven. [You] should pick up this stone; carve it at once [and engrave it later]. Once it has been engraved, bore a hole in it, pass a thread through and wear it around your neck. But in the evening, / go up to [your] housetop [again] and, facing the light of the goddess, address to her this [hymnic spell] as you again sacrifice myrrh troglitis in the same fashion. Light [a fire] and hold a branch of myrtle . . . shaking it, [and salute] the goddess.

At once there will be a sign for you like this: [A blazing star] will descend and come to a stop in the middle / of the housetop, and when the star [has dissolved] before your eyes, you will behold the angel whom you have summoned and who has been sent [to you], and you will quickly learn the decisions of the gods. but do not be afraid: [approach] the god and, taking his right hand, kiss him and say these words to the angel, for he will quickly respond to you about whatever you want. But you / adjure him with this [oath] that he meet you and remain inseparable and that he not [keep silent or] disobey in any way. But when he has with certainty accepted this oath of yours, take the god by the hand and leap down, [and] after bringing him [into] the narrow room where you reside, [sit him] down. After first preparing the house / in a fitting manner and providing all types of foods and Mendesian wine, set these before the god, with an uncorrupted boy serving and maintaining silence until the [angel] departs. And you address preliminary (?) words to the god; "I shall have you as a friendly assistant, a beneficent god who serves me whenever I say, 'Quickly, by your / power now appear on earth to me, yea verily, god!'"

And while reclining, you yourself quickly speak about what you propose. Test this oath of the god on [what] you wish. But when 3 hours have passed, the god will immediately leap up. Order the boy to run [to] the door. And say, "Go, lord, blessed god, / where you live eternally, as you will," and the god vanishes.

This is the sacred rite for acquiring an assistant. It is acknowledged that he is a god; he is an aerial spirit which you have seen. If you give him a command, straightway he performs the task: he sends dreams, he brings women, men without the use of magical material, he kills, he destroys, he stirs up winds from the earth, he carries / gold, silver, bronze, and he gives them to you whenever the need arises. And he frees from bonds a person chained in prison, he opens doors, he causes invisibility so that no one can see you at all, he is a bringer of fire, he brings water, wine, bread and [whatever] you wish in the way of foods: olive oil, vinegar — with the single exception of fish—and he will bring plenty of vegetables, / whatever kind you wish, but as for pork, you must not ever tell him to bring this at all! And when you want to give a [dinner], tell him so. Conjure up in your mind any suitable room and order him to prepare it for a banquet quickly and without delay. At once he will bestow chambers with golden ceilings, and you will see their walls covered with marble — and you consider these things partly real / and partly just illusionary — and costly wine, as is meet to cap a dinner splendidly. He will quickly bring daimons, and for you he will adorn these servants with sashes. These things he does quickly. And [as soon as] you order [him] to perform a service, he will do so, and you will see him excelling in other things: He stops ships and [again] / releases them, he stops very many evil [daimons], he checks wild beasts and will quickly break the teeth of fierce reptiles, he puts dogs to sleep and renders them voiceless. He changes into whatever form [of beast] you want: one that flies, swims, a quadruped, a reptile. He will carry you [into] the air, and again hurl you into the billows / of the sea's current and into the waves of the sea; he will quickly freeze rivers and seas and in such a way that you can run over them firmly, as you want. And [especially] will he stop, if ever you wish it, the sea-running foam, and whenever you wish to bring down stars and whenever you wish to make [warm things] cold and cold things / warm, he will light lamps and extinguish them again. And he will

shake walls and [cause] them to blaze with fire; he will serve you suitably for [whatever] you have in mind, O [blessed] initiate of the sacred magic, and will accomplish it for you, this most powerful assistant, who is also the only lord of the air. And the gods will agree to everything, for without him / nothing happens. Share this great mystery with no one [else], but conceal it, by Helios, since you have been deemed worthy by the lord [god].

And this is spoken next: "Hither to me, King, [I call you] God of Gods, might, boundless, undefiled, indescribably, firmly established Aion. / Be inseparable from me from this day forth through all the time of my life."

Then question him by the same oaths. If he tells you his name, take him by the hand, descend and have him recline as I have said above, setting before him part of the / foods and drinks which you partake of. And when you release him, sacrifice to him after his departure what is prescribed and pour a wine offering, and in this way you will be a friend of the mighty angel. When you go abroad, he will go abroad with you; when you are destitute, he will give you money. He will tell you what things will happen both when and at what time of the night or day. And if / anyone asks you "What do I have in mind?" or "What has happened to me?" or even "What is going to happen?," question the angel, and he will tell you in silence. But you speak to the one who questions you as if from yourself. When you are dead, he will wrap [up] your body as befits a god, but he will take your spirit and carry it into the air with him. / For no aerial spirit which is joined with a mighty assistant will go into Hades, for to him all things are subject. Whenever you wish to do something, speak his name alone into the air [and] say, ["Come!"] and you will see him actually standing near you. And say to him, "Perform this task," and he does it at once, and after doing it he will say to you, "What else do you want? For I am eager for heaven." If you do not / have immediate orders, say to him, "Go, lord," and he will depart. In this fashion, then, the god will be seen by you alone, nor will anyone ever hear the sound of his speaking, just you yourself alone. And he will tell you about the illness of a man, whether he will live or die, even on what day and at what hour of night. / And he will also give [you both] wild herbs and the power to cure, and you will be [worshipped] as a god since you have a god as a friend. These things the mighty assistant will perform competently. Therefore share these things with no one except [your] legitimate son alone when he asks you for the magic powers imparted [by] us. Farewell.

The address to the sun / requires nothing except the formula "IAEOBAPHRENEMOUN" and the formula "IARBATHA."

II. MAGICAL RECIPE (ESPECIALLY GOOD FOR RESTRAINING CHARIOTEERS)

Papyri graecae magicae III.1-59

[P.G.M. III.1-164 is a multipurpose magical recipe, part of which deals with restraining charioteers (lines 15-30). The instructions begin with the ritual drowning of a cat while reciting a

formula to Sekhmet-Bastet, a "cat-faced" goddess mentioned in several other Egyptian magical texts.]

Preparation/discussion

What do you have to do to keep a rival charioteer from winning a race you want to bet on, and how badly do you have to want to do it? Make a:

1. list of action that make it work
2. list of times you have to do another step
3. list of places you have to be/go

THE TEXT:

Take the cat, and make [three] lamellae, one for its anus, one for ..., and one for its throat; and write the formula [concerning the] deed on a clean sheet of papyrus, with cinnabbar [ink], and [then the names of] the chariots and charioteers, and the chariot boards and the racehorses. Wind this around the body of the cat and bury it. Light seven lamps upon [7] unbaked bricks, and make an offering, fumigating storax gum to it, and be of good cheer. Take its body [and preserve] it by immuring it either in a tomb or in a burial place ... with colors, ... bury ... looking toward the sunrise, pour out (?) ..., saying:

"Angel, ... [SEMEA], chthonic ... lord (?), grant [safety?], ... O chthonic one, in [the] horse race, IAKTORE; hold ... restrain ..., PHOKENSEPSEUARE[KTATHOUMISONKTAI], for me, the spirit ... the daimon of [the] place ... and may the [deed] come about for me immediately, immediately; quickly, quickly, because I conjure you, at this place and at this time, by the implacable god ... THACHOCHA EIN CHOUCHEOCH, and by the great chthonic god, ARIOR EUOR, and by the names that apply to you; perform the NN deed" (add the usual).

Then take up the water in which the drowning took place, and sprinkle it [on] the stadium or in the place where you are performing [the rite].

The formula to be spoken, while you are sprinkling the drowning water, is as follows: I call upon you, Mother of all men, you who have brought together the limbs of Meliouchos, even Meliouchos himself, OROBASTRIA NEBOUTOSOUALETH, Entrapper, Mistress of corpses, Hermes, Hekate, [Hermes?], Hermekate, LETH AMOUMAMOUTERMYOR; I conjure you, the daimon that has been aroused in this place, and you, the daimon of the cat that has been endowed with spirit; come to me on this very day and from this very moment, and perform for me the NN deed" (add the usual, whatever you wish). (trans. J.M. Dillon in H.D. Betz (1986))

[The process continues, with the word IAEO being written on the first and third lamellae and a more elaborate conjuration spell being written on the second lamella.]

III. A CURSE TABLET

D.T. 237

Note: This spell is an example of a curse tablet inscription that tapers off and forms a triangle, as this translation from J. Gager (1992) reveals.

Preparation/discussion

Charioteers again:

1. How do you curse them (as opposed to working more complex spells to restrain them?)
2. What do you ask to happen to them so they won't win?
3. How does this strategy compare to the cat spell above?

THE TEXT:

I invoke you, spirit of one untimely dead, whoever you are, by the mighty names SALBATHBAL AUTHGEROTABAL BASUTHATEO ALEO SAMMABETHOR.

Bind the horses whose names and images/likeness on this implement I entrust to you; of the Red [team]: Silvanus, Servator, Lues, Zephyrus, Blandus, Imbraius, Dives, Mariscus, Rapidus, Oriens, Arbustus; of the Blues: Imminens, Dignus, Linon, Paezon, Chrysaspis, Argutus, Diresor, Frugiferus, Euphrates, Sanctus, Aethiops, Praeclarus. Bind their running, their power, their soul, their onrush, their speed. Take away their victory, entangle their feet, hinder them, hobble them, so that tomorrow morning in the hippodrome they are not able to run or walk about, or win, or go out of the starting gates, or advance either on the racecourse or track, but may they fall with their drivers, Euprepes, son of Telesphoros, and Gentius and Felix and Dionusios "the biter" and Lamuros. For AMUEKARPTIR ERCHONSOI RAZAABUA DRUENEPHISI NOINISTHERGA BEPHURORBETH command you. Bind the horses whose names and images I have entrusted to you on this implement; of the Reds: Silvanus, Servator, Lues, Zephyrus, Blandus, Imbraius, Dives, Mariscus, Rapidus, Oriens, Arbustus; and of the Blues: Imminens, Dignus, Linon, Paezon, Chrysaspis, Argutus, Derisor, Frugiferus, Euphrates, Sanctus, Aethiops, Praeclarus. Bind their running,

their power, their soul, their onrush,
their speed. Take away their victory,
entangle their feet, hinder them,
hobble them, so that tomorrow
morning in the hippodrome they
are not able to run or walk
about, or win, or go out
of the starting gates, or
advance either on the racecourse,
or circle around the turning point;
but may they fall with their
drivers, Euprepes, son of
Telesphoros, and Gentius and
Felix, and Dionysius "the
biter" and Lamuros. Bind
their hands, take away
their victory, their exit,
their sight, so that they
are unable to see their
rival charioteers, but
rather snatch them up
from their chariots
and twist them to
the ground so that
they alone fall,
dragged along
all over the
hippodrome,
especially
at the turning
points, with
damage to
their body,
with the
horses
whom
they
drive.
Now,
quickly.

(trans. J. Gager (1992), no

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