

Azazel

I. Introduction. *Demon*, →DDD. The etymology and the meaning of the name ‘azā’zēl, which appears in the Old Testament only in Lev 16:8, 10 (twice), 26, are not completely clear and remain controversial, although the etymological hypothesis ‘z’zl < *‘zz’l < ‘zz (“to be strong”) + ‘l (“god”) appears to be the most likely explanation (JANOWSKI/WILHELM 1993: 128 with n. 98; TAWIL 1980: 58f). In recent discussion various but nondecisive theses have been proposed concerning the possible origin and center of the A.-rite. They can be classified as the nomadic, the Egyptian, and the South Anatolian–North Syrian models (see DDD; SCHLESIER 2003; JANOWSKI/WILHELM 1993; GÖRG 1986; FREY–ANTHES 2007). The possible iconography of A. and his supposedly demonic character was always underlined by positing a connection between the šā’îr (“goat”) chosen for A. with the šē’îrîm (“demons”; Isa 13:21; 34:14; Lev 17:7; 2 Chr 11:15), which naturally results in the image of a demon in goat (→caprid) form for the “scapegoat” (see for example KEEL 2007: § 1421).

II. Iconographic discussion. Since EISSFELDT (1950: 85ff), the 13th cent. ivory plaque from Megiddo (LOUD 1939: pl. 5:4) has been regarded as iconographic proof of the demon hypothesis (for a critique see JANOWSKI/WILHELM 1993: 119–123). EISSFELDT (1950: 92) was the first to connect this composition with the tradition of A. in Lev 16:10, 20–22, and was followed by KEEL (1996: 73, fig. 97) and SCHROER (1987: 134), among others. On this plaque “a composite human, animal, and bird figure and ibex” (LOUD 1939: 13) are brought together in a dramatic relationship: a hybrid with human head, eagle’s wings, and a carnivore’s body assaults a →caprid collapsing under the impact (for the same representation on another ivory plaque from Megiddo see LOUD 1939: pl. 5:5; for parallels in the Syro–Palestinian art of the 2nd/1st mill. see JANOWSKI/WILHELM 1993: 119 n. 52). Furthermore, KEEL has advanced the thesis that a 7th cent. gypsum amulet from Arslan Tash (1996: 74 fig. 97a; MESNIL DE BUISSON 1939: 421–434; BUTTERWECK 1993: 435–437; *KAI* no. 27) belongs to the same tradition (see JANOWSKI/WILHELM 1993: 121 n. 60 for a further example). On the front side the amulet shows two theriomorphic, female demons: above s a winged sphinx with a horned helmet–like headdress is depicted, below a she–wolf devours a child, part of

whose body and legs can be seen in the demon’s mouth. Inscriptions on both sides of the amulet summon various gods as powerful helpers against the depicted demon.

III. Conclusion. It has to be pointed out that the Megiddo scene does not show the constellation “attacking demon vs. succumbed capride,” but is a contest scene of the type “male sphinx vs. caprid/bovide,” with obvious parallels in the Middle Assyrian glyptic art of the 13th and 12th cent. (see MAYER–OPIFICIUS 1986: fig. 10; MOORTGAT 1944: figs. 19, 20, 23; FISCHER 1999: fig. 10). From an iconographic point of view, there are no indications that the sphinx on the Megiddo ivory is of demonic nature. Although the theme of “attacking demon vs. succumbed caprid/bovid” attached to this depiction has stimulated the possibility of an iconographic parallel to the ritual in Leviticus, it is questionable whether the iconographic material discussed above should be connected to it. If the parallel does apply, then a further case might be made that the ritual of sending a goat to the desert demon A. was based on pre–Israelite beliefs (EISSFELDT 1950: 92; PFEIFFER 2001).

IV. Selected bibliography

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