

The main purpose of the project is to deliver a systematic and comprehensive exposition of the literary traditions about angels, demons, ghosts and monsters as transmitted in the Babylonian Talmud. More specifically, it is aimed at answering several questions. (1) How did the authors of the Babylonian Talmud conceptualize and imagine these supernatural entities? How were these entities organized, classified and hierarchized? What particular features and skills did these entities possess? (2) What were the literary, religious and cognitive functions of these entities? To which spheres of life they were connected? (3) What kind of emotions, attitudes and values did the rabbis attribute to these figures? (4) How did the supernatural entities interact with humans? What were the humans' means of controlling these entities?

After performing the initial scrutiny it was possible to advance several hypotheses with regard to the above posed questions. (1) The supernatural entities can be ordered into certain structured classes of beings which in turn share some specific features and functions. (2) The supernatural entities appear in the accounts belonging to various literary genres. The literary genre in turn can be taken as indicative of the perceived reality of a given type or class of entity. (3) The entities being essentially of anthropomorphic and theriomorphic nature are attributed with both positive and negative emotions and attitudes. (4) The relationships between humans and entities can range from hostility through indifference up till benevolence and are focused on several subjects, such as transmission of knowledge or personal health and wellbeing.

The project bases on the methodology applied in the *Elyonim veTachtonim* database (<http://elyonimvetachtonim.blogspot.com>) and combines the techniques typical for cognitive sciences (cognitive linguistics, cognitive theory of religion), digital humanities (linguistic statistics, corpus linguistics) and classical historical-hermeneutic approach. The scope of work includes seven stages. (1) Synthesis of the academic studies of the Talmudic traditions about the supernatural entities. (2) Formulation of the theoretical and methodological principles for the study of the Talmudic traditions about the supernatural entities. (3) Comparison of the manuscript variants of the Talmudic accounts involving supernatural entities. (4) Revision, standardization and classification of the Talmudic accounts involving supernatural entities with regard to the their formal qualities, themes and the types of entities. (5) Analysis and interpretation of the figures gathered from the Babylonian Talmud with regard to the description of the supernatural entities. (6) Analysis and interpretation of the figures gathered from the Babylonian Talmud with regard to the relationships between supernatural entities and humans. (7) Interpretation of the Talmudic traditions on supernatural entities from the perspective of religious studies.

The main reason for choosing this subject is the will to fill up the substantial gap in the academic study of the supernatural entities of the Babylonian Talmud. Although there are numerous studies on the Jewish magic and folklore which address the matter of supernatural entities in passing, they tend to downplay the significance of varied and complex personified nature of these creatures. The works which concern strictly the Jewish angelology and demonology in turn often present a very sketchy and *ad hoc* understanding of the supernatural entity. Finally, while there are several online databases and thematic concordances of the Jewish literature, including the Babylonian Talmud, they offer very little functionality with regard to the supernatural entities. Exactly these issues are addressed by the present project which builds the definition of the supernatural entity and its various classes basing on the cognitive theory of religion, and aims at providing an exhaustive account of these literary creatures and their relationships with humans.

In the further scope, it is possible to discern several academic spheres impacted by the project within such broader fields like Jewish studies, biblical studies and religious studies. First and foremost, since its main purpose is to provide a detailed description of the world of supernatural entities, everyone interested in the subjects of Late Antique Jewish and Christian angelology and demonology can potentially benefit from the results of the present endeavor. Second, the essential part of the project is the further development of the *Elyonim veTachtonim* database, which in itself can serve a variety of functions and a starting point for other inquiries. Third, the texts analyzed within the present project include the passages containing the classical rabbinic interpretations of the particular verses from the Hebrew Bible and these in turn may prove valuable for the scholars interested in the pre-rabbinic biblical angelology and demonology. Fourth, the methods applied in the present project are by no means culture-specific and as such can be copied and utilized in the study of the traditions about supernatural entities present in other religious paradigms. Finally, given the theoretical and methodological principles of the present project the results can be taken as the case study of cognitive theory of religion and digital humanities.