Josephus

The 1st century Jewish historian Josephus mentions the practice of exorcism in his writings and describes it as both an ancient and a modern practice. One section in *Antiquities* 8:45-49 highlights this well. This passage begins with a reference to Solomon, whom Josephus assigns exorcistic powers, and then refers to a present-day man named Eleazar, whom Josephus himself had witnessed exorcise demons. Josephus describes his manner of exorcism to include: use of scents to drive out the demon (8:47); mentioning of Solomon (8:47); reciting Solomon's incantation (8:47); possessing command over the spirit after it had left the man (8:48). These clues, and others, illuminate a 1st century Jewish contextual understanding of exorcism.

Examining this passage, Josephus describes Solomon's "manner of using exorcisms" as being left behind, so that others could perform the action (8:45). What is important, regardless of whether Solomon actually did the historical action of exorcism, is that Josephus wants to stress the antiquity and cultural longevity of the practice of exorcism. In Josephus' mind, exorcism has been happening for hundreds of years and was still occurring in his day. This shows that exorcism had become firmly rooted in the cultural and theological framework of the Jews in Josephus' time.

Another key element of this passage is Josephus' description of Eleazar. Josephus writes that he is from our "own country" and that Josephus himself had witnessed him release people from demons (8:46). By mentioning his eye-witness testimony and Jewish place of Eleazar's origin, Josephus emphasizes the Jewishness of exorcisms. Josephus also informs us that Eleazar used a "ring that had a root of one of those sorts mentioned by Solomon to the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through his nostrils" (8:47). This harkens back to the Tobit's use of fumes to expel a demon. After expelling the demon, Eleazar warns it not to return by invoking the name of Solomon and by using Solomonic incantations (8:47). This could mean that Eleazar did not believe he could perform the act of exorcism out of his own ability or power, but was in need of a higher authority in order for his exorcism to succeed.

Source: https://www.ttschmidt.com/blog/exorcism-in-the-first-century-jewish-mind