

Amulets of Protection and Texts for Fears in Antiquity

Edited by
ANGELIKA BERLEJUNG
and GIDEON BOHAK

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Introduction

What were ancient people afraid of? Are their fears so different from ours today? Did they face their fears or repress them or even overcome them? What did they specifically do about their fears or about the threats they perceived? One of the most important sources to answer such and similar questions in historical research are amulets – especially those which bear inscriptions. These inscriptions can attest to human fears – explicitly or implicitly. They can mention concrete threats which were supposed to be repelled by the amulet. Or the amulet was addressed to a deity who was asked to protect its owner in a more general manner.

Insofar as they were made of valuable materials or inscribed, amulets reflect elite life since literacy cannot be assumed for all classes of the population and valuable materials were expensive. However, we still can learn something about the fears of numerous men and women from the amulets they wore, regardless of whether the amulets were purchased by the persons who wore them or by their husbands, parents, or owners (when the wearers were slaves, and even animals). In this respect, amulets can be analyzed as witnesses to individual fears and dangers, and to some of the methods used for managing such fears.

The use of amulets is attested in virtually every society, from the dawn of human culture onwards. But the use of textual amulets is a by-product of the invention of writing, and it raises a host of new questions: Who was supposed to read the text written on the amulet – the demons? the gods? God's angels? God himself? And did the persons who purchased the amulets, and those who wore them, know what was written on their amulets? And how did the persons who inscribed the amulets know what text to inscribe – was it a matter of personal choice, or of set scribal norms, which dictated what must be written on each amulet?

With these basic questions in mind, we conducted our research project entitled “Between Materiality and Scribal Magic: West-Semitic Textual Amulets from the First Millennium BCE to the Rise of Islam” which was generously funded by the German-Israeli Science Foundation (GIF Grant No. G-1481-111.4/2018). Within this project we studied textual amulets – that is, amulets which contain exclusively or mostly texts – from the Levant and elsewhere in the Ancient Near East as a phenomenon which endured for many centuries and showed some considerable constants as well as changes. Within our joint project, the Leipzig team focused mainly on textual amulets produced in the first millennium BCE, whereas the Tel Aviv team focused on textual amulets from the first millennium CE. And both teams identified fear and anxiety as a cross-cultural, and timeless, link which can be seen as a primary generator of amulet use. This also means that amulets could be seen as devices of human fear management and can be studied as such in historical and interreligious research. Our GIF project gave us the opportunity to focus on textual amulets that were written in the west-Semitic languages, and in the

alphabetic scripts, and to invite scholars in several related fields to share their expertise with us. One of the results of the interdisciplinary and international cooperation is the current volume.

We are grateful to the German-Israeli Science Foundation for funding our joint research. And we are indebted to our co-authors as well as to Dr. Nadine Eßbach who prepared the complicated manuscript for publication, and also prepared the indices.

ANGELIKA BERLEJUNG (Leipzig) / GIDEON BOHAK (Tel Aviv), December 2023

Abbreviations

| | |
|---------|--|
| ÄA | Ägyptologische Abhandlungen |
| ÄAT | Ägypten und Altes Testament |
| AB | Assyriologische Bibliothek |
| ABD | Anchor Bible Dictionary |
| ABG | Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte |
| ABL 13 | HARPER, R.F., 1913, <i>Assyrian and Babylonian Letters Belonging to the Kouyunjik Collections of the British Museum 13</i> , Chicago. |
| ADPV | Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins |
| AfO | Archiv für Orientforschung |
| AJSLL | American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures |
| AMB | NAVEH, J. / SHAKED S., 1985, <i>Amulets and Magic Bowls. Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity</i> , Jerusalem. |
| AMD | Ancient Magic and Divination |
| AnBiB | Analecta Biblica |
| ANESSup | Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Supplement |
| AOAT | Alter Orient und Altes Testament |
| AoF | Altorientalische Forschungen |
| APF | Archiv für Papyrusforschung |
| APF-B | Archiv für Papyrusforschung, Beihefte |
| ARG | Archiv für Religionsgeschichte |
| ATD | Das Alte Testament Deutsch / Neues Göttinger Bibelwerk |
| AuOr | Aula Orientalis |
| AUWE | Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka, Endberichte |
| AzTh | Arbeiten zur Theologie |
| BaF | Bagdader Forschungen |
| BAMTU | Die Babylonisch-Assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen |
| BASOR | Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research |
| BASP | Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists |
| BBR | ZIMMERN, H., 1901, <i>Beiträge zur Kenntnis der babylonischen Religion. Die Beschwörungstafeln Šurpu, Ritualtafeln für den Wahrsager, Beschwörer und Sänger (AB 12)</i> , Leipzig. |
| BBSR | Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplement |
| BdÉ | Bibliothèque d'étude, Institut français d'archéologie orientale |
| BiBOr | Biblica et Orientalia |
| BO | Bibliotheca Orientalis |
| BTB | Biblical Theology Bulletin |
| BThST | Biblich-Theologische Studien |

| | |
|--------|--|
| BTZ | Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift |
| BZ | Biblische Zeitschrift |
| BZAR | Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte |
| BZAW | Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft |
| CAD | GELB, I.J. / JACOBSEN, T. / LANDSBERGER, B. / A.L. OPPENHEIM <i>et al.</i> (eds.), 1956–2010, The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, Chicago. |
| CBET | Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology |
| CDOG | Colloquium der Deutschen Orientgesellschaft |
| CHANE | Culture and History of the Ancient Near East |
| CM | Cuneiform Monographs |
| CMAwRo | ABUSCH, T. / SCHWEMER, D. 2011 + 2016, Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Rituals 1 + 2 (AMD 8/1 + 8/2), Leiden. |
| CNIP | Carsten Niebuhr Institute Publications |
| CRRAI | Compte Rendu de la Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale |
| EBR | Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception |
| EJA | European Journal of Archaeology |
| ELA | Enmerkar and the Lord of Arata |
| EM | Egyptological Memoirs |
| ENiM | Égypte Nilotique et Méditerranéenne |
| ETCSL | BLACK, J. A. / CUNNINGHAM, G. / EBELING, J. / FLÜCKIGER-HAWKER, E. / ROBSON, E. / TAYLOR, J. / ZÓLYOMI, G., 1998–2006, The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature, Oxford. |
| FAT | Forschungen zum Alten Testament |
| GMTR | Guides to the Mesopotamian Textual Record |
| GOF | Göttinger Orientforschungen |
| HANE/M | History of the Ancient Near East Monographs |
| HBS | Herders Biblische Studien |
| HdO | Handbuch der Orientalistik |
| HSAO | Heidelberger Studien zum Alten Orient |
| IDD | Iconography of Deities and Demons in the Ancient Near East |
| IECOT | International Exegetic Commentary on the Old Testament |
| IEJ | Israel Exploration Journal |
| JA EI | Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections |
| JAJ | Journal of Ancient Judaism |
| JANEH | Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern History |
| JAOS | Journal of the American Oriental Society |
| JARCE | Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt |
| JCS | Journal of Cuneiform Studies |
| JEA | Journal of Egyptian Archaeology |
| JEOL | Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-egyptisch Genootschap Ex Oriente Lux |
| JJS | Journal of Jewish Studies |
| JNES | Journal of Near Eastern Studies |

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| JNSL | Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages |
| JQR | Jewish Quarterly Review |
| JSAT | Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam |
| JSH | Journal of Social History |
| JSIJ | Jewish Studies, an Internet Journal |
| JSOTS | Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series |
| JSQ | Jewish Studies Quarterly |
| KriG | Krieg in der Geschichte |
| KUSATU | Kleine Untersuchungen zur Sprache des Alten Testaments |
| LÄ | HELCK, W. / OTTO, E. (eds.), 1975–1992, Lexikon der Ägyptologie, Wiesbaden. |
| LAOS 4 | WASSERMAN, N., 2016, Akkadian Love Literature of the Third and Second Millennium BCE (Leipziger Altorientalische Studien and Sources of Early Akkadian Literature 4), Wiesbaden. |
| LHB / OTS | The Library of Hebrew Bible / Old Testament Studies |
| LingAeg | Lingua Aegyptia, Journal of Egyptian Language Studies |
| LingAeg – StudMon | Lingua Aegyptia – Studia Monographica |
| MÄS | Münchener Ägyptologische Studien |
| MC | Mesopotamian Civilizations |
| MRLA | Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity |
| MSF | NAVEH, J. / SHAKED S., 1993, Magic Spells and Formulae. Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity, Jerusalem. |
| MTK | Materiale Textkulturen |
| NEA | Near Eastern Archaeology |
| NTOA | Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus / Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments |
| OBO | Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis |
| OBO.SA | Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis Series Archaeologica |
| OIS | Oriental Institute Seminars |
| OLA | Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta |
| OLP | Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica |
| OLZ | Orientalische Literaturzeitung |
| Or | Orientalia |
| Or NS | Orientalia, Nova Series |
| ORA | Orientalische Religionen in der Antike |
| PEQ | Palestine Exploration Quarterly |
| PRE | Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer |
| RCAE III | WATERMAN, L., 1931, Royal Correspondence of the Assyrian Empire. Part III: Translated into English, with a Transliteration of the Text and a Commentary (University of Michigan Studies, Humanistic Series XIX), Ann Arbor. |
| REJ | Revue des Études Juives |
| RGRW | Religions of the Graeco-Roman World |
| RINAP | The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period |

| | |
|---------|---|
| RIA | Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie |
| RRE | Religion in the Roman Empire |
| SAA IV | STARR, I. (ed.), 1990, <i>Queries to the Sungod. Divination and Politics in Sargonid Assyria (SAA IV)</i> , Helsinki. |
| SAAS | State Archives of Assyria Studies |
| SAK | Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur |
| SAOC | Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization |
| SMEA | Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici |
| TA | Tel Aviv |
| ThWAT | Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament |
| TSAJ | Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism |
| TUAT | Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments |
| VT | Vetus Testamentum |
| VWGTh | Veröffentlichungen der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für Theologie |
| WdO | Welt des Orients |
| WiBiLex | Wissenschaftliches Bibellexikon im Internet |
| WMANT | Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament |
| WUNT | Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament |
| WVDOG | Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft |
| ZA | Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie |
| ZÄS | Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde |
| ZÄS-B | Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde, Beihefte |
| ZAW | Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft |
| ZDMG | Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft |
| ZDPV | Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina Vereins |
| ZPE | Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik |

Fear Management: Amulets as Coping Strategy for Fears and Anxiety in the Ancient Near East of the First Millennium BCE

ANGELIKA BERLEJUNG

Abstract: Amulets are considered a group of material finds that can be clearly assigned to private religiosity. This article assumes that these objects represent culturally accepted coping strategies that specifically enabled individuals to deal with their fears and anxieties. These fears and anxieties were part of the collective memory and were shared through communal cultural conditioning and social communication. While the fears could be very concrete, the anxieties were quite vague. The apotropaic and protective prophylactic practice of wearing amulets involved different levels of relationships (between the amulet, the amulet wearer, aggressive and benevolent deities, demons, and benevolent and hostile human social partners). Amulets were a method of fear and anxiety management according to the socially accepted feeling rules. The practice of wearing amulets therefore hints at both the potential violence of the aggressor and the vulnerability implied in being attacked. The amulet's efficacy extends into a dynamic of reflection, by means of which the space between the amulet wearer and others was transformed and became a field of bouncing forces – as long as he or she wore his or her amulet.

1. Introduction: Fears and Anxiety

Fear is one of the strongest and most fundamental emotions experienced by every human being. It is a survival mechanism that is ingrained in humans and animals. Proponents of basic emotions theory¹ point out that fear is an innate and universal emotion, although what people are afraid of, how they express their fear, and how they themselves or their social partners deal with that fear are not necessarily universally anchored. Fear, like all feelings – sensations and their expression – is culturally shaped and socially learned. What someone is allowed to feel/display in a certain situation or towards another person and thing and what not is determined by social norms and thus culturally and historically variable.² In this respect, most of today's historians of emotions as well as this article start from four premises: They are (1) convinced that emotion and cognition cannot be sharply separated or contrasted,³ (2) they understand emotions not only as internal or

¹ See PAUL EKMAN, <http://www.paulekman.com/>.

² On the historical boundedness of emotions, see FREVERT 2021b. For valuable comments on emotion research, I would like to thank my colleague Prof. Dr. Roderich Barth, Leipzig.

³ In order to avoid the unproductive dichotomy between mind = cognition/emotion versus body, the current discussion proposes the concept of emotional habitus, which is inspired by Pierre

bodily states, but as actions effective in social space, (3) they regard feelings as socio-cultural products, which can thus vary both culturally and historically – not only in their expression, but also in their content.⁴ In addition, there are (4) the normative expectations of feelings of a society, which determine which feelings are allowed to be expressed in which society or group and how.⁵ With respect to feelings, there is a process of interaction between individuals and society, as people not only try to behave appropriately according to certain feeling norms, but also to feel appropriately.⁶ “Feeling rules” are often also the result of certain practices of feeling. Cultural imprints and social communication thus overform natural basic emotions. The inculturation of a person in gender, family, clan/tribe, state, law, language, religion etc. have a formative influence on his/her emotions and thus also on his/her fears and his/her fear management. Fear/anxiety are as all emotions differently experienced and expressed in different cultures, languages, and culturally shaped social relations. Also, the expression of fear/anxiety in the face, body, gestures and modes of speech vary across cultures⁷ and depend on the context and media.

Fear is in itself a completely natural reaction to a real danger, immediate, present and tangible threat, or to a supposed, expected, future danger that does not yet actually exist – but is imagined and feared. In German contexts, in the wake of Søren Kierkegaard⁸ and Martin Heidegger,⁹ attention has been drawn to the difference between “fear” (Furcht) and “anxiety” (Angst).¹⁰ Thereby is fear an emotional reaction to a specific, real and concrete danger – thus a short-term affect –, while anxiety is an excessive, expected and unfocused and vague fear without a concrete object that may be triggered by a variety of stimuli – thus an ongoing basic setting and mood.

Fear thus has a concrete counterpart of danger, whereas anxiety is rather a mood and intentionally indeterminate. The basic disposition of anxiety, however, can be

Bourdieu. In Bourdieu’s work, the close connection between thinking and feeling is clear, with his theory of emotion appearing in various places in his work without having been made explicit, see SCHEER 2017.

⁴ HITZER 2011: 6–7.

⁵ HITZER 2011: 7 (with reference to Peter N. Stearns/Carol Z. Stearns).

⁶ HITZER 2011: 8.

⁷ The cultural embeddedness of feelings is shown by WIERZBICKA 1999: 123–167. In general, she refers to emotions as “cultural artefacts”. In the same line is BOURKE 2013, and her cultural history of fear.

⁸ KIERKEGAARD 1844.

⁹ Martin Heidegger (HEIDEGGER ¹⁵1979 [1929]: 135) was highly dependent on Kierkegaard. He ties in with Kierkegaard’s concept of anxiety in the context of his fundamental ontology of existence. He defines anxiety as the “basic condition” of existence. Like Kierkegaard, he sharply distinguishes between anxiety and fear. The key elements in Heidegger’s theory of “Angst” are the indeterminacy (German: “Unbestimmtheit”) of the potential dangers (“Bedrohungen”), and the independence of the state of Angst of anything that may happen. Anxiety (German: Angst) focuses on a general state of existential threat, rather than on any specific danger.

¹⁰ For a research report on the history of emotions, in our case “Angst”, see HITZER 2011: 16–30. For an overview of the recent philosophy of fear/anxiety under the aspects of corporeality, intentional content, health or morbidity, hope, and related phenomena such as fright, horror, panic, see DEMMERLING/LANDWEER 2007: 63–91.

condensed in human consciousness in different forms of fear or, precisely then, in the “being afraid of something”. The disposition of anxiety can thus be concretized situationally in concrete episodic emotions of “fear of something”, so that there is a transition between general anxiety and concrete fear. In terms of cultural history, models can be developed according to which, on the basis of the human-existential anxiety, the fear concretions change in each case, and certain leading themes determine the fear discourse: For example, one can assign the fear of the gods and the unseen forces of nature to antiquity, the fear of fate and death to the ancient Catholic Church, the fear of guilt and damnation to the Christian Middle Ages and the Reformation period, the fear of emptiness and meaninglessness to modernity,¹¹ or the fear of man-made ecological collapse to the post-modern present.

Anxiety/fear can be a vital emotion for survival, as it ensures being cautious and assessing potential risks and dangers that a person faces or is exposed to. This can be an advantage as fear motivates a person to take preventive measures to protect him-/herself or avoid unnecessary risks. Realistically assessing a risk or potential hazard and taking action against it helps reduce anxiety. In this respect, fear/anxiety can be seen as a strong motivator for individual as well as collective action, for individual as well as collective developments, and as a particularly powerful emotion in history (= “besonders geschichtsmächtige Emotion”¹²). However, concrete fear and vague anxieties, can also be deliberately provoked at any time in order to control people. Fears are therefore a preferred method of manipulation and instrumentalization, in political, media and economic contexts as well as in private and civil society. The promise of rulers and interpretive authorities to control or even eliminate collectively shared concrete fear and vague anxiety factors has repeatedly proven to stabilize power systems. Since time immemorial, one of the instruments of politics has been to mobilize and control people by means of fear/anxiety scenarios.¹³ Anxiety/fear can therefore motivate people to act, but it can also have the opposite effect. It can prevent people from taking necessary and manageable risks, breaking new ground and exploring the unknown. As is well known, anxiety/fear can be repressed, lead to senseless overacting, to inability to act, and even to apathy. Since fear is a very immediate subjectively experienced physical feeling,¹⁴ it manifests itself in physical reactions that can lead to physical and mental health problems depending on duration and intensity.

Unlike fear, anxiety is not an emotional-physical reaction to a concrete physical danger, but rather a vague underlying mood to expected but unspecific uncertainties and imponderables. However, it can also lead to physical reactions and continuous stress. All physical reactions of fear or anxiety can be perceived by other people and commented or evaluated accordingly.

¹¹ The last three correspond to Paul Tillich’s three types of ontological anxiety, see TILlich 1953.

¹² HITZER 2011: 16. See also FREVERT 2021a.

¹³ On the corresponding studies in political sociology see HITZER 2011: 31–35.

¹⁴ On feelings as a holistic experience in which bodily processes and cognitions coincide, see DEMMERLING/LANDWEER 2007: 20–30.

Fear and anxiety are both strong emotions that profoundly influence human thinking and behavior. In this respect, every person and every society are challenged to deal with their own fear/anxiety and with the fear/anxiety of others, and to engage in concrete fear and anxiety management. Also, the coping strategies offered against fear/anxiety vary across cultures and depend on the context and media.

As mentioned above, fear is a fleeting feeling that is limited in time and ends with the end of the concrete threat. In contrast, anxiety is not a fleeting feeling of short duration, but can last for long periods of time, since the permanent expectation of the threat – perhaps precisely because of its vagueness – does not come to an end. Precisely because fears are concrete and limited in time, whereas anxiety is not, fear management is much easier to achieve than anxiety management.

2. Amulets and the Management of Fears and Anxiety

2.1. *Feeling Rules?*

The study of ancient fears/anxieties and of their management in the Ancient Near East (including the Southern Levant) in the first millennium has to face several problems. One problem is that historical research is highly dependent on sources and media of the male ruling and elite classes.¹⁵ Therefore, these sources reflect only parts of ancient society. Furthermore, the context and the target audience of the texts and images play a central role, since e.g. royal inscriptions and chronicles had a representative character and drew a different picture of the emotional state of a king than royal correspondence or divination literature. The study of semantic fields of fear/anxiety vocabulary in Semitic languages is also of limited use, since the exact connotations of ancient usage are difficult to profile and the equivalence of the term in a contemporary language (e.g. fear, dread, cowardice, anxiety, awe, panic, sorrow/distress, terror, depression, phobia) can be determined only with reservations.¹⁶ Therefore, Ulrike Steinert is right when she writes with regard to historical emotion research (in Mesopotamia): “we need to be sensitive to the cultural and historical differences between the ancient and our own categories, so as not to essentialize the affects of the ancient” people.¹⁷

Semantic and linguistic studies of the extensive fear/anxiety vocabulary of ancient Near Eastern languages have revealed that the common language use establishes a close relationship between bodily sensations and fear/anxiety, so that fear/anxiety have been considered as embodied experiences.¹⁸ It was recognizable that linguistically the

¹⁵ On the problems of the study of emotions in antiquity (and an excellent summary of actual emotion theory) see STEINERT 2020: 410–417; SONIK 2023: 27–50.

¹⁶ Five selected Akkadian words for fear/anxiety have been studied by SVÄRD *et al.* 2020: 470–502. See further STEINERT 2020: 441–447 and STEINERT 2023: 64–67. On Egypt see EICKE 2020: 25–51. Regarding the lexicology of Hebrew, the current lexica have been summarized by KIPFER 2016.

¹⁷ STEINERT 2020: 417.

¹⁸ STEINERT 2020 rightly points out, that a number of terms includes bodily symptoms of fear, such as trembling (*galātu* and *parādu*), throbbing of the heart (*nakādu* and *tarāku*), or sleeplessness (*dalāḥu* and *dalāpu*). The same is true for Hebrew, see KIPFER 2016: 23–25. 32–46 (*phd*, *hyl*, *yr'*, *hrd*, and other

dynamic, contagious, inter-personal nature of fear/anxiety, and its external manifestations was comprehended. Thus, these semantic and linguistic investigations of the fear/anxiety vocabulary of ancient Near Eastern languages have elaborated what has already been formulated above as a premise of modern emotion research: The ancient fear/anxiety vocabulary (1) does not sharply separate or contrast emotion and cognition, and (2) understands fear/anxiety not only as an internal as well as bodily state, but as an action effective in social space.¹⁹ Thus, in antiquity, a person was never afraid alone. There were several levels of relationship. On the one hand, there was the relationship that existed between the one who was afraid and the concrete fear agent or vague anxiety. In addition, there was always a relationship between the one who was afraid and his social human or divine interaction partners, who perceived this fear/anxiety, evaluated it and reacted accordingly. Since ancient oriental people were connected on the horizontal level with their family and fellow human beings, and on the vertical level with their gods, one's fear/anxiety was thus related to human as well as divine interaction partners. In personal fear management, one could turn to both.

Fear/anxiety could be understood as force or agent of human, royal or supernatural origin, that produced specific experiences or physical sensations in the affected person, thus, conceptualizing the human body as container (fear/anxiety filling the body) or as target²⁰ of agents of fear (fear/anxiety overwhelming, hunting or narrowing a person). This conceptualization is true for Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical texts. However, while in Ancient Near Eastern texts demons, evil spirits/ghosts and sorcery play a prominent role as fear agents, the monotheistic view of the Hebrew Bible reduces the fear agents in a significant manner: Apart from human hostile fear agents, Yhwh is the only supernatural fear agent who causes diseases, defeat and distress. But even if the Hebrew Bible re-arranges traditional feeling rules by taking away the fear of demons and spirits from the individual, the extensive practice of making and using amulets, which is documented in Palestine/Israel since the Neolithic age and is as continuous and extensive as in the neighboring cultures, shows that the inhabitants of Israel-Palestine in the first millennium BCE did not feel at all safe from attacks of evil and demonic forces. The feeling rules of the Hebrew Bible, according to which people actually had to fear only rulers, human enemies and Yhwh, are a pure theoretical and theological construct, which is opposed by the local religious amulet practice, which was directed against evil and demons (see below). That feeling rules in texts are constructs of their authors is a phenomenon that is not limited to texts of the Hebrew Bible:

In ancient Near Eastern (and Egyptian) royal self-presentation, the role attribution and feeling rules were quite clear: the king himself feared no one – except his gods. In

roots referring to trembling, shaking, shuddering, hair standing on end, freezing, breath holding, heart reactions, discoloration of the face, trepidation), and Egyptian, see EICKE 2020. On other Mesopotamian words for fear/anxiety see n. 22 below.

¹⁹ See KIPFER 2016: 66; STEINERT 2020: 456–8.

²⁰ Following KÖVECSES 1990: 74–79 and 2007: 23, STEINERT 2020: 446 and EICKE 2020: 46–7 refer to fear as a fluid in a bodily container. Critical with regard to the Hebrew Bible is KIPFER 2016: 52 and 66. In our view, the container conception does not capture the whole picture. In addition, the vulnerable body is the target of fear (understood as the weapon of different fear agents), and consequently the language of fear/anxiety applies the imagery of warfare and hunting.

self-representative media that were produced and approved by kings, rulers and officials and their representatives (such as e.g. soldiers), the superior human being(s) interacted with dangerous humans or creatures (see e.g. royal lion hunts) without any fear or anxiety. Expressions of fear/anxiety were usually ascribed (in iconography or textual sources) to enemies and subordinated people.²¹ In addition, kings – in analogy to deities – expected from their subordinates the fear of their lord- or kingship.²² This fear had nothing to do with panic, but included respect, devotion and awe and the awareness of the sovereign’s unbeatable power and legitimate authority. There was a clear relationship between rulers on the one hand and subordinates, enemies or representatives of the anti-order (wild beasts) on the other, which located fear on the opposite side. The public loss of fear/anxiety control and countenance disqualified a ruler and delegitimized him. His authority was over. Accordingly, a king could be discredited in anti-royal polemics by attributing fear and panic attacks to him (e.g. 2Kings 6:30). Within the cultural cues of the Ancient Near East, ancient Near Eastern legitimation of rulership included emotional control and countenance.²³ Consequently, a ruler was qualified by fearlessness and was not allowed to publicly show fear or anxiety towards other humans or animals. This feeling rule for rulers (and members of the male upper classes) is tangible in the representational art or representational literature.²⁴ Whether ancient rulers and upper class men not only tried to *behave* appropriately according to these emotional norms, but also to *feel* appropriately, is difficult to clarify.

In contrast to the royal self-portrayal as a fearless ruler in representative art and literature, which corresponded to the socially given feeling rules of legitimate rulers, the ancient Near Eastern (and Egyptian) omen, ritual and amulet practice shows the king

²¹ The attribution of fear/anxiety to others may also be accompanied by signs of physical symptoms, e.g. LEICHTY, RINAP 4, Esarhaddon no. 1 iv 85–v 1 (pounding heart, vomiting bile); NOVOTNY/JEFFERS, RINAP 5, Ashurbanipal 002 (prism E2), iii 1’–2’ (to become like an ecstatic, losing mind); GRAYSON/NOVOTNY, RINAP 3, Sennacherib 22 vi 26–32 (involuntary release of urine and excrements); for all Assyrian royal inscriptions, see <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu>.

²² See e.g. *pa-liḥ/pu-luḥ-ti be-lu-ti-ia/LUGAL-ti-ia*, LEICHTY, RINAP 4, Esarhaddon no. 1 ii 34.66 or iii 22 and the parallels. See also CAD P sub *puluḥtu* and sub *pirittu* and CAD H 150–151 and 1 sub *ḥattu* A and *ḥa’attu*. According to CAD H 151 *ḥattu* and *ḥa’attu* refer to fear of panic proportions. “Like *puluḥtu*, *ḥattu* emanates from gods and kings; it is, however, linked to *pirittu*, which denotes a sudden and severe attack of fear, and does not reach into the domain of devotion, piety and respect, as *puluḥtu* does.” *ḥa’attu* is caused by witches, ghosts, and implies mortal terror. On *palāḥu* and its derivatives *pulḥu* and *puluḥtu* denoting fear of the king, gods and their numinous radiance see also SVÄRD *et al.* 2020: 486–89. Also *šaḥtu* and *šaḥātu* denote fear in the sense of being respectful toward the gods or kings. In contrast, the verbs *galātu* and *parādu* and their derivatives were mainly used in omens, incantations, and healing literature; they were reserved for very specialized scribal use with connection to medical conditions and divination, see *ibid.*, 492–493. *Adāru* and its derivatives, *ādiru* and *adru* can be used for terror caused by war, weather and natural events, evil magic, but also include the aspect of respect (gods, oaths and parents).

²³ BERLEJUNG 2017.

²⁴ It was somewhat different with mourning. For public weeping on behalf of a king’s death see LUUKKO/VAN BUYLAERE, SAA 16, no. 95, on behalf of king Nabonid’s mother Adad-guppi, see SCHAUDIG 2001: 3.2. 1 III 24–43. The king may also publicly mourn the deaths of family members or other significant persons, see e.g. David the assassinations of Abner (2Sam 3:32–34), Absalom (2Sam 19:1f), Saul and Jonathan (2Sam 1:12).

(and members of the upper classes) in permanent need of protection. This need reflects his fears. The ruler revealed his fears per se only before the gods,²⁵ sometimes even describing his physical symptoms. In these cases, these physical symptoms were perceived and evaluated by the respective deity and led to corresponding reactions (such as comfort). Descriptions of this kind construct a highly exclusive and intimate relationship of trust between king and deity, reminiscent of parental care by the gods. Gods are thus the primary interaction partners in the coping of a king with his fears. Royal fear management, like all human fear management, needed the help of the gods.²⁶ However, this fact made the king dependent on his court scholars, prophets, seers and diviners, who made the divine will known to him and who explained the divine utterings, oracles, dreams and omens to him. By doing that, they relieved him from his fears and anxieties, provided him with divine help for correct decision making in internal (appointments of loyal officials, danger of rebellion) or external (military, diplomatic) political affairs, religious matters, or providing a personal diagnosis in case of illness, and possible cures.²⁷ This royal fear management practices reflect a variety of concrete fears: The fear of doing something wrong, of appointing the wrong staff, of angering the gods (and thus being guilty oneself), of being/becoming ill, of having unrecognized enemies around oneself, of being unsafe during or even losing a campaign, of being the target of demons or witchcraft attacks and of losing control, determined the royal feelings and actions. If one looks at the royal fear factors that show up in ancient oriental divination, the fear for one's own body, the fear because of one's own fallibility, vulnerability, and finiteness, unites kings and "normal" people. Unlike normal people, however, royal fears and anxieties could indeed become "historically powerful", as the royal reaction to fear agents led to political decisions that guided the state and the military.

Socially accepted and requested was the ruler's fear of the gods. Deities were clearly to be feared by all people, regardless of their social status. The awe-inspiring character of deities and their numinous character were represented in iconography by the radiate wreath, in texts by concepts such as the divine shine of terror (*puluhtu*) or awe-inspiring radiance (*melammu*, Yhwh's "glory" *kābôd* in the Priestly Code and the Book of Ezekiel), overwhelming divine light phenomena, and theophanies (e.g. Hab 3).²⁸ Fear of

²⁵ Assurbanipal describes his encounter with the goddess Ištar, before whom he admits his fears and weeps, see NOVOTNY/JEFFERS, RINAP 5, Ashurbanipal 200: 23–24 (tablet, no royal inscription). Physical signs of fear in the face of the gods (palpitations and saddened face) are also repeatedly admitted by Nabonid before the gods in his inscriptions, see SCHAUDIG 2001: 2.12 II 52, also 2.13 II 18–19; 2.7 I 13; 2.9 I 23.

²⁶ Supportive prophetic oracles start with the "fear-not" formula, indicating that there was fear of god at the human side, but that the deity would provide assistance, see e.g. PARPOLA, SAA 9, no. 1, 2, 4, 7, or LUUKKO/VAN BUYLAERE, SAA 16, no. 60 rev. 14'–15' corresponding to biblical language (*yr'*) e.g. Isa 41:10; 43:1; 2Chr 20:15; (plural) Isa 44:8. On the topic see NISSINEN 2003.

²⁷ See e.g. the *tamītu* queries to the sun- and storm gods, cf. LAMBERT 2007, or the oracle queries to the sungod in Sargonid Assyria, STARR, SAA 4. Regarding the health of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, STARR, SAA 4, no. 183–199.276–277. On e.g. *Bārātu* rituals as coping strategy, see Grütter in this volume.

²⁸ See e.g. Aššur's *melammu* in LEICHTY, RINAP 4, Esarhaddon no. 1 iv 37. Just as the fear of Aššur fights for the Assyrian king, the fear of Yhwh fights for the people of Israel during the Exodus and the conquest, see e.g. Ex 15:16; Deut 2:25; 11:25. On Yhwh's shining appearance and theophanies see PODELLA 1996 and more recently (with a focus on Hab 3) FILITZ 2020.

God was a universally (ancient Near Eastern and biblical) human but also a part of the ruler's virtue.²⁹ It had to govern the ruler's actions, since divine wrath had highly calamitous and fearful consequences for both the ruler and his domain. Also, this fear had nothing to do with panic, but with honor, respect, and devotion. Thus, fears and anxieties that emanated from gods, kings (and parents) included the aspects of respect, piety, devotion, and giving honor where honor was due.

In the Ancient Near East (including the Bible), impending royal wrath was not averted by magical means but by appropriate submissive behavior or pleas for mercy. Divine wrath and its fatal consequences could also be averted by behavior and request for mercy. In addition, there were the options of addressing the gods with prayers, offerings, votives, appeasement rituals³⁰ and amulets. These interactions were possible, because gods and kings were not considered fundamentally hostile to life and followed a basic norm of behavior that could be relied upon: They usually reacted to obedience, submission and gifts (= in the cultic sphere votive offerings) with benevolence and reward, to disobedience and resistance with wrath and sanctions,³¹ so that it was intrinsically up to each person whether or not he had anything to fear from a ruler or deity. This was quite different for dangers and fear agents such as witches, spirits of the dead, demons, diseases and nightmares (believed to be caused by demons), wind and weather storms, accidents, wild animals, enemies, rebels and rivals, as well as the whole set that stood behind "anything evil".³² They were considered destructive and fundamentally hostile to life, and were thus a permanent source of fear. Their attacks were unpredictable and incalculable, admittedly only possible if the enraged personal god allowed it or had even sent the attacker themselves (e.g. 1Sam 16:14). In this respect, all countermeasures against all these uncontrollable damaging forces had to start with the gods, whose help was the condition sine qua non for a successful defense. This applied to rulers as well as to all people who, in their fear/anxiety and need for protection, turned to the gods/their personal god as their patron(s), to whom, according to the socially accepted feeling rules, fear/respect but also trust had to be paid.

2.2. Amulets in the First Millennium BCE

Amulets which a person wore on his/her body were commonplace since the Neolithic Age throughout the Near East and the Mediterranean.³³ The shape of amulets could vary considerably: natural objects, e.g. precious and semi-precious stones, shells, plants, small animals or parts thereof, but also gems/beads, seals, scarabs, scaraboids, conoids and cowroids (= scaraboids with an elongated base and a back that resembles a stylized cowrie shell), teardrop-shaped, bulla-shaped or geometrically shaped pendants with pendant eye/drilling and coins could be used as amulets. Figurative object and image

²⁹ See e.g. "... *áš-šú ana-ku pu-luḥ-ti* d.EN u d.AG *i-du-ú* ... = Because I know the fear of Bel and Nabû", Esarhaddon cf. LEICHTY, RINAP 4, Esarhaddon no. 1 iii 66–67. On the fear of God in the Old Testament see LASATER 2019.

³⁰ See the contributions of Gaitzsch and Gonnermann in this volume.

³¹ On human sin and divine sanction see BERLEJUNG 2021.

³² On incantations against "anything evil" (*mimma lemnu*), see e.g. FINKEL 1976, against "evil spirits" (*utukki lemmuti*), see GELLER 2016.

³³ For the following see BERLEJUNG 2015; BERLEJUNG 2022.

amulets are depicting an item, a human body or parts of it, plants, animals, astral, solar, lunar or symbols referring to special divinities or to any superhuman power. Within these figurative amulets there is a considerable number of pieces with short Egyptian religious inscriptions, known from the LBA until the Hellenistic period.³⁴ Combinations of anthropomorphic and theriomorphic elements as well as isolated hieroglyphs come from Egypt. Images of demons could be used as amulets as well (see below Pazuzu and Lamaštu). The iconography of amulets in the Southern Levant was influenced primarily by Egypt, but Mesopotamian, Syrian or local elements³⁵ can also be identified.

Another type of ancient amulets are textual amulets consisting of a powerful text or charm. This specific type is attested in Mesopotamia (since the Archaic period, increasing from the end of the third mill. BCE), Egypt (from the 12th Dyn.), Syria (9th cent. BCE), Phoenicia (from the 7th/6th cent. BCE), and Palestine/Israel. They can combine iconic elements with the script such as the two limestone amulets from Arslan Tash (7th/6th cent. BCE),³⁶ the bronze pendant from Tyre (third cent. BCE?),³⁷ or the example discussed below.

The external shape of ancient *textual amulets* can be classified into three main types:

1. gems/pearls, cylinder-seal-like and clay bulla-like or geometrically shaped objects that have a device so that they can be worn on a thread,

2. small writing tablets made of clay, stone or metal with a hanging device (originating from Mesopotamia),

3. rolls/lamellae of thin metal sheet, linnen or papyrus, kept in metal capsules with a hanging device (originating from Egypt). Papyrus and linnen can also be folded if necessary. In Phoenicia they are only attested from the 7th/6th cent. BCE and later,³⁸ in Palestine/Israel only in later periods. The famous two silver lamellae from Ketef Hinnom (6th–4th cent. BCE)³⁹ are part of this amuletic tradition. They can probably be considered as the missing link to the later Tefillin, mentioned on an Aramaic papyrus acquired 1906 at Luxor/Egypt (ca. 300 BCE).⁴⁰ This assessment of the first appearance of inscribed, rolled or folded metal lamellae in Palestine/Israel is not shaken by the recent publication of the small, folded lead metal sheet from Mt. Ebal.⁴¹ Basically, the origin of the piece, its removal from Mt. Ebal as well as its publication are highly problematic, as applicable international law has been violated. Apart from that, the piece is not clearly datable, as it comes from a dump pile of Adam Zertal's 1982–1989 excavations. An international team performed X-ray tomographic measurements and claimed to identify an inscription inside the folded sheet. However, even if now photographs of these efforts have been

³⁴ HERRMANN 2006:40; 48.

³⁵ E.g. amulets in the shape of a stick of bone (decorated with circles) which can be interpreted as a club (against demons?) are a local product of Iron Age IA–IIC Israel/Palestine.

³⁶ PARDEE 1998, on amulet 1 from Arslan Tash see BERLEJUNG 2010.

³⁷ SCHMITZ 2002.

³⁸ QUILLARD 1979, 1987 and 2013.

³⁹ On this dating see BERLEJUNG 2008a; BERLEJUNG 2008b. Disregarding palaeographic and orthographic arguments, BARKAY 1992; BARKAY/LUNDBERG *et al.* 2003 and 2004 proposed the dating to the 7th/6th cent. BCE which has been widely accepted, and defended once more (who did not discuss the full range of my arguments) by SMOAK 2016: 14–16.

⁴⁰ PORTEN/YARDENI 1993: C 3.28 Col. 9:106.

⁴¹ STRIPLING/GALIL *et al.* 2023.

published, nothing is clearly readable. Therefore, the proposed reading of the “signs” as a curse formula mentioning the God of Israel Yhw, the attribution of these “signs” to Hebrew, the dating of this “inscription” to the 13th cent. BCE or even older, and the proposal that the item would be an early defixio disregard a full set of scientific standards. There is no way from this folded lead sheet to the textual amulets of the Iron Age. If the inside should really be inscribed, what still has to be proved, the item could belong to (depending on the content of the inscription) the lead amulets or lead defixiones of the Graeco-Roman or even later periods. However, there are good arguments to follow Amihai Mazar, Aren M. Maeir and Christopher Rollston who doubted that the item is an inscribed object and identified it as a lead fishing-net weight.⁴²

That said, in the following paragraphs we will focus on text, inscribed figurative object and image amulets of the first millennium BCE of the Southern Levant which provide us with some informations about ancient fears and anxieties. For an overview of the possible inscription types see 2.3.

In the ancient Near East (including the Southern Levant and Egypt) the sale of amulets took place at sanctuaries. The amulets could be locally produced or imported. Travelling merchants who sold amulets are difficult to document archaeologically, but their existence can be assumed by the distribution of e.g. Egyptian and Egyptianizing amulets in the whole Mediterranean area. In addition, the trade in amulets can be seen as an economic factor, which secured temple income and employed craftsmen, workshops, stores and merchants.

While the textual sources from Mesopotamia and Egypt clearly attest to the practice that the production, handing over or disposal of amulets were connected with rituals, sources about this practice in the Southern Levant are lacking. At least, the existence of professional amulet producers can be assumed. The more complex an amulet is, the higher the demands made upon its maker. Inscribed amulets had the clear advantage of being able to specify the purpose of the amulet, to mention the amulet owner and his deity by name and thus to individualize the piece. However, their production required not only a craftsman, but also scribal training or the collaboration with a scribe.

If one had acquired an amulet for oneself or for giving away, its owner wore it on the body, mostly as a necklace or a chain on the wrist. It was hardly ever taken off by its owner during his lifetime, and was so closely and physically connected with him/her that one gave it to him/her in case of death as part of the personal possessions with the grave or burned it with the corpse at cremations.⁴³ Graves or houses are therefore the primary archaeological sites of the pieces.⁴⁴

⁴² MAZAR 2023; MAEIR/ROLLSTON 2023.

⁴³ Thus, the majority of the amulets in burials (except some typical grave amulets such as e.g. heart scarabs) were not primarily produced for grave contexts, but were part of the personal property of the deceased person during his/her lifetime. This is especially true for textual amulets which were individualized by name and could not be transferred to others within the family. Contra SMOAK 2016: 52–58 who associates the blessing of the Ketef Hinnom amulets with death and stretches the amulets’ protection into the world to come. If this would be true, the amulets would have been kept in close proximity with the deceased person, and not cleared away to the repository.

⁴⁴ See the discussion in QUACK 2022: 12–19.

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