

## **Crashing and Burning in Ancient Love Magic: A Comparison of Graeco-Roman and Jewish Forms of Love Magic from a Cognitive Perspective**

The manipulation and regulation of emotion, in particular those emotions associated with love, was one of the most important uses of magic in the Biblical world. Surprisingly there has been no research on this common aspect of magic from a cognitive perspective. This paper initiates research into ancient love magic from a cognitive perspective. First, we gather the extant material evidence for the use of love magic, primarily from corpora in the Cairo Genizah and the Greek Magical Papyri, in order to compare its use in Graeco-Roman and Hebrew-Arabic-Aramaic traditions (broadly Jewish). After a general comparison of the nature of love magic in the two corpora, we then explore three fundamental areas of overlap that can be approached from a cognitive perspective. The first theme we explore is the meta-discursive reflection on the efficacy of magic within the texts themselves. For example, in both corpora many of the magical formulae and instructions evaluate the relative efficacy of the very spell they are describing, appending such terms as “proven” or “proper.” We explore this from the perspective of cognitive dissonance and its more recent revisions since Festinger proposed the idea in the 1950s. Second, we explore the ubiquitous use in both corpora of fire and burning both as a material component in the magical rituals themselves and also in the form of the metaphorical derivatives about fire in reflections about love (e.g. burning as indicative of passionate desire, or alternatively as indicative of anger). Fire has been an interest for cognitive theories of language at least since Lakoff (1987). We will use cognitive metaphor theory in addition to evolutionary arguments about fire to explore some reasons why fire has such a central place. Third, and no less importantly, we analyze the texts according to the sex of the sender and receiver. There is evidence from one of the most well supported theories from evolutionary psychology, “parental investment theory,” that due to the fact that men are uncertain about their own paternity, men and woman have differential reactions to the possibility of infidelity by their sexual partners. One proposed result is that men often feel more jealousy when suspecting sexual infidelity while woman tend to feel more in response to emotional infidelity. Love magic is a useful way to test the theory in the historical record. It also opens up some very important ideas from evolutionary biology about the emotional relations between the sexes that have gone rather unexplored in Biblical studies. There is a tendency in Biblical literature to associate love, fire, and jealousy, as expressed in the most famous verse from Song of Songs (8:6): “. . . love is fierce as death, jealousy hard as sheol; its flames are flames of fire, a divine flame.” Likewise, Graeco-Roman genres that have intersections with magical texts use fire imagery in a similar nexus of love and jealousy, for example when Tibullus writes of his wish that “winds and fire” destroy the wealth of women who deny their lovers access