

## A Reevaluation of the “Orphic” Tablets with Regard to Evidence Provided by the Ketef Hinnom Amulets

The study of ancient Mediterranean religions has been divided between the disciplines of Religious Studies and Classical Studies—focusing on the Levant or Greece and Rome, respectively. This has continually led to a disregard of common themes between these two cultures. One such theme is that of inscribed metals buried with individuals: the so-called ‘Orphic’ Gold tablets found throughout the Greek world and the Ketef Hinnom amulets found outside of Jerusalem. Funerary texts tend to be placed above the ground and are meant to address individuals visiting the deceased, therefore the fact that both items are inscribed and buried is significant.

The ‘Orphic’ tablets consist of approximately forty items that have been found throughout the Greek world, with little emphasis in Attica. They are all made of gold, but contain numerous variations in both text and physicality. On the other hand, there are only two Ketef Hinnom amulets, both of which were found buried in the same tomb. These were both inscribed with similar texts, but did contain variation.

While there has been scholarship on both sets of funerary items individually, there has never been a study of both in conjunction with each other. Scholarship concerning the ‘Orphic’ tablets has debated usages after death, while the Ketef Hinnom amulets are currently understood to have a usage only attributed to the living. There remain two outliers to evaluating each group on its own: 1) one of the ‘Orphic’ tablets was found rolled up in an amulet case, implying usage during life, and 2) as stated above, the Ketef Hinnom amulets were found buried.

Further, dated to the second or third century CE, an ‘Orphic’ tablet was found in Rome. The amulet case that contains the Petelia tablet, a text dated to the fourth century BCE, has been

dated to the fourth century CE. At the necropolis of Bet She'arim, which contained the burials of numerous Jewish leaders who would have rejected Hellenization, an inscription was found, dated between the first and third centuries, mentioning Μορϑα; this name is also notably contained in several 'Orphic' tablets from Thurii. These findings indicate a resurgence of 'Orphic' ideas and the need for further examination of these two cultures in conjunction with each other. Therefore, I will propose a reevaluation of the 'Orphic' tablets and their usages with regard to evidence presented by the Ketef Hinnom amulets and within the larger Mediterranean context.

## Bibliography

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