The Will of God and its intervention in human life as expressed in the profane literature from the Old Kingdom to the end of the New Kingdom

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The American University in Cairo
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

The Will of God and its intervention in human life as expressed in the
profane literature from the Old Kingdom to the end of
the New Kingdom

A Thesis Submitted to
The Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, and Egyptology

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts
in Egyptology

by Aisha Ihab El Ghazzawy

under the supervision of Dr. Fayza Haikal
May 2016
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Dr. Fayza Haikal for having motivated me to choose this subject. I thank her for her invaluable input, continuous support, and patience. I have been extremely fortunate to have Dr. Haikal as my advisor.

I would like also to thank Dr. Lisa El Sabahy for her support, help and advice throughout my graduate program. I would like also to thank Dr. Mariam Ayad for her support, insightful comments and advice. Many thanks are due to the Department for its financial support in the form of fellowships and teaching assistant awards.

Most importantly, none of this would have been possible without the love, patience and support of my brother, to whom this thesis is dedicated. He has been a constant source of love, concern, support and strength all these years.
Abstract

The “will of god” and how it intervenes in the lives of the people is a very problematic issue. There is a never-ending debate over predestination and fate versus free will. When does the one end and the other start, if they do co-exist. This debate about fate and free will, is also taking place among Egyptologists concerning ancient Egyptian beliefs. The “will of god” is featured in various ancient Egyptian didactic and literary texts. These texts contain words and phrases, which directly or indirectly express the “will of god”. This thesis will study a selection of words that express the intervention of god in the human’s life, which will be excerpted from these texts. This thesis is limited to those texts contained in profane literature from the Old Kingdom to the end of the New Kingdom. A lexicographical study is conducted, in order to determine the precise meaning of the word and its development during the period under study. The selected words are: rdi, wd, shr, sšm, š3, rntt, sšm, mšlt, m-dr/m-hr/m- and ir. This thesis then covers two more points. First, it examines whether demons, magic and prayers were thought by Egyptians to alter the will of god. Then, it will assess the impact of the will of god in the formation of Egyptian culture and a comparison is drawn with today’s Egypt and with the monotheistic Holy Books. The study of the texts reveal that the Ancient Egyptians strongly believed in the divine intervention in their daily lives. This belief has been retained in the cultural memory of the Egyptians throughout the ages and across Religions.
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Introduction

1- Methodology
The “will of god” and how it intervenes in the lives of the people is a very problematic issue. There is a never-ending debate over predestination and fate versus free will. When does the one end and the other start, if they do co-exist. This debate about fate and free will, is also taking place among Egyptologists concerning ancient Egyptian beliefs.

The “will of god” is a comprehensive notion that embraces different concepts such as “predetermination”, “fate”, “gifts” and “wrath”. The “will of god” is featured in various ancient Egyptian didactic and literary texts. These texts contain words and phrases, which directly or indirectly express the “will of god”. This thesis will be limited to those texts contained in profane literature from the Old Kingdom to the end of the New Kingdom. The texts selected here are: wisdom texts - a genre of didactic literature comprised of maxims that “teach right living in the form of advice and exhortation spoken by elders to juniors” (Lichtheim 1996, 243) - such as Instructions of Ptahhotep, Merikare, Ani and Amenemope; tales - fictional stories - such as the story of Sinuhe, the Shipwrecked Sailor; Doomed Prince, as well as autobiographies and letters. These texts are selected for study, as they reflect the common people’s concept of god and their belief in divine intervention.

A selection of words that express the intervention of god in the human life will be excerpted from these texts and studied. The following words are those that were found to relate to gods’ intervention in human life: rdi, wd, shr, ssm, šs, rnt, sšm, msnhnt m-ḏrt/m-ḥr/m-š and ir. In the Instructions of Ptahhotep, for example, wd i.e. to ordain or to command, appears in the following context:

\[ n p3 ḫṛt n ῤmt Ḥpr wḏwt nṯr pw ḫprwšt: \]
People’s schemes do not happen god’s commands are what prevails. (Lichtheim 2006b, 65)

A lexicographical study will be conducted to determine the precise meaning of the word and its development during the period under study. The thesis will then cover two more points. First, it will examine whether demons, magic and prayers were thought by Egyptians to alter the will of god. Then, it will assess the impact of the will of god in the formation of Egyptian culture, and a comparison will be drawn.
with today’s Egypt and with the monotheistic Holy Books. The author’s choice of the Quran and the Bible for comparison purpose stems from the fact that, although these texts are religious in nature, their verses and the concepts contained therein permeate almost every aspect of the daily lives of contemporary Egyptians, making them as relevant to any discussion of popular religious culture and beliefs as is the profane literature in ancient Egypt.

2- Previous Studies

There are few studies that address the “will of god” in ancient Egypt and these studies mainly focus on fate and free will. One of the first such studies is the book of S. Morenz, Zur Rolle des Schicksales in Alten Ägyptischen Religion, 1960. Morenz studies the role of fate in ancient Egyptian religion giving examples from the wisdom texts and the tales. He explains that the word ši/w, which means fate, is attested from the 18th Dynasty and it derives from the word ši, to ordain, which had been used since the Old Kingdom. Morenz studies fate in association with the character, the profession and the life events of humans. He states that gods are the lords of fate and control it. He explains that even before the development of a word for fate, gods determined the character of a person according to their love or hate for them. He adds that the career and profession of a person are determined by the harvest goddesses Renenet and the birth goddess Meskhnet. He refuted the argument advanced by Egyptologists that Renenet is the goddess of “luck”. This argument is based on the fact that Renenet was a harvest goddess and, as such, had been associated with material wealth, hence with “good luck”. Morenz argues that gods created magic for humans to alter their fate. He concludes that ši/w has a primary meaning of life span and death. Although he mentions that there are other words that express fate, he does not study them.

Another study, Le Dieux Egyptien Shai dans le Religion Et L'Onomastique, 1975, by Jan Quaegebeur, explores the concept of Shai or Fate from the Old Kingdom until the Graeco-Roman period. Quaegebeur examines the word Shai grammatically, semantically and lexicographically. He states that Fate or Shai of humans is determined by the gods. Shai is the personification of the divine power. For the king, Shai is his dynamic personality and designates his power to intervene in everyday events and, through his cosmic role, to ensure the prosperity of Egypt. For humans, Shai is the limitation imposed on them, since their fate is determined by the gods.
Nevertheless, it is possible for a person to change their fate by personal piety and prayers. Quaegebeur also analyzes Shai as an abstract notion. He states that numerous texts have the prevailing meaning of Shai as life span, and that this is the reason why scholars like Morenz have limited the meaning of Shai to this definition. For him, Shai is a neutral notion used in different contexts and with different meanings. It has both an active and a passive meaning. The passive meaning is related to predestination. The active meaning, on the other hand, is the living force inside a person by which they could change their fate. He further explains that Shai has also a negative aspect, which means death and a positive aspect, which is interpreted as “good fortune”. According to him, the concept/god Shai and its counterpart goddess Renenet lead humans through their lives. The book, however, is limited to the study of fate through the word Shai and does not include other words that could indirectly refer to it. Although he mentions that personal piety and prayers alter fate, he does not conduct a study on them.

In his article, “God, Fate, Free Will”, 1982, Frank Miosi discusses the ancient Egyptian concept of fate and its connection with the gods and free will. He studies the concept of fate in the wisdom texts. He discusses the goddesses Renenet, Meskhenet and the Seven Hathors and their relationship with fate. Miosi does not agree with the concept of fate as “predestination”. He agrees with Morenz that, for ancient Egyptians, Shai/fate means the lifespan of a person. He states: “The length of a man’s life always appears to have been decreed, and this is the most common meaning of Shai” (1982, 102). He points out that a person’s material position was thought to be ordained, that the Late Period texts show that this position is based on the god-man relationship and that wealth is linked to the “process of reward and punishment”. Miosi focuses in his study of fate on the wisdom texts and does not include other concepts related to divine intervention.

John Baines, in his article “Contexts of Fate: Literature and Practical Religion,” 1994, starts by exploring the various studies written about the concept of fate and its various interpretations around the world. He studies the concept historically in ancient Egypt. Baines argues that fate was popular in the Graeco-Roman as attested in “onomastic evidence”. He adds that during the Graeco-Roman Period, fate was a “vital concept” based on the personal names the people used. As for the Dynastic Period it is not “clear” if this was the case. Baines states that fate in the “narrative texts should not be taken as direct evidence for a significant
belief”, (1994a, 48) as these texts represent the “elite” and it is not known how much fate has influenced the rest of the population. He, too, does not consider other words related to divine intervention.

A study by André de Campos Silva, author of “The status of Free Will in Ancient Egypt’s Old and Middle Kingdoms according to the Instructions of Ptahhotep”, 2010 published online, studies the problem of “free will” in ancient Egypt, as expressed in the Instructions of Ptahhotep. The author argues that human nature consists of five elements which act as “human agents” namely: “the moral character, heart, belly, Ka and Ba”. He states that the most important element is the heart. He concludes that these “elements play a major role in free will: they grant the individual the ability to “will freely”. The author also states that the main “obstacle” to free will in the Instructions of Ptahhotep are the gods. He, therefore, makes an analysis of the concept of “divine intervention”. He states that “divine intervention” is divided into “determinism” and “fate”. He argues that there is a universal intervention such as the Nile flood, but there is also intervention in an individual’s life. The person himself asks sometimes for that intervention through prayers. However, there are occasions where the god intervenes and controls one’s life without being asked to. He divides “divine intervention into two categories”: “determination,” and “control of fate.” There is “negative divine intervention”, where god/gods control action to the extent of preventing the person from accessing the afterlife. However, “divine intervention” was not always believed to be negative but there was also a “positive divine intervention.” The maintenance of the created world by the gods is an example of such intervention. In the same way, an individual could also benefit from a god through their “reciprocal relation”.

Silva, however, does not study fate thoroughly. His study is limited to some passages from the text of the Instructions of Ptahhotep. His aim is to answer the question: “In which way could one’s actions be fated by a divine agency?” (2010, 89) His answer is: a “divine agency” could act directly on the individual’s “nature” and thus determine his actions, or could influence him directly. He does not study the different words used by Egyptians to refer to free will, divine intervention or fate.
Chapter I. Lexicographical study

_rdi_

_rdi_ is a verb with several meanings including: to give (Wb.II, 464, 6) to place (Wb.II, 467, 26), to cause (Wb.II, 468, 12). _Rdi_ is one of the frequently used verbs in phrases expressing the relationship of man with his god. God is the “Giver”. According to the examples below, we can deduce the following: In the Old Kingdom god gave wealth and positions. In the Middle Kingdom god was still responsible for giving wealth and positions but he also gave life. In the New Kingdom god intervened in everything in human life. He not only gave life, health, wealth or poverty but also causes a man to be favored or disfavored by others and sometimes to be sick or to be healthy. Moreover, the wishes and prayers expressed in the letters and biographies show the belief of people in the necessity of the interference of gods for anything to happen, thus showing the growing expression of piety in Egyptian literature.

Instructions of Ptahhotep, 161: Old Kingdom
(Žaba 1956, 28)

_IF you plough and there’s growth in the field and _god_ let it prosper in your hand._

\[\text{ir sk3.k rwd m shr rdi st ngr wr m-5.k}\]

_Do not boast at your neighbor’s side._ (Lichtheim 2006b, 66)

Instructions of Ptahhotep, 433: Old Kingdom
(Žaba 1956, 50)

_Do not put trust in your wealth
which came to you as a gift of god._ (Lichtheim 2006b, 71)

\[\text{m kf3-ib.k hr h5w.k hpr(w) n.k m rd} \text{w ngr}\]
Satire of the Trades, 19: Middle Kingdom
(Helck 1970a, 112)

*The bird-catcher suffers much as he watches out for birds. When the swarms pass over him. He keeps saying, "had I a net" *but the god grants it not. And he is angry with his lot.* (Lichtheim 2006b, 189) *(Lit.: The god had not caused it to happen to him)*

\[\text{hr.f dd.f ḫzl iḏdi nn rdl.n nṯr ḫpr m-ꜣ.f sfn.f ḫr shrw}\]

Biography of Horemkhauef: Stela No. 315: Middle Kingdom
(Metmuseum.org)

*Horus who *avenged his father he placed (me) *as superior at the Residence in order to bring Horus of Nekhen together with his mother Isis justified.*

\[\text{iw rdl.n ḫr nd ḫr it.f m ḫry r-ḥnw r int ḫr Nhḥn ḫnꜣ mwt.f ist mꜣt ḫrw}\]

Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor: Middle Kingdom
(De Buck 1948, 4)

*Behold, god has let you live and he brought you to this Island.* (Lichtheim 2006b, 213)

\[\text{mk nṯr rdl.n.f ḫnh.k}\]
Instructions of Amenemopet, Chapter 8, 19-20: New Kingdom
(Laisney 2007, 335)

Better is a bushel given to you by the god, than five thousand through wrongdoing.
(Lichtheim 2006a, 152)

\[\text{sh ipt iw dl s(t) n.k p3 nfr} \]
\[r 5000 m gns\]

Instructions of Amenemopet, Chapter 10, 12-14: New Kingdom
(Laisney 2007, 337)

You shall pray to the Aten when he rises. Saying: "Grant me well-being and health". He will give you your needs for this life. And you will be safe from fear. (Lichtheim 2006a, 148)

\[\text{iir.k sm3 n p3 itn iw.f wbn} \]
\[dd imi n.i wds nb dl.f n.k hwr.k n p3 nh} \]
\[iw.k wds.ti r hry\]

Instructions of Ani, Maxim 30: New Kingdom
(Suys 1935, 95)

Do not be a mindless person, then your god will give (you) wealth. (Lichtheim 2006a, 139)

\[\text{sic} \]

\[\text{iml.k iry iwtyw h3ty.f iw rdiw nfr.k wnw}\]
Letter Papyrus Louvre 3230a: By Teti: New Kingdom
(Peet 1926, 71)

Thoth, Lord of the gods, Ptah the great, south of his wall, Lord of Ankhtawy may they give to you favors love and efficiency in front of everyone. (Wente 1990, 91)

\[\text{(sic)}\]

Dhwty nb nṯrw Ptḥ ʿz rsi-inb.f nb ʿnh-ṯ3.wy dl.sn n.k ḫswt mṛwt spd ḫr m-bḥḥ bw nbw

Biography of Mahu: Amarna Period
(Sandman 1938, 53)

O living Aten, lord of continuity. May you grant me a good funeral after old age. (Murnane 1995, 148)

\[\text{(sic)}\]

pḥ itn ʿnh nb ḫh dl.k n.l krṣt nfrt m ḫt lḥw

Biography of Neferabu: Stela dedicated to Ptah: New Kingdom
(KRI III, 771)

He made me like dogs of the street, while I was in his hand (power). (Lit: He caused that I become like a dog in the street) He caused that people and gods look upon me as a man who had committed an abomination against his lord. Ptah, lord of Maat, was vindicated against me, and so he gave me an instruction. (Frood 2007, 225)
Biography of Neferabu: Stela dedicated to Meretseger: New Kingdom
(KRI III, 733)

She was merciful to me and she caused that I saw her hand. She returned to me in
peace she caused that I forget the sickness which had been in my heart. (Frood 2007,
227)

Biography of Samut-Kyky: New Kingdom
(KRI II, 336)

Now his god instructed him. He taught him according to his teaching after he had
placed him upon the path of Life in order to protect his body. (Frood 2007, 85)

Biography of Bakenkhons: Statue found in Karnak: New Kingdom
(KRI III, 297)

He favored me he knows me and my character he placed me as the High priest of
Amun. (Frood 2007, 41)
Hsy.f wi si3.f wi ḫr bi3t.i dl.f wi ḫm-nṯr tpt n ṭmn

Biography of Thotemhab: New Kingdom
(KRI VII, 153)

I was your true servant, loyal to your commands, I did not spurn the words of your mouth, I was not ignorant of your teaching.
I was upon the path which you yourself set, upon the road which you yourself made. (addressing Hathor). (Frood 2007, 92)

tw.i ḫr w3t nt dd.t ḫs.t ḫr mṯnw n iri.n.t

Biography of Neferrenpet: Stela Turin 50046: New Kingdom
(KRI III, 668)

You caused me to see a darkness of your making; Lighten for me, that I may see you. For that health and life are in your hand: One lives by your giving it.
The vernacular language here is difficult to translate literary.
If we compare with Arabic it says: Il wahed bey’iish bel inta betedeex الواحد بيعيش باللي انت بتذده

di.k m33.i kky n ṭrr.k shḏ n.i m33.(i) tw p3 wn snb ‘nh ḥm ḫd.t k
‘nh.tw m ṭsy.k dl.tw.f

Letter Papyrus Berlin 14049: By Tjaroy: New Kingdom
(Cerný 1939, 23–24)

We every day tell Amon, Pre, Ptah, and every god and every goddess who are here resting here: “Give to you life, prosperity, and health, a long lifetime, and a great
old age, and give to you very many favors in the presence of Amon-Re, King of the gods”. (Wente 1967, 44–45)

I tell Arsaphes, Lord of Heracleopolis, Thoth, Lord of Hermopolis, and every god and (every) goddess by whom I pass: “Give you life, prosperity, and health, a long lifetime, and a good ripe old age; and give you favor before gods and men”. (Wente 1967, 18)

He says: I am a man who swore falsely by Ptah, lord of Maat, and he caused that I see darkness by day. (Frood 2007, 225)
**wḏ**

wḏ has the meaning of “to command” (Wb.I, 394, 10) “to ordain” (Wb.I, 395, 7,8). The word is attested from the Old Kingdom onwards. God ordained the fate, provisions, life, and children. He decreed for the people a lot of things, but at the same time they had to obey his commandments.

The ancient Egyptians believed that whatever they planned for their lives, it would not happen unless god commanded it. This is reflected in this phrase found in the Instructions of Ptahhotep: “People’s schemes do not happen, god’s commands are what prevails” (Lichtheim 2006b, 65). In the Bible in Proverbs 19:2, we have a similar phrase: “There are many plans in a man’s heart, nevertheless the Lord’s Counsel - that will stand”. Modern Egyptians have the same belief and an identical proverb: Al ‘Abd fi al Tafkeer we Al Rab fi Al tadbeer. This concept prevails everywhere, in the Western world as well as in the East. See for example the English version: “Man proposes, God disposes”.

**Instructions of Ptahhotep, 115: Old Kingdom**

(Žaba 1956, 25)

*People’s schemes do not happen*  
*god’s commands is what prevails.* (Lichtheim 2006b, 65)

```
 n pꜣ ḫryt n rmt ḫpr
 wḏwt nṯr pw ḫprwt
```

**Tale of the Doomed Prince 4,1: New Kingdom**

(Gardiner 1932, 1:1)

*It is said there once was a king to whom no son had been born, after a time his majesty begged a son for himself from the, gods of his domain, and they decreed that one should be born to him.* (Lichtheim 2006a, 200)
Tale of the Doomed Prince 4,12: New Kingdom
(Gardiner 1932, 1:2)

Behold, I am ordained to fate.

Biography of Meryra: Amarna Period
(Sandman 1938, 3)

Adoration to you, O living Aten, lord of continuity, who made eternity, King’s Ka, Lord of the two Lands, Neferkheperure Waenre, long in his lifetime, the ruler who makes officials and builds up the commons, the fate which gives life, lord of what is decreed. (Murnane 1995, 154)

Biography of Samut-Kyky: New Kingdom
(KRI III 336)

The god knew him as a youth, he decreed rich provisions. (Frood 2007, 86) (Lit. He decreed for him rich provisions).

13
Biography Samut-Kyky: New Kingdom
(KRI III, 336)

He found Mut at the head of the gods, Shay and Renenet being with her. A lifetime of life and breath under her authority and all that occurs is under her command. (Frood 2007, 86)

Biography of Thotemhab: New Kingdom
(KRI VII, 153)

I am your servant truly obedient to your orders. (Frood 2007, 92)
One of the meanings of $sḥr$ is to “plan” (Wb.IV, 258, 10). From the examples, we note that the gods had a plan for the individual. The plan encompassed various events in the human life. It could be a plan for victory in a war, or to run away as we read in Sinuhe or a plan for a career. God is also the one, who avenges the harm inflicted on a person because he is his protector. A plan of the gods is another strong evidence of the belief of the Egyptians in divine intervention. Trusting this divine plan, despite not knowing it, is a function of personal piety and a proof of it.

**Tale of Sinuhe: Berlin 3022, 40-43: Middle Kingdom**
(Koch 1990, 29)

*I do not know what brought me to this country.*
*It is as a plan of god*

\[n\ \text{rh.\ i\ in}(w)\ \text{wi\ r\ ḫ3t\ tn\ tw\ mī\ sḥr\ nfr}\]

**Biography tomb of Thotemhab: New Kingdom**
(KRI VII, 153)

*I did not ignore your speech I did not surpass your plan* (he is addressing Hathor).

\[\text{bw\ wn.\ i\ r3.\ t\ bw\ sn.\ i\ sḥr.\ t}\]

**Instructions of Amenemopet, Chapter 21, 13-14: New Kingdom**
(Laisney 2007, 353)

*Don’t falsify the oracles in the scrolls,*
*And thus disturb the plans of god.* (Lichtheim 2006a, 158)
*(Lit.: Don’t falsify the oracles in the scrolls so that you do not disturb the plans of god.)*
Instructions of Amenemopet, Chapter 22, 5: New Kingdom
(Laisney 2007, 354)

Do not say: “Find me a protector,
for one who hates me has injured me”.
Indeed, you do not know the plans of god. (Lichtheim 2006a, 159)

Stela of Wenennefer: New Kingdom
(KRI IV, 296)

He says: O people of Tawer, I will cause you to hear something good
concerning the plan of the god which he carried out for the servant of his domain.
(Frood 2007, 107)

Biography of Roma: Block Statue: New Kingdom
(KRI IV, 129)

That which is ordered to be done occurs immediately, 
for he has trusted himself to the plan of his god. (Frood 2007, 52)
According to the Woerterbuch, *sšm* has the meaning of “to follow” and “to guide” (Wb.IV, 288,1). The individual is guided by the gods and follows them. There is no mention of the kind of guidance a god is offering to the individual, so probably here again the phrase “follow god” signifies following his commandments. The examples show that the individuals who do so, they earn the divine blessings. Those blessings will also be in their afterlife. It is not sufficient to follow the gods but the person has to follow them in a “righteous” way.

**Instructions of Ptahhotep, 198: Old Kingdom**
(Žaba 1956, 33)

*There is no wrong for he whom they guide. He whom they guide can not go wrong. Whom they make boatless can not cross.* (Lichtheim 2006b, 66)

**Biography of Rudjahau: Middle Kingdom**
(Landgráfová 2011, 247)

*I am one who knows things and who is guided by Djehuty.* (Landgráfová 2011, 147)

**Biography of Mentuhotep: Middle Kingdom**
(Landgráfová 2011, 171)

*May I be in the following of the god who wants my spirit to be strong at the staircase of the lord of Abydos*
May you favor your defender upon earth, that I may follow you in your truthful way.

I am happier today than yesterday and at dawn he will increase my happiness; for I have been within the domain of Amun from youth to the onset of old age, following him in a truthful way, my eyes seeing his uraei.

I followed him in a truthful way. (Frood 2007, 41)
The word ššit/ššyt (ššit Wb.IV, 403,7) (ššw Wb.IV, 403,11) meaning “fate” is probably one of the most complex words that refer to divine intervention. It is a word, whose meaning varies a lot as it can be written with different determinatives, altering its meaning in different contexts but always ultimately derived from the verb šš to “ordain, to decree” (Wb. IV, I 402,8). According to the Woerterbuch šš (Wb IV, 402, 8) was attested from the Middle Kingdom in the Instructions of Ptahhotep. The principal meaning is “to decree a fate” and “to ordain that something be done”. Starting with the 18th Dynasty we encounter the word ššit/fate, a passive participle from šši (what is ordained, see for example in the tale of the doomed prince, the fairies come to šši n.f ššit) The word also refers also to a person’s lifetime/death, which was written with a determinative of a dead man (Wb. IV 403, 11). ššit was also written with the determinative of a god in the 18th Dynasty which means that the concept of fate had become “deified” (Miosi 1982, 77).

There were scholarly debates about the concept of fate. A few studies were conducted to explain its various meanings. S. Morenz in his book, Zur Rolle des Schicksales in Alten Ägyptischen Religion, he states that šši/w/ Shai has a primary meaning of “lifespan” and “death”. He adds that the career and profession of the person are determined by the harvest goddess Renenet and the birth goddess Meskhenet rather than by Shai. As for Jan Quaegebeur, in his study Le Dieu Egyptien Shai dans la Religion Et L’Onomastique, 1975, notes that numerous texts have the prevailing meaning of Shai as life span, however, and that this is the reason why scholars like Morenz have limited the meaning of Shai to this definition. He disagrees with Morenz and others who regard lifespan as the primary definition of Shai. For him, Shai is a neutral notion. It is used in different contexts with different meanings. For him, it seems that the concept/god Shai and his counterpart goddess Renenet lead humans through their lives. As for Miosi, in his article, “God, Fate, and Free Will”, 1982, he does not agree with the concept of fate as “predestination”. He agrees with Morenz that, Shai, for the ancient Egyptians, has a primary meaning of lifespan of a person. Other scholars, like John Baines, argues that narrative texts should not be taken as direct evidence for a significant belief”, as these texts represent the “elite” and it is not known how much fate has influenced the rest of the population (Baines 1994a, 48). This argument is adopted by a number of Egyptologists who prefer to believe that
the Egyptians did not believe in pre-destination and fate.

The study of the texts which mention fate and predestination convinced the author of this thesis that ššīt/ fate represents the life events that are ordained for an individual, over which one has no control: for example, birth, birth place, parents, illness, accidents, length of life and death, natural disasters etc.

The author of this thesis does not agree with Miosi and Morenz that it is a concept with a primary meaning of lifespan and death. She agrees with Quagebeur that it is a neutral concept that was used in different contexts and with different meanings. She also does not agree with Baines that fate in narrative texts should not be taken as a “significant belief” but rather that narrative texts reflect the culture traditions and the spirit of a society. The Egyptians believed that gods controlled the fate of the individual, as is shown in the examples below, which means that there is a general belief in predestination when it comes to major life events.

For the hieroglyphic texts for šš/ššyt, see below runt.

**Rnnt**

According to the Woertebuch runt is attested starting from the 18th Dynasty onwards and is often associated with ššit with the meaning of “luck” and “wealth” (Wb. II, 437,7). The word runt is derived from the word rnn (Wb. II, 436,1), which means to “nourish” and to “cultivate”. This word takes either the determinative of a woman suckling a child or that of a Cobra serpent that indicates that the word is in fact the name of a female divinity related to prosperity (Miosi 1982, 75).

**Rnnt/Renenet** was a fertility and harvest goddess, a goddess of nourishment and sustenance. She was ‘nbt-sḥt’, “mistress of the fields”, ‘swrt nbt hṛy’ “the one who increases the corn”, she is also ‘ḥr wḏs’, “the one who fills/equips the granaries/magazines” (Leitz 2003, 339). She was the one who provides/creates food ‘mst ḏfsw’ and increases it ‘swrt ḏfsw’ (Leitz 2003, 339). Among her other titles, which were connected with life and death: She was nbt-ḥʾw nfr ‘The mistress of the perfect lifetime” and also ḫḥw ‘the one who counted the lifetime” (Leitz 2003, 339).

Scholars like Miosi in his article “God, Fate, Free Will”, 1982, suggests that runt is responsible for the person’s growth and his physical traits as well as providing “the material goods” to the individual.
The author of this thesis considers ‘rnnt’ as a person’s fortune/wealth. She was the goddess of nourishments as attested in her titles, so she stood for what we call now in Egypt “rizk”; it means a person’s fortune/wealth. This wealth includes their profession and career, the money they earn, properties that they own and even the children that they beget. All this rizk/fortune is only allotted to the individual by god. Indeed, the Arabic word has a connotation of divine givings, which fits well with rnnt.

§3/ §3yt/rnnt

Instructions of Ptahhotep, 480: Old Kingdom
(Żaba 1956, 54)

One does not escape what is fated. (Lichtheim 2006b, 72)
(Lit: One does not escape from him from what he is ordained
(the sw is grammatically the retained object of the passive participle.)

n whl.n.tw m §3 sw

The Prophecies of Neferti, 5: Middle Kingdom
(Helck 1970b, 21)

The land is quite perished, no remnant is left. Not the black of a nail is spared from its fate. (Lichtheim 2006b, 142)

nn sp km n ʿnt m §3t.f

The Prophecies of Neferti, 10: Middle Kingdom
(Helck 1970b, 36)

All happiness has vanished, the land is ruined, its fate decreed. (Lichtheim 2006b, 142) (Lit: as if one ordained laws against it)
Is an inferior beloved when \textit{he becomes a superior}? (Lichtheim 2006b, 227)  
(Lit: Does an inferior becomes a beloved one \textit{when fated to (be as a) superior})

\textit{in iw wn tw3 mrrw n šš(w) n tp-ḥr}

Tale of Sinuhe, 154-160: Middle Kingdom  
(Koch 1990, 55)

\textit{Whichever god, who ordained/predetermined this flight. Be at peace, give me (back) to the Residence.} (Lichtheim 2006b, 228)

\textit{nṯr nb šš(w) wḥt tn ḫtp.k di.k wi r ḫnw}

Satire of the Trades: Middle Kingdom  
(Helck 1970a, 146)

\textit{Behold, the Renenet’s /fortune is on the path of god. The Renenet of a scribe is on his shoulder the day he is born}

\textit{mk rṅnt ḫr wṣt nṯr rṅnt sš kẖt.f ḫrw n ms.tw.f}
Tale of the Doomed Prince, 4.4: New Kingdom
(Gardiner 1932, 1:1)

*Then came the Hathors to determine a fate for him.* (Lichtheim 2006a, 200)

\[\text{iit pw ir.} n \text{n} \text{hwthryt r s} s f \text{šzyt}\]

Tale of the Doomed Prince, 7.6: New Kingdom
(Gardiner 1932, 1:6)

*The youth said to his wife: "I am given over to three fates".* (Lichtheim 2006a, 202)
(Lit. I am decreed to three fates)

\[\text{wn in p}s \text{šri ḫr dd.} n t\text{ṣy.f ḫmt tw.i wḓ.kwi n 3 šzyt}\]

The Doomed Prince, 8.5: New Kingdom
(Gardiner 1932, 1:8)

*She said to him: "Look, your god has placed one of your fates into your hand.*
(Lichtheim 2006a, 202)

\[\text{iw.s ḫr dd f ptr rdīw pṣy.k n} g s \text{m nṣy.k šzy m ḫṭ.k}\]

Instructions of Ani, Maxim 38: New Kingdom
(Suys 1935, 70–71)

*Don't ever talk back to your attacker.*
*Do not set a trap (for him); It is the god who judges the righteous,*
*his fate comes and takes him away.* (Lichtheim 2006a, 141)

I caused that they (the crew) reach Egypt so as to beg for me from Amun fifty years of life over and above my allotted fate. (Lichtheim 2006a, 228)

Instructions of Amenemopet, Chapter 9, 10-11: New Kingdom (Laisney 2007, 336)

Do not set your heart on power. There is no ignoring Fate and Destiny. (Lichtheim 2006a, 152) (Lit.: Fate and Fortune cannot be ignored)

Instructions of Amenemopet, Chapter 21, 15-16: New Kingdom (Laisney 2007, 353)

Do not use for yourself the might of your own god, as if there were no Fate and Destiny. (Lichtheim 2006a, 159) (Lit.: Do not allot for yourself the might of your own god, as if there were no Fate and Fortune).
Biography of Ahmose son of Ebana: New Kingdom
(URK I,4)

Then Aata came to the South.
*His fate brought on his doom.* (Lichtheim 2006a, 13)

Biography of Huya: Amarna Period
(Sandman 1938, 24)

Adoration (to) your Ka, O living Aten, lord of continuity,
lord of fate who brings Fortune into being,
who illuminates the two land with his beauty.

Biography of Panehsy: Amarna Period (171)
(Sandman 1938, 24)

Adoration to you, my god my builder, *the one who fated good things for me.*

---

>m ir gm n.k b3w n nfr ḏś.k iw bn šṣyt rnnt

"ḥr n 33t3 iw n rṣy stkn š3w.f ḫṣb.f"
Biography of Panhesy: Amarna Period  
(Sandman 1938, 24)

Let me give praise to the height of heaven as I adore the lord of the two Lands, Akhenaten, the fate which gives life, lord of what is ordained.

\[
\text{ddi.i i3w r k3 pt dw3.(i) nb t3.wy 3h n itn š3y ddw nḥ ny nb wddt}
\]

Biography of Parennefer: Amarna Period  
(Sandman 1938, 69)

The king’s Ka who lives on Maat, the Lord of the two Lands, Neferkheperure Wanre, given life, who makes Fate and brings Fortune into being.  
(Murnane 1995, 178)

\[
k3 nsw nḥ(w) m m3t nb t3.wy nfr ḫprw r ṣ n ṣ ḫ(lw) nḥ ṭr(w) š3y ṡḥpr(w) rnn(t)
\]

Biography of Any: Amarna Period  
(Sandman 1938, 65)

Adoration to you, O living Aten, lord of lifetime who grants repetition (of life), master of fate who brings fortune into being.  
(Murnane 1995, 124)

\[
i3w n.k p3 itn nḥ nb ḫ ṣ ddi ṯ ṭ ṡ nb š3yt ṡḥpr(w) rnnl(t)
\]

Tomb of Ay: Amarna Period (East Thickness)  
(Sandman 1938, 92)

My lord, who builds people, brings lifetime into being and makes a good fate for his favourite.
Biography of Samut-Kyky: New Kingdom
(KRI III, 339)

As for the one who makes Mut a protector, (he) came forth from the womb favored, perfection was destined for him on the birthing brick he will become an imakh (provided one). (Frood 2007, 89)

Biography of Samut-Kyky: New Kingdom
(KRI III, 336)

...and he found Mut at the head of the gods, Shay and Renenet with her. (Frood 2007, 86)

Biography of Roma: 8th Pylon Karnak: New Kingdom
(KRI IV, 287)

Gods and people exalt your ka, life is in your hand, health under you, Shay and Renenet united in your grasp protecting you. (Frood 2007, 56)
Msḥnt

Msḥnt is translated as the “birth place” or “stone” (WB II, 148, 9). Birth Bricks were used by women for giving birth. The Mother delivered while squatting with her legs on the birth bricks. Birth bricks are not only attested in ancient Egypt but the use of bricks is also attested in the ancient Near East. The texts of ancient Mesopotamia mention birth bricks, which were mythically linked to their goddess Nintu. In the villages, contemporary Egyptians use bricks for giving birth, just as their ancestors, squatting on two “building blocks” (Wegner 2009, 472). Winfred Blackman in her book the “Fellaheen of Upper Egypt” states that while giving birth, a woman squats “resting her arms on, and pressing upon, a sieve which stands on its side” (Blackman 2000, 63).

During Excavation in South Abydos in 2001, a decorated birth brick was found. The decoration on the birth brick show representations of a mother and a newborn as well as a number of apotropaic gods, similar to those found on the magic wands. The apotropaic images include: “Tree-emblem with Hathor head”, Taweret, a “leonine divinity holding and biting a snake, a “baboon” holding and biting a snake, “a wild cat”, “Renenet in the form of Cobra” and a standing lion holding and “decapitating of a human enemy” (Wegner 2009, 454–455). The baby was put on the birth brick right after the mother gave birth. In Papyrus Westcar, we read that they put the baby on “ifd m ḏbt”. The scholars have different translations for that phrase, while some regard it as “cushion or bed of mud-brick”, others translate it as four bricks (Roth and Roehring 2002, 131). Evidence reveals that ancient Egyptians used four bricks, not a single pair, in childbirth, from the Old Kingdom until the Coptic Period. In the tomb of Watethathor at Saqqara dating to the 6th Dynasty, there is a “birth song” which “invoked 4 birth bricks” (Wegner 2009, 473). In the Coptic Period there is a spell which mentions the “names of the four bricks used by Mary” (Wegner 2009, 473).

The birth bricks functioned as an amulet for protecting the baby and the mother. Gods depicted on the Abydos birth brick aimed at protecting the baby. Also, there is a spell that invokes the birth brick for the protection of the child, which provides evidence that it had an apotropaic and amuletic function (Wegner 2009, 478). The mortality rate of the babies in ancient Egypt was high, therefore they had to use all possible means to protect them. After the baby is put on the birth brick, its “fate was determined” (Roth and Roehring 2002, 215). Egyptians believed that the
fate of the baby is written on its birth brick, which is attested in texts like the Biography of Samut Kyky dated to the New Kingdom, where we read: *As for the one who makes Mut a protector, (he) came forth from the womb favored, perfection destined for him, on the birthing brick: he will achieve veneration* (Frood 2007, 87). This quotation concords with the depiction of *Renenet* on the Abydos birth brick because fate and fortune are written on the person’s birth brick. Griffith has also “cited” two texts in the Late Period Stories of High Priest of Memphis 1.48-9, where we read “the end of his life that Thoth had written upon his brick of birth” (Griffith 1900, 48).

*Mshnt/Meskhenet* was personified as a goddess and represented with a headdress of a cow’s uterus. She was also shown as a female head mounted on a birth stone. She is one of the goddesses who predicted the fate of the new born as is shown in the Westcar papyrus (Lichtheim 2006b, 220).

She had various titles including, *diwt-ḥr š-mr-ib-sn*, “who gives life to those whose heart love” “s*nḥt ḫr.s*” “she who enlivens Horus” *nḥt-ḥr.w* “Mistress of Lifetime”, *ḥsbt-ḥr.w* “the one who counts the lifetime”, *šnty rrt* “who gives fate and rearing”, *rrt* “Wet nurse”, *rnnt m-ḥ.s*, “fortune is in her hand (Leitz 2003, 263–265)

She was also believed to appear at the time of the individual’s death, and may have presided over the rebirth of the deceased in the afterlife. In ancient Egypt, as in other cultures, “there was an essential identity between cosmology and embryology, so that any birth (or rebirth) could be seen as a repetition of the creation of the universe” (Raven, 2005: 53).

Therefore, *Mshnt* was depicted in the Judgment Hall in the Other world accompanied by *šsi* and *rnnt* (Roth and Roehring 2002, 136). The author of this thesis believes that *šsi*, *rnnt* and *mshnt* were attending the judgment of the deceased, because they represented the main aspects of the individual’s life. *Mshnt* represented the day on which a person was born and was the goddess who gave life as attested in her titles “she who enlivens Horus”. Also, she was responsible for the rebirth of the deceased, as depicted in the Judgement scene. She determined as well the number of years an individual was going to live as attested in her title “Mistress of Lifetime”. She is also mentioned in the Instruction of a Man to his son as “who gives breath of life in the nose” (Fischer-Elfert 1999, 82). She stands together with *Khnum* at the
beginning of a person’s life, as *Khnum* creates the human Ka on the potter wheel while *Meskhnenet* gives the individual breath. In the Stela UC14333 of *Mentuhotep*, son of *Hepy* we read: “I am a son of Nepri, a husband of Tayet……..a Meskhentet, a Khnum who created mankind” (Fischer-Elfert 1999, 358). Her title “who gives fate and rearing” also testifies that she was a goddess who determined fate. Moreover, this is also attested in Westcar Papyrus where we read that she said: “A king who will assume the kingship in this whole land” (Lichtheim 2006b, 220). The fact that the fate of the person is written on his birth brick concords with *Meskhenet* being also a fate goddess.

**Satire of the Trades: Middle Kingdom**  
(Heck 1970a, 148)

*The Meskhenet assigned to the scribe, she promotes him in the council.* (Lichtheim 2006b, 191)

However, Lichtheim translation would require an *n* before *sš* and then the *ddiw* is a passive participle plural that cannot relate to Meskhenet. The author of this thesis would rather translate:

*(Lit. Meskhenet is the one who assigns the scribe and those who are foremost of the Council).*

\[ Mšḥnt \ wḏt\ sš\ ddiw\ hr\ ḫt\ kḥnt \]

**Instruction of a Man to his son: Middle Kingdom**  
(Fischer-Elfert 3,4)

*Can the day of Renenet be varied?*  
*Can you add a day to a lifespan?*  
*Can you subtract from it either?*  
*Meskhenet is like the time of creation, there is none who can destroy what she ordained for him.* (Fischer-Elfert 1999, 58)

\[ Mšḥnt\ \ ml-sp \ tpī\ nn\ ḫḏ\ šš.(t)\ n.f \]

30
Instruction of a Man to his son: Middle Kingdom  
(Fischer-Elfert 1999, 5)

All this is within a lifetime,  
Beyond (the influence) of Renenet,  
and without Meskhenet determining anything against it,  
other than determining the breath for his nose. (Fischer-Elfert 1999, 82)

Westcar Papyrus: The Birth of the Royal Children: Middle Kingdom  
(De Buck 1948, 84)

Then the majesty of Re, lord of Sakhbu, said  
to Isis, Nephthys, Meskhenet, Heqet and Khnum

O, may you go and deliver Ruddjedet of the three children who are in her womb.  
(Lichtheim 2006b, 220)
Westcar Papyrus: The birth of the Royal Children: Middle Kingdom
(De Buck 1948, 84–85)

Then Meskhenet approached him and said:
(Lit. Then Meskhenet approached herself from him and said)

"A king who will assume the kingship in this whole land". (Lichtheim 2006a, 220)
Among the meanings of ḫwh are “power” and “dread” (Wb.I, 413, 16). In his article “Divine Intervention in Ancient Egypt and its Manifestation ḫwh”, J.F. Borghouts states that the word ḫwh derives from the word ḫ to “become manifest”. He argues that it is an “abstract notion that “mostly conjures up dread and terror and only rarely evokes praise” (Borghouts 1982, 1). According to him, ḫwh could refer to all the ways that humans, kings and gods could make themselves felt by others in certain events. Although Egyptologists tend to translate the word as wrath or power, Borghouts prefers to translate it as “manifestation” arguing that the Egyptians themselves were not certain about the nature of ‘ḫwh’ (Borghouts 1982, 2). Borghouts also states that the expression ‘ḫwh nṯr hprr “a manifestation of a god has come into being”, which is found in Deir El Medina ostraca, could refer to a sort of punishment (Borghouts 1982, 3). The punishment took place, most probably, when the individual angered the gods. He states that we are not told what kind of punishment is inflicted on the person. It could be sickness, feelings of guilt or accidents which made the person realize that the manifestation of the god is taking place. He also notes that ḫwh was felt as a “psychic burden”, that sometimes causes somatic disorder such as blindness (Borghouts 1982, 31). Borghouts comes to the conclusion based on stelae where it is mentioned that god “caused me to see darkness” like for example in the Deir El Medina stelae of Neferabu (BM 589) (Borghouts 1982, 7).

The author of this thesis does not agree with Borghouts that blindness is meant literally. The concept of someone being in darkness is present in the Holy Books and is prevalent to this day in Egypt. It means that the person has committed a sin or that he is not close enough to god. There are similar concepts in both the Quran and the Bible. In the Bible Exodus Proverb 2:13, we read:

“Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness”

In the Quran surat Al –Baqara verse 2:257, we read:

>Allah is the ally of those who believe. He brings them out from darkness into the light. And those who disbelieve - their allies are Taghut. They take them out of the light into darkness. Those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide eternally therein.”

Allah is the ally of those who believe. He brings them out from darkness into the light. And those who disbelieve - their allies are Taghut. They take them out of the light into darkness. Those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide eternally therein.
The author of this thesis reads b3w as wrath and anger of god, a notion present in all religions and Holy Books. Reward and punishment are part of the relationship of the individual with his god. The author agrees totally with Borghouts in his statement: “b3w signify a divine intervention in the everyday affairs of humans” (Borghouts 1982, 31).

The examples included below show that the ancient Egyptians believed that they should be very careful not to offend the gods in any of their everyday behavior and actions. In the Instructions, the authors urge the people to pray and present offerings to the gods, so as not to anger them. Gods are angry when a person does not follow the right moral conduct and if an individual commits a sin, they are punished.

**Instructions of Amenemopet, Chapter 7, 19: New Kingdom**  
(Laisney 2007, 334)

*Do not move the markers on the borders of fields,*  
*Nor shift the position of the measuring-cord.*  
*Do not be greedy for a cubit of land,*  
*Nor encroach on the boundaries of a widow.*  
*The trodden furrow worn down by time,*  
*He who disguises it in the fields,*  
*When he has snared (it) by false oaths,*  
**He will be caught by the might of the Moon.**  
(Lichtheim 2006a, 151)

\[iw.f \text{ sph } n-m \text{ b3w n } \text{ lɛh}\]

**Instructions of Amenemopet, Chapter 11, 5: New Kingdom**  
(Laisney 2007, 338)

*Guard your tongue from harmful speech. Then you will be loved by others.*  
*You will find your place in the house of god. You will share in the offerings of your lord.*  
*When you’re revered and your coffin conceals you.*  
**You will be safe from the power of god.**  
(Lichtheim 2006a, 153)

\[wδ3.k \text{ r b3w n nfr}\]
Instructions of Amenemopet, Chapter 18, 4-5: New Kingdom
(Laisney 2007, 349)

Do not make for yourself deficient weights. They are many the troupes in the might/wrath of god. (Lichtheim 2006a, 157)

\[ m \text{ ir iry n.k kd.wt m ḫḏ st ḫš ṭ mš n-m b₃w n nṯr } \]

Instructions of Amenemopet, Chapter 21, 15-16: New Kingdom
(Laisney 2007, 353)

Don’t use for yourself the might of god, as if there were no Fate and Fortune.

\[ m \text{ ir gm n.k b₃w n nṯr ḫs.k ṭw bn n ṣṣy t ṭnnt } \]

Biography of Neferabu: Stela to Ptah: New Kingdom
(KRI III, 771)

He says: I am a man who swore falsely by Ptah, lord of Maat, and he caused that I see darkness by day.
I will proclaim his power to those who do not know him and those who do, to the small and the great. (Frood 2007, 225)

\[ ṭw.l ḫ ḫḏ b₃w.f n ḥm sw rḥ n ṣriw ḫw \]
He says: I am a man who said an oath in falsehood to the lady of the house, Nefertari, true of voice. *The power of the god happened.* (Frood 2007, 228)

dd.f ink s ddy w3ḥ m ḏḥ n nḥ pr nt rt íry bȝw nṯr hprw
**m-\drt/ hr-\c/ m-\c**

Irene Shirun-Grumach in her article “Bedeutet in der Hand des Gottes, Gottesfurcht?”, 1990, states that “in the hand” serves several metaphors, which includes beating, owning, as well as protecting. She notes that hr-\c expresses closeness to the god, hr-\cwy expresses the god’s control over time, while m-\c is used to express the god’s control over fate and time with m-\drt signifying “being in the charge of the god” i.e. it is god who is in charge of humans. She also states that people with diseases or mental sickness are described as being “m \drt ps ntr” “in the hand of the god”, which is a metaphor for being “close to god”, as we read in Amenemopet, Chapter 24, 9-18:

*Do not laugh at a blind man nor tease a dwarf.*
*No cause hardship for the lame.*
*Do not tease a man who is in the hand of the god* (Lichtheim 2006a, 160)

She notes that \m \drt ps ntr, has also the meaning of punishment of god. She based her argument on the Deir El Medina stelae where we read in Neferabu stela:

*He made me like dogs of the street,*
*while I was in his hand (m \drt.f)* (Frood 2007, 227)

So, she suggests that m-di ps ntr could be synonymous to m bsw ps ntr, which means being in the might of god (Shirun-Grumach 1990, 843). It is very interesting to note that Egyptians now use a very similar expression “he fell in his hand” when describing someone being punished.

The author of this thesis considers “in the hand of the god” as evidence for the personal piety of the Egyptians and total submission to god’s will. The examples below reveal that not only Lifetime is in the “hand of the god” but also revenge from a wicked person is left to god to handle. “In the hand of the god” offers protection and security. It also reveals that the Egyptians accepted whatever comes from god even if poverty, as is stated in the Instructions of Amenemopet: “Better is poverty in the hand of the god than wealth in the storeroom” (Lichtheim 2006a, 152). Moreover, the expressions we read in their letters: “Today I am living, tomorrow is in the hand of the god” (Wente 1967, 18) is indicative of their belief that they had no say over the events that might or might not cross their path.
Instructions of Amenemopet, Chapter 9, 5-6: New Kingdom
(Laisney 2007, 335)

*Better is poverty in the hand of the god, than wealth in the storehouse.* (Lichtheim 2006a, 152)

\[\text{Papyrus Leiden I 369: By Djehutymes: Letter No. 47} \]
(Cerný 1939, 1)

Indeed, I am alive today; *tomorrow is in god's hands.* (Wente 1967, 18)

*Biography of Roma from Karnak: New Kingdom* (KRI IV, 129)

*The length of a lifetime is in the hands of Amun, to bring its end in perfection.* (Frood 2007, 56)

*Biography of Roma from Karnak: New Kingdom* (KRI IV, 287)

*Gods and people exalt your ka, life is in your hand, health belongs to you, Shay and Renenet united in your grasp protecting you.* (Frood 2007, 56)
Instructions of Amenemopet, Chapter 24, 11: New Kingdom
(Laisney 2007, 358)

Do not laugh at a blind man nor tease a dwarf.
No cause hardship for the lame.
Do not tease a man who is in the hand of the god. (Lichtheim 2006a, 160)

Instructions of Amenemopet, Chapter 5, 4: New Kingdom
(Laisney 2007, 330)

Steer, we will ferry the wicked,
we do not act like his kind.
Lift him up, give him your hand.
Leave him (in) the hands of the god. (Lichtheim 2006a, 160)

Instructions of Amenemopet, Chapter 22, 7-8: New Kingdom
(Laisney 2007, 354)

Settle in the arms of the god.
so that your silence overthrows them. (Lichtheim 2006a, 159)
lifetime is at your hand, and you grant it to whomever you wish

Instructions of Amenemopet, Chapter 14, 1: New Kingdom
(Laisney 2007, 343)

Do not sever your heart from your tongue
that all your strivings may succeed.
You will be weighty before the others,
and secure in the hand of the god. (Lichtheim 2006a, 154)

She was merciful to me and she caused that
I see her hand. (Frood 2007, 227)
Biography Neferabu: Stela to Ptah: New Kingdom
(KRI III, 771)

He made me like dogs of the street, while I was in his hand (power). (Frood 2007, 227)

Biography of Neferrenpet: Stela: New Kingdom
KRI III, 668)

Lighten for me, that I may see you. For health and life are in your hand: One lives by your giving (it)

Instructions of Amenemopet, Chapter 24, 20: New Kingdom
(Laisney 2007, 358)

Happy is he who reaches the west, when he is safe in the hand of the god. (Lichtheim 2006a, 160)
The verb *iri* has several meanings the primary one “to make”, “to do” (Wb.I, 108, 5) but it has also the meaning of “to create” (Wb.I, 108, 21) when associated with gods. God created everything on earth including the human beings, as is attested in their hymns to the gods: God created plants and trees, and animals and gave the breath of life to the babies. This is attested in the hymn to Amun: “*Hail to you, Aten of daytime, creator of all, who makes them live!*” (Lichtheim 2006a, 87).

They also believed that god created the leaders who would rule Egypt. These rulers were predestined already in the womb of their mothers. This is attested in the story of “The Birth of the Royal Children” in the Westcar Papyrus as well as in the Instructions:

Papyrus Westcar: The Birth of the Royal Children:
*Then said the majesty of Re, lord of Sakhu, to Isis, Nephthys, Meskhenet, Heket, and Khnum: "Please go, deliver Ruddedet of the three children who are in her womb, who will assume this beneficent office in this whole land."
* (Lichtheim 2006b, 220)

Instructions of Merikare:
*He made for them rulers in the egg,
leaders to raise the back of the weak* (Lichtheim 2006b, 191)

As noted in the previous examples the god again controlled the fortune of the person, he made people rich or poor according to his will. In Instruction of Amenemopet, Chapter 24,16-17, he says:

*He makes a thousand poor by his will,
he makes a thousand men into chiefs.”* (Lichtheim 2006a, 160)

Another important belief held by Egyptians was, that god created magic to “ward off the blow of events”. Does this mean that a person could alter his Fate?? This is discussed in the next chapter.

**Instructions of Ptahhotep, 184-185: Old Kingdom**
(Žaba 1956, 30)

*For wealth does not come by itself.
It is their law for him whom they love,”
His gain, he gathered it himself:
*It is the god who makes him worthy
And protects him while he sleeps.* (Lichtheim 2006b, 66)
in ntr iriw ikr.f hsf.f hr.f iw.f sdrw

Instructions of Merikare: Middle Kingdom
(Helck 1977, 86)

He made for them rulers in the egg,
leaders to raise the back of the weak. (Lichtheim 2006b, 106)

ir.n.f (n).sn ḫk3wt m swḥt

He made for them magic as weapons
to ward off the blow of events. (Lichtheim 2006b, 106)
(Helck 1977, 86)

lr.n.f n.sn ḫk3w r ḫw r hsf ʾwy n hpryt

Biography of Ay: Amarna Period
(Sandman 1938, 92)

….my lord, who builds people, brings lifetime into being and makes a good fate for
his favourite.

ps3y.(i) nb kd(w) rmt shpr(w) ḫc ir(w) š3y nfr n ḫsy.f

Biography of Parennefer: Amarna Period
(Sandman 1938, 69)

The king’s Ka which lives on Maat, the Lord of the Two Lands, Neferkheperure Wanre, given life, who makes fate and brings fortune into being.
Letter Papyrus Bibliothèque National 197, IV: New Kingdom
(Cerný 1939, 13)

I have noted your having written to look after my condition. It is Amon, Pre Ptah who
shall look after your condition and they will do good for you.

Instructions of Amenemopet, Chapter 24, 16-17: New Kingdom
(Laisney 2007, 358)

He tears down, he builds up daily.
He makes a thousand poor by his will,
he makes a thousand men into chiefs. (Lichtheim 2006a, 160)
Chapter II: Elements that could alter the will of god

Did the Egyptians believe that the will of the gods could be altered by any means? Did they believe that demons, magic and personal piety could alter it? Personal piety will be examined through Literature, as the author of this thesis believes that literature is what best reflects the culture of the people.

1- Personal Piety versus Personal Religion

According to the dictionary, there is a difference in definition between the terms “Religion” and “Piety”. Religion is defined as: “The belief in and worship of a god or gods, or any such system of belief and worship” (dictionary.cambridge.org). Piety on the other hand is defined as: “A strong belief in God or a religion, shown by your worship and behavior” (dictionary.cambridge.org). The behavior of a person towards a god is what makes the difference in personal piety.

There was no term for “personal piety” in ancient Egypt. Adolf Erman in 1911 and James Henry Breasted in 1912 adopted this expression to describe the practices of personal religion in ancient Egypt (Luiselli 2008, 1). Scholars have debated the basic definition of personal piety. Ashraf Sadek in his book, Popular Religion in Ancient Egypt during the New Kingdom, 1988, defines popular religion as follows: “Popular religion in ancient Egypt is made up of the beliefs and practices of the Egyptian people themselves, separated from the official cults of the state-run temples” (1988, 2). It is not, however, exclusively the religion of the poor. Socially, personal religion encompassed all main classes and groups: peasants, artisans, servants, and high and middle officials (Sadek 1988, 2).

Further debates have revolved around when piety arose and whether the Egyptians worshiped the great state gods or various manifestations thereof. A group of Egyptologists including Jan Assmann noted that the appearance of personal piety was a reaction to the reign of Akhenaton and the reforms that took place then. Assmann argues that in the New Kingdom a “new religiosity” developed, which is expressed in phrases like “put god into one’s heart” (Assmann 2002, 230). He states that “life as a whole came to be seen as the object of divine attention and guidance”. He argues that this new expression of religiosity he called the “theology of will”,
consists of two aspects: “divine intervention” and “personal piety” (Assmann 2002, 230).

John Baines, on the other hand, examines the possible early evidence for “practical religion” or “religious action in everyday context”. Baines advanced the theory that the obvious absence of individual devotion in the Old and Middle Kingdoms, may be partly due to the importance of “decorum”, “which specifies in hierarchical terms what may be depicted in what context and possibly as well affects the content of many textual sources” (Baines 1994b, 51).

Although Old Kingdom evidence for personal piety is rare, the author of this thesis believes, along with John Baines and Ashraf Iskander, that it already existed then. The “declarations of right-doing” in the 5th and 6th Dynasties followed the moral codes which are mentioned in the Old Kingdom instructions (Lichtheim 1996, 254). These declarations, although considered by scholars as an idealistic form of biographies, show that love of gods was important to the Egyptians. They were eager to please them by following m3t. They constantly stated the following in their biographies:

\[
I \text { have done justice } (m3t), \text { which the god loves} \\
I \text { pleased the god with what he loves.} (Kloth 2002, 48)
\]

Another evidence for personal piety in the Old Kingdom is found in the expression “on the way of the god” and “the truthful way”, which is already attested in the 5th Dynasty tomb of Nisedjer Kai, where we read: “May she travel on the good way to follow the justified”. This expression was further developed to become “way of life” and “way of the god”. In the “Satire of the Trades” the author says to his son: “I placed you on the way of god” (Haikal 2007, 13).

The above mentioned expressions and the “declarations of right doing” in the Old Kingdom biographies, indicate that, although it is in the New Kingdom where a more developed and elaborate expression of the Egyptian’s religious feelings are found, the roots of this personal piety were already there in the Old Kingdom.

One of the major features of the personal piety of Egyptians was prayers. Egyptians believed that the invisible universe was the domain of the divine, a universe inhabited by gods and some of their other creations, who observed their world and intervened in it. According to the ancient Egyptian mythological tale of the “Destruction of Mankind”, in the beginning of creation, the deities were living in
harmony with humans, until humans rebelled against them (Lichtheim 2006a, 197). So the deities got angry, created the sky and went up to the unseen world, which led ancient Egyptians to pursue contact with their deities and some of their other creatures in that invisible universe by way of magic or even better by prayers (Haikal 2009, 199–200). Thus prayer became a major component of drawing closer to the deities as manifested in the Instructions, tales, biographies and letters throughout the different periods.

Instructions always urged people to pray and to present offerings to the gods to please them. The following quotations show that praying was rooted in Egyptian culture:

**Instructions to Merikare**

*Work for god, he will work for you also,*  
With offerings that make the altar flourish,  
With carvings  
*God thinks of him who works for him.*  
*When they weep he hears.* (Lichtheim 2006b, 106)

**Instructions of Ani:**  
*Pray by yourself with a loving heart,*  
*Whose every word is hidden.*  
*He will grant your needs,*  
*He will hear your words.* (Lichtheim 2006a, 138)

*Offer to your god, Beware of offending him.*  
*Do not question his images,*  
*Do not accost him when he appears,*  
*Do not jostle him in order to carry him,*  
*Do not disturb the oracles.*  
"*Be careful, help to protect him,*  
*Let your eye watch out for his wrath,*  
*And kiss the ground in his name.*  
*He gives power in a million forms,*  
*He who magnifies him is magnified.* (Lichtheim 2006a, 141)

**Instructions of Amenemopet, Chapter 7,10**

*You shall pray to the Aten when he rises.*  
*Saying: "Grant me well-being and health";*  
*He will give you your needs for this life.*  
*And you will be safe from fear.* (Lichtheim 2006a, 153)
The person should not only pray but is urged to pray with a loving heart. The innate understanding of the divine, which resides in the heart and its continuous evocation during prayers, drive the divinity to materialize to respond to the need of those who evoke it. “To put god in one’s heart” evolved into an expression constantly repeated in the personal piety texts (Assmann 1997, 26). This expression became the leit motiv of later Christian mysticism and Islamic Soufi philosophy. The “god pleases the heart when invoked” is also expressed for example in P. Leiden I 344 verso V.I “Amun is one who pleases the heart/gives contentment when invoked” (Darnell 2013). These expressions, revealing the love of the gods, are regarded by some scholars as the first expression of mysticism in antiquity (Haikal 2009, 207).

As for the tales, they contain several examples of personal piety expressed in praying, presenting offering and in being thankful to the deities for saving the person from a misfortune or for granting them what they wanted. In the Middle Kingdom, in the tale of the shipwrecked Sailor whom the god saved from drowning, we read:

*The attendant said: Praise is given, god is thanked, everyone embraces his fellow. Our crew has returned safely; our troops.* (Lichtheim 2006b, 212)

The Egyptians believed that the safe return of the troops, like the rescue of the sailor, was solely up to the intervention of a god, who had to be thanked for it:

*It is god who has let you live and brought you to this island.* (Lichtheim 2006b, 213)

The sailor did not know what was going to happen to him next. The god foretold him the future.

*Then I put myself on my belly to thank him and he said to me: "You will reach home in two months. You will embrace your children. You will flourish at home, you will be buried.* (Lichtheim 2006b, 213)

People not knowing their future, is a theme expressed also in the letters and Instructions of the New Kingdom: “Tomorrow is in the hand of the god” is but one example (Wente 1967, 18). The same concept is found in the Instructions of Amenemopet:

*Do not lie down in fear of tomorrow: " Comes day. how will tomorrow be?"
Man ignores how tomorrow will be;  
God is ever in his perfection. 
Man is ever in his failure. 
The words men say are one thing. 
The deeds of the god are another. (Lichtheim 2006a, 158)

In the tale of Sinuhe, divine intervention is highly stressed, so is personal piety. Sinuhe believed that his flight was due to an intervention of a god and he did not know the reason for his flight. He thought it might be a punishment. Sinuhe prayed desperately to the deity, and begged it to let him return to Egypt and die there. The deity eventually heard his prayers and made him go back to Egypt (Lichtheim 2006b, 225–230).

Whichever god decreed this flight, have mercy, bring me home Surely you will let me see the place in which my heart dwells What is more important than that my corpse be buried in the land in which I was born! Come to my aid! What if the happy event should occur! May god pity me! May he act so as to make happy the end of one whom he punished! May his heart ache for one whom he forced to live abroad If he is truly appeased today, may he hearken to the prayer of one far away! May he return one whom he made roam the earth to the place from which he carried him off. (Lichtheim 2006b, 229)

In the story of the Doomed Prince, we have several examples of personal piety expressed in prayers and in the altering of fate by the gods. There was once a king who grieved because no son had been born to him. The king prayed to the gods for getting a son and he was granted what he asked for. The seven Hathors foretold the prince’s destiny: “His death shall be by the crocodile, or by the serpent, or by the dog” (Lichtheim 2006a, 200). The King grieved when he heard about the destiny of his son (Lichtheim 2006b, 200–203). Then the prince grew up and married. One night his wife managed to kill a snake that was coming to kill the prince. His wife told him: “god has given you one of your fates in your hands” (Lichtheim 2006a, 202). Although the end of the story is unknown, this part indicates that the Egyptians believed that fate could be altered by the gods.

The fact that the gods are the ones who grant an individual his children is also attested in the Old Kingdom Instructions, for example, in the Instructions of Ptahhotep, he states: “If you are a man of worth and produce a son by the grace of god” (Lichtheim 2006b, 66).
In the New Kingdom biographies and prayer texts, god became the protector of the weak and the poor, and patron of people in despair and distress or any person who seeks protection. The worshippers called god “father and mother”, as we read in the following prayers “Mother and Father for him who puts you in his heart” (Assmann 1984, 22). Justice, which protects from fear and need, is the prerogative of god. Silence became a main component of personal piety. It became the center of virtue of a person. It designates subordination to the will of the gods and trust in the protection provided by them, which is encapsulated in the expression “being in the hand of the god” (Assmann 1997, 25–26). In Stela of Nebre, we read:

 Thou art Amun, the Lord of him that is silent: Who comes at the cry of the humble man. (Frood 2007, 221)

An example of extreme personal piety, and love of and trust in god is Samut Kyky’s, who donated all his property to the goddess Mut (Assmann 1997, 26).

He said: Look, I am giving to her my property and all that (I have) accrued, for I know that she is effective on my behalf, that she is uniquely excellent. She removed anguish for me; she left me in a painful moment, (but) she came, the north wind before her, after I called upon her by name. (Frood 2007, 86)

May you keep me safe, until my end, from every evil. My heart is filled with my mistress. I will not fear people when I lie down for when I sleep, I have a defender ...........(Frood 2007, 87)

This text shows also that the king was no longer the patron of the people as was the case in the Old Kingdom. He was replaced by the gods.

The contents of the New Kingdom letters provide further evidence of the importance of prayers to the Egyptians. They frequently used, in their letters, phrases where the sender stated that he was praying daily to the gods to bring the recipient home alive. There were also statements where the sender asked the gods for the recipients’ well-being and stated that tomorrow was not known, thus underscoring the knowledge of god and the humility of the human in his presence (Baines 2001, 9).

In Papyrus Leiden I 369 Letter 47 from Djehutymes, we read:
How are your men? Indeed, I am alive today; tomorrow is in God's hands. As soon as my letter reaches you, you shall go to the open court of Amon of the Thrones of the Two Lands taking the children along with you and coax' him and tell him to save me. (Wente 1967, 18)

And in Papyrus Leiden I 370

....And you shall tell Amon to remove this illness which is in me. (Wente 1967, 30)

There are also other letters where the praying to the god is linked with presenting a “libation” (Baines 2001, 16).

Do not be neglectful in taking water to Amon of the Throne(s) of the Two Lands. "I do (it) two to three times in the decade. I am not neglectful in taking water to him. Now it is good that you turn your heart to him so that he may turn to you his heart without becoming cross at all. (Wente 1967, 50)

Another interesting discovery related to personal piety and the divine intervention of the gods in the New Kingdom, is the rock shrine of Pahu, which was discovered in 2001. A “series of caravan tracks” connect the southern region of ancient Naqada with the great Wadi Alamat Road, leading out of northern Thebes into the Western Desert. Near one of these Naqada tracks, rock inscriptions were discovered dating back to the 18th Dynasty. The inscriptions and representations at the site belong to a scribe named Pahu, Second Prophet of Amun of Heriheramun (Darnell 2013, 7).

Pahu is represented while offering to Amun and to Hathor. There are also depictions of Kings Ahmose and the goddess Taweret. Pahu wrote a prayer to Amun during a storm on the Nile, where he nearly drowned but Amun rescued him. Pahu wrote a short prayer in two parts. The first part consists of a cry of desperate invocation for help, while the second part is the “actual prayer itself”. The divine act of saving Pahu was the deity’s answer to his cry (Darnell 2013, 31).

Pahu’s prayer and his offering scenes show his personal relationship with a number of deities. Pahu’s rock inscription site is an important monument to New Kingdom piety and shows that Pahu built for himself a remote personal religious space for adoring his deities (Darnell 2013).
I called to Amun when I was in trouble in the depth of the river
When the waves were high;
and he caused that I travel the earth by my
own volition.
The cry to Amun which
the wab-Priest Pahu, son of Nay, made
The cry to Amun
“I am shipwrecked”
and he caused that I give voice like the goose.
Pahu son of Na(y). (Darnell 2013, 31)

I cried out to you,
When I was distressed
You came
And I was saved. (Darnell 2013, 32)

Pahu erected a shrine for Amun in gratitude for him giving heed to his prayers,
a tradition which the ancient Egyptians used sometimes to thank god for granting
them what they wanted. Nebre for example erected a stela for Amun thanking him for
hearing his prayers and saving his friend Nakhtamun (Darnell 2013, 32).

I shall make this stela in your name
And I shall set for you this praise in writing on its face
(so) I said to you
and you heard me
Now see, I have done what I said
You are the lord of the one who calls to him, who rejoices in maat, lord of
Thebes. (Frood 2007, 222)

The worshippers in the New Kingdom did not only thank the gods for hearing
their prayers through offerings, praise or erecting stelae and shrines for them, but they
were also willing to humble themselves before those gods. They considered
themselves, “foolish” and “ignorant” not knowing good from bad in their approach to
god. They even acknowledged their sins to the gods and admitted that they deserved
punishment and could only be saved by god’s mercy (Gunn 1916, 82). This is attested
in a number of stelae. A stela is dedicated to Amun by the draughtsman Nebre and his
son Kha'y in gratitude for the recovery from sickness of Nakhtamun, another son of
Nebre:

Amen-Re, Lord of Karnak; The great God within Thebes;
The august god who hears prayer;
Who comes at the voice of the distressed humble one;
Who gives breath to him that is wretched. (Frood 2007, 220)
Another example of sin acknowledgement is a stela by Neferabu to Meretseger:

(I was) an ignorant man, without sense, who did not know good from falsehood. I performed an act of transgression against the Scarp and she gave me an instruction. (Frood 2007, 226)

Apart from acknowledging their sins to their gods, and humbling themselves before them, the worhippers invoked the deities to satisfy all kinds of human needs including requests for help whether spiritual, material or personal. For example, they asked the deities to be in their favor and to be in favor of everyone: “Give you favor before gods and men” (Wente 1967, 18). “Grant me favor so that my mouth bear truth and my eyes may see Amun in all his feasts” (Sadek 1988, 219). They also asked for long life and health as is shown in the following examples: “Grant me a long life and a good old age after years” and “Let Amun grant me health” They also asked for material things including food, clothing and housing “Fill his mouth, clothe his back” (Sadek 1988, 219). The worshipper could ask also for protection from specific accidents, such as protection from a thief: “May you see the one who robs me and the one who stand before you” (Sadek 1988, 222).

They also invoked the deities in their love life as attested in the love poems. They prayed to be together with their lovers. The most invoked goddess in the love poems is Hathor, the goddess of love (Haikal 1997, 79). The following stanza from Chester Beatty I says:

Fifth Stanza
I praise the Golden,” I worship her majesty, I extol the Lady of Heaven; I give adoration to Hathor, Laudations to my Mistress! I called to her, she heard my plea, She sent my mistress to me; She came by herself to see me, o great wonder that happened to me! I was joyful, exulting, elated, When they said: "See, she is here!" As she came, the young men bowed, Out of great love for her. I make devotions to my goddess, That she grant me my sister as gift; Three days now" that I pray" to her name, Five days since she went from me! (Lichtheim 2006a, 184)

Phrases like “hear my appeal” or “the god who hears prayers” are stated often in the prayers of the New Kingdom. The author considers that they reveal how important it is that the god hears the prayers of the worshippers and that the Egyptians
developed this concept further by creating the ear-stelae. These were votive stelae
dedicated to a god to fulfil a prayer or to thank that god for having fulfilled a prayer.
These stelae provide evidence for the personal relationship of the worshippers with
their gods. A number of these stelae depict ears along with eyes. The ears stress the
characteristic of the god whose role was to hear the prayers. As for the eyes, they
stress that the god watches the worshipper while praying. Some of the texts on these
stelae provide evidence that the worshippers not only wanted to thank god for
fulfilling a prayer but also they tried to influence that god and alter his will (Rober
1972, 563; Ausec 2010, 24). For example, in one of the ear-stelae dedicated to Thoth,
we read:

Giving praise to the Moon Thoth, the great of might among the Ennead,
 kissing the ground to the great god, the greatest god, the mighty of spirits,
 kindly, gracious one who listens to the prayers of the one who calls upon
him, who comes at the voice of the one who pronounces his name, who heeds
the prayers of the one who places him in his heart; I give you praise, I lift up
the hands, that you may give L.P.H, alert(ness) favour and love and goodly
burial after old age, union with earth in the necropolis of the favoured ones in
the great west of Thebes; for the ka of the servant in the Place of Truth
Penamun, justified. He made it in the name of his lord; his beloved daughter
servant of the moon Meryetamun, justified. (Sadek 1988, 258)

The Egyptians hoped/believed that through prayers, they could change the will
of god. But the fact that they produced the ear-stelae, and constantly repeated the
phrase “hear my prayers”, shows that they knew that their prayers, needs and
demands were not always fulfilled. However, they did their best in praying, offering
and acknowledging their sins. However, it was at the end up to the god’s will to grant
them what they want.
2- Demons

Letellier ostraca 184, probably from Deir El Medina dating to the 19th Dynasty, was procured in Luxor in 1970 by a local merchant. The ostraca consist of a letter sent by a man called Kenhikhopeshef to a woman called Inerwau:

What means your failing to go to the woman diviner on account of the two infants who died while in your charge? Inquire of the woman diviner about the death of the two infants, whether it was their fate (shai) or their fortune (rnnt). And you shall inquire about them for me and get a view of my own life and their mother's life. As for whatever god shall be (mentioned) to you afterwards(?) you shall write me concerning his identity. You (will be rendering service for one who knows her occupation?) (Wente 1990, 141)

Kenhikhopeshef was probably the father of the two children who died. The age of the children is not mentioned, nor the cause of their death. Kenhikhopeshef sent the letter to Inerwau to inquire about the reason for the death of the children. Inerwau could be their wet-nurse or the one who was taking care of them. The interesting thing about the ostraca is the inquiry of Kenhikhopeshef about the reason for the death of the children. He wanted to know if their death was due to their šši and rnnt /fate and fortune. šši and rnnt, here, represented the date of death ordained by the gods (Letellier 1980, 133). The Egyptians believed that the gods ordained the date of death of a person on the day they were born. The fact that the gods were the ones to determine the date of death of people, is seen in various literary texts. In biographies and prayers, we have these phrases addressing the gods where the worshipper says: “The length of a lifetime is in the hands of Amun, to bring it to its end in perfection” (Frood 2007, 52). In the story of Papyrus Vandier, the king who was very sick and dying asked Merire, the Priest, to go to the underworld and request that the god Osiris prolong his lifetime. Merire went to meet Osiris, who agreed to prolong the king’s years of his life on condition that Merire stayed in the underworld (Posener 1985).

Kenhikhopeshef also wanted Inerwau to inquire from a “rḥt” /“the one who knows”/fortune-teller /العالمة about the identity of the god, who might have caused the death of the children. He feared that the death of the children was not because of the fate ordained to them at their birth by the divine power, but it was due to a malevolent god who caused their early death. He also feared that this god would harm him and the mother of the children, so he wanted to know the name of that god to protect his family from him (Letellier 1980). How did the god harm these children
and why? Who are those demons or messengers of the gods? Do they really change divine will?

The ancient Egyptians believed that the world was not inhabited only by humans and gods but also by the spirits of dead humans and many supernatural beings including demons. Egyptologists find it difficult to explain the ancient Egyptian concept of “demon”. There is no ancient Egyptian word for “demon” and there is no difference in iconography between demon and god. There are also no texts defining the nature of these demons and their roles. They could be the creation of the gods. In her article, “Demons malevolent or benevolent”, Lucarelli argues that demons could be the creation of the gods. She based her theory on what is written in one of the oracular amuletic decrees “gods who make a wrt-demon against a man” (Lucarelli 2010, 2).

Egyptians believed that demons represented chaos. They possessed special powers, which they used either in evil or good actions against humans. Moreover, they stank, fed on excrements, lived in deserts, ponds or foreign places. They came out at night and were active in dark places. They could take various forms, sometimes the form of humans or animals or both at the same time (Azzam 2010a, 9; Szpakowska 2009, 800–801).

The main source of our information about “malevolent” demons comes from magical texts (Szpakowska 2009, 799). There were two types of demons, the so called “wanderers” and the “guardians”. The “wandering” demons travelled between this world and the beyond, where they acted as “emissaries” for gods but sometimes also could act independently from the divine will. Egyptians believed that these emissaries caused misfortune, nightmares, terrors and diseases, and were therefore considered evil. On the other hand, “guardian” demons were connected to a certain “locality”, either in the beyond or on earth, protected their “locality” from invaders, and were considered “benevolent” (Lucarelli 2010).

Among the wanderers were a group of demons called ḫsyyw, which has the meaning of ‘murderers’ or ‘slaughterers’. The term is attested in the Pyramid texts, and it describes the assistants of Ra and Sakhmet, who could harm the fate of the living and the blessed dead. In Papyrus Leiden I 346, the ḫsyyw demons are described as those “who make slaughter, who create disturbance, who hurry through the land, who shoot their arrows from their mouth” (Borghouts 1978, 13). They could threaten also other deities. These demons were responsible for plagues and epidemic diseases.
Plagues according to the ancient Egyptians were sent by *Sekhmet* during the epogamenal days. Egyptians divided their Calendar into three seasons with five extra days added at the end. According to the Calendars of Lucky and Unlucky Days, these epogamenal days were regarded very dangerous and were called the “days of the demons” (Pinch 1994, 38). Egyptians, therefore, protected themselves against *Sakhmet* and her messengers by wearing a linen amulet around their neck. Egyptians presented to each other amulets of *Sakhmet* or *Bastet* on New Year’s day (Pinch 1994, 39).

*May your emissaries (wpwty) be burned, Sakhmet. Let your murderers (*ḥṭwy) retreat, Bastet. No year(-demon) passes along to rage against my face. Your breeze will not reach me. I am Horus, (set) over the wandering demons (SmAyw), oh Sakhmet. I am your Horus, Sakhmet. I am your Unique one, Wedjyiset I will not die on account of you-I am the Rejoiced one. I am the Jubilated one, oh son of Bastet. Do not fall upon me, oh Devourer.*

(Borghouts 1978, 17)

Another group of demons were called *werets* (great ones). They are only mentioned in the oracular amuletic decrees. Their evil influence was restricted to areas where they lived. They lived in pools, ponds, lakes, hills and swamps from where they caused harm to people. Some of these demons were mentioned by their names in a few spells including *nsy, ṣḥškk and the samana*-demon. *Apep* too, the snake, who personified chaos, was identified by name and accused of causing a lot of harm (Szpakowska 2009).

*Ṣḥškk* is known from a spell dating to the Ramesside period. He was responsible for causing headaches. He was represented nude with a short tail and had a side lock, with one arm stretched and the other covering his face. There are three versions of the spell: Leipzig Ostracon no. 42, Gardiner Ostracon no. 300 and BM Papyrus no.10731. The spell begins by ordering the demon to “turn back his face” and then goes on describing the demon (Azzam 2007, 105).

*Turn back, ṣḥškk who has come forth from the heaven and the earth, whose eyes are in his head, whose tongue is in his anus, who eats bread-of-his-buttocks, his right paw turning away from him, his left paw crossing over his brow, who lives on dung, whom the gods in the necropolis fear. Your paw is hit; backwards, turn yourself! Your stride is checked, your mouth is closed, your tongue is cut out by Atum in the House of the Great Magistrate in Heliopolis…..* (Borghouts 1978, 17)
As for the *snn* demon, also known from Papyrus Leiden I 343 and I 345. He was a Mesopotamian demon, who caused a skin disease. *Snn* is a Mesopotamian word equivalent to *šhw*. In the New Kingdom foreign influence increased because of the conquering of foreign lands by the Egyptian rulers at that time, which had a great impact on life in Egypt and influenced the magical texts too (Koenig 2004, 225). Here is a spell against the *snn*-demon:

*See, I have outfaced you, snn-demon! See, (I have out)faced the one who is submerged in the limbs of NN born of NN –like someone who flies up and then stops and settles on a high place, like the flying up of Re when he is rising. I have outfaced you in the same way, snn-demon! I have outfaced you in the same way, you who are submerged!* (Borghouts 1978, 19)

*Wy* was another demon who caused disease. The type of illness the demon inflicted is not known. The demon is attested from the New Kingdom. He is mentioned in two texts one of them in Berlin medical papyrus prescription no. 69, where it is stated: “Fumigate to dispel the demon *wy* from the limbs of a man” (Azzam 2010a, 14). The iconography of the demon is not known (Azzam 2010a, 14).

A demon possession is another way by which demons could harm humans. Forms of possession are attested in the Ebers Medical Papyri, as well as in the Edwin Smith Papyri (Ritner 2011, 7). In Ebers Papyri, line 855, demon possession is described as “something that enters the body from outside”, which has the determinative of a “seated disease demon” (Ritner 2011, 7). Scholars regarded later this possession as “epilepsy”. A powerful magician/priest had to drive out the demon from the body or negotiate with it (Ritner 2011, 7). A stela dating to the 4th century B.C, located in the temple of Khonsu at Karnak, talks about an event which took place during the reign of king Ramesses XI. The younger sister of the Hittite wife of Ramesses became very ill. They sent a scribe to Bakhtan to cure the princess. He diagnosed her illness as “spirit possession”. He invoked the Egyptian god Khonsu who was known to drive out demon possessions. Ramesses sent a special statue of the god Khonsu who succeeded by magic to drive out the spirit. The spirit agreed to leave Bentresh in return for offerings. In this text, the demon possessing Bentresh is called an “*šhw*”. In the New Kingdom the word “*šhw*” had become a word for demon, while in earlier periods, it was a word for “dead people" who had become a justified spirit (Pinch 1994, 140).
Demons became the dead (ṣḥw) who were allowed to travel from the Underworld to the world of the living (Szpakowska 2011). The dead intervened in the lives of the living either in a “malevolent” or “benevolent” way. The dead were sometimes blamed for causing misfortune, illness, fights as attested in letters to the dead. The real reason for the hostility of the dead against humans is not known, but jealousy might have been one of the reasons (Pinch 1994, 37–40). Dying in a brutal way could be the reason why these dead become evil. The dead hurt humans by attacking any part of the body. In Edwin Smith Papyri, the dead who harms humans is described as “one whom the crocodile has taken, one whom the snake has bitten” (Kousolis 2007, 1044).

Demons were also accused of causing nightmares to the sleeper. Egyptians believed that they had no control over their dreams and that dreams established contact between the world of the living and the underworld. The dead and various “entities” could visit the dreamer, while he could not travel to their world (Szpakowska 2011, 65). Sometimes the dreams allowed the dreamer to be contacted by the gods. However, nightmares were thought to be an attack from the spirits of the dead and demons coming from the underworld. Egyptians believed that the gods, the demons as well as the spirits of the dead were able to cross between the two worlds and harm the sleeper (Szpakowska 2011, 65). The Leiden spell starts by naming the enemies who cause nightmares:

*invading denizens of the land of the dead, the male and the female (that is those that we usually think of as the transfigured and justified dead), the male and female mwt (the unjustified dead), the male and the female (adversaries), who come from the Heaven (Ìrj) and from the earth to turn backwards, and contemplate the arrival of a host of powerful deities.* (Szpakowska 2011, 68)

A spell to protect mother and child from demons during the night states:

*May you flow away, he who comes in the darkness and enters in furtively, with his nose behind him, and his face reversed, failing in that for which he came! May you flow away, she who comes in the darkness and enters in furtively, with her nose behind and her face reversed, failing in that for which she came!* (Ritner 1990, 29)

What is interesting is that not only were the dead and demons a source of harm but also the gods, as attested in the magical texts. In those texts, the gods are at the
same level of danger “similarly like the dead or demons”, as seen in the following spell (Koenig 2011, 121):

\[
\text{Take care of so and so born of so and so, rescue him from hunger, from thirst, from nakedness, from wrath of every god, every goddess, every impurity of every male spirit male adversary female adversary. (Koenig 2011, 121)}
\]

Another ostracon from Deir El Medina provides evidence of the fear of the harm of the gods. A man wrote to a craftsman to manufacture for him an image of Taweret to protect him against the baw/wrath of Seth

182. 0. DM 251 Dynasties 19-20)

\[
\text{Please manufacture for me a weret-demon because the one which you manufactured for me has been stolen, and thus it may work a manifestation of Seth against me. (Wente 1990, 141)}
\]

Another ostracon where the wrath of gods is feared: 183. 0. Leipzig 11

\[
[\text{Beginning lost]} \text{ My manifestation shall be against your son so says the deity to me. Please be attentive and propitiate her, and then she will forgive you. A further matter: Please be attentive and fetch a bit of incense as well as a[..] for [End lost]. (Wente 1990, 141)}
\]

There were two ways by which Egyptians protected themselves from the harm of the malevolent gods and their demons.: the first is by magic and the second is by negotiating with them. The concept of demons survives in Egypt till now. Egyptians today share similar beliefs about demons as their ancestors: an individual who dies violently becomes a demon, “afrit” or the demon could take the form of an animal, usually a cat. There is also another kind of demons living underground, called “jinn”. Demons could be Muslim or Christians. There are demons who serve humans and work as their servants but there are also others that harm people. Modern Egyptians believe like their ancestors that if children die in the house it could be due to demons. Demons also attack men and sometimes could cause their death. Contemporary Egyptians also believe in demon possession. The demons enter the body of a man through the mouth causing sickness (Hans 2009). This is the same concept of demon possession that the ancient Egyptians had. Ancient Egyptians invoked gods and magical spells to drive out demons. Modern Egyptians use spells from the Bible and the Quran for the same purpose. This exorcism is usually performed by a Christian priest or a Muslim Sheikh.
Egyptians today are also influenced by the Gerasene demoniac’s story in the New Testament (Mark 5:7) and by verses in the Quran, where demons are mentioned (Nkrumah 2015). In the Gerasene demoniac’s story, Jesus comes out of the boat and a man with an “unclean spirit” meets him. Jesus said only one word, he commanded him to “Go”. The demon made a plea to Jesus “Do not torment me” (Emmett 2000, 8).

As for the Quran, demons/jinn are mentioned in:

Suret Al-Hijr 15:26 and 15:27

And We did certainly create man out of clay from an altered black mud.
And the jinn We created before from scorching fire.
www.QuranInternet.com/app

Suret Ar-Rahman 55:33

O company of jinn and mankind, if you are able to pass beyond the regions of the heavens and the earth, then pass. You will not pass except by authority [from Allah]. www.QuranInternet.com/app

Demons, which include the spirits of the dead, adversaries and the evil spirits, were a source of trouble to the Egyptians. Egyptians feared demons tremendously because they were responsible for diseases, plagues and nightmares. Demons go all the way to possess a person and cause their death. Although demons were used as a tool by gods, they sometimes acted on their own. The magical spells written for protection against these “entities”, as well as the Letellier ostracon, provide evidence that the Egyptians believed that these demons could interfere in the divine will and change fate. They did not only cause illness but could even cause an early death like what happened to the children of the Letellier ostracon.
3- **Magic**

Ancient Egyptians believed that misfortunes, illness and accidents happened, not always because of punishment from the deities but also due to evil powers such as demons and evil spirits. Egyptians used magic in almost every event of their daily life to protect themselves against these misfortunes. Several tools and rituals were used in magic including: spells, amulets, knots, serpent wands and execration rituals. As stated in the 10th Dynasty Instructions for King Merikare the gods “made for them magic as weapon for the people to ward off the blow of events” (Lichtheim 2006b, 108).

Martin Raven defines Magic “as a body of spells and actions that seek to affect fate by supernatural means” (2012, 12). Today, there is a clear difference between religion, medicine, and magic. For ancient Egyptians though, these three categories overlapped and complemented each other. Any problem, whether a disease or a hated rival, could be solved by a combination of magical rituals or treatments, medical prescriptions or religious texts (Azzam 2007, 8).

The word Egyptians used for magic is ḫkȝ/Heka. Heka is a divine power that caused creation to happen. Humans, as well as gods needed Heka to solve their problems. Heka was represented as a human form with his name symbol above his head (Pinch 1994, 9–10). Not everyone in Egypt practiced magic. Magic was mainly practiced by priests, especially, "lector priests". Those priests were responsible for reciting hymns and incantations in temples and funerals. Lector priests worked part-time in the temples, rotating in groups, so they had time to privately practice magic. They were probably the ones who worked as magicians for their community. The “Scribes of the House of Life”, were another group of priests responsible for copying, reading and writing the magical texts. The House of Life functioned as a Library, scriptorium and school, where these texts were kept (Pinch 1994, 51–54). The Magical Harris Papyrus states that “the spells must not be revealed outside the House of Life”. Only priests and Scribes of the House of Life had access to them (Ritner 2011, 230). As for healing magic, it was practiced by the priests of Sekhmet and by the swnw translated as doctors or physicians, who combined the usage of magic and medicine in treating their patients (Pinch 1994, 54). There were also the Scorpio charmers or “Masters of Selket”, who used magic to get rid of reptiles. They accompanied the Pharaoh on his expeditions to Sinai (Raven 2012, 31).
A magician toolbox was found in a shaft excavated from a Middle Kingdom tomb beneath the Ramesseum in Western Thebes. It contained a box with a mixture of magical artifacts and magical texts. On the lid of the box there is a representation of a jackal atop of a chest and the lid is inscribed with the title of ḫrw sīwás the keeper of the secrets. The title ḫrw sīwás and the large number of magical papyri found, have been interpreted as showing that the owner was a “learned individual” with a high level of literacy and with connections to the temple and therefore was most probably a priest. The box contained the following: the statue of Beset wearing a lion mask and holding two snake wands; animal figurines, a hair pin, ivory clappers to ward off demons and evil spirits; an apotropaic wand, where Bes and Beset are represented holding two cobra serpents used for protecting women and children; a female fertility figurine; Serpent wands; pens; an ivory Herdsman carrying a calf, which was most probably used in the “fording rite”, probably as a “substitute figure” for reciting the spell on it while crossing, and plenty of magical-medical texts (Ritner 2008, 222–225; Raven 2012, 76–78).

Tomb reliefs of the Old Kingdom show herdsmen extending their index finger towards their animals in a magical gesture of protection (Ritner 2008, 227). This shows that the Egyptians used magic in every event of their daily lives. The dialogue accompanying these scenes includes spells to protect cattle from danger while crossing the waters.

Crossing the canal by the cattle. Warding off death. Warding off the crocodile by the herdsman: 'Oh herdsman there! Let your face be watchful for this marsh-dweller who is in the water, to prevent these here (scil. the cattle) falling a victim to this marsh-dweller. May he come as a sightless one! Let your face be very watchful for him. (Borghouts 1978, pp. 83)

It has generally been considered that these spells were recited by the herdsmen themselves, but Ritner suggests that this was not necessarily the case. Representations of the scene from the tombs of both Ankhmahor and Mereruka do show the herdsmen extending their index finger in a protective gesture, but the recitation of the spell is left to a single individual at the left of the scene, which according to him, was a Priest. He also states that in the Middle Kingdom "Story of the Herdsman," the reciters of these spells are called the "knowledgeable ones of the herdsmen". Scholars have considered them “informed herdsmen” who knew and recited the spells. But Ritner
argues that the phrase ṛḥ ḫt (knower of things) is a word used for describing a “professional magician” and shows that he is associated with the priests (Ritner 2008, 229–231).

What is interesting about this “fording” scene is that this hand-gesture is the same one the Muu dancers are represented doing in the Old Kingdom tombs. The Muu dancers are most probably “the ferrymen” who offers protection while the deceased is transported, and this is the reason why “they emerge from the Beyond armed with blazing hand-gestures. Like the herdsmen in their boats leading cattle through the water, the Muu guide the deceased on the winding waterways to paradise” (Reeder 1995, 77).

One of the main tools used in magic rituals was the spells. Spells are divided into rubrics, which are “instruction” on what the magician should do. Then comes the script, which comprises the actual words to be spoken. The magical ritual consists of the spell, the action performed while reciting the spell and the objects used (Pinch 1994, 68). These spells served to create a protected area for the individual, so that all types of demons are prevented from crossing from the underworld to harm people (Szpakowska 2009, 801). There are spells for all kinds of problems that the Egyptians might face in their daily life: love, the evil eye, dreams, specific diseases caused by demons, headaches, burns, protection for children, protection against scorpions and snakes, putting remedies, and protection against Apophis ...(Borghouts 1978, x).

Many spells begin with an invocation to the gods, while other spells begin with a mythical narrative or with a conversation between two gods. There are also spells, where the magician threatens the god if he does not do what he wants.

**A love Charm for a man**

*Hail to you, Ra'horachte, father of the gods! Hail to you, seven Hathors who are clothed in wrappings of red linen! Hail to you, gods, lords of heaven and earth- let (the woman) NN born of NN come after me like a cow after grass, like a maidservant after her children, like a herdsman after his cattle. If they fail to make her come after me I will set fire to Busiris and burn up Osiris!* (Borghouts 1978, 1)

In some other spells, the magician speaks as being the god himself (Azzam 2010b, 186–187). The following is a spell to help a woman in childbirth, where the magician identifies himself with Horus and invokes the help of Bes and Hathor:
Knots were another tool used often in magic. Knots had many uses in magic. Knotting and binding could be either “positive or negative”, used either for “protection or forming a threat”. Sometimes knots were used to bind a person, a situation, or a creature. The knots are used to bind evil spirits and prevent them from harming a person, while it functioned as a barrier. Ancient Egyptians wore knots as amulets. They tied a knot in a piece of linen bandage and wore it around the neck after the spell had been recited. They wore also as an amulet the hieroglyphics sign for protection sa which was written as a string with knots (Raven 2012, 69; Azzam 2010b, 191). Knots were sometimes used to stop something from happening until the right time came, for example the birth of a baby. The New Kingdom magical and medical papyri contained description of the usage of knots to stop bleeding and miscarriage (Pinch 1994, 84). Knotting until the Late Period was mostly positive and then it changed in the Late Period and in Islam to become extremely negative. Knots are used in Egypt today to harm anyone by tying any of their belongings (Azzam 2010b, 191). Knots are used, for example to make a man impotent. In the Quran Muslims are asked to recite verses to ensure protection from the use of knotted cords, to wit, sura 113:

Say: I seek refuge with the Lord of daybreak form the evil of what He has created from the evil of a dark night when He appears and the evil of those who blow on knots and from the evil of an envious person in his envy

Amulets were among the frequently used objects in magic. “An amulet is generally defined as a powerful or protective object worn or carried on the person” (Pinch 1994, 105). Everyday amulets were found mostly in tombs of women and children because Egyptians thought they were the weakest members of the society and could be easily hurt by the “supernatural powers”. The amulets functioned through physical contact with the individual wearing them. The spells recited on the amulet, its color, and its material played a role in the magical ritual (Pinch 1994, 105–106). Amulets were put in mummy bandages, because the dead needed to be protected
from danger. They were also used to help in the resurrection of the deceased by putting individual amulets in certain positions on the mummy to ensure that every part is protected, for example a heart amulet or a heart scarab was put on the chest and a very small headrest was placed under the neck to help the dead keep their heads high symbolizing that they are only asleep (Raven 2012, 148).

Amulets were either manmade or natural. The material, shape and color of the natural amulets were the source of its magical power. Shells from the Red Sea were among those natural objects used since pre-dynastic times as amulets. Shell amulets thought to promote health and fertility, were also used for protection against the evil eye. Egyptians often wore cowries like belts around the pelvic area to protect their fertility (Pinch 107, Raven 95-96).

Amulets in the form of popular gods were also used. Taweret and Bes were among the favorite gods who protected the household, particularly the mother and children. The dwarf Bes was represented on all kinds of household articles including cosmetic vessels, hairpins and headrests. Amulets with “mythical resonance” were used, like the lotus because of its association with rebirth. Another very popular amulet was the wadjet eye because of its healing and protective powers. Amulets with hieroglyphic signs were also popular, for example the ankh and djed (Pinch 107-109).

There were also amulets that consisted of rolled strips of papyrus or linen inscribed with a magical spell and were put in a tube around the neck. The texts of such amulets often had a divine decree, where the deity promised to protect the owner against illness and dangers. Twenty-one decrees were published by I.E.S. Edwards in 1960 in the two volume book, the Hieratic Papyrus in the British Museum. The decrees are dated to the 21st and 22nd Dynasties. Fourteen of these decrees were written for women and only seven for males. Edwards has suggested that these decrees were mostly written to protect children. The decrees began by assuring protection (Austin 2014, 40; Bohleke 1997, 155). The content of the following decree, Cleveland Museum, CMA 14.723 published by Briant Bohleke in his article “An Oracular Amuletic Decree in Cleveland Museum”, encompasses everything the Egyptians feared and needed protection from (Bohleke 1997):

*Said Khonsu-in-Thebes Neferhotep the great god, the oldest who was the first to come into existence: I shall protect Irenkhonsu, [son of] Diuesenmut, my servant. I shall keep him healthy in his flesh and in his bone(s).*

66
I shall make his dreams good;
I shall make those dreams which another man
or another woman shall see for him good.
I shall protect him from every slander,
and every injustice thereof. I shall protect
him from the demons and from the gremlins.
I shall protect him from any who seize a man through capture.
I shall protect him from those who seize someone stealthily.
I shall protect him from those who seize someone stealthily.
I shall save him from a crocodile, a serpent, a scorpion,
and from any mouth which bites.
I shall protect him from the gods and goddesses of the (book) 'That-
which-is-in-the-year'.(Bohleke 1997, 158)

Another type of objects used in magic was the serpent wands. Although we do
not know how they were used exactly, the protective figures are often represented
holding serpents’ wands. By holding snakes, the holders are meant to control the
animal and its power, making it harmless to the them, but at the same time, a
dangerous weapon against evil forces. The god Heka is often represented holding
serpent wands. The Bible describes how Egyptian magicians were able to change their
staves into real serpents and how Moses and Aaron also mastered that (Ritner 2006,
205).

*And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it
became a serpent. But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; so
the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments’*
Exodus 7:10-11).

Ritner states here that “motivated by the biblical account and such ancient
depictions” some modern visitors to Egypt like Paul Brunton wanted to explore the
similar magic traditions. In 1936, he looked for Scorpio charmers in Egypt and found
one in Luxor called Sheikh Moussa. The Sheikh was able to hypnotize snakes reciting
a spell and then hold them with his hand like a “walking stick”, which supposedly
provides evidence of the biblical story (Ritner 2006, 207).

Magic was also used in medical treatments. Diseases could be cured by
medical treatment, or magical spells or both. Wounds and bone fractures were usually
treated medically but headaches, fever, worms and other diseases of unknown sources
were treated by magic (Azzam 2007, 105). In case of illnesses, for example, the
magician had to fight against the demonic influence that caused the disease and drive
the demon out. These texts reveal that administering medicine was also accompanied by a magical ritual as follows (Gyory 2011, 152):

Spell for drinking Medicine

_The medicine has come; that which dispels the substances from this heart of mine, from these limbs of mine, has come. The magic is strong on account of the medicine and vice versa._ (Borghouts 1978, 45)

Egyptians used magic against their enemies and against evil spirits. They used different forms of cursing to stop “rebellious action” by Egyptians, foreigners or supernatural forces and demons. These rituals are found in execration figurines, texts, reliefs, architecture and in royal objects (Meyer and Smith 1999, 183). The rites took place in temples, palaces or fortresses. The same concept of the execration ritual was used with variations in both love charms and spells for warding off bad dreams (Meyer and Smith 1999, 183). One of the first objects used in the ritual were the red pots, and by the end of the Old Kingdom, further objects were used; for example, statues produced of stone clay, wax, wood or hairballs. They also used sometimes live animals (Muhlestein 2008, 3). The names of the victims were written on the red pots and so they become a substitute for the image of those victims.

_Against the ruler of Kush A, born by B, born to C and all the stricken ones who are with him, the ruler of ... etc. (follow the names of 4 more Nubian rulers, their descent and their dependents), all negroes of Kush, (19 other Nubian tribes follow), the bowmen of the Southland, their champions, their couriers, their allies, their confederates, who will rebel, who will plot, who will fight, who consider fighting, who consider rebelling in this whole country._ (Borghouts 1978, 11)

In the Middle Kingdom fortress of Mirgissa, we have a comprehensive example of an Execration ritual. The evidence indicates that they used around 200 inscribed and 400 uninscribed red pots. They also used around 350 mud figurines, and 4 limestone figures, as well as a human being whose head was “severed and buried upside down as part of the ritual” (Ritner 2008, 153). Human victims are attested also at Avaris dating to the 18th Dynasty (Muhlestein 2008, 3). Not all of these objects were used in all the rituals. Ritual objects were buried although they were “spat on, smashed, bound, stabbed, locked in a box, burned as well as put in urine, before being buried” (Muhlestein 2008, 2).
In temples, an execration ritual was executed daily to kill Apep and Seth. The *Bremner-Rhind Papyrus* contains spells and several rituals performed in Karnak and other temples. One of the ritual mentioned in the *The Book of Overthrowing Apep* includes burying figurines in boxes, as well as burning wax figurines. *Apep* was responsible for natural disasters like storms and earthquakes. The ritual was probably performed in the temple (Pinch 1994, 94).

Wax figurines are also mentioned in the tale of *Papyrus Vandier*. Meryre descends in the underworld to ask Osiris for a longer life-span for the Pharaoh Sasobek who was sick. Osiris agrees on the condition that Meryre remains in the underworld. The other magicians of the king push him to kill Meryre’s son and marry his wife. Meryre decides to take revenge so he sends a figure of clay to the world of the living. The figure requests the pharaoh to burn his magicians. The king does what the clay figure ordered out of fear (Posener 1985).

Magical practices were not dropped with the Christianization of Egypt. The Church was hostile towards magic but some Coptic priests continued to practice it. The spells were written in Coptic and instead of invoking ancient Egyptian gods they invoked saints, angels or the holy family. The cursing rituals were also performed in Coptic and later in Islamic Egypt (Meyer and Smith 1999, 184). A spell from Coptic Egypt for a healthy childbirth invokes the God of St. Leontius of Tripolis who had healing powers:

*O God of St. Leontius*

*If I stay at this house where I am and remain inside with my mother my heart will be at rest and shall bear a living child.* (Meyer and Smith 1999, 125)

Shams al-Máarif al-Kubra is a manuscript assigned to one of the most famous Egyptian Muslim magicians, Ahmad bin Ali al-Buni, during the early 14th century. He says:

“If you want to harm someone or bring him sadness, grief and worry, then take a long-necked jar in the name of whomever you want and the name of his mother, and draw the seal on it after you draw the picture of the desired one on it. You place a little water, sulfur, pepper and oil in the jar and place it on a fire between two stones. Therefore, you give grief, worry, sickness and illness to the one against whom the magic is worked.” (Hanssen 1999, 429)
In modern Egypt spells and magic ritual are still used. Stunning evidence for the transmission of culture is a number of modern spells found during ARCE’s clearance work in Qurna at the villagers’ houses. The villagers used parts of the ancient Egyptian rock cut tombs as their houses. During the work in one of the houses, a number of modern magical spells were discovered, which were used by the villagers. ARCE’s archaeologists together with the local Sheikh Amer analyzed the spells that were found in Abd El Baset’s house. One spell, written in “blue ink”, was known and often used by the Qurna villagers. It is called “Taskaret Dawood”, it is used to harm a man and make him impotent. The text of the spell is composed of symbols to activate the demons, and drawings of stars aimed at making the spell more powerful. The stars were drawn to guarantee that the spell was activated every month. Here again demons are used in the magical ritual to harm a person (www.arce.org/conservation/Qurna/q/q11).

Another spell was found, written on a tissue paper and aimed to “increase the love between husband and wife”. The spell contained verses of the Quran written “out of order”, which makes the spell more powerful. Another spell invokes a demon to protect the owner and help him get children. The spell was kept in a “plastic cover” and put in a textile bag (www.arce.org/conservation/Qurna/q/q11).

The fifth spell was written for one called Ahmed Ibn Nawal. It contained verses from the Quran to make people buy items from his shop. It starts with a “reference to the pilgrimage to Mecca” and states that all Muslims should do the pilgrimage. It mentions that everyone “should buy from Ahmed’s shop”. The last spell was done to make a man called Abbas impotent. The spell has a drawing of a coarse scorpion representing a woman. After documenting the spells, the project’s workmen burned the spells to stop their power (www.arce.org/conservation/Qurna/q/q11).

All those examples of the tools used in magical rituals show the importance of magic in the lives of ancient Egyptians, who took all possible measures to protect themselves. They even used destructive magic to protect themselves against their enemies. However, in all the spells used for protection, execration rituals and healing, various deities were invoked, which reveals that there was a need for a god’s help to achieve protection or cure from an illness. Egyptians knew that it was up to the gods to effect the spell, that’s why they resorted sometimes to threats against the gods in an attempt to compel them to translate their magic into reality. Divine intervention
played a role here too, for it was up to the god to make the spell work and to protect people or cure them.

A similar concept is mentioned in the Quran where God says that no one can harm anyone without His will (Suret Al Baqura 2:102).

And they followed [instead] what the devils had recited during the reign of Solomon. It was not Solomon who disbelieved, but the devils disbelieved, teaching people magic and that which was revealed to the two angels at Babylon, Harut and Marut. But the two angels do not teach anyone unless they say, "We are a trial, so do not disbelieve [by practicing magic]." And [yet] they learn from them that by which they cause separation between a man and his wife. But they do not harm anyone through it except by permission of Allah. (www.QuranInternet.com/app)
Chapter III: The impact of the concept of divine intervention in human life in the formation of Egyptian Culture

1- Comparative study between ancient Egyptian Religion and monotheistic Holy Books.

The ancient Egyptians concepts about god and his divine intervention is very similar to what we have in the Old and New Testament and the Quran. This chapter will explore and compare some of the verses from the Holy Books and comparing them with those of the Literary work of the ancient Egyptians. The quotes will be put in the following order: The ancient Egyptian quotes, the Bible quotes and then the Quran Verse. The Bible quotes are taken from King James Bible and Quran from the (www.QuranInternet.com/app)

1- God the Creator

In the ancient Egyptian texts, we read:

Instructions of Amenemopet:
*Man is clay and straw, the god is his builder.* (Lichtheim 2006a, 160)

Hymns to Amun
*Hail to you, Aten of daytime, creator of all, who makes them live!* (Lichtheim 2006a, 87)

Biography of Roma
*He says: I have come before you, lord of the gods, Amun, who came into being first, divine god, creator of what exists.* (Frood 2007, 56)

In the Bible we read:

Colossians 1:16
*For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.*

In the Quran we read:

Al Baqara 2:29
*It is He who created for you all of that which is on the earth. Then He directed Himself to the heaven, [His being above all creation], and made them seven heavens, and He is Knowing of all things.*

Suret Al-Hijr 15:26 and 15:27
*And We did certainly create man out of clay from an altered black mud. And the jinn We created before from scorching fire.*
1- God the “Provider”:

In the ancient Egyptian texts, we read:

Instructions of Amenemopet:
You shall pray to the Aten when he rises. Saying: "Grant me well-being and health". He will give you your needs for this life. And you will be safe from fear. (Lichtheim 2006a, 153)

Instructions of Amenemopet:
He tears down, he builds up daily. He makes a thousand poor by his will, he makes a thousand men into chiefs. (Lichtheim 2006a, 160)

Instructions of Ani:
Do not be a mindless person, then your god will give you wealth. (Lichtheim 2006a, 139)

In the Bible, we read:

Chronicles 1:12
Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there be any after thee have the like.

Psalms 36:9-10
For you are the one who gives and sustains life.

Psalms 37:23
The Lord grants success to the one whose behavior he finds commendable.

Ecclesiastes 5:19
Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God.

In the Quran, we read:

Suret El Baqra 2:212
And Allah gives provision to whom He wills without account.

Ar-Ra’d 13:26
Allah extends provision for whom He wills and restricts [it].
2- Plan of God

In the ancient Egyptian texts, we read:

Instructions of Ptahhotep
One plans the morrow but knows not what will be. (Lichtheim 2006b, 69)

Biography of Roma
That which is ordered to be done occurs immediately, for he has trusted himself to the plan of his god. (Frood 2007, 52)

Instructions of Amenemopet
Do not say: “Find me a protector, For one who hates me has injured me.” Indeed you do not know the plans of god. (Lichtheim 2006a, 159)

In the Quran, we read:

Al Imran 3:54
And the disbelievers planned, but Allah planned. And Allah is the best of planners.

An-Naml 27:50
And they planned a plan, and We planned a plan, while they perceived not.

3- God ordains/decrees

In the ancient Egyptian texts, we read:

Biography of Samut-Kyky
The god knew him as a youth, he decreed rich provisions. (Frood 2007, 86)

Biography of Meryra
Adoration to you, O living Aten, lord of continuity, who made eternity, King’s Ka, Lord of the two Lands, Neferkheperure Waenre, long in his lifetime, the ruler who makes officials and builds up the commons, the fate which gives life, lord of what is decreed. (Murnane 1995, 154)

In the Bible, we read:

Psalms 8:3
When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained.

Psalms 33:4
For the Lord’s decrees are just, and everything he does is fair.

Isaiah 26:3
Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.
Epistle to the Romans 13:1
Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

In the Quran, we read:

Al Baqara 2:117
Originator of the heavens and the earth. When He decrees a matter, He only says to it, "Be," and it is.

Al Imran 3:145
And it is not [possible] for one to die except by permission of Allah at a decree determined.

4- On the path/way of God

In the ancient Egyptian texts, we read:

Biography of Thotemhab
I was your true servant, loyal to your commands, I did not spurn the words of your mouth, I was not ignorant of your teaching. I was upon the path which you yourself set, upon the road which you yourself made. (addressing Hathor) (Frood 2007, 92)

Biography of Bakenkhons
He says: I was truly assiduous, effective for his lord, who respected the renown of his god, who went forth upon his path. (Frood 2007, 40)

Biography of Amenhotep
he says: I was one who respected his god, who magnified his renown, who went out upon his every path, and who placed him in his heart. (Frood 2007, 66)

Biography of Anhurmose
I was one who went forth upon the path of the god, without transgressing the steps which he ordained. (Frood 2007, 110)

In the Bible, we read:

Deuteronomy 19:9
If thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to love the Lord thy God, and to walk ever in his ways...

Deuteronomy 30:16
In that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live
and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

Psalm 23:4
He restoroth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.

Psalms 77:19
Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.

Proverbs 2:13
Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness.

Proverbs 18:4
But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

In the Quran, we read:

An-Nisaa 4:167
Indeed, those who disbelieve and avert [people] from the way of Allah have certainly gone far astray.

Al Fatiha 1:61
Guide us to the straight path.

Al Imran 3:51
Indeed, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is the straight path.

Al Maida 5:16
By which Allah guides those who pursue His pleasure to the ways of peace and brings them out from darkness into the light, by His permission, and guides them to a straight path.

Al Anam: 6:153
And, [moreover], this is My path, which is straight, so follow it; and do not follow [other] ways, for you will be separated from His way. This has He instructed you that you may become righteous.

5- God commands/ Obeying the God’s commands

In the ancient Egyptian texts, we read:

Biography Samut Kyky
He found Mut at the head of the gods, Shay and Renenet with her a lifetime of life and breath under her authority and all that occurs under her command. (Frood 2007, 86)
Biography of Djehutyemhab
I was your true servant, loyal to your commands, I did not spurn the words of your mouth, I was not ignorant of your teaching. (Frood 2007, 92)

In the Bible, we read:

Deuteronomy 26:13
Then thou shalt say before the Lord thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them

Deuteronomy 26:14
I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away ought thereof for any unclean use, nor given ought thereof for the dead: but I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord my God, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me.

Psalms 119:35
Guide me in the path of your commands, for I delight to walk in it.

Psalms 50:23
To whoever obeys my commands, I will reveal my power to deliver

Psalms 1-2
How blessed is the one who does not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand in the pathway with sinners, or sit in the assembly of scoffers! Instead he finds pleasure in obeying the Lord’s commands; he meditates on his commands day and night.

In the Quran we read:

An-Nahl 16:50
They fear their Lord above them, and they do what they are commanded.

Ya-Sin 36:82
His command is only when He intends a thing that He says to it, "Be," and it is. “And the command of God is a decree determined” (33:38)

6- Follow God/Guided by God.

In the ancient Egyptian texts, we read:

Biography of Mentuhotep Stela:
May I be in the following of the god so that I might be blessed. (Landgráfová 2011, 171)
Instructions of Ptahhotep

There is no wrong for he whom they guide. He whom they guide can not go wrong. (Lichtheim 2006b, 66)

Biography of Backkhons

I followed him in a truthful way. (addressing Amun) (Frood 2007, 42)

Block Statue of Roma

May you favor your defender upon earth, that I may follow you in a truthful way. (Frood 2007, 51)

In the Bible, we read:

Samuel 12:14

If ye will fear the Lord, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the Lord your God.

Psalms 48:14

For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.

Psalms 61:5

For you, O God, hear my vows; you grant me the reward that belongs to your loyal followers.

In the Quran, we read:

Al Baqara 2:142

The foolish among the people will say, "What has turned them away from their qiblah, which they used to face?" Say, "To Allah belongs the east and the west. He guides whom He wills to a straight path."

Al Baqara 2:157

...Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided.

7- God the Protector

In the ancient Egyptian texts, we read:

Biography of Samut-Kyky

I do not make a protector for myself among men.
I [do not attach] myself to the powerful, not even my son. (Frood 2007, 87)
Biography of Samut-Kyky
*As for the one who makes Mut a protector,*
[he] came forth from the womb favored, perfection destined for him,
on the birthing brick; he will achieve veneration. (Frood 2007, 89)

Stela by Nebre
*Amun-Re, lord of the thrones of the Two Lands, great god,*
foremost of Karnak,
*(noble) god who hears prayers,*
who comes at the call of the afflicted individual,
who gives breath to the one who is wretched. (Frood 2007, 220)

In the Bible we read:

**Psalms 2:12-22**
Give sincere homage! Otherwise he will be angry, and you will die because of your
behavior, when his anger quickly ignites. *How blessed are all who take shelter in
him.*

**Psalms 146:3-8**
*Do not trust in princes, or in human beings,* who cannot deliver! Their life’s breath
departs, they re-turn to the ground; on that day their plans die. How *blessed is the
one whose helper* is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, the one
who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who remains forever
faithful, vindicates the oppressed, and gives food to the hungry. *The Lord releases the
imprisoned. The Lord gives sight to the blind.*

**Psalms 62:5-7**
*Patiently wait for God alone, my soul!*  
For he is the one who gives me confidence.  
*He alone is my protector and deliverer.*  
He is my refuge; will not be upended. God delivers me and exalts me;  
God is my strong protector and my shelter.

In the Quran, we read:

**Al Baqara 2:107**
Do you not know that to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and
[that] you have not besides Allah any protector or any helper?

8- Wrath of God/Fear of wrath of God

In the ancient Egyptian texts, we read:

**Instructions Ptahhotep**
*Do not scheme against people, God punishes accordingly: If a man says: "I shall
live by it". He will lack bread for his mouth.* (Lichtheim 2006b, 64)
Biography of Qen
He says: I am a man who said “As endures” in falsehood to the lady of the house, Nefertari, true of voice. The power of the god overtook me so that (I) would say to the Light, to(.....), to the Moon, to Ptah, Thoth, and Amun: Be merciful (to) me. (Frood 2007, 228)

Stela of Neferabu to Ptah
He says: I am a man who swore falsely by Ptah, lord of Maat, and he caused that I see darkness by day. I will proclaim his power to those who do not know him and those who do, to the small and the great. ..... He made me like dogs of the street, while I was in his hand (power). He caused that people and gods look upon me as a man who had committed an abomination against his lord. Ptah, lord of Maat, was vindicated against me, and so he gave me an instruction. (Frood 2007, 225)

Stela of Nebre
The lord of Thebes does not spend a whole day angered; his anger ends in a moment and nothing remains. (Frood 2007, 222)

In the Bible, we read:

Numbers 11:1
And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.

Deuteronomy 9:8
Also in Horeb ye provoked the Lord to wrath, so that the Lord was angry with you to have destroyed you.

Job 21:23
When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, and shall rain it upon him while he is eating.

Psalms 32:1-5
How blessed is the one whose rebellious acts are forgiven. whose sin is pardoned! How blessed is the one whose wrongdoing the LORD does not punish in whose spirit there is no deceit. When I refused to confess my sin, my whole body wasted away, while I groaned in pain all day long. For day and night you tormented me; you tried to destroy me in the intense heat of summer. when I confessed my sin; I no longer covered up my wrongdoing. I said, “I will confess my rebellious acts to the Lord.” And then you forgave my sins.
Psalms 38:1-3
O Lord, do not continue to rebuke me in your anger!
Do not continue to punish me in your raging fury! For your arrows pierce me, and your hand presses me down. My whole body is sick because of your judgment.

Psalms 51:1-4
Have mercy on me, O God, because of your loyal love!
Because of your great compassion, wipe away my rebellious acts!
Wash away my wrongdoing! Cleanse me of my sin! For I am aware of my rebellious acts; I am forever conscious of my sin. Against you – you above all – I have sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight.

Psalm 51:1
Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

Psalms 85:1-4
You pardoned the wrongdoing of your people; you forgave all their sin. (Selah) You withdrew all your fury; you turned back from your raging anger. Restore us, O God our deliverer! Do not be displeased with us!

Lamentations 3:1-3
I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day.

In the Quran we read:

Al-Imran 3:162
So is one who pursues the pleasure of Allah like one who brings upon himself the anger of Allah and whose refuge is Hell? And wretched is the destination.

Al Imran 3:135
And those who, when they commit an immorality or wrong themselves [by transgression], remember Allah and seek forgiveness for their sins - and who can forgive sins except Allah? - and [who] do not persist in what they have done while they know.

Al Tauba 9:102
And [there are] others who have acknowledged their sins. They had mixed a righteous deed with another that was bad. Perhaps Allah will turn to them in forgiveness. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

Taha 20:81
[Saying], "Eat from the good things with which We have provided you and do not transgress [or oppress others] therein, lest My anger should descend upon you. And he upon whom My anger descends has certainly fallen."
9- God hears prayers

In the ancient Egyptian texts, we read:

Instructions of Ani
Pray by yourself with a loving heart,
Whose every word is hidden.
He will grant your needs, He will hear your words,
He will accept your offerings. (Lichtheim 2006a, 137)

Biography of Samut Kyky
O Mut, mistress of the gods, hear my prayers:
(if) a servant testifies to the efficacy of his lord,
then his lord rewards him with a (long) lifetime. (Frood 2007, 86)

Biography of Amenhotep
Amun-Re, king of the gods,
heard my plea immediately,
for he did not permit delay ...(Frood 2007, 80)

In the Bible we read:

Book Nehemiah
O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant,
and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king’s cupbearer.

Book Nehemiah 1:6
Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father’s house have sinned.

Psalm 4:1
Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer

Proverbs 18:8
The Lord is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous

In the Quran we read:

Yunus 10:89
[Allah] said, "Your supplication has been answered." So remain on a right course and follow not the way of those who do not know."
Ibrahim 14:40
My Lord, make me an establisher of prayer, and [many] from my descendants. Our Lord, and accept my supplication.
2- **Tomorrow is in the hand of the god: Transmission of Culture**

“Transmissions from ancient Egypt do not stop at beliefs, superstitions and tales. We find them in our daily language and its metaphors, in our gestures, in our funerary traditions, in our tools, in our food, everywhere in our daily Life” (Haikal 2011, 179).

The thesis will examine in this section the impact of ancient Egyptians’ beliefs and superstitions on Egyptians today. It is important, first of all, to understand how ancient Egyptians perceived the world around them and how the Egyptians perceive it today. Ancient Egyptians believed that the universe consisted of the visible and the invisible worlds. The invisible world was not fully understood by them. It was inhabited by the gods; it was the “realm of the Divine”. They considered the invisible world “as superior to the visible world”. The dead had access to this “invisible world” through the tomb. It was a mysterious world because it was “the realm of the Divine”, which they knew nothing about, a world inhabited also by demons and the spirits of the dead. These entities could interfere in the life of the living (Haikal 2009, 178).

Egyptians now have the same views about the cosmos as their predecessors. They believe that there is an invisible world which they call al “ghaib”. This word has several meanings including “absent” or “concealed, unseen and hidden” (Aswad 1994, 365). It refers to “the divine and secret knowledge held and dominated only by God” (Aswad 1994, 365), hence it could also describe the unknown future. This invisible world allows any incident to happen in the Egyptians’ “social life and in the cosmos”. God’s will or Mashi’at Allah is connected to this invisible world. Egyptians believe that the “past, present and future are in the hands of God ” (Aswad 1994, 365).

Moreover, contemporary Egyptians, like their ancestors, believe that they have to protect themselves from any misfortune by praying to and pleasing God. This could also be achieved by invoking the Divine name/ Allah or El Rab. The power of the divine name is the power of God Himself, its invocation offers protection from oneself and from the evil spirits. This belief in the power and “performativity of the divine name” evolved and was honed over the years and across religions, from antiquity until today (Haikal 2009, 198). This belief emerged from their conviction that they can establish a contact with the invisible world and its inhabitants by way of magic and better yet by way of prayers. They had an innate understanding of the
divine, who resides in the heart, and the continuous invocation of his name through prayers incited him to materialize in order to satisfy the needs of he who invokes him. This concretization of the divine presence during prayers triggers also, in a certain way the manifestation of its power. The strength of the divine name coming from the heart reassures, protects, and appeases he who pronounces it. Hymns to god and rituals were used for prayers where the god’s name was repeatedly invoked (Haikal 2009, 197). Such prayers are found in the ritual “Book of Hours” made for the glorification of Osiris (Haikal 2009, 208):

* Sokar-Osiris [in Memphis].
* Sepa, most august of the Spirits of On.
* Osiris who dwells in Karnak.
* Osiris the unique one [who dwells in] Sais (Faulkner 1958, 37)

It is a late composition that mentions, in addition to Osiris, some other divinities and elements of nature which condition or determine the well being of Egypt and its inhabitants. It seems that this text is a continuous evocation of Osiris, in the course of the 12 hours of the day for the protection of the country. It is not known how this ritual was performed but it is suggested that ritualistic priests took turn every hour to recite the name of the god that corresponds to the hour of the day, possibly in the presence of a statue or another symbol of Osiris (Haikal 2009, 219).

Some of these rituals and hymns were unconsciously transmitted to early Christianity and then to Islam in Egypt by the cultural memory of the country. It is interesting to see the extent to which similar forms and rhythms were used over the years in the hymnic texts to better define the divinity and invite it to manifest itself. Moreover, the hymns become shorter and shorter and more focused as the fervor of the prayer intensifies to the point where it becomes a continued repetition of the name of god, a perpetual awareness of his presence, which takes hold of the worshipper at all moments (Haikal 2009, 208).

The Osirian Book of Hours resembles the Coptic prayer of Kellia, the monks’ cells in the desert not far from Wadi Natrun in the Western Delta, where the monks recited the prayers of Jesus while standing in-front of the cross or an icon representing the Lord (Haikal 2009, 212).
My Lord Jesus, deliver me (“Ya Rabbi Yasu’ al-Massih khallisni”)
My Lord Jesus, help me (Ya Rabbi Yasu’ al-Massih a’inni)
My Lord Jesus, have mercy on me (Ya Rabbi Yasu’ al-Massih irHamni)
Blessings be upon you Jesus my Lord. (Haikal 2009, 209)

This manuscript contains a prayer formulation made up of four parts, a parallel to which could be found later in Islam. The companions of the prophet Mohammed related that he recommended a very simple prayer useful in our world and in the afterlife:

Allahom ighferly: Oh god forgive me
Allahom irhamny: have pity on me
Ideeniy al seha: give me health
we al rezk: give me sustenance. (Haikal 2009, 211)

The invocation of the name of God in Islam offers protection from the devil and evil spirits, from anxiety and bad thoughts. In Quran we read: ala bi dhikr Allah tatma’ en al qouloub ? “Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured.” [Quran 13:28] (Haikal 2009, 211)

This attachment to the Name of God has reached such a point that it transcended the religious realm to become a constant in the social daily life of contemporary Egyptians. They use the words/expressions Insh’Allah (God willing) and Hamdulillah (thanks to God) in almost all their conversations at every occasion and circumstance: in happiness, in sadness, in birth, accidents hate, disapproval, despair, surprise, and so on. Insh’Allah is used before doing anything or hoping for anything to happen like for example travelling, doing business. The name of God Allah for Muslims /Al Rab for Copts has become so embedded in their subconscious that their daily conversational expression is replete with it. Following are some of the most common expressions used, with their meanings (Abdennour 2007, 29):

Insh’Allah : God’s willing
Hamdullah: Thanks to God.
Allah yiddilak tult al-’umr : May God give you long life:
Allah yikhallik : May God keep you alive
Allah yis’idak wiykhallik : May God keep you happy and alive.  
Allah yihfazak : May God protect you  
or Allah yikhallik : May God keep you alive  
Allah yerzoaak: May god give you sustenance  
Rabena y3mlek illy feeh al kheir: May God does what is good for you  
Allah yebareklek: May god Bless you  
Tawakalana ala Allah: We put our trust in god  
Khaleeha ala Allah: Leave it to God. (Abdennour 2007, 30)

We read similar expressions in the ancient Egyptian’s letters, prayers and biographies where gods are invoked all the time, to protect, save and give long life and happiness to an individual.

In Papyrus Leiden I 369 we read:
Tell Arsaphes, Lord of Heracleopolis, Thoth, Lord of Hermopolis, and every god and [every] goddess by whom I pass  
to give you life, prosperity,  
and health, a long lifetime, and a good ripe old age;  
and to give you favor before gods and men. ………(Wente 1967, 18)

……Please tell Amon of the Thrones of the Two Lands and Meretseger  
to bring me back alive (from) Yari. (Wente 1967, 18)

Papyrus Leiden I 370  
... And you shall take water to Amon of the Thrones  
of the Two Lands and tell him to save (me.) (Wente 1967, 28)

If they have used these expressions in their literature, they might very well have used these invocations to their gods in their conversations too, like the Egyptians do now.

Another name for God that the Egyptians use especially in the villages is “Abu Khaima Zarqa” which is translated as “The owner of the Blue tent”. The sky is called the blue tent which denotes satr “protection” or “veil”, which means “veiling what is beyond it”. It is also a symbol of protection. Blue amulets are used to protect against the evil eye and the evil spirits (Aswad 1994, 367). The ancient Egyptians too considered the blue color of the sky, a divine color. It was the color associated with the gods.

The Egyptian proverbs reveal a lot about the contemporary Egyptians’ concepts of God and fate and their relationship with Him, which are almost identical to the concepts the ancient Egyptians had in their instructions and prayers.
The Plan of God:

- *Al ‘Abd fi Al tafkeer we Al Rab fi al Tadbeer: Man proposes, God disposes*
  In the Instructions of Amenemopet, we read:
  The words men say are one thing,
  The deeds of the god are another

God the Provider:

- *Igry gary al wohoush ghair rezaak lan teshouf: Run as hard as a wild beast if you will, but you won't get any reward greater than that destined for you.*
- *Arzak ala Allah:
  It means that God grants sustenance to an individual according to his will

In the Instructions of Ptahhotep, we read:
Do not put trust in your wealth
which came to you as a gift of god

In the Satire of the Trades, we read:
The bird-catcher suffers much as he watches out for birds;
When the swarms pass over him, He keeps saying,
"had I a net" but the god grants it not. And he is angry with his lot.

God who decrees fate:

- *Illy maktoub Ala Al gebeen Lazem Teshoufu Al Ain: Whatever is written on the forehead the eye must see it*
  It means what is decreed by God, the individual will see it. One will inevitably meet one’s destiny

- *Kol shey2 Qesma we Naseeb: Everything comes down to fate*

  In the Instructions of Ptahhotep, we read:
  His time does not fail to come
  One does not escape what is fated

- *Al A’mar beyed Allah : Lifetimes is in the hand of the God*

  In the Instructions of Ani, we read:
  Do not say, "I am young to be taken,"
  For you do not know your death.
  When death comes he steals the infant
  Who is in his mother's arms,
  Just like him who reached old age. (Lichtheim 2006a, 138)

  In the Instruction of a Man to his son, we read:
  Can the day of Renenet be varied?
Can you add a day to a lifespan?
Can you subtract from it either?
Meskhenet is like the time of creation,
there is none who can destroy what he has ordained

- **Al Khira fima ikhtaroho Allah: The Best is what God choses**

In the Instructions of Ptahhotep we read:
*His time does not fail to come*
*One does not escape what is fated*

In the Instruction of Amenemope we read:
*Do not set your heart on wealth.*
*There is no ignoring Fate and Destiny;*
*Do not let your heart go straying.*
*Every man comes to his hour.* (Lichtheim 2006a, 152)

- **Al 7azar la yamna3 al Qadar: Precaution will not pre-empt your fate**

- **A 3ayel beygeey brezqo: The child is born with his fortune**

In the Satire of the trade we read:
*Renenet/Fortune of the scribe is written on his shoulder the day he is born.*
(Helck 1970a, 146)

The concept of Fate and Fortune is strongly embedded in the Egyptian culture, as was Shai/Fate and Renenet/Fortune in ancient Egypt. The Egyptians now believe that a child is born with its fortune written on its forehead. The ancient Egyptians had the same belief that the fortune is written on the shoulder of the child on the day of his birth.

**God the Protector:**

- **Illy ye7ebo rabo ye7abeb feeh Khal2o: He who is loved by god is loved by the people.**

In the Letter From Teti (P.Louvre 3230a), we read:
*May Thoth, Lord of the gods, Ptah the great,*
*south of his wall, Lord of Ankh-tawy*
*may they give you favors love and proficiency in front of everyone.* (Wente 1990, 91)

- **Al Shakwa Le ghair Allah masala: Complaining to someone other than god is humiliation**

In the Biography of Samut Kyky, we read
*I do not make a protector for myself among men.*
- **Yomhel wala Yohmel : God’s mill grinds slow but sure**

In the Instructions of Instructions of Ani, we read:  
*Don’t rush to attack your attacker.*

*Leave him to the god; Report him daily to the god,*  
*Tomorrow being like today,*  
*And you will see what the god does,*  
*When he injures him who injured you.*  
(Lichtheim 2006a, 144)

- **Idaif luh rabena: God sides with the weak (Moshe p.26)**

In the Stela of Nebre, we read:  
*who comes at the call of the afflicted individual, who gives breath to the one*  
*who is wretched.*  
(Frood 2007, 220)

- **Ya alim behaly alaik itikaly: O knower of my condition in you I put my trust.**

Biography of Roma, we read:  
...*for he has trusted himself to the plan of his god.*  
(Frood 2007, 52)

In the Biography of Bakhenkhons, we read:  
*who respected his god, who magnified his renown,*  
*who trusted himself to his every action.*  
(Frood 2007, 40)

- **Illi malu ab leih rab: who does not have a father, has a lord to take care after him**

*In ancient Egyptian prayer, we read:*  
*A father and mother to him who puts god in his heart.*  
(Assmann 1984, 232)

These examples indicate that the Egyptians invoke God in every single event of their lives. Therefore, the question of “Fatalism” has always been raised through the ages when discussing religion in Egypt. “Fatalism is the idea that all things are predetermined to occur and that there is no ability of the person to alter the predetermined plan of any event” (Dictionary of theology- www.carm.org ). Scholars have constantly debated the subject of “free will versus predestination.” People are always trying to find a “meaning of their lives”, and find an “explanation” for it. They find comfort in relating the events of their lives to a higher power i.e. fate, which helps them accept whatever they face in their lives (Cohen-Mor 2001, 15).

Sherine Hamdy has conducted field research about religious fatalism "through ethnographic analysis of terminally-ill dialysis patients in Egypt who argue that they would rather accept God's will than pursue kidney transplantation” (Hamdy 2009, 174).
These patients who face death argue that their sickness is a “trial from God, most exalted and high and that God is thinking of them by giving them this disease in order to get rid of/ get cleaned of/pay for/ their sins”. They say that they will still be judged after death for their misdeeds but with less punishment (Hamdy 2009, 179). They add that it was only God who “could will life and death and that no one can “save” a person or “lengthen a life” by donating an organ to someone else (Hamdy 2009, 180). They also say that when doctors heal a patient, it is because they are “instruments of God”. According to them, even if a donor donated a kidney to one of the patients, this would not “guarantee” their recovery unless God “wills”. Devout patients always try to “work on themselves” to reach the point of “contentment with God’s will” /Al Reda (Hamdy 2009, 181) because they believe that:

*that true submission to God maintains that God's will transcends everything, and the purpose of worship and remembrance is to bring oneself in utter closeness to God, such that "God is with you wherever you are."* (Hamdy 2009, 188)

The statements of the Egyptian patients remind us of the statements we read in the Literary texts of the ancient Egyptians, which contain similar notions: the association of sin with illness, closeness to god, death and life are according to god’s will, prayers make one close to god, and accepting and submitting to god’s will. They also reveal the piety of the Egyptians.

The Egyptians throughout the ages considered god: their creator, protector, defender, helper and hearer. He is the giver of life, the one who decrees fate for every person and ordains their lifetime. One has to obey him and put him in his heart to be rewarded in the afterlife. The seeking of god in every single event of their lives, make the ancient and modern Egyptians fatalistic to a great extent. Although they try hard to change their fate by prayers or even sometimes by magic, they believe it is again up to god’s will.
Conclusion

Modern Egyptians have a strong belief in the divine intervention of God in their daily lives, which intrigued the author of this thesis to study and to trace this belief in, and compare it with, ancient Egypt in order to find out if the religious beliefs were retained in the cultural memory of the modern Egyptians through the ages and across religions.

In the First Chapter words and expressions that relate to god’s intervention in human’s lives were excerpted from the didactic and literary texts. These words include: to give, to plan, to command, fate, fortune, birth brick, to guide, to do, in the hand and wrath of the gods. Based on the study of these expressions and words, the author concludes that the ancient Egyptians believed strongly that god/ gods intervene in their everyday life. The basis for this belief is the following: God is the “Creator” who created them and the world around them. Furthermore, not only is he the “Creator but also their “Giver”. He gives them their wealth, their career, their children, their provisions and even their poverty. God has a plan for the people, which they trust although they do not know anything about, because their future and their “tomorrow is in the hand of the god”. They have also to obey the commands of the god and follow him in a righteous way. They have to follow the right moral code determined by god or they will anger him. Anger/ wrath of the god is very harsh and severe. It could cause sickness or a psychological burden. By acknowledging their sins, they are forgiven by god. They believed in šísit /fate and fortune rmnt (qadar we rizk) Fate and fortune were decreed by the god and inscribed on their birth brick. For them, šís/ fate was not confined to the time of their death fixed to them by the god but included every life event over which they had no control: birth, birth place, parents, illness, accidents, lifespan and death, natural disasters etc. As for fortune/Renenet, it included: their profession and career, the money they earn, properties etc., while Mshnt/birth brick represented their birth. She gave them the breath of life and she had a say in predicting their life.

The strong belief of the ancient Egyptians in divine intervention is associated with their personal piety. The more people believe in the divine intervention of god in their lives, the more, they want to draw closer to him. The texts show that their personal piety was expressed in their love and devotion to god, putting him in their heart and invoking his name repeatedly in their prayers. They resorted to god to help them in every facet of their lives. In their prayers they asked for protection, provision of their
needs, long life blessed afterlife. They tried and hoped that by praying, god would adhere to their demands and change their fate.

They not only used prayers to try to protect themselves from misfortunes but they also used magic. Despite their belief in the divine intervention, they tried to protect themselves by magic from harm of demons, the dead and also from the gods. Ancient Egyptians believed that evil entities are malevolent and cause sickness and misfortunes. They had to resort to the invocation of the gods in their spells to protect themselves. In some spells, the magicians threaten the gods to make them do what they want. But although they try to alter their fates and protect themselves by magic, the fact that they invoke the gods in their spells, means that they know that without the help of a god they cannot achieve what they want.

In Chapter Three, the author has compared verses from the ancient Egyptians literature with verses of the monotheistic Holy Books. This comparison revealed that although ancient Egyptian religion is a polytheistic religion, both polytheistic and monotheistic religions all share a set of basic concepts about the will of the God and his intervention in human lives: God is the Creator of everything that exists. God decrees life and death. God is the Provider. God’s commandments must be obeyed. God’s wrath and anger must be avoided. The texts emphasize, as a result, the need for the faithful to be on the righteous path, or on the way of god. For those who do so, are blessed and come to “light”, while the sinners earn the wrath of god and is in “darkness”. These findings indicate that regardless of their religion be it monotheistic or polytheistic, people always feel the need to believe in the existence of a supreme power or a higher being to make it easier for them to accept and cope with the unknown, the unexpected, the calamities and the mystery of death. It gives them a measure of comfort to have a higher power they could and would resort to for help, protection and succor. As for the texts of ancient Egyptian religion and the monotheistic religions alike tell them God / Allah/ El Rab hear the prayers of the supplicant.

This astounding transmission of Egyptian culture was accompanied by the transmission of social culture as expressed in daily practices, customs and traditions. Like their forbearers, Egyptians today strongly believe in divine Intervention and its impact on their lives. Hence, their invocation of the will of God in every single event in their lives, in the words and expressions, they utter and in proverbs they use and the conversations they engage in. They pray and ask God for the same things their ancestors asked for: Health, protection, long life, success, wealth, good life and a blessed afterlife.
They believe in fate which is decreed by God. They know that there are certain events they cannot control for example: illness, accidents, death, natural disasters. They believe that one’s fortune is totally in the hand of the god which includes: wealth or poverty, getting children, career and profession. The phrase “Tomorrow is in the hand of the gods” is the same phrase Egyptians use now and it encompasses the whole concept of divine intervention. From the examination of the expression, proverbs the modern Egyptians use as well as, the surveys done by scholars on Egyptians fatalism, the author concludes that Egyptians, as their ancestors, are fatalistic, submitting totally to the will of God.

This transmission of culture extends to include the demons and the belief in magic. The Egyptians now use magic as we stated before to change fate, to harm others, and to protect themselves. Modern Egyptians like their ancestors, used spells in magic, where they invoke God or verses from the Quran. They use the same tools for example the knots, the wax figurines and the pots.
Abbreviations

*KRI*  

**Lit.**  
*Literal*

*WB:*  

*URK*  
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