

Society of Biblical Literature  
Writings from the Ancient World

*Edited by*  
Burke O. Long

Volume 1  
*Letters from Ancient Egypt*  
translated by Edward F. Wente  
edited by Edmund S. Meltzer

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# Letters from Ancient Egypt

*Translated by*  
Edward F. Wente

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Scholars Press  
Atlanta, Georgia

## LETTERS FROM ANCIENT EGYPT

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Society of Biblical Literature

The Society of Biblical Literature gratefully acknowledges grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, an independent federal agency, to underwrite certain editorial, research, and publication expenses of the Writings from the Ancient World series. Published results and interpretations do not necessarily represent the view of the Endowment.

### *Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Letters from ancient Egypt / [edited by] Edward Wente.

p. cm. — (Writings from the ancient world ; no. 01)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-55540-472-3. — ISBN 1-55540-473-1 (pbk.)

1. Egyptian letters—Translations into English. 2. English letters—Translations from Egyptian. I. Wente, Edward Frank, 1930-II. Series.

PJ1947.L4 1990

932--dc20

90-41202

CIP

Printed in the United States of America  
on acid-free paper



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do you want your domicile desolated? Fight on her behalf anew this day that her household may be maintained and water be poured out for you. If there is nought (i.e., no help) from you, your house shall be destroyed. Can it be that you are unaware that it is this maidservant who keeps your house going among people?

Fight on [her] behalf: Watch over her! Rescue her from(?) whoever, male or female, is acting against her. Then shall your house and your children be maintained. It is good if you take notice.

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### A Man to Deceased Relatives(?)

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#### 351. *Oxford Bowl*

(late Dynasty 17 or early Dynasty 18)

Addressed by Tetiaa, son of Neni:

Meniupu has come in flight. My father and my mother will support him since he is . . . from(?) his wife Teti. If he dies, my mother shall bury him, for it is her husband Neni who told her to bury him and to perform the duties of an heir for him.

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### A Husband to His Deceased Wife

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#### 352. *P. Leiden I 371*

(Dynasty 19)

To the able spirit Ankhiry:

What have I done against you wrongfully for you to get into this evil disposition in which you are? What have I done against you? As for what you have done, it is your laying hands on me even though I committed no wrong against you. From the time that I was living with you as a husband until today, what have I done against you that I should have to conceal it? What [have I done] against you? As for what you have done, it is the reason for my laying a plaint against you, although what have I done against you? I shall contend at law with you in the presence with the words of my mouth, that is, in the presence of the ennead of the West, and it shall be decided between you and [me through] this letter because a dispute with you is what I've written about.

What have I done against you? I took you for a wife when I was a youth so that I was with [you] while I was functioning in every office and you were with me. I did not divorce [you], nor did I cause you to be vexed. Now, I took you (for a wife) when I was a youth, and I functioned in every important office for Pharaoh, l.p.h., without my divorcing [you], saying, "She has got

to be with [me]," so I would say. And when any visitors(?) came to me in your presence, did I not receive them out of consideration for you, saying, "I will do according to your desire"?

Now look, you aren't letting my mind be at ease. I shall litigate with you, and right shall be distinguished from wrong. Now look, when I was instructing officers for Pharaoh's infantry and his chariotry, I [had] them come and prostrate themselves before you, bringing every sort of fine thing to set before [you]. I concealed nothing at all from you during your lifetime. I did not let you suffer discomfort [in] anything I did with you after the manner of a lord, nor did you find me cheating on you after the manner of a field hand, entering a strange house. I did not let an upbraider find fault with me [in] anything I did with you.

And when I was assigned to the post in which I now am,<sup>8</sup> I became unable to go out as had been my habit. I got to doing what someone who is in the same situation as I does when he is [at] home [regarding] your oil, your bread, and your clothes; and they would be brought to you. I didn't direct them elsewhere, but said, "The woman is still with me(?)," so I would say and not cheat on you.

Now look, you are disregarding how well I have treated you. I'm writing [you] to make you aware of the things you are doing. When you became ill with the disease which you contracted, I [sent for] a chief physician, and he treated you and did what you told him to do.

Now when I went accompanying Pharaoh, l.p.h., in journeying south, this condition (i.e., death) befell you, and I spent these several months without eating or drinking like a normal person. When I arrived in Memphis, I begged leave of Pharaoh, l.p.h., and [came] to where you were. And I and my people wept sorely for you before [you] (i.e., your body) in my quarter(?). I donated clothing of fine linen to wrap you up in and had many clothes made. I overlooked nothing good so as not to have it done for you.

Now look, I've spent these last three years without entering (another) house although it is not proper that one who is in the same situation as I be made to do this. Now look, I've done this out of consideration for you. Now look, you don't differentiate good from evil. One will judge between you and me. Now look, as for those sisters in the household, I have not entered into a one of them (sexually).

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### A Husband to His Deceased Wife

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#### 353. *O. Louvre 698*

(Dynasty 21)

O you noble chest of the Osiris chantress of Amon Ikhtay, who lies at rest beneath you, hearken to me and transmit my message. Say to her since you

are near to her, "What is your condition? How are you?" It is you who shall say to her, "Alas, [Ikhtay] no longer prospers," so says your brother (i.e., husband), your partner. Alas, you with the beautiful face, like whom there is no other, I have found no instance of [any] ugliness [on your part to] hold against you. I called at any time [upon] you too(?), and [you] answered [me in response(?)]. My mother, father, brother and sister are well disposed to me. They have come, but you have been taken from me so it is as serious as what I (text: he) have described(?).

Alas, Ikhtay no longer prospers, you whose [...] has been taken away [...] from me, while my(?) [townsfolk say], "The fool is still weeping for her," and while my(?) [...] embraces [...] without ever having become satisfied [...].

[Alas], Ikhtay [no longer prospers], you who apportioned your plot [and ...] in three withdrawals(?) comprising fifty-two *oipe*-measures, after having divided your(?) [...] to] make you satisfied with them.

Alas, [Ikhtay] no longer [prosper], you who brought your cattle home. They didn't let you do [...] after] you had made an offering of their offspring.

Alas, I[khtay] no longer prospers, [you who looked after] our many fields, [...] took them(?) [...] did not [...] say(?) to do it.

O, Ikhtay no longer prospers; O, [...], when the sky (i.e., weather) was windy and waves of water [...] descend from ..., while you were burdened with all sorts of heavy loads although there was no carrying pole with which to carry them nor a spot in which to set (them) down. They are in [...] your (text: her) partner [...] youngster [...] after your [...] had taken [...] village(?) [...] and the enclosure wall was built [for you(?)] while things proceeded according to your wish [...] did not see you.

Alas, Ikhtay no longer prospers, the [...] Ikhtay, you who have departed so that your role is [...] approaching the one who approached you [...] make to prosper [...] you (text: she) stopped [to] see them.

O Ikhtay, [you] who are gracious as a woman, you who have been taken away while you were at my side(?), you never held your brother (i.e., husband) back(?) in any ... that were in your heart.

Statement by the necropolis scribe Butehamon to the chantress of Amon Ikhtay:

Pre has departed and his ennead following him, the kings as well, and all humanity in one body following their fellow beings. There is no one who shall stay alive, for we shall all follow you. If I can be heard where you are, tell the lords of eternity to let your brother (i.e., husband) come to [you] that you may be his support in their midst(?), be they great or small. It is you who should speak well within the necropolis since I committed no abomination against you while you were on earth.

So then may you grasp my situation. Swear to god in every manner saying, "It is according to what I have said that things shall be done." I won't deceive

your heart in anything I have said until I come to you. [Behave] toward [me in] every good manner, if I can be heard.

### Letters to Gods

#### 354. O. Gardiner 310 (Dynasty 19: Ramesses II)

Addressed by Hornefer to his god Amon-Re, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands:

If I see that you let success be with me, I shall provide you with an amphora of date-brew of (the type of) Kode (Kizzuwatna) and also a jar of beer, and likewise my man (shall come) with [kylles]tis-loaves and white bread.

#### 355. P. Nevill (late Dynasty 20)

When I was looking for you (the god) to tell you some affairs of mine, you happened to be concealed in your holy of holies, and there was nobody having access to it to send in to you. Now as I was waiting, I encountered Hori, this scribe of the Temple of Usermare-miamon (Ramesses III's mortuary temple), and he said to me, "I have access." So I am sending him in to you.

See, you must discard seclusion today and come out in procession in order that you may decide upon the issues involving seven kilts belonging to the Temple of Haremhab and also those two kilts belonging to the necropolis scribe. The vizier does not accept these garments, saying, "It is because you must make up their number in full.

Now as for one who is in the same position as you, being in a place of seclusion and concealed, he sends forth his pronouncements, but you haven't yet communicated anything at all to me. See here, you let eleven (garments) accrue to the woman Eseye, your [devotee(?)], by your intervening on account of them, but now it happens that your pronouncements no longer come forth as though (confined in) the netherworld for a million years. Farewell!

### Notes

1. Or, "to be commended to Behezt's agent," but the same expression with the dative occurs in Letter No. 67, where the translation "vouched for" is beyond doubt.