

LETTERS FROM PHCENICIA TO THE KING  
OF EGYPT IN THE FIFTEENTH  
CENTURY B.C.

TRANSLATED BY THE EDITOR

THE age and character of the cuneiform tablets found at Tel el-Amarna in Upper Egypt have been fully described in former volumes of this series of the *Records of the Past*, as well as the principal results derived from their discovery. During the past winter all doubts as to the exact spot in which they were found have been removed by Dr. Flinders Petrie's excavations. These have shown that the cuneiform correspondence of the Pharaohs Amenôphis III. and Amenôphis IV. was stored, not in the royal palace itself, but in a building which adjoined it, and in which probably the scribe lived who was versed in the language and syllabary of Babylonia. Among the objects disinterred by Dr. Petrie is a clay cylinder, round which runs the inscription eleven times repeated, "The seal of Tetunu, the servant of Samas-akhiddin." Dr. Petrie's discoveries show that the fellahin led me to the right place when, a year

after the tablets had been found, they took me to a ruined building within the precincts of the palace, the bricks of which were stamped with the name and titles of Amenôphis IV. Khu-n-Aten.

The letters of which I here give translations for the first time have been published in the second part of the *Mittheilungen aus den orientalischen Sammlungen* (Berlin, 1890) by Drs. Winckler and Abel, and consist of the correspondence sent to Khu-n-Aten from Phœnicia. The letters are peculiarly difficult to decipher on account of the non-Assyrian forms and idioms which they contain, and which are probably of Canaanitish origin. As Dr. Zimmern has pointed out, we find, for instance, the first person singular of the perfect tense formed by the suffix *-ti* as in Hebrew, instead of by the suffix *-ku* as in the corresponding person of the Assyrian permissive. Here and there, moreover, a Canaanitish word is given by the side of its Assyrian equivalent. These words afford a fresh proof that Hebrew was originally "the language of Canaan."

Though the Phœnician letters have not the same Biblical interest as the letters from Southern Palestine of which I have given translations in the last volume of the *Records*, we may nevertheless gather from them several historical facts. They show that at the time when the correspondence came to an end, the Egyptian empire in Asia was breaking up. The enemies of "the heretic king"

were beginning to threaten him in Egypt, and he was unable to reply to the pressing requests of his Syrian governors by sending to them the troops for which they asked. The province they administered was surrounded on all sides by its foes. Ebed-Asherah, who seems to have been a Beduin chief, together with his sons, had allied himself to the Hittites, the Babylonians, and the people of Aram-Naharaim, was overrunning the land of the Amorites, and was capturing the Phœnician cities which lay to the west of it. Many of the kings who had been allowed, as at Sidon, Arka, and Hazor, to exercise their royal functions by the side of the Egyptian governors, revolted from Egypt, and Arvad sent its ships to join the enemy. Rib-Addu, the Egyptian governor of Gebal, was already old, and one of his letters seems to show that he was preparing to evacuate Zemar, the centre of the Egyptian government in the inland part of Phœnicia, and retire from the northern portion of the province. It was probably not long before the rule of Egypt ceased to be obeyed, not only in the mountainous interior, but also in the cities of the coast.

Among other interesting facts contained in the letters is the mention of a Yivâna or "Ionian," who was in the country of Tyre, apparently employed in the service of the Egyptian king. The name was, therefore, already known in the fifteenth century before our era, and justifies the belief of the Egypto-

logists that in Huinivu, or Uinin as it is written in Demotic, which represents the name of the Greeks in the bilingual inscription of the Rosetta Stone, we must recognise the Egyptian form of the word "Ionian." The name of Huinivu goes back to early times, since in one of the pyramid texts of the Sixth Dynasty, the Mediterranean is called "the circle which surrounds the Huinivu."<sup>1</sup>

The name of Rib-Addi, or Rib-Addu, is not very easy to explain. The second element in it is the name of the god Hadad, but it is not clear to what root the first part of the compound should be assigned. Probably, however, the root is *rib*, "to contend," so that the name of the Phœnician governor is precisely parallel to those of Jerub-baal and Merib-Baal (1 Chron. viii. 34), the signification of the compound being "Hadad has pleaded."

<sup>1</sup> Erman in the *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*, xxix. 1. p. 39.

LETTERS FROM PHŒNICIA TO THE KING OF  
EGYPT IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY B.C.

42.<sup>1</sup> OBTVERSE

1. Rib-Addu sends
2. to his lord, the king of the world,
3. the great king, the king *of the universe* (?),
4. (whom) the divine lady of GEBAL<sup>2</sup> has known
5. alone; to the king my lord,
6. at the feet of my lord, my Sun-god
7. seven times seven I prostrate myself.
8. This year (certain) men into the presence
9. of the king, who (is) like the god ASSUR<sup>3</sup>
10. and the Sun-god in heaven, have come;<sup>4</sup>
11. they have reported to him: "The sons
12. of Ebed-Asherah<sup>5</sup> according to
13. their desires have taken<sup>6</sup> 2 horses
14. of the king and chariots, and
15. the men whom he sent have given (them);
16. and the IONIAN<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The numbers are those of the *Mittheilungen aus den orientalischen Sammlungen*, pt. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Gebal, the Byblos of the Greeks, now Jebeil, twenty miles north of Beirut. The people of Gebal are mentioned in 1 Kings v. 18 (A. V. "stone-squarers") and Ezek. xxvii. 9. According to Philo Byblius, the "Divine Lady," or goddess of Gebal, was Baaltis.

<sup>3</sup> Expressed in ideographs, denoting "the god of hosts."

<sup>4</sup> Literally "are."

<sup>5</sup> Abdu-Asirta. In some instances the determinative of divinity is prefixed to the name of the goddess Asherah.

<sup>6</sup> Read *la-[ku]*.

<sup>7</sup> *Yivána*. The word corresponds exactly to the Hebrew Yavan, since a Hebrew *yav* would become *yiv* in Assyrian, and is the earliest notice we have of Ionian Greeks. The Ionian in question probably came from Cyprus.

17. is on a mission <sup>1</sup> to the country of TYRE,<sup>2</sup>
18. for eight days
19. doing this deed
20. in it." They speak words
21. of accusation before the king,
22. the Sun-god. I am thy faithful servant,
23. and the news which (the king) knows
24. and hears have I sent
25. to the king my lord. *But* (?)
26. they (are) dogs,<sup>3</sup> and they have [gone]
27. into the presence of the household troops
28. of the king, the Sun-god. I sent [messages]
29. to thy father, and he [listened]
30. to his servant, and [thy father]
31. des[patched] the household
32. troops. The country was not taken.

## REVERSE

1. by Ebed-Asherah for [himself] :
2. it was <sup>4</sup> the property of the
3. governors, since I fought <sup>5</sup>
4. before them against him,
5. and they (were) always
6. strong, and the MISIANS <sup>6</sup>
7. brought the *straw* (?) of barley <sup>7</sup>
8. always ; they did not *despise* (?)
9. the officer, since I collected horses
10. and (was) strong before them,
11. since we know that both strength and
12. existence (belong) to a strong king.
13. As yet they have not marched up (the country)

<sup>1</sup> LU-KIN. The signification is made clear by No. 52, line 7, *Rev.*

<sup>2</sup> ZURI.

<sup>3</sup> "Dog" is used in these letters in the sense of "minister" or "messenger." The idiom may be of Egyptian origin, as *sab*, "a judge," is represented in the hieroglyphics by the figure of a jackal or a dog.

<sup>4</sup> Read *i-ba-[sa]*.

<sup>5</sup> *Anazur*, literally "I defend."

<sup>6</sup> The *Misi* are doubtless the Mas'u or "infantry" of the Egyptian texts.

<sup>7</sup> *Ser[ti]*.

14. since I have despatched two men,  
 15. messengers, to the city of ZEMAR,<sup>1</sup>  
 16. and also the leader of all the men,  
 17. this one (here present), to bring back  
 18. word to the king of each one thing  
 19. as much as they have heard.  
 20. The two men by night  
 21. have carried (it), and by night  
 22. they have brought (it) back,  
 23. even the messengers of the king,  
 24. from the presence of the dogs.<sup>2</sup> If  
 25. the heart of the king, the Sun-god, at  
 26. [this] time they have engaged,  
 27. [this] year I shall dwell [in] my [city]  
 28. . . . . in thy heart  
 29. and the [horses?] . . . and the men . . .  
 30. The Beduin<sup>3</sup> are marching  
 31. away from the city of ZEMAR  
 32. [and] I defend the city,

## EDGE

1. and I have not given it up; and the king  
 2. will hear the words of his servant, and will send  
 3. ten men of the country of MELUKHKHA<sup>4</sup> and ten men  
     of the country of EGYPT  
 4. to defend the city for the king,  
 5. the Sun-god, the lord of thy faithful servant.

## NO. 45. OBVERSE

1. Rib-Addu [sends to his lord,]  
 2. the great king, the king [*of the universe* (?)]

<sup>1</sup> The Zemar of Gen. x. 18, called Simyra by Strabo; now Sumra.

<sup>2</sup> See above, note on *Obv.* 26.

<sup>3</sup> Literally "the Plunderers,"

<sup>4</sup> Melukhkha was the "salt" desert, which extended between the frontier of Egypt and the confines of Palestine. Compare the Biblical name of "the Salt Sea," Gen. xiv. 3; Num. xxxiv. 12, etc.





36. Ebed-Asherah the dog reckon
37. the cities of the governors of the king for [themselves]:
38. they have smitten the cities . . .
39. of Aziru, they have not . . .
40. the king, to their cities; they have not . . .
41. for themselves, from the city of ZE[MAR],
42. the city of ULLAZA,<sup>1</sup> the city of SAWA . . .
43. their chariots, the prince . . .
44. he sends the man . . . . .
45. soldiers . . . . .
46. the city of ZEMAR . . . . .
47. Aziru despatches . . . . .

## REVERSE

1. I am [at] the gate; the men . . .
2. to the country of EGYPT . . . . .
3. and he sent . . . . .
4. in their hand to me.
5. Constantly I have sent this man,
6. but I do not send [messengers] to the king.
7. Now these two EGYPTIANS
8. have come forth to complain to me,
9. and I cannot venture out. If this year
10. there are no household troops, then the provinces
11. will [fall] to the Beduin, but
12. if it is the wish of the king to save<sup>2</sup> them
13. I will send my household troops to
14. Yankhame and to Biri, (saying):
15. "March along with your governors!"
16. They have occupied the country of the AMORITES;  
in quietude
17. they have marched through it. This have I done of  
myself

<sup>1</sup> Ullaza, otherwise unknown, must have been in the neighbourhood of Zemar, the Simyra of classical geography, and the modern Sumra between Tripoli and Amrit. See Gen. x. 18. Sawa . . . may be connected with the mountain of Shaua mentioned in the *Travels of the Mohar*.

<sup>2</sup> Read *ba-li-idh*.

18. along with Yapa-Addu and along with Kha[tip].  
 19. And the king will send . . . . .  
 20. . . . . all  
 21. the property which they have taken  
 22. from these men for the king.  
 23. Another man has not taken it for another.  
 24. We have been successful<sup>1</sup> for the king. Accordingly  
 25. the king will send a horse  
 26. to his servant, and I will defend the city  
 27. of the king. I have nothing at all  
 28. whatsoever; everything has been given away  
 29. to save my life; and as for  
 30. this messenger, the king shall send him in all haste, and  
     shall furnish  
 31. guards to defend  
 32. his faithful servant and the city,  
 33. and (shall furnish) men of MELUKHKHA along with  
     them  
 34. like the god ZI<sup>2</sup> of thy fathers.

*(The next seven lines are too mutilated for translation.)*

## EDGE

1. A man of YARI[MUTA].<sup>3</sup> At the gate I (stand). A  
     . . . I send [to]  
 2. Pharaoh for the protection of the men of the country  
     of MILU[KHA]; but thou dost not  
 3. hear; yet why is the king constantly sending  
 4. men of the guard [from] the country of MILUKHA to  
     its defence?  
 5. They have not [surrendered] the city to the Beduin.

<sup>1</sup> Literally "one has been successful."

<sup>2</sup> There cannot be a reference here to the Assyrian storm-god Zu or Zi, as he was considered an enemy of the other gods, and we must therefore regard Zi as an ideograph. In this case it will mean "Life," the equivalent of the Egyptian *ánkh*. *Ánkh* or "Life" was one of the titles of the Pharaoh.

<sup>3</sup> Yarimuta phonetically resembles Jarmuth (Josh. x. 3), but it lay on the sea coast, and was probably to the north of Gebal.

## No. 74

1. Rib-Addu says to
2. the king of the world, the great king,
3. the king *of the universe* (?), (to whom) the divine Lady
4. of GĒBAL has given strength ;
5. to the king my lord ; at the feet
6. of my lord, my Sun-god seven times seven I prostrate myself.
7. Verily let the king my lord know <sup>1</sup> that
8. strong is the hostility of Ebed-Asherah
9. against me. Now the city which contended
10. against me . . . he has taken.
11. . . . . Again, what about
12. [Ebed-A]sherah the dog? And he has come
13. [against] all the cities of the king, the Sun-god ;
14. [*word*] to the king of the country of MITANA <sup>2</sup>
15. [and] the king of the country of the KASSE <sup>3</sup> he has sent,<sup>4</sup> since
16. he has . . . and has taken the country of the king <sup>5</sup> for himself.
17. [And now] again he has collected
18. all the Beduin against the city of SIGATA
19. and the city of AMBI,<sup>6</sup> and has taken also
20. [the territory?] of this city, and
21. there is no place which the Beduin have not entered.
22. [Make war?] against him ; seize
23. . . . .
24. . . . . Send me 400
25. [men] . . . . .
26. . . . . horses

(*The next five lines are too mutilated for translation.*)

32. [send] the household [troop]s to look after

<sup>1</sup> Read *li-i-di*.

<sup>2</sup> The Aram-Naharaim of the Old Testament on the eastern bank of the Euphrates, opposite Carchemish.

<sup>3</sup> The Babylonians, who were ruled at this time by a Kassite dynasty.

<sup>4</sup> *Supir*.

<sup>5</sup> The Egyptian king.

<sup>6</sup> This seems to be the Ammi of other tablets, the Ummah of Josh. xix. 30. But it may be the Aup of the Egyptian texts.

33. [the do]gs ; and gratuitously
34. again there have been handed over
35. the country of the king and the city of ZEMAR,
36. the city of your guard,
37. to the Beduin, and thou refrainest
38. from sending the household troops
39. (and) an officer, yet (so) thou wilt destroy
40. the enemies of the king from
41. all his country, and
42. all the provinces will be attached
43. to the king. Accordingly
44. do not thou, O great lord,
45. hold aloof from
46. this message.

## No. 72

1. [To] Khayapa . . . .
2. Rib-Addu [speaks] thus :
3. At thy <sup>1</sup> feet I fall.
4. O AMON,<sup>2</sup> the god who (is) su[preme],<sup>3</sup>
5. thou knowest thy light (is) in
6. the countenance of the king my lord, of whom,
7. behold, thou (Khayapa) art a dog,
8. the king knows (it), and in thy own person
9. the king has sent thee
10. as a Commissioner. Wherefore
11. dost thou delay and dost not
12. speak to the king
13. that he may send
14. the household troops and
15. that they may march
16. to the city of ZEMAR? What
17. (is) Ebed-Asherah, the servant,
18. the dog? yet he has taken
19. the country of the king for himself.
20. What (is) his origin?
21. yet (he is) strong among the Beduin, strong

<sup>1</sup> Read *ka*.<sup>2</sup> *Amana*.<sup>3</sup> *Tsi-[ru]*.

22. (is) his power, and
  23. he has despatched 50 convoys
  24. of horses and 200 foot-soldiers,
  25. and they are stationed in the city of SIGATA
  26. in<sup>1</sup> his presence. Until
  27. the household troops appear
  28. he will not assemble all
  29. the Beduin; yet
  30. he has taken the city of SIGATA
  31. and the city of AMBI.
- . . . . .

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NO. 60. OBVERSE

1. To the king my lord, my Sun-god,
2. speaks
3. Rib-Addu thy servant thus:
4. At the feet of my lord, my Sun-god,
5. seven times seven I prostrate myself.
6. The king my lord knows
7. that Salma-salla
8. the son of Ebed-Asherah
9. has entered the city of ULLAZA,
10. in order to strengthen the cities of ARDATA,<sup>2</sup>
11. YIBILYA, AMBI
- 12, 13. (and) SIGATA, all the cities, for themselves,<sup>3</sup>
14. and the king has sent
15. a force to the city of ZEMAR
16. until the king shall give counsel
17. to his country in regard to
18. the sons of Ebed-Asherah
19. the servant, the dog.—The king
20. of the country of the KASSI,<sup>4</sup> and the king
21. of the country of MITANI<sup>5</sup> are strong<sup>6</sup>
22. and have taken the country of the king for

<sup>1</sup> Read *i-na*.

<sup>3</sup> *I.e.* himself and his brothers.

<sup>5</sup> Aram-Naharaim.

<sup>2</sup> Probably Arvad is meant.

<sup>4</sup> The Babylonians.

<sup>6</sup> I read [*da*]-*na-nu*.

23. themselves already,<sup>1</sup>  
 24. and they have seized<sup>2</sup> the cities

## REVERSE

1. of thy governor, yet thou delayest  
 2. in granting the request<sup>3</sup> [of]  
 3. thy Commissioner, and they have seized  
 4. the cities for themselves.  
 5. Now they have taken the city of ULLAZA.  
 6. If, therefore, thou delayest  
 7. until they have taken the city of ZEMAR and  
 8. also have slain the Commissioner  
 9. and the household troops  
 10. which (are) in ZEMAR, what  
 11. could one do? and I  
 12. could not march up  
 13. to ZEMAR  
 14. the city. The cities of AMBI,  
 15. SIGATA, ULLAZA  
 16. (and) ARVAD<sup>4</sup> are hostile  
 17. to me. They have plotted,  
 18. even they, that they shall enter  
 19. the city of ZEMAR,  
 20. even these cities, (and their) ships.  
 21. And the sons of Ebed-Ashe[rah]  
 22. (are) in the field, and . . .  
 23. . . . . and . . .  
 24. [I?] have not marched up . . .

## EDGE

1. . . . and the city of GEBAL has acted.  
 2. Against the Beduin (and) against the city of ARVAD  
 3. I march, since its . . . has joined  
 4. the Beduin.

## NO. 61. OBVERSE

1. [Rib-]Addu [the governor]

<sup>1</sup> *Sa-[su-nu] pa-na-nu.*

<sup>3</sup> Literally "favour [to]."

<sup>2</sup> *U [Ia-]ku.*

<sup>4</sup> *Er-va-da.*

2. [of the city of GEBAL] sends to
3. [his lord], the great king, the king of the world, the  
king
4. *of the universe* (?) (to whom) the divine lady of GEBAL
5. has given strength ; to the king
6. my [lord] ; at the feet of [my] lord, [my] Sun-god,
7. [seven times] seven I prostrate myself. Verily
8. the king my lord knows<sup>1</sup> that very strong (is) hostility
9. against us, since they say
10. [be]fore thee : (Still) belongs
11. the city of ZEMAR to the king ! The king
12. knows that our fortress has fallen ;
13. moreover the sons of Ebed-Asherah have taken it,
14. and there is no one to carry the news
15. to the king. But give counsel, since
16. thy faithful servant (am) I, and thee
17. verily do I hear. I have sent to [my] lord.
18. Prophecy (?), give counsel to the city of ZEMAR,
19. [which] like a bird which (is) in the midst of a snare
20. is placed : its nest
21. is very strong ;
22. and the messengers who
23. from BIT- . . . TETI [have come]
24. I have sent, and into the city of ZEMAR
25. they have entered<sup>2</sup> by night.
26. And Ya[pa]-Addu perpetually [lingers],
27. he does not advance with me.
28. The men . . . have arrived ;
29. they have ridden and know
30. how great (is) my faithfulness . . . . and
31. these Commissioners of the king
32. the king has sent to me, and
33. the king has spoken to them ;
34. and thou hast charged them that they should take
35. all that the king has given to his servant :
36. but the lord knows, as well as his son, at the present  
time
37. the king has taken everything for himself.

<sup>1</sup> Read *i-di*.<sup>2</sup> [*E*]ri<sup>ti</sup>-sunu.

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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