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Reflections on the Phoenician Alphabet: Property and its Defense in the Origin and Order of the Letters (Draft #3)

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REFLECTIONS ON THE PHOENICIAN ALPHABET: PROPERTY AND ITS DEFENSE IN THE ORIGIN AND ORDER OF THE LETTERS

Draft #3

Gerald Cohen

‘Alphabetical order is a historian’s nightmare: we have no evidence about where it came from. We learn our ABCs because the Romans learned their ABCs because the Greeks learned their ABΓs because the Phoenicians learned their ālep-bēt-gīmls because the Northern Canaanites learned whatever they learned – and why they learned it that way, nobody knows.’

Jack Lynch (2021: 281) in his review of Judith Flanders’ *A Place For Everything. The Curious History of Alphabetical Order*.

INTRODUCTION

Lynch’s quote just above neatly captures the mystery of alphabetical order, and he also clarifies that Flanders’ book (despite its title) does not provide a rationale for the order of the alphabet. In this regard he adds:

‘If *A Place For Everything* isn’t a book about the order of the alphabet, what is it? In fact it’s a book about managing information more generally, and particularly the ways the alphabet has made that possible.’

But I believe a rationale for the order of the Phoenician alphabet does exist and have tentatively shared my thoughts on this in *Comments on Etymology*. The jury is still out, and here now is the latest draft.

TREATING THE PHOENICIAN LETTERS INDIVIDUALLY

The first three letters clearly refer to important pieces of property: A (ox), B (house), G (to Roman C; camel), and the fourth one D (door, perhaps originally a tent flap) designates a part of the dwelling (house or tent); the presence of the house and the (original) tent flap might have been used to imply ALL dwellings—houses and tents.

The start of the alphabet with letters whose names pertain to property is striking both in itself (the alphabet was evidently spread by merchants, and so a focus on property is not surprising) and for indicating that perhaps other letters should also be viewed from the perspective of property.

The next Phoenician letter, H (𐤇 ; /hē/, adopted by Greek as the vowel E), seems to go off on a tangent, but maybe not. Let's operate with the already existing supposition that H derives from the Egyptian hieroglyph referred to as 'the hallelujah man' (from having his arms raised as if praising the gods; see below p. 17). The hieroglyph is pronounced ḤEḤ and was turned on its side and altered a bit more in the Phoenician letter. This Egyptian hieroglyph designates a colossal number, and since it comes right after four letters that were originally pictures of property (and whose names still refer to that property) I would suggest: The hallelujah man must be understood in conjunction with the property letters. I.e., he designates lots and lots of property, a colossal amount of property – i.e., the wish dream of the Phoenician merchants who spread their alphabet and almost certainly played a role in developing it from its Proto-Canaanite predecessor.


HOOK, WEAPON

Then, after this H comes W (later V), which designates a hook. At first glance, a hook has nothing to do with property – at least not as important as oxen/houses/camels – but perhaps it should be considered in conjunction with the following letter Z (ZAYIN) = a weapon). Now, in what way does this Z portray a weapon? The answer may be that the letter is a slightly deformed rendering of the original picture of a hooked sword, brought to Egypt by the invading Hyksos and used to great effect by them there. This would explain the presence of the hook letter immediately preceding the weapon letter of the alphabet. The curved sword was evidently the weapon of ‘shock and awe’ in its day. Among other things, it could be used to latch onto the top of the shield of an opponent, pull it down and thereby expose the opponent for a finishing blow.

Also, note the following passage in Google:

‘After the Middle Kingdom, Egypt was ruled by a dynasty of Asiatic kings known as the Hyksos. They came to Egypt with horses, chariots, and copper weapons, which the Egyptians would later adapt for their own armies. The Hyksos were eventually expelled, but this interlude of foreign rule resulted in a new, aggressive professional army with improved weaponry, such as the khepesh, a sickle sword similar to Asiatic curved swords. Egypt became a major military power and the New Kingdom characterized an aggressive nation rather than the defensive one it had been previously.’

SHAPE OF LETTER FOR U IN LINEAR B

Incidentally, the presence of the hooked sword might also have played a role in the shape of the letter for U in Linear B: . The letter is almost certainly the same as the Phoenician letter ‘waw’ (Y), which is known to have given the Greek vowel for ‘U’ (Y υ) as well as Greek digamma (Ϝ), which ultimately gave our letter F). but why does the

Linear B letter have the short vertical line going through the two horizontal lines? Perhaps because the letter originally denoted not only the hook but the entire hooked sword, with the short downward line indicating the standard strategy of swinging the hooked sword down onto the shield of one's opponent; the sword would hook onto the shield, permitting it to be pulled down, thereby exposing the opponent to attack by the sword.

The drawing of a downward line to indicate downward motion does not seem exceptional, but for confirming evidence that this can in fact occur, cf. the Chinese character for 'rain'; the downward stroke is recognized as indicating the downward motion of the raindrops. Here is a photocopy of the relevant entry in Wiegler (1965; 26):



YÜ³. The rain. Drops of water falling from a ☽ cloud that hangs to — heaven; 丿 means the vertical falling; — 像天。☽ 像雲。水从雲下也。 — It is the 178th radical in K'ang-hsi.

FENCE

After ZAYIN (weapon) comes HET (fence), probably for defensive purposes.

THREE HANDS

After HET comes TET, which represented a snake in the Proto-Canaanite alphabet. Maybe the Phoenicians set aside the snake imagery – perhaps even the snake letter entirely – and instead introduced a different TET: the Egyptian hieroglyph TET 'hand'. Gesenius' 19th century dictionary says the name of the letter is uncertain and considers three possibilities, the last one being: '...or perhaps it is Egypt. *tôt*, hand' [sic: *tôt*, not *tet*].

The two following Phoenician letters pertain to the arm/hand and palm of the hand, and if we assume that the Egyptian hieroglyph ṬET ‘hand’ was brought into the Phoenician alphabet as is, we would see three successive characters pertaining to either the arm or hand: ṬET (hand), YOD (arm, hand), KAPH (palm of hand). Why is the hand/arm so important? Because it holds and wields the weapons. Cf. *The Odyssey*, e.g. book 2, line 10 in reference to Telemachos proudly going to address the Ithacan assembly:

palamē d' exe xalkeon egxos
‘in his hand he held a bronze spear.’

The same sentence is also spoken in reference to Athena (book 1, line 104) who has come to Telemachos in the form of Mentēs, leader of the Taphians and an old family friend of Odysseus.

And why three? Because three (vs. the dual two) indicates plurality, i.e., a lot of something. I.e., we see here the defense of the property by a large number of people.

With respect to plurality, I note the following passage from Google:
‘However, war was not to be avoided. The image of a king slaughtering foreigners was constantly repeated throughout ancient history. Many wooden models were found portraying marching soldiers. Egyptians referred to their enemies as the “Nine Bows.” The figure nine represented three times three, which the ancient Egyptians considered the Plurality of Pluralities,” symbolizing all possible enemies.’

I am here interested only in the role of ‘three’ for indicating ‘plurality.’

OX GOAD

After K comes L (from an ox goad), for which I had no explanation in Cohen 2009, other than its being something held in the hand. Why was an ox-goad selected (other than for its starting with the sound /l/: *lamed*), and why was it placed after the letter K?

In Cohen 2012 I suggested a possibility. A Nov. 7, 2011 article about Frederick the Great in the German magazine *Spiegel* says:

‘[The Prussian infantry is] a relentless killing machine, which is held together by a fear of death. Because under the Prussian drill the common soldier fears his officer more than the enemy.’

That brief passage is a reminder that not all men who go into battle do so willingly. They may need to be prodded, at least sometimes by a fear of death from their own officers. The key notion here is ‘prodding.’

And that seems entirely appropriate in the alphabet. As I suggest above, we see the first four letters deriving from property (A, B, G, D), then ‘lots and lots’ (letter H; taken from an Egyptian hieroglyph), then the weapon of shock and awe of ancient times (the hooked sword; hence: letter denoting a hook followed by letter denoting a weapon), followed by three letters denoting a hand or arm.

Then comes the ox goad – to prod all those armed men into battle.

WATER AND FISH

Then come water (the waves seem to indicate the water of the sea/ocean) and fish. That part seems fairly clear. What isn’t clear is the interpretation, and I see two possibilities:

- 1) ‘Fish’ implies great numbers, and ‘water’ (the ocean) implies vastness. These concepts come almost directly after the three hands indicating lots of people doing the defending. The fish (for great numbers) and the ocean/sea water (for vastness) may reinforce the idea of ‘lots of defenders.’
- 2) However, in light of what I believe is about to follow in the alphabet (defense against an actual attack), the water may directly represent the sea, with the fish being numerous attackers. We would deal here with a sudden, unexpected attack on the sea. Cf. p. 5 above, where the Egyptians refer to their enemies with the Pluralities of Pluralities (the number nine, in ‘Nine Bows’). For the Phoenicians, NUN (fish)

might also have represented a sort of plurality of pluralities with respect to their enemies.

SUPPORT, PROP (LETTER *SAMEKH*)

In an earlier version of this working paper (Cohen 2013) I was totally mystified by the Phoenician/ Old Hebrew letter *samekh* ‘support, prop’: 𐤌, in existence already ca. 800 BCE. It immediately follows M and N (*mem*, *nun* = water, fish) and immediately precedes four terms pertaining to the head: ‘*ayin* (eye), *peh* (mouth), *qoph* (back of head), *resh* (head). But why does *samekh* appear here? It seems to have nothing to do with either group of letters.

For a possible explanation, let’s start with a summary view of Hebrew *SAMEKH*, presented on the website ‘Balashon – Hebrew Language Detective’ (Nov. 29, 2006):

‘The fifteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet is *samech* (or *samekh*). There is some debate as to the origin of the name. Klein says it comes from the word 𐤌𐤍 and means “support, fulcrum”. E-hebrew suggests “spine” from the same Hebrew root, David Sacks [G. Cohen: where?] suggests “pillar”, while others say that root meant “peg, spike”. Another theory is that the letter is similar to the shape of a fish, and therefore it is related to the Arabic *samak*, meaning “fish” (the Hebrew word for trout 𐤌𐤍𐤅 - *shemech* - is related to this Arabic word.)

‘Another confusing aspect of *samech* is which Greek and Latin letters came from it. Sacks writes that for the letter *sigma* the Greeks took the sound of “s” from *samech* and the Greek styling of the name, but the shape and placement of the letter in the alphabet (#21) was borrowed from *shin*. From *sigma*, we get the Latin letter “S”. On the other hand, some theories claim that the Greek letter *chi*, which led to the Latin letter “X”, came from the shape of the Hebrew *samech*. As the shape of the letters evolved in each alphabet, we have the Hebrew version currently looking like a circle, and the Latin version as X. Kind of like tic-tac-toe, no?

‘The verb סמך has a number of meanings: “to support, sustain, uphold”, “to lay (hands on), lean”, “to draw near, approach”. From the sense of “lay hands on” we get the concept of *semicha* - סמיכה - Rabbinic ordination, derived from the method of transfer of authority.

‘The Hebrew word for blanket - שמירה- *semicha*, also derives from the root סמך meaning “to support”. It appears once in the Tanach - Shoftim 4:18. The commentaries disagree as to the meaning there - some say it was a kind of blanket, others an article of clothing. Stahl says that it might have been so called because the garment was thick, and therefore is related to the Hebrew word for “dense, thick” - סמיך *samich*. This also goes back to סמך – something dense is pressed on, drawn close together.

‘*Samech* alternates with *sin*, particularly in Aramaic (כנס כוש), as well as with *zayin* and *tzade* (אסר אזר אצר). Steinberg claims it can also change with *tav* - as in תמך סמך .’

SAMEKH: THE ‘PILLAR’ SUGGESTION

‘Pillar’ is one of the possibilities mentioned in Balashon’s column quoted above; cf. also <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samekh> :

‘*Samekh* -- The Phoenician letter may continue a glyph from the Middle Bronze Age alphabets, either based on a hieroglyph for a tent peg or support, possibly the *djed* “pillar” hieroglyph.’

(The reference is Betrò (1996: 209), but her discussion of *djed* does not mention *samekh*.)

So if we do deal with a pillar, it is likely not just an ordinary one but rather the *djed*, an ancient Egyptian symbol meaning ‘stability’ and the symbolic backbone of the god Osiris. A picture (reproduced just below, p. 9) is presented at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Djed>



Also in Betrò (1996: 209) we see at the top of the page:

Pilaster-djed



And at the bottom:





A djed-amulet found in Nefertari's Tomb. West Thebes, Valley Queens. Twentieth Dynasty. Turin, Egyptian Museum.

Of particular importance: In written portrayals of the *djed*, the four disks could be reduced to three or even just two lines; see Betrò's pictures above.

SPECULATIONS ON *SAMEKH*

I would begin by siding with the suggestion that the letter *samekh* derives from the Egyptian pillar known as a *djed*. The similarity of the letter to the pillar, with its protruding disks at the top, seems too striking to be a coincidence.

As for the letter's name *samekh*, let's bear in mind what happened with the Phoenician letter *bet*, which in its oldest attested form (i.e., in the Khirbet Qeiyafa ostrakon, 10th century B.C.E.) is . This letter likely derives from the Egyptian hieroglyph of a house (specifically, the floor plan): .

So with Phoenician *bet* we see a word whose *shape* comes from an Egyptian hieroglyph but whose *name* is Semitic. The same thing might have occurred with *samekh*; the shape seems to derive from an Egyptian hieroglyph (the *djed*), but the name (*samekh* 'prop, support') is Semitic. The initial consonant of *samekh* was then taken as the sound of the letter.

So far, so good. But why was the *djed* selected and why does it appear where it does in the alphabet? As mentioned above, *samekh* appears right after the letters *mem* (water) and *nun* (fish), with which it apparently has nothing in common, and right before four letters pertaining to the head 'ayin (eye), *peh* (mouth) *qoph* (back of head), *resh* (head), with which it apparently has nothing in common either.

SPECULATIVE REPLY TO WHY THE *DJED* WAS SELECTED

First, here is something which is not speculative: The *djed* was a very important religious symbol in ancient Egypt. Cf. Betrò (1996: 209):

'One thing is sure, however: from the beginning, the sign's meaning is to be found in the realm of religious symbolism. As a fetish, its cult rose at Memphis and was soon associated with an important ceremony known by the name "erection of the *djed*."

'It was celebrated in the course of the feasts honoring the god Ptah-Sokar, in allusion to his triumphal resurrection. Very early on, the

precocious assimilation of the Memphite necropolis's god of the dead with the god Osiris brought the ceremony into the Osirian ritual, *where it was interpreted as the triumph of the god over his enemies* [G. Cohen: my italics]. The association with Osiris progressively covered and absorbed the original connection with Ptah and Sokar, and finally became predominant. Beginning in the New Kingdom, the *djed* was commonly interpreted as the backbone of Osiris, and was venerated as one of the god's relics.'

Now back to speculation. Betrò's comment that the ceremony involving the *djed* 'was interpreted as the triumph of the god [Osiris] over his enemies' seems relevant to a speculation I advanced in Cohen 2013, viz., that the fish might represent attackers (on the sea) against the merchants. The early part of the alphabet represents property (ox, house, camel, tent flap/door, i.e., figuratively: dwelling), and as the alphabet proceeds, it will be necessary to defend one's property, both on land and sea.

Now, if the merchants were under attack from numerous enemies on the sea, the *djed* (connected with a ceremony interpreted as the triumph of the god Osiris over his enemies) would be an appropriate symbol to appear in the alphabet here. But the Semitic creators of the alphabet did not need a letter for /d/ (the first sound of *djed*); that sound was already rendered by *delet*. In any case, as mentioned above, a Semitic word (*samekh* = prop, support) was substituted for the Egyptian word *djed*, just as Semitic *bet* (house) was substituted for the Egyptian word *per* (house). And /s/ of *samekh* rendered the sound of the new letter.

Also, this *samekh* appears right after the letters which derive from the pictures of water and fish, and I therefore wonder if Semitic *samak* 'fish' might have played a role in *samekh* appearing where it does in the alphabet. Semitic *samak* appears in Arabic *samak* 'fish' and Hebrew *shemekh* 'trout,' and I assume the word existed already in Proto-Semitic.

And since the letter *nun* derives from the word for ‘fish,’ the logical place to put *samekh* might have seemed to be right after its synonym *nun*.

We may therefore deal with a three-stage development:

1. selection of the *djed* (a type of pillar) based on its importance in the Egyptian religion, specifically its involvement in a ceremony celebrating the triumph of the god Osiris over his enemies.
2. selection of *samekh* (‘prop, support’) as the Semitic name of the letter derived from the picture.
3. bringing the phonetically similar word for ‘fish’ into the picture and treating the letter *samekh* with this new meaning. This factor alone could account for *samekh* appearing where it does in the alphabet, but it could also be just a supporting factor (no pun intended). The original motivation might have come from *djed* (see point #1 just above), reinforced by Semitic *samak* ‘fish.’

Incidentally, for additional information on the *djed*, see the appendix to this article.

CONTINUING WITH THE ALPHABET: ‘EYE,’ ‘MOUTH,’ ‘BACK OF HEAD,’ THEN ‘HEAD’ AGAIN

Let’s skip for just a moment to the letter QOPH. This letter was a picture of the back of the head, and that in itself is striking. After QOPH comes ROSH ‘head,” so why do we have two heads? And why, of all things, the *back* of the head?

A few thoughts come to mind here:

1. When Joseph interpreted Pharaoh’s two dreams, he explained why the same message had been sent twice (Genesis 41:31-32):

‘And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous. And for that reason the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice.’

In other words, plurality can be used to indicate great significance.

2. This same idea probably underlies the use of three words for 'hand' earlier in the alphabet (assuming that TET really comes from the Egyptian hieroglyph of a hand).

3. German has an expression *auf Vordermann bringen* 'to straighten out (e.g., finances), get into ship-shape (budget, auto), get smb. to shape up, etc.'

Maybe *auf Vordermann bringen* has relevance for the two heads in the alphabet. I.e., we do not deal merely with two unconnected pictures of a head but with the heads of men lining up for battle. The man behind sees the back of the head of the man in front of him. I.e., the two heads are shorthand for battle rows. In the early part of the alphabet we see (I believe) property and its defense as the main motivators for the creation of the specific letters. But there we see only the preparation to defend. I suspect we now see an actual fight about to begin.

If the two heads do in fact represent men lining up for battle, I see a possible interpretation for two of the preceding letters: 'AYIN (eye) and PEH (mouth). A lookout (eye) spots danger. He shouts (mouth) a warning to his comrades. They then line up in a defensive battle order (two heads).

In between PEH and QOPH is TSADE (a fishhook). What's going on here? If we do deal with a defensive battle taking shape in the letter 'AYIN through ROSH, why is a fishhook introduced here? Well, if NUN (fish) is interpreted as the numerous enemies about to attack the merchants, the fishhook could be the instrument with which the fish are to be neutralized.

So the numerous enemy (NUN, fish) is spotted ('AYIN, eye), a cry of alarm is given (PEH, mouth), the weapons (TSADE, fishhook) to deal with the NUN are quickly gathered, and then the defenders are arranged in battle rows (QOPH, back of head; ROSH, head).

Incidentally, in Hebrew, the TS-D root can be used not only for 'fishhook' but for 'fortress' (*mə-tsud-ah*). 'Fortress' would certainly be relevant to a defensive battle; perhaps this meaning played a role here.

TOOTH

After ROSH comes SHIN (tooth). If in fact the preceding letters indicate men lining up for battle, SHIN might represent the fury of the battle. I think of two wild animals with teeth bared, snarling and biting. Cf. also English 'fight tooth and nail.'

MARK (LAST LETTER)

The last letter of the alphabet, TAU, is known to mean a 'mark.' This makes sense if we assume the mark referred to is the mark on a tree at which someone practices shooting an arrow or hurling a lance. The arrow or lance comes to rest in the mark, which represents the successful end of the flight of the missile. Hence: END.

But perhaps we can go a step further. If the merchants/traders – with their direct interest in property and its defense – played an important role in ordering the letters of the alphabet, TAU might indicate not merely the end of the alphabet but the end of a successful business journey. I.e., 'We made it!'

Reciting or writing the alphabet was therefore perhaps a shorthand high-adventure story, one with a happy ending. But perhaps it was even more. The ancient abecedaries (i.e., ABC's) have thus far been interpreted as representing merely someone's practicing how to write the letters. That interpretation might or might not be correct. Maybe we need a handwriting expert to determine whether the letters scratched out represent the writing of a rank beginner or a skilled writer.

Meanwhile I suspect that at least occasionally, the people who first wrote out the letters in alphabetical order were not merely practicing but

were in effect arranging the letters as a sort of good-luck charm for the success of the journey. I.e., we may deal with a sort of prayer. And if that is the case, the inscribing of the abecedary might represent not the work of a rank beginner but the craftsmanship of the most experienced scribe in the merchant community.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX TO THE LETTER *SAMAKH*: MORE ON THE *DJED*

Betrò (1996: 209) contains very interesting information on the *djed*, and the following quotes from her article supplement what I have already quoted from it:

*‘Ideogram in dd, name of the fetish sacred to Osiris.
From this it draws the phonetic value dd in the verb ddi,
“to be stable, last.”*

*‘The hieroglyph represents the *djed*-fetish, which as a symbol played a large role in Egyptian religion. It also assumed the form of an amulet, which became very commonly worn because of the idea of longevity and stability which the homophone verb *ddi* brought to it. The sign’s exact nature is debated, but its antiquity has been proven by an ivory pilaster discovered in an archaic tomb at Heluan (near Cairo).*


‘The most ancient interpretations saw it as a column imitating a group of stalks cut and tied together, or a trimmed plant. A more recent variant on the first hypothesis, proposed by the German Egyptologist Helck, sees it as a stack of grain in which the short spikes were tied in different parallel levels. According to this theory, the fetish was connected to agricultural rites, attempting to capture the favor of the mysterious powers that presided over the growth of grain.




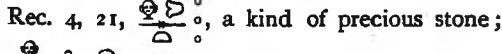
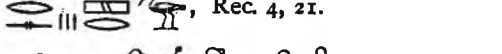
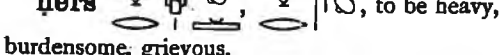
‘However, this hypothesis does not agree with the color of the signs in the examples from the Old Kingdom; the upper part of the *djed* is generally green or red, while the body can be black, white, yellow, or red and sometimes even green. This chromatic convention suggests that the upper part of the fetish represented the branches of a deciduous tree tied together or the stems of canes...

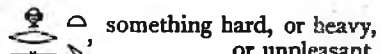
‘The sarcophagi of the New Kingdom often show a *djed*-pilaster painted in the lower part, just where the back of the deceased would rest. Because of its symbolic value, the hieroglyph appears often in scenes and texts associated with the knot of Isis or with the sign of *uas*-scepter, signifying the undying stability of power.’

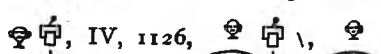
APPENDIX #2: EGYPTIAN AND PHOENICIAN WRITING
(See below, pp. 17-19)




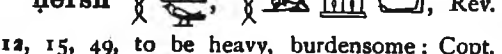
Here now are a few photocopies. The first two (on HĒH and TET are from E. Wallis Budge: *An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary*, pp. 507, 864), and the third is from a book whose title and author I no longer remember.


hērs-t , necklace of beads, beads.

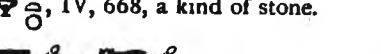
hērsēt , Rec. 26, 75, 
,
,
, a kind of precious stone;
, Rec. 4, 21.

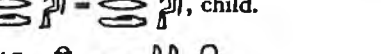
hērs , to be heavy, burdensome, grievous.

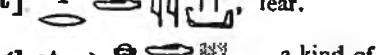
hērs-t , something hard, or heavy, or unpleasant.

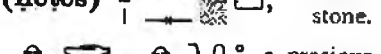
hērsa  IV, 1126,  \, 
, hornless ox.

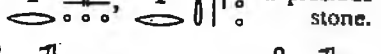
hērsḥ  Rev. 12, 15, 49, to be heavy, burdensome; Copt. $\epsilon\rho\omega\upsilon$, $\epsilon\rho\omega\upsilon$.

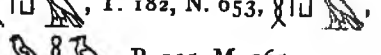

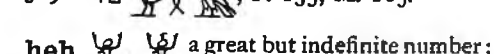
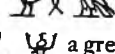
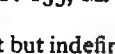
hērtt  IV, 668, a kind of stone.

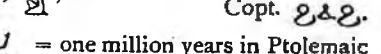
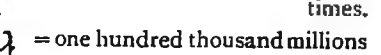

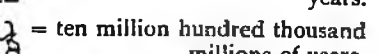
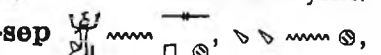
hērt , child.

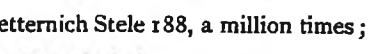
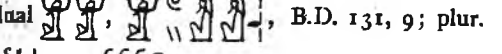

hērti-[t] , fear.

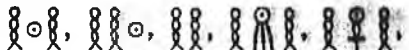
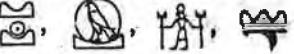
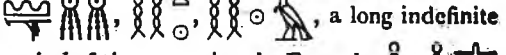
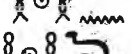
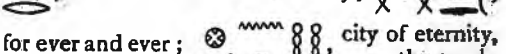
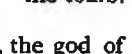

hērtēs (hētēs) , a kind of stone.

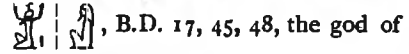
hērtēs , a precious stone.

hēha  T. 182, N. 653, 
P. 529 =    P. 135, M. 165.

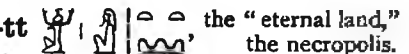
hēh  a great but indefinite number;
Copt. $\epsilon\delta\epsilon$.
 = one million years in Ptolemaic times.
 = one hundred thousand millions of years.
 = ten millions of millions of years.
 = ten million hundred thousand millions of years.

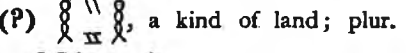

hēh-en-sep  Metternich Stele 188, a million times;
dual  B.D. 131, 9; plur.
 millions of years.

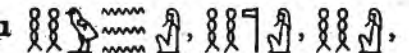
hēh  A.Z. 1908, 122, 
, a long indefinite period of time, eternity, the Eternal; 
, endless or limitless eternity; 
for ever and ever;  city of eternity, the tomb.

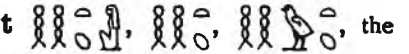

Hēh  B.D. 17, 45, 48, the god of hundreds of thousands of years.

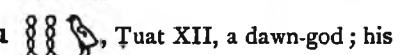

Hēh  Rec. 13, 29, the "eternal land," the necropolis.

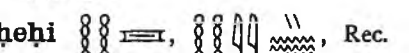
Hēh-tt  the "eternal land," the necropolis.

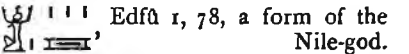
hēh (?)  a kind of land; plur. 

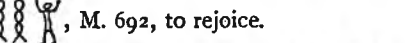
Hēhu  eternity, one of the four elemental gods of the company of Thoth.

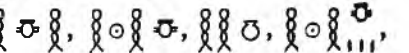
Hēhit  the consort of 

Hēhu  Tuat XII, a dawn-god; his consort was 

hēh, hēhi  Rec. 18, 165, the Nile-flood, Inundation.








Hēh  Edfū 1, 78, a form of the Nile-god.

hēh  M. 692, to rejoice.





















hēh  oil, unguent.





45



ṭ , = Heb. ṭ and ט; Copt. Ṭ.

ṭ , U. 373, P. 434, to give, to set, to place; , U. 61, N. 314;  |, P. 176, 364;  | |, P. 176, M. 316, N. 383, Rec. 31, 167;  | |   to lay oneself flat on the belly in homage.








ṭu (P)  |, sandals; Copt. ṬOOTE.



ṭe-t (P)  |,  |,  |,  |, the hand; perhaps to be read ṭer-t for  ; dual  |, P. 630,  |, N. 1371, Hh. 439,  |, N. 1043,  |, A.Z. 1908, 116,  |,  |,  |; plur.  |, P. 204, T. 385,  |, Metternich Stele 24, 25,  |,  |,  |,  |; ṭe-t áab-t  |, Nástasen Stele 9, the left hand.






ṭeṭ-t-k áb-k     |, P. 83, M.

113, thy heart's desire; var.  |,  |, N. 27.


ṭe-t   |, IV, 659, the hands cut off from slain enemies.

ṭe-ut  |,  |,  |,  |,  |, Rec. 26, 66, a gang of five labourers or slaves; var.  |,  |,  |.

Ṭe-t Amen  |  |, Ṭuat X, the colossal right hand that grasps the chain whereby Áapep is fettered.

Ṭe-t ent Ást, etc.  |,  |,  |,  |, B.D. 99, 21, 153A, 8: (1) the opening in the net of the Akeru-gods; (2) the  of the net, B.D. 153A, 21; (3) a part of the magical boat.

ṭe-t setem  |  |  |, Rec. 17, 146, servant.

ṭe-t (P)  |, hand, i.e., the trunk of an elephant.



SCHRIFTTAFEL

		Altkaram um 1800 v. Chr.	Phoenizisch 10. Jh. v. Chr. ?	Hebräisch um 950 v. Chr.	Syrisch 10. Jh. v. Chr. ?	Arabisch um 925 v. Chr.	Äthiopisch 6. bis 10. Jh. v. Chr.	Stalpäal I und 'Abdo um 910 v. Chr.	Alle Zyprisch 10. bis 9. Jh. v. Chr.	Nora 9. Jh. v. Chr.	Kilamuwa I und II um 810 v. Chr.	Limasol 8. Jh. v. Chr. ?	Karatepe 8. Jh. v. Chr. ?	Küsten von Ur 7. Jh. v. Chr.	Häranbeyle 7. Jh. v. Chr. ?	Tpamboul um 650 v. Chr.
א	א	ככככ	כ	ככככ	כ	כ	כ	ככככ	כ	כ	ככככ	ככ	כ	כ	כ	ככככ
ב	ב	גגגג	ג	גגגג	ג	גג	ג	גגגג	ג	ג	גג	ג	גגגג	גג	ג	גג
ג	ג	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד
ד	ד	הההה	ה	הההה	ה	ה	ה	הההה	ה	ה	הה	ה	הההה	הה	ה	הה
ה	ה	ווווו	ו	וווווו	ו	ו	ו	וווווו	ו	ו	וו	ו	וווווו	וו	ו	וו
ו	ו	זזזז	ז	זזזז	ז	ז	ז	זזזז	ז	ז	זז	ז	זזזז	זז	ז	זז
ז	ז	חחחח	ח	חחחח	ח	ח	ח	חחחח	ח	ח	חח	ח	חחחח	חח	ח	חח
ח	ח	טטטט	ט	טטטט	ט	ט	ט	טטטט	ט	ט	טט	ט	טטטט	טט	ט	טט
ט	ט	ייייי	י	ייייי	י	י	י	ייייי	י	י	יי	י	ייייי	יי	י	יי
י	י	ככככ	כ	ככככ	כ	כ	כ	ככככ	כ	כ	ככ	כ	ככככ	ככ	כ	ככ
כ	כ	לללל	ל	לללל	ל	ל	ל	לללל	ל	ל	לל	ל	לללל	לל	ל	לל
ל	ל	ממממ	מ	ממממ	מ	מ	מ	ממממ	מ	מ	ממ	מ	ממממ	ממ	מ	ממ
מ	מ	ננננ	נ	ננננ	נ	נ	נ	ננננ	נ	נ	ננ	נ	ננננ	ננ	נ	ננ
נ	נ	סססס	ס	סססס	ס	ס	ס	סססס	ס	ס	סס	ס	סססס	סס	ס	סס
ס	ס	עעעע	ע	עעעע	ע	ע	ע	עעעע	ע	ע	עע	ע	עעעע	עע	ע	עע
ע	ע	פפפפ	פ	פפפפ	פ	פ	פ	פפפפ	פ	פ	פפ	פ	פפפפ	פפ	פ	פפ
פ	פ	צצצצ	צ	צצצצ	צ	צ	צ	צצצצ	צ	צ	צצ	צ	צצצצ	צצ	צ	צצ
צ	צ	קקקק	ק	קקקק	ק	ק	ק	קקקק	ק	ק	קק	ק	קקקק	קק	ק	קק
ק	ק	רררר	ר	רררר	ר	ר	ר	רררר	ר	ר	רר	ר	רררר	רר	ר	רר
ר	ר	שששש	ש	שששש	ש	ש	ש	שששש	ש	ש	שש	ש	שששש	שש	ש	שש
ש	ש	תתתת	ת	תתתת	ת	ת	ת	תתתת	ת	ת	תת	ת	תתתת	תת	ת	תת

Zeichnung 1 von H. Zausen, Leipzig

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

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http://www.balashon.com/2006_11_01_archive.html
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- _____ 2012. Origin of the alphabet: two contributions: Phoenician ‘L’ (Why ox-goat? Why after ‘K’?) and possible rationale for letter ‘U’ () in Linear B. *Comments on Etymology*, vol. 41, #5, Feb. 2012, pp. 5-7.
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- Gesenius, Wilhelm 1846. *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*. Translated with additions and corrections from the author’s thesaurus and other works, by Samuel Prideaux Tregelles. London: Bagster. --- Page 575: ‘*Samekh*... The name of this letter, , denotes a *prop, support*.’

- Hooker, J. T. 1979. *The Origin of the Linear B Script*. Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca. – Hooker addresses several issues (How/why/when/where was the script created? See p. 14 of his book) but does not give the origin of the individual letters.
- Klein, Ernest 1987. *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language For Readers of English*. U. of Haifa: Carta Jerusalem. p. 432: ‘The name of the letter, “*Samekh*,” probably derives from ךסמ and literally means “support, fulcrum,” so called in allusion to its ancient Hebrew form.’
- Lynch, Jack 2021. Review of Judith Flanders’ *A Place For Everything. The Curious History of Alphabetical Order* (NY Dover, 2020). in: *Dictionaries* (Journal of the Dictionary Society of North America), vol. 42, #1, pp. 281-285.
- ‘Medieval Knight’ [sic, online *nom de plume*], Nov. 7, 2019. The Khopesh – An Egyptian Sickle-Sword <https://swordscholar.com/the-khopesh-an-egyptian-sickle-sword/>
Excerpt: ‘Appearance and Features of the Khopesh’
‘A regular Khopesh is 50 to 60 centimeters long but there are much smaller samples to this. Plus, the blunt edge of its tip worked as an efficient bludgeon and hook. ...
‘The sword has a curved blade where its cutting edge usually appears on the convex edge of the sword. It has a sickle-like shape so part of the blade that’s opposite the grip has a small hook. ...’
- Sacks, David 2003. *Letter Perfect*. New York: Broadway Books. This is a paperback reprint of the hardcopy edition *Language Visible* (2003; Broadway Books). Balashon says David Sacks suggests the derivation of *samekh* from ‘pillar,’ but I do not find this suggestion in the pages where Sacks discusses the letter (293ff.).
- Spiegel*, Nov. 7, 2011, pp. 72-83 (article title): Der Kleine König.
[pp. 79-80]: ‘...Den Sieg jedenfalls verdankt Friedrich nicht seinem Genius, sondern der preußischen Infanterie. Mann neben Mann, gestaffelt in drei Reihen, rücken die Soldaten vor wie eine Mauer, 90 Schritt pro Minute, wie Historiker [Christopher] Clark schreibt. Marschieren, laden, feuern, alles klappt mit großer Präzision. Geht es mit Bajonetten gegen den Feind, verlangsamten die Männer auf 70

Schritte. Eine unerbittliche Tötungsmaschine, die ihrerseits durch Todesfurcht zusammengehalten wird. Denn unter dem preußischen Drill fürchtet der gemeinsame Soldat den Offizier mehr als der Feind.'

[Translation]: 'Frederick [the Great] does not owe his victory to genius but rather to the Prussian infantry. Man beside man, arranged in three rows, the soldiers move forward like a wall, 90 steps per minute, as historian [Christopher] Clark writes. March, load, fire, everything works with great precision. When bayonets are employed against the enemy, the men slow down to 70 steps. A relentless killing machine which is held together by a fear of death. Because under the Prussian drill the common soldier fears his officer more than the enemy.'

Ventris, M. and Chadwick 1953. Evidence for Greek dialect in the Mycenaean Archives. *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 73.84-103 . --

p. 86: Experimental syllabic grid, with f^{f} = u

Wieger, L. 1965. *Chinese Characters*. [subtitle]: *Their Origin, Etymology, History, Classification and Signification. A Thorough Study From Chinese Documents*. Reprint of 2nd edition. NY: Dover.