

The virtue of listening in ancient Egypt*

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Abstract

Listening was considered one of the moral behavioral attitudes and important aspects of human relations and concepts of virtue in ancient Egypt. The virtue of listening was amply formulated in didactic literature (instructions and teachings) as well as in some tales and in autobiographies mentioning the good character traits. Subject of the study are textual examples illustrating the ‘praise’ of listening, advices to listen, positive consequences of good listening, negative consequences of not listening, consequences of both listening and/or not listening and expressing the attentiveness of the listener as a good character with the effects of acquiring good listening attitudes on attaining rectitude in listening and in speech.

In Egyptian contexts the valued morals that were ascribed to the Egyptian were the ordinary decencies and common virtues.¹ Listening was considered one of the moral behavioral attitudes and important aspects of human relations and concepts of virtue. These included - among others - self-control, moderation, kindness, generosity, justice, truthfulness.²

* I am extremely grateful to Prof. James P. Allen for having revised this manuscript and for his valuable suggestions, and to Prof. Karl Jansen-Winkel for his significant comments.

¹ M. Lichtheim, *Moral values in ancient Egypt*, OBO 155 (1997), 88.

² J. Assmann, ‘Reden und Schweigen’, *LÄ V*, 195; H. Brunner, *Altägyptische Weisheit: Lehren für das Leben* (1988), 105.

Highly esteemed moral character traits were often gathered in the autobiographic self-praises in ancient Egypt.³ The virtue of listening was as well amply formulated in didactic literature (instructions and teachings) as well as in some tales and in autobiographies mentioning the good character traits. Some texts considered as ‘wisdom literature’ expressed a ‘praise’ of listening as in the instructions of Ptahhotep.⁴ The texts were considered an early form of ethics highlighting the positive and/or negative consequences of being or of not being a good listener.

The portrait of the good listener was frequently outlined and followed by a brief consequence of having been a possessor of that highly valued character. Attentive listening was elaborated with its beneficial effects⁵ as in pPrisse, 15, 8. The texts, especially teachings, tend to propel the good son to be a good listener through the repetition of the awaited recognition and ensured success.

The required listening attitude was as described by Brunner⁶: *‘Ein alle Lehren durchziehendes Stichwort ist “hören”. Immer wieder fordert der Lehrer in vielen Variationen auf, ihm zuzuhören, wobei das ägyptische Wort die deutschen Nuancen von “zuhören” bis “gehörchen” umfaßt’*. The portrayal of the listening attitude was expressed by Junge⁷ concerning the instruction of Ptahhotep *‘Dieses “Hinhören”, das die Lehre fordert, schließt wohl das Hören mit den Ohren ein, meint aber eine viel weitergehende, eine grundsätzliche Wachheit der Sinne und des Verstandes’*.

³ Lichtheim, *OBO* 155, 84.

⁴ G. Fecht, *Literarische Zeugnisse zur “persönlichen Frömmigkeit” in Ägypten : Analyse der Beispiele aus den ramessidischen Schulpapyri*, AHAW 1 (Heidelberg, 1965), 125.

⁵ F. Junge, *Die Lehre Ptahhoteps und die Tugenden der ägyptischen Welt*, *OBO* 193 (2003), 106.

⁶ Brunner, *Altägyptische Weisheit*, 27.

⁷ Junge, *OBO* 193, 101.

Requirements for acquiring such a good moral human conduct included a refined attitude towards petitioners as a sign of right judgment and attentive listening.

The teachings and instructions did not merely provide descriptions of values; they rather had the aim of educating young people to adopt them. In that sense they indicated to them the ‘path of life’ ‘*Weg des Lebens*’ as was pointed out by H. Brunner.⁸ Instructions and teachings hence had the role of transmitting the required behavioral attitudes through generations.⁹

Subject of the study are textual examples illustrating the virtue of listening categorized as follows:

1. Praising the virtue of listening
2. Advice to listen
3. Positive consequences of good listening
4. Negative consequences of not listening
5. Consequences of both listening and/or not listening
6. Expressing the attentiveness of the listener as a good character

1. Praising the virtue of listening

1.1. Papyrus Leningrad 1115. Shipwrecked sailor, 182.

⁸ Brunner, *Altägyptische Weisheit*, 24.

⁹ The father in that sense is a representative of the instructors while the son symbolizes the recipients of knowledge. See Junge, *OBO* 193, 107.



mk nfr sDm n rmT

Listening is good for people.¹¹

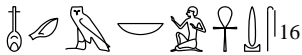
1.2. Papyrus Berlin 3024, 67. Dialogue of a man with his *ba*.



sDm r.k¹³ n.i mk nfr sDm n rmT¹⁴

You should listen to me! Behold, listening is good for people.¹⁵

1.3. Berlin P 10016, Letter from Illahun.



Berlin P 10023 B, Letter from Illahun.

¹⁰ A. M. Blackman, *Middle-Egyptian Stories*, BAe 2 (Bruxelles, 1932) 47, 48.

¹¹ Cf. M. Malaise, J. Winand, *Grammaire raisonnée de l'égyptien classique*, *Aegyptiaca Leodiensia* 6 (1999), 74 'Écouter est utile pour les gens'; P. Grandet, B. Mathieu, *Cours d'égyptien hiéroglyphique II* (Paris, 1993), 65 'Vois, il est bon d'écouter les gens'; S. Quirke, *Egyptian literature 1800 BC : questions and readings*, *Egyptology* 2 (London, 2004), 75 'It is good to listen to people'.

¹² R.O. Faulkner, 'The man who was tired of life', *JEA* 42 (1956), 24.

¹³ Cf. H. Goedicke, *The report about the dispute of a man with his Ba : Papyrus Berlin 3024* (Baltimore, 1970), 129.

¹⁴ Goedicke, *The report about the dispute of a man with his Ba*, 129 nfr sDm n rmT seems an adage or a quotation from a wisdom text.

¹⁵ Quirke, *Egyptian literature*, 132 'Listen to me now. For listening is good for people'; W. Barta, *Das Gespräch eines Mannes mit seinem Ba : (Papyrus Berlin 3024)*, *MÄS* 18 (1969), 15. Cf. M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I* (London, 1973), 165 'Listen to me! It is good for people to listen'; Malaise, Winand, *Grammaire raisonnée de l'égyptien classique*, 307 'vois, il est bon d'écouter pour les hommes'; Faulkner, *JEA* 42, 27 'Listen to me; behold, it is good for men to hear'.

¹⁶ A. Scharff, 'Briefe aus Illahun', *ZÄS* 59 (1924), Berlin P 10016.



nfr sDm nb.i anx wDA snb

It is good that my lord listens.¹⁸

1.4. Papyrus Prisse, verso, 5, 7 - 5, 8. Instruction of Ptahhotep, 49.



.... m Axt¹⁹ n sDmt(y).fy

.... as something useful for him who will hear.²⁰

1.5. Papyrus Prisse, verso, 9, 6-7. Instruction of Ptahhotep, 275-276.



nn sprt.n.f nbt Hr.s m xprt(y).sn²¹

snaa-ib²² pw sDm²³ nfr

¹⁷ Scharff, ZÄS 59, Berlin P 10023 B.

¹⁸ Grandet, Mathieu, *Cours d'égyptien hiéroglyphique* II, 170 translates: 'Il est bon que mon seigneur entende'.

¹⁹ See Junge, *OBO* 193, 208, (49) Ax.t 'Herlichkeit; Nützlich, Gutes', here also 'Wirksamkeit', 'Wirkungshaltigkeit', 'Wirkungsträchtigkeit'.

²⁰ Junge, *OBO* 193, 189; Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* I, 63. Z. Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep* (Prague, 1956), 71.

²¹ K. Sethe, *Erläuterungen zum aegyptischen Lesestücken : Texte des Mittleren Reiches* (Leipzig, 1927), 52.

²² Snaa-ib 'beruhigen, lindern', 'ein Herzens-Glätten ist das gute Hören'. See Junge, *OBO* 193, 233, (276).

Not all he pleads for is what will happen, but good listening is what soothes the heart.²⁴

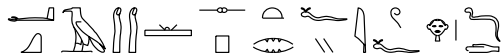
1.6. Papyrus Prisse, verso, 12, 13. Instruction of Ptahhotep, 414.



mk kA pw mrr sDm

Look, he is a ka who loves to listen.²⁶

1.7. Papyrus Prisse, verso, 15, 13 - 16, 2. Instruction of Ptahhotep, 529-531.



...aqA²⁷ spty.fy iw.f Hr Dd, irty.fy Hr mAA msDrwy.f twt(w) Hr
sDm Axt n sA.f

²³ Cf. Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 138, n. 275.

²⁴ Cf. Junge, *OBO* 193, 195; Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 83 ‘Même si tout ce qu’il a sollicité n’est pas susceptible d’arriver, c’est un apaisement de l’esprit que d’être bien écouté’; Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I*, 68, 17.

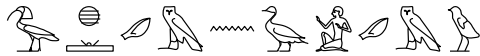
²⁵ E. Dévaud, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep d’après le papyrus 10371/10435 et 10509 au British Museum et la Tablette Carnarvon : Texte* (1916), 39.

²⁶ Junge, *OBO* 193, 199 ‘Denn sieh, wer das Hinhören wünscht/liebt (mrr), ist eine (wahre) Person/ein Selbst (kA)!; p. 246, (414). Cf. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I*, 71 ‘He is a ka who loves to listen’; Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 94 ‘Vois, c’est un caractère que celui qui aime l’obeissance’.

²⁷ *Wb I*, 233, 234; Junge, *OBO* 193, 259, (529) aqA ‘richtig, genau sein’, ‘rechtschaffen sein’, ‘richtig machen’, ‘etw. richtig benutzen’.

...so that his lips are accurate when speaking, his eyes when seeing, his ears are pleased when hearing what is effective for his son.²⁸

1.8. Papyrus Prisse, verso, 16, 3-5. Instruction of Ptahhotep, 534-542.



Ax sDm n sA sDmw

aq sDm m sDmw

xpr sDmw m sDmi

²⁸ Junge, *OBO* 193, 202 ‘so daß seine Lippen wahrhaftig sind, wenn er spricht; seine Augen sehen, seine Ohren sind darauf konzentriert zu hören, was wirkungsträchtig (Ax) ist für seinen Sohn’.

²⁹ Dévaud, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 46, 47; Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 58.

nfr sDm nfr mdt³⁰

sDmw nb Axt

Ax sDm n sDmw

nfr sDm r ntt nbt³¹

xpr mrwt nfrt

Useful is listening to a son (who is) a listener. When listening enters the listener, the listener becomes one listened to,³² good of listening and good of speaking, a listener who possesses what is useful. Useful is listening to the listener. Listening is better than all else, and perfect love comes about.³³

1.9. Papyrus Carlsberg 6; 5, 7. Instruction addressed to king Merikare, 135.

³⁰ Assmann, *LÄ V*, 200, n. 62 ‘Reden, das aus dem Zuhören kommt’ is to be compared with nfr sDm nfr mdt.

³¹ Junge, *OBO* 193, 259, (541).

³² Fecht, *Literarische Zeugnisse zur “Persönlichen Frömmigkeit*, 127 translates ‘wird der Hörende zum Verhörer (=Richter); thus considering that the hearer having become a listener is equivalent to having become ‘a judge’. H. Brunner, *Altägyptische Erziehung* (Wiesbaden, 1957), 132, highlighting the connection between listening and obeying ‘hören – gehorchen’, translates ‘so wird der Zuhörer zu einem Gehorsamen’.

³³ Junge, *OBO* 193, 202, 203 ‘Hinhören (sDm) ist wirkungsträchtig (Ax) für den Sohn, der hingehört (sDm.w) hat, weil hinhören eintritt in den, der hingehört hat, und aus den Hinhörenden jemand wird, auf den man hört, ist das Hinhören gut, ist auch das Sprechen gut. Wer hinhört ist Herr der Wirksamkeit (Ax.t): Hinhören, wahrnehmen (sDm) ist wirkungsträchtig/segensreich (Ax) für den, der hingehört hat – gut (nfr) ist das Hinhören in Hinsicht auf all das, was ist, und vollkommene Liebe (mrw.t nfr.t) entsteht(xpr)’. Cf. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I*, 74; Malaise; Winand, *Grammaire raisonnée de l’égyptien classique*, 434; Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 100, 101 ‘Il est utile d’écouter pour un fils qui entend. N’importe quoi qui est entendu pénètre dans celui qui écoute. Et celui qui écoute devient un homme obéissant. Celui qui est capable d’écouter est capable de parler. Et celui qui obéit est possesseur de quelque chose d’utile. Obéir est utile pour celui qui écoute; obéir est meilleur que tout ce qui existe (car il en) résulte la belle faveur’.



rmm.sn iw.f Hr sDm

When they weep he hears.³⁵

The text refers to mankind being heard by god.

2. Advice to listen

2.1. Papyrus Prisse, verso, 9, 3-4. Instruction of Ptahhotep, 264-265.



ir wnn.k m sSmy hr sDm.k³⁶ mdw sprw

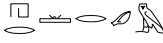
If you are a man who leads, be patient when you hear³⁷ the speech of one who pleads.

2.2. Papyrus Prisse, verso, 15, 11. Instruction of Ptahhotep, 519.



³⁴ A. Volten, *Zwei altägyptische politische Schriften. Die Lehre für König Merikarê (Pap. Carlsberg VI) und die Lehre des Königs Amenemhet*, *AnAe IV* (Kopenhagen, 1945), 75, C 5, 7.

³⁵ Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I*, 106.

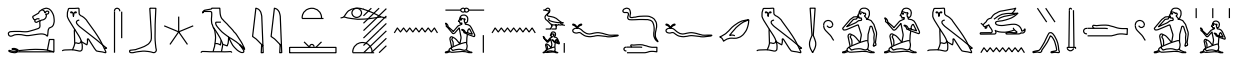
³⁶ Compare with  hr r sDm 'ready to listen', A. H. Gardiner, 'The autobiography of Rekhmirea', *ZÄS* 60 (1925), 73; *Urk. IV*, 1082. Cf. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I*, 68 'listen calmly'; Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 83 'sois tranquille'.

³⁷ Junge, *OBO* 193, 195 'sei geduldig wenn du die Rede eines Bittsteller anhörst', 232, (265).

nfr Dd n m-xt ntf sDm.f st

It is good to speak to posterity: that is what will hear it.³⁸

2.3. BM 10258 I, prologue. Teaching of a man for his son.



HAt-a m sbAyt irt.n s n sA.f Dd.f sDm xrw.i m wn mdw.i m fx ib.k
Hr Ddt.i n.k

Beginning of the teaching, made by a man for his son, he says: hear my voice, do not avoid my words, do not untie your heart from what I tell you.⁴⁰

2.4. BM 10258 I, § 1, 7. Teaching of a man for his son.



aq m mdt wbA sDm

Whoever enters into words, opens the way for hearing.⁴²

³⁸ Junge, *OBO* 193, 202; Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I*, 73. See Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 100 ‘Si ce que l’on dit à la prospérité est bon, elle l’entendra’.

³⁹ Fischer-Elfert, Hans-Werner, *Die Lehre eines Mannes für seinen Sohn : Eine Etappe auf dem “Gottesweg” des loyalen und solidarischen Beamten des Mittleren Reiches*, *ÄA* 60, (Wiesbaden, 1999), Titel, Prolog.

⁴⁰ Quirke, *Egyptian literature*, 102.

⁴¹ Fischer-Elfert, Hans-Werner, *ÄA* 60.

⁴² Quirke, *Egyptian literature*, 102, § 1.

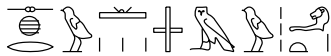
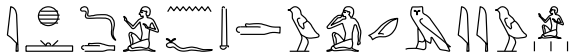
2.5. Papyrus Berlin 3025 B2, 108. Tale of the eloquent peasant, ninth petition.



ir n irr n.k m sDm n bw nb r.f

Act for one who would act for you. Do not listen to everyone around.⁴⁴

2.6. Papyrus Prisse, verso, 5, 3. Instruction of Ptahhotep, 30.



ix Dd.i n.f mdw sDmyw sXrw imyw HAt pAw sDm n nTrw

Then I will say to him the words of those who hear⁴⁶ and the advice of the ancestors, who once listened to the gods.⁴⁷

⁴³ R. B. Parkinson, *The tale of the Eloquent Peasant* (Oxford, 1991), 47, 1.

⁴⁴ Quirke, *Egyptian literature*, 164.

⁴⁵ Dévaud, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 17.

⁴⁶ Junge, *OBO* 193, 189 ‘Ich möchte zu diesem (< ihm) über die Worte derjenigen sprechen, denen zugehört worden ist, und über die Lebensweisen der Früheren, die noch auf die Götter gehört hatten’. Cf. Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 111, n. 30 ‘qui savent écouter’ signifie ici ‘qui savent obéir’; Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I*, 76, n. 4 ‘sDmyw those who heard’, or ‘the listeners’, often has the specific meaning ‘judges’. A. H. Gardiner, *ZÄS* 45 (1908-09), 76 translates ‘judges’.

⁴⁷ Cf. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I*, 63; Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 70 ‘de sorte que je puisse lui dire les paroles de ceux qui savent écouter’.

3. Positive consequences of good listening

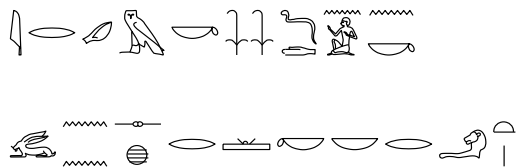
3.1. Papyrus Berlin 3024, 39. Dialogue of a man with his *ba*.



ir sDm n.i bA.i iwty btA twt ib.f Hna.i iw.f r mar

If my soul listens to me, as one without hidden thoughts, and its heart is one with me, it shall be successful.⁴⁹

3.2. Papyrus Prisse, verso, 15, 8. Instruction of Ptahhotep, 507.



ir sDm.k nn Dd.n.i n.k wnn sxr.k nb r HAt

If you hear this which I have said to you, all your affairs will go forward.⁵⁰

3.3. Papyrus Prisse, verso, 15, 11. Instruction of Ptahhotep, 518-519.



sDm.f st xpr.(w) m Hmww sDmw nfr Dd n m-xt⁵¹

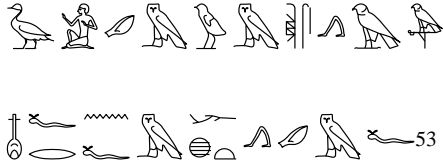
⁴⁸ Faulkner, *JEA* 42, 23, 39, 41.

⁴⁹ Quirke, *Egyptian literature*, 131, § 8. Cf. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I*, 165 ‘If my *ba* listens to me [without malice], its heart in accord with me, it shall be happy’. Barta, *MÄS* 18, 22 ‘Wenn auf mich hört mein Ba dessen Untat noch nicht existiert und sein Herz übereinstimmt mit mir so wird er glücklich sein’.

⁵⁰ Junge, *OBO* 193, 202; Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I*, 73; Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 99 ‘Si tu obéis à ces choses-là que je t’ai dites, tout ton dessein sera avancé’.

When he hears it, he becomes a craftsman, a perfect hearer who speaks to the future.⁵²

3.4. Papyrus Prisse, 17, 10. Instruction of Ptahhotep, 588-589.



sA sDmw m sSm @r⁵⁴

nfr n.f m xt sDm.f

A son (who is) a hearer is a follower of Horus. It is good for him after he hears.⁵⁵

3.5. Papyrus Prisse, 18, 9-10. Instruction of Ptahhotep, 613-614.



sDm r.k mr.k smn.t(w).k m r n sDmyw

Listen, if you want to be set in the mouth of the hearers.⁵⁶

3.6. Papyrus Louvre E4864, § 8. Loyalist Teaching.

⁵¹ Junge, *OBO* 193, 258, (518).

⁵² Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I*, 73. Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 100 ‘De sorte qu’elle écoute et qu’(elle) devienne un artiste qui sait écouter’.

⁵³ Dévaud, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 49.

⁵⁴ Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 166, n. 588. E. Otto, ‘Bildung und Ausbildung im alten Ägypten’, *ZÄS* 81 (1956), 44 translates ‘Ein Sohn, der hört, ist ein Horus-diener (d. h. ein rechter Diener des Königs)’.

⁵⁵ Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I*, 75. Junge, *OBO* 193, 204 ‘Der Sohn, der hinhört, ist ‘Gefolgsmann des Horus’. Das Gute (nfr) gehört ihm, wenn er hingehört hat’. Cf. Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 103.

⁵⁶ Junge, *OBO* 193, 204, 264 (615); Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I*, 75. Cf. Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 104, n. 615 ‘Parle (seulement) quand tu as pénétré dans la nature réelle de l’artiste’.

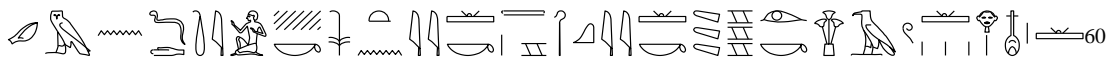


iw sA sDmw r iwty Dwt.f

A son (who is) a hearer will be without any evils.⁵⁸

The use of the translation ‘obéissant’ for sDmw by Posener⁵⁹ indicates that the good listening and the good behavior of the son were associated together.

3.7. Millingen papyrus 1, 2-3. Teaching of king Amenemhat I



sDm n Dd.ti.i [n].k nsy.k tA HqAy.k idbw ir.k HAw Hr nfr

Listen to what I tell you that you may be king of earth, that you may rule the river-banks and achieve in excess of perfection.⁶¹

3.8. Papyrus Sallier II, 10, 8-9. Instruction of _wA-xty (satire of trades).



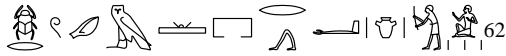
⁵⁷ G. Posener, *L'enseignement loyaliste. Sagesse égyptienne du Moyen Empire*, Centre de Recherches d'Histoire et de Philologie de la IV^e Section de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études (Genève, 1976), 107, § 8, PL.

⁵⁸ Quirke, *Egyptian literature*, 110, § 8.

⁵⁹ Posener, *L'enseignement loyaliste*, 34.

⁶⁰ Griffith, ‘The Millingen papyrus (teaching of Amenemhat)’, *ZÄS* 34 (1896), 39; W. Helck, *Der text der Lehre Amenemhats I. für seinen Sohn* (Wiesbaden, 1969), 10-11.

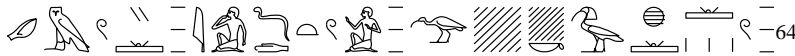
⁶¹ Quirke, *Egyptian literature*, 127, § 1. R. Tavares, *Eine königliche Weisheitslehre? : exegetische Analyse von Sprüche 28 - 29 und Vergleich mit den ägyptischen Lehren Merikaras und Amenemhats*, *OBO* 234 (2007), 188 highlights the indispensable attitude of listening to the father’s instructions in the education of the king. Listening is here politically motivated, and the father is the mediator of wisdom.



mAA.n tw sSw (Hr) sDm (s)xpr sDm pr-a {ib}

When the scribes have seen you listening, listening will produce action.⁶³

3.9. Papyrus Kairo CG 58042 (pBoulaq 4) 15, 11. Instructions of Ani.



sDm iDdt.i gmi.k Ax.w

Hear what I tell you, and you will find them useful.⁶⁵

4. Negative consequences of not listening

4.1. Papyrus Berlin 3024, 83-84. Dialogue of a man with his *ba*.



Hmt.f Hr SsA n.f n sDm.n.f n.s

His wife pleads with him, he cannot hear her.⁶⁶

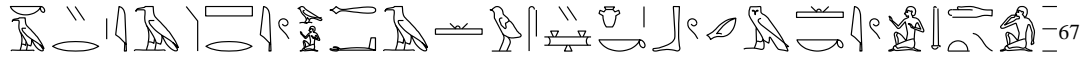
⁶² H. Brunner, *Die Lehre des Cheti : Sohnes des Duauf*, ÄF 13 (1944), 201-202; W. Helck, *Die Lehre des _wA-#tjj II*, KÄT 3 (1970), 142.

⁶³ Cf. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I*, 191.

⁶⁴ J. F. Quack, *Die Lehren des Ani: ein neuägyptischer Weisheitstext in seinem kulturellen Umfeld*, OBO 141 (1994), Ani B, 282.

⁶⁵ Quack, *OBO 141*, 86 ‘Höre auf das, was ich dir sage, damit du es nützlich findest.’

4.2. Papyrus Lansing, 2, 3-4. Letter - a scribe's advice to an unwilling pupil.



kri Sri⁶⁸ aA.wsi ib.k⁶⁹ bw sDm.k iw.i mdt

Young fellow, how conceited you are! You do not hear when I speak.⁷⁰

4.3. Papyrus Prisse, 17, 4-5. Instruction of Ptahhotep, 575-577.



ir wxA iwt(y) sDm.f

nn ir.n.f xt nbt

mA.f rx m xm

⁶⁶ Quirke, *Egyptian literature*, 132. Cf. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I*, 166 'His wife beseeches him and he does not listen to her'; Barta, *MÄS* 18, 25 'Seine Frau ist kundig über ihn, er hörte niemals auf sie'.

⁶⁷ F. Junge, *Einführung in die Grammatik des Neuägyptischen* (Wiesbaden, 1996), 123.

⁶⁸ R. Caminos, *Late-Egyptian miscellanies*, *Brown egyptological studies* 1 (1954), 378, n. 2, 3 the literal meaning of kri Sri might have been 'young Nubian', but the phrase came to signify 'youngster, young fellow'.

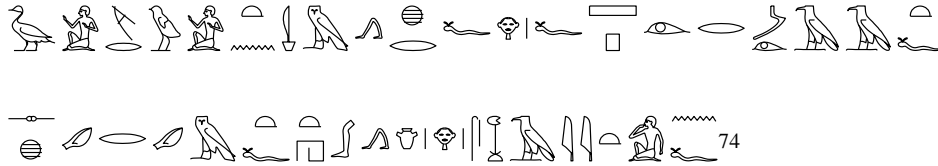
⁶⁹ For aA ib Wb I, 162, 10. For the translation 'conceited' Caminos, *Late-Egyptian miscellanies*, 378, n. 2, 4.

⁷⁰ Caminos, *Late-Egyptian miscellanies*, 377; cf. Junge, *Einführung in die Grammatik des Neuägyptischen*, 123 'Junger Mann, was bist du überheblich! Du hörst einfach nicht zu, wenn Ich spreche'; H. Brunner, *Das hörende Herz : Kleine Schriften zur Religions- und Geistesgeschichte Ägyptens*, OBO 80 (1988), 15. Cf. Chester Beatty IV, pl. 18, verso, 2, 13.

⁷¹ Dévaud, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 48-49.

The fool who does not hear, he can do nothing at all;⁷² he will see knowledge as ignorance.⁷³

4.4. Papyrus Berlin 3025 B1, 218-220. Tale of the Eloquent Peasant, third petition.



sA mrw tnm xr.f Hr.f Sp r mAAt.f sxr r sDmt.f th-ib Hr sxAyt n.f

The son of Meru must go astray, his face blind to what he sees, deaf to what he hears, unheeding of what he has been reminded of.⁷⁵

4.5. Papyrus Berlin 3025 B2, 113-114. Tale of the Eloquent Peasant, ninth petition.



mk wi Hr spr n.k n sDm.n.k st

Look I am pleading to you, and you do not hear it.⁷⁷

5. Consequences of both listening and/or not listening

⁷² Junge, *OBO* 193, 261 (576) also proposes ‘so gibt es keinen, der etw. Auf ihn gäbe’.

⁷³ Cf. Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 102.

⁷⁴ Parkinson, *The tale of the Eloquent Peasant*, 31, 9, 10.

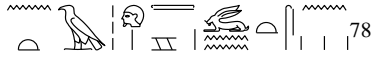
⁷⁵ Cf. Quirke, *Egyptian literature*, 159.

⁷⁶ Parkinson, *The tale of the Eloquent Peasant*, 47, 7.

⁷⁷ See Quirke, *Egyptian literature*, 164.

5.1. Papyrus Prisse, 16, 6-13. Instruction of Ptahhotep, 545-563.





mrrw nTr pw sDm⁷⁹

n sDm.n msddw nTr⁸⁰

in ib⁸¹ sxpr nb.f

m sDm m tm sDm⁸²

anx wDA snb⁸³ n-s ib.f

in sDm.w sDm Dd

mrr sDm pw irr Ddwt

nfr.wy sDm sA n it.f⁸⁴

rS Dddy n.f nn

sA an.f m nb sDm

⁷⁸ Dévaud, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 47, 48.

⁷⁹ Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 101 ‘C’est un homme que le dieu aime que celui qui obéit; celui que le dieu hait n’obéit pas’; i.e. sDm is considered to mean ‘obey’.

⁸⁰ The consequence of being a listener due to the positive relationship to god and its negative opposite are discussed by Fecht, *Literarische Zeugnisse zur “persönlichen Frömmigkeit” in Ägypten*, 128, 129.

⁸¹ According to Fecht, *Literarische Zeugnisse zur “persönlichen Frömmigkeit” in Ägypten*, 129 the heart is responsible of leading someone to be a listener or a non-listener; probably to be interpreted as the intention.

⁸² mrrw nTr and msddw nTr are relative forms. See Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 164, n. 545-546 ‘on peut expliquer que le dieu doue celui qu’il aime de la faculté de bien écouter (ou d’obéir), mais qu’il en prive celui qu’il hait.’

⁸³ Also is here the positive consequence of the right behavior highlighted. See Junge, *OBO* 193, 259 (552).

⁸⁴ sDm n ‘jmdm. Gehorchen; auf jmdn. Hören’, Junge, *OBO* 193, 260 (556).

sDmw Ddw n.f st

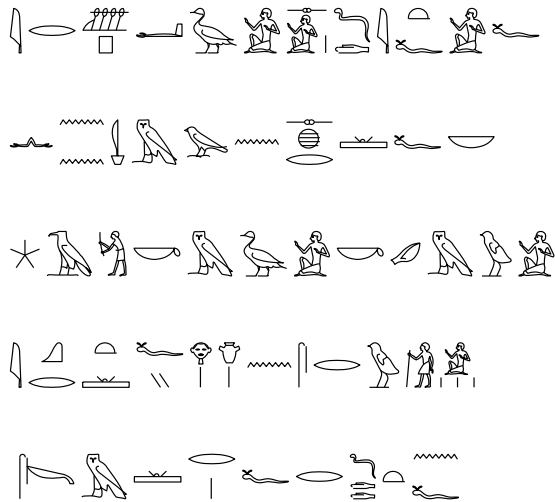
mnx.f m Xt imAxy xr it.f

iw sxA.f m r n anxw

ntyw tp tA wnn.t(y).sn

He who hears is beloved of god, he whom god hates cannot hear. It is the heart that makes of its owner a hearer or non-hearer. Man's heart is his life-prosperity-health! The hearer is one who hears what is said.⁸⁵ He who loves to hear is one who does what is said. How good that a son listens to his father, how happy is he to whom this is said: 'The son, he pleases⁸⁶ as a master of hearing.' The hearer to whom it is said, he is well-endowed and honored by his father. His remembrance is in the mouth of the living, those on earth and those who will be.⁸⁷

5.2. Papyrus Prisse, 16, 13-17, 5. Instruction of Ptahhotep, 564-574.



⁸⁵ Junge, *OBO* 193, 203 'Es ist der Hinhörende (sDm), der auf das Sagen hört (sDm Dd).

⁸⁶ an 'schön sein; schön auszusehen; schön erscheinend', Junge, *OBO* 193, 260 (558).

⁸⁷ Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* I, 74.

𐀀𐀁𐀂𐀃𐀄

𐀅𐀆𐀇𐀈𐀉𐀊𐀋𐀌𐀍𐀎𐀏𐀐𐀑𐀒

𐀓𐀔𐀕𐀖𐀗𐀘𐀙𐀚𐀛𐀜

*𐀝𐀞𐀟𐀠𐀡𐀢𐀣𐀤𐀥𐀦

𐀧𐀨𐀩𐀪𐀫𐀬𐀭𐀮𐀯𐀰𐀱𐀲𐀳𐀴𐀵𐀶𐀷𐀸

ir Ssp sA s Dd it.f

n nnm.n sxr.f nb

sbA.k m sA.k sDmw⁸⁹

iqr.t(y).fy Hr ib n srw⁹⁰

sSm r.f r Dddt n.f

mA m sDmw

sA iqr.f nmtwt.f tnw

nnm bs n tm sDm

dwA rx r smnt.f

⁸⁸ Dévaud, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 48.

⁸⁹ Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 165, n. 566 the adverbial phrase 𐀀𐀁𐀂 here precedes the object sDmw. Such a transposition occurs sometimes in word order. See A. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar* (London, 1957), § 507, 2.

⁹⁰ Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 165, n. 567 'qui passera par être excellent chez les nobles'.

iw wxA mDd.f⁹¹

If a man's son accepts his father's words, no plan of his will go wrong. Teach your son to be a hearer, one who will be valued by the nobles; one who guides his speech by what he was told, one regarded as a hearer. This son excels, his deeds stand out, while failure follows him who hears not. The wise wakes early to his lasting gain, while the fool is hard pressed.⁹²

6. Expressing the attentiveness of the listener as a good character

6.1. Statue of Imn-Htp son of @pw from Karnak, CG 583.




ink Spsy mAa m-qAb tmw sDm ib pw Dar.f sH xppwt mi nty ib xft.s

I am a true nobleman in the midst of all men, having a hearing heart seeking counsel regarding strange things, like one whose heart understands them.⁹⁴

6.2. Stela of Intf from his tomb in Draa Abu el Naga, actually in Louvre C. 26.

(Thutmose III)

⁹¹ For  mDd see Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 520, Aa 23, Aa 24. Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 165, n. 574 explains 'le sot quand il se lève tôt, ne le fait que pour faire quelque chose d'improductif, pour s'adonner à une action sans valeur – à une sottise enfin'.

⁹² See Junge, *OBO* 193, 203, 261 (574) 'Den Dummen trifft es hart' etwa: Der Dumme, er wird hart getroffen.

⁹³ *Urk.* IV, Heft 21 (Berlin, 1958), 1817, 7-8.

⁹⁴ N. Shupak, *Where can wisdom be found?*, *OBO* 130 (1993), 56; Brunner, *OBO* 80, 4, 5.



wAH-ib r sDm sprw

Attentive to hear petitions

6.3. Stela of Mentuhotep from Abydos, CG 20539, 5-6.



wAH-ib r sDmt mdwt mity nTr m wnwt.f

Patient until speech has been heard, alike to the god in his hour.⁹⁷

6.4. Stela of Mentuhotep from Abydos, CG 20539, 8.



wAH-ib iwt(y) snnw nfr sDm iqr Dd

Patient without equal, good listener, well spoken.⁹⁹

The integration of good listening with good speaking underlines the quality of ‘attentiveness’.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ *Urk.* IV, 971, 12.

⁹⁶ H. O. Lange, H. Schäfer, *Catalogue Général des Antiquités Égyptiennes du Musée du Caire: Grab und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs im Museum von Kairo No. 20001-20780 II* (Berlin, 1908), 152.

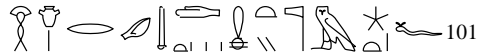
⁹⁷ Lichtheim, *OBO* 155, 79.

⁹⁸ Lange, Schäfer, *Catalogue Général des Antiquités Égyptiennes du Musée du Caire II*, 152.

⁹⁹ Lichtheim, *OBO* 155, 79.

¹⁰⁰ Lichtheim, *OBO* 155, 79.

6.5. Stela of Kares from Draa Abul Naga, now in Cairo.



wAH-ib r sDm mdwt mity nTr m wnwt.f

Patient to hear speech, alike to the god in his hour.

6.6. Stela of Shetep-ib-Re from Abydos, CG 20538, recto, 7.



wAH-ib iwty snnw.f nfr sDm iqr Dd

Patient without his equal, good listener, excellent speaker.¹⁰³

Other texts similarly highlight the worth of being heard.

6.7. Statue of Snmwt from Mwt temple in Karnak, CG 579.



ink saH n sDm n.f

I am a noble worthy of being heard.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ *Urk. IV*, 49, 5; U. Bouriant, 'Petits monuments et petits textes recueillis en Égypte', *RecTrav* 9 (1887), 95, 19.

¹⁰² Lange, Schäfer, *Catalogue Général des Antiquités Égyptiennes du Musée du Caire II*, 147.

¹⁰³ Lichtheim, *OBO* 155, 79.

¹⁰⁴ *Urk. IV*, 415, 13. Cf. *Urk. IV*, 1033, 7; 1194, 10.

¹⁰⁵ Shupak, *OBO* 130, 54 'A term of respect for the officials of the 18th Dynasty, the roots of which go back to the 12th Dynasty'.

Conclusion

The texts include advices to listen and praises of the ones who listen and of the good listening attitude. One of the examples presented is that of the good son who listens willingly and who will be fortunately successful. The verb *sDm* used in the texts denoting the acquisition of instructions does not only signify the act of ‘listening’. Obedience, mere acceptance and submission to the instructions are also meant.¹⁰⁶ The conclusive advantage of acquiring an ethic necessitates the fine listening to teachings, understanding and further doing what one has listened to.

The behavioral attitude of good listening is paired with the effect of hearing on soothing the heart *snaa ib* in the instruction of Ptahhotep (pPrisse 9, 7), and in possessing what is profitable (pPrisse 5, 7-8; 15, 13-16, 2; 16, 3-5). Thus a son’s appealing qualities were fostered by listening to his father’s advices. And even the *bA* would be successful if it listens (Dialogue of a man with his soul, pBerlin 3024, 39).

Advices are also addressed to the man who leads to listen to one who pleads (pPrisse 9, 3-4) and not to listen to everyone around (Eloquent Peasant, B2. 108).

It is therefore concluded that what is required is not mere listening.¹⁰⁷ Acquiring the aimed at ‘art’ of listening rather entails certain conditions in addition to restraint, serenity, patience and respect towards others.

¹⁰⁶ Brunner, *Altägyptische Weisheit*, 27; Shupak, *OBO* 130, 51 ff.

¹⁰⁷ See Brunner, *Altägyptische Erziehung*, 135.

The wise (i. e. the one who listens) would become a master-hearer and would endure in the mouth of hearers. He would be beloved of god and valued by the nobles. A good listener is also promised above all a successful life.¹⁰⁸ On the contrary the fool does not hear and he whom god hates does not hear. In Papyrus Prisse 17, 4-5 the fool is described as a non-hearer.¹⁰⁹

In numerous examples it is the heart *ib* that makes of a person a hearer or a non-hearer.¹¹⁰ In the instructions of Ptahhotep (pPrisse 16, 6-13)¹¹¹ the effects of listening are rendered as consequences according to the responsibility of the heart that leads a person either to be a listener or a non-listener.¹¹²

The relationship of listening with thinking, divine guidance and even wisdom is highlighted in Papyrus Prisse 16, 6-13; where the instructions of Ptahhotep¹¹³ underlines the contrast between the misconduct of the fool (the non-hearer) and the appealing behavior of the wise man (the hearer).¹¹⁴

The frequent use of *sDm* in the texts includes the meaning of understanding and acquiring knowledge; hence hearing was a basic function for learning.¹¹⁵ Some texts further highlight the

¹⁰⁸ Brunner, *Altägyptische Weisheit*, 20.

¹⁰⁹ Dévaud, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 48-49, 575-577.

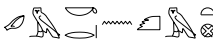
¹¹⁰ Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 101, n. 550-4.

¹¹¹ Dévaud, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 47-48, 545-563.

¹¹² Fecht, *Literarische Zeugnisse zur "persönlichen Frömmigkeit" in Ägypten*, 129, 130. See also Shupak, *OBO* 130, 57.

¹¹³ Dévaud, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 47-48, 545-563.

¹¹⁴ See G. Fecht, *Der Habgierige und die Maat in der Lehre des Ptahhotep (5. und 19. Maxime)*, *ADAIK* 1 (1958), 18.

¹¹⁵ Other examples are explicit in the story of Sinuhe, pBerlin 3022, 31,32  *sDm.k r n kmt* 'you can hear (understand) the language of Egypt'; and in pAnastasi III, 4, 3 'Pay attention (lit. 'give your heart,

specific connection of attentive listening and effective speaking.¹¹⁶ The importance of keeping silence¹¹⁷ is also explicitly mentioned as in the following examples:

pPrisse, verso, 5, 14. Instruction of Ptahhotep, 70-71.



Didi.k xpr iqr.k r.f m gr iw.f Hr md.t bin.t

You will make your worth exceed his by silence, while he is speaking evilly.¹¹⁹

OIC 16999, § 16, 5-6. Teaching of a man for his son.



ir wpt.k s snw m qnbt Hms.k Drt.k r r.k

If you judge two men in council, you should sit with your hand on your mouth.¹²¹

listen to my words'. See Shupak, *OBO* 130, 53-55. Also to be noticed is the close relationship of the heart being the instrument of understanding and the function of hearing (sDm).

¹¹⁶ See Lichtheim, *OBO* 155, 79 ff.

¹¹⁷ For the broad meaning of keeping silence see Assmann, *LÄ* V, 195 ff.

¹¹⁸ Dévaud, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 19; Zába, *Les maximes de Ptahhotep*, 22.

¹¹⁹ Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* I, 64; Malaise, Winand, *Grammaire raisonnée de l'égyptien classique*, 487 'C'est en gardant le silence, tant qu'il parle mal, que tu rendras manifeste ton excellence contre lui.'

¹²⁰ Fischer-Elfert, Hans-Werner, *ÄA* 60, OIC 16999, § 16, 5-6.

¹²¹ Quirke, *Egyptian literature*, 105.

Hearing to the plaintiff seeking a verdict was the basic duty of the judge including the ability to understand and discern in giving judgment.¹²² The relationship between the ‘silent man’ *grw*¹²³ and the good listener is as well emphasized. Both require a high degree of self-control and patience in order to acquire such ethical qualifications. In addition to that both are personal traits that are sufficiently alike in showing the prominence of the good behavior.¹²⁴

Listening to teachings was further regarded as a means of acquiring good moral habits. It was considered as an achievement of the educated person.¹²⁵ The ethical issue dealt with lead to attain rectitude in listening and in speech. A clear conception of the valued moral behavior is therefore achieved.

¹²² Shupak, *OBO* 130, 53. In this context *sDm* sometimes assumes the sense of ‘to investigate’.

¹²³ See Lichtheim, *OBO* 155, 86 ff.

¹²⁴ See also Quack, *OBO* 141, 158.

¹²⁵ Lichtheim, *OBO* 155, 81.