18
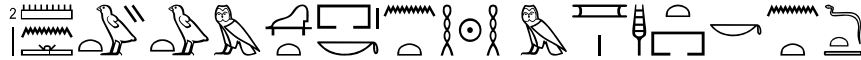
Two Harpers' Songs

The Stela of Nebankh
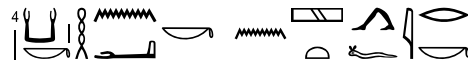
ḥsw tni᷄ꜥꜣ ḏd.f

mntwi tw m st.k nt nḥḥ m miḥꜥt.k nt ḏt

iw smḥ.ti ḫr ḥtpt ḏfꜣw ꜥrf.n.s bw-nb nfr

kꜣ.k ḥnꜥ.k n(n) znt.f ir.k

ḫtmt(i)-biti imi-r pr wr ꜥꜣ nb-ꜥnḫ iw n.k ṯꜣw nḏm n mḥyt

in ḥsw.f sꜥnḫ rn.f imꜣḫy ḥsw tni᷄ꜥꜣ mr.n.f ḥs n kꜣ.f rꜥ nb

A Song from the Tomb of King Intef[1]
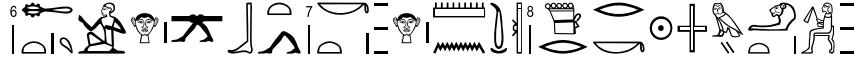
ḥsw nti m ḥwt ꞮNTF mꜣꜥ ḫrw

nti m bꜣḥ pꜣ ḥsw m bnt
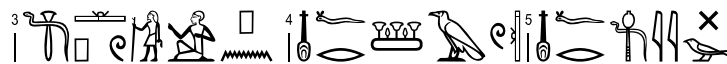
wꜣḏ pw sri pn nfr šꜣw nfr ḥḏy

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[1] The numbering and typesetting follows Hoch, Exercise XVI(B) pp. 232-233.

ḫt ḥr zbt kt ḥr mn ḏr rk imiw ḥ3t

nṯrw ḫprw ḥr-ḥ3t ḥtp.w(i) m mrw.sn

s'ḥw 3ḫiw m mitt ḳrs.w(i) m mrw.sn

ḳd(w) ḥwt nn wn swt.sn ptr irw m.sn

iw sḏm.n.i ii-m-ḥtp ḥn' ḥrw-ḏd-f

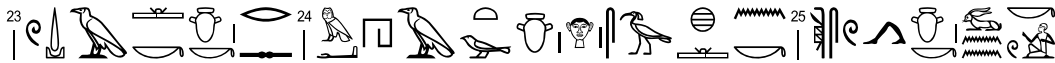*sḏd.ti m sḏdwt.sn rsi*

ptr swt iri inbw.sn fḫ(.wi)

nn wn swt.sn mi nti(w) nn ḫpr.sn

bw iy im sḏd.f ḳdw.sn sḏd.f ḥrt.sn sm.f ib.n

r ḥnt.n r bw šmw.sn im

wḏ3.k ib.k r.s mh ib ḥr.s 3ḫ n.k/mht-ib ḥr s3ḫ n.k šms ib.k wnn.k

imi 'ntiw ḥr tp.k wnḫ n.k m p3kt

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[2] Emended following Hoch, p. 234.

ms.ti m bi3w m3ꜥ n ḥwt nṯr

imi ḫ3w ḥr nfrw.k m b3gy(w) ib.k

šms ib.k ḥnꜥ nfrw.k ir ḫwt.k tp t3 m ḫḏ ib.k

iw n.k hrw pf3 n sbḥwt

bw sḏm.n wrd-ib sbḥwt.sn

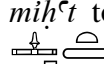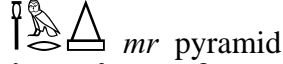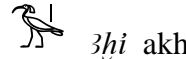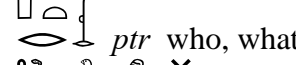bw šd n3y.sn i3kbw ib z(i) im m ḥ(3)t

m3wt ir hrw nfr

m wrdw n.i im.f

m.k nn rdi n z(i) itt ḫwt.f ḥnꜥ.f

m.k nn wn šm iw ꜥnw

Vocabulary

𓏤𓏤𓏤 *ḥsi* sing

𓏤𓏤𓏤 *ḥsw* singer

𓅓𓂝𓉔𓂝𓏏 *mˁḥˁt* 𓏏 *miḥˁt* tomb

𓊵𓏏𓊪𓏏 *ḥtpt* offerings

𓂧𓆑𓄿𓅱𓏤𓏤𓏤 *ḏfȝw* provisions

𓈖𓂽 *zni* pass (by), surpass, transgress

𓊹𓏏𓏏𓆤 *ḫtmt(i)-biti* treasurer/seal bearer of the king of Lower Egypt

𓏏𓇋𓇋𓈖𓏏 *mḥyt* northwind

𓇋𓌸𓇋𓇋 *imȝḫy* honored

𓏤𓏤𓏤 *ḥsw* song

𓎛𓏤 *bnt* harp

𓊩𓀀, 𓀀 *sri* official

𓈙𓄿𓅱 *šȝw* fate

𓐍𓂧𓇋 *ḫdi* destroy, injure, disobey (heart)

𓐍𓂧𓇋𓇋 *ḫdy* destruction

𓐍𓏏𓏤𓏤𓏤, 𓐍𓏏 *ḫt* generation

𓊃𓃀𓂽 *zbi* pass on, send

𓂋𓎡☉ *rk* time, era

𓇋𓅓𓇋𓅱 𓐍𓄿𓏏 *imiw ḫȝt* ancestors, lit. those who are in before

𓉟𓏏 *mr* pyramid

𓋴𓂝𓎛 *sˁḥ* noble, dignitary

𓄿𓐍𓇋 *ȝḫi* akh

𓄂𓊃, 𓋪 *ḳrs* bury

𓄖, 𓄖 *ḳd* build

𓊪𓏏𓂋 *ptr* who, what

𓋴𓆓𓀀𓏤 *sḏdwt* literary works, quotation

𓏤𓄿𓏏 *rsi,* 𓂋𓏤𓏤𓄿𓏏 *rssi* entirely, quite

𓇋𓈖𓃀 *inb* wall

𓆑𓐍𓂽 *fḫ* destroy, fall to ruins

𓉔𓈖𓂽 *ḥn* rush, hurry

𓐍𓂧𓅱 *ḳdw* form, state, manner, character

𓐍𓂋𓏏𓏤𓏤𓏤 *ḫrt* condition

𓄂𓏤. *sm* help, relieve

𓅓𓏏 *mhi* forgetful, neglectful

𓋴𓄿𓐍 *sȝḫ* spiritualize (deceased), glorify (god), beautify (tomb)

𓈖𓏏𓇋𓅱𓏤𓏤𓏤 *ˁntiw* myrrh

𓇅𓈖𓐍𓏏 *wnḫ* put on (dress), be clothed

𓊪𓄿𓐍𓏏𓏤𓏤𓏤 *pȝḳt* fine linen

𓐠𓇉 *ms* anoint

𓉔𓄿𓅱𓏤𓏤𓏤 *ḥȝw* excess, more

𓄤𓂋𓅱𓏤𓏤𓏤 *nfrw* beauty, perfection, happiness

𓃀𓄿𓎼𓇋 *bȝgi* weary, lazy

𓊃𓃀𓐍 *sbḥ* cry, wail

sbḥwt (noun) cries, wailing

wrd (verb) weary, tire

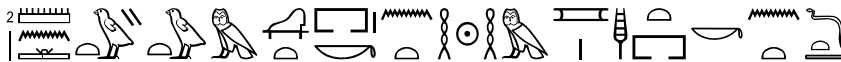*iꜣkb* mourning, plural wailings

ḫꜣt tomb

mꜣwt new thing

ꜥnw again

Grammar Points

The Stela of Nebankh

¹ [hieroglyphs]

ḥsw ṯniꜥꜣ ḏd.f

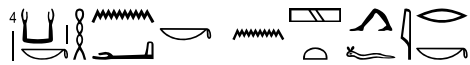² [hieroglyphs]

mntwi tw m st.k nt nḥḥ m miḥꜥt.k nt ḏt

A noun + circumstantial *sḏm.f* /subject-imperfective construction introduces Tjeniaa, the singer of this song: "Tjeniaa, the singer, says."

The song itself starts with an exclamatory adjectival sentence in which the subject, the deceased, is addressed in the form of the dependent pronoun *tw*: "How firm you are in your seat of eternity!"

In the adverbial adjunct [hieroglyphs] is an alternative spelling of the noun [hieroglyphs] [hieroglyphs] *mꜥḥꜥt* or [hieroglyphs] *miḥꜥt* "tomb," and Lichtheim elevates this to "monument."

³ [hieroglyphs]

iw.s mḥ.ti ẖr ḥtpt ḏfꜣw ꜥrf.n.s bw-nb nfr

⁴ [hieroglyphs]

kꜣ.k ḥnꜥ.k n(n) znt.f ir.k

In the first sentence the abundance of offerings in the tomb is described by a subject-stative construction using the transitive verb *mḥ* "fill" having therefore passive meaning. (The suffix pronoun *.s* refers to *miḥꜥt,* a feminine noun.) The preposition *ẖr* "under" followed by *mḥ* should be translated as "with."

In the second sentence the circumstantial *sḏm.n.f* /perfect of the verb [hieroglyphs] *ꜥrf* "contain, enclose, include" denoting completed action further emphasizes that the tomb has everything that the deceased needs.

As a further comfort to him, in the third short sentence (with adverbial predicate) the presence of his spiritual element (*k3*) is emphasized.

In the last unmarked adverb clause, the negated infinitive, qualifying the previous statement, starts with the negative particle 𓈖𓈖𓈖 indicated only by 𓈖. (Note that the context shows that the last clause is not a negated *sḏmt.f* construction which would mean "before/not yet heard.") Another example for the negated infinitive with suffixed subject is

𓉻𓂋𓅯𓂋𓈖𓏏𓏜𓈖𓇋𓆛 *pr.k ꜥk.k*

nn ḥnḥn.k nn šnꜥ.k ḥr sb3 n dw3t[1].

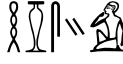𓐍𓏏𓅓𓇋𓉐𓉻𓎟𓋹 *ḫtmt(i)-biti imi-r pr wr ꜥ3 nb-ꜥnḫ iw n.k t3w nḏm n mḥyt*

in ḥsw.f sꜥnḫ rn.f im3ḫy ḥsw ṯniꜥ3 mr.n.f ḥs n k3.f rꜥ nb

In the first sentence the titles and the name (*nb-ꜥnḫ*) of the deceased are given. A simple adverbial sentence of possession that follows contains a well-wish of the singer, lit. "The sweet air of the northwind is for you!"

The third sentence starts with a participial statement: "It is his singer." This is followed by the active participle of the causative verb *sꜥnḫ* "make live, nourish, keep alive" with object *rn.f* "his name," asserting the singer's duty.

The relationship of the singer (who calls himself 𓍋𓅓𓐍𓏭 *im3ḫy* "honored" with his name repeated) to the deceased is expressed by the perfect relative form *mr.n.f* "whom he loved" of the verb *mri* "love."

Finally, the active participle of 𓎛𓋴𓇋𓀁 *ḥsi* "sing" (with Tjeniaa as the antecedent) specifies how the ka of the deceased will be kept alive, once again, a reminder and assertion of the singer's duty.

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[1] [Urk. IV 498, 7-9].

A Song from the Tomb of King Intef[2]

ḥsw nti m ḥwt ˀINTF mꜣˁ ḫrw

nti m bꜣḥ pꜣ ḥsw m bnt

A common feature of Late Egyptian is the appearance of out-of-the-place weak conso-
nants *w* and *y,* superfluous *t*'s and seated man determinatives. This passage is no excep-
tion.

The simple grammar here has the subject *ḥsw* "song" modified by two relative

clauses with adverbial predicates. *ḥwt* "enclosure" should be promoted to "funerary

chapel." The evil bird determinative (for the feminine *bint* "evil, badness") is (proba-

bly) a scribal error and should be replaced with for "harp."
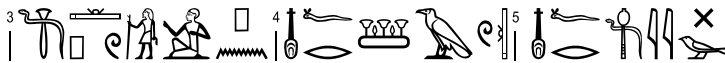
wꜣḏ pw sri pn   nfr šꜣw   nfr ḥḏy

This passage has been interpreted in different ways.

Federn[3] splits the passage into three parts: *wꜣḏ pw sri pn | nfr šˁw | nfr ḥḏy*; inter-
prets the first as an A *pw* B nominal sentence "B is A" and the last two as adjectival sen-
tences with the same predicate *nfr*: "A happy one is this prince; good is the destiny; good
is the injury."

Lichtheim[4] splits the passage into two parts *wꜣḏ pw sri pn nfr | šꜣw nfr ḥḏy*; inter-
prets the first *nfr* as modifying *sri pn* and the second as an AB nominal sentence: He is
happy, this good prince! Death is a kindly fate." But the use of AB nominal sentences
with both A and B nouns or noun phrases is restricted.

Wilson[5] agrees with Lichtheim in the division, but interprets the second part as a
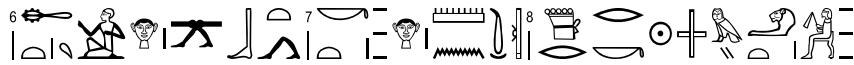sentence with verbal predicate, the prospective/subjunctive *sḏm.f* of the (intransitive) 3ae-

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[2] The analysis here extends the grammar notes of Hoch, p. 234.
[3] JNES 5(1946) p. 259.
[4] M. Lichtheim (I), p. 197.
[5] ANET, p. 467.

inf. verb *ḫḏi*:[6] "Prosperous is he, this good prince; Even though good fortune may suffer harm."

ḫt ḥr zbt kt ḥr mn ḏr rk imiw ḥ3t

The passing of generations after generations is expressed by two pseudo-verbal *ḥr* + infinitive constructions. The alternative spelling of *ḫt* "generation" shows that it is a collective noun. The apparent adjective *kt* "(an)other" refers to *ḫt* and this is why it received the plural strokes. The presence of the determinative is due to its phonetic value *smn*.
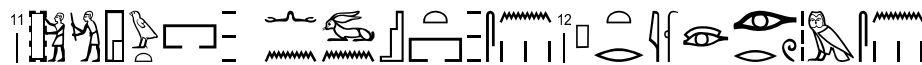
The determinative is suggestive to the meaning of the phrase *imiw ḥ3t* "ancestors," lit. "those who are in before." It is derived from the compound preposition *m ḥ3t* by replacing *m* with the plural prepositional nisbe *imiw*.

nṯrw ḫprw ḫr-ḥ3t ḥtp.wi m mrw.sn

sˁḥw 3ḫiw m mitt ḳrs.w(i) m mrw.sn

ḳd(w) ḥwt nn wn swt.sn ptr irw m.sn

The first two sentences contain subject-stative constructions with (the transitive use of) the verb *ḥtp* "rest (in tomb)," and the (transitive) verb , *ḳrs* "bury;" they both have passive meaning.

The first subject *nṯrw* is modified by a relative clause. It is the antecedent of the plural of the perfective active participle of the verb *ḫpr* "happen, evolve." is a Late Egyptian spelling of *ḫr* "under," and the compound preposition *ḫr-ḥ3t* means "before."

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[6] In this verb class the prospective/subjunctive can receive an *y* ending.

In the second subject the determinative [hieroglyph] indicates that *3ḫiw* should be viewed as a (plural) noun (and not the adjective "blessed" whose determinative is [hieroglyph]) and it refers to the "akhs," the spiritual entities of the Egyptian society, those who lived and made successful transition to afterlife. The compound preposition *m mitt* "likewise" can be translated as "too" or "also."

In the third sentence the tone suddenly changes and the song turns the attention to the tomb builders. They are expressed by the plural perfective active participle of the verb [hieroglyphs] , [hieroglyphs] *ḳd* "build" functioning as a noun. As noted in the analysis of the Poetical Stela of Thutmose III, *nn wn* with the indicative /perfective *sḏm.f* of *wn* expresses negation of existence "there is not," "there does not exists." The suffix pronoun *.sn* is coreferential to *ḳdw.*

The interrogative pronoun [hieroglyphs] *ptr* "who, what" (a contraction of the demonstrative pronoun [hieroglyph] *pw* and the particle [hieroglyphs] *tr*) followed by the plural perfective passive participle *ir(y)w* of *iri* "make, do" questions the fate of these dedicated workers. Since *iri + m* is an Egyptian idiom of "become of, happen to," the whole clause can be translated as "what became/has become of them?"

[hieroglyphic line 13]

iw sḏm.n.i ii-m-ḥtp ḥnꜥ ḥrw-dd-f

[hieroglyphic line 14]

sḏd.ti m sḏdwt.sn rsi

In the first main clause, using the circumstantial *sḏm.n.f* /perfect of *sḏm* "hear, listen," the singer claims familiarity with the words of the famous Old Kingdom sages Imhotep, the vizier of Djoser, and Hardededef, Khufu's son.

In the indirect relative clause the stative has no preceding subject. The transitive caus. 2-lit.verb *sḏd* "recite, retell, relate" (+ *m* "of") receives the 3FS stative suffix *.ti* and carries passive meaning "recited." The object is *sḏdwt* (itself a relative form of *sḏd*) is more likely "literary works" than "quotations as the adverb *rsi* "entirely, whole" emphasizes: "whose (literary) works are recited whole."

ptr swt iri inbw.sn fḫ.wi

nn wn swt.sn mi nti nn ḫpr.sn

This passage begins with a question: "What of the places…? The fate of the "places" (*swt*) of these sages is questioned, and instead of the suffix pronoun *.sn*, possession is expressed by the nisbe *iri,* lit. "that pertains to (them)."

The response comes immediately in a subject-stative construction describing the state of the walls with the stative of the transitive verb *fḫ* "destroy, fall to ruins."

In beginning of the last sentence is repeated from line 11. The object of the preposition *mi* is the relative adjective *nti* functioning as a noun. The latter marks a relative clause containing a negated indicative/perfective *ni sḏm.f* with the wrong negative particle. (Note that in Late Egyptian and are often interchanged.) The suffix pronoun *.sn* is coreferential to the places.
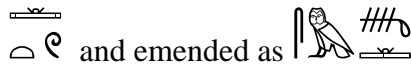

 bw iy im sḏd.f ḳdw.sn sḏd.f ḫrt.sn sm.f ib.n

r ḥnt.n r bw šmw.sn im
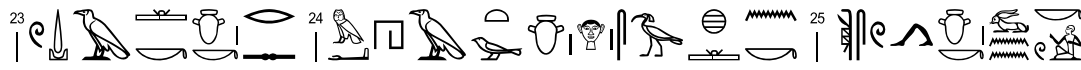
In Late Egyptian negation is often expressed by the negative word *bw* in place of *n(i)* and *bn* in place of *nn*. We actually have a double interchange as the negation *bw* corresponds to the negative particle in a negation of existence *nn* A. Here A is the perfective active participle *iy* of the verb *ii* "return" functioning as a noun (not the negated participle *tm iy* "(one) who did not return"). The adverb *im* "from there" refers the realm of the dead.

The three adverb (purpose) clauses that follow detail the (possible) outcome of return. The verbs are *sḏd* "relate, tell" and *sm* "help, relieve" written wrongly as

⌢ 𓂝 and emended as 𓅓𓏛. (Hoch[7] remarks that the scribe may have mistakenly believed that the line was the passive construction *sm.tw ib.n.*) All the verb forms are in prospective/subjunctive *sḏm.f* and can be translated by inserting first "(so) that."

Alternatively, Lichtheim bypasses the expressed subjects and uses infinitives. The *r + sḏmt.f* construction "until he has/had heard" applied to the verb *ḥn* "rush, hurry" (and suffix pronominal subject *n* "we") has an ironic tone.

Finally, *bw* is the antecedent of an indirect relative clause employing the (plural) perfective relative form of the verb form of *šmi* "walk, go" (with speed contrasting with *ḥn*). (Note the space-filler *t* above the walking leg determinative.) The coreferent is not expressed.

23 𓏤 ... 24 ... 25 ...

wḏꜣ.k ib.k r.s mh ib ḥr.s ꜣḫ n.k/mht-ib ḥr sꜣḫ n.k šms ib.k wnn.k

The main sentence has the prospective/subjunctive *sḏm.f* 𓅱𓂋 𓏏 *wḏꜣ ib.k* "rejoice, take heart" expressing wish/command. The feminine suffix pronoun *.s* is a general reference to the previous skepticism.

The next sentence can be interpreted in two ways. If in 𓅓𓏤 𓅓 𓂋 the *t* above the evil bird is disregarded then this verb form is imperative with a Late Egyptian group-writing of 𓅓 𓂋 *mhi* "forgetful, neglectful." Then *mh ib ḥr.s* is a complete sentence in which the general reference to the skepticism continues with the suffix pronoun *.s*: "Be forgetful about it!" The next short adverb clause *ꜣḫ n.k* then has adjectival predicate with a sarcastic tone: "It is beneficent/profitable for you!"

 On the other hand, if the *t* is considered essential then *mht ib* becomes a phrase for "forgetfulness, negligence." The syntactically adverbial sentence *mḥt-ib ḥr sꜣḫ n.k* with the infinitive of 𓊃𓐍 *sꜣḫ* applied to a deceased as "spiritualize," to a god as "glorify," and to a tomb as "beautify" can be interpreted as "advantageous."

The imperative returns in the last sentence employing the verb *šmsi* "follow" with a clear meaning. The short adverb clause (which can be introduced by "while") contains

[7] Op. cit.

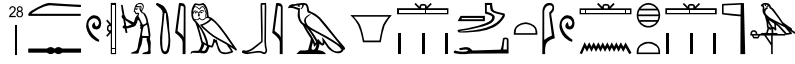the circumstantial/imperfective *sḏm.f* of *wnn* "exist, be."
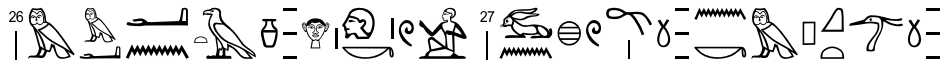
*imi ꜥntiw ḥr tp.k   wnḫ n.k m pꜣkt*

ms.ti m biꜣw mꜣꜥ n ḥwt nṯr

The imperative continues this time with more specific suggestions.

In the first two sentences the imperatives of the verb *rdi* "put" and *wnḫ* "put on (dress), dress" are employed while in the third the imperative (as a command) is expressed by the stative with the second person suffix pronoun *.ti.*

Note that the noun *biꜣw* can also be used for luxury items, and the phrase *ḥwt nṯr* lit. "god's things" can be translated as "fit for a god."

imi ḫꜣw ḥr nfrw.k m bꜣgy(w) ib.k
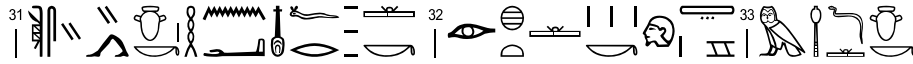
šms ib.k ḥnꜥ nfrw.k ir ḫt.k tp tꜣ m ḥḏ ib.k

The imperatives still continue, first using the phrase *rdi ḫꜣw* "increase, heap/pile up," lit. "make excess/more," and then with the negative imperative *m* "do not" (abbreviated here as) followed by the negatival complement of the adjective-verb
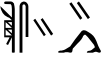
 bꜣgi "weary, lazy, sink." This is an example of a 4ae-inf. verb which, in addition to the negatival complement ending *w*, also receives an additional *y.* In the usual spelling of the complement the scribe replaced the *bꜣ*-bird with the flying pintail duck *pꜣ.*

The "decorative" spelling of the imperative *šms* of the 4ae-inf. verb *šmsi* is a Late Egyptian feature.

For the last passage, note that *iri ḫt* is an Egyptian idiom "be active," lit. "do/make things" (still imperative). Finally, based on symmetry, the last sentence can be considered as a negated imperative using the verb *ḥḏi* which here means "disobey." Note that Lich-

theim reads the passage as an adverb clause "as your heart commands" with ⌽ *wḏ* replac-

ing ⌽ *ḥḏ*.

³⁴ 𓂋𓊪 𓅓 𓏏 ... (hieroglyphs)

iw n.k hrw pfꜣ n sbḥwt

³⁵ (hieroglyphs)

bw sḏm.n wrd-ib sbḥwt.sn

³⁶ (hieroglyphs)
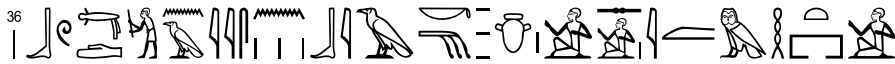
bw šd nꜣy.sn iꜣkbw ib z(i) im m ḥ(ꜣ)t

The initial adverb clause: "(when) the day of…" signals emphatic construction, so that the
verb form of *iw* is a (non-attributive) relative form. The subject is the indirect genitive *hrw*
n sbḥwt in which the late form of demonstrative pronoun *pfꜣ* (with the compounded de-

terminative 𓂺) is moved forward.

The main clause starts with the negated circumstantial *sḏm.n.f* /perfect of the verb
sḏm expressing negation of action or inability. As discussed previously, the Late Egyptian

negative word 𓃀𓅱 *bw* stands for 𓈖 *n(i)*. The subject is the *nfr ḥr* construction *wrd-ib*
"weary of heart" referring to Osiris.

The negated prospective/subjunctive *sḏm.f* of the verb *šdi* "rescue, save" with 𓃀𓅱

bw in place of 𓈖 *nn* should be interpreted as negated future. The late form of the de-
monstrative pronoun *nꜣy* is used in the subject *nꜣy.sn iꜣkbw* with graphic transposition in
the last noun. The object is the direct genitive *ib z(i)* and the vague adverb *im* "from it" is
made precise in the attached prepositional phrase *m ḥꜣt* "from the tomb."

³⁷ (hieroglyphs)

mꜣwt

⁴⁰ (hieroglyphs)

ir hrw nfr

⁴¹ (hieroglyphs)

m wrdw n.i im.f

42 [hieroglyphs]

m.k nn rdi n z(i) itt ḫwt.f ḥnꜥ.f

43 [hieroglyphs]

m.k nn wn šm iw ꜥnw

The noun *mꜣwt* means "refrain," lit. "a new thing," and the out-of-place determinative [hieroglyph] is possibly influenced by the spelling of [hieroglyphs] *mꜣwt* "shaft."

Imperative of *iri* governs the special phrase "make holiday" which has a dual reference: one for everyday life and another for death and afterlife. In addition, ancient Egyptians also employed this term for funerary festivities held on special days in the cemeteries.

Using the negative imperative *m* and the negatival complement *wrdw* (of the verb *wrd*), the singer (present only by the suffix pronoun *.i*) makes a last effort to cheer up the listeners.

Calling for their attention with the particle *m.k*, he once more reminds his audience to enjoy life for two principal reasons given in the last two sentences. (The second particle should read *m.k* not *m.k wi.*)

Grammatically, the first uses negated passive (*nn* in place of *n(i)*) of the verb *rdi* expressing negation of action/ability "(it) is not allowed/permitted," lit. "(it) is not given."

The second uses the negated indicative/perfective *sḏm.f* construction *nn wn* of the verb *wnn*, lit. "there is not." It is followed by the perfective active participles of the verbs *šmi* "go" and *iwi* "return," lit. "there is no one who has gone and who has returned again."