

# The Ten Plagues - Live From Egypt

by Rabbi Mordechai Becher

In the early 19th Century a papyrus, dating from the end of the Middle Kingdom, was found in Egypt. It was taken to the Leiden Museum in Holland and interpreted by A.H. Gardiner in 1909. The complete papyrus can be found in the book *Admonitions of an Egyptian from a heiratic papyrus in Leiden*. The papyrus describes violent upheavals in Egypt, starvation, drought, escape of slaves (with the wealth of the Egyptians), and death throughout the land. The papyrus was written by an Egyptian named Ipuwer and appears to be an eyewitness account of the effects of the Exodus plagues from the perspective of an average Egyptian. Below are excerpts from the papyrus together with their parallels in the Book of Exodus.

IPUWER PAPYRUS - LEIDEN 344	TORAH - EXODUS
<p>2:5-6 Plague is throughout the land. Blood is everywhere.</p> <p>2:10 The river is blood.</p> <p>2:10 Men shrink from tasting - human beings, and thirst after water</p> <p>3:10-13 That is our water! That is our happiness! What shall we do in respect thereof? All is ruin.</p>	<p>7:20 ...all the waters of the river were turned to blood.</p> <p>7:21 ...there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt ...and the river stank.</p> <p>7:24 And all the Egyptians dug around the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river.</p>
<p>2:10 Forsooth, gates, columns and walls are consumed by fire.</p> <p>10:3-6 Lower Egypt weeps... The entire palace is without its revenues. To it belong [by right] wheat and barley, geese and fish</p> <p>6:3 Forsooth, grain has perished on every side.</p> <p>5:12 Forsooth, that has perished which was yesterday seen. The land is left over to its weariness like the cutting of flax.</p>	<p>9:23-24 ...and the fire ran along the ground... there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous.</p> <p>9:25 ...and the hail smote every herb of the field, and broke every tree of the field.</p> <p>9:31-32 ...and the flax and the barley was smitten; for the barley was in season, and flax was ripe.</p> <p>But the wheat and the rye were not smitten; for they were not grown up.</p> <p>10:15 ...there remained no green things in the trees, or in the herbs of the fields, through all the land of Egypt.</p>

<p>5:5 All animals, their hearts weep. Cattle moan...</p> <p>9:2-3 Behold, cattle are left to stray, and there is none to gather them together.</p>	<p>9:3 ...the hand of the Lord is upon thy cattle which is in the field... and there shall be a very grievous sickness.</p> <p>9:19 ...gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field...</p> <p>9:21 And he that did not fear the word of the Lord left his servants and cattle in the field.</p>
<p>9:11 The land is without light</p>	<p>10:22 And there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt.</p>
<p>4:3 (5:6) Forsooth, the children of princes are dashed against the walls.</p> <p>6:12 Forsooth, the children of princes are cast out in the streets.</p> <p>6:3 The prison is ruined.</p> <p>2:13 He who places his brother in the ground is everywhere.</p> <p>3:14 It is groaning throughout the land, mingled with lamentations</p>	<p>12:29 And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive that was in the prison.</p> <p>12:30 ...there was not a house where there was not one dead.</p> <p>12:30 ...there was a great cry in Egypt.</p>
<p>7:1 Behold, the fire has mounted up on high. Its burning goes forth against the enemies of the land.</p>	<p>13:21 ... by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night.</p>
<p>3:2 Gold and lapis lazuli, silver and malachite, carnelian and bronze... are fastened on the neck of female slaves.</p>	<p>12:35-36 ...and they requested from the Egyptians, silver and gold articles and clothing. And God made the Egyptians favour them and they granted their request. [The Israelites] thus drained Egypt of its wealth.</p>

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(For a lengthier discussion of the papyrus and the historical background of the Exodus, see *Jewish Action*, Spring 1995, article by Brad Aaronson, entitled *When Was the Exodus?* )

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