



Ancient Egyptian didactic literature: The admonitions of Ipuwer

-  [Main Index and Search Page](#)
-  [History](#)
-  [Dynasties](#)
-  [Cultural Chronology](#)
-  [Mythology](#)
-  [Life in Ancient Egypt](#)
-  [Glossary](#)
-  [Herodotus on the Pharaohs](#)
-  [Ancient Egyptian Reader](#)
-  [Apologia and Bibliography](#)

Printout

For best results save the whole webpage (pictures included) onto your hard disk, open the page with Word 97 or higher, edit if necessary and print.

Printing using the browser's print function is **not** recommended.

The admonitions of Ipuwer

It is impossible to give a date for the composition of this document. The surviving papyrus (Papyrus Leiden 334) itself is a copy made during the New Kingdom. Ipuwer is generally supposed to have lived during the Middle Kingdom or the Second Intermediate Period, and the catastrophes he bewails to have taken place four centuries earlier during the First Intermediate Period.

On the other hand, Miriam Lichtheim, following S. Luria, contends that

the 'Admonitions of Ipuwer' has not only no bearing whatever on the long past First Intermediate Period, it also does not derive from any other historical situation. It is the last, fullest, most exaggerated and hence least successful, composition on the theme "order versus chaos."

M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Volume I, p.150

Fringe historians often compare the content of this papyrus with Exodus, the second book of the Bible [1]. Similarities between Egyptian texts and the Bible are easily found, and it is reasonable to assume Egyptian influence on the Hebrews, given their at times close contacts. But to conclude from such parallelisms that the Ipuwer Papyrus describes Egypt at the time of the Exodus, requires a leap of faith not everybody is willing to make.

Lacunae in the papyrus text are marked by [...].

I

[. .] *The door [keepers] say: "Let us go and plunder." The confectioners [. . .]. The washerman*

► *the Nile overflows, yet none plough for it: The collapse of the Old Kingdom civilisation is generally attributed to a repeated failure of the Nile to inundate the flood plain. A few consecutive crop failures can result in*

*refuses to carry his
load [. . .]*

*The bird [catchers]
have drawn up in
line of battle [. . .
the inhabitants] of
the Delta carry
shields.*

*The brewers [. . .]
sad.*

*A man regards his
son as his enemy.*

*Confusion [. . .]
another. Come and
conquer; judge [. .
.] what was*

*ordained for you in
the time of Horus,
in the age [of the
Ennead . . .]. The
virtuous man goes
in mourning
because of what has
happened in the
land [. . .] goes [. .
.] the tribes of the
desert have become
Egyptians
everywhere.*

*Indeed, the face is
pale; [. . .] what the
ancestors foretold
has arrived at
[fruition . . .] the
land is full of
confederates, and a
man goes to plough
with his shield.*

*Indeed, the meek
say: ["He who is . .
. of] face is as a
well-born man."*

*Indeed, [the face] is
pale; the Bowman is
ready, wrongdoing
is everywhere, and
there is no man of
yesterday.*

*Indeed, the
plunderer [. . .]
everywhere, and the*

many subsequent years of suffering, as all the grain that is grown and which is to serve as seed, will be consumed as food.

*servant takes what
he finds.*

*Indeed, the Nile
overflows, yet none
plough for it.*

*Everyone says: "We
do not know what
will happen
throughout the
land."*

*Indeed, the women
are barren and
none conceive.*

*Khnum fashions
(men) no more
because of the
condition of the
land.*

II

*Indeed, poor men
have become
owners of wealth,
and he who could
not make sandals
for himself is now a
possessor of riches.
Indeed, men's
slaves, their hearts
are *sad*, and
magistrates do not
fraternize with their
people when they
shout.*

*Indeed, [hearts] are
violent, pestilence
is throughout the
land, blood is
everywhere, death
is not lacking, and
the mummy-cloth
speaks even before
one comes near it.
Indeed, many dead
are buried in the
river; the stream is
a sepulcher and the
place of*

- ▶ *sad*: Lichtheim: *greedy*
- ▶ *Let us suppress the powerful among us*: John A. Wilson: *Let us banish many from us*. Lichtheim: *Let us expel our rulers*.



Ibis

- ▶ *Indeed, the river is blood, yet men drink of it. Men shrink from human beings and thirst after water*: Why really, the River is blood. If one drinks of it, one rejects (it) as human and thirsts for water. (Wilson)
- ▶ *gates, columns and walls are burnt up*: doors, columns, and floor planks are burned up (Wilson)
- ▶ *crocodiles [are gluttons] with the fish they have taken, for men go to them of their own accord*: crocodiles

*embalmmment has
become a stream.
Indeed, noblemen
are in distress,
while the poor man
is full of joy. Every
town says: "Let us
suppress the
powerful among
us."*

*Indeed, men are
like ibises. Squalor
is throughout the
land, and there are
none indeed whose
clothes are white in
these times.*

*Indeed, the land
turns around as
does a potter's
wheel; the robber is
a possessor of
riches and [the rich
man is become] a
plunderer.*

*Indeed, trusty
servants are [. . .];
the poor man
[complains]: "How
terrible! What am I
to do?"*

*Indeed, the river is
blood, yet men
drink of it. Men
shrink from human
beings and thirst
after water.*

*Indeed, gates,
columns and walls
are burnt up, while
the hall of the
palace stands firm
and endures.*

*Indeed, the ship of
[the southerners]
has broken up;
towns are destroyed
and Upper Egypt
has become an
empty waste.*

Indeed, crocodiles

[sink] down because of what they
have carried off, (for) men go to them
of their own accord. (Wilson)

► *When the wise man speaks, [he
flees without delay]: Lichtheim: "The
word of the wise has fled without
delay".*

[are glutted] with the fish they have taken, for men go to them of their own accord; it is the destruction of the land. Men say: "Do not walk here; behold, it is a net." Behold, men tread [the water] like fishes, and the frightened man cannot distinguish it because of terror. Indeed, men are few, and he who places his brother in the ground is everywhere. When the wise man speaks, [he flees without delay]. Indeed, the well-born man [. . .] through lack of recognition, and the child of his lady has become the son of his maidservant.

III

Indeed, the desert is throughout the land, the nomes are laid waste, and barbarians from abroad have come to Egypt. Indeed, men arrive [. . .] and indeed, there are no Egyptians anywhere. Indeed, gold and lapis lazuli, silver and turquoise, carnelian and

▶ *barbarians* : Lichtheim: *Foreign bowmen*. Egyptians saw themselves as the pinnacle of creation: their land was The Land, their people were The People. In this their attitude was similar to that of other ancient (and not so ancient) peoples.

▶ *from abroad have come to Egypt*: Times of weak central power opened opportunities for foreigners to infiltrate the country in even larger numbers than ordinarily: The Nubian Medjay during the First Intermediate Period, the Hyksos during the Second. Still, they probably numbered in the thousands rather than in the hundred thousands.

▶ *Egyptians*: people (Wilson)

*amethyst,
 Iahet-stone and [. .
 .] are strung on the
 necks of
 maidservants. Good
 things are
 throughout the
 land, (yet)
 housewives say:
 "Oh that we had
 something to eat!"
 Indeed, [. . .]
 noblewomen. Their
 bodies are in sad
 plight by reason of
 their rags, and their
 hearts sink when
 greeting [one
 another]. Indeed,
 chests of ebony are
 broken up, and
 precious
 ssnDm-wood is
 cleft asunder in
 beds [. . .].
 Indeed, the builders
 [of pyramids have
 become]
 cultivators, and
 those who were in
 the sacred bark are
 now yoked [to it].
 None shall indeed
 sail northward to
Byblos today; what
 shall we do for
 cedar trees for our
 mummies, and with
 the produce of
 which priests are
 buried and with the
 oil of which
 [chiefs] are
 embalmed as far as
Keftiu? They come
 no more; gold is
 lacking [. . .] and
 materials for every
 kind of craft have
 come to an end. The
 [. . .] of the palace*

- ▶ *lapis lazuli*: Much coveted blue stone, imported from Asia.
- ▶ *Byblos*: This city on the Lebanese coast supplied cedar wood to the Egyptians since the Old Kingdom at least.
- ▶ *Keftiu*: Often identified as Crete.
- ▶ *The work of craftsmen and [. . .] are the profit of the palace*: Lichtheim: *The output of craftsmen is lacking ---*
- ▶ *truth*: Lichtheim: *gifts*

is despoiled. How often do people of the oases come with their festival spices, mats, and skins, with fresh rdmt-plants, grease of birds . . . ? Indeed, Elephantine and Thinis [...] of Upper Egypt, (but) without paying taxes owing to civil strife. Lacking are grain, charcoal, irtyw-fruit, m'w-wood, nwt-wood, and brushwood. The work of craftsmen and [. . .] are the profit of the palace. To what purpose is a treasury without its revenues? Happy indeed is the heart of the king when truth comes to him! And every foreign land [comes]! That is our fate and that is our happiness! What can we do about it? All is ruin! Indeed, laughter is perished and is [no longer] made; it is groaning that is throughout the land, mingled with complaints.

IV

Indeed, every dead person is as a well-born man.

► *Indeed, every dead person is as a well-born man. Those who were Egyptians [have become] foreigners*

Those who were Egyptians [have become] foreigners and are thrust aside.

Indeed, hair [has fallen out] for everybody, and the man of rank can no longer be

distinguished from him who is nobody.

Indeed, [. . .]

because of noise; noise is not [. . .] in years of noise, and there is no end [of] noise.

Indeed, great and small [say]: "I wish I might die." Little children say: "He should not have caused [me] to live."

Indeed, the children of princes are dashed against walls, and the children of the neck are laid out on the high ground.

Indeed, those who were in the place of embalmment are laid out on the high ground, and the secrets of the embalmers are thrown down because of it.

Indeed, that has perished which yesterday was seen, and the land is left over to its weakness like the cutting of flax.

Indeed, the Delta in its entirety will not be hidden, and

and are thrust aside.: Lichtheim: *Those who were people are strangers whom one shows the way.*

▶ *...the children of the neck* (i.e. holding onto the neck of the carrying grown-up): The (once) prayed-for children (Wilson)

▶ *on the high ground*: burial ground above the flood plain.

▶ *were in the place of embalmment*: Lichtheim: *were entombed*


▶ *crafts*: work (Wilson)

▶ *corn-rubbers*: Lichtheim: *grindstones*

▶ *rafts*: Lichtheim: *Boards*

▶ *Load them with vessels filled with [. . . Let] them know the palanquin.:* Lichtheim: *She is loaded down with jars filled with ---. [No longer] does she know the palanquin,*

▶ *trees are felled and branches are stripped off*: the wholesale destruction of trees causes serious fuel problems, as witnessed nowadays in the Sahel region of sub-saharan Africa




*Lower Egypt puts
trust in trodden
roads. What can
one do? No [. . .]
exist anywhere, and
men say: "Perdition
to the secret place!"
Behold, it is in the
hands of those who
do not know it like
those who know it.
The desert dwellers
are skilled in the
crafts of the Delta.
Indeed, citizens are
put to the
corn-rubbers, and
those who used to
don fine linen are
beaten with . . .
Those who used
never to see the day
have gone out
unhindered; those
who were on their
husbands' beds, let
them lie on rafts. I
say: "It is too heavy
for me," concerning
rafts bearing
myrrh. Load them
with vessels filled
with [. . . Let] them
know the
palanquin. As for
the butler, he is
ruined. There are
no remedies for it;
noblewomen suffer
like maidservants,
minstrels are at the
looms within the
weaving-rooms,
and what they sing
to the
Songstress-goddess
is mourning.
Talkers [. . .]
corn-rubbers.
Indeed, all female
slaves are free with*

*their tongues, and
when their mistress
speaks, it is irksome
to the maidservants.
Indeed, trees are
felled and branches
are stripped off.*

V

*I have separated
him and his
household slaves,
and men will say
when they hear it:
"Cakes are lacking
for most children;
there is no food [. .
.]. What is the taste
of it like today?"
Indeed, magnates
are hungry and
perishing, followers
are followed [. . .]
because of
complaints.
Indeed, the
hot-tempered man
says: "If I knew
where God is, then
I would serve Him."
Indeed, [Right]
pervades the land
in name, but what
men do in trusting
to it is Wrong.
Indeed, runners are
fighting over the
spoil [of] the
robber, and all his
property is carried
off.
Indeed, all animals,
their hearts weep;
cattle moan
because of the state
of the land.
Indeed, the children
of princes are*

- ▶ *I have separated him and his household slaves: Lichtheim: And the servant abandons his household*
- ▶ *Cakes are lacking for most children: Lichtheim: Gone is the gain of abundance of children.*
- ▶ *If I knew where God is, then I would serve Him: implying that he doesn't do so now.*
- ▶ *runners are fighting over the spoil [of] the robber: Lichtheim: one runs and fights for the goods [of a man]. He is robbed;*
- ▶ *the ways are [. . .], the roads are watched: the ways [are not] guarded roads (Wilson)*



*dashed against
walls, and the
children of the neck
are laid out on the
high ground.
Khnum groans
because of his
weariness.
Indeed, terror kills;
the frightened man
opposes what is
done against your
enemies. Moreover,
the few are pleased,
while the rest are . .
. Is it by following
the crocodile and
cleaving it
asunder? Is it by
slaying the lion
roasted on the fire?
[Is it] by sprinkling
for Ptah and taking
[. . .]? Why do you
give to him? There
is no reaching him.
It is misery which
you give to him.
Indeed, slaves . . .
throughout the
land, and the strong
man sends to
everyone; a man
strikes his maternal
brother. What is it
that has been done?
I speak to a ruined
man.
Indeed, *the ways
are [. . .], the roads
are watched; men
sit in the bushes
until the benighted
traveler comes in
order to plunder his
burden, and what is
upon him is taken
away. He is
belabored with
blows of a stick and
murdered.**

*Indeed, that has
perished which
yesterday was seen,
and the land is left
over to its weakness
like the cutting of
flax, commoners
coming and going
in dissolution [. . .].*

VI

*Would that there
were an end of men,
without conception,
without birth! Then
would the land be
quiet from noise
and tumult be no
more.*

*Indeed, [men eat]
herbage and wash
[it] down with
water; neither fruit
nor herbage can be
found [for] the
birds, and [. . .] is
taken away from
the mouth of the
pig. No face is
bright which you
have [. . .] for me
through hunger.*

*Indeed, everywhere
barley has perished
and men are
stripped of clothes,
spice, and oil;
everyone says:
"There is none."
The storehouse is
empty and its
keeper is stretched
on the ground; a
happy state of
affairs! . . .*

*Would that I had
raised my voice at
that moment, that it*

▶ *spice, and oil:* Lichtheim:
Unanointed with oil

▶ *the private council-chamber, its
writings are taken away and the
mysteries which were [in it] are laid
bare* the writings of the augurs
enclosure are read. The place of
secrets which was (so formerly) is
(now) laid bare (Wilson)

▶ *magic spells are divulged:*

Anybody who knew magic spells
could use them, though overuse seems
to have made them ineffective. ([Magic](#)
has always shunned the light of day
and becomes ineffectual when
scrutinized with a critical mind.
Strangely, this has never prevented
people from believing in it).

▶ *smw- and shnw spells:* Go-spells
and Enfold-spells (Wilson)

▶ *because they are remembered:*

Lichtheim: *through being repeated*

▶ *the corn of Egypt is common
property:* Wilson: *The*

*grain-sustenance of Egypt is (now) a
come-and-get-it.*

Corn in the ancient Egyptian context
refers to wheat and/or barley. The
storage of surplus grain and its
redistribution was one of the corner
stones of the Egyptian [economy](#).
Egypt was *not* a welfare state,
distributing free grain.

▶ *has attained to the state of:*

Lichtheim: *comes to the place*

▶ *Nine Gods:* The *ennead*, the totality
of the gods of a locality, not
necessarily amounting to exactly nine
gods.

▶ *House of Thirty:* Tribunal, cf. *Hail
Eater of entrails who came forth from*

might have saved me from the pain in which I am.

Indeed, the private council-chamber, its writings are taken away and the mysteries which were [in it] are laid bare.

Indeed, magic spells are divulged; smw- and shnw-spells are frustrated because they are remembered by men.

Indeed, public offices are opened and their inventories are taken away; the serf has become an owner of serfs.

Indeed, [scribes] are killed and their writings are taken away. Woe is me because of the misery of this time!

Indeed, the writings of the scribes of the cadaster are destroyed, and the corn of Egypt is common property.

Indeed, the laws of the council chamber are thrown out; indeed, men walk on them in public places, and poor men break them up in the streets.

Indeed, the poor man has attained to the state of the Nine Gods, and the erstwhile procedure

the House of Thirty, I have not committed perjury. from the Book of the Dead transl. by Allen and Faulkner


► *the children of magnates are ejected into the streets: Lichtheim: there is much hatred in the streets*

*of the **House of the Thirty** is divulged. Indeed, the great council-chamber is a popular resort, and poor men come and go to the Great Mansions. Indeed, **the children of magnates are ejected into the streets**; the wise man agrees and the fool says "no," and it is pleasing in the sight of him who knows nothing about it. Indeed, those who were in the place of embalment are laid out on the high ground, and the secrets of the embalmers are thrown down because of it.*

VII

*Behold, the fire has gone up on high, and its burning goes forth against the enemies of the land. Behold, things have been done which have not happened for a long time past; the king has been **deposed by the rabble**. Behold, he who was buried as a **falcon** [is devoid] of biers, and what the **pyramid** concealed has become empty.*

- ▶ *deposed by the rabble*: Lichtheim: robbed by beggars
- ▶ *Falcon*: the pharaoh, son of Horus
- ▶ *pyramid*: pyramids were built from the third dynasty to the Middle Kingdom.
- ▶ *lawless men*: Lichtheim: *people who ignore custom*. Essentially, Egyptian [law](#) was customary law.
- ▶ *Uraeus*: The snake symbol of the ruler, worn on pharaonic [headdresses](#).
- ▶ *the [. . .] of Re*: Lichtheim: *Stolen*] is the crown of Re
- ▶ *Serpent*: Wilson: (guardian-)serpent
- ▶ *he who could not build a room for himself is now a possessor of walls*: Lichtheim: *He who did not build a hut is an owner of coffers*.



*Behold, it has
befallen that the
land has been
deprived of the
kingship by a few
lawless men.
Behold, men have
fallen into rebellion
against the Uraeus,
the [. . .] of Re,
even she who makes
the Two Lands
content.
Behold, the secret
of the land whose
limits were
unknown is
divulged, and the
Residence is thrown
down in a moment.
Behold, Egypt is
fallen to pouring of
water, and he who
poured water on the
ground has carried
off the strong man
in misery.
Behold, the Serpent
is taken from its
hole, and the
secrets of the Kings
of Upper and
Lower Egypt are
divulged.
Behold, the
Residence is afraid
because of want,
and [men go about]
unopposed to stir
up strife.
Behold, the land
has knotted itself up
with confederacies,
and the coward
takes the brave
man's property.
Behold, the Serpent
[. . .] the dead: he
who could not make
a sarcophagus for
himself is now the*

possessor of a tomb.

Behold, the possessors of tombs are ejected on to the high ground, while he who could not make a coffin for himself is now [the possessor] of a treasury.

Behold, this has happened [to] men; he who could not build a room for himself is now a possessor of walls.

Behold, the magistrates of the land are driven out throughout the land: [. . .] are driven out from the palaces.

Behold, noble ladies are now on rafts, and magnates are in the labor establishment, while he who could not sleep even on walls is now the possessor of a bed.

Behold, the possessor of wealth now spends the night thirsty, while he who once begged his dregs for himself is now the possessor of overflowing bowls.

Behold, the possessors of robes are now in rags, while he who could not weave for himself is now a possessor of fine linen.

Behold, he who

▶ *Behold, noble ladies are now on rafts, and magnates are in the labor establishment, while he who could not sleep even on walls is now the possessor of a bed: Wilson: Behold, nobles' ladies are (now) gleaners, and nobles are in the workhouse. (But) he who never (even) slept on a plank is (now) the owner of a bed.*

Bedsteads were expensive furniture. Most people would have slept on the floor.

▶ *shade: Lichtheim: shelter*

▶ *Songstress-goddess: goddess of music (Wilson)*

▶ *vessel-stands: Most vessels had rounded bottoms and were placed on circular vessel-stands to prevent them from falling over.*

Lichtheim: offering-tables



Limestone pot stand, 12th dynasty.

could not build a
boat for himself is
now the possessor
of a fleet; their
erstwhile owner
looks at them, but
they are not his.
Behold, he who had
no *shade* is now the
possessor of *shade*,
while the erstwhile
possessors of *shade*
are now in the full
blast of the storm.
Behold, he who was
ignorant of the lyre
is now the
possessor of a harp,
while he who never
sang for himself
now vaunts the
Songstress-goddess.
Behold, those who
possessed
vessel-stands of
copper [. . .] not
one of the jars
thereof has been
adorned.

Source: [Petrie Museum website](#)

VIII


Behold, he who
slept *wifeless
through want*
[finds] *riches*,
while he whom he
never saw stands
making dole.
Behold, he who had
no property is now
a possessor of
wealth, and the
magnate praises
him.
Behold, *the poor of
the land have
become rich*, and
the [erstwhile

▶ *wifeless through want*: Founding a household, which seems to have been almost synonymous with getting married required a modicum of wealth.

▶ *riches*: Lichtheim: *noblewoman*

▶ *the poor of the land have become rich*: In reality the poor do not become rich during social upheaval.

▶ *serving-men*: Lichtheim: *cooks*



*owner] of property
is one who has
nothing.
Behold,
serving-men have
become masters of
butlers, and he who
was once a
messenger now
sends someone else.
Behold, he who had
no loaf is now the
owner of a barn,
and his storehouse
is provided with the
goods of another.
Behold, he whose
hair is fallen out
and who had no oil
has now become the
possessors of jars
of sweet myrrh.
Behold, she who
had no box is now
the owner of a
coffer, and she who
had to look at her
face in the water is
now the owner of a
mirror.
Behold, [. . .].
Behold, a man is
happy eating his
food. Consume your
goods in gladness
and unhindered, for
it is good for a man
to eat his food; God
commands it for
him whom He has
favored [. . .].
[Behold, he who did
not know] his god
now offers to him
with incense of
another [who is]
not known [to him].
[Behold,] great
ladies, once
possessors of
riches, now give*

*their children for
beds.*

*Behold, a man [to
whom is given] a
noble lady as wife,
her father protects
him, and he who
has not [. . .] killing
him.*

*Behold, the
children of
magistrates are [. .
. the calves] of
cattle [are given
over] to the
plunderers.*

*Behold, **priests
transgress with the
cattle of the poor** [. . .].*

*Behold, he who
could not slaughter
for himself now
slaughters bulls,
and he who did not
know how to carve
now sees [. . .].*

*Behold, **priests
transgress with
geese, which are
given [to] the gods
instead of oxen.***

*Behold,
maidservants [. . .]
offer ducks;
noblewomen [. . .].
Behold,
noblewomen flee;
the overseers of [. .
.] and their
[children] are cast
down through fear
of death.*

*[Behold,] the chiefs
of the land flee;
there is no purpose
for them because of
want. The lord of [. . .].*

▶ *priests transgress with the cattle of the poor [. . .]: Lichtheim: the serfs eat beef, The paupers -----*

▶ *priests transgress: Lichtheim: serfs eat*

▶ *geese, which are given [to] the gods instead of oxen: Shortchanging and stealing from the gods was a mortal sin. I have not purloined offerings ([Negative confessions](#))*

IX

[Behold,] those who once owned beds are now on the ground, while he who once slept in squalor now lays out a skin-mat for himself.

*Behold, noblewomen go hungry, while the **priests** are sated with what has been prepared for them. Behold, no offices are in their right place, like a herd running at random without a herdsman.*


*Behold, cattle stray and there is none to collect them, but **everyone fetches for himself those that are branded with his name.***

Behold, a man is slain beside his brother, who runs away and abandons him to save his own skin.

Behold, he who had no yoke of oxen is now the owner of a herd, and he who could find for himself no ploughman is now the owner of cattle.

Behold, he who had no grain is now the owner of granaries, and he who had to fetch loan-corn for

- ▶ *priests: king's men (Wilson)*
- ▶ *everyone fetches for himself those that are branded with his name: Wilson: Every man takes for himself and brands (them) with his name.*



*himself is now one
who issues it.
Behold, he who had
no dependents is
now an owner of
serfs, and he who
was [a magnate]
now performs his
own errands.
Behold, the strong
men of the land, the
condition of the
people is not
reported [to them].
All is ruin!
Behold, no
craftsmen work, for
the enemies of the
land have
impoverished its
craftsmen.
[Behold, he who
once recorded] the
harvest now knows
nothing about it,
while he who never
ploughed [for
himself is now the
owner of corn; the
reaping] takes
place but is not
reported. The
scribe [sits in his
office], but his
hands [are idle] in
it.
Destroyed is [. . .]
in that time, and a
man looks [on his
friend as] an
adversary. The
infirm man brings
coolness [to what is
hot . . .] fear [. . . .
.]. Poor men [. . .
the land] is not
bright because of it.*

X

*Destroyed is [. . .]
their food is taken
from them [. . .
through] fear of his
terror. The
commoner begs [. . .
.] messenger, but
not [. . .] time. He
is captured laden
with goods and [all
his property] is
taken away. [. . .]
men pass by his
door [. . .] the
outside of the wall,
a shed, and rooms
containing falcons.
It is the common
man who will be
vigilant, the day
having dawned on
him without his
dreading it. Men
run because of [. . .
for] the temple of
the head, strained
through a woven
cloth within the
house. What they
make are tents, just
like the desert folk.
Destroyed is the
doing of that for
which men are sent
by retainers in the
service of their
masters; they have
no readiness.
Behold, they are
five men, and they
say: "Go on the
road you know, for
we have arrived."
Lower Egypt
weeps; the king's
storehouse is the*

*common property of
 everyone, and the
 entire palace is
 without its
 revenues. To it
 belong emmer and
 barley, fowl and
 fish; to it belong
 white cloth and fine
 linen, copper and
 oil; to it belong
 carpet and mat, [. . .
 .] flowers and
 wheat-sheaf and all
 good revenues . . .
 If the . . . it in the
 palace were
 delayed, men would
 be devoid [of . . .].
 Destroy the enemies
 of the august
 Residence, splendid
 of magistrates [. . .]
 in it like [. . .];
 indeed, the
 Governor of the
 City goes
 unescorted.
 Destroy [the
 enemies of the
 august Residence,]
 splendid [. . .].
 [Destroy the
 enemies of] that
 erstwhile august
 Residence, manifold
 of laws [. . .].
 [Destroy the
 enemies of] that
 erstwhile august
 [Residence . . .].
 Destroy the enemies
 of that erstwhile
 august Residence [. . .]
 . . .] none can stand
 [. . .].
 Destroy the enemies
 of that erstwhile
 august Residence,
 manifold of offices;
 indeed [. . .].*

*Remember to
immerse [. . .] him
who is in pain when
he is sick in his
body; show respect
[. . .] because of his
god that he may
guard the utterance
[. . .] his children
who are witnesses
of the surging of the
flood.*

XI

*Remember to [. . . .
. . .] . . . shrine, to
fumigate with
incense and to offer
water in a jar in the
early morning.
Remember [to
bring] fat r-geese,
trp-geese, and
ducks and to offer
god's offerings to
the gods.
Remember to chew
natron and to
prepare white
bread; a man
[should do it] on
the day of wetting
the head.
Remember to erect
flagstaffs and to
carve offering
stones, the priest
cleansing the
chapels and the
temple being
plastered (white)
like milk; to make
pleasant the odor of
the horizon and to
provide
bread-offerings.
Remember to
observe*

► *Remember*: The things to remember are the duties of the priests, first among them the pharaoh as High Priest, to their gods. In accordance with the magical thinking of the day (and which still persists among many believers) the meticulous fulfilment of duties brings with it the favour of the gods and thus the well-being of the pious.

► *ducks*: sat-geese (Wilson)

► *natron*: used for cleaning teeth, cf.

[Personal hygiene and cosmetics](#)

► *horizon*: Lichtheim: *sanctuary*

► *impurity of body*: Priest had to observe a number of rules, like removing hair, wearing white sandals made of reeds etc.

► *he*: the creator god

*regulations, to fix
dates correctly, and
to remove him who
enters on the
priestly office in
impurity of body,
for that is doing it
wrongfully, it is
destruction of the
heart [. . .] the day
which precedes
eternity, the months
[. . .] years are
known.*

*Remember to
slaughter oxen [. .
.].*

*Remember to go
forth purged [. . .]
who calls to you; to
put r-geese on the
fire [. . .] to open
the jar [. . .] the
shore of the waters
[. . .] of women [. .
.] clothing [.]
to give praise . . . in
order to appease
you.*

*[. . .] lack of
people; come [. . .]
Re who commands
[. . .] worshipping
him [. . .] West until
[. . .] are
diminished [. . .].*

*Behold, why does
he seek to fashion
[men . . .]? The
frightened man is
not distinguished
from the violent
one.*


XII

*He brings coolness
upon heat; men say:
"He is the*

► *herdsman*: The metaphor of divine
herdsman or shepherd is frequently
used in Egyptian literature.

*herdsman of mankind, and there is no evil in his heart." Though his herds are few, yet he spends a day to collect them, their hearts being on fire. Would that he had perceived **their nature** in the first generation; then he would have imposed obstacles, he would have stretched out his arm against them, he would have destroyed **their herds** and their **heritage**. Men desire the giving of birth, but sadness supervenes, with needy people on all sides. So it is, and it will not pass away while the gods who are in the midst of it exist. Seed goes forth into mortal women, but none are found on the road. Combat has gone forth, and he who should be a redresser of evils is one who commits them; neither do men act as pilot in their hour of duty. Where is he today? Is he asleep? Behold, his power is not seen. If we had been fed, I would not have found you, I would not have been summoned in vain;*

- ▶ *their nature*: The evil in man was either unintentional or it came into being shortly after creation.
- ▶ *their herds*: Wilson: *the seed thereof*. Re would have destroyed his flawed creation had he known at the beginning.
- ▶ *heritage*: Lichtheim: *heirs*



*"Aggression
against it means
pain of heart" is a
saying on the lips of
everyone. Today he
who is afraid . . . a
myriad of people; [. . .]
did not see [. . .]
against the enemies
of [. . .] at his outer
chamber; who enter
the temple [. . .]
weeping for him [. . .]
] that one who
confounds what he
has said . . . The
land has not fallen
[. . .] the statues
are burned and
their tombs
destroyed [. . .] he
sees the day of [. . .]
]. He who could
not make for
himself [. . .]
between sky and
ground is afraid of
everybody.
. . . if he does it . . .
what you dislike
taking.
Authority,
knowledge, and
truth are with you,
yet confusion is
what you set
throughout the
land, also the noise
of tumult. Behold,
one deals harm to
another, for men
conform to what
you have
commanded. If
three men travel on
the road, they are
found to be only
two, for the many
kill the few.*

XIII

*Does a herdsman
desire death? Then
may you command
reply to be made,
because it means
that one loves,
another detests; it
means **that their
existences are few
everywhere; it
means that you
have acted so as to
bring those things
to pass. You have
told lies, and the
land is a weed
which destroys
men, and none can
count on life. All
these years are
strife, and a man is
murdered on his
housetop even
though he was
vigilant in his gate
lodge. **Is he brave
and saves himself?
It means he will
live.*****

*When men send a
servant for humble
folk, he goes on the
road until he sees
the flood; the road
is washed out and
he stands worried.
What is on him is
taken away, he is
belabored with
blows of a stick and
wrongfully slain.
Oh that you could
taste a little of the
misery of it! Then
you would say [. . .]
from someone else*

- ▶ *that their existences are few:*
Lichtheim: *reducing their numbers*
- ▶ *Is he brave and saves himself? It
means he will live:* Lichtheim: *. If he
is brave he may save himself. Such is
his life!*
- ▶ *net is drawn in and birds are tied
up:* [Bird netting](#) was to some a leisure
activity, to others a necessity.
- ▶ *build pyramids:* an activity which
had completely ceased by the New
Kingdom.

*as a wall, over and
 above [. . .] hot . . .
 years . . . [. . .].
 [It is indeed good]
 when ships fare
 upstream [.]
 robbing them.
 It is indeed good [. .
 .]. [It is indeed]
 good when the *net*
is drawn in and
birds are tied up [. .
 .].
 It is [indeed] good
 [. . .] dignities for
 them, and the roads
 are passable.
 It is indeed good
 when the hands of
 men *build*
pyramids, when
 ponds are dug and
 plantations of the
 trees of the gods
 are made.
 It is indeed good
 when men are
 drunk; they drink
 myt and their
 hearts are happy.*

XIV

*It is indeed good
 when shouting is in
 men's mouths, when
 the magnates of
 districts stand
 looking on at the
 shouting in their
 houses, clad in a
 cloak, cleansed in
 front and
well-provided
within.
 It is indeed good
 when beds are
 prepared and the
 headrests of*

- ▶ *well-provided within*: firm-bellied (Wilson)
- ▶ *The Medjay are pleased with Egypt*: The Madjoi fortunately are with Egypt. (Wilson); The Medjai are content with Egypt." (Lichtheim)

*magistrates are
safely secured.
Every man's need is
satisfied with a
couch in the shade,
and a door is now
shut on him who
once slept in the
bushes.*

*It is indeed good
when fine linen is
spread out on New
Year's Day [. . .] on
the bank; when fine
linen is spread out
and cloaks are on
the ground. The
overseer of [. . .]
the trees, the poor
[.] in their
midst like Asiatics
[. . .]. Men [. . .]
the state thereof;
they have come to
an end of
themselves; none
can be found to
stand up and
protect themselves
[. . .].*

*Everyone fights for
his sister and saves
his own skin. Is it
Nubians? Then will
we guard ourselves;
warriors are made
many in order to
ward off foreigners.
Is it Libyans? Then
we will turn away.*

*The Medjay are
pleased with Egypt.*

XV

*How comes it that
every man kills his
brother? The troops
whom we*

► *foreigners and have taken to
ravaging: Wilson: barbarians,
beginning to destroy that from which
they took their being. [Foreigners](#) were*

marshaled for
ourselves have
turned into
*foreigners and have
taken to ravaging.*
What has come to
pass through it is
informing the
Asiatics of the state
of the land; all the
desert folk are
possessed with the
fear of it. *What the
plebs have tasted [. . .]
without giving
Egypt over [to] the
sand. It is strong [. . .]
.] speak about you
after years [. . .]
devastate itself, it is
the threshing floor
which nourishes
their houses [. . .]
to nourish his
children [. . .] said
by the troops [. . . .
.] fish [. . .] gum,
lotus leaves [. . .]
excess of food.*

seen as agents of chaos.

► *What the plebs have tasted [. . .]
without giving Egypt over [to] the
sand: Lichtheim: The experience of
the people is that they say: "Egypt will
not be given over <to> sand!"*

XVI

*What Ipuwer said
when he addressed
the Majesty of the
Lord of All: [. . .]
all herds. It means
that ignorance of it
is what is pleasing
to the heart. You
have done what was
good in their hearts
and you have
nourished the
people with it. They
cover their faces
through fear of the
morrow.
That is how a man*

*grows old before he
dies, while his son
is a lad of
understanding; he
does not open [his]
mouth to speak to
you, but you seize
him in the doom of
death [. . .] weep [.
. . .] go [. . .] after
you, that the land
may be [. . .] on
every side.*

XVII

*If men call to [. . .]
weep [. . .] them,
who break into the
tombs and burn the
statues [. . .] the
corpses of the
nobles [.] of
directing work.*

[1] Influenced by the revisionist historians of the second half of the 20th century who could not find any archaeological proofs for the historicity of the earlier Bible stories, their value as historical records came to be doubted. Before that time most Egyptologists, having grown up in the Christian West, accepted these accounts as being, at least in part, historically correct.



[Index of Texts](#)



[Index of Topics](#)



[Main Index and Search Page](#)

Links (Opening in a new window)

These are just suggestions for further study. I do not assume any responsibility for the content or availability of these websites.



[Theses for the reconstruction of ancient history from the end of the Middle Kingdom in Egypt to the advent of Alexander the Great by Immanuel](#)

Velikovsky

Feedback: Please report broken links, mistakes - factual or otherwise, etc. to [me](#). Thanks.

Update: August 2004

