

## MOSES THE MAGICIAN

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### *Moses as Equal to Pharaoh*

Gary A. Rendsburg, "Moses as Equal to Pharaoh," in Gary M. Beckman and Theodore J. Lewis, eds., *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion* (Brown Judaic Studies 346; Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006), pp. 201-219.

➤ Exodus 7:1 : וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה רְאֵה נִתְּתִיךָ אֱלֹהִים לְפַרְעֹה וְאַהֲרֹן אָחִיךָ יִהְיֶה נְבִיאֲךָ :  
"Look, I have set you (as) a god to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother will be your prophet."

➤ Exodus 4:16 : וּדְבַר-הוּא לְךָ אֱלֹהֵי עַמּוֹ וְהָיָה הוּא יְהִי-לְךָ לִפִּי וְאַתָּה תְהִי-לּוֹ לֵאלֹהִים :  
"And it will be, he will be for you as a mouth, and you will be for him as a god."

Moses as Horus, the baby hidden in the papyrus-thicket, nursed by his mother Isis, to protect him from his wicked uncle Seth (as revealed through P. Jumilhac, various artistic representations, Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, etc.)

➤ Exodus 34:29-30 קָרַן עוֹר פָּנָיו 'the skin of his face was horned'

See artistic depictions of Amenhotep III and Rameses II (both at the Luxor Temple) with horned cheeks; for discussion see Lanny Bell, "Luxor Temple and the Cult of the Royal Ka," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 44 (1985), pp. 251-294.

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## THE UNKNOWN NAME OF RA

(P. Turin 1993, c. 1300 B.C.E.)

Adapted from translation by Robert K. Ritner, *The Context of Scripture*, 1.33-34

Spell of the divine god, who came into being by himself, who made heaven, earth, water, the breath of life, fire, gods, men, flocks, herds, reptiles, birds, and fish, the kingship of gods and men as a single thing, with limits beyond numerous years and with numerous names. One did not know that (name), one did not know this (name).

Now Isis was a wise woman. Her heart was more devious than millions among men, she was more selective than millions among the gods, she was more discerning than millions among the blessed dead. There was nothing that she did not know in heaven or earth, like Ra, who made the substance of the earth. The goddess planned in her heart to learn the name of the noble god.

[Isis creates a ‘noble serpent’, which bites Ra and injects him with poison.]

.....

[Ra speaks:] “I am a noble, son of a noble, the fluid of a god come forth from a god. I am a great one, son of a great one. My father thought out my name. I am one who has numerous names and numerous forms. My form exists as every god. I am called Atum and Horus of Praise. My father and mother told me my name. I have hidden it in my body since birth, so as to prevent the power of a male magician or a female magician from coming into existence against me.”

.....

[Isis speaks:] “Say to me your name, my divine father, for a man lives when one recites his name.”

[Ra recites a series of names.]

.....

[Isis again speaks:] “Your name is not really among those that you have said to me. Say it to me so that the poison might go out, for a man lives when one pronounces his name.”

The poison burned with a burning, it was more powerful than flame or fire.

Then the majesty of Ra said, “May you give to me your two ears, my daughter Isis, so that my name might go forth from my body to your body. The most divine one among the gods had hidden it, so that my status might be great within the Bark of Millions. If there occurs a similar occasion when a heart goes out to you, say it to your son Horus after you have you made him swear by a divine oath, placing god in his eyes.” The great god announced his name to Isis, the Great One of Magic.

[Isis speaks:] “Flow out, scorpions! Come forth from Ra, Eye of Horus! Come forth from the god, flame of the mouth. I am the one who made you, I am the one who sent you. Come out upon the ground, powerful poison! Behold, the great god has announced his name. Ra lives, the poison is dead. . . . The poison is dead through the speech of Isis the Great, the Mistress of the Gods, who knows Ra by his own name.”

## **THE WAX CROCODILE**

P. Westcar (Hyksos period) – Second Tale

Adapted from translation by W. K. Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 15-16

When day broke and the second day came, the caretaker informed the chief lector-priest Webaoner of the matter. Then he made a fire and from ebony and gold he made a crocodile of wax seven fingers long. He read out his magic words saying . . . “If anyone comes to bathe in my lake.” . . . Then he gave it to the caretaker and he said to him: “After the townsman goes down to the pool, as is his daily fashion, you shall cast the crocodile after him.” The caretaker went forth and he took the crocodile of wax with him.

. . . . .

After nightfall, the townsman returned as was his daily fashion, and the caretaker threw the crocodile of wax behind him into the water. At once it grew into a crocodile of seven cubits, and it took hold of the townsman.

Webaoner tarried with his majesty the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Nebka the justified, for seven days, all the while the townsman was in the lake without breathing. After seven days had passed, his majesty the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Nebka the justified, came forth, and the chief lector-priest Webaoner placed himself in his presence and said to him, “May your majesty come and see the marvel which has taken place in your majesty’s time.” His majesty went with Webaoner. He called out to the crocodile and said, “Bring back the townsman.” The crocodile came out of the water. Then the chief lector-priest said, “Open up!” and he opened up. Then he placed . . .

His majesty the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Nebka the justified, said, “This crocodile is indeed fearful!” But Webaoner bent down, and he caught it and it became a crocodile of wax in his hand. The chief lector-priest Webaoner told his majesty about the affair which the townsman had in his house with his wife.

. . . . .

This is the wonder which happened in the time of your father, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Nebka the justified, the deed of the chief lector-priest Webaoner.

## **PARALLELS TO THE PLAGUES**

THE ADMONITIONS OF IPUWER, Egyptian sage, c. 2000 B.C.E.

P. Leiden 344 (18th-19th Dynasty)

Adapted from Nili Shupak, *The Context of Scripture*, 1.94

Indeed, the river is blood, yet one drinks from it. Men shrink from people and thirst after water. . . . Indeed, the desert is throughout the land, the nomes are laid waste. Foreign tribes (lit. *pḏtyw* ‘bowmen’) come into Egypt. They are really no people.

HERODOTUS, Book Two, section 37

Translation of A. D. Godley, *Herodotus* (Loeb Classical Library), vol. 1, p. 319

Their priests shave the whole body every other day, that no lice or aught else that is foul may infest them in their service of the gods.

HERODOTUS, Book Two, section 95

Translation of A. D. Godley, *Herodotus* (Loeb Classical Library), vol. 1, p. 381

Gnats are abundant. (with long section following on how the Egyptians protect themselves from this pest)

THE PROPHECY OF NEFERTI (Egyptian sage, c. 1975 B.C.E.)

P. Petersburg 1116B (18th dynasty)

Translation of Nili Shupak, *The Context of Scripture*, 1.108

The sun is covered and does not shine for the people to see. No one can live when the clouds cover (the sun), every face is numb from lack of it. . . . The land is burdensome with misfortune, because of those looking (?) for food, Asiatics (<sup>o</sup>*mw*) roaming the land. Foes have arisen in the east, Asiatics have descended into Egypt.

SETNE KHAMWAS AND SI-OSIRE (SETNE II)

Demotic text, P. BM 604 (verso)

Translation of Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 3.144

*Setne Khamwas is the son of Rameses II and high priest of Memphis, and a great magician, about whom there is a series of stories. In one narrative his son Si-Osire surpasses him in wisdom and magic. In the course of this story, Si-Osire quotes an unnamed Nubian magician:*

One of them was talking in a loud voice and said among other things: “Were it not that Amun would find fault with me, and that the lord of Egypt might [punish me], I would cast my sorceries upon Egypt and would make the people of Egypt spend three days and three nights seeing no light, only darkness.”

## DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN

Translations by M. Gilula, *Tel-Aviv* 4 (1977), p. 94

CANNIBAL HYMN (Pyramid Texts, par. 399a-b)  
(from pyramids of Unas, c. 2350 B.C.E., and Teti, c. 2320 B.C.E.)

It is the king who will be judged with Him-whose-name-is-hidden on that day of the slaying of the first-born (*smsw*).

COFFIN TEXT / de Buck VI.178p (= Spell 573) (c. 2000 B.C.E.)  
Asyut (Siut) / Cairo 28118  
(with parallel: Asyut (Siut) / Cairo 28119)

I am he who will be judged with Him-whose-name-is-hidden on that night of the slaying of the first-born (*wrw*).

COFFIN TEXT / de Buck II.163b-c (= Spell 136) (c. 2000 B.C.E.)  
Coffin in Saqqara storeroom  
(with three parallels: British Museum, Louvre, Cairo)

. . . that night of the slaying of the first-born (*wrw*),  
that day of the slaying of the first-born (*wrw*).

## PARALLELS TO THE SPLITTING OF THE SEA

### SETNE KHAMWAS AND NANEFERKAPTAH (SETNE I)

P. Cairo 30646 (Demotic)

Translation of Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 3.144

He (sc. Naneferkaptah) said to the rowers, “Row me to the place where that book is!” [They rowed him by night] as by day. In three days he reached it. He cast sand before him, and a gap formed in the river. He found six miles of serpents, scorpions, and all kinds of reptiles around [the place where the book was]. He found an eternal serpent around this same box. He recited a spell to the six miles of serpents, scorpions, and all kinds of reptiles that were around the box, and did not let them come up. . . .

### THE BOATING PARTY

P. Westcar (Hyksos period) – Third Tale

Translation of Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 1.217

Said his majesty, “Djadja-em-anekh, my brother, I did as you had said. My majesty’s heart was refreshed seeing them row. Then a pendant of new turquoise of one of the leaders fell into the water. She stopped rowing and thereby spoiled her side. I said to her, “Why have you stopped rowing?” She said to me, “Because the pendant of new turquoise fell into the water.” I said to her, “Row! I shall replace it for you!” She said to me, “I prefer my thing to one like it.”

Then the chief lector-priest Djadja-em-anekh said his say of magic. He placed one side of the lake’s water upon the other; and he found the pendant lying on a shard. He brought it and gave it to its owner. Now the water that had been twelve cubits deep across (lit. ‘on its back’) had become twenty-four cubits when it was turned back. Then he said his say of magic and returned the waters of the lake to their place.

His majesty spent the day feasting with the entire palace. Then he rewarded the chief lector-priest Djadja-em-anekh with all good things.

## DROWNING

HERODOTUS, Book Two, section 90

Translation of A. D. Godley, *Herodotus* (Loeb Classical Library), vol. 1, p. 375

When anyone, be he Egyptian or stranger, is known to have been carried off by a crocodile or drowned by the river itself, such an one must by all means be embalmed and tended as fairly as may be and buried in a sacred coffin by the townsmen of the place where he is cast up; nor may any of his kinsfolk or his friends touch him, but his body is deemed something more than human, and is handled and buried by the priests of the Nile themselves.

### AMDUAT – 10th Hour

You are those who are within Nun,  
the drowned who are in his following.  
May life belong to your *bas*!

Translation of Colleen Manassa, *The Late Egyptian Underworld: Sarcophagi and Related Texts from the Nectanebid Period* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2007), p. 350.

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### The Egyptian Magicians in the Book of Exodus

Exodus 7:11

וַיִּקְרָא גַם־פַּרְעֹה לַחֲכָמִים וְלַמְכַשְׁפִּים וַיַּעֲשׂוּ גַם־הֵם חֲרָטְמֵי מִצְרַיִם בְּלִטְיָהֶם כֵּן:

And Pharaoh called the wise-men and the sorcerers, and they also did, the magician-priests of Egypt, by their spells likewise.

Exodus 7:22 וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן חֲרָטְמֵי מִצְרַיִם בְּלִטְיָהֶם

And the magician-priests of Egypt did likewise by their spells.

Exodus 8:3 וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן הַחֲרָטְמִים בְּלִטְיָהֶם

And the magician-priests did likewise by their spells.

Exodus 8:14 וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן הַחֲרָטְמִים בְּלִטְיָהֶם

And the magician-priests did likewise by their spells.