



## THE IPUWER PAPYRUS AND THE EXODUS

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### ABSTRACT

Controversy surrounds the Ipuwer Papyrus, an Egyptian manuscript residing in the Dutch National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, Netherlands. On the one side are those who claim that this manuscript describes chaotic conditions in Egypt at the time of the biblical Exodus. On the other side are those who deny this on the basis of disbelief that the Exodus ever took place, or who claim that the date of the events described in the manuscript are wrong for the Exodus. In this paper we show that this ancient document most likely describes Exodus conditions; and that the Ipuwer Papyrus therefore offers strong extra-biblical evidence for a historical Exodus. With respect to dating the events in this papyrus, it needs to be understood that the secular historical timeline diverges from the biblical timeline, and furthermore, that the Old Kingdom and the Middle Kingdom of Egypt ended at the same time (contrary to the standard history). This puts the manuscript's original date (as determined by scholars) exactly where it should be. The question of divergence of the secular and biblical timelines is a matter of enormous importance for biblical apologetics. Often secular scholars declare that biblical events like the Exodus cannot have taken place because there are no evidences of these at the time in history where the Bible places them. The Ipuwer papyrus therefore supports a divergence of several hundred years between the biblical and secular timelines at the time of the Exodus.

### KEY WORDS

Ipuwer Papyrus, Exodus, plagues, biblical timeline, secular timeline, Egyptian history

### INTRODUCTION

Controversy surrounds the Ipuwer Papyrus, an ancient Egyptian manuscript that describes chaotic conditions in Egypt at some time in the distant past. The disagreements focus on whether or not this manuscript describes Egypt at the time of the Exodus, whether it describes events at some other time in history, or whether it describes real events at all (but is merely a literary genre called a lament). Because many secular scholars do not believe there actually was an Exodus, naturally they do not believe that this papyrus describes Exodus events. Sorting this all out is not simple, because it involves dating the manuscript, dating the Exodus, accepting or not accepting divergence between the biblical and secular timelines, and belief versus disbelief in a literal biblical Exodus.

We will quote the Lichtheim English translation of 1973 in this paper. It is widely used and comes with notes as well as references to and discussion of prior translations (Gardiner 1909; Erman 1966; Faulkner 1965; Wilson 1969). We recognize that there are more recent translations (e.g., Dollinger 2000; Enmarch 2008). However, from the point of view of this paper, the various translations do not vary greatly beyond nuances of certain expressions and some differences in guesses at what missing words in the manuscript might be (there are quite a number of those). Any of these translations could be used. A translation of the entire Ipuwer text by Dollinger (2000) appears online.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE IPUWER PAPYRUS

The Ipuwer Papyrus is an ancient Egyptian manuscript written in hieratic script, 378 cm x 18 cm, residing in the Dutch National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, Netherlands. Its official designation is Papyrus Leiden I 344 recto. The papyrus is also called *The Admonitions of Ipuwer* and *The Dialogue of Ipuwer and The Lord of All*. It was acquired in Egypt by a wealthy merchant and antiquarian, Jean (Giovanni) d'Anastasi, consul for Norway and Sweden, who sold it to the Dutch government in 1828. The

“recto” designation indicates that the text written by Ipuwer is the primary material, because the recto of a papyrus was the best-quality side to write on. The back side, called the “verso,” has unrelated text, a long hymn to the god Amun. For a description and origins of this papyrus see e.g., Gardiner (1909, p. 1); Lichtheim (1973, p. 150); and Jeffrey (2002, p. 59). For a photo of part of the papyrus, see Fig. 1.

The Ipuwer content on the recto side of the papyrus is in the form of a long poem. It is largely a conversation of an Egyptian called Ipuwer, who is talking to someone called The Lord of All. Because the composition is in the form of a poem, the ideas are not presented in a straightforward manner as they might be in a narrative (poetry has not changed greatly in this regard over the millennia).

Because of damage to the manuscript, there are some lines missing both at the beginning and the end; and there are lacunae (missing words) here and there throughout. These latter present problems in determining the exact meaning in some places in the manuscript, and scholars vary in their suggested translations.

Papyrus writing surface is produced by laying down layers of the inner pith of papyrus plant stalks and drying the sheets under pressure (we get our word “paper” from papyrus). The earliest known surviving papyrus with text dates to the 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (about 2500 BC secular), considerably older than the Ipuwer Papyrus; this shows that this medium of writing survives time well. For information on the history and making of papyrus paper, see Gaudet (2014, pp. 44–56).

The hieratic script of the Ipuwer manuscript is the form of writing used by the ancient Egyptian scribes on papyrus. It is not to be confused with hieroglyphics, which are symbols engraved on stone monuments. Hieratic has been described as a sort of cursive form of hieroglyphics. Both forms of writing were used concurrently over many years (Te Velde 1988).

## WHO WAS IPUWER?

The name “Ipuwer” is known in the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms; Ipu-wer means “Ipu the venerable” (Enmarch 2008, p. 29; Mathieu 2012). Scholars believe that Ipuwer, author of this ancient poem, was probably a real historical figure because of the mention of an Ipuwer on a Dynasty XIX tomb relief decoration from Saqqara called the “Daressy fragment” (unprovenanced and now lost, although photographs survive) (Mathieu 2012). There is a band of hieroglyphics on this stone relief that lists a group called “royal scribes,” that names Ipuwer among the others. The specific title given to Ipuwer is “Overseer of Singers,” a title that was known in the Middle Kingdom (see Stefanovic and Satzinger 2014, pp. 28–33). This group of sages and notables of the past includes the famous vizier Imhotep of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dynasty as well as other well-known figures of Egyptian history. We see therefore that these figures were not people who necessarily lived at the time of Dynasty XIX (1292–1189 BC secular). The Ipuwer Papyrus itself does not include a title for its author, although this could have appeared in the lost opening to the poem. We know only that the writer is important enough to be boldly addressing someone called “The Lord of All.” This evidence of Ipuwer as a real person disproves Rice (1999), who states that there is no evidence of Ipuwer apart from the “Admonitions” manuscript.

We see therefore that Ipuwer was most likely a real person who could have written this manuscript. And considering the far-reaching consequences of the plagues that preceded the Exodus, we should not be surprised that someone might have written some kind of contemporary description of those perilous times.

## WHO WAS THE LORD OF ALL?

At the end of the poem, we learn that Ipuwer addresses a personage called “The Lord of All” (Erman 1966, p. 107). We do not know who this is because the manuscript does not say, at least in the part that we have. This leaves scholars to give their preferred interpretations, and they do not have inhibitions about doing this.

The two main choices are that The Lord of All was either the pharaoh of Egypt, or that he was a chief deity, perhaps even the Egyptian creator god. Because the pharaoh of Egypt was regarded as a kind of god throughout its ancient history, or at least touched by the divine, it could be argued that Ipuwer was addressing the pharaoh. After a discussion of the choices, Enmarch (2008, p. 30) decides that Ipuwer must be addressing the pharaoh— even though he admits that this title is most often used to refer to a deity in the Middle Kingdom. This rather weakens his argument.

Because we are saying in this paper that Ipuwer is writing about the period immediately after the Exodus, there may have been no pharaoh ruling in either Lower or Upper Egypt at this time of catastrophe. It would have taken the Egyptians of Lower (north) Egypt a certain amount of time to look for the pharaoh’s body and to establish a new pharaoh in his place; in Upper (south) Egypt we do not know when the pharaoh was deposed. This makes it more likely that Ipuwer was addressing a high deity rather than a pharaoh.

There is one other factor to be considered. The pharaohs of Egypt had absolute power, and were ruthless in exercising it. Would Ipuwer have dared to say such things to the pharaoh as are written in this manuscript? This seems unlikely, because the pharaoh could



Figure 1. Photo of a section of the Ipuwer papyrus that is located in the Dutch National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, Netherlands. (Public Domain)

have had his head in a moment. This would make it more likely that Ipuwer is addressing the chief deity in the land to bemoan the total disaster that had befallen the country.

**INDICATIONS OF THE PLAGUES AND THEIR AFTERMATH IN THE IPUWER PAPYRUS**

If we look at the poem as a whole, we see that it describes an Egypt that is in total chaos and ruin. People are thirsty and desperate for something to drink because the river is blood. The rich are poor and the poor are rich. There is famine, with even the high-born and officials lacking food to eat. There is barrenness of fields, no trees, no crops. The dead are being buried everywhere. Servants have rebelled against their masters. Maidservants wear valuable necklaces. The wealthy have been turned out of their mansions. There appears to be no central authority in power. Travelers on the roads are robbed and killed. Farmers are carrying shields to defend themselves. Enmarch (2008) aptly titles his book, *A World Upturned...* (ironically he does not believe that the Ipuwer Papyrus refers to the Exodus). Ipuwer’s description of this total collapse of Egypt is the kind of situation that we might expect to find if the ten plagues described in the Exodus had taken place.

In Table 1 we list some details in the Ipuwer Papyrus that parallel the biblical narrative.

**DISCUSSION**

**1. The question of dating the Ipuwer Papyrus events**

Ultimately, we need to be able to place the events described in this papyrus at the time of the Exodus. The sole extant copy of the manuscript dates to the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC (secular); however, scholars are quite sure that it is a copy of a much earlier original. Although most agree that the text was written at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, they are divided on the question of when the events described in it occurred (if they believe these events really did occur). Gardiner (1972, pp. 109–110) says that it is “indisputable” that the papyrus describes events during the First Intermediate Period, immediately after the 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty: “...the condition of the country which it discloses is one which cannot be ascribed to the imagination of a romancer, nor does it fit into any place of Egyptian history except that following the end of the Old Kingdom.” Erman (1966 p. 93) concurs, saying that it is as if Egypt was suddenly blotted from our sight at that time. Hassan (2007) also takes the firm view that Ipuwer is describing real historical events at the end of the Old Kingdom. On the other hand, Velikovsky (1952, pp. 66–67) argues that the events must have happened at the end of the Middle Kingdom, at the time of the Exodus, just before the entrance of the Hyksos into Egypt. Stewart (2003, pp. 255–256) agrees, because Ipuwer writes as if the events have just happened, and the end of the Middle Kingdom is when Stewart believes that the Exodus took place. See also Van Seters (1964, pp. 13–23), who argues for the later date.

The conventional Egyptian chronology shows a total collapse of Egypt twice: at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (end of the Old Kingdom) and then again at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (end of the Middle Kingdom). In the standard view, the same series of unusual events in the same order took place at the end of both of these two dynasties. Secular scholars have noticed this peculiarity, but do not seem to realize how unlikely this is. For instance, see Gardiner (1972, p. 147):

...it will be well to note that the general pattern of these two dark periods is roughly the same. Both begin with a chaotic series of insignificant native rulers; in both, intruders from Palestine cast their shadow over the delta,

**Table 1.** Comparison of statements from the Ipuwer Papyrus and statements in the Bible. Quotes and page numbers in the left column are from the Lichtheim (1973) translation.

Statement from Ipuwer Papyrus	Inferred Biblical Reference and Text
1. There’s blood everywhere... Lo the river is blood (p. 151).	1. ...all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood (Exodus 7:20).
2. ...one...thirsts for water (p. 151).	2. And the Egyptians digged round about the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river (Exodus 7:24).
3. Lo, trees are felled, branches stripped (p. 153).	3. ...and the hail brake every tree of the field (Exodus 9:25).
4. Lo, grain is lacking on all sides (p. 155).	4. ...and the flax and the barley was smitten (Exodus 9:31).
5. Birds find neither fruit nor herbs (p. 154).	5. Ex 10:15 ...they (locusts) did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left (Exodus 10:15).
6. Groaning is throughout the land, mingled with laments (p. 152)	6. ...and there was a great cry in Egypt (Exodus 12:30).
7. Lo, many dead are buried in the river, the stream is the grave, the tomb became stream (p. 151), and He who puts his brother in the ground is everywhere (p. 152).	7. For the Egyptians buried all their firstborn (Numbers 33:4).
8. All is ruin! (p. 152)	8. Egypt is destroyed (Exodus 10:7).

and even into the Valley; and in both relief comes at last from a hardy race of Theban princes, who after quelling internal dissention expel the foreigner and usher in a new epoch of immense power and prosperity.

A total collapse of Egypt would have resulted from the 10 plagues that preceded the Exodus, described in Exodus 7–12. As argued by Habermehl (2013), the likelihood that the 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasties ran concurrently and ended at the same time because of the Exodus plagues is very high. We will take the view here that all the scholars are right about the dating of the Ipuwer Papyrus events with respect to the Egyptian historical timeline, because the Exodus took place at the end of *both* the 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> (concurrent) Dynasties.

If two dynasties were running concurrently, how could two pharaohs be ruling Egypt at the same time? The answer to this would appear to lie with the concept of two Egypts, Upper and Lower, that goes back to the very earliest times. As Habermehl says (2013):

It is possible that the two divisions of Egypt may have been far more important historically than has been realized, and Egypt may have often been divided into two parts under two pharaohs. It is likely a myth that Egypt unified

at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty and was ruled by only one pharaoh at a time after that. Two pharaohs may have reigned concurrently for a lot of Egypt’s history, and more than two pharaohs during some periods, especially in times of disorder.

It would be most likely that one of the ruling pharaohs would be the more powerful one, and would have authority over the lesser pharaoh. Neither pharaoh would be willing to admit in their inscriptions that the other pharaoh was ruling at the same time.

The belief in one pharaoh ruling over all of Egypt is, however, the paradigm to which all secular information on ancient Egypt has to bow. Therefore, the argument among these scholars about dating the Ipuwer Papyrus to the end of the Old Kingdom versus the end of the Middle Kingdom presents a real discrepancy in time to them (about 400 years). For a statement about standard Egyptian chronology, and a typical secular listing of the kings of Egypt, see Shaw (2003, pp. 480–489).

According to arguments by Habermehl (2013), at the time of the Exodus the two ruling pharaohs would have been Amenemhat IV, who reigned from 1786–1777 BC at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty in Lower Egypt; and Pepi II, who reigned from 2278–2184 BC at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty in Upper Egypt (these dates are from Shaw (2003, p. 483)). The reigns of these two pharaohs would have ended abruptly at about the same time because of the plagues. The plagues would have come on both Upper and Lower Egypt, as is shown in the Bible’s description of the plagues; for instance, Exodus 11:5–6 says that the last plague was to be on *all* the firstborn in the land of Egypt, and that there would be a great cry throughout *all* the land of Egypt (*italics are the author’s*).

As the pharaoh of the Exodus, Amenemhat IV in the north would have died by drowning in the Red Sea. But what of Pepi II in the south? There are some hints from Ipuwer: “... things are done that never were before/ The king has been robbed by beggars”

(Lichtheim 1973, p. 155). This would have to refer to the king of Upper Egypt in the south, Pepi II. Ipuwer continues: “...the land is deprived of kingship/By a few people who ignore custom” (Lichtheim 1973, p. 156). The word “robbed” is one place where there are some differences among translators of this manuscript: for instance, Simpson (2003, p. 198) says, “the king has been overthrown by the rabble.” This meaning would be supported by Ipuwer’s statement that the land is deprived of kingship. It would appear that Pepi II did not die in the 10<sup>th</sup> plague, but was deposed some time afterward, most certainly an unusual event for a pharaoh. This would perhaps not be surprising, considering the complete chaos in Egypt at this time, as described by Ipuwer. The last statement in Table I is significant because it shows how widespread the destruction in Egypt was; Ipuwer says “All is ruin!”

The dates that many secular scholars (e.g., Shaw 2003, p. 483) currently give the end of the reigns of Pepi II (2184 BC) and Amenemhat IV (1777 BC) are markedly earlier than the Exodus date of about 1445 BC used by most biblical scholars (e.g., Ashton and Down 2006, p. 89). This means that there is a wide divergence between the biblical and secular timelines, with *two* Exodus dates (that are 400 years apart) on the secular timeline. See Fig. 2 for correlation of the biblical and standard timelines, showing the concurrent double dates for the Exodus at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasties.

We mention here that some biblical believers deny that the Ipuwer Papyrus describes the times of the Exodus, because they do not accept that the two timelines diverge in the second millennium BC; for them, the Exodus took place at 1445 BC on *both* the standard and biblical timelines. They therefore believe that the Ipuwer Papyrus predates the Exodus (e.g., Smith 2015). This presents a problem for them, because the Ipuwer manuscript seems to describe clearly a state of Egypt that was caused by the plagues of the Bible.

**2. Did Egypt collapse because of low Nile floods?**

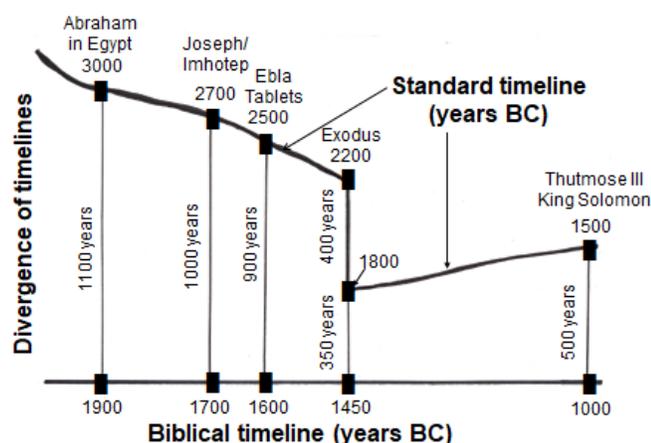
As we see from the Bible, it was the 10 plagues that caused the total collapse of Egypt. However, Hassan (2007), like many others, ascribes the collapse of the Old Kingdom of Egypt to a period of very low Nile flooding, even drying up of the Nile at one point. This would have caused eventual famine over a period of time because far less grain than usual could be grown; other problems would have followed. But Butzer, a scientist, cautions that “it is possible but unproven that Nile failures may have helped trigger collapse of the Old Kingdom” (2012, p. 3634).

Ipuwer gives us a clue about this when he says, “Lo, Hapy (the Nile) inundates and none plow for him” (Lichtheim 1973, p. 151). Although the Nile had risen and deposited the usual sediments, everything was in such disorder that the farmers were not plowing as they normally would have done. We see that Ipuwer bemoans just about everything else going on in Egypt, but the one thing that he does not suggest is that the Nile had not risen as it should. This would indicate that a low Nile rising did not cause the famine that Ipuwer describes. However, a low Nile rising was recorded in the third year of the reign of the pharaoh Sobekneferu (Callender 2003, p. 159), who reigned immediately after the Exodus pharaoh, Amenemhat IV (Habermehl 2013). Because this low Nile rising was only three years after the Exodus, it could be easily mistaken by historians as causing the collapse of Egypt.

**3. The plague of water turned to blood**

As we see above in Table 1, there are some specific details that come out of this manuscript that point to the Exodus plagues, rather than some other period of difficulty that might have taken place in

**Correlation of Biblical and Standard Timelines**



A. Habermehl 2018

**Figure 2.** In this diagram, the lower straight line is the biblical timeline; the Exodus is at 1450 BC. The upper line shows how the standard timeline diverges by different amounts from the biblical one at different times (Habermehl 2013; Habermehl 2018). On the upper line, the Exodus shows up at both 1800 BC and 2200 BC, with the 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasties of Egypt running concurrently and ending at the same time. This causes the unusual sudden drop in the standard timeline. The original Ipuwer Papyrus would therefore refer to events at both 1800 BC and 2200 BC on the standard timeline. These just happen to be the two approximate dates that opposing scholars claim for the events in the Ipuwer Papyrus.

Egypt. The most obvious one is Ipuwer's statement that the river is blood, and the people thirst for water (Lichtheim 1973, p. 151). In Exodus 7:19–24 we see that there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt, in the rivers, the streams, pools of water, ponds, and wood and stone vessels. The water was undrinkable. Both Ipuwer and the Bible say that the river *was* blood, not that it looked like blood.

We might wonder how the skeptics get around this. Not surprisingly they have come up with some explanations for this phenomenon. One popular rationale is that the Nile waters carried so much red soil from the south at that time of year that the water looked red (e.g., Enmarch 2011, p. 174). Another explanation offered is that a certain plant suddenly bloomed in the Nile to make it look red (Humphreys 2003, p. 117). Both of these suggested possibilities present difficulties because the Bible clearly says that not only the water in the Nile turned red, but the water in all the streams and ponds and pools and vessels turned to blood when Aaron smote the waters with his rod (Exodus 7:19, 20). Then the red color suddenly disappeared seven days later (Exodus 7:25). These details of the biblical narrative are hard to explain, short of a miracle. This one statement of the river as blood makes it very likely that the Ipuwer manuscript refers to the time of the Exodus.

#### 4. Statements that can be interpreted more than one way

In reading the Ipuwer poem, we need to be aware that a statement that means one thing to one person can mean something else to another. Indeed, nearly 3500 years after the Exodus, our minds may not think in the same way as an ancient Egyptian poet. We show a few examples here.

“Foreigners have become people everywhere” (Lichtheim 1973, p. 150). Who are these foreigners? Möller (2002, p. 145) claims that they are the Israelites. But we might wonder whether after over 200 years in Egypt that the Children of Israel would be considered foreigners. Because they lived in the Delta in the land of Goshen (Exodus 8: 22–23), they could not be said to be “everywhere.” These foreigners could well be people from outside Egypt who, after the Exodus, with the Egyptian army destroyed, now could enter the undefended country with ease, as mentioned earlier.

“What the ancestors foretold has happened” (Lichtheim 1973, p. 150). Möller claims that this refers to Joseph telling the Children of Israel that they will leave Egypt (2002, p. 145). But would Ipuwer not be more likely to refer to his own Egyptian ancestors who may have foretold some disaster?

“Behold, Egypt is fallen to pouring of water, and he who poured water on the ground has carried off the strong man in misery” (Lichtheim 1973, p. 156). This is claimed to refer to the drowned pharaoh by Stewart (2003, pp. 276–277), who makes a (somewhat) plausible case for this. Alternatively, there are those who quote Exodus 4:9 where God told Moses to pour water on the ground if the Children of Israel would not believe Moses, and this water would turn to blood on the ground. We suggest that this statement could even refer to God, who poured a terrible storm of rain and hail in the seventh plague (Exodus 9:33, 34).

“See now, fire has leaped high” (Lichtheim 1973, p.155). This has been taken to refer to the pillar of fire that God used to lead the Children of Israel by night (Exodus 13:21:22) (e.g., Kolom 2008, p. 114). Alternatively, some believe that this refers to fire that accompanied the plague of hail (Exodus 9:23, 24) (e.g., Holden and Geisler 2013, p. 223).

We cannot use lines in the poem that can be interpreted more than

one way to support our argument, even though we might claim that our preferred interpretation is backed by the Bible.

#### 5. What if the Papyrus does not describe actual events?

Obviously, if scholars can convince us that the events described by Ipuwer did not really occur, we can dispose at once of the possibility that it refers to the time of the Exodus. Indeed, some scholars practically trip over their feet in their eagerness to claim that this manuscript does not refer to real events at all, biblical or otherwise. As an example, Mark (2016) displays almost contempt for those who actually believe. According to him, “One can only accept *The Admonitions of Ipuwer* as history if one has little or no knowledge of Egyptian history and literature.” Lichtheim (1973, p. 150) says 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.”

According to Egyptian scholars, we are supposed to believe that it was very popular back in Ipuwer's day to write lamentation types of literature that had no connection to real events. For further information on this subject, see Pessimistic Literature (2005), and also Shaw (2003, pp. 134–136). We need to consider that these various known pessimistic texts, that were written over a fairly short period of time, might all refer to the troubles that resulted from the plagues and Exodus.

We must also beware of scholars who claim contra statements in the Papyrus that are not true. For instance, Enmarch (2011) says that the Ipuwer poem contradicts the Bible because it speaks of an invasion of Asians, rather than a large-scale emigration. In fact, immediately after the Exodus, with the Egyptian army destroyed, there was no longer any manned defense against the Asian hordes who constantly wanted to get into Egypt from the east. The building of defense walls along the eastern border of Egypt by Amenemhat I at the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty to keep Asiatics out is well documented by historians (e.g., see Shaw 2003, pp. 147–148). But now these people could walk right in. If Enmarch had looked carefully at the biblical narrative and realized its consequences, he would have seen this.

#### 6. What we learn if the Ipuwer Papyrus does describe the time of the Exodus

A large proportion of the text of the Ipuwer Papyrus consists of details that are not mentioned in the biblical narrative, because they are describing the chaotic state of Egypt after the Children of Israel left. We would expect this because the biblical writer is focused on the movements of the Children of Israel, not on the Egypt that they left behind. But if this papyrus really does describe Egypt at the time of the Exodus, we learn some very interesting things about what went on after the Children of Israel left. We see total chaos, with the normal roles of society reversed, servants and masters exchanging positions, rich becoming poor and poor becoming rich, rebellion against all authorities, and a high rate of crime. There was famine. Ipuwer goes on and on describing in detail how Egypt totally fell apart. It is small wonder that the Children of Israel were not bothered by the Egyptians during the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

#### 7. Final remarks

We might wonder why there are not more directly parallel statements between the Ipuwer Papyrus and the Bible listed in Table 1. It is suggested here that this is because Ipuwer could not have known exactly what the biblical writer was going to say, and the biblical writer could not have known what Ipuwer was going to

say! The 8 parallels that are listed are strong points, however, and they make it very likely that the manuscript is about the plagues (especially the river being blood).

## CONCLUSION

We see that the Ipuwer Papyrus displays strong extra-biblical evidence for the historicity of the Exodus in its description of a chaotic Egypt that would have resulted from the biblical 10 plagues. In addition, Table 1 lists some direct parallels between statements in the manuscript and in the biblical narrative. It is important to date the events described in the manuscript at the right time in history, to recognize the divergence of the conventional and biblical timelines, and to accept the concurrence of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasties of Egypt. The Ipuwer Papyrus is therefore a powerful biblical apologetic.

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