

# Reading Hieroglyphs

## Reading & Answer Book

### The Eloquent Peasant

**PREVIEW**

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**Bernard Paul Badham**

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**'For the one who should see, has become blind, the one who should hear, is made deaf.'**

**'The one who should lead, has become one who has gone astray.'**

*The Eloquent Peasant 1800 BC Egypt*

## 'The Eloquent Peasant'

Papyrus of the Tale of the Eloquent Peasant

From Egypt

Late 12th Dynasty, around 1800 BC

One of the major literary texts of the Middle Kingdom

The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant is an extremely important poem from the Middle Kingdom (2040-1750 BC), the 'classical' period of Egyptian literature. This papyrus, known as Papyrus Butler, contains part of the opening of the story.

The events are set in the reign of a king of the Ninth/Tenth Dynasties (around 2160-2025 BC). A peasant trader sets out from the area of the Wadi Natrun (west of the Delta) and travels south towards Herakleopolis. A man named Nemtynakht covets the poor man's goods. When one of the peasant's donkeys eats grain from a field for which Nemtynakht is responsible, he cruelly confiscates the goods. The peasant petitions Rensi, the owner of the estate. Rensi is so taken by the petitioner's eloquence that he reports this astonishing discovery to the king. The king realises the peasant has been wronged but delays judgement, so as to hear more of his eloquence. The peasant makes a total of nine petitions, each more desperate and more eloquent than the last. Finally, Nemtynakht is punished, and the peasant's goods are returned.

The irony of the plot, and of the situation (the contrast between the social status of the peasant and his elaborate discourse), were part of the appeal to the original élite audience. The text is a questioning of social and divine justice.



# THE TEXT



s pw, wn-inpw-xw.n, rn.f, sxtj pw, n sxt-HmAt

man this, Wen-Inpu-Khu.en, name.his, peasant this, of Sekhet-Hemat (Wadi Natron)

**'This man's name is Khu-en-wen-Inpu, he was a peasant of Wadi Natron.'**



ist, wn Hmt.f, mrt rn.s

Lo/now, be/was wife.his, Meret name.hers

**'Lo, his wife was called Meret'**



Dd.n, sxtj pn, Hmt.f tn, mt wi, m hAt, r kmt

say.of (said), peasant this, wife.his this, look I, as go-down, to Egypt

**'This peasant said to this his wife, 'Look, I am going to Egypt...''**





Dd.in, sxtý pn, n Hmt.f, tn

say.by (said), peasant this, to wife.his, this

**'Then this peasant said to this his wife:'**



mt [...] n.t, it HqAt 2, r aqw, Hna Xrdw.t

look, [...] of.it, barley heqat 2, to provisions, together-with children.her

**'Look, [...] two heqat of barley for provisions to you and your children.'**



ir r.t, n.i, swt, tA it, HqAt 6, m t Hnqt, n hrw nb, kA anx.i, im.f

make to.it, for.me, it, the barley, heqat , as bread beer, for day every, then/next live.i, therein.it

**'Prepare for me the six heqat of barley as bread and beer for every day so that I shall live on it.'**







**narww, wgsu, wbn, tbsw, gngnt**

naruu-birds, gutted fish and plucked fowl, weben plants, tebsu shrubs, gengenet beans

**'naruu birds, gutted fish and plucked fowl, weben plants, tebsu shrubs, gengenet beans,'**



**Snyt-tA, inst**

fenugreek, anise

**'fenugreek and anise'**



**mHw, m ini nb, nfr, n sxt-HmAt**

to be full, in tribute all, of Wadi-Natrun

**'and abounding in all good products of the Wadi Natrun.'**



## USEFUL VOCABULARY



**Xr** 'under, carrying, holding, possessing, at head or foot, through of means, subject to someone's actions'



**Dr** 'end, since, before, until'



**ntt** 'that'



**wn mAa** 'true being, reality, true-right'



**aHa** 'stand, stand by, stand erect, raise oneself, stand up, rise up, arise, attend, wait, lifetime'



**sp** 'time, period, times, twice, matter, affair, deed, act, misdeed, fault, occasion, chance, venture, success'; note: **spt** 'threshing floor'



**Hr** face, sight; (preposition with suffixes) 'upon, in, at, from, on account of, concerning, through, and, having on it, because'



**Hr-awy** 'immediately'



**Hr-m** 'why?'



**Hr-sA** 'upon, outside, after, in turn'



**ti** phonetic sound **ti**, enclitic particle: **yes, yeah**



**ti** phonetic sound **ti**, enclitic particle: **yes, yeah**

 **aHa.n** introduces narrative past tense: 'pay attention to this, listen to this'

 **tr** 'forsooth, pray'

 **A** enclitic particle, with exclamatory force 'A!'

 **nA** 'this, these, here, the, hither'

 **ist** 'lo'

 **rf** 'now, then'

 **iry** 'thereof, thereto'

 **ir** 'as to, if'

 **iry** 'thereof, thereto'

 **tw** 'you, your, one, this, that'

 **is** 'after all, indeed, even, in fact'

 **iw** 'is, are, behold' starts a sentence

 **tp-Hsb** 'reckoning, standard, rectitude (high moral standard)' lit. in front of reckoning

 **pw** 'It is, They are, this, who? what? whichever?'

 **ix** 'then, therefore, what?'

 **xr** non enclitic particle: 'and, further'; auxillary verb: 'so says'; preposition: 'with, near, under (a king), speak (to), by (of agent)'

  
 **rk** 'but, now'

  **xft** (preposition) 'in front of, in accordance with, as well as, corresponding to'; when, according to, at the time of, when, (speech) to (someone)

**Note:**   **m** enclitic particle (not translated); 'behold'; preposition 'in the hand, possession, charge of, together with, from'; imperative 'take'; interrogative 'who, what'

**END OF PREVIEW**



'May you be given: Life - Prosperity - Health Forever and Ever'

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