

An Ancient Letter from an Egyptian

I'm so happy. Those Jews who we really didn't like; they are now our slaves. We treat them how we like...we take their food, their money. I haven't even seen their baby boys for a while now - I wonder where they got to...life is great...

I woke up one morning and washed my hands and saw blood everywhere. There was blood in my cup and when I brushed my teeth I saw blood on the toothpaste and toothbrush. So I decided to take a shower to get off all the blood. But the shower also came out with blood! So after all this I gave up and sat down to drink some water to relax - but again blood! So I gave up and went to sleep. When I woke up my bed was all sweaty and I looked down and saw blood in my bed instead of sweat. I called over my doctor and he said that everyone in Egypt has the same. It's the Jews, he said - their Hashem has made a plague!

The next day I went to school as normal and all my friends were talking about what had happened. But we couldn't find any blood - we wondered if we were all dreaming; there was only water. Anyway, school and life went on as normal. We were actually learning about different animals in school, so we went down to the river to see the wildlife. And you'd never imagine what we saw there; a huge frog came up from the river - we all ran and from behind the reeds I saw frogs suddenly coming from this one frog and running everywhere. And there was such noise! Croaking croaking, croaking - I put some reeds in my ears so I couldn't hear the frogs anymore and before I could turn around a frog had taken them out of my ears. Ugh! So I ran home to my parents but as I got home I could hardly open the door - the frogs were everywhere! My mum looked at my dad and said it was all because of the Jews. 'I knew we should not have made them slaves,' she said. 'But they deserve it', my dad said back. I didn't really know what they were saying, but I thought to myself that these frogs are awful; I wish they were smaller less noisy...

I was wrong! A couple of weeks later my sister got sent home from school because of lice. When they counted the lice they found 24 different species, and the smallest was the size of a chicken egg. They didn't really make noise but they were absolutely gross. I don't know what Pharaoh is playing at - what's his game!? Why can't he just give in? All my friends are talking about it. Frogs are so gross, so are lice. Uch...

Polar bear ahead! I woke up one morning to everyone running out into the street to see something called a polar bear. Let me tell you what that is - I had never heard of one before this and I'm sure you have never heard of one either. Basically, it's a huge bear but it's all white. I don't know where they are from, but they are so cute. But hold on, what's that? Why is there a huge rumbling in the background? What's going on? Why are there lions and tigers running towards us, why are there loads of snakes, scorpions and crocodiles everywhere? I thought they were afraid of us! Why don't they stop....

Phew! A few days' rest. I guess the God of the Jews has got tired. Life carries on as normal. And the Jews are still our slaves - I hate them so much! We went back to school - even though there's a snake stuck in the wall. But all is ok. I went for a ride on my horse yesterday, and my friends are coming over for my birthday party to ride the horses later. I'm looking forward - maybe we'll force some Jews to clean the horses - they cause so much trouble! ...I don't want to talk about what happened! I got home and my horses were sleeping: Dorris, Borris, Horsey and Shoehorn were all asleep. I rocked them and they were just lying there - they weren't moving! I am so annoyed. Why are they sleeping now? I went inside to get some cold water to wake them up. And my parents told me what happened. The neighbours cow had died too. And the sheep we were about to bow down to later - all dead!!!! Those Jews!!!!!!

Now I feel I really have suffered. I know we made those Jews work hard, but they deserved it. I hate them. Us? What have we done? At least despite this I look good, Yes, we've had some scares but school has been put on holiday for a bit - there are bits of blood on the walls, I can still imagine the sound of croaking, the rhinos smashed through the playground and the guard dog died. But that's life, and we're still good. At least that's what I thought. Then I saw the huge boils! I've never seen anything like it. I woke up and I started scratching; first my leg, then my back, then my shoulders, my cheeks, but arms. All at the same time! I went downstairs to the looking glass and ahhh! I was so ugly! I had these boils everywhere! My parents had them, my sisters and brothers had them. And it wouldn't stop - it was so itchy, and people were getting ill, blood was oozing everywhere, and it was horrific. I want the tigers back! I heard that Pharaoh's magicians actually died in the plague. Maybe I should just join the Jews!

I decided to find out what is going on for myself; I climbed the palm trees and waited til I saw the leader of the Jews and his brother walk into Pharaoh's palace - them again! They look so refined but they are our enemies. I don't know why they don't just leave us already. Anyway, I really don't have time to write about what happened next because we are now chasing the Jews towards the sea - we'll get them now. Suffice to say that there were so many locusts, then I couldn't move for days because it was dark (boy was that scary) and then...well I don't want to talk about what happened next. But they will pay. We will show them that there is no God. I can see them heading into the sea now - they are so stupid. We've got them trapped!!

A Jew in Egypt - the diaries

Dear Eli Levy.

It's been so long since I last wrote to you. It's been so long since I managed to write to anybody really - since we moved out of Goshen it's so difficult to find time. I can't even begin to explain what's happening to us. One morning Aba got a message that there was a new building project - they were going to build a huge pyramid building; like ten floors. And we were going to be rich - they were paying loads and loads of money for the Jews to build it. It sounded fantastic. But when Aba came home he was so sweaty and he had no money; 'it's one big

trick' he screamed! Then they started coming knocking on our door and forcing everyone to work - they even took Ima, even though she was pregnant. We only see them late at night. You are so lucky Eli - you and the other Leviim don't have to work; you are able to learn Torah in peace. I manage to go to school but I keep thinking of Aba and Ima; they come back at night but they are so tired. But baruch Hashem we stay strong. What's news over there in Goshen Eli? Must run, Aba and Ima got back home...Chaim

Hi Chaim,

So nice of you to be in touch; it feels like ages. I feel so bad for you - it sounds awful over there. I must say that it's such a bracha that the Leviim are not slaves like you; but it's difficult to learn Torah properly sometimes due to the circumstances. We feel so much for you and the members of the other tribes, but we are helpless. What can we do? We daven and we learn and the Egyptians keep snarling at us and insulting us. But would you believe it we had a wedding yesterday! You remember Yocheved who separated from Amram? Well they are getting remarried; and the shadchan is their little Miriam. They made a huge feast and everyone was invited - the Egyptians knew about it but they didn't do anything. It's one simcha in the face of troubled times. Please send me your Hebrew name and that of your family so we can all daven for you over here, Eli

Hey Eli,

Chaim here again - it took ages til we received your letter; it must have got trampled under a camel it took so long! I hardly have the energy to write - the Egyptians took away Ima's new baby boy; I can't begin to tell you how hard it was - we haven't seen him since. We hadn't even given him a name. But Ima secretly just gave birth to six girls. Six! The house is so noisy, but there are these malachim who help out with everything - it's unbelievable. They change the nappies, wash the clothes, put food on the table. But there's still slavery outside. Have you heard of this Moshe person - he came round on a camel yesterday saying that he has been sent to free the Jewish People. I've never heard of him but he looks very holy, though I don't know what to expect. He hasn't done too much yet - I heard he went to the palace and was not killed. That's a start! But now they are saying that the Jews must work harder - Aba was having a lesson on how to make his own bricks!!? They are even pressurising us to change our names to Egyptian names; but Aba says that we will never do that - we need to keep Jewish and our names are so important for that

Must run - Aba and Ima have come home, love Chaim

Hi Chaim,

Eli again. That's so funny - you won't believe it but Moshe is actually Yocheved and Amram's child; you remember the couple I said that got remarried. And let me tell you he is very humble and very caring. He was put into the river in a basket and then Pharaoh's daughter came along and saw him, and saved him. He was raised in the palace but then went out to and saved a Jew from Egyptian hitting him. But I am told he then ran away to Midyan and became a king there - he had servants and everything. But now he's back - he must care for us so much. He told a friend of mine that soon Hashem will redeem us; I have heard this talk before, but I'm a bit more hopeful this time. I am getting excited - I think something big will happen - maybe the time has finally come... Eli

Hi Eli,

Sorry for the late reply. You'll never guess - you might just be right. Last night late at night there was a loud knocking on the door. It was an Egyptian. We started running but he motioned for us to come back. Turns out he wanted to buy water; Aba said to me in Hebrew (so he couldn't understand) that we should give it to him for free, but I decided to charge him 100 shekels! Turns out Elisheva from next door charged their Egyptian visitor 200 shekels for each cup!! Apparently their water has turned to blood - not fake blood but real blood. Their sheets are full of blood, their sweat is blood and all their water is blood. They can't shower or anything. I feel bad but this is exactly what they deserve for all the Jews they killed and made suffer. And we had a mini party in our

school to celebrate (but we didn't keep it too loud - we didn't want them to see). Maybe the slavery will let up. The tables are really turning; we keep davening when we can. Israel is in our sights...Chaim

Hey Chaim,

Amazing news about the plague of blood. I assume you have heard about the frogs too by now. It's amazing. Hashem is making miracles; I went to see outside and heard all the croaking, then saw the frogs jumping everywhere. I think they are quite cute, but they are being really vicious to the Egyptians (though I think one of them smiled at me). Also, the Egyptians complain that they are really loud, but it seems melodious to me - certainly nothing like the Egyptian whips! I heard Moshe went to Pharaoh and the plague is only lasting one more day. Maybe they will all start believing in Hashem now. My dad didn't want me to do this, but I have added a name to my name to celebrate; I'm now called Eli Moshe (I thought Moshe sounded appropriate) - my friends are calling me Elmo. It sounds catchy. Love Elmo

Hey Elmo

Love the new name. Chaim here. I saw the frogs - it was almost like a dream to see them jumping everywhere into the Egyptian homes and leaving the Jews alone. You have no idea ; I was almost jumping with them. But I assume you have seen the lice things too. I always thought that lice were little - but I counted 24 different types; some the size of a chicken egg! I heard that the Egyptian magicians couldn't even copy this one. An Egyptian came over to ask me to use our shower - he said that his one doesn't remove the lice. I told him to go bathe in the river - I know that our shower won't help him either. Who knows what will come next?

I was just about to send this and I can't believe it, the whole place has turned into a zoo! Lions and tigers and bears! They charged into Ahmed's home yesterday like they owned the place. They turned it upside down - Ahmed's wife Elsa was so angry. And she couldn't even call her Jewish servants to straighten up the place. The animals kept coming thick and fast; even the tame ones are acting violently. It's like that last day of school when everyone goes wild. But this time it's every animal you have ever seen, all acting up and going on a wild rampage. I tried to get up close to stroke a lion - when do you ever get to do that?! but Ima said it's not a clever idea. So I ran off to the giraffe instead! But they don't seem so dangerous - they only have eyes on the Egyptians to be honest. It's actually funny to see the Egyptians running away like that - though their cattle seem ok at the moment. I bet they wish they switched places! How's Goshen?

Chaim

Hey Chaim,

Elmo here; I really enjoy writing to you. And I loved the lice and arov; and did you predict the dever plague? Are you a prophet?! Just as I received your letter the last Egyptian animal I know (well, lots anyway) died. It's like they are slowly being paid back for all they are doing. Have you noticed how the plagues go in order; it's almost like an enemy invading a city - first they go for the water source, then scare them, then animals, etc. But my sister Sarah noticed something deeper - it's because she is arty I guess. Have you noticed how the plagues are going up in direction? They start from below the ground (the river), then up from the river (frogs), then the ground (dust - lice) then animals on the ground (arov) then something in the air killing the animals (dever). It's almost like Hashem is telling the Egyptians to stop looking at their god downwards and instead look to Him in the Heaven. Sorry this letter is taking a while - I took a month break to slowly take in what I've seen - I don't want to forget these miracles at all. I hope these diaries will be preserved and someday someone will read these letters. Anyway, I assume that by now you have seen the boils. They look so silly, don't they, those Egyptians - I think it's for all the pains and scrapes they inflicted on us. I haven't heard of their magicians for a while - I heard they have disappeared. Not sure what to add. Must run - we are making a siyum in school. Keep well - next year in Israel, Elmo

Hi Elmo,

I feel that the end is near - in a good way. Aba and Ima told me we should start packing up our belongings. I saw the hail falling from the sky - I swear they contained fire and ice, but people told me I am crazy. I told them that a year ago if you had told me about all these plagues you'd have called me crazy then! I don't care either way - we're out of here asap! I am trying to work out why the Egyptians are being so stubborn - can't they admit defeat? You should have seen the size of these balls of hail - they were bigger than my six siblings and the rest! Ima tells me that we should not be too happy about the downfall and suffering of the Egyptians, but it's natural. She says we should just thank Hashem and keep on davening. So, I'm off to daven now - there's a davening group that us kids have made; we meet every two days now in what used to be the town hall. The Egyptians have let us have it - we removed their idols from it and have made it into our place. Life is good - Hashem can make miracles so quickly. Chaim

Hi Chaim,

So sorry it's been ages. I hope we will meet soon - I hear we are leaving Egypt in the morning. You probably saw all those hungry locusts - I have never seen so many up close, and such devastation! The Egyptians will not forget this in a hurry! It was almost like watching things doubling the speed - there were hundreds of these creatures each taking bites off the produce. The Egyptians were crying, but they had been warned. And then, just when I was running out of ideas about what would happen next, I saw the Egyptians bumping into each other for three days - I don't know what has happened to them! They are walking so slowly. All I know is that we are going to their houses and they are letting us take all their precious gold. How things have turned round. I'm just packing now - we are going in the morning. Hold on - did you hear that - what was that huge scream - why isn't everyone asleep at midnight?!