

Said the Pharaoh: "Ask the crocodile to return at once to the lake."

Before he did that, the scribe touched it, and immediately it became a small image of wax again. The Pharaoh was filled with wonder, and the scribe related unto him all that had happened, while the youth stood waiting.

Said His Majesty unto the crocodile: "Seize the wrongdoer." The wax image was again given life, and, clutching the youth, leaped into the lake and disappeared. It was never seen after that.

Then Pharaoh gave command that the wife of the scribe should be seized. On the north side of the house she was bound to a stake and burned alive, and what remained of her was thrown into the Nile.

### SOURCE:

<http://www.earth-history.com/Egypt/Myth/eml11.htm>

## THE TALE OF THE DOOMED PRINCE

Prof. Stephen Hagin ⊗ *Symbolic Connections in WL* ⊗ 12th edition ⊗ Kennesaw State University

**You need to be aware up front that the end of this tale is missing. Think about how you think the Egyptians would have ended this story.**

Now hear the tale of the doomed prince. Once upon a time there was a king in Egypt whose heart was heavy because he had no son. He called upon the gods, and the gods heard, and they decreed that an heir should be born to him. In time came the day of the child's birth. The seven Hathors (Fates) greeted the prince and pronounced his destiny: They said he would meet with a sudden death, either by a crocodile, or a serpent, or a dog.

The nurses informed the king what the Hathors had said, and that made the heart of His Majesty troubled. He commanded that a house should be erected in a lonely place, so that the child might be guarded well, and he provided servants and all kinds of luxuries, and he gave orders that the prince should not be taken outside his safe retreat.

It came to pass that the boy grew strong and big. One day he climbed to the flat roof of the house. Looking down, he saw a dog which followed a man, and wondered what it was.

Then he spoke to one of the servants, saying: "What is that which follows the man walking along the road?"

"That," answered the servant, "is a dog."

The boy said: "I should like to have one for myself. Bring a dog to me."

After he spoke, the servant informed the king. His Majesty said: "Let him have a young boar hunter, so that he may not fret."

So the prince was given a dog as he had desired.

The boy grew into young manhood, and his limbs were stout; he was indeed a prince of the land. He grew restless in the lonely house, and sent a message to his royal father, saying: "Hear me. Why am I kept a prisoner here? I am destined to die either by a crocodile, a serpent, or a dog; it is the will of the gods. Then let me go forth and follow my heart's desire while I live."

His Majesty considered the matter, and said he would grant the young man's wish. So he provided him with all kinds of weapons and consented that the dog should follow him.

A servant of the king conducted the young prince to the eastern frontier and said: "Now you may go wherever you desire."

The young prince called his dog, and set his face toward the north. He hunted on his way and fared well. In time he reached the country of Naharina (Mitanni), and went to the house of a chief.

Now the chief was without a son, and he had but one daughter who was very beautiful. He had erected a stately tower for her with seventy windows on the summit of a cliff 700 feet from the ground. The fame of the girl went abroad, and her father sent for all the sons of chiefs in the land and said to them: "My daughter will be given in marriage to the youth who can climb up to her window."

Day after day, the young men from all over Egypt endeavored to scale the cliff. One afternoon, when they were so engaged, the young prince arrived and saw them at their task. He was welcomed.

They took him to their house, they cleansed him with water and gave him perfumes, and then they set food before him and gave fodder to his horse. They showed him great kindness, and brought sandals to him. Then they said: "From where do you come, young man?"

The prince answered: "I am the son of one of the Pharaoh's charioteers. My mother died, and my father then took another wife, who hates me. I have run away from home."

He said no more. They kissed him as if he were a brother, and prevailed upon him to stay with them a while.

"What can I do here?" asked the prince.

The young men said: "Each day we try to scale the cliff and reach the window of the chief's daughter. She is very beautiful and she will be given in marriage to the fortunate one who can climb up to her."

On the next day they resumed their task, and the prince stood apart, watching them. Then day followed day, and they endeavored in vain to reach the window, while he looked on.

One day the prince said to the others: "If you consent, I will try also; I should like to climb among you."

They gave him permission to join them in the daily task. Now it happened that the beautiful daughter of the chief in Naharina looked down from her window in the high tower, gazing upon the youths. The prince saw her, and he began to climb with the sons of the chiefs, and he went up and up until he reached the window of the great chief's daughter, the fair one. She took him in her arms and she kissed him!

Then someone who had looked on ran to make glad the heart of the girl's father, and told him of what had transpired: "At last one of the youths has reached the window of your daughter!"

The great chief asked: "Whose son is he?"

He was told: "The youth is the son of one of the Pharaoh's charioteers, who fled from Egypt because of his stepmother."

Then was the great chief very angry, and he said: "Am I to give my daughter in marriage to an Egyptian fugitive? Order him to return at once to his own land."

Messengers were sent to the youth in the tower, and they said to him: "Begone! You must return to the place that you came."

But the fair maid clung to him. She called upon the god, and swore an oath, saying: "By the name of Ra, if he is not to be mine, I will neither eat nor drink again!"

After she had spoken she grew faint, as she felt as if she were about to die. A messenger hastened to her father and told him what the girl had vowed and how she then sank fainting. The great chief then sent men to put the stranger to death if he remained in the tower.

When they came close to the girl, she cried: "By the god, if you slay my chosen one, I will die also! I will not live a single hour if he is taken from me!"

The girl's words were repeated to her father, and he, the great chief, said: "Let the young man, this stranger, be brought into my presence."

Then the prince was taken before the great chief. He was stricken with fear, but the girl's father embraced him and kissed him, saying: "You are indeed a noble youth. Tell me who you are. I love you as if you were mine own son."

The prince made answer: "My father is a charioteer in the army of the Pharaoh. My mother died, and my father then took another wife, who hates me. I have run away from home."

The great chief gave his daughter to the prince for wife, and provided a grand dwelling, with servants, a portion of land, and many cattle.

It came to pass some time after this that the prince spoke to his wife, saying: "It is my destiny to die one of three deaths — either by a crocodile, or a serpent, or a dog."

"Then let the dog be slain at once!" urged the woman.

Said the prince: "I will not permit that my dog be slain. Besides, he would never do me harm."

His wife was much concerned for his safety. He would not let the dog go out unless he went with it.

One day the prince traveled with his wife to the land of Egypt, and visited the place in which he had formerly lived. A giant was with him there. The giant would not allow him to go out after dark, because a crocodile came up from the river each night. But the giant himself went forth, and the crocodile sought in vain to escape him. He bewitched it.

He continued to go out each night, and when dawn came the prince went abroad, and the giant lay down to sleep. This continued for the duration of two months.

**NOTE:** Here the British Museum papyrus, which contains several doubtful sentences, is mutilated and ends abruptly. The conclusion of the story is left, therefore, to our imaginations.

**SOURCE:**

<http://www.earth-history.com/Egypt/Myth/eml23.htm>

It came to pass on a certain day that the prince made merry in his house with a great feast. When darkness fell he lay down to rest, and he fell asleep. His wife busied herself cleansing and anointing her body. Suddenly she beheld a serpent that crept out of a hole to sting the prince. She was sitting beside him, and she called the servants to fill a bowl with milk and honeyed wine for the serpent, which drank it and became intoxicated. Then it was rendered helpless and rolled over. The woman seized her dagger and slew the serpent, which she flung into her bath.

When she had finished, she awoke the prince, who marveled greatly that he had escaped his fate, and his wife said: "Behold! The god has given me the chance to remove one of your dooms. He will let me strike another blow."

The prince made offerings to the god, and prostrated himself, and he continued so to do every day.

Many days afterwards, the prince went out walking at some distance from his house. He did not go alone, for his dog followed him. On the way, the dog seized an animal in flight, and the prince followed the chase, running.

He reached a place near the bank of the river and went down after his dog, only to find that the dog was beside the crocodile, who led the prince to the place where the giant was. The crocodile said: "I am your doom and I follow you. I cannot contend with the giant, but, remember, I will watch you. You may bewitch me like the giant does, but if you see me coming once again you will certainly perish."

Now it came to pass, after the space of two months, that the prince went [...]

## Questions for *The Tale of the Doomed Prince*

1. Which perspective seems more sensible, given the curse on the prince: the Pharaoh's (shelter the son) or the prince's (let me live my life)?
2. Why do you think the prince lies about his identity to the young men?
3. After the prince reached the chief's daughter, her father reacts angrily. Is the chief's anger justified?
4. What accounts for the chief's change in his attitude, suddenly deciding to accept the young man as his own son?
5. Does the wife's actions in killing the serpent absolve the prince of his curse? Does it accomplish anything beyond reminding him of the danger?
6. From what you know about the Egyptians, how would they end this story?

## THE TALE OF THE TWO BROTHERS

Prof. Stephen Hagin ☉ *Symbolic Connections in WL* ☉ 12th edition ☉ Kennesaw State University

This story was written for Seti II (1209-1205 BCE) of the nineteenth Egyptian dynasty, and is considered by some to be the oldest fairy tale in the world. It is complex and vivid, and rich in motifs that have parallels in later literatures. The two protagonists in this story have some connection with a myth of the two gods, Anubis and Bata, that was told as a tradition tale of the Seventeenth Nome of Upper Egypt. The episode of Bata and his brother's wife also strikes a remarkable similarity with the later biblical tale of Joseph and Potiphar's wife (*Genesis 39*).

Bata, the younger brother of Anubis, acts as the servant to his brother. This character Anubis is not the god Anubis (son of Osiris and Nephthys); rather, many Egyptians were named after their gods. For example, in *The Book of Thoth*, Nefrekeptah's name incorporates the name of the creator god Ptah. Even today, we know that many children are named after their religion or religious figures (Adam, Noah, Ruth, Sarah, Christian, Jesus, Seth, Lakshmi, etc.).

Bata tends to the cattle, and even sleeps in the stable, perhaps out of respect to his brother's marriage. Characterized as the true and faithful younger brother, Bata does everything well and with stellar moral dignity. When he is tempted by his brother's wife, he rejects her advances and asks her to forget about the incident, promising to never speak a word of this to Anubis. However, out of fear perhaps, Anubis' wife lies to her husband, telling him that Bata made the advances to her. Anubis then tries to kill his brother in a sneak attack, but Bata's life is saved by the communicating cattle.

After chasing Bata into the open country, Bata asks the gods for justice, which begins by the opening of a deep chasm between these brothers, allowing them to settle down and think rationally about their words to each other the next morning. As a penance, Anubis slices his hand open, but Bata cuts off his phallus, which is eaten by the fish, reminiscent of what happened to Osiris.