

MYTHOPOUCH

THE BOOK OF OVERTHROWING APEP

Also called the Book of Overthrowing Apophis

PUBLIC-DOMAIN SOURCE EDITION

Bremner-Rhind Papyrus - British Museum EA 10188

Historical English witnesses by E. A. Wallis Budge

Controlling edition: *Facsimiles of Egyptian Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum*, 1910

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1. Source identity

The work commonly called the *Book of Overthrowing Apep* survives in the Bremner-Rhind Papyrus, British Museum EA 10188. E. A. Wallis Budge published and translated the papyrus in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His 1910 British Museum volume, *Facsimiles of Egyptian Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum, with Descriptions, Translations, etc.*, explicitly includes the Book of Overthrowing Apep.

Budge later stated that his 1910 edition contained the complete hieratic text with a revised translation. The present file uses that edition as the controlling bibliographic witness and brings together the Apep material Budge also published in other public-domain works.

Manuscript: British Museum EA 10188

Common modern name: Bremner-Rhind Papyrus

Date of manuscript: Ptolemaic Period, with a colophon dated to the reign of Alexander

Historical editor and translator: E. A. Wallis Budge (1857-1934)

Controlling edition: London, British Museum, 1910

2. What Budge describes

Budge distinguishes two closely related Apep compositions. One was arranged in chapters and prescribed repeated ritual attacks against Apep. Another was not divided in the same way and contained two accounts of creation, a list of hostile names associated with Apep, and a hymn to Ra. Both belong to the ritual complex concerned with defeating the force that opposed the sun god.

In Budge's description, the purpose of the ritual was practical and recurring: the words and ceremonies were intended to remove supernatural obstruction to the sun's rising and passage, to turn back Apep and his allies, and to reinforce Ra's victory.

3. Named ritual chapters

In *The Gods of the Egyptians* (1904), Budge lists the opening divisions of the first Apep book. The headings establish the sequence of ritual actions:

1	Spitting upon Apep
2	Defiling Apep with the left foot
3	Taking a lance to smite Apep
4	Fettering Apep
5	Taking a knife to smite Apep
6	Putting fire upon Apep

Budge says the subsequent books continue the destruction in increasingly detailed form. Apep is pierced, cut, dismembered and subjected to fire. The same ritual defeat is extended to his confederates and to the non-physical aspects of the hostile beings, including their shadows, souls and spiritual doubles.

The emphasis is deliberate repetition. The ritual does not merely describe a past victory. It repeatedly enacts the defeat of Apep so that the solar order is renewed.

4. The ritual image

Budge's published descriptions specify the manufacture of a ritual representation of Apep. Apep could be written or drawn on new papyrus and represented as a figure of wax. His hostile name was written on the image. Green pigment is specified in Budge's account.

The image was treated as the ritual body of the enemy. The officiant spat upon it, trampled it with the left foot, pierced it, cut it, bound it and finally consigned it to fire. These actions correspond directly with the named chapters.

5. Burning Apep

Fire is central to the rite. Budge describes the Apep image being placed in flame while words of power are recited. The destruction was repeated at prescribed times, including dawn, midday, sunset and hours of the night, and at recurring festival dates. The point was not a single ceremonial performance but repeated suppression of the hostile force.

A short surviving formula in Budge begins: "Fire be upon thee, Apep, thou enemy of Ra!"

The Eye of Horus is invoked as a destructive power against Apep. Budge's account then moves from burning the physical representation to the destruction of Apep's soul and shade. Fire therefore operates at both material and supernatural levels within the ritual logic.

6. Spitting, trampling, piercing and binding

The opening acts of the rite are intentionally degrading as well as violent. Spitting marks Apep as rejected and polluted. Trampling with the left foot places the enemy beneath the officiant and under divine control. The lance and knife turn symbolic humiliation into ritual dismemberment. Fettering prevents movement and resistance.

Budge repeatedly describes divine agents as restraining Apep. Gods, protective powers and the forces attached to Ra participate in binding, piercing and cutting the serpent. Aker is also associated with the restraint and judgement of the enemy in Budge's wider discussion.

The ritual vocabulary is graphic because the intended result is total neutralisation. It targets body, movement, voice, name, soul, shade and continuing power.

7. The creation texts within the Apep book

One of the most important features of the Bremner-Rhind Papyrus is the presence of two creation accounts inside the Apep material. Budge published these separately in *Legends of the Gods* (1912) under the title concerning the evolutions of Ra and the overthrowing of Apep.

Creation account A

The creator speaks in the first person. Before sky, earth and living creatures had been established, the creator existed in the primeval condition associated with Nu. Creation proceeds from the creator's own being, will and utterance. Shu and Tefnut emerge from the creator, and the ordered world develops from this first self-generated existence.

Creation account B

The longer account again presents the creator as existing before the differentiated world. The god comes into being in the form of Khepera and describes the formation of beings from primeval substance. The account emphasises self-creation, the multiplicity of forms that follow, and the emergence of the first divine generation.

Their position inside the Apep ritual is significant. The recital of creation establishes the priority and authority of the ordered cosmos that Apep threatens. Creation itself becomes part of the magical argument against chaos.

8. Ra and the function of the ritual

Budge consistently places Apep in opposition to Ra. Apep is the hostile serpent associated with darkness, obstruction and the attempted interruption of the sun god's passage. The rite therefore protects more than a single deity: it protects the recurring movement on which the ordered world depends.

The repeated daily performance described by Budge explains the practical character of the text. Its spells are instructions for action. Words, images, gestures, weapons, binding and fire operate together as one ritual technology.

9. Names, enemies and total destruction

The Apep material does not treat the serpent as an isolated enemy. Budge notes lists of names and associated hostile beings. The rite extends the defeat from Apep to his companions and to every element through which hostile power might continue.

This explains the cumulative language of the work. Cutting, separation, burning and erasure are repeated because the intended outcome is not temporary injury but the removal of Apep's capacity to act. The rites attack the enemy's physical representation and his supernatural identity at the same time.

10. Historical source note

This Mythopouch source edition is intentionally newly typeset. It does not reproduce the modern page design, photography or scan files of a library or commercial publisher. The historical works used as its basis are by E. A. Wallis Budge, who died in 1934, and the relevant editions were published between 1890 and 1912.

The 1910 British Museum edition remains the controlling source for the complete hieratic text and Budge's revised translation. Budge's earlier and later public-domain books are used here to identify and consolidate the ritual structure, prescribed actions, creation material and purpose of the work in a standalone source file.

This is a historical source reader, not the Mythopouch retelling. A separate Mythopouch retelling may modernise, explain and contextualise the material for readers aged 15 and up.

Bibliography

Budge, E. A. Wallis. “On the Hieratic Papyrus of Nesi-Amsu, a Scribe in the Temple of Amen-Ra at Thebes, about B.C. 305.” *Archaeologia*, vol. 52, issue 2, 1890, pp. 393-608.

Budge, E. A. Wallis. *Egyptian Magic*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Public-domain editions published before 1931 contain Budge's description of the Apep ritual, its twelve-chapter form and ritual burning instructions.

Budge, E. A. Wallis. *The Gods of the Egyptians, or Studies in Egyptian Mythology*. Vol. I. London: Methuen & Co., 1904. Contains the named chapter sequence and discussion of the destruction prescribed for Apep.

Budge, E. A. Wallis. *Facsimiles of Egyptian Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum, with Descriptions, Translations, etc.* London: British Museum, 1910. The table of contents explicitly includes the Book of Overthrowing Apep. Budge later described this edition as containing the complete hieratic text with a revised translation.

Budge, E. A. Wallis. *Legends of the Gods: The Egyptian Texts, Edited with Translations*. London, 1912. Contains Budge's discussion of the Bremner-Rhind Papyrus and the two creation texts embedded in the Apep ritual.

Verification references

National Library of Ireland catalogue: 1910 volume table of contents.

Smithsonian Libraries catalogue: 1910 bibliographic record.

Wikimedia Commons: public-domain scans of Budge's *Egyptian Magic* and *The Gods of the Egyptians*.

Project Gutenberg and Wikisource: public-domain text of Budge's 1912 *Legends of the Gods*.

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