

# Hymn to Osiris

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## OVERVIEW

One of the oldest and most important gods in ancient Egypt was Osiris. This god, who was both a fertility god and the personification of the dead pharaoh, played a role in Egyptian beliefs of divine rulers. The following excerpt from the “Hymn to Osiris” has been translated from inscriptions dated about 1500 B.C.

**GUIDED READING** As you read, consider the following questions:

- What powers did Egyptians believe the pharaoh had?
  - On the other hand, how was the god Osiris described in human terms?
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19. He has assumed the dominion of the double land, the white crown being established on his head. He has valued the earth with all it contains; heaven and earth are under the place of his face; [SEB] has made him command mankind, the spirits, the race of the men of EGYPT, the HA-NEB-U.<sup>1</sup> The circle

20. of the solar disk is under his orders, winds, river, inundation, fruit trees as well as all the annual plants.

As the god NEPRI<sup>2</sup> he makes all his herbage, the wealth of the soil, to grow; he ascends and all are satiated; he spreads himself through all lands.

21. All that exists breathes; (all) hearts are happy, (all) breasts rejoice. Every being invokes him, every man adores his beauties. Delightful for us is his love; his grace environs the heart; great is his love in all the reins. One offers

22. unto the son of ISIS his enemy overthrown by his vigour. The author of evil pronounces magical words and displays his power in his turn; [but] the son of ISIS makes his way unto him, he avenges his father, sanctifying and honouring his name. Terror is calmed;

23. her domain is extended, is strengthened according to the laws which he dictates. The paths are cleared, the roads are opened, evil flies away; the earth, fertilised by its lord, teems with produce. Established is the truth

24. for its master; sin is pursued; happy is thy heart, O UNNOFRÉ. The son of ISIS has assumed the white crown, he has caused the authority of his father to be recognised in the great dwelling of SEB. RA is his word, HOTH are his writings.

25. The divine chiefs<sup>3</sup> are happy, [for] what thy father SEB has ordained for thee, that is executed when he has spoken.

Divine oblation to OSIRIS KHENT-AMENTI, lord of ABYDOS, so that he may give good funeral offerings of bread, liquids, oxen, geese, cloths, incense, perfumes

26. and all vegetable products; [so that he may grant] to grow, to take possession of the NILE, to appear in the form of a living soul, to see the (solar) disk at dawn, to enter and depart by the *ro-sta-u*;<sup>4</sup> so that the soul may not be driven into the other world, but be received

27. among those who chant in the presence of UN-NOFRÉ and who share in the offerings laid upon the altar of the great god; so that it breathes the delicious breezes of the north and drinks of the current

28. of the river.

To the double of the superintendent of the oxen of AMON, Amon-mes, of the just voice, born of the lady Hont, of the just voice, his wife who loves him [Nofri-t-ari].

<sup>1</sup> "All those of the north," *i.e.* all the inhabitants of the islands and coasts of the Mediterranean. In later times the term was especially used of the Greeks.

<sup>2</sup> The grain-god who presided over cereals, vegetation, and the products of the earth.

<sup>3</sup> Those who sit with Osiris in the Hall of Judgement.

<sup>4</sup> The corridors which led from this world to the next.