

Table of Contents

Introduction:	The Sacred Legacy	6
Chapter One:	Tawy - The Two Lands	10
Chapter Two:	Neter - From One into Many	22
Chapter Three:	Neteru Puat - The Company of the Gods	31
Chapter Four:	Foreign Gods and Goddesses in Ancient Egyptian Religion	50
Chapter Five:	Hwt Neter - The Egyptian Temple	54
Chapter Six:	Wab - Preparing for Ritual	63
Chapter Seven:	Consecration of the Temple	72
Chapter Eight:	Ritual Tools	80
Chapter Nine:	The Practice of Ritual and Meditation	90
Chapter Ten:	Ma'at - In Harmony with the Universe	101
Chapter Eleven:	Abed Heb - Sacred Calendars	113
Conclusion:	A Living Legacy for Today	153
Works Cited		155
Footnotes		164

Introduction

The Sacred Legacy

As the sun's light arches over the eastern horizon a man and woman dressed in long white robes with gold sashes about their waist's enter the dimly lit shrine. The room, draped in dark blue linen and thick with the smoke of incense, echoes from the gentle sound of the priestess' gold Sistrum, a sacred musical rattle. Suddenly a light flares up as the priest intones the ancient words while igniting the flame of an oil lamp on the altar situated at the northern end of the room:

“Come, come in peace, O glorious Eye of Heru, Be strong and renew Your youth in peace. For the flame shines like Ra on the double horizon. We are pure, we are pure, we are pure, we are pure!” (1)

In the center of the altar a small wooden cabinet painted gold stands in simple dignity, its double doors bolted shut. Over the doors the Ancient Egyptian hieroglyph of the winged-disk blazes as a symbol of protection and power (2). All the while the Sistrum continues its hypnotic rhythm as the priestess begins to chant the words of the ancient rite of the ‘House of Morning’ from the inner sanctuary of the Temple of Hathor:

“Awake in peace! You, yourself awaken beautifully in peace! Hwt-Hrw of Iunet awake in life! The Neteru raise to worship you each day! For you are the one who shines as the Sun, flooding the land with gold, who brings life in the east, then immerses the setting Sun each night in Iunet. Awake, Hwt-Hrw in peace! (3)

Slowly the bolts are slid to the side and the doors gently release, swinging open. There in the glimmer of the lamp's sacred flame, the golden statuette of a slender goddess is revealed. Her beauty seems sublime as her face comes into view. Upon her head she wears the horns of the sacred cattle of the Nile valley. In between these the solar disk is displayed. As the ceremony continues this simple effigy seems almost alive with energy and awareness. For through the ancient rites this statue has become the living embodiment of the divine energy of the goddess herself; Hathor, Hwt-Hrw, Nebet-Hetepet. For this one moment in time the quintessence of the Great Mother flows through this simple image composed of marble and gold. Moved beyond all words the priestess and priest kneel, lean forward and kiss the floor before the altar. Then, slowly rising, they lift their hands turning their palms toward the statue in the sacred gesture of adoration.

Each day this couple perform this incredibly ancient and moving ceremony of worship and magic. This is the same ceremony that was performed throughout the temples of Ancient Egypt for thousands of years. Yet, centuries after the last members of the priesthood of Egypt have faded into the past, these and many other people like them have reawakened the age old rituals.

The couple described actually exist. Each weekday one can find the priest dressed in business clothes managing the operations of a large company. While the priestess can be found installing computer systems for a variety of corporations. Both are intelligent, well-educated people who are also versed in the majority of religions of the modern era, yet they have rejected these in favor of embracing a creed that stems from one of the oldest known civilizations in the world, Ancient Egypt. But why? In an age when science and technology has advanced eons beyond anything that the ancients appear to have had, why worship gods from such a distant era?

To understand the answer to this question one must first rethink their own approach toward spirituality. For most people in western culture spirituality is almost like a spectator sport where one is obligated to meet in a building designated for the purpose of observing a minister or priest. There is very little interaction with the public itself, and rather than experiencing god personally, one is expected to accept the minister's word on faith that the god in question is there. Rarely will a western religion allow attempts to be made to actually experience deity.

The religion of Ancient Egypt was very different than this. Rather than seeing God as a distant being residing far away, separate from creation, the Egyptians saw the divine as part of all nature. From the sky and sun, to the earth and the rivers that flowed over it, all was perceived as an expression and embodiment of deity. The divine, or Neter as the Egyptians called it, is spread throughout the universe (4), with nature being the living garment of this supreme intelligence. To the ancients the Neteru, the gods who are expressions of this supreme force, were sensuous living beings that were very much involved in the created universe (6).

The Egyptian temple was also perceived very differently then current society views its churches. Through careful symbolism and sacred rites, these massive structures became locations where, as Egyptologist Serge Sauneron explained, Neter "consents to 'embody' itself"(7). In fact, every detail of these buildings were meant to strengthen the link between the material world and the spiritual forces that created it. This was no static symbolist's vision. Rather these structures became dynamic, vital, living vehicles (8). As such they weren't places for the masses to gather inside to 'watch' someone else perform. The temple was a sacred instrument used to bring the divine through in concentrated and powerful forms. Here in the sacred temples, the priesthood who had spent years in training, daily came face to face with the essence of the divine as channeled through the individual god or goddess to whom the temple was dedicated. This connection with the divine in very real and unlimited terms is a powerful, moving experience for those who have participated in these rites.

The Ancient Egyptian spiritual path offers a means to experience for oneself the divine in very direct and personal ways. Egyptologist Ragnhild Bjerre Finnestad explains that, "In Egyptian religion, the approach to god was predominately sacramental and sensory." She continues, "The cognitive approach, so important in Western religion, was not stressed" (9). Each ceremony was meant to be a direct interaction between the Neteru and the participant. As such, the wording of the hymns and invocations all reflect this. For example the following excerpt from a series of hymns to