

OSIRIS, ISIS, AND HORUS

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CHAPTER 1: THE BEGINNINGS

The *Osiris* story shows the exploits of the five divine children of the Egyptian pantheon: Osiris, Horus (the Elder), Set, Isis, and Nephthys. As the story begins, we once again see Ra as an aging, distant god (Atum) who is jealous of the other gods usurping his power. He curses Nut, who has become impregnated by three different gods (Ra, Geb, and Thoth), preventing her from giving birth for 16,000 years.

In the beginning there was Atum, whirling in the void of the abyss. Then the word of creation was spoken through the breathing of the vowels of the Divine Name. There came into being every god and goddess, lesser and greater. On all sides were the forces of magic, wisdom, intelligence, and truth.

Then Atum gave birth to two lion-headed children — the god Shu became the god of air; the goddess Tefnut became the goddess of moisture. He was yesterday; she tomorrow. Like golden sphinxes, they stared in opposite directions with tails entwined, guarding the entrance to the world and heaven. From them came two children, Heaven and Earth. The goddess Nut was the heavens, the god Geb was the earth. They were the first divine lovers, sharing all emotion. What mattered to one mattered to the other: as above, so below.

The two lovers embraced in what seemed an eternity. They bore two children at dawn and dusk. The first came in a golden orb that Nut named Aten. The second came in a silver orb; she named it Khons. They became the sun and the moon. Through their cooperation, they created time so that other gods could be born. Every evening, Nut would swallow the setting sun, but would give birth to it again the following morning. Ages of Time then passed.

Nut once again became with children, five in all, fathered by Ra, Geb, and Thoth. In the days before Ra had left the earth, before he had begun to grow old, his great wisdom told him that if the goddess Nut bore children, one of them would end his reign amongst men. So Ra laid a curse upon Nut — that she should not be able to bear any child upon any day in the calendar year.

Ra used the power of Shu to uplift his Nut from Geb. She could still see her beloved, but only her hands and feet could touch at the edges of the horizon. Then Ra said, "I who am the sun and created all light and measure of day decree that no other god be born on one of my days. I shall create my own children of my own flesh." Then the cries of Nut rang throughout the universe as her pain grew. She could not deliver her unborn children.

Ignoring this, Ra withdrew and began to create children of his own. He created men and women, both good and evil, and named them *remit* (humanity). They spread across the earth and multiplied.

Inside Nut her five unborn children grew, and Nut began to weave their destiny. The first two children were fathered by the sun god Ra. There was Osiris, brother, son, father, husband, and watcher in the darkness. There also was Horus, the divine son of a divine couple, to be twice born (once on heaven once on earth). There was Set, warrior and rebel, fathered by Geb. Fourth was Isis, woman, wife, widow, goddess of love, and mother of a god who called the god of wisdom, the Ibis-headed Thoth, as her father. Lastly, there was Nephthys, lady of the house, mistress of the shadows, also conceived by Geb.

As the ages passed, brother married sister in the womb. Isis, Queen of Heaven and Earth, married Osiris, Lord on Earth and the realm of dreams. Nephthys married Set. Still ages passed. Time meant nothing to Isis and Osiris, two lovers embraced, but Set became more impatient and frustrated.

On Earth Ra moved, burning and blinding, across the land. The Holy dancers chanted, "Great mother! What sins have we done to be tortured

so?" Ra proclaimed, "Am I not perfect? I am self-created. Nothing matters but me. I had no mother or father. Fall down and worship me."

The children of Nut began to hear the words of Ra. Set screamed and shouted threats from Nut's womb. Nephthys trembled and cried, "Sixteen thousand years have passed. Do you not hear our mother cry?" Ra pretended not to hear. Isis and Osiris put their arms around Set to stay

his anger, but he pushed them away and said, "If you are not with me against Ra then you are against me forever." Set was a dark storm. His rage shattered the dreams of the dead. Then he withdrew in silence, and he began to know hatred. He hated Ra for imprisoning him, and his face became distorted at the thought of Ra. He pushed Nephthys away, who began to weep, not knowing what to do. She began to learn loneliness.

Questions for Chapter 1

1. Draw a family tree that contains the following characters: Atum, Tefnut, Shu, Nut, Ra, Thoth, Geb, Osiris, Horus, Set, Nephthys, and Isis.
2. Why is Ra so jealous?
3. Why does Set become evil-minded?

CHAPTER 2: BIRTH OF THE FIVE NEW GODS

Nut asks Thoth, god of the divine words and wisdom, to help her out, and he does so by playing games with Khons, the moon god, winning tiny slivers of light with each victory at the gaming table. Using this extra daylight, Thoth gathers enough of it to create five additional days that will be added to the calendar. Ra's curse cannot apply to these newly created days, so Nut is allowed to give birth to one child on each special day.

The Egyptians, like the Mesopotamians, used magic numbers, including multiples of 6 (such as 6, 36, 360, etc.). These cultures are still immortalized in the way that we tell time, use trigonometry, and navigate the globe. Our 60-second minutes, 60-minute hours, 24-hour day (6x2 hours of daylight and 6x2 hours of night), and the 360-degree compass all come from Mesopotamia, but were adopted by many neighboring cultures, such as the Egyptians. Because 360 days falls five short of a workable calendar, these five extra days became holidays that celebrated each of the five godly children. Elaborate festivals were thrown for the five divine children on each of these extra days, and any Egyptian who was born on these five special days was considered to be blessed (ironically, the Aztecs also incorporated a calendar with five extra days, but these days were considered to be bad omens, and any children born on these days were considered to be cursed).

First born was Osiris, the great teacher and cultivator of the law (Ma'at). Osiris' name means "the black fertile land," so we see how this male force embodies the feminine ideals of fertility, comparable to Enki. Combining the male and female forces makes Osiris a sort of "creator," and this represents itself during the two scenes where Osiris is brought back to life from the dead. He used his powers of persuasion to civilize the barbarians (early cultures), teaching them language and the arts. He represents the black soil — the fertile and rich color that comes from the annual floods.

Next came Horus (the Elder), who is an early spiritual version of Horus, the son of Osiris and the great hero of the story. Horus is called the "twice born" because he was born in heaven (as the Elder) and as a spirit, then on earth in a carnal form (from the union of Osiris and Isis).

Set was born third. Many versions of the story show him cutting his way out of Isis' womb. Set was angry at Ra for cursing Nut and keeping the kids bottled up inside the sky goddess. He was supposed to be born last, but couldn't wait any longer. Once born, he devoted his life to fighting against Ra (and then Osiris, since Osiris embodied the traits of Ra more than the others). Set is the dark force in this story (chaos, evil, etc.). He forces his way out of Nut's womb before his time and wreaks havoc and mayhem across the Egyptian desert, which Set represents.

Fourth born was Isis, the great fertility goddess of the green crops. She will marry Osiris and become a great hero of this myth. Nephthys, the "lady of the house," is born last. She will be a great assistant to Isis. She will also play a role in The Journey to the Duat. Nephthys married Set, who did not treat her well at all (mostly ignoring her).

Nut's kind heart filled with sorrow at the thought that she would never give birth to her children. Tearfully, she approached Thoth and said, "Ra has cursed me so that I cannot give birth in any month of any year! Is there anything you can do to help me? Surely, one of the children within me is yours!"

Thoth replied, "Do not spoil your beauty with your tears. Instead, let good cheer chase your grief from your heart. Trust me to find a way to help you. I promise that, before the next year begins, you will be called Mother of the Gods!"

Thoth knew what was needed to release them — Time, from which they were sheltered. Time would hold them and bind them to eternally shifting forms of light and dark, night and day, forever. They must be born! So Thoth devised a plan.

Thoth challenged Khons, the cunning moon, to play endless games of chance. Letting Khons win the majority of the games, Thoth secretly gathered some winnings (small parts of light). Finally, Thoth had collected so many fragments of light that, when he put them together, they created five complete days. "You change so often," said Thoth, "that you won't miss the light. Take comfort that I will use it wisely." Thoth then added the five days he had won from Khons to the normal solar year of 360 days.

Furious at being deceived, Ra pounded his hands together, shaking the earth. Thoth spoke "You are bright, but greed hinders you. Let the five unborn gods to be born, one on each day." Ra, seeing no alternative, agreed.

Osiris was to be first born, and the first to make peace with Ra, agreeing to work together in returning the earth to abundance. Set, however,

complained that he should be first so that he could go out and battle Ra. Horus reminded him that fate is decided by neither gods nor man. As Osiris left the womb, Isis lay down with him one more time, tying their souls together with a silver cord. "In three days we will be together again." Osiris fell out of heaven and into Time. Where his feet touched the ground there rushed up a green field of wheat. Water flowed and flowers bloomed.

Then second was Horus the elder, a golden hawk whose claws never touched the earth. He observed future and past and all that is between. He would await the day when he would become born again.

The third born was Set, hideous to behold, his heart hardened into iron. Although he was supposed to be born last, his impatience and temperament compelled him to cut his way out of his captivity by force. On this day Ra sent forth a whirling red wind storm, full of fury and sand. Set turned into an asp and slithered into the rocks to wait out the storm.

Three days had passed. Isis held Nephthys as they wept for their husbands. Nephthys then spoke: "Sister, your sorrows are mine. Let us comfort each other."

Isis responded, "Beloved sister, heart of my heart, we will be together. Always your children will be mine, and mine will be yours. We will soar at the dawn with our wings spread, rejoicing in our good fortune."

On the fourth day, the windstorm ceased. Isis passed through the portal of Time, leaving Nephthys alone in her womb of grief. In the east hung the golden orb. In the west hung the hot

white star, which was the soul of the goddess herself.

On the fifth day, the goddess Nephthys was born in a shroud of mystery. She hid her light like the way only faint stars can be seen only from the corner of your eye. Wolves howled and frogs gulped. She brought truth into the land, but the

kind of truth that can only be glimpsed in dreams. By day Nephthys sang her woman songs of becoming, while by night she sang her songs of unbearable sorrow. In this way, the curse of Ra was both fulfilled and defeated, for the days on which the children of Nut were born belonged to no year.

Questions for Chapter 2

4. Why is the moon “cunning” and “playful”? Why will it not miss its light?
5. Contrast the attitudes of Osiris and Set.
6. Why does Ra conjure a storm of red sand on the day Set was born?

CHAPTER 3: THE RULE OF THE NEW GODS

We discussed how Osiris and Thoth used persuasion rather than commands (such as those we see in *Genesis*). Persuasion does not guarantee that someone will listen to you, but by giving other people their own choice in the matter they can be held accountable for their own actions. Thoth persuades the Moon to relinquish its light. Osiris persuades the people to follow his lead and develop a commitment to agriculture.

Upon the Birth of the new gods, all the land stopped in awe. The animals stopped what they were doing and looked on at these new beings born of the stars. The barbarians that ruled the land stood bewildered. Even the dead began to stir in their slumber. Animals became pregnant, trees became heavy with fruit, and water filled the river. Barley sprang up and flowers bloomed. The land with the gods was born anew.

The hidden gods of fate decreed that Osiris, the first born, would receive the black fertile land on either side of the Nile. Here crops flourished and people began to gather and build. To Set was given all the red land as far as the eye could see. Wild animals lived in these dry lands with sparse vegetation. Here nomads banded together bathing in war and hunt.

When Osiris was born many signs and wonders were seen and heard throughout the world. Most notable was the voice that came from the holiest shrine in the temple at Thebes on the Nile, which today is called Karnak, speaking to a man called Pamytes, bidding him to proclaim to all men that Osiris, the good and mighty king, was

born to bring joy to all the earth. Pamytes did as he was asked, and he also attended on the Divine Child, and brought him up as a man among men.

Osiris had grown to be a man, and Isis took the hand of her husband. Together they built a house of jewels and gold with alabaster walls, and they proclaimed that Egypt's children will dwell in such a house for eternity. Together they took what the land gave and used it. Isis taught them weave baskets, pluck cotton, spin and weave cloth. She showed them how to make the oils and the kohl to define her beautiful eyes.

After Isis, by her craft, had learned the Secret Name of Ra, Osiris became sole ruler of Egypt and reigned on earth as Ra had done. He found the people both savage and brutish, fighting amongst themselves and killing and eating one another. But Isis discovered the grain of both wheat and barley, which grew wild over the land with the other plants, but was still unknown to man. Osiris taught them how to plant the seeds when the Nile had risen in the yearly inundation and sunk again, leaving fresh, fertile mud over the fields. He instructed the people on the proper methods of

tending and watering the crops, how to cut the corn when it was ripe, and how to thresh the grain on the threshing floors, dry it and grind it to flour to make it into bread. He showed them also how to plant vines and make the grapes into wine; they knew already how to brew beer out of the barley.

When the people of Egypt had learned to make bread and cut only the flesh of such animals as he taught them were suitable, Osiris went on to teach them laws and how to live peacefully and happily together, delighting themselves with music and poetry.

Together, the heavenly pair showed the people to sing and dance the songs of their mother (Nut). Isis taught them the names of the stars (the hidden souls of the gods and goddesses). She gave them chants, songs, and praises. Isis also taught them the measure of the moon, from new moon to full moon, about waxing and waning. She then gave them the secrets of the herbs and knowledge of their own bodies.

When Osiris had improved the lives of his own people in these ways, he traveled to other parts of the world to bring his blessings upon other nations and to convince their inhabitants to accept his ideas too. He persuaded his listeners by entertaining them, setting his ideas to music and singing hymns and songs. While he was away, he

left Isis to rule over the land, which she did both wisely and well.

But Set, the Evil One, their brother, envied Osiris and hated Isis. The more the people loved and praised Osiris, the more Set hated him; and the more good he did and the happier mankind became, the stronger grew Set's desire to kill his brother and to rule in his place. Isis, however, was so full of wisdom, and was so watchful, that Set made no attempt to seize the throne while she was guarding the land of Egypt. And when Osiris returned from his travels, Set was among the first to welcome him back and kneel in reverence before "the good god Pharaoh Osiris."

The village grew strong with brick houses and boats of papyrus. Isis and Osiris traveled back and forth along the Nile teaching the people the holy and peaceful ways with each other and the Divine. They gave them the gifts of *Ma'at* (Law and Truth).

They called Osiris King and Isis Queen. The people admired the fine garments of Isis — so delicate, so fine. Isis admired their healthy children laid in her arms at the moment of their births. She breathed upon them and read their blessings and fates ... but she longed for a child of her own.

Questions for Chapter 3

7. Why is Osiris offered the fertile black soil, but Set the red desert lands?
8. What methods and approaches do Osiris and Isis use to educate the people?

CHAPTER 4: THE BIRTH OF ANUBIS

The section "The Birth of Anubis" begins with Nephthys dressing in Isis' robes and coating herself in perfumes to attract Set, who has been out of the house causing trouble around the world. When Set comes home and doesn't notice her, Nephthys runs out to the river and cries. Osiris, returning from a mission trip, comes walking by and, thinking that he is consoling Isis, sings songs to cheer up the person whom he thinks is his wife. They have relations, and Nephthys becomes pregnant.

Since she had to keep the child hidden from Set (who would have killed it), she gave birth to her child in the open desert. She left the baby to a pack of jackals (wild dogs) to raise as their own. Therefore, Anubis, the baby, was essentially raised by "wolves." He is represented as a jackal-headed figure, and an important one during the Weighing of the Heart ceremony.

Set's rage drew him more and more away from the comfort of his wife, Nephthys. This left Nephthys alone for many nights. In his absence she would sneak into the palace and look upon her sister in the loving arms of Osiris. This would bring some comfort to her, listening to their loving vows, as did the sweet smell of Isis's perfume.

Although Isis was her twin, Nephthys wanted to be like Isis in more ways, thinking that if she were more like Isis, Set would love her and not vanish into the desert. So it was that Nephthys put on one of her sister's dresses and wore some of her sweet-smelling perfume. Feeling beautiful, she waited for Set to return. When Set came home, however, he did not even notice her new look, nor did he give her any attention.

So caught up in his own rage, Set soon left once again for the desert. Nephthys, still dressed like her sister, went to the village. The villagers mistook her for Isis, and gave her honor and worship. Then Nephthys went to the palace to seek her sister for comfort. When she arrived, however, the palace was empty, so she went to the garden and began to sob.

Osiris discovered her in the garden and came up and held her. "Why are you so sad? Come to your husband and I shall make you happy," Osiris said. Nephthys did not protest or cry. She did not betray herself when Osiris called her Isis. After she fell asleep in the flowers, dreaming of the happiness that made her feel beautiful, Osiris placed flowers in her hair, then went in to get his lyre to play her music that would bring her happy dreams.

While Osiris was gone, Nephthys awoke and ran home. Set was there, and this time he noticed the flowers in her hair. "What are you doing with those flowers?" Set asked. Nephthys remained silent. "Those only grow in the Palace of my brother," Set stated in anger. She nodded. Set became even more irate and slammed the door as he went back to the desert.

When Osiris came back to the garden, he came upon Isis on her way to the palace. Osiris asked, "Did you have good dreams, my love?"

Isis looked at him confused and asked, "Where would I have been to have had dreams at

all?" Osiris noticed there were no flowers in her hair and began to realize what had happened. "Something terrible has happened," he said to himself. Then turned away and wept.

The moon came and went many times, and Nephthys hid her belly beneath flowing robes. In the final months she would hide in her room. She would instruct her maidservant to send Set and her beloved sister away whenever they would visit. Then, when the time was near, she sneaked out into the desert beneath a full moon. There, alone amid the howling wolves, she gave birth. She feared, if she returned home, that Set would kill her and the child, so she left the baby there in the open desert, warped in a fine golden blanket, where the wolves and jackals ultimately cared for it.

In the morning, the maidservant came to Nephthys with milk and honey. Seeing the soft belly and hearing no crying, she knew what had happened. Quickly she ran to the river where she knew that Isis would be. Begging the goddess for mercy, she explained what had happened. But she need not explain further, because Isis already knew that the child was conceived by Osiris. Cursing herself for her own bareness, she quickly raced into the land of the red sands.

With the help of a jackal that Isis had tamed, they found the boy child. Isis wrapped the child in her skirt and carried him home. There her jackal had recently given birth to four pups. Isis left the child with the jackal to nurse him. The child grew strong, part human and part jackal. Isis named him Anubis. She taught him about her magic, the secrets of seeing the future, and the land of the dead. He became her guardian, and he called Isis "Mother" and Osiris "Father." They called him "The opener of the Ways."

Although Isis knew of his true mother, and Nephthys knew that Isis knew, neither ever spoke about it. Instead they raised Anubis together. The bond of love they shared for the child brought the sisters closer together. When challenged by Set as to the mother of the child, Isis responded, "Why, brother, when would I have time to tell you that I was with child? You have been gone these many months in the desert." As for Osiris, Isis had forgiven him, and that night was never spoken of again.

Questions for Chapter 4

9. Why does Osiris fail to recognize Nephthys (apart from Isis) in the garden?
10. Why is Anubis part human and part jackal?

CHAPTER 5: THE VENGEANCE OF SET

One day, when Isis was out of town, Set played a trick on Osiris during a party. Set and his 72 demons (a “precessional number,” if you recall) secretly measured Osiris’ body and built a custom-made box for him to sleep in. At the party, Set gets the merrymakers to attempt to fit inside the box, but to no avail. Only Osiris, who tries it last, fits perfectly. Once inside, Set and his henchmen seal the coffin with molten lead and cast it into the Nile River. When Isis hears what happened, she becomes devastated and begins searching for his body everywhere.

Set represents the desert landscape, thus his association with the red desert sands. Historically, since the last Ice Age, Egypt had been transformed from lush rainforest to bone-dry desert. Set represents the ever-encroaching desert, filled with death and desolation. We can’t get rid of this dark force, so we’ll have to learn how to live with it. This theme was addressed earlier in the creation story, when Tefnut, goddess of female moisture, became angry and went away.

Set continued his anger, spending most of his time in the desert gathering followers and companions. In all, he gathered 72. Aso, a beautiful sorceress and queen of Ethiopia, was among those. Her power was supposedly as strong as Isis. Aso had entered the shadow of Isis and Nephthys in order to discover the measurements of Osiris.

One day Isis was called to Coptos. Min, the god of love and fertility, had recently visited, and many children were born afterward. Isis gathered her herbs and magic, and left for Coptos. Osiris sent Anubis with Isis to protect her on her journey. In his wife’s absence, Osiris decided to have a party to keep his spirits up.

Set overheard news of this party. Knowing that both Isis and Anubis were away, he had a special box made, based on Aso’s secret measurements. The box was inlaid with jewels and gold, and inside was a painted Nut, goddess of heaven. It was fashioned of the rarest and most costly woods: cedar brought from Lebanon, and ebony from Punt at the south end of the Red Sea (for no wood grows in Egypt except the soft and useless palm). Aso cast her dark magic over the box, casting eternal sleep and binding spells.

As the party progressed, a crowd of merry makers were actively dancing and singing. Fresh

fruits and wine covered the tables. It was the greatest feast that had been seen in Egypt —the foods were choicer, the wines stronger, and the dancing girls more beautiful than ever before. A messenger came for Osiris, telling him that Geb the earth god was pleased with his eldest son. Before his birth, the Earth knew no happiness. Blessed be Osiris.

During the celebration, Set came in with his 72 companions, painted and dressed for war. Osiris, glad to see his brother at his palace, and thinking that Set had put aside their differences, embraced him. The music started again, and the party continued.

Soon, Set brought forth the jeweled box and said that if any man can fit in this box it would be his. As he had anticipated, the box was admired by all of his guests. Pretending to jest, Set announced, “Whoever among you would like to own this beautiful box should climb into it. I promise to give it as a gift to the person whose body is a proper fit. However, your body must fit exactly when you lie down. If you are so tall that your head or your legs overhang the box, or if you are so short that your body leaves a space at the head or foot of the box, then you will not qualify for the gift.”

As Set had planned, his dinner companions eagerly gathered around the beautiful box, each awaiting his turn to try it. Many attempted, but it was not meant to fit any mortal. Osiris marveled at the rare cedar inlaid with ebony and ivory, with less rare gold and silver, and painted inside with figures of gods and birds and animals. He desired it greatly, watching man after man measure himself up with the box.

Lastly, Osiris climbed in the box, and it fit him perfectly. The 72 warriors of Set immediately picked up the cover, jumped upon the box, placed the lid over it, and nailed it down, imprisoning the unsuspecting king. To make certain that Osiris would suffocate, they poured melted lead over the box. Osiris tried to escape but was unable. Soon, Aso's charms cast him into unconsciousness. The faithful to Osiris tried to help, but, being drunk on the wine, were no match for the seasoned desert nomads.

Set and his companions took the chest that held the body of Osiris and cast it into the Nile. Hapi, the Nile-god, carried it out into the Great Green Sea, where it was tossed for many days until it came to the shore of Phoenicia, near the city of Byblos. Here the waves cast it into a tamarisk tree that grew on the shore; and the tree shot out branches, and grew leaves and flowers, to make a fit resting place for the body of the good god Osiris. Very soon, that tree would become famous throughout the land.

Set, however, claimed victory and shouted, "Drowned in his own water! Cut down like his own wheat! Farewell, brother, king of the dead." Set returned to the party and began his own celebration, drinking his brother's wine and beating his servants. Then he fell asleep, content, on his brother's bed.

Questions for Chapter 5

11. Why does Isis travel to Coptos?
12. Why does Set choose to trick Osiris to enter a box rather than fight him man-to-man?

CHAPTER 6: THE MOURNING OF ISIS

After Osiris' death, the animals of the world sob in grief. Isis and Nephthys now will comb the Egyptian landscape looking for the remains of Osiris. Isis gets help from Sobek, a crocodile and friend of Set, who feels pity for Isis. Nut, the cow, also tells Isis that her husband had sailed down through the Nile Delta, across the Mediterranean Sea, and washed up in a port city called Byblos (located in modern-day Syria/Lebanon).

Once she arrives there, she sees a giant tamarisk tree that is miraculously growing in the shallow sands of the delta. Osiris' coffin has lodged itself in there. However, King Melcarthus has sent his workers over to the tree to cut it down, with plans to use it as a support beam in Melcarthus' palace. Isis begs them not to, but to no avail.

The animals of the desert heard of the Death of Osiris first. They howled and screamed in panic, alerting the people of Chemmis. Those who slept awoke with awful nightmares of drowning or murder. Those who were awake shouted the news in the street.

The howling of the wolves and jackals alerted Anubis to the news of his father's death and how it came to be. When he alerted Isis of this, the

goddess grabbed her sacred knife, and began to plunge it into her heart, but at the last second began to cut her beautiful hair. She screamed in pain, "My husband dead, by his brother! Woe is this day on our mother! Two brothers now cursed for all time. How I loved them both." With tears in her eyes, she sent Anubis to comfort Nephthys, her dear sister.

Isis, barefoot, began to search the banks of the Nile for her beloved. She came upon a village, but, in her desperate state, the villagers did not recognize her as the goddess Isis, but as a crazed woman ranting. She asked them, "Have you seen my king in his golden coffin?"

But they responded, "Away with you and your evil eye! A curse be upon you!"

"A curse *is* upon us all!" Isis cried.

As the Great Goddess wandered tirelessly from place to place throughout Egypt, her mournful cries interrupted farmers laboring in their fields, craftspeople working in their shops, and even those who slept soundly at night. Isis walked from town to town, questioning everyone she met. For weeks, Isis roamed the banks and the desert, asking all if they had seen Osiris, but they all looked upon her as being mad. The jackals watched over her at night.

One night, as Isis lay weeping upon the bank of the Nile, Sobek, a secret companion of Set, came from the river as a crocodile. He had come to devour the goddess, but, upon seeing her in such a state, took pity on her and turned away. Isis screamed out, "Have you seen him?" But Sobek kept silent.

Many more weeks passed. Once, Isis passed a man whom she asked about her beloved, but the man pushed her aside and said, "Away with you, old hag!"

"Have I grown old as well?" she wondered. Then, from the Papyrus growing in the Nile, came

a white cow that spoke in a gentle voice, "I have seen him. I have seen your brother, your beloved your husband. He dwells now with me in the Womb of Time."

"Mother!" cried Isis. "Nut!"

Then Isis came upon some children playing with dolls. They put the dolls in a cradle. Then Isis realized this was not a cradle, but a coffin. Isis came up to them and asked, "What game is this you play?"

The girls knew that this was Isis, for they were young and destined to become priestesses of the goddess. They cried for joy at her visit and explained that they had a dream that a man was placed in a jeweled coffin and it floated down the Nile to Tanis, and out to sea. Isis eventually learned that the box finally had become lodged among the branches of a tamarisk bush in the papyrus swamps near Byblos. This bush had grown into a very large tree, and the box had been completely enclosed within the tree's trunk.

When King Melcarthus heard of it, he and his wife, Queen Astarte, came to the seashore to gaze at the tree. By then the branches had grown together and hidden the chest that held the body of Osiris in the trunk itself. King Melcarthus gave orders that the tree should be cut down and fashioned into a great pillar for his palace. Trees of great size were rare in his country, and he had a specific use for its huge trunk. He placed it in the center of his dining hall to help support the roof of his palace. The use of this tree trunk as a column was talked of far and wide. He was unaware of the box.

Questions for Chapter 6

13. Why do few people recognize Isis as a goddess (while the children do easily)?
14. How is knowledge of Osiris' location communicated to others?
15. Nut tells Isis that Osiris is in the "Womb of Time." What does this mean?

CHAPTER 7: ISIS TRAVELS TO BYBLOS

Weeping on the river bank, Isis soon sees several handmaidens from the palace bathing in the river. She cleverly walks over and braids their hair and offers them sweet-smelling perfume. The girls are giddy, and when they return to the palace, Queen Astarte invites Isis inside and offers the position of caretaker of the children.

Notice that Isis also uses persuasion to gain entry into King Melcarthus' palace, where the box of Osiris' body lay wedged inside the great tree that he uses to support his palace ceiling (with the coffin still hidden inside). Astarte, by the way, is the Syrian version of Ishtar, as we have seen in the previous unit.

Isis is given the charge of caring for Asarte's two children, the younger of which (Dictys) is very ill. Isis casts her spells of life on the boy, and, at one point, places the baby in the roaring fire to enact a spell that will destroy his sickly mortal body and replace it with an immortal one. Isis then transforms herself into a swallow and encircles the tamarisk tree, still housing Osiris' coffin. Notice how this shows the straight lines (Osiris, male) and circles (Isis, female) interacting in a classic duality.

But Astarte hears the commotion, investigates the room, and finds a horrific scene — her kid is in the fireplace and a crazy bird flying around. Because Astarte interrupted the spell, Isis informs her that her son cannot become a god as she had hoped. She reclaims her husband's body and sails back to Egypt.

Isis Continued on past the borders of Egypt into strange lands, through Sinai, Canaan, and Lebanon. Everywhere she went the children recognized her and had the dream of the coffin. Finally, Isis came to Byblos on the coast of Syria. There she learned that a great tree had sprung up where the coffin had touched ground. So now Isis searched for the tree. From a distance she saw it standing, tall and strong. Isis ran to the tree and caressed it. "Husband! I have found you!" she cried. A breeze came through the tree.

Suddenly, the mighty king's men came to chop the tree down for his palace. Isis pleaded with them, but they pushed her aside. The king's men chopped the tree down and took it with them. Isis fell to her knees and broke down. It took all of her strength to lift herself.

Isis followed their tracks, but lost them when she came into town. Isis felt alone and lost. She sat down by a well and began to cry. Then the handmaidens of the queen came to the well. They were young and began to splash each other. Then one splashed Isis, who smiled and motioned the girls over. They came over and Isis showed them to braid their hair, and she perfumed them with the aroma of her own body.

When the handmaidens returned to the queen, Queen Astarte saw the braids and smelled the sweet perfume, and she was overcome by a

longing to bring the mysterious woman inside. Astarte immediately announced to her servants, "I want to meet this marvelous stranger who can transfer her own perfume to the hair and skin of other people! Go to the town fountain quickly, before she leaves. Find her, and bring her to the palace at once!"

Soon, Isis had joined the handmaidens at the palace. Isis, seeing the tree standing in the middle of the house, was relieved. Astarte offered a room and a position to nurse over her children, the little Prince Maneros and the baby Dictys, who was ailing sorely.

Isis accepted, being content to live near her husband. Dictys, the baby boy who was ill, was still young enough for her magic to work. Isis, knowing how deeply painful it is to lose a loved one, began to work magic on the child to cure the child of its illness.

Instead of nursing the child with milk of mortals, Isis gave the child her finger, so he could absorb the divine milk of gods. Very soon, the baby was strong and well, though she did no more than give him her finger to suck. But she became fond of the child quickly, and proceeded to cast the spells that would make him immortal.

Late at night she placed the child into the fire to cleanse it of all mortal things. As she did this

she transformed into a swallow, and she circled the tree where Osiris rested. In this form she could cry out and no one would suspect. Isis continued in this fashion for several days.

One night, Astarte awoke, hearing the bird. Thinking it was one of her children in danger, she came down the stairs to look. Confused at the sight of this bird circling the tree, Astarte began to go back up stairs. Then she noticed her youngest in the fireplace, and she screamed. This awoke the child and broke the spell. Isis quickly swooped and pulled the child out of the fire, returning to her goddess form. No longer was she a bird or even a humble nursemaid, but radiant in her true goddess form. Astarte crouched down in terror when she saw the shining goddess and began to learn who she really was.

"I am sorry," Isis said, "but you have come too soon. If the spell had been complete, your son would have become one with the gods. As it is, he will only be good looking, smart, and brave, but one day he will die."

Astarte asked, "Who are you?"

Isis then proceeded to tell her the stories and begged if she could take her husband back with her to Egypt.

The king, moved upon hearing her story, granted her wish. Melcarthus and Astarte offered

her gifts of all the richest treasures in Byblos, but Isis asked only for the great tamarisk pillar which held up the roof to be opened for what it contained. When the pillar was given to her, she caused it to open at her command, and she removed the chest of Set. But the pillar she repaired and gave back to Melcarthus and Astarte, and it remained the most sacred object in Byblos, since it had once held the body of a god. With the wood from the tree Isis built a temple for wives and mother to go for comfort when they lost a beloved.

When the coffin of Osiris was given to her, Isis flung herself down on it with so terrible a cry of sorrow that little Dictys died at the very sound. But Isis immediately instructed for the chest to be placed on a ship that King Melcarthus had provided for her, and she set out for Egypt. With her went Maneros, the young prince of Byblos, but he did not remain with her for long, since his curiosity proved his undoing. As soon as the ship had left the land, Isis retired to where the chest of Set lay, and opened the lid. Maneros crept up behind her and peeped over her shoulder, but Isis knew he was there, and, turning, gave him one glance of anger — at which he fell backwards over the side of the ship and into the sea.

Next morning, as the ship was passing the Phaedrus River, its strong current threatened to carry them out of sight of the land. But Isis grew angry and placed a curse on the river, so that its stream dried up from that day.

Questions for Chapter 7

16. How does Isis cleverly gain entrance into the palace of King Melcarthus and Queen Astarte?
17. How does Isis cure Dictys?
18. Why does Isis fly around the tree each night in the form of a swallow?
19. Why would the lamentations of Isis, but not the fire, kill the baby?

CHAPTER 8: THE BEGETTING OF HORUS

Isis takes the body of Osiris back to Egypt. Once there, Isis drags the coffin into the desert. She assumes the qualities of a bird (the symbol for divine spirits) to breath life back into Osiris, but only temporarily. Osiris is rejuvenated just long enough for him to implant his seed into Isis, thus conceiving the hero child Horus.

This will be Horus' "earthly" birth, which follows his earlier "heavenly" birth as the brother of the other four divine siblings. Recall that Isis gained these powers when she forced Ra to divulge his secret name in the story "Isis and the Name of Ra." Since Osiris cannot remain alive, Isis closes the casket and hides it in a cave with the help of her sister Nephthys.

Each night, as the boat sailed on, Isis called to Osiris to awaken and to pleaded with the heavens. Lost in her pain, the journey took what seemed like ages. Finally they came in sight of the once-glorious home, which was now in ashes, burned to the ground by Set. Like Osiris, only death dwelled in this place now. No children played; no flowers grew. How much time had passed was uncertain.

The boat dropped Isis off on the shore. She was home with her husband, but it was not the happy ending that she had experiences for so long in her dreams. Upon reaching a remote place in the desert, Isis stopped and opened the box. The sight of her beloved husband, lying still and lifeless, was more than her heart could bear. The Great Goddess placed her face against the face of Osiris, embraced his body, and wept with grief.

The look of death was upon him. His eyes where glazed as he dreamed the dream of death. Isis could see her reflection in his eyes and could read his last thoughts: "Isis, Sister, Wife, Queen of heaven and earth."

Isis, lost once again in her grief, began to twirl and dance, spinning out of control. Her arms became feathered wings, and she began to fly around Osiris mourning him. She circled him as she did in Byblos, singing and crying his name. Her dance was so passionate that her circle began to turn the wheels of time back. The ether of space and time began to cluster around Isis, who now in her darkest hour summoned all her powers. The Gates of heaven opened at her command, and she began to weave a new fate for her beloved. Using knowledge that her father, Thoth, had taught her, she skillfully uttered the magical words of power in a way that she knew would bring temporary life to Osiris.

A new crown began to form on Osiris' head, and, from out of the deep sleep of death, the god's eyes opened. Osiris returned to life! With delight, Isis embraced her great love and enjoyed him for as long as she could. She made love with her husband, and from this union she conceived a special child.

All through the night Isis chanted his name, and her love and words of magic were the life breath of creation love. Breathing for her love, her heart would beat for her love. Her words were that of a sorceress, the words of the goddess of magic.

Finally, she collapsed from sheer exhaustion, having used all her power that very night. Isis began to dream the dream of Osiris. She saw a golden hawk come forth and make tacks in the Nile mud and on the land and desert. The hawk rose up, and his wings covered all of Egypt. Then a double crown was placed upon Osiris' head.

Isis awoke to a thunderous storm, and all the animals of Set where in panic. But Isis, who once grieved the loss of her beloved, who once grieved at not having her own child, who once grieved at brother killing brother, was now filled with joy. She felt the life within her womb. She was to be a mother of a god. Horus was to become not only her brother, but her child — Horus, twice born, once in heaven and now on earth. Rain came down to wash away the dirt and tears from the goddess' face. The water also helped to wash away the look of death from the now-sleeping Osiris.

But Isis wanted to bring full life to her husband, but she needed time to work her magic. So it was, she brought the body up to the hills to hide it in a cave. Because she could not guard him, she covered the entrance with a boulder and rushed to enlist the aid of her sister Nephthys and the jackal-god Anubis.

Question for Chapter 8

20. How is Isis able to temporarily revive Osiris?

CHAPTER 9: THE DISMEMBERMENT OF OSIRIS

Isis and Nephthys had hid Osiris' body in a cave, rolling a large boulder over the entrance. Unfortunately, Set stumbles upon it while hunting at night, opens it up, and dismembers Osiris, cutting him up into 14 pieces, spreading the parts across Egypt. Isis must again take a journey to recover the parts and to reassemble them through the act of mummification. Since 14 is one half of a lunar cycle (new moon to full moon, or vice versa), this shows a duality and a complete transformation from one form into another.

Isis and Nephthys race across Egypt looking for the parts, and they sing songs of joy each time they located another one. However, Sobek, the crocodile, sadly informs Isis that one part from Osiris' body fell into the Nile and was eaten by the Oxyrhynchus fish — Osiris' phallus. Isis has to recreate it when assembling the body back together. Luckily, she had already conceived of Horus, her son.

So it was that Set was out hunting wild boars with his dogs on the very night that Isis left to find Nephthys and Anubis. Set hunted by night, as was his custom. While searching beyond the woods, he came across a cave. By the light of the moon, he saw the chest of cedar wood, inlaid with ebony and ivory, with gold and silver, and instantly recognized it. Noticing the scattered jewels and decorations from the coffin, Set became enraged. He searched out the body of Osiris within the cave. When he came upon it he knelt down to his brother's ear and whispered, "Sleep, eternal brother. Death is the heir of Egypt."

In his fury, Set dragged the body outside the cave and began to hack the body of Osiris into fourteen pieces. He then took them down to the Nile and threw them in, so that the crocodiles might eat them.

"It is not possible to destroy the body of a god!" cried Set. "Yet I have done it, for I have destroyed Osiris!" His laughter echoed through the land, and all who heard it trembled and hid.

At this time, Isis was sitting with her sister Nephthys, and they heard the scream of Osiris. Looking up, they saw a dark shadow of blood red cover the moon. Then black covered the moon until just a crescent dagger remained. Isis cried in horror.

Rushing back to the cave, Isis and Nephthys saw that they were too late. In waves of grief, Isis

and Nephthys hurried to the river, led by Anubis, who knew the smell of his father and could smell his blood. Upon the bank of the Nile, Isis saw the severed head of Osiris. She rushed over and grasped it. She sang her spells of life into it, but there was no Osiris left. Isis opened his mouth and offered him bread. She perfumed him and bathed him. Filled with more grief than she had ever known, she was lost in sorrow.

"Sister!" cried out Nephthys. "Here lies the father of our child, our beloved brother. We must find him. We shall reassemble his body and bring him to back life!"

Then they began to mourn and dance with sistrums around the head of Osiris. They rose with feathered wings into the air and circled with their chants. Then all the people seeing this came from their houses and began to mourn for the dead king.

Later Isis, Nephthys, and Anubis built a secret tomb for Osiris and placed his head there. This would be where they would reassemble his body after bringing it back together, piece by piece. Going back to where they found the head of Osiris, they built a temple to him. Inside they buried a body fashioned from spices and wheat within the temple. "Pay honors to my husband here, your king," spoke Isis. And the spirit of Osiris entered the Temple.

"He is yesterday, and he is tomorrow. He shall be born again and again. The spirit of Osiris will be born in you, and you, and you! He is eternal. His body is in the bread you eat, his blood in the wine you drink. He is truth, Lord of Kemet!" Isis shouted to the people.

Having announced their mission, the trio left Abydos and started their search for the parts of Osiris. Unknown to them, Sobek the crocodile was following the boat. He had seen fish eat the reproductive organ of Osiris, and he felt pity on them because he knew that they could never find all the parts of Osiris.

For 28 days they sailed the Nile in a papyrus boat, and, whenever they would find a piece of

Osiris, Isis would shout in joy, "He lives! He rises!" Then she would cry, "He is dead. He is dead." Nephthys cried with her sister even as her troubles weighed on her heart, for it was her husband that killed Osiris, her brother. Yet she could not speak against her husband, loving him and hating him equally. Anubis, her son, called her sister "Mother." Her life was filled with sorrow.

For each piece of Osiris that was found they built a new temple to Osiris, confusing Set as to the location of the real body. To hide from the followers of Set, Isis and Nephthys disguised themselves as beggar men. Isis turned to her sister and said, "Although I am a woman, I have become like a man to ensure the name of Osiris is remembered always."

Questions for Chapter 9

21. Why was Set enraged after discovering Osiris' body in the cave?
22. Why do the fish of the Nile consume Osiris' phallus and not his other parts?
23. Why does Isis say, "Although I am a woman, I have become like a man [...]?"

CHAPTER 10: OSIRIS JOURNEYS TO THE UNDERWORLD

The first mummification rituals are performed on Osiris. His body ceremoniously arranged to reflect his royal status. It is then wrapped in linen and anointed with oil (the word "Christ" means "one anointed [with oil]").

Osiris is now floating in a state of suspended animation (call it "limbo" for lack of a better word). We will learn that the body must be prepared for several weeks before the "Opening of the Mouth" ceremony takes place that releases the soul from the body (see *The Journey to the Duat*). Until then, Osiris is stuck in-between worlds, often referred to as the Underworld, represented as the entire night sky sailing by overhead each night. Osiris asks Atum what is going on, and adapts to his new state of being, swirling in confusion and nonexistence. It is in this spiritual world that Osiris realizes that he has a son about to be born.

When the thirteen remaining pieces of Osiris had been gathered, Isis, Nephthys, and Anubis returned to his real tomb in Abydos. No one saw them in this late hour, none except the moon. The only piece that was missing was that of his manhood, which had been eaten by the fish. So Isis fashioned a replacement out of cedar and gold.

Then began the first mummification of a body. First, they arranged Osiris' head, torso, limbs, heart, and organs as they would be in life.

Next, the goddesses connected the various parts with wax. Then, they prepared a long piece of linen cloth by smearing sweet-smelling ointments upon it and sprinkling it with spices that would preserve Osiris' body from decay. Finally, they wrapped Osiris' body in the treated linen cloth and buried it. Nephthys covered Osiris in frankincense and myrrh while she and Isis chanted spells of power and protection:

Isis began: "Ah Helpless One!

Ah Helpless One asleep!
 Ah Helpless One in this place,
 Although you know not yet that I know it!
 Behold, I have found you lying on your side,
 The great Listless One.
 Ah, Sister!" says Isis to Nephthys,
 "This is our brother.
 Come, let us lift up his head!
 Come, let us rejoin his bones!
 Come, let us reassemble his limbs!
 Come, let us put an end to all his woe,
 That, as far as we can help, he will wear no more.
 May the moisture begin to mount for this spirit!
 May the canals be filled through you!
 May the names of the rivers be created through you!
 Osiris, live!
 Osiris, let the great Listless One arise!
 I am Isis."
 "I am Nephthys.
 It shall be that Horus will avenge you;
 It shall be that Thoth will protect you,
 Two sons of the Great White Crown.
 It shall be that you will act against him who acted
 against you, and
 It shall be that Geb will see;
 It shall be that the Ennead will hear.
 Then will your power be visible in the sky,
 And you will cause havoc among the hostile gods,
 For Horus, your son, will seize the Great White Crown
 From him who acted against you.
 Then will your father Atum call, 'Come! Osiris, live!
 Osiris, let the great Listless One arise!"

Thoth then descended and spoke aloud: "His body to earth; his soul to the sky."

The earth trembled, and Nut came down to earth in her full form and embraced her son, changing him into a living god and returning to the sky. Nut Spoke: "Osiris lives! He was not destroyed! He was not Killed!"

Isis and Nephthys raised their arms and began the chant of change. They changed into golden hawks, as Geb opened his mouth and swallowed his empty body.

Osiris was swirling in confusion. He was alive and dead. He was nothing, yet he was everything. He was madness and he was a god. Osiris joined with the Atum. Osiris-Atum was alive.

Osiris asked, "Atum! What is this? Where am I? I once loved a goddess, but now I am nothing. I breathed her sweet perfume, but now I do not breathe."

Atum answered, "Be still. Look upon Egypt without its king."

Osiris looked. He saw Isis and Nephthys in sorrow, going from town to town burying the dead, showing them the secrets of mummification. He saw wild animals hunting children. He saw the crops wither and die. He saw his brother on his throne. He saw men weep. He saw all of this and more, and he felt empty and full of sorrow.

"I thirst," Osiris said, and Atum brought him beer.

"I hunger," Osiris said, and Atum brought him bread.

"I can not breathe," Osiris said, and Atum brought him air.

But the beer was dry as sand, the bread as tasteless as air, and the air did not fill his lungs. "Can I look upon your face?" Osiris asked.

Atum answered, "Within my face is sorrow deeper than that which you know. I will not show you my face. It shall be forever hidden in shadow."

"I long for light. Even at night I can see stars, but here there is nothing," Osiris said.

Atum Answered, "Your son Horus is your light. He carries your spirit back to earth."

"I did not know I had a son Horus," Osiris stated, growing more hopeful.

"Let me see my Son," demanded Osiris. "If I can not look upon you, then let me see my son. A god should be able to look upon the face of a god, since I can't see you."

"True. I do not show you my face, but I look upon you. I am the desert, I am the sun, I am the stars, I am a man, I am a woman — I am everything," answered Atum.

"How long will I live?" asked Osiris.

Atum began, "For millions and millions of years"

"And in the end?" questioned Osiris.

"It shall be as in the beginning — empty past, empty future. I shall destroy everything and start anew. I am that I am, and I will return to myself," Atum stated.

Question for Chapter 10

24. In what fashion does Osiris still exist?

CHAPTER 11: THE BIRTH OF HORUS

The section entitled “The Birth of Horus” has influenced Greek literature as well. Much like the character Penelope, the wife of Odysseus in the Homeric epic *The Odyssey*, Isis is captured by Set and thrown into a prison, where she must spin and weave day and night. Since her husband has been killed, Set has assumed his throne and enslaved his enemies. Unbeknownst to Set, Isis is ripe with the child conceived by Osiris. As the months pass, Isis nears her delivery date, but she can’t give birth to Horus while in captivity, lest Set kill the infant.

But Thoth, the god of wisdom, has a plan. He sends down two goddesses, Ma’at and Seshet, disguised as weavers to break Isis out of her captivity. Ma’at is the goddess of justice and Seshet is the goddess of writing and measurement. Together, they form the concepts of Justice and Law that are sent to right the wrongs of her imprisonment. Notice how these characters, who are the epitomes of law and order, still disguise themselves in order to execute their plan. This type of cunning behavior resembles the serpent’s arguments in Eden and Ea’s whispers to the reed hut wall during Atrahasis’ dream, and it is a common archetypal motif used all over the world.

This reminds me of that little dot located inside the yin/yang dualities — a little black is still part of the field of white, and a little white dot occupies the dark side. Even though this story is a clear good vs. evil narrative, there appears to be a speck of the other side in each. Remember that both sides of the duality need each other, for one side alone means nothing. This is why Thoth sends down 7 stars that become 7 scorpions that help Isis to break out of prison. Normally, the scorpions represent the dark side and would assist Set (much like Sobek, the crocodile); however, Isis needs some of the dangerous forces to aid her escape by killing the guards at the door. Isis, who represents life and regeneration, could not accomplish such a sly and crafty escape on her own.

The seven scorpions lead Isis into the desert, where she gives birth to Horus — his second birth (remember that Horus the Elder was born as the second of the five children to the earth and sky gods, but was not born into a bodily form until he became the child of Osiris and Isis). Since Osiris was the first born, he gets to assume the power, inheritance, and glory. Once Horus is reborn into a physical form (his first birth is a spiritual birth), he now becomes the first born son, and he inherits all of the powers of the previous gods in his family tree.

A parallel to this can be found in Christianity, where many denominations believe that Jesus always existed in spirit (as the Holy Ghost), even though he did not become a savior figure until after his earthly (physical) birth. Horus, now born again, can assert his presence in Egypt and become a savior to all of Egypt’s people. Remember that Horus is referred to as the “twice born god.”

Rain fell on Egypt as Nut wept for Osiris. Geb drank her tears as genesis occurred. The child grew in the womb of Isis. The two goddesses, Isis and Nephthys, slept not as goddesses, but as tired women. They fed beer and breed to the *ka* of Osiris. However, they were not quiet about this, and one day Set’s men seized them and bound them as slaves.

Set brought the goddess Isis before him and made her kneel. He mocked her for her dedication to the dead. But Isis was proud and would only love Osiris. Set ordered her imprisoned inside a tomb, where he made her weave day and night. But Isis was weaving more than thread — she was weaving a new life inside her.

The *ka* of Osiris saw his dear wife chained in the tomb as his own body decayed. He set to work on his new city, for it is not the nature of gods to lay dormant for long. And it was that, while his child grew inside Isis, he built the city of the dead. Osiris would now become the god of the underworld.

Because Set wanted fine clothes, he demanded that Isis teach her secrets of spinning to his servants. So it was that she taught them not only the secrets of weaving, but of weaving life. She taught them to pray as they weaved. Isis grew round as moons waxed and waned. Horus was coming.

Thoth, the ibis-headed god who knew much of Time, was beginning to worry about Isis, who was still trapped by Set. So He sent forth his sisters Ma'at and Seshet, disguised as weavers, to free Isis. Ma'at and Seshet told Isis that she must leave this very night, for Set has evil intentions for the child. They told Isis that her child would soar to the highest heights and avenge his father, if he could be kept alive. They also told her to name the child Horus, the name meaning "high," "above," and "the face of the gods."

Ma'at continued: "Behold the god Thoth, the great god, the Chief of Ma'at, both in heaven and on the earth," she said unto Isis "Come now, O Isis, you goddess, it is a good thing to listen, for there is life to one who shall be guided by the advice of another. Hide yourself with your son, and there shall come unto him these things: his members shall grow, and two-fold strength of every kind shall spring up in him. He shall be made to take his seat upon the throne of his father, whom he shall avenge, and he shall take

possession of the exalted position of Head of the Two Lands."

That very night seven stars fell from the sky and took the form of scorpions, who were ready to strike any enemies with their stingers. These two scorpions, Tefen and Befen, were behind her; two scorpions, Mestet and Mestetef, were by her side; and three scorpions, Petet, Thetet, and Martet, were for preparing the road for her. They used their pinchers to free Isis and kill Set's guards. Then Isis ventured forth to freedom.

It was still night when the belly of Isis stirred and the Waters of Life flowed out of her. Nephthys, feeling this in her own stomach, rushed to her sister's aid. So too were there other gods and goddesses present — Khnum, the ram god, came forth, and Serket, the scorpion goddess arose, as did Heket, the frog goddess, Wadjet and Renenutet came forth as cobra goddesses, and Isis cried out as her child came forth.

As she gazed upon her newborn child, the Mother Goddess' heart overflowed with joy. "My Son!" Isis chanted to the morning. As dawn broke and the son rose, Horus opened his eyes of blue.

"Child of dawn!" cried Wadjet.

Then his eyes flashed red. "Child of the two horizons!" cried Serket

Then his eyes turned black and gold. "Dispeller of Darkness!" cried Renenutet.

Isis bathed him and wrapped him in her dress: "Horus, the twice born, makes the answers for his father. Horus, my child, my brother," said Isis.

Questions for Chapter 11

25. Why does Isis follow Set's commands when he enslaves her?
26. Why does Thoth send *scorpions* who kill Set's guards? Does he have to use violence?

CHAPTER 12: THOTH'S ADVICE

The scorpions escort Isis into town, where they ask a rich woman for food and shelter. The woman slams the door in their faces when she sees the scorpions and fears for her safety. However, a poor older woman has sympathy on Isis and gives her whatever she has. That night, the scorpions seek

out the child of the rich woman and sting him. Isis is awoken by the child's screams, so she runs to the baby and recites the magic words of life to save him from certain death. Here, we see Isis as a great protector and preserver of life, especially little children.

Thoth then warns Isis about the ever-present danger of Set's evil deeds, and he instructs Isis to hide the child. Isis travels to the Nile delta where she finds an island, called Chemmis. She digs the earth from under the island so that it floats on the Nile water magically. Perhaps she does this to prevent Set (representing the red desert sands) from encroaching upon the island. Much like Moses, he is hidden in the reeds and bulrushes, and much like the Madonna figure, she holds her savior child on her lap, the "seat of authority," as her name indicates (see pages 220-223 in *The Power of Myth*).

Shortly afterward Thoth, lord of divine words, visited his daughter. "Listen to my counsel, Isis, and obey me," he said. "Those who follow the advice of another live and prosper. You must now escape from the eye of Set, and I shall help you. If you will hide your child from Set until he is grown, Horus will become doubly strong. Then he surely will avenge the death of his father and will sit upon his father's throne."

"However," Thoth continued, "until that time comes, Horus will never be far from danger. Therefore, I shall teach you the words of power that will protect him from death on earth, in the world above, and in the Other World."

Isis obeyed her father's counsel. That evening, she left the house with Horus and the seven scorpion-helpers. The Mother Goddess said to them, "My child and I are all alone in the world. Because of the death of my husband, my sorrow surpasses the grief of anyone in Egypt, so turn your faces to the ground and take me to a hidden place where I may rear my child in safety and in peace."

After a long and tiring journey, they reached the Town of the Two Sisters in the Nile delta, where Isis stopped by a big, wealthy-looking house to ask for food and a resting place. But the rich woman living there was scared by the sight of the seven scorpions and closed the door on Isis. When she wearily prepared to walk on, a poor fisherwoman approached them and offered them to share her meager meal.

While Isis rested, Tefen and the rest of the scorpions decided to take their revenge on the rich woman who had denied them help. During the night they all loaded their poison onto Tefen, who crept into the wealthy house and stung the child. The mother woke up by the cries of her son and ran in search of help, carrying the small child in

her arms, but no one offered her help or knew what to do.

Her cries woke Isis, who soon found out what had been done. Looking down at her own child, who slept calmly, she felt pity for the rich mother and decided not to let an innocent child die. Isis uttered words of great power, and named each of the scorpions by their names, which meant that she dominated them. Then she ordered the poison of Tefen to leave the body of the boy, who soon could breathe again. This meant that the spell could be used for any child who was stung by a venomous bite, together with a medical prescription of barley-bread, garlic and salt.

When the mother understood whom she had refused, she became very regretful, collected all her possessions, and carried them over to the poor woman's house, trying to make amends for her pride. Isis rejoiced on behalf of the poor woman, and the next day she resumed her journey.

With three of the scorpions leading the way, Isis brought Horus to an island in the papyrus swamps of the Nile delta. They arrived in a place called Chemmis, where Isis loosened the foundation of the island from below, allowing it to float up and down the Nile or out to sea. Such confusion would keep Set at bay. There she secretly nursed and reared her child.

Isis would often hide Horus among the papyrus plants while she went into a nearby city to acquire food for herself and her child. "Have no fear, dear Horus, my glorious son," she would croon. "Your grandfather and I shall keep every evil thing from you, for you are the father of all that is yet to be created. You shall be in no danger, either on land or in the water. The sting of the most poisonous snake will not kill you, nor will the strongest lion be able to crush you. For you are the son of Osiris and Isis, and in time you will

become lord of all the earth as your father was before you!"

On this day Set knew what had occurred and became enraged. "Kill the Child!" he commanded,

and he sent forth his assassins to hunt the child down. They were disguised as snakes and scorpions, crocodiles and chaos, but Isis kept watch, as the child grew.

Questions for Chapter 12

27. Of all the Egyptian gods, why should Isis especially listen to Thoth's advice?
28. Are the scorpions in this chapter helpful or harmful?
29. Why does Isis detach the island of Chemmis from its sandy foundation?

CHAPTER 13: HORUS THE TWICE BORN

Set quickly locates this divine child, and he attempts to kill the kid on several occasions. First, Set sends a snake to bite Horus, who is easily cured by Isis' magic incantations. Set's next attack does more damage. He places a scorpion inside Horus' crib, and the bite nearly kills him.

Although Isis had secretly brought Horus to the papyrus swamps so that he was away from the servant of Set who sought to kill her child, Horus was bitten by a snake one day while Isis stood guard.

Isis spoke: "Oh, the child shall live and the poison die! Ra lives and the poison dies! Horus shall be in good health for his mother Isis. He who is stricken shall be in good health." And the fire that was in the house of Usert was extinguished, and heaven was satisfied with the utterance of Isis, the goddess. With her kiss, the poison left the leg of her child.

Often, Isis would go to town to get food, where she would trade her wisdom of the secret arts and teach the people to weave and sing. All the townspeople loved her (not knowing who she truly was). While Isis was away, all the goddesses of Egypt would take turns watching over Horus. He would delight them with stories of the spirit world to which he recently left. In all there were seven Cobra Goddesses, seven Scorpion Goddess, and seven Heifer Goddesses.

One day, a stranger came into town with red hair and a red beard; he appeared strange to the people. He watched the children playing in the street, staring intently. He commented to the ladies nearby: "So many children playing. They

must have mothers that love them." Then, in an attempt to locate the goddess Isis, he asked, "Which of the children has the mother that loves him the most?"

The women, now fearful of the stranger, kept their silence, but some of the children overheard this conversation and began to sing out the name of Isis whom they loved dearly: "Isis is the mother that loves all children the most, but none so dearly as her own!" The stranger quickly reported this to Set, who then began to devise a plan to murder the child.

One night, Isis took another routine trip to town, entering the celestial houses and making a libation for her husband. On that night, Set went forth to kill Horus. Nephthys was watching over the child, but Set waited until she was not looking to place a scorpion in the child's bed. Immediately the scorpion bit Horus, and the boy cried out. His scream was heard by both the gods and the animals.

The keepers of the doors, who were in the temple of the holy Acacia Tree, started up at the voice of Horus. One sent forth a cry of lamentation, and Heaven gave the order that Horus was to be healed.

The gods took counsel together concerning the life of Horus, saying, "Oh, bring him the magic that is in you to cut off the poison that is in every member of Horus, the son of Isis, and that is in every member of him that is under the knife likewise. A bread-cake made of barley meal shall destroy the poison, and the fire made of the *hetchet*-plant shall drive out the fever-heat from the limbs.

At that moment Isis arrived in town and felt the pain of Horus. She found it difficult to run as she collapsed in tears.

"O Isis, O Isis, come to your son Horus, O woman of the wise mouth! Come to your son," cried the gods who dwelt in her quarter of the town, "for he is as one whom a scorpion has stung, like the scorpion Uhat that the animal Antesh drove away and wounded." Then, summoning her strength, Isis quickly went to Horus.

Then Isis ran out like one who had a knife stuck in her body, and she opened her arms wide, saying, "Behold me, behold me, my son Horus. Have no fear, have no fear, O son, my glory! No

evil thing of any kind whatsoever shall happen to you, for there is in you the essence, the fluid which made the things which exist. You are the son from the country of Mesqet. You have come forth from the celestial waters, Nun, and you will not die by the heat of the poison. You were the Great Benu, who is born from the top of the balsam-trees that are in the House of the Aged One in Anu (Heliopolis). You are the brother of the Abtu Fish, who ordered what is to be, and art the Nursing of the Cat who dwells in the House of Neith. The goddess Reret, the goddess Uat, and the god Bes protect your members. Your head shall not fall to the Tchat fiend that attacks your body. Your members shall not receive the fire of that which is poison. You shall not go backwards on the land, and you shall not be brought low on the water. No reptile that stings shall gain the mastery over you, and no lion shall subdue you or have dominion over you. You are the son of the sublime god who proceeded from Keb. You are Horus, and the poison shall not gain the mastery over your organs. You are the son of the sublime god who proceeded from Geb, and the four august goddesses shall protect your members."

Questions for Chapter 13

30. How does Isis cure Horus of the snake bite?
31. The stranger, one of Set's henchmen, has a red beard. Why?
32. Why does Set use a scorpion to kill Horus rather than his own hands or weapons?

CHAPTER 14: THE DIVINE WORDS

Thoth must come to the aid of Isis and Horus by speaking even more powerful words and spells, which he teaches Isis afterwards. Notice that Isis continually collects new incantations and attains more power, similar to the growth of Inanna.

One way that Thoth helps is by stopping the journey of the sun, represented by a solar barque (boat) that contains the gods of the Ennead (those nine gods on the family tree). If they can stop time, then they can prevent Horus from dying (or at least stop him from getting worse). Thoth eventually cures Horus, reminding us that Horus is really the manifestation of every other universal force, and he teaches Isis these additional magic spells.

By the time Isis had arrived, Horus was still and foaming at the mouth. Isis cried out, as she was too late to stop the poison. She held Horus in her arms, but Horus, the beautiful one of gold, the

boy, the child, was without life. He had bedewed the ground with the water of his eye, and with the foam from his lips. His body was motionless, his

heart was powerless to move, and the sinews of his members were helpless.

Isis sent forth a cry, saying: "I, even I, lack a son to make answer for me. My two breasts are full to overflowing, but my body is empty. My mouth wished for that which concerned him. A cistern of water and a stream of the inundation was I. The child was the desire of my heart, and I longed to protect him. I carried him in my womb, I gave birth to him, and I endured the agony of the birth pangs. I was all alone, and the great ones were afraid to come out at the sound of my voice. My father is in the Duat, my mother stretches far above, and my elder brother is in the sarcophagus. Think of the enemy and of how prolonged was the wrath of his heart against me when I, the great lady, was in his house."

Isis cried passionately, then looked around at the gathering crowd: "Who among the people will indeed let their hearts come round to me?" The people came forth from their houses, and they thronged about Isis at the sound of her voice, and they loudly bewailed with her the greatness of her affliction. There was no man there who set restraint on his mouth, and every person among them lamented. Yet there were none there who knew how to make the child live.

Then Isis placed her nose in Horus' mouth so that she might detect any breathing. She examined the wound of the heir of the gods, and she found that there was poison in it. She threw her arms around him, and then quickly she leaped about with him, like fish when laid upon the hot coals, screaming: "Horus is bitten, O Ra! Your son is bitten, O Osiris! Horus is bitten, the flesh and blood of the Heir, the lord of the diadems of the kingdoms of Shu! Horus is bitten, the boy of the marsh city of Ateh, the Child in the House of the Prince! The beautiful child of gold is bitten! The babe has suffered pain and is not spirited! Horus is bitten, he the son of Nefertem, who was born of Nun! Horus is bitten, but in him there was nothing abominable — the son, the youth among the gods! Horus is bitten, he for whose wants I prepared in abundance, for I saw that he would make answer for his father! Horus is bitten, he for whom I had cared when he was in the hidden woman, and for whom I was afraid when he was in the womb of his mother! Horus is bitten, he whom I guarded to look upon! I have wished for the life of his heart! Calamity has befallen the child on the water, and the child has perished!"

Then came Nephthys, shedding tears and uttering cries of lamentation, and going round about through the papyrus swamps. Serket came also, and they said: "Behold, behold, what has happened to Horus, son of Isis, and who has done it? Pray then to heaven, and let the mariners of Ra cease their labors for a space, for the Boat of Ra cannot travel onwards while his son Horus lies dead on his place."

So Isis sent forth her voice into heaven, and made supplication to the Boat of a Million Years, and the Disk stopped in its journeying, and moved not from the place where it rested. Then came Thoth, equipped with his spells, and possessing the great word of command of *maa-kheru*, asking, "What ails you, O Isis, the goddess who has magical spells, whose mouth has understanding? Assuredly no evil thing has befallen your son Horus, for the Boat of Ra has him under its protection. I have come this day in the Divine Boat of the Disk from the place where it was yesterday — now darkness came and the light was destroyed — in order to heal Horus for his mother Isis and every person who is under the knife likewise."

And Isis, the goddess, replied, "O Thoth, great things are in your heart, but delay belongs to your plan. Have you come equipped with spells and incantations, and having the great formula of *maa-kheru*, and one spell after the other, the numbers of which are not known? Horus is in the cradle of the poison. Evil, evil is his case, death and misery to the fullest extent. The cry of his mouth is towards his mother. I cannot bear to see these things in his train. My heart has not rested because of them, since the beginning when I first arrived."

And Thoth said: "Fear not, fear not, O goddess Isis; fear not, fear not, O Nephthys, and let not anxiety be to you. I have come from heaven having life to heal the child for his mother. Let your heart be firm; he shall not sink under the flame! Horus is protected, as is the Dweller in his Disk, who lights up the Two Lands by the splendor of his two Eyes. Furthermore, he who is under the knife is likewise protected. Horus is protected as the first-born son in heaven, who is ordained to be the guide of the things that exist and of the things that are not yet created; and he who is under the knife is protected likewise. Horus is protected as that great Dwarf (*nemu*) who goes round about the Two Lands in

the darkness; and he who is under the knife is protected likewise. Horus is protected as the Lord in the Night, who revolves at the head of the Land of the Sunset (*Manu*); and he who is under the knife is protected likewise. Horus is protected as the Mighty Ram who is hidden, and who goes round about in front of his Eyes; and he who is under the knife is protected likewise. Horus is protected as the Great Hawk that flies through heaven, earth, and the Other World (*Duat*); and he who is under the knife is protected likewise. Horus is protected as the Holy Scarab Beetle, the mighty wings of which are at the head of the sky; and he who is under the knife is protected likewise. Horus is protected as the Hidden Body, and as he whose mummy is in his sarcophagus; and he who is under the knife is protected likewise. Horus is protected as the Dweller in the Other World and in the Two Lands, who goes round about 'Those who are over Hidden Things'; and he who is under the knife is protected likewise. Horus is protected as the Divine Bennu who alights in front of his two Eyes; and he who is under the knife is protected likewise. Horus is protected in his own body, and the spells that his mother Isis has woven protect him. Horus is protected by the names of his father Osiris in his forms; and he who is under the knife is protected likewise. Horus is protected by the weeping of his mother, and by the cries of grief of his brothers; and he who is under the knife is protected likewise. Horus is protected by his Own Name and Heart, and the gods go round about him to make his funeral bed; and he who is under the knife is protected likewise."

Then Thoth turned to the infant Horus and spoke the magic words: "Wake up, Horus! Your protection is established. Make your mother's heart happy. The words of Horus shall bind up hearts. He who is afflicted shall cause to be at peace. Let your hearts be happy, O you who dwell in the heavens [Nut]. Horus, he who will avenge his father shall cause the poison to retreat. Surely, that which is in the mouth of Ra shall circulate, and the tongue of the Great God shall repulse opposition. The Boat of Ra stands still, and travels not onwards. The Disk is in the same place where it was yesterday to heal Horus for his mother Isis, and to heal him who is under the knife of his mother likewise. Come to the earth, O Boat of Ra. Heal Horus for his mother Isis, and to heal him who is under the knife of his mother likewise. Go away, O pain which is in the region round about, and let the Boat descend upon the place where it

was yesterday to heal Horus for his mother Isis, and to heal him who is under the knife of his mother likewise. Go round and round, O bald fiend, without horns at the seasons, not seeing the forms through the shadow of the two Eyes, to heal Horus for his mother Isis, and to heal him that is under the knife likewise. Be filled, O two halves of heaven! Be empty, O papyrus roll! Return, O life, into the living to heal Horus for his mother Isis, and to heal him who is under the knife likewise. Come to earth, O poison. Let hearts be glad, and let radiance go round about. O Horus, O Horus, your *ka* protects you, and your Image works protection for you. The poison is as the daughter of its own flame — it is destroyed because it smote the strong son. Your temples are in good condition for you, for Horus lives for his mother, and he who is under the knife likewise lives."

And the goddess Isis nervously said: "Turn his face towards those who dwell in the North Land [Ateh], the nurses who dwell in the city Pe-Tept [Buto], for they have offered very large offerings in order to cause the child to be made strong for his mother, and to make strong he who is under the knife likewise. Do not allow them to recognize the divine *ka* in the Swamp Land, in the city of Nemhettu and in her city."

Thoth continued his incantation: "Bite him not, for he is Ra. Sting him not, for he is Thoth. Shoot not your poison over him, for he is Nefer-Tem. O every male serpent, O every female serpent, O every *antesh* [scorpion] who bites with his mouth, and stings with his tail, bite him not with your mouths, and sting him not with your tails. Get far off from him, and make not your fire to be against him, for he is the son of Osiris."

Thoth then repositioned the suffering body, and continued with an instruction to the future god: "Vomit, and say four times, 'I am Thoth. I have come from heaven to make protection of Horus and to drive away the poison of the scorpion that is in every member of Horus.'"

Still, the young Horus did not move, but slowly he recovered the sensation in different parts of his body. Thoth proceeded: "Your head is to you, Horus, and it shall be stable under the Urert Crown. Your eye is to you, Horus, for you are Horus, the son of Geb, the Lord of the Two Eyes, in the midst of the company of the gods. Your nose is to you, Horus, for you are Horus the

Elder, the son of Ra, and you shall not inhale the fiery wind. Your arm is to you, Horus, and great is your strength to slaughter the enemies of your father. Receive the rank and dignity of your father, Osiris. Ptah has balanced for you your mouth on the day of your birth. Your heart is to you, Horus, and the Disk makes your protection. Your eye is to you, Horus; your right eye is like Shu, and your left eye like Tefnut, who are the children of Ra. Your belly is to you, Horus, and the children are the gods who are there, and they shall not receive the fluid of the scorpion. Your strength is to you, Horus, and the strength of Set shall not exist against you. Your phallus is to you, Horus, and you are Kamutef, the protector of his father, who makes an answer for his children in the course of every day. Your thighs are to you, Horus, and your strength shall slaughter the enemies of your father. Your calves are to you, Horus; the god Khnemu has built them, and the goddess Isis has covered them with flesh. The soles of your feet are to you, Horus, and the nations who fight with the bow (*Peti*) fall under your feet. You rule the South, North, West, and East, and you see like Ra. Say four times, and the same be to him who is under the knife."

Then spoke Thoth unto the great gods who dwell in the Swamp-Land, saying: "O nurses who dwell in the city of Pe, who smite fiends with your hands, and overthrow them with your arms, on behalf of that Great One who appears in front

of you in the Boat of Millions of Years, let the Boat travel on. Horus is counted up for life, and he is declared for the life of his father Osiris. I have given gladness unto those who are in the Solar Barque, and the mariners of Ra make it to journey on. Horus lives for his mother Isis, and he who is under the knife lives for his mother likewise. As for the poison, the strength of it has been made powerless. Truly, I am a favored one, and I will join myself to his hour to hurl back the report of evil to him that sent it forth. The heart of Ra rejoices! Your son Horus is counted up for life, and will be fit to avenge his father's death and to take possession of the throne of the Two Lands. Ra is in heaven to make answer on behalf of him and his father. The words of power of his mother have lifted up his face, and they protect him and enable him to go round about wherever he pleases, and to set the terror of him in celestial beings. I now must depart."

Before leaving, Thoth gave Isis the magic instructions to heal, and he gave her the secret words of power that can call forth the very life force of the universe. Then he returned, and the Sun Boat traveled.

Isis, fearing that Set's attacks would continue to happen again, secretly gave Horus to Renenutet to raise in secret. Set howled out in anger, but could do nothing ... for the moment.

Questions for Chapter 14

33. What is the content of Isis' lament that gathers a crowd of sympathizers?
34. Why does Isis ask the Boat of a Million Years to stop?
35. Why does Thoth continually say, "and he who is under the knife is protected likewise"?
36. What is so magical about Thoth's words? Why would words have healing power?

CHAPTER 15: HORUS BECOMES A MAN

This next section takes place years later, after Horus has been raised by Nephthys and caretakers and is trained in the desert. We know about Horus' birth, then a long gap occurs in our knowledge of him before we see him emerge as a grown man, filled with intelligence and strength. This again seems to parallel the missing years in the life of Jesus. This reemergence of the grown child is also a common attribute of the ultimate hero archetype.

When Horus and Isis become reunited, the first thing that Horus notices is that Isis is once again pregnant. He inquires as to the father, and becomes upset that his mother has been with another man. Isis, however, tells Horus that she has been with no other man but Osiris. Confused, Horus listens outside of his mother's bedroom door that night, and bursts through when he hears her moan and groan. He finds Isis making love to the spirit of Osiris, which begins his own quest to meet his father.

Isis trains Horus to meditate and connect himself with the spirit world so that he can finally meet his father. Through meditation, Horus meets Osiris, who quizzes Horus regarding his purpose. Horus answers the questions correctly, which makes Osiris proud and hopeful that his death will be avenged by his only son.

As the adult son of Isis ("Haroeris"), he performed the "opening of the mouth" ceremony on his dead father Osiris, and revenged his father's death, regaining the throne of Egypt from Set. He once symbolized the kings of Egypt, and in early dynastic times the ruler was called a "follower of Horus." By 3000 BCE the pharaoh became known as an embodiment of Horus in life and Osiris in death. In other parts of Egypt, Horus can also be the son of Horus the Elder (Haroeris) and Hathor.

As Horus prepares for war, Ra looks into Horus' magic eyes to foretell the future of the battle with Set. In the midst of doing this, a strange black pig rushes out of the thickets and injures Horus' eye with its tusker. Bewildered and in pain, Horus screams at the sight of his own wound. Ra takes him home and gives Horus his Divine Eye, called the Udjat to replace the one ruined by Set.

Two important symbols should be addressed here. When one of his eyes is ruined in the attack, Horus temporarily loses his foresight and understanding of the cosmic dualities. By replacing his injured eye with a divine one, Ra allows Horus to become even more powerful than before. Furthermore, the Egyptians incorporated this story into their own dietary codes, which forbade the eating of pork (pigs), a tradition that was passed along to the Hebrews, perhaps brought to Canaan and Judea by Moses after his escape from Egyptian captivity.

Also, notice that Horus' eyes were really windows into time and space. Symbolically, Horus is often described as having two celestial eyes (the eyes of Ra), one representing the sun and the other the moon. This implies that Horus can see both horizons equally. He understands sunrise (birth) and sunset (death) equally. These dualistic forces (combined into one face) represent the unification of the dualities, which only a great god can attain.

Years had passed in isolation, and Horus had become a man. Isis was alone — she had lost her husband, lost her kingdom, and her child was far away from her. She longed to see him once again.

When the time was right, Isis returned once again to the thatched house of her sister goddesses Renenutet and Udjat. Her belly was once again round with child, and she could not wait to share this news with her sisters. She knocked on the door, and a young man answered who was strong and handsome. He stood straight and looked at Isis.

Isis embraced him and said, "I am your mother."

Horus, seeing her round belly, and knowing that his father was dead, pushed her away. "Who is it that you have been with that you love more than my father and me?" Horus shouted.

"You make your father proud, but it was only with your father in the realm of the dead that I lay with," Isis replied. Horus invited her into his home, and the two recalled their days apart from each other. Horus had grown into a man, but he still had a lot to learn.

Later that night while Isis lay asleep, Horus listened in on her. He heard her moan in the embrace of a man, and he became angered once again. He burst into the room, but he did not see another man in the room with his mother — only

the shadows of his father and mother embraced in love.

Startled, Isis awoke from the dream to find Horus. "What creature lays with you?" cried Horus.

"It is your father who comes in my dreams from the land of the dead," answered Isis.

"Then I wish to speak with my father in my dreams too," Horus said.

The time had come for Isis to teach her son the ways of magic, the ways of the world, the path of the hero, and the way to his father.

Isis traveled with Horus to all the shrines of his father, and in each shrine Isis taught Horus secrets of magic and the world. Each shrine was a step closer to Osiris. Finally, they came to Abydos, where Isis then told Horus that he must go alone now to speak to his father. So it was that Horus went down in the sand to commune with Osiris.

Horus began his breathing and meditation techniques that Isis had shown him until he went into the trance of the dead.

The voices of the dead slowly came: "Osiris sleeps ... Osiris is dead ... Osiris has risen ... Osiris is in the realm of dreams ... Osiris is born again in his son ... Osiris rules the realm of the dead." Osiris came to Horus: "Son, you must raise my spirit from darkness, avenge he who has done me wrong, and defend the gates."

Horus replied: "Are you not a god? Can you not do this yourself? I am young and have my own life to live."

Osiris stated: "I am the barley. I grow in you; I die in you."

Now that Horus had taken his place among the gods, Osiris decided that the time had come to deal with Set. He tested his son's readiness to avenge his murder by asking the following question: "What is the most glorious deed a man can perform?"

Horus replied, "To take revenge upon one who has injured his father or mother."

"Good. And what animal is most useful to a warrior?" his father asked.

"A horse," said Horus.

"Why not a lion?" his father asked in surprise.

Horus replied, "A lion is more powerful, but a horse is much quicker. Therefore, a horse can help a warrior capture a fleeing enemy better than a lion can."

When he heard this, Osiris knew that the time had come for Horus to declare war on Set, and instructed his son to gather together a great army and sail up the Nile to attack him in the deserts of the south. Horus gathered his forces and prepared to begin the war.

Ra, the shining father of the gods, came to his aid in his Divine Boat that sails across the heavens and through the dangers of the underworld. Before they set sail, Ra drew Horus aside to gaze into his blue eyes, for whoever looks into them, of gods or men, sees the future reflected there. But Set was watching too, and he took upon himself the form of a black pig — black as the thundercloud, fierce to look at, with tusks that strike terror into the bravest heart, with eyes that glinted with cunning and cruelty.

Ra said to Horus, "Let me gaze into your eyes and see what is to come of this war." He gazed into the eyes of Horus, their color being that of the Great Green Sea when the summer sky turns it into the deepest blue. While he gazed, his eyes transfixed, the black pig scurried by and distracted his attention. Ra exclaimed, "Look at that! Never have I seen so huge and fierce a pig!"

Horus turned his head to look, but he did not know that the pig really was Set. He thought it was a wild boar out of the thickets of the north, and he was not ready with a charm or a word of power to guard himself against this enemy. Set darted forward and aimed a blow of fire into the eyes of Horus, who shouted with pain in a great rage. He knew now that it was Set who had attacked, but he had gone that instant and could not be trapped.

Ra immediately ran to Horus: "Let me see your eye since this has happened to it." Then Ra saw it and said, "Remove your hand that is covering your good eye and look at that injury."

Gazing into the river, Horus looked at his injury, which had assumed the form of a black pig. Horus shrieked because of the condition of his eye, which was stormy and inflamed. Horus mumbled, "Behold, my eye is damaged due to the blow that Set made against it!" He then lost consciousness.

Then Ra said to his servants in the Boat: "Put him upon his bed until he has recovered." Further contemplating Set's disguise, Ra vowed: "The pig is an abomination to Horus."

Ra transported Horus into a dark room, where he transferred his own illumination, his Divine Eye, into the eyes of Horus. He passed the *udjat* into Horus' own eye, allowing it to heal and renew, as does the sun each morning. It was not long before Horus' eye could see again as clearly as before.

When Horus had recovered, Ra returned to the sky. Horus was filled with joy that he could see once more, and as he set out up the Nile at the head of his army. The country on either side shared his joy, blossoming into spring.

Questions for Chapter 15

37. Comment on Horus' character when he talks to his father for the first time.
38. Why does Set assume the form of a black pig?

CHAPTER 16: THE WAR IN HEAVEN BEGINS

The last third of the tale develops the action-packed fighting scenes between Horus and Set. The section entitled "The War in Heaven Begins" shows Horus and Set engaged in a legal argument, presided over by the remaining seven gods of the Ennead. Horus emerges from his childhood prepared to fight this battle to avenge his father's death. Much like Jesus, Horus comes out of his exile a strong and intelligent man ready to tackle the biggest problems. He is honored by all and the women all find him to be handsome, but he does not socialize. Rather, he is all business, and he devotes his time on Earth to fulfill one mission — vengeance.

We see Horus in these last chapters increase his power and his symbolism. One new symbol introduced here is the golden disk of the sun, which shines above his head, similar to a halo around the head of a saint in a stained glass window. The orb is not really hanging over his head, but rather a symbolic representation of his holy stature and his connection to Ra, the sun god. One way that Horus illustrates his newly attained power is by morphing into a new symbol, the Winged Disk. In this form, Horus becomes assimilated with Ra, and he is therefore referred to by a hyphenated name: *Ra-Harakhti* (the combined character Ra-Horus). The symbol of Ra (the sun) combines with the wings that reflect Horus' falcon identity, together revealing a combined character that represents incredible power.

Horus enters the court pleading his case for the throne of Osiris, and Shu and Thoth agree. Atum, however, is upset that he was not asked about his opinion, nor was Set allowed his say in court. If the trial is supposed to be a fair one, so far it has not been achieved. Set is allowed to speak, and he resorts to name calling (for example, Horus is deemed a "child").

Standing tall at the bow of his boat, Horus emerged as a great man, his muscles bulging and a sun disc resting on his head. Wherever he went, the people saw him and knew that a god had returned. To every town that Horus went, he brought the teachings of Osiris, and he taught them the scales of justice. Set's men, seeing this,

and tired of desert life, began to desert Set and join with Horus. In return Horus showed them the secrets of iron weapons, the fleetness of the horse, and the loyalty of the lion.

One day the goddess Hathor spied Horus planning his battle beneath a palm and became

infatuated with him. Anyone who gazed upon Hathor fell in love. So too did Horus fall in love with Hathor, but was unsure of what to do because he had never known the company of a woman. Even Set's concubine, Tauret, deserted Set to go to Horus. This especially enraged Set. Not only had Horus grown to be a man, not only had Set's men deserted him, not only did Osiris' name become commonplace again, but now his concubine had left him as his wife Nephthys had deserted him before. "This is too much," he thought. The war had begun.

Set sent forth a giant serpent to kill Horus and his followers, but the serpent was cut to pieces by the faithful of Horus. So Set set forth to hunt Horus with his knife and cut him to pieces himself. Set approached Horus, knife in hand, and showing his teeth. But, rather than fight, Horus transformed himself into a glorious hawk and flew up into the heavens.

High above the earth he came to the council of the gods, the grand courtroom of Ma'at. Horus, the young god that was seated in the presence of the Universal Lord, claimed the office of his father Osiris. Beautiful in his appearance, the son of Ptah, who illumines the west with his complexion, stood tall and declared, "I am the son of Osiris, rightful heir to the throne of Egypt. I have come to take back what was stolen from my father."

Then said Shu, the son of Ra, in the presence of Atum, the great prince who is in Heliopolis: "Justice is a possessor of power. Administer it by saying, 'Award the office to Horus.'"

Thoth, addressing the Ennead, agreed: "It is correct a million times."

Immediately, Isis let out a loud shriek, rejoicing exceedingly, and she came before the Universal Lord and said, "North wind, go to the west. Impart the good news to Onmophris."

Then added Shu, "The one who presents the uninjured Eye is loyal to the Ennead." The other members of the Ennead agreed, and decorated Horus, resplendent with his sun-disk and *udjat*, with many compliments.

However, there was one god resting in the shadows who now started to stir. Silent until now, Atum finally spoke, and it would change the celebratory mood: "Indeed, what is the meaning of your exercising authority alone by yourselves? You call this fair? You have not even heard Set speak!"

Onuris, however, continued unabated: "He shall assume the cartouche of Horus, and the White Crown shall be placed upon his head."

But Atum had not given his word to this, and was angered that the gods had not waited for his decision. The Universal Lord remained silent for a long while, being furious at this Ennead. Then Atum came forth, still angry with Thoth for cheating Khons out of five days' worth of light: "Give the crown to Set, for the crown of Egypt was meant for a god born of the Sky Goddess Nut."

The whole council then began to argue and fight, and the sky darkened over Egypt. Nut, Goddess of Heaven and all that is in it, was incensed with her children. What right had they to change the course of events that she had set into place? All the stars move by her command, so what right had these souls to awaken her from her dream?

Then Set, the son of Nut, came in and stated, "I am the ruler. I took the throne when my brother died. Now this child wants to take what is in my hands? Have him dismissed outside with me that I may let you see my hands prevail over his hands in the presence of the Ennead, since there is not known any other method of dispossessing him."

Thoth rebutted this challenge, speaking to Atum: "Shouldn't we ascertain who is the imposter? It is while Osiris' son Horus is still living that his office is to be awarded to Set?"

Atum became exceedingly furious, for his wish was to give the office to Set, great in virility, the son of Nut.

Onuris let out a loud shriek before the face of the Ennead, saying, "What shall we do?"

Questions for Chapter 16

39. Why does Horus fly to the heavens rather than fight Set the first time?
40. Why is Atum so jealous?

CHAPTER 17: THOTH'S LETTER TO NEITH

After 80 years of conflict, the Ennead finally decide to write a letter to Neith, the primordial universal Mother Goddess, who writes in reply that Horus is the rightful recipient of the throne and should be awarded it immediately. If not, she threatens to collapse the separation between the heavens and the earth, which would destroy the world. Interestingly, Neith favors Horus, who acts as a defender and protector of order, while simultaneously threatening chaos. This shows that Neith embodies both sides of this duality: order and chaos.

Atum is still angry, and calls Horus “despicable,” possibly suggesting that Atum is a jealous god (akin to Yahweh, who describes Himself as “jealous” in *Genesis*). Perhaps Atum fears losing his glory to a younger deity. Perhaps Atum shows bitterness toward him because Horus is not the first-born sun of Nut (Atum's creation).

Set, although he was defended by Atum, turns to him and insults the great god (it's Set's nature to do so). Atum mopes by himself, but is soon joined by Hathor, who exposes herself to Atum to make him smile. Hathor, if you recall, was one goddess in the form of Ra's eye in the story *The Destruction of Mankind*. Hathor is a complex figure, but part of her essence is that of pure sexuality and healing, so we see her playing a more typical role here.

The deliberations came to a standstill for a period of eighty years before the gods decided to seek the advice of Neith, the creator goddess. Atum, the great prince who is in Heliopolis, finally asserted himself with an idea that appealed to the Ennead: “Have Banebdjede, the great living god, summoned that he may judge between the youths.” Banebdjede, the great god who resides in Sehel, was brought before Atum, who told him this: “Judge between the two youths and stop them from being engaged so in quarreling every day.”

The Ennead reminded Banebdjede, the great living god: “It is already that they have been judged in the ‘One are the Truths’ Court.”

Banebdjede, the great living god, answered what he had said: “Do not have us exercise our authority ignorantly. Let a letter be sent to Neith the Great, the God's Mother. As for what she will say, we shall do it.”

Then the Ennead asked Thoth, in the presence of the Universal Lord, “Please compose a letter to Neith the Great, the God's Mother, in the name of

the Universal Lord, the Bull who resides in Heliopolis.”

Thoth said to them, “I'll do so immediately.”

Then he sat down to compose the letter and wrote: “The King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Ra-Atum, beloved of Thoth, the Lord of the Two Lands, the Heliopolitan, the Solar Disk that illumines the Two Lands with its hue, the Nile mighty in flooding, the living manifestation of the Universal Lord, the Bull in Heliopolis, asks, ‘What shall we do for these two individuals who, for eighty years now, have been in the tribunal, but neither of whom can be judged?’ Please write us what we should do.” The letter was quickly sent.

Then Neith the Great sent a letter in reply to the Ennead, saying: “Award the office of Osiris to his son Horus. Don't commit such blatant acts of inequity that are illegal, or I shall become so furious that the sky will touch the ground. The Universal Lord, the Bull who resides in Heliopolis, ought to be told to enrich Set in his possessions. Give him Anat and Astarte, your two daughters,

and install Horus in the position of his father Osiris."

And so the letter of Neith the Great reached the Ennead as they were sitting in the "Horus with the Projecting Horns" Court, and the letter was delivered into Thoth's hand. Thoth read it out in the presence of the Universal Lord and the entire Ennead, and they declared unanimously: This goddess is correct.

But Atum, the Universal Lord, became furious at Horus and told him: "You are despicable in your person, and this office is too much for you, you lad, the flavor of whose mouth is still bad."

Onuris became exceedingly furious, as did the entire Ennead that constituted the Council of the Thirty.

Suddenly, and without provocation, Set stood right up and told Atum, "Your shrine is vacant," and proceeded to walk out of the court. Atum took offense at Set's insult, and retired to lie down on his back in his pavilion, very much saddened and alone by himself.

The Ennead ran outside and let out a loud cry before the face of Set, "Get out! This offense that you have committed is exceedingly great!" Furious, they departed to their dwellings.

After a considerable while Hathor, Lady of the Southern Sycamore, came and stood before her father, the Universal Lord, and she exposed her vagina before his very eyes. The great god laughed at her, but took her in and enjoyed her company. Feeling better, he summoned the court back into session to attempt to settle the dispute amongst the gods.

Questions for Chapter 17

41. Why is Neith's judgment going to be the binding one over the Ennead's decisions?
42. Why does Atum take his anger out on Horus after Neith's letter is read?
43. Why does Set insult Atum, the only god who has defended him?
44. Why does Hathor expose herself to Atum?

CHAPTER 18: BACK IN COURT

Back in court, Set and Horus make strong cases. In fact, Set has a very strong legal argument, which must resemble a real-life inheritance dispute in ancient Egypt. Isis, however, grows more vocal and excitable in the courtroom, prompting Set to move the court to an island in the middle of the river — without Isis. The ferryman, Nemty, is asked to transport the other gods, but not Isis. However, Isis changes her appearance to that of an old hag and bribes her way across.

Once she arrives, she changes form again, this time into a beautiful woman, whom Set makes sexual advances toward. Isis tells a false story about a wife who lost her husband, only to find that a stranger steals their farm. Although this is a parallel example to what Set did, he does not make the connection, and shows sympathy for the woman's suffering. This, of course, implicates himself, and Isis calls him on it. Set feels better only after Nemty is punished (his toes are cut off).

Atum assumed his seat with the Great Ennead. He said to Horus and Set, "Speak concerning yourselves."

Set, the son of Nut, said, "As for me, I am Set, greatest in virility among the Ennead, for I slay

the opponents of Ra daily while I am at the prow of the Bark of the Millions, and not any other god is able to do it. I should receive the office of Osiris."

Then many members of the Ennead admitted, "Set, the son of Nut, is correct."

But Onuris and Thoth let out a loud cry, saying, "Is it while a bodily son is still living that the office is to be awarded to a maternal uncle?"

Banebdjede argued the other side: "The living Great God, is it while Set, his elder brother, is still living that the office is to be awarded to a mere lad?"

The Ennead let out a loud cry before the face of the Universal Lord and said to Banebdjede: "What is the meaning of the words that you have said that are unfit to be heard?"

Horus, son of Isis, spoke up in his own defense: "It is no good, this cheating me in the presence of the Ennead and depriving me of the office of my father Osiris."

Isis vented her fury at the dissenters in the Ennead and took an oath by the god in the presence of the Ennead: "By my mother Neith, the goddess, and by Ptah, with lofty plumes who curbs the horns of gods, these matters should be submitted before Atum, the great prince who is in Heliopolis, and also before Khepri, who resides in his Barque."

The gods reassured her: "Don't become angry. The rights will be given to the one who is in the right. All that you have said will be done."

But Set, son of Nut, became furious at the Ennead when they had said these words to Isis. He saw through their tones and implicit meanings behind the words, his own nature being most cunning. Set glared at them and shouted his threats: "I shall take my scepter of 4,500 *nemset*-weight and kill one of you each day." Then Set took an oath by the Universal Lord, saying: "I shall not go to law in the tribunal while Isis is still in it. Remove her now!"

Desiring an end to this confusion, Atum spoke to the Ennead, excluding Isis: "You shall ferry across to the Island in the Middle and decide between them there. Tell Nemty not to ferry any woman across resembling Isis." And so the Ennead left the court and ferried across to the Island in the Middle, sat down and ate their cakes.

But Isis was not one to be denied, so she transformed herself into an old woman who

walked with a hobble, and she wore a small golden signet-ring on her hand. She followed the Ennead and approached Nemty, the ferryman who was sitting near his boat. She prattled on to him, "It is in order that you might ferry me across to the Island in the Middle that I come to you, because it is for the young lad that I have come carrying this bowlful of porridge, since he has been tending some cattle on the Island in the Middle for five days now and is hungry."

Nemty replied to the old woman, "I have been told not to ferry any woman across."

But Isis clarified his order: "Ah! It is with reference to Isis that you have been told this."

After looking around, over both his shoulders, he asked her, "What will you give me in order that you may be ferried across to the Island in the Middle?"

Isis: "I will give you this cake."

Nemty replied, "What good is it to me, your cake? Is it in exchange for your cake that I should ferry you across to the Island in the Middle when I have been told not to ferry any woman across?"

Then she held his hand and said to him, "I will give you the golden signet-ring that is on my hand."

He looked down and agreed: "Hand over the golden signet-ring." She gave it to him, and he ferried her across river.

She alighted onto the island, and proceeded to ascend to higher ground. She conjured a spell by means of her magic, transforming herself into a young maiden whose body was beautiful and whose like did not exist in the entire land.

As she was walking under the trees, she looked around and saw the Ennead sitting and eating bread in the presence of the Universal Lord in his pavilion. Set was apart from the gathering, sitting near the edge and looking around when he saw the young maiden from afar. As she came closer, he desired her most lecherously.

Set leaped up and ran down the hill. He proceeded to overtake her, comfortable that no one had seen her except himself. He hid behind a sycamore tree and called to her: "I am here with you, beautiful maiden!"

Isis approached Set and told him a tale of woe: "I was a wife with a cattleman to whom I bore a son. After my husband died, the lad started tending his father's cattle. But then a stranger came one day, and he settled in my stable. He told my son, 'I shall beat you and confiscate your father's cattle and evict you.' Now it is my desire to have you afford him protection."

Lured by her story, Set replied, "Is it while the son of the male is still living that the cattle are to be given to the stranger?"

Immediately, Isis transformed herself into a kite, then flew up and perched on top of an acacia tree. She called down to Set and said, "Be ashamed of yourself! It is your own mouth that has said it! It is your own cleverness that has judged you! What comeback do you have now?"

Set realized that his own words had condemned his case, so he became ashamed and went to where Atum was seated, still ashamed.

Atum asked him: "What's bothering you still?"

Said Set to him, "That wicked woman has come to me again. She has tricked me again, having transformed herself into a beautiful maiden before my eyes and spinning a tale about her victimized son," which he repeated word for word.

Atum had to admit: "Now look here, it is you that has judged your own self. What comeback do you have now?"

Set replied, escalating his anger, "Have Nemty, the ferryman, brought and severe punishment inflicted upon him. We should ask him, 'Why did you let her be ferried across?' So it shall be said to him!"

Then Nemty, the ferryman, was brought before the Ennead, who cut off his toes as punishment for his crime. He renounced gold and all possession before returning to his boat.

Questions for Chapter 18

45. What is Set's argument in favor of the crown?
46. Is Nemty's punishment fair?

CHAPTER 19: THE BATTLE OF THE HIPPOPOTAMI

In court again, Horus is awarded the white crown of Lower Egypt, while Set receives the red crown of Upper Egypt. Set, however, is angry and wants both crowns for himself. He challenges Horus to a physical duel — to submerge themselves in the Nile in the form of hippopotami. The game is simple: the first one who rises for air loses the crown. After a few days under water, Isis panics and casts a fishing hook into the water, catching her son Horus, who screams to the surface. She unhooks the barb and casts again, this time netting Set, who likewise screams in agony. Although she wanted to help, she ended up making both gods angry.

Horus grows so enraged that he cuts off Isis' head and walks away with it. Thoth gives Isis a new head — appropriately, that of a cow. Isis likes it, since it reminds her of her mother (Nut, shown in a cow form in the early stories in the unit). The cow is a reverential figure, representing motherhood and provides sustenance. Ironically, in ancient India, the early Hindus survived years of constant drought by suckling the milk from cows, hence a reason for cows being sacred in Hinduism. To show another connection between Egypt and India, we see the same triad concept of "god" in both cultures. Check out the following table:

EGYPTIAN GOD	HINDU GOD	CONCEPT
Atum	Brahma	creator/resurrector
Osiris/Isis/Horus	Vishnu	protector/preserver
Set	Shiva	destroyer

Given time to reflect and discuss the matter further, an understanding was reached in the heavens. Atum, growing weary of the fighting, conceded his position in order to end the dispute.

Back in court that evening, Ra and Atum, Lord of the Two Lands, the Heliopolitan, wrote to the Ennead, saying, "What are you doing still sitting here? As for the two youths, you will be having them finish out their lifetimes in the tribunal! When my letter reaches you, you shall place the White Crown upon the head of Horus, son of Isis, and appoint him to the position of his father Osiris."

Geb, lord of the gods, read the letter and commanded that the Nine Neteru gather to him. He judged between Horus and Set to end their quarrel. He made Set the king of Upper Chemmis, up to the place in which he was born, which is Su. And Geb made Horus King of Lower Chemmis, up to the place in which his father was drowned, which is called "Division-of-the-Two-Lands." Thus Horus stood over one region and Set stood over one region. They made peace over the Two Lands at Ayan. That was the division of the Two Lands, and the Ennead stood satisfied with their resolution.

But Set became terribly furious.

The Ennead said to Set, "Why have you become so furious? Isn't it in accordance with what Atum, Lord of the Two Lands, the Heliopolitan, and Ra have said that things should be carried out? Then the White Crown was set upon the head of Horus, son of Isis.

Set, being very angry, let out a loud shriek before the face of this Ennead, saying, "Is it while I am still living as his elder brother that the office is to be awarded to my younger brother? The White Crown shall be removed from the head of Horus, son of Isis, and he shall be thrown into the water in order that I may contend with him for the office of ruler. Ra acquiesced.

Set turned to Horus with a challenge: "Come, let's both transform ourselves into hippopotami and submerge in the deep waters in the midst of the sea. If one of us shall emerge within the span of three whole months, the office shall not be awarded to him." They both walked to the Nile, submerged, and were not seen for many days.

Isis sat down and wept, saying, "Set has killed Horus, my son." She fetched a skein of yarn, fashioned a line, fetched a *deben*-weight's worth of copper, molded it in the form of a harpoon, tied the line to it, and hurled it into the water at the spot where Horus and Set had submerged. But the copper barb bit into her son Horus, who surfaced and let out a loud shriek, saying, "Help me, mother Isis, my mother! Appeal to your copper barb to let go of me! I am Horus, son of Isis!"

Isis let out a loud shriek and told her copper barb, "Let go of him! See, it is my son Horus! He is my child!" So her copper barb released its grip.

Then she again hurled it back into the water, and this time it bit into Set, who let out a loud shriek, saying, "What have I done against you, my sister Isis? Appeal to your copper barb to let go of me. I am your maternal bother!" Isis felt exceedingly compassionate toward him. Set called to her again, asking, "Do you prefer the stranger to your maternal brother Set?"

So Isis, crying with heartache, appealed to her copper barb, saying, "Let go of him. See, it is Isis' maternal brother whom you have bitten into." Then the copper barb let go of Set.

This made Horus, son of Isis, furious at his mother, and he went out of the water with his face as fierce as an Upper Egyptian panther's. Waving his cleaver of 16 *deben*-weight in his hand, he removed the head of his mother Isis, put it in his arms, and ascended the mountain. Then Isis transformed herself into a statue of flint that had no head.

Said Atum to Thoth, "Who is that statue without a head?"

Thoth replied, "My good lord, that is Isis the Great, the God's Mother, after Horus, her son, removed her head."

Atum then let out a loud cry and said to the Ennead, "Let us go and inflict severe punishment upon Horus. The Ennead ascended the distant mountains in order to search for Horus, son of Isis.

Thoth immediately used his magical words of power to change his daughter's head into the head of a cow, and he quickly attached it to her body. Isis, seeing her reflection in the waters, exclaimed,

"Oh! I have been remade in the image of my Mother!"

Set was quick to put forth his plea to the gods: "See what Horus does! He attacks his own mother! He should be punished!"

Horus, who fled to compose himself, knew that Set would have to remain free, at least for the time being. He would conquer him, but in some other way.

Horus arrived home after dark, and he found Isis awake and waiting for him. Still she had the head of a cow. Horus replaced her head with her own head, and placed upon it a crown that resembled the horns of a cow. "I am sorry

mother. I have been in error." Horus wept as he placed his head in the lap of his mother.

Isis forgave her son and apologized: "I believed Set, and he tried to seduce me. I am a fool. But come with me Horus. I will show you what you need to see."

Isis led Horus to farm. "What do you see?" asked Isis.

"Some pigs and some corn," answered Horus.

"That is all you need to see. From pigs come pigs, and from corn comes corn. You are from Osiris and will reap your harvest, but Set can only reap dirt and pigs."

Questions for Chapter 19

47. Does Isis overreact when her son and Set submerge themselves underwater?
48. Explain Isis' reaction when Thoth transforms her head into a cow's.

CHAPTER 20: THE VIOLATIONS

After Horus apologizes to his mother and relinquishes her head, he rests outside, only to be attacked by Set, who plucks out his eyes. Hathor comes to the rescue and cures Horus before they re-enter the court chambers. The Ennead tell both Horus and Set to make nice and to celebrate together.

Horus and Set throw a party, where Set eats only lettuce and Horus drinks too much. Set convinces Horus that they should share the same bed, especially if they are supposed to rule together side-by-side. After all, they spent 16,000 years sleeping beside each other in Nut's cosmic womb, so what harm could one more night bring? (Remember that Horus is the embodiment of his spirit uncle, Horus the Elder.)

However, in the middle of the night, Set sexually violates Horus by placing his semen into Horus' cupped hands. When Horus awakens, he is horrified at the sight and runs to his mother, who cuts off his hands, discards them into the river, and cleanses his body. She also stimulates her son so that she can collect his semen, which she pours into the lettuce patch. When Set eats the lettuce, he becomes "pregnant," but does not know it.

Interestingly, these ancient cultures considered lettuce to be an aphrodisiac (sexual stimulant). It really isn't, but the Egyptians and Mesopotamians thought that it was based on the milky substance that oozes out of the pores in the lettuce when it is plucked from the base of the plant. The milky substance resembles both mother's milk and a man's seminal fluids.

In court, a snickering Set believes that he will finally attain the throne after he tells the Ennead that Horus has received the "labor of the male," causing the Ennead to spit and hiss at Horus. However, Horus asks Thoth to "call" the semen of each god. When Thoth calls for Set's semen, it answers from the marshy bog, where Isis had discarded it. When Thoth calls Horus' semen, it asks where it should

exit Set's body. Emerging as a gold sun disk, the semen rises above Set to represent the power of life and regeneration. The Ennead, of course, side with Horus. Set, not to be defeated, then suggests racing in stone boats. He clearly doesn't get it.

The next day, Horus was lying under a *shenusha*-tree in the land of the oasis, but Set tracked him to a field where the hawk god slept. Set found him, seized hold of him, threw him down upon his back on the mountain, and plucked his two eyes out of their sockets with his dagger. The Two Eyes rolled down the hill and became buried in the mountain. The two balls of his eyes became two bulbs which grew into two blue lotus flowers that illumined the earth with their brilliance. Set ran away and, when confronted by the Ennead, he told Atum falsely, "I did not find Horus," although he had indeed found him.

Hathor, Mistress of the Southern Sycamore, had also been searching for Horus when she saw the glow from the blue lotuses. She found Horus in the field weeping. Hathor comforted the blind hawk god. She captured a gazelle and milked it. Then, with the milk of a gazelle, Hathor healed the wounds and restored the eyes of Horus. She said to Horus, "Open your eyes so that I may put this milk in them." Then he opened his eyes and she put the milk in them, putting some in the right one and putting some in the left one. She told him, "Open your eyes." And he opened his eyes. She looked at them both and found that they were healed.

She set out to tell Atum, "I found Horus after Set had deprived him of his eyes, but I have restored him back to health. See, he has returned."

Replied the Ennead, "Let Horus and Set be summoned in order that they may be judged." Then they were brought before the Ennead.

Horus returned to heaven and spoke: "Set plucked my eyes out, but Hathor healed me."

Returned Set: "I couldn't have, for I was nowhere near you."

As their arguments flew back and forth, Ra became furious: "I am sick of your fighting! The two of you are worse than the humans!" Ra continued his screaming as he stormed off.

The gods of heaven agreed: "The fighting must stop. Both of you go home together, have cakes and beer."

Said the Universal Lord before the Great Ennead to Horus and Set: "Go and obey what I tell you. You should eat and drink tonight so that we may have some peace. You must stop quarreling every day endlessly."

Set quickly reached his hand out to Horus: "Come, Nephew, let us celebrate peace. Let's make holiday in my house."

For Horus, Set brought out the finest fruits, the best cuts of meat. Horus enjoyed the feast, but Set ate only lettuce. The two gods drank beer long into the night. Then Set said to Horus, "Come — If we are to have peace between our two lands then we must lay down beside each other in bed." Horus, too drunk on beer to disagree, went to sleep facing East, as Set went to sleep facing West. The two resembled the lions of Aker, Yesterday and Tomorrow.

But during the night, Set caused his phallus to become stiff and inserted it between Horus' thighs. Then Horus, in his sleep, placed his hands between his thighs and received Set's semen.

Early the next morning, Horus went to show his mother Isis what had been done to him: "Help me, Isis, my mother. Come and see what Set has done to me." He opened his hands and let her see Set's semen. She let out a loud shriek, seized a copper knife, cut off his hands, and discarded them into the river. Then she fetched some fragrant ointment and applied it to Horus' phallus. She caused it to become stiff and inserted it into a pot, and he caused his semen to flow down into it.

That morning, Isis carried the semen of Horus to the garden of Set. She asked Set's gardener, "What sort of vegetable is it that Set eats here in your company?"

The gardener replied, "He doesn't eat any vegetable here in my company except lettuce." That being said, Isis walked into the lettuce garden with the jar and added the semen of Horus onto it.

Soon Set arrived, according to his daily habit, and ate the lettuce. This made him become pregnant with the semen of Horus.

Later that morning, Set went up to Horus: "Come. Let's go to council so that I may contend with you in the tribunal." Horus agreed.

They both went to the tribunal and stood in the presence of the Great Ennead. They were told to speak concerning themselves.

Set started: "Let me be awarded the office of ruler. Horus, the one who is standing trial, has received the labor of a male against him that I have performed." The Ennead let out a loud cry. They spewed and spat at Horus' face. But Horus laughed at them.

Horus then took an oath by gods as follows: "All that Set has said is false. Let Set's semen be summoned that we may see from where it answers, and my own be summoned that we may see from where it answers."

Then Thoth, lord of script and scribe of truth for the Ennead, put his hand on Horus' shoulder and said: "Come out, you semen of Set." It answered him, but from the distant water in the interior of the marsh. Thoth put his hand on Set's shoulder and said: "Come out, you semen of Horus."

Then it said to him: "Where shall I come from?"

Thoth said to it: "Come out from his ear."

Horus' semen questioned Thoth: "is it from his ear that I should issue forth, seeing that I am divine seed?"

Then Thoth said to it: "Come out from the top of his head." Suddenly, it emerged as a golden solar disk upon Set's head. Set became exceeding furious and extended his hands to seize the golden solar disk, but Thoth took it away from him and placed it as a crown upon his own head.

Then the Ennead agreed: "Horus is right, and Set is wrong."

And so Set took a great oath by the gods as follows: "He shall not be awarded the office until he has been dismissed outside with me and we build for ourselves some stone ships and race each other down the river. Now, as for the one who shall prevail over his rival, he is to be awarded the office of ruler."

The armies of Set and Horus drew near to one another among the islands and the rapids of the First Cataract of the Nile. Then Horus built for himself a boat of pine, plastered it over with gypsum, and launched it into the water at evening time without anybody who was in the land having observed it. Soon, however, Set saw Horus' boat and thought it was hewn from stone. And he went to the mountain, cut off a mountain top, and built for himself a boat of stone 138 cubits in length.

They embarked upon their ships in the presence of the Ennead, but Set's boat immediately sank in the water. Infuriated and embarrassed, Set cried out to his henchmen to attack their enemies with full vigor.

Questions for Chapter 20

49. Why does Set repeatedly attack Horus' eyes?
50. Why would milk from a gazelle heal Horus' eyes?
51. Why does Set violate Horus?
52. Why does Set only eat lettuce?

CHAPTER 21: HORUS, THE WINGED DISK

Horus, the falcon-headed sky god, is a form of the sun god. As a winged solar disc, Horus has the ability to fly toward the heavens to attend the various trials against Set. As a result of Horus' association with the sun, he was often depicted as the personification of the rising sun and a symbol of eternal life and resurrection.

The ancient Egyptians believed that their pharaohs were the earthbound embodiments of Horus. Egyptian pharaohs would take the name of Horus as their own to intimate their "direct" relation to this great god. At death, the pharaoh was thought to become Osiris, and his princely successor became associated with Horus.

In this chapter, Horus embarks on the boat of Ra to use as a battleship against Set and his army. At the prow is Horus, whose two eyes emerge as two warrior goddesses — Nekhebet (the vulture goddess) and Utachet (the cobra goddess), both of whom attack and enemies that are directly in front of the boat. This is very similar to Set's main duty at the front of the boat of a million years, attacking the monsters that attempt to steal the sun disk (see *The Journey to the Duat*). The demonic appearance is supposed to evoke fear, and can be described as Horus' "game face."

As the battle continues, Horus captures Set, whose body is beheaded and dragged in disgrace around town. This scene was the inspiration of the horrific episode in Homer's *Iliad*, where Achilles drags the beaten body of Hector around Troy for a week before he runs out of energy. However, just when you want the story to conclude — surprise! The dead "Set" was really some other guy!

In the year 363 of the reign of Ra upon the Earth, it befell that the god was in Nubia with a mighty army. With his chariots and horsemen and footsoldiers, Ra embarked on the Great River and came to Edfû, where Horus of Edfû joined him in his boat.

"O Ra," said Horus, "Great are your enemies, and cunningly do they conspire against you!"

"My son," answered Ra, "Arm yourself and go forth against my enemies, and slay them speedily."

Horus then sought the aid of the god Thoth, the master of all magic, by whose aid he changed himself into a great sun-disk, with resplendent wings outstretched on either side. Horus flew up into the horizon in the form of the great Winged Disk, for which reason he is called "Great God, Lord of Heaven" to this day. And when he saw the enemies in the heights of heaven he set out to follow after them in the form of the great Winged Disk, and he attacked with such terrific force those who opposed him that they could neither see with their eyes nor hear with their ears, and each of them slew his fellow.

Each man judged his neighbor to be a stranger, and a cry went up indicating that their foes were upon them. Each turned his weapon against the

other, the majority were slain, and the handful of survivors were scattered. And Horus hovered for a while over the battle plains, hoping to find Set, but the arch-enemy was not there — he was hiding in the north country.

Then Horus returned to Ra, who embraced him kindly. Horus took Ra and the goddess Astarte and showed them the battlefield strewn with corpses.

Ra, King of the Gods, said to those in his train: "Come, let us voyage to the Nile, for our enemies are slain." But Set still had a large following, and commanded some of his associates to turn themselves into crocodiles and hippopotami so that they might swallow the occupants of the Divine Barque and yet remain invulnerable by reason of their thick hides.

Horus, however, had gathered his band of smiths, each made for himself an iron lance and a chain, on which Thoth bestowed some of his ever-powerful magic. Horus also repeated the formulae in the *Book of Slaying the Hippopotamus*, so that when the fierce animals charged up the river the god was ready for them.

The army of Horus met Set's army of creatures, but the battle was a quick one. Many of

them were instantly pierced by the magic weapons and died, while the remainder fled. Those who fled to the south were pursued by Horus, and were at length overtaken.

Another great conflict ensued where the followers of Set were again vanquished. According to the desire of Ra, a shrine was raised to commemorate the victory, and his image placed there. Yet another encounter, however, was to take place in the South Land before the followers of Set were destroyed.

Horus and Ra sailed northward toward the sea in search of Set and his allies, hoping to slay all the crocodiles and hippopotami, which were the bodily forms of their foes, but the beasts kept themselves under water. Four days had elapsed before Horus caught sight of them. He at once attacked them, and wrought great havoc with his glittering weapons, to the delight of Ra and Thoth, who watched the conflict from the Boat.

Then Horus, in the form of the Winged Disk, placed himself upon the front of the Boat of Ra. And he placed by his side the goddess Nekhbet and the goddess Wadjet, in the form of two serpents, that they might make the enemies quake in all their limbs when they were in the forms of crocodiles and hippopotami.

Then those enemies rose up to make their escape from before him. The face of the god was towards the Land of the North, and their hearts were stricken through fear of him. Horus was at the back side of them in the Boat of Ra, and those who were following him had spears and chains of metal in their hands. The god himself was equipped for battle with the weapons of the metal workers that they had with them.

The god spent four days and four nights in the water in pursuit of them, but he did not see anybody, but soon enough he found them and saw them. Ra said to Horus: "O Winged Disk, the Great God and Lord of Heaven, seize them!" He hurled his lance after them, and he slew them, and worked a great overthrow of them. He brought one hundred forty-two enemies to the forepart of the Boat of Ra, and with them was a male hippopotamus that had been among those enemies. He hacked them in pieces with his knife, and he gave their entrails to those who were in his following, and he gave their carcasses

to the gods and goddesses who were in the Boat of Ra on the river bank of the city of Heben.

Then Ra said to Thoth, "See what mighty things Horus has performed in his deeds against the enemies!"

Then said Thoth to Ra, "Horus shall be called 'Winged Disk, Great God, smiter of the enemies in the town of Heben' from this day forward, and he shall be called 'He who stands on the back' and 'prophet of this god' from this day forward."

This caused Set to become greatly incensed, and he decided to come forth in person to do battle with Horus. Horrible indeed were his cries and curses when he heard the losses that his army had sustained. Horus and his followers went out to meet the army of Set, and long and furious was the battle.

Then Horus spoke in the presence of his father Ra, saying, "Let me set this Boat against them, so that I may be able to perform against them that which Ra wills." He made an attack upon them on the lake that was at the west of this district, and he perceived them on the bank of the city that belonged to the Lake of Mertet.

Horus made an expedition against them, and his followers were with him, and they were provided with weapons of all kinds for battle. He waged a great overthrow among them, and he brought in three hundred eighty-one enemies. He slaughtered them in the forepart of the Boat of Ra and he gave one of them to each of those who were in his train.

Then Set rose up and came forth, and raged loudly with words of cursing and abuse because of the things that Horus had done in respect of the slaughter of the enemies. Horus did battle with the Enemy for a period of time, and he hurled his iron lance at him. Horus threw him down on the ground in this region, which is called Pa-Rerehtu unto this day.

Then Horus came and brought the Enemy with him. Horus' spear was stuck in his neck, and his chain was round his hands and arms, and the weapon of Horus had fallen on Set's mouth so that it remained closed. The captive went with Horus before his father Ra, who said, "O Horus, the Winged Disk, twice great is the deed of valor

which you have done, and you has cleansed the district.”

And Ra said to Thoth, “Let the enemies and Set be given over to Isis and her son Horus, and let them work all their heart’s desire upon them.”

Isis and her son Horus cut off the head of the Enemy Set and the heads of his fiends in the presence of father Ra and the great company of the gods. Horus dragged him by his feet through his district with his spear driven through his head and back.

Ra instructed Thoth: “Let the son of Osiris drag the being of disaster through his territory.”

Thoth replied, “It shall be called Ateh,” and this has been the name of the region from that day to this.

Isis, the Divine Lady, spoke before Ra, saying, “Let the exalted Winged Disk become the amulet

of my son Horus, who has cut off the head of the Enemy and the heads of his fiends.”

Thus Horus, the son of Isis, slaughtered that evil Enemy, and his fiends and inert foes, and came forth with them to the water on the west side of this district. Horus was in the form of a man of mighty strength, and he had the face of a hawk. His head was crowned with the White Crown and the Red Crown, and with two plumes and two *uraei*. He had the back of a hawk, and his spear and his chain were in his hands. Horus, the son of Isis, transformed himself into the Winged Disk again, beaming with splendid victory.

Soon it was discovered, however, that the man who was captured was not Set, but only one of Set’s associates who had perished miserably. The Evil One himself was still at large, vowing vengeance on his enemies.

Questions for Chapter 21

53. Why does Set instruct his henchmen to transform themselves into crocodiles and hippopotami?
54. How can the Ennead allow Horus and Isis to desecrate Set’s body in public?
55. How could Horus have mistaken one of Set’s associates for his uncle? Is this a weakness in Horus’ character?

CHAPTER 22: THE SLAUGHTER OF SET’S MONSTERS

Set has now transformed himself into a serpent and clearly becomes a symbol for evil, demonstrating the influence of the Age of Aries. It should not be surprising that this scene helped to establish our Western views of evil and the ways that we symbolize this concept. The name “Set” is the origin of the names “Seth” and “Satan.”

Horus assumes his Ra-Harakhti sun disc form, delivering Ra’s boat in brilliant rays of light that are so bright they could kill a man. Horus also embarks on reconnaissance flights to spot Set and his enemies on the battlefield. After behaving like a hawk, Horus then changes his form into a lion to attack wayward warriors from the enemy side. This association of a divine being and a lion is a ubiquitous symbol of royalty and authority throughout Africa and is also the likely origin if the association of the crowned lion with Jesus in later years.

Horus’ sun disc image is sanctified at the end of this section when Thoth commissions that the symbol adorn all temples and public buildings to ward off the evil spirits.

Set took upon himself the form of a hissing serpent, and he entered into the Earth in this district without being seen, while his followers took courage from the knowledge that he had eluded his enemy.

Ra called out his instructions: "Set has taken upon himself the form of a hissing serpent. Let Horus, the son of Isis, in the form of a hawk-headed staff, set himself over the place where he is, so that the serpent may never more appear."

Then the Boat of Ra arrived at the town of Het-Aha; its forepart was made of palm wood, and the hind part was made of acacia wood; thus the palm tree and the acacia tree have been sacred trees from that day to this. Then Horus again embarked in the Boat of Ra, saying, "O Ra, Lord of the gods, grant that this Boat may pursue them into every place, wherever they shall go, and I will do to them whatsoever pleases Ra."

Everything was done according to what he had said. The Boat of Ra was brought by the winged sun-disk upon the waters of the Lake of Meh, and Horus took in his hands his weapons: his darts, and his harpoon, and all the chains that he required for the fight.

The gods remained for six days on the canal, waiting for the reappearance of the foe, but none were to be seen. However, Horus finally spotted a few of Set's remaining fiends from above, and he swooped down for the attack. Horus threw only one metal dart, which wounded all the enemies. He dragged them along straightway, and he slaughtered them in the presence of Ra. He made an end of them, and there were no more of the fiends of Set in this place at that moment.

They untied the Boat of Ra, and they sailed up the river to the east. Then they looked upon those enemies that had fallen into the river and the others that had fallen headlong on the mountains.

Horus then transformed himself into a lion that had the face of a man, and he was crowned with the triple crown. His paw was like a flint knife, and he went round and round by the side of them. He captured one hundred forty-two of the enemies, and he rent them in pieces with his claws. He tore out their tongues, and their blood flowed on the ridges of the land in this place, and he made them the property of those who were in his following while he was upon the mountains.

Then Ra said unto Horus, "Let us sail to the south up the river, and let us smite the enemies who are in the forms of crocodiles and hippopotami in the face of Egypt."

And Horus replied, "Let us sail up the river, and there we will fight against the remaining one-third of the enemies who are in the water."

Then Thoth recited the chapters of protecting the Boat of Ra and the boats of the blacksmiths, which he used for making the sea tranquil when a storm was raging on it. The barque launched itself onto the open waters and journeyed upstream.

After extensive traveling and searching without encountering the enemies, Ra asked Thoth, "Have we not journeyed throughout the whole land? Shall we not journey over the whole sea in like manner?"

Thoth replied, "This water shall be called the 'Sea of Journeying' from this day onward." They sailed about over the water during the night, but they did not see any of those enemies at all.

Then they made a journey forth and arrived in the country of Ta-sti, at the town of Shas-hertet, and Ra perceived the most able of their enemies in the country of Uaua, and they were uttering treason against Horus, their Lord.

Horus changed his form into that of the Winged Disk, and took his place above the bow of the Boat of Ra. He made the goddess Nekhebet and the goddess Utachet to be with him in the form of serpents, so that they might make the *sebau* fiends to quake in all their limbs. The boldness of the fiends subsided through the fear of the serpents, and they made no resistance whatsoever. Many died instantly at the sight of Horus in his blazing form.

Then the gods who were in the Boat said, "Great, great is that which he has done among them by means of the two Serpent Goddesses, for he has overthrown the enemy by means of their fear of him."

Horus traveled on in his boat and landed at the city of Apollinopolis Magna. Once docked, Thoth said, "The being of light who has come forth from the horizon has smitten the enemy in the form that he has made. He shall be called Being of Light

who has come forth from the horizon from this day onwards."

Ra said to Thoth, "You must make this Winged Disk to be in every place where I seat myself, and in all the seats of the gods in the South, and in all the seats of the gods in the Land of the North in the Country of Horus, that it may drive away the evil ones from their domains."

Then Thoth made the image of the Winged Disk to be in every sanctuary and in every temple, where they now are, all the gods and all the goddesses from this day onwards. Now the Winged Disk is on the temple-buildings of all the gods and all the goddesses of the Land of the Lily, and the Land of the Papyrus. These buildings have become shrines of Horus.

Questions for Chapter 22

56. What advantages does Horus have while in his two main forms: as a winged disk and as a lion?
57. Why does Horus employ the vulture goddess Nekhbet and the cobra goddess Wadjet?

CHAPTER 23: THE FINAL BATTLE

In the final battle, the real Set transforms into a giant hippo that straddles the Nile. Horus himself grows larger and becomes a giant version of himself. Against the wishes of the Ennead, Horus thrusts his harpoon into Set's hippo body, killing the antagonist at last. His body is then fed to the dogs and the vultures, similar to how the evil souls are discarded to the jackals in the Hall of Judgment.

Horus set out in a boat splendidly decorated by Isis, who also laid magic spells upon it, so that its occupant might not be overcome. But emerging from the rushes, and gathering his remaining energies, Set transformed himself into a red hippopotamus of gigantic size and planned to break Horus' boat.

In the water the red hippopotamus waited for the wrecking of the boat so that he might swallow his enemies. But this he was destined never to do, for showed himself above water due to his immensity. Set uttered a great curse against Horus and Isis: "Let there come a terrible raging tempest and a mighty flood against my enemies!" he cried. His voice was like the thunder rolling across the heavens from the south to the north.

At once a violent storm broke over the boats of Horus and his army. The wind roared and the water was heaped into great waves. The raging storm broke over the boats of Horus and his train, so that the waters were lashed into fury. Had it not been that the boats were protected by magic, all would assuredly have perished. Horus, however, held on his course undismayed, his own

boat gleaming through the darkness, its prow shining like a ray of the sun.

Set opened his mighty jaws to destroy Horus and his followers, but he saw that the mighty storm had not wrecked their boats. Distracted by his failed plan, Set turned around and stood at bay, straddling the whole stream of the Nile, so huge a red hippopotamus was he. But Horus took upon himself the shape of a handsome young man, twelve feet in height. His hand held a harpoon thirty feet long with a blade six feet wide at its point of greatest width. It was such a weapon that no ordinary mortal could not lift.

Horus took his copper harpoon and prepared to hurl it at Set. But the Ennead shouted at their hero: "Don't hurl it at him!"

But Horus cast his harpoon anyway, and it struck deep into the head of the red hippopotamus, deep into his brain. That one blow slew Set, the great wicked one, the enemy of Osiris and the gods. This was the end of Set, the Evil One, the murderer of Osiris and the enemy of Ra. The red hippopotamus sank dead beside the

Nile at Edfû. The storm passed away, the flood sank, and the sky was clear and blue once more.

Then the people of Edfû came out to welcome Horus the Avenger and lead him in triumph to the shrine over which the great temple now stands. They sang the song of praise that the priests chanted ever afterwards when the yearly festival of Horus was held at Edfû: "Rejoice, you who dwell in Edfû! Horus the great god, the lord of the sky, has slain the enemy of his father! Eat the

flesh of the vanquished! Drink the blood of the red hippopotamus! Burn his bones with fire! Let him be cut in pieces, and the scraps be given to the cats, and the offal to the reptiles! Glory to Horus of the mighty blow, the brave one, the slayer, the wielder of the harpoon, the only son of Osiris, Horus of Edfû — Horus the Avenger!"

Horus, the victor, gathered the harpoons, put them in his boat, and sailed downstream.

Questions for Chapter 23

58. Why must both Set and Horus enlarge their physical forms before their final battle?
59. Why do the Ennead tell Horus to refrain from harpooning Set?
60. Why is the dismemberment of Set featured in the chants of the priests in Edfû?

CHAPTER 24: THE FINAL JUDGMENT

Back one last time in the Hall of Judgment, Horus once again presents his case ... but so does Set! Why? As much as we may want him to go away, *Set will never die*. If he did, there would be no dark side of the dualities, and life as we know it would be nonexistent. Remember that Set plays the role of the destroyer, so he must play this role for eternity. Set is the desert, and, no matter how much the Egyptians try to get away, it is here to stay, battling against the Nile for dominance in the region.

Isis complains again, and, like before, the Ennead ferry off to an island without Isis, who once again bribes the ferryman, changes into a young woman, tells Set an analogous story, and Set once again steps into the trap. This is the last straw for Ra, who finally turns on Set and tells him to give up. In a bizarre twist, Osiris is then asked who should receive the throne. Set then challenges Osiris to a fight as well. Seemingly without end, Thoth then breaks out the balance scales, where Osiris' judgment is found to be superior to Set's, finally forcing a contrite Set to step aside.

Horus sailed to Sais in order to speak with the Ennead, specifically to Neith the Great, the gods' Mother: "Let judgment be passed on me and Set, seeing that it is eighty years now that we have been in the tribunal and they have been unable to pass judgment on us, nor has he yet been vindicated against me. But it is a thousand times now that I have been in the right against him every day, although he doesn't regard anything that the Ennead has said. I have contended with him in the "The Path of the Truths" court, and I have been vindicated against him. I have contended with him in the "Horus with the Projecting Horns" court, and I have been vindicated against him. I have contended with him in the

"Field of Rushes" court, and I have been vindicated against him. I have contended with him in the "Pool of the Field" court, and I have been vindicated against him.

The Ennead agreed, and said to Shu: "Horus, son of Isis, is correct in all that he has said."

But, once again, Set came before the gods in heaven. His speech was planned, and he again beamed with confidence that he would win. "The throne should be mine! I am born from Nut and Geb."

Horus shouted, "You killed my father and imprisoned my mother!"

"You have no proof of these falsehoods!" claimed Set.

Back and forth the arguments flew, until Isis entered the argument: "My Mother Nut proclaimed Horus to be rightful heir to throne!" she spat.

"Shut up, you old wench!" shouted Set. He banged his staff on the floor, calling Thunder and Lightning to fill the sky. "You, with your magic!"

"Seducer of children!" cried Isis, referring to the way that Set had violated Horus.

But Set defended himself well: "Children? Children? I though you said he was a man?" Set then faced the other gods of the Ennead: "I will have nothing more to do with this council so long as Isis is here. This is between me and Horus."

"Fair enough," stated Ra. "We will move the council to the Island of Reeds. We will instruct the ferryman not to let any one that looks like Isis on the island." So the Council moved to the Island of Reeds.

Isis again disguised herself as an old hag, and went to the ferryman. "Halt, woman. I am not to let any woman across."

Isis replied, "I am to bring raisin cakes and beer to that man over there he has not eaten in three days. You are not to allow anyone that looks like Isis. Do I look like Isis?" Isis coughed and spit into the man's face.

"Not in the least!" proclaimed the man.

"Then ferry me across, and I'll give you some cakes." Isis returned.

"I can not," answered the man.

"Then take this gold ring so as I can feed that poor boy who has not eaten in three days," came Isis. The ferryman gave in to Isis and ferried her across.

Once on the shore of the island, Isis turned herself into a beautiful girl. Once again, Set saw

this young girl, and went into the bush to speak with her. Isis began to cry.

"Why do you cry, woman?" asked Set.

Isis began to tell her story: "A man came and killed my husband. He took my house and my cattle. Then he cast me out with my son. I beg you, if you are truly a god, then honor my husband and help me!"

"What a horrible thing to happen," replied Set. "A man killing your husband and taking your house. I shall help you," Set said confidently, attempting to win her trust. But his lust overtook his charade. He grabbed her by the waist and held her tightly. "I weep for you lovely lady." Set moved still closer.

But Isis pushed him away and screamed: "Your own words condemn you!" She then transformed herself into a swallow and flew up into the acacia tree.

Set screamed in anger. He pounded his fist and he wept, "That Evil Woman has tricked me yet again!" Then he repeated her words to mock her: "A man has taken my house and kicked me out"

Suddenly, Ra looked down upon Set and asked, "What did you say?"

Set, a little surprised, replied, "I felt sorry for her ... and I said that it was an awful thing ... and that I would help her"

"Then it is over," stated Ra firmly. "Horus gets the throne."

Unable to concede, Set quickly pulled his knife and held it to Ra's neck: "Give me one more fight or I'll kill all the gods in heaven!" threatened Set.

Ra called out to the heavens: "I am sick of all this fighting! What do you decree, Thoth?"

Thoth repeated his earlier argument: "We must let Osiris decide, for it was his throne."

"Then we shall send a letter to Osiris in the underworld and abide by the decision," proclaimed Ra, pushing Set aside.

Thoth then relayed this to the Universal Lord: "Have a letter sent to Osiris so that he may judge between the two youths."

Then said Shu, "What Thoth has told the Ennead is correct a million times."

Atum, the Universal Lord, instructed Thoth: "Sit down and compose a letter to Osiris that we may learn what he has to say."

Thoth sat down to fill out a letter to Osiris with these words: "Bull, the lion who hunts for himself; the Two Ladies, protecting the gods and subduing the Two Lands; Horus of God, who invented mankind in the primeval time, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt; Bull in the midst of Heliopolis, son of Ptah, most glorious one of the Two Banks, appearing as father of the Ennead while he eats of gold and glaze, the possessor of sanctity, please write us what we should do for Horus and Set so that we do not exercise our authority ignorantly."

Soon the letter reached the son of Ra, great in bounty and Master of Sustenance. He let out a loud cry after the letter had been read out in his presence. Then he answered it very quickly, writing to the place where the Universal Lord was together with the Ennead, saying: "Why should my son Horus be cheated when it was I that made you mighty and it was I alone who could create barley and emmer in order to sustain the gods as well as the cattle following the gods; whereas, not any god or any goddess found himself competent enough to do it?"

So Osiris' letter reached the place where Atum was, sitting together with the Ennead on the White Mound in Xoïs. It was read out in his and the Ennead's presence, but some questioned the words of Osiris. Atum commanded Thoth: "Please answer for me the letter very quickly to Osiris, and tell him in the letter, 'If you had not come into being and if you had not been born, barley and emmer would exist anyway.'"

The letter of the Universal Lord reached Osiris, and it was read out in his presence. Then he again wrote to Atum as follows: "It is exceedingly good, all that which you have done, O you who invented the Ennead as an accomplishment, although justice was allowed to sink down within the netherworld. Please look at the situation also on your part. As for the land in

which I am, it is filled with savage-faced messengers who do not fear any god or any goddess. I have but to let them go forth, and they will fetch the heart of whoever commits misdeeds and they will be here with me. Indeed, what is the meaning of my happening to be here resting in the west while you are all outside? Who among you is there that is mightier than me? But see, you have invented *injustice* as an accomplishment. When Ptah the Great, South of his Wall, Lord of Ankh-tawi, created the sky, isn't it so that he told the stars that are in it, 'It is in the west where King Osiris is that you shall set every night?' And he told me, 'Now after the manner of gods, so patricians and commoners also shall go to rest in the place where you are.' So he said to me."

Osiris' letter reached the place where the Universal Lord was seated together with the Ennead. Thoth received the letter and read it out in the presence of Atum and the Ennead. After pondering the words for a moment, they said: "The Great in Bounty and Master of Sustenance is doubly correct in all that he has said."

But Set was relentless: "Let us be taken to the Island in the Middle so that I may contend with him."

Then Atum, Lord of the Two Lands, the Heliopolitan, went to Isis, saying: "Bring Set, restrained with manacles." Isis brought Set, restrained with manacles, as a prisoner. Said Atum to him: "Why do you not allow yourself to be judged? Instead you usurp for yourself the office of Horus?"

Thoth, the lord of Divine Words, brought forth the great balance scale of Ma'at. He weighed the testimony of Set on one scale and Osiris' defense on the other. When the balance registered in favor of Osiris, he, Isis, and Horus were recognized as speakers of truth, while Set was unmasked as a liar. As a result, Osiris became judge of the dead in the Hall of Judgment, weighing their testimony on the great balance scale, just as Thoth had weighed his.

Atum then asked what Set's next excuse might be.

Finally, a contrite Set replied: "On the contrary, my good lord. Let Horus, son of Isis, be summoned and be awarded the office of his father Osiris."

Questions for Chapter 24

61. Why does Horus plead his case to the Ennead after killing Set in the river?
62. How do you explain the re-emergence of Set after he had been slaughtered by Horus?
63. Why does Ra once again agree that the Ennead should meet away from Isis, this time on the Island of Reeds?
64. Why does Set finally relent and allow Osiris to assume Osiris' throne?

CHAPTER 25: THE CORONATION

Horus is then awarded the dual crowns (white and red), he gives his Udjat eye to Osiris, who then completes his journey to the Duat, becoming a god in the heavens. Set is then given the task of holding one side of the ladder to heaven, with Horus on the other side. A pharaoh's soul must pass between Horus and Set before climbing the ladder, symbolizing how we all must live through the dualities of this world before we can become unified in the afterlife.

In the end, Set becomes just as important as Horus. More importantly, Set is allowed to work in a position where he can utilize his strengths in a productive way to the universe. If his nature is to be combative, then placing him at the front of the divine boat will allow him to protect the sun boat by destroying its fierce enemies who seek to destroy the boat (and the universe as well). Set pushes the limits, causes a lot of heartache, but eventually finds his rightful place in the Natur.

Horus, son of Isis, was brought, and the White Crown of Upper Egypt was placed upon his head, and he was installed in the position of his father Osiris.

Then it seemed wrong to Geb that Horus' previously awarded portion of Egypt was equal to that portion that was allotted to Set, so Geb gave Horus his inheritance, for he is the firstborn son. Hence, Geb also placed the Red Crown of Lower Egypt upon Horus' head.

Geb spoke to the Nine Neteru: "I have appointed Horus, the firstborn — him alone, Horus — the inheritance. To his heir, Horus, my inheritance, to the son of my son, Horus, the Jackal of Upper Chemmis, the firstborn, Horus, the Opener-of-the-ways, the son who was born — Horus, on the Birthday of the Opener-of-the-ways."

The rest of the Ennead told him: "You are a good King of Egypt. You are the Good Lord of every land unto all eternity."

Isis let out a loud scream of delight on behalf of her son Horus, saying: "You are the good king.

My heart is in joy. You have illumined the earth with your complexion."

Then Ptah the Great, South of his Wall, Lord of Ankh-tawi, said: "What shall be done for Set since Horus has been installed in the position of his father Osiris?"

Said Ra: "Let Set, son of Nut, be delivered to me so that he may dwell with me, being in my company on the Solar Barque as a son, and he shall thunder in the sky and be feared."

Osiris, pleased with the judgments, then pleaded for his own position in the heavens: "The birth of Limitless in the horizon will be prevented if you prevent me from coming to the place where you are. The birth of Sirius (Sopdet) will be prevented if you prevent me from coming to the place where you are. The Two Banks will be held back from Horus if you prevent me from coming to the place where you are. The birth of Orion (Sah) will be prevented if you prevent me from coming to the place where you are."

Thoth agreed, and turned to Horus, requesting his *udjat*, the Divine Eye: "Perfect is the Eye of Horus. I have delivered the Eye of Horus, the shining one, the ornament of the Eye of Ra, the Father of the Gods. Let the Eye of Horus come forth from the god and shine outside his mouth."

Horus then removed his Eternal Eye, placed it in his father's mouth, and directed him to swallow it. Osiris immediately became much stronger and regained his full abilities to see, speak, and walk.

Said Thoth: "The Eye of Horus will protect you. It can be cast down headlong against all of your enemies, and can make them fall down before you. The Eye of Horus comes, sending forth rays like Ra in the horizon."

Once fully recovered, Osiris spoke: "The Eye of Horus has made me holy. I will hide myself among you, O stars, which are imperishable. My brow is the brow of Ra."

With the help of Ra, Horus set up a ladder so tall that it reached from the Other World up to the world of the gods above the earth. Horus and Set were positioned astride the ladder, guarding its rungs to the sky.

Osiris then reflected on his journey to the heavens as he stood before the ladder: "I have inundated the land which came forth from the lake, I have torn out the papyrus-plant, I have satisfied the Two Lands, I have united the Two Lands, and I have joined my mother the Great Wild Cow. O my mother, the Wild Cow that is upon the Mountain of Pasture and upon the Mountain of the *zhzh* bird, the two *djet*-pillars stand, though the broken rubble has fallen, and ascent on this ladder which my father Ra made for me. Horus and Set take hold of my hands and take me to the Duat."

Osiris slowly climbed up to join the gods, with Isis leading the way, and Nephthys behind him, saying, "Come, the Eye of Horus has delivered for me my soul, and my ornaments are established on the brow of Ra. Light is on the faces of those who are in the members of Osiris. That which has been dead will now be opened by the command of the Eye of Horus, which has delivered me. Established are the beauties of the forehead of Ra. I shall see the Gods and the Eye of Horus burning with fire before my eyes."

Thoth then spoke to Osiris: "In your name of Dweller in Orion, with a season in the sky and a season on earth, O Osiris, turn your face and look on this King, for your seed which issues from you is effective. If he lives, this King will live." Osiris looked at his son proudly, then ascended the ladder to the Duat.

Said Thoth: "Your hand is taken by Ra, and your head is lifted up by the Two Enneads. Behold, he has come as Orion. Behold, Osiris has come as Orion, Lord of Wine in the *weg* festival."

Next, Horus ascended the ladder to the sky: "May I soar cloudwards to the sky, like a hero. May I surpass the side-locked ones of the sky, the plumes on my shoulders being like spines. May Orion give me his hand, for Sirius has taken my hand. The earth is hacked up for me, and offerings are presented to me."

On their journey upward, Thoth remarked: "The king becomes a star. Your hand is grasped by Ra. Your head is raised by the Two Enneads. Rejoice, for he has come as Orion — Osiris has come as Orion, conceived of sky, born of dusk. Sky conceived you and Orion; dusk gave birth to you and Orion. Who lives does so only by the gods' command — You shall live! You shall rise with Orion in the eastern sky. You shall set with Orion in the western sky. Sirius, pure of thrones, is your guide on the sky's good paths in the Field of Rushes."

The gods welcomed Osiris warmly, for they were delighted to have him living among them once again. As the news spread throughout the universe, there was turmoil in the sky. "We see something new," shouted the primeval gods.

Atum then spoke to the gods: "O you Ennead, Horus is in the sunlight — the possessors of forms make salutation to him. All the Two Enneads serve him, for he sits on the throne of the Lord of All. The King takes possession of the sky; he cleaves its iron. The King is conducted on the roads to Khoprer, the King rests in life in the West, and the dwellers in the Duat attend him. The king shines anew in the east, and he who settled the dispute will come to him bowing. Make salutation, you gods, to the King, who is older than the Great One, to whom belongs power on his throne."

Horus, son of Isis, had arisen as Ruler. Atum rejoiced exceedingly and said to the Ennead: "You shall jubilate from one land to the next for Horus, son of Isis!"

Isis, with pride, proclaimed: "Horus has arisen as Ruler, the Ennead is in festivity, and heaven is in joy!"

Horus stood over the land. He is the uniter of this land, proclaimed in the great name: Ta-tenen, South-of-his-Wall, Lord of Eternity. Then sprouted the two Great Magicians upon his head.

Atum proclaimed: "He is Horus who arose as king of Upper and Lower Chemmis, who united the Two Lands in the Nome of the Wall, the place in which the Two Lands were united."

They donned wreaths when they saw Horus, son of Isis, arisen as great Ruler of Egypt. As for the Ennead, their hearts were satisfied, and the entire land was in exultation when they saw Horus, son of Isis, assigned the office of his father Osiris, Lord of the Duat.

Thus it concludes successfully in Thebes, the place of Truth.

Questions for Chapter 25

65. What two important positions does Set earn? Why are these perfect jobs for him?

66. Why does Horus' Eternal Eye (*udjat*) make Osiris holy?

67. What is so significant about Osiris climbing the ladder and ascending to the Duat?

68. Why does Atum say that Horus "is older than the Great One [Atum]"?

69. Play with Metaphors:

Nut (sky) has affairs with three gods, bearing five children in the process. Explain how each child makes metaphorical sense, based on the divine qualities represented by the two parents:

- **NUT** (night sky) + **RA** (sun) = **OSIRIS** (fertile land, resurrection)
- **NUT** (night sky) + **RA** (sun) = **HORUS (the Elder)** (kingship, protector)
- **NUT** (night sky) + **GEB** (earth) = **SET** (strength, destroyer)
- **NUT** (night sky) + **GEB** (earth) = **NEPHTHYS** (helper, guide)
- **NUT** (night sky) + **THOTH** (wisdom) = **ISIS** (green crops, the divine throne)

69a. Why would **Osiris** (fertile land, resurrection) marry **Isis** (green crops, the divine throne)?

69b. Why would **Set** (strength, destroyer) marry **Nephthys** (helper, guide)?

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