

## The Return



Stars fade like memory the instant before dawn. Low in the east, the sun appears golden as an opening eye. That which can be named must exist. That which is named can be written. That which is written shall be remembered. That which is remembered lives. In the land of Egypt, Osiris breathes. The sun rises and the mist disperses. As I am, I was, and I shall be, a thing of matter and heaven.

On a midsummer's day, a rustle of beetles fly singing from dry grass to raise the sun like a dung ball. In the sky, bright as Nut's belly above her lover, the sun glints like yellow jasper. The body of heaven lies smooth and firm as an egg. It is joy to lick the wind. On countless mornings, I see the fireball roll and tears roll down my cheek. The souls of men, like tears from Ra, stream down the face of heaven. The eye of the great one sees how stars fade.

Osiris returns from the mountain of sand to the green land of his birth. Morning comes to Egypt. Across an expanse of dirt and stone, cool shadows strain toward the mountain where in

dry tombs the dead are yawning, wondering who has lit the temple fire and who has brought sweet cake. I, Osiris, rise and hurry into the two lands of the living. Black earth and red earth join by a buckle of sky. I embrace the double horizon. I embrace two the mountains, the east and the west. I am god of the living and dead, embracing my soul and shadow.

The ka of Osiris grows bright wings. His face glows with white heat. Above fields, I speak with the voice of a hawk, my eye sharp as a blade against the wheat. I speak the word from which I was made. I speak of truth and splendor and strength, of the honor of death and power of return. I speak of the crested ibis.

Where gods have gathered, the heart grows still. A procession of jabiru walk, laying the eggs of other lives, of blue souls in another time. Incense rises where gods gather. Heaven and earth are long dreams weighed in the balance. A man is known by his words and deeds. Beautiful is the new sun sailing in a river of sky in the boat of morning. Beautiful is a man in his moments in time, a thousand beads of thought on a white string.

Darkness gives way to light, dumbness to speech, confusion to understanding. Devourers of the dead are given their own dry bones to eat. The worm that would suck the eye of Ra has been pierced by spears of light. His green heart has been pitched into the fire; it sizzles like rotten meat.

The old man's house is a riot of living. In bright corners, children are singing because their mother has given birth. The world is made new with laughter. The strings of the lyre hum. The sun floods the country and cities with light. Boats sail on emerald waters. Fish have returned to spawn. In the field, a stubborn donkey sleeps, though his master thrashes him with a stick. I laugh because I have come home. I am content with the movement of hours.

This is the meaning of yesterday - that friends remember my name and after long journeys I am greeted by their voices on the road. They embrace my hands and feet. Look what corn and grapes we share. Look what abundance of meat. Under the eye of the great one the children of Egypt gather. Her four winds gather - mountain dwellers, basket weavers, potters, and musicians.

In my life, I've known the love of men and seen gods on their slow barges passing. The ka of Osiris walks where he pleases. I am thought, shadow, bone. I am the black ibis pecking at corn and the blade of a hunting knife. I am the guardian of sun and moon, the falcon that flies between them. I shall be given day and night and all the space therein. In the bark of morning and the bark of evening I shall gain passage to hidden things. Law and truth, memory and time shall be my sails and rudder.

This is the going forth of gods into the land of triumph. The river is emerald and filled with light. The course of this boat is true. Inside my heart has always lived the grace of bullrushes growing. Like a fruit tree sprung up by the river Nile, from my name rises the story of Egypt. That which is written shall be remembered. Osiris lives in the land of his birth.



*From [The Egyptian Book of the Dead](#) - [The Book of Coming Forth by Day](#) - [The Papyrus of Ani](#)*

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