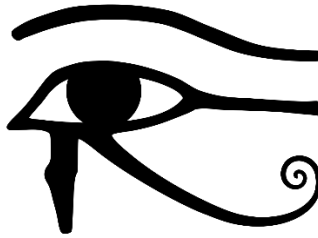


Tales From Kemet



Compiled by Michael Coles

Tales From Kemet

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Sources: The Leiden Papyrus I 384, St. Petersburg Papyrus, Herodotus' Historiae, Westcar Papyrus, Papyrus Chester Beatty II

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The Cat and the Vulture

Once there was a vulture who lived at the top of a tree, and a cat who lived on a nearby hill. The vulture was afraid to go out to fetch food, lest the cat attack his young chicks. Likewise, the cat was afraid to go out to fetch food, for fear that the vulture might attack his young kittens. The vulture turned to the cat and said, "Let us live together like good neighbors, in peace. We will both swear an oath to the grandest creator Amun-Ra: if you go out to gather food, I will not attack your kittens; and if I go out to gather food, you will not attack my chicks."

So, the vulture and the cat both swore the sacred oath to Amun-Ra, that they would behave accordingly. One day the vulture took a piece of meat from one of the cat's kittens and gave it to his chick. The cat saw this and decided to take the meat back from the vulture chick. When the chick turned and saw the cat, the cat sank his claws into him so the chick could not escape. The vulture chick turned to the cat and said, "I swear to Amun-Ra, this is not your food! Why did you sink your claws into me?"

"Then where did you get this meat?" the cat asked.

And the vulture said to the cat, "I did not fly down to your kittens! And if you take revenge on me and my brothers, you will see the oath you took is false."

The vulture chick tried to fly away, but fell to the ground because his wings would not carry him. As he lay on the ground, he said to the cat, "If you kill me, your son will die, as will your son's son."

And the cat left the chick on the ground without touching him further.

When the vulture returned and saw his chick on the ground, he said, "I will have revenge! I will wait until the cat goes out for food for his kittens, and his children will become food for my children!"

The vulture watched the cat's movements, day after day, waiting for an opening to attack. After a long while, just as the vulture predicted, the cat went out to find food for his children. At that moment, the vulture swooped down and grabbed all the kittens and carried them away. When the cat returned from hunting, he did not find a single kitten in his home.

The cat turned to the sky and cried out to Amun-Ra, "O great Amun-Ra! See my grief and judge the vulture! We both made a sacred oath before you, but the vulture has broken it! He killed all my children!"

Amun-Ra heard the cat's voice, and he sent forth a Heavenly Power to punish the vulture. The Heavenly Power sought Retribution, who was waiting under the vulture's tree. The Heavenly Power ordered Retribution to punish the vulture for what it had done to the cat's children. Now it came to pass that Retribution made the

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vulture see a Syrian on the mountain, roasting meat on hot coals. The vulture grabbed a piece of the meat and carried it to his nest. He did not notice there were burning coals sticking to the meat.

When the vulture brought his meat back to his tree, the burning coals caused the nest to burst into flames. All of his chicks were roasted and fell to the ground at the foot of the tree. The cat approached the tree, but did not touch the chicks. And the cat said to the vulture, “I swear by the name of Amun-Ra, even though you hunted my children down, and you even attacked and killed them, even now, I will not touch your dead chicks.”

That day the vulture learned you do not break a sacred oath to the gods.

The Lion and the Mouse

One day, a lion was walking along a mountainside when he encountered a wounded panther with his fur ripped from his skin. The lion asked the injured panther, "What has happened to you?"

"Man did this to me," the panther replied.

The confused lion had not heard of 'Man' before, so he asked the panther for an explanation. "No creature is as cunning as Man," was the panther's response. "Do not fall into the hands of Man."

The lion was a great hunter, and he became angry. He immediately ran off to find 'Man'. Shortly after his encounter with the panther, the lion saw a donkey with a bit in its mouth. "What has happened to you?" he asked the donkey.

"Man," the donkey replied.

"Is Man more powerful than you?" asked the lion.

"Nothing is so cunning as Man," came the reply. "I hope that you do not fall into the hands of Man."

The lion continued on his journey to find Man. As he traveled, he ran into more animals. A horse with a bit in its mouth, an ox with its horns broken, a cow with its nose pierced. He even encountered a bear who had its claws torn out and its teeth broken. Man had convinced the bear that this change would make it easier for the bear to pick up food. Each animal the lion encountered repeated the same warning to him: "Nothing is so cunning as Man."

The lion eventually encountered another lion whose paw was stuck in a tree trunk. "How did you get trapped?" the hunting lion asked the trapped lion.

"A Man convinced me he could create a protective amulet for me from the trunk of this tree. As the Man sawed the tree from top to bottom, he told me he needed help. He asked me to reach out my paw toward the split in the tree. When my paw was close enough, the Man snapped the tree shut, trapping my paw in the tree. The Man then threw sand in my face and ran away," replied the trapped lion.

"If I capture Man, I shall make him suffer like he's made the animals of the mountain suffer," the free lion said to the trapped lion.

As he searched for Man, the lion encountered a mouse. He was about to eat the mouse, but the mouse pleaded for his life: "Let me live, and one day I will return the favor."

The lion roared with laughter, "Who do you think will attack me?"

The lion was so amused that he let the mouse go free. Then the lion continued his journey, but as he took a step, he fell into a deep pit dug by a hunter.

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The hunter ran over to view his catch, and tied up the lion in a great net. He then left the lion in the net overnight.

When darkness came, the mouse visited the lion. "I told you I would help you in a time of need," the mouse said to the lion. He proceeded to nibble through the ropes of the net to release him. The mouse then climbed onto the lion's mane and the two went up the mountain together.

Thanks to the mouse, the lion put aside his arrogance and stopped his mad quest for vengeance. He also learned that even the lowliest and weakest of creatures can be helpful to the powerful in their times of need.

The Tale of the Two Vultures

One day two desert vultures began talking, when the first vulture boasted, “I am the Vulture of Sight, because my eyes are keen and my eyesight is more perfect than yours. No other bird has a gift like mine.”

The second vulture asked the first, “What is this gift you speak of?”

“By day or night,” replied the Vulture of Sight, “I can see through the primeval water to the limit of the darkness. I see all that happens, whether high in the skies or deep in the ocean.”

“It may be that your eyes are better than mine and your eyesight is keener, but I am the Vulture of Hearing,” the second vulture responded, “and my ears are sharper than yours and my hearing is more perfect than yours. No other bird has a gift like mine. I can hear every sound in the land, the sky, and the sea. I hear the movements of the gods themselves, and I listen to the voice of Amun-Ra as he declares the destinies of all living creatures on earth.”

The vultures had considered each other’s words in their hearts for a while, when the Vulture of Hearing suddenly let out a laugh. “Why are you laughing?” asked the Vulture of Sight.

The Vulture of Hearing replied, “I laugh because a bird on the other side of the sky is telling me what he has just seen. He just saw a fly being eaten by a lizard. Immediately the lizard was eaten by a snake. A hungry falcon then snatched up the snake, but it was too heavy and both have fallen into the sea.”

“If your eyesight is as good as you claim,” he continued, “then look out across the sky and tell me what has happened to them.”

The Vulture of Sight then lifted his head and looked out beyond the desert to the shores of the distant sea. “The falcon has been swallowed by a fish, with the snake still caught in its claws,” he said.

“Now the first fish is being eaten by a larger fish,” he continued. The Vulture of Sight was silent for a moment. Then he said, “The larger fish has gone too close to the shore, and a great lion has scooped him out of the water with its paw. He is eating the big fish now.”

Suddenly the Vulture of Sight became excited and exclaimed, “A griffin has appeared! A griffin just flew down from the mountain and carried the lion to its nest!”

“Are you sure?” asked the Vulture of Hearing. “Can this be true?”

“If you don’t believe me, come with me to the desert mountain!” exclaimed the Vulture of Sight.

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So, the two vultures flew across the desert until they approached the griffin's lair.

“See,” the Vulture of Sight whispered, “the griffin has the head of a falcon with the eyes of a man and the ears of a fish on the body of a lion, with a serpent for a tail.”

The two vultures watched in awe as the griffin stripped the meat from the bones of the lion. Then the Vulture of Sight said to his companion, “Hear me when I say that nothing happens on earth that Amun-Ra does not determine—for he only does good. But this good is corrupted by the imperfection of earth and comes back to the Creator. We have seen the power of Amun-Ra himself at work.

“Even the death of a common fly is noticed by the Grandest Creator,” he continued. “And those who kill are themselves killed; violence is repaid with violence. Yet it is strange that nothing should happen to the griffin.”

“That is because the griffin is the messenger of Amun-Ra,” replied the Vulture of Hearing. “He is the shepherd of all living things on earth, and it is he alone who has been granted power of retaliation and death over all creatures.”

The Tale of the Two Jackals

Two jackals, who were friends, were sitting in the desert. They hunted together, ate their prey together, and cooled themselves under the shade of the desert palms together. One day, as they rested, they saw a hungry lion racing toward them.

The two jackals stood motionless as the lion approached them. The lion was confused, and he roared, “Did you not see me coming toward you?”

The jackals replied, “Truly, we did see you running toward us in your anger and your haste.”

“Do I not scare you? Do your legs freeze up in terror at my approach? Why do you not run from me?” the confused lion asked them.

“We decided among ourselves not to run from you. Is it not true that if we tried to run away you would have overtaken us anyway? If we are destined to die, why should we tire ourselves out before you kill us?”

The lion then let out a roar of laughter and allowed the jackals to live, for the jackals had discovered a truth as ancient as the world: the truly powerful are not angered by the truth.

The Tale of the Green Jewel

One day Pharaoh Sneferu was disconsolate and weary. He wandered around the palace desiring to find cheer, but there was nothing that could remove the cloud of gloom from his mind. He had his chief scribe brought before him and said: "I seek entertainment, but can find none in this place."

The scribe said: "O great Pharaoh, you should go boating on the lake and let the rowers be the prettiest girls in your harem. It will delight your heart to see them splashing the water where the birds dive and to gaze upon the green shores, the flowers, and the trees. I myself will go with you."

Pharaoh agreed, and twenty fair virgins boarded the boat, and they were given gold-decorated ebony oars with which to row. The Pharaoh took pleasure in the outing, and the gloom passed from his heart as the boat sailed across the smooth surface of the lake, as the girls' sweet voices rose up in a pleasing harmony.

As they were turning the boat around, an oar handle brushed against the hair of the girl who was steering, and shook loose a green jewel, which fell into the water. She lifted up her oar and stopped singing, and the others grew silent and stopped rowing.

"Do not pause, let us continue," the Pharaoh said.

The girls responded to him, saying: "She who steers has raised her oar."

The Pharaoh then questioned her, asking, "why have you lifted your oar?"

The reply came to Pharaoh's ear: "Alas, great Pharaoh, I have lost my green jewel, and it has fallen into the lake."

Pharaoh responded, "I will give you another; let us go on."

The girl pouted and answered the Pharaoh: "I would rather have my own green jewel again than another."

Pharaoh then turned to his scribe and said, "I am given great enjoyment by this novelty; indeed, my mind is refreshed as the girls row me up and down the lake. Now one of them has dropped her green jewel in the water. She wants it back and will accept none other to replace it."

The chief scribe immediately uttered a spell, and his words of power divided the waters of the lake in two with a dirt road running down the middle. The scribe then went down and found the green jewel the girl had lost, and brought it back to her. Once he was on board the boat again, he uttered additional words of power, and the road through the lake disappeared as the waters came back together.

Pharoah was well-pleased, and when he had thoroughly enjoyed rowing upon the lake, he returned to the palace. He bestowed gifts upon his chief scribe, and everyone wondered at the marvel he had accomplished.

The Shipwrecked Sailor

Once upon a time a ship set forth on a voyage to the mines of Sinai, but along the way it was sunk by a storm. All the sailors were drowned except one; and he swam to the Isle of Enchantment, which was inhabited by the *manes*—serpent gods with heads and arms like men, who are able to speak.

When this man returned to Kemet he related a wondrous story to his master, saying: “Now, be well satisfied that I have come back, even though I am alone. I was rescued by your ship, but fear not—for your ship is safe and there are no men missing from it. When you have heard me out, I pray you relate my tale to the Pharaoh.”

The master responded, saying, “You are persistent in trying to get me to listen to your tale. So, speak on it and I will hear you to the end. I suspect your words will betray the truth. But lower your voice and say what you have to say without so much excitement.”

The sailor then said, “I will begin at the beginning, and relate what happened to me. My voyage started as we sailed towards the mines in your great ship, which was crewed by 150 of the finest sailors in Kemet. They were all stout-hearted men. Now, some said that the wind would be unfavorable, and others said that there would be no wind at all. As it happened, a great storm arose, and the ship was tossed about in the midst of high waves so that it was swamped. When I found myself in the churning waters, I clung to a floating mast-pole. All the others were drowned. In time I was cast ashore, and I found myself on a lonely island, where I lay helplessly for three days and three nights. Then I began to recover. I was so hungry and thirsty, I nearly fainted. So, I went in search of food. I found fruit, birds, and fishes, and I ate my fill. I gave thanks to the gods because I was alive, and I offered up a sacrifice.

“No sooner had I given thanks in this manner than I heard a loud noise like thunder, and the earth trembled beneath me and the trees were stricken as with tempest. I hid my face in terror. I laid on the ground for a time, and when I looked up, lo! I beheld a giant serpent god with a human face and arms. He had a long beard, and his body was blue and gold.

“I bowed before him, and he spoke, saying: ‘Speak and tell, little man. Tell me why you have come hither. If you delay in speaking, I will kill you. If you fail to tell me what I have not heard and what I do not know, I will cause you to pass out of existence like a flame which has been extinguished.’

“Before I could answer him, he carried me inland and set me down without harm. I said that I had come from the land of Kemet in a great ship which perished in the storm, and that I had clung to a floating mast-pole and was washed ashore.

“The serpent god heard, and said: ‘Be not afraid, little man. Be not terrified, but be cheerful of countenance, for it was the gods who sent you to me. Here you

may dwell until four moons wax and wane. At that point a ship will come, and you will depart in it and return once again to the land of Kemet. It is pleasant to hold conversation. Know you then, that I dwell here with my kind, and I have a family. I will take you to my home, and you will return to yours again in time.'

"When the giant serpent god finished speaking, I bowed before him and I said: 'I will relate the wonders I have seen to the Pharaoh of Kemet. I will speak of your name, and offerings of oil and perfumes will be made to you. I will sacrifice beasts and birds to you, and Pharaoh will send you rich offerings because you are a benefactor of mankind.'

"I do not need your perfumes,' answered the serpent god. 'I am a ruler of Punt, and I have plenty of these; but I have no oil of Kemet here. But know that after you leave, this island will never again be seen by any man; it will vanish in the midst of the sea.'

"When four moons had waxed and waned, a ship appeared as the serpent god had predicted. I knelt down and said farewell to the inhabitants of the Isle of Enchantment, and the great god gave me gifts of perfumes, ivory, and great treasures. He also gave me rare woods and baboons. With a grateful heart, I took my leave, and I thanked the serpent god for my deliverance. Then I went to the shore and hailed the ship, and they brought me aboard.

"These are the things which happened to me, my lord and master. Now conduct me, I pray you, before His Majesty that I may present him with the gifts of the serpent god. Look upon me, for I have returned to tell of the wonders I beheld with my own eyes. As a child I was instructed to acquire wisdom that I might be highly esteemed. Now I have become a wise man indeed."

The Wax Crocodile

Once upon a time a Pharaoh went towards the temple of the god Ptah, accompanied by his counselors and servants. He happened upon the home of the chief scribe, behind which there was a garden with a stately summer home and a man-made lake. Among the Pharaoh's party was a handsome youth, and the scribe's wife beheld him with lust. Soon after the Pharaoh's arrival, the scribe's wife sent gifts to the youth and they met in secret. They spent a day in the summer house, and feasted there, and in the evening the youth bathed in the lake. The chief butler went to his master and informed him of what had come to pass.

The scribe told the servant to bring him a certain magic box. When he had received the box, the scribe made a small wax crocodile, and he uttered words of power over it. He placed the wax crocodile in the hands of his butler and told him: "Cast this image into the lake behind the youth when next he bathes himself."

The next day, as the scribe entertained the Pharaoh, the lovers met again in the summer house. In the evening, the youth went down to the lake. The butler stealthily walked through the garden, and threw the wax crocodile into the water. The wax crocodile immediately came to life, and it became a great crocodile, seizing the youth in its jaws suddenly and dragging him away.

After seven days had passed, the scribe spoke to the Pharaoh regarding the wonder which had been done, and he requested that His Majesty accompany him to his villa. The Pharaoh did so. As both stood beside the lake in the garden the scribe spoke words of power, bidding the crocodile to appear. As the scribe commanded, the crocodile came out of the water carrying the youth in its jaws.

The scribe said: "Lo! It shall do whatever I command it to do."

"Bid the crocodile to return at once to the lake," the Pharaoh said.

Before he did that, however, the scribe touched it and it immediately became a small wax image again. The Pharaoh was filled with wonder, and the scribe related to him all that had happened, as the youth stood waiting.

"Seize the wrongdoer," the Pharaoh said to the wax image of the great reptile.

The wax image was again given life. It immediately clutched the youth in its jaws, leaped into the lake, and disappeared. Never was it seen again.

Then Pharaoh commanded that the scribe's wife should be seized and executed. After her execution, her remains were thrown into the Nile.

The Robber Prince

Great Pharaoh Rhampsinitus built the western portion of the temple of Ptah and erected two statues—one to Summer, which faced North, and was worshipped; and the other to Winter, which faced South, but was never honored. The king possessed great wealth, and he ordered construction of a strong stone chamber next to the royal castle, in which to store his treasures. One of the builders, however, schemed to place one stone in such a manner that it could be removed from the outside.

It chanced that, after the king had deposited his treasure in the chamber, this builder was stricken with illness and knew his end was near. He had two sons, and he told them the secret of the removable stone. He gave them the exact location of the stone, so that they might find it.

After the man died, the sons went out under the darkness of night to the Pharaoh's treasure chamber. They found the removable stone and sneaked into the chamber. They carried away much treasure, and before they departed, they replaced the removable stone.

The king marveled greatly when he discovered that his riches had been plundered, for the seals of the door were unbroken, and did not know who to suspect. The robbers returned again and again, diminishing the treasure greatly. The royal guards, who kept watch at the entrances to the treasure chamber, were not able to stop the mysterious robberies. After a while, the king ordered traps to be laid in the chamber.

Soon enough, the brothers returned. They removed the stone, and one of them stealthily entered. As he moved towards the treasure, he suddenly found himself caught in a trap. When he realized that escape was impossible, he reflected that he would be put to death the next day, while his brother would be seized and similarly punished. "So," he said to himself, "I alone will die."

After resolving to save his brother, he called to him softly in the darkness, telling him to enter cautiously. He told of his great misfortune, and said: "I cannot escape. Do not wait long here, or you will be discovered. When they find me here I will be recognized, and they will seize you and put you to death. Cut off my head at once, so they will not know who I am, and your own life will be spared."

With a sad heart the brother did as he was asked, and carried away his brother's head. Before he escaped into the darkness, he replaced the stone, and no man saw him.

When morning came the king was even more astounded than ever to find a headless body trapped in the treasure chamber, for the door had not been opened, and yet the evidence indicated that two men entered, but one escaped. He

commanded the corpse be hung on the palace wall, and he stationed guards at the palace, ordering them to keep strict watch. In this way, he thought, they might discover if anyone came to mourn the dead man. But no one came.

Meanwhile the boys' mother grieved in secret. Her heart was filled with anger because her son's body was exposed in such a manner. She threatened to tell the Pharaoh regarding all that had happened if her other son did not retrieve his brother's corpse. The young man tried to talk her down, but she repeated her threat even more firmly. So, the young man prepared to retrieve his brother's body.

He rented several donkeys, and on their backs he put many skins of wine. In the evening he drove them towards the palace. As he approached the guards who watched over his brother's body, he removed the stoppers of some of the skins. The wine poured out on the road, and he began to lament aloud, hitting his head as if he was in distress. The soldiers ran towards the donkeys and seized them, catching the wine in vessels and claiming it for themselves. At first the young man pretended to be angry, and cursed at the guards; but when they had calmed him (or so they thought), he spoke to them pleasantly and began to secure the stoppers of all the wineskins.

In a short time, he was chatting with the guards, pretending to be amused when they teased him over the accident. After befriendng the guards, the young man invited them to drink, readily filling their flasks. The young man kept pouring wine for them until they were all made very drunk. When the guards fell asleep, the cunning fellow took down his brother's body, and laid it upon the back of one of the donkeys. Before he left, he shaved the right cheeks of the soldiers. His mother welcomed him on his return in the darkness, and she was well-pleased.

The Pharaoh was angry when he discovered how the robber had tricked his guards, but he was still determined to have capture the thief. So, Pharaoh sent his daughter out in disguise to search for the criminal. She spoke to several men, and after a while she found him, because word had come to his ear that he was wanted, and he desired to trick her. He addressed her, and she offered to be his bride if he would tell her the most artful thing and also the most wicked thing he had ever done.

He answered readily: "The most wicked thing I ever did was cutting off my brother's head when he was caught in a trap in the royal treasure chamber, and the most artful was to deceive the king's guards and carry away the body." The princess tried to seize him, but he thrust forth his brother's arm, which he carried under his robe. When she clutched his arm, he made speedy escape.

The Pharaoh was astonished at the cunning and daring of the robber. He issued a royal proclamation, offering the thief a pardon and a generous reward if he would appear at the palace before him. The man went readily, and His Majesty was

so delighted with his speeches and great ingenuity that he gave him the hand of his daughter in marriage. There are no more artful people than the Kemetite peoples, but this man had no equal in all the land.

It was told that this same Prince journeyed to the Duat (the land of the dead), where he played dice with the goddess Aset. It was said that he won some games and lost some games against her in equal measure. She gave him a napkin embroidered with gold, and on his return a great festival was held, which was repeated every year thereafter. On such occasions it was customary to blindfold a priest and lead him to the temple of Aset, where he was left alone. It was believed that two wolves met him and conducted him back to the spot where the Prince returned from the Duat.

The Prophecy of the Magician Dedi

Pharaoh Khufu sent his son, the prince, to seek the counsel of the wise magician Dedi at his home in Tet-Seneferu. Upon meeting Dedi, the prince convinced the magician to return with him so that he might work his wonders for the Pharaoh himself. Upon their arrival at the palace, Dedi was announced and led into the presence of the Pharaoh. His Majesty said, “How is it, Dedi, that I have never seen you?”

Dedi answered, “Only the man who is summoned comes; as soon as Your Highness summoned me, I came.”

The Pharaoh asked Dedi, “It has been said that you know magic to rejoin a head to its body after it has been cut off; is this true?”

Dedi replied, “Most assuredly I know how to do this, my lord.”

His Majesty then announced, “Let them bring in a prisoner, so that his death-sentence may be carried out.”

But Dedi said, “Do not bring a man, O Pharaoh. Perhaps it may be ordered that the head shall be cut off some other living creature?”

So, a goose was brought to the magician, and he cut off its head. He laid the body of the goose on the west side of the hall, and its head on the east side. As Dedi recited his words of magic, the goose stood up and waddled towards its head; and its head moved towards its body. As the body approached the head, the head leaped on to the body, and the goose stood up on its legs and cackled.

They brought the magician another goose, and he performed the same miracle with it. Then the Pharaoh called for an ox to be brought to Dedi. The magician cut off its head and recited magical spells over the head and the body. The ox’s head rejoined itself to the body, and the ox stood up on its feet. Next was brought a lion, and when the magician recited spells over it, the lion followed him around like a dog, and the rope with which he had been tied up trailed on the ground behind the animal.

The magician Dedi then related a prophecy to the Pharaoh. Dedi told the pharaoh that the wife of the high priest of Amun-Ra in Sakhabu was pregnant with three children of Amun-Ra, and that the Creator God had declared all three should rule over the land as Pharaohs.

The Pharaoh was saddened by these words, but Dedi quickly told him, “Your son shall also be a Pharaoh, my lord.”

This put the Pharaoh's mind at ease, and he ordered that none should harm, or allow to come to harm, any of the children born to the wife of the High priest of Amun-Ra in Sakhabu.

In the years that followed, all that the magician Dedi foretold came to pass.

When Truth Was Blinded By Falsehood

Falsehood despised Truth, and one day he determined a way to punish Truth. Falsehood devised a plan, and he brought a claim before the Ennead (the original council of the gods) that Truth had stolen his magic knife. Though Truth pleaded his case, Falsehood told a much better tale that enraptured and convinced the Ennead.

The Ennead ruled in favor of Falsehood and then asked him, “And what would you have us do with Truth?”

Falsehood had an answer for that: “Blind him in both eyes and make him serve me as my door-keeper.”

The Ennead then ordered it to be done, exactly as Falsehood requested. Though blinded, Truth served Falsehood as his door-keeper well and virtuously. But Falsehood grew angrier each day at Truth’s very presence. Finally, one day, Falsehood ordered his servants to abduct Truth and throw him to a hungry lion to be eaten.

The servants seized Truth and began carrying him to the hungry lion’s den. Along the way, Truth pleaded his case to the servants, begging them to free him. His arguments were convincing.

“He will die in the desert anyway,” said the servants as they let him go.

Truth, however, made it to a small town and went to sleep under a thicket. The next morning, a young maiden spied him. She was taken with his handsomeness and ordered her servants to fetch the man and make him her door-keeper. When the servants had brought Truth to their mistress, she burned with love for him. That very night, she seduced him and she became pregnant with his son.

After Truth’s son was born, he grew rapidly, because he was a young god. He went to school and excelled at all manner of arts and sciences. One day, however, the boy was dismal.

“Why are you sad, my son?” his mother asked.

“Because I do not know who my father is,” the boy replied.

The mother then pointed to the blind man sitting next to their door, and she said, “There is your father. Go sit and talk with him.”

So, the boy sat and talked with Truth. He learned of Falsehood’s betrayal and how Truth had been blinded, humiliated, abducted, and left for dead.

“I will avenge you, my father,” said the boy.

The boy then searched the land for Falsehood. When he found him, the boy grabbed Falsehood’s arm and dragged him before the Ennead.

“I am Truth’s own son, and I have come to avenge my father,” the boy declared to the council of gods. “Judge now between Truth and Falsehood.”

Falsehood could not believe this was Truth’s son, for he had ordered his servants to murder Truth many years before. So, Falsehood swore an oath to Amun-Ra, “The boy lies! I swear by the Creator God, if Truth is alive, I will be blinded in both eyes and serve as doorkeeper in the house of Truth!”

The boy then took the Ennead to where his father was, and he was found alive. The Ennead inflicted severe punishment on Falsehood: he was beaten, blinded in both eyes, and forced to work as the Truth’s doorkeeper.

So, the boy avenged his father and settled the dispute between Truth and Falsehood.

Kemetic Proverbs

It is well-known that ancient Greek religion and philosophy were heavily influenced by the Kemetic peoples' religion. Many of these ancient proverbs have found their way into modern variations, others have echoed through the centuries in the sacred texts of other religions.

“Do you think the calamity which you have done in the world will testify to some good deed? He who makes himself a robber will be robbed himself, for a robber robs robbers.” (*Ed.: See the ancient Greek concept of Nemesis and modern “What goes around comes around.”*)

“Those who kill are themselves killed; violence is repaid with violence.” (*Ed.: Modern proverb “Violence begets violence.”*)

“Whatever is on earth, nothing is more beloved than your birthplace. Shai (fate) draws gods and men to their graves, the place where they were born and where they also go to die. This happens not only to men, but to everything that is on earth, if they remain in their place.” (*Ed.: modern “There is no place like home.”; compare Prov. 27:8*)

“A green stone amulet does not grow in the water and papyrus stems do not grow in the desert. The persea tree bears no fruit on the stone.” (*Ed.: Compare Ezek. 7:19.*)

“Do not be like the mountains, which sparkle with green malachite stone. Be instead like the fields of green grain stalks. The stalk is food and sustains all living people; but malachite stone offers no nourishment.” (*Ed.: Commentary on external beauty versus real [physical/spiritual] nourishment value.*)

“Do not build a royal palace for the honey bee. A hive of dung is better than a hive of stone, because the bee's work will be no good in it, for the bee was not born from the stone. And do not build a stable for cats, in which the cat has its kittens, from dung.”

“A lamp does not shine in the sun.” (*Ed.: Compare John 1:5.*)

“That which was tried, that is.” (*Ed.: “Tried and true.”*)

“Suffering of heart and tongue is that which causes a prophet to come into being.” (*Ed.: Compare James 5:10.*)

“Is a father the one who prepares his son, or is it compulsion of the rod?” (*Ed.: Philosophical question – is the child molded by his father, or by the punishments his father applies?*)

“The beasts and birds, knowledge comes to them, but what is the chapter of the book they have read?” (*Ed.: Compare Job 12:7*)

“The disciple sits in total darkness, but the teachings light for him a torch.” (*Ed.: Compare to Plato’s Cave Allegory in Republic.*)

“Listen to an excellent word! Be sweet of tongue! Comfort the comforters!” (*Ed.: Compare to Sophocles’ quote “Kindness begets kindness” and Zoroaster’s “Doing good to others is not a duty. It is a joy...”*)

“As for the ignorant student, let his lightness be removed; for the search for knowledge is heavier than the stone of Letopolis.” (*Ed.: Compare to Plato’s teachings on learning and knowledge.*)

“Let the student stand prepared; let him bind himself against the darkness; let him move confidently in the light of his lifetime.” (*Ed.: Compare principles of Zoroastrianism*)

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“Be not proud because you are learned; but engage with the ignorant just as you would with the wise.” (*Ed.: Compare to Socrates’ teachings on wisdom*).

“When you encounter an arguer who is not your equal, be not scornful to him. Rather, leave him alone and he will confound himself.” (*Ed.: Compare to Socrates’ teachings on wisdom*).

“Leaders should be gracious and ensure their own conduct is beyond reproach.” (*Ed.: Compare to Plato’s discussions of leadership*.)

“Great is Truth, and it sets a straight path.” (*Ed.: Compare to Parmenides’ ‘Way of Truth.’*)

“Silence is more profitable than an abundance of speech.” (*Ed.: Compare to Plutarch quote ‘Know how to listen and you will profit even from those who talk badly.’*)

Pronunciation Guide

In this section we have listed several of the Kemetetic words and phrases, their definitions, and a simplified pronunciation guide. The words that appear here have been confirmed in the ancient texts and sources. Although the original pronunciations have been lost to time, it is known that some of the phonetic sounds spoken by the Ancestors are not normally used by English speakers in our native language. The pronunciations given here are approximations for modern English speakers.

Short vowels are shown with half-moon-shaped “*breve*” mark above them. Long vowels are shown with a straight bar “*macron*” mark above them. Here are some examples of English words with short and long vowels:

Vowel	As in...	Vowel	As in...
ă	făst, trăck	ā (āy)	plāy, sāy
ĕ	tĕst, mĕsh	ē (ēē)	mē, frēē
ĭ	fĭsh, brĭck	ī	lĭght, sĭght
ŏ	dŏg, flŏss	ō	bŏat, grŏw
ŭ	ŭp, lŭck	ū (oo)	trūe, blūe

Syllables in word pronunciations are separated by “division dots” (·), and compound words with hyphens are separated with hyphens. As an example, the pronunciation for the word *Aaru* is divided into two syllables using a dot (*Ăh·roo*). The name Amun-Ra is divided into two words separated by a hyphen, the first word is divided again into two syllables using a dot (*Ăh·mĕn-Răh*).

Word	Definition	Pronunciation
Aaru	Paradise, Ausar’s Kingdom in the Afterlife, also called the “Soul of the Nile” or the “Land of Reeds”.	Ăh·roo
Amenhotep	Pharaoh Amenhotep III reigned over an unprecedented era of prosperity and artistic achievement. His name means “Amun is satisfied.”	Ăh·mĕn·hŏ·tĕp
Amenta	The Western Lands, the land of the dead. The symbol for Amenta represented the horizon where the sun set. See also: <i>Duat</i> .	Ăh·mĕn·tŭh

Ammit	The soul-eating demon goddess who ate the hearts of the unworthy at the final judgement.	Äh·mīt
Amun-Ra	Amun-Ra is a fusion of the creation god Amun and the sun god Ra around the 16th century B.C.E. He represented the midday sun. The preeminent self-created creator deity, Amun-Ra was chief deity of the Egyptian empire. Identified with Zeus by the Greeks.	Äh·mën-Räh or Äh·mün-Räy
Ani	Egyptian scribe who died in 1250 B.C.E. His personalized copy of <i>The Book of Coming Forth by Day</i> is the most well-preserved copy found.	Äh·nēē
Ankh	One of the most well-known symbols in Egyptian hieroglyphs, the ankh literally means “life.”	Äh·nk
Anpu	The Egyptian god of death, also known as Anubis to the Greeks.	Änn·poo or Ähn·poo
Apep	The Egyptian serpent demon representing universal chaos. Each night as Amun-Ra traveled through the Duat, he fought off Apep. Known to the Greeks as Apophis.	Äy·pëp
Apis	The Apis (or Hapis) Bull was a sacred bull who was a sacred form of Ptah, and often associated with the goddess Hathor.	Äyp·ïss
Aset	Maternal goddess and funerary deity, closely associated with nature, marriage, magic, healing, and wisdom. Known to the Greeks as Isis. Sister-wife of Ausar.	Äh·sët
Aten	Maternal goddess and funerary deity, closely associated with nature, marriage, magic, healing, and wisdom. Known to the Greeks as Isis. Sister-wife of Ausar.	Äh·tïn or Äy·tïn
Atet	The solar barque (boat) of the sun god Amun-Ra.	Äh·tët or Ä·tët

Atum	Self-created deity, considered an aspect of Amun-Ra, Atum represents the setting sun. Atum created his children Tefnut and Shu through the act of ejaculation through self-stimulation.	Ā·tūm
Ausar	God of fertility, agriculture, vegetation, the afterlife, and resurrection. Known to the Greeks as Osiris. Brother-husband of Aset.	Āw·sähr
Ba	The human personality that made an individual unique. The combination of the Ba and Ka reunited after death to form the soul. See also: <i>Ka</i> .	Bäh
Bakhu	The great mountain in the West, beyond which the sun sets. It is the mountain Bakhu which separates the physical world from the world of the dead.	Bäh·koo
Bastet	Cat-goddess who offers protection and comfort. She is goddess of perfume and ointments, fertility, children, pregnancy, arts, music, and warfare. Also called Bast.	Bäs·tēt
Benben	The Promordial Mound, pulled out of Nun, upon which all existence was created.	Bīn·bīn
Bennu	The bennu bird was the Egyptian phoenix, a symbol of resurrection. It is considered a sacred form of Amun-Ra.	Bīn·noo
Bes	Popular Egyptian lion-dwarf deity, protector of households. He was highly regarded as a protector of women, childbirth, newborns, and children, as well as sleepers. He is also known as a defender of all good and opponent of all bad.	Bëss
Cartouche	A cartouche is an elongated oval-shaped Egyptian nameplate that often contained the name of a pharaoh or deity. The symbol represents divine protection against evil spirits.	Kär·toosh

Deshret	The “red lands” of Lower Egypt and the infertile deserts surrounding the fertile “black lands” of Kemet. Also the red crown representing rule over Lower Egypt.	Děsh·rět
Djed	The djed is a pillar, known as “the Backbone of Ausar,” representing stability, strength, and virility.	Jěd
Djoser	The first pharaoh of the 3rd dynasty, he is best known for building the first Egyptian pyramid, the step pyramid.	Jō·sūr
Duat	The underworld, or the land of the dead.	Doo·wāht
Geb	Egyptian god of the earth. Brother-husband of Nut, and father to Aset, Ausar, Set, Nebet-Het, and Heru the Elder.	Ghěb or Jěb
Hapi	The son of Heru and personification of the Nile River.	Hăp·ēē
Hatshepsut	The 5th pharaoh of the 18th dynasty, she was the second historically-confirmed female pharaoh. Known for her grand architectural projects and establishing a far-reaching network of trade routes, she has been called “the first great woman in history.”	Hăt·shěp·sūt
Hedjet	White crown symbolizing rule of Upper Egypt.	Hěj·ět
Hēh	The primordial god of infinity, who created the concept of time.	Hě
Heru	Sky god and deity of kingship. The son of Ausar and Aset, he is considered the first of the lineage of pharaohs. Heru defeated his murderous uncle Set to gain rule of both Upper and Lower Egypt. Known to the Greeks as Horus. See also: <i>Eye of Heru</i> .	Hāy·roo

Hetch	A mace weapon, commonly used by soldiers in the Egyptian army. Formed by attaching a stone macehead to a staff. The mace was used as a ceremonial scepter to demonstrate the pharaoh's authority in combat.	Hěch
Horemakhet	The name of the Sphinx that spoke to Thutmose. See also: <i>Sphinx</i> .	Höhr·üm·ähk·hět
Ib	The heart. The seat of thought, will, emotion, and intention. The heart was the one internal organ which was not removed during the mummification process.	Īb
Imhotep	Scribe and advisor to Djoser, he architected the step pyramid. Deified after his death.	Ĕm·hō·těp
Isfet	Isfet represents chaos, disorder, disharmony, and evil. It is the opposite of maat (order, harmony, justice), which is personified by the goddess Ma'at. See: <i>Ma'at</i> .	Īs·fēt
Isheru	Crescent-moon-shaped lake, often found outside temples of Mut.	Īsh·āyr·roo
Ka	The ka was the life force, or spiritual power, that lived within a human body and survived death. It was considered part of the soul. See also: <i>Ba</i> .	Kāh
Kemet	"Fertile Black Soil", the name for the land of Egypt, attested by its original inhabitants.	Kīm·ět or Kīm·īt
Kenynt-nesu	The "King's Braves" were the elite Special Forces units of the Egyptian army.	Kēēn·īt·nēs·soo
Khemenyu	The collection of eight primordial deities: Nun ("primordial abyss"), Heh ("infinity" or "eternity"), Kek ("primordial darkness"), Qerh ("invisibility" or "inactivity"), and their female counterparts Naunet, Hehut, Kauket, and Qerhet.	Kīm·in·yoo

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Khepera	Scarab-faced god; an aspect of Amun-Ra, Khepera represents the rising sun, the creation and renewal of life.	Kěp·ūr·ră
Khnum	Ram-headed god closely associated with the Nile's annual flooding cycle. He is fashioned all physical forms, including human bodies and the bodies of the gods themselves, from the clay of the Nile.	Khă·noom
Khonsu	Egyptian lunar deity, his name means "traveler." He marked the passage of time and was instrumental in the creation of new life. He was son of Amun-Ra and Mut.	Kõn·soo or Kõn·shoo
Khopesh	Sickle-shaped slashing sword used by the Kemetic armies.	Kõ·pěsh
Ma'at (or Maat)	The deified concept of truth, law, justice, morality, balance, and harmony. She regulated the stars and seasons, and helps ensure that order is maintained in a universe of chaos.	Măh·õht or My·õht
Maa-kheru	"True of Voice", a title given to those judged righteous, and a force which men and gods alike must obey.	Măh·kăy·roo
Mandjet	The form of Amun-Ra's solar barque, the Atet, in the morning.	Măn·jět
Maryannu	The "young heroes" were a caste of chariot-mounted warriors in the Pharaoh's army. Primarily the sons of noblemen and the rich upper class, maryannu were the light cavalry of the army, and served as emissaries during peacetime.	Mă·rē·ăh·noo
Mesektet	The form of Amun-Ra's solar barque, the Atet, in the evening.	Měs·ěk·tět
Mut	Mother goddess, primal deity and wife of Amun-Ra.	Moot
Nakhtu-aa	The "strong-arm boys" were the hardcore, open-order, hand-to-hand infantry of the Egyptian army.	Nõk·too-ăh

Narmer	The “first human pharaoh,” a warrior-king who united the lands of Upper and Lower Egypt.	Nār·mūr
Nebet-Het	Funerary goddess associated with childbirth, mourning, temple service, protection, magic, health and healing, embalming, and beer. Sister of Aset, sister-wife of Set. Known to the Greeks as Nephthys.	Nēh·bēt-Hēt
Nefertiti	“The Beautiful Woman Has Come”. Akhenaten’s queen, she brought stability to Egypt during a time of religious and cultural upheaval; much of it due to her husband’s ill-fated attempts to establish a monotheistic faith.	Nēf·ūr·tēē·tēē
Neteru (or Netjeru)	The Kemetic word for the gods or nature spirits.	Nēt·tāy·roo
Nun	The deified primordial watery abyss from which all power is derived, and from which all reality emerged.	Noon
Nut	Egyptian goddess of the sky, stars, astronomy, the cosmos. Sister-wife of Geb and mother to Aset, Ausar, Set, Nebet-Het, and Heru the Elder.	Noot
Ogdoad	See: <i>Khemenyu</i>	Ōg·dō·ād
Ouroboros	Though the name is Greek in origin, the concept of the ouroboros, or the serpent eating its own tail, was first recorded in an Ancient Egyptian funerary text.	Ō·rō·bō·rōs
Penthu	Powerful scribe and chief physician to Akhenaten, and later vizier to Tutankhamun and Ay II.	Pēn·too
Pítati	Ancient Egyptian archer units, often dispatched to support leaders in foreign lands that relied on Egypt for their protection.	Pīh·tāh·tēē
Postiche	A false ornamental beard worn by pharaohs as a symbol of fertility.	Pāw·stēēsh

Pschent	The double-crown incorporating the Hedjet and Deshret crowns, representing rule of the combined kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt.	Shǐnt
Ptah	A cosmic demiurge who created himself into existence. He created all reality with his thoughts, and with his magic words, he commanded reality to produce nature.	Pūh-tāh
Ramesses	A warrior-king, known to the Greeks as Ozymandias, who led military campaigns throughout the Middle East and Africa during his 66-year reign.	Rām·ūh·sēēs or Rām·sēēs
Remet	The Egyptian word for “the people”, a reference to mortals.	Rīm·ēt
Renenūtet	Originally associated with nourishment and the harvest, Renenūtet came to be closely associated with luck and with fate (Shai).	Rēn·ēh·noo·tēt
Scepter	A rod or wand representing royal authority and power.	Sēp·tūr
Sekhem	Scepter resembling a flat paddle, representing power and control.	Sēk·ūm
Sekhmet	Daughter of Amun-Ra, Sekhmet’s name means “she who is powerful.” A warrior lion-goddess, she is considered a protector of pharaohs and a leader of the pharaoh’s armies in combat.	Sēk·mēt
Senet	An ancient Kemetic board game. Tehuti challenged Khonsu to a game of senet, wagering portions of their power against one another.	Sīn·ēt
Set	God of deserts, storms, disorder, violence, and foreigners. Lord of the red wilderness of the desert. Brother of Ausar, brother-wife to Nebet-Het. Also known as <i>Setb</i> .	Sēt
Setau	Scribe and Viceroy of Kush during the second half of Ramesses II’s reign.	Sēt·ōw
Setka	Scribe and Prince in the 4th dynasty.	Sēt·kūh

Shai	The deified concept of fate, Shai means “that which is ordained.”	Shī
Shen	Ring with a branch tied to one side, a protective symbol representing eternal protection.	Shěn
Shu	God of peace, air, and wind. Brother-husband of Tefnut. Father of Geb and Nut.	Shoo
Sistrum	A percussion instrument used in religious ceremonies, used to signify dancing, joy, and festivity. The word sistrum means “to shake”.	Sīs·trūm
Sobekneferu	“Beauty of Sobek”. The first attested female ruler of Egypt, she was the final pharaoh of the Golden Age.	Sō·bēk·nēf·ūr·roo
Sphinx	A supernatural guardian with the head of a human and the body of a lion, often with the wings of a bird. The Greeks later adapted a more malevolent version of the Sphinx.	Sfīngks
Tchatcha	The chief ministers of Ausar, who advise him during the final judgement.	Chă·chă
Tefnut	Goddess of moisture, dew, and rain. Sister-wife of Shu. Mother of Geb and Nut.	Těf·noot
Tehuti	Tehuti is a lunar deity; his name means “He is like the ibis.” He is god of wisdom, writing, magic, art, arbitration, judgement, and science. He is known to the Greeks as Thoth.	Tāy·hoo·tēē or Tūh·hoo·tēē
Tetisheri	Matriarch of the Egyptian royal family of the late 17th and early 18th dynasties. She was regent and advisor to her pharaoh sons and grandsons.	Tět·ish·āy·ēē
Tjet (or Tyet)	The tjet is a symbol of healing associated with the goddess Aset. It is similar in form to an ankh, but with the arms bent downward.	Tī·yět or Tūh·yět

Uraeus	A stylized upright Egyptian cobra representing royalty, sovereignty, and divinity. It was often combined with the symbol of Wedjet to represent the Eye of Ra.	Yoo·rāy·ŭs
Ushabti	Ushabti were figurines buried with the deceased. For Ancient Egyptians, the afterlife was similar to the mortal world. Chores had to be done, just as they were on earth. Ushabti would perform the chores for the deceased, allowing him or her to relax.	Yoo·shāb·tēē
Wabet	A temple dedicated to embalming and mummification of bodies.	Wāh·bēt
Was	The was scepter was the ultimate symbol of Egyptian divine power. The was scepter had a straight staff, a head in the shape of an animal, and a forked end.	Wāz
Wedjet	The “Eye of Ra”, is a powerful goddess and protective symbol, depicted as a cobra coiled around, or carrying, the sun disc of Amun-Ra.	Wěj·ět
Wia-en-hehu	“Boat of Millions of Years”, an alternate name for Amun-Ra’s solar boat, the Atet.	Wēē·ŭh-ĭn-hēh·hŭ

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