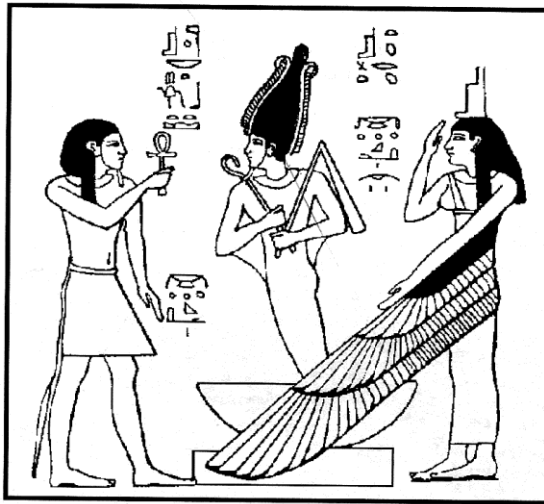


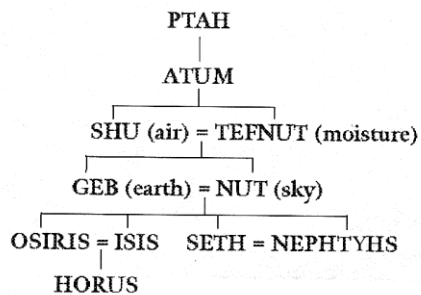
The Theology of Memphis

THE THEOLOGY OF MEMPHIS



The resurrection of Osiris.

The Gods of the Memphite Theology



The Theology of Memphis

This is a remarkable document, because it appears to anticipate, as early as 3000 BCE, the Biblical New Testament Logos doctrine and the First Principle concept of Greek classical philosophy. It has survived because Pharaoh Shabaka (715–664), of Twenty-fifth Dynasty, ordered the ancient text, which was written on some perishable material, probably papyrus, to be inscribed in stone.

Narmer, the founder of the First Dynasty, established his capital at Memphis. Consequently, the local god of that city, Ptah, soon came to be regarded as the chief of the Egyptian pantheon. It seemed quite logical to the ancient Egyptians that if Memphis was now ruling over Egypt then the local god of Memphis must occupy a position of priority over the other gods. A similar process occurred later during the Eighteenth Dynasty, when Thebes became the capital of Egypt and the patron deity of Thebes, Amun, acquired the attributes of Re, to become Amun-Re.

The purpose of the Theology of Memphis is to explain how and why Ptah occupies the position of supremacy among the gods. The most unusual feature of the Memphite theology, however, is that Ptah creates the universe through the power of his mind or thought, not in the usual physical way of the creator gods of antiquity. Thus, the things of this world are merely the objective forms of divine thought and Ptah is the source of that divine will.

Live the Horus:¹ Who Prospers the Two Lands;² the Two Goddesses:³ Who prospers the Two Lands; the Horus of Gold: Who Prospers the Two Lands; the King of Upper and Lower Egypt: Nefer-ka-Re; the Son of Re:⁴ Sha-[ba-ka], beloved of Ptah-South-of-His-Walls, living like Re forever. His majesty copied this text anew in the House of his father Ptah-South-of-His-Wall. Now his majesty had found (it) as (something) which the ancestors had made but which was worm-eaten. It was unknown from beginning to end. Then [his majesty] copied [it] anew, (so that) it is better than its state formerly, in order that his name might endure and his memorial be made to last in the House of his father Ptah-South-of-His-Wall in the course of eternity, through that which the Son of Re: [Sha-baka] did for his father Ptah-tenen,⁶ so that he might be given life forever . . .

The Ennead⁷ gathered themselves to him,⁸ and he judged Horus and Seth.⁹ He prevented them from quarreling (further), and he made Seth the King of Upper Egypt in the land of Upper Egypt, at the place where he was (born), *Su*. Then Geb made Horus the King of Lower Egypt in the

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land of Lower Egypt, at the place where his father¹⁰ was drowned, Pershet-Tawi. Thus Horus stood in (one) place, and Seth stood in (another) place, and they were reconciled about the Two Lands . . .

Words spoken (by) Geb (to) Seth: “Go to the place in which thou wert born.” Seth—Upper Egypt.¹¹

Words spoken (by) Geb (to) Horus: “Go to the place which thy father was drowned.” Horus—Lower Egypt.

Words spoken (by) Geb (to) Horus and Seth: “I have judged you.” Lower and Upper Egypt.

(But it became) ill in the heart of Geb that the portion of Horus was (only) equal to the portion of Seth. So Geb gave his (entire) inheritance to Horus, that is, the son of his son, his first born . . . (Thus) Horus stood over the (entire) land. Thus this land was united, proclaimed with the great name: “Ta-tenen, South-of-His-Wall, the Lord of Eternity.”¹² The two other Great Sorceresses.¹³ grew up in this land. So it was that Horus appeared as King of Upper and Lower Egypt, who united the Two Lands in Wall Nome,¹⁴ in the place in which the Two Lands are united.

It happened that reed and papyrus were set at the great double door of the House of Ptah.¹⁵ That means Horus and Seth, who were reconciled and united, so that they associated and their quarreling ceased in the place which they *reached*, being joined in the House of Ptah, “the balance of the Two Lands,” in which Upper and Lower Egypt have been weighed . . .

The gods who came into being as Ptah:—¹⁶

Ptah who is upon the Great throne . . .

Ptah-Nun, the father who [begot] Atum;

Ptah-Naunet, the mother who bore Atum;¹⁷

Ptah the Great, that is, the heart and tongue of the Ennead;

[Ptah] . . . who gave birth to the gods . . .¹⁸

There came into being as the heart¹⁹ and there came into being as tongue²⁰ (something) in the form of Atum. The mighty Great One is Ptah, who transmitted [*life* to all gods], as well as (to) their *ka's*,²¹ through this heart, by which Horus became Ptah, and through this tongue, by which Thoth became Ptah.²²

(Thus) it happened that the heart and tongue gained control over [every] (other) member of the body, by teaching that he is in every body and in every mouth of all gods, all men, [all] cattle, all creeping things, and (everything) that lives, by thinking and commanding everything that he wishes.²³

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His Ennead is before him in (the form of) teeth and lips. That is (the equivalent of) the semen and hands of Atum. Whereas the Ennead (of Ptah), however, is the teeth and lips in this mouth, which pronounced the name of everything, from which Shu and Tefnut²⁴ came forth, and which was the fashioner of the Ennead.²⁵

The sight of the eyes, the hearing of the ears, and the smelling of the air by the nose, they report to the heart. It is this which causes every completed (concept) to come forth, and it is the tongue which announces what the heart thinks.²⁶

Thus all the gods were formed and his Ennead was completed. Indeed, all the divine order²⁷ really came into being through what the heart thought and the tongue commanded. Thus the *ka*-spirits were made and the *hemsut*-spirits were appointed, they who make all provisions and all nourishment, by this speech. (*Thus justice was given to*) him who does what is liked, (*and injustice to*) him who does what is disliked. Thus life was given to him who has peace and death was given to him who has sin. Thus were made all work and all crafts, the action of the arms, the movements of the legs, and the activity of every member, in conformance with (this) command which the heart thought, which came forth through the tongue, and which gives value to everything.

(Thus) it happened that is was said of Ptah: “He who made all and brought the gods into being.” He is indeed Ta-tenen,²⁸ who brought forth the gods, for everything came forth from him, nourishment and provisions, the offerings of the gods, and every good thing. Thus it was discovered and understood that his strength is greater than (that of the other) gods. And so Ptah was satisfied,²⁹ after he made everything, as well as all the divine order. He had formed the gods, he had made cities, he had formed nomes, he had put the gods in their shrines, he had established their offerings, he had founded their shrines, he had made their bodies like that (with which) their hearts were satisfied. So the gods entered into their bodies of every (kind of) wood, of every (kind of) stone, of every (kind of) clay,³⁰ or everything which might grew upon him,³¹ in which they had their form. So all the gods, as well as their *ka*'s gathered themselves to him, content and associated with the Lord of the Two Lands.

The Great Seat,³² which *rejoices* the heart of the gods, which is in the House of Ptah, *the mistress of all life*, is the Granary of the God,³³ through which the sustenance of the Two Lands is prepared, because of the fact that Osiris drowned in his water,³⁴ while Isis and Nephthys watched. They saw him and they *were distressed at* him. Horus

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commanded Isis and Nephthys *repeatedly* that they lay hold on Osiris and prevent his drowning. They turned their (heads) in time. So they brought him to land.³⁵ He entered the mysterious portals in the glory of the lords of eternity, in the steps of him who shines forth on the horizon, on the ways of Re in the Great Seat. He joined with the court and associated with the gods of Ta-tenen Ptah, the lord of years.

Thus Osiris³⁶ came to be in the land in the “House of the Sovereign” on the north side of this land, which he had reached. His son Horus appeared as King of Upper Egypt and appeared as King of Lower Egypt, in the embrace of his father Osiris, together with the gods who were in front of him and who were behind him.

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1. The king of Egypt, here identified with the sky-god Horus.
 2. Upper and Lower Egypt.
 3. Isis and Nephthys.
 4. Egyptian kings were also believed to be the sons of the sun-god Re. It did not insult the Egyptian sense of logic to identify the king with more than one god at the same time, any more than it insults the sense of logic of modern Christians to identify the One Godhead as a Trinity of divine figures.
 5. Every important Egyptian god has many identifying epithets. “South of His Wall” is only one of many names by which Ptah is known
 6. The name of Ptah as the primordial creator god.
 7. . The original family of nine gods, in four generations (see chart above): (1) Atum, the creator god; (2) Shu, god of air, and Tefnut, goddess of moisture; (3) Geb, god of earth, and Nut, goddesses of the sky; (4) the gods Osiris and Seth, and the goddesses Isis and Nephthys.
 8. Ptah.
 9. Reference to the legendary contest between Horus (son of Osiris) and Seth, in which Geb decided which of them should rule Egypt.
 10. The earth god, Geb.
 11. “Seth—Upper Egypt:” apparently stage directions meaning that the actor who played Seth was to go off toward the south. This portion of the text is clearly intended for dramatic purposes.
 12. The god Osiris, the son of Geb and father of Horus.
 13. Isis and Nephthys.
 14. The province, or nome, in which Memphis was located was named “White Wall.”
 15. Memphis.

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16. Who have their form in Ptah.

17. Ptah was conceived of as both Nun, the primordial water, and his consort Nannet. In these capacities he brought forth Atum, the creator god of the more an-dent Heliopolitan theology.

18. The text is fragmented here, though it is clear that three other forms of Ptah are mentioned.

19. The heart was believed to be the seat of the mind or intelligence.

20. The spoken word or authoritative. The ancients always attempted to use a concrete word to express an abstract thought or idea.

21. Ka was the vital force, or personality.

22. The gods Horus and Thoth (the god of wisdom and the scribe of the gods) are equated with the organs of thought and speech.

23. Ptah, as the mind and speech of the universe, has transmitted his divine power into all living things.

24. Atum's children, See chart above.

25. The first eight gods

26. A distinction is made here between the act of creation of Atum, accomplished in the ordinary physical way, and the creation of Ptah, through the agency of mind and speech.

27. This is rather similar concept to the Biblical "let there be" creation by divine command.

28. The name of Ptah as the primordial creator god.

29. Literally, "every word of the god."

30. It is important to understand (contrary to modern thinking) that these images of wood, stone and clay were not the gods themselves, but merely places where they might appear.

31. The intertwining plants tutelary plants of Upper and Lower Egypt, symbolizing the union of the two parts of Egypt.

32. Ptah's throne in his temple at Memphis.

33. The god is Ptah Ta-tenen, whose throne is the granary which keeps Egypt alive.

34. Upon Ptah in his form as the land rising out of the primordial waters.

35. Upon Ptah in his form as the land rising out of the primordial waters.

36. Osiris was murdered by his brother Seth, who threw the corpse into the Nile river. After a long search, Isis, his sister and wife, found the body and restored it to life. Thereafter Osiris reigned over the realm of the dead. The son of Osiris and Isis was Horus, who later contended with Seth for the rule over Egypt (see chart above). Osiris was originally a god of vegetation. The bringing ashore of his body at this place is given as the explanation for Memphis's position as granary (i.e., capital) of Egypt.