

Grateful

May there be:
a space for creation,
an encircled space,
a quiet place,
that I might hear the soft voice
of my Higher Wisdom,
my divine Spark,
who hears the voice of Netjer,
who discerns the Truth,
who speaks her Conscience.
May I listen.

How does it feel to be in Hethert's train?
Was I her ancient Priestess,
singing and dancing,
rejoicing with those who rejoice,
grieving with those who grieve?
It seems to me that songs of joy
are for just that purpose.
And grieving, wailing songs
need that release,
howling tears for Osiris-Everyman who comes to that gate,
that final gate.
Singing brave passage to the departed,
singing mourning, missing, longing ache.
All these songs need to be sung.
Hethert, strong of heart, we shall sing loudly.

How did I come to be on the boat with Set?
I am there, on the night-passage.
I am there as he nightly gives finish to the
force we do not name,
the destroyer, the anti-Life, the anti-all.
I am there, prideful of life,
I am there, praising his efforts.

I am there, adding my efforts,
I employ my Ka, I use my best heka,
All together, we win.
Around and around, the cycle continues...
(Neheh, endlessly, the cycle continues...)
Set, great of strength, ever we shall continue.

Ptah, the creator,
the one who thought a word,
and spoke the words, and brought creation into being,
are we all your grand children?
Ptah, the reconciling One,
"make me an instrument of thy peace".
May my heart be peaceful,
may my thoughts be peaceful,
may the works of my hands bring peace and joy.
I am so grateful for the gift of life.

Joan Ann Lansberry (*Senuwierneheh*)
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Egyptological Background for my Poem

Skeptics may say it is a flight of imagination to consider that I might have been a Priestess of Hathor in a past life. But emotionally it feels right. The era of time feels to have been the Old Kingdom. I had an intuition about what their duties would have been. They wouldn't have been State-style Priests, but would have had different ministries. Research supports this. During the Old Kingdom "At this time, many women from leading families participated in the divine cults, particularly those of the goddesses Neith and Hathor." "The duties of these female 'servants' included music-making, dancing and singing, and the head of the group was in charge of musical training and practice." (*Religion and Magic in Ancient Egypt*, by Rosalie David (Penguin Press 2002), page 199)



Limestone relief of dancers and singers
Old Kingdom, Dynasty 5, ca. 2504-2347 BCE
Limestone, H: 14 3/8, W: 11 in (H: 37cm, W: 28 cm)
Purchased in Cairo, 1920, Oriental Institute Museum #10590
Photo ©Joan Ann Lansberry, 2010

The texts from the Pyramid age show many women served thusly. Men also served as singers and dancers. One of the hymns referencing Hathor says:

"Be happy and carefree,
 Whilst male and females singers rejoice and dance,
 To prepare for thee a beautiful day."

(*Hathor and Thoth: Two Key Figures of the Ancient Egyptian Religion* , by Claas Jouco Bleeker (Brill 1973), page 84)

The 5th to 6th Dynasty tomb of Akhethotep Hemi/Nebkauhor features this caption:

"Above each figure in a row of men dancing

*The perfect *iba* dance (is done) for your *ka* every day."*

(*Texts from the Pyramid Age* , translated by Nigel Strudwick, (*Society of Biblical Literature 2005*), page 401)

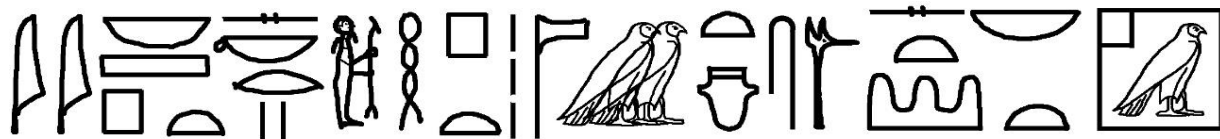
Pepyankhheryib, who according to his inscription, "lived to the age of 100 years", was an overseer of priests of Hathor. His 6th Dynasty tomb featured musical scenes, one of which included his daughter:

"Above a woman playing a harp

*His beloved daughter Peshernefret; May the golden one (*Hathor?*) appear in the great door of the tomb."*

(*TftPA* , page 411)

Hathor is frequently referred to as "the golden one". She's also referred to as "strong of heart":



(From right to left)

Hathor, mistress of the desert (foreign lands)

Strong of heart among the gods;

(And) Ptah-Sokar, lord of Shetyt (the Secret Chamber)

From the tomb of Paheri, El Kab, 18th Dyn., reign of Thutmose III

In the texts, it's clear that the purpose of the singing and dancing is to feed the ka, in all the ways this might be needed.

In any case, I am grateful for all the experience singing in choirs that I've had in this present life. I've always felt it to be a very sacred and magical thing, to bring joy and encouragement to the listeners.

Moving to the poem section about Set, TeVelde explains:

"He is imagined as standing on the prow of the sun barque and conquering the monster of chaos by word or deed and in this quality he is invoked and adored:

"Hail to you, O Seth, son of Nut, the great of strength in the barque of millions, felling the enemy, the snake, at the prow of the barque of Re, great of battle-cry, may you give me a good lifetime..."²).

"O Seth, lord of life, who is upon the prow of the barque of Re, save me from all evil clamour of this year."³)

"A royal offering to Seth of Ombos, the son of Nut, the mighty one on the prow of the ship and to all the gods in Ombos."⁴)

2)Four Hundred Years-stela. Cf K. Sethe, Der Denkstein mit dem Datum des Jahres 400 der Ära von Tanis, ZÄS 65 (1930), p. 87

3)Pap. Leiden I 346 II, 12; cf. B. H. Strieker, Spreuken tot beveiliging gedurende de schrikheldagen naar pap. 1 346, OMRO NR 29 (1948), p.68.

4)Urk. IV, 1437, 8.

(Seth, God of Confusion , by Hermann TeVelde, translated by Mrs. G. E. van Baaren-Pape (Brill 1977), page 99)

While Set delivers the final blow, he does not battle alone. All the deities can give their aid. And humans do, as well. There's a "set of anti-Apep rituals found in *The Bremner-Rhind Papyrus*." "The rituals deal with both the eternal enemies of order in the cosmic struggle and temporary combatants on earth." "The officiant, probably a Chief Lector Priest, invoked a great array of powerful deities. They were summoned in their most formidable aspects, or with special attributes, to join in the struggle against Apep. Among the forces summoned are the *heka* of Thoth and Isis, the Eye of Ra and the Eye of Horus (the solar and lunar eyes), and the spear of Seth." (*Magic in Ancient Egypt* , by Geraldine Pinch (British Museum Press 2006), pages 86 to 87)

"A standard illustration in *The Book of the Dead* depicts the deceased spearing a snake bearing one of the epithets of Apep, the great chaos serpent. (*MiAE*, page 157) Everyone, dead or alive, joins in the struggle.

I explore Ptah's role as creator god in [a pdf about the Memphite Theology](#). The Shabaka stone, which is the main source of information, also speaks of Ptah's role as Reconciler: "Horus and Seth 'were reconciled and united...their quarreling ceased...being joined in the House of Ptah..." (*from the Shabako Stone, quoted by Simson Najovits in "Egypt, Trunk of the Tree", (Algora Publishing, 2003), page 191*)

"And so all the gods and their *kas* assembled together for him (the god Ptah). The Peaceful and Reconciling One (a name of Ptah) was lord of the two lands." (*Memphite Theology as quoted by John Gwyn Griffiths in "The Origins of Osiris and His Cult, (Brill, 1980), page 160*)

Richard Wilkinson explains the Shabaka text: "The text alludes to the Heliopolitan creation account centred on the god Atum, but goes on to claim that the Memphite god Ptah preceded the sun god and that it was Ptah who created Atum and ultimately the other gods and all else 'through his heart and through his tongue'. The expression alludes to the conscious planning of creation and its execution through rational thought and speech, and this story of creation ex nihilo as attributed to Ptah by the priests of Memphis is the earliest known example of the so-called 'logos' doctrine in which the world is formed through a god's creative speech. As such, it was one of the most intellectual creation myths to arise in Egypt and in the ancient world as a whole. It lies before, and in line with, the philosophical concepts found in the Hebrew Bible where 'God said, let there be light, and there was light.' (Genesis 1:3), and the Christian scriptures which state that, 'In the beginning was the Word [logos] ...and the word was God ... all things were made by him...' (John 1:1,3)" (*Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, by Richard Wilkinson, (Thames and Hudson 2003), pages 18-19) It is interesting that Ptah, who has such a connection to the Christian deity, calls to my mind [a Christian prayer](#), "Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace".

Always, there's the sense that the gods want us to aid them in their purposes. They need us to aid them in their efforts. Everyone, all together, that's the ideal process.

