

The celestial underworld or mysterious beyond Going forth by day, reaching the light

A dead individual was linked to the eternal cycle of the sun. The deceased's surviving entities had to return to the light, unhindered, in order to regenerate themselves before returning to their hosts, whose corpse remained in a tomb in the subterranean world.

Heart and scales

The dead had to face two judgments. They first appeared before forty-two judges, to whom they pleaded their innocence of any act contrary to the social, moral, or cosmic order incarnated by the goddess Ma'at. But a second, more impartial judgment was required for the final verdict: the heart of the deceased was weighed against an image of Ma'at. The Book of the Dead always showed the trays of the scales evenly balanced, the picture's magical value insuring a favorable verdict for the deceased, who was then declared to be "true of voice" and could henceforth take his or her place as a follower of Osiris.

Leaving and returning

After appearing in the judgment hall, part of the deceased remained with Osiris, whereas other elements of his or her being had to return to the visible world in order to survive, to "go forth by day." If they didn't manage to return to the subterranean world and find their host, these entities would be condemned to wander, becoming dangerous to the living. The deceased's body served as their tabernacle, a sacred and theoretically eternal refuge. The cycle of entering and leaving the subterranean world, in imitation of the sun, constituted the deceased's new, eternal life.



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