



# Feasts of Light

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*An excerpt from her new book*

Those of you who have encountered *Awakening Osiris and Dreams of Isis* will be delighted to know that Normandi's new book, *Feasts of Light*, was published last spring by Quest books. For serious students of the Egyptian mysteries, this book will be a treasured resource. It delves deeply into the myths and brings the gods and goddesses to life as it describes the ancient rituals and festivals, their pomp and purpose. Following is an excerpt from the chapter titled *The Inebriety of Hathor: Transforming Anger*. —Nicki

Goddess of the blood, Sekhmet wears the crimson robe. Her name means "The Power." Fiery, fecund, and magical - the energy of life itself - she is the scarlet woman the Hebrews warned about. As she is highly protective and one of the great spiritual warriors, it's not surprising that Big Daddy Ra sent her out to do his work, and when it didn't turn out exactly as he'd planned, let her take the rap for it. (That ever happen to you?)

In the Egyptian tradition, Sekhmet is the crone aspect of the Goddess, the mother aspect being embodied by Bast and the maiden aspect ruled by Hathor. The three goddesses represent the stages of the blood mysteries ruling a woman's life as she moves from being lover, wife, and mother to being an elder woman of the tribe. Sekhmet rules that menopausal phase wherein the blood, no longer shed, was thought to be held within. It was believed that if a woman was not using her blood to create children, then the fecund fluid turned inward, marking a powerful time of self-creation and self-government that could produce visions and create magic. According to ancient beliefs post-menopausal women were said to be carrying "the wise blood."

The power of woman to use her potent will and creativity for her own benefit, rather than for the benefit of a mate or child as she might have done in her Bast or Hathor phases, gave certain non-Egyptian members of the community the willies. The Greeks called her Medusa. The Powerful One, Sekhmet, now became the "Feared One," the Gorgon, with her wild hair of snakes and fiery gaze that turned men to stone.

The blood mysteries are linked to the moon, as a woman cycles through the triple goddess phases every month. During ovulation she may feel like Bast with her gentle purring and luxuriating, but prior to and during menstruation she might feel more like the fiery Sekhmet. Highly potent in her magical knowledge, Sekhmet guards the gates of life and death. Monthly she allows a little death to happen; an ovum slips away and is gone. Just as quickly she regenerates the body, opening the way for a new cycle of potentiality. On the other hand, she may allow the egg to be fertilized, thus

creating life but simultaneously marking another kind of death. Motherhood ends the maiden phase of a woman's life and moves her from focusing on self-expression in the outer world to a more inner focus wherein her energies are used to gestate the life she is now creating. If you get the idea that every birth creates a death, then you see how important is the domain of Sekhmet. In her crone phase, the goddess within very wisely chooses what to create and what to destroy. She uses her energies for posterity, coming to a phase where she passes on the wisdom she has learned to younger women in the community.

The important thing to remember about Sekhmet is that her rage is a manifestation of thwarted energy. We may have been told that nice girls don't rage, so we turn the anger inward. After a time, the anger festers, still growing and causing us pain. Unacknowledged anger creates illness. The truth is that energy in all forms is a blessing. As Yoko Ono put it: "Bless you for your anger. It's a sign of rising energy. Direct not on your family. Waste not on your enemy." Of course, one has to do something with all that rising energy. Using it creatively for your own benefit is one way to break the cycle that generated the anger in the first place.

Sekhmet can be a cure for depression, that dark cloak for repressed anger. That energy, the rage, needs an outlet. We feel it when our emotions overwhelm us. Then is a good time to reduce our responsibilities to others and go inward for the journey. Often I find that my own anger is created by somebody else's agenda and comes from coded messages that play on guilt. Usually the message is that I am not being as Bast- or Hathor-like as someone wants me to be. I'm learning to stop and withdraw before becoming either enraged or despairing.

Often I pour my Sekhmet energy into divinations, either reading cards or considering astrological influences. At various times I've compiled a list of worries that plague me and put them inside a box with the shed skin of a snake. I ask the serpent power of Sekhmet to use her transformative energy to change the situation. Amazingly, when I come back to the box two or three months later, many of the issues have resolved themselves, or I have gained clearer insights into them.

In her book *Amulets of the Goddess* Nancy Blair has a wonderful exercise for creating "Angry Dolls," which are similar to the poppets or voodoo dolls sometimes used in sorcerer's magic. Rather than piercing my angry doll with needles and cursing my enemy, I make her face wild, energetic, and beautiful, then fill her with magical taming herbs or scents. Then the two of us dance in a creative process. I tell her how I feel and ask her to show me the best use of my energy in the situation. The point is that you are the vehicle for the transformation of Sekhmet's energy. Sekhmet makes no distinction. Her energy is neutral, a universal force that can be used to curse or to heal; but what you put into the universe is what you get back. Don't let your Sekhmet energy devour you in the process.

When I feel like tearing and shredding something, I use the energy to clean house, both physically and emotionally. I toss out things and obligations that no longer serve any purpose, so that I make an empty place where new life can enter. I've been known to rearrange furniture twice a month in using anger to create possibilities or alternate points of view. I go about cleaning all the mirrors and windows so that I can see more clearly what is being reflected and what is being shown. I've been known to put on a funky, yard-sale, polyester leopard-print nightgown (very Sekhmet), turn up the volume on the music, and dance to Tina Turner's "Soul Survivor."

Anything you can do for your body and yourself during times of tension, anger, and deep transformation will have a soothing effect on your nerves. Hot baths in hops are especially sedative, just like the soothing potion of beer that Thoth laid down for Sekhmet. (I don't recommend drinking alcohol as a way of dealing with anger, but I must admit my Grandmama's hot toddy was perfect for the cramps.) Massages with relaxing aromatherapy oils are wonderful means of turning Sekhmet into Bast. Learning one of the martial arts as a spiritual practice is a great way to build your sense of self-worth and store your Sekhmet energy at the same time. Sometimes kicking and shouting is just what is called for!

What you do with your Sekhmet energy is a direct message to yourself about what and who you value. If you give yourself the message that you are taking care of and nurturing yourself, your own dreams, your own vision, your own wisdom, then you understand that you have less to be angry and resentful about. When all else fails, turn off the phone, quit answering the door, and curl up with a magical book. Tell yourself you are "wholing" up.

Sometimes Sekhmet energy is directed toward us from other people. Certain folks, even people we love— our parents, spouses, children, and friends - can wear us out simply by being present. People in the extremes of emotional conditions, in anger or depression, create fatigue and hopelessness in those with whom they are in contact. Because they generate large electrical fields of emotion around themselves, they require more and more energy to sustain their operating condition. Thus, they unconsciously pull in the energy of others. It is imperative that we remain conscious of our own energy flow, observe when our energy wanes and retreat, if necessary, to protect ourselves. Psychologists may call this pattern codependence, but we are all susceptible to psychic vampirism. We are especially vulnerable when the "vampire" is someone we love.

If we monitor our own energy outflow, exercise restraint and control our emotions, we find that sekhem, or "powerful emotion," is a good thing. Strongly felt emotions are but another name for energy, which may be used for purposes either good or ill. As John Stuart Mill suggests doing nothing with one's anger is not really very useful, for more good may be accomplished by an energetic nature than by an impassive one. Use that energy to envision and manifest a better situation for yourself and the world.

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