

Passage #1 A Day in the life of a Pharaoh

The sun rises on yet another bright day in ancient Egypt. A man wakes up, but this isn't any ordinary man: this is the pharaoh.

This is the last time he will be alone for hours. He has many officials, servants and slaves to make sure he is always safe and perfectly presented.

His day begins with cleaning and dressing by servants including the splendidly named "Chief of the Scented Oils and Pastes for Rubbing His Majesty's Body". When he is clean, he is dressed and adorned with a huge amount of jewelry. After all, he's the pharaoh. He owns vast amounts of gold and he needs to look the part.

The pharaoh then walks to the "audience chamber" to hold his daily meetings. As guests enter the room they prostrate themselves in front of him. He is a Divine Majesty - they are mere mortals. As usual, there are ambassadors who are offering tributes from foreign countries, generals talking military matters, the usual nobility and some special envoys from across the empire.

The day's audiences completed, he leaves for the temple. As pharaoh, he must pay tribute to the chief god, Amen-Re. It's a pain but, if he doesn't do it, the empire could lose its divine order, or Maat. It could descend into Isfet (chaos) and he would be held responsible. It's not worth the risk.

Accompanied by the high priest, the pharaoh walks through the great temple to the sanctuary, enjoying the cool air and smelling the thick incense. Inside, he approaches the statue of Amen-Re. He asks the god some questions and receives answers from the high priest. The questions over, he is presented with a large bull. After prayers, the sacred butcher cuts the bull's throat as a sacrifice to the gods.

Afternoon

There's nothing like a slaughter to work up a big appetite, so the pharaoh returns to his palace for some lunch. Afterwards, he jumps into his royal chariot for a tour of the city. This is long before photos. Few people know what he looks like, so crowds of Egyptians gather in the streets to catch sight of their divine ruler.

Surrounded by bodyguards, he visits some construction sites where magnificent new buildings are being constructed in his honor. Back at the palace, he gets a welcome break. After a day surrounded by people, he can finally be alone and wander through his beautiful gardens.

Evening

His final daily duty comes in the late afternoon. He returns to the temple for a ceremony that marks the setting of the sun and the end of the day.

After that, he goes back home for an early night. After all, even divine majesties need their beauty sleep!