



Eye of Horus

A stone carving of the Eye of Horus in an ancient Egyptian temple. The **Eye of Horus** (also known as the *Wedjat* or *Udjat*) is an iconic symbol from ancient Egypt, representing protection, well-being, and restoration ¹. According to myth, the sky god Horus lost his left eye in a battle against his uncle, the god Set, but the eye was magically restored by the goddess Hathor (or the god Thoth), making it a symbol of healing and wholeness ². Ancient Egyptians revered the Eye of Horus as a powerful protective amulet, using it to ward off evil and to ensure the health and safety of the wearer ².

Mythological Origin

Horus was a sky deity and the son of Osiris, and he fought Set to avenge his father's murder. In the fierce battle for the throne of Egypt, Horus's eye was gouged out by Set ³. The eye was later **restored** through divine intervention – some versions say the god Thoth healed it (others credit Horus's goddess consort Hathor) – and thereafter it was called the "*Wadjet*", meaning "the Whole One" or "healthy" ³. The restoration of Horus's eye came to symbolize the triumph of order over chaos (embodied by the principle of *Ma'at*) and the healing of injury ⁴. In one popular myth, Horus offered the recovered eye to his slain father *Osiris* as a sacrifice: Osiris *ate the Eye* and was magically restored to life, so the Eye of Horus also became a potent emblem of **resurrection** and the promise of wholeness even after devastation ⁴.

Protective Symbol

From the earliest periods of Egyptian history, the Eye of Horus was cherished as a **protective charm**. People wore Eye of Horus amulets in jewelry – fashioned from gold, lapis lazuli, carnelian, wood, and other materials – to ward off evil and to ensure the safety, health, and prosperity of the bearer ⁵. This symbol was used by both the living and the dead: Egyptians placed Eye of Horus amulets with mummies and in tombs to safeguard the deceased in the afterlife, and the living carried or wore the symbol to protect against illness and injury ⁶. Its protective gaze was painted on coffins and even on the prows of boats; for example, sailors would adorn their ships with the Eye of Horus to guarantee safe travel on water ⁶. In essence, the Eye was believed to channel Horus's divine power to **ward off evil influences** and guard one from harm, functioning as a spiritual "eye" that watched over and defended its owner.

Mathematical Symbolism

Beyond myth and magic, the Eye of Horus had an important role in **ancient Egyptian mathematics and measurement**. Egyptian scribes used the parts of the Eye of Horus as notation for fractions when measuring quantities of food, offerings, grains, and medicinal ingredients ⁷. The symbol was conceptually divided into six sections (reflecting how Set had torn Horus's eye into pieces in the legend), each section representing a specific fraction of a unit and associated with one of the six human senses ⁷. For example, the breakdown was as follows ⁸:

- **1/2** – Smell (represented by the right side of the eye)

- **1/4** – Sight (the pupil of the eye)
- **1/8** – Thought (the eyebrow)
- **1/16** – Hearing (the left side of the eye)
- **1/32** – Taste (the curved tail of the eye)
- **1/64** – Touch (the teardrop or marking below the eye) 8

These six fractions were used as parts of the volume unit *hekat* in practical computations of offerings and prescriptions. Notably, if one adds up all the Eye of Horus fractions ($1/2 + 1/4 + 1/8 + 1/16 + 1/32 + 1/64$), the total comes to **63/64**, just shy of a whole 1. Ancient commentators offered explanations for this slight deficit: one tradition held that the missing $1/64$ was *filled in by Thoth's magic* when he restored Horus's eye, while another view was that the Eye could never be fully whole to remind people that absolute perfection is impossible in the mortal world 9. In either case, the nearly-complete sum (63/64) reinforced the Eye's symbolism of **healing** and the restoration of near-total completeness despite loss 10.

Cultural Legacy

The legacy of the Eye of Horus extends far beyond ancient Egypt. **Today**, it remains a widely recognized symbol, often associated with mysticism, occult wisdom, and spiritual awareness. The Eye of Horus commonly appears in modern jewelry, tattoos, and artwork as a talisman of protection or enlightenment 11. In New Age and esoteric circles, people frequently link the Eye of Horus to the concept of the "*Third Eye*" – the inner eye of intuition and spiritual vision. In this interpretation, the Eye of Horus is analogized to the *Ajna* chakra (third-eye chakra) or even the pineal gland in the brain, symbolizing heightened insight, clairvoyance, and awakening to hidden knowledge 12. Thanks to these associations, an ancient emblem once meant to assure physical health and safety now also represents **inner perception** and **mystical wisdom** in contemporary spiritual culture, demonstrating the enduring and evolving power of the Eye of Horus in the human imagination.

Sources:

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