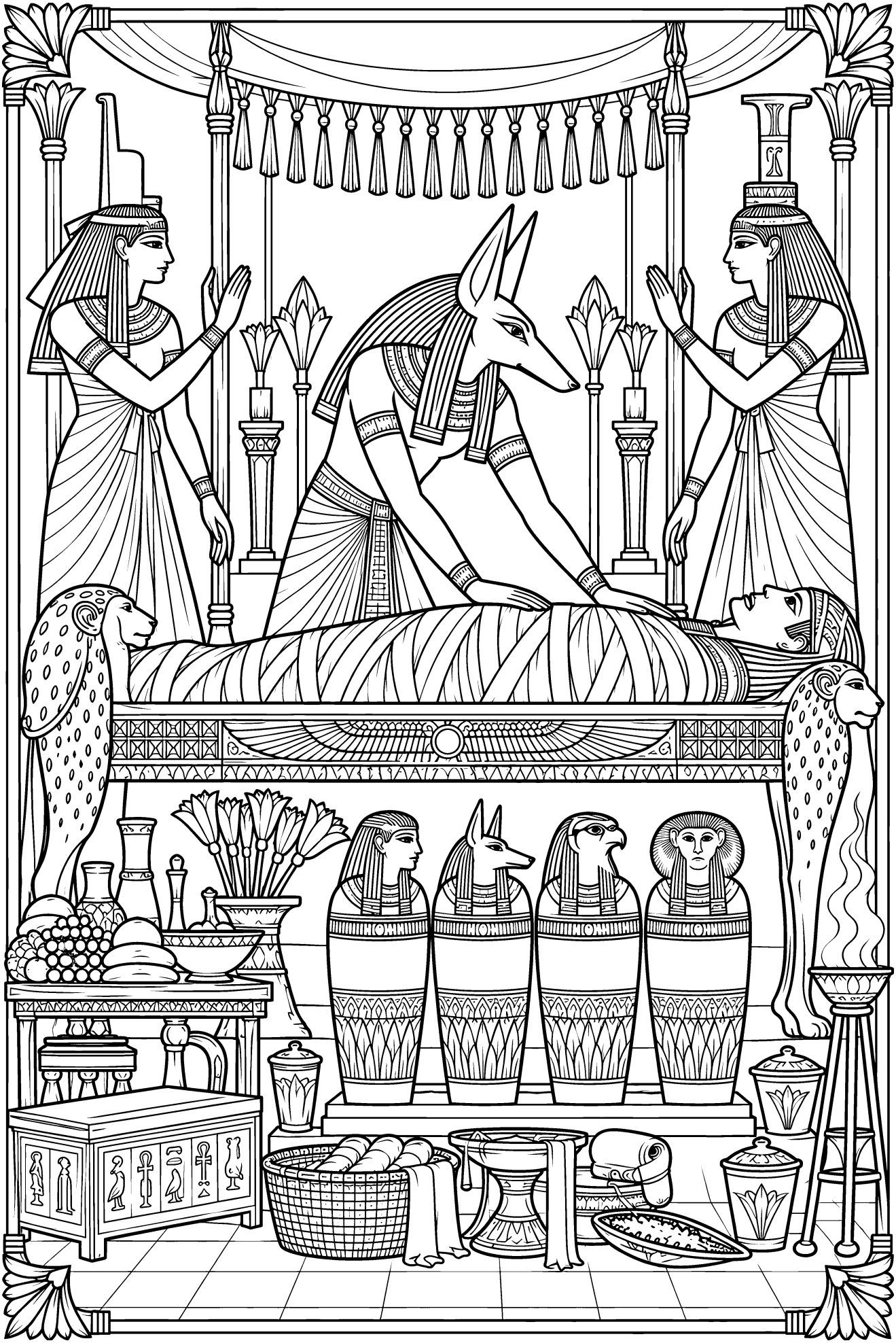
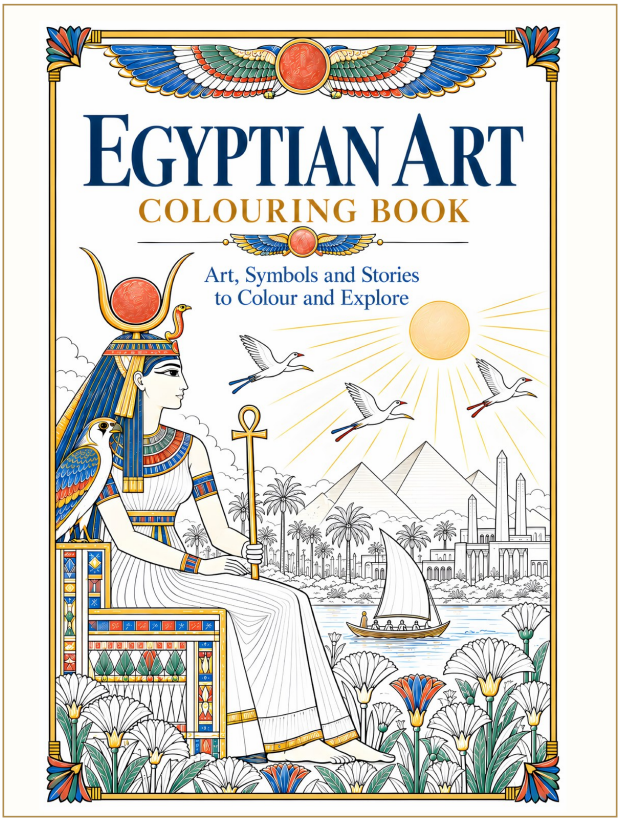


ANUBIS AND THE EMBALMING RITUAL

Making a mummy took about seventy days. The embalmers drew the brain out through the nose with a hook and threw it away, because they thought it was unimportant. The main organs were taken out and dried separately, and only the heart was left in place. The body was then covered in natron, a natural salt that dried it out, for around forty days, before being wrapped in hundreds of metres of linen bandages with lucky charms tucked between the layers. The chief embalmer may even have worn a jackal mask to play the part of Anubis, the god of embalming – a pottery mask with eye-holes still survives. Here Anubis lays his hands on the wrapped body as it rests on a lion-shaped couch. On either side stand the goddesses Isis and Nephthys, sisters who in myth mourned their murdered brother Osiris; at real funerals, two women played their parts and wept over the coffin. You can tell them apart by their headdresses, which spell their names: Isis wears a throne, and Nephthys a house with a basket on top. Below wait the four canopic jars for the organs, a basket of bandages, offerings of food and a burner of sweet-smelling incense. Anubis was painted black, the colour of rich soil and rebirth, not the brown of a real jackal; the linen can stay cream, and the two goddesses can wear white or red with bright collars.

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