

Egyptian Religion: Preparing for the Afterlife

- Polytheism- Belief in many gods
 - **Afterlife**- A life that would continue after death
 - Egyptian gods were of a specific object or activity
- Ancient Egyptians made great preparations for death and burial
- Villages had own local gods
- People built shrines at home to worship favorite gods

Egyptians vs Mesopotamia

- Both believed in polytheism

Mesopotamians religion was....

1. Gloomy picture of the afterlife
2. World of dead was under the earth
3. External life reserved for the gods

Why the Belief in a Second Life? (pg 49 handout)

- Osiris used to rule earth with his wife Isis- mother goddess
- Osiris made laws- taught people how to plant/harvest
- Brother Set jealous- places brother into chest- scatter 14 pieces of brother
- Isis put pieces back together except for the heart
- Embalms body then wraps in linen
- Osiris is alive- becomes God of the Dead
- **Myth explains ancient Egyptians belief in a 2nd life**

Preparation for the Afterlife

- Body had to be prepared, took 70 days
- ** Without the body the person's spirit couldn't eat, drink, dance or enjoy life's pleasures**
 - If the body decayed then the spirit would die
 - **Ka**- spirit double, looked like the person, returned to body for food
 - **Ba**- person's life force, needed the person's body
 - If you did not have a name then you did not exist
 - Wealthy had a funeral
 - a. Carried to the West Bank on the Nile
 - b. Purification Ritual

Step 1: Pyramid Building

- Pyramid building part of the preparation
- Pyramids were built by slaves and farmers

- Pharaohs buried in pyramids to illustrate they were godlike
- When could farmers help build the pyramids?
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Step 2: **Embalming**

- Embalming- Process to treat the body to protect it from decay
- Embalmers place all internal organs in a jar, except for the heart
- Placed the liver, lungs, stomach, intestines into **Canopic Jars**
- **Hapy** (baboon) protected the lungs
- **Qebehseuef** (falcon) protected the intestines)
- **Duamutef**(jackal) protected the stomach
- **Imsety** (human) protected the liver)
- Covered body for 40 days with natron (salt), which dries out the body
- Washed/oiled body then wrapped it in 400 yards of linen strips
- Changes the body into a mummy
- Earliest mummies were laid in the desert to be preserved
- Mummy placed into tomb with items

Step 3: **Placing Mummy Into Tomb**

Opening of the Mouth Ceremony

- A. Mummy placed upright so priest could perform ceremony
- B. Touched feet, hands, eyes, ears, nose, lips of the coffin
- C. Freed the senses to function in the next life
- A mask was placed over the mummy's head
- Many types of items placed in tomb
- Jewels/amulets to protect person into the next life
- Tomb walls painted with scenes from everyday life
- Painting guided people in the afterlife
- Allowed them not to forget how to do things they once did
- Objects/Paintings ensured people would continue to enjoy a good life
- ** Objects/Paintings found in tomb mostly in tombs of wealthy (points of classes)
- Pharaohs buried in pyramids to illustrate they were godlike
- Face of coffin sometimes a portrait of the dead person
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Step 4 **Chanting**

- After Mummy placed in a tomb, priests recited prayers/chanted magic spells
- Book of the Dead contains hymns, prayers, magic spells

Step 5: **Weighing of the Heart**

- Soul of the dead person argues its case before a jury of gods
- Weigh the heart of the dead person against the feather of truth

- **** Heart was the center of intelligence and memory****
- If the heart was as light as a feather then the person lived a good life
- If the soul was heavy with sin then the individual died a second death
- The person was eaten by Ammut- a crocodile-headed monster
- Priests called on gods to help the dead person make the trip to the next world
- Workers seal the tomb- lets huge stones crash to block main passageway
- Made traps/stairs that led to nowhere to fool thieves
- Great Pyramid of Giza- largest pyramid, took over 100,000 men
- **** Pyramids replaced by secret tombs in cliffs****

Animal Gods

- At first animals not worshipped as gods (changed between 712-332 B.C.E.)
- Cats saved world from darkness/evil
- Cat amulets popular with young married women
- Cats had ka
- Bubatis (city) was the center of cat worship- Had a huge temple of Bastet

Priests

1. Helped kings/pharaohs approach the gods
2. Worked in temples
3. Priestesses gave responses in service
4. Each morning woke gods with a hymn
5. Made offerings
6. Taught and organized building projects
7. Only priests/kings could worship in the temple
8. answered people's questions they had for the gods
9. Read signs - example: shooting stars- omen from the gods

Gods/Goddesses of Ancient Egypt

1. Bastet-
 - A. Cat Goddess
 - B. Cat mummies used as offerings
 - C. Small bronze sculptures of cats to worship Bastet
2. Horus
 - Sky god
 - Head of a hawk
 - Associated with the king

The Eye of Horus

- a. One of Egyptians best loved amulet
 - b. Horus lost an eye, which Thoth healed
 - c. Lost the eye in a battle with the god Set
 - d. Became a symbol of healing, good health and sacrifice
3. Osiris
 - Used to rule earth with wife **Isis** (mothergoddess)