

## Important Egyptian Gods and Goddesses

By Cindy Grigg

*Caption: Picture shows a wall in the tomb of Pharaoh Horemheb, showing the gods Osiris, Anubis, and Horus.*

Religion was important in the daily life of Egyptians. They worshiped as many as sixty gods and goddesses! Egyptians pictured their gods and goddesses in different ways. A few of the gods and goddesses were thought to be like ordinary men and women. Some were like animals. Many were thought to be half human and half animal. One god could appear in different forms. In all their forms, there were hundreds of gods and goddesses.

**Ra** (RAH) was the sun god. It was believed that he created the world. The Egyptians believed that Ra sailed across the sky every day in a golden boat. At sunset, Ra sailed into the underworld, a kingdom under the earth. Each day at sunrise, Ra sailed from the underworld to cross the sky again. In the daytime, Ra had the head of a hawk with a sun disk on top. At night, he had the head of a ram and the body and wings of a vulture.



For much of the New Kingdom period, it was believed that **Osiris** (oh SIGH ris) and Isis (EYE sis) ruled over Egypt together. Osiris was thought to be the first king of the world. He was often shown with green skin, wearing a crown and two ostrich feathers to represent Ma'at, or truth. He was shown holding the crook and flail, or whip. They were symbols of his godly power. He was the husband and the brother of Isis. Osiris was murdered by his evil brother, Set, and made into the first mummy. Isis used magic powers to bring him back to life. Then Osiris became the god of the dead and the ruler of the underworld. It was thought that Osiris would one day return to rule on Earth. **Isis** was the mother of Horus and was believed to be more powerful than Ra. Isis was the goddess of healing, marriage, and motherhood.

**Set** (or Seth) was the god of storms and war. He was linked to the desert. He was the brother and the murderer of Osiris. Set was shown as many different animals, including a pig, a donkey, and a hippopotamus. He was the enemy of Horus.

**Horus** (HOR us) was the god of the pharaohs, the ruler of the world, and the god of light. He was the son of Osiris and Isis. It was believed he could protect the world from Set. He was shown in many forms, including as a man with the head of a falcon. Each pharaoh was thought to be "the living Horus." A popular amulet, or magic charm, was called the Eye of Horus. People used amulets to ward off danger. It was believed that Horus lost his eye in a fight with his evil uncle, Set. The god Thoth magically put his eye back. Egyptians thought that carrying an amulet with the Eye of Horus would keep them safe. They also thought that the Eyes of Horus painted on mummy cases would let the dead see outside!

**Anubis** (ah NOO bis) was the god of the dead. The people believed that Anubis had invented the process of mummification. Anubis was often shown as a jackal or as a man with a jackal's head. The chief priest wore a mask of a jackal, acting the part of Anubis, when making a mummy. He made sure that the mummy was well protected with amulets, and the mask had been put in its proper place over the mummy's face. Pictures or statues of Anubis were often placed near mummies as guardians.

**Thoth** (THOTH or TOTE) was the god of the moon, medicine, and wisdom. It was thought that he was the inventor of writing and knowledge. He was believed to keep a record of how long a person would live. Thoth would decide who went to the kingdom of Osiris and who was eaten by the dogs of judgment. He was sometimes shown as a baboon or an ibis. He was also shown as a man with the head of a bird.

**Bes** brought joy and good luck to families. He protected the home. He was one of the favorite gods. He was shown with the body and face of a man with a lion's ears and tail. He was often shown with his tongue sticking out to scare away evil spirits.

Name \_\_\_\_\_



Date \_\_\_\_\_

Over the many years of Egyptian history, religious ideas changed. Gods took on each other's traits and roles. Two gods merged into one. These are just a few of the god and goddesses of ancient Egypt.

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## Questions

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- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Ancient Egyptians pictured their gods and goddesses in different ways. Which of these is NOT one of the ways the story talked about?
- A. as ordinary people
  - B. as ordinary objects
  - C. as half human and half animal
  - D. as animals
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ was the god of the sun.
- A. Anubis
  - B. Osiris
  - C. Ra
  - D. Bes
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_ was the god of the dead.
- A. Anubis
  - B. Ra
  - C. Osiris
  - D. Bes
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_ invented writing.
- A. Horus
  - B. Bes
  - C. Thoth
  - D. Isis
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. What was the Eye of Horus?
- A. a god
  - B. a statue
  - C. a magic charm
  - D. none of the above
6. \_\_\_\_\_ protected family homes.

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