
THE 10 PLAGUES OF EGYPT

BLOOD

OSIRIS: god of death and the Nile

Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. Blood was everywhere in Egypt. *EXODUS 7:20-21*

Osiris is a central figure in ancient Egyptian mythology, primarily known as the god of the afterlife, death, and resurrection, rather than just death. He's also associated with the Nile's fertility, agriculture, and the cycle of renewal, reflecting the river's vital role in Egyptian life.

Role and Mythology: Osiris was the god who judged the dead, overseeing their passage to the afterlife. His most famous myth involves his death and resurrection. He was killed by his brother Set, who dismembered his body and scattered the pieces. His wife, Isis, reassembled him, and he was resurrected, becoming the ruler of the underworld. This story symbolizes cycles of death, rebirth, and the Nile's annual flooding, which brought fertile soil.

Nile Connection: Osiris was linked to the Nile's life-giving floods, which sustained Egyptian agriculture. His death and revival mirrored the river's ebb and flow, tying him to fertility and growth. Some rituals involved offerings to Osiris to ensure the Nile's bounty.

Attributes and Worship: Depicted as a mummified king with green or black skin (symbolizing fertility and rebirth), he held a crook and flail, signs of power and protection. His cult was widespread, especially at Abydos, where festivals celebrated his resurrection.

Cultural Impact: Osiris influenced Egyptian views on morality, death, and the afterlife. His judgment of souls, weighing hearts against a feather, underscored the importance of living justly to achieve eternal life.

Seven days passed after the Lord struck the Nile. *EXODUS 7:25*

FROGS

HEQET: frog-headed goddess of childbirth

So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land. But the magicians did the same things by their secret arts; they also made frogs come up on the land of Egypt. *EXODUS 8:6-7*

Heqet (or Heket) is an ancient Egyptian goddess associated with childbirth, fertility, and the creation of life, often depicted with the head of a frog or as a frog, an animal linked to fertility due to its abundance after the Nile's flooding.

Role and Mythology: Heqet was believed to oversee conception and childbirth, protecting women during pregnancy and labor. She was also associated with the final stages of birth, "breathing" life into newborns. In some myths, she helped shape the child in the womb, as seen in the story of the divine birth of Hatshepsut, where Heqet assists alongside other deities.

Nile and Fertility Connection: Frogs, thriving in the Nile's muddy, fertile banks, symbolized life and renewal. Heqet's frog form tied her to the Nile's cycles, reflecting her role in creating and sustaining life.

Attributes and Worship: Heqet was shown as a frog-headed woman or a frog on amulets, often holding an ankh (symbol of life). Her cult was prominent in places like Antinoöpolis and Herwer, with temples and priesthoods dedicated to her. Pregnant women wore Heqet amulets for protection.

Cultural Significance: Heqet's association with birth made her vital in a society valuing family and continuity. She was sometimes linked to resurrection, aiding Osiris or the deceased in their rebirth, paralleling her role in earthly births.

GNATS

GEB: god of the earth

...when Aaron stretched out his hand with the staff and struck the dust of the ground, gnats came on people and animals. All the dust throughout the land of Egypt became gnats. But when the magicians tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, they could not. *EXODUS 8:17-18*

Geb is an ancient Egyptian god of the earth, embodying the land, soil, and natural forces like earthquakes. He's a key figure in Egyptian cosmology, representing the foundation of the world and fertility of the ground.

Role and Mythology: Geb was the father of major gods like Osiris, Isis, Set, and Nephthys, born from the union of Shu (air) and Tefnut (moisture). In myths, he's often depicted lying beneath his sister-wife, Nut (sky), separated by their father Shu to create the world's structure. His laughter was said to cause earthquakes, linking him to the earth's power.

Earth and Fertility: As the earth god, Geb was tied to agriculture and the fertile land nourished by the Nile. His body was sometimes seen as the source of crops and minerals, sustaining life. He also played a role in the afterlife, as the earth where the dead were buried.

Attributes and Worship: Geb is shown as a man lying under Nut, often with green or black skin (symbolizing fertile soil or vegetation) and sometimes with plants or a goose (his sacred animal) on him. His cult wasn't as widespread as other gods, but he was revered in Heliopolis and depicted in art and cosmology.

Cultural Significance: Geb symbolized stability and the physical world in Egyptian thought. His role in the divine family and creation myths underscored the interconnectedness of earth, sky, and life.

FLIES

NEPHTHYS: goddess of the air

“But on that day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live; no swarms of flies will be there, so that you will know that I, the Lord, am in this land. I will make a distinction between my people and your people. This sign will occur tomorrow.”

And the Lord did this. Dense swarms of flies poured into Pharaoh's palace and into the houses of his officials; throughout Egypt the land was ruined by the flies. *EXODUS 8:22-24*

Nephthys is an ancient Egyptian goddess, often associated with mourning, protection, and the dead, but not primarily the air (that role is more tied to Shu). She's a key figure in funerary rites and the divine family, complementing her sister Isis.

Role and Mythology: Nephthys, daughter of Geb (earth) and Nut (sky), was the sister of Isis, Osiris, and Set, and wife of Set. She's best known for aiding Isis in mourning and resurrecting Osiris after his murder by Set. Nephthys protected the dead, especially as a guardian of the mummy alongside Isis. She's also linked to childbirth and protection, assisting in divine births like Horus'.

Attributes and Symbolism: Depicted as a woman with a basket and house hieroglyph on her head (symbolizing her name, "Lady of the House"), she's often shown with wings, representing protection. While not directly the goddess of air, her airy, ethereal nature ties to her role as a mourner whose cries filled the air during funerals.

Worship and Significance: Nephthys had no major cult centers but was widely honored in funerary contexts, especially in temples and tombs. She was one of the "Four Sons of Horus," guarding the canopic jar containing the liver. Her protective role extended to the living and dead, balancing Set's chaotic nature.

Cultural Impact: Nephthys symbolized loyalty, grief, and safeguarding in Egyptian belief. Her partnership with Isis in rituals emphasized the importance of sisterhood and divine protection in life and death.

LIVESTOCK

HATHOR: cow goddess of love and beauty

The Lord set a time and said, "Tomorrow the Lord will do this in the land." And the next day the Lord did it: All the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one animal belonging to the Israelites died. *EXODUS 9:5-6*

Hathor is an ancient Egyptian goddess of love, beauty, music, dance, and motherhood, often depicted as a cow or a woman with cow horns and a sun disk, symbolizing her nurturing and celestial aspects.

Role and Mythology: Hathor embodied joy, femininity, and sensuality, presiding over romantic love, fertility, and pleasure. She was also a protector of women, especially during childbirth. In myths, she's linked to the sky (as a celestial cow carrying the sun god Ra) and the afterlife, guiding souls. Her dual nature includes a fierce aspect as Sekhmet, the lioness goddess of war, reflecting love's protective intensity.

Cow Symbolism: The cow represented nurturing and abundance, tied to Hathor's role in fertility and motherhood. Her depictions with horns or as a cow emphasized her life-giving qualities, often connected to the Milky Way in cosmology.

Attributes and Worship: Shown with a sistrum (a musical rattle) or menat necklace, Hathor was celebrated in music and dance festivals. Her main cult center was at Dendera, where her temple remains iconic. She was revered across Egypt, with amulets and offerings for love, beauty, and protection.

Cultural Significance: Hathor's influence shaped Egyptian art, music, and social life, promoting celebration and emotional expression. Her maternal and loving nature made her a beloved deity for both elites and commoners.

BOILS

SERAPIS: god of healing

So they took soot from a furnace and stood before Pharaoh. Moses tossed it into the air, and festering boils broke out on people and animals. The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils that were on them and on all the Egyptians. *EXODUS 9:10-11*

Serapis is a Greco-Egyptian god associated with healing, fertility, and the afterlife, created during the Ptolemaic period (3rd century BCE) to unify Greek and Egyptian religious traditions under Ptolemy I.

Role and Mythology: Serapis combined aspects of Egyptian gods Osiris (god of the afterlife) and Apis (a sacred bull linked to fertility) with Greek deities like Zeus and Hades. He was revered as a god of healing, prosperity, and the underworld, bridging the two cultures. His myths often tied him to Osiris' resurrection and Isis' devotion, emphasizing renewal and divine care.

Healing Aspect: Serapis was a patron of medicine and miracles, with his temples, like the Serapeum in Alexandria, serving as healing centers where the sick sought cures through incubation (sleeping in the temple to receive divine visions). His association with fertility and abundance also tied to physical and spiritual well-being.

Attributes and Worship: Depicted as a bearded man with a modius (grain basket) on his head, symbolizing abundance, Serapis blended Greek (human-like) and Egyptian (divine authority) iconography. His cult was prominent in Alexandria, spreading across the Hellenistic world. Temples featured grand statues and rituals, including offerings and festivals.

Cultural Significance: Serapis was a deliberate creation to foster cultural unity, appealing to both Egyptians and Greeks. His worship persisted into Roman times, with the Serapeum remaining a major religious site until its destruction in 391 CE.

HAIL

SETH: god of storms

When Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, the Lord sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed down to the ground. So the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt; hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth. It was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation. Throughout Egypt hail struck everything in the fields—both people and animals; it beat down everything growing in the fields and stripped every tree. The only place it did not hail was the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were. *EXODUS 9:23-26*

Seth (or Set) is an ancient Egyptian god of storms, chaos, violence, and the desert, often depicted as a complex figure embodying both destructive and protective forces.

Role and Mythology: Seth was associated with turbulent natural forces like storms and arid deserts, contrasting with the fertile Nile. In myths, he's infamous for murdering his brother Osiris and battling his nephew Horus for Egypt's throne, symbolizing chaos versus order. Despite his villainous role, Seth was also a protector, defending the sun god Ra from the serpent Apophis during Ra's nightly journey.

Storms and Chaos: As god of storms, Seth embodied unpredictable, destructive weather, reflecting his chaotic nature. His association with the desert further emphasized his link to harsh, untamed environments, opposing the fertility of Osiris and Horus.

Attributes and Worship: Depicted with a unique, unidentified animal head (sometimes called the "Seth animal") with a curved snout and tall ears, he carried a was-scepter or ankh. His cult was strong in Upper Egypt, particularly at Naqada, though less widespread due to his chaotic reputation. Temples and rituals honored his strength, especially in military contexts.

Cultural Significance: Seth represented the necessary balance of chaos in Egyptian cosmology, vital for creation and renewal. While often feared, he was respected as a warrior and protector against external threats, especially in later periods under foreign rulers like the Hyksos.

GRASSHOPPERS

MIN: god of the harvest

So Moses stretched out his staff over Egypt, and the Lord made an east wind blow across the land all that day and all that night. By morning the wind had brought the locusts; they invaded all Egypt and settled down in every area of the country in great numbers. Never before had there been such a plague of locusts, nor will there ever be again. They covered all the ground until it was black. They devoured all that was left after the hail—everything growing in the fields and the fruit on the trees. Nothing green remained on tree or plant in all the land of Egypt. *EXODUS 10:13-15*

Min is an ancient Egyptian god of fertility, agriculture, and the harvest, revered for ensuring the land's productivity and abundance.

Role and Mythology: Min was associated with the fertility of crops and livestock, vital in an agrarian society dependent on the Nile's cycles. He was also a god of male potency and procreation, symbolizing life-giving forces. In myths, Min was linked to the creation of the world and sometimes identified with Horus or Osiris in specific contexts, emphasizing renewal and growth.

Harvest Connection: As a harvest god, Min ensured bountiful yields, particularly of grains and lettuce (a sacred crop tied to fertility). His festivals, like the "Feast of Min," involved offerings of crops and processions to honor his role in sustaining life.

Attributes and Worship: Depicted as a mummiform man with an erect phallus, holding a flail, and wearing a headdress with two tall feathers, Min symbolized virility and power. His black skin often represented fertile Nile silt. Major cult centers included Koptos and Akhmim, where temples and statues celebrated his role. Amulets of Min were used for fertility and protection.

Cultural Significance: Min's worship highlighted the importance of agriculture and reproduction in Egyptian society. His festivals were joyous, with music, dance, and offerings, reflecting gratitude for the harvest and hope for continued prosperity.

DARKNESS

AMUN RA: god of the sun

So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. No one could see anyone else or move about for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived.
EXODUS 10:22-23

Amun-Ra is a major ancient Egyptian god, a fusion of Amun, god of air and creation, and Ra, god of the sun, embodying supreme power, creation, and solar energy.

Role and Mythology: Amun-Ra was considered the king of the gods, central to Egyptian cosmology. As Ra, he represented the sun's life-giving force, traveling across the sky daily and battling chaos (Apophis) at night. As Amun, he was a hidden, creative force. Myths depict him as the creator of the world, father of gods, and protector of pharaohs, often linked to divine kingship.

Sun Connection: As the sun god, Amun-Ra symbolized light, warmth, and growth, driving the cycles of day and night. His solar journey was seen as a metaphor for life, death, and rebirth, influencing Egyptian views on eternity.

Attributes and Worship: Depicted as a man with a ram's head (Amun) or falcon head with a sun disk (Ra), he wore a double-plumed crown. His main cult center was Thebes, particularly the Karnak temple complex, where massive festivals like Opet celebrated his power. Priests held immense influence, and offerings, hymns, and oracles honored him.

Cultural Significance: Amun-Ra's worship unified Egypt, especially during the New Kingdom, symbolizing divine authority and national strength. His role as "hidden" (Amun) and visible (Ra) made him a universal deity, revered by all classes.

FIRSTBORN

NEKHBET: goddess of protection

So Moses said, "This is what the Lord says: 'About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the female slave, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt—worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any person or animal.' Then you will know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. *EXODUS 11:4-7*

Nekhbet is an ancient Egyptian goddess of protection, particularly associated with Upper Egypt, childbirth, and royalty, often depicted as a vulture or a woman with vulture attributes.

Role and Mythology: Nekhbet was a guardian deity, protecting pharaohs, mothers, and the land. As a symbol of Upper Egypt, she paired with Wadjet (Lower Egypt's cobra goddess) to represent unified Egypt, often appearing together in royal iconography. She was believed to shield newborns and women in labor, ensuring their safety, and to safeguard the king in life and death.

Protection Symbolism: The vulture, a bird seen hovering over battlefields and nurturing its young, embodied Nekhbet's protective and maternal nature. Her wings were thought to envelop and shield, a motif in art and amulets.

Attributes and Worship: Shown as a vulture or a woman with a vulture headdress, holding a shen ring (eternity symbol), Nekhbet was linked to white crowns of Upper Egypt. Her main cult center was Nekheb (modern El-Kab), with shrines in Thebes and other sites. She was honored in royal coronations and funerary rites, protecting the deceased.

Cultural Significance: Nekhbet's role as a protector reinforced the divine legitimacy of pharaohs and the unity of Egypt. Her imagery in tombs and temples emphasized safety and sovereignty, making her a vital figure in both life and the afterlife.

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