

War of the Worldviews:
Judgment on
the gods of Egypt

Serpent Confrontation

Serpent Confrontation

Exodus 7:8-13 8 Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 9 “When Pharaoh says to you, ‘Prove yourselves by working a miracle,’ then you shall say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.’” 10 So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the Lord commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. 11 Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. 12 For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. 13 Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.

Pharaoh is unimpressed

His own magicians replicate the miracle

How?

Power of Satan? Demonic power?

Egyptian Magician's Serpent Staff

British Museum

Bronze staff in the shape of a *uraeus*

Egypt, early 18th Dynasty, 1550-1291 BC

From Thebes, Upper Egypt

This unique item is thought to have been a magician's wand. It was found inside the coffin of Mentuhotep by the archaeologist Howard Carter in 1911.

In ancient Egyptian mythology and religious iconography the serpent was a particularly potent image, so this staff must have had great ritual significance. Other items found in the tomb with it suggest that the owner was indeed a magician.

The serpent *uraeus* was considered to be 'the great enchantress' and was often depicted as a cobra with a human head (as on Tutankhamun's shrine), but it was also known for its protective attributes. It therefore appeared on the pharaoh's crown, from where it could spit fire and venom at the king's enemies.

There are many representations on Egyptian papyri and wall paintings of gods and demons holding serpents which resemble this staff.

There is also a biblical account of the metamorphosis of Moses' staff into a serpent.



http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/aes/b/uraeus-shaped_bronze_staff.aspx

Egyptian Magician's Serpent Staff

Snake charmers put snakes into trance state, even into modern times



http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/aes/b/uraeus-shaped_bronze_staff.aspx

Pharaoh's Uraeus Crown



A newly enthroned Pharaoh would address the serpent uraeus-crown thusly:
“O Red Crown, O Inu, O Great One, O Magician, O Fiery Snake! Let there be terror of me like the terror of thee. Let there be fear of me like the fear of thee. Let there be awe of me like the awe of thee.” (Currid, 92)

The Serpent Represented Pharaoh's Power

“Dreadful is thy serpent-crest
among them [Pharaoh's enemies];
the war-mace is in thy right hand.”
(of Ramses III, Currid , 90)

Ezekiel 29:3 “This is what the Sovereign
Lord says: ‘I am against you, Pharaoh,
king of Egypt, you great serpent, lying
among your streams. You say ‘The Nile is
mine; I made it for myself.’”



Serpent Confrontation

Pharaoh's claims:

Horus on earth, Seed of the woman (Isis)

god incarnate, god among men, god with us

Egypt's guardian, protector, savior, prophet, priest, and king
the physical manifestation of the gods

Pharaoh is to Egypt what Christ is to Christianity

“The hostilities were not primarily between Moses and Pharaoh, or between Moses and the Egyptian magicians, or for that matter between Israel and Egypt. What the serpent contest portrays is a heavenly combat – a war between the God of the Hebrews and the deities of Egypt.” (Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*, 86)

On all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord.

Exodus 12:12

On their gods also the Lord executed judgments.

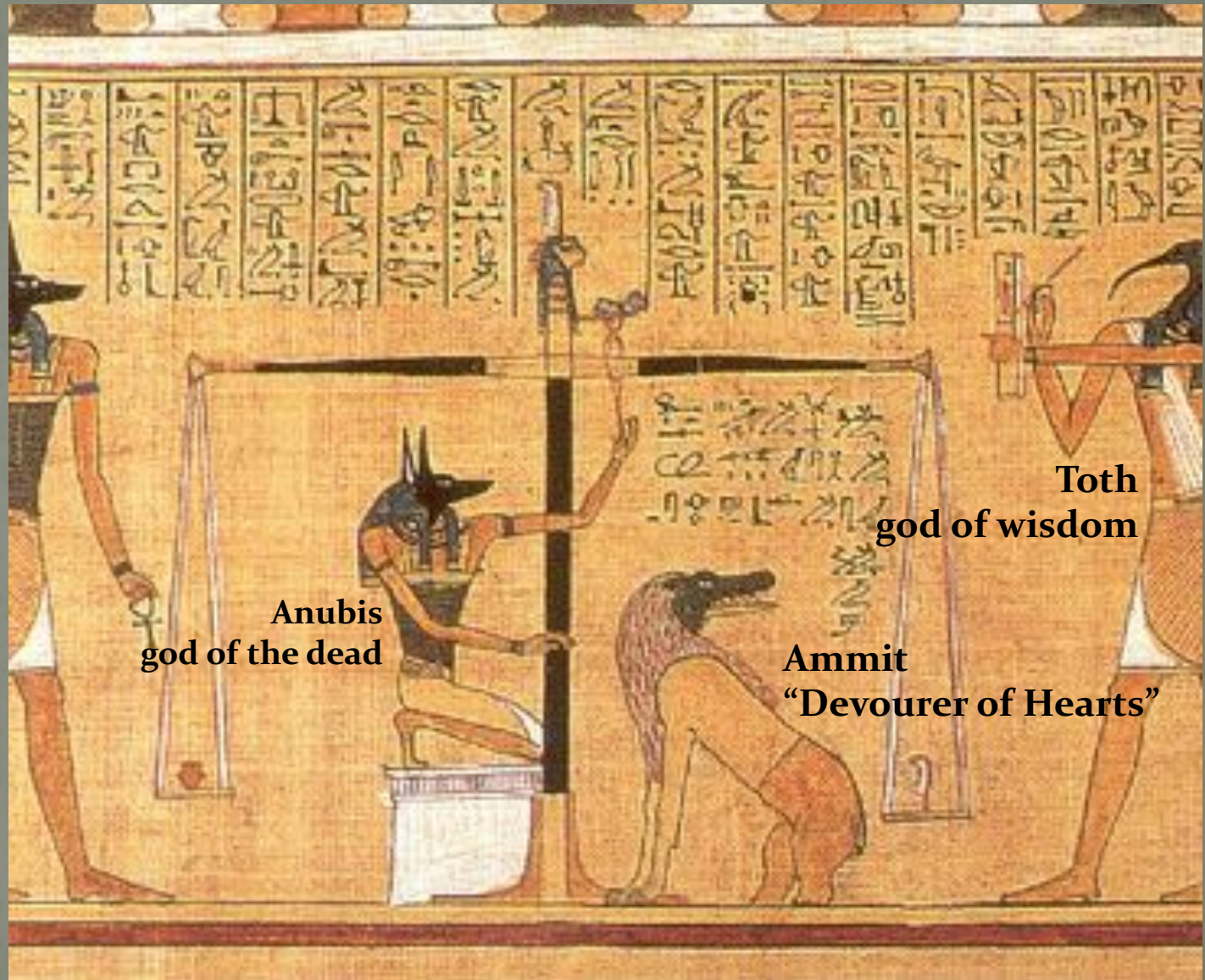
Number 33:4

Pharaoh's Heart Hardened

- Ex. 7:13 Pharaoh's heart was hardened
Ex. 7:14 Pharaoh's heart is hardened
Ex. 7:22 So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened
Ex. 8:15 When Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart
Ex. 8:19 But Pharaoh's heart was hardened
Ex. 8:32 But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also
Ex. 9:7 But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened
Ex. 9:12 But the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh
Ex. 9:34 He sinned yet again and hardened his heart, he and his servants.
Ex. 9:35 So the heart of Pharaoh was hardened
Ex. 10:1 [the Lord] "I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants
Ex. 10:20 But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart
Ex. 10:27 But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart
Ex. 11:10 And the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart
Ex. 14:4 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart
Ex. 14:8 And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt
Ex. 14:17 And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians

Pharaoh's Heart was made Heavy

This detail scene, from the Papyrus of Hunefer (ca. 1275 B.C.), shows the scribe Hunefer's heart being weighed on the scale of Maat against the feather of truth, by the jackal-headed Anubis. The Ibis-headed Thoth, scribe of the gods, records the result. If his heart is lighter than the feather, Hunefer is allowed to pass into the afterlife. If not, he is eaten by the waiting chimeric devouring creature Ammit composed of the deadly crocodile, lion, and hippopotamus. Vignettes such as these were a common illustration in Egyptian books of the dead.



Anubis
god of the dead

Toth
god of wisdom

Ammit
“Devourer of Hearts”

British Museum, London

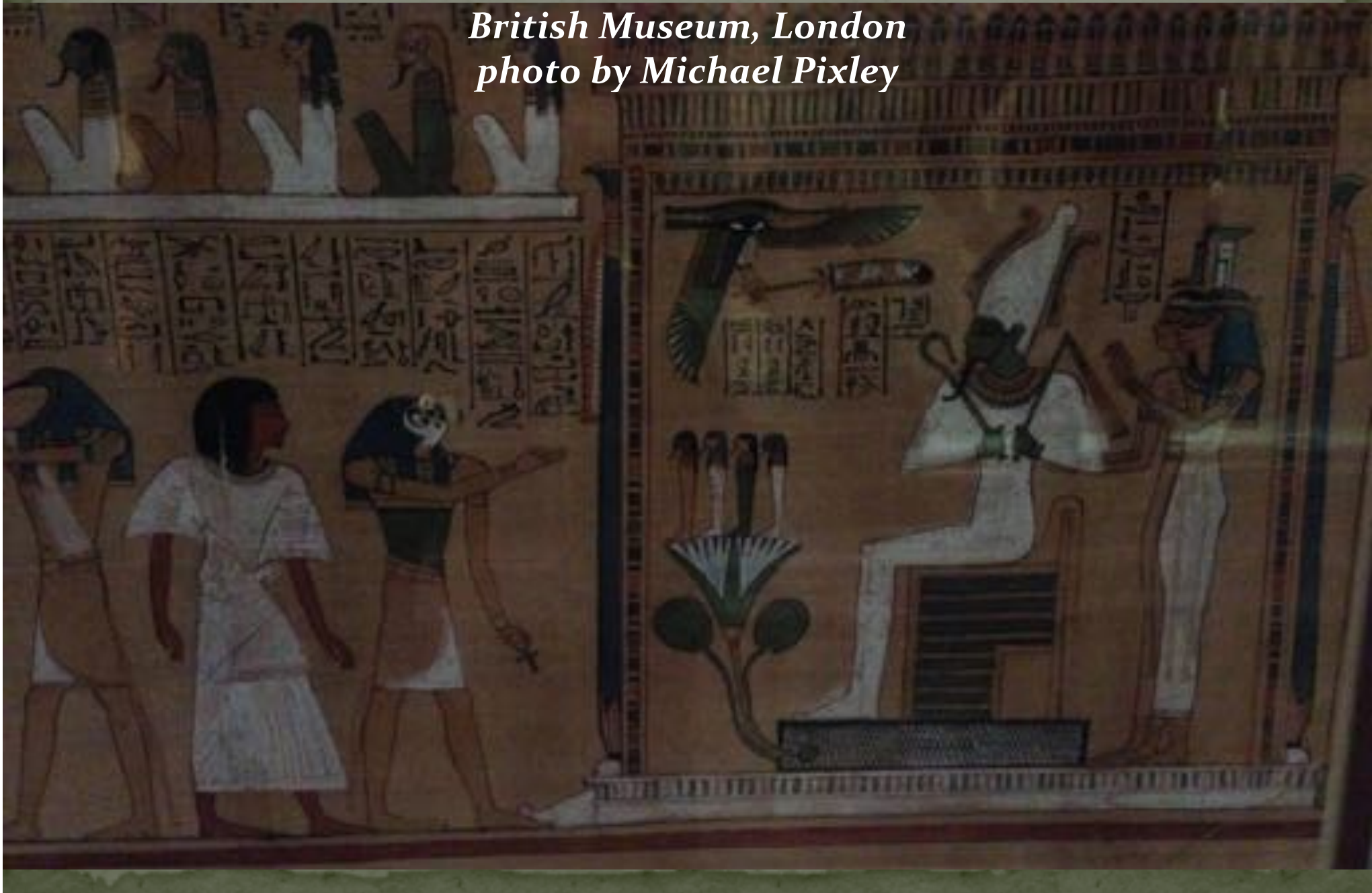
Heart Weighing Scene

*British Museum, London
photo by Michael Pixley*



Heart Weighing Scene

*British Museum, London
photo by Michael Pixley*



Osiris, Judge of the Dead



Osiris,
Judge of the Dead,
The Book of the Dead

Metropolitan Museum of Art
New York City
photo by Michael Pixley

Pharaoh's Heart was made Heavy

The Egyptians believed in works-based goodness and salvation, in the lightness of heart representing purity from sin. God, however, was judging Pharaoh and his heart was found heavy-laden with sin.



Weighing of the heart ritual, Book of the Dead
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, photo by Michael Pixley

Ammit: Devourer of Hearts



Metropolitan Museum of Art New York City
photo by Michael Pixley

Ammit,
“Devourer of Hearts”
The Book of the Dead

Ammit swallows the heavy
(hard) heart

Pharaoh hardened his heart

God hardened Pharaoh’s heart

Aaron’s staff serpent swallowed
Pharaoh’s serpents

Pharaoh was swallowed by the
Red Sea

Judgment on Egypt's false gods

Romans 1: 22-23, 25

Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things... They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

Pharaoh's job to maintain Ma'at in Egypt, intercede for Egypt with the gods
Pharaoh and the gods maintain order in every area of life
God is about to make a full assault on Egypt and their 'Romans 1' worldview

Contrast: God's judgment upon those under the Covenant of Works
 God's salvation for those under the Covenant of Grace

Exodus 12:12

Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments – I am the Lord.

1: Nile Turned to Blood

And the Lord said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, their canals, and their ponds, and all their pools of water, so that they may become blood, and **there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.**” ... and all the water in the Nile turned into blood. 21 And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. 22 **But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts.** So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said. 23 **Pharaoh turned and went into his house,** and he did not take even this to heart.

Was it real blood? What is a natural phenomenon (red algae bloom / red tide / inundation out of cycle)? Was it a miracle of nature or of timing?

God began the plagues by using signs that already had known significance for the Egyptians. This is demonstrated by the fact that Pharaoh's magicians already had secret arts in practice dealing with turning water to blood or some such illusion. Vessels of wood and stone likely refer to the idols of Egypt, which Pharaoh and his priests washed with Nile water each morning. God defiled the idols with blood.

‘Big House’ (*pa’ra* = Pharaoh) turned and went into his house

1: Nile Turned to Blood

The god Hapi was the deification of the Nile and the inundation of the Nile

Hapi brought life and fertility to Egypt by means of prosperity and abundance

Hapi was praised for bountiful harvests, plentiful food, abundance of blessings

Egyptians texts often referred to the Nile itself as 'Hapi'

Ironic, in light of God's salvation of Egypt from famine through Joseph



Bread of Hapi, Blood of Osiris

Egyptians praise Hapi, god of the Nile, from whom all blessings flow as giver of bread, life, prosperity, abundance, and all blessings



The Nile was also the blood of Osiris, king of the dead, the bringer of agriculture to Egypt.

In the Nile, Egyptians ate the body and drank the blood of their nature-gods

Sobek: Lord of the Flood

Sobek and Pharaoh



Sobek ruled over the Nile's inundation. A Nilometer at Sobek's temple at Kom Ombo monitored the flood each year.



Sobek and his wife, Hathor

All photos from the British Museum, taken by Michael Pixley

2: Plague of Frogs



Hekhet

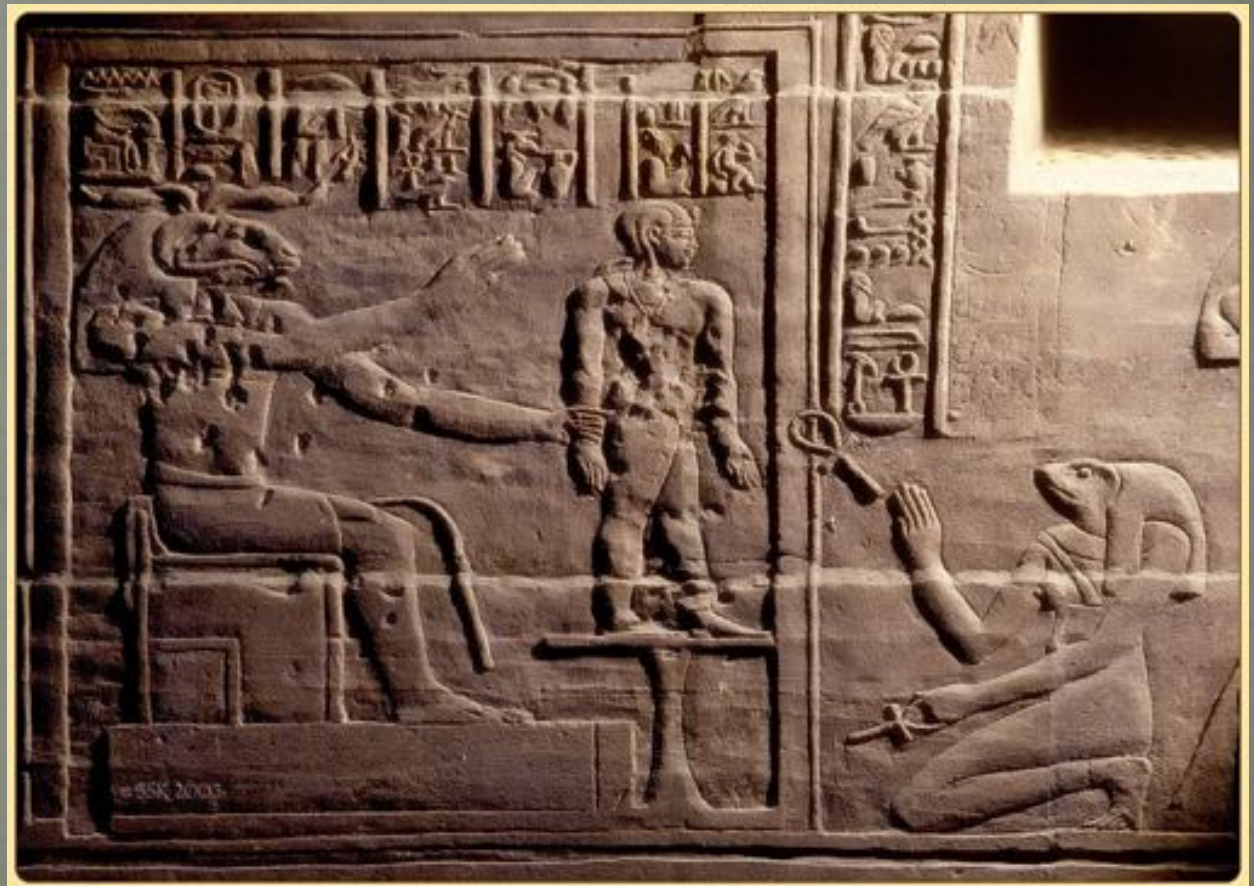


The frog was a symbol of divine power and fertility
Hekhet regulated life by preventing over-reproduction and under-reproduction
Hekhet controlled multiplication of frogs, by protecting the frog-eating crocodile
Hekhet assists the midwives at birth in the role of reproduction divinity
Midwives were called 'servants of Hekhet'
Women giving childbirth often wore frog amulets of Hekhet

2: Plague of Frogs

The goddess Hekhet was a creator of man and goddess of fertility
Along with her husband Khnum
Khnum created human bodies on his potter's wheel
and Hekhet blew the breath of life into the bodies

In attacking Hekhet,
God attacked the
balance of natural life,
animal reproduction,
and human procreation
in Egypt



Hekhet and Khnum

3 and 4: Gnats and Stinging Flies

Kheprer was the self-created one, symbolized by the scarab (dung beetle)

Kheprer



Kheprer symbolized the rising sun
(also attributes of Ra and Horus)

Kheprer was self-generated

He was also god of resurrection

What do all of these have in common?

Egyptians believed that:

Insects (scarabs, gnats, flies) self-generate each year

The sun self-generates each morning

Kheprer rolls the sun up as a dung beetle rolls dung

Insects die each year and resurrect the next

The sun dies each night and resurrects each morning

3 and 4: Gnats and Stinging Flies

God is the Creator of all things, He brings all things into existence
Nothing self-generates: Nothing in Creation comes into being by its own power
This is the largest Egyptian scarab ever discovered



*British Museum, London
Photo by Michael Pixley*



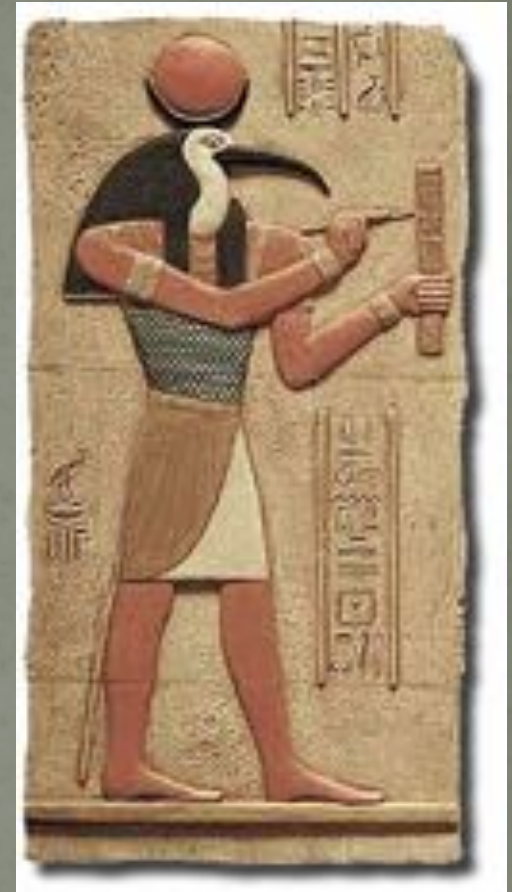
*British Museum, London
Photo by Michael Pixley*

3 and 4: Gnats and Stinging Flies

Ibis-headed Toth was god of wisdom, magic, science, and writing. Ma'at was his wife. He held the symbols of life and power and he upheld the universe.



These are the first plagues that Pharaoh's magicians cannot duplicate. They admit defeat: Exodus 8:18-19 "and the magicians did in like manner with their secret arts to bring forth gnats, but they were not able to... And the magicians said to Pharaoh, 'It is the finger of God.' But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened and he did not listen to them, as Yahweh had said."



Toth

God assaults Egypt's magic and wisdom

I Corinthians 1:19-20 – For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

Ibis Mummy

The Ibis represented Toth, god of wisdom, science, math, and writing



British Museum, photo by Michael Pixley

5: Plague Among Livestock

Hathor, the cow goddess, gave birth to Ra every morning
Represented motherly nurturing, joy, motherhood, and womanly love
The cow gives milk and thus is associated with motherly nurturing



Hathor

The goddess Hathor in cow form is led by the god Amun as she feeds the young Hatshepsut.
(at Hatshepsut 's mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahari)

5: Plague Among Livestock

Egyptians had many bull deities, including the Apis Bull, which was mummified upon death



Apis Bull mummy



Goddess Ma'at paying homage to Hator

God's attack on Egypt's cattle was a direct attack on Ma'at and Hator through various cow deities collectively representing vitality of life, fertility, and nurturing of life through domesticated animals.

5: Plague Among Livestock

Glass eyes for bull mummy masks
Ptolemaic or Roman Era Egypt after 300BC
British Museum, Photo by Michael Pixley



Mummy of a young bull
~30BC, Thebes
British Museum
Photos by Michael Pixley



6: Plague of Boils

Sekhmet was the lion-headed goddess with responsibility of disease, plagues, epidemic, and healing of such pestilence.

Egypt had the best doctors in the ancient world (of the 2nd millenium BC)

Priesthood of Sekhmet was one of the oldest medical fraternities in history

Priests of Sekhmet included doctors and veterinary surgeons. (Currid, 111)



*Metropolitan Museum of Art
Photo by Michael Pixley*



Sekhmet

*Metropolitan Museum of Art
Photo by Michael Pixley*



Sekhmet: 'The Mighty One'



*British Museum,
photo by Michael Pixley*



*British Museum,
photo by Michael Pixley*

Egypt's doctors could not deliver Egypt from the plague of boils
Sekhmet was a daughter of Ra and ruled over plagues and destruction
She was also associated with healing and protection from plague
Sekhmet almost wiped out mankind by a flood for conspiring against Ra's rule

Cat Mummies



Since we're on the topic of animal mummies!

Mummified cats
British Museum
Photos by Michael Pixley

7: Hail

Shu: supporter of the heavens who holds up the sky, deification of air

Tefnut: Deification of moisture, dew, rain (sister-wife of Shu)

Nut: Daughter of Shu and Tefnut, deification of the sky and the vault of heaven

Shu continually holds Nut (sky) above Geb (earth), which is necessary for all life

Shu holding Nut above Geb



Shu holding up the sky (Tutankhamen's tomb)

God is sovereign over the weather and all natural forces of the earth

...That you might know that the earth belongs to Yahweh. Exodus 9:29

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.

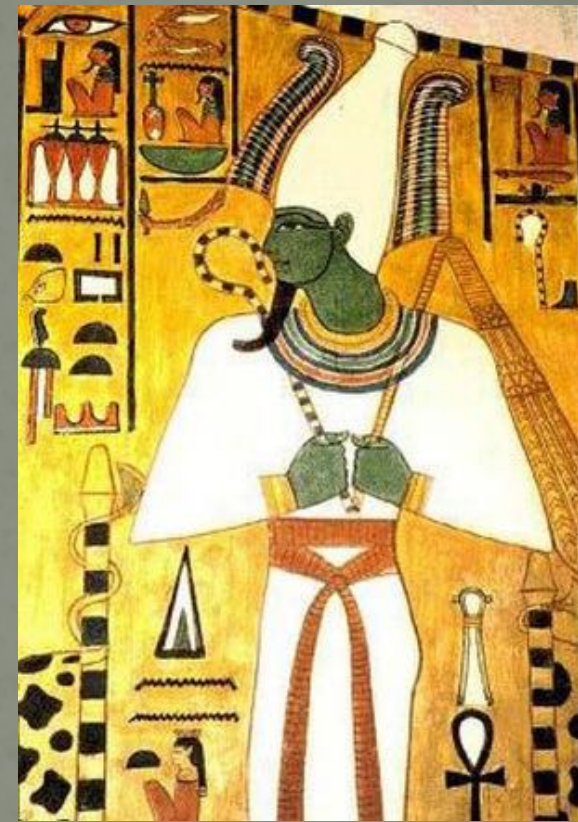
Psalm 24:1

8: Locusts Eating the Crops

Osiris was responsible for agriculture and the growing of crops along the Nile valley
Neper and Nepit were god and goddess of grain
Senehem was god responsible for locusts



Osiris



God destroyed Egypt's agriculture and crops

9: Darkness

Ra, or later, Amun-Ra was the chief solar deity who was born in the east each morning and brought light to the earth.

Each night, Re died in the west and descended into the underworld

Pharaoh was the incarnation of Ra on earth

Pharaoh was often called the “son of Ra”



Ra in his solar boat crossing the sky



At God's command the sun
gave forth no light
Ra was darkened in mid-day
And Pharaoh could do
nothing about it...
Utter defeat for Ra on earth!



10: Death of the Firstborn

Pharaoh cannot protect the lives of his people or even his own heir

Pharaoh is Horus on Earth... Isis was his protector and the protector of Egypt
She presided over magic and knew all names (had magical power over everyone)
She could protect or hurt by magic whomever she wished
She would always protect Pharaoh, who was Horus on Earth



Isis



Yet, Isis could not protect Egypt or even Pharaoh's heir from death at God's hand

The Egyptians... were burying all their first-born whom the Lord had struck down among them. *The Lord had also executed judgments on their gods.*"

-Numbers 33:4

10: Death of the Firstborn

ESV Translation of Exodus 11:7

“But not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.”

Literally: “*a dog shall not sharpen his tongue* against and of the people of Israel..”



Anubis was the jackal-headed god of death, embalming, and mummification. The jackal would eat dead bodies and became associated with death and burial.

*Anubis has no power over Israel: God protects His children from death.
Death is in God's power, Anubis cannot threaten Israel with death.*

Pharaoh's Destruction

Pharaoh and his army were swallowed in the Red (Reed) Sea

Exodus 15:12 You stretched out your right hand; the earth swallowed them.

'Swallow' carries the meaning of total destruction: e.g. to devour
The Egyptians had this idea, too: the crocodile devours men whole
this was the worst death imaginable for an Egyptian,
to be devoured (especially by a crocodile)

Remember Ammit, the heart devourer?
Pharaoh was devoured by God.

Aaron's staff swallowed Pharaoh's
magicians staff-snakes
The Red Sea swallowed Pharaoh and his army



Ammit, Devourer of Hearts

Pharaoh Swallowed

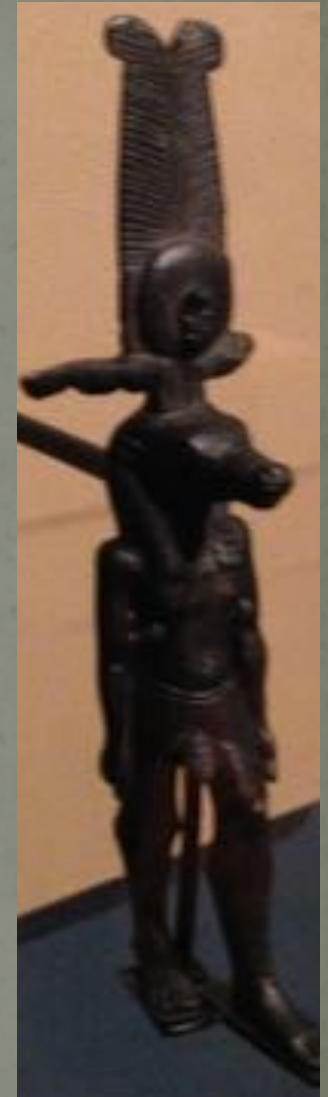
Pharaoh between two crocodiles,
representing the protection of Sobek
From a painted linen mummy wrapping
British Museum, photo by Michael Pixley



**Sobek was to protect
Pharaoh from harm.
Being swallowed was the
worst way to go**

Sobek's Titles
"Lord of Fear"
"Sharp of Teeth"

Sobek's Attributes
Power, strength, appetite



Sobek amulet
British Museum
Photo by Michael Pixley

The Fear of Sobek



“Get back! Retreat!
Get back, you dangerous one!”
Driving away crocodiles in the afterlife
From the Book of the Dead of Nakht
British Museum, photo by Michael Pixley

Paying homage Sobek as a
crocodile mummy on a shrine
From the Book of the Dead of Nakht
British Museum, photo by Michael Pixley



Crocodile Mummy

This crocodile was worshipped as an incarnation of Sobek. It was held in captivity at the Temple of Sobek at Kom Ombo, dating to Abraham's time. Over 300 crocodile mummies have been found at the temple.



Last supper: Shoulder bone and forelimb of a cow.
3D prints of a scan of this crocodile's stomach



All photos from the British Museum, photo by Michael Pixley



War of Worldviews

Pharaoh's job was to maintain ma'at, order, harmony, security, continuity
Pharaoh and their gods failed in every respect, in every area of life
Pharaoh and their gods were utterly helpless to prevent Egypt's destruction

But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. Exodus 9:16

Romans 9

For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." 16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." 18 So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills... 22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory

Judgment on the gods

Lament of Ipuwar describes a time of societal breakdown, loss of ma'at, destruction of all law and order in Egypt.

“There’s blood everywhere, no shortage of dead...

Lo, the river is blood, As one drinks of it one shrinks from people and thirsts for water...

Lo, crocodiles gorge on their catch, People go to them of their own will...

He who puts his brother in the ground is everywhere...

“Lo, Hapy inundates and none plow for him...

Khnum does not fashion because of the state of the land...

Khnum groans in weariness...

Lo, magic spells are divulged, Spells are made worthless through being repeated by people...

[Stolen] is the crown of Re, who pacifies the Two Lands.

“Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment” Exodus 12:12

Spiritual Warfare

A Spiritual / Worldview Battle

This was not merely a physical battle with Pharaoh, played out with plagues
This was a spiritual battle between competing worldviews
The plagues represent spiritual assaults on Egypt's pagan nature-deities
This war of worldviews has played out through history and is still raging

The battle started with an assault on Pharaoh's power and authority in the serpent confrontation.

It continued with assaults on Egypt's pagan gods and pagan worldview

God's Covenant with Israel is a *spiritual* Covenant
God's salvation of Israel is *spiritual and physical*

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. -

Ephesians 6:12

Sovereign God of All

The Lord had also executed judgments on their gods.” -Numbers 33:4

“There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, "Mine!"

— Abraham Kuyper

Plagues illustrate God’s sovereignty over all areas of life:

Plague

1. Nile turned to blood
2. Plague of frogs
3. Gnats
4. Stinging flies
5. Death of livestock
6. Boils
7. Hail
8. Locusts
9. Darkness
10. Death of the Firstborn

Aspect of Life and Worldview

Blessings, Prosperity, Abundance, Food, Water
Fertility, Reproduction, Childbirth
Self-generation, resurrection, magic, wisdom
Self-generation, resurrection, magic, wisdom
Livestock, fertility, motherhood, nurturing
Health, disease, plague, medicine
Weather, climate, natural forces, earth
Agriculture, crops, pestilence
Sun, light, wisdom, understanding
Life, death, heirs, succession, magic

(Note: Magic is not real, but Egyptians and many people both ancient and modern falsely believe it is)

Flood-Exodus Parallels

Creation: God brings forth His creation by His power alone

Flood: God judges the reprobate by undoing creation's blessings

Israel: God creates a Covenant people, Israel contributes nothing

Egypt: God judges Pharaoh and Egypt by undoing creation's blessings

Since they worship nature, God undoes the blessings of creation

- As in creation days 1-3, God created light, separated the waters, and created dry ground for Israel to have new life
- During the flood, God un-separated the waters, brought them back together, eliminated the land, and destroyed all life as judgment
- Likewise, God un-separated the waters, bringing the Red Sea back together upon Pharaoh and his army, eliminating all land, and destroying their lives and destroying all of Egypt along with them.

“See, Egypt has fallen to pouring water” – Lamentation of Ipuwar

Flood as De-Creation

Creation

Day 2: God separated the waters from the waters

Day 3: God separated dry land from the seas

Day 5: God created fish and birds

Day 6: God created the land animals and people

Flood: God undid Creation blessings of Days 2, 3, and 6

Day 2 Undone: Waters from above and below come back together

Gen. 7:11 “on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.”

Day 3 Undone: Land is subsumed back into the sea

Gen. 7:19 “and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered.”

Day 5-6 Undone: Birds, all land animals and human life are killed off

Gen. 7:21 “and all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man.”

Plagues as De-Creation

Creation Days

- 1: Light from darkness
- 2: Separation of waters from waters
- 3: Dry land and vegetation
- 4: Sun, moon, stars
- 5: Birds, fish, aquatic creatures
- 6: Land animals and humans

Plagues

- 9: Darkness prevails over light
- 1: Water turned into blood
Red Sea: waters brought together on Pharaoh and his army
- 7-8: Crops destroyed by hail and locusts
- 9: sun, moon, stars give no light
- 1: Blood kills fish and aquatic creatures
- 2: Frog multiplication then mass death
- 3-4: gnats and stinging flies afflict all land creatures, cattle, and men
- 5: livestock plagued and die
- 6: boils on cattle and humans
- 10: death of the firstborn

Final Judgment

Plague

1. Nile into blood
2. Plague of frogs
3. Gnats
4. Stinging flies
5. Death of livestock
6. Boils
7. Hail
8. Locusts
9. Darkness
10. Death of firstborn

Parallels in Final Judgment in Revelation

Rev. 16:3-4 The sea became blood and everything died

Rev. 16:13-14 Three unclean spirits like frogs wage war

Rev. 9:3-5, Locusts with the sting of a scorpion

Rev. 16:2, Loathsome and malignant sores, 16:11, sores

Rev. 16:17-21, 7th Angel: huge, 100 pound hailstones rain

Rev. 9:3-5, Locusts with the sting of a scorpion

Rev. 16:10-11, The kingdom of the beast became darkened

In all of this, Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he did not repent

Rev. 16:9 Men blasphemed God and did not repent