

About Egyptian Religion

Fast Facts

- Priests had to wash several times a day to remove all hair from their bodies.
- Priests could not wear wool or sandals made of leather. These were thought to be unclean.
- High priests treated the statues of the gods like real people. They washed them, dressed them, and put makeup on them.
- Gods were believed to have human traits. They ate, had emotions, gave birth, had families, and died.
- Many Egyptians wore amulets to protect themselves from evil spirits.
- Women could get jobs as mourners at funerals. They were paid to wail and pull their hair.
- Prayers, hymns, and magic spells were found in the Book of the Dead, which was wrapped in the cloth of mummies to help the dead person make a smooth transition into the afterlife.
- As soon as a new king took the throne, he ordered an architect to begin working on his tomb.
- Tombs were built in the Land of the Dead, on the west side of the Nile. The work took many years to complete



Religion was found in every aspect of the ancient Egyptian society, including government, science, and art. Egyptians worshiped many deities (gods and goddesses). They believed that their deities were responsible for every action in their world, big and small – from the sunrise to a sneeze. However, ancient Egyptians did not call their believe in deities a religion. To them, the gods were simply a part of everyday life and a force of nature. On a daily basis, people showed respect to the gods, asked them for help, and feared them.

Egyptians had different types of gods, and there were any stories about each god. Some were worshiped throughout all of Egypt, such as the sun god, named Ra or Aten. Others were only known to a single nome

(a division of land in ancient Egypt). Many gods and goddesses were depicted as a human with the head of an animal. Egyptian deities were not a set group of gods that never changed. Some pharaohs favored certain gods. Throughout the long history of ancient Egypt, deities came and went depending on what the pharaoh of the time wanted. Sometimes more than one god was merged to form a single new god. One pharaoh, Amenhotep IV, tried to convince Egyptians to worship only one god instead of many. His idea did not last long.

Although pharaohs were human beings, the people considered them gods. Pharaohs built grand temples to honor themselves and the gods. Egyptians believed that the spirits of their deities lived in the temples. The temples were the center of each community. They contained sanctuaries with statues of the gods and goddesses, but only the pharaohs and high priests could enter them. Therefore, most other people prayed at home. Festivals were held to praise the gods and goddesses, especially during flood season when farmers were not able to work in the fields.

Egyptians looked forward to life after death, or the afterlife. They believed they would continue to live after they died, but in a different way than before. Because people wanted to enjoy the afterlife, they spent a great amount of time preparing their tombs for that purpose. If possible, they were buried with the comforts of life such as food, clothes, furniture, jewelry, and household items so they could use them in the afterlife. Bodies were mummified – preserved using special treatments and chemicals – so that people could use their bodies in the afterlife.