

# Ancient Egyptian Dieties

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**Amun:** When Amun's city, Thebes, rose to power in the New Kingdom (1539-1070 B.C.), Amun became known as the "King of the Gods." He was worshipped as the high god throughout Egypt. Able to take many shapes, Amun was sometimes shown as a ram or goose, but was usually shown in human form. He is fundamentally a Creator God and his name, Amun, means "The Hidden One."

**Amun-Re:** Originating in the Middle Kingdom, (2055 - 1650 B.C.), Amun-Re is a fusion of the Gods Amun and Re. He combined the invisible power of creation and the power visible in heat and light.

**Anubis:** Usually represented as a black jackal, or as a human with a canine head, Anubis was a guardian of mummies, tombs, and cemeteries, as well as an escort of the deceased to the afterlife.

**Atum:** According to the most ancient Egyptian creation myths, Atum is the creator of the world. He also brought the first gods Shu (air), Tefnut (water), Geb (earth), and Nut (sky) to Egypt. He is also god of the setting sun. Atum was represented in many forms such as a human, a human with the head of a ram, and a combination of an eel and a cobra.

**Bastet:** Originating as early as Dynasty II (2820-2670 B.C.), Bastet was represented as a cat or a woman with a lioness's head. She eventually became Egypt's most important "cat goddess." If Bastet took the form of a cat she was considered content, but if Bastet was a lioness she was considered an angry goddess.

**Bes:** The Egyptians often called upon minor deities to protect them from evil forces. One of the most popular of these was Bes. With the head of a snarling lion and the body of a dwarf, Bes helped women through pregnancy and childbirth and protected newborns.

**Geb:** Geb was the earth god and the brother-husband of the sky goddess, Nut. Atum separated earth (Geb) and sky (Nut) by placing the air god, Shu, between them for eternity. Geb is most often shown in his human form.

**Hathor:** As a cow with the sun disk between her horns, Hathor represented fertility and heaven. She was also the mobile Eye of Re, who protected Egypt and Ma'at representing the divine order.



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She was known as the protective “mother” who nourished both the gods and humanity. As the goddess of rebirth, she was also the goddess of joy, dance, music, love, and excitement necessary to maintain creation and recreation.

**Horus:** Horus means “The Distant One,” or “He Who is on High.” He is one of the earliest sky gods and the sun and moon as well as the living king are represented by his eyes. The son of Osiris and Isis, Horus symbolizes the triumph of order over disorder. He is most often represented by a falcon or a falcon-headed man.

**Isis:** Isis was the sister-wife of Osiris, and the sister of Seth and Nephthys. After Osiris was murdered by Seth, Isis was able to magically restore Osiris to life. She was Egypt’s model of the loyal wife and protective mother. Isis was usually represented in her human form. Her followers eventually spread to Europe, where ancient Romans worshiped her as their universal goddess.

**Ma’at:** Ma’at or Maat represented the right order and justice established by the gods. Ma’at was vital to the protection of the universe from the chaos that surrounded it. She wears an ostrich feather on her head, and is often represented by an ostrich feather.

**Mut:** Her name meaning “mother,” Mut is known as the divine mother of all kings, the protector of the kingship, and the wife of Amun. She is usually shown wearing the Double Crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. Together with Sekhmet, a very similar goddess, they could represent Upper and Lower Egypt.

**Nephthys:** The goddess helped her sister Isis magically restore their murdered brother Osiris to life. She is most commonly shown as a woman wearing two hieroglyphs on her head, reading “neb(t)” and “hwt,” her ancient Egyptian name, meaning “Mistress of the House.” Nepthys is the Greek translation of her name.

**Nut:** Nut, the sky goddess, usually appears as a woman gracefully arching her body over the Earth (Geb). Her toes touch the eastern horizon, and her arms hang down to touch the point where the sun sets on the west. At sunset, Nut swallows the sun. During the 12 hours of night, the sun passes through her body to be reborn from her at dawn.



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**Osiris:** Osiris is the oldest son of Geb and Nut. He ruled Egypt as a kind king. According to Ancient Egyptian tradition, Osiris was murdered by his brother Seth, and then brought back to life by Isis. Since he had died, he could no longer rule on Earth, and became the Lord of the Dead. He is most commonly shown wrapped in mummy bandages, holding a flail and a shepherd's crook.

**Re:** Re was a solar and universal deity, the original Creator often identified as the lord and father of Ma'at (social order). The sun as a source of light and life was so important to the Egyptians, that many gods came to be associated and linked to Re.

**Sekhmet:** Sekhmet is also known as “The Powerful One.” She is similar to the goddess Mut, but is usually represented by a lion, the fiercer aspect of the cat family. She was the great protector of Egypt, the king, and Ma'at (social order). She was capable of destroying all she was meant to protect, unless peace was maintained. Together with Mut, a very similar goddess, they could represent Upper and Lower Egypt.

**Seth:** Seth is most known for murdering his brother Osiris and taking the Egyptian throne. Seth was ultimately defeated by Horus, the son of Osiris and Isis, and banished from the mortal world. He usually appears as a mysterious animal with the characteristics of several species. By showing him as a “combination creature,” the Egyptians represented his association with chaos.

**Ta-waret:** Ta-waret is usually represented as a pregnant hippopotamus holding a hieroglyph that signifies protection. Her name, “The Great One,” can apply to several “hippopotamus goddesses” worshiped widely as protectors of human birth and rebirth.

**Thoth:** A lunar deity, Thoth was often shown as an ibis or ibis-headed man, but could also take on other forms, such as a baboon. He was associated with many intellectual activities, such as writing and mathematics. His mastery of hieroglyphs and divine words filled him with power that made him a great magician.

