**Egyption Polytheism and the Judgment of God**

**Short Answer**

10 minutes for these questions (4 points each)

1. True or False: All the Egyptian gods were part of one family descended from Ra.
   
   *True. Though there was a family of gods descended from Ra, other gods were not part of this family. Furthermore, different myths describe the origins of the gods differently.*

2. True or False: Egyptians believed that the first god created himself in the beginning.
   
   *True*

3. Name four of the major “gods” of Egypt.
   
   *Any four of these would be correct:*
   - Amun (Amun-Re)
   - Anubis
   - Bast
   - Hathor
   - Horus
   - Isis
   - Ma’at
   - Nut
   - Osiris
   - Ptah
   - Ra/Re
   - Sekhmet
   - Set
   - Shu
   - Sobek
   - Taweret

4. Egyptian idols were often pictured as animal-human combinations. Name one of these.
   
   *The following represent a sample of possible answers, any one of which would be correct. There are others!*
   - Anubis (jackal)
   - Bast (cat)
   - Hathor (cow)
   - Horus (falcon/hawk)
   - Ra/Re (falcon; also ram)
   - Thoth (ibis; also baboon)
   - Set (donkey, hippo, aardvark)
   - Sobek (crocodile)

5. Name two ways in which the gods of Egyptian mythology are similar to humans.
   
   *Any two of these would be correct:*
   - They have human emotions.
   - They engage in unrighteous behavior such as lying, cheating, stealing, and murdering.
   - They are limited by each other’s conflicting plans, powers, and secrets (not omniscient or omnipotent).
   - They marry and have children.
   - They can be tricked, manipulated, or deceived.
   - They suffer from weakness, danger, and fear.

6. How were Egyptian pharaohs thought to be related to the gods?
   
   *The Egyptians believed that each pharaoh was a direct descendent of the god Horus and thereby of Ra. He was considered a “god on earth.”*

7. The Egyptians described the creation of the world in various myths. Summarize one of them.
   
   *Any one of these would be correct:*
   - A god named Atum created the world through a process like evolution.
   - Ra rose out of the primordial waters and then spoke the world into being. (Sometimes Ra is said to have been born from a great goose’s egg or lotus flower.)
   - The pharaoh Akhenaten taught that the Aten (his monotheistic deity, associated with the sun) had created all things.

8. In the myth of Osiris, who kills Osiris and why?
   
   *Seth (or “Set”), his jealous brother, because he wants Osiris’s throne.*

9. Name two of the plagues that judged a specific Egyptian god or goddess, along with the god or goddess so judged.
   
   *Any two of these would be correct. Your student need only list the god or goddess’s name, though for your convenience we identify them further here.*
   - Plague of the Nile: Hapi (or “Hopi,” god of the Nile), or Khnum, or Sothis (god of floodwaters)
   - Plague on livestock: Ptah (represented by the Apis bull), Hathor (represented by the cow), or Khnum (represented by the ram)
   - Plague of boils: Isis, goddess of healing
   - Plague of darkness: Ra/Re, god of the sun
   - Plagues of hail and locusts: Osiris, god of crops
   - Any of the latter plagues (beginning with the plague of gnats) which the Egyptian magicians were unable to match: Isis and Thoth, goddess and god of magic
10. What was the societal significance of the tenth plague?

   **Note:** Students should explain the essence of this answer; they need not provide all this information.

   In the Ancient World, the firstborn male child represented the primal strength of the father. Oldest sons inherited all of their father's estate and were the leaders of their clans. To kill a man's firstborn was to kill his best hope for the future.
**Essay Question**

20 minutes for one of these questions (60 points)

1. “Egyptian ‘gods’ were human creations; only Yahweh is divine.” Support this statement by comparing and contrasting the respective characters, recorded actions (in mythology or the Bible), and relationships to mankind of Egyptian gods and Yahweh.

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**Points an Excellent Answer Might Include**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Egyptian Gods</th>
<th>Yahweh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characters</strong></td>
<td><strong>Character</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Selfish actions are typical</td>
<td>• Holy, righteous, different from man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fallible: no one god able to control</td>
<td>• Sovereign: only one God—can control everything and does, for good and for glory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In conflict with one another</td>
<td><strong>Recorded Actions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>• Mythic stories, unrealistic (untrue)</td>
<td>• Biblical account: true narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mythic stories, unrealistic (untrue)</td>
<td>• Acts in history to redeem man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships to Mankind</strong></td>
<td><strong>Relationship to Mankind</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interested in men mostly as the keepers of their temples</td>
<td>• Created man purposefully, and in love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Men seek to get away with as much as they can (rather than be holy)</td>
<td>• Holy love and justice (as well as self-sacrifice, longsuffering, and patience) towards men are consistently displayed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Sample Answer**

Egyptian gods were human creations; only Yahweh is divine. This is obvious from their respective characters, their recorded actions, and their relationships with mankind.

Egyptian “gods” reflect the character, actions, and priorities of their human inventors. Egyptian myths portray their deities largely as selfish, fallible, and in conflict with one another. Ra is said to have created the world, and he created lesser deities (sometimes called his children) from his tears. One account says that he created his human form by gathering together the waters of chaos. The deity Set envies Osiris his throne, so he kills him and cuts him up into little pieces, which his wife Isis has to reassemble. Egyptian myths tell of gods marrying and giving birth to other gods, feeling jealous, fighting wars, and even getting old. Their relationship to humankind mirrors the human reaction of the powerful to those under them: they pay attention to their inferiors mostly to demand things from them. Egyptian gods expect men to build their temples and generally be useful. Men, for their part, attempt to placate the gods and get away with as much as they can. The gods have little love for humans as special creations. In all these ways, the Egyptian gods reflect the attitudes and characters of their human devisors.

Yahweh, by contrast, displays truly divine character, actions, and priorities that no man would have invented. The Bible describes Him as holy, righteous, just, merciful, omniscient, and omnipotent. He is never capricious or impetuous. He creates the world intentionally and beautifully, giving humans a special place of honor. Yahweh chooses to judge justly, but also to show free mercy in redeeming a people for His own, at great personal cost to Himself. God’s relationship to man is one of a divinity whose character is vastly different from humankind’s. Yet, God cares about people, and seeks to restore them from the sinfulness that comes so naturally to them, and is often directed at Him! Yahweh is truly a God that no man would invent.

The Egyptians believed in gods made in man’s image; the Bible teaches of a God in whose image man was made. The differences in their characters, recorded actions, and reputed relationships to mankind make it apparent that Yahweh alone is truly divine.
2. “In the Ten Plagues, Yahweh demonstrated His superiority over the Egyptian deities.” Support this statement by describing three specific plagues.

### Points an Excellent Answer Might Include

**Note:** Remember that your student’s essay should only have three supporting paragraphs, although the sample includes examples for all the plagues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plague</th>
<th>What the Plague Represented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Nile turns to blood. Egyptians dig near the Nile for drinking water.</td>
<td>The Nile god is named and represented in various ways. Hopi is the primary Nile god. Turning the Nile to blood was showing power over Egypt’s very life-source.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Frogs further foul the land of Egypt and the Nile.</td>
<td>The frog symbolized the goddess Heqt (Heket), a primordial (foundational) deity specially associated with childbirth. Burning piles of frogs would have been a painful sight (and smell!) to Egyptians.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Gnants fill the land. Magicians cannot create gnats and tell Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God!”</td>
<td>This is the first plague that the magicians can’t match, and they admit that God is operating. Isis was the goddess of magicians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Insects infest the land—but God begins to set His people apart. Insects do not infest Goshen, where the Israelites live.</td>
<td>The Bible says that “the land was laid waste” by unknown insects harmful to vegetation and humans. Probably little normal work could go on; perhaps they brought diseases. The idols of health (principally Isis) and crops (Osiris) would be affected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Severe pestilence on all livestock: horses, donkeys, cattle, herds, and flocks.</td>
<td>This is a severe blow to the wealth and prestige of Egyptian culture. Animals were very valuable. The Apis bull was overpowered, as was Hathor, a cow-goddess.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Fine dust that causes boils and sores to break out on man and beast, from head to foot.</td>
<td>All Egyptian deities of healing were powerless before the Lord, especially Isis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Hail, thunder and fire rain down on Egypt, destroying all crops that were in flower or bud (flax and barley) and all trees in the fields (valuable for both shade and wood).</td>
<td>Again, this is a blow to the wealth of Egypt: valuable crops are destroyed. The god Osiris again takes a beating.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Locusts eat the remaining vegetation, especially the important crops of wheat and spelt.</td>
<td>Egypt is further impoverished, and Pharaoh is proven impotent before the plague. No Egyptian idols can help.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Tangible darkness covers the land for three days.</td>
<td>Darkness topples the chief idol: the sun god Re (or Ra, or Amon- Re). Also affected would be Mut (eye of the sun) and Nut (sky goddess). Furthermore, Pharaoh is powerless, even though he believes himself to be the brother of the sun.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 The firstborn of Egypt die, both men and cattle, from the Pharaoh to the prisoner in his dungeon.</td>
<td>A huge blow to human pride, and also to family emotions and relationships. No Egyptian idols can help.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample Answers

In the Ancient World, where multiple gods were thought to have real power and where nations believed in local deities and their power to sustain them, the gods had contests in which their victories or defeats could be easily discerned by their worshippers. In sending the plagues on Egypt, Yahweh specifically demonstrated to the pagan world His superiority over many Egyptian deities. This is seen well in the __________, __________, and __________ plagues.

The first plague, in which the Nile was turned to blood, demonstrated Yahweh’s superiority over the Nile god (chiefly called Hopi). The Nile formed the lifeblood of Egyptian civilization, so naturally the Egyptians worshipped it as a god. For Yahweh to turn the Nile into blood was to jeopardize all of Egyptian society, as their main source of life became defiled and deadly. The Nile god was shown to be helpless to heal himself before the God of Israel, and thus no god at all.

In the second plague, the plague of frogs, Yahweh ridiculed the goddess Heket, whose symbol was a frog. Heket was a goddess of childbirth and one of the Egyptians’ earliest foundational gods. When the frogs died, the Egyptians had to burn whole piles of these sacred animals. Heket was shown to have no power even over her own sacred symbol.

The third plague, the plague of gnats, was an indirect judgment on Isis as goddess of magic. It was significant because Pharaoh’s magicians could not imitate it, thus proving that Isis’ power had failed. Yahweh made it clear that He alone, and not any magical power commanded by mankind, was at work inflicting the plagues.

The fifth plague, the plague on cattle, was a direct judgment on many of the animals that represented Egyptian gods. Ptah, for instance, was represented by the special Apis bull, and Hathor’s symbol was a cow. By showing his control over all cattle, Yahweh ridiculed these and other gods and showed their powerlessness.

The plague of boils showed the helplessness of the Egyptian gods of healing before Yahweh. Isis and other deities stood by helplessly while all their worshippers got sick. This proved that they were not gods of healing at all. Yahweh alone rules the lives of men.

In the seventh plague, the plague of storm and hail, Yahweh showed His kingship over nature and destroyed Egypt’s crops. Osiris was the god of crops and vegetation, which the LORD destroyed. This plague showed Osiris’ helplessness to protect the people of his kingdom from the LORD. God alone could grant or take away prosperity.

The plague of darkness showed Yahweh’s power over the sun, which the Egyptians worshipped supremely. Amon-Re, the sun god, was one of their chief deities. The pharaoh himself was supposed to be the sun god incarnate. By inflicting darkness on the Egyptians, God proved that neither Amon-Re nor the pharaoh had any power over the sun. The sun-god was no god at all.

In each of these plagues, the God of Israel humiliated and overpowered yet another Egyptian deity, proving His superiority over each of them. The plagues showed the Egyptians and the Israelites that Yahweh alone is God.