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## Isis and Osiris

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A long, long time ago, a legend tells us that a god named Osiris was the king of Egypt. He was a very kind king. He made fair laws. He taught his people how to farm the land. And he showed them how to respect the gods. Thanks to Osiris, people lived in peace. They were very happy.



Set, Osiris's brother, was jealous of Osiris. He wanted to be the king himself. He spent a lot of time thinking how he could get rid of Osiris. One day, an evil idea came to him. Set ordered a beautiful wooden chest. The chest was a rare item at the time because trees did not grow in Egypt. After he received the chest, he held a dinner party honoring Osiris. Osiris and many gods came to his party. They ate and drank. They had a great time!

After the feast, Set brought out the beautiful wooden chest for all to see. He told his guests that he would give the chest to whoever fit it best. The guests were excited. They took turns getting into the chest. But none of them fit it perfectly. Then, Set turned to his brother. He asked Osiris to give it a try, too. Osiris stepped into the chest. He fit in it perfectly! As soon as Osiris got into the chest, Set's seventy-two wicked friends surrounded the chest and nailed the lid shut. They sealed every crack with molten lead so no air could enter. After the deed was done, they threw the chest into the Nile River.

The guests at Set's dinner party were horrified. The news spread fast. Soon, every god and every person knew Set had killed his own brother. But there was nothing they could do. Set got his wish. He became the king of Egypt.

Isis, Osiris's wife, was very sad when she heard of the tragedy. She wanted to find her husband's body. She wanted to give him a proper burial so his soul could rest in peace. But Isis didn't know where to look. The Nile had carried the chest to the sea. No one knew where it had gone. Before leaving Egypt to search, Isis entrusted Buto, a cobra goddess, to look after her newborn son, Horus. Buto lived on the island of Chemmis, near the mouth of the Nile. Afraid that Set would find Horus and kill him, Isis loosened the island and sent it floating on the waters. Only after she did that did she feel safe enough to begin her journey. Isis looked everywhere. She asked everybody. She never gave up. One day she heard about a tree that grew all of a sudden on the shore of a faraway country called Byblos. She figured that this miracle must be the work of her husband. She went to Byblos right away. By the time she got there, the king of Byblos had cut down the tree and used it as a pillar for his palace.

Isis put on a disguise and waited patiently outside the palace. She approached the queen's servants who came out for errands. She introduced herself as a hairdresser and offered to braid the girls' hair. As Isis set out to work, she breathed a wonderful perfume into each braid. When the girls returned to the palace, they smelled very nice. The queen noticed and asked them about it. She then had Isis brought to the palace and liked her immediately. The queen hired Isis to take care of her son, who had been weak since birth. Under Isis's watch, the prince grew very healthy. The queen was happy at first, but she became worried. She feared that Isis was a witch. One night she

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stayed up late and watched Isis secretly. She saw Isis put the prince in a fire. She saw Isis turn into a swallow. The horrified queen came out from hiding and snatched her son from the flames. "Fool!" exclaimed Isis. She removed her disguise and revealed her true identity. She told the queen that she was going to make her son a god. But now everything was ruined! The queen fell on her knees before the goddess and begged for forgiveness. Isis forgave her and asked the queen to give her the pillar in return. The queen agreed. Isis broke the pillar into pieces and retrieved the chest hidden inside.

After a long journey on the sea, Isis returned to Egypt with the chest. She hid it in the marshes and left to get her son from the floating island of Chemmis. While she was away, Set and his friends went hunting nearby and discovered the chest by accident. He broke it open and tore Osiris's body into fourteen pieces. He spread them all over Egypt. When Isis came back with Horus and saw the empty chest, she broke down and cried. Her sister, Set's wife, felt very sorry for her and decided to help. The two goddesses searched every corner of Egypt. Upon recovering all the pieces, they sewed them together and wrapped Osiris's body in linen. This, it is said, was how the first mummy came to be made.

Isis cast a magical spell over her husband's body and brought him back to life. Later on, Osiris became the lord of the dead. He ruled Duat, the land of the dead. Set kept on looking for Isis and Horus. He wanted to kill them. But he never did, for he did not know about the floating island of Chemmis. Horus grew up safely. He had a man's body and a falcon's head. After avenging his father and killing Set, Horus became the king of Egypt -- lord of the living.

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## Questions

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- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. According to this legend, who taught Egyptians how to farm the land?
  - A. Buto
  - B. Set
  - C. Isis
  - D. Osiris
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. What was the relationship between Set and Osiris?
  - A. They were cousins.
  - B. They were father and son.
  - C. They were best friends.
  - D. They were brothers.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Isis disguised herself as a \_\_\_\_\_ to get into the palace of Byblos.
  - A. doctor
  - B. hairdresser
  - C. queen
  - D. witch

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- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Who helped Isis recover her husband's body?
- A. her sister
  - B. her father
  - C. her mother
  - D. her son
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. What did Isis turn into at night when she was taking care of the prince of Byblos?
- A. a swallow
  - B. an angel
  - C. a pigeon
  - D. a falcon
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. According to this legend, who ruled the land of the dead?
- A. Set
  - B. Isis
  - C. Horus
  - D. Osiris
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. How many wicked friends of Set helped him kill Osiris?
- A. 29
  - B. 14
  - C. 72
  - D. 68
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. What did Set and his friends do with the chest?
- A. They buried it.
  - B. They hid it.
  - C. They threw it into the Nile River.
  - D. They burned it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Egyptians believed that Osiris was the first mummy ever made.
- A. false
  - B. true
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. How did Set kill Osiris?
- A. He poisoned him.
  - B. He buried him.
  - C. He put him in a chest and drowned him.
  - D. He shot him.

