

## How did Pharaoh view the heart?

With a perspective similar to the Hebrews, Egyptians considered the heart as the seat of intellect and emotion. However in contrast, Egyptians believed that the heart reflected a person's life of good and bad behavior, which was judged with a scale to determine whether one would be reborn in the afterlife. With a balancing scale, the heart was weighed against a feather; if the heart is lighter, the Egyptian is reborn, if the heart is heavier, he is eaten by a demon.

This was commonly seen in Egyptian funerary art on papyri and coffins.

In this image found in the Book of the Dead (1275 B.C.), the red heart is on left side of the scale and the blue feather is on the right.

The black jackal head, left of the feather, is the god of the underworld Anubis (later called Osiris) who is judging the Egyptian to the right of the heart. Note that the feather weighs slightly heavier.

Right of Anubis is Thoth (head of an ibis), the god of truth who checks the fairness of the weighing. Sometimes the goddess of truth, Ma'at, is portrayed.



The demon on all fours is the Devourer, named Ammit, who eats the one whose heart weighs more than the feather (heavy with wrongdoing).

Because Egyptians believed that the heart was necessary at the time of judgment, the heart of a deceased Egyptian had to remain with the body during mummification. For insurance against removal or damage of the heart, a protective amulet or heart scarab was wrapped with the mummy.

The biblical understanding of “hardening of the heart” takes on a different contextual meaning to the Egyptian, and in particular, Pharaoh.

### References:

1. British Museum

([http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/young\\_explorers/discover/museum\\_explorer/ancient\\_egypt/death/weighing\\_the\\_heart.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/young_explorers/discover/museum_explorer/ancient_egypt/death/weighing_the_heart.aspx)).

2. Michael C Carlos Musuem ([http://carlos.emory.edu/RAMESSES/3\\_weighheart.html](http://carlos.emory.edu/RAMESSES/3_weighheart.html))