

A grayscale image of a globe showing continents and oceans. Overlaid on the globe is the text "PAGAN RELIGIONS" in a large, stylized, yellow-to-orange gradient font with a white outline. The text is centered horizontally and slightly above the vertical center of the globe.

PAGAN RELIGIONS

Dr. Rick Griffith • Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary • BibleStudyDownloads.org

Answer in your small groups

**What is the key reason
we see so many
religions in the world?**

**Why are there such divergent
beliefs since we all had the
same biological source in
Adam and Eve?**

Romans 1:20

Person who
is Limitless

Person who is
Supernatural

For since the creation of the world
God's invisible qualities—his
eternal power and divine nature—
have been clearly seen, being
understood from what has been
made, so that men are without
excuse (NIV).



Scope



- Let's compare and contrast the major pagan religions of antiquity. How did their worship differ from one another?





Methodology

- **Gather information** on pagan religions of the main people groups (Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Canaanites, Egyptians, etc.)
- **Compare** the religions under 3 main categories: characteristics of gods, temple worship, general beliefs and practices.
- **Consider** what we can learn from these counterfeit religions.

Sumerian-Babylonian gods

An
god of heaven

Nammu
goddess of watery abyss

Enki
water god

Ninhurseg / Ki / Ninmah
earth goddess

Marduk
king of the igigi

Enlil
air god

Nintu

Ninlil

Ninsar

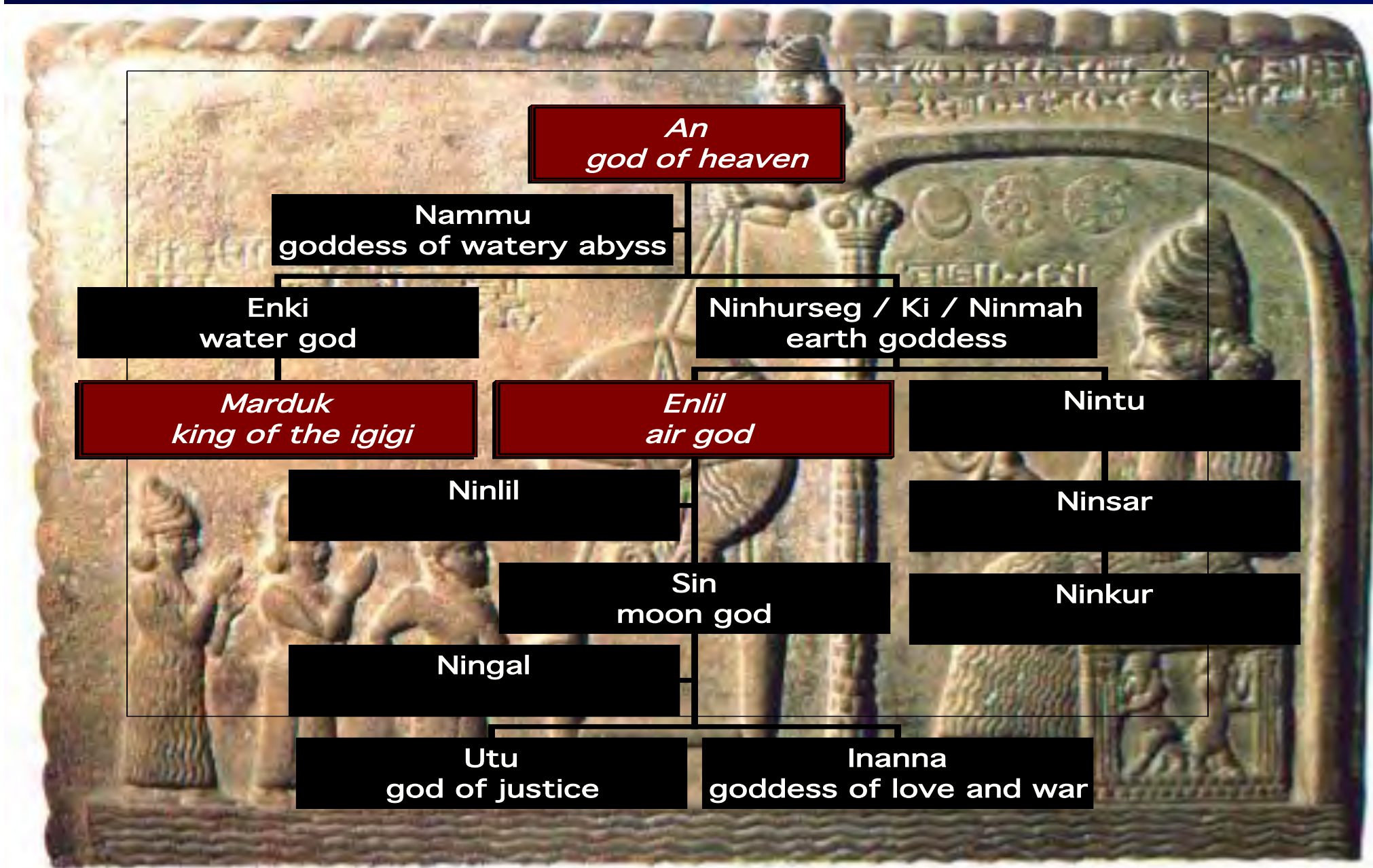
Sin
moon god

Ninkur

Ningal

Utu
god of justice

Inanna
goddess of love and war



160c

SUMERIAN HIGH GOD

Lord of the airspace

God of heaven and earth

Responsible for the Flood

Creator of mankind

Banished to 'hell' for
raping Ninlil

ENLIL



BABYLONIAN HIGH GOD

'King of the Igigi'

**four eyes, four ears,
emits fire from his mouth**

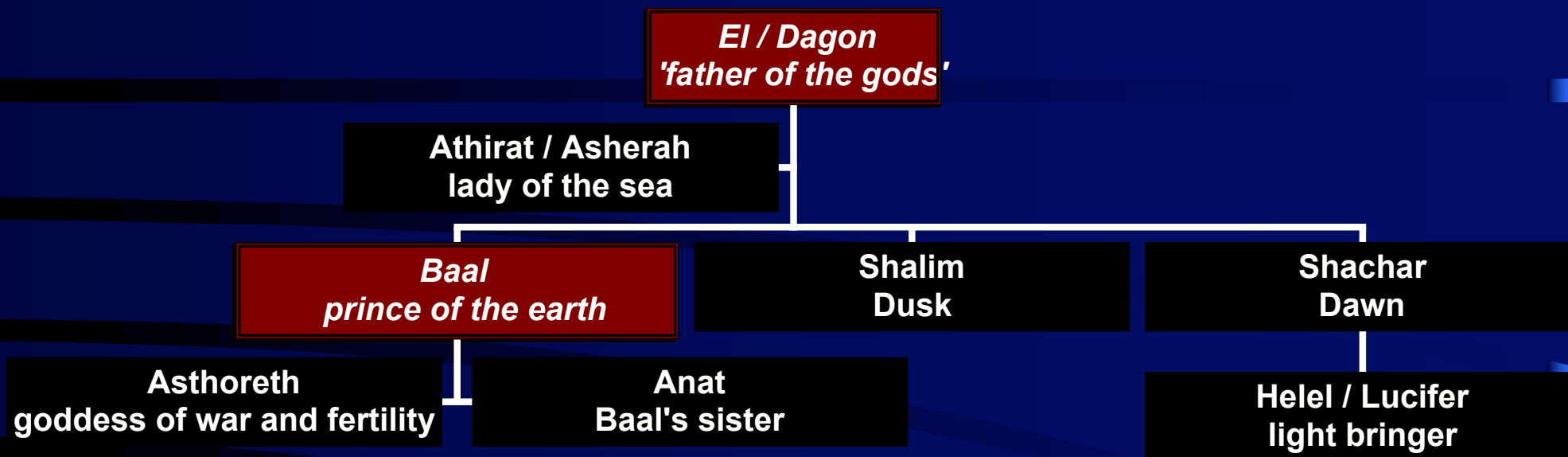
Anu installed to lead pantheon

Given more than 50 names:

1. Asarluhi, 2. Marduk, 3. The Son, The Majesty of the Gods, 4. Marukka, 5. Mershakushu, 6. Lugal-dimmer-ankia (King of heaven and earth), 7. Bel, 8. Nari-lugal-dimmer-ankia, 9. Asarluhi, 10. Namtila, 11. Namru, 12. 'Asare, 13. Asar-alim, 14. Asar-alim-nuna, 15. Tutu, 16. Zi-ukkina, 17. Ziku, 18. Agaku, 19. Shazu, 20. Zisi, 21. Suhrim, 22. Suhgurim, 23. Zahrim, 24. Zahgurim, 25. Enbilulu, 26. Epadun, 27. Gugal, 28. Hegal, 29. Sirsir, 30. Malah, 31. Gil, 32. Gilima, 33. Agilima, 34. Zulum, 35. Mummu, 36. Zulum-ummu, 37. Gizh-numun-ab, 38. Lugal-ab-dubur, 39. Pagal-guena, 40. Lugal-Durmah, 41. Aranuna, 42. Dumu-duku, 43. Lugal-duku, 44. Lugal-shuanna, 45. Iruga, 46. Irqingu, 47. Kinma, 48. Kinma, 49. E-sizkur, 50. Addu, 51. Asharu, 52. Neberu, 53. Enkukur

MARDUK

Canaanite gods



CANAANITE HIGH GOD

Prince of the earth, god of fertility, lord of sky and earth, god of thunder and lightning etc

Lord, master, owner

Chief male deity of the Phoenicians and Canaanites

Slain by Mot & revived by Anath

Worshipped in the high places of Moab (Num. 22:41)

BAAL

The Baal Cycle



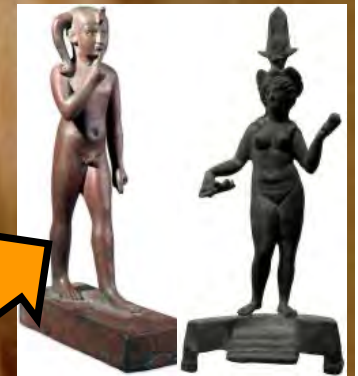
**Baal
Rises**

**Baal
Rises**

**Mot
kills
Baal**



**Mot
kills
Baal**



Winter

Spring

Summer

Fall

Winter

Spring

Religion

Baal fertility cycle (Baal Epic)



Mot (death) in winter defeated by Baal (life) in spring

Temple prostitution and sexual fertility rites in religious worship helped Baal resurrect in spring



Child Sacrifice to Baal

- During worship live babies were placed on the burning hot hands of the statue of Baal.
- After dying they were then pushed into a hole underneath.



PHILISTINE HIGH GOD



Hebrew word *dag* (fish):
Human with back half as fish

Hebrew/Akkadian word
dagan (grain): a grain god

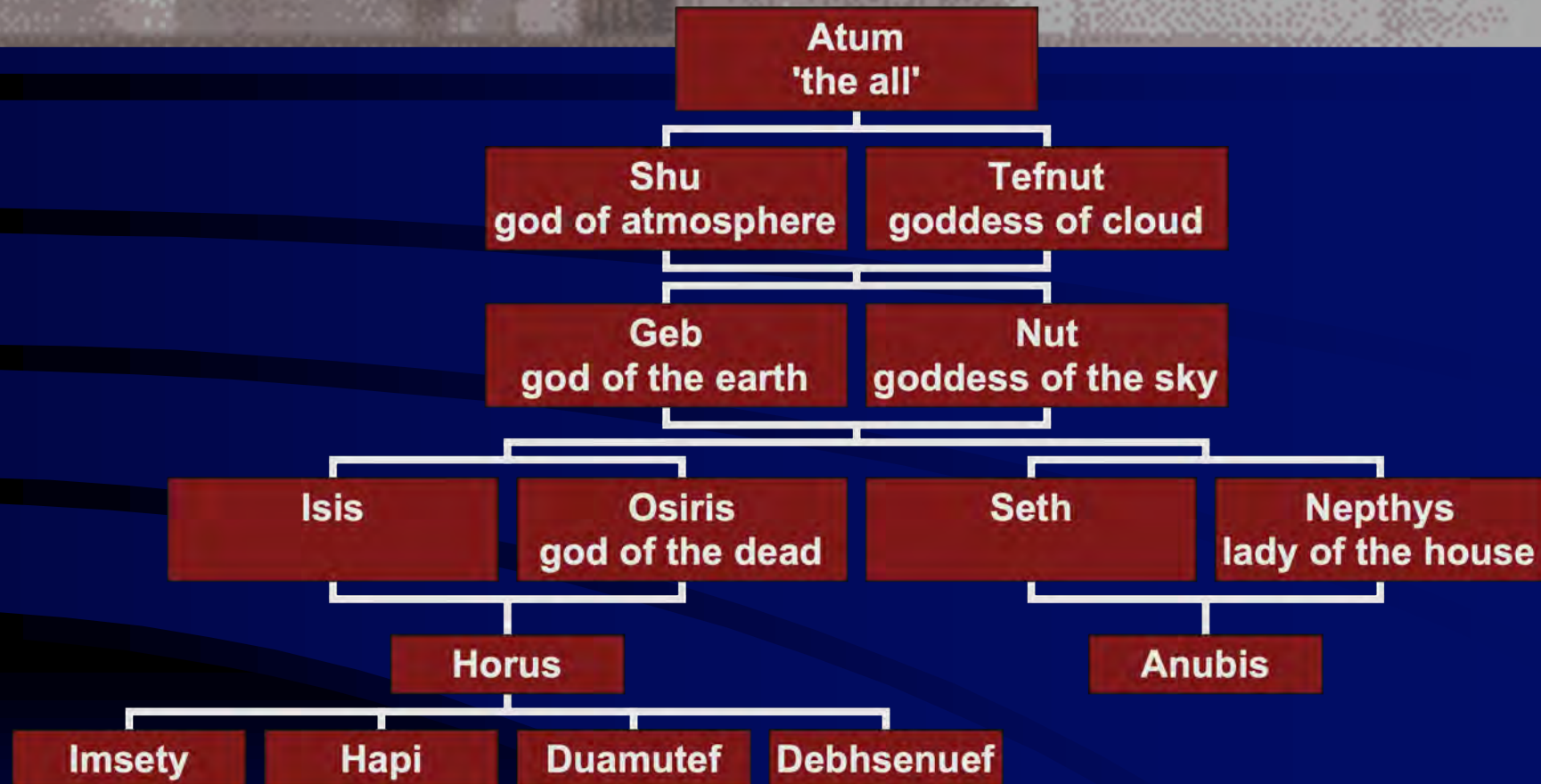
Upper torso: man
Back half: fish

Temples at Gaza, etc.
(Judges 21, 23)

DAGON

Egyptian gods

160d



EGYPTIAN HIGH GOD



'King of the Gods'

Man with a ram-head

Wore ostrich plumed hat

Later called Amun-Ra

AMUN

Similar gods

160e

<u>SUMER</u>	<u>BABYLONIAN</u>
An God of heaven	Anu Sky god
Ki/ Ninmah	Aruru/ Mammi Mother goddess
Enki Water god	Ea God of the waters
Enlil Air god	Ellil Wind/storm god
Nanna God of the sun	Sin Moon god
Inanna Goddess of love and war	Ishtar Goddess of love and war

<u>CANAANITE</u>	<u>PHILISTINE</u>
EI <i>Father of gods</i>	Dagon <i>God of grain</i>
Baal <i>Prince of the earth</i>	Baal <i>Lord of heaven</i>
Attart <i>Goddess of war and chase</i>	Ashtoreth <i>Goddess of fertility</i>

Similar gods

Pagan gods were like humans

- Had families and could procreate
- Ate and feasted - even got drunk!
- Experienced human feelings of jealousy, anger, lust, etc.
- Fought amongst themselves
- Had varying powers but none omnipotent
- Could die and re-live again

Portrayed as Human-Animal

- Dagon (fish tail)



- Horus (hawk head)



- Enlil (horse legs)



- Ra (eagle head)



- Anubis (jackal head)

Pagan Beliefs on Creation

SUMER-BABYLONIAN

Enuma Elish, tables I-V (among others)

- Tiamat, mother goddess (primeval ocean), vs younger gods.
- Marduk (leader) destroyed her
- Tiamat's carcass = present universe.

EGYPTIAN

- In the beginning, all was darkness with primeval ocean = Nun
- Nun -> a great shining egg, Re.
- Re could take any form
- Whatever Re named came into being, thereby bringing into being all creation.
- Lastly, Re named mankind
- Re became man as the first Pharaoh.

- The Sumer-Babylonian myths depict creation with war and violence (a classic case of the "fittest survive" mentality).
- Egypt's creator was powerful but when he became Pharaoh and lived with men, his power dissipated into the air.

Pagan Beliefs on the Great Flood

SUMER-BABYLONIAN

- The gods decided to destroy mankind.
- A god (Enki) warned the priest-king Ziusudra ("Long of Life") of the coming flood
- Instructed to build a great ark and carry beasts and family on it.
- In return, Ziusudra was granted a long life.

Assyrian

1. Humanity was overpopulated
2. The gods decided to destroy the earth
3. Utnapishtim was warned by the god Ea in a dream
4. He built an ark with all living creatures aboard
5. It stormed for six days
6. He released dove, sparrow & raven, then knew water had receded
7. Sacrificed to the gods and he & his wife given immortality

EGYPTIAN

- People were punished for first sin (moral)
- (papyrus boat story unclear)

1. Babylonian flood - result of a disagreement among the gods vs Assyrian - earth was overpopulated

2. Both Ziusudra (Babylonian) and Utnapishtim (Assyrian) were given immortality

Pagan Beliefs on Life after Death

SUMER-BABYLONIAN

- Man was created as a broken, labor saving, tool for the use of the gods.
- At the end of everyone's life, lay the underworld, a generally dreary place. (Wolkstein & Kramer 1983: pp.123-34)

EGYPTIAN

- Believed death was simply a temporary interruption, rather than a complete cessation of life.
- Eternal life could be ensured by means of:
 1. piety to the gods,
 2. preservation through mummification, and
 3. provision of statuary and other funeral equipment.

ASSYRIANS

- Mot is the Mistress of the Underworld. Yet, no clear allusion to the state of existence after death.
- Kings and commoners alike wish for a long life.
- General belief is humans received their due rewards in this life and they have only the gloomy netherworld to look forward in the next.

1. Besides Egyptians who believed in some form of hope in next life based on works, the other cultures did not have favorable views of the after-life

Pagan Beliefs on Relationship with Gods

SUMER-BABYLONIAN

Gods viewed as:

1. Providers for necessities,
2. Protectors against enemies,
3. Parents with whom personal relationships were possible,
4. Cruel warriors (in the first millennium).

EGYPTIAN

- Osiris' tribunal for judgment
- Live according to maat, Egyptian concept of justice and righteousness.
- Admission to heaven via one's record in the Book of the Dead, containing a list of sins and taboos.

ASSYRIANS

- Worldview through myths where forces of nature were personified and deified.
- Engaged their gods through rites to induce changes in nature for betterment of their lives.

1. Consideration for morality was not so distinct in Sumer-Babylonian and Canaanite/ Phoenician cultures
2. Egyptians' motivation for morals was based on fear and entry to heaven on good works

Pagan Worship by Priests

Sumer-Babylonian

- King = official representative of deity, insuring fertility of land by careful observance of the New Year ritual
- Elaborate priestly bureaucracy to maintain temple and its deity
- Queen might manage affairs of temple goddess

Egyptian

- Pharaoh = divine, ultimate high priest who built temples and oversaw their maintenance.
- Lay priests operated small chapels with patron deities not worshipped anywhere else.

Assyrian

- Epic of Ugarit
- King represented human community before gods.
- 12 priestly families with a high priest among them
- Others: consecrated persons (possibly cultic prostitutes), singers, makers of vestments and sculptors. Priests functioned as scribes as well.

1. Political rulers assumed to have close contact with gods
2. Women functioned with special roles in the temple

Pagan Worship in Temples

Sumer-Babylonian

- Temple = 1/3 of city, may lease land for income
- Ziggurat, a stepped tower of 3-7 stages
- divine statue at foot of temple carved from wood, adorned with precious stones
- Temples built on ruins, eventually becoming man-made mountains

Egyptian

- Hypostyle hall for religious rituals - priests and pharaoh only
- Second hall - high priest and pharaoh only
- Sanctuary -> shrine where the statue of the god or goddess was kept - god or goddess may enter statue.
- Sacred lake next to the temple

Assyrian

- Temples = dwelling place of deity
- courts = festive assemblies
- statue to depict deity
- Tophet (child cemeteries) contain some 20,000 cinerary urns with the remains of infant children and animals.

1. Grand architecture depicting central importance of religion
2. Existence of statues to represent gods

Pagan Worship

- Rites & Rituals

The Temple of Ishtar (Babylon)
 ---Ashteroth in Philistine
 ---Venus in Greece

Sumer-Babylonian

- Public rituals, food sacrifices and libations.
- Monthly rituals
- On New Year, King married Inanna (fertility god)
- City deities, family deities
- People prayed by clasping hands in front of chests

Both sexes went to temples
 not to worship
 but to be worshipped!

- Sacred priestesses (temple prostitutes) embodied the goddess. Women go to the temples as sacred prostitutes, and are worshipped as the incarnation of goddess.
- Men are welcomed and served by the priestess by representing the divine male principal, the Horned One, the God.
- Thus, Ishtar is called, "The Whore of Babylon, who leads men into fornication" (Rev. 17:2)
- In return, she blesses crops and grants fertility to women (to sacrifice to Baal?)

Pagan Worship - Rites & Rituals

Canaanites/ Phoenicians

- Rituals imitate actions of characters in myths with recitation of myths
- Indulge in sexual perversion, including incest, homosexuality, bestiality, and pedophilia to stimulate their gods to engage in sexual acts believed to bring about seasonal cycles (Leviticus 18:3, 24-30)

Their immorality was so depraved that they killed people just for their material prosperity!

Child Sacrifice

- Placed healthy babies into burning hands on a statue of Baal in return for good harvests
- In Palestine, jars with human remains were found under the foundations of buildings; at the base of the walls followed marks of fire. They are believed to strengthen walls of houses and cities.

Moabites

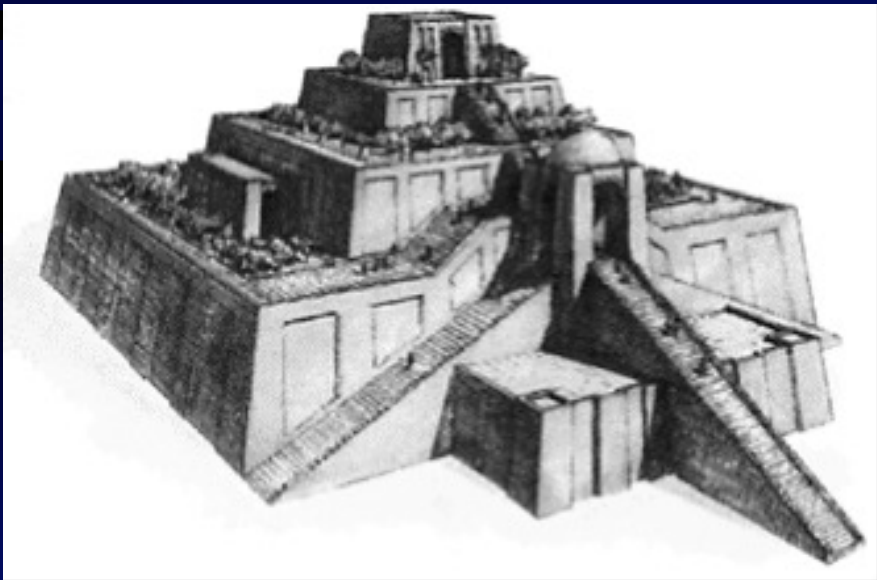
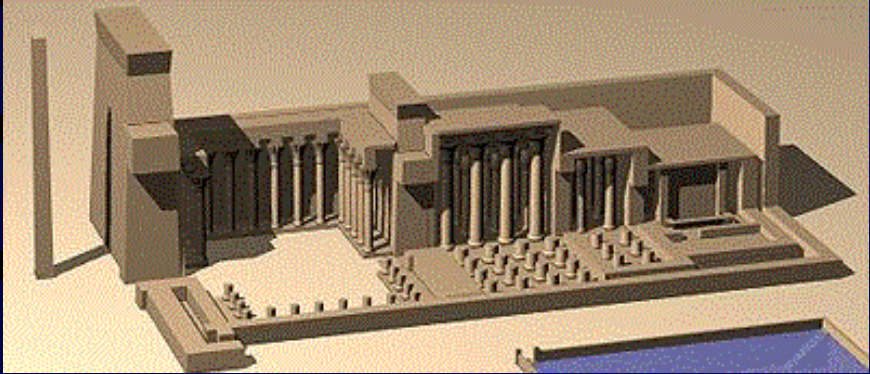
- National god Chemosh, worshipped primarily by offering the first-born son (2 Kings 3:26-27)

Philistines

- Baal, Lord of Heaven
- worshipped by both ritual immorality and child sacrifice (2 Kings 16:7, 21:6).

Babylonian & Assyrian Temples

In the ancient Babylonian and Assyrian periods of W Asia the temple, or ziggurat, was a square pyramidal structure about 300 ft (90 m) high built up in successive, inclined terraces, sometimes as many as seven; with accessory buildings it was enclosed by walls. At its summit was a chamber that served both as a shrine and for astronomical observations. Glazed and colored bricks faced the walls.



THE TOWER OF BABEL

(Gen. 11:1-5)

In this classic story, people were building a colossal staged temple-tower or multi-storeyed ziggurat that would reach heaven. But did they really believe they could reach their gods? Most likely the tower would be used as a place of worship.

Actually, their purpose for the tower was to provide a common religious rallying point, lest the people be scattered. The builders were in open defiance of God's command (Gen. 9:1) .



In other words...

What common characteristics were true of most, if not all, Ancient Near East pagan religions?

Give at least two traits.

Uniqueness of Pagan Religion

- Polytheistic
- Gods sinful
- Blemished sacrifices
- Offerings
- Priestesses
- Local deities
- Religions of the plains (left-stage)
- Worship motivated by fear or finances
- Visual images of gods (idols)
- Temple prostitutes
- Had to care for their gods
- Mythology acceptable
- Political leaders

**How was Israel's religion
distinct from these other
religions of the OT era?
Give at least two contrasts.**

Israel's Distinct Worship

- Monotheistic (worshipped the true God)
- Holy God without sin
- Priesthood by genealogy
- YHWH not a local deity
- Salvation by faith (?)
- Attested by genuine miracles
- Religion of the desert (right-stage)
- No physical depiction of God
- Moral standards of worshipers & leaders
- Covenant relationship with God
- God initiated
- Can't manipulate God
- Male priests only

**But what does
this all have to
do with me?**

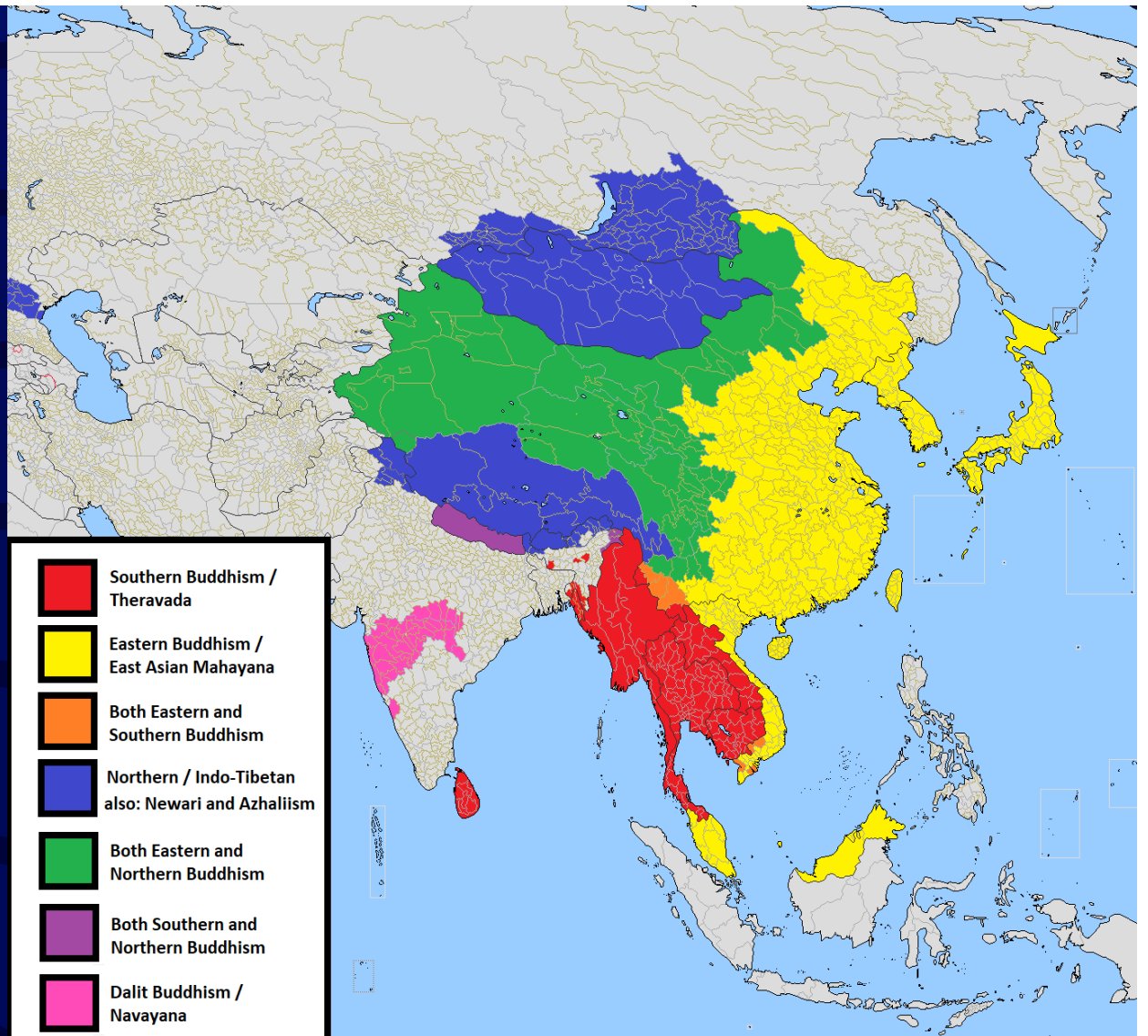


**Let's now see the Discovery Channel movie
on superstitions of the Hungry Ghost...**

How did reading these pagan writings for today's class help you appreciate Judaism?

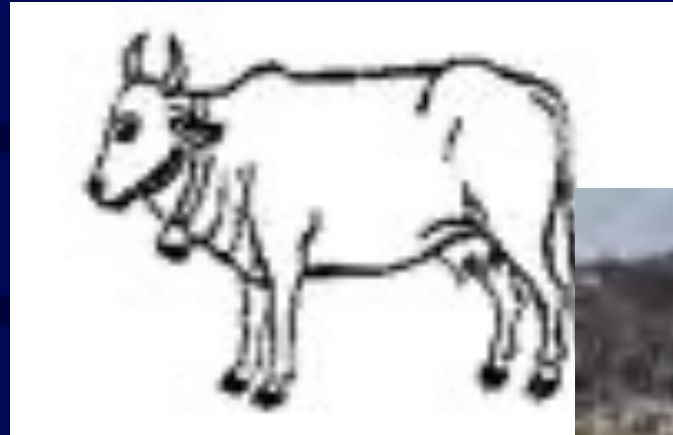
How did this possibly aid your own walk with God?

Buddhism





Hinduism



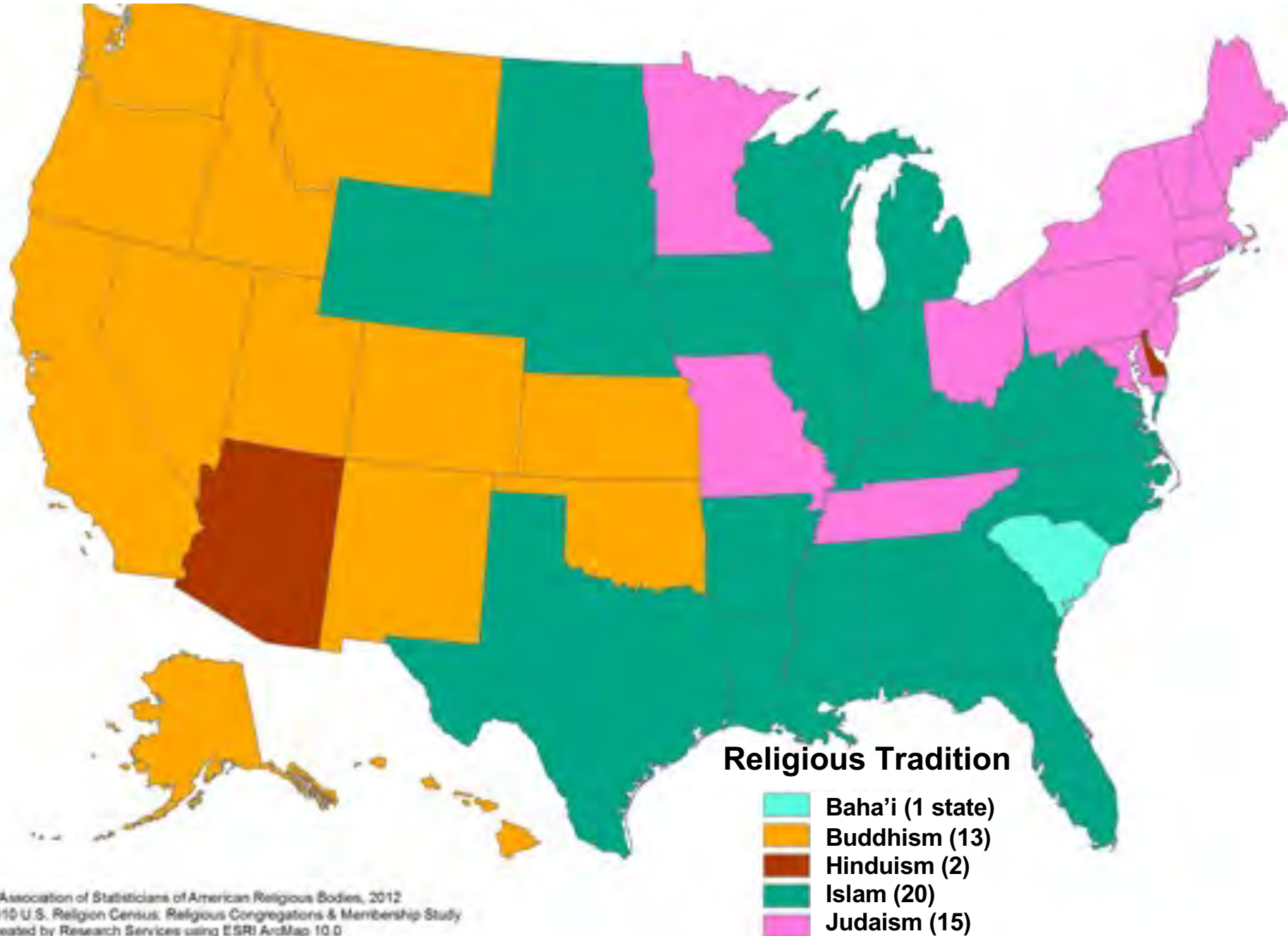


Hinduism



Second Largest Religious Tradition in Each State, 2010

(Christianity remains the largest religious tradition in every state)



"Pay attention to all that I have said to you, and make no mention of the names of other gods, nor let it be heard on your lips"
(Exodus 23:13 ESV).

- arguments. ⁵ We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ."
(2 Cor 10:3-5 NLT).

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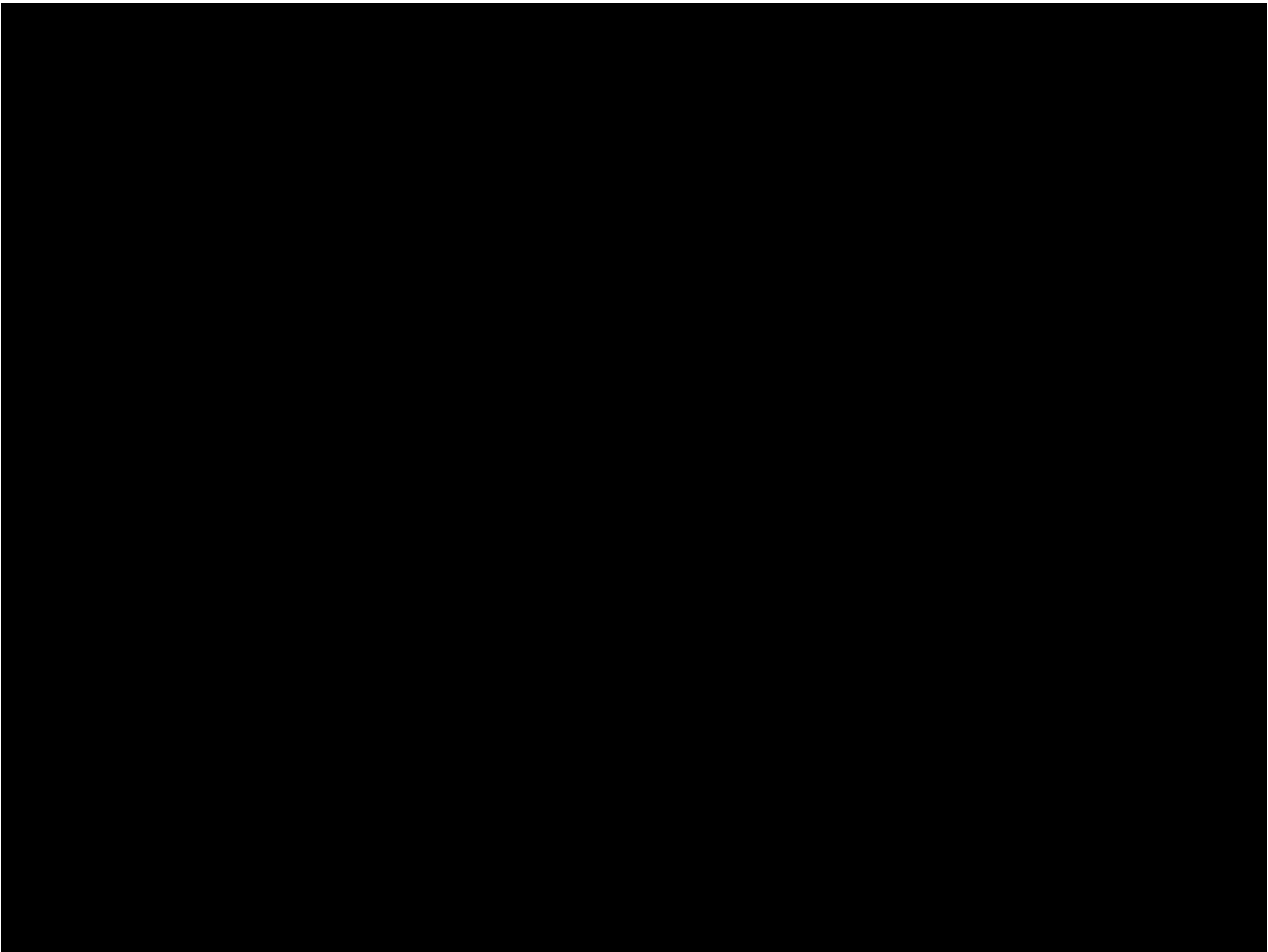
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