

# Heroism and Duty Essay

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In the ancient world, the definition of a hero was subjective among the Egyptian and Israeli cultures. The Egyptians believed heroes were those of higher status, whether they were gods or had a personal relationship with the gods, and their duty was to be a representative of the people. The Israelites' heroes were those that selflessly worshipped God and for that, God chose them to lead others by example as part of their duty. [Ancient Egypt](#) and Israel are similar in their definition and portrayal of a hero and his duty to society. However, the contemporary American world view of a hero is quite different from that of the ancient world.

In Ancient [Egypt](#), heroism depended on one's status in society. Re, the sun god, was the chief among the Egyptian gods and all other gods descended from him, like part of a family. Therefore, as the highest deity, Re was the ultimate hero in Egyptian culture. The king, being of higher class, was considered the son of Re. He "ruled as a living representative of the sun god" (Sayre 67) and also "the representative of the people to the gods" (Sayre 68). The king's duty as a hero was to represent the people to the gods, whom he communicated with through statues of divine beings in the temples. The people went to the king with their problems and concerns and in return, they expected the king to relay their messages to the gods as part of his duty to them.

In Ancient Israel, the primary hero was the highest Deity and other heroes were chosen by

that Deity to be His prophets. Similar to Re, the ultimate hero in Ancient Israel was God, also known as "YHWH, a name so sacred that it could neither be spoken nor written" (Sayre 50) because He was above all else. God made a covenant, "an agreement, or contract, t...

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... some similarity in their roles in their respective societies. Their lineage, perceived divinity, and heroic duties were common themes between both cultures. On the other hand, contemporary heroes differ from these ancient cultures because they are common people that sacrifice themselves for the protection of society. Our modern culture has identified certain jobs that society holds in high regard and specific honorable characteristics that command respect, such as bravery, self-sacrifice, and courage. Contemporary society will elevate anyone to heroic status that is willing to demonstrate these qualities.

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