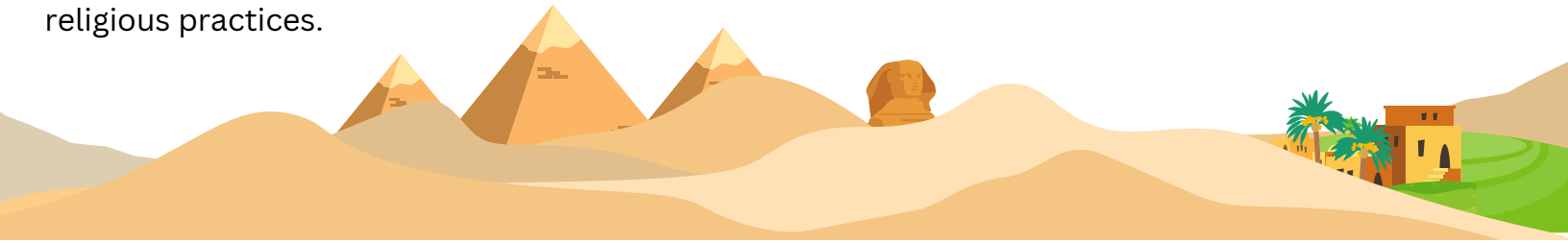


## Getting Started

The Glencairn collection includes objects that were made by ancient people to be given as **gifts** to gods and goddesses. This idea of giving gifts or offerings was central to different **polytheistic** faiths (faiths that included many gods and goddesses.) It's still practiced by many people today! Offerings are a way of showing your belief, giving thanks, or asking for **blessings, protection, health**, and more. For the people who practiced these ancient religions, an offering was how an individual person or community could maintain a good **relationship** with their gods.

Depending on the culture or occasion, offerings took various forms such as liquids, money, votive statues, or sacrifices. The ancient cultures represented in the Glencairn collection are Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome. Each of these cultures had different ways of connecting with their **deities** (gods). For example, the pharaohs and priests of ancient Egypt were considered to have the closest connection with the gods whereas in ancient Greece there was no strict hierarchical system between people that dictated who could communicate with the gods. Understanding how faith was practiced in ancient cultures is a huge topic! Check out the info below to find objects that highlight offering practices in the Glencairn collection as well as links to other resources about ancient religious practices.



## Ancient Egypt



Egyptian art at Glencairn includes a variety of different types of offering objects. For much of ancient Egyptian history, the pharaoh and priests were responsible for presenting offerings at the temple. This changed at some point during the New Kingdom (16th through 11th centuries BCE) when it became more usual for any person within Egyptian society to present personal offerings at temples to the gods. One example of this type of personal offering is Glencairn's libation bowl. Watch the video to learn more!

## Need more info?

[A Libation Bowl with the Goddess Hathor, "Lady of Heaven"](#) - Glencairn Museum News article

[Ancient Egyptian Religious Life and Afterlife](#) - SmartHistory article

[Ancient Egyptian Religion](#) - Britannica article



## Ancient Greece



In ancient Greece, different communities were associated with different gods. For example, Athens is famously known for its relationship with Athena. Individuals could also have a personal connection to a specific god or goddess. To maintain these relationships, Greeks practiced giving offerings as a way to request assistance from, or to thank, a god. This bowl (left) from the Glencairn collection is called a libation bowl, also known as a *phiale* or *patera*. A libation is a liquid offering. The part sticking up in the center is there so that a person could hold it in one hand, resting a finger underneath - inside the indentation - to pour out the contents of the bowl. Libations were often wine, oil, honey, or milk.

## Need more info?

[Greek Sanctuaries as Artistic Hubs](#) - A Khan Academy article

[Greek Gods and Religious Practices](#) - A Met Museum article



## Ancient Mesopotamia



This cylindrical object comes from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, a Babylonian king. It is called a cylinder seal, and is part of a group of objects called foundation deposits. These deposits were made of clay and inscribed with prayers and messages to the gods. It was probably buried with the foundations of a temple, palace, or armory, and was designed to be seen by two different groups of people. The first would be future kings and rulers who might uncover them during renovations. The other would be the gods, who were believed to read texts even when buried!

## Need more info?

[Future-Proofing Kingship: Mesopotamian Foundation Deposits in Glencairn Museum](#) - Glencairn Museum News article

[Mesopotamian Deities](#) - A Met Museum article



## Ancient Rome



Ancient Romans were well known for their immense military strength and empire. As the Romans interacted with cultures across the Mediterranean, northern Africa, and Europe they adopted and incorporated new beliefs and practices into Roman culture. This was layered on top of existing Roman beliefs in many gods and goddesses, expanding who could offerings could be given to. Correctly performed rituals, such as sacrifice and prayer, allowed Romans to communicate and maintain goodwill with the gods. For example, this is a coin of the god Janus who was unique to the Romans, and for whom a small temple or shrine was built near the Forum.

## Need more info?

[The Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Rome](#) - A National Geographic article

[Preserving Sacred Tradition: Household Gods in Ancient Rome](#) - article

[Eastern Religions in the Roman World](#) - The Met Museum article

[Religion in Roman Britain](#) - An English Heritage article



## Glencairn 360

You can explore the Museum and find all these objects and lots more in our Glencairn 360 experience! Click to travel virtually through the galleries, and uncover more about ancient history.