**The Histories-Egypt**

They [the embalmers] fill the corpse’s belly with crushed myrrh and cassia and other perfumed spices (but not with frankincense) and sew it back up. The next phase is to pack the corpse in natron [a type of salt] and leave it to mummify for seventy days—but they are not supposed to leave it for longer. Once the seventy days are over, they wash the corpse and then wrap the whole of its body in bandages made out of fine linen cloth cut into strips. The bandages have gum (which is usually used in Egypt instead of glue) smeared on their underside. Then the relatives come and collect the corpse. They make a hollow casket in the shape of a man and enclose the corpse inside it. Once the corpse has been shut away inside the casket, they store it upright against the wall in a burial chamber.

What is myrrh and cassia?

Why do you think it is used?

***Complete the sentences:***

The period of exactly seventy days shows…

Fine linen cloth was expensive.

Using it on a corpse means…

Why did they treat corpses with such careful attention?

—Herodotus, The Histories, c. 440 BC

1. What process is being explained in the reading passage?

2. How does this process show evidence of an advanced civilization?

3. What does this process tell us about the society’s religious beliefs?

4. What does this process tell us about the society’s attitude toward family?

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