

SPECIAL
INSERT



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THE CIRCLE OF THE HORIZON IS THE EARTH AND SKY'S EMBRACE

SKY'S EMBRACE

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QUEENS OF HEAVEN BY BY SOROR 207i

IN ASCENDING the Qabalistic Tree of Life we come to the final sphere Chesed before venturing into the Supernal Triad. It is in Chesed where optimism, magnanimity, beneficence, mercy, compassion, goodwill, loving kindness, provident abundance, and the fount from where blessings are poured from. The planetary association with Chesed is Jupiter which rules over wealth, leisure time, prosperity and good luck. Astrologically Jupiter is called the Greater Benefic; and on the Tree of Life Chesed is directly above the Lesser Benefic Venus to whom Juno has very strong ties to although they may come together and devise a plan, their goals are generally at odds with each other as in the story of Dido. Chesed also represents the exuberance of Divine Youth as in Hebe, the daughter of Hera and reconciliation resulting from experience that comes with age as when Hera establishes peace with Heracles by giving him Hebe as his bride. Jupiter also governs business, the higher mind, higher education, philosophic reasoning, and aspirations; and represents the judge, the lawmaker and the helper as in Inanna's role of giving the people of her city the codes of civilization.

Deities of the sky tend to be responsible for law and order, both in the cosmos and in humanity; there is a propensity that sky deities are the supreme rulers of their pantheons who make everything and know everything. The regular and predictable motions of the planets and the stars are used as navigational aids on sea and land, astrologically Jupiter also rules long-distance traveling. This systematic movement of the heavenly bodies gives the idea that there is a consistent logical pattern in a seemingly chaotic universe as well as the calendar; the word calendar derives from Juno's festival days, the first day of the month known as Kalends.

Height which is often associated with power and moral superiority is ruled by the planet Jupiter, the heavens being high above the earth would understandably be the home of deities who are lofty, exalted and sublime. The Queens of Heaven in many instances have risen above their initial status; they are ambitious with noble and high aspirations.

INANNA

INANNA, the supreme goddess of the Sumerian pantheon is the oldest of the Mesopotamian goddesses. The inheritors of the legacy of this Queen of Heaven is the Babylonian Ishtar and the Canaanite Anath who assimilated her love and warlike qualities. By the third millennium BCE her prominence in the Sumerian pantheon was well established. Inanna is known as the 'Lady of Heaven'. She like her successors is imbued with the same four aspects of chastity, promiscuity, motherliness, and martial characteristics. She is regarded as a virgin, two of her epithets by which she is commonly called is 'the maid Inanna' and 'the pure Inanna'. Inanna is the radiant lady rapt in beauty, terrifying and tempestuous, but she is also seen as a lady of resplendent light, beloved of heaven and earth.

One of Inanna's primary responsibilities is overseeing sexual love and procreation; she is an agency of fertility for humans. She is also associated in myth and popular religion with her consort Dumuzi¹, a fertility deity. Dumuzi originally a shepherd god contended with the farmer god Enkidu to court Inanna. Her brother the sun-god Utu advocating for Dumuzi recommends his butter and milk but Inanna rejects the shepherd in favor of the farmer. She would rather have the clothes, beans and grain the farmer

¹ Dumu-zi-abzu means "True son of Apsu"

can offer than the precarious livelihood of the shepherd. Dumuzi's wounded pride is eventually alleviated when Inanna and her farmer-husband allow seasonal grazing rights to the shepherd. This story reflects the change in human society of a mainly pastoral existence to that of settlements and agriculture. In due course Inanna takes Dumuzi as her husband and he becomes the earliest mythological ruler of Sumer to whom she freely gave herself to. Subsequently she was the wife of all Sumerian kings thereafter. She presided over one of the most important ceremonies of the year that of the ritual marriage of the god. During these ceremonies the king was wedded to the high priestess and in this way generated for the people the promise of agricultural prosperity. The goddess is the carrier and the fountainhead of his power and prestige.

Her love is insatiable, consuming and even fatal. One of Inanna's most prominent myths is centered on her descent to the nether world, in this familiar theme of Mesopotamian mythology there are direful consequences for her husband Dumuzi. At the height of the hot season she seeks Dumuzi, the dying and rising god of vegetation in the underworld in his season of recession in order to free him. He is lamented annually when he is thought to die and pass away from the cheerful earth to the gloomy subterranean world; and every year Inanna journeys in quest of him to the land from which there is no returning, to the house of darkness, where dust lies on door and bolt. The sexual functions of the whole animal and plant kingdom are so intimately connected to the goddess that without her presence, love-making in both humans and beasts cease to function; the plants stop growing and reproducing, all life is threatened with extinction when Inanna sojourns into the underworld.

Inanna's motive for visiting the underworld is not only to gain possession of Dumuzi but to take control of her older sister Ereshkigal's² kingdom, for Inanna became desirous of ruling in the underworld as she did in the world above, consequently she descended to the realm of the dead to challenge her sovereignty. From the beginning of the 2nd millennium Ereshkigal, Queen of the Underworld was the only goddess of independent significance other than Inanna.

Arriving at the gate of the underworld Inanna threatens to burst in by force. Her behavior is congruent with her character, for she was a goddess of boundless rage and ruthless destruction; she is the lady of battle and conflict who has great fury in her wrathful heart. She is admitted by order of Ereshkigal, on condition that she leaves part of her clothing and insignia at each of the seven gates she is to pass. Inanna accepts these conditions and at each

gate relinquishes a part of her garments and insignia to the gatekeeper.

As Inanna approaches the subterranean temple of Ereshkigal, she emerges through the seventh and final gate naked and stripped of all that symbolizes her divine authority. In the presence of queen of the infernal regions Inanna rushes at Ereshkigal to seize her throne but realizes too late that Ereshkigal is too strong for her and that she is powerless. Inanna is seized, confined and transformed into a corpse as she encounters the deadly glance of Ereshkigal and the judges of the underworld. Inanna now a prisoner in the 'Land of No Return' has dire repercussions in the 'Land of the Living'.

Anticipating calamity, Inanna instructed her vizier, Ninshubur to seek help from various other deities, if she did not return within three days. He sought help from Enlil³ the storm god in Nippur but Enlil refuse to grant aid; then he appealed to the moon god in Ur for assistance but again was denied support. Ninshubur finally succeeded in procuring aid when he went to Enki in Eridu.

Enki the god of water, of wisdom and magic was determined to revive and restore Inanna to the land of the living in company with Dumuzi that the two might return to the upper world and that with their return all nature might revive and that normal fertility may be restored.

Enki created two sexless creatures (possibly a reflection of the occurrence of eunuchs in the cult of Inanna) and sent them to Ereshkigal. By the directive of Enki the eunuchs curry favor from the Queen of the Dead arousing her penchant for them. They venture to ask for a drink from the water-skin containing life-giving water which is tantamount to being released from the underworld; entreating her to give them the corpse of Inanna as a gift. The stern queen of the infernal regions realizes that Enki is responsible of the entrapment and so she curses him. Enki had strategized that Ereshkigal would become exhausted by the curse and its potency against Inanna would therefore subside. So Ereshkigal, to prevent any further subterfuges from Enki reluctantly acquiesces and orders the eunuchs to sprinkle Inanna with the Water of Life and take her away from the presence of Ereshkigal. The eunuchs then restored Inanna to life, but the rules of the underworld permitted her to leave only if she provided a substitute. So Inanna was allowed to return through the seven gates, at each of which her insignia and her clothes are restored with the provision that she would offer an alternative.

An interesting feature of this myth is that on Inanna's return to earth a company of ghouls and malevolent beings are serving as her wardens. Her wardens knew not

2 Akkadian - Allatu

3 Akkadian = Adad

food, nor water, they did not eat of the bread, nor drank the libated wine, they took away the wife from the loins of the husbandman, and they take away the child from the breast of the nursing mother.

At the first two cities Inanna visited, she found the city god in mourning for her, and with gratitude for their sorrow of Inanna's absence she spared them from being taken as a substitute. At the third town, a suburb of her own city Uruk, she found her own spouse Dumuzi rejoicing instead of lamenting. Inanna mortified by Dumuzi's lack of bereavement delivers him over to the demons who accompanied her as the required sacrifice. Despite desperate attempts by Dumuzi to escape, he is finally taken prisoner and carried off to the grim domain of Ereshkigal. Inanna may have saved herself by paying the ransom but it was to her ultimate grief.

Inanna is the tutelary deity of Uruk⁴; it is she who brought the arts of civilization to her city. She decided to visit Enki⁵, god of wisdom the patron of Eridu. During a feast Enki copious in his consumption of wine had given to Inanna his collected works essential to a civilized society, called in Sumerian me. Enki later regretful of his gifts to her, dispatched monsters to seize Inanna on her journey home, but they failed to confiscate the prized possessions. Following the mighty struggle of Inanna against the older divinities in Ur and Uruk, the goddess becomes triumphant in her quest. Due to Inanna's boldness Uruk became the eminent city of the Mesopotamian world. She became the protector of the Babylonian kings such as Hammurabi (ca. 1728-1686 BCE) and armed him with mighty weapons; and in the days of Nabonidus (555-539 BCE), she was worshipped at Uruk in a golden cella, driving a chariot to which were harnessed seven lions.

HERA

HERA is the principal goddess of Argolis, a region of ancient Greece situated on the northeastern part of the Island of Pelops, where her main cult centers were located. This region is home to one of the oldest of the Grecian cities, the city Argos; of all of Hera's cities Argos is her most beloved. The inhabitants of Peloponnese developed the peninsula during the Minoan period (2000-1450BCE) into a powerful and prosperous civilization; they built fortified cities like Tiryns and the royal stronghold of Mycenae. The gentlemen, the men from good families of ancient Greece were known as heros meaning protector, Hera the feminine form of heros denotes 'Lady' or 'Mistress', she is that protective motherly figure who reigns supreme over her lands. In Argolis a short distance away from Tiryns on the Gulf of Argolid is situated an excellent natural harbor called Nauplia, this port of call received the exportation

of goods from Minoan traders such as of woolen textiles, timber, stone lamps, metal vases, pottery, wine and oil as well as the Cretan mother goddess who had certain links with the Anatolian mother goddess via the trade routes.

At Nauplia along with Hermione another harbor city in the Argolis region there was a cult of Hera Parthenos, 'the Maiden'. It is at Hermione according to one tradition that Zeus and Hera landed at the Island of Pelops when they arrived in Greece from Crete. There a statue of Hera carrying a scepter on which a cuckoo perched was set up. Minoan deities were frequently seen as taking the shape of birds, the cuckoo then is probably her divine consort in his amorous appearance. Peloponnese became the dominant force of the Mediterranean during the heyday of Mycenaean Age (1400-1150BCE). It is in the days of Agamemnon king of Argos and Mycenae and Menelaus king of Sparta, brothers of the House of Atreus who conquered the Asia Minor city of Troy. In the Iliad it is Argos, Mycenae and Sparta that Hera declares are 'The three towns I love best'. Hera's chief centre of her worship was the Argive Heraion 'Our Lady's Temple'.

This temple was built on the lower slopes of a mountain called Euboea (named after Hera's nurse) between Argos and Mycenae, there Hera's oldest image at the Argive Heraion is made of pear wood, which was brought there from Tiryns. From Argolis her cult spread throughout Greece as the Mycenaean power grew. They erected temples to Hera at Corinth and Sicyon along the Corinthian Gulf and wherever Agamemnon ruled as described in the Iliad, her image was erected. Her worship was established at Stymphalus in Arcadia as Pais, Teleia and Chera (maid, wife and widow). These titles do not necessarily have anything to do with her own characteristics but indicates to the different phases in a women's life who sought her help. Prior to the Mycenaean Age there were few centers of Hera's cult outside of the Argolis region.

One of these early cult centers was on Samos, another principal island of the Aegean, lying off the coast of Turkey. On Samos she had a very large temple and her worship there was of considerable antiquity. According to one tradition her image at Samos came there from Argos, although the Samians disagree with this tradition. The people of Samos believed Hera, the daughter of Cronus and Rhea, had been born under the willow tree in the sanctuary. It is reasonable to suggest that Hera supplanted an even earlier cult of a goddess on Samos prior to Mycenaean domination. Another ancient seat of her worship was the large island of Euboea which lies adjacent to the coasts of Attica, and Boeotia. The myth and ritual

⁴ The Biblical Erech

⁵ Akkadian = Ea

of Hera in Euboea was nearly indistinguishable from the myth and ritual of Hera in Argolis. The Boeotians from the mainland had a legend that Hera, a fosterling of the Titans Ocean and Tethys, was reared on Euboea. From Euboea Hera and Zeus eloped together to the Kithairon mountain range that separates Boeotia and Attica. Hera had temples in most of the cities of Boeotia, but the oldest of her Boeotian cult centers appears to have been on Mt. Kithairon at the top of the Corinthian Gulf. It is in Boeotia where Zeus met Leto the Titaness to whom the inhabitants of its capital Thebes burnt incense to. Hera and Leto were worshipped together locally, even identified, unlike their customary adversarial relationship.

Another of Hera's early center of worship was at Olympia, located on a small plain in Elis, in the west Peloponnese. There the Olympic Games were celebrated along with the Heraia, an athletic contest for women. There along with one of Hera's oldest temples was a sacred grove dedicated to Zeus and Hera. Her cult at Olympia was brought to the Elis Plain from the Argive Heraion and it is traditionally thought of that the games were founded by the Argive Heracles, the hero named after Hera.

Although the Argolis peninsula was Hera's domain and venerated in every home prior to the Mycenaean Age, she is not an indigenous goddess of the Peloponnese. The Achaeans adopted her cult and thought of her as the wife of their own chief god Zeus. Thereby Hera supplanted Dione, Zeus' original wife, on the peninsula and the mainland as her cult migrated except at Dodona, Zeus' oldest center of worship where Dione retained her devotees. Dione, whose name is a feminine form of Zeus lends her name to Hera's Roman counterpart Juno, being only dialectically different from each other.⁶ Settlers from Argolis also founded a shrine to Hera at Pharygai on the Gulf of Malis, in south Thessaly the most northerly area of her worship. And far to the south, as the seafaring Mycenaeans continued to have contact with Crete, the importance of Hera in Cretan religious belief remained strong, they put images of her are on their coins.

Hera in the Olympian pantheon is the queen of the gods. Her primary interest is the life of women, she is in charge of all phases of their life; she is worshipped as the goddess of the earth, fertility, and marriage. It is Hera that married women turned to for help; they are under her special care and protection and in this capacity Hera was worshipped in most areas of Greece in historical antiquity. Hieros gamos, the sacred marriage is one of Hera's most notable rites. The earliest representation of Hera's brother and husband Zeus is from Crete, as in the Near Eastern

pattern they formed part of a divine tetrad; Cronus and Rhea their parents are the elder deities that complete the foursome. Although the coupling of Zeus and Hera is a later development, they each had different spouses in their earlier history; their union can be seen deriving from the customs at Cnossos in Crete where once the ritual marriage of a sun god and moon goddess in bovine form was celebrated. In later cult the ritual became a sacred marriage of Zeus and Hera, which supposedly occurred in a sanctuary near the river Theren, there yearly sacrifices were offered with traditional wedding rites.

At Gortyna, also in Crete, Europa became identified with Hera. In the legend of Europa, Zeus is shot in the heart by one of Eros' shafts and falls madly in love with the Phoenician princess of Sidon. He transformed himself into a beautiful glorious bull, with a silver circle on his brow and horns like the crescent of the young moon. He bows down to her and as soon as she mounts the bull he carries her off to his island of Crete where he impregnates her thereby becoming the mother of the Minoan kings.

Homer on many occasions describes Hera originally a cow goddess by the epithet boopis ('cow-eyed' 'cow-faced'); the cow is sacred to Hera which plays a prominent role in the story of Io. Although Hera is an important goddess in Greek culture, she has not many myths of her own but appears as a character in story after story. Hera was amongst those who conspired against Zeus' authority in the literature of Homer and Hesiod; they had a quarrelsome relationship, she being portrayed as a jealous wife chiefly engaged in persecuting the numerous women that the adulterous Zeus fell in love with and their offspring.

It made no difference to Hera how reluctant any of them were, how innocent or whether they acquiesced to Zeus's advances because of coercion or deception; Hera treated them all alike. Among the harassed lovers of Zeus was her priestess, the princess of Argos named Io who attracted the attention of Zeus by her beauty and fell in love with her. Zeus tried to conceal ravishing Io from Hera by changing Io into a heifer and accosted her in the form of a bull; to further the concealment he caused a thick cloud cover to envelope the land. Hera suspicious of her husband's philandering ways drove away the cloud. She found Zeus standing beside a most lovely heifer; Hera joined her husband and inquired about the cow, he declared that he had never seen her until just now when she had sprung forth, newborn, from the earth. Not believing Zeus and suspecting that the fair heifer was one of Zeus' conquests, she asked Zeus to give the pretty cow to her as a gift to which he could not refuse her request of so trifling a present without arousing her suspicions even more, so

⁶ The etymological relationship of Juno and Dione is disputed.

he reluctantly gave Io to Hera. Hera knew very well how to keep Io away from him. She delivered Io into the care of the hundred-eyed giant Argus to be strictly watched.

This was an excellent arrangement for Hera's purpose, since with his numerous eyes he was an accomplished watchman; he could sleep with some of the eyes and keep on guard with the rest of his eyes. However Zeus requested of Hermes to find a way to kill Io's intolerable guardian Argus. Hermes approached Argus like a country fellow, playing very sweetly upon a pipe of reeds, charming Argus. Story after monotonous story Hermes told the giant until at last all of his eyes fell fast asleep. After the death of Argus by Hermes, Hera took the giant's eyes and put them as ornaments on the tail of her peacock, her favorite bird. The addition of the peacock⁷ myth is of Persian and India origins, the peacock was introduced into Greece during the campaigns of Alexander the Great. Another display of reverence the Greeks had for Hera is the depiction of the sacred peacock on their coins. Although Argus was dead, the torment of Io continued. Hera's retribution was not yet satiated, she sent a gadfly to plague her, which stung her to madness and drove Io away in wild flight from land to land from its pursuit. Io's flight took her to the part of the sea that would be named after her, the Ionian Sea. She left Europe into Asia by swimming across the Bosphorus which means the Ford of the Cow. Io eventually would reach Egypt; there along the Nile she would attain consolation, where Zeus would touch her with his hand and restore her to her human form and her right wits. She bore him a son named Epaphus which translates as 'him of the touch' (ephaptein, 'to touch'); Heracles is the most famous of her descendants. There she lived happy and honored being identified with the cow-headed Isis. The myth of Io is an expression of the sacred marriage rites; the bride a priestess of Hera is wedded to a priest of Zeus, the bridegroom disguised as a bull.

The cow is the principal milk-giving animal; therefore it is apt to conceive the Great Mother-goddess in bovine form. The cow's horns are shaped like the crescent moon which, in Egypt, appears lying on its back; the moon is the Mother of Heaven and from her udders spills her milk, the stars. In Greek mythology no son of Zeus might gain heaven unless Hera suckled him, when Hermes brought the infant Heracles to her for nursing, she eventually recognized that he was not her child and shook him off her breast, her milk spurted out and formed the Milky Way galaxy. In Argolis the greatest and most popular of all heroes was Heracles of Tiryns, 'Hera's glory' or 'glorious gift of Hera'. Originally he was not a god but a man who attained godhood.

7 Malak tauus stands for Peacock Angel: MaLaK, homonym of MaLiK "King" and TAUUS "Peacock", a homophone TAUUS "Verdant Land"; thus with word play Zeus is the "King" while Hera is the "Verdant Land".

Heracles is the son of Zeus and a princess of Argos, Alcmena. It is typical of royal daughters of the ancient world to be priestesses of preeminent goddess of their homeland; Alcmena therefore is in all probability a priestess of Hera. Alcmena was visited by Zeus in the shape of her husband Amphitryon. As it is typical of Hera in Greek mythology to be furiously jealous of the offspring of her husband by mortal mothers, she retaliated against Heracles from his birth and was determined to kill him.

She tried to destroy Heracles when he was a babe in the cradle by sending a pair of enormous serpents to the room where he and his twin lay. The precocious infant grasped the serpents in each hand and strangled them, the first proof of Heracles' extraordinary strength. In Heracles early adulthood Hera, who never forgot a wrong, sent the madness upon him, he murdered his wife the Theban princess Megara and his three sons by her. When his sanity returned, he had no idea what had happened or how they had been killed, only when Amphitryon approach him and told Heracles the horror, did Heracles realized that he was guilty of the atrocious act. His blood-guilt led to the famous myth of the "Twelve Labors of Heracles", these labors Heracles was compelled to perform in order to be exonerated from his crimes. A priestess of Apollo at the Oracle of Delphi told him he must go to Eurystheus the King of Mycenae (or Tiryns in some tales) a stronghold of Hera in either case to expiate his transgressions. Eurystheus was helped and urged by Hera to give Heracles the most daunting and dangerous tasks in order to fulfill his penance.

Hera interfered whenever possible to trouble Heracles in his disparate adventures either by persuading Eurystheus, the taskmaster of Heracles or outright such as in his ninth labor, obtaining the girdle of the queen of the Amazons. The princess Admeta a priestess of Hera greatly desired to acquire the girdle of Hippolyta⁸ the Queen of the Amazons, probably because it possessed magical powers. Admeta's father Eurystheus ordered Heracles to go and get it. When Heracles arrived in the domain of the Amazons, Hippolyta received him kindly and consented to give him her girdle, i.e. allow him to be the bridegroom in Hieros gamos. But Hera, taking the form of an Amazon⁹, stirred up trouble amongst the warlike nation of women; she convinced the women that Heracles was carrying off their queen. The Amazons instantaneously armed themselves and attacked his ship. Heracles, without fully considering the situation and forgetting how kind Hippolyta had been, thought she had acted deceitfully and was responsible for the attack. He killed Hippolyta, fought off her countrywomen, took the girdle from

8 Hippolyta is also known as Antiope the mother of Hippolytus.

9 Chesed emanating into Geburah

Hippolyta's corpse and sailed away homewards with the girdle. In another account Heracles captured Hippolyta's general Melanippe and she was ransomed for the price of the girdle. Regardless of how Heracles obtained the girdle, it was taken to the temple of Argive Hera and dedicated to the goddess.

Heracles could only be defeated by a supernatural force, nothing that lived in the air, sea, or on land ever overpowered him. Hera used her powers against him with terrible effect and in the end he was killed by magic. Ixion, a king of Thessaly planned to seduce Hera, but Zeus fooled him by creating a cloud phantom in the shape of Hera. Ixion beguiled by the vision of Hera made love to the cloud and fathered the race of centaurs¹⁰. Nessus, a son of Ixion and the phantom Hera, tried to run off with Heracles' wife the Calydonian princess Deianeira and make love to her. While Nessus lie dying, killed by Heracles, he gave Deianeira his blood as a magic love potion to use on Heracles; if Heracles ever fell in love with another woman, the potion would bind Heracles to Deianeira. Heracles eventually fell in love with Iole a princess of Lydia, whereupon Deianeira sent Heracles a splendid robe anointed with the blood of the centaur. When Heracles put the garment on, he instantly became seized with intolerable pain as though he was in a burning fire, although he could not die but just suffer. He resolved to make himself a funeral pyre on Mt. Oeta and commit his body to the flames. Zeus intervened declaring that Heracles who triumphed over all else would not be conquered by the flames blazing on Mount Oeta, only his mortal self will perish. Then the flames rushed up and consumed the mortal side of Heracles, he was seen no more on earth. Zeus enveloped him in a cloud and took Heracles in his chariot to heaven to dwell among the stars. Hera now became reconciled to Heracles and gave him the cupbearer to the gods, the goddess of youth, her daughter Hebe by Zeus in marriage.

Heracles is a likely name in a population where Hera's cult had become firmly established and who was prayed to for children, the myths centered around Heracles are probably a collection of tales of various heroes whose mothers were priestesses of Hera. The cult of Hera and her partner the man that became a god Heracles spread into the Italian peninsula known as the Roman Juno and Hercules. In Rome, the bride's girdle was consecrated to Juno and its knot, untied by the bridegroom on the marriage couch, was called the 'Herculean knot'. The pattern of Hieros gamos is played out in the relationship between Hera and Heracles who was probably her consort long before Zeus entered the picture in classical Greek literature.

¹⁰ Centaur is the magical beast of Sagittarius ruled by Jupiter.

In Greek literature the Greeks tended to compartmentalize their deities and accentuate one characteristic over other qualities. In the myths involving the offspring of her priestesses, consequently their children are her children; Hera's implacable hatred, anger and jealousy was emphasized and followed her priestesses and their children. But Zeus and Hera were constantly reconciled after his many liaisons, in one instance he won Hera back after a quarrel by a trick. Zeus proclaimed he would marry again, he arranged the wedding procession a nuptial custom celebrating the union of god and goddess. Hera was infuriated, interrupted the procession, stripped the bride and discovered it was a dressed-up log of wood, which is reminiscent of the Canaanite wooden poles called Asherahs; she became relieved and reunited with Zeus. The Boeotians used to make wooden images from a tree selected by divination and every sixty years these images were solemnly sacrifice to Zeus and Hera by fire on Mt. Kithairon. The oak god Zeus appears to have been periodically wedded to Hera, symbolized by an oaken image in bridal array, the marriage being celebrated in an annual ceremony during which sacrifices were offered with traditional wedding rites.

One of the conflicting aspects of the quarrelsome relationship between Zeus and Hera is their lack of offspring conceived in wedlock. Zeus has many children, but not by Hera, who had very few children for a goddess that was prayed to for children. According to Hesiod youthful Hebe, Ilithyia, born in a cave near Cnossos, who helped women in childbirth and Ares the god of war were the children of Zeus and Hera. In the Iliad Homer states Hera detested Ares and they opposed each other in the Trojan War.

Hephaestus the celestial artist, the god of fire and patron of smiths in Hesiod's Theogony states that Hera bore Hephaestus without union in retaliation of Zeus bringing forth Athena. In the Iliad Hera mortified that out of all the perfectly beautiful immortals, he turned out to be the only ugly one as well as lame, so as soon as Hera saw that he was born deformed, cast him out of heaven into the sea in shame at having borne such a weakly infant, the water deities Thetis and Eurynome rescued the infant. In other versions of the birth of Hephaestus it is Zeus that who flung Hephaestus out of heaven angry with Hephaestus for trying to defend Hera during a quarrel between Zeus and Hera, he landed on the volcanic island of Lemnos.

Although she became the bitter enemy of those who slighted her, she was also known for favoring particular heroes and being their gracious protector she brought

them aid. In the story of the Quest of the Golden Fleece she was the inspirer of heroic deeds, especially Jason who sailed the ship Argo. Hera roused in the soon to be Argonauts the desire for adventure, even at the price of death to drink with his comrades the peerless elixir of valor. Once at sea Jason poured a libation of wine into the sea from a golden goblet calling upon Zeus to speed them on their way.

After many adventures such as when Hera sent her attendant and messenger, the goddess of the rainbow Iris to request Hephaestus to keep his forge quite until the Argo had passed the Symplegades; the Argonauts arrived at the Asia Minor city of Colchis near the Black Sea. King Aeetes of Colchis kept the Golden Fleece safe in a sacred grove guarded by a sleepless dragon.

Hera determined to help the heroes enveloped them in a thick mist as they started for the city; they arrived at the gates unseen safe from any trouble. The mist evaporated when they approached the entrance, the guardians led the splendid young strangers courteously within and dispatched a message to the king of their arrival. Aeetes welcomed the visitors with great hospitality, when the maiden Princess Medea entered into the hall where the guests were bathing, Eros swiftly drew his bow and shot a shaft deep into the maiden's heart as her eyes gazed upon Jason. This act by Eros was instigated by Hera, who knew Medea possessed secrets of the occult arts and worked very powerful magic which could be advantageous to the Argonauts by use of her knowledge for the accomplishment of their quest. Hera went to Aphrodite for her help, the great Queen of Olympus persuaded the goddess of love to the intrigue and consented to do all she could; together they schemed that the youngest daughter of the Colchian king would fall passionately in love with Jason. Eros enticed by his mother by a present of a golden orb seized his bow and quiver and caused Medea to become bewildered with love and misery.

After the Argonauts were refreshed with meat and drink, Aeetes inquired about the purpose of their visit, at which Jason explained they were heroes from Greece and wanted to exchange their service for the Golden Fleece. The king enraged by their request, replied that they must first prove themselves worthy by performing two tasks. The first trial of their courage was to plow a field with two fiery breathing bulls made of bronze by Hephaestus, the other to sow the teeth of Cadmus' dragon in the field from which armed men would spring, these warriors the heroes would need to raze. Medea used a magic ointment on Jason that made his body safe from any harm for day. After Jason accomplished

the tasks that the king set upon him, Aeetes vowed he would never give up the Golden Fleece and went back to his citadel to plot against the Argonauts. Medea burning like a flame and her soul melting with sweet pain for the love of Jason, she lulled the dragon that guarded the Golden Fleece into a deep sleep. Medea fled with Jason on the Argo and with the help of Hera they prevail against more terrible trials. One such ordeal was the passage between the smooth, sheer rock of Scylla and the whirlpool of Charybdis, where the sea forever spouted and roared and the furious waves mounting up threatening to destroy any ship that dared sail through.

But Hera secured the safety of the ship by making sure that the sea nymphs would guide them through the violent surges of the sea. They finally came to Thessaly to claim the throne of Iolcus, but instead they were exiled and took refuge in the city of Corinth. There Medea bore Jason two sons, taking each one of them as soon as they were born to the temple of Hera. These children died by being stoned to death by the Corinthians because Medea who was repudiated by Jason in favor of the daughter of the King of Corinth, Creon; had brought about the death of their beloved princess Glauce. In other versions Medea murders the children in vengeance for Jason forsaking her. Jason ended his days sitting under the sails of Argo that was dedicated to the shrine of Poseidon at the Isthmus of Corinth.

Hera also has a political aspect, favoring one city against another, of all the cities she opposed Troy suffered the most from her retaliations. She wholehearted supported the Achaeans during the Trojan War but her hatred for the Trojan prince Paris, who had judged another goddess lovelier than she, would not be abated until Troy fell in ruins, no matter how many lives of her people it cost.

The Greeks would have sailed home leaving Troy unoccupied and the war would have ended in an honorable peace if Hera didn't interfere. A truce was declared after Menelaus won a victorious battle, the Trojans agreed to give Helen back. But Hera was steadfast that the war would not end until Troy was razed, instigated Athena into breaking the truce. Athena, hostile to the Trojans as well, being slighted by Paris, allied with the Greeks for among them were princes of Athens; she convinced Pandarus, a Trojan into violating the truce and to shoot Menelaus with an arrow. The war raged on and the earth streamed with blood.

Zeus although he liked the Trojans best, thought it would be best to remain neutral because Hera was so unpleasant and bad-tempered whenever he opposed her

candidly. Hera intuitively knew that Zeus favored the Trojans and so she kept busy planning out how to help the Greeks and thwart the authority of Zeus with her cohorts Athena, Hermes, Hephaestus and Poseidon Lord of the Sea.

During one battle Hera intervened when the Greek hero Diomedes order his troops to retreat when Ares the god of war entered the fray and fought alongside Hector. Hera gave encouragement to Diomedes and along with Athena's help, the spear of Diomedes smote the terrible blood stained god with no fear.

And at another battle, while Zeus was supporting the Trojans rout the Greeks, Hera came to Zeus arrayed in all her charms, beautiful beyond compare. She knew the only way to help the Greeks recover was to distract him from the battle so she went to him looking so lovely, wearing Aphrodite's magical girdle Cestus her allure was heighten to such a degree that he simply could not resist her. Hera preoccupied Zeus and drew his attention from the battlefield with her wiles, he forgot about the contending armies and he thought only of her. Poseidon in the meantime aided the Greeks and they prevailed against the Trojans. But this captivation with Hera did not remain; Zeus eventually came out of his languor and focused on the battlefield seeing the Trojan hero Hector lay dying. He dismissed Hera in a thunderous rage and commanded Poseidon to instantly quit the field

When the Greeks finally decimated Troy, they brought Helen back to Hera's city of Sparta. It was common in ancient times that the possessor of the image of their rival's deity held power over them, and as such statues would often be stolen and brought to the homelands of the victors. The story of the Trojan War could very well reflect a Pre-Hellenic image of Hera that was abducted from her temple and brought to Asia Minor. An example of Hera's image being capture occurs in a legend from Samos, a very old seat of her cult. Her statue was brought out of its temple annually, hidden under withies¹¹, and formally searched for. The Samians account for this custom by relating that once Etruscan pirates from the Tyrrhenian Sea had made off with Hera's statue; but fortune favored the Samians and the pirates were prevented from taking it off the island.

Vergil a Roman poet wrote The Aeneid approximately 800 years after Homer wrote the Iliad, the deities in this post Trojan War epic have taken on the names of their Roman counterparts.

Juno's hatred for the Trojans did not stop with the fall of Troy, her bitterness was unrelenting; so she hounded and harassed the fleeing Trojans whenever

¹¹ willow twigs

possible. Her detestation of the Trojan Aeneas was especially strong for she knew he was destined by the Fates to father the Roman race that would establish one of the greatest empires in history, her beloved pet city Carthage some day would be destroyed by the Roman Republic and its surrounding lands annexed by Rome. Juno regardless of the pronouncements of the Fates merciless tried to drown Aeneas to change the outcome of the future.

Juno upon seeing that the Trojans were swiftly sailing towards the destined shore of their new homeland went to Aeolus, the King of the Winds, she persuaded him to sink the Trojan ships with the enticement of giving Aeolus her loveliest nymph for his wife. Aeolus consented to the arrangement and sent his sons, Boreas, Typhon and the other winds, to hurl the ocean; the waves were so great that their crests reached the stars, and the troughs between them so deep that the ocean floor was exposed. Aeneas was caught in this tremendously violent storm while trying to round Sicily and the Trojan ships were blown off course driven towards the coast of Africa. The fleet was dispersed and Aeneas' ship was in imminent danger of being sunk when Neptune hearing the storm raging, a tempest that he did not decree, upon investigation discovered the fleet in dire straits. He was aware and understood the hostility of Juno towards the Trojans but was infuriate by Juno's meddling in his realm of the sea. Neptune called the winds and dismissed them with a stern reprimand. He then soothed the surf and cleared away the clouds; the face of the sun shone on Aeneas as he safely came ashore was very near to the city founded by the Tyrian princess Dido, Carthage.

Juno began to think about how she could turn the arrival of the Trojans to their detriment and give the Carthaginians the advantage. Juno and Venus schemed to keep Aeneas in Carthage each for their own purposes. Juno's objective was to keep him from arriving in Italy; Venus intention was to have Dido fall in love with him, so that she will give him anything he desires and that no harm will come to him although he will gladly accept her attentions he is not bound to love and when ready he can sail off with cool detachment. Aeneas grew indolent from the luxury Dido provided him, so Venus complained to Jupiter, who sent Mercury to rebuke Aeneas and remind him of his obligation to reach Hesperia.

After Aeneas sailed off, Dido took her own life, as she lay dying she cursed Aeneas, the Trojans and their descendants, her successors would become the enemies of his which would later culminate during the Punic Wars.

At Juno's instigation, some of Aeneas' ships were set on fire while at port in Sicily, after losing some ships he sailed onwards where he finally arrived at the mouth of the Tiber. There Latinus the king of the Latins welcomed him and thought of him as the prophesized foreign bridegroom of his daughter Lavinia, the man destined to father upon her a prodigious race that would rule the known world. But the friendly relations deteriorated due to Juno summoning the fury Alecto to stir up discord among the inhabitants and Queen Amata to oppose the new alliance. Latinus secluded himself from the conflict and refused to come out to open the gates of the temple of Janus, the gates were kept shut as long as peace endured. Juno determined for war burst the doors opens with a violent force. The people frenzy for battle and war waged on. With all of Juno's determination to destroy the Trojans, she did not prevail, in the end Aeneas won the day.

JUNO

JUNO is the Queen of Heaven in the Roman pantheon and is comparable to the Greek goddess Hera. Juno like Hera presided over marriage and cared for woman from birth to death. Juno's name is probably related to the Latin word for younger (junior) and as a goddess associated with childbirth she is particularly concerned with the infancy period in an animal's life especially the virgin cow, the heifer (junix). Besides her epithet the 'venerable ox-eyed' she is known by her oldest and most common name Juno Lucina or Lucetia 'she of the light', signifying her original light nature; and in the role midwife it is she who brings children into the light of day. In Roman thought every person was born with a guardian spirit, this deity of generation and birth was called Genius for the males and Juno for the females, this spirit that protected them through life were given offerings on the person's birthday.

It is likely that the sacred marriage of Juno to her husband Jupiter was annually celebrated by the Roman people during the midsummer month of June which was named for her and was thought to be the most auspicious month for getting married; this custom is still prevalent at present as the majority of weddings still today occur in June. A tradition at Roman weddings, resembling Hera borrowing Cestus the girdle of Aphrodite, the bride's girdle was consecrated to Juno. In her function as the goddess of marriage Juno was called Matrona. The Matronalia or Matronales, the major festival of Juno Matrona is celebrated on May 1, when married couples prayed to her and offered sacrifices for wedded

bliss. The ceremony was either performed over oaken images of the divine pair or as living images, the priest of Jupiter, the flamen dialis, and his wife the flaminica dialis, priestess of Juno were the incarnate representatives of the divine couple. In the earliest days of Roman civilization the king was a representative of Jupiter and the queen a representative of Juno, these deities bore the title of King and Queen; the Roman monarchs were the embodiment of the heavenly bridegroom and bride. The holy mountain Alban Mount was sacred to Jupiter and Juno who were worshipped in the sacred oak grove of the oak god and goddess; here Juno has the title, Moneta, the same title she has on the Capitol at Rome. The oak crown that was sacred to the heavenly couple at the Capitol and the worship of them there was derived from the earlier rituals performed in their sacred grove.

Like other Queens of Heaven, Juno is represented also as a war goddess. There is probably a close connection between Curitis a popular name for Juno and the Curetes, the guards of infant Zeus who clashed their spears so thunderously that Cronus could not hear him. The Curetes also danced a war dance around the son of Zeus, the infant Dionysus. These guardians of the newborn Zeus and Dionysus were later identified with the Corybantes. The Corybantes worshipped Cybele, a Phrygian goddess often associated with Rhea. It was customary of the priests of Cybele to worship her with a deafening noise of shouts; clashing their cymbals and drums. In Falerii where Juno was fervently worshipped as Curitis there were grand festivals in her honor. Her devotees sacrificed white cows to Juno, the streets were laid with carpets; the maidens according to Greek custom clothed themselves in white garments and bore on their heads the cannephorae. Her processions were occasions of joyousness; the Latin word corredo meaning to laugh out loud is related to the deity of the dance and festivals; she who is wild after music is called Curedoia or Corredoio.

ISIS

THE TITLE Queen of Heaven was given to numerous goddesses in the ancient Near East and Mediterranean regions among them Anath, Astarte and Isis. Isis, the Egyptian goddess of the Nile was one of the most popular goddesses of the Roman Empire, she became known as the Queen of Heaven during the Hellenization of Egypt. At an early period in Egyptian history Isis had assimilated the attributes of the primitive and local goddesses. The original meaning of her name is difficult to determine but it is probably of Libyan origin. Her attri-

butes and epithets are so numerous she is often referred to as “the many-named”, “the thousand-named”, and in Greek inscriptions “the myriad-named”. Isis is the goddess who is single in essence but of many forms with diverse rites, the reverence that is paid to her is widespread. She won the hearts of many devotees far beyond the boundaries of her native land. The cult of Isis spread far into the Roman Empire in the form of a Mystery religion perhaps because she is the great compassionate universal goddess, the true wife, the tender mother, and the beneficent queen of nature that appeals to people wherever she is introduced.

Isis is also the corn goddess of cultivated lands and fields in her earliest form; it is she who discovered the use wheat and barley and along with her husband and brother Osiris introduced the cultivation of these grains to the Egyptians bestowing upon them the gifts of agriculture such as how to harness the ox to the plough. In this aspect the Greeks equated Isis with Demeter and the Romans identified Isis with Ceres. At her festivals stalks of grains were carried in procession to celebrate the boon she conferred on humanity. One custom was at harvest time, the Egyptian reapers after they had cut the first sheaf of grain would beat their breasts, wailing and calling upon Isis, lamenting the corn spirit slain under the sickle. She is often represented by Greek or Roman artists with ears of corn on her head or in her hands.

While Osiris was travelling the world teaching the arts of cultivation, the institution of marriage, laws and civicism, as well as how to worship the gods to humans, Isis reigned over Egypt. Her concern over the well being of her people was exemplified by her skill in medicine; she performed miraculous cures and nurtured the sick back to health as well as promoting the vitality of the healthy. Some of her shrines were like hospitals where the ailing came to recuperate and be healed. Isis on one occasion healed Ra of a serpent sting. She fashioned this particular serpent from the spittle of Ra and the earth with the purpose of poisoning Ra, so that he would reveal to her his true name. Isis, a woman mighty in words, desired the world of the gods and contemplated that she could become a goddess reigning in heaven as well as on earth by virtue of Ra’s true name. As Ra convulsed with pain from the poison, Isis approached him and told him, he shall live if he is called by his true name. Ra eventually consented to have Isis enter him and search within him, for his true name was hidden from him. The true name of Ra passed from his breast to hers at which time the poison departed from Ra and Isis appropriated the power of a high god by possessing

herself of his name. Isis is therefore a model to the magician who uses in their art divine names to acquire and wield the powers of the deity, for those who possess the true sacred name possesses the very being of the deity and can force the deity to obey the magician. Isis by her virtue, skill and craft was transformed from a demigod into the supreme goddess of Egypt.

Throughout the age of the Roman Empire the popularity of Isis never waned even during the decline of the empire. She was worshipped by the emperors and the common people alike, her rites appear to have been honorably characterized by dignity, tranquility and a decorum that calmed the worried mind and comforted the troublesome heart. The serene figure of Isis with her spiritual calm and her gracious assurance of immortality was transferred to the Virgin Mary during the rise of Christianity.

MARY

ANOTHER popular form of the worship of the mother goddess as a Queen of Heaven in the Common Era who subsumed many of the characteristics of Isis is Mary; just like Isis is the mother of Horus the living pharaoh, who was conceived magically, Mary is the mother of Christ, another miraculous conception. The prevalent image of the Madonna and her child is based on the common representation of Isis nursing the infant Horus. One of her epithets is theotokos, ‘God-bearer’.

Although Mary retained some of the traits of the ancient Near Eastern goddesses, such as virginity and motherhood, she did not inherit the qualities of promiscuity and bloodthirstiness; these characteristics were not very prominent in Isis either. In one of the stories of Mary it relates that her parents Joachim and Anna dedicated her to the temple when she was three years old, at this period of time of Roman control, the temples of the great goddess would have still been active, nor was she eradicated from common household Hebrew religious practices.

Mary’s perpetual virginity (aeiparthenos) is especially stressed in Roman Catholic doctrine. The original form of Christianity did not have a divine Mother. Even though Hebraic prophets in biblical scripture tried to eliminate the tenacious goddess, it is a deep seated need in humans for the divine feminine. The divine feminine appears in many forms throughout the world, but retains on the whole the same basic traits everywhere. The needs of popular faith demand the presence of the divine feminine and for many ordinary Christians Mary took the place of the great goddesses of the Graeco-

Roman world such as Isis or Cybele. And as Mariolatry spread women in Thrace, Scythia and Arabia who worshipped Mary, offered to her a certain kind of cake, as was customary to pagan goddesses. Devotion to Mary came to fulfill the important need in the thoughts and feelings of the populace for the female in religious faith and practice.

The exaltation and veneration of Mary continually grew throughout the Middle Ages until it became a veritable cult, she rose to such eminence in Christianity, particularly in Roman Catholicism, that her cult at times overshadowed that of Christ in popular devotion. There is very little written in the New Testament about Mary, although it does contain descriptions of the virgin birth of Christ, Mary originally had no special prestige or status in the 1st century Christian community at Jerusalem. Through the first centuries of the Common Era there were occurrences of Mariolatry that presaged her imminent exaltation. Her cult didn't start to flourish until the 4th century, perhaps because by then Constantine had made Christianity the official religion of the Empire and worship was no longer paid to her predecessors the ancient goddesses, this political situation created a vacuum in the lives of the common people that only she could counteract. The practice of invoking Mary's aid began to develop about this time. The accounts of the efficacy of Mary's intercession and of her miraculous intervention to help those devoted to her became prolific. Regardless of the increasing exaltation of Mary, there was no official sanction given to her cult. The earliest mention of the intercession of Mary is made in the 4th century in which a virgin in peril entreats Mary to come to her aid. Emperor Justinian and his general Narses sought her guidance in the 5th to 6th centuries. Later she bore the title *mesitis* (*mediatrix*), in the role of reconciler she is prayed to mediate between humans and Christ in the medieval theme of Doom or the Last Judgment.

The festivals of Mary are of her Purification on February 2nd, the Annunciation on March 25th, her Nativity on September 8th, and the *Dormitio* or 'Falling Asleep' on August 15th known more generally as the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the medieval cult of Mary one of the major themes was her divinization and she is referred to as *deificata*. She was assumed, body and soul, into the heavenly court at her death. The idea of her Assumption seems to have originated in Christian Gnostic circles in the 4th century, but the idea of a mortal woman becoming deified by her virtue is seen in the story of Isis. Mary is then crowned Queen of Heaven,

and in art she is seen over the portals of cathedrals and churches, many of which were dedicated to her, she is presented in regal attire, enthroned and crowned like a Byzantine empress. Although the theologians differentiated between the worship due only to Father and Son and the veneration given to Mary, the distinction was blurred in the devotion by the general population. The populace often adored Mary beyond being Mother of God but worshipped Mary as a goddess, who through the ages never ceased to perform miracles hence she is due direct and personal worship.

The cult of Mary during the Middle Ages influenced the ideas of chivalry and was an inspiration in the poetry of the troubadours. They saw Mary as the ideal of womanhood, beautiful, virtuous and merciful and she inspired some of the finest works of medieval art. She also became the medium in which the mysteries of Isis became encapsulated. Mary presented to her worshippers encircled with the nimbus of moral purity, an immemorial and mysterious sanctity that transcends the boundaries of cultural differences. The stately rituals of Isis, with its shaven and tonsured priests, its matins and vespers, its tinkling music, its baptism and aspersions of holy water, its solemn processions, and its jeweled images of the Mother of God, contributed to the ceremonies of Catholicism.

Ancient Egypt may have provided a share of its mysteries to the beautiful symbolism of the Catholic Church as well as to the watered down concepts of the Catholic Church's theology such as Mary's flight to Egypt. The center of worship of Ra in Egypt during dynastic times was the city called Annu, by the Egyptians, On by the Hebrews, and Heliopolis by the Greeks. The sycamore tree of Nut, a goddess of the sky, stood at Heliopolis, legend has it that Mary rested under Nut's tree during her refuge in Egypt. Also the early Christians of Egypt believed that Mary washed the garments of her Son in the "Fountain of the Sun" which is similar to the ancient belief that Ra bathed each day at sunrise in a pool at Annu. Another popular legend among the Copts was that Mary once hid herself and her Son from their adversaries in the trunk of the sycamore at Heliopolis, just like Isis who hid the body of Osiris in a tree trunk. And the wanderings of Mary in the Delta, which are recorded in the Apocryphal Gospels, are also imparted from the old mythology of Egypt.

A beautiful epithet of Mary is *Stella Maris*, 'Star of the Sea', the name mariners used for Mary as their protector against the tempest seas. The features of a marine deity may have been assigned to Isis by the maritime

Greeks of Alexandria, for the ancient Egyptians marine traits on their deities didn't exist, their travel by boat was limited to the Nile. It can be theorized that when the bright star of Isis called Sothis rises from the glassy surface of the eastern Mediterranean Sea on July mornings heralding halcyon days to come is the true Stella Maris.

The information laid before the reader, doctrinal, illustrative or dialectical is drawn from many different sources. Little is attributed to myself personally, except the manner of presenting it. In any case the truth belongs to all equally, in proportion to each person's power and willingness to assimilate it; there is no room for claims of human originality in respect of the truth itself. Thanks to Frater Doug Blake for editing, proofing this article and his other contributions.

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