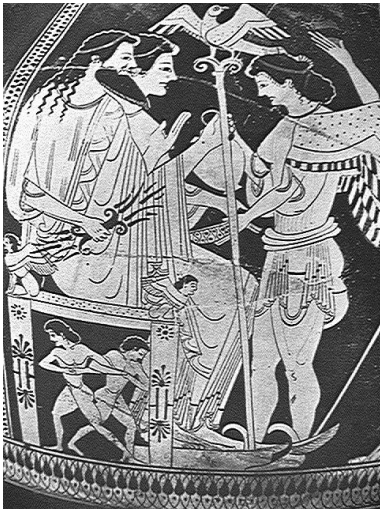


Myth of Prometheus

🌟A Brief Introduction🌟

When Zeus, the king of the Olympian gods, was young and trying to establish his rule, a long and terrible war ensued. All the Olympian gods joined against the Titans, who were led by Zeus' father Cronus and the mighty Atlas.

After ten years of fighting, Zeus and his fellow Olympians defeated the enemy. Only a few Titans, particularly Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus, fought on the side of Zeus, against their fellow Titans.



You see, Prometheus was very wise - wiser even than most of the gods - and foresaw the winner of the battle between the Olympians and the Titans. He persuaded his impulsive brother Epimetheus to also fight on the side of Zeus. Once Zeus emerged victorious he granted the brothers some just rewards.

Zeus permitted Prometheus and Epimetheus to populate the earth with creatures and humans. Epimetheus (he wasn't too bright and his name means "Afterthought") foolishly gave all the good qualities to the creatures: Strength and speed, the ability to fly, to stay warm in all conditions, to possess a keen sense of smell, superb cunning and instinct, to live underwater...

Sadly, when it came time for Man to be endowed with qualities, there were very few left to make Man a match for the beasts. Desperate and sorry, he begged his brother for help. Prometheus (he was wise and his name means "Forethought") took over the task of creation and considered ways to make humans superior.

🌟WISE PROMETHEUS🌟

When the goddess of wisdom Athena was born out of the head of Zeus, Prometheus aided in the "delivery". Wise Athena then taught Prometheus mathematics, navigation, astronomy, architecture, medicine and many other arts. That's how Prometheus got to be so smart. Along with his ability to foresee the future, that made him a formidable Titan.

Prometheus had created humans in the likeness of gods, using clay and water, and Athena had breathed a living soul into them. To compensate for the lack of great qualities, which had foolishly all been given to the creatures by Epimetheus, the wise Titan made Man stand upright like the gods, to be noble and conscious, and to hold his head high, looking up at the heavens.

As yet there were no mortal women on the earth. That came later, as we will see.

Prometheus passed onto Man the useful arts taught him by Athena and looked with joy upon his creation.

He felt bad, however, because when Man sacrificed to the gods, the best portions of the animal were offered to the Olympians, leaving little for the people. So Prometheus tricked Zeus into choosing one pile of offerings, cleverly disguised to look delicious, but instead hiding fat and bones.

Zeus fell for the trick and impulsively chose the wrong pile, and from then on humans got to keep the good and tasty parts of the animal offerings, giving to Zeus the useless portions. This made the King of the Olympians mad, so he punished Prometheus, who was laughing at him. Zeus took fire away from Man - "Let them eat their meat raw!" he shouted. "Let's see how your Men keep warm in the winter!"



Zeus knew that he would seem ungrateful if he directly hurt Prometheus, since the Titan had really helped him become King of Olympus, so he did the next best thing - Swearing revenge, he punished humans by taking away their fire.

Well, this didn't sit well with Prometheus. Daily he looked down with sadness upon his creation, watching them shiver in the cold and try to eat their food raw. Slowly they began to die and Prometheus could no longer sit by idly.

🌟 FIRE RETURNED 🌟

Prometheus arranged a meeting with Athena and beseeched her for help. The wise and gracious Athena kindly revealed to Prometheus a hidden backstairs entrance to Olympus and he gained entrance to the Palace of the gods, one of few to do so.

Upon arriving he lit a torch from the fiery chariot of the sun god, as Helios passed by. Breaking off a fragment of glowing charcoal, he hid the fire inside the hollow of a giant fennel-stalk. Blowing out his torch in case he was spotted by Zeus, Prometheus then worked his way down the side of Mount Olympus.



And a perilous journey it was...The rebel Prometheus, who had taken such a personal risk for Man, now was faced with getting the fire back down to earth. The winds howled as he strode down the mountain, threatening to blow out the coal, or huff it out of his hand. With each step he took, the Titan fully expected to be seen by Zeus and to be struck by one of his thunderbolts.

But Prometheus made it to earth and proudly gave the fire to the humans, who were overjoyed,

needless to say. Soon Zeus smelled the tantalizing scent of cooked meat drifting up to Olympus from earth, and when he looked down he was furious. There were the humans he had supposedly punished, happily cooking their food and keeping warm around their fires.

(It must be noted that, along with all the advantages that fire bestowed upon humanity, it also brought many ills. Out of the flaming forge emerged cruel weapons of war, along with all the attendant miseries that follow the disruption of a simple way of life.)

🌟REVENGE OF ZEUS🌟

That was twice that Prometheus had made the King of the Olympians look bad, and this time Zeus was not going to hold back. Forgetting all that Prometheus had done for him in the war against the Titans, Zeus had him arrested. He summoned from the Underworld the three ferocious Giants: Gyes (guh-y-jeez), Cottus (COAT-us), and Briareus (brigh-AR-uhs), and had them take Prometheus to the highest peak of Mount Caucasus.



On a huge rock the Giants bound the Titan with unbreakable chains.

Each day an enormous eagle (some say a vulture), sent by Zeus, would arrive and eat at Prometheus' liver, feasting on the helpless Titan. To make matters worse, the liver would grow back overnight and the whole ordeal would be repeated the following day.

For some time, (some say thirty years, some say one thousand, or even thirty thousand years) Prometheus endured this excruciating pain and torment. Being a god he couldn't die, hence his ordeal could not be eased. At one point Zeus offered him a chance to free himself by revealing information that Prometheus knew. Since Prometheus had the power of Foresight, he knew the name of the one who would overthrow Zeus, just like Zeus had done to Cronus. The King of the Olympians promised Prometheus that he would set him free if only the Titan revealed the identity of his potential usurper.



Stubborn Prometheus informed the Messenger god Hermes, who had delivered Zeus' offer, that he would refuse.

Prometheus' morals were uncompromising. Even though his body was bound, his spirit was free and the Titan refused to submit to Zeus' threats, torture and tyranny.

🌟PROMETHEUS UNBOUND🌟

Zeus began to feel bad. He wasn't a mean-spirited god, after all, and deep down he admired Prometheus for sticking to his ideals. So he offered a slim glimmer of hope to Prometheus: Zeus told the Titan that he could go free if two conditions were met:

1. An Immortal would have to give up his life for Prometheus
2. A mortal would have to slay the liver-eating eagle

Prometheus thought, *What Immortal would ever give up his life for a Titan?* And there was no mortal brave and strong enough to kill the evil beast that feasted on his liver. Unrepentant for his actions, and fully aware that he had done the right thing in stealing fire from Olympus and giving it to Man, Prometheus was resigned to eternal life on the rocks, so to speak.

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But wait! The story doesn't end here. You see, the Centaur (half man, half horse) named Chiron [ky'-rahn], a wise and immortal mentor of many Greek heroes, had been accidentally shot and wounded by one of Hercules poisoned arrows. The arrows were deadly, having being dipped in the blood of the dying Hydra. But being an Immortal, the gentle Centaur could not die, but lived in horrid pain from the lethal poison.



Hearing of the plight of courageous Prometheus, Chiron volunteered to die in his stead so that his unbearable pain would cease, at the same time conferring his immortality upon the chained Titan. It was a mutually beneficial move and fulfilled the first part of Zeus' terms. Now, where could be found a mortal hero brave enough to challenge the ferocious eagle?

Have no fear...Passing by Mount Caucasus one day the world's greatest hero, mighty Hercules, saw Prometheus bound to the rock, with the frightful eagle merrily munching on his liver.

Armed with his bow and arrows, gifts from the gods, mighty Hercules took aim and let fly a missile at the beast. One shot was all it took and the Titan's tormentor was killed instantly by the poisoned arrow...

Prometheus was now free to go. By this time Zeus had realized his fault and foolishness in imposing such a stern sentence upon the brave Titan, so he invited Prometheus to come and live on Mount Olympus. All was forgiven and our hero rejoined his rightful place at the home of the gods.

Zeus did make Prometheus wear a ring, in which a piece of the Caucasus rock was set, as a symbol of his painful connection with the mountain. This represented the first ring to have a setting, and ever since humans have worn rings in honor of the Titan, in gratitude for all the agony he had endured on their behalf.

The name of brave Prometheus has endured throughout the ages as the world's first rebel and the champion of humanity. He fought against divine authority for his ideals, but ultimately paid a heavy price for his Foresight.