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Hera

The Greek goddess Hera was the goddess of marriage and family. Her Roman name is Juno, which translates to “Great Lady” in English. She was the queen of the ancient Greek gods and the wife of Zeus. She ruled over the heavens and the earth, responsible for every aspect of existence. She controlled the seasons as well as the weather. Zeus was unfaithful to Hera, and she was famous for her jealous and vengeful nature towards her husband and his other lovers. He had many illegitimate children, which made Hera very angry. Even though her husband cheated on her, Hera remained faithful to him no matter what. She eventually came to symbolize monogamy and fidelity.

Hera was the daughter of Cronus and Rhea. Her siblings were Poseidon, Hades, Hestia, Demeter, and her husband, Zeus. She was the mother of Ares, god of war, Hebe, goddess of youth, Eileithyia, goddess of childbirth, and Hephaistos, god of fire. Zeus was the father of Ares, Hebe, and Eileithyia. Some sources say that Hephaistos was also Zeus’s child, but it is not certain. Other sources claim Hephaistos was only Hera’s son, conceived to get back at Zeus for the birth of his daughter Athena. Hephaistos was thrown from Mount Olympus by either Hera or Zeus because of his ugliness. He crashed down to earth and became lame when he fell.

Hera has many plants, animals, and other objects associated with her. These things all represent and symbolize something important about Hera. One of Hera’s symbols is the cuckoo, which is a symbol of Zeus’s love for her. Zeus transformed himself into a cuckoo in order to seduce Hera into marrying him. The pomegranate is another one of her symbols. To celebrate a wedding, people in some Greek city-states gave a pomegranate to the bride in Hera’s name. Most weddings were held in Gamelion, the Greek month honoring Hera. The peacock is an ancient symbol of immortality, and Hera rides in a chariot drawn by this majestic bird. Another animal that represents Hera is the cow. Hera’s flower is the lily, which could be a symbol of her beauty. Hera also has a scepter for justice and the diadem and veil to symbolize her queenship. She has a few other minor symbols, including the myrrh and the fig.

Hera had many strengths and godly powers but had a few weaknesses as well. The Greek goddess was considered very powerful and very beautiful by many people. She had super strength, immortality, and resistance to injury. She also had the ability to curse or bless marriages. Hera was able to protect and preserve the health of women and even prevent death during childbirth. Hera had power over the skies. She could bless the people with clear skies or curse them with storms. One of Hera’s weaknesses was that she could not control her anger when it came to Zeus and his infidelities. She got very jealous of the other women he was with and sometimes people got hurt. Hera was supposed to be very pure and trusting as the goddess of marriage of family but became untrusting because of Zeus.

One myth about Hera involves Zeus and Semele. Zeus pretended to be a handsome young man for Semele, a young human woman. Semele fell in love with him and became pregnant. Hera soon found out about this and came up with a plan to punish Semele. Hera fooled Semele by taking human form. She transformed herself into an old woman and urged Semele to ask her lover to appear to her in his true form. Hera said this would make him prove his love to her. Semele, unfortunately for her, followed Hera’s advice. The next time she saw Zeus, she begged him to show her his true form. Zeus reluctantly did so, but his true form was so intense that Semele started burning up. She was soon engulfed in flames, her unborn baby inside of her. Zeus thought about his child while she was turning into ashes. He grabbed ahold of the infant and pulled it free from her womb. He managed to save his child just in time. Zeus was worried that Hera might try to harm the baby. In order to hide the baby, he sliced open his own thigh, stuffed his child in the wound, and sewed it shut. A few weeks later, the god Dionysus emerged from Zeus’s thigh. To keep Dionysus safe, Zeus hid him in a cave. Hera tried to harm the infant a few times but was never very successful.

Another myth about Hera involves Hercules. Hera wanted revenge for Zeus’s infidelity with Alkmene. She focused her hatred and anger mainly on their son Hercules. She delayed the birth of Hercules so that his cousin Eurystheus could claim the throne of Tiryns before Hercules. When Hercules was born, she sent two snakes to kill the infant while he was sleeping. Hercules was too strong for the snakes and strangled them in his hands. When he grew up, Hera caused Hercules to become mad. He ended up killing his own wife and children because of her. Hera also set the Hydra of Lerna against the inhabitants of Hercules’ hometown and set the Amazons against him when he went in search of the girdle of Hippolyta. Hera was responsible for a few of the monsters Hercules had to face. These monsters include the lion which terrorized Nemea and the Ladon dragon which protected the goddess’ sacred apple trees. Hercules managed to defeat both of these monsters Hera sent his way.

An interesting fact about Hera is even though she was a mother, she embodied eternal virginity. This was because she annually renewed her virginity by bathing in the spring of Canathus in Nauplia. Another interesting fact is according to the Roman poet Ovid, the month of June was named after Juno, the Roman name for Hera. The goddess was said to have been worshipped in that month. Since Hera was the goddess of marriage, many couples were married in her month of June. According to some beliefs, the name “Hera” derives from the ancient Greek word “Air”, meaning “Wind”, since Hera was also the goddess of the weather. The Greek goddess of marriage and family was very powerful and well-known all throughout Greece for her beauty and jealousy.