

Greek and Roman Gods

– Japheth Sons and Forgotten Origins of Tyranny

By Bill Heid

Greek and Roman Gods Were “Family” Gods

Few scholars ever connect the Greek and Roman gods with the flood. Noah had three sons... Shem, Ham, and Japheth. We learn in Genesis that God “increased” Japheth and the Bible tells us that his descendants soon occupied much of the Mediterranean and beyond. You can find much of this history in Genesis 10 which lists the table of nations.

There we find that Japheth was given the “[isles of the Gentiles](#) [2].” His descendants included Javan, which later in Scripture is the name the prophets used when they referred to Greece as a nation.

History also reveals that the children of Japheth began the practice of worshiping dead ancestors. Soon the “gens” or father gods became common among many of these family groups. And it was this brand of ancestor worship that kept families bound tightly together with other families.

Father Gods and Family Sacrifices

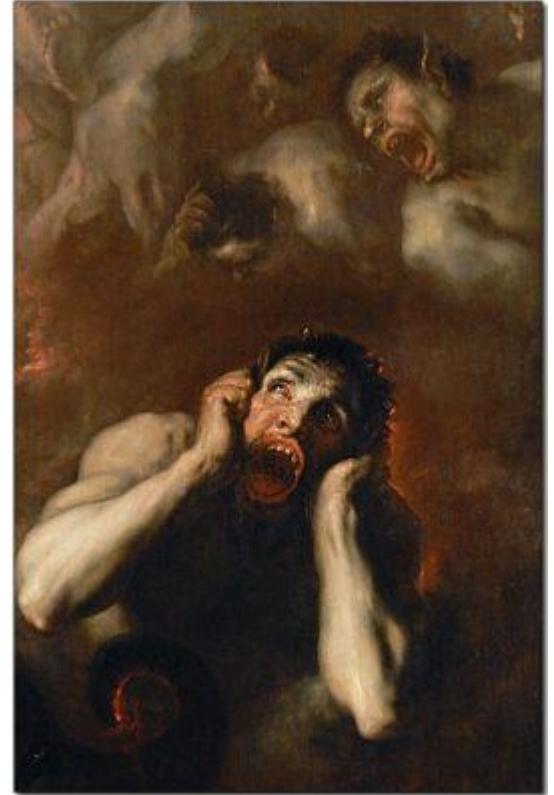
Now, economic and military realities had also bound together extended families. But it was these family or “[father gods](#)”[3] that undergirded the basic religious principles that governed groups of families. In fact, they were the strongest binding force. Consequently, it was the principle of having a common worship that unified these budding societies.

That meant if related or extended families were going to cooperate socially and economically, they needed to have an agreed upon principle of ultimacy. For these groups, it was worshipping a common god. Further, in the case of the ancient Greeks and Romans, this almost always meant a common male ancestor. Perhaps it was a dead chieftain, a dead patriarch, or a dead king.

And so, the Greeks and Romans formed what they, throughout ancient history, have called the “gens.” It consisted of groups of families that had a common dead ancestor and therefore a common worship. That’s also why different gens had different worship liturgies in Greece. It was because they had performed family sacrifices in common from a very early period. The same was true in Rome.

Greek and Roman Gods as Family Spirits

Clan deities or spirits were formed as a result of merging participating family deities. And, like the “family spirits” that attended the early Roman family hearth-fires, these new clan deities became angry when anyone outside the circle of their own descendants attempted to worship them. Each family group or gens had its own rites, rituals, and liturgies. If you were not in the group, you could not worship, meddle, or interfere with that worship liturgy in any way.



During the Lemuria festival in ancient Rome, fathers circled the house at midnight, tossing black beans here and there to placate angry ancestral spirits. [1]

Additionally, these gens or family religions had an umbrella-like effect which had benefits and advantages. Members of the same gens could inherit from one another if family succession failed. Together, they also became responsible for one another's debts. The entire family or gens took responsibility for redeeming any family prisoners and paying any fines of accused or condemned family members.

Even in judicial matters, the gens played a major role. For example, all members of the family or gens accompanied the accused clan member to court when charged with a crime. Additionally, no gens member could accuse another before an outside tribunal. The gens system bound its members to settle their own matters, just as they supposed every individual family to settle things, internally.

The Tribal Use of Greek and Roman Gods

Now, on the surface, it might make you wonder what would be the glue that could bind different clan members that made up the Greek and Roman people. Since there were so many clans, what would be their basis for unity? One thing we do know is this... the economic and social needs of a culture always have a way of driving religious innovation and progression.

And so, the various Japhetic clans found great social unity in coming together as tribes. In order for two clans to form a tribe, they simply needed to discover a common deity who they could both claim had jurisdiction over them.

Of course, any new jurisdictional claims could not interfere with those of the original gods of clan and hearth. A newly chosen deity would have to represent a bigger, broader, and more ancient claim. Accordingly, the tribes looked back to ancestors more remote than those worshiped by the clans. The result was the creation of a new class of deity. They called these tribal deities "heroes".

Like the family gods, "heroes" were bound to the land where they were buried and wholly committed to protecting their own descendants. But unlike the household gods, heroes could go into battle alongside their worshipers. Thus, these heroes could be powerful supernatural assets in times of war.

The Persian wars were full of legends of heroes. For example, during the battle of Marathon, Theseus fought with the Athenians. In this story, we find a hero "rising from the ground in which he rested." Interestingly, in this battle, we also find an ordinary looking guy dressed like a peasant who killed a lot of Persians with a plowshare. When the battle was over, he disappeared. After that, the oracle commanded the Athenians to honor this Greek hero... Echetlos.

Greek and Roman Gods as the Gods of Nature

Mixed in with the worship of the dead, the Greek and Roman descendants of Japheth honored or worshiped something else. It was something they saw as big. Bigger than life. In other words, like most of the pagan world, the ancient Greeks and Romans saw spirit, power, and deity in the forces of Nature. The sun and moon, the constellations, the storms and seasons, the fertility of the land.

These were also divine forces or particular manifestations of divine power. They also saw lesser natural forces as expressions of the spiritual world. Nature spirits and daemons were ubiquitous in these cultures.

[Nymphs](#) [4] were thought to be found everywhere as they were believed to live among the mountains as well as in springs, rivers, trees, and seas. Some entities called "fountain-daemons" were considered to be the very spirit of fertility. Nature, in ancient history, was full of spirits. In fact, every spring, every tree, and every natural object could have its daemon. And perhaps more importantly, these spirits intervened in human life and fortune.

Who Do You Call When the Greek and Roman Gods Go Bad?

Sometimes the daemon, residing in the forces of nature, needed to be restrained if malevolent. The need for a medicine man or shaman would be called on to direct the daemons by magic ritual. In its early forms, this "religion of nature" seems similar to the Baal worship of ancient Canaan.

Eventually, in the case of the Greeks and the Romans, they turned these forces into anthropomorphic character deities. In time, they gave them names and eventually histories and genealogies with more than a little detail.

But in the beginning, each family or tribe had its own take on the sun or the rain. Usually, this meant the sun god of one family wasn't quite the sun god of another family. Many tribes might call their sky-god *Zeus*, and yet no two *Zeuses* would be alike. The Athena of one people might have attributes very different from the Athena worshiped by another group.

Assimilation took place in time as you might expect. Common names and common provinces blended similar deities together. All *Zeuses* became one in a sense. Nevertheless, this all took time and cultivation. The fact remains that even during the periods of assimilation, the multiplicity of gods did not automatically assume an agreed upon glamor, power, and coherence in the Olympian pantheon. More time and a lot of poetic "polish" were necessary for that. In the meantime, tribes discovered the many benefits and advantages of organizing and living together in cities that were increasingly unified by a common worship.

Relationship of Greek and Roman Gods to the Rise of the Sacred City

Over time, tribes would settle in specific locations. The settlement sites were, theoretically at least, near the tomb of the common ancestor. There the tribe would perform the magic rituals they thought necessary for raising the walls of a city. But even logistically, their common ancestors and worship came first. It was this very worship that defined the city.

Very much like the tribe and the family, it was the common deity that defined the character and nature of the city. Even further, the city's god not only defined the city, but that god defined what it meant to be a citizen of that city as well. There are definitely lots of implications here.

It's important to recognize that early Greeks and Romans didn't see their cities as "secular" any more than they saw their hearth-fire and their family deities as secular. To them, all things were religious. That meant their world was an extremely religious place, even by our standards. It also meant something more: the Graeco-Roman world was so full of gods that, at least in theory, divinity became immanent. Stated differently, there was a spirit in everything.

Furthermore, dead ancestors, as well as nature gods, were temporary manifestations of a divine power that cycled through the culture day and night, spring and winter, seedtime and harvest, birth and death. This was the religion and worldview of the earliest Greeks and Romans.

Ancient Greek and Roman Gods Were Not "Family Friendly"

It may be tempting to think that Greek and especially Roman culture emphasized the family as central given the history of ancestor worship. And for a time in these cultures, this certainly could have been true. The family played an important role, especially early on. However, the progression of worship from families to clans and tribes, culminating in the concept of "city," changed things dramatically.

It also seems that whenever ancestor worship is found in a culture's history, that eventually that culture becomes statist. In fact, it often results in tyranny. Not only Rome and Greece, but also China and Japan are examples. It seems like the same cycle occurs in more than a few cultures. But why?

Perhaps it's because when a culture worshiped dead ancestors, control of worship and therefore power left individual families. Power then became consolidated. First in the clan, then the tribe, and

finally the state. This is the essence of the power state and the essence of all political maneuvering since the dawn of time. Whoever claims the power to harness or control worship eventually uses that power to claim political control over the people.

The Use of Terror by the State Sponsored Priest

Remember, daemons who impersonated dead ancestors or masqueraded as nature spirits were truly demonic. This eventually brought terror upon individuals and families. It was precisely this terror that created the opportunity for the clan or state to offer salvation via a sponsored high priest. In many cultures, the king was also the high priest and commanded absolute power.

Think about life with the Greek and Roman gods this way...

If you could control the spirit world and tame the terror of the daemons, you could control people. There are lots of things to learn here. When absolute power is localized in the present or imminent world, individual liberty always suffers. Here's why:

Attempts to appeal any statist abuse of power are impossible as there are no laws beyond that statist power. It literally becomes against the law to say that the king is a tyrant. History is full of such examples. One is found in the English Civil War. Cromwell's army carried banners that read, "[Appeal To Heaven](#) [5]." Another is Hegel calling the state "God walking on earth."

The Only Way to Escape the Lingering Terror and Tyranny of the Greeks and Romans

It is at this point that we must return to infallibility and the concept of ultimacy. The Christian God is infallible and therefore ultimate. Knowing and acknowledging this has always been the key to individual liberty. Only the God of the Bible is transcendent. This means only He is "above" the clan, tribe, or state. Moreover, it's only by appealing to God as ultimate that we can we find true justice, liberty, and freedom.

The terrible truth is that worshiping dead ancestors initially brought terror and eventually brought tyranny to the ancient world. The true brutality of ancient Greece and Rome is never discussed in our day. That's unfortunate.

When something or someone other than the God of Scripture claims ultimacy and infallibility in a culture, that culture begins to die. As the tyrant begins to invoke "fallible human standards" on the culture, individual rights are lost.

When mortals claim infallibility and godhood, it's only a matter of time before the culture in question collapses. It's only a matter of time before anarchy and chaos reign here in America. It's only a matter of time until we reap the whirlwind as so many cultures have in the past.

Returning to God's standards as both ultimate and infallible in our own lives is a crucial first step. Returning to God's standards as ultimate and infallible in broader culture is the only real way back to freedom.

URLs in this article:

- [1] Image: <https://www.offthegridnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/lemuria.jpg>
- [2] isles of the Gentiles: <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/isles-of-the-gentiles/>
- [3] father gods: <https://www.offthegridnews.com/religion/greek-roman-religion/>
- [4] Nymphs: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nymph>
- [5] Appeal To Heaven: <https://www.offthegridnews.com/religion/liberty-appeal-heaven/>

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