

# Relationships between zeus and demeter

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Zeus has proven to be the “ all powerful” god of the sky, and has ruled with an iron fist since he took down his father Cronus as a child. His normal behavior has been constantly ruthless, sometimes fair, sometimes unfair, but once Zeus made a decision, there was no changing what was done. There was a special case in where Zeus made an exception for his sister and lover, Demeter. Zeus takes back his promise to Hades to give him Demeter’s daughter Persephone which is truly out of character for Zeus. Since the Hymn to Demeter originated, many have questioned why Zeus would give into Demeter’s wishes.

To truly understand why Zeus would give in to Demeter, one must understand Demeter’s agony. Demeter hears Persephone cry for help, but Demeter doesn’t know what happened to her. Persephone does cry for Zeus, but sadly her father is the one who gave her away to his brother Hades who is ruler of the underworld. Demeter goes looking for her lost daughter for a horrifying nine days while she roamed the earth. While she is looking for her daughter she wears a dark cloak and carries a torch. This is important symbolism for either the death of her daughter entering the underworld as Demeter grieves, or the marriage of her daughter to Hades as the queen of the underworld.

Demeter finally gets her first clue from Hecate who claims that she didn’t see what happened, but heard Persephone being abducted from her cave. Demeter then consults Helios who tells her that Zeus gave Persephone away to Hades. He explains to Demeter that Hades drove Persephone away in his chariot deep into the depths of the underworld. Helios then begins to push

Demeter's buttons' by saying don't think of it by losing a daughter, but as gaining a son in law.

Demeter is so distraught by the news that she disfigures her goddess form and becomes a wet nurse to sooth her grievance as a mother separated from her child. Demeter goes amongst the human race, and sits by the Maidens Well in Eleusis. The daughters of Celeus and Metaneira find Demeter who has taken the name Deo at the Well and bring her back to the house to be their new wet nurse. Demeter gives the family a glimpse of her godhood and scares Metaneira. The family has a servant named lambe who spreads a fleece over a stool for Demeter to sit on. Demeter bathed and drank Kykeon which were both great traditions in the Eluesinian Mysteries. lambe cheers Demeter up by making her laugh with funny faces and crude jokes, so Demeter will provide the best services for the baby.

Since Demeter has lost her daughter Persephone, she becomes fond of the families baby son Demophon, and claims she knows how to protect him. Her plan is to make the baby infant immortal. She continuously smears ambrosia on him because sometimes fire can burn away the mortality and leave an immortal being left in its place. She places the baby on the coals to slowly burn away the mortal flesh. One time when Demeter was doing this, Metaneira sees her and thinks she is cooking her child. Demeter gets extremely angry and rants about the human race. Demeter shows herself as being a goddess and says they must build her a temple where they must hold regular ceremonies to appease her. Demeter then takes up residence in the temple where she decides enough is enough, and she wants to get Zeus's attention. Starving the human's works because Zeus first tries to <https://assignbuster.com/relationships-between-zeus-and-demeter/>

persuade Demeter to stop and return to Olympus, but this fails. Zeus tells Iris who is a goddess of the rainbow to send a message to Demeter which also fails. Zeus then knew he had to send Hermes who is a psycho pomp down to the underworld to persuade Hades to give Persephone back.

There are many possibilities that Zeus would give into Demeter's wishes to have her daughter back. One reason is there is no such wrath as a mother's scorn. Demeter is a Goddess of the earth, in particular grain. She would rather starve the entire human population than let Hades keep Persephone in the underworld. This showed Zeus how serious Demeter was to get her daughter back, and Zeus knew that she would stop at nothing until he went back on his word. She decided to withhold the grain from sprouting to get Zeus to pay attention to how serious Demeter was. Demeter was extremely determined because her mind was set, "For she thought no more forever to enter fragrant Olympos, and no more to allow to earth to bear her fruit, until her eyes should behold her fair-faced daughter." (Trzaskoma, Smith & Brunet, 2004 Pg. 175) Zeus then knew he had to go to the underworld and talk to his brother Hades to get Persephone back to Demeter.

When Hades was complaining that he did not have a wife, Zeus generously offered his daughter Persephone. His main downfall, was not discussing this gift with Persephone's mother. Zeus did not realize what serious repercussions he would face for making this decision. Not only would all of the human race starve to death, this meant trouble for the Gods because they needed people. If the human race ceases to exist, then that would mean that there would be no sacrifice for the Gods. There would be no more temples built, no more ceremonies, and no more animal sacrifice. "Now the <https://assignbuster.com/relationships-between-zeus-and-demeter/>

whole race of mortal men would have perished utterly from the stress of famine, and the gods who hold mansions in Olympos would have lost the share of renown of gift and sacrifice, if Zeus had not taken note and conceived a counsel within his heart.” (Trzaskoma, Smith & Brunet, 2004 Pg. 175)

One possibility for Zeus questioning his decision is because Demeter is quite possibly the most important woman in his life. “ Hades of the dark locks, you prince of worn-out men, Father Zeus bade me bring the glorious Persephone forth from Erebus among the gods, so that her mother may behold her and relent from her anger and terrible wrath against the immortals.” (Trzaskoma, Smith & Brunet, 2004 Pg. 175) Since Hera does not try to interfere with either Persephone or Demeter, it is highly probable that this Hymn is before the marriage of Zeus and Hera. Hera does not complain, and she is not even mentioned in the story, so this is a very strong indicator that this is correct. This could imply that this was when Zeus was newly in power, and he could have felt less domineering.

An interesting note to make about how Zeus handles his business is he always tries to send other people to handle his messes. He sends Iris to try to convince Demeter to stop starving the immortals even though he is the one that caused her to be angry by giving Persephone away. He also sends Hermes to bring back Persephone from Hades even though he is the one that actually promised her to him in the first place. It might be a good assumption that since this is an older myth, he doesn't know how to handle being a God very well yet, and is trying things out to see how they work.

We definitely know why Demeter did what she did, but we can only speculate why Zeus's actions took place. Although Demeter did get her daughter back, since Persephone ate the pomegranate seed she must return to Hades for one third of the year. This has been a rare case in classical mythology where Zeus has gone and taken back a promise that he has made. It is important to analyze many different options, or perhaps it is a combination of many reasons that Zeus made an exception in Demeter's case. It is definitely an interesting myth to dive into and look at a great well known God acting out of character.