



# Ritual for the Stenia

## 9 Pyanepsion

- ◆ **Ritual washing**
- ◆ **Ritual washing with invocation to Okeanos**

Okeanos whose nature ever flows, from whom at first both Gods and men arose; sire incorruptible, whose waves surround, and earth's all-terminating circle bound: hence every river, hence the spreading sea, and earth's pure bubbling fountains spring from thee. Hear, mighty sire, for boundless bliss is thine, greatest cathartic of the powers divine: earth's friendly limit, fountain of the pole, whose waves wide spreading and circumfluent roll. Approach benevolent, with placid mind, and be forever to thy mystics kind.

- ◆ **Purification – khernips (holy water) sprinkled from a bay branch – Be gone all corruption and evil” (three times).**

“Blessed Okeanos, may your bright waters purify this space, and prepare both me, and it, for the rites that are about to unfold.”

- ◆ **Euphemia sto, euphemia sto, eukhomai tois Theois pasi kai pasais.**  
(Let there be words of good omen, Let there be words of good omen, pray to the Gods and Goddesses.)
- ◆ **Who is present? Those attending answer: All good people!**
- ◆ **Lighting of the lamp for Hestia with invocation: Daughter of Kronos, You whose eternal flame illumines all our worship, come to this oikos with blessings . . .**
- ◆ **Lighting of the sacrificial fire**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 24 to Hestia**

### To Hestia

Hestia, you that tend the far-shooting lord Apollo's sacred house at holy Pytho, from your locks the oozing oil ever drips down. Come to this house in kindly (?) heart, together with Zeus the resourceful, and bestow beauty on my singing.

- ◆ **Strewing of barley groats around the altar (circling clockwise three times)**
- ◆ **To Gaia**

First of all, in my prayers, before all other Gods, I call upon the foremost prophetess Gaia.

- ◆ **Invocation to Gaia: Gaia, to you who nurtures us into being, who nurtures us through life, and who accepts us once again unto Thee, blessed Kourotrophos, I honor you with khernips . . . .**
- ◆ **Offering of khernips poured out**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 26 To Earth**

### Ges

[Gaia Thea/], mother of men and of the blessed Gods,  
 you nourish all, you give all, you bring all to fruition, and you destroy all.  
 When the season is fair you are heavy with fruit and growing blossoms;  
 and, O multiform maiden, you are the seat of the immortal cosmos,  
 and in the pains of labor you bring forth fruit of all kinds.  
 Eternal, reverend, deep-bosomed, and blessed,  
 you delight in the sweet breath of grass, O Goddess bedecked with flowers.  
 Yours is the joy of the rain, and round you the intricate realm of the stars  
 revolves in endless and awesome flow.  
 But, O blessed Goddess, may you multiply the gladsome fruits  
 and, together with the beautiful seasons, grant me favor.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis

- ◆ **Invocations and prayers to Themis: To you who sits leaning against Zeus, who consults closely with Zeus, and who are the just order of all things . . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

Leap for goodly Themis

From the Hymn of the Kouretes

- ◆ **Incense: storax**
- ◆ **Invocation to Demeter: Khaire Demeter, you who taught us to work the earth and provides for us so bountifully...**

I begin to sing of rich-haired Demeter, awful goddess, of her and of her daughter lovely  
 Persephone. Hail, goddess! Keep this city safe, and govern my song.

From Homeric Hymn 13 to Demeter

- ◆ **Libation of a kykeon (barley meal, water, mint or barley meal, water, mint, and goat cheese) to Demeter**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 40 To Eleusinian Demeter**

### To Eleusinian Demeter

Deo, divine mother of all, goddess of many names,  
 revered Demeter, nurturer of youths, giver of prosperity and wealth,  
 you nourish the ears of corn, O giver of all,  
 you delight in peace and in toilsome labor.

Present at sowing, heaping, and threshing, O spirit of the unripe fruit,  
 you dwell in the sacred valley of Eleusis.  
 Charming and lovely, you give sustenance to all mortals;  
 you were the first to yoke the plowing ox,  
 the first to send up from below a rich, a lovely harvest for mortals.  
 You are growth and blossoming, O illustrious companion of Bromios,  
 torch-bearing and pure, you delight in the summer's yield.  
 From beneath the earth you appear, gentle to all,  
 O holy and youth-nurturing lover of children and of fair offspring.  
 You yolk your chariot to bridled dragons,  
 round your throne you whirl and howl in ecstasy.  
 You are an only daughter, but you have many children and many powers over mortals;  
 the variety of flowers reflect your myriad faces and your sacred blossoms.  
 Come, O blessed and pure one, come with the fruits of summer,  
 bearing peace, bring the welcome rule of law;  
 bring riches, too, and prosperity, and bring health that governs all.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **Libation of a kykeon (barley meal, water, mint or barley meal, water, mint, and goat cheese) to Demeter**
- ◆ **Sacrificial Offering**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 41 To Mother Antaia**

#### **To Mother Antaia**

Queen Antaia, Goddess and many-named mother  
 of immortal Gods and mortal men,  
 weary from searching, weary from wandering far and wide,  
 you ended your fast in the valley of Eleusis,  
 you came to Hades for noble Persephone.  
 Your guide was the innocent child of Dysaules,  
 who brought the news of pure Chthonic Zeus' holy union;  
 you bore divine Euboulos by yielding to human need.  
 O Goddess, O Queen to whom many pray, I beseech you  
 to come graciously to your pious initiate.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **From Philicus' Hymn to Demeter (reconstructed and adapted):**

. . . . To Eleusis with the mystic coursings of the Iacchoi, welcoming the faster by the  
 wave in large numbers. Take up the scepter and bring Persephone up to where there are  
 stars. With [Hekate] leading, you shall not go wrong at all, but pick up the torches, relax  
 your heavy brow.

And whole swarms of women in a circle about [Demeter] caressed the ground with their  
 foreheads and gathered the only living growth from the cropland earth to cast as foliage  
 upon the Goddess.

But Halimous dispatched the old woman, who had lost her way in the mountain haunts,

but arrived at a good time as a result of some chance: for in solemn occasions can an amusing tale be unprofitable?

For she stood and uttered at once in a bold, loud voice: “Do not throw goat-fodder: It is not this that is a remedy for a starving God, but ambrosia is the support for such a delicate stomach. But you, divine one, should give ear to Attic Iambe’s little benefit; I am one who has poured out unschooled words, as well as might a chattering living in a distant deme.

For you cups and garlands and water drawn in a fresh stream; and from the women, look! There is grass as a gift, a timorous deer’s diet. None of these things do I have for my gift: but if you loosen up your grieving, then I shall release...”

- ◆ **Invocation to Iambe: Khaire Iambe, you who lifted the mood of the grieving Goddess...**
- ◆ **Excerpt from Homeric Hymn 2 To Demeter**

**(Iambe’s kindness)**

But the goddess walked to the threshold: and her head reached the roof and she filled the doorway with a heavenly radiance. Then awe and reverence and pale fear took hold of Metaneira, and she rose up from her couch before Demeter, and bade her be seated. But Demeter, bringer of seasons and giver of perfect gifts, would not sit upon the bright couch, but stayed silent with lovely eyes cast down until careful Iambe placed a jointed seat for her and threw over it a silvery fleece. Then she sat down and held her veil in her hands before her face. A long time she sat upon the stool<sup>2</sup> without speaking because of her sorrow, and greeted no one by word or by sign, but rested, never smiling, and tasting neither food nor drink, because she pined with longing for her deep-bosomed daughter, until careful Iambe—who pleased her moods in aftertime also—moved the holy lady with many a quip and jest to smile and laugh and cheer her heart.

Translation by Hugh G. Evelyn White

- ◆ **Incense: aromatic herbs**
- ◆ **Invocation to Persephone: Khaire Persephone, maiden Goddess of spring’s bounty...**
- ◆ **Libation of pure water**
- ◆ **Excerpt from Homeric Hymn 2 To Demeter**

**(The return of Kore)**

. . . . and Aidoneus, ruler over the dead, smiled grimly and obeyed the behest of Zeus the king. For he straightway urged wise Persephone, saying: “Go now, Persephone, to your dark-robed mother, go, and feel kindly in your heart towards me: be not so exceedingly cast down; for I shall be no unfitting husband for you among the deathless gods, that am own brother to father Zeus. And while you are here, you shall rule all that lives and moves and shall have the greatest rights among the deathless gods: those who defraud you and do not appease your power with offerings, reverently performing rites and paying fit gifts, shall be punished for evermore.”

And when Demeter saw them, she rushed forth as does a Maenad down some thick-wooded mountain, while Persephone on the other side, when she saw her mother’s sweet

eyes, left the chariot and horses, and leaped down to run to her, and falling upon her neck, embraced her.

Translation by Hugh G. Evelyn White

- ◆ **Invocation to Persephone: Khaire Persephone, who send forth the fruits of the earth . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of pure water**
- ◆ **Sacrificial offering**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 29 Hymn To Persephone**

### **Hymn to Persephone**

Persephone, blessed daughter of great Zeus, sole offspring of Demeter, come and accept this gracious sacrifice. Much honored spouse of Plouton, discreet and life-giving, you command the gates of Hades in the bowels of the earth, lovely-tressed Praxidike, pure bloom of Deo, mother of the Erinyes, queen of the nether world, secretly sired by Zeus in clandestine union. Mother of loud-roaring, many-shaped Eobouleus, radiant and luminous playmate of the Seasons, revered and almighty, maiden rich in fruits, brilliant and horned, only-beloved of mortals, in spring you take your joy in the meadow of breezes, you show your holy figure in branches teeming with grass-green fruits, in autumn you were made a kidnapper's bride. You alone are life and death to toiling mortals, O Persephone, you nourish all, always, and kill them, too. Hearken, O blessed Goddess, send forth the fruits of the earth as you blossom in peace, and in gentle-handed health bring a blessed life and a splendid old age to him who is sailing to your realm, O queen, and to mighty Plouton's kingdom.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **Presentation of a pig-shaped bread offering or pork meat**

“Blessed Demeter, golden-haired Goddess of the harvest and Kore, blessed Goddess of bountiful spring fruit. With you, the seasons rise and fall and the soil provides. From the chasm, You rise, and from the chasm the ancients pulled Your sacrifice. Kore, when you descend down to Haides' realm, we mourn the loss of your fertile influence as You journey to the underworld, but celebrate Your rising.”

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

“May we be mindful of blessings of Demeter and Kore, and may the Theoi watch benevolently over us and guide us with favorable fortunes!”

Adapted from Aeschylus – Libation Bearers – Chorus

- ◆ **Invocation to Hestia: Daughter of Kronos, You whose eternal flame illumines all our worship, we have honored You in first place with a libation of honey sweet wine and will honor you in last place with a libation of honey sweet wine:**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 29 to Hestia**

### **To Hestia**

Hestia, you that in the high dwellings of all, both immortal gods and men who walk on earth, have been assigned an everlasting seat as the privilege of seniority, and enjoy a fine honor and privilege, for mortals have no feasts without you where the libation-pourer does not begin by offering honey-sweet wine to Hestia in first place and last: and you, Argus-slayer, son of Zeus and Maia, messenger of the blessed ones, gold-wand, giver of blessings, be favorable and assist together with Hestia whom you love and revere. For both of you dwell in the fine houses of men on earth, in friendship towards each other, fine supports (of the house), and you attend intelligence and youth. I salute you, daughter of Kronos, and you too, gold-wand Hermes. And I will take heed both for you and for other singing.

Translated by Martin L. West

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine to Hestia**

“Blessed Hestia, Goddess of home and hearth, to you we offer last of all a libation of honey sweet wine, as pious mortals should. Tend to those whom we love and guard the houses of the pious. As the Gods will it, so shall it be!”

- ◆ **Extinguishing of the lamp**