

# THE STORY OF PROMETHEUS AND THE FIRE

## How Fire Was Given to Men

In those old, old times, there lived two brothers who were not like other men, nor yet like those Mighty Ones who lived upon the mountaintop. They were the sons of one of those Titans who had fought against Jupiter and been sent in chains to the strong prison-house of the Lower World.

The name of the elder of these brothers was Prometheus, or Forethought; for he was always thinking of the future and making things ready for what might happen tomorrow, or next week, or next year, or it may be in a hundred years to come. The younger was called Epimetheus, or Afterthought; for he was always so busy thinking of yesterday, or last year, or a hundred years ago, that he had no care at all for what might come to pass after a while.

For some cause, Jupiter had not sent these brothers to prison with the rest of the Titans.

Prometheus did not care to live **amid** the clouds on the mountaintop. He was too busy for that. While the Mighty Folk were spending their time in **idleness**," drinking nectar and eating ambrosia," he was intent upon plans for making the world wiser and better than it had ever been before.

He went out amongst men to live with them and help them; for his heart was filled with sadness when he found that they were no longer happy as they had been during the golden days when Saturn was king. Ah, how very poor and **wretched** they were! He found them living in caves and in holes in the earth, shivering with the cold because there was no fire, dying of **starvation**, hunted by wild beasts and by one another, the most miserable of all living creatures.

*"If they only had fire," said Prometheus to himself, "they could at least warm themselves and cook their food; and after a while, they could learn to make tools and build themselves houses. Without fire, they are worse off than the beasts."*

Then he went boldly to Jupiter and begged him to give fire to men, that so they might have a little comfort through the long, **dreary** months of winter.

*"Not a spark will I give," said Jupiter. "No, indeed! Why, if men had fire, they might become strong and wise like ourselves, and after a while, they would drive us out of our kingdom. Let them **shiver** with cold, and let them live like the beasts. It is best for them to be poor and ignorant, so we Mighty Ones may **thrive** and be happy."*

Prometheus made no answer, but he had set his heart on helping mankind, and he did not give up. He turned away, and left Jupiter and his mighty company forever.

As he was walking by the shore of the sea he found a reed, or, as some say, a tall stalk of fennel, growing; and when he had broken it off he saw that its hollow center was filled with a dry, soft **pith** which would burn slowly and keep on fire a long time. He took the long stalk in his hands, and started walking with it towards the dwelling of the sun in the far east.

*"Mankind shall have fire in spite of the tyrant who sits on the mountaintop," he said.*

He reached the place of the sun in the early morning just as the glowing, golden orb was rising from the earth and beginning his daily journey through the sky. He touched the end of the long reed to the flames, and the dry pith caught on fire and burned slowly. Then he turned and **hastened** back to his own land, carrying with him the precious spark hidden in the hollow center of the plant.

He called some of the shivering men from their caves and built a fire for them, and showed them how to warm themselves by it and how to build other fires from the coals. Soon there was a cheerful blaze in every rude home in the land, and men and women gathered round it and were warm and happy, and thankful to Prometheus for the wonderful gift which he had brought to them from the sun.

It was not long until they learned to cook their food and so to eat like men instead of like beasts. They began at once to leave off their wild and savage habits; and instead of **lurking** in the dark places of the world, they came out into the open air and the bright sunlight, and were glad because life had been given to them.

After that, Prometheus taught them, little by little, a thousand things. He showed them how to build houses of wood and stone, and how to tame sheep and cattle and make them useful, and how to plow and sow and reap, and how to protect themselves from the storms of winter and the beasts of the woods. Then he showed them how to dig in the earth for copper and iron, and how to melt the ore and how to hammer it into shape and fashion from it the tools and weapons which they needed in peace and war, and when he saw how happy the world was becoming, he cried out:

*"A new Golden Age shall come, brighter and better by far than the old!"*

**Activity 1- Choose the best option to answer the following questions**

**1. What is the main reason why Prometheus decided to give fire to men?**

- A) *To make them strong and wise like the gods*
- B) *To help them cook their food and stay warm*
- C) *To drive the Mighty Ones out of their kingdom*
- D) *To make them happy like during the golden days*

**2. Why did Jupiter refuse to give fire to men?**

- A) *He wanted men to remain poor and ignorant*
- B) *He was afraid men would become stronger than the gods*
- C) *He didn't have the power to create fire*
- D) *He believed fire was too dangerous for humans*

**3. How did Prometheus acquire fire to give to men?**

- A) *He created fire using his powers*
- B) *He stole it from the gods*
- C) *He carried a reed filled with a burning pith from the sun*
- D) *He asked Jupiter to provide it, but was refused*

**4. What changes occurred in the lives of men after they received fire from Prometheus?**

- A) *They became more savage and wild*
- B) *They started living in caves and holes in the earth*
- C) *They evolved as they learned how to use fire and tools*
- D) *They became more dependent on the Mighty Ones*

**5. How did Prometheus contribute to improving the lives of men besides giving them fire?**

- A) *He taught them how to fight and defend themselves*
- B) *He showed them how to gather fruits and berries*
- C) *He helped them build homes and cultivate land*
- D) *He advised them to worship the gods for prosperity*

**6. What did Prometheus foresee for the future of mankind after giving them fire?**

- A) *A future era that shines with more brilliance and improvement than the past.*
- B) *Continuous wars and conflicts among men*
- C) *The return of Saturn as the king of the world*
- D) *The eventual destruction of the human race by the gods*

**Activity 2: Identifying references.** Can you identify what these pronouns in the text refer back or forward to? Type the exact word/ words they refer to.

- 1- "If they only had fire," said Prometheus to himself,
- 2- "He reached the place of the sun in the early morning just as the glowing, golden orb was rising from the earth and beginning his daily journey through the sky."
- 3- "He touched the end of the long reed to the flames, and the dry pith caught on fire and burned slowly."

**Activity 3: Based on the way they were used in the text; can you match these words to their definitions?**

WORD	Matches...	DEFINITION
1. hasten		a. to grow, develop or be successful
2. pith		b. to make something happen sooner or more quickly
3. starvation		c. suffering from lack of food
4. dreary		d. dull and depressing
5. amid		e. very unhappy, ill or poor
6. shiver		f. to wait somewhere secretly, especially because you are going to do something bad
7. wretched		g. the white substance between the skin and the flesh of citrus fruits such as oranges, or the soft, white inside part of the stem of some plants.
8. thrive		h. in the middle of or surrounded by something
9. idleness		i. the state of not working or being active
10. lurk		j. to shake slightly because you are cold or frightened