



THE JUDGEMENT OF PARIS & The Trojan War

On Mount Olympus a decadent wedding feast was held and all the gods were invited. Unfortunately, the goddess of discord, Eris, was mistakenly left off the guest list. Angered by the oversight, Eris sought revenge. She appeared at the party and rolled a golden apple amongst the party guests. Upon the golden apple was written, "To the Fairest." Three Olympian goddesses, Hera (queen of the gods), Athena (goddess of wisdom and war), and Aphrodite (goddess of love and beauty), all claimed the prize. To settle the matter, Zeus asked Hermes, the messenger god, to appoint an impartial judge. Hermes chose the beautiful young mortal Paris, who was the son of Priam, the king of Troy.

Each goddess tried to influence Paris with a special gift. Athena offered him victory in war. Hera offered to make him ruler of the world, while Aphrodite proposed to give him the most beautiful woman in the world as his wife. Paris chose Aphrodite who rewarded her judge by promising him the most beautiful woman on earth, whom everyone knew to be Helen, the wife of the Greek king Menelaus.

Lured by Aphrodite's promise, Paris visited the palace of Menelaus at Sparta. Contrary to all the sacred rules of hospitality, Paris seduced the queen and abducted her back to Troy. The theft of Helen was an act of outrage which invoked the oath of Tyndareus, requiring the united powers of the Greeks to avenge the wounded honor of Menelaus and retrieve Helen.

The Greeks traveled to Troy and for nearly ten years, the Greeks unsuccessfully besieged Troy in the Trojan War. Finally, the Greek warrior, Odysseus, had the idea to build a large wooden horse, known as the Trojan Horse. The Greeks hid warriors inside the horse and left it at the gate of Troy. Meanwhile, they pretended to sail away. That night the Trojans took the Horse into their city and the warriors crept out and threw open the city's gates. The Greeks entered, sacked the city and claimed a victorious end to the great Trojan War.