

# THE ENTRANCE

PERSEPHONE: QUEEN OF THE UNDERWORLD

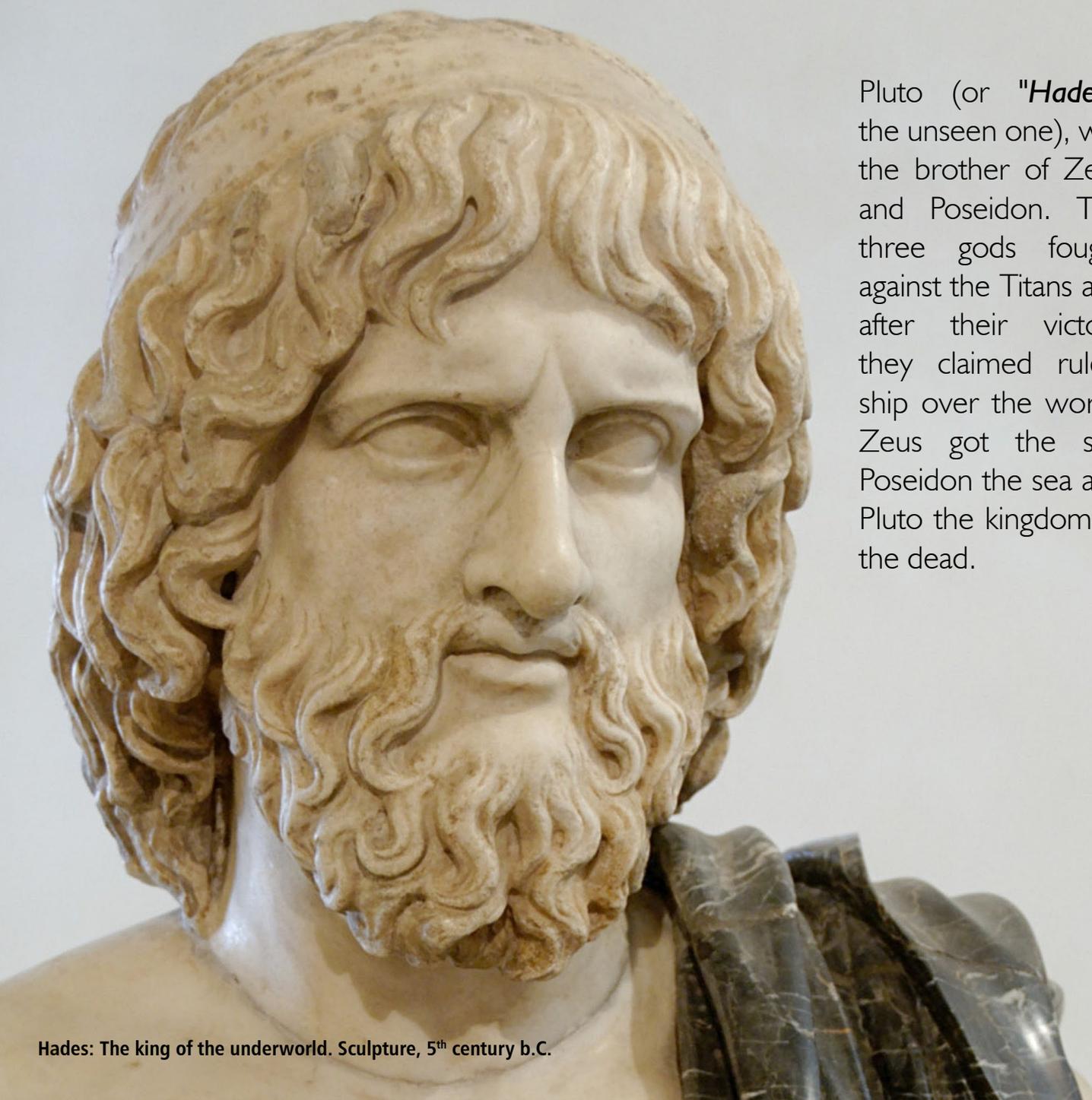
MYTHOLOGICAL REVIEW

English translation by Apostolia Tsigara



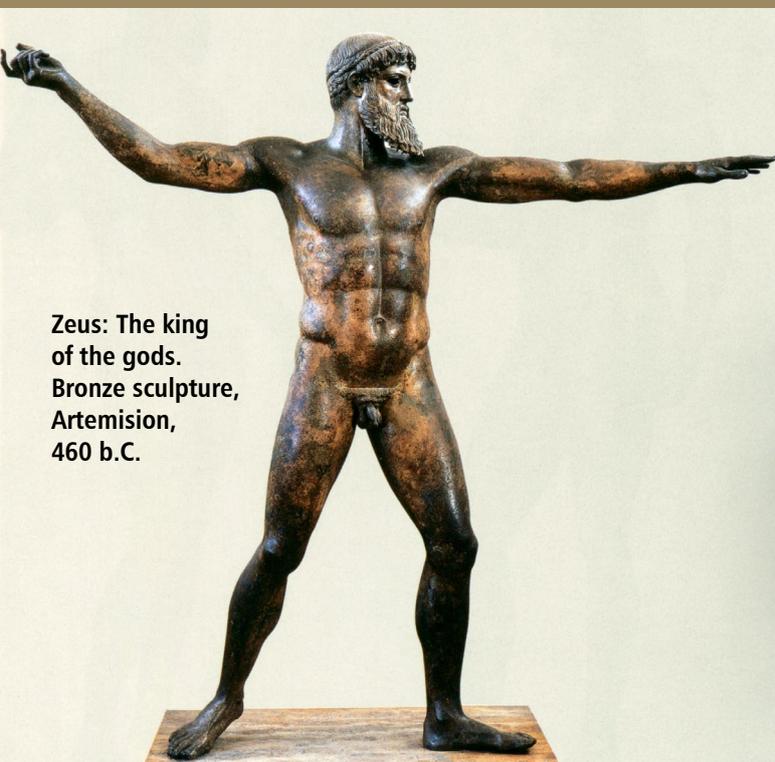
Long before our era, when the world was ruled by the Olympian Gods, Persephone, the daughter of Zeus and Demeter was born. Demeter, meaning "**Mother Earth**", was the harvest goddess. She also protected marriage and motherhood. She taught Triptolemus, son of the King Celeus of Eleusis, the cultivation of wheat and the secrets of agriculture and he in turn taught them to the rest of the world.

Triptolemus between Demeter (left) and Persephone (right),  
Relief sculpture of Pentelic marble, 430 b.C.

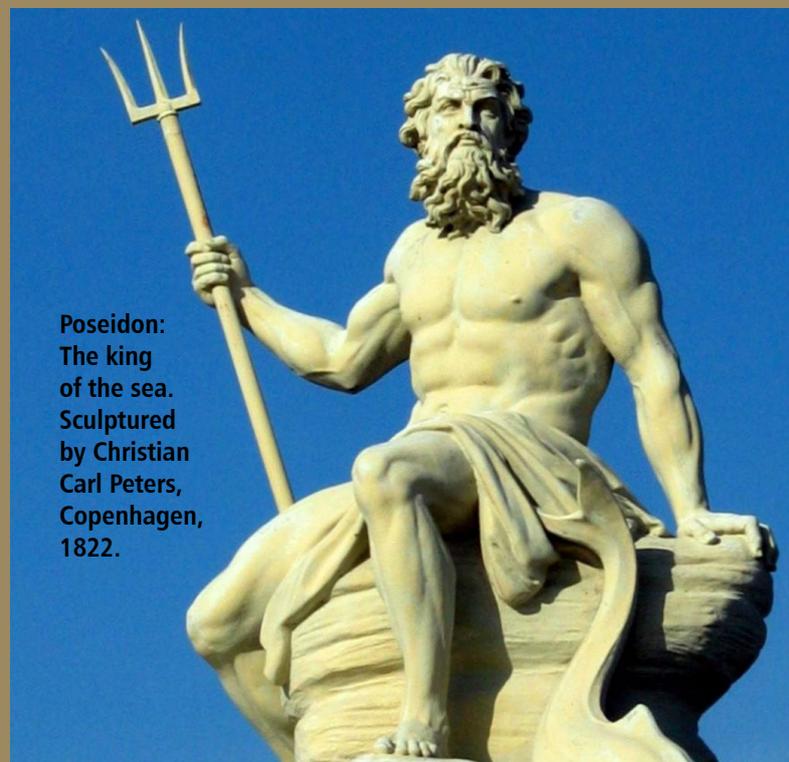


Pluto (or "*Hades*", the unseen one), was the brother of Zeus and Poseidon. The three gods fought against the Titans and after their victory they claimed rulership over the world. Zeus got the sky, Poseidon the sea and Pluto the kingdom of the dead.

Hades: The king of the underworld. Sculpture, 5<sup>th</sup> century b.C.



Zeus: The king of the gods. Bronze sculpture, Artemision, 460 b.C.



Poseidon: The king of the sea. Sculptured by Christian Carl Peters, Copenhagen, 1822.

When someone died,  
the god Hermes  
led his soul to the river  
Acheron.



Hermes:  
The messenger  
of the gods.  
Sculptured  
by Praxiteles,  
Temple of Hera,  
Olympia, 340 b.C.



**Acheron: The river of souls.**

Charon, the ferryman of souls, after receiving the obol (which was already placed in the mouth of the dead) carried the soul to the entrance of the underworld. The souls that could not pay the obol were doomed to wander eternally on the riverside.



**Obol: The coin for paying Charon**



**Charon: The ferryman of Hades. Painting by Josep Benlliure, 1896.**



Heracles, Cerberus and Eurystheus. Black-figured ceramic, 525 b.C.

Charon's journey ended in Acherusia Lake. The Gates of Hades were placed in the bowels of the lake, where Cerberus, the monstrous three-headed dog, was guarding the entrance. Nearby, next to the ancient Mycenaean colony of Ephira there was the Oracle of Acheron, where visitors, after several days of preparation, could communicate with the spirits of the dead.



Necromantion: The oracle of the dead.



Orestes pursued by the Furies. Painting by Adolphe-William Bouguereau, 1862.

The king of the underworld, Pluto, did not allow his nationals to return to the world of the living. But he allowed his servants, though, Keres and Furies. Keres, the deities of the underworld, could visit the world of the living and cause sudden deaths to the mortals, and Furies were hunting those who had committed a crime.

Pluto was captivated by the beauty of Persephone and wanted her to be his wife, but Demeter did not consent to this marriage. She knew her daughter would be forced to live in the world of shadows forever.



Oceanid nymphs. Painting by Gustave Dore, 1869.

Someday, while Persephone was picking flowers along with the Oceanid nymphs, her attention was caught by a narcissus. She approached the flower, and while trying to cut it, the earth cracked and Pluto with his chariot appeared in front of her. He abducted Persephone and led her to the underworld where he forced her to the much wanted marriage.



Hades and Persephone. Red-figured kylix (cup), 440 b.C.

Demeter, devastated by the abduction of her daughter, left nothing on earth to blossom and fructify. The main reference to the lamentation of Demeter for the loss of Persephone was her sitting on a rock at the sanctuary of Eleusis. This rock is called "***Mourning Rock***".

**Propylon:** The entrance to the sanctuary of Eleusis.



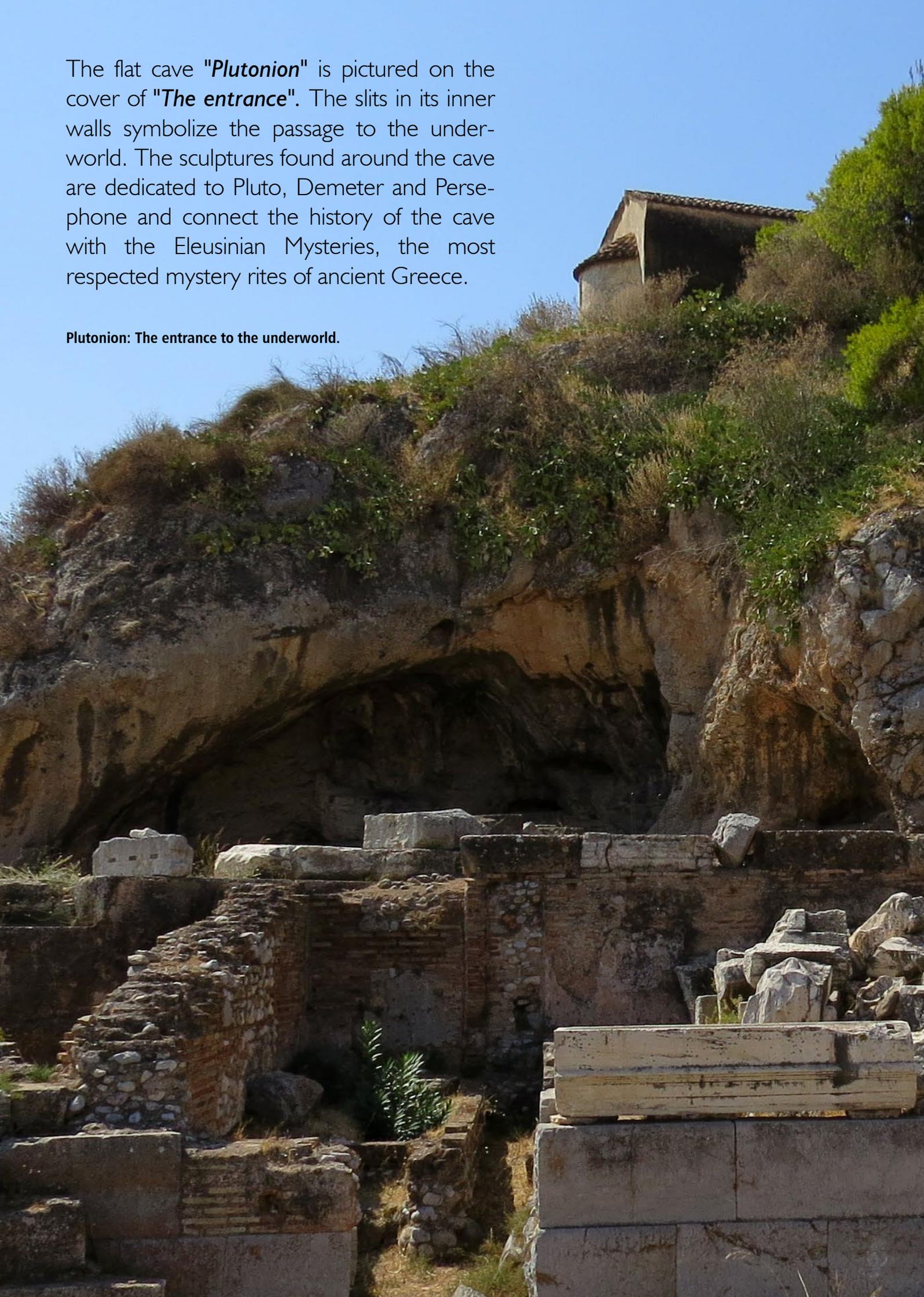


Zeus, realizing that people were starving because of the death of the earth, sends a message to Pluto with Hermes and requests the release of Persephone. Finally, Persephone is forced to live in the kingdom of the dead for four months a year. It is the period that Demeter mourns and winter dominates on earth. The rest of the year Persephone lives with her mother, who is happy and allows nature to blossom again.

The return of Persephone. Painting by Frederic Leighton, 1891.

The flat cave "*Plutonion*" is pictured on the cover of "*The entrance*". The slits in its inner walls symbolize the passage to the underworld. The sculptures found around the cave are dedicated to Pluto, Demeter and Persephone and connect the history of the cave with the Eleusinian Mysteries, the most respected mystery rites of ancient Greece.

**Plutonion: The entrance to the underworld.**



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