



Let's read a paragraph from the book, "GODS, HEROES AND MEN OF ANCIENT GREECE" by W.H.D. Rouse:

"Heracles threw down his bow and arrows and leapt upon the lion's back... while he put his hands round the lions neck...gripped the lion's throat with his two hands, and bending him backwards, throttled him. There lay the lion dead on the ground." (p. 59). In our Bible, **Judges 13:6** says that Samson actually

tore the lion in two, but the ancient historian Flavius Josephus in his "ANTIQUITIES OF THE JEWS" also tells us that Samson first strangled the lion, which is exactly as Hercules is said to have done.

I don't even know that there ever were any lions in Greece. The BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGIST MAGAZINE somewhat tersely comments, "*Lions, we may remark, are not frequent in Greece.*" (59:1, p. 17) In fact, the Greek myths explain this one away as the offspring of a monster! But whether there were lions in Greece is not important; Hercules needed to find one anyway. Why? Simply because the Biblical Samson inspired the Greek legend called Hercules, and provided the basis for his life!

Another of Hercules' labors involved his live capture of a wild animal, which he brought home and threw at the feet of Eurystheus. In **Judges 15:4**, Samson is said to also capture live wild animals, which he released in the cornfields of the Philistines.

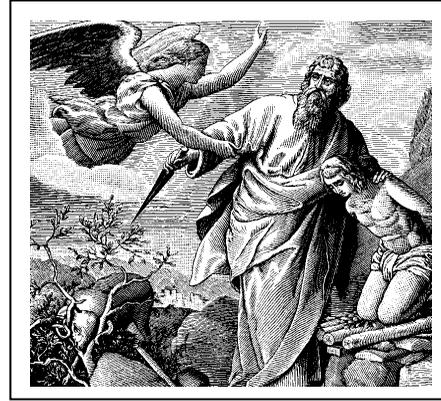
A fascinating bit of additional information regarding Hercules is his connection with the Biblical tribe of Dan. The Bible Samson was born of the tribe of **Dan**. (**Judges 13:2-25**) Greek history tells us that a people called '**Danioi**' came to trade and colonize Greece in ancient times, settling in a region called '**Argos**.' The word **Hercules** in Greek is, '**Heracles**,' which is virtually identical with the Hebrew plural word for traders, '**Heraclim**,' and Heracles is said to have come from '**Argos**,' himself! The Greek myths tell that the **Danioi** were descended from a patriarch '**Danaos**' who was the son of '**Bela**,' and sailed from Egypt. In the Bible, the Hebrew patriarch **Dan** was the son of the concubine '**Bilhah**' (**Genesis 30:3-6**), and the Israelites were in Egypt at the time that '**Danaos**' set sail to Greece from there! Heracles, further, is said to marry a girl named '**Hebe**,' an obvious and well-known short form of the word, **Hebrew!** Since the tribe of Dan were traders and colonists who did so much sailing that they "stayed in their ships" (**Judges 5:17**), it is not surprising to find such connections with ancient Greece.

In another tale from Greek mythology, we read how God through the Oracle at Delphi seemingly ordered a king to sacrificially slay his son Phrixos, as a sign of his obedience to God. But let me quote the story from my Greek commentary: "*The oracle said, kill Phrixos and Helle at the altar for a sacrifice, or your corn will grow no more. This was a*

dreadful blow to the king; but he had to obey what he believed to be god's wish, like Abraham and Isaac in the Bible. And in this case, too, there was a ram, but a different sort of ram from the ram which was sacrificed instead of Isaac. There stood at the altar the two children, ready to be killed; there stood the sacrificer with his knife; there stood the king, full of sorrow. and lo and behold, down came the ram, and up got the boy and girl upon his back, and away he flew into the sky." (*ibid.*, P.92) This is obviously not an exact retelling of the story of Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac, but an historical kernel obviously exists, which was corrupted into the present Greek mythology over time.

Another interesting Bible comparison can be made with the Greek hero Achilles, who could only die by having his heel wounded. What a strange story to tell! That is, it would be strange were it not for the fact that we read such an account in the Bible in the form of a prophecy concerning the coming Christ in **Genesis 3:15**: "*I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou SHALT BRUISE HIS HEEL.*" It can be easily seen how a misinterpretation of this verse (especially in the early pre-Christian centuries, before Christ's fulfillment of prophecy was manifest) could inspire a story of someone dying through a wound in his heel!

The strong connection between the Hebrew and Greek civilizations is well known to scholars of ancient history. Perhaps the leading American archaeologist of the twentieth century is **Cyrus H. Gordon**, author of over 20 books, and recognized authority on Mediterranean cultural history. In his book, "THE COMMON BACKGROUND OF GREEK AND HEBREW CIVILIZATIONS," Dr. Gordon says, "*Pagan critics of early Christianity confronted the Church Fathers with some embarrassing parallels, but the Fathers were equal to the challenge and provided answers in keeping with the spirit of their times. There were Fathers who honestly recognized the reality of the parallels but explained them as the mischief of demons who had planted them in Greek literature to harass the Church.*" (p. 10) Gordon then points out that the definite similarity between Greek early religion and literature, and that of the Old Testament, is not due to demons but to the fact that the Hebrew people provided the basis of Greek culture. In ancient times, Hebrew traders and colonists established trading colonies and settlements throughout the Mediterranean seaboard; our tracts, "ANCIENT HEBREW SEA MIGRATIONS," and "ANCIENT HEBREWS IN SPAIN AND BRITAIN," also give evidence of such migrations in ancient times. Dr. Gordon gives numerous other parallels between Greek traditions and the Bible, such as the "staff of God," in **Exodus 17**, which appears in the *Iliad* in 15:318-



322. The theme of "washing away uncleanness into the sea," in **Micah 7:18-20**, also appears in **Iliad 1:312-317**. (*ibid.*, p.12-13) The imagery of the sea as a "watery path" in **Psalms 8:9** finds its duplicate often in Greek literature. The Hebrew "Cities of Refuge" for a fugitive kinsman who had to flee from an avenger of his own family, is also paralleled in Greek literature as in **Odyssey 15:271-278**. Likewise, military "triads of officers" in **2 Samuel 23:9, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, and 23** are paralleled in **Iliad 2:563-7** and **Odyssey 14:470-471**. In fact, the Hebrew word for military officers, "salis," comes from, "salos," the Hebrew number 3. (*ibid.*, p. 17) Early Hebrew burial customs were also paralleled in early Greece. The Bible tells us that when Saul and his sons died, the Hebrews retrieved and burned the corpses prior to burial. (**I Samuel 31:12**) Similarly, during the Trojan War, Hector's body was retrieved by Priam, and the Trojans "shedding tears, carried out brave Hector and set the corpse on the highest pyre and cast fire thereon." (**Iliad 24:786-787**) The very same custom was well-known in the Norse and early peoples of Europe, showing another familial connection. (Also see our tract, "THE OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS OF NORSE MYTHOLOGY") As a result of such evidence, Gordon sees Hebrew and Greek civilization as "*a continuum instead of two unconnected areas poles apart.*" (*ibid.*, p.54) Yet some insist on ignoring the mass of such evidence! Gordon comments that the ancient Greek writer, "*Herodotus (I:105, 2:44; 4:147ff; 6:47, etc.) knew about the early [Hebrew]-Phoenician penetration of what is now Greek territory. But many modern scholars still choose to discount his testimony and instead follow current schools of thought.*" (*ibid.*, p. 216)

Other familiar Bible history also has its counterpart in Greek literature. Cyrus Gordon explains (*ibid.*, p. 279), "*The analogy between the Greeks and Hebrews goes much further. [The Greek hero] Minos has rightly been compared with Moses. Both are greater than life-size figures who received the law from the Supreme God on a sacred mountain (Dionysius of Helicarnassus, Roman antiquities 2:61) God's law itself has parallels in early Greece. Dr. Gordon comments, "Leviticus 25 makes the theory of real estate quite clear. God owned the Land and the People. The Hebrews... were entrusted with the land as His tenants. They were at the same time to be the landed warrior and administrative ruling class. All this is basically paralleled in Greece."* (*ibid.*, p. 295)

The long day of Joshua, where the sun stood still to lengthen the day and ensure a victory, also appears in Greek legend. (**Joshua 10:13-14**; cp., **Iliad 18:239-242**) Truly, it would be astonishing for such parallel detail between the Hebrews and Greeks to be mere happenstance!

Dr. Gordon's studies have met with a considerable amount of rightly deserved acclaim in the academic community. The BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGIST MAGAZINE devoted an entire issue to his research, and reported (March 1996, p. 22), "*Professor Gordon had been delivering a popular lecture on 'The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilizations,' particularly about the Heroic Age both in Late Bronze Age Greece and in pre-monarchic Israel. Citing the Iliad of Homer and the Biblical book Samuel, he pointed out that the heroes David and Achilles performed essentially the same warlike exploits in search of imperishable glory, the only bulwark against oblivion. The milieu of*

Achilles and of David were therefore closer to one another than was that of Achilles to Classical Greece or that of David to the Age of the Prophets in Israel. Following the lecture, a little old lady, wide-eyed with astonishment and admiration, made her way up to the distinguished lecturer and asked, 'Does that mean, Professor Gordon, that Achilles was Jewish?'" This insightful woman was on the right track in her thinking, for the ancestors of the early Greeks were Israelites, as the close parallels between the religion of these two nations implies.

Near-Eastern scholar, Dr. Louis H. Feldman, concurs with this in a lengthy article in the same journal pointing out the connection between Greek mythic literature and its source in both the Bible and Mesopotamian religion. He states, "*Likewise, Mondt (1990:187) cites the parallel between the Homeric shield of Achilles;*

'And upon it he made the earth and the sky and the sea, the tireless sun and the waxing moon, and all the constellations which wreath the sky.' (Iliad 18.483-485)

And Psalm 136:5-9:

'to him who made the heavens, the earth upon the waters,the great lights, ...the sun..., the moon and the stars.'"

Dr. Feldman continues, "*Furthermore, the scenes on the shield of a city at peace in which the leaders are dispensing justice, repelling aggression, and harvesting, while the king stands by watching happily, correspond to the description in Psalm 72.*" An obvious inference is that the Greek myths are so chock full of Hebraisms because of Hebrew colonization of Greece in ancient times.

Parallels with Assyrian and Babylon religion are also commonplace in Greek mythic literature. On this, Dr. Feldman comments, "*Furthermore, there are parallels in motifs between Near Eastern epics and Homer. In the first place, as Professor Gordon, followed by Considine and Walcot... noted there are eight striking parallels between the Baal-Anath text 137, where Baal is restrained from doing violence to the envoys by the goddesses Anath and Ashtoreth, and the scene in the Iliad (1.188-222), when Achilles is about to slay Agamemnon, but is restrained by the two goddesses, Athena and Hera.*" Dr. Feldman's article continues on these themes for many pages, proving without doubt the connection between Greece and the Near East, including Israel, in very early times. Feldman concludes by saying, "*SOME WOULD SAY, as they did with Professor Gordon's 'Homer and Bible' (1955) and 'Before the Bible' (1962), THAT SEVERAL OF THESE PARALLELS ARE COMMONPLACES; BUT THE TOTAL EFFECT IS WHAT COUNTS. THERE IS NOW FAIRLY GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT THE NEAR EAST ...INFLUENCED HOMER.*" (*ibid.*, p. 19)

It is clear that early Greek mythology shows evidence of not only Hebrew, but also Canaanite, Assyrian, and Babylonian religious culture. That the Greek religion could be influenced by so many streams of different Semitic culture may seem incredible until we remember that Israelite religion was also influenced by these same foreign nations. This



PICTURESQUE TALE OF PROGRESS" says, "*The similarity of these flood stories [Greek and Hebrew] is interesting. Here, as in the Bible, the flood is sent to destroy mortals because of the evil in the world, the chest goes aground on a mountain top and the survivors at once offer sacrifice.*"

Before closing this discussion on Greece and its ancient ties to Hebrew religion, it is interesting that the Greek god-hero, "Adonis," also received his name from the Semitic word, "Adon" or Lord. For example, one of the New Testament titles applied to Christ was "Adonay."

THE GOD WHO IS ABOVE ALL GODS

Greek heroes such as Hercules and Achilles were called children of God, but they were not immortal. They lived on earth, died, and their spirits were believed to sometimes be lifted up into heaven. Above these heroes in importance and power were said to be a pantheon of Gods. Yet, some of the Greek people also worshipped a ONE TRUE GOD, eternal in the heavens, unnamed except to be called "THE UNKNOWN GOD."

This brings us down to New Testament times, where we pick up the rest of our story in the seventeenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles (verses 22-23). "*Then Paul stood in the midst of Mar's Hill and said: Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious; for as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him I declare unto you.*" Not only did this religion have ancient ties to the Hebrews, but so also did the Greek people themselves.

The noted Dr. Cyrus Gordon concluded his book, "HOMER AND BIBLE," by stating, "*BOLD SPIRITS HAVE INTERMITTENTLY MAINTAINED THE KINSHIP OF EARLY GREECE AND THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST... we view Greek and Hebrew civilizations as parallel structures built upon the same East Mediterranean [i.e., Hebrew] foundation.*" (p. 72)

Yes, these people were not adopting a new religion with the coming of Christianity; they were rediscovering the religion of their forefathers in its purified form, as sent unto them by our Lord in the flesh, Jesus Christ. By God's design, these people forgot who they were, where they came from, and what their past religion was, all in His Plan of preparing them to again become united with the ONE TRUE GOD, who came unto them in the form of man, Yahshua Jesus Christ.

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mixed amalgam may therefore have been brought to Greece by the Hebrews themselves. Evidence of Hebrew culture and colonization in ancient Greece should not be ignored.

The story of the Noahic flood is also told in Greek mythology, where Deucalion and Pyrrha built a wooden "chest" to save them. Historian Olive Beaupre Miller, in "A

***A FAMOUS ARCHAEOLOGIST ANSWERS THE QUESTION:
"WAS ACHILLES JEWISH?"***

The Old Testament Roots Of Greek Mythology

GREEK MYTHOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

We began our series in part one with a look at the Old Testament roots of Norse mythology. In that study, we saw that the beliefs of the Norse bore a striking resemblance to the religion and culture of the Hebrews, Canaanites, Assyrians, and Babylonians. These cultural "cross-currents" were not unusual, and indicate a Semitic wave of colonization in early Europe.

Let's continue our series with a closer look at Greek mythology and see if the Bible in the Apocrypha is correct in **I Maccabees 12:21**, where we read, "*It has been found in a writing concerning the Lacedaemonians (GREEKS) AND JEWS (JUDAH), THAT THEY ARE KINSMEN, AND THAT THEY ARE DESCENDED FROM ABRAHAM.*" Yes, Israelites colonized Greece in early times, and the Greek religion shows us proof of a Hebrew origin as stated in the Apocrypha in the Bible.

The most well known Greek God-hero was the one known as Hercules (the Latinized form of the Greek "Heracles"), whose most distinguishing characteristic was immense physical strength. Interestingly enough, the "ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE CLASSICAL WORLD," states, "*The tales of his heroic deeds lend to the supposition that Hercules was originally an historic figure.*" Who do we know in the Bible that exhibits a like characteristic? The answer, of course, is the Israelite hero known as Samson, whose life was detailed in the Bible in **Judges chapters 13 through 16**.

One important event in Hercules' life involved his escaping from the clutches of a symbolic woman, who is called "Pleasure." This corresponds directly to the troubles Samson got himself involved in with the harlots of Canaan.

But the most celebrated event in the life of Hercules involved the **12 labors** he was ordered to perform by God through the Oracle of Delphi. (Incidentally, "12" was an important divine number in Hebrew religion.) What do you suppose was the very first labor Hercules had to perform? You might have guessed it! He had to slay a lion with his bare hands!