

## The Reason for Seasons - Demeter & Persephone

Zeus, the god of sky and thunder, the king of all the gods who ruled on Mt. Olympus, had a sister named Demeter. Demeter was the goddess of the harvest who presided over grains and the fertility of the earth.

One day, Demeter's beautiful young daughter Persephone was wandering about the earth gathering flowers in a field. Hades, Lord of the Underworld, noticed her and instantly fell in love. Suddenly, the earth split open and Persephone was abruptly abducted. Hades took her to his domain in the underworld to live with him as his wife and queen.

Demeter, upon noticing that her daughter had been abducted by Hades, immediately caused all plants to stop growing upon the face of the earth. Trees, flowers, fruits, vegetables and grains all ceased to grow.

In the Underworld, Hades tricked the innocent Goddess Persephone into eating enchanted pomegranate seeds, keeping her bound to the underworld forever, and doomed to eternally remain his bride. Demeter, upon discovering the disappearance of her beloved daughter, runs to Zeus and pleads that he have Hades return her. Zeus, annoyed by Demeter's insistent cries, sends the God Hermes to retrieve Persephone from the underworld. Hades complies and surrenders Persephone; however, he notes that since she has eaten food from the underworld (a deed that ultimately meant eternal residence there), she must return back to him every year. Hermes agrees and delivers Persephone back to her most grateful mother.

Although Persephone, young Goddess of the spring, is safe in her mother's arms once again, she returns each year to her dark husband, Hades. Every year Demeter's grief over the absence of her daughter causes trees to wither and plants to die in cold bitterness.

And that, according to the ancient Greeks, is how the seasons came about.

Every spring, Demeter makes sure flowers are blooming and crops are growing and the fields are green with welcome. Every fall, when Persephone returns to the underworld, Demeter ignores the crops and flowers and lets them die. Each spring, Demeter brings everything to life again, ready to welcome her daughter's return.

\*We also notice that Persephone is often portrayed holding a Pomegranate in her hand. Since the Pomegranate is the Symbol of fertility and abundance this reminds us that when Persephone arrives upon the earth, in the springtime, she brings with her all the Seeds of fertility, prosperity, and abundance. This is the time when the earth is in full bloom and life rejoices. In autumn, when she returns to her husband and her Queendom in the underworld, she takes the Pomegranate with her. During this time of the year the earth goes dormant...it sleeps...it rests.

The tale of Persephone and the Pomegranate is a metaphor for the continual cycle of growth, dormancy and re-growth which governs all things in the physical realm.

This myth also reminds us that when Persephone returns to the underworld, and the world goes dormant, the Seeds of growth, fertility and abundance do not vanish from the world forever. They are kept eternally warm and protected deep within the womb of Mother Earth and await the next annual earthly visit of Persephone and the Cycle of Abundance, growth and prosperity which she, and her fertile Pomegranate, brings to us.