

Hekate, Goddess of Liminality and Intermediary by Deanne Quarrie, D. Min.

Let me share with you the Goddess most honored as the Goddess of liminal time and space. It is our beloved Hekate, Great Goddess of the Three Ways, bridging Earth, Sea and Sky as we travel between worlds.

In modern times, She is seen by many as a "hag" or old witch stirring the cauldron. This idea was popularized by Roberts Graves' book, *The White Goddess*. In early writings, however, she is portrayed as a beautiful and powerful maiden goddess.

"I come, a virgin of varied forms, wandering through the heavens, bull-faced, three-headed, ruthless, with golden arrows; chaste Phoebe bringing light to mortals, Eileithyia; bearing the three synthemata [sacred signs] of a triple nature. In the Aether I appear in fiery forms and in the air, I sit in a silver chariot."
(*Chaldean Oracles*)

She was the only one of the ancient Titans that Zeus allowed to retain her power after the Olympians seized control. She shared with Zeus, the awesome power of granting all wishes to humanity (or withholding, if she chose).

"Hekate whom Zeus the son of Kronos (Cronus) honoured above all. He gave her splendid gifts, to have a share of the earth and the unfruitful sea. She received honour also in starry heaven, and is honoured exceedingly by the deathless gods . . . For as many as were born of Gaia (Gaea, Earth) and Ouranos (Uranus, Heaven) [the Titanes] amongst all these she has her due portion. The son of Kronos [Zeus] did her no wrong nor took anything away of all that was her portion among the former Titan gods: but she holds, as the division was at the first from the beginning, privilege both in earth, and in heaven, and in sea. Also, because she is an only child, the goddess receives not less honour, but much more still, for Zeus honours her." (*Hesiod, Theogony*)

She is the goddess of magic and witchcraft and is often depicted holding two torches or a key. To me the torches are to help light the way and the key for opening doors on the journey. She has many other symbols, showing us Her power in all ways. For me She is indeed, Hekate Soteira.

She is known for Her roles within the three worlds but for me, her role as the goddess who bridges these worlds is far more important. Throughout our lives we are faced with a multitude of liminal moments, those thresholds over which we must step in order to move forward.

The word liminal comes from the Latin word *limen*, meaning "a threshold." The word threshold has several definitions. It can be the sill of a doorway or the entrance of a building. Ultimately, it means any place of point of entering or beginning. In psychology the term *limen* means the point at which a stimulus is of enough intensity to begin to produce an effect.

Liminal time, therefore, is that moment when something changes from one state to another. Examples would be dawn, when the morning sun rises high enough in the sky to bring daylight. Another is dusk, when the evening sun sinks into the horizon bringing nightfall.

Another is that moment when we move from a clearing into a deep fog which shrouds us in mist and for a moment, we stop all thinking. There is that moment when we first wake from a deep sleep, not fully awake but no longer asleep. Plus, there is that state when we move from wakeful consciousness into sleep. There are also those moments of transitions between life and death and from an unborn fetus to a living, breathing infant.

Liminal spaces are thin places at boundaries between spaces. This includes places like the boundaries between properties where fences or trees mark them. Also edges between water and land or even between plains and mountains, highways and grass, etc.

These are all edges where changes occur. Imagine the cliffs and boulders on the Pacific Coast and the massive waves hitting and then retreating - that moment of contact before withdrawal – a liminal moment.

As the Earth travels around the Sun, the year can be divided into halves, the bright half and the dark half, as marked by the Solstices. It can also be marked as well as by the seasons.

Let us look at other examples of Hekate's liminality. She not only separates realms that are lorded over by different gods but serves as a transition goddess for said realms. As a result, She links gods together, weaving the threads of the universe.

Because liminality was deeply associated with boundaries and crossroads as well as the boundary between life and death, Hekate later transformed from a liminal figure to a chthonic figure.

In our spiritual practices, She can be thought of an intermediary. As time evolved the gods as more transcendent, more and more removed from everyday life, Her role as transitional and intermediary deity increased.

In the Chaldean Oracles She is not only a universal deity, She also embodies the divine and serves as a connection between man and the divine. Because of Her many aspects as well as domains, She is transformed to a liminal deity.

In the "Homeric Hymn to Demeter," after Persephone is kidnapped, Demeter roamed the earth to find her daughter. She does not know where to look until Hekate emerges from her cave, with Her torches, to tell Demeter that her daughter has been taken to the Underworld. Demeter and Persephone are paired together in the Eleusinian Mysteries as symbols of life and death. Accordingly, Hekate links the two of them together. Demeter represents what the bountiful earth provides, Persephone represents death and rebirth through her marriage to Hades. Hekate serves as a liminal figure connecting life and death, which is for us, our greatest boundary. As such, She oversees the transition between life and death. This means that she would be the goddess given honor to while crossing major thresholds in their lives, such as in marriage, childbirth, and at the time of death.

Icons of Hekate were placed at entrances to cities, kings' houses and with common people and at the doorways of homes. She was the guardian of the thresholds, as those approaching had to pass in order to enter.

Let us look at another view of liminal places, spaces and times. A shaman, (the term originates from the Tungus tribe in Siberia, now a term applied to spirit walkers of many traditions) works in liminal time and space. She is an edge walker, one who walks between the worlds. Her work is on the edge, for she has one foot in this world and one foot in the other. She travels between them walking the edge. She connects those of

the spirit world with those of this one. Her work is to serve her tribe, to heal, to honor the gods of the people, to talk with the spirits, keeping life in balance and harmony with all. As Goddess of the Three Worlds and the spaces in-between, Hekate is a perfect guide for the spirit walker as she travels between worlds. I am a Spirit Walker and travel those edges in my work and Hekate has been a trusted guide as well as one who facilitates those journeys.

For those of us who live a magical life, liminal times and liminal spaces are where our magical work is done. Liminal times and liminal spaces are when and where the veil between this world and the Otherworld thins. Travel between them becomes easier for us as well as for spirits and deities. As we deepen in our work, we come to recognize these liminal times and spaces, eager to understand them and work with them and finally to use them for the great work of the soul. We may choose liminal places to do our work and certainly we may choose a liminal time, moon wise, seasonally or in choosing the time of day.

For any of these we may call upon and receive assistance from Hekate. She is a perfect guide for us to honor and to put out trust in as we travel through our own personal transitions.

We also have liminal times not of our choosing. We can learn to recognize and use them for the best outcome. Many of them occur throughout our lives. Often, we fail to see what they are until they are behind us. At other times we can see and understand and work with the changes so that what is coming is of the best quality for us. They are threshold moments and we will step through, whether willing or not. We are fortunate when we can see these moments for what they are and embrace them, knowing that a birth of some sort is about to happen.

As we recognize that we have just crossed a significant threshold, it is Hekate we may call on to guide us out of what may seem like chaos, into a better understanding of the significant threshold we have just crossed.

We have many liminal moments that we share. Our coming of age - our first sexual experience - our wedding day - the birth of a child - the death of a loved one - a divorce and an ending of what once was - our first job - the birth of a wonderful creative project - the ending of a career - recognition of inevitable aging and the losses that come with that - and finally embracing death, however she comes. If we recognize

them as thresholds, we can choose to honor these liminal times with ritual and ceremony, with Hekate presiding. Who better to give honor to?

Most of the time, I love liminal times and liminal spaces. I don't always enjoy them when they are not of my choosing. I do, however, see these thresholds as potential – as opportunities to birth something new. Hekate has been my guide for many years. I am not always aware of when She has stepped in and certainly, what she offers is not always what I would have asked for. However, because I have so greatly benefitted by her guidance, I have total trust when facing any difficulty in my life. There have been times when in the throes of decision making, unable to choose, I felt as though Hekate just kicked me on through. But the greatest aspect of that, is that on the other side, there She was my trust-worthy guide.

It is for that reason, I can totally recommend that when you are at liminal spaces or face liminal times of your life, I can think of no better guidance than what Hekate would give us, should we call upon Her to guide us through those thresholds. However, She would not take kindly to being honored only when we are in need. It would be best, to find ways to honor Her as best you can throughout the days and nights of your life. Allow Her to become a part of you, walking with Her on journey here on Earth.

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