

IRIS the goddess of the rainbow...

Iris is a goddess in Greek mythology. She was a goddess of sea and sky, colorful and overwhelming with wings and beauty. As she is the goddess of the rainbow, the voice between mortals and immortals, the messenger of the Olympian gods and the handmaiden of Hera, in name she is called Iris.

As mentioned in the Greek epic Hesiod, "Now Thaumias married a daughter of deep-running Okeanos (Oceanus), Elektra (Electra), and she bore him swift-footed Iris, the rainbow." (Hesiod, Theogony 265, trans. Evelyn-White, Greek epic C8th or C7th B.C.)

She is believed to be the daughter of Thaumias "the wondrous" was a marine-god, and her mother Elektra "the amber" a cloud-nymph. Iris played many roles in her life as mentioned above, she delivered messages from gods of

Mount Olympus to humans with her beautiful wings which are rarely found in Greek gods. She served Hera, one of the powerful goddesses in Greek mythology. In fact, she was often painted in ancient Greek pottery serving wine to Hera and Zeus from her clay vessel she carries in her hand.

In appearance Iris is a beautiful young woman with golden wings and carries a rod with two wings and two serpents wrapped around known as the herald's rod (kerykeion), and sometimes a water-pitcher (oinochoe) in the other hand dressed in white long robes. She is believed to be a virgin goddess. With such beauty, Iris travels with the speed of wind from one end of the world to the other and into the depths of the sea and the underworld.

Her name and appearance are symbolic of her character in many ways. The name iris means messenger and also the rainbow in ancient Greece. The rainbow is an ark that connects two ends of earth that goes through the sky which symbolizes her connection to gods and men, so Iris was believed to be pouring water from the ocean to the clouds to create rainbows. While exchanging messengers from gods to

gods and gods to men, Iris encountered many thrilling incidents.

She also sometimes served men water from her pitcher that made them sleep.

In epic poems like Homer's Iliad, the encounters of Iris are mentioned from time to time.

"Iris storm-footed sprang away . . . and at a point between Samos and Imbros of the high cliffs plunged in the dark water, and the sea crashed moaning about her.

She plummeted to the sea floor like a lead weight." (Homer, Iliad 24. 77, Greek epic C8th B.C.)

Reading the great epic poems written by Homer, The Iliad and The Odyssey will bring more insight about Iris and other Greek goddesses and mythology for whoever that finds passion in such great work of literature and history.

