

## The legend about Phaethon



As the myth implies, there lived a young man named Phaethon, the son of the god Helios and the nymph Clymene. Every day the Sun rises above the Earth---this is the great god Helios drives his golden Chariot of the Sun across the sky. Once Phaethon wanted to prove his high blood and went to the palace of the god Helios. Helios saw Phaethon and asked him:

- What brought you to my palace, my son?
- Oh, the great and radiant Helios! - Please, establish your paternity.
- It is true. You are my son indeed. Ask me everything you want to dispel your doubts.

And Phaethon asked his father to allow him to drive the Chariot of the Sun instead of him.

Helios was fearful at his son's request:

- Bethink yourself, madman! It is above your strength, a mortal, to manage my Chariot of the Sun. Even the mighty Zeus cannot stay on the Chariot of the Sun and who is greater than he?

But Phaethon insisted that Helios kept his promise and Helios had to agree. He put holy ointments on his son's face, so that hot rays would not burn it and led him to fiery horses who hoofed already.

- Listen to my advice. Do not hurry the horses, they will run themselves, they are difficult to control. Keep the reins firmer, do not release them and try not to deviate from the route. Your way lies just between the Snake and the Altar. Do not go too low to the Earth, so as not to burn it, and do not go too high, or else you'll burn the sky. It's time to go; the night is already tired and leaves for rest.

Phaethon jumped into the Chariot of the Sun. Eos, the goddess of the dawn, opened the gates and, before the young man pulled on the reins, the fiery horses jerked forward and up the steep mountain and rushed to the sky going higher and higher. Frightened Phaethon immediately forgot all the instructions of his father. Suddenly, he saw a disgusting monster ahead, all covered with black poison. It was the Scorpio. Phaethon trembled with terror and dropped the reins out of his hands. The horses felt full freedom and rushed forward riding for a fall. They rushed down to the Earth, then they rose high into the sky.

And now, the golden Chariot of the Sun swiftly steered its way down, and the fiery horses set fire to the Earth with their hot breath. Mountains covered with forests were on fire, cities and fortresses died. Then Gaia, the goddess of the Earth, terribly burned rose and exclaimed addressing Zeus:

- Oh, the greatest of the gods! Are you really going to allow all life on the Earth to die? Look, cities are already being destroyed, and if the fiery horses rush higher, then the sky and the palaces of the gods will be burned. Is it possible that everything will return to Chaos again? Save at least what's left!

Zeus heard Gaia and he looked at the Earth and was horrified at what was revealed to him. He gripped his glittering lightnings and scattered them all over the sky. Zeus threw another lightning to the Chariot of the Sun and broke it into pieces. It was swept across the sky in sparkling splashes. Phaethon's golden curls flashed in hot fire. Like a falling star, he fell into the waves of the Eridanus River. Clymene came to the banks of the Eridanus River and mournfully sorrowed her son. Her gum tears fell into the cold water. Gum stiffens in it turning into transparent amber.

### Reference

Kun N.A. *Legends and Myths of Ancient Greece, Rostov-on-Don, "Fenix", 1996*