

Host of Many

Presented by Jamie Waggoner
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Workshop Description: Curious about Hades, the Host of Many, Ruler of the Underworld? In this presentation, Jamie will share both well-known and obscure bits of Hades' mythos, introduce you to the magic and mysteries of the Underworld, and deconstruct some of the common misunderstandings about this enigmatic god from Greek mythology. We'll also discuss how to approach a working or devotional relationship with Hades, and engage in a guided trance journey to the Underworld. Your host on this adventure, Jamie, is a dedicated priestess of Hades, trained holistic deathcare guide, and author of *Hades: Myth, Magic and Modern Devotion* (Llewellyn, 2024).

Introductions

- Hello, I'm Jamie. My pronouns are she/her.
 - I'm an author, Pagan priestess, and unapologetic expert in things that make mortals fascinated and slightly nervous.
 - I've been a practicing witch for 25+ years.
 - I'm the author of *Hades: Myth, Magic and Modern Devotion* (Llewellyn, 2024), and contributor to *Witchology Magazine*, *Haunted Magazine*, *The Feminine Macabre*, and *The Rebis Tarot Journal*, among others. I write and teach from my home studio, located in Alabama, U.S.A., which is the ancestral land of the Mvskoke (Muscogee) people, the "People of One Fire" I offer honor and gratitude to the Mvskoke elders and their descendants, and I acknowledge and affirm their sovereignty on these lands.
- In our time together today, we're going to have...
 - A bit of informal lecture and a guided trance journey, followed by time for conversation wherein we can ask questions, and share our reactions and experiences with each other (if we choose).
 - Your consent is important: we'll start this session with an offering and invocation to Hades. If you don't want to be in the presence of this particular deity, or you're not sure, you can access my slides, speaker notes, and resource materials later. No worries if you need to opt out at any time.
 - Remember: take what makes sense to you, leave what doesn't. There are many ways to work magic with Hades! These are just some of my thoughts and experiences.

Invocation to Hades and Acknowledgement of Unseen Ones

- I invite you to take a breath, if that feels good, and close your eyes or soften your gaze.
- I light this candle as a hearthfire, a flame of welcome, to Hades and all the Unseen Ones who join us today.
- Invocation: "Hymn to the Unseen One" (with incense or pinch of storax for an offering)

*Hear me, Unseen One, you who are
Eternally cloaked in mist and shadows—
Invisible to the eye, yet not
Invisible to the heart.
I offer honor and praise to thee, called Aidoneus,
I pray you will watch over me with kindly spirit
And stealthy might, I ask you to please protect me
As I walk above, until I descend below
To rest in your fields once more.*

Who is Hades?

Group question: What do you know about Hades?

- Hades is one of three brothers, alongside Zeus and Poseidon. Zeus' domain is the sky, Poseidon rules the seas; Hades' primary responsibility is to be Ruler of the Underworld, keeping the balance between the world of the living and the realm of the dead.
 - One of his many epithets, Polydegmon, means "Host of Many" and refers to the idea that Hades hosts all of humanity between lifetimes.
 - Sometimes his domain, the realm of the dead, is also called "Hades". For purposes of clarification, I will always refer to the god as Hades and the place as the Underworld during this panel.
- In addition to the Underworld itself, Hades' domain also includes all the riches beneath the surface of the earth: rocks, gems, metals, minerals, and fertile soil. It is because of these precious resources, in addition to the abundance of shades that inhabit his realm, that Hades is often referred to as "The Wealthy One" (Plouton) among the gods.
- Other epithets include: Aidoneus, Euchaïtes, Klymenos, Adamastos, and Orkos, among others. These poetic "nicknames" refer to different facets of his personality and purview.

Aides, Aidoneus, and Hades: Origins of the Unseen One

The origins and exploits of the gods of Greek mythology are recorded in numerous manuscripts, as well as several scattered fragments of text, from the ancient world. However, there are two primary sources that remain extremely influential (and relevant to our topic): the works of the poets Hesiod and Homer, both circa 800 to 700 BCE.

- Hesiod's *Theogony*, thought to be composed sometime around 730 to 700 BCE, is an epic poem describing the genealogy of the gods and ancient Greek cosmology.
- Homer, whether a singular author or a compilation of several poets using the same moniker, is best known for the epic poems the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—two extensive volumes bursting with stories of war, adventure, heroes, and interactions between humans and the gods.

- Related to these two epics are the *Homeric Hymns*, likely composed a bit later around 500 to 600 BCE, which consist of thirty-three anonymous poems celebrating the Greek gods. The hymns are deemed Homeric because they share the same poetic meter and dialect as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Hades is the fourth child of the Titans Kronos and Rhea, in birth order after sisters Hestia, Demeter, and Hera. Kronos was the king of the Titan generation of gods, and the god of time, particularly time viewed as a destructive, all-consuming force. After it was prophesied that he would be overthrown by one of his own children, Kronos swallowed each of his offspring as they were born.

- Kronos is tricked into regurgitating his children, and after waging ten years of war against their father, the younger generation finally overpowers the Titans, locking Kronos away in Tartaros. Duties and dominions are divided amongst the siblings and their sympathizers. Hades draws the short straw and becomes responsible for the third realm: the Void (as Homer refers to it), or as we have come to know it, the Underworld.
- We can only speculate about how Hades felt in the aftermath of the Titanomachy—the name Classical scholars gave to the overthrow of the Titan generation of gods by the Olympians and their sympathizers—because the poets and historians of the ancient world did not tell us. From primary source texts, we know that his siblings waved goodbye, claimed Mount Olympus for themselves, and blithely began having children and consolidating their power. So-called after their chosen dwelling place, the Olympian gods of Greek mythology would grow to include not only Hestia, Hera, Demeter, Zeus, and Poseidon, but also Aphrodite, Hephaestus, Ares, Athena, Apollo, Artemis, Hermes, and sometimes Dionysus (depending on the source text). Hades, although their contemporary, is noticeably absent from this roll call. Why?
- When Hades drew the lot of the Void, he had no choice but to part with the newly formed cohort of Olympians to build his home in the misty, ancient, and obscured realm of the dead. He is rarely recorded visiting Mount Olympus, instead preferring to interact with other gods and humans within the borders of his khthonic realm. The term *khthonic* comes from the Greek word *khthónios*, meaning “in the earth, under the ground, or subterranean,” and it refers to something being of or related to the Underworld.

OK, Well Then, Where's His Story Told?

Although we can find a plethora of descriptive passages about his realm, there are very few stories about the deeds of Hades himself. He does not take part in the conflicts of mortals, such as the Trojan War, nor is he the patron of any heroes. While the other Olympian gods and goddesses fill page after page of epic verse with their escapades, Hades is frequently absent, or cast in the role of a tertiary character subordinate to the main action.

- In the grand tradition of Greek theater, Hades enters mythology stage left—a theatrical term that refers to the left side of a stage from the point of view of a performer facing the

audience. In some forms of ancient Greek theater, it was customary for tertiary characters (sometimes called the tritagonist) to enter from stage left.

- Hades often fills the shoes of the notorious outcast, unlikely benefactor, or implacable adversary necessary to move the protagonist's story forward. Can anyone guess which ancient Greek myth gives him the most time on stage?
- Does this mean Hades was not important to the ancient Greeks? The answer is quite decisively and unequivocally no. And yet, it is complex: Hades was extremely important—his primary responsibility as ruler of the Underworld was, and is, to keep the balance between the world of the living and the realm of the dead. The Unseen One plays a very valuable role in the pantheon of Greek gods but not one that historically garnered adoration.
- Although occasional offerings were made out of necessity, ancient temples and cult sites dedicated to Hades were even more rare. Most notable among these were the Nekromanteion of Ephyras in northern Greece, the Hades temple at Elis in the Greek Peloponnese, and the Ploutonium at Hierapolis in Asia Minor in modern-day Turkey.
 - All these sites served a very particular function: they were oracles of the dead—temples where the living could petition and speak to the dead during necromantic rites. Necromancy, in the sense of consulting with the dead for the purposes of divination, was quite popular in the ancient world.

Common Misconceptions About Hades

Many people mistakenly assume Hades is the god of death, or the supernatural being who comes to claim you at the end of life—but no, that's the winged daimon Thanatos, who works in his employ.

- Likewise, Hades has no control over the length of a lifetime, or the chosen hour of death for any given individual; that responsibility belongs to another Underworld trio, the Moirai, otherwise known as the Fates.
 - The Moirai consist of three sisters: Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos. Clotho, with a distaff in her hand, presides over the moment we are born. Lachesis, working the spindle, turns out the hours and days of our lives. And Atropos, the eldest sister of the trio, ends the thread of our mortal life with a sharp pair of scissors.
- Hades is most definitely the executive administrator—or Host, if you will— of the Underworld, much more so than a judge or punisher of the dead. Hades usually delegates the responsibilities of judgment and sentencing to a trusted trio of Underworld judges named Aiakos, Rhadamanthus, and Minos, or sometimes to his wife, the Dread Queen Persephone.

- Hades is the devil, and his Underworld is hell. This is simply untrue; mistranslations and the influence of Dante's *Inferno* led to this misconception. However, the ancient Greek and Christian mythos are not equivalent.

When, Where and How to Find Hades

Why study or interact with Hades and the Underworld? The obvious answers...

- If your vocation or interests draw you to the mysteries of death and dying, ghosts, mediumship, psychopomp work, paranormal inquiry etc.
- If you resonate with khthonic, earthy energies. He's the OG goth.

Why study or interact with Hades and the Underworld? The not-so-obvious answers...

- If you want to cultivate a sense of what "wealth" means to you, learn to appreciate it, and welcome more of it into your life (Pluton)
- If you want powerful and protective Unseen allies (Adamastos)
- If you want assistance with Shadow work – yours or the collective (Klymenos)
- If you want to become adept at invisibility and glamour (Aidoneus, Eukaietes)
- If you seek justice for oathbreakers and/or the dead (Orkos)
- If you want to invite healthy masculinity into your life (Polydegmon, Eubuleus)

Katabasis: Guided Trance Journey to the Underworld

- Group question: Is everyone here familiar with trance journeys?
 - *Katabasis* is the Greek term for making a trip to the Underworld. This word is usually associated with Greco-Roman mythology, but it is also used in other mythological and spiritual traditions as a general term to describe any journey to the realm of the dead.
 - When we visit the Underworld in trance journey, we can talk to shades of the dead. We can interact with Hades and his retinue. We can uncover insights, innovations, and paradoxes hidden deep underground, waiting for us in the dark like sparkling gems.
- Let's go on the journey together...

Begin by paying attention to your breath. Breathing in, breathing out, slowing and lengthening each breath. In and out, try to make your inhale the same length as your exhale. In and out, pausing slightly at the top of the inhale. In and out, pausing slightly at the bottom of the exhale. In, pause. Out, pause. Narrow your focus to this pause, the liminal space between breathing in and breathing out. It is this liminal space that will lead you to the liminal place: through the Third Eye into the imagination, the wild mind, the mythic landscape. The place where we are all the characters in all the stories ever told, the place where we can talk to Gods, plants and animals, the place that is everywhere and nowhere, betwixt and between.

It is late afternoon, and you arrive at your headquarters: a place in the Otherworld where you feel safe, where you can take a moment to prepare for the rest of your journey. Take a few deep breaths. Notice what the air is like today. Also notice that there is a small satchel or bag here and three items placed near it, awaiting your arrival. The first item is a bowl of fruit—fresh, ripe, delicious. You select four or five pieces of fruit and place them in the satchel. The second item is an envelope. Breaking the seal, you find a note and a token object inside. The note reads, “Good for one round trip to and from the Underworld.” You slip the note and the token back into the envelope, and then place it in your satchel with the fruit. The third item is a bouquet of flowers and herbs, tied with a silky black ribbon. Lift them to your nose, inhale their scent. Take note of the plants in the bouquet—can you identify them, either visually or just by “knowing”? Place the bouquet in your satchel. Take a moment to make any other preparations you’d like, and when you are ready, slip the satchel over your shoulder and cross the threshold of your HQ.

The sun is setting in the west. You head toward the sunset, taking note of your surroundings as the light continues to wane. The beautiful, liminal color and quality of sunset twilight descends just as you reach a river and a quiet wooden dock. A figure in a boat drifts toward you. As the boat meets the dock, you realize this figure is Kharon, the ferryman of the River Styx. Introduce yourself and hand Kharon the envelope from your satchel. Wait patiently as he reads the note and pockets the token. At his nod, climb into the boat.

The trip across the river is smooth. The surface of the water reflects the twilight sky. Below the surface, its waters are murky and inscrutable. If you listen closely, you can hear the faintest wisp of sound coming from the water—voices, speaking in many different languages, making promises. The boat glides across the water to the far riverbank, where you disembark from the ferry onto another simple wooden dock. Thank Kharon and offer him one of the pieces of fruit from your bag.

Before you is a triple crossroads. The road to the left leads upstream, to what appears to be the gateway to the Underworld. Many shades are gathered there, on both sides of the river. You spot Hermes arriving with a few more shades, dropping them off at the border. The road to the right leads to a large structure. It’s hard to make out any details from your vantage point, but it has the look of a castle or mansion—it must be the Halls of Hades. In the road just before you, the center road, another figure is waiting. Note the details of this figure’s appearance. What are they wearing? How old do they appear to be? What is your general impression of their energy? If it feels right, introduce yourself and ask this figure to accompany you as a guide while you explore the Underworld.

You follow the middle path up and over a hill. From the top of this hill, you can see rolling green grass, flowers, and fruit trees. You can smell honey and hear laughter. These are the Elysian Fields, a place filled with beauty and peace. Sit on the hillside and observe your surroundings. If a guide is with you, offer them a piece of fruit from your satchel and enjoy one yourself.

As you sit in quiet contemplation, your Host approaches. Hades climbs the hill to sit next to you. Greeting him, you offer him the fourth piece of fruit from your bag. He accepts and clearly enjoys

tasting the offering you have brought. He invites you to visit his halls. Gather your things and follow Hades down the hillside.

On your way, before reaching the Halls, you pass through the Asphodel Fields. This place feels different from the last—more transitory, less colorful. It is not a frightening place, but it definitely gives you the feeling of being somewhere “in between.” Keep following your host, noting your route and surroundings, until you reach the Halls of Hades.

Inside the halls you are guided to a room containing a large table, long enough to seat at least thirty or so guests, walls lined with shelves of books bound in leather, and an enormous stone fireplace. There is a bright, roaring fire. Hades offers you a chair near the warmth of the fireplace. He turns to the shelves, pulls a book, and takes a seat next to you. “There is something I have marked to show you,” he says, handing the book to you.

You run your fingers over its cover, noting its color, aspect, and the feel of the leather. Perhaps you even lift the book to your nose to take in its scent. There is a ribbon marking a specific page of the book. You open it to that page. Note what you see there. Is there text on the page? Pictures or illustrations? Symbols? Once you’ve absorbed the contents of the page, hand the book back to Hades. Thank him and present him with the bouquet that you brought as a gift. Sit in companionship with him by the fire. As you must take your leave, thank Hades one last time. If you’d like to ask him to give you a reusable token for visiting the Underworld, you can do that now. He may hand you an object as you depart, or it may appear later at your HQ.

Travel back to the wooden boat dock via the same route. Head back through the Asphodel Fields, over the sunny hillside in the Elysian Fields, down the middle path to the riverside. If you’ve been traveling with a guide, thank them for accompanying you. Kharon is waiting for you at the dock, and once more, he smoothly and efficiently ferries you back across the River Styx. Express your gratitude and head east to your HQ. Stash your trusty satchel at your headquarters and prepare to return to the waking world.

Bring your attention back to your breath. Breathing in and out, inhale and exhale, letting the breath return to its normal pace. The pace that supports your waking body, your own breath leading you back to the physical plane, to the here and the now. Start to make small movements to wake your body; wiggle your fingers and toes, move your head gently side-to-side. Circle the hands around the wrists, circle the feet around the ankles. Yawn, and stretch your arms far over your head. You are safe, you are awake, you are home. Welcome back.

Group Sharing and Conversation Time

- Would anyone like to share their reactions and/or experiences from the trance journey?
- What other questions do you have about Hades, or how to approach working with him?
 - Easy ways to approach working with Hades...

- A good way to get started is to build an altar to welcome him into your space and your life. I describe this in *Hades* chapter one (pages 26-31) and provide a table of correspondences in Appendix A (page 213).
- You can also offer him a daily hymn at sunset twilight – my book has a hymn included in each chapter. Or write your own!

How to Connect with Me

- Purchase my books:
 - *Hades: Myth, Magic and Modern Devotion*
 - Watch for *One Foot in the Underworld* (tentative title) coming soon!
- Website: jamiewaggoner.com
 - Sign up for my email list to be notified of all of my upcoming events
 - Mystic South: July 17–19, 2026 in Atlanta, GA
 - Underworld Rising Retreat: October 15–19, 2026 in North Georgia
 - River Styx Book Club 2027 is already enrolling! Check out the details: <https://jamiewaggoner.ticketspice.com/river-styx-book-club-winter-2027>
- Way of the Weaver: wayoftheweaver.com
 - Offering “radically enchanted” classes and events that weave together the threads of magical study, justice and community.
 - Check out our Way of the Weaver podcast! We post two episodes each month.
 - [Weaver Camp](#) and [Spider Threads](#) are enrolling now
 - Weaver Camp is June 25–28, 2026 near Worcester, VT
 - Sign up for my newsletter to be notified when we open registration for our Winter 2027 online module – a three month deep dive into trance journey!
- Socials: @jmwaggoner on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube

Gratitude to Hades, Unseen Ones, and Attendees

- Offer gratitude to Hades and other Unseen Ones
- Extinguish candle
- Thank y’all for your time and attention today!
- Thank you to the SassyCon organizers and volunteers!