

The Origin of the Solar Eclipse

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Long ago, there was a wise ruler named King Ecliptus. His kingdom existed in the far northern part of Greece. His lands were abundant and his prudence had invoked a magnificent age of strength and prosperity in his kingdom. He was renowned around the Mediterranean for his judgement, and kings, as well as the poor came from all over the Mediterranean to ask him to settle disputes. He never accepted any rewards for his deeds, for he knew the story of Paris. Paris accepted a reward from Aphrodite for choosing her in the contest for the golden apple. The prize was Helen, who was already married to the Greek king Menelaus. As a result, Paris made the Greeks extremely angry, causing the Trojan War. One day, Apollo and Artemis were having a debate over who was the most powerful deity. They peered down to Earth to find a mortal wise enough to judge properly. They saw King Ecliptus, and agreed to make him the judge. Apollo and Artemis descended into his golden palace. Apollo said, "We are visiting you to ask you to decide who is the greatest among us. Choose me, for I bring the world the joy of music. I heal the sick. I help archers." Artemis replied, "No, select me. I am the goddess of the hunt, which provides food. I also help archers." The king thought and thought. He furrowed his brow. Never before had he come across a decision so difficult. He saw the two deities as equal. Finally, he said, "I pick Apollo. As long as the sun looms in the sky over the moon, he will win. The sun is what grows crops. It allows us to see. Without it, humankind would be devastated." Artemis was infuriated. She yelled, "Fine, I will devastate humanity then and you, King Ecliptus will be at fault. Feel my wrath." With all her might, she moved the moon in the front of the sun. Apollo and the King were shocked. A look of triumph crept across the countenance of Artemis. This look did not last. Soon, drops of sweat meandered down her brow, and she gritted her teeth as she held the moon in place. She could not hold this tremendous feat for too long. Exhausted, Artemis could only watch as more and more of the sun became obscured by the moon. Seeing the sun unblocked by the moon, Apollo jeered and taunted Artemis, who hung her head in defeat. The twins disappeared to Mt. Olympus. Unfortunately, wise King Ecliptus was transformed into an owl by Artemis, so he would only see the moon. The wisdom of the king is the reason that owls are known as wise. Whenever she has enough energy, Artemis moves the moon into place over the sun. Every time, the moon leaves her control after a few minutes of darkness. Apollo named this an eclipse, after the king whose decision caused the phenomenon to occur. The path of totality is the place Artemis stands to move the great ball of rock.