

Homeric Hymn to Apollo
Translated N.S. Gill

Source <http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/apollomyth/a/HomericHymnAp1.htm>

(Il. 1-18) I will remember and not be unmindful of Apollo who shoots afar. As he goes through the house of Zeus, the gods tremble before him and all spring up from their seats when he draws near, as he bends his bright bow. But Leto alone stays by the side of Zeus who delights in thunder; and then she unstrings his bow, and closes his quiver, and takes his archery from his strong shoulders in her hands and hangs them on a golden peg against a pillar of his father's house. Then she leads him to a seat and makes him sit: and the Father gives him nectar in a golden cup welcoming his dear son, while the other gods make him sit down there, and queenly Leto rejoices because she bare a mighty son and an archer. Rejoice, blessed Leto, for you bare glorious children, the lord Apollo and Artemis who delights in arrows; her in Ortygia, and him in rocky Delos, as you rested against the great mass of the Cynthian hill hard by a palm-tree by the streams of Inopus.

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Shall I sing how at the first Leto bare you to be the joy of men, as she rested against Mount Cynthus in that rocky isle, in sea-girt Delos -- while on either hand a dark wave rolled on landwards driven by shrill winds -- whence arising you rule over all mortal men?

(Il. 30-50) Among those who are in Crete, and in the township of Athens, and in the isle of Aegina and Euboea, famous for ships, in Aegae and Eiresiae and Peparethus near the sea, in Thracian Athos and Pelion's towering heights and Thracian Samos and the shady hills of Ida, in Scyros and Phocaea and the high hill of Autocane and fair-lying Imbros and smouldering Lemnos and rich Lesbos, home of Macar, the son of Aeolus, and Chios, brightest of all the isles that lie in the sea, and craggy Mimas and the heights of Corycus and gleaming Claros and the sheer hill of Aesagea and watered Samos and the steep heights of Mycale, in Miletus and Cos, the city of Meropian men, and steep Cnidos and windy Carpathos, in Naxos and Paros and rocky Rhenaea -- so far roamed Leto in travail with the god who shoots afar, to see if any land would be willing to make a dwelling for her son. But they greatly trembled and feared, and none, not even the richest of them, dared receive Phoebus, until queenly Leto set foot on Delos and uttered winged words and asked her:

(Il. 51-61) 'Delos, if you would be willing to be the abode of my son "Phoebus Apollo and make him a rich temple --; for no other will touch you, as you will find: and I think you will never be rich in oxen and sheep, nor bear vintage nor yet produce plants abundantly. But if you have the temple of far-shooting Apollo, all men will bring you hecatombs and gather here, and incessant savour of rich sacrifice will always arise, and you will feed those who dwell in you from the hand of strangers; for truly your own soil is not rich.'

(Il. 62-82) So spake Leto. And Delos rejoiced and answered and said: 'Leto, most glorious daughter of great Coeus, joyfully would I receive your child the far-shooting lord; for it is all too true that I am ill-spoken of among men, whereas thus I should become very greatly honoured. But this saying I fear, and I will not hide it from you, Leto. They say that Apollo will be one that is very haughty and will greatly lord it among gods and men all over the fruitful earth. Therefore, I greatly fear in heart and spirit that as soon as he sets the light of the sun, he will scorn this island -- for truly I have but a hard, rocky soil

(Il. 83-88) So said Delos. And Leto sware the great oath of the gods: 'Now hear this, Earth and wide Heaven above, and dropping water of Styx (this is the strongest and most awful oath for the blessed gods), surely Phoebus shall have here his fragrant altar and precinct, and you he shall honour above all.'

Il. 102-114) But the goddesses sent out Iris from the well-set isle to bring Eilithyia, promising her a great necklace strung with golden threads, nine cubits long. And they bade Iris call her aside from white-armed Hera, lest she might afterwards turn her from coming with her words. When swift Iris, fleet of foot as the wind, had heard all this, she set to run; and quickly finishing all the distance she came to the home of the gods, sheer Olympus, and forthwith called Eilithyia out from the hall to the door and spoke winged words to her, telling her all as the goddesses who dwell on Olympus had bidden her. So she moved the heart of Eilithyia in her dear breast; and they went their way, like shy wild-doves in their going.

(Il. 115-122) And as soon as Eilithyia the goddess of sore travail set foot on Delos, the pains of birth seized Leto, and she longed to bring forth; so she cast her arms about a palm tree and kneeled on the soft meadow while the earth laughed for joy beneath. Then the child leaped forth to the light, and all the goddesses washed you purely and cleanly with sweet water, and swathed you in a white garment of fine texture, new-woven, and fastened a golden band about you.

(Il. 123-130) Now Leto did not give Apollo, bearer of the golden blade, her breast; but Themis duly poured nectar and ambrosia with her divine hands: and Leto was glad because she had borne a strong son and an archer. But as soon as you had tasted that divine heavenly food, O Phoebus, you could no longer then be held by golden cords nor confined with bands, but all their ends were undone. Forthwith Phoebus Apollo spoke out among the deathless goddesses:

(Il. 131-132) 'The lyre and the curved bow shall ever be dear to me, and I will declare to men the unfailing will of Zeus.'