

ETYMOLOGY OF *HELLAS*

The designation *Hellas* derives from Hellen, the son of Deucalion and Pyrrha who feature prominently in Ovid's tale of the Great Flood in his *Metamorphoses*. The mythical Deucalion (son of the fire-bringing **titan Prometheus**) was the savior of the human race from the Great Flood, in the same way Noah is presented in the biblical version or Utnapishtim in the Mesopotamian one. Deucalion and Pyrrha repopulate the land once the flood waters have receded by casting stones which become people, the first being Hellen. Contrary to popular opinion, *Hellas* and *Ellada* have nothing to do with **Helen of Troy** from Homer's *Iliad*. Ovid, however, did not **coin** the designation. **Thucydides** writes, in Book I of his *Histories*:



GREECE REACHED THE HEIGHTS IN ALMOST EVERY AREA OF HUMAN LEARNING.



I am inclined to think that the very name was not as yet given to the whole country, and in fact did not exist at all before the time of Hellen, the son of Deucalion; the different tribes, of which the Pelasgian was the most widely spread, gave their own names to different districts. But when Hellen and his sons became powerful in Phthiotis, their aid was invoked by other **cities**, and those who associated with them gradually began to be called Hellenes, though a long time elapsed before the name was prevalent over the whole country. Of this, Homer affords the best evidence; for he, although he lived long after the **Trojan War**, nowhere uses this name collectively, but confines it to the followers of **Achilles** from Phthiotis, who were the original Hellenes; when speaking of the entire host, he calls them Danäans, or Argives, or Achaeans.