

## Divinities in Legend Quest

The **Legend Quest** rulebook states, “Although religion is a strong motivational force, God or gods do not take an active part in **Legend Quest**.” The purpose of this article is to change that, but to do so without throwing away game balance.

Without condemning other games, it is important to remember that many game systems have addressed this issue in such a fashion that they have ruined the game. The divine authorities would become overbearing to the gamemasters. An early fantasy role-playing book suggested that every time adventurers call on their patron god, there should be a 10% chance that the god not only hears, but answers. For a gamemaster trying to learn how to control a fair and fun campaign, this rule suggestion can be the beginning of the end.

By bringing in gods of power, but without putting them at the whim of the characters, a gamemaster retains control of the game, without taking the flair for mythology out of the campaign. This should work equally well with any game system, either to replace the current system of gods or to create one that may not yet exist. It is important to avoid over-quantifying divinities. Too often, the numbers become limits on the gods and goals for the characters to achieve.

### Definitions

First off, divinities need to be categorized so that they can be more easily understood. At the extreme top of the list are the gods and goddesses. With powers over nature and people, these beings stand supreme in the cosmos. Ruling over the other divinities, the gods are most distant from characters, and intend to keep that gap huge.

Serving the gods are the minions. Often legion in number, these beings serve as the go-betweens for the gods and their worshipers. Servants, warriors and messengers, the minions control only the most minimal divine powers.

Avatars are the physical extensions of the gods. Avatars are quite rare, because they split the god's powers between two beings and force the god into more “human” dimensions. Although lacking in raw power, these beings can be remarkably valuable when a god needs to control their worshippers.

Separate from the gods are the spirits. Typically far more numerous and far more limited in the scope of their powers, spirits are also more willing to help their followers. Seeming to be less powerful

gods, some may have the ability to rival the gods' power.

### Aspects

Every divine creature has at least one aspect, and it is these aspects that give them power. An aspect is a control object or a sphere of influence. Aspects are divided into two categories: major and minor. This division simply separates the amount of power a particular divinity can channel into their whim, with some divinities simply being better at it than others.

An example of aspects might help to define them. To begin with, there seem to be certain aspects that every major pantheon of gods must cover. The list of “must haves” includes: life, death, birth, home, war, harvest and nature. These concepts seem rather universal and should be covered in one way or another. Other aspects that typically show up in pantheons include: areas (countries or smaller), athletics, beauty, certain animals, certain races, fire, industries, justice, law, love, luck, lust, magic, the moon(s), revenge, the seas, the sky, the sun, trade, travel, wine, and wisdom. (These are of course intended to be examples and not exhaustive lists.)

Aspects give a divinity power. Divinities have control of their aspects to an almost limitless extent. Depending upon the classification, an aspect could allow a god to manipulate the elements to cause unimaginable miracles. Some GMs may wish to actually give the divinities scores in their aspects. Assuming a range of 1 to 10, 1 to 4 would be considered a minor aspect, while 5 through 10 would be major aspects. These ratings would be most important when gods do battle over control of the same aspect.

One of the major differences between the various types of divinities is their power within the aspects. Minions can only have one aspect and can only have it at the most minor levels (typically rated a 1). Spirits are also restricted in that they can only have one aspect, but they are not restricted in how powerful they may become in that aspect. Gods will typically have more than one aspect and at various different degrees of power. Godly aspects do not have to be related, but they typically are. Avatars have a miniaturized set of aspects based upon their god, but being in mortal form often prevents them from using their aspects. After all, what mortal mind could comprehend enough of the weather patterns of the world to summon the monsoons across two oceans,

even if this mortal mind belonged to the avatar of Sky, god of weather and nature.

Aspects not only define the divinity's powers, they also define the divinity. Marina, goddess of the seas, will most obviously have a major aspect in the seas. She may also have minor aspects in water, lakes, rivers or waterfalls, but she might not. Of course, Marina, goddess of the seas, will now have her appearance, her symbols, and her religion all being based on the seas. Her legends will tell of her underwater palace where mermaids serve her amid the splendor of the seas.

### How the Divine Act

Avatars and minions typically act only upon orders of the god that they serve. Because of this, gods and spirits are the only divinities that act upon their own will.

When a god or spirit decides to act, they have several options open to them. The most powerful option is a use (or abuse) of their aspect. The next most powerful option would be the use of followers, minions or avatars (pawns). The least powerful option would be the use of a gift.

Use and abuse of the aspects are the stuff of legends and myths and the main reason that people fear the gods and spirits. Salaick, spirit of fire, causing the air itself to burst into flames is a good example of an abuse. Sky, god of weather and nature, bringing the needed rains to a drought plagued area would be a use. Any obvious, divine miracle is a use of an aspect

It is the nature of these broadly defined aspects that they will overlap. Use of one divinity's aspect will most likely cross over into what another divinity will see as their sphere of control. Since use of an aspect alerts just about every other divine being within several universes of exactly what has occurred, it is important to understand what will offend another divine creature. It is this brand of divine politics, which keeps the gods and spirits in check.

Example: *Marina, goddess of the seas, becomes angered and raises a waterspout into the air to crush a boatload of pilgrims traveling to the shrine of Laenta. In this single action, she has annoyed at least three gods:*

- 1) Sky, god of weather and nature, for raising a waterspout into his domain of the skies;*
- 2) Ixarick, god of travelers, for interfering with those under his care;*
- 3) Laenta, patron of the now deceased.*

*Marina has control of the seas and therefore has the power to form a waterspout, but she had better be ready to explain herself or face the combined wrath of these gods.*

Had these three gods been paying attention directly, they might have been able to thwart Marina's waterspout, but more than likely they would be reacting after the fact. To keep herself free of open heavenly warfare, Marina could have acted quite differently. She could have used a whirlpool to avoid conflict with Sky. A discussion with Laenta and Ixarick may have shown that Marina was angry with the captain and crew of the ship and not the pilgrims. Maybe the other two gods may have kept their followers off the ship if Marina had declared it about to be destroyed. Not that all the gods work in this way, but most of them will have to, even if it means working with their "enemies".

With this brand of divine politics, gods should never be able to act in a human time frame. By the time they get "permission" to use their aspect, the situation will most likely have passed. Of course the gods can and do act with vengeance. The ship's captain and crew will eventually be at Marina's mercy, and they will find she has none. Often, a god will begin the retribution and then seek agreement. Summoning a great flood or a plague of scorpions may even take a god some time, perhaps enough time to consult the others.

Those gods that do not participate in this form of politics will find themselves branded as outcasts and troublemakers. Minions will be assigned to watch for any actions, so the other gods may immediately band together and thwart the outcast. In this way, unlimited power has been created, but it is also held firmly in check.

Because of the significant problems with the use of an aspect, the use of pawns is far more practical. Many of the gods see the mortal world as a huge chess game anyway, and they enjoy moving their pawns around to their own ends. While it is still likely that another god will realize when one of their number uses a pawn, even if it is not an avatar or a minion, the breach of divine etiquette is far less consequential.

Continuing the example: *If Marina had sent one of her sea serpents to destroy the ship, it may have seemed like a natural occurrence. Of course, the others may have suspected, but they would not have had obvious proof. Of course, Ixarick or Laenta may have immediately dispatched a trio of dolphins to save at least some of the pilgrims, if they somehow had dolphins (or minions in the shape of dolphins) in their service.*

The least powerful of the godly actions is the use of a gift. Gifts can take many forms from lending a minion or other ally to a simple omen that might turn a person towards the correct path. Holy relics such as weapons and armor are very rare and should only be given when a person is about to undertake an

extremely important mission directly for the god. The god will then send minions to retrieve the gifts as soon as the mission is completed.

Information is a far less obvious gift and often easier to pass. It must be remembered that the gods are far less talkative than the spirits. Gods see themselves as too far above the mortals to bother with communicating. Spirits at the other extreme seem not only willing to communicate, but often initiate it. A spirit may send a series of omens and signs that lead a mortal directly to a goal, while a god would send a single omen to remind the mortal that the goal existed.

Visions and actual discussions with gods and spirits are less common than omens, but they do reveal far more information. The odd thing about omens is that the gods actually expect their followers to understand, without additional translation. Sumston, god of the sun, uses dawn as an omen; figure out the meaning of that.

### Divine Power

Gods and spirits derive their power from adoration. By being worshipped, these beings grow in strength and re-energize after a use of an aspect. The act of adoration or worship takes some energy, both physically and emotionally, and it is this energy that the divinity captures.

As might be expected, the more worshippers one has, the more power they will have. The ratings of aspects are dependent upon this power as well. If a god and a spirit are rivals for a particular aspect, the one with the most adoration will be the more powerful.

Numbers are not the only factor, but the quality of worship is important as well. A god with only a handful of blasé worshippers might fade from existence, but one with a handful of zealots would be able to use an aspect (though probably at minimal power). Those religions that have a constant level of worship going throughout the day supply the best power to their gods, and it is this style of religion that gods seek to establish.

Sacrifices might seem to be an inconsequential part of worship, but they are not. The sacrifice of an inanimate object gifts the god or spirit with the use of that object for eternity. The sacrifice of a living creature grants the divinity ten years of slavery. No matter what kind of life the creature or person may have lived, they will be the slave of the god or spirit to whom they were sacrificed. They will retain some semblance of free will, but the divinity can make use of them just the same. Most commonly, divinities will seek to spend these years punishing those who worked against them. After the ten years, they may proceed on to their just reward.

### Concern for Followers

When deciding how a deity will treat their followers, it is important to remember that most gods are immortal (or so close to it that the difference is immaterial). These immortals have centuries to execute their plans, and the life of one worshipper simply does not matter, no matter how important that worshipper is.

The gods serve only those that serve them, and the only way they notice those who serve them is when they receive more power. For this reason, missionaries are one of the few groups that actually receive notice from the gods. Bringing the religion to foreign lands and spreading the faith are of extreme importance to a divinity, and they will keep a watchful eye (or watchful minion) on these efforts. This is not to say that they would use an aspect to save a group of missionaries, but they might wish to warn them of impending danger.

As has previously been discussed, deities simply do not act in a human time frame. When a worshipper prays and begs for a boon, the god or spirit must first decide if this is in their best interest. They must also decide to what degree they wish to help. By the time they shuffle through all of the prayers and requests they receive, and decide where to lend help, it will probably be weeks or months later. If the faithful person is not still praying for the same thing, the god may not be able to locate them. This basically leads to “the squeaky wheel gets the grease”. A single prayer will probably never be answered. Someone who prays daily for an hour will not only be heard, but may be rewarded for that continued degree of adoration, for prayer is a form of adoration.

### The Birth of the Gods

While almost all pantheons (groups of gods) have rich mythology on how they came into being, these stories are less than true. Gods are born out of the same adoration that sustains them. When a group of people gathers to worship in a new religion, their prayers and energy will form the gods they worship. This process takes an enormous amount of time, and it cannot be done purposefully.

Gods can also grant a portion of their power to an offspring. Like an avatar, this weakens the god greatly, but the offspring will then have the ability to receive and channel the energies of adoration on their own. Because this new divinity will need the power granted by worshippers, it is rare for gods to spawn in this way. The parent god will not be quick to reduce their own power base by giving away worshippers.

### Minions

Minions are the servants of the gods. Each god has the ability to create any number of minions in the image of their aspects. Creating a minion is as obvious to other gods as a use of an aspect, and those gods trying to create armies of minions will attract attention. As previously stated, a minion has the power of a single aspect, but only at the most minimal level.

Most gods do have a large number of minions that serve them. These minions would be the legions of angels or demons discussed in mythologies. Typically, they serve as a buffer between a god and their worshippers. In this way, the minions are a form of divine bureaucracy. They bring the pleas of the mortals to the god when they feel the mortal deserves attention. They also serve as messengers, carrying both omens and gifts. While minions can become involved in mortal affairs, this is extremely rare. It is easy to see that having an angel or demon following a mortal around would attract other divine attention.

Spirits do not have minions as such, but they can have other spirits that they control. While these spirits are not necessarily divine in nature, they can be quite powerful. It would be fitting for the spirit of the north wind to have a group of air elementals as followers. While these creatures are not divine spirits, they might be just as useful and just as powerful as a minion.

### Rogue Minions

Legends do exist of minions going rogue, either in doing something the god they serve would not agree with or in not following instructions. While these make for good stories the truth is slightly different. The gods automatically know everything their minions do in their name and will immediately snuff out any minion who is not doing their will. However, from time to time, a rogue minion may serve the god more than a legion of disciplined followers. In these cases, a god may allow a rogue minion to continue its efforts, knowing (or at least guessing) that these efforts will eventually benefit the god.

### Avatars

The creation of an avatar could easily cut a god's power in half. This loss of power will last for the life of the avatar, or until the god receives more adoration. Despite the fact that the avatar takes half the god's power, the avatar might not have use of all that might. This obviously makes the creation of an avatar an extremely risky proposition.

On the divine/spiritual plane, an avatar sticks out like a beacon. Every divine personage knows of the location and actions of the avatar, making them a point of continual conflict. Killing an avatar does not immediately return the divine power to the avatar's sire. Because of this, a god creating an avatar opens him or herself up to attack. This lengthy discussion is intended to show why gods seldom create avatars. The risks are simply too great.

On the other hand, avatars are perhaps the best way for a god to gather worshippers. An avatar serves as a constant reminder that the gods do in fact exist and have taken a hand in controlling the mortal world. It is far easier to worship a god who has sent a lightning bolt throwing avatar to your city, than to worship a god who demands obedience even though he has not shown himself. Obviously, this does not mean that the god with the avatar is more powerful or better than the other, just flashier.

This is the main reason gods create avatars. They are risking their power in an effort to increase it. Of course, a war god might place an avatar to be the general in an upcoming war, but this is a more rare occurrence. Avatars must be born of a mortal. Upon birth, they are relatively normal mortal babies, completely helpless. It is not until they reach maturity that they have any hope of controlling their aspects. This makes placing them for a specific job very questionable. The god needs to anticipate the specific job by some twenty years and risk his or her power in an infant mortal, all the time lacking the full power of their divine aspects.

Like minions, avatars can go rogue, and they are typically treated in the same fashion. Gods may wish to allow an avatar more freedom and be more willing to negotiate. An avatar represents an enormous investment of power. It would be a real shame to simply snuff the avatar from existence before reaping any gains.

### Spirits

Spirits are single aspect divine creatures. Unlike minions, spirits are not restricted as to how much power they may have in their single aspect. This allows spirits to have enough power to rival the gods, though their power is not broadly distributed. Spirits live on the same world as mortals, but they live in a shadowy, magical alternate world. They are capable of passing back and forth from one to the other, and can watch the mortal realm from their spirit world. Mortals may be able to cross over to this spirit world or see into it through some magical spells and abilities. Of course, once there, they are at the mercy of the spirits.

It is important to note that the spirits discussed here are not the same as spirits of the dead. Some cultures call the spirits “Elder Gods” or “Ancient Ones” so as to differentiate between the two. Some people have theorized that spirits are in fact old gods who almost passed out of existence. Since they do not belong to the most powerful pantheon, they are restricted to the one aspect, typically an aspect that is not covered by the pantheon. This is only a theory.

Spirits have the ability to possess. This possession is linked to their aspect, and they can only possess someone or something pertaining to their aspect. For example, the spirit of the wolverines could take control of any wolverine and use its body. The importance of spirit possession comes to light when the emotional spirits are considered. The spirit of rage can take control of anyone lost in a fit of rage and does not have to give the body back, as long as it can maintain the emotion. As a point of fact, a spirit completely obsessed with rage or any other emotion will be able to maintain that emotion in a mortal host indefinitely.

Spirits are not necessarily evil. Far more are benign. Spirits tend towards being more “natural” in their aspects. Because of this, they can receive adoration from practices less organized than religion. The spirit of waterfalls might receive power simply from people standing in awe while watching the majesty of a beautiful cascade. Those spirits that do not receive such “easy” worship do pursue followers. They are more willing to help than most gods, because they are closer and have fewer servants.

### Gods and Goddesses

Gods and goddesses are by far the most powerful of the divinities. They work together in pantheons and can be relied on by allies. They have a broad base of aspects and use multiple aspects when achieving their goals. Despite this, they are focused on their future goals and move ever forward towards these ends, even if the ends are centuries in the future.

Gods dwell in far off heavens and hells. Even those claiming to live atop mountains, typically dwell elsewhere. These mountains might provide transportation to the heavily realms, but only through the gifts of the gods.

Demi-gods are created by other gods as offspring. These gods have taken a portion of their sire’s power, but have not yet begun to gather the adoration that will increase their power. Demi-gods are typically less conservative than those gods who have been forced to “play the game” for centuries

and might be quicker to antagonize other divinities through the use of their aspects.

### Wars of the Gods

The gods do battle. They will fight each other or the spirits, but they prefer to use their pawns to fight their battles. Once their pawns are used up, it becomes time for the gods to enter the fray themselves. In battle with each other, gods will usually open up with a few uses of aspects, but then settle into a contest of strength, either spiritual or some style of divinely physical.

Use of aspects weakens gods. The more they use their aspect, the less powerful they become. While adoration will “recharge” the god, this takes some time. During a battle, the god will become weaker and weaker if he or she continues to use aspects. To quantify this, a god would drop one point in the aspect every time they used it. When the rating in the aspect dropped to zero, the god would be too weakened to use that divine power. Of course quantifying a god or spirit’s power like this is dangerous to a campaign, but it does seem reasonable.

When a god defeats another god or spirit, it may be possible for the victor to take some of the loser’s power. If Marina, goddess of the seas, were to defeat Sky, the god of weather and nature, in battle, she might be able to wrest control of the storms and winds from him. Such stolen power will only remain if the god can develop worshippers who will fuel the power with adoration of the right style. If the worshipers continue to pray to Sky for help with the storms, Marina’s power over them will fade.

If a world has more than a few dozen gods, they will most likely war with each other. Typically, aspect overlap causes these wars as gods contend for full control of their aspects. The spirits are far more numerous than the gods. A single world might hold over a hundred spirits. With more narrow aspects and an inability to “steal” power, spirits simply do not gain as much for going to war.

### Mortals vs. the Divine

In just about every situation, a mortal, no matter how powerful, should be no match for a god. A god should be able to snuff a mortal life through the use of an aspect every single time. No mortal should be able to kill a god, no matter what the gamemaster is trying to accomplish.

There should be some exceptions. Gods should only be vulnerable to weapons crafted by the gods. Spirits might be vulnerable to some style of

specially crafted weapon, but never to a simple weapon, even if it is magical. Weapons that can hurt the divine must be crafted specifically for that purpose, and should be extremely rare. If a minion were to discover that some mage was attempting to fashion a god-killing weapon, abuse of an aspect would be rewarded by every god in that universe.

The most dangerous method of running gods in a fantasy game is to quantify them too much. The more statistics they have, the easier it is for mortal characters to attempt to defeat them. By keeping the gods and their aspects very loosely defined, the gamemaster can allow the gods to overcome mortals whenever they come into direct conflict, but still allow mortals to defeat the god's goals.

### Conclusion

Divinities and mythology are an important part of fantasy role-playing, but they need to be controlled. Any time a player character gains power over the gods, through die rolls or poorly designed spells, the game is bound to suffer. Hopefully with these notes and suggestions, gamemasters can make use of divinities without risking their campaigns.

### Sample Pantheon

The Dinsthain Pantheon is headed by Brakin, King of the gods. He founded the pantheon by defeating a large number of the spirits of the world and taking their powers. He then created his family and gave them the powers of the spirits he had defeated. Although some spirits still exist, they are in a "cold war" with the gods.

Each of the gods is listed with their aspects following. The numbers within the parenthesis are the ratings (on a scale of 1-10) of their control over those aspects.

#### The Upper House

Brakin: God of Life (9) and Justice (8) {Rulers (5)}

Laenta: Goddess of Home (6) and Marriage (6) {Hearth (3)}

Manoto: God of War (8)

Flinda: Goddess of Beauty (6)

Catamib: God of Thieves (7), Outcasts (6), and the Underprivileged (6)

Elightel: God of Magic (evil - 7) and Necromancy (7)

Shade: Goddess of Death (8) and Change/Progress (6) {Cold (2)}

Sky: God of Nature (6) and Weather (7)

Marina: Goddess of Water (6) and the Sea (7)

Trintia: Goddess of Luck (5) {Games (4) Racing (3)}

#### The Lower House

Roland: God of the Elves (5)

Karcook: God of the Dwarves (5)

Zwenn: God of Assassins (4) and Murderers (5)

Glion: Goddess of the Truth (5)

Sinadati: God of Magic (good 4) and Enchantments (5)

Homnon: God of Birth (4)

Winsoar: God of Joy (3) and Alcohol (5)

Endnal: God of Pain (5)

Sumston: God of Fire (4) and the Sun (5)

Bersot: Goddess of the Law (5)

Daawstis: God of Chaos (4)

Jwendal: God of Money (4)

Looupena: Goddess of Sorrow (4)

Pento Tabochk: Judge of the Dead {Corpses (4) Spirits of the Dead (4)}

Jassper: God of Cities (5)

Slemny: Goddess of Physical Love (5) {Lust (5) Prostitutes (5)}

#### Demi-Gods

Fissik: Demi-God of Knights (2), Honor (3) and Male Chastity (2)

Eliamber: Demi-Goddess of Female Warriors (3)

Verdan: Demi-God of Forests (3)

Komano: Demi-God of the Halflings (2)

Umdarc: Demi-God of the Orcs (2)

Tomskin: Demi-God of Horsemen (2)

Ixaricks: Demi-God of Travelers (4)

Hoam: Demi-God of Craftsmen (3)

Cramist: Demi-Goddess of the Rainbow (2)

Tackim: Demi-God of Strategy (3)

Sarslod: Demi-God of Air (1) and Flight (2)

Quimgrow: Demi-God of Mining (3) and the Underground (2)

Vitiei: Demi-Goddess of Light (3)