

The 7 Planets

If we look up at the sky at night, we see countless stars. Most are fixed stars. Many are taken together in constellations. They turn around in front of our eyes once a year. There are also 7 visible celestial bodies, which move across the sky at different speeds. These are called planets (in Greek, 'wanderers'). The Phoenicians and Babylonians probably created the division into 7 days of the week. Each day was assigned a god and the associated planet. The Romans later adopted this classification. In the era when Latin was, so to speak, the world language, the days of the week were renamed accordingly. In the German-speaking world, the equivalent Germanic names of gods were used. We do not hear the corresponding planet for the days of the week in all languages. In German, Sunday and Monday are clearly associated with the Sun and the moon. In the Latin languages, the Sun is masculine and the moon is feminine, Sol and Diana, Helios and Luna. The day of the Sun was probably renamed 'the day of the Lord' ('the day of the resurrection') in Domenica during Christianization under Emperor Constantine. When we hear Tuesday (in French, Mardi), we immediately hear the name Mars. Mars is the Roman god of war. How about the German Tuesday? The Germans called the god of war Ziu or Tir, which means Tirstag or Ziussestag. (My last name means exactly this). With Wednesday, the French is clear again: Mercredi from Mercury, the messenger of the gods. In Nordic languages, the god Wodan can be heard. Donar is the Roman Jupiter/Jupiter, which became Thursday and Jeudi. The Germans call the goddess of love Venus Freia. She gave the name to our Friday, so Vendredi is named after Venus. In Hebrew only Saturday, Sabbath, has a name. The verb 'schoftai' means 'to stop', 'to rest'. In English, the Germanic names were adopted, except for Saturn: Saturday. Mythology is never clear cut. There are always different variations. For the people of ancient times, the stars were much more important than they are for us. They were also guides and calendars. The planets can be seen in many old churches. For example, in the Bern Cathedral they are on the canopy above the main portal.