

WHO ARE THE GODS? WHAT ARE THE GODS?

Before the beginning of time, there was Ginnungagap - a bottomless abyss, which separated the icy land of Niflheim and the fiery land of Muspelheim. These two realms rose in power and clashed; the burning frost turned into water drops and the water drops turned into life.

The first living being was Ymir, a hermaphroditic giant who was created from those life-giving drops of water and whose death was brought about by Odin and his brothers. Odin, Vili, and Vé, Ymir's descendants, fashioned the Nordic mythological universe from his blood, bones, flesh, teeth, hair, eyelashes, brains, and skull.

The Norse gods belong to two major clans: Æsir and Vanir. Odin, Frigg, Thor, Loki, Balder, Hod, Heimdall and Tyr are the most elevated representatives of Æsir and are known as the main gods. The second clan, Vanir, contains the fertility gods and count Njord, Freyr, and Freyja as their most notable members.

If you want to believe the gods were once people, or a part of factual history, there is no one to take that away from you. However, we believe that our ancestors were not silly, we have a challenging time believing at one time there were flying horses, giants, and elves. Our faith lays with the foundation of science, and therefore we believe our gods are much more of archetypes than anything else. Spiritual energies if you will, the kinds that help produce changes throughout the world. As our ancestors did many hundreds of years ago, we call to the gods for guidance, for belief, for help, and for celebration. The gods always see you, and they are always watching. We must remember the gods to not dictate aspects of our lives, we owe nothing to them, and they do not have say over what we believe or do. They are more of spiritual assistance, and guidance when one is in need. The gods cannot make things happen for us, they best give us the tools and ability to make things happen for ourselves. A strong belief in the Asatru way is we must make for ourselves with everything we have, before turning to the gods for guidance and help. This does not mean we must not speak to the gods;

all this means is we do not worship or call to our gods like a Christian faith would to theirs. We tread our gods like friends, helpers, and partners in adventure, thanking them when they help, celebrating them for our faith, and offering to them as if they were on the others side of the table, feasting with you.

So, let us look at some of these gods in a realistic form of Asatru. We must always remember that Asatru means reconstructed, as in the faith is being adjusted to best fit our current times. As I did my own research reading the sources I discovered a typical formula in a lot of the poems of the Eddas and Sagas. There typically are always three main characters always involved in the stories. This is a formula in which takes the three main aspects of the human self-such as the mind, the passion, and the spirit, and in these sources, they use different names (different gods) to help describe certain situations. Reading the sources this completely opened my view on what our ancestors were trying to tell us. These poems, stories, sagas are all fun to read, but when you apply this formula, you can easily see how these stories become lessons, and hints to life's challenges and how to overcome them. To give an example we start with Odin, Vili, and Ve, the three brothers that gave life to beach wood. This is symbolic for Vili which translates to 'Will' as in Will power and the mindset, which is easy to see Vili being the 'Mind.' Ve which gave the ability to see, hear and speak is easily the passion in the formula, giving us the ability to excrete emotion. Then Odin, giving spirit or 'Breath' to the beach wood is the spirit in the trinity. This type of formula is found throughout the sources such as Odin, Hugin, and Munin. Odin again the spirit, Hugin representing 'memory' is the mind, Munin representing 'thought' is the passion. Once more with Odin, Geri, and Freki his wolves. Odin again the spirit, Geri which means something like "Greedy One" is simply the mind, and Freki which means something like "Lustful" or "Gluttonous" and he is simply the passion. Keep in mind Odin does not always represent the Spirit, in some cases he represents the mind, it all depends on which gods are in the current poem. Nevertheless, the formula is always there. One more example will come from the poem Harbardsljod. In this poem Thor tries to cross a river to get home, and a ferryman named Harbard prevents him from hopping on the ferry and taking him across river. In this poem Harbard is Odin in disguise. In this poem Thor represents the mind and passion, trying to find its way home and Odin (The spirit)

is rejecting him and after a lengthy battle of verbal conversation, Odin makes Thor Walk the long way home around the river. This is very symbolic for the mind trying to cross over into divinity and internal life, and the spirit is trying to teach the mind necessary aspects of life and its nature, it is detailed in the conversation Thor and Odin had. Thor taking the long way around the river is symbolic for the spirit making the mind continue through life, learning, gaining knowledge and making a way of its own. These types of formulas are found all over the sagas and poems of the Eddas. When you can find the trinity, and plug in the formula of the Mind, Passion, Spirit, all the poems and sagas become an epic lesson on life.

The Aesir Family:

The Gods to the Norse and Germanic cultures not only stood for the energies or spirits around us, but they were also the creations of things within us. We as pagans look to our gods like energy in the physical world, but also the spirit energy within ourselves as well. After all that is exactly what paganism is, us and nature around us. Nature in the physical sense, but also the nature of what takes place around our lives and daily journeys.

Paganism has always been nature and the soul.

Below is the breakdown of the gods and deities in both a physical sense and spiritual sense.

Most of the Aesir gods stand in line with society, living, structure, war, conflict, law, and order.

Odin,

The All-Father, Leader of the Aesir, One Eye, Grey Beard, Black Coat, White Wizard, leader of Asgard, the god of many names throughout the sources. He is the veteran of the gods, god of knowledge, exploration, sacrifice, wisdom,

cunning, adventurer, desire, and gamble. Many would call Odin for advice and guidance in troubled times, but be careful Odin usually likes fair trade, which means if he grants you.

something, he will take something as well. He was the awe-inspiring ruler of Asgard, and most revered immortal, who was on an unrelenting quest for knowledge with his two ravens Hugin and Munin, two wolves Geri and Freki and the Valkyries. He is famous for sacrificing one of his eyes to be able to see the cosmos more clearly and his thirst for wisdom saw him hang from the World Tree, Yggdrasil, for nine days and nine nights until he was blessed with the knowledge of the runic alphabet.

Frigg,

Frigg is the wife to Odin, the mother goddess, paragon of beauty, love, fertility, and fate. She represents hearth, home, bringer of favor, and hospitality. She is associated with keys, keeping secrets, parenthood, and wisdom. She was gifted with the power of divination, and yet, was surrounded by an air of secrecy. She was the only goddess allowed to sit next to her husband. [Frigg](#) was a very protective mother, so she took an oath from the elements, beasts, weapons, and poisons, that they would not injure her brilliant and loving son, Balder. Her trust was betrayed by Loki, a most deceitful god.

Thor,

The famous god, and son to Odin and Jord (Earth). He is protector of humanity, and known also as the sky god, or the red god. Friend and watcher of Midgard (Earth), he is accompanied by his goats, Tanngrisnir and Tanngnjostr, in which he kills, and eats, then he collects their bones, uses his hammer Mjolnir to bring them back to life. Thor is associated with war, Earth, Humanity, Thunder, Lightning, Strength, Bravery, Healing Powers, and Righteousness.

Siff,

The wife of Thor, mother of Modi and Magni, sons of Thor. She is the goddess known for golden hair, bringer of grain, good harvest, fertility, good crops. She could represent the fields of golden wheat, farmers, long term dedication, determination, earth, wedlock, and marriage.

Tyr,

Tyr the god of justice, one handed god, God of law and order, God of might, hard choices, sword hand, courage, and word or oath of man. Tyr is associated with sacrifice, contest, oath keeping, the rune Tiwaz, and hand to hand combat. He is known for his dedication to the upbringing of Fenrir, the father of wolves. He also is known for losing his hand to Fenrir, after the Aesir bounded Fenrir to the rock, Tyr was the brave god who was willing to place his hand in Fenrir's mouth.

Loki,

Loki known as the trickster god, maker of change, chaos, blood brother to Odin himself, Transformation, shape shifting. Loki is associated with Challenge, necessary changes, preventer of stagnation, snakes, fire, flame, and scheme placer. Loki is known for setting up Baldr's death, and bringing the ship Naglfar, a ship made from the fingernails, and toenails of the dead in Hel at Ragnarok. We must note that there are no archaeological finds of evidence that Loki ever existed as a real god on the Norse Pantheon, increased research shows Loki was created by the poets of that time to help move the stories along, again necessary change.

Baldr,

Baldr is the son of Frigg and Odin, and Aesir god of light, wisdom, courage, radiance, beauty, and fairness. He is associated with mistletoe, dawn, daylight, sunlight, kindness, and equality. He was believed to be immortal, but he was

killed by mistletoe - the golden bough that contained both his life and his death. Once again, there is no evidence of Baldr as a Norse god outside of the Eddas, and once again we can see that the story tellers of pagan times created him to represent reincarnation of the great soul and spirit.

Heimdall,

Heimdall is known as the shiniest of all, whitest skin of all gods. He is known as the protector of the Bifrost bridge, which connects Asgard to Midgard. His Horn, Gjallarhorn, will be blown at Ragnarok as the end of time comes. He is attested as possessing foreknowledge, and keen senses, particularly eyesight, and hearing. He is also known to have built the classes of humankind, and the son of nine mothers. Heimdall is said to be born at the world's edge, and that the earth and sea gave him strength. Heimdall relates to humanity, the world tree Yggdrasil, and life in existence.

Vidar,

Vidar was another son of the supreme god Odin and Grid (a giantess), and his powers were matched only by that of Thor. Vidar is known as the wide ruler and associated with vengeance. Vidar is told to avenge his father at Ragnarok, killing the father of wolves Fenrir.

Vali

Vale/Vali was the son of Odin who avenged Balder's death by killing Hod (Blind/Ignorance), the god who pierced Balder with mistletoe. His sole purpose of existence is to avenge his brother's death. Vali can also be associated with purpose, revenge, warrior, weapons, and destiny.

From here, we will look at the Vanir Gods, and gods associated with nature.

Njord,

Njord is a Vanir god, and father of both Freyr and Freyja. He is associated with the sea, sea life, seafaring, wind, fishing, wealth, and coastal crop fertility. Njord may also relate to water sports, access of water, bodies of water, and coastal life.

Freyr,

Freyr is another Vanir god, son of Njord. He is god of fertility, and one of the most respected gods of the Vanir tribe. Freyr is a symbol and connected with property, pleasant weather, bringer of all, harvesting crops, farming, and land cycles. He is also associated with prosperity, King of the elvar, God of peace, God of abundance, and nature of all. Freyr is known to giving up his sword to Skirnir, for the hand of his daughter Gerd, and therefore Freyr will lose the fight at Ragnarok. This also connects Freyr with sacrifice, love, and destiny. Freyr rides his boar, Gullinbursti, which he received from the Dwarves as gifts.

Freyja,

Freyja the most popular Vanir goddess, sensual and passionate, associated with war, love, sex, beauty, battle, and death. Freyja is known to have first pick of the fallen in battle, taking them back to her field of light and beauty Folkvangr. Freyja is

associated with Seidr magic, spell casting, and rune working. Freyja serves a big purpose in the mythology due to her causing both tribes, the Aesir, and the Vanir to go to war, which ends with both tribes trading hostages, eventually leading to a truce in tribes. Freyja is also known for her cats that pull her chariot through Asgard, she is known as the lady goddess, and queen of the Valkyries. Gold, birds of prey, royalty, and sexual desires are all signs of Freyja.

Jord,

Jord is not a Vanir goddess, but very connected to nature as the Vanir are, in fact Jord is Earth herself. Mother of Thor, lover of Odin, she is nature, the earth,

ground, water, fire, wind, everything in existence here on earth. She is the cradle of nature, she is the bringer of life, but also destruction.

Aegir and ran,

Where Njord may be the connections to the sea and water, Aegir and Ran are the sea and water. Aegir and his wife Ran have a realm called the Realm of Ran where those who drown or die by water may go to in the afterlife. Together the two produced nine daughters who personify as the waves of the sea. The only son Snaer, personified snow itself.

Skadi,

Skadi is a giantess, and goddess of the wilderness, goddess of the hunt, and mountains. She signifies winter, wintry weather, and outdoor activities. She is associated with hunting, fishing, hiking, and any tool used in outdoor living. Skadi is accompanied by her wolf and the nature around her. She is an expert huntress and skilled in weapon making, and weapon using. She is the daughter of Thiazi, and married Njord in payment of the death of her father by the Aesir.

Hel,

Hel was the goddess and ruler of the Norse underworld of the same name (also known as Helheim). She has pale skin and appears to be death-like. She nurtures and houses any who enter her realm. She is known as goddess of the dead, goddess of death, goddess of the spirits, and goddess of the dark. She is associated with darkness, the dead, ghosts, Dis, and connection to the dead. She is the daughter of Loki and Angrboda, and one of the monsters that they produced.

These are just a few of the major gods and goddesses of our beautiful faith.

Next, we will list a few deities that serve a major purpose in our myths, yet do not have any place in the tribes.

Fenrir,

The father of wolves, brother to Hel and Jormungandr, son of Loki, destroyer of Odin. He has two wolf children in Skoll, and Hati that will chase the sun and moon, and eventually devour them. Fenrir relates to change, growth, greed, driving force, destiny, danger, judgment, and distress. Fenrir's story in the myths holds many views to our faith, also delivering plenty room of research. Fenrir becomes bound by the gods due to his increasing size and will break free at Ragnarok where he will seek his revenge on Odin himself. Fenrir's other side of the representation means strength, dedication, fate, power, certainty.

Jormungandr,

Brother to both Fenrir, and Hel, son of Loki and Angrboda. Jormungandr is the edge of know reality, the world serpent in the myths, he grew so big he circles the world touching his face to his tail. He represents change, disaster, chaos, limits of existence, the turning of reality. The myths describe him as a serpent of enormous size, which will bring an end to Midgard, (Earth). However, in the archetype sense Jormungandr represents the changing of time, change of events, shedding the skin, becoming something new. He brings definite, he brings chaos, and he brings the necessary changes that must take place.

Nidhoggr,

Nidhoggr is the dragon who gnaws at the roots of the world tree, Yggdrasil. In the myths he is connected with the squirrel Ratatoskr, which runs up and down the world tree relaying words between both Nidhoggr and the eagle that sits upon the world tree. Nidhoggr is also claimed to feed off the corpses of Nastrond, an island outside of Helheim. Only those of broken oaths, guilty of murder, rape, and the most horrible acts will rot in Nastrond. In the faith, Nidhoggr could stand for lack of order, greed, disorder, and never being satisfied, possibly in selfish acts.

The Norns,

The Norns are three wise women who determine every allotted life span. One spreads the thread of each life, another measured the length of the thread, and the third decided when the thread should be cut. The names of the Norns are Urd, Verdandi, and Skuld, which means Past, Present, and Future. They weave our fates, they weave our lifespan, they weave what we will encounter in our lives. In our faith, we believe what is weaved for us, cannot be changed, only thing we can do is accept. The Norns represent time, destiny, fate, death, life, existence, and certainty.

There are many, many more gods and deities in the Norse Mythos, these are just a small list put together to get you more involved with what the gods, and deities mean outside of the Mythos, and in real faith.

We must remember that our myths are metaphors for our faith, and how are faith intertwines with reality. This does not mean you cannot believe Thor has red hair, and drives a chariot pulled by goats, all this means is there is much more to each god, deity and the poems found in our sources. Many beginners of our faith swallow up the myths and go out into the world with a limited amount of understanding of what the myths stand for. Therefore, the NFK likes to break down the myths and use them in reality of life and decode them for actual usage of day-to-day living.

This learning tab will grow over time. NFK will continue to add knowledge of our faith, from factual sources, and we will soon add links to the books and sites that we feel do an excellent job explaining our faith. Please visit this tab frequently to see what we have added. Soon to come will be a step-by-step guide, on how to practice, study, and learn our faith of Asatru.

Hail for now.

