

## Lesson 13: Ritual

In previous lessons I touched on Ritual and it's use. In this lesson we will look at ritual in depth, including one of the best examples of ritual I have seen.

Let's start with some basics: (please note that I am taking part of this from another lesson I prepared previously. I have revised this slightly and corrected a few inaccurate statements.)



One thing that I want to stress as we get into this is, you can't really screw up a ritual. About all you can do is make it meaningless or knock yourself out of the "mood". There is nothing (unless you are doing a spell) that you can do to really screw things up, so don't worry. Relax.

Ritual serves the same purpose as myth. It is a language of symbols, frequently those symbols will be the same ones that you have on your altar, in your directions, and that you use in your divination. In and of themselves, doing the rites and rituals don't mean anything. The only meaning there is what YOU as the participant or conductor bring to it. That's all.

So, if the ritual has no meaning, why do it? Simple, it serves the same purpose that every other symbol serves. It's an outward expression of an inward state. It is a concrete representation of what you wish to bring to be.

For example, you want to celebrate the Lord and Lady. So, you decorate the Altar with symbols representing the time of year, the way you feel about Them, what you wish to give them, and so on, and your ritual is centered around giving your Love to Them and making Them feel appreciated.

Sadly many Pagans get caught up in the "High Episcopagan" mind set of "I MUST do this action now, and say these words, and have THIS in my hand at THIS time" (said sotto voce) that they loose sight of the MEANING of the ritual. The meaning they are supposed to bring to the ritual is someone trying to show their appreciation to the Gods.

So, if your sleeve catches fire when doing the rite, curse and yell, if you drop the platter of cakes, laugh and keep laughing. The Gods won't be offended; in fact, they may even be joining you in your mirth. I have heard them laughing when I fell on my face during one rite because my robe was too long. Just about every practicing Pagan has something similar to share.

Disclaimer: Here I will be breaking down rituals into parts and explaining those parts, but this list is not all-inclusive. I have probably skipped something, and I KNOW that I have not put every kind of ritual down for discussion. This is a \*general\* outline of what I have encountered in rites and rituals from 10 years of work. These kinds of rituals and ritual structure even carries over into other mainstream religions, so keep an eye out.

## Definitions:

### rite

Pronunciation: 'rlt

*Etymology: Middle English, from Latin ritus;*

1.
  - a. a prescribed form or manner governing the words or actions for a ceremony
  - b. the liturgy of a church or group of churches
2. a ceremonial act or action (initiation rites)

### ritual

Pronunciation: 'ri-ch&-w&l, -ch&l; 'rich-w&l

*Function: noun*

1. the established form for a ceremony; specifically : the order of words prescribed for a religious ceremony
2.
  - a. ritual observance; specifically : a system of rites
  - b. a ceremonial act or action
  - c. a customarily repeated often formal act or series of acts

*Function: adjective*

1. of or relating to rites or a ritual : CEREMONIAL (a ritual dance)
2. according to religious law or social custom (ritual purity) - rit-u-al-ly adverb

## Types of rituals:

**Worship/Devotional/Celebratory:** This is the type of ritual that takes place in Sunday Church, Friday Shabbos rite, Saturday's 7th Day Adventist service or study at a mosque. It is a worship of a God or Gods in which you generally give thanks for what you have, praise the God, and hear any messages that the God has for you, usually through the medium of the Pastor or Minister. This kind of rite is the single most common type of ritual there is. It cuts across all religions, faiths, ways, and creeds. Even many groups that you may not think about as being "religious" in nature like the invocation at a football game, the Scouts, and other examples.

One thing that goes with this section is a sacrifice. I just recently came across an excellent short article by a good friend of mine who summarized a section of a book talking about sacrifice. It can be found here:

<http://www.livejournal.com/community/clergyramblings/3046.html#cutid1> Condensing the article additionally, the theme is there are three kinds of sacrifice: Communion, Celebratory and the "Guilt Offering". Communion opens up communication between you and the divine, or other entities, Celebratory is just that, a celebration, and Guilt is trying to expiate something in your past, canceling its effect on you. These are important to keep in mind. An additional article on [Blood Sacrifice](#) is available.

**Meditation/Self Improvement:** This kind of ritual occurs when you start a process to transform yourself or to get rid of habits or to initiate or continue a spiritual journey. Meditation tapes are a good example. In some cases, so too is a visit to a Psychologist. Especially if just walking through the door of the office gets you into the mood. A "Sweat lodge" could also fall under this kind of heading.

A ritual I went through a long time ago follows:

Once upon a time, I went to a spiritual center and hung out there almost all the time. It was a nice place, I attended classes there, helped with mailing newsletters, and so forth. One lady there did counseling and taped journeys of the soul. I asked her what she did exactly, and she offered to take me through one of those sessions. I said, "Sure, why not?"

What happened to me I remember to this day, more than 10 years later. Basically she laid me on a couch, and put some headphones on my ears and started a tape. In it, I was invited to relax, let go and see what the voice on the tape was telling me to see. And boy did I.

At the end of the one-hour, I was crying like a baby. I was able to purge many negative thought processes. I was able to accept myself as a good person, simply because I was alive. I didn't have to kill my success and myself simply because I didn't deserve anything. And I got better.

These rituals are common when one considers just how many rituals of this kind are out there. A simple meditation with your Gods, a ceremony to purge yourself, and many others all fit into this category.

**Initiatory:** While this ritual can be combined with the ritual above, it can also stand on it's own. The best example of this kind of ritual I can think of is a adult baptism in the Christian Church, Bar/Bas Mitzvah in Judaism or Confirmation in the Roman Catholic Church . You go in to the ritual as one person, and leave it as another. A typical result of that initiation is for at least a while, you behave act differently. So too, in Paganism, we have the initiation and dedication rituals that do the same thing.

Many additional examples of this exist other than initiation, RC Stations of the Cross from another lesson for example, and the Coming of Age rituals. A Native American Sun Dance, where the pain of the process, the pulling to get free, the mortification of the flesh all combine to change the participant into something else.

A symbolic death is as good as a real one for a sacrifice in some traditions, notably Wicca. It binds the group together over that death, and each can relate to it on a personal level at that point. An initiation is a symbol of the death of the old person, the rebirth of the new person (some traditions going so far as to blindfold and restrain the new person in the initiation, or make them crawl through the legs of all the women, or swim between them also), the old person is now dead, a new one born, complete with a new name.

Not all milestones are ritually marked. A coming of age rite that is extremely important for many Teens is getting their driver's license. They take classes (preparation), study, practice, and go for the test. Once they pass it and then drive their parents around for a while (while the parent is white-knuckled in the passenger seat). This is an important rite, a rite of maturity. Yet, rarely is there a ceremony per se.

Certainly a bachelor party or a wedding can be seen in much the same light, as well as the night of drinking typical of western youth when one becomes 21 and can legally buy alcohol.

All these "rites" can be seen as sacred societal rites, not necessarily religious in aspect, but as transformational initiatory rites.

**Spell work:** This is the "ooie ooie" part of Paganism, the spells. Yes, casting a spell is a ritual all by itself, and one that is vastly different from those above. Pretty much, this could be considered the "prayer" part of a Sunday service in the Christian Church. It's the "Coercion of God" or the "imposition of your Will upon the universe." As such it is it's own rite. Some of the basics to this type of rite will be similar to the rest, but the aim, the goal of the rite will be very different.

In each of these types of rituals, there will be elements that will be exactly similar to each other, and normally practitioners will combine one with the other. For instance, using our Christian Church as an example, our dear minister may have the celebration service early Sunday morning, followed hard by the spell work section of the service (the prayer). There may be a break of several hours where he talks to different members of the congregation and counsels them (self improvement), after which there is a gathering on the lawn for the softball league (celebration again) and move right on into the baptism of a new member to the church (initiation). At no one time are the rites ended, but at different points the disinterested members are free to leave.

Any ritual that you find will fit one or more of the above categories. Other authors may give them different titles but there will be commonalities among them. Also note, a rite

is a way of doing things that has been passed down for years, a ritual is the actual doing of a rite. The distinction is subtle but important.

This is a breakdown of a ritual into its component parts:

### **Preparation**

This is the stage where you gather that tools and/or the objects you need. It is here you go over the rite in your head and figure out what you are going to say and what you will do. You set up the Altar and lay out the tools for easy use when you actually begin. You may choose to start a little earlier with a ritual bath to cleanse and purify yourself in preparation for this ritual. You could even start earlier than that with a fast, diet or abstinence from certain vices, all with the goal of preparing you for the actual rite itself. Any research for the ritual should be done in this stage, drawings made for the ritual, and all other things that you need to do before you begin, so that there is no interruption once you start.

### **Consecration**

This is the start of the actual ritual itself. Relating to Paganism, this is where you bless and prepare the space for use. You ritually cleanse the Circle of any negative influences, seal the Circle by "casting" it, bless the participants in the rite, and bless the area. Basically, what you are doing is making this plot of ground "holy" for the purposes of inviting the Gods to attend. It's analogous to the cleaning frenzy many of us go through when acquaintances are coming over for a while. Usually once this part begins, you don't leave for any reason, unless it's a DIRE emergency.

### **Invocation**

This is where you invite the deities or other entities to join your Circle, and bless it with their presence. I say "other entities" because there will be times when you may want other astral beings to be present. For example, if you choose to ritually Invoke the Watchtowers or Call the Quarters, this asks another being to be present at the Circle, and in some cases it commands them to be present. I urge you to use the invocation rather than a summoning. Remember this from a previous lesson? Here is where that advice is useful. By Invoking, you ask them to help and to be present. You do have to accept "no" for an answer, because they may be busy. However, the trade off is cooperation. When invoked, goodwill is given and received, trust is stated and given. By summoning, you are treating these astral beings as slaves or servants, and a slave will never give you their help unasked.

### **The Working**

Okay, this is the actual "working" part of the ritual. Usually this is the specific rite (reason) the Circle was cast. Some examples would be a worship service, spell work, and so on. The actual process done in this section varies from group to group, and

even from person to person. It's where you do all those esoteric things that you see done in movies and TV. A lot of times while the previous steps go by quickly, if only from repetition, this is where you take your time.

I like analogies, and here's one. If a ritual can be likened to car repair, then the Preparation is getting the tools out and popping the hood, the Consecration is laying out the tools and hoping you don't screw up, the invocation is yelling at the car for doing this to you, and the actual repair is the working. This is where you slow down and take your time with everything. This is where you meditate, get your feelings together, figure out what you are doing, and so forth, and actually start the process that you got everything out for.

There are some practitioners that combine a lot of separate rites and rituals into one during the Working section. There are arguments for and against this practice, which I will go into more detail once we begin to look deeper into the way to "rearrange" this format. What? You thought this process was written in stone? More the fool you. No, this is all fluid, under some conditions. It's while it is helpful to stick with the format I give and follow it as much as you can.

## **Thanks**

This is the Thanksgiving part. In our car repair analogy, this is where you say "Hot DAMN!" and celebrate. Basically, it is showing your appreciation to the Gods for what you have, and telling them that you will not take this for granted. It would be a shame to have it (whatever it is) taken from you through lack of appreciation. This is when I also show my appreciation to those other entities that I asked to the Circle. After all, they didn't have to come. Also, if you have any offerings to give the Gods, Cakes and Ale, sacrifices, herbs, other things (no children, please) this is the time you would give it to them.

One exception to this guideline is the "Guilt sacrifice". That would be a ritual in and of itself, in which the sacrifice would be central to the rite. One could not break the sacrifice of food out of it and put it in this section simply because it is the rite. Passover would be a prime example of this, as well as a ceremony of appeasement for certain extra-planar beings.

## **Unmaking the Circle** (or any dismissal of the participants and cleanup)

While some pagans and Metaphysical practitioners may have problems with my terminology, but this is what you are doing. You are unmaking the Circle. It's the same thing you did in step 2, only in reverse. You open the Circle, say goodbye to everyone you invited (both physical and non-physical) and go your merry way. Many call this "Opening or Clearing the Temple", "Grounding the Circle" or an other name. The practice varies from group to group as to how they do this in the specific, but there is usually some variation of drawing the energy of the Circle back into themselves or pushing that "wall" the Circle made down into the ground. Here is where you would

have a party with different people, and perhaps do divination to see how it worked. You would also talk to those who attended to see what they felt. This is the social part of the ritual.

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I'm going to give you the example of Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki's ritual for the Solitary Magickian. (This is used with her permission and with much thanks.)

[Servants of the Light](#) ( online study ) A group that Delores belongs to and writes on.  
[Her personal site](#)  
[Biography](#)

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Taken from "**First Steps in Ritual**" by Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki

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## **Chapter 7: The Solo Magician**

### **Ritual One: The Warrior Guardian**

The Blessed Isles in particular have a long tradition of Warrior Guardians. In many ways, they are the descendants of the Priest-Kings of Egypt, their function is to gather wisdom, teach it, practice it and guard it. The names of Arthur, Merlin, Cuchulainn <sic>, Bran, Gwydion, Math, Rob Roy, Robert Bruce and Llew Llaw Gyffes - and Boudicca also - come to mind. Every land well loved is worth defending, and the role of the Warrior Magician should not be lost as so much that is of value has been lost, simply because no one thought to write it down. It is all too easy for traditions and ways to die out when the last holder of the secret dies without passing it on. I am, so my students tell me, paranoid about putting things down and keeping records. My excuse is that so many things have now gone forever because there was no one near to take them on or write them down, and the future will always have need of true records.

Magicians are not always known for their capabilities as warriors, but the warriors are there under the robe and the lamen. To arouse the Mars within can be dangerous, but unless you try you will never know how to control the power. Learning magic is a tricky business, but spell-burnt fingers teach you a lot... fast!

This is, as you will have guessed, a solo ritual, and although I have written it for a man it may just as easily be worked by a woman, as a Warrior Priestess. In fact these two

rituals are more or less androgynous. *[Daven's note: In the interest of Copyright and brevity, I have only included one ritual here, you can probably find a copy of this excellent book someplace near you, and read the other ritual for yourself.]* You will need in your sacred place an altar, covered with a red cloth, and a spear or a sword and shield if you have one. Wear a dark red robe; if you only have a black one, tie around it a thick dark red girdle (my apologies to my American friends for whom a girdle is not necessarily something you tie around a robe!). Bare feet are best if working indoors; if not, wear thick sandals. Indeed, if you live in a flat with neighbors living below, leave this ritual until you can do it out of doors -- it can get noisy.

Incense should be of the 'hot' Martian kind, and any reputable occult supplier will be able to furnish a ready-made incense, or provided the raw ingredients for you to blend yourself. Place five red candles on the altar, five being the number of Mars, red the color of the Warrior; they should be the only light source. A statue, symbol, or picture of a warrior should act as an altarpiece and a tape recorder with some martial music is the last requirement. Mars, from Gustav Holst's *'The Planets'*, some parts of Prokofiev's *'Romeo and Juliet'* (mainly the "fight" scene), and the film music from Olivier's *'Henry V'* are all good choices. If you can record the music so that it flows from one piece to another with a break it will help the atmosphere to build up. One side of the 90-minute tape will give you enough time for the whole ritual.

Carrying the sword and shield, or the spear, come to stand before the altar, or, if out of doors, the place where you have arranged the ritual implements. Stand quietly holding the weapons for a few minutes then go to the east and salute it with the sword/spear. In the imagination build up the figure of Arthur Pendragon with Glastonbury Tor behind him. When you have it as clear as possible, salute him with the sword:

'HAIL ARTHUR, KING OF THE ISLES OF THE BLESSED. I AM HERE TO TAKE MY WATCH OVER THE KINGDOM ON THE INNER LEVELS, WITH OTHERS OF MY KIND.'

Move to the south; there you build the image of the Saxon King Alfred, who is credited with the formation of the first British navy. Behind him there are the high cliffs of the coast and the sea winds blow his cloak away from his shoulders. Salute him with the sword/spear:

'HAIL ALFRED, LORD OF BRITAIN, I AM HERE TO TAKE UP MY POST AS SENTRY ON THE INNER LEVELS AND TO MY GUARD THE APPROACHES TO THESE ISLES, WITH MY PEERS.'

Move to the west; and there the image is one of Merlin the Archmage with his staff bearing a carved horse's head. Behind him you see the dark forests of his native Wales. Above his head hovers a falcon. Salute him:



'HAIL MERLIN, ARCHMAGE AND GUARDIAN OF THIS LAND. I AM HERE TO OFFER MY HEART AND HAND ON THE INNER LEVELS TO DEFEND THIS LAND FROM ITS FOES.'

Move to the North and build there the image of Herne the Hunter, horn-crowned and cloaked, astride a black stallion, two wolfhounds at his heels. Salute him:

'HAIL HERNE, ANCIENT DEFENDER OF GRAMMERYE AGAINST THE LORDS OF THE DARK FORCE. I AM HERE TO OFFER MY SWORD-ARM IN YOUR ETERNAL STRUGGLE AGAINST THE DARK.'

Return to the altar and turn on the music. As it fills your place of working let it flow through you and begin to stir your blood. Let your body sway and your feet begin to move. Soon the music and the atmosphere within your working place will build up and you will feel the surge in the blood that lifts the heart of every warrior before he goes into battle. There are times to be a priest and a magician, and there are times to be the magical warrior. Dance now as the ancient defenders did, shake your sword and stamp your feet, and mime the sword and spear play as you circle the Temple. You are the Warrior Priest upon the inner levels and you are ready to defend the Land against any who would seek to break its defenses on the inner levels.

Dance until the music ends then rest, leaning on your sword or spear. Move with dignity to the east and salute the King; he turns to face the east and together you take up the vigil of the east from the top of the ancient Tor. You keep watch with the inner eye, and soon before you there builds the land to the east of where you stand. Look over it closely and you will find you are able to see all the way to the coast and to the sea beyond. You will see its ancient peoples and towns and marvel at the continuity of its life and laws. Gradually there builds up around you other figures. First the Knights of the Round Table -- Lancelot, Gawain, Kay, Bedevere, and others -- then slowly the others, archers and foot soldiers, grenadiers and Templars, crusaders and Highlanders, soldiers from every century gathering around you. Always at your side and a little in front of you is the King, and from time to time he turns his head and nods to you. When you feel the time is right, salute him, bow, and go to take up the vigil of the south.

Here Alfred stands high on a cliff overlooking the sea, and you take your place beside him. You can feel the sea winds tugging at the robe and hair, taste the salt on your lips. Before you, you see passing, the small wooden craft, high-powered galleons, and men-of-war. From all centuries they come, still sailing the seas they loved and defended. There sails the Golden Hind with Drake at the prow, Sidney, and Raleigh, and those who sailed with them. Cook and Cabot are there, as are the crew and captains of smaller ships that struggled against all odds at Dunkirk and won. Still their shades patrol the seas and guard the approaches to the Blessed Isles. When you have fulfilled your time, salute Alfred, bow, and then go to take up the vigil of the west.

Merlin acknowledges your presence and you both turn to the west. Before you is a dark sky jeweled with lightning, and together with Merlin you use your magical strength to keep it from overpowering the land before you. Every land is threatened from time to time by the Dark Ones and in every land there are those who from time immemorial have taken their turn on such vigils. Around you, you see others of your kind; you may even see faces you know who like yourself have offered their service to this task. Some still have physical bodies, others have withdrawn to the inner levels and take their turn in the vigils until such time as they must once again wear a form of flesh and blood. You can feel the energy being demanded of you as you work together to keep the darkness from overwhelming the land. When your time is up, another cloak-wrapped form steps to your side to take your place. You turn and salute Merlin, who raises his staff in answer, you bow, and move to the north.

The stallion snorts and dances sideways as you approach Herne; behind him you can see the shadowy forms of ancient shamans, druids, and older and darker figures that wear strange robes and headdresses. Around them move four-footed shapes -- wolves, bears, tusked boar, and the white-coated, red-eared hounds of Annwn <sic>. Herne looks down at you and raises his hand in salute, and you answer in kind, one of the shadow figures brings to you a horse with a silver bridle and you mount. The Hunt begins.

Out onto the inner levels of the Isle of Grammerye you sweep and the land rolls away beneath the flying hooves. Around you jostle the ancient magical warriors, and in between them you see glimpses of the Heroes of legend. Later still as you sweep across the mountains Aengus Oge and his warriors ride with you, circling the whole of Grammerye, checking and searching and guarding. Sometimes a figure from a nightmare looms out of the twilight and it is set upon by the might throng of the Hunt. Sometimes you pause and wait, and another figure will join you, a warrior from earth whose life has been made forfeit and who will be taken by the Hunt to a place of rest. So passes this vigil and all too soon you are back within the enclosure of your sacred place. You dismount and salute Herne, he acknowledges your gift of time and waits for the Temple to be closed. You walk to the altar and lay down your sword and place both hands palms-down upon the altar.

'HAIL TO THEE GUARDIANS OF THIS LAND, STRENGTH TO THEE AND COURAGE ALSO, I GIVE THANKS FOR THE BLESSING OF THY PRESENCE AND FOR THE CONTINUING WATCH OVER US ALL. I COUNT IT AN HONOUR TO TAKE MY PART IN THIS AND PLEDGE MY SUPPORT TO YOU IN THIS WORK. SO MOTE IT BE.'

Lay the sword upon the altar and go to the east; salute.

'HAIL AND FAREWELL ARTHUR, HIGH KING OF BRITAIN AND GUARDIAN OF ITS LAWS AND DESTINY. IF THERE IS A NEED, CALL ME AND I WILL COME AND TAKE MY PLACE BESIDE YOU.'

Move to the south.

'HAIL AND FAREWELL ALFRED, KING OF ENGLAND, GUARDIAN OF THE SEAS. I COUNT MY TIME WITH THEE AN HONOUR, AND PLEDGE MY SUPPORT TO THEE WHEN THERE IS NEED. SO MOTE IT BE.'

Move to the west.

'HAIL AND FAREWELL MERLIN, ARCHMAGE OF BRITAIN, GUARDIAN OF THE INNER LEVELS OF GRAMMERYE. MY PLEDGE TO THEE STANDS, CALL ME AND I WILL COME. SO MOTE IT BE.'

Move to the north.

'HAIL AND FAREWELL HERNE, HUNTER AND DESTROYER OF THE DARK. I WILL RIDE WITH THEE WHEN THOU HAST NEED OF MY PRESENCE. SO MOTE IT BE.'

Return to the altar. Then put out the first red candle.

'RETURN TO THY PLACE ARTHUR KING OF BRITAIN.'

Put out the second candle.

'RETURN TO THY PLACE ALFRED KING OF BRITAIN.'

Put out the third candle.

'RETURN TO THY PLACE MERLIN ARCHMAGE.'

Put out the fourth candle.

'RETURN TO THY PLACE HERNE THE HUNTER OF EVIL.'

Put out the fifth candle.

'THIS SACRED PLACE IS CLOSED AND ALL IS AT PEACE. SO ENDS THIS RITE.'

This ritual can be used by anyone for the guarding of any land -- simply replace the four guardians with heroes, kings, and/or god forms of that land. Women can replace them with Elizabeth I, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Dion Fortune, and Boudicca, for example (an interesting gathering if nothing else!). Use your knowledge and research to find your own guardians to work with.

You can also adapt the ritual for a longer vigil. Every magician should be prepared to take an all-night vigil once in each Tide or Season. Then you choose either to watch over one quarter, or to perambulate the coast on the inner levels. Alternatively, you

can keep spiritual vigil by the altar, flowing out your energies and love to those in need throughout the night. A vigil such as this is usually made from sunset to sunrise. It does take a lot of stamina and you would be wise to start with a one hour vigil and increase it by one hour each Tide, taking a full two years to work up the all-night vigil.



Now, you should note when going through this ritual that she includes many elements in this ritual, the preparation, the visualizations and so on. One thing I want you to do is to go back up and read this through again, and identify the various "sections" of this ritual. Find where the preparation phase is, where the Thanksgiving part is and so on. Print this out if it will help and mark up the page with your notes.

Also understand that 99% of the rituals you will see will have all these elements and more in them.

Variations on the basic ritual

Having discussed the basic structure of the rites and rituals that you may be called upon to perform, here we will discuss the variations of that same structure. Just as there are exceptions to the rules of language in most spoken languages, so too are there exceptions to the language of Ritual.

Make no mistake about it, ritual is a language, with the same goals as the practice of speaking, clear communication of the desired information/need.

*[Mary's Aside: Regarding language and communication, during the editing of this lesson the following conversation occurred between Mary and I on Yahoo Messenger:*

**marymeet27:** *ok, but isn't language used to communicate need?*

**Daven:** *Yeah, but it can't communicate the need itself, only the reasons for the need.*

**Daven:** *If I were to say to you, I need to go to the bathroom....*

**Daven:** *intellectually you understand that.*

**Daven:** *None of my biological need is communicated though.*

**Daven:** *you can internalize it with the SUBconscious, but that's all.*

**Daven:** *Need and want comes from the sub.*

**Daven:** *the communication of that need/want comes from the super conscious.*

**Daven:** *IMO*

**marymeet27:** *LOL good explanation is it in here?*

*While it may feel wrong initially, after thought I would have to agree with Daven. I can't emotionally know how desperate his need is or how miserable his bladder, kidneys or colon are. I can empathize drawing on my own experience but I can't know simply because I am not him. The phrase "I know how you feel." should probably be changed to "I know how I would feel if it were me." in most if not all cases. ~ Mary]*

What is the main purpose of speaking or for language? To communicate an idea from one person to another with the greatest efficiency. One purpose of ritual is to transmit an idea from your conscious mind to your subconscious mind as efficiently as possible. In order to do that, you speak to the subconscious mind in a language it understands, symbols. It is why churches spend so much time inculcating followers with symbols and its meanings.

Having now become versed in the basics of the language of ritual, you are ready to move on to the point of learning when the rules don't apply.

**Discarding the "Preparation" phase:** This is a bad idea. The preparation starts your subconscious thinking about the symbols it will see, and thus it makes the whole ritual stronger. Additionally, by including the preparation in the ritual, you don't have to worry about things like "did I get the matches for the candles? Or will I have to dig them out from between my toes?" (Believe me, this is the single most common mistake in ANY group ritual situation. It's always good for a laugh.)

Then why would you want to discard this phase? Think for a few moments on this and stop reading [HERE!](#)

Did you come up with some good answers? Here are the ones that I am thinking of: a) if the Altar and all the necessary items are already laid out, and b) if the ritual or rite is needed NOW!

At many points in my life B has been the driving force of a ritual. From emergencies like healing to luck spells for my family. Every second is precious and you don't want to mess around with carefully gathering your equipment. That's when you want to grab the bare necessities, like salt, a glass of water, a cigarette (for the incense) and a lit match and go. I have done things this way more than once. As for A, well that implies that you already did all the preparation at the end of the last ritual you had, or that you are a compulsive neat-freak... (A place for everything, and everything in it's place....) In that case, congratulations, you will not have to worry about half of the things most of us have to worry about when we start a ritual.

Being a neat freak or maintaining your altar can however, backfire. Suppose that you do not want your friends and family knowing that you are interested in the occult. Having your altar set up 24/7 is counterproductive if you are in the "broom closet". If nothing else, it is a just about a guarantee that someone close to you will see it. However, if this is not a concern, Congratulations!

**Discarding everything BUT the working part of the ritual:** Sounds dangerous? It can be, but I bet you do something like this everyday without thinking about it. Tell me, who out there gets out the knives and cutting board, all the meat, the milk, a placemat, the five piece place setting, the 16 pieces of silverware every time you go into the

kitchen? Anyone? No, you don't, and in some cases, you should not do an entire ritual when you are doing things that don't need to be done ultra ritualistically.

One possible occasion to discard everything is when you have an inability to do an entire ritual yet need to be in a ritual mindset. For example, when you are taking herbs from nature as offerings to the Gods in other rituals. Going out into the woods and picking the herbs is a ritual act, but Casting the Circle and Invoking the Deities is not necessary for this activity. You do need to thank the plants and herbs for their gift to you, and perhaps leave some milk or something for the plant, but doing an entire ritual to pick sprigs of parsley? Kind of silly, if you ask me.

Another example would be preparing something else to be used in a ritual later. If for instance, you were working on a tool or making a special dinner for Cakes and Ale after the celebration. You don't want to have to stop before the dinner starts getting fixed and lay out your Altar and start chanting and celebrating just so you can cook the meal. That is what the ritual itself is for. At that point, you discard everything but the work, and keep that ritual mindset in your head while the food is being cooked. Besides, you don't want others coming in and out of the Sacred Space while they help you, do you?

Additionally, circumstances may demand discretion, or the physical area you are working in will not contain the entire ritual. When you are plowing the garden to make it new and fresh for the spring, it would be difficult to enclose the space with the neighbors looking on. This is a ritual act, celebrating the fertility of the Earth and readying it for the coming growing season. As such you want to consecrate the garden for the Goddess so She can do Her work in it. However, you have a relative who is made extremely uncomfortable by your beliefs, and wishing to give them room and time to accept them, rather than force those beliefs on them, you need to skip the ritual. You can always come back and consecrate the garden later. So, how do you accomplish staying in a ritual mindset without all the brouhaha?

I'm glad you asked that question. It shows initiative and that you are paying attention to the lesson. Good job and well done. Now, if there are no other questions....

Okay, here's where your mind and imagination comes into the picture. In this type of circumstance, you would have to use your imagination to conjure (for yourself) the appropriate mindset. Many would do this by praying silently to the Gods as they work, others by remembering other rituals in which they had the appropriate mindset and "holiness" and bringing that same mindset to the front simply by remembering. In addition, one can use creative visualization, guided meditation, or by simply deciding to be in that mindset. This will take practice, so don't rush it.

Now, having looked at the exception to the rules in these various parts of the rites, let's look at changing some sections or changing the order of those parts.

**Changing how you do things:** This is one of the easiest things to do, since you simply change some aspect of the ritual into something else. For example, if you are used to working in your Circle fully clothed in ritual robes and with all of your jewelry on, try it with only your street clothes on, or with nothing on. Instead of invoking the God first, as you have always done, invoke the Goddess first or visa versa. Instead of uncasting the Circle by calling it back into your athame, ground the Circle into the earth instead.

Basically, all this type of variation in the ritual does is to keep things fresh. We all fall into a rut, and "old habits are hard to break". But when you change certain aspects of the ritual, you keep them fresh without causing damage to the overall structure of the ritual or the purpose of it (namely getting you into a particular mindset or mood).

Some slight variation when doing the actual ritual is a good thing as it brings spontaneity to the ritual. One of the biggest complaints that many traditional practitioners of religion have is the loss of spirit in the ritual. Many of you know from personal experience that sitting there in the pews and hearing the minister drone on in the service about this and that... gets boring. Bringing a sense of life to the ritual by changing things up can freshen it up and make others pay attention. This can be as simple as having different people doing different speaking parts and help in the Circle.

One example of this is having the "audience" actually do part of the ritual, such as the invocation of the other entities (those spirits that will be present other than the Gods). By having different people doing this from ritual to ritual, it can keep the people's attention on the ritual, rather having it wander off onto the state of their checkbooks.

**Changing the order of the ritual.** Suppose you have someone who desperately needs to go to see a relative in the hospital. They have come to the ritual to ask that there be a quick healing spell done so that they can sleep a bit better at night. As much as they want to stay for the Handfasting that is taking place later, they can't. So, you do the consecration, invocation, the healing rite, thanksgiving, open the temple enough to let that one person go, do the Handfasting and then unmake the sacred space.

See what happened? All the elements are there, and all that really changes was that the Thanksgiving part came before all of the "working" parts were done. While this is an extraordinary circumstance, it is an example. As you progress and grow, particularly in a group setting, you will discover your own examples happening not in theory but in real life. Things like this happen, and no one can really prevent them from happening. So make sure there are "safeguards" built in to allow someone to safely leave and come back into a temple that has been created.

**Changing the dimensions of the sacred space.** Okay, so you want to have a ritual, and you are currently babysitting a friend's puppy. You don't want the sacred space to become contaminated by the dog coming and going from that area (although I don't personally think animals detract from a rite, there are purists who do) or your child is toddling around and getting into things. How do you still have the rite without the

sacred space or circle eroding from someone who comes and goes from that area like there was nothing special about it?

You make your entire house a sacred space. It's not too hard to do. You simply cleanse the space again, and during the consecration phase, instead of the immediate area you are in, you simply imagine the entire house (or apartment or yard or whatever) as being included in the boundaries of what is made pure.

That means that if you are going to be doing a really special ritual that the other occupants of the home you are in also have to be blessed and cleansed. Sometimes you can get away without doing this, like in the above example with the relative, but most times it's good to have them prepared too.

Now let's talk about another variation of the ritual.

Adding pieces to the ritual. In this, you are not adding components to the ritual so much as adding parts to the "working" section of the ritual. An example would be something like Prep, Cleansing, Invocation, Healing ritual, Handfasting, Dedication of a child, Initiation, Celebration, Thanksgiving, Dismissal, Unmaking.

In this, you have multiple parts in the "working" portion that can go together, but which can also stand on their own. This is perfectly acceptable in most practice, although if it is a Sabbat celebration, you really should only do the celebration rather than all the extra stuff. Anything else can be put off until the next regular meeting, or if it can't wait, can be done after the celebration. By doing this after the celebration, I mean that you go through the whole ritual, right up to the unmaking, for the celebration, then start all over from scratch for whatever is left. [This obviously only applies to those who celebrate the Eight Sabbats.]

The reasoning behind this is simple. During a celebration, the area that is consecrated is likely to be violated multiple times, by the celebrants. While this is not bad, remember the energy work we did so long ago? During a celebration, the participants generate a lot of that kind of energy. It collects, and at the end and unmaking portion, that energy can be gathered up and put into the ground for the Earth's fertility.

Because all that energy is there, it acts as a lure to other planar beings that feed on it. They just wait around for a hole or something to occur in the "shields" or wall you put up around the sacred space to open, and they take what they want.

During other rituals, increase that energy output by a factor of 10. I have had a celebrant faint from the energy during a Handfasting I was conducting, and that was while she had a knife to her throat during the vows. A hole in your protections at a time like that can be disastrous. So, you re-consecrate and re-invoke and do the actual working. You don't have to do the entire thanksgiving portion of the rite, it can be simple as "thank you for coming again", but it is nice to acknowledge their return again.



I think some example rituals are in order now:

[A Handfasting](#)

[\\*\\*\\*The Chocolate Ritual\\*\\*\\*](#)

[Ritual of the Mists](#)

[Dedication of A Sword](#)

[Scatha Gunn's Full Moon Binding Ritual](#)

[The Ritual of Warding](#)

[Basic Ritual](#)

[Consecration of Items and Tools](#)

One other thing that ritual does is create what has been called a "C-Shift" or Consciousness Shift. In other lessons I talk about what that is, but a quick look at it is advisable.

C-Shift can be attained through many means, but the most common forms are fasting, drugs, sensory overload (like sexual relations), trance, ecstatic dance, drums and musical instruments and sensory deprivation. Each of these takes us out of the world of here and now and puts us into a world where it's easier to touch the Divine.

Now, no cynical analysis of magick would be complete without pointing out that it's possible that the feelings and thoughts provoked by these techniques could be hallucinations. Take away sensory input, and your mind starts creating input to compensate. Pump someone full of chemicals, and they will not only see God, but may well become God. Dance long enough, and the body starts putting up all kinds of responses to try to force the mind to rest the body instead of continually abusing it.

Is there a way to tell the difference between a true religious ecstatic response and a hallucination? Nope. Certainly not easily. It is entirely possible that mankind has been deluding themselves throughout the millennia and seeing a God where none exist. But we won't know until after we are dead.

So what does this ultimately mean? If these techniques work for you, they do not conclusively prove that there are other worlds or even a deity. It means that the divine could be one explanation among many for what has happened.

Let's assume that the divine or that some force outside of ourselves is the most logical explanation. Using these techniques will throw your mind out of focus long enough to allow one to connect with that something else, if only because they are no longer mesmerized by day to day life.

In most of our days, we spend them wandering around in a half daze in which we only see what we want to see. We don't see the fact that a co-worker has a different haircut because we don't want to see that. We don't see the sights on the route home because we have seen them too many times before. We don't look for the car following us because we don't think anyone would be following us. We don't look for the new

picture on the refrigerator that a child drew because there are so many others up there. All those things combine to keep us with blinders on, not allowing us to notice 90% of what goes on around you.

For instance, the Fourth of July is coming up, and for those of you in other countries, fireworks are set off at this time of the year. If you know any expatriots they may well have fireworks to set off. Even if you are from another country and don't know any Americans, how many people think it's odd for a sudden "Crack" to sound in the night? How many of you would go and investigate it, or would you simply chalk it up to firecrackers? How about a rumbling noise nearby? Would you look and see if that was a detonation of some explosive, or would you wonder if it was going to rain?

C-Shift breaks us out of those mindsets. It is a way to remove the barriers and see with all of our vision, not just the tunnel vision that many of us spend 90% of our time in. Because those blinders are now removed, there is more of a world out there than just what we see when we are doing things day to day. Because of that, we can connect with the rest of the world in new and interesting ways.

Understanding that there actually is purple or blue grass as well as green grass is one of the first steps in breaking out of a "rut" mindset. It allows us to take the first steps in understanding the diversity of our Earth and what part we play in it.

Ask most people about the color of grass and the first answer out of their mouth, emphatically stated with great conviction, will be green. When asked about purple or blue grass they will deny its possible existence. It is the same mindset we fall into when we start talking about "everybody says..." and so on. Has anyone ever seen an "everybody" or a "they"? If one person disagrees with "everybody" does that mean they drop to "most everybody"? Or does it put you into a class of "not them"? These are the kinds of things that are affected by C-Shift.

Ritual starts the C-Shift process, and also takes advantage of it. As I have before, the act of starting the ritual puts you into a certain mindset, which will ultimately allow you to see and experience more than just a little section of the world.

Honestly, isn't that the point of all this? Magick and ritual and worship and gods and deities and prophesy and divination and scrying and meditation and healing and herbs and decanting and incense and altars and altered states and chanting and drums and hymns and mythology and self improvement.... isn't the point of all that to change ourselves in a fundamental way? To allow us to grab a little more than just the small part of the all we deal with every day? Isn't that the reason you got into this in the first place, so that you could understand more than you knew?

In short, ritual and C-Shift will allow that to happen fairly fast, if you practice it faithfully. Just like meditation, the mind needs discipline and will work with you when you start a new habit. But like every other new thing to shift your mind out of the ruts it is in, once is not enough. Repetition is the key. Doing ritual whenever you can is primary.

And that's it for today.



### **Assignment:**

I want you to compile the traditions that you have been working on into a coherent whole now. Spend some time outlining just what it is you believe, the processes and rites of your tradition, the correspondences, the core beliefs. You don't have to have them fully written out and complete yet, but a good outline is essential. It should be something like this:

#### **Core Beliefs:**

Name  
Threefold Law  
Rede  
Magick is permissible if no other solution exists  
Moral statements (1, 2, 3, 4, etc)  
Ethical statements (1, 2, 3, 4 etc)  
Correspondences  
Deities  
Other honored beings  
Ritual format  
Celebration cycle  
Outline of a sample ritual for reference  
Magick, tools, other elements

#### **Optional stylistic ways: (things that change depending on the practitioner)**

Ethical statements  
Tool substitutions  
Ritual substitutions  
Deity substitutions

Get this all written down in your Journal. Flesh it out to your heart's content. Turn in your working draft to the list.

Congratulations, you just created a magickal tradition and religious tradition. You can take any element from anyplace and add it to this tradition and teach it to others. You are solely responsible for the content of that tradition, the master and the founder. Keep that information with you and look at it and think about it.

This is your trad, your style. Consider what your children will see, and determine what parts of this are critical, and which are simply because they make sense to you. Consider who will have access to this tradition, you alone, your children, your family

(extended), those on the Internet, a list group, who gets to practice this? How big do you want it to grow?

You have been working toward this since the first lesson. Some of this you should already have written down. I only need to see the outline, the working sheet you come up with. The whole liturgy and dogma you come up with and put in your journal. Make sure this is a style you want to practice yourself, if not what you currently practice.

And unless it's 99% Wiccan belief, then don't call it "Whatever Wicca" or "Wicca whatever". Wicca implies a very specific set of beliefs and if your new tradition has less than 20% of those beliefs, it's not Wicca anymore. Just like Christians have to accept the divinity of Jesus, the stories told in the Gospels, the father being God, Satan and a whole slew of things or they are not Christian, you have to have specific core elements in Wicca for it to be Wicca.

Use your imagination. If you are unsure if you can call your trad Wicca, check with the list here, and we will help determine if it meets the "requirements". ;-)

Other than that, go back over your lessons, print them out and re-read them. Review and ask questions (Please for the sake of my sanity, use a quote to indicate where the citation is coming from so I have a reference!).