

# What is a "Blót"?

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*Cara Freyasdaughter of The Troth, performing a blót to Freyja.*

The Blót is the most common ritual within Norse Heathenry. In the simplest of terms, a blót is making a sacrifice to the Gods, Wights, and/or Ancestors. In the Viking Era, this was done by feasting on an animal which had been consecrated to the Gods, and then ritually slaughtered with dignity and respect. As most of us are no longer farmers, and our needs are simpler today, the most common blót is an offering of food or mead (or other beverage) to the ones we wish to honour. For this walk through, we are going to use one of my favourites: Mead. If you wish to use food, please do.. simply work it into the appropriate times where actual offerings are mentioned.

The blót consists of three parts: The Hallowing (consecration of the offering), the sharing of the offering with the ones being honoured, and the libation. All three of these steps of these are equally important. The only physical objects truly required for a simple quick blót are: a drink; a horn or chalice; a sprig of evergreen used to sprinkle the drink; and a ceremonial bowl, known as a *Hlautbowl*, into which the offering will be poured into at the end of the blót.

The blót begins with the consecration of the offering. The person performing the blót invokes the God or Goddess, Wight, or Ancestor being honoured. This is usually accomplished by a spoken declaration with their arms raised above their head in the shape of the rune Algiz. z (This posture is used for most invocations and prayers throughout Asatru.) After the invocation is said, a symbol of the one being honoured may be drawn in the air with the finger or with a staff, if you are using one. Once the one being honoured is invoked, it is time to pick up the horn. Carefully pour whichever liquid you are using into the horn. It is common practice to make the sign of the Hammer (an upside down T) over the horn as a blessing at this point. Then, the person performing the blót lifts the horn above their head, offering it to the Gods. With the horn held high, the one performing the blót speaks the request that the Gods, Wights, or Ancestors bless the offering and accept it as a sacrifice.

Once the sacrifice is accepted, the one performing the blót then takes a drink of the horn. At this point the liquid within is no longer simply a drink, but is imbued with the blessing and power of the Ones being honored. When one drinks, one is taking that power into oneself. After the horn has been drunk from, it is lifted in salute to the powers that be, and the remainder is carefully poured into the *Hlautbowl*. Then, the one performing the blót takes up the evergreen sprig and the *Hlautbowl*, and sprinkles the drink around the area the rite has been performed in, and onto the altar.

When this is finished, the remaining contents of the *Hlautbowl* are then poured out onto the ground. This is done as an offering not only to the Ones invoked in the blót, but is also a great way traditionally to acknowledge Nerþus, the Earth Goddess, for

allowing us to perform the ritual on Her ground. Many blóts mention the Gods, Goddesses, or spirits being sacrificed to, and then Mother Earth, as in the third stanza of the Sigrdrífumál (Poetic Edda): "Hail to the Gods and to the Goddesses as well; Hail Earth that gives to all men." With this action, the blót is complete.

Obviously this is a very simple ritual and, if performed alone, could be completed in a matter of minutes. This is a good thing, because blóts are not reserved only for times of gathering or festivities, but also in simple honor or petition of a God, Goddess, Wight, or Ancestor. For example, a parent with a sick child might pour a blót to the Goddess of healing, Eir. The intent is to make an offering to the Goddess as quickly as possible. However, in most cases, a blót will at least be accompanied by a statement of intent at the beginning, and some sort of conclusion at the end.

There are many ways to hold a blót. There are some with full ritual involved, such as extravagant theatricals, shining alters and flowing garb, grandiose speeches, and flourishes of swords and spears. These are not wrong. However, there are times a simple, concise ceremony is needed. These are not wrong either. This ceremony laid out above is a simple one, meant for a solitary practitioner to simply commune with the powers needed.