

[illegible]

RELIGIONS & CULTS OF THE CITY STATE

More than 300 religions and cults are practiced in the City State of the Invincible Overlord. Of these, around 50 religions and cults are regularly practiced by more than 60,000 citizens, while fewer than 20,000 citizens follow the other 240. Almost 200 of the religions and cults in the City State claim fewer than 40 adherents each, while merely nine temples can claim the regular attendance, worship, or sacrifice of more than 50,000 of the citizenry.

Note that most religions and the gods thereof are polytheistic, in that they do not demand exclusive worship on the part of members and worshipers. Only the Mycretians, followers of the Unknown God, Mycr, are monotheistic (some might say, dangerously so, or they would be, were they not pacifists). Thus, the numbers mentioned as members of the faith by religions and cults add up to more than the whole population of the City State, as a citizen will attend the ceremonies of more than one deity or even pantheon. Only initiates and priests are required to remain exclusive to their religion, and in the case of a pantheon, even they may revere more than one god.

There are five ranks of worship, each of which allows greater access to the benefits of the faith:

IRREGULAR: An irregular worshiper shows up at services at least once a month and on one or more holy days a year, and provides a minimal monthly donation, depending on his social level and the financial expectations of the temple. If the

worshiper has not otherwise declared a patron faith or god prior to death, the soul of the deceased will possibly (30%) be judged according to the tenets of this faith, if judged at all.

REGULAR: Regular worshipers show up at weekly services at least twice a month, attend services most holy days, provide at least 2.5% of their income as a tithe, and have developed a friendly relationship with at least one or two members of the clergy so that they recognize them on sight. If the worshiper has not otherwise declared a patron faith or god prior to, the soul of the deceased will usually (60%) be judged according to the tenets of this faith, if judged at all.

SEMI-EXCLUSIVE: Semi-exclusive worshipers show up at least once a week at services when they are in town, and seek out a related temple or perform their own private service at least once a week when they are away, attend all holy days and sponsor them to whatever extent they can, and provide at least 5% of their income as a tithe, more often the full 10%. Generally they do not visit other temples, save those required by law or on very special occasions when a deity is more attuned to the issue at hand. If the worshiper has not otherwise declared a patron faith or god prior to death, the soul of the deceased will most likely (90%) be judged according to the tenets of this faith, if judged at all.

INITIATE: Initiates are exclusive worshipers of a single pantheon and/or deity, and attend every service possible, even if daily, and perform all required rituals on their own when unable to attend a service.

They actively participate in services, especially on holy days, and provide at least 10% of their income as a tithe, if not more. Initiates must be of the same alignment as their deity, and maintain good alignment standing. Initiates are considered “lay clergy,” and some go on to become priests. Most initiates gain special training in casting *orisons*, minor divine spells. Initiates are generally found at the lowest level of the temple’s hierarchy, though if they have wealth and/or political power, they can rise higher. Souls of initiates are guaranteed to be judged by the tenets of their patron faith and god, though of course, the proper burial rituals must still be made, or soul still has to be significant enough to be noticed to be judged.

PRIEST: Priests of a deity dedicate their lives and souls to the causes of their deity. Priests tithe at 20% up to 100% of all their wealth to their temple, lead rituals during regular and holy day services, and can move up in the temple hierarchy. Priests can be from any class; they need not be clerics or druids, though most priests are of those classes, or of some other class with extensive training in *orisons*. Upper ranks in a temple’s hierarchy are usually filled by clerics or druids, though priests with extensive contacts, high charisma, noble blood, or other notable powers or abilities can also reach high ranks. Souls of priests are guaranteed to be judged upon death by the tenets of their patron faith and god.

FORN SIDTHR

A.K.A. "The Old Custom"

20% of the citizenry of the City State are irregular worshippers, 20% are regular worshippers, 20% are semi-exclusive worshippers, and 3% are initiates (exclusive)

HISTORY: The Old Custom grew out of the mix of old folk ways of the Skandiks and Valonar who settled in the Roglaras long centuries ago, tempered by the organized faith of the Avalonians who proselytized in the region. When the City State was founded almost 14 centuries ago, various small temples to the Aesir were built in the city to serve the Valonar and Skandik locals and mercenaries.

When the Skandik Warlord pressed upon the lands and rights claimed by the Overlord, the local temples were forcibly re-organized into a single hierarchy determinedly loyal to the City State, if not the Overlord. Avalonian and Valonar priests from the north were brought in to clear out any Skandik-oriented heresies among the faithful (Loki and Hel being considered co-equals of Odin by many in those days), and the chaotic elements of the temple were reined in if not hammered out entirely.

For many years the Temple of Forn Sidthr acted as a balance against the depredations and tyranny of the Temple of Rash'l, until the mid-43rd Century, when the Temple of Rash'l gained great secular power under Hygelak V, a priest of the God of Tyranny. From that point the influence of Forn Sidthr and other faiths waned until the destruction of the Temple of Rash'l and its hierarchy by the current overlord. Thus, though publicly Ralibarn the

Wise maintains the veil of strict neutrality regarding the Overlord, he and many of the priests strongly support his rule.

With the fall of the Temple of Tyranny the Temple of Forn Sidthr gained the greatest number of followers, mostly common folk who were required obeisance to Rash'l by their lords and thereafter sought a more uplifting faith and gods that believed in a balance between freedoms and the needs of society.

WORSHIPERS: Anyone, though especially those seeking wisdom, justice, strength in battle, peace and prosperity at home, and success in war abroad. Worship is so broad and deep in the City State that even the Overlord must make an appearance at this temple now and again, as do most nobles and other politicians who wish to remain in the good graces of the "common people." Worshipers are mostly human, with some elves and half-elves; dwarves and gnomes are rare in the faith, and halflings all but unknown. No humanoids follow the faith, not even half-orcs, as half-orcs are considered animals, not people, according to Forn Sidthr.

PANTHEON: Forn Sidthr reveres the Aesir, a pantheon of northern deities revered by Valonar and some Avalonians. The faith also makes some room for the Vanir, though those gods are revered primarily by northern elves.

Odin All-Father, Battle God of Knowledge, All-Seer, One-Eye, The Hanged God, is the primary deity of Forn Sidthr, though most of the goodly Aesir gods are revered by the faith. Odin is the ruler of

the pantheon, and thus is generally revered by all, though special offerings are made to him by male nobles and clan thanes, as well as by anyone seeking cunning, wisdom, magical power, poetic mastery, and strategic mastery in battle.

Odin's wife, **Frigga, Queen of Gods, Midgardth Midwife**, is his counterpart for women, especially nobles, and is also called upon by anyone seeking foresight, patience, fortuitous and healthy childbirth, and luck in marriage and conception.

Odin's son, **Thor the Thunderer, Battle God of Lightning and Storms**, is revered by male warriors, fighters, mercenaries, generals, and guardsmen, who seek strength in battle, courage, and fortitude against evil.

Thor's wife, **Sif the Valkyrie, Shield Maiden of Heroes, Gatherer of the Dead, Raven Queen**, is his counterpart for females in all ways, and also is revered by all followers of Forn Sidthr as the guardian and guide of the Einheriar (the Goodly Dead), the dead heroes who will join the gods in their halls of Asgard after fighting the "good fight." Few fighters willingly leave the City State to go to battle without leaving an offering for Thor and Sif, the *de facto* gods of war of the City State.

Other, minor gods of the faith include **Forseti the Justiciar** (the god of justice, truth, and fairness, a favorite of beggars), **Heimdall the Watcher** (patron of guards, bridges, and oaths, much-revered by city guards), **Hermod Hellwalker** (god of messengers, travel, merchants, and those who die well but not in battle, and quiet patron

of heroic rogues), and **Odur Sun-Brother** (lord of the sun and light, special patron of farmers). **Tyr the Tactician** has his own separate and distinct cult in the City State (he walked away from the pantheon when Thor grew greater in Odin's estimation), though his followers are welcome at the temple.

Most of the other minor Aesir have shrines at the Forn Sidthr temple, being revered alongside their father, mother, sibling, or spouse as befits their station. However, **Loki Liesmith** and **Hel, Queen of the Damned** are not revered at the temple (though they have their own, minor cults in the City State), and followers of those gods are not welcome.

Note: In the Wilderlands, the Vanir gods (Frey, Freya, etc.) are patrons of the Alvar, or Northern Elves, and generally do not deal with humans, and are as often inimical as friendly; on occasions when the Aesir and Vanir are on good terms, however, Vanir-worshiping Alvar are welcome to perform their ceremonies at the temple in the City State.

Note: The Avalonian gods are not worshiped in the City State in general, as they identify far too much with their "native" city state. However, traveling followers of **Vala Tar, Aram Kor**, and **Amala** are allowed to perform ceremonies in a side-shrine of the temple for a fair fee.

WORSHIPER'S ALIGNMENT: Overall the temple canon espouses a definitively "Good" way of life and semi-strict morality and ethics, though Thor and Sif's followers are less orderly and inclined to worry about the niceties of society and propriety than the followers of Odin and Frigga. General alignment breakdown is NG 40%, CG 25%, LG 25%, and LN/N/CN 10%.

CLERICAL ALIGNMENT: A general pantheon cleric must be Neutral Good, while clerics of specific gods must be either Lawful Good (Odin, Forseti, Heimdall), Neutral Good (Frigga, Odur), or Chaotic Good (Thor, Sif, Hermod). Frigga and Odur have Neutral Good druidic followers as well as clerical followers, though most such priests are not found in the City State itself, and have little to do with the hierarchy of the Forn Sidthr Temple of the City State.

GENERAL PANTHEON CLERIC: A cleric dedicated to the Forn Sidthr pantheon in general is little different from the standard cleric. She is able to wield spears in addition to normal clerical weapons, and prefers to wield spears and hammers.

Clerics of Forn Sidthr are expected to be at the forefront in the battle against Evil; fleeing from such battles, even in the face of overwhelming odds, and especially when innocents are then harmed, is cause for loss of all clerical abilities and spells until *atonement* is made.

When facing overwhelming odds against Evil (outnumbered in relative power by 3 to 1 or more) and standing her ground, a cleric of Forn Sidthr may go **berserk**, thereby gaining a +2 bonus to hit OR she may make two melee attacks per round (choice may be made each round). However, while berserk the cleric cannot cast spells, can only make melee attacks or use thrown weapons (i.e., no missile weapons), suffers a -2 penalty to AC, and a -2 penalty to all intelligence checks. The berserk state ends only after all enemies are defeated (dead, captured, or fled); thereafter the cleric is fatigued for 10

minutes for every round the berserk state lasted, and suffers a -2 to strength and dexterity checks, moves at half speed, and cannot run, all for four hours. The cleric can use this ability only once per day, no matter how many times she is threatened by overwhelming odds.

PANTHEON SYMBOL: The symbol of Forn Sidthr temple as a whole is similar to the Danish long-branch futhark rune for A, standing for Aesir. It is a cross with a single vertical bar ten times as tall as it is wide, cross by two horizontal bars each half the length of the vertical bar though of the same width (such that there are three widths above the top bar, three widths beneath the lower bar, and two widths between the two bars), though unlike the futhark rune the horizontal bars are straight rather than angled.

It is usually engraved, carved, or painted upon a round disk (symbolizing all of creation), or worn upon a tabard, or incorporated into jewelry. Sometimes it is worn as a device upon a circlet; four large and four small such symbols a bourn upon the gem-encrusted golden Crown of the High Priest, not worn since the days of the oppression under the Temple of Rash'l.

Coloration of the symbol varies with taste, and is usually not significant; only red and orange are avoided, as those colors are particularly associated with Loki. The color officially used by the Temple in the City State has been dark blue since the fall of the Temple of Rash'l.

The pantheon symbol tops the bell tower of the Temple in the City State, and at lesser temples and shrines throughout the Roglaras.

HIERARCHY: **Godthadthar** (“Patriarch,” usually the highest level cleric of Odin), **Hochgodthi** (“High Priest,” one each Frigga, Thor, and Sif, usually 4th or greater level cleric), **Godthi** (“Priest,” usually 2nd or 3rd level cleric, bard, or sometimes druid), **Nyboerjar** (“Novice,” 1st level of any class), **Berserk** (male holy guards — they wear bear headdresses and bearskin cloaks, usually barbarian or fighter initiates of 2nd level or higher), **Valkyrie** (female holy guards who wear raven-feathered cloaks, usually barbarian or fighter initiates of 2nd level or higher), **Tilhenger** (“Initiate,” exclusive member, of any class and level), **Trothærer** (“Faith Keeper,” semi-exclusive member), **Besouker** (“Visitor,” non-exclusive regular or irregular congregation member).

PATRIARCH: **Godthadthar Ralibarn the Wise** (*LG male Avalonian/Alryan 13th level cleric of Odin*) is dedicated to shepherding his flock and administering to the needs of the city. As one of the most potent representatives of Odin in the Wilderlands, Ralibarn maintains a web of contacts throughout the northern Wilderlands, especially with co-religionists in Valon and the Skandik territories. One of his main concerns is the return of the Temple of Rash’l, which greatly oppressed the faithful of Forn Sidthr due to its appeal among the common folk.

TEMPLE: The Temple of Forn Sidthr in the City State (commonly known simply as the “Temple of Odin,” as it is the great gold-covered statue of Odin that dominates the Great Hall of the temple). The temple has shrines to each of the gods of Forn Sidthr, as well as a common shrine for the Vanir gods.

HOLY TEXTS: The **Aesbog**, or “Book of the Aesir,” is a slim tome filled with proper rituals and prayers;

there is little in it of morals, as the Aesir believe that morals must come from the heart, not from reading runes. Usually only priests deal with the Aesbog. The **Heldungsaga** is a book of tales and poems of great heroes who today feast in Valhalla. It is very popular among the laity, and excerpts from it are read at every Thing (see below) to provide examples of piety. Both are written in Old Valonar, though there are translations of the Heldungsaga available in Alryan and Avalonian.

LITURGICAL TONGUE: Most rituals are conducted in Old Valonar, a tongue related to Valonar, Avalonian, Skandik, and Alryan as Old Norse is related to Norwegian, Danish, Anglo-Saxon, and English, respectively. It is written using Old Valonar Runic, a runic script similar to that used by Valonar and Avalonian. Old Valonar and Old Valonar Runic is taught to all Initiates (requires three months of study). Readings from the Heldungsaga are usually made in Alryan, as many at the Forn Sidthr services may not speak Old Valonar.

SOURCES OF POWER: The spear **Gungnirkin** (+3 *ghost touch holy keen wounding short spear*), the **Scale-Shield of the World Dragon** (+5 *greater fire resistance greater acid resistance dragon hide shield*), and the sacred reliquary **Baldarsblotflaske** (a crystal vial said to hold the glowing, warm golden blood of Balder, the dead son of Odin and Frigga, killed by the deception of Loki — a drop of this blood applied to the lips of the recently dead acts as a *raise dead* spell, but only on an initiate of Forn Sidthr who “died by deceit and not in battle”).

RITUALS AND HOLY DAYS: Daily ritual is light, merely consisting of greeting the gods in the morning

and wishing them well at night, plus making proper signs whenever passing near a barrow or spirit-home. Every day the Godthar must tend to the hall (shrine) of their deity at sunrise, noon, and sunset, reporting in silent prayer the doings of the temple and its members to the idol (wooden, covered in beaten silver or gold and gems and decked in jewelry as wealth permits).

Every Gods Day is the **Thing**, during which all the faithful meet in the temple — there to compare events of the past week, discuss problems, and offer prayers and sacrifices to the gods. Usually the Godthadthar or one of the Hochgodthar also gives a sermon. Sacrifices at the Thing generally include coins, food, and goods, some of which support the Godthar, some of which go to the needy. Rural members who live near a spirit-home usually leave gifts upon the door step of the spirit-house. Any minor infractions against canon law (those involving fines) are also tended to, though challenges and trials by combat must wait for a **Great Thing**, as must any violation of canon law that requires self-sacrifice.

Great Things are held four times a year, at the summer and winter solstices and the spring and autumn equinoxes, each Great Thing lasting three days. The **Viking Feast of Odin**, now a City State-wide holiday, is held during winter Great Thing in the Month of the Snow Leopard. In addition to the private rituals, the members of Forn Sidthr participate in the wider holiday, which consists of much drinking and carousing, a sort of Yule-tide celebration of the New Year. Initiates are expected to

sacrifice a bull to Odin and share the meat with the hungry (more than one initiate can “share” a single sacrifice) during the Viking Feast, in addition to any other sacrifices they must make during that Great Thing. The **Feast of the Fenris Wolf** in the Month of the White Wolf is a somber time for Tilhenger, as they remember those lost before their time. It consists of three days of mourning and visiting barrows to placate the un-glorified dead, followed by a day of drunken stupor and coupling, in an attempt to conceive a child that the un-glorified dead might be reborn. In the City State, it has become a more raucous festival, a veritable four-day orgy.

Irregular rituals include births, coming-of-age, handfastings, and funerals. The birth ritual takes place three months after birth (after the child is fairly safely out of danger of dying immediately), and consists of anointing the forehead of the newborn with the blood of a sacrifice (the best the parents and their friends can afford). The presiding Godthi also “tests” the child, offering it various things to see if it favors arcane magic, divine magic, or battle.

Coming-of-age rituals vary, but generally consist of the young adult running a gauntlet, his friends and family all wielding willow switches to remind him of his mortality.

Handfasting is a marriage ceremony — the only “ceremony” being the Godthar saying a few words and invoking the blessings of the gods while binding the couple with a string (made from the hair of the pair, often intertwined with silk, silver, or gold as the couple can afford). The rest of the “ceremony” then consists of getting the couple as drunk and filled with food as possible, and exhausting

them with dancing and merriment. If the couple actually conceive a child on their wedding night it is considered a good omen, and nigh unto a miracle.

Finally, funerals are solemn affairs, unless the deceased fell honorably in battle, then it is quite a party. Traditional Viking boat funerals are reserved for the greatest and wealthiest nobles, staged at great expense in Oracle Lake. Most must satisfy themselves with a plot or nook in the burial grounds and catacombs, though some faithful nobles and old clans have barrows on their lands, which (for a nominal fee) can be used as the final resting place of a fellow Tilhenger. In the past, simple interment was most common, but today most funerals include immolation and burial in an urn (the better to keep the body from being inhabited by demon and becoming a draugr). The man or woman’s second-best item (sword, loom, shield, etc.) is supposed to be given to the Godthi, and from there goes to the best-deserving among the neediest of the Tilhenger.

SACRIFICES: Faithful should make an offering of ale or mead to the gods at every meal (water will suffice if nothing else is available). Weekly Thing sacrifices consist of a few coins, food, or goods, generally a half-day’s wages worth is considered fair. Great Thing sacrifices should be worth two or three-day’s wages. Faithful can share in the cost of a sacrifice. Animals of all kinds are sacrificed during various festivals and rituals — in all cases the sacrifice is eaten, and usually shared with the hungry, Tilhenger or no. The best sacrifice is an unblemished white bull. Sacrifices to rural spirits usually include sweets, meat, ale, and mead, and sometimes goods, though never clothing.

Human sacrifices are rare —

extremely so, but not unknown. All human sacrifices must be free-willing self-sacrifice, never a slave or a thrall. Godthar use magic to make sure that no enchantments or charms, or less arcane and more nefarious mundane methods, are being used to coerce the “willing” sacrifice. Human sacrifices are done only during times of extreme need and danger, as a way to let the gods know that the people really, *really* need their help — the sacrifices are the messengers of the faithful straight to the gods.

Human sacrifices are generally painless, as the sacrifice is given a special potion, effectively a poison that numbs the senses and emotions, before the sacrifice. Sacrifices are made through hanging and through live interment. Self-sacrifices become the honored dead, and their families want for nothing that the community can provide for seven years. Another form of self-sacrifice is to atone for a mortal sin (see below); in death, the sinner absolves himself of his sin. But again, this must be free-willing.

CANON AND DOGMA: The first man and woman were Ask and Embla, created from an oak and an elm tree respectively. Man was created in the image of the gods to help the gods fight against Evil.

Any who turn against the ways of the gods (not necessarily the Aesir, but any gods — i.e., atheists and agnostics) are not true men, nor are those who serve demons, devils, giants, or evil gods.

The best way to please the gods in life is to die in glorious battle against Evil. Failing that, one must live a good life, honor one’s parents, honor your wife or husband, have many children, praise the gods and the spirits, be

kind to fey and the fair elves, shelter the homeless, feed the hungry, and provide work for the unemployed.

Murder, rape, bestiality, and breaking an oath made to the gods are all mortal sins, punishable by excommunication and death. Of course, in the City State, murder and rape are handled through the Royal Court, while bestiality and oath breaking must be proven and punished through the Canon Court (in addition to any punishment through the Canon Court, the sinner is excommunicated and branded as such, and if caught outside the rule of law by Tilhenger, should fear for his life).

Killing a man in battle is not murder, nor is killing a man guilty of a mortal sin, nor is killing a man in a trial by combat. Challenge duels are held at Great Things; stand-ins are *not* allowed. A man may ignore a call for a duel, but it is practically an admission of guilt, as the gods will be sure to see the victory goes to the righteous (+4 for the righteous, -4 for the villainous).

Rape does not count as such against thralls or slaves, nor for women raped during a raid (though such is rare anyway, rapine being considered a reprehensible Skandik tradition). Bestiality includes not merely animals but also any humanoid race (orcs, goblins, gnolls, etc.) and demi-human races other than elves (i.e., dwarves, halflings, and gnomes).

Lesser sins, those punishable by lashes or fines, include adultery, homosexuality, theft, fraud, battery, and blasphemy. Adulterers are usually whipped, and if their spouse wishes a divorce, the spouse gets all lands and goods save the clothes on the adulterer's back. Homosexuality only counts for men coupling with men, not women with women. Theft does

not count things taken during a raid on not-men. Battery includes any unwarranted attacks upon someone weaker than oneself, especially wife-beating. Fraud includes theft by deception, lying, and breaking a common oath. Blaspheming does not include common cursing; instead it is disrespect for a Godthi, a temple, a spirit-home, or barrow.

Those who die honorably in battle are taken up by the Valkyries to dwell forever in **Valhalla**, Odin's hall in Asgard, there to feast and party and battle until the time of Ragnarok, when the world will end in the final battle against evil; lesser heroes who die in battle go to the halls of the other gods. The heroes and gods alike are supported by the hordes of souls of those who lived a pious, if unremarkable life, who dwell upon the Gladden Fields of Asgard.

Those who lived an unremarkable and less-than-pious life and die a common death, of old age or sickness, are condemned to walk the rest of eternity in the White Wastes, until Ragnarok, when the fires of Muspelheim will overflow and burn away their souls. Sinners are condemned to terrible fates in Jotunheim, Muspelheim, or the churning belly of the Fenris Wolf.

The worst of the sinners, as well as the un-glorified dead (those who were murdered, or died young, or died poorly), are often condemned to walk the earth as draugr (varying from zombies, ghouls, wights, and vampires to poltergeists, ghosts, wraiths, and spectres), to haunt those who failed them and warn against the failures of their own lives. If they are honorable in their undeath, after some decades the gods might reward them with

another turn at life, reincarnating them during the **Feast of the Fenris Wolf**. Those un-glorified dead who really piss off the gods are fed to the Fenris Wolf.

The Damned are those who die by drowning, those who have been excommunicated, and in general, those who die poorly and without honor. They are condemned to Nastrond, the Hall of Hel, where Hel and her demons use their souls as food, or to build their halls, or to plank their boats.

PECULIARITIES: Followers of Forn Sidthr are medieval Luddites — they dislike any technology above 5, distrust items from tech levels 6 and 7, and loathe items of tech levels 8 to 10. Ancient artifacts are positively anathema. This is a long-term holdover from the War of the Pious and the Philosophers, both on the part of the faithful and on the part of the gods themselves (reinforced by the discoveries of Ralibarn the Wise during his research into the Commoners Calendar).

Followers of Forn Sidthr also dislike wizardry and anything that smacks of the arcane; they are not by any means as disposed against it as their savage Valonar cousins to the north, but still they feel it is unmanly and altogether dangerous. They avoid using arcane magic if at all possible, and some of the more conservative followers shun those who openly wield arcane magic. Many believe dabblers in arcane magic deal too closely with Loki and Hel, foul demons and giants, or dark dwarves and elves. For their part the Aesir look down upon wizards and illusionists, who have a tough time making it into Asgard even if they've been faithful followers.

THE AFTERLIFE

When a follower of the ways of Forn Sidthr dies, the soul “steps forth” from the body as normal, and can walk around and see things as though he or she were alive. The soul is incorporeal and invisible, and cannot become corporeal on the Prime in any way, though it can be seen from the Prime through the use of *see invisible*, *true seeing*, and other such spells. Characters with *second sight* can see the soul, as can anyone during the effects of an *invisibility purge* spell. The soul can touch and use anything that is natural to the Shadowlands, or that is *ghost touched*.

A soul has only one hit point per hit die it possessed in life, with no bonuses due to Constitution or feats, and in the Shadowlands has an AC of 10 modified only by its Dexterity bonus. The soul is otherwise as naked as the day the body was born. The souls of the dead can see other souls of the dead, and see the world in a shadowy fashion, as they exist in the shallowest part of the Shadowlands. *Speak with dead* can be used to speak with the soul (with no question limit, and only the time limit mattering if the soul is present at the casters location), and anyone who can see the soul can read its lips or read sign language if it uses such.

The soul does not count as undead — it is **dead**, not undead — and so is not affected by spells that specifically affect undead.

If the soul is to become an Einheriar, the Valkyries appear at the end of the battle — until then, the soul wanders the battlefield. If no Valkyries appear, the soul must wait until the burial ceremony is performed, complete

with a casting of *blest* by a godthar, which will get the attention of the gods, who will come to judge the soul. Until that time, a *protection from evil* cast upon the body will also protect the soul in the Shadowlands, provided the soul remains within 5' of the body — a spell used for such a purpose lasts for seven days, regardless of the level of the caster.

If no burial ceremony is performed, the soul might become lost — there is a percent chance per day of the gods noticing the deceased equal to the Charisma of the character plus all Virtue bonuses (see below).

If the burial is performed properly or if the chance to be noticed roll is made, the patron god of the soul, or Heimdall if the soul has no specific patron, appears on the end of Bifrost, the Rainbow Bridge, and the soul gains a glimpse of Asgard above in the clouds. The soul is then judged, and either cast down to its fate or allowed to walk the Rainbow Bridge to Asgard.

Note that some Evil souls might not **want** the notice of the gods, knowing their fate will be bad — if the proper burial ceremony is not performed, such a soul can, through “hiding” in the Shadowlands, decrease the chance of being noticed by one point for every mile between the soul and the body (or the ashes thereof).

If the soul is not judged after seven days, it was too insignificant to be noticed by the gods, and it **never will be**. The soul is stuck in the Shadowlands, bare-ass naked, and can neither make the journey to Asgard, as the **only** path there is over Bifrost,

nor return to the land of the living without a *raise dead* or *resurrection* spell being cast. The living can quest into the Shadowlands to retrieve the soul, but without magic to give life to the body, there is little reason — though perhaps the soul can be placed in a magical vessel for safe keeping, until the proper spells are available.

The souls of the dead cannot generally even properly haunt the living, as they are not, strictly speaking, ghosts, and do not have ghostly abilities. They can hang around wherever they want to, though they cannot pass through lead or various magical wards. Those that can *see invisible* can see them and those that can *speak with dead* can do so. *Speak with dead* can find them anywhere in the Shadowlands or beyond, and there are some obscure spells that can even summon forth a soul from wherever it is in the Shadowlands or even the Nether or Celestial planes.

Lost souls are, however, in danger of being attacked and captured by demons, devils, night hags, ghosts, and other *things* that lurk in the Shadowlands — when captured, such lost souls become currency in the Netherworld, or are consumed and lost forever.

Valiant souls can foray deeper into the Shadowlands, and seek out other planes of existence — should they survive the journey, and reach another plane, there they form a new body of the local plane stuff, and from there, if they are fortunate, they can make their way to the land of the living — with a new (if perhaps altered) body! But that would be a most epic quest, and the vast majority of lost souls that try are lost forever, or are

even transformed otherwise by their journey, and become ghosts or other such creatures... and **then** they haunt those who left them to rot without the proper burial rites!

UN-GLORIFIED DEAD: Those who are murdered (not slain in battle) have a chance to rise as a draugr to haunt their murderers;

this chance is equal to the charisma plus level of the victim expressed as a percentage. If the victim arises, consult Table II for the form he takes; he will seek out his murderer and mete appropriate justice, upon which he finally dies and is then judged; sins committed while a draugr count against the soul!

A babe in arms, child, or even untested stripling youth or maiden might also arise as a draugr, if their death was untimely and tragic. These simply haunt the location where they died, causing trouble and sometimes death (usually only evil victims, though unkind and cruel draugr might slay those of whom they are jealous).

TABLE I: DISPOSITION OF THE SOUL

Base value is 50, with modifiers based on Sins and Virtues.

Total	Afterlife
-101 or less	You are denied the afterworld entirely and your soul is condemned to remain a draugr , generally until Ragnarok. Roll on Table II to determine the nature of your doom. You cannot be raised from the dead , and as this is a divine curse, only a <i>wish</i> cast by a divine being can end this condition permanently.
-51 to -100	Your soul is fed to the Fenris Wolf , and you stew in the flaming acids in his belly until he is slain at Ragnarok. You cannot be raised from the dead , though a <i>wish</i> will return you to life at half your prior levels.
-26 to -50	Your soul is condemned to wander the Flaming Plains of Muspelheim , where you are chased by Hellhounds, Fire Giants, and Demons until Ragnarok. Raise Dead Note: You must make a charisma saving throw, with a penalty equal to your total on this table divided by 5, in order to be raised from the dead; if the attempt fails, it cannot be made again.
0 to -25	Your soul is condemned to wander the White Wastes of Jotunheim , where you are often hunted by Frost Giants, Dragons, and Demons until Ragnarok. Raise Dead Note: You must make a charisma saving throw, with a penalty equal to your total on this table divided by 5, in order to be raised from the dead; if the attempt fails, it cannot be made again.
01 to 50	Your soul is condemned to wander the Gray Plains of Niflheim , where death is much like life, only the best days are like the worst days among the living, and the worst days are very, very bad, especially when the Great Hound Garm decides you look tasty. Raise Dead Note: You can easily be raised from the dead, and if so will likely seek to live a more pious and goodly life!
51 to 90	Though you are denied a place in Valhalla, the Aesir still smile upon you, and your soul makes its way to the Gladden Fields of Asgard , where the worst days are like the best days of life, and the best days are very, very good indeed, especially when you are let into one of the halls of the Immortal Einheriar or Lesser Gods for a great feast. Raise Dead Note: You can easily be raised from the dead, though unless you have unfinished business or seek to improve your chances in the hereafter, you have little desire to return to mortal life!
91 to 100	You are not only granted a home in Asgard, you are attached to the hall of one of the Immortal Einheriar or one of the Lesser Gods . There you serve the gods directly in the afterlife, though you are in turn served by the souls of lesser rank. <u>This is the best that can be hoped for if you did not die in battle.</u> Raise Dead Note: You will most likely want to deny the power of the spell, as of course, you will wish to remain in Asgard — the priest casting the spell will get a vision of your gladness in the celestial realm.
101 to 150	Your soul is collected by the Valkyries, and is brought before Odin in Valhalla — you are an Einheriar, one of the Honored Dead . You are allowed to participate in the games and feast in Valhalla once per week, though the rest of the time you are assigned to the hall of one of the

Intermediate or other Greater Gods, such as Balder, Frey, Heimdall, Thor, or Tyr, as your personality and personal worship dictates. **Raise Dead Note:** You most likely will want to deny the power of the spell, as of course, you will wish to remain in Asgard — the priest casting the spell will get a vision of your gladness in the celestial realm, and that you are one of the Honored Dead.

150 to 200

Your soul is collected by the Valkyries, and is brought before Odin in his personal hall of Valhalla — **you are an Einheriar, one of the Honored Dead**, and you are granted permanent residence at Valhalla as one of Odin's own warriors. **Raise Dead Note:** You most likely will want to deny the power of the spell, as of course, you will wish to remain in Valhalla — the priest and all those nearby will get a vision that you are among the Most Honored Dead, and innately understand your desire to remain dead.

201 or more

You are granted Divine Power as a Hero Deity, and are granted a seat at the Table of the Gods in Valhalla. You have an honored place at the side of the gods in their battles against giants and demons. You **cannot be resurrected**, though should the attempt be made, you appear in your glorious new form to your friends and tell them the good news. Perhaps you can call upon them as allies in your battles against the Giants and Demons of the Netherworld... or they may even become your first worshipers!

NOTE: Anyone who dies by drowning, regardless of their honor or lack thereof, or dies while under excommunication, is considered one of **The Damned**, regardless of faithfulness and honor! The souls of The Damned are condemned to Nastrond, the very Hall of Hel, where Hel and her Demons use their souls as food, or to build their halls, or, in the case of those who drown, to plank their boats.

The bodies of The Damned usually become mindless undead (i.e., skeletons or zombies), though a powerful Evil soul might be sent back as a wight or worse to command a Ship of The Damned, where the souls of The Damned are condemned to man the ship in their rotting zombie bodies. The Damned **cannot be resurrected**, though their friends could quest to save their soul by crawling through the roots of Yggdrasil and thence to Niflheim and the hall of Nastrond, to rescue the soul of their friend directly...

MODIFIERS

Note that sins may be atoned through the casting of the *atone* spell. Each sin will require a separate and distinct penance, lesser sins small ones, greater sins often require quests. Of course, once you are dead, you cannot atone for a sin, only pay for them until Ragnarok...

GREATER SINS

(-25, usually per incident)

Apostasy — if an initiate or priest of the Aesir turns from the faith to worship another in whole, they are apostate, and suffer from the mortal sin of apostasy. If the new patron of the apostate does not claim his soul after death, the Aesir will see to it that the apostate is served his just desserts.

Bestiality — includes not merely animals (-25) but also any humanoid race (half-orcs, orcs, goblins, gnolls, etc., all -25) and demi-humans (dwarves, halflings, and gnomes, -15) except for elves. This penalty stacks with those from adultery and homosexuality, below, if applicable, and per incident.

Breaking an oath made to the gods — any oath made in the name of a god, whether it be one of the gods of Forn Sidthr **or not** (the Aesir take oaths very seriously), for whatever purpose; broken oaths are very difficult to atone, requiring great quests and sacrifice. The -25 penalty is per incident, in addition to the penalties for any other crimes involved in breaking the oath!

Morals, Evil — just being of an Evil moral mind-set is a greater sin; this is a one-time penalty.

Murder — killing a man or woman in battle is not considered murder,

nor is killing a man or woman who is under excommunication, nor is killing a man or woman in a trial by combat. -25 per incident.

Rape — rape counts only against free women, not thralls or slaves, nor for women raped during a raid. Raping your wife is still considered rape, as is any sexual contact with a woman-child under the age of 14, willing or not. A man raping a man does not count as homosexuality, it counts as rape — there is no sin in such a case committed by the victim, regardless of the shame. -25 per incident.

LESSER SINS

(-1 to -10, sometimes per incident)

Adultery — only counts if you were married in the eyes of the gods through a godthar. -10 for full sexual relations with someone not your spouse (once per person), and -1 to -5 each for “minor incidents” that do not include full sexual congress, for single incidents or series of such. Legally-recognized concubines do not count for purposes of adultery.

Battery — includes any unwarranted attacks upon someone weaker than oneself, especially wife-beating. -10 for regular wife beating, -5 for regular beating a child or another woman, -1 for beating a man or for irregular beating of women and children.

Blasphemy — does not include common cursing, instead it is disrespect for a Godthi, a temple, a spirit-home, or Forn Sidthr barrow (usually, the graves of the faithful of other religions are considered fair game, though it is always best to have a godthar *augury* or *commune* first). -1 to -10 depending on the nature of the action and the importance of the site.

Destroying an Evil Draugr — while evil draugr are horrible creatures, they are cursed by the gods to be so, and so destroying one is **going against the will of the gods!** -1 per HD of the draugr; this sin is readily atoned, provided the draugr was making a great nuisance of himself, but if the draugr was not causing any trouble for the living, and the hero sought him out and destroyed him anyway, the penalty to atone may be great indeed!

Divorce — penalties are -10 if it was your fault, -5 if you shared fault, -1 if it was your former spouses' fault.

Evil Spawn — penalties are -1 per child who grew up to become Evil and/or rejected the ways of Forn Sidthr; -2 per child who grew up to become an assassin, illusionist, or wizard; -3 per child who grew up to become a cleric or druid dedicated to Loki, Hel, Aegir, Surtur, or Thrym.

Fraud — includes theft by deception, lying, and breaking a common oath. Completing fraud after making an oath to the gods is a double sin, worth the -25 for the oath-breaking and an additional -10 for the theft (regardless of the value of the item). Otherwise, -1 to -10 depending on the value of the item, the importance of the item to the person, and the relative power differential between you and the victim (if you are powerful and the victim weak, it goes worse for you).

Heresy — this includes active worship of any Evil god, most especially Loki, Hel, Aegir, Surtur, or Thrym. Acknowledging them is one thing, even performing minor rituals to ward them off or placate them is

another, but pro-active worship is a soul-endangering thing. -1 to -10 per incident, with a -10 on top of all incident charges if you actually join a cult to Hel or Loki. In addition, -1 per level as a cleric or druid dedicated to Loki, Hel, Aegir, Surtur, or Thrym. Sure, maybe Loki made you promises about the afterlife, but remember — he **lies**. And Hel is his daughter.

Homosexuality — only counts for men coupling with men, not women with women (though such *does* count as adultery, if married). The penalty is worse for the man who performs the “woman’s duty.” -10 for being on the receiving end, -5 for being on the active end, all per incident. These are all in addition to penalties for adultery, if you are married, and for bestiality, if a humanoid or demi-human is involved.

Poison Use — use of poison, successful or not, is considered dishonorable. -1 to -10 depending on the nature of the use, per incident.

Sorcery — you receive a penalty of -1 per level as an illusionist or wizard. You also receive a -1 per spell level for **every** *animate dead*, *clone*, *gate*, *limited wish*, *trap the soul*, or *wish* spell you personally cast. The Aesir do not take well to those who use “their” power without permission.

Suicide — does not count as a sin if you are doing it to avoid drowning, nor if you are a free-willing sacrifice to the gods. -1 to -10 depending on the circumstances.

Theft — Theft does not count things taken during a raid, won through open combat, nor items “found” or “recovered” in a dungeon — or “borrowed” even, from Evil types,

especially wizards and sorcerers. -1 to -10 depending on the circumstances and often per incident.

VIRTUES

Children — +1 per legitimate child and grandchild; +2 per child that is named after one of the gods or if the child grew up to take levels as a barbarian, bard, cleric, druid, fighter, knight, ranger, or paladin; +3 per child that is named after one of the gods and grew up to take levels as a barbarian, bard, cleric, druid, fighter, knight, ranger, or paladin.

Defeated a greater foe in single combat — grants +1 to +15, depending on the nature of the foe; the more of an underdog you are, and the more legendary the foe, the greater the bonus. You can use magic, but once combat is joined, if anyone helps, even to cast spells, you lose this bonus. This stacks with the traditional foe bonus, below.

Defeated a Demon, Giant, or other traditional foe of the Aesir — +1 to +15, depending on the threat the creature presented in general and the relative power level.

Died in battle — +25

Died in battle against Evil — +50

Destroying an ancient artifact of the Philosophers — +1 to +10, depending on the nature of the artifact; several very minor artifacts can be considered as one minor item.

Great Accomplishments — +1 per level of monk or rogue, +2 per level of barbarian, bard, fighter, knight, or ranger, and +3 per level of cleric, druid, or paladin.

Great acts of kindness and generosity — showing an honorable if weaker person than you kindness is worth +1 to +5 points, but it either has to be a great kindness and cost you something valuable or must be a long-term kindness. Simple kindness like giving a few coppers to orphans or widows does not count, that is assumed in adherence to your moral alignment (see below).

Initiate Skills — for non-clerics and non-druids only, per orison you learned to use through the faith, +1.

Married at death — if you were a good spouse +15, a fair spouse +10, or a poor spouse +5.

Morals, Good — if you remained faithful to your Good moral alignment and the dogma of the faith your whole life, +25. If you back-slid once in a while, +15. If you sinned a lot, +0 (i.e., if the total penalty for your Sins is worse than -25, you don’t get any bonus for being “Good”). Being “Good” includes honoring one’s parents, honoring your wife or husband, having many children, praising the gods and the spirits, being kind to fey and the fair elves, sheltering the homeless, feeding the hungry, and providing work for the unemployed.

Morals, Neutral — if you remained faithful to your Neutral alignment your whole life, +10. If you back-slid once in a while, +5. If you sinned a lot, +0 (i.e., if the total penalty for your Sins is worse than -25, you do not gain any bonus for being “Neutral”). As per good morals, but you were never, well, *good*, just mostly not evil.

Performed Rituals—if you regularly performed the requisite basic rituals of Forn Sidthr according to your station, +10. If you went out of your way to perform more ceremonies with honorable intentions, +15 to +25, depending on circumstances. If you failed to perform some rituals, but still performed most, +5. If you performed only a few rituals, and did so only irregularly, +1. Rituals include tithing, attending weekly services and quarterly Things, birth ceremonies, funerals, holy days, and so forth.

Prayer — if a godthar casts a *prayer* spell instead of *bless* at your burial, your soul gains a +1 per level of the godthar, +1 per additional mourner at the funeral (including paid mourners). Plus, any items buried or burned with your body will have spiritual equivalents created for your soul in the afterworld — clothing, tools, jewelry, weapons, even magic items — wherever the soul may go (this can come in handy of the soul is condemned to the Netherworld).

TABLE II: DOOM OF THE DRAUGR

Roll	Interred	Cremated
01-50	Zombie	Poltergeist
51-75	Ghoul	Ghost
76-95	Wight	Wraith
96-00	Vampire	Spectre

The evil dead and un-glorified dead are condemned to walk the earth as draugr, to haunt those who murdered them or warn against the failures of their own lives. Most evil draugr are shackled to a specific location, and often have severe limits on actions they can take, as an even greater punishment — though even the least of the draugr, zombies and poltergeists, maintain some intellect and have special powers of mischief. All draugr are considered unique undead, regardless of their base power level, and while they can be turned by clerics, turning cannot destroy them, regardless of the power of the cleric.

The evil dead (i.e., those who die and are purposefully accursed by the gods) usually seek isolation if such is possible, though some revel in their new form and cause no end of trouble. Draugr who rise from the un-glorified dead either seek out their murderer or haunt the site of their tragic death.

Some draugr are set as guardians over lost treasures, or are condemned to haunt the battlefield where they died, or the kingdom they destroyed, or some other poetic form of justice. Others can give advice to the living in such a way that, of the living perform certain actions to redeem the sins of the draugr, the draugr will be forgiven. If such a quest is successful, or sometimes after decades or centuries if they are honorable in their undeath, the gods might reward them with another turn at life, reincarnating their soul, sans memories, as the soul of a newly conceived child.