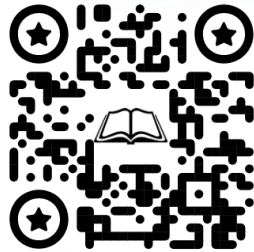


*May you find a path that fills your heart,
and sanctuary wherever you go.*



Bright Blessings, and Safe Travels!

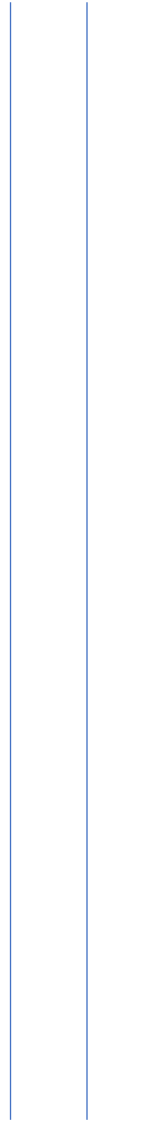
Cleansing
Cleansing
Cleansing

Cleansing

Creating Sacredness



By Ryan Robinson



Shadow to shadow.
Light to light.
Light and shadow,
Shadow and light.
The past is done.
The future is unwritten.
There is only here.
There is only now.
And this is set aside;
For us.

I sanctify this tool to my purposes
I bind this tool to myself
It has no history,
Only this moment.
By Earth and Air,
By Fire and Water
By that which I am,
and that which is.

A blessing upon you for all your woe,
A blessing upon you for all your joy,
A blessing upon you for where you have been,
A blessing upon you to take where you go.

Enter this space and be welcome
Enter this space and be safe
Enter this space and be.

Those who bring blessings,
Be welcome here.
Those who bring ill,
Depart this place.
May this space be filled with peace
and good fortune for all within

I set aside the day to come
I set aside the tasks to be done
I set aside the things that are waiting
There is only now.
I set aside the day that is past
I set aside the things that have happened
I set aside memory and regret, joy and sorrow
There is only now.
I am here
I am present
I am ready.

A gothi raises their hammer high and calls upon listening gods to hallow ritual space.

A ceremonial high magician invokes the elements and directions to set a circle in preparation for their art.

A spiritualist practitioner meditates as they walk a space with burning incense.

A witch turns their broom upward and banishes unwanted spirits and energy with a call of "get on, get."

"Cleansing" may seem like a catch-all term for many different ideas. As a term for Pagans, it is most commonly referenced in Witchcraft and New Age circles. However, the term applies to concepts common throughout religion and spirituality. The multitude of practices we see are approaches to a similar core idea.

Regardless of the terminology, the core idea is bringing a subject to a spiritual condition. This may involve separating the subject from the mundane or specific aspects of the spiritual. Religious traditions may commonly describe some of the ideas of cleansing as consecration, sanctification, or blessing.

Being “Clean”

Pagans see very little in the world as “evil” or “dirty.” Most often, cleansing is a shift between a sense of the world as mundane versus spiritual, or different aspects and experiences of the spiritual. This becomes important because existing aspects are sometimes not what we want in that moment. Pagans seek spiritual experiences, but this is not done to reject the physical. The intent is to experience another aspect of the world. To break down barriers to our experience of the divine. This process may require cleansing away spiritual manifestations just as much as aspects of the physical world. This is an effort to separate ourselves from the mundane or shape our experiences with the divine.

If someone is cooking spicy food and switches to baking cookies they will wash their hands and clean their work space. This is a purification, and they do it not because they dislike spicy foods or think any of the components are dirty. They do it because, generally, you don’t make cookies with the same things you make spicy food with. These things aren’t “wrong” they’re just “wrong for this situation,” so we remove them.

At worst, the Pagan view of existing in the physical world is like gardening; you may be covered in dirt and sweaty, but there is nothing inherently wrong with that and it is the effect of a deliberate process towards a positive end. This dirt, sweat, and *life* collected while gardening is the equivalent of miasma on a human for living in the world. Much as we might wash off that dirt and sweat when going inside to sit down for dinner; we seek to cleanse ourselves of miasma when approaching spiritual beings or seeking spiritual states. Again, not because these things are bad, but because they are inappropriate for the situation.

Cleanse this space with salt and water.
Purify us, purify us.
Charge this space with air and fire.
Purify us, purify us.

Please Bless This Space.
This Sanctuary.
All Around. Below. Above.
Please Bring Us Peace and Protection.
May all who enter be nourished with love.
Alleluia. Amen. Aho, Blessed Be, Allow it in.
Alleluia. Amen. Aho, Blessed Be, So it is.

Circle Purification Chant, by Alane Susan Brown

“Please Bless this Space” by Celia Farran

Guardians and Goddesses of the North,
cleanse these tools
with the deep power of the Earth.
Cast away any remnant that does not serve our magic.
Bring forth the pure form of these tools
that they may be open to sacred use.
I invoke the Guardians of the Crystal
to bring Goddess magic to this cleansing.

Guardians and Goddesses of the East,
cleanse these tools
with the Air of the higher realms.
Blow away any remnant that does not serve our magic.
Bring forth the pure form of these tools
that they may be open to sacred use.
I invoke the Guardians of the Crystal
to bring Goddess magic to this cleansing.

Guardians and Goddesses of the South,
cleanse these tools
with the purifying flames of Divine Fire.
Burn away any remnant that does not serve our magic.
Bring forth the pure form of these tools
that they may be open to sacred use.
I invoke the Guardians of the Crystal
to bring Goddess magic to this cleansing.

Guardians and Goddesses of the West,
cleanse these tools
with the flowing currents of Holy Water.
Wash away any remnant that does not serve our magic.
Bring forth the pure form of these tools
that they may be open to sacred use.
I invoke the Guardians of the Crystal
to bring Goddess magic to this cleansing

Powers, make fast the knot I tie,
creating a magical connection
between my power and these magical tools.
May this tying last
until I will that this connection is magically released.

~ Marilyn Krowommn

Powers of the North,
Guardians of the Earth,
I consecrate this [object] (wand of willow, knife of steel, amulet of
crystal, etc)
and charge it with your energies.
I purify it this night and make this tool sacred.

Powers of the East,
Guardians of the Air,
I consecrate this [object]
and charge it with your energies.
I purify it this night and make this tool sacred.

Powers of the South,
Guardians of Fire,
I consecrate this [object]
and charge it with your energies.
I purify it this night and make this tool sacred.

Powers of the West,
Guardians of Water,
I consecrate this [object]
and charge it with your energies.
I purify it this night and make this tool sacred.

I charge this wand in the name of Old Ones,
the Ancients, the Sun and the Moon and the Stars.
By the powers of the Earth, of Air, of Fire and of Water
I banish the energies of any previous owners,
and make it new and fresh.
I consecrate this wand,
and it is mine.

~ Patti Wigington

By the power of the elements,
I dedicate this [tool] to heal the earth,
to channel my power to harm none,
and to find truth.
I dedicate this Magick [tool]
in the name of witches and wizards of ancient times
by the power of all that is good and all that is true.
My wand honors the Magick in me and the Magick in you.

~unknown

Similarly, when leaving sacred spaces, it is often helpful to cleanse ourselves of the sense of heightened spirituality. To return ourselves to our mundane sense and awareness. We want to change out of the type of delicate, decorative clothes we wear to fancy places before we go back to the garden. We bring those spiritual experiences, perspectives, and lessons with us – but that heightened spiritual state may still be the wrong perspective for our next time and place.

Cleansing may involve some combination of moonlight, sunlight, salt, smoke, invocations, crystals, or any number of other things. Always be aware of the materials your tools are made of when planning cleansing – for example, you would not want to “cleanse” a Tarot deck with exposure to fire or water.

Often, cleansing is limited to removing the unwanted. However, cleansing can also describe preparing a person, space, or thing to appeal to and be receptive to the spiritual or divine. These activities can be thought of like a person putting on cologne or perfume, fancy clothes, or candlelight for a big date.

Another topic of “cleansing” that appears in some Pagan thought is time spent in the afterlife. Even in this situation, it is not a time of “removing wrongdoing.” It is more about healing the soul of the injuries and injustices experienced in the previous life. While the Christianized world views Hades, Hel, and other pre-Christian underworlds as places of darkness, shadows, and often torment; these afterlives were often described as places of feasting, restoration, and leaving behind the ills of the world.

Purification

Whether we talk about the beginning of ritual or the start of a new year, purification or cleansing is often discussed. What many people think of from the Western, Christian-dominated lens is the removal of “evil.” However, unlike some religions, Paganism doesn’t see the mundane, everyday world as inherently “dirty” or filled with “evil.” When performing purification, we should have something specific in mind. These are the things that we are either trying to remove or trying to leave when everything else is removed.

Illness and bad luck are common things that we seek to remove when purifying ourselves. In Paganism we talk about these sorts of things in association with the may fire festival of Beltane and its need-fires. Many aspects of life that other religions seek to wash away are things we accept as part of our existence. For example, some religions may want to remove specific emotions through this sort of purification. However, Paganism generally only does this when they reach excess and start interfering with other parts of life. Grief, for example, is a part of the process of dealing with any change, however unpleasant it may feel. It is only when such emotions stop being processed and becomes a block to further growth and change that they become “evils.”

Mindfulness, awareness, focus, compassion, spiritual awareness, and other similar ideals are common states for practitioners to seek through purification. Alchemy associates these practices with smelting ore into desired metal or removing dross to refine that metal. Another way to imagine the process is turning down music to see more clearly or closing your eyes to catch a faint scent. We alter our environments and ourselves to better understand and connect with the world.

Cleansing by Will and Invocation

The most simple form of cleansing is cleansing by will. This is also one of the most advanced methods of cleansing – because it strips away all materials and ceremony. Its effectiveness entirely depends on the practitioner to *decide it is so*, and have that serve as effective.

Take an item or stand within a space, look at it, getting a full sense of it. You can either continue looking at it or close your eyes and hold an image of it in your mind. State clearly, “I cleanse this (space/item), I set it aside for (purpose), by the divine within me and around me, so it is blessed.” You can make this statement out loud or in your mind, but you must do so with certainty. You are making a statement to any who can hear – not a request filled with doubts.

A related form is cleansing by invocation. Rather than rely on the practitioner’s mystical Will, an invocation is made in the name of some external divine force – often spirits or gods. Popular culture has produced many examples of the Catholic church using these sorts of blessings. But, Pagans, esotericists, and occultists from around the world have sought such blessings through prayer, incantations, and spells.

Moon, Sun, and Starlight

Certain types of light are used to provide blessings and “charging.” Most commonly used for water and stones, this is a type of cleansing, where specific spiritual qualities are granted to the affected material. Many “types” of light and environmental effects can be “captured” in this way. One of the simplest is the purity of rainwater caught falling. Some beliefs about this type of cleansing believe the effects of this vary by ever more detailed influences. The effects of Moon water may vary or require a specific phase, while even more esoteric astrology considerations apply to other forms.

Besom

Using a besom, or broom, returns to the foundations of cleaning as cleansing. There are no materials, just the cleaning tool and the user’s will. Some practitioners will use special besoms for cleansing rituals, performing symbolic, ceremonial cleaning. Others are perfectly happy relying on mundane tools to drive out unwanted energy and visitors as they brush the physical dirt and detritus from the space.

Cleansing By Energy

“Energy” is a very loose term in Pagan and metaphysical circles which can cover a wide range of topics. This category can seem like a catch-all, but the difference between this category and the others is in spiritual focus. While Earth, Air, Fire, and Water cleansing use physical elements to produce spiritual effects, this category is nearly entirely about spiritual aspects.

While all types of cleaning are founded on focus and confidence by the practitioner, energy cleansing is entirely built with them. Different types of energy cleansing are effective for all types of cleansing, including people, places, and things. However, these activities are extremely dependent on the practitioner.

Grounding and Warding

Grounding and warding are often taught as their own principle practice and as something entirely separate from cleansing. And their purpose and function extends beyond cleansing. However, the basic process and effect are a type of self-cleansing. The central function of grounding and warding is the removal and exclusion of unwanted spiritual forces – the main principle of cleansing.

It is not an overstatement that grounding and warding are central to the practice of cleansing. Other tools and practices are methods to help practitioners achieve and buttress the focus and confidence of practitioners. Providing tools for visualization and reinforcement to the action of their Will.

Circle setting traditions combine warding practice with more explicit cleansing to produce temporary sacred spaces.

Cleansing With Time

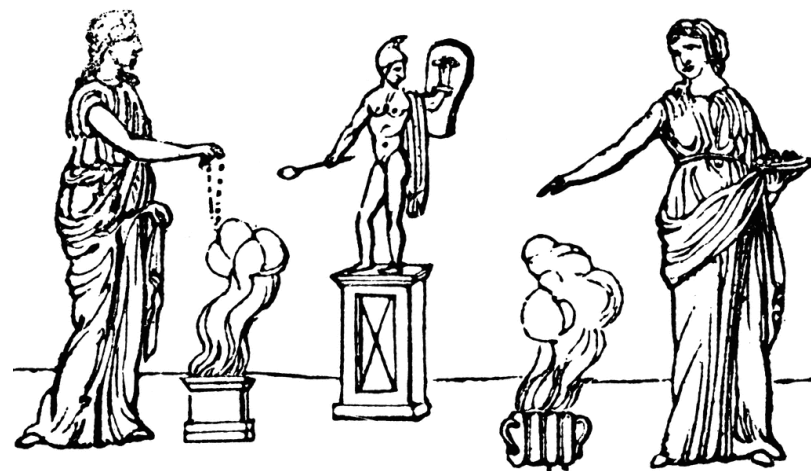
Many forms of cleansing focus on doing so relatively quickly, in a time measured in minutes of focused work. Other methods use the focused work of hours or even days to generate a cleansing effect. One method of cleansing in this way is through literal crafting objects – working materials in a state of mystic focus to bring them to a state of spiritual readiness. Even when not physically working an object into a new form many of the same concepts apply; using tools and processes to prepare a person or space for spiritual purpose. Fasting, meditation, and repeated cleaning are some of the most common tools used for practitioners to prepare themselves.

Miasma

A specific variation of purification is characterized by the Hellenic concept of *miasma*. Many people incorrectly interpret miasma through the lens of “sin,” “pollution,” or “wrongness.” Miasma can be characterized by physical or material nature - often expressed as the decay matter experiences. In some theology these ideas become tied together – the ideas of the “sinful flesh” as part of the “corrupt” material world.

Miasma can be thought of as the tendency of physical things to break down. In this perspective living things self-heal and, if healthy, are generally clean. Dead organic materials are in the process of breaking down, making them repositories of miasma. The dust and dirt living things produce in their growing and healing can be washed away. Even inorganic materials like stone and metals are often judged by their resistance to deterioration. Gold and jade have been prized since ancient times for their beauty and stability in contrast with materials like iron which rust.

Many forms of Paganism recognize material and spiritual aspects to the world, or entirely distinct spiritual worlds. Differences in these separations and interconnections are one way that Pagan traditions disagree. However, Paganism does not view the material aspects of these worlds as “bad.”



Naturalistic Magic

In different circumstances, cleansing may be used for items, places, or people. The fundamental idea of cleansing is to place a subject in a spiritual state; to sanctify it. While this has clear meaning for those who believe in a literal spiritual aspect of existence, it can have just as much power for those who believe in only the physical, material world.

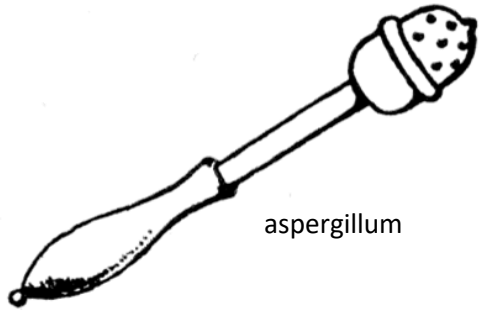
If nothing else, the act of setting a special purpose for items, spaces, and even yourself for a time can be extremely psychologically powerful. Entering even a well-known space in an unusual state can heighten awareness and focus. This has obvious use as a way to begin many types of ritual, individually or as part of a group.

One significant part of cleansing an individual generally involves setting aside mundane concerns for a time. It provides a clear marker of transition from one mental space to another. Specifically, the invited mental state is a type of meditation and mindfulness, with the documented benefits of those activities.

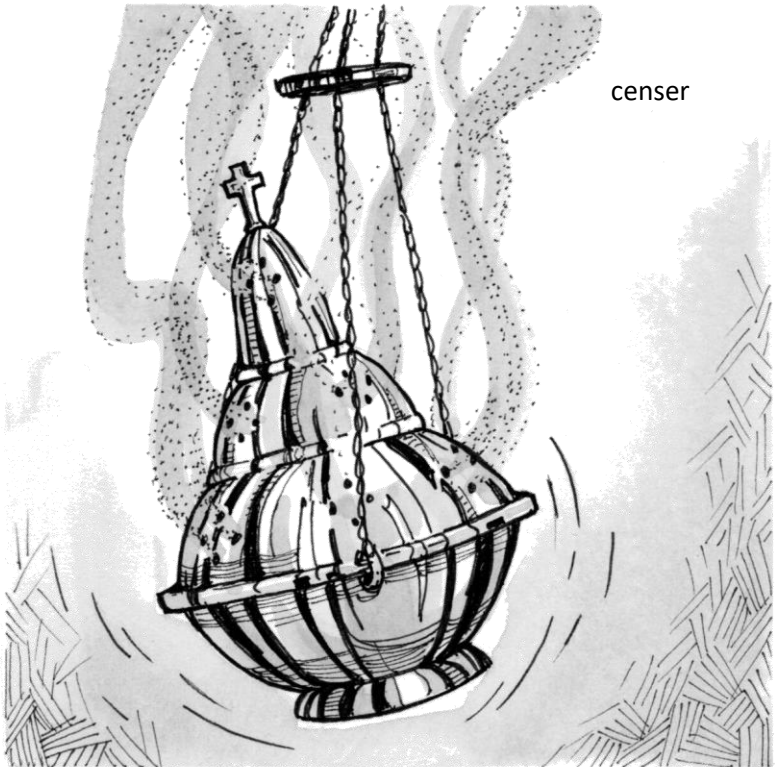
The process of cleansing spaces helps establish their relationship to the type of contemplative, meditative states desired in holy or sacred spaces. Many religious institutions work to specifically construct and maintain spaces conducive to reverence, reflection, and introspection. Because Pagan communities typically use natural spaces, and frequently spaces they do not fully control, the act of cleansing helps build that sense within the space.

Many tools and items have specific purposes, and setting items aside for sacred purposes is the same. There may be entirely mundane, physical considerations for special tools – such as the relationship between someone who sews and their fabric scissors.

There are also functional but non-material considerations to “special tools.” For example, people have multiple phones,



aspergillum



censer

Cleansing By Air

Cleansing by air typically focuses on pushing out unwanted energy or spirits, though it may seek to deter or dissuade spirits. This makes it highly useful for cleansing space, though people and objects can be cleansed through these methods as well.

Smoke Cleansing

One major type of cleansing is by smoke. The use of burning aromatic plants, woods, and resins as incense is ancient and common. Censors are a well-known tool across religions for ceremonially spreading smoke as a cleansing or purifying method for ritual.

There are many types of smoke cleansing. Some plants believed to produce cleansing smoke including juniper, goldenrod, lavender, rosemary, bay leaves, yarrow, sage, and palo santo. Ancient Romans used cinnamon and rosemary, while the Minoans and the Mycenaeans burned ladanum saffron, the Assyrians burned boxwood, cedar, cyprus, and fir, and Chinese practitioners burned agarwood and sandalwood. Other materials used include copal, frankincense, myrrh, dragon's blood, and benzoin.

One term for smoke cleansing that was popularized is "smudging." This term comes from a particular Indigenous American ritual that includes burning white sage. However, most sources do not provide accurate or ethical instruction to perform this Indigenous ritual. Further, unethical harvesting of white sage has nearly destroyed it. Use of this term or claiming to perform this type of cleansing is strongly discouraged unless you have specific training from and association with the relevant culture.

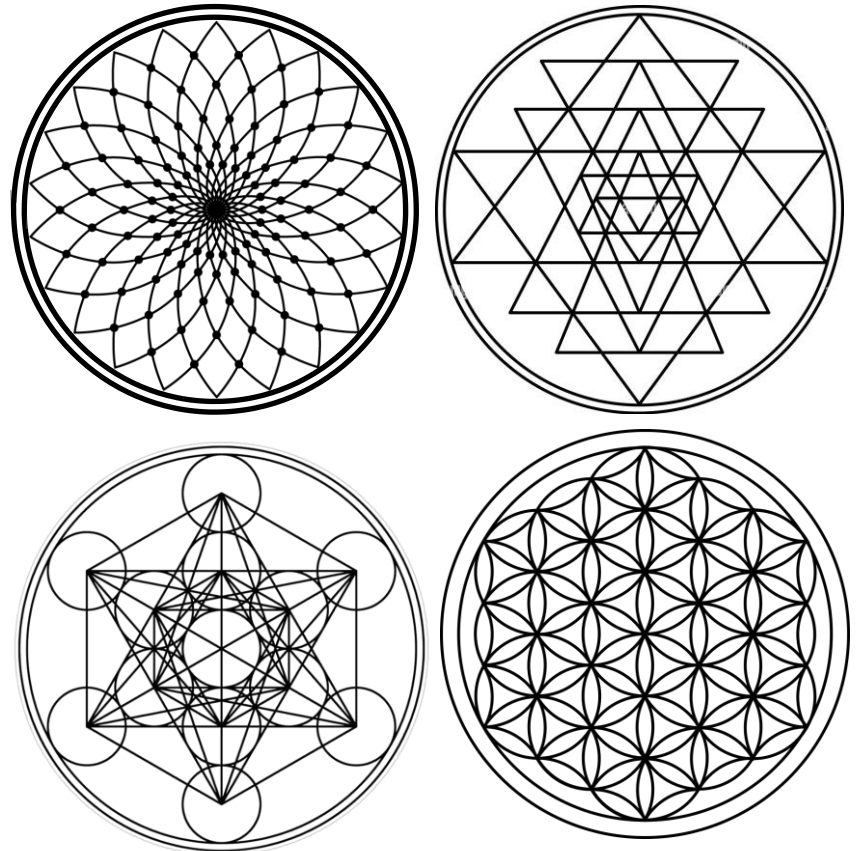
Sound Cleansing

The use of a loud sound to push out or create a barrier to unwanted spirits and spiritual energy is more common than many people realize because it can be less obvious than other forms of cleansing. Abrupt noises such as horns, bells, and gongs can startle or scare people, animals, and spirits equally. They also serve as a call and invitation to others.

A call to prayer and singing of spiritual music are explicitly designed to help establish a reverent or sacred frame of mind for those who participate. The playing of bugle calls in the military clearly demonstrates the power of this, with Reveille, Retreat, and especially Taps having a powerful influence on those who have lived near these communities.

computers, and other electronic devices each with different settings. People often use similar, even identical, tools in distinctive ways based on some established personal frameworks. A common division is between "work" and "personal" purposes. Even if there is no difference in the devices or their settings, changing between tools both reflects and causes differences in mental state.

Setting tools, spaces, and even yourself aside for "spiritual activity" is the same as setting them aside for "work." Dedication to a specific, intended activity facilitates that pursuit and separating that tool from other use, or "cleansing," is a significant part of that process.



Cleansing the Mundane

Cleansing can be done to separate ourselves from the mundane and material world for spiritual reasons. Cleansing can also separate or remove some or all of the spiritual from a person, place, or item to orient them to the material world. Just as an individual wants to avoid tracking mud into a kitchen or other nice rooms inside, they also don't want to wear fancy, fragile clothing and jewelry to work in the garden.

A common time to return focus to the mundane rather than the spiritual is at the end of a ritual. During ritual, we desire sacred spaces, items, and times and a liminal sense. Cleansing at the beginning of a ritual helps establish that. Similarly, cleansing at the end of a ritual helps return to our mundane sense of the physical world. It helps refocus us on the spaces we are in and the things we are doing. Having a transition between these states helps keep each special – connected but different.

Even outside of ritual, we can find ourselves, places, and possessions feeling 'off.' One way this manifests is a sense of something 'wrong.' Whether this is a psychological or spiritual effect, it can have negative impacts on our well-being. Just as different types of cleansing can help achieve special spiritual states, specific types of cleansing can help restore the desired mundane sense of a place or person.

For these reasons, cleansing may be performed on mundane spaces or items without the intent of creating something "sacred." This is commonly done as part of "spring cleaning," when houses are opened to push out dirt, dust, and stale air. This type of cleaning may be done any time it is desired. This type of cleaning during seasonal or emotional transitions is an extremely common form of cleansing, requiring little more than opening windows and doors and using mundane cleansing tools.

Need-fire

Need-fire, nied-fire, wild-fire, or force-fire are terms used in folklore, superstition, and folk magic to denote a fire produced by friction between two pieces of wood. Often, this is done with a rope around a stake. A similar customary practice still exists in India, where fire-churning is used for kindling sacrificial fires.

Need-fire is most common among people who tend herds and flocks. Its use is believed to ward off disease from livestock and humans. In addition to specific events like Beltane, need-fire may be kindled when there is special distress. The effectiveness of a need-fire as a curative and ward is believed to depend on all other fires being extinguished.

Before the advent of matches and lighters, creating new fire was a significant event. Producing fire by friction takes skill and work. As a result, hearth fires were carefully tended to ensure they would not go out. Nearly all fires were spawned from other fires, so if a hearth was allowed to grow cold the light was shared from someone else's fire. This meant that the extinguishing of fires to create a need-fire was worrying and emotional, and a clear break with the past.

When a need-fire was lit, home hearth fires would be relit using a torch from the main fire. This passing of fire brought people together after the harsh, unfarmable, isolating winter as communities gathered around central bonfires, then neighbors passed the torch from home to home.

Cleansing By Fire

Fire is always a transformative element, purifying or consuming things exposed to it. Just as a roaring fire pushes back those who get too close, it can drive away things unwanted beings and forces. By its nature, fire often produces smoke and can perform smoke cleansing as a secondary effect. Similarly, the ashes left behind by cleansing fire can be used in earth cleansings.

Fire cleansing is often used for objects that are passed through the flame. People may also be exposed to fire cleansing, jumping over or passing between fires. This is a common practice around Beltane and Samhain. Woodburning and branding can also be variations on fire cleansing. Because of the focused nature of fire, the flame itself is not generally a good method for cleansing space.

Bonfires

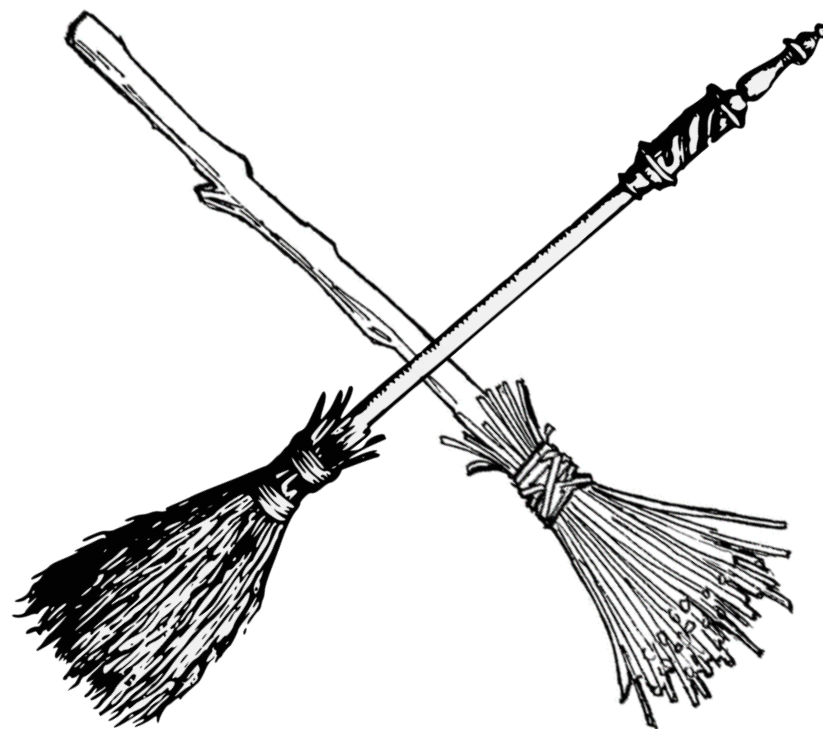
While we're familiar with the term bonfire as a word for large blazes, it comes from the Middle English bone fyre. The term originally denoted a large open-air fire on which bones were burnt, sometimes as part of a celebration. Related terms are banefire, while the Irish term for a bonfire is "tine chnámh," which means "fire of bones."

The ashes from such fires were often spread on the land as a rite for the fruitfulness of crops. This makes sense when you consider that wood ash is a good source of potassium and magnesium as well as many micronutrients needed in trace amounts for plant growth. Bone ash carries calcium and phosphorus, also highly beneficial to plant growth. If treated with sulfuric or phosphoric acid, the quality of this fertilizer can be improved.

When building a fire, wood will ignite at around 300°C (572°F) in typical conditions. The temperature of a bonfire gradually heats up to around 600°C (1112°F), but bonfires can reach 1000-1100°C (1832-2012°F). Bone blackens due to carbonization of the organic compounds at 400 °C (752°F). At 500°C (932°F) and above calcination occurs, which is required to produce bone ash, and is characterized by a grey and eventually white color.

Cleansing mundane spaces of general physical and spiritual "stale air" is the most common form of cleansing without trying to create "holy ground" or other sacred space. However, it is not the only form. Specific mundane things can happen in a house that requires special attention. For example, it takes a more specific, focused effort to get rid of mud tracked onto carpet, spilled drinks, or unwanted house guests.

Setting clear boundaries and taking care are the best ways to avoid these types of situations. This is equally true physically and emotionally as well as spiritually. In the spiritual context, these sorts of boundaries may be described in concepts like warding, shielding, setting circles, and other types of protection. However, whether those protections and preventions are physical, emotional, or spiritual – once they are overcome, expelling uninvited visitors and removing unpleasant stains are generally much more specific and focused than a general cleansing.



Sacred, Mundane, and Profane

The technical definition of being sacred is that something is set apart for special use or purpose. Typically, the intent is for use in connecting with or worshiping the divine or spiritual. The dictionary definitions of “sacred” and “profane” are antonyms; the original meaning of profane is simply to have a secular purpose. Over time, profane has taken on a sense of “desecrating that which is holy,” while the original concept may be more clearly described as simply “mundane.”

This difference between profane and sacred is key in Abrahamic and Gnostic religions. In these religions, the everyday world is perceived as mundane at best, if not blasphemously profane. For these religions, the spiritual world is an isolated, more pure experience which is the only pathway towards divine experience.

For many types of Pagan, there is less separation between the everyday, physical world and the spiritual world, and the divine is experienced through both. No part of either is considered innately blasphemous. However, aspects of both may become mundane through experience and complacency.

Pagans seek spiritual experiences, but this is not done to reject the physical. The intent is to experience another aspect of the world. To break down barriers to our experience of the divine. This process may require cleansing away spiritual manifestations just as much as aspects of the physical world. This is an effort to separate ourselves from the mundane or shape our experiences with the divine.

Cleansing By Earth

Cleansing by earth generally focuses on drawing in or absorbing unwanted spiritual forces or building barriers against them. These traits are mostly used when applied to spaces, though both objects and people can be subject to them.

Crystals

There are several types of semi-precious stones or crystals that are considered useful for the purposes of cleansing. Selenite is probably the most common and general purpose for cleansing. However, other materials like hematite and quartz are believed to have their own specific properties. A common belief is such materials can attract certain types of spiritual energy, such as ill luck or negative emotion, to itself and away from the holder. The belief is this protects the bearer by operating as a type of ongoing cleansing.

Salt

A well-known cleansing tool, a salt is considered highly absorptive of various types of spiritual forces and energy. It is often used as a layer in a container with objects placed atop it to be purified or cleansed.

Salt has also been used to build a type of barrier or ward around a space by creating a line. Beliefs of how this operates vary. One major belief is that it absorbs spiritual energy that attempts to cross it, including from beings like spirits. This practice is becoming less common because salt can have negative impacts on plants in an area, especially when applied heavily or repeatedly. One of the origins of salt as a banishing agent is the practice of “salting the earth,” destroying its ability to support life. A common replacement is eggshells.

Eggshells

Ground or powdered eggshells are a common replacement for salt when cleansing or protecting spaces, particularly outdoor spaces. Eggshells are believed to have many of the same spiritually absorptive properties. They are also believed have protective or sheltering properties due to their origins. They are also substantially better for the environment when spread in outdoor settings— serving to nourish rather than harm plants in the area.

Cleansing By Water

Water may be one of the most common cleansing methods. The literal act of washing is an activity deeply rooted in our psychology. We wash people, places, and things, and variations for cleansing are common.

Ceremonial Washing

This is the process of dedication or sanctification by the use of water to perform physical cleaning. Often focused on the hands, though the face, feet, or entire body may be washed. Variations include the Greek Khernips, Muslim Wudu, and other types of ablution.

Asperging

The process of sprinkling water, often throughout a space or over a person or group of people. This act can ritually symbolize ceremonial washing, speeding the process and using less liquid.

Blessing Waters

There are numerous ways of purifying water, making it sacred, holy, or appropriate for special purposes. One common practice is moon water, where the water has been left out under moonlight and not exposed to the sun. Another is blessing water, where specific rites, chants, or other ritual has been performed over the water.

Some types of “blessing water” are not simply water. Special oils or other materials may be added. At its most extreme other liquids may be substituted for water. In ancient times the blood from sacrifices was used in this way – though this practice is exceptionally rare in modern times.



Liminality

A concept closely related to sacredness in Paganism is liminality. The concept of liminality was developed to describe the quality of ambiguity or disorientation in the middle stage of a rite of passage; when participants no longer have their pre-ritual status but have not yet achieved the status they will hold when the rite is complete.

Much of religion is focused on the liminal. The places and times where people find themselves separated from their previous identity, status, time, community, way of thinking, or set of beliefs. In this space, we can find ourselves seeking and it is often through a sense of the spiritual that we find ourselves in that something new. Everyone experiences events that place them in this state. New births, the grief of loss, and every transition in between can have a liminal quality. Often this is the state where humans are most likely to experience a sense of the divine in whatever form.

The various branches of Paganism focus on transformation and discovery and often spend more focus on directly exploring liminality than other religions. Ritual is a way to help bring us into that state, perhaps to help us with the transitions of the moment, to make it easier when life puts us in that state, or simply to seek experiences with the divine.

Types of Cleansing

There are many ways to perform cleansing. Each type of cleansing has its own benefits and drawbacks. They can be categorized based on the styles, methods, tools, techniques, and other features. Traditions teach specific systems and individual practitioners have preferences.

A common method of categorization is by the type of subject being cleansed. Rituals for cleansing people, objects, and places are each performed differently. Some of these differences are based on obvious mundane, physical properties – a space is typically cleansed from within, while a person obviously is not, and an object depends on its physical shape and size.

Another way cleansings can be categorized is by the result. Some cleansings seek to imbue the subject with a sense of sanctity or holiness while others are intended to remove a (generally “negative”) spiritual aspect.

Types of cleansing can be categorized by philosophy. Different types of cleansing are described as forcefully expelling or pushing out unwanted energy or spirits, deterring or dissuading spirits, drawing or luring in spirits, channeling energy, and more.

The complexity of cleansing is not typically used for categorization. However, it is another useful feature to consider. Some rituals for cleansing are complex, exacting, and lengthy with extensive tools and ceremony. Other methods of cleansing are extremely quick and unassuming.

One of the most common methods for categorizing types of cleansing is by the primary tool used. This is particularly useful because it describes some of the most fundamental features of the cleansing. Spiritual tools, and especially cleansing tools, are often further classified and described.

Tools for Cleansing

Cleaning and cleansing involve something being used to reorder the environment. When cleaning, this may be a broom and dustpan reordering dirt out of your house, or your hand reordering objects onto a shelf. Cleansing is no different, and different traditions have produced a wide range of tools that can be used for this purpose. Regardless of the tool, the important feature is the will and intent of the practitioner. The broom only sweeps where the user takes it. Focusing on the primary tool used is a common method for categorizing types of cleansing.

One common classification of tools is by elements. Categorizing spiritual tools, and especially tools for cleansing, this way can provide multiple layers of description and association. Depending on the Tradition or practitioner elemental classification may use either classical Western / Platonian elements (Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and sometimes Spirit) or Eastern / Wuxing elements (Fire, Water, Wood, Metal, and Earth).

Regardless of the tool used, it is important to research and be aware of mundane safety considerations. Using salt outdoors can harm plants, heat always carries a risk of uncontrolled fire and burns, many types of crystals and stones can leech toxic elements into water, and when burned some plants produce poisonous smoke.

Over the next few pages some types of cleansing will be described organized by Western elements.