

Oimeic to Ostara: Setting Goals

by Judy Harrow

The Sabbat at the beginning of February is known to us by two different names: Oimeic and Brigit. Both names, and their interplay, offer us guidance during the weeks that lead to the Equinox.

One name, *Oimeic*, refers to the agricultural cycle. This is when sheep in Scotland begin to lactate, preparing for the birth of new lambs. All winter, the land seemed dormant. Human effort is at that time irrelevant or even, given deep frost and antique tools, impossible. Now, as Spring approaches, farmers and gardeners prepare and plan, and, depending on their climate, may even begin planting. In the months to come, the land and the tribe will work together to nurture the next year's crops.

The much-discussed breach between Culture and Nature is not as absolute as it may seem. Instead, they form a continuous spectrum. Gathering and hunting are located towards the Nature end of the spectrum, but still they involve substantial human skill, lore and effort. Farming lies somewhere in the middle. The arts, scholarship, technology -- the more direct products of human intelligence and effort -- define the Culture end of the spectrum, yet Nature provides both raw materials and inspiration for cultural creativity. We live by Mother Earth's abundant gifts, indeed, and among those gifts are our human minds and hands.

The other name for the February Sabbat, *Brigit*, is also the name of the Irish Goddess who endows humankind with poetry, smithcraft and healing. Brigit was so beloved by the Pagan Irish that the new Church adopted Her as one of their saints, and continued to celebrate Her traditional feast day on the first of February.

When we call the Sabbat by Brigit's name, we celebrate human doing. That name speaks more directly to those of us who are not farmers. Paradoxically, when many more hands were needed in the fields, it was the winter season, the land's dormancy, that released our ancestors' time and energy to create and develop cultural resources. Some of these cultural resources, in turn, allow us to work better with Nature. Agriculture is a human invention.

Brigit, this time of year, I stay within
my warm room if I can. Outside the old
dark, dirty slush piles deep; the dismal wind
pierces all garments. Everything is cold.

Nature rejects me now. Or is it I,
rebellious child and spoiled, who seeks the warm
furnace, the radiator's soothing sigh,
to mute my Mother's voice upraised in storm?

Brigit, the trees are bare and shivering now,
but hot the forge of human mind and heart.

The cold time turns us inward to allow discoveries of comradeship and art.

Poetry, healing, smithcraft: human skill.
Indoors as out, we live by Nature's Will!

Oimelec teaches us to plan, prepare and set goals. Because of the birth symbolism of Oimelec, it is also considered an auspicious time to begin a Wiccan pre-initiatory study group or to perform an initiation. Brigit nurtures the human arts, scholarship, inventiveness, technical skill. Whether we call this festival by either name, both, or any other, we celebrate this central reality: the Earth's life rising to anticipate and greet the Spring.

Here are some useful things to do while the late winter storms still keep us indoors, while we watch the growing light and wait for Spring to come:

- **Study.** Indulge your curiosity. Read, research, explore, and experiment. Take up something new, or deepen your knowledge of your own special interest. Then write an article or present a workshop to share what you have learned. In Brigit's season, and in Her honor, help build our collective knowledge base.
- **Practice.** Practice your drumming, your calligraphy, your baking. Practice your practice. Polish your skills in any indoor creative outlet that you have, or explore a new one. Also continue to practice and deepen the meditative skills that were the focus of the Dream Time.
- **Gather your ritual working tools.** If you have the skill, make them. Cleanse and consecrate them. Create a home altar. Organize and decorate your living space to serve you as a magical homebase. Make yourself a stole, robe or piece of ritual jewelry. Empower, adorn and surround yourself with magical beauty.
- **Set some goals.** Where would you like to be six months from now, a year, five years? Are there some areas of your life that you would like to change? Look back to your journal from the Death Season to remind yourself of goals you felt you were not reaching but still wanted to achieve. Or you may have other problem areas in your life that you want to try to improve. Even better, you may have some talent or strength that you want to explore or develop.

Choose two or three goals. List some things, both practical and magical, that you can do about them between Oimelec and Ostara. Do them. As Ostara approaches, evaluate your results and make some plans for the next six months and the next year.

This season is vibrant with hope and anticipation. Explore and enjoy your enthusiasms. Catch the rising tide!

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updated: January 19, 2000; Š 1998, 2000, by Judy Harrow
