

Panthea, Initiations and Festivals of the Goddess
by Olivia Robertson

8. Festival of Astarte and Adonis
21st - 24th June

Oracle of the Goddess Astarte

Priestess: Divine Astarte, Queen of Heaven, Virgin of the Sea, we invoke Thee! Thou Who art Venus Urania, Goddess of Fertility and Love, replenish our hungry earth. Bring us hidden knowledge for our use from past aeons, Who art Mother of the Titans.

Oracle: Restlessly you look backwards and forwards in time and outwards to the stars for a world of power and love, whereas it is all around you now! The lost Paradise is as near as head and heart and is enjoyed by children and simple people living in woods and wild pastures. The gifts of the Tree of Life shine within the earth and within each creature. Yet you have lost the Power to use them. For experiment as you will with the forces known to your five senses, the greater part of the physical world, the Etheric Plane, is lost to you! Yet it is from there that all health and energy come. Etheric Power comes from greater planes to animate the earth and your own bodies, through the Power Centres within the earth and yourselves. In Paradise the felled forest still stands and the parched river beds flow with life bringing waters. Nature Spirits enjoy the lovely land of Ether which is visited by beings from beyond the sun and by the Adepti.

You can have little real effect on earth through dreaming in the astral realm of gentle love and beauty, until you can understand and experience the etheric part of the physical plane. It is from thence that Apparitions of the Goddess manifest to Saints and the Gods show themselves to Hermits. From that plane miracles are mightily manifested through the Life Force which animates all existences on earth. Yet this very part of the physical world may be a place of fear to you when your souls leave your bodies on death. Not understanding its true nature, the etheric realm may become a limbo for earthbound spirits. However, know that any evil force in this realm is very transient because it cannot subsist there on its own, but has to draw its existence from plasma produced by unpleasant emotions. But force for good can exist there because it draws its Power from Spheres of Light and Power.

Every day at dawn and dusk each of you should become aware of your own etheric Body of Light, with its many-coloured centres and flowing lines of life force. Pray to me to help you, for I am Mistress both of the rising Earth Force and of the descending Light emanating from greater planes. When these two forces meet within yourself, Love and Truth are one in Harmony and you will attain Illumination. Even in your first attempts you should gain health and happiness, understanding and a kindly love for all. As you progress you will become a beacon Light for all who accept your rays of goodness.

Each woman can be her own original manifestation of the Goddess: and every man individually should show forth the God. But first you must surrender selfishness and arrogance. Be receptive with humility to the Deities, and then you yourselves can give forth the Light.

At the gate. Prs. wears star crown and blue robe, Pr. with gold headdress and crimson robe. Midsummer Maiden with wreath of roses and white robe, Midsummer Youth with leafy wreath and green robe and bears green branch. Children with flower-wreaths and bright clothes. Celebrants attired likewise. At gate is a pot with plant near and statuette of cloth doll. Other potted plants including roses and baskets of cakes and wine or fruit-juice.

Pr: Friends, we assemble to celebrate the Festival of Astarte and Adonis, as did the ancient Phoenicians, Assyrians, Babylonians and Cypriots. The Gardens of Adonis are planted to this day in Sardinia for their Midsummer Festival. On Aphrodite's Day, April the First, a youth presents himself to a girl and requests her to be his "comare" - sweetheart.

Youth walks over to Maiden and offers twig from his branch.

Prs: As May ends, the Maiden makes a pot from cork-tree bark and sows wheat and barley within it. She waters the plants in the sun so they are well grown by old Midsummer's Eve. For the festival she places a statuette or doll in the pot which is now called 'Emre'.

Maiden places doll in pot and holds it. Accompanied by the Youth she heads the Midsummer Eve procession followed by gambolling and rollicking children who carry pots of flowers and plants. Children pick up their pots, women bear baskets with cakes and men, wine.

Pr: Let us make procession to the Altar of the Goddess!

Procession through house and garden to altar, covered with saffron coloured cloth and on it, burning incense and if indoors, 7 white candles. Gong (or bell) nearby.

Prs: *(offers incense)* We offer incense to Thee, the Goddess Urania Astarte. Mother of the Titans, who doth bestow fertility to the whole earth. Bless the land at this auspicious time of Midsummer.

Pr: *(offers incense)* We offer incense to Thee, the God Uranus, Consort of Urania Astarte. Mighty God, Thy Body is in the cloud-filled firmament that encircles the Pleiades, who are Astarte's doves and the shining moon and the Morning and Evening Star, all sacred to the Queen of Heaven. Thy shadow falls across the earth bringing shade to trees and plants. Bring us nobility and far-reaching purpose that strengthens the good in all things.

Prs: Let the Midsummer Maiden present the Emre to the Goddess!

Maiden: *(places Emre on altar)* I present this Emre to Astarte! May we be blessed with earthly abundance and generosity of soul.

Pr: Let all present their gifts.

Youth: I offer this tree branch to Uranus. May we reach far and wide in our life's adventures, yet keep our feet firmly planted on the earth!

Children and Celebrants present their gifts and make a wish or prayer.

Pr: At this joyful time let the Players show forth the mystery of Astarte's Cone.

Mystery of Astarte's Cone.

Players: Columba wears white veil and gown, Adonis green, Pleiades wear star crowns and white silver dresses. Men and women woodlanders are in green and russet. Cone-shaped star crown and silver robe lie at hand. Gong is struck twice.

Alcyone: Draw near, Electra, Taygete and Celeno, and come to me, thy sister Alcyone! Come, Asterope and Maia, Mother of Pan, and bring the far-wandering Merope. I would that you pity a mortal maiden, sweet Columba, who weeps on her wedding eve. Behold the Midsummer Bride, who may be in

mourning weeds at midnight!

Columba: Adonis, it is no wonder thou wast born from the trunk of a tree, so unbending and stubborn art thou! And all for some fantasy born of black night. Thou didst vow to wed me tomorrow, at Midsummer Noon. Art thou forsworn?

Adonis: Never, lovely Columba! I am faithful to thee and to my word. But a solemn oath made to a Goddess must and shall also be honoured. Know that in the depths of the night that has passed no less than a Goddess came to me, shining in the silvery rays of the moon. Her countenance was too bright for human eyes and I covered my face.

Columba: What Goddess was this, so to dazzle your eyes?

Adonis: She spoke these words and Her voice was clear and pure and ran through my heart like a sword: "I am Astarte of the Cone. Adonis, I have chosen thee for an heroic task. Repair thee at the hour of midnight to my ancient Cone in the desert, dedicated to Me thousands of years ago by a great and noble race. Now it is deserted, the fertile lands that once surrounded it, desert, deprived of flowing rivers and high reaching trees. No man dare approach the Cone because of its ever-living Power. At the full of the moon on Midsummer's Eve its Force is replenished by an inverted Cone of White Light that descendeth up it. Forthwith, like a rising cobra, fire shooteth up from the heart of the earth. When the White Light and the Golden Fire meet within the matrix of the Cone, they form a six-pointed star and bright rays shoot forth across the desert on every side."

Columba: What good could come of such fearful Force?

Adonis: Much good. Harken to Astarte's words: "These Rays, when they illumine the souls of worthy custodians, bring fertility to the land, and glory and power to those who do the Goddess's work. But in these degenerate times the Rays bring madness or death to those who venture to use the Power. It is My Will that Thou, Adonis, shouldst repair to the Cone at the fateful time when the six-pointed Star shineth forth this Midsummer Eve! There shalt thou receive My love and Power. If thou canst survive the light and heat, thou shalt labour to restore My lands. Rivers shall be released from the depths and the desert shall bear grain and fruit to feed all creatures."

Columba: A dire command! What answer made you her?

Adonis: I swore to the Goddess that I would undertake the task, even to the death. But I asked a boon, that in return I should become as mighty a hunter as Orion who strideth across the sky and that my name should be honored throughout the wide earth!

Columba: Alas! To make a bargain with the all-powerful Goddess! Surely you shall perish. Did She grant your petition?

Adonis: She replied that whatever the outcome, I shall gain immortal fame! There were lightnings and thunder and She left me like unto the moon obscured by storm clouds.

Columba: Is it for this that I abandoned my home in fair pastures? I preferred thee to my loving parents and friends. I have constantly attended thee as thy companion in thy wild exploits, though I have been accustomed to indulge in peaceful shade. For thy sake I wander among precipices, entangling trees and rocks, my robe tucked up in the manner of Artemis. I have wept to see thy hounds tear asunder fleet hares, timorous does and the stag exulting in his lofty horns. Indeed, I have also feared for thee when thy foes are fierce boars and ravenous wolves, bears armed with claws, and lions red with the slaughter of herds!

Adonis: Fear not for me, sweet Columba, and keep thy compassion for hares and does! When I have received the Power of the Cone I shall be a greater hunter than Orion or indeed than Artemis Herself!

Columba: Impious words! Artemis hears all. Harken to my council, Adonis, who truly loveth thee. Beware the might of the Mother of Nature. Thou hast slaughtered Her children, not for need but for thy pleasure. She shall be avenged. Do not provoke Her. Those charms that have impressed my heart will little avail against Astarte. She lures you to death, who accepted Her challenge with ambition, and not to plant Her lands.

Adonis: Loving Columba, when I have triumphed and have married thee according to my vow thou mayest plant grain to feed our sons, and roses to please our daughters, as befits a woman. I shall have greater tasks in subduing new lands. The evening draws nigh. I must prepare myself for my ordeal.

Alcyone: Woe to those proud mortals who challenge the Great Goddess! Gentle Columba retreats to her grassy glade, there maybe to spend the night in prayer for her lover. Adonis bids farewell to the woodlands and as darkness falls, he sets forth for the desert alone. The full moon is rising, showing herself in all her beauty. Come, my sisters, let us perform the Dance of the Moon.

Music. Moon Dance by Pleiades.

Adonis: Now cometh the ominous midnight hour. The moon shines her white light upon craggy rocks that are as Titans imprisoned in stone, their majestic faces sharply marked with hollow eye sockets and heavy lines of age. The desert sand is like a still silvery lake and the sky is as pale as the soft grey of doves. (*Solemn music with drum beats.*) But what is this blackness that blots out both sand and rocks? As I approach it rises higher and higher, swallowing up the pale sky and eclipsing the moon. It is the Cone! No mortal men could have wrought this mighty work, but rather the Titans, offspring of Astarte and Uranus! What a pygmy creature am I, dwarfed by this Pylon. Is the mockery of my friends of more avail than death? Yet I cannot retreat and live dishonoured. Maybe the descent of the Power is a fable invented by women to keep their sons from venturing into the dangerous desert. Astarte, I await your Force, come what may! I shall keep mine oath.

Gong is struck 12 times. Adonis covers his face and sinks to ground.

Adonis: What dreadful Light is this, what burning fire! It consumes my body and rages like a torrent through my blood. My eyes see no more. I am overcome. This is my Fate, to die. (*lies still*)

Alcyone: Sisters, behold the nemesis of presumptuous mortals. Yet we pity fair Adonis. As Aurora strokes her rosy fingers across the sky of dawn, let us call forth the soul of Adonis with the Dance of the Spirits.

Mystical music. Dance. Woodland folk surround Adonis.

1st Woman: Weep, weep for Adonis! He hath perished, the lovely Adonis! Let us all take up the chant. Let Echo follow.

Women repeat chant.

1st Man: Let us lament for our friend Adonis, the great Hunter! Let the woodsmen lament for Adonis born of a tree. Let Echo follow.

Men take up chant.

1st Woman: Let us call upon Columba, the bereaved Bride. Weep for thy dead lover, Columba. Cut off thy lovely hair and pour ashes upon thy head. Tear thy veil in twain. Weep with us for Adonis and let Echo follow. Come, let us adorn his body with roses and lilies.

Music.

Columba: (*shows herself wearing star crown and silver robe*) Know that I am Astarte, Goddess of Love! (*she bends over Adonis and puts her hands on his head and heart*) Adonis, awake! You have slept too long. It is now close on midday. Keep thy vow!

Gong is struck 12 times. Adonis slowly rises.

Omnes: Adonis has returned to life. Urania weeps no more.

1st Woman: Women, rejoice! The rivers will flow in the desert and we shall have grain and fruits to feed our little ones. Hunger shall be no more.

1st Man: Our woodlands are saved from the encroaching desert, through the love of the Goddess for a mortal man.

Astarte: Do you call yourselves mortal? Let your souls shine forth like the Pleiades! Adonis, know thyself. Thou who didst aspire to be Orion art in verity the God Uranus-El-Adon, My Husband, concealed in human form. Thy penumbra doth pervade the wide-spread sky and earth and thou art the Master of all magic. My Light and Power need Thy strength and purpose that the desert of earth may again blossom. Now our true Nature is known in this land, we must leave for the Heavens, lest We eclipse those who strive on earth. My children, learn from our story that too great a Power blinds and burns when won through magical arts unhallowed by care for every creature. Yet the courage of Adonis and his loyalty to his Bride both as Goddess and woman have been rewarded by renewed life for all.

Alcyone: Blessings flow from the marriage of Urania-Eloh-Astarte and Uranus-El-Adon.

Gong is struck once.

Prs: Fellow celebrants, let us contemplate the Mystery of Astarte's Cone.

Contemplation. Rays of vitality are sent forth. Prs. and Pr. bless cakes and wine which are enjoyed. Thanksgiving to Astarte and Uranus.

End of Rite.

SOURCES: "Metamorphoses," Ovid, trans. Davidson, J. Robinson, 1759. "Bullfinch's Mythology," Spring Books. "Manual of Oriental Antiquities," Ernest Babelon, Grevel, 1906. "Favourite Greek Myths," Lilian Stoughton Hyde, Heath, 1914. "Juno Covella, The Goddesses of Chaldea, Syria & Egypt," Durdin-Robertson, Cesara.

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