

From The Elder Edda: A collection of Old Norse poems from the Icelandic medieval manuscript, Codex Regius ("Royal Book")

### **Some background information**

#### **Norse Hymn to Odin: Havamal**

*The Speech of the High One: Har (The High One), a name for Odin, offers guidance of wise and proper conduct for the traveler of the world. The listener is later revealed to be one Loddfavnir (Embracer of Voluptuous Woman / Harvest / Fate). Towards the end of the poem, Odin recounts his initiation journey in three stages....The initiation journey involved being hanged in a tree for nine nights, receiving neither food nor drink – then he receives the learning of runes and magical spells as well as the mead of poetry, a theme which forms the climax of the revelations of the High One.*

#### **The Lay of Baldur: Vegtamskvida**

*The Son of Way-Wont. Also known as Baldrs Draumar (The Dreams of Baldr). The god, Baldur, son of Odin and Frigg, has terrible dreams about his own death. The Aesir and the Asyniur gather at Parliament in order to discuss these omens, and Odin takes it upon himself to seek a dead volva (witch) in Hel in order to divine the future. He travels into the Underworld, the poem offers a good description of this realm, before he reaches the High Hall of Hel and sings “valgalor” (Death Charms of Choice Charms) for the “ancient wise woman.”*

#### **The Song of the Sibyl: Voluspa**

*The Divination of the Witch: Often known as The Seeress’s Prophecy. This poem takes the form of a séance of oracular divination, i.e. the Old Norse art of “seior.” The diviner, a volva, (wand-carrying witch/priestess) divines the history of the universe from the beginning to the end and into the new era to come, at the request of Odin before the children of Heimdallr (Great World). The poem provides a perfectly chronological framework explaining most of the basics of Old Norse cosmology.*