

Ritual for Esther, the Morning Star

*P r e p a r e f o r t h e s p r i n g e q u i n o x w i t h t h i s r i t
m o r n i n g s t a r .*

The seventh of Adar this month is only three days from the spring equinox (the evening of Thursday, March 17). The moon on the seventh night of Adar will be a first-quarter waxing moon, half-light, half-dark, symbolic of the balance of day and night at the spring equinox as the days become longer. Seven having to do with transcendence, Shabbat, Shekhinah, rest, balance, spirituality, center, joy. And what best symbolizes the Shekhinah this month of Adar than the Purim heroine of Queen Esther? Queen Esther was so-named by the Persians in honor of their goddess, Ishtar, though it is said that her Hebrew name was actually Hadassah. But are Hadassah and Esther/Ishtar so different? Is it coincidence that Esther/Ishtar refers to the planet Venus in the morning and evening sky, and Queen Esther's Hebrew name was Hadassah, a myrtle plant that bears a five-pointed white star-shaped fragrant flower? Perhaps we could view the star-shaped myrtle flower of Hadassah as symbolizing the beauty of Esther and brilliance of planet Venus at night, and the ancient associations of both female images with love, war, and beauty. The myrtle flower's fragrant essence inhaled could be envisioned as drawing Shekhinah's earthly presence into ourselves.

Purim's Queen Esther, like the Persian Ishtar, commands themes of beauty, love, and war. Queen Esther herself not only symbolizes Shekhinah in the Purim story--she embodies Adar's duality, existing in both a Hebrew identity and a Persian one, balancing forces of light and dark, chaos and order, love and hate, life and death, absurdity and logic. Like the morning and evening star of Venus, she dances between the borders of day and night. Standing like a pillar of strength, she holds all opposites.

If you can find some time this seventh of Adar, get outside under the night sky, preferably in the early evening when the half-moon is visible and Venus sparkles. Find a fragrant flower like myrtle or jasmine (also a fragrant, white, star-shaped flower) to inhale, drawing Shekhinah in while pleasuring the soul. Sit under the moonlight and/or starlight and do your own private meditation on drawing down Shekhinah, reflecting over the events of the past year, strengthening your light, or finding inner strength, or whatever brings you contentment or joy. Think of the balancing, rectifying, and strengthening symbolism of Queen Esther and find your own strength to balance, order, and repair, or to simply bring an added measure of ecstasy and joy to yourself this month of Adar. Three days later, celebrate the spring with a renewed sense of light and balance.

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