***VALI***
*God of Vengeance and Rebirth*

Vali, as told in the *Skaldskaparmal*, is the "son of Odin and Rind, stepson of Frigg, brother of the Æsir, Baldr's avenging As, enemy of Hod and his slayer, father's homestead-inhabiter." We also learn that Vali is among the twelve Æsir seated as judges at Ægir's banquet. He is not only seen as a God of vengeance, but truly one of the Æsir, seated with the others at table and drink. He is referenced for his courage and his accuracy with the bow, and is one of the inheritors of Asgard after Ragnarok.

**The Wooing of Rinda**

Billing, the king of the Ruthenes, was greatly dismayed when he heard that a great force was about to invade his kingdom, for he was too old to fight as of yore, and his only child, a daughter named Rinda, although she was of marriageable age, obstinately refused to choose a husband among her many suitors, and thus give her father the assistant he so sorely needed.

While Billing was musing disconsolately in his hall, a stranger suddenly entered his palace. Looking up, the king beheld a middle-aged man wrapped in a wide cloak, with a broad-brimmed hat drawn down over his forehead to conceal the fact that he had but one eye. The stranger courteously inquired the cause of his evident depression, and as soon as he had learned it, volunteered to command the army of the Ruthenes.

His services being joyfully accepted, Odin — for it was he — soon won a signal victory for the aged king, and, returning in triumph, asked permission to woo his daughter Rinda to be his wife. Billing, hoping that his daughter would lend a favorable ear to this suitor, who appeared very distinguished in spite of his years, immediately signified his consent. So Odin, still unknown, presented himself before the princess, who scornfully rejected his proposal, and rudely boxed his ears when he attempted to kiss her.

Forced to withdraw, Odin nevertheless clung to his purpose to make Rinda his wife, for he knew, thanks to Rossthiof’s prophecy, that none but she could bear the destined avenger of his murdered son. Assuming the form of a smith, Odin therefore soon came back to Billing’s hall, fashioned costly ornaments of silver and gold, and so artfully multiplied these precious metals that the king joyfully acquiesced when he inquired whether he might pay his addresses to the princess. The smith Rosterus was, however, as summarily dismissed by Rinda as the successful old general had been; but although his ear tingled with the force of her blow, he was more determined than ever to make her his wife.

A third time Odin now presented himself before the capricious fair one, disguised this time as a dashing warrior, thinking a young soldier might perchance touch the maiden’s heart; but when he again attempted to kiss her, she pushed him back so suddenly that he stumbled and fell upon one knee.

*“Many a fair maiden,
When rightly known,
Towards men is fickle
That I experienced,
When that discreet maiden I
Strove to win
Contumely of every kind
That wily girl
Heaped upon me;
Nor of that damsel gained I aught.”
              -SÆMUND’S EDDA (Thorpe’s tr.)*

This third insult so enraged Odin that he drew his magic rune stick out of his breast, pointed it at Rinda, and uttered such a terrible spell that she fell back into the arms of her attendants rigid and apparently lifeless.

When Rinda came to life again, the suitor had disappeared, but the king discovered with great dismay that she had entirely lost her senses and was melancholy mad. In vain all the physicians were summoned and all their simples tried; the maiden remained as passive and sad as before, and her distracted father was only too glad when an old woman called Vecha, or Vak, appeared, offering to undertake the cure of the princess. The old woman, who was Odin in disguise, first prescribed a footbath for the patient; but as this did not appear to have any very marked effect, she declared she would be forced to try a severe treatment. This could only be administered if the patient were intrusted to her exclusive care, securely bound so that she could not offer the least resistance. Billing, anxious to save his child, consented to all the strange attendant proposed; and when Odin had thus gained full power over Rinda, he compelled her to marry him, releasing her from bonds and spell only when she had faithfully promised to be his wife.

**The Birth of Vali**

The prophecy made by Rossthiof was duly fulfilled, for Rinda bore a son named Vali (Ali, Bous, or Beav), a personification of the lengthening days, who grew with such marvelous rapidity, that in the course of a single day he attained his full stature. Without even taking time to wash his face or comb his hair, this young God hastened off to Asgard with bow and arrow to avenge the death of Balder, God of light, by slaying his murderer, Hodur, the blind God of darkness.

*“But, see! th’ avenger, Vali, come,
Sprung from the west, in Rindas’ womb,
True son of Odin! one day’s birth!
He shall not stop nor stay on earth
His locks to comb, his hands to lave,
His frame to rest, should rest it crave,
Until his mission be complete,
And Baldur’s death find vengeance meet.”
              -VALHALLA (J. C. Jones)*

In this tale, Rinda, a personification of the hard-frozen rind of the earth, resists the warm wooing of the sun, Odin, who vainly points out that spring is the time for warlike exploits, and offers the adornments of golden summer. She only yields when, after a shower (the footbath), a thaw set in. Conquered then by the sun’s irresistible might, the earth yields to his embrace, is freed from the spell (ice) which made her hard and cold, and brings forth Vali the nourisher, or Bous the peasant, who emerges from his dark hut when the pleasant days have come. The slaying of Hodur by Vali is therefore emblematical of “the breaking forth of new light after wintry darkness.”

Vali, who ranked as one of the twelve deities occupying seats in the great hall of Gladsheim, shared with his father the dwelling called Valaskialf, and was destined, even before birth, to survive the last battle and twilight of the Gods, and to reign with Vidar over the regenerated earth.

**Worhip of Vali**

Vali is God of eternal light, just as Vidar of imperishable matter; and as beams of light were often called arrows, he is always represented and worshiped as an archer. For that reason his month in Norwegian calendars is designated by the sign of the bow, and is called Lios-beri, the light-bringing. As it falls between the middle of January and of February, the early Christians dedicated this month to St. Valentine, who was also a skillful archer, and was said, like Vali, to be the harbinger of brighter days, the awakener of tender sentiments, and the patron of all lovers.