

Symbolic Rite of Good Death

Jamie Waggoner | July 2023

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This simple rite of sympathetic magic incorporates three ancient Greek funeral traditions: honoring the dead with an organic wreath, providing an *obol* for Kharon the ferryman, and propitiating the dead with *khoai*. Use this magical rite to give relationships or habits a good death, so that they do not come back to haunt you.

For the funereal herbs, try to procure fresh plants, either store-bought or harvested, so that the leaves and stems are still tender enough to be woven into a circle. Many of these plants are also culinary herbs, and two to three small bunches (such as the presorted bunches sold in markets and grocery stores) will provide enough organic material for you to work with. If you do not have access to fresh plants, you can draw a wreath of herbs on a piece of paper.

Material Supplies

- Funereal herbs such as rosemary, oregano, parsley, thyme, or mint to construct a small wreath
- 2–3 feet (approximately 1 m) of twine or ribbon
- Scissors
- Obol for Kharon: one coin—any denomination is fine—it just needs to be a metal coin.
- Khoai for the dead: in ancient Greece, acceptable libations were either olive oil, a mixture of milk and honey, or a mixture of wine and water.
- Salt or sacred water

Directions for the Rite

1. Prepare for your symbolic death rite by digging a shallow “grave” in which to bury your wreath. Gather the material supplies on a central altar, cast a boundary circle around the grave and your workspace, and set wards of protection in each of the five directions (east, south, west, north, and center).
2. Create your wreath by weaving or braiding together the herbs you have selected, reinforcing the structure of the wreath by tying knots at 3–4 inch (7–10 cm) intervals with ribbon or twine. Use the scissors to trim the loose ends of your knots. If you like, you can recite a hymn, sing, or pray while you construct the wreath. The wreath can be any size, depending on your supplies, but 12–14 inches (30–35 cm) should suffice. Complete the wreath with one final knot that binds the beginning and end together, forming a circle.
3. Once your wreath is complete, approach the grave with it in hand. As you place the wreath into the earth, speak aloud that you are giving something a symbolic good death.

Add the coin for Kharon to the grave and pour out your khoai.

4. Fill in the grave with dirt, making sure to cover the wreath and offerings, and toss a pinch of salt or sprinkle of sacred water onto the soil. In sealing the grave with salt or sacred water, you help ensure that any residual energy from this symbolic funeral rite does not cling to you.
5. Release your wards and your circle. Once they have been released, announce out loud, "It is done." Ground and center yourself before returning to normal activities.

Jamie Waggoner (she/her) is a Pagan priestess, philosopher, author, and teacher with 20+ years of study and practice. Her work centers around theurgic and folk magic, mythology, oracular traditions, trance and ritual arts, and building sacred communities. She is the author of "Hades: Myth, Magic, and Modern Devotion" (Llewellyn, February 2024). Read more about Jamie's upcoming projects, classes, and events on her website: www.jamiewaggoner.com.