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Discussion Questions for *The Wanderers Hávamál* translated by Jackson Crawford

Q1: What is the significance of the first half of the poem consisting of rules concerning interactions with others?

A1: I asked this question because the first stanza all the way up until the 81st stanza, referred to by the translator as the 'Guests' portion' of the poem, seemed to consist of interactions concerning others in polite ways. The contents of this half of the poem consists of advice concerning how others would interact with one another, especially in that point in time. While the concept of hospitality towards strangers as well as codified laws are both universal, the Havamal puts the stanzas concerning the more mundane aspects and advice at the forefront, with the more supernatural and mythological concerns in the latter half of the poem. In fact, the translator notes that the afterlife, one of the key points of Norse Mythology, isn't even mentioned in the first half of the poem. It can be inferred that the concept of interacting with others is incredibly important and critical in the ancient world, and that such interactions would have to be put at the forefront before personal religious beliefs can become the priority. It would make sense that the more mundane aspects of the poem comes first, because in that era, and even in the modern day, such worldly concerns would supercede the more supernatural matters. However, since the latter half of the poem also continues giving advice, albeit through the lens of myth or story, it could also be interpreted that the original authors were utilizing these verses as parables of sorts, to get the internal lesson through a story that could be interpreted more easily.

Q2: Discuss the implications of Odin as the narrator of the Havamal. Why was Odin largely considered as the narrator of the poem?

A2: I asked this question because Odin was referred to as the narrator of the latter half of the poem, and upon reading the introduction, the entirety of the poem is attributed to Odin's wisdom. It is theorized that the Havamal is not one singular poem but a collection of poems that passed down via oral tradition before being written down. And in oral tradition, sources aren't exactly easy to come by, and the original authors were probably lost to history. With the original authors lost, the unified poem would most likely to be attributed to Odin, as he was the Norse God of Wisdom, and the poems can be considered wisdom in their own right. Attributing Odin to the poem would give it more validity as a source of wisdom, after all.