

Using Stellar Timing for Holiday Cycles

by Tuiliel

For Shining Hearth 2023



Why Stars?

1. Moon and Sun paths through the year we're all familiar with!
2. Stars are humanity's oldest calendar, and I believe it's something the fae follow, too
3. Astrology is one way to use celestial timing
4. I'm talking about using the appearance and disappearance of certain stars at certain times of the year, and other stellar events, to time personal practice holidays

Which stars?

1. The Ancient Egyptians used the star we know today as Sirius to time their new year, as its appearance in the pre-dawn twilight usually heralded the annual flooding of the Nile River
2. There's some evidence that other ancient cultures used star timing for planting or harvesting as well, and some of this remains in the names we use for constellations today:
 - a. Virgo, and the star Spica

What kind of events? (Some definitions)

1. Heliacal rising: pre-dawn rising (right in front of the sun)
2. Heliacal setting: pre-dawn setting (opposite the sun)
3. Acronychal rising: post-sunset rising (opposite the sun)
4. Acronychal setting: post-sunset setting (right behind the sun)
5. Midnight culmination: at its zenith at midnight
6. Sun conjunction: can't be seen because it's too close to the rise/set times of the sun

Morgan Daimler's Living Fairy

1. Uses four dates that revolve around the Pleiades, with seven Fairy Queens for the seven sister stars
 - a. Midnight Culmination (late Nov) - The Celestial Fairy Rade, when the Queens ride through our world
 - b. Sun Conjunction (mid May): The Darkening, when the Queens leave the sky and are no longer visible in our world
 - c. Heliacal Rising (mid June): The Returning, when the Queens return to the sky
 - d. Acronychal Rising (mid Sept): The Way Opening, when the roads between the worlds open so that they might ride out

My Spica Cycle

1. I don't really have Names for these yet, but the important periods for me are these:
 - a. Between the acronycal rising and the heliacal setting (aka being in the sky all night, the Brightening?) (approx April 6-April 25th around here)
 - b. Midnight culmination is the center of that (April 15)
 - c. Between the acronycal setting and the heliacal rising (aka being not in the sky at night at all, the Darkening) (approx Sept 25-Nov 3)
 - d. Sun conjunct the center of that (Oct 16)

Pick your favorite star?

1. Some of you probably already have stars in mind, but the process is easier if they are one of the 20 brightest stars/binary pairs or they are very close to one of those, so you can use free online tools & normal binoculars instead of just going out at night every night with a telescope.
2. It also helps if it's a star that does disappear and appear from the sky, instead of circling the pole constantly, so you can use the events I described earlier
3. If you don't know where to start, pull up an image of the sky the night closest to your birth, and see what's hanging around
4. Or pick a constellation that has a lot of meaning for you, and track the brightest star in that constellation

How to Figure These Dates Out

1. <https://skyandtelescope.org/interactive-sky-chart/>
This is useful for looking at the sky on a specific date
2. <https://aa.usno.navy.mil/data/mrst>
This is what I use to find rise and set times vs civil twilight
3. <https://earthsky.org/tonight/>
This is a good way to figure out what's going on in the sky in text format, and if you search their posts you can find out about things from previous years, including meteor shower peak days, and use those dates to predict the coming year

Start Practicing!

1. Come up with personal meanings for the celestial events associated with your star (remember some of them have associated meteor showers!) and start with simple celebrations, following your intuition
2. Remember to record not just what happens during your rituals, but also anything that happens in your daily life in the days nearby, so you can look back later and find patterns if there are any.
3. But have fun with it! Stars are pretty! :D

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