

= Bifröst =

In Norse mythology , Bifröst (/ ˈbɪfrɒst / or sometimes Bilröst or Bivrost) is a burning rainbow bridge that reaches between Midgard (the world) and Asgard , the realm of the gods . The bridge is attested as Bilröst in the Poetic Edda ; compiled in the 13th century from earlier traditional sources , and as Bifröst in the Prose Edda ; written in the 13th century by Snorri Sturluson , and in the poetry of skalds . Both the Poetic Edda and the Prose Edda alternately refer to the bridge as Ásbrú (Old Norse " Æsir 's bridge ") .

According to the Prose Edda , the bridge ends in heaven at Himinbjörg , the residence of the god Heimdallr , who guards it from the jötnar . The bridge 's destruction during Ragnarök by the forces of Muspell is foretold . Scholars have proposed that the bridge may have originally represented the Milky Way and have noted parallels between the bridge and another bridge in Norse mythology , Gjallarbrú .

= = Etymology = =

Scholar Andy Orchard posits that Bifröst may mean " shimmering path . " He notes that the first element of Bilröst ? bil (meaning " a moment ") ? " suggests the fleeting nature of the rainbow , " which he connects to the first element of Bifröst ? the Old Norse verb bifa (meaning " to shimmer " or " to shake ") ? noting that the element provokes notions of the " lustrous sheen " of the bridge . Austrian Germanist Rudolf Simek says that Bifröst either means " the swaying road to heaven " (also citing bifa) or , if Bilröst is the original form of the two (which Simek says is likely) , " the fleetingly glimpsed rainbow " (possibly connected to bil , perhaps meaning " moment , weak point ") .

= = Attestations = =

Two poems in the Poetic Edda and two books in the Prose Edda provide information about the bridge :

= = = Poetic Edda = = =

In the Poetic Edda , the bridge is mentioned in the poems Grímnismál and Fáfnismál , where it is referred to as Bilröst . In one of two stanzas in the poem Grímnismál that mentions the bridge , Grímnir (the god Odin in disguise) provides the young Agnarr with cosmological knowledge , including that Bilröst is the best of bridges . Later in Grímnismál , Grímnir notes that Ásbrú " burns all with flames " and that , every day , the god Thor wades through the waters of Körmt and Örmt and the two Kerlaugar :

In Fáfnismál , the dying wyrm Fáfnir tells the hero Sigurd that , during the events of Ragnarök , bearing spears , gods will meet at Óskópnir . From there , the gods will cross Bilröst , which will break apart as they cross over it , causing their horses to dredge through an immense river .

= = = Prose Edda = = =

The bridge is mentioned in the Prose Edda books Gylfaginning and Skáldskaparmál , where it is referred to as Bifröst . In chapter 13 of Gylfaginning , Gangleri (King Gylfi in disguise) asks the enthroned figure of High what way exists between heaven and earth . Laughing , High replies that the question isn 't an intelligent one , and goes on to explain that the gods built a bridge from heaven and earth . He incredulously asks Gangleri if he has not heard the story before . High says that Gangleri must have seen it , and notes that Gangleri may call it a rainbow . High says that the bridge consists of three colors , has great strength , " and is built with art and skill to a greater extent than other constructions . "

High notes that , although the bridge is strong , it will break when " Muspell 's lads " attempt to cross

it , and their horses will have to make do with swimming over " great rivers . " Gangleri says that it doesn 't seem that the gods " built the bridge in good faith if it is liable to break , considering that they can do as they please . " High responds that the gods do not deserve blame for the breaking of the bridge , for " there is nothing in this world that will be secure when Muspell 's sons attack . "

In chapter 15 of Gylfaginning , Just @-@ As @-@ High says that Bifröst is also called Asbrú , and that every day the gods ride their horses across it (with the exception of Thor , who instead wades through the boiling waters of the rivers Körmt and Örmt) to reach Urðarbrunnr , a holy well where the gods have their court . As a reference , Just @-@ As @-@ High quotes the second of the two stanzas in Grímnismál that mention the bridge (see above) . Gangleri asks if fire burns over Bifröst . High says that the red in the bridge is burning fire , and , without it , the frost jotnar and mountain jotnar would " go up into heaven " if anyone who wanted could cross Bifröst . High adds that , in heaven , " there are many beautiful places " and that " everywhere there has divine protection around it . "

In chapter 17 , High tells Gangleri that the location of Himinbjörg " stands at the edge of heaven where Bifrost reaches heaven . " While describing the god Heimdallr in chapter 27 , High says that Heimdallr lives in Himinbjörg by Bifröst , and guards the bridge from mountain jotnar while sitting at the edge of heaven . In chapter 34 , High quotes the first of the two Grímnismál stanzas that mention the bridge . In chapter 51 , High foretells the events of Ragnarök . High says that , during Ragnarök , the sky will split open , and from the split will ride forth the " sons of Muspell " . When the " sons of Muspell " ride over Bifröst it will break , " as was said above . "

In the Prose Edda book Skáldskaparmál , the bridge receives a single mention . In chapter 16 , a work by the 10th century skald Úlfr Uggason is provided , where Bifröst is referred to as " the powers ' way . "

= = Theories = =

In his translation of the Prose Edda , Henry Adams Bellows comments that the Grímnismál stanza mentioning Thor and the bridge stanza may mean that " Thor has to go on foot in the last days of the destruction , when the bridge is burning . Another interpretation , however , is that when Thor leaves the heavens (i.e. , when a thunder @-@ storm is over) the rainbow @-@ bridge becomes hot in the sun . "

John Lindow points to a parallel between Bifröst , which he notes is " a bridge between earth and heaven , or earth and the world of the gods " , and the bridge Gjallarbrú , " a bridge between earth and the underworld , or earth and the world of the dead . " Several scholars have proposed that Bifröst may represent the Milky Way .