

Easter or Passover?

Scriptures

Exodus 12:21-51, Leviticus 22:26-23:44, Ezekiel 37:1-14
Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22

As believers in the Lord God Almighty and His Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) it is of utmost importance for us to celebrate the Resurrection of our Savior, King, and Lord at this time when he so wonderfully laid down His life for ours making atonement for each and every one of us. In this study we ask the question of the origins of “Easter.” How does this festival relate to the Bible, to the resurrection of Yeshua, and to our lives? The purpose of the study is to examine the origins of Easter, where is this term from, what is its place in history, how has Easter come to replace Passover, and why does Easter include bunny rabbits, eggs, and eating ham? Over the course of the years I have gotten into many discussions on the Bible, Easter, and the Resurrection of Yeshua, and have many times come away disheartened and discouraged over the response to this message. The reason being is I ask the question “Should we be calling this time of year by the name Easter?” “Should we buy Easter eggs, have Easter egg hunts, and should we be eating ham especially during this time of year?” “Is God pleased with this?” “Does the Lord concern Himself with these things today?” I hope to answer these questions in the following study. The Passover and the Resurrection of Yeshua are two of the most important aspects of our faith, Yeshua is the lamb that was slain for the forgiveness of our sins so that we would not die and that Yeshua was raised from the grave for our justification. Before we learn about Easter, let’s begin by looking at a few key Scriptures beginning with *Devarim* / *Deuteronomy* chapter 12, on the Lord telling the people what they are to do when they enter the Promised Land.

ספר דברים פרק יב

א אלה החקים והמשפטים אשר תשמרון לעשות בארץ אשר נתן יהוה אלהי אבותיך לה לרשתה כל-הימים אשר-אתם חיים על-הארצה: ב אבד תאבדון את-כל-המקמות אשר עבדו-שם הגוים אשר אתם ירשים אתם את-אלהיהם על-ההרים הרמים ועל-הגבעות ותחת כל-עץ רענן: ג ונתצתם את-מזבחתם ושברתם את-מצבתם ואשרייתם תשרפון באש ופסילי אלהיהם תגדעו ואת-שמותם מן-המקום ההוא: ד לא-תעשון כן ליהוה אלהיכם: ה כי אם-אל-המקום אשר-יבחר יהוה אלהיכם מכל-שבטיכם לשום את-שמו שם לשכנו תדרשו ובאת שמה: ו והבאתם שמה עלתיכם וזבחיכם ואת מעשרתיכם ואת תרומת ידכם ונדריכם ונדבתיכם ובכרות בקרכם וצאנכם: ז ואכלתם-שם לפני יהוה אלהיכם ושמחתם בכל משלח ידכם אתם וביתיכם אשר ברכך יהוה אלהיך: ח לא תעשון ככל אשר אנהנו עשים פה היום איש כל-הישר בעיניו: ט כי לא-באתם עד-עתה אל-המנוחה ואל-הנחלה אשר-יהוה אלהיך נתן לך:

Deuteronomy 12:1-9

12:1 ‘These are the statutes and the judgments which you shall carefully observe in the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess as long as you live on the earth. 12:2 ‘You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. 12:3 ‘You shall tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and burn their Asherim with fire, and you shall cut down the engraved images of their gods and obliterate their name from that place. 12:4 ‘You shall not act like this toward the Lord your God. 12:5 ‘But you shall seek the LORD at the place which the Lord your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come. 12:6 ‘There you shall bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution of your hand, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock. 12:7 ‘There also you and your households shall eat before the Lord your God, and rejoice in all your undertakings in which the Lord your God has blessed you. 12:8 ‘You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes; 12:9 for you have not as yet come to the resting place and the inheritance which the Lord your God is giving you. (NASB)

ספר דברים פרק יב

י ועברתם את-הירדן וישבתם בארץ אשר-יהנה
 אלהיכם מנחיל אתכם והניח לכם מכל-איביכם מסביב
 וישבתם-בטח: [שני] יא והיה המקום אשר-יבחר
 יהנה אלהיכם בו לשכן שמו שם שמה תביאו את כל-
 אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם עולתיכם וזבחיכם מעשרותיכם
 ותרמת ידכם וכל מבחר גדריכם אשר תדרו ליהנה:
 יב ושמחתם לפני יהנה אלהיכם אתם ובניכם ובנותיכם
 ועבדיכם ואמהותיכם והלוי אשר בשעריכם פי אין לו
 חלק ונחלה אתכם: יג השמר לה פן-תעלה עלתיה בכל-
 מקום אשר תראה: יד פי אם-במקום אשר-יבחר יהנה
 באחד שבטיה שם תעלה עלתיה ושם תעשה כל אשר
 אנכי מצוה: טו רק בכל-אות נפשך תזבח | ואכלת בשר
 כבדפת יהנה אלהיך אשר נתן-לה בכל-שעריה הטמא
 והטהור יאכלנו פצבי וכאיל: טז רק הדם לא תאכלו
 על-הארץ תשפכונו כמים: יז לא-תוכל לאכל בשעריה
 מעשר דגנה ותירשף ויצהרה ובכרות בקרה וצאנה וכל-
 גדריה אשר תדר ונדבתיה ותרומת ידה: יח פי אם-לפני
 יהנה אלהיך תאכלנו במקום אשר יבחר יהנה אלהיך
 בו אתה ובנה ובתה ועבדך ואמתך והלוי אשר בשעריה
 ושמחת לפני יהנה אלהיך בכל משלח ידה: יט השמר
 לה פן-תעזב את-הלוי כל-ימיה על-אדמתה: כ פי-
 ירחיב יהנה אלהיך את-גבולך כאשר דבר-לה ואמרת
 אכלה בשר פי-תאנה נפשך לאכל בשר בכל-אות נפשך
 תאכל בשר: כא פי-ירחק ממך המקום אשר יבחר יהנה
 אלהיך לשום שמו שם וזבחת מבקרה ומצאנה אשר נתן
 יהנה לה כאשר צויתך ואכלת בשעריה בכל אות נפשך:
 כב אף כאשר יאכל את-הצבי ואת-האיל פן תאכלנו
 הטמא והטהור יחדו יאכלנו: כג רק חזק לבלתי אכל
 הדם פי הדם הוא הנפש ולא-תאכל הנפש עם-הבשר:
 כד לא תאכלנו על-הארץ תשפכונו כמים: כה לא
 תאכלנו למען ייטב לה ולבנייה אחריה פי-תעשה הישר
 בעיני יהנה: כו רק קדשיה אשר-יהיו לה ונדריה תשא
 ובאת אל-המקום אשר-יבחר יהנה:

Deuteronomy 12:10-26

12:10 'When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around you so that you live in security, 12:11 then it shall come about that the place in which the Lord your God will choose for His name to dwell, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution of your hand, and all your choice votive offerings which you will vow to the Lord. 12:12 'And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion or inheritance with you. 12:13 'Be careful that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every cultic place you see, 12:14 but in the place which the Lord chooses in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you. 12:15 'However, you may slaughter and eat meat within any of your gates, whatever you desire, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, as of the gazelle and the deer. 12:16 'Only you shall not eat the blood; you are to pour it out on the ground like water. 12:17 'You are not allowed to eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or new wine or oil, or the firstborn of your herd or flock, or any of your votive offerings which you vow, or your freewill offerings, or the contribution of your hand. 12:18 'But you shall eat them before the Lord your God in the place which the Lord your God will choose, you and your son and daughter, and your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God in all your undertakings. 12:19 'Be careful that you do not forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land. 12:20 'When the Lord your God extends your border as He has promised you, and you say, 'I will eat meat,' because you desire to eat meat, then you may eat meat, whatever you desire. 12:21 'If the place which the Lord your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, then you may slaughter of your herd and flock which the Lord has given you, as I have commanded you; and you may eat within your gates whatever you desire. 12:22 'Just as a gazelle or a deer is eaten, so you will eat it; the unclean and the clean alike may eat of it. 12:23 'Only be sure not to eat the blood, for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh. 12:24 'You shall not eat it; you shall pour it out on the ground like water. 12:25 'You shall not eat it, so that it may be well with you and your sons after you, for you will be doing what is right in the sight of the Lord. 12:26 'Only your holy things which you may have and your votive offerings, you shall take and go to the place which the Lord chooses. (NASB)

ספר דברים פרק יב

כז וְעִשִׂיתָ עֲלֹתֶיךָ הַבֶּשֶׂר וְהַדָּם עַל-מִזְבֵּחַ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְדַם-זִבְחֶיךָ יִשְׁפָּךְ עַל-מִזְבֵּחַ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְהַבֶּשֶׂר תֹּאכַל: כח שֹׁמֵר וְשֹׁמֵעַ אֶת כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְנֶךָ לַמַּעַן יֵיטֵב לְךָ וּלְבָנֶיךָ אַחֲרַיִךָ עַד-עוֹלָם כִּי תַעֲשֶׂה הַטּוֹב וְהַיָּשָׁר בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: ס [שלישי] כט כִּי-יִכְרִית יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת-הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה בָּא-שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּ אוֹתָם מִפְּנֵי וְיִרְשַׁתָּ אֹתָם וַיִּשְׁבְּתָ בְּאַרְצָם: ל הַשֹּׁמֵר לְךָ פֶּן-תִּנְקַשׁ אַחֲרֵיהֶם אַחֲרֵי הַשְׁמָדָם מִפְּנֵיךָ וּפֶן-תִּדְרֹשׁ לְאֱלֹהֵיהֶם לֵאמֹר אֵיכָּה יַעֲבֹדוּ הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה אֶת-אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְאָעֲשֶׂה-בֵּן גַּם-אֲנִי: לא לֹא-תַעֲשֶׂה כֵן לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי כָל-תּוֹעֵבֹת יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר שָׁנֵא עָשׂוּ לְאֱלֹהֵיהֶם כִּי גַם אֶת-בְּנֵיהֶם וְאֶת-בָּנֹתֵיהֶם יִשְׂרְפוּ בְּאֵשׁ לְאֱלֹהֵיהֶם:

Deuteronomy 12:27-32

12:27 'And you shall offer your burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, on the altar of the Lord your God; and the blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the Lord your God, and you shall eat the flesh. 12:28 'Be careful to listen to all these words which I command you, so that it may be well with you and your sons after you forever, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God. 12:29 'When the Lord your God cuts off before you the nations which you are going in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, 12:30 beware that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise?' 12:31 'You shall not behave thus toward the Lord your God, for every abominable act which the Lord hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. 12:32 'Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it. (NASB)

There are many examples that may be used to understand what God thinks concerning the way of the nations, we will be looking at two places, (i) the Torah (Deuteronomy) and (ii) the Prophets (Ezekiel). In the first example, from Deuteronomy, the Lord God Almighty tells Moshe to instruct the people on what to do when they cross over the Jordan and live in the land that He was giving them. *Devarim / Deuteronomy 12:1-32* may be summarized in the following way.

Summary of Deuteronomy 12

1. When you enter the land you are to utterly destroy all the places where the nations served their gods. Tear down their altars, smash their sacred pillars, burn their Asherim with fire, obliterate their name from that place. (12:2-3)
2. You are not to serve the Lord God the way the nations serve their gods (12:4)
3. Seek the Lord God in the way and in the place that He chooses. (12:5-7)
4. Do not do whatever “seems” or “appears” to be right in your own eyes. (12:8)
5. The Lord says the place, and in the way that He chooses, the people are to bring their offerings and sacrifices and the contribution of your hand to the Lord. Rejoice in the way the Lord commands us to bring our offerings to Him. (12:10-12)
6. Be careful that you do not offering your burnt offerings in every cultic place you see but in the place that God chooses and in the way the Lord commands it to be done. (12:13-14)
7. You may slaughter meat in your own place, but do not eat the blood. (12:15-21)
8. It is restated to not eat the blood. There must have been a cultural practice among the pagan nations that would drink the blood of their sacrifice. (12:23-25)
9. It is describes that God commands the offerings to be made in the way and in the place that He chooses. (12:27)
10. Disobedience to these things, the Lord will cut them off from before the nations (12:28-29)
11. Be careful not to even inquire after their gods or to ask how they served their gods so that we can serve our God likewise. (12:30)

12. It is repeated, do not serve the Lord God the way the nations serve their gods. (12:31)
13. Do not add to or take away from the command of God. (12:32)

The second example is taken from Ezekiel chapter 8.

ספר יחזקאל פרק ח **Ezekiel 8:1-18**

א וַיְהִי | בַּשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁשִׁית בַּשָּׁשִׁי בַחֲמִשָּׁה לַחֹדֶשׁ אֲנִי יוֹשֵׁב
בְּבֵיתִי וְזָקְנֵי יְהוּדָה יוֹשְׁבִים לִפְנֵי וַתִּפֹּל עָלַי שֵׁם יְד אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:
ב וַאֲרָאָה וְהִנֵּה דְמוּת כְּמִרְאֵה-אִישׁ מִמִּרְאֵה מִתְנַוּוּ וְלִמְטָה אִישׁ
וּמִמִּתְנַוּוּ וְלִמְעֵלָה כְּמִרְאֵה-זֶהָר כְּעֵין הַחֲשֵׁמְלָה: ג וַיִּשְׁלַח תְּבִנִית
יָד וַיִּקְחֵנִי בְצִיצַת רֹאשִׁי וַתִּשָּׂא אֹתִי רוּחַ | בֵּין-הָאָרְצִים וּבֵין-הַשָּׁמַיִם
וַתִּבְאֵ אֹתִי יְרוּשָׁלַיִם מִהַ בְּמִרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים אֶל-פֶּתַח שַׁעַר הַפְּנִימִית
הַפּוֹנֶה צְפוֹנָה אֲשֶׁר-שָׁם מוֹשֵׁב סָמֶל הַקְּנָאָה הַמְקַנָּה: ד וְהִנֵּה-
שָׁם כְּבוֹד אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמִרְאֵה אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי בְּבִקְעָה: ה וַיֹּאמֶר
אֵלַי בֶּן-אָדָם שֵׂא-נָא עֵינֶיךָ דְרָךְ צְפוֹנָה וְאֶשָּׂא עֵינֶיךָ דְרָךְ צְפוֹנָה
וְהִנֵּה מִצְפוֹן לְשַׁעַר הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָמֶל הַקְּנָאָה הַזֶּה בְּבִקְעָה: ו וַיֹּאמֶר
אֵלַי בֶּן-אָדָם הֲרָאָה אֶתָּה מָהֶם [מָה הֵם] עֹשִׂים תוֹעֵבוֹת גְּדוֹלוֹת
אֲשֶׁר בֵּית-יִשְׂרָאֵל | עֹשִׂים פֹּה לְרַחֲקָה מֵעַל מִקְדָּשִׁי וְעוֹד תִּשׁוּב
תִּרְאֶה תוֹעֵבוֹת גְּדוֹלוֹת: ז וַיְבִא אֹתִי אֶל-פֶּתַח הַחֲצַר וַאֲרָאָה וְהִנֵּה
חֹר-אֶחָד בְּקִיר: ח וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בֶּן-אָדָם חֲתֹר-נָא בְּקִיר וַאֲחֻתֹר
בְּקִיר וְהִנֵּה פֶתַח אֶחָד: ט וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בֹּא וּרְאֵה אֶת-הַתוֹעֵבוֹת
הַרְעוֹת אֲשֶׁר הֵם עֹשִׂים פֹּה: י וַאֲבֹא וַאֲרָאָה וְהִנֵּה כָל-תְּבִנִית
הַמָּשׁ וּבְהִמָּה שָׁקוֹץ וְכָל-גְּלוּלֵי בֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל מִחֻקָּה עַל-הַקִּיר
סָבִיב | סָבִיב: יא וְשִׁבְעִים אִישׁ מִזְקְנֵי בֵית-יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּאֲוֹנְהוּ
בֶן-שָׁפוֹן עֶמֶד בְּתוֹכָם עֲמָדִים לְפָנֵיהֶם וְאִישׁ מִקְטָרְתוֹ בְּיָדוֹ וַעֲתַר
עֲנַן-הַקְטָרֶת עָלָה: יב וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הֲרָאִיתָ בֶּן-אָדָם אֲשֶׁר זָקְנֵי
בֵית-יִשְׂרָאֵל עֹשִׂים בַּחֲשֵׁךְ אִישׁ בְּחֻדְרֵי מִשְׁכֵּיתוֹ כִּי אֹמְרִים אֵין
יְהוָה רָאָה אֶתְנֹו עֹזֵב יְהוָה אֶת-הָאָרֶץ: יג וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי עוֹד תִּשׁוּב
תִּרְאֶה תוֹעֵבוֹת גְּדוֹלוֹת אֲשֶׁר-הֵמָּה עֹשִׂים: יד וַיְבִא אֹתִי אֶל-
פֶּתַח שַׁעַר בֵּית-יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר אֶל-הַצְּפוֹנָה וְהִנֵּה-שָׁם הַנְּשִׁים יֹשְׁבוֹת
מִבְּכּוֹת אֶת-הַתְּמוּזָה: טו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הֲרָאִיתָ בֶּן-אָדָם עוֹד תִּשׁוּב
תִּרְאֶה תוֹעֵבוֹת גְּדוֹלוֹת מְאֹלָה: טז וַיְבִא אֹתִי אֶל-חֲצַר בֵּית-
יְהוָה הַפְּנִימִית וְהִנֵּה-פֶתַח הַיֵּכָל יְהוָה בֵּין הָאוּלָם וּבֵין הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
כְּעֹשְׂרִים וַחֲמִשָּׁה אִישׁ אַחֲרֵיהֶם אֶל-הַיֵּכָל יְהוָה וּפְנֵיהֶם קְדָמָה
וְהֵמָּה מִשְׁתַּחֲוִיִּתִם קְדָמָה לְשִׁמְשׁ: יז וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הֲרָאִיתָ בֶּן-
אָדָם הִנְקֵל לְבַיִת יְהוָה מַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-הַתוֹעֵבוֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ-פֹה
כִּי-מָלְאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ חָמָס וַיִּשְׁבוּ לְהַכְעִיסֵנִי וְהִנֵּם שֹׁלְחִים אֶת-
הַזְמוּרָה אֶל-אֶפְסָם: יח וְגַם-אֲנִי אֶעֱשֶׂה בְחֵמָה לֹא-תַחֲסוּ עֵינֵי
וְלֹא אֶחְמַל וְקָרְאוּ בְּאָזְנֵי קוֹל גְּדוֹל וְלֹא אֶשְׁמַע אוֹתָם:

8:1 It came about in the sixth year, on the fifth day of the sixth month, as I was sitting in my house with the elders of Judah sitting before me, that the hand of the Lord God fell on me there. 8:2 Then I looked, and behold, a likeness as the appearance of a man; from His loins and downward there was the appearance of fire, and from His loins and upward the appearance of brightness, like the appearance of glowing metal. 8:3 He stretched out the form of a hand and caught me by a lock of my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the north gate of the inner court, where the seat of the idol of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy, was located. 8:4 And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the appearance which I saw in the plain. 8:5 Then He said to me, 'Son of man, raise your eyes now toward the north.' So I raised my eyes toward the north, and behold, to the north of the altar gate was this idol of jealousy at the entrance. 8:6 And He said to me, 'Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations which the house of Israel are committing here, so that I would be far from My sanctuary? But yet you will see still greater abominations.' 8:7 Then He brought me to the entrance of the court, and when I looked, behold, a hole in the wall. 8:8 He said to me, 'Son of man, now dig through the wall.' So I dug through the wall, and behold, an entrance. 8:9 And He said to me, 'Go in and see the wicked abominations that they are committing here.' 8:10 So I entered and looked, and behold, every form of creeping things and beasts and detestable things, with all the idols of the house of Israel, were carved on the wall all around. 8:11 Standing in front of them were seventy elders of the house of Israel, with Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan standing among them, each man with his censer in his hand and the fragrance of the cloud of incense rising. 8:12 Then He said to me, 'Son of man, do you see what the elders of the house of Israel are committing in the dark, each man in the room of his carved images? For they say, 'The Lord does not see us; the Lord has forsaken the land.' 8:13 And He said to me, 'Yet you will see still greater abominations which they are committing.' 8:14 Then He brought me to the entrance of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and behold, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz. 8:15 He said to me, 'Do you see this, son of man? Yet you will see still greater abominations than these.' 8:16 Then He brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house. And behold, at the entrance to the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs to the temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east; and they were prostrating themselves eastward toward the sun. 8:17 He said to me, 'Do you see this, son of man? Is it too light a thing for the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they have committed here, that they have filled the land with violence and provoked Me repeatedly? For behold, they are putting the twig to their nose. 8:18 'Therefore, I indeed will deal in wrath. My eye will have no pity nor will I spare; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, yet I will not listen to them.' (NASB)

In the sixth year on the fifth day of the sixth month Ezekiel had a vision and an angel of the Lord brought him to the Temple in Jerusalem at the north gate. Let's summarize the Ezekiel's vision.

Summary of Ezekiel 8

1. An angel having the appearance of a man who shown very brightly like glowing metal took Ezekiel in the Spirit and brought him to the Temple in Jerusalem to the entrance of the north gate. (8:1-3)
2. Located at the altar, looking towards the north gate from inside the inner gate stood what is called an “idol of jealousy” (8:4-5) The angels says “you will see greater abominations than these.”
3. The Lord asks do you see the great abominations that the people are doing in the house of the Lord? (8:6)
4. Ezekiel was brought to the entrance of the court and asked to dig through the wall. He entered inside and there were every form of creeping thing, beasts (unclean animals), and the idols of Israel were carved upon the wall. (8:7-10) The angels says “you will see greater abominations than these.”
5. The seventy elders representing the 70 persons (nations) that entered into Egypt and were delivered out of Egypt, they were burning incense before the Lord inside the Temple. (8:11) The angels says “you will see greater abominations than these.”
6. The Lord says each man what he does in the dark and he says in his heart “the Lord does not see us, the Lord has forsaken the land.” (8:12)
7. Ezekiel was brought to the entrance to the gate of the house of the Lord (the North gate) and there the women were weeping for Tammuz. (8:14) The angels says “you will see greater abominations than these.”
8. Ezekiel was brought into the inner court, at the entrance to the temple of the Lord between the porch and the altar were twenty five men with their backs to the temple and their faces towards the east and bowing down to the east. (The raising sun, baal worship) (8:16)
9. The Lord is angered by this, and says He will deal with them and will have no pity on them.

What are the people of Israel doing that is an abomination to the Lord? Why do they have an idol in the temple? What is the meaning of “weeping for Tammuz?”

The etymology of Easter

The word Easter is derived from the “Old English” (Anglo-Saxon) word “Eastre” or “Eostra” (Latinized from the Anglo-Saxon Eostre) is associated with the goddess (female deity) in Anglo-Saxon paganism and refers to the name of the month corresponding to its celebration “Eostur-monath” (Anglo-Saxon “Eostra month”). This name survives in the modern holiday of Easter. This name is attested from the writings of the Benedictine monk named St. Bede.[1,2] Bede states that the Eostur-monath was the month of April and that the feasts held in honor of the fertility goddess during Eostur-monath had died out by the time of his writing and replaced with the Christian custom of Passover under the name of Eostur-monath. According to Easton’s Bible Dictionary, Easter is a reference to a Saxon word (Eostre), denoting the goddess of the Saxons, in honor of whom sacrifices were offered around about the time of Passover. As a result of its proximity to the Pesach festival; the name was used as a reference to the festival of the Resurrection of Yeshua (Jesus) which occurred a couple days following the Pesach festival.

As a result of the use of the name as a reference to Pesach, early English translations of the bible translated the Greek Pascha (Passover) using the word “Easter.” One example is found in *Acts 12:4* from the King James Version (KJV).

Acts 12:4

12:4 ον και πιασας εθετο εις φυλακην παραδους τεσσαρσιν τετραδιοις στρατιωτων φυλασσειν αυτον βουλομενος μετα το **πασχα** αναγαγειν αυτον τω λαω

Acts 12:4

*12:4 And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after **Easter** to bring him forth to the people. (KJV)*

The Greek translation of the Bible does a pretty good job to transliterate the Hebrew word פסח as πασχα (Pascha, Passover). The English translators however choose to translate *Acts 12:4* the Greek word πασχα as Easter in the Authorized Version of 1611. In addition to this, it is interesting to note that the KJV (the Authorized Version of 1611) translates, the word “Passover” in all passages in which this Greek word Pascha (πάσχα) occurs except in this passage here *Act 12:4*. It may be that the Book of Acts is associated with the formation of the “Church” and therefore credence is given to the “Church” celebrating Easter at an early date. However, by the time of 1611 the movement away from translating Passover as Easter was beginning and as a result of modern scholarship today most modern translations do not translate *Acts 2:14* as Easter. The KJV English translation however today continues to use the word Easter to translate πασχα (Pascha, Passover). According to Britannica Concise Encyclopedia, the Easter festival falls on a Sunday between March 22 and April 25 depending upon the date of the first full moon after the spring equinox. This time span was fixed after the Council of Nicea (CE 325) and the Catholic Church adopted this festival to celebrate the resurrection of Yeshua. (*We will discuss this further a later on.*)

Easter (Eastre) is known as a goddess of fertility and sunrise whose feast was celebrated at the spring equinox. (*Note Ezekiel 8 and the 25 elders bowing to the sun.*) Bede said the Anglo-Saxon Christians adopted her name and many of the celebratory practices for their Mass of Christ’s resurrection. In ancient cultures fertility goddesses were quite common. For example, the month of Venus, the second month of the ancient Roman calendar, dedicated to the goddess Venus based on Apru, and Etruscan borrowing from the Greek Aphrodite occurs during the month of April.

Asherim

In *Devarim / Deuteronomy 12:3* the word “Asherim” is mentioned. This is a reference to an Asherah pole. The Asherah pole is a sacred tree that stood near Canaanite religious locations to honor the Ugaritic mother-goddess Asherah, the consort of El. [3] The Biblical relation of the references to an asherah and archaeological finds of Judaeen pillar-figurines has resulted in many publications and scholarly work on the topic. [4] The asherim were cult objects related to the worship of the fertility goddess Asherah, the consort of either Ba’al or, as inscriptions from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom attest, YHVH. [5] This become an subject of contention among competing cults in Israel and the reason God commanded that all of their places, objects, things, everything was to be destroyed including even the memory of them. The erecting of a sacred tree begs the question of the expectations of the worshiper from the wooden object, John Day says “we are never told exactly what it was.” [6] Though there was certainly a movement against goddess-worship at the Jerusalem Temple in the time of king Josiah, it did not long survive his reign, as the following four kings “did what was evil in the eyes of YHVH” (*2 Kings 23:32-37, 24:9, 19*). Further exhortations came from Jeremiah the prophet. The traditional interpretation of the Biblical text is that the Israelites imported pagan elements such as the Asherah poles (trees) from the surrounding Canaanites; the modern scholarly interpretations suggests instead that the Israelite folk religion was always polytheistic, and it was the prophets and priests who denounced the Asherah poles who were the innovators.[7] Asherim are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible in the books of Exodus, Deuteronomy, Judges, the Books of Kings, the second Book of Chronicles, and the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Micah. The term often appears as merely אֲשֵׁרָה, (Asherah) referred to as “groves” in the King James Version, which follows the Septuagint rendering as ἄλση, and the Latin Vulgate “*lucus*” [8] and “*poles*” in the New Revised Standard Version; no word that

— Easter or Passover? —

may be translated as “poles” appears in the text. Scholars have indicated, however, that the plural use of the term (Asherahs, also Asherim or Asherot) provides ample evidence that reference is being made to multiple objects of worship. [9]

The Hebrew Bible suggests that the poles were made of wood. In the sixth chapter of the Book of Judges, God is recorded as instructing the Israelite judge Gideon to cut down an Asherah pole that was next to an altar to Baal. The wood was to be used for a burnt offering. *Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:21* states that YHVH hated the Asherim whether rendered as poles: “Do not set up any [wooden] Asherah [pole] [10] beside the altar you build to the LORD your God” or as trees saying “You shall not plant any tree as an Asherah beside the altar of the Lord your God which you shall make”. [11] That Asherahs were not always living trees is shown according to *1 Kings 14:23* “their asherim, beside every luxuriant tree”. [12] In *2 Kings 21:7*, King Manasseh placed an Asherah pole in the Holy Temple. Was this the “idol of jealousy” standing between the altar and the gate mentioned in *Ezekiel 8:3-4*? King Josiah’s reforms in the late 7th century BC included the destruction of many Asherah poles (*2 Kings 23*). Over and over again we read throughout the Scriptures of the need to destroy the pagan things, like it says in *Shemot / Exodus 34:13* “Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and cut down their Asherah poles.”

Tammuz

In Babylonia, the month “Tammuz” was established in honor of the eponymous god Tammuz, who originated as a Sumerian shepherd-god, Dumuzid or Dumuzi, the consort of Inanna and, in his Akkadian form, the parallel consort of Ishtar. The Levantine Adonis (“lord”), who was drawn into the Greek pantheon, was considered by Joseph Campbell among others to be another counterpart of Tammuz, [15] son and consort. The Aramaic name “Tammuz” in *Ezekiel* seems to have been derived from the Akkadian form Tammuzi, based on early Sumerian Damu-zid. The later standard Sumerian form, Dumu-zid, in turn became Dumuzi in Akkadian. Tammuzi also is Dumuzid or Dumuzi.

Beginning with the summer solstice came a time of mourning in the Ancient Near East, as in the Aegean (*the region of the Aegean Sea, between Greece and Turkey*) the Babylonians marked the decline in daylight hours and the onset of killing summer heat and drought with a six-day “funeral” for the god. Recent discoveries reconfirm him as an annual life-death-rebirth deity. Tablets discovered in 1963 show that Dumuzi was in fact consigned to the Underworld himself, in order to secure Inanna’s release, [16] though the recovered final line reveals that he is to revive for six months of each year. Thus, the dead Tammuz was widely mourned in the Ancient Near East. Locations associated in antiquity with the site of his death include both Harran and Byblos, among others. A Sumerian tablet from Nippur (NI4486) reads:

She can make the lament for you, my Dumuzid, the lament for you, the lament, the lamentation, reach the desert — she can make it reach the house Arali; she can make it reach Bad-tibira; she can make it reach Dul-šuba; she can make it reach the shepherding country, the sheepfold of Dumuzid. “O Dumuzid of the fair-spoken mouth, of the ever kind eyes,” she sobs tearfully, “O you of the fair-spoken mouth, of the ever kind eyes,” she sobs tearfully. “Lad, husband, lord, sweet as the date, ... O Dumuzid!” she sobs, she sobs tearfully. [17]

These mourning ceremonies were observed even at the very door of the Temple in Jerusalem in the vision the prophet *Ezekiel* was given, which serves as a Biblical prophecy which expresses YHVH’s message at His people’s apostate form of worship. *Ezekiel*’s testimony is the only direct mention of the name Tammuz in the Hebrew Bible and to the fertility religions. The period of weeping for Tammuz took place over a 40 day period.

The 40 Days of Weeping for Tammuz (Lent)

A diligent search through all of the scriptures produces no mention of Jews or Christians observing an annual period of 40 days of fasting and abstinence preceding the festival of the Passover, yet today most of the Christian world observes a 40 day period called Lent, which precedes the festival of Easter Sunday. The search does however turn up the number 40 and a period of 40 days is rather common in scripture.

- It rained 40 days and nights (*Bereshit / Genesis 7:4, 12*).
- Forty days after sighting the tops of the mountains, Noah set forth a raven and a dove. (*Bereshit / Genesis 8:6-7*)
- Joseph mourned the death of his father Jacob for a period of 40 days. (*Bereshit / Genesis 49:33 - 50:3*)
- Moshe on Sinai for 40 days. (*Shemot / Exodus 24:18, 34:28, Devarim / Deuteronomy 9:9-11*)
- Moses pleads for Israel 40 days on Sinai. (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 9:18-25, 10:10*)
- Canaan spied on for 40 days. (*Bamidbar / Numbers 13:25, 14:34*)
- Goliath taunted Israel for 40 days. (*I Samuel 17:16*)
- Elijah fasted and journeyed to Horeb for 40 days. (*I Kings 19:8*)
- Ezekiel bore the iniquity of Judah for 40 days. (*Ezekiel 4:6*)
- Jonah warned Nineveh of judgment in 40 days. (*Jonah 3:4*)
- Jesus fasted in the wilderness for 40 days. (*Matthew 4:2, Mark 1:13, Luke 4:2*)
- Jesus was seen for 40 days after His crucifixion. (*Acts 1:3*)

So, based upon a survey of the Scriptures on 40 days, the Bible does not enjoin the Jew or the Christian to observe the 40 day period called Lent. Therefore, what is its origin? The answer can be found in the Catholic Church, let's look at some source material from the Catholic Church.

540 ... "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning" [Heb 4:15]. By the solemn forty days of Lent the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert.

Source: The Catechism of the Catholic Church, copyright 1994 by the United States Catholic Conference, Inc., published by Liguori Publications

"Lent is the 40-day period (Sundays excluded) prior to Easter, which the church observes as a penitential season. It begins on Ash Wednesday (which can occur any time between February 4 and March 11, depending upon the date of Easter), and it concludes with the Passiontide, the two-week period during which the church's liturgy follows Christ's activity closely through the final stages of his life on earth. These two weeks are called Passion Week and Holy Week. It was once claimed that the Lenten practice was of apostolic origin, but historians fix its establishment at a later date, probably the 5th century. Catholics are required to fast and are urged to adopt other penitential modes during the season."

Source: The Catholic Fact Book, copyright 1986 by John Deedy, published by Thomas More Press, page 360

“Lent is the period of six and one half weeks from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday. During Lent, for 40 days, excluding Sundays, fasting is recommended for all Catholics according to the laws of fast. This is reminiscent of the 40 days of our Lord’s unbroken fast (Mt. 4:3-4). The entire period of Lent is also a time of spiritual preparation for the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. It is observed as a time of penitence other than fasting, and as a time of prayer. The Liturgy of the Church reflects the significance of this period of spiritual preparation: each day has a special Mass assigned to it; those Masses date back to the seventh and eighth centuries; there are no feasts observed on Sundays; purple vestments are the daily color...”

“It [Ash Wednesday] was established as the first day of Lent by [Pope] St. Gregory the Great (590 to 604).”

Source: *The Catholic Encyclopedia, revised and updated, edited by Robert Broderick, copyright 1987, published by Thomas Nelson Publishers*

“The reasons for celebrating our major feasts when we do are many and varied. In general, however, it is true that many of them have at least an indirect connection with the pre-Christian [pagan] feasts celebrated about the same time of year -- feasts centering around the harvest, the rebirth of the sun at the winter solstice (now Dec. 21, but Dec. 25 in the old Julian calendar), the renewal of nature in spring, and so on.”

Source: *The New Question Box -- Catholic Life for the Nineties, copyright 1988 by John J. Dietzen, M.A., S.T.L., ISBN 0-940518-01-5 (paperback), published by Guildhall Publishers, Peoria Illinois, 61651, page 554.*

Some Catholic sources claim that the observance of Lent dates back to the Apostles. This is a myth. In the fifth century, some Fathers claimed that Lent was of apostolic institution, but the claim is doubtful. From the earliest Christian times everyone agreed that a penitential season should precede the solemnities of Easter, but for at least three centuries there was no agreement over how long the fasting time should be. This leads to question that “40 days” was chosen from somewhere in the Scriptures. Saint Irenaeus, writing around the year 190, gives us a clue to the diversity of opinion, saying: “*some think they ought to fast for one day, others for two days, and others even for several, while other reckon forty hours both of day and night to their fast.*” Apparently he knew nothing about any Lent or pre-Easter fast of forty days, else he would have mentioned it. “*In the fourth century Saint Athanasius enjoined the people of Alexandria to observe a forty day period of fasting prior to Easter, indicating that this was the mode now practiced throughout Christendom. ... While all the world is fasting, we who are in Egypt should not become a laughing stock as the only people who do not fast but take pleasure in those days.*” At this time, the year was 339, and Athanasius was recently back from a trip to Europe, including Rome. “*Some sources allege that the forty-day Lent was not known in the West until the time of Saint Ambrose (c339-397).*” The date of Athanasius’ letter would seem to negate that theory. “*So, no, our Lent does not date from the time of the Apostles. But apparently it was observed before the year 339. That’s early enough.*” (**Source: *Facts, Myths & Maybes (Everything You Think You Know About Catholicism But Perhaps Don’t), by John Deedy, copyright 1993, published by Thomas More Press, page 235.***)

Today, according to Catholicism, Lent is derived from the 40 days Yeshua spent fasting in the wilderness, but it is admitted that the observance of Lent was unknown to the disciples and it did not find its way into the church until several centuries after the time of the Messiah. It should be noted that the 40 days of fasting in the wilderness preceded the earthly ministry of the Messiah, which lasted some three years, and was not connected in any way to his crucifixion or the Passover.

Additional information from non-Catholic sources

“It ought to be known,” said Cassianus, the monk of Marseilles, writing in the fifth century, and contrasting the primitive Church with the Church in his day, “that the observance of the forty days had no existence, so long as the perfection of that primitive Church remained inviolate.”

Source: Gieseler, vol. ii. p. 42, Note. Cited in *The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop, page 104.

*“Many Christians had already reserved a period prior to Easter for fasting, confession, and schooling candidates for baptism on Easter Eve. But the time frame was never fixed, rules never formalized. Different groups of Christians followed different customs -- some fasted for several days, others several weeks. Some observed a total fast for exactly forty days (minus the Lord’s day, Sunday), a feast called *Quadragesima*, which would evolve into Lent.*

*“Thus, by mid-fourth century, the duration of Lent -- the word itself means “lengthening spring days,” from the Indo-European *langat-tin*, ‘long’+ ‘day’ -- became more or less fixed at forty days, less Sundays; the time frame did not become official, though, until the eighth century.*

“In the Western Church today, Lent begins six and a half weeks before Easter, providing forty fast days when Sundays are excluded. In the Eastern Church, however, Lent begins eight weeks before Easter, since fasting is excluded on Saturdays and Sundays. Today, too, a fast can be as slight an inconvenience as abstaining from chocolate or ice cream for the duration. A token fast.”

Source: *Sacred Origins of Profound Things*, by Charles Panati, copyright 1996, published by the Penguin Group, page 206.

*“Whence, then, came this observance? The forty days abstinence of Lent was directly borrowed from the worshippers of the Babylonian goddess [*Astarte / Ishtar*]. Such a Lent of forty days, ‘in the spring of the year,’ is still observed by the Yezidis or Pagan Devil-worshippers of Koordistan, who have inherited it from their early masters, the Babylonians.*

“Such a Lent of forty days was held in spring by the Pagan Mexicans, for thus we read in Humboldt, where he gives account of Mexican observances: ‘Three days after the vernal equinox began a solemn fast of forty days in the honor of the sun.’

“Such a Lent of forty days was observed in Egypt, as may be seen on consulting Wilkinson’s Egyptians.

“Among the Pagans this Lent seems to have been an indispensable preliminary to the great annual festival in commemoration of the death and resurrection of Tammuz, which was celebrated by alternate weeping and rejoicing, and which, in many countries, was considerably later than the Christian festival, being observed in Palestine and Assyria in June, therefore called the ‘month of Tammuz;’ in Egypt, about the middle of May, and in Britain, some time in April. To conciliate the Pagans to nominal Christianity, Rome, pursuing its usual policy, took measures to get the Christian and Pagan festivals amalgamated, and, by a complicated but skillful adjustment of the calendar, it was found no difficult matter, in general, to get Paganism and Christianity -- now far sunk in idolatry -- in this as in so many other things, to shake hands.

“Originally, even in Rome, Lent, with the preceding revelries of the Carnival, was entirely unknown; and even when fasting before the Christian Pesach was held to be necessary, it was by slow steps that, in this respect, it came to conform with the ritual of Paganism. What may have been the period of fasting in the Roman Church before the sitting of the Nicene Council does not very clearly appear, but for a considerable period after that Council, we have distinct evidence that it did not exceed three weeks. The words of Socrates, writing on this very subject, about A.D. 450, are these: ‘Those who inhabit the princely city of Rome fast together before Easter three weeks, excepting the Saturday and Lord’s day.’ But at last, when the worship of Astarte was rising into the ascendant, steps were taken to get the whole Chaldean Lent of six weeks, or forty days, made imperative on all within the Roman empire of the West. The way was prepared for this by a Council held at Aurelia in the time of Hormisdas, Bishop of Rome [514-523], about the year 519, which decreed that Lent should be solemnly kept before Easter. It was with the view, no doubt, of carrying out this decree that the calendar was, a few days after, readjusted by Dionysius.”

Source: *The Two Babylons*, by Alexander Hislop, second American edition, 1959, published in America by Loizeaux Brothers, pages 106, 107.

“Legend has it that Tammuz was killed by a wild boar when he was forty years old. Hislop points out that forty days--a day for each year Tammuz had lived on earth -- were set aside to “weep for Tammuz.” In olden times these forty days were observed with weeping, fasting, and self chastisement -- to gain anew his favor -- so he would come forth from the underworld and cause spring to begin. This observance was known not only at Babylon, but also among the Phoenicians, Egyptians, Mexicans, and, for a time, even among the Israelites.”

Source: *Babylon Mystery Religion*, by Ralph Edward Woodrow, Copyright 1966, 1992 printing, page 139.

As we can see there is still some inconsistency in the number of days or weeks prior to Easter that Lent fast days are observed today and interestingly the 40 days of Lent is connected with the Babylonian goddess Ashtoreth / Astarte / Ishtar (*the origin of the word Easter*), and the worship of Tammuz. Unlike Lent, both

Tammuz and the Babylonian goddess can be found in scripture:

*Ezekiel 8:14 Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD'S house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for **Tammuz**. (KJV)*

Ezekiel 8:15 Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. (KJV)

Ezekiel 8:16 And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east. (KJV)

2 Kings 23:5 And he [King Josiah] put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven. (KJV)

2 Kings 23:11 And he [King Josiah] took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathanmelech the chamberlain, which was in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire. (KJV)

2 Kings 23:12 And the altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, did the king beat down, and brake them down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron. (KJV)

2 Kings 23:13 And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile. (KJV)

Baal, Tammuz, Ashtoreth, Astarte and Ishtar are all connected to pagan sun worship. Note also is connected to and preceding the festival of Easter. Easter is celebrated on a day specified only by the Roman Catholic Church, and not found in the Scriptures, and is fixed based on the sun and the Spring or Vernal equinox. Lent originated in the ancient Babylonian mystery religion. *“The forty days abstinence of Lent was directly borrowed from the worshippers of the Babylonian goddess. Among the Pagans this Lent seems to have been an indispensable preliminary to the great annual festival in commemoration of the death and resurrection of Tammuz...”* (Source: **The Two Babylons by Hislop, Alexander, Publisher: Loizeaux Brothers**). The annual life-death-rebirth deity Tammuz therefore is the false Messiah of the Babylonians and a satanic counterfeit of Jesus Christ. The Bible records ancient Judah worshipping this false Messiah when we read in *Ezekiel 8:14 Then He brought me to the entrance of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and behold, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz. (NASB)* The women sat at the Lord's house weeping for Tammuz. This was a great abomination in God's eyes! The question then is why did the church at Rome institute such a pagan holiday?

*“To conciliate the Pagans to nominal Christianity, Rome, pursuing its usual policy, took measures to get the Christian and Pagan festivals amalgamated, and, by a complicated but skillful adjustment of the calendar, it was found no difficult matter, in general, to get Paganism and Christianity—now far sunk in idolatry—in this as in so many other things, to shake hands” (Source: **The Two Babylons** by Hislop, Alexander, Publisher: Loizeaux Brothers).*

The Roman church replaced Passover with Easter, and the pagan Feast of Tammuz to Christianize Lent. According to Hislop author of *The two Babylons*, “*This change of the calendar in regard to Easter was attended with momentous consequences. It brought into the Church the grossest corruption and the rank-est superstition in connection with the abstinence of Lent*” Historically, before giving up personal sins and vices during Lent, the pagans held a wild, “*anything goes*” celebration to make sure that they got in their share of debaucheries and perversities. This is very similar to the historical Valentines holiday.

The fertility religions

The origin of the fertility religions, its development originates from Noah’s grandson Cush (and his wife Semiramis) and son Nimrod both of whom are mentioned in the bible (See *Bereshit / Genesis 10:8-9, 1 Chronicles 1:10, and Micah 5:6*). Note also that Nimrod’s kingdom was Babel (Babylon). The legend of Nimrod and Semiramus has Nimrod known as Tammuz and Semiramus as Ishtar (see *Athenagoras in Legatio, vol. 2 page 179, and Lucian in De Dea Syria, vol 3, page 382*). Many ancient cultures share this legend:

1. Babylonians (Tammuz and Ishtar),
2. Egyptians (Osiris and Isis),
3. Syrians (Bel and Astarte),
4. Greek/Roman (Attis and Aphrodite/Cybele/Venus/Cupid), and
5. Britain (Eostre, the dawn goddess).

These cultures depict her (Ishtar) as a fertility symbol and the “*mother of the gods.*” According to the legend, Ashtaroth (Ishtar / Astarte / Eostre / Aphrodite, etc) was the harlot mother/wife and widow of Nimrod. The Legend goes like this. Noah’s grandson Cush and his wife Semiramis had a son named Nimrod. After Cush’s death, Nimrod married his mother and became a mighty king. Nimrod was eventually killed so his mother and wife told the story that he had become a sun god (*This is the origin of the Easter sunrise service*) and he was then to be called Baal which in Hebrew means husbandman. Baal was worshiped as the “*god of fertility*” and thus was associated with sexual sin. Semiramis proclaimed that the people of Babylon must worship Baal (Nimrod) and that he was with them in the form of a flame. Semiramis then set herself up as a goddess calling herself “Ishtar.” Semiramis’ claim about her son Nimrod was that she had become pregnant and bore a son and it was a product of a sun-ray which caused her to conceive. Tammuz was a mighty hunter (which agrees with the biblical account in *Bereshit / Genesis 10:9-10* of Nimrod) but was later killed by a wild pig. Semiramis (Ishtar) then designated a 40 day period to mark the anniversary of Tammuz’s death. (*Note this is the origin of the 40 days of lent.*) During this time no meat was to be eaten and every year on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the spring equinox, a celebration was made called Easter. Semiramis (Ishtar) proclaimed that because a wild boar (pig) killed Tammuz, that a pig must be eaten on that “Sun” day.

The question now is what does God think about the fertility deity (Ashtaroth, Ishtar, Astarte, Eostre,

etc)? God calls fertility religions evil according to the Scriptures in *Judges 2:10-14* and an abomination in other places (Deuteronomy and Ezekiel, etc.)

ספר שופטים פרק ב פסוק י-יד

י וגם כל-הדור ההוא נאספו אל-אבותיו ויקם דור אחר אחריהם אשר לא-ידעו את-יהוה וגם את-המעשה אשר עשה לישראל: יא ויעשו בני-ישראל את-הרע בעיני יהוה ויעבדו את-הבעלים: יב ויעזבו את-יהוה | אלהי אבותם המוציא אותם מארץ מצרים וילכו אחרי | אלהים אחרים מאלהי העמים אשר סביבותיהם וישתחוו להם ויכעסו את-יהוה: יג ויעזבו את-יהוה ויעבדו לבעל ולעשתרות: יד ויחר-אף יהוה בישראל ויתנם ביד-שסים וישפו אותם וימכרם ביד אויביהם מסביב ולא-יכלו עוד לעמד לפני אויביהם

Shoftim / Judges 2:10-14

2:10 All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel. 2:11 Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals, 2:12 and they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the Lord to anger. 2:13 So they forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtaroath. 2:14 The anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. (NASB)

The worship of the fertility god Baal involved sexual immorality and so the worship of Baal and Ashtaroath was very appealing, a significant temptation for the men and women of Israel.

Ashtoreth

Ashtoreth the goddess of the Phoenicians represents the passive principle in nature. Ashtoreth is their principal female deity, which is frequently associated with the name Baal, the sun-god which is the chief male deity mentioned in the Tanakh in *Judges 10:6* and *1 Samuel 7:4 and 12:10*, etc. In Hebrew these names often occur in the plural as Ash-toreth and Baalim which may be in reference to the different statues or different modifications of these deities. This deity is spoken as Ashtor-eth by the Zidonians. The Babylonians called this deity Ishtar.



Ashtoreth

Ishtar

Ishtar is part of the Mesopotamian religion, the goddess of war and sexual love. Ishtar is known in Assyria and Babylonia among the Semitic peoples calling her Astarte. In early Sumeria she was the goddess of the storehouse as well as of rain and thunderstorms. Ishtar was associated with the planet Venus and was the patroness of prostitutes and alehouses. She was also called the “queen of heaven” according to *Jeremiah 7:18, 44:17-19, and 44:25*. The Greek’s also called this deity Astarte.



Ishtar

Astarte

Astarte or Ashtart is the goddess of the ancient Middle East and chief deity of the Mediterranean seaports of Tyre, Sidon, and Elath. Astarte was also worshiped in Egypt as well as among the Hittites. Astarte is mentioned in *Jeremiah 44:17, 1 Kings 11:5, and 2 Kings 23:13*. There was a temple dedicated to this goddess among the Philistines in the time of King Saul in *1 Samuel 31:10*. (Note the Babylonian counterpart is called Ishtar.)

— Easter or Passover? —

This fertility deity had different names depending upon the cultural group it was associated. The Greeks calling their goddess Astarte or Aphrodite (mentioned in the Apostolic Writings NT) and we know from history the Roman counterpart is named Venus. Do you see a connection here? The fertility deity in ancient Israel is connected to that of the Greek and Roman cultures only by different names. The Anglo-Saxon Eastre (Easter) has its connection to the Roman, Greek, and Middle Eastern cultures in their worship of the fertility goddess, all of which are known simply by different names. The underlying connection between all of these fertility gods is the spiritual forces that were at work in those days and are at work today around the world.



Astarte

Bunny Rabbits

According to the book *“American Book of Days”* by Christianson and Hatch (*H. W. Wilson; 4 Sub edition, 2000*) the rabbit or hare has been used as a pagan symbol of fertility and new life throughout history. The egg laying bunny rabbit is derived from a pagan tradition of a bird who wanted to be a rabbit. The goddess Eostre (Easter) turned the bird into a rabbit which still had the ability to lay eggs as a bird. Each spring during the festival dedicated to Eostre (Easter) the rabbit would lay beautiful colored eggs *“for the goddess.”* Another tradition coming from Germany says that during a famine a poor woman dyed some eggs and hid them in a nest, as Easter presents for her children. When the children found the nest a large rabbit leapt away and as the story goes the rabbit brought the eggs. Bede, the eighth century English monk and scholar, wrote about the Teutonic goddess of spring and fertility (Eostre) used the rabbit (hare) as her symbol of fertility. The relationship of the rabbit to the goddess Ishtar is the result of the rabbit’s ability to reproduce so quickly. If you still question whether the rabbit is really connected as a sexual symbol in these fertility religions, then ask yourself this one question: *“Why did Hugh Hefner, the publisher of Playboy magazine use the bunny head as his main logo representing his empire of pornography and sex if the bunny is not a sexual symbol?”*

Bunny Eggs

The egg is a sacred symbol of rebirth and fertility amongst the Babylonians, Druids, Egyptians and other pagan cultures. In fact, the egg was used as a symbol of the goddess Eostre (Ishtar) in various cultures according to the Encyclopedia Britannica, topic: *“Babylon Mystery Religion.”* The catholic Encyclopedia suggests that the egg was found in pagan fertility religions which celebrate the return of spring (Easter). The egg is the emblem of germinating life of early spring. According to Egyptian mythology a very beautiful egg fell from heaven into the river Euphrates. The fishes rolled it to the bank, where the doves sat upon the egg. The egg hatched and out came Venus who was called the Syrian goddess (Astarte). Thus, part of the worship of the fertility goddess was the ritual involving the egg of Astarte. In ancient times, the egg was viewed as a mystical symbol in these pagan fertility religions.

Pork

According to the Babylonian myth, Tammuz was killed by a wild boar and thus Ishtar proclaimed that pork is to be eaten in remembrance of his death on Easter Sunday. In addition to this, according to the book *“American Book of Days”* by Christianson and Hatch (*H. W. Wilson; 4 Sub edition, 2000*), and the book *“Curiosities of popular customs and of rites, ceremonies, observances, and miscellaneous antiquities”* by William Sheppard Walsh (*Gale Research Co, 1966*) eating pork on Easter also comes from eating a side

of bacon on that day (Easter) *“to show contempt for the Jewish custom of not eating pork.”* It is well known that swine is called an unclean animal according to the Torah and the flesh was forbidden to be eaten by God. Our English forefathers loved to show their abhorrence of Judaism by eating bacon/ham/pork on the day on which Yeshua the Messiah was triumphant over his enemies during Pesach (Passover). It is interesting how many Americans have ham for dinner on Easter without being aware of the origin and history behind the custom.

Did you know that eating Ham was also considered an act of consuming a sacrifice unto a fertility deity? Another example of the historical nature of eating ham as a religious symbol is found in the works of Shakespeare. Robert Bell in his book *“Shakespeare’s Puck and his Folk-Lore”* (AMS Press, New York, 1971) cites a passage from Spence’s *Polymetics* *“Alba Longa is the place where Æneas met the white sow and thirty pigs; and here was a very fine flitch of bacon kept in the chief temple even in Augustus’s time, I find recorded in that excellent historian, Dionysius Halicarnassus.”* The *“flitch of bacon”* played a significant role in the rites of consuming a sacrifice in the pagan religions. In sacred pagan texts such as (FRIEDRICH, *Symb. der Natur*, p. 124. TEMME, *Volksagen v. Pommern und Rogen*, p. 125) Tettan and Temme’s *“Volksagen”* (1837) it is says, *“A mighty deity of the heathen Prussians was Percunnos. An eternal fire was kept burning before him, fed by oak billets. He was the god of thunder and fertility, and he was therefore invoked for rain and fair weather, and in the thunderstorms the flitch of bacon was offered to him. Even now when it thunders, the boor in Prussia takes a flitch of bacon on his shoulder, and goes with his head uncovered out of the house and carries it into the fields, and exclaims, ‘O god, fall not on my fields, and I will give thee this flitch.’ When the storm is passed he takes the bacon home and consumes it with his household as a sacrifice.”* We see here in our study, that eating pork/ham, especially on Easter, is a blatant rejection of God’s Torah (Law / instruction) for living regarding clean and unclean meats. Eating pork/ham was historically done out of a rejection and mockery of the traditions and teaching according to the Bible on this very special holiday, the Pesach (Passover) which reveals to us the great love of God sending His only son to die for our sins. Eating pork/ham was also done as a religious rite in numerous pagan fertility religions of consuming the sacrifice that was made to their gods.

Ham has been used by ancient cultures in their fertility religions for thousands of years. One of the difficulties for Jews living in Rome dealt very specifically with the problem of not coming into contact with unclean meats and idolatry. In the Apostolic Writings *Romans 14-15* the Apostle Paul has a discussion over this very topic concerning the laws of Halachah governing the kosher preparation of meats. Paul writes that ὅς μὲν [γάρ] κρίνει ἡμέραν παρ’ ἡμέραν, ὃς δὲ κρίνει πᾶσαν ἡμέραν: ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ νοί πληροφορεῖσθω. *“One man regards one day above another; another regards every day”* is a scripture that is used often in regards to honoring the Shabbat on Sunday rather than Saturday (see *Romans 14-15*). If we study the context of these verses, it appears that Paul is addressing differing opinions, take for example in *Romans 14:1* Ἰὸν δὲ ἀσθενοῦντα τῇ πίστει προσλαμβάνεσθε, μὴ εἰς διακρίσεις διαλογισμῶν. *“Now accept that one who is weak in the faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.”* Notice how Paul is not giving an opinion here but restating something that is concerning the difference in opinion of other believers. Reading through these chapters in *Romans* it appears that Paul is not siding with anyone, he is unwilling to take a side with either opinion suggesting that both are equally valid. Note that the context suggest that Paul is greatly concerned with the opinion of the *“one weak in faith”* and that this person’s opinion be honored by those who are apparently stronger in their faith. (see *Romans 14:1*) In addition to that, Paul addresses those stronger in the faith and admonishes them to not judge the opinion of the weak in faith. That is to say that the opinion of the one weak in the faith is still to be considered valid. The argument of those who say that the Torah is abolished in favor for us being allowed to do whatever we want to do with respect to the kosher laws usually say that the basis for this change is the cross, that the death of Yeshua changed the emphasis from Torah to redemption. If the change away from the Torah is based upon the redemptive work of Messiah in His sacrificial death, then what He abolished cannot be in any way valid for those who are saved by his

death. What I mean is that Sin is defined by the Torah, if the Torah is passed then we no longer sin and there is no longer a need for atonement. If the Torah is passed away Yeshua's work would become inconsequential based upon this doctrine. The problem with the doctrine of the Torah passing away (Dispensationalism) is that we are saved by His blood; this salvation in His blood is valid for us because of the Torah commands which have not passed away! What Paul is speaking of here in the book of Romans is one of halachic differences, not one of theological progression from established Torah to the abolishment of the Torah. The illustration that is given by Paul is that of food. Romans 14:2 ² ὃς μὲν πιστεύει φαγεῖν πάντα, ὁ δὲ ἀσθενῶν λάχανα ἐσθίει. “*One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables.*” Note the context as Paul elaborates on this issue, later on in the text of Romans, of eating by identifying the conflict as a matter of impurities Romans 14:14-15 ¹⁴ οἶδα καὶ πέπεισμαι ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ ὅτι οὐδὲν κοινὸν δι’ ἑαυτοῦ: εἰ μὴ τῷ λογιζομένῳ τι κοινὸν εἶναι, ἐκεῖνῳ κοινόν. ¹⁵ εἰ γὰρ διὰ βρῶμα ὁ ἀδελφός σου λυπεῖται, οὐκέτι κατὰ ἀγάπην περιπατεῖς. μὴ τῷ βρώματι σου ἐκείνον ἀπόλλυε ὑπὲρ οὗ Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν. 14:14 I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks *anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.* 14:15 *For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.* (NASB) Paul was not saying those meats declared unclean are now made clean in Yeshua the Messiah. When it comes to understanding the Scriptures, we must consider the context, thus, when Paul writes that one may “*eat all things*” he is talking about food within the context of the purity laws (see *Romans 14:14-15*). Food that was offered in the market place in Rome was first laid before a pagan altar and blessed prior to being sold. This presents a significant issue with relation to the ritual purity laws and requirements of the Law coming before the Lord in the Temple in Jerusalem. This was what the Apostle Paul was trying to address in the book of Romans. This is not the abolishment of the kosher laws given in the Torah. Pork remains an unclean meat even to this day because the Word of God tells us it is not to be consumed as food. The argument that Paul is trying to make is that the clean/unclean is a greater issue in relation to our being at peace with God than what is allowed/forbidden to be eaten. According to the scriptures, and according to our historical understanding on the 1st century Jews, purity comprised one of the primary issues for the halachic authorities. The bulk of the material written in the Mishnah (Oral Law) is on purity. This suggests that in that time (the 1st century) the question of eating and purity existed and remained relevant in the synagogue at Rome. This was related to eating meat offered to idols, and is related to what we are studying here on Pesach (Passover) and eating ham/pork. Is meat offered to an idol impure? What if gentiles had handled the food, does the food become unclean? Can a Jew eat the meat that was slaughtered by a gentile? Can meat be eaten if it was laid before a pagan altar in the priori? These were the issues that were important to the Roman Jewish believer that dealt with clean and unclean foods and appears to be the one that Paul is addressing in these chapters in Romans. Paul is essentially saying that one person could eat meat that was handled and sold by the Gentiles, while another would avoid it altogether preferring a vegetarian meal instead of having a wounded conscience because the person felt that the meat would have been unclean. Having a clean conscience is related to being at peace with God. Note again that meat sold in the market place in Rome was laid before an idol prior to it being placed out for sale. I would contest that neither Paul nor any Jew of the 1st century would question whether or not God's Torah was valid for their lives and especially that of the kosher laws on eating pork/ham.

One of the most quoted scriptures used as a proof text on eating unclean foods comes from that of the vision of Peter as recorded in *Acts 11:4-11* of the sheet that was let down from heaven. This is most often naively interpreted by the people who say that we may eat anything; God has cleansed all foods. The text indicates that there were 4-legged animals, crawling creatures (insects) and birds, and Peter comments that he has never eaten anything “*unholy or unclean.*” Note the consistency on the unclean animals in the vision of Ezekiel chapter 8. From this text it is assumed automatically that the sheet contained only “unholy and unclean” animals; the kind which are prohibited by the Torah. For Peter however, “*unholy and unclean*” may have also meant “*not conforming to rabbinic Halachah,*” The reason I say this is because Peter

seems to have been involved in a strict group (sect) by the example of his drawing away from eating with gentiles in *Galatians 2:11-21*. Peter may have been referring to the preparation of the foods by the ritual slaughtering of the animals. For some sects of Judaism of the 1st century, to eat meat from a clean animal which was not rabbinically slaughtered would still have been considered eating meat that was unclean. Note also even today in the rabbinic community importance is placed upon eating foods that are prepared and grown according to the Rabbinic Halakhah. Looking at the Greek text in *Acts 10:13* God shows Peter the sheet with the animals and then tells Peter *Θυσον και φαγε* meaning “sacrifice and eat” (¹³καὶ ἐγένετο φωνὴ πρὸς αὐτόν, Ἄναστάς, Πέτρε, θύσον καὶ φάγε.). *Acts 11:7* also says ⁷ ἤκουσα δὲ καὶ φωνῆς λεγούσης μοι, Ἄναστάς, Πέτρε, θύσον καὶ φάγε were we find a repeat of the phrase *Θυσον και φαγε* meaning “sacrifice and eat.” God had shown Peter the animals and then commanded him to “kill and eat” literally saying “sacrifice and eat” where the Greek word here for kill is *θύσον* “thuson” indicating to “ritually sacrifice” the animals. That must have seemed strange to Peter since such an activity, by rabbinic standards, would need to be carried out by either a priest or a certified butcher. This explains why Peter replied that he has never eaten anything unclean or impure. Too quickly we assume that God is commanding Peter to eat meat that was earlier forbidden in the Torah under the idea that the Torah has passed away. According to the Greek text here in Acts, the Lord was commanding Peter to eat meat which did not conform to Rabbinic Halakhah. The further context of Acts shows that the Gentiles were going to receive the Holy Spirit and this was something that was totally unheard of from a Jewish perspective. Rabbinic Halakhah stated that Gentiles were not allowed to partake in the holy things of God. In Yeshua, the blessing of Abraham (*Bereshit / Genesis 12*) all the nations of the earth would be blessed in Abraham’s seed is being fulfilled and the Lord is showing these things to Peter concerning the issue of Rabbinic Halakhah that would prevent taking the message of Christ (Mashiach) to the Gentiles. Yeshua himself said that they were not to go unto the gentiles but to the Jews (*Matthew 10:5*). In addition to this, the Jews of the 1st century did not believe that salvation was available to the Gentiles and especially that a Gentile could even possibly receive the Holy Spirit of God. God was showing Peter that the Gentiles would also partake in the blessing of Abraham. The context of the verses with respect to this interpretation is consistent with the entire biblical story and appears to be very consistent with what is taking place here in Acts. Consider how often Yeshua rejected the traditions and ways of the Pharisees including some of their rabbinic dictates and Paul’s argument over a man of weak faith, and the calling of the gentiles to the body of believers by faith in Yeshua the Messiah; understanding the big picture it is quite clear that these scriptures cannot be interpreted to mean that God has cleansed all meats to mean that pork/ham is fine to eat. If this was the case, it would be completely with *Revelation 21:27 that nothing unclean, and no one who practices abominations and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. (NASB)* The context of the Book of Revelation is that the Torah and remains relevant even into the Olam Habah (World to Come) as we spend the rest of eternity with God.

Passover

The festival of Pesach has been celebrated for thousands of years. It is the retelling of the great story of how God redeemed and delivered Israel from enslavement in Egypt and today how God delivers and saves us from sin in His son Yeshua the Messiah. The Pesach celebration centers on the Pesach lamb whose blood was shed and placed upon the door posts (Mezuzot) as a sign of faith. Those having faith in the blood of the lamb and the God of Israel, the angel of death would Passover the houses and the first born son would be spared. According to the Apostolic Writings, the first born Son of God laid down His life to save each and every one of us. The Pesach Seder is loaded with symbolism; the following is a short list of the important points found in the Seder as it is related to Yeshua the Messiah.

The Passover Lamb was marked out for death.

<i>Shemot / Exodus 12:6</i>	<i>The Lamb was to be slain</i>
<i>Yeshayahu / Isaiah 53:7</i>	<i>The Messiah will be led as a Lamb to slaughter.</i>
<i>1st Peter 1:20</i>	<i>Yeshua was destined to die</i>

The Passover Lamb must be perfect.

<i>Exodus 12:5</i>	<i>The Lamb must be unblemished</i>
<i>Devarim / Deut. 15:21</i>	<i>Only that which is perfect can make atonement.</i>
<i>John 1:29</i>	<i>Recognized by Yochanan Hamatbil (John the Baptist)</i>
<i>John 18:38</i>	<i>Pilate found no fault with Yeshua</i>
<i>Hebrews 4:15</i>	<i>Yeshua was tested in all things</i>
<i>1st Peter 1:19</i>	<i>Yeshua was an unblemished Lamb</i>

The Passover Lamb must be roasted with fire.

<i>Devarim / Deut. 32:22</i>	<i>Fire in scripture speaks of God's judgment</i>
<i>Yeshayahu / Isaiah 53:6</i>	<i>All of our sins are upon Yeshua</i>
<i>Yeshayahu / Isaiah 53:10</i>	<i>Yeshua was a guilt offering</i>
<i>Matthew 27:46</i>	<i>Yeshua suffered God's wrath</i>
<i>2nd Corinthians 5:21</i>	<i>Yeshua was made to be sin on our behalf</i>

When children today think about Easter, are they really thinking about Yeshua our Messiah and redemption from sin or Easter eggs and candy? Understanding the historical origins of Easter we know that Easter does not reveal the Messiah in any way shape or form. In fact, the practice of Easter is an attempt to combine the sacred (the resurrection of Yeshua) with the profane (the fertility goddess). Do you think this causes a problem were Holiness and Divine worship are concerned? Do you think the Lord would be pleased in our celebration of Yeshua's resurrection using Easter? Shouldn't we rather celebrate Passover which more appropriately symbolizes the finished work of Yeshua the Messiah and obedience before God by worshipping him according to His way in the Scriptures?

Conclusion

In the portion of scriptures from Parashat Ki Tisa (*Exodus 30:11-34:35*) we read that Joshua would not depart from the Ohel Moed (Tent of Meeting, אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד) and Moshe speaks to the Lord God requesting that His presence come with the Children of Israel (*33:12-17*). Moshe then asks to see God's Glory (*33:18*) and God tells Moshe that he cannot see His face or he would die (*33:20*). The Lord requests that Moshe come to the mountain in the morning, and then the Lord shows Moshe His glory and declares that the Lord God is merciful, gracious, slow to anger, loving, and having grace forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin for thousands (*34:6-7*). Following these things, God commands that the gods of the Promised Land be torn down and the command of the Passover festival is to be observed each year stated here as the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The first fruits of the ground are to be brought into the house of God and a young goat is not to be boiled in its mother's milk (*34:26*). As we enter into the Passover holiday the scriptures say in *Shemot / Exodus 34:27* כֹּז וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה כְּתֹב-לְךָ אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי עָל-פִּי | הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה כְּרָתִי : 34:27 Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.' (NASB) These Scriptures are very significant, God has made (cut) a covenant with us in the blood of the Messiah, and therefore we are a covenant people. The covenant relationship that we have with God in the blood of the lamb is a significant factor in the decision making process. Should we celebrate the resurrection of Yeshua and Passover using the pagan

festival of Easter? How does our covenant relationship with God affect our understanding the differences between Easter and Passover? What does Passover and the resurrection and/or Easter mean for you today? How do you understand the meaning of Passover and the resurrection? How do you understand the meaning of Easter? Do they mean the same thing? As we study the scriptures for truth living in holiness and righteousness before God is it OK to celebrate Easter instead of Passover and the resurrection? Is it possible to sin unknowingly if we have been taught to violate God's Word? *Vayikra / Leviticus 5:17* יִזְ אִם-נִפְשׁ כִּי וַיִּקְרָא states that it is possible to unknowingly sin and violate the command of God. Such a person, though unknowingly sinning, shall bear his iniquity and it is commanded that one must make atonement for this unknown sin. Do words, dates (times), and instruments representing traditions or holidays hold their historical meaning if a society and culture have changed their original meaning? As the Pesach (Passover) holiday proceeds, these questions are very important especially if we desire to walk in righteousness and holiness before God as the Lord desires for us to do. Is it a problem to take a pagan festival (Easter), the thing God commanded to destroy from the face of this Earth and from our lives, and use these pagan things to worship the Lord God Almighty and celebrate the resurrection of the Messiah?

References

1. *De temporum ratione*, Brill, illustrated edition, p. 384
2. Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, "Eástre, the goddess of the rising sun, whose festivities were in April. Hence used by Teutonic Christians for the rising of the sun of righteousness, the feast of the resurrection," noting Bede, Grimm 1855 ^ Sarah Iles Johnston, ed. *Religions of the Ancient World*, (Belnap Press, Harvard) 2004, p. 418; the book-length scholarly treatment is W.L. Reed, *The Asherah in the Old Testament* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press) 1949; the connection of the pillar figurines with Asherah was made by Raphael Patai in *The Hebrew Goddess* (1967)
3. Summarized and sharply criticized in Raz Kletter's *The Judean Pillar-Figurines and the Archaeology of Asherah* (Oxford: Tempus Reparatum), 1996; Kletter gives a catalogue of material remains but his conclusions were not well received in the scholarly press[citation needed]
4. W.G. Dever, "Asherah, Consort of Yahweh? New Evidence from Kuntillet Ajrûd" *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, 1984; D.N. Freedman, "Yahweh of Samaria and his Asherah", *The Biblical Archaeologist*, 1987; Morton Smith, "God Male and Female in the Old Testament: Yahweh and his Asherah" *Theological Studies*, 1987; J.M. Hadley "The Khirbet el-Qom Inscription", *Vetus Testamentum*, 1987
5. John Day, "Asherah in the Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Literature" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105.3 (September 1986:385-408) p 401; asherim are discussed pp 401-04.
6. William G. Dever, *Did God have a wife?: Archaeology and folk religion in ancient Israel*, 2005, esp. pp
7. Day 1986, p. 401.
8. van der Toorn, Becking, van der Horst (1999), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in The Bible*, Second Extensively Revised Edition, pp. 99-105, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, ISBN 0-8028-2491-9
9. *Wooden and pole are translators' interpolations in the text, which makes no such characterisation of Asherah.*
10. *Various translations of Deuteronomy 16.21 compared.*
11. "Which would be odd if the Asherim were themselves trees" (Day 1986, p. 402, noting that there is

- general agreement that the asherim were man-made objects).*
12. Neill, James (2008). *The origins and role of same-sex relations in human societies*. McFarland. p. 96. ISBN 978-0-7864-3513-5. “In fact, the worship of Baal and Asherah persisted among the Israelites for over seven centuries, from the period after the conquest and settlement of Canaan- which most biblical scholars place at around 1400 B.C., to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the exile of the Israelites in Babylon in the 6th century B.C.”
 13. Finkelstein, Israel, and Silberman, Neil Asher, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*, ISBN 0-684-86912-8
 14. Thomas L. Thompson, Salma Khadra Jayyusi, eds., *Jerusalem in ancient history and tradition* T.& T.Clark Ltd; illustrated edition (1 April 2004) ISBN 978-0-567-08360-9 p. 139 “THE+HEBREW+-GODDESS”
 15. Joseph Campbell “the dead and resurrected god Tammuz (Sumerian Dumuzi), prototype of the Classical Adonis, who was the consort as well as son by virgin birth, of the goddess-mother of many names: Inanna, Ninhursag, Ishtar, Astarte, Artemis, Demeter, Aphrodite, Venus” (in *Oriental Mythology: The Masks of God* pp 39-40).
 16. A B Edwin M. Yamauchi, “Tammuz and the Bible” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84.3 (September 1965:283-290).
 17. *Inana and Bilulu: an ulila to Inana*, from Black, J.A., Cunningham, G., Robson, E., and Zólyomi, G., *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature* (Oxford)[1][2]