

פסח / Pesach / Passover

Shabbat Nissan 24, 5769, April 18, 2009
32:1-32:52 MATSATI.COM / Rightly Dividing The Word of G-d
<http://www.matsati.com> | matsati@matsati.com

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Easter or Passover What are we really celebrating?

השבועות הזה קוראים / This Week's Reading

תורה: Exodus 12:21-51, Leviticus 22:26-23:44

הפטרה: Joshua 5:2-15, 6:1, 27

הברית: Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22

החדשה

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As we enter into the Pesach (Passover) holiday I would like to address a hot topic related to the differences between Easter and Passover. What does Passover and/or Easter mean for us today? How do we understand the meaning of Passover? How do we understand the meaning of Easter? Do they mean the same thing? In our search for truth, what are the implications for our day-to-day life? What does it mean to search for the truth? Is it possible to sin unknowingly if we have been taught to violate G-d's Word? Do words 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 of vital importance especially if we desire to walk in G-d's ways of holiness. In this week's study I want to look at a very serious problem. The problem of taking a pagan festival, changing its meaning, and applying the new festival to worship G-d.

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When studying we need to develop a systematic approach for identifying practices that are more than simply differences in opinion or interpretation and develop a mindset that is centered in biblical thought. We need to examine ideas, modes of thought, and decision processes in light of the Word of G-d. Knowledge of the Ketuvei Hakodesh (Holy Scriptures) is absolutely foundational in order to know how to please the Lord. Once the Scriptures become less of an influence in our lives, other occult activities become acceptable such as reading ones horoscope, numerology, and even celebrating pagan holidays. We must educate ourselves in knowing the differences between right and wrong and use the Scriptures to help us to determine how G-d would want us to live.

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As I mentioned earlier Easter and Passover is a very hot topic. Emotions easily get flared up over the pagan origins of Easter and reasons why we should not be celebrating Pesach with Easter in mind. It is claimed that the holiday of "Easter" is to celebrate the resurrection of Yeshua and therefore it is ok. Some have even given a scriptural reference from the King James Version (KJV) as a means for supporting the argument. Easter is found in the bible thus it is acceptable to use as a substitute for Pesach right? In order to sort out this problem let's begin by looking at the etymology of the word "Easter", then look at its meaning and connection in various cultural groups and discuss if it is ok to combine profane and sacred practices to honor the Most High G-d.

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45 **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 a goddess in Anglo-Saxon paganism and refers to the name of the month corresponding to its celebration "Eostur-monath" (Anglo-Saxon "Eostra month").
50 The name survives in the modern holiday of Easter. This name is attested from the writings of a Benedictine monk named St. Bede^{1,2}. Bede says 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 Pesach (Passover) under the name of
55 Eostur-monath. According to Easton's dictionary, Easter is a reference to a Saxon word (Eostre), denoting a goddess of the Saxons, in honor of whom sacrifices were offered about the time of Pesach. Hence the name came to be given to the festival of the Resurrection of Yeshua which occurred at approximately the time of the Pesach. In fact, early English translations of the bible the Greek pascha (Passover) was frequently translated as Easter, one example is found in *Acts 12:4* in the King James Version (KJV).

Acts 12:4

65 *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

70 *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)*

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

Pascha

The translation of Passover to Easter is evidenced in the Authorized Version of 1611. When the Authorized Version of 1611 was formed, the word "Passover" was used in all passages in which this word pascha occurred except in *Act 12:4*. At the time of 1611 the movement away from translating Passover as Easter was beginning and today most modern translations do not use Easter though Easter is still used in the practice of the celebration of the resurrection.

80 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). The Christian Church adopted this festival celebrating the resurrection of Yeshua.

85 Easter (Eastre) is known as a goddess of fertility and sunrise whose feast was celebrated at the spring equinox. Bede said 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 is perhaps based on Apru, and Etruscan

90 borrowing of the Greek Aphrodite which occurs during the month of April. Let's
next look at some of the fertility gods found in the Middle Eastern cultures.

Ashtoreth

95 The goddess of the Phoenicians, representing the passive principle in nature,
their principal female deity, which is frequently associated with the name Baal,
the sun-god which is the chief male deity mentioned in the Tanach at *Shoftim /*
Judges 10:6 and *1 Shmuel / 1 Samuel 7:4 and 12:10*. In Hebrew these names
often occur in the plural as Ashtoreth and Baalim which may be in reference to
100 different statues or different modifications of these deities. This deity is spoken
as Ashtoreth by the Zidonians. The Acadians called this deity Ishtar.

Ishtar

105 Ishtar is part of the Mesopotamian religion, the goddess of war and sexual
love. Ishtar is known in Acadia, western Semitic peoples called 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 (see
Jeremiah 7:18, 44:17-19, and 44:25). The Greek's called this deity Astarte.

Astarte

110 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 to this goddess among the
115 Philistines in the time of Saul in 1 Samuel 31:10. The Acadian counterpart is
called Ishtar.

120 The fertility deity had different names for different cultures. The Greeks
calling their goddess Astarte or Aphrodite and we know from history the Roman
counterpart is named Venus. Do you notice a connection here? The fertility deity
in ancient Yisrael is connected to that of the Greek and Roman culture 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.

125 Finding the connection between the various cultures, the real question then is
why do believers choose to walk in a way of religious practice according to the
pagan practice of Easter and attempt to abstract that as a means for praising G-d
and celebrating Yeshua's resurrection? The Easter bunny, the egg, and eating
pork are all instruments and symbols for this pagan holiday. G-d warned the
130 people to not enquire after the nations false gods and do not enquire how they
served their gods (See *Devarim / Deuteronomy 12:29-31*).

135 The important distinction is to learn how to discern the profane in what is
considered sacred or secular and hold that up in light of the Ketuvei Hakodesh
(Holy Scriptures). I believe taking Easter to celebrate the resurrection of Yeshua
is a method of mixing the sacred and the profane. The dictionary defines sacred
and profane as the following:

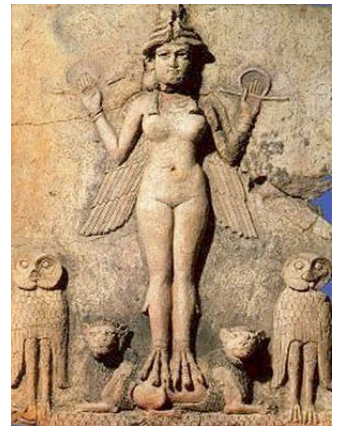
Zidonians

The inhabitants of Zidon. They were among the nations of Canaan.

Ashtoreth



Ishtar



Astarte



Concise Oxford English Dictionary

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sacred

■ adjective

1. connected with a deity and so deserving veneration; holy. ▶(of writing or text) embodying the doctrines of a religion. ▶sacrosanct.
2. religious rather than secular.

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profane

■ *adjective*

1. secular rather than religious. ▶not initiated into religious rites.
2. not respectful of religious practice. ▶(of language) blasphemous or obscene.

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■ *verb* treat with irreverence.

155 When it comes to certain terminology in the Ketuvei Hakodesh (Holy Scriptures), understanding is somewhat narrower than what is found in the dictionary. This is the case in the usage of sacred and profane. According to the Scriptures, that which is sacred and/or profane is so as it pertains to G-d and to the things of G-d. (Note: G-d is the G-d of the scriptures, the G-d of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the G-d and Father of our Lord and Savior Yeshua Hamoshiach)

160 In the Tanach, holy things, things which had been set aside for religious use by G-d's people, were things not open to people in general (i.e. not for general use). Sefer Vayikra (book of Leviticus) makes clear the holy things which were set aside for religious use, and/or things pertaining to G-d, were for holy people (people who were themselves set apart to or for G-d). That which was not set apart (or that which was common) was forbidden to come into contact with that which was sacred. In a parallel manner, our bodies as temples of the Ruach Hakodesh (the Holy Spirit) we are a people who are set apart for G-d. What are the implications of this today in our lives?

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170 **We need to make our worship of G-d (the sacred) more acceptable before a Holy G-d.**

175 We need to make our worship of G-d more sacred and more acceptable before a Holy G-d! It is unfortunate profaned learning has been brought into intimate contact and accepted as approved by G-d. In the practice of Easter, the sacred worship of G-d, in the resurrection of Yeshua, has been polluted and adulterated. The frustration on the mystery of Holiness and Divine worship in contrast with the profane in the practice of Easter to celebrate Yeshua's resurrection has become one of division.

180 In the Torah (see *Shmot / Exodus, Bamidbar / Numbers, and Devarim / Deuteronomy*) when the Children of Yisrael moved the way was led by the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was a visible sign to all that "G-d Himself is Present." Being so far removed from the temple service today and including the events that

transpired in the Torah, naturally we have some difficulties identifying and distinguishing Holiness. Holiness simply means to set apart, special because that which is holy is set apart from the ordinary of everyday. Unholy things are those things which are common, showing a lack of refinement or even profane showing a deliberate lack of respect and blasphemous. In fact, profane derives from the Latin “profanes” which means literally “outside the temple.” Profanity is most often deliberately and actively opposed to holiness, which is the point of the second and third commandment which sets the standard for separation of the sacred and the profane (don’t worship false gods, make no graven images). This leads us back to the first and greatest commandment to fear and love the Lord our G-d with all of our heart, and all of our soul and our entire mind. The proper standard of respect with all of its properties including love, honor, and obedience are expected from us. Is it not important then to distinguish between the sacred and the profane?

Passover

The festival of Pesach has been celebrated for thousands of years. It is the retelling of the great story of how G-d redeemed and delivered Yisrael from enslavement in Mitsraim (Egypt). The Pesach celebration centers around the Pesach lamb whose blood was shed and placed upon the door posts as a sign of faith. Those having faith in the blood and the G-d of Yisrael, the angel would Passover the houses and the first born son would be spared. The Pesach seder is loaded with symbolism and I have only summarized a few important points. This is not an exhaustive list, there are much more symbolism I haven’t time to mention.

The Passover Lamb was marked out for death.

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

The Passover Lamb must be perfect.

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

The Passover Lamb must be roasted with fire.

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

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Conclusion

When children think about Easter, are they really thinking about Yeshua or Easter eggs and candy? Understanding the historical origins of Easter we know that Easter does not reveal the Messiah Yeshua in any way. In fact, the practice of Easter is an attempt to combine the sacred (resurrection of Yeshua) with the profane (fertility goddess). With all that we have learned this week, do you think this causes a problem taking Holiness and Divine worship in contrast to pagan worship combining to celebrate Yeshua’s resurrection? Shouldn’t we rather celebrate Pesach (Passover) which more appropriately symbolizes the finished work of Yeshua Hamoshiach, obedience before G-d by worshiping him according to His ways. What are the implications for us today in our celebration of Yeshua’s resurrection? Now knowing the origins of Easter, our unknowing sin (practicing Easter) has become a “Pesha” an “intentional sin” if you decide to continue pursuing the practice of the Easter holiday against that of the biblical holiday of Pesach (Passover). Having this knowledge of the origins and problems with the pagan holiday of Easter, continued celebration of Easter essentially becomes an action now committed in deliberate defiance of G-d and His Holy Word. Having knowledge of sin changes ones status from a “Chet” an “unintentional sin to a “Pesha” and intentional sin. With that in mind I would strongly advise against celebrating the resurrection of Yeshua with the Easter festival and highly recommend obeying G-d and celebrating as the Bible instructs, the Pesach (Passover) feast.

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Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:
 Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
 “Yeshua” King Messiah forever and ever