

# What About Easter?

Did you know that Ash Wednesday, Lent, Palm Sunday and Maundy Thursday have no Biblical basis and that Jesus probably did not die on Good Friday ?

Originally published in  
Pasover Haggadah  
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The word **Easter** is not a Biblical word. It makes its appearance only once in the Authorised Version of the King James Bible, where it is a most unfortunate and deliberate mistranslation of the Greek word  $\pi\alpha\sigma\chi\alpha$  - Pasha. Anyone with a Strong's Concordance can easily verify the fact that the word Easter is an unwarranted departure from the word Passover, which is the term given to all other 'Pasha' passages in the New Testament. Most modern translations tend to reject **Easter** in favour of **Passover**, however, today it is generally accepted that Easter has always been a Christian Celebration.

As far as it is possible to ascertain, Easter was originally a Spring Festival in the northern hemisphere in honour of the North-European goddess of fertility called EASTRE or OSTERA. It was celebrated on the first full moon after the Spring Equinox.<sup>1</sup>

The term Easter is clearly a derivative of the above and therefore definitely not of Christian origin. Rather, it appears to have its origin in ancient Chaldee. Indeed EASTRE is none other than ASTARTE, one of the titles of Beltis, the Queen of Heaven, whose name was pronounced ISHTAR by the people of Nineveh and Babylon. That name was discovered by Layard on an Assyrian monument. Astarte is of course found in Canaan under the name of Asherah; just as the Babylonian god Bel makes his appearance there under the names Baal and Moloch.

It is not clear exactly when the worship of Bel and Astarte was introduced into Britain, along with the Druids. It may have come with the Phoenician traders to Cornwall, but indications are that its arrival may predate that era. The unmistakable traces of this form of worship are found in many parts of the British Isles. From Bel, the 1st of May is still called BELTANE in the Almanac; and

there are customs still lingering to this day among people of this region, which prove that the worship of Bel or Moloch (for both titles belong to the same god) had been observed even in these northern parts of the world.

Every year, at Beltane (May 1), a number of men and women would assemble at an ancient Druidical circle of stones. They would light a fire in the centre, each person placing a piece of oatcake (with one of the pieces having previously been blackened) into a shepherd's hat. They all sit down and then draw blind-folded a piece of cake from the hat. Whoever draws the blackened piece has to pass through the fire in the centre of the circle and pay a forfeit of money. In ancient days, however, upon whomever the lot fell was burnt as a sacrifice!

Today, the ritual (of passing through the fire) still represents that sacrifice, but the paying of the forfeit redeems the victim. A modified form of this ritual is the HOT CROSS BUN so popular at Easter Time.

Customs of this nature are not exclusive to Great Britain, but can be found all over the continent and have gained popularity in Australia among adherents to New Age philosophies. In Austria, where I was born, such practices were seen as an exciting adjunct to Easter festivities and blessed by the church. Even to this day Bonfires can be seen burning on Easter Sunday on a multitude of mountain tops.

If Baal, Bel or Moloch were thus worshipped, it is not difficult to see that Astarte, or Ishtar, his consort, would also have found adoration among our ancestors.

That Astarte received offerings is clear from the account in Jeremiah Ch.44. She is not mentioned there specifically by name, but she is referred to as the Queen of Heaven, who was revered at the time by the Canaanites under the name of Asherah. The most significant forms of offerings, which have survived

even to this day are 'buns' and coloured eggs. Special cakes made of fine flour and honey were used in the worship of the queen of heaven, the goddess Eastre, as early as the days of *Cecropos*, the founder of Athens - i.e. 1500 years B.C.E.

The ancient Druids bore an egg as the sacred emblem of their order. In the mysteries of Bacchus, as celebrated in Greece, one part of the nocturnal ceremony consisted in the consecration of an egg. In a similar manner the Hindu fables celebrate a golden egg; so in Japan where the sacred egg is brazen. In China, dyed or painted eggs are used on sacred festivals.

In ancient times eggs were used in the religious rites of the Egyptians and the Greeks and were hung up for mystical purposes in their temples. These sacred eggs can be distinctly traced from Egypt to the banks of the Euphrates. There we find that the classic poets of Babylon make wide use of the fabled egg of the Babylonians; hence the egg became one of the symbols of Astarte or Eastre.

When one considers the above, it can be clearly seen that many pagan practices were Christianised; and have been maintained until today with little departure from their original pagan form.

There is much evidence today that the pagan Easter was superimposed over the Jewish Passover (also called Pasch in southern Europe) of early Christianity in an attempt to wipe out all memory of a Jewish connection; a move which is attributed to the Roman Emperor Constantine at the time of the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D.

As a consequence of the imperial decree, Easter became, and remained for most of the Christian era - and often still is - a traumatic time for Jewish people. It is the time when some of the worst atrocities were committed against them.

**It is traditionally the time when Jewish people are taunted with the term *Christ-killer*.**

When Christians think of Easter today, they commonly think of the death and resurrection of their Saviour and Lord Jesus. It is indeed appropriate for Christians to celebrate the death and resurrection of their Saviour.

However, when all the Scriptural evidence is weighed, several questions are inevitably raised:

**\* Why has the Biblical Feast of Passover, on which the Son of God died, been renamed giving honour to a pagan goddess?**

**\* Is it appropriate for Christians to pay homage to her, by maintaining customs of worship, used in her adoration, which have nothing to do with the suffering of the Messiah?**

**\* Is it right that the death and resurrection of the Son of God should have no greater value than that of a pagan fertility rite of a goddess symbolised by a rabbit and eggs?**

**\* Is it right for a Christian to be swept along with the tide of commercialism which exploits the very foundation of Christian belief?**

Perhaps you may say, '*...what does it matter, Easter has been known to be a Christian Festival for so long, it cannot possibly make any difference!*' An important factor, which should influence our thinking is the charge of idolatry levelled against Christians by Muslims and Jewish People alike on this very issue. According to the Scriptures, we are told that,

*'...whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offence, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God...'. And Paul says also of himself, 'We give no offence in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed...'* 1 Cor. 10:31-32; 2 Cor. 6:3

Therefore, in the light of these Scriptures, we should give serious consideration to what the apostle Paul is saying in 1 Cor.5:7-8, viz.

***"... Messiah (Christ), our Passover was crucified for us!  
Therefore let us keep the Feast, ..."***

It is clear from this Scripture that the terms EASTER and PASSOVER are mutually exclusive. Indeed, it is impossible to interchange the two words, for they stand for different things.

How would it sound if we translated the Greek text as '*...Christ our Easter was sacrificed for us*'? Would not Paul's theology be at once reduced to pagan mythology? If then such an exchange is unacceptable, why do we persist with Pagan terminology and traditions? Even if Easter was an acceptable term, it fails to convey the true picture for the word has no link with the redemptive work of God as told to us in the Scriptures. Even though it may remind the more fervent Christians of Calvary, it does not convey the Biblical Story of the Redemption as it needs to be told and retold again and again!

It is worth noting, that the Children of Israel lost their way because they failed to immerse themselves in the retelling of the Exodus, as they were commanded by the Torah. Not only did they lose their Temple, but had to suffer 2500 years of Exile and persecution!

Is it just possible that Christianity as a whole has lost its way for the same reason?