

## Easter or Asherah?

The word Easter appears once in the King James version of the Bible. Herod has put Peter in prison, intending after 'Easter' to bring him forth to the people (Acts 12:4). Yet in the original Greek text the word is not 'Easter', but **Pesach**, that is Passover. So why was the name changed? Please read on, and remember Exodus 34:14; For you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.



### Asherah!

"Asherah," is the Greek form of the word "Astarte" found in the Septuagint, who is the Babylonian goddess of the sea. She was the mother of several gods, including Baal, the Babylonian god of the sun. These deities were soon adopted by the Canaanites when they named these female deities the Asherah or Asherim. These deities were made of wood carved from a type of evergreen tree, or often they were set up in Canaanite homes as full trees cut down from a forest. The Asherim normally were highly acknowledged during two specific occasions. *First and foremost, they were the fertility gods of the spring equinox*, when the days and nights were approximately the same in length, signifying the beginning of living things growing for the summer season. A very common practice in the

Canaanite religion was performed on the first Sunday of the equinox. The families would face east to await the rising of the sun, which was the chief symbol of the sun god, Baal.



### Baal!



Starbucks Corporate Logo  
(Above)  
Relief Carving of Astarte  
(Right)



### CHANCE RESEMBLANCE?

Canaanite worship consisted in human sacrifice, preferably first-born children, as a burnt offering to Baal and consort, Astarte. This detestable and inhuman pagan custom of slaying and then cremating the victim, also was practiced at Tyre in honor of Molech, was severely condemned by the Mosaic Law and was made punishable by the death of the guilty party (Lev.18,21; 20, 2-5)

Later on during the day, the children of the Canaanite parents would often go and hunt for eggs, which were symbolic of sex, fertility and new life. It was believed that these eggs came from rabbits, which in the pagan world were symbolic of lust, sexual prowess and reproduction.

Asherah is pictured in human form with lots of signs of fertility and sexuality:

The Canaanites, however, were not the only ones who worshiped rabbits as deities. The Egyptians and the Persians (Babylon) also held rabbits in high esteem because they believed that rabbits first came from the divine Phoenix birds, who once ruled the ancient skies until they were attacked by other gods in a power struggle. When they were struck down, they reincarnated into rabbits, but kept the ability to produce eggs like the ancient birds to show their origins.



Other stories concerning the egg rose later in the Middle Ages by the Anglo-Saxons, where they believed the origin of the Universe had the earth being hatched out of an enormous egg. Decorating eggs came about to honor their pagan gods and were often presented as gifts to other families to bring them

fertility and sexual success during the coming year.

And secondly, they were highly worshiped and celebrated during the winter solstice. According to Jeremiah 10:1-5; Is. 40:19-20; 41:7 and 44:9-20, the pagans would go out into the forest and do one of two things. Either they chopped down a tree and carved a female deity out of it, or they would simply bring the tree into the house and decorate it with gold and silver ornaments symbolizing the sun and the moon while nailing a stand on the bottom so it would not totter or tip over.

Out of this practice came many other variations of these pagan festivals until the *Roman Catholic Church adopted the Asherah worship and named it easter around 155 A.D.* According to the CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA, easter was named after a pagan goddess of the Anglo-Saxons named Eostre, the goddess of the dawn. A great controversy arose between the Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church in 325 A.D. on whether to celebrate pagan easter on Sundays or on whatever day the Jewish Passover fell upon. Unfortunately, the Greeks lost a lot of followers and the Catholics contended that keeping pagan easter on Sundays would stimulate the practices of both the Christian world and the pagan worshipers. Note that the word Catholic means "universal" or "one form of world worship" in thought, concept and practice. Hence, since the original practice of Asherah worship is pagan we now have in our time the celebration of pagan easter as a so called part of Christianity. It is a counterfeit holiday to the true Christian festival of the Passover which was instituted in the Torah and completed in the New Testament when Jesus Christ died on the cross as our Passover Lamb. For indeed Jesus, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. From the Funk & Wagnell New Encyclopedia 1988 Edition (pages 432-434).

Pagan easter has become an annual festival commemorating lust and fertility. But in the minds of many who celebrate what Jesus Christ did for them, it is *Resurrection Sunday* and the hope of eternal life. Easter is celebrated on a Sunday on varying dates between March 22 and April 25 and is therefore called the movable feast. The dates of several other ecclesiastical festivals, extending over a period between Septuagesima Sunday (the ninth Sunday before easter) and the first Sunday of Advent, are fixed in relation to the date of pagan easter.



Connected with the Catholic observance of pagan easter are the 40-day penitential season of Lent, beginning on Ash Wednesday and concluding at midnight of Holy Saturday, the day before easter Sunday; Holy week, commencing on Palm Sunday, including Good Friday, the day of the crucifixion, and terminating with Holy Saturday; and the Octave of easter, extending from easter Sunday through the following Sunday. During the Octave of easter in early Catholic times, the newly baptized wore white garments, while being the liturgical color of easter and signifying light, purity, and joy.



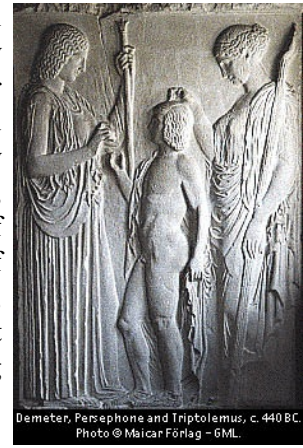
#### Pre-Christian Tradition-

Pagan easter, embodies many pre-Christian rituals and has its' origin in the rebellion of Nimrod, Semiramis and Tammuz. The origin of its name is unknown. Scholars, however, accepting the derivation proposed by the 8th-century English scholar St. Bede, believe it probably comes from Eostre, the Anglo-Saxon name of a **Teutonic goddess of spring and fertility, a wiccan symbol of worship today**, to whom was dedicated a month corresponding to April. Her festival was celebrated on the day of the vernal equinox; traditions associated with the festival survive in the easter rabbit, a symbol of fertility, and in colored easter eggs, originally painted with bright colors to represent the sunlight of spring, and used in easter-egg rolling contests or given as gifts.

Click on the following link; <http://members.internorth.com/~wiccan/seasons/ostara.htm>

Oestara, Ostara, Eostre - is the name of a Teutonic Fertility Goddess who was especially associated with the Vernal Full Moon, and thus Springtime and all the season stands for. While Her actual name is no longer a familiar word, the name of the Catholic springtime holiday - easter - is thought

to derive from Oestara, as do many of the folk customs associated with pagan easter. Chicks, rabbits, early flowers, budding branches, seeds and especially eggs are ancient symbols of the new life that the Spring Equinox heralds. For modern Pagans and Wiccans, Oestara is a time to put winter behind us, and prepare for the upcoming season of growth. They began their preparations by undergoing ritual purification at the previous holiday on the Wheel of the Year, Candlemas (traditionally February 2). The Spring Equinox signifies the end of this annual period of inner purification, and the beginning of the season of outward action. While many of us do this very literally - by planting seeds, pruning trees, and preparing garden soil for planting - all of us do it metaphorically by preparing our inner selves for the life changes that Spring will bring.



Demeter, Persephone and Triptolemus, c. 440 BC.  
Photo © Maicar Förlag - GML.



Such festivals, and the stories and legends that explain their origin, were common in ancient religions. A Greek legend tells of the return of Persephone, daughter of Demeter, goddess of the earth, from the underworld to the light of day; her return symbolized to the ancient Greeks the resurrection of life in the spring after the desolation of winter. Many ancient peoples shared similar legends. The Phrygians believed that their omnipotent deity went to sleep at the time of the winter solstice, and they performed ceremonies with music and dancing at the spring equinox to awaken him.

#### Persephone's Return

The re-awakening of the Earth at Springtide is represented by the return of Persephone to Her mother, Demeter (the Olympian Goddess of the Grain), after spending the winter as Queen of the Underworld. Persephone's annual descent and Her eternal return reinforce our faith in the never-ending cycles of life, and lead us to ponder the Mysteries of the Maiden and Mother aspects of the Goddess.

The Catholic festival of pagan easter embodies a number of converging traditions; their scholars conjoined easter - Ishtar to the Jewish festival of Passover, or Pesach, from which is derived Pasch. The early Catholics, many of whom were of Jewish origin, were brought up in the Hebrew tradition and regarded pagan easter as a new feature of the Passover festival, a commemoration of the advent of the Messiah as foretold by the prophets.

#### The Dating of Easter -

According to the Bible, Jesus Christ was crucified on the eve of Passover and shortly afterward rose from the dead. In consequence, the pagan easter festival commemorates gods and goddesses with their rites of fertility at the same time. In time, a serious difference over the date of the pagan easter festival arose between pagans and true Christians. Those of Jewish origin celebrated the resurrection immediately following the Passover festival, which, according to their Babylonian lunar calendar, fell on the evening of the full moon (the 14th day in the month of Nisan, the first month of the year); by their reckoning, Passover, from year to year, fell on different days of the week.

Catholics of Gentile origin, however, wished to commemorate the resurrection of Persephone on the first day of the week, Sunday; by their method, pagan easter occurred on the same day of the week, but from year to year it fell on different dates.

An important historical result of the difference in reckoning the date of easter and Passover was that the Christian Churches in the East, which were closer to the birthplace of the new religion and in which old traditions were strong, observed only the Passover according to the date of the festival. The churches of the West, descendants of Greek-Roman civilization, celebrated pagan easter on a Sunday.

#### Rulings of the Council of Nicea on the Date of Easter -

Constantine I, Roman emperor, convoked the Council of Nicaea in 325. The council unanimously

ruled that the pagan easter festival should be celebrated throughout the Catholic world on the first Sunday after the full moon following the vernal equinox; and that if the full moon should occur on a Sunday and thereby coincide with the Passover festival, easter should be commemorated on the Sunday following.

The Council of Nicaea also decided that the calendar date of easter was to be calculated at Alexandria, then the principal astronomical center of the world. The accurate determination of the date, however, proved an impossible task in view of the limited knowledge of the 4th-century world. The principal astronomical problem involved was the discrepancy, called the epact, between the solar year and the lunar year. The chief calendric problem was a gradually increasing discrepancy between the true astronomical year and the Julian calendar then in use.

#### Later Dating Methods -

Ways of fixing the date of the feast tried by the Roman church proved unsatisfactory, and easter was celebrated on different dates in different parts of the world. In 387, for example, the dates of easter in France and Egypt were 35 days apart. About 465, the church adopted a system of calculation proposed by the astronomer Victorinus (fl. 5th cent.), who had been commissioned by Pope Hilarius (r. 461-68) to reform the calendar and fix the date of easter. Elements of his method are still in use. Refusal of the British and Celtic Christian churches to adopt the proposed changes led to a bitter dispute between them and Rome in the 7th century.

Reform of the Julian calendar came in 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII, through adoption of the Gregorian calendar. It eliminated much of the difficulty in fixing the date of easter and in arranging the ecclesiastical year; since 1752, the Gregorian calendar was also adopted in Great Britain and Ireland, pagan easter has been celebrated on the same day in the Western part of the religious world. The Eastern churches, however, which did not adopt the Gregorian calendar, commemorate easter on a Sunday either preceding or following the date observed in the West. Occasionally the dates coincide; the most recent times were in 1865 and 1963.

Because the pagan easter holiday affects a varied number of secular affairs in many countries, it has long been urged as a matter of convenience that the movable dates of the festival be either narrowed in range or replaced by a fixed date in the manner of Christmas. In 1923 the problem was referred to the Holy See, which has found no canonical objections to the proposed reform. In 1928 the British Parliament enacted a measure allowing the Church of England to commemorate pagan easter on the first Sunday after the second Saturday in April. Despite these steps toward reform, easter continues to be a movable feast.

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