

Ancient Pagan Religious Expression¹

Ancient man's pagan, religious urges found expression in a variety of beliefs, ideas and practices centering around a sense of a supernatural other world. This world, though invisible, was believed by Pagan Man to have power over his everyday life. Since the dawn of their religious consciousness, pagan men and women regarded this supernatural world with a mixture of awe, fear, and hope. They sought to bring their lives into harmony with it. Life was a struggle for survival and a preparation for death.

Pagan men and women offered up sacrifices and prayers to the mysterious forces of this **MYSTERY RELIGION**, which they believed controlled the workings of nature on their behalf. Their hope in offering these sacrifices and prayers was to ward off catastrophe, to ensure fine hunting, to obtain bountiful harvests, and to live again beyond the grave. Primitive pagan man sought to understand the elements of nature as powers to be worshiped, since they affected his life so directly.

THE CYCLE OF PRIMITIVE WORSHIP

In the **Spring** of the year, pagan man sought fertility for himself and for his land. Bountiful crops would assure food for himself and his household. It was during this season of the year, at the **VERNAL EQUINOX**, that the goddess he worshiped was fertilized by the god he worshiped. In the following **Summer**, the hot, arid land he lived upon became brown and barren. At this season, directly on the **SUMMER SOLSTICE**, the goddess that pagan man worshiped in some way lost the companionship of the god he worshiped.

During the **Autumn**, the sun started dying. The days grew shorter as the nights grew longer. In this season, directly on the **AUTUMN EQUINOX**, the goddess that pagan man worshiped began weeping for the missing god he worshiped. At the **WINTER SOLSTICE** the sun began to come back to life. The days grew longer and the nights shorter. Life was assured for another year, because the goddess he worshiped, who had been fertilized at the previous vernal equinox, gave birth to a son at the Winter Solstice. The god was reborn! Write for our booklet, *True Stories About Christmas*, for more information.

At the Februa—Purification, forty days after the birth of the son: on February 15th in ancient times, but celebrated on February 14th today, and now known as Valentine's Day—this Ancient Mother Goddess was ritually cleansed of childbirth. Write for our booklet, *The Real Meaning Behind Valentine's Day*, for more information.

The **PAGAN RELIGIOUS YEAR** had come to a full circle. Again, at the Vernal Equinox in the Spring of the year, the goddess he worshiped married her Son/Husband, by whom she was fertilized in order to re-fertilize the earth!

The worship of this **ANCIENT PAGAN TRINITY**—the **MOTHER**, the **HUSBAND**, and the **SON**—would continue in a cycle of worship enacted in Pagan Man's Religious Year, perpetually.

Through these **RITUALS** performed on the exact dates of the **Vernal Equinox**, the **Summer Solstice**, the **Autumn Equinox**, and the **Winter Solstice**, pagan men and women were warding off catastrophe, ensuring fine hunting, obtaining bountiful harvests, and giving themselves the hope of living again beyond the grave.

These Mystery Religions dramatized the annual decay of vegetation as the death of a divine youth over whom a goddess mourned. Later, the celebrations were with ecstatic joy as the reborn youth returned.

Participation in each of these rites at the appointed time of the sun was believed by pagan man to cleanse the devotees of their sins and mystically unite them with the gods. The pagan ceremonies generated powerful emotions; thus, this **WORSHIP** of the **PAGAN GODS** has flourished since the beginning of time. Due to these same powerful emotions generated during these rites, this Pagan Worship of Mystery is still flourishing today.

Every year, just after the harsh winter months are over and the earth is turning green with the fresh new growth of Spring, there is a pagan ceremony which is celebrated even today. This day is the most important day in Christian Worship. This day was set apart by the Ancient Pagans as the special day for the **WORSHIP OF THE GODDESS OF THE DAWN**. This pagan rite, still set today according to the Vernal Equinox, is more familiarly known to this deceived world as **EASTER**.

THE CHRISTIAN CELEBRATION OF EASTER

The *New International Dictionary Of The Christian Church*, by J.D. Douglas, 1974, page 322, gives this information about the Christian celebration called Easter:

EASTER. The celebration of Christ's resurrection. Although the Scriptures make no provision for the observance of Easter as the day of resurrection, all the evidence suggests that the celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ began at a very early date in the history of the church, probably as early as the apostolic age. It would seem also that the Christians of the first century consciously sought to create a Christian parallel to the Jewish Passover, since the close relationship between the significance of that event in the O.T. and the crucifixion in the N.T. made a transformation of that Jewish feast into Easter both logical and easy. After a.d. 100, **Easter**, **Pentecost**, and **Epiphany** became the final parts of the church year.

EASTER does not come from the Scriptures! This **PAGAN CUSTOM** has another source. As we have read: There was a transformation of the Jewish Feast (Passover) into Easter. Remember though, this was done by man and not

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by Yahweh! The following definitions of **transform** and **transformation** are from *The Reader's Digest Encyclopedic Dictionary*, Reader's Digest Assn., 1966, page 1422:

trans.form (v. trans.fôr'm'; n. trans'fôr'm) v.t. 1. To give a different form or appearance to. 2. To change the character, nature, condition, etc., of.

trans.for.ma.tion (trans'fer.ma'shen) n. 1. Any change. 2. The act of transforming, or the state of being transformed.

We will then let the *New International Dictionary Of The Christian Church*, by J.D. Douglas, page 322, tell us how this transformation was accomplished in the religion called **Christianity**:

CHRISTIAN YEAR, THE. The early Christians who were mainly Jews were used not only to keeping one day in the week as separate but also to marking the year with certain religious festivals, notably Passover, Tabernacles, and Pentecost. From early times Christians kept a commemoration of Christ's resurrection. This was held at Passover time and was finally fixed on the Sunday following Passover. Pentecost was then celebrated at the appropriate time; the fifty days between the two were days of joy and rejoicing. The choice of 25 December (in the East, 6 January) for the birth of Christ is almost certainly because that day was the great pagan day of honor to the sun, and in Rome in the fourth century it was transformed into a Christian festival.

From the fourth century the Christian calendar became more historical in character, and the Holy Week and Ascension Day appeared. Pentecost became the day of giving of the Holy Spirit. Lent arose out of the custom of preparing catechumens for baptism at Easter. Saints' days came into the calendar either through the commemoration of a martyrdom or through the date of a dedication of a church in honor or a particular saint.

Now, I would ask you: Why doesn't this whole Christian World simply celebrate the Feasts which Yahweh ordained in His Holy Scriptures—clearly written in **Leviticus Chapter Twenty-three**? Why would there have to be any transformation of these Feasts in the first place? The answer to these questions lies in the early history of Christianity; specifically, at the Council of Nicea in 325 c.e. when Constantine the Great helped to formulate Christian Doctrine.

When Constantine the Great—the only man in history who was extolled both as a Christian Saint and a Pagan God—presided over the Council of Nicea in 325 c.e., his main objective was political: how to **MERGE RELIGION and POLITICS** efficiently! Since there were more politically powerful pagans than there were politically powerful believers, the celebrations that the pagans were accustomed to observing were the celebrations which were accepted; and at the same time, the celebrations of the Jews were rejected. Reading from *Funk and Wagnall's Standard Reference Encyclopedia*, Volume 8, 1962, we find:

An important historic result of the difference 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 Easter according to the date of the Passover festival, while the churches of the West, whose communicants were descendants of Græco-Roman civilization, celebrated Easter on a Sunday.

Settlement of this difference was one of the objects of the Roman emperor Constantine in convoking, in 325 a.d. the Council of Nicaea (see NIC[macron]A, councils of). At the Council of Nicea, it was decided that Easter should be celebrated in accordance with the Alexandrine Computation. *Collier's Encyclopedia*, Volume 17, page 520, gives us this information:

NICAEA, COUNCILS OF [naisi'], were two in number. (1) The first (First Ecumenical), in a.d. 325, convoked by Constantine, condemned Arianism, which was essentially a denial of the divine nature of the Word, and so of the Son of God, Christ. The traditional number of bishops present was 318 (see Genesis 14:14); the real number was probably about 270. The council defined the doctrine that the Son is consubstantial (*ὁμοουσιος*) with the Father. In the drawing up of the formula leading parts were taken by St. Athanasius and Hosius, bishop of Cordoba; the latter probably presided. The council promulgated the famous Nicene Creed in its original form. It also decided that Easter should thenceforth be celebrated everywhere at the same time in accordance with the Alexandrine computation.

The pagan Alexandrine Computation for the setting of Easter, is written in *Collier's Encyclopedia*, 1980, Volume 8, page 492, which says: EASTER, the church feast which commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is considered the most ancient and most important festival of the Christian year.

Prior to the time of Pope Victor I (189-c. 198), the Western churches as a rule kept Easter on the first day of the week, while many of the Eastern churches, conforming to the Jewish rule, observed it on the fourteenth of the month of Nisan. Through the energetic efforts of Pope Victor, the latter practice gradually disappeared. But another problem came to the fore: granted that Easter was to be kept on Sunday, how was that Sunday to be determined? The Council of Nicaea (325) paved the way for a final settlement by ruling that Easter is to be observed by all on the same Sunday, that this must be the Sunday following the fourteenth day of the paschal moon, and that that moon was to be accounted as the paschal moon whose fourteenth day followed the vernal equinox. Because of differences in the systems of chronology followed in various places, however, the decrees of Nicaea did not immediately remove all difficulties nor win universal acceptance. The Gregorian correction of the calendar in 1582, moreover, introduced still further discrepancies. Throughout Western Christendom the corrected calendar is now universally accepted, and Easter is solemnized on the first Sunday after the full moon following the vernal equinox, with the result that the earliest possible date is March 22, the latest, April 25.

The Catholic Church's justification for using the Vernal Equinox to set their date for Easter Sunday—which the Protestant Churches have accepted completely, comes from the words of Constantine the Great himself, at the Council

of Nicea in the year 325 of this Common Era, saying: And truly, in the first place, it seems to everyone a most unworthy thing that we should follow the **customs of the Jews** in the celebration of this most holy solemnity, who, polluted wretches! having stained their hands with a nefarious crime, are justly blinded in their minds. It is fit, therefore, that **rejecting the practice of this people**, we should perpetuate to all **future ages** the celebration of this rite, in a **more legitimate order**, which we have kept from the first day of our “Lord’s” passion even to the present times. **Let us then have nothing in common with the most hostile rabble of the Jews.** (Council of Nicea, pg. 52.)

The Council of Nicea, page 23, then says: **Easter day was fixed on the Sunday immediately following the full moon which was nearest after the Vernal Equinox**, because it is certain that our Saviour rose from the dead on the Sunday which next succeeded the Passover of the Jews.

According to the calculations adopted at the Council of Nicea, which are **STILL IN EFFECT** in every Christian Church and Assembly in this world, we read: **If the Passover fell on a Sunday, Easter was to be the following Sunday, so as to have nothing in common with the Jews.**

It was not the Jews who were being rejected. Constantine and his followers were rejecting the Laws that these people obeyed—Yahweh’s Laws which established each of the Feasts that He had ordained. Effectually, because Christianity wanted nothing in common with the Jews, they also have nothing in common with the Ordinances—Laws of Yahweh! Therefore, because Christianity has nothing in common with Yahweh and His Feasts, it has everything in common with Paganism and its holidays! This fact is documented from *The Interpreter’s Dictionary Of The Bible*, Volume 4, page 894, which says: 11. The church week and year. The development of the church calendar was a remarkably slow process in Christianity, and equally striking is the fact that so little of the Jewish year finally found a place in Christian celebrations. Where we should have expected a **Christian transformation** of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Succoth, Chanukah, Purim, etc., we find only the retention of the **paschal festival**. This is due to the fact that the church year was largely the **creation of the Gentile church**, and the **background of such notable days as Christmas, Epiphany, Ember, etc., is pagan**, not Jewish.

We must, however, suppose that the earliest Christians continued to observe the Jewish year and week, until the break with the synagogue was complete. Of definitely Christian days, distinct from those of Judaism, the N.T. affords us only one certain example, **that of Sunday. This was observed as the day of the Lord’s resurrection.**

THE PAGAN WORSHIP OF EASTER

Reading from *Compton’s Pictured Encyclopedia*, 1948, Volume 4, page 140, we find that Easter is the Greatest Festival of the Christian Church, which commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ—which festival was named after the ancient Anglo Saxon Goddess of Spring!

EASTER. The greatest festival of the Christian church commemorates the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a movable feast, that is, it is not always held on the same date. The church council of Nicea (a.d. 325) decided that Easter should be celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon on or after the **vernal equinox** (March 21). Easter can come as early as March 22 or as late as April 25.

The name Easter comes from the ancient Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, Eostre or Ostara, in whose honor an annual spring festival was held. Some of our Easter customs have come from this and other pre-Christian spring festivals. Others come from the Passover feast of the Jews, observed in memory of their deliverance from Egypt (see Passover). The word “paschal,” meaning “pertaining to Easter,” like the French word for Easter, *Pâques*, comes through the Latin from the Hebrew name of the Passover.

Unger’s Bible Dictionary, by Merrill F. Unger, 1957, page 283, goes on to corroborate this fact, saying: **Easter (Gr. pascha, from Heb. pesah), the Passover, and so translated in every passage excepting “intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people” (Acts 12:4). In the earlier English versions Easter had been frequently used as the translation of pascha.** At the last revision Passover was substituted in all passages but this. See Passover.

The word Easter is of Saxon origin, Eastr, **the goddess of spring, in whose honor sacrifices were offered about Passover time each year.** By the 8th century Anglo-Saxons had adopted the name to designate the celebration of Christ’s resurrection. It is a fully documented historical fact that the day which was chosen by the Christian Church to celebrate this resurrection, was a day which had been celebrated by pagans from antiquity! Yes, the only difference between these two celebrations, is the fact that its name was changed to venerate it with Christian Respectability!

It is simply no secret that **EASTER** originated with the **WORSHIP OF A PAGAN GODDESS!** This fact is presented almost every time one researches the word Easter.

Compton’s Encyclopedia, 1956, Volume 4, says this about Easter: “Many Easter customs come from the Old World...colored eggs and rabbits have come from pagan antiquity as symbols of new life...**our name ‘Easter’ comes from ‘Eostre’, an ancient Anglo Saxon goddess, originally of the dawn.** In pagan times an annual spring festival was held in her honor. Some Easter customs have **come from this and other pre-Christian spring festivals.**”

Reading about this Pre-Christian spring festival from *Funk & Wagnall’s Standard Reference Encyclopedia*, 1962, Volume 8, page 2940, we learn: Although Easter is a Christian festival, **it embodies traditions of an ancient time antedating the rise of Christianity. The origin of its name is lost in the dim past;** some scholars believe it probably is derived from **Eastre, Anglo-Saxon name of a Teutonic goddess of spring and fertility**, to whom was dedicated **Eastre monath**, corresponding to April. **Her festival was celebrated on the day of the vernal equinox, and traditions associated with the festival survive in the familiar Easter bunny, symbol of the fertile rabbit, and in the equally familiar colored Easter eggs originally painted with gay hues to represent the sunlight of spring.**

Such festivals, and the myths and legends which explain their origin, abounded in ancient religions. The Greek myth of the return of the earth-goddess Demeter from the underworld to the light of day, symbolizing the **resurrection of life in the spring** after the long hibernation of winter, had its counterpart, among many others, in the Latin legend of Ceres and Persephone. The Phrygians believed that their all-powerful deity went to sleep at the time of the **winter solstice**, and they performed ceremonies at the **spring equinox** to awaken him with music and dancing. The universality of such festivals and myths among ancient peoples has led some scholars to interpret the resurrection of Christ as a mystical and exalted variant of fertility myths.

The Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore, and Symbols, Part 1, page 487 tells us more about this Spring Festival: “It incorporates some of the **ancient Spring Equinox ceremonies of sun worship** in which there were phallic rites and spring fires, and in which the deity or offering to the deity was eaten...The festival is symbolized by an ascension Lily...a chick breaking its shell, the colors white and green, the egg, spring flowers, and the Rabbit. **The name is related to Astarte, Ashtoreth, Eostre and Ishtar, goddess who visited and rose from the underworld.** Easter yields ‘Enduring Eos’... ‘Enduring Dawn’.”

Part of this spring festival centered around Phallic Rites. *Collier’s Encyclopedia*, 1980, Volume 9, page 622, tells us of the **Babylonian Ishtar Festival Phallic Rites**: The **Ishtar Festivals** were symbolical of Ishtar as the goddess of love or generation. As the daughter of Sin, the moon god, she was the **Mother Goddess** who presided over child birth; and women, in her honor, sacrificed their virginity on the feast day or **became temple prostitutes**, their earnings being a source of revenue for the temple priests and servants.

We learn about these Temple Prostitutes from *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of The Bible*, Volume 3, pages 933-934:

a. *The roll of the sacred prostitute in the fertility cult.* The prostitute who was an official of the cult in ancient Palestine and nearby lands of biblical times exercised an important function. This religion was predicated upon the belief that the processes of nature were controlled by the relations between gods and goddesses. **Projecting their understanding of their own sexual activities, the worshipers of these deities, through the use of imitative magic, engaged in sexual intercourse with devotees of the shrine, in the belief that this would encourage the gods and goddesses to do likewise. Only by sexual relations among the deities could man’s desire for increase in herds and fields, as well as in his own family, be realized.** In Palestine the gods Baal and Asherah were especially prominent (see BAAL; ASHERAH; FERTILITY CULTS). These competed with Yahweh the God of Israel and, in some cases, may have produced hybrid Yahweh-Baal cults. Attached to the shrines of these cults were priests as well as prostitutes, both male and female. Their chief service was sexual in nature—the offering of their bodies for ritual purposes.

Sexual relations for ritual purposes was the ceremony for the Fertility Cults. *The Interpreter’s Dictionary*, Volume 2, page 265 says: **FERTILITY CULTS. The oldest common feature of the religions of the ancient Near East was the worship of a great mother-goddess, the personification of fertility. Associated with her, usually as a consort, was a young god who died and came to life again,** like the vegetation which quickly withers but blooms again. The manner of the young god’s demise was variously conceived in the myths: he was slain by another god, by wild animals, by reapers, by self-emasculatation, by burning, by drowning. In some variations of the theme, he simply absconded. **His absence produced infertility of the earth, of man, and of beast. His consort mourned and searched for him. His return brought renewed fertility and rejoicing.**

In Mesopotamia the divine couple appear as **Ishtar and Tammuz**, in Egypt as **Isis and Osiris**. Later in Asia Minor, the Magna Mater is **Cybele and her young lover is Attis**. In Syria in the second millennium b.c., as seen in the Ugaritic myths, the dying and rising god is **Baal-Hadad, who is slain by Mot** (Death) and mourned and avenged by his sister/consort, **the violent virgin Anath**. In the Ugaritic myths there is some confusion in the roles of the goddesses. **The great mother-goddess Asherah, the wife of the senescent chief god El,** seems on the way to becoming **the consort of the rising young god Baal**, with whom we find her associated in the O.T. Astarte also appears in the Ugaritic myths, but she has a minor and undistinguished role.

The O.T. furnishes abundant evidence as to the character of the religion of the land into which the Israelites came. Fertility rites were practiced at the numerous shrines which dotted the land, as well as at the major sanctuaries. The Israelites absorbed the Canaanite ways and learned to identify their god with Baal, whose rains brought fertility to the land. **A characteristic feature of the fertility cult was sacral sexual intercourse by priests and priestesses and other specially consecrated persons, sacred prostitutes of both sexes, intended to emulate and stimulate the deities who bestowed fertility.** The agricultural cult stressed the sacrifice or common meal in which the gods, priests, and people partook. Wine was consumed in great quantity in thanksgiving to Baal for the fertility of the vineyards. The wine also helped induce ecstatic frenzy, which was **climaxed by self-laceration, and sometimes even by self-emasculatation.** **Child-sacrifice was also a feature of the rites.** It was not simply a cult of wine, women, and song, but a matter of life and death in which the dearest things of life, and life itself, were offered to ensure the ongoing of life.

Reading on page 103 of *The Two Babylons*, by Alexander Hislop, 1959, we find that Easter and Ishtar are the same:

Then look at Easter. What means the term Easter itself? It bears its **Chaldean origin** on its very forehead. **Easter is nothing else than “Astarte”**, one of the titles of Beltis, “The Queen of Heaven” whose name, as “pronounced” by the people of Nineveh, was evidently **identical with that now in common use in this country.** That ‘name’, as found by Layard on the Assyrian monuments, is “Ishtar”.

The Two Babylons by Alexander Hislop tells us of the doctrines of Semiramis: “She (Semiramis) taught that he (Nimrod the Babe) was a god-child; that he was Nimrod, **their leader reborn**; that she and her child were divine. This

story was widely known in ancient Babylon and developed into a well established worship—The Worship of The Mother and Child!

Numerous monuments of Babylon show the Goddess Mother Semiramis with her child Tammuz in her arms.’

ISHTAR (pronounced EASTER) of Assyria was worshiped in Pagan Antiquity during her spring festival! *Collier’s Encyclopedia*, 1980, Volume 15, page 748, gives us this information: Ishtar, goddess of love and war, the most important goddess of the Sumero-Akkadian pantheon. Her name in Sumerian is Inanna (lady of heaven). She was sister of the sun god Shamash and daughter of the moon god Sin. Ishtar was equated with the planet Venus. Her symbol was a star inscribed in a circle. As goddess of war, she was often represented sitting upon a lion. As goddess of physical love, she was patron of the temple prostitutes. She was also considered the merciful mother who intercedes with the gods on behalf of her worshipers. Throughout Mesopotamian history she was worshiped under various names in many cities; one of the chief centers of her cult was Uruk.

Astarte of Phoenicia was the offshoot of Ishtar of Assyria. To the Hebrews, this abomination was known as Ashtoreth—Ashtoroth. From *Collier’s Encyclopedia*, Volume 3, page 13, we read: ASHTAROTH [Æ(terath)] the plural of the Hebrew ‘Ashto-reth, the Phoenician-Canaanite goddess Astarte, deity of fertility, reproduction, and war. The use of the plural form probably indicates a general designation for the collective female deities of the Canaanites, just as the plural Baalim refer to the male deities.

Watson’s Biblical and Archaeological Dictionary, 1833, tells us more about this mother goddess, Ashtaroth: ASHTAROTH, or ASTARTE, a goddess of the Zidonians. The word Ashtaroth properly signifies flocks of sheep, or goats; and sometimes the grove, or woods, because she was goddess of woods, and groves were her temples. In groves consecrated to her, such lasciviousness was committed as rendered her worship infamous. She was also called the queen of heaven; and sometimes her worship is said to be that of “the host of heaven.” She was certainly represented in the same manner as Isis, with cow’s horns on her head, to denote the increase and decrease of the moon. Cicero calls her the fourth Venus of the Syrians. She is almost always joined with Baal, and is called a god, the scriptures having no particular word to express a goddess.

It is believed that the moon was adored in this idol. Her temples generally accompanied those of the sun; and while bloody sacrifices or human victims were offered to Baal, bread, liquors, and perfumes were presented to Astarte. For her, tables were prepared upon the flat terrace-roofs of houses, near gates, in porches, and at crossways, on the first day of every month; and this was called by the Greeks, Hecate’s supper. Solomon, seduced by his foreign wives, introduced the worship of Ashtaroth into Israel; but Jezebel, daughter of the king of Tyre, and wife to Ahab, principally established her worship. She caused altars to be erected to this idol in every part of Israel; and at one time four hundred priests attended the worship of Ashtaroth, I Kings xviii. 7.

The Interpreter’s Dictionary, Volume 3, page 975, tells us of Ishtar’s role as The Queen of Heaven: Ishtar, the goddess of love and fertility, who was identified with the Venus Star and is actually entitled “Mistress of Heaven” in the Amarna tablets. The difficulty is that the Venus Star was regarded in Palestine as a male deity (*see* DAY STAR), though the cult of the goddess Ishtar may have been introduced from Mesopotamia under Manasseh. It is possible that Astarte, or ASHTORETH, the Canaanite fertility-goddess, whose cult was well established in Palestine, had preserved more traces of her astral character as the female counterpart of Athtar than the evidence of the O.T. or the Ras Shamra texts indicates. The title “Queen of Heaven” is applied in an Egyptian inscription from the Nineteenth Dynasty at Beth-shan to “Antit,” the Canaanite fertility-goddess Anat, who is termed “Queen of Heaven and Mistress of the Gods.” This is the most active goddess in the Ras Shamra Texts, but in Palestine her functions seem to have been taken over largely by Ashtoreth.

We find this information about Ashtoreth from *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1979, Volume 1, pages 319-320: ASHTORETH ash’te-reth [Heb. ‘astoret. pl. ‘astarôt; Gk. Astarte]. A goddess of Canaan and Phoenicia whose name and cult were derived from Babylonia, where Ishtar represented the evening and morning stars and was accordingly androgynous in origin. Under Semitic influence, however, she became solely female, although retaining a trace of her original character by standing on equal footing with the male divinities. From Babylonia the worship of the goddess was carried to the Semites of the West, and in most instances the feminine suffix was attached to her name; where this was not the case the deity was regarded as a male. On the Moabite Stone, for example, ‘Ashtar is identified with Chemosh, and in the inscriptions of southern Arabia ‘Athtar is a god. On the other hand, in the name Atargatis (2 Macc. 12:26), ‘Atar, without the feminine suffix, is identified with the goddess ‘Athah or ‘Athi (Gk. *Gatis*). The cult of the Greek Aphrodite in Cyprus was borrowed from that of Ashtoreth; that the Greek name also is a modification of Ashtoreth is doubtful. It is maintained, however, that the vowels of Heb. ‘astoret were borrowed from *boset* (“shame”) in order to indicate the abhorrence the Hebrew scribes felt toward paganism and idolatry.

In Babylonia and Assyria Ishtar was the goddess of love and war. An old Babylonian legend relates how the descent of Ishtar into Hades in search of her dead husband Tammuz was followed by the cessation of marriage and birth in both earth and heaven; and the temples of the goddess at Nineveh and Arbela, around which the two cities afterward grew, were dedicated to her as the goddess of war. As such she appeared to one of Ashurbanipal’s seers and encouraged the Assyrian king to march against Elam. The other goddesses of Babylonia, who were little more than reflections of a god, tended to merge into Ishtar, who thus became a type of the female divinity, a personification of the productive principle in nature, and more especially the mother and creatress of mankind. In Babylonia Ishtar

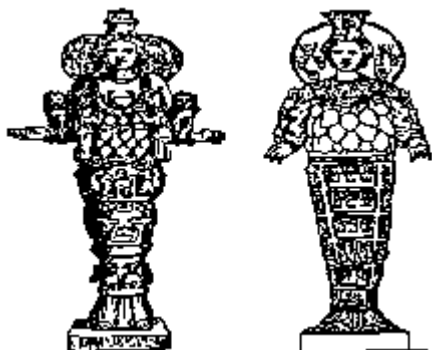
was identified with Venus. Like Venus, **Ishtar was the goddess of erotic love and fertility.** Her chief seat of worship was Uruk (Erech), **where prostitution was practiced in her name and she was served with immoral rites by bands of men and women.** In Assyria, where the warlike side of the goddess was predominant, no such rites seem to have been practiced, and instead prophetesses to whom she delivered oracles were attached to her temples. From various Egyptian sources it appears that Astarte or Ashtoreth was highly regarded in the Late Bronze Age.

Reading on pages 412-413 of *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, we find this information about Ashtoreth-Astarte: Ash'toreth (ash'to-reth), **Astarte**, a Canaanite goddess. In south Arabic the name is found as 'Athtar (apparently from 'athara, to be fertile, to irrigate), a god identified with the planet Venus. The name is cognate with Babylonian **Ishtar, the goddess of sensual love, maternity and fertility.** Licentious worship was conducted in honor of her. As Asherah and Anat of Ras Shamra **she was the patroness of war as well as sex** and is sometimes identified with these goddesses. The Amarna Letters present Ashtoreth as Ashtartu. In the Ras Shamra Tablets are found both the masculine form 'Athtar and the feminine 'Athtart. Ashtoreth worship was early entrenched at Sidon (I Kings 11:5, 33; II Kings 23:13). Her polluting cult even presented a danger to early Israel (Judg. 2:13; 10:6). Solomon succumbed to her voluptuous worship (I Kings 11:5; II Kings 23:13). **The peculiar vocalization Ashtoreth instead of the more primitive Ashtaroth is evidently a deliberate alteration by the Hebrews to express their abhorrence for her cult by giving her the vowels of their word for "shame" (bosheth).** M. F. U.

The Interpreter's Dictionary, Volume 1, page 252 says: The **antipathy** toward the Asherah on the part of the Hebrew leaders was due to the fact that the **goddess and the cult object of the same name were associated with the fertility religion of a foreign people and as such involved a mythology and a cultus which were obnoxious to the champions of Yahweh.**

Unger's Bible Dictionary, page 412, gives us this information about Asherah: Asherah (a-she'ra), plural, Asherim, a pagan goddess, who is found in the Ras Shamra epic religious texts discovered at Ugarit in North Syria (1929-1937), as Asherat, "Lady of the Sea" and consort of El. She was the chief goddess of Tyre in the 15th century b.c. with the appellation *Qudshu*, "**holiness.**" In the Old Testament Asherah appears as a goddess by the side of Baal, whose consort she evidently came to be, at least among the Canaanites of the South. However, most Biblical references to the name point clearly to some cult object of wood, which might be worshiped or cut down and burned, and which was certainly **the goddess' image (I Kings 15:13; II Kings 21:7). Her prophets are mentioned (I Kings 18:19) and the vessels used in her service referred to (II Kings 23:4). Her cult object, whatever it was, was utterly detestable to faithful worshippers of Yahweh (I Kings 15:13) and was set up on the high places beside the "altars of incense" (hammanim) and the stone pillars (masseboth).** Indeed, **the stone pillars seem to have represented the male god Baal (cf. Judg. 6:28), while the cult object of Ashera, probably a tree or pole, constituted a symbol of this goddess** (See W. L. Reed's *The Asherah in the Old Testament*, Texas Christian University Press). But Asherah was only one manifestation of a chief goddess of Western Asia, regarded **now as the wife, now as the sister of the principal Canaanite god El.** Other names of this deity were Ashtoreth (Astarte) and Anath. Frequently represented as a **nude woman bestride a lion with a lily in one hand and a serpent in the other,** and styled *Qudshu* "the Holiness," that is, "the Holy One" in a perverted moral sense, she was a divine courtesan. In the same sense the male prostitutes consecrated to the cult of the *Qudshu* and prostituting themselves to her honor were styled *qedishim*, "sodomites" (Deut. 23:18; 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46). **Characteristically Canaanite the lily symbolizes grace and sex appeal and the serpent fecundity** (W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, Baltimore, John Hopkins Press, 1942, pages 68-94). At Byblos (Biblical Gebal) on the Mediterranean, north of Sidon, a center dedicated to this goddess has been excavated. She and her colleagues specialized in sex and war and her shrines were temples of legalized vice. Her degraded cult offered a perpetual danger of pollution to Israel and must have sunk to sordid depths as lust and murder were glamorized in Canaanite religion.

On page 413 of *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, we have found that **Astarte** is the Greek name for the Hebrew **Ashtoreth**. From *Collier's Encyclopedia*, Volume 3, page 97, we find that Astarte-Ashtaroth is merely the Semitic **Ishtar**—which we have already learned is pronounced **Easter**: ASTARTE [aesta'rti], the Phoenician goddess of fertility and erotic love. **The Greek name, "Astarte" was derived from Semitic, "Ishtar," "Ashtoreth."** Astarte was regarded in Classical antiquity as a moon goddess, perhaps in confusion with some other Semitic deity. In accordance with the literary traditions of the Greco-Romans, Astarte was identified with Selene and Artemis, and more often with



Aphrodite. Among the Canaanites, Astarte, like her peer Anath, performed a major function as **goddess of fertility.**

Egyptian iconography, however, portrayed Astarte in her role as a warlike goddess massacring mankind, young and old. She is represented on plaques (dated 1700-1100 b.c.) as naked, in striking contrast to the modestly garbed Egyptian goddesses. Edward J. Jurji

In Ephesus from primitive times, this **MOTHER GODDESS** had been called **DIANA**, who was worshiped as the Goddess of Virginity and Motherhood. She was said to represent the generative powers of nature, and so was pictured with many breasts. A tower shaped crown, symbolizing the Tower of Babylon, adorned her head: Reading from *Bible Manners And Customs*, by James M. Freeman, 1972, page 451, we learn these facts about the **Mother of all things**:

“The circle round her head denotes the nimbus (sin circle) of her glory, the griffins inside of which express its brilliancy. In her **breasts** are the twelve signs of the **zodiac**, of which those seen in front are the ram, bull, twins, crab, and lion; they are divided by the hours. Her necklace is composed of acorns, the primeval food of man. **Lions** are on her arms to denote her **power**, and her hands are stretched out to show that she is ready to receive all who come to her. **Her body is covered with various breasts and monsters**, as sirens, sphinxes, and griffins, to show that she is the **source of nature, the mother of all things**. Her head, hands, and feet are of bronze while the rest of the statue is of alabaster to denote the ever-varying light and shade of the moon’s figure... Like Rhea, **she was crowned with turrets, to denote her dominion over terrestrial objects.**”

THE ORIGINAL GODDESS: SEMIRAMIS OF BABYLON

The worship of Ishtar-Easter spread throughout the Ancient Pagan World, where she was venerated in almost every segment of society. The original of this goddess, however, loomed upon the historical scene in Babylon. From *The Two Babylons* by Hislop, pages 20-22, we find this information about the original of this Great Mother Goddess—Semiramis!

The Babylonians in their popular religion, supremely worshiped a Goddess Mother, and a Son, who was represented in pictures and in images as an infant or child in his mother’s arms (Figs. 5 and 6). From Babylon, this worship of the Mother and the Child spread to the ends of the earth. In Egypt, the Mother and the Child were worshiped under the names of Isis and Osiris.* In India, even to this day, as Isi and Iswara; * in Asia, as Cybele and Deoius; in Pagan Rome, as Fortuna and Jupiter-puer, or Jupiter, the boy;11 in Greece, as Ceres, the Great Mother, with the babe at her breast, or as Irene, the goddess of Peace, with the boy Plutus in her arms; ** and even in Thibet, in China, and Japan, the Jesuit missionaries were astonished to find the counterpart of Madonna ** and her child as devoutly worshiped as in Papal Rome itself; Shing Moo, the Holy Mother in China, being represented with a child in her arms, and a *glory* around her, exactly as if a Roman Catholic artist had been employed to set her up.”

The original of that mother, so widely worshiped, there is reason to believe, was Semiramis. * already referred to, who, it is well known, was worshiped by the Babylonians, * and other eastern nations, and that under the name of Rhea, **the great goddess “Mother.”**

It was from the son, however, that she derived all her glory and her claims to deification. That son, though represented as a child in his mother’s arms, was a person of great stature and immense bodily powers, as well as most fascinating manners. In Scripture he is referred to (Ezek. viii. 14) under the name of **Tammuz**, but he is commonly known among classical writers under the name of **Bacchus**, that is, “**The Lamented One.**” To the ordinary reader the name of Bacchus suggests nothing more than revelry and drunkenness, but it is now well known, that amid all the abominations that attended his orgies, their grand design was professedly “the purification of souls,” * and that from the guilt and defilement of sin. This lamented one, exhibited and adored as a little child in his mother’s arms, seems, in point of fact, to have been the **husband of Semiramis, whose name, Ninus**, by which he is commonly known in classical history, **literally signified “The Son,”*** As **Semiramis, the wife, was worshiped** as Rhea, whose grand distinguishing character was that of the **great goddess “Mother,”*** the conjunction with her **of her husband, under the name of Ninus, or “The Son,”** was sufficient to originate the peculiar worship of the **“Mother and Son,”** so extensively diffused among the nations of antiquity; and this, no doubt, is the explanation of the fact which has so much puzzled the inquirers into ancient history, **that Ninus is sometimes called the husband, and sometimes the son of Semiramis.** This also accounts for the origin of the very same confusion of relationship between Isis and Osiris, the mother and child of the Egyptians; for as Bunsen shows, Osiris was represented in Egypt as at once the son and husband of his mother; and actually bore, as one of his titles of dignity and honour, the name “**Husband of the Mother.**”

The Babylonian Worship of the Great Mother spread throughout the known world. This Mother Goddess was known by different names, but the form of her religion has not transformed since antiquity. *The Layman's Bible Encyclopedia*, William C. Martin, 1964, page 209, gives these facts about Easter: EASTER, an annual celebration observed by much of the Christian church, commemorating Christ’s resurrection. **Modern observance of Easter represents a convergence of three traditions:** (1) The Hebrew Passover, celebrated during Nisan, the first month of the Hebrew lunar calendar; (2) The Christian commemoration of the ‘crucifixion’ and resurrection of ‘Jesus’, which took place at the feast of the Passover; and (3) **The Norse Ostara or Eostra (from which the name, “Easter” is derived), a pagan festival of spring which fell at the vernal equinox, March 21.** Prominent symbols in this celebration of the resurrection of nature after the winter were rabbits, signifying fecundity, and eggs, colored like the rays of the “returning sun” and the northern lights, or aurora borealis.”

THE ISHTAR EGG

Eggs have absolutely nothing to do with the resurrection of the Messiah (three days and three nights after He was placed in the grave)—but the **EGG** was a **SACRED SYMBOL** to the Babylonians! An egg of wondrous size fell from heaven into the Euphrates River; from this marvelous egg the Goddess Astarte (Easter) was hatched! From the land of



Sacred Egg of Heliopolis and Typhon's Egg.
From Bryant's Mythology, vol. iii. v. 62.

Babylon, humanity was scattered to the various parts of the earth. These religious people took with them the symbol of the **Mystic Sacred Egg**. Each pagan nation had its own representation of this wonder. The Greeks had their Sacred Egg of Heliopolis, and The Typhon's Egg: From *The Two Babylons*, by Hislop on page 109, we learn about the Mystic Egg of Astarte: From Egypt these sacred eggs can be distinctly traced to the banks of the Euphrates. The classic poets are full of the fable of the mystic egg of the Babylonians; and thus its tale is told by Hyginus, the Egyptian, the learned keeper of the Palatine library at Rome, in the time of Augustus, who was skilled in all the wisdom of his native country: "An egg of wondrous size is said to have fallen from heaven into the river Euphrates. The fishes rolled it to the bank, where the doves having settled upon it, hatched it, and out came Venus, who afterwards was called the **Syrian Goddess**"*—that is, **Astarte**. Hence the egg became one of the **symbols of Astarte or Easter**; and accordingly, in Cyprus, one of the chosen seats of the worship of Venus, or Astarte, the egg of wondrous size was represented on a grand scale. (See Fig. 32)



● This "Official Pagan Representation" is now modernly known as: "THE VIRGIN MARY!"



The **ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH** now has their own Official **REPRESENTATION OF ISHTAR—THE VIRGIN MOTHER**, who stands upon the top of this Sacred Egg of Heliopolis, with the Serpent Typhon at her feet.

THE ISHTAR FERTILITY HARE: THE EASTER BUNNY

From the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, we find this information about **Easter**: Like the Easter Egg, **the Easter Hare came to Christianity from antiquity**. The hare is **associated with the moon** in the legends of ancient Egypt and other peoples...Through the fact that the Egyptian word for hare—*um*, means also open and period. The hare came to be associated with the idea of periodicity both lunar and human, and with the beginning of new life in both the young man and young woman, and so **a symbol of fertility and of the renewal of life**.

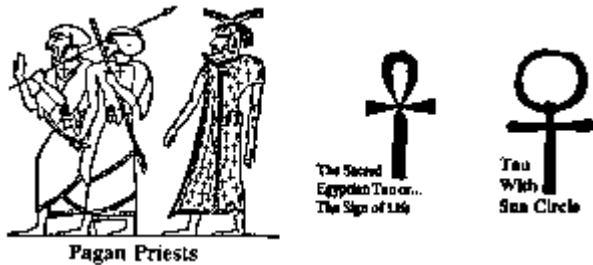
Easter eggs and rabbits are the symbols of sexual fertility in the ancient, pagan religions. *The Reader's Digest Book of Facts*, The Reader's Digest Assn., 1987, page 122, gives this information: **EASTER AND THE BUNNY**—Children's stories in many countries tell how Easter eggs are brought not by a chicken but by hares and rabbits. These long eared hopping mammals have **represented fertility** in many cultures because they breed so quickly. In traditional Christian art the hare represents **lust**, and paintings sometimes show a hare at the Virgin Mary's feet to signify her triumph over temptations of the flesh. Yet as a **symbol of life** reawakening in the spring—often portrayed as the innocent and cuddly Easter bunny—the rabbit coexists in many places with the solemn Christian rites of Easter.

HOT CROSS BUNS

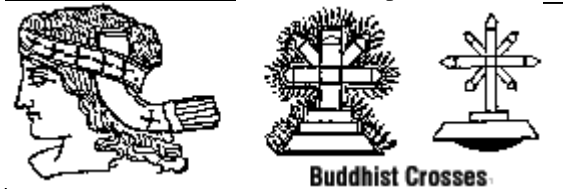
Another custom closely associated with Easter is the baking and eating of **Hot Cross Buns**. There is, of course, no Scriptural justification involved. The **CROSS** is the original **SIGN OF THE GOD: TAMMUZ**. The cross is the letter "T". *The Two Babylons*, by Alexander Hislop on pages 197-200, gives us this information about the **sign of the cross**:

The magic virtues attributed to the so-called "sign of the cross", the worship bestowed on it, never came from (Yahshua or His Apostles). **The same sign of the "cross" that Rome now worships was used in the Babylonian Mysteries, and was applied by paganism to the same magic purposes** (signing oneself, kissing the cross, holding the cross, wearing it as a charm), was honored with the same honors. **That which is now called the "Christian Cross" was originally no Christian emblem at all, but was the Mystic Tau of the Chaldeans and Egyptians—the true original form of the letter "T"—the initial of the name of Tammuz...**that mystic "Tau" was marked in baptism on

the foreheads of those initiated in the *Mysteries*...The mystic **“Tau”, as the symbol of the great divinity, was called “the Sign of Life”**; it was used as an amulet (“good luck charm”) over the heart; it was marked on the official garments of the (Ancient Pagan) priests, as (now) on the official garments of the Priests of Rome (today)...The Vestal Virgins of Pagan Rome wore (the cross) suspended from their necklaces, as the Nuns do today...men as well as women wore earrings and they frequently had a small cross suspended to a necklace or to the collar of their dress...(the cross) was also appended to the robes of the “Rot-N-No” (Pagan Priests); and traces of it may be seen in the fancy ornaments of the “Rebo” (Pagan Priests), showing that it was already in use as early as the Fifteenth Century before the Christian Era...



There is hardly a pagan tribe where the cross has not been found. The cross was worshiped by the pagan Celts long before the “incarnation” and death of Christ... The Druids in their groves were accustomed to select the most stately and beautiful **tree as an emblem of the deity (god) they adored, and having cut the side branches, they affixed two of the largest of them to the highest part of the trunk, in such a manner that those branches extended on each side like the arms of a man, and, together with the body, presented the appearance of a huge cross, and on the bark, in several places, was also inscribed the letter “Thau”**. It was worshiped in Mexico for ages before the Roman Catholic missionaries set foot there, large stone **crosses being erected, probably to the “god of rain”**. **The cross thus widely worshiped, or regarded as a sacred emblem, was the unequivocal symbol of “Bacchus”, the Babylonian Messiah**, for he was represented with a head-band covered with crosses.



Tammuz, according to *Collier’s Encyclopedia*, Volume 15, page 749, was the Sumero-Akkadian God of vegetation, who was known as Adoni—My Lord: Tammuz, **the Sumero-Akkadian god of vegetation**. His name in Sumerian is Dumu-zi-abzu (true son of Apsu), or simply Dumu-zi, from which the Hebrew form Tammuz is derived. **The cult of Tammuz, under the west-Semitic name of Adoni (my lord) and the Greek equivalent Adonis**, was widespread throughout the Mediterranean world. According to still extant mythology, Tammuz died, descended to the lower world, was resurrected, and ascended again to earth and then to heaven. **During his absence the earth remained sterile and the flocks were plundered**. Because of his close association with the realm of nature, the fields and animals, he was called “the shepherd.”

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Volume 4, page 725, shows that the original of the name Tammuz, which is dumuzi, means: invigorator of the child. **TAMMUZ** was the same Sumerian and Babylonian **GOD OF FERTILITY**, who married Easter-Ishtar at the Vernal Equinox!

TAMMUZ tam’uz, tā’mooz [Heb. *tammûz*; Akk. *tammuz*; Sum. *dumuzi*—“invigorator of the child(?)”]. A Sumerian and Babylonian **god of fertility mentioned once in the O.T. (Eze. 8:14)**. The prophet in a vision during his Babylonian exile saw an abomination: women in the north gate of the Jerusalem temple wailing for Tammuz. S.N. Kramer may have found literary antecedents to Canticles in Sumerian love poetry celebrating the marriage of Dumuzi and the goddess Inanna (Akk. Ishtar).

As this source reference has stated, Tammuz was mentioned once in: **Ezekiel 8:13** He also said to me: Turn yet again, *and* you will see greater **ABOMINATIONS** that they are doing. 14 Then he brought me to the door of the gate of Yahweh’s House, which *was* toward the north; and behold, there sat **WOMEN WEeping FOR TAMMUZ**.

This weeping for Tammuz was an abomination which was being practiced even by the people of Yerusalem at the time that Yechetzqyah was prophesying. This weeping was a **FERTILITY RITE!** One of the ceremonies of Ishtar-Easter Worship, was that of weeping for the dead vegetation god, because fertility had ceased from the land. To the pagan mind, unless this god was resurrected, there would be no renewing of fertility with the Great Mother Goddess. So, through sympathetic magic—through the weeping of his Mother (Easter-Ishtar), Tammuz was mystically resurrected. Each year these pagan people grieved with Ishtar-Easter over the death of Tammuz; and at each Vernal Equinox they were rewarded as this resurrected god was reunited with his Great Mother Goddess, in order to ensure the success of the crops and the fertility of animals and people.

This **ANCIENT FERTILITY WORSHIP** was exactly scheduled according to the shadows of the sun. It is very easy to learn how this was done. Obtain our Book: *Deceptions Concerning Yahweh's Calendar Of Events*, by writing to: The House of Yahweh, Dept. I-Net, P.O. Box 2498, Abilene, TX, 79604.

Hot Cross Buns are in reality Tammuz cakes! These little magic Tammuz Cakes were made and used in the worship of **ISHTAR-EASTER: THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN**—for it was she who brought the god back to ensure their fertility. So, when the god returned to Fertilize The Mother, on the exact day of the Vernal Equinox, the people mystically held him in their hands and ate the god, mystically uniting with him and his mother in worship!

During the time that the Prophet Yermeyah was proclaiming Yahweh's Laws to the people, Yahweh inspired him to rebuke the people for this **PAGAN PRACTICE!**

Jeremiah 7:17 Do you not see what they do in the cities of Yahdah and in the streets of Yerusalem? 18. *How* the children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, while **the women knead dough to MAKE CAKES FOR THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN**, and how they **pour out drink offerings to the hinder gods** (elohim), so they may provoke Me to anger! 19 Is it I Whom they provoke to anger? says Yahweh: *Or is it* not themselves, *whom they harm* to their own shame? 20 Therefore this is what Yahweh says: **Behold, My anger and My fury will be poured out** on this place—on man and on beast, on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground—and **it will burn and not be quenched.**

The very things that the people were seeking to reproduce in this fertility worship—man, animals, fruits, and produce—were the very things that Yahweh would not bless because of their apostasy and god worship!

The Interpreter's Dictionary of The Bible, Volume 3, page 975, tells us of Ishtar's role as The Queen of Heaven:

QUEEN OF HEAVEN. The object of worship, particularly by women, in Judah in the time of Jeremiah; cakes (*konim*), possibly shaped as figurines, were offered to her with libations (Jer. 7:18; 44:17-19, 25). Jeremiah censures the Jewish refugees in Egypt after the fall of Jerusalem for burning incense and offering libation to the Queen of heaven. From the second reference **this cult seems to have been designed to secure material welfare.** From these two isolated references, however, it is not possible to determine with certainty the object of worship, the more so because of variant readings. The MT (*melekat*) is an unusual form of *melekeh*, the normal word for "queen" and certain MSS read *melakat* ("handiwork"), meaning presumably the stars; this was understood by the LXX translators in Jer. 7:18, where "the heavenly host" (th stratia tou ouranou) is read, supported by the Targ., which reads "the star(s) of heaven" (*shemia kukbat*). If "the queen of heaven" is to be read—which seems more probable—the reference might be to **Ishtar, the goddess of love and fertility**, who was identified with the Venus Star and is actually entitled "Mistress of Heaven" in the Amarna tablets. The difficulty is that the Venus Star was regarded in Palestine as a male deity (*see* day star), though the cult of the goddess Ishtar may have been introduced from Mesopotamia under Manasseh. It is possible that Astarte, or Ashtoreth, the Canaanite fertility-goddess, whose cult was well established in Palestine, had preserved more traces of her astral character as the female counterpart of Athtar than the evidence of the O.T. or the Ras Shamra Texts indicates. The title "**Queen of Heaven**" is applied in an Egyptian inscription from the Nineteenth Dynasty at Beth-shan to "Antit," the Canaanite fertility-goddess Anat, who is termed "**Queen of Heaven and Mistress of the Gods.**" This is the most active goddess in the Ras Shamra Texts, but in Palestine her functions seem to have been taken over largely by Ashtoreth.

We have had the opportunity to read more than once throughout this booklet that: The name and the **FESTIVAL OF EASTER** have their **ORIGIN IN THE WORSHIP OF A PAGAN GODDESS OF SPRING**, but Easter is now the most important of Christian Festivals. From *The Last Two Million Years* by The Reader's Digest Association, 1981, page 215, we learn how the worship of a Pagan Goddess became the most important Christian Festival:

Pagan rites absorbed

By a stroke of tactical genius the Church, while intolerant of pagan beliefs, was able to harness the **powerful emotions generated by pagan worship**. Often, churches were sited where temples had stood before, **and many heathen festivals were added to the Christian calendar.**

Easter, for instance, a time of sacrifice and rebirth in the Christian year, **takes its name from the Norse goddess Eostre**, in whose honour rites were held every spring. She in turn was simply a northern version of the Phoenician **earth-mother Astarte, goddess of fertility**. Easter eggs continue an age-old tradition in which the **egg** is a symbol of birth; and cakes which were eaten to mark the festivals of **Astarte and Eostre were the direct ancestors of our hot-cross buns.**

Why were the **PAGAN RITES ABSORBED**, rather than being completely abolished? The answer to this question is: Many pagans had been drawn to the religion called **CHRISTIANITY**, but so strong in the pagans' minds was their adoration for the mother, that they would not forsake her worship. Due to the fact that Christianity could readily transform its beliefs, compromising Church Leaders saw their opportunity: They found similarities in Christian Customs with those of the Mother God-dess—and brought pagans by the droves into their fold, but it was the same pagan fold.

Who did these compromising Church Leaders find to worship, instead of the **GREAT MOTHER ISHTAR-EASTER**? They found Miryam, the mother of Yahshua Messiah. Through **MARY WORSHIP**, the pagans could continue their customary prayers and devotion to the mediating goddess—just change her name to Mary. This would give the Pagan Worship of The Mother the appearance of respectability—the same respectability that it still holds today.

Slowly but methodically, the Religion of Pagan Rome, which was a synthesis of everything that was abominable to Yahweh from the beginning, became established with its new name: Christianity.

During the first centuries of this religion, no emphasis was placed upon Mary whatsoever. But, thanks to Constantine the Great, the Savior of Christianity, in the early part of the Fourth Century of this Common Era, the worship of Mary as a goddess was encouraged! Since Rome had long been a center for the worship of the Mother Goddess of paganism, we need not be surprised that Rome was one of the first places where Mary Worship, and many other renamed, but very familiar cus-toms—became firmly rooted.

From *Grolier's Encyclopedia*, Grolier Corporation, N.Y., 1966, Volume 17, we find this information:

Easter: A Day of Joy

Though not all Protestants observe Lent and Holy Week, all Christians celebrate Easter Day, commemorating the Resurrection. Easter Day **invariably falls on a Sunday, the first Sunday after the full moon following the spring equinox, usually late in March.** The name of this holiday and the time it is celebrated have led people to believe that an earlier holiday existed on this day before the Christian observance. For many ancient nations joyously celebrated the end of winter and the “resurrection of the sun” at this season of the year; and some devoted this festival to Eostre, German ic goddess of spring. **The Church Fathers turned this heathen holiday into the Christian celebration of the Resurrection.** And Christians the world over observe this day with great rejoicing. Some greet each other with: “Christ is risen! Christ is risen!” And all think of Jesus, who conquered death so that those who follow him may gain everlasting life.

On Easter people go to church services and delight in the sight of the great masses of Easter **lilies that decorate the altars.** For the Chinese the peony is the king of flowers and symbol of spring. But to the people in church on Easter Day, the fragrant lily with its trumpet shaped blossoms is the symbol of purity and the welcome harbinger of spring. The churchgoers enjoy the flowers and the music and the sermon of the day. And from time to time they look about them to observe the gay clothes that people wear, since it has long been the custom for people to put on their **newest clothes on Easter Day.**

The Eastern Orthodox Easter Parade

In countries where the Eastern Orthodox Church dominates, a quite different parade is put on during Easter. The worshipers gather early on Saturday night in an elaborate ritual. And at midnight, led by their priests in richly embroidered vestments, carrying images and lighted candles in their hands, they go out into the night in search of Jesus.

It is almost dawn when the people return home to **eat the Easter bread** with white cheese and honey and the **richly colored hard boiled eggs.** Many Encyclopedias will make the statement that Easter is the worship of a pagan goddess—and at the same time will state this celebration is one of the most important Christian celebrations of today. In each of these reference works a statement is made, in one form or another, that Easter is the day on which the Christian Church commemorates our Savior’s Resurrection.

THE EASTER TRADITION FORCED UPON THE BELIEVERS

The Early Believers knew the difference between Baal-Ashtoreth worship and the Worship of Yahweh! Yes, they knew the difference, and none of the Early Believers directly under the care of The Apostles celebrated Easter!

After the death of our Savior, **SEVERE PERSECUTION** arose at Yerusalem (**Acts 8:1**), and the Believers were scattered abroad. They were forced into slavery, and even put to death in some of the most horrible ways man could imagine. However, this was only the first, small persecution. Ten Great Persecutions came thereafter upon The Established House of Yahweh. The only people on the face of the earth who worshiped Father Yahweh, was The House of Yahweh Established by Yahshua during the time of the Apostles. This First Era of the Seven Eras of The House of Yahweh is called Smyrna. This Era and the four following it suffered these Religious Persecutions. Our book, *The Lost Faith of The Apostles and Prophets; History and Prophecy*, explains in detail the Seven Eras of The House of Yahweh, and the facts concerning the Ten Persecutions.

Baal and Ashtoreth worshipers had pre-eminence! From approximately the year 70 c.e. to the year 312 c.e., Baal and Ashtoreth worshipers openly practiced their religions under the benevolent eyes of man’s ruling governments. When Constantine became the Emperor of Rome— after the tenth, last Greatest Persecution under Dio-cletian—Baal and Ashtoreth worshipers then disguised the many pagan customs making them to appear Scriptural! By the time Constantine came to power, The House of Yahweh as an Established Organization had died out, just as Prophecy said it would. There was no true Organization, led by Yahweh’s Holy Spirit, to say to the Deceived World—**EASTER IS A PAGAN CELEBRATION!** Thus, the pagan celebrations became the Christian celebrations of today!

But, The House of Yahweh has been re-established in these Last Days according to the prophecies in **Micahyah 4:1** and **Isayah 2:2**. Praise Yahweh! For our Free Booklet, *The House of Yahweh Established*, write to: The House of Yahweh, Dept. I-Net, P.O. Box 2498, Abilene, TX 79604 . Now, in these Last Days The House of Yahweh is again telling this Deceived World that this worldly holiday called Easter is a pagan custom!
YAHWEH’S WARNING!

Throughout The Holy Scriptures we find **WARNINGS** from our Creator Yahweh and His Son, Yahshua Messiah, to **BEWARE** of Scriptural deception! As far back in time as the Scriptural Books of the Kings, this Female Goddess was being worshiped! The Holy Scriptures plainly show that the adoption of pagan practices and the Worship of Easter is condemned!

I Kings 11:33 *I will do this* Because **THEY HAVE FORSAKEN ME, AND WORSHIPED ASHTORETH** the Goddess of the Phoenicians, (Sidonians), Chemosh the God (El) of the Moabites, and Milcom (Molech) the God (El) of the people of Ammon, and **have not walked in My Ways, to do that which is right in My Eyes, and to keep My Statutes and My Judgments**, as David his father did.

Deuteronomy 12:29 When Yahweh your Father cuts off the nations from in front of you, and you displace them and live in their land, 30. **BE CAREFUL NOT TO BE ENSNARED INTO FOLLOWING THEM BY ASKING ABOUT THEIR GODS (ELOHIM), saying: How did these nations serve their gods (elohim)? I also will do the same.**

31. **YOU MUST NOT WORSHIP YAHWEH YOUR FATHER IN THEIR WAY, for every abomination to Yahweh, which He hates, they have done to their gods (elohim).** They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods (elohim).

32. Whatsoever I command you, be careful to observe and do it, you shall not add to it, nor take away from it.

Deuteronomy 8:19 **IF YOU, BY ANY MEANS, EVER FORGET YAHWEH YOUR FATHER, BY FOLLOWING HINDER GODS (ELOHIM) TO SERVE AND WORSHIP THEM, I testify and witness against you this day that YOU WILL SURELY PERISH.**

Revelation 18:3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the **kings of the earth have committed fornication with her**, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich through the abundance of her delicacies. 4. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying: **COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE, SO THAT YOU DO NOT PARTAKE IN HER SINS, AND SO THAT YOU DO NOT RECEIVE OF HER PLAGUES.**

The source reference materials which are available in any library throughout America, are replete with the Fact that the worship of Easter-Ishtar is the worship of a pagan goddess. Mankind's own reference books say the worship of Easter—a pagan goddess—is the most important Christian practice today! Can our Creator be pleased with this?

DO NOT PRACTICE IT!

Shortly, Easter Sunday Morning will be upon us. Almost the entire Christian World will participate in a Sunrise Service that they believe to be in celebration of the Resurrection of our Messiah. Factually, this is a pagan custom celebrated long before our Savior was even born! Yahweh condemns this Pagan Practice through the pages of your own Bible! These same Christians reject the Wonderful Feasts of Yahweh which are Ordained by Yahweh and will be kept Forever in the Kingdom of Yahweh! Read of Yahweh's Feasts in **Exodus Chapter Twelve, Leviticus Chapter Twenty-three, Yechetzqyah 45:21, Isayah 66:23 and Zecharyah 14:16-21.** The only ones who will be given Eternal Life in Yahweh's Kingdom are the ones who **OBEY EVERY WORD** that proceeds from Yahweh's mouth.

Deuteronomy 6:25

And **IT WILL BE OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, IF WE OBSERVE TO DO ALL THESE LAWS;** before Yahweh our Father, as He has commanded us.

Matthew 4:4 But He answered, and said; It is written: **MAN DOES NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF YAHWEH.**

Deuteronomy 8:2-3 2. You must remember that **Yahweh your Father led you** all the way these forty years in the wilderness, **in order to humble you, test and prove you**, and know what was in your heart; *the seat of your intelligence*, **to see whether you would keep His commandments, or whether you would not.** 3. So He humbled you, and allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna, which you did not know of nor did your fathers know of it; so He might make you to know that **MAN DOES NOT LIVE BY BREAD ONLY, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF YAHWEH,** does man live.

Revelation 22:14 **BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO DO HIS COMMANDMENTS, THAT THEY MAY HAVE RIGHT TO THE TREE OF LIFE,** and may enter in through the gates into the city. 15 For outside *are* dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and worshipers of gods (elohim) and everyone *who professes* to love, yet practices breaking the Law.

There is **NO SALVATION TO** the **WORSHIPERS OF BAAL AND ASHTORETH!** When Yahweh's Kingdom is Established on Earth all Baal and Ashtoreth Worship will stop entirely. Only our Father Yahweh, through His Son Yahshua our Messiah, will be worshiped! Only those who **RESIST** Satan's Influence and **OVERCOME** the **PAGAN WORSHIP** practiced today, and then turn to Yahweh in complete obedience will be a part of Yahweh's Soon Coming Kingdom! It would be much better to Obey Yahweh voluntarily now, thereby qualifying to reap the joyous reward of Eternal Life, rather than to voluntarily disobey Yahweh, thereby qualifying yourself to be one of those who will be cast into the lake of fire to be burned up and gotten out of the way! It is time to **COME OUT OF PAGAN WORSHIP** and start obeying Yahweh! Only Yahweh is able to give Eternal Life!