

## Pagan festivals

This world has long been turned over to Satan and we, who do not serve him, have to just keep ourselves separate from the world's influence. The world has been beguiled into worshipping demons and has yet to wake up (if they ever will). **1 Corinthians 10:19-20** says, *"What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to Elohai: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils."* Unfortunately, the church has long been infiltrated by him in the process of time and there is need for constant discernment, but we have an accurate tool that can help navigate through the muddy pool of lies out there. **Hebrews 4:12-13** says, *"For the word of YAH is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."*

Our Father YAHUAH has set a specific set of rules for us to serve him that he doesn't want us to deviate from, because any form of deviation is idolatry.

### **Deuteronomy 12:30-32,**

*"Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto YAHUAH Elohai: for every abomination to YAHUAH, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."*

**Jeremiah 44:4-5, 10** *"Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods.*

*They are not humbled even unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in my law, nor in my statutes, that I set before you and before your fathers."*

Read the chapter of **2 Kings 23** up until verse 30 to understand how we as Qodeshim are supposed to treat all works of sin and idolatry. Let's begin.

## **Pagan New Year's Day**

### **Ancient New Year's Celebrations**

The earliest recorded festivities in honor of a new year's arrival date back some 4,000 years to ancient Babylon. For the Babylonians, the first new moon following the vernal equinox—the day in late March with an equal amount of sunlight and darkness—heralded the start of a new year. They marked the occasion with a massive religious festival called Akitu (derived from the Sumerian word for barley, which was cut in the spring) that involved a different ritual on each of its 11 days. In addition to the new year, Akitu celebrated the mythical victory of the Babylonian sky god Marduk over the evil sea goddess Tiamat and served an important political purpose: It was during this time that a new king was crowned or that the current ruler's divine mandate was symbolically renewed.

Throughout antiquity, civilizations around the world developed increasingly sophisticated calendars, typically pinning the first day of the year to an agricultural or astronomical event. In Egypt, for instance, the year began with the annual flooding of the Nile, which coincided with the rising of the star Sirius. The first day of the Lunar New Year, meanwhile, occurred with the second new moon after the winter solstice. A variety of other dates tied to the seasons were also used by various ancient cultures. The Phoenicians, and Persians began their new year with the fall equinox, and the Greeks celebrated it on the winter solstice.

### **January 1 Becomes New Year's Day**

The early Roman calendar designated March 1 as the new year. The calendar had just 10 months and 304 days, beginning with March. This date surrounded the vernal equinox. That the new year once began with the month of March is still reflected in some of the names of the months. September through December, our ninth through twelfth months, were originally positioned as the seventh through tenth months (septem is Latin for "seven," octo is "eight," novem is "nine," and decem is "ten." It was created by Romulus, the founder of Rome, in the eighth century B.C. A later king, Numa Pompilius, is credited with adding the months of Januarius and Februarius. The new year was moved from March to January because that was the beginning of the civil year, the month that the two newly elected Roman consuls—the highest officials in the Roman republic—began their one-year tenure. Over the centuries, the calendar fell out of sync with the sun, and in 46 B.C. the emperor Julius Caesar decided to solve the problem by consulting with the most prominent astronomers and mathematicians of his time. He introduced the Julian calendar, which closely resembles the more modern Gregorian calendar that most countries around the world use today.

As part of his reform, Caesar instituted January 1 as the first day of the year, partly to honor the month's namesake: **Janus**, the Roman god of beginnings, whose two faces allowed him to look back into the past and forward into the future. Romans celebrated by offering sacrifices to Janus, exchanging gifts with one another, decorating their homes with laurel branches and attending raucous parties. In medieval Europe, Christian leaders temporarily replaced January 1 as the first of the year with days carrying more religious significance, such as December 25 (the anniversary of Jesus' birth) and March 25 (the Feast of the Annunciation); Pope Gregory XIII reestablished January 1 as New Year's Day in 1582.

### New Year Resolutions

The practice of making resolutions for the new year is thought to have first caught on among the ancient Babylonians, who made promises in order to earn the favor of the gods and start the year off on the right foot. (They would reportedly vow to pay off debts and return borrowed farm equipment.)

## Pagan feast of Easter

**Jeremiah 7:18-20**, *"The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to **make cakes** to the **queen of heaven**, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger. Do they provoke me to anger? saith YAHUAH: do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces? Therefore thus saith the Adon YAHUAH; Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched."*

**1 Kings 11:31-33**, *"And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith YAHUAH, the Elohai of Yasharel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee:  
(But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Yasharel:) Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped **Ashtoreth** the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father."*

**Judges 10:6**, *"And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of YAHUAH, and served Baalim\*, and Ashtaroth\*, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook YAHUAH, and served not him."*

**1 Samuel 12:10, 20-22**, *"And they cried unto YAHUAH, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken YAHUAH, and have served Baalim\* and Ashtaroth\*: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee.  
And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following YAHUAH, but serve YAHUAH with all your heart; And turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain. For YAHUAH will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased YAHUAH to make you his people."*

\*Ashtaroth is plural for Ashtoreth.

\*Baalim is plural for Baal.

What this means is that they served variations of the same false god and goddess. At the bottom of this section I will provide a list of the different names this false goddess has.

### Who is Ashtoreth/Ishtar?

Ishtar, (Akkadian), Sumerian **Inanna**, in Mesopotamian religion, goddess of war and sexual love. Ishtar is the Akkadian counterpart of the West Semitic goddess **Astarte**. Inanna, an important goddess in the Sumerian pantheon, came to be identified with Ishtar, but it is uncertain whether Inanna is also of Semitic origin or whether, as is more likely, her similarity to Ishtar caused the two to be identified. In the figure of Inanna several traditions seem to have been combined: she is sometimes the daughter of the sky god An, sometimes his wife; in other myths she is the daughter of Nanna, god of the moon, or of the wind god, Enlil. In her earliest manifestations she was associated with the storehouse and thus personified as the goddess of dates, wool, meat, and grain; the storehouse gates were her emblem. She was also the goddess of rain and thunderstorms—leading to her association with An, the sky god—and was often pictured with the lion, whose roar resembled thunder. The power attributed to her in war may have arisen from her connection with storms. Inanna was also a fertility figure, and, as goddess of the storehouse and the bride of the god Dumuzi-Amaushumgalana, who represented the growth and fecundity of the date palm, she was characterized as young, beautiful, and impulsive—never as helpmate or mother. She is sometimes referred to as the Lady of the Date Clusters.

Ishtar's primary legacy from the Sumerian tradition is the role of fertility figure; she evolved, however, into a more complex character, surrounded in myth by death and disaster, a goddess of contradictory connotations and forces—fire and fire-quenching, rejoicing and tears, fair play and enmity. The Akkadian Ishtar is also, to a greater extent, an astral deity, associated with the planet **Venus**. With **Shamash**, the sun god, and **Sin**, the moon god, she forms a secondary astral triad. In this manifestation her symbol is a star with 6, 8, or 16 rays within a circle. As goddess of Venus, delighting in bodily love, Ishtar was the protectress of prostitutes and the patroness of the alehouse. Part of her cult worship probably included temple prostitution. Her popularity was universal in the ancient Middle East, and in many centres of worship she probably subsumed numerous local goddesses.

Ishtar had a significant impact on the images and cults of many later goddesses, including the famous Greek goddess of love, **Aphrodite**, and other well-known goddesses such as Astarte. Many goddesses from the Classical period, such as **Aphrodite**, **Artemis**, and **Athena**, have continued to function as important cultural symbols. Ishtar was also known to be the wife of **Tammuz**. In later myth she was known as Queen of the Universe, taking on the powers of **An**, **Enlil**, and **Enki**.

### Easter

**Ēostre** (Proto-Germanic: \*Austrō(n)) is a West Germanic spring goddess. The name is reflected in Old English: \***Ēastre** ([ˈæ:astre]; Northumbrian dialect: **Ēastro**, Mercian

and West Saxon dialects: **Ēostre** ['e:ostre]), Old High German: **Ōstara**, and Old Saxon: **Āsteron**. By way of the Germanic month bearing her name (Northumbrian: **Ēosturmōnaþ**, West Saxon: **Ēastermōnaþ**; Old High German: **Ōstarmānoth**), she is the namesake of the festival of Easter in some languages. The Old English deity **Ēostre** is attested solely by Bede in his 8th-century work *The Reckoning of Time*, where Bede states that during **Ēosturmōnaþ** (the equivalent of April), pagan Anglo-Saxons had held feasts in **Ēostre**'s honour, but that this tradition had died out over time and was reinvented by assimilation of the Christian faith as a so-called celebration of the resurrection of Jesus.

There is a holiday named for the goddess is part of the neopagan Wiccan Wheel of the Year (Ostara, 21 March). In some forms of Germanic neopaganism, **Ēostre** (or Ostara) is venerated. Regarding this veneration, Carole M. Cusack comments that, among adherents, **Ēostre** is "associated with the coming of spring and the dawn, and her festival is celebrated at the spring equinox. Because she brings renewal, rebirth from the death of winter, some Heathens associate **Ēostre** with **Iðunn**, keeper of the apples of youth in Scandinavian mythology.

In the early English versions this word was frequently used as the translation of the Greek *pascha* (the Passover). When the Authorized Version (1611) was formed, the word "passover" was used in all passages in which this word *pascha* occurred, except in Act 12:4. In the Revised Version the proper word, "passover," is always used.

Some early Christians chose to celebrate the resurrection of Christ on the same date as the Jewish Passover, which fell around day 14 of the month of Nisan, in March or April. These Christians were known as Quartodecimans (the name means "Fourteeners").

By choosing this date, they put the focus on when Jesus died and also emphasized continuity with the Judaism out of which Christianity emerged. Some others instead preferred to hold the festival on a Sunday, since that was when Jesus' tomb was believed to have been found.

In A.D. 325, the Pagan Emperor Constantine, who favored Christianity, convened a meeting of Christian leaders to resolve important disputes at the Council of Nicaea. The most fateful of its decisions was about the status of Christ, whom the council recognized as "fully human and fully divine." This council also resolved that Easter should be fixed on a Sunday, not on day 14 of Nisan (The council actually intended to get rid of the Jews influence completely). As a result, Easter is now celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon of the vernal equinox.

Easter is not only a movable holiday but a multiple one: in most years Western Christian churches and Eastern Orthodox churches celebrate Easter on different dates. In 2015, for example, Easter will be celebrated on April 5 by Western churches and April 12 by Orthodox churches. But in 2014, the two celebrations occurred on the same date, April 20.

The theological inconsistency of two Easters has remained a thorny problem for the Christian Church. "It has long been recognized that to celebrate this fundamental aspect of the Christian faith on different dates," states the World Council of Churches, "gives a divided witness and compromises the churches' credibility and effectiveness in bringing the Gospel to the world."

#### A Simple Formula, Complicated Interpretations

The formula for Easter—"The first Sunday after the first full moon on or after the vernal equinox"—is identical for both Western and Orthodox Easters, but the churches base the dates on different calendars: Western churches use the Gregorian calendar, the standard calendar for much of the world, and Orthodox churches use the older, Julian calendar.

That much is straightforward. But actually calculating these dates involves a bewildering array of ecclesiastical moons and paschal full moons, the astronomical equinox, and the fixed equinox— and that's in addition to the two different calendar systems.

The Eastern Orthodox Church also applies the formula so that Easter always falls after Passover, since the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ took place after he entered Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. In the Western Church, Easter sometimes precedes Passover by weeks.

#### Why One Faith and Two Easters?

The Western church does not use the actual, or astronomically correct date for the vernal equinox, but a fixed date (March 21). And by full moon it does not mean the astronomical full moon but the "ecclesiastical moon," which is based on tables created by the church. These constructs allow the date of Easter to be calculated in advance rather than determined by actual astronomical observances, which are naturally less predictable.

This division between the Eastern and Western Churches has no strong theological basis, but neither is it simply a technical skirmish. As the World Council of Churches has noted, much of Orthodox Christianity is located in the Middle East, where it has frequently been the minority religion, and in Eastern Europe, where until recently it faced hostility from communist governments.

The emphasis on honoring tradition and maintaining an intact religious identity was therefore crucial. Seen in this context, changing the rules governing its most important religious holiday chisels away at the foundations of an already beleaguered religious heritage.

So, man and not YAH changed the memorial day of the Yasharelites leaving Egypt as well as the day when Yahushua died for our sins. Not only that, the week of Paschca (Passover) or Feast of unleavened bread is replaced by the consumption of rabbits, eggs, buns and cakes which are not allowed during that holy week. Refer to **Exodus 12:15-20**, I'll just quote verse 20 here: "*Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread.*" Also you can Read **1 Corinthians 5:6-8**.

### **Easter Eggs**

Eggs in paganism symbolize the circle of life, duality, love, light, life, fertility, birth, offspring and beginnings.

The Greeks and Romans of the ancient world placed eggs in tombs or left nests of eggs beside them – a sign of life after death – while Maori people buried their dead with an egg of a now-extinct moa in one hand. Still today, Jewish mourners traditionally eat eggs after a funeral to signify loss and the circle of life.

More than 2,500 years ago, eggshells were decorated as part of spring rituals in Africa and elsewhere to symbolise new growth and life. Undoubtedly influenced by such traditions, Christianity adopted the egg to denote the Easter Resurrection of Christ. The decorative painted eggs of Eastern European countries, such as the pysanka of Ukraine, were used in Christian rituals from the 10th century AD. By the late 13th century ostrich eggs, which had first hung in mosques to symbolise light and life, began to appear in churches, too, and featured in Easter ceremonies.

Well before the advent of Christianity, eggs were also used ritually to encourage human and agricultural fertility. Such practices continued so that, for instance, in 17th-century France, a bride would break an egg to ensure fertility when she entered her new home, while German farmers smeared eggs, bread and flour on their ploughs in spring as they sowed their fields.

Women of the indigenous Japanese Ainu people had to take eggs from the nests of certain birds and present them to their husbands or fathers. The women would then mix the eggs with seeds to be planted that year, while the men prayed for good crops and made inao (talismans) to place in the nests.

### **Easter Bunny**



Based upon mythology and ancient cultures, the rabbit symbolizes prosperity, luck, wisdom, sexual activity, duality and fertility. People see having a rabbit's foot as bringing to themselves good luck. In Chinese culture the rabbit is the 4th animal of the Zodiac and is seen as the luckiest animal out of the 12. Many times in ancient Chinese culture they saw the rabbits as symbols of the moon. The Jade rabbit is a companion of the moon goddess.

The rabbit also symbolizes the moon in Japanese culture. This practice of making sweet treats gives rabbits a bonus symbology. They're commonly associated with the New Year and the rebirth of the world as it moves into spring. In south-eastern Native culture, rabbits are tricksters, symbolic of cleverness, wit, and guile.

### **What Do Rabbits Signify in The Bible?**

Rabbits are rarely mentioned in the bible, but when they are, it is not overly positive.

According to the bible, humans should not eat rabbits. They are considered unclean animals because "he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof." So, in a biblical sense, rabbits do not really symbolize anything.

Despite this, the rabbit is indelibly connected to the Christian holiday of Easter. After all, children are taught about the Easter bunny at a young age.

### **Why Do Rabbits Symbolize Easter?**

The bible, of course, makes no mention of the Easter bunny. This leads many people to wonder why rabbits are so symbolically connected with Easter as a holiday.

There is no way to be certain of how this tradition began. However, it is startlingly similar to a creature of German mythology. The 'Osterhase' or 'Oschter Haws' is an egg-laying hare which came in springtime. German children would make nests in which this creature could lay its eggs safely. With the migration of many Germans to the U.S. in the 1700's, the tradition spread.

**Various names for Ashtoreth:** Ostara (German), Artemis (Greek), Hekate/Hecate (Greek), Diana (Roman), Trivia (Latin), Beltis, Isis (Egyptian), Bendis/Dilonchos (Trachia (ancient kingdom that spread across Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria), Venus (Italian), Cerridwen (Welsh), Chang'e/Chang Xi (Chinese), Coyolxauhqui (Aztec), Luna (Roman), Mama Quilla (Incan), Mawu (African), Rhiannon/Rigantona (Celtic), Selene (Greek), Yolkai Estsan (Native American), Aega (Greek), Aine (Irish), Aisha (Arabic), Altalune (Latin), Anahita (Persian - Iranian goddess), Arianrhod (Welsh - Celtic goddess), Dalmin (Korean), Deva (Hindu), Epona (Celtic), Haliya (Filipino), Hanwi (Native

American), Ishtar (Arabic), Jezanna (Africa), Juna (Roman), Kuan Yin (Buddhist), Lasya (Tibetan), Maya (Mayan), Nanna (Norse), Raith (Hindu), Sadarnuna (Sumerian),

**Jeremiah 7:8-11**, *"Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith YAHUAH."*

Please read the entire chapter of **Jeremiah 44**.

## Valentines Day

**Valentine's Day** is a time to celebrate romance and love and kissy-face fealty. But the origins of this festival of candy and cupids are actually dark, bloody — and a bit muddled.

Though no one has pinpointed the exact origin of the holiday, one good place to start is **ancient Rome**, where men hit on women by, well, hitting them.

Those Wild And Crazy Romans.

### **The Salt: How Chocolate Became A Sweet (But Not So Innocent) Consort To Valentine's Day**

From Feb. 13 to 15, the Romans celebrated the feast of **Lupercalia**. The men sacrificed a goat and a dog, then whipped women with the hides of the animals they had just slain.

The Roman romantics "were drunk. They were naked," says Noel Lenski, a historian at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Young women would actually line up for the men to hit them, Lenski says. They believed this would make them fertile.

The brutal fete included a matchmaking lottery, in which young men drew the names of women from a jar. The couple would then be, um, coupled up for the duration of the festival — or longer, if the match was right.

The ancient Romans may also be responsible for the name of our modern day of love. **Emperor Claudius II** executed two men — both named Valentine — on **Feb. 14** of different years in the 3rd century A.D. Their martyrdom was honored by the Catholic Church with the celebration of **St. Valentine's Day**.

Later, **Pope Gelasius I** muddled things in the 5th century by combining St. Valentine's Day with **Lupercalia** to expel the pagan rituals. But the festival was more of a theatrical interpretation of what it had once been. Lenski adds, "It was a little more of a drunken revel, but the Christians put clothes back on it. That didn't stop it from being a day of fertility and love."

Around the same time, the Normans celebrated Galatin's Day. Galatin meant "lover of women." That was likely confused with St. Valentine's Day at some point, in part because they sound alike.

As the years went on, the holiday grew sweeter. Chaucer and Shakespeare romanticized it in their work, and it gained popularity throughout Britain and the rest of Europe. Handmade paper cards became the tokens-du-jour in the Middle Ages.

### **Business Be Mine? Nope. SweetHeart Candies Hard To Find This Valentine's Day**

Eventually, the tradition made its way to the New World. The industrial revolution ushered in factory-made cards in the 19th century. And in 1913, Hallmark Cards of Kansas City, Mo., began mass producing valentines. February has not been the same since.

Today, the holiday is big business: According to market research firm IBIS World, "Valentine's Day sales reached \$17.6 billion last year; this year's sales are expected to total \$18.6 billion."

But that commercialization has spoiled the day for many. Helen Fisher, a sociologist at Rutgers University, says we have only ourselves to blame.

"This isn't a command performance," she says. "If people didn't want to buy Hallmark cards, they would not be bought, and Hallmark would go out of business."

### **All Songs Considered**

Most love songs are just about idolatry anyway, if you listen to them with enlightened ears. Most people don't even know what true love is. It's just a lot of inordinate affection: obsession, master & slave, adultery etc.

### **Between Love And Hate: A Valentine's Day Playlist**

And so the celebration of Valentine's Day goes on, in varied ways. Many will break the bank buying jewelry and flowers for their beloved. Others will celebrate in a SAD (that's Single Awareness Day) way, dining alone and binging on self-gifted chocolates. A few may even be spending this day the same way the early Romans did. But let's not go there.

### **Who is Cupid?**

In classical mythology, Cupid /'kju:pid/ (Latin: Cupīdō [kʊ'pi:do:], meaning "passionate desire") is the god of desire, erotic love, attraction and affection. He is the counterpart of the Greek god **Eros** and the equivalent of Amor in Latin poetry. According to myth, Cupid was the son of **Mercury**, the winged messenger of the gods, and **Venus**, the

goddess of love. He often appeared as a winged infant carrying a bow and a quiver of arrows whose wounds inspired love or passion in his every victim. He was sometimes portrayed wearing armour like that of Mars, the god of war, perhaps to suggest ironic parallels between warfare and romance or to symbolize the invincibility of love.

The ancient Roman Cupid was a god who embodied desire, but he had no temples or religious practices independent of other Roman deities such as Venus, whom he often accompanies as a side figure in cult statues. A Cupid might appear among the several statuettes for private devotion in a household shrine, but there is no clear distinction between figures for veneration and those displayed as art or decoration. This is a distinction from his Greek equivalent, Eros, who was commonly worshipped alongside his mother **Aphrodite**, and was even given a sacred day upon the 4th of every month. Roman temples often served a secondary purpose as art museums, and Cicero mentions a statue of "Cupid" (Eros) by Praxiteles that was consecrated at a sacrarium and received religious veneration jointly with Hercules.

### **Who is Pan?**

Pan, in Greek mythology, a fertility deity, more or less bestial in form. He was associated by the Romans with Faunus. Originally an Arcadian deity, his name is a Doric contraction of paon ("pasturer") but was commonly supposed in antiquity to be connected with pan ("all"). His father was usually said to be Hermes, but a comic invention held that he was the product of an orgy of Odysseus's wife Penelope with her many suitors. Plutarch wrote that during the reign of Tiberius the crew of a ship sailing near Greece heard a voice calling out "The great Pan is dead." Christians took this episode to be simultaneous with the death of Christ.

Pan was generally represented as a vigorous and lustful figure having the horns, legs, and ears of a goat; in later art the human parts of his form were much more emphasized. Pan is famous for his sexual prowess and is often depicted with a phallus. There was a legend that Pan seduced the moon goddess Selene, deceiving her with a sheep's fleece. He haunted the high hills, and his chief concern was with flocks and herds, not with agriculture; hence he can make humans, like cattle, stampede in "panic" terror. Like a shepherd, he was a piper and he rested at noon.

With his homeland in rustic Arcadia, he is also recognized as the god of fields, groves, wooded glens, and often affiliated with sex; because of this, Pan is connected to fertility and the season of spring.

## **Halloween**

### **Deuteronomy 18:10-13**

*There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consuler with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto YAHUAH: and because of these abominations YAHUAH Elohai doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with YAHUAH Elohai.*

### **Deuteronomy 14:1-2**

*"Ye are the children of YAHUAH your Elohai: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead. For thou art an holy people unto YAHUAH Elohai, and YAHUAH hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth."*

### **Luke 20:38**

*"For he is not a Elohai of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him."*

Halloween's origins date back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced sow-in). The Celts, who lived 2,000 years ago, mostly in the area that is now Ireland, the United Kingdom and northern France, celebrated their new year on November 1.

This day marked the end of summer and the harvest and the beginning of the dark, cold winter, a time of year that was often associated with human death.

Even though these Celts were ruled by various kings, the real power behind the throne was in the hands of the Druids. They were a secret, bloodthirsty priestly society who ruled by terror, sorcery and witchcraft. Even the various Celtic kings feared their black powers.

The most important religious day for the Druids was the celebration of Samhain, Lord of the Dead. The Celtic New Year began on November 1st. The night before, October 31st, was the night to reverence Samhain. It was the time of the falling of leaves and general seasonal decay—so the appropriate time to celebrate the Lord of the Dead.

They believed that on that night the Spirit world came into its closest contact with the human world. As such, it was a night when the souls of the departed dead returned to their former homes to be entertained by the living (much like ancestor worship is practiced today by many religions).

It was also a time when demonic and evil spirits came out of their shadowy nether world. If proper food, shelter and provision were not provided, these evil spirits would cast spells, wreak havoc on man and beast, and generally torment the living! If the proper "treat" was not awaiting to appease them, then they would respond with an appropriate "trick"—thus our custom of "trick or treating."

In addition to causing trouble and damaging crops, Celts thought that the presence of the otherworldly spirits made it easier for the Druids, or Celtic priests, to make predictions about the future. For a people entirely dependent on the volatile natural world, these prophecies were an important source of comfort during the long, dark winter.

The perverted climax of this dark night was animal and human sacrifice to placate this Lord of the Dead. It was carried out by the priestly Druids who would rip the hearts out of their victims and use the blood for religious rites. They would also use the entrails and other body parts to divine the future and forecast the New Year. The remains were then burned in "bone fires," from which we get the popular "bonfire." When the celebration was over, they re-lit their hearth fires, which they had extinguished earlier that evening, from the sacred bonfire to help protect them during the coming winter.

Samhain celebrated a broken barrier between the physical world and the spiritual one, hence why items such as ghosts have made their way into common Halloween lore. The festival evolved throughout the middle ages, until Christianity took hold of the tradition.

By **27 AD**, Rome celebrates harvest yearly in the fall in honor of Pomona, the goddess of fruit. The origin of bobbing for apples may have come from here. Roman general Agrippa builds the Pantheon and it is used for worship to the Gods.

By **A.D. 43**, the Roman Empire had conquered the majority of Celtic territory. In the course of the 400 years that they ruled the Celtic lands, They incorporated **Feralia**, a sort of Halloween look-alike, a day in late October when the Romans traditionally commemorated the passing of the dead.

By **100 AD**: Roman Emperor Hadrin rebuilds the Pantheon and dedicates it to Cybele, the goddess of nature. Here teh Romans worship their gods and honor and pray to the dead.

#### All Saints' Day

On **May 13, A.D. 609**, Pope Boniface IV dedicated the Pantheon in Rome in honor of all Christian martyrs, and the Catholic feast of All Martyrs Day was established in the Western church. He dedicates it to the virgin Mary. It was a transition from Cybele,

goddess of nature, to Mary, mother of Jesus. Every May, a major celebration was held in the Pantheon to the Virgin Mary.

By **400-100 AD** The Dark Ages see a rise in witchcraft and many of our modern halloween traditions. One of the most important aspects of witchcraft was the number of celebrations held each year called "Witches' Sabbaths." The most important of those was known as the "High Sabbath," or the "Black Sabbath," which occurred on October 31st.

It was generally a night of feasting and revelry. It was that feast that gave us many of the common paraphernalia of our Halloween like witches on broomsticks, black cats, death's skulls and pumpkins. So much of our Halloween folklore today stems directly from this High Witches' Sabbath that was celebrated in Europe during the Dark Ages.

**800s:** Christians change All Saints Day to incorporate October 31-November 1st, perhaps in an effort to convert the pagan holiday. Similar traditions were known to happen with Christmas trees and their association with Druid celebrations.

**1000 AD:** November 2 gets incorporated into the All Saints Day celebrations, known as All Souls Days. Christians would dress up in angel, devil, and saint costumes. All Souls' Day was celebrated similarly to Samhain, with big bonfires, parades. The All Saints' Day celebration was also called All-hallows or All-hallowmas (from Middle English *Alhallowmesse* meaning All Saints' Day) and the night before it, the traditional night of Samhain in the Celtic religion, began to be called All-Hallows Eve and, eventually, Halloween.

**1556:** Allhallowtide, a three-day celebration (Oct 31-Nov 2) involved Christians dressing in all black to mourn the dead and go door to door asking for food for the dead. The origin of trick or treating started here.

**1600s:** When our Puritan ancestors came to America, they were far too Biblically oriented to allow such occult practices. They knew that all forms of witchcraft were strictly forbidden by God as an abomination. The Puritans ban Halloween, claiming it's a Catholic holiday. Catholics continue to celebrate the tradition for the next two hundred years. Carved turnips turn into pumpkins, and participants ask for treats instead of food in their door to door inquiries.

**1800s:** Due to the Potato Famine in Ireland, many Irish Catholics flee to America and bring the Halloween traditions with them. As is the case with most holidays in America now, various traditions have evolved since then. With them came many of their ancient pagan observances and practices, including Samhain, the Festival of the Dead, or



Halloween. This pagan practice took firm root in American soil and has been a widely accepted cultural tradition ever since.

### History of Trick-or-Treating

Borrowing from European traditions, Americans began to dress up in costumes and go house to house asking for food or money, a practice that eventually became today's "trick-or-treat" tradition. Young women believed that on Halloween they could divine the name or appearance of their future husband by doing tricks with yarn, apple parings or mirrors.

Today, Americans spend an estimated \$6 billion annually on Halloween, making it the country's second largest commercial holiday after Christmas.

### All Souls Day and Soul Cakes

The American Halloween tradition of trick-or-treating probably dates back to the early All Souls' Day parades in England. During the festivities, poor citizens would beg for food and families would give them pastries called "soul cakes" in return for their promise to pray for the family's dead relatives.

The distribution of soul cakes was encouraged by the church as a way to replace the ancient practice of leaving food and wine for roaming spirits. The practice, which was referred to as "going a-souling," was eventually taken up by children who would visit the houses in their neighborhood and be given ale, food and money.

The tradition of dressing in costume for Halloween has both European and Celtic roots. Hundreds of years ago, winter was an uncertain and frightening time. Food supplies often ran low and, for the many people afraid of the dark, the short days of winter were full of constant worry.

On Halloween, when it was believed that ghosts came back to the earthly world, people thought that they would encounter ghosts if they left their homes. To avoid being recognized by these ghosts, people would wear masks when they left their homes after dark so that the ghosts would mistake them for fellow spirits.

On Halloween, to keep ghosts away from their houses, people would place bowls of food outside their homes to appease the ghosts and prevent them from attempting to enter.

### The jack-o'-lantern

The jack-o'-lantern has a long history with Halloween, although our favorite demonic faces haven't always been carved out of pumpkins.

Their origin comes from an Irish myth about Stingy Jack, who tricked the Devil for his own monetary gain. When Jack died, God didn't allow him into heaven, and the Devil didn't let him into hell, so Jack was sentenced to roam the earth for eternity. In Ireland, people started to carve demonic faces out of turnips to frighten away Jack's wandering soul. When Irish immigrants moved to the U.S., they began carving jack-o'-lanterns from pumpkins, as these were native to the region.

## Christmas

### **Jeremiah 10:2-5**

*Thus saith YAHUAH, "Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are **vain**: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good."*

Read Ezekiel chpt 8 and know why we should not be apart of these 'festivities'.

The Christian festival of Christmas is more coincidental than genuine. Christianity being derived from the Jewish faith has somehow taken on German, Egyptian, Greek and Roman traditions and made them into their own holiday.

Christmas, the holiday commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ, is celebrated by a majority of Christians on December 25 in the Gregorian calendar. But early Christians did not celebrate his birth, and no one knows on which date Jesus was actually born (some scholars believe that the actual date was in the early spring, placing it closer to Easter, the holiday commemorating his Resurrection. Some believe that he was born in Autumn).

The origins of the holiday and its December date lie in the ancient Greco-Roman world, as commemorations probably began sometime in the 2nd century. There are at least three possible origins for the December date. The Roman Christian historian Sextus Julius Africanus dated Jesus' conception to March 25 (the same date upon which he held that the world was created), which, after nine months in his mother's womb, would result in a December 25 birth.

It was also the birthday of the Indo-European deity **Mithra**, a god of light and loyalty whose cult was at the time growing popular among Roman soldiers.

Mithra, also spelled **Mithras**, Sanskrit Mitra, in ancient Indo-Iranian mythology, the **god of light**, whose cult spread from India in the east to as far west as Spain, Great Britain, and Germany. (See Mithraism.) The first written mention of the Vedic Mitra dates to 1400 BC. His worship spread to Persia and, after the defeat of the Persians by Alexander the Great, throughout the Hellenic world. In the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, the cult of Mithra, carried and supported by the soldiers of the Roman Empire, was the

chief rival to the newly developing religion of Christianity. The Roman emperors Commodus and Julian were initiates of Mithraism, and in 307 Diocletian consecrated a temple on the Danube River to Mithra, "Protector of the Empire."

According to myth, Mithra was born, bearing a torch and armed with a knife, beside a sacred stream and under a sacred tree, a child of the earth itself. He soon rode, and later killed, the life-giving cosmic bull, whose blood fertilizes all vegetation. Mithra's slaying of the bull was a popular subject of Hellenic art and became the prototype for a bull-slaying ritual of fertility in the Mithraic cult.

As god of light, Mithra was associated with the Greek sun god, Helios, and the **Roman Sol Invictus**. He is often paired with Anahita, goddess of the fertilizing waters.

The church in Rome began formally celebrating Christmas on December 25 in 336, during the reign of the emperor Constantine. As Constantine had made Christianity the effective religion of the empire, some have speculated that choosing this date had the political motive of weakening the established pagan celebrations. The date was not widely accepted in the Eastern Empire, where January 6 had been favored, for another half-century, and Christmas did not become a major Christian festival until the 9th century.

The awkward mixture of traditions we draw on at Christmas and New Year, complete with remnants of ancient winter solstice customs are quite confusing. The solstice use of evergreen plants has become a part of Christmas now, but even the special traditions of mistletoe make it the most difficult to link to Christmas proper. Let's take a look at the true origins of Christmas and its traditions.

### **Mistletoe traditions**

The druidic priesthood valued, even **worshipped**, mistletoe where it grew on their sacred trees. The ritual of oak and mistletoe is a Celtic religious ceremony, in which white-clad druids would climb the sacred oak tree to harvest the mistletoe, cutting it with a golden sickle, then let it fall naturally to be caught in a hide or cloak before it touched the ground. If it did reach the ground it would lose its special powers. They sacrificed two white bulls and used the mistletoe to make an elixir to cure infertility and the effects of poison. The ritual, known from a single passage in **Pliny's Natural History**, has helped shape the image of the druid in the popular imagination.

The only extant source for this ritual is a passage in the Natural History by Roman historian Pliny the Elder, written in the 1st century AD. Speaking of mistletoe, he writes:

"We should not omit to mention the great admiration that the Gauls have for it as well. The druids – that is what they call their magicians – hold nothing more sacred than the mistletoe and a tree on which it is growing, provided it is a hard-timbered oak [robur].... Mistletoe is rare and when found it is gathered with great ceremony, and particularly on the sixth day of the moon.... Hailing the moon in a native word that means 'healing all things,' they prepare a ritual sacrifice and banquet beneath a tree and bring up two white bulls, whose horns are bound for the first time on this occasion. A priest arrayed in white vestments climbs the tree and, with a golden sickle, cuts down the mistletoe, which is caught in a white cloak. Then finally they kill the victims, praying to a god to render his gift propitious to those on whom he has bestowed it. They believe that mistletoe given in drink will impart fertility to any animal that is barren and that it is an antidote to all poisons."

### **Kissing tradition**

The plant has had a special place in mid-winter customs for a very long time, and its use pre-dates Christianity.

The kissing tradition is a remnant of an ancient **fertility** tradition, helped along by some re-invention in the 18th and 19th centuries when druidic ideas were reborn. It may originally have been rather a local custom and not a genuine national tradition. But it became amazingly popular, particularly in Britain and abroad in English-speaking countries (USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand etc), and eventually everywhere.

### **Warding off evil traditions**

One particularly interesting tradition is that mistletoe can ward off evil. One popular version of this suggest that mistletoe brought into the house at Christmas/mid-winter/New Year (depending on your custom) should be kept hanging for a full 12 months. This will protect the house from evil and prevent evil spirits from entering. The old mistletoe can be ceremoniously burned after new mistletoe is brought in.

### **Christmas tree traditions**

A Christmas tree adorned with ornaments and lights is a centrepiece of the festive season. But have you ever wondered where the tradition comes from?

Evergreen trees and plants have been used to celebrate winter festivals for thousands of years, long before the advent of Christianity. People in the Northern Hemisphere used

evergreen plants to decorate their homes, particularly the doors, to celebrate the Winter Solstice. On December 21 or December 22, the day is the shortest and the night the longest. Traditionally, this time of the year is seen as the return in strength of the sun god who had been weakened during winter — and the evergreen plants served as a reminder that the god would glow again and summer was to be expected.

Ancient **Egyptians** used green palm rushes as part of their worship of the **god Ra** while in Northern Europe, the **Celts** decorated their **druid temples** with evergreen boughs which signified everlasting life. Further up north, the **Vikings** thought evergreens were the plants of **Balder**, the god of light and peace. Early **Romans** used evergreens to decorate their temples at the festival of **Saturnalia**.

In the early days of Christianity, the birth of Jesus was set at the last day of Saturnalia by the first Christian Romans in power to approach pagans, even though scholars assert Jesus was born nine months later. It was a clever political ploy, some say, which in time transformed Saturnalia into a celebration of the birth of Christ.

In 1419, a guild in Freiburg put up a tree decorated with apples, flour-paste wafers, tinsel and gingerbread. In some Christian cults, Adam and Eve were considered saints, and people celebrated them during Christmas Eve.

In “Paradise Plays” that were performed to celebrate the feast day of Adam and Eve, a tree of knowledge was represented by an evergreen fir with apples tied to its branches. Flanders finds documentation of trees decorated with wool thread, straw, apples, nuts and pretzels. The clergy banned these practices from the public life, considering them acts of heathenry.

The oldest Christmas tree market is thought to have been located just over the southwestern German border in Strasbourg in Alsace (which was back then part of the Rhineland, now in present-day France), where unadorned Christmas trees were sold during the 17th century as Weihnachtsbaum, German for Christmas tree. Flanders says the “first decorated indoor tree” was recorded in 1605, in Strasbourg, decorated with roses, apples, wafers and other sweets, according to her research.

Demand for Christmas trees was so high in the 15th century that laws were passed in Strasbourg cracking down on people cutting pine branches. Ordinances throughout the region of Alsace limited each household to one tree in the 1530s.

During these early days of the Christmas tree, many statesmen and members of the clergy condemned their use as a celebration of Christ. Lutheran minister Johann von Dannhauer, for instance, complained that the symbol distracted people from the true evergreen tree, Jesus Christ. The English Puritans condemned a number of customs

associated with Christmas, such as the use of the Yule log, holly and mistletoe. Oliver Cromwell, the influential 17th-century British politician, preached against the “the heathen traditions” of Christmas carols, decorated trees, and any joyful expression that desecrated “that sacred event.”

As Germans emigrated to other parts of the world the tradition also spread. But in places like the United States, having a Christmas tree was often viewed as a foreign pagan custom until the mid-19th century.

Though traditionally not all Christian cultures adorned their homes with evergreens and presents, the influence exerted by the West and rising consumerism has turned the Christmas tree into a ubiquitous symbol. In fact, many people of other faiths have adopted the Christmas tree (See Japan for instance).

The Christmas tree has gone a long way from its humble, pagan origins, to the point that it's become too popular for its own good. In the U.S. alone, 35 million Christmas trees are sold annually, joined by 10 million artificial trees, which are surprisingly worse from an environmental perspective. Annually, 300 million Christmas trees are grown in farms around the world to sustain a two-billion-dollar industry, but because these are often not enough, many firs are cut down from forests.

### **Origin of Yuletide**

Yule or Yuletide ("Yule time" or "Yule season") is a festival historically observed by the **Germanic peoples**. Scholars have connected the original celebrations of Yule to the **Wild Hunt**, the god **Odin**, and the pagan **Anglo-Saxon Mōdraniht**.

Many present-day Christmas customs and traditions such as the Yule log, Yule goat, Yule boar (*Sonargöltr*, still reflected in the Christmas ham), Yule singing, and others stem from pagan Yule traditions. Today, Yule is celebrated in **Heathenry** and other forms of **Neopaganism**, as well as in **LaVeyan Satanism**.

Yule is an indigenous midwinter festival celebrated by the Germanic peoples. The earliest references to it are in the form of month names, where the Yule-tide period lasts somewhere around two months, falling along the end of the modern calendar year between what is now mid-November and early January.

Yule is attested early in the history of the Germanic peoples; from the 4th-century Gothic language it appears in the month name *fruma jiuleis*, and, in the 8th century, the English historian Bede wrote that the Anglo-Saxon calendar included the months *geola* or *giuli* corresponding to either modern December or December and January.

While the Old Norse month name *ýlir* is similarly attested, the Old Norse corpus also contains numerous references to an event by the Old Norse form of the name, *jól*. In chapter 55 of the Prose Edda book *Skáldskaparmál*, different names for the gods are given; one is "Yule-beings". A work by the skald Eyvindr skáldaspillir that uses the term is then quoted: "again we have produced Yule-being's feast [mead of poetry], our rulers' eulogy, like a bridge of masonry". In addition, one of the numerous names of **Odin** is **Jólnir**, referring to the event.

### Who is Odin?

**Odin** (/ˈoʊdɪn/) is a widely revered god in Germanic mythology project him as the husband of the goddess **Frigg**. In wider Germanic mythology and paganism, the god was known in Old English and Old Saxon as **Wōden**, in Old Dutch as **Wuodan**, and in Old High German as **Wuotan**, all ultimately stemming from the Proto-Germanic theonym \***Wōđanaz**. References to him appear in place names throughout regions historically inhabited by the ancient Germanic peoples, and the day of the week **Wednesday** bears his name in many Germanic languages, including in English. Old Norse texts portray Odin as one-eyed and long-bearded, frequently wielding a spear named Gungnir and wearing a cloak and a broad hat. He is often accompanied by his animal companions and familiars—the wolves Geri and Freki and the ravens Huginn and Muninn, who bring him information from all over Midgard—and rides the *flying, eight-legged steed* **Sleipnir** across the sky and into the underworld.

### What is the wild hunt?

The **Wild Hunt** is a folklore motif (Motif E501 in Stith Thompson's Motif Index of Folklore) that historically occurs in the folklore of various Northern European cultures. Wild Hunts typically involve a 'soul-raving' chase led by a mythological figure escorted by a ghostly or supernatural group of hunters passing in wild pursuit. *Seeing the Wild Hunt* was thought to presage some catastrophe such as war or plague, or at best the death of the one who witnessed it. People encountering the Hunt might also be abducted to the underworld or the fairy kingdom. In some instances, it was also believed that people's spirits could be pulled away during their sleep to join the cavalcade. The leader also is sometimes an undead noble, most often called Count Hackelberg or Count Ebernburg, who is cursed to hunt eternally because of misbehaviour during his lifetime, and in some versions died from injuries of a **slain boar's tusk**. Dogs and wolves were generally involved. In some areas, werewolves were depicted as stealing beer and sometimes food in houses. Horses were portrayed as two-, three-, six-, and eight-legged, often with fiery eyes.

The role of **Wotan's Wild Hunt** during the **Yuletide** period has been theorized to have influenced the development of the Dutch Christmas figure **Sinterklaas**, and by extension his American counterpart **Santa Claus**, in a variety of facets. These include his long white beard and his gray horse for nightly rides.



The concept of the Wild Hunt was first documented by the German folklorist Jacob Grimm, who first published it in his 1835 book *Deutsche Mythologie*. Grimm interpreted the Wild Hunt phenomenon as having pre-Christian origins, arguing that the male figure who appeared in it was a survival of folk beliefs about the god Wodan, who had "lost his sociable character, his near familiar features, and assumed the aspect of a dark and dreadful power... a spectre and a devil." Grimm believed that this male figure was sometimes replaced by a female counterpart, whom he referred to as Holda and Berchta. In his words, "not only Wuotan and other gods, but heathen goddesses too, may head the furious host: the wild hunter passes into the wood-wife, Wôden into frau Gaude." He added his opinion that this female figure was Woden's wife. Grimm believed that in pre-Christian Europe, the hunt, led by a god and a goddess, either visited "the land at some holy tide, bringing welfare and blessing, accepting gifts and offerings of the people" or they alternately float "unseen through the air, perceptible in cloudy shapes, in the roar and howl of the winds, carrying on war, hunting or the game of ninepins, the chief employments of ancient heroes: an array which, less tied down to a definite time, explains more the natural phenomenon."

The **Saga of Hákon the Good** credits **King Haakon I** of Norway who ruled from 934 to 961 with the Christianization of Norway as well as rescheduling Yule to coincide with Christian celebrations held at the time. The saga says that when Haakon arrived in Norway he was a confirmed Christian, but since the land was still altogether heathen and the people retained their pagan practices, Haakon hid his Christianity to receive the help of the "great chieftains". In time, Haakon had a law passed establishing that Yule celebrations were to take place at the same time as the Christians celebrated Christmas, "and at that time everyone was to have ale for the celebration with a measure of grain, or else pay fines, and had to keep the holiday while the ale lasted."

Yule had previously been celebrated for three nights from midwinter night, according to the saga. Haakon planned that when he had solidly established himself and held power over the whole country, he would then "have the gospel preached". According to the saga, the result was that his popularity caused many to allow themselves to be baptized, and some people stopped making sacrifices. Haakon spent most of this time in Trondheim. When Haakon believed that he wielded enough power, he requested a bishop and other priests from England, and they came to Norway. On their arrival, "Haakon made it known that he would have the gospel preached in the whole country." The saga continues, describing the different reactions of various regional things.

A description of pagan Yule practices is provided (notes are Hollander's own):

"It was ancient custom that when sacrifice was to be made, all farmers were to come to the heathen temple and bring along with them the food they needed while the feast

lasted. At this feast all were to take part of the drinking of ale. Also all kinds of livestock were killed in connection with it, horses also; and all the blood from them was called *hlaut* [sacrificial blood], and *hlautbolli*, the vessel holding the blood; and *hlautteinar*, the sacrificial twigs [aspergills]. These were fashioned like sprinklers, and with them were to be smeared all over with blood the pedestals of the idols and also the walls of the temple within and without; and likewise the men present were to be sprinkled with blood. But the meat of the animals was to be boiled and served as food at the banquet. Fires were to be lighted in the middle of the temple floor, and kettles hung over the fires. The sacrificial beaker was to be borne around the fire, and he who made the feast and was chieftain, was to bless the beaker as well as all the sacrificial meat."

The narrative continues that toasts were to be drunk. The first toast was to be drunk to **Odin** "for victory and power to the king", the second to the gods **Njörðr** and **Freyr** "for good harvests and for peace", and third, a beaker was to be drunk to the king himself. In addition, toasts were drunk to the memory of departed kinsfolk. These were called *minni*.

Scholars have connected the month event and Yule period to the Wild Hunt (*a ghostly procession in the winter sky*), the god **Odin** (who is attested in Germanic areas as leading the Wild Hunt and bears the name **Jólnir**), and increased supernatural activity, such as the **Wild Hunt** and the increased activities of **draugar**—undead beings who walk the earth.

**Mōdraniht**, an event focused on collective female beings attested by Bede as having occurred among the **pagan Anglo-Saxons** on what is now **Christmas Eve**, has been seen as further evidence of a **fertility** event during the Yule period.

The events of Yule are generally held to have centered on Midwinter (although specific dating is a matter of debate), with feasting, drinking, and sacrifice (blót). Scholar Rudolf Simek says the pagan Yule feast "had a pronounced religious character" and that "it is uncertain whether the Germanic Yule feast still had a function in the cult of the dead and in the veneration of the ancestors, a function which the mid-winter sacrifice certainly held for the West European Stone and Bronze Ages." The Christmas traditions stem from Yule customs, which Simek says "indicates the significance of the feast in pre-Christian times."

### **Yule singing/Wassailing/Carol singing**

The tradition of wassailing (alt sp wasselling) falls into two distinct categories:

- 1) the house-visiting wassail and the orchard-visiting wassail. The house-visiting wassail is the practice of people going door-to-door, singing and offering a drink from the wassail bowl in exchange for gifts; this practice still exists, but has largely been displaced by caroling.
- 2) The orchard-visiting wassail refers to the ancient custom of visiting orchards in cider-producing regions of England, reciting incantations and singing to the trees to promote a good harvest for the coming year.

Although wassailing is often described in innocuous and sometimes nostalgic terms—still practiced in some parts of Scotland and Northern England on New Years Day as "first-footing"—the practice in England has not always been considered so innocent. Similar traditions have also been traced to Greece and the country of Georgia. Wassailing was associated with rowdy bands of young men who would enter the homes of wealthy neighbours and demand free food and drink (in a manner similar to the modern children's **Halloween** practice of **trick-or-treating**). If the householder refused, he was usually cursed, and occasionally his house was vandalized. The example of the exchange is seen in their demand for "figgy pudding" and "good cheer", i.e., the wassail beverage, without which the wassailers in the song will not leave; "We won't go until we get some, so bring some out here". Such complaints were also common in the early days of the United States, where the practice (and its negative connotations) had taken root by the early 1800s; it led to efforts from the American merchant class to promote a more sanitized Christmas.

### Neopaganism

As forms of **Neopaganism** can be quite different and have very different origins, these representations can vary considerably despite the shared name. Some celebrate in a way as close as possible to how they believe Ancient Germanic pagans observed the tradition, while others observe the holiday with rituals "assembled from different sources". In Germanic Neopagan sects, Yule is celebrated with gatherings that often involve a meal and gift giving.

Groups such as the Asatru Folk Assembly in the US recognize the celebration as lasting 12 days, beginning on the date of the winter solstice. In most forms of **Wicca**, this holiday is celebrated at the **winter solstice** as the rebirth of the **Great horned hunter god**, who is viewed as the **newborn solstice sun**. The method of gathering for this **sabbat** varies by practitioner. Some have private ceremonies at home, while others do so with their **covens**.

### LaVeyan Satanism

**The Church of Satan** and other **LaVeyan Satanist** groups celebrate Yule as an alternative to the Christian Christmas holiday.

## **Origin of Sinterklaas/Santa Claus**

Sinterklaas (Dutch pronunciation: [ˌsɪntərˈklaːs]) or Sint-Nicolaas (Dutch pronunciation: [sɪnt ˈnikoːlaːs] (listen)) is a legendary figure based on Saint Nicholas, patron saint of children. Other names for the figure include *De Sint* ("The Saint"), *De Goede Sint* ("The Good Saint"), and *De Goedheiligman* ("The Good Holy Man") in Dutch; *Sanikolas* in Papiamentu; *Saint Nicolas* in French; *Sinteklaas* in West Frisian; *Sinterklaos* in Limburgs; *Saint-Nikloi* in West Flemish; *Kleeschen* and *Zinniklos* in Luxembourgish; *Sankt Nikolaus* or *Nikolaus* in German; and *Sint Nicholas* in Afrikaans.

### **Sinterklaas arriving in the Dutch town of Schiedam in 2009**

The feast of Sinterklaas celebrates the name day of Saint Nicholas on 6 December. The feast is celebrated annually with the giving of gifts on St. Nicholas' Eve (5 December) in the Netherlands and on the morning of 6 December, Saint Nicholas Day, in Belgium, Luxembourg and northern France (French Flanders, Lorraine and Artois). The tradition is also celebrated in some territories of the former Dutch Empire, including Aruba.

Sinterklaas is one of the sources of the popular Christmas icon of ***Santa Claus***.

[Hélène Adeline Guerber](#) and others have drawn parallels between Sinterklaas and his helpers and the **Wild Hunt** of **Wodan** or **Odin**, a major god among the Germanic peoples, who was worshipped in Northern and Western Europe prior to Christianization. Riding the white horse Sleipnir he flew through the air as the leader of the Wild Hunt, always accompanied by two black ravens, [Huginn](#) and [Muninn](#). Those helpers would listen, just like [Zwarte Piet](#), at the chimney – which was just a hole in the roof at that time – to tell Wodan about the good and bad behaviour of the mortals. Due to its speculative character, however, this older "Germanic" theory has little support among present-day scholars, although it continues to be popular in non-scholarly sources. At the same time, it seems clear that the Saint Nicholas tradition contains a number of elements that are not ecclesiastical in origin.

### **Middle Ages**

The Sinterklaasfeest arose during the Middle Ages. The feast was both an occasion to help the poor, by putting money in their shoes (which evolved into putting presents in children's shoes) and a wild feast, similar to Carnival, that often led to costumes, a "topsy-turvy" overturning of daily roles, and mass public drunkenness.

In early traditions, students elected one of their classmates as "bishop" on St. Nicholas Day, who would rule until 28 December (Innocents Day), and they sometimes acted out events from the bishop's life. As the festival moved to city streets, it became more lively.

### **16th and 17th centuries**

During the Reformation in 16th- and 17th-century Europe, Protestant reformers like Martin Luther changed the Saint gift bringer to the **Christ Child** or **Christkindl** and moved the date for giving presents from 6 December to Christmas Eve. Certain protestant municipalities and clerics forbade Saint Nicholas festivities, as the Protestants wanted to abolish the cult of saints and saint adoration, while keeping the midwinter gift-bringing feast alive.

After the successful revolt of the largely Protestant northern provinces of the Low Countries against the rule of Roman Catholic king **Philip II of Spain**, the new Calvinist regents, ministers and clericals **prohibited** celebration of Saint Nicholas. The newly independent Dutch Republic officially became a Protestant country and abolished public Catholic celebrations. Nevertheless, the Saint Nicholas feast never completely disappeared in the Netherlands. In Amsterdam, where the public Saint Nicholas festivities were very popular, main events like street markets and fairs were kept alive with persons impersonating Nicholas dressed in red clothes instead of a bishop's tabard and mitre. The Dutch government eventually tolerated private family celebrations of Saint Nicholas' Day.

### Horned God

The Horned God is one of the two primary deities found in Wicca and some related forms of Neopaganism. The term Horned god itself predates Wicca, and is an early 20th-century syncretic term for a horned or antlered anthropomorphic god partly based on historical horned deities. The Horned god represents the male part of the religion's duotheistic theological system, the consort of the female **Triple goddess** of the Moon or other **Mother goddess**. In common Wiccan belief, he is associated with nature, wilderness, sexuality, hunting, and the life cycle. Whilst depictions of the deity vary, he is always shown with either horns or antlers upon his head, often depicted as being theriocephalic (having a beast's head), in this way emphasizing "the union of the divine and the animal", the latter of which includes humanity.

In traditional and mainstream Wicca, the Horned God is viewed as the divine male principality, being both equal and opposite to the Goddess. The Wiccan god himself can be represented in many forms, including as the **Sun God**, the Sacrificed God and the **Vegetation God**, although the Horned God is the most popular representation.

In Wicca the cycle of the seasons is celebrated during eight sabbats called **The Wheel of the Year**. The seasonal cycle is imagined to follow the relationship between the Horned God and the Goddess. The Horned God is born in **winter**, impregnates the Goddess and then dies during the autumn and winter months and is then reborn by the Goddess at **Yule**. The different relationships throughout the year are sometimes distinguished by splitting the god into aspects, the **Oak King** and the **Holly King**.

The Holly King and Oak King are personifications of the winter and summer in various folklore and mythological traditions. The two kings engage in endless "battle" reflecting the seasonal cycles of the year: not only solar light and dark, but also crop renewal and growth. During warm days of **Midsummer** the Oak King is at the height of his strength; the Holly King regains power at the Autumn equinox, then his strength peaks during **Midwinter**, at which point the Oak King is reborn, regaining power at the Spring equinox, and perpetuating the succession.

The relationships between the Goddess and the Horned God are mirrored by Wiccans in seasonal rituals. There is some variation between Wiccan groups as to which sabbat corresponds to which part of the cycle. Some Wiccans regard the Horned God as dying at Lammas, August 1; also known as Lughnasadh, which is the first harvest sabbat. Others may see him dying at Mabon, the autumn equinox, or the second harvest festival. Still other Wiccans conceive of the Horned God dying on **October 31**, which Wiccans call **Samhain**, the ritual of which is focused on death. He is then reborn on **Winter Solstice, December 21**.

Other important dates for the Horned God include **Imbolc** when, according to Valiente, he leads a **wild hunt**.

### Origin of the Christmas wreaths

For Witches, the wreath represents the turning of the **wheel of the year**, an eternal circle turning through the darkness to the light. The circular wreaths and it's candles are pre-Christian, and actually an old Pagan tradition that originated with the ancient Celtic people of Germany and Scandinavia. These people worshiped the rhythms of the earth with the **sun** being central in importance to them. During the **Winter Solstice** the Celts prayed for the sun's return and the reassurance that spring was coming. The center of these rituals was a living wreath. The wreath was traditionally formed with evergreens. It symbolized the unending circle of life and rotation of the seasons. The evergreen was used as it's part of the earth that survives winters cold weather and darkness. Traditionally candles were lit and set within the wreath bringing light to the darkness. The ritual was done with candles and ceremonial fires. The wreath was

displayed indoors. Either hung like a chandelier or on top of a table or alter. Later on in history the tradition was modified to include hanging the wreath on walls and doors.

## **Egypt**

### **Egyptian God Ra**

**Ra** is the ancient Egyptian deity of the sun. By the Fifth Dynasty in the 25th and 24th centuries BC, he had become one of the most important gods in ancient Egyptian religion, identified primarily with the noon sun. Ra was believed to rule in all parts of the created world: the sky, the Earth, and the underworld. He was the god of the sun, order, kings, and the sky.

**Ra** was portrayed as a falcon and shared characteristics with the sky god **Horus**. At times the two deities were merged as Ra-Horakhty, "Ra, who is Horus of the Two Horizons". In the New Kingdom, when the god **Amun** rose to prominence he was fused with Ra into **Amun-Ra**.

### **The sun as their creator**

The sun is the giver of life, controlling the ripening of crops which were worked by man. Because of the life giving qualities of the sun the Egyptians worshiped the sun as a god. The creator of the universe and the giver of life, the sun or Ra represented life, warmth and growth. Since the people regarded Ra as a principal god, creator of the universe and the source of life, he had a strong influence on them, which led to him being one of the most worshiped of all the Egyptian gods and even considered *King of the Gods*.

Ra was thought to travel on the **Atet**, two solar **barques** called the **Mandjet** (the Boat of Millions of Years) or morning boat and the **Mesektet** or evening boat. These boats took him on his journey through the sky and the **Duat** - twelve hours of night which is also the literal underworld of Egypt. While Ra was on the *Mesektet*, he was in his **ram-headed form**. Apophis, the god of chaos, was an enormous serpent who attempted to stop the sun boat's journey every night by consuming it or by stopping it in its tracks with a hypnotic stare. During the evening, the Egyptians believed that Ra set as **Atum** or in the form of a ram. The night boat would carry him through the underworld and back **towards the east** in preparation for his **rebirth**. These myths of Ra represented the sun rising as the rebirth of the sun by the sky goddess Nut; thus attributing the concept of rebirth and renewal to Ra and strengthening his role as a creator god as well. When Ra was in the underworld, he merged with **Osiris**, the god of the dead.



## **Egyptian God Horus**

**Horus** or **Her**, **Heru**, **Hor**, **Har** in Ancient Egyptian, is one of the most significant ancient Egyptian deities who served many functions, most notably god of kingship and the sky. He was worshipped from at least the late prehistoric Egypt until the Ptolemaic Kingdom and Roman Egypt. Different forms of Horus are recorded in history and these are treated as distinct gods by Egyptologists. These various forms may possibly be different manifestations of the same multi-layered deity in which certain attributes or syncretic relationships are emphasized, not necessarily in opposition but complementary to one another, consistent with how the Ancient Egyptians viewed the multiple facets of reality. He was most often depicted as a falcon, most likely a lanner falcon or peregrine falcon, or as a man with a falcon head.

The earliest recorded form of Horus is the tutelary deity of Nekhen in Upper Egypt, who is the first known national god, specifically related to the ruling pharaoh who in time came to be regarded as a manifestation of **Horus** in life and **Osiris** in death. The most commonly encountered family relationship describes Horus as the son of **Isis** and **Osiris**, and he plays a key role in the Osiris myth as Osiris's heir and the rival to **Set**, the murderer and brother of Osiris. In another tradition **Hathor** is regarded as his mother and sometimes as his wife. Claudius Aelianus wrote that Egyptians called the god **Apollo** 'Horus' in their own language.

Macrobius' *Chronicon* noted the annual ancient Egyptian celebration of Horus, specifying the time as the **winter solstice**. An analysis of the works of Epiphanius of Salamis noted the Egyptian **winter solstice** celebration of Horus in Panarion.

## **Saturnalia**

**Saturnalia**, the most popular of Roman festivals. Dedicated to the Roman god **Saturn**, the festival's influence continues to be felt throughout the Western world.

Originally celebrated on **December 17**, Saturnalia was extended first to three and eventually to seven days. The date has been connected with the winter sowing season, which in modern Italy varies from October to January. Remarkably like the Greek Kronia, it was the liveliest festival of the year. All work and business were suspended. Slaves were given temporary freedom to say and do what they liked, and certain moral restrictions were eased. The streets were infected with a Mardi Gras madness; a mock king was chosen (*Saturnalicus princeps*); the seasonal greeting to Saturnalia was heard everywhere. The closing days of the Saturnalia were known as Sigillaria, because of the



custom of making, toward the end of the festival, presents of candles, wax models of fruit, and waxen statuettes which were fashioned by the sigillarii or manufacturers of small figures in wax and other media. The cult statue of Saturn himself, traditionally bound at the feet with woolen bands, was untied, presumably to come out and join the fun.

The influence of the Saturnalia upon the celebrations of Christmas and the New Year has been **direct**. The fact that Christmas was celebrated on the birthday of the unconquered sun (*dies solis invicti nati*) on the 25th of December, gave the season a solar background, connected with the kalends of January (January 1, the Roman New Year), when the festival of light was held leading to the winter solstice, with the abundant presence of houses decorated in greenery and candles symbolizing the quest for knowledge and truth and the renewal of light and the coming of the new year. Presents were given to children and the poor. Concerning the gift candles, the Romans had a story that an old prophecy bade the earliest inhabitants of Latium send heads to Hades and *phota* to Saturn. The ancient Latins interpreted this to mean human sacrifices, but, according to legend, Hercules advised using lights (phos means "light" or "man" according to accent) and not human heads.

Although probably the best-known Roman holiday, Saturnalia as a whole is not described from beginning to end in any single ancient source. Modern understanding of the festival is pieced together from several accounts dealing with various aspects. The Saturnalia was the dramatic setting of the multivolume work of that name by Macrobius, a Latin writer from late antiquity who is the major source for information about the holiday. Macrobius describes the reign of Justinus' "king Saturn" as "a time of great happiness, both on account of the universal plenty that prevailed and because as yet there was no division into bond and free - as one may gather from the complete license enjoyed by slaves at the Saturnalia." In Lucian's Saturnalia it is Chronos himself who proclaims a "festive season, when 'tis lawful to be drunken, and slaves have license to revile their lords".

The popularity of Saturnalia continued into the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, and as the Roman Empire came under Christian rule, many of its customs were recast into or at least influenced the seasonal celebrations surrounding Christmas and the New Year.

### **Deuteronomy 28:9**

*YAHUAH shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of YAHUAH thy Elohai, and walk in his ways.*

So these are the Pagan festivals, if you want to find out what Elohai's true Holy festivals are, check out **YAH's 7 appointed times** PDF.

Let's Talk truth with Suziann