



# CAN CHRISTMAS & EASTER BE HOLY?

*an excerpt from the book*

## REUNITING THE COVENANT

by Rav. David Pollina

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## CHAPTER 11

### CAN CHRISTMAS & EASTER BE HOLY ?

HaSatan, Lucifer, our adversary, has an agenda. Ever since he rebelled against Yahweh, his agenda has been the same; to make himself a substitute for Yahweh, the One True Elohim. He attempts this in many ways, all targeted at drawing us away from the Father - physically, mentally, and spiritually; yet with such cunning that we do not recognise the separation. As an ancient foe, he realised long ago that some people would follow him willingly, but most would need to be tricked. Of all the weapons in his arsenal, one of the most effective is the calendar.

**Isaiah 14:12** Look how you have fallen from the sky, O shining one, son of the dawn! You've been cut down to the ground, O conqueror of the nations! **13** You said to yourself: "I will climb up to the sky. Above the stars of El I will set up my throne. **I will rule on the mountain of assembly** on the remote slopes of Zaphon. **14** I will climb up to the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High!" **15** But you were brought down to Sheol, to the remote slopes of the pit. **16** Those who see you stare at you, they look at you carefully, thinking: "Is this the man who shook the earth, the one who made kingdoms tremble? **17** Is this the one who made the world like a desert, who ruined its cities, and refused to free his prisoners so they could return home?"

The Adversary says "*I will rule on the mountain of*" מועד, 'MOWED', (#4150), "*appointed place, time, meeting, sacred season*", the same word used to refer to the appointed times of Yahweh; His forever ordained Holy Days in Leviticus 23, times that have been set-apart, sanctified for us to worship Him. This is haSatan's agenda; to rule over the times and seasons set by Yahweh, to keep us from worshiping our Creator. We have seen how this replacement of the 'when' of worship was done by Jeroboam when the northern kingdom separated from the southern, and how it was likewise done by the early Christian church in separating from the root of its faith. This strategy of attack has become the Devil's most effective one against both Judah and Ephraim.

In this chapter, we will examine this 'modus operandi' as it specifically relates to 'Christmas' and 'Easter', seeking to understand where the customs originate, and how believers should respond. Our object lesson in this regard has been given to us in Israel's history of desert wandering - Moses lifted up the symbol on a pole, and everyone that looked on it was saved; those who did not, died. This shows us the

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focus of how HaSatan works; trying to take our eyes off Y'shua, off of Yahweh's path and plan. He is called a deceiver, and correctly so. If someone follows falsehood, and knows it, there has been no deception. HaSatan's cunning is that he takes people's eyes off Yahweh, while all the time deceiving them into thinking they honour Yahweh with what they do. That is a true 'deception', and the only antidote is Yahweh's Word.

Many of Judah have been deceived into denying the Messiah; at the same time believing it is honouring Yahweh to do so. Many of Ephraim have been deceived into lawlessness; at the same time believing that breaking His Torah honours Him by our 'freedom'. Christmas and Easter are two other deceptions upon Ephraim from the Adversary's favourite weapon, ruling over the MOWED; pagan occasions, re-packaged with the veneer of Holy Worship. Yahweh repeatedly warned against this mixing of pagan customs.

**Leviticus 18:2** "Speak to the Israelites and tell them, 'I am Yahweh your Elohim. **3** You **must not do as they do** in the land of Egypt where you have been living, and you **must not do as they do** in the land of Canaan into which I am about to bring you; you **must not walk in their statutes**. **4** You **must observe my regulations** and you must be sure to walk in my statutes. I am Yahweh your Elohim.'"

**Leviticus 20:23** "You **must not walk in the statutes of the nation** which I am about to drive out before you, because they have done all these things and I feel disgust against them."

**Deuteronomy 12:30** After they have been destroyed from your presence, **be careful not to be ensnared** like they are; **do not pursue their gods** and say, "**How do these nations serve their gods? I will do the same.**" **31** You **must not worship Yahweh your Elohim the way they do!**...

**Jeremiah 10:1** You people of Israel, **listen to what Yahweh has to say to you**. **2** Yahweh says, "**Do not learn to follow the religious practices of the nations**. Do not be in awe of signs that occur in the sky even though the nations hold them in awe."

Yahweh specifically forbids combining pagan worship practices with His worship. He also commands us not to follow the דֶרֶק, 'DEREK', (#1870), "way" of the גֹּוִי, 'GOWY', (#1471), "*heathen, nations, gentiles*" (*Jeremiah 10:2*). DEREK is much broader linguistically than simply the religious practices of other nations, but also encompasses their entire view of life. We are not to blindly go with the crowd, but to consider His ways in all we do. He has instructed us to worship only Him, 'When' to worship Him, and 'How' to worship Him; our practices need to line up.

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## HISTORY OF CHRISTMAS AND EASTER

For Israel to be reunited, that unity must be based in truth. A blending of everyone's practices and beliefs to make everyone happy is not truth, but compromise, and such a mixing is exactly where Christmas and Easter came from. The early believers did not celebrate either holiday; they celebrated Passover, not Easter, and they never celebrated the birth of Messiah at all. Nowhere in the Bible are we told to celebrate Y'shua's birth; and although that does not make it bad to do so, we must admit from the start that it is a tradition of man, not a commandment.

The time of the winter solstice has been one of pagan worship for thousands of years. Nothing has changed with these practices by modern day pagans (*neopagans*) either. The concept of the sun as an object of worship is ancient indeed; of all the created things which are worshiped in place of the Creator, the sun clearly ranks as the most popular. Adonia, Appolo, Attis, Baal, Bacchus, Dionysus, Helios, Hercules, Horus, Mithra, Osiris, Perseus, Ra, Theseus, Tammuz, and Woden are some of the false deity names associated with sun worship across many cultures. The solstice was special to these cults, for it marked the time of year from which longer hours of daylight returned, and has been celebrated with a variety of holly, wreaths, yule logs, mistletoe, and decorated fir trees in most ancient civilisations. The Druids 'hweol', or 'yule', was a carefully selected log; holly and mistletoe were both regarded as having magical powers of fertility. Most of the symbols of Christmas are deeply rooted in such ancient solstice rites.

The 'Christmas Tree' had its modern origins in Germany, but derives from the far more ancient practice of bringing evergreen trees indoors to decorate at the time of the solstice. The superstition behind it was simple - the days were getting shorter, and the sun might continue to disappear, but the fir trees remained green. Since they must have some magical powers to do this when everything else is turning brown, they were brought into the temples and homes. Greek worshipers of Adonia decorated fir trees, as did Roman worshipers of Bacchus who decked them with bits of shiny metal and ornaments resembling him. The Druids placed fruit and candles on the branches to honour Woden. The Egyptians, without any local fir trees, used the palm tree instead. So pervasive in antiquity was the custom of decorating fir trees to ward off the decline of the sun, that it is mentioned specifically in the Tanakh.

**Jeremiah 10:3** For the religion of these people is worthless. For example, they **cut down a tree in the forest**. And a craftsman makes it into an idol with his tools. **4** He **decorates it** with overlays of **silver and gold**. He uses hammer and nails to fasten it together so that it will not fall over. **5** Such idols are like

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scarecrows in a cucumber field. They cannot talk. They have to be carried because they cannot walk. Do not be afraid of them because they cannot hurt you. And they don't have any power to help you, either.

The NET translation of verses 3 and 4 does not do justice to the Hebrew; taking the translator's interpretation that idol making is in view, and translating the text accordingly. This is not accurate to the literal text, as can be seen by referencing the same two verses in the King James:

**Jeremiah 10:3** 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.** 4 They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. (KJV)

The word here for "workman" or "craftsman" is חָרָשׁ, 'CHARASH', (#2796), most often translated "carpenter", and the "axe" is מַעְצָר, 'MA'ATSAD', (#4621). The grammar of the sentence relates the "workman with the axe" to the act of "cutting" down the tree, there is no "then" to indicate a second stage action, such as "then carves it into an idol". If it was an idol, it would not need to be fastened with nails to stand up; idols are carved to be self-standing. No, this is a simple tree being propped-up for pagan worship. For additional proof, we need only look at the preceding verse 2, "**Do not be in awe of signs that occur in the sky even though the nations hold them in awe**". This tree is being cut in relation to "signs in the sky", exactly the pagan practice that started the 'Christmas Tree'. Finally, in the passage from Isaiah with which we began this chapter, speaking of the rise and fall of HaSatan; the prophet speaks of the Adversary's destined destruction:

**Isaiah 14:8** The evergreens also rejoice over your demise, as do the cedars of Lebanon, singing, 'Since you fell asleep, no woodsman comes up to chop us down!'

The translation is spot on. When HaSatan is defeated, millions of evergreen trees will rejoice that no one cuts them down anymore! How about that for a prophecy? Despite being popular, the 'Christmas Tree' is pagan to the very core.

The most telling aspect of Christmas however, is the date. December 25<sup>th</sup> is the birthday of Tammuz, the 'sun-god', progeny of incest between Nimrod the Babylonian and his mother, Semiramis, who called herself the "queen of heaven". This birthday was widely celebrated in the Roman world, along with those of many other sun-god types. Emperor Aurelian (270-275 AD) was the first to combine these worship rites into an official holiday, the "birthday of the unconquered sun", held on

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December 25<sup>th</sup>, and predominantly focused on Mithraism. Not until the 4<sup>th</sup> century did the holiday get transferred to Christianity by Constantine who declared a special 'Christ Mass' to be the focus of the day for the pagans he was forcing to become 'Christians'. Thus the very day is of heavily pagan origin, having absolutely no relation to the actual birthday of the Messiah.

The tradition of giving gifts is said to commemorate the gifts given by the wise men. However, it must be noted that they did not visit Y'shua until approximately two years after His birth, and gave Him gifts because He was a king, not because it was His birthday. Coincidentally, the gift-giving tradition was also a major part of 'Saturnalia', one of the Roman sun-god feasts combined into 'Christmas' by Constantine. Of course, there is nothing inherently wrong with giving or receiving gifts; it is only their use in connection with this holiday being referred to.

It is not possible, knowing the truth, to celebrate Christmas in honour of Y'shua. How would you feel if your 'friends' ignored your real birthday and instead threw a party on the birthday of your most hated enemy, gave gifts to each other instead of you, and said they did it all for the 'love' of you? That is exactly the way Y'shua must feel about Christmas, but even beyond His feelings of disgust over His 'birthday' celebration, must be His feelings towards 'Easter', known of old as a pagan equinox celebration.

Easter's very name is the derivative of 'EASTRE', an ancient word for spring and a false mother-fertility goddess. This 'deity' was also known by other cultures as Aphrodite, Astarte, Ausos, Austron, Demeter, Eostra, Eostre, Eostur, Eastr, Eastur, Hathor, Ishtar, Kali, Ostara, Ostare, or Ostern. In the second century, the most popular spring festival was that of Eastre and her sacred animal... the bunny rabbit; that harmless, adorable symbol of Easter dispensing Easter Eggs. Oh, but those decorated eggs have been used in equinox fertility rites longer than anyone can trace; coloured by dipping in the blood of sacrifices.

Eastre was known to the Babylonians and Assyrians as Ishtar, and to the Phoenicians as Astarte, the sister and incestual lover of Baal. Many times in the Tanakh, Yahweh speaks against Baal worship, and punishes Israel for defying Him to seek after Baal. In Anglo-Saxon mythology, Eastre is known as Ostara, who turned her pet bird into a rabbit which laid brightly coloured eggs for the children. Even the 'Easter Lily', an ancient phallic symbol of reproduction, as well as the 'hot cross bun', are from Ostara worship. But, ah the beauty of a sunrise service; what self respecting pagan sun worshiper would dare not attend? Nowhere does the Bible say that Y'shua rose from the dead on Sunday morning, as we will see in a few chapters.

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The most heartbreaking thing about Easter for Yahweh must be the way it is used to prevent celebration of His forever-ordained Passover. The very precious picture Y'shua gives us of His body broken for us and of the Blood of the New Covenant to come is lost among the glitter of bunnies bearing eggs. Both Easter and Christmas were mixed into 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century Christianity for the sake of assimilating pagans celebrating those rituals. The leaders of the Gentile church knew very well that it would be easier to get those people to give up their gods than their parties, and by merging the pagan customs, and repackaging them, the pagans were 'converted' easily. In the process, the warnings of Yahweh fell on deaf ears, politicising minds, and cold hearts; changing the 'When' of worship.

## MAKING THE HOLY PROFANE

All of these pagan traditions from Christmas and Easter have been blended into Christianity and, by extension, popular culture. Tell any child that they can't celebrate such a day of fun and you're a villain! What harm is there is going along for the fun?

**Luke 16:15** But Y'shua said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in men's eyes, but Yahweh knows your hearts. For **what is highly prized among men is utterly detestable in Yahweh's sight.**

**1 John 2:15** **Do not love the world** or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him,

Even though all these things had their origins in pagan religions, what does that matter today? They're not pagan now, they're 'Christian', and have been turned into something good used to worship Yahweh.

**Haggai 2:11** "The sovereign Yahweh says, 'Ask the priests about the Torah. **12** If someone carries holy meat in a fold of his garment and that fold touches bread, a boiled dish, wine, oil, or any other food, will that item become holy?'" The priests answered, "It will not." **13** Then Haggai asked, "If a person who is ritually unclean from touching a dead body comes in contact with one of these items, will it become unclean?" The priests answered, "It will be unclean." **14** Then Haggai responded, "**The people of this nation are unclean in my sight,**' says Yahweh. **'And so is all their effort; everything they offer is also unclean.'**"

The Holy can not make something common or unclean into something Holy; on the other hand, that which is defiled can and does lower the mix to its own level. This is exactly what happens with trying to celebrate Christmas and Easter; the pagan practices being assimilated are not made into something Holy simply because they are now used to

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worship Yahweh, but the whole mix is now defiled and detestable in His sight. What we need to realise however, is that HaSatan is a deceiver, and most people will not know these things; they will be following the practices of these holidays in deceived ignorance of the truth. We must be careful to be salt and light. Y'shua warns of salt loosing its savour, but our saltiness must at the same time be mixed with love, not condemnation; we must educate, not excommunicate. Our enemy has been at his deceptions for hundreds and even thousands of years; his web of lies and deceit will not be undone in a day.

The best way to maintain our knowledge and presentation of the truth among pagan celebrations masquerading as Holy is by being a light. The darkness of ignorance is only banished by the light of truth. When someone comes to your house and comments that you don't have a Christmas Tree; when another asks what you plan to do for Easter; these are opportunities to shine as a light. Stating that "*we don't celebrate Christmas/Easter, we love Y'shua too much for that*", usually will open a very puzzled door of questions. If the person is sincere in their love for Yahweh, speak to them in His love about these things; perhaps share with them a copy of this chapter. Challenge them to prayerfully consider how they should respond to the truth, and remind them that they will be held accountable by Yahweh for what they do. Your duty is then fulfilled, except to continue loving them even if they reject the seed you plant.

The ones most affected are the children. Ask any child what is the best thing about Christmas and 99% of the time they will answer "*presents*". They have yet to learn that they are supposed to mask this greed with a passing religious saying or two. They tell it like it is; like it really is. Sometimes the easiest way to understanding is through example. Tell them that you've decided to change their birthday this year to (*pick any date*). On this new day, you will host a grand party, in honour of their birthday of course, and invite everyone. All who come will give gifts to each other, but none to them. You will even invite the school bully, or anyone who hates them, and these can decorate the house with whatever they like, especially if your child hates it. Just what kind of a birthday celebration is that? We call it Christmas.

**Ezekiel 33:7** "So, son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel—**whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you will give them a warning from me.** **8** When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you will certainly die,' and you do not speak to warn the wicked of his conduct, the wicked man will die in his iniquity, but I will hold you accountable for his death. **9** But if you warn the wicked man to turn from his conduct, and he does not turn from his conduct, he will die in his iniquity, but you have saved your own life."

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The only thing worse than deliberate participation in these things, is keeping silent about them. Y'shua taught that hiding our light is no way to impact the world for Him and His Kingdom. Yahweh has placed the responsibility on those who know to warn those who don't. We have a serious mission to present the truth to others in a loving manner, one in which they should be willing to honestly examine it and respond. Too often, this can become intimidating to the point of either separation or belligerence, yet we are called to work towards unity.

## WHAT OF ALL THE GOOD?

One of the saddest things about false MOWED observance is the justifications they receive. Most who claim to be believers in Y'shua have some knowledge of these holidays' pagan origins; many know a great deal about them, yet they continue to observe these festivals for the reason of misplaced hope. Look at all the 'good' that has come from the holiday - the people who heard the true message and repented. Even if that message is buried under a mountain of pagan ritual and modern commercialism, it is still there, the surviving relic of the truth. Hope springs eternal, the saying goes, and as long as that message is still in there somewhere, what better way to reach people than on their own level? But is this Yahweh's way?

As we have seen, Hellenism attacked the very fabric of Hebraic thought before and after the first century. So too there is a philosophy attacking believers today - Moral Relativism, the concept that there is no right or wrong apart from situational ethics, has become tacitly accepted. Thus the continuance in Christmas and Easter can be justified by the 'good' results. This is the very question Yahweh posed to the priests in Haggai 2. They knew the correct answer - the Holy can not consecrate the common, but the defiled will defile the Holy; they knew this, but they were not practicing it.

If a missionary goes to the jungle and the tribe offers them something to eat which is unfit according to Torah, is it proper for the missionary to eat if the purpose of saving the tribe would be served by not 'offending'? Some would actually say that it is, but if so, then if the tribal chieftain offers his wife, is adultery now also acceptable because it is normative in their culture? Are there absolutes? In giving Torah, Yahweh set forth the standard; one side is righteousness, the other is sin. Paul writes in Romans 6 "*What shall we say then? Are we to remain in sin so that grace may increase? Absolutely not!*" Even back then, this same argument was found, that if good results from evil than evil should be done so that good can result from it. Paul knew to forcibly reject this line of reasoning as lawlessness.

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Yahweh has the marvellous power of turning even those things meant for evil into good results (*Genesis* 50:20, *Romans* 8:28). HaSatan is extremely cunning, but he is not omniscient; Yahweh is, and He will bring about His plan in His way, He doesn't need us 'helping' through our disobedience. Once starting down the slope of relativism, there is no more line to cross except one arbitrarily placed from the fashion of the moment. The feasts of man that try and replace the MOWED of Yahweh have been and will always be a battlefield for that line; the line of righteousness before the Holy One.

## MIXING IN A MIXED UP WORLD

By far the greatest dilemma facing a believer are the details of interacting with the world at large, and with other believers choosing to keep these holidays out of ignorance. So we don't celebrate them in our home, but what if we go to a home that does, or a church, does our mere presence provide validation? In all things, we are to focus on our mission as believers - to be salt and light; to fulfil the Great Commission. The first part of that command is to go into the world, not to preach from an ivory pulpit. Yes, we are sanctified, set apart, but we are not separated; there is a distinction. Our being set-apart is for a purpose, we are sanctified to go. Y'shua should be our example in this as He ate with sinners and tax collectors, in their homes, and His presence was certainly not a validation of their lifestyles. When the religious leaders chastised Him for this, He replied ***"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"*** (*Matthew* 9:13, *Mark* 2:17, *Luke* 5:32). He actually went out of His way to go places where the opportunity to do just this would be.

Why then is it that we feel uncomfortable mixing with those who still follow these practices? Could it be that we allow a true heart of love and respect for Y'shua to be misplaced by hiding from those He shed His blood to save? We are His ambassadors, and need to think as such; we need to relish the opportunity to share our faith in a loving way. Part of this ambassadorship is learning to represent our King in the world, without being of the world. We must maintain the standard of righteousness in mixed environments by not participating in things offensive to Yahweh. This must be done in love and humility, and is not by any means an easy thing to do, requiring much prayer and the guidance of the Ruach haKodesh. We seek to dialogue on the things of Yahweh, not debate. The list of conversation starting responses to *"Merry Christmas"*, alone are almost endless! Of course, be sensitive to the culture and person you respond to, as any good diplomat would be, and above all, stay in the love of Y'shua, remembering you are His ambassador. It is worth the effort!

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**Matthew 5:13** You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its flavor, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled on by people. **14** You are the light of the world. A city located on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** People do not light a lamp and put it under a basket but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. **16 In the same way, let your light shine before people, so that they can see your good deeds and give honor to your Father in heaven.**

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