

Israelite Studies

PREFACE

Here at Israelite Studies©, we understand that for information to be provided which helps answer questions, that info must first be studied to give absolute conclusions based upon accurate examinations of any resource contributing to it.

HOW DO WE CONDUCT OUR STUDIES?

Our research team comes with a collective of 50+ years' experience in Biblical Studies and examination. Although each member holds a particular position for each topic, an unbiased approach is taken when applying the comparative research method to best harmonize concrete interpretations of scripture. Each topic is put under heavy scrutiny while taking into consideration, language, cultural and historical backgrounds, parallel texts, etc. Once any study has been exhausted, our team finalizes the findings with a collective position. If necessary, amendments to the studies are applied once all of the views expressed by our research team are made available for the public to form their own conclusions.

- Throughout some of our bible studies, we have replaced *LORD/the LORD* with *Yahawah*, *God* with *Alahayam,* and *Jesus Christ* with *Yahawashi Mashayach.*

- All Hebrew definitions referenced are listed in the *Tel-Dan Inscription* font, along with every Transliteration and Phonetic pronunciation provided in the earliest dialect of Hebrew studied by our team (commonly called '*Lashawan Qadash*' – Holy Language).

A Study and Examination of the Traditions of Autumn and Winter

The focus here is on the traditions of autumn and winter—Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas—and the claim that, in their roots and dominant practices, they are fundamentally pagan. The aim is not to romanticize or envy what sinners are doing in this season, but to expose the underlying customs so that we can remain in the fear of Yahawah all day, every day.

Proverbs 23:17 instructs,
"Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of Yahawah all the day long."[1]

As these festivities cycle around each year, the "old man" in us may feel tempted to participate in what looks fun, social, or nostalgic. Yet the text commands us not to envy sinners, and not to desire to do what they are doing, especially at this time of year. Their judgment is coming; our task is to hear, obey, and to warn. To understand how these observances work, we begin with the season of autumn.

Merriam-Webster defines autumn as the third season of the year, the interval between summer and winter. Astronomically, it begins at the equinox, when the sun enters Libra, and ends at the winter solstice; in popular language, it generally covers September, October, and November.[2]

The key point is that autumn is anchored to the equinox. Many pagan customs are structured around these astronomical markers—the equinoxes and solstices—which signal the changing of the seasons. There are two equinoxes annually, one in the spring and one in the fall. Our concern here is with the autumn equinox, which usually falls in the third week of September. Pagan religious calendars deliberately synchronize their observances with these celestial transitions.

This is precisely what Jeremiah warns against. In Jeremiah 10:2 we read,
"Thus saith Yahawah, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them."[1]

The nations study the signs of heaven—the movements of the sun, moon, and stars—and build religious and magical systems around them. They structure festivals and rituals around these transitions. We are not permitted to learn their ways in the sense of imitating or adopting them. We may study them in order to warn, but we are not to practice them. The annual cycle of equinox and solstice becomes, in the hands of the nations, a framework for idolatry.

One modern example of an autumn-equinox observance is Mabon. Mabon is a modern pagan ritual marking the autumn equinox. Within contemporary neo-pagan practice, it is the second of three harvest festivals (often listed alongside Lammas/Lughnasadh and Samhain). It is described as a time of giving thanks for a plentiful harvest and recognizing the need to share the earth's fruits in preparation for the coming winter. However, in its mythological roots, Mabon is not a neutral term. As standard reference works on world mythology note, Mabon (or Mabon ap Modron) is a figure from Welsh mythology, treated in neo-paganism as a kind of harvest deity or divine youth.[9]

Modern pagans have adopted this mythic figure's name for their autumn equinox rite. So when they "give thanks" at Mabon for the harvest, the question is: to whom? They are not giving thanks to the Most High of Scripture; they are giving thanks within a framework that venerates nature and pagan deities.

This is why Job's warning is relevant. In Job 31:24–28, Job declares:
"If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; if I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much; if I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand: this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the Alahayam that is above."[1]

In the agrarian world of Scripture, a "plentiful harvest" is a form of wealth. To rejoice in that abundance while attributing it to a false god or to the powers of nature is to commit idolatry. Furthermore, Job explicitly rejects being "secretly enticed" by the sun and moon. Pagan systems use these luminaries to time their festivals, and then subtly shift the gratitude and reverence that belong to Yahawah onto the created order or onto invented deities associated with it. Scripture calls that iniquity.

Another major autumn observance is Samhain. History.com describes Samhain as a pagan religious festival originating in ancient Celtic spiritual traditions. The Gaelic term “Samhain” (commonly pronounced “sow-in” or “sah-win”) refers to an observance usually celebrated from October 31 to November 1, marking the final harvest and ushering in the dark half of the year. It was, and in some neo-pagan circles still is, believed that during Samhain the boundary between the physical world and the spirit world is weakened, allowing greater interaction between humans and the inhabitants of the “otherworld.”[3]

The festival is thus explicitly built around the idea of communication with or influence from spirits of the dead and other supernatural entities.

Deuteronomy 18:10–11 flatly forbids precisely these practices. The text commands,
“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 consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.”[1]

Samhain, in both ancient and modern forms, is closely linked to divination, observing times, consulting spirits, and necromancy. Popular culture reinforces this by associating Halloween (which descends from Samhain) with séances, mediums, fortune tellers, Ouija boards, and so on. In other words, the entertainment industry has normalized what the Torah explicitly condemns.

Historically, as the Roman Catholic Church expanded into Celtic regions, elements of Samhain were rebranded rather than abolished. The evening before the Church feast of All Saints (All Hallows) became “All Hallows’ Eve,” eventually shortened to “Halloween.” History.com notes that Halloween, especially as brought to North America in the 19th century by Irish immigrants, retained many traditional pagan features. Practices like trick-or-treating are often traced to Irish and Scottish customs in the nights leading up to Samhain. One such practice, “mumming,” involved people putting on costumes, going door-to-door, and performing songs or recitations for the dead in exchange for cakes or food. Halloween mischief and pranks also echo the older Samhain idea that fairies or other spirits roam more freely at this time.[4]

We are thus dealing with a holiday whose popular customs—costumes, door-to-door food collection, pranks, and fascination with spirits and the dead—are built on a pagan foundation. Scripture itself gives an example of the kind of necromantic activity that underlies these customs.

First Samuel 28:8 records that,
"Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night; and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee."[1]

Saul literally put on a disguise—functionally a costume—and went by night to a medium to conjure the dead prophet Samuel. This action is a direct violation of Deuteronomy 18. Yet it parallels what is ritualized and trivialized every year when people dress up in costume and play at contacting "the other side." The biblical narrative does not treat this as harmless fun; it treats it as disobedience that contributed to Saul's downfall.

The autumn cycle in the United States also includes Thanksgiving. While the modern civil holiday falls in November, many cultures historically treated the second harvest season of the fall, around the equinox, as a time of giving thanks for the harvest. As LearnReligions.com notes in its discussion of pagan harvest festivals and the U.S. holiday, equinox observances like Mabon function as "thanksgiving" rites. In early American practice, Thanksgiving was at first connected more closely to harvest timing than to our current commercial calendar. For example, one early national Thanksgiving proclamation placed it on October 3, a date that aligns more naturally with the agricultural cycle of the northern hemisphere.[5]

Only later were the dates adjusted for political and economic reasons. In 1863, during the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln issued a Thanksgiving Proclamation setting the observance on the last Thursday of November. In 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt moved it to the second-to-last Thursday of November in an attempt to lengthen the holiday shopping season and boost the economy after the Great Depression. Public confusion and resistance led Congress, two years later, to establish the fourth Thursday of November as the official date.[5]

None of these adjustments has anything to do with scriptural instruction; they are administrative decisions layered over a practice that is, in its older form, part of the same general "harvest thanksgiving" stream that appears, in overtly pagan form, in festivals like Mabon. The question again is: to whom is thanks being rendered? Scripture certainly commands us to give thanks continually to the Most High for His goodness and for His provision.

The Apocryphal book of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 17:27–28 poses the question, *"Who shall praise the most High in the grave, instead of them which live and give thanks? Thanksgiving perisheth from the dead, as from one that is not: the living and sound in heart shall praise Yahawah."[1]*

True thanksgiving is the daily posture of the living, sound-hearted servant who honors Yahawah in all seasons, not a once-a-year ritual that historically has been intertwined with harvest rites and, in some contexts, idol veneration. When a society participates in a harvest-Thanksgiving framework while attributing its blessings to a vague "nature," to national myth, or to unbiblical deities and symbols, it is not practicing the thanksgiving that Sirach commends. Moreover, some autumn customs explicitly seek contact with the dead at the very time others are "giving thanks" for the harvest. Yet the dead cannot praise Yahawah; they cannot repent or obey. Those who seek answers from the dead, from spirits, or from mediums are turning away from the living Alahayam to broken cisterns. Meanwhile, the living who are sound in heart should be praising Yahawah every day for life, breath, and sustenance—apart from any pagan calendar. Despite the clear spiritual problems with these festivals, many people still treat them as harmless fun, especially in relation to children. Trick-or-treating persists in some places, and churches attempt to "sanitize" Halloween with practices like "trunk or treat," where people decorate their car trunks in a church parking lot so children can collect candy in a controlled environment. Regardless of its intentions, this still keeps children participating in a festival whose historic and spiritual core is idolatry, necromancy, and reverence for the powers of darkness. It is difficult to justify exposing children to a holiday whose dominant symbols—witches, death, ghosts, demons, haunted houses—remain profoundly ungodly.

Turning from autumn to winter, we find a similar pattern. Merriam-Webster defines winter as the cold season of the year. Astronomically, in the northern hemisphere, winter begins at the winter solstice—around December 21, when the sun enters Capricorn—and ends at the spring equinox in March.[6] In everyday speech, winter is commonly identified with December, January, and February.[6]

Here again the key marker is the solstice. Just as there are two equinoxes, there are two solstices each year—one in summer, one in winter. These four turning points—the two equinoxes and two solstices—structure much of the world's traditional religious calendar, particularly in Europe and the Near East. Paganism attaches rites and deities to each transition.

By contrast, Psalm 74:17 ascribes the establishment of seasons directly to Yahawah:
"Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter."[1]

The boundaries of the habitable earth, the cycle of the seasons—these are the work of the Creator alone. He ordained summer and winter; He governs the lengthening and shortening of days and nights. Therefore, the correct response is to fear Him, thank Him, and worship Him—not to transfer reverence to the sun, moon, stars, or to fabricated deities associated with those things. When societies celebrate seasonal change without reference to Yahawah, or with reference to false gods, they are wrestling away the honor that belongs to Him.

One historical winter festival that became deeply entangled with later Christian practice is Yule (or Yuletide). The Wikipedia article on "Yule" summarizes it as a festival historically observed by Germanic peoples. Scholars connect early Yule celebrations with themes like the Wild Hunt, the god Odin, and the Anglo-Saxon festival called Mōdraniht ("Mothers' Night"). As Christianity spread in Germanic regions, Yule did not disappear; instead, it was increasingly folded into the Christian liturgical season of Christmas-tide. Many customs now thought of as "Christmas traditions" have roots in Yule: the Yule log, the Yule goat, special Yule feasts (such as the Yule boar), and communal singing.[7] In several Nordic languages, the word still used for "Christmas" derives directly from "Yule."[7] In contemporary religious practice, Yule remains part of the ritual year in modern heathenry and in neo-pagan paths like Wicca, where it appears on the "Wheel of the Year" as the winter-solstice festival. It is also observed by LaVeyan Satanists as one of the eight major holidays of their ritual calendar.[7]

That alone should give believers pause. When Satanists and neo-pagans openly claim this season and its symbols as part of their religious heritage, and when they recognize that what many Christians celebrate at this time has been built on their foundations, it is worth asking whether we have "learned the way of the heathen."

Jeremiah 10:3–4 warns,
"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."[1]

Historically, Jeremiah is addressing a Babylonian-style idol: a crafted object taken from nature, shaped and stabilized by artisans, and then decorated and venerated. It is true that this passage is not originally about a modern "Christmas tree" as such. Yet the structural similarity between the described practice and what many people now do at Christmas is striking. An evergreen is brought into the house, set upright, fastened so it will not fall, and adorned with glittering ornaments. Even if the ancient referent differed, the underlying pattern of turning a tree into a decorated focus of seasonal reverence is the same. Many Christian apologists attempt to deflect this parallel by insisting that they do not "worship" the tree; they see it as only a decoration. But from Jeremiah's perspective, the issue is not merely explicit bowing to an idol; it is the adoption of the customs of the nations that are bound up with their idolatries.

The Christmas tree tradition descends from Yule and other evergreen rites that symbolized life, fertility, and magical protection during the darkest part of the year.[7]

Some households even keep artificial trees up year-round and redecorate them seasonally, effectively enthroning the object itself as a constant presence. If we are seeking to be separate from pagan practice, this is not a neutral space.

Even more widely recognized as a pagan root of Christmas is the Roman festival of Saturnalia. World History Encyclopedia describes Saturnalia as a major Roman festival dedicated to Saturn, the agricultural god, observed between December 17 and 23, around the time of the winter solstice. Originating in archaic agricultural rites, Saturnalia developed into a widely popular celebration characterized by extensive gift-giving, feasting, public merrymaking, and "role reversals." During Saturnalia, normal social hierarchies were symbolically inverted: slaves might be treated as masters for the day, and various forms of license were encouraged. Ancient sources and modern historians note that Saturnalia featured heavy drinking, gambling, and, at times, public nudity and sexual excess.[8] Over time, as Christianity became the dominant religion of the Roman Empire, the timing and some of the features of Saturnalia appear to have influenced the emerging celebration of Christmas, which eventually settled in late December.[8]

Habakkuk 2:15 pronounces judgment on precisely this kind of revelry:
"Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!"[1]

Saturnalia's culture of intoxication and sexualized spectacle fits this pattern. The "merry-making" is not innocent; it is tied to disinhibition, exploitation, and shameful behavior. When modern Christmas is celebrated chiefly as a season of excess—overeating, overdrinking, consumerist indulgence, office-party immorality—it continues the spirit of Saturnalia far more than it reflects any biblical command to honor the birth of Messiah. Scripture nowhere commands us to mark the Messiah's birth with such customs. Instead, what we see is a syncretistic layering of celebration of the Messiah onto existing pagan frameworks—Yule, Saturnalia, and related solstice rites—to make the old religions more palatable to new converts.

Taken together, the autumn and winter festival cycles—Mabon and other equinox rites, Samhain and Halloween, Thanksgiving as a harvest-thanksgiving adapted into a national civil holiday, and then Yule, Saturnalia, and Christmas—form a coherent pattern. They are structured around the equinoxes and solstices; they attach spiritual meaning to the movements of sun and moon; they venerate harvest, fertility, darkness and light, and the spirits of the dead; and in their modern forms they still preserve key elements of those older pagan usages.[2][3][4][5][7][8][9]

Scripture repeatedly instructs us not to envy sinners, not to learn the way of the nations, and not to be dismayed at or spiritually guided by the "signs of heaven." Yahawah set the borders of the earth. He made summer and winter. He commands all the seasons. Our calling is to fear Him all day long, every day, to give Him thanks continually as living, sound-hearted servants, and to separate ourselves from unclean customs. Rather than conforming to the world's festival calendar, we are to "come out of her," be separate, and touch not the unclean thing. That may mean staying indoors with our families while others roam the streets in costume; it may mean declining to set up a tree or to join in certain workplace or family rituals. But it certainly means refusing to exchange the glory of the Creator for the traditions of the heathen, even when those traditions are wrapped in the language of holidays many have grown up with and taken for granted.

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