

Do ancient Israelite festivals have Canaanite origins?

by Nada Tahiri

The contested topic of study in this research paper will be regarding whether or not the ancient Israelite festivals are of Canaanite origin. I argue that some of the ancient Israelite festivals do have Canaanite origins, mainly because of their agricultural characteristics and because some ancient Israelite months have the same names as the Canaanite months. As a result, in my opinion, it is plausible for the ancient Israelites to borrow the names of the Canaanite months and adopt the festivals that occurred during those months, for their own religious purposes. In addition, because the ancient Israelites did not become monotheistic overnight, I believe that they initially picked and chose the aspects of the polytheistic Canaanite religion that they deemed fit; in my opinion, these aspects include festivals. I will thus prove that the ancient Israelite festivals have Canaanite origins by comparing and contrasting them to the Canaanite festivals, by illustrating their similarities and by using the input and opinions of several prominent scholars.

The topic of festivals in the ancient Near East is thus an interesting, yet contested one, especially since the different civilizations used various calendars to designate their festive celebrations. Before delving into the topic, I will first define the word “festival.” In this essay, I will use the word “festival” to refer to “a day or period set aside for celebration or feasting, especially one of religious significance or one which commemorates an anniversary or other significant event” (Collins English Dictionary, 2003). The words “festival” and “feast” will also be used interchangeably to denote the same topic. This essay thus focuses on comparing the festivals of the ancient Near East, notably the ones in ancient Israel<sup>1</sup> during the monarchic period, and the Canaanite ones in an earlier time period<sup>2</sup>, notably between 1800BCE-1200BCE. The aspects of the festivals that will be covered include the celebrations, the

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<sup>1</sup> : Maps of Israel can be found on P. 16 (Figures 2 and 3) of this paper

<sup>2</sup> : This is done so that I can be able to compare the ancient Israelite festivals to the Canaanite festivals celebrated earlier, to see if the former actually do have Canaanite origins.

timing, and their significance to the religion and the people as a whole. Because the biblical text will be one of the main sources describing the festivals in ancient Israel, it is important to acknowledge that is a mere English translation and thus, the translation may be ambiguous or not one the original author intended. In addition, other written and archaeological sources will be used in the discussion regarding the festivals in Canaan<sup>3</sup>.

The ancient Israelites celebrated several festivals of religious significance during the monarchic period, meaning between the tenth and sixth centuries BCE. These festivals were Passover, the festival of Unleavened Bread, the festival of the First Fruits, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Booths and the Festival of Jeroboam (Elwell, 1997, para. 1). These festivals of religious significance evoked a sense of collective values that unified the Israelites in their worship of Yahweh, especially since the festivals were used to celebrate major historical, religious events (Elwell, 1997, para.2-4). As a result, I believe that it is interesting to study these festivals, the way they were celebrated, and their timing pertaining to different calendars during the various time periods in the United Monarchy of Israel as well as the northern and southern kingdoms.

Passover, also called *Pesah*, is a one-day festival that was used to commemorate how Yahweh “passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, when he struck down the Egyptians but spared [their] houses” (Elwell, 1997, para. 5; *Holy Bible New Revised Standard Version*, Exodus 12:27). Thus, Passover “commemorated the Lord’s sparing of the Israelites” on the day before the exodus actually happened (Elwell, 1997, para. 7; May, 1936, p.66). According to Exodus 12:21, Moses orders the Israelites to slaughter a lamb to celebrate Passover. The date of celebrating Passover was the fourteenth day of the first month (Leviticus 23:5). The Bible also mentions specific Passover celebrations during the rule of Hezekiah and Josiah, who were the kings of the southern kingdom (May, 1936, p. 68).

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<sup>3</sup>: A map of Canaan can be found on P.15 (Figure 1) of this paper

Hezekiah, who is thought to have been king from 727-698 BCE, called upon his subjects to come to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover in the second month by slaughtering a lamb, according to 2 Chronicles 30: 1-6 (Borowski, 1995, p. 148). The blissful Passover celebration during Hezekiah's rule is described as being unique because no other celebration could rival it since the time of King Solomon's rule (2 Chronicles 30: 26). These passages regarding Hezekiah's Passover celebration do entail an unexplained chronological inconsistency, especially concerning why the festival was in the second month and not in the first. This demonstrates the unreliability of the Bible's historical accuracy.

Josiah, another king of Judah or the southern kingdom, who ruled sometime during the sixth century BCE, celebrated Passover as well (Delamarter, 2004). 2 Chronicles 35:1-19 describes Josiah and his subjects celebrating Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month by sacrificing a lamb during the eighteenth year of his rule. In addition, the majestic celebration is seen as significant because according to 2 Chronicles 35: 18, since prophet Samuel's time, no other Passover celebrations were like it; this observation is also supported by 2 Kings 23:22. As demonstrated by the descriptions in both 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, the uniqueness of the Passover celebrations is attributed to both of those that occurred during the rule of Hezekiah and Josiah (May, 1936, p.68). Thus, these celebrations cannot be unique, thereby raising questions about the factuality of their existence. One can only speculate that only one unique celebration might have occurred or that several celebrations had happened and instead, none of them were unique.

The Festival of Unleavened Bread is a week-long festival that took place the day after Passover (Elwell, 1997, para. 10). Consequently, this festival is also closely linked to the exodus; in fact, according to Exodus 12: 17, God explains to the Israelites that He took them out of Egypt on the first day of what would become the Festival of Unleavened Bread (May, 1937, p. 67). After their departure from Egypt, the Israelites ate unleavened bread on their

journey because they did not have time to pack any necessary products (Exodus 12: 39).

According to Exodus 23:14, this festival is considered significant because it was one of the preliminary three festivals that God ordered the Israelites to celebrate. The Israelites celebrated this festival by eating “unleavened bread” which is bread without yeast and by confiscating all of the yeast in their homes as well (Elwell, 1997, para. 10; Exodus 12: 15). In addition, they did not work during the first and last days of the festival but instead, prepared only food (Elwell, 1997, para. 10; Exodus 12:16; Leviticus 23: 6-8). 2 Chronicles 8:12-14 briefly mentions how King Solomon of the united monarchy of Israel, who probably ruled between 970 BCE to 930 BCE, celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread by sacrificing burned animals (Ussishkin, 1973, p. 78). According to 2 Chronicles 30: 13-30, Hezekiah also celebrated this festival, immediately after Passover in Jerusalem; it was a joyous time because the Israelites were so happy that they extended the festival to another week as they sacrificed a large number of bulls and sheep. Josiah also celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread, albeit only for a week right after Passover in the first month (2 Chronicles 35: 17). Because Solomon, Hezekiah, and Josiah all celebrated the same festival according to the Bible, this implies that the Festival of Unleavened Bread continued to be celebrated despite the division of the United Monarchy of Israel.

Although the Festival of the First Fruits is said to have taken place “at the beginning of the harvest,” there are several chronological inconsistencies regarding the exact timing of the festival (Elwell, 1997, para. 12; Wagenaar, 2004, p. 257). For instance, according to Numbers 28: 26-31, God mentions that this festival occurs at the same time as the Festival of Weeks and the Israelites are required to “offer a grain-offering of new grain to the Lord” and sacrifice some animals. These ambiguous references from the Holy Bible confuse the reader as to when exactly the Festival of the First Fruits was celebrated and how it is related to the Festival of Weeks. However, according to the Anchor Bible Dictionary, the Festival of First

Fruits of Barley occurred in the first month and the Festival of Weeks, also known as the Festival of the First Fruits of Wheat, was celebrated in the third month (Anchor Bible Dictionary, 1992, p.819). The Anchor Bible Dictionary bases this information regarding these festivals on a Temple Scroll, known as 11QTemple<sup>4</sup>, from the Qumran site<sup>5</sup> (Anchor Bible Dictionary, 1992, p.818). The 11QTemple, is dated to either 200 BCE or between 135-104 BCE, contains most of the festivals discussed in this paper, with the exceptions of the Festival of Unleavened Bread and the Festival of Jeroboam, along with the months and days they were celebrated on (Anchor Bible Dictionary, 1992, p.819). Unfortunately, the 11QT exceeds the time frame of the holidays focused on in this paper; regardless, however, I still think that the 11QT is significant archaeological evidence because it is an extra-biblical piece of evidence that proves that those festivals were actually celebrated during those times. The 11QT is further supported by the 4QMishmarot<sup>6</sup>, another Dead Sea Scroll found at the Qumran site<sup>7</sup> (Anchor Bible Dictionary, 1992, p.819).

King Solomon celebrated the Festival of Weeks through sacrifices, as mentioned in 2 Chronicles 8: 12-14. This festival is a clear manifestation of the Israelites offering their thanks to God for the fruitful harvest (Elwell, 1997, para. 15). However, according to Deuteronomy 26: 1-11, the Festival of the First Fruits is also used to commemorate the exodus and that God had given the Israelites the promised land that is fertile (Elwell, 1997, para. 14). I think that this demonstrates the importance of the exodus in the eyes of the Israelites and their God, Yahweh, because all of the festivals mentioned above have been linked to the exodus and also serve as commemorations of it, as well. In addition, all of the celebrations involve the sacrifice of animals, thereby highlighting the significance of sacrifice in Israelite religion,

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<sup>4</sup> : This can be found on P.17 (Text 1) and on P.19 (Figure 6) of this paper

<sup>5</sup> : A map of the Qumran site can be found on P. 18 (Figure 4) and an image of the cave where the 11QT was found is on P. 18 (Figure 5) of this paper

<sup>6</sup> : This can also be found on P.17 (Text 2), on P.20 (Figure 8), and on P.21 (Figure 9) of this paper

<sup>7</sup> : A picture of the cave where 4QMishmarot was found is on P. 19 (Figure 7)

ancient Judaism, at the time. Thus, all of these three festivals thus help to suggest the religious aspects that the ancient Israelites believed to be the most significant in their lives.

The Day of Atonement, as implied by the name, was a one-day holiday in which the Israelites did penance for their sins (Elwell, 1997, para. 36). This holiday is also different from the other festivals since it is somber and void of festive celebration. On the Day of Atonement, which was on the tenth day of the seventh month of the year, the Israelites rested and atoned for their sins by allowing a priest to sacrifice and burn an animal, notably a goat in their name (Leviticus 16: 23-34). In addition, another goat was set free into the wilderness (Elwell, 1997, para. 37; Leviticus 16: 22).

The Festival of Booths, initially known as the Festival of Ingathering and other names such as the Festival of Tabernacles or the Sukkot Festival, lasted for a week and it was five days after the Day of Atonement (Elwell, 1997, para. 51 & Leviticus 23:34; Morgenstern, 1964, p. 109, 111). This festival was supposed to take place after the Israelites had gathered the products of their harvest (Deuteronomy 16:13). The Israelites were required to celebrate by giving “burnt-offerings and grain-offerings” and sacrifices to God and by resting on the first and last day of the festival (Elwell, 1997, para.51). God also ordered them to “live in booths for seven days” (Leviticus 23: 42). God also commanded the Israelites to celebrate the Festival of Booths joyfully (Deuteronomy 16:14). The ancient Israelites celebrated the Festival of Booths “at the dedication of Solomon’s temple” with “great pomp and ceremony” (Wood, 1916, p.228). During the period of the divided monarchy, this festival would continue to be celebrated in the southern kingdom (Morgenstern, 1964, p. 114). In the northern kingdom, it would still be celebrated as well, albeit under a different name and during a different time (Morgenstern, 1964, p. 114).

Jeroboam I, the king of the northern kingdom from approximately 789-7 BCE to 748-7 BCE, created his own festival that was to be celebrated on the “fifteenth day of the eighth

month”, replicated after a festival in Judah, according to 1 Kings 12: 32-33 (Morgenstern, 1964, p. 115; Haran, 1967, p. 266). In addition, the sacrifices of the Festival of Jeroboam I were undertaken at the altar in the shrines of Dan and Bethel that Jeroboam I had built to rival the Temple of Jerusalem, in the southern kingdom (1 Kings 12: 32; Morgenstern, 1964, p. 109). Since Jeroboam I chose the date for the festival, it implies that its rival festival in Judah was on a different date (1 Kings 12: 32; Morgenstern, 1964, p. 109). Speculations have arisen regarding which Judean festival Jeroboam I’s was supposed to rival. For instance, some scholars, like Julian Morgenstern, have argued that the Festival of Jeroboam I is based upon the Sukkot Festival, or the Festival of Ingathering or Booths or Tabernacles, which was celebrated on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Morgenstern, 1964, p. 114; Leviticus 23: 34). He bases his argument on the fact that Jeroboam I’s festival occurred exactly one month after the Sukkot Festival (Morgenstern, 1964, p. 109). In addition, he tries to prove this by demonstrating that there were several calendars over the course of Israel’s history, the second of which was a “modified solar calendar” that succeeded the first rudimentary, local, agricultural calendar of Canaanite origin known as the “pentecontad calendar”<sup>8</sup> (Morgenstern, 1964, p. 110-111). Morgenstern further posits that although King Solomon instituted this second solar calendar, some of the Israelites, notably the northern ones, preferred using the pentecontad calendar, especially to know the dates for the agricultural festivals (Morgenstern, 1964, p.111-113). Thus, Morgenstern believes that it was King Solomon who changed the

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<sup>8</sup>: According to Morgenstern, 1965, p.111, until around 1000 BCE, almost all of the Western Semitic peoples, notably the Canaanites used a calendar which “the authors of this study,” [i.e. Morgenstern and his colleagues] called the “pentecontad calendar.” The calendar had agricultural features considering “it was based primarily upon the successive stages of the annual crop.” As a result, the year consisted of 365 days which were divided “into seven periods, each of fifty days, seven pentecontads.” Thus, “each pentecontad consisted of seven weeks of seven days each, forty-nine days in all, plus one day, at the very end of the seven weeks period, the fiftieth, and therefore the concluding, day of the pentecontad.” A number designated each of the seven days of the pentecontad week, “indicating the day’s position in the week” and “the seventh and final day of the week, however, was designated, not by its number, ‘seventh day,’ but by its own specific name or title, *Sabbat*, (‘Sabbath’),” which was a “day of abstention from all labor” and “a day of complete rest (Morgenstern, 1965, p.111).

initial date of the Festival of Ingathering and that Jeroboam I changed the date back to its original one (Morgenstern, 1964, p. 115). As a result, Morgenstern states that Jeroboam I's decision to use of the old calendar in his northern kingdom further separated the north from the south because the southern kingdom continued to use Solomon's solar calendar (Morgenstern, 1964, p.116). Morgenstern thus concludes that because the kingdoms used different calendars during Jeroboam I's reign, the timing of the festivals were different (Morgenstern, 1964, p.117). Morgenstern is supported by other scholars, notably Goldstein and Cooper in his analysis and conclusions (Goldstein & Cooper, 1990). In addition, the scholar W. Carleton Wood agrees with Morgenstern and reasserts that although the Festival of Jeroboam "was kept one month later...being ordained by royal decree to occur at that time probably for political reasons," it was the same as the Sukkot Festival (Wood, 1916, p.229). As a result, there is a lot of support for this hypothesis regarding how the Festival of Jeroboam is the same as the Sukkot Festival.

After discussing the ancient Israelite festivals, I will now describe three Canaanite festivals and I will also illustrate how some of the discussed ancient Israelite festivals had Canaanite origins. Although I am well aware of the contradictions and speculations regarding the origins of the ancient Israelites and whether or not they conquered Canaan by force or assimilated with Canaanites, I believe that regardless of the former or the latter, the ancient Israelites adopted some features of the Canaanite festivals (Paton, 1914, p.205-209). I agree that if they conquered Canaan, the ancient Israelites must have had to learn agriculture to survive and if they assimilated with the Canaanites, they must have taught the ancient Israelites their agricultural way of life (Paton, 1914, p.208). Before the ancient Israelites settled or conquered Canaan (depending on one's perception), they had been pastoral nomads whereas the Canaanites were established settlers whose civilization included agriculture (Paton, 1914, p.209). As a result, when the ancient Israelites were still "nomadic shepherds,"



they could not have been able to celebrate festivals with an agricultural background (Jewish Encyclopedia, “Festivals,” 2011; Welhausen, 1878, p.69). By adopting the Canaanite customs of agricultural life, the ancient Israelites could not have used agriculture “without observing the ceremonies that accompanied the planting of the seed and the reaping of the harvest,” especially since, like the Canaanites, the Israelites would have to pay tribute to a higher divinity to show their gratitude for the harvest (Paton, 1914, p.209; Welhausen, 1878, p.69). Although some might argue against the ancient Israelites’ adoption of some features of the polytheistic Canaanite festivals, the scholar Welhausen reasserts that transferring the festivals from Baal to Yahweh was “a profession of faith” because it demonstrated the Israelites’ belief that the land and its harvest was God’s and not the polytheistic deities (Welhausen, 1878, p.69).

Apart from the agricultural features of some ancient Israelite festivals that could possibly link them to Canaanite festivals, ancient Israelite months can be connected to the Canaanite months that have been mentioned in the Holy Bible (Anchor Bible Dictionary, 1992, p.815; 1 Kings 6:1,37-38, 8:2). These months, which are Abib, Ziv, Ethanim and Bul, with the exception of Abib, are all found in Phoenician extra-biblical inscriptions and thus, have surely been adopted by the ancient Israelites from the Canaanites (Heidel, 1925, p.52; Miano, 2010, p.20). As a result, I think that if the ancient Israelites adopted the Canaanite month names for their own use, they could have also adopted the festivals of those months for their own use, as well.

During all of the Canaanite festivals mentioned below, all of the Canaanite males were obligated to provide an offering to the god Ba’al (Wood, 1916, p.227). In addition, these festivals were celebrated during the Canaanite period, which the scholar W. Carlton Wood dates to 1800-1200 BCE (Wood, 1916, p.164). Moreover, everyone celebrated these festivals, which were “characterized by great jubilation” as the Canaanites ate, drank, and danced

(Wood, 1916, p.227). The first of these Canaanite festivals was the “Autumn Feast” which took place during the fifteenth day of the month of Ethanim (Wood, 1916, p.228). In the Canaanite calendar, Ethanim was the first month whereas in the ancient Israelite calendar it was the seventh month (Anchor Bible Dictionary, p.815; Wood, 1916, p.228). The “Autumn Feast” celebrated the “end of the olive harvest” (Wood, 1916, p.228). As a result, I think that the timing of the “Autumn Feast” in the Canaanite calendar enables it to coincide with the Sukkot Festival. In addition, I think it is similar to the Canaanite festival because the Sukkot Festival occurred at the end of the harvest as the Israelites collected the grain from the threshing-floor and the wine from the wine-press (Deuteronomy 16:13). The Israelites celebrated the Sukkot Festival by giving grain-offerings to God (Elwell, 1997, para. 51). Similarly, the Canaanites presented Ba’al, their god, with an offering (Wood, 1916, p.228). Thus, there are three similarities between these two festivals, thereby allowing me to conclude that it is very possible that the Sukkot Festival had Canaanite origins.

The second Canaanite festival was the “Spring Feast” or the Festival of Massoth; *massoth* means “unleavened bread” (Morgenstern, 1917, p.276; Wood, 1916, p.229). This festival was celebrated on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, at the “beginning of the harvest” and thus, the Canaanites had to show their gratitude to Ba’al for the harvest (Wood, 1916, p.229). As a result, all the males were required to offer a “sheaf of the first ripe barley” to Ba’al and unleavened bread had to be made, as well (Wood, 1916, p.229). I thus think that this festival has significant obvious similarities, including the name and the traditions, with the ancient Israelite Festival of Unleavened Bread, thereby demonstrating that the latter had Canaanite origins. I am well aware that it is important to point out that the Festival of Unleavened Bread was celebrated on the fifteenth day of the first month (Elwell, 1997, para. 10). However, because the Canaanite first month is the seventh month in the ancient Israelite calendar, I have realized that the Canaanite seventh month is also the first month in the

ancient Israelite calendar. As a result, I believe that these points reaffirm that the Festival of Unleavened Bread did indeed have Canaanite origins.

Apart from Wood, the scholars Lewis Bayles Paton and Julian Morgenstern also argue that the Festival of Unleavened Bread had agricultural origins, and hence, was adopted from the Canaanites because it was “celebrated just before the beginning of the harvest season” (Paton, 1914, p.223; Morgenstern, 1917, p.275). Morgenstern further posits that the festival entails a sacrifice of the “first sheaf of barley” and that the unleavened bread is actually made of the old crop and not the new crop of the harvest (Morgenstern, 1917, p.275). I think that Morgenstern lacks evidence for this argument and he does not explain how the fact that the unleavened bread is made from the old crop and not the new crop is supposed to prove that the Festival of Unleavened Bread has Canaanite origins. Morgenstern then attempts to prove his point by demonstrating that the “ritual dance” that occurred on the last day of this festival can be compared to the dances that were performed in an earlier Canaanite festival “in honor of the Canaanite triad, the father-god Ba’al, the mother-goddess Astarte, and the divine child, Tammuz” (Morgenstern, 1917, p.282-283). These gods and goddesses were a consequence of the “deification of the great agricultural forces and phenomena;” hence, I think that this festival and these gods thus emphasize the importance of agriculture in Canaan (Morgenstern, 1917, p.290). Because the Canaanites celebrated this festival for seven days, I can understand Morgenstern’s emphasis on the similarity between this Canaanite festival and the Festival of Unleavened Bread (Morgenstern, 1917, p.283). This Astarte-Tammuz Canaanite festival entailed “fasting, mourning, and bodily affliction” because the Canaanites were mourning Tammuz, the “dead god of vegetation” (Morgenstern, 1917, p.283). However, as the days of the festival passed, the Canaanites became more joyful in their celebration because they thought that Tammuz would be “restored to life in the crop” of the new harvest (Morgenstern, 1917, p.283). The seventh and last day was the most blissful day of the festival, wherein the

Canaanite maidens performed “sacred dances and prostitution” (Morgenstern, 1917, p.283). Although I can understand Morgenstern’s train of thought in linking the ritual dance of the last day of the Astarte-Tammuz Festival to the ritual dance on the last day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, I find it hard to fathom the similarity between these two dances. I do not think that the ancient Israelites would have performed ‘sacred prostitution’ during a festival that was supposed to commemorate the Exodus and whose celebration was ordered by God. In addition, although some scholars may argue that the ancient Israelites were not completely monotheistic at this point, I believe that they were on their way to monotheism and performing ‘sacred prostitution’ would be considered heretical for those on this path. Morgenstern further links the two festivals by arguing that the ancient Israelites performed mourning rites and fasted as well during the Festival of Unleavened Bread (Morgenstern, 1917, p.284). His cited evidence is that the first-borns of modern Orthodox Jews fast during this festival (Morgenstern, 1917, p.284). I find this particular evidence problematic because I think that one should not take modern day practices as proof of traditions that occurred during the tenth century BCE. Because of some of the logical fallacies in Morgenstern’s arguments, I find it hard to agree with his and Paton’s conclusions regarding how the Festival of Unleavened Bread had Canaanite origins. Instead, I agree with W. Carlton Wood’s clear, concise arguments. In sum, although Morgenstern, Paton, and Wood all posit arguments trying to illustrate that this ancient Israelite festival had Canaanite origins, I have been most convinced by Wood’s arguments and thus, I can conclude for myself that the Festival of Unleavened Bread did indeed have Canaanite origins.

The third Canaanite festival, which was called the Feast of Weeks and which was also known as the “Summer Feast,” occurred on the ninth day of the ninth month (Wood, 1916, p.229). All of the Canaanite men were required to bring offerings of bread “baked from the new wheat flour” to Ba’al (Wood, 1916, p.230). I think that this festival evidently

corresponds to the ancient Israelite Festival of Weeks which was also called the Festival of the First Fruits of Wheat. The ancient Israelites also had to “offer a grain-offering of new grain to the Lord” during the Festival of Weeks (Numbers 28:26-31; Paton, 1914, p.224). In addition, the Festival of Weeks took place during the third month in the ancient Israelite calendar which corresponds to the ninth month in the Canaanite calendar (Anchor Bible Dictionary, 1992, p.819). Moreover, this festival had sedentary agricultural features, which is “radically different from anything that the...” ancient Israelites would have contributed to as nomads (Paton, 1914, p.224; Wood, 1916, p.230). As a result, I think that this particular festival had Canaanite origins because of its agricultural features.

The Festival of Jeroboam is another festival that is believed to have Canaanite origins. Some scholars, such as Johannes C. de Moor, argue that when Jeroboam I changed the date of his festival to the fifteenth day of the eighth month, the festival was celebrated on the full moon, coinciding with a nameless Canaanite festival (Moor, 1971). Other scholars, including W. Carleton Wood, posit that the festival of Jeroboam was the Canaanite “Autumn Feast”; the only difference was that it was celebrated in Bul, instead of the seventh month of Ethanim (Wood, 1916, p.229). Because both scholars do not provide enough information for their conclusions, it is hard for me to choose sides. Regardless of which scholar is right, the debate between them reasserts that this festival could have had Canaanite origins. In addition, Jeroboam I also adopted the Canaanite practice of “sacrificing and offering incense” as a king at the Bethel alter to celebrate the festival (1 Kings 12:32-33). As a result, both the debate between the scholars and Jeroboam I’s adoption of the Canaanite practice imply that the Festival of Jeroboam I had Canaanite origins.

However, I do not think that all of the festivals that the ancient Israelites celebrated had Canaanite origins; this highlights the controversial features of this topic. I believe that Passover or *Pesah* had agricultural origins because it entails the sacrificing of lambs, and

herding sheep is an evident feature of nomadic pastoralism, the ancient Israelites' prior lifestyle. As a result, Passover was "essentially a shepherd festival" and an "original nomad festival" that continued to be celebrated in the "agricultural environment" of Canaan (Morgenstern, 1917, p.275).

In sum, this paper has strived to discuss ancient Israelite and Canaanite festivals in an effort to demonstrate how some of the former have been influenced by the latter. Of the seven ancient Israelite festivals mentioned, I have managed to illustrate how the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks, the Sukkot Festival and the Festival of Jeroboam had Canaanite origins and how Passover did not. While doing my research, I did not come across sufficient arguments and evidence that would enable me to argue whether the Festival of the First Fruits and the Day of Atonement are of Canaanite or Israelite origins. As a result, this research paper shows that four of the studied festivals have Canaanite origins, one does not, and the remaining two are of ambiguous origins.

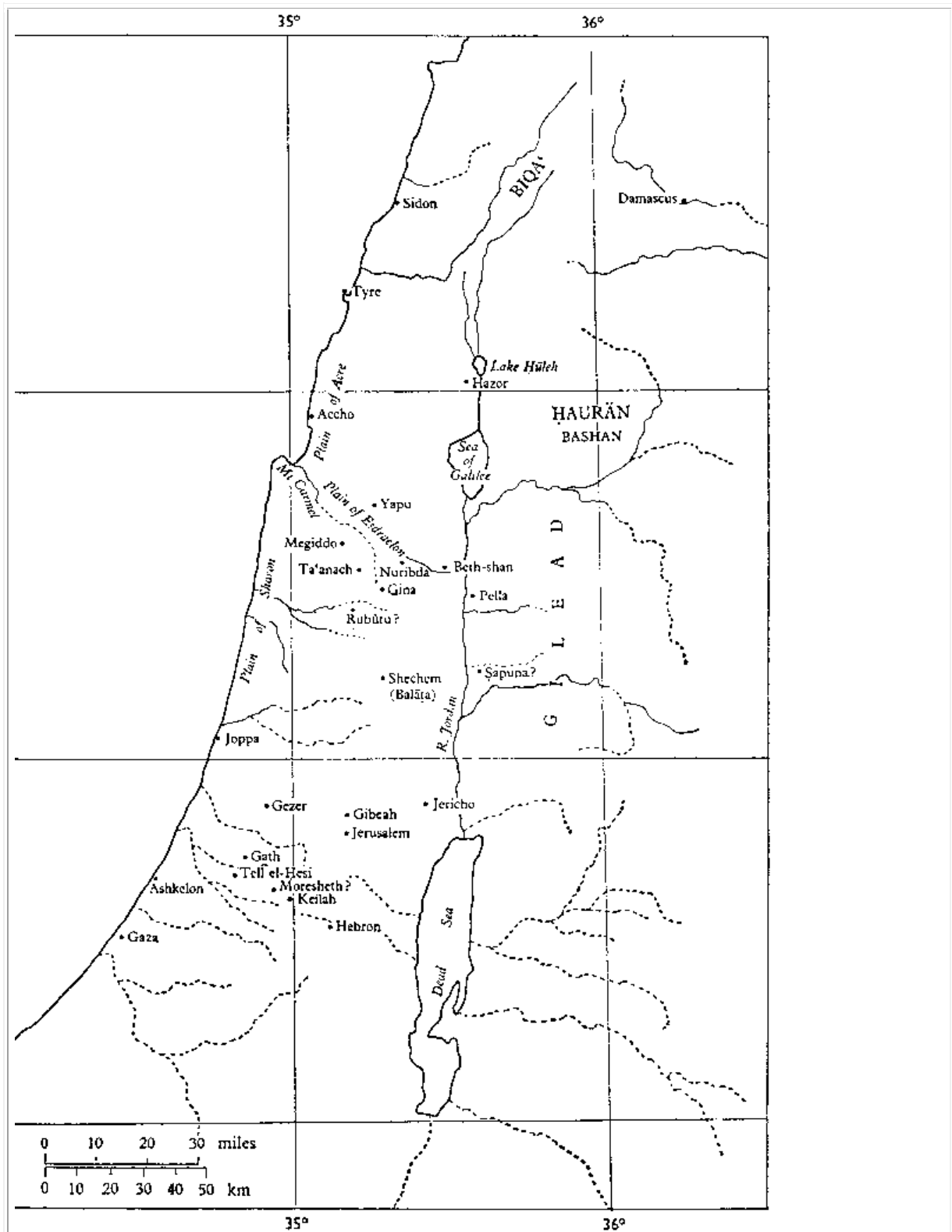


Figure 1: Map of Canaan circa 1200 BCE

Retrieved from: The Cambridge Ancient History Vol II Part 2A: The Amarna Letters from Palestine, W.F. Albright, Cambridge Univ. Press 1980  
<http://www.mideastweb.org/pal1200.htm>



Figure 2: Map of the United Monarchy, circa 1000 BCE (Retrieved from: <http://www.conflicts.rem33.com/images/ISRAEL%20PALES/KDM%20of%20DAVID%201000%20BC.jpg>)



Figure 3: Map of Israel, after its division into the northern and the southern kingdoms

Retrieved from:  
<http://www.ebibleteacher.com/sites/default/files/images/1/Divided%20Kingdom%20of%20Israel%201024.JPG>



Text 1: 11QTemple Scroll: Retrieved from: Anchor Bible Dictionary, 1992, p.819

1/1-8 Days of Ordination for Priests

1/14 Passover

1/26 Waving of the Omer (= The Festival of the First Fruits of Barley)

[2/14 The Second Passover (perhaps in a lost part of a column)]

3/15 The Festival of Week (=The Festival of the First Fruits of Wheat)

5/3 Festival of New Wine

6/22 Festival of Oil

6/23-29 (?) Festival of the Offering of Wood (cf. Neh 10:34)

7/1 Day of Remembrance

7/10 Day of Atonement

7/15 Festival of Booths

Text 2: 4QMishmarot: Retrieved from the: Anchor Bible Dictionary, 1992, p.819

The first year, its festivals

On the third (day) in Maoziah—Passover [=1/14]

[On the first (day)] in Jed[iah]—the waving of

the [omer] [=1/26]

On the fifth (day) in Seorim—the [Second]

Passover [=2/14]

On the first (day) in Jeshua—the Festival of

Weeks [=3/15]

[On] the fourth (day) in Maoziah—the Day of

Remembrance [=7/1]

[On] the sixth (day) in Joiarib—the Day of

Atonement [=7/10]

[On the (fourth) day in Jed]aiah—the Festival

of Booths

[=7/15]



Figure 4: Map of Qumran Site

Retrieved from : [http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/mistic/scroll\\_qumran.htm](http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/mistic/scroll_qumran.htm)



Figure 5: The cave where the 11Q Temple Scroll was found

Retrieved from: <http://www.bibleplaces.com/qumrancaves.htm>



Figure 6: Fragments of the 11 QTemple Scroll

Retrieved from: <http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/temple>



Figure 7: The cave where the 4Q Mishmarot text was found

Retrieved from: <http://www.bibleplaces.com/qumrancaves.htm>

7. [במימין בשנים עשר החודש ודוקה בארבעה כאכיה כשמונה עשר כוא  
 חרביעה בארבעה בשכניה באחד בראשון ודוקה בששה]  
 8. [בימים בשבעה עשר ב]ראשון שבת פתחיה בשלושים בשני  
 ודוקה באחד בחו"ר בשבעה עשר כוא באחד בדליה בחשעה]

#### Fragment 2 Column 1

1. [ודוקה באחד [בבל]א באר]בעה ועשרים] כוא שבת בחור  
 בשבעה [ה בשמי]  
 2. [ודוקה בשנים בפתחיה] בשלושה ועשרים כוא באחד בימין בחמשה  
 בשביעי ודוקה בארבעה  
 3. [בדליה בשנים ועשרים] כוא בשלושה בימין בחמשה כשמיני ודוקה  
 בחמשה בחרים  
 4. [בששה עשר כוא באר]בעה במלאכיה בארבעה חשיעי ודוקה שבת  
 באכיה באחד  
 5. [ועשרים כוא בששה בי]שוע [ב]שלושה כשעירי ודוקה באחד בימים  
 בחשע העשר ב[וא]  
 6. [שבת בישבאב בשנים בעמתי] עשר החודש ודוקה בשלושה באמר  
 בת]שע העשר כוא  
 7. [כשנים בפעין בשנים בשנים] עשר החודש ודוקה בארבעה ביחזקאל  
 בשמונה עשר  
 8. [כוא *vacat* השנה הראשונה החודש הראשון בדליה  
 במו]עזיה [כו]א  
 9. [הפסח בידעיה כוא הנף העומר השני ב]דעיה [כשעורים כוא הפסח  
 השני השלישי בקיין]

#### Fragment 2 Column 2

1. [כ]ש]וע כוא חג השב[ועים הרכיעי כאל]שיב החמישי] בבלנה הששי  
 ביחזקאל] השביעי [י]  
 2. [במועזיה הואה יום הזכרון כי]ר'יב כוא יום הכפורים בידעיה כוא  
 [חג ה]סוכות השמיני [כשעורים]  
 3. [החשיעי בי]שוע העשירי בחופה עשירי עשר החודש בחור ענים עשר  
 החודש בנחל *vacat*  
 4. [השנית הראשון בידעיה כשעורים כוא הפסח ב[מ]ימין כוא הנף העומר  
 ח>ש<י ב[מ]ימין באכיה]  
 5. [כוא הפסח ה]שני השלישי באל]שיב [ובח]פא] כוא חג השבועים [הרכיעי  
 בבל]א החמישי בפתחיה  
 6. [הששי במועזיה השביעי כשעורים הואה יום] הזכרון במלאכיה  
 [כוא יום הכפ]ורים בנימין  
 7. [כוא חג הסוכות השמיני באכיה החשיעי ב]חופה העשירי בחור ע]שתי  
 עשר] החודש בימין]

Figure 8: The 4Q Mishmarot text; fragment 2, column 2 includes the festivals and their dates.

Retrieved from:

[http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/scrolls\\_deadsea/uncovered/uncovered04.htm](http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/scrolls_deadsea/uncovered/uncovered04.htm)

8. [שני]ם עשר ח[ח]רש [בירעיה] *vacat* [השלישית הראשון]  
 ב[מזכיר] באכיה בוא  
 9. הפסח בשכנ[ח] בוא חנף העומר השני] בשכניה ביקים בוא הפסח  
 [השני השלישי כבלנא ב[ח]ויר

### Fragment 2 Column 3

1. [בוא חנ] השבועים הרביעי ב[פתחיה החמישי כרליה הששי בש/עורים  
 [השביעי באכיה] >[הואה יום] [הזכרון בישוע] > בוא יום הכפורים  
 2. [בשכניה] בוא חנ [ה]סוכות [ה]שמני ביקים התשיעי בחור העשירי  
 ב[יכין עשתי עשר החודש ב[יורדי] [שנים]  
 3. [עשר] החודש ב[מזמן] [הרביעית הראשון] בשכניה ביקים בוא הפסח  
 בישכאב בוא חנף העומר השני  
 4. בישכאב ב[אמר בוא הפסח השני השלישי] כפתחיה] ב[יכין בוא חנ  
 השביעים הרביעי כרליה  
 5. [החמישין] כחרים [הששי באכיה השביעי] ביקים הואה יום [הזכרון]  
 כ[הופה בוא יום הכפורים בישכאב בוא חנ  
 6. [הסוכות] השמיני באמר [התשיעי בוכין העשירי ביורדי] >עש> תי [עש]>ר  
 [החודש] כמלאכיה שנים עשר החודש  
 7. [בשכניה] החמישי הראשון כבלנא באמר] בוא הפסח בפ[עין בוא] חנף  
 העומר השני בפ[עין ביחזקאל בוא  
 8. הפסח [השני השלישי ב[רליה ביורדי] בוא חנ [השבעים הרביעי]  
 כחרים החמישי בקוץ [השני] ביקים השביעי  
 9. באמר הואה יום הזכרון בחור בוא יום הכפורים בפ[עין בוא חנ  
 הסוכות השמיני ב[חזקאל החמישי ביורדי] >עשירי

### Fragment 2 Column 4

4. [הששי באמר השביעי ביחזקאל הואה יום הזכרון בוכין בוא יום  
 הכפורים כבלנא בוא חנ  
 5. [הסוכות השמיני כמזעיה התשיעי כמלאכיה העשירי בישוע] עשתי  
 עשר ח[ח]חודש כהופה  
 6. [שנים עשר החודש בפעין] *vacat*  
 7. *vacat*  
 8. *vacat*  
 9. *vacat*

Figure 9: The 4Q Mishmarot text; fragment 2, columns 3-4 mention the festivals and their dates.

Retrieved from:

[http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/scrolls\\_deadsea/uncovered/uncovered04.htm](http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/scrolls_deadsea/uncovered/uncovered04.htm)

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