

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

so successful, they must have realized that the Lord's hand was not with them as with Israel.

Q. Should we not, then, think that the day was lengthened in answer to Joshua's apostrophe?

A. The text does not say so absolutely, and if the battle took place in the morning, the need does not appear.

Q. How, then, should we explain the fourteenth verse?

A. When we realize from Joshua's position that the sun must have been obscured by the storm, and read how the Lord fought (verses 10 and 11), there is no difficulty.



ART. VI.—WHY WAS THE HARE CONSIDERED “UNCLEAN” AMONG THE ISRAELITES?

VARIOUS reasons have been put forward to account for the fact that the hare is classed among the “unclean” animals in the lists in Lev. xi. and Deut. xiv.—*e.g.*, in the Old Testament itself the reason given is that it chews the cud (Lev. xi. 6; Deut. xiv. 7). Its habit of rubbing the teeth together when eating causes its cheeks to move in such a way as to make a superficial observer conclude that this is the case. Another reason suggested is its proneness to disease. The supposed thickness of its blood, resulting in sleepiness and melancholia to the eater, has also been assigned as the cause of its “uncleanness.” Or, once more, it has been said that to the general unhealthiness of its flesh was due the command to abstain from eating it; and, lastly, it has been maintained that the prohibition originated in the desire to differentiate the Israelites from the surrounding nations. But strong objections, which it is not necessary to enlarge upon here, can be urged against all these contentions; the real, the original reason, must be sought elsewhere.

I.

It may be well to observe first the place which the hare occupied in the religions and in the “*Volks-Ideen*” of some widely separated peoples.¹

Among the ancient Egyptians, the hare was holy to Neptra,² the god of grain; it appears in the “*Book of the Dead*,” where it is represented in a sitting posture with a wisp of corn before

¹ The data here given are not exhaustive, but seem to contain the salient points.

² *I.e.* Osiris, as the giver of grain. Egyptologists are not at one as to the hare being holy to a god. Cf. also Renouf, “*The Myth of Osiris Unnefer*,” who regards the hare from an entirely different point of view.

it, facing the god.¹ The Hittites, on the other hand, did not regard it as holy, which is interesting from another point of view; in the words of Messerschmidt: "Among animals of the chase lions and hares are represented. . . . A representation of the god of the chase is found on one of the gate-panels of Sendschirli; he has a human body, but the head of a lion. In one hand he is holding a hare, in the other a spear, which was therefore used in hunting."²

Among the Arabs the women used to wear hares' heads as amulets,³ for what reason will be seen below; the bones of hares were also worn on the wrist and round the neck as charms against the jinn, who were believed to be afraid of the hare.⁴ The bones of a hare were also worn by the Arabs as a preservative against death.⁵

"Many separate races," writes Andrew Lang, "seem to recognise the figure of a hare where we see the 'Man in the Moon.' In a Buddhist legend, an exemplary and altruistic hare was translated to the moon. To the common people in India the spots on the moon look like a hare, and Chandras, the god of the moon, carries a hare; hence the moon is called *sasin* or *sasanka*, 'hare-mark.' The Mongolians also see in these shadows the figure of a hare (Grimm)."⁶ Again, the Mexicans imagined that the spots in the moon resembled a hare, and accounted for the phenomenon by saying that once "a god smote the moon in the face with a rabbit"; in Zululand they believe that a hare was translated to the moon.⁷ The origin of this connection of a hare with the moon is difficult to trace; it is perhaps a somewhat hazardous conjecture, but the writer is inclined to see the reason of it in the great fertility of the hare (concerning which see more below). Primitive man desired to account for the numerous offspring of the sun and the moon—*i.e.*, the stars—and in accordance with that illogical theory of cause and effect, so incomprehensible to us, but so natural to him, he believed that the most prolific animal on earth, the hare, must have had a hand in the supposed fertility of the great persons in the sky. If

¹ See "P.S.B.A." xxiv. 270. In vol. xxi. (the plate facing p. 239) there are two representations of the goddess Anupt; that on the left, in the second row, appears to have a head more like that of a hare than like that of a jackal. Is it possible to see any connection between the name of this goddess and the word אַרְיָנָה?

² "Die Hettiter" in *Der alte Orient*, 4 Jahrg. i. 21.

³ Rob. Smith, "Rel. Sem.," p. 382.

⁴ Rob. Smith in "Z.D.M.G.," xxxix. 329.

⁵ Hommel, "Die Namen der Säugethiere," p. 321.

⁶ "Custom and Myth," p. 132.

⁷ Cf. Andrew Lang's "Myth, Ritual, and Religion" (new impression, 1901), i. 129.

this is so, one can understand why the hare should also have been connected with the sun, for, according to an Algonkin myth, "the godly hare's house is at the place of the sun-rising,"¹ though, as Andrew Lang points out, "it does not follow from this that the hare had any original connection with the dawn"; it is with the sun itself that the connection would be. It may be added that there appears to have been a hare constellation, Lagos (Λαγώς). Then, further, 'among the Indians of North America the hare was regarded with great veneration. "The Moquis say that long ago the Great Mother brought from the West nine clans in the form of deer, sand, water, bears, hares, tobacco-plants and reed-grass. She planted them on the spots where villages now stand, and transformed them into men, who built the present pueblos, and from whom the present clans are descended."²

In many Indian tribes of North America the Great Hare is regarded as the originator of man and as the inventor of the arts of life. Père Allouez, a seventeenth-century missionary to the North Americans, says: "The Great Hare is the master of life, and can leap eight leagues at one bound, and is beheld by his servants in dreams."³ The Great Hare in these North American legends appears thus as the creator of man, so that here again one may see his characteristic power of productivity coming into play in the savage mind. The legend of the Great Hare is "the kind of legend," to quote Andrew Lang again, "whose origin we ascribe to the credulous fancy of early peoples making no distinction between themselves and the beasts."⁴

To come now to a very different type of man, we have the following interesting quotation from Dr. Frazer's "Pausanias": "So when the people of these three towns—viz., Etis, Aphrodisias, and Side—went forth into the world, they sought to know where it was the will of heaven that they should dwell. And it was foretold them that Artemis would show them where they should abide. So, when they were gone ashore, and a hare appeared to them, they took the hare as their guide. And when it dived into a myrtle-tree, they built a city where the myrtle stood. And they worship that very myrtle-tree till this day, and they call Artemis by the name of Saviour."⁵

¹ Strachey's "History of Travaile," pp. 98 f.; cf. Lang, "Myth, Rit., and Rel.," i. 184; ii. 82 f.

² Frazer's "Totemism," p. 4.

³ A. Lang, *op. cit.* ii. 80.

⁴ For the North American legends about the Great Hare see Strachey's "Travaile into Virginia," issued by the Hakluyt Society, and "History of Travaile."

⁵ "Pausanias," i. 171.

In another work by the same author numerous instances are cited to show that all over Europe customs are still kept up indicative of a belief in the hare as a corn-spirit; for the evidence in detail see the "Golden Bough," ii. 269 *sqq.* Attention is also drawn to the fact that there was a belief in a close relationship between hares and witches (*op. cit.*, iii. 408);¹ the latter were always believed to have dealings with supernatural beings.

In Teutonic myth the hare is holy to the spring goddess Ostara (Eostre):² she it is who brings new life to the earth; as her name implies, she was believed to bring the spring, and with it light, from the East.

II.

Even from these few data it will be seen that the hare must have played a not unimportant part in heathen mythology. To what was this due? Was it because the hare was a totem-animal? Or must we seek for the reason in some other direction? We are concerned here more especially with Israelite belief, but seeing that the hare was "holy" among so many and such various races, it is assuredly justifiable to take into consideration extra-Israelite conceptions for the purpose of throwing light upon the reason of this animal being reckoned among the unclean ones in the Pentateuch. As far as one can see, there appears to have been almost universally (among those who venerated the hare) one special conception held with regard to this animal which, one ventures to think, is sufficient to account for its place in mythology, and therefore also for its "uncleanness" among the Israelites; nevertheless, to deny that the hare was a totem-animal among the Israelites, or rather, among their ancestors, would be unreasonable, because the *possibility* that this was the case exists; indeed, we have direct evidence that among some peoples in a savage state the hare was a totem-animal. We have already seen that this was the case among the Moquis; other North American tribes may be instanced. "The martyred Père Rasles, writing in 1723, says that one of the stocks of Outaonaks claims descent from a hare, 'the Great Hare was a man of prodigious size,'"³ the totem-kindred which bore his name was looked up to with especial respect. Andrew Lang says: "It is probable that the Great Hare of the Algonkins is only a successful apotheosized totem; his legend and his dominion are very widely spread."⁴ On

¹ In some parts of Scotland there is a tale of a witch being shot at while in the shape of a hare.

² Cf. Dahn's "Walhall," pp. 192 f.

³ A. Lang, *op. cit.* i. 75.

⁴ *Ibid.* ii. 79, 80.

the other hand, to affirm that the hare was a totem-animal would be unsafe, for it cannot be said that there is any direct evidence for this as far as the Israelites are concerned.¹ It will be better to consider what deductions may be drawn from the available evidence.

III.

Very little is known of the Egyptian god Nepra,² but considering that he was the god of grain, his cult cannot have been unimportant in a land like Egypt. To the simple mind of early man the striking thing about corn must have been the wonderful way in which it reproduced itself. Now the hare is the most productive among mammals: it usually breeds four times a year; one can, therefore, understand that to the primitive mind there must have appeared some occult connection between these two prolific representatives of the vegetable and animal kingdoms. Another fact, and a very simple one, must have been regarded as significant—namely, that the hare was not infrequently seen in the cornfields.

It seems, therefore, not unnatural that the hare was holy to Nepra. How, in later times, the corn-spirit was believed to manifest itself in the shape of a hare is amply shown by Mannhardt in his "Korndämonen" (*cf.* also Frazer, "Golden Bough"). When, in the "Book of the Dead," the hare is represented with a wisp of corn³ before him, we may see, as it were, a double symbol of productivity. It is well known that among the Arabs, as among the Israelites, barrenness was a terrible reproach;⁴ when we learn, therefore, that Arab women wore the bones of hares as amulets, it seems fairly certain that the object was to acquire fruitfulness. And even in the case of these being worn, as we are told, as charms against the jinn, who were believed to be afraid of the hare, one may reasonably surmise that the object was to avert an evil influence which was supposed to entail barrenness. Moreover, as we have seen, the bones or the head of a hare were also worn as a preservative against death; here too, probably, some similar conception must have been present, as death would naturally be regarded as the direct antithesis of fruitfulness—the production of life.

¹ *Cf.* S. A. Cook in "J.Q.R.," xiv. 55, p. 426.

² *Cf.* Lanzone, "Diz. di mitologia egizia"; Brugsch, "Hieroglyph-Demot Wörterbuch"; "Book of the Dead," chap. lxxvii., line 9. These were pointed out to the writer by Dr. Budge, of the British Museum.

³ Many Egyptologists question whether this represents a wisp of corn.

⁴ For various expedients resorted to by Arab women, even at the present day, to remove the reproach of childlessness, see Curtiss, "Primitive Sem. Rel. To-day," pp. 115-119.

The evidence thus far would go to show that the hare was regarded as a symbol of fertility, and as such would be holy to a divinity in whom was supposed to reside the power to make fruitful. Further light is, however, shed on the subject by considering the quotation given above from "Pausanias." Dr. Frazer makes the following comment upon it: "Professor Wide ('Lakonische Kulte,' pp. 121 *sqq.*) points out that the myrtle and the hare are attributes of Aphrodite rather than Artemis";¹ and he also draws attention to the name of one of the towns in question, Aphrodisias. The hare was, of course, holy to Aphrodite, and the reason is obvious enough. But the worship of Aphrodite was of Eastern origin, being brought by the Phœnicians to Cyprus, from whence it spread all over Greece; under the names Ishtar, Astarte, or Ashtoreth (among the Arabs Al Lat or Al 'Uzza ?),² this goddess was worshipped by all the nations of Western Asia. Now, seeing that the Greeks received the worship of Aphrodite from the Semites, may one not reasonably suppose that her holy animal, the hare, came likewise from the Semites? Among these latter, this goddess was also, as is well known, the goddess of fertility and reproduction, so that the hare would be just as appropriate as her attribute among the Semites as among the Greeks. If this is so, then the reason of the hare's uncleanness among the Israelites becomes plain—it was holy to Ashtoreth.

It is interesting to note that in much later times, among an entirely different people, a goddess of fertility has the hare as her holy animal. In Teutonic myth the equivalent of Venus, namely Ostara (Eostre), is the goddess of love and fruitfulness, and the hare is sacred to her. When she comes in the spring-time, bringing new life to the earth, she is accompanied by the hare. According to early popular belief, the sun itself gives three leaps of joy at the appearance of Ostara.³ The egg which was supposed to be laid by the (female) hare was the emblem of abundance (in Christian times changed into a symbol of the resurrection of the body); and here one may observe, incidentally, that the tortoise was holy to Aphrodite. Dr. Frazer, in referring to a statue which represents this goddess standing with one foot on a tortoise, says: "This statue of Aphrodite by Phidias is mentioned by Plutarch, who interprets the tortoise as a symbol that women should

¹ "Pausanias," iii. 385.

² Cf. Wellhausen, "Reste Arab. Heidenth.," pp. 39-42.

³ Dahn, "Walhall," pp. 192 f. On the other hand, Grimm ("Teutonic Mythology," i. 291) says: "According to popular belief of long standing, the moment the sun rises on Easter Sunday morning the hare gives three joyful leaps, he dances for joy." Is this the origin of the expression, "As mad as a March hare"?

stay at home and keep silence."¹ Tortoises were also sacred to the sensual god Pan.² It is possible that the mention of the hare and the tortoise together in the fable may originally have had a more interesting significance than is generally supposed.

IV.

We have seen that, as Andrew Lang has pointed out, many races recognise a hare where we see the "Man in the Moon." And here one cannot help recalling the fact that Ishtar (Ashtoreth) was a moon-goddess.³ There was also a hare constellation. The transference of the hare to the sky marks another stage in the history of the sacred animal; it also proves that there must have been a hare cult.

It is therefore possible that three stages are to be traced in the mythological history of the hare:

1. The hare as a totem-animal.
2. The hare as holy to a divinity.
3. The hare as a god.

¹ "Pausanias," iv. 105.

² *Ibid.*, iv. 447.

³ In spite of "Encycl. Bibl.," 338; cf. Ball, "Light from the East," p. 153: "In her celestial character the goddess represents, first, the crescent moon, and is called the 'Daughter of the Moon-god.'" At the same time, it is realized that among the Israelites this is only a secondary character. Unexpected light has very recently been thrown upon the subject. During the excavations on the site of ancient Gezer, carried on by the Palestine Exploration Fund, a small bronze figure (4 inches high) of Ashtoreth-Karnaim was found in the temple area ("P.E.F.Q.S.," 1903, pp. 225 f.); the horns on this figure are clearly those of a ram. This "find" goes a long way to establish Rob. Smith's belief that among the nomadic Semites Astarte was a sheep-goddess; this belief is also justified by the interesting passage Deut. vii. 13: "He will bless the increase of thy kine, and the young of thy flock." "The young of thy flock" is literally "the *ashteroth* of thy flock." During the excavations referred to, the remains of cow statuettes were frequently found; cf. the words of Philo Byblus quoted in G. A. Cooke's "North Semitic Inscr.," p. 21: ἡ δὲ Ἀστάρτη ἐπέθηκε τῇ ἰδίᾳ κεφαλῇ βασιλείας παράσημον κεφαλῆν ταύρων.

It should, however, also be pointed out that a somewhat different figure of Astarte was discovered by the Palestine Exploration Fund a few years ago at Tell Sandahannah (close to Beit Jibrin); in a kind of halo on this figure the seven planets are represented (cf. Jer. xlv. 17, where Astarte is called the "Queen of Heaven"), and the action of the right hand in clasping the breast is paralleled by Babylonian representations of the goddess, and is symbolic of giving nourishment to new-born babes (cf. Riehm, "Handwörterbuch des bibl. Alterthums," Art. "Astarte"; Delitzsch, "Babel und Bibel," second lecture, p. 33). There would seem, then, to be good reason for believing that among the Babylonians Astarte was primarily a moon-goddess, and that her "horns" were those of the crescent moon, while among the Israelites she was primarily (after the Exile this was apparently modified) a cow-goddess, and her "horns" here were those of a cow. As the goddess of fertility the appropriateness of this is obvious.

It is not, of course, implied that these stages were definitely marked—the evidence proves the contrary; but at one time or another it seems that the hare did assume these different characters.

Thus, the material at present available for the purpose of answering the question, "Why was the hare considered unclean among the Israelites?" seems to demand the answer: *Because it was sacred to Ashtoreth.*

At the same time, it is realized that this may have only been a contributing cause, and that further evidence may show that there were additional reasons.

W. O. E. OESTERLEY.



ART. VII.—THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

THROUGH the kindness of the editor I am permitted to reply to the remarks of the Rev. C. Greene upon my article on the "Intermediate State," published in the September number of this magazine, and reprinted for discussion in the Worcester Clerical Society, as well as for others who were desirous of examining my conclusions more closely. I cannot complain of my kind and courteous critics, least of all of Mr. Greene, who has frankly conceded the most important part of what I contend for when he allows that my "reasoning is fatal to the Romish doctrine of purgatory, and to the possibility of repentance and conversion in the Intermediate State." It may probably have occurred to him that if it is fatal to these errors, it is fatal to much more—the invocation of saints, prayers for the dead and to the dead, and all that mass of hazy sentiment which is grounded on the doctrine of intermediate consciousness, including the various forms of "spiritism," necrology, demonology, soothsaying, and divination by the aid—real or pretended—of the spirits of the dead. All this latter-day rubbish goes by the board when once it is clearly seen that there is no ground in Scripture for believing that the spirits of good men, while separated from their bodies, have any such capacities as is implied in these dangerous intrusions into the unseen world. For let it be once granted that instead of Scriptural "sleep" there is to be a "Hades life" of conscious activity, and it becomes difficult, or perhaps impossible, to refuse to believe in moral and spiritual progress during that life; and when that is granted we must go on to agree to all the discipline, however painful, which is necessary to progress, in the case of those who leave this world in that state of imperfection which is supposed to