

# Spirit of Easter



## Solemn Scenes of Easter Week at Jerusalem

The Arab festival, which comes during the Christian Easter week, is known as "Nebi Musa," Arabic for "Prophet Moses." It is of comparatively recent origin, and in reality is a political rather than a religious festival started by the Sultan Saladin about the time of the Crusades, because he felt that too many Christians were coming to Jerusalem for Easter who might outnumber the Moslems. He instituted this festival to coincide with the orthodox Easter, which would bring a host of Moslems into Jerusalem. The Arabs pouring into Jerusalem for the "Nebi Musa" festival present a kaleidoscope of color that is quite dazzling. The Bedouin women, in their red and yellow coarsely embroidered finery, are particularly striking.

The large body of Hebronite Arabs make their way around the outside of the city walls, dancing and whirling a weird chant, accompanied by the beating of tom toms and clapping of hands in a measured beat, their leader performing gyrations with a huge curved sword.

The banners carried in the procession are blessed and brought from Mecca each year, and they are blessed again by the Mufti on the top of the Mount of Olives, after which the parade moves on. The flutes break into a melancholy wailing this time and the dancing dervishes revolve and revolve, their skirts opening out like an umbrella. This performance takes place at frequent intervals and lasts about 20 minutes, and the dancers look like spinning tops as they whirl around until some of them foam at the mouth. The whole pilgrimage is made on foot and lasts about three days, during which time they do not partake of food.

When Jericho is reached they place the blessed banners on the supposed grave of Moses, in spite of the fact that the exact whereabouts of the burial place of Moses is distinctly disclaimed in the Bible. Deut. chap. 34, v. 6, "And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab over against Bethpeor; but no man knoweth of his sepulcher unto this day."

**Beginning Easter Week.**

The first day of Paschal or Easter week for the Christian starts with Palm Sunday at cock crow. All night long the weary pilgrims have walked up and down the courtyard of the church of the Holy sepulcher and over the rough cobblestones of the narrow streets in Jerusalem, while the clanging of the great bell on the church continues until daybreak. But in the words of the Psalmist: "Weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning." When the sun comes up over the mountains the people, weary and worn with vigils and fastings, march slowly into the church and offer special prayers.

Many are overcome with emotion and with hearts ready to break and with weeping eyes they sob out: "I've seen the holy of holies," for they believe their own hands have touched the very place where for three days the Master lay in the flesh. Services at the church of the Holy sepulcher last until noon hour, when the people hurry home to their humble lodgings to eat only such food as the restrictions of Lent permit.

**On the Mount of Olives.**

At the seventh hour the clergy, with men women and children following, climb the Mount of Olives, along paths bordered by anemones and shaded by silvery olive trees, until they reach the summit, and for two hours hymns are sung and chanted, after which the people proceed to the stone of ascension, from which place it is

believed the Christ was seen to have risen.

Old and young alike then take a squatting position in the grass, and the children, with branches of olive trees and palms waving gently in rhythmic motion, sing: "Blessed is He That Cometh in the Name of the Lord." The clergy give the signal that the ceremony is over and the people rise and slowly follow, gently singing and chanting, as they escort the priests in the descent from the mount.

They take the road which leads to the church of the Holy sepulcher, and when they reach there they find the sides of the quadrangle court before the place lined with vendors and fakirs selling sticky sweets, all kinds of relics, holy pictures, brilliant colored glass bracelets, mother-of-pearl crosses from Bethlehem and other small ornaments made of olive wood from Jerusalem.

**Symbolic Picture.**

During the night, before the crowd begins to assemble, a platform, upon which are two benches, is placed in the courtyard. On each bench is a row of six cushioned seats. On a dais, gained by a step and carpeted in red and gold, stands a gilt throne. In front of which are placed a great ewer, a gold tray and a very large white towel. Against the wall of the court, near the platform, there is a flight of wooden steps painted green, which lead to a small pulpit. In the center of the pulpit is a picture of Jesus washing the feet of the 12 Apostles.

By morning the pavements are echoing with ceaselessly tramping feet and everyone and everything has the appearance of the great festive occasion that is about to take place. At nine o'clock comes a crash of bells and, fairly blazing with jewels, the Greek patriarch emerges from the church, attended by his bishops and priests. The procession ascends the dais and in a loud voice a high official reads from the Gospel of St. John the account of Jesus washing His Disciples' feet.

That night the way to the Garden of Gethsemane is lighted with candles and the people pass along the different stages of the cross, until the garden is reached.

**Easter**

Long before the Christian religion gave Easter to the world to be observed as the day of Christ's resurrection, there had been an Easter to mark the return of spring, the annual resurrection of nature.

Christianity gave a new meaning to the day, but the underlying theme is the same as it has been for thousands and thousands of years. Easter is the embodiment of hope. It promises renewed fruitfulness of the earth, as it has for ages. It promises, in addition renewed spiritual growth, as it has for 1,928 years.

**Religion**

I believe in miracles  
For I have seen it snow,  
And I believe in God  
For I have watched a small seed grow  
From out the ground where nothing was  
Into a Golden Glow!  
—Kathleen Millay in Harper's Bazar.

**Truths Brought Home**

The intimations of immortality dwell upon by poets, reasoned about by philosophers, fluttering in our hearts, again and again chilled by the cold winds of doubt, eclipsed by the fogs, are made to stand forth clearly in the light of Easter day. The spiritual in us is made to glow, the spiritual about us is set forth in its splendor. Our highest hopes seem reasonable. Great impulses are stirred within us. And we are aware of the splendor that ties  
All things of the earth with the things of the skies.

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