



JIM C'S QUIZ OF THE WEEK

MONDAY – 12/17/2007

HOW DID *HOLIDAY TRADITIONS* ORIGINATE?

One holiday, the celebration of New Years, may have begun in Mesopotamia [land of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers], where their chief god "Marduk" battled with the monsters of chaos each year as winter arrived. The festival for the Mesopotamian New Year was called "Zagmuk," which lasted for 12 days and, some say, was later appropriated into the "twelve days" of Christmas.

The Persians and the Babylonians celebrated a similar festival called the "Sacaia." Part of that celebration included switching roles - the masters became slaves and slaves became the masters.

Early Europeans believed in evil spirits, witches, ghosts and trolls. As the winter solstice approached, with its long cold nights and short days, many people feared the sun would not return. Special rituals and celebrations were held to welcome back the sun.

During the Scandinavian winter months, the sun would disappear for many days. After thirty-five days, scouts would be sent to the mountain tops to look for the return of the sun. When the first light was seen, the scouts would return with the good news. A great festival was held, called the "Yuletide," and a special feast would be served around a fire burning with the "Yule Log."

Moment of Zen: Holiday Traditions = Part Myth + Part Fact