

CHAPTER 3

PASSOVER: ABIB 14 OR NISSAN 15?

“You shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free” ~ Yeshua

The final plague on Egypt was the plague of the Passover – when God PASSED-OVER for judgment those who came under the blood of the lamb, but passed-through and struck the Egyptians (Ex 12:23). The plague was not called the plague of Unleavened Bread, but the Plague of Passover. It was indeed a plague and a curse for the Egyptians who did not yet accept the blood of the lamb, but it was a **great blessing** for those who did! Passover comes the day before the Feast of ULB. In God’s Word and for the Hebrews, each “day” begins with the evening, followed by the night, followed by the morning, followed by the daylight part of the day and ending at twilight in the evening of the next day – thus making a full 24 hour day.

The plague of the death of all the firstborn who did not come under the blood of the lamb was the great Passover plague which took place at midnight on the 14th. Remember, “Midnight” stands for “middle-of-the-night,” not “beginning of morning,” or “new day.” Had this plague took place on the 15th, (the day after the Passover) IT WOULD NOT BE THE PASSOVER PLAGUE, for God said the Passover was on the 14th! The Passing-over, for which the day is named, took place in the nighttime portion of THE PASSOVER DAY (Ex.12:12)!

Originally, the Passover was killed by each head of household. God’s promise was to make Israel a holy nation, a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:6). Therefore, at Passover, each head of household acted as a priest for his family by picking out a perfect lamb a head of time, and then sacrificing that lamb for his family. Notice:

Ex 12:21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them,
"Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families,
and kill the Passover lamb. NKJV

PASSOVER CONDUCTED BY EACH HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD

Unlike the counting and keeping of the Feast of Firstfruits (Pentecost) which required *the priest* to perform priestly sacrifices and wave offerings forbidden the public (Lev 23:11-21), the Passover lamb was killed by each head of household. Further, although these Holy Days share certain common principles of humility, repentance and coming out of the world, they also each have a unique purpose and were kept as joined but separate festivals! Each male head of his family was responsible to be ready for the Passover in whichever region he happened to live in. Passover was a family time where fathers would share the meanings of the Passover symbols with their families and willing neighbors. It was an assembly of two or more families – but not of the whole congregation, as were the High Days of each Feast. Each of the seven annual Feasts had in its descriptive commands the words “Holy Convocation” for the corresponding High Day (Lev 23:7, 8, 21, 24, 27, 35, 36) – seven annual High Days in all. You will notice Passover is not among them. This is because Passover was not kept by convening a meeting of the whole congregation in the same way the other festivals were. Passover was usually kept with extended families and neighbors – all gathering together according the number of people needed to completely eat a lamb (Ex 12:4). In this way, each head of household would participate in the Passover meal and service with the senior patriarch overall guiding the service.

Each father had his part and opportunity to learn how to act as priest on behalf of his family to God – for God had told them, “you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests... (Ex 19:6). This remains God’s purpose for His people (Rev 1:6, 5:10). Peter continued to teach the important principle to the New Testament “spiritual” Jews.

1 Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. NKJV

As Jesus and His disciples ate the Passover lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, Jesus explained to them more completely the symbolism of unleavened bread and wine (Luke 22:19-20). It was customary to explain

the history and meaning of the day during the meal. Jesus expounded on that practice and carried it further by adding to it the New Covenant context and **fulfillment** for a fuller understanding. This teaching and explaining remains the responsibility of each head of household as we keep Passover today. The *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, by David H Stern, explains this beautifully:

“At Passover Jews all over the world retell the story of the plagues and the Exodus and thus proclaim the central fact on which their peoplehood is founded (see 5:6-8N). Likewise, members of the Messianic Community are to **proclaim the death of the Lord** as their exodus from sin and as the basis for their existence. Both proclamations look not only back toward a past redemption but also forward to a future one; hence the proclamation is **until he comes** the second time.” *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, by David H Stern, section on 1 Cor 11:26, pages 475-476.

(More will be explained about how the Passover was and is conducted later in this book.)

Since the Passover was to be conducted in an area near to “where the Lord had placed His name” (Deut 16:2-6), each family would already be gathered into the general area so they could join the general assemble to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the following day (Deut 16:8, Lev 23:5-7).

PASSOVER “CHANGED” AFTER THE BABYLONIAN EXILE

While the common purposes behind these two separate festivals cannot be denied, neither can it be denied that they were and are to be kept separately on consecutive but separate days (Lev 23:5-7). But after the Babylonian Exile this changed! Notice:

The feast of Passover consists of two parts: The Passover ceremony and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Originally both parts existed separately; but at the beginning of the Exile they were combined.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol.13, page 170) (emphasis mine)

There are two important points that the *Encyclopedia Judaica* makes here:

1 ***“Originally, both parts existed separately.”*** Can you see that the above statement, “originally both parts existed separately,” is tantamount to saying that these two festivals were originally been kept on separate days? How could they be kept separately at the same time? In other words, originally one was kept on the 14th while the other began on the 15th! Clearly, the use of the word “originally” shows that there was a CHANGE which combined them at a later date. How true! Notice further the second part of the above quote, ***“but at the beginning of the Exile they were combined.”*** The Exile into Babylon brought a change in the keeping of Passover by ***combining*** it with the Feast of Unleavened Bread! What a statement from such a respected historical source! It was during the Exile that Passover was “combined” by being transferred from the 14th to the 15th! AN INCREDIBLE ADMISSION!

2 ***“but at the beginning of the Exile they were combined.”*** A second important point the *Encyclopedia Judaica* makes is the timing of the change, i.e., at the time of greatest Babylonian influence – when Israel was not in charge of her own destiny.

Encyclopedia Judaica states that it was at the time of the Exile into Babylon by the Assyrians (2 Kings 17) that the Passover began to be changed and “combined” with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Indeed the Babylonian influence crept deep into many of Israel’s religious and civil affairs. The biblical month of Abib in which Passover fell began to be called by the Babylonian name Nissan.

THE MORNING / EVENING SACRIFICE AND PASSOVER

The reckoning of each day’s time – and thus the time of day that Passover was kept – was also greatly affected by the intense Gentile influence suffered by the Babylonian Exile. The biblical meanings of “morning” and “evening” now began to be understood with a Babylonian flair. Instead of the times of the day being understood biblically, they began to be accounted by a Babylonian reckoning by dividing the 12 hours of the day into two groups of 6 hours; and the 12 hours of the night into two groups of 6 hours each. Like the Babylonians, many post exilic Jews now began to apportion the 12 hours of the day by appointing the 6 hours before noon as

belonging to the morning, and the 6 hours after noon belonging to the evening. They thus also divided the 12 hours of the night by appointing the 6 hours before midnight to that night, but appointing the 6 hours after midnight as belonging to the next morning. Thus the last 6 hours of the night (midnight till 6:00 AM) and the first 6 hours of the day (6:00 AM till 12:00 noon) all belonged to the “morning.” This is where we get our 1:00 AM being called “morning” when it is clearly part of the night. Conversely, the last 6 hours of the day from noon till 6:00 AM were now called “evening,” even though it was clearly still day. For sacrificial purposes this became a critical difference. 6 ½ hours into the “day” (12:30 AM) could now be interpreted as being “evening,” even though it was not evening. For sacrificial purposes, this new interpretation of “evening” replaced the Biblical meaning of “evening” which was the period of about 30 minutes to an hour before *AND* after sunset known as the “twilight” period or “between the evenings.” The same “change” in meaning was applied to the “morning,” at least where sacrifices and other ritual services were involved.

Notice these words from the Babylonian Talmud:

(33) “Lit... denoting the continual daily evening sacrifice which was offered as a rule from the sixth and half hours after sunrise (the day being divided into twelve hours).” (Eiruvil 39a:33, *The Soncino Talmud* (©1973 Judaica Press, Inc. and ©1965, 1967, 1977, 1983, 1984, 1987, 1988, & 1990)

Notice the “*evening sacrifice*” came to be offered from the “*sixth and half hours after sunrise.*” Incredible! The affects of this Babylonian influence are believed to have altered the time the morning / evening sacrifices were being offered during the 2nd Temple period.

Biblically, morning and evening sacrifices or offerings were offered either in the actual morning or in the actual evening – just as God’s Word prescribes. They were not offered in the middle of the day.

- Notice when Abraham offered Isaac:

Gen 22:3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. NKJV (emphasis mine)

- When God commanded Abraham to bring a three year old heifer, goat and ram to divide them to cut a covenant, God appeared to Abraham in a dream “*when the sun was going down*” (Gen 15:9-12).
- Job “*would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings...*” for the sins of his sons (Job 1:5).
- Righteous Hezekiah “*rose early*” to have the priests offer a sin offering for Judah:

2 Chron 29:20 Then King Hezekiah **rose early**, gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD. 21 And they brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats for a sin offering for the kingdom, for the sanctuary, and for Judah. Then he commanded the priests, the sons of Aaron, to offer them on the altar of the LORD. NKJV

- Elijah’s great offering that was liked up by fire took place long after “midday.” It took place at the time of the “*evening sacrifice.*” Notice:

1 Kings 18:29 And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention. 30 Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down. NKJV

- Notice, “*...when midday was past they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice.*” **This shows that midday WAS NOT the time of the evening sacrifice.** There was time for many false prophets to do their preaching before the time for Israel’s “*evening sacrifice.*” At the time of the evening sacrifice, Elijah repaired the alter of the LORD, cut the sacrificial bull in pieces and offered it on behalf of Israel – precisely at the time of the EVENING sacrifice – several hours AFTER “midday” had past (1 Kings 18:33-39)!

After the Babylonian exile, the time for the sacrifices was now being done shortly before and shortly after noon or midday. Therefore, the Passover lamb also began to be killed – not at the twilight of the evening as commanded in the TORAH, but in the mid afternoon establishing a new worldly influenced tradition.

(1) Deut. XVI, 3. 'It' refers to the Passover sacrifice, which was offered on the fourteenth of Nisan from mid-day and onwards; and the verse is interpreted: You are to eat no leavened bread at the time that you must offer the Passover sacrifice. (Pesachim 28b:1, *The Soncino Talmud* (©1973 Judaica Press, Inc. and ©1965, 1967, 1977, 1983, 1984, 1987, 1988, & 1990))

Consider: Since God's Word says the Passover lambs were to be killed on the 14th – the only way to keep this new tradition of slaughtering the lambs “from mid-day,” and still do it on the 14th was to do it the next day – i.e., in the afternoon of the 14th. The only way the post exilic Jews could amalgamate this new understanding of “evening” as being after-noon and still kill the Passover on the 14th was to kill it at the end of the 14th, rather than at the beginning as the scriptures command. This practice thus necessitated eating the Passover meal with its service, on the 15th! But what does God's Word say?

Ex 12:6 Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at **twilight**. NKJV

The Hebrew word “until” is *ad*, meaning “*as far as, up to, until.*” It means “until” or “up to.” It does not mean “the day after.”

According to Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon, the word “*twilight*” is *'ereb*, meaning, “*evening, dusk, the close of the day, sunset, between the evening, dusk.*”

That definition certainly does **NOT** fit an interpretation of anytime from 6 ½ hours after 6:00 am, ie 12:30 in the afternoon!

But if tradition trumps God's Word and one is going to kill their lamb and begin Passover late in the afternoon of the 14th, placing paschal meal with its rights and services on the 15th. This is the “HOW” and “WHY” Passover was transferred from the evening beginning the 14th to the 15th.

WHAT IF THE SAME MEANING OF “EVENING” WERE APPLIED TO THE WEEKLY SABBATH?

Think of the confusion that would result if one were to attempt to place the SAME INTERPRETATION of “evening” onto the weekly Sabbath?

Should the Sabbath be kept from say about 12:30 pm one day to about 12:30 pm the next day? Or, since some claim “evening” means anytime from 6 ½ hours into the day (12:30 pm) until dark – that could place the time of the Sabbath to anytime within the final 6 or 8 hours of the afternoon. Convenient huh? One could pretty-much choose their own time the beginning and ending of their Sabbath! With such human-reasoning, one could “keep Sabbath” beginning from whenever they chose in the afternoon of the sixth day to whenever they chose on the afternoon of the seventh day! Confusion and lawlessness would be the result! While one person might choose to begin their Sabbath at 12:30 PM, another might begin theirs at 6:30. Or, speaking moronically, why not start your Sabbath at sunset Friday and then end your Sabbath the following day at 12:30 PM – for a shortened Sabbath? Such reasoning sounds confusing and absurd, because it is! So why would a person want to use the same baseless human-reasoning by starting the Passover at a completely different time from that of all the other feasts and Sabbaths and at a different time from when God’s Word says? Why the inconsistency with Passover? Why keep each weekly Sabbath beginning at sunset or twilight, each Holy Day beginning at twilight or sunset, and then suddenly change for Passover?

Does God’s Word make clear what “twilight” or “evening” means? Please judge for yourselves:

Deut 16:5 "You may not sacrifice the Passover within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you; 6 but at the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide, there you shall sacrifice the **Passover at twilight, at the going down of the sun**, at the time you came out of Egypt. NKJV

Clearly God’s Word is not ambiguous as to what was meant by “evening” or “twilight”, so we should not be confused by later traditions of men that supplant the word of God. “Twilight” means “at the going down of the sun (Deut 16:6).”

Peter, and his scribe Mark, both understood “evening” as being that time around and shortly after the setting of the sun – not anytime after noon.

Mark 1:32 **At evening, when the sun had set**, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. NKJV

This changing from the biblical reckoning of the times of the day to that of the Gentiles also brought changes to the times Israel made their sacrifices.

By changing the time of the sacrifice, the date of Passover was transferred as well. Instead of the Passover lamb being kept “*until the fourteenth,*” i.e., the beginning of the 14th at the evening or twilight period, this new interpretation forced the Passover over to the next day of the 15th.

This has confused many who have recited historical proof of what was done to substantiate their belief in a Nissan 15 Passover. But those historical examples are post exilic! Notice the frank admission from the Babylonian Talmud, about Passover:

(17) During its (forbidden) time means during Passover. Before its time, from six hours (mid-day) on the fourteenth of Nisan until evening, when Passover commences; after its time, after Passover — i.e., leaven which was kept from before until after Passover. He transgresses by eating it (Pesachim 28a:17, *The Soncino Talmud* (©1973 Judaica Press, Inc. and ©1965, 1967, 1977, 1983, 1984, 1987, 1988, & 1990))

Notice the Rabbi says, “...*from six hours (mid-day) on the fourteenth of Nisan until evening, when Passover commences....*” If you go from mid-day on the afternoon of the fourteenth to that evening to commence Passover – and the evening begins the next day – you have just transferred Passover to the fifteenth! It’s just that simple. If that’s what you believe, fine. But that’s not what the Word of God says, nor is it what Yeshua practiced and taught.

This is NOT to belittle or in put down the Talmud, Rabbi’s or Jewish people in anyway. They have done much to preserve God’s Words for us. But changing the Passover falls outside of their scope of. This is especially so, since keeping Passover was the charge of each head of household, and was never given to the priests or Jews to administer in the way other Holy Feasts were.

Ex 12:3 Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. NKJV

Not only did things change through the Jewish Exile throughout Babylon, but there were other contributing factors as well.

“Originally, the Passover was celebrated among the families (Ex 12:21 [J]) in tents, after the territorial occupation, in hoses. After the cultic centralization of King Josiah, the celebration of the Passover was

transferred to the central Sanctuary in Jerusalem...” (*Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 13, page 171)

Both Israel and Judah had drifted far away from God (2 Kings 17:19) and had thus lost the truths about God’s Holy Days and how to keep them. Israel had already been taken captive. Judah was not far behind. But Judah’s time was extended a bit for David’s sake, and in part because of few righteous kings, Josiah in particular (2 King 8:19, 2 King 22:18-20). At King Josiah’s instructions, the priests were told to put the house of God in order. Things had gotten so bad that the priests were surprised to find a copy of the law in the Temple (2 Kings 22:8)! They quickly read the law to the king who ordered this new method of keeping Passover for those around the Temple. Perhaps this new method was due to the people being ceremonially unclean, or perhaps because Josiah, just learning God’s Laws did not know better or, perhaps it was just meant as a special occasion for those in the near vicinity to the Temple? Regardless, Josiah was the one who established this new practice – not God.

Shortly after Josiah’s death, Judah was also taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon (2 Kings 25). Later the few, who returned to Jerusalem from their Babylonian captivity, brought with them the lingering influence of the Babylonians. They then amalgamated their new understandings with the last-minute changes King Josiah had made. The affects of this difference on Passover was notable. Some historians note that the Sadducees maintained that each man should sacrifice his own lamb on Abib 14.

For some this is too much information. For others... it will be very enlightening. For all it is important.