

The Timing of PASSOVER

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One of the most contentious topics among True Worshipers is Yahweh's calendar, especially as it applies to Passover. Because the first Biblical month is established at Passover, observing Passover in the correct month will help ensure that all the rest of the annual observances fall properly in the calendar year. One teaching says that we should use the vernal equinox in determining Passover. We discuss this issue beginning on page 10.

The Passover has been misconstrued since the time Judah and Benjamin were led away captive to Babylon. From that point in history the Passover has gone through various transformations. As Yahweh designed it, the Passover is a memorial (moed, appointed time) and separate from the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but Judaism later combined the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread into one Feast and this has caused much of the problem among Feast keepers today.

Note what the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* says, "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 [Babylonian] exile they were combined" (vol. 13, p. 169).

Ten specific passages relating to Passover have posed problems for Bible scholars and students alike. We will examine each of these. An important point to note: If our understanding does not correspond with the original standard given by Yahweh to Israel in the Old Testament, then it is erroneous. Many go wrong here—they fail to consider what Yahweh commanded in the Old Testament and apply those historical facts to the present. Let's look at our first passage.

- "And ye shall keep it [the sacrifice] up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening" (Exodus 12:6, KJV).

The word "even" in Exodus 12:6 does not very accurately translate the original term. The Hebrew for the word "even" is *ben ha arbayim*, literally "between the two evenings."

According to modern Jewish rabbis, "between the two evenings"

indicates a time between noon and sunset. However, most scholars maintain that this phrase originally signified the time between sunset and complete darkness, which is about a 45-minute period. A number of modern translations interpret this Hebrew phrase as beginning at sunset or twilight, including: The New International Bible, Revised English Bible, New American Bible, New Jerusalem Bible, New King James Bible, James Moffatt Bible, Complete Jewish Bible, Lamsa Bible, The Holy Scriptures (JPS), and the Jewish TANAKH.

Evidence shows that the Jews began only later to define this phrase as the time between noon and sunset. The Jerusalem Bible, in an Exodus 12:6 note, says: “Either between sunset and darkness (Samaritans) or between afternoon and sunset (Pharisees and Talmud). The Zondervan NIV Exhaustive Concordance identifies this phrase as, “evening, twilight, dusk, the fading of the day; twilight can be extended to the dark of the night.” The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon agrees, noting, “between the two evenings, i.e. prob. between sunset and dark.” The Harper Collins Study Bible gives this explanation, “Twilight, lit. ‘between the two settings,’ apparently between sunset and the last of the residual light in the sky.” And The New Strong’s Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible says, “The phrase ‘in the evening’ [literally, ‘between the evenings’] means the period between sunset and darkness, ‘twilight’ (Ex. 12:6; KJV, ‘in the evening’).”

- “And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to Yahweh throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever” (Exodus 12:14, KJV).

Based on this verse, some Bible students believe that the Passover is a Sabbath and first high day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread in which no work is permitted. The King James Bible is often difficult to understand and in some cases like this one offers a poor rendition of the original meaning. Notice that a semicolon separates “memorial” from the phrase, “and you shall keep it a feast to Yahweh...” as if they are two different observances. The word “it” is added (*italicized*), offering further evidence that the second phrase describes a Feast

apart from the Passover.

The **TANAKH** seems to recognize this distinction, but renders Exodus 12:14 a bit differently, “This day shall be to you one of remembrance: You shall celebrate it as a festival to Yahweh throughout the ages...” The **TANAKH** says that we are to remember to observe the Passover “as” we might an annual feast, not that it is a feast. The annual feasts of Yahweh are to be observed on appointed times, and to neglect these feasts is to neglect the will of Yahweh.

For additional information on why Passover is not a high day or the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, write for our comprehensive booklet, *10 Proofs Passover Is a Memorial, Not a High Day* (no charge).

- “In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even” (Exodus 12:18, KJV).

Those who advocate that the Passover is part of the Feast of Unleavened Bread often use this passage to show that both the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread begin on the 14th day of Abib and stop before the 21st day of Abib. The confusion lies in the word “until.”



The word until is translated from the Hebrew word “*ad*,” which can mean up to a particular point. This same word “*ad*” is found in Exodus 12:6, which designates the day in which the Passover lamb was slaughtered. Exodus 12:6 says that the lamb was to be kept “until the fourteenth day” of Abib. In other words, the Passover lambs were kept up to the 14th day, and as the 14th day began the lambs were

slaughtered.

In the Hebrew a word may have several different definitions or be used several different ways, and such is true for the word *ad*. The primitive root of *ad* is *adah*. *Adah* means to advance through or go through a certain point in time. Therefore, knowing that the Passover by Yahweh's command is on the 14th day of Abib and that the Feast begins on the 15th (Lev. 23:5-6), we can conclude that in this verse the meaning from the root word "*adah*" is proper.

Another example of this usage of *adah* is found in Exodus 12:15, where Yahweh says that we are to eat unleavened bread "until" the seventh day. We know from Leviticus 23:6 that we are to eat unleavened bread for seven complete days during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, therefore showing that the word "*ad*" can mean the entire duration thereof. In this case, the Feast goes through the 21st, so that the Passover is not part of the seven days of the Feast.

- "Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover be left unto the morning" (Exodus 34:25, KJV).

The Authorized Version calls the Passover a "feast" in Exodus 34:25. The word "feast" as found in the King James and many other popular translations is from the Hebrew *chag*, which can mean either a feast or a type of sacrificial victim.

If we examine the context of Exodus 34:25 from the King James Bible, an inconsistency will be noticed. How can a feast be left "unto the morning"?

This poor rendition by King James translators, who did not keep the annual moedim, can be overcome by inserting the word victim instead of feast in Exodus 34:25. According to Exodus 12, the Passover lamb or victim was not to be left unto the morning. "And ye shall let nothing of it [Passover animal] remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire" (Exodus 12:10, KJV).

By delving into the Hebrew and understanding the events of the Passover, this particular verse is made clear. A better rendition of

Exodus 34:25 can be found in the Schocken Bible – The Five Books of Moses: “...You are not to leave-overnight, until morning, the pilgrimage-offering of Passover.”

- “In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the Passover, a Feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten” (Ezekiel 45:21, KJV).

This is another verse used to support the idea that the Passover is part of a seven-day feast. What we must remember is that this is but one translation, and likely one of the most difficult translations to understand. We find an improved rendering of this verse from the *TANAKH*: “On the fourteenth day of the first month you shall have the Passover sacrifice; and during a festival of seven days unleavened bread shall be eaten.”

The *TANAKH* shows a distinct separation of the Passover from the Feast of Unleavened Bread in Ezekiel 45:21. The semicolon after the word “sacrifice” shows that the second thought is separate from the previous one. (Hebrew lacked punctuation, which was inserted later by translators.)

The *TANAKH* harmonizes with other passages telling us that the two observances are separate and come on different days (see Lev. 23:5-6 and Num. 28:16-17, each showing clearly that Passover is on the 14th, while the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on the 15th).

- “Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be impaled” (Matthew 26:2, KJV).

This passage is cited by those who advocate that the Passover is a Sabbath or Feast. In all English versions of the Bible we have words that were added by the translators in an effort to clarify specific passages. Yet in some cases these words only confuse the issue and make the original meaning difficult.

The translators of the Kings James Bible added the word “feast” in Matthew 26:2. In some Bibles, like the KJV, this is indicated when the word is put in italics. The word “feast” is omitted from Matthew

26:2 in the *New Revised Version*, *Revised English Bible*, *American Standard Version*, *Revised Standard Version*, *World English Bible*, *New American Bible*, *Hebrew Names Version*, *New Jerusalem Bible*, *Young's Literal Translation*, *New King James Version*, *New International Bible*, and the *Complete Jewish Bible*.

- “Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Yahshua, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover?” (Matthew 26:17, KJV).

Matthew 26:17 is also used by those who think that the Passover is part of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It should be first noted that the word “day” in Matthew 26:17 was added by KJV translators. So this passage, with the word “day” omitted, would read, “Now the first of the Feast of Unleavened Bread...”

There is yet another clarification to be made, and that is that the word “first” as found in the Authorized Version can be interpreted differently according to the Greek. The word “first” is from the Greek word “*protos*” and is explained by the Complete Word Study New Testament, “The superlative degree of pro (4253), before. First; used of time (John 5:4; 1 Cor. 15:45, 47; 2 Tim. 4:16; Rev. 1:11, 17; 2:8); former, before, in a comparative sense, as first is often used in Eng. (Luke 2:2; John 1:15, 30, 42; 8:58; 20:4, 8; 1 Cor. 14:30); or order or situation (Acts 16:12); of dignity, first, chief, principle.”

The Greek *protos* signifies an order of events, and more precisely it indicates whether an event is before or concurrent with another. We know by the Old Testament command of Yahweh (Lev. 23:5-6) that the Passover was originally separate from the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and only later did the Jews combine it with the Feast.

Knowing this fact, Matthew 26:17 should more accurately be translated, “Now before [Gk. *protos*] the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Yahshua, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover?” The Passover cannot be the first day of the Feast because the first day is a high day and no preparation work would be allowed—including purchasing unleavened bread. It was on the Passover that the disciples assumed that Judas was going to purchase Feast supplies, John 13:29, an assumption they never

would have made had Passover been a High Day of the Feast.

Some believe that Yahshua ate only what the Jews call a seder that Passover night, but in Matthew 26:18 Yahshua plainly said that He would keep the Passover at a certain house with His disciples.

According to Yahweh's law, if a person neglects to partake of the Passover, he will be cut off. "But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbears to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of Yahweh in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin" (Numbers 9:13). Yahshua obviously understood this law, and would by all means comply with the command to observe the Passover.

If Yahshua had neglected that last Passover, as some suppose, our Savior would have committed a sin and would Himself have been cut off! The Scripture confirms that He was sinless, 1Peter 2:22, and consequently we also know that He kept the Passover according to the law.

- "Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover" (Luke 22:1, KJV).

Note the phrase, "which is called the Passover." At that time there were two major Jewish sects, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Historically it is known that the Pharisees kept the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread as one single Feast, just as modern Judaism does today, while the Sadducees kept two separate observances: the Passover on the fourteenth and the Feast of Unleavened on the fifteenth day of Abib. It is also widely known that while the Pharisees placed more authority on their own rabbinical teachings (Talmud) than they did on the Scriptures, the Sadducees accepted the Torah as their only source of truth.

Knowing that these differences existed when Luke wrote his Evangel, it is no wonder that he wrote "which is called the Passover." There were those who kept the Passover as the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The *Revised English Bible* perhaps delivers a clearer interpretation than the *Authorized Version*: "The festival of

Unleavened Bread, known as Passover, was approaching.” It is clear that Luke is not stating that the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread are the same Feast, but that some considered the Feast the Passover, no doubt because the one came immediately after the other.

- “Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed” (Luke 22:7, KJV).

Here is another passage that appears to be stating that the Passover lamb was slaughtered during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. To discern the original intent of this specific passage, an understanding of the Greek is essential. The Greek word for “day” in the above passage is *hemera*. Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible offers the following definition: “...the time space between dawn and dark, or the whole 24 hours... fig. a period (always defined more or less clearly by the context).” Strong’s offers two different definitions for the Greek *hemera* — either as a literal 24-hour span or figuratively as a period that is normally defined by the context of the passage.

We know from the Old Testament and Yahweh’s instructions that the Passover was separate from the Feast of Unleavened Bread, therefore, we know that the Passover lambs were not slaughtered during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In addition, we also know that it was during the period of the Feast of Unleavened Bread that the Passover lambs were killed. Just as people today refer to the Passover by simply saying the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Luke does the same by stating, “Then came the *hemera* [period] of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed.”

- “And it was the third hour, and they impaled him” (Mark 15:25, KJV).

Many believe that Yahshua was impaled at 9:00 a.m., but according to John, Yahshua was not yet convicted by that time: “And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!” (John 19:14). According to John, Yahshua was convicted about the sixth hour, which would

be from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. How could He be impaled before being sentenced?

In addition, Matthew 27:45, Mark 15:33, and Luke 23:44 all state that there was darkness over the land from the sixth to the ninth hour. The fact is, no other passage referring to Yahshua's impalement mentions the third hour. Mark 15:25 has offered a challenge to Biblical scholars from the start.

There are two possible explanations for this inconsistency. The first requires some background on how the Jews defined day and night hours. They broke both the day and night into four equal parts of three hours each: 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.; 9:00 a.m. to noon; noon to 3:00 p.m., and 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Mark could have possibly been using the Jewish method of calculating time in Mark 15:25.

According to the Commentary on the New Testament, "Mark divides the day into four quarters as he does the night; the second quarter, from nine in the morning until midday, he names after the hour with which it begins; hence, our L-rd was condemned by Pilate and crucified shortly before midday" (p. 224).

We can conclude that Yahshua was convicted roughly before noon, impaled shortly thereafter, and died at 3:00 p.m.

The other explanation is that the word "third" in Mark 15:25 could be a mistranslation. In ancient texts, numbers are often represented with letters. If this were the case in Mark 15:25, it is quite possible that a mistranslation could have occurred due to the similarities between the Greek letters that represent the numbers six and nine. We may never know exactly what time of day Yahshua was convicted and impaled, but we do know that according to three of the Evangels that these events occurred from the sixth to the ninth hour — noon to 3 p.m.

Equinox or Barley?

All of Yahweh's seven annual Feasts or moedim (appointments) revolve around the harvest cycle of grains and other produce. This is clear with the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, which occur at the barley harvest (Ex. 9:31, Deut. 16:9).

These observances are followed by the Feast of Firstfruits, also known as Pentecost in the New Testament. This special time occurs seven weeks after Unleavened Bread and represents the firstfruits of the wheat harvest made into two loaves of bread that were waved (presented before Yahweh, Lev. 23:17). Then in the seventh month we come to the Feast of Tabernacles, otherwise known as the “Feast of Ingathering” (Ex. 23:16). Tabernacles represents the general harvest at the close of the growing cycle when everything is “gathered in”—from grains to vegetables, melons, nuts, and fruit.



Clearly, the various harvests are central to Yahweh’s Feasts. The harvests prophetically point to the harvest of souls in Yahweh’s great salvation plan — from the firstfruits, which represent His elect people in the first

resurrection, to the general harvest of souls after the Millennium.

Even the first month of the sacred year is named Abib, which in Hebrew means “tender, green ears.” The “ears” refer to barley grain in the ear of the stock, the only grain mature enough at the time of the Passover to be green and in the head. Exodus 9:31 reads, “And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was balled” [balled=podded, No. 1392, Heb. *gibol*]. “32: But the wheat and the rye were not smitten: for they were not grown up.” Therefore, Yahweh says, “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you,” Exodus 12:2. “This day came you out in the month Abib,” Exodus 13:4.

The state of the crops, especially the barley and flax, is the only criterion that Yahweh gives for establishing the timing of the first month of the year. Nothing in the Bible explains how to establish the first month of the year in any other fashion than the developing

green ears of barley.

In the spirit of maturing crops, we are to establish and observe the first month – when the barley grain is green, Leviticus 23:14 (note the words “parched,” meaning roasted, and “green”). Baking or parching the green barley dried it. This was not ripe, dry barley, it was young and green barley. We cannot establish Abib if the barley head is not developed or if the barley seed is dry, ripe, golden and ready to harvest; by then it is too late. The barley must be green and this occurs at a specific time in a specific month.

Where Do We Look?

Can we look at the barley crop growing in our own vicinity to establish Abib? We will find a difference in maturity of several weeks between barley ripening in southern Texas and barley growing in North Dakota. Therefore, the timing of Abib could vary widely depending on where one lives. Ostensibly, believers living at different latitudes could follow calendars that differ by a month or two if one goes by the local barley crop.

The only way to reconcile this discrepancy in growing seasons is to look at the barley that is grown in or around Israel. And that makes perfect sense, because it was to people living in that area of the world that Yahweh gave the command during the green ear month of Abib to keep the Passover and Feast. It is that area of the world that will give us the proper and accurate time based on the barley growing there when Yahweh commanded Israel to keep the first month.

Interestingly, barley originated in the Mediterranean region. How appropriate, then, that we look at the barley growing in the Middle East, and not barley grown in North Dakota, Texas, Australia or somewhere else to establish Abib.

The law provides that the wave sheaf be of the firstfruits of barley. Whatever barley field produced first, from that crop the wave sheaf was taken. Once the wave sheaf was offered to Yahweh, the harvest could begin. Harvesting of barley takes place in early April near Jericho. Abib barley has been reported by the middle of March in

the Middle East.

The explanation of why only the barley and flax were damaged by the plague of hail in Egypt (Ex. 9:31) brings up an important point many miss: "...for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was balled." "Balled" is from the Hebrew gibol and means swollen, podded, in the bud. Therefore, one could use the flax plant as a second confirmation for the month of Abib by examining whether it is in the pod at that time.

Why Not Use the Equinox?

Some ignore barley altogether and set Abib 1 according to the vernal equinox. The vernal equinox is that instant when the sun is positioned directly over the earth's equator in its yearly migration from south to north. It is the time that astronomers define as the beginning of spring when days and nights are equal in length. (Yet there are still several days difference between equal night and day at the equator and equal night and day in the northern hemisphere where Israel and the U.S. are located.)

Those who employ the vernal equinox point to Genesis 1:14, claiming that the sun, moon, and stars set the Feasts. It is true that the sun divides day from night and brings about the seasons, while the new moon sets the beginning of months. Nowhere in the entire Bible, however, can one find where the vernal equinox establishes Abib, nor is there one verse referring to the vernal equinox.

The King James Version has led some astray in the way it translates moed in Exodus 13:10, Num. 9:2, 3, 7, and 13. The KJV uses "season" in these verses, causing some to believe that the command is specifically for a spring season Passover, and therefore must involve the vernal equinox. In reality, the Hebrew moed simply means "set time" or "appointed time." Yahweh has set Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread by crop growth, not by a man-made definition for when spring begins (the equinox).

Passover is related to spring only through the growing cycle of crops. First and foremost, it must occur in the month of Abib. Abib

itself hinges on the condition of grain, not a season.

Equinox and Historic Paganism

When the Roman church deliberately acted to separate Easter from Passover, it ruled in 325 CE in the Council of Nicaea that Easter would fall on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox. This setting of an observance was entirely man-made, and appropriately applied to a similarly man-made holiday called Easter.



Persian Nowruz pagan relief, on the day of an equinox, the power of an eternally fighting bull (personifying the Earth) and that of a lion (personifying the Sun) are equal.

The Roman church, acting on its own authority, bestowed a legitimacy to the vernal equinox as a calendar marker even though it lacks such in a Biblical context. That does not mean, however, that the vernal equinox had no significance among historic pagans and their calendars. (See more about this on our web page at yrm.org)

‘Tequphah’ Is not the Equinox

The argument has been attempted that the vernal equinox corresponds to the Hebrew word “*tequphah*,” which is found four times in the Bible. The definition of *tequphah* (Strong’s Concordance No. 8622)

is: “A revolution, i.e. of the sun course (of time) lapse: circuit, come about, end.” From the definition, we find it next to impossible to attach any certain connection of *tequphah* to a spring equinox. The evidence, in fact, points to the end of the year, not the beginning.

The following passages contain the Hebrew word *tequphah* as well as its meaning, as indicated by the quotation marks:

- Exodus 34:22 (Feast of ingathering at the “year’s end”)
- 2Chron. 24:23 (Syria attacked Judah at the “end of the year”)
- 2Chronicles. 24:23; 36:10 (“end of the year/year was expired”)

Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon defines the *tequphah* (Strong’s No. 8622) as: “coming round, circuit;—Ex. 34:22, adv., at the circuit (completion) of the year, so 2Chron. 24:23= pl. cstr. 1Sam. 1:20; sig. Sf. Of finished circuit of sun.” p. 880

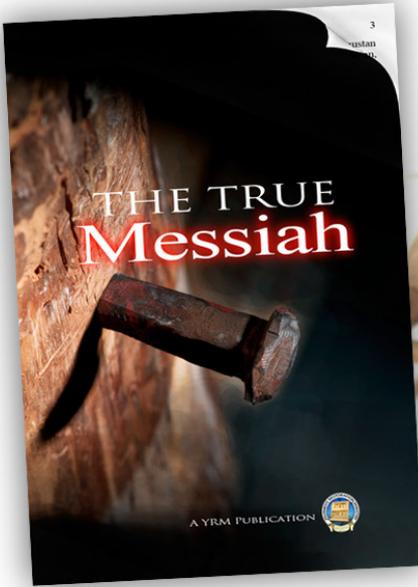
This lexicon says about the root of *tequphah*: “No. 5362 naqaph: 1. An intransitive verb meaning to surround something... (Isa. 29:1, let feasts go around, i.e. run the round (of the year). 2. make the round, i.e. complete the circuit. Job 1:5 when the days of feasting had completed their circuit.”

The closest we have in the Bible to spring as a season is 6779, *tsamach*, a primitive root meaning to sprout, bear, bring forth, bud, grow, cause to spring (forth, up). The Bible’s “spring” is determined by crops, not by solar positioning.

Yahweh’s Feasts are agricultural in nature. It is this fact that binds them to the Biblical theme of salvation through the spiritually maturing and “harvesting” of souls for the Kingdom, which will occur when the angels come to weed out the tares and gather the elect for the Kingdom, Matthew 13:30. May you be counted among the good produce at that final harvest for Yahweh’s Kingdom because you were obedient in all things.

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