

The Passover Problem Solved

THE PASSOVER PROBLEM SOLVED

We are approaching the series of 3 springtime Biblical Feasts that begin on the 1st month of the Jewish Religious calendar year, the month of Aviv. Aviv is the original Hebrew name for this month that, after the Babylonian exile, also started to be called by its Babylonian name Nisan. The first of these 3 festivals is Pesach, Passover.

I am regularly asked how it is that Messiah could be crucified on Friday, buried, and then resurrected on Sunday, and that satisfy the “3 days and 3 nights” that prophecy seems to require. Any child knows that the math doesn’t add up. So let’s go through the procedure carefully. I’ll add some facts that have been missing until now, and then it will all come together.

So Passover is the first Festival of the season and then Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Matza, is the 2nd of the group and it commemorates the day that Israel actually began its march out of Egypt. While Passover is a 1-day event, Matza is a 7-day event that begins the day immediately following Passover. Because this event happened suddenly and Israel had to leave in hurry there was no time for the Hebrews to prepare their staple food, bread, in the normal way (by adding yeast, letting it rise, and then baking it). Instead the Jews had to prepare a kind of bread that did NOT utilize yeast. This bread, Matza, was not even baked; it was prepared by being

placed on an open griddle to cook in a similar way as we cook pancakes. Matza is the bread of nomads, wanderers without a homeland; and Israel was about to become a nation of nomads for a 40-year period.

The last festival of the group of 3 is called *Bikkurim*, or Firstfruits, which on the FIXED Jewish calendar occurred earlier this week. Firstfruits occurs the day immediately following the 1st day of Matza. So we have the commencement of each festival on the 14th, 15th, and 16th of Nisan. The final day of the festival is the 21st of Nisan. We'll talk more about Firstfruits shortly.

Another important feature of the Biblical Festivals is that God added some extra Sabbath days to them. There are 2 kinds of Biblical Sabbath days: the regular weekly 7th day Sabbath that we're all familiar with, and the festival Sabbaths (also termed "high" or "great" Sabbaths) that were always part of the festivals. In the series of 3 spring feasts, the 1st day of the 7-day festival of Matza was one of those added Sabbaths, as was the final day of the 7 days of Matza.

According to the Torah Passover was on Nisan 14: the first day of Matza was on Nisan 15 and then there was a lull until the 7th day Sabbath came and on the following day Firstfruits was to be celebrated. Not all the Jews in Jesus time thought this was correct. But this was the way the Sadducees practiced it because the Sadducees controlled the priesthood and everything that went on at the Temple during that era.

Just as the slaughtering of the Pesach Lamb (Passover) is the focal point of the Springtime Festivals, so it is for Believers in Yeshua who understand that His death and resurrection are THE key events in His ministry that so profoundly affect us all.

Let's examine the momentous events that surrounded Christ's death and how it would have played out on a timeline.

Look at the chart I've prepared for you. Notice that a Biblical day begins and ends at sunset. Our modern day that uses mechanical clocks as our time measuring devices, makes 12 midnight when one day ends and the new begins. It has nothing to do with sunrise or sunset.

Nisan13 (which in the year Jesus died would have been a Wednesday) is the day before Passover. It was on Wednesday the 13th that the disciples had the special meal prepared that we call The Last Supper and have transformed it into a church sacrament that we call Communion. We find in the Mishna that the Galileans (Yeshua and his disciples were Galileans) adopted a tradition that in Hebrew is called, ***seudah maphseket***; this translates essentially to "last supper". The Galilean Jews (Yeshua and His disciples were Galileans) had established an additional celebration called ***seudah maphseket*** (last supper) that the Judean Jews (the Jews of the Jerusalem area) did not observe. This last supper was about remembering that it was indeed not ALL Hebrews who were in danger from death at God's hand in Egypt, but ONLY the firstborn sons. So a special nighttime meal was adopted whereby this meal would be eaten and then there would be a 24 hour fast that followed.....thus the name "last supper". The next meal to be eaten was the Passover meal.

So on Nisan 13, Wednesday, the *seudah maphsehket* was prepared; HOWEVER, it was not eaten on Nisan 13. Rather, it was after sundown, at the end of the day of Nisan 13, that the meal was taken. That is, it was eaten as the first meal of the next day, Thursday Aviv 14th (remember the beginning of a new day is just after sundown). The meal called "last supper" was generally eaten starting in the first hour of Passover. It is here that Yeshua says to commemorate this day by drinking wine that symbolizes His blood that establishes the New Covenant, and by eating unleavened bread that symbolizes His body to which we become in union. NOTE: this was NOT the traditional Passover Seder meal; that meal was yet to come because that meal is not eaten until the END of Passover day.

Therefore at the start of the day of Nisan 14, Thursday (which is nighttime), Passover day, the Galileans ate a special meal commemorating firstborns, and that meal was called "last supper." After having the last supper where Yeshua proclaimed the words we now call Communion, the next event is that Judas betrays Him and shortly after midnight Our Lord is arrested. It is still Passover day. In the wee hours a little before sunrise, He is tried and convicted of blasphemy by the Sanhedrin. It is still Passover Day. After the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, confirms his death sentence Jesus is scourged and then nailed to Roman cross by Roman soldiers. It is still Passover Day, Thursday, Nisan 14.

At about the moment Jesus expires (around 3 pm in the afternoon on Passover Day) the slaughter of the Passover Lambs begins in the Temple grounds. Somewhere around $\frac{1}{4}$ million sheep will be killed and their blood collected between the hours of 3 pm and 6 pm. It is still Passover Day because the sun has

not yet set.

While this is occurring the women are hurrying to convince the Roman soldiers to remove Messiah's corpse from the execution stake; it is a requirement that they **MUST** get Him buried immediately because otherwise He would just lay exposed for at least 2 days. Why? I'll show you in a minute. The women are relieved when the soldiers relent, take his dead body down, and then Yeshua is entombed **before** the sun sets. It is still Passover Day.

The butchered lambs are placed in the thousands of collective ovens located all around Jerusalem...both inside and outside the city walls...so that the hundreds of thousands of visiting Jewish pilgrims can cook their Passover Lambs. It is still Passover Day. Shortly after the sun sinks over the horizon 3 stars become visible thus ending Passover Day. It is nighttime, Passover Day has ended and the 1st day of the Feast of Matza begins. It is now Nisan 15, Friday, the 1st day of Unleavened Bread.

What, you say, where did the Passover meal go? Aren't they supposed to eat the Passover meal on Passover day? NO! Much to many peoples' surprise the Biblical injunction is that the Passover meal is to be eaten **AFTER** dark at the end of the day of Aviv 14. This means the day has changed from Thursday the 14th to Friday the 15th...the 1st day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. That's right: the Passover meal technically is **NOT** eaten on Passover Day; it is the first meal of the new day on the Feast of Matza. Why? Because that's exactly as it was in Egypt. They were still eating the Passover meal at around midnight we're told, on Nisan 15, when Yehoveh killed all the

unprotected firstborns throughout Egypt.

Now what did we learn earlier that was special and different about the 1st day of Matza? It was a festival Sabbath day (not the 7th day Shabbat, simply an added Sabbath for preparation purposes). Friday Nisan 15th was a festival Sabbath day. It had some of the same requirements as the 7th Day Sabbath in that handling a human corpse was prohibited on a Sabbath. That is why we read in the Gospels that there was a frenzy to get Jesus buried before dark, when the day changed from Festival of Pesach to the 1st day of Matza, which was a festival Sabbath day.

Nisan 15th was an uneventful day; it was Friday, the festival Sabbath to begin the weeklong Feast of Unleavened Bread. The 15th day of Nisan ends at sundown and now it is now Saturday, Nisan 16th; this is (of course) the regular Hebrew weekly 7th day Sabbath. I already mentioned that while for the past several centuries Firstfruits has been celebrated on Aviv 16 (as a permanent tradition), in fact it was only the Rabbis (who were Pharisees) who long ago ordered it done this way, as opposed to the way it was observed in Jesus' day. And this change in observance occurred AFTER the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. when the priesthood became non-operational. Remember, the Sadducees were the High Priests at this time and so with the end of the Temple and the priesthood the Sadducees lost their control over the matter of ritual and tradition. After the destruction of the Temple the Rabbis now got their way and they decided that rather than Firstfruits moving around on the calendar it would ALWAYS be Nisan 16th that Firstfruits would be celebrated on.

Notice that by this timeline Yeshua has been in the tomb for 3 days and 3 nights just as the prophecy of Jonah in the belly of the great fish demonstrated, and that Messiah said would be manifested in Him.