

Timing of Passover Observance

Understanding Foundational Definitions

Here's a quick summary of what I see Scripture laying out with all the pieces and some important ancient historical definitions examined. First, let's lay out some foundational understandings:

1. Days begin at sunset according to the Biblical pattern in Genesis of evening and morning.
2. Months begin day 1 when the new sliver is first large enough to be visible at sunset. It's beyond the scope of this study to go into detail demonstrating it, but that's what we're working with here. A future study will hopefully examine the evidence for that.
3. The timing for when Scripture indicates the Passover lamb was to be slain is historically debated, and some translations are not helpful.

Let's look at Exodus 12:6 to explore number 3 in more detail, because it's pivotal to understanding the timing. Many translations (including the KJV) read something similar to this with emphasis shown:

“And ye shall keep it [the lamb] up until the fourteenth day of the same [first] month, and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it **in the evening.**”

We need to zoom in on the phrase “in the evening.” This is an incorrect translation. IF the phrase was properly translated “in the evening” then the original Hebrew would say “**b-arab**” or “**b-erev**” (depending on if we try to represent it more phonetically or with letters closer to the Hebrew letters like B-ARB or ברעב. The problem is – that is NOT the Hebrew phrase in Ex 12:6. The Hebrew of Ex 12:6 is the phrase “**byn ha-arabim**” which should be translated: literally “between the evenings” (plural) or “during the period of twilight.” This is a critical difference. So, a much better translation of Ex 12:6 is actually:

“And ye shall keep it [the lamb] up until the fourteenth day of the same [first] month, and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it **between the evenings.**”

There was much ancient, historical debate over the correct interpretation of the phrase “**byn ha-arabim**” and that is a truly fascinating study. If you'd like to go really deep on the subject, I highly recommend this very scholarly, well-documented work: http://yahweh.org/pdf_index3.html You can download the entire book as a single PDF near the top of the page.

To oversimplify the conclusion of a thorough historical investigation – the more ancient and (I am fully convinced) correct interpretation and definition of “**byn ha-arabim**” is: the time between sunset until total darkness.

Putting all the Pieces Together

With that understanding let's put all the pieces together. Every piece of Scripture has to work together – there can be no contradictions or pieces that don't fit in whatever the final picture is.

1. According to Ex 12:6 the lamb (or goat) was to be kept UNTIL the 14th – this means that the lamb (or goat) was to be slain at the BEGINNING of the 14th day (which means at sunset, since days begin at evening). Keeping the animal longer than that (well into the 14th day) would be a violation of that piece of the picture.

2. According to Ex 12:6 and a proper understanding of “*byn ha-arabim*” the animal was to be slain during the time period between sunset and total darkness.
3. According to Ex 12:8 we are required to “eat the flesh in THAT **night**” (in context, the NIGHT of the 14th day – the period of darkness during the 14th day of the month, which only happens on the 14th day after twilight, right after the 14th day begins at evening). And we are to eat unleavened bread with it.
4. According to Ex 12:10 we are required to “let none of it remain until morning” (in context, the MORNING of the 14th day – the period marked by the daylight returning on the 14th day of the month, which only happens on the 14th day after sunrise).
5. According to Ex 12:12 on that original Passover YHWH said He was going to “pass through the land of Egypt THIS NIGHT” (in context, the NIGHT at the beginning of the 14th day after sunset).
6. According to Ex 12:15 “SEVEN days you shall eat unleavened bread” (in context, seven days beginning with Passover at the beginning of the 14th day as indicated by the Ex 12:8 instruction to start eating unleavened bread with the Passover.
7. According to Ex 12:16 on the first day and on the seventh day we are to have a set-apart gathering (assembly, rehearsal, calling, meeting, convocation, reading, etc.) In context this has to mean the 14th day (first day) and 20th day (seventh day).
8. According to Ex 12:17-18 The Feast of Unleavened Bread is defined as: “In the first month, **on the fourteenth day** of the month, in the **evening** [*my comment: which has to be the beginning of the 14th day since days begin at evening*], you shall eat unleavened bread **until the twenty-first day of the month** in the **evening** [*my comment: which is until the evening which begins the 21st day*].
9. According to Ex 12:19 it is reiterated that “For SEVEN days no leaven is to be found in your houses...”
10. According to Ex 12:29 at midnight on the 14th day in context, after Israel had slain the lambs and applied the blood to their doorposts, YHWH struck down the firstborn throughout all Egypt wherever the blood was not applied.
11. According to Ex 13:6-7 we are to eat unleavened bread for SEVEN days and the **seventh** day is a *khag* (feast, festival) to YHWH.
12. According to Ex 23:15 we are to “Guard **the Festival of Unleavened Bread. SEVEN days** you eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib – for in it you came out of Egypt...”
13. Lev 23:5-8 is where confusion can come into the picture, but only if we look at Lev 23 while ignoring the foundation that was already laid in Exodus, which is important to recall and summarize now before we consider Lev 23:
 - a. Unleavened bread was to be eaten STARTING on the 14th day with Passover.
 - b. Unleavened bread was to be eaten for SEVEN days total.
 - c. Unleavened bread was to be eaten UNTIL the 21st day.
14. According to Lev 23:5 “In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, **between the evenings** [*“byn ha-arabim”*], is the Passover to YHWH” which is consistent with Ex 12:6.
15. According to Lev 23:6 “And on the **fifteenth day of this month** is the Festival of Unleavened Bread to YHWH – SEVEN days you eat unleavened bread.” In addition to understanding “*byn ha-arabim*” properly, here’s what we also have to wrestle with understanding.
 - a. By itself, this verse seems to say that the 15th day starts the Feast of Unleavened Bread. But that’s NOT what it actually says.
 - b. We have to understand that Lev 23:5 comes before Lev 23:6 and both must rest on the foundation of Ex 12 which comes first.
 - c. We already know the cut-off of the SEVEN day period is to happen at the moment “UNTIL the 21st day.”

- d. Therefore the only way to consistently interpret Lev 23:6 is like this: “And on the 15th day **CONTINUES** the Festival of Unleavened Bread for the remainder of the SEVEN days.”
 - e. Otherwise, the period of unleavened bread would have to be 8 days total (nowhere mentioned in Scripture) and would have to continue THROUGH the 21st day UNTIL the 22nd day and thus violate Ex 12:18.
 - f. It’s also important to note that Lev 23 does NOT provide an exact ending day / “until” day like Ex 12 does, therefore Lev 23 is not as specific as Ex 12 and must be interpreted in light of the more specific instructions already found in Exodus.
 - g. Leviticus cannot change or be different than what Yah already established in Exodus.
16. Num 9 is another account of the Passover that the Children of Israel kept a year later after that first Passover and includes the provisions for a 2nd month observance if once is unclean and cannot keep it in the first month.
17. Num 28:16-25 is the same pattern as Lev 23 regarding it’s instructions for Passover and Unleavened Bread:
- a. It describes a total period of SEVEN days.
 - b. In context, the seven days begins with Passover, which must be the evening / beginning of the 14th day.
 - c. The 15th day continues the SEVEN days.
 - d. No specific ending day for the SEVEN days is mentioned, so we must calibrate our understanding of the final seventh day according to Exodus 12.
18. Num 33:3 presents an additional clarification that on the surface seems to be at odds with the Ex 12 account – that the people departed from Rameses on the 15th day of the month. This has to be reconciled without contradicting the Ex 12 account. I think this is easily explained by considering there are hundreds of thousands of people involved here. They spent time plundering the Egyptians. They likely all had to gather to Rameses in the first place from all their different dwellings. So, while they were coming out of Egypt on the 14th day it wasn’t until the 15th day when they were finally all assembled and leaving Rameses. This might be why Lev 23 and Num 28 mention the 15th day by name as well. Deut 16:1 indicates that YHWH brought them out by night, so this could also indicate that they were leaving Rameses by night at the beginning of the 15th day after sunset.
19. Deut 16 records additional instructions – specifically that the Passover could not be sacrificed just anywhere, but had to be sacrificed at the place where YHWH would place His Name (Zion, Jerusalem). This is one of the reasons we understand that we are not officially “keeping” actual observance of Passover, but we are rehearsing and celebrating the memorial of what YHWH did for His people in delivering them from Egypt as a physical picture of the blood covenant of forgiveness and deliverance through Yahushua Messiah the Lamb of Yah to which all of it points. Deut 16 also re-affirms the SEVEN day total pattern in the Feast of Unleavened bread.
20. According to Eze 45:21 – which provides additional confirmation – the Passover is called “a feast of SEVEN days, [where] unleavened bread is eaten” and this is observed in the physical Millennial Kingdom context.

Any other system or reckoning of the timing cannot make **all** those Biblical pieces work together in unity. Some part of Scripture would have to be violated in order to follow a different sequence or timing.

Passover Example Timeline for 2020

When we combine all the Scriptural instructions and apply them to this Gregorian year 2020 we have:

Aviv Day	Calendar Sunset	Calendar Sunrise	Feast Day Notes
1	25-Mar	26-Mar	Aviv New Moon
2	26-Mar	27-Mar	
3	27-Mar	28-Mar	
4	28-Mar	29-Mar	
5	29-Mar	30-Mar	
6	30-Mar	31-Mar	
7	31-Mar	1-Apr	
8	1-Apr	2-Apr	
9	2-Apr	3-Apr	
10	3-Apr	4-Apr	Lamb or goat taken into home; Yahushua's entry to Jerusalem
11	4-Apr	5-Apr	
12	5-Apr	6-Apr	
13	6-Apr	7-Apr	
14	7-Apr	8-Apr	ON the 14th day BEGINS Passover, Unleavened Bread Day 1
15	8-Apr	9-Apr	Unleavened Bread Day 2
16	9-Apr	10-Apr	Unleavened Bread Day 3
17	10-Apr	11-Apr	Unleavened Bread Day 4
18	11-Apr	12-Apr	Unleavened Bread Day 5
19	12-Apr	13-Apr	Unleavened Bread Day 6
20	13-Apr	14-Apr	Unleavened Bread Day 7
21	14-Apr	15-Apr	UNTIL the 21st day "period" OVER
22	15-Apr	16-Apr	

Conclusion

I know this is not what everyone practices, but I believe with full conviction and all my heart that it is the way Abba instructed his people to do it according to His Word. As far as I can tell from Scripture, it's the only way all the pieces fit together in unity with the correct definitions applied. And, it's historically verified that this was the practice of the line of Zadok Levites descended from the high priest during King David's days who was also the first high priest of the First Temple, the Sadducees, the ancient Samaritans, and the early assemblies who followed Yahushua Messiah after his life, death, and resurrection.