

## ***The Chronology of Yeshua's Last Week of Life*** **Part 2**

### **Nisan 12 (Tuesday night/Wednesday daytime)**

After being examined by the chief priests and the elders (Mat 21:23-32), Yeshua was examined by the Pharisees and Sadducees (Mat 22:15-33), and then by the Pharisees a second time (Mat 22:34-46). Since they could not find a flaw in His character or His teachings, they stopped asking Him questions, which proved Him to be unblemished like a Passover Lamb.

In the afternoon, Yeshua took the disciples to the Mount of Olives where He gave them a series of signs that pointed to His return and the circumstances at the end of the age (Mat 24-25).

### **Nisan 13 (5th day of the week – Wednesday evening/Thursday daytime)**

In the evening, an unnamed woman anointed Yeshua's head with an oil-based perfume, which served as a preparation for His burial (Mat 26:1-13). That same day, Judas initiated his betrayal of Yeshua by literally selling Him to the leaders of the nation (Mat 26:14-15; Lk 22:2-6).

### **Nisan 14 (6th day of the week – Thursday evening/Friday daytime)**

Yeshua instructed Peter and John to prepare the Passover (Lk 22:8). Meanwhile, the leaders of the nation did not observe Passover until after Yeshua's death, which would be the same for the majority of the nation. That has led some people to conclude that Yeshua only observed what they call a fellowship meal with His disciples. But the overall text repeatedly presents details that specifically relate to a Passover Seder, not a generic kind of supper.

Two other possibilities exist for reconciling the apparent contradiction between Yeshua's observance of Passover and that of the majority. One proposal is that Yeshua adopted the calendar of the Essenes for His observance. But there is no evidence of Him adopting other Essene practices. And their calendar, which did not go by the lunar cycle, always called for the observance of Passover on the 4th day of the week (Tuesday night to Wednesday daytime), which would not fit the chronology of the text.

The other possible explanation involves a specific practice of the Jewish people from the Galilee like Yeshua. The *Mishnah*, in *Pesachim 55a* states that the Galileans did all of their preparations for Passover on the 13th of Nisan, not the fourteenth as the Judeans did. Having a head start on preparing for the feast enabled them to observe it at the beginning of the day on the fourteenth, not at the end of that day, as was the custom of the majority of the people and continues until today. But, did the Torah allow for such an early observance of the feast?

The original instruction for the feast is found in Exodus 12:6. Most English translations render it with words similar to the NASB: "You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight." The KJV uses "evening" instead of twilight. But that is not how the Hebrew reads. It says "*beyn ha-arybayim*," which literally means "between the evenings." That is exactly how the NJV reads, which means it is the most accurate translation of this verse.

There has been much speculation about what those words actually represent. Some commentators state that it is the time between sunset and the stars becoming visible (Onkelos, Ibn Ezra). Some commentators taught that it refers to the period of time between the declining of the sun in the sky at noon and sunset, meaning the late afternoon (Saadia, Rashi). The Pharisees

were more specific, saying that it referred to the time from when the heat of the sun started to diminish at 3:00 p.m. and sunset (*Pesachim 61a*). Josephus concurred with that timing during the second temple period (*Wars of the Jews 6.9.3*).

But the *Mishnah* allowed for a more literal interpretation than those above that are rationalized. According to *Mishnah Zevachim 11b*, “*beyn ha-aryaim*—between the evenings” refers to the entire period of time between the sunset that began the fourteenth day of the month until the sunset that began the fifteenth. Thus it refers to the entire day of the fourteenth (that understanding is explicitly confirmed in footnote 28 that accompanies the text of the Talmud). In other words, God’s original instruction in Exodus 12:6 allowed for observing Passover at the very beginning of the day, not just at the end. That is what Yeshua was doing with His disciples in full compliance with the Torah.

Why, then, were the rest of the people doing it at the end of the day? In Deuteronomy 16, Moses described how the people were to observe the feast when the temples were established in Jerusalem. Verses 5-6 read:

"You are not allowed to sacrifice the Passover in any of your towns which Adonai your God is giving you; but at the place where Adonai your God chooses to establish His name, you shall sacrifice the Passover in the evening at sunset, at the time that you came out of Egypt."

The Hebrew of verse 6 literally reads, “at the time of the going of the sun.” That indicates a shift of observance specifically to the end of the day, right before the beginning of the fifteenth of the month, which is also the day that was the anniversary of their departure from Egypt. So, in the second temple period, the leaders of Israel narrowed the timing of the sacrifice of the lambs and the observance of the feast to the end of the fourteenth, which caused the seder to carry over to the evening of the fifteenth, just as it continues to be observed today. That is how the fourteenth, the original day of Passover, became known as the Preparation Day and the feast of Passover became merged with the feast of Unleavened Bread.

So we have to recognize that there were two ways of observing Passover in biblical times: 1) The original Passover in Egypt and 2) The permanent Passover in temple times and continuing until the present day.

This, then, is how Yeshua could observe a genuine Passover Seder with His disciples on what we call Thursday evening according to the instruction in Exodus 12 and then die at the time of the general sacrifice of the lambs late in the day on Friday according to Deuteronomy 16. Both of these occurrences were able to take place on the sixth day of the week and on the fourteenth day of the month without contradiction.