

'God's Passover Lamb'

♪“Down by the river Jordan, John was baptizing there. The children of Israel kept coming, one by one they went in. Then in their midst was Yeshua. The prophet lifted his head. And to the children of Israel, this is what he said: Behold the Lamb of G-d who takes away the sin of the world. Behold the Lamb of G-d who takes away the sin of the world. He gave His life, He made the sacrifice for each and every man. By His blood we are saved, let the L-rd be praised. Yeshua is the Lamb.” ♪

Scripture establishes for us that *Yeshua* is/was the true Passover Lamb. *Yochanan* the Immerser (John the Baptist) made that fact clear when he said: “The next day he saw *Yeshua* coming to him and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” (John 1:29). Rabbi Sha’ul also makes the point when he wrote: “Get rid of the old hametz, so that you can be a new batch of dough, because in reality you are unleavened. For our Pesach lamb, the Messiah, has been sacrificed. So let us celebrate the Seder not with leftover hametz, the hametz of wickedness and evil, but with the matzah of purity and truth.” (1 Cor. 5:7-8)

It is reasonable to ascertain that for *Yeshua* to be the true Passover Lamb of the Bible, he would have had to be offered for the sins of the world on the day of Passover, that is, on the fourteenth of *Aviv/Nisan* in the Hebrew calendar—on the day of the 10th Plague in Egypt when the Angel of *Adonai* passed over the homes of the children of Israel in Goshan. Scripture furnishes certain facts and fixed points which make it possible to detail the events which preceded the crucifixion, to fix the time of the crucifixion, and to ascertain the duration of the time that *Yeshua* remained in the tomb. (See attached chart).

To grasp the details of the proceedings associated with *Yeshua*’s last days in the *B’rit Chadasha* (New Testament) it is necessary to be familiar with original events and their timing in the *TNK* (the Hebrew Scriptures). According to the Bible the day begins at sunset, not at midnight, so that the evening of the day is followed by the morning (“God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. So there was evening, and there was morning, one day” (Genesis 1:5). The Hebrew day began with the going down of the sun or at approximately 7pm. (on March 29th 2009 the sun will set at 6:57pm Jerusalem time). It should be noted that Scripture tells us that the Children of Israel left at night in the month of *Aviv/Nisan*: “Observe the month of *Aviv*, and keep Pesach to *ADONAI* your God; for in the month of *Aviv*, *ADONAI* your God brought you out of Egypt at night.” (Deut. 16:1). Also “Keep the festival of matzah: for seven days, as I ordered you, you are to eat matzah at the time determined in the month of *Aviv*; for it was in that month that you left Egypt. No one is to appear before me empty-handed.” (Ex. 23:15)

In Exodus 12:3, God commanded Moses to instruct the Israelites to take a lamb for each household on the *Aviv* 10 and keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, in which day the whole congregation of Israel was to kill the lamb at evening (dusk) or between the two evenings, or *eventide* as the Hebrew is literally rendered: “Speak to all the assembly of *Isra’el* and say, ‘On the tenth day of this month, each man is to take a lamb or kid for his family... You are to keep it until the fourteenth day of the month, and then the entire assembly of the community of *Isra’el* will slaughter it at dusk.” The fourteenth day of *Aviv* began at 6-7pm on what we in America would call the thirteenth day (the night before). Deuteronomy 16:6 states clearly: “but at the place where *ADONAI* your God will choose to have his name live - there is where you are to sacrifice the Pesach offering, in the evening, when the sun sets, at the time of year that you came out of Egypt.” The period of *eventide* or *between the two evenings*, was the time between the going down of the sun and the arrival of darkness.

Following the slaughtering of the Passover lamb, the people were instructed to strike its blood on the doorposts and lintels of their houses. “That night, they are to eat the meat, roasted in the fire; they are to eat it with matzah and maror” (Ex. 12:8). During that night, *Adonai* passed through the land of Egypt and smote the firstborn of every house upon whose door the blood had not been applied. That night of terror, the people did as they were ordered: “Then, none of you is to go out the door of his house until morning” (vs. 22). It was during this night that Pharaoh relented and sent instructions to Moses and Aaron by night: “He summoned Moshe and Aharon by night and said, ‘Up and leave my people, both you and the people of *Isra’el*; and go, serve *ADONAI* as you said.’” (vs. 31).

During *Aviv* 14, the children of Israel spoiled the Egyptians. Finally at the end of that day, at dusk., or on the evening of *Aviv* 15, the Israelites departed from *Ra’amses* to *Sukkot*. Deut 16:1 told us that they left at night.

Which night? The night of the 15th of *Aviv*—that is on the 1st day of the Feast of *Matzot*—on the night when Jews celebrate the Passover Seder in their homes. This no doubt accounted for the fact that our Jewish people placed such great emphasis on the first day of the Feast of *Matzot* (Unleavened Bread). This day, *Aviv* 15, is a high-holy day, a Sabbath, and the day of Passover, *Aviv* 14, became a day of preparation for this holy convocation. “*In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, between sundown and complete darkness, comes Pesach for ADONAI. On the fifteenth day of the same month is the festival of matzah; for seven days you are to eat matzah. On the first day you are to have a holy convocation; don't do any kind of ordinary work. Bring an offering made by fire to ADONAI for seven days. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; do not do any kind of ordinary work.*” (Lev. 23:5-8)

By the time of the *NT*, the Jewish people had so closely celebrated the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread that the terms became interchangeable: “*But the festival of Matzah, known as Pesach, was approaching*” (Luke 22:1). By this time, the whole eight days of Passover and Unleavened Bread had come to be known as the *Pesach* (Passover) festival. This fact alone accounts for some of the confusion of the *B'rit Chadasha's* account of the Last Seder (Supper). It is evident that *Yeshua* ate the Passover supper before His death on the cross. “*Then came the day of Matzah, on which the Passover lamb had to be killed. Yeshua sent Kefa and Yochanan, instructing them, 'Go and prepare our Seder, so we can eat.'*” (Luke 22:7,8) “*On the first day for matzah, when they slaughtered the lamb for Pesach, Yeshua's talmidim asked him, 'Where do you want us to go and prepare your Seder?'*” (Mark 14:12).

The actual day of Passover, *Aviv* 14, had come to be known as the day of preparation for the coming holy convocation (מִקְרָא קָדוֹשׁ, *mikrah kadosh*) on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread: “*Since it was Preparation Day (that is, the day before a Sabbath), as evening approached*” (Mark 15:42). This passage of Scripture has been the basis for the “Good Friday” crucifixion; however, in the context of the whole *Pesach-Matzot* (Passover-Unleavened Bread) timeframe, it is clear that the preparation was the day of Passover (*Aviv* 14) before the 1st day of the Feast of *Matzot* (Unleavened Bread) the ‘Sabbath’ of *Aviv* 15, which does not mean on a Saturday since the 15th of *Aviv* can fall on any day of the week.

The basic criterion for establishing the date of the crucifixion of the *L-rd Yeshua* must be His own prophetic sign to His generation: “*For just as Yonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea-monster so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the depths of the earth.*” (Matthew 12:40). If the *L-rd* had said that He would remain in the heart (depths) of the earth for three days, it could be assumed that he intended a period of less than seventy-two hours. The fact that He said three days and three nights and then repeated the phrase precisely can only indicate that He meant three days in addition to three nights, or seventy-two hours. The use of the Hebrew idiom *three days and three nights* precludes the possibility that the *L-rd* may have remained in the tomb less than seventy-two hours.

The secondary criterion on which the calculation of the events of the week of the crucifixion and resurrection may be established is the fact that the Scriptures say repeatedly that the visitations of various people to the tomb of *Yeshua* in the pre- and post-dawn hours of the first day of the week found the tomb vacant. This establishes the fact that *Yeshua* resurrected before dawn on the first day of the week. Since He remained entombed for a minimum of seventy-two hours, and since we are informed that He was interred shortly before six p.m. on the day of the crucifixion, counting backward from around 6-7p.m. at the end of the weekly Sabbath (Saturday) and the beginning of the first day of the week, the time of interment must have been around 6-7p.m. on Wednesday. From this point an accurate chronology of the events which surrounded the death and resurrection of the *L-rd* can be established, in which all the passages of Scripture which conflict with other dates for the crucifixion are reconciled. We may also note the words of Daniel 9:26-27: “*Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.*” (NASB) In my view, Daniel accurately predicted the crucifixion and death of *Yeshua* was to take place on a Wednesday, that is the middle of the week. NASA calendar programs also establish a Wednesday Passover in the year Messiah died.

The chronology of John begins in John 12:1 with this statement: “Six days before Pesach, Yeshua came to Beit-Anyah, where El’azar lived, the man Yeshua had raised from the dead” According to Luke 19: 1-10, Yeshua had approached Jerusalem from Jericho on the previous day and had spent the night. During that sixth day before the Passover, Yeshua came to Bethany according to Luke 19:29 where the events of John 12 transpired. Since the Passover to which the *B’rit Chadasha* (Newer Testament) writers referred was in fact the first day of Unleavened Bread or Aviv 15, which in that year was on Thursday, six days before that day was Friday, Aviv 9.

John 12:12, 13 states that “The next day, the large crowd that had come for the festival heard that Yeshua was on his way into Yerushalayim. ¹³ They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, ‘Deliver us!’” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of Adonai, the King of Israel!” It was earlier in this day while at Beit-Pagei and Beit-Anyah, by the Mount of Olives that Yeshua had sent His disciples to procure the ass and colt that He subsequently rode into Jerusalem at His triumphal entry (Luke 19:29-38). The event that most people celebrate as Palm Sunday actually took place on the weekly Sabbath (Palm Sabbath?). Finally Yeshua went out of the city with the twelve at evening to Bethany (Mark 11:11). These were the events of the Sabbath, Aviv 10.

Mark 11:12 continues the chronology thus: “The next day, as they came back from Beit-Anyah, he felt hungry.” The *L-rd* found no fruit on the fig tree and cursed it. When He came into Jerusalem and the Temple, the zeal of the *L-rd*’s house consumed Him, and He drove the moneychangers from the temple. Then He taught at length as Luke 19:47 and John 12:20-50 declare. These were the events of Sunday, Aviv 11.

Mark continues the chronology in Mk. 11:20: “In the morning, as the talmidim passed by, they saw the fig tree withered all the way to its roots.” Then Yeshua continued to Jerusalem and spent time teaching and giving parables in the temple (Mk. 11:20; 14:1). In Mk. 14:1 this statement further identifies that day: “It was now two days before Pesach (that is, the festival of Matzah), and the head cohanim and the Torah-teachers were trying to find some way to arrest Yeshua surreptitiously and have him put to death.” Since the Feast of Passover and of Unleavened Bread to which the writer alluded had come to be recognized Aviv 15 and since the statement of “after two days is the Passover” would have to have been made on the third day before the Passover, this day was Aviv 12.

Mark identifies the next day as being “On the first day for matzah, when they slaughtered the lamb for Pesach.” (Mark 14:12). Since the original Passover was to be eaten with unleavened bread and Yeshua is the fulfillment of this Passover, Mark’s identification of that day as the first day for unleavened bread is not referring to the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Aviv 15) but to the Passover (Aviv 14). Note his statement, “when they killed the Passover,” identifies the day precisely. It was at sunset on this Tuesday, Aviv 13, at the entering into the fourteenth day that the Passover lamb was slain in Egypt. During the previous day—that is, Aviv 13—Yeshua had sent Peter and John to “prepare us the Passover, that we may eat” (Luke 22:8).

After Yeshua and His disciples had concluded the observance of the Passover supper on the evening of the day when they killed the Passover (Aviv 14), Yeshua instituted what we could call “The *B’rit Chadasha Pesach* (New Testament Passover), instructing His disciples, “This do in remembrance of me.” After the disciples had partaken of the last supper, Yeshua washed their feet, instituting the practice of feet washing. Then they sang the *Hallel* (Ps. 113-118) and went out to the Mount of Olives (to observe the prescribed watch/vigil, “It is a night to be observed for Adonai for having brought them out from the land of Egypt; this night is for Adonai, to be observed by all the sons of Israel throughout their generations.” Exodus 12:42) where Yeshua predicted Peter’s denial. Finally they came to Gethsemane, where Yeshua prayed and where He asked Peter to keep watch, *i.e.*, the prescribed vigil. Immediately thereafter the chief priests and a multitude of armed men came with Judas and seized Him.

The subsequent events pre-dawn Wednesday (Tuesday night after midnight, that is, Wednesday) Aviv 14 are documented both in history and in the Gospels. During the night, Yeshua was tried in the court of *Kayafa* (Caia-phas.) At dawn he was taken to Pilate. It was then that the Jews would not enter before Pilate so that they would be clean to eat the Passover (“They led Yeshua from Kayafa to the governor’s headquarters. By now it was early morning. They did not enter the headquarters building because they didn’t want to become ritually defiled and thus unable to eat the Pesach meal”, John 18:28). The Passover of which they wished to eat was Aviv 15, that first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread which was called the Passover, the annual, not the weekly, Sabbath.

After the trial by Roman standards, *Yeshua* was found not guilty by Pilate, who, fearing an uprising of the people and wishing to placate their furor, assented to the wishes of the people and their leaders and issued the order for the execution of *Yeshua*. The Son of God was taken to *Gulgolta* (“*Carrying the stake himself he went out to the place called Skull (in Aramaic, Gulgolta),*” (John 19:18) and crucified on or about nine a.m. (just as the hour of prayer was concluding!). After hanging on the cross for six hours, *Yeshua* died at three p.m. John 19:31-42 further identifies this time: “*It was Preparation Day, and the Judeans did not want the bodies to remain on the stake on Shabbat, since it was an especially important Shabbat. So they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies removed...After this, Yosef of Ramatayim, who was a talmid of Yeshua, but a secret one out of fear of the Judeans, asked Pilate if he could have Yeshua’s body. Pilate gave his consent, so Yosef came and took the body away...So, because it was Preparation Day for the Judeans, and because the tomb was close by, that is where they buried Yeshua.*” The day of preparation for the annual Sabbath that was the first day of Feast of Unleavened Bread was *Aviv* 14. *Yeshua*, therefore, was placed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea at near sundown, or around six p.m., just before the sunset of *Aviv* 14, which corresponds to our Wednesday.

Thus, on or about 6-7p.m. on the day of Passover, the preparation day before the Feast of Unleavened Bread, *Yeshua* was interred in the tomb. On the very next day, the chief priests and scribes came to Pilate, fearful of the prediction which *Yeshua* had made that on the third day He would rise again. They requested that a three-day watch be set upon the tomb and that it be sealed. Permission was granted, and the opposition of the Messiah set the trap which would stand for all eternity as a testimony of the resurrection of *Yeshua*.

Since Jewish law required that a man be dead for three days and three nights before he could be pronounced legally dead, *Yeshua* remained in the tomb for at least seventy-two hours. On the first day of His entombment, the watch was set. On the second day, the women prepared spices with which to anoint the body when the three-day waiting period had expired (Mark 16:1). On the third night and day of His entombment, the saints rested on the Sabbath day according to the commandments (Luke 23:56). At sundown, the angels opened the tomb with an earthquake in the end of the Sabbath as the first day of the week was drawing on (Matthew 28:1-7).

Some time later while it was still dark on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene was instructed not to handle the *L-rd* because He had not yet ascended to the Father (John 20:17; Luke 24:39). Shortly thereafter *Yeshua* ascended, taking with Him the *bikkurim* (firstfruits) of the resurrection (the saints which arose at the time of the earthquake), and as the newly installed High Priest, waved them before the *L-rd* as the wave sheaf of the firstfruits (Matthew 27:53; 1 Corinthians 15:23) fulfilling the Feast of Firstfruits (of Barley) in Lev. 23.

Some time later *Yeshua* appeared to the women in the garden and to His disciples instructing them to “*handle me*” (Mk 16:1-6; Lk 24:39; Jo 20:27). On Sunday, the first day of the week, *Yeshua* appeared to the men who were walking very dejectedly toward Emmaus. Answering His questions, they related the events of the past few days, saying that ‘today’ was the third day since all those things were done. Their reference was the fact that the first day of the week was the third day since *Yeshua* was crucified, entombed, and the watch set over His tomb, which was the annual Sabbath, the first day of Unleavened Bread, or Thursday, *Aviv* 15 (Matt 27:62).

This is a chronology of the events of the Passover. With this account, the Scriptures are harmonized, the dates are chronologically in order, and the times of the last supper, the crucifixion, the entombment, and the resurrection are placed on a sure foundation. Kol Simcha celebrates Passover on the eve of *Aviv* 14 with a Messianic Seder. We recognize the crucifixion of *Yeshua* to have occurred on Wednesday, the middle of the week (Daniel 9:27), rather than on Good Friday. We remember the resurrection three days and nights after the eve of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (the eve of *Aviv* 18) rather than at sunrise on an “Easter Sunday morning.” We observe the Feast of Firstfruits which on the year *Yeshua* died, fell on *Aviv* 18. Lev. 23 commands us to observe this *moadim* by beginning the Omer Count. With this understanding our remembrance of the death and resurrection of *Yeshua* is established on a solid Scriptural foundation.