

Passover – The Forgotten First High Holiday

Passover is the first of the Biblical High Holidays: *Pesach* and Feast of *Matzot* ⁴“*These are the appointed feasts of Adonai, holy convocations which you are to proclaim in their appointed season.*” ⁵“*During the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening, is Adonai’s Passover.*” ⁶“*On the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Matzot Adonai. For seven days you are to eat matzah.*” ⁷“*On the first day you are to have a holy convocation and you should do no regular work.*” ⁸“*Instead you are to present an offering made by fire to Adonai for seven days. On the seventh day is a holy convocation, when you are to do no regular work*” (Lev. 23:4-8). The Feast of Unleavened Bread (*Chag HaMatzot*) is the second of the Biblical High Holidays and it starts the day after Passover (Nisan 15).

The original Passover was on the night of the fourteenth of Nisan in the Hebrew calendar – the night of the 10th Plague in Egypt. It is called Passover because the Angel of *Adonai* passed over the homes of the children of Israel in Goshen that were sprinkled with the blood of the Passover lamb. *Yeshua*, the true Passover Lamb of the Bible was also crucified on the afternoon of the Nisan 14 Passover at noon, agonized for three hours, died at 3p, and was entombed right at sundown that same afternoon. From last Shabbat’s Message we established that these events happened on Tuesday-Wednesday, AD 30 and that in this year (2020) we have the same alignment of weekdays as *Yeshua*’s Passover week in that Nisan 14, 5780 started this past Tuesday April 7, 2020 at sundown.

At the beginning of the Christian Era (CE) the Jewish people had so closely celebrated the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread that the terms had become interchangeable: “*Now the Feast of Matzah, which is called Passover, was approaching*” (Luke 22:1). At this time, the entire eight days of Passover and Unleavened Bread (Nisan 14 – Nisan 21) had come to be known as the *Pesach* (Passover) festival, as it is today. This fact alone accounts for some of the confusion of the *New Testament* account of *Yeshua*’s *Seder* (Last Supper). *Yeshua* ate the Passover *Seder* before His death on the cross on Nisan 14: ⁷“*Then came the day of matzah when the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.*” ⁸“*Now Yeshua sent Peter and John, saying, ‘Go and prepare the Passover for us, so we may eat’*” (Luke 22:7,8). ¹²“*Now on the first day of matzah, when they were slaughtering the Passover lamb, Yeshua’s disciples say to Him, ‘Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?’*” (Mark 14:12).

The actual day of Passover (Nisan 14) had come to be known as the Day of Preparation for the coming holy convocation (Hebrew, *mikrah kadosh*) on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread: ⁴²“*Now evening had already come. Since it was the Day of Preparation, that is, the day before Shabbat*” (Mark 15:42). This passage of Scripture has been the basis for the “Good Friday” crucifixion. However, in the context of the entire Passover/Unleavened Bread (*Pesach/Matzot*) timeframe, it is clear that the preparation was the day of Passover (Nisan 14) before the 1st day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (*Matzot*). Please note that the so-called ‘*Sabbath*’ of Nisan 15 does not mean Saturday since the 15th of Nisan can fall on any day of the week.

After *Yeshua* and His disciples had concluded the observance of the Passover Seder on the evening of the day when they killed the Passover (Passover lambs were slaughtered from 12p to 3p on the afternoon of Aviv 14), *Yeshua* instituted the *New Testament Passover*, instructing His disciples, “*Do this in memory of me*” (Luke 22:19). At the beginning of this last *Seder*, *Yeshua* washed their feet, instituting the practice of feet washing (John 13:1-15). At the conclusion of the Seder they sang the *Hallel* (Psalm 113-118) and went out to the Mount of Olives (to observe the prescribed *watch/vigil* as spoken in Exodus 12:42: ⁴²“*It was a night of watching for Adonai to bring them out of the land of Egypt. This same night is a night of vigil for Adonai, for all Bnei-Yisrael throughout their generations.*”) Here *Yeshua* predicted Peter’s denial (Mark 14 and Luke 22). Then they came to the Mount of Olives (Gethsemane), where *Yeshua* prayed (John 17) and where He asked Peter to keep *watch* (the prescribed vigil, Matt. 26). Shortly thereafter the chief priests and a multitude of armed men came with Judas and seized Him.

The subsequent events pre-dawn of Aviv 14 are documented both in history and in the Gospels. During the night, *Yeshua* was tried in the court of Caiaphas. 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 (²⁸“*Then they led Yeshua from*

Caiaphas to the Praetorium. It was early. They themselves did not enter the Praetorium, so they would not become unclean but might eat the Passover” John 18:28). The Passover of which they wished to eat happens on Nisan 15, on the first day of the Feast of *Matzot* or Unleavened Bread (which was then and is today called the Passover), at an *annual* and not necessarily a *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 *Golgotha* (“¹⁷ Then they took *Yeshua*. He went out, carrying His own crossbar, to the Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called *Golgotha* (John 19:18)) and crucified Him on or about 9a (just as the first hour of prayer (8a-9a) was concluding!). After hanging on the cross for six hours, *Yeshua* died at 3p (just as the third hour of prayer (2p-3p) was concluding). “³¹It was the Day of Preparation, and the next day was a festival Shabbat. So that the bodies should not remain on the execution stake during Shabbat, the Judean leaders asked Pilate to have the legs broken and to have the bodies taken away... ³⁸After these things, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate if he could take *Yeshua*’s body away. Joseph was a disciple of *Yeshua*, but secretly for fear of the Judean leaders. Pilate gave permission, so Joseph came and took the body away... ⁴²Because it was the Jewish Day of Preparation and the tomb was nearby, they laid *Yeshua* there”(John 19:31-42). The day of preparation for the *annual* Shabbat (the 1st day of Feast of Unleavened Bread) was, of course, Nisan 14. *Yeshua* was placed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea very near sundown (~7p), just before the Nisan 14 sunset.

Thus, on or about 7p 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 *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 enemies 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. This agrees with *Yeshua*’s own statement in Matthew 12:40. Further, the chief priests request that a watch be established at the tomb and that it be sealed for three days (Matthew 27:62-66). Scripture states that *Yeshua* rose from the dead on the first day of the week. This would have to have been on *Yom Rishon* (Sunday) Nisan 18 (15+3) (See Matthew 28:1-7).

In my estimation, Pesach has been ignored and practically eliminated from importance as a High Holiday by treating it as a day of preparation. By calling the First Day of Unleavened Bread Passover, then Nisan 14 becomes a forgotten holiday. In fact, in modern Judaism and in Messianic Judaism the Day of Pesach is not a holiday at all. It is a workday, and the only thing people do in their homes is extricating the *chametz*. The day of Messiah’s passion is put out of one’s mind and is thereby almost totally forgotten. The emphasis in the ‘Passover Season’ in Judaism (and in Messianic Judaism) is the Seder (celebrated on the evening of the 15th). Nothing of importance is celebrated on the 14th. In Christianity the emphasis of the Passover season is the Day of Resurrection (Easter, ugh!). But according to Paul, Messiah’s Meal is a remembrance of His death: “²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes” (1 Cor. 11:26). It was on *Pesach* that *Yeshua* died for my sins and by accepting His atonement I am freed from the slavery of sin. The most important event in my entire life is that I became a Believer (I got saved!). My salvation is tied directly to the cross and the Blood of the Lamb. The moment of *Yeshua*’s victory against Satan is at the cross (Col. 2:14-15). Paul preached Messiah and Him Crucified, the “Power and the Wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24). Routinely Seders are done by Messianic Jews on the 15th and in their Seders, Messiah in the Passover is discussed and amplified. But the 15th is the wrong date! He died on the 14th! When I am asked about doing our Seder on the 14th the reaction is a rolling of the eyes. Rabbi Tony, why don’t you do it when the Jewish Community does? More important than the Exodus from Egypt to a Messianic Jew should be the crucifixion. Don’t you agree? “...for Messiah, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸ Therefore let us celebrate the feast” (1 Cor. 5:7b-8). Celebrate what feast? The Feast of Passover (the day of Passover), the first of the High Holidays of *Adonai*.