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THE PASSOVER IN EGYPT WAS AT THE START OF THE 14TH OF NISAN

With the Passover now only a few days away, people are again looking at the time when the Passover was kept by Israel before they left Egypt. It is always amazing to me that there are so many people who feel that Israel must have killed the Passover lambs AT THE END OF THE 14TH OF NISAN.

That is totally false! The biblical evidence is quite clear that Israel did in fact kill the Passover lambs AT THE START OF THE 14TH OF NISAN!

I have been told on more than one occasion that there are even many ministers in God's Church who are convinced that O.T. Israel kept the Passover at the end of the 14th of Nisan. While they acknowledge that the New Testament instructs us to observe the Passover at the start of the 14th, they nevertheless insist that in Old Testament times Israel was instructed by God to kill the Passover at the end of the 14th of Nisan.

This article will present the evidence that O.T. Israel did in fact keep the Passover at the start of the 14th of Nisan. But first a caution.

BEWARE OF ACCEPTING JEWISH TRADITIONS AS BIBLICAL FACTS

When it comes to choosing between believing the Bible or believing their traditions (i.e. "the traditions of the fathers" as they have been preserved in the Talmud), then the Jewish religion today will always go with the traditions, even when those traditions contradict biblical instructions and biblical revelation. In this way they are no different from the Catholic Church, which places the teachings of the "church fathers" ahead of what the Bible actually says. My statement here is in agreement with published statements in "The History of the Talmud" by Michael J. Rodkinson. Any claims or verbal assertions that the Jews do in fact believe the Old Testament ahead of their traditions does not negate the correctness of what I have stated here. IT IS A FACT ... they don't really believe the Bible whenever the Bible contradicts their traditions.

To justify their traditions, the Jews will invent "new meanings" and "new ways of interpreting" biblical Hebrew words. What I will do in this article is show you what the Bible says. I will use the Bible itself to explain Hebrew words where the Jews have tried to twist the meanings of those words for the sake of supporting their traditions.

The question then boils down to this:

Do we believe the Bible, and how THE BIBLE itself explains those Hebrew words? Or do we believe Jewish "experts" who clearly have a vested interest in the outcome, and who have come up with "NEW MEANINGS" for Hebrew words, and where THEIR TRADITIONS ABSOLUTELY DEPEND ON THESE "NEW MEANINGS"?

One example is the Jewish claim that "shabbath" can also mean "WEEK". That claim is absurd, when judged by everything that is written in the Old Testament. The word "shabbath" literally means "DAY OF CESSATION", and it is absurd to attach the meaning of "a period of 7 days" to the word meaning "a day of cessation". But the reason why the Jews today insist that "shabbath" can also mean "week" is that this is the only way for them to justify their TRADITION of keeping Pentecost on Sivan 6th.

Another example affects the Passover. It is the Jewish claim that "THE EVENING" can start at 3:00 p.m., or even at noon. And connected to this is the Jewish claim that "THE MORNING" can start while it is still dark, or even any time after midnight. In this instance the Jews have simply invented new ways of defining "evening" and "morning", in order to be able to hold fast to their traditions. But these definitions contradict what the Bible clearly tells us.

So here is the evidence:

THE BIBLICAL FACTS

1) The Bible instructs that the Passover was to be killed "in the evening" (Exodus 12:6). The word here translated as "in" is the Hebrew word "beyn", which is always used as a preposition, and which means "BETWEEN". This is acknowledged in the KJV by the marginal comment which reads "BETWEEN THE TWO EVENINGS".

"The evening" is a period of time that starts with sunset and ends with the onset of total darkness. "The evening" comes in time after "the day" and before "the night". When there is a reference to "TWO" evenings, it means that the extremes at both ends of this period of time are each referred to as "one evening". Thus immediately after sunset would be "the first evening" and "the time just prior to total darkness" would be "the second evening". The expression "BETWEEN the two evenings" is intended to convey A PERIOD OF TIME, bounded by two endpoints.

THIS FACT IS ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE 1917 JEWISH PUBLICATION SOCIETY TRANSLATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT!

The 1917 JPS translation of Exodus 12:6 reads:

"... and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it AT DUSK!"

So here we have a very clear Jewish admission that Exodus 12:6 instructs the Passover to be killed "AT DUSK" ... i.e. after sunset!

A few years ago WCG tried to twist the truth about the Passover. They realized that Exodus 12:6 very clearly refers to "AFTER SUNSET"! So the only way they saw of teaching that the Passover took place at the end of Nisan 14th was to claim that "the day starts with darkness and not with sunset". Many of you will recall that teaching. In that way they claimed that the Passover was (supposedly) killed at the end of the 14th, just before the 15th started. In so doing WCG was only following the method the Jews have always used to justify changing biblical instructions ... simply change the definitions of some of the key words involved. WCG tried to change the definition of "a day".

But the Bible makes quite clear that the day starts and ends with sunset. This makes "dusk" the very first part of a new day. Therefore the Jewish translation itself clearly proves that THE BIBLE instructs us in Exodus 12:6 that the Passover was to be killed at dusk, at the start of the 14th.

2) Exodus 12:3 tells us that the Passover lamb (representing Jesus Christ) was to be set aside on the 10th day of the month. That may possibly represent the day when Satan tempted Adam and Eve to sin, the Tuesday after that first Sabbath in Genesis 2:2-3. The 10th day of the 1st month is exactly 6 months away from the Day of Atonement, which pictures both the initial binding of Satan when Jesus Christ returns, as well as the permanent binding of Satan a little over 1000 years later.

For a detailed discussion of the expression "the foundation of the world" check out my 12-page article entitled "What Does 'The Foundation of the World' Really Mean?", and also the lengthy article entitled "The Progressive Development Of God's Plan Of Salvation And How the Last Great Day Came To Be

A Part Of It”.

Basically the expression “the foundation of the world” refers to the establishment of human society after the flood. Now without knowing the exact year B.C. of Adam’s creation, it is clear that in round numbers Jesus Christ came and died for us ABOUT 4000 YEARS AFTER ADAM’S CREATION.

So consider the following:

Exodus 12:6 instructs that the Passover was to be killed at dusk on the 14th day. This was at the beginning of the 14th. So from the time the lamb was selected until it was to be killed was exactly 4 days ... the 10th, 11th, 12th, and 13th days. Then, EXACTLY AT THE START of the 14th the lamb was killed. This pictures that Jesus Christ died for us exactly 4000 years after the creation of Adam and Eve. He died at the start of the 5th 1000-year period.

Now IF the Passover lamb was supposedly slain at the end of the 14th day, this would picture that Jesus Christ would only die for us AT THE END OF THE 5TH 1000-YEAR PERIOD. Do you follow?

From the time it was appointed for the lamb to be sacrificed it would then be the 10th day, 11th day, 12th day, 13th day, and the WHOLE 14th day ... making it close to 5 full days. But Christ died for us about 4000 years after Adam’s creation, and NOT about 5000 years after Adam’s creation.

So the biblical information about when the lamb for the Passover was to be “set aside” also negates an end-of-the-14th Passover.

3) The name “Passover” has nothing to do with the lamb! This name comes from what GOD was going to do. As God explained to Moses in Exodus 12:13:

“... and when I see the blood, I WILL PASS OVER YOU ...”!

So the Passover is named directly for something that God was going to do. It is downright foolish to claim that God would call the 14th “the Passover” when God all along only intended to “PASS OVER” the Israelites on the 15th! If God REALLY was only going to “pass over” the Israelites on the 15th, THEN God should have called the 15th “the Passover”, as do the Jews today.

But in the Bible God repeatedly refers to the 14th as “the Passover”. And God does not name one day after an event that He Himself was going to do on a different day.

4) After Israel had killed the Passover, God instructed them in Exodus 12:22:

“... AND NONE OF YOU SHALL GO OUT AT THE DOOR OF HIS HOUSE UNTIL THE MORNING”.

This plain instruction is twisted by those who teach an O.T. end-of-14th Passover, because the Bible ALSO makes clear that Israel left Egypt BY NIGHT (see Deuteronomy 16:1). So in order to still have Israel leave Egypt “by night”, they then reason, INCORRECTLY SO (!), that the expression “until the morning” can refer to any time after midnight or perhaps the hour or two before dawn.

This line of reasoning implies that God does not know what He means ... in one place He refers to a specific time as “BY NIGHT”, while somewhere else He supposedly refers to the exact same time as “THE MORNING”. So what is it to be ... night or morning?

The truth is actually quite simple.

The Hebrew word in Exodus 12:22 translated as “the morning” is “boqer”. Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament defines this word as: “morning, daybreak, dawn, so called from the breaking forth of light”.

That definition is correct, because it is EXACTLY the same as how THE BIBLE ITSELF defines this word “boqer”. That definition is found in 2 Samuel 23:4. This section of Scripture records “the last words of David” (2 Samuel 23:1). In speaking about God, David said in verse 4:

“And He shall be AS THE LIGHT OF THE MORNING (boqer), WHEN THE SUN RISES, EVEN A MORNING (boqer) WITHOUT CLOUDS ...”. (2 Samuel 23:4)

Here we have a very clear BIBLICAL definition of “boqer” as referring to “WHEN THE SUN RISES”! What could be plainer? “Boqer” simply does NOT refer to any time BEFORE sunrise! How the Jews may have decided to redefine the word “boqer” in order to fit in with their traditions has nothing to do with the biblical facts. The Bible makes clear that “boqer” starts with sunrise. So there was no way the Israelites could have left their houses before sunrise without flagrantly disobeying Exodus 12:22. That means that then they could only leave Egypt “by night” THE FOLLOWING NIGHT.

5) Exodus 12:29 tells us that:

“... at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt ...”

There was not a house in all of Egypt (except for the Israelites) where there was not AT LEAST one person dead (Exodus 12:30). Pharaoh and all his people didn’t all get up in 5 minutes flat! It took some time, perhaps an hour or two (?) before everyone nationwide grasped the magnitude of this calamity. So Pharaoh “called for Moses and Aaron by night” (Exodus 12:31). No tarred highways ... no cars ... no electric street-lights ... no telephones ... just a full moon.

Pharaoh’s servants would not have gotten to Moses in 5 minutes flat. How long would they have taken to cover the perhaps 10 or more miles to where Moses was staying with the Israelites? Again, this would have taken them well in excess of an hour ... perhaps even two or more hours?

It doesn’t make a difference whether Moses then went to see Pharaoh and received Pharaoh’s message from Pharaoh himself, or whether Moses simply received Pharaoh’s message from the messengers who came to him. Either way four or five hours would have passed from the time the firstborn were killed at midnight to the time Pharaoh’s messengers reached Moses.

And Moses didn’t just blow the whistle (or “sound a trumpet”?) and 5 minutes later two million people started walking out of Egypt. And furthermore the people were CERTAINLY not permitted by God to go out of the doors of their houses before sunrise (as per Exodus 12:22).

EVEN IF the people of Israel had been allowed by God to leave their houses before sunrise, it STILL would have taken those two million people several hours to all be on the move.

Have you ever been at a football game with 100 000 spectators ... or been at St. Peter’s Square in Rome with over 100 000 people listening to the Pope for some special occasion? Do you know how long it takes 100 000 people to start moving? Have you ever watched the start of a huge marathon, with perhaps 20,000 runners? Do you know how long it takes the last of those 20,000 runners to cross THE STARTING LINE?

When Israel left Egypt there were 100 times as many people as at such a marathon race, or 20 times as many people as at a huge sporting event. Think of a city of two million people today ... even with all our

modern means of transport ... how long would it take to get those two million people to start moving? How long would it take if two million refugees were trying to leave the Congo or Ethiopia or Burundi or some other war zone? How long does it take two million commuters to make their way into Los Angeles or into New York every morning, even with cars and trains and busses? We have some squatter-camps with around 100 000 people here in some areas of South Africa ... and those squatter-camps are huge! What if 20 of those squatter-camps were placed next to one another ... how huge would that area be ... and it would not even include large flocks of domestic animals, as was the case with Israel (see Exodus 12:38).

The point is: it was a REAL situation and the reality of that situation required several hours before those two million people would get going. They had large flocks of sheep and goats and large herds of cattle. This was not some 5 minute move we might see in some Hollywood movie. This took a lot of time.

And there simply isn't enough time to fit everything between midnight and sunrise!

6) The Bible VERY CLEARLY gives a chronological rundown of events from Exodus 12:28 ("And the children of Israel went away, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses") down to Exodus 12:37 ("And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth"). People who teach an end-of-14th Passover in Egypt are forced to claim that the information in these 10 verses is not chronological ... because a straight chronological account contradicts Jewish traditions and also the teachings of such people.

So such people are forced to claim that, while the account may APPEAR to be chronological (the most logical thing for the reader to expect), it actually (supposedly) jumps backwards and forwards in time.

Thus:

Exodus 12:35-36 shows that AFTER THE FIRSTBORN HAD BEEN KILLED the Israelites "spoiled the Egyptians", taking their gold and silver and expensive clothing. But end-of-14th teachers have to claim that this "spoiling" took place BEFORE the Passover was even killed.

Now the Egyptians were not any more altruistically inclined than your own neighbours today. They no more wanted to part with their wealth than do your neighbours willingly part with their gold and bank balances and expensive belongings today.

It was THE DEATH of one or more persons in every single house that motivated the Egyptians to simply give the Israelites whatever they wanted to have. Never before in their lives had the Egyptians done anything like this ... giving away everything that was precious to them.

Without the deaths of the firstborn the Egyptians would simply not have handed over all of their wealth to these unarmed Israelites. The previous 9 plagues had all come and gone ... and there was no indication that any of those 9 plagues would be repeated. And Pharaoh was not the only person in the land of Egypt whose "heart was hard". It took the deaths of the firstborn to make the Egyptians willing to give away all of their wealth without a fight.

So "the spoiling of the Egyptians" could only have taken place after the firstborn had been killed ... which is EXACTLY the way Exodus 12 presents this account.

7) A start-of-14th Passover also does not require any convoluted explanations as to WHY Jesus Christ kept the Passover at the start of the 14th day. The "seder" of the Jews has NOTHING to do with God's instructions in the Bible ... nothing at all! They do "something" on the wrong day, and the ritual they happen to carry out is not based on biblical instructions; it is based on their "traditions". Jesus Christ

very plainly called what He observed “THE PASSOVER”! In Luke 22:15 Jesus Christ said:

“With desire I have desired to eat THIS PASSOVER with you before I suffer.” (Luke 22:15)

To say that Jesus Christ was calling something “the Passover” when the Passover was really a day later, really amounts to calling Jesus Christ a liar. What Jesus Christ observed with His disciples was A REAL PASSOVER! What customs the Jews happened to be observing at that time has nothing to do with this ... Jesus Christ kept the Passover at the correct time!

[Comment: While the Jews may have killed the lambs late on the 14th, THE MEAL THEY THEN ATE was a full day later than THE MEAL Jesus Christ had eaten with His disciples.]

Nowhere does God say that Jesus Christ would have to DIE at the very moment when some Pharisees decided it was time to kill the lambs, way before dusk, towards the end of the 14th day, in clear violation to God’s plain instructions.

It was planned ahead by God that Jesus Christ would do TWO things on the Passover day ... He would OBSERVE the Passover Himself, and later on that same day He would also DIE for mankind’s sins. Clearly He could only do ONE of those two things at the specific time when the lambs were to be killed in the Old Testament. So God chose to institute the Passover at the time when Christ would be able to also observe it Himself ... and still die later on that same day. It is perhaps ironic that the Pharisees (because at that time the Sadducees still kept the Passover at the start of the 14th) had shifted their observance to the end of the 14th, the time when Christ would actually die. But they had not made this shift based on God’s instructions ... they had made it in rebellion to God’s instructions ... and Christ gave His life for those who have rebelled against God.

8) An end-of-14th Passover really separates the Passover into TWO DIFFERENT DAYS! They claim that the lambs were killed on the 14th day (late that day); but the lambs are then not eaten until the 15th day. Now the killing of the animals and then eating those animals is treated in the Bible as ONE EVENT! But late-14th Passover teachers spread that ONE event over TWO days ... the 14th and the 15th.

That is not the way God works with the instructions He has given us for specific days of the year. It would mean that the instructions God gave for the 14th (Exodus 12:6-7 = kill the animal and do something with the blood; Exodus 12:8-11 = eat it a certain way with certain added items) would be spread over TWO days.

Exodus 12:6 very plainly refers to the 14th day! Exodus 12:8 refers to “THAT NIGHT”. This refers back to the 14th day mentioned two verses earlier; it is NOT a reference to the 15th day which is only introduced in verse 14 (six verses later). And from verse 14 onwards it is the 15th day and the Feast of Unleavened Bread that is the subject of discussion. But before the 14th verse the discussion is about “the Passover” ... God clearly speaks about “PASSING OVER” the Israelites (e.g. Exodus 12:13).

It should be clear that the Bible simply does not make any provisions for a “late-14th Passover” that happens to “spill over” into the 15th day. In Egypt God instructed Israel to observe the Passover at dusk, at the start of the 14th day of the first month.

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