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THE MEANING OF 'BETWEEN THE TWO EVENINGS'

THE SCRIPTURE CONCERNED

And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it IN THE EVENING. (Exodus 12:6 AV)

THE HEBREW WORD WITH THE CHANGED MEANING

The Hebrew words translated as "in the evening" in this verse are "beyn haabayim", and they really mean "BETWEEN THE TWO EVENINGS".

This instruction obviously does not mean "between one evening and the evening 24 hours later". The "two evenings" in God's instructions here must be in reasonably close proximity to one another, because God was clearly delineating a specific time of day. Also, God spoke these words long before THE JEWS ever had any traditions regarding what constitutes an "evening". And therefore "evening" cannot possibly mean something that is in the middle of the day. The middle of the day is not something that GOD would ever call "evening"!

"The evening" is a specific period of time in the 24-hour day. It is THE PERIOD OF TIME that starts with sunset and which ends with total darkness having set in. It is the period we generally call "DUSK" or "TWILIGHT".

Now the way to precisely define this period of time is to point to the start and to the conclusion of this period of time. And that is PRECISELY what the Hebrew expression "between the two evenings" does. It means that THE START of the period of evening (i.e. sunset) is meant to be "THE FIRST EVENING", and THE END of the period of evening (i.e. the onset of total darkness) is meant to be "THE SECOND EVENING". And together they define very precisely the whole period we speak of as "evening".

Now here is the contradiction: The Jews KNOW that the expression "beyn haabayim" pinpoints the period of "dusk", but that knowledge does not prevent them from asserting A DIFFERENT MEANING for this expression. That type of hypocrisy is far more prevalent in how Jewish religious authorities have defined specific Hebrew words than most people in God's Church would realize. It is naive to trust a people in things that would challenge their own cherished traditions.

So first notice how the Jewish Translation (JPS) has translated this verse CORRECTLY:

and ye shall keep it unto the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it AT DUSK. (Exodus 12:6 JPS)

This is a translation made by Jews for Jewish readers, and they translated "beyn haabayim" correctly as "AT DUSK"! A PERFECTLY CORRECT TRANSLATION!

"Dusk" is the period "between the two evenings". Many of the more recent translations have understood the Hebrew expression used here correctly. The NAS, NIV, NKJV and NRSV all render this as "twilight". "The Message Bible", produced by Eugene Peterson in 2002, translates this as "dusk" like the JPS. The JPS translation of "between the two evenings" is AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT that dusk is bounded by "the two evenings".

With God days start and end at sunset. This is also well-known. Now "dusk" is NEVER before sunset.

Dusk is ALWAYS AFTER SUNSET! It follows that dusk can ONLY refer to a period of time at the very start of a day. Therefore this instruction to kill the Passover "at dusk" could only be at the very start of the 14th day. The word "dusk" does not allow for any other possibility.

HOWEVER ...

Jewish traditions dictate that they observe their "Passover" only at the start of the 15th day, one day too late. They don't actually believe in doing anything at all on the 14th day, not even at the end of the 14th. And so they must have a way to reconcile their unbiblical tradition with this instruction in Exodus 12:6.

And the answer is as simple as it is ridiculous. They simply CHANGE THE DEFINITION OF "EVENING"! That's really cool! And everybody is expected to just buy this new definition.

As usual with this sort of thing, the authors of the new definitions for "evening" are not really agreed amongst themselves. All of them have the goal of justifying their "LATE 14th Passover", even though none of them today actually keep any "late 14th Passover"; they only keep a "15th day Passover". And so some claim that the first evening starts at noon. Others, wanting to appear more reasonable, claim that the first evening starts only in the middle of the afternoon, around 3:00 p.m. And some will claim the second evening was at sunset, while others claim the second evening was at nightfall. Others will claim that both evenings consisted of a period of time each, with the first evening being a period before sunset and the second evening being a period after sunset.

The only thing they are fully agreed on is that the two evenings CERTAINLY could not be the period between sunset and nightfall! They CAN agree on what it supposedly does not mean, even though they CANNOT agree on what it supposedly does mean. And that in spite of the Jewish Translation correctly rendering this passage as "AT DUSK"! Hm ...?

When Jesus Christ, in the course of one discussion (Matthew 23), referred SEVEN TIMES to the Pharisees as "hypocrites", was He perhaps trying to tell us something? Was He perhaps being "anti-Semitic" with this attack on the feigned integrity of the Pharisees? Or was He pointing out to us that we should EXPECT HYPOCRISY when we are dealing with the traditions of the Pharisees? Or was He just venting His frustrations with these formulators of Jewish traditions, without any particular significance being attached to His use of the word "hypocrites". Or does this same word still apply to Jewish religious traditions today? Are there answers to these questions?

It can be demonstrated over and over and over again that the Jewish religious leaders who contributed to the production and to the interpretation of the Talmud, from the zugot to the tannaim to the amoraim to the savoraim to the geonim to the rashei ha-yeshivah (i.e. heads of the academies) did not hesitate to assert meanings for specific Scriptures that are NOT EVEN REMOTELY CORRECT! The totally whimsical applications and interpretations of vast numbers of Scriptures is frequently supported by nothing more than a new way of defining a biblical word or a biblical expression.

Anyone who is looking for the clearest and most succinct summary of the whole Talmud should simply read Matthew chapter 23, the words of Jesus Christ.

The truth, as far as the Bible is concerned, is that "evening" NEVER refers to a period of time BEFORE sunset! Evening FOLLOWS SUNSET!

THE MEANING THE JEWS APPLY TO THIS SCRIPTURE

The Jews have interpreted this expression to imply that the Passover was supposedly to be killed LATE on the 14th day, and then only roasted and eaten on the 15th day. It is only their new way of defining

"evening" that makes this interpretation possible.

THE CORRECT MEANING OF THIS SCRIPTURE

This Scripture is a very clear instruction to kill the Passover at the start of the 14th day, between sunset and total darkness. When God used the expression "between the two evenings" He knew EXACTLY which period of the day that meant.

THE CONSEQUENCES SUMMARIZED

This Scripture squarely contradicts the Jewish traditions regarding the Passover. The changed definition for "evening" is the only support they can appeal to for their "15th day Passover". See also the articles on Exodus 34:25 and on Deuteronomy 6:1-6.

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