Student Notes: Will the Real Passover Please Stand Up

The feasts belong to God and all of His people.

Leviticus 23:1-2 NKJV 1 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts.

Verses 5 & 6 speak of the Passover and Unleavened Bread specifically.

Leviticus 23:5-6 NKJV 5 'On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the LORD'S Passover. 6 'And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread.

The modern day Jewish calendar lists Passover as an eight day long Feast while ignoring the Feast of Unleavened Bread as well as the Feast of First Fruits, found in Leviticus 23:11-12.

Passover traditions practiced in the Galilee region and those in Judea and in Jerusalem varied greatly.

There are two basic questions that we are going to concentrate on tonight.

(1) When is the meal identified as the Passover being prepared?
(2) And when do the disciples gather to eat it?

Let’s start with reading the relevant passages in the synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Matthew 26:17-22 NKJV 17 Now on the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" 18 And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples."'" 19 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover. 20 When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. 21 Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." 22 And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?"

Mark 14:12-18 NKJV 12 Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, "Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?" 13 And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. 14 "Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat"
the Passover with My disciples?" 15 "Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us." 16 So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover. 17 In the evening He came with the twelve. 18 Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me."

Luke 22:1-14 NKJV 1 Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover. 2 And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might kill Him, for they feared the people. 3 Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. 4 So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them. 5 And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. 6 So he promised and sought opportunity to betray Him to them in the absence of the multitude. 7 Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. 8 And He sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat." 9 So they said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare?" 10 And He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house which he enters. 11 "Then you shall say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, 'Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'" 12 "Then he will show you a large, furnished upper room; there make ready." 13 So they went and found it just as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover. 14 When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him.

- Passover was done on the “first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.”
- “Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover Lamb had to be sacrificed.

But the Gospel of John seems to have a different timing on these events:

John 18:1-3, 28 NKJV 1 When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered. 2 And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples. 3 Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. (now skipping to verse 28) 28 Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover.

According to scripture, the first day of Unleavened Bread is a High Sabbath.

Leviticus 23:6-7 NKJV 6 'And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. 7 'On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it.

There is both a “High” or special Sabbath as well as the regular weekly Sabbath.

Let’s go back to the first place where the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are first spoken of in Exodus.
Exodus 12:17-18 NKJV

17 'So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance. 18 'In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening.

Leviticus 23:4-7 NKJV

4 'These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. 5 'On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the LORD'S Passover. 6 'And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. 7 'On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it.

Now what does it mean “at evening”?

Evening: #6153 ereb, eh'-reb; dusk:-- day, even(-ing, tide), night. And according to the Brown-Driver-Biggs Hebrew Dictionary, “ereb” is defined as “evening, sunset”. (also see #6150)

If a day begins at evening, then ereb: evening, sunset, dusk etc., can only be at one time during a at the “beginning” of a day!

Matthew and Mark say Yeshua and his disciples observed the Passover on the first day of Unleavened Bread.

First: #4413 protos, pro'-tos. Contracted superlative of #4253; foremost (in time, place, order or importance):--before, beginning, best, chief(-est), first (of all), former.

#4253 pro, pro. A primary preposition; "fore", i.e. in front of, prior (figuratively, superior) to:--above, ago, before, or ever. In the comparative, it retains the same significations.

The better English word would be “before.” They observed the Passover before the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

In Yeshua’s day, the “Passover” was the meal that launched the week long Feast of Unleavened Bread. The traditional observance and the exact timing of the Passover meal varied from community to community and from one Jewish sect to another. Residents of Judea and the Galilee ate the Passover nearly a full day earlier than the Priests in the Temple as well as most permanent residents of Jerusalem.
How is it possible that the timing of the Passover meal was varied when the scripture clearly states that it was at the evening or “ereb” as previously pointed out? Well, maybe the Biblical definition of “ereb” is not so clear after all. In other interpretations (read translations), the term “ereb” is used in a broader sense, as in “between the evenings” or “afternoon”, as in when the sun is going down as found in Exodus 12:6 in the Hebrew Tanach: (The Stone Edition from Artscroll)

Exodus 12:6 It (the lamb) shall be yours for examination until the fourteenth day of the month; the entire congregation of the assembly of Israel shall slaughter it in the afternoon.

This translation reflects a long standing tradition and interpretation of the meaning of the word “ereb”. Here it is translated as “afternoon” which is, as had been for centuries, interpreted in Jewish circles as meaning anytime after the sun starts its downward path to sunset. This is reflected in subsequent translation of the scriptures describing the Day of Atonements, Yom Kippur:

Leviticus 23:26-27, 32 NKJV 26 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 27 “Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD… 32 "It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath."

Here is where this slightly different but all too important definition of the Hebrew word “ereb” comes from. Verse 27 in this passage establishes the timing of Yom Kippur on the 10th day of the 7th month. But later in verse 32 states that it is on the 9th day of the 7th month that is the Sabbath of solemn rest “at evening, from evening to evening”. To resolve this contradiction, the word “ereb” had come to also means “afternoon”. That is, a period of time when the sun is on its downward path and to include sunset to total darkness.

- The residents of the Galilee and Judea partook of the Passover meal at the very beginning of the 14th day of the 1st month at the evening, “ereb”, defined as twilight.
- The priests of the Temple ate their Passover meal at the end of the 14th day of the 1st month “at even” or “ereb” as the sun was on its downward path before actual sunset as the day of the 14th was ending.

I believe that Yeshua and His disciples partook of their Passover meal at the proper time, in the evening of the 14th day of the 1st month at “twilight” the period of sunset to complete darkness at the very beginning of the “day” of Passover, mistranslations notwithstanding.

I think this fact illustrates in a powerful way how Yeshua both partook of the Passover and was also the Passover sacrifice. Our Passover lamb without spot, wrinkle or blemish.