

PASSOVER: Comments related to Abib 14 and 15

Wil Berg, May 2022

As a supplement to my 5/21 and 3/22 papers about Passover and Abib 14 /15, I would like to add the following related observations and comments.

Even though there are no Bible instructions for making Jesus' Abib 14 supper a yearly memorial convocation, churches of God, following tradition, observe it ritualistically on the 14th as the most important event of the year.

To evaluate this practice from a Bible-only perspective, this paper compares the Old Testament Passover instructions with the New Testament related details and parallels.

Conflicting Scriptures

The word "Passover" in Scripture is used in various often confusing ways. For example, Numbers 28:16: "On the fourteenth day of the first month is the Passover of the Lord;" Mark 14:12: "Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover;" and Luke 22:1- "Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover."

A variety of interpretations have been made of such verses. For example, some believe Jesus' Abib 14 last supper is the New Covenant Passover; some believe Passover is the Abib 15 first night of Unleavened Bread; and others believe Passover is all seven days of Unleavened Bread.

How can one correctly sort out and understand such conflicting statements? To me the safest most biblically accurate way is by carefully examining Exodus 12, which is the original foundational source of God's detailed Passover instruction and definition to His people.

Exodus 12

Exodus 12:6 - "Now you shall keep it [the Passover lamb] until the fourteenth day of the same month [Abib]. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight" (=ben ha arbayim=end of the 14th). NKJ throughout. **The lamb was killed toward the end of Abib 14.**

Exodus 12:8 - "Then they shall eat the flesh on that night [Abib 15], roasted in fire [4-5 hours], with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs."
The lamb was eaten during the early (night) part of Abib 15.

Exodus 12:11 - ". . . So you shall eat it [the Abib 15 supper] in haste. It is the Lord's [=YHWH=God the Father's] Passover." **Abib 15 is the Father's Passover.**

Exodus 12:14 - "So this day [context=Abib 15] shall be to you a memorial, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance."

The only day the Father designates as a yearly memorial is the first high holy day (Abib 15) of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

And Moses said to the people: "**Remember this day** [Abib 15] in which you went out of Egypt [a type of sin], out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out of this place" (Exodus 13:3).

Exodus 12:15 - "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread" (Abib 15-21).

Exodus 12:16 - "On the first day [of the Feast of Unleavened Bread] there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them, but that which everyone must eat - that only may be prepared by you."

Exodus 12:18 - "In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening [=end of the 14th/beginning of the 15th], you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the month at evening" (=7 days).
Required eating of unleavened bread begins on Abib 15 (not 14).

Exodus 12:42 - "It [=the first night of Unleavened Bread, Abib 15] is a night of solemn observance to the Lord for bringing them out of the land of Egypt . . . [to be observed] throughout your generations." **The first night of Unleavened Bread (Abib 15) is a night of solemn observance.**

I believe Exodus 12:11 confirms Passover being on Abib 15. But because it is on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, it is understandable

why some believe Passover is also synonymous with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, as some Scriptures suggest.

The word Passover in Scripture is used two ways: 1) – as the Abib 15 commemoration of the Exodus, and the Father’s Lamb sacrifice supper; 2) – as a broad general term that includes everything done during Abib 15-21.

Killing the Passover Lamb

One striking parallel to note is the Exodus 12:6 lamb being killed during the latter part of Abib 14, and the Lamb of God (=Jesus, John 1:29) being killed on the same day and time (Abib 14, 3 PM). **Abib 14 is a work and preparation day for the first high day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, that is never referred to as a special, holy, commanded, or memorial observance.**

Jesus was our Passover Lamb of God (1 Corinthians 5:7), who the Father gave the world to pay the death penalty for human sin (John 3:16; Romans 6:23). Jesus’ reconciling sacrifice is applied to sinners when they repent and obey the Father’s teachings (which Jesus magnified during His ministry - Isaiah 42:21; Matthew 5:17-19; John 12:50).

Jesus desired to eat the Abib 15 Passover with His disciples, but this was impossible as He knew His Father’s plan was for Him to be the sacrificed Lamb during PM Abib 14. This is why His last supper was necessary on the night of Abib 14. It was His last opportunity before He died to explain the symbolic meanings of the Abib 15 Passover bread and wine observance.

Jesus and His disciples knew this Abib 14 supper was not the Exodus 12 Passover meal, as they had all participated in that observance on the correct Abib 15 date with their families for many years.

Jesus eating His Abib 14 supper did not replace and negate His Father’s Abib 15 Passover meal. It did not institute or memorialize Abib 14 as a commanded yearly observance. Thinking Jesus did this in obedience to his Father’s will is based on human assumption, not on Scripture.

Leviticus 23:1 states the Feasts are the Father's (established by Him). Malachi 3:6 states the Father does not change. **There are no Bible references stating the Father ever changed the dates of any of His Feasts or holy days.**

After His last supper Jesus prayed all night, was betrayed by Judas, repeatedly ridiculed, arrogantly interrogated, and then brutally flogged. He was crucified at 9 AM (Mark 15:25), and died around 3PM (Matthew 27:45-46), toward the end of Abib 14.

Jesus died on the preparation day (Wednesday) for the first day of Unleavened Bread (Thursday), which was a high (holy) day (John 19:31), before the weekly Saturday Sabbath.

His death was before the Jews had observed their Abib 15-21 Passover (John 18:28). These references also confirm Jesus was in the grave three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40).

Additions to the Passover Meal (John 6)

Exodus 12:8 and 12:18 explain the Passover lamb was eaten during the beginning evening part of Abib 15 with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. It was the first holy day of Unleavened Bread, which commemorated God leading Israel out of Egypt. This symbolized God's deliverance of His people from sin and its spiritual bondage, by His great power.

But how should the eating of the OT Passover lamb be understood by God's people today? This was explained figuratively by Jesus and the apostle John in the context of Passover. Jesus said, **"These things I have spoken to you in figurative language"** (John 16:25).

"Then Jesus said to them, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:53-54).

The other gospels record Jesus teaching the same symbolic explanations – "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave

it to the disciples and said, "take eat, this [bread] is [figuratively represents] My body.

Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 15:22-24; Luke 22:19-20) – Luke 22:19 adds, "do this in remembrance of Me."

The apostle Paul, building on Matthew 26:26-28, gave meaningful explanation in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [sharing] of the blood of Christ?" The bread which we break, is it not the communion [sharing] of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread."

We understand from this and Ephesians 4:4-5 that we are baptized by one Spirit of God into one spiritual body, and share in the redemptive death of Jesus, which Passover instruction commands us to commemorate. This also highlights the goal of brotherly unity, patterned on the love and oneness of God the Father and His Son (John 17:21).

Additionally, Jesus personally explained the meaning and purpose of His death: - "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life for a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). His death became the substitute payment for the death penalty of sin if people repent.

Drinking the Cup

Matthew 20:22 adds further meaning to eating the bread and drinking the wine. Jesus asked, "Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am [about to be] baptized with?" (which included hateful unjust accusations, beatings and death)?

A follower of Jesus must "count the cost" (Luke 14:27-28), by being willing to righteously endure whatever unjust consequences come our way during a godly commandment-keeping way of life.

The apostle Peter expounded this further: – “For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps (1 Peter 2:20-21).

Eating the Bread

Jesus taught, “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him” (verse 27).

Jesus’ listeners then said, “Our fathers ate the manna in the desert [and died], as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said to them, Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the [spiritually nourishing] bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the bread from heaven” (=His Son), which gives eternal life” (verses 31-32).

Jesus said, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me [for spiritual nourishment] shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst” (verse 35).

“And this is the will of him [the Father] who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day” (verse 40).

The critically important point is that physical food (like manna and plant/animal food) only nourish physical life that dies. Heavenly spiritual food (Holy Spirit and instruction) from God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, provides spiritual sustenance that will result in its eater receiving eternal life, if he continues eating and growing in spiritual character.

Brief Passover Review

New and Old Testament Scriptures both teach the Passover lamb was killed on the afternoon of Abib 14. The animal blood of the lamb was a type that was fulfilled by the blood of Jesus Christ the Lamb of God, who was/is the parallel antitype.

Both Old and New Testaments show the lamb was eaten during the Father's Passover memorial night of Abib 15, hours after the closure of Abib 14. Similarly, figuratively eating the Lamb of God should be remembered and discussed during the first night of Unleavened Bread.

Also, eating unleavened bread for 7 consecutive days should be a physical reminder and motivator to live a pure life and grow spiritually in the image of the Father's character as we walk with Him.

In Opposition to Rome

While there is no Bible instruction for an assembly on the night of Abib 14, the Abib 14 date was instrumental in creating the identifying name and custom of a unique second century AD group of God's people.

The "fourteenters", an Asia Minor ekklesia that included the apostles John and Philip, John's disciple Polycarp, and many others, opposed the early Roman Catholic Church Easter Sunday Passover decrees and practices. They created a custom of voluntarily fasting on Abib 14 until 3PM of that day to honor Christ's death. However, no documentation I have read ever mentions they held a holy convocation on any part of Abib 14 (The Messianic Feast, 2014, T. Alex Tennent, pages 3-21).

Clarifying Confusing Scriptures

1) - Numbers 28:16 – To some, reading "On the fourteenth day of the first month is the Passover of the Lord" - is absolute proof that Passover is on Abib 14.

But this is a broad, general statement that omits the critical Exodus 12:6 detail "at twilight," which shows Abib 14 must be understood as the end of the 14th and not as the entire day. Also, the roasted Passover lamb, eaten on the night of Abib 15, is specifically identified as "the Lord's Passover (Exodus 12:11).

With these details added and explained, Numbers 28:16 does not support an Abib 14 Passover observance.

2) - Deuteronomy 16:1 states, - "Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover of the Lord your God, for in the month of Abib the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt by night."

This "night" is clarified by Exodus 12:31 that tells us that Pharaoh "called for Moses and Aaron by night and said, 'Rise, go out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel," who were commanded by God to stay in their houses until morning (Exodus 12:22).

Numbers 33:3 adds - "They departed from Ramses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the [daytime] sight of the Egyptians" (on Abib 15).

A number of other Passover-related Scriptures are confusing because the clarifying details are not included in them. Again, carefully studying Exodus 12 is the best way to correctly evaluate and understand them.

Godly Response to Differences

In conclusion, I strongly feel we should all follow Paul's example of dealing with differences in God's church in Rome, which had many different beliefs and practices. To avoid division he instructed the people not to judge and condemn one another, but to patiently pursue peace and unity by loving each other despite differences (Romans 8 - see also Matthew 7:1-2).

This is in harmony with Jesus' new command in John 12:34-35: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; **AS I HAVE LOVED YOU, that you also love one another**. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Both Father and Son continue to love us perfectly. Their love is gracious, patient, forgiving, easily entreated, responsive to the humble - and accepting of those who are sincerely and earnestly seeking to obey and serve the Father the best they know how. This is the model and example we should all follow.