

When Should We Keep the Passover?

by Jamie McNab

Do you remember just a few short years ago, when the Church of God was *unified* when we all held to the SAME BELIEFS?

One of the vital truths that we all shared up until recently was the understanding of *the Passover*. We were confident we knew WHEN Passover fell, and understood what it signified.

We were familiar with Mr. Armstrong's teaching in *Pagan Holidays or God's Holy Days — Which?* showing that Passover was on 14th Abib. We knew Passover came on that date once a year, as covered in Mr. Armstrong's booklet, *How Often Should You Partake of the Lord's Supper*.

But times have changed.

Over recent years there has been an onslaught of false teaching, with endless questions and challenges against the Truth we once knew. Almost everything we have learned and once believed is under attack the nature of God, the Sabbath, the Holy Days, the Calendar, the identity of Israel, the name of God, and so on.

One teaching currently the subject of much debate among the Churches of God is *the Passover* and, in particular, *the date* on which we should keep the Passover.

Does Passover fall on 14th Abib? Does it fall on 15th Abib? *Can you prove it?* And does it matter?

I have looked at many of the articles attempting to show that we have been IN ERROR all these years, and trying to show that Judaism is correct in placing Passover on the evening of the 15th Abib (or Nisan).

For those who wish to look into the matter further, I hope the following comments and explanations will assist in showing why we can HOLD FAST with confidence to what God taught us under Mr. Herbert Armstrong.

I will start by discussing those Scriptures which make it plain, to my mind, that Passover falls on 14th Abib. Then I will look in some detail at those Scriptures which some people use to show that Passover could be on 15th Abib. Hopefully, *the truth* will become clear as we continue.

The Meaning of "Evening"

Ex 12:6 says that Israel were to keep the Passover lamb until *the 14th day* of the first month and "kill it in the EVENING" (KJV).

One of the key areas of the Passover dispute is the meaning and use of this term *evening* in the Bible.

Let us examine this word by starting in Genesis, the book of origins. Gen 1:5 tells us, "God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day". (All scriptures are from the *New King James* version, unless otherwise stated).

If we look closely at Gen 1:5 we see that God inspires *four different words* when describing a day. I do not believe God is being vainly repetitive here. Each word has a different meaning in Hebrew, and a different meaning in English. "And God called the light *Day*, and the darkness He called *Night*. And the *evening* and the *morning* were the first day".

Notice in this verse we have: day, night, evening, morning—four *different* terms. There is no reason here to equate "day" with "morning", as though they were identical. Or "evening" with "night", as though those two terms had *the same meaning*.

Mr. Roth brought out in his June 1999 taped message on *How God Keeps Time*, that Moffatt gives the latter part of this verse as "evening *came*, and morning *came*, making one day". That is obviously true and common sense. In any day you will have a morning (around sunrise), and an evening (around dusk)—but the morning and the evening don't constitute *the whole day*—they are simply *stages* we will pass through in a 24 hour period.

My Oxford Wide-Margin KJV has a marginal note against this verse, giving the original Hebrew reading as "And the evening was, and the morning was", one day.

The RSV has: "And there was evening, and there was morning, one day".

If we think about it, we do not go *instantaneously* from the bright light of day to the pitch black of night. The effect of the atmosphere, and our latitude and longitude, mean that for most of us we have a *transition period* between day and night, which can be up to an hour, or even longer. This is how it looks:

i) At around sunset, the light starts to diminish, and we enter a more or less short period known as **evening**—or twilight. (Some Scots refer to it as the "gloaming"; Harry Lauder made this period famous in one of his songs years ago, when he referred to "roaming in the gloaming").

ii) When twilight fades away and full darkness is upon us, we have **night**.

iii) At the end of night, the sun makes its way back towards the eastern horizon, and the sky starts to lighten again—we come to dawn, or twilight, or **morning**.

iv) The sun rises fully, "rules" the **day**, and gives us daylight.

So there are four quite separate components to a full day—starting from sunset (which is how God starts His day), we have: *evening* then *night* then *morning* then *day*.

That fits in empirically with what we observe, and is clearly stated in Gen 1:5 (and other verses I'll come to later).

Where does this lead us? Very simply: if the Passover lamb is to be killed on the 14th Abib IN THE EVENING—and it is according to Ex 12:6—then there is *only one period of time* in the 14th which can be called EVENING—and that is just after sunset, and before night falls.

Biblically, the hours after midday are still daytime. When the Jews say they killed the lamb at 3 o'clock to 5 o'clock "in the afternoon", it was indeed just that—*the afternoon*!

The term "midnight"

In view of the misunderstanding associated with the term *midnight*, I would like to spend a little time discussing it.

The term "midnight" plays a very important part in OUR calendar, today. Our days *begin* at midnight—and this is a *very precise* moment.

It can have significant legal implications. Many insurance policies, for example, expire at *midnight*, and if an insured event happens even one short minute after midnight, it will not be covered (unless the policy is officially renewed).

At midnight, we change from one day *to another*. A baby born at five minutes to midnight has a different birthday from one born at five minutes past midnight.

After midnight, since we have started another day, WE often refer to the time as being, for example, "two o'clock *in the morning*".

The Roman calendar divides the day into 24 hours. The precise moment when the sun transits the overhead meridian—at its zenith—we call *noon*. The precise moment when the sun passes the opposite meridian—albeit out of sight in the Northern hemisphere—we call *midnight*. From these points in time we derive the expressions ante meridiem (a.m.) and post meridiem (p.m.). [Technically, the times relate to the passage of the *mean* sun—the actual sun can run about 15 minutes ahead of, or behind, the mean sun].

We are so familiar with these details we rather take them for granted. However, when we come to deal with the Old Testament Hebrew scriptures—which long antedate the Roman calendar—we need to carefully avoid reading our "modern" ideas into the various texts.

The word *midnight* appears seven times in the Old Testament. For example:

Ex 11:4, "Thus says the LORD: About *midnight* I will go out into the midst of Egypt".

Ex 12:29, "And it came to pass *at midnight* that the LORD struck all the firstborn..."

This does *not refer* to the moment between 11:59 p.m. on one day, and 00:01 a.m. on the next! Neither God nor Moses was using a Roman calendar!

The Hebrew simply means that these events happened in the **middle of the night**.

Ex 11:4 uses the Hebrew *chatsoth layelah*—two separate words meaning "middle" and "night".

Ex 12:29 uses *chatsi layelah*—a similar expression meaning middle, or midst, or halfway, and night.

And note that the expression is middle **of the night**—the hours *before* are the early part of *the night*, the hours after are the late hours of *the night*—but the hours after are very definitely *still the NIGHT*—NOT "the morning".

When the Israelites heard that the Eternal would go through the land of Egypt "about midnight" and slay the firstborn, they did not look at their Rolex watches and battery-powered kitchen clocks and say "Oh, it's only two hours and ten minutes left till midnight..." Midnight was not some *astronomically precise moment* to them—it was simply some rather loosely defined period occurring in *the middle of the night*.

It will clear up so much if we can remember that in the Hebrew reckoning we do not go from night to morning at "12:00 o'clock midnight". The Hebrew day starts at sunset, and morning arrives just around sunrise—not six or more hours before sunrise, at midnight.

I will deal with the topic of "morning" a little later, and show how, rightly understood, the use of the term "morning" in Ex 12:22 proves the correct Passover date.

Does God Have a Limited Vocabulary?

God does not need to leave us in confusion through any lack of vocabulary on His part.

If He wants us to do something in the early *afternoon*, or in the late *afternoon*, He is well able to tell us so. Consider:

"And the LORD appeared unto [Abraham] in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in *the heat of the day*", Gen 18:1. The Hebrew here is *chom ha-yom*, and refers to early afternoon, when the sun is high in the sky, and the sun's rays are still very powerful.

So, if God wants the Passover lamb killed at that time of day, He need only inspire the expression *chom ha-yom*, and we will all understand.

Or God can use another expression, "And he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart: and the damsel's father said, Comfort thine heart, I pray thee. And they tarried until *afternoon*, and they did eat both of them", Judges 19:8. The term "afternoon" here comes from the Hebrew *netoth ha-yom*. Netoth means to stretch out or *decline* (Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon).

Therefore, if God wants the Passover lamb killed in late afternoon, as the day *is declining*, He need only use the expression *netoth ha-yom*.

For even later in the day, we have *ruach ha-yom*, as in "And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in *the cool of the day*: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden", Gen 3:8.

But God did not choose any of these expressions for the slaying of the Passover lamb. Rather He chose evening—Hebrew *ereb*—which we saw earlier comes at the very beginning of the day, AFTER SUNSET.

Strong's gives as the meaning of ereb (no. 6153): "*dusk*, from 6150, *to grow dusky* at sundown:- be darkened, (toward) evening".

Evening is *not* afternoon. Teachers of Judaism would have us believe that evening begins around noon (!)"as the sun starts to descend in the sky". They would have us believe that the Passover lamb could be slain from 1:00 p.m. onwards, and that this was "the evening". (In practice, they generally slew the lambs around 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.)

This makes no sense in terms of the meaning of the words, or their Biblical usage, or even common sense. If I said I was going to pop round to see you for a chat "tomorrow evening", you would be quite nonplussed if I turned up at your door at three o'clock in the afternoon! However, if I turned up at, say 7:30 p.m., you would feel that indeed I had arrived in the evening—and we would probably greet each other with a "good evening, how are you?" At 3:00 p.m. we

would be saying "good afternoon"—because that's all it would be—afternoon, not evening.

So, God has a wide and appropriate vocabulary at His disposal. If He meant afternoon, He would have said so—using, for example, *chom ha-yom*, or *netoth ha-yom*, or *ruach ha-yom*, or some similar expression dealing with daytime. If He meant evening—dusk—He would say so—and *He did*.

"At evening"

One scripture which Bill Dankenbring and others seek to use to "show" a late 14th killing of the Passover lamb is Ex 12:18. This verse states, "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*". Since we know that there are only *seven days* of unleavened bread, we can see that these verses are referring to the *very end* of the fourteenth day, up to the *very end* of the twenty-first day, i.e. days 15 to 21, inclusive.

Mr. Dankenbring writes in *The Mystery of Ben Ha Arbayim - When Was the Passover Killed*, "Letting the Bible interpret the Bible, then, 'on the fourteenth day AT EVEN' plainly means at the END of the fourteenth", and "...logically, then, the same should be true in speaking of the Passover (Exodus 12:6)". He states elsewhere in his article, "[so]...we find proof positive that the term *ba ereb* or "evening" refers to the time of late afternoon, before sunset".

We are assured that the expression "at evening" means *late in the afternoon*, before sunset. And since the Passover is to be slain in the "evening", it must mean late in the afternoon. (Although remember that the Jews and Mr. Dankenbring believe it is acceptable to kill the lamb as early as 3 o'clock in the afternoon!)

Further proof (allegedly) is given in Lev 23:32, where we are told regarding the Day of Atonement, "on the ninth day of the month *at evening*, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your Sabbath". Once again Mr. Dankenbring claims that evening as used here "would be the afternoon, up until sunset". Hence, the Jews would be correct to kill the Passover in late afternoon "up until sunset".

However, if you look closely here you will see some "sleight of hand" is being practised. Does "at evening"—Hebrew *ba ereb*—really mean "late afternoon up to sunset"?

Let's examine the passage in Lev 23 about Atonement. *When*—EXACTLY—is the Day of Atonement? We all know the answer—the *tenth day* of the seventh month. *When* EXACTLY does the tenth day begin in God's calendar? Answer: at the precise moment of SUNSET. So when does Atonement run FROM and TO? It can only—and MUST ONLY—run from the precise moment of sunset on the ninth of Tishri to the moment of sunset on the tenth of Tishri.

It *most certainly* does not run from "late afternoon" on the ninth to "late afternoon" of the tenth!! This year in Worcester, England, sunset on the ninth of Tishri was about 7:15 p.m. If I go along with Bill Dankenbring's explanation of "evening", would I have been entitled to start Atonement at, say, 3 o'clock or 4 o'clock in "late afternoon before sunset"? I think not! Would each person decide individually which part of "late afternoon" they would start Atonement from? Nonsense!

The clear meaning of Lev 23:32—the only meaning that fits all the facts—is "on the ninth day of the month *at sunset*, from *sunset* to *sunset*, you shall celebrate your Sabbath".

Indeed Brown Driver Briggs gives as the meaning of *ereb*: " evening, *originally sunset*, and hence perhaps at time of sunset".

As Mr. Armstrong says in his booklet *Pagan Holidays or God's Holy Days*, "Notice, too, in Lev 23:32, the expression 'from even unto even shall ye celebrate your Sabbath.' Every Sabbath-keeper quotes this passage to show that the Sabbath begins at SUNSET".

If we reconsider the other passage, in Ex 12:18, Mr. Dankenbring would have us believe that unleavened bread is to be eaten only from "late afternoon" on the 14th Abib, to "late afternoon" on the 21st Abib. On this basis, would I be entitled, therefore, to start eating leavened products—perhaps some thick toast and marmalade—at, say, five o'clock in the "afternoon" of the 21st—and with sunset not due till around 7 p.m.?!

Well, I think we can see that this makes no sense. The days of unleavened bread are the 15th to 21st of Abib, inclusive (Lev 23:6), and start at *sunset* at the end of the 14th till *sunset* on the 21st of Abib.

It is necessary to carefully put all the scriptures together when looking at "evening" or "sunset", because there is an obvious and well

understood ambiguity—in common with our English usage today of the term "midnight". If I said I would meet you at "midnight next Tuesday"—when would you expect to see me? "Midnight on Tuesday" could be *either* midnight as Tuesday *begins*, or midnight as Tuesday *ends*. Both moments are "midnight on Tuesday", even though 24 hours apart. To make matters absolutely clear, and beyond dispute, I would need to qualify our meeting time as, say, "midnight *at the end* of Tuesday".

So, likewise, God makes it clear that Atonement starts at the sunset (ereb, evening) that comes at THE END of the 9th Tishri—and the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins at the sunset that comes at THE END of 14th Abib. Simple!

So we can safely conclude that none of these scriptures that Mr. Dankenbring or others use shows us that "evening" means *late afternoon*.

Mr. Dankenbring's sleight of hand also includes a misleading cross-reference of verses. After trying to show that "at even" in Ex 12:18 means "late afternoon, up to sunset", Mr. Dankenbring states that this principle must logically apply to when the Passover is killed. In this regard, he refers to Ex 12:6 in brackets (see full quote given earlier).

But hold on a moment. Ex 12:6 does NOT say the Passover lamb is to be killed "at even"! The Hebrew is NOT *ba ereb* as used in Ex 12:18 or Lev 23:32! The Hebrew here is *ben ha arbayim*—which has an entirely different significance. God inspired a different expression to be used when referring to the killing of the Passover lamb.

Ben Ha Arbayim

When giving what are *very detailed* instructions for the keeping of Passover, God stated in Ex 12:6 " Now you shall keep [the lamb] until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it *at twilight* (KJV gives "in the evening").

The Hebrew here is *ben ha arbayim*.

The KJV margin says, "between the two evenings".

This expression is translated as "*twilight*" in the NKJV, NIV, NASB, NRSV and New Jerusalem versions. The Revised English Bible and

Moffatt have "between dusk and dark". *Even the Jewish Publication Society Holy Scriptures translation gives "AT DUSK"*.

None of these translations imply any period IN THE AFTERNOON. They all refer to that period of time *following sunset* when the light fades, and just before darkness falls.

The Jewish Soncino Commentary defines *ben ha arbayim* as the "period of approximately one-and-a-third hours between sunset and the disappearance of the light which subsequently penetrates through the clouds".

God has been very specific here. When it comes to killing the Passover lamb, don't start before sunset and don't wait till after dark. Get it done between the two evenings—between sunset and nightfall.

The Jewish Rabbinical leaders would have us believe that the two evenings here are "noon" and "sunset". As shown earlier, however, there is no way that the baking hot hours of early to mid-afternoon can be construed from the scriptures as meaning "evening". Even common sense should tell us that if you have to wear a powerful sun-block cream at two o'clock in the afternoon in the Sinai wilderness, you could hardly expect to say you were trying to protect yourself from the "evening sun"!!!

"Evening" begins at sunset, as the new day starts. Evening ends as the darkness of NIGHT takes over. Then, as mentioned earlier, we come to morning at around sunrise, followed by *the day* proper.

In fact, even referring to the term "afternoon" can be rather misleading. "Noon" to us means 12 o'clock midday—a very precise moment in time; and afternoon means any time after 12 o'clock—after NOON.

But as with midnight, the Hebrews did not use a precise *moment* to divide the daytime (e.g. into forenoon and afternoon). In fact, the word "afternoon" only appears *once* in the Bible (in Judges 19:8 where the Hebrew is *netoth ha-yom*, and simply means "declining of the day", rather than "after 12 o'clock").

"Until morning"

Having killed the Passover lambs on the 14th Abib "between the two evenings", the Israelites were told "And none of you shall go out of the

door of his house *until morning*", Ex 12:22. Also, if there were any leftovers from the Passover meal, "what remains of it until *morning* you shall burn with fire", vs. 10.

In the morning—after the LORD had passed over them, and had slain the firstborn of the Egyptians—the Israelites were able to leave their homes, burn the Passover-meal remains, finish packing together all their belongings, further spoil the Egyptians, congregate at Rameses toward the end of the day, and finally leave Egypt. Deut 16:1 tells us "...in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt BY NIGHT".

Which *night* would this be? Obviously the night of the *15th Abib*. This is confirmed in Num 33:3, "They departed from Rameses in the first month, on *the fifteenth day* of the first month...".

This all seems straightforward, and harmonises perfectly. Yet the proponents of a 15th Passover want to dispute matters. Apparently all is not as it seems, they would tell us. The important point that we have missed, they say, is that morning doesn't mean *morning*. In fact, morning really means *night*!

Their problem is this: they teach that the lamb is slain in late afternoon of the fourteenth Abib, that the Passover is then eaten in the evening hours of the 15th, and that God went through Egypt "at midnight" of the fifteenth. Since Deut 16:1 and Num 33:3 show that Israel left Egypt on the *night of the 15th*, this means that Israel must have left Rameses within just a *very few hours* of the slaying of the firstborn, and while *still night*. The quandary is: Scripture says the Israelites were not even to leave *their front doors* till morning, let alone *leave Egypt*!!

How is this dilemma overcome? Quite simple; just redefine *morning* to mean *night*! Or, more specifically, redefine morning to be the "wee small hours" after midnight—thus allowing the Israelites to leave their homes anytime after perhaps *one or two a.m.* Within an hour or two of the killing of the firstborn, therefore, the Israelites were already heading out and away from Rameses—*whilst still night*—and obviously some hours before daybreak.

This, however, is just not credible.

As explained earlier, going from *before* midnight to *after* midnight has no impact within the Hebrew calendar. Midnight does not refer to a

specific moment of the night, but means just the "middle of the night". The hours after midnight are STILL NIGHT—no different to the hours before midnight.

It is in the *Roman calendar* that there a change at midnight. In our calendar, we go from one day to the next at midnight, and we call the first few hours "the wee small hours of *the morning*". That is what we do in our Western culture. It doesn't apply in the Pentateuch!

When is "morning" (Hebrew: *boqer*)? As I showed at the beginning of this study, the day comprises four separate parts: evening, then night, then morning (*boqer*), then day (Gen 1:5). Morning is the transitional period when the darkness of night fades away, the light gradually appears, and the sun finally rises to bring in the daytime.

The Israelites were not to leave their homes, therefore, until shortly before daybreak at the earliest. They were to stay indoors *all night*—and night lasts until *morning* —until twilight.

So, how do the 15th Abib proponents attempt to demonstrate that morning can occur at night?

One writer among the Churches of God states, "There are a number of passages which show that *boqer* can be applied to the early hours of the morning, between midnight and sunrise and while it was still dark". He then quotes a number of passages that show nothing of the sort! And note the reference to *midnight*—which we have already seen is misleading and irrelevant as God counts days. But let's look at a couple of these passages that apparently show that morning can mean night.

The first passage quoted in the article is Ruth 3:14, "So she (Ruth) lay at his feet until morning, and she arose before one could recognise another. Then he (Boaz) said, Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor".

Does this prove that the term "morning" can mean two or three o'clock in the night? Does it conclusively prove that it was still *the pitch black of night* which was being referred to as "morning"? Hardly. All we read here is that—for the sake of propriety—early in the morning, and before the light got so strong that Ruth could be *easily recognised*—she got up and made her way home.

Boaz was clearly a very noble and thoughtful individual. He would not be likely to send the woman he loved home from the threshing floor out in the fields in the middle of the night, when it was still dark! There were no street lights in those days! It is obvious that the morning light was strengthening enough for her to make her way home. Note also verse 15, "And he said, Bring the shawl that is on you and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six ephahs of barley, and laid it on her. Then she went into the city". It would be pretty tricky measuring out a specific quantity of barley into a lady's shawl in an unlit barn in the pitch black of night, wouldn't it?

No—I think the only *natural* understanding of this passage is that *morning* is the *twilight period* just before daybreak—when there is enough light to move around, yet before full daylight, and before it would be too easy to recognise someone from a distance. This fits in entirely with everything we have said up to now.

The next scripture quoted is Ex 14:24, "Now it came to pass, in the *morning watch*, that the LORD looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled the army of the Egyptians". Here, we are assured, is proof positive. The article continues, "The last, or early morning watch, was from 2 a.m. to sunrise. The morning watch was called the morning watch because it took place in the early hours of the morning".

Yes, the "morning watch" took place from what we would call about 3:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. But does this scripture say that 3 a.m. or 4 a.m. IS *morning*? Does it explicitly state that the dark of night IS *morning*? Or—in the context of everything we have already read—does it not make more sense that the "morning watch" is the watch that brings you UP TO MORNING, and *ends* with the *arrival of morning*?! The watch that leads up to and terminates AT MORNING!

Moffatt gives "And in the watch *before the dawn* the Eternal looked out from the column of fire ..."

The NIV translates as, "During the last watch *of the night* the LORD looked down ...".

The next example the article gives us to prove that morning means night is, "As soon as morning dawned, the men were sent away, they and their donkeys", Gen 44:3.

Hmmm. Seems to me that this could only be at early *light*? From a practical point of view, these men are not likely to be leaving on a journey in the middle of the night, are they? But it makes sense if it is the *twilight period* before full sunrise.

The article I have been quoting from gives two more scriptures (even less useful to its cause than the ones I have already quoted!), then rather astonishingly concludes "boqer is a general term which could be applied to any time after midnight through to the light of day".

Well—bluntly—NO!!

The passages used in the article surely show, *if anything*, that morning is the *end of night*, and the period around *sunrise* and leading to full daylight!

So—back to Ex 12:22. The Israelites were not to leave their homes "until morning (boqer)". So they must have stayed indoors ALL NIGHT until morning light was breaking.

And, since they left Egypt *at night*—on the 15th Abib—then the Passover slaying of the firstborn must have been around midnight on *the previous night*—the 14th Abib.

Indeed this is confirmed if we read all of Num 33:3. "They departed from Rameses 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 sight of all the Egyptians".

[Now remember, the Passover these people had observed wasn't just the ceremonial killing of a lamb! It was the fact that the LORD had PASSED OVER them, whilst slaying hundreds of thousands of the firstborn of Egypt. Passover represented their deliverance *from death!*].

So, if the 15th was the DAY AFTER the Passover, then *the Passover* must be THE 14TH of the month!

Remember, the Bible starts the days *at sunset*. The 15th of Abib started at sunset—and the 15th of Abib is stated to be the DAY AFTER Passover. So THE Passover—the slaying of the firstborn of Egypt, and the deliverance of Israel—must have taken place in the day commencing *at sunset* on the 14th Abib!

Some misunderstand Num 33:3 in the KJV which reads, "... *on the morrow* after the Passover the children of Israel went out ...". They misread this to mean "on *the morning* after" the Passover, taking "the morning" as being just a few hours after midnight, and still part of THE SAME DAY.

However, the Hebrew in Num 33:3 is not *boqer*—morning. It is *mochorath*—an entirely different word, meaning *the next day*, or *the day after*.

Num 33:3 in some other translations reads:

"... the DAY AFTER the Passover ...", NIV.

"...on the DAY AFTER the Passover ...", Amplified

"...on the DAY AFTER the Passover ...", RSV

Despite these clear translations, a number of people insist that the KJV reference in Num 33:3 to "*on the morrow* after the Passover" means simply "the *morning* after the night before". And, as we saw earlier, "morning" to these people actually means around 2 a.m. or 3 a.m. *in the night*, rather than around daybreak.

One Bible Study, which is currently circulating on the subject of Passover being on the 15th, purports to show how Scripture uses the Hebrew word *mochorath* in the sense of the "*following morning* after the preceding night". They give three illustrations of this alleged usage. Let's have a look at them.

The first example is Gen 19:33-35. The study paper states, "Lot and his incest. Here the incest with his 1st daughter was the preceding night period, and the 1st daughter describes it to the 2nd daughter the next daylight period, "mohorot" = morrow, and makes plans for the following night. The context here demands that "mohorot" = morrow means the next daylight period, following the night time before".

[*Mohorot* and *mochorath* are different ways of spelling the same Hebrew word, in English]

So, according to these authors, Lot's incest took place in the evening, or night, and the two daughters talked about it the next morning. True? Yes. So *mochorath* means the "morning after"? NO!!

These authors are failing to read the *entire context*. If we start reading, not at verse 33, but at *verse 31*, we can pick up all the details of what took place, *and when*.

"Now the firstborn SAID TO THE YOUNGER, 'Our father is old, and there is no man on the earth to come into us as is the custom of all the earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we preserve the lineage of our father'. (WHEN did this conversation take place? Surely sometime during *the daylight hours*. They would need some time to talk it over, and make their plans for the evening ahead. I suspect it may well have taken quite a bit of time for the girls to work up *the courage* to take such a drastic step!). Continuing, "So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. It happened on the NEXT DAY (KJV: it came to pass *on the morrow*...) that the firstborn SAID TO THE YOUNGER, 'Indeed I lay with my father last night ...'" Gen 19:31-34.

So what do we see here? On one day, the girls discussed the plan together. On the NEXT DAY—*on the morrow*—*mochorath*—they discussed taking the plan one stage further, and having the second daughter also sleep with her father. But these conversations were on *different calendar days*. One may have been, for example, on a Tuesday morning—and the next on the Wednesday morning. In other words, *mochorath* clearly means *the day after*—the next calendar day. There is no evidence in these Scriptures that "on the morrow" means just a few hours after the previous evening.

The next example given in the study paper is Judges 6:38. The article states, "Gideon and fleece. Gideon asks for a miracle, a sign, to fully know God's will. He placed a fleece of wool on the ground overnight, then examined it in the following morning, here called *mohorot* = *morrow*. For the fleece to remain to the next calendar day before inspection would be illogical. *Mohorot* = *morrow* clearly means here the next daylight period (the next morning) following the events of the previous night".

The implication again is that the fleece is put out at night, and in the morning—*mochorath*—it was inspected. So obviously, it seems, *mochorath* means the very next morning.

But once again, we need to read the whole context. Let's read verses 36 to 38. "Then Gideon said to God, 'If You will save Israel by my hand

as You have said — look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said'. And it was so. When he rose early next morning (on the morrow, KJV) and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowl of water".

WHEN did Gideon *discuss* this "test" with God? Presumably some time *during the day*. Then later in the day, or at night, he put out the fleece. The next morning—the DAY AFTER he had discussed the test with God—Gideon discovered that God had responded miraculously, and the fleece was soaked in dew. This was the NEXT calendar day after presenting God with his "experiment".

So here again, we see that *mochorath* has the meaning of A DAY AFTER, not just the next morning "after the night before". Don't let anyone pull the wool over your eyes in this regard. (Or even pull the fleece over your eyes!!!).

The third example which is given in the study paper is 1 Sam 5:3, 4. The article tells us, "In Ashdod the priests of Dagon rose on "mohorot" = morrow, to find Dagon fallen on his face over night. "Mohorot" here again demands a contextual meaning of "the morning after" the preceding night, when Dagon fell on his face before the captured ark".

Once again, let us make sure we read the whole account *in context*, starting in verse 2. "When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon. [*When would this have been done? Almost certainly during daylight hours*]. And when the people of Ashdod arose early in the morning (early on the morrow, KJV), there was Dagon fallen on its face to the earth before the ark of the LORD". This was clearly the NEXT DAY after the ark had been set up in front of Dagon — a *different calendar day*. Continuing, "So they took Dagon and set it in its place again (this was obviously within a short time of discovering the fallen Dagon, and hence still very early in the day). And when they arose early *the next morning*, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the ground before the ark of the LORD..." So here again, a *full calendar day* passes from setting up Dagon once more, to finding it fallen over again.

Despite what is said in the study paper, therefore, we can see that the meaning of *mochorath* is THE DAY AFTER—the next *full day*. So when it says in Num 33:3 that Israel departed from Rameses on the 15th

Abib, on *the morrow after* the Passover, it can only mean ON THE DAY *AFTER* the Passover.

Mr. Roth covered this point at some length in his taped messages on *How God Keeps Time*.

So, if the Bible means what it says—and it does—then the LORD must have passed over the Israelites on *the day before* the 15th—namely, the 14th Abib! And if He passed over in the middle of the night on the 14th Abib, the Passover lamb must have been killed and eaten in the *early part of the 14th*—just after the 14th began!

KEEPING the Passover

Num 28:16-17, "On the *fourteenth day* of the first month is *the Passover* of the LORD. And on the *fifteenth day* of this month is *the Feast*; unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days".

Note that it is clearly stated that one event occurs *on the fourteenth*, and the other *on the fifteenth*. The Passover is ON the fourteenth—and as we'll see in a moment the Passover is not just "the slaying of the lamb". Some would say that the slaying of the lamb, late on the 14th (technically still *afternoon*!) IS the Passover. Then early on the 15th, they would class the eating of the lamb as "keeping" the Feast. They would have us believe that on the first Passover, the death angel then passed over the Israelites a few hours later, at around midnight on the 15th Abib.

But we need to ask, EXACTLY WHAT WAS IT that gave the *name* PASSOVER to the events of that special night? Was it *the killing of a lamb*? No—the Israelites would have killed many lambs throughout the course of a year! Was it *the eating of a lamb*? No—the Israelites would have eaten many lambs in a year! Was it the sprinkling of blood on their door posts? No—though that might have given us the name of *the doorpost-blood-sprinkling ceremony*! Really, it is all very obvious, isn't it? The *name* PASSOVER comes from the fact that the Eternal PASSED OVER the Israelites when the firstborn of the Egyptians *were being killed*! It is the actual PASS OVER that gives us the name *Passover*, and we've just read in Num 28:16 that the Passover is *on the fourteenth of the month*. Why? Because that is the day when the PASS OVER took place—the 14th!

Again we read in Lev 23:5-6, "ON the *fourteenth day* of the first month *at twilight* IS the LORD'S Passover. 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". Two separate observances—on two separate days!

Consider now Num 9:2-5, "Let the children of Israel KEEP the Passover at its appointed time. ON *the fourteenth day* of this month, at twilight, you shall KEEP IT at its appointed time. According to *ALL ITS RITES AND CEREMONIES* you shall KEEP IT. So Moses told the children of Israel that they should KEEP the Passover. And they KEPT the Passover ON *the fourteenth day* of the first month, at twilight, in the wilderness of Sinai; according to ALL that the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did".

This is very clear. You do not KEEP the Passover just by "killing a lamb"! The Passover was KEPT by:

- choosing a young male lamb, without blemish (Ex 12:5)
- keeping the lamb till the 14th Abib (Ex 12:6)
- killing it on the 14th at twilight (Ex 12:6)
- roasting its body (Ex 12:8)
- not breaking any bones (Ex 12:46)
- eating the lamb, with unleavened bread and herbs (Ex 12:8)
- ensuring only circumcised to eat (Ex 12:44, 48)
- burning any that remained, in the morning (Ex 12:10)

ALL of this is required to KEEP THE PASSOVER. Note Num 9:3 quoted earlier, "According to *all its rites and ceremonies* you shall KEEP it"! And it was KEPT on the 14th day! Simply "killing a lamb" is NOT KEEPING the Passover!

We know that it was possible for people to keep the Passover in *the second month*, if they were ceremonially defiled in Abib, or were away on a long journey. Moses continues in Num 9:11-12, "ON the *fourteenth day* of the *second month*, at twilight, they may *keep it*. They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They shall leave none of it until morning, nor break one of its bones. According to *ALL THE ORDINANCES OF THE PASSOVER* they shall KEEP it".

So—when Scripture says we are to KEEP the Passover ON or IN the fourteenth day of the month, it means keeping ALL of it in the 14th—not just *beginning* to keep it then, but with *most* of it coming in the 15th!! The Passover is not in the 15th it is IN the 14th!

And note in Num 9:11-12, these people were to KEEP the Passover—with all its ordinances—all its rites and ceremonies—ON the 14th. Also note that there is no reference here to anything taking place *on the fifteenth* of the month. They didn't keep any "Feast" on the 15th. There was no "second" period of Unleavened Bread, with a Holy Day on the 15th of the second month! The only observance which is mentioned for the second month is KEEPING THE PASSOVER—with ALL its ordinances—ON the *fourteenth day*!

Summary So Far

Let's just recap what we have seen so far, before we look at some of the so-called "difficult" scriptures that people use to "support" a 15th Abib Passover.

1. Passover is *the evening* of 14th Abib.
2. A full day starts *at sunset* and comprises: evening, night, morning, and day.
3. Evening is *after sunset* at THE BEGINNING of the new day.
4. Midnight has no relevance in God's system of time keeping. The hours *after* midnight (which simply means "the middle of the night") are still *night*, not morning.
5. If God wanted to have the Passover killed in late *afternoon*, He could have chosen various expressions, such as *chom ha-yom*, *netoth ha-yom* or *ruach ha-yom*.
6. The term "at evening"—*ba ereb*—does not mean "late afternoon", but means *sunset*.
7. The Passover lamb was killed *ben ha-arbayim*—which means *twilight*, between sunset and night.
8. The Israelites left Egypt *at night*, but were not allowed to leave their homes until *the morning* after the death angel had PASSED OVER.
9. Morning means around *daybreak*, NOT the middle of the night.
10. The Israelites left Egypt on the night of the 15th Abib—which was a *complete day* AFTER the death angel passed over.

11. The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are on different days, and have different meanings. They represent *different phases* of God's plan of salvation.

12. The Passover consists of ordinances, rites and ceremonies, not just the killing of a lamb. ALL must be observed in order to KEEP the Passover.

2,000 Year-old Dispute

I have tried thus far to show WHY—from the plain instructions in Scripture—we accept Passover on 14th Abib. It all seems to fit together very naturally.

Yet some have disputed the correct observance of the Passover for at least 2,000 years!

The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia states, under *Paschal Lamb*, "The Pharisees and Sadducees had a DISPUTE as to the time when the slaughtering should take place; the former held it should be in the last three hours before sunset, the latter, BETWEEN SUNSET AND DARK" (Volume 8).

Since all agreed that Passover was on the 14th of the month, that means that the Pharisees believed the lamb should be killed around 3:00 p.m. *in the afternoon*, whereas the Sadducees opted for the *twilight period* AT THE BEGINNING of the 14th.

So this dispute is NOT something *new*! Those who claim to bring us NEW TRUTH—who approach us with, "Don't you know Passover is actually on the 15th Abib?"—are just rehashing *old Jewish arguments*.

And the Jews couldn't agree among themselves even 2,000 years ago, so there is no point in our particularly looking to them for any help, now!!

The Scriptures are plain enough, as we've hopefully covered up till now.

Difficult Scriptures?

However, some point to certain Scriptures which, they say, *throw doubt* upon what we've said so far. Usually the argument follows the form of "yes, but it *doesn't mean* that..."

For example:

- we say the Bible shows that Passover is ON the 14th Abib, and meet the response "Yes, but it *doesn't mean* that, it means the 15th"

- we say that evening means *after sunset*, as darkness falls, to be met with "Yes, but evening *doesn't mean* evening, it really means afternoon"

- we say that the Israelites couldn't leave their houses till morning, to be met with "Yes, but morning *doesn't mean* morning, it actually means night"

- we say KEEPING the Passover on the 14th means killing *AND EATING* the meal, to be met with "Yes, but keeping *doesn't mean* keeping in that sense, it really only means *killing* the lamb"

- in the New Testament, when Jesus said "I WILL KEEP the Passover", we are told "Yes, but Passover *doesn't mean* Passover, it means a final going away dinner".

Well — it all seems rather suspect to me. I get uneasy when too many scriptures apparently *don't mean* what they say!

Let's look at a number of verses which are used to support several of these points.

Evening

One of the main arguments you will come across is that EVENING *doesn't mean* the period after sunset and before dark. Those who teach a Passover on the 15th Abib need to show that the lamb was killed *in late afternoon* on the 14th—perhaps around 3:00 p.m. Since the Bible shows that the lamb was killed *in the evening*, they need to show that evening *means* afternoon. As we'll see later, they actually have to show that "evening" begins at around noon (!), and stretches beyond sunset—though, in practice, they have in mind the period 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. for the sacrifice of the lamb.

So—what scriptures show that evening really means afternoon? (Bearing in mind that Gen 1:5, 8, 13 etc. show that the days *begin with evening*).

Collecting Water

For our first example, let's review what Mr. Dankenbring says in his article, *The Mystery of Ben ha Arbayim*:

"In Gen 24, Abraham sends his faithful servant to find a wife for Isaac back in his own original country... when the servant travels back to the land of Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor, he stops. We read: 'And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the EVENING, even the time that the women go out to draw water' (Gen 24:11)".

What does this tell us about EVENING? Mr. Dankenbring continues, *"This would refer to late afternoon, not after sunset when it is getting dark outside. Women would not wait until it is growing dark, or till dusk or twilight, before getting their water from the well".*

Well (no pun intended!)—would the women of Mesopotamia, in the period 2,000 BC—wait till after sunset to go out to collect the water? I don't know. I wasn't around then! I do not know *what* the customs of that time were. Perhaps the ladies *did* wait "until it is growing dark"—until the sun was down, and it was much cooler—before going to draw water from the well. I don't suppose Mr. Dankenbring knows either.

I would certainly consider it rather presumptuous to conclude—without knowing the culture and mores of the day—that the women couldn't visit the wells during the evening, after sunset.

However, other translations of the Bible show us that Mr. Dankenbring is probably on the wrong track entirely. Rather than the women walking down to the well *during* the evening, it seems they actually came out shortly *before evening*—shortly BEFORE *sunset*, and as evening *was approaching*. Consider:

"Towards evening, the time when the women came out ..." Gen 24:11 (New English Bible)

"Near evening, at the time when the women go out to draw water ..." (New American Bible)

"It was *toward evening* when the women came out ..." (Berkeley).

Certainly no PROOF here that evening MUST include *late afternoon*! To use this scripture to "prove" that evening also means afternoon you need to (a) ignore the translations quoted above, (b) assume that you know precisely how—and when—the women of that day carried out their domestic responsibilities, and (c) ignore the various other scriptures and references we looked at earlier showing the evening falling after sunset!

Dark Shadows

Let's look another scripture which is used to show that the afternoon can also be described (allegedly) as evening.

After quoting this next scripture, Mr. Dankenbring says in his article, "*here we find proof positive that the term ba ereb or "evening" refers to the time of late afternoon, before sunset*".

The scripture in question is Jeremiah 6:4, "Prepare war against her; arise, and let us go up at noon. Woe to us, for the day goes away, for the shadows of the evening are lengthening". Mr. Dankenbring explains, "*... after sunset, there are no shadows cast at all — for it is the sun which casts shadows*".

Well, it's certainly true that the sun casts shadows. However, so does *the full moon*, even in the middle of the night. I've read somewhere that the planet Venus can cast shadows if the conditions are right!

But what are shadows? Does it *only mean*: "dark areas cast by the *light of the sun* being blocked by some solid object"?

My *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* includes among its definitions " ... *darkness ... gloom*". It explains that the word shadow comes from the Old English *sceadu*, which comes in turn from the Greek, *skotos*, which simply means DARKNESS. My *Collins Concise Dictionary* gives one meaning of shadow as "an area of *relative darkness*".

As evening approaches, the light starts to fade away, and the gloom descends. Shadows cast by the sun stretch out and lengthen as the arrival of evening becomes imminent. In this sense, the lengthening shadows show that evening—dusk—the gloom of twilight—is

immediately at hand. The lengthening shadows lead up to—and *introduce evening*—which as we saw earlier begins *at sunset*.

The same Hebrew word for shadows, used in Jer 6:4 (*tsalal*), is also used in Song of Solomon 2:17 and 4:6. It reads: "Until the day breaks and the *shadows flee away ...*"

The Good News Bible translates this as, "... until the morning breezes blow and the *darkness disappears*". The Living Bible gives "Before the dawn comes and the shadows flee away..."

Both of these verses in the Song of Solomon show that the term *shadows* can be used to refer to the darkness, or gloom, of night. As day breaks, the light of the sun drives away the darkness—drives away the shadows, or gloom, of the night.

So Jer 6:4, rather than proving beyond doubt that evening must be afternoon, appears to be using the lengthening shadows simply to show that the gloom and darkness of evening and night was minutes away—that the best time for a military attack was past. Those who would say that evening begins *at noon*, and that the Passover lamb could be killed at 3:00 p.m., would be hard pressed to explain why Jeremiah would use the approach of evening as a sign of a military problem. Soldiers can fight quite well throughout the afternoon hours! It is only as sunset looms—and the twilight period *and darkness* approaches—that fighting becomes difficult.

Ferrar Fenton's translation of Jer 6:4 states, "Woe to us! — For the day turns! — for the *dark shadows* extend! "

So this scripture is hardly clear evidence—"proof positive"—that the evening can be construed as the period prior to sunset (and which the Jews actually take as commencing *at noon*, as we'll see later!).

David and Bathsheba.

Another rather obscure scripture used to show that evening doesn't mean evening, but means afternoon, is the account of David's adultery with Bathsheba, recorded in 2 Sam 11:2, "Then it happened one *evening* that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold".

From this rather brief account, all sorts of inferences seem to be drawn—for example, that David wouldn't be walking on the roof of his house when it was dusk, so it must have been late afternoon—or, that David wouldn't be actually sleeping in his bed on the roof in the *evening*, so this must relate to his simply having a siesta on a couch *in the afternoon*—or, well if it was *twilight* he wouldn't have been able to see whether the woman was beautiful or not, so it *must have been* daylight.

Some of these views seem, however, like *wishful thinking* on the part of those who want to find evidence for the afternoon being also classed as evening. David may well have slept in a bed on the roof of his palace. If the weather was warm, it was probably a very pleasant and refreshing place to sleep (there is an example of Saul sleeping overnight on a roof in 1 Sam 9:25-26, "Samuel spoke with Saul on *the top of the house*. They arose early; and it was about the dawning of the day that Samuel called to Saul *on the top of the house*, saying, *Get up*, that I may send you on your way ...").

Then again, why would Bathsheba be bathing—in public view—in *broad daylight*, at say 3 o'clock in the afternoon? It is surely much more understandable that she thought it "safe" to bathe in *the deepening dusk*, between sunset and the dark of night—when she might have believed nobody would see her?

How could David see well enough *in the dusk* to know that she was beautiful? Well, there may be more to this story than meets the eye. We usually think that this was the *first time* that David had set his eyes on Bathsheba, and was immediately carried away with her beauty. This is quite unlikely.

Bathsheba was almost certainly *not* a stranger to David. She was the wife of Uriah, the Hittite. Her father was Eliam. *Both* Uriah *and* Eliam were among the thirty-seven men who were David's hand-picked personal bodyguard (2 Sam 23:34, 39). Even more than this, Bathsheba was the granddaughter of Ahithophel, who was David's most famous counsellor and prime-minister. Ahithophel's wisdom and importance can be gleaned from 2 Sam 16:23, "And the counsel of Ahithophel ... was as if one had inquired at the oracle of God".

We can perhaps only speculate now, but it would seem very likely that Bathsheba would have attended a number of court banquets and festivals in the king's palace, since she was so closely related to David's right-hand men and prime minister, and lived only a short

distance away. Perhaps David had already allowed his eyes and mind "to wander" over this attractive young woman—and catching a glimpse of her bathing in the twilight was enough to incite him to action.

Whatever the exact circumstances, we can certainly find no proof that *the evening* here was anything other than the dusky period we would associate with the arrival of sunset.

These seem to be three of the more popular scriptures used to show that evening can be applied to the *afternoon period*, but hopefully we can see that they are far from convincing, and easily support the more natural understanding of evening being *after* sunset?

The real meaning of "evening"

Compare the above rather indirect and obscure references to the many, many scriptures where an evening starting around sunset in *the only* reasonable view.

The laws of uncleanness all show that those who are unclean become clean again AT EVENING:

"...whoever touches the carcass of them shall be unclean *until evening*", Lev 11:24

"...whoever carries any such carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean *until evening*", Lev 11:28.

See also Lev 11:31,32,39,40,46, Lev 15:5,6,7,8,10,11, etc..

Is anyone seriously suggesting that the unclean people referred to above would become ceremonially clean at 2:00 p.m. in the afternoon—or at 3:30 p.m.—or at 4:55 p.m.?? I think not! Surely we all understand that these people were unclean until the *end of the day*—and only when the next *new day* commenced—at EVENING—at sunset—were they able to take their place back among the congregation.

We looked earlier at Lev 23:32—the Day of Atonement—which runs "from evening to evening", and saw that we do not start eating our sandwiches at 3:00 p.m. *in the afternoon* of the Day of Atonement, but that we wait till the *day ends*—at sunset—at EVENING—before we break our fasts.

Consider also Zech 14:7. This prophecy of Christ's return notes that, "It shall be one day which is known to the LORD—neither day nor night. But at *evening* time it shall happen that it will be LIGHT". This is a prophecy of *dramatic events* taking place in the Day of the Lord. Incredibly, the scripture tells us, it will be *bright* at evening time—something unheard of! Yet the Rabbis would tell us that evening can mean any time after noon, and by killing the Passover at 3:00 p.m. they are killing it "at evening". If we follow their argument, Zech 14:7 becomes meaningless — it is hardly dramatic prophecy to state that "at 3 o'clock in the afternoon it shall be light"! That's not exactly a major demonstration of God's power!

"Between the two evenings"

We know the Passover lamb was to be killed "at evening" (Ex 12:6, KJV). The Hebrew expression in this verse, however, is not simply *ba ereb*—at evening—but is *ben ha arbayim*—BETWEEN THE EVENINGS.

This is quite specific. We looked at this expression in some detail earlier. Most modern Bible translations use the term TWILIGHT to translate *ben ha arbayim*—meaning the period between sunset and full darkness (see NKJV, NIV, NASB, NRSV. Moffatt gives "between dusk and dark"). The Rabbis would tell us, however, that the "first evening" is at noon when the sun begins to go down, and the "second evening" is at sunset—so between the two evenings, they tell us, is between noon and sunset (even though their own Jewish Publication Society Holy Scriptures translates the expression as *at dusk!*).

Does the Bible use this expression elsewhere than Ex 12:6? And does this other usage show whether the expression means *late afternoon*—or early evening, after sunset?

Yes, say some people, the expression can be shown to mean *late afternoon*—BEFORE sunset—by looking at the time of the "evening sacrifice". Let's look at the relevant scripture.

In Num 28:3-4 we read, "This is the offering made by fire which you shall offer to the LORD: two male lambs in their first year without blemish, day by day, as a regular burnt offering. The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, the other lamb you shall offer in the evening (*ben ha arbayim*—between the two evenings)".

One writer states, "Both these offerings were to be offered DAILY, "day by day", "IN A DAY" — that is, WITHIN THE SAME DAY! The first one

is the morning sacrifice, and the second one is the EVENING sacrifice. In order for the evening sacrifice to be offered the SAME DAY as the morning sacrifice, it had to be offered BEFORE SUNSET! Otherwise it would have been the NEXT day! What could be clearer? Thus, here we find incontrovertible, inexorable, yet simple proof that *between the two evenings* has to refer to the period of time BEFORE SUNSET, not after sundown ..."

Well, no, I don't think we find any such "proof".

A sacrifice *after sunset*, followed by one the next morning, are both in the SAME DAY, as God keeps time (sunset to sunset)! They are not on one day, and the *next day*. The inference being drawn from Num 28:3-4 is that—since it mentions the morning offering *first*, and the evening offering *second*—they must both come before that *particular day* is over, at sunset.

That may appear to be a "reasonable" inference, but falls short of constituting actual PROOF. Especially when the following scriptures which refer to *ben ha arbayim* are considered.

Ex 30:1, 7-8, "You shall make an altar to burn incense on; you shall make it of acacia wood ... and Aaron shall burn on it sweet incense every morning; when he tends the lamps, he shall burn incense on it. And when Aaron LIGHTS THE LAMPS at twilight (*ben ha arbayim*), he shall burn incense on it, a perpetual incense ..."

If it is considered *logical* to interpret Num 28:3-4 to mean that morning and evening (*ben ha arbayim*) must both come *before sunset*, then it becomes completely ILLOGICAL to expect Aaron to *light* the Tabernacle lamps in MID-AFTERNOON, *before sunset* (remember that the Rabbis killed the Passover lamb at *around 3 p.m.*, which they say is *ben ha arbayim*). Surely LOGIC—and *common sense*—tell us that the Tabernacle lamps are most likely to be lit AT DUSK—at around sunset—at *twilight*. So the most likely meaning of *ben ha arbayim*, according to Ex 30:7-8, is the period of dusk AFTER SUNSET.

[Don't be confused by passages such as 1 Kings 18, where Elijah met the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel. The various translators seem to have added all sorts of "helpful" words which are not in the original Hebrew, and which create an entirely inaccurate impression. In the KJV the passage reads, "And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that

regarded", 1 Ki 18:29 (and see verse 36 also). Some have claimed, "Well—look! Here it is, just a little time after midday, and we come to the time of the evening sacrifice. Thousands of people are up on the hills of Mount Carmel. It is obviously still *daylight*—around say 3 o'clock in the afternoon—and it is called the time of the *evening* sacrifice. So afternoon IS evening!"

NOT SO. Notice that both the word *time*, and the word *evening*, are in italics in the King James Version. That means that those words are not to be found in the original Hebrew. On most occasions when the translators add a few words, it helps give a clearer meaning. Here the translators manage only to confuse. This passage makes no reference WHATSOEVER to any *evening sacrifice* in the Hebrew. (And a *bullock*, moreover, is not permitted as an evening sacrifice). Without the "benefit" of the translators' additional words the passage reads, "And it happened, as noon passed by, that they prophesied madly until the offering up of the offering; and there was no sound, and there was no one answering, and there was no one paying attention", see *A Literal Translation of the Bible*, by Jay P Green, Senior. The verse makes perfect sense without *any additions*. All of the activity on Mount Carmel led up to the time of *Elijah's sacrifice*—that is the offering that is being discussed, not some other sacrifice taking place elsewhere and which has no relevance to the story. There is no evidence here at all that evening sacrifices were offered in the afternoon!]

Returning to the expression *ben ha arbayim*, this also appears in Exodus 16, in the account of the miraculous arrival of the quail and the manna. This passage should help to make things CLEAR.

Moses is giving a Sabbath-day message to the Israelites (see *Lesson 35* of the Bible Correspondence Course, on the subject of The Day of Pentecost). The Israelites have been murmuring and complaining about their food. Moses says, "At EVENING (*ereb*) you shall know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt. And *in the morning* you shall see the glory of the LORD ... this shall be seen when the LORD gives you meat to eat in the EVENING (*ereb*), and *in the morning* bread to the full ..." Ex 16:6, 8. Moses is saying that once the Sabbath is over—at EVENING—or sunset—God is going to provide them with flesh to eat, and later in that day—first thing *in the morning*—a special bread to eat.

The story continues in Ex 16:11-14, "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, I have heard the murmuring of the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying, At TWILIGHT (*ben ha arbayim*) you shall eat meat, and

in the morning you shall be filled with bread. And you shall know that I am the LORD your God. So it was that quails came up at EVENING and covered the camp, and in the morning the dew lay all around the camp. And when the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was [manna]".

What can we deduce from this passage of scripture? The quails were to be eaten *ben ha arbayim*. But they didn't arrive in the camp till *evening* (*ereb*). So *ben ha arbayim* must come AFTER evening—you can't eat the quail till they arrive!

And when, *precisely*, would they arrive? Consider:

a) the quail—like most birds—are most likely to settle down and roost when it starts to get dark *around sunset*

b) as we have seen many times, the biblical reference to *evening* means the beginning of a new day, *following sunset*

c) Moses' message in Ex 16 was delivered on a Sabbath, and it is unlikely that God would be inclined to deliver the quail till *after the Sabbath was over, at sunset* (after all it was not an urgent matter of life and death starvation—the Israelites had been eating up to this date)

d) since this whole passage was about the SABBATH TEST (Ex 16:4)—and Israel's *obedience* to the Sabbath commandment—God would not be likely to deliver the quail *during the Sabbath*, and so compromise His own TEST!

So, it is clear that the quails arrived around sunset, and were eaten shortly afterwards *ben ha arbayim*. Ben ha arbayim therefore *follows* sunset—and hence when scripture tells us in Ex 12:6 to kill the Passover lamb *ben ha arbayim*, it means JUST AFTER SUNSET — at twilight or dusk—NOT in mid to late afternoon!

Going Down of the Sun

One other so-called "key scripture" that is used to show that *evening* can mean *afternoon* is Deut 16:6, "But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place His name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the Passover at EVEN, *at the going down of the sun*, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt" (KJV).

We are told that the sun starts *to go down* from noon, and that the phrase "going down of the sun" relates to the entire period from *noon to sunset*. Deut 16:6, we are told, shows us that this is also called "even".

However, when most of us talk about the sun *going down* we mean the time around actual *sunset*—that is the time the sun actually *goes DOWN*—out of sight. We don't mean 2 or 3 o'clock in the afternoon. The NKJV translates verse 6 as "at twilight, at the going down of the sun". The Amplified and the Moffatt say "... in the evening, *at sunset*".

Consider Amos 8:9, "And it shall come to pass in that day, says the Lord GOD, that I will make the SUN GO DOWN at noon, and I will *darken* the earth in broad daylight". The reference here is to the dramatic effect of the sun *SETTING* at noon—and producing darkness over the earth. The *going down* of the sun is equated to sunset—darkness. Any other interpretation would mean we have the rather meaningless statement that "at noon the sun starts to go down in the sky". That happens *every* day! Is that supposed to be a dramatic end-time prophecy from the Lord GOD?!!

See also Lev 22:6-7, "... the person who has touched any such thing shall be unclean until *evening*, and shall not eat the holy offerings unless he washes his body with water. And when the SUN GOES DOWN he shall be clean ..." As we saw earlier, ceremonial uncleanness expires at *the end* of the day—at evening—which we see here equates to the going down of the sun.

Or look at 2 Sam 3:35, "And when all the people came to persuade David to eat food while it was *still day*, David took an oath, saying, God do so to me, and more also, if I taste bread or anything till the SUN GOES DOWN". David makes it clear here that it is still daytime, up until the sun goes down. At that point, daytime is over—finished. And common sense alone should tell us it doesn't *finish* at noon, or 3 p.m. in the afternoon.

In Mal 1:11 we read, "For from *the rising of the sun*, even to its GOING DOWN, My name shall be great among the Gentiles". We see two opposites ends of the day contrasted here—sunrise and *sunset*. All day long, from *sun-up* in the morning, till *sun-down* in the evening, God's name will be praised. If the *going down of the sun* means anytime after *noon*, however, we have a meaningless prophecy which

tells us that God's name will be praised from sun-rise till about *mid-afternoon*!

I think it should be very clear. When the Bible refers to *the going down of the sun* it means AT SUNSET—when the sun goes DOWN.

Eat it in haste

Hopefully, we have covered most of the verses that people use to support a 15th Abib Passover.

One last verse that is sometimes puzzles people is Ex 12:11, "And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So shall you eat it *in haste*. It is the LORD'S Passover".

The argument is, "Well, they wouldn't be all dressed up, and told to eat the meal *in haste*, unless they were just about to leave, would they?"

But let's remember, the Israelites were commanded not to leave their homes until MORNING. So they clearly weren't going *anywhere* in a hurry! We looked in detail at this point earlier (and also saw from Num 33:3 that it was a *complete day* AFTER the Passover when Israel left Egypt).

So what did the instructions in Ex 12:11 mean?

The Hebrew for "in haste" in this verse is *chippazown*. It is a *different word* from "in haste" as used, for example, in Ex 12:33, "And the Egyptians urged the people, that they might send them out of the land *in haste*". The meaning here in verse 33 is clearly one of *urgency*, or speed.

Chippazown has more the meaning of *in fear* or *in trepidation*. There was about to be a major slaughter in the land of Egypt. The Israelites had been *warned* not to leave their homes. Those responsible for selecting the right type of lamb, sacrificing it at the correct time, splashing its blood properly on their homes, knew that if they had failed to follow those very specific instructions, it could mean the deaths of *their* firstborn—or even *themselves*. It was not a night of rejoicing. It was a very solemn, sobering observance. On many occasions over the next few weeks, the Israelites would demonstrate how much they *distrusted* their God and suspected He had brought

them out into the wilderness to *destroy them*. Some probably feared God would kill them *along with* the Egyptian firstborn! The Passover meal was eaten in an attitude of *apprehension* at what was to happen in the next few hours.

They were not to eat the meal dressed casually in their pyjamas, or nightclothes! After centuries in Egypt, it was now about time to leave. Dressing up in their travelling clothes *reinforced* the reality of their imminent departure, and mentally got them ready for a major upheaval in their way of life. McLintock and Strong, in their *Encyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, comment " ...some think, that, like the dress and posture in which the first Passover was to be eaten, it was intended to remind the people that they were no longer to regard themselves as settled down in a home, but as a host upon the march ...".

Does it MATTER?

The Jews of today—modern Judaism—adhere to a Passover feast on 15th Abib. The ideas which have been introduced in recent years into the Churches of God, by people such as Mr. Bill Dankenbring, have their origins in the traditions of the Jews.

Does knowledge of the correct day actually *matter*? As long as we are *sincere*, and have been honest in our studies, does God really care *which day* we keep?

Well, I think we all know the answer if that question is asked about the Sabbath or Sunday keeping! And would God accept it if we kept Christmas "sincerely"?!

But apart from accuracy over the *correct day* for the Passover, there is a MAJOR PROBLEM with those who elect for a Passover on 15th Abib.

Basically, they lose much of the inspired TEACHING that God would have us *understand*. They *merge together* the separate meanings of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Those who keep a 15th Abib Passover—in general—do nothing special *on the 14th*, other than prepare for the feast meal on the evening of the 15th. On the evening of the 15th, they have a meal of lamb, bitter herbs, unleavened bread, glasses of wine, and celebrate Israel's deliverance from Egypt. It is a time of rejoicing—of celebrating

deliverance from ancient Egypt—and, in our case, from sin and spiritual death. To a certain extent, that is fine.

But Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread actually have DIFFERENT MEANINGS.

Passover commemorates the death penalty PASSING OVER the Israelites because they had accepted the sacrifice of a lamb without blemish. Its shed blood sprinkled on their dwelling places saved them from DEATH. It was a solemn evening. So, for us TODAY, the Passover is a *solemn memorial* of our being saved from the PENALTY OF DEATH by the blood of *our Passover lamb*, Jesus Christ.

And so we read in Ex 12:26-27, "And it shall be, when your children say to you, What do you *mean* by this service? that you shall say, It is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who PASSED OVER the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He *struck* the Egyptians *and delivered* our households..."

On the other hand, the Feast of Unleavened Bread deals with *our escape* from Satan and the POWER OF SIN—just as Israel *escaped* from their bondage to Pharaoh in the land of Egypt. Israel left Egypt on the night of 15th Abib with a "high hand", rejoicing. Their dreams of freedom had come true. Egypt was apparently defeated. The power of Pharaoh had been broken. NOW they were *free*, to leave Egypt and to *follow God*. So we REJOICE on the night of 15th ABIB, as we commemorate this remarkable event, and remember *our freedom* from the power of sin, and the beginning of our walk with God.

Ex 13: 3, 6, 8-9 tells us, "And Moses said to the people: Remember *this day* in which you went OUT OF Egypt (15th Abib — Num 33:3), *out of* the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you *out of* this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten ... seven days you shall eat unleavened bread ... and you shall tell your son in that day, saying, This is done *because* of what the LORD did for me when I CAME UP FROM Egypt. It shall be a sign to you ... that the LORD'S LAW may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the LORD has brought you OUT OF Egypt".

We need to keep these entirely SEPARATE meanings *clearly in mind*. Most Protestants today acknowledge the need to "accept Jesus". They talk of how Jesus DIED to "save us from our sins". They talk a great deal about "the CROSS of Christ". They emphasise the blood of Christ as Passover lamb. But they STOP AT THE CROSS!! What you will

rarely hear is that God requires MORE of us. Not only must we accept the Passover sacrifice, we must also MOVE ON to KEEP HIS LAW—to KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS—to keep the Sabbath, Holy Days, *all* of God's commandments.

Perhaps it is because they do not observe the FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD—the putting of SIN out of their lives—that Protestants as a whole do not understand the need to keep God's laws today?

And perhaps also—because they no longer keep the Passover on the 14th Abib, as a solemn occasion picturing the death of an innocent lamb—the Jews have been unable to recognise a Messiah who came *to suffer* and DIE for them?

In his book *Pagan Holidays—or God's Holy Days—Which?* Mr. Herbert Armstrong writes about the Feast of Unleavened Bread as follows:

"But let us learn the full significance of this. WHY did God ordain these feast days? What was His great PURPOSE? [Mr. Armstrong then quotes Ex 13:3, 6 which we looked at a few moments ago]

Oh, my friends, do you see the wonderful meaning? Do you grasp the true significance of it all? Do you see God's PURPOSE? The PASSOVER pictures the DEATH OF CHRIST *for the remission of sins that are past.*

But shall we *stop there* with only past sins forgiven? We are still *flesh beings*. We still shall suffer *temptations*. Sin has held us *in its clutch*—we have been SLAVES to sin, in its power... We have been in BONDAGE to sin.

The picture—the meaning—the symbolism, is not complete with the Passover alone. Passover pictures the acceptance of Christ's blood for the REMISSION of *past* sins. It pictures the CRUCIFIED—the DEAD—Christ. Shall we leave Christ symbolically hanging on the cross? The seven days of UNLEAVENED BREAD following Passover, picture to us the COMPLETE *putting away* of sin, the KEEPING of the Commandments—after past sins are forgiven.

To observe Passover alone, and then fail to observe the seven days of unleavened bread, means, in symbolism, to accept Christ's blood, and then to continue in sin—to say with the Sunday churches the Law is done away ..."

So Mr. Armstrong takes some considerable time and effort to make clear that Passover and Unleavened Bread have DIFFERENT PURPOSES—*different* meanings. The Jews have largely lost this *important lesson*, even though they admit themselves that the festivals were originally SEPARATE! The *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, under the heading *Passover* states:

"The feast of Passover consists of *two parts*: The Passover ceremony and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. ORIGINALLY BOTH PARTS EXISTED SEPARATELY; but at the time of the exile they *were combined*. Passover was *originally* not a pilgrimage FEAST, but a domestic ceremony consisting of the slaughtering and eating of the paschal animal".

So at least some Jewish scholars are prepared to admit that *originally* there were *two separate observances* (and the *original* instructions are found in the scriptures—the Books of Moses!!).

Conclusion

Hopefully, the foregoing discussion will help in making plain why I believe the 14th Abib represents the *true Passover*.

Mr. Herbert Armstrong went through many of these points in several of his writings, and as we know held to the 14th Abib Passover to the very end of his life.

The scriptures we have looked at so far relate to the Old Testament. It was in the *Old Testament* that the first Passover took place. The very specific instructions for keeping Passover are to be found in the *Old Testament*. The information necessary for us to understand the correct day for keeping Passover can be found in the *Old Testament*.

If we can come to understand the truth from the Old Testament, then we can look also at the New Testament references to the keeping of the Passover. This would be a separate study. However, this article is already long enough, and suffice it to say that the New Testament—as we would expect—harmonises completely with the Old Testament, and shows *Christ Himself* keeping Passover *on 14th Abib*.

Here, at the end of the end-time, the churches of God are seeing a virtual non-stop attack on everything we were once taught AND WHICH WE ONCE BELIEVED. We need to clearly recognise that so

many of these so-called *New Truths* are just rehashed OLD FALSEHOODS!

In 2 Thess 2:15 Paul commanded the saints, "Therefore, brethren, *stand fast* and HOLD THE TRADITIONS which you were taught..."

Those with a Philadelphia attitude are commanded to "HOLD FAST what you have, that no one may take your crown", Rev 3:11.

Let's *hold fast* to the truth we once received—and remember always that, "On the FOURTEENTH DAY of the first month at twilight is the LORD'S Passover", Lev 23:5!

Jamie McNab