

## CHAPTER 5

# PASSOVER FOURTEENTH OR FIFTEENTH—EXEGESIS OR EISEGESIS?

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*Sacrifice the Passover at twilight, at  
the going down of the sun.*

—Moses

**E**XEGESIS IS A careful line by line study of the Scriptures to accurately discover what God's Word is communicating to us. *Eisegesis* is when we read into the Scriptures what we want them to say or what we already believe they say. This eisegesis is done by interpreting scripture selectively and out of context to fit our preexisting beliefs. For example, quoting one verse (or a part of a verse) out of context is a method many use to make the Bible appear to support whatever they want it to say. Exegesis further leads one down a path of enlightening discovery of God's truth, but eisegesis leads to stagnation, the perpetuation of blind human tradition, and even heresy.

The time and events surrounding Israel's departure from Egypt, as recorded by Moses, holds valuable proofs as to the date and time of Passover.

Remember, God told the Israelites they were not to come out of their houses between Passover night and the following morning (Ex. 12:21–24). When the fourteenth arrived, Israel killed the Passover lamb, put the blood on their doorposts, and prepared and ate their paschal meal (Seder) with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Eating the lamb was another type of the need to “eat Christ” as we absorb the meaning of His sacrifice and life. The bitter herbs symbolize the horrible bitterness of bondage in Egypt and the bondage of sinful and false ways of this world. After the Passover service, the Israelites were to remain indoors all night until the twilight of the next morning. While they waited, the destroyer passed over judgment on those homes that came under the blood of the lamb. But the destroying angel visited judgment on those houses that did not have the blood. The penalty for not coming under the blood of the lamb was the death of all the firstborn. Venturing outdoors Passover night would be flagrant disobedience and would symbolize coming out from under the atoning blood—it was not an option.

Yet some who believe in a Nisan 15 Passover service maintain that Israel did come out of their homes before the arrival of morning. What exactly does the biblical word for morning mean? I use the term *biblical* to denote the meaning of the word *morning* found in your Bible as opposed to what some will tell you it came

to mean after the Babylonian exilic influences were imposed upon it. According to *Brown, Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon*, the word *morning* (*boqer*) in the Bible means “the break of day a) morning: 1) used of end of night 2) used of coming of daylight 3) used of the coming of sunrise.”

James Strong says *morning* means “properly, dawn (as the break of day); generally, morning.”

The clarity of the words used in the Torah is not difficult to understand. Yet some have been led to count the time for Passover like the Gentiles count time, by claiming that “morning” is that portion of the night that comes after midnight through noon. But God’s Word logically calls “morning” the breaking of light through the full rising of the sun. God’s Word calls evening (*‘ereb*) that period from the beginning of sunset into the twilight of the evening at the other end of the day! God told Israel to keep the lambs *until* Abib 14, kill them at the coming of evening (*‘ereb*) which begins each new day, eat the lamb prepared with bitter herbs in a state of haste, and not to come out of their homes until morning (*boqer*).

God’s way of keeping time is for each new twenty-four-hour day to begin first with the evening at dusk, that is, the evening first and then the morning. This was the division of time that God said made up the individual days at creation (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31).

Remember, the passing-over by the death angel at midnight is the event Passover day is named for—not the following day. God said the Passover would happen

on the fourteenth. Since the Hebrews counted each day's time beginning with the evening until the following evening—making a complete twenty-four-hour day—it stands the test of logical reasoning that the morning after the previous evening was still part of the same “day.” Thus, biblically, the morning after each evening was still part of the same day. The Passover meal with bitter herbs in the evening was followed by the actual Passover event at midnight on the 14<sup>th</sup>, followed by spoiling the Egyptians the following morning and throughout the day—all part of the twenty-four-hour Passover day on the fourteenth of Abib. Then Israel departed Egypt on the next day.

### EXEGESIS OF NUMBERS 33 AND DEUTERONOMY 16

Relevant is the fact that Moses recorded the exact date and time of Israel's departure from Egypt, and of the Egyptians burying their dead:

Now Moses wrote down the starting points of their journeys at the command of the LORD. And these are their journeys according to their starting points: 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. For the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the LORD had killed among them. Also on their gods the LORD had executed judgments.

—Num. 33:2–4, emphasis added

Combine Numbers 33 with Deuteronomy 16:1, and the reader is armed with some irrefutable truth regarding this important topic:

“Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt *by night*.”

—Deut.16:1, emphasis added

With a little worthwhile exegesis of Scripture, we may glean several points from the combined facts of these two passages.

- Israel left Egypt “on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day After the Passover.” How could Passover have been observed on the fifteenth and the Israelites left on the fifteenth, when Moses recorded Israel left on “the day after the Passover?” One cannot leave on two different days at the same time.
- Israel departed Egypt by night, that is, the night of the fifteenth.
- Egypt was burying their dead while Israel plundered the Egyptians and departed.

These are important and relevant facts to remember when determining if Passover should be kept on the fourteenth, as recorded in Scripture, or on the fifteenth, as re-interpreted by some after suffering the Babylonian persuasion. Remember, God told Israel not to come

out of their homes until the morning twilight, about sunrise, Passover day, Abib 14 (Ex. 12:22). If, as some presume, the Passover Seder began at the end of the fourteenth (with the Passover meal and service actually falling on the fifteenth), then Israel would have had to have come out of their homes before the morning, contrary to what God commanded them. They would have had to leave Egypt between midnight and the rising of the sun the following morning, because God's Word says Israel left in the dark of "night" on the fifteenth.

Each twenty-four-hour day has only one night. If Passover was kept on the fifteenth and Israel left on the night of the fifteenth, then they would have had to have left their homes before sunrise, for the next night would be the sixteenth. But, of course, that's not what the Bible records:

And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. And *none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning*. For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you. And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever.

—Ex. 12:22–24, emphasis added

Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt *by night*.

—Deut. 16:1

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.

—Num. 33:3

It is understandable why one would refer to later historical sources to show that Passover was historically kept by *some* Jews on the fifteenth of Abib, as that became a historical fact for many later postexilic Jews. But when one actually looks at what Moses commanded God's people to do and then compares it to Yeshua's example of keeping Passover on the fourteenth, one finds that Passover was originally kept at the beginning of the fourteenth by Moses and ancient Israel, as well as by the messianic New Testament Jewish church of God. But there's one more incredible point to consider: Egypt burying their dead!

Think about these poignant questions:

- Does it make sense that families would bury their dead within the same night death occurred—within only several hours of their deaths?
- Since all the firstborn were killed at midnight (Ex. 12:29), how long would it be until each Egyptian household realized that their firstborn

had died? Many would likely have lain in bed covered up and dead for a few hours before being discovered.

- How many hours does it take for a body lying covered in bed to grow cold? How long before rigor mortis sets in? The answer is more than a few hours. Do you really believe that the Egyptians, known for extended pre-burial ceremonies, would quickly bury their dead (killed at midnight) while it was still in the dark of night and within only a few hours of their deaths? Do you believe the Egyptians would bury their dead before the bodies had even grown cold and rigid?

Consider that Israel left by night on Abib 15 and the Israelites witnessed the Egyptians burying their dead as they left Egypt. There is only one night on the fifteenth. To believe the actual Passover—the **passing over** by God for judgment—was really at midnight on the fifteenth is tantamount to believing the majority of the Egyptians woke up in the middle of the night and immediately began burying their dead before the bodies were even cold! Such reasoning is to believe the Egyptians in essence said, “Oh no! \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are dead! Quick, grab a shovel. Let’s bury them right now, while it’s still in the dark of night, before the rising of the sun and before their warm bodies get cold and rigid.”

That would be bizarre and extremely heartless behavior. But that is in essence what would have had



to have happened if either the Passover Seder of the pass-over (or pass-through for Egypt [Ex. 12:12]) was the same night Israel left Egypt! This author does not believe such a crazy scenario. Upon closer examination, I hope each reader can see the unrealistic absurdity such a belief entails.

If the Passover Seder took place on the evening of the fifteenth, and God passed over at midnight on the fifteenth, then Israel would have had to disobey God's command not to stay indoors until the twilight of morning. They would have had to have left their homes sometime after midnight and have begun to march out of Egypt at 2:00 or 3:00 A.M. They would have had to have begun their journey out of Egypt before the light of day in order to have "left by night" as God's Word clearly says they did. Respectfully, that is unbelievable. But that is what would have had to have happened if the Passover Seder were eaten in the night of the fifteenth, with Israel still departing Egypt on the night of the fifteenth, as Scripture reveals they did. Unless one does not really believe Israel left Egypt "by night" and "on the morrow *after* the Passover" (Deut. 16:1; Num. 33:3).

In addition to the scriptural evidence already established, consider also the logic of the following significant facts.

### A MATTER OF LOGIC AND SPEED

In the short time between an hour or two after midnight and before sunrise, how could all of Israel

(including their elderly, women and children, and livestock) do the three things Moses said they did? First, they had to burn the remains of the Passover lamb—the hide, hair, bones, and so forth. Second, they traveled out of Goshen to the dwellings of the Egyptians to take their silver, gold, and other “spoil.” And third, they still needed time to gather together to one point, from all across the land of Goshen (a distance of approximately forty or more miles). How fast could you travel twenty, thirty, or forty miles by foot with children, the elderly, and animals? Could you and all of your extended family cover those distances all between, say, the hours of 2:00 A.M. and before sunrise? How long does it take to build a fire and completely burn up the moist remains of a lamb? It’s inconceivable to expect Israel to do all they did and still travel such distances in such a short amount of time!

After they burned the remains of the lamb (Ex. 12:10), Israel had to gather together from all across the land of Goshen, where they lived (Ex. 8:22). They gathered into one point, the small city of Rameses from which they departed (Num. 33:3). They did this so they could all follow Moses out of Egypt together from one point in “orderly ranks” (Ex. 13:18). Remember, before assembling at the point of departure, they also needed time to travel to where the Egyptians dwelt, enter their homes and spoil them, then go back to Ramses before leaving Egypt that night (Ex. 12:35–36). It’s nonsensical to think Israel could do all this within only a few hours in the dark of night—after midnight and before the morning twilight!

Israel needed the full daylight portion of Abib 14 to marshal together and accomplish all they did before departing together from one point.

Putting all the scriptures together we have a clear sequential picture.

1. Israel prepared for Passover ahead of time. They chose their lambs on the tenth of Abib and kept the lambs until the arrival of the fourteenth of Abib at evening twilight (between sunset and dark) (Ex. 12:3–6, 21).
2. Each head of household killed his lamb and put some of the blood on the doorposts of his home. With the lamb and fire already prepared, they roasted the lamb with bitter herbs and ate the Passover meal inside their homes (Ex. 12:7–8, 22). This was all done in haste as they anxiously prepared to depart the following day (Ex. 12:11).
3. Israel obeyed God and did not come out of their homes until after the twilight of the following morning (Ex. 12:22). As the sun rose that day it began the daylight portion of Passover day, Abib 14.
4. The destroyer “passed over” Israel at midnight on the fourteenth of Abib, but “passed through” the Egyptians and struck all the firstborn of Egypt; all who did not come under the atoning blood of the lamb were destroyed (Ex. 12:12–13, 23, 29–30).

5. The following morning Israel burned anything that remained of the lamb (Ex. 12:10). Then they began to pack up their goods and plunder the riches of the Egyptians as payment for their lost wages. This was done throughout the daylight portion of the fourteenth of Abib and leading up to the night of the fifteenth (Ex. 12:34–36). This day was their preparation for their departure from Egypt at night, on the day after the Passover (Ex. 12:37).
6. The Egyptians cried out in anguish over the deaths of their firstborn Passover night (Ex. 12:30). The remaining hours of Passover night and all of the following fourteenth was the Egyptians' time to mourn and come to grips with the incredible crisis they had to deal with. If they did not act fast, the death toll would increase exponentially, because the sudden concurrent deaths of millions of people could give way to rapid spread of disease—potentially killing millions more Egyptians. Thus, each family would need to begin the process of burying their dead very quickly. This is why Israel witnessed the Egyptians beginning to bury dead by early nightfall on Abib 15, while the Israelites marched out of Egypt (Num. 33:2–4).
7. Moses marshaled Israel together into one departure point so he could lead Israel out of Egypt in “orderly ranks” (Ex. 13:18). The task of organizing Israel together from all

around the land of Goshen (a distance of over forty miles) into Rameses was completed by nightfall on Abib 15, the day after Passover. This enabled Israel to leave Egypt together, organized by ranks, and from one starting point (Deut. 16:1; Num. 33:2-4). On that memorable night of Israel's departure, they witnessed the Egyptians digging their mass graves for their dead (Num. 33:2-4).

8. God commanded this night of Israel's departure from Egypt to be remembered and solemnly observed—independently of Passover—forever (Ex. 12:24, 42).

