

Between the Evenings Explained

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When considering the timing of the Passover observance, there is no question that we are commanded to observe the Passover on Day 14 of Month 1, and the observance begins at “twilight” on Day 14.

There are numerous ordinances that are involved in the Passover observance, so the timing is critical in order to properly comply with the Torah.

I am writing this article due to the confusion that exists concerning the timing of the Passover slaughtering. Some believe it occurs at the beginning of Day 14, while others believe it occurs in the afternoon of Day 14. The timing of the sacrifice determines whether you would fulfill all of the ordinances of the Passover on Day 14, or if you overlap them with Day 15.

In Hebrew, the word translated as “twilight” is “bein ha’arbayim” (בֵּין הָעֶרְבַיִם) which literally means “between the evenings.”

Repeatedly, the Torah points to performing the Passover on Day 14 at the specific time, commonly referred to as “twilight”, but what exactly is that time being described? When does “between the evenings” actually occur?

It is a very fundamental Hebrew concept that a day begins in the evening, and the Hebrew word for “evening” is “ereb” (ערב). The evening is the first portion of a day. The day begins in the evening, and evening is associated with darkness.

Since the day begins in the evening, you would logically be focused on the beginning of Day 14 to celebrate the Passover since it occurs “between the evenings”. Right?

Well sadly, I am witnessing people torture this very simple Hebrew concept and phrase to the point where they completely distort the Passover command. Many look to Pharisaic definitions and they end up celebrating the Passover at the end of Day 14, in the afternoon, and then on into Day 15, instead of the beginning of Day 14 as the Torah clearly commands. Most who ascribe to the Pharisaic tradition actually end up moving their entire Day 14 Passover into Day 15.

This is all due to the Pharisaic definition of “between the evenings” that contradicts the ancient understanding. The Pharisees changed the definition of “between the evenings” to describe the entire “afternoon” from the high point of the sun to sunset.

That completely shifted the focus of the Passover from the beginning of the Day 14 to the end of Day 14. It also resulted in the Passover being merged with the First Day of Unleavened Bread, which essentially diluted and diminished the Passover observance. It turned the Passover into a Feast, which it is not.

They apparently made this change to accommodate the Temple service, and the change is a historical fact. It is well documented that the Jews changed an eight day observance into a seven day observance.

So, despite all of the emphasis associated with the Passover occurring on Day 14, they only “technically” start the Passover at the end of Day 14, and primarily celebrate Passover on the First Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The question is: Can we know what “between the evenings” actually means? Isn’t there only one evening in a day? How can the evening be at the beginning of the day, but “between the evening” refer to the end of the day?

Well, when you understand Hebrew reckoning of time, and the Hebrew language, it all becomes very clear. The Hebrew word for “evening” - “erev” derives from the concept of mixing, mingling or weaving.

Erev is used to describe evening because evening represents the time when darkness and light are “mixing” as day and night are being “woven” together. It is the time from sunset to complete darkness.

It stands in direct contrast with the “morning” (boker). During the morning we transition from 1) complete darkness 2) to dusk, 3) to actual sunrise.

The “evening” transition period also involves three stages, and in the ancient understanding, there were 3 erevs that spanned the entire period of evening.

The moment of sunset was the “first erev,” the twilight period was the “second erev,” and the moment of complete darkness was the “third erev.”

So the time referred to as “between the evenings” was the second erev - twilight - the time between sunset and complete darkness. It is very simple, and completely in line with the Torah and Creation.

In fact, so important were these transition periods of morning (boker) and evening (erev), that YHWH prescribed a sacrifice at each time in the service at His House, and the evening sacrifice was specifically designated to occur “between the evenings.”

Here is that Command: *“³⁸ Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs of the first year, day by day continually. ³⁹ One (first) lamb you shall offer in the morning (boker), and the other (second) lamb you shall offer at twilight (between the evenings).”* Exodus 29:38-39

Now I see people performing Scriptural acrobatics using this passage to justify a Day 15 Passover. Obviously, the time of the sacrifice is the same as the Passover sacrifice. They point out that the sacrifice “between the evenings” is called “the second”, so it must occur before sunset if it is going to be on the same day as the first.

This is simply incorrect and a perfect example of eisogesis - the practice of cherry-picking verses, and taking them out of context or distorting them, to us as “proof texts” to support your desired doctrine or position.

The passage in Exodus is specifically detailing the service of the priests in the House of Elohim. It has nothing to do with the Passover, and the only similarity is the time of the slaughtering – “between the evenings.”

What they fail to understand, or simply just ignore, is the fact that the daily priestly service began before sunrise each day. The priests would serve in their weekly courses, and meet before sunset each day to cast lots, and determine their duties for each day.

They would prepare the altar, burn the incense and get the Temple “ready for business” so to speak. The opening of the gates would coincide with the morning sacrifice at sunrise - so that would naturally be called the first.

The second sacrifice occurred later, after sunset, and “between the evenings” as the daily Temple service was concluding.

Referring to the evening sacrifice as “the second” has nothing to do with the definition of “between the evenings” or moving the Passover from the beginning to the end of Day 14. It is simply describing the order of the daily sacrifices that actually spanned two days. The morning sacrifice would occur on one day, while the evening sacrifice would occur after sunset into the following day.

The simple fact is that the religious Jews have completely distorted the concept of “between the evenings,” and they are now violating the Torah through their traditions.

They promote the notion that the evening begins when the sun starts to go down from its zenith, and continues until sunset. That completely changes the Hebrew concept of time, and it profanes the Torah by changing the timing of the Passover from the beginning of Day 14 to the afternoon of Day 14 into the evening of Day 15. That is not what the Torah prescribes.

This is exactly the type of thing that Yahushua chastised them for when He stated: *“³ Why do you also transgress the Commandment of Elohim because of your tradition? . . . ⁷ Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ⁸ These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. ⁹ And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”* Matthew 15:3, 7-9

The Rabbinic definition of “between the evenings” is a Pharisaic doctrine – a commandment of men. While they may honor YHWH with their lips, they worship Him in vain. They are transgressing the Command because of their tradition.

Remember that they completely violate the calendar rules by using a calculated calendar instead of the sun and the moon. (Genesis 1:14)

They generally follow their own traditions and laws, rather than the Torah of Elohim.

There are very powerful forces at work trying to get people to observe the Passover at the wrong time. This is a very spiritual issue, and I see people's minds getting tangled up as they read articles and watch videos that lead them further into confusion.

The Passover does not occur at the end of Day 14 and then merge into Day 15, which is the Feast of Unleavened Bread. They are two separate and distinct Appointed Times occurring on two separate and distinct days. The Torah is very clear on this point.

"¹⁶ On the fourteenth day of the first month is YHWH's Passover, ¹⁷ and on the fifteenth day of this month is a Feast. Seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten. ¹⁸ On the first day there shall be a set apart convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work." Numbers 28:16-18

The Passover is not a Feast, but Jewish tradition has turned it into one. In Egypt, the Yisraelites slaughtered the lambs at the beginning of Day 14, after sunset, which was the time "between the evenings" that we refer to as twilight.

They then proceeded to fulfill all of the ordinances of Passover that needed to be completed throughout the night of the 14th before morning as prescribed by Exodus 12:1-11.

They did not depart from Egypt that night. They stayed in their homes as specifically commanded.

"None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning."
Exodus 12:22

Let me reiterate that - No one left their houses on the night of the Passover. They were commanded not to leave their houses until morning. Therefore, they could not have left Egypt on the night of Passover.

During the day portion of Day 14, they left their houses, pillaged the Egyptians and assembled together at Ramses as they prepared to depart after sunset, on Day 15 of Month 1.

They departed on the 15th Day - the day after the Passover. This is very clear, and there should be no confusion if we simply adhere to the Torah.

*“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 Yisrael went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians.”*

Numbers 33:3

By focusing on the minutiae, (ie. the definition of between the evenings) people are losing sight of the truth and the plan of YHWH outlined in the Appointed Times. I see people willing to treat Passover as a fractional portion of a day, which is unprecedented in the observances of the Appointed Times.

It also destroys the amazing picture provided through the entire cycle of the Appointed Times. You see, circumcision is specifically required in order to observe the Passover. Circumcision was to occur on the eighth day of the child’s birth, and Passover is the first of eight days that begin the Covenant pattern presented through the Appointed Times.

Passover is Day 14, followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread that begins on Day 15, and concluded on Day 21. So there were eight days total when you combine the Appointed Times of Month 1.

The annual cycle of the Appointed Times actually concludes in the seventh month with another sequence of Appointed Times that constitute eight days. Sukkot begins on Day 15 of Month 7 and ends on Day 21. It is then followed by the Eighth Day, which is an entirely separate Appointed Time.

So the opening eight days of Passover and Unleavened Bread, and the closing eight days of Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret encapsulate and surround the entire Covenant journey with the number eight. Indeed, Passover and the Eight Day are connected as the first and the last – the beginning and the end.

Diminishing the Passover destroys the pattern and that connection. That is why understanding the ancient meaning of an evening, and the Hebrew phrase “between the evenings”, is critical to our obedience to the Torah, and our observance and understanding of the Appointed Times.