

# PASSOVER AND FIRSTFRUITS CHRONOLOGY

## Three Views Dating the Events From Yeshua's Last Passover to Pentecost

by Michael Rudolph

### **Bikkurim: Plan or Coincidence?**

In the covenant given through Moses, God commanded the Israelites that when they came into the land God had given them, they were to sacrifice a sheaf of their *bikkurim*<sup>1</sup> – their first fruits of the harvest – as a wave offering:

*“And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of its firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.’” (Leviticus 23:9-10)*

This was to be done on “the day after the Sabbath,” and was to be accompanied by a burnt offering of an unblemished male lamb:

*“He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the Lord.” (Leviticus 23:11-12)*

Then, in the New Covenant Scriptures, we read:

*“But now Messiah is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Messiah all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Messiah the firstfruits, afterward those who are Messiah's at His coming.” (1 Corinthians 15:20-23)*

Are the references to “firstfruits” in both the New and Old Covenants coincidental, or are they God's intricate plan for relating events across the span of centuries? In the sections which follow, this paper demonstrates that they are no coincidence, and that understanding the offering of firstfruits is prophetically important in the dating the events from Yeshua's last Passover to the arrival of the Holy Spirit.

### **Bikkurim: A Season of Firstfruits**

In examining these questions, we note that the *Bikkurim* (firstfruits) offering of Leviticus 23:10 is positioned in the Scriptures after the commandment to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 23: 4-8), and prior to the commandment to observe the firstfruits offering known as

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<sup>1</sup> *Bikkurim* is the Hebrew word for “firstfruits.”

“The Feast of Weeks,” “*Shavuot*,” or “Pentecost” (Exodus 23:15-22). Because these two firstfruits offerings are separated by a fixed number of days, this writer views them as the two ends of a single feast season rather than as two independent feasts.<sup>2</sup>

## About This Paper

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke present a consistent timetable of events from just before Yeshua’s last Passover meal to his death and resurrection. The Book of John, however, presents what appears to be an inconsistency in dating the Passover, and will be dealt with in later sections of this paper. For clarity, this paper presents the chronology of Matthew and is supplemented by the other Gospels and *Torah* Scriptures as applicable. Verse quotations are from the New King James Version (with “Messiah” substituted for “Christ”), and references to calendar days and months are according to the Biblical lunar calendar.

This paper presumes that the word “day” as translated from the Scriptures most often refers to a Biblical day. The Biblical day begins at sundown and ends at sundown,<sup>3</sup> whereas the civil day begins at midnight and ends at midnight. As a consequence, each Biblical day leads its corresponding civil day by a number of hours which varies according to the time of year. In some cases, “day” also means “daytime”, ie. the time of day which is light. Because each “day” begins when it is dark, “morning” begins during the dark hours, and “early in the day” includes the dark hours as well. Also, the word which is translated “evening” can mean any time from mid-afternoon to after sundown.

Throughout this paper, “*Nisan*” refers to the first month of the Biblical calendar year,<sup>4,5</sup> and *Bikkurim* refers to the first wave offering of firstfruits – the first day of a firstfruits season which ends with *Shavuot*.<sup>6</sup> Although only three views are presented, the reader should be aware that other chronologies have been theorized and published.

## Determining the Dates of Bikkurim and Shavuot

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<sup>2</sup> Rabbinical authority recognizes the first wave offering as the day to begin counting 50 days to *Shavuot*. It is referred to as “day one of counting the *Omer*” and is not considered to be a separate feast. Note that the two firstfruits wave offerings are different in nature. At the beginning of the 50 day period, the offering is a sheaf of grain. At the end of the period (*Shavuot*), the offering is two baked loaves made with flour and leaven (processed grain).

<sup>3</sup> For an explanation of a “sunrise to sunrise” theory, see Samuele Bacchiocchi, The Time of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, pp. 66-89, (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Biblical Perspectives, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> In contrast to the Biblical calendar, the first month of the Jewish calendar is *Tishri*. *Nisan* is either the 7th or 8th month depending upon whether a given year has one or two months of *Adar*.

<sup>5</sup> For a concise explanation of the Jewish luni-solar calendar, see Arthur Spier, The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar, 3rd revised ed., pp. 1-22, (Jerusalem / New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> In Rabbinical literature, the word *bikkurim* does not refer to a particular day; it is rather a term which refers to firstfruits offerings generally. That Notwithstanding, in his Sefer HaMitzvot, Maimonides identifies the “Offering of The Firstfruits” as his Positive Commandment #44.

The key to placing the Firstfruits season in time, is our knowing which Sabbath is intended in Leviticus 23:11:

*“He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.”*

There are four Sabbaths in close proximity to the Feast of Unleavened Bread; they are:

- The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:7)
- The last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:8)
- The weekly Sabbath which falls during the seven days of Unleavened Bread
- The weekly Sabbath which follows the last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread

The key Scripture to consider is:

*“And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord.”*  
(Leviticus 23:15-16)

The counting method prescribed for arriving at *Shavuot* would appear to eliminate the first two Sabbaths in the above list because, in order for the fifty-day count to end after the completion of seven Sabbaths (49 days), the count must begin the day after a weekly Sabbath (i.e. on a Sunday). As between the two remaining possibilities, this writer prefers the third on the list – the weekly Sabbath which falls within the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This Sabbath is the more distinctive of the two in that it is always within the Feast period, while the Sabbath which follows the Feast has little distinction and would not warrant the recognition of being called “the” Sabbath.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, it is shown later in this paper that only this Sabbath is consistent with Yeshua having risen on *Bikkurim* which, if true, has profound prophetic importance.

Because *Bikkurim* is defined relative to a weekly Sabbath, neither it nor *Shavuot* (which is defined relative to *Bikkurim*) falls on the same calendar date each year.<sup>8</sup>

## **The Events of Nisan 14**

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<sup>7</sup> Modern Rabbinical authority has proclaimed the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (*Nisan 15*) as the Sabbath referred to in Leviticus 23:11. This interpretation has required explaining away the seven Sabbath requirement of verse 15. Baruch A. Levine, in the JPS Commentary to Leviticus, p. 158, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), suggests several approaches, including defining “sabbath” as a week-long period rather than a single day. The Karaites, on the other hand, believed that the intended “Sabbath” was the seventh day Sabbath which immediately followed Passover. See *Menachoth (Men.)* 65a-65b, and also David M. Feldman, “*Omer*”, Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol. 12, p. 1383, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Jerusalem Ltd., 1972).

<sup>8</sup> According to Rabbinical teaching, *Bikkurim* (day 1 of counting the omer) is always on *Nisan 16*, and *Shavuot* is always on *Sivan 6*. This can be verified by perusing the calendar pages of Arthur Spier, The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar, supra.

*“Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, ...”*  
(Mark 14:12)

On what calendar date was the Passover lamb killed? We find our answer in Exodus 12:6 which states:

*“Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the Congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight.”*

This rendering of the Hebrew as “twilight” in the NKJV and similar translations creates an ambiguity as to whether the lamb was killed prior to sundown in the late hours of *Nisan* 14, or after sundown in the early hours of *Nisan* 15. A literal reading of the Hebrew cures the ambiguity, however, for it states that the lamb was to be kept until the 14th day and killed “between the evenings.” It is clear, therefore, that the lamb was killed on *Nisan* 14.

An interesting question is raised by Matthew 26:17:

*“Now on the first day of the Feast of The Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Yeshua, saying to Him, “Where do you want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?””*

How did *Nisan* 14 come to be referred to as “the first day of Unleavened Bread” when Leviticus 23:6 clearly indicates that the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on *Nisan* 15?

An explanation is offered by Donna and Mal Broadhurst. In their book Passover Before Messiah & After,<sup>9</sup> they state that then as now, reference was commonly made to the entire Passover season.<sup>10</sup> For example, today’s Rabbinical community speaks of the “Passover week” or the “eight days of Passover” as including Passover, the seven days of Unleavened Bread, and the added day celebrated in the Diaspora. Similarly, in the First Century, the term “eight days of Unleavened Bread” included *Nisan* 14 which was the day of preparation for the Passover – the day of killing the lamb and the day all leaven had to be removed from homes.

Biblical evidence for the correctness of this explanation can be deduced from Exodus 12:15 which states:

*“Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your house.”*

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<sup>9</sup> Donna and Mal Broadhurst, Passover Before Messiah & After, p. 43, (Carol Stream, Illinois: Shofar Publications, 1987).

<sup>10</sup> David H. Stern, The Jewish New Testament Commentary, p. 78, (Clarksville, Maryland: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1992).

Since Exodus 12:19 makes it clear that leaven has to be absent from one's house during the seven days of Unleavened Bread (*Nisan 15 to Nisan 21*), the leaven must have already been removed by *Nisan 15*, and so the term "first day" in Exodus 12:15 must refer to *Nisan 14*.

Additional Biblical evidence connecting *Nisan 14* with the first day of unleavened bread can be found in Exodus 12:18:

*"In the first month, on the 14th day of the month, at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the 21st day of the month until evening."*

Since the 14th day is the first day of a period for eating unleavened bread, it may logically be said to be the "first day of Unleavened Bread."<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, it cannot be the first day of the "Feast of Unleavened Bread," which can only be *Nisan 15* (Leviticus 23:6).

### **The Events of Nisan 15 and 16: Conventional And Alternative Views**

Having determined that Yeshua's lamb was killed on *Nisan 14*, the next question is whether Yeshua ate the Passover just before dark at the end of *Nisan 14*, or after dark in the early hours of *Nisan 15*. Since all subsequent Passovers were modeled after the first Passover in Egypt, Exodus 12:8 demonstrates that Yeshua's Passover had to be eaten after dark in the early hours of *Nisan 15*:<sup>12</sup>

*"Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it."*

The events which occurred before dawn on that day came in quick succession:

Prediction of betrayal	Matthew 26, verses	21-25
The bread and wine		26-30
Prediction of Peter's denial		31-35
Prayer in the garden		36-46
The arrest		47-56
The interrogation		57-68
Peter's denial		69-75

When daylight came (still *Nisan 15*), the chief priests and elders conferred and decided to deliver Yeshua up to Pontius Pilate (Matthew 27:1-2). Later that day, Yeshua was sentenced to death and was nailed to a wooden stake. He died that same day before nightfall (Matthew 27:11-56).

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<sup>11</sup> "By this period "the Feast of Unleavened Bread" which immediately followed Passover in the Bible, had been extended in popular parlance to include the Passover itself." Craig S. Keener, The IVP Bible Background Commentary, p. 120, (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1993)

<sup>12</sup> The Israelites were released by Pharaoh after midnight of the same night that the lamb was eaten (Exodus 12:31-32). This was the first day of the very first Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:17) which, according to Scripture, was *Nisan 15* (Leviticus 23:6).

Whether or not Yeshua was buried on *Nisan* 15 and which day of the week it was is crucial to dating his resurrection. A key Scripture in defining the sequence of these events is Matthew 27:57-61:

*“Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Yeshua. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Yeshua. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb.”*

The word for “evening” in the foregoing Scripture and also in Mark 15:42 is derived from the Greek word “*opsios*.” According to Thayer,<sup>13</sup> Vine,<sup>14</sup> and Arndt & Gingrich,<sup>15</sup> “*opsios*” can mean any time from late afternoon through the period after sundown. Which it is, determines the chronology of events from this point on.

**Conventional View:<sup>16</sup> Burial was on *Nisan* 15, the 6th day of the week, and a guard was placed at the tomb on *Nisan* 16, the Sabbath.**

According to this view, “*opsios*” in Matthew 27:57-58 means late afternoon. Yeshua could be buried on the 15th because there was adequate time left in the afternoon to both prepare and bury the body. This view is rounded out by another Scripture, John 19:14-16:

*“Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, “Behold your King!” But they cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar!” So he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away.”*

“*Preparation Day of the Passover*” is interpreted here to mean the 6th day of the week – the preparation day for the weekly Sabbath which fell within that week of Passover. This is a reasonable interpretation since it could not have meant the *Nisan* 14 preparation which had already passed, and since the expression “Preparation Day” also appears in other John 19 verses

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<sup>13</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, The New Thayer’s Greek - English Lexicon of the New Testament, P. 471, (Peabody, Massachusetts: 1981).

<sup>14</sup> W.E. Vine, The Expanded Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, p. 374, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1984).

<sup>15</sup> “The context often makes it easier to decide just what time is meant, whether before or after sundown.” William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Walter Bauer), A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament And Other Early Christian Literature, p. 606, (Chicago: Univ. Of Chicago Press, 1957).

<sup>16</sup> There is no single “conventional” view. The “conventional view” presented in this paper is one which has more commonly accepted components than its counterpart “alternative view.”

(31 and 41-42) where, in this writer's opinion, it refers to the sixth day of the week.<sup>17</sup> Those who hold this view, therefore, believe that Yeshua died and was buried on *Nisan* 15, the 6th day of the week,<sup>18</sup> and that *Nisan* 16 was the Sabbath (Matthew 27:62-66).

**Alternative View: Burial was on *Nisan* 16, the 6th day of the week.**

According to this view, “*opsios*” in Matthew 27:57-58 and Mark 15:42 means evening just after sundown, when the date had changed to *Nisan* 16. Mark 15:42-43, is clear that Yeshua's body was claimed when evening had come, on the “Day of Preparation” (6th day of the week), which therefore had to be in the early dark hours of *Nisan* 16. Since Yeshua was buried shortly thereafter, he was also buried on *Nisan* 16. Other Scriptures which confirm that Yeshua was buried on the “Day of Preparation” are John 19:41-42, Luke 23:54-56, and Matthew 27:59-62. Logically, the burial could have taken place in either the dark or the daylight hours. The dark hours better account for three nights spent in the tomb (Matthew 12:39-40).<sup>19</sup>

Because, in this view, the “Preparation Day” was not the day of Yeshua's death, the foregoing interpretation of John 19:14-16 must be thought to be incorrect and explainable in some other way.<sup>20</sup> Those who hold this view believe that Yeshua died on *Nisan* 15, the 5th day of the week, was buried on *Nisan* 16, the 6th day of the week, and that *Nisan* 17 was the Sabbath.

**The Events of *Nisan* 17: Conventional and Alternative Views**

**Conventional View: Resurrection on *Nisan* 17, the 1st day of the week, *Bikkurim*.**

The conclusion that *Nisan* 17 was the first day of the week follows logically from the conventional view described in the previous section of this paper. Matthew 28:1-6 tells how Yeshua's tomb was found empty at dawn on the first day of the week, and of the appearance of an angel who declared that Yeshua had risen:

*“Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And*

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<sup>17</sup> A minority view holds that these verses do not refer to the 6th day of the week, but to the *Nisan* 14 day of preparation.

<sup>18</sup> Samuele Bacchiocchi, p. 47.

<sup>19</sup> An argument offered in support of the burial having occurred during the light hours of the 6th day of the week, is that Luke 23:55-56 projects an urgency in having to bury Yeshua before the approaching Sabbath. Such haste would not have been necessary had the Sabbath been a full twenty-four hours distant. On the other hand, the reference in Luke to the Sabbath drawing near could indeed have meant that the Sabbath was a full day away because, according to Luke 23:55-56, the women who attended the burial had time to return to their homes and prepare spices and fragrant oils before the Sabbath.

<sup>20</sup> John 19:31 is consistent with this view if Yeshua died on *Nisan* 15 just prior to sundown, but was not noticed to have died until just after sundown when the date changed to *Nisan* 16. It was then that he was pierced with a sword, and his body was immediately claimed by Joseph of Arimathea (See in the context of John 19:32-38).

*the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Yeshua who was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.'*

Consequently, those who hold this view believe that Yeshua rose on *Nisan* 17, the first day of the week, during either the dark hours or the dawn of the very first light hour of the day (Matthew 28:1-7; Mark 16:2-6, 9; Luke 24:1-3; John 20:1-2).<sup>21</sup> The dawn of the first light hour better accounts for three days spent in the tomb (Matthew 12:39-40) by allowing one to count three light periods which are “days” as distinguished from “nights.” Also, since *Nisan* 17 was the day after the weekly Sabbath which fell within the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Yeshua had to have risen on the day of Firstfruits -- *Bikkurim*.

### **Alternative View: A guard was placed at the tomb on *Nisan* 17, the Sabbath**

The conclusion that *Nisan* 17 was the Sabbath follows logically from the alternative view described in the previous section of this paper. The events of *Nisan* 17 are portrayed in Matthew 27:62-66:

*“On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, ‘Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise.’ Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead.’ So the last deception will be worse than the first.’” Pilate said to them, ‘You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how.’” So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.”<sup>22</sup>*

This view raises two puzzling questions. First, if the Scripture meant to identify *Nisan* 17 as Sabbath, why did it not say so instead of calling it “*the next day, which followed the day of preparation*”? Also, if *Nisan* 17 was the Sabbath, why were the chief priests and Pharisees spending their Sabbath petitioning Pilate and securing Yeshua’s tomb instead of attending to Sabbath rest as commanded? Despite these unanswered questions, the chronology is supported by the weight of Scriptural evidence. Consequently, those who hold this view believe that the guard was placed at Yeshua’s tomb on *Nisan* 17, the Sabbath.

### **The Events of *Nisan* 18: Alternative View**

**Alternative View: Resurrection on *Nisan* 18, the 1st day of the week, *Bikkurim*.**

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<sup>21</sup> Although the NKJV translates verse 1 “...while it was still dark,...,” the Greek allows for it to be turning light with some darkness still upon the day. In order to capture this idea, Jay P. Green, Sr. translates John 20:1 to read: “*But on the first of the sabbaths Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, darkness yet being on it.*” Jay P. Green, Sr., The Literal Translation of The Bible (1985) contained within The Interlinear Bible: Hebrew-Greek-English, (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986).

<sup>22</sup> References to Yeshua’s statements that he would rise in three days: Matthew 20:18-19; Mark 8:31, 10:33-34; Luke 18:32-33, 24:6-7.



In the previous section of this paper, the alternative view demonstrated that the Sabbath immediately following Yeshua's burial was *Nisan* 17. Therefore, the day after the Sabbath, the first day of the week when Yeshua arose (Mark 16:9) had to be *Nisan* 18, during either the dark hours or the dawn of the very first light hour of the day (Matthew 28:1-7; Mark 16:2-6, 9; Luke 24:1-3; John 20:1-2).<sup>23</sup> The first light hour better accounts for three days spent in the tomb (Matthew 12:39-40). Moreover, since *Nisan* 18 was the day after the weekly Sabbath which fell within the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Yeshua had to have risen on the day of Firstfruits – *Bikkurim*.

### **John's Timing of the Passover: Conventional and Alternative Views**

As was stated earlier, John presents an account which, on its face, appears to be inconsistent with the other Gospels:

*“Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the praetorium, and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover.”* (John 18:28)

The apparent inconsistency is that, according to the other Gospels, the Passover meal should already have been eaten earlier that day (during the dark hours of *Nisan* 15). Messianic Jewish author and scholar David H. Stern responds to this by suggesting that “the Passover” in John 18:28 does not refer to the lamb which was eaten on *Nisan* 15, but to other food known as the *chagigah* (festival sacrifice) eaten on subsequent days of the Passover season.<sup>24</sup>

In substantial agreement with Stern, theologian Joachim Jeremias states:<sup>25</sup>

*“It is true that paschal sacrifices (*hagigah*) were eaten during the seven days of the Feast (*Nisan* 15-21) sometimes called *pesah* in accordance with Deut. 16.2 and II Chron. 35.7, so that John 18.28 could be referred to *Nisan* 15.”*

More dubious theories have also been advanced in scholarly circles of unbelief, such as that documented by anthropology professor Gillian Feely-Harnik. In his book The Lord's Table: Eucharist And Passover In Early Christianity,<sup>26</sup> he states that “some biblical scholars have argued that John altered the date to meet contemporary Jewish objections that none of these events – Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion – could have taken place on a holy day.”

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<sup>23</sup> See footnote 21.

<sup>24</sup> David H. Stern, pp. 206-207.

<sup>25</sup> Joachim Jeremias, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus, pp. 20-21, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966)

<sup>26</sup> Gillian Feely-Harnik, The Lord's Table: Eucharist And Passover In Early Christianity, pp. 117-118, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).

None of these theories can be proven. What is important, however, is that plausible theories do exist which reconcile John with the other Gospels. In light of this fact and the overwhelming agreement of Matthew, Mark and Luke, there is no reason to doubt that Yeshua's last supper was a Passover meal and that it occurred on *Nisan* 15.

### **An Intriguing Speculative Third View**

Undocumented reports appear in the literature which suggest that two calendars may have been in use during the First Century.<sup>27,28,29</sup> In recognition of this possibility, it is herein speculated that the Pharisees followed one of these calendars, while Yeshua and His disciples followed the other. Normally, one does not publish such unsubstantiated theories. The reason for my doing so here, however, is that if Yeshua followed a calendar whose date was one day later than each corresponding date on the Pharisees' calendar, and both calendars agreed on when the weekly Sabbaths occurred, then all of the difficulties previously encountered with the other views regarding John's timing and the term "Preparation" instantly vanish.

The liberating aspects of this theory are twofold: First, as with the Alternative View, it clearly results in three calendar days or three dark and three light periods ("nights" and "days") for Yeshua's entombment. Second, it increases the span of events by one day, thereby creating a third "Day of Preparation", to-wit, one in preparation for the agreed seventh day Sabbath, and one in preparation for each of the calendars' first day of Unleavened Bread.

The timing of events of this view is produced by the same rationale as presented to form the Alternative View, except that Yeshua and his disciples would have considered each calendar date to be one day later than did the Pharisees. For consistency with the dates presented elsewhere in this paper, the Pharisaic calendar continues to be the frame of reference in this paper to which this theorized calendar of Yeshua is compared.

### **Speculative View: Yeshua's lamb killed on the Pharisees' *Nisan* 13**

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<sup>27</sup> "The contemporaries of Jesus celebrated the passover meal on two successive days because the Sadducees and the Pharisees dated the beginning of *Nisan* differently" Joachim Jeremias, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus, p. 23, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966).

<sup>28</sup> "The Samaritans seem to have followed the northern calendar as distinct from that of the other Jews. In Hasmonean and Herodian times the Sadducees and Boethusians each had their own calendar as did – subsequently in Talmudic and post-Talmudic periods – the Karaites and other less well-known sects." The editorial staff, "Calendar", Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol. 5, p. 50-51, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Jerusalem Ltd., 1972).

<sup>29</sup> In discussing various ways of counting to the destruction of the Temple, author Edgar Frank states: "... in those times the month of *Nissan* might have been defective or the reason was because the Karaites did not exactly follow the ruling of the Rabbanite calendar." Edgar Frank, Talmudic and Rabbinical Chronology: The Systems of Counting Years In Jewish Literature, p. 42, (Jerusalem / New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1956).

Yeshua's calendar listed this day as *Nisan* 14, and therefore it was his Preparation Day for the Passover. This is consistent with the references in Matthew 26:17-19, Mark 14:12-16 and Luke 22:7-8, to the disciples preparing the Passover (There is no corresponding passage in John).

**Speculative View: Yeshua ate the Passover, was arrested, tried and executed on the Pharisees' *Nisan* 14.**

The sequence of events is as presented in the Alternative View except that Yeshua's calendar listed this day as *Nisan* 15. To the Pharisees it was the Day of Preparation for their Passover, while to Yeshua, it was the first day of Unleavened Bread and therefore a Sabbath. This is consistent with Matthew 26:20-27:50, Mark 14:17-15:37, Luke 22:14-23:46 and John 13:2-19:30. It also explains why John 18:28 can infer that the Pharisees had not yet eaten the Passover, for according to John 19 verses 14 and 31, it was their Day of Preparation and their time of Passover had not yet arrived. Furthermore, according to their reckoning, it was not yet the Sabbath of Unleavened Bread, and so they could lawfully arrest, interrogate and prosecute Yeshua.

**Speculative View: Yeshua's body claimed & buried on the Pharisees' *Nisan* 15, the 6th day of the week.**

The sequence of events is as presented in the Alternative View except that Yeshua's calendar listed this day as *Nisan* 16. According to Matthew 27:62, Mark 15:42, Luke 23:54 and John 19:42, this was the "Day of Preparation." Since Yeshua had already eaten the Passover a day earlier and the Pharisees were eating the Passover that very day (it was after sundown), the "preparation" mentioned in the foregoing Scriptures had to be referring to the approaching weekly Sabbath, and therefore this day had to be the 6th day of the week. In addition to its being the "preparation" day for the weekly Sabbath, the Pharisees considered it also to be a festival Sabbath, the first day of Unleavened Bread. Yeshua's disciples did not, however, consider the day to be a festival Sabbath, and therefore could lawfully engage in the work of burying him. Having now identified this day as the 6th day of the week, the position in the week of all previous and subsequent days can be determined with certainty.

**Speculative View: Guard posted at tomb on the Pharisees' *Nisan* 16, the 7th day Sabbath.**

The posting of the guard is as presented in the Alternative View except that Yeshua's calendar listed this day as *Nisan* 17. Recognition of this day being the weekly Sabbath can be found in Matthew 27:62-66. The Pharisees probably justified the lawfulness of their sealing the tomb on the Sabbath by requiring the guard, who was a Gentile, to do the work.

**Speculative View: Yeshua resurrected on the Pharisees' *Nisan* 17, the 1st day of the week, *Bikkurim*.**

The sequence of events surrounding the resurrection is as presented in the Alternative View except that Yeshua's calendar listed this day as *Nisan* 18. Both Yeshua's disciples and the Pharisees recognized it as being the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1-8; Mark 16:1-9; Luke 24:1-9; John 20:1-18). As in the Alternative View, Yeshua arose during either the dark hours or the dawn of the very first light hour of the day.<sup>30</sup> The first light hour better accounts for three

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<sup>30</sup> See footnote 21.

days spent in the tomb (Matthew 12:39-40) because it results in three light and three dark periods (three days and three nights). Moreover, since it was the day after the weekly Sabbath which fell within the Feast of Unleavened Bread, as in the case of the other views, Yeshua had to have risen on the day of Firstfruits – *Bikkurim*.

### **The Pentecost Following Yeshua’s Death**

Applying the fifty day count of Leviticus 23:15-16 to *Bikkurim* (either *Nisan* 17 or 18 in the year of Yeshua’s death), we are able to determine that the first *Shavuot* (Pentecost) following Yeshua’s death fell on the 7th or 8th day of the third month, known on the Rabbinical calendar as *Sivan* 7 or 8 respectively. It is important to remember, however, that these dates only apply to the *Bikkurim* and *Shavuot* immediately following Yeshua’s death. Both of these days are defined from a weekly Sabbath and are not the same date on the calendar each year.<sup>31</sup>

### **Summary**

Taking into account that a civil day is measured from midnight to midnight and not sundown to sundown as in a Biblical day, three views of Yeshua’s last hours can be presented:

#### **1. Conventional View:**

*Preparation for The Passover, Lamb Killed*

The daylight hours of *Nisan* 14; the 5th day of the Biblical week; Thursday of the civil week.

*The Passover Meal*

The early dark hours of *Nisan* 15; the 6th day of the Biblical week; Thursday of the civil week because we know, from tradition, that the meal occurred before midnight.

*His Arrest And Interrogation*

The middle dark hours of *Nisan* 15; the 6th day of the Biblical week; either Thursday or Friday of the civil week depending upon whether the events occurred before or after midnight.

*His Trial*

The daylight hours of *Nisan* 15; the 6th day of the Biblical week; Friday of the civil week.

*His Death*

The middle afternoon hours of *Nisan* 15; the 6th day of the Biblical week; Friday of the civil week.

*His Body Claimed*

The late afternoon of *Nisan* 15; the 6th day of the Biblical week; Friday of the civil week.

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<sup>31</sup> According to the Book of Jubilees, Shavuot always falls on the 15th day of the third month. This follows from its use of a 364 day solar calendar. Jacob Licht, “Calendar”, Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol. 5, p. 51, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Jerusalem Ltd., 1972)

*His Burial*

The twilight hours of *Nisan* 15; the 6th day of the Biblical week; Friday of the civil week.

*The Guard Posted*

The light hours of *Nisan* 16; the 7th day (Sabbath) of the Biblical week; Saturday of the civil week.

*His Resurrection*

Either the dark hours or the very first daylight hour of *Nisan* 17 (*Bikkurim*); the 1st day of the Biblical week; either Saturday or Sunday, depending upon whether the event occurred before or after midnight.

*His Body Found Missing*

The daylight hours of *Nisan* 17; the 1st day of the Biblical week; Sunday of the civil week.

*Shavuot (Pentecost)*

*Sivan* 7 (the third month); the first day of the Biblical week; spans Saturday and Sunday of the civil week.

**2. Alternative View:**

*Preparation for The Passover, Lamb Killed*

The daylight hours of *Nisan* 14; the 4th day of the Biblical week; Wednesday of the civil week.

*The Passover Meal*

The early dark hours of *Nisan* 15; the 5th day of the Biblical week; Wednesday of the civil week because we know, from tradition, that the meal occurred before midnight.

*His Arrest And Interrogation*

The middle dark hours of *Nisan* 15; the 5th day of the Biblical week; either Wednesday or Thursday of the civil week depending upon whether the events occurred before or after midnight.

*His Trial*

The daylight hours of *Nisan* 15; the 5th day of the Biblical week; Thursday of the civil week.

*His Death*

The late daylight hours of *Nisan* 15 (almost evening); the 5th day of the Biblical week; Thursday of the civil week.

*His Body Claimed*

The early dark hours of *Nisan* 16; the 6th day of the Biblical week; Thursday of the civil week since it likely occurred before midnight.

*His Burial*

The dark hours of *Nisan* 16; the 6th day of the Biblical week; either Thursday or Friday of the civil week depending upon whether the event occurred before or after midnight.

### *The Guard Posted*

The light hours of *Nisan* 17; the 7th day (Sabbath) of the Biblical week; Saturday of the civil week.

### *His Resurrection*

Either the dark hours or the very first daylight hour of *Nisan* 18 (*Bikkurim*); the 1st day of the Biblical week; either Saturday or Sunday, depending upon whether the event occurred before or after midnight.

### *His Body Found Missing*

The daylight hours of *Nisan* 18; the 1st day of the Biblical week; Sunday of the civil week.

### *Shavuot (Pentecost)*

*Sivan* 8 (the third month); the first day of the Biblical week; spans Saturday and Sunday of the civil week.

## **3. Speculative View:**

### *Preparation for Yeshua's Passover, Lamb Killed*

The daylight hours of *Nisan* 13 (*Nisan* 14 according to Yeshua's calendar); the 4th day of the Biblical week; Wednesday of the civil week (Yeshua's Day of Preparation for Passover; no special significance to the Pharisees).

### *Yeshua's Passover Meal*

The early dark hours of *Nisan* 14 (*Nisan* 15 according to Yeshua's calendar); the 5th day of the Biblical week; Wednesday of the civil week because we know, from tradition, that the meal occurred before midnight; (Yeshua's Passover and Sabbath of Unleavened Bread; Pharisees' Day of Preparation for Passover).

### *His Arrest And Interrogation*

The middle dark hours of *Nisan* 14 (*Nisan* 15 according to Yeshua's calendar); the 5th day of the Biblical week; either Wednesday or Thursday of the civil week depending upon whether the events occurred before or after midnight; (Yeshua's Passover and Sabbath of Unleavened Bread; Pharisees' Day of Preparation for Passover).

### *His Trial*

The daylight hours of *Nisan* 14 ((*Nisan* 15 according to Yeshua's calendar); the 5th day of the Biblical week; Thursday of the civil week; (Yeshua's Sabbath of Unleavened Bread; Pharisees' Day of Preparation for Passover).

### *His Death*

The late daylight hours of *Nisan* 14 (almost evening) (*Nisan* 15 according to Yeshua's calendar); the 5th day of the Biblical week; Thursday of the civil week; (Yeshua's Sabbath of Unleavened Bread; Pharisees' Day of Preparation for Passover).

### *His Body Claimed*

The early dark hours of *Nisan 15* (*Nisan 16* according to Yeshua's calendar); the 6th day of the Biblical week; Thursday of the civil week since it likely occurred before midnight; (Yeshua's disciples' Day of Preparation for 7th day Sabbath; Pharisees' Passover, Sabbath of Unleavened Bread, and Day of Preparation for 7th day Sabbath).

### *His Burial*

The dark hours of *Nisan 15* (*Nisan 16* according to Yeshua's calendar); the 6th day of the Biblical week; either Thursday or Friday of the civil week depending upon whether the event occurred before or after midnight; (Yeshua's disciples' Day of Preparation for 7th day Sabbath; Pharisees' Passover, Sabbath of Unleavened Bread, and Day of Preparation for 7th day Sabbath).

### *The Guard Posted*

The light hours of *Nisan 16* (*Nisan 17* according to Yeshua's calendar); the 7th day Sabbath of the Biblical week; Saturday of the civil week (Sabbath for both Yeshua's disciples and the Pharisees).

### *His Resurrection*

Either the dark hours or dawn of the very first daylight hour of *Nisan 17* (*Nisan 18* according to Yeshua's calendar) (*Bikkurim*); the 1st day of the Biblical week; either Saturday or Sunday, depending upon whether the event occurred before or after midnight.

### *His Body Found Missing*

Dawn of the very first daylight hour of *Nisan 17* (*Nisan 18* according to Yeshua's calendar) (*Bikkurim*); the 1st day of the Biblical week; Sunday of the civil week.

### *Shavuot (Pentecost)*

*Sivan 7* (the third month) (*Sivan 8* according to Yeshua's calendar); the first day of the Biblical week; spans Saturday and Sunday of the civil week.

## **Conclusion**

This paper began with two premises, to-wit: (1) that the references to "firstfruits" found in the Old and New Covenant Scriptures are prophetically connected and not coincidental; (2) that understanding the offering of Firstfruits is prophetically important in understanding the sequence of events from Yeshua's last Passover to the arrival of the Holy Spirit. If the reader is satisfied that Yeshua rose from the dead on *Bikkurim*, the day of the firstfruits offering and the beginning of the firstfruits season, then the prophetic importance of Firstfruits has been demonstrated, and the premises upon which this paper is begun has been substantially supported. Furthermore, since God chose *Bikkurim* to be the day of Yeshua's resurrection, our annual remembrance of the resurrection is more authentic if celebrated on *Bikkurim* (which has no set calendar date) than on either the 18th or 19th day of *Nisan*, depending upon which chronology one adopts.

As to which of the three chronologies is more probable, this writer can only offer this observation: The Conventional View is easier to reconcile with [John 19:14-16](#) than the Alternative View, but the Alternative View results in Yeshua being in the tomb three light

periods and three dark periods (days and nights), and therefore fulfills the three days and three nights required by Matthew 12:39-40,<sup>32</sup> the conventional view does not as easily fulfill this requirement. The Speculative View produces perfect consistency with the Scriptures, but is based upon an unverifiable hypothesis.

### **A Final Observation**

As one understands Yeshua's identity as "the lamb of God" and observes the remarkable parallels between the historical Passover sequence and Yeshua's final hours, one may wonder why, according to the Conventional and Alternative Views, Yeshua did not die on *Nisan* 14, the day that the Passover lamb was slain. A possible answer is that the killing of the Passover lamb was not the intended sacrifice. The noted Jewish theologian Abraham P. Bloch explains:

"The original paschal lamb (*pesach*) was not an "offering" (*Karban*) in the technical sense of the word. There were as yet no consecrated priests to perform the normal rites of an offering, nor was there any altar upon which to perform such rites."<sup>33</sup>

Further supporting this analysis is the fact that, even after the priesthood was established, each year the Passover lamb continued to be killed by the lamb's owner and not by the Temple priest:

"As a ritual it was unique in many respects. The lamb was slaughtered in the afternoon of the fourteenth of *Nisan*, prior to the commencement of the festival (Lev. 23:5). This was an exception to the general rule that all festival offerings are to be sacrificed on the day of the festival. Furthermore, the lambs were slaughtered by Israelites, and the priests poured the blood on the base of the altar. All other offerings were generally slaughtered by the priest."<sup>34</sup>

Although the killing of the lamb was, by its nature, a sacrifice, it was only incidental to the way the lamb and its blood were used. The blood was painted on the lintel and doorposts of the houses, and the lamb was eaten by the Israelites. Exodus 34:25 connects the sacrifice with the centrality of the eating:

*"You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven, nor shall the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover be left until morning."*

According to both the Conventional and Alternative Views, Yeshua died on *Nisan* 15 – the same day that the Passover lambs of the Pharisees were eaten. According to the Speculative View, however, Yeshua died on *Nisan* 14, the very same day that the Passover lambs of the Pharisees were killed.

March 3, 1997

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<sup>32</sup> Samuele Bacchiocchi, pp. 22-35.

<sup>33</sup> Abraham P. Bloch, The Biblical and Historical Background of the Jewish Holy Days, p. 105, (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1978).

<sup>34</sup> Abraham P. Bloch, p. 101.