

The Hebrew Day – How was it calculated?

Kel Hammond. This document was updated on the 21st Aug, 2016. It is located on the Vault [here](#).

One of the peculiarities of Jewish time reckoning is that the day is reckoned to begin at Sunset, with a night preceding the following daylight. This practice was well established in NT times and has continued down to the present time. This is observable in the following NT references -

John.19:31 "The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away."

Luke.23:52-54 "This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on."

Josephus, a later first century writer, also mentions this practice in his book called the ¹"Wars of the Jews" "... one of the priests stood of course, and gave a signal beforehand, with a trumpet at the beginning of every seventh day, in the evening twilight, as also at the evening when that day was finished, as giving notice to the people when they were to leave off work, and when they were to go to work again."

This later Jewish practice matches what we find written about 500 years earlier, in the days of Nehemiah (approx' 432BC) after the return from Babylonian captivity –

(Neh.13:19) "And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the Sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath"

It is clear then that the later Jews reckoned the day to be begin at sunset. However, from the time of Moses to the Babylonian captivity there are two main streams of thought about how the original ²Hebrew day was reckoned. Some believe that the day began at Sunset, and some believe that the day originally began at Sunrise but was later changed to the sunset reckoning at about the time of the Babylonian captivity. In this essay we will examine the main arguments used in both rationales.

The Month.

We know from the scriptures that the original Hebrew calendar was primarily lunar. The Hebrew word for month is "chodesh", which basically means moon. New moon celebrations are referred to in many of the OT scriptures (**1.Sam.20:5, 18, 24, 2.Kg.4:23, Isaiah.66:23, Ezek.46:1, 6, Amos.8:5**). Just like the Sabbath, the first day of every new month was to be marked out by special offerings (**Num.28:11-15**).

We can see this same type of reckoning in ³Babylonian tradition, where each new month began when the new crescent moon was seen just after sunset. In like manner, the ancient Israelites blew a trumpet at the new moon (**Psalms.81:3, Num.10:10**) which marked the arrival of a new month. The arrival of the seventh month was particularly marked out as a holy day, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a special Sabbath day (**Lev.23:24, Num.29:1**), probably in preparation for the coming Day of Atonement.

¹ The Wars of the Jews, Josephus, (Book IV, Chp.9, Sect. 12 – [Pg.543]). Link to an on-line PDF version is [here](#) (Pg.228)

² The following references show the origin of these main streams of thinking. See [here](#).

³ The Babylonian months were lunar, the first day of each month began at sunset when a new crescent moon was first sighted, see [here](#).

Num.10:10 “Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, **and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets** over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God.”

Psalms.81:3 “**Blow up the trumpet in the new moon**, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day”.

Lev.23:24 “Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, **In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation.**”

⁴According to the Mishnah and Tosefta, in the Maccabean, Herodian, and Mishnaic periods, new months were determined by the sighting of a new crescent, with two eyewitnesses required to testify to the Sanhedrin to having seen the new lunar crescent at sunset. The practice in the time of Gamaliel II (c. 100 CE) was for witnesses to select the appearance of the moon from a collection of drawings that depicted the crescent in a variety of orientations, only a few of which could be valid in any given month. These observations were compared against calculations.

At first the beginning of each Jewish month was signalled to the communities of Israel and beyond by fires lit on mountaintops ... “

The new moon reckoning supports the idea that the day officially begins at sunset.

Jewish, Babylonian & Egyptian Days.

Most historians say that the Babylonians began their day at ⁵sunset, after the first sighting of the new crescent moon. The Babylonian calendar was lunar, with an extra month inserted every few years (called an intercalary month) to ensure that the calendar remained in sync with the solar cycle. There is some ⁶internal scriptural evidence that suggests that the ancient Hebrews did the same.

⁷The ancient Egyptians originally also used a lunar calendar, but this was later changed to a solar one. Most authorities suggest that the Egyptians began their day at ⁸sunrise and not sunset.

In this essay we examine many scriptural references, and particularly those from the Law of Moses, which have some bearing upon this subject. We will firstly consider the sunset-sunset model, then later the sunrise-sunrise model.

The Exodus marked the beginning of Israel's new calendar year.

⁹It was just after the Exodus that a new calendar was instituted by God, which set the beginning of the Hebrew year. The new-year began in the same month as their deliverance from Egypt, which marked their national birth. The first month of the year was originally called “**Abib**” (**Exod.13:4, 23:15, 34:18, Deut.16:1**), a

⁴ See the article in Wikipedia, “Hebrew Calendar” - link is [here](#).

⁵ Babylonians began their day at sun-set, see the comments [here](#). And [here](#).

⁶ The intercalary year = a year with an extra month (i.e. 13 months instead of 12). We see an example of this when we count the times mentioned in the early chapters of Ezekiel. Compare **Ezek.1:1-2** - 5th day / 4th mth / 5th year with **Ezek.8:1** - 5th day / 6th mth / 6th year. That's a period of 1 year and 2 months or 354 days (lunar year) plus 59 days (2 lunar months) = 413 days. Yet the time between these two dates must allow for the 430 days of **Ezek.4:5-6**.

⁷ Egyptian Calendar – Encyclopaedia Britannica, see [here](#)

⁸ Egyptians began their day at sun-rise, see the comments [here](#) and [here](#).

⁹ There is a suggestion by many authors that the calendars in the world all changed sometime in the 8th century BC, from 360 days per year to 365 days per year. Some speculated that this is related to the sign given to Hezekiah, of the sun going back by 10 degrees, see [here](#).

word that refers to the forming of the ears of barley, the first of their crops. We see the same word translated as “*green ears*” in [Lev.2:14](#). After the Babylonian captivity the first month was known as “Nisan” ([Neh.2:1](#), [Est.3:7](#)), which was the ¹⁰Babylonian name for the same month.

The following reference shows how the new-year was to be reckoned after the Exodus. This also shows that the year was primarily lunar.

[Exod.12:1-2](#). “And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, **This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.**”

Days and Evenings – some basic guidelines.

Before we look specifically at the scriptural evidence, it is important to note that when we read the word “day” it is clear that it does not always refer to a 24 hour period, as we now know it. ¹¹On considering all the various scriptural references, it seems that the general use of the word “day” is sometimes ambiguous.

- Most often the term “day” refers to day-light compared to evening or night-time ([Gen.1:5](#), [31:39-40](#), [Exod.13:21](#), [1.Chron.9:33](#), [Neh.9:12](#), [19](#), [John.11:9](#), [Matt.20:2,8](#)).
- Sometimes the term refers to a whole 24 hour period, or what we would call a whole day ([Gen.1:8-31](#), [2:3](#), [7:13](#), [8:5](#), [Exod.13:6](#), [20:8-11](#)).
- Sometimes the term refers to a general epoch of time or an event without necessarily referring to a particular day ([Gen.2:4](#), [2:17](#), [3:5](#), [35:3](#), [Num.3:1](#), [2.Sam.22:1](#), [19](#), [Jer.34:13](#), [1.Kg.2:37,42](#), [John.8:56](#), [1.Cor.3:13](#), [Phil.1:6](#)). Many of these references use the Hebrew “*be-yom*” for “in the day.”

Only the context can determine how the word is used, and even then we may simply be guessing.

¹²Some also suggest that the term “evening” does not always represent night, but rather it usually refers to the late afternoon that leads to the twilight period before full night. See the examples in these references ([Gen.24:11](#), [Gen.30:16](#), [Deut.23:11](#), [Prov.7:9](#), [Matt.14:1](#), [Luke.24:29](#)).

Importantly, the day-light hours were generally recognized as the time of work and labour ([John.9:4](#), [John.11:9-11](#)). The evening and night a time of relaxation and rest.

To grasp all these various points highlights some of the vagaries found in the record. In our opinion, sometimes evening means twilight, and sometimes it means night-time. In our opinion, only the context can determine the correct application.

There is a very comprehensive website dedicated to issues surrounding these questions, called ¹³The Biblical Calendar. It may be of value to those who wish to know more about this subject.

¹⁰ See the article in Wikipedia, Nisan – link is [here](#).

¹¹ An interesting summary of this is found in the article – “The Start of a Biblical Day of the Month and the Sabbath Day” - by Herb Solinsky. See [here](#).

¹² See the sight, “Ancient Hebrew Days Began at Sunrise” - Link is [here](#).

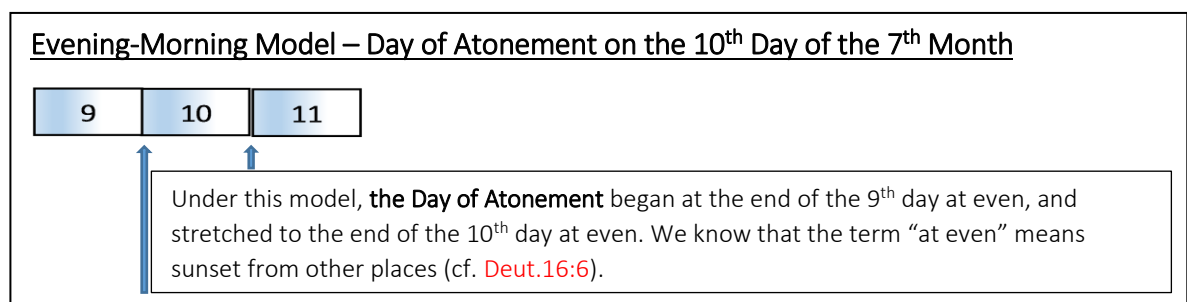
¹³ The Biblical Calendar, located [here](#).

Old Testament examples of Sunset to Sunset reckoning.

We will now examine the evidence that supports a sunset reckoning for the beginning of the (24 hour) day. Although no single reference tell us specifically how the day was to be reckoned, there is enough circumstantial evidence available in the record to get a basic understanding on this subject.

- 1) **Each of the first 6 days mentioned in Gen.1:3-31** are reckoned as evening-morning, which is apparently based upon the order of creation that began on the first day. That is, darkness preceded light. This seems to set the rule of how the day was to be reckoned in later times. In this context, evening seems to refer to the night-time that preceded the day. It is difficult to make sense of the wording in Gen.1 if the evening only means later afternoon in this place. Why place evening before morning if this was the intention.
- 2) **The (Sabbath) Day of Atonement** was reckoned evening to evening. It commenced on the evening of the 9th day and continued to the evening of the 10th day. "**It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict yourselves; on the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you keep your sabbath**" Lev.23:32.

By comparing this with all the following references (Lev.16:29, 23:27-32, 25:9, Num.29:7-11), it is clear that this means that this **Sabbath day** (Lev.32:32) and its associated fast, began in the evening that followed the 9th day and continued to and concluded on the evening that followed the 10th day. This was a special Sabbath day, a day of national affliction. This whole day was called the 10th day of the month (Lev.23:27). This clarification may have been needed because in making the shift from a morning reckoning to an evening reckoning, the 'day' was in fact moved back so that it began a half day earlier than had been the case previously when they served the Egyptians To avoid any misunderstanding, the verse explains with utmost precision that the tenth day, according to the sunset reckoning, began "on the ninth day of the month beginning at evening" and it was to be kept "from evening to evening"



This whole Day of Atonement was the 10th day of the seventh month. The careful detail used in explaining how this day was to be calculated may indicate that some of the people still held onto Egyptian reckoning, and so to avoid confusion, **the start and finish of the day was fully explained.**

- 3) **The 7 Days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread** was also reckoned evening to evening (Exod.12:18). The way these times are precisely detailed indicates that the feast of Unleavened Bread began at the end of the 14th day of Abib, i.e. in the evening that followed, which is the beginning of the 15th day. This type of reckoning is the same as that found in the Day of Atonement (Lev.23:32), which helps us understand the wording. This is NOT speaking about the Passover, but what followed it. Although the Passover itself was eaten with unleavened bread, unleavened bread was not

forbidden on the 14th. It seems that unleavened bread was removed from all houses for the following seven day feast. We will expand on this later with more detail and with a diagram.

- 4) **The Weekly Sabbath Day began in the evening.** In this record the Sabbath is said to begin in the evening, so Nehemiah had the gates close as the afternoon wore on. [Neh.13:19](#) tells us, "[And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the Sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath.](#)" We know from [Exod.20:8-11 & 31:12-17](#) that the 7th Day Sabbath was to memorialize God resting from all his works. This concepts is drawn from [Gen.2:2-3](#).
- 5) **Contact with the carcase of dead animals makes a person unclean.** They are to wash and remain unclean **until the evening** – which one assumes marks the end of the day ([Lev.11:24-28](#)).
- 6) **A man remained unclean for 7 Days after being defiled by contact with the dead.** On the third and seventh days an offering was made, then he remained unclean until the evening that followed the seventh day – i.e. until sunset. This appears to have marked the end of his seven days of uncleanness, and the beginning of a new day - the eight day ([Num.19:7-22](#)).
- 7) **Night and Day.** Another indication of sunset reckoning can be seen in those passages where the "night" is mentioned before the "day." This sequence is less frequent in the Old Testament than the sequence in which the "day" is mentioned before the "night." The night-day sequence does, however, occur. Esther, for example, sent word to Mordecai to tell the Jews to "[neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day](#)" ([Esther 4:16](#)). Similarly Solomon prayed at the dedication of the Temple that God's "[eyes may be open night and day toward this house](#)" ([1 Kings 8:29](#)).
- 8) **Capital punishment – hang him on a tree.** The Law specified that those who committed sin worthy of death were to be hung upon a tree, and were not to be left hanging upon a tree overnight but **were to be buried that day** – ie. before sunset, that the land be not defiled. The word "day" in this context probably more fairly represents "day-light" than the 24 hour day.

["And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; \(for he that is hanged is accursed of God;\) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance."](#) ([Deut.21:22-23](#)).

["And it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, that Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees,"](#) ([Josh.10:27](#)). (See also [Josh.8:29](#))

- 9) **The lamps were tended and replenished with oil, from evening to morning.** "In
[the tent of meeting, outside the veil that is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening to morning before the LORD. It shall be a statute forever to be observed throughout their generations by the people of Israel.](#)" [Exod.27:21](#) ([Lev.24:3-4](#))

The order of the continual service is evening and morning, which covers a whole day. Now given the fact that [Exod.30:7-8](#) tells us that the incense was to be offered when the lamps were filled, and that incense represents prayer, it is interesting that [Psalm.55:17](#) uses the order of "[Evening, and morning and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud ...](#)" Although this is not marking a 24 hour day, the order that is used is interesting.

However, we must note that the order of incense in [Exod.30:7-8](#) is listed as morning and evening, as it is in the same context of the daily burnt offering, which we will examine when we consider the contra argument. As we will suggest, the terms “morning and evening” do not refer to day and night, but rather AM and PM in our terms – the two bookends of the work day. See below -

[Acts.3:1-2](#) details the hour of prayer as the 9th hour, which is about 3pm our time. This corresponded with the offering up of the evening incense. The evening sacrifice and the offering of the incense marked the end of the work day (in day-light), not the 24 hour day.

10) **The record of Judges 19.**

In this record, **the close of the day is identified with sunset**, and the next day with sunrise. Again, this reference may more fairly only refer to day-light rather than the idea of a 24 hour day.

“And when the man and his concubine and his servant rose up to depart, his father-in-law, the girl’s father, said to him, “Behold, **now the day has waned toward evening. Please, spend the night. Behold, the day draws to its close.** Lodge here and let your heart be merry, **and tomorrow you shall arise early in the morning for your journey, and go home.**” But the man would not spend the night. He rose up and departed and arrived opposite Jebus (that is, Jerusalem). He had with him a couple of saddled donkeys, and his concubine was with him. When they were near Jebus, **the day was nearly over**, and the servant said to his master, “Come now, let us turn aside to this city of the Jebusites and **spend the night in it.**”

And his master said to him, “We will not turn aside into the city of foreigners, who do not belong to the people of Israel, but we will pass on to Gibeah.” And he said to his young man, “Come and let us draw near to one of these places and spend the night at Gibeah or at Ramah.” So they passed on and went their way. **And the sun went down on them near Gibeah**, which belongs to Benjamin,” ([Judges.19:9-14](#)).

11) **The Original Passover.** To correctly understand the Passover, it is necessary to carefully review ALL the references and put them into a table and see how the Passover coordinates with the Feast of unleavened bread.

When we do this we end up with a different result to what Jewish tradition concluded and practiced in the first century. This will explain why Jesus kept the Passover on the day before the Jews did in NT times. In other words, Jesus kept it correctly, but the Jews kept the wrong day. We see this anomaly when we compare **Jesus’ Passover** ([Matt.26:19](#), [Mk.14:14-16](#), [Luke.22:11-15](#)) with that kept by the Jews a day later ([John.18:28](#), [19:14](#)), which John calls **the Jews Passover** ([John.11:55](#)).

We will now closely examine the Original Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The Passover – 14th Abib.

To understand the timing, we need to take ALL the references into account to grasp the logistics involved. We will now lay out all the main events in chronological order. By doing this can we understand how the Passover connects to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The table following will show this in graphic detail.

- **Exod.12:6, Deut.16:6.** The Passover lamb was slain at even, at the time of the going down of the sun – which denotes sunset, the opposite of sunrise (Ps.50:1, 113:3, Mal.1:11, Gen.15:12, Josh.1:4).
- **Exod.12:8-9, Deut.16:1-4.** The Passover was to be eaten **that night**, with unleavened bread. It was to be roasted with fire, a process that takes between 4-6 hours depending upon lamb size. There is no mention of foregoing leaven on the fourteenth, only of not eating it WITH the Passover.
- **Exod.12:11.** They were to eat the Passover fully clothed, with shoes and staff, and ready to leave.
- **Exod.12:12-13 27-29.** **It was called the Lord’s Passover because** the LORD passed over the houses of those who ate the Passover, who were inside the houses marked with the blood at midnight when the LORD slew all the firstborn of Egypt. **The eating of the lamb was called the Lord’s Passover, not the killing of the Passover lamb (Exod.12:11).**
- **Lev.23:5-6, Num.9:2-5, 28:16, Josh.5:10, 2.Chron.30:15.** The 14th day of the first month is clearly called the LORD’S Passover, and it was to be kept/eaten in the “even” – i.e. which is a flexible term like our term evening.
- **Exod.12:31.** Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron at night, and told them to leave Egypt.
- **Exod.12:22.** Israel were instructed to not leave their houses until the morning (sunrise).
- **Exod.11:2-3, 12:33-36.** During the next daylight hours, after sunrise, the Jews spoiled the Egyptians. This may have been a continuation of what happened before, the events of the Passover now motivated the people to now urge Israel to leave Egypt.
- **Exod.12:37-41, Num.33:3-5.** Israel firstly gathered at Rameses, and marched out of Egypt as a host (600,000 men). This must have taken some time to gather this many people, particularly given that they walked from their homes in the various parts of Goshen to Rameses, in Eastern Goshen. They left Egypt in haste (**Exod.12:33-34**) on the 15th Abib, the day after Passover (**Num.33:3, Josh.5:11**).

The term “even” or “evening” generally defines the time around sunset and perhaps also beyond, depending on context. For example, **Deut.16:6** is quite clear when it says the Passover was to be sacrificed at even, which it further defines as **the time of the going down of the sun**. Significantly, **Lev.23:5, Num.9:5, Josh.5:10** tell us that the Passover was kept at even – which means that it was eaten in the evening, for the Passover memorializes the LORD passing over the houses of the Israelites, not the actual slaying of the Lamb. The Passover Lamb was killed at Sunset, then it was roasted which would take 4-6 hours, then it was eaten that night. **To keep the Passover is to eat it (2.Chron.35:8, Matt.26:18).**

Israel left Egypt on the night of the 15th Abib - The Feast of Unleavened Bread.

According to later Jewish tradition, the Passover was considered the first day of the Feast of Unleavened bread – see **Mark 14:12** (cf. **Matt 26:16**). However, on reviewing the details surrounding the original Passover, it would seem that this is not correct, even though the Passover itself was to be eaten with unleavened bread.

We must remember that Israel could not leave their dwellings until after dawn. They then spoiled the Egyptian and afterwards gathered at Rameses, to leave Egypt as one host. This gathering was in the daylight, after the Passover. They then left Egypt by night on the 15th.

- **Exod.12:40-42.** Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years—on that very same day—**it came to pass that all the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night of solemn observance to the LORD for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is that night of the LORD, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.**

- **Deut.16:1** “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.**”
- **Num.33:3, Josh.5:11.** “**And they departed from Rameses** in the first month, **on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow** (the next day) **after the passover** the children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians.”

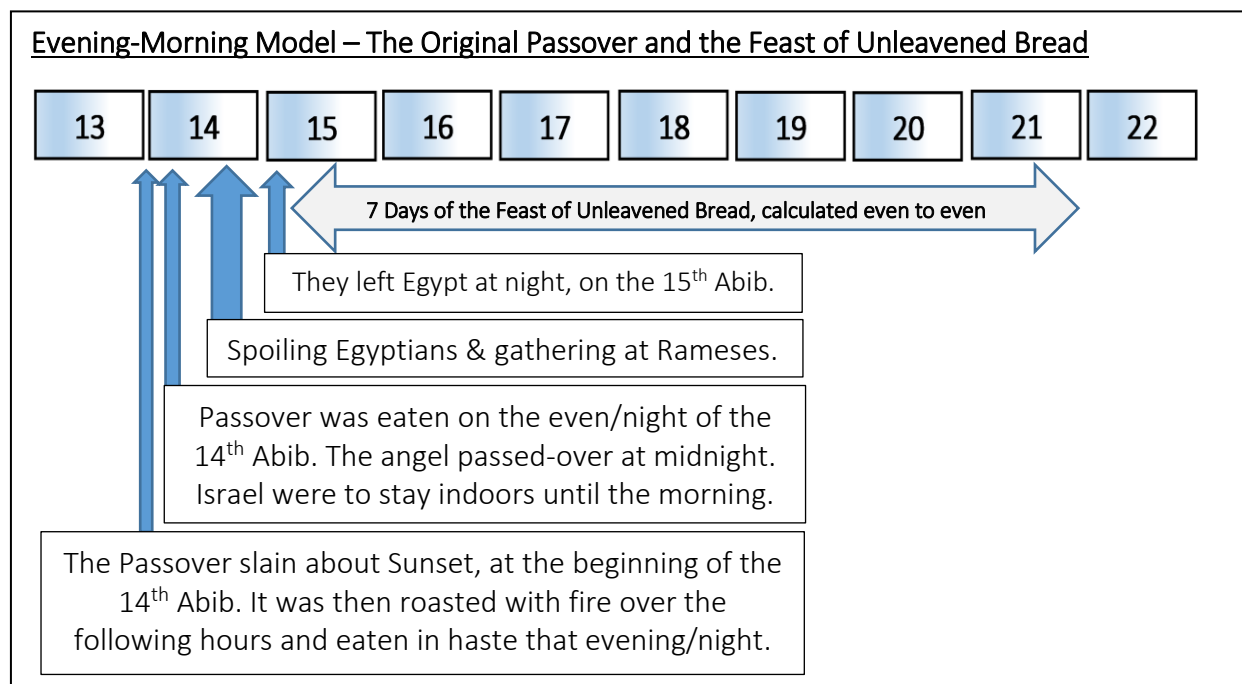
The Seven Days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (are measured evening to evening).

The feast of unleavened bread was to memorialize Israel’s exodus from Egypt, as they did not have time to leaven their bread – for they left in extreme haste (**Exod.12:19, 33-34, Deut.16:3**).

- **Exod.12:18.** “In the first month, **on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even.**” (use **Lev.23:32** as a guide)
- **Exod.13:6-7.** “**Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread**, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the LORD. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.”
- **Deut.16:8.** “Six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread: and on the seventh day shall be a solemn assembly to the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work therein.”
- **Lev.23:6.** “**And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast** of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.”
- **Num.28:16-18, 25.** “**And in the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover of the LORD. And in the fifteenth day of this month is the feast:** seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten. In the first day shall be an holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of servile work therein: And on the seventh day ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work.”

The following table models these events. They easily fit together when we reckon the Day to begin at Sunset. The same model applies here as we saw used in **Lev.23:32**, the Day of Atonement.

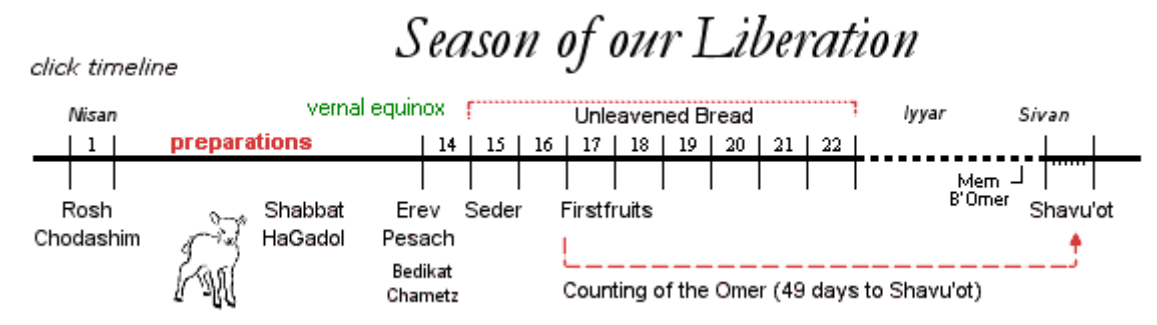
It is very important to understand the slower nature of activity in ancient times. Everything was basically done on foot, and the assembling of such a vast multitude with all their goods followed by their departure as one host under Moses’ direction would have taken some time to coordinate.



¹⁴General Jewish and Christian thinking on the Passover.

The following diagram depicts how the later Jewish and Christian thinking understands the timing of the Passover. A summary of the commonly held rationale can be found on the article titled – ¹⁵“When does Passover begin?” In this model, the Passover was slain in the afternoon of the 14th Abib. This is in accord with Jewish NT practice. ¹⁶Josephus says that the Jews of the NT times sacrificed the Passover lamb between 3pm and 5pm on the afternoon of the 14th Abib.

Although this rationale was certainly practiced in NT times, it is difficult to make it fit into the timing of the first Passover in the days of Moses. Notice also that for some reason the following table has made the feast of unleavened bread eight days, instead of seven - see Exod.12:18. Also, recall the contradiction between Jesus keeping the Passover a day earlier than the Jews of his time should also be taken into account.



¹⁷Reviewing the Counter Rationale – The day begins at Sunrise.

The evidence for a sunrise reckoning in Bible times is not as explicit and abundant as that for the sunset reckoning, yet it cannot be ignored.

The counter argument suggests that the various feasts and holy days that began in the evening were anomalies that only had reference to how some of the religious feasts and holy days were to be kept. It is reasoned that on these special occasions, the special day was often stretched across two half days so that the worshippers might be fully prepared for the ceremonies on the coming day.

This counter position suggests that other evidences in the OT texts indicate that the Hebrew day commenced at sunrise in the same manner as that employed by Egypt, etc. While acknowledging that many Israelites may have reasoned this way as a legacy of their Egyptian captivity, we don't believe that there is strong supporting evidence that demonstrates that this is how God intended it, nor how the day was generally reckoned in the OT Scriptures. We will now list and examine some of the main references that are used to support the contrary thesis of the 24 hour day beginning at sunrise.

¹⁴ Others conclude that the Passover was kept (eaten) on the 14th Abib, see these links - [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), & [here](#).

¹⁵ When does Passover begin? – Link to the article is [here](#).

¹⁶ See Josephus' "War of the Jews" Book VI, Chap. 9, Sect. 3 (Page 598). The Link to a PDF version is [here](#) (Page 315).

¹⁷ One of the best summaries of the argument that supports a sunrise beginning is probably found at this site – "2besaved", located [here](#). There are quite a few dictionaries and commentaries that support this view. See also the article in the Plain Truth – "When does God's day begin?" located [here](#).

The Daily Sacrifice.

“And thou shalt say unto them, This is the offering made by fire which ye shall offer unto the LORD; two lambs of the first year without spot **day by day, for a continual burnt offering**. The one lamb shalt thou offer **in the morning**, and the other lamb shalt thou offer **at even**,” Num.28:3-4. (see also 1.Chron.16:40, 2.Chron.2:4, 13:11, 31:3, Ezra.3:3)

The same terminology is used earlier, when the priests were consecrated.

Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year **day by day continually**. **The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even:**” Exod.29:38-39, & Vv.42.

This is perhaps one of the strongest counter argument that supports a sunrise start for the day. The continual daily sacrifice appears to be always spoken of as being offered in the morning and the evening, in that order. This was to be offered day by day continually.

However, solely relying upon the order of the sacrifices to denote how the 24 hour day was structured maybe missing the point. We must consider the cultural context and setting. We tend to forget that the ancients were, by and large, agricultural folk who were early risers. They rose and worked from sunrise to sunset – fully utilizing natural light. Psalm.104:20-23 clearly shows how they arose with the sun and worked until the evening. It is here contrasted to the beasts who creep forth in the night (See also 2.Sam.21:10). They didn’t have artificial lighting to the extent that we do, so that we hardly notice. In other words, generally the work day was MAINLY during the daylight hours. The night was a time of rest (Isaiah.21:4).

Perhaps the daily sacrifice was to bookend their labour. That is, that they and all their labour was to be dedicated to the LORD – at the start and at the end of each day-light period. At the same time the incense was also offered, which stood for their prayers of dedication and thanks to God for all he did for them. Of note here is Acts.3:1, where we have mentioned the hour of prayer, being the 9th hour, about 3pm. This was the time when the incense was offered up ... in the evening towards the end of the work day. Incense was offered at a similar time to the daily offerings which is why it is mentioned in the same context in Exod.30. It seems that a coal from the burnt offering was used on the incense altar, in the Holy Place (Lev.16:12), thus tying the daily burnt offerings to the offering up of the incense.

In the Bible, when the morning is mentioned before the evening, this indicates the order in which they came in the waking - working day. In the law of the continual burnt offering, for example, the morning sacrifice is mentioned before the evening sacrifice (Ex 29:39-41), because the former marked the beginning of the daily priestly ministrations at the tabernacle.

Other References that speak of Day, or the order from morning to evening.

- Psalm.104:22-23. “The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. **Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening.**”
The context of these verses speak of the lions and beasts creeping forth at night to hunt, and at sunrise they sleep. While they sleep man awakes to his labours until the evening (i.e. late afternoon to sunset and twilight) comes, then he rests. The reference only marks out the day-light hours of labour, nothing more.
- Exod.18:13. “And it came to pass **on the morrow**, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses **from the morning unto the evening.**”

The context tells us that Moses spent all his day-light hours sitting in judgement, until the evening. As noted earlier, the term evening refers to the late afternoon. The reference point is the previous day, when Moses talked with his father in law – and the morrow spoken of indicates what happened on the next day. Moses did not judge the people during the night, but commenced in the morning and continued till the evening. This is easily understandable irrespective of how the day was reckoned.

- **Exod.32:5-6** (ESV). “When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, **“Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD.”** And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play”
The reference can be understood as saying, “the people rose up early in the morning of the following day and offered burnt offerings & etc.” The term “day” here refers to the day-light, as compared to the night. The words here can reasonably be understood irrespective of how the day was reckoned.
- **Deut.28:67**. “And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: **In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning!** for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.”
The order is given as “day and night”, “morning” and “even” and “morning.” Some take this as evidence of the way that the 24 hour day was structured. However, it more likely means that there would be no prospect of better things, either in the daylight or in the night, morning or afternoon. The reference just as simply means that there would be no anticipation of rest anytime, as all the generally used time markers are used. The sequence basically corresponds to how the people laboured, i.e. during the daylight hours. This does not give support to how the day was ordered.
- **1.Sam.17:16**. “And the Philistine drew near **morning and evening, and presented himself forty days.**”
The rationale is that we are told that for forty DAYS the Philistine approached every MORNING AND EVENING, not from EVENING to MORNING, etc.
We would point out that it does not say he approached day and night. The terms “morning and evening” are not being used as the measure of a 24 hour day. The most natural way to read the record is that he presented his challenge to Israel in the morning and in the evening (afternoon) ... i.e. at the start and at the end of the day-light that they were fighting.
- **Job 4:20**. “They are destroyed **from morning to evening:** they perish for ever without any regarding it.”
The record quite naturally reads that they were destroyed from morning/sunrise to afternoon/sunset. He is not marking out the order of a day.
- **Lev.7:15-18** “And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten on the day of his offering. **He shall not leave any of it until the morning.** But if the sacrifice of his offering be a vow, or a voluntary offering, **it shall be eaten the same day that he offereth his sacrifice: and on the morrow also the remainder of it shall be eaten: But the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burnt with fire.** And if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings be eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be imputed unto him that offereth it: it shall be an abomination, and the soul that eateth of it shall bear his iniquity.”
The Law relating to this offering is similar to that spoken of about the Passover (**Exod.12:10, 22, Deut.16:4**) and also the keeping of the manna (**Exod.16:20, 23**). The command here is that the flesh of the sacrifices was not to be kept for the future, but to be eaten when it was offered. The term

“day” probably refers to the day-light hours. In other words, it was to be eaten that day, and possibly into the evening, but it was not to be kept or eaten during the following day-light hours. In this reference the term day may not represent a 24 hour period.

- **Lev.22:29-30.** "When you sacrifice a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Lord ... **it shall be eaten on the same day, you shall leave none of it until morning.**"
The term “day” probably refers to the day-light hours. In other words, it was to be eaten that day, and possibly into the evening, but it was not to be kept or eaten during the following day-light hours. In this reference the term day may not represent a 24 hour period.
- **Genesis 19:30-38** “And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us . . . Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. **And they made their father drink wine that night:** and the firstborn went in and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. **And it came to pass on the morrow,** that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold I lay **yesternight** with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him . . . “
The reference to the behaviour of Lot’s daughters indicates that night was followed by a morrow, which was then followed by another night. To suggest that this defines the 24 hour day is rather weak, as it hinges upon the meaning of “morrow.” If morrow simply defines the next set of day-light hours, then the reference is easily understandable.

The Original Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread – reckoned on a day beginning at Sunrise.

The Passover – 14th Abib.

To understand the timing, we need to take ALL the references into account to grasp the logistics involved. We will now lay out all the main events in chronological order. By doing this can we understand how the Passover connects to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The table following will show this in graphic detail.

- **Deut.16:6.** The Passover was slain at even, at the going down of the sun.
- **Exod.12:18, Num.14:11.** The Passover was eaten **on the 14th Abib** - at even.
- **Exod.12:8, Deut.16:1-4.** The Passover was to be eaten with unleavened bread. There is no mention here of foregoing leaven on the fourteenth, only of not eating it WITH the Passover.
- **Lev.23:5, Num.9:3, 5, 28:16, 2.Chron.30:15.** The 14th day of the first month is the LORD’S Passover. The day is clearly identified as the 14th day of the first month, and the time of eating is clearly identified as “even.”
- **Exod.12:29.** At midnight the angel of the LORD slew all the firstborn of Egypt.
- **Exod.12:31.** Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron at night, and told them to leave Egypt.
- **Exod.12:22.** Israel were not allowed to leave their houses until the morning (sunrise).
- **Exod.11:2-3, 12:33-36.** During the next daylight hours, after sunrise, the Jews spoiled the Egyptians. This may have been a continuation of what happened before, the events of the Passover now motivated the people to now urge Israel to leave Egypt.
- **Exod.12:37-41, Num.33:3-5.** Israel firstly gathered at Rameses, and marched out of Egypt as a host (600,000 men). This must have taken some time to gather this many people, particularly given that most walked.

The term “even” or “evening” generally defines the time around sunset and beyond, depending on context. For example, **Deut.16:6** is quite clear when it says the Passover was to be sacrificed at even, which it further

defines as **the time of the going down of the sun**. Significantly, [Lev.23:5](#), [Num.9:5](#), [Josh.5:10](#) tell us that the Passover was kept at even – which means that it was eaten in the evening. The Passover Lamb was killed at Sunset, then it was roasted which would take a few hours, then it was eaten that night. To keep the Passover is to eat it ([2.Chron.35:8](#), [Matt.26:18](#)).

Israel left Egypt on the night of the 15th Abib - The Feast of Unleavened Bread.

According to later Jewish tradition, the Passover was considered the first day of the Feast of Unleavened bread. However, on reviewing the details surrounding the original Passover, it would seem that this is not correct, even though the Passover itself was to be eaten with unleavened bread.

We must remember that Israel could not leave their dwellings until after dawn. They then spoiled the Egyptian and afterwards gathered at Rameses, to leave Egypt as one host. This gathering was in the daylight, after the Passover. They then left Egypt by night on the 15th.

- [Exod.12:40-42](#). Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years—on that very same day—**it came to pass that all the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night of solemn observance to the LORD for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is that night of the LORD**, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.
- [Deut.16:1](#) “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.**”
- [Num.33:3](#). “**And they departed from Rameses** in the first month, **on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow** (the next day) **after the passover** the children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians.”

The Seven Days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (are measured evening to evening).

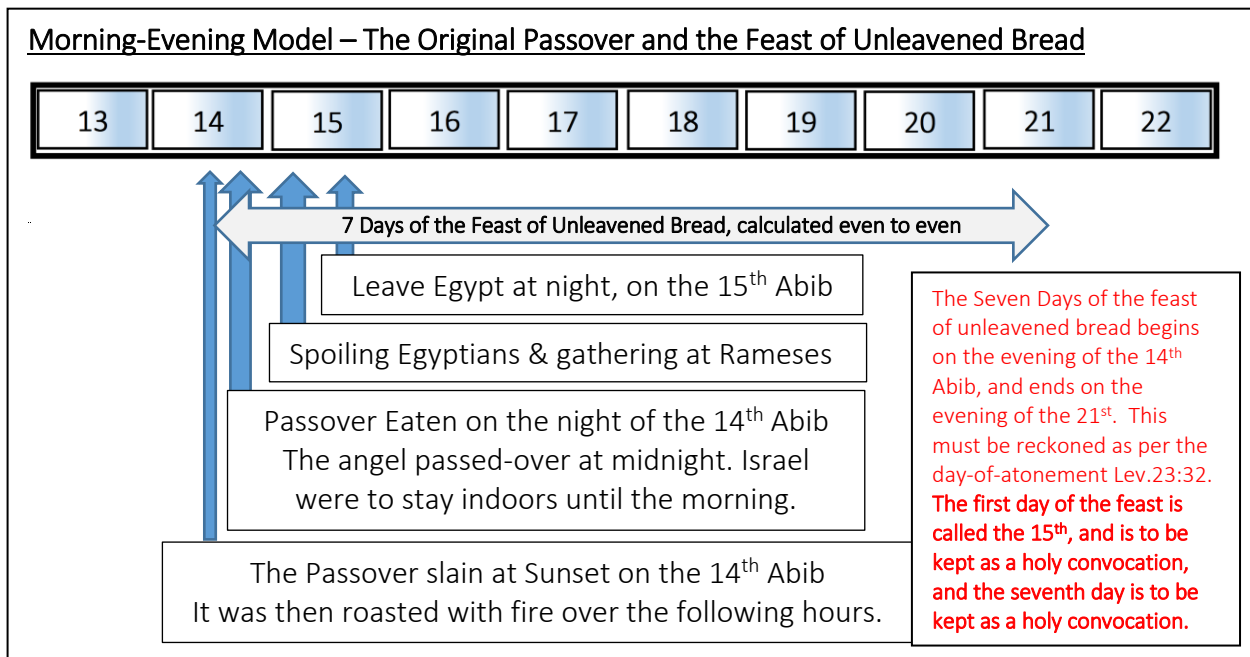
The feast of unleavened bread was to memorialize Israel’s exodus from Egypt, as they did not have time to leaven their bread – for they left in extreme haste ([Exod.12:19](#), [Deut.16:3](#)).

The Seven Days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread – the references.

- [Exod.12:18](#). “In the first month, **on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even.**”
- [Exod.13:6-7](#). “**Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread**, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the LORD. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.”
- [Deut.16:8](#). “Six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread: and on the seventh day shall be a solemn assembly to the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work therein.”
- [Lev.23:6](#). “**And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast** of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.”
- [Num.28:16-18, 25](#). “**And in the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover of the LORD. And in the fifteenth day of this month is the feast**: seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten. In the first day shall be an holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of servile work therein: And on the seventh day ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work.”

The following table models these events. They struggle to fit into the sunrise sunset model.

The main problem with this model are the 2 holy convocations, one of the first day of the feast of unleavened bread (i.e. the 15th Abib) and the other on the 7th day of the feast of unleavened bread (called the 21st Abib). This data does not comfortably fit this model.



Conclusion.

We have found that the indications for the sunset reckoning are more abundant and explicit than those for the sunrise reckoning. Our investigation has concluded that the method of day reckoning in Bible times suggests that the sunset-sunset reckoning has more explanatory power.

The sunrise-sunrise reckoning can be made to fit a number of references. However, as we noted, many of these could simple using the term “day” to refer to day-light hours, and not necessarily 24 hour days.

Perhaps another option is that the two systems coexisted harmoniously. One was based upon how the religious and civil calendar was organised (sunset-sunset), while the other was of a more practical nature which revolved around how the work-day was organised, from sunrise-sunset.