

Reconciling Exodus 12:22, Exodus 12:29, and Deuteronomy 16:1 with the Belief That the Israelites Ate the Passover on the Evening of Nisan 15

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How can a person who believes that the Passover is to be eaten on the early portion of Nisan 15 reconcile the instruction by Moses to not leave their homes on the night of the Passover with the clear statement that the Israelites left Egypt by night? We'll examine these two scriptures to see if there is a conflict.

(Exo 12:22) And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.

(Deu 16:1) Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night.

It appears that God in Exodus is giving an instruction to the Israelites to not leave their homes until the morning after the Passover meal is eaten. If this were the case, then it would not be possible for the Israelites to begin their exodus on the same night (Deut. 16:1) as they ate the Passover meal, thereby giving credence to the claim that the Passover was eaten on the night of the Nisan 14 and that the Israelites waited a full 24+ hours before leaving. This is a legitimate question that deserves an answer.

Why would God give the instruction for them to be ready for an immediate exodus but then have them wait a full 24 hours - why "hurry up and wait"? The answer may be found by noticing who gave the specific instructions in each case. Exodus 12:1 begins the instructions God gave Moses and Aaron concerning the Passover. His instructions continued through verse 20. Notice that within these various instructions given by God to Moses and Aaron, there is no instruction stating that they must remain in their houses. Quite to the contrary, these instructions indicate that they must be ready to leave, dressed to go - even to the point of already having your sandals on your feet. God's instructions seem clear - Be ready to go at a moments notice!

Then in verses 21 through 28 Moses relays the information he had received from God to the elders of Israel who (it is assumed) relayed it on to each of the individual families. But notice that these instructions are not the same. Moses and Aaron fail to relay (at least to our knowledge) some of the instructions God gave them, yet they appear to have added other's. For instance, Moses fails to relay the information about taking the lamb on the 10th day, the qualifications of the lamb, and the time it was to be killed. He also fails to tell them to be dressed, ready to go. On the other hand, he adds details such as using hyssop to spread the blood, the exact place where the lamb was to be killed (the basin or threshold of their homes), and the point about staying in their homes.

Could it be that Moses was adding instructions that God did not give. Possibly. We know that Moses required some things of the Israelites that God did not instruct. For instance, Moses had the people grind the golden calf into dust then drink it - an instruction God did not give. Could it be that Moses was simply trying to keep the Israelites from "jumping the gun" and trying to leave on their own?

It appears that Moses was simply telling the Israelites to stay in their homes until after the

destroyer had passed through the land. After all, was the "destroyer" going to patrolling their houses all night, or was he going to pass over half way through the night (midnight) as the scripture indicates (Ex. 12:29). And if God had told them to stay in their homes till daybreak, then Moses himself, when he appeared before Pharaoh (Ex. 12:30-31) would have been in violation of the commandment as well as Aaron, who, as a firstborn, would have been risking his own life.

Why would God instruct them to eat their meal in haste, dressed to go, if they were not going to leave for at least 24 hours? And why would they be leaving with unleavened dough still in bowls if they had had nearly 24 hours to make preparations before leaving. It would seem that they would have had plenty of time for their dough to rise as well as to bake it into bread if they were waiting for that period of time. It's apparent that they were making preparations to leave early the next morning, but they ran out of time. They didn't know Pharaoh was going to "thrust" them out so quickly, but God did!

Finally, does Deuteronomy 16 actually say that the Israelites began their journey from Rameses at night or that they left Egypt at night. The verse actually says they came out of Egypt by night. This is exactly what happened.

In the account of Exodus 14, Israel was penned in between the Egyptian army and the Red Sea (the Egyptian border). That night (vs. 20) God moved between the Egyptians and Israel. He was a cloud of darkness to the Egyptians, but He gave light "by night" to Israel. The Egyptians never came close to Israel "all that night". Then, in the "morning watch" (very early in the morning - vs. 24-25) God caused the Egyptian's chariot wheels to come off, further preventing them from approaching Israel, then "when the morning appeared" (vs. 27), the sea closed in on the Egyptians. Israel's full deliverance from Egypt came at that point. At that point, they left Egypt behind, just as Deuteronomy 16 indicates.

Reconciling Numbers 33:3 with the Belief That the Israelites Ate the Passover on the Evening of Nisan 15

(Num 33:3) And they departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month: on the morrow after the passover the children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians.

There are two questions in this verse. The first question is "what does the term 'on the morrow' mean?" and the second is "what does the term 'Passover' mean?".

What does the term "morrow" mean? Is it the next day as in "I'm going to Dallas this afternoon, then I'll be leaving Dallas tomorrow for Houston", or is it "I'm spending tonight in Dallas, then leaving tomorrow for Houston". In one phrase the connotation is that this person is spending one day in one city, then going to the other city the next day. On the other hand, the second phrase leads you to understand that on a particular evening the person was going to be in one city, then leaving the next day for the other city.

In our society where we consider days to begin and end at midnight, both phrases would indicate being in each city on two separate days. But in Hebrew thought where days begin and end at sundown, the first phrase indicates being in each city on two separate days, but the second indicates being in both cities on the same day.

This phrase "on the morrow" could mean both - and that's a problem for a person who speaks English (a language that has a word for everything) trying to interpret Hebrew (a language with a

limited vocabulary). To understand the Hebrew, a person must look at the context, and in some cases, the context does not give enough information to make a determination, so you must rely on other scriptures that pertain to the subject.

The scriptures themselves make this clear by seeing other places where this word is used in the same context. The Hebrew word used in Numbers 33:3 for "morrow" is:

4283. mochorath, mokh-or-awth'; or mochoratham (H1 Sam. 30 : 17), mokh-or-aw-thawm'; fem. from the same as H4279; the morrow or (adv.) tomorrow:--morrow, next day.

There are places where this word clearly means the following day, not the morning of the same day. For instance, when a person made a voluntary peace offering he was allowed to eat it on the first and second day, but not on the third:

(Lev 7:15-17) And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day that it is offered; he shall not leave any of it until the morning (1239 "boker"). {16} 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 (4283 "mochorath) also the remainder of it shall be eaten: {17} But the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burnt with fire.

But there are also cases where the word clearly means the morning portion of the same day such as the case of Lot's daughters:

(Gen 19:33-34) 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. {34} And it came to pass on the morrow (4283 "mochorath), 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, that we may preserve seed of our father.

After the Israelites had complained about the lack of meat, God sent quail to them. In this case the next day (morrow) is the day after the night before:

(Num 11:32) And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day (4283 "mochorath), and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least gathered ten homers: and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp.

So it can be seen that the term 'on the morrow' can mean either the morning of the next day, or the morning after the night before.

The second question is what the term 'Passover' means. Is it the day the lamb is killed, or the night the lamb is eaten. There again, the word used that was translated "Passover" is a word with at least two meanings:

6453. pecach, peh'-sakh; from H6452; a pretermission, i.e. exemption; used only tech. of the Jewish Passover (the festival or the victim):--passover (offering).

In Exodus 12:21 the word "passover" (pecach) clearly means the killing of the lamb, as it does again in Numbers 9:5 (those with corpse uncleanness could not approach the tabernacle, the place the killing of the lambs was moved to - Deut 16:5), but in Exodus 12:11 it clearly means to eat it.

Therefore, both meanings of "morrow" could fit in Numbers 33:3. If "morrow" means the next calendar day (as in Lev. 7:15-17) and the "passover" day being spoken of is the killing of the lamb on the afternoon of the 14th, then they left very early in the morning of the next day, the 15th of Nisan. On the other hand, if "morrow" meant is the morning following the evening before (as in Gen 19:33-34 and Num. 11:32) and the passover being spoken of is the meal that is to be eaten after the lamb is killed late in the afternoon of the 14th, then they still left very early in the morning of the 15th. There is no controversy here.