

What is a Fifteener ?

By

Anthony V. Gaudio

Almost all believers know of someone who is a “Fifteener.”

Fifteeners believe the passover lamb was killed as commanded on 14 Nisan, but in *the afternoon*, and was eaten after sunset, which began 15 Nisan (scriptural sunset-to-sunset reckoning).

There are words in scripture which reflect that sequence before, during, and after, our Savior’s life. The same sequence is observed by Jews today. But is the observance in keeping with Yahweh’s law?

A reference for this subject, *The Christian Passover* by Frederick R. Coulter, York Publishing Co., has been used extensively herein because it is totally about the pass-over and related matters. Unfortunately, it is not a ‘restored name’ publication.

The book includes chapters about the commanded 14th Passover vs. the supposed 14th/15th of Nisan as Passover. It contains details about matters which are generally not obvious.

In at least twelve places in the scriptures, the passing-over in Exodus, begins at the sunset of 13 Nisan, which begins 14 Nisan. It was a domestic event with a few people. The lamb which had been selected on 10 Nisan and kept until the 14th, was slaughtered, roasted, then eaten from sunset into the darkness of night. Any part remaining was burnt before sunrise.

To understand the supposed 15th passover, one should start with the book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy essentially means ‘second giving of the Law.’ It is a book that records the final words of Moses to the children of Israel.

It was a reminder of the commands which were spoken *directly* by the Almighty Yahweh *earlier* in Exodus 12, Numbers 9 and 28, and Leviticus 23. It was about the commandments they were to remember to do in the *future, when they entered the Promised Land*.

Deuteronomy 16:1-17 mentions three *holy convocations*. A convocation is a gathering of the people into one place *for the purpose of having a feast* (Hebrew = hag, also chag and khag). Mentioned are the feast of: *Unleavened Bread, Weeks, and Tabernacles*, but *not* Passover. This is because Passover was to be a small *domestic* event then.

The commands in Deuteronomy 16:1, on the surface appear to be instructions for the Passover. They are, in reality, instructions for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The book of Deuteronomy contains the *only* passage that refers to the Feast of Unleavened Bread as: “passover.” The word ‘*Passover*’ in verse 1 has caused confusion in the minds of many bible students and scholars.

Deuteronomy 16:1-17 1“Observe the month [Chodesh = new moon (2320)] of Abib, and keep the passover to Yahweh your Elohim; for in the month of Abib Yahweh your Elohim *brought you forth out of Egypt by night*. 2 and you shall sacrifice the passover to Yahweh your Elohim, of the flock *and* the herd, in the place which *Yahweh shall choose*, to cause his name to dwell there..... 3 You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, even the bread of affliction; for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste; that you may remember the day when you came forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life...

The commands in verse 1 and 2 are instructions for “the night to be much remembered” which begins the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread on 15 Nisan, that first month. As Scriptural shows, “the night to be much remembered” was the night *after* the Passover.

Most people are *not* aware the word ‘Passover’ appears in the book of Deuteronomy because the original verses were edited by Ezra long *after* the book was written. How can we know this?

Answer: In Ezra’s time the entire *eight-day observance of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread was called “Passover.”*

The inclusive term ‘Passover’ was apparently edited into the text when Ezra was preparing the books of the Old Testament for canonization. The fact that Ezra used the *same term* when he wrote the book of 2 Chronicles, shows that it was the customary practice of Ezra’s day.

It has been concluded by religionists that since the words in Deuteronomy 16 were not *directly* from Yahweh, but from Moses, it was permissible for Ezra to have edited them.

The historical circumstances which led to the editorial changes Ezra made in Deuteronomy 16 led to the *temple-centered* the worship of Yahweh in Jerusalem.

Ezra canonized the books of the old testament, adapted the name of the Babylonian months for the Jewish calendar, changed the shape of letters of the Hebrew alphabet from the paleo-Hebrew to the square script used now, and was involved in the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

These actions by Ezra were an emergency measure in response to a national crisis. The true worship of Yahweh in Jerusalem was being threatened by a Samaritan conspiracy, and the scriptures, particularly the books of the Law, were in danger of being corrupted.

Even while Moses still was on Mount Sinai, the children of Israel, who had just been delivered from slavery and who were witness to many miracles on their behalf, turned back to worshipping the gods of Egypt. This is reflected in the golden calf Aaron made.

In the following year, near the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, Yahweh commanded Moses to send twelve spies into the Promised Land. This was in preparation for their invasion and the expulsion of the Canaanites. After spying out the land for forty days, ten of the spies came back and gave an evil report.

Only Joshua and Caleb gave a good report which showed their faith in Yahweh. The children of Israel *refused to trust in Yahweh's power and protection for them to go into the Promised Land.*

Since the children of Israel rebelled, they were condemned to wander in the wilderness *thirty-eight and one-half years more*, until all in that generation over twenty years old, had died.

After Joshua brought the children into the Promised land, it took *seven years* to conquer the land and to divide the inheritance between the twelve tribes (see the book of Judges).

But the children of Israel were to sin again:

“And the people served Yahweh all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the *elders* that outlived Joshua...” “And there arose another generation after them that knew not Yahweh, nor yet the work which He had wrought for Israel.” “And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh and served *Baalim*, and followed other gods, of the gods of the peoples that were round about them, and worshiped them; and they provoked Yahweh. And they forsook Yahweh, and served *Baal* and *Ashtaroth*.”

“And Yahweh was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of raiders that plundered them; and he sold them into the hands of their enemies all round, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies...and they were greatly distressed.”

“And Yahweh *raised up judges*, who saved them out of the hand of them that plundered them. Yet they harkened not to their judges, for they went astray after other gods, and worshiped them; they turned aside quickly out of the way wherein their fathers walked...”

“But when it came to pass the *judge was dead*, the children of Israel turned back and dealt more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them and worship them; They left nothing undone of their practices, nor of their stubborn way.”

The children of Israel committed the same sins over and over again, yet through Yahweh's love, mercy, and grace toward them, He did not wholly destroy them. In spite of Israel's repeated back-sliding, Yahweh remained faithful to the promise that He had given Abraham.

During the time of Samuel, the prophet and priest, the people remained faithful to their covenant with Yahweh. However, toward the end of Samuel's life, the people rejected him *and* his sons. They demanded a king. Grieved, Samuel followed Yahweh's instruction to designate a king as the people had asked.

Yahweh choose Saul to be the nation of Israel's first king (1 Samuel 9:15-17). During most of Saul's *forty-year reign*, he remained faithful.

But when Saul disobeyed Yahweh's commandments, Yahweh raised up David, a man after Yahweh's own heart, to be king. During David's reign the people were relatively faithful to Yahweh.

David's son, Solomon succeeded him as king. During most of his *forty-year reign*, Solomon remained faithful to Yahweh. However, during his later years, Solomon allowed his *foreign wives* to draw him *away from Yahweh and to the idolatrous worship of their false gods*.

2 Kings 23:13 “For Solomon went after *Ashtoreth* the goddess of the Zidonians, and after *Milcom* the detestation of the Ammonites. Then did Solomon build a high place for *Chemosh* the detestation of Moab, and for *Molech* the detestation of the children of Ammon...

The words of a prophetess predicted the end of Saul's kingdom.

After the death of Solomon, the nation of Israel divided into *two kingdoms (c. 970 BC)*. The ten northern tribes followed Jeroboam, a *servant* of Solomon. They made Jeroboam king and called the northern kingdom 'Israel.'

The son of Solomon ruled the tribe of Judah in the south, and part of the tribe of Benjamin, as well as the Levites who lived in Jerusalem and elsewhere. It became known as the kingdom of Judah to which the term 'Jews' has been applied.

Jeroboam, king of the northern kingdom, made two calves of gold and said unto the people: “You have gone up long enough to Jerusalem; behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” And he set one in Beth-el and the other he put in Dan.

1 Kings 12:28-33 “And Jeroboam made temples to Baal in high places and made priests from among all the people, that were *not* of the sons of Levi.

And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month... which month he had devised of his own heart. And he went up to the altar in Beth-el to sacrifice unto the calves that he had made.”

Pagans commonly observed the fifteenth day of the first month. Jeroboam was setting up a *rival festival* to compete with that which Yahweh had ordained in the seventh month.

The ten tribes in the kingdom of Israel, received a curse from Yahweh which caused the Assyrians to root them out of the land which Yahweh had given to their fathers, and be scattered beyond the river; because they had made *Asherim*, which provoked Yahweh.

It is believed the ten tribes were moved to the area known today as the Caucasus, east of the Black Sea. Centuries later it is believed many migrated westward into what is now Europe and the British Isles and became known as Anglo-Saxons.

Asherah was the Hebrew name for an Amorite or Canaanite goddess, who was worshiped in the middle east (*Anat, Diana, Artemis, Ishtar, Isis, Atherat, and Astarte*).

The Canaanite god Baal was known by different names: in Babylon the sun-god *Shamash*, in Assyria, the god *Saturn*, in Egypt both *Ra* the sun-god, and *Osiris*, god of the underworld).

2 Chronicles 15, under *King Asa* the children of Israel entered into the covenant to seek Yahweh, the Elohim of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul and sought him with their whole desire, and he was found of them... *but the high places were not taken away out of Israel*

2 Chronicles 17:3-4 later Asa's son *Jehoshaphat* was *also* accepted by Yahweh because he walked in the ways of his father and sought not unto the Baalim. Despite Jehoshaphat's righteous leadership, the people of Judah did not fully repent of their idolatries.

2 Chronicles 21:6 They were led back into paganism by Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram, who walked in the ways of the wicked kings of Israel.

2 Chronicles 28:2-3 A king that was more wicked than Jeroboam was *Ahaz*, king of Judah. He made molten images and burnt his children in the fire according to the abominations of the heathen.

King Ahaz sacrificed and offered in the high places, whereupon Yahweh his elohim delivered him into the hand of king Aram, who smote him, and carried away a great multitude of captives to Damascus.

2 Chronicles 28:24-27 After Ahaz's death, his son *Hezekiah* reigned as king of Judah. Unlike his father, Hezekiah worshiped Yahweh following the example of his ancestor David. He began to reign when he was *twenty-five years* old.

In the first year of Hezekiah's reign, *in the first month*, he repaired the doors of the Temple and had the priests clean and sanctify the Temple itself. This work was completed on the eighth day of the first month (Abib), but the rest of the work did not end until the sixteenth day of the first month (Abib).

Because the temple was not ready in time to keep the *Passover* and the *Feast of Unleavened Bread* in the *first* month, Hezekiah and the people decided to observe them in the *second month*, according to Yahweh's instructions in Numbers 9.

2 Chronicles 30:1-5 Letters were sent to Beersheba and even to Dan, that the people should come to keep the passover unto Yahweh, the Elohim of Israel, at Jerusalem; for they had not kept it in great numbers according as it is written.

During Solomon's reign the Feast of Tabernacles is recorded as the major feast celebrated by the people. But during Hezekiah's reign, the emphasis shifted from the fall, to the spring season.

It is Ezra that records in 2 Chronicles 30:13 that "there assembled at Jerusalem much people *to keep the feast of unleavened bread* in the second month.

This is the first scriptural record in which the term 'Feast of Unleavened Bread' and the 'Passover,' *are used interchangeably* in referring to the spring festival season (verses 1-2, 13)).

In the days of Hezekiah, the term ‘Passover’ *had not yet* been established as a name for the *entire eight-day* observance, as *later* practiced by the Jews.

2 Chronicles 30:13-17 explains that the Levites had the charge of killing the passover lambs for every person that was not ceremonially clean, to sanctify them unto Yahweh.

Verse 15 says “they killed the passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the second month,” *but it does not indicate when*. There are clues, however.

Because of (a) the large number of pilgrims, (b) the fact they arrived without being able to sanctify themselves, (c) because there is no mention of many of the factors associated with the domestic sacrifice of lambs in Exodus, (d) the *burnt* sacrifices being done by the priests and Levites, and (e) because of the special circumstances of this Passover, there was (f) the possibility that the people would not sacrifice a lamb, or, (g) would sacrifice the lamb to a pagan deity.

These reasons make it likely the lambs were sacrificed during the *afternoon* of Abib 14. Hezekiah’s Passover is the *first record* in scripture of killing the lambs at the Temple. It occurred about 780 years *after* the Passover in Egypt. From then to the Babylonian captivity there is only one other temple-centered passover recorded.

The idolatrous history of Israel and Judah show that Hezekiah’s decision for a temple centered passover, which occurred about one hundred years *before* the kingdom of Judah was taken into the Babylonian captivity, was a *necessity*. But it *did not* nullify the original Passover ordinances of Yahweh.

In 2 Chronicles 30 we read “And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation...”

When the full account of Hezekiah’s Passover is examined, there is no indication the passover lambs were killed at the beginning of the 14th “between the two evenings” according to Exodus 12. There are other items which show it was indeed the first *recorded* temple-centered observance.

It may seem surprising that the account of Hezekiah’s life in 2 Kings 18-20 makes *no mention* of this epochal passover. The answer may be that 1 and 2 Kings did not have the same author as 1 and 2 Chronicles.

Ezra *wrote* the books of Chronicles *after* the Babylonian captivity. Ezra *edited* the books of Kings when he was compiling and canonizing the Old Testament.

Because the books of Chronicles were *recorded much later* than the book of Kings, they give us a different perspective of the history of Israel at that time.

Ezra had a great deal to do with *institutionalizing* the temple-centered observance of the

Passover.

Manasseh was the son of King Hezekiah. He was the worst and most *evil* king in all the history of Israel *and* Judah. He came to reign when he was *twelve years* old and reigned fifty-five years.

His son Amon ruled for two years and was as wicked and evil as his father. His evil reign ended when his servants conspired against him, and put him to death in his own house.

The conspirators were killed by the people who subsequently made Josiah, his *eight* year old son, king (2 Chronicles 33:24-25).

In his *twelfth* year Josiah began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, and the Asherim, and the graven images, and the molten images. After six years the cleansing of the land was completed. Josiah undertook to repair the House of Yahweh (See 2 Kings 23 for the extent of cleansing).

Josiah's passover was a call for national repentance by the people of Judah who were as spiritually degenerate as in the days of Hezekiah.

The people had become so corrupted by paganism, and so habituated to worshipping other gods, especially Baal and Asherah, apparently Josiah could not trust them to observe the passover according to the commands of Yahweh in Exodus 12.

Faced with these circumstances, Josiah chose the same solution as Hezekiah – a temple centered Passover with the priests and Levites officiating in the sacrificing.

Scripture shows in both cases it was 'according to the command of the king' and not according to the command of Yahweh in Exodus 12.

The description of King Josiah's passover, only the second temple-centered Passover which is recorded, is similar to that previously under King Hezekiah.

Second Chronicles 30:14-15 shows *30,000* lambs that had to be slaughtered. This quantity make it likely the lambs were slaughtered on the *afternoon* of 14 Nisan, and as likely, not eaten until the darkness of 15 Nisan, which begun at sunset of 14 Nisan.

The sacrifices were from the *flocks*, lambs and kids.

King Josiah also provided 3,000 bullocks which were for the burnt offerings, peace offerings, and thank offerings which were from the *herds* (bovine), *not* the flocks. These animals were offered on the night of the 15th, and *each* day during the feast of Unleavened Bread.

It indicates that by this time in history the entire Feast of Unleavened Bread began to be called 'Passover.' As laudable as were the efforts of Josiah and Hezekiah at reuniting the children of Israel, the sacrificing of the lambs for passover was *not* according to Yahweh commands in

Exodus 12.

There is a small mistranslation in 2 Chronicles 35:13 “And they roasted the passover with fire according to the ordinance; and the holy offerings sod they in pots, and in caldrons and in pans, and carried them quickly to all the children of the people (JPSA).

The Hebrew word for the act of cooking is *Bashal* specifically it means boiling in water. The sacrifices from the *herds* were cut into pieces and boiled, *not* roasted in fire.

During periods of Israel’s history, lambs from the flocks, which were sacrificed for passover, were *only* roasted over fire, *never* boiled.

Ezra preserved the description of Josiah’s Passover in 2 Chronicles 35, yet it is only briefly mentioned in 2 Kings 23:22-23

“...For there was not kept such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah; but in the eighteenth year of king Josiah was this passover kept to Yahweh in Jerusalem.”

Rather than admit that the temple-centered passover observance occurred by divine approbation, Judaism today *claims* that the temple-centered tradition was instituted by Yahweh himself.

From this point in Jewish history, two Passover observances began to be practiced side by side: (a) the domestic Passover on the 14th, according to the commands of Yahweh, and (b) the temple-centered Passover on the 14th/15th, according to the command of the kings of Judah.

We know this dual practice was in effect during the time of Yeshua’s life because of verses in the Gospels which reflect it. The dual practice continued until the destruction of the temple in AD 69-70. The Jews eventually forsook the 14th Passover observance altogether, and for centuries, have observed only a 15th ‘Passover.’

We find the beliefs of fifteeners perplexing. The scriptures clearly show Passover, starting at the *beginning* of 14 Nisan, is a remembrance of Yahweh’s *deliverance* of the Israelites from slavery. He chose them to be his people.

The Last Supper is a memorial to Yeshua’s *deliverance* of all mankind from sin by the sacrifice of his precious life.

Conversely, the Jews memorialize their ancestors’ *exodus* out of Egypt by starting an observance near the end of 14 Nisan and continuing it into the beginning of 15 Nisan with a special meal during the days of unleavened bread. This is how the Jewish Seder evolved.

Conclusion

Hearers of this message must choose whether their beliefs are based upon the practices of men, or the ordinances of the Almighty Yahweh.

True believers must obey the commands of our Father Yahweh and his son, Yeshua the Anointed, with unleavened bread and with wine, at the appointed time.

August 1, 2008