

RECONSIDER CRUCIFIXION WEEK FROM A HEBRAIC PERSPECTIVE

Part 1 – Clarifying Crucifixion Week by Rabbi Adam J. Bernay

One of the most common questions asked by new Christians is, this: "How could Jesus have been in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights if He died on a Friday afternoon and rose before sunrise on a Sunday?"

Many Christian teachers duck the question, since at most they can only come up with one day and two nights (Friday nighttime, Saturday daytime, and Saturday nighttime in our measure of days). If they add in the Friday daytime they get two periods of daytime, even though Yeshua would have died in the late afternoon on a Friday. This late afternoon death is consistent with the Passover lamb being killed between the two evenings of Jewish teaching. The lamb was killed between 3 and 6 PM on the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan and prepared, because the 15th was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was an annual Sabbath observance (the first and last days of Unleavened Bread are annual Sabbaths in addition to the normal weekly Sabbaths). But on what days did this actually occur? Well, let's look at the Scriptures to see if we can Clarify Crucifixion Week.

Let's work backwards from the Resurrection. We read in:

Matthew 28:1-8

Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Yeshua who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you." And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples.

In Biblical terms, a day doesn't start at sunup or at midnight, which is we think of days beginning in the Western world. In Biblical terms, as stated in the creation story in Genesis 1, and elsewhere, a day begins at nightfall, at sundown. This tracks with the statement in Mark 16 that after the Sabbath, they purchased the materials "when the Sabbath was past." This is, as we would think of it, Saturday night. For well over two thousand years, the marketplace in Jerusalem is closed Sunday mornings, but it is alive and cooking on Saturday nights. Why? Because it was tradition to send the Sabbath out with a party. This tradition goes back to King David, who would prepare a festive meal to end the Sabbath, because he had a prophetic view that he would die on a Sabbath, so every Sabbath that passed meant he'd live at least another week. It is a tradition even today for Jews to end the Sabbath with a festive meal, and to begin that meal with the Hebrew proclamation, "**Seudot d'David Malkah**", "This is the Meal of King David." After partying late into the night on Saturday night, you can bet they didn't get up and do business on Sunday morning!

But you will notice, we have the women arriving at the tomb shortly after the end of the Sabbath... but Yeshua has already resurrected! He's already up! So, when did He resurrect? For that, first let's look at His prophecies concerning His death and resurrection:

Matthew 12:38-40

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Rabbi, we want to see a sign from You." But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE

NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Mark 8:31-32

And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And He was stating the matter plainly.

Mark 9:30-31

From there they went out and began to go through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know about it. For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later."

Mark 10:32-34

They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Yeshua was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again."

John 2:12-22

After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days. The Passover of the Jews was near, and Yeshua went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business."

His disciples remembered that it was written, "ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME." The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" Yeshua answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body. So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Yeshua had spoken.

These are only some of the prophecies, but I wanted to point out there are four ways Yeshua put it, three about how long He would be dead, and one about how long he would be buried. The three ways He said how long He would be dead was: "after three days," "three days later," and "in three days." The only way all three could be true is if He would be dead for exactly three days, seventy-two hours, which blows out of the water this whole idea of "a part of a day counting as a day" to get us three days from a Friday crucifixion to a Sunday resurrection. Also, Yeshua says He would be "three days and three nights in the belly of the earth," which means we must count a separate three-day count for that.

So, let's look at what time of day Scripture says He died and was buried. The detailed account takes place in Matthew 27:1-61:

Matthew 27:1-61

1 Now when morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Yeshua to put Him to death; *2* and they bound Him, and led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate the

governor. **3** Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, **4** saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!" **5** And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself.

6 The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood." **7** And they conferred together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers. **8** For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. **9** Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "AND THEY TOOK THE THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER, THE PRICE OF THE ONE WHOSE PRICE HAD BEEN SET by the sons of Israel; **10** AND THEY GAVE THEM FOR THE POTTER'S FIELD, AS THE LORD DIRECTED ME."

11 Now Yeshua stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And Yeshua said to him, "It is as you say." **12** And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He did not answer. **13** Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" **14** And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so the governor was quite amazed.

15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the people any one prisoner whom they wanted. **16** At that time they were holding a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. **17** So when the people gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Yeshua who is called Messiah?" **18** For he knew that because of envy they had handed Him over. **19** While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him a message, saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him." **20** But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Yeshua to death. **21** But the governor said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." **22** Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Yeshua who is called Messiah?" They all said, "Crucify Him!" **23** And he said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they kept shouting all the more, saying, "Crucify Him!" **24** When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves." **25** And all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!"

26 Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Yeshua scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified. **27** Then the soldiers of the governor took Yeshua into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. **28** They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. **29** And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" **30** They spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head. **31** After they had mocked Him, they took the scarlet robe off Him and put His own garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him. **32** As they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they pressed into service to bear His cross.

33 And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull, **34** they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall; and after tasting it, He was unwilling to drink. **35** And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots. **36** And sitting down, they began to keep watch over Him there. **37** And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, "THIS IS YESHUA THE KING OF THE JEWS."

38 At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left. **39** And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads **40** and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." **41** In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, **42** "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. **43** "HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE Him now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.' " **44** The robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words.

45 Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. **46** About the ninth hour Yeshua cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" **47** And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying, "This man is calling for Elijah." **48** Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink. **49** But the rest of them said, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him."

50 And Yeshua cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. **51** And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. **52** The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; **53** and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many. **54** Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Yeshua, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!" **55** Many women were there looking on from a distance, who had followed Yeshua from Galilee while ministering to Him. **56** Among them was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

57 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Yeshua. **58** This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Yeshua. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. **59** And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, **60** and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away. **61** And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave.

In Biblical times, they would reference hours since sunrise or sunset as their time references, so when it says "the sixth hour" and "the ninth hour," it means the sixth hour since sunrise and the ninth hour since sunrise, which is generally figured to be noon and three pm. Interestingly enough, the sixth hour and the ninth hour were two of the Temple service times, and it was at the service at the ninth hour when the Passover lamb was slain on the fourteenth of Nisan. So, we see that Yeshua – our Passover Lamb – died at the time of the Passover sacrifice! How perfect!

So, if the death occurred at the ninth hour – about 3pm – the Resurrection took place at that time as well! So, if we figure Saturday afternoon at the 3pm is the time of the Resurrection (since it had to happen before the end of the Sabbath, which is when the women arrived to find Yeshua alive and out of the tomb already), we figure back three days to find the Crucifixion: Saturday to Friday is one, Friday to Thursday is two, and Thursday to Wednesday is three. So, we know the Crucifixion was on Wednesday!

And the Resurrection took place about 3pm on Saturday, which is why our afternoon service on the Sabbath of Unleavened Bread takes place at 3pm, to honor the Resurrection!

We know from Matthew 27 and the similar passages in the other Gospels that Yeshua was laid in the tomb right at sundown, so He walked out of the tomb right at sundown, the end of the Sabbath! We know that they were

hurrying to lay Him in the tomb because the Festival Sabbath – the first day of Unleavened Bread, which begins the night of the Passover Seder – was beginning. This means the Passover Seder that year was Wednesday night! Well, this year, the Passover Seder is also Wednesday night! What a remarkable year to celebrate the true days and nights of the Crucifixion and Resurrection – Passover and the Festivals of Unleavened Bread and First Fruits – then in a year when they match up exactly with the days of the week as they were when the Crucifixion and Resurrection happened! That’s not always the way it works out, just as your birthday isn’t on the same day of the week every year.

And it’s highly significant that the Messiah rose on First Fruits, as we read in:

1 Corinthians 15:20-22

But now Messiah has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Messiah all will be made alive.

And one week before His Resurrection, Yeshua rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, the “Triumphal Entry” where the crowds proclaimed Him as the Messiah! This occurred on the Tenth of Nisan, the day when the Passover Lamb was selected for each household. They had to find a pure, spotless lamb, suitable for the sacrifice, and bring it into their homes for the four days before the sacrifice.

These people found their ultimate Passover Lamb in Yeshua, and accepted Him into their hearts on the same day. And that’s today! Let us celebrate today, the day of the Triumphal Entry; the Sabbath before Passover, which is called in traditional Judaism Shabbat HaGadol, or the Great Sabbath, as I mentioned earlier. How much greater could it be? We’ll be celebrating during the Mincha Shabbat service at 1pm. I hope you’ll be there.

The night before His death, Yeshua brought His Disciples together for what they thought would be a routine Training Seder – the practice session a rabbi used to give his disciples the night before the Passover Seder to show them how to do it right. But Yeshua gave this tradition new life by inaugurating this night as a special night to remember His Last Seder with footwashing, and the taking of the matzah bread and the Cup of Redemption.