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Appendix to Passover of Exodus 12

Doctrinal Paper

Approved by the Council of Elders
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All scriptures are quoted from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version* (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee) unless otherwise noted.

APPENDIX TO PASSOVER OF EXODUS 12 PAPER

EXODUS 16:12 “BETWEEN THE TWO EVENINGS” (*beyn ha arbayim*)

One of the biggest questions associated with the timing of the Old Testament Passover is the question of the meaning of the Hebrew words. If we go back to Exodus 12 and examine verse 6, we find the phrase, “kill it in the evening” regarding the lamb. Our primary question regarding the word *evening* is, when is evening? The Hebrew phrase for *evening* is *beyn ha arbayim*. It means *between the evenings* or *between the two evenings*. Hebrew has a singular ending, a dual ending (for two), and a plural ending (for more than two). This ending is dual, for two things, so we have *between the evenings* or *between the two evenings*.

The meaning of the phrase *beyn ha arbayim* has several interpretations among various Jewish traditions. Most agree that it refers to the time period between the going down of the sun and darkness. The problem is that there are different interpretations of when the sun starts going down. Some believe that at noon the sun begins its descent. Others feel that at 3 p.m. it begins to descend toward sunset. Others feel that it is late, just before sunset. And finally there are those who believe it begins at sunset.

We should not be content to accept any tradition, if the Bible itself gives us explicit evidence of when *beyn ha arbayim* actually is. But does the Bible give us such information? Yes it does! But for most people who do not have some knowledge of Hebrew it is difficult to find.

The reason for today’s difficulty is found in Strong’s Concordance.¹ Most non-Hebrew speaking people use Strong’s Concordance numbers to look up Hebrew words. Unfortunately, in the case of the Hebrew phrase *beyn ha arbayim*, Strong’s Concordance uses the same number for it and another similar phrase. The other phrase is *ba erev*, which is also translated as *evening* and means *sunset*. Both are number 6153 in Strong’s Concordance. Strong’s identifies the phrase for *evening* in Exodus 12:6 as *ba erev*. But it really is *beyn ha arbayim*.

As we find in the “Passover of Exodus 12” study paper the meaning of *ba erev* is commonly accepted as *sunset*. What remains to be discovered is explicit Biblical information on the meaning of *beyn ha arbayim*.

Exodus 16 is a significant chapter for several reasons, aside from the Sabbath issues. It is vital to our understanding of the meaning of *beyn ha arbayim*. There seem to be two major traditions that are most commonly accepted among the Jews. One accepts the meaning as being from noon or the time when the sun begins to descend to sunset, and the other from sunset to darkness. Exodus 16:12 and 13 give us the positive proof of the meaning of *beyn ha arbayim*.

Notice Exodus 16:12 – “I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even [*beyn ha arbayim*] ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled

¹ Strong, James, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers) 1999.

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with bread; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God.”² Here we have God telling Moses that He will bring the quail to them at the specific time of *beyn ha arbayim*. It is appropriate here to ask a few questions. Did the quail show up at noon? Did they show up at 3 p.m.? How about 5 p.m.? Verse 13 uses a different expression to record when the quails came up. Here the term is *ba erev*, which means *sunset*. This term is not disputed and these two verses taken together clearly identify *beyn ha arbayim* with *ba erev*.

Exodus 16:13 – “And it came to pass, that at even [*ba erev*] the quails came up, and covered the camp; and in the morning the dew lay round about the host.”³ Moses records for us exactly when the quail showed up - sunset - *ba erev*. So we see that God’s definition of *beyn ha arbayim* is sunset to dark. He said they would arrive between sunset and dark and He caused the quail to begin their arrival at sunset. So we have God’s definition of when *beyn ha arbayim* is. Clearly it isn’t during the day.

In addition this is God speaking to Moses just 30 days after the Exodus (Exodus 12 and 16 are just 30 days apart, so the Hebrew language and tradition of meaning would not have changed in such a short time). Clearly, the misunderstandings in traditional meaning of the phrase *beyn ha arbayim* are not very important when viewed in light of God’s own interpretation of the words and His example of usage.

This evidence from God's own words (recorded by Moses) that *ba erev* and *beyn ha arbayim* occur at the same time of day, sunset, is very significant. Even though one may be a point in time and the other a period of time, they both begin at the same time.

² King James Translation (AV)

³ *Ibid.*