

PASSOVER AND THE APOSTLE JOHN

by Avram Yehoshua

[The Seed of Abraham](#)

Controversy surrounds the ‘supper’ of John 13. Some teach it’s a memorial meal that Yeshua (the Hebrew name for Jesus) and the Apostles had a night before the Passover (which would be the biblical date of 14 Aviv).¹ This fits nicely into a teaching that Yeshua died at the time the Passover lambs in the Temple were being sacrificed, which has a great theological ‘ring’ to it because Yeshua is the (Passover) Lamb of God who takes our sins away (John 1:29, 36). All three Synoptic Gospels, though, clearly contradict that, presenting Him eating the Passover meal with His Apostles at the biblically correct time, the night of 15 Aviv,² and being crucified the following morning, which is still 15 Aviv. There are only a few verses in the Fourth Gospel that lead people to think that Yeshua ate a commemorative meal the night before the biblical Passover. John 13:1-2, 29 and 18:28 are three of them:

John 13:1-2: ‘Now, *before* the Feast of Passover...and *supper being ended*, the Devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him...’

John 13:29: “For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, ‘*Buy those things we need for the feast,*’ or that he should *give something to the poor.*”

John 18:28: ‘Then they led Yeshua from Caiaphas to the Praetorium and it was early morning, but they themselves did not go into the Praetorium *lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover.*’

Obviously, if Yeshua died at the time when the Passover lambs were being sacrificed for the Passover meal He wouldn’t have been able to eat the Passover meal at its biblically appointed time because He would have been dead a few hours earlier. The lambs were slain at the Temple on 14 Aviv in the afternoon,³ and the Passover meal was eaten later that day, after dark (15 Aviv). The concept of Yeshua dying when the Passover lambs were being sacrificed seems like a divine gem, but it isn’t scriptural.

Like other heresies that spawn new heresies, this false teaching has given birth to Lazarus being ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved’⁴ (‘the Beloved Disciple’), and consequently, also the author or compiler of the Fourth Gospel that we know as the Gospel of John.

First, I’ll establish that John 13 is a Passover meal, and not a memorial meal eaten the night before. Out of this will flow the understanding that Lazarus couldn’t be ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved,’ nor the author of the Fourth Gospel.

¹ See, [When Does The Sabbath Begin?](#) In the 24 hour biblical day, darkness precedes daylight and dusk. The new day begins in darkness, not sunset, which is a rabbinic tradition for when the Sabbath begins. The Hebrew phrase for when the Passover lamb was to be slain, ‘between the two evenings’ is correctly rendered in English as *twilight* or *dusk*. The lambs were slain in Egypt at sunset on 14 Aviv. At the end of dusk the new biblical day began, 15 Aviv. It was in the night of 15 Aviv when the Passover ceremonial meal took place, with dawn still being 15 Aviv until darkness that evening.

² Exodus 12:1ff.; Lev 23:4-6f.; Mt. 26:17, 18, 19; Mk. 14:12, 14, 16; Lk. 22:7, 11, 13, 15..

³ In Yeshua’s time the lambs began to be sacrificed in the Temple beginning about 1 PM, not between sunset and darkness, because of their vast number (about 100,000 lambs).

⁴ John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20. John 21:20 specifically references Jn. 13:23 as the disciple whom Jesus loved, who leaned on Yeshua’s chest, but never names the disciple. Cf. John 11:5; 13:1, 34.

John 13:29—Buy Food for the Feast

John 13:29: “For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, ‘Buy those things we need for the feast,’ or that he should give something to the poor.”

Those who teach that Yeshua ate a commemorative meal the night before the actual Passover ceremonial meal (whose biblical date is 15 Aviv [English: Abib], today known as 15 Nisan),⁵ say the disciples would never have thought that Judas left to buy things for the feast because the time when the Passover meal is eaten is an annual Sabbath,⁶ and shops would be closed. Also, what beggars would be around on Passover night to give any money to? Wouldn't they all be celebrating Passover along with the rest of Israel?

Alfred Edersheim,⁷ noted scholar on Jewish and Temple affairs in the time of Yeshua, writes that despite the night of the Passover meal being an annual Sabbath (15 Aviv, the first day of Unleavened Bread; Ex. 12:16; Lev. 23:6-8), shops *were open* in Jerusalem in order to buy food needed for the feast. He says it was also a time when beggars would gather around the Temple to receive alms, and so, what the disciples thought when Judas left was appropriate for Passover night, but interestingly enough, not for the night before. Edersheim writes,

“Sufficient here to state that the provision and preparation of the needful food, and indeed of all that was needful for the Feast, *was allowed on 15 Nisan*⁸...the mention of these two suggestions by the disciples seems almost necessarily to involve that the writer of the Fourth Gospel *had placed this meal in the Paschal night*. Had it been on the evening before, no one could have imagined that Judas had gone out during the night to buy provisions, when there was the whole next day for it, nor would it have been likely that a man should on any ordinary day go at such an hour to seek out the poor. But in the Paschal night, when the great Temple-gates were opened at midnight to begin early preparations for the offering of the *Chagigah*, or festive sacrifice, which was not voluntary, but of due, and the remainder of which was afterwards eaten at a festive meal, such preparations would be quite natural. And equally so, that the poor, who gathered around the Temple, might then seek to obtain the help of the charitable.”⁹

If John was speaking of a commemorative meal the night before the actual Passover meal, the disciples would never have thought that Judas was going to buy some things for the feast nor give some funds to the poor. The very thing the disciples thought, about why Judas left, which seems to point to the *supper* of John 13:2 being eaten the night before, specifically reveals it was the biblical Passover on the night of 15 Aviv. Also, there's nothing anywhere in the New Testament that speaks of Yeshua eating a special com-

⁵ Exodus 12:6, 8, 12, 14-15, 17, 21-23, 29, 31-34, 37-42; 13:4; 23:15; 34:18; 16:1.

⁶ Exodus 12:16.

⁷ Alfred Edersheim (1825-1889) was a Jewish man born in Vienna, Austria who was well versed in Mosaic Law and Talmud. He came to Christ in Pest, Hungary through John Duncan, a Church of Scotland chaplain assigned to minister to Scottish workers constructing a bridge over the Danube river. Edersheim studied theology at Edinburgh and Berlin, and became the leading authority of his time concerning Jewish practices and personages (e.g. the Pharisees) during the Second Temple period and their relationship to Yeshua and His teachings.

⁸ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), p. 825, note 30: ‘The Mishnah expressly allows the procuring even on the Sabbath of that which is required for the Passover, and the Law of the Sabbath-rest was much more strict than that of feast days’ (i.e. the annual feast Sabbaths). ‘See this in Appendix 17.’ 15 Nisan is the same as 15 Aviv, *Nisan* becoming the name for the first biblical Hebrew month during and after Babylonian captivity beginning in 597 B.C., with the first Temple of King Solomon being destroyed in 587 B.C.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 825.

memorative meal the night before Passover, or that Christians, in imitation of Him, should hold a special memorial meal the night before the biblical Passover. Yet, if Yeshua had held such a meal it surely would have been written somewhere in the New Testament, so at the very least, we would know about it and be able to imitate Him.

Yeshua ate the Passover meal at the correct biblical time, several hours *after* the Passover lambs were sacrificed in the Temple in the afternoon of 14 Aviv. He didn't die when the Passover lambs died.

John 18:28—The Praetorium and Ritual Defilement

John 18:28: 'Then they led Yeshua from Caiaphas to the Praetorium and it was early morning, but they themselves did not go into the Praetorium *lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover.*'

The Fourth Gospel speaks of the chief priests and scribes bringing Yeshua to Pilate, but not wanting to enter the *praetorium*, Pilate's residence in Jerusalem,¹⁰ for fear of defilement, which meant they couldn't 'eat the Passover.' As the memorial teaching relates, because Pilate was a Gentile they would have become ceremonially defiled and not have been able to eat the Passover meal that evening.

David Stern notes that their understanding of being defiled by entering a Gentile's home was a 'rabbinic addition'¹¹ and that it's not specifically found in Torah (Law of Moses), but anyone knowing Jewish law realizes it was justified of the Jewish contingent because Pilate, who was a pagan Gentile, wasn't following God's regulations prohibiting leavened bread in one's home and territory during Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread.¹² Even Peter in Acts 10, about nine years *after* the resurrection, told Cornelius that Jews weren't to even associate with Gentiles:¹³

Acts 10:28: "Then he said to them, 'You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man *to keep company with or go to one of another nation*, but God has (just!) shown me that I should not call any *man* common or unclean.'¹⁴

God was about to use Peter to break down the divine barrier that He had set up between Israel and the pagan Gentiles. As Ben Witherington writes, the Gentiles were unclean chiefly because they worshiped false gods, not because they ate unclean foods, although of course, that did figure into the equation. The worship of idols is what truly made the Gentiles unclean. Witherington states,

"Jews believed that the *chief* source of Gentile impurity was their contact with 'the defilement of idols,' not their contact with non-kosher food."¹⁵

The *praetorium*, where Pilate lived when in Jerusalem, originally meant 'the general's tent.'¹⁶ F. F. Bruce

¹⁰ R. V. G. Tasker, Author and General Editor, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: John* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), p. 204.

¹¹ David Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1992), p. 206. The 'addition' came out of cites where God spoke of not mingling with the Gentiles (Ex. 23:32; 34:15; Lev. 20:22-26; Dt. 7:3-4; 23:6; Josh. 23:1-13; Ezra 9:1-10:44) because they worshipped other gods and would lead Israel astray.

¹² Exodus 12:14-15, 18-20; 13:6-7; Dt. 16:14.

¹³ Ex. 23:32-33; 34:12, 15; Lev. 20:22-26; Dt. 7:3-11; 23:6; Josh. 23:1-15; Ezra 9:1-10:44; Neh. 13:1-3, 23-28.

¹⁴ See [Law 102](#) to understand why Peter's vision didn't do away with the biblical dietary laws, but was the symbolic picture of the Jew going to the Gentile with the Message of Life in Yeshua (Acts 11:18).

¹⁵ Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), p. 462.

¹⁶ Marcus Dods, D.D., Author; W. Robertson Nicoll, Editor, M. A., LL. D., *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol.

writes:

“The term ‘praetorium’ denotes the headquarters of a Roman military governor (as the governor of Judea was). In a Roman camp, the praetorium was the commander’s headquarters in the center of the camp.¹⁷ The Roman governor of Judea normally resided at Caesarea, where the palace built by Herod the Great for himself was available as the praetorium (cf. Acts 23:25). When the requirements of public order brought him to Jerusalem (e.g. when the city was overflowing with visitors at the great pilgrimage festivals), the building where he took up temporary residence would be his praetorium.”¹⁸

‘It appears that entering a Gentile house at this time would have conveyed defilement, perhaps because of the presence of leaven, but remaining outside in the colonnade did not.’¹⁹

The Jewish group that led Yeshua to Pilate believed that entering his abode would make them defiled or unfit for the Passover, which seems to be speaking of the Passover meal. Edersheim shines light upon this, saying that *if* it had been the day when the Passover lambs were slain (i.e. 14 Aviv), with the Passover meal that night, *there would have been no concern on the part of the Jewish group about ceremonial defilement* because their defilement would have ended at darkness, and they would have been able to eat the Passover meal that night, on 15 Aviv. Edersheim states that it isn’t the Passover meal the Jewish group was concerned about, but rather a special sacrifice for the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Chagiga, which took place in the morning of 15 Aviv (Num. 28:16-25). This was about 12 hours *after* the Passover meal had been eaten the night before:

“The ‘Praetorium,’ to which the Jewish leaders, or at least those of them who represented the leaders—for neither Annas nor Caiaphas seems to have been personally present—brought the bound Christ, was (as always in the provinces) the quarters occupied by the Roman Governor. In Caesarea this was the Palace of Herod, and there...Paul was afterwards a prisoner. But in Jerusalem there were two such quarters: the fortress Antonia, and the magnificent Palace of Herod at the north-western angle of the Upper City. Although it is impossible to speak with certainty, the balance of probability is entirely in favour of the view that, when Pilate was in Jerusalem with his wife, he occupied the truly royal abode of Herod, and not the fortified barracks of Antonia.²⁰ From the slope at the eastern angle, opposite the Temple Mount, where the Palace of Caiaphas stood, up the narrow streets of the Upper City, the melancholy procession wound to the portals of the grand Palace of Herod. It is recorded that they who brought Him would not themselves enter the portals of the Palace, ‘that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover.’”

“Few expressions have given rise to more earnest controversy than this. On two things at

one: *The Gospel of St. John* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), p. 850.

¹⁷ Yahveh, the King of Israel, dwelt in the midst of the camp of Israel in the Wilderness in ‘the Tabernacle of Moses.’ See my 7 CD with 8 original diagrams presentation of [The Tabernacle of Moses—A Reflection of Heaven](#). Also, Scripture says that King Saul slept in the middle of the camp, with the army encamped all around him, when he came to kill David (1st Sam. 26:5).

¹⁸ F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel and Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), p. 348.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

²⁰ Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p. 865, note 4: As ‘the Palace of Herod undoubtedly became (as all royal residences) the property of the State, and as we have distinct evidence that Roman Procurators resided there, and took their seat in front of that Palace on a raised pavement to pronounce judgment (Jos. War 2.14.8; comp. Philo, ad Caj. § 38), the inference is obvious, that Pilate, especially as he was accompanied by his wife, resided there also.’

least we can speak with certainty. Entrance into a heathen house *did* Levitically render impure for that day—that is, till the evening. The fact of such defilement is clearly attested both in the New Testament (Acts 10:28) and in the Mishnah, though its reasons might be various (Ohol. 18.7; Tohar. 7.3). A person who had so become Levitically unclean was technically called *Tebhul Yom* ('bathed of the day')."

"The other point is, that, to have so become 'impure' for the day would *not* have disqualified for eating the Paschal Lamb, since the meal was partaken of *after* the evening, and when a new day had begun. In fact, it is distinctly laid down (Pes. 92a) that the 'bathed of the day,' that is, he who had been impure for the day and had bathed in the evening, *did* partake of the Paschal Supper, and an instance is related when some soldiers who had guarded the gates of Jerusalem 'immersed,' and ate the Paschal Lamb.²¹ It follows that those Sanhedrists *could not have abstained* from entering the Palace of Pilate because by so doing they would have been disqualified *for the Paschal Supper.*"

"The point is of importance because many writers have interpreted the expression 'the Passover' as referring to the Paschal Supper, and have argued that, according to the Fourth Gospel, our Lord did not on the previous evening partake of the Paschal Lamb, or else that in this respect the account of the Fourth Gospel does not accord with that of the Synoptists. But as for the reason just stated, it is impossible to refer the expression 'Passover' to the Paschal Supper, we have only to inquire whether the term ('Passover') is not also applied to other offerings. And here both the Old Testament (Deut. 16:1-3; 2nd Chron. 35:1, 2, 6, 18) and Jewish writings²² show that the term *Pesach* or 'Passover' was applied *not only to the Paschal Lamb, but to all the Passover sacrifices*, especially to what was called the *Chagigah*, or festive offering (from *Chag* or *Chagag*, to bring the festive sacrifice, usual at each of the three Great Feasts)."

"According to the express rule (Chag. 1:3) the *Chagigah* was brought on the first festive Paschal Day.²³ It was offered immediately after the morning-service and eaten on that day—probably some time before the evening... We can, therefore, quite understand that *not* on the eve of the Passover, but on the first Paschal day, the Sanhedrists would avoid incurring a defilement which, lasting till the evening, would not only have involved them in the inconvenience of Levitical defilement on the first festive day, but have actually prevented their offering on that day, the Passover festive sacrifice or *Chagigah*. For we have these two express rules: that a person could not in Levitical defilement offer the *Chagigah*, and that the *Chagigah* could not be offered for a person by someone else who took his place (Jer. Chag. 76a, lines 16 to 14 from bottom). These considerations and canons seem decisive as regards the views above expressed. There would have been no reason to fear 'defilement' on the morning of the Paschal Sacrifice, but entrance into the *Praetorium* on the morning of the first Passover-day would have rendered it impossible for them to offer the *Chagigah*, which is also designated by the term *Pesach*."²⁴

²¹ Ibid., note 6: 'Jer. Pes. 36b, lines 14 and 15 from bottom.'

²² Ibid., p. 866, note 7: 'The subject has been so fully discussed in Wieseler, Beitr., and in Kirchner, Jüd. Passahfeier, not to speak of many others, that it seems needless to enter further on the question. No competent Jewish archaeologist would care to deny that 'Pesach' may refer to the 'Chagigah,' while the motive assigned to the Sanhedrists by St. John implies, that in this instance it must refer to this, and not to the Paschal Lamb.'

²³ Ibid., note 8: 'But concession was made to those who had neglected it on the first day to bring it during the festive week, which in the Feast of Tabernacles was extended to the *Octave*, and in that of Weeks (which lasted only one day) over a whole week (see Chag. 9a; Jer. Chag. 76c). The *Chagigah* could not, but the *Paschal Lamb* might be offered by a person on behalf of another.'

Edersheim dismantles the false notion that John 18:28 speaks of defilement for the Passover ceremonial meal. The word 'Passover' also applies to any special sacrifice during the Feast, especially on the first day of the Feast, when Yeshua was brought before Pilate. This is what the Fourth Gospel is speaking about.

If it had been the daytime of 14 Aviv, when the Passover lambs were sacrificed in the Temple for the Passover meal in the evening, the chief priests and scribes would not have been concerned with defilement for they would have been able to eat the Passover meal in the evening, after having bathed. Their defilement would have only lasted until dark, that is to say, the end of 14 Aviv. With 'Passover,' though, also being a term for the Passover festive sacrifice on the morning of 15 Aviv, their morning defilement would have kept them from offering the festive Passover Chagiga sacrifice that morning and they would not have been able to eat it in the afternoon.

Stern agrees with Edersheim and says that the *supper* of John 13:2 was a Passover *Seder*²⁵ (the Passover ceremonial meal), and that the Passover being spoken of in John 18:28,

“refers to other food eaten during Pesach, specifically the *chagigah* (festive sacrifice), which was consumed with great joy and celebration on the afternoon following the Seder ...the Judeans gathered outside Pilate’s palace would have been unable to eat had they entered, because their defilement would have lasted till sundown. If ‘the Pesach’ meant the Passover lamb, defilement in the morning might not have been a problem, since the Seder meal took place after sundown.”²⁶

The ritual uncleanness or defilement that John 18:28 speaks of for the 'Passover' has to do with the special feast sacrifice called the Chagiga, the morning following the Passover meal. If it had been the biblical Passover that the Jewish group was concerned about, defilement would have easily been removed at the end of dusk after ritually bathing, and the Passover ceremonial meal could have been eaten. Everyone bathed before the Passover meal anyway, as Yeshua mentions concerning the Apostles (Jn. 13:10).

As it was with the *thoughts of the disciples* when Judas left that night, the speaking of *defilement* for the Passover points directly to Yeshua having eaten the Passover meal at the biblical time, the previous evening, on the night of 15 Aviv.²⁷ After that He was arrested at Gethsemane, and in the early morning He was brought to Pilate, all of which was still the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 15 Aviv, the first annual Sabbath.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 864-866.

²⁵ *Seder* is the Hebrew word for 'order' and speaks of the procedure for conducting a Passover meal, which involves rituals before and after the meal that speak of salvation from Egyptian slavery (Ex. 12:26-27; 13:3-10).

²⁶ Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, pp. 206-207.

²⁷ Exodus 12:6-8, 10-12, 21, 23-32, 39, 42.

John 13:2—‘Before Passover...and Supper being Ended’

John 13:1: “Now *before* the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”

John 13:2: “And *supper being ended*, the Devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him...”

These two verses appear to point to a *supper* a day *before* the Passover meal of 15 Aviv, but as we’ll see, this isn’t the case. Edersheim states that v. 1 forms a ‘general introduction’ to the chapter, and v. 2 begins,

“the account of what happened ‘*during* supper’—the Supper itself being left undescribed—beginning, by way of explanation of what is to be told about Judas, with this:”

‘The Devil having already cast into his heart, that Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, shall betray Him.’

“General as this notice is, it contains much that requires special attention...mark the full description of the name and parentage of the traitor. It reads like the wording of a formal indictment. And although it seems only an introductory explanation, it also points to the contrast with the love of Christ, which persevered to the end (Jn. 13:1), even when hell itself opened its mouth to swallow Him up; the contrast also between what Jesus and what Judas were about to do, and between the wild storm of evil that raged in the heart of the traitor, and the calm majesty of love and peace which reigned in that of the Saviour.”²⁸

Even though the KJV and NKJV speak of ‘supper being *ended*,’ the NIV correctly has ‘*during* supper.’ The difference between ‘ended’ and ‘during’ is only one Greek letter, but it changes the phrase from the supper having *ended* to the supper was ‘in progress.’ F. F. Bruce writes,

“‘Supper was now in progress’ (*deipnou ginomenou*) is also a preferable reading to the variant, ‘Supper having ended’ (*deipnou genomenou*)” because John 13:26f., obviously speaks of the Passover ceremonial meal still being in progress.²⁹

What Bruce cites has Yeshua giving His traitor some bread (matza/unleavened bread), which means the meal hadn’t ended. The KJV and NKJV are wrong. Marcus Dods translates the phrase in v. 2 as, ‘*supper having arrived*,’ because of the foot washing. He rightly says:

“Foot washing, customarily done when guests arrived for a banquet, would have been ‘out of place’ during or after the meal.”³⁰

Dods is referring to Yeshua washing the feet of His disciples, which came at the *beginning of the supper* (the Passover ceremonial meal), starting at vv. 4-5f., which obviously happened *after* v. 2, which allegedly speaks of the supper having already ended (KJV/NKJV). In other words, the Passover ceremonial meal was only just beginning in v. 4, so v. 2 cannot mean the meal was over:

John 13:4-5: (Jesus) “rose *from supper* and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.” (NKJV)

Even the KJV, which at v. 2 has ‘supper being ended,’ at v. 4 states; ‘He riseth from supper.’ The NKJV

²⁸ Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p. 818.

²⁹ Bruce, *The Gospel and Epistles of John*, p. 279. Also, the NU Text has, ‘and during supper’ for John 13:2.

³⁰ Dods, *The Gospel of St. John*, p. 815.

says, ‘he rose from supper.’ The correct translation for John 13:2, then, should be, ‘And supper taking place’ or ‘supper having arrived,’ not, ‘And supper being ended.’ The literal translation of the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament³¹ and the Textus Receptus both have, ‘And supper taking place.’³²

In John 13:26 Yeshua speaks of giving a *piece of bread* to the traitor:

John 13:26: “Jesus answered, ‘It is he to whom I shall give a *pieced of bread*³³ when I have dipped it.’ And having dipped the *bread*, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.”³⁴

Edersheim writes that the *piece of bread*³⁵ (called *morsel* or *sop* in some translations) consisted of some lamb and bitter herbs on a piece of unleavened bread, known in Hebrew as *matza* (cf. Exodus 12:8).³⁶ Whether it was only matza, or lamb and bitter herbs on a piece of matza, dipped in an Israeli sesame seed paste called humus (or something else), Yeshua gave it to Judas as the sign to ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved,’ of His betrayer. That disciple would later tell Peter, and most likely, the others would know, too.

The Foot Washing

As Marcus Dods spoke of, the foot washing meant that the Passover ceremonial meal had only begun when Yeshua got up from the table and washed the feet of His Apostles, in verse 4f. The foot washing by Yeshua for His Apostles included Judas. Yeshua, the King of Israel and God the Son, washed their feet to reveal true humility, servanthood and love for these men so that they could do the same for one another (Jn. 13:12-17).

When Yeshua said to Peter that unless He washed Peter’s feet he wouldn’t have any part with Him (v. 8), Yeshua revealed it was also a symbolic picture of being washed, cleansed and transformed by Yeshua’s blood and the Water of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn. 7:37-39). Blood and water are the two chief cleansing agents in Mosaic Law (cf. Hebrews 9:19-22). Both are seen in the cleansing of the leper (Lev. 14:1-20), the leper being symbolic of our status before the holy God without Messiah’s sacrificial blood atonement. Blood and water literally came out of Yeshua’s pierced side, symbolic of what would cleanse and transform us. In the foot washing Yeshua was showing all of us that there isn’t anything He won’t do for us in

³¹ Robert K. Brown and Philip W. Comfort, Translators; J. D. Douglas, Editor, *The New Greek–English Interlinear New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1990), p. 376. The basis for this interlinear is The United Bible Societies’ Third Corrected Edition of the Greek New Testament. This is the same text as the 26th edition of *Novum Testamentum Graece*, by Kurt Aland, M. Black, C. Martini, A. Wikgren and Bruce Metzger.

³² George Ricker Berry, Editor and Translator, *Interlinear Greek–English New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2000), p. 286.

³³ *Matza* is the bread of Passover, unleavened. In Hebrew the word for ‘bread’ encompasses *matza* as is seen in the Passover blessing of the *matza*, which only speaks of *bread* (*leh’chem* לחם).

³⁴ When Yeshua said the traitor would be the one He gave the matza to, He didn’t say it to the whole group, but only to John. If He had said it out loud, all the Apostles, including Judas, would have known who the traitor was.

³⁵ “ψωμίον,” *L&N*, n.p. (*psōmi’own*) “ψωμίον, ον *n*: a small piece or bit of bread—‘a piece of bread, a bit of bread.’ ἐγὼ βάρω τὸ ψωμίον καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ ‘I will dip a piece of bread and give it to him’ Jn 13:26. In John 13:26, 27, 30 it may be necessary to use a phrase such as ‘a broken-off piece of bread’; otherwise the inference might be that the ψωμίον was simply a scrap or crumb of bread.”

³⁶ Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p. 824. “This, we believe, was ‘the sop,’ which Jesus, having dipped it for him in the dish, handed first to Judas, as **occupying the first and chief place at Table.**” This understanding of the ‘sop’ or ‘morsel’ is seen in the Jer. Chall. 57b, which was written about the time of Hillel” (who lived a generation before Yeshua).

The NRSV, HCSB and the NIV call it a piece of bread, which, of course, for the Passover was *matza* bread. The Greek word (*psōmi’own*) for *sop* (*morsel*) is the same in the Textus Receptus and the Majority Text.

order that we might be with Him in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 3:12; 21:2; cf. Heb. 12:22). This was driven home by Him laying down His life for us and being crucified in our place.

Foot washing for guests, by slaves, wouldn't be done during or after the actual meal, but when the guests arrived, or shortly thereafter. Yeshua's foot washing spring-boards off the Pharisaic Passover ceremony of washing hands, which comes in the beginning of the traditional Jewish *seder* or meal ceremony.³⁷

From 'what the disciples thought' about Judas leaving the meal, and *defilement* at the Praetorium, to John 13:1 being translated as '*before* the Feast of the Passover,' and 13:2 speaking of the *supper ending*, the Fourth Gospel has consistently revealed that Yeshua didn't eat a memorial meal the night before Passover, but ate the Passover with His Apostles at the biblical time, when all Israel was doing the same.

The well known Christian theologian Gleason Archer speaks about those who hold to a memorial meal a day earlier than the actual Passover meal, and says:

"The various ingenious explanations offered by others, that Christ held His personal Passover a night early, knowing that He would be crucified before the evening of the fourteenth; that Christ and His movement held to a different calendar, reckoning the fourteenth to be a day earlier than the calendar of the official Jerusalem priesthood; or that He was following a revised calendar observed by the Essenes at Qumran—all these theories are quite improbable and altogether unnecessary."³⁸

The Terms Are Interchangeable

The Synoptic Gospels clearly present Yeshua eating the Passover at the proper time. In the days of the Apostles the terms Passover, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, were used interchangeably, and could also even refer to the day before the Passover meal (14 Aviv), as part of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Matthew records:

"Now on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Yeshua, saying to Him, 'Where do You want us to *prepare for You to eat the Passover?*' And He said, 'Go into the city to a certain man and say to him 'The Rabbi says, 'My time is at hand. *I will keep the Passover* at your house with My disciples.''" (Matthew 26:17-18)

Obviously, it was the biblical Passover that Yeshua kept, even though v. 17 speaks of the day when the Passover lambs were sacrificed, which was 14 Aviv (not biblically part of the Feast of Unleavened Bread), as the first day of Unleavened Bread. The terms *Passover*, for both the sacrifice of the lamb on 14 Aviv, and the eating of the Passover ceremonial meal on the night of 15 Aviv, and the seven day Feast of *Unleavened Bread* (15-21 Aviv) were used interchangeably.³⁹ Luke 22:1 literally tells us that:

'Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, *which is called the Passover*, was near. Then came the (first) day of *Unleavened Bread*, on which the *Passover* lamb had to be sacrificed."

Technically, Passover is only on the first night of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but in Yeshua's time the term had come to encompass the entire Feast of Unleavened Bread and also the sacrifice of the lamb on 14 Aviv. Interestingly enough, 14 Aviv isn't a holy day nor even the day when the Passover lamb was eaten, nor part of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but Mark has the same thing:

³⁷ See [Passover](#). It explains the full ceremony and that the traditional hand washing occurs at the beginning of the Passover ceremonial meal.

³⁸ Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Accordance electronic ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), n.p.

³⁹ See Mt. 26:17-20; Mk. 14:12-18; Lk. 22:1, 7-14; Acts 12:3-4; 1st Cor. 5:6-8.

“Now on the *first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb*, His disciples said to Him, ‘Where do You want us to go and prepare that we may *eat the Passover?*’” (Mk. 14:12)

Just in this, the Synoptics confirm that Yeshua ate the Passover meal at the biblically correct time because the Apostles asked Yeshua where He wanted to keep the Passover, obviously, on the day when the lambs would have been sacrificed and the meal eaten in the evening. If Yeshua had died when the lambs were sacrificed, the Apostles couldn’t have asked Yeshua that. He would have been pierced to a wooden pole at that time. Luke further confirms that Yeshua was still alive when the lambs were going to be sacrificed:

“Then came *the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover (lamb) must be killed*. And He sent Peter and John, saying, ‘*Go and prepare the Passover (lamb) for us that we may eat.*’” (Luke 22:7)

One of Yeshua’s most poignant words are found in Luke, where He speaks of his intense longing to eat the Passover (lamb/meal) with His friends before His death. It was His sacrificial death for them, and us, that reveals His great love and friendship for all of us:

“When the hour had come, He sat down and the 12 Apostles were with Him. Then He said to them, ‘*With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.*’” (Lk. 22:14-15)

Additional Internal Evidence for the Passover Meal

Having established that John 13 is the Passover ceremonial meal, there are four distinct points that further confirm that John 13, and that Lazarus is not ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved,’ nor the author of the Fourth Gospel:

1. Yeshua *speaks* of His betrayer in John 13:10-11, 18-19, 21, 26-27 (cf. v. 2). The Synoptics speak of it being the Passover meal where Yeshua *speaks* of His betrayer.⁴⁰
2. Yeshua *identifies* Judas as His betrayer in John 13:26-27, by giving Judas the sop. The Synoptics speak of it being the Passover meal where Yeshua *identifies* His betrayer as the one who dips his matza in the same dish as He does.⁴¹
3. Judas *leaves* the Passover meal to betray Yeshua in John 13:30-31. The Synoptics speak of Judas at the Passover meal, and it’s obvious that Judas left the Synoptic Passover before it ended in order for him to lead the Sanhedrin’s cohort to arrest Yeshua at Gethsemane.⁴²
4. Peter speaks of *laying down his life* for Yeshua in John 13:36-38, but Yeshua says that very night Peter would deny Him. The Synoptics record that this happened at the Passover.⁴³

These four distinct elements from John 13 parallel the Synoptic Passovers and further prove that John 13 is the Passover ceremonial meal that the Messiah ate with His Apostles. It also proves that Lazarus isn’t the ‘disciple whom Jesus loved’ because only the 12 Apostles were at the Passover ceremonial meal. Therefore, it’s impossible that Lazarus is the one referred to in John 13:23 as the disciple whom Yeshua loved. There were no women and there were no other male guests at Yeshua’s Passover, which categori-

⁴⁰ Mt. 26:17-21, 23-24; Mk. 14:12, 14-16, 18, 20-21; Lk. 22:13-15, 21-22; cf. Mt. 26:14-16, 25; Mk. 14:43-46; Lk. 22:3-6, 47-48.

⁴¹ Mt. 26:23-26; Mk. 14:20; cf. Mt. 26:2, 14-16, 20-21; Mk. 14:10-11; Lk. 22:3-6, 21-23, 47-48.

⁴² Mt. 26:30, 36, 44-48; Mark 14:32, 42-45; Lk. 22:39-40, 47-48.

⁴³ Mt. 26: 33-35; Mk. 14:29-31; Luke 22:33-34.

cally excludes Lazarus from the Passover meal and being ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved:’

Matthew 26:17-18, 20—“Now on the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread the *disciples* came to Yeshua, saying to Him, ‘Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?’ And He said, ‘Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Rabbi says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with My *disciples*.’...When evening had come, **He sat down with the 12**. Now as they were eating, He said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.’”

Mark 14:17—“In the evening **He came with the 12**.”

Luke 22:14—“When the hour had come, **He sat down and the 12 Apostles** with Him.”⁴⁴

This also means that Lazarus can’t be the author or compiler of the Fourth Gospel because John 21:23-24 directly links the author as being the disciple whom Yeshua loved, leaning upon Yeshua’s chest at the Passover meal and asking Yeshua who would betray Him (John 13:23), and we know that Lazarus wasn’t there. Lazarus is not the disciple whom Jesus loved, also known as ‘the Beloved Disciple,’ and Lazarus did not write the Fourth Gospel. It was the disciple whom Yeshua loved—John. The ‘tandem’ of Peter and John will point to this, and the Passover Table will reveal it.

The Tandem

Not everyone who followed Jesus or was healed by Him became His disciple. Disciples literally *followed* Yeshua.⁴⁵ In Hebrew the term for disciple is *talmid*, which is a student. Jewish students or disciples would follow their itinerant rabbis. It would be like a ‘school on the move,’ with the rabbi as the teacher. Lazarus, though, is never seen nor mentioned outside his home, except when he’s in the tomb from which Yeshua raises him from the dead. In other words, Lazarus, as much as he loved Yeshua and listened to Him teach (e.g. in his home; Lk. 10:38-40; cf. Jn. 11:5). The Apostles were also called disciples (Mt. 26:36-37, etc.), but neither term is used of Lazarus.

The Apostle John is specifically mentioned as one of the three disciples whom Yeshua took with Him on several occasions, separating the three from the 12, whom many call Yeshua’s ‘inner circle.’ When Yeshua wanted companionship and strength in His hour of need, at Gethsemane, He took His inner circle further than the rest:

“And He took Peter, James, and *John* with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed.” (Mark 14:33 NKJV)

If Lazarus was the Beloved Disciple and so special to Yeshua, and as one man said, Lazarus “was closer to the Lord and spiritually more perceptive than even Peter,”⁴⁶ why wasn’t Lazarus included in the three whom Yeshua took with Him that night, if Lazarus had actually been at the Passover Table? Of course, we know he wasn’t there, but why not? Why didn’t Yeshua invite him, or make him an apostle instead of one of the 12, since he was so ‘spiritually’ perceptive and Yeshua loved him so much more than anyone else, allegedly the disciple whom Jesus loved?

Also, why wasn’t Lazarus included as one of the three whom Yeshua took with Him up the mountain to His Transfiguration?

“Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, *John*, and

⁴⁴ Compare Mt. 26:14, 47; Mk. 14: 10, 20, 23; Lk. 22:47; John 6:71.

⁴⁵ See John 1:35-40 where two of John the Baptist’s disciples started following Yeshua.

⁴⁶ See the comment by ‘bob’ to Ben Witherington’s article, [Was Lazarus The Beloved Disciple?](#)

James and went up on the mountain to pray.” (Luke 9:28 NKJV)

Again we see that Peter, John and James are the three closest to our Lord. When Luke writes of the *two* disciples whom Yeshua sent to prepare that Passover lamb for the Passover meal, it’s Peter and **John**:

Luke 22:7-8—“Then came the (first) day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and *John*, saying, ‘Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat.’”

This tandem of Peter and John is six times in the Book of Acts.⁴⁷ Even Paul notes the two of them, along with ‘a new James,’ the half-brother of Yeshua, as Pillars of the Mother Church in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:9).⁴⁸ Why isn’t Lazarus mentioned in Acts or anywhere else in Scripture if he “was closer to the Lord...than even Peter” and so perceptive?

The Apostle John is not only the disciple that Yeshua loved, but also ‘the other disciple:’

“When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and *the disciple whom He loved* standing by, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!”” (John 19:26)

“Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to *the other disciple, whom Jesus loved*, and said to them, ‘They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.’ Peter, therefore went out, *and the other disciple*, and were going to the tomb. So they both ran together, and *the other disciple* outran Peter and came to the tomb first.” (John 20:2-4; this is the tandem of Peter and John)

Peter and John obviously had a special relationship. When Samaria came to believe in Yeshua, the Apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to extend the hand of fellowship to the estranged Samaritans, and welcome them into the Kingdom of Messiah, with the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14f.). In the Fourth Gospel the disciple whom Yeshua loved is John.

The Passover Table

The structure of the ancient Passover Table also reveals that the Beloved Disciple was John. There were no seats at Messiah’s Passover Table, just large pillows to lay on. The ‘table’ was actually only about a foot off the floor. Lying down upon the pillows and leaning on their left arm, everyone would eat their food with their right hand. Lying down was symbolic of being a free person. Hebrew slaves ate standing up and ready to return to work immediately. There was no rest for the Hebrew slaves in Egypt, but this was the Passover, and lying down symbolized the freedom and rest that Yahveh had given to Israel.

The host at the Passover Table was Yeshua. This is seen by Him seeking the upper room from the man, in Jerusalem, providing the lamb for His Apostles and telling Peter and John to go and prepare the Passover, which meant going to the Temple with their lamb, sacrificing it, returning to the upper room and roasting the Passover lamb, and getting the other food ready. If Yeshua had celebrated the Passover at anyone’s home, including the home of Lazarus or the house in Jerusalem where Lazarus kept the Passover, Yeshua would not have been the host. The host provided the lamb and all Israel celebrated Passover in Jerusalem in the days of Messiah, the place where God chose to establish His name forever, and where all the Feasts were kept.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Acts 3:1, 3, 11; 4:13, 19; 8:14; cf. Matthew 4:21; 10:2; Mk. 1:19; 3:17; 10:35; Lk 5:10.

⁴⁸ The Apostle James, the brother of John, was murdered by Herod in Acts 12:1-2, about 42 AD. The ‘new’ James was the oldest of Yeshua’s half brothers (Mt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3; cf. Mt. 27:56; Mk. 15:40, 47).

⁴⁹ Ex. 20:24; Dt. 12:11, 21; 14:23-24; 16:2, 6, 11.

The host also chose the guest who would be seen as the most honored guest. This man always laid to the left of the host. To the right of the host was the youngest person (who could ask the Passover questions).⁵⁰ As we'll see, that was John.

The Passover Table was in the shape of a large U, made up of three tables. At the top right corner of the U the youngest laid on a large, flat pillow. To his left, was the host, Yeshua. The upper torsos of everyone were parallel to the Table, but their legs jutted out at about a 45° angle, which allowed the person on the right, in this case, John, to come closer to the of the person on his left, Yeshua. This is how John could be at Yeshua's chest when he asked the question of who would betray Him. The legs of the Passover participants jutted out so more people could fit around the Passover Table.

Yeshua, as the host, determined that Judas would be to His left—the guest of honor. We know that because Yeshua handed the sop to Judas (with what would have been His right hand; Jn. 13:26:27). Yeshua made His betrayer the guest of honor, in one last demonstration of divine love to Judas.

To the left of Judas was the host's 'next most honored guest' (in this case, another apostle), and on down the line around the outer perimeter of the Table,⁵¹ to the least honored guest, which was Peter. Even though Peter was the chief Apostle, Yeshua was trying to teach him humility (Jn. 13:8-13).

We also see this order played out with Yeshua washing the feet of the Apostles and Peter being the last one Yeshua came to (Jn. 13:5-11). It's from that 'last' or least honored position at the Passover Table, in the upper left hand corner of the U, that placed Peter directly across from John, the youngest, who laid in the upper right hand corner of the U. It was from this position that Peter was able to easily motion with his hand to John, who was already laying upon Yeshua's chest, and John asked Yeshua, in no doubt a whisper, who the traitor was (Jn. 13:23-26f.). If John had asked with a loud voice, all the Apostles, including Judas to Yeshua's left, would have heard the question, and known the answer. The other Apostles wouldn't have thought that Judas, upon leaving, might be going to buy some things for the feast or that he was going to give some alms to the poor if they had heard the question.

Even though Scripture speaks of Lazarus being loved by Yeshua (Jn. 11:5, 36), John spoke of himself as the one whom Yeshua loved. The Passover Table brings this out, as it's written in John 13:23 that is was the disciple whom Yeshua loved that asked the question. John was the youngest, and history records that he outlived all the other Apostles, to about 100 AD, which would have made him about 30 years old that Yeshua's last Passover. Using the phrase, the disciple whom Yeshua loved, instead of his own name, was an ancient form of humility. The Beloved Disciple is John (Jn. 13:23; 19:26; 21:7, 20).

Conclusion

Alfred Edersheim revealed that John 13 was the Passover ceremonial meal. This categorically excludes Lazarus from being the Beloved Disciple because Scripture tells us that only the 12 Apostles were at the Passover.⁵² Lazarus wasn't a disciple, let alone an apostle.

John 13:1 (*before* the Feast of the Passover) forms a general introduction to the chapter and does not place the *supper* the night before the Passover. This means that Yeshua didn't die when the Passover lambs

⁵⁰ The youngest asks the host some questions, which allow the host to speak of God's mighty deliverance from Egyptian slavery, etc. For those questions and how Passover was conducted, see [Passover](#) and [The Passover Ceremony](#).

⁵¹ No one laid on the inside of the U. That was left open for food and drink to be brought to the Table, without having to step over anyone.

⁵² John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20.

were being sacrificed in the Temple, but kept the Passover with His Apostles at the biblical time. John 13:2 doesn't speak of the meal *being over*, but actually states that the time of the (Passover) meal had arrived. Yeshua didn't eat a memorial or commemorative meal a day earlier, as is evident,

1. from what the Apostles thought when Judas left the Passover ceremonial meal (that he went out to either buy something for the feast or to give gifts to the poor at the Temple).
2. The concern of ritual defilement for the chief priests and scribes who brought Yeshua to Pilate, was not for the Passover ceremonial meal, but for the special Chagiga sacrifice in the morning *after* the Passover meal had been eaten the previous night.
3. Also, John 13 parallels specific events that the Synoptic Gospels declare took place on the night of the Passover meal, and so, John 13 is the Passover meal because:
 - a. Yeshua speaks of His betrayer;
 - b. Yeshua identifies the traitor to John by giving Judas the sop;
 - c. Judas leaves the Passover meal to betray the Lord, and
 - d. Peter speaks of laying down his life for Yeshua, but Yeshua tells him that he would deny Him that very night.

These eight points reveal that John 13 is the Passover meal that was kept on the correct biblical date of 15 Aviv. John 13 is not a commemorative or memorial meal that was held the night before the Passover.

Also, the tandem of Peter and John point to John being the 'other disciple,' when Peter is spoken of with another disciple.

Furthermore, the layout at the Passover Table revealed that John was the Beloved Disciple who laid upon Yeshua's chest, and subsequently, that it was John who wrote the Gospel that bears His name, because the disciple whom Yeshua loved is also the author of the Fourth Gospel (John 13:23; 21:20-24; cf. 21:7).

Why didn't Yeshua die when the lambs were being sacrificed? After all, He is the (Passover) Lamb of God.⁵³ The reason is because 15 Aviv was when the First Passover was eaten in Egypt *and* the day when Israel left their life of slavery because of the sacrifice of the lamb. 15 Aviv was also the time when the Second Passover was eaten in Jerusalem and the day when Israel left their life of slavery to sin, sickness death and Satan because of the sacrifice of the Lamb.⁵⁴ That's why 15 Aviv, and not the day before (14 Aviv), is an annual Sabbath in the Passover—Feast of Unleavened Bread.

⁵³ John 1:29, 36; 1st Peter 1:19; Revelation 5:6, 8, 12-13; 7:9-10, 14, 17, etc.

⁵⁴ John 19:14 seems to place the crucifixion at the time when the lambs were being sacrificed in the Temple: 'Now it was the day of preparation (*paraskeue*) for the Passover (*tou pascha*); it was about the sixth hour' (NASB). The NIV correctly translates it as, 'It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour.' Gleason Archer (*Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, n.p.); "the word *paraskeue* had already by the first century AD become a technical term for 'Friday,' since every Friday was the day of preparation for Saturday, that is, the Sabbath. In Modern Greek the word for 'Friday' is *paraskeue*...the Greek term *tou pascha* (lit., 'of the Passover') is taken to be equivalent to the Passover Week" referring to the seven day Passover—Feast of Unleavened Bread...It was unnecessary to insert a specific term for 'week'...for it to be understood as such. Therefore, that which might be translated literally as 'the preparation of the Passover' must in this context be rendered 'Friday of Passover Week.'" This means that John is saying it was Friday, not the day the Passover meal was eaten, and as 'Friday' begins on Thursday night, it was on Thursday night that the Passover was eaten that year.

Revised on 16 December 2018.