

Section 4

The Passover Sacrifice

The Torah tells us that God brought 10 Plagues upon Egypt to help the Israelites obtain their freedom from Pharaoh. The Tenth Plague was the “Death of the First Born” during which all first born males living in Egypt would die. In order to be saved from this Plague, God instructed to the Israelites to put lamb’s blood on their doorposts so that the Angel of Death would “pass over” the houses of the Israelites. The Passover Sacrifice commemorates God’s sparing the Israelite first born males during the plague of the first born males.

Although colloquially we often refer to the 7 days on which we do not eat leaven as “Passover”, or “*Pesach*”, in the bible “*Pesach*” refers exclusively to the Passover sacrifice. This sacrifice was given by every Israelite man on the 14th of the first month at twilight. The 7 days (from the 15th through the 21st of the month) on which we do not eat leaven, by contrast, are called “*Hag HaMatzot*” (“The Feast of Unleavened Bread”) in the Tanakh. I use the biblical terminology in *Mikdash Me'at*.

The topics I will cover in this section are:

1. The three Passover sacrifices: The Passover of Egypt, The Standard Passover, and 2nd Passover
2. Regulations of The Standard Passover
3. Regulations of 2nd Passover
4. Summary and Comparison of Statues Pertaining to the Three Passovers

Since the sacrifices, including the Passover, are no longer offered today, I have shortened the details and derivations of the laws of this section more so than in previous sections.

“Behold the Passover sacrifice that saved Israel from the plague of the first born at the decree of God is reason for all with understanding to know the bountiful protection of God” –Adderet Eliyahu’s

Introductory Poem to the Section on Passover

§4.1 The Three Passovers

There are three types of “Passovers” referenced in the Bible, each was followed according to its specific set of regulations. The three Passovers are:

1. *The Passover of Egypt.* This is the first Passover that happened during the Exodus. The blood of this sacrifice was spread on the doors of Israelite houses so that the plague would not affect the household (see Exodus 12).
2. *The Standard Passover* was held during *bein ha'arbayim* on the 14th of the 1st month of every year as a remembrance for the Passover of Egypt.
3. *2nd Passover* was held on the 14th of the 2nd month. The 2nd Passover was a substitute sacrifice performed only by those who had missed the Standard Passover that year due to their being impure or unable to reach Jerusalem in time (the 2nd Passover is commanded in Numbers 9:10-11).

§4.2 The Standard Passover

§4.2A When the Animal for the Standard Passover Was Prepared

Most of the sages held that the animal for the Standard Passover needed to be prepared by the 14th of the month, the day of the sacrifice. However, a minority held that it should be prepared by the 10th of the month since regarding the Passover of Egypt we find written:

“On the tenth day of this month they shall take for them every man a lamb...you shall take it from the sheep or from the goats...and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the month and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel will slaughter it at twilight.”

-(Exodus 12:3-5)

Although the Passover of Egypt was prepared on the tenth of the month, the majority of the sages ruled that the standard Passover need not be prepared on the tenth of the month. They argued that the command to prepare the sacrificial animal on the 10th of the month was a temporary command intended only for the time of the Exodus. They noted that it would have been hard to find sheep or goats in Egypt since the Egyptians held sheep and goats as an abomination (see Exodus 8:22), so Moshe commanded that the animal be prepared well in advanced.

§4.2B When the Animal was Slaughtered

The sacrifice was slaughtered on the 14th of the 1st month at *bein ha'arbaim* (Deuteronomy 16:6), that is twilight. The Rabbanites believe, however, that *bein ha'arbaim* refers to the time between noon and sunset.

Notes on §4.2B:

Adderet Eliyahu contains in its discussion on the Passover an extensive proof that the term “*Bein Ha'arbayim*”, which is when the Passover is to be offered, refers to twilight. The Rabbanites, on the other hand, believe that the term refers to the period of time between noon and sunset. While the extensive arguments and counter arguments regarding this matter offer great support to many important *halakhic* conclusions, this level of detail is not needed to reasonably understand those conclusions and the rationale behind them. Thus, I do not include this discussion in my abridgement.

For now, the reader may simply rely on the Karaite linguistic tradition's definition for “*bein ha'arbayim*” just as he relies on linguistic tradition for the knowledge of many other Hebrew words. It is perhaps worthwhile noting that most non-Orthodox translations of the bible translate “*bein ha'arbayim*” as “twilight”. Also, a slightly more detailed discussion for “*bein ha'arbaim*” can be found in §1.1.

§4.2C When the Animal was Eaten

The Passover was eaten throughout the night of the 15th of the month. None of it could be left until the morning of the 15th (Exodus 34:25) and any leftovers were burned (Exodus 12:10).

§4.2D Where the Passover was Offered and Eaten

The Passover was sacrificed in the courtyard of the sanctuary and its blood was poured on the corners of the altar. It was eaten in the buildings surrounding the sanctuary as it is written: “you shall roast and eat it in the place *Hashem* your God shall choose” (Deuteronomy 16:7)

§4.2E Who was Required to Offer and Eat of the Standard Passover

All adult males were required to offer the Passover, as it is written: “Three times a year all your males will appear in front of *Hashem* your God on *Hag HaMatzot*, on *Hag HaShavuot*, and on *Hag HaSukkot*” (Deuteronomy 16:16). Those that are required to offer the Passover are the same who are required to eat of it.

No foreigner (a “*ben nechar*”), that is no one who had not accepted the Torah and God's oneness could offer it or eat of it (Exodus 12:43). Furthermore, no one who had accepted God and the Torah but had not converted to Judaism (a “*toshav*”) could offer or eat of it (Exodus 12:45). No one who was uncircumcised, even if Jewish, could eat of it (Exodus 12:48). If a man owned slaves the slaves needed to be circumcised before that man could eat of it (Exodus 12:44).

§4.3 2nd Passover*§4.3A Who Should keep 2nd Passover*

The Second Passover was established when those impure from contact with a dead body asked Moshe whether or not they should offer the Passover:

“but there were certain men who were unclean by the dead body of a man so that they could not keep the Passover on that day....and Moshe said to them ‘stay that I may hear what Hashem will command concerning you’. And Hashem spoke to Moshe saying...‘if any man of you or your generations be unclean by reason of a dead body or be on a journey, he shall nevertheless keep the Passover of Hashem; in the second month on the fourteenth day at dusk they shall keep it’ ”
(Numbers 9:6-11)

Although the inquiry by the unclean men and God’s response refer only to those impure from contact with a dead body, one should keep 2nd Passover instead of the Standard Passover if he is subject to any form of impurity. This follows from the verse: “but the man that is pure and is not on a journey and does not keep the [Standard] Passover that man shall be cut off from his people” (Numbers 9:13). Since only the pure are punished for not keeping the Standard Passover, it stands to reason that the impure for any reason were to keep 2nd Passover instead of the Standard Passover.

Notes on §4.3A:

Another argument showing that any impurity invalidates one from keeping the Standard Passover is that the Passover was offered in the sanctuary and only the pure may enter the sanctuary under penalty of death (Leviticus 15:31). I am surprised that this argument is not mentioned in *Adderet Eliyahu*.

§4.3B Missing the 2nd Passover

If one misses the 2nd Passover because he is impure or on a journey, one does not then observe a “3rd Passover” on the 3rd month.

§4.4 Summary and Comparison of the Three Passovers

§4.4A Comparison of The Passover of Egypt and The Standard Passover

The table below lists the similarities between the Passover of Egypt and the Standard Passover:

Similarities Between Passover of Egypt and Standard Passover	
Topic	Description
Animal to be Sacrificed	Male sheep or goat without blemish
How the Animal was Prepared	Not boiled, rather roasted in fire
Bones	No bones were to be broken during the eating or the preparation of the sacrifice
Leftovers	The leftovers were burned so that none would be left the following morning
<i>Hametz</i>	It was not prepared with <i>Hametz</i> present (Exodus 23:18)
Who could eat it	The uncircumcised could not eat of it, even if Israelite. The foreigner could not eat of it, even if circumcised.
When it was slaughtered	At twilight

The table below lists the differences between the Passover of Egypt and The Standard Passover

Differences between Passover of Egypt and Standard Passover		
Topic	Passover of Egypt	Standard Passover
Preparation	The animal to be sacrificed was prepared on the 10 th of the month at the latest	The animal to be sacrificed was prepared on the 14 th of the month at the latest
The blood of the sacrifice	Spread onto the door frame of Israelite houses	Sprinkled on the altar in the sanctuary
The fat of the sacrifice	No Explicit Ruling Given	It was given on the altar
Who was required to eat it	The pure, the impure, men, women	Only the pure men.
How it was Eaten	Eaten in Haste	Eaten peacefully
Where it was Eaten	Eaten inside the Israelite Houses	Eaten within the sanctuary
Followed by <i>Hag HaMatzot</i> ? (7 days of eating matzah, with work forbidden on the first and last of the 7 days)	There is debate on whether it was followed by <i>Hag HaMatzot</i>	Followed by <i>Hag HaMatzot</i>

§4.4B Comparison of The Standard Passover and 2nd Passover

The rules and regulations of 2nd Passover are almost identical to those of the standard Passover as it is written “according to all the statutes of the Passover they shall keep it (the 2nd Passover)” (Numbers 9:12). The only differences are that it was given in the 2nd month, that it was not followed by *Hag HaMatzot*, and that it was prepared at a time when *hametz* was present.