

Section I

Different Jewish Schools

ARISTOCRATIC SYSTEM A

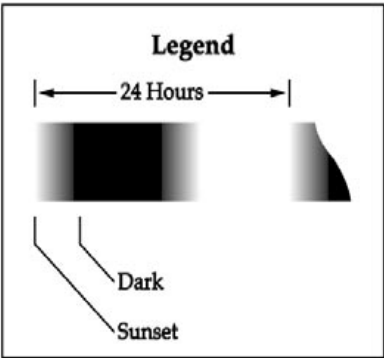
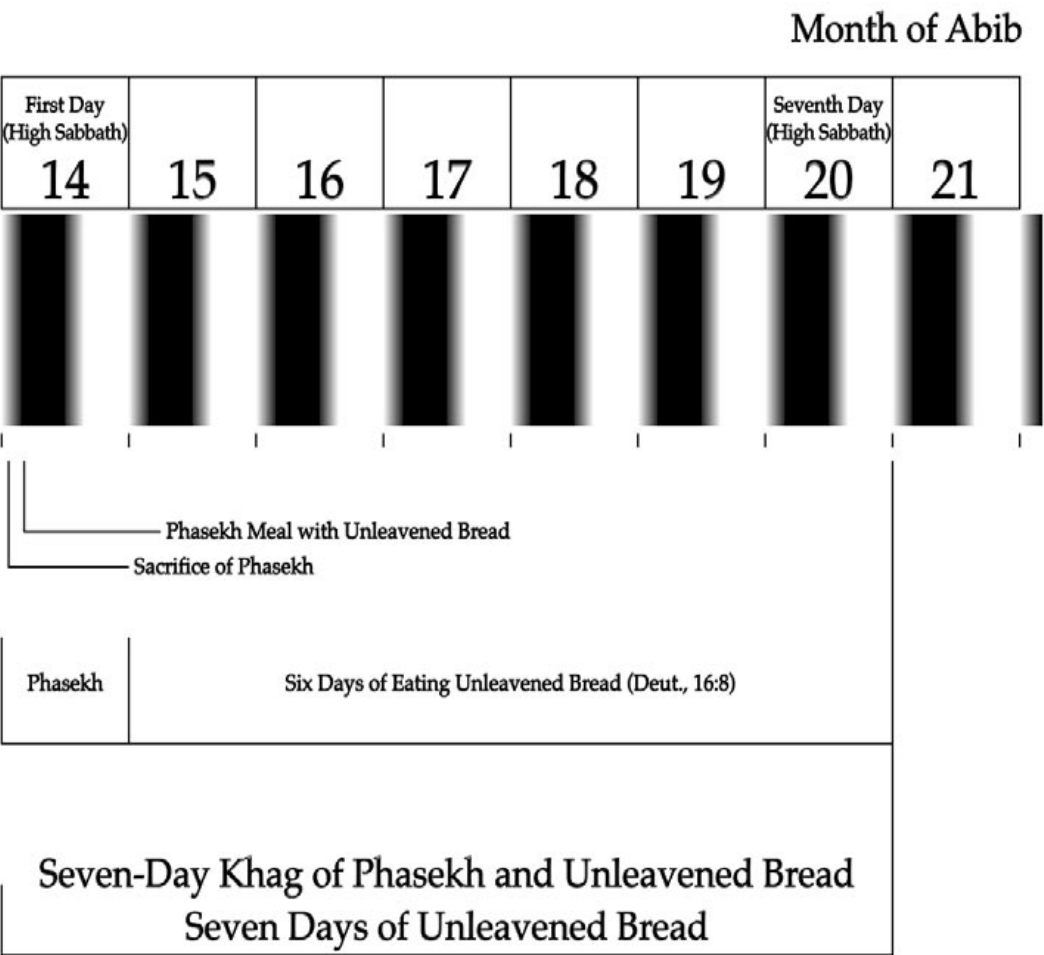


CHART C

HASIDIC SYSTEM B

Month of Abib

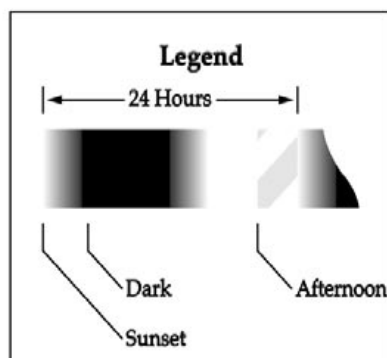
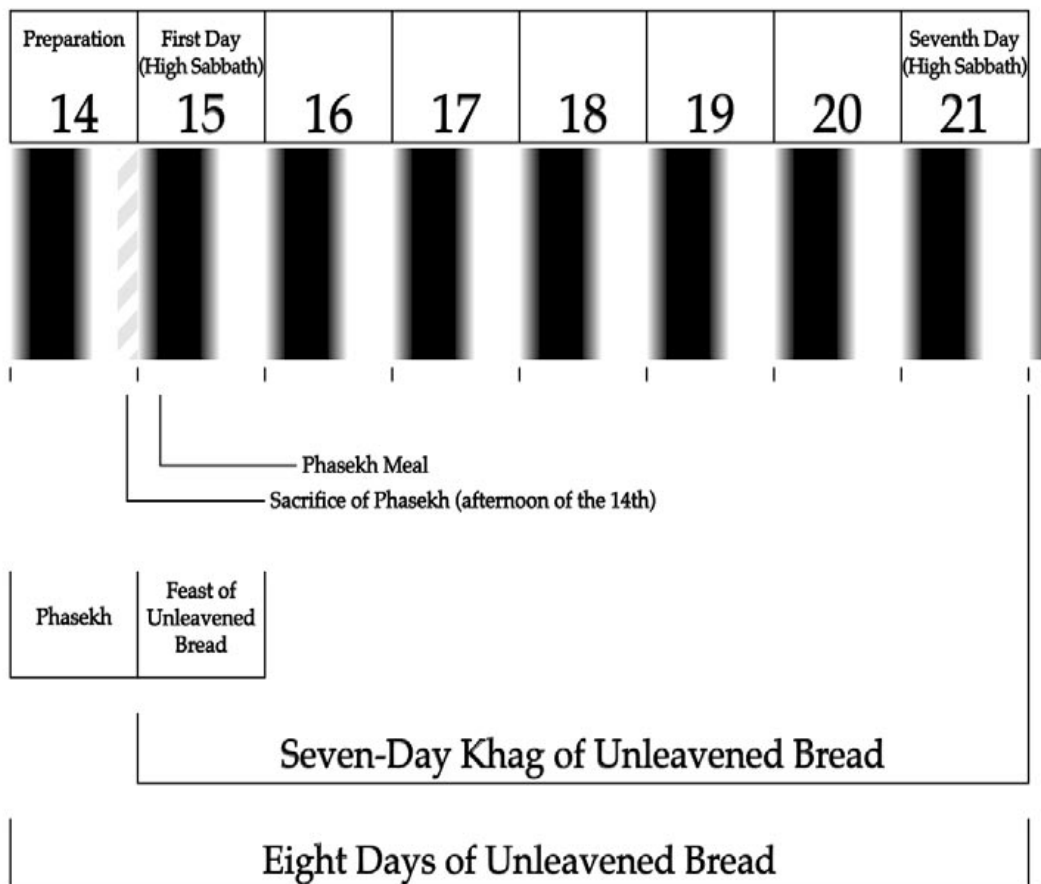


CHART D

NEO-ARISTOCRATIC SYSTEM C

USING BOTH A LEGAL AND COMMON DAY

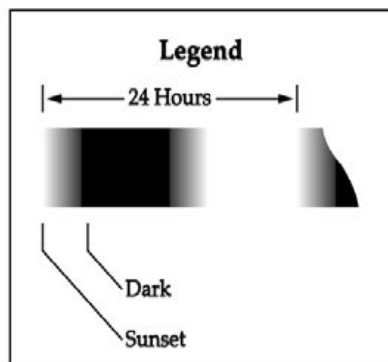
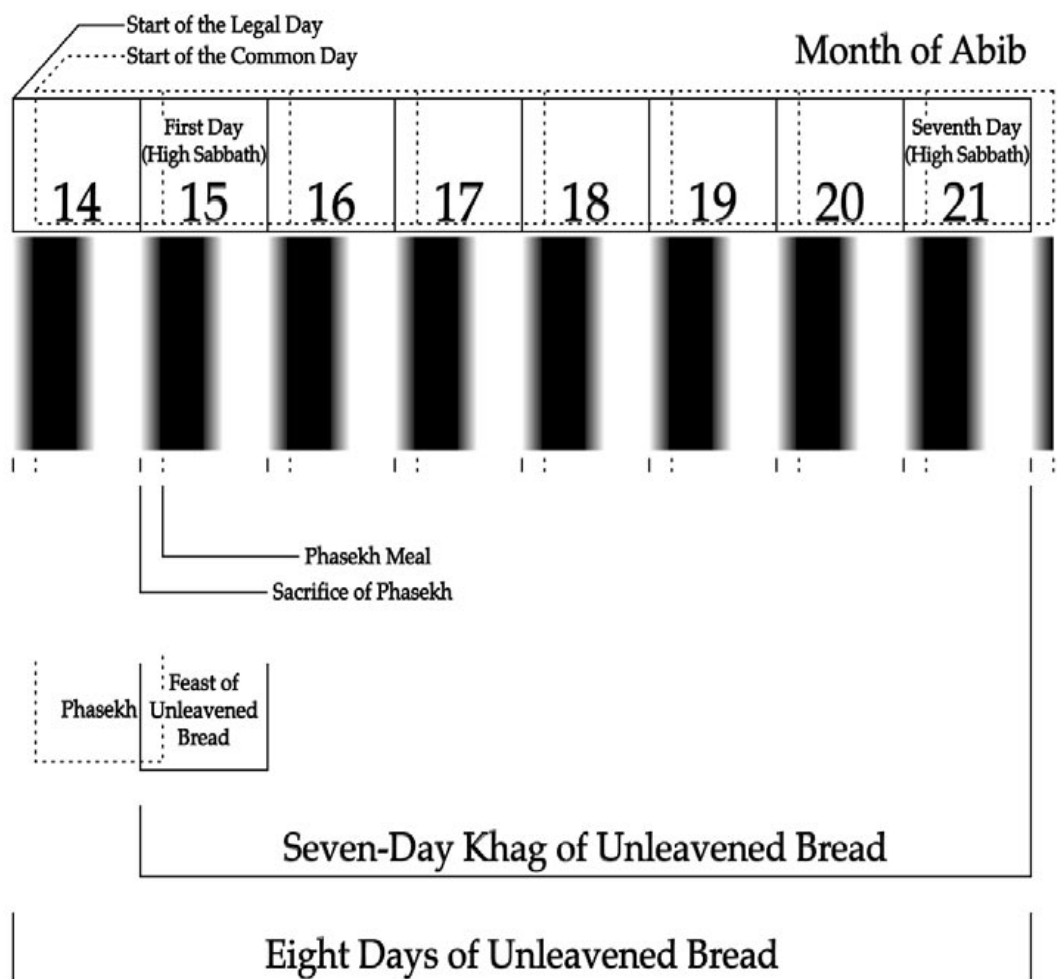


CHART E

Introduction: Section I

Different Jewish practices with reference to the Khag of Phasekh and the seven days of unleavened bread and the Khag of Shabuath (Pentecost) become overtly apparent in the mid-second century B.C.E. During this period a great dispute was already under way among the Jews, not just over exactly how the nation of Judaea should observe these festivals but over the approach to religion itself. This debate was fought between the two leading factions of Judaism: the Hasidic and the Aristocratic schools.

The Jewish Factions

From the political and religious turmoil of that period, two major religious parties rose above the others to gain political and social dominance in Judaea—from the Aristocratic school came the Sadducees—supporters of the Levitical priesthood of Tsadoq (Zadok)—and from the Hasidic school came the Pharisees (who later evolved into the Talmudists). Each school held to very different ideas about the Phasekh celebration. The essence of their disagreement centered upon (1) the exact time of the day on the 14th of the moon of Abib (also called Nisan)¹ that the Phasekh lamb was to be slaughtered, (2) on which day, the 14th or 15th of Abib/Nisan, one was to eat the Phasekh supper, and (3) which days represent the seven days of unleavened bread: the 14th through 20th or the 15th through 21st days of the first moon.

According to the school of the Pharisees—an offshoot of the early Hasidim,² from which also descended the Essenes, Zealots, and others—the lamb is to be slaughtered in the afternoon of the 14th and then eaten after the sun has gone down, during the first part of the 15th (the ancient legal Hebrew day beginning at sunset).³ The seven days of unleavened bread extended from the 15th until the end of the 21st day of the first moon.

The Sadducees, being supporters of the system used by the old Zadok priesthood, were largely made up of aristocratic priests and their families. They were established among both the Jews in Judaea and the people in Samaria (the Samaritans). The Sadducees held to the Aristocratic view that the lamb was to be sacrificed at twilight, just after sunset and before dark, on the 14th, and then eaten that same night (still being the 14th). Their practice was suppressed as a state observance in Judaea by the Pharisees in the first half of

¹ That the Hebrew moon (month) previously named Abib was, after the Babylonian exile period, called Nisan, see HBC, pp. 33–40; NBD, p. 937.

² Hebrew קְהִלָּה (Khasidim; the “pious” ones); EBD, p. 465; NBD, p. 505, “loyal ones . . . saints”; EJ, 7, p. 1383, “pietists.”

³ “Sunset is the moment when the entire sun disappears below the horizon” (EJ, 5, p. 1376). For the legal day beginning at sunset see below Chap. XIII, pp. 213ff, p. 213, n. 21.

The precise meaning of the phrase **בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים** *between the two evenings*, which is used with reference to the time when the paschal animal is to be slain (Exod. xii, 6; Lev. xxiii, 5; Numb. ix, 3, 5), as well as in connection with the offering of the evening sacrifice (Exod. xxix, 39, 41; Numb. xxviii, 4), and elsewhere (Exod. xvi, 12; xxx, 8), is greatly disputed.⁸

Generally, the phrase **בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים** (*between the two evenings*) in Exodus, 12:6 (cf., Exodus, 16:12; Leviticus, 23:5; Numbers, 9:3, 5, 11) has been accorded several variant renderings. William Smith, in his *Dictionary of the Bible*, comments:

Its precise meaning is doubtful. The Karaites and Samaritans, with whom Aben Ezra (on Ex. xii. 6) agrees, consider it [*byn ha-arabim*] as the interval between sunset and dark. This appears to be in accordance with Deut. xvi. 6, where the paschal lamb is commanded to be slain "at the going down of the sun." But the Pharisees and Rabbinites held that the first evening commenced when the sun began to decline (δείλη πρωΐα), and that the second evening began with the setting of the sun (δείλη ὀψία). . . . A third notion has been held by Jarchi and Kimchi, that the two evenings are the time immediately before and immediately after sunset, so that the point of time at which the sun sets divides them.⁹

The New Jerusalem Bible remarks:

Lit. 'between the two evenings', i.e. either between sunset and darkness (Samaritans) or between afternoon and sunset (Pharisees and Talmud).¹⁰

One Correct View

There can only be one correct system for the Festival of Phasekh and Unleavened Bread. Yet, when all of the clutter is removed, behind every interpretation found among the Jews there has been one of three basic understandings of the expression "**בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים** (*byn ha-arabim*).\" For simplification purposes, this study shall utilize the following labels to identify each Jewish system.

System A: The first view is that of the Aristocratic school, represented by the aristocratic priests, Sadducees, and early Samaritans (see Chart C). The day is counted from sunset to sunset. The time of *arab*, also called *byn ha-arabim*, being the time when the Phasekh lamb was sacrificed, is counted as the

⁸ CBTEL, 7, p. 735.

⁹ DBC, 2, p. 714, n. k.

¹⁰ NJB, p. 95, n. c.

period of twilight lying between sunset and dark. In this system the Phasekh lamb was anciently sacrificed just after sunset, which was the very beginning of the 14th day of the moon of Abib, a month-name later identified by the Judahites returning from their Babylonian exile with Nisan (March/April).¹¹

The Phasekh supper is eaten at dark, after the evening's twilight, on the 14th day of the moon of Abib. The seven days of eating unleavened bread also begin with sunset, at the very beginning of the 14th of Abib, and continue only until the sunset which marks the very end of the 20th of Abib and the very beginning of the 21st of Abib. The 14th of Abib and the 20th of Abib are both *sabbathons* (high Sabbaths).

System B: The second school is represented by the Hasidic groups like the Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots (see Chart D). The day is counted from sunset-to-sunset. There are two periods of *arab*. One form of this system counts the first *arab* as lasting from the ninth hour (3 P.M.) until sunset, being the last part of a day, while the second *arab* is represented by twilight after sunset, being the first part of the next day. The Phasekh lamb was sacrificed at the ninth hour, calculating that this point in time was the *byn ha-arabim* on the afternoon of the 14th of Abib. The second form of this system calculates the first *arab* from noon until the ninth hour (3 P.M.) and the second *arab* from the ninth hour until sunset. Still another variant has the second *arab* continue until dark. Regardless of whichever form it takes, the basic tenet of the Hasidim is that there is an *arab* that ends the day and the time of *byn ha-arabim* is in the afternoon before sunset.

According to System B, the Phasekh lamb is sacrificed during the afternoon of the 14th of Abib and the Phasekh supper is eaten just after the beginning of dark on the 15th day of the moon of Abib. The seven-day Festival of Unleavened Bread lasts from just after sunset at the beginning of the 15th of Abib until sunset at the end of the 21st day of Abib. The 15th and the 21st are high Sabbaths. This system originated among the ancient Hasidim and was later made popular by the Pharisees and their spiritual descendants the Talmudists.

System C: The third school, represented by such groups as the Karaite Jews and neo-Samaritans, was an amalgamation of the Aristocratic and Hasidic opinions (see Chart E). The day is counted in two ways. There is a legal day, which extends from sunset to sunset, and a common day, which extends from dark until dark. *Arab* and *byn ha-arabim* represent the period of twilight between sunset and dark and is the period that overlaps the legal day with the common day. Under this system, the 14th of Abib, the day on which the Phasekh lamb is to be sacrificed, is counted as a common day (from dark to dark). The lamb is sacrificed at *arab* (twilight) at the end of the 14th of Abib (also being the first part of the legal day of the 15th). The Phasekh supper is eaten just after dark on the legal day of the 15th. The seven days of unleavened bread are counted from the end of the 14th until the end of the 21st day of the first moon. The 15th and the 21st, legal reckoning, are high Sabbaths.

¹¹ See above n. 1.

These three Jewish schools of thought have in turn been manipulated into several arrangements, each intended to explain just how and when the Phasekh was to be sacrificed and eaten, and on which days the high Sabbaths should fall. At the same time, Yahweh does not change.¹² Obviously, there can only be one original and correct usage of the expression *byn ha-arabim* and only one correct practice of the Festival of Phasekh and Unleavened Bread. It will be the object of this study to find out which system was the original and intended construct of Scriptures.

The Pentecost Debate

The dispute among the Jews with regard to the day of Pentecost centered upon their interpretation of Leviticus, 23:11, which commands that the *omer* offering should be waved "on the day after the Sabbath." The day of Pentecost was calculated as the 50th day from this point. The meaning of the word Sabbath as found in this verse became the source of much contention. Four interpretations arose:

- The Aristocratic view held that the Sabbath referred to in Leviticus, 23:11, was the weekly Sabbath. The *omer* wave offering, therefore, always occurs on that first day of the week which falls just after the festival day of Phasekh. The 50th day starts from this point. Pentecost day likewise always falls on the first day of the week.
- The quasi-Aristocratic view also argued that the Sabbath referred to is the weekly Sabbath. Yet in this variation, the *omer* wave offering occurs on the first day of the week falling just after the end of the full seven days of unleavened bread. Pentecost is 50 days later and always on the first day of the week.
- The Hasidim saw the Sabbath of Leviticus, 23:11, quite differently. They understood this Sabbath as referring to the high Sabbath festival day of Phasekh, which for the Hasidic Jews is Abib 15. The *omer* wave offering, therefore, always occurs on the 16th of Abib (Nisan), the day after Phasekh, no matter which day of the week that might be. Pentecost always falls on the same day of the week on the 50th day from that point.
- The quasi-Hasidic view also believed that the Sabbath referred to is a high Sabbath festival day. Yet unlike their counterparts, they believed it was the *sabbathon* on the last day of the seven days of unleavened bread. For the Hasidim this date is Abib 22. The *omer* wave offering, therefore, always occurs on Abib 23, regardless of which day of the week it falls. Pentecost always falls on the same day of the week on the 50th day from that point.

Pentecost leaves us with the same dilemma presented by Phasekh and the seven days of unleavened bread. There can only be one original and correct usage.

¹² Mal., 3:6; Heb., 1:10–12, 13:8.

Conclusion

Discovering just when the knowledge of the original forms of Phasekh, the seven days of unleavened bread, and Pentecost was lost and how so many variant views came into existence is clearly part of the purpose of this section of our research. Several other questions must also be addressed:

- What was the historical and cultural context that helped develop these different views?
- Who were the spiritual fathers of these different views?
- What was the reasoning used to support their respective positions?

We shall begin our search for the one correct view of how to celebrate the Festival of Phasekh and Unleavened Bread and the Festival of Pentecost by examining the historical and cultural context that gave birth to the differing opinions. We shall also examine when and why the advocates of the Hasidic views were able to politically suppress the Aristocratic understandings. This background shall be followed with the evidence documenting the practices and reasonings used by the Hasidic (System B) and Aristocratic (System A) schools. We shall also examine a late compromise which combined the Hasidic interpretation of the seven days of unleavened bread with the Aristocratic view of *byn ha-arabim* (System C). Finally, we shall examine the various views advocated by the ancient Jews for counting the days to Pentecost.