



## Mary Stayed

The Adoration and Tenacity of Mary of Magdala  
An imaginative interpretation of Mary's last days with Yeshua (Jesus)

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## Preface

Chronologies in the Gospel accounts are often difficult to find because the writings were collections of gathered writings. The lack of some detail in these accounts reflects their authenticity. For instance, Mary of Magdala was alone at the tomb with the risen Messiah; But other verses mention she was at the tomb with the other women, as well as with Peter and John. In this story, I explore how these events may have occurred in their order, writing from Mary's perspective. As I attempted to capture her emotion and her understanding of the events, my gratitude to my Savior has deepened.

For many years, I have been piecing together the timeline of Yeshua's (Jesus) last days from Scripture. In the framework of this story, I have made a sincere effort to adhere to Scripture rather than to creeds, commentaries, or traditions. I sought the teaching of Dr. Dwight A. Pryor regarding difficult texts. Dr. Pryor was the Founder and President of *The Center for Judaic-Christian Studies* in Dayton, Ohio. He was also a founding member of *the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research*. His many years of association with Jewish and Christian scholars in Israel provided him with profound insights into the life and teachings of Yeshua. His message series *Misconceptions about the Passover* give clarity to passages that seem to have discrepancies in the English until understood in the light of Jewish understanding.

This story reflects the context of first-century Judaism in the Second-Temple period in Jerusalem in about AD 30 during the week of *Passover, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruits* in the spring – the week coinciding with Yeshua's last week on earth. The following summary of the meaning behind these Jewish *Appointed Days* will clarify parts of the story:

Yahweh<sup>1</sup> ( יהוה ), the Creator of the heavens and the earth, appointed times for His people to observe to remember His faithfulness and their covenant with Him. These times are recorded in Leviticus 23 and other parts of the Bible. Four occurred in Yeshua's last week and are described here:

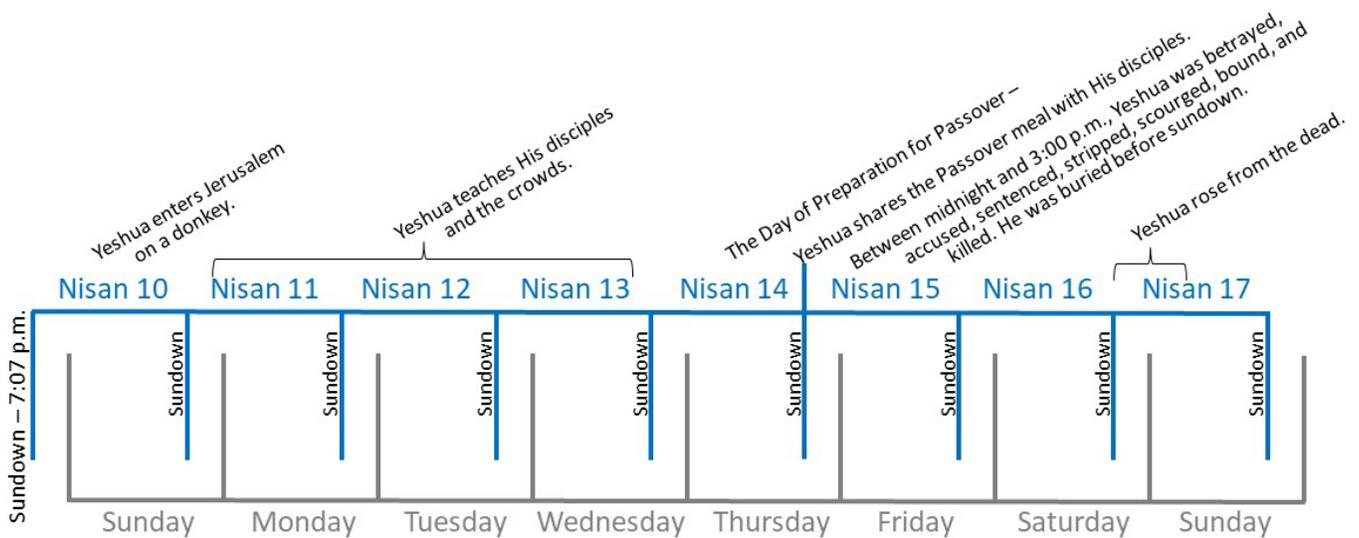
1. **Shabbat** or *the Sabbath* is the appointed weekly day of rest. The other seven appointed times occur annually. They begin with *Passover* at sundown on the first full moon of spring on Nisan 14.
2. **Passover** is a meal that celebrates the Israelite's deliverance from slavery in Egypt in 1,446 BC when Moses gave instruction to prepare them for their day of deliverance. Each family was to kill a spotless lamb, apply its blood to the lintel and doorposts of their houses with hyssop, then roast the lamb and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They were to be girded to flee in the morning. The Lord said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt."<sup>2</sup>

3. **The Feast of Unleavened Bread** begins the next day after Passover and lasts for a week. During this week, all leaven is removed from Jewish homes; it is a reminder of the haste in which the Israelites fled from their enemy, since their bread had no time to rise.
4. **The Day of First Fruits** falls on the Sunday within the week of *Unleavened Bread*. It is a day of praise for the resurrection of the spring earth. Each farmer takes the first sheaf of his barley harvest to the priest who waves it before the Lord to accept and dedicate the farmer’s entire harvest to the Lord.

Passover is one of three pilgrimage Feasts; Jews travel to the City of Jerusalem to observe it. Yeshua and His disciples would have traveled the four-to-five-day journey from Galilee (over 100 miles) to stay in guest homes called *aliyahs* (aw’-lee-aws) in the City or to stay in the outskirts of the City. Hospitality has always been important in Israel, and so Jewish stone homes were built with *aliyahs* which were typically the upper room of the home.

Yeshua’s last week on earth begins during this week of *Passover, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruits*. He shared His last Passover meal with His disciples on a Thursday evening in an upper room just before His trial and execution the following Friday morning. The lambs for the meal were killed on Thursday. And, in this second-Temple period, the Lamb of Atonement was sacrificed on Friday (the next day) at 9:00 a.m.,<sup>3</sup> the same hour Yeshua was sacrificed as our Atonement Lamb... once for all people for all time.<sup>4</sup>

*Shabbat* began at sundown that Friday and ended at sundown on Saturday ushering in the observance of *First Fruits* on Sunday – the celebration of the resurrection of the earth when Yeshua was resurrected by the Father!



## The Story

### Friday morning and afternoon, Nisan 15

My name is Mary and I was born in Magdala. From the morning until the afternoon on that Friday, I watched at a distance<sup>5</sup> as my Lord died cruelly on the wooden Roman execution pole – this One Who had delivered me from demons and redeemed my life!<sup>6</sup> I clung to the unbelievable scene. The most selfless, compassionate man I had ever known – crushed and beaten.<sup>7</sup> I couldn't leave Him even though the horrific display was crushing *me*. Time seemed to stand still as I retraced the events in my mind in the light of that morning. The atmosphere was hazy and confusing...

I remembered how He had delivered me with just a word. His kind eyes. And called me to follow Him... a few years ago. He had taught all of us of His kingdom of love, and He lived every word, always talking of His Father in heaven. And now this week, I had followed Him from my home in Galilee to celebrate Passover and the week of Unleavened Bread in Jerusalem with the rest of His disciples.

Last evening, the Passover gathering in the guest room had been sweet although sobering as He spoke words that seemed to usher us into a new time, a new covenant, He said. So many words I needed to ponder... the comforting Spirit He would send, which meant that He was leaving. This was unsettling to me but then He also had spoken of our oneness with Him, branches in Him, the Vine... like He would always be with us.

After the meal, I had returned with His mother to the home of her relative where we were staying for the week of the Feast. At the end of the week, we had planned to make our way back to Galilee. The men had walked on from the Passover meal to sleep in the olive groves on the mount with Yeshua just outside the eastern gate.

Friday morning had come. Mary, Yeshua's mother, and I shared a peaceful meal and set out to find the others. The City was restless. We looked for Peter and the rest, but there was so much chaos and chatter on the streets. I strained to see the object of the commotion... and there He was... emerging from the council chamber of the elders and priests of my people, bloody and beaten, unrecognizable... except for His eyes, this One Who had completely restored *me*, restored the leper, the lame man, the blind boy, the woman with the ostracizing issue of blood – the Messiah, my Healer, now stricken, ostracized – the One Who had included, embraced, affirmed, accepted, and deeply loved everyone. Was that a crown of thorns on His head? I could barely look. Was the entourage of Roman soldiers taking Him to the Place of the Skull?<sup>8</sup> How unbelievable! How could this be happening?

I had swayed with the suffocating mourning and wailing of those who loved Him. The sounds of the mocking and spitting were deafening. As He passed near us, I heard His voice, the voice that had called me by name to be His.<sup>9</sup> With deep breaths, He cried, "Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." He said that days were coming when they would say, "Blessed are those who cannot bear and the wombs that have not given birth and the breasts that have not nursed," and to the mountains, "Fall on us," and to the hills, "Cover us." He said, "For if they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"<sup>10</sup> I could barely swallow or think, I just followed as I had done since I met Him. There were two others being led away with Him toward the gate and a man carrying a large beam just behind Him.<sup>11</sup>

And now, after an infinite wait, huddling with the other women at a distance from the form on the ominous wooden stake, I could see the sun bright and high above me in the noon sky. An unusual cool breeze passed over my weary tears and tiredness as a profound darkness fell suddenly, sharply on the land.

I reached for the other women. We held each other in the black thickness that magnified the appalling groans and smells. I was glad I could no longer see, but the moans were louder as if the entire weight of all the pain and evil of the world was hurled against Him.

After what seemed like several hours of moving in and out of consciousness, I saw the sun dispersing the clouds, hanging in the afternoon sky.<sup>12</sup> I squinted to see Yeshua speaking to the man on the stake next to Him.<sup>13</sup> Then, He looked down and spoke to... John, I think.<sup>14</sup> A soldier lifted a reed to His mouth to give Him something to drink. He looked up and said something to Heaven.<sup>15</sup> I stared numbly... my Lord... His chest heaved. He took His last breath. And it was over. A soldier looked over Him mockingly and then pierced His side with his spear.

After a time, a Roman soldier lowered the stake. Other guards and soldiers looked bewildered. One was on his knees, bowed to the ground weeping.<sup>16</sup> A Jewish religious ruler, Joseph of Arimathea, came to care for His body. He would have needed permission from Pilate. I don't know why Pilate was so accommodating?<sup>17</sup> Joseph didn't have much time; Shabbat began in just a few hours.

We followed Joseph as he procured the transfer of Yeshua's body to a new tomb that had been hewn out of a rock in a nearby garden<sup>18</sup> just outside the City walls. Joseph anointed and wrapped the body in new linen cloths and laid Him in the tomb.<sup>19</sup> Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, also came with a large amount of myrrh and aloe.<sup>20</sup> Salome, James and John's mother, and Mary, Yeshua's mother, and I watched from a distance. I wanted to stay. I would have slept there, but Shabbat was approaching, and so we walked back to the guest home. I was thankful our resting place was so close to the gate; I was so tired.

## Friday at sundown, the beginning of Shabbat, Nisan 16

Before the evening meal, we washed our bodies and then prepared more spices in hope we could complete the anointing of His body after Shabbat<sup>21</sup> since Joseph had been in such a hurry. We ate and rested... according to the commandment.

I remembered Shabbat eve as a little girl, warm and special times reclining around the table with my family each week. But then life happened differently than I had dreamed... and *then* I met Yeshua... warm times of family began again after He delivered me, gatherings with my new family, His followers. We had all been miraculously touched by Him. And now on this Shabbat... just a heart-wrenching sadness. I stared at the meal.



Sleep eluded me that night as scenes from the day flashed before me and Scripture flowed like living water into my mind. The declaration John had told us about... made by Yeshua's cousin at His immersion into the water, "Behold, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world!" Hmm. The Lamb slain.

As I lay there in this unfamiliar upper room of Mary's relative, I could see my own father and myself as a little girl looking up to his strong shoulders. I could hear his voice repeating the words... bits and pieces of words he would vocalize in the mornings... "You shall sacrifice the Passover lamb to the Lord..."<sup>22</sup> and "Take the lamb into your dwelling on the tenth day and kill it on the fourteenth day... put its blood on the outside doorposts and lintel of your dwelling... *eat the flesh of the lamb*... Yahweh will pass over us when He judges our enemy..."<sup>23</sup> Hadn't Yeshua said, "The bread that I give for the life of the world is *my flesh*..."?<sup>24</sup> [long pause] His life given? Pierced for our transgressions? Crushed and bruised for our guilt? Scourged for our deliverance?... *my* healing... like a lamb to the slaughter..."<sup>25</sup> ... verses from the prophet Isaiah!

I saw the faint shadows of the crude rafters above me as I lay there. A swirling mass of memories continued... trauma, death, blood... The bed was soft... my father's words returned... "swashes of the blood of the lamb on our doors." [pause in wonder] Swashes of His blood covering *my* life? Was this horrific death of my Master the offer of redeeming blood?! With everything He had done for me, did He also give His life?

My thoughts continued... the fourteenth of Nisan... or Abib as the ancient words designated the eternal appointed day of Passover... just as my father had rehearsed for the killing of the lamb, "We will kill the lamb on the fourteenth." I didn't like this part, for I had come to love the lamb that my father brought into our home on the tenth of Abib just as Moses commanded. And I had come to love my Master, taken from me in the early morning hours after the Passover meal. [puzzled sigh]

I closed my eyes and remembered the Master's words to us as He had moved past us toward the gate. With His bloodied face, He still had radiated compassion with words of the green tree and the dry tree and an impending warning of judgment. I knew the words reflected those from the prophet Ezekiel. My father had taught me to always be a green tree, a righteous lover of Adonai full of the sap of His life and truth. Truly Yeshua was the Green Tree we all longed to be like. Wait a minute! Those were His glorious words He shared as we had walked toward the outskirts of the City with us after our last meal.<sup>26</sup> Just before we parted from the men who were going to the groves on the mount to sleep, Yeshua said He was the Vine and we were the branches and we should abide in Him so that we could bear much fruit! Oh what peace! Even though He was gone, was I with Him, in Him, a green tree firmly planted by the streams of water?<sup>27</sup>

My mind finally fell asleep for a few hours.



The light of Shabbat morning filtered through the herbs hanging in the room where I lay. I tried to rest. I thought... how does one *try to rest*? It sounded unrestful. I tried to focus my mind on how Yeshua had healed my restless soul with His peace. I decided to speak words of gratitude into the room, and they somehow diffused the tossing of the night.

## Shabbat at sundown, the beginning of Sunday, Nisan 17

*Finally*, when Shabbat ended at sundown that Saturday, my first opportunity came. Mary had fallen asleep early, and I quietly took my cloak and slipped out of the guest home into the dusk. With a mixture of trepidation and determination, I made my way through the gate to the tomb. The full moon of Passover cast sharp shadows on the large rocks.<sup>28</sup> As I came near to the tomb I saw the huge round stone in front of its entrance highlighted in the moonlight. An awe mixed with longing gripped me. I halted, arrested by the reality of what had happened. My Master... lifeless behind the coldness. But being near the tomb brought comfort and so I lay down in my cloak and slept deeply.

### Before Dawn

I opened my eyes to a faint hue in the sky and the absence of anxiety in my body. I sat up and looked toward the tomb. The details were still indefinable since the sun had not yet risen. But I could faintly see that the stone was no longer in front of the tomb, and so I approached it slowly, nervously, stooping to look inside. I was shocked! The tomb was empty!

I faltered as I ran back through the City streets to the eastern gate toward the olive groves to find my brothers. I found them sleeping and shouted "Peter, they have taken the Master from the tomb!" John also awoke, and the three of us ran to the tomb. John ran ahead of us, but when he came to the tomb, he stopped abruptly and slowly stooped to peer inside.

When Peter caught up to John, he bolted into the tomb!<sup>29</sup> We saw the linen wrappings that had been wound around Him just lying there. The facecloth was folded by itself apart from the other linen wrappings. If someone had stolen the body, they surely wouldn't have taken the wrappings off, let alone folded the headcloth! We froze in amazement! Speechless, Peter and John ran back into the City.

I stayed and wept uncontrollably. All the emotion and anxiety of the last two days were released in my tears. Suddenly a light flashed, and two radiant figures appeared in front of me. I was stunned at the sight of them sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where my Master's body had been lying.<sup>30</sup> They asked me why I was weeping, and I told them that someone had taken away my Master, and I didn't know where they had put Him.<sup>31</sup>

A gentle, resonant voice behind me asked, "Why are you weeping? For Whom are you seeking?"<sup>32</sup> I thought He was the gardener, but I was transfixed on the tomb, and so I didn't turn around. I just asked Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you put Him, and I will take Him away." ... [spoken slowly] and then He said my name. The sound of His voice pierced me softly. He was *my* Gardener Who had tended my soul!<sup>33</sup> I reached out for Him, but with His kind, familiar smile, He told me to go tell the others that He had risen and, also that He would ascend to the Father! And then... He was gone.

I slid to the ground and embraced the stillness and wonder for a moment. All the trauma, sadness, and exhaustion released their hold on me. I gasped, "O, praise Adonai!" How grateful and elated I was that I had lingered at the tomb! I arose, I sang, and I swirled in circles of laughter as I ran back into the City to tell the other women!



## Dawn

By this time, the dawn was appearing on the horizon when I entered our guest home to look for Mary. I told her as much as I could as we rushed back to the garden together. The sunrise sent rays upward as if the whole of creation was rejoicing with us! All the mystery of the empty tomb in the dimness of night was suddenly clear. Yeshua's mother could see – He was not in the tomb! Soon, Salome and Joanna came carrying spices. These women were always so tender and protective of me.<sup>34</sup> How kind of our Father to give us each other at this moment!

As we drew near to the tomb, the earth rumbled. We reached for the ground, and as we knelt there, a bright form appeared, sitting on top of the massive stone that had been in front of the tomb. This heavenly messenger was similar to the ones I had seen in the night with an appearance like white lightning.

I looked around me. I hadn't noticed the many guards until now... a distance from the tomb. They were frightened and fell to the ground like dead men.<sup>35</sup> The messenger's voice was joyful, "Do not be afraid. I know you are looking for Yeshua who was crucified. He is not here for He has risen just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying." The other women moved closer. I stood back with my eyes on the ground away from the brilliance and peered once more inside to see the place where His body had been.

I'll never forget that moment! Pure, crystal clear silence and awe. Mary was wide-eyed and motionless. The lilting voice of the messenger broke our trance, "Go quickly and tell His disciples and Peter that He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of them to Galilee. There you will see Him!" And so we ran away from the tomb and back through the City gate to find the others!<sup>36</sup>



It was the appointed day of First Fruits, and so the streets were crowded with eager farmers streaming toward the Temple with the first sheaves of their barley harvests. On our way, we ran into Yeshua<sup>37</sup> – Oh! The warm compassion in His face and the embrace of His eyes and stature once again! We bowed, trembling to the ground while He repeated the messenger’s words, “Don’t be afraid, go and tell my brothers to meet me in Galilee at the mountain.”

We stumbled as we ran to look for our brothers and found them congregated where we had shared the Passover just days before. Some of the disciples did not believe us. They decided that we would all meet back in this room in the evening after they had investigated our words. Many of them went to the tomb and found our words to be true.<sup>38</sup>

We gathered later in the evening and kept the doors shut. We feared the religious Jews; most of them had opposed Yeshua’s teaching. Two men were there who had also seen Yeshua as they travelled to their home in Emmaus. As we all ate and wondered and rejoiced... there He was... standing in our midst saying, “Shalom be with you.” Then He showed us the piercings in His hands and side. We gasped in awe-filled joy! He said again, “Shalom be with you. As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” Then He breathed on us and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven, and if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.”<sup>39</sup> After eating with us, He disappeared. After much jubilation and sharing, the men prepared for travel back to Galilee according to the words of Yeshua and the messengers. They would journey to the mountain He had chosen.<sup>40</sup>



Soon, along with the other women, I would journey back to Galilee as well. I pondered all these events deeply for the remainder of the week of Unleavened Bread. His rising on First Fruits!? The newness of the earth! The newness in my spirit... forever forgiven, forever redeemed, a fragrance of His new life in me, forever loved, forever whole, forever His! No more striving to stay close to Him. He was in me, never to leave! O praise the Father, Yeshua His Only Begotten Son, and the Ruach... the Breath of His Spirit forever and ever! Oh, may all who live on the earth everywhere in every nation receive Him, receive Eternal Life!

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 3:13-15

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 12:13

<sup>3</sup> “The second series of sacrifices [Deuteronomy 16:2 and 2 Chronicles 35] came to be called Second Passover. The sacrifices of lambs became so numerous, they lasted two days. What began as one combined series of sacrifices from the time of Josiah onward was separated into sacrifices on two days. On Nisan 14, the sacrifice of the Passover lambs occurred; they were cleaned and given to the people to take home and eat. The next day, Nisan 15, was the second Passover for the sacrifice of all other bulls, lambs, and goats, including the atonement sacrifice or sin offering [killed when Yeshua was killed].” (Dwight A. Pryor, *Misconceptions about the Passover*)

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 10:10-14

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 27:55-56

<sup>6</sup> Luke 8:2

<sup>7</sup> Isaiah 53:4-5

<sup>8</sup> Luke 23:26-27

<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 43:1

<sup>10</sup> Luke 23:28-31

<sup>11</sup> Luke 23:26,27,32

<sup>12</sup> Mark 15:33

<sup>13</sup> Luke 23:43

<sup>14</sup> John 19:26

<sup>15</sup> Luke 23:46

<sup>16</sup> From Matthew 27:54

<sup>17</sup> Mark 15:43-45; Usually the executed bodies were left to rot on the poles as an embarrassment and a statement to the crowds, so Joseph’s request was unusual; it was doubly unusual that Pilate would bother to grant Joseph his request.

<sup>18</sup> Mark 15:46; Matthew 27:60

<sup>19</sup> Mark 15:42-47

<sup>20</sup> John 19:39

<sup>21</sup> Luke 23:56

<sup>22</sup> Deuteronomy 16:2

<sup>23</sup> Exodus 12:3-8

<sup>24</sup> John 6:51

<sup>25</sup> Isaiah 53:5-7

<sup>26</sup> John 15:1-5

<sup>27</sup> Psalm 1:3

<sup>28</sup> John 20:1

<sup>29</sup> John 20:3-5

<sup>30</sup> John 20:12

<sup>31</sup> John 20:13

<sup>32</sup> John 20:15-18

<sup>33</sup> John 10:27

<sup>34</sup> Luke 24:10

<sup>35</sup> Matthew 28:4

<sup>36</sup> Matthew 28:3-8

<sup>37</sup> Matthew 28:8-9

<sup>38</sup> Luke 24:24

<sup>39</sup> John 20: 19-23

<sup>40</sup> Matthew 28:16