

And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense upon it [the golden altar], daybreak by daybreak—when he trims the lamps, he shall burn incense on it. And when Aaron lights the lamps **between the settings**, he shall burn incense—perpetually before Yahweh throughout your generations.

The lamps were trimmed (cleaned out and prepared) at daybreak at the same time as the morning incense offering. Then they were lit *between the settings*, and at the same time more incense was burned. Since the tabernacle faced east, there was no need to light lamps until afternoon when the sun passed over the top of the tabernacle. The later temple was oriented the same way. Now there were two hours of prayer, and these “hours of prayer” were timed with the morning incense offering and the afternoon incense offering. We are not told in Luke 1:10 which of the two incense offerings Zechariah’s lot fell on, though it seems to me that it was the afternoon. Whichever it was, it was the time when “the people were praying outside.” As to the second hour of prayer, which was at the same time as the afternoon incense offering, we are told what time it happened in Acts 3:1: “at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer.” The ninth hour is counted from sunrise (when the temple day began) , and this would be at 3 p.m. in the afternoon.¹⁶⁵

This is the normative Rabbinic understanding the phrase, despite the incorrect translation of the JPS. Next, let us look at when the Passover lamb was eaten:

And they shall eat the flesh that night, roasted with fire,
and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.
(Exodus 12:8).

¹⁶⁵ Numbers 28:4 says that the second lamb for the continual offering should be “between the settings.” The time of the continual offering is mentioned in 1Kings 18:36, and is clearly placed in the afternoon. Before the end of the day, Elijah had time to execute the prophets of Ba’al. Ahab had time to have a feast, and Elijah had time to send his servant seven times to the peak of Carmel to see if there was a cloud on the horizon. Then the sky grew black with clouds (not night), and Elijah had time to run from Carmel to the Jezreel Valley (1Ki. 18:46).