

April 2018

Frank W. Nelte

## A REPLY TO: A STUDY PAPER BY COGWA

### **HOLY DAY OFFERINGS ... HOW OFTEN?**

A couple of hours ago (make that yesterday) a friend sent me the above-mentioned Study Paper from COGWA. The Paper was published in September 2015, but I had never seen it before, or even heard of it.

That Paper is four pages long, and it is **a very devious attempt to justify taking up seven offerings in the year**. The Paper is clearly intended to refute the explanations I have been providing for years regarding the Hebrew words "chag" and "mow'ed".

In fact, the Paper is **an attempt to mislead God's people** about the true teachings of the Bible, as far as taking up offerings is concerned. The Bible simply does not teach taking up offerings seven times in the year. As I emphatically spelled out in my 2017 article, "What Does The Bible Teach About Offerings?", that claim for seven offerings in the year is based on "plain old-fashioned greed".

I should point out that this 4-page Paper was approved by the Ministerial Board of Directors of COGWA, and therefore it represents the view which all of them endorse and support.

The most forceful impression this 4-page Paper makes is that **it argues against the Scriptures**. In other words, this Study Paper doesn't argue **for** what the Scriptures teach. Instead, it argues against what the Scriptures plainly state! It argues that the scriptural statements cannot be restricted to what they plainly state. In plain terms, the Paper reasons: just because the Scriptures say "three", that doesn't mean that more than three are somehow forbidden. That is rather weird reasoning. Would you reason like that about the Sabbath and Sunday observance (i.e. just because the Bible teaches the Sabbath, that doesn't mean that Sunday observance is wrong, does it?)?

The Study Paper also exhibits **a pathetic lack of understanding the Scriptures**, let alone understanding the mind of God. It is flabbergasting that a major branch of God's Church has such a misguided and seriously flawed understanding of the Scriptures.

The flaws in the Study Paper can be boiled down to three points:

- 1) A lack of understanding the differences between the Hebrew words "chag" and "mow'ed".
- 2) A total misunderstanding, and consequently misapplication, of Exodus 34:25. This one is quite devious because COGWA claims that there are "four" Feasts in the year.
- 3) Trying to imply that "feast offerings" are basically the same as "peace offerings" and as "free will offerings". This approach is a parallel to the concept of "guilt by association" in that it asserts **"approval by association"**.

Let's now consider the nuts and bolts of that Study Paper.

## THE STUDY PAPER EXAMINED

1) The Paper starts out with the questions:

"Does the Church practice of giving offerings seven times (i.e. on the seven annual holy days) **violate** the principle in Deuteronomy 16? Or, is it possible that ancient Israelites gave **more than three festival offerings?**"

What a creepy premise!

Can you see what COGWA has done? They are **not** asking: what does God instruct? They are **not** asking: what does God command? No, they have turned these questions around! Can you see that? They ask: **would it be wrong to give more than three offerings?**

That is extremely perverse!

The question has never been: **would it be wrong** to do more than God commands? That is an extremely perverse way of reasoning. It totally ignores the question: yes, but what does God actually **command**? What does God actually tell us in plain words?

Whether or not doing more would "violate" God's intentions is a devious distraction from the actual question at hand: what does God actually command us to do?

So right in the opening paragraph COGWA tells us that they will argue that "taking up **more offerings than God commands**" is surely not wrong.

But that is not the question!

It has never been a question of: is it okay to do more than God commands? But that question diverts the attention away from the real issue: what does God actually command His people to do? Doing more than God commands is not the issue; it is only a perverse distraction.

2) The Hebrew word translated as "times" in Deuteronomy 16:16 means "**occurrences**" or "**occasions**". So in Deuteronomy 16:16 it refers to three "occasions" or three "occurrences" in the year. This Hebrew word all by itself, if COGWA didn't twist its meaning, shows that God commands three offerings in the year, and not seven. After all, that Scripture continues to spell out what those three "occurrences" are ... Feast of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost and Tabernacles.

But remember, COGWA doesn't argue for the Scriptures; they argue against the Scriptures. They try to prove what the Scriptures supposedly don't mean, that you can't restrict it to three simply because it says three. Understand that the people who argue against the Scriptures, the people who argue for what the Scriptures supposedly don't mean, **always have an ulterior motive!** They don't like what the Scriptures say at face value.

Regarding the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Paper asserts:

"Deuteronomy 16:16 describes *when* to "appear" before God, **not how many** offerings to give".

This is perverse!

It is arguing negatively! This implies that God likes playing games! As in:

"Lord, I brought \$500 with me to give to You as an offering. I hope You don't mind if I give You \$200 on the First Day of Unleavened Bread, and then I'll give You \$300 more on the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread, because the ministers have told me that You like to receive my Unleavened Bread offering in two separate portions. Is that okay with You, Lord?"

It is absurd to reason that people who bring their offering to God at the Feast of Unleavened Bread would somehow please God by giving that offering to God in two separate portions. That is just perverse! It implies that God likes to play games.

The real motivation in this approach is to pressure God's people to give two offerings instead of just one offering. It is a desire by COGWA to receive more from God's people than if the people would only give one offering at that Feast.

3) COGWA next reasons:

"But what about Trumpets and Atonement? Does the omission of these festivals in Deuteronomy 16 *prohibit* a pilgrimage and offering for these festivals?"

More perverse reasoning!

First of all, COGWA is plain ignorant of the Bible! Simply because some mistranslations refer to Trumpets and Atonement as "festivals", that doesn't make Trumpets and Atonement "festivals". When has COGWA ever referred to Atonement as "the **Feast** of Atonement"? Never! Why? Because Atonement isn't a Feast! Or a Festival! And neither is Trumpets!

God, and I mean God, used two distinct Hebrew words! **Hebrew "chag" is not the same as Hebrew "mow'ed"**! They are not interchangeable! Not every "mow'ed" is a "chag". Simply because the spiritually ignorant translators viewed these two Hebrew words as synonyms, that doesn't make these words synonyms.

What COGWA does not understand, or does not want to understand is this:

Hebrew "chag" refers to "a Feast".

Hebrew "mow'ed" refers to "an assembly", or even to the place for "assembling". **If** it is a "holy mow'ed", **then** it is "a Holy Day". But **if** the "mow'ed" is **not** pronounced to be "holy" (e.g. the Passover), **then** that assembly is **not** a Holy Day. But the word "mow'ed" never refers to "a Feast" or "a Festival".

"Chag" and "mow'ed" are not synonyms!

I've been explaining this for two decades, and COGWA still doesn't get it. We can't expect unconverted translators and commentators to understand that God instituted **two distinct categories of annual religious observances**. But leaders in a Church of God organization should be able to grasp that when God refers to some observances with the word "chag", and to other observances with the word "mow'ed", then God does not intend these two words to be synonymous.

Next, COGWA's reasoning about Trumpets and Atonement (which are Holy Days but **not "festivals"**) is also perverse. Not being "prohibited" is a strawman! You can make 50 pilgrimages in the year, if that's what you want to do. And you can give 50 offerings in the year, if that's what you want to do. Referring to "**not prohibited**" is a totally artificial and plain stupid focus!

On top of that COGWA makes offerings ride on the coattails of pilgrimages. If more than three

"pilgrimages" are made, that doesn't automatically mean that more than three "offerings" are required or expected by God. It is devious to attach offerings to pilgrimages, where you want to assert more than three pilgrimages for every year.

Furthermore, the Feast of Unleavened Bread amounts to one "pilgrimage", not two. So why does COGWA attach **two offerings** to **one pilgrimage**?

We are not talking about "occasional years", as in people "occasionally" making a pilgrimage. We are talking about "every year", because the Church wants "more than three" offerings every year, not just occasionally.

A year ago (i.e. in May 2017) I wrote a 23-page article entitled "The Distinction Between Feasts And Holy Days", which covers this subject very thoroughly. That article also examines the Hebrew words "chag" and "mow'ed", and the Greek word "heorte", and the Latin words "feriae" and "sollemnitas". That article clears up the false claims COGWA makes for the Greek word "heorte".

Basically, where the Hebrew language had two words ("chag" and "mow'ed") to distinguish two different categories of days, the Greek language only had one word available ("heorte"), because Greek society did not have two distinct categories of religious observances. Their observances could all be described by the one word "heorte".

This lack in the Greek language (having only one word available for all categories of religious observances) resulted in Feasts being equated with Holy Days in the New Testament Greek language. And the Latin Vulgate then thoroughly muddied the waters, when producing the Latin Vulgate Version, by using two Latin words indiscriminately.

But COGWA doesn't understand any of this. So you can't expect them to know that "heorte" was the only Greek word for either "chag" or "mow'ed". However, that doesn't make "chag" and "mow'ed" interchangeable synonyms, even if a hundred spiritually-clueless commentators say so.

4) Next, COGWA presents the totally perverse question:

"whether the omission in Deuteronomy 16 means that Trumpets and Atonement were *forbidden times* for the pilgrimage **and giving offerings** in Jerusalem?"

Can you see how deviously and artificially COGWA attaches "offerings" to "pilgrimages"? Why don't they just present plain biblical instructions? Why do they reason about "pilgrimages", when they really want to talk about monetary offerings? This whole reasoning about "forbidden times" is an artificial and hypocritical sham!

They argue and reason from omission, from what is not said. You are forced to answer their stupid and perverse question with: of course, it is never, at any time of the year, "forbidden" to give offerings. But that is not what they mean. They really mean: therefore it is our right **to claim** seven offerings every year. And that conclusion is contrary to the biblical instructions.

5) Next, COGWA resorts to some very creepy reasoning about what people did in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah (a very troubled time when some Jews had just returned from Babylonian captivity). **Why doesn't COGWA present a command from God?** Why all this devious and convoluted reasoning about what happened in Ezra's time?

They don't present a commandment from God because **they don't have any command**. God's only command refers to "three". But that's not a command they like. And so they don't present it. Instead of

presenting a command from God, they reason and reason and reason and reason. Yet the command is there! But they don't like that command.

5) COGWA then states:

"Likewise, the expression 'three times' is not a restriction to just three offerings".

Really? What's the point of GOD mentioning "three"? This argument here is clearly presented from a perspective of greed. It reasons: just because God says "three" that doesn't mean that we can't ask for "seven". The reasoning obviously implies, and not all that subtly either, that they really want more than three.

Of course you can give offerings more than three times a year. And that's what "the Co-Worker Letters" used to do ... they would beg for offerings **twelve times a year!** And that was in addition to the other "seven annual offerings".

The correct focus is not on "restrictions". The correct focus must be: yes, but what does God actually command His people to do? Does God command three, or does God command seven?

6) COGWA next reasons:

"An appointed time (mow'ed) can also be a feast (chag) ... **Therefore, why can't the same be said of the other annual festivals?**"

Do you understand how devious and perverse this reasoning is? **COGWA is trying to infer a "chag" status on days that God identifies as "mow'ed"**. And the claimed foundation for this perverse reasoning is a very devious alteration of the text of Exodus 34:25. (To be clear: it was some Jewish scribe who deviously altered the text of Exodus 34:25, not COGWA. COGWA simply accepts this altered text and then builds an argument on that foundation.)

The answer to COGWA's above question is:

**If God doesn't tell us that a "mow'ed" day is also a "chag" occasion, then we have no right whatsoever to impute a "chag" status to those "mow'ed" days. COGWA's reasoning here is extremely presumptuous, as in "why can't the same be said ...?". But this line of reasoning by COGWA is an unintended admission that the Bible does not use the word "chag" for Trumpets and Atonement. Therefore COGWA tries to reverse-engineer a "chag" status for these two Holy Days.**

7) Next, COGWA rambles on about "freewill offerings" and "peace offerings", trying to invoke some shared destiny with the three annual feast offerings. This is a totally artificial argument. **The offerings commanded for the three feasts have nothing to do with peace offerings or freewill offerings.** The whole reasoning about "peace offerings" is garbage!

Introducing these other offerings into the discussion is devious and perverse. These other offerings have no influence on "three versus seven" annual Feast offerings. They are a distraction. They also prove once again that COGWA has no real scriptural support for their "seven offerings" teaching.

Whenever people introduce distractions into their arguments, it means that they themselves recognize that their own arguments are flawed! So bring on some more distractions.

COGWA goes so far as to appeal to "the Amplified Bible", which is in the vernacular known as "the

biased Opinion Bible". **The Amplified Bible isn't a Bible at all!** It is a biased commentary, rather than a faithful translation. And that's what COGWA needs to support their teachings?

What's the point of appealing to the Hebrew words "chag" and "mow'ed" if a few moments later you appeal to "the Amplified Bible" and to Protestant commentators (Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Lexham Bible, John Gill, etc.) in order to blur the distinctions between these words?

8) Notice COGWA's negative reasoning towards the end of the Study Paper.

"The amount that God blesses someone to be able to give is unchanged by the number of offerings that he gives."

This is not exactly an appeal to God's commands or instructions, is it? It is simply **another attempt to justify "seven"**. The devious reasoning is: you can give us the same amount of money, whether you give it three times or seven times in the year. So therefore we'd like it seven times a year, even though God clearly says "three".

9) The Paper continues:

"Therefore the Church's practice of giving seven offerings doesn't increase or decrease how much God has blessed someone to be able to give."

Do you understand what COGWA has done here? They have **rationalized** that it doesn't make a difference whether it is seven or three. Can you see that?

They don't have any Scriptures to justify "seven", none at all! **All they can do is argue against three**, and then reason themselves into accepting seven. But there is no statement like "seven times a year ...".

COGWA is doing what Jesus Christ called "binding heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders" (Matthew 23:4). Don't forget that the ministers who approved this COGWA teaching have exempted themselves from saving second tithe and from paying third tithe, based on nothing more than the flimsiest of reasoning.

10) Time and again COGWA appeals to "**there is no implicit or explicit biblical restriction** on how often someone **could** give freewill offerings". In plain language they reason: since it is not forbidden, therefore we can do it. In actual fact it is not a question of "could"; it is really a question of "should", how many times in the year **should** God's people give offerings?

The reasoning that people can give the same amount whether it is three or seven annual offerings is hollow, because the real reason is that they hope they will receive more money (the root of all evil??) if they take up seven offerings instead of only three. Their annual budgets demand seven.

Now let's take a look at the gross misunderstanding COGWA has regarding Exodus 34:25. Their claim that there are supposedly four Feasts in the year displays a pathetic lack of understanding.

### **EXODUS 34:25 EXPLAINED**

This verse was fraudulently changed by some Hebrew scribe, in the same way that 1 John 5:7-8 was changed by some dishonest scribe. **The evidence** for the fraudulent change here is internal. It is **found in the pages of the Bible itself**.

This is a Scripture that is absolutely vital to upholding a Jewish belief regarding the Passover, which belief would without this changed text be unbiblical **according to all the other Scriptures** in the Old Testament. The motive for the change made here by some dishonest Jewish scribe is very easy to see.

The evidence I will now present consists of exposing the incompatible and/or illogical statements in the changed text. The person who altered the text overlooked things which expose his fraudulent tampering with the text.

Here is this verse in the KJV.

Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven; neither shall **the sacrifice of the feast of the passover** be left unto the morning. (Exodus 34:25)

Let's look at the general context of this verse.

The Old Covenant starts in Exodus 19:17 and it is concluded in Exodus 24:3, when the people replied with: "All the words which the Eternal has said we will do".

Then Moses went up to the mountain, where God wrote the ten commandments on two tables of stone.

Meanwhile the people made the golden calf and descended into idolatry. Moses came down from the mountain and broke the tables of stone.

So in Exodus 34:1 God instructed Moses to make two new tables of stone and to come up to the mountain again. God then **repeats** some of the things He had spoken while giving the Old Covenant previously. In the latter part of chapter 34 Moses again comes down from the mountain.

Exodus 34 represents a repetition of what had already been presented in Exodus 23.

Next, consider when the Bible mentions "the Passover".

God introduced the word "Passover" to Israel in Exodus 12:11. The word is mentioned exactly five times in the course of Exodus 12.

After Exodus 12 the word "Passover" is not mentioned again until we get to Leviticus 23:5 (the chapter which lists **all** of the annual observances for God's people), **except for once in Exodus 34:25**.

As we will see, **the word Passover is totally out of place and out of context in Exodus chapter 34**. It very obviously does not belong in that context, if we have the eyes to see it.

Now let's compare Exodus 23 and Exodus 34

Exodus 23 is in the latter part of the original making of the Old Covenant. Exodus 34 is **a repeat of the things covered in Exodus 23**, but at the time when Moses was upon the mountain for the second time. Let's notice the clear parallels:

### **Exodus 23**

Verse 12 = deals with the **weekly Sabbath**

Verse 14 = deals with keeping a Feast **three times in the year**

Verse 15 = deals with the Feast of **Unleavened Bread**

Verse 16 = deals with the Feasts of **Pentecost** and **Tabernacles**

Verse 17 = repeats appearing before God **three times in the year**

Verse 18 = **this is a key verse about sacrifices at the Feasts**

Verse 19 = deals with **firstfruits of the land**

Verses 20-33 = some **concluding comments** in wrapping up the whole Old Covenant

### **EXODUS 34**

Verse 18 = deals with the Feast of **Unleavened Bread**

Verses 19-20 = deal with firstlings and the firstborn

Verse 21 = deals with the **weekly Sabbath**

Verse 22 = deals with the Feasts of **Pentecost** and **Tabernacles**

Verse 23 = deals with keeping a Feast **three times in the year**

Verse 24 = deals with protection of our possessions

Verse 25 = **suddenly it talks about "the feast of the Passover"**

**This is totally unexpected and out of context!**

Verse 26 = deals with **firstfruits of the land**

verse 27 = A **concluding comment** from God

Now if we ignore Exodus 34 verses 19-20 and verse 24, which verses deal with additional comments not recorded in Exodus 23, then it should be very clear that **these two accounts are obvious parallels!** They present the same material.

It is important to note that God did **not at all** refer to "the Passover" in the entire original Old Covenant!

The Passover was not a part of the original Old Covenant, even though God had already established the Passover before the Old Covenant was made. In the Old Covenant God mentioned the weekly Sabbath and the **three** annual Feasts, but God did **not** mention any other days in the year.

Specifically: **the Passover, the Day of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Last Great Day were not mentioned in the Old Covenant.**

In the repeated account in Exodus 34 God again mentions the weekly Sabbath and the **three** annual Feasts. And then, after God had **concluded** the references to the annual Feasts (Tabernacles is the third and final Feast in the year), **then** God supposedly introduces "the Passover", almost like an afterthought?



How on earth can we think that God will only say something about the Passover **after** having mentioned the Feasts of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost and Tabernacles? Why would God possibly do that ... make some statements about the Passover after discussing the three Feasts? That's not what God did in Exodus 23. So why would God do it in Exodus 34?

There is no way that God Himself would give a sequence that goes:

"Unleavened Bread ... Pentecost ... Tabernacles ... Passover". Such a sequence is totally **out of step with every other reference to the annual observances**.

We should also note the following:

#### **In Exodus 23:**

Statements about Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Tabernacles, and three times in the year are followed by "**instructions regarding sacrifices at these Feasts**".

#### **In Exodus 34:**

Statements about Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Tabernacles, and three times in the year are followed by "**comments about the feast of the Passover**"!

Exodus 23:18 and Exodus 34:25 are **very clear parallels**, with much of the wording being identical.

You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain until the morning. (**Exodus 23:18**)

You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left unto the morning. (**Exodus 34:25**)

And looking at the overview for both of these chapters:

Verse 25 in Exodus 34 fits **exactly** into the sequence of events where verse 18 fits into the sequence in Exodus 23. **Exactly!** The contexts in these two chapters are identical.

Yet one verse supposedly speaks about the Passover, while **in the earlier account** (i.e. in Exodus 23) **the Passover is not mentioned at all**. Let's now compare these two verses

#### **Comparing Exodus 23:18 and Exodus 34:25:**

##### **Exodus 23:18**

You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain unto the morning.

##### **Exodus 34:25**

You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover remain unto the morning.

[Comment: Since the expressions "leavened bread" in Exodus 23 and "leaven" in Exodus 34 are identical in Hebrew, and should therefore have been translated identically, I have written "leavened

bread" in both verses. Likewise, since the verb translated "remain" in Exodus 23 is the same verb that is translated "be left" in Exodus 34, therefore I have written "remain" in both verses. **These minor differences were introduced in an attempt to disguise just how identical these two verses actually are.]**

In their respective accounts these two verses are **followed by the identical verse**. Thus both, Exodus 23:19 and Exodus 34:26 state:

The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring unto the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk. (Exodus 34:26 and Exodus 23:19)

It should be clear that before some dishonest scribe tampered with the text, Exodus 23:18 and Exodus 34:25 **had also been identical!** And in a moment we'll see the proof for this.

### **Examining the Key Hebrew Words in These Verses:**

Here are these two verses again with key Hebrew words left untranslated.

#### **Exodus 23:18**

You shall not **zabach** (offer) the blood of my **zebach** (sacrifice) with **chametz** (leavened bread); neither shall the **cheleb** (fat) of my **chag** (sacrifice, but this should read "feast") remain unto the morning.

#### **Exodus 34:25**

You shall not **shachat** (offer) the blood of my **zebach** (sacrifice) with **chametz** (leavened bread); neither shall the **zebach** (sacrifice) of the **chag** (feast) of the **pesach** (passover) remain unto the morning.

I realize that dealing with foreign words can be a bit confusing. But here is what we find in these two verses:

1) Where the first half of these two verses are identical in the English text, we see that in the Hebrew text the verb "zabach" in Exodus 23:18 has been **replaced** by the verb "shachat" in Exodus 34:25. **There is a very important reason for this change!**

2) In the second half of these two verses: where the English text reads "my sacrifice" in Exodus 23:18 and "the feast" in Exodus 34:25, **the Hebrew text is identical!** We are dealing with **a clear mistranslation** in the KJV for Exodus 23:18. It should read "feast" in both cases.

This has been corrected in the Jewish translation (JPS), as well as in most other major translations (i.e. ASV, DBY, NAS, NIV, RSV, NRSV, YLT, etc.), but not in the NKJV. Exodus 23:18 should **correctly** read:

"... neither shall the fat of my **feast** remain ...",

instead of

"... neither shall the fat of my **sacrifice** remain ...".

3) The Hebrew word "cheleb" (fat) in Exodus 23:18 has in Exodus 34:25 been replaced by the Hebrew word "zebach" (sacrifice). **There is also a reason for this change!**

4) In Exodus 34:25 the word "pesach" (Passover) has been **inserted** between the words "chag" (feast) and the expression "remain unto the morning".

Thus in the Hebrew text for these two verses there are **only three differences**.

A) The verb "zabach" has been **changed** to "shachat"

B) The noun "cheleb" has been **changed** to the noun "zebach"

C) The noun "pesach" has been **added** to the text of Exodus 34:25.

**That's all that has happened: two words were changed and one word was added. The rests of these two verses are identical. And the entire context in both chapters is identical.**

So the question now is: why did some dishonest scribe change the two words? Let's examine the Hebrew verbs "zabach" and "shachat". Then it will become obvious why the forger made these changes in Exodus 34.

### **The verbs "zabach" and "shachat":**

In Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament, these two verbs are defined as follows:

**"Zabach"**: (1) to slaughter animals, (2) specially to slay in sacrifice, to sacrifice, to immolate [immolate means "to kill as a sacrificial victim"]. The Hebrew noun for "sacrifice" is "zebach".

**"Shachat"**: (1) to slay animals, especially a victim, and even a human victim, (2) to kill persons.

For example, the word "shachat" is used in Genesis 22:10 to refer to Abraham who was about to "slay" his son; it is also used in Judges 12:6 to refer to killing the Ephraimites who could not say "Shibboleth"; and it is used in 2 Kings 10:7 to refer to 70 sons of Ahab being killed, etc.

So while both these Hebrew verbs are used to refer to animals being slaughtered for sacrifices, **the verb "shachat"** has the added dimension that it also refers to **human victims** being killed.

And this word "shachat" is **always used** to refer to **the killing of the Passover** (except in Deuteronomy 16, which is another text that was clearly altered).

That is why we always read "you shall **kill** the Passover", rather than reading "you shall **sacrifice** the Passover".

So let's understand something clearly:

**If God had ever intended for us to think of the Passover as a sacrifice like the other sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood, then God would have used the verb "zabach" in Exodus 12, because "zabach" is the verb from which the noun "zebach" (a sacrifice) is formed. But God didn't do that! God never used the verb "zabach" to refer to the Passover being killed.**

The lesson?

**God does not want us to think of the Passover as a part of the sacrificial system!**

Now God did use **the noun "zebach"** one time, in Exodus 12:27, in the expression "the sacrifice of the

Eternal's Passover"; and it is **this phrase** in Exodus 12:27 that the scribe who changed Exodus 34:25 was appealing to in his altered text. But even then God **never used the verb "zabach"** to refer to the Passover being killed.

Instead, God has **consistently** used the verb "shachat" to refer to the Passover being killed, because the Passover represents "**a killing**" rather than "a sacrifice". Jesus Christ had to be **killed** for our sins! The Romans didn't offer Jesus Christ up "as a sacrifice"! It was **a killing**, like Isaac was almost **killed** by his father. And this concept is conveyed much more effectively by the verb "shachat", rather than by the verb "zabach".

Here is the point:

- 1) The verb "zabach" in Exodus 23:18 shows that this verse is speaking about one of the Levitical sacrifices. It shows that this verse is not speaking about the Passover. God has never used the verb "zabach" to refer to the Passover.
- 2) So in order to make the identical text in Exodus 34:25 apply to the Passover, our dishonest Jewish scribe had to introduce the verb "shachat" into the text, the verb that is always used for the Passover.
- 3) At the same time that dishonest scribe had to get rid of the verb "zabach", because that verb identifies Levitical sacrifices distinct from the Passover. He could not have introduced the word for "Passover" into this verse in the presence of the verb "zabach". The verb "zabach" in that context would have exposed his forgery for all to see.
- 4) So the dishonest scribe simply exchanged the verb "zabach" for the verb "shachat". That was a quick one-word alteration.
- 5) Next, Exodus 23:18 has the word "cheleb" for "fat", because the fat of sacrificial animals was to be burned. But the dishonest scribe couldn't possibly have the word for "fat" in Exodus 34:25, because "fat" doesn't feature in the Passover. "Fat" would have identified this as a reference to a non-Passover sacrifice. So he needed to remove the word "cheleb" from the text of Exodus 34:25.
- 6) So he replaced the word "cheleb" (fat) with the word "zebach" (a sacrifice). In this way the dishonest scribe now had the expression "the sacrifice of my feast remain unto the morning". At this stage this verse was still referring to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, as is the case with Exodus 23:18.
- 7) It was the dishonest scribe's intention to support the Jewish teaching that the Passover is supposedly a Feast. So he then inserted the word "pesach" (Passover) between the words for "the feast" and "remain unto the morning".
- 8) So what had originally read: "**neither shall the fat of my feast** (mistranslated as "sacrifice" in Exodus 23:18) **remain unto the morning**", was now changed to read: "**neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover remain unto the morning**".
- 9) This insertion of "pesach" into the text could slip by the casual observer because of Exodus 12:27, where it uses the noun "zebach" in the expression "the sacrifice of the Eternal's Passover". This expression in Exodus 12:27 is then supposed to justify the new expression "the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover". That is a big totally unjustified jump, since Exodus 12:27 does not call the Passover "a feast".

So to falsely assert that the Passover is a feast, it required only three very small changes to the original text: add one single word, and exchange two other words in the verse.

Now let's try to see it from the point of view of the forger of Exodus 34:25.

### **From the Forger's Point of View:**

The forger's intent was to introduce the word "Passover" into this verse. That intent is obvious. So he realized that:

- 1) To escape detection he wanted to make **as few** changes as he could get away with.
- 2) He had to change the verb "zabach", the word used for Levitical sacrifices, to the verb that is always applied to the Passover (i.e. shachat).
- 3) He was desirous of having the Passover referred to as "**the feast** of the Passover", something that the rest of the Old Testament **never** says!
- 4) By introducing the word "Passover" into this text, he realized that the expression "the fat of the feast of Passover" would not have made any sense, since "**fat**" never enters the picture when we talk about the Passover. The word "fat" is **always** a reference to the sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood (i.e. peace offering, burnt offering, etc.), and not to the Passover.
- 5) So he replaced the word "fat" with the word "sacrifice", thereby appealing to people's familiarity with Exodus 12:27.

**And that is all he had to do in order to provide "a biblical justification" for his unbiblical Passover customs and traditions. With these simple changes the noun "chag" (feast) was made to refer to the noun "zebach" (sacrifice) instead of referring to the noun "cheleb" (fat); and the noun "zebach" in turn was made to refer to the noun "pesach" (Passover). And now the Jews could refer to the Passover as "a Feast", with full confidence in supposed biblical support for this custom.**

But what about God's point of view?

### **From God's Point of View:**

It is really stretching the credibility to expect us to believe that God would have **inspired** the identical wording in Exodus 23:18 and in Exodus 34:25, except for three words, with the result that there is a total change in focus, when the rest of **the context in both cases is identical**.

It is really asking a lot, when we are expected to believe that God would talk about the Passover **only after** He had discussed the three annual Feasts, all three of which the Passover precedes in the yearly cycle.

It is asking a lot to expect us to believe that God suddenly, and out of the blue, makes some unexpected reference to the Passover in the repeat instructions pertaining to the Old Covenant, when God very clearly did not say anything at all about the Passover in the original Old Covenant.

In short, we are expected to be extremely shallow and gullible, if we are expected to believe that God actually inspired the text of Exodus 34:25 as we have it today.

The plain, simple and obvious reason why some scribe at some point (perhaps sitting in Babylon?) made this alteration to the inspired text of Exodus 34:25 is to create some biblical support for the unbiblical Jewish customs pertaining to their observance of the Passover.

The correct English text of Exodus 34:25 should be identical to Exodus 23:18, except that the second time the word "sacrifice" appears in this verse it must be changed to "feast", because that is a mistranslation of the word "chag" in Exodus 23:18.

Here are these verses:

You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my feast remain until the morning. (Exodus 34:25 and also Exodus 23:18)

These two verses are an instruction that applied to the sacrifices people would bring during the three annual feasts, specifically during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

God did not call the Passover "a Feast", not in Exodus 34:25, and not anywhere else.

Let's conclude our assessment of COGWA's Study Paper.

### **IN CONCLUSION**

- 1) COGWA obviously does not understand the distinction between the Hebrew words "chag" and "mow'ed". This is clear from their deliberate attempt to blur any possible distinctions, their attempts to make these two words synonymous.
- 2) The attempt to turn three Feasts into four Feasts is rather devious. And when we understand Exodus 34:25 correctly, then that attempt is fatally flawed. The motivation for claiming "four feasts" is an attempt to justify taking up offerings on more than three occasions.
- 3) However, with their claim for "four feasts" COGWA has in effect moved away from the Church's longtime understanding of "3 Feasts and 7 Annual Holy Days". They are forsaking a truth they once understood, and that is bad. And they are forsaking this truth in order to justify taking up offerings on more occasions than God has commanded. How desperate they are!
- 4) Their assertion that the Passover is the fourth annual Feast is hollow for another reason. They claim that the Passover is a feast, but they make no attempt to keep the 14<sup>th</sup> Day of the First Month "as a feast day"; and they certainly don't keep it holy. Are some of God's feasts holy, while others of God's feasts are not holy?

The 14<sup>th</sup> Day is supposedly one of God's feasts, but for the bulk of that day you can do what you like ... work, play sport, watch movies, go shopping, etc. Can you really do all of those things on a day that is supposedly one of God's "feasts"? Because those are all things that you can do in good conscience during the daylight part of the 14<sup>th</sup> Day. Hmmm ... what kind of "feast" is that, when you can do all the things you can do on regular weekdays?

Understand that COGWA doesn't really view the Passover as a "feast day"; they only say this in an attempt to justify seven annual offerings. Once people have accepted seven, then all references to the Passover being the fourth annual Feast can be dropped and forgotten.

- 5) They don't have any Scriptures to support their teaching of taking up seven annual offerings. They don't understand that **God would not expect four offerings within a 3-week period** (i.e. Trumpets to Last Great Day) from His people. That's what Jesus Christ calls "heavy burdens".
- 6) Their entire defense for seven offerings is **negative**. They don't try to show what the Bible teaches about offerings. Rather, they try to reason around the "three times" instruction in the Bible. Their

reasoning about more than three offerings not being forbidden or prohibited is very ungodly!

7) The evidence that Exodus 34:25 was altered by some dishonest scribe is overwhelming. Someone would have to be spiritually blind to not recognize that this verse was altered to justify an unbiblical Jewish custom regarding the Passover. It is an Old Testament equivalent of 1 John 5:7.

8) Trying to equate the three annual feast offerings with freewill offerings and with peace offerings is rather dishonest, because those two sacrificial offerings have nothing to do with the three feast offerings. Simply because people could supposedly bring "many" peace offerings (COGWA got the "many" from the Protestant commentator John Gill, not from the Bible) does not mean that there should also be "many" feast offerings. This argument is an example of grasping at non-biblical straws.

So the COGWA Study Paper about "Holy Day Offerings" (the Bible teaches "Feast Offerings" and not "Holy Day Offerings") stands exposed as unbiblical and ungodly. What was it that COGWA said about **"crumbling like a house of cards"**?

Frank W Nelte