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## LEVITICUS 23:2

### THE SCRIPTURE CONCERNED

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, *Concerning* THE FEASTS of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, *even* these *are* MY FEASTS. (Leviticus 23:2 AV)

### THE MEANING PEOPLE DRAW FROM THIS TRANSLATION

Many people do not really understand the difference God makes between "a Feast" and "a Holy Day". These two are emphatically not the same thing before God! People think that Leviticus chapter 23 was intended by God to provide a list of "all the feasts in the year".

But that is only partially correct! And it is also partially wrong!

The purpose of Leviticus 23 is to provide a list of ALL THE COMMANDED EVENTS IN THE YEAR: the WEEKLY Sabbath days, plus the ONE annual observance limited to circumcised Israelites (plus all females, Old Testament) or baptized adults (New Testament), the Passover, plus the THREE annual Feasts, plus the SEVEN annual Holy Days.

The focus of Leviticus 23 is on ALL the times in the year God's people are to gather together. But only three of those are "Feasts". NONE OF THE OTHERS ARE FEASTS! The weekly Sabbath days and the Holy Days are certainly NOT the same thing as "the Feasts". The misunderstanding here is fostered and compounded by the mistranslation that is involved in this chapter.

### THE MISTRANSLATION

There are two different Hebrew words which are both translated into English as "feasts". But only one of those two words actually means "feasts". The other word does NOT mean "feasts" at all, even though the meaning of this second word is at times associated with the feasts mentioned in the Bible.

By not making the distinction between these two Hebrew words clear, people have applied the word "feast" very indiscriminately to occasions that God Himself has NEVER referred to as "feasts".

The two Hebrew words involved are "mow'ed" and "chag". And these two words are NOT synonymous. Let's look at the meanings for both words.

### THE NOUN "MOW'ED":

This word is derived from the root verb "ya'ad", which means "TO MEET TOGETHER". Yes, such "meeting together" may at times be on festive occasions. But that is not the focus of this word. In MOST cases the "meeting together" implied in this word has nothing at all to do with "feasting". This word "mow'ed" is mostly translated into English as "congregation", as in "the congregation of Israel". It is only occasionally mistranslated as "feast". This word really means "a meeting" or "a church service" or "an appointed time". But IT DOES NOT MEAN "FEAST"! Furthermore, the word "mow'ed" always only refers

to one day at a time, and NEVER TO A NUMBER OF CONSECUTIVE DAYS!

THE NOUN "CHAG":

This noun is derived from the root verb "chagag", which means "to keep", "to celebrate", "to hold a festival", etc. It also refers to pilgrimage-type festivals which involve more than one day at a time, and may involve celebrations and dancing. This word means what we in English understand as "a feast" or "a festival". THIS WORD REALLY DOES MEAN "FEAST"! The word "chag" refers to both, a single day occasion and also occasions that involve a number of consecutive days.

Both of these words are used in Leviticus 23, where they are unfortunately both translated as "feast/s". This has created misunderstandings.

So let's examine Leviticus 23 and correct those places where "mow'ed" was incorrectly translated as "feasts".

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, *Concerning* the MEETINGS (mow'ed) of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* HOLY CONVOCATIONS, *even these are* my MEETINGS (mow'ed). (Leviticus 23:2)

This verse is not speaking about "feasts" at all! It is speaking about "commanded meetings", which are here also called "holy convocations". What follows this verse is NOT a discussion of the annual "feasts", but of the annual commanded meetings! The only "feasts" in the list that follows are those that are specifically designated as "feasts" by the Hebrew word "chag". And here in Leviticus 23 ONLY TWO SEVEN DAY PERIODS ARE CALLED "FEASTS" (i.e. chag).

The next verse, Leviticus 23:3, is a discussion of the weekly Sabbath. A correct understanding of the word "mow'ed" in verse 2 makes clear that THE WEEKLY SABBATH IS NOT "A FEAST", but it is "a commanded meeting"!

Then verse 4 again contains the word "mow'ed" twice. Notice:

These *are* THE FEASTS (mow'ed) of the LORD, *even* holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim IN THEIR SEASONS (mow'ed). (Leviticus 23:4 AV)

A correct translation of this verse should read:

These *are* THE MEETINGS (mow'ed) of the LORD, *even* HOLY CONVOCATIONS, which ye shall proclaim to be MEETINGS (mow'ed). (Leviticus 23:4)

This is a repetition of the statement in verse 2, and it is not talking about "seasons" at all! The phrase "in their seasons" is another major mistranslation! It is talking about "meetings" and convocations.

Leviticus 23 then discusses the Passover, the 7 Days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, the 7 Days of Tabernacles, and the Last Great Day in verses 5 to 36.

Verse 37 then summarizes everything that has been covered in Leviticus 23:5-36 by stating:

These *are* THE FEASTS (mow'ed) of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* HOLY CONVOCATIONS, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day: (Leviticus 23:37 AV)

A correct translation of this verse is:

These *are* THE MEETINGS (mow'ed) of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* HOLY CONVOCATIONS, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day: (Leviticus 23:37)

Verses 39-43 then discuss the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day one more time. Then we have the final concluding statement in verse 44:

And Moses declared unto the children of Israel THE FEASTS (mow'ed) of the LORD. (Leviticus 23:44 AV)

A correct translation of this verse is:

And Moses declared unto the children of Israel THE MEETINGS (mow'ed) of the LORD. (Leviticus 23:44)

So this chapter has been a discussion of all the MEETINGS that God has commanded in the course of the year. The emphasis is on "meeting together", and not necessarily on feasting at all!

Now within the context of these annual meetings God has ALSO designated TWO periods of seven days each as "FEASTS" by the use of the Hebrew word "chag". This Hebrew word "chag" is used in 4 verses in Leviticus chapter 23. Notice the first occurrence:

And on the fifteenth day of the same month *is* THE FEAST (chag) of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. (Leviticus 23:6 AV)

So here the seven day period of the Days of Unleavened Bread is designated by the word "chag" to make clear that THIS is one particular period God looks upon as "a feast". Then the word "chag" is not used again until verse 34.

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month *shall be* THE FEAST (chag) of tabernacles *for* seven days unto the LORD. (Leviticus 23:34 AV)

Here the seven day period of Tabernacles is also designated by the word "chag", showing that this period is also "a feast". The word "chag" is also in verse 39 and in verse 41, all these references being to Tabernacles.

Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep A FEAST (chag) unto the LORD seven days: on the first day *shall be* a sabbath, and on the eighth day *shall be* a sabbath. (Leviticus 23:39 AV)

So here we are told that "the feast" is for seven days, but that there are to be TWO Holy Days, also

called annual Sabbath days.

And ye shall keep it A FEAST (chag) unto the LORD seven days in the year. *It shall be* a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. (Leviticus 23:41 AV)

So the Hebrew word for "feast" (i.e. chag) is in Leviticus chapter 23 only used once to refer to "the Feast of Unleavened Bread", and three times to refer to "the Feast of Tabernacles". In this chapter no other day or days are called "a feast".

From Exodus 23:14-16 and Exodus 34:22 and Deuteronomy 16:16 and 2 Chronicles 8:13 we know that there are actually THREE feast (i.e. chag) occasions in the year, with "the Feast of Pentecost" (also called "Feast of Weeks" or "Feast of Firstfruits") being the missing third feast in the year. Leviticus 23 focuses on discussing exactly how the date for Pentecost is to be determined but without giving the name for this particular occasion. These four Scriptures give us the name for this third feast.

So to summarize:

God has commanded the following observances in the year:

- 1) The weekly Sabbath days are to be MEETING days, or Holy Days. That is what is meant by God "hallowing" the Sabbath (Exodus 20:11); God made it "a Holy Day".
- 2) The Passover is a once-a-year meeting for all baptized members of God's Church.
- 3) The first FEAST in the year is "the Feast of Unleavened Bread" for seven days.
- 4) Within the context of this Feast, God made the FIRST day and the SEVENTH day MEETING days, or Holy Days.
- 5) The second FEAST in the year is "the Feast of Pentecost" for one day.
- 6) This Feast of Pentecost is at the same time also a MEETING day, or Holy Day.
- 7) The fourth annual MEETING day is the Day of Trumpets. This is a Holy Day, but it is NOT "A FEAST"!
- 8) The fifth annual MEETING day is the Day of Atonement. This is also a Holy Day, but NOT "A FEAST"!
- 9) The third and final FEAST in the year is "the Feast of Tabernacles" for seven days.
- 10) Within the context of this Feast, God made the FIRST day a MEETING day, or Holy Day.
- 11) The seventh and final annual MEETING day is the Last Great Day, also a Holy Day.

To summarize, there are THREE annual Feasts and SEVEN annual Holy Days and ONE WEEKLY Holy Day. The reason the three occasions are "Feasts" is because each one of those Feasts represents one step in the process by which God builds His Family. Thus:

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a feast not because it pictures us putting sin out of our lives, but because God the Father accepted the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on our behalf ON ALL SEVEN OF THOSE DAYS (pictured by the wave offering being brought on every one of those seven days in the course of a 19-year period). This is step one in the Family of God being built. The Apostle Paul referred

to this first step as "Christ the firstfruits" (1 Corinthians 15:23).

The Feast of Pentecost is a feast because it pictures step two in the process of the Family of God being built. This feast represents all those who will be in the first resurrection. The Apostle Paul referred to this second step as "afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming" (also 1 Corinthians 15:23).

The Feast of Tabernacles is a feast because it pictures the third and final step in the process of the Family of God being built. It represents all those from the time of the millennium plus from the second resurrection, which is appended to the millennium, becoming a part of God's Family. The Apostle Paul referred to this third and final step as "then comes the end (or the end ones)" (1 Corinthians 15:24). This step will complete the Family of God.

These three steps are all FEASTS as far as God is concerned because each of these three steps represents SPIRIT-BORN SONS BEING ADDED TO GOD'S FAMILY!

The other days, known as Holy Days or as Meeting days (i.e. mow'ed) add details pertaining to God's great plan, but none of them are "feasts".

#### THE SOURCE OF THIS WRONG TRANSLATION

The confusion between the Hebrew words "mow'ed" and "chag" can be clearly traced back to the Latin Vulgate and to the Greek language LXX translations. The early English translators relied very heavily on the Vulgate. And Jerome was strongly influenced by the Greek LXX.

So here is the trail of how we ended up with this mistranslation of "mow'ed" into English in our English translations of the Bible.

1) The Greeks had feast days and festivals, but they were not at all familiar with the concept of having "Holy Days" that were not also "festivals" at the same time. They didn't go to church to be taught from a book of holy writings. So where in Hebrew you could distinguish between a "chag" day and a "mow'ed" day, you simply had no vocabulary available in Greek to express such a distinction. From the earliest Greek writings (i.e. Homer) on down, the Greeks used the word "heorte" to designate feast days and festivals.

2) So the Greek language LXX translated both, "mow'ed" and "chag", into Greek as "heorte". This obviously obscured the distinction between these two Hebrew words.

3) That is also the reason why we do not see a distinction between "Feasts" and "Holy Days" in the Greek New Testament, because there was no Greek word available to express this distinction.

NOTE! When in the Greek N.T. text you see a reference to "the FEAST day", that is typically intended to be a reference to "the HOLY DAY", but which, because of the limitation of the Greek language, could only be expressed as "the Feast day".

4) When Jerome translated the Bible into Latin, on the other hand, he had THREE different Latin words at his disposal. So Jerome could theoretically have restored a distinction between the concept expressed in Hebrew by "mow'ed" and the concept expressed in Hebrew by "chag". He could have achieved this by simply being consistent, by always translating the same Hebrew word with the same Latin word.

5) The Latin words Jerome actually used in his translation are:

A) "FESTUS", from which we get our English words "feast" and "festival". This Latin word focuses on

feasting, and would have been a suitable translation for the Hebrew "chag".

B) "FERIA, FERIAE", meaning "festivals" or "holidays". This is the root of the German word "Ferien", German for "vacation". "Feria" is also the designation for a weekday of the Roman Catholic church calendar on which no feast is celebrated. This word is less suitable as a translation for either Hebrew word.

C) "SOLLEMNITAS, SOLLEMNITATIS", a word that means "UNCOMMON". We get our English words "solemn" and "solemnity" from this Latin word. This word would have been suitable as a translation of the Hebrew "mow'ed".

So, to summarize, Jerome could have consistently translated "mow'ed" with "sollemnitas", and he could have consistently translated "chag" as "festus".

**BUT THIS JEROME DID NOT DO!**

Instead, Jerome in his Vulgate translated these Hebrew words as if they were interchangeable, which they are not!

Thus:

In Leviticus 23:2, 4 he translated "mow'ed" as "feriae".

But in Leviticus 23:44 he translated "mow'ed" as "sollemnitas".

In Leviticus 23:6, 41 he translated "chag" as "sollemnitas".

But in Leviticus 23:34, 39 he translated "chag" as "feriae".

And in Luke 22:1 he translated the Greek "heorte" (for "chag", in reference to "the Feast of Unleavened Bread") as "festus".

So Jerome made the following mistakes:

- 1) He indiscriminately used "sollemnitas" and "feriae" as if they were interchangeable.
- 2) He used the word "feriae" when he really should have used the word "festus".

And so with that background (only one Greek word available for the two concepts of "chag" and "mow'ed" in Hebrew, plus the inconsistent translations into Latin) the translators into English also treated these two Hebrew words as if they are nothing more than synonyms, which they are not.

## THE CORRECT TRANSLATION

We have already seen the correct translation into English. However, for the average member of God's Church it may at times be difficult to know which Hebrew word is involved in any given passage.

So if you have access to a Bible program with the Strong's Numbers embedded in the text, then you just need to look at the number that appears after the word "feast". If that number is 4150, then the Hebrew word is "mow'ed". And if the number is 2282, then the Hebrew word is "chag".

## THE MEANING OF THIS CORRECT TRANSLATION

There are three annual Feasts, and it is on those three Feasts, and those only, that God instructs us to appear before Him with an offering.

Then there are seven annual Holy Days, when we are also to attend church services, but God has not at all connected these Holy Days with the idea of "offerings", except in one case. Because Pentecost is a Feast and a Holy Day at the same time, therefore this Holy Day is also connected to offerings.

#### IN SUMMARY

This subject is discussed in more detail in my article "GOD'S HOLY DAYS & GOD'S ANNUAL FESTIVALS AND HOLY DAY OFFERINGS".

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