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EXODUS 12:14 EXPLAINED

Many people understand that the Passover is not "a feast" (Hebrew "chag"), but that the Days of Unleavened Bread are indeed referred to as "a feast" ("chag") in the Old Testament. One Scripture that sometimes causes some difficulty in this regard for some people is Exodus 12:14, which reads as follows:

And THIS DAY shall be unto you for a memorial; AND YOU SHALL KEEP IT A FEAST to the LORD throughout your generations, you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. (Exodus 12:14)

Since the preceding section of Exodus 12:6-13 had very clearly spoken about the Passover, some people have concluded that "THIS DAY" in verse 14 must obviously refer to the Passover day, and that therefore the Passover is also "a feast".

While this conclusion is technically a possibility, it is not really justified to assume that this is the only possible application.

Let's examine this verse more closely and consider the following things:

1) We cannot evaluate this verse based on ENGLISH GRAMMATICAL RULES! What we have is a translation from the Hebrew text, and therefore it is the rules that regulate Hebrew constructions that need to be considered.

In English constructions the expression "and this day" would in most cases refer to something that was said before. The most common meaning of the adjective "this" is:

"being the person, thing, or idea present or near in place, time or thought, OR JUST MENTIONED". (Webster's 7th New Collegiate Dictionary).

That's the meaning most of us tend to think of most of the time. However, Webster's Dictionary continues immediately with the following definition:

"constituting THE IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING PART of the present discourse."

So while we in English would want to associate the expression "THIS DAY" with the discussion that preceded it, even in an English language construction it could in fact refer to something that would "immediately follow" the use of the word "this".

However, that isn't really the most important thing.

The HEBREW EXPRESSION translated as "and this day" is "hayom hazeh", the word "yom" meaning "day" and the word "zeh" meaning "this". This expression can CERTAINLY refer to either, something that has already been stated, or to something that is about to be stated! By no means does the adjective

"this" in Hebrew have to automatically refer to something that has already been mentioned, which is typically our most common usage of this adjective in English. In Hebrew constructions it does equally commonly refer to something that is about to be mentioned.

In Hebrew "zeh" is actually a demonstrative pronoun, which is used like an adjective when joined with "ha", as in "hayom hazeh". And Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament states the following about "zeh":

"This pronoun MAY BE USED as referring to that which precedes (Ecclesiastes 6:9), or, AS IS MORE COMMON, TO THAT WHICH FOLLOWS."

So irrespective of what we may feel about the use of the word "this" in English, the fact is that in Hebrew it MOSTLY refers to that which follows the use of the word "this".

Thus the simple conclusion of this first point is this:

IT IS FUTILE TO ARGUE ABOUT EXODUS 12:14 BASED ON HOW WE IN ENGLISH UNDERSTAND THIS GRAMMATICAL CONSTRUCTION! FOR A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING WE HAVE TO LOOK TO SOMETHING OTHER THAN RULES THAT REGULATE ENGLISH GRAMMAR!

2) Since in Hebrew "this" (i.e. "zeh") can refer to either, what has been said before, or, more commonly, to what is about to follow, we need to be on guard against any Jewish experts of the Hebrew language who will boldly assert that "this day" in Exodus 12:14 simply HAS TO refer to the Passover day, that no other understanding is possible.

The fact is that Jewish tradition is BIASED in favour of viewing the Passover as "the feast", and therefore the Scriptures are interpreted to support this unbiblical bias.

But understand "THIS" about the Jewish traditions:

Jewish tradition does not look upon the word "Passover" as referring to Nisan 14th! Jewish tradition refers to The Seven Days of Unleavened Bread as "the Passover". The very first Jewish observance on what they call "Passover" is what they do at the start of Nisan 15th! They do nothing at all on Nisan 14th.

So here is the Jewish contradiction:

A) They apply Exodus 12:14 to refer to "the Passover".

B) But by "this day" in Exodus 12:14 supposedly being a reference to "the Passover", THEY MEAN NISAN 15TH!

C) So the Jews do in fact apply Exodus 12:14 to the correct day (i.e. Nisan 15th) ... they KNOW that "the feast is on the 15th" (see Leviticus 23:6) ... but they simply refer to that day by the wrong name! They call the 15th "Passover", but God in the Bible calls the 15th "the First Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread".

So even the Jews understand the expression "this day" in Exodus 12:14 to be a reference to Nisan 15th, and NOT to Nisan 14th.

3) Now let's examine the context.

A) Exodus 12:6-13 speak about the Passover, Nisan 14th.

B) Exodus 12:15-17 speak about the Seven Days of the Feast of UB.

C) So clearly Exodus 12:14 sits exactly between these two discussions.

D) This means that technically verse 14 "COULD" refer to the discussion in Exodus 12:6-13 (i.e. the Passover); but, MORE COMMONLY, it is likely to refer to that which follows in Exodus 12:15-17 (i.e. a discussion of the Feast of Unleavened Bread).

E) Exodus 12:17 very clearly uses the expressions "this day" and "this selfsame day" in reference to Nisan 15th, the First Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Numbers 33:3 makes quite clear that Israel departed out of Egypt on the 15th, which was the day after the Passover ... and this is the day referenced in Exodus 12:17. The expression "this day" in verse 14 refers to exactly the same day as it does in verse 17. To imply that "this day" in verse 14 must refer to "the Passover", when in verse 17 the same expression "this day" refers to the First Day of UB, would amount to confusion, since verses 14 and 17 are clearly within the same context.

F) Where the 15th is identified in Exodus 12:14 as being a memorial and a feast, two verses later (Exodus 12:16) it is also identified as a Holy Day (a holy convocation).

G) "THE FEAST" of Unleavened Bread is repeatedly identified as "A FEAST OF SEVEN DAYS" (2 Chronicles 30:21; 2 Chronicles 35:17; Ezra 6:22). Thus Exodus 12:15-17 is clearly a discussion of ONE feast that lasts seven days, not "eight" days (if it were to include the Passover as a "feast day").

H) Nowhere in the Bible is there a DIRECT statement to the effect that THE PASSOVER is "a feast" (i.e. Hebrew "chag"). Yet the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost and the Seven Days of Tabernacles are REPEATEDLY clearly identified as "feasts" ... no guessing or speculation is required for this.

THE ONLY WAY the Jews, or for that matter anyone in God's Church today, can reach the conclusion that the Passover is also a feast (i.e. "chag") is BY INFERENCES! The supposed "feast status" of the Passover always has to be "inferred" from certain verses ... because there is no direct statement anywhere! In other words: people try to REASON that the Passover is a feast, but they have no biblical statements to support this view. Yet none of the other feasts depend for their "feast status" on our reasoning ... with ALL of them there are clear biblical statements that spell out this status. But not so with the Passover. The reason is because the Passover is NOT a feast.

I) When any of our understanding depends on OUR REASONING, as opposed to being based on clear plain biblical statements, then we always need to be on guard against vanity getting the better of us. Somehow the things we ourselves "reason out" are always very attractive to us, and sometimes we fail to see the unfounded assumptions we have to make in order to hold fast to our reasoned-out understanding. Something we may be able to "reason out" is never on the same level as a clear and unequivocal biblical statement. This applies to my reasoning out just as much as it does to yours. So ... if something we can reason out is "good", then a clear and plain biblical statement is "even better"!

So in conclusion:

While in our English translation of Exodus 12:14 it would appear quite logical to apply the expression "this day" to the discussion of the Passover which preceded this verse, IN HEBREW the expression "this

day" is far more commonly used to refer to something that follows this expression. Besides this grammatical expectation of "this day" referring to what follows, the content of the verse itself (i.e. the reference to "this day" being a feast) should make clear that it is indeed linked to the discussion of the Feast of Unleavened Bread which immediately follows verse 14. Jewish authorities cannot be relied upon to objectively examine this passage without having a traditional bias towards wanting to see the Passover referred to as "a feast".

Thus it seems quite clear to me that Exodus 12:14 is a reference to Nisan 15th, the First Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

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