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Frank W. Nelte

WHEN SHOULD WE KEEP PENTECOST?

In the 50's and 60's the Worldwide Church of God always kept the Feast of Pentecost on a Monday. This was changed in 1974, and since then this Feast Day has always been observed on a Sunday. Thus in the Church of God the Feast of Pentecost is always observed on the same day of the week. The Jewish community, on the other hand, always observes this Feast on the same day of the month, this being the 6th of Sivan, the third month of the Jewish calendar.

The Church's date for observing this Feast is arrived at by counting 50 days BEGINNING WITH the day after the WEEKLY Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread. The Jewish date of observance is based on counting 50 days BEGINNING WITH the day after the First Day of Unleavened Bread, which is the day after the first ANNUAL Sabbath of the year.

In recent years Mr. William Dankenbring has published a number of articles in an attempt to prove that the Jewish date for observing this Holy Day is correct ... that we really should be observing Pentecost on the 6th of Sivan.

THOSE CLAIMS ARE PATENTLY IN ERROR!

There is absolutely no biblical support for a 6th of Sivan observance! In this article I will present the biblical facts about this subject, as well as address the flaws in some of the arguments presented by Mr. Dankenbring. It should become quite evident that the Church's present custom of always observing Pentecost on a Sunday is biblically correct.

THE TRUE MEANINGS OF VARIOUS HEBREW WORDS

We need to recognize that the Jews have developed MANY customs which have no biblical basis at all. They are nothing more than "traditions". Jesus Christ said very plainly that, already in His time, the Pharisees used humanly devised traditions, which they called "the tradition of the elders", to oppose and to reject the clear commandments of God. This is explained in Matthew 15:1-9 and in Mark 7:1-13. To save space I will just quote one key verse out of this whole section.

And he said unto them, FULL WELL YE REJECT THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD, THAT YE MAY KEEP YOUR OWN TRADITION. (Mark 7:9)

Clearly already over 1900 years ago there was a conflict between the traditions the Pharisees observed and the true commandments of God. Later I will present some examples which illustrate that Jewish practices are based on human traditions and NOT on the Bible. TODAY, over 1900 years later, that conflict between what the Bible actually teaches and what the Jewish traditions claim is GREATER and not smaller than it was 1900 years ago!

But now let's see how this applies to Pentecost observance.

It should be apparent that modern Jewish authorities will do their best to support and to substantiate modern Jewish practices. This is a natural tendency to support and to preserve the heritage of your own people. This would also affect the meanings that are attached to various words. It is also a well-known

fact that in the course of centuries new meanings are attached to some words. This is part of the development of a language and happens in all languages to accommodate new needs.

Most people do not understand that Hebrew as a spoken language had basically DIED OUT long before the year 1800 A.D.! Two thousand years ago the Jews had already abandoned speaking Hebrew in favour of speaking Aramaic. Even Jesus Christ conducted His whole ministry in the Aramaic language. Christ's final words, as He was dying on the stake, were in Aramaic. They were "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani" (Matthew 27:46), or as recorded by Mark "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani" (Mark 15:34).

BUT at that time Hebrew was still SPOKEN by those who studied the Old Testament scriptures, and that study kept the SPOKEN language, as well as also the written language, alive to some degree. It is, however, only in the last 100 - 200 years that a serious attempt has been made to revive Hebrew as a spoken language. And it was the decision by the modern State of Israel that was the main boost for reviving the Hebrew language in the spoken form.

Now if we want to be clear about the meanings GOD attached to specific Hebrew words, then the best way to establish this is to look at ALL the places where God has inspired those specific words to be used. When any word is used a large number of times, then in most occurrences the intended meaning will be quite plain and easy to discern from the context.

When a Hebrew Dictionary CLAIMS that a certain word had a secondary meaning in biblical times, which meaning is NOT supported by actual usage ANYWHERE in the whole Old Testament, then this claim must be questioned. Is the claim perhaps based on a preconceived false interpretation of some biblical teaching? Is the claim perhaps made in order to support a non-biblical "tradition of the elders"? WHY is this claim made when there is no biblical usage anywhere in the entire Old Testament to support this claim?

THE HEBREW WORDS FOR "SABBATH" AND FOR "WEEKS"

Let's now briefly examine a few different Hebrew words. The information I present here is based on several different reference works, the main one being "Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament" by H.W.F. Gesenius.

1) There is a primitive root verb "shabath". This verb means "to rest", "to cease (from labour)", etc.. This verb has NOTHING to do with the number "seven". It means "to rest" and not "seven".

2) From this verb "shabath" a noun has been formed. That Hebrew noun is the word "shabbath", the double letter "b" in the middle of the word signifying a strengthened form of the verb. This noun "shabbath" means "rest day". Now it is very clear from the Bible that God created the seventh day to be that recurring "rest day". But we need to understand that the word "shabbath", in and by itself, does NOT contain the meaning "seven" or "seventh" ... it simply means "rest day".

3) Then there is the Hebrew word "sheba" which means "seven". It is derived from the verb "shaba".

4) This word "shaba" is also a primitive root verb. It is NOT directly connected to the previous verb "shabath" we have looked at. They are totally different verbs, even though to us English-speakers they may sound very similar. This Hebrew verb "shaba" means "to swear" or "to charge" or "to make an oath". The word for "seven" (i.e. "sheba") is derived from this verb in the sense that oaths were (sometimes) confirmed by seven sacrifices or by seven witnesses and pledges, seven being the number that pictured completeness.

So notice that this verb "shaba" has nothing to do with "resting", but that it is linked to the Hebrew word

for "seven".

5) The Hebrew noun "shabuwa" (or also "shabua") is the passive participle of the verb "shaba". This Hebrew noun means "a week", a period of seven days. The word is derived from "shaba".

So we need to understand that in biblical Hebrew there is a word for "Sabbath" (the meaning of which is 'rest day') and there is another word for "week" (the meaning of which refers to 'a period of seven days'). While they may sound quite similar to us, these two words come from different roots and the one word is not derived from the other. These two words (shabbath and shabuwa) are NOT interchangeable! They do NOT mean the same thing!

To summarize: The verb "shabath" (to rest) is the root of the word for Sabbath. The verb "shaba" (to swear) is the root for the words for "seven" and for "weeks".

THE HEBREW WORD "SHABUWA":

This word is used 20 times in the Old Testament, with 9 of those occurrences (in 8 verses) being in the first five books of the Bible. These uses of this word "shabuwa" make very clear that THIS is the Hebrew word which means "a week". Here are the 9 places in the books of Moses.

Fulfil HER WEEK, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years. (Genesis 29:27)

And Jacob did so, and fulfilled HER WEEK: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also. (Genesis 29:28)

And thou shalt observe THE FEAST OF WEEKS, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end. (Exodus 34:22)

But if she bear a maid child, then she shall be unclean TWO WEEKS, as in her separation: and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying threescore and six days. (Leviticus 12:5)

Also in the day of the firstfruits, when ye bring a new meat offering unto the LORD, after YOUR WEEKS [be out], ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: (Numbers 28:26)

SEVEN WEEKS shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the SEVEN WEEKS from [such time as] thou beginnest [to put] the sickle to the corn. (Deuteronomy 16:9)

And thou shalt keep THE FEAST OF WEEKS unto the LORD thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give [unto the LORD thy God], according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee: (Deuteronomy 16:10)

Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in THE FEAST OF WEEKS, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty: (Deuteronomy 16:16)

The word "shabuwa" is also used 7 times in the Book of Daniel, with all of Daniel's references to "weeks".

Of the 20 times this word is used in the Old Testament, in the KJV it is 19 times translated as "week/s"

and one time as "SEVEN". That one place is Ezekiel 45:21.

In the first [month], in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, a feast of SEVEN DAYS; unleavened bread shall be eaten. (Ezekiel 45:21)

The Hebrew words here translated as "SEVEN DAYS" are the root words "shabuwa yom" ('yom' is the Hebrew word for 'day'). This literally means:

"... a feast of a week of days ..."

Thus, the translation as "a feast of SEVEN days" conveys the intended meaning and anyway, the word "shabuwa" is linked to the word for "seven".

An examination of the 9 occurrences in the above-quoted 8 verses should make quite clear that THIS is indeed the Hebrew word for "week" and "weeks". This word really has no other meanings! It is NEVER used in any way to IMPLY any other meaning! Moses, who wrote the first five books of the Old Testament, was obviously familiar with this word.

SO THERE IS A CLEARLY DEFINED WORD IN HEBREW WHICH MEANS "WEEKS"!

Now let's take a look at the word "shabbath".

THE HEBREW WORD "SHABBATH"

This word "shabbath" is used 108 times in the Old Testament. It is thus quite common. Another word, which has been formed from this word "shabbath", is the word "shabbathown", which is used 11 times in 10 different verses, all 11 occurrences being in the books of Exodus and Leviticus. This word "shabbathown" is translated (in the KJV) 8 times as "REST" and 3 times as "SABBATH". It is an intensive form of the word for "rest" and that is precisely what it means ... EMPHATIC REST!

In the 108 occurrences of the word "shabbath" it is translated as "Sabbath" 107 times and one time as "ANOTHER". That one time is the second usage of "another" in Isaiah 66:23.

And it shall come to pass, [that] from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath TO ANOTHER, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. (Isaiah 66:23)

While this translation correctly conveys the intended meaning, it is not a fully correct translation of the Hebrew text. In this Hebrew text there is no word which means "another". In the Hebrew text this verse actually reads:

"... from NEW MOON TO NEW MOON, and from SABBATH TO SABBATH, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD."

The translators opted to use the word "another" twice in this verse to make it more readable in English without changing the intended meaning. But it should be quite clear that IN ALL 108 PLACES the word "shabbath" is ALWAYS correctly translated as "SABBATH"! It is NEVER translated as "WEEK" or as "WEEKS"!

It is probably asking too much, in the context of an article like this, to quote all 108 occurrences of the Hebrew word "shabbath". But let's examine every single use of this word up to the end of Leviticus chapter 23, where the instructions for the Feast of Pentecost are also recorded.

The word "shabbath" is used 27 times in 22 different verses before Leviticus chapter 24. Those 27 uses should be sufficient to make VERY CLEAR exactly what meaning GOD, the One who inspired Moses to write these books, attached to this word "shabbath". Specifically, let's look if there is ANY evidence that this word should EVER mean "week".

Here are these 22 verses.

And he said unto them, This [is that] which the LORD hath said, TO MORROW [is] the rest of THE HOLY SABBATH unto the LORD: bake [that] which ye will bake [to day], and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. (Exodus 16:23)

And Moses said, Eat that to day; for TO DAY [IS] A SABBATH unto the LORD: to day ye shall not find it in the field. (Exodus 16:25)

Six days ye shall gather it; but on THE SEVENTH DAY, [which IS] THE SABBATH, in it there shall be none. (Exodus 16:26)

NOTE: In this verse GOD gives us a very clear definition of what the word "Sabbath" means TO HIM! It is defined as referring to THE SEVENTH DAY!

See, for that the LORD hath given you THE SABBATH, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. (Exodus 16:29)

Remember THE SABBATH DAY, to keep it holy. (Exodus 20:8)

But THE SEVENTH DAY [IS] THE SABBATH of the LORD thy God: [in it] thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that [is] within thy gates: (Exodus 20:10)

NOTE: Here God AGAIN gives a very clear definition for the word "Sabbath". It is "THE SEVENTH DAY"! And God defines for us that this word refers to a period of REST!

For [in] six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them [is], and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed THE SABBATH DAY, and hallowed it. (Exodus 20:11)

Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily MY SABBATHS ye shall keep: for it [is] a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that [ye] may know that I [am] the LORD that doth sanctify you. (Exodus 31:13)

Ye shall KEEP THE SABBATH therefore; for it [is] holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth [any] work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. (Exodus 31:14)

Six days may work be done; but in the seventh [is] THE SABBATH OF REST, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth [any] work in THE SABBATH DAY, he shall surely be put to death. (Exodus 31:15)

Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep THE SABBATH, to observe THE SABBATH throughout their generations, [for] a perpetual covenant. (Exodus 31:16)

Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, A SABBATH of rest to the LORD: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death. (Exodus 35:2)

Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon THE SABBATH DAY. (Exodus 35:3)

It [shall be] A SABBATH of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever. (Leviticus 16:31)

NOTE: Here the word "shabbath" is used to refer to the day of Atonement.

Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and KEEP MY SABBATHS: I [am] the LORD your God. (Leviticus 19:3)

Ye shall KEEP MY SABBATHS, and reverence my sanctuary: I [am] the LORD. (Leviticus 19:30)

Six days shall work be done: but THE SEVENTH DAY [IS] THE SABBATH of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work [therein]: IT [IS] THE SABBATH of the LORD in all your dwellings. (Leviticus 23:3)

NOTE: Here God AGAIN gives a very clear definition for the word "Sabbath". It is "THE SEVENTH DAY"! And it refers to a period of rest!

And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow AFTER THE SABBATH the priest shall wave it. (Leviticus 23:11)

And ye shall count unto you from the morrow AFTER THE SABBATH, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; SEVEN SABBATHS shall be complete: (Leviticus 23:15)

Even unto the morrow AFTER THE SEVENTH SABBATH shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD. (Leviticus 23:16)

It [shall be] unto you A SABBATH of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth [day] of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye CELEBRATE YOUR SABBATH. (Leviticus 23:32)

NOTE: In this last verse "shabbath" is AGAIN used to refer to the day of Atonement.

Beside THE SABBATHS of the LORD, and beside your gifts, and beside all your vows, and beside all your freewill offerings, which ye give unto the LORD. (Leviticus 23:38)

{In the KJV the word "Sabbath" is also used in Leviticus 23, in verses 24 and 39, but in both of those verses it is a translation of the intensified Hebrew word "shabbathown", which I referred to earlier. In both

these verses "shabbathown" is used to refer to Holy days ... the Day of Trumpets in verse 24 and the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day in verse 39.}

We have now looked at EVERY USE OF THE WORD "SHABBATH" prior to Leviticus 24. In three different places God VERY CLEARLY defines the word as referring to "the seventh DAY". In NONE of those 22 different verses does it even remotely have the meaning of "week". This word simply NEVER means "a week" or "weeks" ... it never does! There is not one shred of biblical evidence to support this claim.

The only reason some Jewish "authorities" will attach the meaning of "week" to the word "shabbath" is in order to justify their own unbiblical customs! To define the word as "week" is a blatant defiance of the three definitions God Almighty inspired Moses to record!

The attempt to persuade people to accept that "shabbath" ALSO means "week" also counts on people's ignorance ... it attempts to persuade people to accept that the word "shabbath" somehow also means "SEVEN"! But it clearly does NOT mean "seven" at all and in fact the word has NOTHING to do with "seven"! The expression "the seventh day" simply tells us WHEN the Sabbath is to take place ... but it does NOT tell us WHAT is to take place on that day. It is the meaning of the word "Sabbath" itself which makes clear that it is to be "A REST DAY".

IF I were to include at this stage THE TEXT for the remaining 81 occurrences of the word "shabbath" in the Old Testament, it would reveal EXACTLY the same thing we can see in the first 27 occurrences ... that it ALWAYS refers to "a day" and NEVER to "A WEEK"! [Exception: the LAND "Sabbath" refers to a period of "ONE out of seven years" which was to be A REST PERIOD; but it certainly never refers to all seven of the periods that are under consideration.]

Nowhere in the Old Testament does the word "shabbath" ever refer to "a week"! It simply never does. I will not take the time to list the other 81 places ... but if you are still unconvinced, please do so yourself with the help of a concordance.

But also keep in mind that in Hebrew there ALREADY was a word which specifically and exclusively meant "a week" ... and that is the word "shabuwa". There is neither need nor justification for extending the meaning of a word that refers to ONE SPECIFIC DAY to also somehow mean "a period of seven days".

To apply the word "shabbath" to mean "a week" defiles and pollutes the meaning of the word "shabbath". How could you POSSIBLY assume that a word which means "a rest DAY" could refer to a period of time that includes SIX WORK DAYS?! To imply that the word "shabbath" can mean a period of time which includes 1 REST DAY PLUS 6 WORK DAYS totally obliterates the meaning of "rest day"! The other 6 days of the week actually OPPOSE the meaning of the word "shabbath" ... God clearly spelled out that they are to be WORK days. The Sabbath is always presented by God IN CONTRAST to the other 6 days of the week. It is the one day which is DIFFERENT! And the word "Sabbath" can NEVER include the other ordinary work days of the week!

The reason the word "Sabbath" can be applied to the Holy Days is precisely because of what the word means ... rest day. The Holy Days are also rest days from our normal labour. Note also: IF the word "Sabbath" in any way meant "seven" THEN it would not have been possible to refer to the annual Holy Days as "Sabbaths". The fact that the word "Sabbath" CAN be applied to the Holy Days proves again that this word "Sabbath" inherently refers to REST and not to seven or to seventh.

This should suffice to clearly establish the meanings these two Hebrew words (shabbath and shabuwa) are given in the Bible:

SHABBATH always means "Sabbath" and never means "week".

SHABUWA always means "week" and never means "Sabbath".

With this background, let's now examine the Scriptures which speak about the Feast of Pentecost.

LEVITICUS 23:15-16 EXAMINED

Let's start off by looking at the KJV of these two verses.

And ye shall COUNT unto you FROM the morrow AFTER THE SABBATH, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; SEVEN SABBATHS shall be complete: Even unto THE MORROW AFTER THE SEVENTH SABBATH shall ye number FIFTY DAYS; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD. (Leviticus 23:15-16)

Let's look at these verses with the original Hebrew words inserted for our key words.

And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after THE "SHABBATH", from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; SEVEN "SHABBATH's" shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after THE SEVENTH "SHABBATH" shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD. (Lev. 23:15-16)

The facts about these verses are:

- 1) The word "FROM" is better translated as "BEGINNING WITH".
- 2) The word "COUNT" refers to "COUNTING DAYS", not seeds or anything else.
- 3) The Hebrew word "SHABBATH" is used 3 times here.
- 4) The Hebrew word "SHABUWA" is NOT USED in these verses.
- 5) The day after a weekly Sabbath is always "the first day of the week".
- 6) To start counting from the first day of the week means that every time you reach a new Sabbath in your counting, you have counted A FULL WEEK. So when you have counted "the seventh Sabbath", you have in effect also counted "7 weeks".
- 7) But here the original instruction is to count "7 Sabbaths" and NOT "7 weeks", even though the effect is the same IF you start out counting from the day after a weekly Sabbath.
- 8) The expression "the morrow after" means "THE DAY after", and not "the morning after". The Hebrew here has nothing to do with "morning". In fact, "the morrow after" begins at sunset.

Now let's understand something very clearly!

In these two verses the Hebrew "shabbath" is used three times. THE INCORRECT EXPLANATIONS DEPEND PRIMARILY ON APPLYING, WITHOUT ANY PROOF WHATSOEVER, DIFFERENT MEANINGS TO THIS WORD "SHABBATH"!

In verse 15 everyone is agreed that the expression "the day after the SHABBATH" means that the word "shabbath" means "a day" and does NOT mean "a week". Those who follow one particular wrong line of reasoning want the word "shabbath" in this verse to refer to the ANNUAL HOLY DAY (i.e. the First Day of Unleavened Bread).

However, they CERTAINLY do not claim that the first use of "shabbath" in verse 15 means "a week"! They AGREE that here the word MUST refer to "a day"!

But when the word "shabbath" is used again exactly six words later (in the Hebrew text), then they want the word ALL OF A SUDDEN, WITHOUT ANY PROOF, WITHOUT ANY PRECEDENT, to have a different meaning. Suddenly "shabbath" is supposed to mean "WEEK". This is in spite of the fact that Hebrew has a very specific word for "week" (shabuwa).

God inspired this one word "shabbath" to be used twice in one verse; and the false explanations depend on changing the meaning of the word midway through this verse. They are not prepared to be consistent.

Then, in the next verse (i.e. Leviticus 23:16) they want the word "shabbath" to again have this meaning of "weeks"; a meaning this word NEVER has anywhere in the Bible.

The inconsistency in assigning meanings to this word "shabbath" again becomes obvious in verse 16. The expression "the day after the seventh SHABBATH" cannot refer to "after the seventh HOLY DAY", which is the meaning these people want to attach to the first use of "shabbath". That is: IF the expression "the morrow after the Sabbath" in verse 15 is supposed to mean "the day after THE HOLY DAY", then it would follow that the expression "the morrow after the seventh Sabbath" in verse 16 really should also mean "the day after THE SEVENTH HOLY DAY" ... and that doesn't make sense.

IT SHOULD BE QUITE OBVIOUS THAT THESE CLAIMS ARE ONLY MADE IN ORDER TO HOLD FAST TO THE TRADITIONS THE JEWS HAVE DEVELOPED AROUND THE DAY OF PENTECOST!

The words of Jesus Christ very clearly apply to these wrong interpretations of these two verses.

And he said unto them, FULL WELL YE REJECT THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD, THAT YE MAY KEEP YOUR OWN TRADITION. (Mark 7:9)

Just think about it for a while: it is the use of "shabbath" in verse 16 (i.e. "after the seventh shabbath") that makes quite clear that in this context "shabbath" must refer to the WEEKLY SABBATH. It follows that therefore the starting point seven weeks earlier must also be a WEEKLY Sabbath.

Remember that the word "shabbath" NEVER means "week" anywhere in the Bible. The word "shabuwa" means "week".

Now notice how the Jewish Publication Society translates these verses:

"And ye shall count unto you from the morrow AFTER THE DAY OF REST, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the waving; SEVEN WEEKS shall there be complete; even unto the morrow AFTER THE SEVENTH WEEK shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall present a new meal offering unto the LORD." (JPS Leviticus 23:15-16)

This is not a faithful translation at all!

It is simply a rendering which is designed to be compatible with accepted Jewish practices. From this translation you wouldn't even know that the word "SHABBATH" is actually used three times in this context; it has been completely disguised.

Here is how these verses appear in the NIV translation.

From the day after THE SABBATH, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off SEVEN FULL WEEKS. Count off fifty days up to the day after THE SEVENTH SABBATH, and then present an offering of new grain to the LORD. (Leviticus 23:15-16, NIV)

The NIV has retained the word "Sabbath" for the first and third occurrences, but rendered the middle occurrence as "FULL WEEKS". This is not a correct translation, even though the end result happens to be correct. By the way, from the NIV you would also have to conclude that "the seventh Sabbath" must be a WEEKLY Sabbath day, since it certainly could not be a "seventh Holy Day". THEREFORE the "Sabbath" seven weeks earlier would also have to be a weekly Sabbath.

The New Revised Standard Version basically follows the NIV, as can be seen here:

And from the day after THE SABBATH, from the day on which you bring the sheaf of the elevation offering, you shall count off SEVEN WEEKS; they shall be complete. You shall count until the day after THE SEVENTH SABBATH, fifty days; then you shall present an offering of new grain to the LORD. (Leviticus 23:15-16, NRSV)

Moffatt also translates these verses like the NIV:

"From the day after THE SABBATH, the day you bring the sheaf of the waved offering, you shall count SEVEN FULL WEEKS, fifty days to the day after THE SEVENTH SABBATH, and then you shall make a cereal-offering of new grain to the Eternal." (Moffatt Leviticus 23:15-16)

The point is that NONE of these translations have any justification at all for translating the second use of the word "SHABBATH" as "weeks" or "full weeks". All of these translators know that the Hebrew word "shabuwa" means "week", and "shabuwa" is simply not used here. All of them are merely accepting the Jewish tradition.

Of the more recent translations, it is only the NEW KING JAMES VERSION which stays faithful to the original Hebrew words in these verses. This translation reads as follows:

"And you shall count for yourselves from the day after THE SABBATH, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: SEVEN SABBATHS shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after THE SEVENTH SABBATH; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD." (NKJV Leviticus 23:15-16)

NOTICE THIS MODERN TRANSLATION!

They have correctly and faithfully translated the three occurrences of the Hebrew word "shabbath" into English as "Sabbath". This is the CORRECT way of translating these verses. They have in this instance

not allowed JEWISH CUSTOMS to influence them in the translation of these two verses.

THE FEAST OF WEEKS

Three times in the books of Moses Pentecost is called "the Feast of WEEKS". Earlier we already saw those verses in full (i.e. Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10 and Deuteronomy 16:16).

In all three of these places it is "the Feast of SHABUWA"!

The three occurrences of this expression "the Feast of SHABUWA" also make very clear that "SHABBATH" never means "weeks"! It is never called "the Feast of SHABBATH's" because "shabbath" simply does not mean "week".

Now let's examine Deuteronomy 16:9-10 more closely.

SEVEN WEEKS shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number THE SEVEN WEEKS from [such time as] thou beginnest [to put] the sickle to the corn. And thou shalt keep THE FEAST OF WEEKS unto the LORD thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give [unto the LORD thy God], according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee: (Deuteronomy 16:9-10)

In these instructions nothing is mentioned about "the day AFTER the seventh Sabbath" or "after the seventh WEEK".

Let's put the instructions in Leviticus 23:15-16 together with these instructions here in Deuteronomy 16:9-10. This is what we have:

- 1) Leviticus 23:15 tells us to START counting from the day after a Sabbath. The day after the Sabbath is the first day of the week (i.e. a Sunday).
- 2) That is the day the wave sheaf offering was to be cut out of the field and brought to God.
- 3) Leviticus 23:15 then tells us to count 7 Sabbath days (shabbath). Since the counting starts on a Sunday, it follows that counting Sabbath days is the same as counting full weeks.
- 4) Leviticus 23:16 then tells us that, in order to number 50 days, we are to go to the day after the seventh Sabbath day. That again brings us to a Sunday.
- 5) Deuteronomy 16 was written AFTER Leviticus chapter 23 and it provides supplementary information. A knowledge and understanding of Leviticus chapter 23 is assumed.
- 6) Deuteronomy 16:9 refers to the same starting point. But here there is no reference to "the day after the Sabbath". Instead, here we only have a reference to the time when they began to put the sickle to the corn. That is the day when the wave sheaf was cut and then offered up. Thus it is the same starting point as in Leviticus chapter 23.
- 7) Here the instruction is to count 7 weeks (shabuwa). No further instructions are given; i.e. it is assumed that a knowledge of Leviticus 23:16 means we go to the 50th day, the day after the seventh full week.

[NOTE! Deuteronomy 16:9-10 should make clear that we can only get to a Sunday, and not to a Monday. Some people who observe a Monday Pentecost seem to feel that they should observe "the

morrow after the morrow after the seventh Sabbath" as the Feast of Pentecost. But that is not something Deuteronomy 16:9-10 allows us to deduce.]

8) So one instruction tells us to count 7 Sabbath days and the other tells us to count 7 weeks. The only way these two can be reconciled is when the counting starts on a Sunday, the first day of the week. In that case each Sabbath day counted will complete a week.

9) It is well-known that with God "a week" starts on a Sunday (the first day) and finishes with the Sabbath (the seventh day). Now the way the present Jewish calendar is structured, it means that the First Day of Unleavened Bread can fall on a Sunday, a Tuesday, a Thursday or a Saturday.

THEREFORE IF GOD INTENDED FOR US TO "COUNT" FROM THE DAY AFTER THE FIRST DAY OF UNLEAVENED BREAD:

THEN SOMETIMES we would have to count "1 week" as being:

- from a Monday to the following Sunday; or
- from a Wednesday to the following Tuesday; or
- from a Friday to the following Thursday; or
- from a Sunday to the following Saturday.

The first three of these possibilities actually involve parts of TWO separate weeks each; only the fourth possibility reflects a true week! In the first three possibilities, how could God POSSIBLY say: "count 7 SHABBATH's", when the counting actually finishes on a Sunday or a Tuesday or a Thursday (and then you still go to "the morrow after")?

Let's make this point really plain!

Sivan 6 in the present Jewish calendar can fall on Sundays, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. So when Sivan 6 falls on a Wednesday (for example) HOW could God possibly say what the Jewish translation wants us to believe:

"And ye shall count unto you from the morrow AFTER THE DAY OF REST ("shabbath"), from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the waving; SEVEN WEEKS ("seven shabbaths") shall there be complete; even unto the morrow AFTER THE SEVENTH WEEK ("the seventh shabbath") shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall present a new meal offering unto the LORD." (JPS Leviticus 23:15-16)

How could God possibly tell us: "counting FROM A WEDNESDAY TO THE FOLLOWING TUESDAY, COUNT SEVEN FULL WEEKS, COMING TO THE SEVENTH TUESDAY, AND THEN GO TO THE MORROW AFTER THAT TUESDAY TO ARRIVE AT A WEDNESDAY PENTECOST"?? How could God possibly refer to a period of time from a Wednesday to the following Tuesday as "A SHABBATH"?? By God's reckoning such counting clearly represents parts of TWO different weeks ... don't we understand that with God a week starts with a Sunday and ends with a Saturday? It is GOD who established the weekly cycle to run this way. And here we have people ARGUING that God would supposedly designate a period of time that can run from a Wednesday to the following Tuesday with the word "SHABBATH", which according to God's own definitions means "REST"!

We could perhaps reason that the word "shabuwa" could refer to a period of time from a Wednesday to the following Tuesday, since "shabuwa" is derived from the root-word "seven". But the word "shabbath" could NEVER refer to such a period of time!

It simply does not make sense to claim that the God who specifically created the weekly cycle to finish with the Sabbath would actually refer to a cycle that finishes with a Sunday or a Tuesday or a Thursday (three possibilities in the present Jewish calendar) as a "SHABBATH"!

Such a cycle could be described as a "SHABUWA" (i.e. a cycle of 7 days), but never as a "SHABBATH"! And even then we would still have to acknowledge that with God "A PERFECT WEEK" would be one that starts on a Sunday and finishes on a Saturday ... the cycle which God established back in Genesis. We would also have to acknowledge that IF God really wanted us to count 7 weeks ... one year from a Wednesday to the following Tuesday, the next year from a Monday to the following Sunday, and the year after that from a Friday to the following Thursday ... THEN YOU REALLY HAVE CONFUSION! With that kind of cycle, exactly WHAT would trigger in your mind that "one week has been completed" when you come to a Tuesday or a Sunday or a Thursday?? NOTHING!

10) IN PRACTICE it would mean that you really don't do any counting at all! You will already know in advance the exact date for "the morrow after" the day you selected, and it would ALWAYS be the same day of the month (i.e. the 6th of Sivan). NO COUNTING OF ANY KIND would be needed! It would be fixed in the calendar just like all the other Holy Days are fixed.

Now let's examine some of the arguments Mr. Dankenbring has presented over the past few years. Some of the articles he has written on this subject include titles like "Pentecost: The Final Answer!", "The Pentecost Enigma", "How Should We Reckon Pentecost?", "How Should We Count Pentecost?", "Why Do We Count the Omer From Passover to Pentecost?", etc..

SOME OF MR. DANKENBRING'S ARGUMENTS

1) To support his ideas Mr. Dankenbring presents any number of ideas from various HUMAN "authorities" ... but he doesn't explain what the Bible itself says.

The "authorities" he quotes include "Angus Bible Dictionary", "Josephus", "Chaim Raphael", "the Pharisees", etc.. These "authorities" have absolutely NOTHING to do with how GOD instructs us to count Pentecost. All they do is represent THE IDEAS OF MEN about this subject.

The real answer to our question should be sought with:

"YES, BUT WHAT DOES THE BIBLE ACTUALLY SAY ABOUT THIS QUESTION?"

2) In 1992 a lady sent me an article by Mr. Dankenbring and asked me to comment on the article. So I sent my brief comments to her, which she promptly sent to Mr. Dankenbring. In the October-November 1992 edition of "PROPHECY FLASH" Mr. Dankenbring published his reply to the letter I had written to this lady. That edition of "PF" contained a 17-page section entitled "Letters from Our Readers" and his reply to my letter to this lady appears in the middle of page 16, where the correspondent is identified as being from "South Africa".

Mr. Dankenbring wrote the following:

"As for the letter from the minister (i.e. from me), it is sad that he cannot see beyond the end of

his nose. He argues with noted Biblical scholars, Bible Dictionaries, and refuses to accept ANYTHING which is not "Biblical" in origin. So much for history! So much for the Apostle Paul! So much for the Pharisees! So much for Christ who observed Pentecost along with the JEWS of His day, in the synagogue, which were run by Pharisees (Luke 4:16-20)." (his own emphasis)

Then he wrote:

"The BIBLE is quite clear. [I agree! But then why drum up all these "scholars" to prove his points?] There is no question but that the Hebrew word shabbat can mean 'weeks' (compare Leviticus 23:15 with Deuteronomy 16:9, 'Seven WEEKS shalt thou number ... Begin the seven WEEKS'.)"

DO YOU SEE WHAT MR. DANKENBRING HAS DONE HERE?

He hasn't quoted Leviticus 23:15 at all! Instead he has only quoted a few words from Deuteronomy 16:9 ... and this quote he has presented dishonestly!

His claim that Deuteronomy 16:9 proves that the Hebrew word "shabbath" can also mean "weeks" is SIMPLY NOT TRUE! Deuteronomy 16:9 does not even use the word "shabbath"! The word which is translated as "weeks" in this verse is the word "SHABUWA", which has nothing to do with "shabbath".

Mr. Dankenbring concluded his references to me with these words:

"His (i.e. my) reasoning is twisted, convoluted, distorted, and, frankly, damnable. What more can I say?"

[MY COMMENT: No doubt there are now other people who feel the same way about some of the other articles I have written over the past few years. It doesn't really bother me to have people like Mr. Dankenbring refer to my writings in these sort of terms. It always makes me think of Scriptures like Matthew 5:11, etc..]

So according to Mr. Dankenbring it is "damnable" for me to point out that in Deuteronomy 16:9 the word "shabbath" is not even used! It is "damnable" for me to point out that "shabbath" has absolutely nothing to do with "seven". It is "damnable" for me to point out that NONE of the 108 uses of "shabbath" ever mean "week". It is "damnable" for me to point out that Mr. Dankenbring's explanation requires him to give two different meanings to the word "shabbath" within the same verse (i.e. in Leviticus 23:15). It is "damnable" for me to point out that we human beings do not have the prerogative to attach our own meanings to the words God has inspired to be used in His Word.

Notice that THE ONLY "PROOF" Mr. Dankenbring could provide that "shabbath" also supposedly means "weeks" is a verse where "shabbath" isn't even used! In this article I have shown you many places where both, "shabbath" and "shabuwa" are used. They make the meaning GOD attaches to these words quite clear.

3) On page 2 of his article "Why Do We Count the Omer From Passover to Pentecost?" Mr. Dankenbring gave his "simple answer" why Pentecost cannot be on a Sunday. According to him, Pentecost CANNOT be on a Sunday because that is "the day of the sun-god BAAL!"

THAT REASONING IS RIDICULOUS!

Above I mentioned that the First Day of Unleavened Bread can only fall (according to the present Jewish calendar) on a Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday or Saturday. It should be quite obvious that when the First Day of Unleavened Bread DOES fall on a Saturday, THEN Pentecost will be on a SUNDAY, the 6th of Sivan!

To illustrate this: in the 50 years between 1950 A.D. and the year 2000 A.D. the 6th of Sivan has fallen on a Sunday (or will fall on a Sunday) 14 times ... that is just over a quarter of the time. Those 14 years when Pentecost fell on, or will fall on, SUNDAY, 6th of Sivan are: 1951, 1958, 1961, 1964, 1965, 1968, 1971, 1978, 1985, 1988, 1991, 1992, 1995 and 1998.

Thus Mr. Dankenbring's reasoning stands exposed as rather ludicrous when we would have to say:

"BECAUSE Sunday is the day of the sun-god Baal, THEREFORE God has ensured that the Day of Pentecost will not fall on a Sunday more than 25% (or 30%, to be really safe?) of the time."

Now I realize that there are people whose preconceived ideas make the reasoning that "Pentecost can't fall on the day of the sun-god Baal" very attractive. But anyone who is willing to look at the facts should be able to see how unsound such reasoning is. Why would God then allow other Holy Days (e.g. the First Day of Unleavened Bread) to fall on a Sunday?

4) On page 8 of the same article Mr. Dankenbring finally reveals his ideas why God tells us to count, when for the 6th of Sivan clearly no counting is needed! He twists the instruction "to count" to mean - "the daily counting of the omer is a ritual"!

Read Leviticus 23:15-16!

Nowhere does God say "count the omer". The Hebrew word "omer" comes from the root word "AMAR". "OMER" is used in 14 verses in the Old Testament. These verses are:

- Exodus 16:16,18,22,32,33,36;
- Leviticus 23:10,11,12,15;
- Deuteronomy 24:19;
- Ruth 2:7; Ruth 2:15;
- Job 24:10.

It is always rendered in the King James Version as "omer", "omers", "sheaf" or "sheaves". It refers to a dry goods measure of a volume of about two quarts, i.e. depending on which produce was being measured, it would have been perhaps four or five pounds.

It is ridiculous to claim that God instituted the daily "counting of a few pounds of barley". How would you "COUNT" a few pounds of barley? Do you count the same number of grains over and over for 7 full weeks? This whole idea is preposterous! Read Leviticus 23:10-15 again!

An open mind says: Show me where God says "count the omer for 7 weeks". We should believe that God means exactly what He says in Leviticus 23:15 ... that we are to count from the day after the Sabbath. God wants us to count Sabbath days, not the number of grains of barley in a few pounds of grain.

This is nothing more than a weak attempt by Mr. Dankenbring to justify why God inspired the word "COUNT" when, according to Mr. Dankenbring, no counting of any kind is really needed. Simply relegate God's instruction into the realm of rituals and, hey presto, it is no longer needed. Neat, isn't it?

Of course Jewish authors are going to support the idea that "Sabbaths" means "weeks" - that is the only way they can justify their tradition of the 6th of Sivan! But THE BIBLE gives no support to this misinterpretation of the word "SHABBATH".

Now let's examine some candid admissions by some Jewish authorities.

DO JEWISH CUSTOMS AND AUTHORITIES STICK TO THE BIBLE?

If you are on the lookout for it, it is quite easy to find evidence that the Jews actually do not stick to what is revealed in the Bible at all. It is fairly easy to discover that for the Jews TRADITION is of far higher importance than what God actually instructed in the Old Testament. In some of my other articles I have presented examples from the Talmud, which illustrate this point.

Let's notice some examples.

1) For a start let's look at a quote, also referred to by Mr. Dankenbring, found in the "The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia".

THE UNIVERSAL JEWISH ENCYCLOPEDIA, Copyright 1942, published in the USA, Volume 8, Page 406, Article "Pascal Lamb" says the following:

"The PHARISEES and SADDUCEES had a dispute as to the time when the slaughtering (of the lamb) should take place; the former held it should be in THE LAST 3 HOURS BEFORE SUNSET (and therefore AT THE END of the 14th day!), the latter, BETWEEN SUNSET AND NIGHTFALL (and therefore AT THE BEGINNING of the 14th day!)."

This Jewish authority acknowledges that even at the time of Christ SOME people in Jerusalem kept the Passover at the beginning of the 14th day (i.e. the Sadducees), while others kept it at the end of the 14th day (the Pharisees). Both groups accepted that a day starts at sunset (thus the reference to '3 hours before sunset') and both groups kept it on the 14th.

Notice that the Pharisees, who kept it 3 hours before sunset had absolutely no biblical authority of any kind to support their practice.

Further, this illustrates that at the time of Christ's ministry there were indeed people in Jerusalem who kept the Passover at the beginning of the 14th day. References to the Jewish customs (non-biblical!) that were built up around the Passover have nothing to do with this ... The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia makes clear beyond doubt that some people (i.e. the Sadducees and those who followed their practice) in Jerusalem kept the Passover at exactly the same time at which Jesus Christ kept it.

This also explains why the owner of the house where Christ observed the Passover did not complain to the disciples that they were actually one day too early for keeping a Passover (see Mark 14:12-16; etc.). People in Jerusalem knew very well that some people kept the Passover at the beginning of the 14th and others at the end of the 14th.

It also explains the behaviour of the disciples themselves. Notice what happened.

And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, HIS DISCIPLES SAID UNTO HIM, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover? (Mark 14:12)

Notice that the disciples INITIATED the focus on the need to prepare. They had kept the Passover with Christ for the previous three years. In this account they are clearly observing the Passover on the same day that they were already used to. They would not have volunteered to prepare for the Passover 24 hours earlier than they were used to from previous years ... keep in mind that none of them believed that Christ would really be killed.

IF Christ had on this occasion kept the Passover one day earlier than He had done previously, this would CERTAINLY have been recorded as noteworthy by the various authors of the gospel accounts. Put yourself into that situation: if YOU would suddenly keep one of God's Holy Days one day EARLIER than you really KNOW you should normally keep it, wouldn't you feel the need to explain such a course of action to your readers?

This admission by The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, that at that time some people actually did keep the Passover at the correct time (beginning of the 14th, just after sunset) explains all of this.

Now notice another example.

2) In the March 1992 edition of "Prophecy Flash" Mr Dankenbring has an article entitled "A Letter to the Chief Rabbi, London - on Passover and Pentecost", and another article entitled "Reply from the Office of the Chief Rabbi". This second article is interesting in that it clearly reveals the Jewish thinking. The last two paragraphs of that article are most revealing.

Firstly, the "Chief Rabbi" points out that

"... according to the Sadducees, PENTECOST WOULD ALWAYS FALL ON A SUNDAY". (my emphasis)

THIS IS A STAGGERING ADMISSION!

During the time of Jesus Christ the Pharisees controlled the local synagogues, but THE SADDUCEES CONTROLLED THE TEMPLE AND THE TEMPLE WORSHIP! The priests, with very few exceptions, were Sadducees!

Therefore during the time of Christ Pentecost at the Temple in Jerusalem was always observed on a Sunday ... and this information is given to us by the "Chief Rabbi" (Christ said to call no man 'Rabbi') of London, England. Thus, when Christ observed the Day of Pentecost and when the disciples observed it at the Temple in Acts chapter 2, IT WAS ON A SUNDAY!

But continue reading this "reply from the office of 'the chief rabbi'". Notice the last paragraph of that article - it's only six-and-a-half lines long. How did the Pharisees try to argue with the Sadducees? Notice! [The parenthetical statements are my comments.]

"The Pharisees ... tried to do this from text [i.e. they tried by using THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES!] WITHOUT relying on the oral traditions, [what "oral traditions"? - the ones Christ addressed in Matt 15:1-3 and Mark 7:8-9?] since their adversaries were not ready to accept all of the oral tradition [i.e. the Sadducees said: unless it's in the Bible, we don't believe it]."

But now notice this candid admission concerning pharisaical teachings:

"But the real reason they [i.e. the Pharisees] insisted on this interpretation [Pentecost on the 6th of Sivan] is based on two factors ..."

WHAT ARE THOSE TWO FACTORS THAT DETERMINE PHARISAICAL BELIEFS?? God's Word? the Bible? NO!! Continue with the quote:

"...1) The oral tradition which [they falsely claimed!] had come down from Moses' time which they maintained and passed on; 2) Logic which dictated that ..."

Did you catch this candid admission by this Jewish authority?

The two factors that determine pharisaical teachings are:

- 1) human oral traditions (i.e. originally nothing in writing to support them), and
- 2) human reasoning (or "logic").

God's Word, the written revelation of God, doesn't even feature anywhere in establishing pharisaical doctrines! And this statement was published by Mr. Dankenbring himself! Here is a letter from the top Jewish religious authority in the United Kingdom ... and he FREELY admits that the teachings of the Pharisees were NOT really based on the Bible at all; they were based on human oral traditions and on human reasoning.

AND THAT IS WHY I DO NOT ACCEPT THE JEWISH CUSTOM OF KEEPING PENTECOST ON THE 6TH OF SIVAN!

But did you notice one other point in this statement by the "Chief Rabbi"? When the Pharisees tried to argue with the Sadducees based purely on the written Word of God, they couldn't succeed. Did you notice this? What does this tell you?

It tells you that about 2000 years ago already the Sadducees, the keepers of the Temple Scriptures, the ones who were of the priestly line and who were responsible for all of the Temple services, DID NOT ACCEPT THAT "SHABBATH" MEANS "WEEKS"! And those learned Sadducees knew more about the Hebrew language than all of the "noted Biblical scholars and Bible dictionaries" of today put together! It makes clear that the Pharisees tried to attach the meaning of "weeks" to the word "shabbath" and that the Sadducees did not accept this as valid.

So on what authority can someone TODAY claim that the Sadducees didn't know what the Hebrew word "SHABBATH" means??

As a matter of interest, the four gospels record Jesus Christ spending far more time condemning the Pharisees than He did condemning the Sadducees.

Now Mr. Dankenbring claims that my reasoning is "twisted, convoluted, distorted, and, frankly, damnable". HIS reasoning accepts the pharisaical approach of REJECTING the written Word of God in favour of some "oral" traditions and some "human" reasoning. The "Chief Rabbi" of London is more

honest than Mr. Dankenbring ... Mr. Dankenbring vainly tries to claim that Jewish practices are based on the Bible but the "Chief Rabbi" freely admits that this is not the case at all! And Jewish encyclopedias admit the same thing.

So let's summarize what we have thus far examined in this article.

IN SUMMARY:

- 1) We have carefully examined the meanings of key Hebrew words. We have done this by examining how these words are used in the Old Testament.
- 2) Specifically, we have seen that "SHABUWA", the Hebrew word for "week" is not in any way connected to the Hebrew word "SHABBATH".
- 3) The instructions for establishing when Pentecost is to be observed are found in two different passages. Leviticus 23:15-16 tells us to count 7 Sabbath days. Deuteronomy 16:9-10 tells us to count 7 weeks.
- 4) God created the weekly cycle, and with God a Sabbath day concludes a week.
- 5) The only way Lev. 23 and Deut. 16 can be reconciled is to have the counting start on the day after the WEEKLY Sabbath day. This is the only way in which Lev. 23 and Deut. 16 will come up with the same day for Pentecost. This way seven perfect weeks are counted.
- 6) The statement in Leviticus 23:16 "... the day after the seventh Sabbath" also makes very clear that this MUST refer to the weekly Sabbath day. Therefore seven weeks earlier it must also be a weekly Sabbath day.
- 7) Wrong explanations are often based on changing the meaning of the word "shabbath" in Leviticus 23:15-16. There is no justification anywhere in the Bible for doing this.
- 8) To imply that "shabbath" in Leviticus 23:15 refers to the First Day of Unleavened Bread totally negates any need "to count". In this case every explanation for "counting" is weak and artificial.
- 9) The argument that God would not want Pentecost to fall on a Sunday is equally weak, since fairly often even for the Jews Pentecost DOES fall on Sunday, the 6th of Sivan.
- 10) Jewish authorities that claim the word "shabbath" also means "weeks" ignore the word "shabuwa" and they clearly have the ulterior motive of wanting to support their own Jewish "traditions".
- 11) Even so, it is still fairly easy to find quotations in JEWISH reference works, which will reveal that originally the Passover was observed in the evening between sunset and darkness, that originally the Passover and the First Day of Unleavened Bread were separate observances (one on the 14th day and the other on the 15th day), and that the present way these things are observed by the Jewish community are NOT based on the actual written instructions in the Bible.
- 12) The top Jewish religious authority for the United Kingdom readily admits that pharisaical teachings are based on two factors: ORAL traditions and human reasoning. They are NOT based on the written Word of God!
- 13) There is an inescapable parallel between:

A) The Catholic Church freely admitting that the Bible instructs us to observe Saturday and that they (the Catholic Church!) changed this from Saturday to Sunday on their own authority; while the Protestant churches desperately try to insist that Sunday-worship is actually based on the Bible.

and ...

B) The Jewish community freely admitting that their religious practices are not necessarily in conformity with the written instructions in the Old Testament, and that their authority for deviating from the written instructions lies in oral traditions and in human reasoning; while Mr. Dankenbring is desperately trying to prove that the Jewish practices are based totally on the written instructions in the Old Testament.

It is a hopeless task for Mr. Dankenbring. The Jews don't feel they have anything to hide. They don't see a problem in admitting that their religious customs are indeed based on non-biblical oral traditions ... just like the Catholic Church doesn't see a problem in admitting that it changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday without biblical authority.

It should be quite clear by now that there is no BIBLICAL justification for keeping Pentecost on any day other than a Sunday.

Let's now briefly examine another question about the "counting" of Pentecost.

COUNTING IN UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Occasionally the Passover falls on a Saturday (observed Friday evening), and the First Day of Unleavened Bread falls on a Sunday, and the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread falls on a Saturday. Under the present Jewish calendar this would have been the case for the following years in recent times:

1950, 1974, 1981, and 1994.

It will also be this way in the year 2001.

[In a calendar that does not accept the postponement rules of the present Jewish calendar this situation would actually apply more often ... in the years 1950, 1953, 1957, 1977, 1981, 1984, 1994, 2001, 2004, 2008, 2011, etc..]

In this situation, when the First Day of UB is a Sunday and the Seventh Day of UB is a Saturday, how are we to count "from the morrow after the (weekly) Sabbath"?

There are only two possible options ... and only one of them will be the right one. Those options are:

EITHER:

We take the PASSOVER as being in this case referenced as "the weekly Sabbath" and thus the "morrow after" will be the First Day of UB, a Sunday.

OR:

We take the Seventh Day of UB as being in this case referenced as "the weekly Sabbath" and thus the

"morrow after" will be the first day after the seven days of UB have concluded, a Sunday.

IF the second situation is the correct one, THEN Pentecost will in such a year be exactly one week later than if the first situation is the correct one.

What is the answer here?

To understand this matter more fully, it is helpful to know the historical background to this question, from a Church of God perspective.

Until 1973 inclusive the Worldwide Church of God observed (wrongly so!) the Day of Pentecost on a Monday. At the same time the Church ALSO felt that the key point about "the (weekly) Sabbath" in this matter was that THE SABBATH must be within the Days of Unleavened Bread. The fact that "the morrow after" would sometimes be OUTSIDE OF the Days of Unleavened Bread did not present a problem to us.

In 1974, after a lengthy process, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was finally persuaded that his method of counting (i.e. exclusive counting) was incompatible with the biblical instructions. Even then Mr. Armstrong took great pains to point out that FROM HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE the expression "to count FROM" implied "counting exclusive of the starting point", i.e. "counting AWAY FROM", not including the first Sunday in the counting process. [He had also been partly influenced by the bias that God wouldn't want His Holy Days falling on the day of the pagan sun-god. That seemed to make sense to us "anti-sun-god" people.]

IN THIS HE HAD BEEN CLEARLY WRONG! THE HEBREW TRANSLATED AS "COUNT FROM" SHOULD IN THIS VERSE BE MORE ACCURATELY TRANSLATED AS "COUNT BEGINNING WITH"!

So shortly before Pentecost in 1974 the Church changed its teaching about this day from a Monday to a Sunday.

AT THE SAME TIME WE ALSO CAME TO UNDERSTAND SOMETHING ELSE ABOUT THE COUNTING PROCESS!

And this "something" was how to count in those years where the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread is a weekly Sabbath day.

This we came to understand from two different perspectives, both of which helped us to reach the same conclusion.

THE BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

In Leviticus 23:10 we have the following instruction for the people of Israel:

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, WHEN YE BE COME INTO THE LAND WHICH I GIVE UNTO YOU, AND SHALL REAP THE HARVEST THEREOF, THEN YE SHALL BRING A SHEAF OF THE FIRSTFRUITS OF YOUR HARVEST UNTO THE PRIEST" (Leviticus 23:10)

Here we find an instruction that would only be implemented for the first time AFTER the people of Israel

had crossed into the Promised Land. It was not an instruction they were to put into practice at the time God gave it to them through Moses.

The next few verses give specific instructions for the priests. Then notice verse 14:

AND YE SHALL EAT NEITHER BREAD, NOR PARCHED CORN, NOR GREEN EARS, UNTIL THE SELFSAME DAY THAT YE HAVE BROUGHT AN OFFERING UNTO YOUR GOD; it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings." (Lev. 23:14)

What is important to understand about this instruction is that there would be ONLY ONE SINGLE APPLICATION FOR THIS INSTRUCTION! It was only going to be applied ONE SINGLE TIME! And that time would be: when they crossed over the Jordan into the Promised Land. Thereafter they would ALWAYS (!) and REGULARLY (!) eat of the old corn from previous harvests! After the initial crossing into the Promised Land the Israelites would always keep over some dried grains as food for the following year.

Yes, it was to be a statute "for ever" for the people of Israel. What was to be observed "for ever" was that they were to bring a sheaf of the firstfruits to the priest for him to "wave" (Leviticus 23:10-13). But the instruction in verse 14 had only one single application, something which was to be observed right in the first year of Joshua's leadership over the people of Israel ... when they first came into the land which God gave to them.

Then, in Leviticus 23:15-16, God instructs us exactly how we are to "count" for the Day of Pentecost. Leviticus 23:17-21 then continues with instructions for the Day of Pentecost.

Thus we see that this statement in verse 14 (not eating of the old crops of the land until after the wave sheaf had been brought) is embedded right within all of the instructions that pertain to the counting and the observance of this Holy Day. Also, since verse 14 was only going to have a singular application (a one-time event in the history of Israel), it should tell us that God was using this event to convey some information to us.

In plain English:

GOD INCLUDED VERSE 14 TO GIVE US A CLUE AS TO HOW WE SHOULD "COUNT" AT CERTAIN TIMES!

Leviticus 23:10 leads us directly to Joshua chapter 5, where they came into the land. In Joshua chapters 3-4 we see the people of Israel crossing the Jordan, and in chapter 5 we find them in the Promised Land.

WE SHOULD EXPECT JOSHUA CHAPTER 5 TO INFORM US ABOUT THE FULFILMENT OF GOD'S INSTRUCTION IN LEVITICUS 23:14!

What we find in Joshua chapter 5 is that God instructs Joshua to circumcise all those males who had been born during the 40 years of wandering and who had not thus far been circumcised (Joshua 5:2-7). AFTER they had been circumcised, the people of Israel then kept the Passover. Notice verse 10:

And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho. (Joshua 5:10)

Now notice verses 11-12:

AND THEY DID EAT OF THE OLD CORN OF THE LAND ON THE MORROW AFTER THE PASSOVER, UNLEAVENED CAKES AND PARCHED CORN IN THE SELFSAME DAY. AND THE MANNA CEASED ON THE MORROW AFTER THEY HAD EATEN OF THE OLD CORN OF THE LAND ... (Joshua 5:11-12)

The purpose of these two verses is to make clear to us that God's instructions in Leviticus 23:14 had now been fulfilled. That is the only reason why we are told about them "eating something" ... because it fulfilled a requirement which had been spelled out earlier. Never again are we told that Israel came into a certain area and "ate of the old corn". And nowhere outside of Leviticus 23:14 do we have this kind of restriction imposed ... that they were not to eat of the old corn until a specific event had taken place.

Let's look again at this section in Leviticus chapter 23.

Verse 10 is a clear reference to the time when they would cross the Jordan under the leadership of Joshua. Then verse 14 tells us:

And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, UNTIL THE SELFSAME DAY THAT YE HAVE BROUGHT AN OFFERING UNTO YOUR GOD; it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings." (Leviticus 23:14)

In other words, they were not permitted to eat of the old crops of the land UNTIL AFTER they had brought the wave offering. But three verses earlier we are told that this wave offering was to be brought "on the morrow after the Sabbath" (Leviticus 23:11).

THEREFORE the only possibility for Joshua chapter 5 is that they kept the Passover on a Saturday (i.e. observed Friday evening), and that the First Day of Unleavened Bread was a Sunday that year! Since Joshua 5:11 tells us very plainly that they ate of the old corn and parched corn on the 15th of Nisan (i.e. that was "the morrow after the Passover"), THE ONLY POSSIBILITY is that early that Sunday morning, Nisan 15th, they reaped the sheaf for a wave offering and the priest waved it before God. THEREAFTER (i.e. later that same day!) the people were then free to eat of the old corn and the parched corn without transgressing God's instructions in Leviticus 23:14.

[COMMENT: The expression "the MORROW after" does not mean "the morning after", but rather "the DAY after". Thus when they observed the Passover on Friday evening (the start of the Sabbath), then "the morrow after" was NOT Saturday morning, but rather Sunday morning ... or at the very earliest Saturday EVENING AFTER SUNSET. In practice it would have been Sunday morning.]

Therefore, based on this biblical precedent, we see that when the Passover falls on a Saturday, then we are to start counting towards Pentecost from the Sunday which is the First Day of Unleavened Bread. In this case the Passover is "the Sabbath" which is referred to in Leviticus 23:11.

The key in this whole equation is NOT the weekly Sabbath that is referenced, but the fact that THE STARTING POINT FOR THE COUNTING PROCESS must be within the Days of Unleavened Bread. Understand that the Sabbath itself doesn't really feature in the whole equation ... it is simply a reference point! It is THE MORROW AFTER THE SABBATH that really features; it is the morrow after the Sabbath that is IMPORTANT in this equation. And God intended for us to understand that "the morrow AFTER the Sabbath" should always lie within the Days of Unleavened Bread, because there is a significance attached to "the morrow after the Sabbath", but there is no significance at all attached to this particular

Sabbath itself in this context.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "THE MORROW AFTER THE SABBATH"

We in God's Church understand that "the wave offering" symbolically represented Jesus Christ. We also understand that the Passover represents the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

In the gospel accounts we see that Jesus Christ was resurrected sometime around sunset Saturday evening, most likely right at sunset or just preceding sunset. When the women came to the tomb early on Sunday morning, when it was still dark (see John 20:1), Jesus Christ had already been resurrected. Mary Magdalene then saw Jesus Christ, who told her that He had NOT YET ascended to God the Father (John 20:17); yet later that same day they DID touch the feet of the resurrected Jesus Christ (see Matthew 28:9).

THIS ALL HAPPENED ON A SUNDAY, THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK! AND IT ALL HAPPENED DURING THE DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD!

It should be quite clear that "the waving" of the sheaf represented Jesus Christ after His resurrection being presented to God the Father before quickly (i.e. the same day) returning to this earth.

Now understand this: "the waving" cannot be separated from Christ's death! Without the Passover (picturing Christ's sacrifice) there simply would be nothing to wave! The Passover is a major consideration in this waving ritual!

Similarly, without the foundation of the Passover there cannot be any Days of Unleavened Bread ... unless our guilty past is forgiven and blotted out by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ we can't really put sins out, because they still remain with us. It is the Passover that makes the Days of Unleavened Bread possible!

So while the Passover is indeed a separate occasion from the Days of Unleavened Bread, it is nevertheless very intimately tied to the Days of Unleavened Bread. It is a part of that "season", an exact parallel to what we find at the end of the Holy Day calendar. There we have the Seven Days of Tabernacles intimately tied to the Last Great Day.

Now Jesus Christ simply HAD TO be presented to God the Father DURING the Days of Unleavened Bread! It could not be that He would somehow be presented to the Father only after the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread! That would have been an utter impossibility! The Days of Unleavened Bread are conditional on God the Father accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. BEFORE those seven days of Unleavened Bread are concluded (while we are still going through the process of putting sins out of our lives) the Father must have accepted the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ ... that is a part of understanding the symbolism of the annual Holy Days.

So Let's get back to the "morrow after the Sabbath" in Leviticus 23:11.

Nowhere in that chapter (i.e. Lev. 23) is that Sabbath actually defined! It is simply that God has discussed the Passover (verse 5) and the Days of Unleavened Bread (verses 6-8). THEN verse 9 starts a new section ... explaining how we are to correctly count for the Day of Pentecost. "A Sabbath" is referred to in verse 11, but we are NOT given a clear definition of how we are to arrive at that "Sabbath". That same "Sabbath" is again referred to in verses 15-16, and these verses make quite clear that it must be a WEEKLY Sabbath day.

IT HAD BEEN OUR ASSUMPTION that the "Sabbath" being talked about has to be one of the seven

Days of Unleavened Bread. However, when we take our understanding of the symbolism of the wave offering into account, THEN we realize that that "Sabbath" must be one of EIGHT days, and not one of seven days. The "eight" days within which that Sabbath has to fall are: 1 day (Passover) plus 7 days (Unleavened Bread) = 8 days. In the context of the wave offering the Passover is certainly (as far as importance is concerned) on a par with, if not ahead of, the Days of Unleavened Bread.

And in those situations where these EIGHT days include two weekly Sabbath days, Joshua chapter 5 makes quite clear that it is always the first of the two Sabbath days that must be taken as the reference point. That also insures that the wave offering is ALWAYS presented before God during the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread.

Since Jesus Christ Himself was presented to God the Father during the Days of Unleavened Bread, it cannot be that the date for the wave offering could ever be AFTER the seven Days of Unleavened Bread have been concluded ... a wave offering OUTSIDE OF the Days of Unleavened Bread would simply not represent Jesus Christ!

THEREFORE:

When we count for the Feast of Pentecost, and we start counting from the day on which Jesus Christ was presented to God the Father, we simply CANNOT start with a date that lies after the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread. The day on which the counting is to start is only important because of what it represents ... the day on which the Father accepted the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. If we were to start counting from the day after the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread (where that seventh day is a weekly Sabbath), we would be starting the counting from a day that has not the slightest significance of any kind ... there is nothing important or special about the day after the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread ... it is not a day that has any special meaning or symbolism attached to it by God. WHY would God possibly want us to start counting from that day?

It is interesting that the Feast of Pentecost (picturing the harvest of firstfruits) is EXACTLY SEVEN WEEKS AFTER JESUS CHRIST WAS ACCEPTED BY GOD THE FATHER! This is something the people who today try to keep the Feast of Pentecost on a MONDAY do not fully understand. God the Father accepted the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on a Sunday DURING the Days of Unleavened Bread ... and EXACTLY SEVEN WEEKS LATER God then accepts the "two wave loaves" (see Leviticus 23:17) ... those who will be in the first resurrection.

That seven week gap between Christ and those in the first resurrection is something God planned into the Holy Day calendar. Obviously the Jews, who observe Sivan 6, don't understand this either, even as they don't understand the Passover.

Well, hopefully now we all understand when to correctly observe the Feast of Pentecost.

Frank W. Nelte