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GOD'S HOLY DAYS & GOD'S ANNUAL FESTIVALS AND HOLY DAY OFFERINGS

The Bible has a lot to say about "feasts" and "holy days" and "high days". The world in general looks upon these days as "Jewish" feasts. Let's examine exactly what the Bible tells us about these feasts.

For a start, there are two different Hebrew words which are at times indiscriminately translated into English as if they were the same word. They are not the same word, and they don't mean the same thing.

TWO DIFFERENT HEBREW WORDS

Where in the English text of the Old Testament we find the ONE word "feast" in reference to God's feasts, there are in fact TWO different words used in the Hebrew text. The indiscriminate translation of both of these Hebrew words into the English word "feast" has created a certain amount of confusion.

The two Hebrew words are "mow'ed" and "chag". Both words are used a number of times in Leviticus chapter 23; both words are there translated into English as "feast(s)", yet they do NOT mean the same thing!

Let's examine both these words.

THE HEBREW WORD "MOW'ED"

This noun is derived from the root verb "ya'ad", which means "to meet together". It does NOT really have anything to do with what we in English generally mean by "a feast". The noun "mow'ed" is used 223 times in the Old Testament and is translated in the KJV 150 times as "CONGREGATION", 23 times as "FEAST", 13 times as "SEASON", 12 times as "APPOINTED", 12 times as "TIME", etc..

The focus of this word is on "getting together"; the focus is NOT on "feasting". This word may also mean "season". I submit that it was rather unfortunate that in 23 occurrences the translators chose to render this word as "feast", when in exactly 200 other occurrences it clearly and obviously cannot mean "feast".

It would have been more accurate to have rendered this word in those 23 places as "appointed time" or as "meeting" or as "an assembly". This is the word which is repeatedly defined as a "convocation". This word is never used to refer to a specific period that is longer than one day as far as the annual Feasts and Holy Days are concerned.

Let's now see the next word.

THE HEBREW WORD "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.

When the two words "chagag chag" are used together, as they are in a number of places, they are usually translated as "you shall keep a feast". This word "chag" is associated with feasting and with

joyous celebrating. A suitable way to translate this word is "festival".

The word "chag" is used 62 times in the Old Testament, and in the KJV it is translated as "feast" 56 times, 3 times it is rendered as "sacrifice", 2 times as "feast days" and once as "solemnity". [The rendering as "sacrifice" is not really appropriate.]

So if we want to summarize the meanings of these two words, then we get the following:

The word "MOW'ED" basically refers to "a meeting", such as a Church service, or a gathering of some kind. The word does not give any hint as to the circumstances surrounding such a meeting ... it could be equally used for a meeting that involves feasting and happiness as it could for a meeting that involves solemnity, fasting and weeping. This word refers to one day at a time, rather than to a period of time (such as seven days).

The word "CHAG" basically refers to a celebration of some kind that may involve one or more days (e.g. fourteen days, seven days, etc.). The word does not necessarily imply "meetings" or "Church services". Of the two Hebrew words presented here, THIS is the word that expresses what we in English understand by "a feast".

From the above information it should already be quite clear that the Day of Atonement can certainly be described as a "mow'ed", but it would NEVER qualify for the term "chag".

Now let's see how these two Hebrew words are used in Leviticus chapter 23.

THE WORD "MOW'ED" IN LEVITICUS CHAPTER 23

This word is used 6 times in 4 different verses in this chapter. Here are all of those verses:

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, concerning THE FEASTS (mow'ed) of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my FEASTS (mow'ed).
Leviticus 23:2

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

These are THE FEASTS (mow'ed) of the LORD, which you 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

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

As can be seen from the above references, the word "mow'ed" is ONLY used in the introduction to the weekly Sabbath (i.e. verse 2), in the general introduction to all of the annual days (i.e. verse 4) and at the conclusion of the whole discussion (i.e. verses 37 and 44). But the word "mow'ed" is never used in the section that actually discusses the details for all of the annual days (i.e. in verses 5 - 36). However, the conclusion in verse 44 makes quite clear that ALL of the "mow'ed" days in the year have been enumerated.

Note also that the introductory verses (i.e. verses 2, 4) also show that the expression "holy convocation" refers to "mow'ed" days. So we can know that ALL the days that are referred to as "holy convocations"

are in fact "mow'ed" days. The expression "holy convocation" means in simple English "a commanded church service".

Thus:

- the weekly Sabbath is a "holy convocation" (v. 3);
- the 1st Day of U.B. is a "holy convocation" (v. 7);
- the 7th Day of U.B. is a "holy convocation" (v. 8);
- the Feast of Pentecost is a "holy convocation" (v. 21);
- the Day of Trumpets is a "holy convocation" (v. 24);
- the Day of Atonement is a "holy convocation" (v. 27);
- the 1st Day of FoT is a "holy convocation" (v. 35);
- the Last Great Day is a "holy convocation" (v. 36).

And that concludes all the "holy convocations" for the year ... the weekly Sabbath days plus the 7 annual Holy Days. And that is what verse 44 tells us, that Moses faithfully declared all of the "mow'ed" days in the year to the people of Israel.

But what about the Passover?

IS THE PASSOVER A "MOW'ED" DAY OR NOT?

I get the impression that the Passover is indeed also a "mow'ed", but WITHOUT being "a holy convocation". The omission of the expression "holy convocation" in reference to the Passover is very obvious in this chapter. Yet the Passover is discussed immediately after setting out to list all of the "mow'ed" days in verse 4 ... the Passover is the very first thing to be listed (i.e. in verse 5).

The initial instructions for the Passover instruct people "to gather together", but only in small family groups and not as a gathering for the entire congregation. This might qualify the Passover to be described as a "mow'ed" but without also being "a holy convocation"?

The word "mow'ed" is also used in reference to the Passover in the following verses:

Let the children of Israel also keep the passover AT HIS APPOINTED SEASON (mow'ed).
Numbers 9:2

In the fourteenth day of this month, at even, you shall keep it IN HIS APPOINTED SEASON (mow'ed): according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall you keep it. Numbers 9:3

And those men said unto him, We are defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the LORD IN HIS APPOINTED SEASON (mow'ed) among the children of Israel? Numbers 9:7

But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbears to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the LORD IN HIS APPOINTED SEASON (mow'ed), that man shall bear his sin. Numbers 9:13

Notice that here in Numbers chapter 9 the translators decided to always translate "mow'ed" with the expression "in his appointed season". It could equally correctly have been translated as "in his appointed meeting or gathering". Even though the gatherings themselves were quite small (i.e. family groups), these gatherings were without contradiction "appointed by God". But God did NOT designate them as "holy convocations".

With the change of the emblems of the Passover in the New Testament to bread and wine, we are also given the indication that from then onwards the meetings would be on a congregation-wide basis as far as possible ... witness Paul's corrective comments to the Corinthian congregation concerning their unacceptable ways of observing the Passover.

So without being dogmatic on this matter, it seems to me that God has designated the weekly Sabbath days plus 7 annual Holy Days as "mow'eds" which are "holy convocations". In addition God has also designated the Passover as a "mow'ed", but without being a "holy convocation".

THE REASON why God has not designated the Passover "mow'ed" as a "holy convocation", I suspect, is because attendance at the Passover is limited to baptized members of the Church (or: to circumcised males, plus all females, in Old Testament times). It seems unlikely to me that God would ever designate any specific day as "a holy convocation" ... and then LIMIT attendance at that "holy convocation". Limiting the attendance at a "holy convocation" would force those excluded to automatically profane such a day, which they can neither attend nor observe.

Now let's examine the word "chag".

THE WORD "CHAG" IN LEVITICUS CHAPTER 23

This word is used 5 times in 4 verses in this chapter. Here are all those verses.

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

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

Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you 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

And you SHALL KEEP IT A FEAST (chag) unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: YOU SHALL CELEBRATE IT (chag) in the seventh month. Leviticus 23:41

As can be seen, in this chapter the word "chag" is used ONLY to identify two periods of seven days each. The word "chag" here in Leviticus 23 does NOT identify individual "Holy Days"! Holy Days are identified by additional statements (as in verse 39).

So Leviticus 23 tells us that there are two "Feasts" (chag) of seven days each:

- the Feast of Unleavened Bread;

- the Feast of Tabernacles.

Let's note references to "chag" in sections other than Leviticus chapter 23. Let's start with Exodus chapter 23. There we read:

Thou shalt keep THE FEAST (chag) of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:) (Exodus 23:15 AV)

And THE FEAST (chag) of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and THE FEAST (chag) of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. (Exodus 23:16 AV)

THREE TIMES in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD. (Exodus 23:17 AV)

Exodus 23:15-16 refers to exactly three "feasts" as "chag" ... Unleavened Bread, Pentecost and Tabernacles. The word "mow'ed" is NOT used in this context. The reference to "three times" in verse 17 is obviously a reference to the three "chag" occasions that have just been spelled out in the previous two verses.

Let's now look at Exodus chapter 34 at the section from verse 18 to verse 23.

The feast (chag) of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, in the time of the month Abib: for in the month Abib thou camest out from Egypt. (Exodus 34:18 AV)

And thou shalt observe the feast (chag) of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast (chag) of ingathering at the year's end. (Exodus 34:22 AV)

THRICE IN THE YEAR shall all your men children appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel. (Exodus 34:23 AV)

Exodus 34:18-22 refers to exactly the same three "feasts" as "chag" ... Unleavened Bread, Pentecost and Tabernacles. The word "mow'ed" is also NOT used in this context. The reference to "three times" in verse 23 is also obviously a reference to the three "chag" occasions that have just been spelled out in the previous verses.

Notice also this reference to the time of King Solomon, when he offered burnt offerings on the altar he had built. This was long after the time of Moses.

Even after a certain rate every day, offering according to the commandment of Moses, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts (mow'ed), (and) THREE TIMES IN THE YEAR, in THE FEAST (chag) of unleavened bread, and in THE FEAST (chag) of weeks, and in THE FEAST (chag) of tabernacles. (2 Chronicles 8:13 AV)

This verse lists ALL the occasions in the year, namely:

- the weekly Sabbath days,
- the new moons,
- the "mow'ed" days, and
- 3 specific "chag" occasions.

Notice that in this verse the "chag" occasions are again distinguished from the "mow'ed" days. Notice also that the exact same three occasions are listed as "chag".

Now let's look at Deuteronomy chapter 16.

And thou shalt keep THE FEAST (chag) 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 AV)

Thou shalt observe THE FEAST (chag) of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine: (Deuteronomy 16:13 AV)

And thou shalt rejoice in THY FEAST (chag), thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates. (Deuteronomy 16:14 AV)

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 (chag) of unleavened bread, and in THE FEAST (chag) of weeks, and in THE FEAST (chag) of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty: (Deuteronomy 16:16 AV)

Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee. (Deuteronomy 16:17 AV)

These are the only verses in Deuteronomy 16 where the word "chag" is used. This presents an anomaly which I will discuss shortly. Notice first of all that Deuteronomy 16:16 very clearly and unequivocally refers to THREE different "chag" occasions ... Unleavened Bread, Pentecost and Tabernacles. This is in complete harmony with what we have already seen in Exodus chapter 23 and in Exodus chapter 34, where the exact same three occasions are listed as "chag" occasions.

But even though Deuteronomy 16:16 plainly refers to THREE "chag" occasions, the preceding verses in this chapter only discuss TWO of these "chag" occasions ... Pentecost and Tabernacles.

WHY DOES THIS CHAPTER NOT MENTION THE "CHAG" OF UNLEAVENED BREAD PRIOR TO VERSE 16?

I will make a suggestion at this point, one I expect will meet with some opposition? My only proof is internal evidence, i.e. flawed statements in the text of the passage itself. I have no problem with you disagreeing with the suggestion I will put forward, but I will tell you what I believe to be true anyway.

I BELIEVE SOME JEWISH SCRIBE AT SOME STAGE TAMPERED WITH THE TEXT OF

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 16 IN AN ATTEMPT TO MUSTER SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT FOR THE UNBIBLICAL JEWISH CUSTOMS SURROUNDING THE OBSERVANCE OF THE PASSOVER!

Here is why I feel that this is so.

THE PROBLEMS IN THE FIRST PART OF DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 16

1) First of all I want to acknowledge that I first heard this matter explained in a taped sermon given by John Ritenbaugh of The Church of the Great God. I heard the tape about half a year ago. I feel confident that if any of you are interested in a thorough discussion of this section in Deuteronomy 16, then The Church of the Great God would be happy to send you a copy of that tape. They have their offices in Charlotte, North Carolina.

This is not intended to be a promotion of CGG. I simply mention this to both, acknowledge that others have expounded this matter before me, and to point out where those who are interested can find more information on this specific question.

2) Both, Exodus chapter 23 and Exodus chapter 34, refer to all the males appearing before God on the 3 "chag" occasions in the year. Both passages list those three as being Unleavened Bread, Pentecost and Tabernacles.

Deuteronomy 16:16 makes exactly the same point. Yet the word "chag" is only used prior to verse 16 for TWO occasions in this chapter ... Pentecost and Tabernacles.

THE FEAST (CHAG) OF UNLEAVENED BREAD IS GLARINGLY HIGHLIGHTED BY ITS OMISSION FROM THIS CHAPTER! WHY IS THE 'CHAG' OF UNLEAVENED BREAD NOT DISCUSSED PRIOR TO VERSE 16 IN DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 16?

3) Deuteronomy 16 is NOT a discussion of the "mow'ed" occasions in the year! The whole tenor of this chapter is a discussion of the "chag" occasions in the year, the real FEAST occasions. And verse 16 makes clear that there are THREE such occasions in the year.

4) A careful reading of this chapter should make clear that a discussion of THE PASSOVER, as presented in verses 1-8, is really out of place ... it simply doesn't fit in with the whole discussion. The Passover and the spirit and the atmosphere surrounding it simply don't fit in with what the word "chag" stands for. Neither the "eating in haste", nor the element of fear and trepidation surrounding the first Passover, nor the limitation that no stranger was to eat of the Passover (Exodus 12:43) are really compatible with an occasion of feasting and rejoicing (i.e. a "chag"). Occasions of feasting and rejoicing are not subject to attendance and participation limitations, as is the case with the Passover. Such limitations are only imposed on situations where personal commitment to something is of paramount importance (i.e. the Passover).

5) The internal evidence of Deuteronomy 16 reveals that this passage has indeed been tampered with by some scribe, resulting in a number of inaccurate statements. The purpose of the tampering was to lend support to the unbiblical Jewish customs surrounding the observance of the Passover.

When we really understand this correctly, we have here in Deuteronomy 16 a parallel to what has happened to 1 John 5:7-8. In 1 John 5:7-8 some Catholic scribe edited the text in such a way as to lend credibility to the pagan Catholic teaching about the trinity. This particular fraud has long been identified as having been introduced in the 16th century A.D..

In Deuteronomy 16 some Jewish scribe did the same thing ... he edited the text to justify the existing Jewish observance of the Passover. But in so doing he introduced some errors. These errors are well exposed in John Ritenbaugh's sermon.

Let's briefly look at a few points in this passage.

6) Note the text of verse 1.

Observe the month of Abib, and keep THE PASSOVER unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night. (Deuteronomy 16:1 AV)

This verse was edited to read "THE PASSOVER". It originally must have read:

Observe the month of Abib, and keep THE FEAST (CHAG) OF UNLEAVENED BREAD unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night. (Deuteronomy 16:1 AV)

The proof for this assertion is that God did NOT bring them "out of Egypt" on the Passover. They came out of Egypt on THE FEAST (CHAG) OF UNLEAVENED BREAD (see Numbers 33:3). As the text stands in our Bibles with the words "the Passover" in this verse, it is simply an inaccurate statement! This alteration of the text very likely took place after the Jews had rolled the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread into ONE occasion, after they had started to observe their Passover at the start of the 15th of Nisan (instead of at the start of the 14th). This explains why the person who initially altered the text would not have seen a problem in retaining the expression about "coming out of Egypt by night". That's what the Jews erroneously believe ... that God brought Israel out of Egypt the same night during which they had earlier eaten the Passover. But the Bible makes quite clear that God brought Israel out of Egypt the night FOLLOWING the one during which they had eaten the Passover.

7) Notice verse 2.

Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto the LORD thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the LORD shall choose to place his name there. (Deuteronomy 16:2 AV)

The words of interest here are "of the flock and of the herd". The Hebrew word for "flock" is "tseown" and refers to: "flock, sheep, cattle". And the word for "herd" is "baqar" which means: "ox, herd, cattle". The point is this: while the Hebrew for "flock" may refer to either sheep or to cattle, the Hebrew word for "herd" NEVER refers to sheep or goats.

Yet the clear initial Passover instructions state: "... you shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats" (Exodus 12:5).

What happened is as follows:

The ORIGINAL instruction in Deuteronomy 16:2 talked about sacrifices brought during THE FEAST (chag) of Unleavened Bread ... and such sacrifices could certainly include cattle. The forger overlooked this technicality that the Passover animals could NEVER be taken "from the herd", and thus omitted to edit this particular expression as well.

Next, the expression "a (or the) place which the LORD shall choose" is used about 19 times in the Old

Testament (depending on what words are included in the phrase), all in the book of Deuteronomy.

5 references in Deuteronomy chapter 12 refer to Jerusalem, the place where the Temple would later be built. They refer to sacrifices being only performed there.

3 references in Deuteronomy 14:23-25 refer to the use of second tithe at the 3 annual Feasts (chag). We mostly tend to apply these 3 verses to the Feast of Tabernacles because they imply that the harvests have been reaped.

One reference in Deuteronomy 15:20 refers to partaking in eating the firstling males of the herd and of the flock that were offered to God in sacrifice at the place God would select for performing such sacrifices.

Chapter 16 also contains a number of references to this phrase. Apart from the verses in question (i.e. verses 2,6,7) this expression is used to refer to Pentecost in verse 11 and to Tabernacles in verse 15.

THEN VERSE 16 TELLS US that there are THREE occasions when we are to appear before God in the place that HE chooses ... Unleavened Bread, Pentecost and Tabernacles.

NOW IF the statement in verse 2 was correct, THEN there would in fact be FOUR OCCASIONS when we are to appear before God in the place HE chooses, the Passover being the fourth such occasion.

Again, the expression "in the place which the LORD shall choose" in verse 2 ONLY makes sense if it refers to the Feast (chag) of Unleavened Bread ... otherwise verse 16 is incorrect in referring to "THREE times in the year".

8) Deuteronomy 16:3 is a clear reference to the SEVEN DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD and NOT to the Passover. The expression "you shall eat no leavened bread with it" refers to not eating any leavened bread with any sacrifice brought during the Days of Unleavened Bread. The reference to "the day when you came forth out of the land of Egypt" again identifies the First Day of Unleavened Bread and NOT the Passover.

9) The reference to "7 days" in Deuteronomy 16:4 again makes clear that we are dealing with an instruction for the 7 Days of Unleavened Bread, and NOT an instruction for the Passover.

10) Deuteronomy 16:5-6 reads as follows:

Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee: (Deuteronomy 16:5 AV)

But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 16:6 AV)

When we compare this to the original instructions God gave in Exodus chapter 12, we find no reference as to WHERE they were to eat the Passover. There was no prohibition against eating the Passover "within any of their homes (gates)". However, this instruction to "not sacrifice within any of their gates" most certainly applied to the ritualistic sacrificial system (sin offering, burnt offering, trespass offering, peace offering) ... those sacrifices were ALL to be performed "at the place which God would choose to place His name there".

11) Next, notice the verb "sacrifice" used in these two verses. That also hints at an alteration of the text. Here is why.

There are two different Hebrew verbs with somewhat similar meanings. They are the verbs "zabach" and "shachat".

As stated in Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament, these verbs are defined as follows:

"ZABACH": (1) to slaughter animals,

(2) specially to slay in sacrifice, to sacrifice, to immolate [immolate means "to kill as a sacrificial victim"].

"SHACHAT": (1) to slay animals, especially a victim, and even a human victim,

(2) to kill persons.

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

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

Now back to Deuteronomy 16.

In verses 2, 5 and 6 of Deuteronomy 16 the Hebrew verb "zabach" is used three times and is in each case translated in the KJV as "sacrifice". That is certainly a fine and correct translation for the word "zabach", and the word is commonly used for the various animal sacrifices.

HOWEVER ...

Nowhere else in the entire Old Testament is the verb "zabach" ever used to refer to the Passover. In every other place where the actual "KILLING" (i.e. to kill or to sacrifice) of the Passover animals is referred to, it is ALWAYS the verb "shachat", which carries the connotation of "a victim", be it animal or be it human, that is used. The places where the verb "shachat" is used to refer to the Passover are: Exodus 12:6,21; 2 Chronicles 30:15; 2 Chronicles 35:1,6,11; Ezra 6:20. [Later we'll examine Exodus 34:25.]

It was God who inspired this word "shachat" to be used when He first instructed Israel about the Passover in Exodus 12, because God wanted to get across the concept that observing the Passover required the death of AN INNOCENT VICTIM, with the understanding that it really pictured the death of a HUMAN victim! It pictured the death of Jesus Christ!

So God inspired the word "shachat" to be used 7 times in reference to the Passover.

The verb "zabach" does not carry the connotation of a human victim; and so, even though the meaning is still fairly close, the use of "zabach" in reference to the Passover would place the sacrifice of the Passover on a somewhat LOWER level.

Now back to Deuteronomy 16.

The indications are that verses 1-7 originally referred to the feast (chag) of Unleavened Bread. The sacrifices performed during that seven day festival could certainly be described with the verb "zabach". So when the text was altered to read "Passover" instead of "Feast of Unleavened Bread", the man performing this unauthorized alteration overlooked this seemingly slight difference between the verbs "zabach" and "shachat" and therefore left the verb "zabach" unchanged. However, that seemingly slight difference in meanings is actually VERY PROFOUND when applied to "the Passover".

12) Now let's look at verse 7.

And thou shalt roast and eat it in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose: and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents. (Deuteronomy 16:7)

The wording of this verse refers to the end of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, not to the morning after the Passover! The picture is one of people having gone to the place where God has placed His name. Also in verse 16 God CLEARLY instructs us to appear before Him in the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

THEREFORE the phrase "and you shall turn in the morning and go unto your tents" CANNOT possibly refer to the day after the Passover. The day after the Passover we are MOST ASSUREDLY "to appear before the Eternal in the place which He shall choose", that being the First Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Verse 7 had to originally mean that at the end of the Feast of Unleavened Bread people were to go back home to their own tents (or later houses). A careful examination of this verse 7 once again exposed that this passage has been altered to comply with unbiblical Jewish traditions.

13) Let's now look at the last verse in this section.

Six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread: and on the seventh day shall be a solemn assembly to the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work therein. (Deuteronomy 16:8 AV)

This too is clearly a reference to the 7 Days of Unleavened Bread, and NOT to the Passover.

Thus: if we examine Deuteronomy 16:1-8 very carefully, then it should become apparent that there are simply too many statements that conflict with statements in other parts of the Old Testament for this section to be a correct reflection of the originally inspired words. At the same time all of these 8 verses fit perfectly into a discussion of the Feast (chag) of Unleavened Bread. And Deuteronomy 16:16 really DEMANDS that verses 1-8 must be a discussion of the CHAG of Unleavened Bread, verses 9-12 a discussion of the CHAG of Pentecost, and verses 13-15 a discussion of the CHAG of Tabernacles. Verses 16-17 then present the concluding summary statement, a parallel to the way Leviticus chapter 23 is organized (i.e. a concluding summary in verses 37-38 after all the mow'ed days have been carefully listed).

So for these reasons I personally feel that the text of Deuteronomy 16 has been altered at some stage, and this altered version is the one that has been preserved.

"BUT I THOUGHT THAT THE OLD TESTAMENT WAS PERFECTLY PRESERVED?"

At this point I can see some people objecting and saying:

"But wait a minute. I've always understood that the Old Testament was delivered to the Jews for them to preserve perfectly for posterity. And besides that, Jesus Christ said very clearly that not one jot or one tittle of the law would pass away till it was all fulfilled. So how can you claim that some verses were altered?"

Paul said that the oracles of God were committed to the Jews to preserve (Romans 3:2). This statement simply points out the responsibility which was conferred on the Jews. This does NOT mean that they automatically fulfilled that responsibility perfectly.

What we need to understand is that what God originally inspired (both, the O.T. in Hebrew and the N.T. in Greek) was perfect and NONE of that will pass away until "all be fulfilled". That is speaking about it remaining in effect until God chooses to let some things pass away; it is NOT speaking about perfect "PRESERVATION" of some text. God's laws and God-given prophecies will remain in effect totally independently of whether or not they are also correctly and accurately preserved in writing.

What we also need to understand is that we human beings are incapable of doing anything PERFECTLY ... it is simply beyond our capabilities.

Realize that God is not somehow more concerned about seeing to it that the Old Testament is preserved perfectly; but as far as the New Testament is concerned God doesn't mind errors and alterations creeping into the preserved text. That's not the case at all! IF God was going to ensure that the Old Testament would indeed be preserved PERFECTLY in writing, THEN God would obviously also have the same concern for the New Testament ... since both of these together make up HIS Word in writing.

Let's first look at the New Testament. There are literally many THOUSANDS of variations (most are minor, but a considerable number also have a major impact) in the Greek texts of the New Testament that have been preserved. It is up to us to do our best to try to discern what is the best text to follow in any passage where there is a potential disagreement amongst the texts that have been preserved. And while the Antiochian Majority Manuscripts are certainly superior in their reliability when compared to the Alexandrian Minority Manuscripts, this does not by any means imply that all of the Antiochian Manuscripts all agree with every other Antiochian Manuscript ... they simply don't! There are enough variations amongst even the Antiochian Manuscripts that we cannot avoid the conclusion that the divine preservation of the New Testament does not mean that errors and changes have not crept into some manuscripts. Errors have crept in, and so different translators have used different manuscripts as the basis for their particular translations.

For example, those of you who like to rely on the RSV, the NIV or the ASV translation are in fact relying on a translation that is based on Greek manuscripts of the N.T. which are at variance with about 95% of all the Greek manuscripts that have been preserved ... your particular translation is based on agreement amongst no more than 5% of all the surviving manuscripts. [These figures apply to the manuscripts as whole entities; they are NOT meant to apply to any specific verse viewed in isolation. Many verses in the Alexandrian minority MSS are in fact identical to those preserved in the Antiochian MSS.]

While there is nobody on earth today who possesses a perfectly preserved copy of the New Testament, the overwhelming majority of discrepancies are really inconsequential, and the few major ones (like 1 John 5:7-8) we can usually figure out without too much difficulty ... so that for all PRACTICAL PURPOSES we can approach the Antiochian text as BASICALLY accurate and correct. Very few potential discrepancies will have any effect on salvation.

As far as the Old Testament Hebrew text is concerned, we can say exactly the same thing ... that for all PRACTICAL PURPOSES the Jews have preserved a BASICALLY accurate and correct text. But this does not mean that many changes have not crept into the text since it was originally inspired ... such

changes HAVE indeed crept in. Here are some examples:

1) There are 134 passages where the Jewish scribes, without any kind of divine permission at all, simply changed the name of God from "YHWH" to "Adonai". We can try to find ways to rationalize and to justify as to why they did this ... but the bottom line still remains that they simply CHANGED the text from the way God had originally inspired it. And these changes were NOT authorized by God ... it is not as if GOD wanted to have His name changed in those 134 passages.

2) There are a number of numeric disagreements regarding the same people or the same events when we compare the accounts found in the books of Kings and in the books of Chronicles. In some cases we may be able to reason out a way to justify these discrepancies, but in other cases we simply don't have an explanation. However, these discrepancies also do not even remotely have any impact on our salvation; they are nothing more than technical details, where in the one book or in the other at some point some scribe made a mistake, and this mistake was then perpetuated.

3) The Hebrew text also contains THOUSANDS of marginal comments from the scribes. The reason for such comments is that the scribes themselves felt that there was A MISTAKE in the text, and they used the marginal comment to point this mistake out. In many cases the marginal comments are unnecessary, as the preserved text is correct. But in many other cases there is indeed A MISTAKE in the text, and the marginal comment is helpful in bringing this mistake to our attention. This shows that MISTAKES have indeed crept into the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, and without the marginal comments (really a form of a human commentary on the text in question) we might have great difficulty catching those mistakes.

So whereas in the New Testament we have to use our minds to decide between textually different manuscripts that have been preserved, in the Old Testament we have to use our minds to choose whether to accept the preserved text or whether to accept the marginal reading in cases where there is a discrepancy. In the New Testament there will be cases where our overall understanding will tell us to reject the reading based on one particular set of preserved manuscripts in favour of a reading based on a different set of manuscripts. And in the Old Testament there will be cases where our overall understanding will tell us to reject the text that has actually been preserved in favour of a marginal comment added by someone other than the original author (though the marginal comment MAY reflect what the original author had actually written?).

To complicate things even further, in some cases your English translation of the Old Testament may in its text actually say what is found only in the marginal comments of the Hebrew manuscripts ... and the brief comment in the centre reference column of your Bible may state what is actually found in the text of the Hebrew manuscript. And you are likely to assume that the marginal comment, which has found its way from the margin of a Hebrew manuscript into the text of your Bible, actually represents the preserved text, when it doesn't do that at all.

4) In other cases a specific combination of Hebrew letters (words were originally written without any vowel pointings) may apply to two or more words with two or more different meanings, where these meanings are only made clear by the unwritten vowels that are implied. Thus some Hebrew words (in the absence of any vowel pointings) could be translated by completely different words. While theoretically both translations could be linguistically correct, only one of those two meanings will be the correct one in that context ... and the other one will be wrong.

Let me give you an example of this.

Here is the KJV text for Isaiah 29:1:

Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add you year to year; LET THEM KILL SACRIFICES. (Isa. 29:1 KJV)

And here is the text of Isaiah 29:1 as found in the JPS:

Ah, Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped! Add you year to year, LET THE FEASTS COME ROUND! (Isa. 29:1 JPS)

So where the KJV translated the Hebrew as "let them kill sacrifices", the JPS translated the same Hebrew expression as "let the feasts come round". There is a considerable difference in these two translations. So let's note what the Hebrew text actually tells us.

The whole expression consists of two words: one verb and one noun. The noun is "chag", which the JPS has correctly translated as "feasts", but which the KJV has INCORRECTLY translated as "sacrifices".

The verb in this expression is "naqaph" and it is used with the "qal" stem. The meanings of Hebrew verbs vary considerably, depending on which stem they are used with. There are three stems which apply to this particular verb "naqaph"; they are: qal, hiphil and piel. In very brief terms: the qal stem expresses simple or casual action; the piel stem expresses intensive or intentional action; and the hiphil stem expresses causative action. That may sound complicated, but here is a simple example to illustrate these differences. This is based on the verb "TO EAT".

QAL STEM: he ate,

PIEL STEM: he overate, he ate greedily, he ate deliberately,

HIPHIL STEM: he caused to eat, he fed.

Now here are the meanings of the verb "naqaph" as applied to these different stems.

QAL STEM: to go around, to go in a circle,

PIEL STEM: to strike off skin, to cut down,

HIPHIL STEM: to go in a circle, to surround, to encompass.

So now back to the translation of Isaiah 29:1.

The JPS has correctly translated both words into English as "let the feasts come round", and this is compatible with the qal stem of the verb "naqaph".

But once the KJV had settled for the incorrect translation of "chag" into English as "sacrifices", they were then forced to select the PIEL STEM of this verb in order to make some sense out of the expression. The piel stem is NOT used in the Hebrew in this verse, but that was really the only option open to the KJV translators once they had settled for the wrong translation of "chag". And that is how they arrived at "let them kill sacrifices".

While "kill" may in some circumstances be a correct translation of the verb "naqaph" when it is used with the piel stem, that is quite clearly NOT the intended meaning in Isaiah 29:1 ... and the piel stem isn't used there anyway.

So much for our example.

So when a Hebrew word has three different meanings, it does NOT mean that therefore God intended for all of those three meanings to apply in the specific verse we are currently examining. Nor does it mean that God gives US the choice as to which meaning should apply in that specific instance. We have a responsibility to try to discern the meaning that GOD intended in that specific case. But we should recognize that we could have a translation into English which is technically correct, but which STILL does not really reflect what God intended to convey to us.

It can really get complicated and confused, and that is where sound Bible Studies and sermons can help guide and direct our understanding. That's where we really need 1 Corinthians 2:11, something "scholars" and commentators don't have access to.

Anyway, this should suffice to show that the verses in Deuteronomy 16:1-6 are certainly not the only ones in the Old Testament that have been altered from the way they were originally inspired. God expects us to use our minds when we read statements that seem out of harmony with the rest of God's Word. Take responsibility for what you read and for what you believe.

So I myself don't have a problem with recognizing that the Bibles we have access to may contain both, unintentional scribal errors and even some malicious and deliberate alterations. We have already seen the deliberate alteration that someone made to the section in 1 John 5:7-8. In the German translation that he produced, Martin Luther deliberately added the word "ALONE" to the text of Romans 3:28 to make it read: "... that a man is justified by faith ALONE ...". In the Seventh Day Adventist translation into which Ellen G. White had considerable input, she determined to leave out verse 2 and portions of other verses right down to verse 6 in chapter 24 of the Book of Isaiah (because those verses contradicted what she wanted to believe about the millennium). Similar deliberate alterations of certain passages can be found in many other sectarian translations.

The very fact that God at the end of the Book of Revelation issues a very strong warning against those who would deliberately alter the content of His Word implies that there would be attempts to do just that (see Revelation 22:18-19).

So I believe that the text of Deuteronomy 16 was deliberately altered to read "Passover" instead of "the Feast of Unleavened Bread". I believe there is another verse, in the Book of Exodus, that was also deliberately altered, very likely some time after Deuteronomy 16 had been altered, to further support the unbiblical Jewish teachings about the Passover.

Let's now look at that verse.

COMPARING EXODUS 23:18 WITH EXODUS 34:25

Exodus chapter 23 is a part of the giving of the Old Covenant. Verses 14-16 specifically list the 3 "chag" occasions in the year. Then verse 17 summarizes these three occasions by stating "three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord GOD". Notice that the Passover has NOT been mentioned in this chapter. The three "feasts" in the year have been very precisely identified ... and the Passover is not one of them.

Now notice verse 18.

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

Now let's examine Exodus chapter 34.

Verse 18 speaks about the Feast (chag) of Unleavened Bread. Verse 22 speaks about the Feast (chag) of Pentecost and the Feast (chag) of Tabernacles. Verse 23 then summarizes these three occasions by stating "three times in the year shall all your males (menchildren) appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel". Here also the three "feasts" in the year have been precisely identified in the preceding verses. Verse 24 then adds a promise of protection for those three occasions in the year, which promise is not mentioned in Exodus 23.

Now notice verse 25.

You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven; neither shall the sacrifice OF THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER be left unto the morning. Exodus 34:25

Now up to verse 25 NOTHING had been said about the Passover in any way. The sudden and unexpected introduction of "the Passover" into the thought-flow should raise some questions. But not only is the subject of "the Passover" suddenly introduced; it is even introduced as "THE FEAST of the Passover".

First let's eliminate a slight difference in the English text, where the Hebrew words are actually the same in both verses.

- "Leavened bread" in Exodus 23:18 and "leaven" in Exodus 34:25 are the identical Hebrew noun "chametz". So we should either include the word "bread" in both verses, or we should leave the word "bread" out in both verses. For the sake of consistency I will include the word "bread" in both verses, as that was the intention with the instruction ... not to have leavened BREAD involved in the sacrifice (i.e. a leavened product).

Now let's replace certain words in each of these two verses with the Hebrew words that are actually used. Some additional Hebrew words need to be introduced at this stage. We saw that "zabach" is the Hebrew verb for slaughtering or sacrificing an animal. The noun "zebach" thus means "a sacrifice". The verb "luwn" is translated as "shall remain" in Exodus 23:18 and as "shall be left" in Exodus 34:25. I will render it as "shall remain" in both verses, again for the sake of consistency. It is slight differences like these that lead us to assume that in the Hebrew text there are also these differences. But that is not the case.

So here is Exodus 23:18.

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

And here is Exodus 34:25.

You shall not SHACHAT (offer) the blood of my ZEBACH (sacrifice) with CHAMETZ (leavened bread); neither shall the ZEBACH (sacrifice) of the CHAG (feast) of the PESACH (passover) remain unto the morning. Exodus 34:25

The context preceding these verses is in each case exactly the same. The verses that immediately

follow these two verses are also 100 % identical. Thus the translation of BOTH, Exodus 23:19 and Exodus 34:26 reads:

The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God. You shall not seethe a kid in his mother's milk. (Exodus 23:19 & Exodus 34:26)

It should be obvious that Exodus 23:18 and Exodus 34:25 were ALSO identical when Moses first recorded them.

IN EXODUS 34:25 WE ARE AGAIN DEALING WITH A FRAUDULENT CORRUPTION OF THE ORIGINAL TEXT, IN AN ATTEMPT TO JUSTIFY THE UNBIBLICAL JEWISH PRACTICES REGARDING THE PASSOVER!

A mistranslation in the KJV obscures the problem somewhat. The KJV translators decided to translate the word "chag" in Exodus 23:18 as "my sacrifice". THAT IS NOT CORRECT! Young's Literal Translation, for example, translates Exodus 23:18 as follows:

Thou dost not sacrifice on a fermented thing the blood of My sacrifice, and the fat OF MY FESTIVAL doth not remain till morning. (YLT Exodus 23:18)

The following translations, amongst others, have also recognized this error and translated this phrase as "the fat of my FEAST": American Standard Version, Jewish Publication Society Translation, RSV and the Darby Translation.

So here is what must have happened:

The original texts in Exodus 23:18 and in Exodus 34:25 were identical. The person who altered the text of Exodus 34:25 realized that the verb "zabach" is NEVER used in reference to the Passover, that for the Passover it is ALWAYS the verb "shachat" that is used. So in Exodus 34:25 he changed the verb "zabach" to now read "shachat".

He then left the remainder of the first part of the sentence unchanged. Then he changed the second part of that sentence.

Where the verse originally read:

"... neither shall the CHELEB (fat) of my CHAG (feast) remain until morning"

it was altered to read:

"... neither shall the ZEBACH (sacrifice) of the CHAG (feast) of PESACH (Passover) remain until morning".

So the only things that the person who changed the text did are:

- he CHANGED two words and he ADDED one other word.

In other words:

- 1) He changed the verb "zabach" to the verb "shachat" to fit in with the typical description of the Passover.
- 2) He changed the noun "cheleb" (fat) for the noun "zebach" (sacrifice).
- 3) He then retained the noun "chag" (feast) ... so NO CHANGE needed.
- 4) He then added the noun "pesach" (Passover).

In this way the noun "chag" (feast) was made to refer to the noun "zebach" (sacrifice); and the noun "zebach" in turn was made to refer to the noun "pesach" (Passover).

IN THIS WAY THE MEANING OF EXODUS 34:25 WAS COMPLETELY CHANGED!

JEWISH JUSTIFICATION FOR THEIR PRACTICES

I think it should be fairly obvious now that we are dealing with text that was changed at some stage in both, Deuteronomy 16:1-6 and in Exodus 34:25. The evidence contained in those passages themselves is overwhelming.

But what Scriptures do the Jews use to justify their practices for the Passover? Do they appeal to the Scriptures that discuss when the Passover was first instituted by God ... Exodus chapter 12? Do they appeal to the chapter which very meticulously lays out all of the "mow'ed" days and the "chag" occasions in the year ... Leviticus chapter 23? Do they appeal to the section within the text of the Old Covenant itself where the three "chag" occasions in the year are carefully laid out ... Exodus chapter 23?

NO!

They don't look to any of these basic sections for support for their teachings, as those sections only call their practices into question. Instead, they look to Exodus 34:25 and to Deuteronomy 16:1-6 to justify how they observe the Passover. The very sections of the Old Testament Scriptures which were altered are the only justifications for their customs. It seems like some scribe really saw a need for scriptural support for the customs surrounding the Passover ... and he set about fulfilling that need by altering the text of the Old Testament. It is not unlike Martin Luther seeing a need for scriptural support for his teaching of "saved by faith ALONE", and then setting about providing that scriptural proof.

It is the present text of Exodus 34:25 that allows the Jews to refer to Passover as a "chag", because nowhere else in the Old Testament is the word "chag" ever applied to the Passover.

It might be worthwhile to examine the expression "the JEWS' passover" in the New Testament more closely (used by the Apostle John in his gospel in John 2:13 and John 11:55), when we already know very clearly that they kept THEIR feast (the meal they call Passover) a day after Jesus Christ had observed the Passover with His disciples. Perhaps it is just a descriptive phrase? Or perhaps John was also telling us more than we may suspect when he used this phrase?

Let's move on to the next question.

HOW MANY "CHAG" (FEASTS) ARE THERE IN THE YEAR?

Thus far we have seen that the Bible refers to the following events as "CHAG" occasions, feasts or festivals in our language:

- the 7 Days of Unleavened Bread are one "chag",
- the 1 Day of Pentecost is one "chag",
- the 7 Days of Tabernacles are one "chag".

We have already seen that the Passover is NOT referred to as a "chag" occasion. But what about the "Feast" of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Last Great day ... are they "chag" occasions or not? We already know that they are referred to as "mow'ed" days, but are they also "chag" days?

A careful study of the Old Testament will show us that there are ONLY 3 "chag" occasions in the year. There simply are no others. And that is why we are told THREE TIMES that all the males should appear before God THREE TIMES each year; and those are the THREE TIMES in the year when God expects us to appear before Him with an offering!

WHY ARE THERE ONLY 3 FEASTS IN THE YEAR?

So while there are 7 specific days in the year when we are commanded to gather or to assemble before God (i.e. "mow'ed" days), there are only 3 occasions that GOD refers to as "feasts" (i.e. "chag").

The question then arises: WHY did God only designate 3 occasions as "feasts"? Why did God not designate ALL SEVEN occasions as "feasts"? WHY did God in fact differentiate between the "mow'ed" days and the "chag" occasions?

Understand this!

1) The "MOW'ED" days (including the weekly Sabbath days and the Passover) reveal God's overall plan of salvation for mankind. All of these days are set aside for us to receive teaching and instruction in the ways of God.

2) The 3 "CHAG" occasions are set aside by God as times of joy and feasting because these three "chags" focus on the THREE STAGES in which God builds His Family! It is not a matter of whether a "chag" is more important than a "mow'ed", or whether a "mow'ed" is more important; neither is it a matter of whether an annual "mow'ed" is more important than the weekly "mow'ed" (i.e. the weekly Sabbath). They are ALL important in revealing what God is doing and is in the process of achieving. But they FOCUS on different things.

But each "CHAG" pictures that another stage in the building of the Family of God has been achieved.

AND THAT IS WHY GOD HAS DESIGNATED THESE 3 AS "FEASTS"!

To see this more clearly, let's first look at what the Apostle Paul explained in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. In discussing the sequence of steps in the building of God's Family, Paul wrote:

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming. Then comes the end (or: then come the end-ones, the last ones), when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father ... (1 Corinthians 15:23-24 AV)

The sequence Paul lays out here is quite clear:

Step 1: Jesus Christ becoming a BORN Son of God,

Step 2: All those in the first resurrection,

Step 3: All the rest join the Family later.

This is "the order" Paul was speaking about.

Now let's look again at the 3 "chag" occasions that God has designated.

While the Passover is absolutely vital to the entire process of salvation and the process of God achieving His purpose, it is NOT "a Feast" because it does not picture one of the 3 steps by which the Family of God will be built.

So:

THE FIRST "CHAG":

The Days of Unleavened Bread. It is DURING these 7 days that God the Father officially accepts His resurrected Son Jesus Christ. It is always DURING these 7 Days of Unleavened Bread that the wavesheaf (which pictured Jesus Christ ascending to the Father and being accepted by Him) had to be offered.

Understand this! It is NOT "our putting sin out of our lives" that makes these 7 Days of UB into "A FEAST"! What makes it "A FEAST" is that on ALL of these 7 days (and it could be ANY one of those 7 days!) God the Father accepted the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ ... and God the Father REJOICED because the first of three steps in creating His Family had been accomplished!

To place the wavesheaf offering outside of the 7 Days of Unleavened Bread would remove the "FEAST" character from these 7 days! Without the wavesheaf offering within these 7 days they would be reduced from being a "chag" to simply being a number of days that connect two different "mow'ed" days.

Understand one other thing that is revealed by the wavesheaf being accepted by God on ANY ONE of the 7 Days of UB: it shows that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is accepted by God the Father for ALL 7000 YEARS that encompass God's plan of creating born sons and daughters.

[Comment for those who insist on the Jewish calendar: When you think this particular point through, it should also become clear that the calendar God originally approved MUST HAVE had the potential for the wavesheaf to be offered on any of the 7 Days of UB ... to show that God applies Christ's sacrifice to human beings from all 7 of the 1000-year periods God has set aside for building His Family. This shows that "the postponement rules" of the present Jewish calendar are not of God, since those "postponement rules" prevent the wavesheaf (always offered on a Sunday during UB) from falling on the 3rd Day of UB, on the 5th Day of UB and on the 7th Day of UB. This would symbolize that Christ's sacrifice is not accepted by God the Father for all those people who lived in the 3rd and the 5th and the 7th 1000-year periods of God's 7000-year plan. Right here we can see that the Jewish "postponement rules" symbolize salvation NOT being available for people during the millennium, as well as during two other 1000-year periods!! So do you STILL want to argue that those Jewish "postponement rules" must "somehow" have God's approval? Will you still stubbornly refuse to concede that there are real problems with those "postponement rules"? What was that about stubbornness being like iniquity and idolatry ...? Don't think that if you simply ignore the problems with the Jewish calendar, that they will somehow go away. They

won't go away; instead the evidence against the present Jewish calendar will only grow and get stronger.]

THE SECOND "CHAG":

The Feast of Pentecost. This pictures step two of the three steps for creating the Family of God. It pictures all those in the first resurrection becoming spirit beings in God's Family. And again it is "A FEAST" because God the Father will REJOICE when that specific occasion will come about (we hope in the not too distant future!).

It is this occasion that is also pictured by "the marriage FEAST" of Jesus Christ.

THE THIRD "CHAG":

The Feast of Tabernacles. This occasion pictures the second and great harvest of the vast majority of mankind into the Family of God. That refers to the people who live during the 1000-year millennium and also to those in the second resurrection, because all of them will become spirit-beings at exactly the same time. They are all a part of the same group, being tested by God under identical conditions. When THEY are changed into spirit-beings, it will be the time when Jesus Christ will "deliver up" to God the Father the whole kingdom of God (see again 1 Corinthians 15:24). And that too will be "A FEAST" and God the Father will indeed REJOICE because the process of building His Family will have been achieved ... the Family will then be complete!

There are "7 days" to the Feast of Tabernacles because those who are pictured as joining the Family of God then will have come from a period of 7000 years of human existence. Even those in the second resurrection are from that 7000 year period, since all those in the second resurrection will originally have lived within that first 7000 year period. They are FROM that 7000 year period, even though their time of "qualifying" (I don't mean "earning" salvation, I mean their time of testing) will lie just beyond that 7000 year period (i.e. the 100 years that follow the millennium).

Thus, to recap: The FEAST of Unleavened Bread is SEVEN days long to show that God the Father applies the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to people from all 7000 years covering His plan. The FEAST of Pentecost is ONE day long to focus on the occasion of the Marriage Supper, when those in the first resurrection become spirit-beings. The FEAST of Tabernacles is SEVEN days long, because it represents the overwhelming majority of human beings from the total 7000-year period becoming a part of God's Family.

So God has designated three specific times in the year as "Feasts" to focus in on the three steps in which He builds His Family. And God Himself will rejoice as each of those three steps is attained. Those three are GOD's FEASTS!

Let's now examine some other Scriptures that may perhaps present a difficulty in this regard. Let's start with Psalm 81.

PSALM 81

Here is Psalm 81:3, as it appears in the KJV:

Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. Psalm 81:3

Here are some of the Hebrew words in this verse:

- "in the new moon" = "chodesh", meaning: month, new moon
- "in the time appointed" = "kece", which means: full moon
- "on our solemn feast" = "chag", the word for "feast"
- "day" = "yom", which means: day

IN THIS VERSE THERE IS NO WORD IN THE HEBREW FOR "SOLEMN".

The KJV text implies that the words "our solemn feast day" refer to the "Feast" of Trumpets (i.e. the only annual Holy Day on a new moon).

BUT THAT IS NOT CORRECT! IT IS ONLY BASED ON A MISTRANSLATION OF THIS VERSE!

Two errors in the KJV of this verse are:

- 1) The expression "in the time appointed" is a clear mistranslation. It should really read "AT THE FULL MOON"!
- 2) It should not be referred to as "SOLEMN". That is an error that was perpetuated by Jerome's Latin Vulgate translation, and which the KJV translators simply copied.

Here is the text of the Latin Vulgate for this verse (which in the Vulgate is given as Psalm 80:4).

clangite in NEOMENIA bucina et in MEDIO MENSE die SOLLEMNITATIS nostrae. (Vulgate Psalm 80:4, equivalent to KJV Psalm 81:3)

Notice the word "neomenia", which refers to the "new moon", and the expression "medio mense", which refers to "full moon" ("medio mense" literally means "middle of the month" from medius = middle, mensis = month). In a calendar that starts months with the new moon, the expression "the middle of the month" refers to the full moon. In other words, Jerome in his Latin Vulgate translation INTERPRETED the Hebrew word "kece" which means "full moon" with the Latin expression "the middle of the month", which is when the full moon takes place. This shows that Jerome clearly understood the time the Hebrew word "kece" refers to.

Notice also the expression "die sollemnitis nostrae", which means "our SOLEMN feast day". There is nothing in the Hebrew text that justifies the word "solemn". The KJV simply took the word "solemn" over from the Latin Vulgate of the Catholic Church. But the Hebrew word "chag" actually has nothing to do with "solemn" ... rather, it implies feasting, joy and happiness. And it is largely due to the presence of the word "solemn" that we have assumed that this verse simply MUST be speaking about the "Feast" of Trumpets (which involves a time of war and warrants being "solemn").

But in actual fact "the feast day" referred to in this verse is not speaking about the Day of Trumpets at all! It is speaking about the First Day of the Feast of Tabernacles! And that does not involve being "solemn"!

[As an aside: Here we sing a hymn based on Psalm 81 ("Praise the Eternal with a Psalm!") and our concept of what God means by "a feast day" (that God views it as 'solemn') is based on nothing more

than the wrong Catholic translation of this verse.]

Notice that as long ago as 400 A.D. (the time when Jerome produced the Latin Vulgate version) it was understood that Psalm 81:3 contains a reference to the new moon and another reference to the FULL MOON. Yet the KJV translators chose to ignore this, choosing rather to obscure the direct reference to the full moon found in the Hebrew text.

Here are a few other translations of Psalm 81:3:

Blow the horn at the new moon, at the FULL MOON for our feast-day. (Jewish Publication Society, 1917)

Blow the trumpet at the new moon, At the FULL MOON, on our feast-day. (ASV, 1901)

Blow the horn at the new moon, at the FULL MOON, on our feast day. (RSV, 1947)

Stosset am Neumonde in die Posaune, am VOLLMONDE zum Tage unseres Festes!
(ELBERFELDER German Language Translation, 1905):

Steekt de bazuin op nieuwemaan, op VOLLEMAAN voor onzen feestdag. (LEIDSE VERTALING
Dutch Language Translation, 1912/1994)

It should become quite clear that it is fairly well-known that this verse ALSO refers to the "full moon" ("Vollmonde" in German and "vollemaan" in Dutch).

So the meaning should now be clear. Psalm 81:3 should be translated as:

"Blow the trumpet in the new moon (i.e. on the Day of Trumpets) AND at the full moon (First Day of the Feast of Tabernacles), on our feast (chag) day."

Alternatively, since the trumpets were blown on EVERY new moon, Psalm 81:3 can apply equally well as follows:

Blow the trumpet in the new moon (i.e. on the first day of the FIRST month, Nisan) AND at the full moon (First Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread), on our feast (chag) day."

However, either way, since a new moon and a full moon are always 14 days apart, THEREFORE this verse here simply has to be talking about TWO different days. And it is the full moon day (First Day of Unleavened Bread OR First Day of Tabernacles) that is referred to as a "chag" (feast day). That is in complete harmony with every other reference we have seen about the three "chag" occasions in the year.

So maybe the time has come to revise our understanding about Psalm 81:3? Certainly there is NO JUSTIFICATION of any kind to use either the phrase "in the time appointed" or the word "solemn" in translating this verse.

Let's look at a few passages in the Book of Ezekiel.

EZEKIEL CHAPTERS 45 AND 46

Notice Ezekiel 45:17, which is a prophecy for a time yet future.

And it shall be the prince's part to give burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and drink offerings, IN THE FEASTS (chag), and in the new moons, and in the sabbaths, IN ALL SOLEMNITIES (mow'ed) of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin offering, and the meat offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel. (Ezekiel 45:17 AV)

[Comment: The translation of "mow'ed" as "in all solemnities" is again based on following the Latin Vulgate's translation, which reads "... in universis sollempnitatibus". Without this precedent in the Latin Vulgate the KJV translators would not have chosen the word "solemnities" as the translation of "mow'ed".]

This Scripture is speaking about a time yet future when Jesus Christ will be ruling on earth. Note that the term "mow'ed" is here used to INCLUDE: the "chag" occasions plus the "new moons" plus the weekly Sabbaths. Recall that "mow'ed" means "appointed meetings".

Next, notice Ezekiel 45:21.

In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, (and) A FEAST (chag) OF SEVEN DAYS; unleavened bread shall be eaten. (Ezekiel 45:21 AV)

It is again obvious that "the Feast" (chag) is seven days long and is therefore "the Feast of Unleavened Bread". Again we have an example where the word "chag" is NOT used for the Passover.

Now let's look at Ezekiel 46:11.

And IN THE FEASTS (chag) AND IN THE SOLEMNITIES (mow'ed) the meat offering shall be an ephah to a bullock, and an ephah to a ram, and to the lambs as he is able to give, and an hin of oil to an ephah. (Ezekiel 46:11 AV)

[Comment: Again the translation of "mow'ed" as "solemnities" shows the translators' bias towards the Latin Vulgate's "sollempnitatibus".]

In this verse we also see a distinction made between the "chag" occasions and the "mow'ed" days. It is because Jerome in his Latin Vulgate translation did not differentiate between "chag" and "mow'ed" that the KJV translators followed his example and indiscriminately translated both, "chag" and "mow'ed" as "feast". There are also other translation preferences in the KJV which illustrate their familiarity with, and their liking for, the Latin Vulgate translation; but that is of no concern in our present discussion.

[Comment: Examples where Jerome used "sollempnitas" to translate the Hebrew "chag" include Exodus 10:9; Exodus 13:6; Exodus 32:5; etc.. Examples where Jerome used "sollempnitas" to translate the Hebrew "mow'ed" include Ezekiel 45:17; Ezekiel 46:11; etc..]

So that pretty well gives us all the information behind "God's Feasts". Let's summarize it to get a concise picture.

THE FACTS ABOUT "GOD'S FEASTS"

What we have found is the following:

1) In the Hebrew text God VERY CLEARLY distinguishes between days that are set apart for "meetings" (these days are referred to as "mow'ed" days and all of them except for the Passover are also "HOLY convocations") ... and days or periods of time that God designates as "festivals" or as "feasts" (referred to as "chag" occasions).

2) All these "mow'ed" days, except for the Passover, are also referred to as "sabbaths". There are the weekly Sabbath days plus the 7 annual Sabbath days. It is appropriate to refer to these annual mow'ed days as "HOLY DAYS", because God has designated all of them as "HOLY convocations". But it would be far better NOT to refer to the annual "mow'ed" days as "FEAST DAYS" ... because that would only serve to confuse them with the "chag" occasions.

3) God has designated ONLY 3 occasions in the year as "FEASTS" (CHAG)! They are:

- the 7 Days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread,
- the 1 Day of the Feast of Pentecost,
- the 7 Days of the Feast of Tabernacles.

There are no other occasions in the religious calendar of the year that God has designated as "Feasts". These three occasions each picture a step in the process of God building His Family of spirit-born sons and daughters.

4) When Jerome produced the Latin Vulgate translation, he blurred the distinction between "chag" and "mow'ed". The Vulgate reigned supreme in Europe for a full millennium (roughly 400 A.D. to 1400 A. D.). For 1000 years it stood unchallenged.

5) All of the early translators into the English language "GREW UP ON THE VULGATE"! The first major translation into English was made by John Wycliffe in the 1380's A.D.. But John Wycliffe did NOT make his translation from the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. John Wycliffe made his translation from the Latin Vulgate. When later translators DID use the Hebrew and the Greek texts, the Wycliffe translation was still a major influence on their minds, as was the Latin Vulgate translation itself.

6) The King James Version translators perpetuated the blurring of "mow'ed" and "chag" that Jerome had first set in motion. As a result, it is difficult for a reader of the English KJV to know when God speaks about a "mow'ed" and when God speaks about a "chag".

7) When Mr. Armstrong studied into this subject, he came to understand the meaning of all of the Feasts and the Holy Days. This understanding he passed on to us through his writings. Where Mr. Armstrong's understanding appears to have been a little unclear is in the area of the distinction between "Feasts of God" and "the annual Holy Days" ... thanks to the process that was set in motion over 1500 years ago by Jerome with his Latin Vulgate. Yes, Mr. Armstrong did understand that all of the "HOLY DAYS" are organized around the three harvest "situations" (he usually referred to it as THREE "seasons" and TWO "harvests"). But there is no indication, as far as I can see, that he saw a clear distinction between "mow'ed" days and "chag" situations.

8) As a result we in God's Church have tended to use the terms "FEAST days" and "HOLY days" as interchangeable terms. This they are NOT! God did not intend "mow'ed" to mean exactly the same thing as "chag".

9) Probably the only area where this lack of distinction between "chag" and "mow'ed" impacted on Mr. Armstrong's understanding in a practical way is in the matter of "taking up Holy Day offerings".

10) In the absence of a clear understanding as to WHY God repeatedly tells us that there are THREE occasions in the year when we are to appear before Him with an offering, Mr. Armstrong reasoned as follows:

We are to bring an offering at those occasions BECAUSE it is proper and expected to bring an offering when one comes into the presence of a king! And since God has commanded us to appear before Him on SEVEN specific Holy Days in the year, which are organized around THREE "seasons", THEREFORE God really requires us to bring an offering on all SEVEN annual Holy Days.

But this reasoning is not correct.

THE GIVING OF FEAST OFFERINGS

So now let's look at the instructions for us to appear before God with an offering.

1) The assumed premise, that the reason for the instructions to bring offerings is simply because we are APPEARING before God, is not correct! We appear before God on both, the "mow'ed" days and the "chag" occasions. The weekly sabbath is ALSO a "mow'ed" occasion ... but clearly God does not command us to bring an offering on each weekly Sabbath. We DO at times appear before God without bringing an offering. So while "appearing before God" is a part of the answer, there is MORE to it than just "appearing before God". It is a matter of "appearing before God" at THREE specific times which God has carefully spelled out.

2) "Mow'ed" days are days of assembly before God for the purpose of being taught and instructed in God's ways. They are all (apart from the Passover) "holy". But God did NOT intend for us to associate appearing before Him for the purpose of receiving instruction and teaching with bringing offerings! God did not intend for us to associate "mow'ed" days with giving offerings!

When Jerome in his Latin Vulgate blurred the distinction between "chag" and "mow'ed" days, it opened the way for taking up offerings on ALL "mow'ed" days; it opened the way for taking up "Sunday collections" (since the Catholic Church replaced the Sabbath, a "mow'ed" day, with Sunday).

WE have made the giving of an offering a significant component of all of the annual "mow'ed" days (except the Passover), building one whole message on each of those days around the process of giving the offering (the offering sermonette). WE have made this focus on money a major component of these "mow'ed" days. THAT WAS NOT GOD'S INTENTION!

3) What God DID intend is for us to associate bringing an offering to Him with JOYOUS celebrating on the three occasions GOD has designated as "FEASTS" (chag). These 3 occasions picture one step each in the process of God building His Family. It is at the "chag" FEASTS that God expects us to bring an offering.

The Feast of Pentecost is simultaneously a "chag" and a "mow'ed". So the offering on Pentecost will be taken up on a "mow'ed" day. But I personally see no reason why during the 7 day "chags" of Unleavened Bread and of Tabernacles we necessarily have to give these offerings on the Holy Days (mow'ed) themselves. We can easily give the offerings on the 2nd or on the 3rd day of the Feast. (This is not to say that I believe it is wrong to GIVE the offering on a "mow'ed" day.) Nor does this giving of the

offerings necessarily have to take place in the context of a Church service. We send our tithes to the Church outside of the context of weekly Sabbath services; and the three Feast offerings could likewise be made outside of the actual church services on those Feasts. However, there is a good likelihood that people would give LESS in such offerings than when they are taken up during services. And THAT might be of concern to some people?

4) By including the giving of the offerings as a part of a Church service, we do bring an element of formality into the giving of these offerings. I suspect that this can be traced back, via the custom of taking up an offering each week at the church services of so-called "Christian" churches, to the Jewish custom of sounding a trumpet or a fanfare before giving an offering.

Notice what Jesus Christ said in regard to religious people giving offerings during His ministry:

Therefore when you do your alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do IN THE SYNAGOGUES and in the streets ... Matthew 6:2

"In the synagogues" refers to "during Church services". So even back then they had "SPECIAL MUSIC" to introduce an element of formality into the taking up of offerings during Church services. Making the occasion more formal will never lead to people giving SMALLER offerings. If anything, there will be the psychological pressure to feel compelled to give a larger offering in a formal situation. Announcing the size of the offering, and then breaking it down into how much that amounts to for every man, woman and child present, has the same effect of psychological pressure to give more rather than less. And "business managers" worry about how much money the Holy Day offerings will produce ... they budget (read: make predictions!) very tightly around these offerings.

Spelling out how much good the Church will be able to do with the amount of money that is about to be taken up in the offering also has that same effect of pressuring people to give more ... to be able to feel that they are having a greater part in "doing the work".

5) I get the distinct impression that "making a big show" out of taking up offerings at Church services ... having a special sermonette-announcement preceding the offering, speaking about how the Church will benefit from this offering, presenting special music to accompany the taking up of the offering, etc. ... is what Jesus Christ was speaking AGAINST in Matthew 6:2! That was basically what the Jews were doing back then. All of those things present a certain amount of psychological pressure.

[This is not to say I am against having "special music" at services. But we should recognize that the Jews at Christ's time did the same thing for collecting contributions from people.]

6) Jesus Christ continued in this context to say:

But when you do alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your alms may be in secret ... Matthew 6:3-4

It seems to me that WE have decided that this instruction does not apply to the giving of Holy Day offerings. I suspect that the best way to comply with this instruction from Jesus Christ, when applied to the three commanded offerings each year, is to simply drop off the offerings in some sealed, secure collection box before or after Church services. Those people who under those circumstances will neglect to give offerings are obviously the ones who are not "CHEERFUL givers". And the offerings from people who are NOT "cheerful givers" are of no value to God (read: verily, I say to you, they already have their reward), even though we as a physical Church organization would still like to also receive the money of

"uncheerful givers" ... so our "business managers" can meet their targets.

7) I get the impression that taking up offerings DURING Church services is something we have simply taken over from the churches of this world. That included the Jewish religious customs. Do we have any examples of when GOD instructed His people to take up money DURING a Church service? In Matthew 6:1-4 we have a clear admonition from Jesus Christ that giving offerings should as far as possible be done privately and confidentially.

8) The three "chag" occasions when we are to bring offerings have to do with the harvests, when people in an agricultural society would have an income.

-The Feast of Unleavened Bread marks THE START of the spring harvest. It was at this time when the "wavesheaf" offering was to be brought, after which farmers could start to reap the grain.

-The Feast of Pentecost marks THE END of the spring harvest.

-The Feast of Tabernacles marks THE END of the autumn harvest.

9) The instruction to appear before God with an offering on THREE occasions in the year has NOTHING to do with the ritual and sacrificial laws. In plain language: those three offerings were NOT to be in the form of burnt offerings or peace offerings or sin offerings or trespass offerings! Those three annual offerings had nothing to do with something that would be IMMEDIATELY CONSUMED (as is the case with animal sacrifices).

10) Sacrifices were associated with the Feasts, but animal sacrifices are NOT what God means by "a tribute of a freewill offering of your hand" (Deuteronomy 16:10). "Giving as we are able" is also not a reference to bringing "as many animal sacrifices as we feel we are able to bring". The three offerings God commands us to bring refer to monetary offerings. And it is not really appropriate to compare these three commanded offerings with bringing animal sacrifices. These three offerings on the three "feasts" during the year have nothing to do with the animal sacrifices.

11) We need to recognize that when God says "THREE", then God does not really mean "SEVEN"! Three times (Exodus 23, Exodus 34 and Deuteronomy 16) God tells us to appear before Him on THREE occasions with an offering, and in each case we have reasoned: "God SAYS 'three', but He really means 'seven'". We need to believe that God means what He says. Whenever we use reasoning to CHANGE God's instructions, then our reasoning is simply not right!

12) We need to understand that giving the annual offerings is not a ritual God imposed. Neither is God playing some kind of game.

To put it mildly, it simply does not make sense (i.e. UNLESS you view the giving of these offerings as a ritual) to set aside some money for offerings and then to dish it out to God piecemeal! The approach of:

"Lord, I'll give You half of what I have set aside today, on the First Day of U.B. and the other half I will give You six days from now on the Seventh Day of U.B.. Later I will give You a quarter of what I will set aside on the Feast of Trumpets, the next quarter I will give You 9 days later on the Day of Atonement, and the third quarter I will give You 5 days later on the First Day of F.o.T., and the last quarter I will give You a week later on the Last Great Day."

... seems like some sort of game, when we are dealing with the Supreme Creator and Owner of everything that exists!

That all sounds very ritualistic to me! And I don't believe that God intended the annual offerings to be a ritual! It is also rather clinical.

13) An approach I would suggest is as follows:

A) From the time we return from the Feast of Tabernacles until the next Days of Unleavened Bread start, we set aside money for the offering at the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We do this by taking our blessings and physical circumstances during that half a year into account.

B) Then during the Feast of Unleavened Bread we give that money as an offering to God's Church.

C) From the start of Unleavened Bread up to the Feast of Pentecost we again examine our blessings and our circumstances and set aside money for an offering, which we will then give at the Feast of Pentecost.

D) From Pentecost until the start of Tabernacles we again set aside money for an offering, considering our blessings and our income during that period. This offering we then give at the Feast of Tabernacles.

E) Then the whole cycle starts all over again.

14) This approach would be a nightmare for "business managers" in their budgetary planning, as the total amounts given as offerings would:

A) not be uniform throughout the year;

B) be subject to considerable fluctuations.

When the periods between giving offerings are longer, then the offerings would be likely to be larger. Example: the offering at the Feast of Unleavened Bread would be based on an income of about 6 months; but the offering at Pentecost would be based on an income of no more than 7 weeks.

The offerings would also be subject to greater fluctuations. If a family goes through a financially difficult time (perhaps major expenses due to accidents or sicknesses), they may have a smaller offering for one of those three Feasts than they had the previous year (when they had no financial expenses due to accidents).

What this approach would achieve, however, is this: it would link EACH of our three annual offerings far more closely to reflect what life was actually like for us leading up to each of those three Feasts ... were we blessed, or did we struggle to get through the period?

15) There is one other thing this approach would achieve.

Most of us probably budget a certain amount that we wish to give as an offering at each of the 7 annual Holy Days (the way most people in the Church still think, although it should really only be on 3 Feasts). Let's take a simple example to illustrate this.

Supposing you had previously decided that you would like to give an offering of \$100,00 at each of the 7 Holy Days. This means that you are planning to give \$700,00 for the whole year. So this means that you budget \$700,00 divided by 12 months, equalling roughly \$60,00 per month (in round numbers).

So from the time you return from F.o.T. you set aside \$60,00 each month. When you get to the start of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, you will very likely have \$360,00 in your "offering account". So on the

First Day of U.B. you take out \$100,00 and on the Seventh Day of U.B. you take out another \$100,00 ... and these two amounts you hand in as offerings.

But you will STILL have another \$160,00 in your "offering account".

To me this presents a somewhat undesirable situation. Here is why.

For 6 months I have faithfully saved for the time when I am to appear before God with an offering. Then that situation finally arrives ... the Feast of Unleavened Bread starts. But then I only give God A PART of what I have set aside to give to Him! The rest I keep and say: "The rest I will only give to You later in the year, because I need to keep some money back so that I can also meet my personally-set targets LATER at the Feasts that are still ahead."

To me that seems a bit like playing a game!

If I have set \$360,00 aside for offerings to God, WHY don't I then give all of it to God when that commanded situation arises? Why do I keep back \$160,00 to only give to God LATER?

After giving all of the offering I have up to that point set aside for that purpose, should I not approach the time that lies ahead in faith? Should I then at Pentecost not give an offering from whatever my income was during those 7 weeks since Unleavened Bread ... without having to "pad" that offering with money set aside earlier in the year? Is God really that concerned and that impressed with THE AMOUNT we give to Him as an offering?

When God originally commanded the ancient Israelites to bring these offerings three times a year, would God not have expected them to base their offerings on the crops the land had produced for them since the last time they had given an offering? Or would God have expected them to give an offering based on an income they had already earned PREVIOUSLY TO the last time they had given an offering? Where does the element of faith enter this equation of giving offerings?

When the time comes to give an offering we should examine our blessings. But what period of time should we reflect on ... the past 12 months? It seems to me that we should reflect on the time that has passed since the last time we gave an offering. We may experience very many blessings in a short period of time (e.g. between Unleavened Bread and Pentecost ... it seems that was when Ruth experienced some rather profound blessings?) and then our offering on the Feast of Pentecost should take this situation into account. If thereafter we were to experience a great "drought", I don't think God would somehow expect us to "pad" our offering at the Feast of Tabernacles with what we had earned prior to the time when we gave the Pentecost offering.

To go back to our example above:

If we set aside \$60,00 per month (ignoring changing circumstances for the moment) and thus have \$720,00 available for the year, let's see what that would look like if we give offerings only THREE TIMES a year, as God instructs:

- For the offering at U.B. we would have \$360,00,

- For the Pentecost offering we might have \$60,00 or \$120,00 (depending on whether we received 2 months' wages or only the wages for 1 month during the elapsed time),

- For the offering at F.o.T. we would have either \$300,00 or \$240,00 (depending on what the Pentecost offering was).

So for the year it would be either: \$360,00 , \$120,00 , \$240,00;

or it would be: \$360,00 , \$60,00 , \$300,00.

That assumes a uniform, stable income and uniform blessings throughout the year, so that we saw no need to modify our initial projections.

However, I can't see those responsible for the financial planning in the Church getting excited about this sort of prospect ... that an offering might only be one-sixth of what it had been at the previous Feast, and still be a "good" offering.

16) We should really get away from laying too much stress on just how large a chunk of the annual income these annual offerings actually provide. Yes, it IS important for each one of us to plan to appear before God with an offering at the three annual Festivals, but we need to be cautious about stressing the importance of the amount of the offering taken up. I am aware of incidents in the past where some ministers actually chided the congregation, after the total offering amount had been announced, for not having given more.

That makes me think of Luke 21:1-4. What if there are a large number of people in a congregation who are, financially speaking, in the "poor widow" category ... where after the offering has been taken up, it amounts to no more than a few "mites"? What if the total offering taken up doesn't even cover the travelling expenses of the minister who conducted the services ... would that be considered a "poor" offering?

What is the real purpose of the offering? Is it to cover the minister's expenses in getting to the people? Or is it supposed to be an opportunity for God to see what is in our hearts?

I also try to keep Matthew 23:4 in mind ... that there were in Christ's time, and there have been in our time, religious leaders (i.e. ministers) who have laid "heavy burdens" on the shoulders of God's people. In many cases asking people to have an offering available SEVEN times each year becomes a greater stress than having to only prepare an offering THREE times each year, as God instructs. Theoretically it shouldn't affect the amount people have to give. But in practice, there are those in the lower income groups who are embarrassed to give less than a certain amount (perhaps tied to the "amount-per-person" figure that has so often been presented?), and they will feel pressured to give such an amount seven times in the year.

17) Do we give offerings because we receive recognition for doing so? What if we receive no recognition at all for the offerings we give ... would we give less? Do we need someone to give us a pep-talk before we give a God-ordained offering ... kind of like "the Co-Worker Letters" Mr. Armstrong used to send out? I was in Mr. Armstrong's presence when he admitted that his purpose in writing those letters (and including convenient return envelopes for sending in financial contributions!) was TO MOTIVATE PEOPLE TO SEND IN MONEY! The Co-Worker letters were nothing more than indirect requests for money (and often it wasn't all that "indirect" either). As Mr. Armstrong freely acknowledged at the time: "If I don't write those letters, then the Work's income goes down." Do we need those "Co-Worker"-type messages to motivate us to give the offerings that God has commanded us to give? If we DO need such messages, how "cheerful" is our giving really?

18) Those who wish to retain the custom of requiring God's people to give offerings on SEVEN Holy Days in the year should examine their motives for wanting to do so. While it was not my intention to study into the matter of giving offerings, once I came to understand the difference between what God says about "mow'ed" days and what God tells us about "chag" Festivals, then it became very clear why God tells us to bring an offering THREE times in the year, and why God doesn't mean "seven" when He

says "three".

19) THE PURPOSE of giving offerings has also been misunderstood. It has been assumed that God has commanded us to bring these offerings three times a year BECAUSE WE WILL APPEAR BEFORE GOD! It was often compared to appearing before a human king, where protocol will usually REQUIRE that a gift is presented to the king in return for him having granted the person an audience. Therefore it is only proper, so it was reasoned, that when we appear before the Creator God, that we, too, appear with an offering.

But that reasoning isn't fully correct. God does not expect us to "buy" the favour of an audience with Him. It is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that has ALREADY given us that access to God. And so we DO appear before God on the weekly Sabbath days and also in our private prayers on our knees ... without bringing any monetary offerings.

WHY did God command us to appear before Him WITH AN OFFERING on the three Feasts? If the offering is supposed to signify our respect for God and His power and His office ... why didn't God command us to bring an offering every week when we appear before Him at Church services? After all, we need to have that respect and reverence for God all the time, and not just three times a year.

Clearly there is MORE to the three annual offerings than just showing respect and reverence to God. Clearly there is MORE to it than just the fact that we will be appearing before God.

God has commanded us to bring an offering on each of the three annual feasts to teach us that
HE WANTS US TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROCESS OF BUILDING THE FAMILY OF GOD!

Can we understand this?

There are three stages, and three stages only, in which God is building His Family. Each one of those three stages is pictured by one of the annual "FEASTS"! And when we come before God during those three Feasts WITH AN OFFERING, we are telling God that we want to HELP, we want to CONTRIBUTE, to what HE, Almighty God, is in the process of achieving! However tiny and insignificant our contribution towards that Family-building process may be, we want to show God that we have A WILLING MIND, and we are willing to sacrifice in order to contribute towards that awesome goal.

While the Passover and the annual "Holy Days" do lay out God's overall plan, it is only the three "Feasts" in the year that actually focus specifically on the three steps by which that Family will be built. We can't really "CONTRIBUTE" to the Passover (that's a sacrifice Jesus Christ had to bring), or to the Day of Trumpets (where Christ has told us that no man knows the time of His return), or to the Day of Atonement (which also pictures something Christ has to do). But we CAN contribute to the process of God building His Family! If we repent and submit our lives to God, then we can become an individual part of that Family. And then we can be given the responsibility to RULE WITH CHRIST over humanity during the millennium and during the period of the second resurrection! So we CAN make a contribution to stage 2 and to stage 3 of the 3-stage Family-building process. And we can do so because we can access what Jesus Christ did in stage 1 of that process.

Can we now grasp WHY God tells us to come before Him with an offering on THREE occasions in the year? If we change that into SEVEN occasions in the year, we are likely to obscure the real significance of those offerings to some degree.

20) Once we grasp the real reason for THREE offerings in the year, then, as far as I can see, that also strengthens the case for taking up the three annual offerings outside of the context of Church services,

though I don't mean for that to be a major issue.

Our real "contribution" towards God's goal of building the Family of God rests primarily on us developing holy, righteous, godly character (with the help of God's Spirit, of course). And real character development mostly takes place "in secret". It is developed by the things we do in secret.

Recall also that the Church has always gratefully accepted "Holy Day Offerings" from people who were unable to attend a service somewhere, but who still wanted to contribute ... and therefore sent the offering by mail after the Holy Day had passed. So we have even in the past had people give "Holy Day Offerings" even outside the context of a Church service. It is the offering we bring (and I don't mean THE AMOUNT of money we give), rather than our ability or inability to attend a service somewhere that is significant. Certainly we should do our best to attend these three Feasts with a group of God's people, but sometimes something may prevent us from attending such occasions in person; yet our inability to attend in person does not prevent us from bringing an offering to God.

We bring an offering on the three FEASTS in the year, and we show God our desire to contribute to the process of building His Family.

Anyway, that should suffice on the subject of "offerings". If I have misunderstood something; if there really is a way to know that God means "seven" when He says "three", then I'd be happy to learn that. If you can convince me that God really WANTS me to bring an offering on SEVEN days each year, then I will gladly do so ... as I have ALREADY been doing for over 30 years now.

But unless you can do so, I myself am planning to give Festival offerings on THREE occasions this coming year ... one at the Feast (or Festival) of Unleavened Bread, the second at the Feast of Pentecost, and the third at the Feast of Tabernacles. I have no intentions of using this approach as an excuse to somehow "give less" to God ... I am not in God's Church for playing games or for searching for loopholes "to make things easier". But I feel that I have finally come to a clearer understanding regarding "Feasts" and "Holy Days" and "appearing before God THREE times".

Here is a summary of what we have covered in this article:

- 1) There are 7 "mow'ed" days in the year which are "holy convocations". It is proper to call them "HOLY DAYS".
- 2) There is 1 "mow'ed" day which is not a "holy convocation". This means we are also instructed to "get together" in some way on this day, but it is not "holy" because attendance is limited to those people who have made a certain commitment. This is the Passover.
- 3) There are 3 "chag" occasions in the year. It is proper to refer to them as "FESTIVALS" or as "FEASTS". It is on these 3 occasions that God instructs us to bring an offering. They (the 3 "chags") are tied to the 3 stages in which God builds His Family, and they are truly times of rejoicing (i.e. "feasts").

Thus:

PASSOVER = "mow'ed", NOT a "holy convocation"

FESTIVAL OF U.B. = 1st "chag", but not a "mow'ed"
appear before God with an OFFERING

1st DAY OF U.B. = 1st "mow'ed" that is A HOLY DAY

7th DAY OF U.B. = 2nd "mow'ed" that is A HOLY DAY

FEAST OF PENTECOST = 2nd "chag", also the 3rd "mow'ed"
A FEAST & A HOLY DAY, give an OFFERING

DAY OF TRUMPETS = 4th "mow'ed" that is A HOLY DAY

DAY OF ATONEMENT = 5th "mow'ed" that is A HOLY DAY

FESTIVAL OF TABERNACLES = 3rd "chag", but not a 'mow'ed"
appear before God with an OFFERING

1st DAY OF TABERNACLES = 6th "mow'ed" that is A HOLY DAY

LAST GREAT DAY = 7th "mow'ed" that is A HOLY DAY

And that's about it.

Frank W. Nelte