Frank W. Nelte

EXODUS 12:2

THE SCRIPTURE CONCERNED

> THIS MONTH *shall be* unto you the beginning of months: it *shall be* THE FIRST MONTH OF THE YEAR to you. (Exodus 12:2 AV)

THE MEANING PEOPLE DRAW FROM THIS TRANSLATION

People understand that this first month of the year must be in the spring (Northern Hemisphere), rather than in the winter or in the summer. But in an effort to support the use of the present Jewish calendar people will claim that this requirement of Exodus 12:2 is fulfilled as long as A PART OF THE FIRST MONTH IS IN THE SPRING.

THE MISTRANSLATION

The Hebrew noun that is in this verse translated three times as "month" is "chodesh", which is derived from the Hebrew verb "chadash". Now this verb "chadash" means "TO RENEW, TO REPAIR". And so the primary meaning of the noun "chodesh" is "A NEW MOON" (i.e. the moon which has been renewed or repaired), and by extension this word then also means "A MONTH", in as far as every month was to start with a new moon.

While the word "month" is not necessarily a mistranslation as such, THE INTENT of the use of the word "chodesh" in the above verse, is to refer to THE NEW MOON DAY, rather than to the month.

Consider the following four Hebrew words:

"Yareach" (Genesis 37:9) means "MOON".

"Yerach" (Exodus 2:2), from the same root as "yareach", means "MONTH".

"Chadash" (1 Samuel 11:14) means "TO RENEW".

"Chodesh" (Exodus 12:2) means "NEW MOON", and by extension also "MONTH".

Now in most European languages, including English, the word for "month" is derived from a word that means "moon". In Hebrew there are TWO words that mean "month", and both of them are in some way connected to "the moon", but only one of them refers to the moon directly.

The Hebrew word "yerach" is like the word "month" in English and in most European languages, in as far as it is derived from the Hebrew word for "moon". But the Hebrew word "chodesh" does not really refer directly to the moon! The word "chodesh" does not include any root that points back to the word for "moon". The Hebrew word "chodesh" really has the literal meaning of "RENEWED", and it is understood that what has been "renewed" is THE MOON.

Gesenius in his lexicon gives as the only meaning of "yerach" "a month", pointing out that this is the

word "the older (i.e. earlier) writers" used to refer to a month. For "chodesh" Gesenius gives the first meaning as: "the new moon, THE DAY of the new moon, the calends of a lunar month". [The word "calends" referred to THE FIRST DAY of a Roman month.]

So the difference in biblical usage between the two Hebrew words "yerach" and "chodesh" is as follows:

1) The word "yerach" refers to the month in a very general way, without any focus on any particular part of the month.

2) The word "chodesh" either refers specifically to THE NEW MOON DAY, or it refers to a month with a specific focus on THE FIRST DAY OF THAT MONTH.

3) Later Hebrew writers used the word "chodesh" in a more general way to refer to a month.

The word "chodesh cannot really be separated from a focus on THE FIRST DAY of a month, since that happens to be the specific meaning of "chodesh", any more than in Latin the word "calends" can be separated from the first day of the month.

Now here is Exodus 12:2 again, with the word "chodesh" retained:

> This CHODESH *shall be* unto you the beginning of CHODESH's: it *shall be* the first CHODESH of the year to you. (Exodus 12:2 AV)

It is clear that with the word "chodesh" God was PINPOINTING A SPECIFIC TIME! Either God was pinpointing a specific new moon day, or God was pinpointing a specific month. But the "chodesh" God referred to in Exodus 12:2 was something that Israel should have been able to VERY CLEARLY IDENTIFY. God was presenting this "chodesh" as a benchmark. And God very clearly had a clear season in the annual solar cycle in mind, without which it is impossible to pinpoint any specific "chodesh" in the year. Reference to THE FOUR SEASONS is the only way we have to pinpoint specific new moons in the year.

The fact is that in Exodus 12:2 God was identifying A SPECIFIC NEW MOON DAY with which the year is to start. In this Scripture God was NOT focussing on a specific month, but on a specific DAY! Had God simply intended to refer to a month in general terms, then Moses would have used the word "yerach", as he had done exactly 10 chapters earlier, in Exodus 2:2.

The use of "chodesh" in Exodus 12:2 shows that God was focussing on a specific DAY, even as the Romans would focus on a specific day by using the word "calends".

So in Exodus 12:2 the intended meaning of "chodesh" has to be "NEW MOON" or "NEW MOON DAY".

THE SOURCE OF THIS WRONG TRANSLATION

According to the Jewish calendar the year starts very randomly in either the winter or in the spring. The first month of the Jewish year (i.e. Nisan) VERY OFTEN starts in winter and ends in spring. Therefore it was expedient to push the meaning of "month" in Exodus 12:2, all the while very conveniently ignoring that in a "chodesh-month" the focus is automatically directed on the first day of that month. And while "month" is an acceptable meaning for "chodesh", it is assuredly NOT the meaning God intended here in Exodus 12:2. If the first day, "the new moon day", is sometimes in the winter and sometimes in the spring, then that first "chodesh" has evidently not been precisely pinpointed in the annual cycle.

THE CORRECT TRANSLATION

> This new moon *shall be* unto you the beginning of new moons: it *shall be* the first new moon of the year to you. (Exodus 12:2 AV)

THE MEANING OF THIS CORRECT TRANSLATION

By placing the focus of this verse correctly on a specific DAY rather than on a specific month, it establishes an absolute standard for when the year may start. The year may NEVER start in the season that preceded the new moon day of Exodus 12:2. In plain language: the year may never start in the winter. The Jewish traditions pertaining to the calendar are thus again exposed as being contrary to biblical instructions.

IN SUMMARY

With God it is simply not good enough for "a part" of the first month to be in the spring. With God "THIS chodesh", THIS new moon day, must be in the spring, as well as the whole rest of the first month which follows that new moon day.

Exodus 12:2 again makes clear that the present Jewish calendar is in conflict with biblical instructions, and that therefore it should not be used in determining the timing for the annual Feasts and Holy Days.

Frank W. Nelte