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EXODUS 23:16

THE SCRIPTURE CONCERNED

> And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast 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)

THE MEANING PEOPLE DRAW FROM THIS TRANSLATION

Reference works sometimes appeal to these statements about "in the end of the year" and "at the year's end" (see Exodus 34:22) to justify why the Jews refer to the first day of the seventh month (Tishri) as "New Year". They claim that since the Feast of Tabernacles was to be "in the end of the year", therefore it means that the new year must also start at that time of year.

THE MISTRANSLATION

The expression "in the end of the year" is a translation of the Hebrew "bezet ha-shanah" (or "betset ha-shanah"). This expression is made up of two words, the verb "yatsa", translated as "in the end", and the noun "shanah", translated as "of the year".

This verb "yatsa" is used 1069 times in the Old Testament, and it is translated 518 times as "out" and 411 times as "forth". But this verb does not mean "end". ONLY here in Exodus 23:16 is this verb "yatsa" ever translated by the English noun "END". This expression "bezet ha-shanah" doesn't really mean "END of the year" at all!

As far as the actual meaning of "year's end" is concerned, this expression is found, for example, in 2 Kings 8:3, where it is translated from the two Hebrew words "shaneh qatseh". The expression there is "at the seven years' end", which tells us that it is really referring to "THE END" of seven years. The noun "qatseh" really means "end, extremity", etc.; but this noun "qatseh" is not in any way connected to the verb "yatsa". The verb "yatsa", used in Exodus 23:16, means something other than "end".

The only translation I have found which does not use the incorrect expression "END of the year" in this verse is the 1902 Rotherham Translation, which reads:

> And the festival of harvest with the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou shalt sow in the field, And the festival of ingathering -- AT THE OUTGOING OF THE YEAR, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. (Exodus 23:16 Rotherham)

At the time of the Feast of Tabernacles the year is "going forth" or "going out", but absolutely NO WAY is the year "coming to an end" in the seventh month! God would never refer to the seventh month as being "the end of the year"! We are dealing with a mistranslation.

This expression in Exodus 23:16 is used to refer to THE HARVEST TIME, the season of autumn, and not to the time of the end of the Jewish year. It is a reference to the identical time of year which is

spoken about in Exodus 34:22. There the expression "at the year's end" is a translation of the phrase "tekufat ha-shanah", consisting of the two words "tekufah" and "shanah".

So God uses THREE different ways to pinpoint the exact timing for the Feast of Tabernacles.

In Exodus 23:16 "in the end of the year" is "bezet ha-shanah".

In Exodus 34:22 "at the year's end" is "tekufat ha-shanah".

In Leviticus 23:34 it is "the 15th day of the seventh month", to continue for seven days.

And that is certainly NOT "at the end of the year".

THE SOURCE OF THIS WRONG TRANSLATION

Jewish traditions view the first day of the seventh month as the start of a "new year", in spite of God very clearly and unequivocally stating in Exodus 12:2 that "THIS NEW MOON" in the spring is to be the FIRST new moon of the year. It is a desire to hold fast to unbiblical traditions that is at the root of interpreting the verb "yatsa" to mean "end".

Any high school student should be able to understand that the seventh month cannot possibly be referred to as "the end of the year"!

THE CORRECT TRANSLATION

We've already looked at the Rotherham Translation of this verse. It could also be rendered:

> And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering at the proceeding forth of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. (Exodus 23:16 AV)

THE MEANING OF THIS CORRECT TRANSLATION

By removing the incorrect reference to "in THE END of the year", it eliminates the reasoning about the year supposedly "ending" in the autumn. Exodus 12:2 makes quite clear that the year is to start and end IN THE SPRING. Any appeals to justify ending the year at any other time than in the spring (excluding the time period before the Exodus from Egypt) are contrary to God's clearly revealed instructions in Exodus 12:2, and must therefore be unconditionally rejected.

IN SUMMARY

The expression "in the end of the year" is from a biblical point of view completely unjustified. See also the article on Exodus 34:22.

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