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EXODUS 23:18

THE SCRIPTURE CONCERNED

> Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat OF MY SACRIFICE remain until the morning. (Exodus 23:18 AV)

THE MEANING PEOPLE DRAW FROM THIS TRANSLATION

Some people have assumed that this verse is speaking about the Passover. But that is certainly not the case! The Passover is not mentioned or referred to anywhere in Exodus chapter 23.

THE MISTRANSLATION

Here is this verse with key Hebrew words left untranslated. Notice:

> 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 unto the morning.

The Hebrew word "chag" is mistranslated as "sacrifice" in this verse. This word "chag" actually means "FEAST", and it is used to refer specifically to the three annual feasts.

This verse has been correctly translated in many translations including ASV, RSV, NIV, NAS, JPS, etc. Here is the text of the JPS for this verse:

> Thou shalt not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall THE FAT OF MY FEAST remain all night until the morning. (Exodus 23:18 JPS)

Next, there are two Hebrew verbs with somewhat similar meanings, but also with clearly distinct uses. The Hebrew verb "zabach" is used here in Exodus 23:18, where it is translated "offer". This verb means "to sacrifice", but it is NEVER used to refer to the Passover. The verb that is used to refer to the Passover being killed is "shachat", but this verb is never used in Exodus chapter 23. The use of the verb "zabach" here in Exodus 23:18 makes quite clear that the Passover is NOT being referred to. This is explained in more detail in the article on Exodus 34:25.

Next, the noun "cheleb" (i.e. "fat") is never used to refer to the Passover, but it is invariably used to refer to the sacrifices of the whole sacrificial system performed by the Levitical priesthood. The Passover was not a part of that system.

The Passover was already instituted by God in Exodus chapter 12, almost a full year before God instituted the Levitical priesthood and the sacrifices for which the Levitical priests would be responsible. And the Book of Leviticus does NOT give a discussion of the Passover anywhere, showing that the Passover was NOT one of the duties of this Levitical priesthood. The word "Passover" is mentioned only one single time in the whole Book of Leviticus, in Leviticus 23:5, which simply spells out when the

Passover is to be observed. But it was NOT one of the duties of the Levitical priesthood.

The previous verse in Exodus 23 speaks about the three annual FEASTS (Hebrew "chag"), and this verse (Exodus 23:18) refers specifically to those three feasts, and not at all to the Passover, which is not a "chag". Notice verses 17 and 18 when they are read together, with verse 18 being correctly translated into English:

> THREE TIMES in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD. Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my FEAST remain until the morning. (Exodus 23:17-18)

Verses 14 to 16 of this chapter have already explained what those three FEAST occasions are, and the Passover does not feature anywhere in that context.

Exodus 23:18 is simply an instruction which applied to all the sacrifices people would bring at those three annual feast occasions, two of which involved a seven day period each.

THE SOURCE OF THIS WRONG TRANSLATION

Both, the Latin Vulgate and the Greek LXX, have translated Exodus 23:18 with the word "feast". It seems that the KJV translators did not understand what this verse means, and so they translated "chag" as "sacrifice" because that made more sense to them. As already seen, many other translations have corrected this error.

THE CORRECT TRANSLATION

> Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my feast remain until the morning. (Exodus 23:18)

THE MEANING OF THIS CORRECT TRANSLATION

This is an instruction that applied to the animal sacrifices that Israelites would bring during the three annual feast occasions. It has nothing at all to do with the Passover. See also the article on Exodus 34:25.

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