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## **ALL THE DAYS WE ARE TO OBSERVE IN THE YEAR**

At this time of year there are always some people who ask: is the Passover a Feast or is it a Holy Day? The correct answer here is: **it is neither**. The Passover is certainly not a Feast, and the Passover is equally certainly also not a Holy Day. But yet it is a commanded observance.

So where does the Passover fit into the scheme of the annual observances that God has commanded us to observe? For that matter, **how many categories** of religious days **are there** in the year? And what are the differences, if any, between these categories of religiously observed days?

## **A PROBLEM OF TRANSLATION**

To correctly translate something from one language into another language, it is essential that the translator clearly understands what he is translating. Even when he understands the other language in general terms, if the translator does not clearly understand **the subject matter** that he is trying to translate, then that opens the door for producing a translation that may be misleading.

Specifically, if a translator is trying to translate a Hebrew text into English, and the translator himself doesn't understand the intended meaning of that specific Hebrew text, then he is likely to produce an incorrect translation. That is in spite of being a qualified Hebrew scholar in general terms.

**This has unfortunately happened very many times**, where spiritually clueless Hebrew scholars have attempted to translate biblical passages, the meaning and implication of which passages those scholars themselves have not really understood. Almost all translations of the Hebrew and Greek Bible texts have been produced by spiritually blind translators.

The proof for this statement is readily available.

There are very many instances where translators have translated **two or more Hebrew words** with **one English word**. And they confidently assure us that those two or more Hebrew words are just synonyms. And yes, there are indeed some cases where certain pairs of Hebrew words are more or less synonymous. But **there are also many cases** where the translators assigned the same meaning to two or more Hebrew words, because the translators themselves didn't understand the distinctions between those two or more Hebrew words.

So whenever we find that two completely different Hebrew words are supposedly identical in meaning, then there is a great likelihood that the translators didn't clearly understand what they were translating. **That's why they assigned the same meaning to two different Hebrew words**. And we need to be on our guard, and examine for ourselves whether the words in question are indeed synonymous.

On top of that, in some cases the Jewish sages of bygone ages (i.e. the tannaim and the amoraim) had very deliberately assigned **new meanings** to certain Old Testament Hebrew words, for the purpose of justifying specific unbiblical customs which those sages had established. English language translators who came along many centuries later then blithely accepted the added meanings those scholars had

deviously asserted for specific biblical Hebrew words. Some of those asserted meanings are preposterous, like, for example, claiming that the Hebrew word "shabbath" supposedly also means "week". That claim is absurd! But that claim is needed to uphold the incorrect Jewish way of counting for Pentecost. And there are a number of other Hebrew words where the same thing has happened.

For our specific subject matter here we have the following situation:

English language translators have translated the two Hebrew words "**mow'ed**" and "**chag**" with the **one** English word "**Feast**". In this they blindly followed the precedent set by the notoriously sloppy Greek language LXX translation, in which both of these Hebrew words are translated by the **one** Greek word "**heorte**".

### **THAT IS A HUGE, MAJOR PROBLEM!**

The Hebrew words "mow'ed" and "chag" don't mean the same thing at all! God used these two words with **very distinct meanings**. But the translators didn't understand those distinct meanings. And so when you read your English language Bible, without checking the Hebrew text, you have no way of knowing whether the English word "feast/s" in a specific OT verse represents the Hebrew word "mow'ed", or whether it represents the Hebrew word "chag".

The translators didn't really care whether the Hebrew text reads "mow'ed" or whether it reads "chag" in a specific verse ... to them it is all the same.

**But it is not all the same to God, not at all!**

God specifically used different words to convey different meanings. And that distinction was lost on our translators.

### **THE PROBLEM IN SIMPLE TERMS**

The first language into which the Hebrew Scriptures were translated was Greek. In the **Greek** language **there was just one word available** to describe days in the year that had a specific religious significance. That one Greek word was "heorte".

So where in **Hebrew** God had used **two different words** to refer to specific days with religious significance, to make a distinction between two different types of days, in Greek these two Hebrew words were considered as being the same thing.

With the available Greek vocabulary of the time it was difficult to express the distinctions between the Hebrew words "chag" and "mow'ed", without becoming excessively verbose. From the Greek culture point of view there was no difference between a Hebrew "chag" and a Hebrew "mow'ed". Both were "heorte" as far as the Greek language was concerned.

So from the very first translations into another language the meanings of the Hebrew words "chag" and "mow'ed" were blurred. And that blurring has continued ever since. And so translators have always treated the words "mow'ed" and "chag" as synonyms, thereby perpetuating the confusion that was created by the very first translation into another language.

Let's now look at the Old Testament.

## **ALL THE RELIGIOUS DAYS IN THE YEAR**

When God led Israel out of Egypt, God gave Israel His laws. All of the laws given in Old Testament times are recorded in the first five books, from Genesis to Deuteronomy. No additional laws are given in the Prophets or in the Writings.

**All of the days in the year that God wants His people to observe are recorded in Leviticus 23.**

Any days that are not mentioned in Leviticus 23 (e.g. new moons, Purim, Feast of Dedication, etc.) are not required observances for God's people today. There are no other days that God wants us to observe in this age. **Any other days** in the year, whether they have a religious or a secular significance, have been instituted by man and **not by God**.

Here is a key for us to understand in this regard:

**All of the days in the year that God wants us to observe are identified by the Hebrew word "mow'ed".**

If a day (or a period of days) is not identified by the Hebrew word "mow'ed", then it is not a day that God has commanded us to observe in some or other way.

Notice what God said in Leviticus 23:2.

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

In this verse, and also in verse 44, "feasts" is a mistranslation of the Hebrew word "mow'ed". We'll correct this later.

In verse 2 God is making an introductory statement. Every day that is mentioned in the following verses is a "mow'ed" before God. **There are no exceptions!** If a day is mentioned after verse 2, then, and only then, is it a "mow'ed of God".

Now such days may also be something in addition to being a "mow'ed"; but at the very least they are "mow'ed days".

In verse 44 we have what is clearly a concluding statement.

And Moses declared unto the children of Israel **the feasts** (Hebrew "mow'ed") of the LORD. (Leviticus 23:44)

What this verse tells us is that Moses declared all the "mow'ed's" of God to Israel.

So **what days in the year does God command us to observe?** Only those days that are specifically mentioned between verses 2 and 44 in Leviticus 23. Yes, there have indeed been other days that people in the Bible have observed in some way or other (new moons, Purim, certain fasts, etc.), but none of those days qualify for the label "**mow'ed's of God**". Only the days mentioned in Leviticus 23 have the specific attribute of being ordained by God.

Now the various correct meanings of "mow'ed" are well known, and presented in Hebrew dictionaries. The problem is that "feast" is not one of the correct meanings of "mow'ed". Here is the relevant

information.

### **THE MEANING OF "MOW'ED"**

Here is the information for the word "mow'ed":

It is used **223 times** in the Old Testament, and in the KJV it is translated as follows:

- 150x as "congregation"
- **23x** as "**feast**"
- 13x as "season"
- 12x as "appointed"
- 12x as "time"
- 4x as "assembly"
- 4x as "solemnity"
- 2x as "solemn"
- 1x as "days"
- 1x as "sign"
- 1x as "synagogues"

A number of these assigned meanings are due entirely to the way "mow'ed" has been translated into the Greek language LXX, and into the Latin language Vulgate version. Here we have about **ten different meanings** assigned to **one Hebrew word**. While a number of these meanings can be questioned and debated, it is the 23x it is mistranslated as "feast" that are of concern in our context here.

Let's look at an authoritative Hebrew Dictionary. Let's see how the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT) explains "mow'ed".

It is known that the Hebrew noun "mow'ed" has been derived from the primitive Hebrew root verb "ya'ad". For "ya'ad" TWOT says:

**"The basic meaning of this root is 'to appoint' ...".**

And for "mow'ed" TWOT says:

**"Appointed sign, appointed time, appointed season, place of assembly, set Feast."**

TWOT is incorrect in stating that "mow'ed" also means "set Feast". "Mow'ed" is only used in the Old Testament to refer to a "set Feast" when an additional Hebrew word is also used for that "set Feast"; and that additional Hebrew word is "chag".

**Without the presence of the word "chag", the word "mow'ed" on its own never refers to "a set**

## **feast"! Never!**

Including "set feast" as one of the meanings for "mow'ed" shows that TWOT does not understand the differences between "a Feast" and "a Holy Day".

However, from these TWOT definitions we can see that **"mow'ed" refers to something that is appointed**. But that by itself doesn't mean that it must also refer to something that is "a feast", or to something that is "holy".

It is also clear that in Leviticus 23 it is speaking about very specific days in the year. So let's now look again at verse 2, and translate "mow'ed" correctly.

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, *Concerning the appointed days and periods* (i.e. "mow'ed") **of the LORD**, which you shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, *even these are my appointed days and periods* (i.e. "mow'ed"). (Leviticus 23:2)

Here is a very simple proof that "mow'ed" in verses 2 and 44 cannot possibly mean "Feast". If in verse 2 it really meant "the Feasts of the Eternal", **then the Day of Atonement is also "a Feast"!** The discussion of the Day of Atonement is right in the middle (i.e. verses 26-32) of all the days that are designated by the word "mow'ed".

But nobody in their right mind would refer to the Day of Atonement as "a Feast"! And therefore the word "mow'ed" in verses 2 and 44 cannot possibly mean "Feast", because verses 2 and 44 also apply to the Day of Atonement.

Now let's also correct verse 44.

And Moses declared unto the children of Israel **the appointed days and periods** of the LORD. (Leviticus 23:44)

So as far as days that are to be observed are concerned, we have the following situation:

**On its own the Hebrew word "mow'ed" has no clearly defined religious significance! Added instructions are required.**

And so in the discussion of all the days in Leviticus 23 most days have **added qualifications**, in addition to being "mow'ed" days. It is these added qualifications that separate all "mow'ed" days into **three distinct categories**.

The first two of those three categories of "mow'ed" days are identified by having or not having certain additional attributes. Those attributes are:

- #1) The mow'ed day is defined as **"God's mow'ed"**.
- #2) The mow'ed day is defined as **"a holy convocation"**.
- #3) **No work** is to be done on that mow'ed day.

From these three attributes we derive the following two categories.

**Category #1 = An appointed day or period of days that is neither a holy convocation, nor is it forbidden to do regular work. This is simply "God's 'mow'ed' day without the next two attributes"**

(or God's mow'ed days, plural, without the next two attributes). So work may be done, and church services are not commanded on these days. (This is not to imply that it would be wrong to have church services on these days, or on any other days, in addition to the weekly Sabbath services.)

**Category #2** = An appointed day that is in addition also identified as a holy convocation, and as a day on which no work is to be done. These are "'God's mow'ed days with the two additional attributes". On these days church services are commanded, and we are not to do our regular work on these days. This category we commonly refer to as "Holy Days".

So these three attributes or qualifications give us two distinct categories of "appointed days" that are designated for religious purposes. But where do we find the third category of "mow'ed days"?

**Category #3** = An appointed day or period of days that may or may not have the above-mentioned added qualifications. This category is not identified by added qualifications. Instead, this category is identified by having an additional descriptive term. That additional descriptive term is the Hebrew word "chag". This is the Hebrew word that means "Feast". And so we commonly refer to this category as "Feasts". This category includes days that fall into Category #1, and also days that fall into Category #2. However, if any mow'ed day or period of mow'ed days is not identified by this added descriptive term "chag", then that day or period of days is not a Feast! (For "mow'ed days" read "appointed days".)

All the days mentioned in Leviticus 23 fall into one or two of these three categories. Now days in Category #3 may or may not also have the added qualifications that identify Category #2. When any days in Category #3 also have the added qualifications for Category #2, then **the instructions that apply to Category #2 always take priority** over general "Feast instructions" for Category #3; i.e. no working and having a holy convocation **take priority** over "feasting".

So let's now see how all the days listed in Leviticus 23 fit into these three categories.

### **ALL THE "MOW'ED" (i.e. APPOINTED) DAYS IN LEVITICUS 23**

1) **All the Weekly Sabbath Days** (verses 3-4): They are **Category #2** weekly Holy Days. No work is to be done, and we are to have church services. But they are **not** "Feast Days". The Sabbath is **not** "a weekly Feast".

2) The **Passover** (verse 5): This is a **Category #1** day. The day itself is neither holy, nor is work forbidden on this day. It is solely the activity in the evening, at the start of the 14th day, that is in our age commanded for all baptized members of God's Church. The rest of that 24-hour period is not affected by the mow'ed status of the Passover.

The Passover day is the only day in Category #1 that does not have the added status of also being either a Category #2 day or else a Category #3 day. The Passover day has only **a Category #1 status and nothing else**.

3) The **Feast of Unleavened Bread** (verse 6): This is a period of 7 **Category #3** days. It is a 7-day Feast period. This whole period is identified by the added word "chag". However, all 7 days also fall into an additional category as follows:

- **Day 1** = also a **Category #2** day, a Holy Day.

- **Days 2-6** = also **Category #1** days, not Holy Days.

- **Day 7** = also a **Category #2** day, a Holy Day.

**Comment:** The added instructions to put out leaven and to not eat leaven do not affect which category the 7 days fall into. All 7 days are "Feast Days". But Day 1 and Day 7 and the weekly Sabbath Day are firstly Holy Days, and secondly Feast Days. The remaining days are also Category #1 days, in addition to being Category #3 days.

4) The **Feast of Pentecost** (verses 15-21): This is a **Category #3** day. But it is also a **Category #2** day, because it has the added qualifications of no work and a commanded church service. This day is thus likewise first a Holy Day, and secondly a Feast Day.

**Comment:** The additional descriptive term "chag" is not used for Pentecost in Leviticus 23. But this word "chag" is used for Pentecost in Exodus 23:16 and in Exodus 34:22 and in Deuteronomy 16:10, i.e. it is used in the mouth of three witnesses.

5) The **Day of Trumpets** (verses 24-25): This is a **Category #2** day. No work is to be done, and we are to have church services. But this day is **not** a "Feast Day", because it is never identified with the word "chag", neither in Leviticus 23, nor anywhere else. The added instructions to blow the trumpets do not affect which category this day falls into.

6) The **Day of Atonement** (verses 27-32): This is a **Category #2** day. No work is to be done, and we are to have church services. But this day is also **not** a "Feast Day", because it is never identified with the word "chag", neither in Leviticus 23, nor anywhere else. The added instructions regarding fasting do not affect which category this day falls into.

7) The **Feast of Tabernacles** (verses 34-42): This is a period of 7 **Category #3** days. It is a 7-day Feast period. This whole period is identified by the added word "chag". However, all 7 days also fall into an additional category as follows:

- **Day 1** = also a **Category #2** day, a Holy Day.

- **Days 2-7** = also **Category #1** days, not Holy Days.

**Comment:** The added instructions to "dwell in booths" do not affect which category the 7 days fall into. All 7 days are "Feast Days". But Day 1 and the weekly Sabbath Day are firstly Holy Days, and secondly Feast Days. The remaining days are also Category #1 days, in addition to being Category #3 days.

8) The **Last Great Day** (verses 36, 39): This is a **Category #2** day. No work is to be done, and we are to have church services. But this day is **not** a "Feast Day", because it is never identified with the word "chag", neither in Leviticus 23, nor anywhere else.

The above covers all of the days in the year that God expects people to observe. All of them are "mow'ed days". And all of them fall into the 3 categories as follows:

**Category #1 days:** These are mow'ed days without any added qualifications or specific restrictions. They are definitely not Holy Days, though some of them are "Feast Days". The days in this category are: the Passover, Days 2-6 of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and Days 2-7 of the Feast of Tabernacles.

**Category #2 days:** These mow'ed days are all Holy Days. They all have the added qualifications that no work is to be done, and that we are to have church services. The days in this category are: the weekly Sabbath Days, the First Day and the Seventh Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, The Day (also Feast) of Pentecost, the Day of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the First Day of the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Last Great Day.

**Category #3 days:** These mow'ed days are identified by having an additional descriptive term. That additional descriptive term is the Hebrew word "chag", the Hebrew word that means "Feast". And so we refer to this category as "Feasts". The days in this category are: the 7 days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the 1 day of the Feast of Pentecost, and the 7 days of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Besides these there are no other days or occasions in the year that God requires us to observe. If a day or an occasion is not mentioned in Leviticus 23, then it is not something God expects us to observe. This chapter lists all of the days that God has "appointed", i.e. it lists **all the mow'ed days** in the year.

To be clear:

**Holy Days are certainly mow'ed days. But it is not the word "mow'ed" that identifies a day as being a Holy Day. The identifying marks of a Holy Day are the two added qualifications (i.e. a holy convocation, and no work to be done). It is called "a Holy Day" because God has instructed that the day is to be used for "a holy convocation".**

**Feast Days are identified by the descriptive term "chag". If a day, or a period of days, is not identified with the word "chag", then it is not a Feast.**

If a mow'ed day (i.e. an appointed day) is **not** identified with the word "chag", and if it also does **not** have the two added qualifications, then that mow'ed day (appointed day) is neither a Feast nor a Holy Day. And then no specific restrictions apply. The Passover is the only day in this category that has no other qualifications. The other days in this Category #1 are the non-Holy Days during the two 7-day Feasts, and all of those days also have a Category #3 status.

Let's now look at the New Testament, and see how this information applies.

## **IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

As already mentioned, biblical Greek did not have a way to distinguish between "chag" and "mow'ed" days. In Greek all three categories of days are referred to as "heorte", as "feasts".

So in the New Testament references to Category #1 days (i.e. the Passover) are identified as "heorte". And Category #2 days (i.e. all the Holy Days) are also identified as "heorte". And category #3 days (i.e. the three annual feasts) are also identified as "heorte". And in the New Testament "heorte" is translated 26x as "feast" and one time as "Holy Day".

Can you see **the problems this has caused?**

If you find expressions like "the feast of the Passover" (Matthew 26:2; Mark 14:1; John 13:1) and "the Passover, a feast of the Jews" (John 6:4), then you need to recognize that NT Greek didn't have a way to speak about a mow'ed day that wasn't also either a Feast Day or a Holy Day. All the gospel writers could do was use the Greek word "heorte". In Greek you could not differentiate between categories 1, 2



and 3. **They couldn't say "the non-Holy Day and non-Feast Day mow'ed of Passover".**

To correctly understand any days that are mentioned in the New Testament, if the word "feast" is applied to those days, we need to always go back and identify those New Testament days with specific days that are identified in Leviticus 23. Without such accurate identification with OT instructions the word "feast" (or "feast day") in the New Testament is meaningless.

**Beware of people who attempt to draw conclusions from any day that is identified in the gospel accounts as "a feast day". Unless that day can be related to a day mentioned in Leviticus 23, in which case the correct category for that day will be known, such conclusions are of no value.**

Well, can you now see why it is so seriously wrong for the translators to have mistranslated the Hebrew word "mow'ed" into English as "Feast"? This mistranslation has totally confused what God means by "a Feast". This mistranslation has erased the distinctions between the Passover and the Feasts and the Holy Days.

And it has confused people regarding where the Passover fits into the overall picture of Feasts and Holy Days.

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