

THE WAVE SHEAF OFFERING

By Don Roth

Since the metamorphosis of the Worldwide Church of God into the Synagogue of Satan, and the resulting proliferation of the corporate Churches of God some have proclaimed that the counting of Pentecost for the year 2008 should start from the Sunday after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and that this would be the true day of the wave sheaf offering. Their new teaching is that the count must begin on the first day of the week *following* the first weekly Sabbath that occurs during the days of ULB. This is faulty reasoning and results in Pentecost being observed a week late.

The present teaching begins the count from the first day of the week - the day that the wave sheaf was offered – that occurs *during* the days of ULB. Of course it would follow a regular Sabbath, in or out of the days of ULB.

Because the Passover of 2008 occurs on the weekly Sabbath, they are teaching that the count begins on Nisan 22 rather than Nisan 15 – the first day of the week during the days of ULB. This is contrary to the examples and directions of the scriptures as we now understand them. This is also contrary to what was taught by Mr. Herbert Armstrong in the latter years of the Worldwide Church of God (1974 until his death in 1986).

The 1974 change has been challenged in a number of ways. One is that Mr. Armstrong had been “duped” into making this correction by his son Garner Ted Armstrong and the doctrinal committee; that he accepted an incomplete study about the Wave Sheaf Offering without confirming it.

Part of the 1974 change that Mr. Armstrong made was based on Joshua 5 as a new starting point for counting Pentecost whenever the Passover service falls on a weekly Sabbath.

In addition to the above, the following rationalizations have been made in order to *reject* Joshua 5 as the wave sheaf offering. One reason given is that Joshua 5 does not specifically state that there was a wave sheaf offering.

They claim that Joshua 5 was a second Passover, and that the circumcised men would have been in too much pain to handle the killing of the lamb and preparing it for Passover. (No wave sheaf offering is commanded for the second Passover.) Therefore there would be an unstated lapse of time resulting in this being a second Passover.

The additional case is made that Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land because of the restriction God had placed on him for striking the rock, contrary to God’s instructions. Numbers 20 states, “Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.”

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, ‘Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this

assembly into the land which I have given them.” (vs. 11-12; all scripture is quoted from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted). The account continues, “Aaron shall be gathered to his people, for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the children of Israel, because you rebelled against My word at the water of Meribah” (vs.24).

It is also said that the Israelites were not in the Promised Land until they crossed the Jordan River; therefore, there was no time to raise a crop for the wave sheaf offering. Because the Israelites did not raise their own crops for the wave sheaf offering, they would not be able to utilize the grain of the land which was raised by Gentiles for this rite. This would be considered a polluted offering and not acceptable by God.

In addition, no work could be done to harvest grain after the wave sheaf offering because Joshua 5:11 depicts a high Sabbath - (First Day of Unleavened Bread). Therefore, the work of harvesting could not be done on a Sabbath, so there would have been no grain to eat on that day, even though a wave sheaf offering was made.

Finally, those proclaiming that the counting of Pentecost should begin from the Sunday after the days of ULB reason that no sacrifice could be made until the Promised Land was completely occupied and a central place of worship established.

But notice scripture says, “But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety, then there will be the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the LORD” (DEUT. 12:10-11).

There could be no wave sheaf offering because they had no central place of worship.

The idea that no sacrifice could be made without the establishment of a centralized place of worship is a misunderstanding of Deuteronomy 12. The direction is that a centralized place of worship is to be established once the nation is at peace. It does, in no way, restrict sacrifices to God prior to the time that all of the Promised Land was under their control. There is the Passover of Joshua 5, which required sacrifices in addition to the individual lambs for each home. Deuteronomy 23:8 and 12 so direct these sacrifices. Joshua 8:30-31 also shows offerings being made without this centralized place of worship. Did Joshua fail to understand Deuteronomy 12:10-12 and act contrary to it? Obviously not, as God continued to bless him.

Did Mr. Armstrong Understand These Scriptures?

The booklet *Pagan Holidays – or God’s Holy Days – Which?* was rewritten in 1976 by Herbert W. Armstrong. In it he clearly points to Joshua 5 as the defining clarification for the count to Pentecost having to start *during* the days of ULB. On page 13 he writes, “This event,” [the wave sheaf offering] always occurred *during* the days of unleavened bread (see Joshua 5).”

To understand this statement by Mr. Armstrong, it will be necessary to begin in Joshua 5:2-9 “At that time the LORD said to Joshua, ‘Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time.’ So Joshua made flint knives for himself, and circumcised the sons of Israel at the hill of the foreskins.

“And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: All the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way, after they had come out of Egypt. For all the people who came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness, on the way as they came out of Egypt, had not been circumcised.

“For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people who were men of war, who came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD—to whom the LORD swore that He would not show them the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers that He would give us, ‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’

“Then Joshua circumcised their sons whom He raised up in their place; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way. So it was, when they had finished circumcising all the people that they stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed. Then the LORD said to Joshua, ‘This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.’ Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal to this day.”

The Second Circumcision Explained

A question occurs here: Why weren't the children of Israel circumcised as they traveled through the wilderness? There was no physical impediment to performing this rite, including traveling. Then what would cause this rite to stop so abruptly?

Numbers 14 shows that Israel refused to enter the Promise Land. This results in God rejecting them as seen in verses 33-34, “And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness. According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection.”

Their refusal to enter the Promised Land was a rejection of God and a breach of the Covenant of Promise. It negated the covenant, which God then set aside for forty years, until all the men of twenty years and older had died. Circumcision could no longer be performed, it being the confirmation of the covenant that God no longer accepted. This is an important fact, and it was the reason why Passover and Atonement rites were discontinued after the second year.

Understanding How These Events Occurred

The time line of these two events can be traced through Exodus 40:2, 17. First, the

tabernacle was erected on the first day of the second year. Leviticus. 8:1-36 shows the consecration of Aaron, his sons, and the tabernacle.

This rite is also recorded in Ezekiel 43, “Seven days they shall make atonement for the altar and purify it, and so consecrate it. When these days are over it shall be, on the eighth day and thereafter, that the priests shall offer your burnt offerings and your peace offerings on the altar; and I will accept you,” says the Lord GOD.” This is an outline of the detailed account that occurs in Leviticus 8.

Numbers 9:1-5 records the Passover being kept in the second year: Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying: ‘Let the children of Israel keep the Passover at its appointed time. On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight, you shall keep it at its appointed time. According to all its rites and ceremonies you shall keep it.’ So Moses told the children of Israel that they should keep the Passover. And they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, at twilight, in the Wilderness of Sinai; according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did.”

It would include the Days of ULB, making it clear that the Passover followed closely the consecration of the tabernacle, although it was necessary to go to the book of Numbers for confirmation. It also shows that the historical events that take place in the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy do not necessarily follow in a chronological order. It is important to recognize the progression of events leading up to the setting aside of the covenant by God in Numbers 14:34.

Chapter 16 of Leviticus is generally understood as a detailed description of how to observe the Day of Atonement, but verse 34 makes it very plain that it was literally carried out by Aaron: “This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year.” And he [Aaron] did as the LORD commanded Moses.”

The time frame for this event would be the tenth day of the seventh month, of the second year. This means the events of Numbers 14:34 (the rejection) occurred after the seventh month. It demonstrates that only Passover, Days of ULB, and Atonement were recorded as observed in the wilderness before the spies were sent out; the spies being sent out around the time of Atonement. Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles were not celebrated because there was no early grain harvest or later harvest to reap. Thus these days would not have been observed; and in addition there is no biblical record of these holy days being observed at this time.

Circumcision Required

Joshua 5:2 was an order for Joshua to do what had been done in Egypt before the children of Israel could partake of the first Passover since leaving Sinai. Although there is no direct statement of a mass circumcision in the book of Exodus, it should be obvious that it was required of all the males before they could partake of the Passover. Exodus 12:48 states: “For no uncircumcised person shall eat it.”

The importance of this act is made abundantly clear by the near death of Moses' son in Exodus 4:24-26. Zipporah had to perform this rite on their son because Moses failed to carry out his responsibility. Thus she saved their son from death.

The foreskin can only be removed once. Therefore, all the male children below the age of twenty who came out of Egypt were not circumcised in Joshua 5. The number would have been large – at least equal to half of the number of males coming out of Egypt (300,000). The point here is that there were more than enough pain-free men to do all the work required to prepare the lambs for the Passover if, in fact, this was a problem for them.

Another important point to remember is that God's rejection did not occur until after the Atonement celebration of the second year. All applicable feasts were thus discontinued until the Israelites were once again accepted by God. Joshua's circumcision was that acceptance. Joshua 5:9 explains, "Then the LORD said to Joshua, 'This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.' Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal to this day."

There were only two restrictions that allowed a person to take a second Passover. (1) being unclean by handling a dead body or having an issue (such as infection, etc.) and (2) being on a journey. Neither of these applied to Joshua 5 because the act of circumcision took them from a state of uncleanness to that of being clean.

Joshua 5:8-9 also implies a miraculous healing of those circumcised. The word *healed* (#2421 in *Strong's Concordance*) is more correctly understood as "revived." When verse 9 tells us God rolled away the "reproach of Egypt," He restored His promises to Israel, one of which was healing. The Ferrar Fenton translation of the Bible shows this: "But whilst they were completing the circumcision of all the nation they kept quiet in the camp until they were restored. Then the Ever-living said to Joshua, 'Today (the day of circumcision) I have rolled away the reproach of Mitzeraim (Egypt) from off you.'" These facts clearly make Joshua 5 a *first* Passover.

When Did God's Rejection Occur and When Did it End?

By recognizing the time that Atonement occurred in Leviticus 16, we see that Numbers 14:34 had to occur *after* the tenth day of the seventh month. Additional proof is that the spies brought back ripe fruit which occurs in our months of September and October.

In order to understand the correct time frame, see in Deuteronomy 2:14, "And the time we took to come from Kadesh Barnea until we crossed over the Valley of the Zered was thirty-eight years, until all the generation of the men of war was consumed from the midst of the camp, just as the LORD had sworn to them."

Note the forty-year trek did not directly apply to the men of war, but to the sons being required to shepherd the flock in the wilderness. "And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness" (Num. 14:33).

Thirty-eight years had passed since God's punishment. This meant they had completed thirty-nine years and were starting the fortieth year. (Thirty-eight years for the men of war to be consumed, plus the first year in the wilderness makes thirty-nine years complete.) This is confirmed by Deuteronomy 1:3 "Now it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the LORD had given him as commandments to them."

In Deuteronomy, Moses recounts for Israel their history, pointing to the miracles God had done for them, "So it was, when all the men of war had finally perished from among the people, that the Lord spoke to me, saying: ¹⁸"This day you are to cross over at Ar, the boundary of Moab." (Deut.2:16-18).

God Starts Moses on a Military Campaign

God then starts Moses on a military campaign to conquer the Promised Land on the east side of the Jordan. This campaign begins sometime around the middle of the sixth month. This is established through the following scriptures: "Now when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, all the house of Israel mourned for Aaron thirty days" (Num.20:29) "And Aaron the priest went up into mount Hor at the commandment of the LORD, and died there, in the fortieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the first day of the fifth month" (Num.33:38).

Aaron died at the beginning of the fifth month and was mourned 30 days. Thus they started their journey to the Promised Land at the beginning of the sixth month. Deuteronomy 1:2 shows eleven days were required to arrive at Mt. Horeb. Numbers 33:41-49 records the Israelites had a total of eight campsites during these eleven days. The fourth campsite after leaving Mt. Hor puts them on the border between Moab and the Amorites, placing them at the border of the Promised Land. This sets the travel time at about half of the eleven days.

The Lands That God Gave Us as a Possession

God told Moses that he gave the land of Amon to the descendants of Lot for a possession. Deuteronomy 2:5 shows God gave Mt. Seir to the descendants of Esau as a possession. Now note in verse 31 "And the LORD said to me, 'See, I have begun to give Sihon and his land over to you. Begin to possess it, that you may inherit his land.'"

God gives the land of the king of Sihon as a possession to Israel. Next we see Deuteronomy 3:1-2, "Then we turned and went up the road to Bashan; and Og king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. And the LORD said to me, 'Do not fear him, for I have delivered him and all his people and his land into your hand; you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon.' God also gave this land to the Israelites as a possession." (As a confirmation, see Deut. 3:12-13.)

Moses in the Promised Land

The term *possession* used by God denotes the land was part of the promises He gave to Abraham. This means that Moses, along with the Israelites, had entered the Promised Land, contrary to the universal belief that he did not.

Notice, “Then I pleaded with the LORD at that time, saying: ‘O Lord GOD, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your mighty hand, for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do anything like Your works and Your mighty deeds? I pray, let me cross over and see the good land beyond the Jordan, those pleasant mountains, and Lebanon.’

“But the LORD was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me. So the LORD said to me: ‘Enough of that! Speak no more to Me of this matter. ²⁷Go up to the top of Pisgah, and lift your eyes toward the west, the north, the south, and the east; behold it with your eyes, *for you shall not cross over this Jordan*” (Deut.3:23-27).

The above scripture shows that Moses had pleaded with God to allow him to not only enter the Promised Land, but also to pass through its entirety. God relented from His original restriction and allowed him to enter the Promised Land east of the Jordan, but emphatically refused Moses’ plea to cross the Jordan. Moses, being east of the Jordan, was allowed to see the Promised Land. All the land he sees to the north, south, and east is predominantly on the east side of the Jordan. Therefore, Moses is standing *in the Promised Land* when he views it from the top of the mountain.

The Promised Land on Both Sides of the Jordan

As further proof, make note of Genesis 13:3 and 14-15. The land that Abraham views is the Promised Land. God tells him to look north, south, east, and west; so when he looks east he is looking at the land on the east side of the Jordan river- the same land that Moses took from the two kings. (Note: Abraham was about fifteen miles from the Jordan River at this time.)

Thus it is plain that the Promised Land lies on both sides of the Jordan. Genesis 15:18-21 explains, “On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: ‘To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates—the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.’”

In the above scripture, God shows the land to be inherited includes that of ten nations. Two of these nations occupied the land east of the Jordan. As already shown, that land of the Amorite kings Sihon and Og, was captured by Moses and declared an inherited land by God. In addition, they would inherit the land of Rephaim.

The Rephaim’s land was also east of the Jordan. (Gen. 14:5). Their city, Asheroth, is about twenty miles east of the Sea of Galilee. This proves that once they crossed the Arnon River, they were in the Land of Promise as specified as a covenant by God to Abraham.

What Time of the Year?

The campaigns against Sihon and Og were quick and decisive. (Deut. 2:34; 3:6-7). Numbers 21:25, 35 further explains that they took immediate possession of the land. The following scripture shows that they saw the land at the time they conquered it and observed its desirability for their needs: “Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of livestock: and they saw the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, that indeed the region was a place for livestock. Therefore they said, ‘If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as a possession, and do not take us over the Jordan’” (Num.32:1, 5). There would be no reason for them to wait. They had an immediate need to pasture their animals.

The intervening account in the book of Numbers of Balak and Balaam in the book of Numbers was not chronological and would not affect either the time of their request for the land nor Moses’ decision to grant their request. They are parallel accounts. The third chapter of Deuteronomy shows that the land east of the Jordan was granted to them following the defeat of Sihon and Og. The previous scriptures show the capture of the land east of the Jordan occurred during the later part of the sixth month of the fortieth year.

In the Antiquities of the Jews, chapter 5, Josephus tells us this battle occurred during the summer. “For it was the summer season.” This agrees with the biblical time line as previously described.

Why the Israelites Needed to Plant

At this time Israel was basically an agricultural nation with different emphasis on diverse types of crops and animals. Those settling on the east side of the Jordan were primarily raising herds and flocks. These tribes took possession of a land that had already been organized to raise animals. (Deuteronomy 2:35 and 3:7 confirm this.)

As part of the agreement to occupy the east bank they were to provide a fighting force of 40,000 men (Josh 4:13) to lead in their battle to conquer the land west of the Jordan. It should be noted that the census of Numbers 26 showed these combined tribes accounted for 110,000 men over the age of 20. Sixty thousand were left with the families and animals to provide protection and do the work required to sustain their livelihood and support their brethren who were going across the Jordan.

With the gaining of this land, these tribes had a definite list of needs to prepare their families for their absence as they were required to provide 40,000 men of war. They needed housing, which was ostensibly left there by the defeated nations, although some repair would have been required as a result of the war. Also, stock pens needed to be built or repaired. However, their most pressing need was that of food - grain. Why would this be when they had manna to eat? God had provided manna as a grain substitute for Israel because there was no provision for grain to be grown in the wilderness.

Notice, “Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its color like the color of bdellium. The people went about and gathered it, ground it on millstones or beat it in the

mortar, cooked it in pans, and made cakes of it; and its taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil.” (Num. 11:7-8).

The Israelites knew that this would cease once they had reached the Promised Land so they could provide this basic food item on their own: “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘*When you come into the land* which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest’” (Lev. 23:10).

The requirement of planting on their arrival in the new land is implicit. You cannot have a wave sheaf offering or grain to eat without planting the grain first. It also speaks to the fact that they would be expected to provide their own grain from their own labors. God was not running a welfare state. Every man is expected to provide for his own sustenance. II Thessalonians 3:10 explains, “For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.”

Joshua 5:12 reads, “Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year.” This scripture tells us that is exactly what happened. They knew this was going to happen and they prepared for it as God commanded in Leviticus 23:9-11, 14 “And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it... You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.’”

The Basics

Not understanding the requirements and accompanying practices of raising small grains (barley and wheat) prevents those who are teaching today from realizing the natural way that this would have occurred, thus resulting in a twisted teaching of the events and timetables leading up to Joshua 5. The scriptures cited have shown that the Israelites were in control of the land before the fall planting season. It is imperative to know that barley and wheat are planted in the fall and are crops requiring only five months to harvesting. The past custom was to graze these crops in their early stages of growth, which was a perfect fit for their herds and flocks. Lacking this information, one could not see the reality that they had an acceptable sheaf of grain to wave.

The additional point that no grain could be harvested because this was a Sabbath would not apply because this Sabbath was a high day. Work required to prepare food for a high day is acceptable according to the word of God. Yet it would have required an unacceptable amount of work to harvest grain for more than two million people in one day. We need to remember that the manna had not ceased, so they had both manna and grain to eat on the first day of Unleavened Bread once the offering of the wave sheaf had taken place in the morning.

A CHANGE IN DIET

To the Israelites it was an important event. They had had a forty-year diet of manna and they wanted a change. Less than a year earlier they endured the plague of fiery serpents because of their complaints of the tiresome diet of manna. Numbers 21 states: “And the people spoke against God and against Moses: ‘Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread.’ So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. (vs.5-6).

Despite their desire for change, they waited until the requirements of Leviticus 23:14 were met. What restrained them from eating the grain that was there? It was that they lacked the required wave sheaf offering and they did not want to go through another plague by breaking what God had commanded.

It is interesting to look at the gathering of manna. What time of the day was it to be gathered? In the morning before the sun had warmed the land and melted it. They could only realize that it had stopped by looking for it in the morning. So the term, “on the day after” in Joshua 5:11 would refer to the daylight hours, not the night portion of that day. On the sixth day of the week, a double portion was gathered to provide a workless Sabbath for Israel. As already pointed out, a high day Sabbath allowed for food preparation and would have included the gathering of manna. This resulted in their declaring that there was no manna to gather the following day.

In addition, the term “on the day after” is a combination word in Strong’s, #4480 and #4283, clearly meaning the “following numbered day,” *not* “the next morning.”

Numbers 33:3 uses the exact same wording and shows that this is the correct understanding for this terminology: “They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians.

A complete listing of this term can be found in the *New Englishman’s Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament*, which always indicates that it is the next day – never the morning of the night before. This would make it the same day, a day being sunset to sunset.

Responsibility for Cutting the Sheaf

Too many have been duped into thinking that the priest or his appointees had to go out after the Sabbath, the evening of the first day of the week, and cut the grain to be waved - a tradition that the Jews established. This was not the instruction given by God.

Leviticus 23:10, 14 states, “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. “It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.”

These directions are addressed to the nation in general and specifically to those having control of the harvesting of the fields. Using the pronoun “you” and “your” gives each individual the responsibility to bring a sheaf of grain from his own field (a cut handful) for the priest to wave. It had nothing to do with the priest or his appointed ones but it was those responsible for growing and harvesting who brought in the sheaf.

What Did God Command?

Due to the distances, sometimes requiring more than a day of travel from their fields to the location of the tabernacle, it would have been cut sometime prior to being waved. Then it would have been brought to the priest ahead of time for him to wave on the appointed day. There can be no doubt about this clear instruction. The *individual* had the responsibility to cut and bring the sheaf to the priest.

It should be noted that when the stalk or stem that supports the head of the grain dries, the cereal stops growing. Unlike today, the grain was cut before it could be threshed, then bundled, leaving it in the field to dry. If the grain was left too long before cutting, it would fall to the ground and be lost. Leviticus 23:11-14 gives us the rest of the requirements of the wave sheaf. The only restriction placed on them was that no one was to eat of the grain before the wave sheaf offering. In fact, verse 13 means that God expected them to have harvested the grain ahead so that they could make this offering.

Notice, “He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the LORD. *Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour* mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the LORD, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin. You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings” (Lev. 23:11-14).

Remember, these were directions given to all those raising that crop. This was a mini celebration, allowing them to eat of the new crop, or the first crop of their field, upon entering the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 16:9 is cited as a direction that prohibits the sheaf from being cut prior to the wave sheaf day. “You shall count seven weeks for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the grain.”

The word “begin,” Strong’s #2490, is the hiphil – (infinitive) of this verb. The dictionary definition of infinitive is as follows: Infinitive – meaning, *unlimited or indefinite*: applied to a certain mode or form of the verb (by origin a verbal noun and in English commonly preceded by the preposition to) which expresses the general sense of the verb *without restriction to person or number*.”

The *English Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament* cites four places where the word is used in the infinitive.

(1) Genesis 11:6, “...this they begin to do.”

- (2) Deuteronomy 16:9, "...from [such time as] thou beginnest."
- (3) I Samuel 3:12, "...when I begin, I will also make an end."
- (4) II Chronicles 31:10, "Since [the people]begin to bring."

This makes Deuteronomy 16:9 a general instruction about the beginning of the counting for the Feast of Weeks, and in no way prevented the general cutting of the grain before the wave sheaf offering day. The emphasis is on the number of weeks to be counted, not the starting point.

If Deuteronomy 16:9 were followed with the requirements of Leviticus 23, they would have waited until after sundown of the Sabbath, cut a handful of grain and traveled whatever distance from the field to bring the sheaf to the priest for waving. After waving they would have returned home and cut and threshed more of the crop, then hurried back to the place where it was waved to make an offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour as an additional offering. This would have been ridiculous when laid out as this timeline would demand.

Remember, they needed grain that the Israelites had grown for this offering as well as the wave offering. The inability to comply with Deuteronomy 16:9 and follow the instructions of Leviticus 23 supports the point already made about the general sense of time meant by the word "begin."

Christ tells us in John 10:35 that the scripture cannot be broken. With the correct understanding these scriptures do agree.

The wave sheaf was cut first; then the grain that was ripe was harvested in preparation for the wave sheaf offering, just as Leviticus 23 requires. This chapter also prohibited the Israelites from eating the grain of the land until the wave sheaf offering. Joshua 5:11 tells us that they did eat of this grain; *so the wave sheaf offering had to have been made*. Verse 12 shows that God confirmed that all was done with His approval by stopping the manna the next day; without any punishment or sign of His disapproval for not following the implicit instructions of Leviticus 23:10-14. Not following those instructions would have been a breach so serious as to bring immediate punishment by the Eternal. They ate and God blessed them with the conquering of Jericho.

It should now be clear that God's people were in the Land of Promise with adequate time to raise the small grain crop and wave it on the day following a weekly Sabbath. This allowed the sheaf to be waved during the Days of Unleavened Bread. This requirement places an important stamp of approval on it as representing the sinless life of Christ.

The Days of Unleavened Bread do not picture the putting out of sin; that had to be done prior to the first day. These days picture life *without* sin, and Christ is the only one to fulfill this prerequisite. Therefore, the simplicity and purity of the sheaf was a representation of the sinless Christ. It had to be waved during the days that pictured the purity of a sinless life. No other concept is acceptable!

Placing the wave sheaf offering on an ordinary day, outside of the Days of

Unleavened Bread, is subtly saying that Christ's life was with sin, negating His sacrifice that was accepted by the Father for us.

The accusation that Mr. Armstrong did not do a sufficient study into this subject, but accepted it on its surface, was in part the thrust of this writing. By looking at the statements below it can be seen that Mr. Armstrong placed a particular emphasis that many have not considered:

“On the morrow after the Sabbath, *during the Feast of Unleavened Bread*, the priest waved the Wave Sheaf, and none could be used until this was done” (Letter from “THE GOOD NEWS,” Herbert Armstrong, 1940)

“Jesus, the great Antitypical Lamb, and His resurrection, the Antitypical Wave Sheaf was presented before and accepted of God on the morrow after the WEEKLY Sabbath, *during the Days of Unleavened Bread*, A.D.31” (Letter from “The GOOD NEWS,” Herbert Armstrong, 1943.)

“This event (the Wave Sheaf) *ALWAYS occurred during the Days of Unleavened Bread*. (See Joshua 5.) This fulfillment of the Wave Sheaf offering actually occurred on Sunday, the morrow after the Sabbath during the days of unleavened bread.” (*Pagan Holidays or God's Holy Days – Which?* Herbert Armstrong, 1976 Edition).

“The third is the Feast of Firstfruits, called in the New Testament, “Pentecost,” because it came fifty days after the cutting of the Wave Sheaf *during the Days of Unleavened Bread*” (*Never Before Understood*, Herbert Armstrong, 1981).

By examining this declarative statement, what should be seen as the imperative to be carried out? The Sabbath marking the waving of the sheaf should occur during the Days of Unleavened Bread, or that the sheaf is to be waved during the Days of Unleavened Bread?

Some think that the seven days of Unleavened Bread picture putting sin out during these days, when the scriptures clearly show that it was to be removed before the commencement of these days. Notice, “For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land” (Ex.12:19).

This is confirmed in Paul's instructions in I Corinthians 5:7-8, “Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

The purging occurred prior to these days, so that they are to be kept sinless as Paul points out in these verses. This is the perfect picture of Christ being presented to the Father as a sinless offering during these days.

It should be recognized that Mr. Armstrong was under no pressure to justify the wave

sheaf occurring as he stated because of the occasional times when the Passover occurred on the Sabbath, and so he did not. The body of believers accepted his pronouncement. The whole thrust of this article is to show the correctness of that decision. This should not detract from the basic truth that Christ was a sinless offering. Therefore He would have to be offered during the Days of Unleavened Bread, which picture a time devoid of sin. Of all the points, this one should be so fundamental as to wipe away all doubts as to its occurrence.

Obviously Mr. Armstrong had a thorough understanding of these biblical events, and made the change of accepting Joshua 5 as the wave sheaf offering based on them. We should also accept this as the correct understanding as hereby shown.

Once one gleans the biblical history that led up to Joshua 5: That it was not a second Passover; that Moses and the Israelites were in the Promised Land before they crossed the Jordan; that they were in part of the Promised Land with more than adequate time to raise the small grain crop required for the wave sheaf offering; then you can understand that they complied with the requirements of Leviticus 23, which allowed them to eat the grain of the land, this being the wave sheaf offering.

Coupled with the above information, we have the additional understanding that Christ's sinless life had to be accepted during the very days that depicted living a sinless life - the Days of Unleavened Bread!

Finally, we see that God has placed His stamp of approval on what Joshua accomplished. "As the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did" (Josh.11:15).

Joshua left *nothing* undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses!