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KARAITE JEWISH CALENDAR

Creator: egw@aubranch.egwestate.andrews.edu

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| <p>Question</p> <p>HELLO,</p> <p>PLEASE EXPLAIN THE POSITION OF THE S.D.A. CHURCH WITH RESPECT TO THE "DAY OF ATONEMENT" IN THE YEAR 1844, ACCORDING TO MY UNDERSTANDING IT TOOK PLACE ON OCTOBER 22,1844 THIS ACCORDING TO THE KARAITE JEWISH CALENDAR, I ASK THIS BECAUSE ACCORDING THE INTERNET AND OTHER SOURCES THE "DAY OF ATONEMENT " TOOK PLACE ON SEPTEMBER 23,1844, AND YES I SEARCHED UNDER THE KEY WORD "KARAITE JEWISH CALENDAR", PLEASE EXPLAIN SO THAT I IN TURN MAY BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN TO OTHERS.</p> <p>THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS!</p> <p>Answer</p> | |

Dear Friend,

Thank you for contacting the Ellen G. White Estate. Below my signature I will copy for you something that Dr. Gerhard Pfandl of the General Conference's Biblical Research Institute wrote on this matter a couple of years ago, in response to comments on a critic's website. I think it will help you understand the issue you are interested in.

I do hope this helps. Thank you for writing, and God bless!

William Fagal, Director

Ellen G. White Estate Branch Office

Andrews University

Berrien Springs, MI 49104-1400 USA

Phone: 269 471-3209

FAX: 269 471-2646

Website: www.WhiteEstate.org or www.egwestate.andrews.edu

E-mail: egw@aubranch.egwestate.andrews.edu

THE KARAITE CALENDAR Gerhard Pfandl

This is in response to the web site of Robert K. Sanders. I do not know the man, but he is obviously trying to discredit Ellen White and the sanctuary message.

The Jewish calendrical system and the annual feast cycle was tied to the harvest seasons of the Jewish year. The Passover on the 14th day of the first month and the wave sheaf offering two days later always fell in the period of the newly ripened barley harvest, Pentecost 50 days later in the time of the ripening of the wheat harvest, and the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles in the 7th month after the remaining harvests (primarily grapes and olives) had been gleaned. This was the general pattern in OT times as well as in the time of Jesus.

The Israelite year was a lunisolar year of 354 days in which the months alternated between 29 and 30 days. To adjust to the solar year of approximately 365 days an additional month was inserted seven times in a 19 year cycle (leap years).

Following the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 the Jews had difficulties celebrating the feasts with uniformity because of their scattered condition. Then during the 4th century the Roman state forbade the Jews to proclaim leap years, nor were they allowed to communicate with Jews outside of the empire. Therefore, they developed what became known as the rabbinic calendar which tied their new year's day to a fixed astronomical point -- the vernal equinox. This did not alter the week but it frequently changed the beginning of the year by one month. Thus the new year and therefore all the feasts of the seventh month had their fixed dates, because between Nisan 1 (the first month) and Tishri 1 (the seventh month) were always exactly 177 days.

In the 8th century there arose a protest against this tampering with the Mosaic calendar. Anan ben David and his followers, later called Karaites, rejected the rabbinic traditions and claimed to base their teaching only on Scripture. As far as the calendar was concerned they determined the beginning of the year and the months by direct lunar observation. Consequently, Karaites often celebrated the festivals on dates different from those fixed by the rabbis. At one stage the Karaites

comprised about 40 % of the Jews. In time, however, they lost power and by the end of the 18th century they surrendered to a large extent the battle for their principles. Some sources, including the one quoted by Sanders, claim that for a time the Karaites in Palestine followed their own calendar whereas the Karaites around the world accepted the rabbinic calendar, but that by the 19th century even those living in Palestine observed the feasts at the same time as the rabbinic Jews.

However, an unsigned article in Signs of the Times, June 21, 1843, states:

"Now there is a dispute between the Rabbinical and the Karaite Jews, as to the correct time of commencing the year. The former are scattered all over the world, and cannot observe the time of the ripening of that [barley] harvest in Judea. They therefore regulate the commencement of the year by astronomical calculations, and commence with the first day of the new moon nearest the vernal equinox, when the sun is in Aries. The Karaite Jews on the contrary, still adhere to the letter of the Mosaic law and commence with the new moon nearest the barley harvest in Judea; and which is one month later than the Rabbinical year."

This seems to indicate that there were still some Karaite Jews in the early 1840s who observed the old Karaite calendar. Be that as it may, the fact is that the Millerites chose October 22 and not September 23, 1844, which was the day the Jews observed the Day of Atonement in that year. They wanted to be as exact as possible in their calculations concerning the Day of Atonement. They therefore chose to go with "the old Karaite Jewish calendar" (SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 11, Encyclopedia, 1996 edition, p. 620, emphasis mine), rather than with the rabbinic calendar, even though the Karaites themselves may no longer have used it, but this is uncertain.

The last day of the Karaite Jewish year 1843 had as its equivalent sunset April 18, 1844. April 19 was, therefore, the civil equivalent of Nisan 1 for the Jewish year 1844. As mentioned above, there are always 177 days from Nisan 1 to Tishri 1, hence Tishri 1 in 1844 was October 13 and the tenth day was October 22.

The issue is not whether the Karaites celebrated the Day of Atonement on that day in 1844, this was the closest the Millerites could come to the biblical date for the Day of Atonement in that year. If some Karaites were still using their old calendar in 1844 that would have been the day they would have celebrated the Day of Atonement.

Robert Sanders may think that our pioneers were half wits, but reading their literature indicates that they were more knowledgeable than he thinks. They knew very well that the Jewish Day of Atonement was in September, but they knowingly rejected it and chose October 22 instead. Ellen White's testimony concerning the 7-month movement confirms that God was in this movement and that they did not have to reject it.

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RANDOM QUOTE

Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him. (Pr 280)

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Verifying the Dates

Time & Date Calendar Calculator:

<http://www.timeanddate.com/date/dateadd.html>

Computing: April 19th 1844 to October 22, 1844 [186 days]

1. Enter the start date of October 22, 1844 (10/22/1844)
2. Select Subtract
3. Enter 186 days based on the logic given in the above Karaite Calendar explanation: (1st Day of the 1st Month to the 1st day of the 7th month is 177 days. Add 9 days to get to the 10th day of the 7th month = 186 days)

“As mentioned above, there are always 177 days from Nisan 1 to Tishri 1, hence Tishri 1 in 1844 was October 13th and the tenth day was October 22nd” – {paragraph 9 of the explanation}

Computing: April 19th 1844 to Sunday July 21, 1844 [93 days - Midway/Midnight]

1. Enter the start date of April 19, 1844 (4/19/1844)
2. Select Add
3. Enter 93 days based on the logic given in the above Karaite Calendar explanation

Computing: August 15 1844 (1st Day, 5th Month) to October 22, 1844 (10th Day 7th Month)

1. Enter the start date of August 15, 1844 (8/15/1844), Day S. Snow gave Midnight Cry at Exeter Camp Meeting
2. Select Add
3. Enter 68 days based on the logic given in the above Karaite Calendar explanation
 - i. 5th month – 29 Days remain
 - ii. 6^h month – 30 Days remain
 - iii. 7th month – 9 Days remain