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# Luni-Solar Calendar in Millerite Movement

*I have been shown that many who profess to have a knowledge of present truth know not what they believe. They do not understand the evidences of their faith. They have no just appreciation of the work for the present time. When the time of trial shall come, there are men now preaching to others who will find, upon examining the positions they hold, that there are many things for which they can give no satisfactory reason. Until thus tested they know not their great ignorance. And there are many in the church who take it for granted that they understand what they believe; but, until controversy arises, they do not know their own weakness. When separated from those of like faith and compelled to stand singly and alone to explain their belief, they will be surprised to see how confused are their ideas of what they had accepted as truth . . . . Maranatha 45*

I felt like crying.

That day had been what I had always *thought* was the Sabbath. Now I was being told that I had been keeping the wrong day all my life.

“Well, if today hasn’t been the Sabbath, what was it?”

“Third day,” my friend replied.

“I don’t know the days that way. What is it by name?” I asked.

“Well, the weeks cycle differently so you can’t really compare that way, but *if* you could, today would have been a Tuesday.”

*Tuesday?* Had Satan really been able to pull off such a triumph? Had I truly been that deceived? Of course, I wanted to study it out for myself. You cannot just take someone else’s word for something like this, but what I had seen so far seemed logical.

But, what of my husband? What would be his reaction? If we did not agree, how would I raise five children in a divided home? How would the children respond if we were not united on so important a point? Would they end up throwing all religion out, as often happens in the case of a spiritually divided home? Dare I take such a risk?

The decision did not take long. I knew that truth must be more important than a united home. *Not* knowing the truth does not change reality. If I had to raise our children in a divided home, God would give me the grace to do so.

I stayed up late that night reading through the papers given me, seeing the accumulation of Biblical evidence, historical evidence.

I dug deeper. As I studied, it slowly began to take shape in my mind. I could finally begin to wrap my brain around a luni-solar calendar that did not have a continuous cycle of weeks. I consulted the Jewish Encyclopedia, emailed Chabad.org and read about the Jewish calendar in a variety of sources including the S.D.A. Dictionary. Then, one night while searching on the Internet for more information, I stumbled upon something exciting – a veritable treasure providentially preserved in the archives of the Adventist Heritage Center at Andrews University: the Grace Amadon Collection. I could hardly believe what I was reading! Had our church really known about the luni-solar calendar?

Not only was our church aware of it, but it had been this very calendar the Millerites had used to establish October 22, 1844 as being the Day of Atonement!

I quickly wrote off for some of the papers. When they arrived, I poured over them. What a wealth of information! I found the answer to something that had long puzzled me. I had known for some time that the Jews observed September 23 as the Day of Atonement in 1844 - so why did we say October 22? At the time, I had chosen to believe Ellen White rather than the rabbis, but now I knew why there was a difference. Modern Jews use an altered calendar, while the Millerites used the Biblical reckoning.

I began to see tremendous significance in the Spirit of Prophecy statements that we need to study all of our established points in order to give a reason for the hope that is within us. How easy it would have been for some prosecuting attorney, in the days just ahead, to make mince-meat of me on the witness stand. Now I had a reason for why October 22 was Day of Atonement in 1844 and not September 23. All I had to do was explain how the luni-solar calendar worked and that the first crescent moon was visible in the night hours of October 12/13.

Then I had the rug jerked out from under my new-found confidence. In the Grace Amadon Collection I learned that *there was no new moon visible the night of October 12/13!* And yet the Millerites still insisted that it was the first day of the seventh month. So just how *did* they come up with October 22?

The Millerites understood the Biblical luni-solar calendar and used it to arrive at October 22, 1844. But knowing the basics of how the luni-solar calendar worked are not enough. We need to know precisely how the Millerites *used* that calendar. It is probably news to most Adventists that the Millerites did not use the Gregorian calendar to establish the Day of Atonement for 1844. But they did not.

As far back as April, and then in June and December of 1843, and in February of 1844 . . . [William Miller's associates] came to a definite conclusion. This was

that the solution of Daniel's prophecy is dependent upon the ancient or *original* Jewish form of luni-solar time, and not upon the *altered modern* rabbinical Jewish calendar.<sup>1</sup>

The Millerites were deep students of the scriptures. The Seventh-day Adventist church owes much to their diligent, deep study of the Bible. They discovered that within Judaism, there were two distinct ways of computing the calendar. The rabbinical, which starts its new year, Nisan 1, on the new moon *closest* to the vernal equinox, and the Karaite which, following Mosaic calendation principles, placed its Nisan 1 on the first new moon *after* the vernal equinox *if* the barley harvest was ready. If not, they would intercalate an extra month.

The Millerites rejected the rabbinical first day of Nisan on March 21 in 1844, and chose the April new moon for the beginning of the true type of the ancient first month. April 19 was the day.<sup>2</sup> They argued that the modern Jewish calendar is based upon decisions that were unknown in the time of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

The Karaites were a sect of Jews who “gave up the system of rabbinical calendation, and made the intercalation of a leap month dependent upon the ripened barley, according to Moses.”<sup>4</sup> They have been called the “Protestants of Judaism.”<sup>5</sup> “Karaism clashed seriously with the parent faith, shook off the yoke of traditionalism, proclaimed the right of private judgment, and maintained that the original Scripture is a full and sufficient guide.”<sup>6</sup>

The previous chapter explained how the original Mosaic luni-solar calendar worked. But there is another point regarding the Millerite computation of the Oct. 22 date that is vital for us to know. The Millerites arrived at Oct. 22 as being the Day of Atonement by *calculation*.

Had the leaders waited until October to visually observe the first appearance of the moon by which to date Tisri 1, *there could have been no seventh month movement*, for there would have been insufficient time. They had to make their calculation in advance from standard moon tables which were abundantly available.<sup>7</sup>

The date of October 22 being the ending date of the 2300 year prophecy was first announced by Samuel Snow on July 21, 1844. He gave a discourse at the large Boston Tabernacle on the text “Behold the Bridegroom cometh (on the tenth day of the seventh month), go ye out to meet Him!” However, it was not until the camp meeting held at Exeter, New Hampshire (August 12-17) that the message really took hold. At this camp meeting, Snow gave three sermons.

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<sup>1</sup> L. E. Froom, *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1982, Vol. 4, 796, emphasis supplied.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Bates, *Second Advent Waymarks and High Heaps*, New Bedford, 1847.

<sup>3</sup> Grace Amadon, “Millerite Computation of the October 22 Date”, Box 2, Folder 4, Grace Amadon Collection.

<sup>4</sup> Froom, *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1948, Vol. 2, 197.

<sup>5</sup> Albiruni, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, as quoted in *ibid.*, 196.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>7</sup> Amadon, “How the Millerites Chose October 22”, Box 2, Folder 4, Grace Amadon Collection, emphasis original.

The first was on the 1844 ending of the great prophetic time periods; the second on the Mosaic sanctuary service types, and their antitypical fulfillment in the Christian dispensation; and the third on the date of Christ's crucifixion in the 'midst' of the seventieth prophetic week, which therefore brought an end of the 70 weeks in the seventh month of A.D. 34. And in consequence, the close of the 2300 years would similarly extend to the seventh month of 1844, which equated largely with the month of October.<sup>8</sup>

From this revival comes the name "seventh month movement". Again, they arrived at the date of October 22 by *calculation*, for had they waited until they could observe the first crescent moon, there would have been no time for them to give the Midnight cry. The Millerites already knew that the first day of the first Jewish month (Nisan 1) fell on April 19 in 1844. The way they reasoned it was thus: "Since the crucifixion occurred 'in the midst of the week' in the spring of the year, and hence in the middle of a literal Jewish year and also of a prophetic year, therefore the end of the prophetic year must come in the autumn. In other words, the prophetic years of Daniel end in the fall and not in the spring."<sup>9</sup>

Calendation was not altogether the key to the new chronology which suddenly confronted the people in the summer of 1844, and which gave life to the midnight cry. The mainspring lay concealed in Daniel 9 and Matthew 25. Samuel Snow was one of several to discover that six lunar months had yet to be added to the spring date -- itself a month later than first computed -- in order to complete the prophecy. Snow got this largely from Daniel 9. His argument was simple, but impelling -- that if Christ was crucified in the midst of the 'week,' in the spring, then the end of the week, and therefore the end, not only of the 487th year, but also of the 2300th year, would come six lunar months later in the autumn.<sup>10</sup>

[October 22] was computed by adding six lunar months or 177 days, to April 19, and thereby obtaining as the first day of the seventh month, October 13, from which nine days more extended to the tenth day on October 22. The Millerites have left an official statement that they thus "reckoned" from the "appearance of the moon on the 18th of April" and thereby found that "the seventh Jewish month commenced with the appearance of the moon on the 13th of October, so that the tenth day of the seventh month synchronized with the 22d of that month."<sup>11</sup>

This is an extremely important point to know because, although there were new moons observed in all of the months leading up to the seventh month, *there was no new moon to be observed the night of October 12/13*. Why? Technically, it has to do with how soon the new moon can be

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<sup>8</sup> Froom, *Prophetic Faith*, Vol. 4, 803.

<sup>9</sup> Bates, *Second Advent Waymarks and High Heaps*, 17, quoted in "Millerite Computation of October 22 Date", Box 2, Folder 4, Grace Amadon Collection.

<sup>10</sup> Amadon, "Brief Review of the New Views Regarding Millerite Chronology", Box 2, Folder 4, Grace Amadon Collection.

<sup>11</sup> *The Advent Shield*, Boston, 1844-5, Vol. 1, 278, as quoted in *ibid*.

seen after conjunction – the point in time when the moon, earth and sun are all in alignment and the moon cannot be seen.<sup>12</sup> At the U. S. Naval Observatory website, the conjunction is referred to as the “new moon.” However, in Bible times, as has been stated, the months did not start until the first crescent could be *observed*.<sup>13</sup> Typically, it takes two days for the crescent of the new moon to appear.

In simple terms, no new moon was observed the night of Oct. 12/13, 1844, because the moon’s meridian (or the highest point of its arch before it set) was below the horizon in most of New England, the land of the Midnight Cry. Furthermore, the moon set only ten minutes after the sun did on Oct. 12, thereby making the sky too light to observe it anyway. The Millerites knew that under Mosaic calendation, a new moon was declared after 30 days regardless of whether or not it was observed.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, they were all in agreement that October 13 was the first day of the seventh month (Tisri 1) and that the tenth day was the 22nd of October. Sylvester Bliss, in the Millerites’ official report in January, 1845 affirms: “Reckoning from this [Nisan] moon, the seventh Jewish month commenced with the appearance of the moon on the 13th of October.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, the tenth day of the seventh month was October 22.

Was October 22 the correct date for Day of Atonement in 1844? Absolutely.

Under the Mosaic system the cleansing of the sanctuary, or the great Day of Atonement, occurred on the tenth day of the seventh Jewish month (Leviticus 16:29-34), when the high priest, having made an atonement for all Israel, and thus removed their sins from the sanctuary, came forth and blessed the people. So it was believed that Christ, our great High Priest, would appear to purify the earth by the destruction of sin and sinners, and to bless His waiting people with immortality. *The tenth day of the seventh month, the great Day of Atonement . . . which in the year 1844 fell upon the twenty-second of October,*<sup>16</sup> was regarded as the time of the Lord’s coming.<sup>17</sup>

The Millerites showed great courage in following the Lamb to arrive at October 22.

Their (sic) remarkable stand of the Millerites, in 1843 and 1844, in rejecting the current Rabbinical calendation, and reviving the original Jewish year of the

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<sup>12</sup> The conjunction is also called the “black moon.”

<sup>13</sup> “That the first day of a lunar month begins with the ‘first appearance,’ or phasis, of the moon - is a precise calendar principle” (“The 1844 Problem - As Checked By Astronomy”, Box 2, Folder 4, Grace Amadon Collection).

<sup>14</sup> Among those who keep the Sabbath based on the luni-solar calendar, there is some confusion over whether to start the month off of the conjunction of the moon or its first visible crescent. October 22, 1844, provides the answer. If the months were to start at the conjunction, then the tenth day of the seventh month would have fallen on October 21, not 22. The U. S. Naval Observatory confirms that the conjunction of the moon occurred at 11:25 p.m. on October 11, 1844. The Millerites, however, knew that the Jews calculated it off of the first *visible* crescent and so they did the same.

<sup>15</sup> *The Advent Shield*, January, 1845, 278, as quoted in “Brief Review of the New Views Regarding Millerite Chronology”, Box 2, Folder 4, Grace Amadon Collection.

<sup>16</sup> See United States Naval Observatory chart at end of chapter.

<sup>17</sup> GC 400, emphasis supplied.

crucifixion period . . . that they might correctly determine the close of the 2300-year period, took clear, scholarly thinking, intensive research, extraordinary moral courage, and really heroic, decisive action. They risked all upon this crucial position.<sup>18</sup>

Not only was Catholicism directly opposed to their prophetic interpretations, but almost all of Protestantism had rejected it as well. Furthermore, and “most serious of all, Jewry had many centuries before abandoned the calendation given to Moses, which had been operative in principle and in essentially identical form in both the 5th century B. C. and the 1st century A. D.”<sup>19</sup> These centuries are important because the former embraces the beginning date of the 2300-year time prophecy, while the latter includes the verifying date of the Passover/crucifixion which occurred in the midst of the 70th prophetic week of the longer time prophecy.

Painstakingly studying the Karaite protest in the Middle Ages against the Rabbinical perversion of the calendar, they at last deliberately and irrevocably accepted, restored, and applied to their time-prophecy problem, the earlier calendation championed by the Karaites. And this they did in defiance of the whole body of Rabbinical scholarship and the general current practice of Jewry.<sup>20</sup>

There were many in 1844 who made merry over a lunar reckoning that was not based upon the modern Jewish calendar. The answer was returned: “Every scholar knows that we are correct as to the Karaite seventh month.” The Millerites were well aware of the rabbinical seventh month in September in 1844, and the circumstance was often mentioned in their papers. At the same time they were emphatic in their challenge that they dissented from the modern Jewish calendar because it did not agree with the laws of Moses.<sup>21</sup>

To be consistent with Adventism’s spiritual forefathers, Seventh-day Adventists of today need to compute when the true Sabbath occurs by using the same calendar utilized for determining the Day of Atonement in 1844.

Those who cling to old customs and hoary errors have lost sight of the fact that light is ever increasing upon the path of all who follow Christ; truth is constantly unfolding to the people of God. We must be continually advancing if we are following our Leader. It is when we walk in the light that shines upon us, obeying the truth that is open to our understanding, that we receive greater light. We cannot be excusable in accepting only the light which our fathers had one hundred years ago. If our God-fearing fathers had seen what we see, and heard what we hear, they would have accepted the light, and walked in it. If we desire to imitate their faithfulness, we must receive the truths open to us, as they received those

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<sup>18</sup> Amadon, “Courageous Action Of Millerites On ‘Jewish Calendar’ Problem”, Box 2, Folder 4, Grace Amadon Collection.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Amadon, “Millerite Computation of the October 22 Date”, Box 2, Folder 4, Grace Amadon Collection.

presented to them; we must do as they would have done, had they lived in our day.<sup>22</sup>

To follow the Lamb withersoever He goeth, God's people must be as brave as their forefathers, advancing further in the path first traveled by those who have long since gone to their rest.

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<sup>22</sup> Ellen G. White, *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists*, 197.

## The Great Calendar Controversy

### Luni-Solar Calendar in Millerite Movement

This chart from the United States Naval Observatory website shows all of the lunations for 1844. The conjunction of each lunation is listed under the column “New Moon”. Because it typically takes two days before the first appearance of the new crescent, add two days to each conjunction date to arrive at the date of the visible new moon.

In March, the conjunction, and thus the visible new moon, arrived too early for the barley harvest to be ripe so the Millerites intercalated another month as per Mosaic law. This chart is in accordance with their repeated statements that the visible new moon in April was the 19<sup>th</sup> – two days after the conjunction on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

The seventh lunation’s conjunction was on October 11, which placed the first of the month, Tisri 1, on October 13. Ten days later is the Day of Atonement, the tenth day of the seventh month, on October 22.

#### U.S. Naval Observatory Astronomical Applications Department

#### Phases of the Moon

1844 Phases of the Moon																
Universal Time																
New Moon				First Quarter				Full Moon				Last Quarter				
d	h	m		d	h	m		d	h	m		d	h	m		
								Jan	5	17	34		Jan	12	21	32
Jan	19	18	18	Jan	27	12	31	Feb	4	8	43	Feb	11	5	22	
Feb	18	8	45	Feb	26	9	58	Mar	4	21	02	Mar	11	13	20	
Mar	19	0	17	Mar	27	5	02	Apr	3	6	58	Apr	9	22	09	
Apr	17	16	32	Apr	25	20	17	May	2	15	17	May	9	8	23	
May	17	8	53	May	25	7	30	May	31	22	47	Jun	7	20	29	
Jun	16	0	26	Jun	23	15	25	Jun	30	6	17	Jul	7	10	50	
Jul	15	14	23	Jul	22	21	13	Jul	29	14	34	Aug	6	3	26	
Aug	14	2	32	Aug	21	2	16	Aug	28	0	34	Sep	4	21	43	
Sep	12	13	17	Sep	19	7	52	Sep	26	13	14	Oct	4	16	29	
Oct	11	23	25	Oct	18	15	16	Oct	26	5	05	Nov	3	10	19	
Nov	10	9	37	Nov	17	1	31	Nov	24	23	42	Dec	3	2	08	
Dec	9	20	13	Dec	16	15	22	Dec	24	19	29					