

# Millerite Use of Luni-Solar Calendar

*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*

Seventh-day Adventists grow up hearing about “October 22, 1844!” They are shown from scripture and historical documentation that the 2300 day prophecy, beginning in 457 B.C., ended in 1844 on the Day of Atonement. What most people do not know, however, is how the Millerites arrived at that *specific* date. Why October 22? Why not July 10?

Leviticus 23 states that the Day of Atonement shall be observed on the tenth day of the seventh month, so where does October 22 come in? 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 Jews, in 1844, kept Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) on September 23. The Millerites were well aware of this and references to it show up in their publications. However, when challenged or mocked for insisting on a date which even the Jews themselves did not keep, the Millerites commonly replied, “Every scholar knows that we are correct by the original calendar.”

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

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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.

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>

Knowing that the Millerites used the Karaite calendar is important, but there is another point regarding the Millerite computation of the Oct. 22 date that is vital 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.

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

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<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.

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 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 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.

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<sup>8</sup> From, *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*.

<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).

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 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

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<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.

<sup>18</sup> Amadon, "Courageous Action Of Millerites On 'Jewish Calendar' Problem", Box 2, Folder 4, Grace Amadon Collection.

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

To follow the Lamb whithersoever 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>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.

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

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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				