

CALENDAR AND IDENTITY IN EMERGING JEWISH
MOVEMENTS:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE CALENDAR PRACTICE
OF THE KARAITE MOURNERS OF ZION AND THE EARLY
REFORM MOVEMENT IN GERMANY

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Thesis Summary

Calendar and Identity in Emerging Jewish Movements: A Comparative Study of the Calendar Practice of Karaite Mourners of Zion and the Early Reform Movement in Germany

This thesis is a comparative study of the calendar practice of two Jewish movements in their formative stages: Karaite Mourners of Zion (tenth and eleventh century Palestine) and the early Reform Movement (mid-nineteenth century Germany). My research seeks to explore the role that calendar played in forming and upholding the identity of these two distinct Jewish groups. Both the Karaite Mourners of Zion and the early European Reform Movement constitute two emerging Jewish movements who sought to crystallize their movement's belief and practice while evaluating their relationship to other Jewish communities of their time. Religious reform discussed by each of these movements included extensive discussion of calendar practice. It is for this reason that I chose to compare the calendar practice of these two groups.

I divided this thesis into four chapters: 1) History and Overview of the Hebrew Calendar, 2) Calendar of the Karaite Mourners of Zion, 3) Attitude of the Early Reform Movement in Germany towards the Calendar Practice of Second Day *Yom Tov* in the Diaspora, and 4) Sociology of Time. In writing this thesis, I utilized primary sources written by early Karaites and the early Reform Movement along with secondary sources on these two groups. The thesis also includes biblical, Mishnaic, and Talmudic sources relevant to the calendar practice and sociological material related to time and group identity.

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INTRODUCTION

Who ignores the time walks in darkness, and who explores it is illumined by a great light.
–Moses Ibn Ezra

Calendar not only has the ability to structure time for groups, but the act of structuring time through calendar also helps form group identity. As a Reform Jew living in the United States, I begin my work week with other Americans on Monday and begin my period of rest, my weekend, as the sun goes down on Friday and I mark the holy time of Shabbat by lighting candles and making *kiddush*. While the sun setting and rising and the seasons changing are inevitable, communities, societies, and religions determine the manner in which we demarcate these natural intervals of time.

The manmade nature of calendar systems becomes apparent when different calendars clash with one another. For example, when the busy streets of New York stop as the majority of its Christian residents enjoy the holiday of Christmas with their families and small bands of Jews search the streets for a Chinese restaurant with a glowing neon sign reading “open,” the clash is evident.

This thesis materialized out of an interest in the role that calendar practice had and has on shaping Jewish identity. But, as a modern student of Judaism, I hold that the Jewish community has rarely, if ever, been a unified one. I, therefore, chose to focus on the calendar practice of two specific Jewish movements with the hope of gaining a broader understanding of the role calendar plays in terms of Jewish group identity. This thesis is a comparative study of the calendar practice of two Jewish movements in their formative stages: Karaite Mourners of Zion (tenth and eleventh century Palestine) and the early Reform Movement (mid-nineteenth century Germany). My research seeks to

explore the role that calendar played in forming and upholding the identity of these two distinct Jewish groups.

Language and Terminology

As the Reform Movement emerged in Europe in nineteenth century, some traditionalists made the comparison between Reformers and Karaites in an attempt to call Reform Judaism a sect, a heretical Jewish group. While I will explore this accusation in the conclusion of my thesis, I am not writing about the calendar practice of the Karaite Mourners of Zion and the early European Reform Movement in order to make a statement about the Reform movement and sectarian Judaism or Karaite Judaism and sectarian Judaism.

The use of the term “sect,” often carries a negative connotation. I do not seek to place value of the choice of Karaites or Reform Jews to either identify with or disengage from other Jewish communities. Karaite Mourners of Zion fit into a classical understanding of sectarian religion in the sense that they consciously chose to self-identity in opposition to another form of Judaism of their time, Rabbinic Judaism. European Jewish reformers in the nineteenth century, on the other hand, considered themselves to be a part of the larger European Jewish community.

In this thesis, I will refer to the Karaite Mourners of Zion and European Jewish reformers in the nineteenth century as “religious movements.” The term “religious movement” refers to a group that intended to bring about religious reforms. This applies to both early Karaites and early European Reformers. The use of the term “movements”

also allows me to acknowledge the Mourners of Zion and early reformers as distinct Jewish groups without passing judgment on their activities.

Two Emerging Jewish Movements

Both the Karaite Mourners of Zion and the early European Reform Movement constitute two emerging Jewish movements who sought to crystallize their movement's belief and practice while evaluating their relationship to other Jewish communities of their time. Religious reform discussed by each of these movements included extensive discussion of calendar practice. It is for this reason that I chose to compare the calendar practice of these two groups.

Karaite Judaism came into being under Muslim Rule in the Middle East during the mid-seventh and eighth centuries. The Karaite Movement defined itself through its belief in scripturalism and opposition to the authority of the Babylonian Geonate. Early Karaism was comprised of disparate groups in the Middle East who shared in these two beliefs. The Karaite Mourners of Zion represent the first attempt of centralized Karaite leadership and scholarship. An ideological immigration to Palestine in the late-ninth century gathered together a group of Karaite scholars in Jerusalem which came to be known as the Mourners of Zion. The group had a finite history; it existed in Palestine in the tenth and eleventh centuries. In my discussion of calendar practice of the Karaite Mourners of Zion, I will spotlight how the Mourners of Zion intercalated their calendar by direct observation of the moon and the barley harvest in the land of Palestine.

The early Reform Movement was a product of the Enlightenment—the seventeenth and eighteenth century Western European intellectual movement. As Jews

entered the secular European world as a result of this new rational thinking, the early Reform Movement in the mid-nineteenth century sought to reform Jewish practice as a result of their new place in European society. While individual Jewish communities throughout Europe began to modify their religious beliefs and practices, in the 1830s and 1840s, rabbis with Reform tendencies in Germany came together in an organized manner to discuss, debate, and shape the nature, practice, and thought of a new Judaism reformed by the thinking of the Enlightenment. In my discussion of calendar practice of the early European Reform Movement, I will highlight their rabbinic conversation around the calendar practice of keeping a second day of festivals in diaspora communities: the practice of *Yom Tov Shenit shel Galut*.

Overview:

This thesis is divided into four chapters. My opening chapter is a history and overview of the current Hebrew calendar. It is not meant to be a comprehensive, critical history of the Hebrew calendar. Rather, it is meant to provide a context in which to place the particular calendar practice of the Karaite Mourners of Zion and the early European Reform Movement.

Chapters two and three are an in depth study of the calendar practice of the Karaite Mourners of Zion and the early European Reform Movement. In these chapters, I will first present background information on the formation of these two movements and then present the groups' ideologies. I will move on to describe these groups' particular calendar practices and then contextualize specific calendar practice within the groups'

ideology in an attempt to show how religious practice works to uphold collective belief and ultimately group identity.

My fourth chapter is an examination of time through the lens of sociology. I will present the work and terminology of Eviatar Zerubavel in his 1981 work, *Hidden Rhythms: Schedules and Calendars in Social Life*, where he introduces the field of the sociology of time—how and why human societies construct time. Zerubavel and his study of the sociology of time offer a framework and vocabulary in which to contextualize the role of calendar in identity and specifically identity formation. I will apply Zerubavel's theories to the calendar practice of the Karaite Mourners of Zion and the early European Reform Movement to further explore the affects of calendar on the identity of these two emerging movements. In the conclusion of this thesis, I will survey the similarities and differences between the Karaite Mourners of Zion and the early Reform Movement in Germany by utilizing the calendar practice of these two respective movements to compare the identities of these two groups.

CHAPTER 1: HISTORY AND OVERVIEW OF THE HEBREW CALENDAR

Characteristics of Our Current Hebrew Calendar

לְמִנּוֹת יְמֵינוּ, כֵּן הוֹדַע;
וְנָבֵא, לֵבב חֲכָמָה.

Teach us to number our days
That we may attain a wise heart.

Psalm 90:12

The Hebrew Calendar is responsible for creating a unique rhythm to Jewish life. Since biblical times, Israelites and subsequently Jews have organized time by structuring days into weeks, months, and years. The Hebrew calendar unites a Jewish people that currently live throughout the world. Throughout the year, festivals occur in alignment with particular seasons. The calendar and its festivals link the Jewish people to the natural world order—the cycle of the sun and moon—which bonds the Jewish people to God, who in Jewish theology is responsible for this creation.

The current Hebrew Calendar is luni-solar in nature, meaning that the months are determined by the position of the moon, but provisions are made in the calendar in order to align the lunar months with the solar cycle. These adjustments ensure that festivals occur during the same season every year. In a strictly lunar calendar, such as the Islamic Calendar, months shift seasons throughout an extended period of time. Twelve lunar months contain 354 or 355 days in a year, whereas the yearly solar cycle is approximately 365 days. The ten day discrepancy results in months migrating throughout the solar seasons over time. The Hebrew calendar currently makes up this ten day discrepancy by inserting a thirteenth month to the calendar every seven years in a nineteen year cycle. The extra month that is inserted is a second Adar (*Adar Sheni*), taking place in the spring.

There are three categories of Jewish holidays: biblical holidays, rabbinic holidays, and post-rabbinic celebrations. The Bible prescribes the celebration of three pilgrimage holidays: Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot. These three holidays were given historical significance in the rabbinic period, but were described as agricultural holidays in the *Tanakh*. The other biblical holidays are the High Holidays: Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Rabbinically ordained holidays include Purim, Hanukkah and a handful of fast days. More recently, the Israeli parliament instituted the celebration of two holidays that have been adopted into the greater Jewish calendar by Jewish communities throughout the world with the exception of Ultra-Orthodox communities. These holidays are Holocaust Remembrance Day (*Yom Hashoah*) and Israeli Independence Day (*Yom Ha'atzmaut*).

Historical Development of the Hebrew Calendar

The Hebrew Calendar in its present form was influenced by other ancient Near Eastern traditions and mathematical and astronomical innovations. It became fixed in its present form at the same time that rabbinic Judaism prevailed as the dominant practice of Judaism during the Geonic Period (around the tenth-century). With few exceptions, the Hebrew Calendar has remained static since this period.

Measuring Time in the Bible

The very first chapter of the Book of Genesis establishes the seven day week corresponding to God's creation of the world in seven days. While a seven day week seems like a given in the modern world which is dominated by the Gregorian calendar

which also utilizes a seven day week, seven days to a week are not necessarily a given. For example, from 1929 to 1931 the Soviet Union instituted a calendar containing seventy-two five-day weeks.¹ The Soviet leaders alteration of the calendar was not only meant to create a more productive work force; the five day week undermined the Judeo-Christian seven-day week (that replicated God's creation of the world), thus upholding the Communist Atheism. The first chapter of Genesis is not only the foundation of the seven-day week, but also the underpinning of the use of the sun and the moon in demarcating larger periods of time such as seasons and years. Genesis 1:14 reads:

<p>וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים, יְהִי מָאֹרֶת בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם, לְהַבְדִּיל, בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה; וְהָיוּ לְאֹתֹת וּלְמוֹעֲדִים, וּלְיָמִים וּשָׁנִים.</p>	<p>God said, 'Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night; they shall serve as signs for the set times—the days and the years.</p>
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Other biblically described characteristics of the calendar include the dates in which holidays fall found in the books of Leviticus and Numbers.² Months are referred to in numerical terms rather than by their currently held Babylonian names. The three harvest festivals of Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot are linked to specific agricultural seasons, thus eliminating possibility of a strict lunar calendar in the biblical period. Numbers 28:14 explains that the new month was determined by the appearance of the new moon and this day was marked with the religious significance of making a special sacrifice to God.

<p>וְנִסְכֵּיהֶם, חֲצִי הַהֵין יִהְיֶה לַפָּר וּשְׁלִישֵׁת הַהֵין לְאַיִל וּרְבִיעֶת הַהֵין לְכֶבֶשׂ--יֵין: זֹאת עֹלֹת חֹדֶשׁ בְּחֹדְשׁוֹ, לְחֹדְשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה.</p>	<p>Their libations shall be: half a <i>hin</i> of wine for a bull, a third of a <i>hin</i> for a ram, and a quarter of a <i>hin</i> for a lamb. That shall be the monthly burnt offering for each new moon of the year.</p>
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¹ "Russia: Stalin Shifts the Helm." *Time Magazine*. 13 July, 1931.

² See Chapter 3 for more details.

While the solar and lunar cycle both appear to be at play in the calendar of the *Tanakh*, the text does not disclose its methodology of reckoning in any real detail.

Exilic Influence

When the Israelite people were exiled to Babylonia in the sixth-century BCE, they began to adopt the Babylonian names for the twelve lunar months: Nisan, Iyar, Sivan, Tamuz, Av, Elul, Tishrei, Marcheshvan (Cheshvan), Kislev, Tevet, Shevat, and Adar. Post Exilic books of the Bible, such as Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Zechariah, begin to refer to months both by numerical and Babylonian names.³ Zechariah 7:1 is an example of this dual reference:

וַיְהִי בִּשְׁנַת אַרְבַּע, לְדָרִיוֹשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ; הָיָה דָּבָר- הַנֶּה אֶל-זְכַרְיָה, בְּאַרְבַּעָה לַח' דָּשׁ הַתְּשַׁעִי-- בְּכֶסֶל.	In the fourth year of King Darius, on the fourth day of the ninth month, Kislev, the word of Adonai came to Zechariah.
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The Jerusalem Talmud attests that the Babylonian names were adopted during the Babylonian Exile:

Rosh Hashana 56d

חנינה שמות חדשי' עלו בידם מבבל .	Rabbi Hanina said, the names of the months came us with them from Babylonia.
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The dual mention of numerical and Babylonian names of months in the Post Exilic books suggest that the Babylonian names of months had not been fully adopted in the Post Exilic period.

It should also be noted that during the period that Israelites were exiled in Babylonia, the community there would have been practicing intercalation based on a

³ Rochberg-Halton, Francesca. "Calendar, Ancient Near East." *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Freedman, David (ed). Doubleday, 1992, 816.

nineteen-year cycle. Archeological evidence shows that this calendar was decreed by rulers in the area from approximately the third millennium BCE until about the middle of the first century BCE. In Mesopotamia, the extra month added to the calendar was either *Ulūlu* (Elul) or *Addaru* (Adar). Interestingly, each fall before the months in which important Hebrew holidays occur: Rosh Hashana and Passover. The Hebrew calendar would ultimately adapt the nineteen-year cycle of intercalation and the practice of adding another month of Adar. While these practices may have been adopted during the Babylonia Exile, mention of these practices does not occur in Jewish texts until much later.⁴

The Hasmonean and Second Temple Periods: Diversity in Calendar Practice

The Hasmonean and Second Temple Periods were a time of great diversity among the Jewish people. Jacob Neusner suggests that it is more appropriate to refer to *Judaisms* that were practiced from the second century BCE to 70 CE. These Judaisms took the form of Pharisees, Sadducees, Hasidian, Sicarii, Essenes, early Christians, and many smaller groups.⁵ While these groups shared some characteristics, calendar practice was not uniform among them.

Texts composed during these periods begin to describe in great mathematic and astronomical detail how the calendar was reckoned. Not only was there not consensus on minute detail of practice, but different communities were keeping different solar and lunar calendars. The books of *Enoch*, *Jubilees*, and texts from Qumran that speak of

⁴ Vanderkam, James C. "Calendar, Ancient Israelite and Early Jewish." *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Freedman, David (ed). Doubleday, 1992, 811.

⁵ Levine, Lee I. *Jerusalem: Portrait of the City in the Second Temple Period*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002, 119.

calendar describe the use of a solar calendar while *Ben Sira* describes the use of an exclusively lunar calendar. Sacha Stern in his work *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar Second Century BCE-Tenth Century CE* explains that while sectarian groups that composed the above works favored the exclusive use of either a solar or lunar calendar, “the safest conclusion is that both solar and lunar calendars were variously observed, in a relationship that remains somewhat unclear.”⁶

After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, rabbinic Judaism prevailed as the dominant Jewish practice. During the first century CE, the solar calendar disappears from both Jewish and Christian sources.⁷ Calendar variation and sectarian Jewish groups reappear during the Geonic period as Babylonian Jewish rule consolidated its power across the Middle East. This suggests that perhaps the dominance and prevalence of rabbinic practice was not as strong as Jewish historians may once have thought.

Calendar Practice in the Rabbinic Period

Many of the Jewish practices that are kept today took form during the Rabbinic Period. The shape of the Hebrew calendar became solidified among rabbinic Jews during this time. For the first time, we see confirmation in the Mishna that the additional month intercalated into the calendar was the month of Adar (*Megillah* 1:4 and *Nedarim* 8:5). The Mishna does not, however, describe the actual technique of inserting this leap month. The method of reckoning the calendar continued to be in flux until the tenth century CE.

⁶ Stern, Sacha. *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar Second Century BCE-Tenth Century CE*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, 4.

⁷ *Ibid* 18.

The Mishna does shed light on how the new month was determined in the Second Temple period and the Tannaitic period (from 70 CE to the early third century).

Mishna *Rosh Hashana* describes that the new month was determined by direct moon observation through at least the time of Rabban Gamliel (mid first century).

Chapter 1, *mishna* 4 explains that this was the practice while the Temple stood.

על שני חדשים מחללין את השבת על ניסן ועל תשרי שבהן השלוחין יוצאין לסוריא ובהן מתקנין את המועדות וכשהיה בית המקדש קיים מחללין אף על כולן מפני תקנת הקרבן .	Because of two months could they [the witnesses] profane Shabbat: because of Nisan and Tishrei, for on them messengers went forth to Syria, and by them the Holydays were determined. And when the Temple still stood, they could profane it indeed for all of them for the correct regulation of the [<i>Rosh Chodesh</i>] offering. ⁸
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Rabban Gamliel continued to uphold the practice of direct moon observation, but he introduced some use of intercalation in his practice. Gamliel utilized drawings to help people determine the new moon.

Rosh Hashana 2:8

דמות צורות לבנות היו לו לרבן גמליאל בטבלא ובכותל בעלייתו שבהן מראה את ההדיטות ואומר הכזה ראית או כזה .	Rabban Gamliel had diagrams of the shapes of the moon on a tablet and on the wall in his upper chamber [where the witnesses were examined]. These he used to show to the ordinary people, asking, 'Did you see it like this or like that?' ⁹
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The problematic nature of the method of spreading the message of the new moon to outlying Jewish communities arose in the Mishna. The Mishna describes the use of messengers as well as fire signals, but the use of fire signals was apparently suspended after sectarian interference.

⁸ Translation adapted from: Philip Blackman (1971).

⁹ *Ibid.*

Mishna, *Rosh Hashana* 2:3

בראשונה היו משיאין משואות
משקלקלו הכותים התקינו שיהו
שלוחין יוצאין .

Beforetime they used to light beacons, but after the Samaritans caused great harm, they enacted that messengers should go forth.¹⁰

It is thought by historians that the practice of observing two days of holidays in the diaspora developed during this time, although the Mishna itself makes no mention of this practice.¹¹

The move from direct moon observation to mathematical intercalation begins to take place in the Amoraic period (third to sixth centuries). The Babylonian Talmud, *Eruvin* 56a describes Shmuel (early third century) as having great knowledge of astronomy which he applied to the reckoning of the Hebrew Calendar. Elsewhere in the Talmud, Shmuel is described as having fixed the calendar for sixty years.

Chullin 95b

כתב שדר ליה עיבורא [Shmuel] wrote and sent to [R. Yochanan] the calendar
דשיתין שני ... intercalations for sixty years...

Palestinian Amora, Simon (fourth century) is also described as having calculated the calendar based on mathematics.

Talmud Yerushalmi, Sukkah 54b

רבי סימון מפקד לאילין ... Rabbi Simon, who fixed the calendar...

The exact dating for the general acceptance in the rabbinic community of a mathematically fixed calendar is not known. Hai Gaon (939-1038), the early-eleventh century leader of the academy in Pumbedita attributed the institution of a continuous

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ The history of second day *yom tov* is described in greater detail in chapter 3.

calendar to Hillel II (fourth century). This statement first appeared in a responsum that was later cited by Rabbi Avraham ben Hiyya in his *Sefer Ha'ibbur* composed in 1123.¹² The Talmud, however, makes no mention of Hillel II fixing the calendar. While the *Gemara*¹³ questions the relevancy of the practice of second day *yom tov* explaining “In our time the time of the calendar is known to us,” the *Gemara* does not describe how or when the practice was fixed (*Beitsa* 4b).¹⁴ Conflict over calendar reckoning during the Geonic period among the rabbinic and Jewish sectarian community puts into question how widely accepted the calendar was that the *Gemara* references.

The Geonic Period

The rabbinic calendar and the mathematical method in which it was reckoned finally became standardized in 922 by Saadia ben Yosef (d. 942). The fixing of the calendar and the triumph of Babylonian tradition only occurred after much controversy of which Saadia was at the heart. The Babylonian reckoning of the calendar found opposition from the rabbinic community in Palestine as well as the sectarian Karaite movement.

For the most part, the Babylonian rabbinic calendar and the Palestinian rabbinic calendar were identical. It was the practice of both communities that if the conjunction of the sun and moon which marked the beginning of the month of Tishrei occurred after noon, the beginning of that month would occur on the following day. There were three

¹² Pozanski, Samuel. “Ben Meir and the Origin of the Jewish Calendar.” *Jewish Quarterly Review*. Vol 10 (1898), 156.

¹³ The redactive voice of the Talmud, from around the sixth century.

¹⁴ This passage from the Babylonian Talmud will be described in greater detail in chapter 3.

days on which the month of Tishrei could not begin: Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday.¹⁵

If the conjunction of the sun and moon occurred after noon, thus causing Tishrei to fall on any of the above three days, the new month would be delayed by two days. Aaron ben Meir, the head of the Palestinian Yeshiva, asserted that the cut off should not occur precisely at noon, but rather thirty-five minutes and forty seconds later.¹⁶ In 921, this would have resulted in a two day schism between the Babylonian and Palestinian rabbinic communities. Clearly, this was not a dispute over thirty-five minutes, but rather Ben Meir trying to assert control of the Palestinian Community. Ultimately, the Babylonian community prevailed, the Palestinian community adopted the Babylonian method, and continuity was kept between the two communities.¹⁷

Unlike the Palestinian Yeshiva, Karaite calendar practice was radically different from rabbinic calendar practice. They rejected the use of mathematical intercalation altogether and would never reconcile with rabbinic calendar practice or the rabbinic community. The development of the Karaite calendar has its own unique history. The Karaites came together as a unified sectarian movement from the coalescence of many Jewish sectarian groups. These groups shared in their opposition towards rabbinic Judaism, but held disparate calendar practices.¹⁸

While the history of the Jewish calendar as told by rabbinic literature paints the picture of a generally smooth transition from direct moon observation to the adoption of mathematical intercalation, the dispute between Saadia and Ben Meir and the existence of

¹⁵ Poznanski, Samuel. "Calendar (Jewish)". *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*. Hastings, James (ed). Kessinger Publishing, 2003, 120.

¹⁶ *Ibid* 119.

¹⁷ The Saadia-Ben Meir dispute will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 2.

¹⁸ See chapter 2.

Jewish sectarian groups with unique calendars throughout the Rabbinic Period and early Geonic Period creates as alternative portrait of the history and acceptance of current Hebrew Calendar.

CHAPTER 2: THE CALENDAR OF THE KARAITE MOURNERS OF ZION

In this chapter I will explore the calendar practice of the Karaite Mourners of Zion, the Karaite community that lived in Palestine in the tenth and eleventh centuries. I will look at how calendar practice worked to uphold the ideology of this Karaite community, paying particular attention to how calendar practice helped to define this group against the Rabbanite community.

Before I discuss the details of calendar practice of the Karaite Mourners of Zion, I will discuss the early history of Karaism, the movement in which the Mourners of Zion emerged. This will move into a history of the Mourners of Zion in Palestine in the tenth and eleventh centuries and include a description of key figures in the community. Once historical background is laid, I will introduce elements of the ideology of the Mourners of Zion which include: scripturalism, centrality of Palestine, messianism, and asceticism.

The second part of this chapter will explain the details of calendar innovations made by early Karaites and upheld by the Mourners of Zion. I will then contextualize this calendar practice within the greater context of the history and ideology of the Karaite Mourners of Zion. While I believe that calendar practice worked to support the Mourners of Zion ideology, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of Karaite marriage documents that may reveal a disconnect between Karaite anti-Rabbanite ideology and the everyday interactions between Karaites and Rabbanites in Palestine during this period.

The Formation of Karaism

The scholarship on the history of the formation of Karaism has evolved in recent years as new primary sources have become available. Medieval manuscripts from the Middle East gathered by the Karaite leader Abraham Firkovich in the nineteenth century had been kept at the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg. Only in the past few years have these important documents become available to international Judaic studies scholars. These new documents have produced new interests in and new approaches to Karaite studies.¹⁹ Scholars of Karaism, like Fred Astern and Moshe Gil, seek to differentiate the historical self-narrative of Karaites from a critical history of the formation of Karaism. The historical self-narrative of the Karaites was formulated after the Karaite center moved from Palestine to Byzantium in the twelfth century.

A text from the twelfth century attributed to the Karaite Elijah ben Abraham describes Anan ben David (eighth century) as the founder of Karaism.²⁰ Elijah explains that Anan was in line to be the Babylonian exilarch, but his brother Hananiah received the title instead. A bitter Anan rallied the support of other Rabbanite dissidents and as a result was thrown in jail by Muslim authorities. During his imprisonment, Anan was able to win the favor of the caliph and subsequently established Karaism. It should be noted that Anan won the caliph's favor because of similarities in his calendar practice and Muslim calendar practice regarding the observation of the new moon.²¹

¹⁹ Polliack, Meira. *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to Its History and Literary Sources*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2003, xix.

²⁰ Nemoy, Leon. *Karaite Anthology: Excerpts from the Early Literature*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952, 4-5.

²¹ This text will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

Elijah's narrative and variations of this story found in other Karaite works functions as what Astern defines as the "sacred narrative" of the Karaites, meaning "their own believed truths."²² The Karaite community that existed in Palestine in the tenth and eleventh centuries, known as the Mourners of Zion, did not share the same self understanding. The Mourners of Zion's conception of history was shaped by their ideology concerning scripture. Early Karaites defined themselves by their rejection of Rabbinic Oral tradition and their sole adherence to biblical scripture. For this reason, the "biblical past was all the past that [the Mourners of Zion] needed."²³ Karaites, during the Golden Age, used the bible to interpret current events. This method, called *peshet*, was also utilized by the community that generated the Dead Sea Scrolls.²⁴ The messianic nature of the Mourners of Zion also attributed to their lack of interest in their historical roots; they were preoccupied with the activity of ushering in the future.²⁵

Critical historians reject the Karaite self-narrative for their scholarly purposes, although Anan ben David (or rather his lineage) does play a role in the formation of Karaism. While Anan ben David who lived in the eighth century may have been a dissident, it is Anan's grandson, Anan II—the son of Daniel ben Saul, living in the ninth century, who brings the House of Anan into a relationship with other sectarian groups. It is the coming together of sectarian groups which ultimately forms Karaism. Ananites were only one of several sectarian groups that coalesced into what became known as Karaism.

²² Astern, Fred. *Karaite Judaism and Historical Understanding*. Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2004, 9.

²³ Astern *Karaite Judaism* 78.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Astern *Karaite Judaism* 82.

Karaism came into being under Muslim Rule in the Middle East and is a product of a consolidation that took place in the region during the mid-seventh and eighth centuries. As a result of the Islamic conquest, rabbinic Judaism, which was centered in Babylonia, began to consolidate its power throughout the Middle East. At the same time, smaller Jewish communities with their own distinct practices existing in Egypt, the Levant, and Palestine found themselves in greater contact with rabbinic Judaism.²⁶ While some of these groups accepted rabbinic authority and the authority of the Babylonian Talmud, others were opposed to their leadership and Oral Law.

A similar phenomenon was simultaneously occurring in the Islamic world as leadership in the area consolidated and *shar'īa* law became normative. Muslim groups, such as the Khārijites, thought to retain their tribal identity and defined themselves against *shar'īa* leadership. Many of these groups, like proto-Karaite sects, shaped their identity around a return to scripture and a rejection of legal tradition.²⁷

The Islamic conquest was the catalyst for the formation of many small Jewish groups who defined themselves against Babylonian centered rabbinic leadership. These groups unified to form Karaism in the ninth century. Early Karaism incorporated the beliefs and practices of disparate groups. A crystallization of Karaite ideology took place between the late-ninth century and the end of the eleventh century as Karaite leadership converged in Palestine.

²⁶ Astern *Karaite Judaism* 25-26.

²⁷ Astern *Karaite Judaism* 68.

The Rise and Fall of the Mourners of Zion

Soon after Jewish sectarian groups unified and formed Karaism, many Karaite leaders in the diaspora called for a return to Zion. During this period of formation, settlement in Jerusalem was linked to messianic fervor.²⁸ Karaite leaders created their own quarter in Jerusalem in the late-ninth century. The group flourished in Jerusalem in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Much literature was produced during these two centuries including biblical commentaries, books of commandments, works of grammar and philosophy, and polemics against Rabbanites. Much of this literature constitutes the foundational canon for Karaism, thus this time period became known as the “Golden Age.”

Karaites living in Jerusalem are now referred to as the Mourners of Zion because of their active mourning for the fall of Jerusalem. The Mourners of Zion referred to themselves as the Community of Lilies (*shoshanim*). This name encapsulates this group of Karaites’ perceived messianic significance. The origin of the name stems from a reference to lilies in Psalms. Tenth century Karaite commentator Salmon Yeruḥim in his commentary on the Book of Psalms explains (as paraphrased by Yoram Erder):

Just as the flowering of the lily occurs after the end of the winter, so too the appearance in the historical arena of *tsadiqim* (righteous individuals)—who are compared to lilies—occurs at the end of the fourth kingdom, i.e., Islam, the last phase prior to the redemption.²⁹

A tension existed within Karaite discourse of the tenth and eleventh centuries around Muslim Rule. Settlement in Jerusalem was only made possible after the Islamic

²⁸ This will be discussed in greater detail latter in the chapter.

²⁹ Ben Yeruḥim, Salmon. *Commentary on Psalms: The Arabic Commentary of Salmon ben Yeroḥam the Karaite on the Book of Psalms Chapters 42-72*. Marwich, L. (ed). Philadelphia: Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1956, 97.

conquest. While in Jerusalem, Karaites describe favorable relations between their community and Islamic authorities. Daniel al-Qūmisī³⁰ (late-ninth century) attributes this favor to shared religious traditions, namely calendar practice: “they are favorable to those who fix the new month by lunar observation.”³¹ This same idea was seen in the twelfth century Karaite historical narrative attributed to Elijah ben Abraham. It was hard for Mourners of Zion to speak entirely sympathetically of Muslims given their messianic doctrine. Ultimately, at the End of Days, Karaite perception of Judaism had to prevail. Yefet ben ‘Eli (tenth century) tried to reconcile these two beliefs explaining that while other religions would be destroyed, Muslims would accept Judaism in the end of days and be spared from annihilation.³²

The fall of Muslim Rule in Palestine resulted in the exile of Karaites from Jerusalem marking the end of the Mourners of Zion and the end of the Golden Age of Karaism. The center of Karaism began to shift to the diaspora after the second half of the eleventh century with the Seldjuk conquest of Jerusalem in 1073. The community in Jerusalem was completely eradicated in the 1099 Crusade and the center of Karaism became Egypt.³³

³⁰ Note: Jacob Mann attributes this text to Daniel al-Qūmisī while Leon Nemoy asserts that more evidence is necessary to attribute the text to a specific author, however, he does agree that it was written by an early (ninth-century) member of the Mourners of Zion.

³¹ Nemoy, Leon. “Pseudo-Qumisian Sermon to the Karaites.” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*. 43 (1976), 78.

³² Erder, Yoram. “The Mourners of Zion: The Karaites in Jerusalem in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries.” *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to Its History and Literary Sources*. Polliack, Meira (ed). Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2003, 227.

³³ Astern *Karaite Judaism* 24.

Key Figures in the Mourners of Zion

Astern explains that while many messianic movements are lead by a charismatic leader, the Mourners of Zion focused its leadership on their future messiah.

Karaite attitudes with regard to leadership were redirected in society toward scholars, whose charisma was anything but activistic, and in the mythical sphere toward an unknown messiah of the future.³⁴

The following is a list of important Karaite scholars associated with the Mourners of Zion.

Daniel al-Qūmisī (late-ninth to early-tenth centuries) is best known for his call for Karaites to make *aliyah* and is one of the earliest Mourners of Zion. He settled in Jerusalem from the Province of Qūmis (present day Iran) in 880. Daniel al-Qūmisī is unique among early Karaite scholars because he wrote in Hebrew, rather than Judeo-Arabic.

The next generation of Karaite scholars during the Golden Age wrote biblical commentaries, books of commandments, and polemics against Rabbanites. Tenth century figures include: Sahl ben Maṣliaḥ, Salmon ben Yeruḥim, and Yefet ben ‘Eli. At the end of the tenth century and into the eleventh century, Karaites continued to write commentaries and polemics, but they also began to write works on grammar. Karaite scholars of the late-tenth and early-eleventh centuries include: Levi ben Yefet ha-Levi (the son of Yefet ben ‘Eli), Joseph Ibn Noah, Abū al-Faraj Harun, and Yūsuf al-Baṣīr. While Karaism began to decline in Jerusalem during the end of the eleventh century, Yesu’ah ben Yehudah wrote biblical commentary and legal works.

³⁴ Astern *Karaite Judaism* 94.

Ideology of the Mourners of Zion

Karaism was formed around a shared opposition to rabbinic Judaism. Early Karaite ideology called for a return to a life shaped solely by the *Tanakh*. A saying attributed to Anan ben David first seen in a commentary by Yefet ben 'Eli encapsulates early Karaite (or rather proto-Karaite) belief: "Seek diligently in the Torah, and do not rely on my opinion."³⁵ From the late-ninth century through eleventh century, the Mourners of Zion expanded the ideology of Karaism. Latter Karaites still worked to define themselves against Rabbinic Judaism; they continued to adhere to scripturalism but their beliefs were also characterized by the centrality of Palestine, messianism, and asceticism.

A call to the return to Zion was closely linked to the Karaite rejection of Oral Law. Daniel al-Qūmisī's preaching illustrates:³⁶

Now consider, our brethren in Israel, in your hearts, why has our Dispersion (*galut*) endured at such exceeding length, while the Dispersion of our forefathers in Babylon has lasted no more than seventy years? Yet our Dispersion is exceedingly long...know therefore that our forefathers knew the way of the precepts in the Lord's Torah, hence they know that they should return to the Land...Today, however, in our Dispersion, we serve the Lord according to man-made precepts learned by rote, and not according to the Lord's Torah.³⁷

The connection between Land and Torah extended to ideas of redemption. If one were to look to the Torah, they would learn from the First Exile and understand that in order to be redeemed, the Jewish people must return to the Land of Israel.

The call for immigration to Israel came soon after the formation of Karaism. Daniel al-Qūmisī was most outspoken in his appeal for *aliyah*, disseminating epistles to

³⁵ In Astern *Karaite Judaism* 78.

³⁶ See footnote 11.

³⁷ In Nemoy "Pseudo-Qumisian Sermon" 65.

Karaite communities throughout the diaspora. An unstable political and economic situation in the areas of Iraq and Iran at the end of the ninth century also resulted in Karaite migration to Palestine.³⁸ Not all Karaites relocated to Palestine, Qūmisī called for Karaites remaining in the *galut* to help fund Karaites who were able and willing to make the move.³⁹

Latter literature of the Mourners of Zion makes clear that living in the Land of Israel was much preferred, for God desired that the People of Israel keep God's commandments in Palestine, not in Exile. Yeft ben 'Eli's commentary on *Song of Songs* encapsulates this view:

It is said that those living in Exile are 'the vines,' and their sages are 'the blossoms.' And just as the sages of Palestine are more revered than those of the Exile in their knowledge, so too are all those who dwell in Palestine are more respected in their observance of religion than those living in Exile. Do you not see that it is said of those who dwell in Palestine 'green figs forming on the tree' referring to fruit that is beginning to ripen, while it is said of the people of the Exile 'and the vines are in blossom' because they have no fruit suitable for eating. The meaning of this is that those who dwell in Palestine are superior in their obedience to God, observance of the Sabbath and holidays, and purity with regard to eating and ritual cleanliness and impurity, whereas those living in Exile are inferior to them.⁴⁰

Not only were commandments kept in the Land of Israel preferable to those kept in the diaspora, as expressed by Yefet ben 'Eli, but certain commandments could only be kept through a presence in there, such as certain calendar practices and practices related to the mourning of the loss of the Temple in Jerusalem.⁴¹

Mourning practices adopted by the Karaites of Jerusalem were in opposition to rabbinic Judaism's dismissal of excessive mourning for the Temple in Jerusalem.

³⁸ Astern *Karaite Judaism* 66-67.

³⁹ Erder "The Mourners of Zion" 219.

⁴⁰ Erder "The Mourners of Zion" 217.

⁴¹ These practices will be discussed in greater detail latter in this chapter.

Mourners of Zion believed that joyous Temple practices that took place in Jerusalem when the Temple was standing should be replaced with overt mourning practices. The Community of Lilies created their own ceremonies for mourning that included the recitation of liturgical works about the destruction of the Temple while donning sack cloth; they also refrained from drinking wine and eating meat. Through these mourning practices, the Mourners of Zion not only rejected the Rabbanites complacency in the diaspora, they also critiqued the life that they had established in the diaspora. A return to Zion was also made with a call to discard “the wealth that was associated with it and the rabbinic community.”⁴²

The Mourners of Zion’s ideology discussed above (scripturalism, *aliyah*, mourning and asceticism) encompassed the most salient differences between rabbinic theology and their own. Rabbinic Judaism during the Geonic period was not a messianic movement. While the messiah existed in their philosophical discourse, they were not actively pursuing redemption. Practices of the Mourners of Zion all worked to rapidly usher in the End of Days. The return to properly keeping commandments as described in the *Tanakh*, the return to Zion, and the mourning of the Temple all worked towards appeasing God and ushering in the Messiah.

Calendar Practices of Mourners of Zion

The above section gave an overview of the ideology of the Mourners of Zion and demonstrated how their particular ideology worked to define themselves against rabbinic Judaism. One practice of the early Karaites that worked to distinguish themselves from

⁴² Astern *Karaite Judaism* 70.

Rabbanites, both ideologically and practically, was their distinct calendar practice.

Karaites living after the Mourners of Zion expressed an awareness of the role that the calendar played in helping shape their unique identity.

Elijah ben Abraham, a twelfth century Karaite living in Byzantium, authored one of the earliest sacred accounts of the formation of Karaism. In his account, ben Abraham describes Anan ben David to be the founder of Karaism. While this fact does not hold to be historically true, ben Abraham's perception that the calendar was the corner-stone of Karaite formation may have merit. Ben Abraham's account, in his own words:

Anan had a younger brother named Hananiah. Although Anan exceeded his brother in both learning and age, the contemporary Rabbanite scholars refused to appoint him exilarch, because of his great lawlessness and lack of piety. They therefore turned to his brother Hananiah, for the sake of the latter's great modesty, retiring disposition, and fear of Heaven, and they set him up as exilarch. Thereupon Anan was seized with wicked zeal—he and with him all manner of evil and worthless men from among the remnants of the sect of Zadok and Boethus; they set up a dissident sect—in secret, for fear of the Moslem government which was then in power—and they appointed Anan as their own exilarch.

On a certain Sunday, however, the affair was discovered by the government, and the order was given that Anan be imprisoned until the following Friday, when he was to be hanged on the gallows as a political rebel. In prison Anan came upon a Moslem scholar who was also confined there and was likewise to be hung on the same Friday, as a violator of the Mohammedan faith. This scholar advised Anan, saying, **“Are there not in the Law ordinances admitting of two contradictory interpretations?”** **“Indeed there are,”** answered Anan. **“Observe then,”** said the Moslem scholar, **“the interpretation accepted in the teaching of those who follow your brother, and take the other interpretation for yourself, providing that those who follow you will back you up in it.** Then give a bribe to the viceroy, so that you might perchance be permitted to speak in your defense, after which prostrate yourself before the caliph and say: **‘O my Lord the King! Did you set up my brother to rule over one religion or over two?’** Upon his relying: **‘Over one religion only,’** say to him further: **‘But I and my brother belong to two different religions!’** Of a certainty you will save yourself, providing you explain to him the difference between your religion and that of your brother, and providing your followers back you up. Say these things, and when the king hears them he will say nothing further about your execution.”

Anan understood also to deceive his own followers and said to them: “Last night Elijah the Prophet appeared before me in a dream and said to me, ‘You

deserve to be put to death for violating that which is written in the Law.’” He spoke thus to them in order to entice them with his crafty argumentation and out of fear for his life, so that he might save himself from a cruel death and might perpetuate his name in eternity. He also expended a great sum of money in bribes, until the king gave him permission to speak, whereupon he said, **“The religion of my brother employs a calendar based upon calculation of the time of the new moon and intercalation of leap years by cycles, whereas mine depends upon actual observation of the new moon and intercalation regulated by the ripening of new grain.”** Since the king’s religion likewise employed the latter method, Anan thus gained his favor and good will.”⁴³

The formation of the new religion is based on two distinct calendar practices: the actual observation of the new moon to determine the new month and the intercalation of the calendar regulated by the ripening of new grain.

These two calendar practices discussed in the twelfth century are first mentioned in the works of Benjamin Ben Moses Nahawendi who lived in Persia in the late-eighth and early-ninth centuries. The Mourners of Zion propagated and discussed these two practices throughout their literature beginning with Daniel al-Qūmisī (late-ninth century). The observation of the new moon and the observation of the grain (barley) harvest were specifically tied to the centrality of Palestine in the ideology of the Mourners of Zion. While calendar distinctions may have begun as a way for Karaites to distinguish themselves from Rabbanites, direct observation of the moon and grain in Palestine would also distinguish the Mourners of Zion from Karaites living in the diapsora during the ninth through the eleventh centuries.

Early Karaites, including the Mourners of Zion, held that observation of the moon by witnesses should determine the new month versus the custom of mathematical calculation preferred by the Rabbanites. This was a revival of Jewish calendar practice, rather than the establishment of a new one. Rabbinic Judaism had practiced the direct

⁴³ Nemoy *Karaite Anthology* 4-5.

observation of the new moon until the late fourth century. The Mishnah (Tractate *Rosh Hashanah*) describes the practice of direct observation in great detail.

The Mourners of Zion held that the practice of direct observation of the new moon was a return to practices established in the *Tanakh*. Yeshu'ah ben Yehudah who lived in Jerusalem in the second half of the eleventh century explained the Creation Story as the proof text for the direct observation of the new moon.⁴⁴ Genesis 1:14 reads: “God said, ‘Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night; they shall serve as signs for the set times—the days and the years.’” From this passage ben Yehudah derived that the lights of the sky, rather than mathematics should work to set time for the Jewish people.

An anonymous text found in the Cairo Geniza, attributed to a member of the Community of Lilies, refutes Rabbinic calendar practice of the time. Jacob Mann, in his 1921 analysis of this text “A Tract by an Early Karaite Settler in Jerusalem,” summarizes the disputation:

The author has much to say in disfavor of the ‘shepherds of the dispersion’ as the Rabbanite spiritual leaders are designated. They hallow neither Sabbath nor festivals; the first by reason of their laws which, according to him, are against God’s Torah, and the latter by their wrong calculation of the months. The Mishnah, *Rosh Hashanah* 2:2, is cited which embodies the privilege claimed by the Bet Din to fix the festivals at their discretion, be they in time or out of time.

It is noteworthy that the author of the text cites the Mishnah in his argument. While the Mourners of Zion do not believe in the authority of the Oral Law, they were comfortable using it to explain that the Rabbinites were not holding by practices that earlier rabbinic tradition derived from the *Tanakh*. While the explanation of practice found in the

⁴⁴ Magdi, Shmuel. “The Karaite Calendar: Sanctification of the New Moon by Sighting.” *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to Its History and Literary Sources*. Polliack, Meira (ed). Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2003, 607.

Mishnah is not necessary for determining the law from the *Tanakh*, in the instance of determining the new moon by observation, Karaites believed the Mishnah to be accurate.

While early Karaites held that they were restoring practices described by scripture, their practice of *aviv* (אָבִיב) appears to be a new innovation to Judaism. *Aviv* is commonly translated from the Hebrew as the season of spring, but Karaites interpreted it as “a *terminus technicus*...denoting freshly ripened ears of barley; the maturation of that crop in Palestine symbolized the advent of spring and, with it, of a new calendar-year.”⁴⁵ Based on their reading of passages relating to observance of the Passover holiday in Exodus and Deuteronomy, it was deemed mandatory to celebrate Passover during “the month of *aviv*.” Passages that describe this requirement are as follows:

Exodus 13:4

הַיּוֹם, אַתֶּם יֹצְאִים, בַּחֹדֶשׁ, הָאָבִיב. This day, you are going out, in the month of *aviv*.

Deuteronomy 16:1

שְׁמֹר, אֶת-חֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב, וְעִשִּׂיתָ פֶּסַח, Observe the month of *aviv*, and offer a
לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: כִּי בַחֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב, הוֹצִיאָךְ Passover sacrifice to the Eternal your God;
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִמִּצְרַיִם--לַיְלָה. for in the month of *aviv* the Eternal your
God brought you out of Egypt by night.

Exodus 23:15

אֶת-חַג הַמִּצּוֹת, תִּשְׁמֹר--שִׁבְעַת The feast of unleavened bread you shall keep; seven
יָמִים תֹּאכַל מִצּוֹת פֶּאֶשֶׁר צִוִּיתָךְ, days you will eat unleavened bread, as I have
לְמוֹעֵד חֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב, כִּי-בֹיֹצְאָתָךְ commanded you, at the time appointed in the month
מִמִּצְרַיִם... *aviv*—because in it you went out from Egypt...

Exodus 34:18

אֶת-חַג הַמִּצּוֹת, תִּשְׁמֹר--שִׁבְעַת They shall keep the feast of unleavened bread. Seven
יָמִים תֹּאכַל מִצּוֹת אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָךְ, days you will eat unleavened bread, as I have
לְמוֹעֵד חֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב: כִּי בַחֹדֶשׁ commanded you, at the time appointed in the month
הָאָבִיב, יֵצְאָתָּ מִמִּצְרַיִם. *aviv*, for in the month of *aviv* you went out from
Egypt.

⁴⁵ Ankori, Zvi. *Karaites in Byzantium: The Formative Years, 970-1100*. New York: AMS Press, 1968, 292.

While these verses make clear that we “were brought out of Egypt in the month of *aviv*,” the connection between *aviv* and the barley harvest does not appear in the above passages. Early Karaites interpreted *aviv* as a particular stage in the development of barley based on Exodus 9:31-32. The passage describes the destruction caused by the plague of hail which God inflicted upon the Egyptians:

<p>וְהַפְּשָׁתָה וְהַשְּׁעִי רָהָה, גִּכְתָּהּ: כִּי הַשְּׁעִי רָהָה אֶבִּיב, וְהַפְּשָׁתָה גִּבְעָה לִּי.</p>	<p>And the flax and the barley were smitten; for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was in bloom.</p>
<p>וְהַחֲטָה וְהַכֶּסְמֶת, לֹא גִבְּוּ: כִּי אֶפִּילָתָהּ, הִנָּה.</p>	<p>But the wheat and the spelt were not smitten; for they ripen late.</p>

From these biblical passages, early Karaites derived that the month of *Nisan* in which Passover falls, must coincide with the ripening of barley in the Land of Israel. A delayed barley harvest required the postponement of *Nisan* and thus a delay in the holidays thereafter. A delay in the barley harvest was described as a “leap year.” Not only was the Karaite calendar derived in a different manner than the Rabbanite calendar of the time, but the consequence of their derivation often resulted in the Karaite community observing festivals at different times than the Rabbanite community.

During the early period of the Mourners of Zion, community leaders, specifically Daniel al-Qūmisī, utilized the practice of *aviv* as a way to promote the centrality of Palestine. The practice of *aviv* required a Karaite presence in the Land of Israel. Karaites there would observe the barley harvest and disseminate information to Karaites living in the diaspora.

Aviv was described as one of the central characteristic in Elijah ben Abraham's account of Anan ben David's portrayal of Karaism:

The religion of my brother employs a calendar based upon calculation of the time of the new moon and intercalation of leap years by cycles, whereas mine depends upon actual observation of the new moon and intercalation regulated by the ripening of new grain.⁴⁶

Despite the weight put on this practice in the twelfth century, it was apparently not upheld by all Karaite communities during the tenth and eleventh centuries. Levi ben Yefet ha-Levi in his early-eleventh century work *The Book of Precepts* explained that there are three methods in which the Jewish community determined the month of *Nisan*.

Jewry is divided on that point [i.e., on the method of declaring the advent of the crucial month of *Nisan*] into three differing groups. The first group, comprising the majority community, are the Rabbanites, the followers of the *molad* [=the precalculated birth of the New Moon], who are acting [in this matter] on the basis of computation. This is close to *al-i'tidal* [=the equinox], i.e., the time when the sun enters the Constellation of the Ram [=Aries]. And they do not search for the *aviv* [i.e., for ripened barley] in conjunction with the beginning of their calendar-year. Thus it may happen that at one time the barley will mature prior to their [vernal] New Year, while another time it will tarry and appear later.

The second group consists of people in the Land of Shine'ar [=Babylonia] from among our brethren the Karaites. They follow the [computation of the vernal] equinox alone; yet, they stipulate certain conditions which are different from those stipulated by the Rabbanites. This is why we have listed this group as separated from the Rabbanites...Now, this second group does not inquire, nor search, for the *aviv* at all; [its members simply] wait and do [the proclamation of *Nisan*] when the sun reaches the Constellation of the Ram...

The adherents of the third group [i.e., the Palestinian-oriented Karaites] observe [the New Year] on the strength of *aviv* alone and they do not investigate [the position of] the sun at all.⁴⁷

According to Levi ben Yefet ha-Levi, the Babylonia Karaite community relied upon the Rabbanite calendar. He does not explain if this was for ideological or practical reasons.

⁴⁶ Nemoy *Karaite Anthology* 5.

⁴⁷ Ankori 303-304.

Zvi Ankori dates *The Book of Precepts* to 1006-1007.⁴⁸ Nathan Schur in his 1992 *History of the Karaites* proposes that after the Seldjuk capture of Palestine in 1073, it became difficult for Karaites in the diaspora to receive word of the observation of the *aviv* from the Community of Lilies. The Seldjuk capture of Palestine provides a practical reason as to why the Babylonian Karaite community relied on the Rabbanite calendar, however, Levi ben Yefer ha-Levi was writing many decades before political instability in the area of Palestine.

Further writings by Levi ben Yefet ha-Levi reveal that the Babylonian community may not have been keeping the custom of *aviv* because neither were the Mourners of Zion.

Now those who preceded us (following *aviv*) on the basis of their own actual acquaintance with, and knowledge of the seeds, since they themselves cultivated and inherited the soil. Thus, they used to inform each other (of the state of the crops) and (their prognosis) would be unquestionably correct. (Nowadays) all these things have become difficult for us, since all the land is not ours and most of us are incapable of recognizing the seed.⁴⁹

While the generation of Karaites that came to Jerusalem from abroad came with agricultural skills, the Community of Lilies were city dwellers and apparently did not have the necessary knowledge to determine the *aviv*.

Contextualizing Calendar Practice of the Mourners of Zion with their History and Ideology

As discussed above, early Karaites derived the calendar practices of direct observation of the new moon and *aviv* from the scripture. These two practices are in alignment with the ideology of scripturalism held by the Mourners of Zion, but more

⁴⁸ Ankori 303.

⁴⁹ Schur, Nathan. *Karaite Encyclopedia*. Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1995, 51.

significantly, these two calendar practices worked to actively promote other ideological components of tenth and eleventh century Palestinian Karaism. Calendar practice was central to the Mourners of Zion's belief in messianism and the centrality of Palestine. Daniel al-Qumisi explained in his writings that it was necessary to have a Karaite presence in the Land of Israel in order to properly determine the calendar and thus observe Jewish practice correctly. The proper adherence of the law would actively help to usher in a Messianic age.

Along with promoting ideology, these two calendar practices also worked to establish the Mourners of Zion as the central community of Karaites during the tenth and eleventh centuries. The dispersal of the observance of the new moon and *aviv* endorsed communication between Jerusalem and abroad. It also created an interdependence of diaspora Karaites on the Community of Lilies.

The Mourners of Zion came into existence just after disparate sects coalesced to form Karaism. While these groups shared a sense of scripturalism and an anti-Rabbanite stance, they did not all share the same calendar practice. For example, late-ninth century Babylonian Karaite Mīshawayh al-'Ukbarī actually accepted a solar rather than a lunar calendar. While he was not “deliberate about adhering to it in his own day,” he did endorse beginning festivals in the morning rather than in the evening among his circle of followers.⁵⁰ While primary sources from the early-eleventh century show that not all Karaite communities were following the practices of moon observation and *aviv*, the

⁵⁰ Erder, Yoram. “The Karaites and the Second Temple Sects.” *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to Its History and Literary Sources*. Polliack, Meira (ed). Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2003, 132.

Mourners of Zion were successful in promoting their calendar practice to be the perceived normative Karaite practice by the twelfth century, if not earlier.

The Calendar can be perceived as playing a political purpose for the Mourners of Zion among the greater Karaite community. It may also have been a way that the Mourners of Zion found political favor among the Muslim authority in Jerusalem as well. More than two centuries before Elijah ben Abraham wrote of Anan ben David winning over Muslim authority with the shared use of a lunar calendar, Daniel al-Qūmisī described the same phenomenon in his *Igeret* to Karaites of the diaspora calling for *aliyah*.

Now you are living in the midst of the kingdom of Ishmael, which loves those who fix the new moon by direct observation. Why, then, are you afraid of the Rabbanites? God will surely come to your assistance. Arise, therefore, draw your strength from the Law of the Lord, *strengthen ye hands that are weak* (Isa. 35:3), endeavor skillfully to teach all Israel the ordinances of the Lord, and admonish them with words of peace, not with quarreling and strife, as it is written: *And they who have understanding among the people shall instruct many...and many shall join them* (Dan. 11:33-34), this being a reference to the kingdom of Ishmael, for with it the Lord broke the staff of the Rabbanites and removed it from over you.⁵¹

While al-Qūmisī does not explicitly describe the political favor that he and his Karaite community held in Jerusalem, the messianic overtones of this text suggest that Muslims supported the Karaite presence in Palestine over a Rabbanite presence. Al-Qūmisī believed that the Muslim favor of the Karaites was a Divine sign that they were the community, not the Rabbanites, which were properly keeping the Jewish law.

⁵¹ Nemoy *Karaite Anthology* 38-39.

Calendar and the Relationship between the Mourners of Zion and Rabbanites

Even though the Mourners of Zion thought to separate themselves from Rabbinic Judaism throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries through ideology, Karaites in Jerusalem and in the diaspora continued to interact with Rabbanites and rabbinic Judaism. Interactions took place on a philosophical and political level through the discourse of disputations. Interactions took place on a personal and communal level, as well. The Community of Lilies occupied their own quarter in Jerusalem in the south-eastern quarter of the city walls at the time.⁵² Archeological evidence upholds that the Karaites occupied their own “neighborhood,” however, living quarters in Jerusalem were tight; Karaites and Rabbanites could not help but interact with one another on a personal level. The communities’ distinct calendar practices help to reveal the nature of the relationship between Rabbanites and Karaites during this time.

While modern historians are mainly left with heated disputation literature between Karaites and Rabbanites that begin to appear in the tenth century, the early period of Karaite settlement in Jerusalem may have been the tensest between Karaites and Rabbanites. Calendar disputes appear to have resulted in physical violence and murder in the year 870. Eleventh century Rabbanite, Abraham Ibn Daub, describes that every year on *Hoshana Rabba* the Rabbanite Yeshiva in Jerusalem would convene on the Mount of Olives and publicly excommunicate the Karaites, explicitly because of their method of calendar reckoning. Aaron ben Meir, head of the Palestinian Yeshiva, writing in the first quarter of the tenth century holds that one of his relatives, Rabbi Musa, was killed during

⁵² Ben-Shammai, Haggai. “The Karaites.” *The History of Jerusalem: The Early Muslim Period 638-1099*. Prawer, Joshua and Haggai Ben Shammai (eds). Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1996, 208.

a confrontation between Karaites and Rabbanites at one of these public excommunications.⁵³

The calendar was at the forefront of disputes in the greater Jewish community during the time of Aaron ben Meir. The head of the Palestinian Yeshiva is most known for his calendar dispute with Saadia Gaon. In 922, a controversy arose between the Aaron ben Meir's Palestinian Yeshiva and the Babylonian academies concerning the calendar. While both communities practiced intercalation, each used a different method. This particular year, the difference in practice would have resulted in a two day discrepancy between the Rabbanite communities of Palestine and Babylonia commemoration of holidays. The controversy, revolving around calendar, highlighted a power struggle between the Rabbanite communities of the Land of Israel and the diaspora. Saadia argued the side of the Babylonian community whose opinion ultimately prevailed. Saadia's role in this dispute ultimately led to his appointment as Gaon.

Ruth Tsoffar in her work *The Strains of Culture: An Ethno-Reading of Karaite Jewish Women* notes, "it is revealing...that Saadia, the Karaites' most vocal opponent, was also the person who fixed the Rabbanite calendar."⁵⁴ Saadia's biography itself is an antithesis to the ideology of the Mourners of Zion. He was born in Egypt in the end of the ninth century and died in Baghdad in 942 but spent a considerable amount of time in the Land of Israel. After his success in his disputation against ben Meir, Saadia moved to Sura in 928 to take the appointment as head of the academy, *gaon*.

⁵³ *Ibid* 218.

⁵⁴ Tsoffar, Ruth. *The Strains of Culture: An Ethno-Reading of Karaite Jewish Women*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006, 245.

Saadia took pains to refute the Karaite understanding of calendar. The Mourners of Zion along with Karaites who lived well after the time of Saadia Gaon would engage in disputation literature countering his arguments and attacks. Saadia's tactic against the Karaite calendar was to establish the rabbinic method of mathematical calendar practice to ancient times. Samuel Pozanski explains Saadia's position:

Saadia asserted that the new moons has always been fixed by calculation, and that they commanded summoning witnesses only after Zadok and Boethos and others had maintained that the Torah enjoined to fix the new moons by observation; and that they did so for the purpose of showing that calculation and observation coincided.⁵⁵

Saadia describes Karaite calendar reckoning as follows:

We have in our midst yet another class of people, who regulate their festivals according to the [first appearance of the] new moon, and believe nevertheless that they proceed after the methods of the Rabbanites. [They say] that the first teachers among the Rabbanites proceeded in the same way, that they convened an assembly of the people, and caused witnesses to come, whom they cross-examined. If they approved of the evidence, they sanctified [the new month], and proclaimed: 'Sanctified!' In the same way they kindled, when they were certain of the first appearance of the moon.⁵⁶

Both Saadia and the early Karaites believed that early Rabbanites did participate in the practice of direct moon observation as described in Mishnah, *Rosh Hashanah*. But, Saadia believed that the Karaites did not understand that rabbinic direct moon observation was in fact just a back-up to the more ancient custom of calculation. Saadia's belief in the origin of the mathematical calculation of the calendar was not only disputed by Karaites, but also by fellow Rabbanites, like Hai Gaon (939-1038) who deemed this argument weak.

Saadia exercised the method of scripturalism in his argument against the Karaite notion of *aviv*. Levi ben Yefet, in his *Book of Precepts* refutes Saadia's claim that *aviv* in relationship to barley, as seen in Exodus 9:31-32, refers to the ripening of barley in Egypt, not in the Land of Israel. Zvi Ankori in his analysis of Saadia's stance of *aviv*

⁵⁵ Nemoy *Karaite Anthology* 124.

⁵⁶ *Ibid* 118-119.

points out that not only was Saadia opposed to Karaism, he found particular offense in practices that upheld Palestino-centric ideology.⁵⁷ The disputes between Saadia and the Karaites and Saadia and ben Meir not only reveal contention over the calendar during this time, they also reveal a high level of threat to the authority of Babylonian Rabbanites coming from both Karaites and Palestinian Rabbanites.

The vast majority of the historical evidence that evokes calendar practice speaks of irreconcilable differences between the Mourners of Zion and Rabbanites. Olszowy-Scghlanger in her work *Karaite Marriage Documents from the Cairo Geniza*, asserts that “the actual differences between Karaites and Rabbanites concerned more theoretical and philosophical issues than matters of daily life.”⁵⁸ She reaches this conclusion based on marriage contracts (*kettubot*) that reveal that mixed marriages between Karaites and Rabbanites took place in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These documents all “contain special stipulation clauses intended to guarantee the mutual tolerance and respect of different dietary and calindrical requirements.”⁵⁹

While Olszowy-Scghlanger does not refer to any mixed marriage *kettubot* from Palestine and the Community of Lilies specifically, Jacob Mann, cites a nearly identical stipulation found in a Jerusalem *kettubah* dated to 1028-29 and an eleventh century *kettubah* from Ramlah, Palestine. The stipulation reads:

And further they discussed and both of them agreed to observe the festivals of God by the way of lunar observation and through the finding of *aviv* in the Land of Israel.⁶⁰

The *kettubot* analyzed by Olszowy-Scghlanger and Mann reveal a power dynamic dominated by Karaites. All the known *kettubot* between Karaites and Rabbanites were composed in Hebrew, which was a requirement of the Karaites, not Rabbanites who preferred marriage documents composed in Aramaic. Documents between Karaite women and Rabbanite men (only surviving from Egypt) explain that it was her calendar and dietary rights, not his, that were upheld.

⁵⁷ Ankori 300.

⁵⁸ Olszowy-Schlanger, Judith. *Karaite Marriage Documents From the Cairo Geniza: Legal Tradition and Community Life in Medieval Egypt and Palestine*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 1998, 7.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Ankori 295.

Communal documents reveal that despite poor philosophical relationships between Rabbanites and Karaites during the tenth and eleventh centuries, the two groups had amicable enough relationships to marry one another. Like the philosophical disputes preserved from the period, communal texts reveal that Karaism posed a real threat to Rabbanic Judaism in the Land of Israel and beyond. These texts show that perhaps Karaites even dominated Rabbinic Judaism during the time.

CHAPTER 3: THE ATTITUDE OF THE EARLY REFORM MOVEMENT IN GERMANY TOWARDS THE CALENDAR PRACTICE OF SECOND DAY *YOM TOV* IN THE DIASPORA

In this chapter, I will explore the attitude of the early Reform Movement in Germany towards the calendar practice of keeping a second day of festivals (*yom tov*) in the diaspora (*shel galut*). The rich discussion of this calendar practice that took place among early Reform leaders helps one to better understand the early European Reform Movement's desired relationship with other Jewish communities of their time. Before I analyze the conversation that took place around second day *tom tov* among early Reformers, I will provide background information on the formation of Reform Judaism, their early ideology, and the history of the calendar practice of second day *yom tov shel galut*.

Formation of Reform Judaism

There were two interconnected catalysts for the emergence of the Reform Movement in Germany in the mid-nineteenth century: new social conditions for Jews created by the Emancipation in western and Central Europe and new cultural conditions for Jews created by Enlightenment thinking. Arnold Eisen explains in the introduction to his book *Rethinking Modern Judaism: Ritual, Commandment, Community*:

Emancipation meant the opening of doors long closed to Jews, the reality or promise of political and economic opportunities of which earlier generations could not even dream, and the pursuit of new and multiple options by individuals suddenly cut loose from the integral communities which had long anchored Jews and constrained them. *Enlightenment*...was no less overwhelming. It entailed a

new language on the lips, a new set of furniture for the mind, and a radical questioning of truths long held to be self-evident.⁶¹

A desire to integrate into a non-Jewish world and a new way of thinking which stemmed from studies in secular universities both led early Reformers to work to create a new Jewish movement. The first Reformers sought to reform Judaism in light of Emancipation and the Enlightenment.

The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century intellectual movement of the Enlightenment in Western Europe advocated reason as the ultimate source of authority over tradition and religion. Moses Mendelssohn refers to the Enlightenment as a process by which man was educated in the use of reason. Enlightenment thought held that reason was a “universal attribute of man.” Universal rights and equality of all men were an extension of the centrality of reason.⁶²

The French Revolution broadened the intellectual movement of the Enlightenment into a political movement. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizen officially emancipated the Jews of France in 1789. As Napoleon’s army moved east, the rights of Jews were granted throughout Central Europe. It should be noted that the full legal emancipation of the Jews of Central Europe was not completed until the unification of Germany between 1869 and 1871. Despite not having full legal rights and social acceptance, the acculturation of Jews in western and Central Europe was rapid.

In the late eighteenth century, European Jewry began entrance into secular institutions of higher learning. As a result, Jews integrated into the secular world,

⁶¹ Eisen, Arnold. *Rethinking Modern Judaism: Ritual, Commandment, Community*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, 1.

⁶² Mendes Flohr. Paul and Jehudah Reinharz (Eds). *Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1995, 54.

professionally speaking, and began the process of integrating secular thought into their beliefs about Judaism. The German Jew, Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) was the first Jew to fully win acceptance into the world of secular academia. He was a full fledged participant of the Western Enlightenment, which led him to be considered the “father” of the *Haskalah*—the Jewish Enlightenment movement. While Mendelssohn accepted Enlightenment thinking, he did not change his observant religious practice based on new ways of thinking. He did, however, pave the way for religious reform in Judaism, although he himself was by no means a reformer.

While some Jews who entered the non-Jewish world kept their observant practice like Mendelssohn, Gunther Plaut in his work *The Rise of Reform Judaism* explains that many Jews during this time chose to abandon Judaism completely:

Some [Jews], as might be expected, chose this moment to escape altogether from the burden of being Jews, and for a time it appeared as if the flight might assume epidemic proportions.⁶³

Jews reacted to this perceived threat to Jewish survival in different ways. An Ultra-Orthodox movement emerged which called for the complete separation between Jews and non-Jews from a social perspective. Neo-Orthodox Jewry led by Rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer (1820-1899) and Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) emulated Mendelssohn’s example, partaking in secular society while upholding tradition. The Neo-Orthodox movement did not remain entirely static; it did make some aesthetic reforms to customs of dress and worship. The early Reform movement wanted to align Jewish thinking with the thinking of the Enlightenment in order to create a Judaism that would

⁶³ Plaut, Gunther. *The Rise of Reform Judaism: A Sourcebook of its European Origins*. New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1963, xiv.

remain relevant and viable. Early Reformers, like Neo-Orthodox, sought to sustain Judaism in a rapidly changing world.

While the Jews of France were the first in Europe to receive political emancipation. The social acceptance of Moses Mendlessohn and brisk urbanization and industrialization were responsible for the Reform Movement taking root in Germany rather than western Europe.⁶⁴ The first religious reforms to occur in Germany were practical and not ideological and were led by lay-leaders rather than religious figures. The earliest Reformers were most concerned with integrating into secular society and looked to rid Judaism of ritual and thought that inhibited them from doing so. The ideas of an ethnic and national Jewish identity were eliminated to enable Jews to become full German citizens.

Organized effort to reform Judaism came with the founding of the first Reform congregation in Hamburg in 1817, the New Israelite Temple Association. While the process of reform of the New Israelite Temple Association was systematic, it was still instituted by lay leaders. Changes made included greater attention to decorum in services, the move of Shabbat services from Friday evening and Saturday morning to Sunday, and a new prayer book whose liturgy eliminated the concepts of a personal Messiah and a national Jewish identity.⁶⁵

The Reform Movement in Germany emerged as a religious ideological movement in the 1830s and 1840s. During these two decades, secularly educated rabbis came together to discuss, debate, and shape the nature, practice, and thought of a new Judaism reformed by the thinking of the Enlightenment. Much of the public shaping of the

⁶⁴ *Ibid* xiv-xv.

⁶⁵ Mendes-Flohr 157.

Reform Movement took place at rabbinical conferences held by rabbis who endorsed religious reform in Brunswick in 1844, Frankfurt in 1845 and in Breslau in 1846.

Ideology of Early Reform

The two catalysts for the formation of the Reform Movement in the mid-nineteenth century, Emancipation and Enlightenment, while interconnected, affected Reform ideology, and subsequently its practice, in different ways. Emancipation allowed the Jews of western Europe entrance into secular society, however, aspects of traditional Judaism such as dietary restrictions and the prohibition to work on Jewish festival days, made it difficult for Jews to fully enter and engage in the secular world on a social and professional level. An ideology of integration was behind both lay-led and rabbinic sponsored religious reform.

Changes to religious practice were by no means exclusively motivated by a desire to assimilate into western culture. Many early Reformers made changes to religious practices that were rooted in a newly formed religious ideology influenced by Enlightenment thinking. Enlightenment thinking required *maskilim*, members of the Jewish Enlightenment, to question the supreme authority of religion, integrate reason and scientific practice into their understanding of Jewish history and tradition, and reconcile concepts of Jewish particularism and choseness with the universalism of the Enlightenment from which Jews ultimately won their emancipation.

The integration of Enlightenment thinking into early Reform ideology ranged from moderate to radical. The ideology of Zacharias Frankel (1801-1875) falls into the moderate camp. Frankel supported “historical Judaism.” He fully supported the

integration of scientific research into Jewish tradition, but maintained the authority of traditional Jewish belief and practice. Frankel publicly resigned from the second Rabbinical Council in Frankfurt in 1854; he was unable to reconcile the question raised of maintaining *some* Hebrew in the prayer book with his concept of Historical Judaism. Within his ideology, Hebrew played a significant role in the historical development of the Jewish people and Jewish tradition and should remain an integral part of the prayer service.

On the other end of the spectrum was the Frankfurt Society of the Friends of Reform which was founded in 1842. Their proposed statement of principles was:

1. We recognize the possibility of unlimited progress in Mosaism.
2. The collection of controversies, dissertations, and prescriptions commonly designated by the name Talmud possesses for us no authority either from the dogmatic or the practical standpoint.
3. A Messiah who is to lead the Israelites back to the land of Palestine is neither expected nor desired by us; we know no fatherland expect that to which we belong by birth or citizenship.⁶⁶

Mosaism, unlike Frankel's Historical Judaism, not only rejected the authority of the Oral Law, but rejected the Oral Tradition completely, taking an approach reminiscent of the Karaites. Frankel's Historical Judaism would become the foundation of the Conservative Movement. The radical reform of Mosaism was only supported by a small minority of Jews at the emergence of the Reform Movement, and ultimately did not prevail.⁶⁷

The themes addressed in the platform of the Frankfurt Society of the Friends of Reform delineated the main areas of Reformer's ideological innovation: the reformation of Judaism, the authority of tradition, and messianism in light of universalism. First and foremost, early Reformers needed to believe that they had the right to make changes to

⁶⁶ Plaut 52.

⁶⁷ *Ibid* 95.

Jewish belief and practice. Moderate Reformers believed that change must be rooted in Jewish tradition while radicals believed that they, as men imbued with capacity of reason, had the right to reform traditional Jewish practice.

Early Reformers welcomed the scientific study of Judaism, *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, but all continued to maintain that “the Bible was God-given, a divine instrument that was to guide the Jews for all time.”⁶⁸ As opposed to focusing on the legal aspects of the *Tanakh*, they highlighted Prophetic teachings. Jacob Louis in his article “Modernization and Its Discontents: The Jewish Enlightenment and the Emergence of the Reform Movement,” explains how Prophetic Judaism aligned with Enlightenment thinking:

The Reformers understood Judaism as “ethical monotheism,” with its institutions not as divine laws but as human means of furthering this ideal until it became the religion of all mankind.⁶⁹

For some early Reformers, infusing Judaism with Enlightenment thinking not only had the ability to make Judaism relevant and viable, but it could also advance Enlightenment thinking in general.

The holy purpose of advancing the Enlightenment through Judaism was linked to the radical Reformers’ concept of Messianism. While early Reformers rejected the concept of an individual Messiah,⁷⁰ they believed that the Messianic age was imminent

⁶⁸ *Ibid* xviii-xix.

⁶⁹ Jacobs, Louis. “Modernization and Its Discontents: The Jewish Enlightenment and the Emergence of the Reform Movement.” In *Jewish Religion: A Companion*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1995, 4.

⁷⁰ Maimonides (1135-1205 C.E.) codified the belief in a personal messiah from the Davidic line in his Thirteen Principles of Faith written in his commentary on the Mishnahh (tractate Sanhedrin, chapter 10).

and that by embracing the Enlightenment though Judaism, they had the ability to hasten the coming of the Messianic age. Gunther Plaut explains this phenomenon:

In the West, Jews detected the signs of God's Kingdom all about them. Social and political idealism abounded. Whether or not God would send His special servant, it was clear that men were on their way to smooth His way. They themselves would lay the foundations for the Kingdom; they themselves would bring inventions; the earth was becoming smaller; nations were coming closer to the vision which Israel's prophets had seen...Its Messianic sweep expressed itself in an all-pervasive optimism, a belief in the perfectibility of the human race—not in the far distant future, but here and now. Reform's Messianism had urgency; it was divinely impatient and often inaccessible to the counsels of orderly and organic progress. Like all truly revolutionary movements, it wanted salvation *now*. Once the goal was sighted, there was no halting at the post of tradition.⁷¹

The Messianic fervor of early Reformers in Germany was diminished with the 1848 Revolution when groups of Christians fought against Jewish emancipation with violence. Jews lost some of their faith in the Enlightenment principle of brotherhood.

While restrictions against Jews were lifted in many German States, emancipation was not easily or quickly won and anti-Jewish sentiments rather than diminish, came to the forefront.

After the failure of the 1848 revolutions...Reform proceed[ed] with a new, slower, and more deliberated gait. Its Messianic enthusiasm had become tempered with the disappointment in quick political and social solutions.⁷²

Despite set-backs, the move to reform Judaism and the formation of the Reform Movement in the 1830s and 1840s had left an indelible mark on the Jewish communities of Germany and subsequently western Europe and the United States.

⁷¹ Plaut xvi.

⁷² *Ibid.*

History of the Calendar Practice of Second Day *Yom* in the Diaspora

Innovations made by early reformers included changes to the traditional Jewish calendar. The debate to abolish the diaspora calendar practice of celebrating the second day of festivals (*yom tov*) encompassed both an integrationist ideology and an ideology influenced by Enlightenment thinking. The debate over the practice of second day *yom tov* in Germany in the early to mid-nineteenth century is significant because the debate not only occurred in the Reform milieu, but in the traditionalist camp as well.

The practice of keeping a second day of festivals in the diaspora is, in and of itself, an example of how Jewish practice and reasoning for ritual has developed over time. There is no mention of keeping two days of holidays in the *Tanakh*. The dates and prohibition of work for festivals of Passover, Shavuot, Sukkot, and Rosh Hashanah, of which the practice of two days in the diaspora applies, are established in the books Leviticus and Numbers.

Passover: Leviticus 23:5-8; Numbers 28:16-25

ה בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן, בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ-
בֵּין הָעֶרְבָּיִם: פֶּסַח, לַיהוָה. וּבַחֲמִשָּׁה
עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה, חַג הַמִּצּוֹת לַיהוָה:
שִׁבְעַת יָמִים, מִצּוֹת תֹּאכִלוּ. ז' בַּיּוֹם,
הָרִאשׁוֹן, מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ, יִהְיֶה לָכֶם; כָּל-
מְלָאכָת עֲבֹדָה, ל' אֵל תַּעֲשׂוּ. ח' וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם
אֹשֶׁה לַיהוָה, שִׁבְעַת יָמִים; בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי
מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ, כָּל-מְלָאכָת עֲבֹדָה ל' א
תַּעֲשׂוּ.

5 In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, there shall be a passover offering to Adonai. **6** And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto Adonai; You shall eat unleavened bread for seven days. **7** On the first day you shall celebrate a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations. **8** Seven days you shall make offerings by fire to Adonai. The seventh day shall be a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations.

טז וּבַחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן, בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם--לַחֹדֶשׁ: פֶּסַח, לַיהוָה. יִזְ וּבַחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה, חָג: שִׁבְעַת יָמִים, מִצּוֹת יֹאכֵל. יח בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן, מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ: כָּל-מְלָאכָת עֲבֹדָה, לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ... **כ**ה וּבַיּוֹם, הַשְּׂבִיעִי--מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ, יִהְיֶה לָכֶם: כָּל-מְלָאכָת עֲבֹדָה, לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ.

16 In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, there shall be a passover sacrifice to Adonai, **17** And on the fifteenth day of that month a festival. Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days. **18** The first day shall be a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations...**25** And on the seventh day shall be a sacred occasion for you: you shall not work at your occupations.

Shavuot: Leviticus 23:21; Numbers 28:26

כא וּקְרַאתֶם בְּעֶצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם--כָּל-מְלָאכָת עֲבֹדָה, לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: חֻקַּת עוֹלָם בְּכָל-מוֹשְׁבֵי תִיכֶם, לְדֹר וָדֹר תִּיכֶם.

21 On that same day you shall hold a celebration; it shall be a sacred occasion for you; you shall not work at your occupations. This is a law for all time in all your settlements, throughout the ages.

כו וּבַיּוֹם הַבְּכוֹרִים, בְּהַקְרִיבְכֶם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה לַיהוָה--בִּשְׁבַּע תִּיכֶם: מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם, כָּל-מְלָאכָת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ.

26 On the day of the first fruits, your Feast of Weeks, when you bring an offering of new grain to Adonai, you shall observe a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations.

Sukkot: Leviticus 23:34-36; Numbers 29:12-35

לד דִּבֶּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, לֵאמֹר: בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם, לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׂבִיעִי הַזֶּה, חָג הַסֻּכּוֹת שִׁבְעַת יָמִים, לַיהוָה. **לה** בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן, מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ: כָּל-מְלָאכָת עֲבֹדָה, לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ. **לו** שִׁבְעַת יָמִים, תִּקְרִיבוּ אֲשֶׁה לַיהוָה; בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׂמִינִי מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אֲשֶׁה לַיהוָה, עֲצָרַת הוּא--כָּל-מְלָאכָת עֲבֹדָה, לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ.

34 Say to the Israelite people: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month there shall be the Feast of Booths to Adonai [to last] seven days. **35** The first day shall be a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations; **36** Seven days you shall bring offerings by fire to Adonai. On the eighth day you shall observe a sacred occasion and bring an offering by fire to Adonai; it is a solemn gathering: you shall not work at your occupations.

יב וּבַחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׂבִיעִי, מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם--כָּל-מְלָאכָת עֲבֹדָה, לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ; וְחָג תֶּחֱגַג לַיהוָה, שִׁבְעַת יָמִים... **לה** בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׂמִינִי--עֲצָרַת, תִּהְיֶה לָכֶם: כָּל-מְלָאכָת עֲבֹדָה, לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ.

12 On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, you shall observe a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations.—Seven days you shall observe a festival of Adonai...**35** On the eighth day you shall hold a solemn gathering; you shall not work at your occupations.

Rosh Hashanah: Leviticus 23:24-25; Numbers 29:1

כד דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, לֵאמֹר:
בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ,
יִהְיֶה לָכֶם שַׁבָּתוֹן--זִכְרוֹן תְּרוּעָה,
מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ. **כה** כָּל-מְלָאכָת
עֲבֹדָה, לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ; וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם
אֹשֶׁה, לַיהוָה.

24 Speak to the children of Israel, saying: In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts. **25** You shall not work at your occupations; and you shall bring an offering by fire to Adonai.

א וּבַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ, מִקְרָא-
קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם--כָּל-מְלָאכָת עֲבֹדָה, לֹא
תַעֲשׂוּ: יוֹם תְּרוּעָה, יִהְיֶה לָכֶם.

1 In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations. You shall observe a day when the horn is sounded.

While the dating and practices established for these four holidays may not be clear in light of modern Jewish practice, it is clear that the commemoration of sacred occasions were to be observed by the abstention from one's occupation. It is also clear that the abstention from work occurs on the first day and last day of Passover, Sukkot, and the day of Shavuot and Rosh Hashanah. There is no mention of abstaining from work for two days at the beginning or end of holidays.

Modern historians do not know the exact dating of the innovation of second day *yom tov*. The reasons for the need to establish the practice can be retraced through secondary sources. Mishnah *Rosh Hashanah* describes the practice of ascertaining the first day of the month through direct observation of the new moon. This was done by the Rabbinic Court in the Land of Israel. Once the *Sanhedrin* had observed the new moon, word was spread throughout the diaspora through the use of fire signals and/or messengers.

Solomon B. Freehof explains the scientific need for direct observation of the new moon before mathematical intercalation of the calendar was established in the Jewish community. It was difficult to predict when the new month would begin because it takes the moon 29.5 days to cycle around the earth.

Since a new month cannot be begun in the middle of a day, it was uncertain whether the half day belonged to the old month or the new (i.e., whether the old month should be twenty-nine days or thirty days).⁷³

The practice of keeping two days of festivals was established in the diaspora because it apparently became difficult for communities to receive word of the announcement of the new moon and the new month from Jerusalem. Communities outside of the Land of Israel began to keep two days of festivals in order to ensure that they were keeping the festival on its correct day.

But even after the calendar was mathematically fixed during the Amoraic period (third to sixth centuries),⁷⁴ diaspora communities continued to uphold the practice of keeping two days of holidays. The Talmud questions why communities would continue to keep two days of holidays even though the factor of uncertainty of date was eliminated by the mathematical fixing of the calendar.

⁷³ Freehof, Solomon B. *Reform Jewish Practice and Its Rabbinic Background*. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1963, 16.

⁷⁴ See Chapter 1 for greater detail in the history of the mathematical fixing of the calendar.

דהאידינא ידעינן בקביעא דירחא וקא עבדינן
תרי יומי אמר אביי כותיה דרב מסתברא
דתנן בראשונה היו משיאין משואות
משקלקלו הכותים התקיננו שיהו שלוחין
יוצאין ואילו בטלו כותים עבדינן חד יומא
והיכא דמטו שלוחין עבדינן חד יומא והשתא
דידעינן בקביעא דירחא מאי טעמא עבדינן
תרי יומי משום דשלחו מתם הזהירו במנהג
אבותיכם בידיכם זמנין דגזרו ואתי
לאקלקולי

In our time the time of the calendar is known to us, and nevertheless we hold in exile two days of festival. Abaye, however, said: It seems to me that Rav is correct in his opinion, and our keeping of two days of festival in exile is merely because a message was sent to us from the West: Take heed of the customs of your ancestors, as it can happen that the government might forbid the keeping of festivals, and the exact date might be forgotten (after the government should retract the command).⁷⁵

While the Talmud recognizes that continuing to keep two days of festivals in the diaspora after the establishment of the fixed calendar may seem unnecessary, the *gemara* gives two reason why the tradition should be upheld: 1) because it was the tradition of their ancestors, and 2) in case the tradition of fixing the calendar would be forgotten as a result of persecution by a government.

Interpreters of Jewish law throughout the Middle Ages focused on different aspects of the Talmud's interpretation of second day *yom tov*. Rashi (1040-1105), in his Talmudic commentary to *Beitsa 4b*, focused on the concept of government persecution.

וקסעתי אלש - הרזג תוכלמה ירזג
מכמ רוביעה דוס חכתשיו, הרוחב
ילוקלקל יתאו. אמוי דח ימנ דבעתו
רסח אלמו אלמ רסח תושעלו.
חספב קמח ולכאתו.

If the rulers make a proclamation forbidding the study of Torah, all knowledge of the secret of intercalation will be lost and if you observe only one day, you may come to transgress and eat *chametz* during Passover.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Translation adapted from: Michael L. Rodkinson (1918).

⁷⁶ Translation from: Katz, Jacob. *Divine Law in Human Hands: Case Studies in Halakhic Flexibility*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1998, 257.

Maimonides (1135-1204) in his *Mishneh Torah* excludes the risk of government persecution and focuses on the upholding of the practice of the second day of festivals in the diaspora because the tradition of one's ancestors should be upheld.

Hilkhoh Kiddush Hachodesh 5:5

<p>בזמן הזה שאין שם סנהדרין, ובית דין של ארץ ישראל קובעין על חשבון זה, היה מן הדין שיהיו בכל המקומות עושין יום טוב אחד, אפילו המקומות הרחוקות שבחוזה לארץ כמו בני ארץ ישראל-- שהכול על חשבון אחד סומכין וקובעין; אבל תקנת חכמים היא, שייזהרו במנהג אבותיהם שבידיהם.</p>	<p>In the present era, when the <i>Sanhedrin</i> no longer exists, and the court of <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> establishes [the months] according to the [fixed] calendar, according to law, it would be appropriate for [Jews] throughout the world to celebrate the holidays for one day alone. For [the inhabitants of] the distant regions of the diaspora and the inhabitants of <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> rely on the same [fixed] calendar and establish [the festivals] accordingly. Nevertheless, the Sages ordained [that the inhabitants of the diaspora] retain the custom of their ancestors.</p>
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Commentators throughout the Medieval period, such as R. Avraham b. David (twelfth-century Provence) and R. David ibn Zimra (sixteenth-century Egypt), would weigh in with their opinion of why the practice of second day *yom tov* should continue to be maintained. It was not, however, until the early to mid-nineteenth century that the actual keeping of the practice would be challenged.

It should be noted that discussion around the second day practice of *yom tov* only applies to the holidays of Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot. The practice of keeping two days of the holiday of Rosh Hashanah was not only kept by communities in the diaspora, but also by the community in *Eretz Yisrael*. Rosh Hashanah, unlike Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot fell, on the first day of the month, rather than the middle of the month. Therefore, there was not only uncertainty about what day the holiday should be held in

the diaspora, but also in Jerusalem where the *Sanhedrin* sat and determined the date of the new month. The tradition of keeping two days of Rosh Hashanah was so well established that the Palestinian Talmud attributes the practice of keeping two days of Rosh Hashanah to the Early Prophets:

Eruvin 21c

הכא שניהן שוין מודין חכמים לרבי יודה בשני ימים טובים של ראש השנה שהן מתקנת נביאים הראשונים.	The sages agreed with R. Judah that the two holy days of Rosh Hashanah are an enactment of the Early Prophets. ⁷⁷
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Perhaps due to the universal Rabbinic acceptance of keeping two days of Rosh Hashanah throughout the late Rabbinic and Geonic periods, there was not the same debate over the practice of keeping two days of Rosh Hashanah in the Medieval period and subsequently in the Modern Period.

The Early Reform Movement in Germany and Their Attitude toward the Calendar Practice of Second Day *Yom Tov* in the Diaspora

The history of the debate over the practice of second day *yom tov* in the early Reform Movement mimics the history of the Reform Movement itself. There was a lag time between changes that were occurring in society and the organized response from early Reformers concerning the practice of second day *yom tov*. Lay members of the Jewish community began to question and stop keeping the practice before its approval by rabbinic authority (traditional or Reform). As Jews entered into the secular world and into secular professions, the prohibition against work on Shabbat and holidays became an

⁷⁷ Translation from: Arian, Charles L. and Clifford E. Librach. "The 'Second Day' of Rosh Hashanah: History, Law, and Practice." *Journal of Reform Judaism*. 32:3 (1985), 76.

economic burden. The practice of keeping two days of holidays in the diaspora increased festivals to thirteen days from the original seven described in the Torah.

Jewish individuals choosing not to uphold the second day of festivals was an issue in Orthodox communities as well as communities with tendencies towards Reform. The first rabbinic response to the laxity in practice did not come from any budding Reform Rabbi, but rather the Hatam Sofer. Moses Schreiber (1762-1839) who is most commonly referred to by the name of his main work, the *Hatam Sofer*, was one of the leading Orthodox rabbis of Central Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Hatam Sofer was well known for his vocal opposition to Reform Judaism. He did engage early Reformers on the issue of second day *yom tov*, but before early Reformers addressed the issue, he addressed his own constituency. In a responsum penned in 1809 he already takes a conservative approach to the second day of *yom tov*, ruling that a circumcision could not take place on day two of a festival.⁷⁸ Writing in 1826, he maintained his strict interpretation:

I have already written elsewhere that the custom of the second day of the festivals is close to being biblical, for it is considered a prohibition ordained by a vote of the court; even though its reason may be nullified, the ruling is not.⁷⁹

While his audience is not explicit, based on the time period in which he was writing, he was most likely responding to Jews who were keeping their businesses open.

Rabbi Joseph Friedländer was the first Reformer to publicly tackle the issue of second day *yom tov*. Friedländer was appointed chief rabbi of Westphalia, Prussia, in 1832. He won the appointment on account of his willingness to reform Jewish practice. At his installation ceremony, Friedländer announced that anyone who did not observe the

⁷⁸ Katz 263.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

second day of festivals, but observed other commandments, was “loyal to Mosaic law.”⁸⁰ He apparently chose the reformation of second day *yom tov* to address first in his appointment because it was deemed an issue that would receive support because of its negative financial impingement on the community and its weak *halakhic* support. In 1834 Friedländer would publish this opinion in a pamphlet entitled *Shores Joseph* (Root of Joseph). He had two other rabbis, R. Levy of Giessen and R. Gosen of Marburg, endorse the abolishment of second day *yom tov* in an attempt to have it viewed as a religious ruling.⁸¹

Friedländer received much criticism on his decision from the Orthodox community. The Hatam Sofer organized attacks calling on R. Judah Leib Karlborg of nearby Krenfeld to denounce Friedländer’s appointment based on his second day *yom tov* ruling.⁸² While the Hatam Sofer did not engage in a public debate with Friedländer, he did correspond with other Orthodox leaders across Central and western Europe concerning the issue. He wrote to Zvi Hirsch Lehren of Amsterdam:

For our sins the transgressors among us have proliferated. They have now proclaimed a false new vision and mock the second day of the festivals, [saying] that it is merely a custom.⁸³

The concern of the Orthodox rabbis was ultimately unwarranted.

Not only did Friedländer receive critique from Orthodox opponents, he was ultimately not supported by his own constituency in the matter of second day *yom tov* who continued to observe the second day of festivals. Later, Friedländer attempted to recast his abolishment of the second day of festivals by explaining that he never really

⁸⁰ *Ibid* 266.

⁸¹ *Ibid*.

⁸² *Ibid* 267.

⁸³ *Ibid* 263.

meant to get rid of the second day of festivals; rather, he wanted to take away the guilt placed on those who worked on the second day.⁸⁴

Another Reformer to individually address the question of second day *yom tov* was Michael Creizenach (1789-1842). Creizenach took a more moderate approach to the practice to the second day of festivals. In 1833 he broached the topic in his book *Thariag oder Inbegriff der mosaischen Vorschriften nach talmudischer Interpretation (The 613 Commandments or The Essence of the Mosaic Legislation According to Talmudic Interpretation)*. In his work, Creizenach tackled the rabbinic style of legal codes, describing the Talmudic foundation of the 613 commandments, but modernized the genre by composing his work in German.

Creizenach, described each commandment and its origin, but did not explicitly describe how it should be practiced. He did, however, look at the commandments in light of contemporary challenges, as seen in his discussion of second day *yom tov*.

From the time that the calendar was instituted it was undoubtedly possible to abrogate the second day, for from then on it was not done for it was feared that some time in the course of history the method of calculation would be forgotten, and so until today the custom has been preserved outside the Land of Israel, to celebrate two days, aside from Yom Kippur...The great difficulties involved in the celebration of the second day of the festival in all branches of civic employment have raised the question many times, whether it is appropriate to abrogate the second day...A more difficult question is whether those who zealously adhere to the Talmud could accept this with a quiet conscience.⁸⁵

Creizenach first presents the weak Talmudic argument for keeping the second day of festivals. He then presents modern difficulties with keeping this practice. Creizenach hints at a concern for keeping continuity in the Jewish community explaining that those

⁸⁴ *Ibid* 269.

⁸⁵ *Ibid* 271.

who “zealously adhere to the Talmud” would probably not make a concession on second day *yom tov* no matter how weak the rabbinic argument was for the law.

The second day of *yom tov* was not discussed collectively by early Reformers until the third rabbinic conference which was held in Breslau in 1846. Joseph Friedländer along with Levi Hellwitz and Solomon Herxheimer of Anhalt each proposed to discuss the matter during the second conference in Frankfurt. Herxheimer presented a comprehensive statement about the practice of second day *yom tov* in his proposal to discuss the issue at the rabbinic conference.

He, like Creizenach, approached the second day *yom tov* from two different perspectives: religious and practical. In his religious discussion, he examined the practice from a biblical and Talmudic perspective. Not surprisingly, he concluded that each supported abolishing the practice of second day *yom tov*. He writes concerning biblical support to abolish the practice:

The Pentateuch...limits the annual festivals (excepting the Sabbath) to seven, and this number seven plays a role also in other sacred periods: the seventh day during Passover and Succot, the year of release, and the Jubilee year (see *More Nevukhim* 3:43)⁸⁶

Not only does the Torah not mention the practice of keeping festivals for two days, Herxheimer gives extra biblical support for only keeping seven days.

In terms of his Talmudic discussion, Herxheimer highlights the argument that political persecution could lead to forgetting the customs of intercalation of the calendar. He writes:

In fact, the Talmud itself asks: Since we now know the beginning of each month by calculation, why do we still continue to observe the double festival? And the answer is: Because the sages in Palestine said, “Observe the customs of your

⁸⁶ Plaut 196.

forefathers, for the government might forbid the study of Torah and then the science of astronomical calculation might be forgotten and the correct time of the festival might then be easily missed if only one day would be observed.” However this is surely not enough reason in our time for maintaining this custom of our fathers, for surely our present government will never more be moved, as were the old pagans, to forbid the Israelites the study of their religious books. Besides, the calculation of the calendar no longer depends on theology or Jewish science. It is no longer a secret but is generally known, and is so vital to Gentile nations as well that it is impossible that it might be relegated to oblivion.⁸⁷

Living in the age of Enlightenment, Herxheimer argued that he could not fathom a western government outlawing the study of Torah. In addition, non-Jews and scientific study would help to maintain the knowledge necessary to properly determine the calendar.

From the practical perspective, Herxheimer makes two points in his proposal. He argues that abolishing the practice of second day *yom tov* would make the celebration of the festivals “true days of joy unto the Lord” rather than burdensome and boring.⁸⁸ He also argued that eliminating the second day of festivals would encourage more people to observe the holidays.

It is precisely the strictness in the celebration of our important festivals which makes them economically oppressive to the business man, the merchant, and the artisan, for competition is pressing and demands made upon them seem to be growing steadily. The observant Jew feels this pressure strongly and is so disadvantaged that only the most unusual person will have the strength to make such a religious sacrifice. Others, considering their need to make a living for wife and child, open their store a little and keep it closed a little, and let their helpers and apprentices work behind closed doors. They begin by riding railroads, then they get into carriages, so that by and by they publicly begin to disregard the whole celebration and even the service—not only on the second day but also on the first—and finally they fall prey to religious indifferentism. This is what economic need will do if Jewish law will not deal with it in some measure.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ *Ibid* 197.

⁸⁸ *Ibid* 198.

⁸⁹ *Ibid* 197-198.

Herxheimer, like other Reformers, argued that religious reform was needed for the survival of the Jewish People.

Despite Herxheimer's efforts, Abraham Geiger persuaded him, along with Friedländer and Hellwitz, to postpone conversation around the issue until the following year's conference so Geiger could have time to prepare an *appropriate* proposal. The choice to hold a Reform conference farther east in Breslau was significant; the conference was held in the heart of Orthodox opposition. Discussion of second day *yom tov* was overshadowed by the more controversial topic of Shabbat and the proposal to move Shabbat to Sunday. While radical reformers like the Frankfurt Society of the Friends of Reform had already moved their Shabbat observance to the secular day of rest, Sunday, the majority of those present in Breslau were in opposition with this change. Other issues discussed at the conference included: liturgy, circumcision, mourning customs, Reform marriage laws, the position of women, and the creation of a Reform rabbinical seminary.⁹⁰

Bernhard Wechsler (1841-1874) presented on the issue of second day *yom tov* at the Breslau Conference. He spoke on behalf of a special committee that was convened to make recommendations on the practice. The approach the committee took was much less hard-line than Herxheimer's proposal. Their report made suggestions rather than rulings and catered to the more conservative stance on the subject.

Wechsler, like Herxheimer and Creizenach, explained that "in our religious records a proper reason for the second days of festivals, which would be applicable in our

⁹⁰ Philpson, David. "The Breslau Rabbinical Conference" *The Jewish Quarterly Review*. Vol. 18, No. 4 (Jul., 1906).

time is missing.”⁹¹ But unlike Herxheimer, the committee at Breslau’s first recommendation was not to abolish the practice of keeping the second day of festivals.

Rather, they gave people permission to uphold the practice:

The Committee does not find any inner contradiction in the continuance of the second day of festivals, and, therefore, it does not find the abolition of these second festival days everywhere absolutely *necessary*.⁹²

While *reason* might not warrant the celebration of the second day of festivals, the committee acknowledged the power that tradition had in religious practice:

One must not fail to appreciate that the two-day celebration has taken deep roots among the people; that even after the concept of the original meaning had disappeared from its consciousness, the people had, nevertheless, kept those days holy and hallowed, attaching to them religious importance.⁹³

While the tone of the proposal seemed to favor upholding traditional practice, the committee did acknowledge the financial burden that the practice of second day *yom tov* entailed.

Ultimately, the committee gave authority to individual communities to make decisions based on their own constituencies’ needs. They did, however, put forth the following recommendations to the Assembly at Breslau:

Motion No. 1 The Assembly shall declare that second-day festivals and the eighth day of the Pessach festival, respectively, as well as the ninth day of the Feast of Tabernacles, have no more validity for our time.

Motion No. 2. The Assembly shall declare, therefore, that if their total or partial abrogation is being demanded and resolved in certain communities, these communities do not offend against any religious rule, but are in fact within their rights to do so.

⁹¹ Plaut 198.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Idib.*

Motion No. 3. The Assembly shall further declare that in the communities in which total abrogation would give offense to the conviction of even a small fraction of its membership, the festival character of the divine service shall be maintained; however, the prohibition of work for the individual shall not be obligatory.

Motion No. 4. Finally, the Assembly shall declare that, accordingly, the prohibition of leavened bread on the last day of the Passover festival shall not be obligatory for the individual.⁹⁴

The committee's presentation did its best to accommodate both reform and traditionalist tendencies. However, both members of the Reform and Orthodox movement were quick to point out the inconsistencies in Wechsler's presentation. Neither side could reconcile the concept of allowing partial observance of the second day festival. Ultimately, it was members of congregations who spoke with their feet. The proposal's tone of maintaining the second day of festivals was in agreement with the German Jewish community. While the aesthetic style of services may have changed, the majority of Jews continued to go to temple and synagogue on second day *yom tov*.⁹⁵

Second Day *Yom Tov* and the Issue of Continuity Among Early Reformer and the Greater German Jewish Community

In terms of consistency with Reform ideology, Herxheimer's proposal best represented the early Reform Movement's beliefs. As all Reformers pointed out in their arguments, the *reason* for keeping the second day of *yom tov* in the diaspora because of uncertainty ceased to be relevant after the calendar was fixed by mathematical calculation. Enlightenment thinking was in conflict with the two reasons that the Talmud gave for continuing to keep the practice of second day *yom tov*: upholding the traditions of ancestors and the possibility of government persecution leading to forgetting calendar

⁹⁴ *Ibid* 199.

⁹⁵ Katz 280.

practice. The use of reason over tradition was one of the main principles of the Enlightenment. With the exception of those in the more moderate camp of Historical Judaism, the concept of ‘we do it because that’s what was always done,’ was by no means a compelling argument. At least before the 1848 Revolutions, enjoying and upholding an unprecedented amount of acceptance from government and society, early Reformers discounted possible persecution as a reason for maintaining a tradition.

Herxheimer’s proposal resonated with Reform ideology. Despite that, the collective voice of that Early Reformers presented at the Breslau conference was greatly toned down to accommodate those with more traditional tendencies. Early Reformers, even the most radical, were conscious of keeping continuity with the greater Jewish community. For example, while The Society of the Friends of Reform in their 1842 Declaration of Principles referred to themselves as “mosaists” breaking away from the authority of the Talmud, they also voiced concern that they by no means wanted to create a “schism or sect.”⁹⁶

While early Reformers highlighted time and again that they desired to maintain their relationship with the greater Jewish community, Orthodox leaders referred to the Reform Movement as a sect, like the Karaites and Samaritans, and called for their constituency to limit their social contact with the Reform community. Austrian Orthodox leader, Rabbi Solomon Rapoport (1790-1867) responded to the creation of the Frankfurt Society:

What would we do to protect ourselves against this sect? We merely have to imitate the example of our ancestors and see what they did against such sects, which had as their task and aim the annihilation of rabbinic Judaism. We must strictly insist and warn our coreligionist not to have any social contact with the

⁹⁶ Plaut 50-51.

members of this Reform association, and especially not to enter into matrimonial union with them.⁹⁷

By the rabbinic conference in 1846, Reformers were feeling the backlash from the Orthodox camp. They chose to hold the third conference in Breslau because it was the epicenter of opposition to their cause.

Based on the motions presented at the Breslau conference concerning the practice of second day *yom tov*, the Reform Movement, chose to down play their Enlightenment-influenced ideology for the sake of maintaining ties and relevance with the greater Jewish community of Central Europe. The issue of Jewish continuity and use of sacred time also came up at the conference in the discussion over Shabbat. A small radical minority voice at the conference proposed that Shabbat celebration be moved to the secular day of rest, Sunday. Samuel Holdheim (1806-1860) argued that “the religious purpose of the Sabbath [could] be maintained on another day.”⁹⁸ M. Hess of Stadt Lengersfeld attacked this opinion saying, “If we transfer the Sabbath to Sunday we will bury Judaism on Friday to permit it to be resurrected on Sunday mornings as another religion!”⁹⁹ Both the examples of second day *yom tov* and Shabbat observance maintain that the collective keeping of sacred time maintained the continuity of the Jewish people, which was paramount for early Reformers, even more than Enlightenment thinking.

⁹⁷ *Ibid* 52.

⁹⁸ Philipson “The Breslau Rabbinical Conference” 641.

⁹⁹ *Ibid* 644.

CHAPTER 4: THE SOCIOLOGY OF TIME

Eviatar Zerubavel in his 1981 work, *Hidden Rhythms: Schedules and Calendars in Social Life*, introduces the field of the sociology of time—how and why human societies construct time. Zerubavel establishes terminology and theory related to the sociology of time and then illustrates concepts with examples from different world cultures, religions, and from his own field work in hospitals. Drawing on his own Israeli and Jewish heritage, he uses many examples from Jewish tradition, even making mention of the Karaite calendar.

Zerubavel and his study of the sociology of time offer a framework and vocabulary in which to contextualize the role of calendar in identity and specifically identity formation for the Karaite Mourners of Zion and the Early Reform Movement in Germany. I will break this chapter into subsections based on Zerubavel's theories that apply specifically to religious groups. Within these subsections, I will first introduce Zerubavel's concepts and I will then move on to apply these concepts to the calendar practice of the Karaite Mourners of Zion and the Early Reform Movement in Germany.

Physiotemporal and Sociotemporal Order

There are two manners in which time is structured: by the natural world and by people. Zerubavel differentiates between physiotemporal and sociotemporal order. Examples of physiotemporal order include:

the predictable time of day at which the sun rises on any particular day of the year; the predictable period during which a particular planet completes a revolution around the sun or a rotation on its own axis...¹⁰⁰

Sociotemporal order, on the other hand, “regulates the structure and dynamics of social life.”¹⁰¹ Sociotemporal order often takes into consideration physiotemporal order. The Hebrew calendar illustrates this with its concern for holidays coinciding with specific seasons.

The interplay between physiotemporal and sociotemporal order is at the forefront of Karaite and Rabbanite disputes over calendar in the tenth century. While the reckoning of the Hebrew calendar was not set by the Rabbanite community until 922, after Saadia ben Yosef’s dispute with Aaron ben Meir, throughout the Rabbinic Period, the Rabbanite community worked to integrate a new scientific understanding of calendar with their own traditional religious practice. The Rabbanites changed the method in which calendar was reckoned from direct moon observation to a mathematically fixed calendar based on an acceptance of new astronomical approaches to time reckoning. This acceptance of scientific innovation is an example of sociotemporal order taking into consideration physiotemporal order in the Hebrew calendar. But, more significant to the Rabbanite dispute with Karaites, it is an example of a religious group accepting scientific innovations into practice.

The Karaite calendar was by no means void of physiotemporal order. It differed from Rabbanite calendar in the sense that it rejected the adaptation of Hebrew calendar practice based on new scientific discovery. Early Karaites, as well as the Karaite

¹⁰⁰ Zerubavel, Eviatar. *Hidden Rhythms: Schedules and Calendars in Social Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, 2.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

Mourners of Zion, taking a literal approach to scripture, believed that Jewish practice should be constructed solely by concepts found in the *Tanakh*. While Karaites rejected the new innovation of mathematical calendar calculation, their method of calendar reckoning by direct moon and grain observation is an excellent example of physiotemporal order.

Reification

Zerubavel explains that religious groups often employ another understanding of how time is ordered aside from nature or humans; they attribute the structure of time to a divine entity. Zerubavel explains that attributing temporal order to a higher order or authority is an example of sociologists Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's concept of reification described in their 1967 work *The Social Construction of Reality*. Berger and Luckmann define reification as:

the apprehension of human phenomena as if they were things, that is, in non-human or possibly supra-human terms. Another way of saying this is that reification is the apprehension of the products of human activity *as if* they were something else than human products—such as facts of nature, results of cosmic laws, or manifestations of divine will. Reification implies that man is capable of forgetting his own authorship of the human world...The reified world is, by definition, a dehumanized world. It is experienced by man as a strange facticity...The objectivity of the social world means that it confronts man as something outside himself.¹⁰²

Traditional religious groups do not display a self-awareness of their manmade structures which they attribute to a higher power. Zerubavel expands that even when not dealing

¹⁰² Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality*. Garden City: Anchor, 1967, 89.

with religious groups, “it is the nature of ‘social facts’ such as the temporal regularities that derive from the schedule that they are generally seen as natural and inevitable.”¹⁰³

The Karaite derivation of calendar practice from Divine scripture is an example of reification. Modern historians of Karaite history and practice can look to primary sources and observe how early Karaite leaders promoted a calendar that placed them in opposition to Rabbanites. However, it is the Karaite “believed truth” that their practice of calendar was and remains to be God’s command.¹⁰⁴

Early Reformers, unlike early Karaites, did not promote their calendar practice with Divine authority. Early Reformers appear to be a religious exception to what Zerubavel calls an ignorance of temporal regularities being a “social fact.”¹⁰⁵ While Berger and Luckmann’s use of the term ‘reification’ would not have been known to early Reformers in Germany, they were students of the newly established field of the scientific study of religion or more specifically *Wissenschaft des Judentums*—the scientific study of Judaism. Early Reformers were concerned with reconciling traditions that were believed to be accomplished by the hand of God but were now understood to be of the human construction.

The concept of reification cannot apply to the early Reform discussion of the practice of adding an additional day to festivals to the Jewish diaspora calendar. The Talmud makes clear that the practice of second day *yom tov* in the diaspora was not a Divine command.¹⁰⁶ Early reformers who discuss the practice of second day *yom tov* all make a point of elucidating its history in order to show that it was a human innovation

¹⁰³ Zerubavel 43.

¹⁰⁴ Astern *Karaite Judaism* 9.

¹⁰⁵ Zerubavel 43.

¹⁰⁶ Talmud Bavli, Beitsa 4b

and that the reasons for its creation no longer applied to their community, regardless of whether or not they believed the practice should be maintained.

A modern scientific understanding of practice included an understanding that calendar also affected group cohesion. The presentation on the practice of second day *yom tov* at the Breslau conference in 1846 ultimately argued for the keeping the second day of *yom tov* in the community's calendar. This was not because of an acceptance of status quo tradition, but rather because they understood the power that calendar practice had on group identity. Zerubavel research supports this notion.

Calendar and Group Identity

The structuring of time and specifically the calendar plays a significant role in the construction of group identity. The sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) explains that “a calendar expresses the rhythm of the collective activities, while at the same time its function is to assure their regularity.”¹⁰⁷ Calendar is a cultural construction, but at the same time, calendar helps in the process of constructing culture. Calendar creates a sense of group solidarity and also “contributes to the establishment of intergroup boundaries that distinguish and separate group members from ‘outsiders.’”¹⁰⁸ Zerubavel uses the example of the Christian decision to move their Sabbath observance from Saturday to Sunday in order to disassociate themselves with the Jewish community to illustrate the use of calendar as a method of creating in-group cohesion while simultaneously establishing boundaries with other groups.

¹⁰⁷ Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. New York: Free Press, 1965, 23.

¹⁰⁸ Zerubavel 70.

Zerubavel also mentions Karaite and other Jewish sectarian groups in his discussion of calendar and its symbolism, stating: “even though these calendrical differences may seem to be rather insignificant on the surface, they were nevertheless highly significant from a symbolic standpoint.” Zerubavel expands on the symbolic nature of calendar asserting that “substantial calendrical reforms have always been associated with great social—political as well as cultural—reforms.”¹⁰⁹ He spends much time deconstructing the symbolism of the calendar instituted after the French Revolution: The French Republican Calendar. The institution of the French Republican calendar inevitably affected the way in which the early Reform Jews of Germany, students of the Enlightenment, viewed their own Hebrew Calendar.

The calendar reform made by the Karaite Mourner’s of Zion and early Reformers in Germany reflect calendar change stemming from larger political and cultural reform. The Karaite movement materialized in response to the consolidation of power of the Babylonian Rabbanite community. Early Reform emerged and addressed calendar in light of Enlightenment thinking and imminent emancipation. While discussion of calendar among early Karaites and early Reformers stemmed from the creation of emerging movements, each group used calendar to define their relationship with other Jewish communities of their time in radically different ways.

Early Karaites, including the Mourners of Zion, were committed to defining themselves against Babylonian Rabbinic Judaism. Symbolism embodied in Karaite calendar practice reveals a desire to disassociate from Babylonian Rabbinate. The center of Rabbinic Judaism was located in metropolitan Babylonia. Karaites chose to center

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid* 82.

their calendar in agricultural practice in the Land of Israel. The specific Karaite practice of *aviv*—direct observation of the barley harvest to determine intercalation of the calendar, achieved symbolic separation from Rabbanites. However, it ultimately did not properly reflect the nature of the Karaite Mourners of Zion. The practice of *aviv* became difficult to keep by Mourners of Zion in Jerusalem. While the first generation of Karaites who moved to Palestine in late-ninth century were farmers, by the tenth century the Karaite leadership in Jerusalem was city dwellers and lacked proper knowledge of agriculture to determine the stage of the barley.¹¹⁰

Zerubavel writes that differences between Karaite calendar practices “may seem to be rather insignificant on the surface, they were nevertheless highly significant from a symbolic standpoint.” Perhaps a better illustration of “insignificant” practice “on the surface” is the calendar practice of the *Eretz Yisrael* Rabbanite community and Babylonian Rabbanite community in the tenth century which held minuscule differences, a difference of thirty-five minutes and forty seconds later, to be exact.¹¹¹ This difference in reckoning, however, would have resulted in these two communities celebrating festivals on different days. Celebrating holidays at different times nearly resulted in the split of Babylonian and Palestinian Rabbanite communities. Not only did early Karaites reckon their calendar in a different way from Rabbanites (by direct moon and grain observation, rather than mathematical calculation) more significantly, this resulted in the Karaite and Rabbanite communities observing biblically ordained festivals on different days. This resulted in a tangible, not just symbolic, fissure between Karaites and Rabbanic Judaism.

¹¹⁰ Schur 51.

¹¹¹ Pozanski “Calendar” 119.

Early Reformers in Germany were cognizant of Karaite history and status as a sectarian group. The Reformer Joshua Heschel Schorr (1814-1895) explains how he did not mean to be associated with Karaites, stating:

I presume by no means to rebuke the sages of ancient times, much less reject their teaching or even join the Karaites. Not at all! On the contrary, I am an adherent of tradition, and I honor its representatives. Indeed, I believe that they have developed these conclusions from the Torah with true piety and the purest intentions.¹¹²

Again, Reform rabbis at the Breslau conference in 1846 ultimately allowed communities to uphold the practice of observing two days of festivals in the diaspora calendar, despite this decision not aligning with the emerging ideology of their own movement.

The early Reform Movement in Germany sought to be identified with traditional Jewish communities and therefore did not commit to calendar reform. It should be noted that the abolishment of the practice of second day *yom tov* would not have resulted in the Reform communities and traditional communities keeping holidays on different days. However, holidays would end at different time, resulting in the Reform community eating bread one day before the traditional community at the end of Passover and the holiday of *Simchat Torah* would be celebrated one day before traditional communities.

¹¹² Plaut 113.

Qualitative Conception of Time

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1926-2006). Geertz explains:

[calendar] cuts time up into bounded units not in order to count and total them but to describe and characterize them, to formulate their differential social, intellectual, and religious significance.¹¹³

While calendar breaks time into units, it is people's behavior that works to truly distinguish and separate units of time. This is understood by Zeruavel as the "qualitative conception of time."¹¹⁴

The committee of rabbis that presented on the topic of second day *yom tov* at the Breslau conference gave permission for communities to maintain the practice of celebrating two days of festivals, thus not officially reforming the Hebrew calendar.

While calendar remained the same, practice of holiday observance was made flexible and left up to individuals to decide if and how they would mark holiday practice. Many at the conference could not reconcile the concept of allowing partial observance of the second day festival.

Zerubavel's discussion of qualitative time gives further insight into the decision of early Reformers concerning the practice of second day *yom tov*. Calendar, quantitative time, would demarcate the festivals. But calendar is not the only manner in which time is divided. It is the actions of people that uphold calendar and ultimately create a tangible difference in time. While a rabbinic council had the authority to determine calendar, it was individual Jews and their actions that would determine the quality of festivals. It is not clear if Reform leadership could have predicted the people's behavior, but ultimately

¹¹³ Geertz, Clifford. "Person, Time, and Conduct in Bali." *The Interpretations of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973, 391.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid* 101.

the majority Jews with tendencies to reform tradition in Germany continued to mark the second day of holidays by attending religious services.¹¹⁵

Temporal Regularity as a Cognitive Need

While the ordering of time through calendar is important to the construction of group identity, the ordering of time is also important on the individual level as well.

Zerubavel writes:

The temporal regularity of our social world has some very significant cognitive implications. In allowing us to have certain expectations regarding the temporal structure of our environment, it certainly helps us considerably to develop some sense of orderliness. By providing us with a highly reliable repertoire of what is expected, likely or unlikely to take place within certain temporal boundaries, it adds a strong touch of predictability to the world around us, thus enhancing our cognitive well-being. Temporal irregularity, on the other hand, contributes to the development of a strong sense of uncertainty.¹¹⁶

Zerubavel illustrates the correlation between schedule and certainty through Bruno Bettelheim's description of life as a Jew in a Nazi concentration camp,

Thus the endless 'anonymity' of time was another factor destructive to personality, which the ability to organize time was a strengthening influence. It permitted some initiative, some planning.¹¹⁷

While Zerubavel speaks of a lack of structure of time resulting in uncertainty on an individual level, I believe that the example of early Reformers in Germany will illustrate that this same phenomenon can occur on a group level as well.

While the early Reformers ultimately chose not to reform calendar, the conversation around the practice of the observance of two days of holidays in the diaspora remains significant. As Jews began to participate in the secular sphere in

¹¹⁵ Katz 280.

¹¹⁶ Zerubavel 12.

¹¹⁷ In Zerubavel 12.

Western and Central Europe, they experienced disorientation in time. Time before emancipation was structured exclusively by the Hebrew calendar and the Jewish community. Jews entering into a non-Jewish world felt their previous system of time clash with a competing secular system of time. This is illustrated by the financial burden of not engaging in business on Shabbat and holidays while trying to compete in a non-Jewish workforce.

Early Reform discussions concerning calendar, highlighted by the discussion around second day *yom tov*, reveal a sensitivity to try and reconcile living by Jewish time while living in a non-Jewish world. Early Reformers sought to maintain a strong sense of Jewish identity while adopting tradition to reflect a new position in European society. The early Reformers decision to maintain the use of the Hebrew calendar shows this group's awareness of the power that time and calendar had on creating and maintaining a sense of Jewish group identity. Karaites, also utilized calendar to construct the identity of their group, but unlike early Reformers, they chose to define their movement against other forms of Judaism of their time.

CONCLUSION

Karaite Judaism began almost one thousand years before the early European Reform movement in Germany. In this thesis, I chose to highlight the calendar practice of Karaite Mourners of Zion and the early Reform Movement in Germany not to make a comparison between the two groups, but rather to learn how two Jewish movements in their formational stages of existence used calendar to uphold ideology and create group identity. Exploring a comparison between early Karaites and early Reform Jews became hard to ignore as I researched the early Reform movement and came across numerous references to Karaite Judaism. In this conclusion, I will explore similarities and differences between the Karaite Mourners of Zion and the early Reform movement in Germany and will use the calendar practice of these two respective movements to compare the identities of these groups.

Orthodox Jews evoked the religious tension between Rabbanites and Karaites from the Geonic period in their attacks against reformers, claiming that they were separatists and should not be considered to be a part of the European Jewish community. The Orthodox Rabbi of Prague, Solomon Rapoport (1790-1867) compared Reform Jews to Karaites and other sects and called for a ban on intermarriage between traditionalists and reformers.

What would we do to protect ourselves against this sect? We merely have to imitate the example of our ancestors and see what they did against such sects, which had as their task and aim the annihilation of rabbinic Judaism. *We must strictly insist and warn our coreligionists not to have any social contacts with the members of this Reform association, and especially not to enter into matrimonial union with them.* That is the way it was done long ago with regard to Samaritans, Sadducees, Karaites, and Saruans. This separation must be strictly maintained, for if it is not, many disadvantages arise because of our marriage laws

in case we enter into matrimonial union with those who reject tradition and interpret Mosaic laws according to whim or convenience.¹¹⁸

As I read Rapoport's proposed ban on intermarriage between Rabbinic and Reform Jews because of a conflict between interpretations of law, I could not help but think of the marriage documents that exist between Karaites and Rabbanites during the eleventh and twelfth centuries in the Middle East.

While the vast majority of the historical evidence that evokes calendar practice of Karaites and Rabbanites speaks of irreconcilable differences, Judith Olszowy-Scghlanger in her work *Karaite Marriage Documents from the Cairo Geniza*, asserts that "the actual differences between Karaites and Rabbanites concerned more theoretical and philosophical issues than matters of daily life."¹¹⁹ She reaches this conclusion based on marriage contracts (*kettubot*) that reveal that mixed marriages between Karaites and Rabbanites took place in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These documents all "contain special stipulation clauses intended to guarantee the mutual tolerance and respect of different dietary and calindrical requirements."¹²⁰

Reform Jews in the mid-nineteenth century, most likely prompted by Orthodox attacks, made the comparison between traditional Jews and Karaites explaining that their approach to the Talmud had the same sense of scripturalism as the Karaites and the *Tanakh*. Rabbi Joseph Aub, the moderate German reformer (1805-1880) in his call for an end to name-calling between Orthodox and Reform Jews wrote:

The consecrated and the consecrating spirit, not the dead and killing letter, is to be preserved. Karaism holds fast to the letter of the Torah. Will it prove less

¹¹⁸ Plaut 52.

¹¹⁹ Olszowy-Scghlanger *Karaite Marriage Documents from the Cairo Geniza* 7.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

injurious to hold fast to the letter of the Talmud than to that of Sacred Writ? Hence one is almost tempted to cast the reproach of Karaism upon those who charge with such of their colleagues as do not shun scientific investigation. Let them do away with the weapons of damning and heresy-hunting which are foreign to Judaism, and pursue the method of peaceful refutation and explanation. No sensible person can be frightened, nor any intelligent court be deceived by the cries of deism or atheism which the obscurantists raise at every deliverance of science. It is possible to stand firmly on the basis of positive Judaism without searing unswerving allegiance to Talmudism.”¹²¹

Aub asserts that Orthodox Jews are, in fact, similar to the Karaites because both movements “shun scientific investigation.”

This claim applies specifically to the case of calendar practice. Michael Creizenach (1789-1842) in his discussion of the calendar practice of the second day of festivals describes how Reform Jews are not like Karaites because of their acceptance of rabbinic practice specifically related to calendar.

This, however, does not mean that all measures and decisions of the ancient scribes should be disregarded. To do so would rob us of all those useful means in the observance of the Pentateuch which we owe the Talmud, and would put us into a labyrinth in which the Karaites have found themselves for many centuries, without being able to achieve a satisfactory organization of their religious affairs. On the contrary, we wish to leave untouched many a custom which through universal esteem has attained even in our own time a high degree of venerableness. Take for instance the beautiful, scientifically accomplished calendar computation of which it can be said, indeed, that it is an attestation of our wisdom and insight before the eyes of the other nations. It is only necessary that, in our awe for tradition, we do not exceed the boundaries which our ancient sages themselves would have set for us, had they foreseen our present-day conditions and had they not firmly believed that Israel’s dispersion would not last half the time that it has lasted already.¹²²

Creizenach makes what I believe to be an intentional remark, that the Rabbinic Calendar is an example of the adoption of scientific knowledge into Jewish practice. Hence, making the underlying comparison that Reform Jews are like Rabbinic Jews because of

¹²¹ Philipson “Breslau Rabbinical Conference” 71.

¹²² Plaut 118.

their acceptance of scientific innovation into Jewish religious tradition and Orthodox Jews are like the Karaites because of their rejection of science.

Despite Orthodox comparisons of Reform Judaism to Karaite Judaism made in the nineteenth century, a critical analysis of the calendar practice of the early Karaites, namely the Mourners of Zion, and the calendar practice of the early Reform Movement in Germany reveals a fundamental difference between these two groups in terms of group identity. The Karaite Mourners of Zion living in Palestine in the tenth and eleventh centuries actively sought to separate themselves from the other Jewish communities in the region (i.e. the Rabbanites) while early German Reformers wanted to maintain membership in the larger European Jewish community that included Orthodox Jews.

The calendar practices of the Karaite Mourners of Zion worked to uphold an aspiration to disengage from Rabbinic Judaism. The practice of direct moon observation and observation of the barley harvest (*aviv*) to determine the intercalation of the calendar supported the centrality of Palestine for the Mourners of Zion. The Rabbinic move to a solely mathematical intercalation, on the other hand, symbolically removed their need to have Jewish settlement in Palestine and thus released any stigma from having their center exist in the diaspora community of Babylonia. The Karaite practice of barley observation that was directly linked to agriculture can also be viewed as a Karaite critique of the cosmopolitan centric Babylonian Rabbinic Judaism.

The way in which the calendar practice of the Mourners of Zion worked to uphold their ideology is significant in the process of disengagement from the Rabbanite community. More important, however, is the result of the two communities' differences in method of calendar intercalation. While Rabbanites and Karaites may have celebrated

many of the same holidays, they did not share in the same calendar and therefore did not celebrate holidays at the same time.

The Reform Movement emerged out of a desire to reconcile Jewish tradition with Enlightenment thought and Emancipation. But, early Reformers in Germany did not feel so strongly about this ideology that it should come at the expense of membership in the larger European Jewish community. Based on the motions presented at the Breslau conference concerning the practice of second day *yom tov* in the diaspora, the Reform Movement chose to down play their Enlightenment-influenced ideology for the sake of maintaining ties and relevance with the greater Jewish community of Europe.

The Karaite Mourners of Zion and the early Reform Movement in Germany were two different groups with different agendas of membership in their contemporary Jewish communities. Calendar practice played a significant role in helping to shape the group identities of these two emerging Jewish movements. The Karaite Mourners of Zion created an alternative calendar to the Rabbinic Jewish community, thus breaking their membership from this group. The early Reform Movement in Germany, chose to maintain the traditional Jewish calendar for the sake of Jewish continuity.

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