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‘EREV SHABBATH, 18TH DAY OF THE 10TH MONTH 3319 A.E. (1/16/2009)

THE NATURAL CALENDAR IN ISRAELITE HISTORY

ORIGINAL RESEARCH DOCUMENTING OVER 2,000
YEARS OF DIRECT OBSERVATION OF THE
CRESCENT NEW MOON AND ÂVÎV BY THE
REMNANT OF YISRAEL (ABRIDGED VERSION)

The Natural Calendar in Israelite History

OVER 2,000 YEARS OF HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

All praise is due to YHWH, our Creator, for bringing us together to better understand His sacred Torah – may our efforts to serve Him be acceptable in His sight. Amen.

The intent of this shortened list of historical evidences of using the direct observation of the new crescent moon (from Israel, whenever possible) to define the Hebraic month, and the discovery of Aviv (ripened barley) as the requirement for beginning a new Hebraic year, is to supplement – not replace – scriptural evidence. The author's recommendation is to put the various calendar theories to the test by understanding which calendar model has been preserved by the remnant of Yisrael who – following Devarim 4:2 do not add to **nor** diminish from *any* aspect of the Torah (which should be the goals of all of our present-day communities). The Tanakh itself has several rules for determining the truth, among controversial opinions:

- **The true calendar should not require additional religious books/Rabbinical enactments to understand**
Devarim 12:32 “All the things that I command you, take heed to do them and you shall not add to it, nor take away from it.”; **Mishlei Shelomoh (Prov.) 30:6** “Do not add to His Words, that He not reprove you, and you be found a liar.”; **Yesh`ayahu 29:13** “And the Lord says, Because this people draws near with its mouth, and they honor Me with its lip; but its heart is far from Me, and their fear of Me is taught by the commandments of men.”
- **The Torah is does not follow the “will of the majority” – we should not be biased to go along with the mainstream opinion, or to reject minority views out-of-hand because they may have unpopular consequences**
Shemoth 23:3 “You shall not be after the many to do wrong; you shall not answer a dispute to be sided with the many, so as to be biased.”; **Mishlei Shelomoh 18:3** “He who responds to a matter before he hears, it is foolishness to him – and shame.”

Additionally, some of these sources will refer to the Karaites (Qaraim/Benei Miqra – “Sons of the Scripture”). These are Israelites who for centuries has rejected the Talmud, NT, and Quran to follow the Tanakh alone in their service of the Creator. These and other groups are (in the opinion of the researcher) examples of the remnant of Yisrael, who have upheld the above principles.

A major Karaite Hakham (scholar/wise man) who lived over 1,000 years ago was Ya`aqov Al-Qirqisani, who lived in Babylonia (Iraq) during the 10th century CE. He wrote the following:

Hakham Ya`aqov Al-Qirqisani, Book of the Lights and Towers, 10th Century, Babylonia

יעקב אל-קירקיסאני, ספר
האורות והמגדלים, המאה
ה-10, עיראק¹

“One must only derive religious obligations exclusively from

יש להוציא חובות דתיות אך ורק

¹ מצוטט בתוך: B. Chiesa and W. Lockwood, *Ya'qub al-Qirqisani on Jewish Sects and Christianity*, Frankfurt 1984, עמ' 93

the study and research of Scripture (Miqrā). Whatever the research necessitates, and whatever the study leads to – one must accept it; it does not matter if this is the opinion of the Rabbanites (followers of the Rabbis), or of `Anan (a major 9th-century Qaraite leader), or of others. Furthermore, if scholars or researchers arrive at a conclusion which none of them had brought up before, one must accept it – as long as there is no proof against it, and that it has no deficiency.”

מלימוד [המקרא] וחקירה בו. מה שהחקירה מחייב, ומה שהלימוד מוביל אליו יש לקבל, לא משנה אם זו דעתם של הרבניים או של ענן או של אחרים. יתר על כן, אם מלומדים או חוקרים מסיקים מסקנה שאף אחד לא העלה אותה מקודם, יש לקבל אותה, כל עוד שאין הוכחה נגדה ואין בה פגם.

May Yah be with us all, and may we have the merit to see His redemption in our days, Amen.

DURING THE SECOND TEMPLE ERA

Philo Judaeus (Philon HaYehudhi) – Hebrew philosopher whose works defended and explained the Torah to the Greeks, writing specifically about how we use the first visible crescent to define the new moon – Alexandria, Egypt (20BCE – 50CE)

“CHAPTER XI. (41) Now there are ten festivals in number, as the Law sets them down:

The first is that which any one will perhaps be astonished to hear called a festival. This festival is every day. The second festival is the seventh day, which the Hebrews in their native language call the Sabbath. The third is **that which comes after the conjunction, which happens on the day of the new moon** in each month...”

“CHAPTER XXVI. (140) Following the order which we have adopted, we proceed to speak of the third festival, that of the new moon. First of all, because it is the beginning of the month, and the beginning, whether of number or of time, is honourable. **Secondly, because at this time there is nothing in the whole sky that is without light.** (141) Thirdly, because at that period the more powerful and important body gives a portion of necessary assistance to the less important and weaker body; **for, at the time of the new moon, the sun begins to illuminate the moon with a light which is visible to the outward senses, and then she displays her own beauty to the beholders.** And this is, as it seems, an evident lesson of kindness and humanity to men, to teach them that they should never grudge to impart their own good things to others, but, imitating the heavenly bodies, should drive envy away and banish it from the Soul.”

(And on the topic of some who say that “Rosh HaShanah” should to be in the Autumn and not during the time of the blossoming of crops in the Spring, he wrote):

“Chapter XXVIII (153) Although the month in which the autumnal equinox occurs is first in sequence according to solar orbits, **it is not considered first in the Law**. The reason is that at that time, after all the crops have been harvested, the trees lose their leaves and **everything that springtime produced in the height of its glory is withering under dry winds after it has been made dry by the flaming heat of the sun.** (154) Therefore He thought that to apply the name "first" to the month in which the hill country and the plain become barren and infertile [i.e., in the Autumn], was inappropriate and unfitting. For it is necessary that the most beautiful and desirable phenomena belong to those things which are first and have received the position of leadership, those phenomena through which the reproduction and growth of animals and fruit and crops take place, but not the ominous destructive forces.”

Philo of Alexandria, Special Laws, Book II
(<http://philo.homestead.com/book28.htm>)

Letter from Rabban Gamliel (President of the Sanhedrin/Supreme Court during final decades of the 2nd Temple) – Evidence that Israelites in exile would receive letters from the Temple Mount regarding whether or not the Aviv had been discovered and when the new year would begin in order to start their pilgrimage – Circa 50 C.E., Yerushalayim, Yisrael

“It is taught: An act of Rabban Gamliel, who would sit on the upper side of the Temple Mount – and Yohanan this scribe would stand before him, and three letters would be cut out and laid out before him. He (Gamliel) said to him: ...**Take one letter and write: ‘To our brothers, the sons of the exiles in Bavel (Babylon), and to our brothers that are in Madhai (Media), and to the rest of the exiles of Yisrael, may your Shalom forever increase! Behold, we are informing you that the hatchlings are still tender, and the goat-kids are still young, and the time of the Âvîv still has not arrived; therefore, the matter is good in my eyes, and in the eyes of my colleagues, that I will add 30 days upon this month.’**” (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin 11b)

אגרת רבן גמליאל, שנת 50 לספירה בקירוב, ירושלים
דתניא: מעשה ברבן גמליאל שהיה יושב על גב מעלה בהר הבית, והיה יוחנן סופר הלז עומד לפניו, ושלוש איגרות חתוכות לפניו מונחות. אמר לו: ...קח איגרת אחת וכתוב: לאחינו בני הגלויות בבבל, ולאחינו שבמדי, ולשאר כל גלויות ישראל, שלומכם רב לעולם! הננו מודיעים לכם שהגוזלות עדיין רכים, והגדיים עדיין צעירים, וזמן האביב עוד לא הגיע; לכן טוב הדבר בעיני ובעיני עמיתיי שאוסיף על שנה זו שלושים יום.² (תלמוד בבלי סנהדרין דף יא עמוד ב)

Mishnah, Tractate Rosh HaShanah (the New Year) Chapter 2 (Discussing the Process of Communicating Information about the New Moon from the Temple Mount and the Process of Examining Eyewitness of the Crescent during the 1st Century CE) – Note: the Mishnah was completed around 150CE, and records the opinions of the Pharisees roughly 80 years after the temple was destroyed

² המקור בארמית: וטול איגרתא חדא וכתוב: לאחנא בני גלוותא בבבל, ולאחנא דבמדי, ולשאר כל גלוותא דישראל, שלומכון יסגא לעלם! מהודעין אנחנא לכון דגוזליא רכיכין, ואימריא ערקין, וזמנא דאביבא לא מטא, ושפרא מילתא באנפאי ובאנפי חביריי ואוסיפית על שתא דא יומין תלתין

“...In the beginning, they would lift up torches. From the time when the *Kuthim* (Babylonian Samaritans) ruined [this], they decreed that there will be messengers sent forth. How would they lift up torches? They bring: long poles of cedar-wood, and reeds, and oily wood (pine?), and linen chaff, and he (the runner) binds it with oil, ascends to the mountaintop, ignites the light with them, and makes [the torch] go forward and back and go up and down until he sees his companion who does the same thing on the second mountain; and so on the third mountain.

And from where would they lift up torches? From the Mount of Olives [in Judea], to Sartaba [in Samaria], and from Sartaba to Agrippina [in Galilee], and from Agrippina to Hauran [in Syria], and from Hauran to Beith Biltin [in Babylon]; and they would not move from Beith Biltin, rather he would make [the torch] go forward and back and up and down, until he would see the entire exile before him like a bonfire.”

“A large courtyard was in Yerushalayim, and it was called Beith Ya'zeq, and all the witnesses would gather there, and the Beith Din (legal court) would examine them there. And they would make many great feasts for them, because they would be used to coming [there].”

“How would they examine the witnesses? The pair which came first, they would examine first. They would bring in the greater of them and would say to him, ‘Tell how you saw the Moon – Before the Sun? Behind the Sun? To the North? To the South? How high was it? Which way was it inclined? And how wide was it? If he said “before the Sun” he (the judge) would not say anything. And afterwards, they would bring in the second one, and would examine him. [If] their words were found accurate, their testimony would stand. And they would ask the rest of all the pairs the highlights – not that they (the judges) needed them, rather, so that they [the witnesses] would not depart with disappointed souls, because they were used to coming [there].”

“The Rosh Beith Din (Chief Justice) would say ‘Mequddash! [It has been sanctified!]’, and all the people would answer after him “Mequddash! Mequddash!”

“Rabban Gamliel would have a picture of shapes of moons on the wall in a table, and on the wall in his upper room, which he would show the commoners and say: ‘Did you see something like this, or like that?’ Two would come and they would say, ‘We have seen it, in its time!’...”
[Mishnah, Rosh HaShanah Ch. 2 (Written Circa 150 CE)]

תלמוד/משנה ראש השנה ב'ח: [נ"ח ט']

«בְּרֵאשׁוֹנָה הָיוּ מְשִׁיאִין מְשׁוּאוֹת; מְשַׁקְלָקְלוּ הַכּוֹתִים, הַתְּקִינוּ שְׂיָהוּ שְׁלוּחִין יוֹצְאִין. כִּיצַד הָיוּ מְשִׁיאִין מְשׁוּאוֹת? מְבִיאִין: כְּלִנְסָאוֹת שֶׁל אֶרֶז אֲרָכִין וְקִנִּים וְעֵצֵי שֶׁמֶן וְנֶעֱרַת שֶׁל פֶּשֶׁתִּין וְכוּרֶד בְּמִשְׁיחָה, וְעוֹלָה לְרֹאשׁ הַהָר וּמַצִּית בָּהֶן אֶת הָאוֹר וּמוֹלִיד וּמְבִיא וּמַעֲלָה וּמוֹרִיד עַד שֶׁהוּא רוֹאֶה אֶת חֲבֵרוֹ שֶׁהוּא עוֹשֶׂה כֵן בְּרֹאשׁ הַהָר הַשֵּׁנִי; וְכֵן בְּרֹאשׁ הַהָר הַשְּׁלִישִׁי. וּמֵאֵין הָיוּ מְשִׁיאִין מְשׁוּאוֹת? מִהָר הַמִּשְׁחָה לְסַרְטָבָא, וּמִסַּרְטָבָא לְגִרְפִּינָא, וּמִגִּרְפִּינָא לְחִנְרִין, וּמִחִנְרִין לְבֵית בִּלְתִּין; וּמִבֵּית בִּלְתִּין לֹא זָזוּ מִשָּׁם, אֶלָּא מוֹלִיד וּמְבִיא וּמַעֲלָה וּמוֹרִיד, עַד שֶׁהָיָה רוֹאֶה כָּל הַגּוֹלָה לְפָנָיו כְּמִדּוֹרֵת הָאֵשׁ.

חצר גדולה הייתה בירושלים, ובית יעזק הייתה נקראת; ולשם כל העדים מתכנסין, ובית דין בודקין אותם שם. וסעודות גדולות עושין להם, בשביל שיהיו רגילין לבוא.»

כיצד בודקין את העדים: זוג שבא ראשון, בודקין אותו ראשון. מכניסין את הגדול שבהן ואומר לו, אמור כיצד ראית את הלבנה--לפני החמה, לאחר החמה, לצפונה, לדרומה, כמה היה גבוה, ולאין היה נוטה, וכמה היה רחב. אם אמר לפני החמה, לא אמר כלום. ואחר כך היו מכניסין את השני, ובודקין אותו. נמצאו דבריהן מכוונין, עדותן קיימת. ושאר כל הזוגות, שואלין אותן ראשי דברים: לא שצריכין להן; אלא שלא ייצאו בפחי נפש, בשביל שיהיו רגילין לבוא.

ראש בית דין אומר מקודש, וכל העם עונין אחריו מקודש מקודש

דמות צורות לבנות היו לו לרבן גמליאל בקיר בטבלא ובכתל בעליתו, שבהן מראה את ההדיוטות ואומר: הכזה ראית או כזה? באו שנים ואמרו: ראינוהו בזמנו.

משנה, מסכת ראש השנה, פרק כ' משנה ח

“The Declaration of Âvîv”, from the “Tuv Ta'am” Prayer – The Karaite Declaration of Faith, called Tuv Ta'am (after the first two words in Hebrew) has been recited in the Karaite Synagogue on Holy Days since at least the 13th Century, with an abridged version being recited twice daily. The Karaite "Declaration of Faith" consists of a series of statements read aloud by the Hazan (cantor). The congregation responds to each statement by emphatically shouting “Emeth!” (Truth!). The Karaite “Declaration of Faith” includes the main principles and practices of a Tanakh-based way of life.

(See http://www.karaite-korner.org/declaration_of_faith.shtml)

“...And the Âvîv which is found in the land of Yisra'el in its time, according to its way, according to its custom – a sign and a symbol established for the heads of years, for pilgrimages, for feasts, and for appointed times – according to the statement of the God of Hosts – Truth! Truth!”

(*Siddur HaTefilloth KaMinhagh HaYehudhim HaQârâ'im/The Siddur of Prayers According to the Custom of the Qaraite Jews : Part 2, Ramlâh 1977, Pg. 208 [13th Century Crimea, Ukraine]*)

“הצהרת האביב” מתוך תפילת טוב טעם

“והאביב הנמצא בארץ ישראל בזמנו כדרכו כמנהגו סימן ואות קים לראשי השנים, לרגלים, לחגים, ולמועדים כמאמר אלהי צבאות : אמת!” (סדור התפלות כמנהג היהודים הקראים : חלק שני, רמלה 1977, עמ' 208 [נכתב במאה ב-13 בקרים])

Ancient Karaite Kethubboth on the Calendar Issue (A Kethubbah is a Hebrew Wedding Contract Stipulating the Terms of the Marriage) Discovered in Yisrael and North Africa

“ועל שישמרו את מעדי ייי על ראית הירח ובהמצא אביב בארץ ישראל”

“...And upon that they shall observe the appointed times of YHWH by the sighting of the Moon, and by the discovery of Aviv in the land of Yisrael...”

(Kethubbah from a Karaite Siddur from the year 1009 CE, Yerushalayim, Yisrael)

“זה נוסח כתובה של מצרים של בני מקר... ולא יכריח אתה על חלול מועדי ייי צבאות על ראית הירח ובהמצא אביב בארץ ישראל כי היא מאנשי המקרא”

“This is the version of the Kethubbah of Egypt of the Benei Miqra (sons of Scripture)... And he will not force her to desecrate the appointed times of YHWH Tseva'oth based upon the sighting of the moon and the discovery of Aviv in the land of Yisrael; for she is of the people of the Miqra (Scripture)”.

(Version of a Kethubbah for Marriages between a Rabbanite groom and a Karaite bride, from a Karaite Siddur from 1036 CE, Egypt)

Judah ben Elijah Hadassi (in Hebrew, Yehuda ben Eliyahu) was a Karaite Hakham, who flourished at Constantinople (Istanbul, Turkey) in the middle of the twelfth century. He was known by the nickname "ha'Avel," which signifies "mourner [of Zion]". He dealt with Hebrew grammar, Israelite customs, theology, and philosophy, and knew Arabic and Greek.

Yehudhah HaDasi, 1148 C.E., Istanbul, Turkey

"...But as for those too far away to see the evidence of his ripened [grain] from his Holy Land, their ruling is to research and to ask those going there if, perhaps, they will hear and become clarified by her (= the Land's) neighbors about the sighting of his evidence... and because of this, we do not know whether a year is twelve or thirteen months in length except by the consideration of a witness who has heard from the Holy Land in this, our exile, which by our sins and by the iniquities of our fathers has been prolonged upon us..."

(Yehudhah HaDasi, Eshkol HaKofer, Eupatoria Crimea 1836 Edition, Alef-Beith 188 Letters Daleth & He, Col. 96:2)

Hakham Yisrael HaMa'aravi writes Concerning how Israelites in His Day Communicated the Status of Aviv in Yisrael to Communities outside of the Holy Land (14th Century)

Hakham Yisrael HaMa'aravi, 1313 C.E., Cairo, Egypt

"Give thanks to the educators of most of Yisrael, for it is good to go by way of calculating the intercalation of the calendar, since is a way that is close to the Aviv which is found in the land of Yisrael. However, O Yisrael: the Qârâ'im (Qaraites), Ba'alei Miqra (the masters of Scripture) who reside near to Eres Yisrael – the community of Egypt, and of Alexandria – which is Nâ Âmûn – and the community of Damascus, and of Aleppo – which are Aram Sova and Aram Naharayim – these communities on each and every year are sending trustworthy men to the land of Yisrael, and are seeking, inquiring, researching, and searching for it (i.e., Aviv) in all the places known traditionally for it to be found earlier than in other places. And if one should find that it has ripened, they take about two 'Omerim (= bundles/sheaves) of the stalks of barley and present the evidence of the Aviv to them and show them (i.e., their communities) the Aviv, and perform Pesah. And until the 10th of Nisan do these delegates arrive at each of these communities."

(Yisrael HaMa'aravi, "Order: The Matter of Intercalation" [written in 1313], quoted from Sefer HaYashuv, Vol. II., Column 107)

יהודה הדסי, המאה ה-12, איסטנבול

אבל הרחוקי[ם] מראיית עדות בשולו מארץ קדושתו דינם לחקור ולשאול לבאים שם אולי ישמעו ויתבררו מן שוכניה ראייה בעדותו... וע"כ אין אנחנו יודעים אי זו שנה י"ב חדש ואי זו י"ג לערכה אלא מעיון העד ושמע ארץ הקדושה בגלותנו זו אשר בחטאתינו ובעונות אבותינו עלינו ארכה. (יהודה הדסי, אשכול הכפר, יופטוריה 1836, אלף בית קפ"ח אותיות דלת-הא עמ' עו, ב [נכתב במאה ה-12 באיסטנבול])

ישראל המערבי, שנת 1313, מצרים

"הודו משכילי רוב ישראל כי טוב ללכת על דרך חשבון עבור של מחזור, כי דרך קרוב הוא על האביב הנמצא בארץ ישראל. אבל ישראל הקראים בעלי מקרא היושבים קרוב לארץ ישראל, הקהל של מצרים ושל אסכנדריאה, הוא נא אמון, והקהל של דמשק ושל חלף, שהם ארם צובא וארם נהרים, אלו הקהלות בכל שנה ושנה שולחים שליחים אנשים נאמנים לארץ ישראל, ומבקשים ודורשים וחוקרים ומחפשים אותו בכל המקומות הידועים בקבלה כי יש שם ימצא קודם מכל המקומות. ואם ימצא אחד כי נתבשל לוקחים כמו שני עמרים מן שבלי השעורים ומביאים להם עדות האביב ומראים להם האביב ועושים פסח, ועד עשרה בניסן מגיעים אלו השלוחים לכל אלו הקהלות." (ישראל המערבי, סדר ענין העבור [נכתב ב-1313], מצוטט בתוך: ש. אסף ול.א. מאיר, ספר הישוב: כרך שני, ירושלים תשי"ד, עמ' 107)

A Note on the Legend of “Rabbi Hillel II” Creating a Purely Calculated Calendar that was Universally Accepted by Jews as Early as the 4th Century. According to the Confessions of Rabbinic Jewish Scholars, the Neither the Mishnah nor Talmud mention this legend, and it first appears in Rabbinic arguments against Karaites over 1,000 years after the destruction of the Temple.

*“He is traditionally regarded as the creator of the modern fixed Hebrew calendar. **However this attribution is tenuous.** It **first** appears in a responsum of R. Hai Gaon (early eleventh century) cited by R. Avraham b. Hiyya in his Sefer Ha'ibbur, written in 1123. The topic of that responsum is the 19-year cycle for leap-year intercalations, so the most that can be inferred from that attribution is that Hillel was responsible for the adoption of that cycle for the regulation of the distribution of leap-years. **Scholars who have studied the history of the Hebrew calendar are in general agreement (and there is much evidence for this in the Talmud itself and in other rabbinic sources) that in practice, the evolution of the calendar into its present form was a gradual process spanning several centuries from the first to about the eighth or ninth century CE.**”*

(Wikipedia, “Hillel II”, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillel_II)

כ- לפני ועד, לספירה 359 בשנת יהודה בן הלל ר' י"ע "נוסד" העברי שהלוח הדעה מקובלת: **תקציר** הלוח חשבונית כי העלו הגניזה מן גילויים. הלוח וחשובי הכללים כל את להלל ייחסו שנה 120 בידינו שהוא כפי הסופית צורתו את הלוח קיבל הלל אחרי שנה 500 - כ ורק השתכללו

“Summary: The idea has been accepted that the Hebrew Calendar was “established” by Rabbi Hillel ben Yebudhab in the year 359 C.E., and until about 120 years ago, all the rules and calculations were ascribed to him. Revelations from the [Cairo] Genizah have brought to light that the mathematics of the calendar have gradually become more advanced, and that only about 500 years after Hillel did the calendar receive its final form as it is in our hands [today].”

“When was the Hebrew Calendar established? When was it modified, and When was it sealed?” (Hebrew Essay by Rachamim Sar-Shalom, by the Jewish Studies portal ‘Da`at’).

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/shabat/luach/matay-2.htm>

Abayudaya: Jews of Uganda – their Heritage (like the North African/Middle Eastern Karaite Israelites) was one of Preserving a Tanakh-only Lifestyle, without Adding Rabbinic Laws to the Torah – as Confirmed by a Rabbi sent to Convert them to Conservative Judaism:



"...Why had the community never before formally converted to Judaism? The community was founded on the religion of the Jewish Bible, without reference to or knowledge of later developments - i.e., Rabbinic Judaism, as reflected in the Talmud and in other later works of Jewish law. Since nowhere in the Bible is there an explicit mention of ritual conversion, the Abayudaya never felt the need to be converted. In fact, one of their leaders, Rabbi Samson Mugombe, the last living member of Kakungulu's inner circle, opposed conversion as an unwarranted and unacceptable rabbinic

innovation. Why, then, did the Abayudaya decide to go through this ritual? The Abayudaya have come into contact with Jews throughout the world, and have come to understand Judaism and the religion of the Bible are not synonymous. They understand that normative Judaism is based, in large measure, on the teachings of Talmudic rabbis. These rabbis defined the process of how one becomes a Jew..."

– Rabbi Howard Gorin, <http://www.rabbihowardgorin.org/Abayudaya.html>

The Same Rabbi Speaks Concerning the Igbo Jews of Nigeria:

"Most Ibos are Roman Catholic, but "what happens is that an Ibo man will practice Catholicism and then he'll get an awakening, realize that his roots are not Catholic but Israelite."

No matter where they believe their tribe's origins lay, not all Ibos are interested in becoming Jews, and not all Nigerians who wish to become Jews are Ibos.

Many Nigerians who identify themselves as Jewish belong to messianic congregations, Rabbi Gorin said. It is their way in toward Judaism; often they will give up their belief in Jesus as they learn more. "A lot of people call themselves Jews who we would call messianic Jews," he said.

Moreover, sometimes Nigerians are attracted to Judaism because they are attracted to the purity of what they see as the biblical way of life. They have not been exposed to the idea of Torah she'baal peh [Oral Torah], of rabbinic Judaism, of anything post-biblical, and they are to some extent culturally resistant to its fluidity. Some of those people leave Catholicism because they see it as having strayed from the purity of its origins; Rabbi Gorin thinks that once those putative Jews understand that Judaism is as much rabbinic as it is biblical many will lose interest."

– United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism Review, Spring 2006:

http://www.uscj.org/Becoming_Jewish6982.html

**Finally, the New Moon and New Year as Traditionally Practiced by the Lemba of Zimbabwe
– many of whom are Genetic Heirs to the Kehunnah (the Lineage of True Kohanim):**



“Lemba forefathers used to meet at a mountain as a pre-rabbinic community, with priests rotating among families. Therefore, some of the older members wonder why they need a synagogue. But Wuriga believes, “Now we should unite with other Jewish communities,” and a chief has given land for a synagogue in Mapakomhere, Zimbabwe. Lemba still tend to live near mountains and rivers.

Wuriga says he is still comparing his upbringing with customs he reads about and sees modern Jews doing. One Passover, he recalls, an uncle slaughtered a sheep. They would do kosher slaughtering facing east. To celebrate the New Moon, the first person to see the New Moon would go to the chief, who would send three witnesses to confirm the sighting. If confirmed, the first person would blow the shofar and sing songs and receive gifts.”

- **Dr. Rabson Wuriga, Research Fellow and Member of the Lemba Tribe in an interview with Kulanu** (<http://www.kulanu.org/lemba/wuriga-lemba.php>)

“The coming of the New Year remains an important event in the Lemba community. With the Gregorian calendar introduced, many Lemba people abandoned observing the details of their new year and succumbed to ‘the official’ demands of the new civilization... But there are still some pockets of traditional practices that give hope to the Lemba people. **The traditional Lemba calendar is based on the solar-lunar system. The rising and setting of the sun set the length of the day. The phases of the moon set the number of days in a month. The number of the coming and going of the new moon leads to a new year – that used to be celebrated in the month of Aviv (now Nissan (March-April).**

...The first beginning is announced in Exodus 12:2 where Moses and Aaron were told, “This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months for you”. The month of the exodus became the first month of the year. Leviticus 23:23ff points the beginning of the year in the month of Abib (March-April) now called Nissan.

...In the traditional Lemba practice, during the March-April period of the year, people used to collect the first fruits of their farming produce and give them to their respective leaders of the area. The leaders in turn took them to the chief's courtyard. While the first fruits were being brought to the chief, at the same time the council of elders would also gather at the chief's place to prepare for the celebrations of the New Year. Their assembly would be followed by all heads of families – thus men of the community.



After receiving the first fruits, the chief would invite the elders of the Bakari clan to bless the first fruits. After the blessings, then the men from this clan would blow the horn or shofar to announce the end of the year and beginning of another new year. This horn was supposed to be that of an eland or antelope. The blowing of the shofar would also be an announcement to the people that they were free to eat the produce of their fields. After the blowing of the shofar, the men at the chief's place would break into song and dance. There would be a great feast of eating and drinking...”

- **Dr. Rabson Wuriga from his book “The Oral Tradition of the Lemba Jews of Africa”** (http://jewishresearch.org/BL_archives/9_06H.htm#Flame)