

## The Feast of Jeroboam and the Samaritan Calendar.

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'AND Jeroboam celebrated (made) a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he went up unto the altar; so did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made. And he went up unto the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart: and he celebrated (made) a feast for the children of Israel, and went up unto the altar, to burn incense' (1 K 12<sup>31-33</sup>).

According to this statement, Jeroboam deliberately transferred, as it appears, the Feast of Tabernacles from the seventh month, as celebrated by the dwellers in Judah, on to the eighth. Moreover, he had devised this change 'out of his own heart.' I am not aware that any commentator has endeavoured to explain the strange action of Jeroboam. It has hitherto been taken as an act of arbitrary change in which the people, as it seems, acquiesced without any protest; and on that occasion he himself, together with the priests, brought up the sacrifices on the altar, or at least went up to burn incense. It is clear that the sacrifices referred to here were those prescribed in Lv 23<sup>35-36</sup> for the Feast of Tabernacles. It seems passing strange that such a radical change as transferring the feast should have been attempted, and without any reason or justification, for it is not alleged that, though Jeroboam had made golden calves, he deliberately went away from the Law of Moses or from the practices of the Israelites. By the mere appointment of a new king for exclusively political and economic reasons a nation does not, as a rule, change its faith, and in spite of many idolatrous practices mentioned by the Prophets performed by the people of the northern kingdom, the vast majority no doubt followed the Law of Moses as far as they understood it; and up to that time were united in the worship as performed at Jerusalem. The very fact that Jeroboam celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles 'like unto the feast that is in Judah' shows that he had no intention of departing from the religious practices, especially those which had a popular character. The Feast of Tabernacles is one of the three feasts of pil-

grimage, when the people were enjoined to travel to the sanctuary to celebrate it there together.

A study of the Samaritan Calendar, of which I possess a good number of MSS., helped me, I believe, to understand this very obscure incident recorded in the Bible. Very little is known of the Samaritan system of the calendar, and in vain have scholars laboured, from Scaliger at the end of the sixteenth century to de Sacy at the beginning of the nineteenth, to unravel the mystery of this calendar. But they had very scanty and insufficient material to work upon, and therefore their results have remained unsatisfactory. It is not my intention to discuss here at length the theory of the Samaritan Calendar, which they trace back to Adam, and believe to have been one of the secrets entrusted by God to the first man, handed on by him through the patriarchs to Moses, to Phinehas who finally established it in Sichem after the entry of the children of Israel into the land of Canaan. According to their statement, he made his calculations on the meridian of Mt. Garizim. The Samaritans have a double calendar like the Jews, one consisting of lunar months, and one of solar months. They are perfectly aware of the discrepancy between these two cycles, and they therefore also intercalate at certain intervals a month, making that year a leap year consisting of thirteen instead of twelve months. Thus they are able to adjust the difference between the lunar and the solar year. Their lunar months agree, as far as I have been able to ascertain, with the Jewish.

But among other differences there is one as to the time when the intercalation takes place. With the Jews it is after the month of Thebat that a month called Adar is intercalated, and the month which ordinarily would have been the twelfth becomes the thirteenth. With the Samaritans, as I have discovered, the system is different. The intercalation takes place after the sixth month, called by the Jews Elul.—Of the names of the months I shall speak in another article, for with them another far-reaching problem is connected.—However, it suffices to state that they have two months, the seventh, Tishri, and this intercalated

month (Second Tishri), so that they have two months of Tishri, a seventh and an eighth, and evidently their seventh would be the intercalated month. It is not here the place to discuss the origin of the Samaritans. The belief that they owe their origin to the split which had taken place in the time of Ezra is, to my mind, absolutely groundless. The Samaritans are unquestionably the last remnant of the old northern kingdom of Israel, of which they retain many practices, and are therefore of the highest interest for the history of Jewish antiquities. Incidentally, I may mention that their importance for the history of the origins of Christianity has hitherto not been clearly understood, because their literature has remained practically a closed book to the world. Their calendar is not a modern invention, just as little as the Jewish Calendar is. The necessity of carrying out the Law, of keeping the festivals, and of bringing the sacrifices in their due season made it imperative for the Jews in general to establish a certain calendar. The same held good for the people in the kingdom of Israel. And it is just round these astronomical calculations bearing on the calendar that most of the disputes have turned in the Jewish synagogue as well as in the Christian Church. If experience of later days can prove anything for events in the past, this calendar of the Samaritans throws an unexpected light on the schismatic movement of Jeroboam. If he was to establish himself firmly and win the adhesion of the people, he must appeal to their religious susceptibilities; and what would be easier than to declare, as has been done since then on innumerable occasions, that the calculations of the people in Judah were wrong, that they kept the festival in the wrong month, that it was necessary, therefore, to intercalate a month, and that the real season for the Feast of Tabernacles was a month after the date on which it was kept in Judah. So what is called in 1 K the eighth month was really the seventh month, for the one counted the 'seventh' would have been the intercalated one. Thus we can easily understand why the feast was carried out with all the necessary pomp, why the priests were drafted to Sichem, and why the sacrifices were brought on the date which the writer of 1 K 12<sup>32</sup> stated was 'like unto the feast that was in Judah,' but he adds that 'he had devised it of his own heart.' The word translated 'devised,'

אָבַד, occurs only once more in the Bible (Neh 6<sup>8</sup>). The question is: What could he have 'devised'? Surely not the festival, because that was precisely the same as kept in Judah in accordance with the Law of Moses. The reference must therefore be to something else which Jeroboam is said to have 'devised,' and this can only refer to the eighth month—the transfer of the festival from the seventh to what was counted as the eighth month.

What Jeroboam did was to turn an ordinary year into a leap year, and to intercalate one month; and this, then, is what the writer in the Book of Kings means when he says that 'he had devised it of his own heart.' The inference is that it was not done in accordance with any calculation, but as a deliberate and arbitrary act resting on no other authority than his own. For surely no one can invent a month, and no one could devise a feast. This can only refer to the principle underlying the change of the date in such a manner that it could be accepted also by the people and the priests, and not be considered as any break with the past or any infringement of the Law, which they had come together to observe, and the festival which they intended keeping as the religious festival prescribed by the Law.

It is curious, indeed, that the Ketib should be מִלְכָּר, which the Keri transforms into מִלְכָּו, so that the text in this place is somewhat uncertain. The translation of the Ketib would be that he devised it 'without,' i.e. without any of the other recognized authority, whilst the Keri makes it to be from his own heart or mind. What, therefore, has hitherto appeared as an arbitrary act of Jeroboam assumes quite a different aspect in the light of the Samaritan Calendar. His act becomes then the starting-point of a movement destined to have more lasting effects than any political secession. No more profound difference can be created between the people of one faith than by shifting the calendar, by changing the seasons, and thus deeply affecting the whole religious life. For the days that were kept holy by the one section, would be looked upon as profane by the other, and violated as it were; and *vice versa* days kept profane by the former, would be observed as sacred by the latter, and thus engender bitter feud and resentment.

It might be asked quite legitimately how old this Samaritan Calendar is, and whether we are justified in drawing conclusions from what might be a comparatively modern system of calendar on events

which lie so far back as the time of Jeroboam. There can be no doubt that a certain system must have existed by which they regulated the concordance of the solar and lunar year, for the festivals were to be kept in their due season. If the year had been only a lunar year like the Mohammedan, the festivals would have made the turn of the months of the year just as it happens with the Mohammedan festivals. Now the counting of the Shemitah, that is the year for the Release, and connected therewith the counting of the Jubel-Jubilee, when the great Release was to take place, started with the seventh month, and the first of the seventh month is known not only by Jews as New Year, but also by the Samaritans who count that season—not the day—as the time for the calculation of the Release, whilst they call the first day of the first month 'New Year,' as the beginning of the religious year. They have preserved that calculation of the calendar to this very day. In their oldest Chronicle—Tolidah—the era, in addition to that of the Creation and that of the Entry of the Children of Israel into the land of Canaan, is practically that of Jubilees. They reckon out how many Jubilees had elapsed since the Creation, and until such and such a high priest had been appointed, or how many Jubilees had elapsed before the compilation of this Chronicle. It was, therefore, a very fitting time if an intercalation had to be made that they should select the time before the 'new year of Release' for the addition. But there is now another proof for the antiquity of this practice. The Samaritans, as shown by me in a series of articles appearing in the *Jewish Review*, have also an annual cycle for the reading of the Law. They read every week one section, and they start the reading with the first Sabbath after Tabernacles, like the Jews. So their annual cycle commenced with the counting of the year of Release. The Law is, as a rule, divided into as many weekly portions as there are weeks in the lunar year. In the leap year there are, however, four or five more Sabbaths to be provided for with Bible Lessons. In order to satisfy this requirement the Samaritans split up four or five of the longer Bible Lessons of Genesis, thus making out of thirteen, seventeen or eighteen Lessons. In this manner they provide for the additional four or five Sabbaths added in that part of the year when the first Book of the Law is being read. In none of the other four books of the Law do we find such a redistribution of the Lessons. This sub-

division is limited only to the first book—Genesis—showing thereby that at no other time of the year the intercalation of an additional month of four or five Sabbaths has taken place. The practice of reading the Law has been shown by me in the *Jewish Review* as of extreme antiquity. Tradition traces it as far back as the time of Ezra, and there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of that tradition. It must be so old, or older, as the Samaritans and Jews agree therein. The creation of a leap year by the intercalation of a month must, however, precede the reading and such subdivision of the Bible. The latter had to be adapted to the prevailing and pre-existing practice. It was much more elastic and easily carried out, whilst the calendar would undoubtedly never have been made dependent on the manner in which certain portions of the Bible were to be read. The system of intercalation after the sixth month, making two seventh months, must therefore be of extreme antiquity, and must go back to the time before the Exile, for the system of intercalation and harmonizing of the solar and lunar year dates from a much earlier period than even the time of Jeroboam. The oldest Babylonian (Sumerian) Calendar which has come down to us knows the intercalation of a month. In the leap year there the intercalation takes place before the month of Bau, which corresponds with Tishri, which is more or less identical with the Seventh month, with which the Babylonian year began (v. Hommel, *Hastings' Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. iii. p. 73 f.). This is exactly the same time and month of the year in which the Samaritans intercalate their additional month. It is therefore not at all impossible, not even improbable, that in the time of Jeroboam that system was known, and he, therefore, could be perfectly justified, if he so chose, to declare that year in which the political schism was inaugurated to be a leap year, and thereby bring about a much more profound and lasting difference between the Israelites and the Judeans than a mere political cleavage. It may be a mere coincidence, yet it is a curious fact, that in the Samaritan Calendar before me, Cod. 858, corresponding to the year 1907-1908, the difference between the Jewish and Samaritan is absolutely identical with that which presumably it was in the time of Jeroboam. The Jewish Calendar is exactly one month ahead of the Samaritan, so that the Samaritans in that year celebrated their

Feast of Tabernacles precisely on the same day and date as the Jews, but *one month later*, in the eighth month, according to the Jewish computation. If they had not added a month, they would readjust their calendar and bring it into perfect harmony with the Jewish, but only for a while. Now, the same year was also a Jewish leap-year, and the next Passover would find the Samaritans two months behind the Jews, for the Jews had meanwhile intercalated another Adar. The Samaritans having, however, intercalated one month—a second Tishri—the same difference of one month between the Jewish and Samaritan computations was re-established as existed before, and they kept the Passover in what was the Jewish second month. In any case, it cannot be gainsaid that by the aid of the Samaritan Calendar we might get a different interpretation to the procedure of Jeroboam, and the event would receive greater significance than it has hitherto been invested with.

In the light of the above investigation, the action of King Hezekiah, as described in 2 Ch 30, will appear now under a totally different aspect. It is

no less than an attempt on the part of King Hezekiah, with the assistance of his wise men, to undo the work of Jeroboam in precisely the same manner as the latter had done, namely, to intercalate at a given time a month, and thus bring about a complete religious harmony between the northern kingdom and that of Judah, especially as the former had lost its political existence. Instead of keeping the Passover in the first month, he moved it to the second month, and sent letters to the whole of Israel, including Ephraim and Manasseh, and from Beersheba to Dan, asking them to join in the celebration of the festival of the Passover in Jerusalem—evidently on the date which agreed with the calendar of the northern kingdom. Ephraim mocked at this attempt, and the schism remained unhealed to this very day. Talmudic tradition describes his action as an attempt to make Nissan an intercalary month; but the reason why he should have attempted such alteration of the calendar was never suspected.

In another article I shall endeavour to explain the names of the Jewish Calendar months in the light of Samaritan tradition.

## The Great Text Commentary.

### THE GREAT TEXTS OF DEUTERONOMY.

#### DEUT. XVIII. 15.

The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.

1. THE argument of the passage shows that the 'prophet' contemplated is not a single individual, belonging to a distant future, but Moses' representative for the time being, whose office it would be to supply Israel, whenever in its history occasion should arise, with needful guidance and advice: in other words, that the reference is not to an individual prophet, but to a prophetic order. The existence of such an order in Israel, forming a permanent channel of revelation, was, of course, a signal mark of distinction between Israel and other nations of antiquity. At the same time, the terms of the description are such that it may be reasonably understood as including a reference to the ideal prophet, who should be 'like' Moses in a pre-eminent degree, in whom the line of individual

prophets should culminate, and who should exhibit the characteristics of the prophet in their fullest perfection.<sup>1</sup>

2. There is no doubt that these words did more than almost any others to create and keep alive that expectation of some great prophet to come, sometimes identified with Messiah, sometimes distinguished from Him, which we discover to have existed among the Jews generally at the time of our Lord's earthly ministry. The words were familiar to every Jew from his childhood, and through all the changes and vicissitudes of his national history, through those long years when vision and prophecy alike had ceased, there they stood as the great promise of God, of the ultimate fulfilment of which no Jew who believed in the faithfulness of his God could have a shadow of doubt. And thus, when a new teacher arose, the question was at once asked, with anxious interest,

<sup>1</sup> S. R. Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 229.