

**“Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.”  
(Romans 11:5)**

### **There Is A Remnant**

What's next? It almost seems that there isn't enough space and time for all the crisis that are happening in the world today. Well, we knew there was a time of trouble coming such as was not since the beginning of the world. However, God's grace is sufficient. His strength is made perfect in weakness. We are presenting a very interesting article this week called “Karaite Judaism”. If you read and study this article and do additional research on the topic yourself you may be surprised at how it helps to understand Jesus' conflict concerning the Pharisees, then and now.

Here is an interesting quote from Abraham Collier.

“When one studies the Second Temple Era, they are usually overwhelmed by the contradictions, obscurities, and blatant bias that many historians, philosophers, clergymen and rabbis had towards the Jews at that time. Josephus, he is probably the best source for knowledge of this period, states: "...while some men who were not concerned in the affairs themselves have gotten together vain and contradictory stories by hearsay, and have written them down after a sophisticated manner; and while those that were there present have given false accounts of things, and this either out of a humor of flattery to the Romans, or of hatred towards the Jews..." (Josephus War. Preface 1 Ch Line 2)

People should take established legend and tradition with a grain of salt. For whosoever is the victor writes the history of the victim!

Contrary to popular opinion, the Pharisee sect was the main enemy of Judaism in the Second Temple era. The Sadducees comprised the majority of all Jews. Additionally, there was a tiny Hellenistic Sadducee sect that controlled the priesthood and conspired with the Pharisees. The Pharisees and Hellenistic Sadducees also collaborated with the Roman Empire in order to obtain religious and political power over the Jews in Palestine at the time.

Regarding the Pharisees, the historian Josephus, himself a Pharisee, stated:

'What I would now explain is this, that the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers (not by Yahweh, but by men), which are not written in the laws of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them, and say that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written word, but are not to observe what are derived from the tradition of our forefathers.' (Josephus Ant. 13 Ch. 10 Par. 6)

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Karaite Judaism (Edited from longer article.)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Karaism is a Jewish movement characterized by the recognition of the Tanakh [The Tanakh is a name used in Judaism for the canon of the Hebrew Bible] alone as its supreme legal authority in Halakha (Jewish religious law) and theology. It is distinct from mainstream Rabbinic Judaism, which considers the Oral Torah, the legal decisions of the Sanhedrin as codified in the Talmud, and subsequent works to be authoritative interpretations of the Torah. Karaites maintain that all of the divine commandments handed down to Moses by God were recorded in the written Torah, without additional Oral Law or explanation. As a result, Karaite Jews do not accept as binding the written collections of the oral tradition in the Mishnah or Talmud. When interpreting the Tanakh, Karaites strive to adhere to the plain or



*Karaite Synagogue, Jerusalem*

most obvious meaning of the text; this is not necessarily the literal meaning, but rather the meaning that would have been naturally understood by the ancient Israelites when the books of the Tanakh were first written. In contrast, Rabbinic Judaism relies on the legal rulings of the Sanhedrin as they are codified in the Mishnah, Talmud, and other sources to indicate the authentic meaning of the Torah. Karaite Judaism holds every interpretation of the Tanakh to the same scrutiny regardless of its source, and teaches that it is the personal responsibility of every individual Jew to study the Torah, and ultimately decide for themselves its correct meaning. Therefore, Karaites may consider arguments made in the Talmud and other works without exalting them above other viewpoints.

According to Rabbi Avraham ben David, in his *Sefer HaQabbalah*, the Karaite movement crystallized in Baghdad in the Gaonic period (circa 7th - 9th centuries CE), under the Abbasid Caliphate in what is present-day Iraq. This is the view universally accepted among Rabbinic Jews. However, the claim has been made that Karaites were already living in Egypt in the first half of the 7th century, the evidence consisting of a legal document that the Karaite community in Egypt had in its possession until the end of the 19th century, which was said to be stamped by the palm of 'Amr ibn al-'As, the first Islamic governor of Egypt, in which he ordered the leaders of the Rabbanite community not to interfere in the way of life of the Karaites nor with the way they celebrate their holidays. This document was reported to be dated 20 AH (641 CE). Karaites have always maintained that, while there are some similarities to the Sadducees, there are also differences, and that the ancestors of the Karaites were another group called *Benei á'ẓedeq* during the Second Temple period.

Karaites were at one time a significant proportion of the Jewish population. Today there is a range of estimates from about 30,000 Karaites with about 25,000 of those in Israel to only 7,000 in Israel though one estimate has had as many as 50,000 Karaites worldwide, over 40,000 of whom have made aliyah (emigrated to Israel) from Arab countries such as Egypt and Iraq.

### **Origins**

Arguments among Jewish sects regarding the validity of the Oral Law can be dated back to the 1st and 2nd centuries BCE. Accordingly, some scholars trace the origin of Karaism to those who rejected the Talmudic tradition as an innovation.

"In the times of John Hyrcanus, and Alexander Janneus his son, sprung up the sect: of the Karaites, in opposition to the Pharisees, who had introduced traditions, and set up the oral law, which these men rejected.

Some claim that Karaism is the original form of Judaism and rabbinic Judaism branched off from it.

### **9th century**

Anan Ben David (c. 715 - 795 or 811?) is widely considered to be a major founder of the Karaite movement. His followers were called Ananites and, like modern Karaites, did not believe the Rabbinic Jewish oral law was divinely inspired.

### **The Golden Age**

In the "Golden Age of Karaism" (900 - 1100) a large number of Karaite works were produced in all parts of the Muslim world. Karaite Jews were able to obtain autonomy from Rabbanite Judaism in the Muslim world and establish their own institutions.

Karaites in the Muslim world also obtained high social positions such as tax collectors, doctors, and clerks, and even received special positions in the Egyptian courts.

According to historian Salo Wittmayer Baron, at one time the number of Jews affiliating with Karaism comprised as much as 40 percent of world Jewry, and debates between

Rabbanite and Karaite leaders were not uncommon.

Most notable among the opposition to Karaite thought and practice at this time are the writings of Rabbi Saadia Gaon, which eventually led to a permanent split between some Karaite and Rabbanite communities.

The Karaites were and have always been a part of the Jewish people, prayer was in Hebrew, the lineage of Kohanim, Levites, and families of Davidic descent were meticulously preserved, books printed in Hebrew adamantly stated that the Karaites were Jews.

### **USSR**

After the Bolshevik Revolution, atheism became official state policy and Karaite religious schools and places of worship were the very first religious institutions closed by the Soviet government. After that the only information about the Karaites that was allowed to be taught were the Szapszalian doctrines, and the official definition according to Russian law (carried over from Tsarist law) was the erroneous one that the Karaimi were the Turkic descendants of the Khazars and not Jews. Not all European Karaites accepted the Szapszalian doctrines. Some Hakhamim and a small part of the general Karaite population still preserved their Jewish heritage, but most dared not oppose Szapszal openly due to his official standing vis-À-vis the Soviet government.

### **Beliefs**

Karaites believe they observe the original form of Judaism, as prescribed by God in the Tanakh, and do not accept what they consider to be later additions such as the Oral Law of Rabbinic Judaism. They place the ultimate responsibility of interpreting the Tanakh on each individual. Karaism does not reject Biblical interpretation but rather holds every interpretation up to the same objective scrutiny regardless of its source.

Karaites believe in an eternal, one, and incorporeal God, Creator of Universe, who gave the Tanakh to humankind, through Moses and the Prophets. Karaites trust in Divine providence and the majority hope for the coming of the Messiah.

### **Views on the Mishnah**

Karaites do not accept the existence of an Oral Law because:

1. The Mishnah quotes many conflicting opinions.
2. The Mishnah does not go on to say in which opinion the truth lies. Rather, the Mishnah sometimes agrees with neither one nor the other, contradicting both.
3. They argue that the truth of the oral law given to Moses could only be in one opinion, not many opinions.
4. They question why the Mishnah does not solely speak in the name of Moses.
5. The Oral Law is not explicitly mentioned in the Tanakh.
6. When God told Moses to come up to Mount Sinai to receive the Torah He said, "Come up to me into the mountain, and be there: and I will give you tablets of stone, and a law, and commandments that I have written"; (Ex 24:12). The text states the commands are written, and no mention is made of an Oral Law.
7. The Tanakh reports that the written Torah was both lost and completely forgotten for over 50 years and only rediscovered by the Temple priests (2Ki 22:8; 2Chr 34:15). It is inconceivable that an Oral Law could have been remembered when even the written Law was forgotten.
8. The words of the Mishnah and Talmud are clearly the words of people living in the 2nd - 5th centuries CE, in contrast to the Torah, which is held to be a direct revelation by God through Moses.
9. The Torah states, "You shall not add to the word that I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of YHWH, your God, which I

command you." (Deut 4:2) They argue that this excludes the possibility of later interpretation, when that interpretation is viewed as divinely ordained.

10. Joshua 8:34 - 35 states:

ואסר-ינו, קרא את-כל-דברי התורה, הברכה, והקללה—ככל-הכתוב, בספר התורה. לא-היה דבר, מכל אשר-יצו משה—אשר לא-קרא יהושע, נגד כל-קהל ישראל והנשים והטף, והגר, ההלך בקרבם.

After that, he [Joshua] read all the words of the Torah, the Blessing and the Curse, according to all that is written in the Torah scroll. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua failed to read in the presence of the entire assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that walked among them. Since Joshua read from the Torah every word Moses had written, this implies that Moses had not been given an Oral Law, since Joshua could not have read an Oral Law from the written Torah. Secondly, there could not have been additional commandments outside of the written Torah, since all the commandments that existed could be read from the Torah scroll.

In addition to this, Joshua 1:8 states: This book of the law is not to depart out of your mouth, but you are to meditate on it day and night, so that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it.

### **Karaite interpretations of the Torah**

Theoretically, most historical Karaites would not object to the idea of a body of interpretation of the Torah, along with extensions and development of halakhah. In fact, several hundred such books have been written by various Karaite sages throughout the movement's history, although most are lost today. The disagreement arises over the perceived exaltation of the Talmud and the writings of the Rabbis above the Torah, so that, in the view of Karaites, many traditions and customs are kept that are in contradiction with those expressed in the Torah. This is seen especially by the fact that the Karaites also have their own traditions that have been passed down from their ancestors and religious authorities. This is known as Sevel HaYerushah, which means "the yoke of inheritance." It is kept primarily by traditional Karaites, and any tradition therein is rejected if it contradicts the simple meaning of the Torah. Additionally, these traditions are not forced upon any Karaite Jew or convert to Karaite Judaism.

Those newly entered Karaites who do not have such an inheritance or tradition tend to rely heavily upon just the Torah and those practices mentioned in it, and to adapt Biblical practices to their cultural context. One reason for this lack of tradition is that many modern Karaites spring from the Karaite revival due largely to the revival group known as the World Karaite Movement founded by Nehemia Gordon and Meir Rekhavi in the early 1990s.

### **Who is a Jew?**

Karaite Judaism follows patrilineal descent, meaning a Jew is someone whose father is Jewish, or who has undergone a formal conversion, since all Jewish descent in the Tanakh is traced patrilineally.

However, anyone who formally accepts the God of Israel as his own god, the people of Israel as his own people, and is circumcised (males only), is a fully established member of the people of Israel (Jew); Karaites believe this should be done, after living amongst Karaites and studying the Torah, in the form of a vow before the Beit Din.

Exodus 12:43 - 49 ׀

"But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof. In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the

house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof. All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. \ And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.” \ Ruth 1:16 \

"And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.” \ Esther 8:17 \

"And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.” \ Isaiah 56:6 - 7 \

"Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.” \ Ezekiel 47:21-23 \

”So shall ye divide this land unto you according to the tribes of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you: and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord GOD. And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof.”

Nehemia Gordon argued that, though modern scholars universally take the pronunciation of YHWH to be YAH-weh, the proper pronunciation is ye-ho-VAH. He claimed that the Masoretes belonged to the group of Karaites who did not pronounce the name and for that reason omitted the middle vowel O (as seen in the earliest complete manuscripts of the Tanakh), "to prevent their fellow Karaites from simply reading the name as it was written". However, Gordon also published an article translated in 1971 from the Hebrew by Hakham Avraham Ben-Rahamiel Qanai, which was a study by á, ðakham Mordekhai Alfandari, according to which the proper and original pronunciation of the Name is "Yihweh". Rather than attempt an uncertain pronunciation of the divine name, some have argued that instead of saying "Adonai" the term YAH should be used based upon its usage in Psalm 68:5.

#### Writings

Scholarly studies of Karaite writings are still in their infancy, and owe greatly to the Firkovich collections of Karaite manuscripts in the Russian National Library that have become accessible after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The cataloguing efforts of scholars at the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris and in the United States and England is continuing to yield new insights into Karaite literature and thought.

#### **Karaites today**

In the early 1950s, the Israeli Chief Rabbinate originally objected to the immigration of Karaite Jews to Israel, and unsuccessfully tried to obstruct it. In 2007, however, Rabbi

David Hayim Chelouche, the chief rabbi of Netayana was quoted in The Jerusalem Post as saying, "A Karaite is a Jew. We accept them as Jews and every one of them who wishes to come back [to mainstream Judaism] we accept back.

#### **Karaism in Rabbinic Jewish opinion**

Rabbinic Judaism's scholars, such as Maimonides, write that people who deny the divine authority of the Oral Torah are to be considered among the heretics. However, at the same time Maimonides holds (Hilkhot Mamrim 3:3) that most of the Karaites and others who claim to deny the "oral teachings" are not to be held accountable for their errors in the law because they are led into error by their parents and are similar to a tinoq shenishbah (a captive baby), or to one who was forced.

Some recent Ashekenazi Haredi scholars have held that Karaites should be regarded as Gentiles in all respects, though this is not universally accepted. They hasten to add that this opinion is not intended to insult the Karaites, but only to give individual Karaites the option of integrating into mainstream Judaism by way of conversion. In contrast, in 1971 Rav 'Ovadia Yosef, who was then the Rishon LeSiyon/Chief Rabbi of the Sefaradim and Edot HaMizrah of Israel, proclaimed that Karaites are Jews "LeKhol Davar" (literally, for all purposes) and that it is permissible for Rabbanite Jews to marry with them.

For Karaites, in sum, the rabbinic interpretations in oral law, are only one form of interpretation. They are not divinely ordained, and they are neither binding halakhah nor practical religious law.

#### **Halakhic status as Jews**

Rabbi David Hayim Chelouche, the chief rabbi of Netanya is quoted in the Jerusalem Post as saying: "A Karaite is a Jew.

However, as of 2013, there has been a resurgence in the questioning of the Jewish identity of Karaite's by Israel's chief rabbinate. According to the rabbinate's spokesman, "Israel is a Jewish state and Jews have superior rights. But the Karaites are not Jewish." This has led to protestations from Moshe Firrouz, head of the Karaites' Council of Sages, that "the rabbinate is denying us our religious freedom."

2013.06.14