

# The Neo-Aristocratic System (System C)

A late innovation of the Aristocratic understanding of בין הערבים (*byn ha-arabim*) arose sometime after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., becoming clearly manifested in records by the eighth century C.E. This new interpretation (System C) was built under the heavy influence of the Talmudists (spiritual offshoots of the Pharisees). It flourished primarily among the Karaites and neo-Samaritans but was also practiced by some less well-known groups.

Like those of the Aristocratic school (System A), these neo-Aristocratic groups (System C) understood *byn ha-arabim* as the period of twilight that follows sunset. But under the influence of the Hasidic schools (System B), they also determined that the seven days of unleavened bread extended from the 15th until the end of the 21st day of the first moon. As a result, they celebrated the Phasekh supper on the night of the 15th.

To bridge the obvious gap created by the simultaneous adherence to these two opposing concepts, the advocates of the neo-Aristocratic view argued that there were two different reckonings of a day: a legal day (from sunset to sunset) and a common day (from post twilight to post twilight). The 14th was calculated as a common day, while the 15th was considered a legal day. As a result of this innovative interpretation, *byn ha-arabim* actually came to represent both the last part of the 14th, as a common day reckoning, and the first part of the 15th day, as a legal day reckoning. In the eyes of the supporters of the neo-Aristocratic system, this arrangement allowed for *byn ha-arabim* to pass the ancient test of being part of the 14th while also allowing the 15th to be the first day of the seven days of unleavened bread.

## Sadducean Influence

Already by the mid-first century C.E. the Sadducees and the Samaritans had both come under the heavy domination of the Pharisees. In 70 C.E., with the destruction of the Temple of Yahweh by the Romans, the main branch of the Sadducees had ceased to exist as a political force.<sup>1</sup> The effect of the growing dominance of the Pharisees (Rabbinists, Talmudists) among the Jews was the unavoidable influence and pressure placed upon the earlier Sadducean and Samaritan doctrines.

Those of the Sadducean persuasion who continued to cling to any semblance of their old Aristocratic views were, from 70 C.E. on, placed under tremendous pressure to compromise with the Hasidic-based groups. As

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<sup>1</sup> See above Chap. XII, p. 198, n. 24.

suppression continued and necessity grew, new views of the Phasekh took shape. These neo-Aristocratic views retained only a shadow of their ancient form and for the most part were recast in the Hasidic mode. Nevertheless, even within this new construct we still see the original Aristocratic understanding of *byn ha-arabim*.

The Sadducees of Jerusalem had become divided into two main sects by the first century B.C.E.: the Sadducees and the Boethusians (the latter being treated by the Rabbis as if they were one and the same with the other Sadducees).<sup>2</sup> Late Rabbinic tradition has provided a fictionalized version of these two Sadducean factions.<sup>3</sup> Rabbi Nathan ha-Babli states that Zadok and Boethus were disciples of Antigonus of Soho (about 200–170 B.C.E.), a teacher who had received the oral laws from the high priest Simeon II.<sup>4</sup> With this explanation the Pharisees make it appear that the Sadducees were a heresy derived from the Hasidim, which is clearly not the case. The truth to the story seems simply that a priest named Boethus and his faction arose at the time of the Hasmonaean revolt in some doctrinal disagreement with the other Sadducean leadership. Yet, for the reason that the Boethusians were still seen as “the seed of Zadok” (= Sadducees) and agreed with the Sadducees on most issues, the Pharisees and others continued to group the Boethusians under the Sadducean label.<sup>5</sup>

The “Boethusian branch of the Sadducees” seems to have been named after the Boethus family from which later descended Simon Boethus, a well-known priest of Jerusalem whom Herod the Great made high priest in about 25/24 B.C.E.<sup>6</sup> The priestly “House of Boethus” is criticized in the Talmud for its oppression.<sup>7</sup> In the New Testament their party appears to be the supporters of the family of Herod the Great. For example, the party of the Herodians is, in a parallel text, made to be Sadducean, though separate from the Sadducees.<sup>8</sup>

After the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. the Sadducees as a distinct political body disappeared. The Pharisees and Talmudists, nevertheless, continued to use the word “Sadducee” for all heretics (including Christians).<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, the term Boethusian independently continued and

<sup>2</sup> In the Mishnah and Baraita the terms are freely interchanged (GDJ, 3, pp. 694f). In the dispute between the Pharisees and the Boethusians over where the high priest was to prepare the incense for the Day of Atonement, the Tosef. Yom., 1:8, and J. Yom., 1:39a, call them Boethusians, while the parallel account in the B. Yom., 19b, calls them Sadducees. Also see JE, 3, p. 285; EJ, 4, p. 1169; PSSP, pp. 227f.

<sup>3</sup> CBTEL, 9, pp. 239f; JE, 3, p. 285, 4, p. 1169, “legendary”; HJP, 2, p. 406, “historically unreliable.”

<sup>4</sup> Ab. R.N., 5; Ab., 1:3.

<sup>5</sup> CBTEL, 9, p. 240.

<sup>6</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 15:9:3. The Boethusian name was not necessarily from Simon Boethus himself, as concluded in CBTEL, 9, pp. 240f. Boethus seems merely a surname carried by numerous members of that family, i.e., the “House of Boethus” (see below n. 7). Also see HJP, 1, pp. 320f, 2, p. 406; EJ, 4, p. 1169; ADB, 4, p. 350; PSSP, p. 227, n. 67.

<sup>7</sup> B. Pes., 57a; cf., Tosef. Men., 13:21. See EJ, 4, p. 1169.

<sup>8</sup> Cf., Matt., 16:6, “Sadducees” with Mark, 8:15, “Herodi”; yet Mark, 12:13, “Herodians” are listed as separate from those “Sadducees . . . who say there is no resurrection,” v. 18. It is possible that the parallel verses may only demonstrate that the party of Herod was somehow connected with the Sadducees politically and may not mean that they were Sadducean in their religious beliefs; but see EJ, 4, p. 1169; CBTEL, 9, pp. 240f.

<sup>9</sup> JE, 10, p. 633; PSSP, p. 226; LS, pp. 97–99.

was applied to an individual as late as the time of Rabbi Akiba (early second century C.E.).<sup>10</sup> At this time the Boethusian name often replaced that of Sadducees, “only for the sake of opposition,” as the opponents of the Pharisees. They had maintained certain Sadducean traditions but “without proper understanding of the historical principles upon which they were based.”<sup>11</sup>

It is apparent that the Boethusian branch of the Sadducees, because of their leadership position during the final decades of the Temple of Yahweh at Jerusalem, were the leaders of the Sadducean movement after the Temple’s destruction. They also became part of the Jewish Diaspora, establishing themselves in various parts of Asia, especially in the frontier regions, as far north as Armenia. Here they would still exert their influence on part of Judaism but, as we have already said, without the proper understanding of the historical principles upon which the original Aristocratic movement was founded.

### The Karaites

The first clear demonstration of the neo-Aristocratic view comes from the records of the Karaites (the “Readers”).<sup>12</sup> The Rabbis assert that the Karaite sect (originally called Ananites)<sup>13</sup> was identical with the Sadducees and had originated with Anan ben David (about 740 C.E.), because the latter was ignored in the election of a new *Resh-Gelutha*.<sup>14</sup> Karaite activity was transferred from Asia to Europe by the pupils of Abu al-Faraj Furqan (Jeshua ben Judah) in the middle of the 11th century.<sup>15</sup>

Today it is admitted that before Anan there were already groups of people holding to his basic views living in outlying districts whom Anan was able to organize. Leon Nemoy calls them the “never entirely suppressed opposition (represented in earlier times by the Sadducee faction).”<sup>16</sup> They absorbed into their ranks the Jewish sects of “the Isawites (adherents of Abu ‘Isā al-İşfahānī) and the Yudghanites, who were influenced by East-Islamic tendencies, and small remnants of pre-talmudic Sadducees and Boethusians and similar anti-traditional movements.”<sup>17</sup> There seems little doubt that many of the remaining Samaritans were also in some kind of loose alliance with these various remnants.

The Karaites themselves claimed that their predecessors (at least those who held similar ideas) went back much further than Anan. They believed

<sup>10</sup> B. Shab., 108b; Sof., 1:2.

<sup>11</sup> JE, 10, p. 632.

<sup>12</sup> CBTEL, 5, p. 17. קָרָאִים (*Qaraim*) is the plural form of the Hebrew קָרָא (*qara*), meaning “called . . . call together, assemble,” with the idea of having a convocation for reading Scriptures (HEL, p. 234; SEC, Heb. #7121–7124, cf., #4744). They saw themselves as those who relied upon Scriptures rather than upon the oral laws of the Talmudists. The principle was established by Anan, as transmitted by Japheth ben Ali, that one was to, “Search thoroughly in the Torah and do not rely on my opinion.” This statement was meant to uphold the doctrine that the Scriptures were the sole source of law. Its reality was to create a great variety of opinions among the Karaite factions (EJ, 10, pp. 765, 777).

<sup>13</sup> JE, 7, p. 438; EJ, 10, p. 764.

<sup>14</sup> CBTEL, 5, p. 17.

<sup>15</sup> JE, 7, p. 441.

<sup>16</sup> KAEEL, p. xvi.

<sup>17</sup> EJ, 10, p. 764.

that the true law had been preserved by the Sadducees, whose leader, Zadok, had discovered a “portion,” but not all of the truth.<sup>18</sup> Anan, they claimed, was merely a leader of some renown who had only later organized the forces in opposition to the Rabbis. At the same time, the assertion that the Karaites were Sadducees is in part a fabrication, for they disagreed with the Sadducees on many important issues, including issues about the Phasekh and the resurrection.<sup>19</sup> They in fact represented an amalgamation of Jewish ideas.

Since Boethusian leadership survived the first century C.E., it is highly probable that the information about the Sadducees, to whom the Karaites made reference as providing some of their spiritual background, came by means of the Boethusian branch of the Sadducees. Indeed, the Karaites claimed, for example, that their opinion about how to calculate Pentecost came from Boethus.<sup>20</sup> It is also clear that the ruling Boethusian Sadducees, ever since the first century C.E., had already been compromised by the Pharisees with reference to the practices of Phasekh, for they had been forced to keep the Phasekh according to the dictates of the Pharisees.

Herein lie the reasons why men still holding Sadducee-like views were flourishing in 740 C.E. when Anan ben David came to power. Yet, like the Boethusians under Pharisaic domination, they kept the Hasidic method of seven days of unleavened bread from the 15th until the end of the 21st. It was the continuing Pharisaic (Talmudic) repression of those Jews holding on to the Aristocratic understanding of how to observe the Phasekh that resulted in the creation of the neo-Aristocratic view (System C).

### **The Phasekh of the Karaites**

As far as the observance of Phasekh, the Karaites were divided. Some divisions adjusted the calendar according to the season in which the crops became ripe in Palestine. Others adopted the Rabbinical system in its entirety.<sup>21</sup> Earlier Karaites, like Anan ben David, believed that the Phasekh did not override the weekly Sabbath, others held a contrary opinion.<sup>22</sup> These variations merely demonstrate that rabbinical Judaism had a great deal of influence over these Aristocratic-leaning groups.

The fact remains that Karaite ideas had in part sprung from the families of Sadducean priests and therefore retained some of the priestly interpretations for the Phasekh and its observances. Yet the Karaites also lived in a time of heavy Pharisaic (Talmudic) influence. For this reason, though they agreed with the Sadducees on the time of day that the Phasekh lamb was to be sacrificed (i.e., between sunset and dark), they also adopted ideas from the dominant Hasidic groups, like the Pharisees and Essenes, as well as from the powerful Mohammedans and others. *The Jewish Encyclopedia* notes:

<sup>18</sup> EJ, 10, p. 765.

<sup>19</sup> For example, the Karaites, unlike the Sadducees but in accord with the Pharisees, believed in the resurrection of the dead on the day of judgment as well as in rewards in the afterlife (EJ, 10, p. 778; CBTEL, 5, p. 18).

<sup>20</sup> Al-Kirkisani, 1:7.

<sup>21</sup> THP, p. 255, n. 1.

<sup>22</sup> THP, p. 255.

But Karaism in fact adopted a large part of rabbinical Judaism, either outright or with more or less modifications, while at the same time it borrowed from earlier or later Jewish sects—Sadducees, Essenes, Isawites, Yudghanites, etc.—as well as from Mohammedans.<sup>23</sup>

This merging of Sadducean and Rabbinical Judaism, therefore, directly affected the Karaite practice of Phasekh. To demonstrate, the Karaite writer Samuel al-Magribi understood “*byn ha-arabim*” as follows:

Its beginning is the setting of the sun, and its end the disappearance of the last brightness of daylight, and this is the period of dusk which lingers for some time after the sinking of the last portion of the disk of the sun.<sup>24</sup>

In Scriptures, the Phasekh is to be sacrificed on the 14th of Nisan. Yet the Karaites, clearly under Pharisaic-Talmudic influence, sacrificed during the twilight at the beginning of the 15th of Nisan and ate the Phasekh that same night. To bridge the gap between the apparent contradiction Samuel al-Magribi provided the following reasoning:

This time is regarded as part of two days: of the common day, which is the fourteenth of Nisan, as mentioned above; and of the legal day, which is the fifteenth. The common day begins after the sinking of twilight and continues until its next sinking; this is the day as reckoned for the purpose of offering the sacrifice. The legal day begins with sunset and lasts until the next sunset.<sup>25</sup>

For the Jews, the legal (scriptural) day ended at sunset,<sup>26</sup> while the common day ended after twilight, with the appearance of the first three stars of the evening.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, in the time of Pliny (first century C.E.), a day for “the common people everywhere” extended “from dawn until the darkness of night.”<sup>28</sup> For this reason the Greek words δειλης (*deiles*), δειλινος (*deilinos*), etc., meaning the last half of daylight (the afternoon),<sup>29</sup> were at times used by editions of the LXX to translate the Hebrew word *arab*.<sup>30</sup> Some LXX versions use δειλης (*deiles*; afternoon) in place of ἑσπέρας (*hesperas*; twilight) as a translation of *arab*.<sup>31</sup> These details show that a legal day overlapped with the common day

<sup>23</sup> JE, 7, p. 438.

<sup>24</sup> Al-Magribi, 2:1; KAEEL, p. 199.

<sup>25</sup> Al-Magribi, 2:3; KAEEL, pp. 199f.

<sup>26</sup> THP, p. 131, and n. 3, p. 199, and n. 6; EJ, 5, p. 1374; ADB, 4, p. 766. For the scriptural evidence that the legal day ends and begins with sunset—the moment when the entire sun disappears below the horizon (EJ, 5, p. 1376)—see above Chap. XIII, pp. 213ff, p. 213, n. 21.

<sup>27</sup> B. Ber., 2a–b; Maimonides, *Code*, 3, 1:5:4; JE, 3, p. 501.

<sup>28</sup> Pliny, 2:79.

<sup>29</sup> GEL, 1968, pp. 373f.

<sup>30</sup> CS, 1, pp. 286, 287.

<sup>31</sup> CS, 1, p. 557, at Exod., 18:13, and 1 Macc., 10:80.

during the period of twilight. This period of overlap was the source of much debate in Talmudic circles.<sup>32</sup>

The Karaite view is undoubtedly derived from a strained effort to merge the diverse practices of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Such a merger came about because of Pharisaic dominance (demanding that Phasekh be sacrificed toward the end of the 14th and eaten on the night of the 15th), while the party of the Karaites, still a minority, clung to the ancient priestly interpretation that *byn ha-arabim* was twilight after sunset. System C simply bridged the gap between the two opposing views.

## The Samaritans

The Samaritans suffered through the same pressures and changes that developed the Karaite view (if indeed they are not both derived from the same source). We know, for example, that in the latter part of the second century B.C.E., the Jews of Judaea had conquered the country of the Samaritans.<sup>33</sup> Though they never agreed with the Pharisees on many scriptural issues, the Jews of that time had gained important political influence over the Samaritans, just as they had become dominant over the Sadducees.

Because of Judaeans supremacy, the Samaritans became subject to the same rules as the Edomites who were living in southern Judaea. Since they were living in the ancient land promised by Yahweh to the Israelites, they were obligated to keep the laws of the Jews. Failure to keep these laws meant exile.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, the Pharisees became dominant in the reign of Queen Alexandra of Judaea (76/75–68/67 B.C.E.),<sup>35</sup> which was not long after Ezekielos the Tragedian wrote. As a result, the Samaritans from the mid-first century B.C.E. onward fell under the authority of the Pharisees, just as the Sadducees and others had been forced to do.

The Samaritans, meanwhile, were strong allies and supporters of Herod the Great,<sup>36</sup> who conquered and ruled Judaea in the winter of 37/36 B.C.E.<sup>37</sup> For a time Herod even left his relatives in Samaria for safety.<sup>38</sup> Herod married a Samaritan woman named Malthace,<sup>39</sup> the mother of his son named Archelaus, who ruled Jerusalem after Herod's death.<sup>40</sup> During his siege against Jerusalem, while residing in Samaria, Herod took another wife, named Mariamme, the daughter of Simon, the son of Boethus, the Jewish priest.<sup>41</sup> In

<sup>32</sup> This debate is discussed at some length in the B. Shab., 34a–35a. Here the twilight after sunset, called *arab* and *byn ha-arabim* by those of the Aristocratic school, was by the Talmudic writers referred to as *בין השמשות* (*byn ha-shamasuth*; between the suns). They argued whether it should be counted as the last part of day (i.e., the common day) or the first part of night. They determined that any conclusion was in doubt. Admitting that the legal day ended at sunset, at which time a person, if he followed the purity laws, was rendered clean, the rabbis judged other issues leniently. For example, one was allowed to store away food *בין השמשות* (*byn ha-shamasuth*; between the suns) but is forbidden to do so after dark on the Sabbath day. Cf., Maimonides, *Code*, 3, 1:5:4.

<sup>33</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 13:10:2f.

<sup>34</sup> SJC, chap. xxv; cf., Jos., *Antiq.*, 13:9:1.

<sup>35</sup> Jos., *Wars*, 1:5:1–4, *Antiq.*, 13:15:5–13:16:6.

<sup>36</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:11:4, 14:15:3.

<sup>37</sup> For the date of Herod the Great's conquest of Jerusalem see SJC, chaps. xvi–xx.

<sup>38</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:15:4.

<sup>39</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 17:1:3, *Wars*, 1:28:4.

<sup>40</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 17:10:1.

<sup>41</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:12:1, 14:15:14, *Wars*, 1:12:3, 1:17:8.



late 30 B.C.E. Samaria was brought under direct control of this Jewish king.<sup>42</sup> After Herod's death, Augustus Caesar assigned Samaria to King Archelaus (4 B.C.E.–6 C.E.), the son of Herod the Great.<sup>43</sup>

Meanwhile, King Herod the Great (36–4 B.C.E.) was supported by the Boethusian Sadducees. He appointed Simon, the son of Boethus, high priest in about 25/24 B.C.E. and then, as we have stated above, married Simon's daughter, Mariamme.<sup>44</sup> Mariamme, in turn, became the mother of Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great.<sup>45</sup> Herod Antipas later became the tetrarch of Galilee. During the Herodian period, the family of Boethus supplied several high priests: Joezer, who filled the office twice;<sup>46</sup> Eleazar;<sup>47</sup> Simon Kantheras;<sup>48</sup> his son Elioneus;<sup>49</sup> and Joshua ben Gamaliel, whose wife, Martha, belonged to that house.<sup>50</sup>

The close political association between the Samaritans and the Boethusians with the family of Herod the Great was strong. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to conclude that, after the Herodians lost power, some of the Samaritans, despite their dislike of the Jerusalem priesthood and the Temple at Jerusalem, fell under the same kind of Pharisaical pressures that affected the Boethusians and other Sadducees. Over the years some of the Samaritans would have found it necessary to make the same kind of compromise that the Boethusians of the first century C.E. had made in their celebration of the Phasekh.

### Different Samaritan Sects

There is no evidence of a continuous tradition among the Samaritans. To the contrary, the Samaritans have undergone many vicissitudes since they were founded.<sup>51</sup> The great divergence in Samaritan attitudes began shortly after a period of intellectual stagnation, which occurred "from the time of Hadrian and a little later, when most of the ancient literature of the Samaritans had been irretrievably destroyed."<sup>52</sup> Between the early second and fourth centuries C.E. a number of Samaritan sects emerged, namely, the Dositheans, Gorothenians, Masbothaeans (Sebuaeans), and by the fourth century a faction that was identified with the Essenes.<sup>53</sup>

Their willingness to compromise is also demonstrated by the fact that Pharisee-like eschatological tenets and the dogma of the resurrection (previously denied by the Sadducees and Samaritans) already appeared in full bloom by that time.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 15:7:3; NBD, p. 1132.

<sup>43</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 17:11:4.

<sup>44</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 15:9:3, 18:5:4, 19:6:2.

<sup>45</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 18:5:1.

<sup>46</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 18:1:1.

<sup>47</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 17:13:1.

<sup>48</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 19:6:2.

<sup>49</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 19:8:1.

<sup>50</sup> Yeb., 6:4.

<sup>51</sup> THP, pp. 251f.

<sup>52</sup> SHDL, p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:22; Epiphanius, *Pan.*, 1:10; Theodoret, *Fab.*, 1:1; John Dam., in EGM, 1:282; Nicetas, 1:35; SEJS, pp. 252–265.

<sup>54</sup> SEJS, pp. 239–251.

The early Dositheans, for example, reflected the changing positions of some of the Samaritans, for some of them “believed in the resurrection of the dead, which belief is foreign to the Samaritans.”<sup>55</sup> As James Montgomery poignantly comments:

For from all we know of Samaritanism there can be no doubt that it remained under the steady influence of Judaism, and that this spiritual patronage was so strong and so necessary that even after the complete excommunication of the schismatics in the IIIrd and IVth Christian centuries Rabbinism still infiltrated into Samaria.<sup>56</sup>

The Essene faction is vital to understanding the development of the neo-Samaritans. As discussed earlier, the Jewish Essenes were a Hasidic-based group.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, Hippolytus even classified the Pharisees as an Essene sect.<sup>58</sup> That the Essenes would have established themselves among the Samaritans proves that by the fourth century C.E. serious inroads had been made by the Hasidic schools into the Samaritan groups. With regard to the festivals, the Essene Samaritans “celebrated their feast indifferently with whomsoever they chance to be.”<sup>59</sup> In this willingness, one can already see the roots for a compromise between the Aristocratic and Hasidic forms of the Festival of Phasekh and Unleavened Bread. At about this time, due to Jewish suppression, the Samaritans seem to vanish. Moses Gaster writes:

The persecution of the Samaritans was so effective that for close upon a thousand years their very existence was entirely forgotten, and they lived only in the memory of the ancient writers.<sup>60</sup>

We do know that many Samaritans spread to other regions, which served as a source for the acquisition of different ideas. For example, there was a large Samaritan population living in Egypt by the 12th century C.E.<sup>61</sup> At the same time, the destruction of ancient Samaritan literature makes it difficult to trace the history of these changes, the oldest known Samaritan writings belonging only to the 10th or 11th century C.E.<sup>62</sup> Yet there is good evidence of differing opinions among the Samaritans even over the last centuries.<sup>63</sup> It is very probable that various factions continued to celebrate Phasekh quite differently over the centuries.

Neither should we doubt that there were contacts between the Samaritans and the Karaites. James Montgomery’s research into Samaritan theology, for

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<sup>55</sup> John Dam., 13.

<sup>56</sup> SEJS, pp. 72f.

<sup>57</sup> See above Chap. XI, p. 184, n. 32.

<sup>58</sup> Hippolytus, *Ref. Her.*, 9:23.

<sup>59</sup> John Dam., 12.

<sup>60</sup> SHDL, p. 2.

<sup>61</sup> Gaster, *Asatir*, p. 170.

<sup>62</sup> Gaster, *Asatir*, pp. 134f.

<sup>63</sup> Gaster, *Asatir*, p. 259.



example, admits to this influence.<sup>64</sup> It was from this mix of ideas that, in the final stages of the existence of the Samaritan religion, at a time when their numbers had dwindled so drastically, that the neo-Aristocratic view emerged as dominant.

### The Neo-Samaritan Phasekh

With regard to the celebration of the Festival of Phasekh and Unleavened Bread, we are not made aware, with any detail or clear delineation, of the modern or neo-Samaritan view until the end of the 19th century C.E., with the work on Samaritan beliefs and practices composed by the high priest Jacob ben Aaron, entitled *The Guide*.<sup>65</sup> Parroting the Pharisees of the first century C.E., the neo-Samaritans celebrate eight days of unleavened bread.<sup>66</sup> They remove the leavening at the very end of the 13th and keep the festival from the beginning of the 14th until the end of the 21st of Nisan/Abib.<sup>67</sup> To this very day, the 14th of the moon is considered by the neo-Samaritans a day of preparation. Using as their authority Exodus, 23:18, “You shall not sacrifice over leaven the blood of my sacrifice,” the neo-Samaritans neither eat “leavened or unleavened,” on the 14th nor keep “anything fermenting into yeast.”<sup>68</sup>

The neo-Samaritans, like the Karaites, have put a strange twist on the understanding of Phasekh and the concept of “between the *arabim*.” They bridge the gap between the Aristocratic and Hasidic views by calculating *byn ha-arabim* as the time between sunset and dark. Then they calculate *byn ha-arabim* as occurring at the end of the day. Therefore, for the neo-Samaritans, as with the Karaites, the common day ends at the arrival of dark (i.e., the appearance of the first three stars in late twilight).<sup>69</sup> Also, like the Karaites and Pharisees, they make the legal day end with sunset (*arab*), but the expression “between the *arabim*,” for religious purposes, means the end of the common day. Sunset is the first *arab* and the setting of twilight the second *arab*.

The neo-Samaritans sacrifice their Phasekh lamb after sunset, which they believe is the last part of the 14th, holding that they are following the prescription of Exodus, 12.<sup>70</sup> For the neo-Samaritans, “Real twilight is the space of two minutes after the actual going-down of the sun. This is the moment when the Paschal Sacrifice is slaughtered.”<sup>71</sup> Phasekh, therefore, is eaten at the beginning of the 15th, just as it was with the Pharisees and their confederates.

Accordingly, although the neo-Samaritans have developed a different understanding of the phrase “between the *arabim*,” in that it actually ends rather than begins a day, it is certain that their view of the expression “between the *arabim*,” to mean the period between sunset and dark, was a very ancient one—derived from the same priestly source as that practiced by the Sadducees. For this reason, the neo-Samaritans continue to cling to that

<sup>64</sup> SEJS, p. 204.

<sup>65</sup> Quoted in PHT, pp. 78–83.

<sup>66</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 2:15:1.

<sup>67</sup> SEJS, p. 40.

<sup>68</sup> PHT, pp. 77–78.

<sup>69</sup> See above n. 27.

<sup>70</sup> PHT, p. 81.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

understanding, if for no other reason than that it serves as a mark of distinction and national pride. At the same time, for an assortment of reasons, the ranks of the Samaritans have greatly dwindled over the centuries. In 1970, for example, there were only 430 Samaritans counted as still living in Palestine.<sup>72</sup> As a result, there are very few Samaritans remaining who continue to practice the neo-Samaritan Phasekh system.

### **Conclusion**

The ancient Aristocratic priests and their spiritual brothers and descendants the Sadducees, ancient Samaritans, and Boethusians retained the ancient view of *byn ha-arabim*. In their understanding, *byn ha-arabim* meant the period between sunset and dark. The earlier Aristocratic groups, including the Sadducees and ancient Samaritans, kept only a seven-day festival, lasting from the beginning of the 14th until the end of the 20th. Later groups, such as the Karaites and the neo-Samaritans, modified their Phasekh observance so that they could retain their more ancient definition of *byn ha-arabim* as between sunset and dark. Yet they conformed with the Pharisaic interpretation of the seven-day Festival of Unleavened Bread, beginning it with the 15th and continuing it until the end of the 21st. In doing so they created a third interpretation of the festival observance (System C).

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<sup>72</sup> EJ, 14, p. 738.