

SHOULD NON-ADVENTIST STUDENTS OF LUKANGA ADVENTIST BOARDING SCHOOL KEEP SABBATH?

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Non-Adventist boarding students at the Adventist University of Lukanga, hereafter referred to as UNILUK,¹ think that Sabbath observance should not be mandatory for them. When students enrol at UNILUK, they receive a manual which summarizes ethical conducts for the school, among which is the Sabbath.² Students make a commitment to observe the school ethics by signing a document, regardless their religious affiliation.³ However, after quite a time on campus, non-Adventist students generally complain that Sabbath observance is a matter of worship and should never be compulsory. They claim that UNILUK violates their conscience by inflicting them a religious law. This article provides a biblical ground for UNILUK to require Sabbath keeping from non-Adventist students. The case of the “mixed multitude” of Exod. 12:38 is used as an essential background.

Key words: Sabbath, “mixed multitude,” non-Adventist students, and UNILUK.

1 UNILUK is a French acronym for Université Adventiste de Lukanga (Adventist University of Lukanga). It is an Adventist institution located in central Africa, more precisely in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in the province called North-Kivu, in Lukanga village.

2 Université Adventiste de Lukanga, *Manuel de l'Etudiant*, 2013-2014, 11-12.

3 *Ibid.*, 23.

1. Identification of the “Mixed Multitude” of Exodus 12:38

When the people of Israel came out of Egypt, “a mixed multitude went up also with them” (Exod. 12:38).⁴ This “mixed multitude” (‘ēreḥraḥ)⁵ could possibly be composed of some native Egyptians, or the remnants of the Hyksos, or other Semites made captives in Egypt, or coming from inter-marriages between Jews and Egyptians.⁶

Nevertheless, what is certain is that the “mixed multitude” was not part of the children of Israel. In fact, it is constantly distinguished from the people of Israel. It is referred to in Exod. 12:38 only after mentioning the children of Israel and their numbering in verse 37. In Numbers 11:4, the “mixed multitude” is identified as a rabble in the midst of the people of Israel.⁷ It is when the rabble manifested a craving desire that the people of Israel also wept (Num. 11:4). Moreover, the same Hebrew word ‘ēreḥ (mixture) is used in Neh. 13:3 and Jer. 50:37 to describe Gentiles.⁸

Furthermore, the Bible mentions foreigners who were in the midst of the people of Israel in the wilderness (Deut. 29:11; 31:12). Since Exod. 12:37-38 specify that those who departed from Egypt were composed of the Israelites and the “mixed multitude,” the foreigners who are referred to as being within the Israelites’ camp (Deut. 29:11; 31:12) are the same as the “mixed multitude.”⁹ Therefore, the “mixed multitude,” was Gentiles, foreigners.¹⁰ Some scholars hold that it was composed of native Egyptians

4 All Bible passages referred to in this paper are taken from the King James Version.

5 The Hebrew noun ‘ēreḥ means mixture and the adjective raḥ means multitude.

6 For different views about the identification of the “mixed multitude” see Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary: The Holy Bible With Exegetical and Expository Comment*, Commentary Reference Series (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1978), 1:556-557.

7 Many scholars argue that the “mixed multitude” of Exod. 12:38 and the rabble of Num. 11:4 refer to the same group. See Allen Ross and John Oswalt, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, With the Entire Text of the New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2008), 1:377.

8 William H.C. Propp, *Exodus 1-18: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (London, UK: Yale University Press, 2008), 364.

9 Nichole, 1058.

10 Fabry and Lamberty-Zielinski assert that the “mixed multitude” of Exod. 12:38 was composed of non-Israelites. See H. –J. Fabry and H. Lamberty-Zielinski, “II/III ‘rb II/III,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (TDOT)*, ed. G. Jo

stirred up by the plagues that had taken place.¹¹ The rabbinic literature supports this view as Gerald Aranoff demonstrated.¹²

The “mixed multitude” decided freely to join and journey with the people of Israel without being Israelites. Similarly, non-Adventist students choose freely an Adventist institution, UNILUK, as their *alma mater*, without being Adventists. Keeping this in mind, it is also important to find out whether the “mixed multitude” was converted to Judaism or not in order to strengthen the comparison between the “mixed multitude” and the non-Adventist students at UNILUK.¹³

2. The “Mixed Multitude” Within Judaism

The Bible does not actually give the reason why the “mixed multitude” decided to join and go with the people of Israel. Some scholars allege that the “mixed multitude” was collectively converted to Judaism.¹⁴ However, the Bible gives some hints showing that this “mixed multitude” was not converted to Judaism.

First, the “mixed multitude” was always the first to complain and to lead the people of Israel into rebellion (Num. 11:4-5). In both Exodus and Numbers the “mixed multitude” is portrayed as being the instigators of

Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David. E. Green (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 11:332.

- 11 Arno C. Gaebele, *The Annotated Bible, Volume 1: Genesis to Deuteronomy* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2009), 138; John Peter Lange, Philip Schaff, and Charles M. Mead, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Exodus* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2008), 42.
- 12 Gerald Aranoff, “The Mixed Multitude According to the Zohar,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 40 (2012): 128-130.
- 13 The parallelism between the “mixed multitude” within Israel and the non-Adventist students within UNILUK does not mean that non-Adventist students within UNILUK are Gentiles or that Adventists in UNILUK are Israelites. The comparison focuses on non-Sabbath keepers within Sabbath keepers.
- 14 Shaul Magid, “The Politics of (Un) Conversion: The ‘Mixed Multitude’ (‘Erev Rav) as Conversos in Rabbi Hayyim Vital’s ‘Ets Ha-Da’at Tov,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 95 (2005): 630-631.

God's wrath whereas the people of Israel are blamed for following the "mixed multitude" in rebellion.¹⁵

Second, the "mixed multitude" joined the people of Israel in haste, on the eve of the departure from Egypt,¹⁶ and could not receive circumcision as an initiatory rite into Judaism.¹⁷ Since circumcision was the sign of belonging to Judaism, the "mixed multitude" never belonged to Judaism. Circumcision was taken seriously that God instructed Moses and Aaron, during the Exodus, that no foreigner should eat of the Passover unless he complies with circumcision (Exod. 12:43-49). Joshua 5:5 declares that "all the people that came out were circumcised: but all the people *that were* born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, *them* they had not circumcised." Thus, when the people of Israel entered in Canaan, God ordered Joshua to circumcise all those who were born in the way (Joshua 5:2-3). Since circumcision was performed neither at the beginning of the exodus nor in the wilderness, if the Egyptians identified as the "mixed multitude" were not circumcised, this would mean that they were not converted to Judaism.

Third, on the one hand Ellen G. White declares that the "mixed multitude" was constituted of the Egyptians who, incited by the signs and wonders wrought in Egypt, believed and decided to join the Hebrews and to serve their God.¹⁸ On the other hand she specifies that there was among the "mixed multitude" "a far greater number who desired only to escape from the plagues, or who followed in the wake of the moving multitudes merely from excitement and curiosity."¹⁹

Therefore, the fact that the "mixed multitude" joined the Israelites without being converted to Judaism is another factor that strengthens the comparison between the "mixed multitude" within Israel and the non-

15 Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 1-20: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (London, UK: Yale University Press, 2008), 321.

16 Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* (Washington, DC: Review, & Herald, 1945), 3:225.

17 It is attested that circumcision was practiced in ancient Egypt, see H-C. Hahn, "Circumcision," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), 1:307. However, it is not evident that all the Egyptians who joined the Israelites were circumcised. Even if they were circumcised their circumcision would still have had a meaning other than belonging to Judaism.

18 White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 224-225.

19 Ellen G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets as Illustrated in the Lives of Holy Men of Old* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1958), 281.

Adventist students within UNILUK. Like the “mixed multitude,” non-Adventist students at UNILUK are accepted within an Adventist institution without being Adventists and without even being required to become Adventists. Therefore, the way the “mixed multitude” was dealt with regarding Sabbath keeping can be considered as a background for dealing with non-Adventist students within an Adventist institution, UNILUK, regarding Sabbath keeping.

3. The “Mixed Multitude” and the Sabbath Keeping

The Pentateuch does not make any distinction between the “mixed multitude” and the people of Israel regarding Sabbath keeping in the wilderness. The first biblical occurrence of the word Sabbath appears in Exod. 16:23 in relation to manna collect during Israel’s pilgrim in the wilderness.²⁰ Manna fell during the days of the week except on Sabbath. No one should go out to seek for manna on Sabbath (Exod. 16:29). It is worth noting that even the “mixed multitude” of the Egyptians had to observe the Sabbath with the people of Israel in the wilderness for forty years. In fact, the instruction “let no man go out of his place on the seventh day” (Exod. 16:29) was addressed to everyone. Anyone who would go out to collect manna on Sabbath, Israelite or Egyptian, could not find any.

In addition, the fourth commandment expressed in Exod. 20:8-11 includes strangers in verse 10 which says, “But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.” Sabbath is not to be kept by the Israelites only, but also by the animals and strangers.²¹ The stranger is cited at last because he or she is neither a son nor a daughter of the

20 The first biblical occurrence of the word Sabbath in Exod. 16:23 does not mean that Sabbath begins with the manna story. The terminology “seventh-day” used in Gen. 2:2-3 with respect to the cessation of God’s creative activity refers to Sabbath even though the noun *šabbāṭis* not used there. According to David Noel Freedman, Gen. 2:2-3 is a universal divine example of rest to be imitated by the entire humanity; see David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1996), 5:851.

21 Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus: Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1991), 229.

household nor regularly in its care like the servants and cattle.²² Thus, the stranger mentioned in the fourth commandment is not part of the regular household.

Besides, the Hebrew word "gēr" (stranger) used in Exod. 20:10 means a sojourner or a temporary dweller.²³ It may refer to any of the Egyptians who freely decided to join themselves to the people of Israel.²⁴ When God was promulgating the Ten Commandments on Sinai, strangers were present and could also hear His voice. Though these Egyptians were not part of the covenantal people, they were required to observe the Sabbath together with the people of Israel. However, the phrase "thy stranger that is within thy gates" points also to Israel's settlement in the Promised Land because there were no gates in the wilderness. Even the promise "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" found in the fifth commandment in Exod. 20:12 suggests that Israel's future settlement in the Promised Land was also in view.²⁵ Thus, the stranger may also be a visitor stopping temporarily with the Israelite.²⁶

Moreover, the reason given for keeping the Sabbath, namely, "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exod. 20:11), is universal and does not depend on being Jew or Egyptian. The fact that the animals (Exod. 20:10),²⁷ even the land (2 Chron. 36:21; see also Lev. 26:34-35; 26:43), need, also to rest suggests that Sabbath is not only for worshiping God (since animals cannot worship), but also for a renewal of God's creation. That masters should not require any work from their servants is another indication that Sabbath was made for the benefit of human beings. Since strangers need also renewal and

22 Benno Jacob, *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus*, trans. Walter Jacob (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1992), 568.

23 Francis Brown, with S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (BDB), based on the lexicon of William Gesenius (1952), s.v. "gēr."

24 Nichol, 605.

25] Jacob, 568.

26 John I. Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary 3 (Dallas, TX: Word, 2002), 289.

27 For more information about the rest of the animals, see A Rahel Schafer, "Rest for the Animals? Nonhuman Sabbath Repose in Pentateuchal Law," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 23 (2013): 167-186.

care, it is for their advantage to partake in the blessings of the Sabbath. Sabbath is not a burden but a blessing.

Furthermore, Deut. 5:15 specifies that the Lord commanded the people of Israel to keep the Sabbath because the Lord delivered them from slavery in Egypt. Yet, the “mixed multitude” of the Egyptians who joined themselves to the people of Israel had to keep the Sabbath even though they were not slaves in Egypt as were the people of Israel.²⁸ In keeping the Sabbath, the “mixed multitude” was also considered as slaves who had been delivered. This suggests that the deliverance from slavery mentioned as one of the reasons of keeping the Sabbath should not be limited to the Egyptian slavery, but could possibly include spiritual redemption (John 8:34), which reinforces the universal character of the Sabbath.²⁹

Therefore, the story of manna collect in Exod. 16 and the stipulation of the fourth commandment in Exod. 20:10 and Deut. 5:15 reveal that God did not make any distinction between the Israelites and the “mixed multitude” of the Egyptians regarding Sabbath keeping for forty years that they spent together in the wilderness. Even after Israel’s settlement in the Promised Land, a Gentile within an Israelite’s gates had to keep the Sabbath. Later, Isaiah wrote that foreigners who joined themselves to the Lord should not think that the Lord will deal with them differently regarding Sabbath keeping (56:2-6).

28 Some scholars assert that the “mixed multitude” was constituted of people who were oppressed under Pharaoh; see for example, James K. Bruckner, *Exodus*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 119. However, no biblical evidence shows that the “mixed multitude” was also oppressed in Egypt like the children of Israel. Num. 11:4-5 is appealing, “And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting; and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? 5 We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick.” The claim “we did eat in Egypt freely” is more understandable when it comes from those who were not slaves, the “mixed multitude.”

29 Commenting on Deut. 5:15, Duane L. Christensen correctly pointed out that in Exodus the doctrine of creation dominates while in Deuteronomy it is the doctrine of redemption that dominates, see Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy* 1-21:9, Word Biblical Commentary 6A (Dallas, TX: Word, 2002), 120. Since the Bible describes the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of redemption as having a universal scope, the fact that the Sabbath brings these two doctrines together in Exod. 20:11 and Deut. 5:15 pleads for its universality.

4. The “Mixed Multiple” Face to God’s Punishment for Sabbath

Breaking

Numbers 15:29-36 is revealing regarding the punishment for Sabbath breaking. It reports,

29Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, both for him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them. 30But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. 31Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him. 32And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath day. 33And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. 34And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. 35And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. 36And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD commanded Moses.

The story in Num. 15:29-36 does not specify whether the man stoned to death for breaking the Sabbath was an Israelite or one of the “mixed multitude.” However, some hints suggest that he could possibly be one of the “mixed multitude.” In fact, it is significant to notice that the account of his death (Num. 15:32-36) is immediately preceded by God’s instruction that there ought to be one law for both the children of Israel and the strangers and that any person who sins with a high hand, whether an Israelite or a stranger, shall be cut off (Num. 15:29-30).

Moreover, the case reported in Num. 15:29-36 is similar to that reported in Lev. 24:10-23.³⁰ In both cases (1) there is a capital offense (Sabbath breaking in Num. 15:32-36 and blasphemy of the name of the Lord in Lev. 24:10-14, 23), (2) the offender is brought unto Moses, (3) the offender is put in detention until God’s special revelation, (4) the offender is stoned

30 Phillip J. Budd says that the resemblance between both stories is unavoidable, Phillip J. Budd, *Numbers*, Word Biblical Commentary 5 (Dallas, TX: Word, 2002), 175; see also Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 1-20: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (London, UK: Yale University Press, 2008), 398.

to death without the camp on God's command, and (5) there is a stipulation that the punishment is the same regardless being Israelite or foreigner (Num. 15:29-30; Lev. 24:16, 22).

Now, it is striking to notice that the offender in Lev. 24:10-14, 23 was legally a stranger (his father was an Egyptian and his mother an Israelitish). It is possible that he was put in custody to settle first the issue of the applicability of the blasphemy law to him.³¹ If this was the case, then the offender in Num. 15:32-36 who was also put in custody was most probably one of the "mixed multitude," especially because it was the "mixed multitude" who usually initiated rebellion (Num. 11:4). Anyway, the fact that the punishment was the same for both the Israelite and the stranger shows that both were treated equally regarding Sabbath keeping, and this constitutes a provision for similar cases such as that of non-Sabbath keepers within the gates of Sabbath keepers.

5. Sabbath Reinforcement in Nehemiah's Reformation

Nehemiah 13:19-21 is appealing. It reads,

¹⁹And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and *some* of my servants set I at the gates, *that* there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day. ²⁰So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice. ²¹Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no *more* on the sabbath.

Nehemiah commanded the gates of Jerusalem to be shut during the Sabbath, which means that the transgressors of the Sabbath could not pass in the shut gates. Nevertheless, he still appointed some of his trusty servants by the gates to make sure that no porter would be tempted to reopen them by bribery or other reason.³² Seeing that, the merchants decided to continue doing their business on Sabbath outside the gates. In fact, verse

31 Clyde M. Woods and Justin Rogers, *Leviticus-Numbers*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO.: College Press, 2006), 144.

32 Loring W. Batten, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1913), 296-297.

20 —“so the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice”— reads in the Septuagint—“So all [the merchants] lodged, and carried on traffic without Jerusalem once or twice.”³³ Then Nehemiah threatened to lay hands on them (v. 20) and they ended the transgression.

Nevertheless, Nehemiah’s attitude and action need to be set in their context. After experiencing the Babylonian captivity because of infidelity to the Lord, Nehemiah knew that the existence of the nation of Israel depended on fidelity to the Lord.³⁴ He was aware of the doom that awaited Israel for Sabbath breaking and the blessings for Sabbath keeping (Jer. 17:19-27; Ezek. 20:12-24). Moreover, he was a governor in a theocratic regime where the religious and political laws were fused. Therefore, the way he carried out his reformation needs to be understood in a specific context. However, it still shows that those who lead God’s institutions where His law is to be magnified should take some precautions that promote obedience to God.

6. Conclusion

The case of the “mixed multitude” of Exod. 12:38 within Israel and that of non-Adventist students within UNILUK are similar. This similarity allows using the way the “mixed multitude” was treated regarding Sabbath keeping within Israel as a valid biblical background for treating non-Adventist students regarding Sabbath keeping within UNILUK. Therefore, requiring Sabbath keeping from non-Adventist students within UNILUK as it was required from the “mixed multitude” within Israel is not unbiblical.

33 Some commentators claim that when the merchants found the gates closed they were obliged to pass the night outside the city until the end of the Sabbath, see for example, John Peter Lange et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Nehemiah* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2008), 57. However, the reading in the LXX shows that the merchants decided to continue with their business on Sabbath, outside the city.

34 Jacob M. Myers, *Ezra-Nehemiah: Introduction, Translation and Notes* (London, UK: Yale University Press, 2008), 215.