

English translation:

N: Nafkote M: Woman on the left

M: Let's talk about the way that time is counted in Ethiopia.

N: Indeed. That's one of the things that I enjoy explaining to *ferengis*¹: how we count seconds, hours, etc. Because it's very different for them, and if you think about it, theirs is also different for us as well. When they celebrate their New Year in the middle of the year, we've already finished celebrating it. And again, when you look at keeping time, when we still say it's six, they're saying it's twelve.

M: Explain it to us. For instance, our new year...

N: Oh okay, the time issue, definitely. Our New Year arrives – in the *ferenge* system – on the night of September 11. In our system, that's to say *Meskerem* 1. So, how did we start this calendar? To begin with, we use the Julian calendar. Also, we are seven years behind. For example, for *ferenge* it's 2006, but in Ethiopia, it is the year 1999. *Meskerem* 1 comes when the rainy season ends – or for *ferengis*, when summer ends. Students are on vacation, employees ask for leave if they want; at that time, things slow down. Even if you look in this country, it's the same.

M: Yes, that's true. During the summer, a lot of things slow down.

N: So, since school, work, everything starts up again in *Meskerem*, or September for *ferengis*, we call that time the New Year. Therefore, we are seven years behind because of the Julian calendar. In terms of Jesus Christ's birth, I believe it's the Julian calendar that is acknowledged to be more accurate. That is to say, it's been 1999 years since Jesus Christ was born. That's what many of them believe – the [Ethiopian] Orthodox Church, other churches, most of them. When it comes to counting hours, we start counting in the morning when—*ferenge* start counting from midnight, from the night-time.

M: Right, as soon as midnight has passed, they begin with “one”. But with us, when we wake up from our sleep in the morning, when the sun rises, we start by calling that time “one”. So the difference, I think, is that their “seven” is our “one” and their “twelve” is our “six”.

N: Right, it's because they start at midnight.

M: They begin at midnight, and we start with one in the morning. What I often see in Ethiopia when they're trying to promote tourism is a slogan that says “13 months of sunshine.” Why is it that there are 13 months?

¹ non-Ethiopians.

N: There are 13 months because of *Pagume*. And, as you know, during all of the 13 months, it's sunny.

M: And the reason that there is *Pagume* is -- in the *ferengi* calendar, some of the months have thirty-one days, some have thirty, some have twenty-nine and sometimes twenty-eight, but in our calendar, all months have thirty and the remaining days are collected in *Pagume* and sometimes *Pagume* has five or six days. Then after *Pagume*, we start with *Meskerem* as the first month.

N: It's very admirable. You won't find it anywhere else.

M: Yes, it's unique. It isn't found elsewhere. When you think about Ethiopia, a lot of our characteristics are unique – our own way of counting time, our own calendar, our own writing system or – what's it called? – our own alphabet, all of the diversity there, that there are over eighty languages spoken in Ethiopia – and none of these are dialects, they are actual languages. And now, when you think about it, Ethiopia is just about to celebrate the new millennium next year.

N: Oh yeah. A lot of people are really excited for that.

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