

Tribes of Israel Research Notes

DRAFT

Jewish Origins

Are all Jewish People Genetic Descendents of Judah?

By Craig M. White
Version 1.1





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Associated Readings

- *Notes on the Bible and Genetics* by Craig M White.
- “The Jews: Race, Nation or Religion: Which? A Study Based on the Literature of the Second Jewish Commonwealth,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (April 1936), pp. 313-347, by Solomon Zeitlin.
- *The Jews: A Study of Race and Environment* by Maurice Fishberg.
- *The Khazars* by Yair Davidiy.
- *The True Roots and Origin of the Scots* by Craig M White.
- *Where are the ‘Lost’ Tribes of Israel in the Modern World? An Introduction* by Craig M White.

Executive Summary

This document investigates whether modern Jewish individuals are uniformly genetic descendants of the Biblical tribe of Judah. It outlines Judah's lineage as presented in Scripture (including sons Er, Onan, and Shelah from a Canaanite mother, as well as twins Perez and Zerah from Tamar), while also noting the tribe's settlement in southern Canaan and its leadership role. The document highlights potential early migrations, such as those from Zarah's line to the British Isles. It posits that contemporary Jews display considerable physical diversity across various groups, including Ashkenazi (Central/Eastern European), Sephardic (Iberian/North African), Mizrahi (Middle Eastern), and others (such as Ethiopian and Indian communities). This diversity is attributed to environmental factors, intermarriage, and conversions, rather than a singular "race." The author references Jewish anthropologists such as Maurice Fishberg, who emphasised admixture and the absence of purity, and Solomon Zeitlin, who regarded Jewish identity during the Second Commonwealth as primarily based on religious and community ties. The conclusion drawn is that Judaism operates more as a covenantal faith that welcomes outsiders than as a strictly biological lineage from the Biblical Judah, son of Jacob (Israel).

Regarding genetics, the text warns against overinterpreting Y-DNA haplogroups (for instance, J1/J2 or E1b1b connections to the Levant compared to R1b in Western Europeans). It discusses mutations, genetic drift, and the limitations of these haplogroups in fully representing ancestry amidst historical mixing. While it recognises shared Middle Eastern genetic markers among various Jewish groups, it also suggests significant admixture (for example, Southern European/Mediterranean influences in Sephardim and Ashkenazim, stemming from Shelah's Canaanite-influenced lineage) and questions assertions that all modern Jews can be directly linked to ancient Judahites.

The Khazar theory, which posits that Ashkenazim primarily descend from medieval Turkic converts in the Caucasus, is examined and largely dismissed, as genome-wide studies indicate a predominant ancestry of Levantine and southern European origins with limited Khazar contribution. Ultimately, the document asserts that not all individuals who identify as Jewish today are biological descendants of Judah in the Biblical context; numerous communities include converts and local admixtures are from other nations.

As such, the conclusion is drawn that many Jews are descendants of Judah's son, Shelah (and a smattering of other tribes of Israel), while others are not of the tribe of Judah racially.

Introductory Remarks

“Egypt shall become a desolation and Edom a desolate wilderness, for the violence done to the people of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem to all generations. I will avenge their blood, blood I have not avenged, for the Lord dwells in Zion.” (Joel 3:19-21, ESV)

I have wanted to write on this subject for decades but have refrained due to other projects. But now, due to the proliferation of ideas and conspiracy theories, I thought it is high time to summarise research and thinking that I hope is of benefit.

What is a Jew? is raising its head time-after-time with discussions emanating from people in general, historians, anti-Semites and Jews themselves. Although the issue has been studied and carefully considered by the myself for decades, I have only written tidbits on the subject. But now that it is being talked about and all sorts of silly and conspiracy ideas are being touted, it is time to write something which should assist in settling the issue.

Are the Jews a race, a religion or a community that overlaps both to some degree?

To answer this question we must:

1. understand their origin and what a *Jew* is in the Bible.
2. evaluate what Jews themselves say.
3. be aware of physical anthropology and human biology as to what actually constitutes a *race* in the scientific fields of physical anthropology and human biology.

The Jewish author Tzvi Freeman in “Is “Jewish” a Race? ...or maybe a nation? Or just an ethnicity?” at the [Chabad Jewish website](#) explains that:

“The traditional Jewish self-concept is that Jews comprise a family held together by a covenant with G-d accepted at Mount Sinai. Anyone born into that family is there for life—just as you can’t divorce your parents, you can’t undo your Jewishness. A Jew who calls himself by any other name is still a Jew.

On the other hand, just as you could be born into a family, you might also get yourself adopted in - which is fundamentally what conversion is all about. And again, once in, it’s a knot that can’t be undone. Only that to tie that knot, you’ll need to accept upon yourself the same covenant we entered and the mission we were assigned at Mount Sinai over 3300 years ago before a tribunal of qualified Jews.

Jews are bound together tighter than any DNA or ideology could bond us. It is a bond eternal that runs deeper than any bond.”

His explanation is generally what all Jews say: they are a tightly knit religious community consisting of converts from all races. They are not a race in the biological or Biblical sense due to the vast array of physical types and colours. National and racial groupings have generally similar appearances which are separate from culture and language, though related to them.

The complete article by Freeman can be found in the **Appendix. Is “Jewish” a Race?**

The Greek word for *Jew* is Ἰουδαῖος (transliterated as *Ioudaios* or *Ioudaîos*; see Strong's #G2453) and is used over 190 times in the New Testament. The word is an ethnonym, meaning “one who is of the people of Judea” occupying the ancient and original territory of Judah.

Of importance, it is the direct Greek equivalent of the Hebrew יהודי (*Yehudi*). So Jew in the New Testament is a translation of the Greek *Ioudaios*, which itself translates the Hebrew *Yehudi* thereby tracing back to the name *Judah*.

Descendants of Judah

So where does the tribe of Judah originate and what did they originally look like?

Below we trace his immediate descendants who are important to remember in our quest for Judaic appearance and migrations.

Judah was a son of Jacob, son of Isaac, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Note what the Scriptures reveal about his descendants in 1 Chronicles 2:3-15:

“The sons of Judah: **Er**, and **Onan**, and **Shelah**; which three were born unto him of Shua's daughter the Canaanitess. And Er, Judah's first-born, was wicked in the sight of Jehovah; and he slew him.

And Tamar his daughter-in-law bare him **Perez** and **Zerah**. All the sons of Judah were five.

The sons of Perez: Hezron, and Hamul.

And the sons of Zerah: **Zimri**, and **Ethan**, and **Heman**, and **Calcol**, and **Dara**; five of them in all.

And the sons of Carmi: Achar, the troubler of Israel, who committed a trespass in the devoted thing.

And the sons of Ethan: Azariah.

The sons also of Hezron, that were born unto him: Jerahmeel, and Ram, and Chelubai.

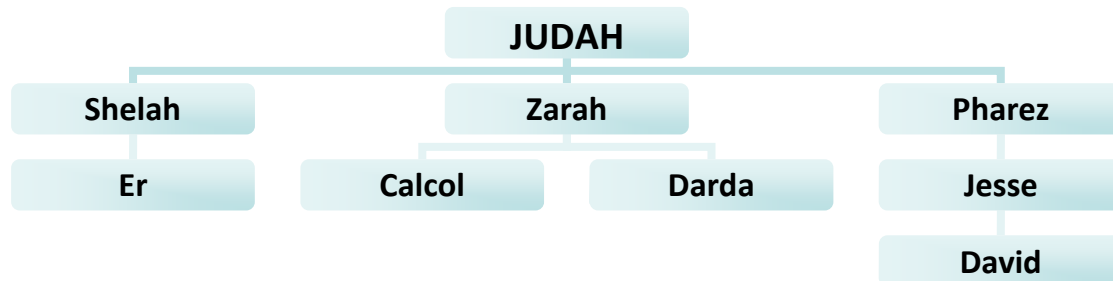
And Ram begat Amminadab, and Amminadab begat Nahshon, prince of the children of Judah;

and Nahshon begat Salma, and Salma begat Boaz,

and Boaz begat Obed, and Obed begat **Jesse**;

and Jesse begat his first-born Eliab, and Abinadab the second, and Shimea the third,

Nethanel the fourth, Raddai the fifth,
Ozem the sixth, **David** the seventh.”



Judah's immediate descendants

What of Judah's descendants which are listed in the aforementioned family tree? Judah had five sons: **Er**, **Onan** (left out of the above tree) and **Shelah** born from the daughter of Shuah the Canaanite (Genesis 38:2-5). Er and Onan died but Shelah had a son named Er.

The other two sons, **Zarah (Zerah)** and **Pharez (Perez)**, were twins born of Tamar, his daughter-in-law. Pharez means “breach” and indicates the great rivalry that emerged between the lines of Zarah and Pharez with the latter gaining the primogeniture per the description in Genesis 38:28-30.¹

Although Shelah was the firstborn, he was not chosen to carry the sceptre (Genesis 24:3, 37; Deuteronomy 7:1-6; 20:16-18. Cp Isaiah 5:1-8).

Due to the failure of his older brothers and because of his capacity and character, Judah came to be the leader in Israel. From that line comes the Messiah and famous Bible names such as Caleb, Ruth, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Josiah and Zerubbabel.

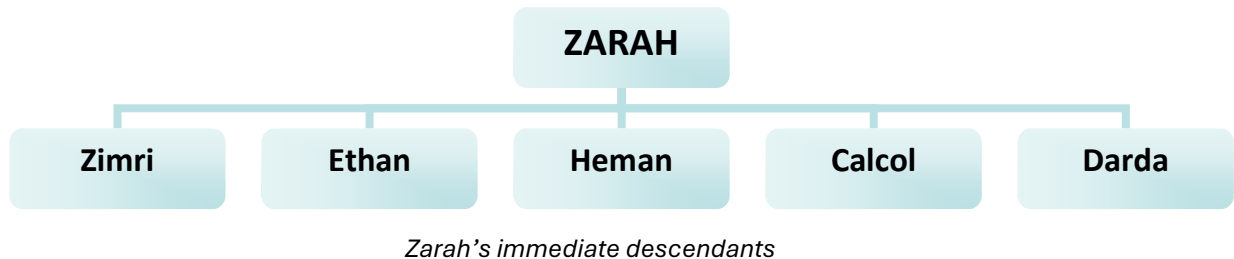
“For **Judah prevailed among his brothers, and from him came the chief ruler** [the royal line of David which includes the Messiah, but also political and military leaders], but the birthright was Joseph's.” (1 Chronicles 5:2)

“Yet the LORD God of Israel chose me from all my father's house to be king over Israel forever. **For he chose Judah as leader**, and in the house of Judah my father's house, and among my father's sons he took pleasure

¹ “The midwife, in this case, names him: “What a breach you have made for yourself [*mah paratzta*]!” So he was named Perez [*Peretz*]” (Gen. 38.29). The term connotes an outburst of water (See 2 Sam 5.20, 1 Chron. 14.11), or, as in this case, to “burst forth from water” (i.e., the womb). It also suggests the making of a breach in a wall (See Amos 4.3; 1 Kg. 11.27; Neh. 6.1; Ps. 144.14; and Job 30.14); in the figurative sense, it implies the act of intercession—“to stand in the breach” (See Ezekiel 13.5), but can also mean, conversely, an outburst of God's wrath (1 Sam. 68; 1 Chron. 13.11; Job 16.14; and Judges 21.15). See Brown, Drivers, and Briggs, *Lexicon* entry 7877. Most telling, in terms of the role of leader, is the verse from Micah: “He who opens the breach [*haporetz*] will go up before them; they will break through [*partzu*] and pass the gate, going out by it. Their king will pass on before them, the Lord at their head” (Mic. 2.13). Tamar and Judah as progenitors of kings, figuratively, “open the breach” and “break through,” so that “their king will pass on before” them (See *Gen. Rab.* 85.29).” (Rachel Adelman, “Ethical Epiphany in The Story of Judah and Tamar”, in *Recognition and Modes of Knowledge: Anagnorisis from Antiquity to Contemporary Theory*, footnote 32, p. 17)

in me to make me king over all Israel.” (2 Chronicles 28:4)

Now consider this: why does the account in the Bible extend Zarah’s genealogy only to the third generation? Could it be that they had left the area for Europe (Ireland via Spain)? Were these the Milesians which may have sprung from Mahol?



Note what we read in 1 Chronicles 2:3-15:

“The sons of Judah; Er, and Onan, and Shelah: *which* three were born unto him of the daughter of Shua the Canaanitess. And Er, the firstborn of Judah, was evil in the sight of the LORD; and he slew him. And Tamar his daughter in law bare him Pharez and Zerah. All the sons of Judah *were* five. The sons of Pharez; Hezron, and Hamul. And the sons of Zerah; Zimri, and Ethan, and Heman, and Calcol, and Dara: five of them in all. And the sons of Carmi; Achar, the troubler of Israel, who transgressed in the thing accursed. And the sons of Ethan; Azariah. The sons also of Hezron, that were born unto him; Jerahmeel, and Ram, and Chelubai. And Ram begat Amminadab; and Amminadab begat Nahshon, prince of the children of Judah; And Nahshon begat Salma, and Salma begat Boaz, And Boaz begat Obed, and Obed begat Jesse, And Jesse begat his firstborn Eliab, and Abinadab the second, and Shimma the third, Nethaneel the fourth, Raddai the fifth, Ozem the sixth, David the seventh.”

When the tribes of Israel settled down in the Promised Land, Judah occupied the southern regions with Simeon, close to Dan, Ephraim and Benjamin.

Judah was in the **forefront** of the Israelite army during their march (Numbers 2:9). Their tribe was the **first** to be allocated territory west of the Jordan River. They were the **most numerous** tribe at this point, and their area was **larger** than their numbers justified. They were **leading** the tribe's retaliation against the Benjaminites shortly after Joshua's death, and they produced the **first** Judge.

The partition of the territory of Canaan served to emphasise Judah's independence from the northern tribes. The other tribe divisions on this side were in the centre and northern areas, with Judah receiving the southern portion on the west bank of the Jordan.

Henry Ellison noted:

"As a result when Judah became tributary to the Philistines (Jdg.15:11), he appears not to have appealed to the other tribes, nor do they seem to be concerned ... The failure to maintain a hold on Jerusalem (Jdg.1:8,21), combined with the existence of the semi-independent Gibeonite tetropolis (Jos.9; 2Sa.21:1-2), created a psychological frontier between Judah and the central tribes..." ("Judah," *New Bible Dictionary*, p. 628.)

But what of the Jews over the centuries?

Diversity of Physiognomy

One observation by many is that the Jews are not uniform in terms of their physical biology. As such, they cannot be a single race, but a religion of different peoples.

Given the physical/racial differences within the religion or community of Judaism, we find the following major ethnic divisions:

- Ashkenazi: comprising approximately 70-80% of contemporary Jewry, with roots in Central and Eastern Europe.²
- Sephardic: from the Iberian Peninsula (Spain/Portugal), many migrated to North Africa, Italy, and the Balkans.
- Mizrahi: refers to Jews originating from the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia (e.g., Iran, Yemen, Iraq).
- Other Communities: including Ethiopian Jews (Beta Israel), Indian Jews (Bene Israel), and the Romaniotes of Greece.

Judaism itself (like any religion) constitutes a range of views and thus is diverse itself. This includes ultra-Orthodox (Hasidic) to Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, and secular or humanist.

Similarly, while Hebrew is utilised as the language of prayer, Jewish traditions also include Yiddish (Ashkenazi), Ladino (Sephardic), and Judeo-Arabic.

There are scores of books and articles on the subject of cultures and languages within Judaism that the reader can explore for deeper understanding.

The Jewish community in Israel is marked by a nearly equal representation of Jews of European origin and those originating from the Middle East/North Africa, in addition to a growing number of Ethiopian, Indian, and Russian Jews. Today, more than 68% of Israeli Jews are *Sabras* (those born in Israel), often coming from racially/ethnically varied families. More than 85% of the worldwide Jewish population, which is around 15.2 million, lives in either Israel or the United States.

² Some Jews have reddish hair, possibly reflecting their Judaic roots. Much like David being described as a ruddy man (1 Samuel 16:12; 17:42).

So, due to its extensive history spanning thousands of years, Jewish individuals display considerable diversity in physical traits, cultural practices, and appearances.

These differences cannot represent different tribes of Israel because Israel was one nation descended from Shem, a fair-skinned people. Others are from different nations and races that adopted Judaism and thus were incorporated into it – not as a race, but as a religion. The Jewish people acknowledge that themselves.

Maurice Fishberg was a Jewish-American physician, physical anthropologist, and author who specialised in the ethnology and physical anthropology of the Jews. In 1911 he published a book *The Jews: A Study of Race and Environment* which I read many decades ago. His book covers demography and distribution; physical anthropology (the most important aspect of all this research); pathology and health; sociology and culture.

Fishberg argues that Jews do not form a pure or homogeneous race. Rather, the observed "Jewish" characteristics - whether physical, cultural, or behavioral - are primarily influenced by environmental factors, social conditions, historical persecutions, occupations, isolation, and religious practices, rather than being rooted in fixed heredity or ancient racial purity.

He examined the distinctions between Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews, highlighting the presence of "blonde," "Slavonic," "Teutonic," and even Mongoloid/Negroid traits among Jewish individuals, thereby challenging the notion of a singular, "indelible" Jewish physical appearance. Artistic and literary stereotypes frequently distort or exaggerate the truth.

He illustrated through physical measurements, statistical data, and historical context that Jewish communities globally exhibit a mixed heritage stemming from ancient Levantine roots intermingled with local populations (European, Mediterranean, and regional groups) due to intermarriage, migration, and environmental influences over thousands of years.

Key aspects of Fishberg's position after much analysis:

- Jews display considerable physical diversity (in terms of stature, head shape, skin color, etc.) across different regions, which contradicts the idea of a "pure race" model.
- Ashkenazi and Sephardic communities provide clear evidence of historical intermingling with neighboring populations, including Southern European/Mediterranean influences (which contribute to the prevalent "olive-skinned" appearance). These are likely to be descendants of Shelah.
- He dismissed modern racial pseudoscience that categorises Jews as a distinct, unchanging race, instead highlighting the significance of environmental and historical mixing.

Another valuable work I also read all those years ago concerning this issue is Solomon Zeitlin's, "The Jews: Race, Nation or Religion: Which? A Study Based on the Literature of the Second Jewish Commonwealth," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (April 1936), pp. 313-347.

It draws upon ancient literature, which includes the Apocrypha, Philo, Josephus, and various other sources from that era.

Zeitlin argues that Jews during this time were primarily characterised as a religious community (adherents of Judaism), rather than as a race (in the biological or descent-based interpretation) or as a nation (in the context of a political-territorial entity). Jewish identity was fundamentally based on commitment to the Torah, its laws, beliefs, and practices - not merely on bloodline, ethnicity, or political loyalty to a state.

He is of the belief that although Jews maintained a profound connection to the Land of Israel (Judaea), they did not constitute a "nation" in the political sense for much of the Second Jewish Commonwealth period (c516BC-70AD), particularly under foreign dominion (Persian, Hellenistic, Roman). Instead Jews operated as religious entities within larger empires.

Zeitlin analyses particular texts and their usages finding that the terminology "Hebrew," "Israelite," and "Jew" (*Ioudaios*) have evolved, with the term "Jew" becoming increasingly associated with religious practices within the Hellenistic-Roman context rather than the Biblical genetic meaning. The acceptance of converts demonstrated a willingness to transcend ethnic boundaries.

His conclusion is that during the Second Jewish Commonwealth, the Jewish people formed a religious community above all else. By that time they were neither a race in the modern sense (defined by bloodline/genetics/physiognomy) nor a sovereign nation (linked to independent territory and governance), but rather a community united by a common faith.

“To summarize: We believe that this essay demonstrates that in the early days of our history there was distinctly a Hebrew race. By the time of the Second Commonwealth **there was no longer a pure Hebrew race** [in that region]. Only the Jews who lived in Palestine constituted the Jewish nation and called themselves Judaeans. The Jews of Babylon were not members of the Jewish nation. They were only united to the Jews of Palestine by religion and culture. They called themselves Hebrews or Israelites.” (pp. 346-47) [emphasis mine]

Therefore, due to conversions and intermarriages, not all Jewish peoples today are biological Jews per the Biblical meaning. Some are of the tribe of Judah (even if in part), while others are converts to Judaism.

DNA, Genetics and the Jews

If one reads the literature carefully, one will find that there is considerable complexity in this research and diversity of opinions. For example:

“As recently discussed by Barbujani and Chikhi, the origin(s) of modern

European ancestors remains a controversial issue. Other major population events, including the multiple epidemics during the Middle Ages, may also have resulted in genetic bottlenecks contributing to current differences in European population structure.” (Michael Seldin (et al), “European Population Substructure: Clustering of Northern and Southern Populations,” *PLOS Genetics*, Vol. 2, Issue 9 (Sept 2006), p. 1348)

There are those that assume that DNA and Y-Chromosome ‘evidence’ proves that the Anglo-Saxon-Keltic-Nordic people’s Y-DNA Haplogroups are dissimilar to the Jews and do not show a common origin/father. But it is the mixture that has caused this confusion. E. g., I have always maintained that the Sephardic Jews are a mixed people and not all are original racial Judahites, but many are converts to the Jewish religion. See for instance *The Non-Jewish Origins of the Sephardic Jews* by Paul Wexler. Similar arguments can be made for the Yemenite, Ethiopian, Indian and other Jews.

These DNA studies by some do not match Genesis 10 properly - because this is just not a perfect science even though it is presented as dogma at the moment. I have noticed that scientific dogmas are eventually challenged and later modified over time.

This DNA research is still a rather young science and there will be a lot of changes to its over time. All it currently does is show that there may have been a common father. So, people with a few percentages of similar bloodline can be shown to have a common father. Doesn’t make sense, does it? Because along the way, other bloodlines are often picked up, confusing the issue.

Notice what Jon Entine has found out in his book, *Abraham's Children: Race, Identity, and the DNA of the Chosen People*:

“Genetic drift can work in reverse, serendipitously reducing or eliminating genes, blurring the story told by our DNA by erasing evidence of certain lineages or how evolution unfolded. That’s exactly what has happened to Jews. Remember the blood studies that seemed to show Jews were of mixed ancestry? It turns out that Jews began to resemble European gentiles in blood type and other physical traits purely by the chance spread of a few genes, not by mixing in large numbers with their host populations.” (p. 45)

“... our phenotype-traits, including our physical makeup, blood type, etc.-often tells a different story than the genes themselves-the genotype.” (p. 45)

“The rest of the human genome, almost 98 percent, contains what geneticists had long thought was junk (but is not)-genetic detritus left behind during the billions of years in which single-cell organisms evolved into modern humans. Scientists have likened this genetic material, which they sometimes call the “dark matter” of the human genome, to a

discarded heap of outdated books with the relevant wisdom incorporated in newer, revised volumes squeezed into the most usable 2 to 3 percent.” (p. 46)³

The fact is that there are DNA links between all peoples but the closeness of that depends on race of course. So, the olive-skinned Jews would have *some* similarity to Anglo-Kelts, but the Yemenite Jews are Arabs (with some Jewish admixture) which adopted Judaism (see Daniele Fallin (et al), “Genomewide Linkage Scan for Schizophrenia Susceptibility Loci among Ashkenazi Jewish Families Shows Evidence of Linkage on Chromosome 10q22,” *The American Journal of Human Genetics*, Vol. 73, 2003, pp. 601-11).

In this case, haplogroups study is helpful but due to mutations and gene drift and because it is an imperfect science driven by political correctness, it is not completely trustworthy! It is helpful though, but one shouldn't depend on it at this time.⁴

I have seen many books and articles trying to make out that American Indians, Ethiopians, Burmese etc are lost tribes of Israel. But their physical appearance, genetics and DNA is just like all the other peoples around them. And so, this rules them out as Israelites.

An article “Where are The Ten Lost Tribes of Israel? www.geni.com lists the usual, false suspects:

- Bedul, Jordan
- Bene Israel, India
- Beta Israel, Ethiopia
- Chiang Min, China
- Igbo, Nigeria
- Japanese
- Kurds, Turkey
- Lemba, southern Africa,
- Pashtuns, Afghanistan
- And others.

³ Entine further wrote: “Since the first humans walked the earth, more and more random mutations have been introduced into each subsequent generation. However, these markers were not easy to locate. Evolutionary mistakes often overwrote each other. A polymorphism—one of the forms of a gene caused by a mutation—that might have served as a marker sometimes split and recombined in a later mixing. Then again. And again. Instead of a set of informative snapshots emblazoned with a genetic date, we were left with what amounted to scrambled composite pictures, degraded from many generations of copying, much as repeated photocopying degrades a document. The shuffling was so complete that markers created hundreds, thousands, or millions of years ago were lost in the vast sea of genes in the nucleus ... obstacle was not a dearth of markers, but too many unreadable ones.” (p. 47)

⁴ In addition to mutations, there are adaptations such as the Moken tribe in Thailand who can now see underwater to the same degree as dolphins. See Jason Ford, “Which ethnicity that most people are unaware of is the most fascinating?” www.quora.com, 19 December 2019. Another are the Bajau people who, through mutation, have become much better divers than most other peoples: “The Bajau, these people have a genetic mutation allowing them to live in the sea!” *The Daily Digest*, 25 February 2024, <https://thedaydigest.com/en>. For further information on adaptation from a Biblical perspective, read the article “Adaptations. Designed by God, Not From Evolution,” *Beyond Today*, March-April 2024, pp. 12-14 by Mario Seiglie.

Some are trying to use Y chromosome research to trace national origins but are turning it into a red herring that has raised its head time and again. The Y chromosome is merely a tracer, indicating male parentage over the generations. It does not indicate one's entire racial make-up.

For example, as the Arabs are $\frac{3}{4}$ Hamitic and only $\frac{1}{4}$ Abrahamic (as demonstrated in chapter 3 of my book, *In Search of ... the Origin of Nations*), wouldn't one expect them to show little connection to Anglo-Kelts? That is indeed the case. They have diverged racially.

One article critical of the British-Israel claim that the peoples of Northwest Europe are the direct genetic descendants of Israel is supposedly false is "A Foundation of Sand. Part VIII," *Silenced* website, 18 Dec 2013). The author fails to understand even basic DNA and haplogroups methodology and is an example of the futile attempts to deny this doctrine.

See the article "The Y Chromosome in the Study of Human Evolution, Migration and Prehistory," *Science Spectra*, No. 14, 1998 by Neil Bradman and Mark Thomas. www.ucl.ac.uk/tcga/ScienceSpectra-pages/SciSpect-14-98.html.

The article by Bradman and Thomas includes the following table:

Before the flood: the generations of Adam according to the book of Genesis

Name	Date of birth from Creation	Date of death from Creation
Adam	0	930
Seth*	130	1042
Enosh	235	1140
Kenan	325	1235
Mahalalel	395	1290
Jared	460	1422
Enoch†	622	987
Methuselah	687	1656
Lamech	874	1651
Noah	1056	2006
Shem, Ham, Japheth	1556	?

* How did Seth feel, outliving his great, great, great-grandson Enoch by 55 years?
† And how about Enoch, sensing himself slipping away earlier than his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather?

Before the flood: the generations of Adam according to the book of Genesis

Genesis, chapter 5, records "the generations of Adam": Adam begat Seth, Seth begat Enosh, Enosh begat Kenan... down to Noah of the flood (Table above).

In contemporary genetic terminology, the narrative can be interpreted as such: "Adam

transmitted his Y chromosome (Figure 1) to Seth, who then passed it on to Enosh. Enosh carried on this genetic line by passing his Y chromosome to Kenan, and the cycle continued until Noah was born, inheriting a copy of Adam's Y chromosome. The Y chromosome is inherited paternally, found in males but not in females. Interestingly, the Y chromosome that a father passes down to his son remains relatively stable."

Now, if one had a small amount of Semitic blood (like the Bantu Lemba residing in southern Africa), this merely means that they are partially Semitic (perhaps 5% or so), but overwhelmingly African.⁵ That does NOT mean that they primarily derive from Ishmael or Jews but have a few of his genes. That is all, and obviously they are not Judahites or even Arabs. In fact, they are regarded as wholly Bantu by anthropologists, and this is borne out by their overall look (physical appearance/physiognomy) and DNA. While early studies suggested a direct Jewish connection, later analysis suggests the Semitic influence likely originated from Arab maritime traders who settled in Africa and married local women, as highlighted in various studies (e. g., Amanda Spurdle & Trevor Jenkins, "The origins of the Lemba "Black Jews" of southern Africa: evidence from p12F2 and other Y-chromosome markers," *The American Journal for Human Genetics*, Vol. 59, No. 5 (Nov 1996), pp. 1126-33). It is this mingling with Arabic traders that has resulted in the Y-chromosome Semitic marker in many Lemba.

Let me explain: some today are working backwards. They assume that *all* the people called Jews are the original Judah. In fact, many are mixed – particularly with Canaanites (i. e. Shelah) as we have seen. Some look like Palestinians (as a Jewish friend of mine pointed out); some like Poles; some this and some that – dependent upon where they originated and which peoples they mixed with. Many of the Jews today have picked up many other genes along the way as to make them difficult to identify as a single race.

If we work forward from Noah -> Shem -> Arphaxad -> Abraham etc and look at how fair-skinned the Near East was for long periods in the ancient world, and the culture these people emerged from, one must conclude the early Israelites and predecessors were White. Read about this in the chapter on Arphaxad and Aram in my book *In Search of ... the Origin of Nations*.

By working forward and using deductive reasoning, history, tribal names etc we can prove who the Israelites are. Assuming that today's Jews are all Israelites and working backwards does not bring one to the truth of the matter.

If one were to work through all the nations of Genesis 10, we would find that all the light-skinned northern Europeans descend from Arphaxad – people who misunderstand the Y chromosome work backwards by assuming that all the Jews are Israel, rather than many are a mixed group with some Israelitish genes.

Others try and use evidence that is Y-DNA haplogroup based. Let's take a look.

⁵ An interesting article about blood groups from a creationist viewpoint can be found online at www.icr.org/article/3647/ Daniel Criswell, "ABO Blood Groups and Human Origins," *Institute for Creation Research*, 1 Feb 2008.

Y-DNA Haplogroups:

- Y-DNA haplogroups are representative of significant divisions within the Y-chromosome phylogenetic tree.
- Haplogroup R1b1: This particular haplogroup is commonly observed in individuals of 'white' English and American descent, with a notable presence in Western Europe and certain regions of Eastern Europe.
- Haplogroups J1, J2, and E1b1b: These haplogroups are linked to ancestral origins in the Arabian Peninsula, Southern Europe, and North Africa. They are identified among various populations such as Ashkenazi Jews, Arab Bedouins, Uygurs, and Uzbeks.⁶

Similarly, the contention is that the genetic disparities observed in these haplogroups imply that there is no direct ancestral connection between 'white' English and Americans and Jews. Likewise, the haplogroups of modern Germans do not establish a direct lineage to the modern claimants to be neo-Assyrians.

It should be realised and accepted that contributions to racial ancestry go beyond haplogroups.

"Cultural changes in political and social organisation - phenomena that are unique to human beings - may extend their reach into patterns of genetic variation in ways yet to be discovered" (Tian Chen Zweng, Alan J. Aw & Marcus W. Feldman, *Cultural hitchhiking and competition between patrilineal kin groups explain the post-Neolithic Y-chromosome bottleneck*, [nature.com/articles/s41467-018-04375-6](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-018-04375-6)).

Yet some still attempt to claim that DNA research disproves Israelitish heritage in or links to northwest Europe. But as one author concedes that when

"dealing with European population palaeogenetics, no one can evade question of the limitations that are intrinsic to the field of aDNA" (Marie-France Deguilloux & Fanny Mendisco, "Ancient DNA: A Window to the Past of Europe," *Human Heredity*, Vol. 76, Nos. 3-4, 2013, p. 122).

That being said, scientific research confirms that "a demic diffusion spanning the entire European continent from the Levant" with differences between "Eastern Europe" and "the West" (Patrizia Malaspina, et al. *Human Y-chromosomal Networks and Pattern of Gene Flow in Europe, West Asia and North Africa. In: Archaeogenetics: DNA and the population prehistory of Europe*, p. 165).

Notice also the following:

"Atlantic Modal Haplotype #3 The most common variant of the Atlantic Modal Haplotype in the YHRD database has DYS389, values of 13 and 29, and DYS385a,b values of 11 and 14. This haplotype differs by one

⁶ Note: as the Arabs are ¾ Hamitic and ¼ Abrahamic, they would not exhibit much DNA evidence for their distance relationship to Abraham's modern descendants.

step upward on the most quickly mutating marker. This haplotype is very interesting, from the perspective of the YHRD database, because most of the top frequencies are not in Europe but in the United States. Of the top twenty, twelve are among U.S. populations. Two are Hispanic samples, three are African-American (most likely of Anglo-American origin), and the rest are European American. These samples seem to congregate in areas of the U.S. settled by French, Scottish, English, Irish and German immigrants. That accords with the Western European origin of AMH. Southern Ireland and London, England appear among the top ten European frequencies, along with four separate locales in The Netherlands. Although "Border Reiver" descendants would most likely have acquired this haplotype through British "Celtic" ancestry, the multiple hits in The Netherlands suggest that an Anglo-Saxon origin is also quite possible." (James Elliott, Haplogroup R1b (Atlantic Modal Haplotype), ~*gallgaedhil* Rootsweb, http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~gallgaedhil/haplo_r1b_amh_13_29.htm)

One journalist, Steve Olson, who specialises in writing about science noted:

“One need go back only a couple of millennia to connect everyone alive today to a common pool of ancestors...

“Being descended from someone doesn’t necessarily mean that you have any DNA from that person...The amount of DNA each of us gets from any one of our 1,024 ancestors ten generations back is minuscule—and we might not get any DNA from that person, given the way the chromosomes rearrange themselves every generation.”” (Steve Olson, *Mapping Human History: Genes, Race, and Our Common Origins*, p. 47). [emphasis mine]

Here is another interesting observation.

There are so many dangers and hidden consequences for modern technologies such as vitro fertilization, blood transfusions and even bone marrow transplants. Scientists are now finding that in many cases associated with the aforementioned, that the “foreign” DNA that enters the recipient’s body may continue in their body throughout their life.

“Shared DNA can lead to two different eye pigmentations, two separate blood types, simultaneous male and female body parts, and autoimmune issues. The phenomenon concerns criminologists because shared DNA makes criminal identification and paternity determinations less reliable...

“In a December 7, 2019, *New York Times* article titled, “When a DNA Test Says You’re a Younger Man, Who Lives 5,000 Miles Away,” Heather Murphy tells the story of a man with leukemia who, after a bone marrow transplant, found that his donor’s DNA traveled to unexpected parts of his body. A crime lab is now studying the case...

“Fraternal twin chimeras can create confusing scenarios when they acquire each other’s DNA in the womb. In at least one case, that led to unfounded fears of infidelity when a man’s child did not seem to be his. In another case, a mother nearly lost custody of her children after a DNA test.” (Martin Collins, “Why the DNA you carry is not yours,” *CGG.org*, 14 Dec 2019)

So, through different means, racial DNA can transfer, leading to false identifications and measures based upon blood tests and not all the other, much more important measures for race or nations physiognomy and skin colouration.

The Khazar Question

A number of books and articles have appeared over time postulating that today’s Jews are Khazars who were a semi-nomadic people who hailed from Central Asia originally.

However, not all who are labelled as *Khazar* were of Central Asiatic descent because it was a polyethnic grouping that migrated westward. They settled down in the Caucasus-Volga region. Advocates of this Jewish-Khazar connection reference it to challenge the historical connections of Jews to the ancient Levant (which includes modern Israel and its neighboring regions). Nevertheless, comprehensive peer-reviewed genetic research has consistently refuted this assertion. The prevailing agreement among experts is that Khazar (or more broadly, Central Asian/Turkic) ancestry within Jewish communities is minimal.

But modern genetic and historical studies demonstrate clearly that most Jews are not Khazars. One such study by Doron Behar et al “No Evidence from Genome-Wide Data of a Khazar Origin for the Ashkenazi Jews” *Human Biology*, Vol. 85, No. 6 (1 December 2013), pp. 859-900 asserts that the notion that contemporary Jews, especially Ashkenazi Jews, primarily originate from the Khazars is false.

“No particular similarity of Ashkenazi Jews to populations from the Caucasus is evident, particularly populations that most closely represent the Khazar region... **Ashkenazi Jews derive their ancestry primarily from populations of the Middle East and Europe, with no indication of a significant genetic contribution either from within or from north of the Caucasus region.**” (p. 860) [emphasis mine]

“According to this hypothesis, a portion of the Khazar population, among whom at least some had converted to Judaism, migrated north and west into Europe from their ancestral lands to become the ancestors of some or all of the Ashkenazi Jewish population. This hypothesis can be regarded as an alternative view to a perspective that **the Ashkenazi Jewish population originated in the west rather than the east, with Jewish migrations north into Europe from Italy through France. Historical scholarship has provided considerable documentary evidence that Jews did indeed live along this latter route during the**

period of their entry into central Europe (Baron 1957; Ben-Sasson 1976; De Lange 1984; Mahler 1971), and the discussion can be viewed as an attempt to evaluate the relative magnitudes of possible eastern and western contributions.” (p. 862) [emphasis mine]

“In summary, in this most comprehensive study to date, we have examined the three potential sources for contemporary Ashkenazi Jews, using a new sample set that covers the full extent of the Khazar realm of the sixth to tenth centuries. Analysis of this large data set does not change and, in fact, reinforces the conclusions of multiple past studies, including ours and those of other groups ... **We confirm the notion that the Ashkenazi, North African, and Sephardi Jews share substantial genetic ancestry and that they derive it from Middle Eastern and European populations, with no indication of a detectable Khazar contribution** to their genetic origins.” (pp. 884-86) [emphasis mine]

Another study worthwhile discussing is Eran Elhaik’s paper “The Missing Link of Jewish European Ancestry: Contrasting the Rhineland and the Khazarian Hypotheses published” in *Genome Biology and Evolution* (Vol. 5, Issue 1, January 2013, pp. 61–74) which had proposed stronger Khazar/Caucasus links but was criticised for methodological issues, including the use of modern proxies like Armenians and Georgians for ancient Khazars. This methodology undermined his findings, yet there still seems to be an element of truth to it – that some Jews are part Khazarian. This paper was also discussed in an online article by Michael Germano which can be found in the **Appendix. Who Are the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel?**



Khazar Khaganate, 650–850

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khazar_hypothesis_of_Ashkenazi_ancestry

The study examines genome-wide data from both Jewish and non-Jewish populations to assess two rival hypotheses regarding the origins of European (Ashkenazi) Jews: the Rhineland hypothesis, which suggests descent mainly from a small founding group in the Rhineland with subsequent admixture, and the Khazarian hypothesis, which claims considerable ancestry from the Khazar Khaganate located in the Caucasus region, along with later European admixture. The findings indicate that the data endorse a varied genome that incorporates Caucasus, European, and Semitic ancestries, leaning towards elements of the Khazarian hypothesis.

This article ranks among the most frequently read in the journal's history and has generated considerable discussion (along with some subsequent critiques) within the scientific community. Elhaik notes:

“We compared two genetic models for European Jewish ancestry depicting a mixed Khazarian European-Middle Eastern and sole Middle Eastern origins. Contemporary populations were used as surrogate to the ancient Khazars and Judeans, and their relatedness to European Jews was compared over a comprehensive set of genetic analyses. Our findings support the Khazarian Hypothesis depicting a large Caucasus ancestry along with Southern European, Middle Eastern, and Eastern European ancestries, in agreement with recent studies and oral and written traditions. **We conclude that the genome of European Jews is a tapestry of ancient populations including Judaized Khazars, Greco-Romans and Mesopotamian Jews, and Judeans...**” (p. 22) [emphasis mine]

Diverse genetic origins of medieval steppe nomad conquerors, <https://www.biorxiv.org/> by Alexander S. Mikheyev et al, 16 December 2019, discusses the race and genetics of the Khazars. Ancient and medieval DNA evidence suggests that the Khazars constituted a varied steppe population, primarily characterized by Turkic and Central Asian genetic traits, while also including other elements. Their genetic legacy is minimal in modern European populations. Also, there is no significant Khazar genetic marker found in Jewish genomes.⁷

Other supporting research dismissing the Jewish-Khazar link include:

- Agranat-Tamir, L (et al), “The Genomic History of the Bronze Age Southern Levant,” *Cell*, Issue 181 (28 May 2020), pp.1146-1157.

⁷ In my book *In Search of ... the Origin of Nations* I mentioned the Khazars:

"An Arab geographer Istakhri says that the Scythian Khazars whose kingdoms stretched down to the region between the Black and Caspian Seas near the Colchis, from south-western Russia included black Khazars." (p. 128)

Istakhri [Abu Ishaq Ibrahim al-Istakhri] is one of the primary medieval Islamic sources on the Khazar Khaganate.

In footnote 610, p. 128: “The Khazars do not resemble the Turks. They are black-haired, and are of two kinds, one called the Kara-Khazars [Black Khazars], who are swarthy verging on deep black as if they were a kind of Indian, and a white kind [Ak-khazars], who are strikingly handsome ... the Black Khazars were wild men ... and the manners of wild beasts, eaters of blood.” (quoted from Arthur Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, p. 22)

- “Khazar hypothesis of Ashkenazi ancestry,” *Wikipedia*, last edited 13 April 2016 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khazar_hypothesis_of_Ashkenazi_ancestry
- Xue J, Lencz T, Darvasi A, Pe'er I, Carmi S. “The time and place of European admixture in Ashkenazi Jewish history,” *PLoS Genetics*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (4 April 2017).

An interesting piece appeared in *Science Daily* many years ago: “Jews are the Genetic Brothers of Palestinians, Syrians, and Lebanese but not to Non-Jewish Europeans,” *Science Daily*, 9 May 2000:

Date: May 9, 2000

Source: New York University Medical Center And School Of Medicine

Summary: If a common heritage conferred peace, then perhaps the long history of conflict in the Middle East would have been resolved years ago. For, according to a new scientific study, Jews are the genetic brothers of Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese, and they all share a common genetic lineage that stretches back thousands of years.

FULL STORY

If a common heritage conferred peace, then perhaps the long history of conflict in the Middle East would have been resolved years ago. **For, according to a new scientific study, Jews are the genetic brothers of Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese, and they all share a common genetic lineage that stretches back thousands of years.**

"Jews and Arabs are all really children of Abraham," says Harry Ostrer, M.D., Director of the Human Genetics Program at New York University School of Medicine, an author of the new study by an international team of researchers in the United States, Europe, and Israel. "And all have preserved their Middle Eastern genetic roots over 4,000 years," he says.

The researchers analyzed the Y chromosome, which is usually passed unchanged from father to son, of more than 1,000 men worldwide. Throughout human history, alterations have occurred in the sequence of chemical bases that make up the DNA in this so-called male chromosome, leaving variations that can be pinpointed with modern genetic techniques. Related populations carry the same specific variations. In this way, scientists can track descendants of large populations and determine their common ancestors.

Specific regions of the Y chromosome were analyzed in 1,371 men from 29 worldwide populations, including Jews and non-Jews from the Middle East, North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, and Europe...

The authors of this study are: Dr. Ostrer from NYU School of Medicine; Michael F. Hammer, Alan J. Redd, Elizabeth T. Wood, M. Roxane Bonner, Hamdi Jarjanazil, and Tanya Karafet from the University of Arizona, Tucson; Silvana Santachlara-Benerecetti, University of Pavia, Italy; Ariella Oppenheim, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel; Mark A. Jobling, University of Leicester, England; Trefor Jenkins, University of

Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa; and Batsheva Bonne-Tamar, Tel Aviv University, Israel.

Story Source: Materials provided by [New York University Medical Center And School Of Medicine](#). Note: Content may be edited for style and length.

Journal Reference:

1. M. F. Hammer, A. J. Redd, E. T. Wood, M. R. Bonner, H. Jarjanazi, T. Karafet, S. Santachiara-Benerecetti, A. Oppenheim, M. A. Jobling, T. Jenkins, H. Ostrer, B. Bonne-Tamir. Jewish and Middle Eastern non-Jewish populations share a common pool of Y-chromosome biallelic haplotypes. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2000; 97 (12): 6769 DOI:[10.1073/pnas.100115997](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.100115997) [emphasis mine]

From the above we can be assured that genetic studies indicate that a significant majority of contemporary Jews do not trace their origins to Central Asia or Khazaria (probably over 90%). Their primary lineage is in the ancient Levantine ancestry, with the most notable admixture from olive/Mediterranean Southern European sources found within the largest subgroup, the Ashkenazim. Therefore the Khazar hypothesis is not substantiated by current DNA findings.

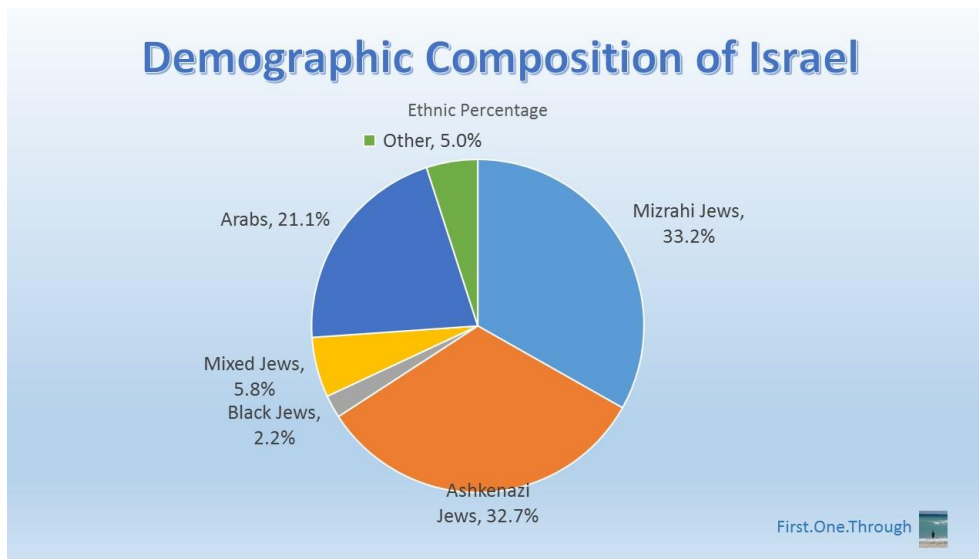
Final Comments

In summary, Jewish identity today is best understood as a religious and cultural community bound by covenant, law, and shared history rather than a singular biological race descending uniformly from the tribe of Judah.

Biblical accounts and historical migrations show early admixture (Canaanite influences via Shelah) and migration of Perez/Zerah branches into the British Isles probably prior to the Exodus and centuries later at the time of the Babylonian captivity. Post-exilic and diasporic events introduced further diversity through conversions and intermarriage, as documented in works by Fishberg and Zeitlin. Physical and genetic variation underscores that "Jew" encompasses both Israelite descendants and those adopted into the faith, consistent with Judaism's own emphasis on maternal lineage and conversions.

We have seen that the research into phenotypes and ancient history demonstrate that mixtures have influenced a portion of the tribe of Judah after returning to the Holy Land after the Babylonian captivity. However, the majority (Perez/Zarah) never did return – these are discussed in the lengthy paper [The True Roots and Origin of the Scots](#).

The prevalent "olive-skinned, Southern European/Mediterranean" look among many Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews is indicative of their ancient Levantine mixing and perhaps exacerbated with intermingled with others during the diaspora of the Roman era.



Source: Jews Are A Minority-Minority, *First One Through*, 13 November 2013
<https://primarybowman.com/2023/11/13/jews-are-a-minority-minority/>

The ancient Israelites originated from the wider fair-skinned Shemitic genetic pool alongside the darker Canaanite elements in the Levant, per the intermarriage of Shelah and a Canaanitess. This ancestral lineage is obvious among the Jews today.

Communities with darker complexions (such as certain Mizrahi or Ethiopian Jews) are not Jews by race, but local peoples who have adopted Judaism and many of these have migrated to the modern state of Israel, which causes further confusion in the eyes of the observer.

So, to answer the question: *Are today's Jews, Jewish by religion or direct genetic descent?* – they answer this themselves - Judaism welcomes genuine converts, meaning that "Jews by religion" can encompass individuals from any background. Genetic studies demonstrate this common heritage, which is separate from later converts or the false Khazar theory.

Think of it like this by using the USA as an example. All citizens are Americans and most espouse Christianity as their religion. Yet not all are Anglo-Keltic or of north-west European origin (i. e. descendants of the House of Israel). In fact, only 21% of Americans are Anglo-Keltic and another 11% of north-west European heritage.

While all citizens, no matter what race, are Americans, most are no longer of the tribe of Manasseh. Similar arguments may be made for the Jewish peoples.

Appendix. Is “Jewish” a Race?

Is "Jewish" a Race?

...or maybe a nation? Or just an ethnicity?

By Tzvi Freeman

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/498027/jewish/Is-Jewish-a-Race.htm

Jews cannot be defined by religion, since there are many irreligious Jews. Neither can they be defined by culture.

Some have suggested that Jews are a race. But while there is a definite cluster of Jewish genes, plenty of people have those genes but aren't Jewish, and plenty don't have them and are.

It's obvious, then, that DNA does not make you a Jew. There must be something much deeper that does.

Who Is a Jew?

Let's start from the beginning. The Jewish people began with the descendants of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob, Leah and Rachel. The children of Jacob, to start with, likely married out of the family. Then there was the "mixed multitude" that came with the Children of Israel out of Egypt. Until the [covenant at Mount Sinai](#), there was [no formal conversion](#), and several of the classic commentaries write that Jewishness may have followed the paternal line. (From Sinai on, [Jewishness follows the maternal line](#).)

The royal family itself is linked to King David, a descendant of a convert named Ruth whose story is told in a book of the Hebrew Bible named after her. Another book, the Megillah of Esther, speaks of "many of the people of the land" becoming Jewish during the Persian exile.

In the Mishnaic Period, some of the greatest sages and leaders were converts—such as Onkelos, Shemaya and Avtalyon—or descendants of converts, such as Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Meir. Mass conversions may well have occurred in Canaan, Yemen and the Caucasus. Today there are African Jews, Japanese Jews, even Inuit Jews. It seems difficult to call such a mixture a "race."

Are Jews a Cluster Group?

Indeed, scientists continue to argue whether the term *race* has any useful meaning when classifying human beings. Racism as a sociopolitical ideology [died with the Holocaust](#) and was laid to rest by the [civil rights movement](#) for all thinking people. It should be obvious to all who have learned the history of the last century that humanity can no longer afford to discriminate by race or genetic makeup if we are to survive on this planet.

Does race have any useful meaning when classifying human beings?

Nevertheless, it's indisputable that certain groups form *clusters* in which certain genetic properties are more common than for humanity as a whole. It's important to understand those clusters, as they help us understand national identities and allegiances, as well as genetic inheritance.

Since Jews have mostly "married in" for several thousand years, yes, there are certain features that are distinctly common among Jews—as there are among Inuits, Icelanders, Amish, the Basque people and others. On the other hand, since there is room for conversion, those features are not ubiquitous within the group.

One feature that stands out in the Jewish cluster: The average verbal IQ score among Jews is 120. Translate that into percentiles and we discover that the average Jew is a "one out of ten"—brighter than 91% of the population. That may explain why Jews, at only 1.4% of the American population,

make up 22% of Ivy League students, 20% of America's chief executives and have earned 25% of the Nobel Prizes awarded to American scientists (not including Jews born outside the US, such as Albert Einstein) since 1950—32% worldwide in the 21st century—and 52%(!) of Pulitzer Prizes for nonfiction (the key is *verbal IQ*).¹

We've yet to find evidence that Jewish intelligence or philanthropy is genetic.

(For a sampling of great Jewish authors, see [101 Authors Who Didn't Write the Bible](#).)

But is it all in the genes? So far, no real evidence. No “Jewish genes” for IQ scores have turned up, nor for scientific innovation (although over 500 genes have been found related to intelligence, so we may not be far). Neither do we know of any genetic basis for charitability, yet Jews give far more charity than others in the same income bracket and make up a highly disproportionate number of America's leading philanthropists (19 out of the top 53 and five out of the top six in 2015 according to the Chronicle of Philanthropy). Is it biology or is it culture?

All that geneticists know so far is that there is certainly a “cluster” of typical Jewish DNA. They've also been able to identify several distinct haplotypes—markers in the chromosome structure that cropped up in one individual and have been passed on ever since. That allows them to approximate the age of these unique features, along with a good guess at the geographic origin. The time machine of our genes show that most Jews have a shared ancestry that traces back to ancient Israel. Any competing theories will have to argue with hard science.²

Every once in a while, another opportunist attempts to genetically dismember the Jewish people. Yet, as science gets better at these things, all such attempts only backfire. In 2015, 30 researchers from nine countries pooled their data to create “the largest data set available to date for assessment of Ashkenazi Jewish genetic origins.” They concluded their analysis with a statement: We confirm the notion that the [Ashkenazi](#), North African, and Sephardi Jews share substantial genetic ancestry and that they derive it from Middle Eastern and European populations, with no indication of a detectable Khazar contribution to their genetic origins.³

Nevertheless, from the perspective of traditional Jewish law (known as [halachah](#)), a DNA test demonstrating typical Jewish DNA is not a blank pass into the tribe. After all, if your ancestry is from Europe, there's about a 90% chance of some Jewish DNA turning up in there. That's due to the many Jews over the ages who were forcibly converted, or simply left the fold due to the hardships involved.

A DNA test demonstrating typical Jewish DNA is not a blank pass into the tribe.

On the other hand, there are entire communities of Jews with no typical Jewish haplotypes to speak of - such as the Bene Israel in India, who are considered Jewish by orthodox standards. Does that mean they are not descendants of Abraham? Not necessarily. Perhaps they were isolated before those haplotype markers turned up.

All this means you'll still need evidence of a Jewish mother no matter how kosher your DNA. (See our article [How Do I Know If I Am a Jew?](#) for all the details.)

Common descent, then, does not make a race, nor does proof that you share it guarantee citizenship. On the other hand, neither does it imply exclusivity.

Are Jews a Nation?

Perhaps Jews are permanent citizens of a Jewish nation.

Citizenship is one of the landmark innovations of the Western world. In his series of lectures, “Epochs of European Civilization,” historian Geoffrey Hosking lists citizenship and the closely related idea of the nation-state among the four ideas that distinguish modern Western civilization.⁴

Before there were nations, there were kingdoms. Kingdoms have subjects. The king makes you his subject. It's not your identity—it's that of the king.

The idea of citizenship was born not in Athens or Sparta, but in the Sinai peninsula.

To have a nation-state, you must build a strong sense of identity from the bottom up - which is the idea of the citizen. Citizenship implies a sense of responsibility between citizens, along with certain privileges, such as the right to own property, or to have a say in legislation.

Where did these two ideas of the citizen and the nation-state originate? Hosking insists it was not in Athens or Sparta, but in the Sinai peninsula, with the birth of the Jewish nation.

At Mount Sinai, every Jew, man, woman and child, became a team player in a fledgling nation. When they took over the Promised Land, every Israelite became landed—with ownership of his inherited plot of land for perpetuity. During the time of the Judges, the people had no king to unite them, but they were held together by a sense of common lineage and destiny. The law was absolute, but it's interpretation and application was always discussed, principally amongst the elders, those most respected by the people. The identity of the nation depended on every individual doing his or her part, and behaving in accordance to the law.

So we could explain Jewish identity very much as that kind of participatory citizenship, continuing throughout history, even as we have left our land and are without a monarch or central authority. We are citizens of a mobile, distributable, highly-resilient nation—quite similar to the World Wide Web.

The Covenant That Makes the Jewish Nation

The traditional Jewish self-concept is that Jews comprise a [family held together by a covenant with G-d accepted at Mount Sinai](#). Anyone born into that family is there for life—just as you can't divorce your parents, you can't undo your Jewishness. A Jew who calls himself by any other name is still a Jew.

On the other hand, just as you could be born into a family, you might also get yourself adopted in - which is fundamentally what conversion is all about. And again, once in, it's a knot that can't be undone. Only that to tie that knot, you'll need to accept upon yourself the same covenant we entered and the mission we were assigned at Mount Sinai over 3300 years ago before a tribunal of qualified Jews.

Jews are bound together tighter than any DNA or ideology could bond us. It is a bond eternal that runs deeper than any bond.

[emphasis mine]

Appendix. Are Modern Jews Khazars?

Are Modern Jews Khazars?

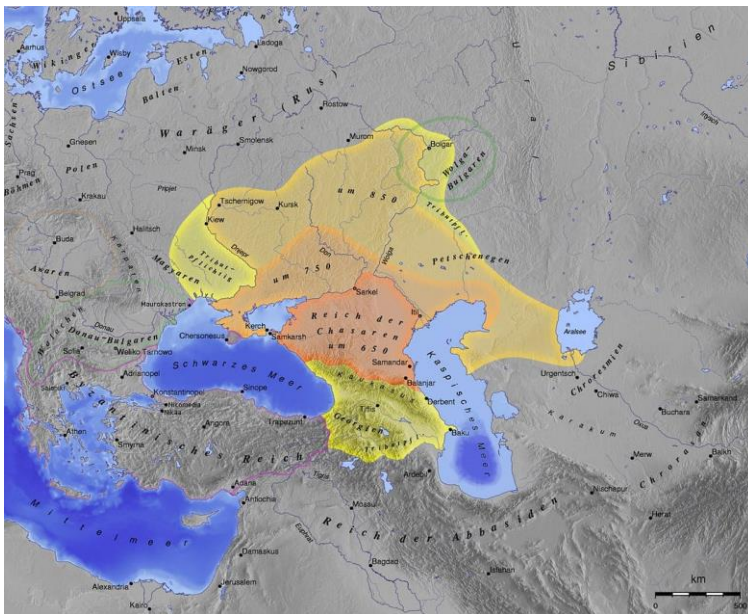
Evaluating the Khazar Hypothesis

Keith Woods

31 March 2026

https://keithwoods.pub/p/khazartheory?publication_id=1597520&post_id=191044846&isFreemail=true&r=ddqog&triedRedirect=true

The theory that Ashkenazi Jews descend primarily from converts in the medieval Khazar Khaganate, a Turkic polity in the Caucasus region, has been around for over a century. Though it was largely seen as put to bed by modern genetic science, this theory has recently taken on renewed popularity, driven by the rise in anti-Zionist sentiment since October 7.



Khazaria

This belief has enduring appeal among anti-Zionists because, if true, it undermines the Jewish claim to an ancient biblical connection to Israel, and many of its proponents also see it as a clever way to sidestep accusations of “anti-Semitism.” Severing the connection between biblical Israelites and modern Jews is also why the theory has been adopted by some Christian anti-Zionists — this appears to be the primary motivation of Candace Owens, now the most influential proponent of Khazar theory. Candace has [argued](#) that acceptance of Khazar theory “doesn’t even require literacy” because of how self-evident it is that ““God’s chosen people” don’t mass murder, steal, create systems of usury and rape children in occult ceremonies.”



While the theory is now kept alive by conspiratorial audiences online, its origins lie in a small body of historical scholarship on the medieval Khazar state. A key body of Hebrew source material was published by the Russian Academy in Leningrad in 1932. This was followed by Abraham Nahum Polak's *History of a Jewish Kingdom in Europe* (1944), which portrayed Khazaria as a substantially Jewish polity and entertained the possibility of a demographic legacy in Eastern Europe, linking it to the collapse of the Khazar state and a subsequent mass migration following the Mongol invasions — in fact, the kingdom had collapsed several centuries before the Mongols appeared on the steppe, a fatal error for Polak's theory.¹ The theory entered wider public debate, and took on its more maximalist form as an explainer for Ashkenazi origins, several decades later with the publication of Arthur Koestler's 1976 book *The Thirteenth Tribe*.

Koestler, a Hungarian Jew, moved through several ideological currents — including Zionism and communism — but ultimately became a staunch critic of ideological nationalism and ethnic politics. Koestler's biographer documents that Koestler told a French biologist that he:

Was convinced that if he could prove that the bulk of Eastern European Jews (the ancestors of today's Ashkenazim) were descended from the Khazars, the racial basis for anti-Semitism would be removed and anti-Semitism itself could disappear.²

In the introduction to *The Thirteenth Tribe*, Koestler outlines what he views as the most profound consequences of his theory — a final undermining of the "cruel hoax" of anti-Semitism:

This was written before the full extent of the holocaust was known, but that does not alter the fact that the large majority of surviving Jews in the world is of Eastern European—and thus perhaps

mainly of Khazar—origin. If so, this would mean that their ancestors came not from the Jordan but from the Volga, not from Canaan but from the Caucasus, once believed to be the cradle of the Aryan race; and that genetically they are more closely related to the Hun, Uigur and Magyar tribes than to the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. **Should this turn out to be the case, then the term “anti-Semitism” would become void of meaning, based on a misapprehension shared by both the killers and their victims.** The story of the Khazar Empire, as it slowly emerges from the past, begins to look like the most cruel hoax which history has ever perpetrated.³

Koestler’s argument is speculative. Without the aid of modern genetic science, he constructs his theory around a few facts from the historical record:

1. The ruling elite of the Khazar Khaganate converted to Judaism around the 8th century.
2. The Khazar state collapsed after attacks by the Kievan Rus in the 10th century.
3. Large Jewish populations appear in Eastern Europe in the late medieval period, especially in Poland, Lithuania, and Russia.

From this, Koestler suggests that there may have been a large migration of converted Khazars to Eastern Europe in this period, who now comprise the bulk of Ashkenazim.

Interest in the Khazar hypothesis resurfaced more recently with the publication of Shlomo Sand’s 2009 book *The Invention of the Jewish People*, a work Candace Owens often cites as something that woke her up to Khazar theory. Sand, like Koestler, is a leftist Jew and an ardent opponent of nationalism, who similarly views the Zionist project as harmful to Jews.



Arthur Koestler, Eran Elhaik, Shlomo Sand

Sand rejects the idea of a unified, continuous Jewish ethnos descended from a biblical nation, as well as the traditional narrative of a mass exile after the destruction of the Second Temple. Instead, Sand suggests that Jewish populations outside the Levant emerged primarily through local conversions — most notably among the Khazars — rather than through diaspora communities maintaining biological continuity.

Though Sand’s theory addresses genetics, he seems unwilling to actually engage with genetic science, sometimes suggesting the whole enterprise is racist. For example, when geneticist Harry Ostrer announced the results of a DNA study revealing “a biological basis for Jewishness,” Sand [responded](#) that “Hitler would certainly have been very pleased.” Sand has also claimed that geneticists have avoided investigating the Khazar hypothesis because they know it would undermine the ancient foundation for a unified Jewish ethnic identity.

Setting aside genetics, there is little new in Sand’s historical argument, which is largely a repetition of Koestler’s in *The Thirteenth Tribe*. For additional historical evidence, he draws primarily on two sources — the highly dubious Cambridge document and King Joseph’s letter, which will be discussed in the next section.

Elsewhere, Sand writes that “the Khazars’ sacred tongue and written communication was Hebrew,” citing an Arab source named Ibn al-Nadim.⁴ In fact, al-Nadim merely recorded that Khazars used “Hebrew characters,” and this would have been limited to elites in what was otherwise a largely illiterate steppe society.

Sand also makes the claim that Hebrew characters entered the Cyrillic alphabet, through the Khazars’ early rule over the Russians. This suggestion finds no support among historical linguistics, or seemingly anywhere outside Sand’s work; the origins of the Cyrillic script are generally [traced](#) to Greek and Glagolitic forms developed by Byzantine missionaries.

Even overlooking errors like this, and setting aside the genetic record, Koestler and Sand’s broader theory is problematic from a historical perspective. The migration history of Ashkenazi Jews is relatively well documented and points to gradual migrations from Western and Southern Europe. After exile, Jewish communities existed throughout the Roman Empire and developed particularly strong roots in Italy during late antiquity. From there, they migrated northward into the Rhineland and northern France in the early medieval period, with historians documenting an established “Italy–Rhineland route of Jewish immigration.”⁵ One example is the [Kalonymos family](#), a prominent rabbinic lineage documented to have moved from Lucca in Italy to Mainz, where its members became leading scholars in the emerging Ashkenazi community.⁶

These Ashkenazi communities later migrated eastward into Poland and Lithuania between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. We know such movements were encouraged by Polish rulers who granted Jews legal protection and economic privileges, most notably in the [Statute of Kalisz](#) of 1264.

There is also no historical evidence for a mass westward migration of Khazar Jews. While remnants of Khazar populations likely survived in regions around the Caucasus after the collapse of the Khazar Khaganate, medieval sources do not describe any large-scale movement of Khazars into Eastern Europe. Contemporary chronicles do document the rise of Jewish communities in Poland and the German lands, but they make no reference to these migrants arriving from the Eurasian Steppe. If such a migration had occurred on the scale required by the Khazar hypothesis, there would surely be traces of it in the record: descriptions of migrating peoples in chronicles, references to Khazar or Turkic origins in Jewish communal traditions, or linguistic evidence of a Turkic substrate in Ashkenazi culture. Neither Koestler, Sand, or any other contemporary proponents of Khazar theory have produced anything compelling on this front.

What we do know is that the traditional language of Ashkenazi Jews, Yiddish, developed primarily from High German dialects with Hebrew and Slavic influences, reflecting its emergence among Jewish communities in medieval German-speaking Europe without any Turkic linguistic influence. Yiddish is primarily based on medieval High German,⁷ taking in elements of Hebrew and Slavic languages. The religious traditions and legal scholarship of Ashkenazi Judaism likewise show clear continuity with the rabbinic culture of Mediterranean and Western European Jewish communities rather than with the cultural milieu of the Khazar steppe.

Did the Khazars even convert?

Even the story of a large Khazar conversion rests on scant evidence. A 2013 paper titled *Did the Khazars Convert to Judaism?* has demonstrated serious problems with the sources commonly used to support the narrative of a large conversion among the Khazars.

The most commonly cited source is a letter from a Khazar king Joseph addressed to a Jewish scholar named Hasdai ibn Shaprut. Joseph’s letter, which describes the conversion of the Khazar ruling elite and the establishment of Jewish institutions in the kingdom, is written in “beautiful literary Hebrew,” with no reflections of a native Khazar language. The author of the letter also

displays an apparent ignorance of the geography of the region. Despite the king describing his kingdom, he doesn't mention any of the main cities, knows "remarkably little about its eastern part" or the groups populating it, or about trade routes or the commercial ties with other regions. The author seems to only be familiar with Crimea, about which he also makes apparent mistakes, leading historians who have analysed the document to suggest it was authored by someone who would have travelled from Constantinople to Crimea.

The Jewish king's letter refers to great synagogues, study houses and other centers of learning containing renowned Jewish scholars throughout the land, yet:

None of the scholars are named, no other sources refer to grand synagogues or Jewish study halls, and no archaeological remains of Khazar synagogues have been found. In all of the rich literature produced in that time in the yeshivot of Jerusalem or Babylonia or preserved in the Cairo Geniza, there is not one reference to scholars in the Khazar lands, nor are there references to migration of scholars to Khazaria.⁸

The other powerful source for the Khazar conversion narrative is the so-called Cambridge Document or [Schechter Letter](#), a medieval Hebrew text that purports to describe the conversion of the Khazar ruling elite to Judaism. The author of this document, and the date it was authored, is unknown, and none of the events in it have been corroborated by any other sources.

The events in the document read more like legend than real history, describing Khazar elites miraculously discovering preserved Hebrew books hidden in a cave. The Khazars who find these texts, despite growing up without books or any education in Hebrew education, were somehow immediately able to read and understand these complex Hebrew texts, sparking a mass-conversion. Hebrew scholars have identified many similarities between this story and the pseudepigraphic Jewish chronicle [Josippon](#).

The document portrays Khazar society as having an established Jewish scholarly culture with institutions and traditions, yet this left no trace anywhere else in Jewish intellectual history. Stampfer notes that

In all of the rich literature produced in that time in the yeshivot of Jerusalem or Babylonia... there is not one reference to scholars in the Khazar lands.

The silence of external observers is equally significant. Byzantine, Muslim, and Rus' writers described the Khazars extensively, often commenting on their political structures and religious diversity. These sources consistently portray the Khazar elite as religiously heterogeneous — sometimes mentioning Judaism among several faiths practiced within the khaganate — but none describe the large-scale Jewish kingdom or scholarly centers depicted in these Hebrew texts.

Also absent is archaeological evidence. If the ruling elite of a major Eurasian empire had adopted Judaism and established synagogues, academies, and a network of Jewish institutions, historians would also expect to find traces of this in the archaeological record. Yet despite excavations across the core regions of the Khazar Khaganate uncovering a wealth of settlements, fortifications, and burial sites, they have never revealed evidence of Jewish communal life on the scale described in the medieval narratives.

Archaeologists excavating in Khazar lands have found almost no artifacts or grave stones displaying distinctly Jewish symbols.⁹

A historical study of the burial practices of Khazarians note they retained pagan customs that would have been strictly forbidden in Judaism, such as trephination — boring into the skull's cranial cavity — well after their alleged conversion.¹⁰

This is how an archaeologist of Khazaria summarises the archaeological picture:

There is very little archaeological evidence of the propagation of this faith among the population of the Khazar khaganate. Almost all of them are found in the large ancient cities on the shores of the

sea, where the population was mixed, inhabited by people of different religious beliefs. But in the towns in the steppe and in the mountains, in the tombs, there are practically no Jewish artefacts. Their quantity does not allow us to think about the propagation of Judaism among the Khazars.¹¹ The story of a Jewish Khazar kingdom is therefore far less certain than often assumed, resting on little more than a handful of noncontemporary and unreliable stories. But even if such a conversion did occur, it would still do nothing to support the claim that Khazar Jews migrated westward to form the basis of Ashkenazi Jewry. Modern genetic evidence provides a far clearer answer to that question.

New support for Khazar theory?

In 2013, an Israeli geneticist sensationally claimed to have proven the Khazar theory. Eran Elhaik's *The Missing Link of Jewish European Ancestry: Contrasting the Rhineland and the Khazarian Hypotheses* argues that the genetic ancestry of Ashkenazi Jews is better explained by a Caucasus-centered origin than by the traditional model of migration from the Middle East through Western Europe. Using modern populations as proxies for ancient groups, he concluded that Ashkenazi Jews show closer genetic affinity to populations from the Caucasus region than to the Middle Eastern groups used in his model. Elhaik — who told interviewers he read Koestler's *The Thirteenth Tribe* as a child — concludes that “our findings support the Khazarian Hypothesis and portray the European Jewish genome as a mosaic of Caucasus, European, and Semitic ancestries.”¹²

Given his background as a geneticist, Elhaik obviously cannot be dismissed as a kook. However, his proposal runs into many of the same problems discussed earlier for the Khazar hypothesis: there are no linguistic traces of Turkic influence in Ashkenazi culture, no evidence of a mass westward migration from the Eurasian steppe, no historical records among Ashkenazim describing such an origin, and no archaeological evidence of widespread Jewish communities in Khazaria.

There is another problem with Elhaik's argument though, which is that a heterodox explanation like the Khazar theory is necessary because the massive growth in the Jewish population in Eastern Europe — from about 50,000 in the 15th century to around 8 million in the twentieth — could not be explained by natural population growth. He argues this is particularly true of a Jewish population “subjected to severe economic restrictions, slavery, assimilation, the Black Death and other plagues, forced and voluntary conversions, persecutions, kidnappings, rapes, exiles, wars, massacres, and pogroms.”¹³ Elhaik's citations for this claim are Koestler's *The Thirteenth Tribe* and Shlomo Sand's *The Invention of the Jewish people*.

But there is really nothing remarkable about this kind of population growth, especially for an insulated religious group that combines high fertility rates and low rates of out-marriage. The Amish population in North America numbered only around 5,000 at the start of the twentieth century but has expanded to over 350,000 today. They are [projected](#) to reach 3–7 million by the end of the century, already matching the 20th century Jewish population in Eastern Europe from a smaller starting base. The Afrikaners in South Africa started from a group of only a few thousand Dutch settlers at the Cape in the seventeenth century, today it is roughly 3 million, largely through natural population growth.

Gershon Hundert, a historian of early-modern Jewry, has documented that Jews in Poland enjoyed both a higher birth rate and a lower mortality rate than their Polish neighbours, and also practiced earlier marriage, though he attributes most of the growth to low infant mortality.¹⁴ The Jews' population growth was also remarked on by observers of the time, with Hundert quoting a Krakow university professor who wrote of the Jews “[n]one of them dies in war or of the plague. . . . Moreover, they marry when they are twelve . . . and so multiply rampantly.”¹⁵



Elhaik is also vastly overstating the maltreatment Jews faced in this period. There is scant evidence of mass forced conversions or massacres of Jews, and modern historians now agree that Jewish life in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth was relatively secure and autonomous compared to Western Europe. A papal diplomat, surveying Jewish areas of Poland in the 16th century, wrote: They do not live here under pitiful conditions and do not engage in lowly pursuits... But rather, they possess land, engage in commerce, and devote themselves to study, especially medicine and astrology.... They possess considerable wealth and they are not only among the respectable citizens, but occasionally even dominate them.¹⁶

Similarly, Jewish historian Israel Bartal describes an economically powerful and integrated Jewish population, with large share of Jews working as artisans, merchants, and estate leaseholders, with many others managing regional and international trade:

At the end of the eighteenth century, nearly 30 percent of the Jews were linked to the estate lease economy, and managed means of production owned by the nobility: distilleries, breweries, flour mills, lumber mills, and the like.¹⁷

Far from being lowly, persecuted minorities, Jews by this time dominated the trades and made themselves key intermediaries between peasants and markets.

All this is to say that the historical anomaly Elhaik uses to support his Khazar thesis is not anomalous at all. But what of his genetic model?

Elhaik’s argument depends heavily on modelling ancestry using modern populations as proxies for ancient ones. In particular, he treats contemporary South Caucasus populations — especially Armenians and Georgians — as stand-ins for the Khazars, a medieval Turkic confederation whose genetic composition is largely unknown.

Elhaik writes that “Caucasus Georgians and Armenians were considered proto-Khazars because they are believed to have emerged from the same genetic cohort as the Khazars.” Here, Elhaik makes three citations, Polak 1951; Dvornik 1962; Brook 2006. The first two references are more than half a century old works on Jewish Khazaria that are now widely seen as outdated, the latter reference is to an “amateur Khazar enthusiast who has no first-hand knowledge of Central Asian studies.”¹⁸

Elhaik’s assumption here has been widely criticised by other geneticists, who point out that Armenians and Georgians are indigenous populations of the Caucasus with deep regional continuity and are not appropriate genetic substitutes for a medieval Turkic confederation whose ruling elite likely originated on the Eurasian steppe.

Elhaik himself refers to a study by Balanovsky et al., but fails to mention that it concludes that of all the national groups in the Black Sea region, the Georgians and Armenians were the *least* likely to have absorbed significant populations from other national groups. In other words, while there was DNA from eight Ashkenazi males in Elhaik's study, there was no Khazar DNA at all. This makes it a bit difficult to come to significant conclusions about the Khazarian ancestry of Ashkenazi Jews.¹⁹

As a result, Elhaik's model effectively tests whether Ashkenazi Jews share ancestry with Caucasus populations — not whether they descend from Khazars. But genetic similarities between eastern Mediterranean and Caucasus populations are already expected under the conventional historical model, since both regions were historically connected through migration and trade.

A second major criticism concerns the reference populations Elhaik used to represent Middle Eastern ancestry. A response paper with 20 co-authors criticised Elhaik's methodology, noting that he used poor modern populations as stand-ins for ancient ones. Not only was his identification of Georgians and Armenians as a stand-in for Khazars misleading, but he chose poor proxies like modern Palestinians as proxies for ancient Judean populations. When alternative Middle Eastern reference populations are used, the genetic results change substantially.²⁰

Taken together, these methodological problems mean that Elhaik's argument for a Khazar origin is no more convincing than earlier historical versions of the theory. In contrast, the broader body of genetic research converges on a clear and internally consistent account of Ashkenazi ancestry.

The genetic picture

Across multiple independent genome-wide studies, Ashkenazi Jews consistently cluster between Levantine and southern European populations. They do not cluster with populations of the Caucasus or Eurasian steppe, as would be expected if they primarily descended from Khazar converts. This single finding is sufficient to rule out the Khazar hypothesis in its strong form.

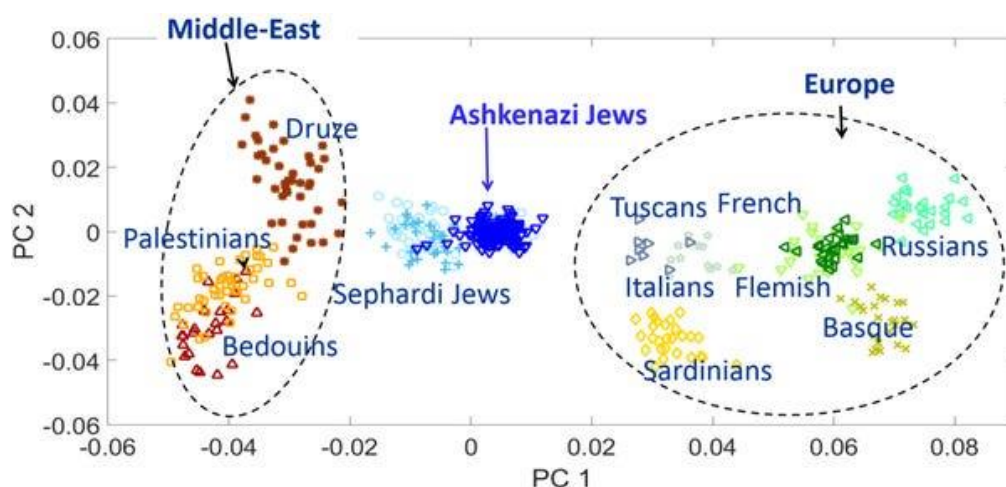
More broadly, modern population genetics has established that Jewish communities across the diaspora share a significant component of Near Eastern ancestry traceable to the ancient Levant. Genome-wide analyses show that Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Mizrahi Jews form related genetic clusters despite centuries of geographic separation, reflecting a common origin followed by varying degrees of admixture.

This pattern is also visible in uniparental markers. Paternal lineages (Y-DNA) tend to show strong continuity with Middle Eastern populations, while maternal lineages (mtDNA) more often reflect European origins — suggesting a pattern of outbreeding where Jewish men adopted European wives.

Early Y-chromosome research — which traces paternal lineages and shared male ancestry across populations — already pointed in this direction. A landmark 2000 study found that Jewish populations from Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East share a substantial set of paternal lineages derived from a common Middle Eastern ancestral population.²¹

The most influential genome-wide [study](#) on Jewish origins is a 2010 paper by Behar et al. Using hundreds of thousands of genetic markers, the researchers compared several Jewish populations with dozens of non-Jewish populations across Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. The analysis showed that Jewish groups form closely related genetic clusters, reflecting shared ancestry despite centuries of geographic separation. Most Jewish populations clustered between Middle Eastern and southern European populations, indicating a substantial ancestral connection to the ancient Levant alongside varying degrees of admixture from surrounding host populations.²²

Similar conclusions were reached in a parallel analysis of Jewish diaspora groups published the same year.²³



The origins of Ashkenazi Jews have attracted particular attention because the population emerged in medieval Europe while retaining clear genetic ties to the Near East. Research on the timing and location of European admixture suggests that much of this mixture occurred in the Mediterranean world. A key 2017 genetic study concluded that the European component of Ashkenazi ancestry most likely originated in southern Europe, with Italy highlighted as a plausible location.²⁴

Ancient DNA research has further illuminated this picture. A major 2022 [study](#) of medieval Jewish remains from a cemetery in Germany confirmed a founder event leading to modern Ashkenazim, and supported a blend of Levantine and European ancestries, with subgroups showing varying proportions but overall continuity from ancient Jewish sources.

Genetic evidence also points to a demographic bottleneck in the medieval period. The Ashkenazi population appears to have descended from a relatively small ancestral group before expanding rapidly in Central and Eastern Europe, a process that helps explain the genetic homogeneity observed among modern Ashkenazi Jews. The Ashkenazi population appears to have descended from a relatively small ancestral group before expanding rapidly in Central and Eastern Europe.

Some recent analyses suggest that the European — particularly southern European — component of Ashkenazi ancestry may be larger than earlier models indicated. Several researchers argue that earlier genetic studies relied on imperfect reference populations when modelling “Italian ancestry,” typically including northern Italian groups such as proxies, even though southern Italians and Sicilians are genetically closer to eastern Mediterranean populations. Because northern Italians are more genetically similar to northern Europeans, these models may exaggerate the apparent genetic distance between Ashkenazi Jews and southern European populations.

Using stronger southern Italian reference populations, some recent studies estimate that Ashkenazi ancestry may derive largely from southern European — especially Italian — sources. One recent [model](#) estimated placed southern European ancestry at 68%, with most of the rest coming from Levantine and Middle-Eastern sources.²⁵

Genetic historians have therefore [proposed](#) “a one-time event in the first or second centuries... when many Jews arrived in Italy and married locals before intermarriage sharply declined.” After centuries of relative isolation following this event, Jewish populations migrated to Northern and then Eastern Europe, with their genetics changing little since.

The picture we now have of Jewish genetics is impossible to reconcile with the Khazar hypothesis. **While there is still room for debate over the precise balance between Levantine and southern**

European ancestry in Ashkenazi Jews, genetic studies consistently place them closer to Mediterranean and Middle Eastern populations than to peoples of the Caucasus.

More importantly, genetic studies show continuity in Ashkenazi ancestry across the medieval period. The genetic structure observed in medieval Jewish remains already closely resembles that of modern Ashkenazim, with no sign of the large-scale influx of Caucasus ancestry that would be expected if the population had been substantially reshaped by Khazar converts.

Taken together, the historical, linguistic, archaeological, and genetic evidence presents a consistent picture of Ashkenazi origins. Jewish communities developed in Europe through gradual migrations from the Mediterranean world, into the Rhineland and later into Eastern Europe. **While conversion and local admixture occurred, as it does in all diaspora populations, there is neither the evidence for a large-scale migration of Khazar converts, nor a widespread conversion to Judaism among the Khazars.**

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Appendix. Who Are the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel?

Who Are the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel?

Why Are They Lost? Can the Science of Molecular Genetics Help Identify Their Descendants?

The archaeological dead-end in this area of investigation leads us to call for a new scientific investigation which could put this matter to an end.

by **Michael P. Germano**

What became of the lost ten tribes of the house of Israel? Outside of the Bible itself the limited evidence pertinent to this question appears to be ambiguous, incomplete, and suspect. Presumably the lost ten tribes never returned to the Holy Land. Archaeology, history, and linguistics fail to explain their fate. No more than soft evidence is available and none of it is scientific. While interesting the evidence is not compelling.

At the heart of the matter is a theological concept, a hermeneutic often with significant prophetic overtones, read into the findings of archaeology, history, and linguistics. Even a cursory reading of the various publications "identifying" and equating the United States, Britain, and northern European nations and peoples with the lost ten tribes evidence theological arguments based upon their particular authors' exegesis.

Inconclusive Data is a Problem

While the findings of historians, linguists and archeologists are of great import they do not establish with any certainty that Americans of northern European descent, the British, and northern European peoples are indeed the descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of the House of Israel. The data is inconclusive except for those people willing to accept a very low standard of proof, simply believe what they read, or trust in someone else's opinion and logic.

Moreover, the political situation since World War II has inhibited extensive archaeological research in Iraq, the former Soviet Union, communist Poland, and some adjoining states. This region is the traditional route of the Israelite immigration into northern Europe. Further, slaves, refugees, and nomads do not make good subjects for archaeological research. Their mudbrick houses washed away a long time ago and few, if any, monuments testify to their feats and accomplishments. Only rarely would we expect to find such data. It appears we now deal, absent some new accidental discovery, with an archaeological dead-end.

Except for a limited account of the deportation by the Assyrians and prophecies such as the promises made to the tribes recorded in Genesis 49 the Bible is silent on this subject. Spinning Genesis 49 and a few other scriptures such as Genesis 35:9, I Chronicles 5:2, Romans 1:16, and the like, results in an illusory proof. Why? Its proponents consistently fail to establish context! Now do not misunderstand. This criticism of some very prominent writers and their logic does not mean that the basic proposition is in error, nor does it necessarily diminish the writer's importance, stature, or contribution in his or her own time. I simply question the nature of the inquiry, the quality of the data, and the conclusions drawn from the available data. Northern Europeans may very well be and probably are descendants of the ancient Israelites. This is no great leap of faith for those of us who have spent time in the study of migration of ancient peoples and population genetics. I merely suggest we refocus the inquiry along scientific lines so we can develop sufficient evidence, perhaps, to put the matter to rest. If, on the other hand, hard scientific evidence confirms at a high level of statistical certainty that northern European peoples and Americans of northern European descent (Danes, Scots, English, Swedes, Fins, and the like) are descendants of the

ancient Israelites then we should reconsider the theological implications. The matter would require careful scrutiny.

The Assyrian empire declined and eventually collapsed with the rise of the Chaldean empire. Nearly all the literature dealing with the fate of the Israelite tribes suggest either their absorption into Gentile populations, where they perished as a people with their genes swamped and their culture abandoned, or their assent to nationhood as the British, and other northern European peoples. In this thinking the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic peoples are descendants of the lost ten tribes.

A Prophetic Hermeneutic is No Big Help

Claims that the tribes migrated into northern Europe and constitute the basic stock of modern nations arose in the seventeenth century commonly have a scriptural basis, arise from a prophetic hermeneutic, and reflect an ethnocentric philosophy. The idea caught on in the time of the industrial revolution in the West. It was a time when "civilized" peoples such as the British and French saw most of the world's peoples as savages. The British Israelite idea served to legitimize royalty and advance British imperialism. It also served in the eradication of native American populations seen by some as Canaanite peoples. In our present world the equation of America, Britain, and northern European nations with specific Israelite tribes serves to impart an exciting prophetic hermeneutic for interpreting why the world is the way it is and what is going to happen in the course of future events. Few who hold to this worldview are aware of the tenuous basis of the hermeneutic upon which they rely.

Even though such thinking is quite ethnocentric, often contradictory, and speculative, it does not negate the fact that hundreds of thousands of Israelites experienced deportation to Assyria where they settled. These refugees continued to live, have children, and grandchildren. Their descendants are with us today! But where? This leads us to consider what we can know and how we can know it. The question is can we identify the descendants of these ancient Israelite peoples and, if so, how? I suggest that the answer does not lie in theological speculation but in the science of molecular biology and genetics.

A Scientific Test is Possible

In recent decades molecular biology has significantly advanced. By 1990 scientists launched an ambitious attempt to map all of the estimated 100,000 genes in a human DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) molecule known as the Human Genome Project. The nucleus of each cell contains DNA. The structure of each DNA molecule consists of two strands arranged in a helix joined together by chemical bases. In humans the nucleus of a cell contains 23 pairs of DNA each known as a chromosome. Moreover, the mitochondria of each cell contains additional DNA called mtDNA (Mitochondrial DNA). The latter ordinarily pass only through the maternal line but there is some scientific evidence suggesting that some can transfer from the father.

A mutation must occur in the DNA, either nuclear or Mitochondrial, passed through a sperm cell or ovum to have a genetic impact in an offspring. A mutation is a change in genetic code. Mutations in nuclear DNA can bring about neutral, harmful, or helpful results. As scientists learn more of human DNA the mechanisms of heredity have become clearer. Molecular biology and genetics provide us with the means and the opportunity to identify the descendants of the ancient Israelite peoples.

Two avenues of scientific research can bare on this subject: (1) research on gene mutations and genetic diseases and (2) Mitochondrial DNA research. Both approaches require the identification of appropriate genetic markers and the establishment of a sampling technique across European peoples as part of a careful research design. A vital part of the study would need to be the

acquisition and isolation of DNA from human remains from the ancient Israelites and burial sites along the imputed migration route in their relevant time periods.

Let's Examine Our Genes

Only certain peoples can assimilate dairy products due to a lactase deficiency in most human populations. Most adult humans cannot digest milk efficiently resulting in various symptoms including severe cramps, diarrhea, and other intestinal disorders. The "gene mutation" resulting in the ability to manufacture the lactase enzyme as a mature adult is traceable to a mutation occurring in an individual living in the Middle East several millennia ago about the time of the invention of herding and the domestication of animals. Research shows that European Americans have a 2-19% lactase deficiency, African Americans a 70-77% deficiency, and Asian Americans a 95-100% deficiency. This is an example of a helpful result coming from a gene mutation and it is a rich area for research on the Lost Ten Tribes issue. Other avenues for exploration are diabetes, sickle cell anemia, blood groups, the HLA system, and the like.

The Answer May Lie in Our mtDNA

Neutral mutations of mtDNA are neither beneficial nor harmful but accumulate over long periods. The Israelite population in question involves a period of about 4,000 years. Assuming this accumulation occurs at a constant rate over time, as most researchers believe, the number of mutations shared by individuals reflect the closeness of their relationship. Molecular geneticists then employ this to estimate at what time in the past that they shared a common ancestor using DNA from the Mitochondria (the energy-producing part of a cell). Since mtDNA accumulates neutral mutations rapidly it is an effective tool for studying genetic relationships in humans. As inheritance of mtDNA is from the mother alone geneticists trace recent genetic change through the female line. Ultimately, the derivation of all human mtDNA is from a common female ancestor. **A caveat is that there is some evidence to link some mtDNA to fathers. I suggest that mtDNA based studies can be quite helpful, perhaps ultimately key, in investigating the Lost Ten Tribes problem.**

In spite of the potential of the science of human genetics for providing us with insight into the Lost Ten Tribes problem God might want, for his greater purposes, for the tribes to remain lost from we more inquisitive types. Note that I have not raised the issue of the identity of tribes nor suggested any particular prophetic significance. Those are another matter for another day. It is sufficient at this time to point out, however, that "the nations of the earth will be blessed" through the descendants of Abraham (Genesis 18:18, cf., Galatians 3:8 NASB). This scripture may include the birth of the Messiah to a virgin in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago but also through the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob God brought many blessings to the world.

[Emphasis added. I hope that this article helps to settle the matter that indeed, the north-west Europeans descend from Israel]

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