**'Jews a Race' Genetic Theory Comes Under Fierce Attack by DNA Expert**

**Israeli Scientist Challenges Hypothesis of Middle East Origins - 2013**

<http://forward.com/articles/175912/jews-a-race-genetic-theory-comes-under-fierce-atta/?p=all>



**Science Feud**: Johns Hopkins geneticist Eran Elhaik says his research debunks the long-held theory that Jews are a single race.

#### By [Rita Rubin](http://forward.com/authors/rita-rubin/)

Published May 07, 2013, issue of [May 10, 2013](http://forward.com/issues/2013-05-10/).

Scientists usually don’t call each other “liars” and “frauds.”

But that’s how Johns Hopkins University post-doctoral researcher Eran Elhaik describes a group of widely respected geneticists, including Harry Ostrer, professor of p[athology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pathology) and [genetics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetics) at Yeshiva University’s [Albert Einstein College of Medicine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Einstein_College_of_Medicine) and author of the 2012 book “Legacy: A Genetic History of the Jewish People.”

For years now, the findings of Ostrer and several other scientists have stood virtually unchallenged on the genetics of Jews and the story they tell of the common Middle East origins shared by many Jewish populations worldwide. Jews — and Ashkenazim in particular — are indeed one people, Ostrer’s research finds.

It’s a theory that more or less affirms the understanding that many Jews themselves hold of who they are in the world: a people who, though scattered, share an ethnic-racial bond rooted in their common ancestral descent from the indigenous Jews of ancient Judea or Palestine, as the Romans called it after they conquered the Jewish homeland.

But now, Elhaik, an Israeli molecular geneticist, has published research that he says debunks this claim. And that has set off a predictable clash.

“He’s just wrong,” said Marcus Feldman of Stanford University, a leading researcher in Jewish genetics, referring to Elhaik.

The sometimes strong emotions generated by this scientific dispute stem from a politically loaded question that scientists and others have pondered for decades: Where in the world did Ashkenazi Jews come from?

The debate touches upon such sensitive issues as whether the Jewish people is a race or a religion, and whether Jews or Palestinians are descended from the original inhabitants of what is now the State of Israel.

Ostrer’s theory is sometimes marshaled to lend the authority of science to the Zionist narrative, which views the migration of modern-day Jews to what is now Israel, and their rule over that land, as a simple act of repossession by the descendants of the land’s original residents. Ostrer declined to be interviewed for this story. But in his writings, Ostrer points out the dangers of such reductionism; some of the same genetic markers common among Jews, he finds, can be found in Palestinians, as well.

By using sophisticated molecular tools, Feldman, Ostrer and most other scientists in the field have found that Jews are genetically homogeneous. No matter where they live, these scientists say, Jews are genetically more similar to each other than to their non-Jewish neighbors, and they have a shared Middle Eastern ancestry.

The geneticists’ research backs up what is known as the Rhineland Hypothesis. According to the hypothesis, Ashkenazi Jews descended from Jews who fled Palestine after the Muslim conquest in the seventh century and settled in Southern Europe. In the late Middle Ages they moved into eastern Europe from Germany, or the Rhineland.

“Nonsense,” said Elhaik, a 33-year-old Israeli Jew from Beersheba who earned a doctorate in molecular evolution from the University of Houston. The son of an Italian man and Iranian woman who met in Israel, Elhaik, a dark-haired, compact man, sat down recently for an interview in his bare, narrow cubicle of an office at Hopkins, where he’s worked for four years.

In [“The Missing Link of Jewish European Ancestry: Contrasting the Rhineland and the Khazarian Hypotheses,”](http://gbe.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2012/12/14/gbe.evs119.full.pdf) published in December in the online journal Genome Biology and Evolution, Elhaik says he has proved that Ashkenazi Jews’ roots lie in the Caucasus — a region at the border of Europe and Asia that lies between the Black and Caspian seas — not in the Middle East. They are descendants, he argues, of the Khazars, a Turkic people who lived in one of the largest medieval states in Eurasia and then migrated to Eastern Europe in the 12th and 13th centuries. Ashkenazi genes, Elhaik added, are far more heterogeneous than Ostrer and other proponents of the Rhineland Hypothesis believe. Elhaik did find a Middle Eastern genetic marker in DNA from Jews, but, he says, it could be from Iran, not ancient Judea.

Elhaik writes that the Khazars converted to Judaism in the eighth century, although many historians believe that only royalty and some members of the aristocracy converted. But widespread conversion by the Khazars is the only way to explain the ballooning of the European Jewish population to 8 million at the beginning of the 20th century from its tiny base in the Middle Ages, Elhaik says.

Elhaik bases his conclusion on an analysis of genetic data published by a team of researchers led by Doron Behar, a population geneticist and senior physician at Israel’s Rambam Medical Center, in Haifa. Using the same data, Behar’s team published in 2010 a paper concluding that most contemporary Jews around the world and some non-Jewish populations from the Levant, or Eastern Mediterranean, are closely related.

Elhaik used some of the same statistical tests as Behar and others, but he chose different comparisons. Elhaik compared “genetic signatures” found in Jewish populations with those of modern-day Armenians and Georgians, which he uses as a stand-in for the long-extinct Khazarians because they live in the same area as the medieval state.

“It’s an unrealistic premise,” said University of Arizona geneticist Michael Hammer, one of Behar’s co-authors, of Elhaik’s paper. Hammer notes that Armenians have Middle Eastern roots, which, he says, is why they appeared to be genetically related to Ashkenazi Jews in Elhaik’s study.

Hammer, who also co-wrote the first paper that showed modern-day Kohanim are descended from a single male ancestor, calls Elhaik and other Khazarian Hypothesis proponents “outlier folks… who have a minority view that’s not supported scientifically. I think the arguments they make are pretty weak and stretching what we know.”

Feldman, director of Stanford’s Morrison Institute for Population and Resource Studies, echoes Hammer. “If you take all of the careful genetic population analysis that has been done over the last 15 years… there’s no doubt about the common Middle Eastern origin,” he said. He added that Elhaik’s paper “is sort of a one-off.”

Elhaik’s statistical analysis would not pass muster with most contemporary scholars, Feldman said: “He appears to be applying the statistics in a way that gives him different results from what everybody else has obtained from essentially similar data.”

Elhaik, who doesn’t believe that Moses, Aaron or the 12 Tribes of Israel ever existed, shrugs off such criticism.

“That’s a circular argument,” he said of the notion that Jews’ and Armenians’ genetic similarities stem from common ancestors in the Middle East and not from Khazaria, the area where the Armenians live. If you believe that, he says, then other non-Jewish populations, such as Georgian, that are genetically similar to Armenians should be considered genetically related to Jews, too, “and so on and so forth.”

Dan Graur, Elhaik’s doctoral supervisor at U.H. and a member of the editorial board of the journal that published his paper, calls his former student “very ambitious, very independent. That’s what I like.” Graur, a Romanian-born Jew who served on the faculty of Tel Aviv University for 22 years before moving 10 years ago to the Houston school, said Elhaik “writes more provocatively than may be needed, but it’s his style.” Graur calls Elhaik’s conclusion that Ashkenazi Jews originated to the east of Germany “a very honest estimate.”

In a [news article](http://gbe.oxfordjournals.org/content/5/1/75.full) that accompanied Elhaik’s journal paper, Shlomo Sand, history professor at Tel Aviv University and author of the controversial 2009 book “The Invention of the Jewish People,” said the study vindicated his long-held ideas.

”It’s so obvious for me,” Sand told the journal. “Some people, historians and even scientists, turn a blind eye to the truth. Once, to say Jews were a race was anti-Semitic, now to say they’re not a race is anti-Semitic. It’s crazy how history plays with us.”

The paper has received little coverage in mainstream American media, but it has attracted the attention of anti-Zionists and “anti-Semitic white supremacists,” Elhaik said.

Interestingly, while anti-Zionist bloggers have applauded Elhaik’s work, saying it proves that contemporary Jews have no legitimate claim to Israel, some white supremacists have attacked it.

David Duke, for example, is disturbed by the assertion that Jews are not a race. “The disruptive and conflict-ridden behavior which has marked out Jewish Supremacist activities through the millennia strongly suggests that Jews have remained more or less genetically uniform and have… developed a group evolutionary survival strategy based on a common biological unity — something which strongly militates against the Khazar theory,” wrote the former Ku Klux Klansman and former Louisiana state assemblyman on his blog in February.

“I’m not communicating with them,” Elhaik said of the white supremacists. He says it also bothers him, a veteran of seven years in the Israeli army, that anti-Zionists have capitalized on his research; not least because “they’re not going to be proven wrong anytime soon.”

But proponents of the Rhineland Hypothesis also have a political agenda, he said, claiming they “were motivated to justify the Zionist narrative.”

To illustrate his point, Elhaik swivels his chair around to face his computer and calls up a 2010 email exchange with Ostrer.

“It was a great pleasure reading your group’s recent paper, ‘Abraham’s Children in the Genome Era,’ that illuminate[s] the history of our people,” Elhaik wrote to Ostrer. “Is it possible to see the data used for the study?”

Ostrer replied that the data are not publicly available. “It is possible to collaborate with the team by writing a brief proposal that outlines what you plan to do,” he wrote. “Criteria for reviewing include novelty and strength of the proposal, non-overlap with current or planned activities, and non-defamatory nature toward the Jewish people.” That last requirement, Elhaik argues, reveals the bias of Ostrer and his collaborators.

Allowing scientists access to data only if their research will not defame Jews is “peculiar,” said Catherine DeAngelis, who edited the Journal of the American Medical Association for a decade. “What he does is set himself up for criticism: Wait a minute. What’s this guy trying to hide?”

Despite what his critics claim, Elhaik says, he was not out to prove that contemporary Jews have no connection to the Jewish people of the Bible. His primary research focus is the genetics of mental illness, which, he explains, led him to question the assumption that Ashkenazi Jews are a useful population to study because they’re so homogeneous.

Elhaik says he first read about the Khazarian Hypothesis a decade ago in a 1976 book by the late Hungarian-British author Arthur Koestler, “The Thirteenth Tribe,” written before scientists had the tools to compare genomes. Koestler, who was Jewish by birth, said his aim in writing the book was to eliminate the racist underpinnings of anti-Semitism in Europe. “Should this theory be confirmed, the term ‘anti-Semitism’ would become void of meaning,” the book jacket reads. Although Koestler’s book was generally well reviewed, some skeptics questioned the author’s grasp of the history of Khazaria.

Graur is not surprised that Elhaik has stood up against the “clique” of scientists who believe that Jews are genetically homogeneous. “He enjoys being combative,” Graur said. “That’s what science is.”

Read more: <http://forward.com/articles/175912/jews-a-race-genetic-theory-comes-under-fierce-atta/?p=all#ixzz2j6OpwCG3>

# [Khazar DNA Project](http://khazardnaproject.wordpress.com/)

<http://khazardnaproject.wordpress.com/>

The Khazars are one of the most mysterious populations of the Old World whose abrupt disappearance from the history pages has tantalized scientists for years. Who were these Eurasian warriors? Were they Giants, Amazons, Turks, or Mongols? Were they all Jews or just their rulers? What happened to them and where are they now? Were they enslaved by their conquerors or were they absorbed into a different population?

**To answer these questions we launched the Khazar DNA Project. The Khazar DNA Project currently participates in its first [crowdfunding effort](http://www.rockethub.com/projects/7471-the-khazar-dna-project), seeking to raise $5-6,000. Please consider making a small donation to support the study.**

This project traces the ancestry of the Khazars, by searching for their particular DNA signature in the genomes of 500 worldwide populations to learn more about these mysterious people. Sounds like searching for a needle in a sack of hay? It’s somewhat similar, but imagine that you have a magnet! Want more information? Read on and check out the video below!

**What can DNA tell us?** Our DNA is like a history encyclopedia. It tells us the stories of our forbearers from the first human who walked on the earth to YOU. Different DNA regions can tell us whether you ancestors interbred with Neanderthals, while other regions tell us about the path your ancestors took out of Africa. It all depends on what you want to know and your ability to interpret the genetic code. We are interested in identifying populations around the world the carry the Caucasus signature. Because Caucasus people remained largely confined in the Caucasus, finding populations who carry these signature is the first step in relating them to the Khazars.

**Why Khazars? Why now?** Unlike the famous Greek, Roman, and Persian Empires, the history of the Khazar’s Empire remained a mystery, known only to very few people. The main reason was that the study of Khazaria was forbidden in the Soviet Union, where the major sites reside. Dr. Satanovsky, director of the Middle Eastern Institute in Moscow, [said](http://dianarn.wordpress.com/2008/09/21/discovery-of-lost-capital-unearths-more-about-ashkenazi-jews/) that Josef Stalin detested the idea that a Jewish empire had come before Russia’s own. He ordered references to Khazar history removed from textbooks because they “disproved HIS theory of Russian statehood.” Only now are Russian scholars free to explore the Khazar culture, and they are doing a tremendous job. [The Itil excavations](http://dianarn.wordpress.com/2008/09/21/discovery-of-lost-capital-unearths-more-about-ashkenazi-jews/), for example, sponsored by the Russian-Jewish Congress, recently revealed one of the three Khazar capital cities. While archeologists and historians are making their contribution to our knowledge of the Khazars, so should geneticists. Using genetic data we can unravel some of the mystery around these people who built their Empire of the basis of harmony and peace and later on joined the Jewish faith and perhaps contributed to Eastern European Jewish culture.

Our knowledge of the ancient Khazars is based almost entirely on the writings of educated, wealthy, elite men who often contradicted one another. The Soviet Union did its share of spreading fear and prejudice around about the Khazars that still prevails among many people and hinders studies in the field. It’s time to change our approach to Khazar history by harnessing genetics and combining it with archeological and historical knowledge.

**What’s this new project about?** My preliminary analyses identified a unique Caucasus genetic signature found exclusively in Caucasus populations. This is not surprising, because Caucasus populations remained isolated in their mountain terrain for centuries and over time they became genetically distinct from other populations. The only population who mass-migrated from the Caucasus were the Khazars when they fled from the Rus in the 13th century. This project aims to survey the genomes of 500 populations around the world and look for this Caucasus signature in a hope to trace the live descendents of the Khazars. Because the Khazars were Jews, we speculate that Jewish populations, mostly around ancient Khazaria, will exhibit a large fraction of this signature, compared to other populations, but we will search non-Jewish populations as well. While other genetic projects measure the percentage of Neanderthal interbreeding or Jewish ancestry in DNA data, no one knows how to identify and measure Khazarian ancestry. I am excited to reveal the genetic background of these mysterious people through our genetic data.

**How can I help?** Genetic Archeology of ancient Khazars is a new research area, currently unsupported by any funds. This project will be the first large-scale DNA survey of Khazar descendants. **The Khazar DNA Project currently participates in its first** [**crowdfunding effort**](http://www.rockethub.com/projects/7471-the-khazar-dna-project)**, seeking to raise $5-6,000**. Donors will have exclusive access to the Khazar DNA Project’s [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/KhazarDnaProject) and [blog](http://khazardnaproject.wordpress.com/category/blog/), where I will post news and updates. **It is our hope that this project will result in sufficient data for further grant proposals.**

**Jewish researcher attacks DNA evidence linking Jews to Israel**

[Jon Entine](http://www.geneticliteracyproject.org/author/jon-entine/) | May 13, 2013 | [Genetic Literacy Project](http://www.geneticliteracyproject.org/source/genetic-literacy-project/)

<http://www.geneticliteracyproject.org/2013/05/13/jewish-researcher-attacks-dna-evidence-linking-jews-to-israel/#.Um-ICBDP-2A>

It’s one of the consequences of the ongoing conflict between Israel and its neighbors that the origins of the “Jewish people” periodically surfaces as an issue of great controversy. It’s particularly troublesome when a scientist—in this case, an Israeli molecular geneticist whose motivations appear more personal and ideological than scientific—stokes the contretemps.

The current brouhaha arises over a recent study by Eran Elhaik and is accompanied by his personal attacks on more mainstream scientists who have eviscerated his work. In the face of overwhelming evidence from [dozens of studies over twenty years](http://www.amazon.com/Abrahams-Children-Identity-Chosen-People/dp/B0046LUJGY) from geneticists and historians around the world, Elhaik is aggressively stumping on behalf of his belief that most Jews trace their seminal ancestry not to the Middle East but to the Caucuses and Eastern Europe.

**Khazarian myth**

Elhaik, who is now a post-doctoral researcher at Johns Hopkins, is recirculating the debunked “Khazarian hypothesis” promoted by journalist Arthur Koestler in his 1976 book, *The Thirteenth Tribe,* written before scientists had the tools to compare genomes and challenge his conclusion.

The Khazarian myth was more recently recycled (to great applause by [anti-Israeli activists](http://dyneslines.blogspot.com/2009/10/shlomo-sand-at-nyu.html) and some [pro-Palestinian](http://electronicintifada.net/content/book-review-shlomo-sands-invention-jewish-people/3561) groups) in no less convincing form by Israeli French historian Shlomo Sand in [*The Invention of the Jewish People*](http://www.amazon.com/Invention-Jewish-People-Shlomo-Sand/dp/1844674223/ref%3Dtmm_hrd_title_0), published in 2008—a book [panned](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/24/books/24jews.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) by both [historians](http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/973) and [geneticists](http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/defining-jews-defining-a-nation-can-genetics-save-israel/254428/).

Elhaik reengaged the faux controversy late last year when the Oxford journal *Genome Biology and Evolution* published his study, “[The Missing Link of Jewish European Ancestry: Contrasting the Rhineland and the Khazarian Hypotheses](http://gbe.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2012/12/14/gbe.evs119.short?rss=1).” The young Jewish researcher challenged the so-called “Rhineland hypothesis”—the broadly accepted genetic and historic evidence that about 80 percent of Jewish Ashkenazi males trace their ancestry to a core population of approximately 20,000 Eastern European Jews who originated in the Middle East. Elhaik wrote that the Khazars converted to Judaism in the eighth century, although historians believe and genetic evidence confirms that only a fraction of the population converted, including almost certainly royalty and some members of the aristocracy.

A [paper published in 2000](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC18733/) by geneticists Harry Ostrer, a professor of genetics at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and University of Arizona geneticist Michael Hammer showed that most Ashkenazis, Italians, North Africans, Iraqi, Iranian, Kurdish and Yemenite Jews share common Y-DNA haplotypes that are also found among many Arabs from Palestine, Lebanon and Syria.  Only a small percentage of the Y-DNA of Jews originated outside of the Middle East—some in the Caucuses.

The competing Rhineland and Khazarian theories were most recently discussed by Ostrer in [two studies](http://chronicle.com/article/The-Chosen-Genes/131481/) published in 2012 and in his well received book, [*Legacy: A Genetic History of the Jewish People.*](http://forward.com/articles/155742/jews-are-a-race-genes-reveal/?p=all) He found that geographically and culturally distant Jews still have more genes in common than they do with non-Jews around them, and that those genes can be traced back to the Levant, an area including modern-day Israel. “All European [Ashkenazi] Jews seem connected on the order of fourth or fifth cousins, Ostrer has said.

The concept of the “Jewish people” remains controversial. The Law of Return, the Israeli law that established the right of Jews around the world to settle in Israel and which remains in force today, was a central tenet of Zionism. The DNA that links Ashkenazi, Sephardi and Mizrahi, three prominent culturally and geographically distinct Jewish groups, could conceivably be used to support Zionist territorial claims —except, as Ostrer has pointed out, some of the same markers can be found in Palestinians, distant genetic cousins of the Jews, as well. Palestinians, understandably, want their own ‘right of return’.

That disagreement over the interpretations of Middle Eastern DNA also pits Jewish traditionalists against a particular strain of secular Jewish ultra-liberals who have joined with anti-Israeli Arabs and many non-Jews to argue for an end to Israel as a Jewish nation. Their hero is the Austrian-born Shlomo Sand—and now Elhaik. His study gained buzz in neo-Nazi websites and radical anti-Israeli and more radical pro-Palestinian blogs. For example, the notorious former Ku Klux Klansman David Duke actually attacked Elhaik in his latest anti-Jewish rant—Duke’s anti-Semitic beliefs hang on the fact that Jews are genetically cohesive and conspiratorial. “The disruptive and conflict-ridden behavior which has marked out Jewish Supremacist activities through the millennia strongly suggests that Jews have remained more or less genetically uniform and have … developed a group evolutionary survival strategy based on a common biological unity — something which strongly militates against the Khazar theory,” Duke [wrote in his blog in February](http://www.davidduke.com/?p=33626).

While Elhaik’s work has provided ideological support for those seeking the destruction of Israel, it’s fallen flat among established scientists, who peer reviewed his work and found it sloppy at best and political at worst.

“He’s just wrong,” said Marcus Feldman of Stanford University, a leading researcher in Jewish genetics. “If you take all of the careful genetic population analysis that has been done over the last 15 years… there’s no doubt about the common Middle Eastern origin,” he said. He added that Elhaik’s paper “is sort of a one-off.”

“It’s an unrealistic premise,” said University of Arizona geneticist Michael Hammer, one of the world’s top Y-chromosomal researchers.

*Discover*’s Razib Khan did a [textured critique](http://forward.com/articles/175912/jews-a-race-genetic-theory-comes-under-fierce-atta/?p=all#ixzz2TBcaw5rq) in his Gene Expression blog, noting the study’s historical fuzziness and its selective use of data to come up with what seems like a pre-cooked conclusion. As Razib writes, it’s hardly surprising that we would find a small but sizable Khazarian contribution to the “Jewish gene pool”. In fact the male line of my own family traces to the Caucuses, suggesting I’m one of the 20 percent or so of Jews whose lineage traces to converted royal Khazarians. But that view is widely acknowledged by Ostrer, Hammer, Feldman, Michael Thomas and every major researcher in this area—as summarized in my book, [*Abraham’s Children: Race, Identity and the DNA of the Chosen People*](http://www.abrahamschildren.net/).

The rebuke of Elhaik’s study apparently has irked the beleaguered and brash researcher. He’s launched a new offensive—the double entendre is intentional—as chronicled in the [*Jewish Forward*](http://forward.com/articles/175912/jews-a-race-genetic-theory-comes-under-fierce-atta/?p=all)*.* Elhaik is now calling the world’s top geneticists “liars” and “frauds.” When I weighed in on the magazine’s discussion board, Elhaik responded with academic restraint, claiming my reporting was no better than the geneticists he trashed, saying it shared “common ground with the Nazism (sic) ideology.”

**Judaism’s tribal roots**

Unlike Christianity and Islam, Judaism is not solely a faith-based religion. Its origins, as is the case with the other prominent surviving ancient religion, Zoroastrianism, are tribal. The blood connections mentioned endlessly in the Hebrew Bible are not just symbolic; the Jews of ancient Israel were a clan of connected tribes who coalesced over hundreds of years. While Jesus and later Mohammad transformed the notion of “blood” into “faith”—one could become a Christian or Muslim through faith alone—Judaism has always retained an ancestral component.

In the Torah, that blood link is patrilineal, passed on from father to son. That tradition is preserved today in the Jewish priesthood, known as the Aaronite line. According to the Bible (and we have no way to know if this is historical or apocryphal), Aaron was anointed as the first Jewish priest and his sons and their descendants became the seed population of the Jewish priesthood. Jewish Cohanim—the word means ‘priests’ in Hebrew—supervised the inner sanctum until the destruction of the Second Temple in the first century, after which the Aaronite line was preserved by tradition, with Cohanim having special privileges and responsibilities to this day.

Are present day Cohanim descended from Aaron? That question is unanswerable; we do not even know for certain that Aaron or Moses even existed. However, DNA studies of the Y chromosome have determined that a majority of self-proclaimed Cohanim (it’s an oral tradition) has a set of genetic markers that trace back approximately three thousand years to a single common ancestor. In other words, if there was no Aaron, there was certainly a High Priest early in the Jewish tradition whose ancestors have retained evidence of that tradition in their DNA.

As discussed in *Abraham’s Children*, Judaism has always retained its tribal roots even as faith-based religions flourished. In the centuries after the destruction of the Second Temple in the first century, Jewish lineage became defined through the mother rather than the father. Jewishness is now based on a triple helix: belief in God (although many Jews are agnostic or atheist); recognition of ancient Israel as a Biblical homeland; and literal blood connection with other Jews, passed on from generation to generation.

To many people—including and especially Jews sensitive to the Nazi branding of Jews as a race, which led to the near extinction of the religion—acknowledging the genetic cohesiveness of Judaism is uncomfortable. Anything that marks Jews as essentially different runs the risk of stirring either anti- or philo-Semitism. But that doesn’t mean we can ignore the factual reality of what Ostrer calls the “biological basis of Jewishness” and “Jewish genetics.” Acknowledging the genetic distinctiveness of Jews is “fraught with peril,” but we must grapple with the hard evidence of “human differences” if we seek to understand their implications of the age of genetics.

[***Jon Entine***](http://www.jonentine.com/)***, executive director of the*** [***Genetic Literacy Project***](http://www.geneticliteracyproject.org/)***, is a senior fellow at the*** [***Center for Health & Risk Communication***](http://chrc.gmu.edu/scholars.html) ***and*** [***STATS***](http://www.stats.org/) ***(Statistical Assessment Service) at George Mason University.***

# View from the Lab: Who is a Jew? DNA can hold the key

## Steve Jones examines the complex issues of identity

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/7346496/View-from-the-Lab-Who-is-a-Jew-DNA-can-hold-the-key.html>

Who is a Jew? As the recent passport row shows, that question can be murky, with elements of belief, values, descent and nationality mixed in.

It also has dark reminders of a terrible time in history when Jewish blood meant death; and science, or pseudo-science, claimed to be able to sniff it out.

Things have changed. A decade ago, I was passing through Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv carrying a box filled with small tubes. Alerted by the Syrian stamp in my passport, the security staff gave me a hard time. After emptying my case, she asked what was in the box. I replied, irritably: "Arab spit". "What?" she said. "I'm a geneticist, I explained, I have been sampling Palestinian DNA. At once, her face brightened – ah, DNA. Had I heard the then novel stuff on the shared male chromosomes of priestly Jewish families such as the Cohens? I had, and we parted on amicable terms.

The conversation gave me pause for thought. Joseph Mengele himself wrote his doctoral thesis on the relationship between jaw shape and racial identity. His ideas were pernicious rubbish and even 20 years later the thought of a genetic test for Jewish descent would have been treated with horror. Now, one has emerged and is not despised but hailed by many Jews themselves.

A scan of half a million variable sites across the genomes of several hundred Europeans and Americans, each aware from their family history of having had a recent Jewish or a non-Jewish ancestry, gave an absolute separation between Jews and others: even a single Jewish grandparent was enough to provide an unambiguous identity, written in DNA. A carefully chosen sample of just 300 of those sites does almost as well, and a test based on that would be cheap.

## Related Articles

* [Phantom limbs and smoke and mirrors](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/steve-jones/7829753/Phantom-limbs-and-smoke-and-mirrors.html)

15 Jun 2010

Judaism is inherited down the female line – as are mitochondria. Their DNA shows that today's Jews from the largest group, the eight million Ashkenazim – most of whom once found their home in central and eastern Europe, and who now represent the majority of American Jews – have few grandmothers. Around half descend from just four women who bear mitochondrial types found almost exclusively in that population. Two million trace their descent from just one of those ancient predecessors.

In 1650, there were only 100,000 Ashkenazim in Europe, a number then further reduced by pogroms. In 18th-century central Europe, though, came massive expansion of that population, largely because of their relatively good living conditions. In Frankfurt, Jewish life expectancy was at aged 48, compared to 37 among non-Jews. By 1800, Jews numbered two million and by 1900 almost four times as many.

Much of the growth occurred in the Rhine Valley – modern-day Germany. The increase was concentrated among a few well-off families, many of whom had 10 children while the poorest classes had far fewer. As a result, the majority of today's Ashkenazim derive from a small proportion of that population, two million from one mother, quite literally their shared Eve, who probably lived – unknown and unrecognised – in an affluent household in a German or Polish village three centuries ago. A shared close identity through mothers, grandmothers, and more is, for millions of Ashkenazim, a genetical fact.

For others, though, the story is murkier. A separate great centre of Jewish tradition and culture grew up in Spain. Most of the Sephardim arrived after the peninsula fell under Roman control in the second century BC. In 711 AD, a Muslim army invaded. The Jews flourished under a tolerant regime, often as lawyers, merchants and the like. Then the Church returned. After a century of persecution, they were expelled in 1492. The Sephardim were scattered over much of Europe, the Middle East, and the New World.

Their mitochondria, unlike those of the Ashkenazim, give no sign of a recent bottleneck. Their DNA show instead how porous the boundaries of faith may be. Threatened by the Inquisition, thousands of Spanish Jews left to places such as Turkey. Others converted, or pretended to do so – and one Portuguese village maintained a secret Jewish culture, marrying among themselves for five centuries.

Y chromosomes reveal much leakage across the religious divide. A fifth of all the male lineages of modern Spain are of Jewish origin, which means that millions of devout Spanish Catholics have Sephardic ancestry, while the Sephardim themselves, with their unique and ancient Jewish ritual, present a wider range of genetic variation than do their Ashkenazi cousins. Plenty of those with one faith have biological roots in the other. My wife, as it happens, comes from a Sephardic family and has relatives with surnames such as Cardozo and Pexiota. After 40 years here, she has still not got round to obtaining a British passport. In spite of the double helix, identity remains a confusing thing.

|  |
| --- |
| DNA Science and the Jewish Bloodline |
| <http://www.amazon.in/Science-Jewish-Bloodline-Texe-Marrs-ebook/dp/B00DUHSHEG> |

Who are the Jews? What is their ancestry? Are the Jews a homogenous race? Are Jews descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

Today, DNA science reveals that almost all the Jews in the world come from Khazaria. They are not of the blood lineage of Abraham and the prophets, but of King Bulan and the pagan peoples of the Caucasus. The ancestors of today's Jews are not Israelites but are Khazarians.

Khazaria's people, in the 8th century, converted from paganism to Judaism. In the 10th century, these Khazarian "Jewish" converts emigrated to Eastern Europe, and especially Poland and Lithuania.

In 1948, the Khazars, erroneously believing themselves to be "Jews," arrived in the territory of Palestine and set up the state of Israel. The people of Israel today are virtually all of Khazar (Turk/Mongol stock) extraction. The "Jews" have no genetic claims to the land of Israel and no family connection whatsoever to historical Israel.

DNA science joins recent discoveries in history and archaeology to present the world with a correct and remarkable picture of the Jewish people. Now, everything changes!

**About the Author**

Well-known author of three #1 national Christian bestsellers, including the landmark bestselling book, Dark Secrets of the New Age, Texe Marrs has also written 46 other books for such major publishers as Simon & Schuster, John Wiley, McGraw-Hill, Prentice Hall/Arco, Stein & Day, and Dow Jones-Irwin. His books have sold millions of copies and have been published in many foreign languages, including Turkey, Greece, Romania, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. They have been featured as main selections of the Christian Book Club, the Conservative Book Club, and the Computer and Electronics Book Clubs. Texe Marrs was assistant professor of aerospace studies, teaching American Defense Policy, strategic weapons systems, and related subjects at the University of Texas at Austin from 1977 to 1982. He has also taught international affairs, political science, and psychology for two other universities. A graduate Summa Cum Laude from Park University, Kansas City, Missouri, he earned his Master's degree at North Carolina State University. As a career USAF officer (now retired), he commanded communications-electronics and engineering units. He holds a number of military decorations, including the Vietnam Service Medal and the Presidential Unit Citation, and served in Germany, Italy, and throughout Asia. He was chosen Airman of the Year while serving in Korat Air Base, Thailand. President of Power of Prophecy Ministries and RiverCrest Publishing in Austin, Texas, Texe Marrs is a frequent guest on radio and TV talk shows throughout the U.S.A. and Canada in response to the public's search for greater insight into Bible prophecy, secret societies, politics, and world affairs. His latest books are Robot Alchemy: Androids, Cyborgs and the Magic of Artificial Life; Conspiracy of the Six-Pointed Star: Eye-Opening Revelations and Forbidden Knowledge About Israel, the Jews, Zionism, and the Rothschilds; Codex Magica: Secret Signs, Mysterious Symbols, and Hidden Codes of the Illuminati; Mysterious Monuments: Encyclopedia of Secret Illuminati Designs, Masonic Architecture, and Occult Places; and the highly acclaimed Conspiracy World: A Truthteller's Compendium of Eye-Opening Revelations and Forbidden Knowledge. In addition to his many books, Texe Marrs has produced over 30 bestselling video documentaries, including the investigative exposé, Die, America, Die!: The Illuminati Plan to Murder America, Confiscate Its Wealth, and Make Red China Leader of the New World Order, as well as Rothschild's Choice: Barack Obama and the Hidden Cabal Behind the Plot to Murder America, a #1 national bestseller at Amazon.com. Texe Marrs' monthly newsletter is distributed to tens of thousands of subscribers around the world. His radio program, Power of Prophecy, is beamed by shortwave radio and internet to nations around the globe.

**Fake Jewish Ancestry by Way of DNA**

published by andie531 on Sun, 2010-05-02 19:06

<http://wakeupfromyourslumber.com/video/andie531/fake-jewish-ancestry-way-dna>

The Jewish Gene theory is a false thesis. U.S. research teams led by Ashkenazi Jews themselves, like Hammer and Wilder. Based on the Cohen, and EU 19 gene being of Jews? And they own or control the very Labs this stuff comes out from. How can they say that? In fact they have started to get major corporate sponsorship from other Askenazi Jews to promote this crap. Like Google owners, and so on.

Whats funny too these DNA guys have no Semite lab gene to compare. How can you say you are the descendants of the real Jews, and you don't have a gene in your lab to compare? So they make assumptions, notice coincidences similar to Arabs of the region like illness's they have like Arabs, and they forget Asian Orientals have that too, and on top off that fabricate that they have a common gene with the middle eastern people. That's it folks. They spent millions to say they have a gene similar to Arabs. This makes them Jewish? Or the Arabs Jewish?

But what they fail to know, is the Arabs, Orientals, Bedouin, and Berbers are mixed too in blood. And they traveled or come from all over Europe at much of the same time, and mixed with the populaces of those countries as well prior. We find the Ashkenazi gene popping up in non-Jews, and Arabs, and Berbers, and Bedouins, in the same areas of all their testing. Why don't they mention this is their testing? Why just Israelis? Something they don't want to tell you in their research.

And what about the Palestinians and Syrians and Lebanese who also have the same gene found in their blood. Just do the simple math, and the answer is right in front of you.

Lets take a small step back in time. And recount the days when then Mongols, and the Turks sacked Jerusalem. Both groups would have interbred and have children, and marry. And when the Mongols, and Turks had also been conquered they would leave Jerusalem and go back to their home lands. With their new children mind you. These children would almost be a new race. Mixed with Khazarian, Mongol, Turkish, and Jewish, and Arab, Bedouin, and Berber bloods. Not to mention a dash of spicy Greek, and Roman too from prior invasions. And they would end up in the far Northern regions of the middle east, Europe, Eastern Europe, and Khazaria, and Turkey, and parts of Asia and Russia for the matter, and for each perspective invasion and retreat to their home land at the time. We honestly can only say there is no proof in any of the theories set out by Hammer, or Wilder that they are Jewish in genetics. We just don't know.

The new people even after the Khazars would have been Ashkenazi's. Descendants of the Khazars. And that blood too is even further diluted from the Mongol Khazars, and Turks. So by now any trace would be wiped out, or gone. One thing to consider is the culture of the Jews at the time of the Mongol, and the Turk invasions. The Jews at the time were in shambles. There was inter sex with Arabs, Turks, Mongol's, Roman's, Greek's, and other cultures. But of the priestly class, they did not marry in general to any other person, unless they converted to Judaism or was a Jew.

So the answer in all the testing is simple. We don't know. And we may never know actually. We don't have in our lab a gene to compare. Genetics is genetics. Not assumptions as Abrahami pointed out. So there is no support for the Jewish Gene theory.

Besides, these lab guys are scientist, and not historians, if you look at both sides of the research, they can't line up. So this is a false assumption to make about Jewish Genes.

Great scientific quotes about this thesis "Geneticist Steven Rose said, Biologists define "race" as a group or population differing in gene frequency from that of others in the same species. "If race as a classification had any use at all, it served as a mere convenience to distinguish between geographic groups of people. In the process, individual variances must first be abolished and the group's characteristics reduced to an average, to an imaginary prototype if you will, that has no basis in physical genetic reality". Writes Montague.

So my theory is now introduced and confirmed. Why? Steve Rose sad it best in his theory. And this is why I mentioned why wasn't the genes of modern middle easterners like the Arabs, Berbers, and Bedouin of the region included in the testing to isolate and compare? And why does my tests show the same genes show up in these cultures as well? To some it up, we will never have the answer. We can only assume. And you know what that does to you and me? We know more about King Tuts' genes and ancestors, then we will ever know about the Hebrews genes. Ever! We just aren't interested in Hebrews

# The DNA of Abraham’s Children

Jun 2, 2010 8:00 PM EDT

## Analysis of Jewish genomes refutes the Khazar claim.

<http://mag.newsweek.com/2010/06/03/the-dna-of-abraham-s-children.html>

Jews have historically considered themselves “people of the book” (*am hasefer* in Hebrew), referring to sacred tomes, but the phrase is turning out to have an equally powerful, if unintended, meaning: scientists are able to read Jewish genomes like a history book. The latest DNA volume weighs in on the controversial, centuries-old (and [now revived in a 2008 book](http://inventionofthejewishpeople.com/about/)) claim that European Jews are all the descendants of Khazars, a Turkic group of the north Caucasus who converted to Judaism in the late eighth and early ninth century. The DNA has spoken: no.

In the wake of studies in the 1990s that supported biblically based notions of a priestly caste descended from Aaron, brother of Moses, an ambitious new project to analyze genomes collected from Jewish volunteers has yielded its first discoveries. In a paper with the kind of catchy title you rarely see in science journals—“Abraham’s Children in the Genome Era”—scientists report that the Jews of the Diaspora share a set of telltale genetic markers, supporting the traditional belief that Jews scattered around the world have a common ancestry. But various Diaspora populations have their own distinct genetic signatures, shedding light on their origins and history. In addition to the age-old question of whether Jews are simply people who share a religion or are a distinct population, the scientific verdict is settling on the latter.

Although the origin of the Jews has been traced, archeologically, to the Middle East in the second millennium B.C.E., what happened next has been more opaque. To sort it out, researchers collected DNA from Iranian, Iraqi, Syrian, and Ashkenazi Jews around New York City; Turkish Sephardic Jews in Seattle; Greek Sephardic Jews in Thessaloniki and Athens; and Italian Jews in Rome as part of [the Jewish HapMap Project](http://pediatrics.med.nyu.edu/genetics/research/jewish-hapmap-project). (All four grandparents of each participant had to have come from the same community.) As the scientists will report in the next issue of the *American Journal of Human Genetics,* the analysis shows that “each of the Jewish populations formed its own distinctive cluster, indicating the shared ancestry and relative genetic isolation of the members of each of those groups.”

Jewish populations, that is, have retained their genetic coherence just as they have retained their cultural and religious traditions, despite migrations from the Middle East into Europe, North Africa, and beyond over the centuries, says [geneticist Harry Ostrer](http://www.med.nyu.edu/people/H.Ostrer.html) of NYU Langone Medical Center, who led the study. Each Diaspora group has distinctive genetic features “representative of each group’s genetic history,” he says, but each also “shares a set of common genetic threads” dating back to their common origin in the Middle East. “Each of the Jewish populations formed its own distinctive cluster, indicating the shared ancestry and relative genetic isolation of the members of each of those groups.”

The various Jewish groups were more related to each other than to non-Jews, as well. Within every Jewish group, individuals shared as much of their genome as two fourth or fifth cousins, with Italian, Syrian, Iranian, and Iraqi Jews the most inbred, in the sense that they married within the small, close-knit community. In general, the genetic similarity of any two groups was larger the closer they lived to one another, but there was an exception: Turkish and Italian Jews were most closely related genetically, but are quite separated geographically.

Historical records suggest that Iranian and Iraqi Jews date from communities that formed in Persia and Babylon, respectively, in the fourth to sixth centuries B.C.E., and the DNA confirms that. The genetic signatures of these groups show that they remained relatively isolated—inbred—for some 3,000 years. The DNA also reveals that these Middle Eastern Jews diverged from the ancestors of today’s European Jews about 100 to 150 generations ago, or sometime during the first millennium B.C.E.

That’s when the Jewish communities in Italy, the Balkans, and North Africa originated, from Jews who migrated or were expelled from Palestine and from people who converted to Judaism during Hellenic times. During that period Jews proselytized with an effectiveness that would put today’s Mormons to shame: at the height of the Roman Empire, as the Roman historian Josephus chronicled, mass conversions produced 6 million practicing Jews, or 10 percent of the population of the Roman Empire. The conversions brought in DNA that had not been part of the original gene pool in the land of Abraham.

The DNA analysis undermines the claim that most of today’s Jews, particularly the Ashkenazi, are the direct lineal descendants of converted Khazars—which has angered many in the Jewish community as an implicit attack on the Jews’ claim to the land of Israel, since it implies that today’s Jews have no blood ties to the original Jews of the Middle East. Instead, find the scientists, at most there was “limited admixture with local populations, including Khazars and Slavs ... during the 1,000-year (second millennium) history of the European Jews.”

Of the non-Jewish Europeans, northern Italians were most genetically similar to the Jews, followed by the Sardinians and French. The Druze, Bedouins, and Palestinians were closest to the Iranian, Iraqi, and Syrian Jews. That is evidence of “a shared genetic history of related Middle Eastern and non-Semitic Mediterranean ancestors who chose different religious and tribal affiliations.” Adds Ostrer, “the study supports the idea of a Jewish people linked by a shared genetic history. Yet the admixture with European people explains why so many European and Syrian Jews have blue eyes and blond hair.”

Southern Europeans were the closest genetic cousins of Ashkenazi, Sephardic, and Italian Jews, reflecting the large-scale conversion of these Southern European populations to Judaism some 2,000 years ago, when European Jewry was forming. The Sephardic groups share genetic makers with North Africans, probably a result of marriages between Moors and Jews in Spain from 711 to 1492.

Several details of the Ashkenazi genome imply that centuries ago, the population experienced a severe bottleneck, in which the size of a group plummets, followed by a rapid expansion. That jibes with the historical record showing that the Jewish population in Western and Eastern Europe bottomed out at about 50,000 in the Middle Ages and then soared to 500,000 by the 19th century, growing at twice the rate of non-Jews—something called “the demographic miracle.”

Analysis of Jewish genomes has been yielding fascinating findings for more than a decade. A pioneer in this field, [Michael Hammer](http://hammerlab.biosci.arizona.edu/) of the University of Arizona, made the first big splash when he discovered that genetics supports the biblical account of a priestly family, the Cohanim, descended from Aaron, the brother of Moses: one specific genetic marker on the Y chromosome (which is passed on from father to son, as membership in the priestly family would be) is found in 98.5 percent of people who self-identify as Cohanim, he and colleagues reported in a [1997 paper in *Nature*](http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v385/n6611/pdf/385032a0.pdf) (the PBS science series Nova did a nice segment on that work, summarized [here](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/israel/familycohanim.html)). The Cohanim DNA has been found in both Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews, evidence that it predates the time when the two groups diverged, about 1,000 years ago. DNA can also be used to infer when particular genetic markers appeared, and suggests that the Cohanim emerged about 106 generations ago, making it fall during what is thought to be the period of the exodus from Egypt, and thus Aaron’s lifetime.

*Sharon Begley is NEWSWEEK’s science editor and author of*  [Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain: How a New Science Reveals Our Extraordinary Potential to Transform Ourselves](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1400063906/?tag=nwswk-20).

=========================================================================================================================================================