
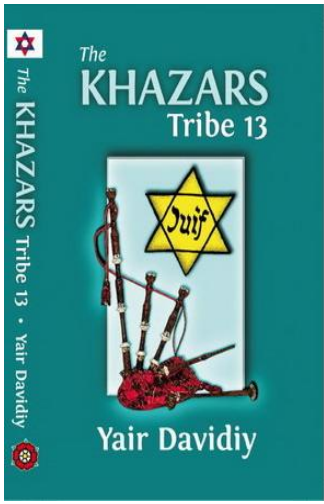


# THE KHAZARS AND THE MODERN JEWS

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Research, Recognition, Reconciliation			
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Let us consider an aspect of Jewish history which is sometimes controversial. This is the history of the Khazar kingdom , whose later monarchs adopted Judaism.

Some maintain that the Khazars were non-Israelites who, en masse, accepted Judaism and became the forebears of the Ashkenazi Jews of Europe. This viewpoint tends to disenfranchise Ashkenazi Jews as "legitimate" Jews from the tribe of Judah, and it is historically inaccurate. This

**viewpoint assumes: (A) all Khazars were gentile, (B) all Khazars accepted Judaism and (C) no members of the house of Judah were already living among the Khazars.**

**All three assumptions are incorrect.**

**It is well-documented that numerous Jews lived in the Parthian Empire and many of them accompanied the migrating Parthians toward Europe through the Caucasus Mountains and into territory north of the Black Sea. Other Jewish migrations to the region of Khazaria occurred in the centuries prior to the fall of Parthia, as we shall soon document. This region (the Transcaucasus and north of the Black Sea), through which hordes of Israelites and Jews passed on their way to Europe, was the homeland of the Khazars. How could the Khazars all be gentiles when their homeland had been the main expressway for the tribes of Israel as they left Parthia and Scythia? The Khazar region also included the former kingdom of Iberia, which had borne a Hebrew name since its founding soon after the fall of the Israelite capital of Samaria. Iberia had also been ruled by kings with the root-word "Phares" in their names, confirming their descent from King David of Israel. Surely, there were still Israelites left in this region when the Khazars came to power there in later centuries.**

**There is considerable evidence that the Khazars were a mixture of races and ethnic groups. The Encyclopaedia Britannica**

**records that some "Khazars" were first noticed in Armenia in 198 A.D.1 This was 28 years before Parthia fell. When Parthia collapsed, millions of Semitic people from Parthia poured through the region later to be called "Khazaria" like a tidal wave on their way to Europe. During the centuries of the great migrations of Parthian and Scythian refugees through the Transcaucasian region, the descendants of the ten tribes of Israel were dominant in the region which later became Khazaria. The Khazar rulers did not adopt Judaism until the year 740 A.D. or even later. Let us consider how many waves of Jewish refugees entered Khazaria before that event occurred.**

**Large numbers of Jewish refugees had settled in what became Khazaria long before the Khazars were even a recognizable people. It is recorded in The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia that:**

**"Vakhushti's History of Georgia informs us that permission was granted to a Jewish legation which had appealed to the prince of Mtskhet, after the destruction of the First Temple at Jerusalem (586 B.C.E.), to settle on the outskirts of Mtskhet."2 Jews from the tribe of Judah began settling in the Transcaucasus from the time Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians! The same source records many more waves of Jewish migration to this region:**

**"Another influx of Jewish refugees into various Trans- Caucasian regions took place after the destruction of the Second**

**Temple at Jerusalem (70 C.E.). The height of the influx during the first centuries of Christianity is confirmed by the chronicler Faustus of Byzantium (4th cent. C.E.), who reports that the Persians, under King Sapor II (360 C.E.), invaded Armenia, and took with them to South Persia more than 75,000 Jewish captives, the progeny of those who had previously come to the Transcaucasus from Palestine." 3 (Emphasis added.)**

**The Jews had seen the Caucasus region as a hospitable refuge for centuries, and they went there in large numbers. Why shouldn't they? From 700 B.C, until at least the 5th century A.D., it was inhabited by many descendants of the ten tribes of Israel (called Scythians, Iberians, Sacae, Goths, etc.), and many of the Israelite kings were Jewish, descendants of King David's dynasty. The Persian King, Sapor II, was from the Persian Sassanian kingdom that had driven the Parthians out of Asia. There had to be an immense number of Jews in the Transcaucasus region for him to take over 75,000 Jews captive in a single raid in that area! That they were descended from Jews who had originally migrated there from Palestine confirms they were racial members of the tribe of Judah! The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia continues:**

**"Subsequently they [Transcaucasian Jews] were joined by other Jews from more westerly regions; from Asia Minor, the Crimean Peninsula, and especially from Byzantium (to escape from the severe**

**persecutions which they had been suffering at the hand of Emperor Justinian in the 6th cent. C.E.). It is evident...that Jewish immigration into the Caucasus took Place not only at different times but also from different directions." (Emphasis added.)<sup>4</sup>**

**We're not done yet. Many Jews, whose forefathers had lived peacefully under the Parthians, finally migrated out of Persia centuries after the Parthians had done so. Consider this account:**

**"From Arabic and other sources, primarily the Old Persian chronicle Derbend-Nameh...we may conclude that many Jews migrated from North Persia and Mesopotamia to the Northeast Caucasus during the 5th and 6th centuries (under the Sassanids). Other groups of immigrants followed...When, in the 8th century, the Arabs conquered part of Daghestan, they found a large Jewish population there." <sup>5</sup> (Emphasis added.)**

**Many people from the tribe of Judah migrated to the Caucasus from the former region of Parthia because of Sassanian persecution. By the time the final waves of "Parthian" Jews entered the Transcaucasus, the descendants of the Parthians and Scythians were already occupying new homelands in Europe. For many centuries before Khazar rulers adopted Judaism, there had been numerous migrations of the tribe of Judah (Jews) into the region later called Khazaria. There would have been some**

remnants of the ten tribes of Israel in that region as well. Indeed, Jewish sources claim that there were identifiable remnants from the tribes of Issachar, Manasseh, and Simeon living in Khazar regions, and that their archaic Hebrew names and the lack of any Levites among them supported the conclusion that they were not Jews, but Israelites from the ten tribes of Israel.<sup>6</sup> Since huge numbers of people from the ten tribes of Israel had lived in or passed through this region from the 8th century B.C. until at least the 5th century A.D., some remnants of Israel's ten tribes should be expected there. However, this region had many non-Israelites as well. The Encyclopaedia Britannica states that:

"...the Khazars had reappeared in Armenia, though it was not till 625 that they appear as Khazars in the Byzantine annals...described as "Turks from the East."<sup>7</sup>

The Transcaucasus were getting crowded. Not only had numerous Jews lived in this region for centuries (coming from Palestine and Parthia), but there were Turks, other races and even residual Israelites from the ten tribes whose main body had migrated through this region on the way to Europe. Khazaria came to include not only portions of the Transcaucasus, but also part of the steppes north of the Black Sea.

There is evidence that most Khazars were of the Caucasian race. The Encyclopaedia Britannica states that the Khazars were part of the "white race of the steppe,"<sup>8</sup> and

**adds that the Khazars, in response to being threatened by other Turkic tribes (such as the Petchenegs), built a stone fortress with the help of the Byzantines. The Britannica adds:**

**"Famous as the one stone structure in that stoneless region, [the fortress] became known far and wide amongst the hordes of the steppe as Sar-kel or the White Abode. Merchants from every nation found protection and good faith in the Khazar cities...The dynasty accepted Judaism, but there was equal tolerance for all, and each man was held amenable...to the official judges of his own faith." 9**

**The Khazars were known by their contemporaries as a white Caucasian race, and they built a great fortress to protect themselves from marauding Turkic tribes. Yet some of the Khazars were, themselves, called Turks. They were capitalists known for "good faith," and practiced religious tolerance. In doing so, they perpetuated Parthian traditions, for the Parthians were famous for honest dealings and religious tolerance. It is also evident that the entire nation of the Khazars did not adopt Judaism. The "dynasty" (the ruling class) adopted Judaism while the commoners still practiced their own faiths of Judaism, Christianity or Islam. The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia adds this comment on the Khazar conversion:**

**"...it was chiefly due to the cultural superiority of the Daghestan Jews that the 'Kahan' (king) of the mighty state of the**

**Khazars was converted to Judaism together with his court and part of the Khazar population between the 8th and 9th centuries." 10**

**This account indicates that, besides the ruling class, only a "part" of the Khazar population adopted Judaism over the next century. Notice the title of the Khazar King: Kahan. The Hebrew word for "priest" is "kohen."<sup>11</sup> The consonants of the Khazar king's title with the Hebrew word for "priest" are identical (K-H-N). This argues that the king of the Khazars, who already had a Hebrew title at the time of his conversion to Judaism, may have already been a racial member of the house of Judah. Why else would he already be known by the Hebrew word for "priest?"**

**The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia also states that the conversion of the Khazar "Kahan" and his court may not have occurred until between 786 and 809 A.D.<sup>12</sup> It further records how few people actually converted to Judaism as a result of their monarch's conversion. It states regarding the Khazar King's conversion:**

**"...he and about 4,000 Khazars were circumcised; it was only by degrees that the Jewish teachings gained a foothold among the population...the Jews were greatly outnumbered by the pagan masses, by Moslem and Christian inhabitants of the cities." 13**

**The Khazars were not a majority Jewish state. They had leaders of the Jewish faith,**



**but only a sizeable minority of Jews among their numbers. A total of only 4,000 new conversions to Judaism in a large nation was actually a small number of converts. The requirement of circumcision was likely a disincentive for most Khazar men to convert to Judaism. Most Khazars remained in pagan or Christian religions. In the later centuries of the Khazar kingdom, many adopted Islam. The Encyclopaedia Britannica records that one of the major Khazar cities, Itil, had 30 mosques around 924 A.D.14**

**The Khazars also included Turks (descended from Esau, also called Edom). The Edomites were fellow-Semites as their forefather, Esau, was a son of Isaac. The Israelites had been commanded by God in Deuteronomy 23:7:**

**"Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother ...the children that are begotten of them shall enter into the congregation of the Lord in their third generation." (KJV)**

**God called the Edomites "brothers" of the Israelites because Esau, the father of the Edomites, was the brother of Jacob, the patriarch of the Israelites. The above commandment required full admittance of Edomites into the congregation of Israel "in the third generation." The Edomites (Turks) living in Khazaria who became Jews were regarded by divine law to be fully assimilated into the tribe of Judah by the time the third generation was born. This assimilation would have been accomplished prior to the fall of the Khazar**

## **Empire.**

**There isn't space to fully discuss the Edomites, but Esau gave birth to many tribes of his own, each headed by a "Duke" (see Genesis 36). Genesis 36:15 lists the first (and likely foremost) "duke" of Edom as "Duke Teman." The consonants of Teman are T-M-N, which were the same consonants of the Ottoman Empire, which eventually came to be called "Turkey." The second Edomite Duke was named "Omar," and another name for the famous "Dome of the Rock" in Jerusalem is "the mosque of Omar," named after a powerful Islamic Caliph.**

**When word spread on the trade routes that Khazaria had adopted Judaism, Jews from the diaspora would surely have migrated to Khazaria to seek refuge there. According to The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia:**

**"the report of the marvelous conversion [of the Khazar rulers] spread throughout the Jewish world."<sup>15</sup>**

**This would have steadily increased the number of people from the tribe of Judah among the Khazars as more Jews migrated there for sanctuary and freedom of religion. When Khazaria fell, its people, including the Jews, would have been pushed toward eastern Europe to seek refuge and new homelands. The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia records that the Jews of Khazaria migrated to Kiev and parts of Russia, while the remaining Khazars joined the Magyars and migrated to modern**

## **Hungary, becoming Christians.16**

**Khazaria's Jews eventually became known as "Ashkenazi" Jews. Some mistakenly link this name to a son of Gomer (Genesis 10:3). The name actually has Parthian origins. The Encyclopedia Britannica (1943 Ed., Vol. 17, pp. 576-577) records that the name "Ashkanians" was a Persian/Arabic name for the Parthians. The derivation of "Ashken-azi" from "Ashkan-ian" is easy to see. Therefore, the term "Ashkenazi Jews" actually proclaims and ancestry among the "Parthian Jews." This is very consistent with the historical record which confirms many Jews lived in Parthia and that they migrated out of Parthia into the Transcaucasus and the Black Sea regions.**

**In conclusion, the historical record indicates that the Khazarian Jews were, for the most part, refugees from the tribe of Judah who had settled in that region. There were converts to Judaism from other races as well, but God's assimilation laws defined their offspring to be "fully Jewish" within a few generations. The Ashkenazi Jews are part of the modern Tribe of Judah. God himself has made that clear in our modern time as he directed many Ashkenazi Jews to help found and settle the modern Israeli state, fulfilling the prophecy in Zephaniah 2 that "Judah" would again inhabit its old homeland in the Mideast.**

**Submitted by: Steve Collins**

**ENDNOTES:**

1. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1943 Ed., Vol. 13, see Khazars, p. 362
2. The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. 8, see "Mountain Jews," p. 26
3. Ibid, p. 26
4. Ibid, p. 26
5. Ibid, p.26
6. Ibid, pp. 26-27
7. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1943 Ed., Vol. 13, see "Khazars," p. 362
8. Ibid, p. 362
9. Ibid, p. 363
10. The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. 8, see "Mountain Jews," p. 27
11. Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible, see word "Priest," p. 772
12. The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. 6, see "Khazars," p. 376
13. Ibid, p. 376
14. Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 13, see "Khazars," p. 363
15. The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. 6, see "Khazars," p. 377
16. Ibid, pp. 377-378

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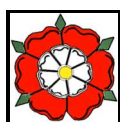
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