Rabbi A.Avihail and A.Brin

THE LOST TRIBES IN ASSYRIA



למען נדחי ישראל
עמישב
AMISHAV

on behalf of the dispersed of Israel

THE LOST TRIBES IN ASSYRIA

Rabbi A. Avihail and A. Brin

Translated by S. Matlofsky

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2026

THE LOST TRIBES IN ASSYRIA

Rabbi A.Avihail and A. Brin

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"And the lost from the land of Assyria will come"

published by "AMISHAV" - on behalf
the banished of Israel
Rechov Epshtein 3 1985, Jerusalem,Israel

Words of the deceased President Y. Ben-Tsvi

The tribes of Afghanistan, amongst whom dwelt the Jews of Afghanistan for many generations, are Muslim tribes which kept, and still keep, the wonderous tradition regarding their origin from the Ten (lost) Tribes. This tradition which circulates among the people of the Afghan tribes, is an ancient one and has historical backing. Some researchers, and travellers, Jews and non-Jews who visited these places dealt with it, as did researchers of the land and its population from literary sources alone. Only a few facts have been published on this matter in books and encyclopediae, either in the European languages or in Hebrew.

Jewish travellers of the Middle Ages, and emissaries from the Land of Israel who found themselves in these eastern cities spoke of the Israelite source of the tribes of Afghanistan (see Y. Yaari: "Emissaries from the Land of Israel to the Ten Tribes", Sinai-year 3:;2-13). Some researchers and travellers from Europe who visited these tribes repeat this fact, and their words were recorded in all the important encyclopediae. It appears in old Afghan chronicles, and recent Afghan authors repeat it. For some reason, our modern researchers and travellers did not pay proper attention to it, and perhaps because of the numerous imaginary legends on the matter in certain literature, a negative attitude arose among the people of an enlightened generation. The main reason seems to be that Afghanistan is so remote; mountains and deserts divide her from Jews of the European diaspora; and the researchers had almost no means of contact with this sparce banished Judaism in the lap of these mountains of darkness. It is no wonder that the matter of the Afghan tribes and the tradition of their Jewish origin was not of prime interest to our researchers.

... However something happened in our day: the State of Israel was born and the repatriation of the Jews of Afghanistan came about. Their coming made possible our collecting of evidence from live witnesses, eye witnesses who spent many years among these tribes, and got to know from anear their traditions and customs. These are Jews who speak honestly and tell what they saw with their eyes and heard with their ears.

(From the book "Banished of Israel" pt.2, p.146-7)

The author of "Tiferet Yisrael on Mishnayot Sanhedrin

It seems to me that Jeremiah returned many of them (to Judaism) and so we see in Megilla and Arakhin, only that many remained mixed among the Gentiles. We knew that many of them were in India and China and Ethiopia. They know only that they are Jews and they circumcise themselves and keep a few commandments. Their worship of God however is mixed with idol worship,and on this point Rabi Akiva and Rabi Eliezer disagree: whether in the future those who remained inter-mixed will return in strength under the wings of the Divine Presence even though some of them are absolute idol worshippers, and they have even forgotten the name of Israel. Only some Jewish customs remain from those of their ancestors, as in the case of the Afghan nation, whom some wise geographers see as forgotten Jews. However, also in Egypt all were idol worshippers and G-d in his mercy opened their eyes by force and redeemed them.

(his commentary to Sanhedrin,
Chapter Helek, Mishna 3)

The Israelite Source of the Pathan Tribes

Introduction

The "AMISHAV ORGANIZATION" which was established in 1975 deals with research on the banished of Israel in every location. The main field of activity of the organization is research of the Pathan tribes of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Pathans are also called simply Afghans or Sons of the Pashtu (after their language) and also identify themselves by their ancient name "Sons of Israel" though they live today as Muslims.

The number of Pathans in Afghanistan is about 6-7 million, in Pakistan 7-8 million. They live in the border region between these two countries and about two million of them live today as nomads.

The external appearance of Pathans is like the Jews. According to their ancient customs and other data, a connection to the people of Israel can be made.

The purpose of this booklet is to bring the different evidences before the reader to prove this connection of the Pathans to the Tribes of Israel.

A. The lives of the Pathans in Afghanistan and Pakistan

The Afghan (Pathan) people inhabit today more than half of the state of Afghanistan, and even the government is in its hands. The other part of this people live near the eastern border of the country in an area named after them Pushtustan, on the Pakistani border. The desire for independence by the Pathans is Pakistan is supported by Afghanistan and causes constant tension in this region.

Afghanistan is considered one of the least developed countries in Asia. The vast majority of the population is illiterate. The inhabitants work primarily in farming and in raising sheep and domesticated animals. Despite the efforts of the regime to urbanize the inhabitants, most still live in villages, some of them as nomads. Until recently Afghanistan was one of the few countries in the world to be run according to religious law (Islam). More than 90% of the population are Sunni Moslems.

Signs of what little modernization has entered the country can hardly be seen in the hilly border areas. Here the Pathans continue to live a tribal life, like their ancestors for hundreds of years. In this framework the only leader is the tribal head. In the family unit all respect and obey the elder of the family. The legal system is according to the "Pashtunwali" - the law of the Pashtun, similar in part to Torah Law, as we will see further on. The Pathans are very healthy and strong. They are tall and have light faces and pleasant contenances. They are warriors, and most carry arms from a young age. They are hard working and wise. People of truth and extremely loyal, they are known in the world for their exemplary hospitality.

B. The Ethnic origin of the Pathans

The problem of the ethnic origin of the Pathans has kept men of science occupied for some time, for the Pathans are not similar externally or in character traits to any of the ethnic groups around them: the Indo-Iranian, the Turk, the Mongolian or the Persian. Also historically it is difficult to determine their past, for in this region tens of nations and tribes came and went each with a different origin.

In opposition to different explanations that some researchers suggested on this topic (1) many others from east and west accept their tradition of Israelite origin (2). Some also feel that the Pathans are descendents of the Ten Israelite Tribes exiled by the Assyrian Empire about 150 years before the destruction of the First Temple.

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(1) The opinions are: A. Turkish or Mongol origin by S.M. Imammdin - The origin of Afghans, Islamic Culture vol. 23 pp.I. B. Indo-Iranians in Caroe's book - The Pathans. C. Irano - Caucasian with some mixing (possibly including the Israelite connection). Encyclopedia of Islam, Afghan,pp. 216.

(2) In the books: "Taarikh i Gozìda" (900 years ago)-"Israrul Afgahina" (Afgahani Secrets) - "Mikhshan I Afgani", Nitmula -"Afghan Dates", E. Imammdin in his above article which also appears in Bellew, The Races of Afghanistan pp 23 (1949). Noldich, Afghan Claim. Nemunn, Afghanistan - From Darius to Amanula.-Pennel, The Tribes on our N.W.F., Asian Review 1910, vol. 30 pp 88.

Researchers point out as most significant the tradition of their ancient name: "The Sons of Israel" and their appearance, similar to Jews.

A few mention some ancient customs retained by them as a proof of their identity(3). In recent years, with the coming of the Jewish Afghan community to Israel, many important facts have been collected from them, justifying the position of the researchers due to Pathan customs, as well as some other proofs which the researchers did not deal with.

With all this, it is very likely that the Pathans source is really Israel.

C. Relationship to tribes of Israel

The personal identification of the Pathan tribes with their Israelite origin is expressed in various ways. Besides oral tradition from the elders of the tribe, there are also interesting testimonies of the keeping of scrolls of genealogy among the tribes reaching back to the fathers of the Jewish nation. These scrolls have been well preserved. Some of them are written in gold on doe skin.

No less interesting and important to point out are the names of the tribes, which are identical to the Tribes of Israel; the Rabani tribe, (in Afghan dialect) is the tribe of Reuven, the Shinwari - Shimon, the Lewani - Levi?, Daftani - Naftali, Jaji - Gad, Ashuri - Asher, Yusuf-Sai - Sons of Josef, Afridi-Ephraim and others.. there are some among the Jews of Afghanistan who count the other tribes

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(3) Caroe, The Pathans.-Pennel

of Israel among the Pathans (4). There are also testimonies where the Pathans themselves indicate, that the small differences between the original name of the tribe and its present name result from the different dialects of the languages, and they explain that the Jaji for example, were once called Gad, etc.

The Afghan royal family has a very well-known tradition according to which it originates from the tribe of Benjamin and the family of King Saul. This tradition was first published in the book "Mahsan I-Afgani" (350 years ago) and since then has been mentioned again in almost all the research literature.

According to this tradition, King Saul had a son called Jeremiah who had a son called Afgana. Jeremiah died around the time of Saul's death and Afgana was brought up by King David and stayed in the royal court, also in King Solomon's time.

About four hundred years later, with Nebuchadnezzer's exile, Afgana's family fled to the region "Gur" (Hazarat Jat, today), found in central Afghanistan.

There he settled and traded with the nations around him. In the year 662 with the coming of Islam, Muhamed sent to the "Sons of Israel" Halid Ibn Walid the head of the tribe Kuraiysh to spread Islam among the Afghan tribes. He came to Gur where he succeeded and he returned to the prophet with seven representatives of the Afghans and with 76 of their supporters.

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(4) See addenda - testimony No. 14.

Their leader was "Kays" or "Kish" (like the name of Saul's father).

According to the tradition the emissaries succeeded and Muhamed congratulated them accordingly. Kish's Hebrew name was changed to Abad-A-Rashid by Muhamed and he was given the task of spreading the religion among his people.

D. The Location of the Assyrian Exile

According to the Bible, the Ten Tribes were exiled to "Halah", to "Hibur", to "the River of Gozan", to "Hera" and to the"cities of Modai" (Kings II, 18, Chronicles I, 5). There are different opinions between men of science regarding identification of these places. According to a Jewish Afghani custom the River Gozan is "Rud Jasan" (Rud in Persian - River), one of the sources of the Amu-Darya. (It is possible that the entire river was once called by this name) (5), which passes by the city Mimna.

The city Hibur, according to them, is Peshawar, made up of two words (Pesh - Hibur), that is Khyber Pass (in Afghan) and it serves today as the Pathan centre on the Pakistani border.

The city Hera is the city "Herat" the largest in Western Afghanistan.

It is likely that the entire area housed the ancient Assyrian exile.

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(5) It seems that Benjamin Metudela so identifies the river (See also Y.Ben Tsvi "Mahanaim" # 93-94.)

There are researchers who claim that all the Jews who live in the Southern Soviet Union along the Amu Darya are descended from the Ten Tribes (such as the Bokharians and the Georgians), but they kept the connection with other tribes of Israel and their tribal origin was forgotten. As is known there are also a group called "Sons of Israel", in India and Afghanistan, some of which came to Israel.

Certainly, the Afghan tribes are found in the heart of the region of the Ten Tribes.

Consequently, it seems likely that the Assyrian exile dispersed them directly to these places, or perhaps at a later stage (perhaps at the time of the Babylonian Dispersion - according to a popular custom) they arrived in this region.

E. The Similarity of the Pathans to the Jews

As said above, the similarity of the Pathans to the Jews is great. The British who ruled in Afghanistan for a long time had great difficulty telling them apart and called the Pathans "Jews".

The Jews also have difficulty when the Pathans are not wearing their traditional dress. Among about 21 nations and languages in Afghanistan only the Pathans (besides the Jews) look distinctly Semitic; their faces are lighter than those of the other nations, and are long; some among them have blue eyes. Seeing that most also grow beards and sidelocks like Jews, this adds to the difficulty to differentiate between them and the Jews.

F. Jewish Customs

Despite the fact that the Pathans accepted Islam willingly or unwillingly, they keep Jewish customs, since the dawn of their past. The testimonies of Afghan Jews show this. (These are shown fully in the addenda).

Some of these customs were identified as Jewish customs even by non-Jewish researchers (6).

It should be emphasized that most of the researchers who dealt with this matter had little knowledge of Jewish customs, and so in this important field they could not progress much. The limited testimonies following were brought mostly by Afghan and Pakistani Jews who lived in the Pathan regions and came in contact with them.

These testimonies do not refer to all the Pathans or all the tribes or all the locales but they do prove the existence of Jewish customs among them. This research needs completion both quantitative and qualitative.

1. Sidelocks - according to testimonies and also from photographs, the Pathans grow sidelocks from ancient custom, some of them say that this is one of the signs of their Jewish past. (Most have beards too).

2. Circumcision on the eighth day. There are testimonies to the existence of the very joyful circumcision ceremony on the eighth day after birth, like the Jews and not as in Muslim custom.

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(6) For example as in E. Imammdin's article above and in the book "The Way of Conquest" of A.S. Flatcheh.

3. Talit and four-cornered garments (and fringes) Many testimonies tell of the popularity of the custom of wearing a talit among all the Pathans. This garment is called a "Joy-Namaz" (place of worship in Afghan), made long and square (about 2-3 meters) made to cover the head and part of the shoulders and it is used for prayer by laying it on the ground (as in the Muslim custom). It has no fringes.

   In addition to this, the Afghanis also have a sort of small talit called "Kafan" (?) which is a four cornered garment, to which they tie strings similar to our tsitsit, say some of the testimonies. This they also see as one of the signs proving their Jewish past.

4. Jewish wedding - There are some testimonies which tell of Pathan customs of marriage like Jews with marriage canopy (and rings).

5. The custom of the menstruating woman - The women keep the custom of the menstruating woman as in Jewish law. At the time of the period no contact is allowed and also one week after the period. After that they immerse in a river or spring. Where there is nonethey suffice with a bath-house (not according to Jewish Law).

6. Levirate Marriages - One of the signs that Gentiles also point to as proof of their Judaism is the custom of Levirate marriages frequent among the Pathans (which is not to-day customary in Judaism, but was in the far past). When a brother dies without children, the dead brother's widow marries his brother.

7. Respect of Father - The Commandment of respect of father is kept in exemplary manner by the tribes. The sons listen to the father on all

matters. When the father enters the room, all stand heads bowed in his honours.

8. Forbidden foods -They do not eat horse or camel meat. Some evidence indicates that they do not eat meat and milk cooked together. They have a tradition regarding pure birds and impure ones.

9. Sabbath day - The Sabbath day is a day of rest. There are testimonies of abstention from labour, cooking and baking. In honour of the Sabbath they prepare 12 Hallot (traditional bread), as in the Temple. There are those who institute legal proceedings on the Sabbath.

10. Lighting a candle to honour the Sabbath - one of the significant indicators proving their Jewish past is the lighting of a candle to honour the Sabbath. After the lighting, it is covered, generally in a large basket. The candle is lit by an old lady beyond the age of menopause.

11. Yom Kippur - One testimony tells of a member of the tribe of Lewani who came on Yom Kippur to the Jewish Synagogue and would stay there until sundown without uttering a word. He would speak of the tradition of the Temple on this day and of the High Priest and his work there. One year he erred and did not come, and he wept bitterly.

12. Prayer - The Pathans, like the rest of the Muslims, usually pray in mosques, however, some pray toward Jerusalem. There are some ancient synagogues left from past times near "Ankhoy", "Mulmul" and in "Peshawar".To these places they come on special days, when great tragedies occur or for special prayers. The individual who needs help comes there to touch the lock and pray.

(There are those who say that there were once scrolls of the Law).

13. Blood on the door lintel and posts - At a time of plague they slaughter a sheep and sprinkle its blood on the lintel and door posts, as the Jews did in Egypt with the blood of the Passover Sacrifice, during the plague of the first born.

14. Scapegoat - A custom similar to sending out a scapegoat to atone for the sins of the Jews is found also among the Pathans.

15. Healing of the sick with the help of Psalms - One interesting testimony regards the putting of a book of Psalms wrapped as a package under the pillow of the sick to heal him.

16. Hebrew amulet - There are a few testimonies that the Pathans have amulets written in Hebrew and Hebrew script languages. In some of them was found the phrase "Hear O Israel". The amulet is written by the head of the tribe in secret. It is forbidden to open it.

17. Hebrew names - among the Pathans are found Hebrew names not found among the Muslims (like Israel, Samuel and even Akiva?).

18. Placenames based on places in Israel - There are testimonies that in Afghanistan are neighbourhoods and locations in villages based on places in the Land of Israel.

19. Holy Books - There are testimonies that they have pages and even complete books. They honour greatly "Torah el Sharif" (Moses), and they rise at the mention of his name.

20. Pathan Law - It is famous and is known as the

Pushtunwali after their language. Among others it includes laws similar to the Torah, such as "An Eye for an Eye" (in the Oral Tradition?), blood vengeance,etc.

21. Shield of David - This symbol is found in almost every Pathan house in the Peshawar area. The rich make it in expensive metals, the poor with simple wood. It can be seen on towers, on schools and also on tools and jewellery.

G. Archeological and other evidence

Besides synagogues, scrolls of the Law, Hebrew place-names, and tribal genealogy books above, there is also evidence of significant archeological finds:

Near Herat in Chahcharan, ancient graves were found with Hebrew writing in Persian script. The graves are from the 11 - 13th centuries.

Conversely, it seems there are a number of writings etched on rocks in ancient Hebrew script and in an unidentified language (?) near the city Nachest.

In the museum "Dar el Aman" in the capital Kabul, is found a black stone in Kandahar, and on it written in Hebrew "I go in G-d's shadow; Betsalel goes in G-d's shadow; fear and trembling will come upon us; he who is a Jew will die, and he who is a Muslim will live. On Wednesday, 13th of Adar..." (The year is broken off, perhaps on purpose).

There is also a stone written in ancient Hebrew in this museum from which we can learn of their Jewish past and of the presence of the Jews for at least about 1,500 years (from two testimonies). In "Minerjam", which is in the centre of Afghanistan, there is a large Shield of David in stone; In Tchastovi, a school and on it a Shield of David.

A D D E N D A

* Words of the Chief Rabbis on the "Amishav" Organisation

* Testimonies by people from Afghanistan, Pakistan and others

The words of His Honour the First of Zion - Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, may he live long, in his letter to the secretary of the "Amishav" Organization

14 Menahem-Av 5738 (1978)

To his honour - Rabbi Eliahu Avihail
24 Rehov Ha-Hida, Jerusalem

Dear Sir,

I read with great interest your letter of the 29th of Tamuz 5738 and I find it fitting to encourage you to attempt a complete research by competent and G-d-fearing people to clarify matters regarding tribes in Afghanistan and Pakistan. According to rumour, there are among them, those belonging to the lost tribes of Israel, as in the words of the "Tiferet Yisrael" on Sanhedrin, chapter Helek.

G-d willing that the quote from Isaiah 11:11-12 will come true: "And it will be on that day, G-d will extend again his arm to the remainder of his people which remain in Assyria and in Egypt and from Patros and Kush etc. and he will raise a banner to the Gentiles and will gather the banished of Israel, and the dispersed of Judah will he bring together from four corners of the Earth", Amen and Amen.

With much honour,

Ovadia Yosef
First of Zion, the Chief Rabbi of Israel

The words of the Chief Rabbi of Israel, His Honour, Rabbi Shlomo Goren, may he live long, written on the basis of testimonies and verbal evidence on the Pathans.

B"H, 29 Sivan 5735, (June 8, 1975)

I hereby wish to strengthen the hand of and encourage the spirit of the energetic honourable man, Rabbi Eliahu Avihail, may he live long, who awakened to a holy task and found the Sons of Israel who were lost in ancient times and in the course of the exiles in the different lands of the earth from East to West.

In a time such as ours, when the vision of ingathering of the exiles becomes fact with the help of the G-d of the Wars of Israel, we are witness to a great extent to the fulfillment of the words of the prophet regarding the future: "Turn around your eyes and see that all have been brought together and returned to you. Your sons will come from afar and your daughters will nurse beside you". And with the eyes of our spirit through rays of redemption splitting and rising on the face of the dawn, observing our lives in our Holy Land, we must anticipate the fulfillment of the vision in the Mishnah: The Ten Tribes will come back as it says: "And He will send them to another land as in this day, just as a day becomes light, so the Ten Tribes who have darkness will have light".

Happy be he who helps to reveal the hidden of Israel, rem ants of the Ten Tribes who were lost among the Gentiles, to teach them the way of return to Zion, to the nation and to the Torah.

By this merit may we succeed in making true the words of the prophet: "So said G-d - Here do I take the Sons of Israel from among the Gentiles where they sojourned and gather them around and bring them to their land and mould them into one nation in the Land, in the hills of Israel".

With the blessing of the Torah:

"If your banished will be at the end of the sky,from there I will engathering them the Lord your God",etc.

Shlomo Goren

The Chief Rabbi of Israel

The words of the Rabbi Tsvi Yehuda Kook, may he live long,

B"H, 26 Tamuz 5735 (1975)

A wreath of peace and blessing upon you
My friend, dear and honoured, Rabbi Eliahu Avihail,

I was pleased with your holy awakening to the work of the people of G-d in the attempts to reach and search out the lost and banished in the distant lands of the earth.

Certainly this our time and generation - great and majestic in the heights of the realization of the word of G-d regarding his people and inheritance, and to the wonders of the process of redemption - enable and demand all the strength of our united action to make his efforts to ingather the banished come true, and to complete the return of his sons to the borders of the land of their life, to their full glory.

From all the depths of my heart and soul, I bestow upon you the abundance of my blessings, from the source of their uttering in the Torah and from the heights of our holy city.

The pleasantness of G-d be upon you for all the readiness of your deeds and these your steps for the sanctification of his great and wondrous name for our full deliverence and the strength of our complete redemption. Our eyes should see your absolute success, and their uplifting, in G-d's returning his people and his entire inheritance to all of our complete redemption

Tsvi Yehuda Ha-Cohen Kook

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Testimony of Afghan Immigrants and others

Afghan immigrants in Israel tell of what they saw with their eyes and heard from others about the tribes of Afghanistan and about the Jewish signs in their midst. These testimonies were collected by Mr. Yitshak Ben Tsvi in his book "The Banished of Israel"; also testimonies were brought from Mr. Avraham Zonenshein in his book "New Light Zion" and also testimonies that were collected in recent years or were gathered from other sources.

Since the testimonies are very important for the research on the Afghan tribes, attempts were made to quote them as carefully as possible. For this reason we also divided those written or collected in a specific place from those collected by a different source, because some witnesses spoke to different sources at different times. Because witnesses heard the same things from others or saw them by themselves, each in different times and places, it is not difficult to see why there are often variations and even contradictions between different testimonies.

Despite this fact, we will be able to see more or less from the words of witnesses, immigrants of Afghanistan, a picture which illustrates the situation and the connection to Judaism of the tribes of Afghanistan.

Testimonies from the book "Nidhei Israel"

(1) Testimony from Mr. Yaakov Danieli of Shechunat Shapira

"By tradition from a tribe of the Muslim tribes in Pakistan on their sources from Benjamin, as follows:

Their ancient forefathers who were from the tribes of Benjamin were never in the Land of Israel. They speak of a civil war which broke out in the desert between the Tribes of Israel. As a result of the great defeat of the original tribe of Benjamin, most were killed and the rest fled to the desert, and never returned, but rather wandered from land to land, from nation to nation, and from kingdom to kingdom, until their early ancestors reached India, present day Pakistan, and they are forebearers of these above tribes.

This tradition (comments Avraham Zonenshein) is connected to the Bible portion "Ekev" (Deut.10, 6), there Rashi brings a legend of a war between the tribes of Israel, who decided to return to Egypt after Aharon's death. When the Clouds of Honour disappeared, the Sons of Levi chased them and returned them after a war, to continue the trip to Israel. According to this legend, the tradition of the Afghans may have weight.

(2) Testimony of Mr. Hananya Davidov, a Bukhara Jew from Afghanistan, a trader by profession:

"I was among a group of cooperative traders who dealt with peddling all sorts of products in the

villages, and in the course of our work, we reached the distant regions of the country. It must be mentioned that most of the commerce in the areas near the Indian border is by Indian traders. In the lonely distant regions of the country such as those near the Pakistan border, which were in a very hilly area, the Indian traders exploited the situation, and consequently the price of all articles was very high. These traders saw us as serious competitors and so looked at us with jaundiced eyes in any area which had been for many years under their total control.

During our trading trips, I arrived once with my group of ten to a remote hilly region near the Pakistan border. Because we were in one village we came in contact also with the sheik (the religious leader of the village) and we told him we were Jews. This fact awakened in him and the people of the community great curiosity and he came often to visit us.

Each time he asked us many questions about Judaism. He told us that he and the people of his community and the villages of the area were of the tribe of Benjamin - of the Sons of Israel, and at the time of the Islamic conquests they were forced to accept Islam. Our group stayed a few days in the village and we saw that they light a candle which they cover on Sabbath Eve.

They were interested in every detail of our conduct and especially regarding our religion and how much we keep it. In most cases only they questioned us, and we were afraid to ask them and examine their customs. For Afghanistan is clearly and fanatically a Muslim country. We feared creating a contact with these our banished brothers, because we feared the stiff jail terms

prevalent there. For a minor infraction one can rot for years in a jail with hair-raising tortures. Without this fear of examining them regarding their customs and their past, we could have collected much factual material which would certify even more strongly their tradition of Jewish origins. It is also known to us that on the other side of the Pakistani border there are large areas inhabited only by members of these tribes.

Regarding the types of occupations of the people of the area where we visited, they have orchards occasionally, almond trees, etc. and we heard that sometimes the tribesmen fall upon caravans passing on the roads.

As we mentioned above, the Indians in whose hands the village commerce was held, looked upon our presence in the area with jaundiced eyes and did everything possible to get us out of the area and the above village. We received orders from the Afghan authorities after a few days to leave before we harm the economy of the local traders who are established residents and citizens of the place".

(3) From Mr. N. Mashiah, a Persian Jew who visited Afghanistan, a trader

"I am from Persia living tens of years in Israel. Despite this I can not forget what happened to me once on a trip to Afghanistan on business. While I was staying there, I arrived in a small town near the Pakistan border. At that time, the British still ruled in India, and in the town, and in the region British influence was well known.

The area is very hilly, and the inhabitants of the hill villages are brave aggressive fighters.

In order to protect the regular traffic on the hill hill roads, the British learned from the bitter experience of battles with the people of the tribes that it is better to come to terms with the sheiks, the head of the tribes, and not to come in conflict with them. It had already cost them many casualties and so they paid respectable sums to the tribe heads as "blackmail". And at the same time that I stayed in the above village, the British held up payment to the tribe head of the region and then stopped payment altogether.

Out of the blue we sensed a strange silence in the town. It was really the quiet before the storm. All of a sudden, hordes of riders came out of the hill area from all around and flo ded the town. They were brave soldiers and they frightened the representatives of the Afghan authorities and the local police who fled in every direction. The stores and the homes were stripped bare by them and in the space of a short time they simple swept up the place and left it empty.

They gathered their booty as one gathers sea-fish in a pool, withoutfinding any opposition. While collecting their booty they met me and saw immediately that I was a stranger and a non-Muslim. They did not harm me but began to question me . I told them I was a Jewish trader from Persia and they let me speak with their leader, the tribal sheik.

Here is what the sheik told me:

We know about our Jewish origins. It was passed on from mouth to mouth that we are from the Sons of Israel and were complete Jews until the

time of the Islamic conquest, when we were forced to accept Islam. It is a tradition that about 100 years before the coming of Muslim emmisaries to their region, the idol-worshipping tribes people around them who were fire-worshippers fell upon them, and robbed and plundered them of all including their ancient books. As a result they forgot many of the principles of the religion for they were left only with an oral tradition. With the difficult conditions and the constant fear their contact with the Torah and the traditions was lessened. When the representatives of Islam came and threatened them to accept Islam, hearing their claims that they also believe in one G-d, they accepted Islam to save themselves and secretly continued to keep the tradition of their Jewish origin".

(4) From Mr. Mikhael Gul, treasurer of the Shehunat Shapira synagogue among the honoured members of the Bukharan Community

"When I was a child a rumour reached our city Herat in Afghanistan, that the King, the Amir Habib Alla Khan, father of the King Aman Alla Khan, would come to our city riding his horse. The honourable Jews of the city came together, and among them my father and teacher of blessed memory, who was a respected merchant in the region; they decided to receive the king ceremoniously. I was also urged by my father to receive the monarch. The king asked the Jews: What tribe are you from? - We have no family genealogy and we do not know, my Lord the King, answered the heads of the delegation. We do know, answered the king: We are from the family Muhamed Zai, all of us of the Benjamin, of the seed of King Saul, from the sons of Jonathan, Afghan and Pathan...

The king thanked the Jews for their assembly and commanded to dress each of them(they were 12) in golden coats and golden turbans and he sent them in honour, with body guards, so the Gentiles would see and respect the Jews.

In Chronicles I (8, 35) the name Piton the grandson of Jonathan the son of Saul is mentioned. According to the tradition of the place, which is between Peshawar in Pakistan and Jalal-Abad-Hari, they are the Pathans, descended from Piton, and they even have some Jewish customs. On their clothes they sew something like a four-sided garment, two inside on the chest and two in the back like a talit, and they thread through them white strings, two in each corner. They grow sidelocks and on Sabbath eve the old ladies light candles in the corners of the room.

Among the inhabitants of the place one can find a tribe calling itself "Afridi" - refering to the tribe Ephraim, "Jaji" to Gad, "Lawani" to Levi. One tribe calls itself "Shafe Mazhab" that is to say "Religion in abundance" and I know not its meaning. And another tribe calls itself "Shimoni" which inhabits the area between the city Maimana and Shabarkan. Between the city Oktcha and the city Mazar lived the tribe Malmuli, most of whom are tent-dwelling nomads. They had a room all closed off that they feared opening. Once a Jew happened by, became very brave and opened the door. He found inside a scroll of the Law written on parchment as is the Jewish custom.

When I was in Lahore in Punjab - today Pakistan - I began a conversation with a Muslim, until we began to argue about religion. There was a young local there who heard the argument. He jumped up and told me: You are a quiet man, I will answer him! He opened his mouth and began to bitterly

attack the Muslim and finished saying: Mohamed is a lie and his law is a lie. Moses is true and his law is true. When I got up to go to my hotel, the young man came to me and told me that about 30,000 ews live around the city Habat Abad, between Lahore and Peshawar, today Pakistan. They live in special neighbourhoods, like a ghetto. On Friday afternoon they close the gates of the ghetto and they rest from all labour on the Sabbath. Disputes and judgements between them are arbitrated by the elders on the Sabbath in the large square, which is like a community centre. There is one room there whose door is closed with a lock. They are afraid to open it. Each one kisses the door and goes home. A transgressor or one who comes to a menstruating woman is punished on the Sabbath: they tie him till evening to a column of shame beside the room. On Sabbath eve they light candles. They do not marry with the local people not of their tribe. They have a special cemetery. Their dead are laid in the grave head facing east and feet west. Also in the city Jalandar, between New Delhi and Ahmandabad there is one tribe, of a few thousand who call their sons Biblical names, especially names of the patriarchs and matriarchs and they light Sabbath candles"(from the booklet Yeda'Am 4,5)

(5) From Mr. Gabriel Borochov - a Bokharan Jew, a barber by trade

"I left Bokhara and travelled to the city Ankhoy - and from there to Mazar and Kabul. Once I travelled with a friend in the Afghan mountains to a place where the Afghans nomads live. We saw on their clothes an embroidered mark on the back. It was similar to a "Hanuka lamp" (that is it had 9 candles) and they have two sidelocks on their cheeks. To my question- "Who are you ? How are you

called?" - They answered that they were "Shabronim"; "Afridim" and "Gadim".

Here he added a comment: There is an Afghan Jew called Aba Koret and he tells that when he was in Afghanistan he travelled with people of these tribes by car and found mezuzot tied to their hands and that they were always covered with a blanket, like a talit over their clothes. When they pray, they take it off and spread it before them (this they call Ja-Namaz - place of prayer). These tribes are wealthy, their wives are healthy and they have horses, sheep and cattle; cows and camels and mules.

They enjoyed asking questions about the Jews, and told me that on every Friday after the noon prayers, their wives light candles, and that the women keep their purity and immerse after their days of impurity, in the sea or in pools. The men do not touch them at the time of their period (impurity).

I would shave them - that is my profession, and I would have to be careful not to touch their moustaches or sidelocks. Most of them grow beards and all of them have moustaches. They pray like all the Gentiles (that is the Muslims). Their language is Persio-Afghan. They marry only in their tribes, that is among the above tribes. They live adjacent to Kabul and Peshawar. They are interested in us and knew we were "Sons of Musa", but after some of the Jews started to sell them Arak, they changed their attitude to us to the negative. They also saw us as commercial competitors. Most live in tents, built of straw standing on a slant and plastered on top. They use hunting rifles and knives and go with caravans of the Haj to Mecca and Medina, but not to Kerbela (so they are Sunnis and not Shiites)".

(6) Testimony of Aba-Koret, Tel-Aviv, a resident of Herat

He would spend 4-5 months a year among the tribes in their tents, and he tells of things that he saw first hand: "We would buy wool from the Afridi and Shinwari tribes. They knew we were Jews and would not eat from their slaughtering. Their elders said that they were once Jews. One elder aged 90 told me that he heard from his father that they were Jews of the tribe of Shimeon (Shinwari). They grow sidelocks and cover themselves with a long cloth over their clothes, similar to our small talit, except for the fringes (tsitsit) which they lack.

At the head of the Afridi (Ephraim) tribe stands Muhamed Khan Tarzi, and his tribe lives between Siabond and Kandahar. .

Regarding candle lighting, Aba-Koret related that not all the women keep this commandment, rather there are 4-5 old ladies who light a small candle on Friday before evening, and say it is some sort of "remembrance". They do not light the candle in the room because they have no houses, but rather there is some sort of a courtyard, where they keep a box or case. They do not do it publicly. As his story continued Aba-Koret told that the Afghans knew it was the Jews who came to buy wool and they never displayed hate towards them. This happened nine years ago, in the month of Kislev 5694 (1933-1934), when a decree of expulsion was issued for 3,000 Jews. The decree was actually against Bokharan and Russian Jews but it affected all the Jews of the area, that is 3,000 people.

(7) From Abraham Ben Benjamin of Herat (came to Israel Sukot 5711 - 1950)

"The Afridim are of the Sons of Israel according to their tradition, and they claim that they are of the tribe of Ephraim. They grow sidelocks on both sides. Generally their soldiers do not hide their origins from the Jews, but recently a change has come over the youth, who have been estranged from this tradition, because of foreign national influences.

According to his information, there live between Balugistan and Kvita in the Indian border region the "Luani" tribe, brave camel riders who are 10,000-20,000 strong.These are said to be of the tribe of Benjamin, and like them also the Vaslis The Jajio tribe are said to be of G d; the Shinwa Shimon. In total these tribes descended of Israel include a half a million people. The Afridi live in the hills; the reknown among them are called "kosomengal" in their language. They are erect with black eyes and Eastern beauty on their faces. They are independent and do no accept foreign rule, not even the official rulers of Afghanistan or India. Each tribe has a special leader called a "Malic" with a special flag, and in addition to these secondary leaders, there are main leaders of the tribe, that is to say, three leaders representing the three tribes, and ruling them absolutely."

(8) From Abraham Ben Agagan ha-Kohen - Nisan 5711 (1951)

He was the head of the Herat community and arrived in Israel only a short time ago. His father had much influence at the court of the king, the Amir Habib Alla (Abi Amin Alla) who gave him an important role, however his end was like so many of

his kind - he was killed in Kabul, by Muslim fanatics. Mr. Abraham ha-Kohen recalls that when he was a child he once heard at a great feast that his late father Agagan prepared in the king's honour, from the king Habib Alla himself: "I am from the tribe Benjamin".

He heard from Hadar Aga-Khan:"Abda-Rahman, the father of Habib-Alla and grandfather of Amin-Alla wrote in his article: 'Afghanistan Tarikhi' that the Afghans are of Jewish origin and that they accepted Islam only in the Abassid times in Iraq and Persia".

Mr. Abraham ha-Kohen met the Afridi in the hills and here is what they told him:"We heard from the elders, that we are from the Jews". It is their custom that some of the old men or women light candle on Friday before evening. They have sidelocks on both sides the length of the cheeks opposite the earlobe and they shave the remainder. They have cloths like a talit which they wrap around from the top. When they pray they spread it out and bow down. It is called "Jay-Namaz" (place of prayer) in Persian. However, they have no threads which would recall our fringes or tsitsit. They eat from Jewish slaughtering but not from Shiite slaughtering. Regarding marriage - they only marry within the tribe and not with strangers.

(9) Testimony from Yehezkel Batsal (or Betsalel) of Shehunat Shapira

Mr. Betsalel visited me with his friend Mr. Daniel Gul, head of the Jerusalem Afghan community:

"The king rules the Afghans. In our time, he is Nadir (Zahr) Khan Bin Nadir Shah. Betsalel Yehezkel

was a merchant and in the course of his work he travelled from Kabul to Peshawar by way of the hills inhabited by the Afridi. From them he heard that they were Jews, that is of the tribe Ephraim, the Jajis-Gad, the Shinwari-Shimon. They have corners (like prayer shawls) on their clothes, and they they grow sidelocks. There are among them families which light candles on Friday evening (after prayer); they say that if the candle goes out -the soul will die within a year. They have among them those who circumcise on the eight day (not as the Muslims who generally circumcise at a later age, but no later than 13 years).

They have one family with a private mosque, that is a room, and in it a menorah: There they told me that a sic person who looks upon the menorah is healed.

Once when I was in Kabul, a Gentile driver came to me. He found no one with me. He asked that I teach him our writing and said: I am a Jew, we have many Jewish customs and I want to learn our writing. I am from the Sons of Josef ("Yusuf-Sai"). We are true Jews, but we fear to reveal our Judaism because of our neighbours. We live in Yagiashan in the hills between Kabul and Peshawar in the Khyber Pass.

Mr. Batsal added: Their language is Pushtu; they live by agriculture. They work their own fields (summer wheat); some worked for the British army and today most are in the Pakistani but not in the Indian army. They have mosques. Each family has a prayer area. They bring guests to the mosque to rest.

Jews do not come to them to do business and so they have no contact with Jews. In India they are called "Pathan", and in Afghanistan - "Pathan - Ali".

Once - my informant tells me - when in Gandahar in Afghanistan one of my friends, a local Muslim told me that he met a few of them, there and they asked him where he was going. When he told them "Jerusalem the Holy City", they said: He who prays there (they said "The Temple" - that is Jerusalem) one prayer, it is weighed against 1,000 prayers that one prays here (in Afghanistan)".

(10) From the memorandum of Mr. Hiya Zaorov (5710 - 1950)

I had a discussion with the vizier of Afghanistan, Gulam Nebi Khan and this is what I heard him say: "The Afghans are descended from the Sons of Israel, from the time of the destruction of the First Temple, and especially residents of the city Gandahar near the capital Kabul. Its royal dynasty are all of Benjaminite descent. All of those same tribes between Afghanistan and Peshawar who rise up periodically against England and other governments, and who accepted Islam, claim to be of Gad and Ephraim".

(11) From Yaakov Yitshakov, former head of the Kabul community (30.5.57)

"The Ephraim tribe - Afridim (wear sidelocks); the Gad tribe - Jaji; the Shimon - Shinwari; and Benjamin are said to be related to the royal family. The first three tribes are 7 millions strong".

Yitshakov would visit these tribes on business. He said: "The Afridis light candles for the Sabbath - a wick of cotton in oil - and leave it outside. They lend money with interest and smuggle goods. They are nomadic and do not serve in the

army. They are found in Pakistan and Baluchistan. They live in the hills between India and Afghanistan. Their clothes have fringes as a remembrance of the Prayer Shaul. They are Muslim and have a Mosque and go on the Haj but they are unlike Muslims (Sunni and not Shiite he means). They fast on Ramadan. They are used to giving alms among themselves and marry only within their tribes. Most are illiterate. If they came in contact with Jews on business they trusted them.

The Luani tribe are nomadic and live in tents. They dress in black and go to India in winter. They do not work the land. They have sheep, cattle and camels and trade with the Jews. Their descent is unknown, but some of them also light Sabbath candles.

The Shinwari tribe - linked to the tribe of Shimon work in commerce and transport. All carry arms. They also grow sidelocks, but those of the Afridi are longer than theirs. The Shinwari have one synagogue in the village Andra and one in Mulmul. Some of them circumcise their sons on the eighth day and some like the Muslims when their sons reach 12-13 years.

Pathan is a name of derision to the Afghans, that is how the Jews called them. Among the tribes is one called Yusuf Sai, meaning Sons of Josef and also the Musa Sai. They were converted by force."

(12) Testimony of Menahem Levi

"In January 1930 (5690) at 8 in the morning, I left Hankin by wagon (stretcher). In the afternoon I saw that it was impossible to travel, for the mules sunk into snow up to their necks. Before I left I was warned that it was impossible to travel.

'We will go to the Hibur' said the wagoneer. We went almost seven hours by foot until we came to the first tent. I was told that it was the sheik's tent. I entered and he accepted me with great honour. As is my custom, I asked him: 'Do you know that I am a Jew?'
'I recognized your face and was glad of your coming', said the sheik. He immediately brought me food and a chicken to slaughter. I slaughtered it and he ate with us. I stayed with him for three days; and during discussions I learned of their life and ways. They believe in Muhamed, but admit to being descended from Hibur. On the ten days of Muharam they flagellate themselves more than others do. It is their custom, for their ancestors killed the holy ones and they wish to be forgiven for their father's sin.

The tribe's name is Kaltaki or the Tent of Kalta. They told me that they have 700 tents. They only retain a few names from their Judaism, such as: Shimon, Yakov, Yosef; it is strange that they also have the name Akiva.

They have no education; perhaps five or six can read. They live off "hashab" (herds) and they change their grazing grounds four times a year. The government generally collects taxes from them but they often rebel especially when there is some change in the government".

(13) Information from other sources

A - The wiseman Yosef Eliahu was imprisioned by the Sons of Hivariha. He lived in Balkh, and he came to Kabul on occasion. He wrote about the custom of the Hivariha but did not publish. They are 1,500-1,600 souls. The women work the fields; the men raid the roads.

He was their captive, and they gave him great honour. They do not pay close attention to slaughtering, but when they pray they say: "Musa is G-d's prophet". They circumcise on the eighth day. And had an ancient scroll of the Law, but the Bukharans took it from them and sold it to the Baron Rothschild, when he was in Bokhara (?), however, the casing was taken by the Bolsheviks and sent to their museum in Moscow to the "Jewish" Section.

They live in tents and caves in Harar, between Baluchistan, Afghanistan and Kave-Zar. They fast once a year (in memory of Yom Kippur, according to their date).

B. The "Luani" are 10,000-20,000 brave warrior camel riders. They live between Balujistan and Kivtah, toward the Indian border and they are said to be of the tribe of Benjamin.

C. The tribes of Vazistan should be recalled. They live on the borders of India outside of Afghanistan, but are close to the Afghanis in language and traditions. Their men of army age are 48,000 strong, include 30,000 "Darvish Kahal" and 18,000 Mahmudis (Britanica Encycl. V-18, pp 445).

D. Besides these fighting tribes whose conversion to Islam predate the Arab conquest, there are in Afghanistan other tribes or clans which were forced later to accept Islam and they retained more Jewish traces. Here are a few other examples:

1) Between the Afghan border and Soviet Russia, live the Musa-Sai family (Sons of Moses) and they have customs like those attributed to the Sons of Israel mentioned above. They live in a place called Markau.
2) In the Maimana area near Ankhoy, 15 days from Herat is a clan called Malmal, whose sons were still Jewish 100 years ago and then were forcibly converted. Now they are Muslims, and work as shepherds. Occasionally pieces of Scrolls of the Law on parchment were found among them and they returned them to Jews. They do not marry with the Muslims, rather only among themselves. Their tribe numbers about 1,000 families. The Muslims call them to this day "Jedid al Islam" (Newcomers to Islam), like the forced converts of Mashhad, and this proves that their forces conversion is not as early as that of the Afridi.
3) According to certain traditions, the Amir Gadir Shah of the Yusuf-Sai tribe received a Hebrew Bible, and other holy objects, but he did not know what they were. He called a Hebrew soldier who worked in his ranks and he recognised them and explained to the King.

(14) From Shmuel Shabtai (translated by the wiseman Mordechai Zar)

In my article "The Afghanistan Tribes and the tradition of their origin from the Ten Tribes" ("Davar Year Book", 1952, 198-212), I collected and transmitted among others, some testimonies which I obtained from Jews who saw and heard first hand of the popular traditions and legends of the Afghan tribes, especially among the Afridis, Duranis, Yusef-Sai, Levi-Suanis, etc.

Now I have come upon Shmuel Shabtai Dadush (the Afghan), of the immigrants from Afghanistan who arrived last year. He comes from Herat, but he claims to have spent a few months among the wandering tribes in the Afghanistan and Baluchistan regions, especially among the Shinwari, Siabandar and Afridim, as a merchant pedlar. As such he got to know their local way of life and he noticed their special customs reminiscent of Jewish ones. He claims that he was jailed 14 years in the central Kabul prision, and also there he came in close contact with members of these tribes imprisoned with him, so gaining additional knowledge of their customs.

The fact of the existence of Jewish tradition among the Afghan tribes up to this day is not new. One can find material on the topic even in in the Encyclopedia Britanica, under Afghanistan, with a bibliography. I have in my possession the Persian book of Abd-a-Rahman Khan, the grandfather of Amanulla, ("Taarikhe Afgan", Teheran, 1321 of the Hegira) where he recalls (pt.2p.141) the tradition of their origin, especially of the royal Afghan dynasty, from the Jews.

The following list written in Jedeo-Persian by Shmuel Shabtai and translated by the wiseman Mordekhai Zar gives more factual material from the way of life of the tribes and their legends. He wrote it from notes written locally, but it may be inexact. I am not responsible for the material but it generally agrees with evidence I gathered from other sources, some of which I published, and even adds to it. It is important to publish such correspondence, written by eye-witnesses, and I have checked his words as closely as possible.

I see value in publishing these testimonies to inform the public, and also to inspire and encourage Afghan immigrants, so they can inform us on

this matter. All this will aid researchers to check the facts regarding customs and traditions more closely and more scientifically on location.

- Yitzhak Ben Tsvi

The border area of Afghanistan and Pakistan is called Pushtuhistan settled by two million people claiming to be of Jewish stock and calling themselves Sons of Israel. Their borders are free and their land called "Yakiastan" (the rebels). They are completely independent, and have no representative outside their borders. They see themselves as being of the 12 tribes descended of the patriarch Jacob. They are very tall, with long noses and faces, and bearded with sidelocks. Also their children retain their sidelocks. On Sabbath eve they light candles and they have fringes-strings in the corners of their clothes. This is an ancient custom. They consider themselves of Jewish stock. If someone mentions to them that they are not Jews, they are greatly angered and insist strongly of their Jewishness. They belong to 12 large families (hamoulas) each considered to be one of the 12 tribes, and they are:

The "Rabani" family - that is Reuven. They live mainly in the hill region, have herds, cattle and sheep, and are extremely hospitable.

The "Shinwari" family that is Shimon, have customs completely different from the Rabanis. Each family lives on its portion and they have clear boundaries.

The "Lewani" family, that is Levi, are aristocratic, and have many judges and notables. They are wealthy and trade on the Indo-Kush border.

The "Yunim" family, that is Judah, rule all 12 tribes together and are especially respected by the others. Along with the former they are known in all Afghanistan and are recognised as honoured and aristocratic.

The Yitshaki family deal primarily in grazing. Their elders teach religion to the other families.

The "Jaji" family - that is Zevulun, are farmers, and most of them are also craftsmen and drivers. Transport between India and Afghanistan is mostly in their hands.

The "Zai-Khan" family - that is Naftali (Zain in Afghan - family) are most aristocratic. Among them is the Muhamed Zai which is spread over the borders of the country. Also the "Durani" family is known in the entire country.

In the book THE HISTORY OF AFGHANISTAN, written by the Afghan Minister of Education, Muhamed Naim Khan, the Durani family is said to be of Jewish stock. The Muhamed Zai and Duranis are the largest and best known families in all Afghanistan.

The "Kaka Khil" family is Gad (David family). They are known as peasants and farmers, and dwell in the hill regions.

The "Azhik Zai" family - Asher, live between Kandahar and Kabul. It is a known merchant family. They are known for their yellow beards, wide eyebrows and very long faces.

The "Mumand" family - that is Menasheh is large and well known. The Afghan War Minister of a few years ago, Gol Muhamed Khan, was of this family.

The"Afridi" family that is Ephraim are well-known among the Jews and the English. During the First

World War the latter drafted many of them into their army. They are known as good warriors and all carry arms, and they even produce arms. There are numerous legends of their bravery.

There are other well-known families such as "Suliman Khil","David Zai", "Yusuf Zai", etc. They are 2 million people all together.

Among these 12 families is prevalent the idea that their forefathers were always spread out in the hills with no spiritual leader, until Muhamed came and they accepted his ideology unwillingly. However, they did not alter their Jewish customs since and kept their roots.

During 2,000 years they did not forget their beginnings and they link their notion to the sons of our patriarch Jacob. In contrast to the Muslims, their wives do not cover their faces and do work in agriculture and grazing. They know how to work and fight and their children also know how to use weapons. They circumcise their sons until age 15. I learned all their customs during 18 years that I lived among them. They are very happy to meet Jews, and they await the Messiah.

Because they dwell far from the Afghan Jews, they have no contact and their language is different - it is called Pushtu. At the time of India and Pakistan's declaration of independence, after the British army left the borders of these countries, there was a fierce battle between Pakistan and Afghanistan because of these families. Each side wanted them as citizens, and each side invited the family leaders and tried bribery, etc. to influence them.

The Afghans claimed the tribes were of Afghan stock and their language is Afghani. They offered

them the establishment of their own state, Pushtuhistan, under Afghan protection. On the other hand, Pakistan claims that they lack education and culture which she can offer them , as well as teaching them modern agriculture, etc.

They offered them a few million rupees per year until they could deal with their own matters and be independent. Consequently, there is a constant dispute between the two states on this question.

About 98% of these people are illiterate. They know how to pray and they fast during the month of Ramadan. They wear quite long cloaks and very wide pants of white cloth, turbans on their heads and cloth belts.

I saw personally a women quickly decend to a spring. She had birth pangs on the way, gave birth, gathered up the baby and took the water jug to its place. There are many such examples. They are physically very healthy and have immunity from disease. They are very hard-working people occupied in all aspects of agriculture and shepherding. The English fought for years to include these tribes in India in order to have a stable border, and they did not succeed because of the bravery and stubbornness of these families. They did not succumb to the English, who tried every method to make them subjects. Even when the Indians became part of Britain, the tribes stayed free and until this day accept citizenship from no country. Over the years, they killed many from the British army and never surrendered.

Their Law is similar to Jewish Law: a life for a life, an arm for an arm. Also the Law of Damages - the same damage in retribution for each damage inflicted - and they watch carefully over the carrying out of these laws.

They are always armed and never move without arms, also their children and women. They have a custom regarding murder, whereby the murderer has to pay the family of the murdered the sum of 10,000 Afghan rupees for one young girl.

They see themselves in exile, and have no contact with the outside. Some have heard of the establishment of the State of Israel and the Israeli goverment, and they wish to come and see it personally.

(Extract from "Be-Terem" 1.1.52)

TESTIMONIES COLLECTED BY AVRAHAM ZONENSHEIN

(from his book "New Light in Zion)

(15) From Mr. Agagan Abramov Shemesh

And here is what I was told by Mr. Agagan Abramov Sh mesh, an 100 year old Afghan immigrant - may G-d give him long life, who lives in the Florentin neighbourhood in Tel-Aviv.

All the names ending in Khan, for exampie Abdul Khan, Rahman Khan, etc, are of the same family and are our brothers who were forced to accept another religion. Three hundred years ago, they were still Jews. In the village "Ala Bangivan", a resort,all are of these forced converts to Islam. All the following evidence on the finding of descendents of other tribes from our converted brothers; Jajis (Gad), Shinwaris, Afritis -

has been verified by the above Mr. Agagan and he told me that all the information was learned incidently during meetings with the above tribes. If they had gone specifically with research in mind, they could have obtained much more information.

(16) Testimony of Avraham Abulof (former Kabul resident)

One of the residents of the villages around Kabul of the Jaji tribe once visited the Jewish wiseman of the Bukharan community in Kabul. During their conversation, the rabbi sensed that this Jaji was holding an amulet of leather and the became curious. He questioned him on the matter, but the Jaji could not tell him what it was or what was in it. Then the rabbi asked for permission to open the amulet. The Jaji would under no circumstances agree, explaining that it is grounds for excommunication to open the amulet, and they say that he who opens one will become blind as punishment for his daring to ignore the above excommunication tradition. The rabbi would give him no rest and by various means, he succeeded in opening the amulet. To his great astonishment, he found written inside in clear Hebrew the first verse of "Shma Yisrael" (Hear O Israel).

(17) Testimony of Mr. Zevulun Kort, of the "Davar" editorial board, a Bukharan

"Regarding the amulet found among and popular with the Jaji tribe, a friend of mine of the Afghan immigrants spoke to me. He was a peddler at the time and would travel among the villages of the Afghan hills. Once he stayed overnight in a village of the Jajis because of his work. One evening he

was invited to a family and some of the villagers came. They all had amulets. They told him it was a tribal custom, that the holder of the amulet had special protection from evil. I questioned him on the contents of the amulets and somehow despite his protests, I managed to open one amulet and I found inside the first verse of Shma Yisrael. He said that only one in the tribe knows how to write such an amulet, and it is always passed on as an inheritance from father to eldest son. He is considered a holy man and sits in a room within a room and there writes it".

Once a Jewish pedlar arrived at a distant village. He entered an inn Shalu El Hatchahina - that is the Tea House. The inn keeper knew that a Jew would not eat his food so he supplied him with only fruits, vegetables, eggs and milk. The pedlar had his own teapot. The innkeeper filled it with tea and the Jew sat, dipped his bread in tea and ate. A Shiite entered. He saw the Jew eating alone and called the Muslims who were there: See that impure Jew, afraid to touch our food, which he sees as impure. You see, your shame and remain quiet? The mob wanted to attack the Jew and kill him. However, one of the notables of the community was there, said to be of the descendents of the Ten Tribes, and he said to the tormentor: Are you a Sunni? You are a Shiite! (The Sunnis hate the Shiites and will even kill them) . Do you know what a Jew is? A Jew is one that G-d chose to give his Law; whose teacher was Moses our teacher, the servant of G-d, peace upon him. And who are you Shiite? An infidel and a son of an infidel, a dog and son of a dog are you? The Jew is pure in body and in his food and does not eat impure food like you, and what have you to make an outcry about? Since then they honoured this pedlar. Each sent him a gift and wanted to have him stay with him.

Yohai Eliav told me: During the Israel War of Independence, my neighbour in Kabul, a Muslim, weaved - goods store-owner and Jew-hater told me: the Arabs fight the Jews and will destroy them in one more week. I feared to answer him lest he libel me that I curse Muhamed. A second neighbour, a learned and wise man told me: Look, your Jews in the "Temple House" make problems. I kept quiet. After a while I entered the above store, he turned and told me: If the Jews win in the war with the Arabs, I will convert. After a year, when the battles ceased in Israel, I entered the weaved-goods store and my neighbour told me: I am ready to convert, but I cannot do it here - Zealots will kill me. Therefore take me to Jerusalem. There I will convert.

(18) From Mr. Yehezkel Batsal (Betsaleli) an Afghan immigrant of Shchunat Shapira

One of the most brave among the Afriti stock - formerly Ephraim - in Afghanistan are called Yusuf-Sai- Sons of Joseph. During the First World War two of their soldiers served here in Israel in the British army. Their camp was near Hedera. They sent a special group of emissaries to the Afghan Jews here asking them to send a special rabbi to teach them Jewish laws. Also in his testimony to the President of the State, Mr. Yehezkel Batsal told of a driver of the Yusuf-Sai tribe who visited him while he still dwelt in Afghanistan, before coming to Israel. He asked Mr. Yehezkel to teach him the Jewish writing and he said: We are true Jews but we fear our neighbours and so do not reveal our Judaism, and Mr. Batsal continued that the request of the two soldiers in Hedera was not granted for some reason and no group was sent to teach them and it was a very great pity that the community does not realize the importance of the matter.

In the year 1958 when we immigrated to Israel by way of India and we reached the Indian border (Pakistani today), it happened to be Sunday and the British officer at the crossing station refused to stamp our passports on the official day of rest. This distressed us greatly for we feared that the Afghan government might change its mind at the last minute and might revoke our exit permits, so we tried again to influence the officer to stamp our passports and the elderly in the convoy beseeched him. He asked where we were headed from India? When we answered Jerusalem he was taken aback, and asked again: - To Jerusalem? And he asked in English if there was a wall there of tears crying? Yes, answered the elders. So he immediately stamped all the passports. When he finished he turned to the elders and asked: When you arrive at the Wall of Tears (Kotel), make a request also for me for I am also of the seed of the Jews. I am from Punjab (Pakistan). And ask of the Blessed Name that he return his lost sons, and we the elders saw tears in the eyes of the officer.

(19) Testimony of Mr. Simantov Sason
(of Neve Tsahal neighbourhood)

During my work among the Afghan immigrants for the Department of Immigration of Middle East Jews, and during my discussions with immigrants I discovered the following information:

Beyond the high mountains in the Khyber Pass in the Pathan region of Afghanistan, there was known in these times of a large tribe calling itself "Sons of Israel" which linked itself to the tribe of Benjamin. They are called Lavani by the local people. They dwell in the mountain area bordering the Afghan lands and Pakistan at the end of the Iranian heights connecting the Middle and Far East.

The mountain-dwelling tribal people are healthy, , immune to disease and brave fighters. The many wars in recent times between Afghan and Pakistani tribes were fought by them. By law, they are under the protection of the Afghan Sultan and obey the royal house, but in practice they are independent and have local autonomy. Afghan authorities do not dare to provoke them, for this could cause a tribal rebellion, which is liable in the end to cost many casualties to the Afghan army.

The tribe members carry arms freely despite the law against it. Their main preoccupation is war, and they manufacture arms by themselves. The English use them as a garrison force especially in India and its surroundings paying high wages. The signs that link them to the Jews are the Hebrew names, wearing of the little talit with four corners from age 13 and up, lighting candles on Sabbath eve and hiding them, growing beards and side locks and circumcising on the eighth day. In one of the cities of this tribe there is a house called "The Holy House". It is surrounded in mystery and closed tightly.

No one is allowed to approach it due to ancient ancestral custom of protecting the house from all evil. From a discussion with one of the elders of the tribe, it was clarified that the house is a synagogue with Torah scrolls inside. When the existence of these scrolls was made known to the Afghan Jews they tried many times to buy them for a great deal of money. A small group was sent to them from among the community to negotiate the acquisition. But the attempt failed because the people of the tribe refused to give them over, claiming that it passed as an inheritance during all the generations and it is a dear possession proving their belonging to the tribes of Israel in the past, and their ancestors warned them not to touch the scrolls. At times of danger or tribulation all the tribes people gather around the synagogue, cry and supplicate until the evil passes.

Besides their military service in various armies, some of them are talented merchants who live by transporting goods from the Near East to the Far East, and taking road tax from the caravans passing through their region. The tribe members understand and befriend the Afghan Jewish Community. The regional officer of the city of Herat is of this tribe and he also stamps the exit visas of Jews going from Herat to Mashhad. Once during a visit to him by a community dignitary regarding preparing of papers, he asked the latter where the Jews travel from here? The answer was to the Land of Israel. In astonishment the officer asked - I am of the Children of Israel - why are you going to Israel?

There are other Jews in the region,for example the tribe of Shimon called Shinwari locally, and the tribe Gad - called Jaji.

In the national museum in Kabul is a very ancient stone found in a dig near the city and on it is written in Hebrew letters about a vicious pogrom in the place against the tribespeople to force them to convert. But the youth of the tribe went out against the enemy and most fell in battle and were slaughtered. This stone is a monument to their memory.

(20) Testimony from Mr. Hanimof Gavriel
(barber on Shabazi St.)

"In Afghanistan we support ourselves from commerce, selling clothes to the villages. As a result I travelled among the villages and came into close contact with descendents of the these tribes, said to be of the lost Jewish tribes. They always accepted us with warmth and love and called us "Mishia" (in the Pushtu language Moshe).

In every city or village that we passed in our work, when the Mukhtar, the village head, was of one of these tribes he was very close to us and let us sell as much as we wanted, but if he was an Indian, he made problems for us. And as for me, because I already knew the barbering profession I would give them hair cuts and they warned me not to touch their beards or sidelocks. I asked them why and they answered: it is an ancient custom for us. Under no circumstances will they alter the tradition of their fathers. I once happened that one of the Jaji had to go to Kabul to deal with many matters, and would go there often, British bureaucratswould always make fun of him because of the long beard and sidelocks that he grew and called him Jewish. Once they overdid it and upset him enough that in his anger he entered the barbershop and cut off his beard and sidelocks. But he very much regretted this hasty deed afterwards, for when he got home to his village, the residents who are very fanatical regarding their customs and tradition chased him away for his rebelliousness and so he found himself in a very embarrassing situation indeed. He had no choice but to grow his beard and sidelocks anew".

(21) From Mr. Yakov Danieli (of Shehunat Shapira) an Afghan immigrant

"I know the lost tribes well. I worked in their regions many times. It is known that in II Kings 17:6 it is written concerning the exile of the Ten T ibes that the King of Assyria settled them in Halat and Hibur and the River Gozan. Because I examined closely places settled by the tribes, and I know well the language of the land; the River Gozan is Rad Jozan; Rad is the name for river in their language. The Gozan River runs from the Gandahar region in Afghanistan to the

Karachi region of Pakistan. On both sides and throughout the entire length of the river live our brothers of the lost sons of Israel. I met them in their multitudes on both banks of the river from the Shinwari tribe - supposedly of Shimon, of the Afridati and Rabani (Reuven). On the Pakistani side is found the Biblical Hibur. It is undoubtedly Peshawar. In the local language it is pronounced PeshHibur.

And here is what happened to me about 30 years ago. I travelled once with one of my children by the Gozan River in the region of our tribes; the child had sidelocks, and suddenly as we passed by one village, people of the tribe came upon us in their multitudes and simply wanted to kill me. They thought I had taken the child from their region. When I succeeded by a miracle to quiet them a bit and asked why they attacked me, they explained that it was clear to them that I kidnapped the child for to grow sidelocks is only the custom of the sons of the tribe, for they are of the Sons of Israel, and only they grow sidelocks".

(22) Testimony of Amnon Eliav - an Afghan immigrant

When I was in Kabul and Kandahar I met in the surrounding villages some residents who see themselves as descendents of Israel, remnants of the Ten Tribes. In the village Nuristan, the men wear "four corners" over their clothes, without fringes however, and they have a tradition from the village elders: he who wears "four corners" will not be hurt in war and the death bullets will not pierce his body.

In Chariakh-Khar an ancient stone was found in

1947 and on it engraved Hebrew letters. The stone aroused archeological interest and was taken to the Dar-El-Aman Museum in Kabul. In the region there is also a Jewish grave fenced off and beside it a prayer house. At one of the villages of the Afridi tribe I arrived on Sabbath eve around dark. I sat there in a Muslim house. How astonished I was when they lit candles and hid them in a corner of the house, the remnants of an ancient custom I was told, but they could not explain what it was. On Sabbath night they gave out grape juice to the family members. According to Muslim law they can not drink juice of the vine but they have an old tradition for this and will not give it up. Once an old lady returned on Yom ha-Jamia (Friday) from the Mosque and told that the Sheik gave them a sermon that the Jews conquered all of Palestine and control the Temple and all the cities. "If so, Islam is false and we should all convert".

(23) From Mr. Mikhael Bar Yosef of the elders of Bukhara Community

In 1948 after the establishment of the State of Israel, I was still in the exile of Afghanistan in the city Kabul. When we heard of the establishment of the state our joy knew no bounds and many of our Bukharan brothers decided to immigrate to Israel. It was not easy however, for the state was zealously Muslim and they do not give Jews exit visas easily, especially during days of battle of the War of Independence, when it was considered reinforcements for the Jews. At that time I sat in a Muslim coffee house in Kabul, and in the local newspaper of the day appeared an article on the situation in Israel on the Jewish-Arab front. We read of Arab defeat and the loss of Lod and Ramla by the Arabs. In the coffee house

there were also three Afghan officers. One of them began to talk to me as follows: "I always thought the Jews were cowards and the Arabs brave like us, and now I was surprised to hear the opposite. How do your Jews win?" At first I hesitated and thought whether to answer them but all at once I became brave and said:
"Your opinion of the Arabs that they are brave is incorrect, they were never brave like you. They are cowards. Only the Muslim religion is common to you. But you are not of Arab stock, for you are of Jewish stock, and you received the religion at a later date". Hearing my answer two of the officers got very angry, but the third one quietened them saying - why do you boil up? This Jew speaks the truth. I myself heard from my father, that we are Afghans descended from the tribes of Israel. And then the officer beside him said - if we are truly of Jewish stock, the Jews are our relations and brothers and we should help them against the Arabs. These same officers helped me later to get papers for my immigration.

(24) Testimony of Mr. Yitshak Betsalel

Mr. Yitshak Betsalel lived in Kabul and then in Kandahar. His address is Rehove Ha-Eshel 15, Ramat Gan. He told us the following:

Afghanistan itself has about 15 million people. About 4 million are Duranis, among them the royal family and they are more educated that the rest of the tribes; about 6 million are Klajai. There are also Uzbeks and Tajiks, people of Bokhara, principally on the Russian border. All the Afghans are Sunnis except for about three million Shiites found in the mountain regions which are principally in the center of the country. The Shiites hate the Jews, and the Sunnis less so. There is emnity between the

two groups. The Pathans are a nation found in the Shamsin (Tibet) region and all the way to Persia but mostly in Pakistan along the border with Afghanistan. The capital of the Pathans is PeshHibur (that is how he pronounces Peshawar). Pathan is a name given them by the English. The Pathans are about 8 million strong. They are fierce warriors and make up 80% of the Pakistani army. The English succeeded in laying a road in their region after paying a huge sum of money. They are very aggressive and dangerous. Sometimes they kill all who stray from the road and do not travel on the main road. Among them are tribes said to be of the Ten Tribes.

The Afghan Jews almost all came from Persia and some of them are from among the forced converts of Mash-had; 130 years ago disturbances were launched against the Mash-had Jews and they were forced to accept Islam and then some fled to Afghanistan. The grandfather of the speaker was among those who fled. All the Jews of Afghanistan accepted Islam in his opinion 700 years ago and the present Jews are from Persia. Now most have immigrated to Israel, and those who remain are protected by the king and his son.

Regarding the Tribes he continued and told us: there is a nomadic tribe called Kuchi, found in winter in Pakistan and in the summer in Afghanistan. They pass Kabul on their way, and there the speaker met them. They live in black goat skin tents and the women also wear black (he sees this as a sign in memory of the destruction). Perhaps there is a hint here to the sons of Rehav to which Jeremiah said (Chapter 35) to drink wine, and they answered him that they do not drink and they sit all their days in tents etc. The tribe is more than 20,000 strong. The tribesmen have rifles and do not fear to use them at will.

Most of the Pathans have sidelocks and beards; all the Afridis have beards. Some of the Pathan children hang strings on their clothes like a small talit. The Pathan tribes whom he feels are descended from the Ten Tribes are: Afridis-Ephraim, Levani-Levites, Rabani-Reuven, Shinwari-Shimon, Daftani-Naftali, Jajis-Gad (live in the PeshHibur area).

The Duranis are also considered to be of the Ten Tribes and also some of the Kaljai. The royal family has a family tree all the way back to Benjamin, son of Jacob which also includes King Saul. The royal family and the king, who has learned the history of his people and has a large library and museum, claims that the Afghans are descended from the Ten Tribes. Yitshak Betsalel adds that the king takes to his private museum the most important archeological finds and perhaps for this reason he has proof of Afghan origins. The entire royal family is positively inclined toward the Jews. There was a prince Nabob Mardan, who built a city and called its streets after cities in Israel. He also had a large library and liked the Jews. The present king: "Zair Khan" studied in France.

All the tribes have a few elders who remember the tradition and claim a connection to the Jews. The learned of the population also know that the Afghans are Jews. A Jew heard that when an old man who was a former Prime Minister claimed before the Prime Minister that they were Jews and not Aryans as claimed by modern authors, the Prime Minister said he was right.

The speaker had a few stores in Kandahar where he and his son sold cloth. One day a tall youth from a village between Kandahar and Kabul, 100 km. from Kandahar came in. He started buying there regularly. Once he came and said that his 80 years old father asked from what nation they were? The speaker

answered him that they are Jews. The youth did not know what Jews were and so Mr. Betsalel added: "Sons of Israel", the people of "Hazrat Musa". After some time he came to their home (in Kandahar, but not to the store) and said that he comes only for this, for when his father heard they were Jews, he said - "We are also Jews" and added that his father had a very large library and sat and learned all day. His father beseeched the speaker to visit him in the village, but Mr. Betsalel refused because of the dangers of the road.

Regarding the verse in Kings II 17:6 which mentions that the Sons of Israel were exiled to "Halat, and Hibur, Gozan River and the Mede cities" and in the corresponding verse in Chronicles which says Hera instead of Mede cities, Mr. Betsalel told me: Herat is called Hera in Afghanistan; the elders call PeshHibur - PeHibur. Mr. Betsalel feels this may be a corruption of Peh-Hibur. The Gozan River is the river Rud Jazan passing through northern Afghanistan. It has streams and flows in the end into the Amu Darya part of which is the border between Afghanistan and Russia. The river Rud Jazan passes by the cities Aksha, Shuberkan, Ankhoy Mimma and Balkh. Rud in Persian means river.

The city Balkh itself is very old and the Megilla is read there on the 15th of Adar (Shushan Purim). A large palace is situated there. The inhabitants do not know themselves when they settled there, but there are some hidden history books on the topic. In Balkh thousands of books were buried under 10 meters of earth and a road was built on top to keep them buried. Nearby is a place called Tashurgan (in the local language - stone small) east of Balkh and north of Malmul on the Russian border. There were 4-5 families of hide merchants who had a synagogue and a ritual bath. The synagogue had an ancient Torah scroll with crooked Hebrew letters and not like regular letters. The

speaker saw the scroll but did not want to take it fearing that he would not be able to protect its holiness on the way to Israel. A Bukharan Jew took the scroll to Israel and sold it here. Finally it was taken to America and found to be written by Ezra the scribe. Jews lived at Mimna 1,000 years ago. There is a village there called Musa and its inhabitants are said to have been Jews once. In the Balkh region is a place called Mulmul. Four hundred years ago there were 500 Jewish families there who were converted to Islam by force - says their Sheik. They only married among themselves. The king's son-in-law was a friend of the Sheik and he asked him to open the old synagogue of the village (the sheik related that there was an old synagogue there in a cave covered with stones). He refused sternly.

Mr. Yitshak Betsalel thinks it likely that the exiled Sons of Israel arrived first at Herat-Hera and from there some continued to Gur-Sahar and the others to the Balkh region in North Afghanistan (compiled by A. Brin, 1974).

(25) Testimony by Mr. Lider, tourist who visited Afghanistan

Mr. Lider travelled recently to Afghanistan by way to Iran. While he stayed with a Persian rabbi, the latter asked why he was travelling and when he answered that he sought lost Jews, the rabbi told him that in Afghanistan the tribe of Ephraim, called Afridi, was found.

On Passover, he came to a Russian (the language of the above) speaker in Kabul and asked him of the Jewish tribes. The man said that there were two tribes - Afridi and Jaji. The latter living in Jalalabad. He also told him of special customs

such as amulets with a verse of Shma Yisrael, and of lighting candles on Sabbath eve, found among the tribes. He heard that the Afridi number 1½ million.

They do not marry with the other tribes. When a boy wants to marry,his parents go to the bride's parents and if the bride agrees, she is bought with the price determined according to her pedigree. A bride has no right to choose a groom, except to send her friend to the boy's father. Jews at the "Palace" Hotel told him that the tribes have been in Afghanistan for more than 3,000 year. They are strictly religious and are willing under no circumstances to be called Jews. The American consulate warned them of staying over in the area of the nomadic tribes, but the Afridi tribe is sedentary. (compiled by the above) .

(26) Testimony of Meir Hai Ajajan

He came to Israel 40 years ago from Balkh in Afghanistan. "Most of the Pathans shave their heads and beards and leave the sidelocks above their ears unshaven. They attribute holy value to them and the people swear by them. Sabbath candles are found almost in every home. Their garments is open at the bottom on both sides up to about 1/3 the length so that four corners exist. Fringes are found among almost all the Pathans; the amulet is found among all of them and it is kept in a silver case. They believe in it and in its power. These tribes are externally similar to Jews and are intelligent and strong. In his opinion they have no tradition regarding their origins. However other Jews told me that they heard on the train from a few Pathans that they are also Orthodox Jews. From this he concludes that some of them know it. Among the Jews it is clear that the Pathans are Jews.



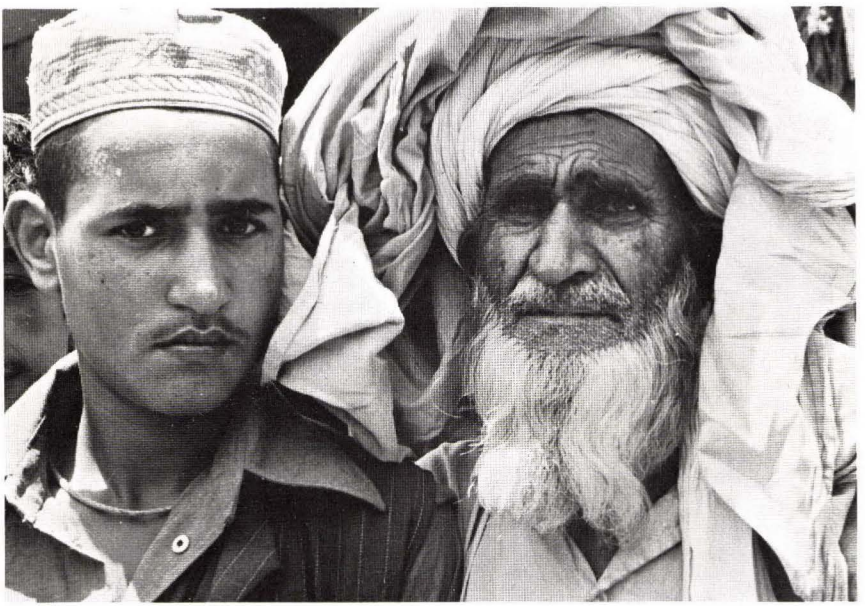
Member of the Amishav Organisation with Yitzchak Navon, President of Israel, 1980



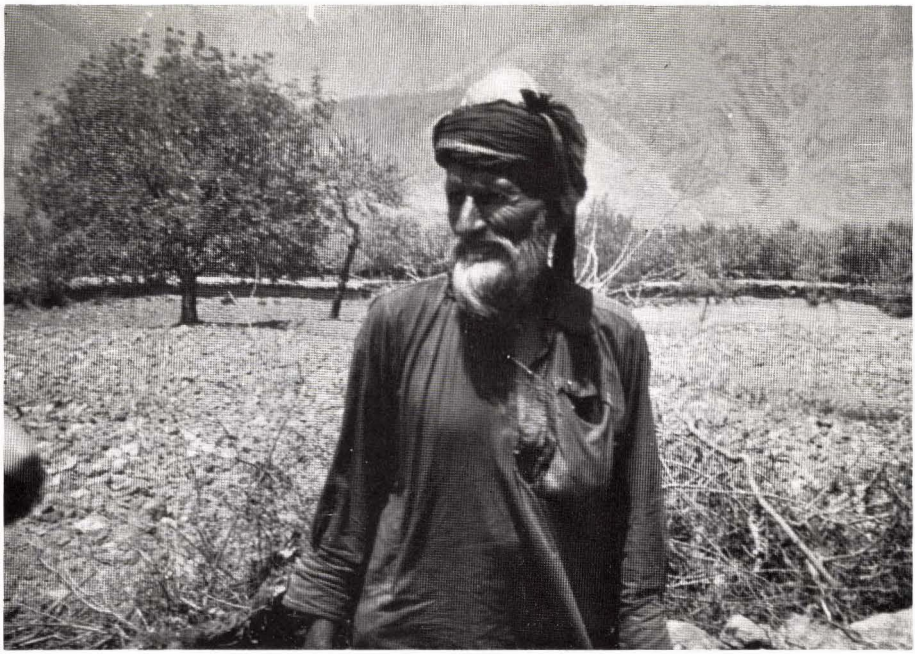
Blessing of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, of blessed memory before taking off to India - 1980



Group of Pathan fighters in Afghanistan



Father and son of the Pathan tribe in Pakistan



Pathan farmer in Kashmir



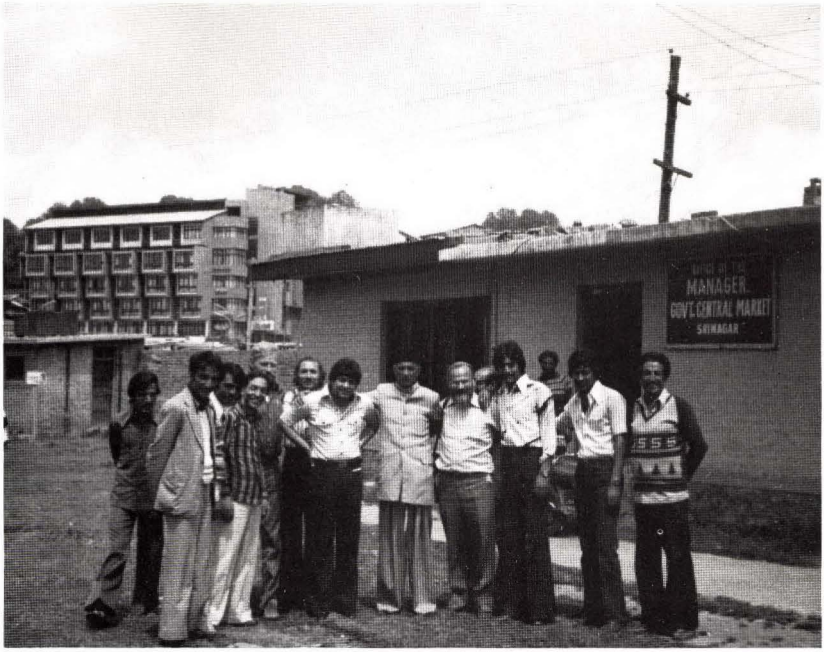
Pathan fighter with Tallis (Joy Namaz)



Elderly man from the Chiang-Min tribe



Group from the tribe of Chiang-Min in Western China



Group of the Kashmir people in Srinagar, Kashmir



Group of the tribe of Menashe (Shinlong) in north west Burma



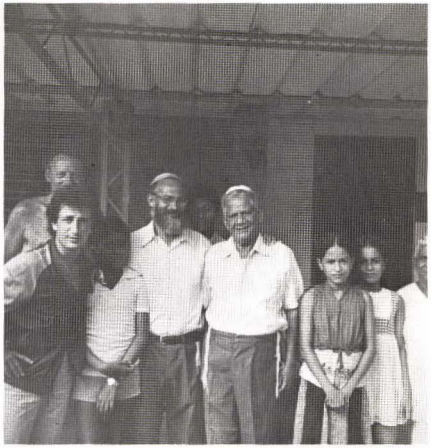
Peace-offering of Menashe tribe in Manipur in north east India



Group from the Menashe tribe on Purim from Mizoram state in India



With bishop, Abraham Mar Clemis, Knanite leader in Chingavanam, Kerala, India



With one of the Knanite leaders, Mr. Thomas, in Trivandrum, Kerala



Group of Knanites in Kottayam, Kerala



With group of people interested in Judaism (Marranos)
in Mexico



With group of descendents of the Marranos
in Palma-de-Majorca

They are all found in Pakistan in the PeshHibur region and together they are about one million strong. They are very hospitable though they are savage.

The royal family, Muhamed Zai see themselves as being of the tribe of Benjamin (not necessary descended from Saul). They like the Jews, and they are a small tribe inhabiting the Kabul region. They have no special customs reminiscent of their having been Jews.

The Levanis are found in the Balkh region - Mazar (Turkistan), a region which the Afghans did not conquer, and which was not formerly held by them. He thinks they have no Jewish connection.

(27) Testimony of Mr. Hiya Zaorov (Summer 1973)

The above came to Israel from Bokhara in 1935, and lives on Cordovero Street in Tel Aviv. He told me of the Afghan royal family.

When Galam Nabi Khan, an Afghan minister, was in Tashkent, Mr. Zaorov spoke with him and was told of his royal family background and its descent from the tribe of Benjamin. He added that in Pakistan the Peshawar region there were tribes descended from the Ten Tribes. The royal family prides itself of its Jewish origin (but perhaps only before Jews). They honour the Jews and did so also in the past.

Aminula Kahn was king until 1928. Up until his father Habibula Khan's time, the kings would be blessed by the Jews on their coronation day, whereupon they would show them their lineage from the sons of Benjamin. When Habibula's son wanted to reform the Afghan constitution, he requested of the Jews their books of personal and monetary laws to

use them as a model in establishing his reforms. The speaker felt that the king was trying in this way to reestablish the original Afghan constitution - the Law of Israel. The father of Hiya Zaorov, told his son, who was born in 1940, that Nadir Shah who conquered part of Afghanistan over 100 years earlier also requested of the Jews of his time that they translate their laws to aid him in administering his country. Nadir Shah despite being a Perisan king was a Sunni and not a Shiite and he liked the Jews. After Aminula Khan, Nadir Khan the former ambassador ot France became king. While still ambassador, he would often discuss matters with and be advised by a Bukharan Jew - Eliahu Yisakhar Khan (Yisakharov). Upon his coronation he called upon the latter to join him in Afghanistan, where he was given power and influence due to his position in the palace. With Eliahu's help many Bukharan and Afghan Jews came to Israel. When Nadir Khan was murdered, an Afghan consul was sent to the speaker, Mr. Hiya Zaorov, at Bukhara,to inform him that thev were writing a book of condolences, for the royal family and request the signatures of the Jews of Bukhara in Hebrew.

Mr. Hiya Zaorov also related to me that when the Bosheviks took power in Russia they divided the large area of South-Central Russia into smaller regions such as Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakstan, etc. In Tajikistan which is north of Afghanistan there was a village called Dushma , and when Stalin rose to power he called it after himself Stalinabad, and it began to develop and grow. Consequently, many Jews streamed to Tajikistan. They found that the Tajiks light candles on the Sabbath eve; when they came to visit with them they found that the Tajiks eat a meat and rice dish called "Bahash" which is specifically characteristic of the Bukharan Jews and is eaten on Sabbath eve. When asked "What is it?" the Tajiks answered that it was an old traditional dish and

they also related that they have a tradition that they were once Jews.

Rabbi Saadiah Gaon argued at length with the wise-man Hivi of Balkh and the speaker feels that in Hivi's time the Jews tended to assimilate to Islam and so tried to avoid arguments.

The learned Ibn Sina of Bukhara also lived in that period. A Tajik teacher said that the above was from the Jews, forcibly converted to Islam and called Chela. Also the meaning of his name according to the speaker is Son of Sinai (until this day in many languages including Arabic Sinai is pronounced Sin, Sina) and it is likely that he called himself Son of Sinai, that is son of the Law that came from Sinai.

The Maharaja of Mardan was learned and completed university in London. He often met the forced converts of Mashhad who lived in Peshawar. He would also visit a Jew called Carmely who told Mr. Hiya Zaorov that the Maharaja would always say that the day would come when the origins of all men will be known and then it will be known that all the people of the Afghanistan region were once Jews. The Maharaja published a book in English and wrote of this in its introduction, but the book was lost. The speaker together with the deceased President Yitshak Ben-Tsevi, who thought the matter very important, had attempted unsuccesfully to find the book.

Some of the Bukharan Jews have a tradition that they are descended of people of the First Temple Period (perhaps of the Ten Tribes - but this not known to him), and afterwards were added to them Jews of the Second Temple dispersion.

The Bukharans have a tradition that the Amu Darya River is the Gozan River. The speaker saw in

translation the Tifsar of Rabbi Saadiah Gaon of the Bible (in Arabic) which translates Gozan as Balkh (so did I see also in translation afterwards). Mr. Hiya Zaorov estimates that the conversion of the tribes to Islam was at the time of Rabbi Saadiah Gaon and Hivi of Balkh (as above).

(28) By Mr. Abraham Katanov of Balkh
(3 years in Israel) - 18 Av 5733 (1973)

The above told me the following facts:

1) All the tribes living in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border area have their old women lighting candles on the Sabbath eve.

2) They all have sidelocks above their ears - also beards but these are not compulsory.

3) All wear a large cloak like a talit without fringes, compulsory from age 5.

4) The Tribe "Suliman Khil" is among these tribes and inhabits the Suliman hills in Pakistan.

5) They live among themselves, that is one of the Jaji tribe can marry one of the Afridi tribes, but they do not marry strangers.

6) They have Hebrew names like Soliman, Yakov, Ibrahim, Isak.

7) The tribe elders say they are the Sons of Jacob, but they cannot differentiate themselves and say which tribe they belong to.

8) Altogether these tribes number above one million souls. They live in the border region between

Pakistan and Afghanistan, in the Khyber Pass area. He does not know of the tribes of Baluchistan (further south). Until recently they were nomadic, but now the government is beginning to give them parcels of land in the Balkh region, and so they settle permanently.

9) In Mulmul there was forced conversion about 200 years ago. Until today there is a synagogue there with a ritual bath. The Jews lived below the hill, about 120 families, and on the hill itself about 400 - 500 families of non-Jews lived. The non-Jews who forced the Jews to convert belonged to the Zakh and Polad families. Some of the forced converts fled but some stayed and they only marry among themselves until today.

10) The royal family is called Yusuf Sai. Its other name is Bin amin Khil (Khil=tribe). The tradition is more developed with them, and also the young announce proudly that they are of Jewish origin. They do not marry strangers and also not the border tribespeople.

(29) Testimony of Mr. Zvulun Kort (7 Av 5733 - 1973)

"My friend Daniel Zeevi of Balkh spoke to me of Jaji amulets. He travelled in a remote hardly-accessible area and arrived around evening at a Jaji village in the Mangal region. There he saw some children aged 3-5 who wore amulets sewn in pouches, around their necks. He took one of the amulets from one of them, opened it and saw that in it on rough paper were written 2 words "Shma Yisrael" from the first verse of the "Hear O Israel", in Assyrian script (as in our Torah Scrolls). When he asked the elders about the

amulet, they told him that a tribal leader writes the amulet and only he knows the secret of its writing. When he writes the amulet he sits near ashes (or in ashes). During his life he teaches the writing to his son and when he dies his son fills the role. When Daniel wanted to see the tribal leader and bless him, they refused to let Daniel see him and said it was forbiden to do so. They told him that every baby wears the amulet from birth. The host added and said that they know they are Jews".

"Another time Daniel Zeevi went to the British Embassy, found outside the wall of Kabul - in the suburbs of the city. When he crossed one of the streets, children fell upon him and began to hit him. When he called for help, an old man came out from one of the houses, reprimanded the children and chased them from the place. When Daniel told him that he was going to the British Embassy to get a visa to travel abroad, the old man told him: "I know where you are going - to the Land of Israel - because I am a Jew". The old man asked him to pray for him also when he gets to Jerusalem.

"Meir Khafi told me that he travelled from Kabul to Peshawar. On the way in one of the villages, a householder met him and invited him into his house. It was the Sabbath eve and Meir saw on the table about 12 loaves of bread, and the former told him that it was their tradition. In the corner he saw a lit candle covered by a basket".

"According to legend, some of the Babylon exiles left to find a better place. And so they reached Kabul (the capital of Afghanistan). Its meaning is Land of Swamps, a good place for grazing, and a large river passes through the city. When they arrived the local population accepted them

with great honour, for they were people of majesty, strong and tall. The exiled Jews became their Mukhtars and leaders, and after a while also their kings".

"While Mula Avraham Kohen was staying in Kabul with the king, who honoured him, they would often talk and the king would always say that he was a Jew. Once Mr. Avraham asked him: 'If you are a Jew why do you not act like the Jews and why do you not leave Islam?' The king answered: It is a tradition from our elders; when the Messiah comes we will return to our Judaism as it is written (Genesis 40;10) 'Until Shilo comes, and his will be the nations obedience'."

"In 5684 (1924) on a winter day early in the morning Rabbi Reuven Betsalel (Rabbi of Afghan Jews in Tel Aviv) bought firewood. He urged the donkey driver of the Klijai tribe to hurry and bring the wood to the kitchen,because he had to go to prayers. The driver told thim, "Musai (local name for Jews) also goes to prayers?" Rabbi Reuven answered: "We are Jews and we pray to G-d who gave us his Law from the sky through Moses our teacher of blessed memory"."If you are a Jew"- answered the driver -"explain to me this. In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth?" Rabbi Reuven answered - "not like he who builds his home on foundations in the earth are the deeds of G-d. He created the sky before the earth". The driver said to him: "If so I see that you too are a Jew!- And what is your name?" asked Rabbi Reuven quickly for he was afraid of missing the time of public prayer: "My name is Israel Khan", said the driver as he went on his way."

"In Kandahar one of the notables of the place Muhamed Zahi has a document relating his lineage all the way to King Saul".

Mr. Yisakhar Kohen said:"Every few months a group of traders from the Levani tribes would come to Herat. They are tall and have majestic faces and beards. On their cloaks they wear fringes. They would bring Pakistani products, sell them and buy local products to sell in Pakistan. This was their livelihood always, and their main business was with Jews. The leader of the group had black fringes. When asked why he had them and why they were black, he said that his people were Jews, his mother lit candles on Sabbath eve and place them in the corner under a basket, and that they live as a family among themselves. Since the Temple has been destroyed, they tie black fringes until the time that they return to Judaism".

(30) From Mr. Gul of Columbia Street, Jerusalem

The tribes generally live on the line between Kandahar, Gazni, and Kabul. They number 4 million souls. Their women light candles on Sabbath eve and do not touch the basket (where the candles are) throughout the entire Sabbath. They only marry within the tribes. Most of the men have short sidelocks and their heads shaven. There are the following tribes among them: Efratis, Shinwaris, Jajis, Mumandis-Mangali-Menashe, Musa-Sai, Yusuf-Sai, Yitshak Sai (who have special sheep).

They wear a small talit, whose strings wrap around a button 8 times. Besides them are the Lewani tribe - 60,000 camel drivers between Kandahar - and Kvita. They are Nazirites, not drinking wine and are very hospitable. One of them always came on the eve of the Day of Penitence to pray, and would stay in the synagogue until the end of the fast without uttering a sound. He would retell the tradition of the Temple and the High Priest

on the Day of Penitence. Near Mazar Sharif are a few families who know they are Jewish but converted to Islam because of the price of ritual slaughtering.(compiled by A. Avihail, 5734-1974).

(31) Testimony of Shalom Dadush (Bukharan St.31) Of Herat

When I travelled to Israel, I came by way of Peshawar. On the border we were stopped by one of the guards for questioning. When he saw that we were Jews he asked: "Are we Jews or not, you see, I wear fringes (showing his cloak), my father wears fringes. My mother lights candles, my grandmother lights candles, so are we Jews or not?".

From his words I learned that he was from the tribe of Lewani. He claims they are of the tribe of Benjamin (Ben-Amin). I asked him jokingly: "Why do you not return to Judaism and see no need to?" He answered: "The day will come when we return and be Jews!"

As a sign of esteem he gave us loaves of bread and sent us in honour. The man was bearded, healthy and his face looked Jewish. He looked like those tribesmen who would come to Herat. Many were traders, dealing especially with Jews. They liked Jews. (compiled by A.Avihail, 14 Iyar 5734 - 1974).

(32) Testimony of Mr. Meir Kaspi (Arlozorov St. 13 Tel-Aviv), formerly a trader in Kabul. Born in Herat

In the city Kust near Gazni is a customs-free store. I was in it when a soldier entered who

belonged to one of the tribes. He asked for a silk tablecloth for "Joy Namaz" (place of prayer). "Why do you buy this?" I asked him. He looked at me. I told him I was a Jew and he said "you are like the sun which came out from behind a hill" and added that all the Kust inhabitants are cousins of the Jews (of the tribe of Muhamed Zai). I asked "Do you have written proof of this?" and he answered: "You are a Jew, correct? Do not be angry"."Why should I be angry?" I asked, and he continued: "You know how to write? If so, show me when you arrived in Afghanistan? We do not have the means to write, and also we have no books, and you though you are Jews have no written (proof) of it".

I saw tribesmen of the Jajis and they had sidelocks, black-coloured eyes and the appearance of Jews. They would come to Kabul, where I asked them why they had sidelocks. They answered that they did not know. They all like the Jews.

I heard from Mr. Rafael Basan of Kabul, that the Jews took a walk through King Zair Khan's Garden in Kabul, on the second day of the intermediate days of Passover dressed in Jewish holiday clothes. The king told them - go with the customs of the time for you are longtime residents here; in the city of Gur-Sakhar there is Jewish synagogue from before the coming of Muhamed. (Because of its importance in antiquity the city has an air link with Kabul).

In the Kabul Museum - Dar el Aman - there was a black stone which had written on it: "I went in G-d's shadow. Betsalel went in G-d's shadow. Fear and trembling will come upon us, and he who is a Jew will be killed, and he who is a Muslim will live. On Wednesday, the 13th of Adar" (the year was not written; it was broken off intentionally, in his opinion).

Someone came from France and related that they found the stone in Kandahar and "the year was broken off by the goverment"; the writing was Hebrew; I wanted to photograph it but I did not find it because it was put inside a store house below large stones, so I could not photograph it.

Thirty years ago, the Muhamed Zai tribe would say they were Jews from the tribe of Benjamin, and now they say they are Aryans. (compiled by A.Avihail, Nisan 5738 - 1978).

(33) Testimony of Mr. Haim Yitshak, a leader of the Afghan Community in Tel-Aviv, a carpet merchant from the city Balkh

The Afridis light candles, grow sidelocks and do not cook on the Sabbath. When the city Balkh was built anew, some workers came (as work tax) from different cities and among them many Afridis. They related that they light 2 candles on the Sabbath eve. On the Sabbath they do no cooking. They grow sidelocks and prepare 12 breads in honour of the Sabbath. (compiled by A.Avihail - Nisan 5734 - 1974).

(34) Testimony of Mr. Yitshak Dil, of Ra'anana, who immigrated from Afghanistan in 5734 (1974)

He related that when he was in Kabul he heard of old Torah Scroll pages from Mulmul. He asked to buy them and then heard that there was a complete scroll. He sent a man called Agarjan to buy it, but he could not find the man who told of it. (Testimony of Mr. Kafi, who doubts the veracity of the story).

The French excavated at Gazni (or Kandahar) at an old gate and under it they found a large stone. It was brought to the Museum "Dar el Aman" in Kabul. I saw it and ancient Hebrew script was written on it. I asked the museum director what was written? He answered that the writing was unknown. I took out a calendar from Israel that I had and on it was ancient Hebrew script. I told him it was ancient Hebrew script and he asked me to go to the Head Director to discuss this. (Mr. Kafi also knows of this fact - see ahead) .

Once I toured with my family in the King's garden in Kabul. The king was there too and called us. We approached with fearful honour and kissed his hand as is expected. The king asked me how long the Jews had been in Afghanistan but I could not answer. He answered that there is a stone according to which the Jews are there 1,540 years (compiled as above).

(35) Testimonies of Musa Morduf and Moshe Kohen

Musa Morduf related that he travelled with the governor of the city Hudja-Tchest near Herat and Ovah. The governor's name was Abdul Rahim Khan. They travelled near the city, where there was a stone in the mountain with Hebrew script (written backwards) on it in plaster. This happened 50 years ago.

Moshe Kohen Ambulo travelled from Kabul to Peshawar. On the way he stayed with the tribespeople. On the Sabbath eve the tribesman brought 12 loaves of bread. When asked why,he said today was "Akhter", a holiday.

In Peshawar there is an important (royal) place and streets named after cities in Israel and also a street called Jerusalem.

I spoke with a member of the Muhamed Sai tribe and asked him what were their signs that they were Jewish. He pointed to his arm and to the place of the phylactery of the head, which they keep shaven.

The locale of the Lewani tribe is near Kandahar, toward the Pakistan border. The people's clothes have something like a talit with a square piece of cloth (like with our talit). I asked them what it was? They did not know. They put their shoulder and head into the garment and call it a Joy-Namaz (place of prayer), and use it for prayer.

The police chief of Kabul, the commandant, does not like Jews, but his father did, recognising the connection of the tribes with the Jews. At the time of the Israel War of Independence Muslims came to attack the Jews and he endangered himself to help defend them. We made him a beautiful "Place of Prayer". When we presented him with it, he told us that they were of the Sons of Israel. When Muhamed came they had no other religion besides Judaism. You remained Jews and we accepted the religion of Muhamed (reconstructed testimonies) (as above).

(36) Testimony of Mr. Yosef Barukh, Yehuda Halevi St. Rishon Le-Tsion, (formerly a Kabul merchant, born in Balkh)

(The above stayed several days each year at the Pathan villages. He sees a connection to the tribes of Israel, especially with the Afridis, Shinwaris, Jajis and Lewanis - who are like brothers).

They identify themselves with the Sons of Israel and they know that they fled from some where and came to Afghanistan. They have lighter faces than those around them and many have blue eyes. They are tall, even the women. They are brave warriors

and all carry arms (revolvers) with permits.

He saw a woman carrying the flank of a camel on her shoulder. In another incident he saw a woman give birth in a field, wrap the baby up and come to help her husband work. They grow animals - sheep and cattle. There is also agriculture.

Those who grow hashish do not use it.

In Balkh was an important family, friendly with his family. The family sons had Hebrew names: Israel, David, Moshe; most were literate. Some shave their heads in the middle at the place of the phylateries. All grow sidelocks and do not touch them. Most have beards.

Joy Namaz (Place of Prayer) is found among all the Pathans. Unlike the Muslim's it is white, and they keep it very clean. They spread it on the ground for prayers.

Many of the children of the Jaji and other tribes in Balkh wear a type of small talit under their garment, which is open on both sides and tied by part of it lower down. Asked why they wear it, they told me that it was for protection against enemy and evil eye.

The children are circumcised at the age of 8 days, not like the Muslims. The ceremony is very joyous. They slaughter many sheep.

In Kanduz (on Kust) he saw a wedding canopy, and there the groom also put a ring on the bride's finger.

They do not keep dietary laws, but they do not eat camel or horse meat. They differentiate between clean and unclean birds as do the Jews.

They greatly honour "Torat el Sharif" - The Law of Moses.

In Mulmul was a synagogue for the tribes but it sunk into the ground and only the upper section was visable. They do not pray in the direction of Mecca, saying that they do not know exactly where Mecca is, nor the Bayt el Mukades (Temple).

Women keep family purity and menstruation laws; during menstruation husbands and wives do not touch. After that they wait one week to nine days and bathe at home twice. Most go to city bath-houses if there are any.

The Sabbath is called "Yom el Hafta" (Seventh day?).

On the Sabbath eve he saw an old woman lighting candles in a cold storage room (for fruits) in the yard. Asked why she did so, she could not answer.

I was told in Balkh of old people who do not cook on the Sabbath. They did not know why.

If the brother dies (childless), there are levirate marriages in many cases. They keep the law of honouring parents in an exemplary fashion. They rise when the father enters, and stand heads bowed listening to him obediently.

They give alms generously - bags of flour and jugs of oil.

Their spoken language is Afghan (Pahtu). The Jajis are very wealthy. Many are in the cities Kabul, Balkh and others.

He heard in Peshawar that there is a special place of prayer for the Sons of Moses (Musa-Sai).

They told him that there is a place behind Peshawar where the sands blow in a storm for six days and stop on the Sabbath. There are found the

Sons of Moses. When I told him it was certainly the Sambatyon, he did not understand and asked for an explanation.

The Jews fear the tribespeople (compiled by A. Avihail).

(37) Testimony of Mr. Yosef Ben Rahamim (Jewish Agency Emissary to Pakistan)

He saw the Pathans in Karachi, Pakistan. They are tall and brave. They come to trade and guard. He heard of Jewish customs. They have Mediterranean faces, are honest and trustworthy. (as above).

(38) Testimony of Yosef Kasel from France (famous author who stayed in Afghanistan for a long time).

The Pushtu tribes have white skin (dark shade) and beautiful faces. Their origin is wrapped in mystery but they call themselves "Sons of Israel" and they say that their ancestors emigrated from Mesopotamia in the period of Nebuchadnezzar after the Babylonian suffering. They emigrated to Central Asia (from his book, Afghanistan).

(39) The words of S. M. Immodin (Professor in the University of Dacca)

This nation was known for its courage and strength. Most of the researchers, both from East and West accept the premise that their origin is Jewish. According to most of the Eastern historians the Afghans testify to their being of Jewish origin,

however there are those who differ from this view.

The reason for the change of their name to Afghans was that the Babylonians and Egyptians persecuted them as Jews so they fled and began to migrate to escape from the tyrants and eventually changed their name to Pushton or Pakton. They were already known by this name in the 6th century of the Christian era.

Proofs to their Judaism: During times of plague they sacrifice animals and smear the doorposts of their homes as in Egypt.

They have a scapegoat to expiate their sins. They keep the custom of Levirate marriages. There is a connection between the Pushtu and Hebrew languages. Celebrating Passover they make unleavened bread. Hebrew names. (Islamic culture 1949, p.23 - the Origin of Afghans).

(40) Testimony of Moshe Khardim, an Iranian student who travelled from Israel to Afghanistan in the summer of 1975. Lives on Rechov Alfandari 9, Jerusalem.

He heard in Herat from some Jews, that the Kakaris, Jajis and Lavunis have clothes with fringes. (2 in the front). The Shinwaris have a square garment which they spread on the ground to pray on and the Jews say these are fringes. All have beards and the Afridis, Shinwaris, Jajis and Lavunis have sidelocks.

He saw a black stone in a museum with 8-15 lines written in Aramaic and Greek, saying: "Respect your father and your elders and do not kill animals". (The stone was from 300 years before the Common Era?).

In Menarjam in Central Afghanistan there is a stone with the Shield of David on it. There are also pictures of graves there with Hebrew writing on them. They are about 1000 years old and have a Hebrew date on them. The Germans photographed these graves and published the photographs. (It is written for example: "Joseph ben Menashe died", in the Persian language with Hebrew script).

Each tribe has a family tree on deerskin with gold letters: from the sons of Jacob until the present head of the tribe. He heard that the Jajis and the Lavunis converted to Islam because of the threat of death. He found a piece of silver which had the Shield of David on it among the Jajis or Afridis (this refers to a silver bracelet which he brought with him and presented to the association?).

The tribes only marry amongst themselves. He saw a beautiful column 1,000-2,000 years old which had a Shield of David on it. (He brought a photograph). Three years ago one of the Shinwaris came to the synagogue in Kabul and told that his grandmother lit candles. He came for 6 months on Sabbaths and New Moons and afterwards stopped coming. (Perhaps they killed him?).

In A.Scott's book "Afghan and Pathan" on page 13 it says that the Abdullis, Sabu-Zai and Baruch Zai belong to the Sons of Israel from the kingdom "Gur". On page 18 the Gilzais, Kurianis and Shinwaris and also the Muhamandis are said to belong to the Sons of Israel. The Jajis and Levunis also live in Kandahar. He did not find amulets among the children of the Jajis. He found a tribe that locked their menstruating women in a small room (from the testimony of one Jew).

He heard that the king considers himself to be of the tribe of Benjamin. There is, "the Book of the Convenant" where it is written that Jews who did not see the destruction of the First and

Second Temple came to the Afghanistan region. Jews relate that they saw fringes and Sabbath candles fifty years ago. They also swear by Moses. The ritual slaughterer, Moseh Naamat tells that they had a sort of Torah scroll which they would kiss without knowing what it was. The Jews of Afghanistan are not interested in the customs of the Pathans. The Pathans number 16 million: 7 million in Pushtostan and 9 million in Afghanistan.

Mula Abba, an old doctor in Herat saw the above fringes amongst the Levunis. The Jews know they belong to the Ten Tribes but did not make contact with them because of their areas of inhabitance.

The Pathans (Shinwaris?) have "Joy Namazh" (Place of Prayer),but they do not take them off. They are very similar to Jews. Historians say that the Shinwaris near Jalalabad do not know the Koran and are almost not Muslims. In Nuristan are "heretics" who accepted Islam about 50 years ago.

The security situation is serious because of constant war with Pakistan and is difficult to travel in the border region. All are suspect, and it seems that the land has no law. The economic situation is difficult without modernization. Most of the tribespeople are shepherds. Vengeance is a popular custom among them. The synagogue in Mimna was built by Jews. (abridgement and taping by A. Brin and A. Avihail, spring 1975).

(41) Testimony Yakov Bezalel of Rechov Har-Zion corner of Wolfson, Tel-Aviv (of Herat, emigrated to Israel 1934, was a trader)

The Jewish tradition of the tribes is known to the elders and the learned and is accepted by the people. The tribes: Afridi, Jaji, Shinwari, Rabbani, Levuni, Ashuri (Asher) and others who do not live in the area were exiled from the Land of Israel

in the exile of Shalmanesser to the Afghanistan region. As is written in the Bible they were exiled to "Hala and Hibur, the River Gozan and the Mede cities". Hibur is Peshabur in his opinion because "Pesh" in Afghani means fortress. The river Gozan is a large river flowing near Kandahar and spilling into the Indian Ocean near Karachi. On both sides of the river live about 40 million of these tribespeople. Among the tribes is the tribe Vaziri, meaning "the ministers" and they are important. When Muhamed came the tribes thought he was the Messiah which they waited for and they converted to Islam. On the other hand, the "Benai Yisrael" in India did not convert to Islam. Also the Duranis belong to to the Sons of Israel ("Benai Yisrael"); and according to Rashi based on the Midrash to the portion Ekev (10:6). Therefore in the second counting in the portion Pinchas, only 5 families appear from the tribe of Benjamin (instead of 10). At the time of the incident of the concubine on the hill and at the time of the death of Saul and Jonathan at Gilboa, others of the tribe of Benjamin fled and joined their brothers in Afghanistan.

Even then they had taken power and when the other tribes were exiled and came there they found a Benjaminite regime.

The tribespeople help one another and marry one another but not the Shiites. They love Israel and see them as cousins: "We converted to Islam and they remained sons of the religion of Moses". Their government has a tradition of not killing a Jew, even if he is a criminal.

When he was a child of 8 years old, he went with his father to a village near Herat to collect a debt. There were Shiite children who threw stones at them. All of a sudden an old man came from the village and chased away the children. He explained to his son that the Jews are the Sons of Israel and

we are also from the Sons of Israel, and that the Sons of Israel sinned against G-d and are in exile, but we are not in exile.

The Afghanis grow sidelocks on their cheeks and the hair above their ears grows long. When walking one time with his son after his car had been disabled between Mazar and Kabul, the tribesmen saw him and attempted to take back the child who had sidelocks, thinking that he was from the tribes, until one of them explained that the Jews also grew sidelocks. They swear by Moses and not by Muhamed.

As a remembrance of the large talit they wear "Joy-Namaz" (place of prayer) on their head and shoulders without strings. An old lady (past menopause) lights Sabbath candles on Friday eve. They place 4 bricks on 4 sides of a square and inside is placed a candle on which they place a ceramic utensil resting on the bricks to enable oxygen to reach the candle and protect it from the wind.

All the Pathans in Peshawar and vicinity have Shields of David in their houses. They see them as signs of blessing and each one acquires one according to his economic situation. (Compiled by A. Brin, Spring 1975) .

(42) Testimony of Mr. Levi Dil, Rechov Asirei Zion, Raanana (emigrated to Israel from Kabul recently)

The Jaji (Gad), Shinwari (Shimon), Afridi (Ephraim) tribes and also the Benjamin tribe are converts like the Jaji. He thinks that only they are part of the Jewish people, from among the tribes. The tradition is kept primarily by the elders.

According to the tradition they were exiled by Nebuchadnezzar and came to Pakistan from India. Today they are Muslims. They know of their Jewish origin (Ten Tribes), but they do not know of Jewish history.

They look like Jews; many of them have beards. Some circumcise on the eighth day. A ninety-five year old lady remembers that she would light candles on the Sabbath She died last year.

About two hundred years ago two tribes were annihilated in Kandahar. They were identified as being of Jewish origin. Consequently they hide their Jewish identity.

In the Museum in Kabul there is a stone which testified to their Jewish past and the situation in Afghanistan for fifteen hundred years. He visited the museum and saw a very large stone on which was written ancient Hebrew writing. He asked the director about the stone and he explained that it was excavated in Gazani and there was no one who could read it. Someone was brought from Paris for purpose. He spoke with a man from the tribe who told him about a dynasty 70 generations old which proved his Jewish origin.

In his opinion the tribes are scattered from Iraq to India.

(43) Testimony of Shalom Simon-Tov from Rechov Yehoshafat 16, Ramat Shikma (from Kabul) (emigrated to Israel 24 years ago)

He knows the Afridi, Jaji, Shinwari and Levoni tribes. They are known by the Hebrew original - Ephraim, Gad, Shimon and Levi. The language of the Pushtu is similar to Hebrew.

They are 7 million strong and live in the border region. They look like Rabbinite Jews. They keep sidelocks very meticulously. Most have beards. They are strong with beautiful eyes and wear 4 cornered garments without fringes called "Kafan". There are Hebrew names among them. They light candles in honour of the Sabbath.

Once he had to remain amongst the tribes on the Sabbath because of business, (perhaps this was among the Shinwari). He saw an old lady lighting an oil lamp in the middle of the room on the Sabbath eve (similar to the oil lamps of the Jews). Afterwards she spread a mat over it. Asked why, they knew that it was a remembrance from the time they were Jews. There remain three signs to their Judaism: fringes, sidelocks and the Sabbath candles. The speaker asked the old lady why they converted to Islam and she answered that it was because they killed them and tormented them, and after they heard that they say "Allah" (G-d in Arabic), they finally agreed to accept Islam. Consequently they are not interested in revealing their Judaism. Furthermore she claims: "We are the real Jews, not you".

When the State of Israel was established he heard that many from amongst the tribes wanted to emigrate to Jerusalem to help their Jewish brothers, and they could not keep quiet. They were not permitted by the authorities.

The king who was expelled liked the Jews because he ate and slept with them when he was studying in France. The Afghan tribes are nomadic sheph rds, and very hospitable. It is not dangerous to stay amongst them (As above).

(44) Testimony of Baruch Mula (lives at Maimon 3, Bnai Brak) emigrated from Herat in 1962

His acquaitance with the tribes was due to his visiting Herat on business, and also because of his stay for a certain period in Kabul and Kandahar. He heard of the tribes Jaji-Gad, Shinwari-Shimon, Afridi-Ephraim Levoni-Levi and this is the popular tradition in Afghanistan. He saw people of the Levoni tribe who wear cloaks open at the side and at the bottom. And they had something similar to 4 cornered garments with one string in each corner. He heard from the tribespeople that their elders light a candle on Sabbath eve and cover it with a big basket.

The royal family speaks of its relationship to the tribe of Benjamin. The kings are known for their good attitude to the Jews. Once the king Habiballah Khan ordered food from the Jews to demonstrate his positive attitude to them. The family tree of the Afghan kings is mentioned in their family diary.

The administrator of the city Mimna would tell the Jews who came to visit him, "I am a Jew and you are not", when they mentioned the name of Moses our teacher to him he stood in memory of him. Once he sent his soldiers to bring vinegar from the Jews for the Sabbath, and because it was the Sabbath a fight broke out and his soldiers were assaulted. When they returned and told him that the Jews refused to give vinegar because of the Sabbath, the administrator remembered and said, "if so, better that you would have been killed". Until today many of them are bandits and they distribute the booty among the poor. They are physically very strong and when they fought the British, they sent their women into battle. They are independent. They trust the Jews in matters of commerce even though the latter deal with forbidden objects.

They would tell the Jews: "We are Jews and you are not". Once my friend asked them, "How do you know you are a Jew?" They said they had a sign and pointed to their sidelocks. They are lovers of Israel. (As above, spring 1975).

(45) Testimony of Menashe Rabani and Shimshon Kashe, (Menashe emigrated to Israel in 1946 from Herat. He was helped by Shimshon who came one year ago from Kabul, and others are present)

He says that all the Afghan tribes have a tradition of belonging in the past to the people of Israel. He knows the famous tribes: Afridi, Jaji, Shinwari, Levoni (and Asiri), by their Hebrew names, and sees this as only an Afghan translation. The tribes are different from those around them by their external appearance. The Jajis are tall, light-skinned and green-eyed. They do not marry with other tribes.

Once he travelled with a friend to the area of the tribes and had to stay over. He went to the house of the sheik. There they prepared a feast on wide trays and served different dishes and sheep meat. They feared lest they be asked to eat (not kosher), but the head of the tribe asked to bring them eggs which would be cooked in a separate utensil that was also used for tea and also to bring "yoghurt". After the feast, the head of the tribe said that the guests are from the Sons of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and they themselves are also sons of Jacob, but they converted to Islam in the past. However, they keep a parchment scroll on which is written of their origin from the tribes of Israel. At the end of days the Madi (Messiah in Persian) will come and guide them. According to the speaker, other tribal heads have similar scrolls.

He also relates that when he was a young man he drove in a truck in the city Mazar and beside him sat a gentile soldier who hit him with his fist until he broke out crying. People asked why he was crying and he showed them the marks from the blows that he had received. Then, their leader arose and reprimanded the soldier and said to him: "Ask your father and your elders and they will tell you that once we were also Jews but we were not steadfast".

At their weddings they sing a lot about Moses. There was a Jewish community at Mulmul until a hundred years ago but they converted to Islam. They keep their Torah scrolls in a locked place until this day, and he who has a request comes there and touches the lock. Many of them have Hebrew names like Samuel, Shimon, etc.

They grow sidelocks to the middle of their cheeks but the custom is not kept rigorously. The women light the candles on the Sabbath and cover them with baskets. As a remembrance of fringes they wear a long garment (about 3 or 4 meters) and they fold it on their necks like a scarf. Besides this they tie a string at the bottom of their garments even if it is not separated into corners. The tradition is not kept by the young, but the attitude to the Jews is good. (As above, spring 1975).

(46) Testimony of Abba M., an Afghan emigrant (Bnai Brak), emigrated to Israel, 40 years ago, asked to remain anonymous.

In his opinion you must separate between Persian-speaking tribes (Banit Tajiki) and Afghan speakers (Pushto?). To the first group belong the royal family, the Mahamandis, etc. To the second group belong the Saradis, Kandaharis, Kalgais, Levanis, Jajis, etc. (doesn't remember well). Yusuf Zai and

Musa Zai are aristocrats among them. Three tribes belong to the Sons of Israel - Afridis, Shinwaris and Vasiris. They live together in the border region Kabul-Peshawar-Kevita-Kandahar, in long camps of tents. The tribes amongst which he visited are very wild and illiterate. They do mathematical calculations with rope. They have herds of sheep but also live by bandity and thievery of strangers. A stranger is liable to be killed by them. He who kills and steals more is considered brave by them. They launch attacks also on Indians, pillaging and kidnapping the daughters and converting them to Islam. It is accepted to marry several wives (up to 7).

There is firm discipline administered by the tribal head on all matters. They are very rich and completely independent. The Afghan government fears them. Each tribe sees itself as the strongest and they won't intermarry even amongst the other tribes. They are not aware of world events, but conversely, when one becomes friendly with them, they are extremely hospitable.

Once we met Muhamed Khan Tarazi the head of a large tribe among the Afridis. After an extended stay with him, I told him I was Jewish. He had difficulty understanding what a Jew was, but after he understood he said, that they came with the Nebuchadnezzar exile from Israel to these areas and that they were also Jews. After the coming of Muhamed they converted to Islam. I told them they should be proud of their past. I asked them why there remained no more customs proving their Judaism. The head of the tribe answered that they still kept 3 customs: they have a large 4 cornered garment which they wear on their head and shoulders (without fringes), they are careful not to shave their heads and beards but not sidelock portion beside their ears). Afterwards he took me to his tent and his wife showed me (the third

custom) an oil lamp which they were lighting every Friday afternoon. They cover the lamp with a very large basket so that it will not go out. (A lamp like this is also found among Afghan Jews). They say that this custom of lighting the lamp is being forgotten, and they see the lamp as a sign. If it does not go out until the end of the Sabbath they will have good fortune.

In continuing, his wife took me to the edge of the tent and took out a small package which was very well hidden and she bowed down before it. To my questioning she said that when somebody is sick in the village, they place the package under their head and they get well immediately. When I wished to open the package she told me "if you open it you will die". They told me that these packages are found all over the region. I asked that they show me and they brought me to an old lady over 100 years old, known as a healer of the sick. She also did not allow me to open the package and said, "a pity that you should die young". I strongly beseeched them and stayed the night until finally she agreed to the opening of the package, but not in her presence. I opened it and found a small book of Psalms which was difficult to read (in Hebrew), and also a menorah (which is found drawn on Sepharadic synagogues). When I asked her how she heals sick people she told me that she knows a couple of names of angels amongst which I identified the name Mikhi (Michael?). She told me that she obtained the package and the secret of the names of the angels from her mother. Of course she refused to give me the package.

They circumcise on the eighth day when they have money for it. They do not know Muslim customs well. (As above, Spring 1976).

(47) Testimony of Zion Solomon, an emigrant from Karachi (1949), who visited there several times as an emissary (until 1970), Bet Maariv.

The tribal members who live in Pakistan sometimes leave the tribal framework and go to the city where they work in various occupations, as for example in Karachi.

A Rabani waiter with whom he came in contact and who saw that they act like Jews, said that they are also from the Sons of Israel exiled from Babylon. To prove it he said that they circumcise their sons at the age of 8 days. He does not eat meat unless it has been slaughtered ritually. (and not by breaking of the neck in the tradition of the Indians). They know the day of rest is the 7th day and they light the candles on eve of the Sabbath. He had an amulet around his neck as did the other Pathans and as do all the Muslims, but whereas the Muslims have amulets with verses from the Koran even externally, on their amulets they have nothing on the outside and on the inside sometimes is written "Shma Yisrael" (as above, Summer 1976).

(48) Testimony of Mr. Hananel Merzioff of Rechov Weizman, Tel-Aviv (of Kabul who lived in Peshawar, Pakistan, between 1935 and 1948)

In the year 1942 there was an English military rabbi who went to visit the Shinwari tribe.He met the head of the tribe, Nabob Huti in his home. This is the father of Nabob Mordan, who had close contact with the Merzioff family. The head of the tribe told him of the book of his family's origin and he wanted it translated into English and published, but Muslim zealots burnt it. Despite this, he had in his possesion an original copy.

He heard that President Y.Ben-Zvi sent an American to Peshawar in order to obtain a book of genealogy but he failed.

Nabob related that Nebuchadnezzar brought them because of their bravery to the mountain region of Afghanistan-Pakistan. They accepted Islam because of its similarity to the Law of Israel.

The head of the tribe related "our blood is Jewish blood; we dress differently from the other tribes. We have a garment, different by its white colour and its being woven by hand. They wear a skullcap and a Joy Namaz (as do all) on their heads. The Pathans have small sidelocks and usually have beards. They are pleasant people and brave. Their faces are Semitic and they have light blue eyes".

They know that about 500 years ago they had a Torah scroll but they could not read it and when the King of Iran came to visit them, he asked who they were and they said that they did not exactly know, but that they had a book, according to which they know their identity. With the king was a Jewish minister who discovered that the book was a Torah scroll and said that they were Jews.

On Fridays they light a candle towards evening but do not know why. Old ladies light it. He saw the candle in the room and asking,was told that lighting "was an ancient tradition". They are about 3-4 million strong.

He heard that there was a nabob (prince) who said that they have to fight with the British against the Germans to protect the race of the Jewish people. They do not eat horse and camel meat.

The rabbi from England asked concerning family purity and was told that they immerse in a river and refrain from touching for 3 days. They only

marry within the tribe.

At Landi Katal (the mountain country) Meen Merzioff visited with the Jaji, Shinwari and Afridi tribes. They are drivers and deal in transporting goods. They know English and this is enough to enable meeting and speaking with them in Peshawar. They have radios and the place is accessible by road. It is not dangerous. They are very hospitable. The rich have houses and the poor live in tents. There are shepherds and farmers and also merchants. They are wise and brave. They sell hashish and also smoke it. They respect their mothers very much. When a child is born they give him a rifle. (Compiled by A. Avihail).

(49)Testimony of Mr. Pinchas Yekutieli (of Herat, living in Jerusalem)

I heard that the kings of Afghanistan have a book of genealogy. This I heard from members of the royal family. I saw fringes but not an outer garment. Only on the inner side do they have 2 strings on their clothes.

Some wear sidelocks and some do not. Every community and tribe has a special garment. Each tribe has a head. Some tribes have a proven link to Israel through their names: Suliman Khiel, Musa Zai - they live on the border. Some of them know they were Jews, but they also do not believe... they are already assimilated (As above).

(50) Testimony of Abba Gul of Jerusalem (from Herat)

I heard that the Afghanis have signs that they were once Jews, for example they light candles on Sabbath eve and cover them with a basket. Royalty is of the tribe of Benjamin. (as above).

(51) Testimony of Mr. Moshe Naamat (was the head of the community in Herat, a ritual slaughterer and circumciser. Emigrated to Israel in 1978)

Each Afghan family has a book of genealogy, according to which they belong to the people of Israel, a fact which they keep hidden. He knows the names of the tribes: Jaji, Afridi, Shinwari, Jamshivi (Menashe).

They are meticulous about laws of impurity and purity, regarding a menstruating woman. She is isolated for 15 days.

"Joy Namazh" is always with them, even if they don't wear it, and they keep it clean.

On the Sabbath eve they light a kerosene lamp and put it under a basket until the end of the Sabbath.

They have personal names which are not found amongst the Muslims, such as Israel and Jacob. He has a German booklet in which is written that German researchers found graves in Chahchaharan from the 11th-12th centuries that have inscriptions in Persian script and in the Hebrew language. (Compiled by A.Brin, Passover 1978).

THE INHABITANTS OF KASHMIR

The State of Kashmir in Northern India, which borders on Pakistan and Afghanistan, consists of a very wide valley, surrounded by high mountains. Her inhabitants, who number between 5-7 million people, are different from the remainder of India's inhabitants. Generally speaking, they have clearer complexions, and most of them are Moslems.

An interesting tradition is passed down among the inhabitants of Kashmir regarding their ancestry from the ten tribes. (See the Encyclopaedia Judaica on Kashmir.) This tradition is supported by extensive literature, written both by the people of Kashmir and by outsiders. It is interesting to note that, in spite of their being Moslems, the people of Kashmir are sympathetic towards Israel and the Jews. It is evident that the interest in their origin has also led to interest in the people of Israel.

There is apparent willingness among the people of Kashmir to learn about Judaism and perhaps also to return to their origins - to the people of Israel.

The history of the Kashmirs is clouded in mystery, as is the history of other peoples in that region.

Their History

Many Kashmir researchers are of the opinion that most of the inhabitants of Kashmir are descendants of the ten tribes, who were exiled in 722 B.C.E. and who wandered along the "Silk Way" through the countries of the East, Persia and Afghanistan, until they reached the Kashmir Valley and settled there. Others say that the wanderings began approximately 300 years later. The wanderers settled in the Kashmir Valley and kept their traditions,until they were forced to convert to Islam when the spread of Islam reached the valley.

The priest Kitro, in his book The General History of the Mogul Empire , says that the Kashmirs are the descendants of the Jews (from the book Jesus Died in Kashmir).

The travelling Arab historian, El Bironi, wrote in a report on India in the 12th Century "that in the past, permission to enter Kashmir was granted only to Jews". The priest Monstrat said in the time of Vasco de Gama, in the 15th Century: "All the inhabitants of this area who have been living here since ancient times can trace their ancestry, according to their race and their customs, to the Jews; their features, their general physical appearance and clothing, and their ways of conducting business show that they are similar to the Jews in Europe." (V.I.Fishel - Jews and Judaism in Mogul Law)

Books which discuss this subject today are Jesus Died in Kashmir by A. Faber-Kaiser,and Hindu Kashmir by Professor F.M. Hassnain, the director of the National Museum, who has also written another book which is in the process of being published.

Dr. Aziz Achmad Kurshi reiterates the above opinion in his book Asrar-I-Kashmir (The Mystery of Kashmir), in both Urdu and English, and the same idea has been stated in numerous other books.

Mr. Ikbal Chapri, the owner of a house-boat named "Haifa" in Srinagar, has written about this topic in the Srinagar newspapers.

The following list of names is compiled from the philological evidence about the names of tribes and places in Kashmir literature, in comparison with Hebrew names.

The Names of Tribes and Groups in Kashmir

Abri - Ibri	Asheriya - Asher	Azri - Azriel
Amal - Amal	Attai - Ittai	Bal - Baal

Baniyah - Baanah
Beroth - Beeroth
Bilgai - Bilgah
Caleb - Caleb
Dand - Dan
Gabba - Gaba
Mallak - Melech
Matri - Matri
Moza - Moza
Musa - Moses
Nehru - Nahor
Shaul - Shaul
Shuah - Shuah
Suliamanish-Solomon
Tamar - Tamar
Tellah - Telah
Tiku - Tekoa
Tola - Tola
Zadu - Zadok
Zartan - Zaretan
Zattu - Zattu
Gaddi - Gaddi
Gadha - Gad
Gareb - Gareb
Gomer - Gomer
Haqqaq - Hukok
Ishai - Ishai
Israel- Israel
Kan/
Kahana - Cohen
Kalkul- Kalkul
Kanaz - Kenaz
Lavi - Levi

Names of Places in Kashmir

Ach-bal(Anantnag)- Ashbel
Amunah(Kulgam) - Amon
Amariah(Srinagar)-Amariah
Aner-wan(Srinagar) - Aner
Ara-ham(Anantnag) - Ara
Ara-guttru(Kulgam)- Ara
Arah-bal(Kulgam) - Arah
Ara-Mullat(Kulgam)- Ara
Aror(Awantipur) - Aroer
Astor(Kulgam)-Ashtoreth
Bahan(Kulgam) - Bohan
Balpura(Awantipur)Baalpeor
Bani-ruth(Kulgam) - Ruth
Barzilla(Kulgam and Srinagar) - Barzillai
Ben-hara - Ham
Behatpoor(Handwara) - Bethpeor
Dan-sok(Kulgam) - Dan
Doru(Anantnag and Gilgit) - Dor
Gochan(Anantnag) -Goshen
Hara-mok(Anatnag) - Hara
Heshba(Handwara)-Heshbon
Kahan(Awantipur) -Kanah
Kalkol(Kulgam) - Kalkul
Keran(Kernah) - Cheran
Lasharoun(Srinagar)Lasharon
Lavi-pura(Handwara)- Levi
Lyddan(Palwana) - Lod
Mamre(Srinagar) - Mamre
Mattan(Anantnag) - Mattam
Median-pura(Kulgam)Midian
Nabudaal(Handwara)-Mt.Nevo
Nine-wa(Anantnag) -Ninveh
Perah(Udampur) - Parah
Phallu(Kulgam) - Phallu
Pishgah(Handwara)- Pisgah
Rissi-Pura (Awantipur) - Rissah
Shopeon(Kulgam) - Shopan
Sukait - Succoth
Suru(Bhawan) - Shur
Takht-i-Sulaiman (Srinagar) - Solomon
Tarelu(Awantipur) -Taralah
Teman-kot(Handwara)-Taman
Uri(Uri) - Uri
Tema-pura(Kulgam) - Tema
Zelu(Awantipur) - Zelah
Bushan(Pamir) - Bashan
Dottan(Baltistan)- Dathan
Gilgit - Gilgal
Guzana - Gozan
Jehial(Gilgit) - Yechiel
Kirjuth(Ladakh) - Kiryath

Their Traditions

In "Yusmarg" (Handwara), which is on the border of Pakistan, there lives a group which to this day calls itself by the name "B'nei Yisrael". Many of the inhabitants of Kashmir say, however, that this was the ancient name of all of the inhabitnats of Kashmir.

The people of Kashmir have a theory that Jesus the Christian did not die on the cross, but that, in his search for the ten tribes, he reached the Kashmir Valley and lived there until his death. (Jesus Died in Kashmir - A. Faber-Kaiser.) They even point out the place of his grave in Kashmir.

There is another even stranger tradition of a small community next to the Wallar Lake, who point out the grave of Moshe Rabbeinu, this being in relation to names such as Beit Peor, Pisgah, Cheshbon and Har Nevo, for which one finds very similar names of places in the Kashmir region.

There is yet another tradition in connection with King Solomon, according to which King Solomon reached the Kashmir Valley, and, through his wisdom, aided the people of Kashmir by successfully regulating the "Jalum" River. This tradition is also connected to the name of a place "Tachat - I - Sulimein" - meaning Solomon's Throne, which is situated above the capital of Kashmir, Saringer.

Literature about the Kashmir People

The two primary historians of Kashmir, Mulla Nadiri, who wrote Tarich-I-Kashmir (The History of Kashmir), and Mulla Achmad, who wrote Waki-I-Kashmir (Events of Kashmir), have established, without a trace of doubt, that the origins of the Kashmirs are to be found in the People of Israel.

Abdul Kadir Ben Kazwil states the same opinion in his book Hashmat-I Kashmir.

Lhasa(Tibet)-Lasha/Laish
Moserah(Kenskar)-Moseroth
Pishon(Zenskar) - Pison
Rabath(Pamir) - Rabbah
Rezin(Zanskar) - Rezin (Nechemia)
Samaryah(Zanskar) - Samaria

In addition, the name "Ju" (Jew?) appears as an addendum to many names in Kashmir. The name Israel is also fairly common among them, as among the Pathans. This name is not used at all by Moslems.

They also have Jewish customs which have not been fully investigated. These include lighting a candle for the Sabbath, growing sidelocks and a beard, the Shield of David and others.

The educated members of the tribe have expressed their willingness to return to the People of Israel. This matter requires extensive research by Torah scholars and scientists.

THE SHINLUNG TRIBE - MENASHE

In the mountainous region which lies on both sides of the border between India and Burma, lives the "Shinlung" Tribe, which numbers between one and two million people.

This tribe traces its ancestry to the tribe of Menashe. In their prayers and songs they refer to themselves as the sons of Menashe, and they pray to the G-d of Menashe. The entire tribe is conscious of its Jewishness.

A few thousand members of the tribe decided to return to the observance of the commandments of Judaism approximately ten years ago, after an interruption of about 100 years. and they yearn to return to the Land of their Fathers - to Zion.

The Tradition of their Wanderings

After the exile of the ten tribes by the Kings of Assyria in the year 722 B.C.E., the tribes were taken by Salmanesser to Assyria, from where they were sent to Halah, Habor and the River of Gozan. The tribe of Menashe lived in Persia following its exile there in 457 B.C.E, under the rule of the Persians (Darius and Ahashverosh).

In 331 B.C.E., when Alexander of Macedon conquered Persia, Afghanistan and India, the tribes were exiled to Afghanistan (Pakton) and to other countries and they became shepherds. As a result, they became idol-worshippers.

With the conquest of Islam, they were forced to convert to Islam. On account of their speaking Hebrew, they were called "The Semitic Speakers". Throughout this entire period, they are said to have possessed a Sefer Torah which was guarded by the Elders and the priests.

The Continuation of their Wanderings

From Afghanistan, their migration continued eastward, through Indu-Kush until they reached the Tibet region and the Chinese border. From there they continued into China along the length of the "Wei" River until they reached the central region. A settlement was established in Kaifeng in the year 231 B.C.E. Resulting from the cruel behaviour of the Chinese towards them, they were forced to act like slaves to the Chinese. Thus began the process of assimilation, which crept into the tribes as a result of Chinese influences. In consequence of these pressures, a part of the people escaped and lived in caves in the mountainous region. They were therefore named "The Cave People" or "The People of the Mountains". They lived in terrible poverty in these caves for approximately two generations. During this period, they still kept the Sefer Torah with them.

The Observance of Commandments in the Past

a. Circumcision - Because of difficulties, circumcision was not carried out according to Jewish law. The priest used to bless the child in a ceremony on the 8th day.
b. Marriage - A young man was expected to marry his cousin. The parents would marry off their children according to mutual agreements between both parties and under the direction of the elders.
c. Inheritance - The oldest son would inherit his father's possessions and assume responsibility for the whole family.
d. Holydays - They would observe 3 holidays during the year: "Tzap-Charkut" or "Kanyanikut", "Mimi-kut" or "Chang-ta-kut" and "Paul-kut".
e. Levirate Marriage - A younger brother had to marry his older brother's widow, and name the first-born son after his deceased brother in order to keep the name alive.
f. Incest - This did not occur and was unheard of in the community. Anyone commiting this crime was excommunicated and banished from the tribe.
g. Divorce - Was forbidden under any circumstances.
h. Burial - The deceased was buried in a grave next to his house. Cremation was not practiced.
i. Status of Women - The women were not involved in the men's affairs. They were forbidden to wear men's clothing. It was customary for them to sit separately in the synagogue (as is practiced today) and it was incumbent upon them to honour their husbands.
j. Strict Observance of the Ten Commandments - They were meticulous in their observance of the 10 Commandments.

Their Tradtitions and Religion Today

With the arrival of the first American missionary, V. Petigrore of the Baptist Mission in 1854, the Baptist Church was established in Kan-fung-Pi in Manipur. In 1910, more missionaries arrived and established churches in Tehurach-Tcharpur. As a result of pressures, the priest lost his status and the community was subjected to Chiristian influences. The new generation lost the spiritual inher-

itance of their fathers and down to the present day, a certain belief in the Christian Jesus still exists.

Recently, a return to the Torah has begun to take place. This has happened through contact with Jews and freedom of worship. Today, they try to observe the commandments as written in the Torah, with certain confusions resulting from their ignorance of the Oral Law.

They have synagogues called "Beit Shalom" in Mizaram, Manipur and Assam, in which they congregate on Sabbaths from their villages.

They perform the rite of circumcision. Some of their sons and daughters are sent to Bombay to learn Jewish studies and Hebrew at the "ORT" school. When they reach matriculation they convert to Judaism and marry "Bnei Yisrael".

Since the establishment of the State, they have been pleading to be allowed to come to Israel (The State symbol is printed on their letters). They write that they are weeping by tne Rivers of Babylon and beg to come to the hills of Zion. They call themselves the "Jews of North-East India."

At the end of a booklet published by them, from which the above information was taken, they write:

> According to the law of the independent State of Israel which was declarted in 1948, every Jew is permitted to return to Israel, We therefore turn to these good people who have good will and deep understanding to take immediate steps to allow us as Jews to be granted this right and privilege. We, the undersigned, ask to have our rights recognized and to be allows to return to our ancestral home according to the law of the State of Israel.

When they were banished from the cave area, the Sefer Torah was lost, or perhaps stolen from them by the Chinese, who burnt it. The priest continued to hand down their tradition orally, including ritual observances, of the worship until the beginning of the 19th century. From the valley of the caves known as "Kawil" or "Sin Lun", they migrated westward, passed through Thailand (Siam), the Kila Valley and the **Kendi** Mountains until they reached **Lantchuan** and Shan. From there, they journeyed to Burma. In Burma they wandered along the length of the river until they **reached Mandalei.** From there they wandered until they reached the Chin Mountains. In the 18th century, a part of them migrated to the areas of Manipur and Mizoram and they were thought to be refugees that emigrated from China.

Generally speaking. a certain tradition was observed by the tribes throughout their wanderings. All who observed them realised that they were not Chinese, even though they spoke the local language. In various places they were called "Lu-Si" ("The Ten Tribes" or "The Ten Jewish Tribes). Because of pressures, they were not always allowed to worship; it was only when they reached India that they were able to return to a way of life and worship free from outside pressures. This, however, did not last for long; when Christianity spread to the Nagaland Mountains on the border with Burma, the community was once again subjected to extremely heavy pressures. All of their religious articles were thrown away and burnt by the English and American missionaries between 1854 and 1910.

This poem is one that accompanied them throughout their migrations; it is a traditional song about the crossing of the Red Sea which was written by their forefathers. These are the words:

"We must keep the Passover festival
Because we crossed the Red Sea on the dry land
At night we crossed with a
And by day with a cloud
Enemies pursued us with chariots
And the sea swallowed them up
And used them as food for the fish
And when we were thristy
We received water from the rock."

The Priests and the Worship

In every village there lived a priest, whose name was always Aharon. One of his duties was to watch over the village. There were two priests in the large villages. The priesthood was passed down by inheritance. The priests were thought to be endowed with superior powers. They were occupied with worshipping and with the ofering of sacrifices. The priest wore a tunic (perhpas with a breastplate) and an embroidered coat, fastened with a belt, and a kind of crown on his head. As we have already said, the priest sand a song about the anscestor "Menashe" at the beginning of each gathering.

In case of illness, the priest was called in to bless the sick person and to offer a sacrifice for his recovery. The priest would slaughter a sheep or a goat and smear its blood on the ear, back and legs of the ill person, whilst reciting verses from the Torah at the same time (Leviticus 14:14).

For the atonement of sins, a kid goat was offered on the altar, which was in the temple which they sometimes built. The blood was sprinkled on the horns of the altar and the rest of the meat was eaten by the people.

Yom Kippurim was observed as a day of atonement, once a year.

The holy vessels of the priest were not made of metal, but rather of earth, cloth, wood, etc.

Special ceremonies were held by the priests in the case of certain illnesses. There was a form of atonement carried out with a bird, the wings of which were sacrificed and the feathers thrown into the wind. In the case of leprosy, the kohen would sacrifice a bird in the field.

It is apparent that they also practiced idol-worship and had superstitions regarding spirits and demons. They also believed in reincarnation, but at the same time they believed in a G-d in Heaven, to whom they would turn in times of trouble.

THE CHIANG-MIN TRIBE IN CHINA

Their History and Way of Life

In the mountainous area of North West China, Sechuan, west of the Min River, which lies near the border of Tibet, lives an ancient people who are called by the Chinese Chiang (or Chiang-Min). The language of this people has been forgotten, and they have also lost their ancient script.

Today they speak Chinese and two other languages: one that originates from Tibetan and the other a slang which is called Chiaring.

The area in which they live is famous for its rare animals and plants (for example, the Giant Panda Bear).

The people live in villages similar to fortresses, which are generally built on hilltops in the "Win Chuan", "Ligan", "Mangisian" and "Tiachi" areas, as well as in other areas.

In the past they were a great peole who ruled in th the provincial territories from Kansu in the north to Liyunan in the south.

Historical maps of the "Han" Kingdom show that the Chiangmin also spread to North-West Kansu.

The Chiang-Min see themselves as immigrants from the West who reached the area after a journey of 3 years and 3 months.

There is also insubstantial evidence that they were in the area for over 200 years before the Common Era.

The Chinese treated them as barbarians and they related to the Chinese as to idol-worshipers. Enmity existed between the Chinese and the Chiang-min for a long time. The Chiangmin lived independent lives until the middle of the 18th century, when they became part of the Chiarung people, in

order to earn more freedom.

The pressure from the Chinese from the point of view of religion, the spread of Christianity and the influence of intermarriage caused the Chiangmin to gradually give up their special monotheistic way of life. However, it is still possible even today to learn about their past traditions through customs and the faith which they still keep.

The Chiang-Min people have been living a special Jewish way of life for approximately 2300 years. According to their tradition, they are the sons of Abraham and their forefather had 12 sons.

Those among them who did not take Chinese wives after their victory in war, their descendents looked semitic.

The character traits of this people include: integrity, love of one's neighbor, mutual aid, love of loving kindness, generosity, modesty, gratitude, shyness and stubbornness. They live according to high ethical standards and they also have the fear of Heaven.

They believe in one G-d whom they call "Abachi" ("The Father of the Spirit") or "Mabichu" ("The spirit of Heaven"), and also "Tian" (Heaven). As a result of Chinese influences, they all call him "G-d of the Mountains" as the mountains are the central place for the worship of G-d.

They see G-d as an all-powerful G-d, who watches over all his creatures, judges the entire world with justice, rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. This G-d gives man the opportunity to do repentance and to gain atonement for his actions. In times of trouble they call G-d "Yahweh".

They live a very special way of life based on the offering of sacrifices. It is forbidden to worship statues or foreign gods and anyone who offers a sacrifice to other gods must face the death penalty

Because of Chinese influences, they came to believe in spirits and demons, but they are forbidden to worship them.

The Chiang-Min did have a great influence over the Chinese and other peoples to the west and to the south.

In the past they used to have written scrolls of parchment and also books. Today they keep oral traditions. They themselves do not understand many of their own songs and prayers.

The Sacrifices

The offering of sacrifices forms the central point of the religious life of the Chiang-Min. This worship is performed in two ways:

a. as public sacrifices on platforms erected on mountain tops, on which they build altars of stones which may not be fashioned with tools, and on which they offer special sacrifices;

b. as domestic or personal sacrifices, on domestic altars built on the flat surface of the roofs of the houses.

There is an atmosphere of holy worship in all these sacrifices. They are performed by priests whose priesthood is passed down through inheritance from father to son. These priests wear clean white clothes and perform the sacrifices in a state of purity.

This purity is attributed to the Creator and is required of all men. Sinners and those who are impure may not take part in the worship of the Creator.

The Chiang-Min do not have statues or images, but they do have two symbols of holiness: a) a clean white sheet of paper and b) a piece ofnatural white stone, to symbolise absolute purity (and perhaps the written parchment which they had in the past).

Before the worship of G-d, one must become holy and purify oneself.

It is apparently because of Assyrian influences in the past that they always try to build their altars next to trees or branches.

The altar itself is built of earth which is moulded into stones which are then laid one on top of the other, without being fashioned or cut by any utensil.

The main part of the service is performed at night (perhaps to conceal it from any Chinese onlookers, or because of the special effect of the silence and tranquility of the night).

Before the offering of the sacrifices, one is required to wash oneself and one's clothing and to dress oneself in clean garments. The sacrificial animal itself must also be washed and purified.

There is a special place for washing and for purification by immersion situated next to the public platforms. Anyone who has not purified himself may not approach the place of the sacrifices. Strangers are also forbidden to approach the place of worship.

The purpose of the sacrifices is as an atonement and to bring G-d'S blessing on those who offer the sacrifices. The sacrifice itself has the purpose of taking away the sin. Blood must be sprinkled on the corners of the altar in order for one to be granted atonement and to have one's prayers accepted.

They believe in a general atonement in the future, after which the sacrifices will be annulled.

The elders and the priests place their hands on the head of the sacrifice before it is slaughtered, and then offer their prayers.

The Priests

The priests are the religious leaders and worshippers of G-d.

As previously stated, the priesthood is passed down through inheritance from father to son. The priest may not perform sacrifices without being ordained in a special ceremony in which sacrifices are also offered.

Single men may not become priests.

The sacrificial ceremonies are performed to the accompaniment of prayers and drums. The priests wear special white garments, a sash and a special head-turban.

Through their prayers , they try to achieve closeness to G-d and assert their faithfulness and the observance of their traditions.

One of the prayers pronounced by the Cohen includes the following petition: "Priests of G-d, you are the priests of the generations who are witnesses to the fact that our sacrifice is pure, and has not been altered by us, but has been performed in the same manner since ancient times. We hereby fulfil our vows. We have not eaten impure food for 3 days, and we have not been in any impure places. We have gathered in the holy grove, the bundles of grass for the sprinkling of the blood are in their places, we have brought the sacrificial ewe and we have lowered the rope around the bundles of grass for the sprinkling of the blood.

"We are about to slaughter the ewe on earth. G-d of the Heavens, at the hour of our sacrifice to You, Father of the Spirit, we beg You to descend and come to our grove.

"If our garments were impure, we would not dare to wear them. If our shoes were not pure we would not dare to wear them. If our hats were impure, we

at the time of the preparation of uncultivated land. The sprinkling of the blood on the doorpost and on the Mezuzot is performed to ensure the safekeeping of the house.

The laws of levirate marriage is kept by the Chiang-Min, despite this being strictly forbidden by a decree of the Chinese authorities.

It is considered shameful for a woman to leave her hair uncovered, and the women therefore wear white scarves.

Mixed dancing does not take place.

They have a custom of closing off forests for 50 years, after which they have a special ceremony to mark their re-opening.

At the time of the sacrifice, the priest carries a white scroll of parchment. They show great love for the parchment and take care to ensure that it remains unblemished, as any blemishes would render the scroll defective.

As a result of Chinese influences they practise trances for witchcraft, and various objects to expel demons. The serious priests scorn these practices.

The New Year - On the first day of the tenth month, a sacrifice is offered and completely burned.

The Festival of Peace is observed in the middle of the summer.

The Festival of Thanksgiving is observed in the autumn.

Circumcision is not performed, but after the 7th day or on the eve of the 40th day of the child's life a white cock is slaughtered in the child's honor, and he is given a name.

(from "The Ancient Missionaries of China" by Prof. T. Torrens.)

THE KNANITES OF KERALA

An ancient outpost of Judaeo-Chrisatianity

Ancient Tradition

Kerala, the verdant coastal strip of South-West India, was from very ancient times, an immigrants' haven. Peoples of various races and from varied areas have entered Kerala at different times. Whoever were the original inhabitants, they were either driven into its lush tropical forests and hill ranges or enslaved to field labour. No-one knows when, or in what order the immigrant races came. The earliest, perhaps, are the snake worshipping Nagars, who evolved into the warlike 'Nayars', the land-owning and military class, and spread over the entire country; their origin is still unknown. Then there is the numerically large community of 'Ezhavas', who are supposed to be of Polynesian origin, emigrating via Ezham or Ceylon. They brought with them the Kera Palm (the Coconut) giving the land its name. The 'Nambidiris' followed, Aryan Brahmins who established themselves as the intellectual elite, by the seventh century A.D. Numerous other racial groups have penetrated the hill ranges from far and near and remained as minorities or as classes of lower order.

Merchants from Greek and Roman ports, Arabia, Egypt and Palestine were engaged in pepper and spices' trade centuries before the Christian era. The Old Testament contains vestiges of such trade contacts in the Hebraic names for ivory, apes, peacocks etc., which show that the words are of South Indian origin: even the word for palanquin used in the Song of Songs is derived from its Indian name. In consequence of such mercantile contacts, the coast had Roman and Greek settlements; also several Jewish Colonies, dating, perhaps, from pre-Christian centuries, and, certainly, after the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem. Budhism and Jainism were the dominant religions until the 6th century; thereafter, with the increase in ascendancy of the Nambidiris Brahmins, Vodic Hinduism came into the fore.

Into this whirlpool of racial and religious eddics, Christianity flowed in very early in its career. A persistent tradition, lacking in definite historical evidence ascribes the introduction of Christianity in Kerala, to St. Thomas, a disciple of Christ, who allegedly landed in Musirie (Shingley of Jewish lore) in 52 A.D. Eusobius, in his 'History of the Church', refers to Pontaenus, a stoic Philosopher of Hebrew origin, and the head of the 'Catechetical' School of Alexandia, who visited India about 180 A.D. He'found that Matthew's Gospel (in Aramaic) had arrived before him and was in the hands of some people there who had come to know Christ,' This would imply that he had met with either a Jewish or a Judaeo-Christian group.

In 345 A.D., the small Christian community was reinforced by a batch of immigrants, According to tradition, it consisted of a Bishop (Joseph Rabban), several priests and deacons and laity - men and women - numbering 400 in all, under the leadership of Knayi Thoma the Nasarani. The Community gets its name (Knanaya or Knanite) from this personality. Ancient songs refer to his name in different forms - Thomas Kinan, Knaya Thoma, Thoma Cana etc, Scholars are not sure whether the same signifies a merchant (Cananeo) or a locality (from Cana).

Knaya Thoma and his people found favour enough with the Ruler (Cherakon or Cheraman Perumal) that he gave a Copper Plate - Charter of land, high social privileges and overlordship over 18 lower classes, such as barbers, carpenters, bow makers, toddy-toppers, tailors, smiths, etc. The original Copper Plates disappeared with the Portuguese in the 15th Century and may be in the Torro de Tombo in Lisbon, or some old Franciscan Convent in Portugal. Translations in Manuscript exist in the British Museum.

Ancient songs of the community commemorates the tradition; but the versions have been altered, due to changes in ecclesiastical allegiance, in the course of centuries, so as to cater to Catholic or Jacobite interests. Those garbled versions persent unreliable traditions about the origin of the community. Knanites are represented as Persian Christians fleeing from persecution under Sapor II

or as an admixture of immigrants from Edessa, Jerusalem and Mesopotamia. Hints about their true origin can be gleaned from here and there in some parts of the Songs. The term used about Thoma, viz. Nasrani (a modified form of the Greek word Nazarence applied to Jewish Christians), the number 72 as the number of families involved (an important number in Jewish lore), reference to head covering (women at prayer covering the head is a Jewish custom, vide I Cor. 11: 5, 6, 13), reverence for ten Commandments, mention of a gold crown, and a six-pointed star (in the description of a bridegroom's dress), bridal songs reminiscent of the Song of Songs - all these indicate a definite connection with Judaeo Christian Communities in Edessa and Jerusalem. Land's Adecdota Syriaca' says Thomas Cana is of Jerusalem; Mingana's Early Spread of Christianity in India' refers to him as Thomas the Cananite, of Cana which is Jerusalem.

The Knanites are also known locally by the term Thokkumbhagar or Southists, One explanation is that in the City of Mahadovarpattanam, the immigrants settled in the southern part and other Christians in the northern part; another connects the term with the North and South Kingdoms of Palestine. Both are unsatisfactory.

In the following pages an attempt is made to trace the origin of this ancient community from whatever meagre information is available.

The Nazarenes in Kerala.

When the Knanites or Judaeo Christians or Nazranis landed in Cranganore in 345 A.D. they, according to the ancient songs, were met by Jews and small groups of pre-existent Judaeo- Christians who had the Hebrew Gospel, Probably they would have also met groups of Pauline Christians who may also have come to Kerala by then, In the aftermath of the Copper Plate Charter of Privileges, the different groups of Nazaranis (Newish or Petrine and Pauline) segregated themselves and settled in different parts of Mahadevarpattanam, which is more or less synonymous with Cranganore or Muziris (or Shingley of the Jews). The Knanites may have chosen the Southern portion and got the

name of Southists (or, as some say, Sudhists, which means Puritans). But there seems to be a more distinctive significance attached to this term.

Certain suggestions contained in the book 'The Scrolls and Christian Origins' by Mathew Black (1961), may be summarised as follows: Essenes represented an ascetic strain in Israel, a strain represented in the old days by Kenites, Nazirites, Rachabites, etc. This strain flourished in the Post-Exilic period as a non-conformist tradition in two main groups, Northern and Southern, From the Northern group came the men of the Qumran Community. A century later, against the background of the Southern Group, Jesus proclaimed in Galilee the Gospel of the Kingdom of G-d, but the fourth Gospel shows that he had earlier and later associations with the southern group also.

The Kenites seem to be a distant echo of Knanites, a non-conformist or separatist group in Kerala. The name 'Southists' may point to a very ancient division preserved among Essenes, then among Nazarenes in the Middle East and transmitted through Edessa to Nazranis in Kerala.

The Knanites who came in the 4th century were Nazranis. In course of time this term came to be applied to all ancient Christians in Kerala. The Edessan Knanites were also called Syrians, and they brought the Syriac Liturgy, The total Christian world in Old Kerala also thus came to be known as Syrian Christians. By the time the Portuguese came, the tradition of St, Thomas' apostolate had become widespread and the Portuguese called them St. Thomas Christians.

From the 5th century Eastern Christendom became subject to strong Nestorian influences. Nestorian missionary enterprise was far reaching and widespread up to Cathay and beyond. Gradually the Kerala Christians including Knanites came under Nestorian hegemony. Priests and prolates came from the Nestorian Patriarchate or Catholicates. When Nestorian power declined from the 13th century, clergy were recruited from whatever sources were available, irrespective of whether they came from Nestorian or Coptic or Jacobite sources. Even the Roman sea started sending feelers. In this period of extreme fludity and confusion,

the original religious faith underwent a sea-change, at different times taking on the hues of whatever mother-church in the Middle East or Egypt happened to send clerical help and attain temporary local dominance.

However, like the Essenes and the Nazarenes who wore their forebears, the Knanites, while bending to the winds of litergical change now and then, steadfastly maintained their separate social customs and status. They never mixed socially or intermarried with other Christian sects of pagans; they were rigidly endogamous; they preserved their Jewish heritage in customs and manners, including some of their wedding costumes, their wedding songs and other ancient songs kept them constantly reminded of this rich heritage of the past.

By the 16th Century, the Portuguese arrived on the scene. By 1590, on the strength of the Papal Padriado, and with the military help of ruling chiefs, they forcibly reduced all Syrian Christians to obedience to Rome. They burned the books and records of the Syrians. For 54 years the entire Kerala Christian community was under Rome. Then they rose in revolt, which a Knanite priest spearheaded. The majority of parishes seceded from the Roman Catholic fold. The seceding party made attempts to get priests and prelates from whatever source they could get at except the Roman Catholic. Accidentally they netted Jacobite help. The Syrian Church thus started a connnection with the Patriarchate of Antioch from 1653.

Ever since, the Syrian Church in Kerala has been split, mainly in two factions, namely Roman Catholic and Jacobite. The Knanites although they preserve social uniformity among themselves, stand divided in matters of faith in two opposite camps. This division has been prolonged for three centuries and tends to keep the two groups even socially estranged. The religious divisions is so transcondental that the two groups, although aware of a common origin and common heritage find themselves unable to come together.

The 70 families of Jacob who went to Egypt multiplied into six lakhs of people of a mixed community, within the period of 400 years, when Moses redeemed them from there.

But our community of 70 families which came and settled in Kerala in 345 A.D. have not multiplied into more than two lakhs of people (Catholic and Jacobite together), though it is more than 16 centuries now since we settled in Kerala. This is because it is and has been our tradition not to mingle or get intermarried with the gentiles of this land, and we have been strictly adhering to the same. When we settled in Kerala our language was Aramaic. Though in course of time this has completely vanished, for all religious services in our churches this language is even now in use. We do not marry each other unless one of them adopt the other's faith. Further Knanite churches will not solomnise a marriage ceremony between a Knanite and follower of another faith - sect of Christianity, or in other words in such matters too we are strictly endogamous.

My personal view is that salvation for Knanites lies only in one direction, They have to forcibly eschew the religious trappings imposed by the Roman Catholic and Jacobite Churches, go back to their Judaeo-Christian faith in one G-d and to the doctrine and customs espoused by the Jerusalem Church.

The crying need of the hour is for all Knanites to join together. They should consider the divine call for unity of Israel found in Ezekiel 37/15-22 as applicable to them, mutatis mutandis. Before this can be achieved, the Knanite youth should undertake a study of their history, of the history of Jews and Judaeo-Christians, Much study and research are called for. They should seek the help of historians of whatever faith in India and abroad, including Israel, in order to reconstruct their past. To this end, the writer hopes this article will serve as a humble pointer.

THE MARRANOS IN SPAIN AND PROTUGAL

On the 1st of Tammuz 5151 (1391), "G-d aimed his bow like an enemy at the community of Savilia...her gates were set on fire and many of her people were killed; but most gave up their religion and some sold their children and wives to the Ishmaelites... some died for the santification of G-d's name and many desecrated the holy covenant." (from the letter of Rabbi Chisdain Kreskis). Similarly, in the community of Kordova, "There were no adults and children left in the community who did not give up their written religion."

In this way, the religious persecution spread to Toldu and throughout the entire region. Many Jews were forced to accept the Christian religion and even to make a proclamation about this faith. The Jews who were converted by force were called the "Marranos" (perhaps because of the expression in the New Testament which they were forced to declare: "Mara-Ata" to acknowledge that "the lord" (Jesus) is coming.) This expression later had a meaning of a curse and a disgrace. The convertees were also called "Konursus" (the Exchangers of Religion), or the "New Christians", (Cristos Novos). In the Baleares Islands (Majorca and others) they were called "Chuetas"- the eaters of pork (Chua - pig fat) because of their eating pork in public.

The exchanging of religion bacause of persecution spread thoughout Spain. After the expulsion from Spain in 1492, many were uprooted to neighbouring Portugal, mainly to Northern Portugal.

Approximately one hundred years after the beginning of religious persecution in Spain, a decree was passed by King Manuel (in 5257 - 1496) ordering the expulsion of all the Jews from Portugal, with a period of 11 months in which to close up their businesses. This expulsion was passed as a result of pressures from the Spanish monarchy. King Manuel, whose real intention was to allow the Jews to remain, ordered all the children under 14 to be seized and forced to undergo baptism. The captors also seized adults. Consequently, many families decided to give up their religion in order to

would certainly not wear them. If our backs were not pure, we would not carry the drums on them. If our hearts were not pure, we would not dare to carry out our vows and to offer up our prayers. The grass has been tied into bundles for the sprinkling of the blood. We offer the bread and the wine before our G-d. We ask You to consider the slaughterer of sins! We ask you to absolve the sins of all who are gathered here. We sprinkle the blood in order to atone for our sins. We ask of You, G-d, to accept our prayers!"

Following this prayer, the head, heart, liver and kidneys are burned with the meat in the fire. The priest receives the shoulders, the chest, the legs and also the skin of the animal.

The meat is divided amongst the worshippers. A stranger may not partake of it, as the meat is holy.

The intestines and entrails are cut up and then eaten with unleavened bread. Each worshipper also drinks a small glass of wine.

They understand their sacrifices as retribution for their vows. In the past there were also burnt-offerings which were burnt completely.

The priests also perform marriage ceremonies, burials and similar duties.

At the time of the sacrifice, 12 flags are placed around the altar, in order to teach that they originate from a father of 12 sons.

Funerals and Burials

The deceased is either buried or cremated. A wooden bird is placed on the coffin to symbolise the ascension of the soul to Heaven. Two cocks are also brought to the funeral; one is slaughtered and the other is left alive. The first fruits are brought to the priests. The purification of the earth. In order to request help from G-d for the harvest, a sacrifice is offered

be allowed to remain with their children. Many committed suicide together with their children for the sanctification of G-d's name. On the actual day of the expulsion (ships had been especially prepared in advance) the entire crowd who had gathered (numbering approximately 20,000) was dragged to "churches". They were baptised with water and declared to be Christians. Amongst those who were baptised against their will were the father of the Ralbach and the father of Rabbi Joseph Karo.

As a result, there were many Marranos in both Spain and Portugal. Some of these Marronos left their countries at the first opportunity and escaped to other countries such as Italy, Turkey and also the states of North Africa. However, many remained behind in Spain and Portugal. In 1505, a member of the Venetian government who was delayed in Spain, testified that "one-third of the inhabitants of Spain who live in the cities are descended from the Marranos" (Graetz). At the same time, the historian D. Azvo claimed that "approximately one-fifth of the inhabitants of Portugal, mainly the city-dwellers, are descended from Jews." On the basis of this, another writer expresses the opinion that: "every Portuguese who was born outside of a village can be presumed to have Jewish blood flowing in his veins."

The Marranos were divided, generally speaking, into three groups: a) Those who had been forcefully persecuted and who eventually accepted the decree willingly and became assimilated amongst the Gentiles, in order to attain important positions in government or to become rich. There were also some sho fought with their brothers, spoke slander against them and prevented their return to religion (See Responsa of the Raivish No. 11). Those were considered to have converted willingly; b) Those who secretly felt a deep connection to the faith of their fathers and a love of Jews. They secretly observed a few of the commandments, but made no effort to leave their land in order to return to the complete observance of Judaism. The third group, c) was a group of true Marranos, who secretly observed all of the commandments and who used ruses and clever tactics in order to maintain their observance in difficult circumstances.

The Marranos were terribly persecuted by priests and the church, and also by the government. The gentiles often instigated pogroms against the Marranos; for example, on one day in 1506, more than 500 Marranos were killed in Libson.

According to Jewish Law, the first two groups were considered to be Christians. With regard to the third group, their marriages are not considered to be valid, because they did not have valid witnesses and there are therefore no problems of bastardy (Mamzeruth).

The Inquisition which took place in both Spain and Portugal, and which forced the Jews to undergo terrible suffering, degration and even death by burning, forced many of them to seek refuge in other countries. It sometimes happened that the Inquisition caught up with them in those countries.

The Inquisition took place in Portugal over a long period of 285 years (from 1532 to 1821). Throughout this entire period, the Jewish tradition was still given expression secretly. Until the end of the 17th century, there were many experts in Judaism and its laws. Thereafter, Judaism and its practice decreased, became weakened, the Hebrew tongue was forgotten and only a few leaders remained. As a result, assimilation became widespread. In many places, especially in the north of the country, many communities of Marranos still remained; they did not become assimilated, even when their Judaism was at a very low level.

Fifty years ago, Dr. N. Slutch wrote that: "An accepted lie existed in the world at large that the Marranos of Spain and Portugal had become completely assimilated and that they would never return."

It is possible to say that at least 500 thousand descendants of the Marranos are living in Portugal today. Of these, some still identify with their past and observe some customs and traditions, and there is hope for their return to Judaism.

In contrast to the situation in Portugal, it is very difficult to speak of clear concentrated groups of Marranos in Spain. The Inquisition in Spain was perpetrated in a much crueller and more terrible way than in Portugal. On the other hand, the possibilities for escape were much greater. Therefore, after the Inquisition ended in 1780, the small groups remaining had no clear tradition of being Jewish, and certainly not of observing Jewish customs.

However, a large group numbering approximately 50 thousand Marranos did remain in the Baleares Islands. Because of hatred by the gentiles, this group had remained separate and had not been allowed to assimilate. These Marranos were mostly living on the large island of Majorca (approximately 400 km east of the coast of Spain). Up until 25 years ago, this group had absolutely no chance of assimilating. Since then, however,major changes have occurred, resulting mainly from the change of government in Spain, and this community is also becoming smaller and weaker, mostly by the choice of its own members.

The "Chuetas" (Descendants of the Marranos) in Majorca can be divided into 3 types: a) Those who have remained Catholics and who try to prove their faithfulness to Christianity, resulting from their previous suffering and their desire to escape from the past. b) Those who have left religion altogether, as a result of a deep aversion caused by pressures of the church in the not-too-distant past, This group is also not interested in the Jewish religion and is active in the Socialist party. c) Approximately 10 percent of the people who are interested in their Jewish past, in knowing and learning about Judaism, and even in returning to Judaism. A part of this group wishes to be affiliated to a synagogue, and some are interested in coming to live in Israel.

In Portugal, conditions today are very difficult. The entire population is suffering from economic difficulties, as a result of the change of government. Approximately 2 and a half million people have left Portugal in order to find a means of supporting themselves in wealthier countries (Germany, France, and others, and even Spain).

"The Marranos", in spite of having a certain link to Judaism, live like gentiles in an atmosphere of materialism, and seek a life of comfort. Here, there are also those who are interested in Judaism and in living in Israel.

From the point of view of Jewish law, all the descendants of the Marranos are required to undergo conversion to Judaism, at the very least, because of doubt.

May it be G-d's will that the blessings of "He Who gathers the dispersed of Israel" and "The sons shall return to their borders" be fulfilled.

THOSE INTERESTED IN JUSAISM IN MEXICO

a) In the city of Halapa which is situated in the beautiful mountainous region, only a 4-hour drive away from Mexico City, and the city of Veracruze on the east coast of Mexico, a large group of approximately 200-300 people, who yearn to live completely Jewish lives, has become consolidated.

The group is partly made up of descendants of the Marranos, and also of people who observe Jewish traditions which were passed down to their families from past generations. Their interest in returning to Judaism has been continuous for approximately 5-7 years and several members of the group have succeeded in converting in the United States. There are tremendous difficulties involved in converting in Mexico itself. The members of the group have established a beautiful synagogue in Veracruze and, next to this, a community center where they study Judaism.

They endeavour, to the best of their ability and understanding to keep the dietary laws, Sabbath, Festivals and other commandments. They appealed to the Chief Rabbi of Israel, the "First of Zion" Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu and he referred them to the Amishav

Organisation, saying that "It is a great Mitzvah to assist them." The Amishav Organisation did indeed embark on new activities to help these people.

b) In the town of Vienta-Prietta(approximately 80 km from Mexico City), there is a second group of people who have been living as Jews for about 40 years. They have a synagogue, a cemetery, a community center and more recently, a mikveh for ritual immersion which they built for themselves.

In this group also, descendants of the Marranos can be found. They became assimilated with the local inhabitants and number about 150 people.

In spite of their being gentiles according to Jewish Law, however, these people have also been living as Jews during this entire period. Several of their children have studied in religious institutes in Israel, and some have been converted and yet maintain connections with the community. The entire community is interested in deepening their Jewish lives up to the point of conversion according to Jewish Law.

Both of these groups request assistance in the study of Judaism for the purpose of conversion, and in eventually organising their being able to live in Israel.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

* Rabbi Tsvi Yehuda Kook, Long may he live, initiator and activist in the association.

* Mr. Alfonso Tsava, Chairman of the Association by whose donation and the donation and the donation of his association this booklet was published.

* Mr. Shimon Matlofsky for his translation.

* Mr. Avraham Zonenshein, deserving of highest acclaim.

* Our friends, the people of Afghanistan and others, who gave of their time to testify regarding the Pathan tribes.

* Ms. Lily Lipszyc for her contribution.

* Ariel United Israel Institutes

May it be G-d's will that we will be worthy of seeing the fulfillment of the prophet's vision of the coming of the lost ones from the land of Assyria with all the banished ones of Israel in every location.

THE MYSTERY OF THE TEN LOST TRIBES OF ISRAEL



Peoples claimed by different writers to be the Ten Lost Tribes, dispersed by the Assyrian deportations of 740-700 BC

Peoples believing themselves to be descended from the Ten Lost Tribes

Nineteenth century expeditions in search of the Ten Lost Tribes

Alleged discoveries of ancient Hebrew Texts, "proving" that the Lost Tribes migrated to the U.S.A.

Anglo-Israelites. British and Danish Christians believing that the Anglo-Saxons are descended from the lost tribes. In 1900 they claimed 2 million adherents in Europe and the United States. They also claimed that Queen Victoria was a direct descendant of David