

The Thirteenth Tribe
by
Arthur Koestler

The Brilliant Author of:
Darkness at Noon

Reviewed
by
Meyer Levin

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This is a startling new discovery about the true ancestry of the European Jewish People.

Are today's Western Jews, really ethnic, Semitic, biblical Jews, or are mostly descended from a converted people called the "Khazars"? (Not to be mistaken for the "chazir", which means pig in Yiddish).

Who were they?

They were people of Turkish stock, mixed with Palestinians and, no doubt, others.

They claim their descent from Noah. (Noah's ark is believed to have finally settled on Mt. Arrarat in Turkey.) Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham & Japhet. Japhet had a son, Tagarma who had ten sons, one of which was called Khazar.

The Semitic people, Jew and Arabs, claim their decendency from Shem. Not much is know about Ham. I suppose all others are his descendants.

These tribes, from around Turkey, moved westward for a few hundred years. They were nomads who continuously raided and conquered as they traveled. People like the Pacheneg, Bulgarians, and Magyars, who later became know as Hungarians, were conquered.

They also attacked the Slavs, the Vikings, and the Russians from the seventh to the tenth century. They formed the Khazar Empire that ruled the area between the Caucasus Mountains and the Volga River, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea in Southern Russia.

They were fierce warriors. History speaks of how in one war they amassed fifty thousand horsemen.

The modern derivation of the name Khazar would be the Russian Kozzak and the Hungarian cavalry known as the Huzzars, both signifying military horsemen.

The Khazars had a strategic position. They stood as a bulwark to the Byzantine Empire (the Greek Orthodox Christians) from invasions from the north by the Vikings who were from Denmark. They were later referred to as the “Rohs” or “Rus”, meaning rowers of boats. Eventually they became known as “Russians”.

They crossed the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Finland and down the Volga River and other waterways to the Caspian Sea. They traveled on the Dnieper and into the Black Sea, conquering the Slavs who lived in the steppes of Russia. Their aim was to capture Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine and Arab countries.

The Khazars blocked their advance. These battles continued for more than two hundred years.

At that period in history, the Vikings were doing a fairly good job of trying to conquer the world. The Swedes and Norwegians (Norsemen) had already invaded Ireland and England and even raided northern France and Germany.

These battles with the Rus didn't always end in Khazar victories. The Russians captured the Khazar city of Ityl, located at the mouth of the Volga, and the Khazars started to lose ground.

Russian folk songs recall how the Russian heroes returned victorious from the Jidovskia Zemlya (the land of the Jews). However, the Soviet Government gave historians strict orders to “play down” the importance of the Khazar period. Even more importantly, the Khazars' blocked the advance of the Arab avalanche from the south, preventing the Moslem conquest of Eastern Europe. This was at the time when the Mohammedans were determined to conquer the world through North Africa and into Spain after the death of Mohammed in 632 A.D. The Arabs came as far as the Caucasus Mountains. There they met the organized military power of the Khazars. If it hadn't been for the Khazars, the history of Europe and Islam might have been a lot different from what we know.

That there was a great conversion to Judaism in the eighth century by the Khazar people and that the bulk of Eastern European Jews of the Crimea, Ukraine, Hungary,

Poland, and Lithuania are their descendants is most upsetting to the believers in the dogma of the “Chosen People”.

How then did it come about?

The kingdom of Khazaria lasted for four hundred years. To a large degree, the conversion to Judaism was a political move by King Bulan, although did believe it was the best of three religions.

In the eighth century, the world was polarized between two super powers, Christianity and Islam. The Khazars’ Empire represented a third power that had proven equal to either of them, sometimes as the enemy, sometimes as the friend.

Despite great pressure from the Christian Church and the Moslems to convert, they knew that they could only maintain their independence by accepting neither. Either choice would automatically subordinate them to the Roman Church or the Caliph of Baghdad.

The Khazars were already well acquainted with the “Real Jew” from Palestine for at least 100 years. These were Jews who came to their land as merchants, tradesmen, craftsmen, and quite often as refugees from Greek, Roman, and Arab persecution. They respected these Jews for their high degree of culture and industry. Also, both Christian and Mohammedans alike respected their sacred books. This is another reason that helped King Bulan with his decision.

So, in the year 744 A.D. the Khazar King Bulan chose Hebrew as the national religion. Idolatry was not completely forbidden, but circumcision was adopted.

At this time, however, the Khazar people did not want to or showed no interest in studying the Talmud, but accepted the teachings of the Bible wholeheartedly and became fanatically religious. They gave up eating pork, and they would pass the Sabbath sitting in complete darkness in their homes. There are Jews today in the Balkan region called the Karaites, who still behave that way.

Two generations after Bulan, his grandson King Obadiah created a great religious revival. He sent messengers to Palestine to recruit Jewish scholars. He built synagogues and had these scholars translate the Mishna, the Talmud, and prayer books. Even after the curtain came down on the Khazar state, after 400 years, their religion followed them to

the Khazar-Jewish settlements of Russia, Poland, the Ukraine, and Lithuania. The Rusks finally defeated them in 915 A.D., but they retained their Jewish faith.

In the 13th century, they fell victim to the great Mongol invasion of Genghis Khan and there was a mass emigration to Slavonic lands where they ultimately built up the great Jewish Centers of Eastern Europe. This of course, was 400 years after the conversion. By this time, the Khazars were pretty well mixed up with the “Real” Jews. They had a tendency to stick together, some in self-imposed communities called “Shtetles” and others flocked to larger cities. They again established their own places of worship and schools. Also, local populations were permitted to a large degree, to govern themselves. There they sat for centuries waiting for “Messiach” to come and return them to Palestine.

The Polish King Casmir the Great welcomed these Jewish immigrants to settle in his country, as he considered them as valuable assets to the Poland’s economy and government administrations.

Since the Khazars were experienced tax collectors, from the time they had exacted tribute from those they had conquered, and the Poles lacked this expertise, they became financial advisors to the nobility and the courts. Up until then, Poland was a land of forests and the good King Casmir saw their potential to bring his country into the modern world.

The traditional clothes worn by the Jews were the long silk caftans and hats trimmed with fur. This was also the dress of the Polish nobility who copied it from the Mongols. The Yarmulke, or skullcap, was also copied from the Mongols and, to this day, is still worn by the Uzbeks and other Turkish tribes in the Soviet Union.

As history has repeatedly shown, the Jew is invited to one or another European country like England, France or Germany, where they are pampered with special privileges and favors because they possessed the secret of how to keep the wheels of the economy turning.

The story always starts with a honeymoon and ends with divorce and bloodshed. After the “tricks of the trade” are learned, they don’t want the Jew around to give them competition. With the help of the church, they are once more expelled. Usually, they are once again “invited” to settle in another backward country that can use their expertise.

With constant restrictions on owning land, performing their trade, or practicing medicine, Jews were forced to keep their assets liquid in case they had to run. They took to money lending, later to be dignified as banking. The Christian Church forbade the charging of interest on loans, called usury. The Jews however, had no such restrictions and therefore became the moneylenders as typified in Shakespeare's Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. At that time, there were few, if any, Jews in England. Most were expelled in 1290, and Shakespeare probably never met a Jew in his life.

This relationship would last until the Christians learned the banking business and decided that they would rather get their reward here on earth than wait until they get to heaven, so Jews were once again expelled.

At no time does history show a great concentration of Jews in Germany, France, and England during the period of the first and second Crusades. There were, to be sure, small Jewish communities from as far back as the period of the Roman Empire. So, when these noble heroes of Christianity massacred, burned, and lynched the Jews of Europe, some Jews converted out of fear and some committed wholesale suicide.

The next terrible catastrophe was that of the Black Death from 1348 to 1350, that killed off one third of the European population, including Jews (since the rats who brought the disease from Eastern Asia weren't discriminating). The Jews were blamed and massacred by the Christians and accused as the ones who poisoned the wells. They didn't bother to consider that the Jews also drank the same water and also died.

Germany virtually became "Judenrein" which means "clean of Jews". If this was so, the question must be asked: What Jews constituted the millions in Poland, Russia, Hungary, Austria, Lithuania, and the Balkan States?

If all evidence points to the fact that there were not near enough Jews migrating from Germany into Poland and Russia, then where and how did Yiddish become the popular tongue of Jewish masses? Yiddish is a curious combination of medieval German, Slavonic, and other elements written in Hebrew characters.

But why German? ... Perhaps this is the reason.

As I noted before, medieval Poland was a land of nothing but farms and trees. King Casimir the Great did everything possible to attract immigrants with a high degree of culture to colonize the land, a degree of culture and “know-how” the Poles did not possess.

He invited four million Germans from East Germany who were bordering Poland to move in, build cities, and spread their high degree of culture.

It’s easy to see why the Khazars, coming into Poland from the other end, the East, found it necessary to learn German if it meant progress, getting along in business as well as socially.

In a few generations, they shed their original language and adopted German. (Jews did the same thing when coming to America, giving up Yiddish for English).

In Poland, the “honeymoon” lasted longer than elsewhere. By the 16th century however, it had run its course.

The Poles became jealous of the Jews and the Church became hostile. Again, the story repeats itself. There was a mass exodus, this time to Hungary, Romania, and further west to Germany and Austria. Countries, including Russia, Lithuania and Poland, Israel and the United States, became the nucleus of Jewish communities.

Historians claim the Khazars’ contribution to the genetic make-up of the Jews must be substantial and in all likelihood, dominant.

Are the Jews a race?

According to anthropologists, the answer is No! There is a wider difference, with regard to physical characteristics between Jews of one area of the world and another. For instance, Jews living around the Mediterranean, Near East, Arab and African countries, look entirely different from Jews of Poland, Russia, Germany, Holland, and England. There are greater similarities to the populations amongst whom we live that are reflected in statistics such as body height, head size, blood type, hair and eye color, and so on.

That there is a distinct Jewish type is a misconception. A non-Jew will be friends for many years with one whose name does not sound particularly Jewish until through conversation, there is some inadvertent mention that they are Jewish as well.

There are certain hereditary traits that do characterize the contemporary Jew. This, to a large degree, is a result of being confined to the Ghetto for several centuries

and being subjected to overcrowding. Ghettos were different from the Shtetle. A ghetto had a wall built around it and locked the gates at night. The Shtetle, on the other hand, was a self-imposed Jewish town, large or small and the Jews enjoyed a limited autonomy of self-rule. They were permitted to do business with the outside.

In the ghettos, Jews were subject to a certain amount of claustrophobia. They suffered depression of the spirit, contempt, and harassment. Sometimes, there were attacks by Christian churchmen followed by mobs that beat them and forced them to attend Christian sermons. They were intimidated, became self-conscious and suspicious of the “Goy.” This therefore became a mental attitude.

There had to be a lot of inbreeding that affected their looks and outlook. A natural selection took place. The concept as to who is beautiful made its mark. Certainly, a boy or girl with a pug nose was not favored. Didn't one with such a nose look too much like a Goy? Even since biblical times, the Jew favored a boy like Isaac's son, Jacob, who was thin and frail, but devoted to Hebrew learning, compared with Jacob's twin brother Esau, the hunter, who was tall and muscular. The concept of the willowy, thin scholarly youth was for a long time, the ideal “chosen” and much more desirable for one's daughter than the brawny and less studious boy.

Now, just a few comments about the origins of the Sephardim and Ashkenazim sub-groups. After the revolt of 70 A.D., when the Romans expelled the Jews from their biblical land, some went toward Europe to already existing Jewish communities made up of merchants, tradesmen, and refugees from previous persecutions, as for example the land of Khazara. So, the communities of Europe are called Ashkenazis, probably by the German Jews. The Sephardim get their name from the Hebrew word for Spain, Sephard.

Jews also took refuge in Arab lands and Egypt. There were actually Jewish cities in North Africa, even before the expulsion. The Arabs welcomed the Jews, at that time, until they rejected Mohammed as a prophet in the 7th century. Until that point, the Arabs considered the Jew a cousin, having the same ancestry. The Arabs claimed their descent from Ishmael who was Father Abraham's son with his concubine Hagar.

When Islam began the conquest of the world and conquered Northern Africa under the leadership of Hannibal and crossed into Spain, the Jews went with them. There, for 500 years, they enjoyed rich and productive lives. They served in the royal courts of

Spain and reached great cultural achievements. It was their “Golden Age,” until the 15th Century.

In 1492, during the Spanish Inquisition, they were expelled from Spain unless they would convert to Catholicism. Some did and became known as the Marranos. To prove they did convert, they had to eat pig. (Marrano is the Spanish word for “swine”).

Secretly they practiced Judaism. The prayer “Kol Nidre” was written for them, who under great pressure sinned against God. They were to be forgiven. Again, Jews were slaughtered, and again, they had to flee. Many were welcomed in Arab lands. Others went to Holland, England, Germany, Austria, and France.

The question persists: Are the Ashkenazi Jews of Eastern Europe, really descended from the Khazar people? This is a great and puzzling question that has yet to be resolved to everyone’s satisfaction. What happens to Anti-Semitism if Jews are not really Semites at all?

One more thing has to be said.

The author, Arthur Koestler, wanted to make it very clear that these findings do in no way imply that the State of Israel has no right to exist as a Jewish Homeland. The right to exist is not based on the origin of the Jewish people. The decision is based on international law. The United Nations decided this in 1947.

Whether the chromosomes of its people contain genes of Khazar, Semite, Roman or Spanish origin, is not relevant and cannot affect Israel’s right to exist.

There is no such thing as a pure bloodline. No race in the world can claim such distinction, and neither can the Hebrews.

Our own patriarchs set many examples of intermarriage.

Father Abraham cohabitated with Hagar, an Egyptian. Joseph married Asentha, a daughter of an Egyptian priest. Moses marries Zipporah, a Midianite. King David’s mother was a Moabite. King Solomon’s mother was a Hittite. Samson, a hero, was a Philistine.

You can readily see the Jews are a hybridized bloodline. So, of course, are the populations of most historic nations. It makes no difference that racial purity was not preserved. Yassir Arafat’s statement that East European Jewry does not have the “Right of Return” to live in Israel because they might be descended from the Khazars has

absolutely no validity. Israel has acquired a genuine national identity and therefore all Jews, regardless of their origin, their looks, or bloodline, have the “Right of Return”.

I am beginning to wonder why my eyes are blue. You may wonder why your nose is small. Don't let it bother you!

“Am Israel Chai!”

May the state of Israel live forever!

Meyer Levin