

Isaiah 14:1-2 Strangers in land of Israel join with the Israelites.

Isa 14:1, 2 For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the LORD for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors.

Strangers of Isa. 60 persecuted Jews outside the Land. In Isa. 14 they persecuted in Israel.

ARABS OF JEWISH DESCENT IN ISRAEL-- Israel National News 8-10-09

Up to 85 percent of Arabs in greater Israel stem from Jewish ancestors, it is estimated. Some of them want to become fully Jewish, but most are scared to even talk about it. MiSinai has spent about a half-million shekels, he estimates, on these efforts. They include visiting dangerous places deep inside Palestinian Authority-controlled territory, hearing the stories of Arabs who remember observing Jewish customs, and distributing literature to Jews and Arabs alike.

One Arab says his father told him the secret of his family's Jewishness on his deathbed, while another one, on the backdrop of a photo of the saintly Cabalistic sage Rabbi Abuchatzera on his wall, says their roots have been known in his family for generations. Wrapping what apparently used to be kosher tefillin on his arm, he says, "My father used to do this, and he taught us to do it whenever someone was sick or in trouble."

The Jews Who Didn't Leave

It is generally accepted that most Jews left the Land of Israel after the failed Bar Kokhba revolt in 135 CE. Yet many remained, and of these, many are still here, after having been forced to convert to Islam. "It turns out that a large part of the Arabs of the Land of Israel are actually descendants of forced converts to Islam over the years," says Rabbi Dov Stein of the nascent Sanhedrin rabbinical council. "There are some studies that say that 85 percent of the Arabs in Israel are descended from Jews; others say there are fewer."

Ben-Gurion Agrees

The claims are not new. Early Zionist leaders David Ben-Gurion and Yitzchak Ben-Tzvi wrote in a book 100 years ago: "If we investigate the origins of the Felahim, there is no doubt that much Jewish blood runs in their veins." The authors implied that these Jews loved the Land so much that they were willing to give up their religion. The reference is probably to an edict in the year 1012 by Caliph el-Hakim, who ordered the non-Muslims to either convert or leave the Land of Israel. It is estimated that 90 percent of the Jews chose the former, though many continued to practice Judaism in secret. The decree was revoked 32 years later - apparently too late for about 75 percent of the converts.

Tzvi MiSinai continues to convince Arabs in Judea and Samaria that they are likely Jewish. The film shows him passing through the Gush Etzion checkpoint and distributing pamphlets both to Israeli soldiers - "so that you'll know who you're checking here" - and to the Arabs waiting there - "so that you'll know who the majority of you are." Asked by an Arab if he is from the peace movement, MiSinai answers, "Yes, yes, peace, so that we can live together as one nation."

The Sawarka Bedouin Jews

One place where MiSinai has apparently found very strong Jewish roots is in the Bedouin tribe known as the Sawarka. There are about 3-4,000 of them throughout the Sinai and the Negev, and they "are all Jewish," says a tribal leader in perfect Hebrew. With his face camouflaged for the cameras, the Bedouin says, "They had no choice but to convert; this was centuries ago... I remember my mother and grandmother wouldn't light fire on Sabbath, and they had a special mikveh..."

Others, in a Bedouin village east of Hebron, also remember lighting candles at graves, and tearing clothes and sitting shiva for seven days, and not three as is Muslim practice.

Even today, ritual circumcisions are carried out after the seventh day of birth. Many homes in some of the Arab villages have doorpost indentations for a Mezuzah, with a scroll placed in some of them. In another village just south of Hebron, Muhammed Amsalem – a descendant of Spanish Jews - told Aharon Granot of Mishpacha magazine that everyone in town knows he and his clan are Jews: “Our elders tell us that our forefathers came to this land during the [15th century] Spanish Inquisition, via Morocco. They settled in Ramle. Then the Mamluks forced them to convert to Islam, and they moved to the South Hebron area.”

Amsalem says they decided to reveal their Jewish roots after the 1967 Six Day War when they learned that a Jewish community had been reestablished in Hebron. “But the Jews saw we had no knowledge of their religious practices and refused to accept us... If the Jewish community would be willing to receive us today, we would join them with great enthusiasm.”

In the area of the South Hebron Hills, half of the Arabs are aware of the Jewish origins. They used to talk about it openly, though no longer. One man who recently publicized a silver Chanukah menorah that had been passed down to him from his father and previous generations was hung by terrorists by his feet for six weeks, leaving him with permanent injuries.

Genetic Studies Back Claims

At the Hadassah Medical School labs, Prof. Ariela Oppenheim of Hebrew University performed an international genetic study that backs up conclusions of Jewish-Arab genetic similarities. “We found that despite the dispersion of Jews around the world for 2,000 years, they essentially kept their Jewish continuity,” Oppenheim said. “In addition, we found that the Jewish population is surprisingly close, genetically, to the Arabs living here in Israel.”

She said that the study shows that both the Arabs of Israel and the Jews are descended from the Kurds of Aram in Babylon – the birthplace of the Patriarch Abraham.

“It’s clear that we’re all from the same family,” Oppenheim concludes. “Most unfortunately, however, there are conflicts even within families, and sometimes brothers fight as well. I wish this is what will bring the Redemption, but I’m very sad to say that I don’t think so.”

Some Want to Return to Observant Judaism

South of Hebron, in Yatta, there is a large formerly-Jewish presence – and some even want to return to active Judaism. It is widely known there that half the residents are of the originally-Jewish Mahamra clan – a name that means “winemaker,” a trade that is forbidden according to Islam. “The people in these areas converted to Islam later in history,” MiSinai says, “and therefore more customs and knowledge and artifacts have been preserved.” These include Jewish stars over the entrances to homes, while in at least one house, the family has hidden a mezuzah and tefillin in creative hiding spots. One man pulled out a small Hebrew booklet of Psalms and Tanya with which he says he continues to secretly pray.

Miro Cohen, a Jew from Tekoa, in eastern Gush Etzion, is very friendly with the Arabs in a nearby village known as Kawazbe – a name that he and they agree is merely a corruption of Kuzeiba, the original name of the famous Bar Kokhba.

“These people are the descendants of Bar Kokhba,” Cohen declares. One Arab sitting with him can count his ancestors eight generations back, ending with a grandfather named Kawazbeh. Another village elder says openly that his grandfather was a Jew who converted to Islam. Some of the residents want to return to Judaism; they don’t call it converting, because they are “already Jewish.” On the other hand, Arabs with the name Kawazbeh have been arrested for terrorist activity against Israel. Other areas where Arabs of Jewish descent reside are Kfar Anzah in Samaria, Samoa in southern Judea, villages in the Tel Arad area, and more. Rabbi Stein says, “We know that up to about 200 years ago, the Galilee village of Sakhnin was a Jewish town, with an active synagogue. The Turks pressured them to convert to Islam, but the people there know that they are of Jewish origins.”