

Claimants of Israelite Descent in South Asia

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Abstract: There are seven groups in South Asia that claim Israelite descent. Of these, the two that have started practicing Judaism were previously Christian. Thus, the Judaizing movements among them are seen by anthropologists as byproducts of Christianity. Among the five groups that have not yet started following Judaism, four are Muslim and one is Christian. Although they have had traditions of Israelite descent for centuries, they refuse to embrace Judaism or even migrate to Israel, unlike the Christian-turned-Jewish groups in India. There are certain religious Jewish organizations that have been actively involved with the Christian-turned-Jewish groups for the last two decades and have also been instrumental in facilitating the immigration to Israel of a number of members of one of the two groups, the B'nei Menashe. Amishav and Shavei Israel now long for immigration to Israel of the other Indian claimants of Israelite descent as well, as they believe that the dawn of the messianic era depends on the return of the lost tribes of Israel. Their involvement with such groups in India can have great ramifications for world politics.

People who claim descent from the biblical character Jacob, whose alternative name was Israel, but are not necessarily Jewish by faith, are found all over the world, including South Asia, home to seven such groups. This number does not include the three Indian Jewish communities, that is, the Bene Israel, the Cochini, and the Baghdadi. Of these seven groups, four are Muslim, that is, Kashmiri,¹ Pathan,² Qidwai/Kidwai,³ and *Bani Isrāil* (Arabic and Urdu for the Hebrew *B'nei Yisrael*).⁴ Of the three non-Muslim groups, the Shinlung/Chikim or *B'nei Menashe* (Children of Menasse) as they call themselves,⁵ and the Madiga,⁶ who now call themselves *B'nei Ephraim* (Children of Ephraim), have left practicing Christianity for Judaism, the faith of their supposed Israelite ancestors, while the Kenanaya or Syrian Orthodox Christians of Kerala remain Christian.

Except for the Qidwai/Kidwai and the Bani Israil, who trace their descent from Jews and not necessarily the lost tribes, all the groups under study claim descent from the lost tribes of Israel, for they believe that the biblical stories are actually historical events and the characters in these stories really did exist. In terms of evidence, all that these groups (and those who support the theories of their Israelite origins) have been able to present, are alleged similarities of their customs and rituals with the Jewish ones and the mention of their putative Israelite origins in several medieval texts. However, the majority of the scholars remain unconvinced. They either doubt that the lost tribes of Israel even ever existed or hold the view that even if they did exist, they got assimilated in the Assyrian population way back in the seventh century BCE. But the stress in the academic world seems to be more on the lack of evidence rather than on the alleged assimilation in the seventh century. Hence, scholars often see the lost tribes as nothing but a myth. An example is Stuart Kirsch, who argues "that the lost tribes do not exist until they are invented." Kirsch sees "the concept of the lost tribe" as "an example of what Gananath Obeyesekere called a 'European myth model', described 'as an important or paradigmatic myth [which] may serve as a model for other kinds of myth construction.'"⁷ Kirsch draws our attention to Obeyesekere's thesis that "a myth model is also 'an underlying set of ideas (a myth structure or cluster of my themes) employed in a variety of narrative forms'. Obeyesekere argues that when political and economic conditions favor a particular role model, it is likely to appear in a variety of contexts and forms."⁸

The Qidwais/Kidwais consider their progenitor, sufi saint Qazi Qidwatuddin, popular as Qazi Qidwā, who settled in India in AH 588/1191 CE, Israelite by descent. According to Riaz-ur-Rehman Kidwai, author of the only known book on the community, the available

genealogies trace Qazi Qidwa's lineage from either of the two sons of the biblical character Jacob: Yahuda (Judah) or Lava (perhaps Levi).⁹ According to another theory, which finds mention in Maulana Abdul Hai's *Malfuzāt Firangi Mahal*, it was Qazi Qidwa's wife who was a *Bani Israil* (Child of Israel), and it is Qazi Qidwa's descendants from her who are known as Qidwais/Kidwais. The Qidwais/Kidwais are divided into five branches, of which only one is made up of the direct lineal descendants of Qazi Qidwa, while the other four branches consist of his followers.

The *Bani Israil* in Uttar Pradesh, India, trace their genealogy from a Jewish *sahābi* (companion of the prophet Muhammad) Hazrat Abdullah Ibn-i-Salām. They claim that their ancestors settled in India a millennium ago to preach and propagate Islam. Members of this clan generally use *Israili* (Israeli) as their last name. They reside, in both Sambhal as well as Aligarh, in a locality, each called Bani Israil Mohalla or Mohalla Bani Israilān. Many of this clan migrated to Pakistan after its creation in 1947. A prominent member of this clan, who was a professor at Aligarh Muslim University, had the Hebrew sounding name Shimoni Israili, as testified by Joshua M. Benjamin, author of *The Mystery of Israel's Ten Lost Tribes and the Legend of Jesus in India* (2001).¹⁰

It is only among the Christian groups that the Judaizing movements developed, seen by anthropologists and historians like Parfitt,¹¹ Weil,¹² Samra,¹³ and Egorova¹⁴ as byproducts of Christianity. None of the four Muslim groups under study has moved toward Judaism, in spite of their centuries-old traditions of Israelite origins. And interestingly, the two Christians groups that did move toward Judaism, have never had any traditions of Israelite origins. The traditions of Israelite origins among the Muslim groups cannot, of course, be seen as byproducts of Christianity, as in the case of the B'nei Menashe and B'nei Ephraim, and nor can the traditions be attributed to any Jewish influence, as they have always been resident in areas where there has never been any significant Jewish presence. According to Caroe,¹⁵ the tradition of descent from the lost tribes of Israel among the Pathans emanates from their desire to distance themselves from their pre-Islamic polytheistic past, as it helps them trace their genealogy from the supposed patriarchs and founders of monotheism, accepted by Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike. But if it is so, why did not the other Muslim communities of South Asia do the same? The fact is that it is very difficult to say anything conclusive in regard to the traditions of Israelite origins of the four Muslim groups under study. Why would these groups, which are so strongly anti-Zionist and anti-Israel and also greatly prejudiced against Jews and hence unwilling to immigrate to Israel unlike the B'nei Menashe and the B'nei Ephraim, choose to claim origins from the land of Israel, which is the sanctum sanctorum of Judaism, the core of Zionism, and the geographical location of the modern state of Israel, without any basis?

A number of medieval Persian (Farsi) texts, dating from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries,¹⁶ document the Pathan tradition of descent from a contemporary of Muhammad, Kais/Qais or Kish, believed to be thirty-seventh in descent from the biblical character Saul or Talut.¹⁷ The Mughal courtier and historian Neamatullah writes in his *Makhzan-i-Afghani* (1612 CE):

...Khaled sent a letter to the Afghans who had been settled in the mountainous countries about Ghor ever since the time of the expulsion of the Israelites by Bokhtnasser, and informed them of the appearance of the last of the Prophets. On this letter reaching them, several of their chiefs departed from Medina; the mightiest of whom, and of the Afghan people, was Kais, whose pedigree ascends in a series of thirty-seven degrees to Talut, forty-five to Ibrahim...¹⁸

The probable Israelite origin of Pathans has been written about by medieval Jewish scholars such as the tenth-century Sadia Gaon and the eleventh-century Moses Ibn Ezra; and also by modern scholars such as the Hebrew University anthropologist Shalva Weil,¹⁹ and Itzhak

Ben-Zvi,²⁰ the second president of Israel and a lost tribes' enthusiast. Ben-Zvi records in his book *The Exiled and the Redeemed* (1957) testimonies provided by Afghan Jewish immigrants to Israel about Pathan practices that are Jewish in nature, that is, the lighting of candles on the Jewish Sabbath, keeping of long sidelocks, wearing of shawls resembling the Jewish prayer shawl *tallith*, circumcision on the eighth day after birth, and Levirate. Curator of a 1991 exhibition at Tel Aviv's Diaspora Museum on "The Myth of the Ten Lost Tribes," Weil writes:

Even the Pathan students in exile at the University of New Delhi, the most violently anti-Zionist group that I had ever met, reluctantly agreed that they were Bani Israel. "But this has nothing to do with the modern state of Israel," they hastened to inform me when I interviewed them in the nineties.²¹

She also writes:

Many Afghan and Western scholars, who have investigated the subject from historical, anthropological and philological points of view, are convinced that the Pathans are of Israelite origin. Indeed they appear to be the best candidates among the diverse groups claiming Lost Tribe status. The location is right (2 Kings 17:6), and the Pathans have shown exceptional tenacity in adhering to their story through the centuries.²²

More than the secular scholars, it is the religious scholars of both Jews as well as Christians who have shown interest in the supposed Israelite credentials of Pathans. By 1926, the belief in the Israelite origin of Pathans became so widely accepted that it drove Jacques Faitlovich, the activist for Ethiopian Jews, to make an unsuccessful attempt to persuade the American Pro-Falasha Committee to send a mission to Afghanistan to explore the Israelite presence there. Finally in 1975 an exploratory team was sent by the Israeli organization Amishav²³ to Afghanistan, and in 1983 to Pakistan, on British passports. Certain alleged similarities between the Pathan and Jewish customs convinced the explorers that the Pathans were actually descendants of lost Israelites. A number of Christian missionaries and European adventurers are known to have taken the lost tribes of Israel as a historical fact and sought to prove the Israelite origin of Pathans.²⁴ A couple of attempts to prove their Israelite origin through genetic study have also been made, but the results of the DNA analyses were neutral and did not connect them to any group other than the general family of mankind.²⁵ It is speculated that it could be so because the population chosen for the collection of samples was from their diaspora in India: the Pathans of the Afridi tribe in Malihabad in District Lucknow of Uttar Pradesh, who have failed to retain their tribal purity because of intertribal marriages with the Pathans of the Ghilzai tribe there, which is one of the many tribes of Turkish origin among them. It is only the Pathan tribes of non-Turkish origin who have traditions of Israelite descent and whose origins are shrouded in mystery. But there are geneticists who think that genetic research does lend support to the theory of the Israelite origin of Pathans, such as the medical doctor Amtul Razzaq Carmichael, who points out:

The genetic abnormalities that lead to a group of genetic diseases affecting the muscles of the body called inclusion body myopathies are located on chromosome 9 in both Afghani and Iraqi Jewish patients, while non-Jewish patients have a different genetic abnormality associated with this disease. The genetic abnormalities causing this disease affect Jews, Arabs and Iranians and are thought to be at least 1,300 years old. All of these findings strongly point towards a common Jewish ancestry with eastward migration of Jewish tribes into Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan, centuries

ago. Thus, evidence from genetic diseases does indeed lend support to the lost tribes theory and strongly supports a common ancestry of Jews in some Indian and Pashtun populations.²⁶

She further writes:

Interestingly, retinoblastoma, which is a hereditary cancer of the eye, has been found to be genetically different when ethnic Pashtuns were compared to the general Pakistani population. This suggests that Pashtuns are genetically different from the indigenous Pakistani population.²⁷

The other Muslim people who claim descent from the lost tribes of Israel are the Kashmiri, inhabitants of the region called Kashmir, a part of which is under Pakistani control. The Pathan villagers of Gutlibagh, about 20 kilometers north of Srinagar, consider themselves descendants of Judah, a son of Jacob/Israel and the progenitor of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Claimants of Israelite descent are also found among the Gujars in Kashmir, who neither plough their fields nor milk their cows on Saturdays. Residents of the Yusmarg valley call themselves Bani Israil, meaning Children of Israel.

The first three early historians of Kashmir, that is, Mullah Nadiri (1378-1416) in his *Tarikh-i-Kashmir*, Mullah Ahmad in his *Waqqya-i-Kashmir*, and Abdul Qadar bin Qazi-ul-Quzat Wasil Ali Khan in *Hashmat-i-Kashmir*, all unanimously accepted the theory of the Israelite origin of Kashmiris.²⁸ Kashmiri Brahman scholars like Pandit Narain Kaul in his *Guldasta-i-Kashmir* and Pandit Ram Chand Kak in his *Ancient Monuments of Kashmir* agree with the early Kashmiri historians about the Israelite origin of Kashmiris.²⁹ The fact that some of the Kashmiri Brahmins abstain from traveling or entering a new house on Saturday is often cited in support of the theory of the Israelite origin of Kashmiris.

Khwaja Nazir Ahmad lists some 405 names from Afghanistan, Kashmir, and parts of Pakistan and India in his book *Jesus in Heaven on Earth* (1952) to show similarities and common origin with biblical names.³⁰ Supporters of the theory of the Israelite origin of Kashmiris lay great stress on the fact that Kashmir is locally known as Kashir and a Kashmiri is called Koshur, which seems to be a variant of the Hebrew *kosher*.³¹ They also see parallels in the Kashmiri and Jewish styles of the adjustment of days between the lunar and solar calendars. It is also claimed by them that in the ancient past entry into the Kashmir valley was the exclusive privilege of Jews. The Kashmiri practices of observance of a forty-day purification ritual by women, abstinence from fat while cooking, and the east-west alignment of graves are seen by the proponents of the Israelite origin of Kashmiris as Jewish in nature.³²

The beliefs that Kashmiris are Israelite by origin and that Jesus survived crucifixion and settled in Kashmir are intertwined. Efforts are made to prove that Jesus went to Kashmir to win the lost tribes of Israel to his new creed and settled there to show the alleged authenticity of the theory of the Israelite origin of Kashmiris, while the alleged presence of the lost Israelites in Kashmir is cited as the stimulant for Jesus' immigration to Kashmir.

The people of the Yusu Marg or Yus Marg ("the Path of Jesus") valley in Kashmir, located on the bridle route followed by merchants from Afghanistan, consider themselves Israelite by descent.

The shrine of Rozabal in Kashmir houses the tomb of the sufi saint Yuz Asaf, which the Ahmadi sect of Muslims believes was the name adopted by Jesus after he allegedly survived the crucifixion and settled in Kashmir to proselytize among the Israelites resident there. This belief of Ahmadis, shared by the New Age movement and the readers of Talmud Jmmanuel, is based on the theory propounded by the founder of the Ahmadi sect Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in his Urdu treatise *Masih Hindustan Mein* (Messiah in India) in 1899. The present structure at Rozabal was perhaps built over the grave during the reign of the

Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (1628-58 CE). The actual tomb of Yuz Asaf is believed to be beneath the existing tombstone, which is said to be in the east-west alignment like the Jewish graves.

Among many other things in support of his theory, Ahmad wrote that the gospel of Barnabas, which according to him must be available in the British Museum, stated that Jesus was neither crucified, nor did he die on the cross. In his book *Masih Hindustan Mein* (Jesus in India) he writes, "hundreds of thousands of people have, with their physical eyes, seen that the tomb of Jesus (on whom be peace) exists in Srinagar."³³

It was his strong desire to counter as effectively as possible the Christian proselytizers' activity in nineteenth-century India that drove Ahmad to try to prove that Jesus survived crucifixion and went to Kashmir to live up to the ripe old age of 120. The Islamic tradition—that after foiling an attempt to kill him God raised Jesus alive to heaven—was used by Christian missionaries as an argument to demonstrate to the Muslims the superiority of the living Jesus to the deceased Muhammad. "*Inni Mutawaffika*" in Sura 3:55 of the Qur'an was interpreted by Ahmad to mean that God caused Jesus to die naturally, in sharp contrast to the more common interpretation. His rendering of the verse in English is as follows: "I cause you to die and raise you to Myself." Ahmad sees it as a clear indication that Jesus' ascension to heaven took place after his death.³⁴

Christian missionary interest in the lost tribes of Israel is triggered by two factors according to Gonen. The belief in the lost tribes of Israel provides an explanation to the resemblance of the customs and beliefs of tribes and people across the world with those of the ancient Israelites. Based on these supposed similarities, the Christian missionaries bestow on them a lost tribe ancestry and then make strong efforts to convert these peoples to Christianity,

...believing that such a conversion would have a double benefit. Not only would it add members to the church, but these new members would be of Israelite—or Jewish—origin, as no specific distinction has been made between the two. Moreover, not only would such a conversion be a great achievement to the Christian Church, which has tried for centuries to convert the Jews, but these converts would be innocent of the heavy sins of the Jews—the crucifixion of Jesus—since they had already been lost at the time of that event. If these sinless Israelites recognized Jesus, it would be a crowning accomplishment for the church, and open the way to the Second Coming of Christ.³⁵

Although the Christian missionaries were not successful with the Pathans, yet they did manage to convert the tribes of Chin, Lushai, Kuki, and Mizo in northeast India in this manner, and that is where begins the genesis of the Judaizing movements among these tribes. Influenced by the Christian missionaries' stress on the supposed similarities between the practices described in the Bible and the Mizo tribal traditions, the Mizos were convinced of their Israelite origin. The Judaizing movement in these Christian people began in 1936 with the revivalist Saichhunga's declaration that the Mizos were one of the lost tribes of Israel. The idea was further developed in 1951 by Mela Chala, the head deacon of the United Pentecostal Church in Buallawn, north of Aizawl in Mizoram. The movement picked up pace with the Mizo Uprising that started in 1966. By 1972 the notion of descent from Menasseh, one of the progenitors of the twelve tribes of Israel, had become so widely accepted that some of the groups adopted the name *B'nei Menashe*, the Hebrew for the "Children of Menasseh." In 2005, the B'nei Menashe population was estimated to be around 6,000 in India and 800 in Israel.³⁶

The religious Jewish scholars came into the picture in the 1970s when the Shinlung/Chikim or B'nei Menashe, as they call themselves, sought contact with the Israelis. Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail, president of Amishav (a religious nationalist organization), came forward to facilitate their immigration to Israel. In 1980-81, Rabbi Avichail brought three

B'nei Menashe to Israel for Jewish theological studies, and in 1988 he arranged for the formal conversion of twenty-four B'nei Menashe in Mumbai and a year later their immigration to Israel. In 1993, Rabbi Avichail was lent moral support by the farmers of Gush Katif in the Gaza strip in his endeavor to bring the B'nei Menashe to Israel. The farmers felt that the B'nei Menashe could replace the Arabs laborers, who could no more be trusted, while financial support came from Dr. Irving Moskowitz of Florida, who bore the expenses of the immigration of two groups of young B'nei Menashe to Israel in 1993 and 1994. Supported by right-wing groups, who saw the B'nei Menashe as the means to boost Jewish population in the disputed territories, the Chief Sephardic Rabbi Shlomo Amar recognized the B'nei Menashe as a lost tribe of Israel in 2005 and sent rabbinical judges to northeast India to formally convert the B'nei Menashe to Judaism to overcome official hurdles in their immigration to Israel. Egorova points out that "if the conversions were a prerequisite for the Bene Menashe aliyah, then proof of a genealogical connection to the rest of the Jewish people was a prerequisite for such conversions."³⁷ Amishav, was soon joined by a new organization—Shavei Israel—dedicated to the search for the lost tribes of Israel just like Amishav. It was founded by Michael Freund, a former member of Amishav and a close associate of Rabbi Avichail, when he broke up with him. These two organizations took a significant number of the B'nei Menashe to Israel in several stages (between 1981 and 2007) after formally converting them to Judaism. The conversions were brought to a halt when the Indian authorities expressed their objections to the Foreign Ministry of Israel, as they feared it might annoy the predominant Christian population of northeast India where the evangelists had been vehemently opposing these mass conversions.³⁸ In 2011 the entire 7,000 strong B'nei Menashe community was permitted to settle in Israel, as reported in the media. The first group of new B'nei Menashe immigrants reached Israel in December 2012 to join 1,700 members of their community who had settled there before, some of them two decades ago.³⁹

It was only in the year 2004 that the scientists succeeded in obtaining DNA samples from the B'nei Menashe (who had been resisting genetic research for many years as they feared that it could deflate their claim of Israelite descent). The mtDNA and Y chromosome analysis of 414 B'nei Menashe individuals from Mizoram, done by the National DNA Analysis Centre in Kolkata, found traces of genetic relatedness between them and Near Eastern lineages. However, the research was considered unreliable by the Haifa Technion scientists in Israel, according to whom the Kolkata team had not done the complete sequencing of the DNA.⁴⁰ But this did not deter the Chief Rabbi of Israel from officially recognizing them as a lost Israelite tribe, thus making them the only such group after the Beta Israel (or Ethiopian Jews) to be so recognized. The immigration of such groups of non-Halachic Jewish descent is a contentious issue in Israel with the right-wing encouraging it and the left-wing opposing it not only because they believe it would "contribute to further oppression of the Palestinians" but also because they tend to doubt the authenticity of the B'nei Menashe's claim to lost tribes status.⁴¹

Another group among which a Judaizing movement emerged as a byproduct of Christianity, as considered by anthropologists, is the Madiga of the Guntur district in Andhra Pradesh, who follow the development of the B'nei Menashe closely and see them as their brethren, "just as Ephraim and Menashe are brothers in the biblical tradition."⁴² They are not the first group to link themselves with ancient Israelites by associating themselves with a group that has come to be recognized as a lost Israelite tribe. It has been observed by historians and anthropologists of Judaizing movements that several African and African American Jewish communities have identified themselves with Ethiopian Jews or Beta Israel, encouraged by their case "which challenged the popular stereotype that Jews had to be of European descent," as pointed out by Egorova and Perwez.⁴³ In the early 1980s, the leader of the Madiga (a Christian preacher) now known as Shmuel Yacobi attended a conference of Evangelical Christians in Jerusalem, where he saw living Judaism for the first time, which generated his interest in the religion. Upon his return, he and his brother undertook an in-

depth study of the Old Testament and saw in Judaism a means to liberation from their economic plight. Suddenly they became conscious of their alleged tradition of Israelite descent, according to which they had descended from the lost Israelite tribe of Ephraim. As per their alleged tradition, their ancestors settled in India passing through Afghanistan and North India in the ninth or tenth centuries. The brothers renamed themselves Shmuel, Sadok, and Aaron, with Yacobi as the last name, and started observing the Sabbath, Jewish holidays, and life-cycle events. Shmuel established an open university in Vijaywada from where he offered correspondence courses in Jewish theology to Christian seminary students. He secretly used the funds from Christian donors to build a synagogue in 1992, and he persuaded about thirty families in his native village of Kottaredipalam to practice Judaism.⁴⁴ The Madiga aspiration to be recognized Jewish by descent stems from their desire to shed away their untouchability. The first attempt in this direction was their conversion to Christianity from Hinduism, which did not bring about the desired rise of their social status. Now their claim of Israelite descent is yet another attempt on their part to accomplish the same objective, but this time it involves not just conversion to another religion but also an effort to prove foreign origin, that is, Israelite.

Ironically, in spite of their practicing Judaism and being largely perceived as Christian by the local population because of the widespread ignorance of the existence of Jews among Indians, they officially continue to represent themselves as Hindus to fit into a category recognized as a Scheduled Caste. Part of the Indian state's affirmative action, Scheduled Caste benefits are reserved for those Dalits who profess any of the Indic religions, that is, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism, and do not extend to the communities practicing Semitic religions for it is believed there is no caste-based discrimination in the Semitic religions, as everybody is equal according to their philosophies. According to Egorova and Perwez,

...the structural inequalities that they are subjected to makes their position in coastal Andhra just as marginal and precarious as that of Hindu Dalits, which means that they cannot afford to refuse the benefits associated with their Scheduled Caste status. Moreover, keeping this status entitles them to state protection against caste-based crimes.⁴⁵

Although the total Madiga population in Andhra Pradesh stands at 12 million (46.94 percent of the total Scheduled Caste population of Andhra Pradesh), yet only 125 families identify as Israelite, according to Shmuel Yacobi.⁴⁶

This phenomenon of conversion to Christianity followed by Judaism was termed "dual conversion" by Weil in her study of the B'nei Menashe.⁴⁷ What Lesser writes regarding ethnicity would be helpful in understanding this:

Ethnicity is not "natural" but constructed and as individuals move among different spaces, the ways in which ethnicity is expressed is ever changing. While such constructions are often implicit, that is not always the case. At times ethnicity/identity/home seems to be a resource that is deployed in response to specific circumstances.⁴⁸

Egorova and Perwez suggest that rhetoric theory could be usefully employed to understand the nature of the rise of the above-mentioned Judaizing movements. They find it particularly useful to draw on the work of scholars "who see identity as a rhetorical strategy rather than a broad ontological category."⁴⁹ According to them:

The case study of the Bene Ephraim provides an exciting site for the development of rhetoric theory. When explored ethnographically, it demonstrates how new audiences are called into being through rhetoric expressed both through narratives and

practices, and how the boundaries delineating these audiences can be elusive both in the discourse of the rhetors and in these audiences' own self-representation.⁵⁰

The group that remains Christian but claims Jewish descent is that of Kananya or Canaanites, who belong to the Syrian Orthodox Church. In AD 345, according to their tradition, the small Christian community of Malabar in Kerala, India, was reinforced by a group of Israelite migrants from Syria, led by a rich merchant, Thomas of Cana, or Knayi Thoma the Nasarani, or Knayel the merchant.⁵¹ The entourage of Thomas of Cana was comprised of seventy-two families numbering four hundred persons in three ships, which sailed from Mesopotamia (Iraq) across the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea to the shores of Kerala.⁵² These four hundred Christian Israelites settled in the district of Kottayam and the southern fringes of Cochin. Their descendants today form the community of Canaanite/Kananaya/Knanite Christians.⁵³ The Canaanite/Kananaya/Knanite Christians are locally known as *Thokkumbhagar* (Southists), for they settled in the southern part of the city of Mahadovarpattanam. Another explanation offered is that the name points to the southern kingdom of Judah, from where they originated. As Parfitt reports, "one or two members of the community, which is centered in Kottayam in Kerala, have even converted to Judaism in recent times."⁵⁴

The community uses a special canopy, similar to the Jewish *huppah*, at weddings, and the couple is seated under it. A symbolic sum of money is given to the bride's father, and the bride is escorted by maidens. The Jewish feast of *Passover* is observed by Canaanites/Kananaya on Monday and Thursday after nightfall, at which a drink called "milk" and an unleavened bread is consumed, which is broken into pieces by the head of the family and distributed among all its members, who stand in reverence while receiving the pieces. The red colored wine prepared from coconut milk and a certain plum is specially served on this night. The family members eat their bread dipped in this specially prepared "milk." A bitter herb juice is drunk by Kananaya on Good Friday before eating anything else—perhaps an ancient *Passover* ritual.

The Canaanites/Kananayas, whose population stood at around 200,000 in the year 1990, remain strictly endogamous as ever and even today use the ancient Aramaic language for all religious purposes.

Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail fully agrees with the Hebrew University anthropologist Dr. Shalva Weil, that the Canaanites/Kananaya are Judaeo-Christians. He believes:

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 Nazarene 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), reverence for the 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.⁵⁵

As regards the supposed Israelite descent of the above-mentioned groups and others, Rabbi Avichail says:

In most recent years, we have come to believe that the *giyyur* (conversion) is the main process, and not the question of determining whether the group has some prior Jewish identity. Since we think the question of "motivation" is the central one, we may well decide to help a group even if we are not persuaded scientifically that it has

some prior Jewish connection. With all these groups, it is almost impossible to make clear definite, non-ambiguous claims about their Jewish connection.⁵⁶

Rabbi Avichail's efforts are motivated by the longstanding belief that the ingathering of the lost tribes will bring about the dawn of the messianic era. He says:

One important thing that I have learned through the years is that this question of the Ten Tribes is not a question of the coming of the Messiah. But it is we who have the important determining role in what happens, through out the process of the Redemption....I thought that this is our task, to bring small groups (not the whole people) and to prepare them to be teachers, then send them back to their people. What is important is that the *giyyur*, the conversion process, be authentic, that they will be good Jews.⁵⁷

Although traditions of Israelite descent have existed among the Pathans for centuries, yet those who are resident far away from their native places, in the Pathan diaspora of India, are largely ignorant of them. Perhaps, when the Pathans settled in India, they did not mention the traditions of their Israelite origin, as they probably feared losing favor with the non-Pathan Muslim rulers of India at that time, aware as they were of their antagonism toward Jews. As a result, the word was not passed on to the coming generations and subsequently they were largely left ignorant of the traditions of their Israelite descent. Recent attempts at investigating the authenticity of these traditions have stimulated the interest of some young Pathans concerning their putative Israelite roots, which is testified to by the many letters the present author has received from Pathans curious about the results of the analysis of the DNA samples of the Afridi Pathans of Malihabad at the University College London.

One Sameer Khan, an Afridi Pathan of Qa'imganj (District Farrukhabad, Uttar Pradesh, India) wrote:

I always hated Jews not because of a religion or the current politics however because of an old story by Shakespeare *Merchant of Venice*. In that story there is a old Jew grump who was very clever and was a cruel money-lender. Then when I grew up I saw this hatred in our Muslim community for Jews, which I could never understand.

Recently I watched a movie *Munich* which touched me and I started searching more about the people of Israel (as shown in the movie very courageous and women specially—same like our so called Pathanees (ladies)), and by chance I got a website in which I saw the link between the Afridis [and Jews].

I heard from our elders in my childhood that we are Bani-Israel. This actually enhanced my curiosity, though I am a proud "Pathan" and a follower in Islam and I have no intentions to convert but yes I would like to explore about my forefathers and would love to visit these places.⁵⁸

Another Pathan, this time a Yusufzai from Karachi, Pakistan, Qazi Fazli-Azeem, founder-member of the cyber group www.PakistanIsraelpeace.org, devoted to the task of getting diplomatic relations established between Israel and Pakistan, and the website administrator of www.moderates.com.pk, wrote offering to help the present researcher "in writing any academic material, articles, contacting government or NGO/Think Tank bodies"⁵⁹ and also proposed to set up a common forum for Pathans from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India for direct interaction and to help those of them who are interested in immigrating to Israel.⁶⁰

There are also those who are influenced by their non-Pathan Muslim neighbors, who are hostile toward Jews, to see these attempts at researching the probable Israelite origins, as part of a Jewish conspiracy to deprive Islam of its bravest followers, the Pathans, by proving them Israelite by descent and then persuading them to embrace Judaism and immigrate to Israel. Such views have found expression in articles that have appeared in the popular Indian Urdu-language newsweekly *Nai Duniya*⁶¹ and daily newspaper *Roznama Rashtriya Sahara*.⁶² They present it as an attempt on the part of Jews to boost their population in the disputed territories in Israel and to use the fearless and sturdy Pathans as cheap labor and as gun-fodder in their fight with the Arabs. How the anti-Israel Muslim press of India has shaped the way Muslims think is clearly reflected when the 92-year-old Afridi Pathan of Malihabad, Qavi Kamaal Khan says that he doesn't want to live to hear that he is descended from a Jew. "It hurts me when I think that my forefathers were from Israel."⁶³

A New York-born online writer and blogger, based in Israel, "Ruvy in Jerusalem" expresses the view point of the section of religious Jewry that takes great interest in the above-mentioned claimants of Israelite descent, particularly the Pathans, on a South Asian website:

For over two millennia, Jews have more or less considered themselves the only remaining Children of Israel, figuring that the other tribes had been lost to history. We have taken a term from the Bible *shearit*—remnant—and applied it to ourselves. Thus, you see the names of many synagogues in the Western world—*Shearit Israel*, Remnant of Israel. Apparently, this may be a misperception.

In addition to all the forced converts away from the religion who are now coming back to the faith, like the descendants of the Spanish and Portuguese "Anusim," we Jews now have to come to grips with the fact that we are only a small portion of a larger people. According to Rabbi Dr. Yehuda Bohrer, one group of Israelites from the general area of Bokhrara claim to be descended from the tribe of Reuven. They never lost their laws or traditions and have retained the links with Jews and are now considered as Jews.

Unlike the members of the tribe of Reuven, the Pakhtun [an alternative term for Pathan] appear to have lost much of the ties to our people. Nevertheless, they have been claiming to be the Children of Israel for over a thousand years; they claim that the original king Afghana, the first king of the royal line of Afghanistan, was a descendant of Sha'ul, of the tribe of Benyamin. Jewish merchants who lived in Kabul always could travel without fear to the Pakhtun lands, where they were recognized by the Pakhtuns as fellow Children of Israel. Today, the Pakhtun, who live in places that have media hostile to the State of Israel, like India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, look upon us Jews as brothers from the wrong side of the tracks....We Jews have the interesting task of "recognizing Joseph" (Ephraim was a son of Joseph). And the Pakhtun are going to have to get to know their brothers, the Jews.⁶⁴

A letter to the present author from a Jerusalem-based religious Jew, Gerald Parkoff, further reflects the religious Jewish perception of Pathans:

I consulted with Rabbi Chaim Wasserman, my Rav and teacher for over 23 years and he is of the opinion that the situation of the Pathans and other descendants of the "Ten Tribes" is comparable to that of the Anusim, those who were forcibly converted to Christianity by the Spaniards and the Portuguese in the 1300s, 1400s and early 1500s. The Rabbinim were favorably disposed towards extending a

hand to bring them back. The difference is that your [Pathans'] separation from the body of the Jewish People was more than 1000 years before the Spanish Expulsion. That means not only do you [the Pathans] come from a much earlier period in our history (*Bayit Rishon*—the period of the First Temple), but that you had a longer amount of time to forget everything. Being cut off even 200 years from those Anusim who fled Amsterdam in the 1600s resulted in a jarring clash of cultures and a difficult time to re-acclimatize, since these people were steeped in Christian culture and religion for such a long period....Don't you think we yearn for every Jew to return to Torah Observance? Every Motzai Shabbat (Saturday Nite) we quote the prophet *Shalom, Shalom le Karov ule Rachok Urfativ*—Peace be unto those that are near and Peace be unto those that are far and I G-d will heal them." (Isaiah 57:19)⁶⁵

This yearning finds echo in the founder and president of the Jerusalem-based Root & Branch Association, Aryeh Gallin's message to the Afridi Pathans of Malihabad, recorded by the present author on June 18, 2007:

It is time for you Pashtuns/Pakhtuns/Pathans to wake up and come home. And that is the way it is going to be. So let's do it the easy way than the hard way. It's time for that to happen. And no one can stop that. Not the CIA, not the Pakistan Inter-Services, not the whole Saudi money in the world. Victor Hugo said, "Nothing is greater than the power of an idea whose time has come." So the time has come when you all have to come home to Jerusalem. We will have a party right here.

The same sentiment finds expression in Israeli writer Reuven Kossover's message to the Afridi Pathans of Malihabad, again recorded by the present author on June 18, 2007, in Jerusalem:

We are the descendants of the tribe of Yehuda. You are most likely the descendants of the tribe of Ephraim. Jews and Israelites have fought wars in the past in this country. That's in our history. However, time has arrived when the tribe of Ephraim will come to be one with the tribe of Yehuda. That all of Am-Israel, people of Israel, will be one joined with one: one tree being called Ephraim and one tree being called Yehuda. We are Jews; you are Ephraim. I invite you to look at it from that point of view. Our prophets said this will happen....These things will happen because you believe it and because we believe it. We are one people; never forget.

Described as "the leading ten-tribe traveler today," whose "work has had concrete, practical consequences," Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail says:

We as well as the Pathans themselves, have a very clear tradition that they, especially those of them who have the names of our tribes, belong to the ten tribes of Israel. According to the Book of Psalms, after Menasse God will bring Ephraim to the land of Israel. So my dream is now to help the Afridi to come back to their roots, to come back, after Menasse, to Israel. Ephraim is more important. When Ephraim will be here, it will change a lot of things. As the Afridi Pathans of Malihabad (District Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh) are in India, and not in Afghanistan or Pakistan, from one point of view it is easier for me to help them. The only problem is that the government of India has stopped me from going there. They think that I want to convert the people there, and the fact is that this is not my intention. I want to go there to teach, to learn, and to spread knowledge....The Afridis can even come just to

visit Israel, if not for immigration. And if you do come I will be your friend. Would be glad to invite you home and to help you in every possible way.⁶⁶

Although Rabbi Avichail agrees with the traditional view that the messianic ingathering of the exiles depends solely on providential will, yet he justifies his efforts to facilitate the immigration of the supposed Israelites by drawing on mystical texts, which teach that human actions are interrelated to divine actions, and stresses that human effort toward bringing the Messiah will hasten God's intervention in the matter. Thus, he considers it the responsibility of every Jew to search for the lost tribes of Israel and to try to bring them to Israel.

The involvement of religious Jewish organizations with the claimants of Israelite descent in India—active with only two until now, the B'nei Menashe in northeast India and the B'nei Ephraim in South India—can have great ramifications for India, Israel, and world Jewry at large

Notes

¹ The people of the northern Indian state of Kashmir, a part of which is under Pakistani control. Their population is 12.54 million in the Indian controlled Kashmir according to the Indian census of 2011 (http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/prov_data_products_J&K.html) and their population in the Pakistani controlled Kashmir was estimated to be 3.8684 million in 2094 (Source: http://www.ajk.gov.pk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=28&Itemid=11).

² A warlike people, divided into sixty tribes and four hundred clans, inhabiting eastern Afghanistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. There are also a few Pathan settlements in India. Pathans, Pashtuns, Pakhtuns, and Afghans are names that are often used interchangeably. There is nothing wrong with this usage, but it would be better to understand what each means. Those who inhabit plains and plateaus are entitled to the name Afghan, which has a far wider connotation than that of a subject of the modern state of Afghanistan, founded only in 1747 CE. The northern highlanders call themselves Pakhtuns, while the southern highlanders are known as Pashtuns. The appellation Pathan is the Indian variant of Pakhtanah, the plural of Pakhtun. The overwhelming majority of Pathans are Sunni Muslim. Only some of the border tribes such as the Turis of Kurram, some Orakzais of Tira, and certain Bangash clans are of Shia persuasion (see *Encyclopaedia Britannica*). There are no reliable figures available of the Pashtun population in Afghanistan because of the many problems involved in conducting a census as pointed out by the *Guardian* correspondent Emma Graham-Harrison in her article, "Afghan census dodges questions of ethnicity and language" (*The Guardian*, January 3, 2013; accessed on March 15, 2013 at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jan/03/afghan-census-questions-of-ethnicity>). Pashtuns are 15.42 percent of the population of Pakistan and 42 percent of the population of Afghanistan, according to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The population of Pakistan was estimated to be about 179 million and that of Afghanistan, 33.4 million in 2012 by the United Nations, which implies that the Pashtun population in Pakistan was 27.60 million and in Afghanistan it was 14.02 million in 2012. Thus the total Pashtun population of the two countries in which most of the Pashtuns live was 41.62 million that year. A number of them are also found in India, particularly in certain districts of the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh. These Pathan settlements in India were founded between 1206 CE and 1818 CE, when the Pathans were employed by the Sultans of Delhi and the Mughal emperors in the later Mughal period by the smaller kingdoms and principalities.

³ A Sunni Muslim community centered in the Barabanki district of Uttar Pradesh, with individuals scattered all over the world.

⁴ A Sunni Muslim clan in Sambhal (District Moradabad) and Aligarh in Uttar Pradesh.

⁵ Those members of the tribes of Chin, Lushai, and Kuki, in the states of Manipur and Mizoram in northeast India, who have moved toward Judaism.

⁶ Located in the Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh.

⁷ Stuart Kirsch, "Lost Tribes: Indigenous People and the Social Imaginary," *Anthropological Quarterly*, 70, 2 (April 1997): 58.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Riaz-ur-Rehman Kidwai, *Biographical Sketch of Kidwais of Avadh with Special Reference to Barabanki Families* (Aligarh: Kitab Ghar, 1989), p. 1.

¹⁰ Joshua M. Benjamin, *The Mystery of Israel's Ten Lost Tribes and the Legend of Jesus in India*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Mosaic Books, 2001), p. 111.

¹¹ See Tudor Parfitt, *The Lost Tribes of Israel: The History of a Myth* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2002); Tudor Parfitt and Emanuela Trevisan Semi, *Judaizing Movements: Studies in the Margins of Judaism* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002).

¹² See Shalva Weil, "Lost Israelites from the Indo-Burmese Borderlands: Re-Traditionalisation and Conversion Among the Shinlung or Bene Menasseh," in *The Anthropologist*, 6, 3 (2004): 219-33.

¹³ See Myer Samra, "The Tribe of Manasseh: 'Judaism' in the Hills of Manipur and Mizoram," *Man in India*, 71, 1 (1991 Special ed.): 183-202; "Judaism in Manipur and Mizoram: By-Product of Christian Mission," *The Australian Journal of Jewish Studies*, 6, 1 (1992): 7-22; "Buallawn Israel: The Emergence of a Judaizing Movement in Mizoram, Northeast India," in Lynette Olson, ed., *Religious Change, Conversion and Culture* (Sydney: Sydney Association for Study in Society and Culture, 1996), pp. 105-31.

¹⁴ See Yulia Egorova, *Jews and India: Perceptions and Image* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁵ See Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans: 550 B.C.–A.D. 1957* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1958; reprint 1964).

¹⁶ *Hayat-i-Afghani* of Muhammad Hayat Khan; *Khulasat-ul-Ansab* of Hafiz Rahmat; *Majma-ul-Ansab* of Hamidullah Mustawfi; *Mirat-al-Afghani* of Qutb Khan, Sarmast Khan Abdali, Hamza Khan, Umar Khan Kakarr and Zarif Khan—the five historians commissioned by Khwaja Ni'matullah, courtier of the Mughal emperor of India Jahangir, to investigate the origins of Pathans in 1621 CE; *Mirat-ul-Alam* of Bukhtawar Khan; *Rauza ul-Bab Twarikh ul Akbar-wal-Ansab* of Abu Sulayman Daud (1310 CE); *Tarikh-i-Guzeedah* of Hamidullah Mustawfi (AH 730/1326 CE); *Tadhkirat al-Awliya* of Sulayman Maku (13th c.); and *Tadhkirat al-Abrar* of Akhund Darwiza (1611 CE).

¹⁷ Although the highland Pathan tribes of Afridi, Khatak, Orakzai, Bangash, Wazir, Mahsud, Turi, Jaji, Dilazak, Khostwal, Jadran, Usman Khel, Wardak, and Mangal do not claim descent from Qais, unlike the Pathan/Afghan tribes of plains and plateaus, yet they also have the tradition of Israelite descent and call themselves *Bani Israil* (Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, and Urdu for the Hebrew *B'nei Yisrael*). They are presented in genealogical legend as descended from a founding common ancestor named Karlanri or Karlan, who had two sons: Koday and Kakay. The northerners who speak the hard variety of Pashto are the descendants of Koday and the southerners who speak the soft variety of Pashto are the descendants of Kakay. Karlan or Karlanri is believed to have been adopted by a grandson of Sarbanr, one of the three sons of Qais or Kais (see Caroe, *The Pathans*).

¹⁸ *Makhzan-i-Afghani* (History of the Afghans) of Neamatullah (1612 CE), trans. Bernhard Dorn, Part I, Oriental Translation Committee, London, 1829, p. 37.

¹⁹ Shalva Weil, "Our Brethren the Taliban?" *The Jerusalem Report*, October 22, 2001, p. 22.

²⁰ See Izhak Ben-Zvi, trans. Isaac A. Abbady, *The Exiled and the Redeemed*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Publications, 1976), pp. 209-26. The book was originally

published by The Jewish Publication Society of America in 1957. Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi brought their edition of the book in 1976 and called it the "second edition."

²¹ Weil, "Our Brethren the Taliban?" p. 22.

²² Ibid.

²³ A Jerusalem-based organization founded in 1975, dedicated to the search for the lost tribes of Israel across the world and facilitating their emigration to Israel. A new organization called Shavei Israel, dedicated to the same purpose, was founded by a close associate of Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail and former member of Amishav, Michael Freund, when he broke up with Rabbi Avichail.

²⁴ For instance M.W. Bellew, J.P. Ferrier, A.K. Johnson, Sir William Jones, Captain Riley, John Chamberlain, Sir Alexander Burnes, William Carey, John Marshman, J. Samuel, and Theodore Pennel.

²⁵ Professor Tudor Parfitt and Dr. Yulia Egorova collected DNA samples of fifty paternally unrelated Afridi males in Malihabad in November 2002, which were later analyzed by Dr. Neil Bradman and Dr. Mark Thomas at University College, London. The second attempt was made in 2009 by an Indian geneticist Shahnaz Ali under the supervision of Professor Karl Skorecki at the Israel Institute of Technology (Technion) in Haifa, Israel.

²⁶ Amtul Razzaq Carmichael, "The Lost Tribes of Israel in India—A Genetic Perspective," *The Review of Religions*, March 2012 [Accessed on March 15, 2014 at <http://www.reviewofreligions.org/6107/the-lost-tribes-of-israel-in-india-a-genetic-perspective/>]

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ M.M. Ahmad, "The Lost Tribes of Israel," *The Muslim Sunrise* (Summer 1991); accessible online at: <http://www.alislam.org/library/links/00000094.html>

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ M. Ashraf, "A Paradox of Sorts, a Place Called Kashmir," in *Kashmir First*; accessible online at: http://www.greaterkashmir.com/full_story.asp?Date=28_10_2006&ItemID=4&cat=

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³² Ibid.

³³ Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *Jesus in India* (Islam International Publication Ltd., 1989); accessible online at <http://www.alislam.org/library/books/jesus-in-india/ch2.html>

³⁴ Yohanan Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and Medieval Background* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 111-15.

³⁵ Rikva Gonen, *The Quest for the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel to the Ends of the Earth* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 2002), pp. 186-87.

³⁶ Egorova, *Jews and India*, p. 118.

³⁷ Yulia Egorova and Shahid Perwez, *The Jews of Andhra Pradesh: Contesting Caste and Religion in South India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 131.

³⁸ Egorova, *Jews and India*, pp. 115-19; Tudor Parfitt and Yulia Egorova, *Genetics, Mass Media and Identity: A Case Study of the Genetic Research on the Lemba and Bene Israel* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 92-93.

³⁹ Egorova and Perwez, *The Jews of Andhra Pradesh*, p. 120.

⁴⁰ Parfitt and Egorova, *Genetics, Mass Media and Identity*, pp. 123-25.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 124-25.

⁴² Egorova and Perwez, *The Jews of Andhra Pradesh*, p. 74.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 75.

⁴⁴ Egorova, *Jews and India*, pp. 119-27; Parfitt and Egorova, *Genetics, Mass Media and Identity*, p. 94.

- ⁴⁵ Egorova and Perwez, *The Jews of Andhra Pradesh*, pp. 55-56.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43
- ⁴⁷ Weil, "Lost Israelites from the Indo-Burmese Borderlands," pp. 219-33.
- ⁴⁸ Jeffrey Lesser, "How the Jews became Japanese and Other Stories of Nation and Ethnicity," *Jewish History* 18 (2004): 8.
- ⁴⁹ Egorova and Perwez, *The Jews of Andhra Pradesh*, p. 19.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- ⁵¹ Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail, *The Tribes of Israel: The Lost and the Dispersed* (Jerusalem: Amishav, 1990), p. 162.
- ⁵² Joseph Chazhiccattu, "Origin of Syrian Christians," *Jews of Cochin—India* (New Delhi: Jewish Welfare Association, 1999), p. 34.
- ⁵³ Joshua M. Benjamin, *The Mystery of Israel's Ten Lost Tribes and the Legend of Jesus in India*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Mosaic Books, 2001), p. 102.
- ⁵⁴ Tudor Parfitt, "Tribal Jews," in Nathan Katz et al., *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century: A View from the Margin* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 181.
- ⁵⁵ Avichail, *The Tribes of Israel*, p. 163.
- ⁵⁶ Shalom Freedman, *Learning in Jerusalem: Dialogues with Distinguished Teachers of Judaism* (Northvale, NJ and Jerusalem: Jason Aronson Inc., 1998), p. 36.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.
- ⁵⁸ Sameer Khan's email to the present author, August 11, 2007.
- ⁵⁹ Qazi Fazl-i-Azeem's email to the present author, August 14, 2007.
- ⁶⁰ Qazi Fazl-i-Azeem's email to the present author, September 5, 2007.
- ⁶¹ "Andhé ko badi dūr ki sūjhi: Malihabadi Pathanon ko Israel āné ki dāvat," *Nai Duniya*, November 13-19, 2003 [Urdu].
- ⁶² Hasan Kamaal, "Chai ki payāli méin tūfān uthāné ki koṣiṣ," *Roznama Rashtriya Sahara*, May 26, 2007 [Urdu].
- ⁶³ Agniva Banerjee, "When a Pathan is called a Jew," *Sunday Times of India*, New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, May 20, 2007.
- ⁶⁴ Ruvy in Jerusalem, "Ruminations on the Destiny of the People of Israel," on the website *DesiCritics.org*, January 18, 2007, <http://desicritics.org/2007/01/18/021132.php>
- ⁶⁵ Gerald Parkoff's email to the present author, December 24, 2006.
- ⁶⁶ Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail's message to the Afridi Pathans of Malihabad, video recorded by the present author at the rabbi's Jerusalem residence on June 14, 2007.