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A Collection of Interesting, Important, and Controversial Perspectives Largely Excluded from the American Mainstream Media

American Pravda: The True Origin of the Jews as Khazars, Israelites, or Canaanites • 1h40m

RON UNZ • MAY 27, 2024 • 12,900 WORDS • [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

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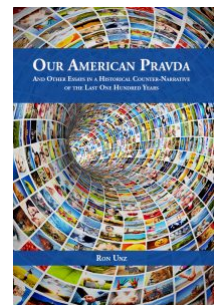
Prof. John Beaty on the Jews as Khazars

Over the last half-dozen years I've regularly cited the work of John Beaty, a respected academic who spent his entire teaching career at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas.

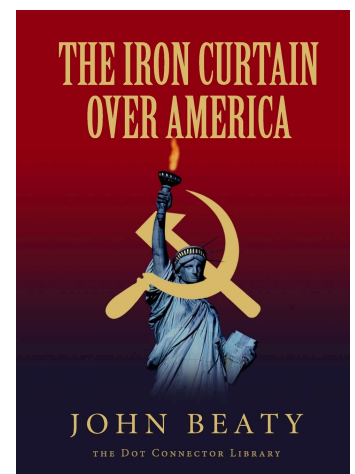
During World War II, Prof. Beaty served in Military Intelligence and his responsibilities included producing the daily intelligence briefing reports distributed to the White House and the rest of our top political and military leadership. That position provided him with a unique perspective on the entire course of the conflict.

After the end of the war, he resumed his academic career and in 1951 he published *The Iron Curtain Over America*^[1], a book harshly critical of our government policies and the overwhelming Jewish influence that he had believed was responsible. He argued that Jewish domination over the publishing industry and the media had grown so powerful that most ordinary Americans never learned many important facts, with their dangerous ignorance maintained by the "Iron Curtain" of Jewish media control described in his title.

Since Beaty was a reputable scholar who possessed an insider's crucial knowledge of our wartime activities, his many fierce critics both then and now have always chosen to attack his credibility on a minor side-issue. In his



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book, he had repeatedly claimed that instead of being the descendants of the ancient Israelites, most European Jews actually traced their ancestry to the Khazars[2], a fierce Turco-Mongolian warrior tribe that for several centuries controlled a substantial empire in portions of present-day southern Russia and Ukraine. Their rulers had converted to Judaism in the 8th century AD and according to Beaty, the Khazars eventually became the ancestors of the Ashkenazi Jews of Eastern Europe, who today constituted most of the global Jewish population, including an overwhelming majority of American Jews.

Beaty's book became a huge conservative best-seller during the 1950s, and his claims about the Khazars were picked up by many other right-wingers hostile to Jewish influence. This was especially true of the leading antisemitic Christian preachers of that era such as Gerald L.K. Smith[3] and Gerald Winrod[4], perhaps because they preferred believing that their Jewish adversaries were actually the descendants of Central Asian Turkic tribesmen rather than the holy prophets of the Old Testament; and since Beaty was himself a devout Christian, he may have been influenced by similar factors. In recent years, many anti-Zionists of all ideological stripes have also taken up that same theory, arguing that the European Jews who settled in Palestine were actually Khazars and therefore had no legitimate claim to that land. Indeed, among anti-Jewish or anti-Zionist activists on the Internet, "Khazar" has become quite common as a denigrating synonym for "Jew."

Current efforts to promote this Khazar Hypothesis may have a practical political dimension. These days an important part of American support for Israel relies upon the large body of Christian Zionists, who identify today's Jews with the Israelites of the Old Testament. Such Christians strongly supported the return of these exiled Jews to their ancient homeland and the restoration of a Jewish state in Palestine after two thousand years, regarding these events as the fulfillment of the biblical prophecies necessary for the return of Christ. So if they became convinced that Jews were instead Central Asian Khazars, their support might wane.

Since Beaty's beliefs about the Khazars seemed irrelevant to the bulk of his book, I'd mostly ignored them. But although such Khazar theories are rarely discussed in mainstream venues, they have become so widespread in fringe, conspiratorial circles that a few months ago I finally decided to review the evidence and publish my findings. However, my lengthy analysis of Jewish origins was buried in the middle of a very long article[5], bracketed on both sides by completely unrelated issues. Therefore, I've now decided to extract this material and expand it into a much more focused and comprehensive treatment of this important topic.

I had opened my analysis by mentioning[6] Beaty's claims and the attacks upon him:

Although I had been vaguely aware of the Khazar Hypothesis of Jewish origins, I regarded it as merely a rather marginal academic theory, finally laid to rest[7] in the last couple of decades by modern DNA analysis. But Beaty had been writing more than seventy years ago, and he cited seemingly credible scholarly support for his claims, notably including the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* and the magisterial six volume *History of the Jews*, published in the nineteenth century by Heinrich Graetz. Beaty's book had appeared several years before Watson and Crick had even discovered DNA, so his theory seemed a harmless

eccentricity, hardly damaging his credibility on the major issues that fell within the purview of his personal expertise.

The overwhelming majority of Beaty's material had seemed very solidly argued, so his eccentric Khazar claims were naturally seen as his greatest vulnerability, the issue that his bitter critics have focused upon for more than seventy years in order to discredit the rest of his analysis. Therefore, I decided to take some time to explore the Khazar Hypothesis and the broader question of Jewish origins, partly to evaluate Beaty's credibility.

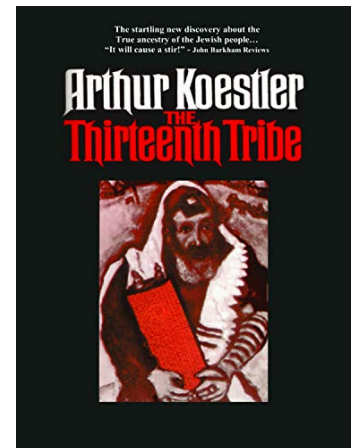
Arthur Koestler and *The Thirteenth Tribe*

When Beaty published his 1951 book, the story of the Khazars had probably been unknown to nearly all Americans, but a generation later another book by a very different writer suddenly brought it to widespread public attention, at least in intellectual circles.

Arthur Koestler[8] was a Hungarian Jew, an early Zionist and former Communist who later turned strongly against Stalin and soon became a prominent Cold War writer. He was best known for *Darkness at Noon*[9], a loosely fictionalized account of the Stalinist purge trials of the 1930s that had deeply impressed me when I'd read the novel in high school. Then in 1976 he published *The Thirteenth Tribe*[10], a widely-discussed book promoting the Khazar Hypothesis for the origins of European Jewry, and I recently reread it for the first time since the 1990s.

I wasn't terribly impressed. Aside from the story of the conversion of their rulers to Judaism, apparently very little solid evidence exists concerning the large Khazar Empire, merely scattered references in the histories and correspondence of their Byzantine, Russian, and Islamic neighbors and rivals, so although Koestler's short book only ran a couple of hundred pages, it actually felt heavily padded, substantially summarizing the much better documented histories of the other regional powers in order to fill out its pages.

Koestler was a literary intellectual rather than a trained historian or anthropologist, and the efforts he made on behalf of his controversial theory sometimes seemed rather strained to me. All analysts agree that the Eastern European Jews are either the descendants of Jewish migrants from the Rhineland area of Germany or else Turkic Khazar converts. But these Jews call themselves "Askenazim"—meaning "German"—and they speak Yiddish, a German dialect, which contains almost no Turkic words. Although this evidence does not conclusively establish the Rhineland case, it obviously does tend to support it. Koestler rather weakly tries to explain away those simple facts by arguing that the Khazar Jews were so impressed by the high culture of the Gentile German settlers whom they



encountered that they adopted the language of the latter, which is possible but not very plausible.

Furthermore, we only begin to encounter references to the substantial presence of Eastern European Jews hundreds of years after the collapse of the Khazar Empire, so any connection between the two populations seems rather tenuous.

I also wondered whether Koestler's advocacy might have been partly based upon a personal motive. Prior to the conquest of their present-day lands, the Magyar tribesmen who founded Hungary had spent centuries as vassals of the Khazars, and when they finally broke free during the ninth century and migrated into Central Europe, a small segment of their former Khazar overlords came with them. So if Koestler had successfully established his theory, he would have been able to trace his own Jewish ancestry to the former rulers of the Hungarian Gentiles of his own country, providing a pleasant psychological boost to the self-esteem of someone raised in the ethnic patchwork quilt of *mitteleuropa*.

The main argument in favor of the Khazar Hypothesis had been the question of numbers. The Khazar Empire was relatively large and populous, and advocates tend to argue that most of the inhabitants eventually followed their rulers in converting to Judaism, thereby becoming a far more plausible source of the eventual millions of Central and Eastern European Jews than the immigrant Jews from the Rhineland, who probably numbered only a few thousand. But this ignores the reality that populations that find a successful economic niche can grow very rapidly over time.

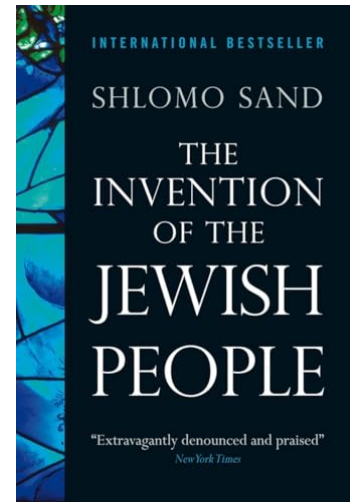
For example, top Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann had ten siblings in his Russian family, and similarly high fertility rates had helped Russia's Jewish population grow from roughly a half-million around 1800 to a figure ten times larger a century later. So if we know that Russian Jews had increased ten-fold during the course of a single century, it's perfectly possible that a few thousand German Jews might have multiplied a hundred-fold during the course of six or seven hundred years. In a different historical example, today's many millions of French Canadians and Louisiana Cajuns are all the descendants of just a couple of thousand French settlers who arrived in the New World three or four hundred years ago, while many tens of millions of Americans trace most of their ancestry to a few thousand British settlers who had arrived on the continent around the same time.

Moreover, the very distinct economic activities of the Ashkenazi Jews is another factor strangely ignored both by Koestler and his critics. The Rhineland Jews overwhelmingly filled a minority business niche, being money-lenders and traders among their Gentile host population, and together with estate-management and alcohol sales, this was the same sort of occupational profile filled by the much later and larger Ashkenazi populations of Central Europe and the Ukraine. In sharp contrast, the Khazars were fierce Central Asian tribal warriors, and their sudden transformation into a middleman minority earning its livelihood from business and finance seems much less likely.

Prof. Shlomo Sand and *The Invention of the Jewish People*

Koestler's book provoked considerable discussion when it was published almost two generations ago, but many of the reviewers were skeptical or even dismissive, so I'm not sure whether it had much long-term impact on the debate. Indeed, some of Koestler's sharp critics even suggested that he had written it merely in hopes that such a controversial work would revive his public profile which had largely faded away since his early writings of the 1940s had originally established his name.

Far more recent and more influential in mainstream circles has been the widely-praised international bestseller *The Invention of the Jewish People*^[11] by Prof. Shlomo Sand^[12], a dissenting anti-Zionist Israeli historian, whose English translation had been released in 2009, a year after the original Hebrew edition. Sand's basic thesis was considerably more measured than that of Koestler, primarily arguing that the majority of present-day Jews both in Europe and elsewhere were probably the descendants of later converts rather than the ancient Israelites of the Bible, with the Khazars merely being one of many such strands. I'd casually read the book about a dozen years ago, and despite the favorable recommendations had been rather unimpressed, but I decided to reread it.



Perhaps because I was now much more focused upon the topic of Jewish origins, my reaction to Sand's work was far more positive than it had been the first time through.

For example, whereas Koestler had stretched the very thin historical evidence of the Khazars across an entire book, presenting his material in a rather tendentious and credulous manner, a professional historian such as Sand was far more judicious, treating it with considerable caution across 40 pages of text, much of which carefully summarized the conflicting views of many of the leading Jewish historians over the last two centuries.

As Sand explained, mainstream Jewish scholars who held a belief in the Khazar origins of European Jewry had always been a decided minority, but a minority that was both substantial and highly-regarded. During the 1950s, Prof. John Beaty had been roasted and vilified in our own country for his endorsement of the Khazar Hypothesis, which was portrayed as a lunatic-fringe belief probably motivated by his hatred of Jews; but during that very same period, Israel's own Minister of Education was a prominent Jewish scholar holding very similar beliefs.

While Sand does seem to accept that a considerable fraction of Eastern European Jews probably have substantial Khazar roots, he hardly regards the case as solidly proven, nor is it central to his overall analysis, which instead focused upon a wide variety of different conversions to Judaism over the last two thousand years and more.

Some of the conversions emphasized by Sand seem absolutely undeniable though previously unknown to a non-specialist such as myself. For example, around 125 BC, King Yohanan Hyrcanus of the Maccabean dynasty conquered the small neighboring Semitic state of Edom and forcibly converted its inhabitants to Judaism. This history was often

embarrassing and under-emphasized by many modern Jewish historians, especially since some of the most important later Judean leaders such as King Herod the Great, various leading rabbis, and even the most extreme Zealots involved in the Great Revolt against Rome were primarily of Edomite convert descent.

Numerous other apparent large-scale conversions to Judaism also took place, but on a voluntary basis. Sand gives the background to the later Jewish kingdom of Yemen that survived for more than a century, as well as the very large and flourishing Jewish communities of Alexandria and North Africa in the era of the late Roman Republic, while Cicero had famously remarked in 59 BC upon the substantial number of Jews living at Rome itself. Judaism was a proselytizing religion during this period, and that fact was almost certainly responsible for the rapid appearance of these large Jewish populations across the shores of the Mediterranean rather than any massive emigration of Jewish peasants from Palestine or any implausibly rapid natural population increase in small immigrant Jewish communities.

Indeed, despite the considerable loss of Jewish life during the revolts against Roman rule, over the next century Jewish numbers reached their high-water mark in the ancient world, perhaps 7-8% of the entire population of the Roman Empire, amounting to many millions. Sand plausibly argues that the rapid expansion of Judaism through conversion had probably begun with Alexander's conquests and the creation of the large Hellenistic kingdoms that replaced the Persian Empire, and this process had then accelerated with the rise of Rome. All of this supports Sand's central thesis that by the time of the late Roman Empire only a rather small fraction of its large Jewish population could actually trace their roots back to the Israelites of the Bible.

Many of the other facts that Sands recounts seem to have become solidly established in mainstream modern scholarship but had remained unknown to an ignorant layman such as myself.

For example, in the half-century since Israel's conquests of the 1967 war, waves of determined Israeli archaeologists and historians have made every effort to uncover evidence of the wealthy and powerful Jewish state of King David and King Solomon, but have found almost nothing at all. This suggests that the story of their mighty kingdom was either entirely fictional or so wildly exaggerated that it amounted to the same thing, with those famous Biblical figures actually reigning over a tiny, impoverished scrap of territory, so unimportant and obscure that it was totally ignored in the chronicles of the major states of the Middle East and also by Herodotus when he compiled his very hefty regional history a few centuries later.

Consider also the belief that the Jews were expelled from their homeland following the failure of their repeated revolts against the Romans in the first and second centuries AD. This story of the Jewish Exile is probably almost universally assumed by Jews and Gentiles alike, constituting a central ideological pillar for the "restoration" of a Jewish homeland in the State of Israel in 1948 and the ingathering of Jews from across the world that soon followed. However, it has absolutely no factual basis and is accepted by few if any reputable scholars. Although the victorious Romans certainly might have exiled a thin

stratum of the vanquished Jewish elites as punishment, they had no policy of deporting entire populations, so the ordinary Judeans who survived their defeat surely remained exactly where they were, merely suffering a loss of political independence.

As Sand persuasively argued, over the centuries many of those Jews eventually converted to Christianity then later to Islam following the Muslim conquest, and they are the ancestors of today's Palestinians, leavened by an admixture from all the various conquering groups of the last two thousand years, including Arabs, Crusaders, and Turks. Thus, the direct descendants of the ancient Judeans lived continuously in their homeland prior to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. The tremendous historical irony that the current Palestinians—now suffering horrifying massacres in Gaza—are almost certainly the closest lineal descendants of the Biblical Israelites was highlighted by Sand and had been similarly emphasized by Beaty in his 1951 book.

Although this view might seem shocking to the vast majority of both Gentiles and Jews, certainly including most present-day Israelis, Sand and Beaty were hardly alone in reaching that conclusion. David Ben-Gurion[13] was Israel's founding father and first prime minister, while Yitzhak Ben-Zvi[14] became the country's second president after the death of Chaim Weizmann, and in 1918 as young Zionist leaders, they had co-authored *Eretz Israel in the Past and the Present*, the most important Zionist book of that era, very successfully released in both Hebrew and Yiddish. In that work, they summarized the strong historical evidence that the local Palestinians were obviously just long-converted Jews, expressing the hope that they would therefore be absorbed into the growing Zionist movement and become an integral part of their planned State of Israel; Ben-Zvi published a later 1929 booklet making the same points. It was only after the Palestinians became increasingly hostile to Zionist colonization and they began violently clashing with those European settlers that the Judean ancestry of the Palestinians was tossed down the memory-hole and forgotten.

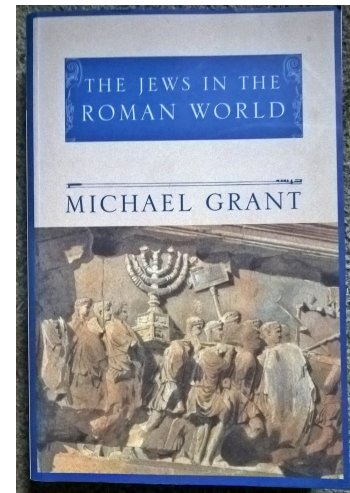
Thus, despite a long series of military conquests and foreign overlords, the Israelites of the Old Testament had remained in place for well over two thousand years, annually plowing their fields until they were brutally uprooted and expelled from their ancient homeland by Zionist militants in 1948, a story I had told in a lengthy article last month.

- American Pravda: The Nakba and the Holocaust[15]

Ron Unz • **The Unz Review** • December 11, 2023 • 14,600 Words

The different elements of Sand's reconstruction fit together quite snugly. Palestine had never been a very populous land and its inhabitants had overwhelmingly consisted of peasant farmers. Once we recognize that they had remained in place following the failure of their repeated revolts against Roman rule, the large Jewish populations we later find spread across the shores of the Mediterranean basin only become explicable as a result of large-scale religious conversions. Such a development was hardly surprising given the decline of traditional paganism and the rise of various new cults during those same centuries of the later Roman Empire. Thus, it seems undeniable that the overwhelming majority of the Jews of that era had little if any Judean ancestry.

Sand seems a highly-reputable scholar and his international best-seller was very respectfully treated or even glowingly praised by a long list of mainstream outlets and reviewers, including Israeli ones. But his academic specialty was French history rather than the classical world, and many of his claims about the size and status of the Jews in the Roman Empire seemed so surprising to me that I decided to evaluate them by reading *The Jews in the Roman World*[16], published in 1973 by Michael Grant, an eminent British ancient historian.



Although Grant's emphasis was quite different, his account seemed generally consistent with that of Sand. Population figures from the classical era have considerable uncertainty, but Grant seemed to accept the very large Jewish population spread across Rome's empire, which he reckoned might have reached a figure as high as eight million, perhaps representing as much as 20% of the total in the eastern, Greek-speaking provinces. The widespread evidence of Jewish conversions was also heavily documented, although unlike Sand, Grant believed that the Emperor Nero's second wife was merely sympathetic to Judaism rather than an outright Jewish convert.

Some of the reviews I read also seemed to substantiate Sand's important findings. A long article[17] about his book ran on the front-page of one of the sections of the *New York Times*, and the journalist had contacted various mainstream experts, who confirmed many of the author's surprising claims: the expulsion of the Jews from Palestine was merely a myth, modern Jews were very substantially the descendants of later converts, and today's Palestinians were indeed probably the direct descendants of the ancient Judeans. I was also pleased to discover that the *Times* writer had focused upon many of the same surprising points I had taken from rereading the text. A comprehensive Wikipedia page[18] provides an even-handed summary of Sand's book, including the praise he attracted from so many leading Jewish public intellectuals.

Although Sand naturally drew much bitter criticism especially from Zionists, I noticed that many of the sharpest attacks against his work focused upon his support for the Khazar Hypothesis, although it only constituted a small part of his book and he was cautious in his claims. This closely mirrored the strategy employed against Beatty more than a half-century earlier.

I actually suspect that the visceral Jewish reaction to the Khazar Hypothesis promoted by Beatty, Koestler, and Sand may partly be due to an unfortunate coincidence. In Jewish culture, pigs are considered disgusting, unclean animals and in both Hebrew and Yiddish the word for pig is "Chazar," pronounced "KHA-zer." [19] Since most Jews have probably never heard of the Khazars, they may have naturally assumed that name had the same pronunciation and was somehow related to pigs. So if they discovered that various academics were claiming that Jews traced their ancestry to some sort of "pig-people," their very hostile response was hardly surprising.

The Decisive Genetic Evidence

For centuries, nearly everything we have known about the ancient world has been based upon literary and epigraphic evidence, but over the last generation DNA analysis and population genetics have begun providing additional, potentially far more scientifically objective sources of information. And the nature and origins of world Jewry has been an important target of that newly-enhanced research.

Sand is a historian, strongly committed to his anti-racist beliefs and an individual with deep Communist roots. When I originally read his book a decade ago, I was surprised that he seemed to almost completely ignore some of the revelations of Jewish origins produced by genetic studies that had recently been in the news and I was therefore quite dismissive of his work when I briefly mentioned it[20] in a 2016 article:

For example, Shlomo Sand's international best-seller *The Invention of the Jewish People*[21] was very widely praised in left-liberal and anti-Zionist circles, and attracted considerable attention in the mainstream media. But although I found many parts of the history extremely interesting, the central claim appeared to be incorrect. As far as I'm aware, there seems overwhelming genetic evidence[22] that Europe's Ashkenazi Jews do indeed trace much of their ancestry back to the Holy Land, apparently being the descendants of a few hundred (presumably Jewish) Middle Easterners, mostly male, who settled in Southern Europe some time after the Fall of Rome and took local Northern Italian wives, afterward remaining largely endogamous for the next thousand-plus years of their growing presence in Central and Eastern Europe. However, being a historian rather than a genetic researcher, Prof. Sand was apparently unaware of this hard evidence, and focused upon much weaker literary and cultural indicators, perhaps also being somewhat influenced by his own ideological predilections.

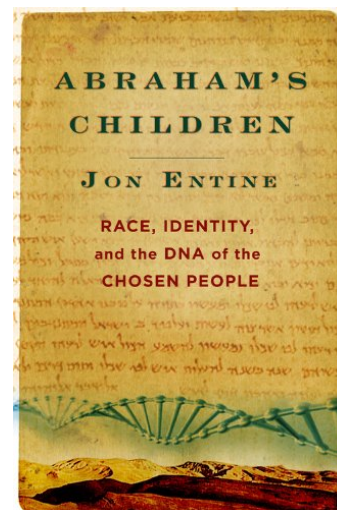
Given the fascination of the Jewish public with their ancestral origins and the fact that so many journalists and genetic researchers are themselves Jewish, it's hardly surprising that the implications of Jewish DNA analysis has been so widely covered in the media. But when one such Jewish geneticist revealed in 2010 that widely-separated populations of Jews seemed much more closely related to each other than they were to any of the local host populations among whom they had dwelled for many centuries, Sand outrageously told *Science Magazine*[23] that "Hitler would certainly have been very pleased," deeply offending that scientist. Heated ideological reactions such as these were among the reasons I'd dismissed Sand's book when I'd read it a year or two later.

But after now rereading Sand, I have somewhat tempered my strongly negative appraisal. The author did devote a few pages to discussing the genetic evidence, providing various examples to argue that it had often been skewed by the ideological predispositions of the researchers, while the media tended to promote those studies that supported the Zionist framework and ignore those that challenged it. So although the author agreed that genetic

analysis had “a brilliant future,” he believed that it was still “a relatively young science” whose current findings should be treated with considerable caution. Although I still found Sand’s arguments unconvincing, his position wasn’t quite as anti-scientific as I had remembered it to be.

Ironically enough, as one of the hostile reviewers[24] of his book had noted, many aspects of today’s widely-accepted genetic picture seem to strongly buttress Sand’s own overall conclusions. The vast majority of the world’s Jews are the European Ashkenazis, and most DNA analysis has concluded that they are overwhelmingly the descendants of a tiny founding population from more than a thousand years ago, whose males were apparently Jewish Middle Easterners but with a large majority of the females being Northern Italian or German Gentiles. This conclusion thus actually supports Sand’s claim that modern-day Jews had very heavy convert ancestry although their family tree is different than the one he suggested. Meanwhile, those same studies have revealed at most a tiny sliver of Turkic ancestry, seeming to rule out the Khazar Hypothesis that Sand had discussed at considerable length.

For decades, journalist Jon Entine has been heavily focused upon these sorts of issues, with his Genetic Literary Project website[25] being devoted to that topic. Several years ago I read his 2007 book *Abraham’s Children*[26], which discussed the particular genetics of the Jewish population, and although DNA researchers have obviously made huge strides during the subsequent sixteen years, I decided to reread it.

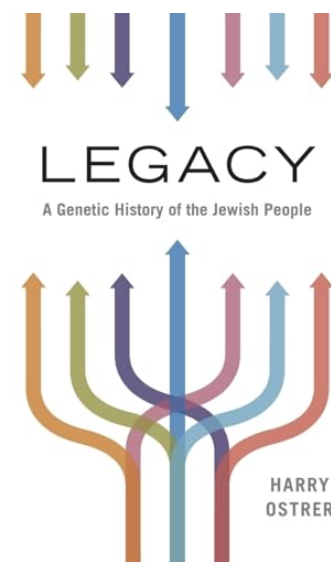


Although the main focus of Entine’s book was the genetic evidence of Jewish origins, he also devoted part of one chapter to strongly challenging the Khazar Hypothesis on general historical grounds, and I found his arguments quite persuasive. Although he certainly acknowledges that Khazar converts may have contributed to the ancestry of Ashkenazi Jews—he even finds some scattered genetic evidence to support this possibility—that contribution seems to have been rather small, with the overwhelming majority of the male Jewish line having its origins in the ancient Middle East. And after the formation of the Ashkenazi population, subsequent admixture of the Eastern European Jews with the Slavs and Balts among whom they lived for centuries was absolutely negligible, with only 0.5% of the Jewish women in each generation having children with Gentiles.

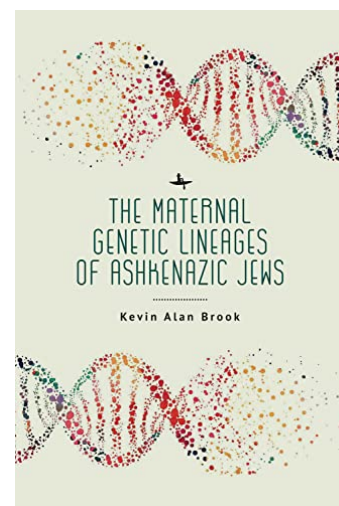
However, in rereading Entine’s narrative I noticed some items that did seem to support the cautionary arguments that Sand was to emphasize in his own book published the following year. According to Entine, the crucial financial backing for the ground-breaking genetic research had come from a wealthy Jewish business tycoon in Britain, who had an intense personal focus on Jewish ancestry and therefore funded a project that seemed to demonstrate that all present-day members of the Jewish priestly caste—the *Cohanim*—were apparently direct male descendants of High Priest Aaron of the Old Testament. Moreover, the chief scientist on that effort was a fervently-devout Jewish researcher who traced his

personal ancestry to exactly that sacred line. Although there was nothing to suggest that these strong ideological beliefs had skewed their scientific findings, the skepticism of someone like Sand is hardly unreasonable. And indeed a book published several years later by a leading genetics researcher, himself also Jewish, seemed to thoroughly debunk that exciting Biblical hypothesis, which had made global news headlines when it was announced.

That latter short book was *Legacy: A Genetic History of the Jewish People*[27], by Prof. Harry Ostrer[28], published in 2012 by Oxford University Press, which seemed to take a very sober and restrained view of these complex genetic questions. Much of Ostrer's discussion was historical, and he noted with some irony that the widespread genetic beliefs firmly established by one generation of Jewish scientists were sometimes completely overturned by those of the next generation, only to be just as firmly resurrected by a third generation. Obviously, under such circumstances maintaining proper scientific caution is quite important. But Ostrer did confirm Entine's conclusions regarding the apparent Middle Eastern male ancestry of Ashkenazi Jews and their total genetic dissimilarity from Turkic peoples seemed to virtually rule out the Khazar Hypothesis.



I also purchased and read *The Maternal Genetic Lineages of Ashkenazic Jews*[29], a very short 2022 book by Kevin Alan Brook[30], an independent genetic researcher. Over the years, Brook has become a leading expert on the Khazars, arguing that they provided merely a trivial fraction of Ashkenazi ancestry, and this very recent work seemed to fully cement that conclusion, though in eye-glazingly dull fashion: nearly the entire text consisted of an encyclopedic listing of the ancestral origins of the many hundreds of major maternal Jewish genotypes, almost none of which seem to have any significant Turkic component.

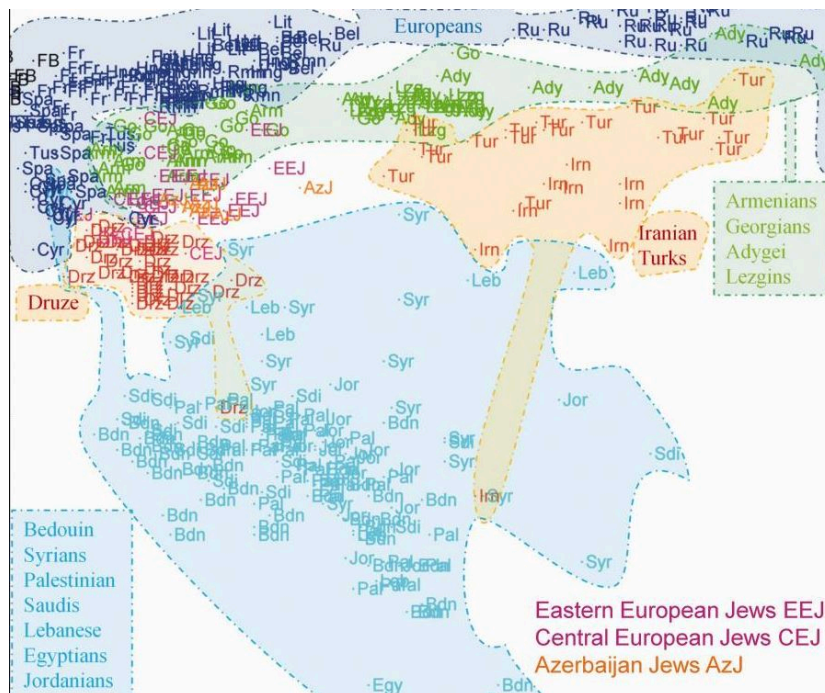


For those interested in exploring the subject in greater detail, I would strongly recommend the enormously comprehensive Wikipedia page on the Khazar Hypothesis[31], which runs nearly 13,000 words including copious references and a large section[32] on the genetic evidence. However, being Wikipedia, we must treat its claims on such a controversial topic with considerable caution. For example, I noticed that in the Antisemitism section[33], the article stated that Wilmot Robertson, the founding father of modern American White Nationalism was an adherent, but when I checked, I found that he had actually dismissed the Khazar Hypothesis as “One of the oldest of racial old wives’ tales,” declaring that it had been conclusively debunked by genetic evidence.

The Wikipedia article also devoted a subsection[34] to the very controversial work of Israeli-American geneticist Eran Elhaik[35], who has published several papers over the last decade attempting to revive the Khazar Hypothesis, but with a large majority of genetic

My technical expertise in genetic analysis isn't sufficiently strong to properly evaluate these conflicting arguments, but one of Elhaik's major claims caught my attention. He contrasted his own "Khazarian Hypothesis" of Jewish origins with the mainstream "Rhineland Hypothesis," but repeatedly claimed that the latter asserted that Ashkenazi Jews were solely the descendants of the Semitic Judeans, which seems a total misstatement of that position. Instead, mainstream researchers describe those Jews as a hybrid population, perhaps half Middle Eastern but almost half European, a very different assumption.

Population ancestry is commonly analyzed by examining a PCA chart of genetic markers and the one provided in Elhaik's paper showed that the Eastern and Central European Jews seem to cluster part-way between Europeans and Middle Easterners, exactly as we would expect, and completely distant from the Turks. So I saw nothing that would lead me to doubt the mainstream perspective.



How Jews as Punics Resolves the Conflicting Evidence

However, in reviewing this genetic evidence I saw an obvious puzzle that seemed to have passed unnoticed in all of the discussions I'd read.

Most mainstream experts seemed to quietly concede that Sand was correct in arguing that by the time of the Roman Empire the overwhelming majority of the Jews living along the shores of the Mediterranean were probably of convert stock, having little ancestry from the Israelites of Palestine. Yet the genetic evidence painted a very different picture for the major subsequent Jewish populations.

As mentioned, the Ashkenazi Jews seem to derive from Middle Eastern males who took European wives in the centuries after the Fall of Rome. Meanwhile, the Sephardic Jews of Muslim Spain are also of Middle Eastern ancestry, and they were the wealthiest and most numerous component of Jewry throughout much of the Middle Ages prior to their 1492 expulsion by Ferdinand and Isabella. So if only a small fraction of Jews had roots in Palestine, it appears quite odd that these would have become the progenitors of both the Sephardic and male Ashkenazi lines. Genetic evidence seems to conflict with strong literary and historical evidence.

I think the solution to this apparent mystery comes from considering a very simple question. If millions of pagans across the Mediterranean world probably converted to Judaism during the centuries following the conquests of Alexander the Great and the rise of Rome, we should ask ourselves which pagans were the most likely to do so.

The Greeks dominated the Hellenistic world, and the success and appeal of their culture was so overwhelming that large numbers of the Jews in Palestine became ardent Hellenizers, incorporating pagan elements into their lifestyle and eventually sparking the Maccabean revolt against such detested foreign influences. So it seems very unlikely that substantial numbers of Greeks or Greek-influenced groups would have converted to Judaism when the evidence is that the flow of quasi-converts was far stronger in the opposite direction. And the long history of bitter hostility between the very large Greek and Jewish populations of Alexandria further undercuts the notion of numerous Greek converts.

Similarly, the world-conquering Romans of the Republic ruled Palestine, and there seems no evidence that any of them converted to Judaism or found that religion attractive, with Cicero's remarks[40] suggesting that the Jews were merely considered a disruptive and disreputable nationality. During the early Empire, the Romans brutally crushed several Jewish revolts and although some elite Romans were attracted to the religion, the Jewish population across the Roman world had already become very large by that point, with no indication that it had been swelled by Roman converts.

So if it seems rather unlikely that substantial numbers of either Greeks or Romans had converted to Judaism prior to the birth of Christ, what was the probable source of the huge number of such apparent converts?

An intriguing possibility presents itself. The ancient Judeans were a Semitic people, closely related in language and culture to the neighboring Canaanites, primarily distinguished by their fiercely monotheistic religion. And by far the greatest and most important of these Canaanite peoples were the Phoenicians[41], whose coastal city-states included Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos, and who centuries earlier had founded Carthage[42] as a North African colony on the coast of Tunisia. These Punic peoples—the Phoenicians and Carthaginians—were renowned as the greatest merchants of the ancient world, and they had successfully established a far-flung trading empire long before the rise of Classical Greece or Rome, an empire that endured for nearly a thousand years. Their business activities had also made them great innovators, and the Greeks credited them with having invented the Alphabet, which was later borrowed and adapted by all other peoples.

The Phoenician cities had eventually been subjugated by the large Semitic land empires of the Assyrians and the Babylonians, becoming tributary vassals, and this status continued under the Persian Empire, which relied upon the Phoenicians to provide most of its navy. But during Alexander the Great's successful campaign to conquer Persia, he destroyed Tyre and any residue of Phoenician independence was permanently lost under his Hellenistic successors.

By this same era, Carthage had established a large North African empire in the Western Mediterranean, including many colonies of its own, and had probably become the largest and wealthiest city of the ancient world. But during the following century, the Punic Wars against Rome ended with Carthage's total defeat and the loss of all of its territories, ultimately culminating in its final destruction in 146 BC.

We know that the Israelites had certainly had regular contact with their nearby Phoenician cousins. According to the Bible, King Solomon relied upon the skilled artisans of Tyre for his building projects, and a later king of Israel married into the ruling dynasty of that same city. Although these particular historical incidents seem quite plausible, I think a much more realistic perspective is that the wealthy, sophisticated merchants of Phoenicia regarded the Israelites as their rustic country cousins, probably poor and ignorant and fanatically religious with their monotheistic creed.

However, once Phoenicia had permanently fallen under the alien rule of the Hellenistic heirs of Alexander and the surviving Carthaginians had been incorporated into the empire created by their bitter Roman enemies, it is easy to imagine that many members of both those Punic populations might have gradually become drawn towards a messianic religion such as Judaism espoused by a closely-related Semitic people. According to modern estimates, Carthage's North African empire probably included 3-4 million inhabitants at its peak, easily explaining the source of so many of the apparent Jewish converts who later appeared in that same part of the world.

Alexandria was the largest and most sophisticated city in the Eastern portion of Rome's empire and one-third of its million residents were Jews, often locked in communal strife with the one-third who were Greek. It seems far more likely that these urbanized Jews were the descendants of Phoenician converts rather than Judean peasant farmers who had somehow been transformed into city-dwellers in such huge numbers. The very large Jewish community in Cyprus off the coast of Lebanon also seems likely to have had similar roots.

Indeed, Michael Grant noted that as early as 6 AD a leading Jewish rabble-rouser involved in anti-Greek agitation in Palestine bore the distinctly Punic name of Hannibal.

The Palestinian Jews had no sea-faring tradition nor any history of colonization and were never known as merchants, with their most notable characteristic being their religious fanaticism and the violent rebellions it regularly inspired. But by the time of the early Roman Empire, we find enormous Jewish populations in coastal trading cities and islands, with Josephus making the (probably exaggerated) claim that 500,000 Jews lived in Cyrenaica on the Libyan coast, not far from destroyed Carthage. How plausible is it that Judean peasants could have migrated to all those distant locations in such large numbers, or had suddenly become the successful merchants and traders that many of these Jews seemed to be?

Outside the vicinity of the Middle East, those regions that later became centers of large Jewish populations were Spain and portions of the North African coast, both of which had been Carthaginian territory, a very suggestive pattern. And even as the Jewish population of the Roman Empire grew larger and became an increasing topic of discussion in the histories of that era, any mention of the residual Phoenicians or Carthaginians became less and less frequent, with those two historical trends possibly being connected.

Furthermore, conversion to Judaism required adult circumcision, a very painful and sometimes dangerous process that functioned as a major deterrent to potential adherents, and by foregoing that requirement, Christianity was able to greatly swell its ranks of Gentile converts. But Herodotus and some other ancient sources claimed[43] that the Phoenicians already practiced circumcision, which would have made it much easier for them to become Jews.

The cities of the Phoenicians were located in present-day Lebanon and much of that country's population are their direct descendants. For centuries, the Lebanese, whether living at home or in their far-flung diaspora, have been widely regarded as some of the world's shrewdest businessmen and traders, surely reflecting that Phoenician heritage and its enduring traditions. But although the Jews of Judea never had any such reputation, the Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews certainly did, further suggesting that their true origins lay with a different Semitic people.

Sand spent a few pages discussing the possibility of Jewish converts from among Phoenicians and Carthaginians, but he failed to give the idea the importance it deserved, instead devoting many times more space to the far less plausible Khazar ancestry of the European Jews. Indeed, his discussion was so meager that the issue was never mentioned in the long Wikipedia page[44] devoted to his book nor in any of the reviews that I read. And although Sand cited a French work from 1962 that had briefly asserted the possibility, I have never seen the hypothesis mentioned anywhere among modern writers. For example, Paul Johnson's widely praised 1987 bestseller *A History of the Jews*[45] runs over 650 pages, but neither "Phoenician" nor "Carthaginian" appear anywhere in its index.

Although there seems no indication that this origin theory had ever circulated within the Jewish community, strong sympathy for those other Semitic peoples has been quite

common. For two thousand years, Jews have regarded the Romans as their most hated enemy, the foreign nation that conquered and oppressed them, brutally subdued their repeated revolts, and demolished their Second Temple, the central shrine of their religion. But more than a century before it seized Jerusalem, Rome itself had nearly been destroyed by Carthage during the Second Punic War, so throughout history many Jews have greatly admired that kindred Semitic empire. During that war, the Carthaginians had been led by Hannibal[46], widely regarded as one of history's most brilliant military commanders, who repeatedly destroyed far superior Roman armies before the weight of their greater resources finally overwhelmed him. Hannibal later fled overseas, offering his services to all enemies of Rome, and many years afterward when he was about to fall into Roman hands, he chose suicide by poison rather than captivity, thus explaining the name of the Israeli government's controversial "Hannibal Directive."[47] For related reasons, Sigmund Freud explained that as a Jew he had always regarded Hannibal as one of his personal heroes[48].

So unless modern DNA testing has become sufficiently precise to distinguish the genetics of the ancient Judeans from that of their close Phoenician cousins, I think the latter group should be treated as a leading candidate for the true origin of the modern Jews, including both the Sephardics of Spain and the male line of the Ashkenazis of Eastern Europe.

I wish I could take personal credit for this bold, seemingly persuasive hypothesis that solves many different puzzles, but I can't. Nearly fifty years ago I happened to read The Outline of History[49], the sweeping 1920 history of the world by British polymath H.G. Wells, whose narrative stretches from the origins of life to the end of the world war, and he devoted[50] a couple of paragraphs[51] in its 1,200 pages to presenting this exact theory of Jewish origins, which he regarded as so plausible as to almost be self-evidently true. I found his hypothesis quite convincing at the time and have always been surprised that no one else seems to have ever taken it up in the hundred years since it was first proposed.

- Prof. John Beaty and the True Origin of the Jews[52]

Ron Unz • ***The Unz Review*** • January 29, 2024 • 12,900 Words

Finding Punic Religious Echoes in Later Judaism

I was quite pleased with my January analysis of Jewish origins, including my debunking of the Khazar Hypothesis and the case I had made for the far likelier Phoenician/Carthaginian origins of modern Jews. Although H.G. Wells had very briefly sketched out that theory more than a century ago, I'd always regarded it as so plausible that I'd wondered why it had been totally ignored at the time and apparently almost never mentioned anywhere else. So I was glad to have now revived it, mustering the very considerable literary and genetic supporting evidence that had steadily accumulated since 1920.

The implications of this Punic Hypothesis are quite interesting. During the first century AD, Christianity had begun as a small Jewish religious sect, but soon attracted a multitude of Gentile converts, who swamped the original Judean adherents, leading to important changes in its doctrines. But under this reconstruction, something rather similar may have happened to Judaism during the previous century, with Punic converts across the Mediterranean world soon greatly outnumbering the original Judean Jews.

Moreover, given the far greater wealth and sophistication of those Punic Jews, they would have especially dominated the elite ranks of the religion. As heirs to a thousand-year-old trading empire, they were a proud people, perhaps unwilling to abandon all their own traditions as they adopted the Judaism of their rustic, inland cousins. Thus, we should not be surprised if certain elements of those pagan Punic beliefs might continue to exist in the new version of the Jewish religion that eventually emerged.

Although some of these thoughts had been in the back of my mind, my religious expertise was too scanty to properly pursue them and since my article was already overly long, I let the matter drop. Fortunately, someone far more knowledgeable in such matters soon decided to take up the issue.

A couple of months ago I'd published a long and very interesting article arguing that the major ideological shifts in the Catholic Church produced by the Second Vatican Council[53] ending in 1965 had actually been the result of an organized subversion of that two-thousand-year-old Christian institution by its longtime Jewish adversaries, perhaps even amounting to a *coup d'état* relying upon nefarious means. Although I lacked the background to properly evaluate those arguments, they were based upon a wealth of surprising information and seemed carefully reasoned.

- The Smoke of the Synagogue[54]

Lawrence Erickson • **The Unz Review** • March 20, 2024 • 11,100 Words

Given that writer's obvious expertise in religious history and theological matters, I was very pleased that he seemed persuaded by my arguments for a Phoenician/Carthaginian origin for the Jews and subsequently produced a new article endorsing my hypothesis and extending it in ways I hadn't considered, drawing upon his deep familiarity with the Old and New Testaments.

- Religious Implications of the Carthaginian Theory[55]

Lawrence Erickson • **The Unz Review** • May 10, 2024 • 3,900 Words

Although I'd strongly urge those interested to read that entire article, it's worth discussing several of his important points and quoting some of his key passages.

First, although the Israelites were very closely related to the neighboring Canaanites, he noted that the Old Testament was intensely hostile to the latter, who were stigmatized as an accursed people.

“And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.”

-Genesis 9:25

The Bible uses the term “Canaanite” to refer to the indigenous pagan tribes in the land of Canaan (modern day Israel and Lebanon). The story of the Canaanites begins with their namesake, Canaan. The Bible describes how Canaan's father, Ham, witnesses Noah naked and tells his brothers about it, rather than helping cover Noah up. As punishment, Noah curses Canaan in Genesis 9:25. Canaan's descendants settle in the land of Canaan, and they are condemned for practicing incest, homosexuality, bestiality, and child sacrifice

(Leviticus 18). God eventually commands the Israelites to remove them from the southern portion of the land (modern day Israel). While some are under the impression that the Canaanites were completely annihilated, the Bible states in Judges 3 1:4 that the Canaanites in the north (modern day Lebanon) were allowed to survive so as to test future Israelites in battle.

But the Phoenicians and their Carthaginian colonists were merely the coastal Canaanites, so if they ultimately became the ancestors of most later Jews, including the Zionist settlers who established the state of Israel, he emphasized that the resulting historical and religious ironies were enormous.

While the Bible describes the people of this land as Canaanites, the Greeks had a different name for them: Phoenicians. Carthage was founded by the Phoenicians as a colony in the 9th century BC,[2][56] roughly three centuries after modern scholars believe the Canaanite displacement at the hands of the Israelites occurred. However, there is little reason to think these Phoenicians/Carthaginians were anything other than the direct descendants of the Biblical Canaanites. Ephraim Stern, chairman of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Institute of Archaeology, stated that the Phoenicians were the descendants of the Biblical-era Canaanites, some of whom were forced out of Palestine by the Israelites around 1200 BC.[3][57]

Already, an incredible irony presents itself. Modern scholars subtly acknowledge that the vast majority of Roman Jews never left Palestine, meaning that modern Palestinians are the closest descendants of the ancient Israelites. Others have already pointed out how ironic it is that the entire Zionist project justifies itself off the claim that they are the descendants of the Israelites, but in reality, they are expelling the actual descendants of the Israelites from the holy land.

The Carthaginian theory further deepens this already remarkable irony. Zionist settlers are not just a foreign entity attacking the true Israelites, but are actually the descendants of the people that were cursed and explicitly ordered for removal from the land by God, according to scriptures that religious Zionists themselves believe in. They do have a connection to the holy land, it's just not the one they want.

From a Christian perspective, the story of modern Zionism is the story of a bitter people attempting to reverse God's judgment upon them without Christ, and who have been allowed to exist so as to test Israelites in combat. This ends up remaining true theologically, in the sense that Christians are the new Israelites and Christian societies have been seized by Jewish organizations, and it's also become true again literally, in the sense that Israelite descendants are now physically in combat with Canaanite descendants in the holy land.

America's tens of millions of Christian Zionists regard themselves as the champions of the Israelis whom they identify with the Israelites of the Bible, and I suspect that many of them may vaguely

consider the Palestinians to be the descendants of the accursed Canaanites. But the actual facts seem to be the other way round, with the Israeli Jews having heavy Canaanite ancestry and today's suffering Palestinians probably being the closest direct descendants of the ancient Israelites.

Erickson went on to note:

It is commonly believed that modern day Jews are followers of the Old Testament, only differentiated from Christians by their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. The Hebrew scriptures seem to clearly point to Jesus as the Messiah, leaving Christians frustrated for centuries over the Jewish refusal to accept this. However, the [scholarship of Prof. Israel Shahak](#)[58] has shown that the modern Jewish religion includes a wide variety of strange, seemingly pagan practices. Many have accused them of general devil worship, but Canaanite origins could provide greater clarity as to the essence of their beliefs.

He explained that according to Shahak, many Talmudic Jews actually believed in the existence of both male and female supreme deities whose sexual union is a crucial objective of Jewish religious rituals. He found this a very puzzling element in a purportedly monotheistic creed.

...I was baffled, and wondered how such an odd belief could have ended up in modern Judaism. With the Carthaginian context though, it makes perfect sense, as the Carthaginians worshipped a divine couple, the male Baal-Hammon and the female Tanit, as mentioned above.

Assuming that the Carthaginian theory is true, the evidence suggests that the modern Jewish religion is a sort of hybrid between genuine Torah Judaism and Canaanite paganism. This should be unsurprising, as the Phoenicians were a proud people with an empire that had lasted a millennium, and they were probably reluctant to totally shirk their own religion in favor of one coming from their impoverished peasant cousins.

To his considerable credit, Erickson did not shy away from the touchiest issues such as child sacrifice that seemed to connect Punic religious practices with those of the latter day Jews.

As we covered earlier, the Canaanites in the Bible engaged in a host of disturbing pagan practices, including child sacrifice...Despite the distance between Carthage and Phoenicia, the Phoenician Carthaginians retained an unsevered connection with their native religion, and this included the practice of child sacrifice. For many years it was doubted that the Carthaginians actually sacrificed children, but recent findings have provided overwhelming evidence that they did.[4][59] An article in *Haaretz* provides [a useful summary](#)[60]:

“Though they dispersed throughout the western Mediterranean, the Phoenicians remained united by their religious practices. For centuries, Carthage sent a delegation to Tyre each year to sacrifice at the temple of the city-god Melqart. In Carthage itself, the chief deities were the divine couple Baal-Hammon, meaning “Lord of the Brazier,” and Tanit, identified with Astarte. The most notorious characteristic of Phoenician religion was the practice of child sacrifice. The area around the western Mediterranean (Carthage, Western Sicily, Southern Sardinia) is littered with burials of sacrificed children, but in truth, the practice was commonplace in the Phoenician cities all over the Levant. Diodorus Siculus reports that in 310 B.C.E., during an attack on the city, the Carthaginians sacrificed over 200 children of noble birth to appease Baal-Hammon.”

The scholarship of Prof. Ariel Toaff[61] shows that this practice also did not end with the destruction of Carthage, and that European Jews practiced child sacrifice well into the Middle Ages. The existence of Carthaginian child sacrifice strongly supports the accounts of Canaanite child sacrifice in the Bible, as well as Prof. Toaff’s research, and shows a significant link between Rabbinic Judaism and Canaanite paganism.

In a lengthy passage, Erickson also noted the strong association that both Phoenicians and later Jews maintained with Saturn:

Another intriguing continuity is the role of Saturn in Jewish culture. The historian Eusebius records that the Phoenician supreme deity, El, was deified as the star Saturn[62]. The Romans also linked Saturn with the Carthaginian supreme deity, Baal-Hammon, possibly reinforced by the fact that Saturn ate his children in Roman mythology.

Roman and Medieval Jewish sources attest that at least some form of Saturn/Baal-Hammon worship remained even after the Carthaginians mass converted to Judaism. Shlomo Sela, a professor in the Department of Jewish Thought at Bar Ilan University, analyzed the works of Abraham ibn Ezra, a prominent Medieval Jewish commentator, who wrote a lengthy work attempting to defend the link between the Jews and Saturn. Sela wrote that this link is “historically vouched for in almost all the sources which have been presented above to demonstrate the persistence of the Saturn-Jewish connection from antiquity till the Middle Ages. Thus, both Tacitus and St. Augustine asserted that the Jews made the Sabbath their rest day in order to honor or worship Saturn.”[6][63] (p. 40)

Lest anyone think that this was just Roman or Christian propaganda, Sela also states: “That Jewish society of the Talmudic period recognized the same association is shown by the fact that the Babylonian Talmud (Shabbat 156a) refers to Saturn as Shabbetai, i.e., the star of Shabbat (Saturday).”[7][64] Ibn Ezra himself did not deny that the Shabbat (Sabbath) was related to Saturn, but defended it by saying that Jews rested to protect themselves from Saturn’s malignant influence, which was supposedly strongest on that day. The Jewish newspaper, Forward, also admits the link, but claims that the Jews named Saturn after the Sabbath simply because the Romans believed the Jews were resting in honor of Saturn.[8][65]

Both of these explanations raise serious questions. The Old Testament clearly and repeatedly states that God blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy, and that it's to be dedicated only to God (Exodus 20:8-11). If devout Jews rest for Saturn, even if we are to believe that it's to protect themselves from Saturn, this would be religiously errant at the very least. Along with that, one would think that pious Jews would be deeply offended by the Roman accusation that they dedicated the Sabbath to a malicious pagan deity and would strenuously resist such a connection given the severe scriptural warnings against idol worship. Instead, they appear to have had no problem with naming Saturn "the Sabbath star", casting doubt on the idea that the Romans were wrong about this.

Given that Jews have resisted conversion to Christianity for two-thousand years under enormous pressure, and that they even use a different mathematical plus sign[66] because ours looks too much like a cross, a misnomer here would seem like quite the oversight.

Furthermore, although the Star of David has come to represent the main symbol of Judaism, its origins are actually obscure since there is no such mention anywhere in the Old Testament. Instead, there are Biblical references to a star as the symbol of Saturn and its association with Phoenician religious practices.

St. Stephen appears to allude to this in his speech to the Sanhedrin (Acts 7), where he compares their actions to those of disobedient Israelites in the Old Testament, including some who decided to worship Moloch and Remphan over God:

"Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon."

-Acts 7:43

Remphan (or Rephan) is the Egyptian name for Saturn.[11][67] Stephen is referencing Amos 5:26 when he refers to the star of Remphan:

"But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves."

-Amos 5:26

Chiun is the Hebrew name for Saturn, and the Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary on this verse states that Saturn was probably represented with a star symbol: "Probably there was a figure of a star on the head of the image of the idol, to represent the planet Saturn; hence "images" correspond to "star" in the parallel clause." [12][68] It seems quite possible that Carthaginian influence led to a revival in the usage of this star of Saturn symbol, and is what led Stephen to refer to this specific verse.

When asking ourselves what this star symbol may have looked like, there is of course one very obvious candidate: the Star of David. Not many Christians seem to be aware of this, but there is no mention in the Old Testament of any sort of "star" of David, a star symbol

for David, or anything else that could plausibly link David with the modern Jewish symbol. [13][69] Theories for the origin of the Star of David are vague and varied, but the Jewish Virtual Library's page on the topic interestingly says that "The oldest undisputed example is on a seal from the seventh century B.C.E. found in Sidon." [14][70] Sidon was a major Canaanite/Phoenician city, and the 7th century BC is just a century after the prophet Amos is said to have lived. [15][71]

The page also states that Arab and Jewish sources referred to the hexagram as "the seal of Solomon" and that this connects the symbol with early "Judeo-Christian" magic such as the first-century [16][72] magical work The Testament of Solomon [73]. In this non-canonical work, God gives Solomon a ring engraved with a pentagram that allows him to control demons, and the story ends with Solomon worshipping Moloch and Remphan in exchange for sex. This seems to be the earliest documentary source for the Star of David, which happens to be from the time Stephen lived and happens to also link the symbol with Saturn/Remphan.

Were Amos and Stephen speaking of the Star of David when they condemned this star of Saturn symbol? We may never be able to confirm this, but given that the oldest example of the Star of David is from around the time of Amos, in a major city of Saturn worshippers, and its first documented appearances also associate it with Saturn in the time of Stephen, this seems highly likely.

I think that all these shared religious elements strongly support the Punic Hypothesis of Jewish origins, adding to the considerable literary and genetic evidence that I had previously described.

The Seminal Scholarship of Israel Shahak and Ariel Toaff

Erickson's analysis drew heavily upon the scholarship of Israeli academics Israel Shahak and Ariel Toaff, and he repeatedly cited my own 2018 article [74] describing their ground-breaking research. Therefore I think it is worth including portions of that piece in which I discussed the remarkable works of those two Israeli scholars.

My first surprise was that Shahak's writings included introductions or glowing blurbs by some of America's most prominent public intellectuals, including Christopher Hitchens, Gore Vidal, Noam Chomsky, and Edward Said. Praise also came from quite respectable publications such as *The London Review of Books*, *Middle East International*, and *Catholic New Times* while Allan Brownfeld of *The American Council for Judaism* had published a very long and laudatory obituary [75]. And I discovered that Shahak's background was very different than I had always imagined. He had spent many years as an award-winning Chemistry professor at Hebrew University, and was actually anything but a Communist. Whereas for decades, Israel's ruling political parties had been Socialist or Marxist, his personal doubts about Socialism had left him politically in the wilderness, while his relationship with Israel's tiny Communist Party was solely because they were the only group willing to stand up for the basic human rights issues that were his own central focus. My casual assumptions about his views and background had been entirely in error.

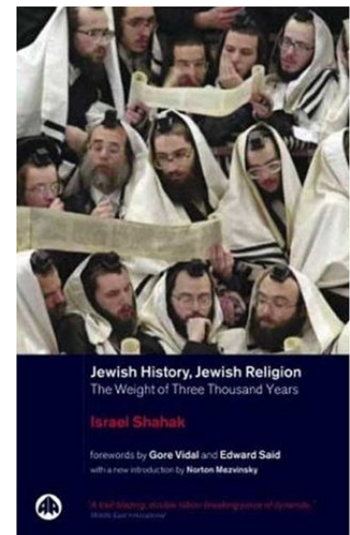
Once I actually began reading his books, and considering his claims, my shock increased fifty-fold. Throughout my entire life, there have been very, very few times I have ever been so totally astonished as I was after I digested *Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of Three Thousand Years*[76], whose text runs barely a hundred pages. In fact, despite his solid background in the academic sciences and the glowing endorsements provided by prominent figures, I found it quite difficult to accept the reality of what I was reading. As a consequence, I paid a considerable sum to a young graduate student I knew, tasking him to verify the claims in Shahak's books, and as far as he could tell, all of the hundreds of references he checked seemed to be accurate or at least found in other sources.

Even with all of that due diligence, I must emphasize that I cannot directly vouch for Shahak's claims about Judaism. My own knowledge of that religion is absolutely negligible, mostly being limited to my childhood, when my grandmother occasionally managed to drag me down to services at the local synagogue, where I was seated among a mass of elderly men praying and chanting in some strange language while wearing various ritualistic cloths and religious talismans, an experience that I always found much less enjoyable than my usual Saturday morning cartoons.

Although Shahak's books are quite short[77], they contain such a density of astonishing material, it would take many, many thousands of words to begin to summarize them. Almost everything I had known—or thought I had known—about the religion of Judaism, at least in its zealously Orthodox traditional form, was utterly wrong.

For example, traditionally religious Jews pay little attention to most of the Old Testament, and even very learned rabbis or students who have devoted many years to intensive study may remain largely ignorant of its contents. Instead, the center of their religious world view is the Talmud, an enormously large, complex, and somewhat contradictory mass of secondary writings and commentary built up over many centuries, which is why their religious doctrine is sometimes called "Talmudic Judaism." Among large portions of the faithful, the Talmud is supplemented by the Kabala, another large collection of accumulated writings, mostly focused on mysticism and all sorts of magic. Since these commentaries and interpretations represent the core of the religion, much of what everyone takes for granted in the Bible is considered in a very different manner.

Given the nature of the Talmudic basis of traditional Judaism and my total previous ignorance of the subject, any attempt on my part of summarize some of the more surprising aspects of Shahak's description may be partially garbled, and is certainly worthy of correction by someone better versed in that dogma. And since so many parts of the Talmud are highly contradictory and infused with complex mysticism, it would be impossible for someone like me to attempt to disentangle the seeming inconsistencies that I am merely repeating. I should note that although Shahak's description of the beliefs and practices of Talmudic Judaism provoked a fire-storm of denunciations, few of those harsh critics seem to have denied his very specific claims, including the most astonishing ones, which would seem to strengthen his credibility.



On the most basic level, the religion of most traditional Jews is actually not at all monotheistic, but instead contains a wide variety of different male and female gods, having quite complex relations to each other, with these entities and their properties varying enormously among the numerous different Jewish sub-sects, depending upon which portions of the Talmud and the Kabala they place uppermost. For example, the traditional Jewish religious cry “The Lord Is One” has always been interpreted by most people to be an monotheistic affirmation, and indeed, many Jews take exactly this same view. But large numbers of other Jews believe this declaration instead refers to achievement of sexual union between the primary male and female divine entities. And most bizarrely, Jews having such radically different views see absolutely no difficulty in praying side by side, and merely interpreting their identical chants in very different fashion.

Furthermore, religious Jews apparently pray to Satan almost as readily as they pray to God, and depending upon the various rabbinical schools, the particular rituals and sacrifices they practice may be aimed at enlisting the support of the one or the other. Once again, so long as the rituals are properly followed, the Satan-worshippers and the God-worshippers get along perfectly well and consider each other equally pious Jews, merely of a slightly different tradition. One point that Shahak repeatedly emphasizes is that in traditional Judaism the nature of the ritual itself is absolutely uppermost, while the interpretation of the ritual is rather secondary. So perhaps a Jew who washes his hands three times clockwise might be horrified by another who follows a counter-clockwise direction, but whether the hand-washing were meant to honor God or to honor Satan would hardly be a matter of much consequence.

Strangely enough, many of the traditional rituals are explicitly intended to fool or trick God or His angels or sometimes Satan, much like the mortal heroes of some Greek legend might seek to trick Zeus or Aphrodite. For example, certain prayers must be uttered in Aramaic rather than Hebrew on the grounds that holy angels apparently don’t understand the former language, and their confusion allows those verses to slip by unimpeded and take effect without divine interference.

Furthermore, since the Talmud represents a massive accretion of published commentary built up over more than a millennium, even the most explicit mandates have sometimes been transformed into their opposites. As an example, Maimonides, one of the highest rabbinical authorities, absolutely prohibited rabbis from being paid for their religious teaching, declaring that any rabbi who received a salary was an evil robber condemned to everlasting torment; yet later rabbis eventually “reinterpreted” this statement to mean something entirely different, and today almost all rabbis collect salaries.

Another fascinating aspect is that up until very recent times, the lives of religious Jews were often dominated by all sorts of highly superstitious practices, including magical charms, potions, spells, incantations, hexes, curses, and sacred talismans, with rabbis often having an important secondary role as sorcerers, and this even remains entirely true today among the enormously influential rabbis of Israel and the New York City area. Shahak’s writings had not endeared him to many of these individuals, and for years they constantly attacked him with all sorts of spells and fearful curses aimed at achieving his death or illness. Many of these traditional Jewish practices seem not entirely dissimilar to those we typically associate with African witch-doctors or Voodoo priests, and indeed, the famous

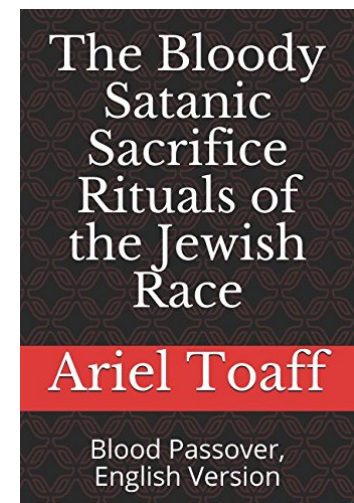
legend of the Golem of Prague described the successful use of rabbinical magic to animate a giant creature built of clay.

I do not doubt that much of the candid analysis provided above will be quite distressing to many individuals. Indeed, some may believe that such material far exceeds the boundaries of mere “anti-Semitism” and easily crosses the threshold into constituting an actual “blood libel” against the Jewish people. That extremely harsh accusation, widely used by stalwart defenders of Israeli behavior, refers to the notorious Christian superstition, prevalent throughout most of the Middle Ages and even into more modern times, that Jews sometimes kidnapped small Christian children in order to drain their blood for use in various magic rituals, especially in connection with the Purim religious holiday. One of my more shocking discoveries of the last dozen years is that there is a fairly strong likelihood that these seemingly impossible beliefs were actually true.

I personally have no professional expertise whatsoever in Jewish ritual traditions, nor the practices of Medieval Jewry. But one of the world’s foremost scholars in that field is Ariel Toaff[78], professor of Jewish Renaissance and Medieval Studies at Bar-Ilan University near Tel Aviv, and himself the son of the Chief Rabbi of Rome.

In 2007, he published the Italian edition of his academic study *Blood Passovers*[79], based on many years of diligent research, assisted by his graduate students and guided by the suggestions of his various academic colleagues, with the initial print run of 1,000 copies selling out on the first day. Given Toaff’s international eminence and such enormous interest, further international distribution, including an English edition by a prestigious American academic press would normally have followed. But the ADL and various other Jewish-activist groups regarded such a possibility with extreme disfavor, and although these activists lacked any scholarly credentials, they apparently applied sufficient pressure to cancel all additional publication. Although Prof. Toaff initially attempted to stand his ground in stubborn fashion, he soon took the same course as Galileo, and his apologies naturally became the basis of the always-unreliable Wikipedia entry[80] on the topic.

Eventually, an English translation of his text turned up on the Internet in a PDF format and was also placed for sale on Amazon.com, where I purchased a copy and eventually read it. Given those difficult circumstances, this work of 500 pages is hardly in ideal form, with most of the hundreds of footnotes disconnected from the text, but it still provides a reasonable means of evaluating Toaff’s controversial thesis, at least from a layman’s perspective. He certainly seems an extremely erudite scholar, drawing heavily upon the secondary literature in English, French, German, and Italian, as well as the original documentary sources in Latin, Medieval Latin, Hebrew, and Yiddish. Indeed, despite the shocking nature of the subject matter, this scholarly work is actually rather dry and somewhat dull, with very long digressions regarding the particular intrigues of various obscure Medieval Jews. My own



total lack of expertise in these areas must be emphasized, but overall I thought Toaff made a quite persuasive case.

It appears that a considerable number of Ashkenazi Jews traditionally regarded Christian blood as having powerful magical properties and considered it a very valuable component of certain important ritual observances at particular religious holidays. Obviously, obtaining such blood in large amounts was fraught with considerable risk, which greatly enhanced its monetary value, and the trade in the vials of that precious commodity seems to have been widely practiced. Toaff emphasizes that since the detailed descriptions of the Jewish ritualistic murder practices are very similarly described in locations widely separated by geography, language, culture, and time period, they are almost certainly independent observations of the same rite. Furthermore, he notes that when accused Jews were caught and questioned, they often correctly described obscure religious rituals which could not possibly have been known to their Gentile interrogators, who often garbled minor details. Thus, these confessions were very unlikely to have been concocted by the authorities.

Furthermore, as extensively discussed by Shahak, the world-view of traditional Judaism did involve a very widespread emphasis on magical rituals, spells, charms, and similar things, providing a context in which ritualistic murder and human sacrifice would hardly be totally unexpected.

Obviously, the ritual murder of Christian children for their blood was viewed with enormous disfavor by the local Gentile population, and the widespread belief in its existence remained a source of bitter tension between the two communities, flaring up occasionally when a Christian child mysteriously disappeared at a particular time of year, or when a body was found that exhibited suspicious types of wounds or showed a strange loss of blood. Every now and then, a particular case would reach public prominence, often leading to a political test of strength between Jewish and anti-Jewish groups. During the mid-19th century, there was one such famous case in French-dominated Syria, and just before the outbreak of the First World War, Russia was wracked by a similar political conflict in the 1913 Beilis Affair in the Ukraine.

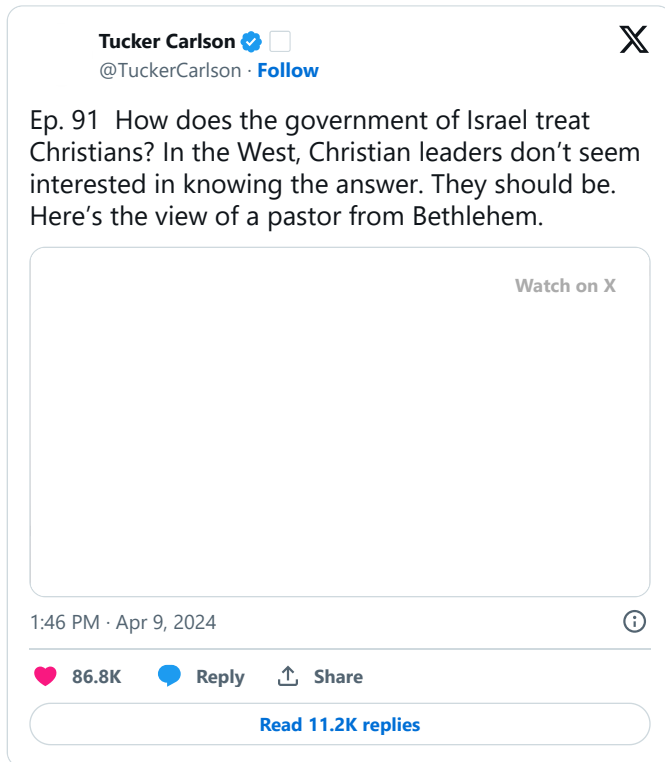
I first encountered these very surprising ideas almost a dozen years ago in a long article by Israel Shamir that was referenced in *Counterpunch*, and this would definitely be worth reading as [an overall summary](#)[81], together with [a couple](#)[82] of his [follow-up columns](#)[83], while writer Andrew Hamilton offers [the most recent 2012 overview](#)[84] of the controversy. Shamir also helpfully provides [a free copy of the book in PDF form](#)[85], an updated version with the footnotes properly noted in the text. Anyway, I lack the expertise to effectively judge the likelihood of the Toaff Hypothesis, so I would invite those interested to read Toaff's book or better yet the related articles and decide for themselves.

- [American Pravda: Oddities of the Jewish Religion](#)[86]
Ron Unz • *The Unz Review* • July 16, 2018 • 7,800 Words

Religious Judaism and the Struggle Over the Holy Land

Although this analysis of Jewish origins and religious beliefs has primarily focused upon the distant past, aspects of it may be relevant to the ongoing Israel/Gaza conflict that has now captured so much of the world's attention. Many Westerners have been greatly disturbed to discover longstanding but concealed Israeli behavior that they find surprising and abhorrent, and some of that behavior may be illuminated by its religious roots.

Last month I published [an article](#)[87] noting Tucker Carlson's lengthy interview with a Christian Palestinian pastor from the holy city of Bethlehem, who described the severe oppression that he and his Christian flock suffered at the hands of Israel's extremist Jewish government and the militant settlers it supported.



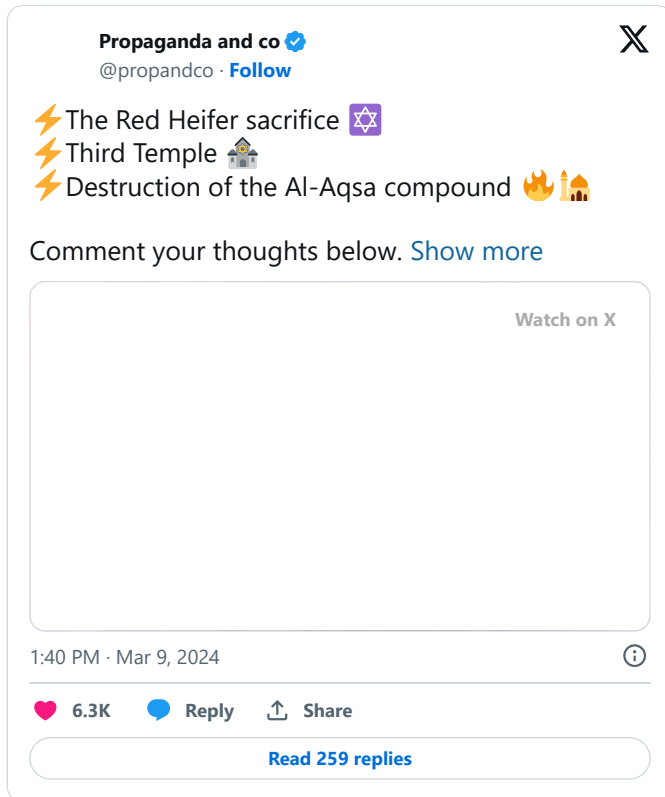
I also noted the long hidden facts of the original 1948 *Nakba*, in which some 800,000 native Palestinians were expelled from their ancient lands:

Some of the crimes committed by the Zionists to terrorize the Palestinians and drive them from their homes were quite shocking. Whereas the recent story of Hamas militants roasting an Israeli baby in an oven was merely an atrocity-hoax, we have eyewitness testimony that back in 1948, the Zionist militants did indeed throw a young Palestinian boy into an oven and burn him alive, with his father soon following along behind him.



Furthermore, I emphasized that the religious beliefs of the Talmudic Jews who dominate Israel have some important political implications.

Not having any interest in religion myself, I've never paid any attention to such things, but those beliefs obviously dominate the thinking of the fiercely committed Talmudic Jews who have become such a powerful factor in Israel's government and politics, and their spiritual dogma could have fateful consequences. Last month I watched a presentation suggesting that those fervent Messianic Jews may be on the verge of reestablishing ritualistic sacrifices as preparation for the plans to destroy the 1500 year old holy Islamic mosques[88] of the Temple Mount and rebuild the Jewish Third Temple in their place, all in preparation for the coming of the Jewish Messiah.



All of this suggests some remarkable American political ironies.

From what I've read here and there, Christians have traditionally identified the Jewish Messiah with the Antichrist of their own Scriptures, so under such an interpretation America's numerous Christian Zionists, including such leaders as Rev. Franklin Graham and Rev. John Hagee, have actually spent their entire careers in service to the followers of the Antichrist, hardly a pleasant discovery for those pious Christians.

Related Reading:

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- [Religious Implications of the Carthaginian Theory](#)[55] by Lawrence Erickson
- [American Pravda: Oddities of the Jewish Religion](#)[86]
- [Israeli Assassinations and Public Scrutiny](#)[90]
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