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THE KHAZARS AND THE JEWS

Tom's Perspectives

by Thomas Ice

One of the tactics used by some anti-Christian Zionists is to say that most modern Jews are not true descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This errant theory is based upon wrong conclusions that they have drawn from the history of a medieval nation in which some converted to Judaism. Khazaria was a nation composed largely of Turkish stock that lived between the Black and Caspian Seas during the seventh to tenth centuries.¹ Some holding to replacement theology and many neo-Nazis are attracted to this theory in which they conclude that the Jews are not really Jews.

THE KHAZAR THEORY STATED

Replacement theology advocate, James B. Jordan speaks of "the heresy of Christian Zionism."² He then declares, "that most modern Jews are not Jews at all: They are Khazars."³ Jordan explains further:

The Khazari race seems to lie behind the Ashkenazik Jews of Eastern Europe. This kind of assertion can, of course, be debated. The real problem in the discussion is the notion that Jewishness is a blood or racial phenomenon. It is not.

Biblically speaking, a Jew is someone who is covenanted into the people of Jews by circumcision. . . .

All these people were Jew, but only a small fraction actually had any of Abraham's blood in them. . . . What this demonstrates is that covenant, not race, has always been the defining mark of a Jew.⁴

Another replacement theologian, John L. Bray asserts that, "the pure fact is that many of the Jews of the world are not only not pure Jews, but not even Jews at all."⁵ "In addition to findings about the Khazar Jewish beginnings, we need to consider also that because of intermarriage, cross-breeding, etc.," declares Bray, "there is very little that can be called 'Jewish race' today."⁶

This particular instance of historical revisionism is used to conclude the Jewish people in Israel are not really the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and thus do not have a legitimate right to be there today. Not surprising this theory is very attractive to Arabs, Muslims, Holocaust deniers, skinheads, Nazis and too many within Christian circles who hold to replacement theology. It is a convenient way of dismissing the modern state of Israel. This belief teaches that the Jews are largely a people who are now extinct as an ethnic people, therefore, it renders mute, in their minds, the issue of the Land of Israel as a future promise that will be fulfilled by God to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This belief can have significant implications on a Christian's understanding of God's Word. Jordon wonders: "Are Bible-believing Christians supposed to support a Jewish State, for theological reasons? Such is the assertion of Jerry Falwell, and of the heresy of Christian Zionism."⁷ Let us now examine the veracity of such claims.

THE KAZHAR THEORY EXAMINED

No informed person on these issues question the existence of a country in the Middle Ages named Khazar that converted to Judaism in the eight century. However,

it is still an unproved theory, as attractive as it may appear to some, lacking any scientific evidence that Ashkenazi Jews (about 85% of world Jewry) are primarily descended from the Khazars.

In 1976, Arthur Koestler (a communist, Jewish novelist) suggested this theory in his book *The Thirteenth Tribe*,⁸ which was never taken seriously by linguists and most other scientists. This is why the most vigorous propagation of his views are usually found within the circles of propagandists who have an ideological axe to grind and not by the scientific community. Like the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, the forged document supporting a supposed Jewish world conspiracy, they so much want their theories to be true when they are not.

Many scholars on this subject believe that only the leadership of the Khazars converted to Judaism and some think that one of the reasons they converted is that many of the leaders were already Jewish, having immigrated there years earlier. When word got out that the nation of Khazaria had converted to Judaism we learn that many Jews, especially from the Byzantine Empire and the Muslim world immigrated to Khazaria since Jews were commonly persecuted in those Empires. Thus, this immigration greatly increased the number of Jews in the nation and it was known to have a very large population of Jews in those days. Since Khazaria was about the only nation on earth at that time that practiced religious freedom, the nation had large populations of Christians, Muslims and pagans who never converted to Judaism. This would mean that the belief that thousands of Gentiles were added to Jewish bloodlines is simply not the case. The Jews of Khazaria appear to have had just as strong Jewish bloodlines as other Jews of their day.

When the nation declined and was conquered, the Jews fled to other countries and most of the population of Khazaria, which was not Jewish, either was killed in these battles, or converted to Islam and Christianity. Even though the Jews surely must have intermarried with some Gentiles in Khazaria that does not invalidate their Jewishness any more than intermarriage that was practiced in the Old Testament did not invalidate their Jewishness. Jesus Himself had a number of Gentiles within His genealogical line, yet He was certainly Jewish. In the time of the New Testament these people were still known as Jews—the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

It is the Bible that divides mankind into Jew and Gentile, denoting one's descent by birth. One may repudiate the religious aspects of Judaism, but they cannot escape the genealogical fact that they were born within the Jewish race. The Nazis during the Holocaust made little distinction between deeply religious Jews and secular Jews. They killed them all when they had the opportunity. The same is true today. The Arab Muslims kill Jews today whether they are religious or secular. It does not matter to them.

It takes great leaps of logic, which many anti-Semites are willing to make to conclude that Koestler's theory has merit. This is evident when one considers that no one before Koestler's theory was put forth in 1976 had concluded that the Jews were not really descended from of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, this information about the Khazars had been known all along, especially by historians, but no one before Koestler had supposedly connected the dots. Just because someone like John Bray provides long quotes from many Jewish sources documenting the fact that Jews were indeed in Khazaria in the Middle Ages contributes nothing to prove the thesis that most of them were of Gentile origin. To think that requires too great a leap from the actual evidence to such a wrongheaded conclusion. Koestler's theory is groundless and can be treated as nothing more than a casual theory with little or no foundation.

DNA AND THE KHAZARS

The opinion of historians and genealogists concerning the Khazars is now confirmed with the development of using DNA as a reliable way to analyze one's genealogical heritage. Kevin Alan Brook⁹ is a leading researcher on the Khazars and tells us the following:

We no longer need to rely on speculation. It is now a known FACT that German Jews mingled with other Jews when they came east. It is also clear that the ancient Israelites possessed those Y-DNA patterns that are found in common among Sephardic Jews, Ashkenazic Jews, Kurdish Jews, and Indian Jews, despite the fact that ultimately those patterns may have earlier stemmed, in part, from somewhere in Kurdistan or Armenia or Iraq. The Middle Eastern Y-DNA patterns in the J and E haplogroups cannot be explained by Khazars. Some of the mtDNA evidence and Levite Y-DNA can be, however.¹⁰

Brook's overall conclusion of Khazar origins is as follows:

In summary, Eastern European Jews are descended from a mixture of German and Austrian Jews, Czech Jews, and East Slavic Jews. The East Slavic Jews may have roots in both the Khazar and Byzantine empires, hence necessitating our further study of Jewish life in those lands. But the largest, and most influential, proportion of Eastern European Jews came from Central Europe. By this analysis we can show that the dominant ethnic element among Eastern European Jews is Judean—the ancient Jewish people of Judea in the Middle East.¹¹

CONCLUSION

The Khazar theory has been completely refuted by both scholarly research into the history of the Khazars and, more recently, by genetic evidence showing that Jews from all parts of the world are genetically closely related to Middle Eastern Jews and not so closely related to non-Jewish Russians, Eastern Europeans, or others from that region. "Dr. Michael Hammer showed that based exclusively on the Y-chromosome (parental) shows that Ashkenazi Jews are more closely related to Yemenite Jews, Iraqi Jews, Sephardic Jews, Kurdish Jews, and Arabs than they are to European Christian populations,"¹² notes Joel Bainerman. True research on the matter reveals that only a tiny percentage of Jews have any descent through the Khazars. So it appears that the Khazar theory is just that, a theory, and not a very good one. It is safe to conclude that most of the Jews living today in Israel and still in the Diaspora are clear descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Maranatha!

ENDNOTES

¹ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 10, reference to "Khazars," pp. 944–54.

² James B. Jordan, "Christian Zionism and Messianic Judaism," in *The Sociology of the Church: Essays in Reconstruction* (Tyler, TX: Geneva Ministries, 1986), p. 176.

³ Jordan, "Christian Zionism," pp. 176–77.

⁴ Jordan, "Christian Zionism," p. 177.

⁵ John L. Bray, *Israel In Bible Prophecy* (Lakeland, FL: John L. Bray Ministry, 1983), p. 44.

⁶ Bray, *Israel*, p. 44.

⁷ Jordan, "Christian Zionism," p. 178.

⁸ Arthur Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe* (New York: Random House, 1976).

⁹ Kevin Alan Brook, *The Jews of Khazaria* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002).

¹⁰ Kevin Alan Brook, "Re: Jews and the Khazars," on the Jewish Genealogy Forum on the internet at www.genealogy.com, posted on Aug. 4, 2004.

¹¹ Kevin Alan Brook, "From the East, West, and South: Documenting the Foundation of Jewish Communities in Eastern Europe" in *Roots-Key*, Newsletter of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles (vol. 24: num. 1; Spring 2004), p. 6.

¹² Joel Bainerman, "So What If A Small Portion of World Jewry Are Descendents Of Khazars!" (Jan. 3, 2003), internet address as follows: www.rense.com/general33/sowhat.htm.