

GENETICS, HISTORY, AND IDENTITY: THE CASE OF THE BENE ISRAEL  
AND THE LEMBA

**ABSTRACT.** The paper examines the impact of genetic research on the religious identity of the Bene Israel Indian Jewish community and the Lemba Judaising group of southern Africa. It demonstrates how DNA tests which happened to support the possibility of the communities' legends of origin affected their self-perception, the way they are viewed by their neighbors, and their image in the West. It is argued that in both cases what accounted most for the Bene Israel and Lemba responses to the tests was the way the results were portrayed in the mass media, the history of the development of Judaism in their communities, and the local realities.

**KEY WORDS:** population genetics; identity; Lemba; Bene Israel.

INTRODUCTION

From early mediaeval times the Jews have attempted to define their identity and their peoplehood in an abstract, more or less theological way, and also to determine their outer limits. Who belonged to this people? Where did they live? How different were remote groups of this people? What were their histories? The fascination the writings of Eldad ha-Dani,<sup>1</sup> the ninth-century Jewish traveler and romancer, the 12th-century traveler Benjamin of Tudelah,<sup>2</sup> and many others held for Jews in mediaeval and later times arose largely from the glimpses they gave or purported to give of the life of marginal members of the Jewish people in remote parts of the world. Groups that claimed Jewish status through conversion, such as the Khazars (Koestler 1976) in the ninth century or the Himyarites<sup>3</sup> five centuries earlier, fared badly in early Jewish historiography: they were almost totally ignored. But equally remote groups with an imagined bloodline to the Jewish people were of great interest.

The outer edge, if you like, of this imagined blood-community always included the Lost Tribes of Israel shimmering faintly over the horizon of the known world, whose ongoing reality was taken to be axiomatic by the majority of Jews until fairly recent times. Whether different groups throughout the world—for instance, the North and South American Indians—formed part of this people or not was a hotly debated topic among both the Christians and the Jews from the beginning of colonial intervention in the Americas. Similarly, the periodic sightings of representatives of the Lost Tribes in various other parts of the world caused great, even messianic excitement as the conventional geography of the Jewish people

was challenged or asserted. Over the last century or so, the further away a given group of exotic claimants to membership of the Jewish people were, the greater the interest other Jews had in them. Currently, one of the most studied Jewish groups is the minuscule handful in Kaifeng in China, about whom a colossal amount has been written as two recent bibliographies indicate. The two recent and substantial bibliographies on the Falashas of Ethiopia, mostly containing works written by Jews, similarly denote a fierce interest by Jews in the Jewish periphery, which may be perceived as the frontier of the Jewish people—that is, the ultimate line that divides them from others.<sup>4</sup>

The two groups under discussion in this article form part of this periphery. In the case of the Bene Israel of western India, whose origins have always been something of a mystery,<sup>5</sup> they were marginally present in the consciousness of the Jewish people from about the first half of the 19th century to about 1948, and for the last 50 years, since the migration of the majority of the community to Israel, they have been somewhat more central. In the case of the Lemba, they have been marginally present for perhaps five years, and for a tiny number of Ashkenazi Jews living in what was the Transvaal, who had come across members of the Lemba tribe and heard the claims advanced by them and on their behalf, they were present almost as a joke for much of the 20th century.

#### GENETIC STUDIES ON JEWISH POPULATIONS

Jewish scholarly efforts to define the peoplehood of the Jews, including the periphery, date back some centuries. Recent efforts in the same direction have included a substantial number of genetic studies dealing with the origin of various Jewish and would-be Jewish groups. Some of the most widely publicized of these were the various studies carried out on the Cohanim (Jewish priests); those on the origin of various Jewish communities led by Michael Hammer of the University of Arizona; those on the origins of the Lemba; and more recently, the preliminary results of genetic analysis of the Bene Israel group, both carried out by Neil Bradman and Mark Thomas from University College, London.<sup>6</sup>

One issue linking the Lemba and the Bene Israel is the way in which Jews and others have perceived the study of genetics as supplying the appropriate tools to explain their past in the ongoing attempt to include or reject peripheral groups in what is called “the family of Israel.” A further area of similarity linking these two case studies is the fairly intense media interest that accompanied the release of the genetic studies. In both cases, the media reporting of the research has impacted substantially on the community in question.

When Tudor Parfitt became interested in the Lemba in the late 1980s, no one save a small handful of specialists had ever heard of them. Now on Google,

there are some 27,500 entries on the Lemba (admittedly not all of them to do with the African community under discussion—there is for instance a Latvian musician called Lemba who is responsible for some—but the great majority). The media interest in this tribe has been generated in very large part by the genetic work that purports to show that they are of Middle Eastern origin and that the incidence of the Cohen Modal Haplotype (CMH) is much the same as is to be found in Jewish populations (Thomas 2000). The story was carried on the front page of the *New York Times* as well as in countless newspapers throughout the world and was the subject of two or three documentary films as well as being featured by the flagship “60 Minutes” program on CBS (NOVA 2000).

Why did the story generate such media interest? Was it because everybody knows that Jews are not black or is it because at some level they are assumed to be so?

#### ARE JEWS BLACK?

As Sander Gilman has shown, a long European and North American tradition maintains that the Jews in general indeed are “black” metaphorically as well as literally. Robert Knox (1791–1862), the first conservator of the College Museum, Edinburgh, in the mid-19th century, commented on “the African character of the Jew, his muzzle-shaped mouth and face removing him from other races” (Gilman 1999: 89). Nineteenth-century anthropologists assumed that Jews had a close racial connection with blacks. According to Gilman, the “general consensus of the ethnological literature of the late nineteenth century was that the Jews were ‘black’ or, at least, ‘swarthy.’” One late 19th-century anthropologist explained the “predominant mouth of some Jews being the result of the presence of black blood” and that “brown skin, thick lips and prognathism” were typical of Jews (Gilman 1999: 89). One of the key physical indicators of race was the nose: for the Encyclopedists all “deviant noses” were put together: “the blacks, the Hottentots and various peoples of Asia, such as the Jews” (Gilman 1999: 90). Elsewhere Gilman argues that the Jews were considered black because they were of mixed race but that the blackness of the skin of the African, like that of the Jew, was in part due to the effect of diseases such as syphilis (Gilman 1991: 99).

If in some discourses Jews were thought to be black and African, so Africans in the 19th century in a vast number of cases were thought to be Jews. Ethnographers, missionaries, and travelers time and time again concluded that African tribes including the Masai, the Zulus, the Khosa, the Hottentots, the Tutsis, the Ashanti, and many more were of Jewish origin (Parfitt 2002: 205). The idea that Jews were to be found in central Africa has a long pedigree. The best known of the Arab

historians and geographers of Africa was Leo Africanus (c.1492–c.1550). He was born of Arab Muslim parents in Granada and was originally called Hassan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzân al-Zayyâtî. His most important work was the remarkable *Description of Africa*,<sup>7</sup> which was written around 1528–1529 and which was for many years the only source on sub-Saharan Africa (he also wrote an Arabic grammar and a manual of Arabic rhetoric).<sup>8</sup> *Description of Africa* at once became an essential part of the rapidly expanding body of the 16th century European geographical knowledge. Translated in 1556 into both Latin and French, it went through a number of editions in several European languages. An English translation was done in 1600. In *Description of Africa*, there are frequent mentions of Jews in Africa: the author notes that once Jewish law was widely observed, that there were warrior tribes in the Atlas claiming descent from King David, that the Canaanites traveled to Africa followed later by the Sabeans, and that the ruler of Timbuktu could not stand the sight of Jews (Williams 1930: 208, 224, 232, 281, 292).

The major source on Africa, *Description of Africa* carried great authority. The translator of the English edition, John Pory, added a piece entitled “A summaried discourse of the manifold religions professed in Africa” where he noted: “At this day also the Abassins affirm that upon the Nilus towards the west there inhabiteth a most populous nation of the Jewish stock under a mightie king. And some of our modern cosmographers set down a province in those quarters which they call the land of the Hebrews, placed as it were under the equinoctial, in certain unknown mountains, between the confines of Abassin and Congo” (Pory 1600: 379). In 1705, a German scholar, Peter Kolb, was sent to the Cape to make astronomical observations. Afterward Kolb published a book, the German edition of which was published in 1719, and subsequently translated into Dutch, English, and French. *The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope* reached a very wide audience, and for the next 50 years was the definitive account of the religion of the Hottentots. Kolb claimed that the general customs and traditions of the Hottentots were similar to those of the Jews. He enumerated what he saw as the similarities between their sacrificial customs, their moon festivals, circumcision rites, and so on. But he also asserted that the Hottentots could be counted among the children of Abraham, that they were of Jewish descent. Many indigenous peoples simply reminded Europeans of Jews in some way or other. Thus writing of Ankole, southeast of Lake Albert, Johnson observed: “The Banyankole, as the people of Ankole are called are an exceedingly interesting race, the purest, least mixed branch of the great Baima stock which constitutes the ruling caste in all the kingdoms around. In figure they are tall and lithe, and their long thin faces, with a very Jewish nose and lips, suggest a Semitic origin and strongly mark off their features from the bullet head, flat nose and thick lips of their neighbours.” (Johnson 1909: 184ff). And there are many more examples.

These ideas may feed into modern concepts to some extent—albeit only in extreme white supremacist and Nazi circles—but in the general discourse of today’s western world, the Jews, despite some confusion in the past, are by and large considered white.

#### ETHIOPIAN JEWS

A challenge to this assumption was the arrival in Israel from the mid-1980s of the Ethiopian Jews,<sup>9</sup> otherwise known as the *Beta Israel*.<sup>10</sup> Since the Second World War, great efforts have been made to dismantle the idea that there is a Jewish “race” and that there are phenotypical elements which link Jews wherever they are. In other words, you cannot tell a Jew from his external appearance. On the contrary, it is clear that the Beta Israel are strikingly different in color and in other respects from the rest of the Jewish population of Israel, and this difference is repeatedly remarked upon.

It is interesting to note that in only one of the mediaeval Jewish treatments of the Beta Israel was the question of their “blackness” mentioned at all. Their color or “race” was not considered to be important (Corinaldi 1998: 95–107). But by the 19th century, when “scientific racism” ruled the roost, new criteria pertained: if the Ethiopian Jews wanted to be taken seriously as Jews they would have to be shown to have Jewish racial characteristics, and soon enough Jewish features were discovered and remarked upon. As Henry Aaron Stern, a Jewish convert to Christianity who worked as a missionary to the Beta Israel, observed: “There were some whose Jewish features no one could have mistaken who had ever seen the descendants of Abraham either in London or Berlin” (Kaplan 2003). Later, Jewish noses were observed among them, and others opined that in time, as they were Jews, once they moved to the more temperate climate of the land of Israel their skin color would soon revert to an appropriately Jewish white (Kaplan 2003). Attempts to discover phenotypical features among the Beta Israel, which distinguish them from other Ethiopians and which usually suggest that their skin color and shape of face are different, continue to this day (Kaplan 2003).

One should also refer in this context to the question of Ethiopian Jewish descent. In overall terms, it has been suggested that “[ethnic] origins are the necessary basis in the determination of the Jewish collective” (Kaplan 2003). Even though we now know that the origins of the Beta Yisrael lie neither in the Lost Tribe of Dan nor in the Jewish colony of Elephantine, nor yet in wandering Karaites, but rather in the evolution of a kind of Judaism in Ethiopia, the vast majority of scholarly work until very recently indeed has been devoted to demonstrating (despite a truly impressive lack of evidence) that the Beta Yisrael were blood relatives of other Jews—that they were descended from Abraham (Kaplan 1992; Quirin 1992).

## THE LEMBA

The general background surrounding the Lemba differs in some respect from the Beta Israel discourse. For one thing, the “Jewishness” of the Beta Israel has been known for a long time, and for another, there are specific issues in western representations of Africa and Africans, which have a particular bearing on our topic. What we mean by this is that a distinction has often been drawn between those Africans who despite their color have a more or less European or Middle Eastern look and those who do not. Since Herodotus, Africans have been divided in the western imagination into “good and bad Ethiopians”: the good resemble the tall, gracious Beta Israel, the bad are the sub-Saharan populations “with heads of dogs” (Smith 1986). Tall, thin “Semitic”-looking Africans were often linked with Jewish populations, heavier-built “Bantu”-looking Africans much less often (Parfitt 2002).

A 50–70,000 strong endogamous tribe—the Lemba, sometimes referred to by others in South Africa as Kruger’s Jews—are to be found in northeast South Africa and in various places in Zimbabwe. Often referring to themselves as “the white men who came from Sena,” they have a number of Semitic customs and have tentatively been identified as Jews by missionaries and other observers for about 100 years. There is very little evidence for this and whatever evidence there is Tudor Parfitt collected in his book *Journey to the Vanished City*. As Tudor Parfitt has shown elsewhere, however, the project of identifying African and other groups as Jews was an endemic part of the colonial enterprise (Parfitt 2002). In terms of their actual religious affiliation, most Lemba are Christians. In Zimbabwe, there are a number of Muslim Lemba communities, and there is a small minority who profess to follow the ancient religion of the Lemba.

By and large, the Lemba are indistinguishable from their Venda or Shona neighbors. This did not prevent those few intrepid travellers who ventured into Lemba areas in the past and who acquired a conviction that they were Jewish from systematically finding phenotypical aspects that proved their racial origin. One German observer said: “How absolutely Jewish is the type of this people! They have faces cut exactly like those of ancient Jews who live around Aden. Also the way they wear their hair . . . gives them the appearance of Aden—or of Polish Jews—of the good old type.” An English writer in the 1880s spoke of “the lighter skin and Jewish appearance” of the Lemba (Parfitt 1997: 265). A.A. Jaques noted in 1931 that the whites of the northern Transvaal could distinguish a Lemba by his features, and Jaques agreed that “many Lemba have straight noses, rather fine features and an intelligent expression which distinguish them from the ordinary run of natives . . . one does occasionally meet with a Lemba who possesses strikingly Semitic features. One of my informants, old Mosheh, even had what might be termed a typical Jewish nose, a rare occurrence in any real

Bantu” (Jaques 1908: 245). Some of the early ethnographic work on the Lemba includes profile photographs of Lemba to establish that they do indeed have “Jewish” noses (Stayt 1931: plate XXI). In 1942, an article by Louis Thompson, which included a profile photograph showing “the Semitic features of the Lemba” (essentially a prominent nose) noted: “As the blood of the Semite became more diluted with that of the Bantu, so did their arts decrease” (Thompson 1942: 86). The last citation is significant: it showed that for the writer, and no doubt the feeling was widely shared, Jewish blood was better than black blood. The Lemba were regularly put in a higher category than other tribes for this very reason. In other words, as the Lemba—even as marginal Jews—challenged existing ideas about what Jews were supposed to look like, “Jewish” physical attributes had to be found for them. These ideas were soon internalized by the Lemba themselves. In a South African compilation of “vernacular accounts” M.M. Motenda observed: “The Vhalemba in respect of their faces and noses are well known to have been very handsome people, their noses were exactly like those of Europeans.” Plate IV in this work again shows a profile of a Lemba with a prominent “Semitic-looking” nose (Warmelo 1940: 63). When I was doing my fieldwork in Lemba villages in Zimbabwe, I was urged to meet a man who everyone said was a typical Lemba: he had a prominent nose and what they said was a “European face.” They were very proud of this man’s look. But in reality he was the only Lemba I met in the Mposi chieftanship in Zimbabwe who had this kind of look. He was atypical but presented as typical. The illustrations in the small ethnographic literature follow this principle. The Lemba were expected to look Semitic: if they were to be thought of as Jews or Semites, they had to correspond to the stereotype. It was fascinating to discover in recent fieldwork that in one Zimbabwe village, the majority of respondents maintained that their “Jewish” noses were one of the most important things about them.

#### *Genetic Research on the Lemba*

What the genetic data appear to suggest is that the Lemba indeed did substantially originate via the male line outside Africa. The presence of a haplotype that may be associated with the Jewish priesthood is, to say the least, intriguing in historical terms because we know of no Jewish incursion into central Africa. However, in itself, this evidence hardly justifies the conclusion proclaimed with such enthusiasm in the mass media that the Lemba are indeed Jews. Indeed that conclusion is now more or less standard in the popular academic discourse. Steve Olson’s readable book *Mapping Human History* includes a chapter entitled “God’s People” which devotes a couple of pages to the Lemba. “At this point,” he affirms, “their Jewish ancestry on the male side seems assured” (Olson 2002: 114). Again the truth is more ambiguous: as Olson himself points out, the CMH is found fairly widely in

the Middle East. All one can really say, as we have already said, is that the Lemba may be shown to be of Middle Eastern extraction genetically and that the presence of the CMH is indeed surprising and fascinating.

### *Media Coverage*

The colonial fantasies we have mentioned above were unknown to the majority of the readership of the *New York Times* and other western newspapers when the news of apparent genetic affinities between the Lemba and Jews broke. For them, no doubt, the idea that a Bantu-looking central African tribe were apparently Jewish came as something of a shock. When the news of the genetic studies linking the Lemba with the Jews became public, the media headlines stressed the fact that the Lemba are black, and the accompanying image often demonstrated what *kind* of black population was in question. Very often the image would feature the late Professor M.E.R. Mathivha, the then spiritual and intellectual head of the South African Lemba, whose physical characteristics have nothing at all in common with what is perceived as a Jewish or “Semitic” look.

### *The Lemba Responses to the Tests*

In the ongoing research, we are engaged in trying to gauge the impact of such media reports on genetic research on group religious and social identity. To this end, we are examining in particular the Lemba and the Bene Israel. We have tried to assess the Lemba response through about two dozen in-depth conversations and through 120 fairly detailed questionnaires conducted in 2003 in Zimbabwe and South Africa. The questionnaires were distributed as widely as possible throughout the areas of Lemba settlement. Some were taken from areas where many Lemba have taken up Islam in Zimbabwe; others were from the rural Mposi chieftainship in Zimbabwe; and others yet from urban and rural areas of South Africa, mainly areas around Louis Trichardt and Pretoria. In both Zimbabwe and South Africa, English is an official language, usually the language of education and *lingua franca*. Not all Lemba are literate, but those that are, are probably literate in English. Illiterate Lemba are no doubt poorly represented in this sample. It is difficult to imagine a situation in either Zimbabwe or South Africa where an English-speaking Lemba is very far away. Therefore, it was always possible to have someone translate the questionnaire for the rare individual who was incapable of reading it in English. We tried to ensure that women were equally represented as respondents: this was difficult in a society where matters pertaining to tradition and history have always been deemed a completely male preserve. However, these notions are now being eroded and among younger Lemba, and particularly among younger urban Lemba, it was easier to find female respondents. The constraints



of time, geography, and tradition all militated against our Lemba sample being a fully scientifically representative cross section of the population, but it is close to so being. One caveat is that those parts of the Lemba population who are vehemently against the idea that the Lemba are Jews were much more reluctant to participate in the survey and the remoter the community and the further away from the beaten track the less likely they were to be visited by us.<sup>11</sup> When we refer to the observations of respondents, these are taken either from notes taken as the questionnaires were being filled out (some of the questions were quite revealing), from more formal extended interviews, or in some cases directly from the questionnaire. The language of the interviews was almost always English, and by and large, the respondents were known to the principal investigator or related to someone known to the principal investigator who has been working with the Lemba on and off for about 15 years. He has visited very many of the Lemba villages throughout South Africa and Zimbabwe collecting ethnographic material, filming, recording, and collecting DNA samples. With a few exceptions, people were happy and willing to talk to the principal investigator.

The main aims of the Lemba questionnaire were to assess the degree to which the Lemba were aware of the genetic tests conducted among the community and to find out how they got to know about the tests and what they made of the results.

Seventy percent of the Lemba respondents knew about the tests. There is a clear relationship between the level of education of the respondents and their knowledge of the tests. Ninety-three percent of people who had higher education knew about the tests as opposed to 58 percent among those who did not have a degree. Interestingly, the percentage of those who knew about the results was rather low: only 11 percent of those who knew about the tests. Many respondents were under the impression that the results had not been published.

One of the questions asked the respondents to define genetics. Half of them described it as a study of genes or heredity. The rest thought that it was a test to determine origin. Some described it as a blood test. In answer to the question "What was the first time you heard about genetic tests?" almost everybody answered that it was in the 1990s, i.e., during the tests.

Almost all those who answered the question about the purpose of the tests said that it was to test the origin of the Lemba. Some reckoned that it was to test the link between the Lemba and the Jews. Others said that it was to find out whether they were "true Lemba." In response to a question about the object of the tests, 48 percent of those who knew about the tests answered that it was "blood" and 30 percent thought that it was the link between the Lemba and the Israelites. Only a few individuals answered that it was genes or DNA. The rest of those researched failed to answer.

The attitude toward the tests of 40 percent of those respondents who knew about them was positive. Some indicated that they approved of the tests because

they helped to “consolidate” the Lemba. Very few people were skeptical about the tests. One person observed that he was positive about the tests only because the results were positive for the Lemba. Many did not answer the question. Only two respondents gave clearly negative answers. One of them opined that probably the researchers were trying to kill them and another complained that he did not understand the purpose of the tests. Interestingly, both of them thought that what was researched in the tests was the Lemba blood group. Neither of them believed in the Jewishness of the Lemba and both were Muslim (though one of them also indicated an affiliation to Christianity). It should be noted in this respect that the majority of the researched Muslims did not support the idea of the Israelite origin of the Lemba. When asked about their attitudes toward the results of the tests, 65 percent of respondents said that they were happy about them. Others did not reply. There was not a single negative answer.

Several questions asked whether they thought the Lemba were properly consulted, whether they were happy with the way the tests had been conducted, and what better ways of organizing them they envisaged. In answer to the first question, the views were divided equally. The suggestions for a better organization of this type of test included informing all the Lemba about the tests in advance, testing more/or all the Lemba, and employing Lemba researchers to conduct the tests, so that they could indicate who should be tested. Apparently the implication here is that Lemba know better who would make the most suitable candidate in their communities for this research. When asked whether it was right for the Europeans to be involved in this research, an overwhelming majority answered in the affirmative.

A number of questions asked the respondents whether they thought the knowledge of the results of the tests had affected the life of their community. The majority did not answer the question and some explained that they were not acquainted with the results. Those who replied in the affirmative explained that now it had been established that the Lemba were Jewish. Several questions looked at the possible effect the tests could have had on the relations between the Lemba and others. The majority assumed that their neighbors would not know about the tests.

### *The Impact of the Tests on the Image of the Lemba*

Even though no responsible Jewish religious authority has yet argued that any specific DNA could affect the question of who is or who is not a Jew, a number of groups throughout the world, and particularly in the United States, have taken the genetic research on the Lemba as an indication that they are indeed Jewish, and should be admitted as a matter of course and urgency into “*kelal Yisrael*,” the family of Israel.

The groups concerned may be labeled strongly liberal both in political and religious terms (although often to the right in strictly Israeli terms). The DNA results to them appeared as a vindication of the efforts made by the Lemba to have themselves recognized by other Jews as Jews: the results were taken as a weapon against what such groups perceive to be racist and exclusive attitudes in Israel and among Jewry in general. (It is, broadly speaking, the case that no Jewish organization had previously shown any great interest in the Lemba.)

### *Missions to the Lemba*

Since 1999—which is to say since the DNA work on the Lemba became widely known in the United States—there have been a number of Jewish missions to the Lemba, in themselves fairly remarkable events as Jews are not known for proselytism. The first was Yaakov Levi, a Jewish educator who left the United States for South Africa in December 1999 under the auspices of Kulanu, an American organization devoted to an inclusive view of who is a Jew and to the discovery and reintegration of lost Jewish groups. His mission was to bring normative Judaism to the Lemba. In the event, this mission was unsuccessful. Kulanu's president, Jack Zeller, called Levi's mission "Kulanu's most creative outreach in our short six-year history" and observed "Levi has, in a few months, 'roughed out' the prospects for the next 100 years of a diaspora renaissance."<sup>12</sup> In January and August 2002, two further missions led by Rabbi Léo Abrami, an American rabbi of French background supported in the second case by rabbis from Johannesburg, brought the message of normative Judaism to the Lemba; on the first occasion Tudor Parfitt was present and witnessed the passionate attempts on the part of the rabbi to wean the Lemba away from their Christian affiliations. In his report on the trip to be found on the Kulanu website, Rabbi Abrami reported that he had taken the Lemba "laptop computers, many books for the library which is being created and which will become part of the Lemba Cultural Center and Synagogue in construction, copies of *What is a Jew* by Kerzer, *This is My God* by Herman Wouk, a copy of the new JPS Hebrew-English Bible and dozens of other books on Jewish theology, several manuals of Jewish history, Hebrew text-books, over a hundred small Shabbat manuals, talitot and other educational material." In September 2002, Tudor Parfitt attended the annual meeting of the Lemba Cultural Association and observed that for the first time they were connecting this event with the Jewish New Year and were using the Hebrew formula *Shanah Tovah*—which again they had never done before—as well as a number of other Hebrew expressions. Among some of the elite, one can perhaps see the beginnings of a revival of a non-Christian Judaic religion which again did not exist before, or which more precisely had been destroyed leaving little coherent trace. Rabbi Abrami observed that many Lemba are now "determined to re-affirm their Jewishness and their allegiance to Judaism."<sup>13</sup>

Many of the same people in the United States who identify with what they perceive as the aspirations of the Lemba are also likely to be involved in the welfare of the Ethiopian Jews. The relationship of American Jews with African Americans has become painfully difficult over the last few decades. Parfitt's own experience would suggest to him that the forging of intimate relationships with distant black communities with Jewish aspirations (not only the Beta Israel and the Lemba but also, among others, the Abayudaya community of Mbale in Uganda [Oded 1974: 173; Primack 1998: 168–244; Twaddle 1993] and a group in the village of Sefwi Wiawso in Ghana [Kulanu 2003]) may represent attempts by some Jewish groups to traverse barriers that can appear insurmountable when dealing with more closely situated black communities at home in New York, Washington, and elsewhere. For these groups, then, the genetic studies on the Lemba may be presumed to have great ideological value, as they may be used to prove that Zionism or Judaism are not, as claimed by their detractors, racist.

#### *“Negative Results”*

It is perhaps worth making the point that for the liberal groups interested in the fringes of the Jewish world *negative* genetic results do not seem to make much difference. In the case of the Beta Israel, for instance, genetic results have indicated that they have little if anything in common with other Jewish groups. These results have been reported in the press<sup>14</sup> but have not made any particular impact—certainly not upon the supporters of the Ethiopian community in the United States and elsewhere. Upon the Ethiopian Jews themselves the report made no discernible impact (private communication from Dr. Shalva Weil, Hebrew University, 2003). Similarly, in the case of the Judaising groups in eastern India known as the Shinlung or Bene Menasheh it is unlikely that negative DNA results will have any impact upon those who support their claims of Jewish descent: Hillel Halkin, the author of a recent book (Halkin 2002) on this group, has stated at a seminar held in Israel's Technion in January 2002 that negative results (i.e., showing no link with Jewish populations) would not shake his convictions about their origins in any way at all.

Another case is the Yemenite Jews who in Israel have always been viewed as somewhat different, phenotypically as well as in other respects. At the Second International Congress of Yemenite Jewish Studies held under the auspices of the Institute of Semitic Studies and the Committee for Jewish Studies, Princeton University, in 1992, general outrage was expressed by Israeli scholars of Yemenite extraction and by Yemenite Jews in the audience when an Israeli scholar, Dr. M.A. Weingarten, gave a paper entitled “The Genetic Identity of Yemenite Jews” in which he showed that Yemenite Jews are genetically close to Yemeni Muslims and that they are genetically quite distant from other Jewish groups in the world (Weingarten 1992: 20–23). We do not believe, however, that these findings (which

have since been substantially revised by geneticists) had any effect on the standing of Yemenite Jews in Israel or elsewhere.

### *Effects on Other Judaizing Communities*

In the Southern African context it is already clear that other black groups who subscribe to some sort of Jewish identification are encouraged by these genetic research projects. A black Judaizing community in Rusape in Zimbabwe with links to other similar non-affiliated Judaizing groups in South Africa, Zambia, Botswana, and Malawi have become aware of the research: as Kosintahi Nyathi Mbolekwa, a Xhosa member of this Judaizing movement, noted in a recent article: “I am so pleased and proud to see such great efforts finally being made in addressing the significant genetic finds made by Parfitt and others. These are rather interesting and ground-shaking discoveries, but this information has been known for centuries. . . I have relatives and friends from the Lemba tribe and we have always known that not all Bantus are Israelites but many more than just the Lemba are Jews. The Lemba are just one major group of Jews that settled in southern Africa, but . . . a much larger picture can be drawn of our entire inheritance. The Yoruba, Hausa, Ashanti, Buganda and many other tribes in Africa have made public and open their Hebrew roots, but on deaf—or can I say outright racist—ears who find these claims outlandish.”<sup>15</sup> The same may be said of the Black Israelite community in the United States. After the wide publicity given to the DNA findings, the Minister of Shalom Hebrew Israelite Congregation of Jackson, Mississippi, Herman Taylor, wrote to Tudor Parfitt expressing his satisfaction that his group’s kinship with Israelite populations in Ethiopia, Rwanda and Burundi, the Sudan, Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, and Malawi had been so conclusively proven.

### THE BENE ISRAEL

In the case of the Bene Israel, the shock value of the genetic story was less pronounced. The broad lines of the history of the Jews of India have been well known to educated Jewish audiences for a long time and even have some resonance in the wider educated world (e.g., Salman Rushdie’s *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, Amitav Ghosh’s *In an Antique Land*).

The early accounts of many peoples, as Arthur Koestler noted, often leave historians “famished for facts.” Historians have to content themselves with “a few bleached bones to gnaw at, like starving bloodhounds, in the forlorn hope of finding some hidden morsel to sustain them” (Koestler 1976: 160). The history of the Bene Israel of western India is one such example: it is almost totally obscure before the 18th century. The earliest sources to offer a more or less detailed account of the Bene Israel consist of the writings of Christian missionaries and

Jewish travellers. Hitherto a lack of data has in fact prevented us from saying anything objective about the actual origin or early history of the Bene Israel.<sup>16</sup> According to the most widespread Bene Israel tradition, which was recorded by the historian of the community and one of its members Haim Samuel Kehimkar, their ancestors had been shipwrecked near the village of Navgaon on the Konkan coast of western India in 175 BCE after they had fled Palestine during the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes (Kehimkar 1937).<sup>17</sup> Only seven men and seven women survived, and became the forefathers of the community. There is no *evidence* for this of any kind. This legend of origin has much in common with many other legends of origin both in India and elsewhere in the world—even down to the numbers involved—and must be taken as mythic. Interestingly enough, the legend of origin of the Bene Israel resembles that of the Chitpavans, a group of Maharashtra Brahmans. The legend told on the Konkan coast states that the Chitpavans are descended from 14 foreigners who perished in a shipwreck but then were restored to life by Parashurama, one of Vishnu's incarnations, who taught them Brahman rites (Enthoven 1920: 242). According to this theory, then the Bene Israel settled in the area in remote times and stayed on. What we do know is that by the early 19th century they existed as a community and by this time were known as *Shanwar Teli* (Marathi 'Saturday oilmen'), because they constituted a sort of caste—a rather bizarre one—of oil pressers who apparently abstained from work on Saturdays (Isenberg 1988: 3). Already by the time they were first encountered their caste integrity was dissolving, and they appear to have started moving from the Konkan villages to the towns of Pen, Panvel, Thana, and Bombay, becoming artisans of all kinds. Nonetheless—and this is significant for our present purposes—they remained endogamous. At the present time, the Bene Israel community is principally to be found in Israel, where some of them still wear Indian dress and play cricket, but there are still about 4,000 members of the community in India. The majority of them live in Mumbai (Bombay), but there are also Bene Israel communities and functioning synagogues in Pune, Thane, and Ahmedabad.

No doubt the particular obscurity of the origins of the Bene Israel community contributed substantially to the difficulties they encountered as they endeavored to gain recognition as Jews both in the Jewish world at large and particularly in Israel. Rabbinical courts in Baghdad and Jerusalem ruled in 1914 that intermarriage between Jews and the Bene Israel was forbidden, and until fairly recently the dominant view among the Baghdadi Jews of India was that the Bene Israel were not Jewish.

In 1964, the conflict between the Bene Israel community and the rabbinate reached its zenith following a refusal by the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel, Yitzhak Nissim, to allow Bene Israel individuals to marry other Jews, unless they were able to provide proof of Jewishness and no intermarriage over several generations.

The main argument of the Chief Rabbi and of those who supported his point of view was that in the past the Bene Israel had been ignorant of Jewish laws relating to divorce and levirate marriage and their failure in the past to follow such laws would have led to *mamzerut*<sup>18</sup> (more or less the same argument was to be used later against the Beta Israel). As a result of a campaign led by a number of Bene Israel organizations (including a sit-down strike in front of the Jewish Agency and the burning of an effigy of Yitzhak Nissim), which received the general support of the Knesset and other secular bodies, the problem was resolved to the satisfaction of the Bene Israel. As Prime Minister Eshkol put it, the rabbinate could not be allowed to be an obstacle in the way of the principle of the ingathering of the exiles (Eisenstadt 1967: 314). However, despite the support they received, the scars of this encounter remained (Roland 1998: 249–251; Weil 1977). This confrontation was repeated in 1997 when the Chief Rabbi of Petah Tikvah again raised doubts about the Jewishness of the Bene Israel and ordered his employees not to validate new marriages for them (*Hindu* 1997).

A frequent taunt leveled at the Bene Israel by the Baghdadis was based on the presumption that in the past the Bene Israel had engaged in impure marriages with non-Jewish women. The Bene Israel would retort that there was no room for such marriages in Indian society, which was governed by the laws of the caste system. A Bene Israel writer who contributed to one of the community periodicals named the main castes represented on the Konkan and stated that in the social pyramid the Bene Israel were “higher” than the untouchables but that there was “a great social bar” between them and such castes as Kunbis (most of whom at that time were landholders and field laborers), Kolis, and Bhandaris (whose hereditary occupation was palm-juice drawing). Their ancestors would not have been permitted to marry into those higher status castes, nor would they have been permitted to take women from the untouchable groups as they themselves would then have become ritually impure in the eyes of their Hindu neighbors from higher castes, who would have refused to consume the oil they produced (*Israelite* 1919). Joan Roland observes that farming and oil-pressing were not considered to be prestigious occupations on the Konkan and in the local hierarchy the Bene Israel must have been only just above the purity level that divided the Hindu population into ritually pure castes and outcastes (Roland 1998: 13).

The Indian press often questioned the origin of the Bene Israel. *The Times of India* suggested in the 1880s that to get at the truth the history of this community should be written by Jewish authorities from outside India (*Times of India* 1886, 1887). Until the first half of the 20th century, the Bene Israel were still called *Telis* by their neighbors, though oil-pressing was no longer their distinctive occupation, and some of them by that time had moved considerably up the socioeconomic ladder (Roland 1998: 13, 309 n. 12).<sup>19</sup>

Caste rules affected the relations between the Bene Israel and their Hindu neighbors to a considerable degree. It is not surprising then that the Bene Israel denied any possibility of being descended from the untouchables. When Baghdadi Jews queried the origin of the Bene Israel, not only did they influence the perceptions of the Bene Israel by world Jewry, they also inadvertently called into question the status of the Bene Israel in the society of the Konkan coast.

Some members of the community attempted to raise their status in the local hierarchy by imitating the style of life of higher castes. Ezekiel observed that his co-religionists adopted many of the customs of the Agris, a Maharashtrian caste that was higher in status than the Telis (Ezekiel 1948: 27, 30–32). It appears that Agris were not the only caste that the Bene Israel were keen on being associated with in the local society. As noted above, the legend of origin of the Bene Israel, which states that they are the descendents of the seven men and seven women who survived the shipwreck, resembles that of the Chitpavans, Maharashtra Brahmans. It has been argued among the Bene Israel that their ancestors and those of the Chitpavans were of common origin. According to their tradition, after the famous shipwreck, the seven men and seven women who are considered to be the ancestors of the Bene Israel community were washed ashore together with some other compatriots of theirs. The latter were discovered by the local inhabitants, who decided that they were dead and attempted to cremate them. However, when they were put on the funeral pyre they regained consciousness. Subsequently, they were converted to Hinduism and eventually became known among the local population as Chitpavan Brahmans. It is difficult to pinpoint when exactly this legend became popular among the Bene Israel but it already existed in the first half of the 20th century.<sup>20</sup>

These two cases, in one of which the Bene Israel tried to imitate the way of life of the Agris, while in the other they showed an interest in being associated with the Chitpavans, whose position in the local hierarchy was very high, resemble the attempts of lower caste Hindus to raise their status along the lines of Sanskritization, which was defined by the famous Indian sociologist Srinivas as “the process by which a ‘low’ Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently ‘twice-born’ caste” (Srinivas 1966: 6). The Bene Israel were ready to imitate the style of life of higher castes but adhered to their own theory of origin. Thus, the Bene Israel did not claim that their ancestors had been the Chitpavan Brahmans but insisted on the Jewish origin of the Chitpavans.

The anxieties they felt with respect to Indian society were present in their dealings with Jews, too. They were suspicious of members of the local Baghdadi community or the Cochin community who were “black,” and in one case became alarmed when a Cochin Jew officiating at the synagogue in Alibag on the Konkan was thought to be a Black Jew and as such an improper person to be attending to



such sacred functions (Roland 1998: 67). Indeed within the Bene Israel community, there was division between *Gora* (white) and *Kala* (black) although the division did not reflect actual skin color (Isenberg 1988: 104). A *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency* reported in 1883 that the Gora and the Kala neither eat nor intermarry with each other (*Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency* 1883: 421–422).

The same period had witnessed the Bene Israel community being brought closer and closer to British institutions: many of them were educated in English mission schools (Isenberg 1988: 65ff) and many others had contacts through their work as clerks or soldiers. No doubt that the prevalent racial theories developed by British Sanskritists and others had some impact on their attitudes; these essentially constructed the distant Indian past on a paradigm of polar opposites of black and white influenced by white attitudes toward blacks in the southern United States, South Africa, and elsewhere (Trautman 1997: 207).

The appearance of the Bene Israel was regularly commented on by British observers. Like the Lemba, they were construed as physically different from their neighbors. The *Gazetteers of the Bombay Presidency* commented: “The men are fairer than the middle class Hindus of Kolaba, and are generally above the middle height and strongly made . . . The women are generally good-looking and fair” (*Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency* 1883: 85). And in another case: “The men have distinctive features, the nose being decidedly aquiline. The face has something of the Afghan type, but the body is of the inferior strength and size” (*Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency* 1883: 85). And again: “The men are of about the same colour as Marathas, perhaps a little fairer. They are generally above the middle height and strongly made, and in many cases have an expression of much intelligence and of strong character” (*Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency* 1885: 508). The Christian missionary John Wilson, who worked a lot with the Bene Israel, argued that they “resemble in countenance the Arabian Jews . . . They are fairer than the other natives of the same rank of life with themselves . . .” (Isenberg 1988: 327). In other words, as their Indian appearance conflicted with accepted ideas of what Jews were supposed to look like they were given lighter skins and prominent noses to fit the stereotype. It is worth noting that the reference to “Afghan type” in the context of the 19th century also suggests “Jewish,” as the Afghanis and particularly the Pathans were widely believed to be of Jewish extraction.<sup>21</sup>

In general, it can be seen that since the 19th century, as Roland puts it, the Bene Israel have been “preoccupied over the questions of ‘caste’ or ‘black’ and ‘white’” (Roland 1998: 67). On the one hand, they were made to feel inferior, halakhically “impure” (Isenberg 1988: 101), and “black” by the Baghdadi Jews, on the other hand, they looked down on other Jews whom they could construe as black or on Indians of lower caste. At the same time, the British with whom they interacted

constructed them as a Jewish group with specific physical characteristics and a superior lineage, which connected them with the Chosen People.

*Genetic Research on the Bene Israel*

DNA research on the Bene Israel that was initiated about five years ago has finally given us some data on the basis of which it might be possible to make some substantive comments on the origins of the community. What has been shown is that genetically the Bene Israel can be differentiated from other Indian groups from which we have samples, including neighbor populations in Maharashtra, Goa, and Gujarat.

The DNA material of the Bene Israel collected by Neil Bradman and Tudor Parfitt was compared with DNA collected from throughout India by Tudor Parfitt and others, including two SOAS doctoral students, Sarah Stewart and Yulia Egorova. The conclusion about the “genetic difference” of the Bene Israel in comparison with other Indians was drawn most sharply on the basis of the fact that a particular combination of polymorphisms, haplogroup (hg) 28, which is very widespread in India, is hardly found among the Bene Israel. In fact, only one singleton was found with hg28 among the Bene Israel. In addition, the tests have demonstrated that the Bene Israel have affinities with Ethiopian and Yemeni data sets. Furthermore, the genetic diversity is significantly lower in the Bene Israel than in the other Indian groups we examined.

Of the Indian data sets, only the Bene Israel have the CMH chromosomes. Haplogroup 9, which comprises the CMH, is present at high frequency among the Bene Israel, as well as among the Ethiopian and Yemeni groups, but at much lower frequency among the Indian groups. Finally, haplogroup 21, which may be viewed as a North African and Mediterranean haplogroup, was absent among the Bene Israel, although it is present in Jewish populations. This might have suggested an Arabian origin for the community, as the haplogroup is absent in Arabia. However, the presence among the Bene Israel of the CMH, which is absent in Arabian populations, prevents this conclusion. It suggests rather that the Bene Israel were an ancient Jewish population dating to a period before the hap21 entered the gene pool. This suggests that the Bene Israel are a Middle Eastern, perhaps Jewish, group whose male founders migrated to India at some remote time in history.

The radical difference of the Bene Israel from other Indian communities, and the presence of a haplotype which may perhaps be viewed as a marker for Jewish communities when found in fairly high concentrations, suggests that surprisingly the Bene Israel are indeed what they say: a group the founders of which originally migrated from the Middle East. In addition, the presence of the CMH among the community members perhaps suggests that there may have been Jews among the founding group.

*Media Response to the Bene Israel Tests*

News of the analysis of the DNA of the Bene Israel made first-page banner headlines in the *Times of India* as well as being very prominently covered in other Indian newspapers including the tabloid press. One Mumbai tabloid, *Midday*, trumpeted: “Thane Jews pass the blood test!” and went on to say:

The news that recent DNA tests have linked India’s Bene Israel Jewish community to the patriarch Moses has delighted the small Jewish community in Thane.

For hundreds of years, the Bene Israel (meaning Children of Israel), now largely concentrated in and around Thane had fought Western prejudice that denied them their claim as descendants of one of Israel’s 12 lost tribes. Now the Jews of Thane, home to 2,000 or 40 per cent of India’s Jewry, can hold their head high among the rest of the Jewish community. (Nair, M. [2002] “Thane Jews Pass the Blood Test,” Mumbai *Midday* newspaper, 23 July)

Quite apart from anything else, given the fact that the Bene Israel community numbers about 5,000 out of an Indian population of over one billion, it is remarkable that the Indian media took any interest at all. The coverage of the Bene Israel story in the western media was much less than that on the Lemba. There may have been some coverage of a DNA collection recently done among the Afridi Pathans in Lucknow,<sup>22</sup> as this was picked up by Reuters as well as by the national press of India, but in general there was little if anything done on the Bene Israel. A story that started circulating in mid-November which claimed that the Judaising Shinlung groups of Manipur—the so-called Sons of Menasseh (*Hindu* 2002)<sup>23</sup>—did not want to engage in DNA tests got much more international publicity than the Bene Israel story, which showed that their unlikely oral history had been confirmed by the genetic study.

In India itself the media had something of a field day. For the first time in history, the Bene Israel had a *Times of India* headline and this was followed up by a number of other reports in the tabloid press (*Times of India* 2002). During a recent field trip, Tudor Parfitt observed substantial press coverage of the topic that included headlines in the other great Indian English-language daily, the *Hindustan Times* (*Hindustan Times* 2002).

*The Response of the Bene Israel to the Media Reports and to Genetic Testing*

Very recently, Tudor Parfitt visited the Bene Israel community at the invitation of the Indian branch of the Jewish international aid organization ORT. The head of ORT India, Mr. Benjamin Isaac, and other formal and informal leaders of the community appeared to have been extremely enthusiastic about the results of the tests. Mr. Isaac explained that the community was “incredibly excited” about them and that many people believed that the tests indeed could help them to end the controversy about the origin of the Bene Israel. Victor Sassoon, a Bene Israel and

one of the executive members of ORT, is a senior official at *The Times of India*. Sassoon too stressed that our visit was very important for the community. “You should have been here for the festivities in July,” he said. He explained that there had been spontaneous outpourings of joy among the Bene Israel of Bombay on the Sunday following the publication of the *Times of India* article on July 21, 2002. He mentioned that he had sent the article to his relatives in Canada and Australia and that they were very happy about the news. Victor Sassoon added that in local terms, however, the information had come too late. The most significant “others” for the Bene Israel had always been the Baghdadi Jews. Now there were hardly any of them left to show the results to.

The Bene Israel questionnaire was aimed at determining the degree to which the Bene Israel were aware of the DNA tests conducted among them, the way they perceived this genetic research, the sources for their knowledge of the tests, and the attitude toward them.

*Response to the media coverage of the tests.* As with the Lemba questionnaire, here we offer descriptive statistics on the received responses. About 55 percent of our respondents knew about the genetic tests and their results and about 45 percent did not. Almost all those who knew about the tests learnt about them from the media. Many recalled the titles of newspapers that published articles about the research—principally *The Times of India* and *Midday*. In answer to the question “If you learnt about the tests from the media . . . what exactly do you remember from it?” about a quarter of the respondents answered that the tests had proved that the Bene Israel were Cohanim or related to the family of Moses. To give an example, one respondent maintained that “It [newspaper article] stated that Bene Israel have a similar genetic structure to that of Cohens. This was true as the media had no reason to lie.” It appears that a significant number of the Bene Israel have perceived the results of the tests as proving that nearly all members of their community are of Jewish priestly origin. It should be noted in this respect that during our trip we were conducting further DNA tests among the Bene Israel for geneticists from the Haifa Technion working with Professor Karl Skorecki. It was interesting to note that in answer to one of the questions on the form, which asked whether they were Cohens, Levites, or Israelites, some Bene Israel asked to be marked as “Cohens.” As one of them explained, “Now we know that all Bene Israel are Cohens.”

This response is hardly surprising given the way the tests were represented in the *Sunday Times* article, which argued in its opening paragraph that the research had revealed that the Bene Israel carry “the unusual Moses gene” and that they are the “probable descendants of a small group of hereditary Israelite priests or Cohanim.” The statement is very likely to be understood by a layman as an argument in support of the priestly origin of the entire Bene Israel population.

Those who expressed doubts about the correctness of the mass media report stressed their lack of knowledge and/or of understanding of the technicalities of the tests: "They did not inform us [about] what exactly was the test or what proved that we were related to Aaron."

*Attitude toward genetic tests.* As in the case of the Lemba, we wanted to assess the respondents' perception of genetic research in general, which also has some bearing on the vexed question of informed consent. One of the questions asked "What is genetics?" About one half of the respondents described genetics in a fairly adequate way. They defined it as "science of heredity," "science of genes," and "science of genetic structure." Interestingly, about ten percent linked genetics to the study of origins, a phenomenon which we have already come across with the Lemba questionnaire. They described genetics as "[science] about classes of people," "study of origin through body," "[science which] traces ancestors." As it must have been true also for the Lemba, the perception of genetics of this portion of the respondents was dominated by what they had learnt about the research on the Bene Israel, so they construed it as a science which looks only or mainly at the origins of populations.

Another question asked whether the respondents knew about any other genetic studies conducted among the Jews. The overwhelming majority said "no." One respondent mentioned the Sons of Menasseh (an article on the possibility of conducting DNA tests among Bnei-Menashe had been published that week in the *Hindu* [Hindu 2002] and other Indian newspapers).

One question, aimed at determining the way the Bene Israel viewed the thinking behind the tests, asked "Why do you think they conducted these tests on the Bene Israel?" About one-third replied that the scientists wanted to see "how Jewish the Bene Israel were." Ten percent argued that the idea behind the tests had been to prove that the Bene Israel were Jewish. This group included such answers as "to confirm that the Bene Israel are from the 12 Tribes," "Bene Israel wanted better respect," "to declare Bene Israel Jews," "to give Bene Israel more respect," "to prove we are Jews." Thus, here the assumption was that the geneticists were from the start "on the side" of the Bene Israel, that they did not doubt their Jewish origin and wanted to provide scientific proof for it. One response gave an opposite perspective: "They were under the impression that we are impure Jews."

Another question looked at the way the Bene Israel perceived the way the research was conducted: "Do you think that the Bene Israel were consulted in the matter of the tests? If not, what would be a better way of organising this type of research? What do you think the researchers failed to do conducting the tests? What do you think they did wrong?" About one-third of the respondents made negative comments about the way the tests were conducted and only very few appeared to be entirely happy with the geneticists. Those who were not satisfied

with the tests had two main complaints about the way they were conducted. The first was that not all the Bene Israel were informed about the tests when they were being conducted and that they learnt about the tests only recently when the results appeared in the media. The second was that not all Bene Israel were tested. A number of people suggested that if the entire community had been tested the results would have been even more overwhelmingly satisfactory. Some individual responses reflected a negative attitude toward the very idea of conducting such tests. Thus, one person argued that the tests should not have been conducted at all as the Bene Israel knew all along that they were Jewish. Another person maintained that the results of this study should not have been published presumably because of the possibility of communal backlash.

A number of questions specifically asked what the respondents thought about the idea of conducting these tests and about their results. About half of those who knew about the tests were positive about the idea of this research. Their responses ranged from direct affirmative answers (“good idea,” “great”) to stressing the usefulness of the tests to the Bene Israel and the general academic value of the tests (“very helpful,” “ended controversy,” “useful during migration to Israel,” “knowledge is always good”). About 20 percent of the respondents were either clearly negative about the idea of conducting the tests (“no,” “not a good idea,” “don’t believe in such things,” “do it on AIDS, much more important,” “waste of time”) or argued that there was no need to conduct tests like that on the Bene Israel, as they had always known that they were Jewish.

When asked about their attitude toward the results of the tests about half responded in a very positive way. Those who chose to explain why exactly they liked the results related them to the issue of the recognition of the Jewishness of the Bene Israel. Others stressed that it proved the “purity” of the Bene Israel. They gave answers such as: the tests “ended controversy,” “we’ll get importance,” “we can benefit from them,” “we are proud of being associated with Moses.” One respondent in the same context also stressed that “science is never wrong.” Others either argued that the results had no importance for them or said that they were happy about the results as they were beneficial for the community, but made it clear that generally they had reservations about this sort of research. One respondent observed, “We’re lucky, what if the results had been negative?”

*Possible social effects.* Several questions were aimed at looking at the way the Bene Israel viewed the actual or potential effects of the genetic research on their life and on the community’s self-perception. In response to the general question about whether the genetic results would affect the life of the Bene Israel and the way they think about themselves, about one-half answered that they would definitely affect the life and self-perception of the community. Among more detailed answers there were the following explanations: “We always knew we were Jewish, now we know

we are Cohens,” “we no longer have to fight for recognition,” “they gave us status,” “the results will have an effect where Israel is concerned.” Many stressed that the results added to their self-dignity. About one-third argued that the tests would not affect the Bene Israel at all. One response was particularly negative, saying that the research may cause religious, possibly communal problems, without specifying in what context.

Another question asked to choose between the following answers: “Some say, these results confirm what the Bene Israel have always said about their history. But others say that they are not important or less important than what their grandparents taught them. What do you think?” About one-third replied that the tests confirmed the foundation legend, while 25 percent stressed that the tests were less important than the oral tradition of the community. The latter argued that they had never had any doubts about their origin. In answer to a more direct question “Are the Bene Israel themselves more convinced that they are Jewish now than they were before the tests?” more than half said “no.” Some made it clear that they found the question insulting (one person said, “The question makes my blood boil”). Others were less negative, and argued that though the tests did not make any difference to them, it was good for the Bene Israel that the world knew about the results. When asked whether they considered the results of the tests important, one-third of the respondents categorically denied that that could be the case. About 40 percent said yes, but some explained that they were only important for the outside world, and not for the Bene Israel (“[the results are important as they provide] written proof,” “[they are important] because of the Baghdadi Jews”).

*Relations with others.* Three questions asked whether, in the view of our respondents, the Israelis, Western Jews, and Baghdadi, and Cochini Jews of India have changed their attitude toward and/or the way they think about the Bene Israel since the publication of the tests. As far as the Israelis are concerned, both those who thought that their attitude toward the Bene Israel was bound to change and those who thought that it would not, spoke about the problem of recognition that the Bene Israel had in Israel. Thus, the former argued that now the Bene Israel would become more respected in Israel. Those who were sceptical about the Israeli response also evoked the problem of the Bene Israel status in the Jewish state. As one informant put it, “Israel will never accept any change with respect of the Bene Israel.”

When asked about the changes in the relationship with other foreign Jews, 15 percent answered that they may change in the future. As in the previous question, these people expressed hope that the Bene Israel would now be more respected and accepted by foreign Jews. Some of those who were sceptical (about one-third) expressed bitterness at the way Western Jews have treated their community. One person observed, “European and American Jews may not like it [the result of the

DNA tests], as it shows dominant sect.” He was among those who interpreted the results of the tests as proving that the entire community was of priestly origin.

In answer to the question about the Baghdadis and Cochini Jews, the overwhelming majority of the respondents said that they either did not know what the response of the latter to the test was or observed that there were too few members of these two communities around. Two respondents asserted that the relations had always been good, one person expressed hope that now they would recognize them, and two people indicated that the Baghdadi Jews even after the tests continued to humiliate the Bene Israel because the Baghdadis considered themselves to be “genetically superior.” And indeed as we know, the Baghdadis since the 19th century had persistently argued that the Bene Israel were “impure” (Roland 1998).

### *Purity and Status*

What generalizations can be made about the Bene Israel perception of the DNA tests on the basis of their responses? The majority of the respondents were positive about the tests. Their argument was that the tests were much needed for the community, and the publication of their results was going to change things for the better in respect of their self-esteem and the complete recognition of their Jewishness by the others. Several of the questions asked about the religious and group identity of the respondents and their views on the history of their community. Practically all of our respondents identified themselves as practising Jews (though belonging to different denominations of Judaism) and argued that their ancestors had come from “Israel.” Many argued that the tests did not have any significance for them, as they always knew that they were Jewish. There were also scattered negative responses that expressed fear that the tests might cause religious problems for the Bene Israel. However, even those who were dismissive about the significance of the tests suggested that it was good for the “outside world” to learn about their results. Thus, the questionnaire has shown that the community still remembers the traumatic experience of not being recognized as “proper Jews” only too well.

Did the tests have any significance for the Bene Israel in the Indian context? As we have seen, many Bene Israel thought that the researchers had discovered that all the Bene Israel were the descendants of the priests, and this is exactly what the *Sunday Times* reported. This response must be considered in the context of the social history and religious culture of the society in which the Bene Israel live. In traditional Indian society, of course, the concept of purity is vitally important and defines status in the caste hierarchy. The purer the origin of a caste, the higher its status. The Bene Israel were acutely aware of caste in the context of their native villages and in the more recent context of their dealings with Jews. A century on, issues of caste, purity, and to an extent color are still of overriding importance for the community and the genetic results were interpreted by them in light of these



concerns. Very often both in the questionnaires and in oral discussions of the tests the informants expressed great satisfaction that geneticists had proved that the Bene Israel were “the purest of the pure” or “the purest of the Jews.” In Jewish terms, the purity of descent so long questioned by the Baghdadi Jews has now been established. Even more than that the Bene Israel could now see themselves as not merely on a par with the Baghdadis or any other Jews for that matter but as superior to them: for now the newspapers had proclaimed them, as a community, to be not just lay Jews but Cohanim. In Indian terms, the tests appeared to the Bene Israel to confer upon them caste dignity, priestly status, and purity.

In light of their social situation in India it was not surprising that the Bene Israel tended to construct the genetic results as proving the “purity” of their Jewishness. Combined with their traditions, according to which the Brahmans of India were actually Jewish, the discovery of the connection of the Bene Israel with the Cohanim, the “purest” of the Jews, made the Bene Israel even purer than the Brahmans.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Let us now try to single out the main differences and similarities in the impact that genetic research had on the identities of the two groups and in their overall response to the tests. Both the Lemba and the Bene Israel have had historical experiences that are not dissimilar. They have been unable to prove that their own cherished narratives of origin are true. They have both been ridiculed and belittled because of them. Now they have what they regard as proof of the authenticity of their traditions. The objective outside the interest of the genetic research on the Lemba and the Indian Jews is that it substantially proves theories of origin deeply cherished by both groups. However, it should be borne in mind that the two groups are organized quite differently. The Bene Israel, notwithstanding their mysterious origins, have developed into a Jewish community very much like any other in the world. In Mumbai, there is a full range of community organizations, synagogues, prayer halls, community journals, et cetera. The Lemba on the other hand have but one organization, the Lemba Cultural Association, which is run by a small body of elders and which has very poor outreach to the bulk of the community. Hence the differences in the way the genetic tests affected the narratives of origins of the two groups, and the way they are perceived in the outside world.

In the case of the Lemba, geneticists basically ‘invented’ the Lemba as a Jewish community for the ‘outsiders’ who probably would have never learnt about the “Jewishness” of the Lemba but for the widespread discussion of the tests in the media. As far as the response of the Lemba themselves is concerned, it was the elite who derived most value from the media reports. The scattered nature of the tribe and the inaccessibility of the rural areas in which many of its members

live have meant that the information has reached them in a very approximate form. The direct impact of the media coverage on the totality of the Lemba in Zimbabwe, as in South Africa, was probably quantitatively slight. Even though there were quite a few reports in South Africa on TV, radio, and in the press, few of these got directly to the rural populations concerned. Word of mouth accounted for more of the impact but probably in the majority of cases the Lemba were ignorant of the DNA results. Though the percentage of those Lemba who were aware of the tests was quite high—about 70 percent as compared to 55 percent of the Bene Israel—it has to be borne in mind that the Lemba respondents tend to be the ones that it is easiest to get hold of and they tend to be in relatively urban areas. In addition, the genetic tests on the Lemba were done much longer ago, and the story has had time to travel far and wide. It may be said, though, that the Lemba responses are less diverse: they probably knew about the tests but did not really have much to say about them. A much greater impact of the Lemba story is discernible in the west, where the media discussion on the issue created a new geography of Jewish populations in the perceptions of many Jews and non-Jews.

For the Lemba elite no doubt the DNA evidence had some usefulness. It was the elite who had in the past attempted to present the Lemba as Jews to the various organs of South African Jewry. They had no evidence at that time to support their claims: the DNA research could now be used as evidence, and it was extremely effective in opening new channels of communication with South African Jews and also with Jews elsewhere, particularly in the United States. As a result, the Lemba leadership was increasingly drawn into a wide range of networks that were closed to them before.

In the case of the Bene Israel, it was also the elite who were most responsive to the tests. In the past, by and large, it was the elite who had dealings with organs of world Jewry and also the institutions of the Baghdadi Jews. However, in overall terms, for the Bene Israel the question of the use of the tests is more obvious than for the Lemba: most members of the community have been aware at some point in their lives of the disparaging remarks often made about them by the Baghdadi Jewish community in Mumbai and elsewhere, and an even greater number are aware of the treatment meted out to the community by rabbis in Israel both in the 1960s and since. The undisguised glee that accompanied their reception of the genetic results draws on this history. Quite apart from that, the level of English-language education among the Bene Israel is significantly higher than among the Lemba, they were better informed about the tests, had better understanding of their objective and purpose, and had a better background knowledge about genetics. The outside impact, on the contrary, has been slight.

Speaking about the similarities in the responses of both communities, it should be noted that in both cases, it is difficult to overestimate the influence of local realities on the reactions to the tests. It was shown that the tests had a lot of

significance for the Bene Israel in the Indian context. Similarly, the response of the Lemba could be considered in the context of the history of the society they live in. South Africa is of course a society where color gradations have had pre-eminent importance in the classification of groups. The Lemba who had always maintained that despite their blackness, they were the “white men who came from Sena” and who thought of themselves as having western traits such as “Jewish” noses could now point to the genetic results as a proof of a shared physicality with the white Jewish elite of the great South African cities.

Similarities are also found in the responses of the researched to the way the tests were conducted. In both cases, the reaction to the collection of DNA was largely positive, but critical at the same time. One of the often-repeated complaints of the Bene Israel was that they should all have been tested. They felt that then the results would then have been even more categorical about the purity of their descent. Some of the Lemba said the same thing: while they were happy about the results, they felt that those conducting the tests should have been more careful in selecting only “pure” Lemba. It was only the Lemba themselves who knew whose blood had been “contaminated” by relationships outside the tribe. Both groups felt that they had been left in the dark by the geneticists, who should have taken more efforts to keep them informed about the results. And in the case of the Lemba among whom DNA tests based upon blood samples were conducted some eight years ago (Spurdle and Jenkins 1996), the memory lingers on, that the blood collected may have been used for improper purposes (the more recent collections were done by mouth swabs). Thus, the positive responses to genetic tests in general and these tests in particular were due to the fact that for the researched they had produced favorable results and the criticisms were borne out of poor understanding of genetics.

Finally, needless to say, the tests, particularly in the case of the Bene Israel, are a very recent event. It will be interesting to watch the long-term effects on both communities. However, already now we can argue with a considerable degree of certainty that these “scientific” findings will have a substantial impact upon other peoples’ perceptions as well as these two communities’ own narratives and sense of where they belong. If this article contains what may be regarded as preliminary data, a much bigger project based on larger samples and a much wider selection of Jewish and Judaising populations is shortly to be embarked upon.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Some of this article arose out of a project funded by the Innovations in Research initiative of the British Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB), to whom I am most grateful. Yulia Egorova was appointed as research assistant to work on this project.

## NOTES

1. Of two things we can be certain: Eldad the Danite ca 880 was not called Eldad and he was not of the tribe of Dan. He arrived in the great Islamic city of Kairouan in present-day Tunisia, where he announced that he was a member of the lost tribe of Dan, which according to him was still flourishing along with Naphtali, Gad, and Asher in the Land of Cush. See Parfitt (2002: 8ff).

2. Rabbi Benjamin ben Jonah of Toledo in Navarre, the most famous of Jewish travellers, finished the journey he described in 1173.

3. On the conversion of the wealthy South Arabian state of Himyar to Judaism see Rubin (2000: 32ff).

4. For example, see Goldstein (1998). For a recent bibliography on the Jews of China, see Shulman (2000). See also Pollack (1980). On Chinese attitudes toward Jews, see Zhou (2001). On the Ethiopian Jews, see Kaplan and Ben-Dor (1988), Salamon and Kaplan (1998), Quirin (1992), Kaplan (1987), Kaplan (1992), Kessler (1996), Parfitt and Trevisan-Semi (2000, 2002).

5. The first documented account of the Bene Israel took the form of a letter from the Danish missionary J.A. Sartorius in 1738. There are many conjectures on the origins of the Bene Israel, but few if any facts. Having surveyed the various theories Roland concluded: "But as there are no written records, inscriptions, or other evidence to confirm or disprove any of these conjectures, the origins of the Bene Israel remain shrouded in legend." See Roland (1998: 11) and Isenberg (1988: 3–19).

6. Works on aspects of Jewish "race" and physicality are too numerous to mention. For an overview of the older material, see Patai and Patai (1989). See also Gilman (1991). More or less serious work from the standpoint of modern population genetics is of fairly recent origin, e.g., Mourant (1978), but the real breakthrough has been over the last ten years.

7. The original manuscript of his work in the National Library at Rome is written in 16th-century dialectal Italian with traces of Arabic and other Mediterranean languages. Ramusio's first edition transformed this manuscript into an elegant Venetian text. The *Description of Africa* was published in the 1540 and subsequent editions of Giovanni Battista Ramusio's *Delle navigationi et viaggi*.

8. According to the 1588 edition of the *Description of Africa*, Leo died in Rome shortly before 1550, but there is some evidence to suggest that he may have returned to North Africa and to Islam.

9. Until recently the Ethiopian Jews were known as Falashas. This is now considered a pejorative term and the appellation Beta Israel is preferred.

10. Since about 1984 some 60,000 Ethiopian Jews have found their way to Israel.

11. Of course the only way to get to most of the villages was by dirt tracks that are used by occasional motor traffic. Some villages are not accessible by car at all.

12. "Levi returns from South Africa" in *Kulanu* (2000, vol. 7[1], p. 1).

13. A recent work gives an account of Kulanu's objectives and the scope of its interests. See Primack (1998).

14. The reports summarized in Hammer (2000). See also Halkin (2000).

15. See "Letter from Zimbabwe," *Kulanu*, vol. 7,4, p. 5ff.

16. For a comprehensive discussion of the existing theories of origin of the Bene Israel, see Isenberg (1988: 3–19).

17. For a recent detailed discussion of Kehimkar's version of the Bene Israel legend of origin, see Numark (2001).

18. The *mamzer*, sometimes incorrectly rendered "bastard," is something worse than an illegitimate child in Jewish law: namely, the offspring of a father and mother between whom there could in law be no legal marriage, issuing either from adultery between a married

woman and a man other than her husband, or from incest within the forbidden degrees of kinship defined in Lev. xviii. and xx.

19. Ezekiel, a contemporary Bene Israel writer, observed that his family and friends were described on the Konkan as Telis though it was decades since they had abandoned this occupation (Ezekiel 1948: 26–27). Shifra Strizower, who did her fieldwork among the Bene Israel of India in the 1960s, notes that her informants complained that some 20 years before that the Hindus had considered them to be members of Teli caste, which had a low status on the Konka (Strizower 1971: 22–23).

20. In 1920, David S. Erulkar, the editor of a communal periodical *The Israelite* and a supporter of a radical Indian nationalist, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, wrote an editorial after the latter's death in which he praised Tilak's activities. Erulkar found it necessary to mention that Tilak was a Chitpavan Brahman and to retell this legend which implied the commonality of the origins of the Chitpavans and the Bene Israel (Israelite 1920).

21. Afghanistan was one of the favored supposed homes of the Lost Tribes. According to Afghani belief the Afghan people were banished by Nebuchadnezzar into the mountains of Ghur where they maintained a relationship with the Jews of Arabia. When some of the Arabian Jews converted to Islam one of their number—a certain Khaled—wrote to the Afghans and invited them to convert to Islam. A number of Afghan notables arrived in Arabia under a leader who traced his descent back 46 generations to King Saul. Muhammad greeted him with the deferential title *malik* or 'king': at the end of the 19th century, the leading families of Afghanistan still claimed descent from the man so honored by the prophet, and the Afghans' claim to be of Israelite descent is accepted by the majority of Muslim writers as well as by many others. In the 19th century, the idea was widespread in European circles. See Parfitt (2002: 117ff).

22. The Pathans have long been associated with legends of Jewish origin. At the request of the Afridi community of Lucknow in November 2002 Yulia Egorova and Tudor Parfitt collected DNA samples from this community which will be analyzed by Dr. Mark Thomas and Dr. Neil Bradman at UCL. On claims of a Jewish origin for the Pathans, see Parfitt (2002: 125–128).

23. A conversionary movement toward Judaism on the part of a number of tribal groups in eastern India is based on the idea that they are descendants of Menasseh, one of the lost tribes of Israel. See Parfitt and Trevisan-Semi (2000: 17ff).

#### REFERENCES

Corinaldi, Michael

1998 *Jewish Identity: The Case of Ethiopian Jewry*. Jerusalem: Magness Press.

Eisenstadt, Samuel Noah

1967 *Israeli Society*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.

Enthoven, R.E.

1920 *Tribes and Castes of Bombay*, Vol. 1. Bombay: Government Central Press.

Ezekiel, Moses

1948 *History and Culture of the Bene-Israel in India*. Bombay: J. and J. College of Science.

Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency

1883 *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, Vol. 11. Kolaba and Janjira, Bombay: Government Central Press.

1885 *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, Vol. 18. Poona, Bombay: Government Central Press

Gilman, Sander

1991 *The Jew's Body*. New York and London: Routledge.

Gilman, Sander

1999 *Making the Body Beautiful: A Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

Goldstein, Jonathan, ed.

1998 *The Jews of China, Vol. 1. Historical and Comparative Perspectives*. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe.

Halkin, Hillel

2000 *Jewish Genetics*. Commentary, September.

Halkin, Hillel

2002 *Across the Sabbath River*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Hammer, M.F., A.J. Redd, E.T. Wood, M.R. Bonner, H. Jarjanazi, T. Karafet, S. Santachiara-Benerecetti, A. Oppenheim, M.A. Jobling, T. Jenkins, H. Ostrer, B. Bonne-Tamir

2000 Jewish and Middle Eastern Non-Jewish Populations Share a Common Pool of Y-chromosome Biallelic Haplotypes. *Proceedings of The National Academy of Sciences* 97(12): 6769–6774.

Hindu

1997 Indian Jews Face Identity Crisis in Israel. *Hindu*, November 20.

2002 Indian Jews Resist DNA Tests. *Hindu*, November 11.

Hindustan Times

2002 Linking Jews to Afridi Pathans. *Hindustan Times*, November 14.

Isenberg, Shirley B.

1988 *India's Bene Israel*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.

Israelite

1919 *Israelite*, September–October 3(9–10): 118–119.

Israelite

1920 *Israelite*, July–August 4(7–8): 96.

Jaques, A.A.

1908 Notes on the Lemba Tribe of the Northern Transvaal. *Anthropos* 19:245–251.

Johnson, T. Broadwood

1909 *Tramps Round the Mountains of the Moon*. Boston.

Kaplan, Steven

1987 The Beta Israel (Falasha) Encounter with Protestant Missionaries: 1860–1905. *Jewish Social Studies* 49(1): 27–42.

1992 *The Beta Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia*. New York and London: New York U.P.

2003 If There are No Races How Can Jews Be a Race? *Modern Jewish Studies* 2(1): 79–96.

Kaplan, Steven, and Shoshana Ben-Dor, eds.

1988 *Ethiopian Jewry: An Annotated Bibliography*. Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute.

Kehimkar, Haim Samuel

1937 *The History of the Bene Israel of India*. Tel Aviv: Dayag Press.

Kessler, David

1996 *The Falashas*. London: Cass.

Koestler, Arthur

1976 *Thirteenth Tribe: The Khazar Empire and its Heritage*. London: Hutchinson.

Kulanu

2000 Levi returns from South Africa in Kulanu, 7(1), 1.

2003 Abayudaya. Electronic document, <http://www.kulanu.ubalt.edu>, accessed January 15.

Mourant, A.E., with Ada Kope'c and Kazimiera Domaniewska-Sobczak

1978 *The Genetics of the Jews*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

NOVA

2000 NOVA online. Lost Tribe of Israel. Tudor Parfitt's Remarkable Journey. Electronic document, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/israel/parfitt.html>.

- Numark, M.  
2001 Constructing a Jewish Nation in Colonial India: History, Narratives of Descent, and the Vocabulary of Modernity. *Jewish Social Studies* 7(2): 89–114.
- Oded, A.  
1974 The Bayudaya of Uganda: A portrait of an African Jewish Community. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 6: 167–186.
- Olson, Steve  
2002 *Mapping Human History: Discovering the Past Through Our Genes*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Parfitt, Tudor  
1997 *Journey to the Vanished City*. London: Phoenix.  
2002 *The Lost Tribes of Israel: The History of a Myth*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Parfitt, Tudor, and Emanuela Trevisan-Semi, eds.  
2000 *The Beta Israel in Ethiopia and Israel: Studies on the Ethiopian Jews*. London: Curzon SOAS Near and Middle East Publications.  
2002 *Judaizing Movements: Studies in the Margins of Judaism*. London: Routledge Curzon.
- Patai, Raphael, and Jennifer Patai  
1989 *The Myth of the Jewish Race*. Detroit: Wayne University Press.
- Pollack, Michael  
1980 *Mandarins, Jews and Missionaries: The Jewish Experience in the Chinese Empire*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Pory, John  
1600 *A Geographical Historie of Africa written in Arabicke and Italian by John Leo a More, borne in Granada, and brought up in Barbarie*. London: Impensis G. Bishop.
- Primack, Karen, ed.  
1998 *Jews in Places You Never Thought of*. New Jersey: KTAV Publishing House.
- Quirin, James  
1992 *The Evolution of the Ethiopian Jews: A History of the Beta Israel (Falasha) to 1920*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Roland, Joan  
1998 *The Jewish Communities of India: Identity in the Colonial Era*, 2nd ed. New Brunswick and London: Transaction.
- Rubin, Zeev  
2000 Judaism and Rahmanite Monotheism in the Himyarite Kingdom in the Fifth Century. *In Israel and Ishmael: Studies in Muslim Jewish Relations*. Tudor Parfitt, ed., pp. 32–52. London: Curzon.
- Salamon, Hagar, and Steven Kaplan, eds.  
1998 *Ethiopian Jewry: An Annotated Bibliography 1988–1997*. Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute.
- Shulman, F.D.  
2000 Chinese Jews and the Jewish Diasporas in China from the Tang Period (A.D. 618–906) through the Mid-1990s: A Selected Bibliography. *In The Jews of China, Vol. 2. A Sourcebook and Research Guide*. Jonathan Goldstein, ed., pp. 157–183. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe.
- Smith, M. Van Wyck  
1986 Waters Flowing from Darkness: The Two Ethiopias in the Early European Image of Africa. *Theoria* 68: 67–77.
- Spurdle, A., and Trefor Jenkins  
1996 Origin of the Lemba “Black Jews” of Southern Africa: Evidence from p12F2 and other Y-Chromosome Markers. *American Journal of Human Genetics* 59: 1126–1133.

Srinivas, M.N.

1966 *Social Change in Modern India*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Stayt, H.A.

1931 *The Bavenda*. London: Oxford University Press.

Strizower, Shifra

1971 *The Children of Israel*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Thomas, Mark G., Tudor Parfitt, Deborah A. Weiss, Karl Skorecki, James F. Wilson, Magdelle Roux, Neil Bradman, and David B. Goldstein

2000 Y chromosomes travelling south: The Cohen Modal Haplotype and the Origins of the Lemba: The "Black Jews" of Southern Africa. *American Journal of Human Genetics* 66(2): 674–686.

Thompson, Louis C.

1942 *The Ba-Lemba of Southern Rhodesia*. NADA (The Southern Rhodesia Native Affairs Department Annual): 76–86.

Times of India

1886 *Times of India*, September 8.

Times of India

1887 *Times of India*, April 11.

Times of India

2002 "Marathi Jews Are Moses' Kin" Says Study. *Sunday Times*, July 21.

Trautman, Thomas R.

1997 *Aryans and British India*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Twaddle, Michael

1993 *Kakungulu and the Creation of Uganda*. London: Currey.

Warmelo, N.L. Van, ed.

1940 *The Copper Miners of Musina and the Early History of the Zoutpansberg*. Pretoria.

Weil, Shalva

1977 *Bene-Israel Indian Jews in Lod, Israel: A Study in the Persistence of Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity*. PhD dissertation, University of Sussex, England.

Weingarten, M.A.

1992 *Changing Health and Changing Culture, The Yemenite Jews in Israel*. Westport, Connecticut, London: Praeger.

Williams, Joseph J.

1930 *Hebrewisms of West Africa: From Nile to Niger with the Jews*. New York: The Dial Press.

Zhou, Xun

2001 *Chinese Perceptions of the 'Jews' and Judaism: A History of the Youtai*. Richmond: Curzon.

*Department of the Languages and Cultures of the Near and Middle East*  
*School of Oriental and African Studies*  
*University of London, London, UK*  
*E-mail: tp@soas.ac.uk.*