

THE LOST TRIBES OF ISRAEL IN THE PACIFIC AND ASIAN RIM

by David H. H. Chen

China is a multi-racial society, with more than fifty different nationalities and races. Minority races constitute seven per cent of the total population of China; a nation of over one billion people. Today, most of the minority races in China have their respective autonomous regions and still maintain their own racial identities and particular religious faith. However, some of the minorities have already been assimilated to the Han race of the Chinese majority. The Israelites, perhaps, are the typical example. Historically, the Israelites were not of Chinese origin and they lived in their motherland, Palestine, until the kingdom of Israel was defeated by Sargon II, king of the Assyrian Empire, in 721 B.C.. A short time after the captivity, the Israelites escaped mysteriously and moved toward their north neighboring countries. Thereafter, the Israelites became the lost people in the regions of the Euphrates and they were referred as the ten lost tribes of Israel.

Prior to the fall of the Assyrian Empire in 612 B.C., Babylonia came to power as the New Babylonian Empire or Chaldean Empire, allying itself with the Medes and Persians. Under King Nebopolassar and his son Nebuchadnezzar, they defeated the Egyptians in 605 B.C.. Jerusalem was sacked and destroyed. Consequently, the king and nobles of the kingdom of Judah were imprisoned in Babylon and remained in "Babylonian captivity," until their liberation in 529 B.C. by Cyrus the Great, King of the Persian Empire. The Israelites migrated through Central Asia along the silk-route into the north western region of China, perhaps, during the latter part of the Zhou Dynasty, approximately 600 B.C.. The people of Israel upon their arrival in China, at their best taught the highest ideas of moral and ethical excellence. Their social principles and values were identical with that of the Chinese ethical rules and systems. Therefore, the Israelites were accepted as a civilized race of people by the Chinese, and concepts such as the Redeemer or the "Holy One" were also introduced to the Chinese. In the ancient Chinese classic writing, "Lih-tse jong-ni-pian" there is the following passage:

【列子仲尼曰：商太師見孔子，問三王五帝聽者幾，孔子皆以不知。商太師曰：然則孰有為之？孔子動容有間，曰：方之，人有聽者，莫不道而不亂，不有聞者，莫不化而自行。湯武受命，天下歸之，此其為也。知真偽，識虛實，莫不聽之。】

which is translated as follows:

Shang premier visited Confucius and asked him whether the Three Kings and the Five Emperors of China were the Holies? Confucius answered that he knew not. The Shang Premier was very astonished and asked again, "Then whom is to be the Holy One?" After a while with a very touching

expression on his face, Confucius said that there will be one born in the West (west to China, the Middle East). He would be the only one to be the Holy One.(1)

The most obvious Israeli influence upon China is the Chinese practice of "過年" 'guoh nian' which literally means "passover festival," and it has been changed to the term of Spring Festival or New Year celebration after the overthrow of the Manchurian rulership, the last Chinese imperial dynasty, in 1911. The Chinese "guoh nian" is identical to the Jewish Passover Festival. Both the Chinese "guoh nian" and the Israel Passover Festival are during the beginning month in the lunar calendar, "the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying the month shall be unto you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year to you,"(2) during this special occasion the Israelites place lamb's blood upon their doors to avoid the destroying angels entering their homes. "And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you."(3) The Chinese place red strips of paper on their doors during "guoh nian", and the Chinese New Year, for good luck and to be more free from disaster. Before New Year's eve, to please the spirits, the Chinese traditionally clean their houses, even putting away their left over food to give to beggars in the next day. The Israelites have the same tradition and customs in their Passover Festival, which marks the time when Elijah is said to visit each house of Israel, disguised as a beggar, to see whether or not the world is ready and worthy for a messiah.(4) On Chinese "guoh nian," Passover Festival or Spring Festival, none of ye shall go out at the door of his house until the morning;(5) therefore no visitors are accepted from the eve of the New Year until the following morning of the next day.(6) The majority of the Chinese households do not sleep on Chinese New Year Eve, in the lunar calendar, and eat unleavened dumpling at midnight. On the other hand, the Israelites on the night of the Passover Festival do not go out, but stay in their homes and partake of unleavened bread called mazzah, at midnight.(7) The Chinese "guoh nian 'Passover Festival'" is the most serious and biggest festival in China, even in modern times. Although the Chinese government officially has adopted the Western calendar practices, "guoh nian 'the lunar Chinese New Year'" or the Chinese Passover Festival, is still the most important festival and ceremony in Chinese custom. The first two weeks of the new year to the Chinese people is the period of mutual greetings and "bay nian," which means to ask for forgiveness to those whom a person has offended, and to express thanksgiving to those to whom a person is indebted. The way of "bay nian" is to bow head to the ground of the earth in order to show a person's sincerity and true humbleness to his benefactors as well as to God." After a couple of thousand years practicing the "guoh nian" ceremony, the Chinese no longer know why they have such a mysterious tradition

of "guoh nian 'Passover Festival'". Nevertheless, they practice it. It is very similar to the offering sacrifices of Adam and Eve after they were out of the Garden of Eden, although they knew not why they did offer sacrifices, they did so because they were commanded. It would be so exciting and a great joy if the Chinese knew that the significance can be found in the Bible as it has been written, "And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons forever," and "it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, what mean ye by this service?"(8) of "guoh nian," "that ye shall say, it is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who pass over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when he smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses. And the people bowed their heads and worshipped."(9) The Passover Festival and the Chinese "guoh nian" come from the same vein, and it has been as a sacred ordinance forever, with the tradition of the Israelites in memorial of the Passover. Evidently, the various similar customs and traditions practiced by the Chinese as well as the Israelites, explained very definitely that there was a period of cross cultural fertilization between the Chinese and the Israelites in early history. Apparently, the Israelites arrival in China was in the latter part of the Zhou Dynasty, but before the birth of Confucius.

The Israelites settled down in the Kaifeng area of Henan Province in central China, with the Israel communities and villages. In Chinese accounts, the Israel communities consisted of families with seventy different surnames, and they built synagogues, having their own scriptures which were based on the five teachings of Moses. According to the Chinese writing of KAIFENG ISRAEL RELIGION RESEARCH (10) the Israelites had kept their genealogical records until they were influenced by the Chinese. They changed their surnames and adopted Chinese surnames in the 13th century A.D.. Professor Wolfram Eberhard has indicated in his writing, "China's Minorities: Yesterday and Today," that the Israelites or Jewish people reached the Yellow River Basin, perhaps before the 9th century A.D. Most of the Israelites (the Jewish people) were businessmen, and entered China through Siberia.

Gradually, the Israelite immigrants settled in the Kaifeng area and developed their own style of Israel communities, sometimes referred to as the Jewish communities, and lived their own way of life. Regardless of whether they went through Siberia, Silk Routes or any other paths they entered into China, their settlement in the Kaifeng area of China's Henan Province was a historical fact.

While in the 16th century A.D. the Jesuit missionaries arrived in China. They heard about the Israelites Jewish communities and not only visited the area, but also studied a great deal about those Israelites and their communities. The reports of the Jesuit missionaries indicated that although the Israel or Jewish communities still kept their own religious faith, and their ministers could still read their own scriptures, yet their social circles had become very limited.(11)

「第一批到中國來的猶太人，是在第九世紀的光景。大概過了一百年後他們才逐漸北上。這些從西亞細亞來的移民，都是生意人，可能是棉花業。到了十二世紀左右，他們就以開封為根據地發展起來。十六世紀耶穌會教士到了中國，聽說開封有猶太人，就去訪問，那個時候的猶太人雖然還守着自己的宗教信仰，牧師也會唸猶太經文，但他們的漢字下六，而且顯然已與當地人打成一片了。到了十九世紀，英國和歐洲的訪客從中國回來後，都提到猶太人漸漸為中國人同化了。猶太文的經典，也只剩下幾本了。從此以後，我們再沒有聽到猶太人在中國活動的報道。他們原有的聖經名字，已全都中國化，體型長相，也與中國人無異。在經文上，這是有猶太人在沒有迫害和歧視的情形下完全受當地同化的唯一例子。我們相信，十分分來華經商的猶太人都是單身漢，後來與中國女子結婚，或領養中國孤兒。這樣一千年後，他們就失去自己原來的身份了。」

There was ample evidence that the Israelites, through inter-racial marriages were already assimilated with the indigenous people of the Han Chinese, the majority race of China. In addition, American and European scholars commented, upon returning from their visit to China at the end of the 16th century A.D., that there were only few Israel or Jewish scriptures left, and the people of the Israelites were already completely assimilated by the Chinese race. After the 16th century A.D., the West could no longer hear anything about the Israelites in China.

Mixed marriages changed the unique features of the Israelites; the adoption of Chinese surnames changed the social identities of the Israelite people. Consequently, after the 16th century A.D. the Israelites became a people of no different in comparison to their physical appearance and social identities with the native Chinese. Professor Wolfram Eberhard pointed out, in his writing "China's Minorities: Yesterday and Today", that in the history of mankind China was the only place where the Israelites were peacefully and completely assimilated with the native race of people without suffering any persecution. Apparently, the key to the success of the assimilation was the



mixed marriage and the adoption of the native ways of life, as well as that of native Chinese surnames. Thus a couple of thousand years later, the Israelites had totally and completely lost their original racial identities and their characters of appearance and became Chinese.

Leo Gabow, an Israel nationality, spent more than seven years studying the history and historical traces of the Israelites in China.(12)

The result of his studies has been noticed and collected by the Hoover Institute of Stanford University. Research data and accomplishments have been preserved by the Institute. The data show that the date of the Israelites arrival in China was possibly in the latter part of the Zhou Dynasty, 500-600 B.C.. (13)

Some of the data shows that the possibility of their arrival in China was in the Han Dynasty, 206 B.C. - 220 A.D.. Some other data indicated that their settlement in the Kaifeng area was a nation of multi-racial cosmopolitanism. Leo Gabow in order to find the factual data for furthering studies of the Israelites in China, in May 1983, went to China and visited the Israel or Jewish communities in the Kaifeng area. He interviewed quite a number of people of the descendants of the Israelites; unfortunately, although they knew that they were the descendants of the Israelites, they have no knowledge about their ancestral history. However, some of the Israel customs still remained in the Kaifeng area, such as the practice of circumcision, and the picking out of meat-muscles before eating, etc..(14)

Alley". Actually, these street names were given by the early Israelite settlers. The native Chinese had referred to the Israelites as "the Blue-hat Moslems" because the Israelites in the early days always wore blue hats in order to distinguish themselves from the Turkish moslems, so the Israelites were known as the "Blue-hat Moslems".

To the native Chinese there was no way to distinguish the Jews from the Israelites, the Jews from the Arabs, and the Arabs from the Turks. Consequently, the Israelites were given the name as the "Blue-hat Moslems" in the early days of the Kaifeng. Since the last century, the study of races became a popular academic subject, the Jewish communities (its proper name should be the Israelite communities) also became a noticeable terminology in Sinology, and China's Kaifeng is no longer strange to the academic world. Consequently, in order to study the early Israelite communities in Kaifeng, the "Blue-hat Moslems" became the subject matter in research. The popular knowing "Blue-hat Moslems" were also referred to as the "seven blue-hat moslems" because they adopted seven Chinese surnames into themselves, namely:

Jin (金), Jang (張), Ay (艾), Kao (高), Lee (李), and Shy (石).

12 住在柏洛門的猶太人... O GABOW) 七年來致力研究猶太人在中國... MICHAEL POLLAK.

13 猶太人何時進入中國... 摩、宋都有可能... 後人皆是根據文獻論斷...

14 為了進一步研究... 關於猶太遺址最多的地方... 三名猶太後裔... 外形、文化上也與一般中國人無異...

15 由於百年來西方民族學者的遺棄... 「開封猶太人」幾乎變成一個專有名詞... 人又稱「七姓子」...

There are still more than two hundred people nowadays in the Kaifeng area known as the descendants of the Israelites, but their physical appearance differs not much from the Han, majority Chinese. Besides some of the streets in the city of Kaifeng are still named as "Religion Scripture Alley", and "Muscle-Pick-Out

This account, the so-called "Seven blue-hat moslems" because of their adopting seven Chinese surnames into themselves is different from the records of the inscription of ancient monuments found in the Kaifeng area, which indicated that there were seventeen surnames (Chinese surnames) of the Israelites in the early Kaifeng's Jewish (Israelite) communities.

Besides the above mentioned Israelite communities, perhaps it is worthy to notice that in 1957, the Chinese government sent an expeditionary team of explorers with the mission to discover the Takla Maka, the largest desert of the world, which is located in the Chinese Turkistan, the Xinjiang Province of China. The expeditionary team found, in the central part of the Takla Maka desert, a large group of non-Han Chinese people. These newly discovered people had already lived in the Takla Maka desert for more than a couple of thousand years. They had no knowledge of the date of their ancestors' arrival, and didn't even know how long they had been lost in the Takla Maka desert. They had no knowledge that there was a world beyond the Takla Maka Desert. Due to China's isolation in 1950's, the discovery was not revealed to the rest of the world. To scholars in racial studies, inevitably rises the question that if these people are not of Chinese racial origin, then what is their racial origin? Are they the lost tribes of Israel?

The WORLD JOURNAL has made some interesting comments regarding the assimilation of the Israelites into the Chinese race as follows: "Perhaps, one day, you and most of you--the Chinese may find that you have assimilated blood of the Israelites; although the chance may be rare, but not at all impossible." (18) Perhaps, it was why only five years after the early pioneers reached Salt Lake Valley in 1852, four missionaries were called to work in Asia. Three of the four missionaries were called to China.

Half a century later, President David O. McKay with Hugh J. Cannon traveled to the region of Manchuria, Korea and Beijing, the very political center of China. In the Forbidden City, when President David O. McKay with Hugh J. Cannon came to a grove of cypress trees "a reverential feeling came and a presence seemed to be upon them. They were sure that unseen holy beings were directing their footsteps. There at Peking in the heart of the most populous nation in the world they offered the dedicatory prayer. (19) The Spirit had strongly impressed President David O. McKay and Hugh J. Cannon, and they felt that their prayer was accepted by the Almighty. "His Spirit gave approving testimony and at the same time revealed for their comfort and blessing some things which should transpire in the future." 20

In 1949, three decades after President McKay's dedication of China for the gospel, Elder and Sister Matthew Cowley, with President and Sister Henry W. Aki, and President and Sister Hilton A. Robertson were sent to continue the missionary work in China. Due to the turmoil of China's Civil war, it was decided that Hong Kong would be the headquarters for the work of China's mission. On the 10th of July, 1949 the Southern Far East Mission which is the continuation of the Chinese Mission was commenced, and on the 14th day of the same month, the mission was officially opened. The first two missionaries, Elder H. Grant Heaton from Utah, and Elder William K. Paalani from Honolulu, arrived in the mission field on the 25th of February 1950. The mission was interrupted by the Korean War, but it reopened on August 23rd of 1955 and Elder H. Grant Heaton was chosen as Mission president to reopen and preside over the Southern Far

# 猶太人移民中國逾千年歷史

## 雷歐嘉寶研究

### 胡佛研究所重視珍藏

【本報記者雷歐嘉寶專訪】也許有一天，你忽然發現自己原來是猶太後裔，這機會雖然微乎其微，但不是完全沒有。  
猶太人在中國歷經千年來的同化，已失去外形及文化上的特徵，要不是民族學家苦力的追查，恐怕他們自己也不清楚來龍去脈，只是知道自已與其他中國人有所不同。

關於一賜姓... (一賜姓... 猶太民族也... 清真寺與回教寺同名... 乃猶太教而非回教... 遺蹟... 故能言之鑿鑿... 其始至... 尚沿猶太民族歷元之明... 乃改漢姓。

Nevertheless, regardless of the number of surnames of the Israelite immigrants, the existence of the Israelite communities in China's Kaifeng area was not an imaginary story, but a historical fact, and these people were scattered, mixed married, and eventually assimilated into the Chinese race are also undisputedly historical fact.



East Mission which oversaw Hong Kong, Macao, Vietnam, Thailand the Philippines and American Guam. Thirty years after the reinstatement of the Southern Far East Mission, presently, missionary work has been rapidly developed in the region of Southeast Asia; there are respective missions in Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia. After a study, the writer has found out that all these above mentioned events are closely related with each other and guided by the Almighty hands. Certainly, from this we can see that the Lord works in mysterious ways for His "... glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man".

In connection with the Southern Far East Mission and the various missions in the respective nations in Southeast Asia, one cannot help thinking of the diversity of the racial origin of the people of Southeast Asia and the permeation of the Chinese immigrants among them. The so-called "overseas Chinese", (a great portion of them), through inter-racial marriage have assimilated into the various indigenous people in Southeast Asia. Thus it becomes much easier for us to comprehend why the various missions in the nations of Southeast Asia are derived and developed from the Southern Far East Mission. By the same token, it becomes much easier for us to understand why the People's Republic of China cancelled all the cultural exchange programs with the U.S. excepting BYU and also the noticeable event of the Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang's visit of the Polynesian Cultural Center and the BYU-Hawaii Campus. The wholistic picture of these events has enlightened us to the missionary implication of the restored Church not only to China, but also to the entire Pacific and Asian rim. Indeed, the House of Israel was scattered together again before the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, which "God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began".(21) Regardless of these people's living in heathendom or believing in heathenism, through missionary efforts of the Restored Church, the Lord will bring them out of spiritual darkness to know God is and Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of all mankind, as the Lord revealed to the ancient prophet Isaiah that "I am sought of them that ask not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, 'Behold me, behold me,' unto a nation that was not called by my name, because of that they have the assimilated blood of my covenanted people of the Israelites." 22

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Lieh-tse jong-ni-pian and see Liu Yi-jeng's THE CULTURAL HISTORY OF CHINA Vol. 2, p. 10.

2. Exodus 12:1-2, BIBLE.

3. Exodus 12:7,13, BIBLE.

4. Richard Siegel, Michael Strassfeld and Sharon Strassfeld, eds., THE JEWISH CATALOG, Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973, p. 141.

5. Exodus 2:23, BIBLE.

6. Wolfram Eberhard, CHINESE FESTIVALS. New York: Henry Schuman, 1952, p. 39.

7. Celil Roth, ed., JUDAICA. (Jerusalem: Keiter Publishing House, 1971,) Vol. 13, under "Passover", pp. 163-172.

8. Exodus 12:26, BIBLE.

9. Ibid 12:27.

10. Liu, OP. CIT. Vol. 3, p. 12.

11. Wolfram Eberhard, CHINA'S MINORITIES: YESTERDAY AND TODAY, and see MING PO, August, 1983, p. 83.

12. World Journal, September 2, 1983.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Liu Yi-jeng, THE CULTURAL HISTORY OF CHINA, Vol. 3, p. 12.

17. World Journal, September 2, 1983.

18. Ibid.

19. President Spencer W. Kimball's address.

20. Ibid.

21. Acts 3:21, New Testament, BIBLE.