


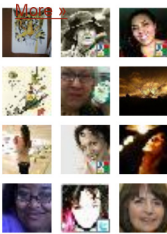
# A Radical Profeminist

This blog exists to challenge the oppressive forces of white, heterosexual, and male supremacy. I understand each to be institutionalized ideologies that are mutually reinforcing. They work together as braided practices which are misogynistic, heterosexist, racist, genocidal, and ecocidal.

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**CONTACT INFORMATION:** you can email me (Julian Real) at the following address: [aradicalprofeminist@gmail.com](mailto:aradicalprofeminist@gmail.com) **but only if** you're respectful, considerate, and not bigoted about women, people of color, non-heterosexual people, or any oppressed ethnic group.

**\*\*A. R. P. Glossary, Favorite Quotes, and Reading Recommendations\*\***  
:

**GLOSSARY:** see

TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2009

## Seinfeld: A Television Show About Something Really Dangerous



Seinfeld: A Television Show About Something Really Dangerous  
by Julian Real, December 18, 2006.

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*NOTE: I wish to thank Yolanda Carrington for her on-going friendship, and specifically here for her thorough research and elegant editorial work without which this piece would be a long, confusing mess. — Julian, 12/26/06*

I grew up a Jewish white guy in the United States of America. I remember, after enjoying The Cosby Show, Cheers, and Roseanne, also watching **Seinfeld** from time to time the first few years it was on. Once it became really popular, I started watching it more regularly. I saw many of the last few seasons' episodes through to the final show, which was watched by 76 million other U.S. viewers. I enjoyed aspects of it, and was also simultaneously irritated with it. There were some clever and hilarious plot lines, like the classic show about masturbation. And there was also the white self-absorption and anti-humanitarianism of the main characters, some of which manifested in the show's unrelenting racism. Unlike the other very popular "Must See TV" show of that era, **Friends**, which almost completely ignored the reality of race, Seinfeld had many minor roles played by people of color. But I always wondered as I saw POC-stereotype after stereotype on Jerry's show: "What decade is this: The 1950s?"

Given recent media events, it is becoming increasingly clear to me that no, it is not the 1950s all over again. This is the newest media manifestation of something that has been around for well over a dozen decades. I am

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**Ănarap** commented on **Few Concerns For Now On Sexual Politics: I was**  
*challenged for using 'intergender' too but by an intersex acquaintance, I haven't...*

**Julian Real**  
commented on **Can Enemies Become Allies Conversation: And Schmiggen, Some**  
*of your other comments violate the comment policy here. Please review that and...*

**Julian Real**  
commented on **Can Enemies Become Allies Conversation:**

**\*here\***. (The most used acronym on this blog is this: C.R.A.P. and it stands for *Corporate Racist Atrocious Patriarchy*.)

**FAVORITE QUOTES:**  
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thinking now of Mel Gibson's anti-Jewish film, [The Passion Of The Christ](#)[\[Subtitle: Pssst--The Jews Did It\]](#), his subsequent anti-Semitic remarks to a Jewish male cop, and his misogynistic remarks to a female cop. I am also thinking of Rosie O'Donnell's [most recent racist remarks](#) on The View, making fun of how people from China allegedly speak by employing an old anti-Asian slur. And, of course, [we have the footage](#) of Michael Richards' white male supremacist tirade against two African-American men:

Was I surprised by Richards' tirade? By Rosie's comments? By Mel's anti-Jewish film and his conduct when arrested? The honest answer is yes and no. I never cease to be stunned, infuriated, despairing, all at the same time, and left saying "Of course this is happening (again)."

White Male Supremacy, or WMS, is firmly in place, his-terical male supremacists' comments about "feminazis" notwithstanding. It has found different ways of expressing itself over decades, often with little imagination or innovation. Old-fashioned white lynching doesn't happen quite so much any more, but Michael Richards conjured up that period of horrific U.S. history in an effort to verbally threaten and oppressively silence two African-American men in 2006. His own closing words to the men: "That's what happens when you interrupt the white man."

This essay examines one tiny dangerous thread in this tapestry of human oppression: Seinfeld's show, Richard's tirade, and how both are products of the same system in which Jerry and Michael have been "politically active" for some time. [I had a link here, originally, noting other racist acts Jerry and Michael have created; that link has since been taken down by the user at YouTube.]

Jerry, like other Ashkenazic Jews in anti-Semitic AmeriKKKa, learned that making white(r) people laugh was a good way to earn a living. He also learned that selling out your Jewishness was a good way to gain status in a competitive white Gentile-dominated market. He let go of his Jewishness when he became a white supremacist, in my view, as have Israeli government officials who maintain a racist-imperialist campaign called "protecting nationhood" in West Asia.

To me, when being Jewish means systematically mocking or mass-murdering people of color, one has cut out of oneself the heart of what it means to be a Jew, which is to say, a humane being. Jews are among the many peoples in the world who have visceral access to a history that includes slavery, pogroms, and genocide. In this we (ought to) stand close by those of African descent, who are also a Diasporic People, and with Indigenous Peoples around the world, who fight genocidal campaigns, including in the United States of America and Canada, to this day. Jews, of whatever race, ought to stand with any oppressed group, opposing white male supremacy in any form. This casting off of regional culture and (non-white) ethnic history (read: obstacles to power and status) is not unique to Jews in the U.S. It is what is required of all people who desire to be white in America, regardless of racial or regional ancestry. Being white currently means having no visceral history while having a corporate-owned culture. Once we have "achieved" in this "American Way", we are instructed to fill our desperate and lonely lives with the struggle to climb the white male supremacist ladder, acquiring mostly unneeded crap as we ascend towards a higher form of hell. Those who achieve white status, if male, are well rewarded, and the rest of us are left yearning and hurting, dying or dead.

In this context, a simple show reportedly "about nothing" was born and after

*Schmiggen, When I asked you to quote Andrea Dworkin, you instead put forth inaccurate...*

Shmiggen Mghow commented on [Can Enemies Become Allies Conversation: What would you like an example of? Oh yes. I was referring to the hate and ignorance of mra's. ...](#)

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a shaky start, found an audience. "New York Jewishness" became synonymous, in this series, with being socially-politically-spiritually oblivious and deeply neurotic; this meant that anyone of any abandoned ethnicity could, inside a white supremacist system, potentially "relate." But it was predominantly white people who related to that particular program, in part because it was so routinely hostile to people of Color. You had to be a white supremacist to like and be part of Jerry's show, regardless of what your assigned race or actual heritage was.

In my memory, there are two racist caricatures from the show that I remember most clearly. One was **Phil Morris**, who was featured in seven episodes, cast as the African-American attorney Jackie Chiles, a racist parody of O.J. Simpson's trial lawyer, Johnnie Cochran. The other caricature is the infamous Soup Nazi, played by character actor **Larry Thomas** (originally Tomashoff). This sloppy use of the term "Nazi" by people who are part of dominant America speaks to an internalized anti-Semitism on the part of the show's Jewish writers and producers, and a larger, more dominant hysteria among white men about anyone else who might take some power away from us. Let's be clear: hatred of one's ethnicity of origin is usually required to become white, unless one's "ethnicity" was already white.

Larry Thomas was interviewed about his experience after appearing on Seinfeld. This snippet demonstrates the ethical oblivion, the racial confusion or unconsciousness common to those who strive to be white capitalists:

*INTERVIEWER:* Okay: Soup Nazi: Best thing ever, or bane of your existence?

*THOMAS:* A little of both. Playing the Soup Nazi brought me things I really love: Being well known, getting stopped for autographs and the biggest thrill was being caricatured in Mad Magazine. Oh, and an Emmy nomination - almost forgot that.

**But of course, I've been typecast as a character that speaks foreign dialects and some directors in Hollywood won't use me because that's politically incorrect.** But being associated with probably the greatest show of our generation, Seinfeld, is a really terrific thing for anyone.

Seinfeld was, in fact, considered "the best show in television history" by *TV Guide*, a magazine once owned and operated by a white Republican Jewish philanthropist named Walter Annenberg, son of the more ruthless publishing baron, Moses Annenberg. The magazine was sold in 1988, however, to Gentile white Aussie publishing tycoon, Rupert Murdoch, under whose reign the Seinfeld show was so mightily ranked.

**Danny Hoch**, a white Jewish hip-hop performance artist, **was interviewed about his decision** to not be on Seinfeld, when given the opportunity. This portion of the interview from the *Revolutionary Worker* fills out a portrait of Jerry as a white male supremacist. Danny expresses far more political insight on the matter of racism in America:

*RW:* There's this tightrope that artist walk to keep their principles and get their art out in the mass media to the people that they made it for. In your latest show you talk about being invited to be in a Seinfeld episode.

Television Show About Something Really...

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*HOCH:* To put the story in a nutshell, I had just gotten back from Cuba...and they asked me to be in this Seinfeld episode and I had to decide in an hour whether I was going to get on a plane the next morning. I read the script and my instinct said, I got a bad feeling about this.

When I got there Jerry Seinfeld wanted me to do this stereotypical funny Spanish-speaking pool caretaker who collects towels and is just like funny and psychotic, and that was the extent of the character...My instinct knew that that was going to happen but I didn't listen to it because I thought maybe I could just go out and fucking do Seinfeld, and more young people will come to my shows because I will be the guy that was on Seinfeld

So I had this argument with Jerry Seinfeld and the director. You know I wasn't condescending at all, I was very apologetic but I said, "Look, I can't do this," when they asked me to do it in a Spanish accent. They confronted me with something that I really wasn't expecting. It was very manipulative and it was very sort of pulling their power. And it was this question, "Aren't you an actor? Isn't that what you do? Don't you do accents, don't you play different characters?" And for a second they had me asking myself that question.

But then I was like, no, wait a second, I know where I come from, I know where I've been. And that's when I started looking down at my shoes. I was like, my shoes have been to Rikers, my shoes have been to Bronx Detention, my shoes have been to India and Cambodia, and my shoes have been all over Brooklyn.... If I participate in this I will be participating in something which is not only against my values, but against my people.

Of course, I didn't say that to him at the time. But I told him the reason why.... And they flew me back, first-class, and didn't pay me....

Jerry Seinfeld and his show demonstrated that WMS is normal in the U.S. It is so unremarkable that his show was seen as being "about nothing". What does it take for white America to register WMS as such? The answer is: a well-publicized outburst of the ugliness that is invisible as both systemic and ubiquitous.

What does white America want from those individuals who expose the ugliness of the system, by revealing it, unabashedly, in themselves? Often, just a simple apology, as if an individual's apology has much to do with the system as a whole. It is also helpful to have an excuse, such as having had too much to drink, in the Gibson case. But what excuse does Richards offer us?

Jerry happened to soon be on David Letterman's show and made space not to declare an end to his personal and professional relationship with his White Brother, but rather to **allow him that small requisite apology**.

Fellow stand-up comedian Sinbad, who was in the audience when Richards went on his racist rampage, was later **interviewed by CNN** about the "apology." Sinbad exposes what most of us already know—but he was honest and truthful enough to say it out loud, in clear language: we are a

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sexist and racist country. In other words, WMS is always here, occasionally erupting in ways that garner unusual attention.

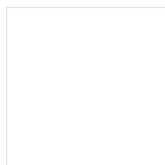
Not so coincidentally, the [Season 7 DVD series](#) of Seinfeld was advertised for sale to the viewing audience, the very season that contains some of the most racist material in the series' nine years on the air. It is clear that the connections between Jerry's own racism, the racist stereotypes in his shows, and racist vitriol that Richards can't seem to understand, are not being made in WMS corporate media discourse. For anyone who daily experiences racism, these allegedly separate phenomena are clearly "part of a whole." But for this whole to be seen as such by anyone white, we would have to come to terms with who we are, and the systems of domination and subordination that, together with our own actions, make us who we are. Sinbad sets an example of the kind of reckoning that is necessary for us to know ourselves at all.

Danny Hoch more thoroughly exposes Jerry and Michael's WMS off-stage, [in this monologue](#) from his 2002 film *Jails, Hospitals, and Hip-Hop*, where he tells the real history of the "Pool Guy" episode. For me it is refreshing to see two men, Sinbad and Danny, with fame—and ethics—on their minds, speak about the social pressure to be part of the WMS system of dehumanization and destruction. But what about the two men most directly targeted by Richards' remarks?

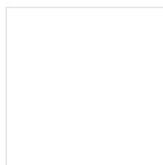
On this clip of the [Today Show](#), Frank McBride and Kyle Doss share their own experiences of what happened. Host Matt Lauer engages them and the feminist attorney Gloria Allred, in a discussion of possible remedies for Richards' public harassment. Note especially Kyle's apolitical critique of "free speech." If what has been termed by the courts to be "hate speech" is indeed free speech (and it is free for the powerful and costly to the oppressed), that means that those of us who are white male supremacists are free to say what we want, no matter who is harmed by such speech. White male pornographers use this entitlement to free speech as a weapon, a bludgeoning tool, of dehumanization and destruction against women of all ethnicities and men of color. Hate speech is clearly one weapon, among many, in our corporate racist patriarchy.

Let's hope more women and men speak out about the willfully inhumane nation called the United States of America, which sells racist and sexist violence to its own citizens while also marketing that violence around the world, through military, religious, economic, and cultural propaganda.

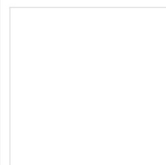
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Posted by [Julian Real](#) at 4:14 PM



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## 4 comments:

**yrl said...**

Thanks for the post.

Small critique: you call Jerry Seinfeld "ashkenazic" but he's actually mixed ashkenazi/sephardi. Also many Jews ARE of african descent, and/or indigenous. Qualifying that, I do think most of what you say about whiteness holds true, though.

*Jews, of whatever race, ought to stand with any oppressed group, opposing white male supremacy in any form.*

yes.

Wednesday, March 11, 2009 1:50:00 AM EDT

**Julian Real said...**

Hi yrl.

I apologise to the readers, and to Jerry, for that lack of awareness.

Thank you very much for clarifying his ethnic heritage: you're the first person to bring that to my attention! (Not that I couldn't have found this out on my own!)

I've been thinking more about this matter of Jewishness in the U.S., of Jews and whiteness, of non-white Jews being invisibilised in Ashkenazic Jewish-white environments and in Christian communities, and have posted about it not too long ago.

Your comment helps remind me to link to that post from the one about Seinfeld, which I'll do [here](#).

Shalom.

Thursday, March 12, 2009 1:17:00 PM EDT

**DVY said...**

Julian,

Related to the issue of "Jewishness in the U.S., of Jews and whiteness, of non-white Jews being invisibilised in Ashkenazic Jewish-white environments and in Christian communities" ...

would you agree that there is pressure by white Christians on white Jews to "invisiblise" Jews of color as wells as to invisiblize white Jews own Jewishness?

This continent was colonized and eventually became the "U.S." via White Christian terrorism. Making this statement does not preclude that other forms of terrorism exist. It simply acknowledges a form of terrorism on this continent that is not typically acknowledged.

American Indians did not cross the Atlantic and colonize Europe, spreading small pox deliberately and decimating the food supply of the people resulting in the death of millions, forcibly removing European children from their family's "savage influence" and enrolling them into residential schools wherein the children were forbidden from speaking their own indigenous European languages and face torture for doing so while imposing the language, culture and life ways of American Indians upon them. If this were the case, I would not hesitate in calling that process American Indian terrorism in Europe. (See The Circle Game:

[gay experience](#) (42)

[Gay Politics](#) (46)

[genderism](#) (81)

[genocide](#) (271)

[glossary](#) (1)

[gratitude](#) (1)

[gynocide](#) (238)

[H.Tubman](#) (2)

[happy birthday](#) (18)

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**I'm Unschooled. Yes, I Can Write.**

2 months ago

Shadows and Substance in the Residential School Experience in Canada for an example of the reality of Christian Terrorism North of the United States.)

Acknowledging the existence of Jews of color also has an impact on the consciousness of white activists against white supremacy on this continent who do not acknowledge the role that white Christian terrorism played and still plays on this continent. (See for instance the urging to burn/revoke Papal Bulls: <http://intercontinentalcry.org/tag/papal-bull/> )

Similar to the process of people of color internalizing white supremacy, non-Christians--e.g., Jews--living in a culture created by white male christian supremacy internalize christian supremacy with the result being seen for example in anti-semitic jokes told by Jews themselves in order to gain acceptance by white Christian peers who don't want to acknowlege their role in sustaining terrorism on this continent. (The consumption of white supremacist and anti-Semitic porn being an example).

People of color have told white activists for years that it seems that it is so much easier for white activists--for us--to see issues across the globe and cry out against them than it is to look at issues under our very feet--the land we "own"/live on--or across the street or across town or downtown.

Acknowledging the existence of Jews of color would bring up the point that Jews are indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa and the struggles in The Middle East are struggles between and among indigenous peoples experiencing, often, similar pressures--pressures of both White and Christian supremacy. There is plenty of Male Supremacy already in the Middle East including in movements supported by white activists against the supposed "colonization" by Jews in the Middle East. Certainly, Jews of color could not be accused of colonizing the Middle East. I think that the guilt of white Christian activists in North America is projected onto Jews in the Middle East and in this process of projection, white Christians erase and pressure light skinned Jews to erase the existence of Jews who are darker skinned. Jews of darker skin--including Mizrahi, Sephardic (Seinfeld is, as was already noted, mixed Ashkenazi and Sephardi)and Ethiopian Jews have voiced opposition to Ashkenazi Jews acting as though if someone isn't Ashkenazi, s/he isn't an authentic Jew. (For example, of Ethiopian/Black Jews, see <http://thecommandmentkeepers.net/crew.htm> )

Thursday, March 12, 2009 3:20:00 PM EDT

**Julian Real said...**

Hello and welcome, DVY!

YES! From the change in our last names, whether upon arrival here, or done by ourselves to not be so noticeable, to celebrating *Amerikkkan holidays* like Thanksgiving and Christmas, to the shameless support of white male supremacist actions globally, we Jews are made to invisibilise ourselves here, to blend in with the ones that *didn't* kill Christ. (That's being written with the greatest amount of sarcasm possible.)

I sometimes call it "white heterosexual male Christian supremacy" but I like your phrasing very much, as long as gender and sexuality oppression, among others, don't get left out of the meaning of "White Christian Terrorism".

In subtle and overt ways the white nuclear family, heterosexism, colonialism, Western cultural imperialism, rape, slavery, marriage-

(11)

**J. Baldwin** (1)

**James Baldwin** (2)

**Jessice Yee** (1)

**Jewishness** (46)

**Julian Real's Profile** (1)

**Kimberlé Crenshaw** (1)

**Latina/o experience** (10)

**Latina/o liberación** (26)

**lesbian existence** (90)

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**lesbophobia/transphobia/homophobia** (19)

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**LGBT politics and existence** (4)

**LGBTIA politics** (19)

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**logical phallusy** (37)

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**M. Daly** (1)

**Malalai Joya** (15)

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**male supremacy** (18)

**male supremacy/misogyny** (48)

**male supremacy/misogyny /sexism** (490)

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**media** (393)

**men's war against women** (15)

**Men's Wrongs** (311)

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**misogyny** (37)

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radical feminist**  
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Intelligence  
Review**  
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Reyna**  
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the eco-radical  
feminist blog of  
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I want change**  
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**(La Chola) La  
Alma de Fuego:  
brownfemipower'  
s blog before flip  
flopping joy**  
4 years ago

**La Mestiza  
Colectiva  
Feminista de**

as-an-institution, white supremacy, globalisation, genocide, ecocide, and various other misopedic and misogynist atrocities are all part of each other, indivisible, under a Christian white heterosexual male supremacist sky-god, who presides over the Earth and preaches the holiness of men's matrimony with women while also proclaiming women to be worthy of contempt, degradation, and subordination by those very same men, and any other men that care to jump in. (Such an odd and inhumane fellow, that Christian white sky-god who has no Earthly dirt under his pristinely manicured fingernails.)

I use the letters ECD after the Christian calendar years listed here, meaning the "Era of Christian Domination".

Have you read *Yurugu: An African-Centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior* by Marimba Ani, the work of Andrea Smith, especially *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*, as well as *Scapegoat: The Jews, Israel, and Women's Liberation*? If so, let's "discuss". If you haven't as yet, you'll find yourself nodding a lot and hopefully gaining new insights.

Thanks for the reading recommendations and links. I was familiar with one of them but not the others, and I appreciate you bringing them to my attention.

You wrote:  
*People of color have told white activists for years that it seems that it is so much easier for white activists--for us--to see issues across the globe and cry out against them than it is to look at issues under our very feet--the land we "own"/live on--or across the street or across town or downtown.*

Indeed! U.S. and other Western white activists make it a perennial practice to speak out against atrocities beyond our shores murderously pretending those human rights crimes are completely unrelated to what we white Western men do, globally. Making it a routine practice to focus one's political agenda on those evil, bad, dangerous dark-skinned men (or women, or children, or African bees from Mexico, or a deadly virus from East Asia on its way over here, bee-lining it to North America, as we speak) over there on some other continent, is a most convenient way to ignore white Westerners' complicity with the on-going genocide on *this* land, currently. These same activists--and also the population of *passivists*--seem to not to want to deal substantively, through organised unrelenting militant activism, with what being Western and white means and does. To focus away from *that* inconvenient truth makes "us" seem to be much more morally pure and allows us white men to sound off with grandiose self-unawareness.

**It is so blasted racist/white supremacist/Western imperialistic** for U.S. whites--men and women--to criticise *those* people of color *over there* for how **THEY** treat other men, women, the Earth, children, animals, etc. (But let's not talk about where the guns and other mean and methods of mass destruction come from that flow into areas, here and abroad, that are continually destabilised by us. (What?! Munitions used in "the Mexican drug wars" are supplied by white folks in the U.S., and mostly come down through California??? Scalping came from British and Dutch conquerors??? La, la, la; I don't want to know.)

Knowing all that would make us, well, culpable, with both old and fresh blood dripping from our outwardly and accusingly pointed fingers. Having that awareness might take some of the dignity out of our self-righteousness, willfully ignorant indignation. (A golden rule for oppressors: always better to keep away from the mirrors, unless all one sees there is one's own cloistered version of oneself.)

Do you have a blog? I'll link to it if you do. I am in complete agreement with you, down to the dotted i's and crossed t's, especially the "big

**P.H. Collins** (5)

**Palestinian Liberation**  
(3)

**Palestinian Liberation  
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2 hours ago

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blog**  
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**Not For Sale**

crossed T" that an Indigenous Jewish man named Jesus allegedly didn't quite die on.

You'll find plenty of support for your points elsewhere here on this blog, in other posts including [this one](#).

I am filled with gratitude to know there are others out there who experience and interpret the world similarly. This is all to say:

Thanks so much for showing up. And don't be a stranger!!

What can I get you to drink?

Friday, March 13, 2009 12:13:00 PM EDT

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# Indigenous

## 4 Wikipedia Articles

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# Ethnic religion

**Ethnic religion** may include officially sanctioned and organized civil religions with an organized clergy, but they are characterized in that adherents generally are defined by their ethnicity, and conversion essentially equates to cultural assimilation to the people in question. Contrasted to this are imperial cults that are defined by political influence detached from ethnicity. A partly overlapping concept is that of folk religion referring to ethnic or regional religious customs under the umbrella of an institutionalized religion (e.g. folk Christianity). Adherents of an ethnic religion may constitute an ethnoreligious group.

In antiquity, religion was one defining factor of ethnicity, along with language, regional customs, national costume, etc. With the rise of Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, ethnic religions came to be marginalized as "leftover" traditions in rural areas, referred to as paganism or shirk (idolatry). The notion of *gentiles* ("nations") in Judaism reflect this state of affairs, the implicit assumption that each nation will have its own religion. Historical examples include Germanic polytheism, Celtic polytheism, Slavic polytheism and pre-Hellenistic Greek religion.

Adherents.com cites Barrett's 2001 world religion calculations for a demographic estimate, ranging at 457 million "tribal religionists," "ethnic religionists," or "animists," including African Traditional religionists, but not including Chinese folk religion or Shintoism.

Over time, even revealed religion will assume local traits and in a sense will revert to an ethnic religion. This has notably happened in the course of the History of Christianity, which saw the emergence of national churches with "ethnic flavours" such as Germanic, Ethiopian, Armenian, Syrian, Greek, Russian and others.

The term *ethnic religion* is therefore also applied to a religion in a particular place, even if it is a regional expression of a larger world religion. For example, Hinduism in the Caribbean has been considered an ethnic religion by some scholars, because Hindus in Trinidad, Guyana, and Suriname consider themselves a distinct ethnic group.<sup>[1]</sup> Korean Christian churches in the United States have been described as an ethnic religion, because they are closely associated with the ethnic identity of immigrant Korean Americans.<sup>[2]</sup>

Some scholars classify entire religions as either *universal religions* that seek worldwide acceptance and actively look for new converts, or *ethnic religions* that are identified with a particular ethnic group and do not seek converts.<sup>[3]</sup>

Judaism is considered an ethnic religion by some authors (defining of the Jewish people, but not by others. Hinduism as a whole is mostly classed as one of the world religions, but some currents of Hindu nationalism take it as definitive of an Indian or Hindu ethnicity or nation. Within Hinduism, there are regional or tribal currents with ethnic traits, sometimes termed Folk Hinduism.

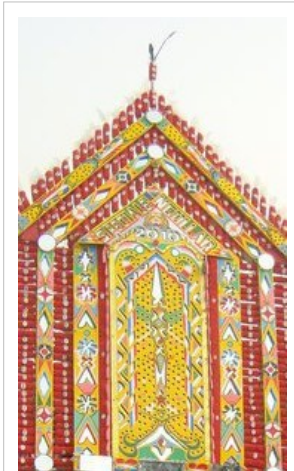


Altar to Inari Ōkami at the Fushimi Inari Shrine in Kyoto. Shinto is the ethnic religion of the Japanese people.

## Indigenous traditional ethnic religions

### African traditional religions

- North Africa
  - Traditional Berber religion
- Sub-Saharan Africa
  - Central and Southern Africa
    - Bantu mythology
  - West Africa
    - Odinani (Igbo)
    - Vodun and Yoruba religion (Western Africans)
    - Serer religion (West Africa)
- partially derived Afro-American religion
  - Candomblé, Umbanda and Quimbanda (Brazilians)
  - Kumina and Rastafarianism (Jamaicans)
  - Marialionzanism (Venezuelans)
  - Santería, Regla de Arará, Regla de Palo (Cubans)
  - Haitian Vodou (Haitians)
  - Louisianan Voodoo (Louisianan African Americans)
  - Winti (Surinamese)



The symbol of the Ndut initiation rite in Serer religion.

### East and Central Asia

(c.f. East Asian religions)

- Chinese Ethnic Religion or *Shenism*, and Taoism (Hans)
- Dongbaism (Nakhi)
- Muism or *Sinism* (Koreans)
- Shinto (Japanese)
- Ryukyuan Shinto and Ijun (Ryukyuans)
- Bön (Tibetans)
- Tengriism (Turko-Mongols), historical



Indian devotees of Shiva in pilgrimage.

### Near East

- Druze (Levantine Arabs)
- Judaism (Jews), historically originates in the Levant
- Mandaism
- Samaritanism
- Yazdânism (Kurds)
- Zoroastrianism (Persians, Parsi, and other Iranians)



A typical Chinese local-deity temple in Taiwan.

### South Asia

- Sikhism and Ravidassia (Punjabi)
- Hinduism and Jainism (Indians, Indian diaspora), Folk Hinduism:
- Kirant Mundhum (Kirats)
- Tribal religions in India
  - Donyipoloism (Arunachali)
  - Santhal religion
  - Sanamahism (Meitei)

#### Northern Asia and Arctic

- Siberian Shamanism
- Sami shamanism / Noaidi
- Eskimo shamanism / Inuit mythology

#### American ethnic religions

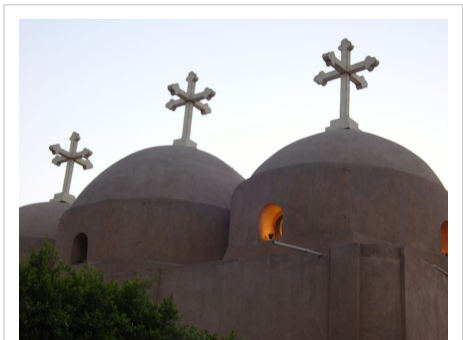
- Northern American religions and Peyotism
- Anishinaabe traditional beliefs
- Ancient Mexicah Religion, Santa Muerte Worship
- Maya religion (ethnic Maya; Guatemalans)

#### Europe

- historical polytheism (Greek, Roman, Celtic, Germanic, Slavic etc.)
- contemporary folk religion (Folk Catholicism); Neo-pagan revivalism

### **Ethnic Christian churches**

- Armenian Apostolic Church
- Assyrian Christianity
- Bulgarian Orthodox Church
- Church of Denmark
- Church of England
- Church of the Faroe Islands
- Church of Iceland
- Church of Norway
- Church of Scotland
- Church of Sweden
- Coptic Church
- Ethiopic Church
- Eritrean Orthodox Church
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
- Georgian Orthodox and Apostolic Church
- Greek Orthodox Church
- Macedonian Orthodox Church
- Russian Orthodox Church
- Romanian Orthodox Church
- Serbian Orthodox Church



A Coptic church in Cairo, Egypt.



## Reconstructionist Neopagan revivals

### Heathenism (Germanic)

Heathenism (also Heathenry), or Greater Heathenry, is a blanket term for the whole Germanic Neopagan movement. Various currents and denominations have arisen over the years within it.

Forn Siðr, Ásatrú or Vanatrú (Norse Paganism)

- Íslenska Ásatrúarfélagið (1972)
- The Troth (1987)
- Asatru Folk Assembly (1996)
- Swedish Asatru Assembly (1994)
- Åsatrufellesskapet Bifrost (1996)
- Folktrú (folklorist Scandinavian Forn Siðr)
  - Foreningen Forn Sed (1999)
  - Samfälligheten för Nordisk Sed (1999)

Odinism or Wotanism (ethnically exclusivist movements)

- Odinic Rite (1973)
- Odinist Fellowship (1996)

Theodism (American tribalist movements)

Armanism or Irminism (or *Irminenschaft*) (German Paganism and Ariosophical movements)

- Heidnische Gemeinschaft (1985)
- Artgemeinschaft (1951)

Deutsche Heidnische Front (1998)

- New Armanen-Orden

Urglaawe (Pennsylvanian Deutsch Paganism)

### Celtism (Celtic)

Celtic Reconstructionism (1980s)

Neo-druidism (Druidism, Druidry or Neodruidry)

- Reformed Druids of North America (1963)
- Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids (1964)
- Ár nDraíocht Féin (1983)



Heathen altar for Haustblot in Björkö, Westgothland, Sweden. The big wooden idol represents god Frey (Ing), the picture in front of it goddess Freya (Walpurgis), and the small red idol god Thor.

## Other European

### Hellenic Polytheistic Reconstructionism (Hellenism)

- Supreme Council of Ethnikoi Hellenes
- Hellenion

### Roman Way to the Gods or *Religio Romana*

- Nova Roma

### Armenian polytheism (*Hetanism*)

### Slavic polytheism (*Rodnover*)

- RUNVira, Sylenkoism
- Native Polish Church
- Native Faith Association of Ukraine

### Baltic polytheism

- Lithuanian *Romuva*
- Latvian *Dievturība*

### Finnish Neopaganism (*Suomenism*)

### Estonian polytheism

- *Taaraism* and *Maausk*
- *Maavalla Koda*

### Church of the Guanche People (Canary Islands)

## Ancient Near East

### Semitic Neopaganism

### Kemetism (*Egyptian Neopaganism*)

- Ausar Auset, "Black" Kemetism or *Neterianism*
- Kemetic Orthodoxy, "White" Kemetism
- Church of the Eternal Source
- Ta Noutri

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A Romuvan ritual in Lithuania.

# Indigenous peoples

**Indigenous peoples** primarily refers to ethnic groups that have historical ties to groups that existed in a territory prior to colonization or formation of a nation state, and which normally preserve a degree of cultural and political separation from the mainstream culture and political system of the nation state within the border of which the indigenous group is located.<sup>[1]</sup> The political sense of the term defines these groups as particularly vulnerable to exploitation and oppression by nation states. As a result, a special set of political rights in accordance with international law have been set forth by international organizations such as the United Nations, the International Labour Organization and the World Bank.<sup>[2]</sup> The United Nations have issued a Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to protect the collective rights of indigenous peoples to their culture, identity, language, employment, health, education and natural resources. Depending on which precise definition of "indigenous people" used, and on the census, estimates of a world total population of Indigenous people range from 220 million Indigenous peoples in 1997<sup>[3]</sup> to 350 million in 2004.<sup>[1]</sup>



Raoni Metuktire, Kaye, Kadjor and Panara, leaders of the Indigenous Kayapo tribe, Mato Grosso, Brazil



Sven-Roald Nystø, Aili Keskitalo and Ole Henrik Magga, the three first presidents of the Norwegian Sami Parliament



The New Zealand delegation endorses the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in April 2010.



Baka dancers in the East Province of Cameroon



Inuit people on a traditional *qamutik* (dog sled),  
Cape Dorset, Canada

## Definitions

The adjective *indigenous* is derived from the Latin etymology meaning "native" or "born within" formed from *indigena*, literally "born within (the tribe)".<sup>[6]</sup> Therefore, according to its meaning in common usage in English, any given people, ethnic group or community may be described as being *indigenous* in reference to some particular region or location to which they trace their traditional tribal land claim. However during the late twentieth century the term *Indigenous peoples* evolved into a legal category that refers to culturally distinct groups that had been affected by the processes of colonization. These are usually collectives that have preserved some degree of cultural and political separation from the mainstream culture and political system that has grown to surround or dominate them economically, politically, culturally, or geographically.



Ati woman, the Philippines, 2007<sup>[4]</sup> The  
Negritos were the earliest inhabitants of  
Southeast Asia.<sup>[5]</sup>

The status of the indigenous group in this relationship can be characterized in most instances as an effectively marginalized, isolated or minoritised one, in comparison to other groups or the nation-state as a whole. Their ability to influence and participate in the external policies that may exercise jurisdiction over their traditional lands and practices is very frequently limited. This situation can persist even in the case where the indigenous population outnumbers that of the other inhabitants of the region or state; the defining notion here is one of separation from

decision and regulatory processes that have some, at least titular, influence over aspects of their community and land rights.

The presence of external laws, claims and cultural mores either potentially or actually act to variously constrain the practices and observances of an indigenous society. These constraints can be observed even when the indigenous society is regulated largely by its own tradition and custom. They may be purposefully imposed, or arise as unintended consequence of trans-cultural interaction; and have a measurable effect even where countered by other external influences and actions deemed to be beneficial or which serve to promote indigenous rights and interests within the wider community.

A definition of "indigenous people" has criteria which includes cultural groups (and their continuity or association with a given region, or parts of a region, and who formerly or currently inhabit the region) either:

- before or its subsequent colonization or annexation, or
- alongside other cultural groups during the formation or reign of a colony or nation-state, or
- independently or largely isolated from the influence of the claimed governance by a nation-state,

and who:

- have maintained at least in part their distinct cultural, social/organizational, or linguistic characteristics, and in doing so remain differentiated in some degree from the surrounding populations and dominant culture of the nation-state, and
- are self-identified as indigenous, or those recognized as such by other groups.

Another defining characteristic for an indigenous group is that it has preserved traditional ways of living, such as present or historical reliance upon subsistence-based production (based on pastoral, horticultural and/or hunting and gathering techniques), and a predominantly non-urbanized society. Not all indigenous groups share these characteristics. Indigenous societies may be either settled in a given locale/region or exhibit a nomadic lifestyle across a large territory, but are generally historically associated with a specific territory on which they are dependent. Indigenous societies are found in every inhabited climate zone and continent of the world.<sup>[2][7]</sup>

There are various formulations of these defining characteristics in existence. Most are commonly drawn from a few widely-acknowledged authorities, in particular the Martínez Cobo – WGIP statement. These several definitions are recognised and employed by international and rights-based non-governmental organizations, as well as among national/sub-national governments themselves. The degree to which indigenous peoples' rights and issues are accepted and recognised in practical instruments such as treaties and other binding and non-binding agreements varies, sometimes considerably.

Many organizations advocating for indigenous rights, and the indigenous communities themselves, seek to particularly and explicitly identify peoples in this position as indigenous. This identification may also be made or acknowledged by the surrounding communities and nation-state, although there are some instances where the identity claim is the subject of some dispute, particularly with regard to recognizing assertions made over territorial rights. Even if all the above criteria are fulfilled, some people may either not consider themselves as indigenous or may not be considered as indigenous by governments, organizations or scholars.



## United Nations

In 1972 the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) accepted as a preliminary definition a formulation put forward by Mr. José Martínez Cobo, Special Rapporteur on Discrimination against Indigenous Populations:

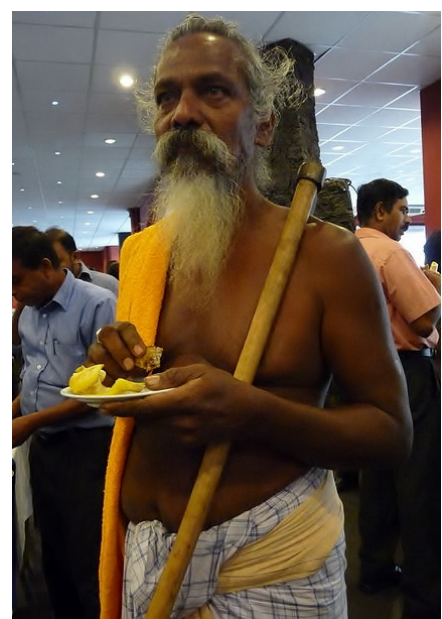
*Indigenous populations are composed of the existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them, by conquest, settlement or other means, reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial condition; who today live more in conformity with their particular social, economic and cultural customs and traditions than with the institutions of the country of which they now form part, under a state structure which incorporates mainly national, social and cultural characteristics of other segments of the population which are predominant.*

This definition has some limitations which were subsequently noted by the organization. The definition applies mainly to pre-colonial populations, and would likely exclude other isolated or marginal societies. In 1983 the WGIP enlarged this definition (FICN. 41Sub.211983121 Adds. para. 3 79) to include the following criteria:

- (a) *they are the descendants of groups, which were in the territory at the time when other groups of different cultures or ethnic origin arrived there;*
- (b) *precisely because of their isolation from other segments of the country's population they have almost preserved intact the customs and traditions of their ancestors which are similar to those characterised as indigenous;*
- (c) *they are, even if only formally, placed under a state structure which incorporates national, social and cultural characteristics alien to their own.*

In 1986 it was further added that any individual who identified himself or herself as indigenous and was accepted by the group or the community as one of its members was to be regarded as an indigenous person (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1986/7/Add.4. para.381).

The draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples prepared by the DWIG does not provide a specific definition of indigenous peoples or populations. According to the Chairperson, Ms. Erica Irene Daes, Rapporteur of the Working Group, this was because "historically, indigenous peoples have suffered, from definitions imposed by others" (E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/1995/3, page 3).



Veddha chief Uruwarige Wannila Aththo, leader of the indigenous people Sri Lanka



Orang Asli near Cameron Highlands, Malaysia playing a nose flute

## International Labour Organisation

A definition as used by the International Labour Organisation (Convention No. 169, concerning the working rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, 1989) applies to:

*both tribal peoples whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations, and to peoples who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabit the country at the time of conquest or colonisation.*

## World Bank

A description of Indigenous Peoples given by the World Bank (operational directive 4.20, 1991) reads as follows:

*Indigenous Peoples can be identified in particular geographical areas by the presence in varying degrees of the following characteristics:*

- a) close attachment to ancestral territories and to the natural resources in these areas;
- b) self-identification and identification by others as members of a distinct cultural group;
- c) an indigenous language, often different from the national language;
- d) presence of customary social and political institutions;
- and e) primarily subsistence-oriented production.

The World Bank's policy for indigenous people states:

Because of the varied and changing contexts in which Indigenous Peoples live and because there is no universally accepted definition of "Indigenous Peoples," this policy does not define the term. Indigenous Peoples may be referred to in different countries by such terms as "indigenous ethnic minorities", "aboriginals", "hill tribes", "minority nationalities", "scheduled tribes", or "tribal groups."<sup>[8]</sup>

## Philippine definition

**Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines** (Tagalog: *Katutubong Tao sa Pilipinas*; Cebuano: *Lumad* or *Tumandok*; Ilocano: *Umili a Tattao iti Filipinas*) refers to a group of people or homogenous societies, identified by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as an organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and used such territories, sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, or who have, through inroads of colonization, non-indigenous religions, and cultures, become historically differentiated from the majority of the Filipinos.<sup>[9]</sup>

The indigenous peoples also include peoples who are regarded as indigenous based on their descent from the populations which inhabited the country at the time of inroads of non-indigenous religions and cultures or the establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled outside their ancestral domains.

## Individual states

Different states designate the groups within their boundaries that are recognized as indigenous peoples according to international legislation by different terms. These include, for example "Native Americans" and "Pacific Islander" in the United States; "Aboriginals (Inuit", "Métis" and "First Nations)" in Canada;<sup>[10]</sup> Aborigines in Australia; Hill tribes in Southeast Asia; indigenous ethnic minorities, scheduled tribes or Adivasi in India; tribal groups, or autochthonous groups.<sup>[8]</sup>

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## Population and distribution

Indigenous societies range from those who have been significantly exposed to the colonizing or expansionary activities of other societies (such as the Maya peoples of Mexico and Central America) through to those who as yet remain in comparative isolation from any external influence (such as the Sentinelese and Jarawa of the Andaman Islands).

Precise estimates for the total population of the world's Indigenous peoples are very difficult to compile, given the difficulties in identification and the variances and inadequacies of available census data. Recent source estimates range from 300 million<sup>[11]</sup> to 350 million<sup>[12]</sup> as of the start of the 21st century. This would equate to just fewer than 6% of the total world population. This includes at least 5000 distinct peoples<sup>[12]</sup> in over 72 countries.

Contemporary distinct indigenous groups survive in populations ranging from only a few dozen to hundreds of thousands and more. Many indigenous populations have undergone a dramatic decline and even extinction, and remain threatened in many parts of the world. Some have also been assimilated by other populations or have undergone many other changes. In other cases, indigenous populations are undergoing a recovery or expansion in numbers.

Certain indigenous societies survive even though they may no longer inhabit their "traditional" lands, owing to migration, relocation, forced resettlement or having been supplanted by other cultural groups. In many other respects, the transformation of culture of indigenous groups is ongoing, and includes permanent loss of language, loss of lands, encroachment on traditional territories, and disruption in traditional lifeways due to contamination and pollution of waters and lands.

## Historical cultures

The migration, expansion and settlement of societies throughout different territories is a universal, almost defining thread which runs through the entire course of human history. Many of the cross-cultural interactions which arose as a result of these historical encounters involved societies which might properly be considered as indigenous, either from their own viewpoint or that of external societies.



An Adivasi woman from the Kutia Kondh tribal group in Orissa, India

Most often, these past encounters between indigenous and "non-indigenous" groups lack contemporary account or description. Any assessment or understanding of impact, result and relation can at best only be surmised, using archaeological, linguistic or other reconstructive means. Where accounts do exist, they frequently originate from the viewpoint of the colonizing, expansionary or nascent state or from rather scarce and fragmented ethnographic sources compiled by those more congenial with indigenous communities and/or representatives thereof.



Alonso Fernández de Lugo presenting the captured Guanche kings of Tenerife to Ferdinand and Isabella

## Classical antiquity

Greek sources of the Classical period acknowledge the prior existence of indigenous people(s), whom they referred to as "Pelasgians". These peoples inhabited lands surrounding the Aegean Sea before the subsequent migrations of the Hellenic ancestors claimed by these authors. The disposition and precise identity of this former group is elusive, and sources such as Homer, Hesiod and Herodotus give varying, partially mythological accounts. However, it is clear that cultures existed whose indigenous characteristics were distinguished by the subsequent Hellenic cultures (and distinct from non-Greek speaking "foreigners", termed "barbarians" by the historical Greeks). Greco-Roman society flourished between 250 BC and 480 AD and commanded successive waves of conquests that gripped more than half of the globe. But because already existent populations within other parts of Europe at the time of classical antiquity had more in common culturally speaking with the Greco-Roman world, the intricacies involved in expansion across the European frontier were not so contentious relative to indigenous issues. But when it came to expansion in other parts of the world, namely Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, then totally new cultural dynamics had entered into the equation, so to speak, and one sees here of what was to take the Americas, South East Asia, and the Pacific by storm a few hundred years later. The idea that peoples who possessed cultural customs and racial appearances strikingly different to that of the colonizing power is no new idea borne out of the Medieval period or the Enlightenment.

## European expansion and colonialism

The rapid and extensive spread of the various European powers from the early 15th century onwards had a profound impact upon many of the indigenous cultures with whom they came into contact. The exploratory and colonial ventures in the Americas, Africa, Asia and the Pacific often resulted in territorial and cultural conflict, and the intentional or unintentional displacement and devastation of the indigenous populations.

The Canary Islands had an indigenous population called the Guanches whose origin is still the subject of discussion among historians and linguists.<sup>[13]</sup>

## Indigenous peoples by region

Indigenous populations are distributed in regions throughout the globe. The numbers, condition and experience of indigenous groups may vary widely within a given region. A comprehensive survey is further complicated by sometimes contentious membership and identification.

### Africa

In the post-colonial period, the concept of specific indigenous peoples within the African continent has gained wider acceptance, although not without controversy. The highly diverse and numerous ethnic groups which comprise most modern, independent African states contain within them various peoples whose situation, cultures and pastoralist or hunter-gatherer lifestyles are generally marginalized and set apart from the dominant political and economic structures of the nation. Since the late 20th century these peoples have increasingly sought recognition of their rights as distinct indigenous peoples, in both national and international contexts.



Tuareg nomads in southern Algeria





A San man from Namibia

Although the vast majority of African peoples can be considered to be indigenous in the sense that they have originated from that continent and middle and south east Asia, in practice identity as an "indigenous people" as per the term's modern application is more restrictive, and certainly not every African ethnic group claims identification under these terms. Groups and communities who do claim this recognition are those who by a variety of historical and environmental circumstances have been placed outside of the dominant state systems, and whose traditional practices and land claims often come into conflict with the objectives and policies promulgated by governments, companies and surrounding dominant societies. Given the extensive and complicated history of human migration within Africa, being the "first peoples in a land" is not a necessary precondition for acceptance as an indigenous people. Rather, indigenous identity relates more to a set of characteristics and practices than priority of arrival. For example, several populations of nomadic peoples such as the Tuareg of the Sahara and Sahel regions now inhabit areas in which they arrived comparatively recently; their claim to indigenous status (endorsed by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights) is based on their marginalization as nomadic peoples in states and territories dominated by sedentary agricultural peoples. The Indigenous Peoples of Africa Co-ordinating Committee (IPACC) is one of the main trans-national network organizations recognized as a representative of African indigenous peoples in dialogues with governments and bodies such as the UN. IPACC identifies several key characteristics associated with indigenous claims in Africa:



Batwa Pygmy with traditional bow and arrow

- *political and economic marginalization rooted in colonialism;*
- *de facto discrimination based often on the dominance of agricultural peoples in the State system (e.g. lack of access to education and health care by hunters and herders);*
- *the particularities of culture, identity, economy and territoriality that link hunting and herding peoples to their home environments in deserts and forests (e.g. nomadism, diet, knowledge systems);*
- *some indigenous peoples, such as the San and Pygmy peoples are physically distinct, which makes them subject to specific forms of discrimination.*



With respect to concerns expressed that identifying some groups and not others as indigenous is in itself discriminatory, IPACC states that it:

- *"...recognises that all Africans should enjoy equal rights and respect. All of Africa's diversity is to be valued. Particular communities, due to historical and environmental circumstances, have found themselves outside the state-system and underrepresented in governance...This is not to deny other Africans their status; it is to emphasise that affirmative recognition is necessary for hunter-gatherers and herding peoples to ensure their survival."*

At an African inter-governmental level, the examination of indigenous rights and concerns is pursued by a sub-commission established under the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), sponsored by the African Union (AU) (successor body to the Organization of African Unity (OAU)). In late 2003 the 53 signatory states of the ACHPR adopted the *Report of the African Commission's Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities* and its recommendations. This report says in part (p. 62):

- *...certain marginalized groups are discriminated in particular ways because of their particular culture, mode of production and marginalized position within the state[; a] form of discrimination that other groups within the state do not suffer from. The call of these marginalized groups to protection of their rights is a legitimate call to alleviate this particular form of discrimination.*

The adoption of this report at least notionally subscribed the signatories to the concepts and aims of furthering the identity and rights of African Indigenous peoples. The extent to which individual states are mobilizing to put these recommendations into practice varies enormously, however, and most Indigenous groups continue to agitate for improvements in the areas of land rights, use of natural resources, protection of environment and culture, political recognition and freedom from discrimination.



Peruvian Quechua people reading

## Americas

Indigenous peoples of the American continents are broadly recognized as being those groups and their descendants who inhabited the region before the arrival of European colonizers and settlers (i.e., Pre-Columbian). Indigenous peoples who maintain, or seek to maintain, traditional ways of life are found from the high Arctic north to the southern extremities of Tierra del Fuego.



A Nahua man, ploughing his cornfield in Morelos, Mexico

The impact of European colonization of the Americas on the indigenous communities has been in general quite severe, with many authorities estimating ranges of significant population decline due to the ravages of various genocide campaigns, epidemic diseases (smallpox, measles, etc.), displacement, conflict, compulsory boarding schools, massacres and exploitation. The extent of this impact is the subject of much continuing debate. Several peoples shortly thereafter became extinct, or very nearly so.

All nations in North and South America have *populations* of indigenous peoples within their borders. In some countries (particularly Latin American), indigenous peoples form a sizable component of the overall national population—in Bolivia they account for an estimated 56%–70% of the total nation, and at least half of the *population* in Guatemala and the Andean and Amazonian *nations* of Peru. In English, indigenous peoples are collectively referred to by several different terms which vary by region and include such ethnonyms as Native Americans, Amerindians, and Indians. In Spanish or Portuguese speaking countries one finds the use of terms such as *pueblos indígenas*, *amerindios*, *povos nativos*, *povos indígenas*, and in Peru, *Comunidades Nativas*, particularly among Amazonian societies like the Urarina<sup>[14]</sup> and Matsés.

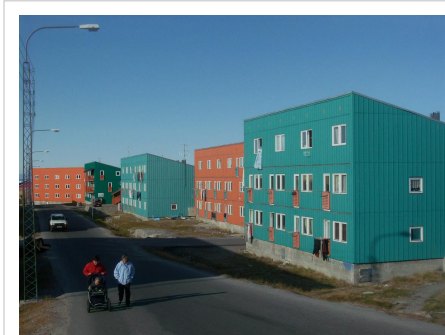
In Brazil, the term *índio* (Portuguese pronunciation: [ˈĩdʒi.u] or ˈĩdʒju) is used by most of the population, the media, the indigenous peoples themselves and even the government (FUNAI is acronym for Fundação Nacional do **Índio**), although its Hispanic equivalent *indio* is widely not considered politically correct and falling into desuse. Nevertheless, Portuguese for Amerindian and *amerindio*, *ameríndio* (ameˈɾĩdʒi.u or ameˈɾĩdʒju in the standard South American dialects) is gaining some popularity, still, it seems odd for many. The widespread completely politically correct term of which Brazilians are used to is *indígena* ɪˈdʒiʒenɐ (although its literal translation is "indigenous person or peoples from anywhere", it is colloquially intended as synonym for Amerindian, without need for specifications in reference to the indigenous peoples of what continent). It has more ethnic meanings than racial ones, and a "Westerner" in Brazil can be an acculturated *ameríndio/índio* but not an *indígena*, which officially means indigenous in the narrow sense.

Aboriginal peoples in Canada comprise the First Nations,<sup>[15]</sup> Inuit<sup>[16]</sup> and Métis.<sup>[17]</sup> The descriptors "Indian" and "Eskimo" are falling into disuse in Canada.<sup>[18][19]</sup> There are currently over 600 recognized First Nations governments or bands encompassing 1,172,790 <sup>2006</sup> peoples spread across Canada with distinctive Aboriginal cultures, languages, art, and music.<sup>[20][21][22]</sup> National Aboriginal Day recognises the cultures and contributions of Aboriginals to the history of Canada

The Inuit have achieved a degree of administrative autonomy with the creation in 1999 of the territories of Nunavik (in Northern Quebec), Nunatsiavut (in Northern Labrador) and Nunavut, which was until 1999 a part of the Northwest Territories. The self-ruling Danish territory of Greenland is also home to a majority population of indigenous Inuit (about 85%).



A Navajo boy on horseback in Monument valley, Arizona



The indigenous people of Greenland, previously a Danish colony, achieved self-rule in 2009

In the United States, the combined populations of Native Americans, Inuit and other indigenous designations totalled 2,786,652 (constituting about 1.5% of 2003 US census figures). Some 563 scheduled tribes are recognized at the federal level, and a number of others recognized at the state level.

In Mexico, approximately 6,011,202 (constituting about 6.7% of 2005 Mexican census figures) identify as *Indígenas* (Spanish for natives or indigenous peoples). In the southern states of Chiapas, Yucatán and Oaxaca they constitute 26.1%, 33.5% and 35.3%, respectively, of the population. In these states several conflicts and episodes of civil war have been conducted, in which the situation and participation of indigenous societies were notable factors (see for example EZLN).

The Amerindians make up 0.4% of Brazil's population, or about 700,000 people.<sup>[23]</sup> Indigenous peoples are found in the entire territory of Brazil, although the majority of them live in Indian reservations in the North and Center-Western part of the country. On 18 January 2007, FUNAI reported that it had confirmed the presence of 67 different uncontacted tribes in Brazil, up from 40 in 2005. With this addition Brazil has now overtaken the island of New Guinea as the country having the largest number of uncontacted tribes.<sup>[24]</sup>

Guatemala is 50 to 80% indigenous, depending on whose statistics are used (Nelson, Finger in the Wound 1999)

## Asia

The vast regions of Asia contain the majority of the world's present-day Indigenous populations, about 70% according to IWGIA figures.

The most substantial populations are in India, which constitutionally recognizes a range of "Scheduled Tribes" within its borders. These various peoples (collectively referred to as Adivasis, or tribal peoples) number about 68 million (1991 census figures, approximately 8% of the total national population).



A Yanomami shabono in the northern Amazon Rainforest



Ainu people of Hokkaidō, Japan in traditional dress



The Circassians are one of the oldest nations in the North Caucasus

Nivkh people are an ethnic group indigenous to Sakhalin, having a few speakers of the Nivkh language, but their fisher culture has been endangered due to the development of oil field of Sakhalin from 1990s.<sup>[25]</sup>

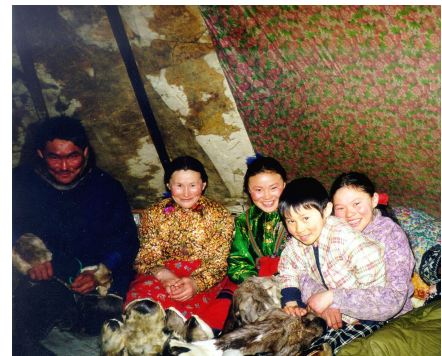
Ainu people are an ethnic group indigenous to Hokkaidō, the Kuril Islands, and much of Sakhalin. As Japanese settlement expanded, the Ainu were pushed northward, until by the Meiji period they were confined by the government to a small area in Hokkaidō, in a manner similar to the placing of Native Americans on reservations.<sup>[26]</sup>

The languages of Taiwanese aborigines have significance in historical linguistics, since in all likelihood Taiwan was the place of origin of the entire Austronesian language family, which spread across Oceania.<sup>[27][28][29]</sup>

There are also indigenous people in Southeast Asia.

There are indigenous peoples of the Philippines, which Spain and the United States colonized.

The Assyrians and Marsh Arabs are indigenous to areas of the geocultural region of Mesopotamia which includes parts of Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. The Lurs also inhabit parts of Iran close to the Iranian border with the provinces of Lorestan and Ilam.<sup>[30]</sup>



A Nenets family in their tent, Yamal peninsula, Russia.



## Europe

Since most of Europe in historical times was never colonized by non-European powers with lasting effect (arguably except for Hungary and Romania, Turkish Thrace, Tatarstan, Kalmykia and islands such as Malta or Cyprus<sup>[31]</sup>), the vast majority of Europeans could be considered indigenous. However several widely accepted formulations, which define the term "*Indigenous peoples*" in stricter terms, have been put forward by internationally recognized organizations, such as the United Nations, the International Labour Organization and the World Bank. Indigenous peoples in this article is used in such a narrower sense.



The Khinalug people are one of the indigenous inhabitants of the North Caucasus.

In Europe, present-day recognized indigenous populations are relatively few, mainly confined to northern and far-eastern reaches of this Eurasian peninsula. Whilst there are various ethnic minorities distributed within European countries, few of these still maintain traditional subsistence cultures and are recognized as indigenous peoples, *per se*. Notable indigenous populations include the Sami people of northern Scandinavia, the Nenets and other Samoyedic peoples of the northern Russian Federation, and the Komi peoples of the western Urals, beside the Circassians in the North Caucasus.

## Oceania

Many of the present-day Pacific Island nations in the Oceania region were originally populated by Polynesian, Melanesian and Micronesian peoples over the course of thousands of years. European colonial expansion in the Pacific brought many of these under non-indigenous administration. During the 20th century several of these former colonies gained independence and nation-states were formed under local control. However, various peoples have put forward claims for Indigenous recognition where their islands are still under external administration; examples include the Chamorros of Guam and the Northern Marianas, and the Marshallese of the Marshall Islands.

The remains of at least 25 miniature humans, who lived between 1,000 and 3,000 years ago, were recently found on the islands of Palau in Micronesia.<sup>[32]</sup>

In most parts of Oceania, indigenous peoples outnumber the descendants of colonists. Exceptions include Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii. According to the 2001 Australian census, indigenous Australians make up 2.4% of the total population, while in New Zealand 14.6% of the population identify at least partially as indigenous Māori, with slightly more than half (53%) of all Māori residents identifying solely as Māori. The Māori are indigenous to Polynesia and settled New Zealand relatively recently, the migrations were thought to have occurred between 1000–1200 CE. In New Zealand pre-contact Māori tribes were not a single people, thus the more recent grouping

into tribal (iwi) arrangements has become a more



Huli man from the Southern Highlands, Papua New Guinea. New Guinea has more than 1,000 indigenous languages.



formal arrangement in more recent times. Many Māori tribal leaders signed a treaty with the British, the Treaty of Waitangi, so that the modern geo-political entity that is New Zealand was established by partial consent. However, the Māori language translation of the Treaty of Waitangi which they signed is worded ambiguously and does not fully match the English version. The treaty process gave British citizenship to the "native" population. However, some of the British settlers ignored the Treaty of Waitangi and through some illegal acts of colonization and war (though there were legitimate land sales between

Māori and the settlers) Māori lost 95% of their land and resources from the 1850s through to the 1970s, which resulted in the large scale socio-economic marginalization of the vast majority of Māori. Since the 1970s there has been a cultural renaissance by Māori, and a political drive to assert their Treaty rights to their land, resources and culture through the Waitangi Tribunal process. This has resulted in the legal recognition of the Māori language and culture and has resulted in the return of some land, resources and money so that today Māori businesses have an estimated value of over NZD\$14 billion. Māori have also formed an important political party.

The independent state of Papua New Guinea (PNG) has a majority population of indigenous societies, with more than 700 different tribal groups recognized out of a total population of just over 5 million. The PNG Constitution and other Acts identify traditional or custom-based practices and land tenure, and explicitly set out to promote the viability of these traditional societies within the modern state. However, several conflicts and disputes concerning land use and resource rights continue to be observed between indigenous groups, the government and corporate entities.

## Rights, issues and concerns

Indigenous peoples confront a diverse range of concerns associated with their status and interaction with other cultural groups, as well as changes in their inhabited environment. Some challenges are specific to particular groups; however, other challenges are commonly experienced. Bartholomew Dean and Jerome Levi (2003) explore why and how the circumstances of indigenous peoples are improving in some places of the world, while their human rights continue to be abused in others.<sup>[33]</sup> These issues include cultural and linguistic preservation, land rights, ownership and exploitation of natural resources, political determination and autonomy, environmental degradation and incursion, poverty, health, and discrimination.

The interaction between indigenous and non-indigenous societies throughout history has been complex, ranging from outright conflict and subjugation to some degree of mutual benefit and cultural transfer. A particular aspect of anthropological study involves investigation into the ramifications of what is termed *first contact*, the study of what occurs when two cultures first encounter one another. The situation can be further confused when there is a complicated or contested history of migration and population of a given region, which can give rise to disputes about primacy and ownership of the land and resources.

The Bangladesh Government has stated that there are "no Indigenous Peoples in Bangladesh".<sup>[34]</sup> This has angered the Indigenous Peoples of Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh, collectively known as the Jumma (which include the Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Tenchungya, Chak, Pankho, Mru, Murung, Bawm, Lushai, Khyang, Gurkha, Assamese, Santal and Khumi).<sup>[35]</sup> Experts have protested against this move of the Bangladesh Government and have questioned the Government's definition of the term "Indigenous Peoples".<sup>[36][37]</sup> This move by the Bangladesh Government is seen by the Indigenous Peoples of Bangladesh as another step by the Government to further erode their already limited rights.<sup>[38]</sup>

Wherever indigenous cultural identity is asserted, some particular set of societal issues and concerns may be voiced which either arise from (at least in part), or have a particular dimension associated with, their indigenous status.



Indigenous Australians playing football

These concerns will often be commonly held or affect other societies also, and are not necessarily experienced uniquely by indigenous groups.

Despite the diversity of Indigenous peoples, it may be noted that they share common problems and issues in dealing with the prevailing, or invading, society. They are generally concerned that the cultures of Indigenous peoples are being lost and that indigenous peoples suffer both discrimination and pressure to assimilate into their surrounding societies. This is borne out by the fact that the lands and cultures of nearly all of the peoples listed at the end of this article are under threat. Notable exceptions are the Sakha and Komi peoples (two of the northern indigenous peoples of Russia), who now control their own autonomous republics within the Russian state, and the Canadian Inuit, who form a majority of the territory of Nunavut (created in 1999).

It is also sometimes argued that it is important for the human species as a whole to preserve a wide range of cultural diversity as possible, and that the protection of indigenous cultures is vital to this enterprise.

An example of this occurred in 2002 when the Government of Botswana expelled all the Kalahari Bushmen known as the San from their lands<sup>[39]</sup> on which they had lived for at least twenty thousand years. President Festus Mogai has described the Bushmen as "stone age creatures"<sup>[40]</sup> and a minister for local government, Margaret Nasha, likened public criticism of their eviction to criticism of the culling of elephants.<sup>[41]</sup> In 2006, the Botswanan High Court ruled that the Bushmen had a right to return to their land in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve.<sup>[42][43]</sup>

## Health issues

In December 1993, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, and requested UN specialized agencies to consider with governments and indigenous people how they can contribute to the success of the Decade of Indigenous People, commencing in December 1994. As a consequence, the World Health Organization, at its Forty-seventh World Health Assembly established a core advisory group of indigenous representatives with special knowledge of the health needs and resources of their communities, thus beginning a long-term commitment to the issue of the health of indigenous peoples.<sup>[44]</sup>

The WHO notes that "Statistical data on the health status of indigenous peoples is scarce. This is especially notable for indigenous peoples in Africa, Asia and eastern Europe", but snapshots from various countries, where such statistics are available, show that indigenous people are in worse health than the general population, in advanced and developing countries alike: higher incidence of diabetes in some regions of Australia;<sup>[45]</sup> higher prevalence of poor sanitation and lack of safe water among Twa households in Rwanda;<sup>[46]</sup> a greater prevalence of childbirths without prenatal care among ethnic minorities in Vietnam;<sup>[47]</sup> suicide rates among Inuit youth in Canada are eleven times higher than the national average;<sup>[48]</sup> infant mortality rates are higher for indigenous peoples everywhere.<sup>[49]</sup>

## International bodies concerned with indigenous peoples' rights

- African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)
  - United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
  - United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
  - United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous Peoples
  - United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations (discontinued)
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## **Non-governmental Organizations working for indigenous peoples' rights**

Various organizations are devoted to the preservation or study of indigenous peoples. Of these, several have widely recognized credentials to act as an intermediary or representative on behalf of indigenous peoples' groups, in negotiations on indigenous issues with governments and international organizations. These include:

- Center for World Indigenous Studies
- Cultural Survival
- Earth Peoples
- Friends of Peoples Close to Nature (fPcN)
- Incomindios Switzerland
- Indigenous Dialogues
- Indigenous Peoples' Center for Documentation, Research and Information (doCip)
- Indigenous Peoples of Africa Co-ordinating Committee (IPACC)
- International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)
- Minority Rights Group International
- Netherlands Center for Indigenous Peoples (NCIV)
- Survival International

## **International Day of the World's Indigenous People**

The International Day of the World's Indigenous People falls on 9 August as this was the date of the first meeting in 1982 of the United Nations Working Group of Indigenous Populations of the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities of the Commission on Human Rights.

The UN General Assembly decided on 23 December 1994 that the International Day of the World's Indigenous People should be observed on 9 August every year during the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (resolution 49/214). Thereafter, on 20 December 2004, the General Assembly decided to continue observing the International Day of Indigenous People every year during the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (2005–2014) (resolution 59/174).<sup>[50]</sup>

## **Knowledge and culture**

The preservation and investigation of specialized Indigenous knowledge, particularly in relation to the resources of the natural environment with which the society is associated, is a goal of both the Indigenous and the societies who thereby seek to identify new resources and benefits (example: partnerships established to research biological extracts from vegetation in the Amazon rainforests).

For some people (e.g. Indigenous communities from India, Brazil, and Malaysia and some NGOs such as GRAIN and Third World Network), Indigenous peoples have often been victims of biopiracy when they are subjected to unauthorized use of their natural resources, of their traditional knowledge on these biological resources, of unequal share of benefits between them and a patent holder.

## **Viewpoints**

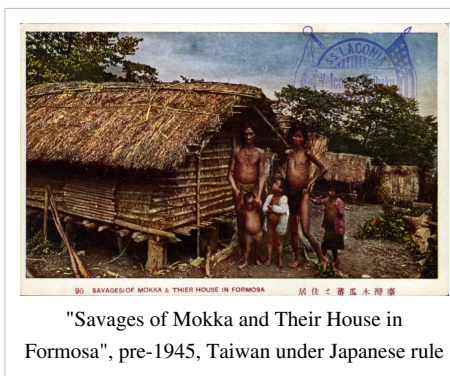
A range of differing viewpoints and attitudes have arisen from the experience and history of contact between Indigenous and "non-indigenous" communities. The cultural, regional and historical contexts in which these viewpoints have developed are complex, and many competing viewpoints exist simultaneously in any given society, albeit promulgated with greater or lesser force depending on the extent of cross-cultural exposure and internal societal change. These views may be noted from both sides of the relationship.

## Indigenous viewpoints

Indigenous peoples are increasingly faced with threats to their sovereignty, environment, and access to natural resources. Examples of this can be the deforestation of tropical rainforests where many native tribe's subsistence lifestyles are threatened. Assimilative colonial policies resulted in ongoing issues related to aboriginal child protection.

## Non-indigenous viewpoints

Indigenous peoples have been denoted *primitives*, *savages*, or *uncivilized*. These terms were common during the heights of European colonial expansion, but still continue in modern times.<sup>[51]</sup> During the 17th century, indigenous peoples were commonly labeled "uncivilized". Whilst there was a swell in bringing back creative elements of classical antiquity in artistic pursuits, there was also the not so creative side of regurgitating xenophobic ideas from that period. Some philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes considered indigenous people to be merely 'savages', while others are purported to have considered them to be "noble savages". Those who were close to the Hobbesian view tended to believe themselves to have a duty to civilize and modernize indigenes. Although anthropologists, especially from Europe, used to apply these terms to all tribal cultures, it has fallen into disfavor as demeaning and, according to anthropologists, inaccurate (see tribe, cultural evolution). Survival International runs a campaign to stamp out media portrayal of indigenous peoples as 'primitive' or 'savages'.<sup>[52]</sup> Friends of Peoples Close to Nature considers not only that indigenous culture should be respected as not being inferior, but also sees their way of life as a lesson of sustainability and a part of the struggle within the "corrupted" western world, from which the threat stems.<sup>[53]</sup>



After World War I, however, many Europeans came to doubt the morality of the means used to "civilize" peoples. At the same time, the anti-colonial movement, and advocates of indigenous peoples, argued that words such as "civilized" and "savage" were products and tools of colonialism, and argued that colonialism itself was savagely destructive. In the mid 20th century, European attitudes began to shift to the view that indigenous and tribal peoples should have the right to decide for themselves what should happen to their ancient cultures and ancestral lands.

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## External links

- Awareness raising film by Rebecca Sommer for the Secretariat of the UNPFII (<http://social.un.org/index/IndigenousPeoples/NewsandMedia/Video.aspx>)

## Institutions

- IFAD and indigenous peoples (International Fund for Agricultural Development, IFAD) (<http://www.ifad.org/english/indigenous/index.htm>)
  - IPS Inter Press Service ([http://www.ipsnews.net/new\\_focus/indigenous\\_peoples/index.asp](http://www.ipsnews.net/new_focus/indigenous_peoples/index.asp)) News on indigenous peoples from around the world
  - Indigenous Peoples Issues & Resources (<http://indigenouspeoplesissues.com>)
-

# Jews

Jews

Hebrew: יהודים (*Yehudim*)

Total population		
13,428,300 <sup>[1]</sup>		
Regions with significant populations		
 Israel	5,703,700	<sup>[1]</sup> <sup>[2]</sup>
 United States	5,275,000	<sup>[1]</sup>
 France	483,500	<sup>[1]</sup>
 Canada	375,000	<sup>[1]</sup>
 United Kingdom	292,000	<sup>[1]</sup>
 Russia	205,000	<sup>[1]</sup>
 Argentina	182,300	<sup>[1]</sup>
 Germany	119,000	<sup>[1]</sup>
 Australia	107,500	<sup>[1]</sup>
 Brazil	95,600	<sup>[1]</sup>
 Ukraine	71,500	<sup>[1]</sup>
 South Africa	70,800	<sup>[1]</sup>
 Hungary	48,600	<sup>[1]</sup>
 Mexico	39,400	<sup>[1]</sup>
 Belgium	30,300	<sup>[1]</sup>
 Netherlands	30,000	<sup>[1]</sup>
 Italy	28,400	<sup>[1]</sup>
 Chile	20,500	<sup>[1]</sup>
All other countries	250,200	<sup>[1]</sup>
Languages		
<b>Predominant spoken languages:</b> Hebrew · English · Russian · the vernacular languages of other countries in the diaspora		
<b>Historical languages:</b> Yiddish · Ladino · Judeo-Arabic · others		
<b>Sacred languages:</b> Biblical Hebrew · Aramaic		
Religion		

The **Jews** (Hebrew: יְהוּדִים, ISO 259-3 *Yehudim* Israeli pronunciation Hebrew pronunciation: [jehu'dim]), also known as the **Jewish people**, are a nation and an ethnoreligious group, originating in the Israelites or Hebrews of the Ancient Near East. The Jewish ethnicity, nationality, and religion are strongly interrelated, as Judaism is the traditional faith of the Jewish nation.<sup>[3][4][5]</sup> Converts to Judaism, whose status as Jews within the Jewish ethnos is equal to those born into it, have been absorbed into the Jewish people throughout the millennia.

In Jewish tradition, Jewish ancestry is traced to the Biblical patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the second millennium BCE. The modern State of Israel was established as a Jewish nation-state, and defines itself as such in its Basic Laws. Its Law of Return grants the right of citizenship to any Jew who requests it.<sup>[6]</sup> Israel is the only country where Jews are a majority of the population. Jews also enjoyed political autonomy twice before in ancient history. The first of these periods lasted from 1350<sup>[7]</sup> to 586 BCE, and encompassed the periods of the Judges, the United Monarchy, and the Divided Monarchy of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, ending with the destruction of the First Temple. The second was the period of the Hasmonean Kingdom spanning from 140 to 37 BCE. Since the destruction of the First Temple, most Jews have lived in diaspora.<sup>[8]</sup> A minority in every country in which they live (except Israel), they have frequently experienced persecution throughout history, resulting in a population that has fluctuated both in numbers and distribution over the centuries.

As of 2010, the world Jewish population was estimated at 13.4 million by the North American Jewish Data Bank,<sup>[1]</sup> or less than 0.2% of the total world population (roughly one in every 514 people).<sup>[9]</sup> According to this report, about 42.5% of all Jews reside in Israel (5.7 million), and 39.3% in the United States (5.3 million), with most of the remainder living in Europe (1.5 million) and Canada (0.4 million).<sup>[1]</sup> These numbers include all those who consider themselves Jews, whether or not they are affiliated with a Jewish organization. The total world Jewish population, however, is difficult to measure. In addition to issues with census methodology, there are *halakhic* disputes regarding who is a Jew and secular, political, and ancestral identification factors that may affect the figure considerably.<sup>[10]</sup>

## Name and etymology

The English word *Jew* continues Middle English *Gyw*, *Iewe*, a loan from Old French *giu*, earlier *juieu*, ultimately from Latin *Iudaeum*. The Latin *Iudaeus* simply means *Judaeian*, "from the land of *Judaea*".<sup>[11]</sup> The Latin term itself, like the corresponding Greek Ἰουδαῖος, is a loan from Aramaic *Y'hūdāi*, corresponding to Hebrew: יְהוּדִי, *Yehudi* (sg.); יְהוּדִים, *Yehudim* (pl.), in origin the term for a member of the tribe of Judah or the people of the kingdom of Judah. The name of both the tribe and kingdom derive from Judah, the fourth son of Jacob.<sup>[12]</sup>

The Hebrew word for Jew, יְהוּדִי, ISO 259-3 *Yhudi*, is pronounced Hebrew pronunciation: [jehu'di], with the stress on the final syllable, in Israeli Hebrew, in its basic form.<sup>[13]</sup>

The Ladino name is ג'ודיו, *Djudio* (sg.); ג'ודיוס, *Djudios* (pl.); Yiddish: ייד *Yid* (sg.); יידן, *Yidn* (pl.).

The etymological equivalent is in use in other languages, e.g., "Yahoud"/"Yahoudi" (Arabic: يهودي/يهود) in Arabic language, "Jude" in German, "judeu" in Portuguese, "juif" in French, "jøde" in Danish and Norwegian, "judío" in Spanish, "jood" in Dutch, etc., but derivations of the word "Hebrew" are also in use to describe a Jew, e.g., in Italian (*Ebreo*), in Persian ("Ebri/Ebrani" (Persian: عبرانی/عبری)) and Russian (*Еврей*, *Yevrey*).<sup>[14]</sup> The German word "Jude" is pronounced [ˈjuːdə], the corresponding adjective "jüdisch" [ˈjyːdɪʃ] (Jewish) is the origin of the word "Yiddish".<sup>[15]</sup> (See Jewish ethnonyms for a full overview.)

According to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Edition (2000):

It is widely recognized that the attributive use of the noun *Jew*, in phrases such as *Jew lawyer* or *Jew ethics*, is both vulgar and highly offensive. In such contexts *Jewish* is the only acceptable possibility. Some people, however, have become so wary of this construction that they have extended the stigma to any use of *Jew* as a noun, a practice that carries risks of its own. In a sentence such as *There are now*

*several Jews on the council*, which is unobjectionable, the substitution of a circumlocution like *Jewish people* or *persons of Jewish background* may in itself cause offense for seeming to imply that Jew has a negative connotation when used as a noun.<sup>[16]</sup>

## Origins

According to the Hebrew Bible, all Israelites descend from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Abraham was born in the Sumerian city of Ur Kasdim, and migrated to Canaan (commonly known as the Land of Israel) with his family. Aristotle believed that the Jews came from India, where he said that they were known as the *Kalani*.<sup>[17]</sup> Genetic studies on Jews show that most Jews worldwide bear a common genetic heritage which originates in the Middle East, and that they bear their strongest resemblance to the peoples of the Fertile Crescent.<sup>[18][19][20]</sup> According to some Biblical archaeologists, however, Israelite culture did not overtake the region, but rather grew out of Canaanite culture.

## Judaism

Judaism guides its adherents in both practice and belief, and has been called not only a religion, but also a "way of life,"<sup>[21]</sup> which has made drawing a clear distinction between Judaism, Jewish culture, and Jewish identity rather difficult. Throughout history, in eras and places as diverse as the ancient Hellenic world,<sup>[22]</sup> in Europe before and after The Age of Enlightenment (see Haskalah),<sup>[23]</sup> in Islamic Spain and Portugal,<sup>[24]</sup> in North Africa and the Middle East,<sup>[24]</sup> India,<sup>[25]</sup> and China,<sup>[26]</sup> or the contemporary United States<sup>[27]</sup> and Israel,<sup>[28]</sup> cultural phenomena have developed that are in some sense characteristically Jewish without being at all specifically religious. Some factors in this come from within Judaism, others from the interaction of Jews or specific communities of Jews with their surroundings, others from the inner social and cultural dynamics of the community, as opposed to from the religion itself. This phenomenon has led to considerably different Jewish cultures unique to their own communities, each as authentically Jewish as the next.<sup>[29]</sup>

## Who is a Jew?

Judaism shares some of the characteristics of a nation, an ethnicity, a religion, and a culture, making the definition of who is a Jew vary slightly depending on whether a religious or national approach to identity is used.<sup>[30]</sup> Generally, in modern secular usage, Jews include three groups: people who were born to a Jewish family regardless of whether or not they follow the religion; those who have some Jewish ancestral background or lineage (sometimes including those who do not have strictly matrilineal descent); and people without any Jewish ancestral background or lineage who have formally converted to Judaism and therefore are followers of the religion.<sup>[31]</sup>

Historical definitions of Jewish identity have traditionally been based on *halakhic* definitions of matrilineal descent, and halakhic conversions. Historical definitions of who is a Jew date back to the codification of the Oral Torah into the Babylonian Talmud, around 200 CE. Interpretations of sections of the Tanakh, such as Deuteronomy 7:1–5, by learned Jewish sages, are used as a warning against intermarriage between Jews and Canaanites because "[the non-Jewish husband] will cause your child to turn away from Me and they will worship the gods (i.e., idols) of others." Leviticus 24:10 says that the son in a marriage between a Hebrew woman and an Egyptian man is "of the community of Israel." This is complemented by Ezra 10:2–3, where Israelites returning from Babylon vow to put aside their gentile wives and their children.<sup>[32][33]</sup> Since the *Haskalah*, these *halakhic* interpretations of Jewish identity have been challenged.<sup>[34]</sup>

At times, conversion has accounted for a substantial part of Jewish population growth. In the first century of the Christian era, for example, the population more than doubled, from four to 8–10 million within the confines of the Roman Empire, in good part as a result of a wave of conversion.<sup>[35]</sup>



## Ethnic divisions



Ashkenazi Jews of late 19th century Eastern Europe portrayed in *Jews Praying in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur* (1878), by Maurycy Gottlieb

Within the world's Jewish population there are distinct ethnic divisions, most of which are primarily the result of geographic branching from an originating Israelite population, and subsequent independent evolutions. An array of Jewish communities were established by Jewish settlers in various places around the Old World, often at great distances from one another resulting in effective and often long-term isolation from each other. During the millennia of the Jewish diaspora the communities would develop under the influence of their local environments; political, cultural, natural, and populational. Today, manifestation of these differences among the Jews can be observed in Jewish cultural expressions of each community, including Jewish linguistic diversity, culinary preferences, liturgical practices, religious interpretations, as well as degrees and sources of genetic admixture.<sup>[36]</sup>

Jews are often identified as belonging to one of two major groups: the *Ashkenazim*, or "Germanics" (Ashkenaz meaning "Germany" in Medieval Hebrew, denoting their Central European base), and the *Sephardim*, or "Hispanics" (Sefarad meaning "Spain/Hispania" or "Iberia" in Hebrew, denoting their Spanish, and Portuguese, base). The *Mizrahim*, or "Easterners" (Mizrach being "East" in Hebrew), that is, the diverse collection of Middle Eastern and North African Jews, constitute a third major group, although they are sometimes termed *Sephardi* for liturgical reasons.<sup>[37]</sup>

Smaller groups include, but are not restricted to, Indian Jews such as the Bene Israel, Bnei Menashe, Cochin Jews, and Bene Ephraim; the Romaniotes of Greece; the Italian Jews ("Italkim" or "Bené Roma"); the Teimanim from Yemen and Oman; various African Jews, including most numerous the Beta Israel of Ethiopia; and Chinese Jews, most notably the Kaifeng Jews, as well as various other distinct but now almost extinct communities.<sup>[38]</sup>

The divisions between all these groups are approximate and their boundaries are not always clear. The Mizrahim for example, are a heterogeneous collection of North African, Central Asian, Caucasian, and Middle Eastern Jewish communities that are often as unrelated to each other as they are to any of the earlier mentioned Jewish groups. In modern usage, however, the Mizrahim are sometimes termed *Sephardi* due to similar styles of liturgy, despite independent development from Sephardim proper. Thus, among Mizrahim there are Egyptian Jews, Iraqi Jews, Lebanese Jews, Kurdish Jews, Libyan Jews, Syrian Jews, Bukharian Jews, Mountain Jews, Georgian Jews, Iranian Jews and various others. The Teimanim from Yemen and Oman are sometimes included, although their style of liturgy is unique and they differ in respect to the admixture found among them to that found in Mizrahim. In addition, there is a differentiation made between Sephardi migrants who established themselves in the Middle East and North Africa after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal in the 1490s and the pre-existing Jewish communities in those regions.<sup>[38]</sup>

Despite this diversity, Ashkenazi Jews represent the bulk of modern Jewry, with at least 70% of Jews worldwide (and up to 90% prior to World War II and the Holocaust). As a result of their emigration from Europe, Ashkenazim also represent the overwhelming majority of Jews in the New World continents, in countries such as the United States, Canada, Argentina, Australia, and Brazil. In France, emigration of Jews from North Africa has led them to outnumber the Ashkenazim.<sup>[39]</sup> Only in Israel is the Jewish population representative of all groups, a melting pot independent of each group's proportion within the overall world Jewish population.<sup>[40]</sup>

Languages

Hebrew is the liturgical language of Judaism (termed *l'shon ha-kodesh*, "the holy tongue"), the language in which the Hebrew scriptures (Tanakh) were composed, and the daily speech of the Jewish people for centuries. By the 5th century BCE, Aramaic, a closely related tongue, joined Hebrew as the spoken language in Judea.<sup>[41]</sup> By the third century BCE, Jews of the diaspora were speaking Greek.<sup>[42]</sup>

For centuries, Jews worldwide have spoken the local or dominant languages of the regions they migrated to, often developing distinctive dialectal forms or branches that became independent languages. Yiddish is the Judæo-German language developed by Ashkenazi Jews who migrated to Central Europe. Ladino is the Judæo-Spanish language developed by Sephardic Jews who migrated to the Iberian peninsula. Due to many factors, including the impact of the Holocaust on European Jewry, the Jewish exodus from Arab lands, and widespread emigration from other Jewish communities around the world, ancient and distinct Jewish languages of several communities, including Judæo-Georgian, Judæo-Arabic, Judæo-Berber, Krymchak, Judæo-Malayalam and many others, have largely fallen out of use.<sup>[43]</sup>

For over sixteen centuries Hebrew was used almost exclusively as a liturgical language, and as the language in which most books had been written on Judaism, with a few speaking only Hebrew on the Sabbath.<sup>[44]</sup> Hebrew was revived as a spoken language by Eliezer ben Yehuda, who arrived in Palestine in 1881. It had not been used as a mother tongue since Tannaic times.<sup>[41]</sup> Modern Hebrew is now one of the two official languages of the State of Israel along with Arabic.<sup>[45]</sup>

The three most commonly spoken languages among Jews today are Hebrew, English and Russian. Some Romance languages, such as French and Spanish, are also widely used.<sup>[43]</sup> Yiddish has been spoken by more Jews in history than any other language,<sup>[46]</sup> but it is far less used today, after the Holocaust and the adoption of Hebrew, first by the Zionist movement, and then by Israel.

Genetic studies

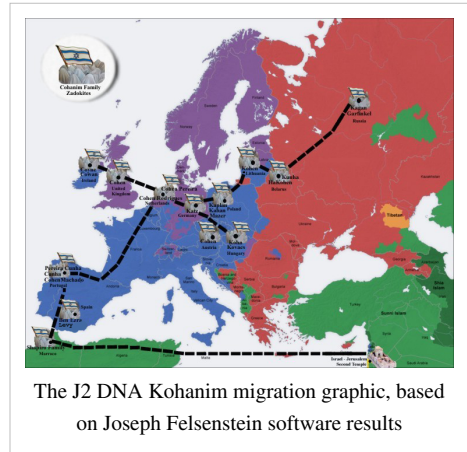
Genetic studies indicate various lineages found in modern Jewish populations; however, most of these populations share a lineage in common, traceable to an ancient population that underwent geographic branching and subsequent independent evolutions.<sup>[47]</sup> While DNA tests have demonstrated both inter-marriage and conversion to Judaism in all of the various Jewish ethnic divisions over the last 3,000 years, it was substantially less than in other populations.<sup>[48]</sup> The findings lend support to traditional Jewish accounts accrediting their founding to exiled Israelite populations, and counters theories that many or most of the world's Jewish populations were founded entirely by local populations that adopted the Jewish religion, devoid of any actual Israelite genetic input.<sup>[48]</sup>

גאון דער אידישער שולחן ערוך

Bittel	Liffor	הַלֵּל	בָּטֵל
Zoller	Telonarius	מִזְבֵּחַ	זָלוּר
Trumeter	Tubica	שֹׁפָר	טְרוּמֵטֶר
Vogt	Præfatus	פֶּאָדֶר	בֹּקֵט
Iud	Iudeus	יְהוּדִי	יֵד
Chriß	Chriftianus	כְּרִיסְטִיאַן	קריסט
Türck	Turca	טורק	טורק
Araber	Arabs	אַרַבִּי	האַרֵב
Mor	Aethiops	אַרְבִּישִׁי	מֹר
Griech	Græcus	גִּרֵּכִי	קריק
Frangoß	Gallus	פֶּרַנְצוֹס	פֶּרַנְצוֹס
Hifpanier	Hifpanus	הִיִּפּאַנִי	ספּאַניאָ
Welch	Italus	וֵלְשִׁי	וואָלך
Teufcher	Germanus	טעִפּֿער	טויפּער
Vnger	Vngarus	וֵונְגֶר	אונגער
Turier	Tartarus	טורִי	טאַרטער
Zegeiner	Paganus	זעגִינער	פּאַגאַנער
Haid	Ethnicus	הַיִד	האַיד
גאון דער שולחן ערוך			
Vatter	Pater	אַב	פאָטער
Mutter	Mater	אַם	מוֹטער
D 2			

A page from Elia Levita's (right to left) Yiddish-Hebrew-Latin-German dictionary (1542) contains a list of nations, including an entry for Jew: Hebrew: *יְהוּדִי*, Yiddish: *יהיד*, German: *Jud*, Latin: *Judæus*

DNA analysis further determined that modern Jews of the priesthood tribe—"Kohanim"—share an ancestor dating back about 3,000 years.<sup>[49]</sup> This result is consistent for all Jewish populations around the world.<sup>[49]</sup> The researchers estimated that the most recent common ancestor of modern Kohanim lived between 1000 BCE (roughly the time of the Biblical Exodus) and 586 BCE, when the Babylonians destroyed the First Temple.<sup>[50]</sup> They found similar results analyzing DNA from Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews.<sup>[50]</sup> The scientists estimated the date of the original priest based on genetic mutations, which indicated that the priest lived roughly 106 generations ago, between 2,650 and 3,180 years ago depending whether one counts a generation as 25 or 30 years.<sup>[50]</sup> These Jews belong to the haplotypes J1e and J2a. However, more recent research has shown that many ethnic groups in the Middle East and Mediterranean area also share this genetic profile.<sup>[51]</sup>



Although individual and groups of converts to Judaism have historically been absorbed into contemporary Jewish populations, it is unlikely that they formed a large percentage of the ancestors of modern Jewish groups, and much less that they represented their genesis as Jewish communities.<sup>[47][52]</sup>

Biologist Robert Pollack stated in 2003 that one cannot determine the biological "Jewishness" of an individual because "there are no DNA sequences common to all Jews and absent from all non-Jews".<sup>[53]</sup> A 2009 study was able to genetically identify individuals with full or partial Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry.<sup>[54]</sup>

### Male lineages: Y chromosomal DNA

A study published by the National Academy of Sciences found that "the paternal gene pools of Jewish communities from Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East descended from a common Middle Eastern ancestral population", and suggested that "most Jewish communities have remained relatively isolated from neighboring non-Jewish communities during and after the Diaspora".<sup>[47]</sup> Researchers expressed surprise at the remarkable genetic uniformity they found among modern Jews, no matter where the diaspora has become dispersed around the world.<sup>[47]</sup>

Other Y-chromosome findings show that the world's Jewish communities are closely related to Kurds, Turks and Armenians,<sup>[49][55]</sup> the hypothesis being that "Jews, Kurds, Armenians and Anatolian Turks all carry the genetic markers of ancient indigenous populations of the Fertile Crescent, while Palestinian Arabs and Beduin may largely descend from the Arab conquerors". Skorecki and colleague wrote that "the extremely close affinity of Jewish and non-Jewish Middle Eastern populations observed ... supports the hypothesis of a common Middle Eastern origin".<sup>[49]</sup> According to another study of the same year, more than 70% of Jewish men and half of the Arab men (inhabitants of Israel and the territories only) whose DNA was studied inherited their Y-chromosomes from the same paternal ancestors who lived in the region within the last few thousand years. The results are consistent with the Biblical account of Jews and Arabs having a common ancestor. About two-thirds of Israeli Arabs and Arabs in the territories and a similar proportion of Israeli Jews are the descendants of at least three common ancestors who lived in the Middle East in the Neolithic period. However, the Palestinian Arab clade includes two Arab modal haplotypes which are found at only very low frequency among Jews, reflecting divergence and/or large scale admixture from non-local populations to the Palestinians.<sup>[56]</sup>

A study of haplotypes of the Y-chromosome, published in 2000, addressed the paternal origins of Ashkenazi Jews. Hammer *et al.*<sup>[47]</sup> found that the Y chromosome of some Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews contained mutations that are also common among Middle Eastern peoples, but uncommon in the general European population. This suggested that the male ancestors of the Ashkenazi Jews could be traced mostly to the Middle East. The proportion of male genetic admixture in Ashkenazi Jews amounts to less than 0.5% per generation over an estimated 80 generations, with "relatively minor contribution of European Y chromosomes to the Ashkenazim," and a total admixture estimate

"very similar to Motulsky's average estimate of 12.5%." This supported the finding that "Diaspora Jews from Europe, Northwest Africa, and the Near East resemble each other more closely than they resemble their non-Jewish neighbors." However, when all haplotypes were included in the analysis, *m* (the admixture percentage) increased to  $23\% \pm 7\%$ . In addition, of the Jewish populations in this cluster, the Ashkenazim were closest to South European populations, specifically the Greeks, and to the Turks.<sup>[47]</sup>

In Jewish populations, Haplogroup **J1** (defined by the 267 marker) constitutes 30% of the Yemenite Jews<sup>[57]</sup> 20.0% of the Ashkenazim results and 12% of the Sephardic results.<sup>[57][58][59][60]</sup> However, J1 is most frequent in Yemen (76%),<sup>[61][62]</sup> Saudi (64%),<sup>[63]</sup> Qatar (58%).<sup>[62]</sup> J1 is generally frequent amongst Negev Bedouins (62%)<sup>[64]</sup>. It is also very common among other Arabs such as those of the Levant, i.e. Palestinian (38.4%),<sup>[58]</sup> Syria (30%), Lebanon (25%).<sup>[65][66]</sup> In Europe, higher frequencies have been reported in the central Adriatic regions of Italy: Gargano (17.2%),<sup>[67]</sup> Pescara (15%),<sup>[67]</sup> in the Mediterranean Paola (11.1%)<sup>[67]</sup> and in South Sicilian Ragusa (10.7%).<sup>[68]</sup> Fairly high frequencies have also been reported in other nearby Mediterranean areas: Crete (8.3%),<sup>[69]</sup> Malta (7.8%), Cyprus (6.2%),<sup>[70]</sup> Greece (5.3%).<sup>[69]</sup>

Haplogroup **J2** which is found in the Sephardic Jews (29%)<sup>[71]</sup> and Ashkenazi Jews (23%),<sup>[71]</sup> or 19%.<sup>[72]</sup> is found mainly in the Fertile Crescent, the Caucasus,<sup>[73]</sup> Anatolia, the Balkans, Italy, the Mediterranean littoral, the Iranian plateau, Central Asia, and South Asia.<sup>[71]</sup> More specifically, it is found in Iraq,<sup>[74]</sup> Syria, Lebanon,<sup>[75]</sup> Turkey, Israel, Palestine, Greece, Italy and the eastern coasts of the Iberian Peninsula,<sup>[67]</sup> and more frequently in Iraqis 29.7%,<sup>[76]</sup> Lebanese 25%,<sup>[77]</sup> Palestinians 16.8%,<sup>[71]</sup> Syrians 22.5%,<sup>[78]</sup> Kurds 28.4%, Saudi Arabia 15.92%,<sup>[79]</sup> Jordan 14.3%, Oman 10–15%,<sup>[80]</sup> UAE 10.4%, Yemen 9.7%,<sup>[62]</sup> in Israel,<sup>[71]</sup> in Palestine,<sup>[71]</sup> and in Turkey.<sup>[81]</sup>

## Female lineages: Mitochondrial DNA

Before 2006, geneticists largely attributed the genesis of most of the world's Jewish populations to founding acts by males who migrated from the Middle East and "by the women from each local population whom they took as wives and converted to Judaism", though no genetic relation was found between Jewish and non Jewish female lineages. However, more recent findings of studies of maternally inherited mitochondrial DNA, at least in Ashkenazi Jews, has led to a review of this archetype.<sup>[82]</sup> This research has suggested that, in addition to Israelite male, significant female founder ancestry might also derive from the Middle East-with 40% of Ashkenazim descended from four women lived about 1000–1500 years ago in the Middle East.<sup>[82]</sup> In addition, Behar (2006) suggested that the rest of Ashkenazi mtDNA is originated from about 150 women, most of those were probably of Middle Eastern origin.<sup>[83]</sup> Approximately 32% of people with Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry belong to the mtDNA haplogroup K. This high percentage points to a genetic bottleneck occurring some 100 generations ago.<sup>[84]</sup>

Research in 2008 found significant founder effects in many non-Ashkenazi Jewish populations. In Belmonte, Azerbaijani, Georgian, Bene Israel and Libyan Jewish communities "a single mother was sufficient to explain at least 40% of their present-day mtDNA variation". In addition, "the Cochin and Tunisian Jewish communities show an attenuated pattern with two founding mothers explaining >30% of the variation." In contrast, Bulgarian, Turkish, Moroccan and Ethiopian Jews were heterogeneous with no evidence "for a narrow founder effect or depletion of mtDNA variation attributable to drift". The authors noted that "the first three of these communities were established following the Spanish expulsion and/or received large influxes of individuals from the Iberian Peninsula and high variation presently observed, probably reflects high overall mtDNA diversity among Jews of Spanish descent. Likewise, the mtDNA pool of Ethiopian Jews reflects the rich maternal lineage variety of East Africa." Jewish communities from Iraq, Iran, and Yemen showed a "third and intermediate pattern... consistent with a founding event, but not a narrow one".<sup>[85]</sup>

In this and other studies Yemenite Jews differ from other Mizrahim, as well as from Ashkenazim, in the proportion of sub-Saharan African gene types which have entered their gene pools.<sup>[86]</sup> African-specific Hg L(xM,N) lineages were found only in Yemenite and Ethiopian Jewish populations.<sup>[85]</sup> Among Yemenites, the average stands at 35% lineages within the past 3,000 years.<sup>[86]</sup>

## Genome-wide association and linkage studies

In genetic epidemiology, a genome-wide association study (GWA study, or GWAS) is an examination of all or most of the genes (the genome) of different individuals of a particular species to see how much the genes vary from individual to individual. These techniques were originally designed for epidemiological uses, to identify genetic associations with observable traits.<sup>[87]</sup>

A 2006 study by Seldin, *et al.* used over five thousand autosomal SNPs to demonstrate European genetic substructure amongst the Ashkenazi. The results showed "a consistent and reproducible distinction between 'northern' and 'southern' European population groups". Most northern, central, and eastern Europeans (Finns, Swedes, English, Irish, Germans, and Ukrainians) showed >90% in the 'northern' population group, while most individual participants with southern European ancestry (Italians, Greeks, Portuguese, Spaniards) showed >85% in the 'southern' group. Both Ashkenazi Jews as well as Sephardic Jews showed >85% membership in the "southern" group. Referring to the Jews clustering with southern Europeans, the authors state the results were "consistent with a later Mediterranean origin of these ethnic groups".<sup>[88]</sup>

A 2007 study by Bauchet, *et al.* found that Ashkenazi Jews were most closely clustered with Arabic North African populations when compared to Global population, and in the European structure analysis, they share similarities only with Greeks and Southern Italians, reflecting their east Mediterranean origins.<sup>[89][90]</sup>

A 2010 study on Jewish ancestry by Atzmon-Ostrer *et al.* stated "Two major groups were identified by principal component, phylogenetic, and identity by descent (IBD) analysis: Middle Eastern Jews and European/Syrian Jews. The IBD segment sharing and the proximity of European Jews to each other and to southern European populations suggested similar origins for European Jewry and refuted large-scale genetic contributions of Central and Eastern European and Slavic populations to the formation of Ashkenazi Jewry.", as both groups—the Middle Eastern Jews and European/Syrian Jews shared common ancestors in the Middle East about 2500 years ago. The study examines genetic markers spread across the entire genome and shows that the Jewish groups (Ashkenazi and non Ashkenazi) share large swaths of DNA, indicating close relationships and that each of the Jewish groups in the study (Iranian, Iraqi, Syrian, Italian, Turkish, Greek and Ashkenazi) has its own genetic signature but is more closely related to the other Jewish groups than to their non Jewish fellow countrymen.<sup>[91]</sup> Atzmon's team found that the SNP markers in genetic segments of 3 million DNA letters or longer were 10 times more likely to be identical among Jews than non-Jews. Results of the analysis also tally with biblical accounts of the fate of the Jews. Using their DNA analysis, the authors traced the ancestors of all Jews to Persia and Babylon, areas that now form part of Iran and Iraq.<sup>[92]</sup> The study also found that with respect to non-Jewish European groups, the population most closely related to Ashkenazi Jews are modern-day Italians. The study speculated that the genetic-similarity between Ashkenazi Jews and Italians may be due to inter-marriage and conversions in the time of the Roman Empire. It was also found that any two Ashkenazi Jewish participants in the study shared about as much DNA as fourth or fifth cousins<sup>[93][94]</sup>

These authors also found that the genetic evidence was compatible with the historically attested 'demographic miracle' when the population of Ashkenazi Jews rose from 50,000 at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century to 5,000,000 at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

A 2010 study by Bray *et al.*, using SNP microarray techniques and linkage analysis, estimated that 35 to 55 percent of the modern Ashkenazi genome is specifically traceable to Europe, and that European "admixture is considerably higher than previous estimates by studies that used the Y chromosome". The study assumed Druze and Palestinian Arabs populations to represent the reference to world Jewry ancestor genome. With this reference point, the linkage disequilibrium in the Ashkenazi Jewish population was interpreted as "matches signs of interbreeding or 'admixture' between Middle Eastern and European populations". In their press release, Bray stated: "We were surprised to find evidence that Ashkenazi Jews have higher heterozygosity than Europeans, contradicting the widely-held presumption that they have been a largely isolated group". "Thus, the AJ population shows evidence of past founding events; however, admixture and selection have also strongly influenced its current genetic makeup." The authors note that their results will require further investigation.<sup>[95][96]</sup>



A 2012 study by Campbell *et al* of North African Jewish groups (Moroccan, Algerian, Tunisian, Djerban and Libyan) by a variety of methods including principal components, neighbor joining trees and identity by descent showed that these populations showed a high degree of endogamy and were part of a larger Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jewish group.<sup>[97]</sup> These findings are consistent with the known history of the North African Jews: the founding of the population during Classical Antiquity with proselytism of local populations; this in turn was followed by genetic isolation with the rise of Christianity and then Islam; and finally admixture following the emigration of Sephardic Jews during the Inquisition.<sup>[97]</sup> Regarding the relationship between this geographically distinct Jewish groups and their host population this study concludes that "Jewish groups generally demonstrated closer relatedness with other Jewish communities than with geographically near non-Jewish populations."<sup>[98]</sup>

## Demographics

### Population centers

Country <sup>[1]</sup>	Jews, №	Jews, %
 Israel	5,916,200 <sup>[99]</sup>	75.52%
 United States	5,275,000	1.71%
 France	483,500	0.77%
 Canada	375,000	1.11%
 United Kingdom	292,000	0.47%
 Russia	205,000	0.15%
 Argentina	182,300	0.45%
 Germany	119,000	0.15%
 Australia	107,500	0.50%
 Brazil	95,600	0.05%
 Ukraine	71,500	0.16%
 South Africa	70,800	0.14%
 Hungary	48,600	0.49%
 Mexico	39,400	0.04%
 Belgium	30,300	0.28%
 Netherlands	30,000	0.18%
 Italy	28,400	0.05%
<b>World</b>	<b>13,558,300</b>	<b>0.21%</b>

According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics there were 13,421,000 Jews worldwide in 2009, roughly 0.19% of the world's population at the time.<sup>[100]</sup>

According to the estimates for 2007 of the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute, the world's Jewish population is 13.2 million.<sup>[101]</sup> Adherents.com cites figures ranging from 12 to 18 million.<sup>[102]</sup> These statistics incorporate both practicing Jews affiliated with synagogues and the Jewish community, and approximately 4.5 million unaffiliated and secular Jews.

## Israel

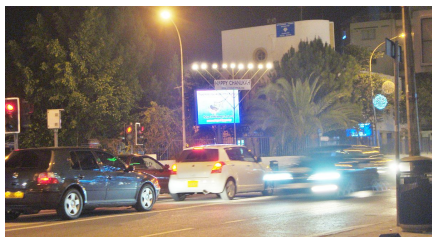
Israel, the Jewish nation-state, is the only country in which Jews make up a majority of the citizens.<sup>[103]</sup> Israel was established as an independent democratic and Jewish state on May 14, 1948.<sup>[104]</sup> Of the 120 members in its parliament, the Knesset,<sup>[105]</sup> currently, 12 members of the Knesset are Arab citizens of Israel, most representing Arab political parties and one of Israel's Supreme Court judges is a Palestinian Arab.<sup>[106]</sup>

Between 1948 and 1958, the Jewish population rose from 800,000 to two million.<sup>[107]</sup> Currently, Jews account for 75.4% of the Israeli population, or 5.9 million people.<sup>[108]</sup> The early years of the State of Israel were marked by the mass immigration of Holocaust survivors and Jews fleeing Arab lands.<sup>[109]</sup> Israel also has a large population of Ethiopian Jews, many of whom were airlifted to Israel in the late 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>[110]</sup> Between 1974 and 1979 nearly 227,258 immigrants arrived in Israel, about half being from the Soviet Union.<sup>[111]</sup> This period also saw an increase in immigration to Israel from Western Europe, Latin America, and North America.<sup>[112]</sup>

A trickle of immigrants from other communities has also arrived, including Indian Jews and others, as well as some descendants of Ashkenazi Holocaust survivors who had settled in countries such as the United States, Argentina, Australia, Chile, and South Africa. Some Jews have emigrated from Israel elsewhere, because of economic problems or disillusionment with political conditions and the continuing Arab-Israeli conflict. Jewish Israeli emigrants are known as yordim.<sup>[113]</sup>

## Diaspora (outside Israel)

The waves of immigration to the United States and elsewhere at the turn of the 19th century, the founding of Zionism and later events, including pogroms in Russia, the massacre of European Jewry during the Holocaust, and the founding of the state of Israel, with the subsequent Jewish exodus from Arab lands, all resulted in substantial shifts in the population centers of world Jewry by the end of the 20th century.<sup>[114]</sup>



Public Hanukkah menorah in Nicosia, Cyprus

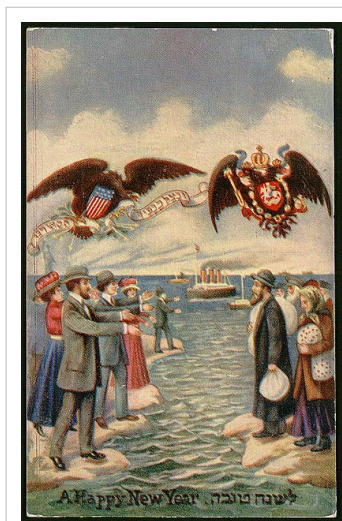
Currently, the largest Jewish community outside Israel, and either the largest or second-largest Jewish community in the world is located in the United States, with 5.2 million to 6.4 million Jews by various estimates. Elsewhere in the Americas, there are also large Jewish populations in Canada (315,000), Argentina (180,000-300,000), and Brazil (196,000-600,000), and smaller populations in Mexico, Uruguay, Venezuela, Chile, and several other countries (see History of the Jews in Latin America).<sup>[116]</sup>

Western Europe's largest Jewish community, and the third-largest Jewish community in the world, can be found in France, home to between 483,000 and 500,000 Jews, the majority of whom are immigrants or refugees from North African Arab countries such as Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia (or their descendants).<sup>[117]</sup> The United Kingdom has a Jewish community of 292,000. In Eastern Europe, there are anywhere from 350,000 to one million Jews living in the former Soviet Union, but exact figures are difficult to establish. Germany, with 119,000 Jews, has the fastest-growing Jewish community outside Israel, especially in Berlin. Tens of thousands of Jews from the former Eastern Bloc have settled in Germany since the fall of the Berlin Wall,<sup>[118]</sup> and thousands of Israelis live in Germany, either permanently or temporarily, for economic reasons.<sup>[119]</sup>

The Arab countries of North Africa and the Middle East were home to around 900,000 Jews in 1945. Fueled by anti-Zionism<sup>[120]</sup> after the founding of Israel, systematic persecution caused almost all of these Jews to flee to Israel, North America, and Europe in the 1950s (see Jewish exodus from Arab lands). Today, around 8,000 Jews remain in all Arab nations combined.<sup>[121]</sup>

Iran is home to almost 9,000 Jews, and has the second-largest Jewish population in the Middle East after Israel. From 1948 to 1953, about one-third of Iranian Jews, most of them poor, emigrated to Israel. Before the 1979 revolution, there were 100,000 Jews living in the country. After the revolution, most of them left Iran for Israel, Europe, or the United States. Most Iranian-Jewish emigres, along with many non-Jewish Iranians, went to the US, especially Los Angeles, where the principal Iranian community is called "Tehrangles".<sup>[121][122]</sup>

Outside Europe, the Americas, the Middle East, and the rest of Asia, there are significant Jewish populations in Australia (120,000) and South Africa (70,000).<sup>[121]</sup> There is also a 7,000-strong community in New Zealand.



In this Rosh Hashana greeting card from the early 1900s, Russian Jews, packs in hand, gaze at the American relatives beckoning them to the United States. Over two million Jews fled the pogroms of the Russian Empire to the safety of the US between 1881 and 1924.<sup>[115]</sup>

## Demographic changes

### Assimilation

Since at least the time of the Ancient Greeks, a proportion of Jews have assimilated into the wider non-Jewish society around them, by either choice or force, ceasing to practice Judaism and losing their Jewish identity.<sup>[123]</sup> Assimilation took place in all areas, and during all time periods,<sup>[123]</sup> with some Jewish communities, for example the Kaifeng Jews of China, disappearing entirely.<sup>[124]</sup> The advent of the Jewish Enlightenment of the 18th century (see Haskalah) and the subsequent emancipation of the Jewish populations of Europe and America in the 19th century, accelerated the situation, encouraging Jews to increasingly participate in, and become part of, secular society. The result has been a growing trend of assimilation, as Jews marry non-Jewish spouses and stop participating in the Jewish community.<sup>[125]</sup>

Rates of interreligious marriage vary widely: In the United States, they are just under 50%,<sup>[126]</sup> in the United Kingdom, around 53%, in France, around 30%,<sup>[127]</sup> and in Australia and Mexico, as low as 10%.<sup>[128][129]</sup> In the United States, only about a third of children from intermarriages affiliate themselves with Jewish religious practice.<sup>[130]</sup> The result is that most countries in the Diaspora have steady or slightly declining religiously Jewish populations as Jews continue to assimilate into the countries in which they live.

## War and persecution

The Jewish people and Judaism have experienced various persecutions throughout Jewish history. During late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages the Roman Empire (in its later phases known as the Byzantine Empire) repeatedly repressed the Jewish population, first by ejecting them from their homelands during the pagan Roman era and later by officially establishing them as second-class citizens during the Christian Roman era.<sup>[131][132]</sup>

According to James Carroll, "Jews accounted for 10% of the total population of the Roman Empire. By that ratio, if other factors had not intervened, there would be 200 million Jews in the world today, instead of something like 13 million."<sup>[133]</sup>

Later in medieval Western Europe, further persecutions of Jews in the name of Christianity occurred, notably during the Crusades—when Jews all over Germany were massacred—and a series of expulsions from England, Germany, France, and, in the largest expulsion of all, Spain and Portugal after the Reconquista (the Catholic Reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula), where both unbaptized Sephardic Jews and the ruling Muslim Moors were expelled.<sup>[134][135]</sup>

In the Papal States, which existed until 1870, Jews were required to live only in specified neighborhoods called ghettos.<sup>[136]</sup> In the 19th and (before the end of World War II) 20th centuries, the Roman Catholic Church adhered to a distinction between "good antisemitism" and "bad antisemitism". The "bad" kind promoted hatred of Jews because of their descent. This was considered un-Christian because the Christian message was intended for all of humanity regardless of ethnicity; anyone could become a Christian. The "good" kind criticized alleged Jewish conspiracies to control newspapers, banks, and other institutions, to care only about accumulation of wealth, etc.<sup>[137]</sup>

Islam and Judaism have a complex relationship. Traditionally Jews and Christians living in Muslim lands, known as dhimmis, were allowed to practice their religions and to administer their internal affairs, but subject to certain conditions.<sup>[138]</sup> They had to pay the jizya (a per capita tax imposed on free adult non-Muslim males) to the Islamic state.<sup>[138]</sup> Dhimmis had an inferior status under Islamic rule. They had several social and legal disabilities such as prohibitions against bearing arms or giving testimony in courts in cases involving Muslims.<sup>[139]</sup> Many of the disabilities were highly symbolic. The one described by Bernard Lewis as "most degrading"<sup>[140]</sup> was the requirement of distinctive clothing, not found in the Qur'an or hadith but invented in early medieval Baghdad; its enforcement was highly erratic.<sup>[140]</sup> On the other hand, Jews rarely faced martyrdom or exile, or forced compulsion to change their religion, and they were mostly free in their choice of residence and profession.<sup>[141]</sup>

Notable exceptions include the massacre of Jews and/or forcible conversion of some Jews by the rulers of the Almohad dynasty in Al-Andalus in the 12th century,<sup>[142]</sup> as well as in Islamic Persia,<sup>[143]</sup> and the forced confinement of Moroccan Jews to walled quarters known as mellahs beginning from the 15th century and especially in the early 19th century.<sup>[144]</sup> In modern times, it has become commonplace for standard antisemitic themes to be conflated with anti-Zionist publications and pronouncements of Islamic movements such as Hezbollah and Hamas, in the pronouncements of various agencies of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and even in the newspapers and other publications of Turkish Refah Partisi.<sup>[145]</sup>



Jews (identifiable by the distinctive hats that they were required to wear) being killed by Christian knights. French Bible illustration from 1255.



World War I poster shows a soldier cutting the bonds from a Jewish man, who says, "You have cut my bonds and set me free - now let me help you set others free!"





Jews in Minsk, 1941. Before World War II some 40% of the population was Jewish. By the time the Red Army retook the city on 3 July 1944, there were only a few Jewish survivors.

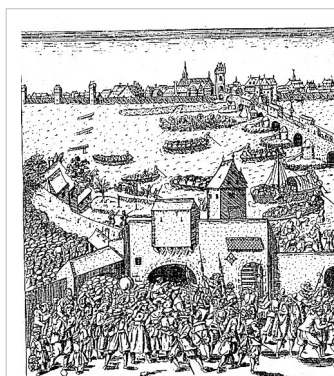
Throughout history, many rulers, empires and nations have oppressed their Jewish populations or sought to eliminate them entirely. Methods employed ranged from expulsion to outright genocide; within nations, often the threat of these extreme methods was sufficient to silence dissent. The history of antisemitism includes the First Crusade which resulted in the massacre of Jews;<sup>[134]</sup> the Spanish Inquisition (led by Torquemada) and the Portuguese Inquisition, with their persecution and *autos-da-fé* against the New Christians and Marrano Jews;<sup>[146]</sup> the Bohdan Chmielnicki Cossack massacres in Ukraine;<sup>[147]</sup> the Pogroms backed by the Russian Tsars;<sup>[148]</sup> as well as expulsions from Spain, Portugal, England, France, Germany, and other countries in which the Jews had settled.<sup>[135]</sup> According to a recent study published in the American Journal of Human Genetics 19.8% of the modern Iberian population has Sephardic Jewish ancestry,<sup>[149]</sup> indicating that the number of conversos may have been much higher than originally thought.<sup>[150][151]</sup>

The persecution reached a peak in Nazi Germany's Final Solution, which led to the Holocaust and the slaughter of approximately 6 million Jews.<sup>[152]</sup> The Holocaust — the state-led systematic persecution and genocide of European Jews (and certain communities of North African Jews in European controlled North Africa) and other minority groups of Europe during World War II by Germany and its collaborators remains the most notable modern day persecution of Jews.<sup>[153]</sup> The persecution and genocide were accomplished in stages. Legislation to remove the Jews from civil society was enacted years before the outbreak of World War II.<sup>[154]</sup> Concentration camps were established in which inmates were used as slave labour until they died of exhaustion or disease.<sup>[155]</sup> Where the Third Reich conquered new territory in eastern Europe, specialized units called Einsatzgruppen murdered Jews and political opponents in mass shootings.<sup>[156]</sup> Jews and Roma were crammed into ghettos before being transported hundreds of miles by freight train to extermination camps where, if they survived the journey, the majority of them were killed in gas chambers.<sup>[157]</sup> Virtually every arm of Germany's bureaucracy was involved in the logistics of the mass murder, turning the country into what one Holocaust scholar has called "a genocidal nation."<sup>[158]</sup>

## Migrations

Throughout Jewish history, Jews have repeatedly been directly or indirectly expelled from both their original homeland and the areas in which they have resided. This experience as refugees has shaped Jewish identity and religious practice in many ways, and is thus a major element of Jewish history.<sup>[159]</sup> The incomplete list of major and other noteworthy migrations that follows includes numerous instances of expulsion or departure under duress:

- The patriarch Abraham was a migrant to the land of Canaan from Ur of the Chaldees<sup>[160]</sup> after an attempt on his life by King Nimrod.<sup>[161]</sup>
- The Children of Israel experienced the Exodus (meaning "departure" or "exit" in Greek) from ancient Egypt, as recorded in the Book of Exodus.<sup>[162]</sup>
- The Kingdom of Israel was sent into permanent exile by Assyria, initially to the Upper Mesopotamian provinces of the Assyrian Empire,<sup>[163]</sup> from whence they scattered all over the world (or at least to unknown locations).<sup>[164]</sup>



Etching of the expulsion of the Jews from Frankfurt on August 23, 1614. The text says: "1380 persons old and young were counted at the exit of the gate"



- The Kingdom of Judah was exiled by Babylonia,<sup>[165]</sup> then returned to Judea by Cyrus the Great of the Persian Achaemenid Empire,<sup>[166]</sup> and then many were exiled again by the Roman Empire.<sup>[167]</sup>
- The 2,000 year dispersion of the Jewish diaspora beginning under the Roman Empire, as Jews were spread throughout the Roman world and, driven from land to land, and settled wherever they could live freely enough to practice their religion. Over the course of the diaspora the center of Jewish life moved from Babylonia<sup>[168]</sup> to the Iberian Peninsula<sup>[169]</sup> to Poland<sup>[170]</sup> to the United States<sup>[171]</sup> and, as a result of Zionism, back to Israel.<sup>[172]</sup>
- Many expulsions during the Middle Ages and Enlightenment in Europe, including: 1290, 16,000 Jews were expelled from England, see the (*Statute of Jewry*); in 1396, 100,000 from France; in 1421 thousands were expelled from Austria. Many of these Jews settled in Eastern Europe, especially Poland.<sup>[173]</sup>
- Following the Spanish Inquisition in 1492, the Spanish population of around 200,000 Sephardic Jews were expelled by the Spanish crown and Catholic church, followed by expulsions in 1493 in Sicily (37,000 Jews) and Portugal in 1496. The expelled Jews fled mainly to the Ottoman Empire, the Netherlands, and North Africa, others migrating to Southern Europe and the Middle East.<sup>[174]</sup>
- During the 19th century, France's policies of equal citizenship regardless of religion led to the immigration of Jews (especially from Eastern and Central Europe).<sup>[175]</sup>
- The arrival of millions of Jews in the New World, including immigration of over two million Eastern European Jews to the United States from 1880–1925, see History of the Jews in the United States and History of the Jews in Russia and the Soviet Union.<sup>[176]</sup>
- The Pogroms in Eastern Europe,<sup>[148]</sup> the rise of modern antisemitism,<sup>[177]</sup> the Holocaust,<sup>[178]</sup> and the rise of Arab nationalism<sup>[179]</sup> all served to fuel the movements and migrations of huge segments of Jewry from land to land and continent to continent, until they arrived back in large numbers at their original historical homeland in Israel.<sup>[172]</sup>
- The Islamic Revolution of Iran caused many Iranian Jews to flee Iran. Most found refuge in the US (particularly Los Angeles, CA) and Israel. Smaller communities of Persian Jews exist in Canada and Western Europe.<sup>[180]</sup>
- When the Soviet Union collapsed, many of the Jews in the affected territory (who had been refuseniks) were suddenly allowed to leave. This produced a wave of migration to Israel in the early 1990s.<sup>[113]</sup>



Jews fleeing pogroms, 1882

## Growth



A man praying at the Western Wall

Israel is the only country with a Jewish population that is consistently growing through natural population increase, though the Jewish populations of other countries, in Europe and North America, have recently increased through immigration. In the Diaspora, in almost every country the Jewish population in general is either declining or steady, but Orthodox and Haredi Jewish communities, whose members often shun birth control for religious reasons, have experienced rapid population growth.<sup>[181]</sup>

Orthodox and Conservative Judaism discourage proselytism to non-Jews, but many Jewish groups have tried to reach out to the assimilated Jewish communities of the Diaspora in order for them to reconnect to their Jewish roots. Additionally, while in principle Reform Judaism favors seeking new members for the faith, this position has not translated into active proselytism, instead taking the form of an effort to reach out to non-Jewish spouses of intermarried couples.<sup>[182]</sup>

There is also a trend of Orthodox movements pursuing secular Jews in order to give them a stronger Jewish identity so there is less chance of intermarriage. As a result of the efforts by these and other Jewish groups over the past 25 years, there has been a trend (known as the *Baal Teshuva* movement) for secular Jews to become more religiously observant, though the demographic implications of the trend are unknown.<sup>[183]</sup> Additionally, there is also a growing rate of conversion to Jews by Choice of gentiles who make the decision to head in the direction of becoming Jews.<sup>[184]</sup>

## Leadership

There is no single governing body for the Jewish community, nor a single authority with responsibility for religious doctrine.<sup>[185]</sup> Instead, a variety of secular and religious institutions at the local, national, and international levels lead various parts of the Jewish community on a variety of issues.<sup>[186]</sup>

## Notable individuals

Jews have made contributions in a broad range of human endeavors, including the sciences, arts, politics, and business.<sup>[187][188]</sup> Although Jews comprise only 0.2% of the world's population, over 20%<sup>[188][189][190][191][192][193][194]</sup> of Nobel Prize laureates have been Jewish, with multiple winners in each field.

## Notes

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## External links

### Information

- Homepage (<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/>) of the Jewish Virtual Library
- Archives (<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/>) of the Jewish Encyclopedia
- Judaism 101 (<http://www.jewfaq.org/index.htm>)












### Organizations


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-

# Levant

<div>Levant</div> <div>بلاد الشام</div> <div>Bilād ash-Shām</div> <div>المشرق العربي</div> <div>al-Mašhriq al-'Arabiyy</div>	
<div></div> <div>The Levant region.</div>	
Countries and regions	<div> Cyprus</div> <div> Turkey</div> <div> Israel</div> <div> Jordan</div> <div> Lebanon</div> <div> Northern Cyprus (Recognised only by Turkey)</div> <div> Palestinian Authority</div> <div> Syria</div> <div>Sometimes Included:</div> <div> Iraq</div> <div> Sinai Peninsula</div>
Population	47,129,325 <sup>[1]</sup>
Languages	Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Bukhori, Cypriot Maronite Arabic, French, Georgian, German, Greek, Hebrew, Bukhori, Italian, Kayla, Kurdish, Ladino, Malayalam, Marathi, Persian, Polish, Qwara, Romani, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Syriac, Turkish, Ukrainian, Western Neo-Aramaic and Yiddish.
Time Zones	UTC+02:00 (EET) (Turkey and Cyprus) to UTC+03:00 (Iraq)

The **Levant** (  /ləˈvænt/, Arabic: بلاد الشام *Bilād ash-Shām*) or Arabic: المشرق العربي *al-Mašhriq al-'Arabiyy*) is a geographic and cultural term referring to the region of the "eastern Mediterranean littoral between Anatolia and Egypt".<sup>[2]</sup> The Levant includes most of modern Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Cyprus, Hatay Province and parts of southeastern Turkey, some regions of northwestern Iraq and the Sinai Peninsula.

Precise definitions have varied over time, and the term originally had a broader and less well defined usage.<sup>[3]</sup> The Levant has been described as the "crossroads of western Asia, the eastern Mediterranean and northeast Africa".<sup>[4]</sup>

## Etymology

The term *Levant*, which first appeared in English in 1497, originally meant the East in general or "Mediterranean lands east of Italy".<sup>[5]</sup> It is borrowed from the French *levant* 'rising', that is, the point where the sun rises.<sup>[6]</sup> Similar etymologies are found in Greek Ἀνατολή (*Anatolē*, cf. Anatolia), in Germanic *Morgenland* (which means "land of the morning") and in the Hungarian *Kelet* (which literally means *the place of rising*). Most notably, "Orient" and its Latin source *oriens* meaning "east", is literally "rising", deriving from Latin *orior* "rise".

## Early European usage

The term became current in English in the 16th century, along with the first English merchant adventurers in the region: English ships appeared in the Mediterranean in the 1570s and the English merchant company signed its agreement ("capitulations") with the Grand Turk in 1579 (Braudel). The English Levant Company was founded in 1581 to trade with the Ottoman Empire and in 1670 the French Compagnie du Levant was founded for the same purpose. At this time, the Far East was known as the "Upper Levant".<sup>[3]</sup>

In 19th-century travel writing, the term incorporated eastern regions under then current or recent governance of the Ottoman empire, such as Greece. In 19th-century archaeology, it referred to overlapping cultures in this region during and after prehistoric times, intending to reference the place instead of any one culture.

## Since World War I

The French Mandates of Syria and Lebanon, from 1920 to 1946, were called the Levant states. The term became common in archaeology at that time, as many important early excavations were made then, such as Mari and Ugarit. Since these sites could not be classified as Mesopotamian, North African, or Arabian, they came to be referred to as "Levantine."

## Since World War II

Today "Levant" is typically used by archaeologists and historians with reference to the prehistory and the ancient and medieval history of the region, as when discussing the Crusades. The term is also occasionally employed to refer to modern or contemporary events, peoples, states or parts of states in the same region, namely Cyprus, Iraq, Israel, Palestinian Authority, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria (compare with Near East, Middle East, Eastern Mediterranean and Western Asia). Several researchers include the island of Cyprus in Levantine studies, including the Council for British Research in the Levant,<sup>[7]</sup> the UCLA Near Eastern Languages and Cultures department,<sup>[8]</sup> and the UCL Institute of Archaeology,<sup>[4]</sup> the last of which has dated the connection between Cyprus and mainland Levant to the early Iron Age. Currently, a dialect of Levantine Arabic, Cypriot Maronite Arabic, is the most-spoken minority language in Cyprus. Archaeologists seeking a neutral orientation that is neither biblical nor national have utilized terms such as Syro-Palestinian archaeology and archaeology of the southern Levant.<sup>[9][10]</sup>

## People

The largest religious and ethnic group in the Levant is Sunni Muslim Arabs, but there are also many other groups. Until the mid-20th century, there were Jews in some parts of the Levant; now most are in Israel, joining those who returned under Zionism. There are many Christian Arabs, belonging to the Antiochian Orthodox (Greek/Eastern Orthodox), Maronite Catholic, belonging to the eastern Catholic, and Oriental Orthodox churches. There are Assyrians, belonging to the Assyrian Church of the East (autonomous) and the Chaldean Catholic Church (Catholic). There are largely Sunni Muslim Kurds. There are Shia Muslims (Alawite, Twelvers, and Ismailis) and Druze. There are Armenians, mostly belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Church. There are a few Arab and Armenian Protestant Christians. There are Latin Catholics, called Levantines or Franco-Levantines. There are also Circassians, Turks, Samaritans, Bedouins and Yazidis.



## Notes

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# Jewish History and Fertile Crescent

2 Wikipedia Articles

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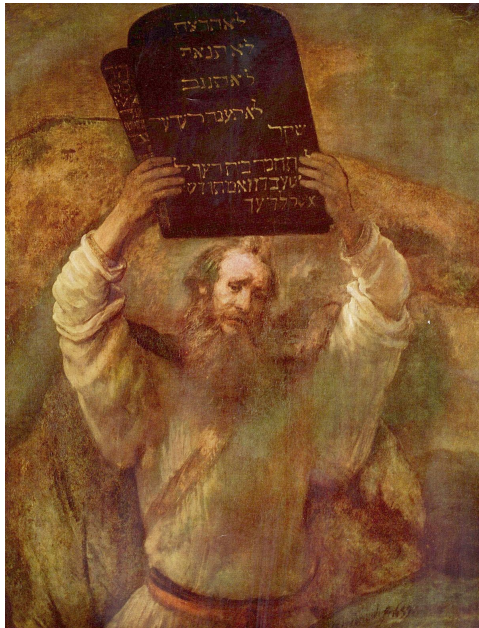
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# Jewish history

**Jewish history** is the history of the Jews, and their religion and culture, as it developed and interacted with other peoples, religions and cultures. Jewish history is over 4,000 years long and includes hundreds of different populations.

## Ancient Jewish history (c. 1500 BCE – 37 BCE)

### Ancient Israelites (c. 1500 BCE – 587 BCE)



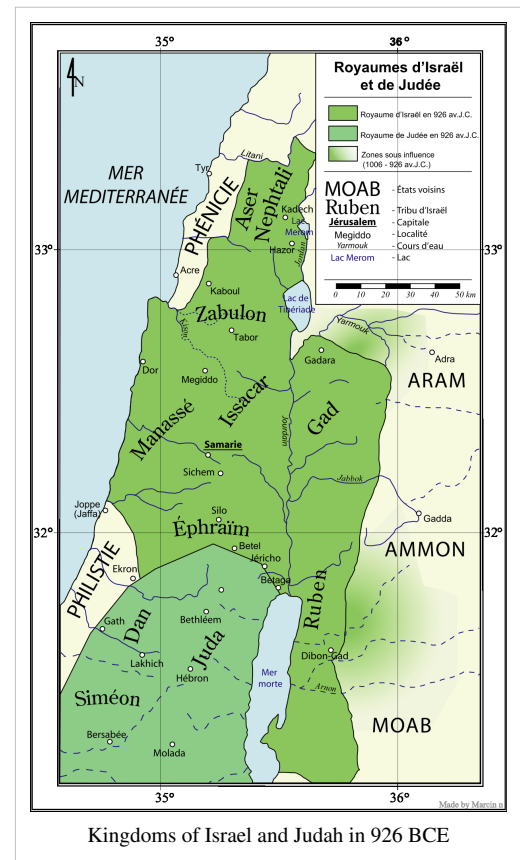
Moses with the Tablets of Stone (1659 painting by Rembrandt)

The history of the early Jews, and their neighbors, is mainly that of the Fertile Crescent and east coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It begins among those people who occupied the area lying between the Nile, Tigris and the Euphrates rivers. Surrounded by ancient seats of culture in Egypt and Babylonia, by the deserts of Arabia, and by the highlands of Asia Minor, the land of Canaan (roughly corresponding to modern Israel, the Palestinian Territories, Jordan and Lebanon) was a meeting place of civilizations. The land was traversed by old-established trade routes and possessed important harbors on the Gulf of Aqaba and on the Mediterranean coast, the latter exposing it to the influence of other cultures of the Fertile Crescent.

According to the Jewish sacred writings, which became the Hebrew Bible, Jews are descended from the ancient people of Israel who settled in the land of Canaan, located between the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River (1451 BCE). The Children of Israel shared a lineage through their common ancestors, Abraham, his son Isaac, and Isaac's son Jacob, Hebrews whose nomadic travels centered around Hebron

somewhere between 1991 and 1706 BCE, apparently leading to the establishment of the Cave of the Patriarchs as their burial site in Hebron. The Children of Israel consisted of twelve tribes, each descended from one of Jacob's twelve sons, Reuven, Shimon, Levi, Yehuda, Yissachar, Zevulun, Dan, Gad, Naftali, Asher, Yosef, and Benyamin. Jacob and his twelve sons, or so the Bible asserts, left Canaan during a severe famine and settled in Goshen of northern Egypt. While in Egypt their descendants were enslaved by the Egyptian government led by the Pharaoh. After 400 years of slavery, YHWH, the God of Israel, sent the Hebrew prophet Moses, a man from the tribe of Levi, to release the Children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. According to the Bible, the Hebrews miraculously emigrated out of Egypt (an event known as the Exodus), and returned to their ancestral homeland in Canaan. This event marks the formation of Israel as a political nation in Canaan, in 1400 BCE.<sup>[1]</sup>

However, archaeology reveals a different story of the origins of the Jewish people: they did not necessarily leave the Levant. The archaeological evidence of the largely indigenous origins of Israel in Canaan, not Egypt, is "overwhelming" and leaves "no room for an Exodus from Egypt or a 40-year pilgrimage through the Sinai wilderness", according to Biblical minimalists.<sup>[2]</sup> Many archaeologists have abandoned the archaeological investigation of Moses and the Exodus as "a fruitless pursuit".<sup>[2]</sup> A century of research by archaeologists and Egyptologists has arguably found no evidence that can be directly related to the Exodus narrative of an Egyptian captivity and the escape and travels through the wilderness, leading to the suggestion that Iron Age Israel—the kingdoms of Judah and Israel—has its origins in Canaan, not Egypt.<sup>[3][4]</sup> The culture of the earliest Israelite settlements is Canaanite, their cult-objects are those of the Canaanite god El, the pottery remains in the local Canaanite tradition, and the alphabet used is early Canaanite. Almost the sole marker distinguishing the "Israelite" villages from Canaanite sites is an absence of pig bones, although whether this can be taken as an ethnic marker or is due to other factors remains a matter of dispute.<sup>[5]</sup>



According to the Bible, after their emancipation from Egyptian slavery, the people of Israel wandered around and lived in the Sinai desert for a span of forty years before conquering Canaan in 1400 BCE under the command of Joshua. While living in the desert, according to the Biblical writings, the nation of Israel received the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai from YHWH, carried by Moses. This marked a beginning for normative Judaism, and contributed to the formation of the first Abrahamic religion. After entering Canaan, portions of the land were given to each of the twelve tribes of Israel. For several hundred years, the Land of Israel was organized into a confederacy of twelve tribes ruled by a series of Judges. After that, notes the Bible, came the Israelite monarchy. In 1000 BCE, the monarchy was established under Saul, and continued under King David and his son, Solomon. During the reign of David, the already existing city of Jerusalem became the national and spiritual capital of Israel. Solomon built the First Temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. However, the tribes were fracturing politically. Upon his death, a civil war erupted between the ten northern Israelite tribes, and the tribes of Judah (Simeon was absorbed into Judah) and Benjamin in the south. The nation split into the Kingdom of Israel in the north, and the Kingdom of Judah in the south. Israel was conquered by the Assyrian ruler Tiglath-Pileser III in the 8th century BCE. There is no commonly accepted historical record of the fate of the ten northern tribes, sometimes referred to as the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, although speculation abounds.<sup>[6]</sup>

## Babylonian captivity (c. 587 – 518 BCE)



Deportation and exile of the Jews of the ancient Kingdom of Judah to Babylon and the destruction of Jerusalem and Solomon's temple

After revolting against the new dominant power and an ensuing siege, the Kingdom of Judah was conquered by the Babylonian army in 587 BCE. The elite of the kingdom and many of their people were exiled to Babylon, where the religion developed outside their traditional temple.

After a few generations and with the conquest of Babylonia by the Persian Empire, some adherents led by prophets Ezra and Nehemiah, returned to their homeland and traditional practices. Other Jews did not permanently return and remained in exile and developed somewhat independently outside of the Land of Israel, especially following the Muslim conquests of

the Middle East in the 7th century CE.

## Post-exilic period (c. 538 – 332 BCE)

Following their return to Jerusalem and with Persian approval and financing, construction of the Second Temple in 516 BCE was completed under the leadership of the last three Jewish Prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

Hegemony in the eastern Mediterranean world was, at the time, shifting to the classical civilizations and away from the Egyptians, Syrians, and Persians. Some Canaanites had already become Phoenicians and colonized areas of the southern Mediterranean, and they went on to found the Carthaginian Empire. Greeks, meanwhile, were beginning to probe eastwards.

After the death of the last Jewish prophet and while still under Persian rule, the leadership of the Jewish people passed into the hands of five successive generations of *zugot* ("pairs of") leaders. They flourished first under the Persians and then under the Greeks. As a result the Pharisees and Sadducees were formed. Under the Persians then under the Greeks, Jewish coins were minted in Judea as *Yehud* coinage.



Model of the Second Temple of Jerusalem

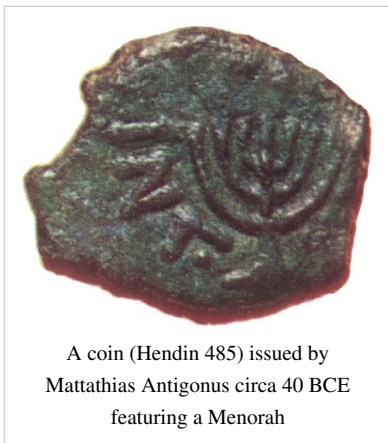
## Hellenistic period (c. 332 – 110 BCE)

In 332 BCE, the Persians were defeated by Alexander the Great of Macedon. After his demise, and the division of Alexander's empire among his generals, the Seleucid Kingdom was formed.

Greek culture was spread eastwards by the Alexandrian conquests. The Levant was not immune to this cultural spread. During this time, currents of Judaism were influenced by Hellenistic philosophy developed from the 3rd century BCE, notably the Jewish diaspora in Alexandria, culminating in the compilation of the Septuagint. An important advocate of the symbiosis of Jewish theology and Hellenistic thought is Philo.



### The Hasmonean Kingdom (110 – 63 BCE)



A coin (Hendin 485) issued by Mattathias Antigonus circa 40 BCE featuring a Menorah

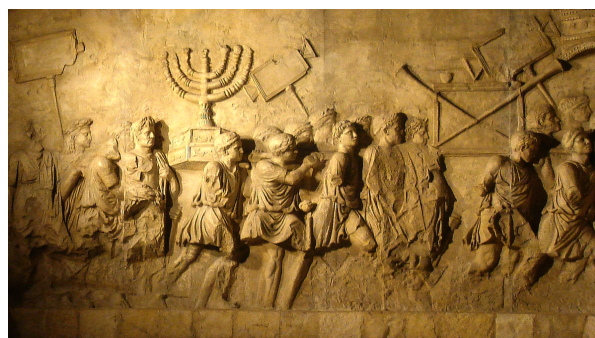
A deterioration of relations between hellenized Jews and orthodox Jews led the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes to impose decrees banning certain Jewish religious rites and traditions. Consequently, the orthodox Jews revolted under the leadership of the Hasmonean family (also known as the Maccabees). This revolt eventually led to the formation of an independent Jewish kingdom, known as the Hasmonaean Dynasty, which lasted from 165 BCE to 63 BCE.<sup>[7]</sup> The Hasmonean Dynasty eventually disintegrated as a result of civil war between the sons of Salome Alexandra, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II. The people, who did not want to be governed by a king but by theocratic clergy, made appeals in this spirit to the Roman authorities. A Roman campaign of conquest and annexation, led by Pompey, soon followed.

### Roman rule in the land of Israel (63 BCE – 324 CE)

Judea had been an independent Jewish kingdom under the Hasmoneans, but was conquered by the Roman general Pompey in 63 BCE and reorganized as a client state. (Roman expansion was going on in other areas as well, and would continue for more than a hundred and fifty years.) Later, Herod the Great was appointed "King of the Jews" by the Roman Senate, supplanting the Hasmonean dynasty. Some of his offspring held various positions after him, known as the Herodian dynasty. Briefly, from 4 BCE to 6 CE, Herod Archelaus ruled the tetrarchy of Judea as ethnarch, the Romans denying him the title of King. After the Census of Quirinius in 6, the Roman province of Judaea was formed as a satellite of Roman Syria under the rule of a prefect (as was Roman Egypt) until 41, then procurators after 44. The empire was often callous and brutal in its treatment of its Jewish subjects, see Anti-Judaism in the pre-Christian Roman Empire. In 66 CE, the Jews began to revolt against the Roman rulers of Judea. The revolt was defeated by the future Roman emperors Vespasian and Titus. In



Siege and Destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (1850 painting by David Roberts)



The sack of Jerusalem depicted on the inside wall of the Arch of Titus in Rome

the Siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the Romans destroyed much of the Temple in Jerusalem and, according to some accounts, plundered artifacts from the temple, such as the Menorah. Jews continued to live in their land in significant numbers, the Kitos War of 115–117 CE notwithstanding, until Julius Severus ravaged Judea while putting down the

Bar Kokhba revolt of 132–136 CE. 985 villages were destroyed and most of the Jewish population of central Judaea was essentially wiped out, killed, sold into slavery, or forced to flee. Banished from Jerusalem, the Jewish population now centred on Galilee. Jerusalem was renamed Aelia Capitolina and Judea was renamed Syria Palestina, to spite the Jews by naming it after their ancient enemies, the Philistines. Jews were only allowed to visit Aelia Capitolina on the day of Tisha B'Av.

## The diaspora

Many of the Judaeans were sold into slavery while others became citizens of other parts of the Roman Empire. The book of Acts in the New Testament, as well as other Pauline texts, make frequent reference to the large populations of Hellenised Jews in the cities of the Roman world. These Hellenised Jews were affected by the diaspora only in its spiritual sense, absorbing the feeling of loss and homelessness that became a cornerstone of the Jewish creed, much supported by persecutions in various parts of the world. The policy encouraging proselytism and conversion to Judaism, which spread the Jewish religion throughout the Hellenistic civilization, seems to have subsided with the wars against the Romans.

Of critical importance to the reshaping of Jewish tradition from the Temple-based religion to the rabbinic traditions of the Diaspora, was the development of the interpretations of the Torah found in the *Mishnah* and *Talmud*.

## Late Roman period in the Land of Israel

In spite of the failure of the Bar Kokhba revolt, a significant number of Jews remained in the Land of Israel. The Jews who remained there went through numerous experiences and armed conflicts against consecutive foreign occupiers. Some of the most famous and important Jewish texts were composed in Israeli cities at this time. The completion of the *Mishnah*, the system of *niqqud*, and the compilation of the *Jerusalem Talmud* are examples.

In this period the *tannaim* and *amoraim* were active, rabbis who organized and debated the Jewish oral law. The decisions and opinions of the *tannaim* are contained in the Mishnah, Beraita, Tosefta, and various Midrash compilations. The Mishnah was completed shortly after 200 CE, probably by Judah haNasi. The commentaries of the *amoraim* upon the Mishnah are compiled in the *Jerusalem Talmud*, which was completed around 400 CE, probably in Tiberias.

In 351 CE, the Jewish population in Sepphoris, under the leadership of Patricius, started a revolt against the rule of Constantius Gallus, brother-in-law of Emperor Constantius II. The revolt was eventually subdued by Gallus' general, Ursicinus.

According to Jewish tradition, in 359 CE Hillel II created the Hebrew calendar based on the lunar year. Until then, the entire Jewish community outside the land of Israel depended on the calendar sanctioned by the Sanhedrin; this was necessary for the proper observance of the Jewish holy days. However, danger threatened the participants in that sanction and the messengers who communicated their decisions to distant communities. As the religious persecutions continued, Hillel determined to provide an authorized calendar for all time to come.

In 363, shortly before launching his campaign against the Sassanid Empire, Julian II, the last pagan Roman Emperor, allowed the Jews to return to "holy Jerusalem which you have for many years longed to see rebuilt" and to rebuild the Temple. But, Julian's campaign against the Persians failed and he was killed in battle on June 26, 363. The Temple was not rebuilt.

## Middle Ages

### Byzantine period in the land of Israel (324–638)

Jews were widespread throughout the Roman Empire, and this carried on to a lesser extent in the period of Byzantine rule in the central and eastern Mediterranean. The militant and exclusive Christianity and caesaropapism of the Byzantine Empire did not treat Jews well, and the condition and influence of diaspora Jews in the Empire declined dramatically.

It was official Christian policy to convert Jews to Christianity, and the Christian leadership used the official power of Rome in their attempts. In 351 CE the Jews revolted against the added pressures of their Governor, Constantius Gallus. Gallus put down the revolt and destroyed the major cities in the Galilee area where the revolt had started. Tzippori and Lydda (site of two of the major legal academies) never recovered.

In this period, the Nasi in Tiberias, Hillel II, created an official calendar, which needed no monthly sightings of the moon. The months were set, and the calendar needed no further authority from Judea. At about the same time, the Jewish academy at Tiberias began to collate the combined Mishnah, braitot, explanations, and interpretations developed by generations of scholars who studied after the death of Judah HaNasi. The text was organized according to the order of the Mishnah: each paragraph of Mishnah was followed by a compilation of all of the interpretations, stories, and responses associated with that Mishnah. This text is called the *Jerusalem Talmud*.

The Jews of Judea received a brief respite from official persecution during the rule of the Emperor Julian the Apostate. Julian's policy was to return the kingdom to Hellenism and he encouraged the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem. As Julian's rule lasted briefly from 361 to 363, the Jews could not rebuild sufficiently before Roman Christian rule was restored over the Empire. Beginning in 398 with the consecration of St. John Chrysostom as Patriarch, the Christian rhetoric against Jews continued to rise; he preached sermons with titles such as "Against the Jews" and "On the Statues, Homily 17," in which John preaches against "the Jewish sickness".<sup>[8]</sup> Such heated language contributed to a climate of Christian distrust and hate toward the large Jewish settlements, such as those in Antioch and Constantinople.

In the beginning of the 5th century, the Emperor Theodosius issued a set of decrees establishing official prosecution against Jews. Jews were not allowed to own slaves, build new synagogues, hold public office or try cases between a Jew and a non-Jew. Intermarriage between Jew and non-Jew was made a capital offense, as was a Christian converting to Judaism. Theodosius did away with the Sanhedrin and abolished the post of Nasi. Under the Emperor Justinian, the authorities further restricted the civil rights of Jews,<sup>[9]</sup> and threatened their religious privileges.<sup>[10]</sup> The emperor interfered in the internal affairs of the synagogue,<sup>[11]</sup> and forbade, for instance, the use of the Hebrew language in divine worship. Those who disobeyed the restrictions were threatened with corporal penalties, exile, and loss of property. The Jews at Beroia, not far from Syrtis Major, who resisted the Byzantine General Belisarius in his campaign against the Vandals, were forced to embrace Christianity, and their synagogue was converted to a church.<sup>[12]</sup>

Justinian and his successors had concerns outside the province of Judea, and he had insufficient troops to enforce these regulations. As a result, the 5th century was a period when a wave of new synagogues were built, many with beautiful mosaic floors. Jews adopted the rich art forms of the Byzantine culture. Jewish mosaics of the period portray people, animals, menorahs, zodiacs, and Biblical characters. Excellent examples of these synagogue floors have been found at Beit Alpha (which includes the scene of Abraham sacrificing a ram instead of his son Isaac along with a zodiac), Tiberias, Beit Shean, and Tzippori.

The precarious existence of Jews under Byzantine rule did not long endure, largely for the explosion of the Muslim religion out of the remote Arabian peninsula (where large populations of Jews resided, see History of the Jews under Muslim Rule for more). The Muslim Caliphate ejected the Byzantines from the Holy Land (or the Levant, defined as modern Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria) within a few years of their victory at the Battle of Yarmouk in 636. Numerous Jews fled the remaining Byzantine territories in favour of residence in the Caliphate over the subsequent

centuries.

The size of the Jewish community in the Byzantine Empire was not affected by attempts by some emperors (most notably Justinian) to forcibly convert the Jews of Anatolia to Christianity, as these attempts met with very little success.<sup>[13]</sup> Historians continue to research the status of the Jews in Asian Minor during the Byzantine rule. (for a sample of views, see, for instance, J. Starr *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire, 641–1204*; S. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium*; R. Jenkins *Byzantium*; Averil Cameron, "Byzantines and Jews: Recent Work on Early Byzantium", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 20 (1996)). No systematic persecution of the type endemic at that time in Western Europe (pogroms, the stake, mass expulsions, etc.) has been recorded in Byzantium.<sup>[14]</sup> Much of the Jewish population of Constantinople remained in place after the conquest of the city by Mehmet II.

Sometime in the 7th or 8th century, the Khazars, a Turkic tribe in what is now Ukraine, seem to have converted to Judaism. The completeness of this conversion is unclear. There had been a Jewish population in the Crimea since the Hellenistic era, and the conversions may have been reinforced by Jewish migrants entering the region, who had emigrated from areas of Byzantine rule.



Mosaic pavement of a synagogue at Beit Alpha (5th century)



Mosaic in the Tzipori Synagogue (5th century)



Mosaic pavement recovered from the Hamat Gader synagogue (5th or 6th century)

## Islamic period in the land of Israel (638–1099)

In 638 CE the Byzantine Empire lost control of the Levant. The Arab Islamic Empire under Caliph Omar conquered Jerusalem and the lands of Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine and Egypt. Under the various regimes, the Jews suffered massacres and fled the inland villages toward the coast. They were subsequently induced to return inland after the coastal towns had been destroyed. After the change in control, the Jews still controlled much of the commerce in Palestine. According to the Arab geographer Al-Muqaddasi, the Jews worked as "the assayers of coins, the dyers, the tanners and the bankers in the community".<sup>[15]</sup> During the Fatimid period, many Jewish officials served in the regime.<sup>[15]</sup> Professor Moshe Gil documents that at the time of the Arab conquest in 7th century CE, the majority of the population was Jewish.<sup>[16]</sup>



## Crusaders period in the land of Israel (1099–1260)



Capture of Jerusalem, 1099



Jews (identifiable by the Judenhut they were required to wear) were massacred by Christian knights during the First Crusade in France and Germany, as illustrated in this French Bible from 1250.

In 1099, Jews helped the Arabs to defend Jerusalem against the Crusaders. When the city fell, the Crusaders gathered many Jews in a synagogue and set it on fire. In Haifa, the Jews almost single-handedly defended the town against the Crusaders, holding out for a month, (June–July 1099).<sup>[15]</sup> At this time there were Jewish communities scattered all over the country, including Jerusalem, Tiberias, Ramleh, Ashkelon, Caesarea, and Gaza. As Jews were not allowed to hold land during the Crusader period, they worked at trades and commerce in the coastal towns during times of quiescence. Most were artisans: glassblowers in Sidon, furriers and dyers in Jerusalem.<sup>[15]</sup>

During this period, the Masoretes of Tiberias established the Hebrew language orthography, or *niqqud*, a system of diacritical vowel points used in the Hebrew alphabet. Numerous piyutim and midrashim were recorded in Palestine at this time.<sup>[15]</sup>

Maimonides wrote that in 1165 he visited Jerusalem and went to the Temple Mount, where he prayed in the "great, holy house".<sup>[17]</sup> Maimonides established a yearly holiday for himself and his sons, the 6th of Cheshvan, commemorating the day he went up to pray on the Temple Mount, and another, the 9th of Cheshvan, commemorating the day he merited to pray at the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron.

In 1141 Yehuda Halevi issued a call to Jews to emigrate to the land of Israel and took on the long journey himself. After a stormy passage from Córdoba, he arrived in Egyptian Alexandria, where he was enthusiastically greeted by friends and admirers. At Damietta, he had to struggle against his heart, and the pleadings of his friend Ḥalfon ha-Levi, that he remain in Egypt, where he would be free from intolerant oppression. He started on the rough route overland. He was met along the way by Jews in , Tyre and

Damascus. Jewish legend relates that as he came near Jerusalem, overpowered by the sight of the Holy City, he sang his most beautiful elegy, the celebrated "Zionide" (*Zion ha-lo Tish'ali*). At that instant, an Arab had galloped out of a gate and rode him down; he was killed in the accident.

## Mamluk period in the land of Israel (1260–1517)

In the years 1260–1516, the land of Israel was part of the Empire of the Mamluks, who ruled first from Turkey, then from Egypt. War, uprisings, bloodshed and destruction followed the Maimonides. Jews suffered persecution and humiliation, but the surviving records note at least 30 Jewish urban and rural communities at the opening of the 16th century.

Nahmanides is recorded as settling in the Old City of Jerusalem in 1267. He moved to Acre, where he was active in spreading Jewish learning, which was at that time neglected in the Holy Land. He gathered a circle of pupils around him, and people came in crowds, even from the district of the Euphrates, to hear him. Karaites were said to have attended his lectures, among them Aaron ben Joseph the Elder. He later became one of the greatest Karaite authorities. Shortly after Nahmanides' arrival in Jerusalem, he addressed a letter to his son Nahman, in which he



described the desolation of the Holy City. At the time, it had only two Jewish inhabitants — two brothers, dyers by trade. In a later letter from Acre, Nahmanides counsels his son to cultivate humility, which he considers to be the first of virtues. In another, addressed to his second son, who occupied an official position at the Castilian court, Nahmanides recommends the recitation of the daily prayers and warns above all against immorality. Nahmanides died after reaching seventy-six, and his remains were interred at Haifa, by the grave of Yechiel of Paris.

Yechiel had emigrated to Acre in 1260, along with his son and a large group of followers.<sup>[18][19]</sup> There he established the Talmudic academy *Midrash haGadol d'Paris*.<sup>[20]</sup> He is believed to have died there between 1265 and 1268. In 1488 Obadiah ben Abraham, commentator on the Mishnah, arrived in Jerusalem; this marked a new period of return for the Jewish community in the land.

### Spain, North Africa, and the Middle East

During the Middle Ages, Jews were generally better treated by Islamic rulers than Christian ones. Despite second-class citizenship, Jews played prominent roles in Muslim courts, and experienced a "Golden Age" in Moorish Spain about 900–1100, though the situation deteriorated after that time. Riots resulting in the deaths of Jews did however occur in North Africa through the centuries and especially in Morocco, Libya and Algeria, where eventually Jews were forced to live in ghettos.<sup>[21]</sup>

During the 11th century, Muslims in Spain conducted pogroms against the Jews; those occurred in Cordoba in 1011 and in Granada in 1066.<sup>[22]</sup> During the Middle Ages, the governments of Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Yemen enacted decrees ordering the destruction of synagogues. At certain times, Jews were forced to convert to Islam or face death in some parts of Yemen, Morocco and Baghdad.<sup>[23]</sup> The Almohads, who had taken control of much of Islamic Iberia by 1172, surpassed the Almoravides in fundamentalist outlook. They treated the *dhimmis* harshly. They expelled both Jews and Christians from Morocco and Islamic Spain. Faced with the choice of death or conversion, many Jews emigrated.<sup>[24]</sup> Some, such as the family of Maimonides, fled south and east to the more tolerant Muslim lands, while others went northward to settle in the growing Christian kingdoms.<sup>[25][26]</sup>

### Europe

According to the American writer, James Carroll, "Jews accounted for 10% of the total population of the Roman Empire. By that ratio, if other factors had not intervened, there would be 200 million Jews in the world today, instead of something like 13 million."<sup>[27]</sup>

Jewish populations had existed in Europe, especially in the area of the former Roman Empire, from very early times. As Jewish males had emigrated, they took wives from local populations, as is shown by the more various MtDNA, compared to Y-DNA among Jewish populations. These groups were joined by traders and later by member of the diaspora. Records of Jewish communities in France (see History of the Jews in France) and Germany (see History of the Jews in Germany) date from the 4th century, and substantial Jewish communities in Spain were noted earlier than that.

The historian Norman Cantor and other twentieth-century scholars dispute the tradition that the Middle Ages was a uniformly difficult time for Jews. Before the Church became fully organized as an institution with an increasing array of rules, early medieval society was tolerant. Between 800 and 1100, an estimated 1.5 million Jews lived in Christian Europe. As they were not Christian, they were not included as a division of the feudal system of clergy, knights and serfs. This meant that they did not have to satisfy the oppressive demands for labor and military conscription that Christian commoners suffered. In relations with the Christian society, the Jews were protected by kings, princes and bishops, because of the crucial services they provided in three areas: financial, administrative and as doctors.<sup>[28]</sup>

Christian scholars interested in the Bible consulted with Talmudic rabbis. As the Roman Catholic Church strengthened as an institution, the Franciscan and Dominican preaching orders were founded, and there was a rise of competitive middle-class, town-dwelling Christians. By 1300, the friars and local priests staged the Passion Plays

during Holy Week, which depicted Jews (in contemporary dress) killing Christ, according to Gospel accounts. From this period, persecution of Jews and deportations became endemic. Around 1500, Jews found relative security and a renewal of prosperity in present-day Poland.<sup>[28]</sup>

After 1300, Jews suffered more discrimination and persecution in Christian Europe. As Catholics were forbidden by the church to loan money for interest, some Jews became prominent moneylenders. Christian rulers gradually saw the advantage of having such a class of men, who could supply capital for their use without being liable to excommunication. As a result, the money trade of western Europe became a specialty of the Jews. But, in almost every instance when Jews acquired large amounts through banking transactions, during their lives or upon their deaths, the king would take it over. Jews became imperial "*servi camerae*", the property of the King, who might present them and their possessions to princes or cities.

Jews were frequently massacred and exiled from various European countries. The persecution hit its first peak during the Crusades. In the First Crusade (1096) flourishing communities on the Rhine and the Danube were utterly destroyed; see German Crusade, 1096. In the Second Crusade (1147) the Jews in France were subject to frequent massacres. The Jews were also subjected to attacks by the Shepherds' Crusades of 1251 and 1320. The Crusades were followed by expulsions, including in, 1290, the banishing of all English Jews; in 1396, 100,000 Jews were expelled from France; and, in 1421, thousands were expelled from Austria. Over this time many Jews of Europe, either fleeing or being expelled, migrated to Poland, where they prospered into another Golden Age.

## Early Modern period

Historians who study modern Jewry have identified four different paths by which European Jews were "modernized" and thus integrated into the mainstream of European society. A common approach has been to view the process through the lens of the European Enlightenment as Jews faced the promise and the challenges posed by political emancipation. Scholars that use this approach have focused on two social types as paradigms for the decline of Jewish tradition and as agents of the sea changes in Jewish culture that led to the collapse of the ghetto. The first of these two social types is the Court Jew who is portrayed as a forerunner of the modern Jew, having achieved integration with and participation in the proto-capitalist economy and court society of central European states such as the Habsburg Empire. In contrast to the cosmopolitan Court Jew, the second social type presented by historians of modern Jewry is the *maskil*, a proponent of Haskalah. This narrative sees the maskil's pursuit of secular scholarship and his rationalistic critiques of rabbinic tradition as laying a durable intellectual foundation for the secularization of Jewish society and culture. The established paradigm has been one in which Ashkenazic Jews entered modernity through a self-conscious process of westernization led by "highly atypical, Germanized Jewish intellectuals". Haskalah gave birth to the Reform and Conservative movements and planted the seeds of Zionism while at the same time encouraging cultural assimilation into the countries in which Jews resided.<sup>[29]</sup> At around the same time that Haskalah was developing, Hasidic Judaism was spreading as a movement that preached a world view almost the opposite of Haskalah.

In the 1990s, the concept of the "Port Jew" has been suggested as an "alternate path to modernity" that was distinct from the European Haskalah. In contrast to the focus on Ashkenazic Germanized Jews, the concept of the Port Jew focused on the Sephardi conversos who fled the Inquisition and resettled in European port towns on the coast of the Mediterranean, the Atlantic and the Eastern seaboard of the United States.<sup>[30]</sup>

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## Court Jew

Court Jews were Jewish bankers or businessmen who lent money and handled the finances of some of the Christian European noble houses. A corresponding historical term is **Jewish Bailiff**. See also *shtadlan*.

Examples of what would be later called court Jews emerged when local rulers used services of Jewish bankers for short-term loans. They lent money to nobles and in the process gained social influence. Noble patrons of court Jews employed them as financiers, suppliers, diplomats and trade delegates. Court Jews could use their family connections, and connections between each other, to provision their sponsors with, among other things, food, arms, ammunition and precious metals. In return for their services, court Jews gained social privileges, including up to noble status for themselves, and could live outside the Jewish ghettos. Some nobles wanted to keep their bankers in their own courts. And because they were under noble protection, they were exempted from rabbinical jurisdiction.

From medieval times, court Jews could amass personal fortunes and gained political and social influence. Sometimes they were also prominent people in the local Jewish community and could use their influence to protect and influence their brethren. Sometimes they were the only Jews who could interact with the local high society and present petitions of the Jews to the ruler. However, the court Jew had social connections and influence in the Christian world mainly through his Christian patrons. Due to the precarious position of Jews, some nobles could just ignore their debts. If the sponsoring noble died, his Jewish financier could face exile or execution.

## Iberia

During the European Renaissance, the worst of the expulsions occurred following the reconquista of Andalus, as the Moorish or Arab Islamic government of Spain was known. With the ejection of the last Muslim rulers from Grenada in 1492, the Spanish Inquisition followed and the entire Spanish population of around 200,000 Sephardic Jews were expelled. This was followed by expulsions in 1493 in Sicily (37,000 Jews) and Portugal in 1496. The expelled Spanish Jews fled mainly to the Ottoman Empire, Holland, and North Africa, others migrating to Southern Europe and the Middle East.

## Port Jew

The Port Jew concept is a social type that describes Jews who were involved in the seafaring and maritime economy of Europe, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Helen Fry suggests that they could be considered to have been "the earliest modern Jews". According to Fry, Port Jews often arrived as "refugees from the Inquisition" and the expulsion of Jews from Iberia. They were allowed to settle in port cities as merchants granted permission to trade in ports such as Amsterdam, London, Trieste and Hamburg. Fry notes that their connections with the Jewish Diaspora and their expertise in maritime trade made them of particular interest to the mercantilist governments of Europe.<sup>[30]</sup> Lois Dubin describes Port Jews as Jewish merchants who were "valued for their engagement in the international maritime trade upon which such cities thrived".<sup>[31]</sup> Sorkin and others have characterized the socio-cultural profile of these men as marked by a flexibility towards religion and a "reluctant cosmopolitanism that was alien to both traditional and 'enlightened' Jewish identities".

## Ottoman Empire

During the Classical Ottoman period (1300–1600), the Jews, together with most other communities of the empire, enjoyed a certain level of prosperity. Compared with other Ottoman subjects, they were the predominant power in commerce and trade as well in diplomacy and other high offices. In the 16th century especially, the Jews were the most prominent under the *millets*, the apogee of Jewish influence could arguably be the appointment of Joseph Nasi to Sanjak-bey (*governor*, a rank usually only bestowed upon Muslims) of the island of Naxos.<sup>[32]</sup>

At the time of the Battle of Yarmuk when the Levant passed under Muslim Rule, thirty Jewish communities existed in Haifa, Sh'chem, Hebron, Ramleh, Gaza, Jerusalem, and many in the north. Safed became a spiritual centre for the Jews and the Shulchan Aruch was compiled there as well as many Kabbalistic texts. The first Hebrew printing press,

and the first printing in Western Asia began in 1577.

Jews lived in the geographic area of Asia Minor (modern Turkey, but more geographically either Anatolia or Asia Minor) for more than 2,400 years. Initial prosperity in Hellenistic times had faded under Christian Byzantine rule, but recovered somewhat under the rule of the various Muslim governments that displaced and succeeded rule from Constantinople. For much of the Ottoman period, Turkey was a safe haven for Jews fleeing persecution, and it continues to have a small Jewish population today. The situation where Jews both enjoyed cultural and economical prosperity at times but were widely persecuted at other times was summarised by G.E. Von Grunebaum :

It would not be difficult to put together the names of a very sizeable number of Jewish subjects or citizens of the Islamic area who have attained to high rank, to power, to great financial influence, to significant and recognized intellectual attainment; and the same could be done for Christians. But it would again not be difficult to compile a lengthy list of persecutions, arbitrary confiscations, attempted forced conversions, or pogroms.<sup>[33]</sup>

## **Poland-Lithuania**

In the 17th century, there were no significant Jewish populations in Western Europe. The relatively tolerant Poland had the largest Jewish population in Europe that dated back to 13th century and enjoyed relative prosperity and freedom for nearly four hundred years; however the calm situation there ended when Polish and Lithuanian Jews were slaughtered in the hundreds of thousands by the cossacks during Chmielnicki uprising (1648) and by the Swedish wars (1655). Driven by these and other persecutions, Jews moved back to Western Europe in the 17th century. The last ban on Jews (by the English) was revoked in 1654, but periodic expulsions from individual cities still occurred, and Jews were often restricted from land ownership, or forced to live in ghettos.

With the Partition of Poland in the late 18th century, the Jewish population was split between the Russian Empire, Austro-Hungary, and Prussia, which divided Poland for themselves.

## **The European Enlightenment and Haskalah (18th century)**

During the period of the European Renaissance and Enlightenment, significant changes occurred within the Jewish community. The Haskalah movement paralleled the wider Enlightenment, as Jews began in the 18th century to campaign for emancipation from restrictive laws and integration into the wider European society. Secular and scientific education was added to the traditional religious instruction received by students, and interest in a national Jewish identity, including a revival in the study of Jewish history and Hebrew, started to grow. Haskalah gave birth to the Reform and Conservative movements and planted the seeds of Zionism while at the same time encouraging cultural assimilation into the countries in which Jews resided. At around the same time another movement was born, one preaching almost the opposite of Haskalah, Hasidic Judaism. Hasidic Judaism began in the 18th century by Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, and quickly gained a following with its more exuberant, mystical approach to religion. These two movements, and the traditional orthodox approach to Judaism from which they spring, formed the basis for the modern divisions within Jewish observance.

At the same time, the outside world was changing, and debates began over the potential emancipation of the Jews (granting them equal rights). The first country to do so was France, during the French Revolution in 1789. Even so, Jews were expected to integrate, not continue their traditions. This ambivalence is demonstrated in the famous speech of Clermont-Tonnerre before the National Assembly in 1789:

We must refuse everything to the Jews as a nation and accord everything to Jews as individuals. We must withdraw recognition from their judges; they should only have our judges. We must refuse legal protection to the maintenance of the so-called laws of their Judaic organization; they should not be allowed to form in the state either a political body or an order. They must be citizens individually. But, some will say to me, they do not want to be citizens. Well then! If they do not want to be citizens, they should say so, and then, we should banish them. It is repugnant to have in the state an association of

non-citizens, and a nation within the nation...

## Hasidic Judaism

Hasidic Judaism is a branch of Orthodox Judaism that promotes spirituality and joy through the popularisation and internalisation of Jewish mysticism as the fundamental aspects of the Jewish faith. Hasidism comprises part of contemporary Ultra-Orthodox Judaism, alongside the previous Talmudic Lithuanian-Yeshiva approach and the Oriental Sephardi tradition.

It was founded in 18th century Eastern Europe by Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov as a reaction against overly legalistic Judaism. Opposite to this, Hasidic teachings cherished the sincerity and concealed holiness of the unlettered common folk, and their equality with the scholarly elite. The emphasis on the Immanent Divine presence in everything gave new value to prayer and deeds of kindness, alongside Rabbinic supremacy of study, and replaced historical mystical (kabbalistic) and ethical (musar) asceticism and admonishment with optimism, encouragement, and daily fervour. This populist emotional revival accompanied the elite ideal of nullification to paradoxical Divine Panentheism, through intellectual articulation of inner dimensions of mystical thought. The adjustment of Jewish values sought to add to required standards of ritual observance, while relaxing others where inspiration predominated. Its communal gatherings celebrate soulful song and storytelling as forms of mystical devotion.



Hasidic Jews praying in the synagogue on Yom Kippur,  
by Maurycy Gottlieb

## 19th century

Though persecution still existed, emancipation spread throughout Europe in the 19th century. Napoleon invited Jews to leave the Jewish ghettos in Europe and seek refuge in the newly created tolerant political regimes that offered equality under Napoleonic Law (see Napoleon and the Jews). By 1871, with Germany's emancipation of Jews, every European country except Russia had emancipated its Jews.

Despite increasing integration of the Jews with secular society, a new form of anti-Semitism emerged, based on the ideas of race and nationhood rather than the religious hatred of the Middle Ages. This form of anti-Semitism held that Jews were a separate and inferior race from the Aryan people of Western Europe, and led to



An 1806 French print depicts Napoleon Bonaparte emancipating the Jews.

the emergence of political parties in France, Germany, and Austria-Hungary that campaigned on a platform of rolling back emancipation. This form of anti-Semitism emerged frequently in European culture, most famously in the Dreyfus Trial in France. These persecutions, along with state-sponsored pogroms in Russia in the late 19th century, led a number of Jews to believe that they would only be safe in their own nation. See Theodor Herzl and History of Zionism.

During this period, Jewish migration to the United States (see American Jews) created a large new community mostly freed of the restrictions of Europe. Over 2 million Jews arrived in the United States between 1890 and 1924, most from Russia and Eastern Europe. A similar case occurred in the southern tip of the continent, specifically in the countries of Argentina and Uruguay.

## 20th century

### Modern Zionism

During the 1870s and 1880s the Jewish population in Europe began to more actively discuss immigration back to Israel and the re-establishment of the Jewish Nation in its national homeland, fulfilling the biblical prophecies relating to Shivat Tzion. In 1882 the first Zionist settlement—Rishon LeZion—was founded by immigrants who belonged to the "Hovevei Zion" movement. Later on, the "Bilu" movement established many other settlements in the land of Israel.

The Zionist movement was founded officially after the Kattowitz convention (1884) and the World Zionist Congress (1897), and it was Theodor Herzl who began the struggle to establish a state for the Jews.

After the First World War, it seemed that the conditions to establish such a state had arrived: The United Kingdom captured Palestine from the Ottoman Empire, and the Jews received the promise of a "National Home" from the British in the form of the Balfour Declaration of 1917, given to Chaim Weizmann.

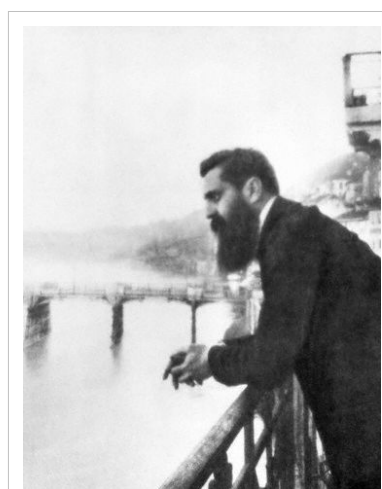
In 1920 the British Mandate of Palestine began and the pro-Jewish Herbert Samuel was appointed High Commissioner in Palestine, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was established and several big Jewish immigration waves to Palestine occurred. The Arab inhabitants of Palestine were not fond of the increasing Jewish immigration however, and began to oppose Jewish settlement and the pro-Jewish policy of the British government by violent means.

Arab gangs began performing violent acts and murders on convoys and on the Jewish population. After the 1920 Arab riots and 1921 Jaffa riots, the Jewish leadership in Palestine believed that the British had no desire to confront local Arab gangs over their attacks on Palestinian Jews. Believing that they could not rely on the British administration for protection from these gangs, the Jewish leadership created the Haganah organization to protect their farms and Kibbutzim.

Major riots occurred during the 1929 Palestine riots and the 1936–1939 Arab revolt in Palestine.

Due to the increasing violence the United Kingdom gradually started to backtrack from the original idea of a Jewish state and to speculate on a binational solution or an Arab state that would have a Jewish minority.

Meanwhile, the Jews of Europe and the United States gained success in the fields of the science, culture and the economy. Among those generally considered the most famous were scientist Albert Einstein and philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. A disproportionate number of Nobel Prize winners at this time were Jewish, as is still the case.<sup>[34]</sup> In the Soviet Union, many Jews were involved in the October Revolution and belonged to the communist



Theodor Herzl, visionary of the Jewish State, in 1901.



party.

## The Holocaust



A boy raises his hands when the Jews leave the bunkers after the submission of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising



During World War II the Holocaust occurred, in which Nazi Germany carried out systematic state-sponsored extermination (genocide) of approximately six million European Jews.

In 1933, with the rise to power of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party in Germany, the Jewish situation became more severe. Economic crises, racial anti-Semitic laws, and a fear of an upcoming war led many Jews to flee from Europe to Palestine, to the United States and to the Soviet Union.

In 1939 World War II began and until 1941 Hitler occupied almost all of Europe, including Poland—where millions of Jews were living at that time—and France. In 1941, following the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Final Solution began, an extensive organized operation on an unprecedented scale, aimed at the annihilation of the Jews of Europe and French North Africa. This genocide, in which approximately six million Jews were murdered methodically and with horrifying cruelty, is known as The Holocaust or *Shoah* (Hebrew term). In Poland, more than one million Jews were murdered in gas chambers at the Auschwitz concentration camp alone.

The massive scale of the Holocaust, and the horrors that happened during it, heavily affected the Jewish nation and world public opinion, which only understood the dimensions of the Holocaust after the war. After the war, efforts were increased to establish a Jewish state in Palestine.

## The establishment of the State of Israel

In 1945 the Jewish resistance organizations in Palestine unified and established the Jewish Resistance Movement. The movement began attacking the British authority.<sup>[35]</sup> Following the King David Hotel bombing, Chaim Weizmann, president of the WZO appealed to the movement to cease all further military activity until a decision would be reached by the Jewish Agency. The Jewish Agency backed Weizmann's recommendation to cease activities, a decision reluctantly accepted by the Haganah, but not by the Irgun and the Lehi. The JRM was dismantled and each of the founding groups continued operating according to their own policy.<sup>[36]</sup>

The Jewish leadership decided to center the struggle in the illegal immigration to Palestine and began organizing massive amount of Jewish war refugees from Europe, without the approval of the British authorities. This immigration contributed a great deal to the Jewish settlements in Israel in the world public opinion and the British authorities decided to let the United Nations decide upon the fate of Palestine.

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 181(II) recommending partitioning Palestine into an Arab state, a Jewish state and the City of Jerusalem. The Jewish leadership accepted the decision but the Arab League and the leadership of Palestinian Arabs opposed it. Following a period of civil war the 1948 Arab–Israeli War started.

In the middle of the war, after the last soldiers of the British mandate left Palestine, David Ben-Gurion proclaimed on May 14, 1948, the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz Israel to be known as the State of Israel. In 1949 the war ended and the state of Israel started building the state and absorbing massive waves of hundreds of thousands of Jews from all over the world.

Since 1948, Israel has been involved in a series of major military conflicts, including the 1956 Suez Crisis, 1967 Six-Day War, 1973 Yom Kippur War, 1982 Lebanon War, and 2006 Lebanon War, as well as a nearly constant series of ongoing minor conflicts.

Since 1977, an ongoing and largely unsuccessful series of diplomatic efforts have been initiated by Israel, Palestinian organisations, their neighbours, and other parties, including the United States and the European Union, to bring about a peace process to resolve conflicts between Israel and its neighbors, mostly over the fate of the Palestinian people.

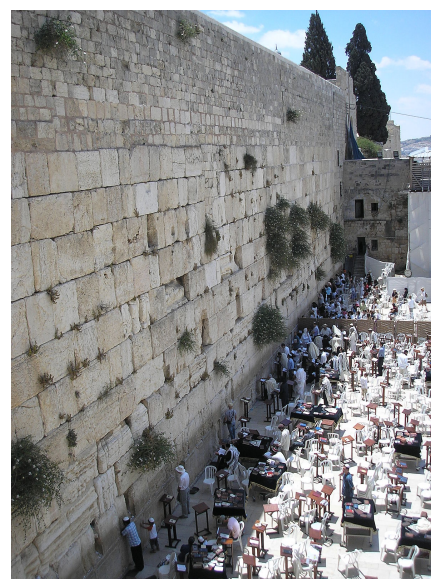


David Ben-Gurion proclaiming Israeli independence from the United Kingdom on May 14, 1948

## 21st century

Today (2012), Israel is a parliamentary democracy with a population of over 7.5 million people, of whom about 5.6 million are Jewish. The largest Jewish communities are in Israel and the United States, with major communities in France, Argentina, Russia, England, and Canada. For statistics related to modern Jewish demographics see *Jewish population*.

The Jewish Autonomous Oblast, created during the Soviet period, continues to be an autonomous oblast of the Russian state.<sup>[37]</sup> The Chief Rabbi of Birobidzhan, Mordechai Scheiner, says there are 4,000 Jews in the capital city.<sup>[38]</sup> Governor Nikolay Mikhaylovich Volkov has stated that he intends to, "support every valuable initiative maintained by our local Jewish organizations".<sup>[39]</sup> The Birobidzhan Synagogue opened in 2004 on the 70th anniversary of the region's founding in 1934.<sup>[40]</sup>



The Western Wall in Jerusalem, 2008

## Jewish history by country or region

For historical and contemporary Jewish populations by country, see *Jews by country*.

## Footnotes

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- Internet Jewish History Sourcebook (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/jewishsbok.html>) offering homework help and online texts
- Israelite Religion to Judaism: the Evolution of the Religion of Israel ([http://www.adath-shalom.ca/israelite\\_religion.htm](http://www.adath-shalom.ca/israelite_religion.htm)).

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# Fertile Crescent

The **Fertile Crescent** is a crescent-shaped region containing the comparatively moist and fertile land of otherwise arid and semi-arid Western Asia, and the Nile Valley and Nile Delta of northeast Africa. The term was first used by University of Chicago archaeologist James Henry Breasted. Having originated in the study of ancient history, the concept soon developed and today retains meanings in international geopolitics and diplomatic relations.

In current usage the Fertile Crescent has a minimum extent and a maximum extent. All definitions include Mesopotamia, the land in and around the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The major nation in this region is Iraq (formerly Mesopotamia), with small portions of Iran near the Persian Gulf, Kuwait to the south and Turkey in the north. More typically the Fertile Crescent includes also the Levantine coast of the Mediterranean Sea, with Syria, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon and the West Bank. Water sources include the Jordan River.



At maximum extent, the Fertile Crescent also may include Egypt and the Nile Valley and Delta within it. The inner boundary is delimited by the dry climate of the Syrian Desert to the south. Around the outer boundary are the arid and semi-arid lands of the Alps to the North, the Anatolian highlands to the north, and the Sahara Desert to the west.

The region is often called the cradle of civilization; it saw the development of many of the earliest human civilizations. Some of its technological inventions (but not necessarily first or uniquely) are writing, glass, and the wheel. The earliest known western civilizations manifestly arose and flourished using the water supplies and agricultural resources available in the Fertile Crescent. They were not necessarily the first or the only source of civilization, as Breasted believed. Moreover, plants and animals were not domesticated there but in the surrounding nuclear area, where the original plant species still grow wild.



## Terminology

The term "Fertile Crescent" was first used by University of Chicago archaeologist [[James Henry Breasted]] in his *Ancient Records of Egypt*, published in 1906.<sup>[1]</sup> The region was so named because of its rich soil and crescent shape.

The modern-day countries with significant territory within the Fertile Crescent are Iraq, Kuwait, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel and Palestinian territories, besides the southeastern fringe of Turkey and the western fringe of Iran.

## Genetics and language

The modern-day North Caucasians (the Chechens, the Ingush, the Batsbi, and the people of Dagestan) have direct linguistic links to the Fertile Crescent.<sup>[2]</sup>

“Linguistically, most languages in the region and in the Fertile Crescent itself are relatively recent arrivals. Now, however, linguist Johanna Nichols of the University of California, Berkeley, has used language to connect modern people of the Caucasus region to the ancient farmers of the Fertile Crescent. She analyzed the Nakh–Dagestanian linguistic family, which today includes Chechen, Ingush, and Batsbi on the Nakh side; and some 24 languages on the Dagestani side ... Thus location, time, and vocabulary all suggest that the farmers of the region were proto-Nakh–Dagestanians. "The Nakh–Dagestanian languages are the closest thing we have to a direct continuation of the cultural and linguistic community that gave rise to Western civilization," Nichols says.”<sup>[2]</sup>

The Ingush have the highest (89%) frequency of J2 gene and the Chechens have 57% respectively. J2 is closely associated with the Fertile Crescent.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Geography

As crucial as rivers and marshlands were to the rise of civilization in the Fertile Crescent, they were not the only factor in the area's precocity. The area is important as the "bridge" between Africa and Eurasia. This "bridging role" has allowed the Fertile Crescent to retain a greater amount of biodiversity than either Europe or North Africa, where climate changes during the Ice Age led to repeated extinction events when ecosystems became squeezed against the waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Coupled with the Saharan pump theory, this Middle Eastern land-bridge is of extreme importance to the modern distribution of Old World flora and fauna, including the spread of humanity.

The area has borne the brunt of the tectonic divergence between the African and Arabian plates and the converging Arabian and Eurasian plates, which has made the region a very diverse zone of high snow-covered mountains, fertile broad alluvial basins and desert plateau, which has also increased its biodiversity further and enabled the survival into historic times of species not found elsewhere.

## Vegetation

The Fertile Crescent had many diverse climate, and major climatic changes encouraged the evolution of many "r" type annual plants, which produce more edible seeds than "K" type perennial plants. The region's dramatic variety of elevation gave rise to many species of edible plants for early experiments in cultivation. Most importantly, the Fertile Crescent was home to the eight Neolithic founder crops important in early agriculture (i.e. wild progenitors to emmer wheat, einkorn, barley, flax, chick pea, pea, lentil, bitter vetch), and four of the five most important species of domesticated animals—cows, goats, sheep, and pigs—and the fifth species, the horse, lived nearby.<sup>[4]</sup>

## History

The Fertile Crescent has an impressive record of past human activity. As well as possessing many sites with the skeletal and cultural remains of both pre-modern and early modern humans (e.g. at Kebara Cave in Israel), later Pleistocene hunter-gatherers and Epipalaeolithic semi-sedentary hunter-gatherers (the Natufians), this area is most famous for its sites related to the origins of agriculture. The western zone around the Jordan and upper Euphrates rivers gave rise to the first known Neolithic farming settlements (referred to as Pre-Pottery Neolithic A (PPNA)),

which date to around 9,000 BC (and includes sites such as Jericho).

This region, alongside Mesopotamia (which lies to the east of the Fertile Crescent, between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates), also saw the emergence of early complex societies during the succeeding Bronze Age. There is also early evidence from the region for writing and the formation of statelevel societies. This has earned the region the nickname "The Cradle of Civilization."

Both the Tigris and Euphrates start in the Taurus Mountains of what is today Turkey. Farmers in southern Mesopotamia had to protect their fields from flooding each year, except northern Mesopotamia which had just enough rain to make some farming possible. To protect against flooding, they made levees.<sup>[5]</sup>

Since the Bronze Age, the region's natural fertility has been greatly extended by irrigation works, upon which much of its agricultural production continues to depend. The last two millennia have seen repeated cycles of decline and recovery as past works have fallen into disrepair through the replacement of states, to be replaced under their successors. Another ongoing problem has been salination — gradual concentration of salt and other minerals in soils with a long history of irrigation.

In the current era, river waters remain a potential source of friction in the region. The Jordan River lies on the borders of Israel, the Kingdom of Jordan and areas administered by the Palestinian Authority. Turkey and Syria each control about a quarter of the river Euphrates, on whose lower reaches Iraq is heavily dependent. In Syrian nationalism, the region is held to be a natural nation and is referred to as the **Syrian Fertile Crescent**.<sup>[6]</sup>

Our Syria has distinct natural boundaries and extends from the Taurus range in the northwest and the Zagros mountains in the northeast to the Suez canal and the Red sea in the south and includes the Sinai peninsula and the gulf of Aqaba, and from the Syrian sea in the west, including the island of Cyprus, to the arch of the Arabian desert and the Persian gulf in the east. This region is also known as the Syrian Fertile Crescent.<sup>[7]</sup>

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## External links

- *Ancient Fertile Crescent Almost Gone, Satellite Images Show* ([http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2001/05/0518\\_crescent.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2001/05/0518_crescent.html)) - from National Geographic News, May 18, 2001

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