

Black Hebrew Israelites (BHI)

Are BHIs descended from the Israelites?

BHI followers believe themselves to be descended from 1 or more of the 12 tribes of Israel. In 722 BC 10 northern tribes of Israel were taken into captivity to Assyria (2 Kings 17:6). Cyrus the Great allowed Jews to return home in 538 BC, but a substantial number stayed. This verse is used to connect Jews with Africa, via Egypt: Dt 28:68 "And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy *you*. (Deu 28:68 KJV) While Jews arrived in poverty, according to this verse, they later prospered. Most Jews ended up in Alexandria, Egypt. They have had a long history there, and were sometimes almost exterminated, as by Romans around 117 and 629 AD, and by Christians around 415 AD. All this was well before the trans-Atlantic slave trade began in the late 1400s. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Egypt
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/transatlantic-slave-trade>
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Diaspora-Judaism>

It would be very difficult to prove that Jews who migrated to Egypt from the Middle East centuries before Christ ended up as black slaves in America from the 1600s. In 1973, the Israeli government denied citizenship to one sect of Black Hebrews living there, because they could not prove Jewish ancestry. American civil rights lawyers found no evidence of racial discrimination in that ruling.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Hebrew_Israelites

Many groups claim to be descended from the 10 lost tribes of Israel. Among them are the Pashtuns of Afghanistan and Pakistan, Kurdish Jews, Jews of Kashmir, Jews in India, Ethiopian Jews, Igbo Jews of Nigeria, the Sefwi tribe in Ghana, as well as "British Israelites" and others.

"Historians generally concluded that the groups referred to as the Lost Tribes merged with the local population. For instance, the *New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia* states: 'In historic fact, some members of the Ten Tribes remained in Palestine, where apart from the Samaritans some of their descendants long preserved their identity among the Jewish population, others were assimilated, while others were presumably absorbed by the last Judean exiles who in 597–586 BC were deported to Assyria [similar boundary with Babylon] ... Unlike the Judeans of the southern Kingdom, who survived a similar fate 135 years later, they soon assimilated ...'"
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Lost_Tribes

Are we saved by our lineage or genealogy?

Even if BHIs could prove Israelite ancestry, ancestry saves no one from punishment for one's sins. What is ultimately important is not who we are born from, but that we are "born again" into the Kingdom of God. In the most general sense, all humans are children of God, but in terms of the salvation of one's soul, only those who have put trust in Jesus Christ as savior, God, and one's personal master are children of God "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: ¹³ Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (Joh 1:12-13 KJV).

Hebrew ancestry is not what is important to God. What is important is a transformed life by the power of the Holy Spirit. That only comes as a result of being "born again" (John 3:7). The spiritual children of Abraham do the good works of Abraham. Ancestry does not save a person (see John 8:39-42). The children of God are known by their fruit:

Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

¹⁸ A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

¹⁹ Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

²⁰ Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. (Mat 7:17-20 KJV)

Salvation is not specifically for those genetically descended from Abraham, but for anyone who calls upon God for salvation.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whosoever** believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3:16-17, KJV

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: ² And he is the propitiation [satisfaction] for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of **the whole world***. (1Jo 2:1-2 KJV)

"...if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. ¹¹ As the Scripture says, "**Anyone** who trusts in him will never be put to shame." (Rom 10:9-11 NIV)

Was Jesus black?

Some BHIs would have us believe that Jesus was the color of black Africans, using this verse in support: "And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet *are* like fine brass (Rev 2:18 KJV—BHIs use the KJV). First, this description of Jesus is not precise, as the words "like" and "like unto" indicate. Visions are extremely hard to describe. BHIs seem equate "brass" with blackness. The Greek word **χαλκολίβανον** seems to indicate a metal close to the color of gold (Thayer's Greek Lexicon).

Jesus was born a Palestinian Jew. People living there are usually of a suntanned complexion. Of course, there is a range of pigmentation within an ethnic group. Moses, who led the Israelites (as they were called) into Canaan, was not black. His sister and assistant Aaron criticized Moses for marrying a black (Cushite) woman: "And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman." (Num 12:1 KJV) "Ethiopian" is in Hebrew

"Cushite" [כְּשִׁיטָה] This refers to a Nubian woman, and Nubians are black (Theol. Wordbook Old Testament Lexicon). If Moses were black, there would have been no issue.

Is Jesus Christ God?

While there are differences among BHI groups, they may deny that Jesus Christ is God. However, the Bible teaches:

Jesus is one with God, and God is One— Matt. 1:22-23; Mark 12:29; John 10:30; 20:28; 1 Cor. 8:4.

Jesus claimed to be God: Lk. 22:70; John 5:18; 10:30 (compare Tit. 2:13)

Jesus is God: Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-2, 14; Rom. 9:5; Rev. 1:8 compared with 1:17-18 Jesus created all things (not Himself created): John 1:3; Col. 1:16-17 He is above all angels: Heb. 1:4-6

Jesus claimed to be God, not just a prophet: John 10:30; 14:6, and performed many miracles (see the Gospels), as did the Apostles (Acts 2:43; 5:12). The resurrection of Jesus confirmed that he is God (Acts 17:31).

Christians do not worship three Gods, but One God in three persons. God is a tri-unity.

The Spirit is God: Gen. 1:2; John 14:16; 15:26; Acts 5:3-4

The Spirit is a Person: Eph. 4:30

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