

# I Am A Caucasian

My Genomic Journey, An Odyssey of 7-Million Years

An Illustrated Retrospective Research Manuscript Utilizing  
Archeological, Biblical, Biologic, Cartographic, Cultural,  
Genomic, Historic, & Linguistic Resources

By

Robert S. Sherins, MD  
Pacific Palisades, California, 2015

## About the Author



Robert S. Sherins, M.D.

Dr. Sherins graduated UCLA, AB Zoology, 1959 and attended the UCSF School of Medicine, receiving his Medical Degree in 1963. He completed his Internship at the Wadsworth Veterans Hospital in West Los Angeles in 1964 and served as a flight medical officer with the rank of Captain in the United States Air Force at the NATO airbase in Incirlik, Turkey, 1964 – 1966. Dr. Sherins completed his Ophthalmology residency at Wadsworth Veterans Hospital and the Jules Stein Eye Institute, UCLA School of Medicine, 1970. He was certified by the American Board of Ophthalmology in 1972 and served on the Clinical Attending Staff at the Jules Stein Eye Institute 1970 - 1984. He established a clinical practice of Ophthalmology in Santa Monica, California, and served on the medical staff of Saint John's Health Center; served as Chairman of the Ophthalmology Section of the Department of Surgery from 1980 to 1986; and served in the Southern California Lions Eye Institute at Saint John's Hospital from 1970 to 1997. He was president of the Bay Surgical Society, West Los Angeles, in 1985, and historian thereafter. Dr. Sherins is the founding chair and historian of the Saint John's Physicians Alumni Association since 1997.

## Preface

This manuscript was sub-entitled: *"An Illustrated Retrospective Research Manuscript Utilizing Archeological, Biblical, Biologic, Cartographic, Cultural, Genomic, Historic, and Linguistic Resources,"* for the specific purpose of bringing to the reader's attention the necessity of using many research categories and disciplines that would unite the complex prehistoric information. In so doing, I have outlined a journey of modern humans from prehistoric times when hominids have been discovered who were bipedal and walked upright. They evolved in Africa at least 7,000,000 years ago.

With the scientific evidence from genetic research of the human genome, it is now possible to trace the evolution of the modern and prehistoric human species. Examination of the changes or mutations of the nucleotides, which join the 2 chains of DNA in each chromosome, made it possible to discover and link our human ancestors by genetic types, locations and to calculate the probable time of the appearance of those individuals. Clustering the DNA haplogroup types by comparing the geographic locations throughout the world of indigenous populations with the DNA evidence, created the opportunity to locate the ancestral journeys of modern humans.

I have taken this opportunity to merge the evidence discovered from genomic research with the data learned from other scientific specialties to further explain our family history. Cross-connecting data from the various scientific disciplines has made it possible for this author to predict our probably and unique ancestral journey to the present time. Only the most recent history has been obtained from preserved archival documents. The overwhelming majority of our ancestral journey has been pre-historical. Without documents, the tale must be estimated based upon the best scientific evidence available. Surely new facts will emerge in time and the story will require updating. At this time, however, the story is both fascinating and compelling to the writer.

Genomic evidence has confirmed that our ancestors passed through the Levant on their way to arriving at the Western Caspian region 100,000 to 80,000 years BCE. About 70,000 to 60,000 years later, our J2a-M10 genomic ancestors migrated from the Caucasus to the Levant. They appeared in the Levant about 4,000 to 3000 years BCE and later became members of one of the 12 Hebrew tribes. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Russia, after centuries of anti-Semitism and economic difficulties, some of our ancestors and their relatives through marriage sought relief through Zionism and made their exodus to Israel. "Three times is a charm", so the saying goes and here we descendants now are to be found in America, Europe and Israel.

As described in a previous chapter of this manuscript, our Cherkinsky family migrated out of Africa about 100,000 to 80,000 years ago. Their genomic journey has been researched. With confidence, we can determine that our ancient ancestors migrated to the Western Caspian region about 80,000 to 60,000 years ago. Approximately 30,000 years ago, our ancestors Y-DNA haplogroup, "J" appeared for the first time in the Western Caspian area. About 15,000 years ago, descendants of

the “J” ancestral male, produced offspring with the subclade genetic markers classified as “J2a.” Most recently, that genome was reclassified, “J2a-M410.” This subclade group lived predominantly in the Caucasus.

Our M410 ancestors inhabited the Caucasus, and specifically Georgia and North Ossetia starting about 8,000 years ago. That era has been pinpointed as the early **Neolithic agricultural revolution**. The region is part of the “Fertile Crescent” – a region spanning the approximate borders of Anatolia and its neighbors, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and the Caucasus.

As described elsewhere in this manuscript, our ancestors later migrated to the Levant. Utilizing archeological, cultural, geographic, genomic, historic and linguistic methods, I was able to locate when and where our ancestors next journeyed. They appeared in the Levant. This migration can be estimated with reasonable accuracy. Ancestors carrying the Y-DNA haplogroup “J” produced offspring with many subdivisions, whose migration pathways can be traced in the Middle East. In fact, they produced hundreds of mutational changes that have been categorized by their genomic analyses. They produced mutations that are found in Arabs, Armenians, Canaanites, Georgians, Hebrews, Kurds and Turks, among others.

In our particular case, the genomic evidence demonstrated that our autosomal chromosomes are definitely found among those Hebrews who formed the 12-Tribes of Israel. We do not know yet from which tribe our ancestors may have originated. The timing occurred after the formation of the Land of Canaan and subsequently the Hebrew tribes, as written in the Bible’s Book of Kings. Tribes have been described in the Land of Israel after the Exodus from Egypt led by Moses, (circa 1,280 BCE).

Our Cherkinsky autosomal genome further demonstrated that about 20% of the genes also are found among the Arab Bedouins. The presence of both ethnic groups suggests that the origin of our autosomal genome most likely arose before those religious-ethnic groups formed. Therefore, we can assume that the ancestors carrying J2a-M410 arrived or appeared in the Levant during the time of the Canaanites. This could have appeared before the time of appearance of the Patriarch, Abraham (circa 1850 BCE). Abraham was born in the town of **Şanlı Urfa**, in close proximity to the town of **Harran** that has been so well described during Abraham’s journeys that were written in the Bible. Perhaps our ancestors appeared in the Levant about 3,000-4,000 years BCE.

Linguistic information has been extremely helpful in determining the further migratory directions of our J2a-M410 ancestors. Let us examine the language origins in the Middle East. The earliest of those languages has been classified as a “Proto-Semitic” language. Derivatives of the Proto-Semitic languages have evolved and dialects and derivative languages emerged in a variety of geographic areas in the Middle East. As an excellent example, one of my cousins, who descended from my grandmother’s family, instead of from my grandfather’s lineage as I did, carries the Y-DNA haplogroup subclade, “J1.” We have a common ancestor, “J” whose group appeared in the Western Caspian region approximately 30,000 years ago. The “J1”

subclade group also appeared in the Caucasus a few thousand years before “J2a”. Our genomic pathways are close, but **NOT** exact.

Genomic data show that the region of Bagdad and Babylon has a majority of “J1” carrying males in their population. That region was a center in the development of the “Archaic-Semitic” language. Aramaic language appeared in this region. However, the descendants of that region migrated to the deserts of Arabia and settled mostly in the southerly region of the peninsula, Yemen and Oman. The inhabitants of Yemen and Oman speak a minor dialect of Arabic not spoken elsewhere.

On the other hand, the Northwest region of Syria and Lebanon is associated with the appearance of the Archaic or Proto-Semitic language. Hebrew appeared in that location as an alternative to Aramaic. Therefore, Hebrew is not a derivative language of Aramaic, but rather a derivative of the archaic, Proto-Semitic language. It is in this vicinity of the Northwest that J2a subclade is most apparent. Modern Hebrew evolved there, as well as the modern Arabic. Both of those languages have continued to be spoken in modern times. We can estimate that our ancestors settled in the Northwest Levant, prior to the appearance of the Hebrew tribes approximately 4,000 to 3,000 years BCE.

Robert S. Sherins, MD

## Foreword

Robert S. Sherins, MD

*“In all of us there is a hunger, marrow deep, to know our heritage – to know who we are and where we came from. Without this enriching knowledge, there is a hollow yearning. No matter what our attainments in life, there is still a vacuum, an emptiness, and the most disquieting loneliness.” (Alex Haley – 1976).*

In 1979, **Haley, Alex published “Roots: The Next Generations,”** which generated huge public interest and record-setting attention to the details of researching family history. The novel and television mini-series also set into motion keen public interest in genealogy. By the 1990s, ancestral research became one of the most prominent hobbies in America.

It did not escape my attention that by the mid-1970s my twin brother and I had become quite interested in asking our relatives about our family history. Indeed we had heard many stories about our relatives from Russia and Romania, but paid only minor attention to the “cast of characters.” With much deliberation, contacts with aunts, uncles and cousins, we produced and verified a number of family facts. However, there was so much unknown about our family origins. Armed with copies of a few old sentimental letters, I set into motion a systematic review of civil records, maps and family photographs in an attempt to make sense of our family history.

To understand the technology involved and to better speak the language of genealogists, I joined the Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles; ROM-SIG, the Romanian Special Interest Group; and the Polish Genealogical Society of California. My first cousin, who was already a member of ROM-SIG, offered me her direct assistance and partnership in developing a detailed family history. We formed an investigative trio, Richard, Robert and Beryle, sharing the expenses and proof-reading each other’s essays in an attempt to create accurate and concise summaries of the newly discovered information. Beryle and Robert ventured into the realm of translating the texts from Hebrew, Yiddish, Romanian, and Russian documents, guided by specialized texts on the subjects, conferences with genealogical colleagues and finally by hiring European consultants to assist us. Consider for a moment attempting to read and translate handwritten Cyrillic text that utilized Romanian vocabulary to describe Yiddish information and patronymic names, in a narrative of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Such a project definitely got my attention as will be demonstrated in a later chapter of this manuscript.

I wish to acknowledge the laudable efforts of Dr. Ladislau Gyémánt,<sup>3</sup> Professor of Jewish History, University of Cluj-Napoca, Transylvania, Romania, for his astute research in discovering documents that identified over 1000 relatives from Moldavia collectively identifying those with the surnames Solomon, Salomon, Goldenberg and Rothenberg, branches of our maternal family. However, most of the individuals had to be identified by their patronymic names, since legal surnames were not required in Romania until after 1865. Professor Gyémánt was so successful with his discoveries that we declared him our "honorary cousin."

Through an introduction by a friend, who was the Program Chair of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles, I was able to engage Mrs. Angela Semakova, from Kiev, Ukraine, as a researcher of Ukrainian civil records.<sup>4</sup> Within a couple of month's time, Angela located records of over 200 individuals of the Goldenberg and Rothenberg families in Brody, Ukraine, (formerly Galicia, Poland). A few months later, Angela travelled to Chernigov, Koselets, Konotop, Sumy and Nezhin, Ukraine, where she located metrical records of our Cherkinsky and Halperin (Galperin) ancestors of Russia.

During the last decade, Internet resources have advanced dramatically. I was able to trace both Cherkinsky and Halperin ancestors living throughout the world, as well as discovering additional documents about the Cherkinsky families that had been released by the Soviet Union and KGB offices. Unique documents appeared from Soviet registration lists in Central Asia. Specific archives from the registrars appear from Tashkent, Uzbekistan, that were written in 1942 during the height of World War II when the Germany army plunged into Russia and Ukraine in a war invasion attempt to seize Moscow and St. Petersburg. In an emergency response, the Soviets took citizens from the homes and removed them to Central Asia for the duration of the war. From those records, I was able to locate an additional 100 living Cherkinsky individuals in Russia, Ukraine, Israel, France, Canada and the United States.

Finally, at the time of this writing, a new source of information has appeared regarding our Halperin ancestors. I was contacted through the on-line family finder index of Jewishgen.org website by a newly found cousin, whose ancestors came from Pereyaslav, Southeastern Ukraine (formerly Southwest Poland before the 1772 First Partition of the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania). The cousin possessed detailed records of her family that were identical to my records. Our Halperin great grandparents, Hirsch and Chaje Halpern (Galpern) were the same individual. Other members of his family had moved to Koseletz, where my immediate relatives had lived. This discovery led to a wonderful merging of our two families. It may be some time before these facts can be fully corroborated. Importantly, The records confirmed information about the

origins of the Halperlins about 100 years earlier in Poland.



***“If you would not be forgotten... either write things worthy of reading, or do things worth of writing...” (Benjamin Franklin, Circa 1738.)***

Our preliminary documents and secured his promise to assist us in researching our Moldavian family metrical records.

<sup>4</sup> Research in Brody, Ukraine, and the Jewish Metrical Records of Brody held at the State Central Archives of Ukraine in Lvov, Ukraine, circa 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Identical twins, Robert (left) and Richard (right) Sherins, Brooklyn, New York, 1939.

<sup>6</sup> Russian Proverb, date unknown.

## Archeology Encounters Anthropology and Genomics

In mid-May 2015, I received notification of a fascinating lecture to be given by Professor Andrea Ricci, German Archaeological Institute – Eurasia Dept. The announcement was a routine invitation to join the staff lecture at the **UCLA Cotsen Institute of Archeology**, which was a public event for the benefit for interested students and neighbors.

**EUREKA !!!** I immediately recognized the implications of merging data from the excavation of the Georgian/Azerbaijan Neolithic sites with the genomic information that I had previously gathered. Both databases confirmed overlapping facts that concentrated on information obtained from 8,000 years ago. I was overwhelmed with the curiosity that I would learn much more about the culture of my genomic ancestors. The good luck was almost too much to absorb...

In fact, by combining the information learned from linguistics and historical sources, I was able to advance the date of my most recent prehistoric ancestors to a time period of approximately 4,000 to 3,000 years BCE. To date there are no data as to which of the 12 Hebrew tribes my ancestors from Canaan might have been born. That information will require exhumation of graves to procure DNA samples, while reassuring the religious authorities that the graves will be repopulated appropriately. Such genomic details would advance my knowledge of my ancestors to about 1000 years BCE. Let us hope that these tasks will come to pass and be fruitful.

### **Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at UCLA and**

### **Archaeological Institute of America Present:**

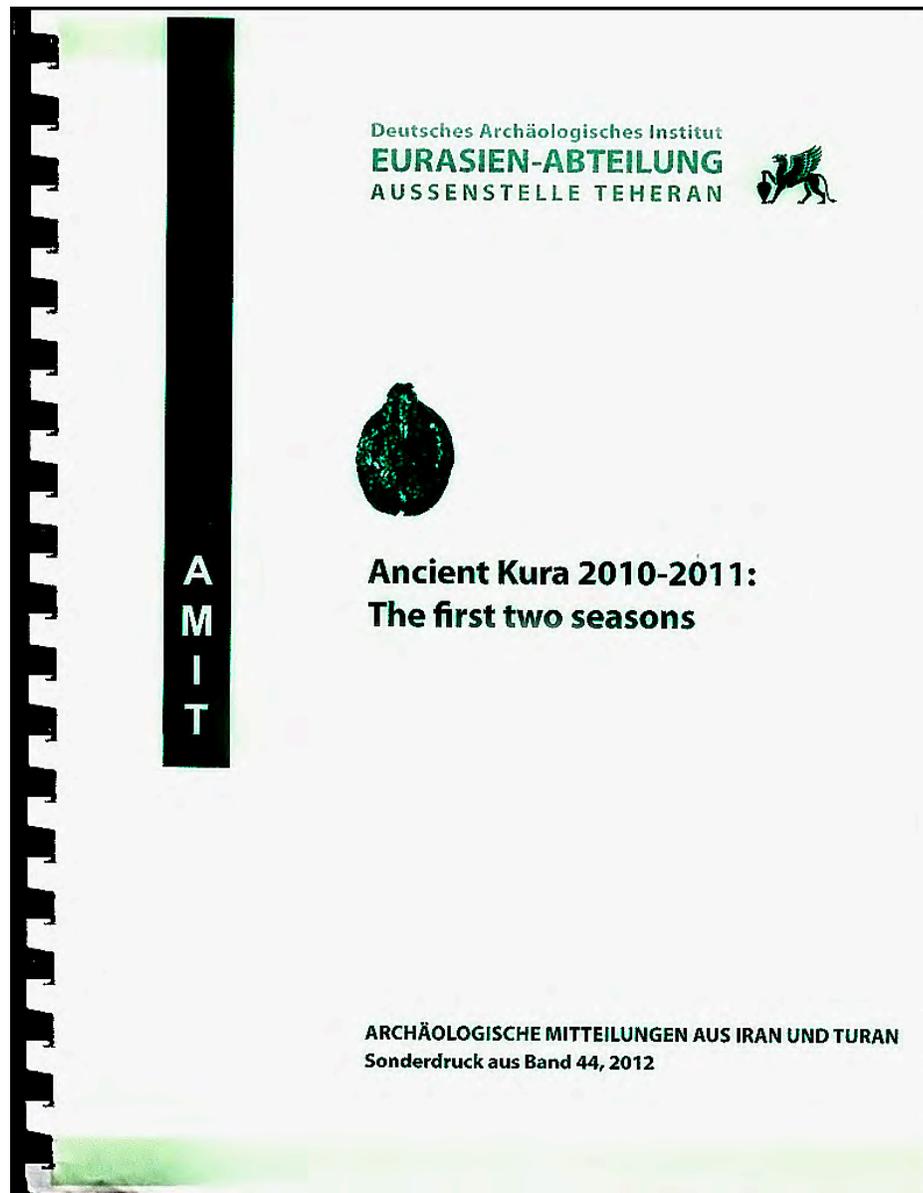
**Dr. Andrea Ricci** German Archaeological Institute – Eurasia Dept.  
2015 AIA-DAI Fellow at the Cotsen Institute (UCLA)  
Lenart Auditorium, Fowler Building UCLA  
Tuesday, May 26, 2015 at 7 pm

### **“Early settlement of the Southern Caucasus: recent discoveries of the German-Azerbaijani investigations in the Mil Plain (Southern Azerbaijan)”**

The talk will address the latest results of the interdisciplinary project “Kura in Motion”, which has been investigating early sedentism along the Kura Valley since 2010. Focus will be on the landscape of survival of the Mil Plain of Southern Azerbaijan, where a series of late Neolithic (6<sup>th</sup> Mill. BCE) sites have been investigated with intensive survey and excavation.

Contact with Professor Ricci at UCLA was productive and enthralling. He promised help and would send me his publications, as well as continue to support my research project of the Neolithic sites in the Caucasus. Most importantly, he sent me his primary research publication, which was co-authored by dozens of specialists in the fields of History, Prehistoric and Classical Anthropology, Geography, Carbon dating, Chemistry, Metallurgy, Botany, Physics/Engineering, Art Conservation and Art History, among others.

From Professor, Dr. Andrea Ricci:



Publication of the Research Team, Ancient Kura 2010-2011



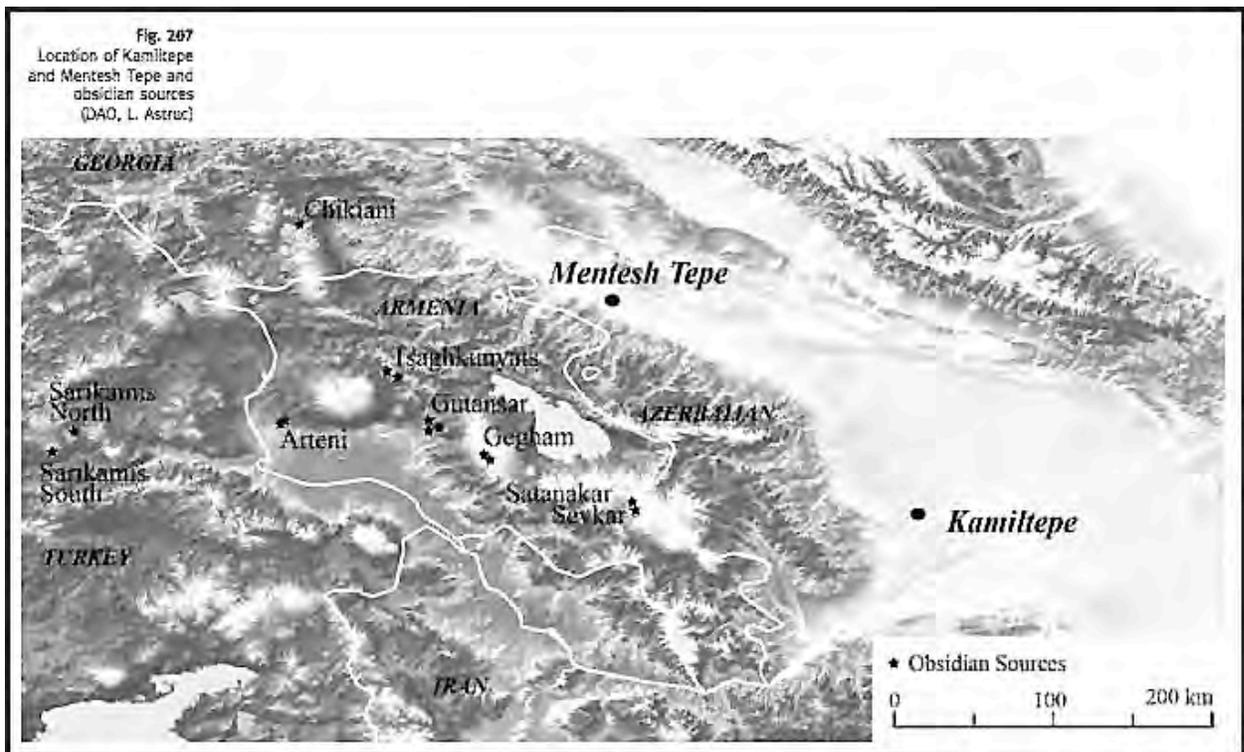
Aerial Map Caucasus

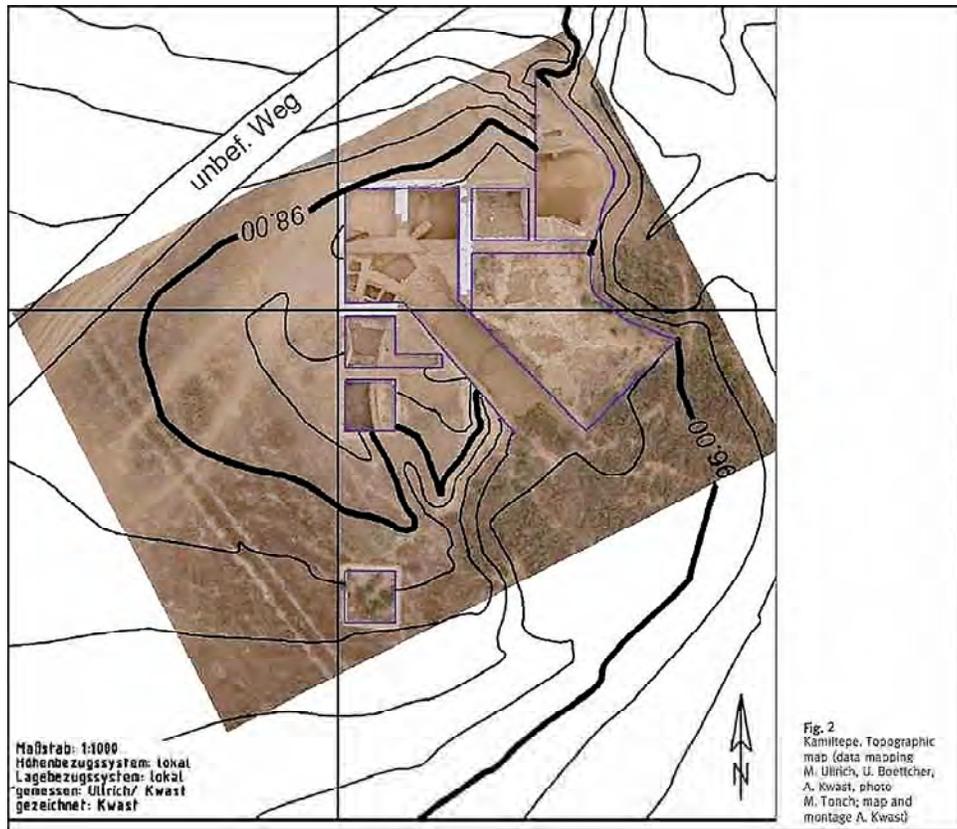


Archeological Sites Georgia, Azerbaijan & Armenia

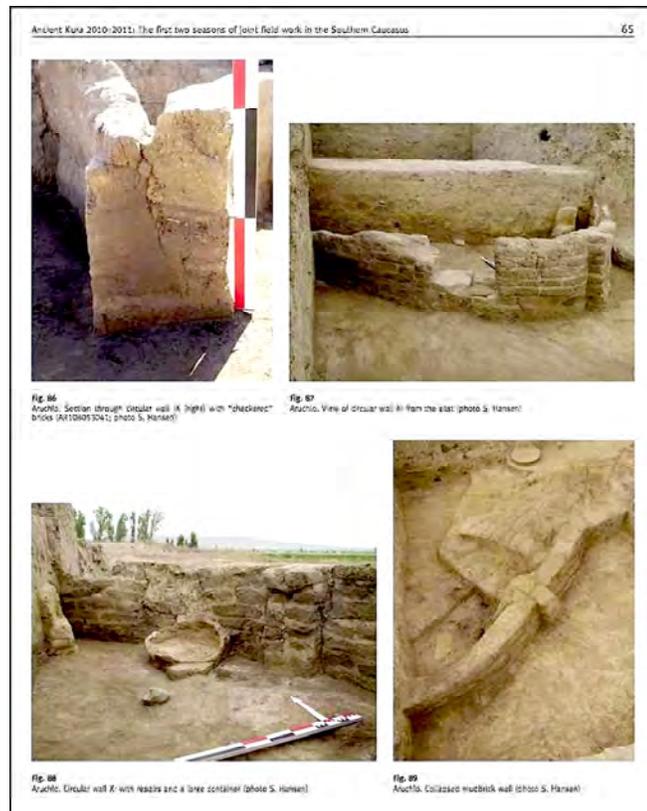


The Neolithic Settlement of Arukhlo – Georgian German Project

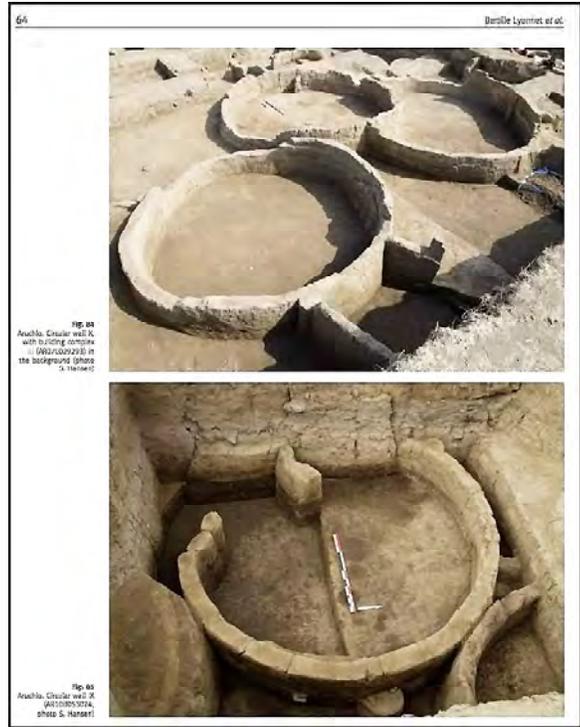




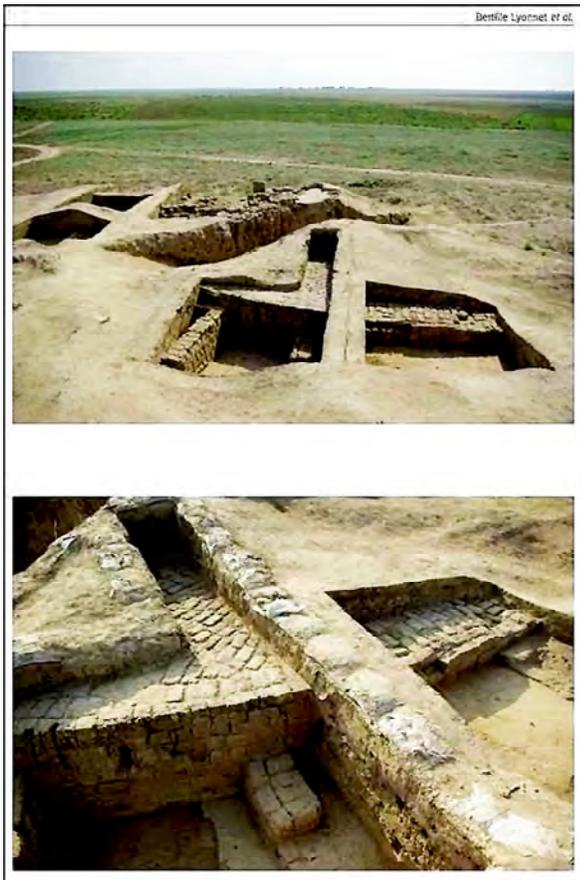
Topographical Map of Kamiltepe Neolithic Site

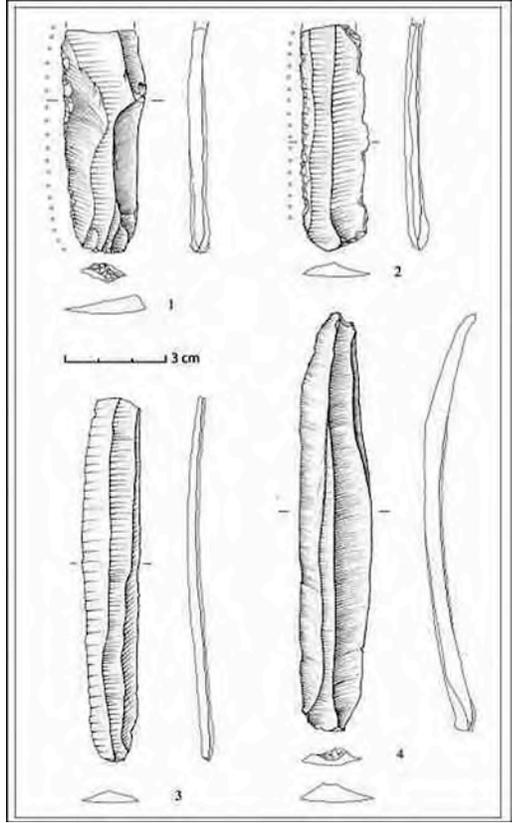


Complex Mud-Brick Dwellings

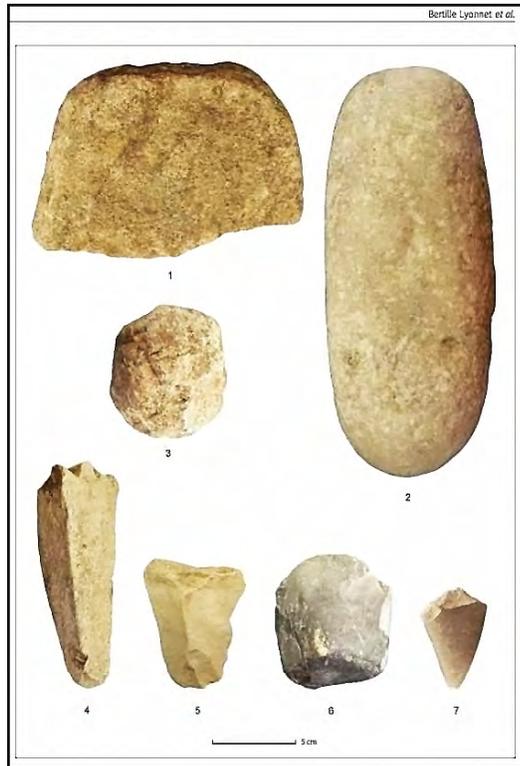


Round Structures





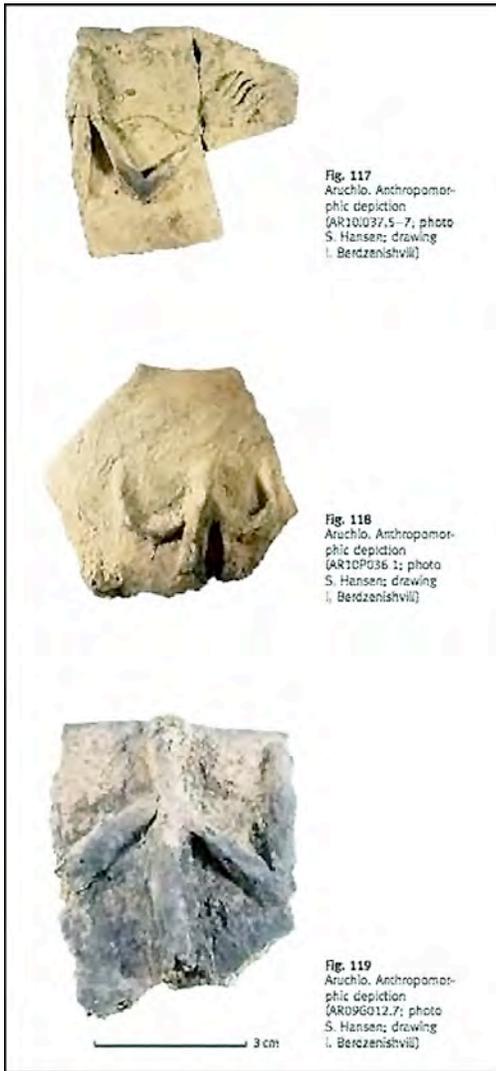
Obsidian Tools



Stone Tools



Stone Tools



Anthropomorphic Reliefs



Jewelry Beads

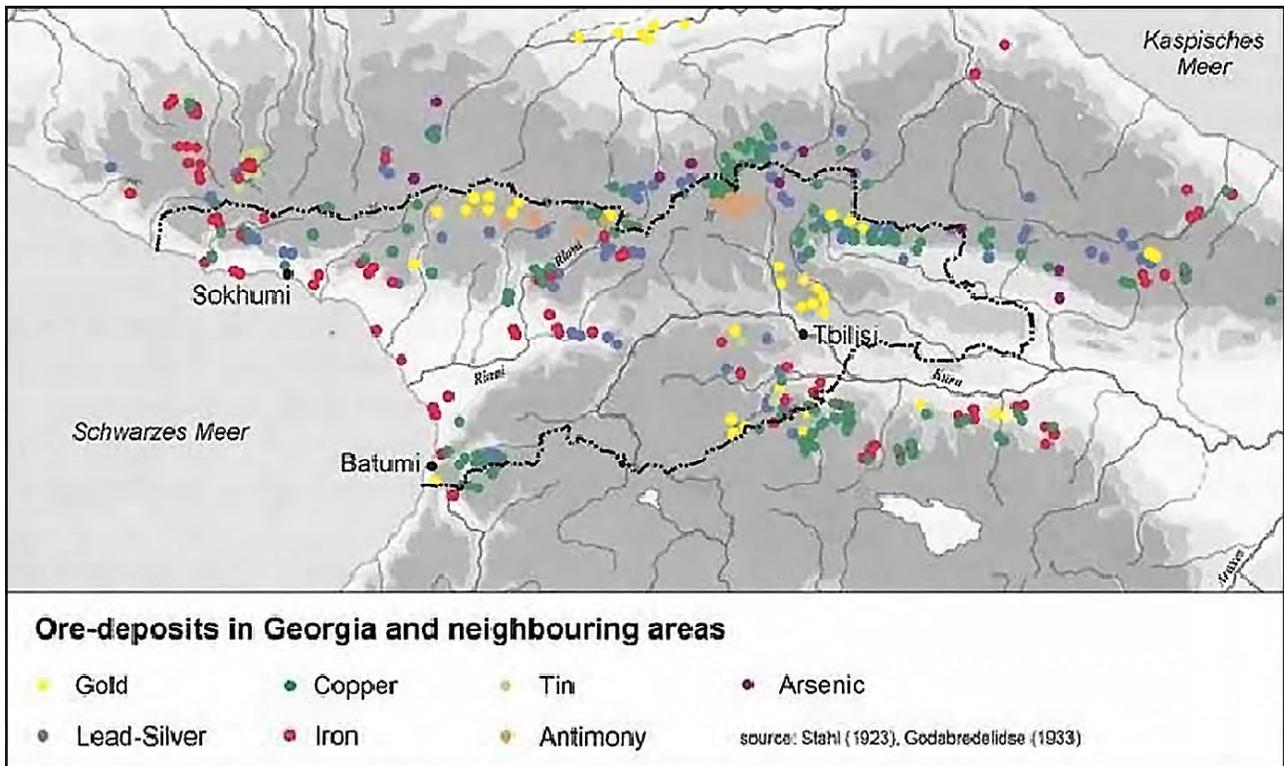


DBM, TH. RABSILBER).

Utilitarian Pottery Samples Discovered in the Excavations



Pottery Technology and Utility



Map of the Kura Valley and Azerbaijan Ore Deposits



DBM, TH.RABSILBER

Modern Excavation of Ancient Neolithic Gold Mine



Tunneling Into Ancient Ore Spaces – DBM, TH. RABSILVER

As the millennia of the Neolithic era evolved, valuable ores were discovered and utilized. The above map shows the areas of the abundant and valuable ore-deposits.

From the 190-page manuscript of the excavation research project and Professor Ricci's lecture, I gleaned many new facts that I appreciated in trying to better understand the physical nature and the evolving culture of my Georgian ancestors, 6,000 BCE. The appearance of the early Neolithic human settlements has been pushed back in time. The settlements were immensely successful as determined by the explosive expansion of the communities and the huge migrations of clans that ensued to Europe, and the Middle East. The evidence of their advancing technical feats and cultures are shown by the excavated artifacts and analysis of the structures built as residences of substantial height, canals around the residences and cultivated fields, and the obsidian and stone tools, pottery shards, and jewelry.

Professor Ricci discussed the geologic conditions of the region as flat and dry. However, the nearly 1000 mile region between the fresh water resources of the Caspian and Black Seas, as well as the abundant fresh water river systems from the Kura and Araxes rivers, provided amply for their human requirements, their cultivated agriculture and animal husbandry needs. Geological and archeological evidence supports the facts of the population migrations every few years and their return to the same regions many times. It is presumed that weather and agricultural conditions forced the migrations and returns of the clans.

The Caucasus region supported a huge population explosion, as well as a huge technical explosion during the Neolithic era. The early Neolithic era occurred principally about 6,000 years BCE. There were many stages in the evolution of the cultures as the technology passed from the agricultural successes to the iron and bronze ages. Technologies flourished as attested to by the pottery, jewelry and trading that evolved. Early populations have been far more mobile than previously recognized. There were multiple clans of varying haplotypes, as attested to by the discovery of the genomic variability of the current resident populations. The clans of varied genomic types founded successful settlements in the Caucasus. New migrations to Europe and the Middle East occurred presumably due to weather and nutritional needs. No major regional battles have been described in the area during that era. By the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE, major empires evolved in the region, including the Hittites, Mittani, Akkadians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians and the Egyptians. By about 3500 BCE, written alphabets appeared, which was a critical evolution of languages that directly affected my own ability to follow the human journey of my ancestors. This will be discussed in greater detail in the manuscript.

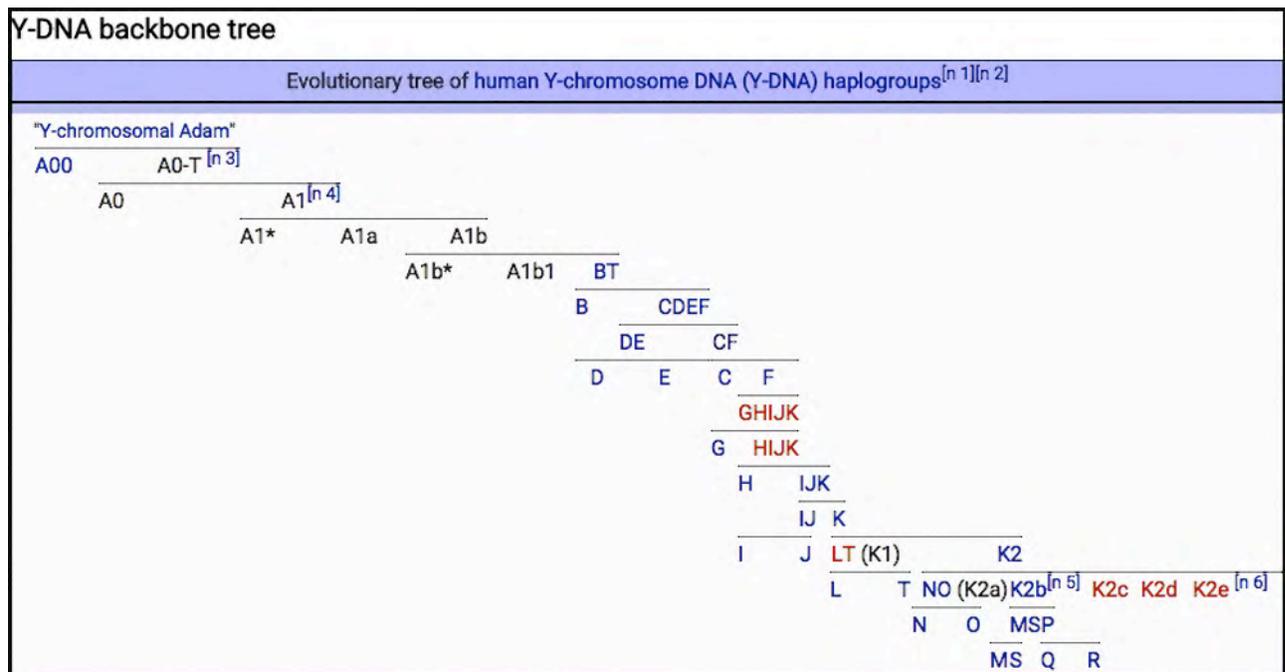
The significance of the further migrations relates to the populating of Europe and the Middle East. As well, both Europe and the Middle East received numerous and separate, but continuous immigrant migrations from other areas of Central Asia, Asia, and Africa. Populations brought a large variety of genetic types and new

mutations. A general statement about the mixing of the genomes has been that it was the males who traveled, while the females were the local gals.

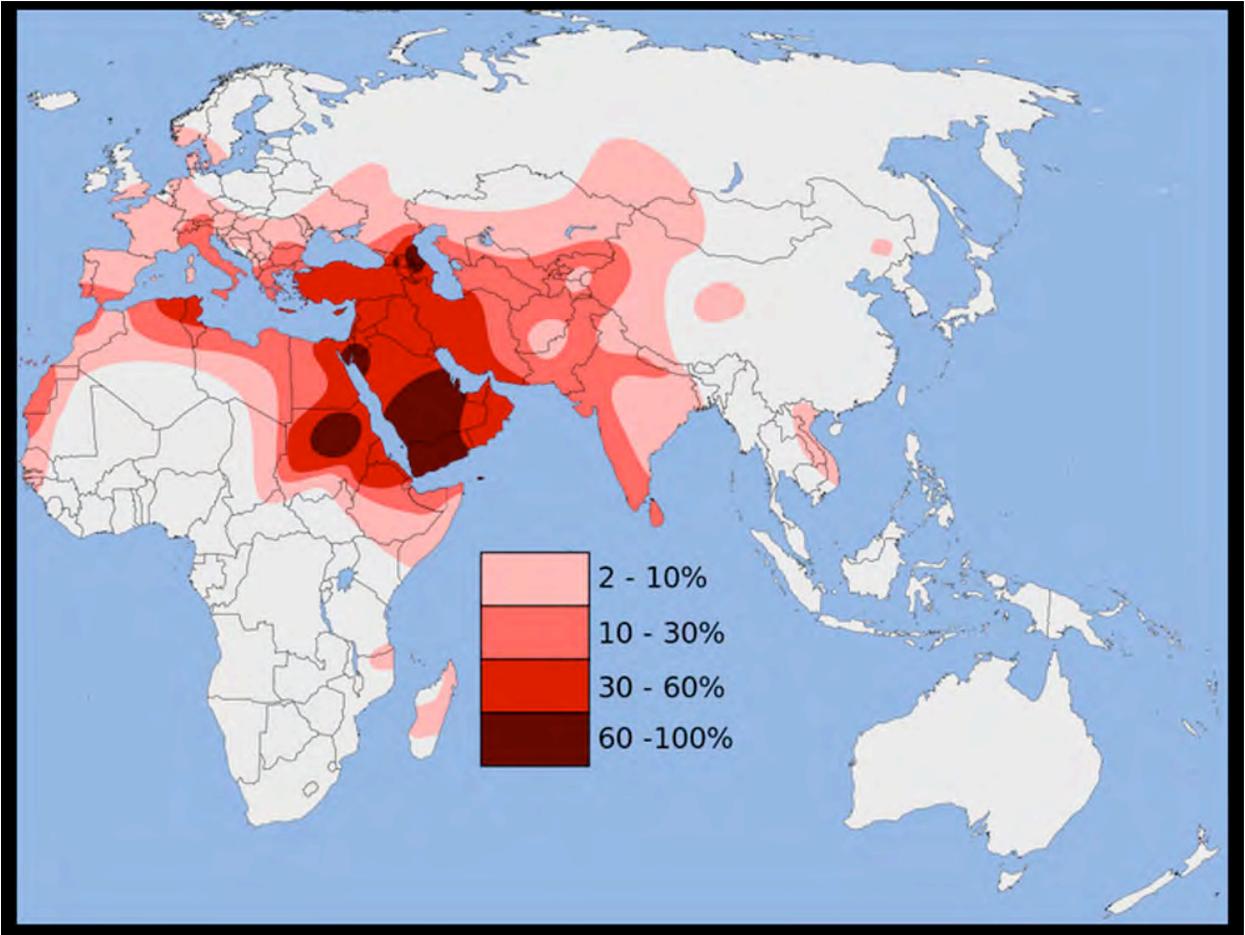
By comparing the data from many disciplines, i.e. archeology, genetics, linguistics, recorded history, Biblical accounts, and geography, it became possible to cross-link the facts to determine more recent stages of my ancestral journey to modern times.

Due to findings of specific genetic mutations, the J2a haplogroup/subclade has been reclassified as J-M410. Current analyses of J-M410 located this subgroup mainly in the Caucasus and principally in Georgia and North Ossetia. The group appeared about 15,000 years ago. Several specific mutations are associated with this subclade that interestingly arose in the region of Georgia and North Ossetia.

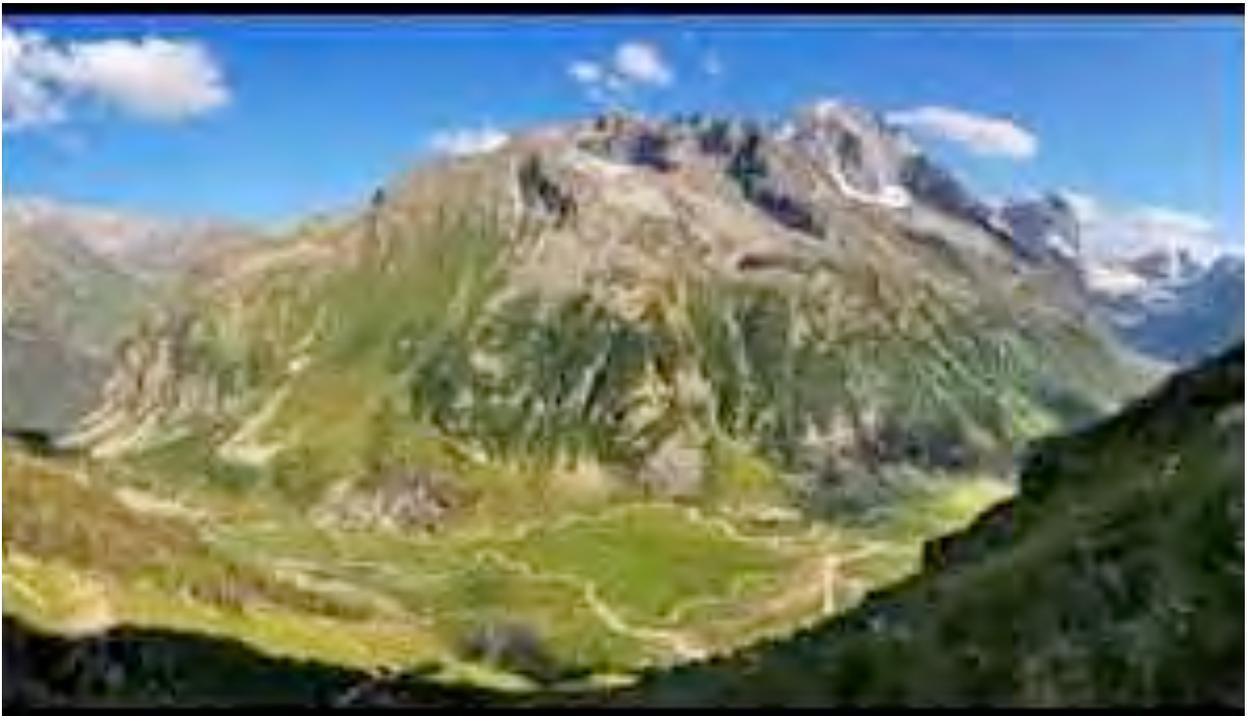
Georgia and North Ossetia are located in the lush valley of the Kura and Araxes Rivers. The region lies conveniently between the two huge fresh water seas: the Black Sea in Anatolia and the Caspian Sea to the East. This is the region where ancient humans migrated about 100,000 years ago. Ninety percent of living humans descended from these ancient peoples. This region also was located in the northern part of the Fertile Crescent, where animal husbandry and the agricultural revolution evolved. Animals were domesticated, which included: sheep, goats, cattle and pigs. Eicher wheat was first domesticated in the region. When these ancient people migrated, they took their animal stock and plants with them.



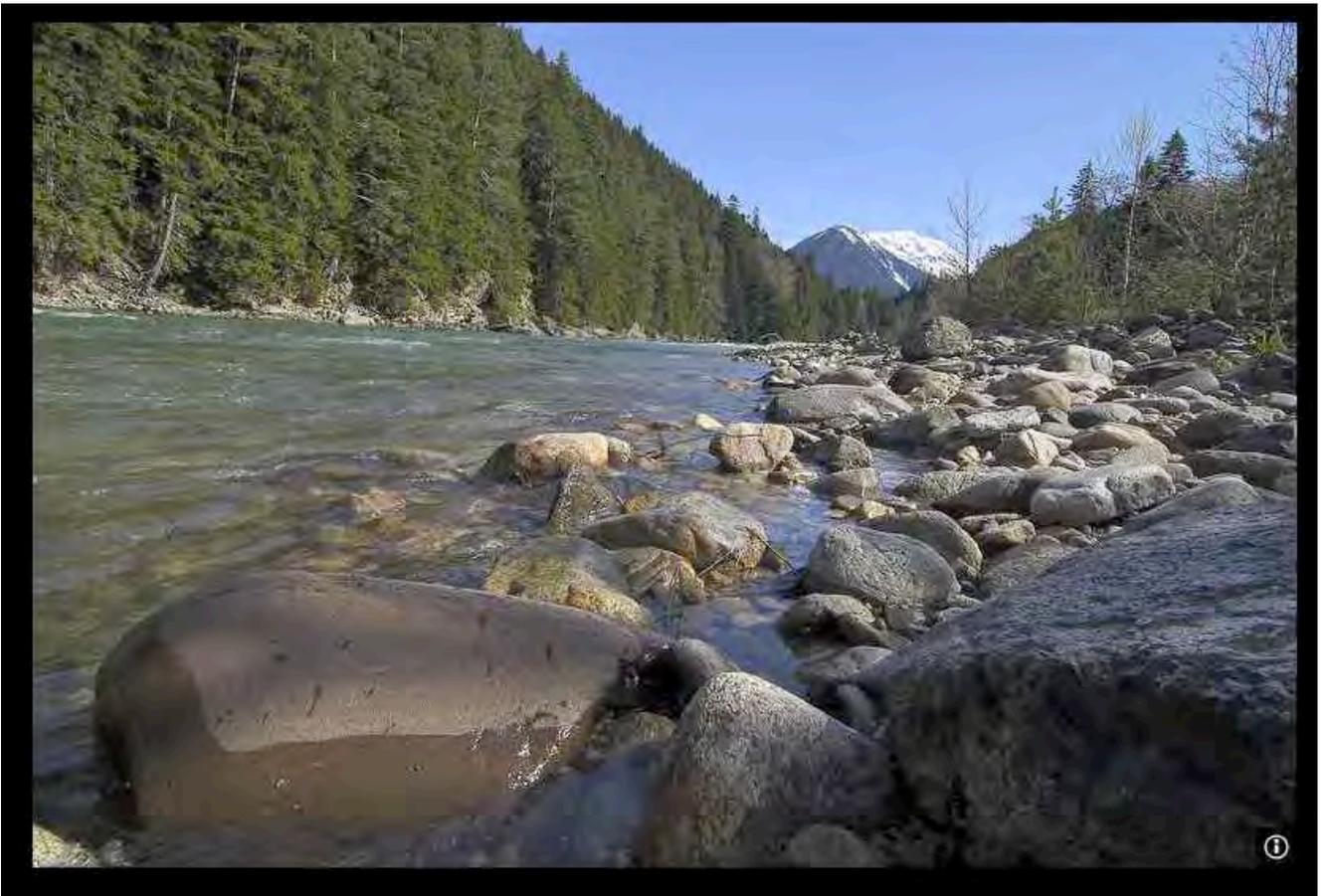
Y-DNA Backbone Tree (ISOGG – International Society of Genetic Genealogy)



Map Graphic Distribution of J2-M410 Y-DNA



Georgia, Caucasus





View of a Village settlement in the Caucasus



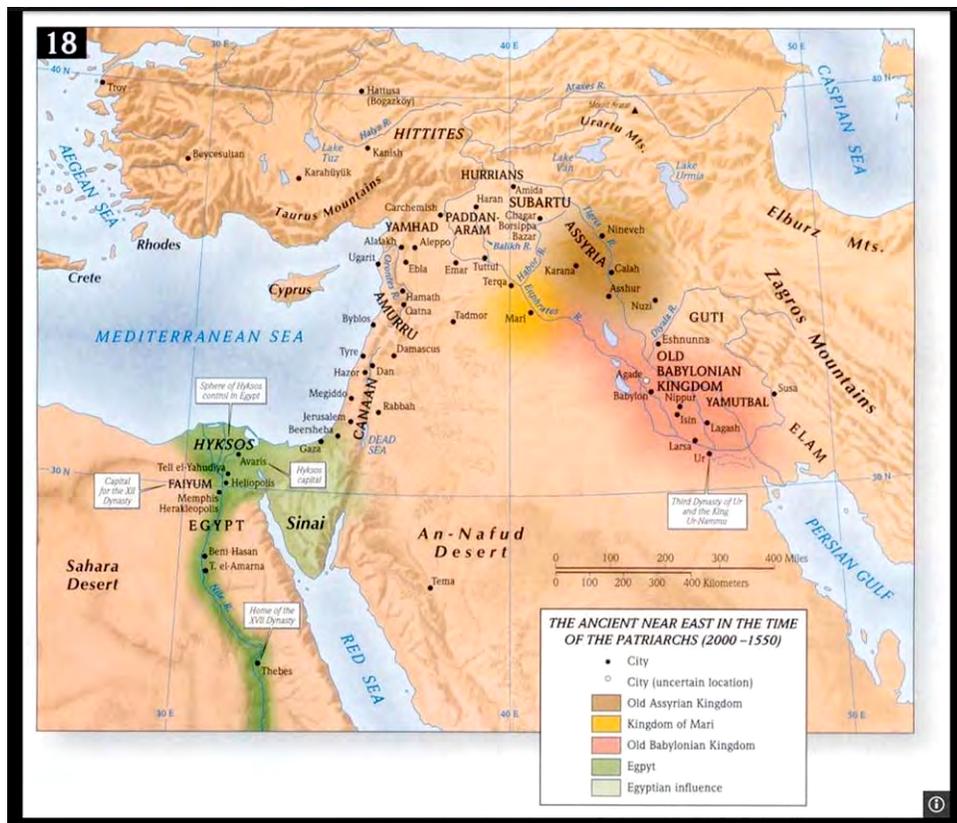
Lush Valleys, Mountains and Rivers of the Caucasus



Map of the Fertile Crescent of Mesopotamia



Aerial Modern Map of the Caucasus



Map of Middle Eastern Empires, 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium BCE



Aerial Map of the Greater and Lesser Caucasus Mountain Ranges and the Kura & Araxes Rivers Positioned between the Black Sea of Anatolia and the Western Shoreline of the Caspian Sea

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## Anthropological View of Our Human Journey

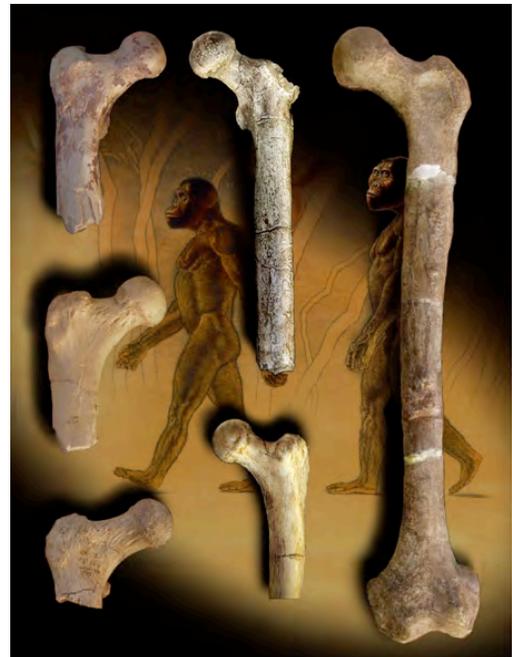
### Early Hominids Walked Upright

Robert S. Sherins, MD

In the past decade, discoveries of three new hominid species have been reported that showed bi-pedalism in hominids as early as 7 million years ago. The earliest of those hominids is ***Sahelanthropus tchadensis*** (Sahel man from **Chad**), which is an extremely important finding because it is the only one so far not discovered in the Rift Valley region of Kenya-Ethiopia. Additionally, it showed that the spinal cord was attached to the foramen magnum (skull) in a fashion suggesting that this hominid was bipedal. The discovery of this remarkable individual pre-dates the split-off of the pre-apes and modern humans. As such, the evolutionary scheme is a terrific way to compare our modern human evolution that resulted in our upright posture and bipedalism, huge brains, fine motor coordination for tool making, language skills and intellectual development.



Fossil remains of ***Orrorin tugenensis*** were discovered in the Tugen Hills of **Kenya** dating about 6 million years ago. Orrorin was a bipedal hominid that predated *Australopithecus afarensis* ("Lucy") by about 2.5 million years.

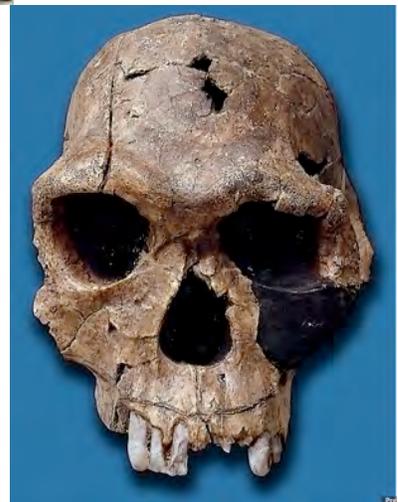


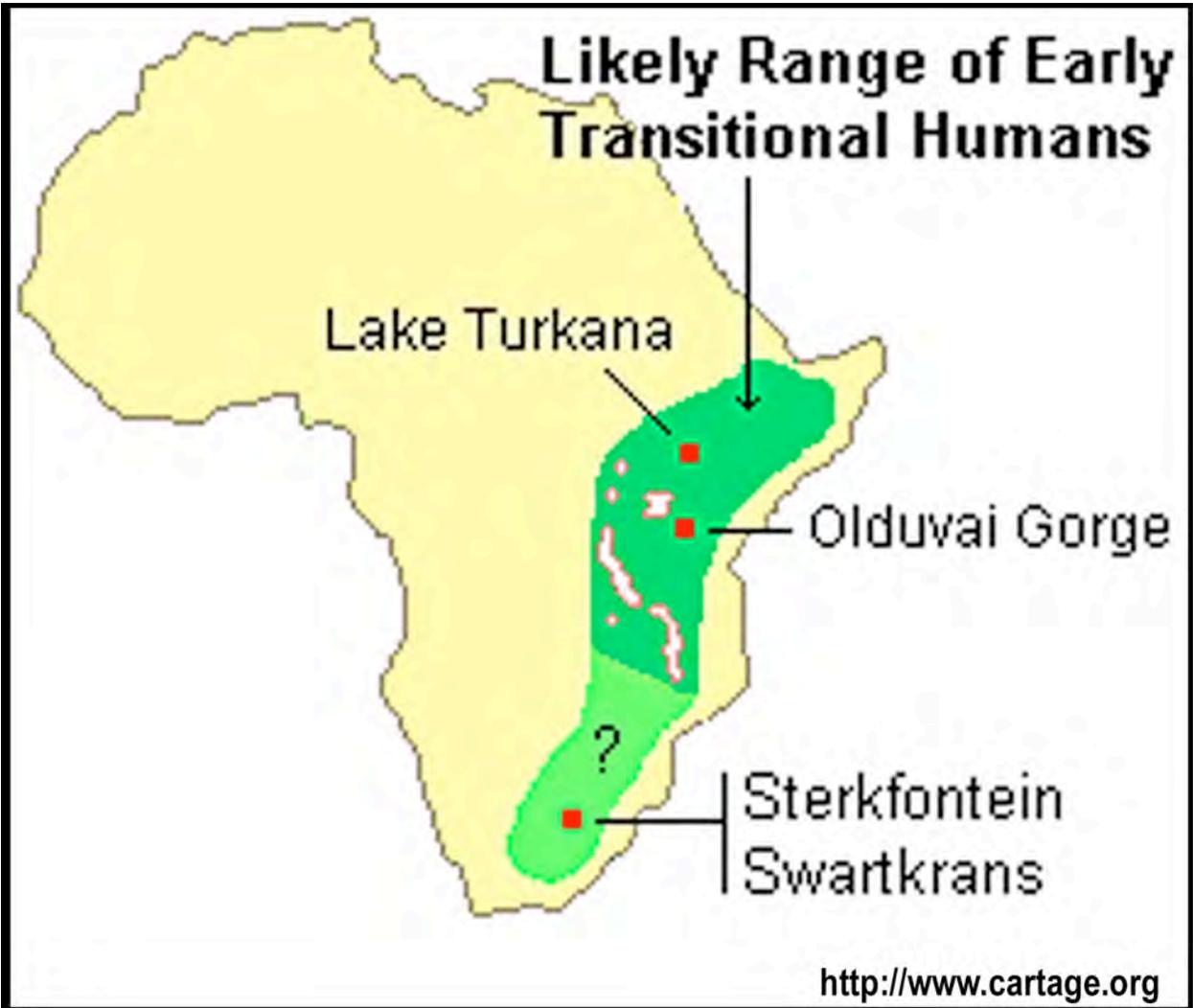
The third bi-pedal hominid was ***Ardipithecis ramidus***. The fossils were located in the ***Afar region of Ethiopia*** and were dated to 4.5 million years ago.



Skeleton of *Ardipithecis ramidus*

The first hominid associated with ***hand tool making*** was ***Homo habilis***. Fossil remains of his stone hand tools are impressive, but his brain capacity was still quite small - 600 cc. *Habilis* lived entirely within Africa from 2.3 to 1.4 million years ago.



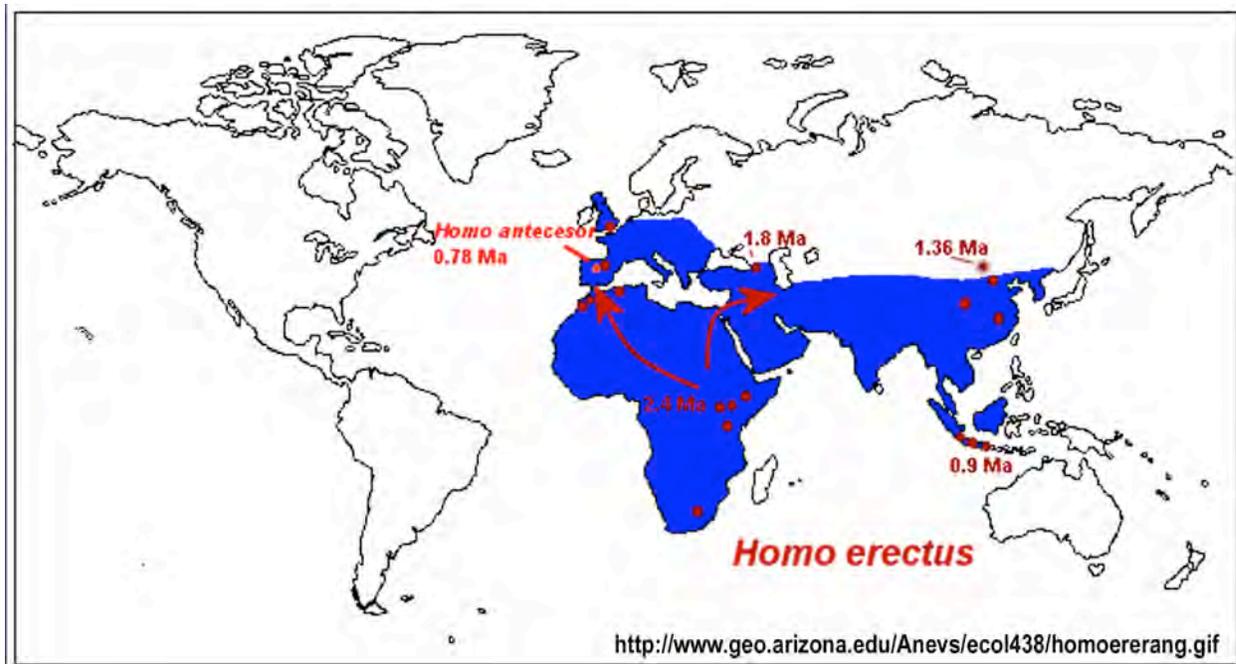


Homo Habilis Lived Entirely Within Africa

## Hominids Walked Out of Africa

Robert S. Sherins, MD

**Homo Erectus** appeared about 1.8 million years ago and **migrated out of Africa**. These **H** individuals populated the African continent, as well as the southern regions of Europe, Asia, Siberia, India and Indonesia. They roamed far and wide indicating that they could adapt to a wider range of environments following their food resources.



Migration Map of Homo Erectus

About 600,000 to 400,000 years ago, fossil remains of individuals identified as Homo Neanderthalensis appeared, but they were all discovered **out of Africa** and ranged from Western Europe, the Middle East and Asia. To date, no vestiges of Neanderthal have been found within the African continent.



## Graphic Illustrations

From Science: Magazine:

[http://www.thefullwiki.org/Neanderthal\\_Extinction](http://www.thefullwiki.org/Neanderthal_Extinction)

<http://www.sciencemag.org/>

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/10/neanderthals/neanderthals-photography>



Comparison of Skull and Skeletons of Neanderthal and Homo sapiens



Reconstruction of CroMagnon and Neanderthal facies



Both Neanderthal and Homo sapiens Can Display Red Hair



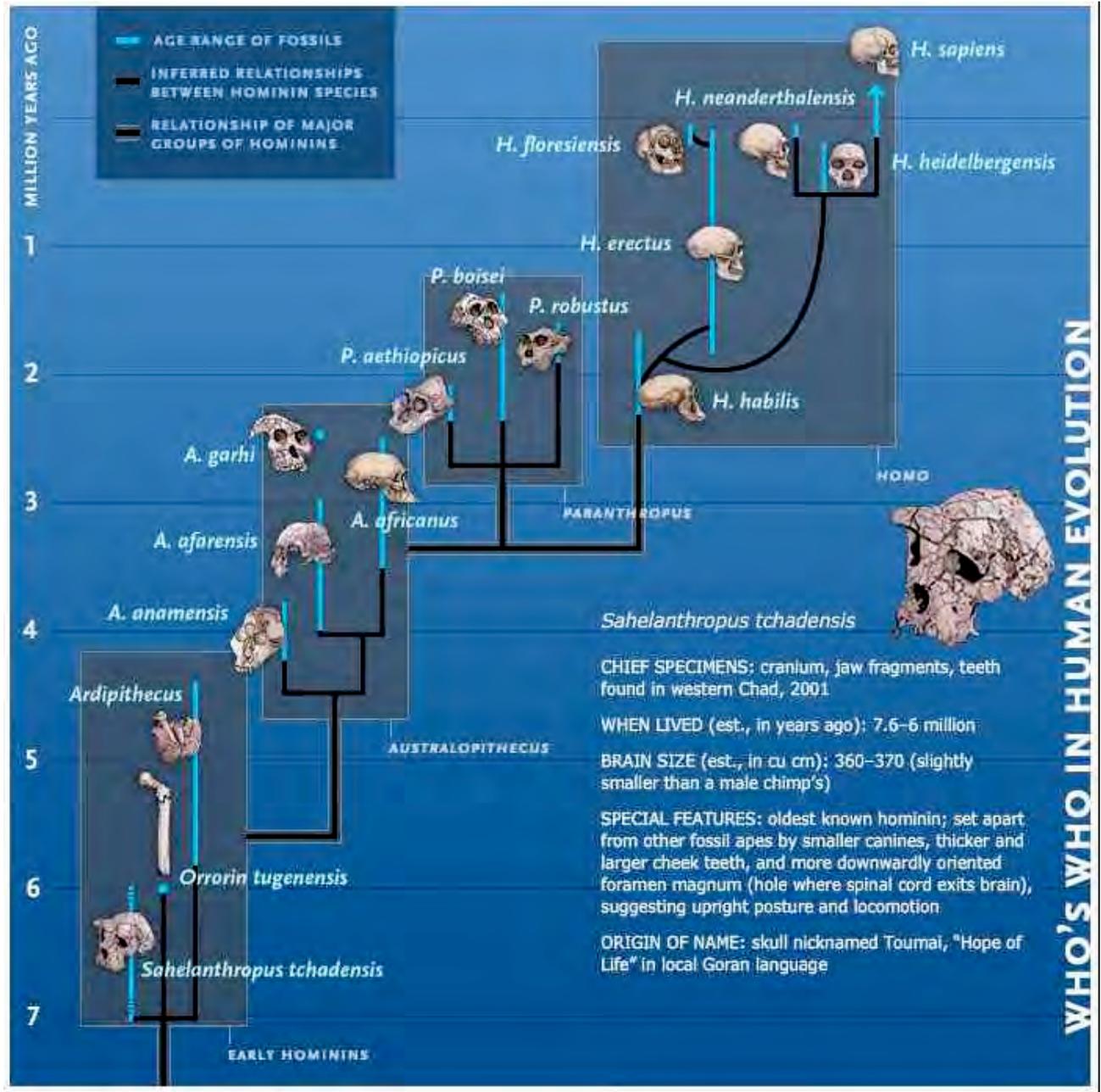
Reconstruction by Kennis & Kennis / Photograph by Joe McNally

Neanderthal Female model



Neanderthal Anatomic Reconstruction

# Graphic Timeline of Hominid Evolution



Graphic Display of the Hominid Evolutionary Tree

Timeline: 7-Million Years

## Our Ancestral Genomic Journey

Robert S. Sherins, MD

At a lecture sponsored by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles in 2005, Professor Michael Hammer<sup>1</sup> spoke on the subject of his deep interest in trying to identify genetic traits associated with ethnicity. He offered members of the audience free testing of their DNA if they would participate in a survey matching their DNA results with their ancestral countries of origin. It was a novel idea that the Eastern European origin of my ancestors might be detectable by DNA testing. However, I deferred the decision to be tested until three years later after confirmation that any test results would remain private and permanently secured by the laboratory and that the genetic testing would not expose my identity as an individual.

In December 2008, I received in the mail 2 certificates from the FamilyTreeDNA laboratory that certified my genomic identity. My oral-swab samples revealed that the **Y-Chromosomal haplogroup was J2a**; the **mtDNA haplogroup was H1**. I looked in the mirror to try to determine what such a genomic identity meant. I noticed a bald, grey, blue-eyed male of height and weight appropriate for a 71-year Caucasian Jew of Russian-Polish-Romanian extraction. Opening my mouth, I saw three types of teeth for biting, slicing and grinding, which identified me as an omnivore. If I mentally subtracted my protruding facial appendages, the remaining skull above my eyes and ears consisted of at least half of the volume devoted to the upper brain case, which was a huge volume of neurological tissue relegated to sensory input, fine motor functions and highly evolved intellectual pursuits. In evolutionary terms, the earliest identified skulls of the genus homo (hominids) had cranial volumes of about 450 – 550 cubic centimeters, whereas the capacity of modern human skulls exceeds 1,500 cubic centimeters. Not seen was my blood type: hemoglobin B, Rh+; the somatic genes responsible for the structural fixation of my larynx required for speech; and the genes for red hair that appear not only among a small percentage of modern humans (1-2%), but also have been found in ancient Neanderthals and modern Orangutans.

**At the outset, let me be absolutely clear in stating that there are neither genetic traits nor alleles, which could be identified or associated with race, ethnicity or religion.**

The DNA tests showed the sequencing of the nucleotides on my Y-Chromosome as well as the mitochondrial-DNA (mtDNA) from my X-Chromosome. Single mutations were identified (SNP – single nucleotide polymorphisms), as well as short tandem repetitions (STR) of some of the sequences of nucleotides. The Y and X chromosome

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<sup>1</sup> Professor of Molecular Biology and Genetics, University of Arizona and Scientific Director of the FamilyTreeDNA laboratory.

(23<sup>rd</sup> pair of human chromosomes) confer only gender to offspring. They do not confer other physical characteristics to the individual.

From father to son in perpetuity, the Y-Chromosome passes its component genes to each subsequent male offspring, except for an occasional mutation in an offspring. Female offspring receive none of the Y-chromosomal genes. Since male gender is bestowed by the combination or pairing of the X and Y-chromosomes, every male also receives the mitochondrial genes from his mother on the X chromosome. In the sex gametes (sperm/ovum) the pair of chromosomes is split into two components, an X and a Y single chromosome. In fertilization, the sperm nucleus enters the nucleus of the ovum, but the mitochondria from the sperm, which is located in the tail of the sperm, remains outside the ovum. Hence the fertilized ovum must produce both mitochondrial components of the pair received from the mother and passed on to the conceptus. The mitochondria contain cellular structures that provide for the chemistry to power the cells.



Fertilized Conceptus with Mitochondria of the Sperm Outside the Ovum

The advent of the scientific investigations under the auspices of the Human Genomic Project at the National Institute of Health made possible relatively inexpensive genetic testing, which was readily available to the public.<sup>2</sup> Several laboratories offered those services. The Family Tree DNA company was selected by the author to process his specimens, which were performed at the molecular biology laboratory under the direction of Professor, Dr. Michael Hammer at the University of Arizona. Dr. Hammer's laboratory has accumulated a genomic database of about 750,000 samples worldwide, which is currently the largest and foremost genomic testing laboratory for this purpose. By 2015, their case studies included about 750,000 specimens as of the timing of this publication in 2015. The data are secured and indexed so that only the owner of the individual specimen can obtain his or her data by knowing both the sample number and password. As future new information is learned the laboratory at no extra charge provides updates to its participants. Additionally, The Family Tree DNA laboratory performs the DNA analyses on the specimens received from several other firms who support genomic research, such as the National Geographic Genomic Project.

In 2001, "The Seven Daughters of Eve, the Science that Reveals our (female) Genetic Ancestry," by Dr. Brian Sykes,<sup>3</sup> was published by W.W. Norton & Company, New York and London. This very readable and basic analysis of the female human genomic journey became a best seller, which created keen public interest in the use of DNA testing for the purpose of determining one's genetic ancestry.

Dr. Sykes determined that mutations in the genetic coding of our DNA occur about once in every thousand years, although the mutations found in the male Y-DNA are more varied than the mitochondrial-DNA (mtDNA) of females. The tests are performed and compared with the results of samples taken from individuals living in other worldwide regions. Dr. Sykes identified and calculated the approximate dates of origin of the mutations. The results produced the estimated dates of the appearance of the **most recent common female ancestors in Europe**. Those females were called genetic "**Eves**". The "Eves" were provided with fictitious given names, by which he identified seven regional European genomic areas that encompassed the variation of the female mtDNA Haplogroup/subgroups.

In 1990, the National Institutes of Health with support from the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Sciences, funded an International effort to map the human genome by sequencing the nucleotides of approximately 20,000 human genes that

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<sup>2</sup> The "Human Genome Project" was organized and coordinated by the U.S. Department of Energy and the National Institutes of Health. The program was launched in 1990 in order to identify the approximately 20,000-25,000 genes in human DNA and to determine the sequences of the 3 billion chemical base pairs (nucleotides) that make up human DNA. By 2003, the results of the research investigations were released to the private sector.

<sup>3</sup> Oxford University Professor of Genetics at the Institute of Molecular Medicine.

are contained among our 23-pairs of chromosomes. The successful completion of the Human Genome Project made possible affordable DNA analyses for the public. The laboratory first concentrated upon the pair of sex chromosomes, #23. Rather than pursuing the expensive analyses of the complete human genome, the nucleotide sequences of the Y-chromosome and the mitochondrial-DNA from the X-chromosome were studied preferentially. The Y and X-chromosomes contain about 1,600 genes, whose functions are entirely allocated in determining gender. In contrast, the entire human genome contains about 20,000 genes.

Deciphering the human genome required the herculean task of locating as many as 200 million base pairs of nucleotides on a single chromosome. Some of the 23 chromosome pairs are larger, but the smallest of them is our 23<sup>rd</sup> gender-determining chromosome. The X-chromosome of the pair is much smaller than the Y-chromosome.

From Wikipedia:

*“The **Y chromosome** is one of two sex [chromosomes](#) ([allosomes](#)) in [mammals](#), including [humans](#), and many other animals. The other is the [X chromosome](#). Y is the [sex-determining](#) chromosome in many [species](#), since it is the presence or absence of Y that determines the male or female [sex](#) (gender) of [offspring](#) produced in [sexual reproduction](#). In mammals, the Y chromosome contains the [gene SRY](#), which triggers [testis](#) development. The [DNA](#) in the human Y chromosome is composed of about 59 million [base pairs](#). The Y chromosome is passed only from father to son, so analysis of Y chromosome DNA may thus be used in genealogical research. With a 30% difference between humans and chimpanzees, the Y chromosome is one of the fastest evolving parts of the [human genome](#). To date, over 200 Y-linked genes have been identified. All Y-linked genes are expressed and (apart from duplicated genes) [hemizygous](#) (present on only one chromosome) except in the cases of [aneuploidy](#) such as [XYY syndrome](#) or [XXYY syndrome](#). (See [Y linkage](#).)”*

“...The content of the human genome is commonly divided into coding and noncoding DNA sequences. Coding DNA is defined as those sequences that can be transcribed into [mRNA](#) and [translated](#) into proteins during the human life cycle; these sequences occupy only a small fraction of the genome (<2%). [Noncoding DNA](#) is made up of all of those sequences (ca. 98% of the genome) that are not used to encode proteins.”

*“...Protein-coding sequences represent the most widely studied and best understood component of the human genome. These sequences ultimately lead to the production of all human proteins, although several biological processes (e.g. [DNA rearrangements](#) and [alternative pre-mRNA splicing](#)) can lead to the production of many more unique proteins than the number of protein-coding genes.”*

*“The complete modular protein-coding capacity of the genome is contained within the [exome](#), and consists of DNA sequences encoded by [exons](#) that can be translated into proteins. Because of its biological importance, and the fact that it constitutes less than 2% of the genome, sequencing of the exome was the first major milestone of the Human Genome Project.”*

***“Number of protein-coding genes:***

*About 20,000 human proteins have been annotated in databases such as [Uniprot](#). Historically, estimates for the number of protein genes have varied widely, ranging up to 2,000,000 in the late 1960s, but several researchers pointed out in the early 1970s that the estimated mutational load from deleterious mutations placed an upper limit of approximately 40,000 for the total number of functional loci (this includes protein-coding and functional non-coding genes)...*

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From Robert S. Sherins, MD:

Reports from the genomic research that we genealogists received, include the classification factors that identify us by changes in the genetic nucleotide sequences (mutations). The groups of those sequences are known as “**haplogroups**” or types. Haplogroups are identified by the order of the number and types of nucleotide sequences that bind the two chains of DNA in every chromosome. Each chromosome is doubled by the contribution from each parent. There are subdivisions of the individual haplogroups that are identified by the specific changes in a nucleotide sequences, called “SNP” – single nucleotide polymorphism”. Other means of characterizing mutations/subgroups are the number of repeated sequences. In those cases, the code is identified as “STR” – short arm tandem repeats.

From Wikiwand: <http://ghr.nlm.nih.gov/handbook/howgeneswork/genelocation>

***“How do geneticists indicate the location of a gene?***

*Geneticists use maps to describe the location of a particular gene on a chromosome. One type of map uses the cytogenetic location to describe a gene’s position. The cytogenetic location is based on a distinctive pattern of bands created when chromosomes are stained with certain chemicals. Another type of map uses the molecular location, a precise description of a gene’s position on a chromosome. The molecular location is based on the sequence of DNA building blocks (base pairs) that make up the chromosome.”*

### ***“Cytogenetic location:***

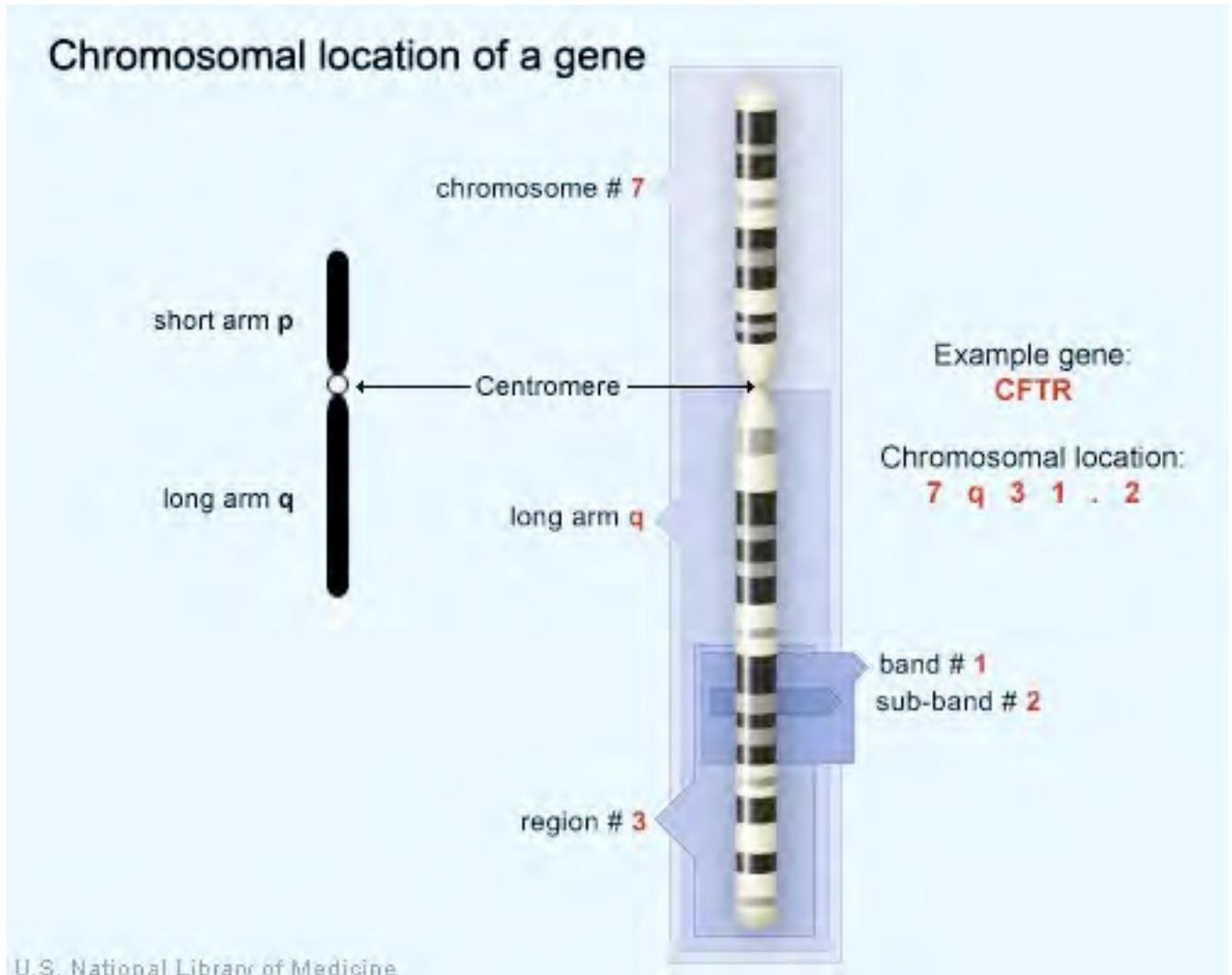
*Geneticists use a standardized way of describing a gene’s cytogenetic location. In most cases, the location describes the position of a particular band on a stained chromosome: 17q12. It can also be written as a range of bands, if less is known about the exact location: 17q12-q21”*

*“The combination of numbers and letters provide a gene’s “address” on a chromosome. This address is made up of several parts:*

- The chromosome on which the gene can be found. The first number or letter used to describe a gene’s location represents the chromosome. Chromosomes 1 through 22 (the autosomes) are designated by their chromosome number. The sex chromosomes are designated by X or Y.“*
- “The arm of the chromosome. Each chromosome is divided into two sections (arms) based on the location of a narrowing (constriction) called the centromere. By convention, the shorter arm is called p, and the longer arm is called q. The chromosome arm is the second part of the gene’s address. For example, 5q is the long arm of chromosome 5, and Xp is the short arm of the X chromosome.”*
- “The position of the gene on the p or q arm. The position of a gene is based on a distinctive pattern of light and dark bands that appear when the chromosome is stained in a certain way. The position is usually designated by two digits (representing a region and a band), which are sometimes followed by a decimal point and one or more additional digits (representing sub-bands within a light or dark area). The number indicating the gene position increases with distance from the centromere. For example: 14q21 represents position 21 on the long arm of chromosome 14. 14q21 is closer to the centromere than 14q22.”*

*“Sometimes, the abbreviations “cen” or “ter” are also used to describe a gene’s cytogenetic location. “Cen” indicates that the gene is very close to the centromere. For example, 16pcen refers to the short arm of chromosome 16 near the centromere. “Ter” stands for terminus, which indicates that the gene is very close to **the end of the p or q arm**. For example, 14qter refers to the tip of the long arm of chromosome 14. (“Tel” is also sometimes used to describe a gene’s location. “Tel” stands for telomeres, which are at the ends of each chromosome. The abbreviations “tel” and “ter” refer to the same location.)”*

*See Graphic Illustration below:*



The [\*CFTR\*](#) gene is located on the long arm of [chromosome 7](#) at position 7q31.2. [q for the long arm; p for the short arm of the chromosome]

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From Robert S. Sherins, MD:

It was observed that nucleotide mutations occur about once every millennium. By comparing the DNA of living individuals to individuals and groups from other global populations, the mutations can be compared. By this method, the most recent common ancestors of living individuals can be identified and the time intervals to the most recent common ancestors can be estimated. Anthropologist and geneticist Spencer Wells, PhD (Stanford University), renowned authority on this subject, popularized genomic testing through public media supported by the National Geographic Society (The Genographic Project, 2005).

From Dr. Well's comments:

*“Some 99% of the human genome is shuffled from one birth to the next. The Genographic Project traces the 1% of the genome, which is not shuffled—mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) through the maternal line and the Y-chromosome through the paternal line. Mutations (changes) in the pack allow geneticists to work back to the genetics of our common ancestors. Our mtDNA appears to coalesce in a single woman, who lived on the African savannah about 150,000 years ago. Our Y-chromosome survives from a few men, who lived Africa about 348,000 years ago. So, the Biblical first couple Adam and Eve did exist—on or before 348,000 years. The discrepancy between the male and female lines is because, unlike the biblical Adam and Eve, this couple only represents the **last common Ancestors we can trace.**”*

*“It is estimated that about 60,000 years ago, our species had crashed to about only 2,000 individuals, then recovered. Evolution of our species occurs when changes/mutations occur in cell division that divides our genes, or by the gene interaction with our environment.”*

*“In many respects the Genographic Project is a race against time. Indigenous peoples amount to just 350m of the 6.8 billion people on the planet. The number of languages has gone from 15,000 in 1492 to 5,900 today. The ancient bloodlines are almost gone.”*

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From Robert S. Sherins, MD

Modern humans first appeared in the Rift Valley of northeastern Africa about 348,000 years ago<sup>4</sup>. About 100,000 years ago three identifiable mutations in the mitochondrial DNA appeared among the first groups of humans. Male Y-DNA from our most recent common ancestors has been discovered that extended back 348,000 years ago in 5 men from Algeria and Chad. Initially, those small bands of individuals migrated within Africa. The people of the San-Bushman tribe are the modern descendants of the first humans.

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<sup>4</sup> Y-DNA evidence of the A00 male haplogroup.



San - Busman Village



<http://nissan4x4.co.za>

## Diaspora “Out Of Africa”

Robert S. Sherins, MD

about 100,000 years ago, a band or bands of humans migrated out of Africa and crossed over to the Southern Arabian Peninsula over or through the region of Anarrowing of the Red Sea as it passes to the Gulf of Aden. The isthmus is quite restricted and in ancient times, there may have been a land bridge.

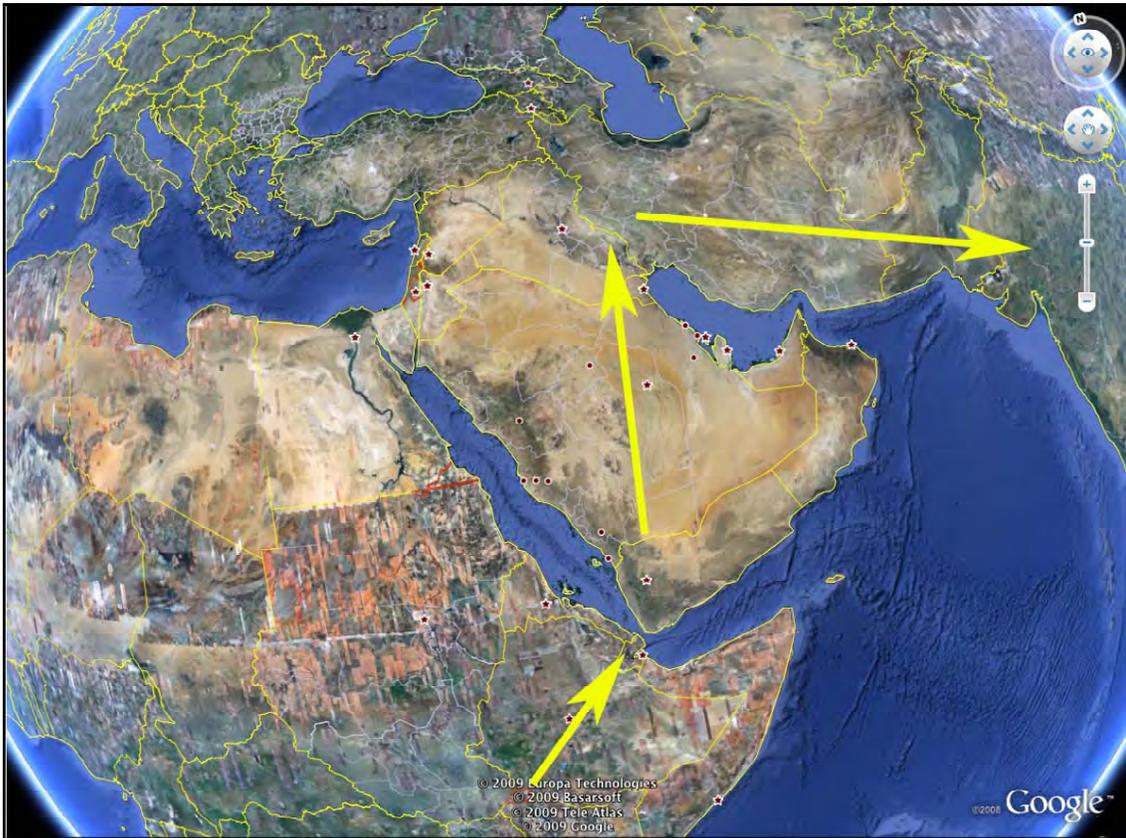
The routes of migration out of Africa have been determined by measuring molecular changes (mutations) of the gender-determining chromosomes, the Y-DNA and the mitochondrial DNA, (mtDNA) of the indigenous populations living in both geographic regions. The mutation of the first group has been identified as the “DE” haplogroup, which appeared in Arabia about 80,000 years ago. It is possible that the “D” mutation took place within Africa before the journey out of Africa. Descendants of those first individuals continued their journey and migrated along the coastline of South Asia, reaching India, Indonesia and Australia about 60,000 years ago.

The first genetic “Adam” was initially estimated to be only 60,000 years ago. However, other researchers disagreed, estimating the genetic “Adam” to be at least 142,000 years ago. That said, on March 7, 2013 an article was published in ***The American Journal of Human Genetics***<sup>5</sup> that identified the Y-DNA of an African-American male from South Carolina who had genetic mutations estimated to have originated at least 348,000 years old. This archaic genome preceded all previously examined Y-DNA. The haplogroup has been designated the **A00 haplogroup**, which is currently the oldest human male lineage and appeared in Africa. Testing of indigenous populations confirmed a few additional men with the same halogroup are presently living in Cameroon. None have been found in sub-Sarhara Africa, but it does not confirm that Cameroon was the location of origin of this haplogroup. Significantly, the genetic evidence from Y-DNA has demonstrated that modern human males lived more than 200,000 years earlier than suspected.

Other recent analyses of African haplotypes among indigenous populations has shifted the location of the presumed “genetic Adam.” Haplogroup A1b has been associated with Bakola pygmies from Southern Cameroon and one individual male who is an Algerian Berber. Since the discovery of the South Carolina male who exhibited the earliest Y-DNA haplotype, the classification identification of this archaic DNA has been changed to A00.

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<sup>5</sup> Vol. 92, pages 454-459, March 7, 2013.



“D” Haplogroup - First Out of Africa, 80,000 Years Ago (<http://earth.google.com/>)

A second wave of humans migrated out of Africa about 80,000-60,000 years ago. They migrated northward into the Middle East. Some of those individuals remained in the Middle East, but others continued to migrate northward and reached Central Asia and the Caspian Sea region about 80,000-60,000 years ago. By 50,000 years ago, an ice-age maximum appeared, during which the ice cap increased and retreated northward to the North Pole and thereby opened new grasslands in Europe. Early modern humans followed the herds of animals into Europe for the first time. Those individuals are known as the Cro-Magnon. By 30,000 years ago, other territories in Asia became accessible to wildlife. Following their food sources, modern humans migrated eastward as far as Siberia. By 18,000 a Siberian land bridge to North America appeared and small bands of humans entered North America for the first time. When the seas rose again, the humans who had migrated to North America were unable to return to Siberia. Instead, they continued to move southward in the Americas. Within a relatively short time, descendants from those early Americans reached Central and South America.

The earliest genetic ancestors of all living individuals have been identified (A00 haplogroup for males; L0 for females). Those individuals are referred to as the genetic “Adam” and “Eve.” **Every person on Earth is related to those first humans in Africa.** The initial human migration out of Africa has been identified as “D” and E” haplogroups. However, only about 10% of living persons are descendants of those individuals. Everyone else (90% of living persons) is related to the individuals who comprised the second wave of humans who migrated to Central Asia about

80,000-60,000 years ago. The second wave of human migration out of Africa has been identified as **“N”** and **“R”** haplogroups.



Second Wave of Human Migration to Central Asia

<http://www.google.com/maps>



Cro-Magnon Migration to Europe - 40,000 Years Ago



Asian Migration about 25,000 Years Ago

Let me summarize the information that we have learned thus far. It took 7-million years for the bipedal hominids of Africa to evolve to a state of having larger brains, creating hand tools, and surviving within Africa as hunter-gatherers. Dentition shows that omnivorous diets prevailed, which may have had direct consequences in providing for the protein diets required to build the more complex brains of the latter species.

Within the period of 800,000 to 300,000 years ago, Neanderthal species appeared in the Middle East, Europe and Central Asia. We now understand that by 348,000 years ago the first African modern human males appeared in Africa as attested by the recent discovery of the A00 Y-DNA haplogroup of the African-American male in South Carolina and 3 other individuals in Cameroon (2) and Algeria (1). Thus, we can say with confidence that for a short period of time, perhaps 80,000-50,000 years, modern humans had evolved within the time frame of Neanderthal evolution. The appearance of both species may have been concurrent for 50,000 or so years, but Neanderthal was NEVER present in Africa. At least, no fossil records of Neanderthal have been found in Africa so far. Evidence of the presence of Homo Erectus in Europe and Asia has been confirmed. There are some cases where the DNA has shown breeding of Homo Erectus with Neanderthal and possibly with a few modern humans. This evidence is preliminary, but newer cases of cross-breeding are being discovered and reviewed in great detail.

Female mitochondrial DNA has been analyzed (mtDNA) from many indigenous populations of Africa and other global communities. By using the same calculus as with the Y-DNA project, it has been estimated that the earliest female modern humans evolved in Africa about 200,000 to 150,000 years ago. With the discovery of the male A00 haplogroup from 348,000 years ago, we can assume that a female counterpart will be discovered during the same archaic period. Let us hope that surviving female descendants of such an archaic mtDNA haplogroup can be found.

Modern human evolution within Africa continued for 200,000 years before any known migrations proceeded out of Africa. Among males in Africa, individuals with "A" and "B" Y-DNA haplogroups survived within Africa. Among the females, individuals with mtDNA of the L0, L1, L2 and L3, evolved within Africa. Today, the descendants with those haplogroup identities live among the San & Bushman tribes.

Our family interest in the evolution and genomic journey really begins with the first modern human treks out of Africa. Although Homo erectus migrated to Europe and Asia (1.8 million ya), as did Neanderthal (800,000 to 300,000 ya), modern humans remained within Africa until 100,000 to 80,000 years ago. Y-DNA "D" haplogroup has been identified in the Arabian Peninsula and dated to about 80,000 years ago. It may be that the "D" mutation appeared in Africa before the migration to the Arabian peninsula. The next mutation has been ascertained to be "E" haplogroup and dated to about 80,000 years ago. Both "D" and "E" have been identified along the coasts of Southern Asia, India, Indonesia and Australia dating from 60,000 years ago.

Analyses of the subsequent distribution of "E" populations shows that "E" groups of males remained along the migration paths toward Australia. However, other "E" groups migrated back to the Middle East and to Africa, depositing populations throughout the Middle East, and later on populating North Africa and the Southern Mediterranean regions. Each of those subsequent populations had further mutations that can be identified as sub-clades of the original "E" haplogroup. About 25,000 years ago, sub-clade "E1b1b1" was present in the Middle East. This group also has been identified in North Africa and in the Southern Mediterranean area. The sub-clades of "E" haplogroup are quite diverse and the population was very widespread by 25,000 years ago. When the first scientific research and DNA analysis occurred, a system of classification was used, denoting the first emigration out of Africa as the "M" group and the second migration to Central Asia as the "N" group.

I wish to call attention to the male haplogroup that was identified as the M-35/E1b1b1. That constellation of mutations of the Y-DNA has been confirmed in many ethnic groups:

- Arabs
- Armenians

- Ashkenazim
- Berbers
- Cypriot Turks
- Iranians
- Kurds
- Lebanese
- Nubians (Sudan)
- Moroccans
- Sephardim
- Turks Anatolia

While a very large proportion of Jewish Ashkenazim have are identified as Y-DNA Haplogroup, E1b1b1, so do many other ethnic groups, i.e. Arabic, Anatolian, and Middle Eastern populations. **The sub-clade E1b1b1 appeared about 25,000-20,000 years before the birth of the Patriarch Abraham (his birth in Şanlı Urfa, Turkey, was approximately 1,800 BCE)**

There were no Hebrew tribes, nor Caananites nor Semitic languages at the time of the first appearance of E1b1b1. Christians and Muslim populations also exhibit the E1b1b1 haplotype, which by itself does not signify Jewish ancestry. Therefore, Jesus and his disciples also may have inherited the E1b1b1.E-M34 y-DNA Haplotype, as did so many other ethnic types in the Middle East and Near East.

*My maternal family of Solomon males of Pungesti and Negresti, Moldavia, Romania, have the Y-DNA haplogroup E1b1b1, which has been reclassified, E-M34. They descend from the earliest individuals out of Africa about 80,000 years ago. Male descendants of Bercu Jidovul (Bercu the Jew), was documented to have been born in 1820 in Pungesti, he was also known as Bercu sin Zeilic, and possessed the E1b1b1/E-M34 genome.*

The author's paternal ancestry (Cherkinsky, Cherkinskii) was Russian. In actuality, they were Polish, living in the Russian Occupied Eastern Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania. Our Cherkinskii ancestors were originally Polish prior to the First Partition of the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania in 1772. This author's Y-DNA demonstrated the "J2a/E-M34" haplogroup/sub-clade. About 80,000 years ago, our *Cherkinsky' ancestors probably arrived with the second wave of human migrations from Africa, eventually settling in Central Asia, in the region of the Caspian Sea.* From the second wave of migrations to Central Asia, arose 90% of all living humans. The ancient populations of migrants were composed of very few individuals estimated to be less than about 2,000 persons. With adequate food resources the population expanded. Despite hardships, a significant population expansion resulted that spread to Europe after the last ice age (~45,000 years ago), Later on about 35,000 years ago, migrations began to Asia, Siberia and eventually to the Americas, crossing the Bering Sea to Alaska about 18,000 years ago.

Y-DNA analysis has revealed a complex and sequential evolution from the earliest human populations, who arrived in Central Asia about 80,000 years ago. They are recognized as the "N" haplogroup, although some researchers consider that the N Haplogroup may have arisen in Africa. Their descendants shown by newly discovered mutations in the Y-DNA, have been ascribed to the "R" haplogroup, appearing in Central Asia about 80,000 years ago. Still being considered is the theory the "R" also arose in Africa or the Middle and/or the Near East.

Next to appear were male populations that exhibited other mutations, classified as the CF Haplogroup appearing about 75,000 years ago. Again, new data complicates the history of evolution, with considerations that CF may have arisen in Africa or the Near and Middle East. Hopefully these theoretic conflicts will be resolved as deeper DNA research discoveries are published.

Major expansions from the CF Haplogroup occurred about 70,000 years ago, when the C and F groups split apart and diverged. The appearance of the G and HIJK Haplogroups are descended from "F" and appeared in Central, South and Southwest Asia about 55,000 years ago. The author's Y-DNA descended from the offspring of the F-M89 Haplogroup. F-M89 does not flow from the G Haplogroup. In fact, all of the G, H, I, J and K Haplogroups descended from males with the "F" mutations and appeared in South East Asia closest to the extended Middle East region.

The relationship of "F" to the author's Y-DNA can best be summarized as follows: Y-DNA "**J-P209**" Haplogroup/Subclade arose approximately 40,000 years ago in the region of West Caspian Sea. This group achieved a wider distribution into Western China, and the region of the Uyghurs. Two major subdivisions of the descendants of "J-P209" appeared later on. Y-DNA **J1/M267** appeared about 25,000 years ago in West Asia and in the Fertile Crescent region near the borders between Turkey, the Caucasus, and Syria, Iraq and Iran. The first of these mutations, J1, population enjoyed a particular presence in the Caucasus.

The next mutations, Haplogroup "J2-M179," is the second subgroup descended from "J-P209" that appeared about 30,000 years ago in Western Asia. They achieved a wide distribution from Western China, the Uyghur region of Northwest China, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. However, **J2-M410 Haplogroup is mostly associated with settlements in Georgia and North Ossetia. It is in this region that the agricultural revolution and the explosive expansion of the population occurred 8,000 years ago. The Neolithic Revolution of sedentary habitat was achieved. This phenomenon is known as a genomic "founder event".**

## Proto-Semitic, Aramaic & Hebrew Languages

Determining the distribution of human populations materializes when genomic data are evaluated with additional data, such as linguistic evolution and expansions, cultural factors, such as foods, dress and behavioral customs, as well as geographic population analyses. Triangulation of the factors improves the certainty in the results of determining the origins of ethnic populations and their migration patterns.

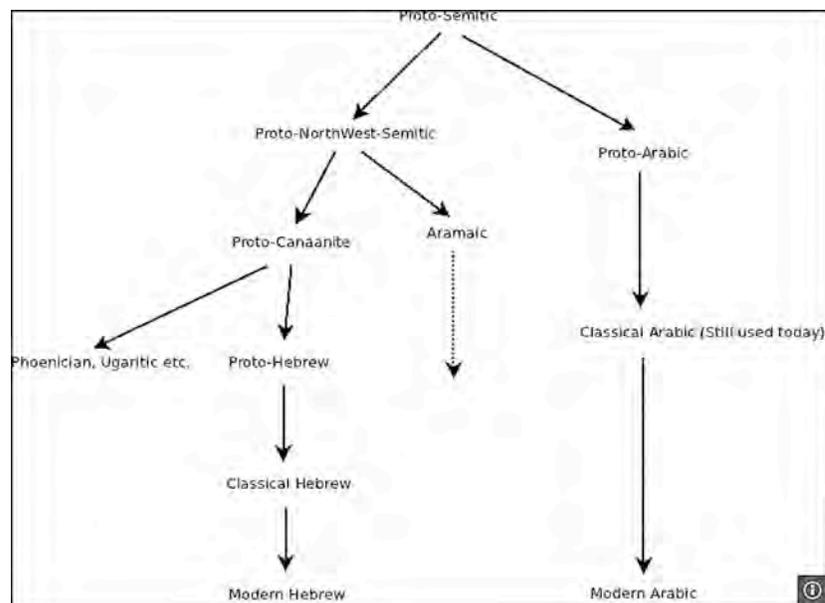
I was pleasantly surprised to find that the evolution of the Hebrew and Aramaic languages in the Middle East occurred in different locations and different times. Those locations in turn were associated with the different distributions of J1/M267 and J2/M410 populations.

Evidence of the earliest Proto-Semitic language appeared about 3,700 BCE in Northeastern Mesopotamia. It is one of the world's primary language groups that includes: Berber, Chadic, Cushitic, Egyptian, Omotic and Semitic languages.

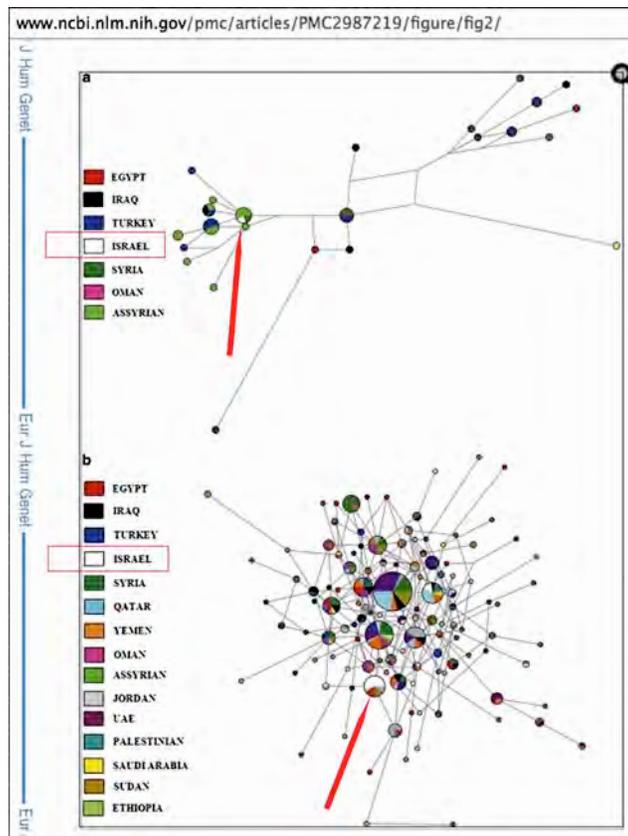
From Wikipedia/Wikiwand digital encyclopedia:

*“Proto-Semitic is the hypothetical proto-language ancestral to historical Semitic languages of the Middle East. Locations, which have been proposed for its origination, include northern Mesopotamia, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Levant with a 2009 study proposing that it may have originated around*

*3750 BCE. The Semitic language family is considered a component of the larger Afro-Asiatic macro-family of languages.”*



“Graphic Display of the Evolution of Semitic Languages In the Middle East”



“Distribution of Afro-Asiatic Languages

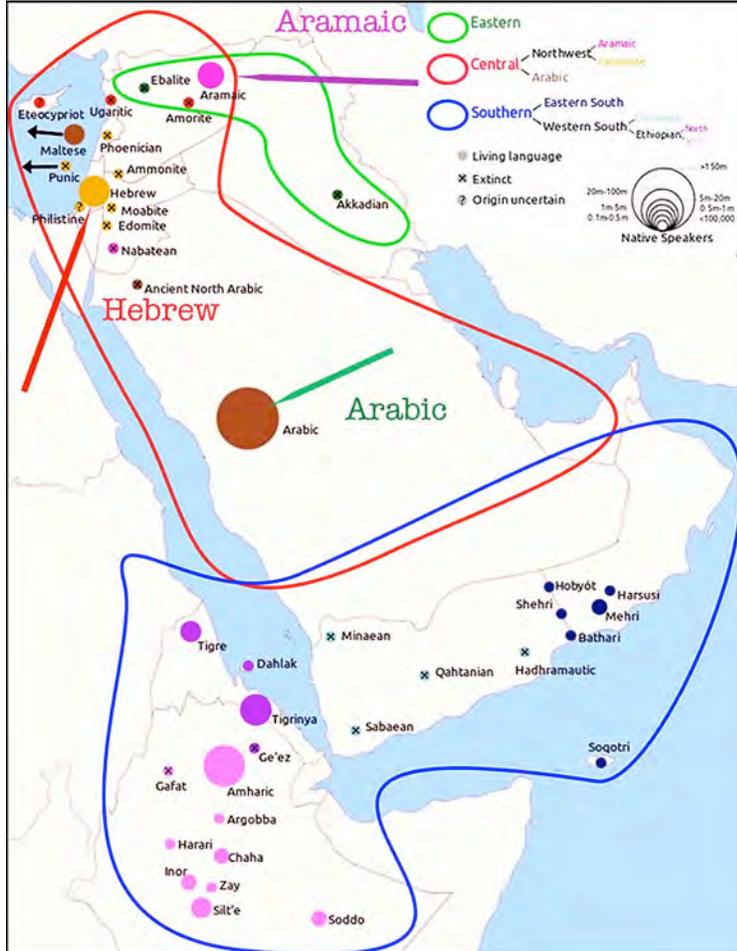
Note that the Hebrew language, represented in White (red arrows) is a very small part of the whole language group”

“The Aramaic language, along with Chaldean (Babylonian) and the Proto-Semitic languages arose in Northeastern Mesopotamia. As well, the principle Arabic language evolved in this region. However, Arabic speaking populations of the region spoke a different dialect of Arabic as they migrated to the South Arabian Peninsula. They formed the desert populations of Yemen and Oman. Males carrying the J1-M267 genomic mutations were included in this group. They also spoke Aramaic. Later on, Jewish populations from this region became part of the 12 Hebrew tribes (Aramaic speakers later on adopted Hebrew).”

“The graphic map shown next shows colored marquees that designate 3 regions:

1. Green – demarcates the Northeastern region of the Levant and Arabian Peninsula where the Proto-Semitic language was spoken, as well as Chaldean and Aramaic.
2. Blue – demarcates the Southern Arabian Peninsula where Yemen and Oman are located. The Arabic dialect speakers from the Northeastern green area migrated to the far south of the peninsula, Yemen and Oman.

3. Red – demarcates the Northwestern region of former Mesopotamia, and current location of Syria and Lebanon, as well as the Levant and most of the main Arabian Peninsula. This is the region where Hebrew evolved. It is also the region where the most prominent Arabic language evolved and is spoken in modern times.”



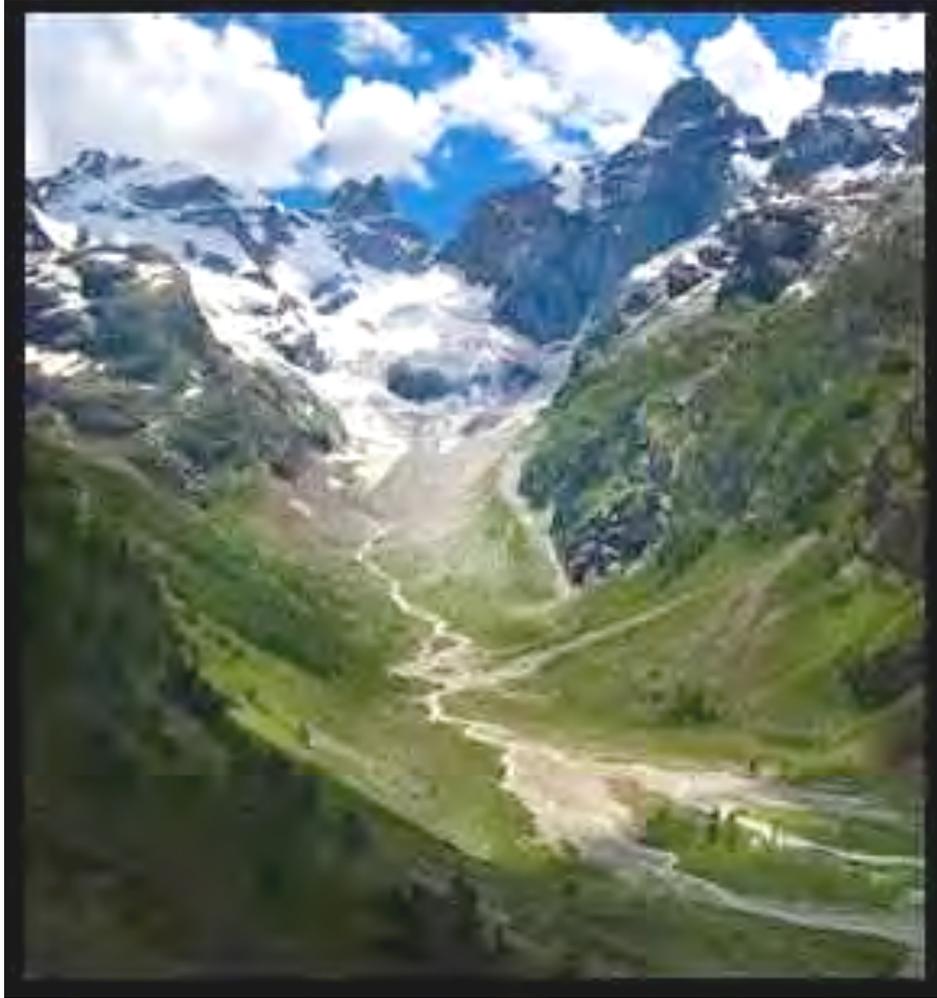
“The Y-DNA Haplogroup Subclades, J2-M410It appears is one of the most populous genomic identifies of the Caucasus region. They migrated to several regions in the Middle East, but those who migrated to the region demarcated by the red boundary in the map, became the Caananites and many of them became Hebrew speaking Jews. Those individuals became not only Hebrew speaking Jewish tribes, but also included future Caananites,

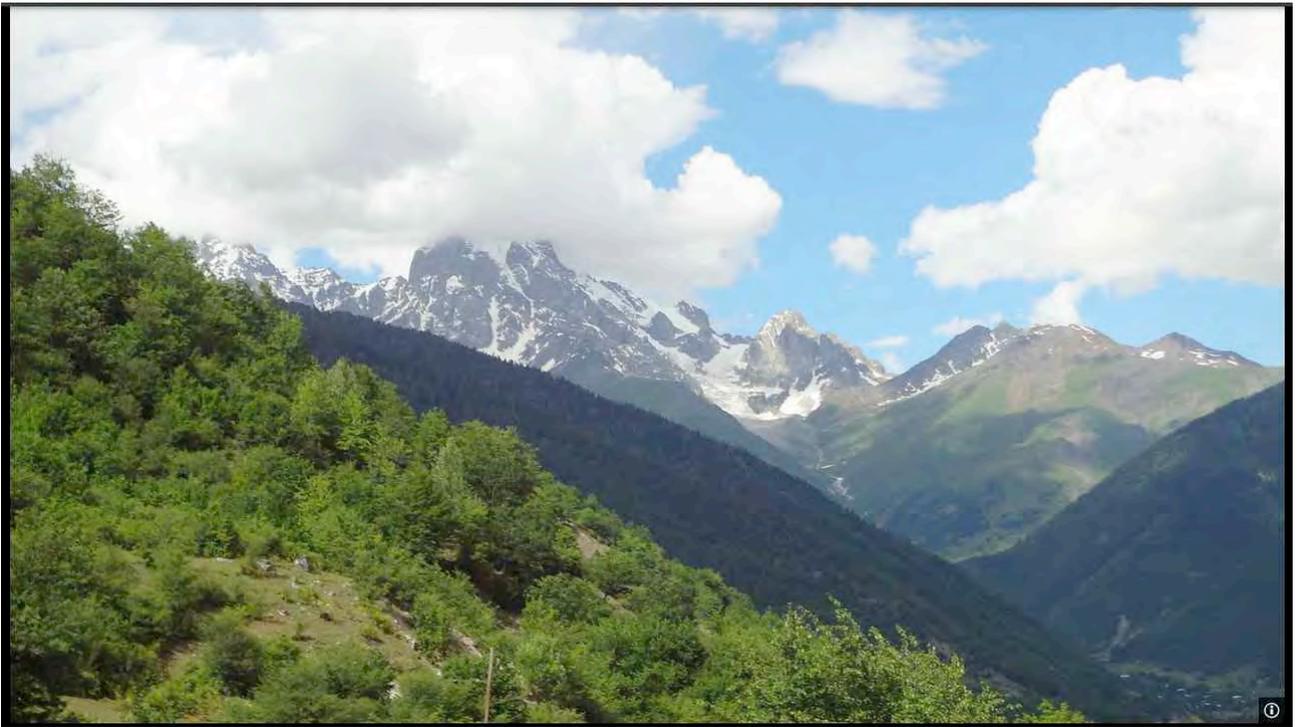
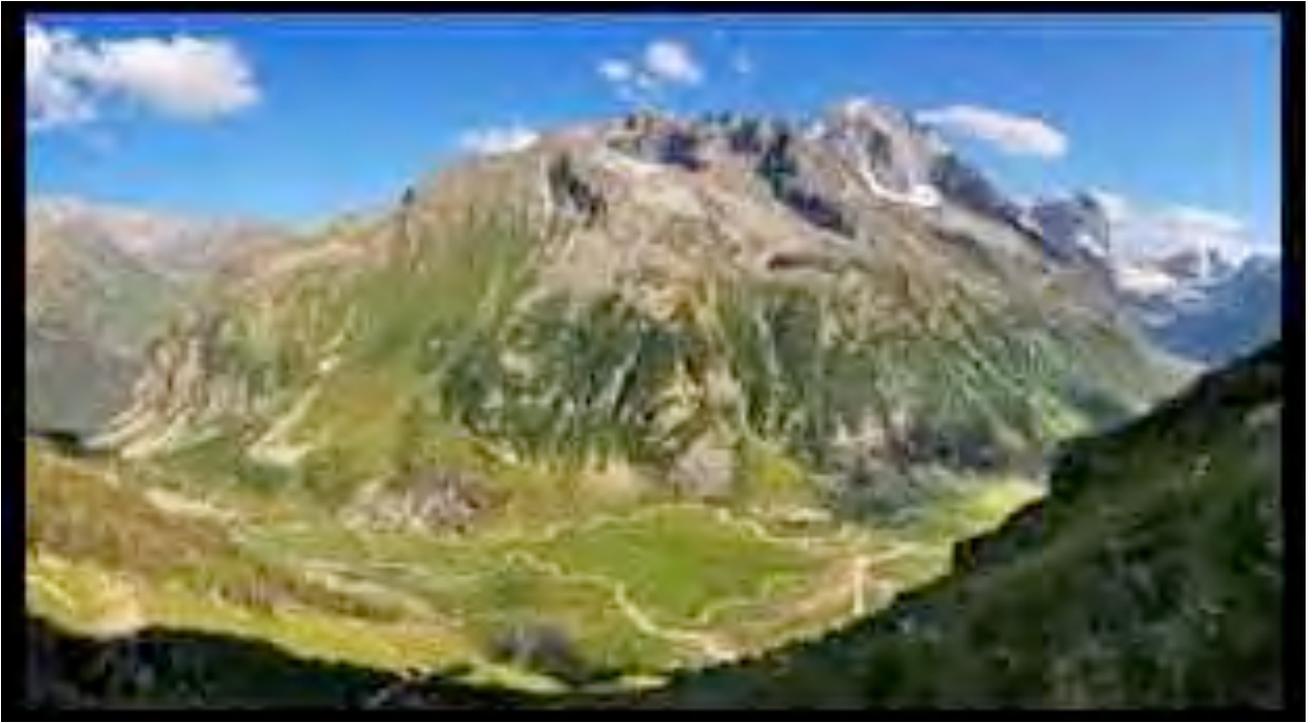
among them were the Arabs who spoke the main dialect of Arabic, Kurds and Phoenicians.”

Haplogroup J1 and J2a appeared more than 10-millenia before the appearance of the Hebrew Patriarch Abraham, Moses and the Exodus from Egypt, and the establishment of the 12 Jewish tribes of Israel about 1000 BCE. The Fertile Crescent region represented a population of humans who first settled and adopted agricultural means and animal husbandry to sustain them. Settlements replaced the hunter-gatherer cultures. The migration of the agricultural communities and culture to Southern Europe and the Mediterranean communities is associated with the distribution of the “J” haplogroup genome. Therefore, it is no surprise that individuals expressing J2a have been found among disparate cultures:

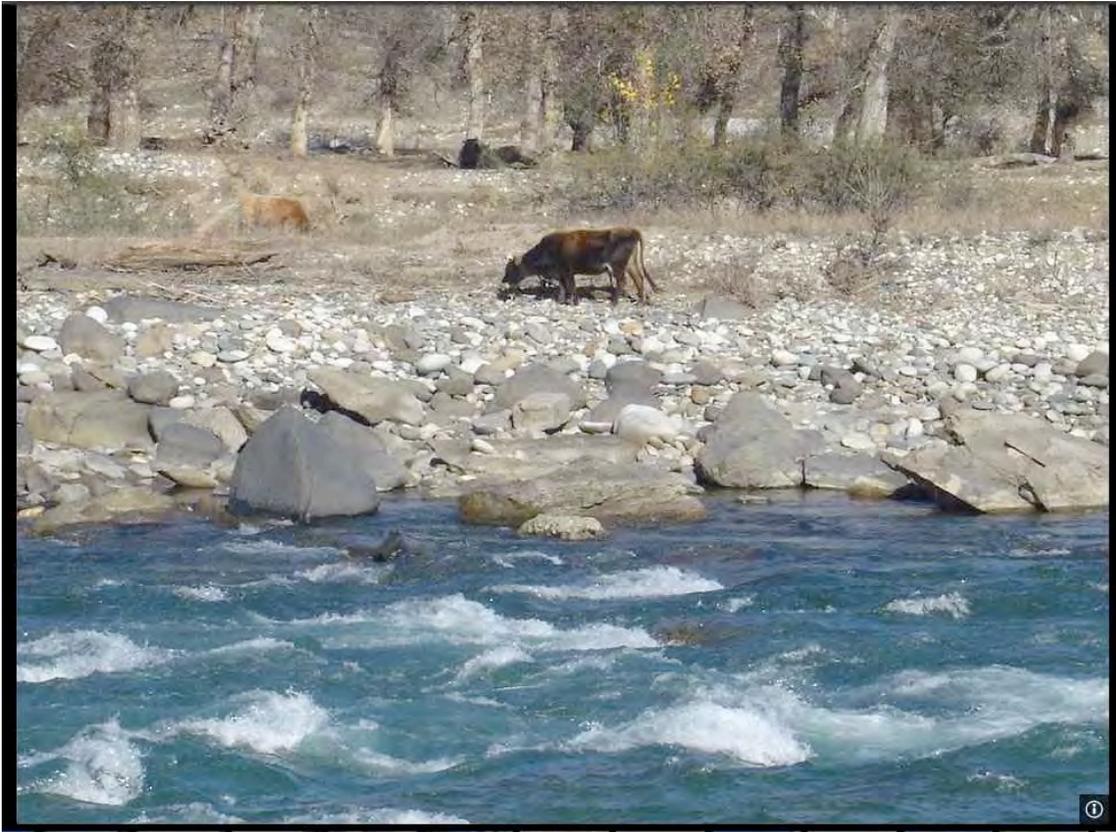
- Aegean
- Anatolia
- North Caucasus
- Iranian
- Georgian
- Chechen
- Arabs of Iraq, Arabia, Lebanon, Jordan and Omanis.

# Georgian Landscapes













## Göbekli Tepe, Stone Temple in Anatolia

Robert S. Sherins, MD

As a side comment, stone temples at Göbekli Tepe in Southern Turkey near the Syrian border were discovered that were built about 13,000 years ago, by a population that must have settled into communities large enough to support such a massive stone construction project – a period of time estimated to be more than one hundred years. The building of the temples coincided with the place and time of the origin of the subclades J2 and J2a. Our patriarchal genomic ancestor was “J2a-M410” haplogroup, which appeared about 10,000-8,000 years ago.

### Researching Ancient Ancestors

In 1994, an archeological discovery in Eastern Anatolia uncovered a religious temple that was so significant that it invalidated the prevailing theories of the origin of human settlement. While making a return visit to Turkey (2005) to explore parts of Eastern Anatolia, personal friends of ours stumbled upon the archeological research site of Göbekli tepe and spoke with the on-site managing scientist. When the publication of this phenomenal discovery became available this year, I was stirred by the thought that one of those ancient Neolithic people may have been my paternal ancestral relative. Was it possible that this new conception of the beginning of human worship had a personal genomic relationship to me?

Last week the June 2011 issue of the National Geographic magazine arrived at our home. The cover story was boldly entitled, “**The Birth of Religion.**” A huge T-shaped carved stone column was displayed with a sculpted animal in relief protruding from the pillar; a wall made of smaller block-stones extended between each column. The date of the construction was estimated to be 11,600 years ago! No other engineered building has ever been found at such an early date. The oldest materials at the site were dated to almost 13,000 years ago, but evidence supported the fact that Göbekli tepe was built in several stages.



Exposed Massive Stone T-shaped Pillars  
<http://www.gobeklitepe.info/>

The essence of the discovery at Göbekli tepe was the physical proof that human engineers were capable of producing carved stone pillars weighing up to 16 tons, sculpting magnificent large stone animal figures, and drafting architecture designs of a ceremonial center, presumed to be a religious temple. This feat had been accomplished more than 2,000 years before the previously acknowledged date of first human settlement. I have some disagreement with the statement made that the structure represented the "Origin of Religion." Surely such scientific dating of the well-crafted designs and the organization of the erected pillars was a scientific breakthrough. However, it would seem to me that the human engineers, craftsmen and workers, who built Göbekli tepe, did not learn their craft on the job. They had to have brought those great skills to the job from somewhere else. Therefore, the principles involved in organizing such a magnificent structure already had to be known to those builders.

Anthropological interest in the development of ancient human religious beliefs is limited due to the lack of refined evidence. However, my interest is related to the understanding of the more recent religious traditions in Western Civilization since the time of the Patriarch Abraham, 3,800 years ago. The three major faiths of Judaism,

Christianity and Islam have been grouped by calling them the faiths of the Children of Abraham. I am fascinated by the findings at the Temple at Göbekli tepe, because it is currently the oldest known religious structure. Could the spiritual symbols found at Göbekli tepe be a forerunner of modern faiths? That question about religious origins coupled with my interest in the human genomic journey motivated me to compose this article. My military experiences in Turkey and the Middle East in the mid-1960s provided some first-hand views into the ancient world. This summary of my experiences, photographic images and further reading is an attempt to relate the exciting discoveries.

Publications from archeological excavations in Europe have shown elaborately designed figurative artwork of both animals and humans, as well as musical instruments, i.e. the Cro-Magnon flute discovered in Hohle Fels, Germany, dated about 40,000 years ago. An unexplained, but major issue, relates to the meaning of the ancient artwork. Was this an example of early spiritual representations of human fecundity and dependence upon the animals for their hides and meat to sustain human life tens of thousands of years ago? Did such spiritual concepts begin earlier in Central Asia when humans first arrived at the Caspian Sea about 60,000-50,000 years ago from Africa and the Levant? Or, did spirituality begin even earlier as stated in the Bible, since the origin of humans in Africa? Göbekli tepe was built some 6,000 years prior to the construction of both Egyptian Sphinx and the massive stone structures that were arranged at Stonehenge, England. More recent evidence of ancient cultures is too detailed for this publication, but I was fascinated by my reading about the excavations of burial sites in Central Asia and Asian, which have revealed some glimpses of the ancient cultures as far back as 2,500 years ago.



Venus of Hohle Fels, Germany  
Cave of Hohle Fels, West of Ulm, Baden-Württemberg,  
Swabia, Germany - 40,000 Years Ago  
<http://www.donsmaps.com/hohlefelsvenus.html>



Stone Age Flute Made from Vulture Wing Bone, Hohle Fels, West of Ulm, Baden-Württemberg, Germany - 40,000-35,000 Years Ago  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/25/science/25flute.html>



Herd of Ancient Horses, Hand painted on Cave Walls, Grotte d'Chauvet dans Ardeche, France - 32,000 Years Ago.

<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/arcnat/chauvet/fr/>



Venus von Willendorf (Woman of Willendorf – 22,000 Years Ago)  
Village of Willendorf, Lower Austria near Krems

Fortunately, by the time of the recent publication about Göbekli tepe, I had researched my genetic ancestry. I learned that my paternal genomic lineage could be classified as a type that originated about 10,000 years ago in the region of the Fertile Crescent along the border of Turkey shared with Iraq and Syria. However, some additional information was essential for me to understand. Genomic (DNA) data demonstrated that the migration of Homo sapiens came out of Africa in two major waves. About 80,000 years ago, the first group migrated from Africa over the narrow isthmus to the Southern Arabian Peninsula. A genetic mutation occurred in the population about 60,000 years, which can be identified as the “E” haplotype. People with the “E” haplotype then migrated along the South Asian coastal areas, Indonesian Islands and eventually reached Australia. This was a significant feat to travel part of the distance over ocean.



A second major wave of humans migrated out of Africa about 60,000 years ago and populated the region of the Levant and then migrated to the Caspian Sea. When Ice-Age conditions changed and the warmer weather of the valleys and fields opened for wildlife to migrate; human hunter-gatherers followed the game.

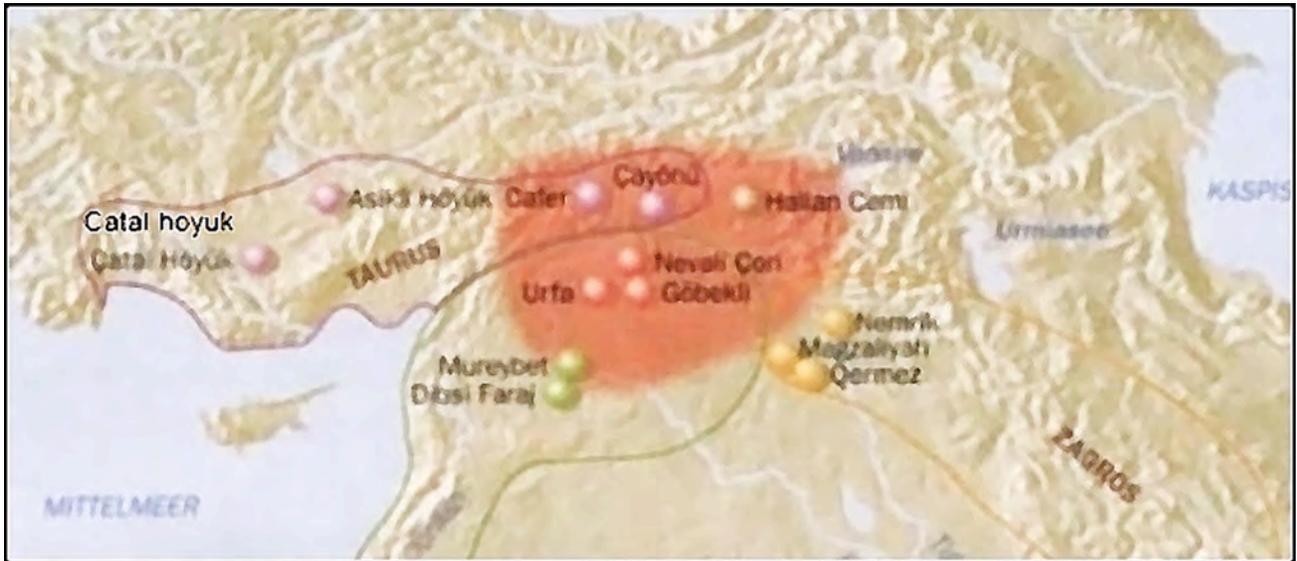
About 40,000 years ago a population of humans moved into Europe. They are known as the Cro-Magnons. About 25,000 years ago, other clans migrated to Asia. About 10,000 years ago, humans migrated to the region of the Fertile Crescent along the border separating Turkey, Iraq and Syria. One of the most fascinating aspects about the discoveries at Göbekli tepe is the fact of the earlier appearance of the Neolithic age, which was back-dated to 13,000 years ago. Human skills have been demonstrated at a much earlier time than previously thought.

I became interested in the spread of cultures and spiritual beliefs during the course of human migration. The distances between some of the historically important civilizations of the region are located quite closely. It seemed logical that those proximate kingdoms must have had extensive sharing of technologies and cultural attitudes. I wish to highlight some relevant issues. Göbekli tepe is located along the southern Turkish border with Syria. More recently 5000 years ago, the region was populated by several advanced societies; among them were: the Hittites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians and Arabs. There were vital resources available that were necessary for survival and later on for commerce. Wild game and plants were domesticated. According to UCLA Professor Jared Diamond ("Guns, Germs and Steel, The Fates of Human Societies," W.W. Norton, 1998), it was most likely that human settlement would occur in the Fertile Crescent where the essential foods were plentiful.

I became fascinated by the scriptural accounts that Abraham's birthplace was near Göbekli tepe, Harran and Şanlıurfa. My personal interest in this subject deepened when I learned that my Y-DNA chromosomal markers were shared by these regional populations, I wondered if one of those men who built Göbekli tepe could have been my ancestor 13,000 years ago.

### ***Birth of Western Civilization***

The copy of the map shown below has a highlighted area (orange) of towns where the best evidence of early human settlements has been unearthed. Among the most important towns are: Göbekli Tepe (13,000 years), Nevali Çori (9,250 years), Çayönü (9,200 years), Şanlıurfa (9,000-6,000 years) and Harran (5,000 years). Assyrian texts 5,000 years ago have been translated that mentioned "Beth Eden" – The House of Eden, which was reported to be located west of Assyria. There is mention of the children of Biblical Eden in the town of Thelassar (Tel Assar), which is now located in Northern Syria. Many researchers believe that this region was the Biblical location known as the **Garden of Eden**.



<http://www.turkeyforholidays.com/>



### **Göbekli Tepe:**

In 1994, a Kurdish shepherd in Eastern Anatolia noticed an oddly shaped rock protruding from the fields where his sheep grazed. He dusted off the surface and noted a huge oblong stone that appeared to have been carved. He contacted local archeological authorities, who in-turn contacted the German Archeological Institute associated with the Turkish Ministry of Culture in Ankara. Dr. Klaus Schmidt traveled to the region to make a first-hand inspection. The findings were recognized to be potentially highly significant. Eventually, Dr.

Schmidt's team succeeded in uncovering one of the most important ancient Neolithic sites known in Western Civilization. Careful analysis revealed layers of human stone carvings, some of which were dated to 13,000 years ago. Some of the stones weighed almost 16 tons and there were a wide variety of skillfully carved animal sculptures. The ancient artifacts were dated well before the pottery, iron and bronze ages.



<http://www.turkishforum.com>

The exposed site seemed to be a carefully crafted ceremonial structure that consisted of huge T-shaped pillars that apparently supported a heavy roof. The roofing material did not remain, so the material, wood or thatch, was not preserved. There was evidence that the multiple inner circular walls had been constructed at different times. There was no evidence of habitation, so the site appeared to be

ceremonial, a religious Temple. In the wider region, some settlements have been found, but none in the immediate area. The archeological team concluded that such an advanced technology of immense stonework would have required a huge work force. There had to have been a settlement sufficient to support the needs for water, Dr. Klaus Schmidt Inspecting Exposed Pillars food and shelter for a very large population of architects, engineers and workers, required over decades.

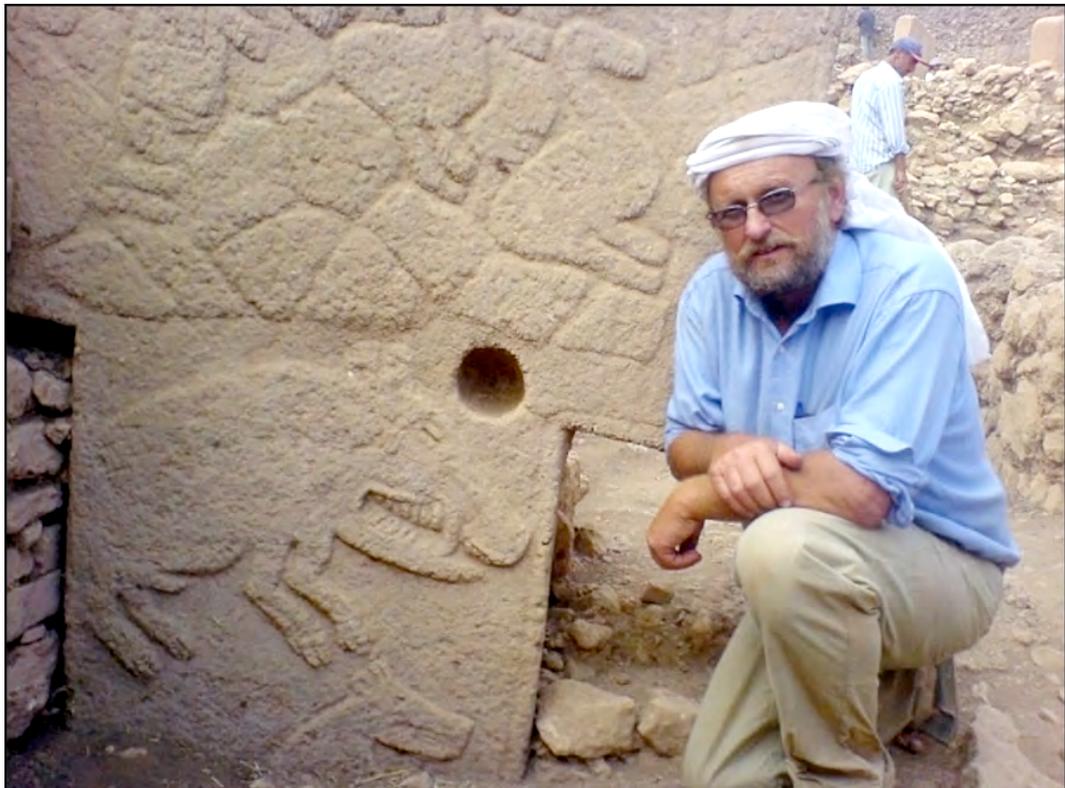
It now is believed that the earlier hunters and gathers must have had significant spiritual beliefs prior to human settlement. The discoveries at Göbekli tepe represent the earliest structure provided for human spiritual worship in the world. It would appear that settlements occurred because of the need to build a Temple, not as an afterthought from an already settled population.



T-shaped limestone monoliths

Concentric Circular Walls Within the Temple

<http://www.turkeyforholidays.com/>

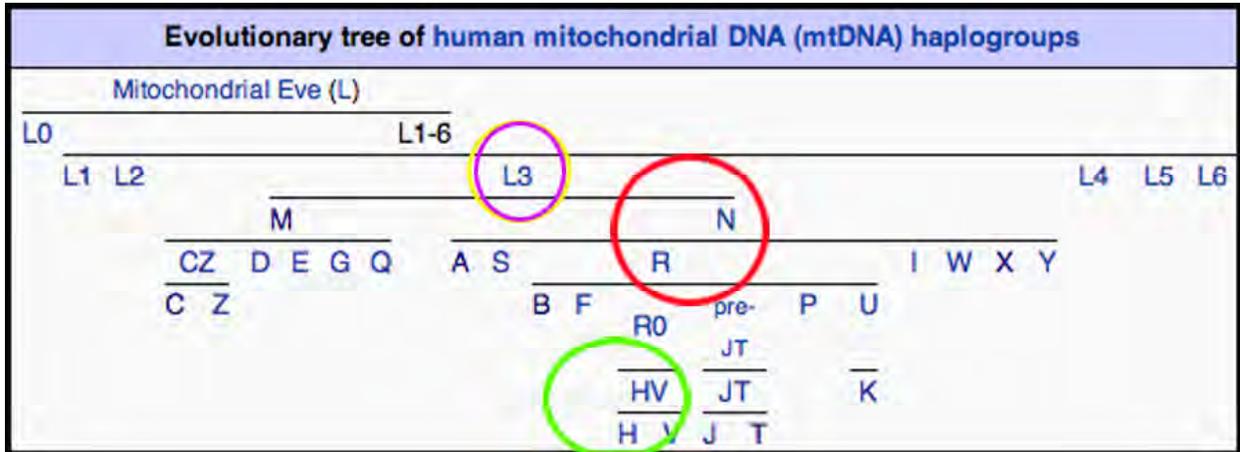


Dr. Schmidt Inspecting Sculpture of a Domesticated Pig

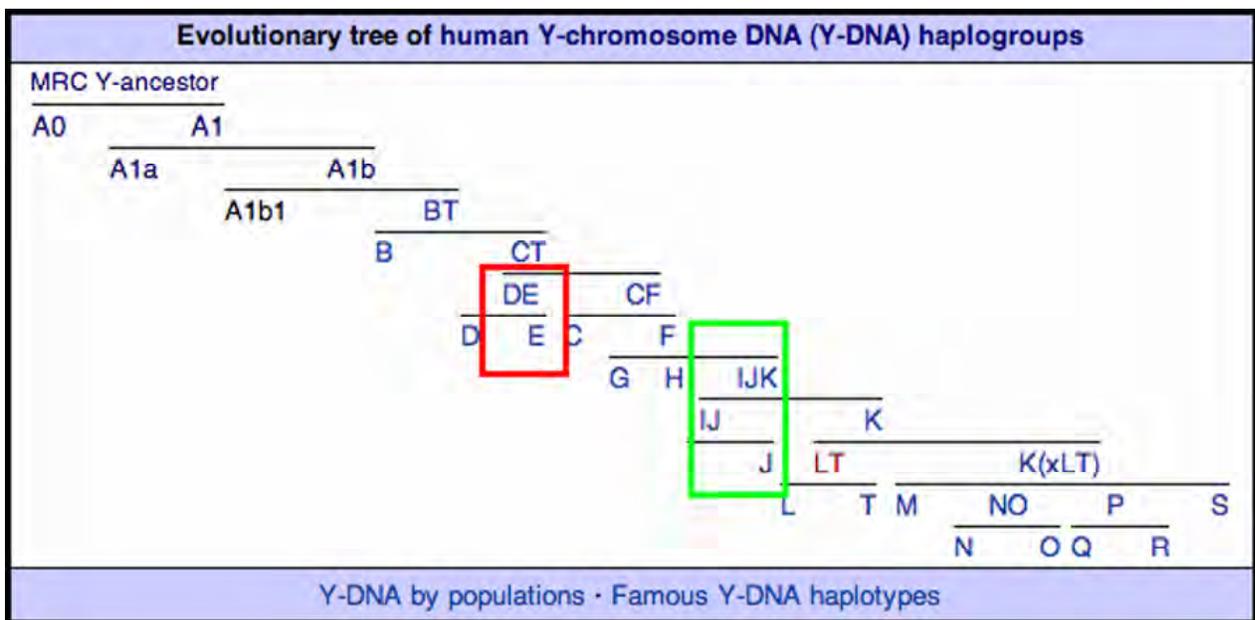
<http://www.turkishforum.com>

Map Distribution of J2 Haplogroup (Y-DNA)

Two graphic charts are displayed below that represent the “Human Evolutionary Tree” of the Y-DNA and the mtDNA haplogroups. The author’s ancestors have been identified: Y-DNA – J2a-M410; mtDNA – H1a2



mtDNA Evolutionary Tree



Y-DNA Evolutionary Tree

Israelite Diaspora

Robert S. Sherins, MD

Between the time of the appearance of J2a haplogroup subclade, 10,000 years ago, until the discovery of our family documents of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, there is a void of historical information and documented records. If we assume that there were about 3-generations per hundred years, there would have been 30-generations per thousand

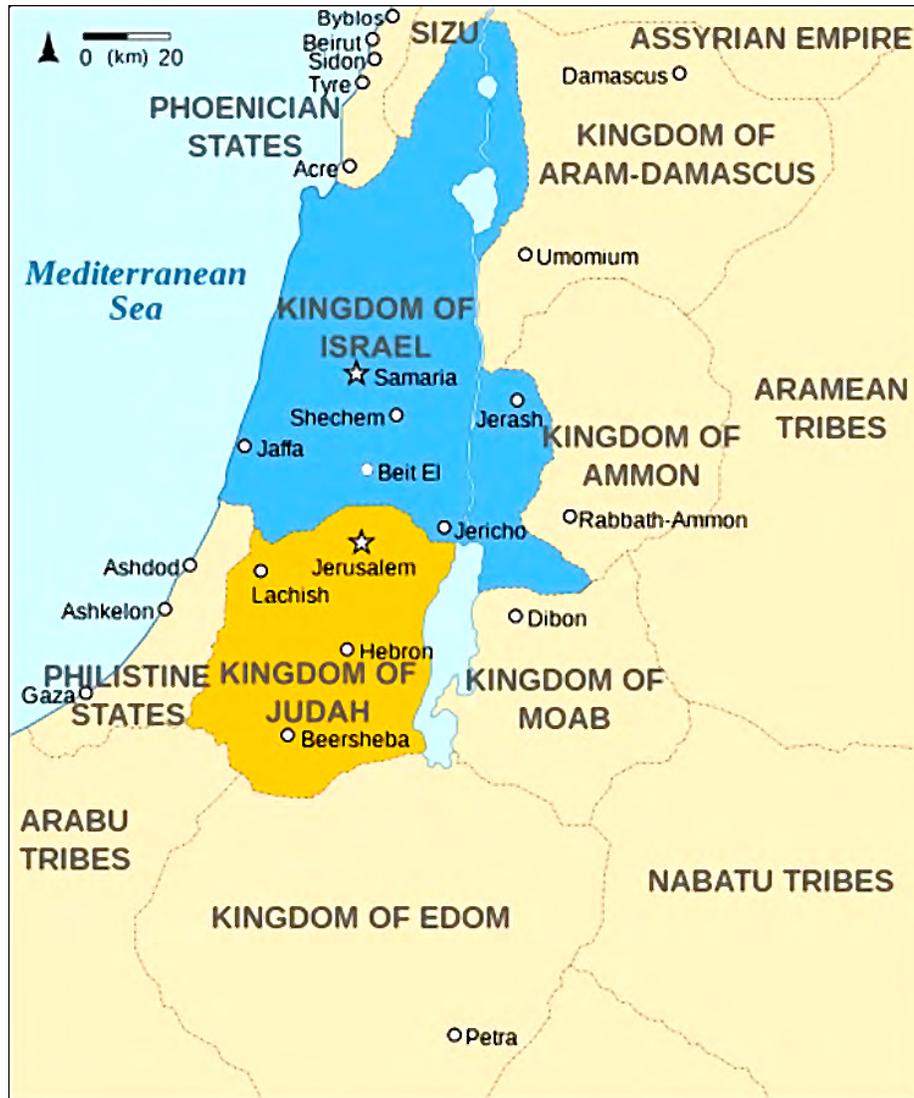
years. Within the past 10-millenia, there were about 300 ancestral generations, who migrated from the original region of the Fertile Crescent.

Not only do we not know the exact migration routes and timing of the Diaspora of our ancestors, but also we have no knowledge about our Jewish roots since the founding of the 12-Hebrew Tribes in the 2 kingdoms of Israel (Northern and Southern Kingdoms). In genomic terms, the relatively recent appearance of Moses about 1280 BCE, who led the Hebrews from Egypt to the Land of Canaan, represents an interval of time of about 100 generations to date. Within the approximately 3,280 years since the time of Moses' exodus from Egypt, there has been a nearly continuous migration of Jewish communities throughout the world. Such a pattern of migration (some forced and some voluntary) has complicated the facts about individual family histories. Searching for documents about our ancestors prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> century has been quite problematic. In lieu of finding specific documents, we must rely upon published accounts from cultural, linguistic and geopolitical history, as well as understanding the migration of the foods and customs as exhibited by the Mizrahim, Sephardim and Ashkenazim.

#### Destruction of Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel

Since there is no evidence that either the Cherkinsky clan or the Solomons of Romania were converts to Judaism, we will accept with confidence that both Cherkinsky and Solomon male patriarchs had been members of one the twelve Hebrew tribes in Israel. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin were part of the Southern Kingdom of Israel, whose capital was Jerusalem. The other 10 tribes belonged to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, who subscribed to different traditions, and made their capital in Samaria.

The author's Y-DNA has been identified as the J2-M410 haplogroup that first appeared in the region of the Fertile Crescent about 10,000 years ago. As will be shown in the illustrations and discussions, the interactions and conflicts among the major empires of Mesopotamia evolved in the exact regions of our genomic journey. Thus, we must appreciate and pay careful attention to the geopolitical, linguistic and cultural details gleaned from these states.



Map of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel, Circa 8<sup>th</sup> Century BCE

### First Diaspora - Assyrian Conquest

I wish to summarize the complex era that encompassed the first Diaspora of the Jewish communities of the Northern Kingdom of Israel of Biblical Israel, circa 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

From Wikipedia, Online Encyclopedia:

[http://www.wikiwand.com/en/Assyrian\\_captivity](http://www.wikiwand.com/en/Assyrian_captivity)

*“The **Assyrian captivity** (or **Assyrian exile**) is the period in the history of Ancient Israel and Judah during which several thousand Israelites of ancient Samaria were resettled as captives by Assyria – 740-732 BCE. The Northern Kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Neo-Assyrian monarchs, Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul) and Shalmaneser V. The later Assyrian rulers Sargon II and his son and successor, Sennacherib, were responsible for finishing the twenty-year demise of Israel's northern ten-tribe kingdom, although they did not overtake the Southern Kingdom. Jerusalem was besieged, but not taken. The tribes exiled by Assyria later became known as the Ten Lost Tribes.”*

“...Assyrian

Cuneiform

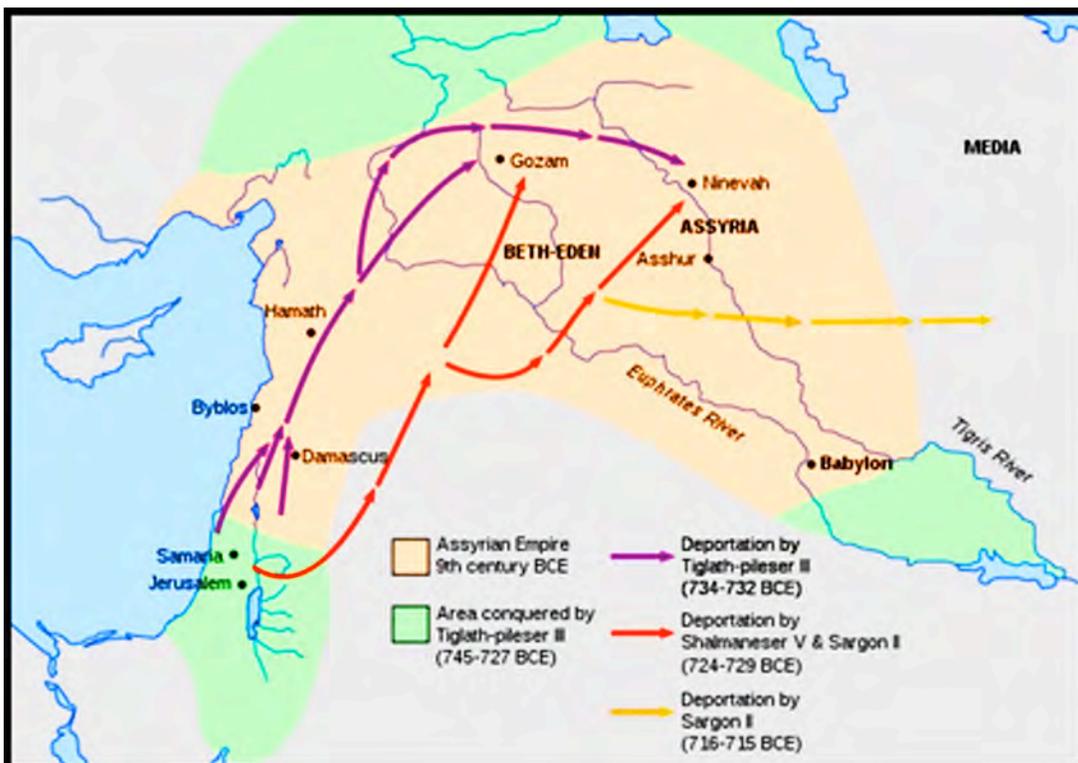
[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Assyrian\\_captivity&action=edit&section=2](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Assyrian_captivity&action=edit&section=2)

Assyrian cuneiform states that 27,290 captives were taken from Samaria, the capital of the Northern [Kingdom of Israel](#), by the hand of [Sargon II](#).

Sargon records his first campaign on the walls of the royal palace at Dur-Sharrukin (Khorsabad): In my first year of reign \*\*\* the people of Samaria \*\*\* to the number of 27,290 ... I carried away. Fifty chariots for my royal equipment I selected. The city I rebuilt. I made it greater than it was before. People of the lands I had conquered I settled therein. My official (Tartan) I placed over them as governor.

The description of the final defeat of the Northern Kingdom of Israel above appears to be a minor event in Sargon's legacy. Some historians attribute the ease of Israel's defeat to the previous two decades of invasions, defeats, and deportations.

Some estimates assume a captivity numbering in the hundreds of thousands, minus those who died in defense of the kingdom and minus those who fled voluntarily before and during the invasions. However, it has also been suggested that the numbers deported by the Assyrians were rather limited and the bulk of the population remained in situ.<sup>[5]</sup> There is also evidence that significant numbers fled south to the [Kingdom of Judah](#).”



Graphic Map: Assyrian Exile of the Northern Kingdom of Israel

[http://www.wikiwand.com/en/Assyrian\\_captivity](http://www.wikiwand.com/en/Assyrian_captivity)

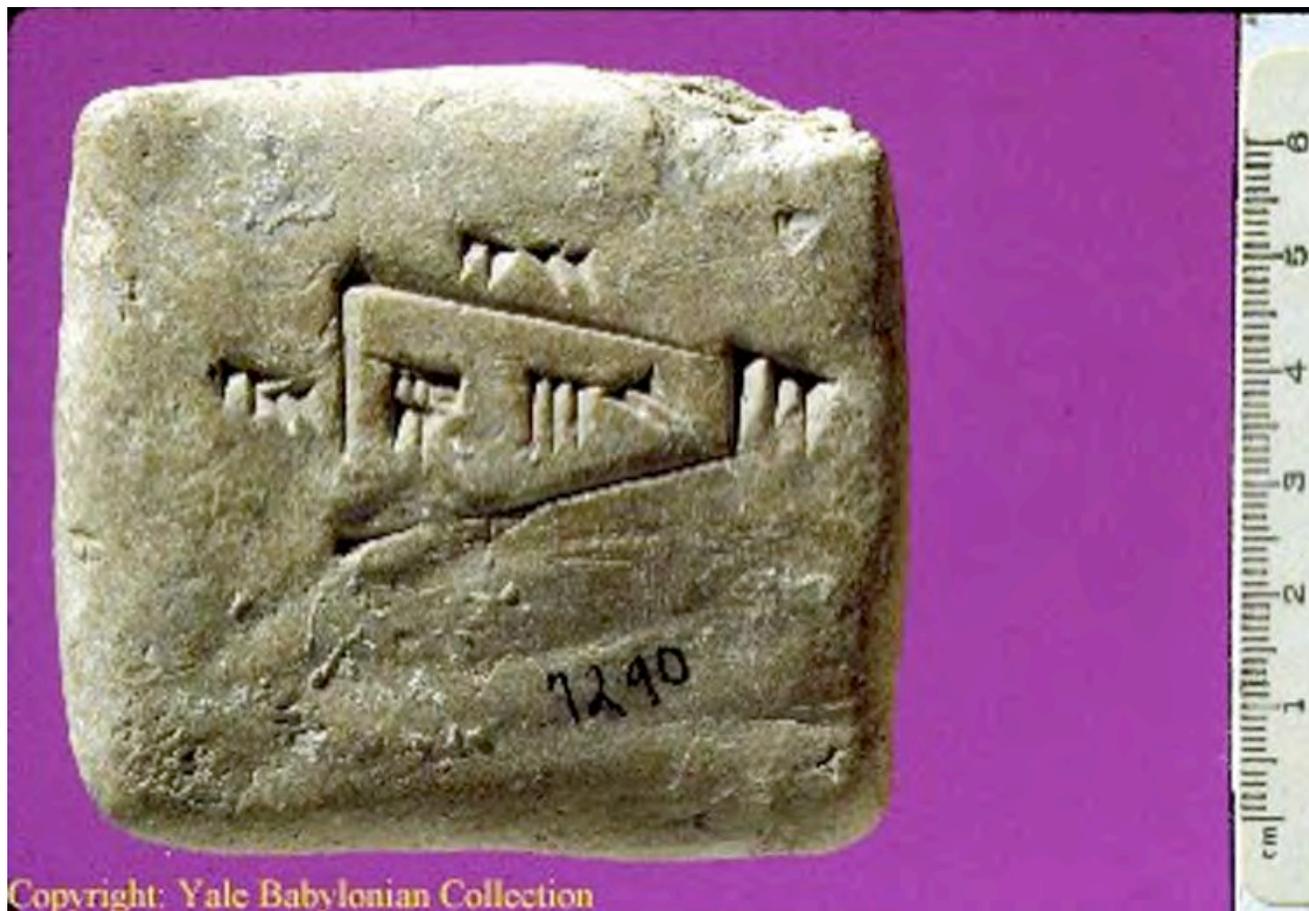
As shown in the map above, the Assyrian Empire encompassed the regions of the Tigris-Euphrates valleys, Beth-Eden (considered the location of the Biblical "Garden of Eden.")

The Assyrians demonstrated advanced intellectual expertise in a number of scholarly pursuits: [architecture](#), [engineering](#), [agriculture](#), [economics](#), [civil service](#), [mathematics](#), [medicine](#), [literature](#), [military technology](#), [law](#), [astronomy](#) and [libraries](#). In mathematics, the Assyrians demonstrated knowledge of geometry hundreds of years before the publication of the Pythagorean theorem of triangles: "In any right-angled triangle, the area of the square whose side is the [hypotenuse](#) (the side opposite the right angle) is equal to the sum of the areas of the squares whose sides are the two legs (the two sides that meet at a [right angle](#))."

$$\text{Pythagorean Equation: } a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$



Assyrian Mathematical Stone Tablets



During that era of the first three millennia BCE, there were constant conflicts among the many tribes and kingdoms of the region, which are beyond the scope of this publication. I intend only to outline the simplest facts of the historic timeline. Beginning about 740 BCE, Assyrian forces captured the territories and capital Samaria of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and exiled the Hebrews to Assyria. The Assyrians failed to capture the Southern Kingdom of Israel, which contained the remaining tribes of Benjamin and Judah. Jerusalem was their capital, which was the primary aim of the Assyrian invasion to capture Jerusalem and subsequently to mobilized from there a campaign to capture Egypt. This is the history behind the story of the "Lost 10-Tribes of Israel."

But, 200 years later, the Babylonians again rose to power and defeated the Assyrians. The Babylonians invaded the Southern Kingdom of Israel in 582 BCE and succeeded in capturing Jerusalem. The Hebrew Temple was destroyed in the process and the "elites" of Jerusalem's nobility, military, law and commerce were taken in exile to Babylon. It has been estimated the only 11,000 individuals were taken in exile. The reminder of the Hebrew tribes either remained in place or emigrated. The details of the capture are entailed in the story of the about "The March to Babylon."



Map of the Assyrian Empire, Circa 740 BCE

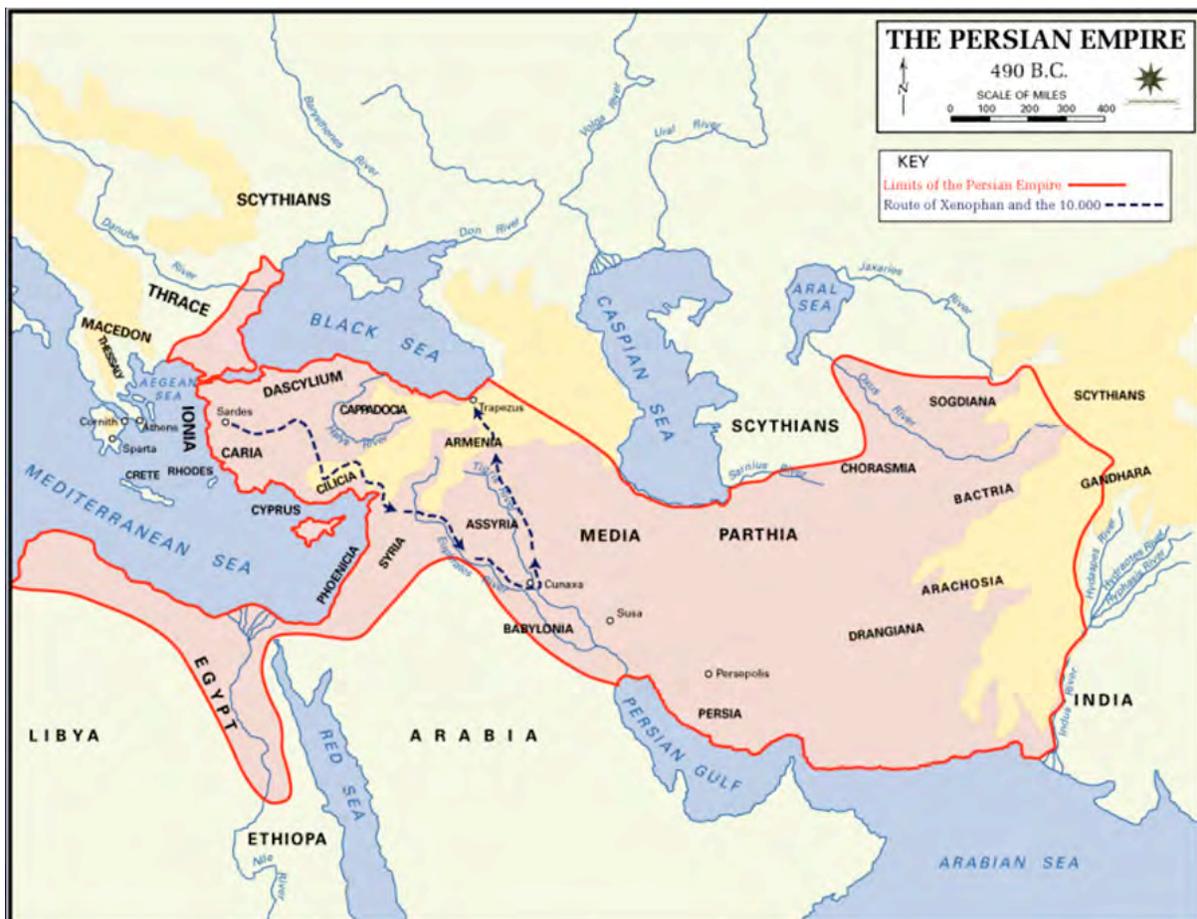


Map of Babylonian Empire, Circa 582 BCE

Within about 50 years, Cyrus "The Great," king of Persia, invaded and defeated the Babylonians. The map shown below demonstrates the largest size of the Persian Empire, which extended to the Indus River in the East and to Anatolia, Cyprus and Greece to the West. Persia encompassed parts of Georgia, Armenia, Scythia and the Southern portion of the Caspian Sea in the North, as well as Syria, Israel, Egypt and coastal Libya in the South.

Cyrus I permitted relative freedom of religious practices, which included both the Zoroastrians and the Hebrews. The king approved funds for the Hebrews to return to Israel and to rebuild their Temple in Jerusalem ("Second Temple"). It has been estimated that only 10% of the Jewish population exiled in Persia actually returned to Israel.

The Second Temple continued in use until 70 CE, when the structure was destroyed by Roman forces. The "Wailing Wall," notable in the old part of Jerusalem today, is the only remaining part of the Second Temple.



Map of the Persian Empire, Circa 5<sup>th</sup> Century CE

The Diaspora of Hebrews from both the Northern Kingdom (740 BCE) and the Southern Kingdom including Jerusalem (582 BCE) displaced several thousands of Hebrews from the 12 Tribes. Within 50 years (538 BCE), the Babylonian Empire was conquered by Cyrus The Great (Cyrus I), king of Persia. Suddenly, the Babylonian Jews became Persian subjects. This group of Jews has been called the "**Mizrahim**" or "Eastern Jews."

By far the largest proportion of Jews from the 12 Tribes were NOT taken into exile. Instead, most of them, but not all of them, remained in their native lands. Some Jews sought refuge in Egypt and Yemen. Later on some of them continued to migrate westward in North Africa; other Jews sailed their primitive boats to India where they established Jewish communities known as the Bene Israel. Their presence in Cochin, India, as a minority has been estimated to be about 2,500 years old. There were additional Jewish migrations that occurred after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. Other Jewish communities were established later on in Calcutta and Mumbai (Bombay).

The arrivals in Calcutta and Mumbai are not to be confused with earlier

Jews who arrived about 2500 years ago. Much later, other Jews from Bagdad, Iraq; Iran; Afghanistan and other Arabic countries sought refuge in India. Jews from England of Portuguese decent arrived in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and established themselves as corral merchants in Madras. The Bene Ephraim arrived in 1981.



In the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, the region was conflicted by wars. Persian forces invaded Greece and assassinated king Phillip of Macedonia (336 BCE). His son, Alexander of Macedonia,

inherited the throne. Alexander created a huge army of experienced fighters and proceeded eastward to avenge his father's assassination and overthrow the Persian king. Alexander's army was led to Anatolia where they engaged the forces of Darius III on the Plain of Issus in Southern Turkey. Darius was defeated in 333 BCE. The Persian Empire was immediately subjugated to Alexander's rule.



Aerial Map of the Bay of Iskenderun, Turkey

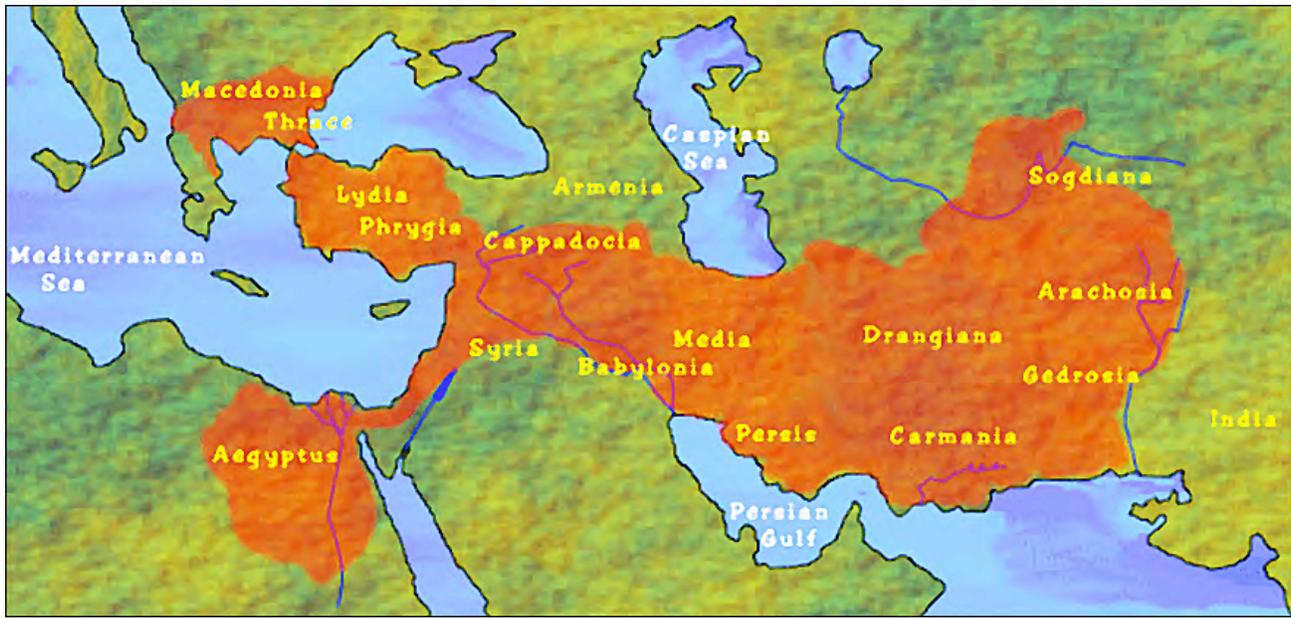
### Battle Maneuvers of Alexander the Great, 333 BCE

Later, Alexander's forces expanded captured territories to India, Egypt, Dagestan, Chechnya, Armenia and Scythia. The importance of Alexander's conquests directly relates to our family history. For first time, Jewish merchants and traders migrated to the farthest borders of the Greek Empire, which included mainland Greece and the Greek Colonies of the Black Sea region.

Jewish traders moved to the new territories of Greece, Northern Turkey along the Black Sea, the Greek colonies of Scythia along the Black Sea and Crimea. Since the time of the exile of Jews to Assyria, Babylon and Persia, Jewish merchants and traders had opportunities to migrate to the distant borders within each of those the Empires. From the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, Jewish traders travelled to Greece. It was quite dangerous and unknown to them, so most Jews did **NOT** bring wives. Many of the merchant traders married local women, created families that converted to Judaism within the new territories. Jewish communities also were established in Central Asia, in the mountains surrounding the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea, as well as Crimea and southern Russia, where at the time the Scythians ruled. Russia did not become a nation until the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE – over 1000 years later.

Jewish traders were successfully promoting ventures further inland in Europe. The Greek economy increasingly depended upon the agriculture of Crimea and the fishing resources of the Black Sea to feed its growing population and military forces.

By the time Russia was established under Viking leaders in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Jewish businessmen were promoting trade as far north as Kiev.



Map of Greek Empire Under Alexander  
Jewish Traders Migrated to Borders of the Greek Empire



Map of Greek Empire Under Alexander The Great



Map Greek Colonies in Mediterranean and Black Sea

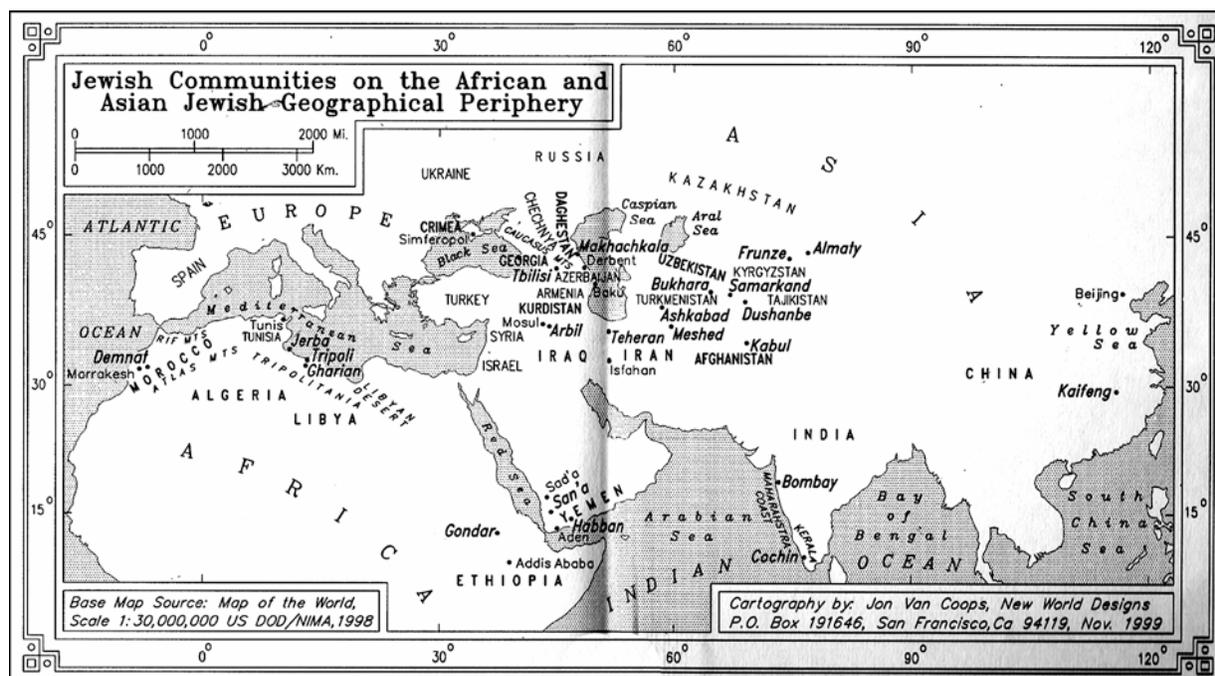


River Transport was the key to trading during ancient times. Note the Dniester, Bug, Dnieper and Don Rivers emptying into the Black Sea



Map of Greek Colonies of Crimea and the Black Sea

The Greeks had a cooperative and successful relationship with the Scythians for many centuries. Jewish traders benefited.



Map of Jewish Communities in Exotic Places

Much attention has been focused on the Jewish revolts against the Romans and destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. After the final revolt, the Bar Kokhbar Revolt in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, Jews were banned from Jerusalem. For the purposes of tracing our family history, it is the migration of Jews within the Roman Empire that has the relevance to the research of our ancestral origins.

Jews migrated to the farthest borders of the Roman Empire. They continued mostly as traders, but they also established many new Jewish communities. We must research the history of the Jewish communities of the Roman Era as a guide to estimating where our ancestors might have settled. It has been estimated that most of European Jewry has in common 4 women/mothers in Italy, who are regarded as "Founders" of the Ashkenasim between the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, CE. Aided by genomic DNA research, it has been found that the Jews of Eastern Europe, which encompassed about 80% of the world's Jewish population, collectively inhabited Eastern Europe after the 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Jewish population in the latter 18<sup>th</sup> century has been estimated to be about 2 ½ million. After the Partitions of the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania, 1772, 1792 and 1794, by Russia, Prussia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Jewish population of Poland-Lithuania became occupied by the Russian military forces. The "**Pale of Settlement,**" which placed borders around the newly acquired Jewish villages and towns, was authorized by Russian Empress, Katherine the Great."

There are several potential locations where our family could have originated. Starting with the Diaspora to Assyria and Babylon, then to Persia, the Mizrahi communities survived. There were early Jewish migrations to Spain during that time. Jewish traders travelled to the borders of the Greek Empire, particularly after the conquests of the Middle East and Central Asia by Alexander. There were Jewish settlers in the region of the Black Sea colonies, whose descendants moved into the lands of the Scythians, which later became Russia. A large Jewish settlement in Kiev lasted until the Jews were evicted from Russia in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. As well, Jewish migrations to the Southern Mediterranean region continued before, during and after the Jewish revolts against the Romans in Judea. Although there were Jewish migrations to China, Egypt and Yemen, and later on along North Africa, I wish to concentrate on the history of Jewish migrations to the areas of the Southern Mediterranean and Iberian Peninsula.

Sephardic traditions of the Iberian region lasted until the 15<sup>th</sup> century when Jews who resisted Christian conversion were murdered or evicted. During the same time, there were other Jewish communities established in Italy, the Balkan countries and Romania. Because Romania is so important in our

Solomon-Goldenberg family history, I wish to add a few more details about Moldavia's Jewish history. In the earliest Roman era, Romania was known as "Dacia." Jewish communities were established as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. In addition, during the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Jewish community of Galati (home of our uncle Jack Solomon) bestowed great honor upon the Jews for their efforts to revive the declining economy of the region. There are few surviving details about the successes of those Jewish businesses and trading, but the trades with Europe had a direct benefit upon the economy of the

non-Jewish population. We know from the Pinkas haKehillot<sup>6</sup> records of Iasi, Moldavia, that **Polish traders and merchants** maintain an active commercial interchange with merchants in Romania since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Particularly, sales of grains and animal products were sent to Romania for local consumption or transshipment to the Mediterranean shipping companies via Romanian ports.



Map of Roman Empire

**From the Pinkas haKehillot), Iasi:**<sup>7</sup> *“The Beginning of Jewish Settlement and Development of Iasi:*

*According to tradition, the first Jewish settlers arrived in Iasi during the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The first person to register the history of Romanian Jewry was Iakov Psantir, who recorded that he found two early tombstones from the years 1467 and 1549. Contradicting the historian, Dr. M. A. HaLevi, claimed in a monograph that the oldest tombstone in the city was from 1648, but he acknowledged the fact that there*

<sup>6</sup> Encyclopedia of European Jewish Communities created from post-WWII testimonies. These volumes of historical records are archived at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem. The works were written by survivors of the Holocaust, which documented the Jewish community history of more than 23,000 towns of Europe.

<sup>7</sup> Edited by Robert S. Sherins, MD (Pacific Palisades, California); Translated from the original Hebrew by Ziva Yavin, PhD (Tel Aviv, Israel), and Rabbi Jack H. Boom, PhD (Fairfield, Connecticut).

were older cemeteries that were ruined with the passage of time and anti-Semitic acts of violence.

When Iasi became the capital of Moldavia (1565), Jewish settlement started to develop rapidly. Strong commercial and political ties developed between Jewish merchants and bankers from Kushta and the Moldavian capital. In 1551, the Jew "Emanuel" was nominated by the Turkish sultan to be the ruler of Moldavia, however it is not clear whether he actually ruled. Several historians identified him with Aron Voda, who ruled in 1591-1595. In 1594, this ruler rebelled against the Turks, conducted a massacre against them, and killed 19 Jews from Iasi...."

**From the Pinkas haKehillot, Iasi:**

"Romanian Jews traded with Poland since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In the **Responsa literature** of Polish scholars from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Jewish settlement in Iasi was a stopover place for Polish merchants on their way to Bessarabia and the port at Galati. Several Moldavian princes used Jewish doctors, who also served political roles. The trade in wine and hard spirits at that time was almost solely in Jewish hands. Yoseph Shlomo Rofeh Dilmadigo, who visited Iasi in 1619-1620, found a large Jewish community headed by an important rabbi, the cabalist Rabbi Shlomo Ben Aroio."

"In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, many Jews from Galicia and Bukovina settled in Iasi, The Jews lived in a suburb called the "kikeville", which stretched along the eastern valley of the main hill where the city was built. Many Jews lived in the German quarter. The rich ones lived in the main street and the poor in the quarter called "Tirgul Kokoloy". In 1799, the merchants' main street was destroyed in a fire and the Jews were forced to find other places to live. In 1782, the ruler, Alexandru Mavrocordat the First (1782-1785), expelled the Jews from the neighboring villages and they settled in Iasi.

**The Jews of Iasi were exporters of wine to Poland and Wallachia.** Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Jews forged strong commercial ties with the city Brody and many of Brody's Jews settled in Iasi and even established their own synagogue. Trade in grain, honey, cattle, wool and cheese was entirely in the hands of Jews. At the onset of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jews occupied a central role in all branches of trade. In 1843, the city's center was occupied mainly by Jewish merchants (compared to only 15 Christian merchants) and people started to complain about "Jews spreading to all the streets and neighborhoods." In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jews began to serve as bankers and moneychangers, professions that were beforehand in the hands of the Turks and the Greeks alone. Jews also took an important part in heavy industry."

Genetic analyses of the **mitochondrial DNA of female Ashkenasim** in Europe revealed startling results that 4 women from Italy during the Middle Ages were responsible for the founding of unique genetic nucleotide sequences:

*“A 2006 study by Behar et al.,[\[50\]](#) based on high-resolution analysis of [Haplogroup K](#)(mtDNA), suggested that about 40% of the current Ashkenazi population descended (matrilineal) from just four women, or **“founder lineages”**, that were “likely from a [Hebrew/Levantine](#) mtDNA pool” originating in the Middle East in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE. Moreover, a maternal line “sister” was found among the Jews of Portugal, North Africa, France, and Italy. They wrote:”*

*“Both the extent and location of the maternal ancestral, from which the Ashkenazi Jewry arose remain obscure. Here, using complete sequences of the maternally inherited mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), we show that close to one-half of Ashkenazi Jews, estimated at 8,000,000 people, can be traced back to only four women carrying distinct mtDNAs that are virtually absent in other populations, with the important exception of low frequencies among non-Ashkenazi Jews. We conclude that four founding mtDNAs, likely of Near Eastern ancestry, underwent major expansion(s) in Europe within the past millennium.”*

**Editor (RSS):** Please note that our Solomon/Goldenberg ancestral females had the H-15 haplogroup mtDNA (most recent maternal ancestor). Therefore, our ancestral matriarch was Cro-Magnon (their mtDNA haplogroup origin was 25,000 years ago). She married a Jewish paternal ancestor and converted to Judaism within the past 2,000 years. Solomon and Goldenberg males migrated to Moldavia from Galicia, Poland, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Neither gender was descendant from the Italian founders.

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## Rhandanites



Map Silk Roads and Trade Routes



Rhadanite Camel Trading Caravan

The Rhadanites were a group of Jewish traders, who excelled as merchants and who developed multi-linguistic skills. They probably emerged from Persia in the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE. They expanded trading routes as far as China, Central Asia, India, Spain, North Africa and Europe.

Major trading routes were established and expanded by credentialed Jewish merchants. Perhaps the most important attributes of this class of Jewish traders were their direct knowledge of the many different cultures and their multi-lingual skills needed in their geographically widespread commerce. Particularly after the Crusades of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, trading through the silk routes was closed to Christian merchants. However, the Jews were granted access to the silk routes and thereby acted as commercial agents for the Sultans and Islamic merchants. In 1178, Polish coins were struck utilizing Hebrew characters to identify the currency as "Jewish" and also to permit transit of goods and currencies in commercial exchanges in Mediterranean territories and in Asia.

From: Wikipeda.org:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radhanite>

*“The **Radhanites** (also **Radanites**, Arabic *ar-Raḏaniyya*; Hebrew sing. רדחני *Radhani*, pl. רדחנים *Radhanim*) were **medieval Jewish merchants**. Whether the term, which is used by only a limited number of primary sources, refers to a specific guild, or a clan, or is a generic term for Jewish merchants in the trans-Eurasian trade network is unclear. Jewish merchants were involved in trade between the Christian and Islamic worlds during the early Middle Ages (approx. 500–1000). Many trade routes previously established under the Roman Empire continued to function during that period largely through their efforts. Their trade network covered much of Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia and parts of India and China.”*

*“Etymology: Several etymologies have been suggested for the word "Radhanite". Many scholars, including Barbier de Meynard and Moshe Gil, believe it refers to a district in Mesopotamia called "the land of Radhan" in Arabic and Hebrew texts of the period.[1] Others maintain that their center was the city of Ray (Rhages) in northern Persia.[2] Cecil Roth and Claude Cahen, among others, make the same claim about the Rhône River valley in France, which is Rhodanus in Latin. The latter claim that the center of Radhanite activity was probably in France as all of their trade routes began there.[3] Still others maintain that the name derives from the Persian terms *rah* "way, path" and *dān* "one who knows", meaning "one who knows the way".[4] English-language (or Western) sources added the suffix *-ite* to the term, as is done with ethnonyms or names derived from place names.”*

“Activities: Radhanites are documented by ibn Khordadbeh, the Director of Posts and Police (spymaster and postman) for the province of Jibal under the Abbasid Caliph al-Mu'tamid (ruled 869–885), when he wrote *Kitab al-Masalik wal-Mamalik* (Book of Roads and Kingdoms), probably around 870. Ibn Khordadbeh described the Radhanites as sophisticated and multilingual. He outlined four main trade routes utilized by the Radhanites in their journeys; all four began in the Rhone Valley in southern France and

terminated on the east coast of China. Radhanites primarily carried commodities that combined small bulk and high demand, including spices, perfumes, jewelry, and silk. They are also described as transporting oils, incense, steel weapons, furs, and slaves.”

*“End of the Radhanite age: The fall of the Tang Dynasty of China in 908 and the destruction of the Khazar Khaganate some sixty years later (circa 968-969 AD) led to widespread chaos in Inner Eurasia, the Caucasus and China. Trade routes became unstable and unsafe, a situation exacerbated by Turkic invasions of Persia and the Middle East, and the Silk Road largely collapsed for centuries. This period saw the rise of the mercantile Italian city-states, especially Genoa, Venice, Pisa, and Amalfi, who viewed the Radhanites as unwanted competitors.*

*The economy of Europe was profoundly affected by the disappearance of the Radhanites. For example, documentary evidence indicates that many spices in regular use during the early Middle Ages completely disappeared from European tables in the 10th century. Jews had previously, in large parts of Western Europe, enjoyed a virtual monopoly on the spice trade.[17]*

*Some have speculated that a collection of 11th century Jewish scrolls discovered in a cave in Afghanistan’s Samangan province in 2011 may be a “leftover” of the Rhadanites, who had mostly disappeared by the 11th century.”*

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References to the Rhadanite merchants were written in many documents of the Middle Ages. However, there is little mention of them after the 12<sup>th</sup> century. There have been several theories about the disappearance of the Rhadanites. Perhaps several factors were responsible. Among the theories were the expansion and influence of the emerging Italian banks of Genoa and Venice, who thought the Rhadanites were competitors; the emergence of the Ottoman Empire; and the Fall of the Khazarian Empire to the Kievan Rus in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Jewish merchants apparently conducted most the spice trade between Europe and Asia. Trade collapsed with the fall of the Rhadanite traders. As India and China provided the Asian spices for Europe, European products were of no interest or use to the Asians. In fact, a declining economy in Europe resulted in the severe debasement of European bullion and other metallic currencies. Simply stated, the Europeans made up for inflation and economic depressions by thinning and clipping their coins, and adding tin and copper to make cheaper alloys for their bullion. Few nations wanted European currency. There was no “paper” currency, which would have required total faith in the national backing of paper currency by a policy backed by bullion. By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, monetary values in Europe were so bad, that the major

nations of Europe launched expeditions to seek gold and silver bullion in the Far East. The era of the "Explorers" and "Conquistadores" ensued in the "New World" as a major effort to rebuild European bullion reserves. Europe had been nearly bankrupted economically.



Trade Routes of the Jewish Traders, Rhadanites

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## Khazarian Khaganate (Kingdom)

Khazars were nomadic peoples of Turkic origin from Mongolia and Southern Siberia. They have been described in Arabic documents as people with white skins, blue eyes and red hair and did not appear like the Turkish people, who are dark with black hair. They spoke languages of *Bulğaric*, *Chuvash*, and *Uyğur*. After migrating westward, they settled a large region from the Aral Sea in Central Asia to Crimea and the Northern Black Sea and to Kiev in the Northwest. Their southern border encroached upon the Umayyid Persian Empire, which was changing to an Islamic Empire after defeat by the Muslim Arabs. South of the Black Sea, the Byzantine Empire was well established and Christian. There were conflicts with the Arabs, as well, placing Khazaria between two major powers with different religions (Islam and Christianity). The Khazarian Khan (king), the nobility, military and courts adopted Judaism and did not side with either the Persian Muslims, the Arabs or the Byzantine Christians. Khazarian legal documents were written in Hebrew. It is debated whether or not the common folk also converted to Judaism.

They were well administered until the 10<sup>th</sup> century when Vikings first ruled the Kievan Rus, with its capital in Kiev. The Khazars disappeared as a nation after defeat by the Rus and conquest of their fortress at Atil (967). The region was populated by large and varied cultures for the several centuries prior to administration by Sviatoslaw I of Kiev.



The Khazars managed to keep the Muslims out of the region and in so doing controlled the western portion of the silk routes to Europe. By defeating Arab forces, Europe was better able to retain its Christian traditions. However, after the invasion by the Vikings of the Kievan Rus, the Khazarian culture disappeared. What exactly happened to the Khazars is debated. Perhaps they either were killed or they were absorbed into the varied

local cultures. The most appealing theory relates to their assimilation in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. With regard to DNA analyses, there appears to be no connection with the Middle Eastern haplogroups of the Y-DNA (J2 AND E1b1b1). The origins of the Khazars are Asian and Siberian, so the Y-DNA and mtDNA haplogroups are mostly derived from the "M" - "R" and R1a and R1b haplogroups. They are predominantly C-M217 haplogroup in Central Asia and Mongolia. These are definitely not the DNA haplogroups associated with Jewish ancestry. Modern Lithuanian DNA Haplotypes are predominantly N and R1a, but minority representation includes types G, J and E1b1b1.

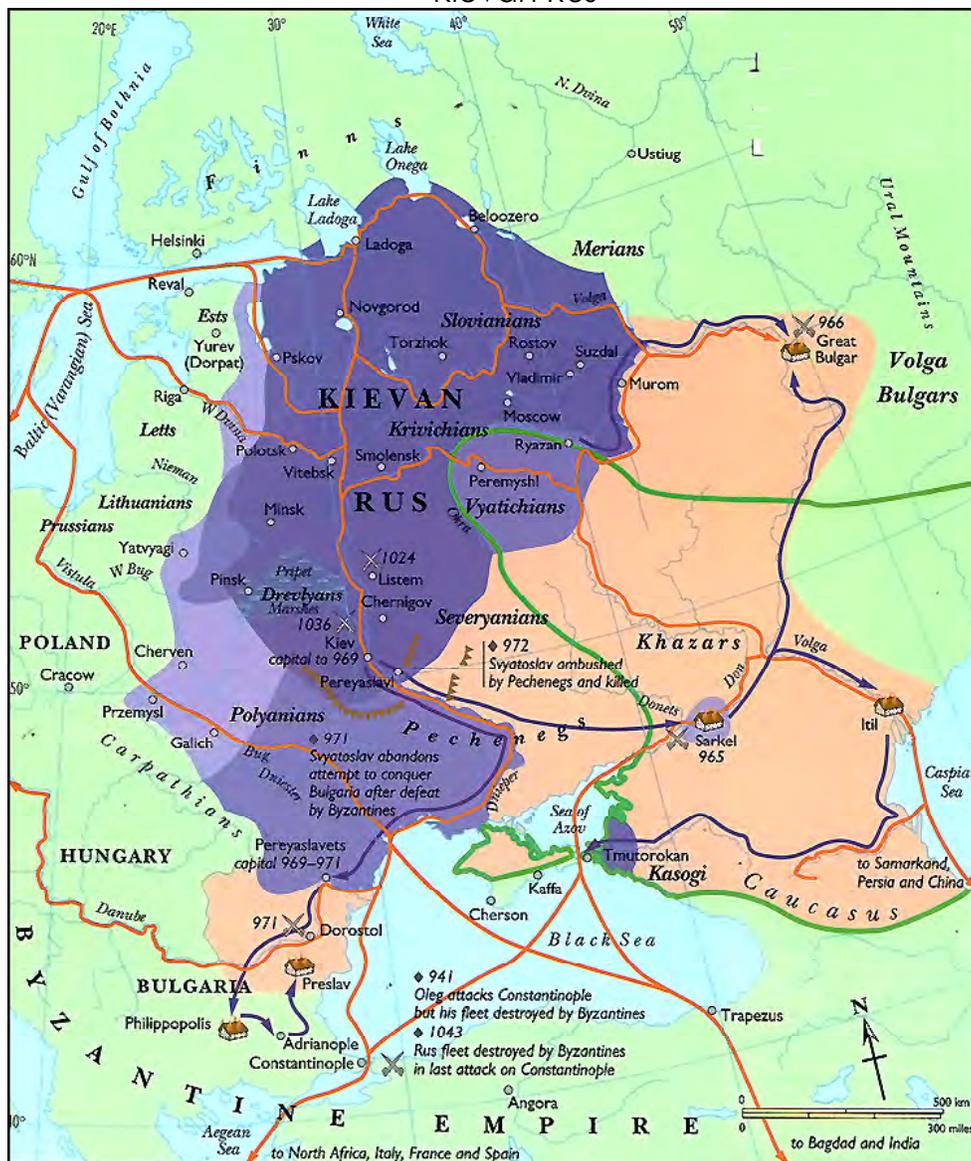


Map of Khazarian Kingdom, 7<sup>th</sup> Century CE

## Jewish Representatives of the Islamic Sultanates in Europe

The monarchies of Europe refused to admit the ambassadors of Islamic nations to their European Courts. Instead, Jewish traders were sent to Europe representing the Sultanates. The multi-linguistic Jews had distinct advantages over the Sultans, whose knowledge of European affairs and their languages were limited. In fact, many times the influence of the Jews became indispensable to the Islamic nations. There is a fascinating connection between a marital link of the Cherkinsky and Triffon families in Israel to the "Sultan's Jews," as they were called. In our patriarchal family, there were two marital unions to females of the Abulafia family.

## Kievan Rus

Map of Kievan Rus, Circa 10<sup>th</sup> Century

The devastation of Eastern Europe resulting from the Mongol invasion during the 13<sup>th</sup> century changed the cultures of the nations and instituted noteworthy political changes. With the death of Genghis Kahn in 1227, the Mongol forces withdrew to Asia. However, the Tatar tribes, who had joined the Khan invasion of Europe, remained. Even in modern times, ethnic Tatars can be identified in Russia, Ukraine, and Crimea. The language and names of towns are Tataric as shown in the adjacent map. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Crimean territory abutted Pereyaslav, where Halperin ancestors lived, as well as in nearby Chernigov, where our Cherkinsky ancestors lived. The proximity of the Khazars, Tatars and Rus to our ancestral towns provoked a lot of interest in my reading about their histories.



Map Tatar Invasion, Circa 13<sup>th</sup> Century

**In summary, of the many possibilities about our ancestral migration to Eastern Europe, the genetic haplotypes of the Khazarians do NOT appear to be included among our ancestors.**

However, I am fascinated by the map of the Kievan Rus when overlapped by the map of the Khazarian Empire. Both maps included within their borders the region of Kiev, Pereyaslav and Chernigov, areas of great importance to our Cherkinsky and Halperin (Galperin) ancestry. The Khazars, Tatars and the Rus influenced those areas profoundly. There were commercial and cultural interactions. Khazarian artifacts have been found in Chernigov, but that finding does not indicate that Khazars actually lived there or married with Chernigov inhabitants. The strongest evidence of our own ancestry, places our Cherkinsky and Halperin relatives in Eastern Poland about the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is unknown where they lived during the Middle Ages or from the time of origin of the Kievan Rus in the 10<sup>th</sup> century to the 17<sup>th</sup> century when they appeared in Poland. The pathway of our family traditions is guesswork at best. But, the mysterious ventures of their Diaspora captured my emotional attention in researching and writing this historical document.

More recent investigations about ancestry of the European Ashkenazim indicate a higher incidence of conversion of the Sephardim to the Ashkenazi traditions than previously assumed. Because there are no documents about our ancestors before the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Poland, we can only assume that our traditions were those of the Ashkenazim. This question about our ancestral Jewish traditions and culture will remain an enigma. There are no ethnic genetic traits to identify any race, religious or ethnic characteristics.

In the general Diaspora, our ancestors more than likely migrated from either the Greek or Roman regions, married and continued their migrations to Eastern Poland about the 17<sup>th</sup> century. We know that by the 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, 80% of all Jews lived in the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania. There were many routes to Poland. Without direct evidence, we learn about all of them.

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## Spanish Jewry

Biblical references date trading with Spain to the time of King Solomon, circa 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Trading was carried out using ships; perhaps they were Phoenician ships of the same era or Greek vessels. But, the most substantial evidence places Jewish traders in Spain at the time of the Roman Era. Roman control over Spain began after the fall of Carthage in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. Especially after the expulsion of Jews from Judea after the Great Revolt in 70 CE (and also previously from Rome 139 BCE), Jewish presence in Spain is well documented by artifacts dated to the 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries CE.

The Visigoths (Western Goths) conquered Spain and converted to Catholicism in the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE. There were significant attempts to Baptize children of mixed Jewish-Christian marriages, which were strictly forbidden. Early in Spanish history, circumcisions and celebration of the Sabbath were forbidden, as well.

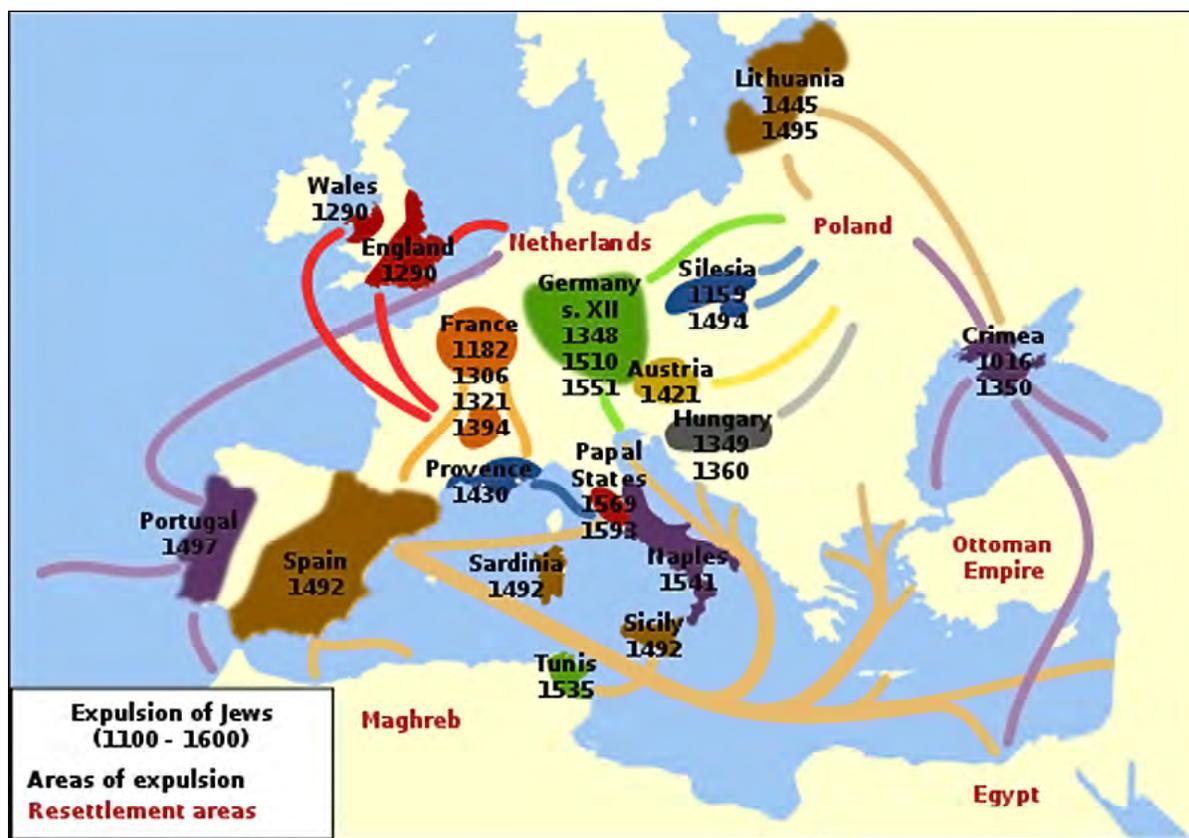
Following the invasion of Spain in the 8<sup>th</sup> century by the Moors, Jewish communities expanded with influx of Jews from Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. Sephardic traditions comingled with Arabic and Babylonian cultures. Christians sought Jewish intellectual resources and scholarship. By the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Christians began to retake control over Spain. They treated the "Dhimmi" (non-believers) harshly, expelling them from Morocco and Spain. Jews fled to more moderate Muslim lands, i.e Maimonides.

I want to call attention to the **Abulafia** family of Spain, circa 11<sup>th</sup> century. They owned successful commercial interests and land before the re-conquest of Spain. Abulafias were rabbis, scholarly Kabbalists and mystics, as well as wealthy merchants in Spain. Their dynasty can be traced to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The Great Synagogue of Toledo was the private chapel of Samuel haLevy Abulafia. To understand the fortunes of Samuel haLevy Abulafia, who was capable of providing financial loans to King Pedro of Spain, and built his large estate in Toledo, complete with private synagogue (El Transito, 1357), I wondered where was the source of his great wealth. Samuel haLevy Abulafia was a wealthy financier about 1320. He rectified the mismanaged Royal treasury of King Pedro. In so doing, he obtained great influence in the Spanish Court. However, the king later

perceived a conspiracy and had Don haLevy imprisoned and tortured. Samuel haLevy Abulafia died in prison in 1360, despite his great wealth and prior service to King Pedro.

The Abulafias produced were a well-known dynasty of descendants, who lived in Spain, Italy. Their ancestry can be traced to North Africa about the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Two marriages of Abulafia women to Triffon men in Palestine relate distantly to our Cherkinsky ancestors from Palestine, the descendants of the marriage of Chaya Ita Cherkinsky and Yizhak Triffon. This will be further discussed later in the manuscript chapter about the Cherkinsky family history.

### Jewish Expulsion from Iberia, 1492



Expulsion from Iberia, circa 1100 to 1600.

There are wide estimates as to the actual number of Sephardim who were exiled from Spain in 1492. However, the map illustrated above indicates a number of pathways that the Sephardim took in their journeys to safety. These included journeys to North Africa, the Ottoman Empire, and Netherlands. One of the largest migrations was to the Ottoman Empire under Pasha Beyazid II. The Ottoman Sultan considered the eviction of educated and skilled Jews from Portugal and Spain to be very foolish and not well thought out. He offered the Sephardim freedom to enter any territory within the Ottoman Empire. Sephardic culture flourished in Turkey; Jews were protected.

In Europe, Jews had been expelled from England, Germany and France and other countries from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. However many evicted Sephardim were accepted back in England, as well as in Italy and Holland. During the Renaissance, Jews began to establish new communities in Eastern Europe, and particularly in Eastern Poland. Jews brought new skills, literacy and education and the concept of monetary

currencies with them. England and Holland were the first nations to utilize monetary currencies to enhance their commerce adding a new concept of establishing “value” to properties and products. In feudal Poland, monetary concepts were foreign to the serfs. Soon, serfs began to get the idea that their labor and products could earn them silver or other metal currencies from the Jewish peddlers. Previously, serfs traded work and products for debt owed to the estate landowners or nobility. None of it, however, was based upon the concept of established worth. As an example, death of a Jew was valued less than that of a slaughtered animal. Jews could not own land, but were given rights of propination - matters dealing with grains, alcohol production and inn keeping. Landowners bartered their needs with those of the serfs, whose payments were made by providing a percentage of the produce or labor repairing the estates.

**A key event occurred in 1264, when Polish King Boleslav granted a charter to invite Jews to Poland. Our Romanian and Russian ancestors surely were impacted by the historic event.** Additionally, the charter granted rights and privileges for the Jews that included:

- With regard to monetary and property issues, a Christian may not testify alone against a Jew.
- If the Christian injures a Jew, the accused will be fined and the fine paid to the royal treasury.
- If a Christian desecrates a Jewish cemetery in any way, the Christian will be punished as demanded by the law.
- Christians may not attack a Jew and are forbidden to accuse Jews of using the blood of humans for their ceremonies.
- Jews are permitted to buy freely just as Christians. If Jews are hampered in this freedom, they will be fined.

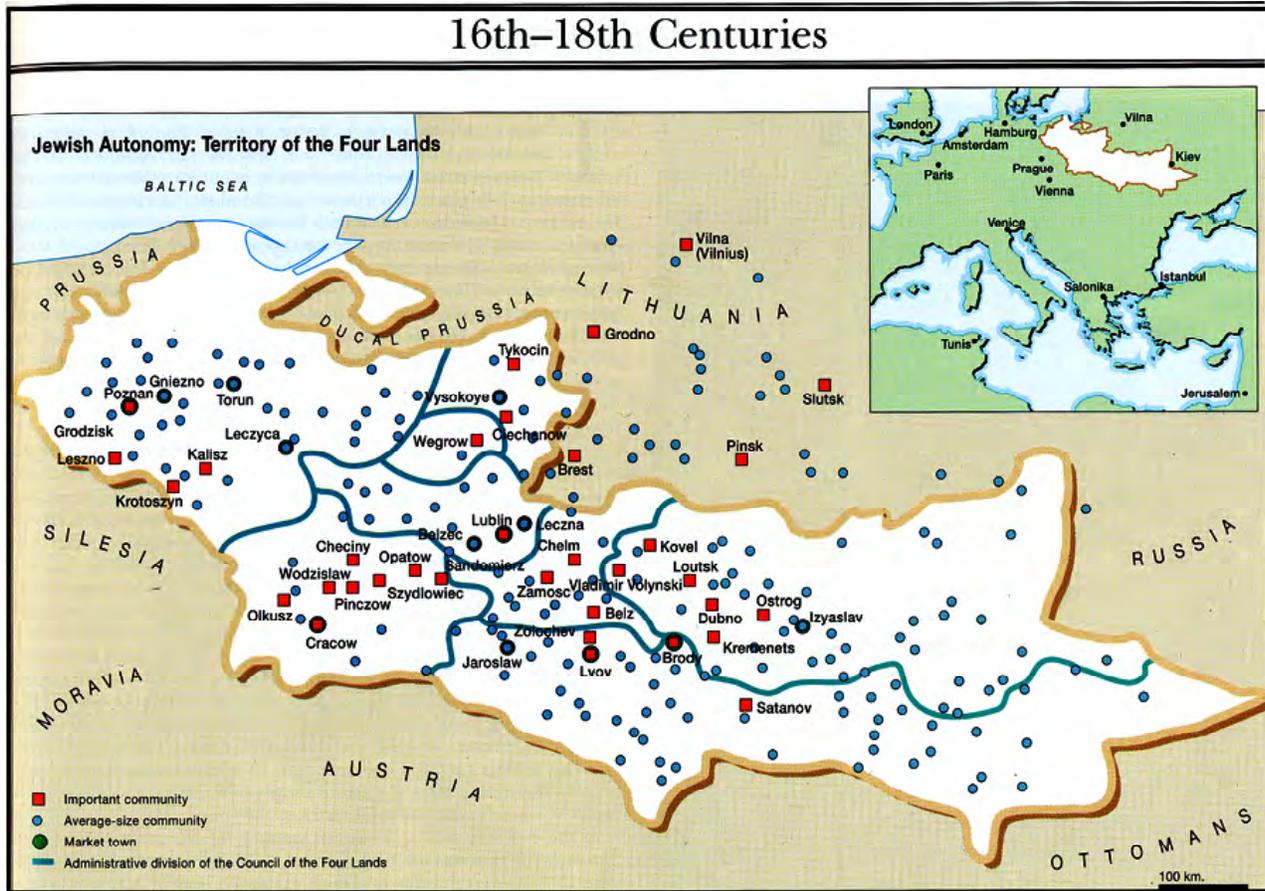
The Polish freedoms for Jews brought many new immigrants to Poland. Many were directed to settle in the Eastern part of Poland, where populations would serve to defer incursions by Tatars and Ottomans. However, the Jews were required to live in communities separate from Christians and at fixed distances from the nearest churches.

In 1569, the Treaty of Lublin was agreed upon formally uniting Poland with Lithuania. The Polish term, “Rzeczpospolita” meant “Commonwealth” of Poland-Lithuania. Its broad geography made it the largest nation-state in Europe extending from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and nearly to the Caspian Sea. It was an immense State and contained 80% of the worlds Jewry within its borders.



Map of Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Polish King Sigismund III Vasa (House of Sweden) decreed that all Jewish communities would be thereafter administered by an autonomous organization known as the **Kahal**. Within the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania, arrangements were made to create a system of self-administration granting authority for the rabbinic officials to elect a supreme leader, and all matters of the Jewish community including the administrative (taxation, business licenses, inheritance, etc.), judicial, religious and charitable governance that would be decided. The negative results of such a powerful administration was to corrupt the process whereby all matters from cradle to grave were included, without exception. Corruption involved exclusion of secular education (other than Judaic); exclusion of girls from schools forcing mothers to become their teachers; selection of young males who would serve in the Polish military; and ex-communication as the severest penalty for “breaking the rules of the Kahal.” It was liberal and authoritarian at the same time. One supreme officer served over the Kahals and reported directly to the Monarch. Initially there were four “Councils” known as the Council of the Four Lands. Later on, The Council of the Land of Lithuania was added, making the Council of Five Lands.



Map of the Council of Four Lands

The capitals of the Kahals were located in Poznań, Kraków, Lwów and Ostrog. Delegates were selected to attend their mutual congresses together with their rabbis. Conferences were created about twice annually and their decisions were taken to the Polish Diet (Parliament) and King. In time, the authority of the Kahals became more and more limited. By 1764, the Polish Diet discontinued the Kahal system.

#### Partitions of the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania

Within a decade of the dissolution of the Kahal system, Poland was dismembered by the occupations of Russia, Prussia and Austria in 1772. The Partitions of Poland were extended further in 1793 and 1795, thereby eliminating the polity and existence of the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania. Some aspects of their former Polish geography were re-instated after World War I. However, the Russians gained control over Poland at the end of World War II - until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Of great importance in the understanding of our maternal ancestry, Galicia, the southern region of Poland, was occupied by the Hapsburg' Austro-Hungarian Empire after 1772. Our Goldenberg and Rothenberg

ancestors have been documented in Brody, Galicia, since about the 1790s.

It is of particular interest that among the Romanian documents, our ancestors were classified as “under the protection of Russia” despite the fact that they had been Poles in Galicia. The evidence of their Polish roots will be discussed in a later chapter of this manuscript.

On the paternal side of our family, our Cherkinsky and Halperin/Halpern grandparents have been documented in Konotop and Koseletz, Russia (Ukraine). That region of the Russian Empire was previously part of the Eastern Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania. After 1772, it was within Russian Occupied Poland.

The Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania was totally dismembered after the third Partition in 1795. The following maps attest to the occupations by Austria, Prussia and Russia and the border changes that ensued.



Map of the Greatest Extent of the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania



First Partition of 1772

Konotop became part of Russian Occupied Poland  
 Brody, Galicia, became part of Austrian Occupied Poland



Second Partition of Poland

The Grand Duchy of Lithuania was subsumed by Poland. Note that Vinius/Wilno, Lithuania, was now located in Poland, and Riga, Latvia, as well as Minsk, Belarus, became part of Russia.



Map of Third Partition of Poland

The nations of Poland and Lithuania have been dismembered by Austria, Prussia and Russia. Poland and Lithuania did not exist politically or on maps until after the end of World War I (1917).

## Pale of Settlement



Map Pale of Settlement, 1791

Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia (Sophie Friederike Auguste von Anhalt-Zerbst) was Prussian born and was betrothed to Grand Duke Peter, grandson of Peter the Great (1745). Tsar Peter III was overthrown and Catherine became Empress of Russia in 1762. She tried to modernize Russia and continued to expand Russia's borders. In 1768, she declared war with the Ottomans. With cooperation of Austria and Prussia, Russia occupied Eastern Poland and thereby extended Russia's borders into Central Europe (1772, 1793, 1795).

As a result of the Russian occupation of Eastern Poland, Russia inherited the largest

Jewish population in the world. This event produced a remarkable change of Russian policies, since the Jews had been evicted from Russia during the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, only under special circumstances were Jews permitted to reside within Russia's borders. Temporary permits to travel in Russia was granted to Jews for the sole purpose of supplying the trade fairs with the Western goods not available locally. Jews were not otherwise welcome.

With extreme pressure applied to the Empress Catherine from Russian merchants, a royal decree (Ukase) was written placing a border around the towns and villages that included the previously Polish Jewish communities. Thereafter, there would be no further commercial competition with the nervous Russian merchants. We know of this geographic polity as the "Pale of Settlement." It has been estimated that in the occupation of Eastern Poland, the Russians inherited about 2.5 million Jews.

Since then, the history of the Jewish communities of the Pale included restricted travel by its Jewish subjects. Russia was feudal and ruled by wealthy landowners. Serfs still were victimized, as were the Jews. The "internal" migration of Jews within the "Pale" is particularly relevant to our family history, as will be further detailed in a later chapter of this manuscript. Our Cherkinsky and Halperin ancestors lived within the "Pale" unlike our Romanian ancestors. However, the Romanians did not escape the Russian dominance of the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.



Jewish Populations Within the Pale of Settlement

Russia and the Ottoman Empire engaged in many wars since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. These conflicts are of particular interest to our family history because of the Russian victories over Romania, a by-product of the Ottoman conflicts. Romania had a unique history of being ruled by two other administrations simultaneously: Turkey and Russia. There have been 13 separate Wars between Turkey and Russia:

- 1568-1570
- 1571-1574
- 1676-1681
- 1686-1700
- 1735-1739
- 1768-1774
- 1787-1792
- 1806-1812
- 1828-1829
- 1853-1856 (Crimean War with Britain and France)
- 1877-1878
- 1914-1918 (World War I)

In the conflict of 1806-1812, Eastern Moldavia was ceded to Russia. Although Bessarabia was culturally Romanian, it has remained part of Russia until the Paris Peace Treaty that ended World War II, when Bessarabia was made part of the Soviet Union (Moldovan SSR). After the fall of the USSR in 1991, the Republic of Moldova became independent of Russia and Ukraine. While none of our Solomon/Goldenberg ancestors came from Bessarabia, one cousin, Beryle Solomon – daughter of Rudolph and Isabel Solomon – married Paul Buchman in Tampa, Florida. It was Paul's ancestors who immigrated from Leovo, Bessarabia. Leovo is located immediately east of the Prut River, which is the boundary between Bessarabia and Moldavia, Romania.

- - -

History of the Sudits of Moldavia, Romania  
Robert S. Sherins, MD

As a result of economic decline during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, princes of the autonomous Romanian provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia instituted a unique socio-economic plan. Foreign professionals, merchants, artisans, and craftsmen were encouraged to immigrate to Romania given incentive by special tax-free privileges and the legal protection of the foreign governments of their origin. Neither citizenship nor property rights were granted, but the exceptional tax-free privileges conferred a status that provided enormous economic advantages over the indigenous population. Eventually, even the princes and nobility sought sudit privileges in order to remain commercially competitive with the new immigrant merchants and bankers.

The Romanian word, **SUDIT**, which meant privileged immigrant, was created from the original Latin, *subbo subter*, to put together, and the Italian word, *suddito*, subject of a foreign power. Sudits were foreign guest workers, who were invited to Romania by the Ottomans, the Romanian nobility, the gentry (boyars), and the Orthodox Church, in order to promote import-export business with Europe, to create a skilled professional and artisan/craftsman community, and to populate the underdeveloped and remote agricultural lands. Sudits became the most successful, prestigious, and influential inhabitants of Romania in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century alone, there were sixty new communities established by sudits.

Sudits were not the first Jews in Romania. Inscriptions on 2<sup>nd</sup> century coins discovered in Bessarabia affirmed the first Jewish presence in Romania. Khazarians, who adopted Judaism in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, migrated there. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Hungarian Jews migrated to Transylvania. By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, princes in Galati proclaimed the great benefits to the region that were derived from Jewish merchants, who established trade with Western Europe. A thriving 16<sup>th</sup> Jewish community in Iasi already had extensive trade with merchants in Brody, Galicia. However, Jews were not permitted to own property or businesses; they became lessees of the landlords and their businesses.

The Capitulation Treaties were signed by the Ottoman overlords of Romania, which provided for the privileged immigrants in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Tens of thousands of individuals from Western, Central, and Eastern Europe migrated to Romania to seek better opportunities. An estimated 30% of the new arrivals were Jewish immigrants, who came predominantly from Poland and Russia. At first, Jewish sudits mixed easily with the indigenous Jewish communities.

The majority of sudits arrived from Austria-Hungary, Russia, Prussia, France, and England. Poland was no longer a political power after dismemberment by Austria-Hungary, Prussia, and Russia in the three Partitions of Poland (1772, 1792, and 1795). Polish immigrants were provided legal protection by Russia, when the Poles of Eastern Poland suddenly found themselves to be relocated in Russian Occupied Poland. As an example, Moldavian and Wallachian catagrafia (census) and metrical records of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries stated that individuals from Poland were "under the protection of Russia." Poles from Western Galicia were under the protection of Austria-Hungary, since Austria

occupied Galicia after the First Partition of Poland in 1772.

There were no official records of the population prior to 1778, when the Russian occupation administration ordered the census of Moldavia after an uprising in Iasi during the Russian-Turkish war. This did not include a separate category for Jewish communities. New foreign consulates were quickly established: Russia in 1782, Austria in 1783, France in 1784, and England 1802.

The Ottomans ordered several catagrafia in 1803, 1808, 1820, and 1824 for Moldavia. Catagrafia meant economic census, but they were used as a political census, not an economic instrument and were directed towards specific groups. The 1820 census in Moldavia had a separate catagrafia for Jews after an uprising of the Greek Orthodox in Iasi against the Muslim Ottoman overlords. Sultan Mahmood II suspected that the rioters had obtained false papers to enter Moldavia. Patronymic names were handwritten in Cyrillic, but were very well indexed by Latin letters. In some instances the names were simple, Bercu Jidovul (Bercu the Jew). Only by comparison with catagrafia from later periods where patronymic names were complete, i.e. Bercu sin Zeilic (Bercu son of Zeilic) was it possible to link fathers and sons. Females were not initially recorded. A few individuals were listed with legal surnames, adopted in the country of origin.

Agricultural development of the backward, outlying rural communities was one of the primary problems of Romania. Immigrants were invited to develop the lands. Small villages were created, which were called Targuri. The small towns functioned as centers for exchange of merchandise in a society that was agriculturally based. Romania was primarily inhabited by farmers, who depended entirely upon the few powerful landlords and boieri (boyars).

Under the new immigration laws, there was a huge demographic movement of foreigners from Western, Central, and Eastern Europe, 30% of whom were Jews. Half of the Jews were from Austria-Galicia and Russia. During the early years, Romanian princes and boyars encouraged the immigration of this large skilled work force. However, economic advantages for the newly arrived immigrants eventually created severe animosity among the indigenous Romanians. Consequently, restrictive and exclusionary laws were written that took away the civil rights of the same immigrants, who had been previously courted. It was the era of exclusion of the Jews from Romanian society that followed their previous emancipation.

Economic stratification developed between the wealthy landowners with their enormous privileges, and the poor agricultural peasants. Moldavian Jews filled an intermediate role. In Wallachia, Greeks and Bulgarians served this new middle class role. Economic growth of the Jewish and non-Jewish Sudits coincided with the last phases of the Romanian struggle to achieve unification as a nation.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an explosion of anti-Semitism and xenophobic policies accompanied the awakening of Russian Nationalism. The Organic Laws, imposed by the Russian Czar in 1830, confirmed this. As the economic climate deteriorated, the official policies of exclusion of the Jews turned into policies of legal anti-Semitism.

The Treaty of Adrianople (1829) ended the Russo-Turkish War. It provided little direct benefit to Romania. At the end of the Crimean War (1856), Russia turned its attention again toward the affairs of Romania. An unusual settlement granted the Ottomans suzerainty over Romania, while the Russian Czar managed the internal affairs of Bukovina, Bessarabia, Moldavia, and Wallachia.

The Russian governor, General Pavel Kisselev, who reported to the Czar, imposed the Organic Laws over Romania. They were established first in Wallachia (1830) and soon followed in Moldavia (1831). The laws were inspired by the Russian regime and deliberately gave political power to the wealthy landowners. Boyars became directly responsible for their peasants, who were stripped of all authority and had no power of their own.

Russia exported their restrictive laws against Jews to Moldavia and created a new category of "vagrant Jew." Romanians were told that Jews were vagrants, who lived at the expense of the native population and exploited their resources to the detriment of industrial progress and public prosperity. The government declared Jews as vagrants, deported at will, and prevented them from returning to Romania. Serious economic conflicts arose among the Jews themselves, which divided the Jewish communities. Sudits were given enormous tax-free incentives in business that held great advantages over the indigenous Jews, whose families had resided in Moldavia and Wallachia for centuries.

Taxation for Sudits was restricted to 3% of the export/import goods, whereas other merchants paid 5%. They were not required to pay personal or community taxes. Their transactions were restricted to wholesale goods and they were forbidden to enter the retail markets, although they often ignored the restrictions. Indigenous Jews and non-Jewish merchants angrily contested the unfairness of the privileged status of the Sudits.

Antagonism grew steadily within the Jewish communities. Conflicts over sudit affairs often ended in litigation. Cases were tried in special courts that also demanded the presence of translators to ensure the precision of the discussions. In 1838, the Moldavian Jewish population was 79,164, 14.7% of the total. Jewish population increased remarkably and by 1845, 1,437 sudit families represented 31% of the total. This resulted in placing increased tax burdens upon the indigenous Jews.

After years of conflict and complaints to the governmental agencies by the indigenous Jews, other new taxes were levied in the attempt to equalize some of the unfair practices. Taxes were applied to the koshering of meat and poultry, head taxes upon Jewish individuals, Jewish communal taxes derived from the Jewish communities own authorities (Hahambashi), taxes levied upon artisans and merchants (patentei), who engaged in retail sales (amanuntul), and school taxes. The new tax code of 1839 set the tax of 60 lei on each head of household in Iasi, and 45 lei for heads of household in other towns of Moldavia. Sudits were eventually required to settle their disputes in local courts and abide by local laws.

After the Romanian Revolution to become independent of foreign rulers, a Congress of Berlin was convened in 1848, supported by the western powers of Europe. Its decrees had specific requirements aimed at providing political and religious equality to all Romanians, including the Jews. It was not successful and Jews were only briefly emancipated.

Jewish communities petitioned Prince Sturdza in 1847 to release them from their required special dress, which consisted of wearing the traditional Polish clothing of the long caftan (coat) and large shtreiml (hat). Such deviation from wearing traditional clothes caused great conflict within the Jewish community between the Orthodox and liberal Jews.

After the restrictive Organic Laws were ended, Jews had a respite from the imposed effects. By 1848, Jews could own vineyards and only recently arrived immigrants could be expelled. Jews were able to serve in the army, but only up to the rank of non-commissioned officers; the latter was reserved for Christians. Synagogues could be built with the provision of maintaining a distance of at least 150 feet from the nearest Christian church. Jews were allowed to enter institutions of higher learning and obtain a doctorate from foreign universities.

The core of anti-Semitism developed among the teachers in public schools and universities. Similar problems arose in political and professional organizations. Anti-Semitism involved all social classes and became an integral part of literary clubs and the media. It became a national movement.

Politicians, who were determined to maintain their offices, used rising anti-Semitism for their own means by inciting the masses against the Jews. There were massive persecutions of Jews from the 1860s to 1880s. The Romanian Parliament blamed Jews for being a "village within a village." Persecutions of Jews were achieved by every possible legal, and often, non-legal means. A systematic exclusion of all Jews in Romania evolved. In the Romanian countryside, where almost no Jews resided any longer, anti-Semitism remained very strong.

The growth rate among the Jews between the 1850s and 1890s exceeded the Christian families. Of 5.95 million Romanians, 269,000 (4.5 %) were Jews. In Moldavia, Jews represented 10% of the population.

By the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century after Prince Carol Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen was crowned King Carol I (1881), legal anti-Semitism was enacted by the government. Jews were excluded from naturalization, denied civil rights by being declared foreigners, their children were expelled from public schools, and their properties and businesses were confiscated. Jews were prohibited from having professions, business licenses, or even peddling. Jews were denied previously held rights of propination (sales of alcohol) and lost their leases to the inns and pubs. Eventually, the experiment of having Jews reside in Romania as privileged guests failed. Jews were murdered or injured in the ensuing riots. Mobs looted businesses and residences, while police either looked aside or were directly involved. Some older Jews remained, but 30 % of the families were forced to emigrate by the end of World War I. A unique group of very poor, but highly motivated, young Jews (Fussgeyers) walked from Moldavia across Europe to Antwerp and sailed to America.

Enormous religious, political, and socio-economic pressures were imposed upon loyal Jewish communities of Moldavia and Wallachia. Increasingly, the Jews turned to Socialism and organizations that offered hope of emancipation from the political nightmare in Romania. About a third of the Jews emigrated to the U.S. and Canada, Western Europe, and Central Africa, especially to Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Belgian Congo. Many families, about 30%, became fervent Zionists in the hope that by immigrating to Palestine they could become productive citizens and freely express their religious beliefs. Another third of the Romania Jews stayed in Romania in hopes of improving their socio-political conditions.

Sherins/Cherkinsky Family History  
Konotop, Ukraine



Immigration to New York

# 1262 2530

### Verzeichniss

der Personen, welche zur Auswanderung nach *Amerika* in *Liverpool*  
 durch die Dampfschiffe *Kaiser* Capitan: *Hyde*  
 unter *englischer* Flagge nach *Neuyork* bestimmt werden  
 Abgang über die Schiffen am *6. October* 1891 *1/2 Nachts*

Zusammen	Vornamen	Geburtsort		Alter	Beruf	in Besitz von	Beruf	Zeit der Auswanderung	Zahl der Familienmitglieder	Höhe des Einkommens		
		M.	F.							M.	F.	M.
1	<i>Elias</i>	<i>Cherkinsky</i>	<i>Ulas</i>	28	<i>Handl.</i>	<i>Handl.</i>	<i>Handl.</i>	<i>Neuyork</i>	1	1		
2	<i>Georg</i>	<i>Scherin</i>	<i>Georg</i>	28	<i>Handl.</i>	<i>Handl.</i>	<i>Handl.</i>	<i>Neuyork</i>	1	1		

Elias Cherkinsky - Salesman (Arbiter & Kaufmann)  
 Hamburg Passenger List, Ship Amerika  
 Sailed to New York via Liverpool 6 October 1891

2300

Form 2000  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
NATURALIZATION SERVICE

TRIPLICATE  
(To be given to the person making  
the Declaration)

129049

# UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## DECLARATION OF INTENTION

Invalid for all purposes seven years after the date hereof

State of New York, } ss: In the Supreme Court of Kings County.  
County of Kings, }

I, Louis Cherkinsky, aged 45 years,  
occupation operator do declare on oath that my personal  
description is: Color White, complexion Dark, height 5 feet 2 inches,  
weight 138 pounds, color of hair Grey, color of eyes Brown  
other visible distinctive marks none

I was born in Rondops, Russia  
on the 1 day of November anno Domini 1875. I now reside  
at 441 Hopkinson av, Brooklyn, N. Y.  
(Give number and street.)

I emigrated to the United States of America from Hamburg Germany  
on the vessel My last

(If the alien entered otherwise than by vessel, the name of the person or name of the transportation company should be given.)  
foreign residence was Russia; I am un married; the name  
of my wife is None; she was born at Russia  
and now resides at 441 Hopkinson av (Kings NY)

It is my bona fide intention to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign  
prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly to

of whom I am now a subject:

I arrived at the port of New York, in the  
State of New York, on or about the — day  
of October anno Domini 1896

I am not an anarchist; I am not a  
polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy; and it is my intention in good faith  
to become a citizen of the United States of America and to permanently reside therein:  
SO HELP ME GOD.

Louis Cherkinsky  
(Original signature of declarant.)

Subscribed and sworn to before me in the office of the Clerk of said Court  
at Brooklyn, N. Y., this 29 day of July

[SEAL]

anno Domini 1921

By Robert Emery Clerk of the Supreme Court.  
Deputy Clerk.

STATE OF NEW YORK.

CITY OF NEW YORK.  
No. of Certificate, 1305

RECEIVED  
COUNTY OF NEW YORK  
JUN 24 1897

I hereby Certify, that Elias Cherkinsky and Annie Halpern were joined in Marriage by me in accordance with the laws of the State of New York, in the City of New York, this 22nd day of June, 1897.

Witnesses to the Marriage, Louis Halpern and Rabbi Moses Berlin

Date of Marriage.	<u>June 22, 1897</u>
Groom's Full Name.	<u>Elias Cherkinsky</u>
Residence.	<u>14 Orchard</u>
Age.	<u>23 years</u>
Color.	<u>white</u>
Single or Widowed.	<u>single</u>
Birthplace.	<u>Russia</u>
Father's Name.	<u>Abraham Cherkinsky</u>
Mother's Maiden Name.	<u>Sarah Rivkin</u>
Number of Groom's Marriages.	<u>first</u>
Bride's Full Name.	<u>Annie Halpern</u>
Residence.	<u>14 Orchard</u>
Age.	<u>20 years</u>
Color.	<u>white</u>
Single or Widowed.	<u>single</u>
Maiden Name, if a Widow.	
Birthplace.	<u>Russia</u>
Father's Name.	<u>Isidore Halpern</u>
Mother's Maiden Name.	<u>Sarah Feitshouch</u>
Number of Bride's Marriages.	<u>first</u>
Name of Person performing Ceremony.	<u>Moses Berlin Rabbi</u>
Official Station.	<u>Cong. Ch. Mess.</u>
Residence.	<u>39 Orchard</u>
Date of Record.	<u>25 June 1897</u>

Marriage License, New York, June 22, 1897  
Elias (Louis) Cherkinsky & Annie (Neché) Halpern



Anna (Neché) Halperin & Husband, Louis (Elias) Cherkinsky

### REGISTRATION CARD

1 **Louis Cherkinsky** 11311  
 2 **441 7th St. Brooklyn**  
 3 **44** **OCT 1 1873**  
 4 **Russian**  
 5 **U.S. CITIZEN**  
 6 **Present Occupation: Operator A. W. Kohn**  
 7 **115 R. 22nd St. NYC**  
 8 **Wife: Mrs. Anna Cherkinsky**  
 9 **441 7th St. Brooklyn**  
 10 **Louis Cherkinsky**

### 31-9-86-C REGISTRAR'S REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF REGISTRANT

HEIGHT		BUILD		COMPLEXION		COLOR OF HAIR	
Tall	Medium	Slender	Medium	Light	Dark	Light	Dark
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

11 **No**  
 12 **No**  
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 97 **No**  
 98 **No**  
 99 **No**  
 100 **No**

**9/12/15**  
**[Signature]**  
 Date of Registration

LOCAL BOARD NO. 86  
 FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
 HEADQUARTERS  
 451 BROADWAY AVENUE  
 (STATE OF LOCAL BOARD)  
 (The name of the Local Board of which registration of the man is made  
 and the name of the person for whom the card is filed in this book.)

Louis Cherkinsky Draft Registration, 1915  
Born October 1, 1873, Married to Anna Cherkinsky

*KONOTOP*

Jews Past and Present

**History of the Jewish Community  
of the Town of Konotop****2001**

Grigory Eisenstat, Computer Compiler and Editor, Lebn  
 Grigory Pertrushenko, Executive Director, Konotop community center, Ester  
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 Kiev, Ukraine, April 10, 2003

English translation by Robert Fineman<sup>9</sup>  
 Santa Monica, California, October 29, 2003

English version edited with footnotes by Robert S. Sherins, M.D.  
 Pacific Palisades, California, November 1, 2003

<sup>8</sup> Permission of the translator has been given to distribute this article among our family and friends.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

## Preface

By Robert S. Sherins, M.D.

*Today, editing and proof reading of the English translation of the publication, "KONOTOP, Jews Past and Present - History of the Jewish Community of the Town of Konotop," was completed. It is a milestone article because no other publicly available text about this Jewish community has been found in my research. Thus far, only one paragraph of general information has been printed about Konotop among the major world encyclopedias, including Encyclopedia Judaica Jerusalem, The Great Soviet Encyclopedia, Encyclopedia of Ukraine, Encyclopedia Britannica, or by using search engines on the Internet.*

Our Cherkinsky ancestors emigrated from Konotop beginning in the 1890s. My research has confirmed that our earliest ancestors dispersed to several locations. Among them, Louis Cherkinsky and his sisters, Miasha (Mariashya), who arrived in New York in 1896, and Ida, whose arrival date is yet unconfirmed, were the earliest arrivals to America. Joseph (Yehuda) Cherkinsky, son of Alexander, arrived in Canada early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They first lived on the east coast of Canada, but later settled in Windsor, Ontario. After obtaining visas, many of their children later moved to Michigan. Chaya-Ita Cherkinsky immigrated to Israel in 1907, and her brother, Reuven Cherkinsky and his sister, Chana, immigrated to Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in the 1940s. In addition, I recently discovered a death record in the Belarus-SIG website, Russian Jewish Encyclopedia, which listed Samuil Naumovich Cherkinsky, a physician, who was born in 1897, but who died in Moscow in 1988. Samuil's genealogical relationship to our family is unproven, but highly likely to be a distant cousin who survived the Russian wars, Communist Revolution, and the freezing winters in the Soviet Union to become a highly educated physician in Moscow.

As far as family sizes were concerned, Cherkinsky families were not exceptionally large, as shown by the family records recently discovered in the regional archives by Angela Semakova. Angela discovered our ancestral documents in Sumska (Sumy) Oblast, because Konotop, which was originally located in Chernigov Gubernya, was relocated to Sumy Oblast after the provincial borders were altered.

As of the date of this English translation in 2003, the oldest Cherkinsky ancestor so far discovered was Eselj Cherkinsky, which is the regional Yiddish nickname, similar to losel or Yossel, which also means Josef/Joseph. Among his presumed other children we know that Eselj/Joseph Cherkinsky had at least one son, who was named Berko loselevich, which translates as Berko/Boris, son of Joseph. Berko loselovich Cherkinsky owned a farm in Konotop where Eselj lived, while Berko's son, Mordukh Berkovich, managed the farm. Mordukh<sup>10</sup> Berkovich means Mordecai, son of Berko. Mordukh also owned a textile manufacturing business in Konotop, which was listed in the text of this article. From other archival records obtained by Angela Semakova, we learned that Mordukh also owned a

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<sup>10</sup> Mordukh was the principal God of Babylon. After the Persian conquest of Bablyon, there was a saying, "Mordukh lives" or Mordukh Chai. The name, Mordecai, comes from Mordukh Chai.

hotel, a café, a barbershop, and two fruit markets. However, the specific names of those businesses remain unknown.

Our family records now include many names of the descendants from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Those records have included Rachel Cherkinsky, who married Max Yeselson, parents of Abe Yeselson, who knew our grandparents in New York. We have confirmed that our grandfather, Louis Cherkinsky, was the son of Abraham Cherkinsky from Konotop. Probably, Abraham was Rachel's sibling or a cousin.

Chaya-Ita Cherkinsky immigrated to Israel in 1907, while other members of her family, such as Binyamin Cherkinsky and his family arrived in America in 1920; Shmuel Cherkinsky went to Israel; and Reuven Cherkinsky and his sister, Chana, migrated to Tashkent, Uzbekistan, presumably in the 1940s. Other Cherkinsky ancestors died in the wars and still others later immigrated to America, but please review the family tree chart and register report for those details.

What can be stated about our ancestral name is that Cherkinsky seems to be a Polish ethnic surname. Many of our ancestors told of their origins from Minsk. Possibly they meant towns that were located within Minsk Gubernya (Province), because they all reported that they were "White Russians."<sup>11</sup> Minsk is located in Belarus, which translates as "White Russia." In 1772, Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia, annexed the eastern portion of Lithuania-Poland and thereby inherited about three and one-half million Jews within the newly expanded Russian Empire. After the second and third annexations of 1794 and 1795, "Imperial Ukases (Decrees)" were issued that evicted Jews from Russian cities. Jewish families were forced to migrate to many small villages within the restricted region known as the "Pale of Settlement." It is quite possible that Cherkinsky ancestors migrated from the Minsk region after those decrees were issued and ended up in the region of Konotop, where we located their records. It is important to note that the archives proved that the Cherkinsky ancestors lived in several towns, all of which were located within Konotop Uyezd or district. That is why our initial correspondence among the cousins seemed confusing because we did not know that the names of the various towns of origin were in fact within the same district.

It is hoped that this article about the origin of the town of Konotop and its Jewish community will be incorporated into the foundation of your family history. Please share this legacy of our family history with all of your children, grandchildren, and cousins. I am very proud to be part of the process of discovery of this history, but in so doing I must acknowledge my deepest gratitude for the invaluable research assistance of Angela Semakova in Kiev, and for the English translations written by her, as well as my friend, Robert Fineman, in Santa Monica, California.

Robert S. Sherins, MD

Pacific Palisades, California

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<sup>11</sup> The origin of the term, "White Russia," appears to be related to the old designation of that region of Russia, which remained white, clean, and untouched by the invading Mongol armies, and therefore "White."

October 30, 2003

We want to believe that this brochure will not be the last page in the history of the Jewish community of Konotop, which used to be the very largest and friendliest Jewish community of Konotop many years ago," Chairman of the board of the Jewish community town of Konotop, Editor of newspaper, Lebn, Grigori Eisenstat. "I am glad that I have participated in the revival of Jewish people in independent Ukraine," stated by Executive director of the Jewish Community Konotop Center Ester, Grigori Petrushenko.

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For What?

I have heard the question on which I want to answer "Why do we need this history about the Jews of Konotop?" The topic of the discussion was about the rationale of returning to our roots – it meant revival of Jewish traditions, customs, and holidays.

For me, this question didn't arise until I recognized that I was a Jew. This happened not at once. To know your nationality and identify yourself with it – are different things. Thanks to genetic memory, I strived and strive to repeat what my predecessors used to do in spite of all persecutions and tortures.

The voice of blood told me the necessity not just to remember but also to revitalize the things that our ancestors were not afraid to do until their death the traditions of the ancient (and not only) Jews.

In general, it seems that people don't want to look at their past, who are ashamed about belonging to one nationality due to some exclusively subjective causes, such as upbringing, personal views, and so on. That is why in historical records there is no objective basis for this retrospectively for Jews to be ashamed. Frightened - yes it was, but ashamed – never.

The Jews have given to the world the Book [Bible], which brings in itself the basis of human morality and ethical values for all and forever.

There were Jews, who assumed the culture and religious practices of the people among whom they used to live. It was several thousand years ago in times of Antioch the 4<sup>th</sup> - it happened under the reign of the Russian tsars. "But there always comes a minute when the call of blood, not the one which flows in our veins, but that which flows out of our veins" (as was said by Uri Tuvim). But there were times when the call of blood of the nation united into one nation despite any differences of culture and religion to which they belonged. You must not be the Jew, who is frightened by the soldiers. The flame of the Holocaust burns in the biggest part of our past. Our past history was troubling those non-humans. And, that is why we must exist not only to be a part of the global

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<sup>12</sup> "Joint" was formed originally by several philanthropic organizations, which united to assist persecuted Jews in Europe. "Joint" was extremely active before, during, and after World War II.

population, but also as a people, who are united together by spilled blood.

That was exactly what world-famous Steven Spielberg felt. He grew up in the immigrant's country where all the Chinese, Italian, Spanish, and Jews were simply called Americans. When Spielberg decided to learn the details about the history of the Second World War, he suddenly remembered his roots and now the foundation, which was organized by him, does everything to make it all possible that the memories of the Holocaust survivors will be known for the future generations and that there will be no room for theories of racial supremacy. And that is why we must remain Jews, who remember who they were and from where they came.

Yes, "citizen of the world" has everything, cities and villages, countries, and continents, but he doesn't have a place where people always come when they feel bad. He doesn't have the spiritual motherland, his national family, which can calm him down and be side-by-side forever.

I understand that we are all people of different nationalities and different colors of our skin. We all are just a small part of the Universe. We live in different countries; we love the land on which we were born and work for its prosperity. We are interested in the spiritual and cultural life of nations in which we live, without taking into consideration their nationality. And that is for me why we must look backward in order to move forward.

By Amelia Eisenstat

She is a member of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine

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We can discover the historical roots of Konotop from the time of the Kievan Rus. There is a lot of historical research, which proves that it is true. Some historians think that it was the center of the Lipeckr [Lipetskova] principality and it was called, Lipovetsk. It was fully destroyed by Mongol troops for disobedience.<sup>13</sup>

The town was rebuilt again under the name Konotop in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The first written reference that mentioned the fort of Konotop was dated in 1638.

Konotop is a local center, which is situated on the left bank of Ezuch River, 129 kilometers from the city of Sumy. Today Konotop is one of the biggest railway centers with a population more than 100,000 people.

The first mention about Jews in Konotop appeared at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when few people lived there. But the Jewish symbolic was found in 1782 in the Coat of Arms of Konotop. On the Coat of Arms there is depicted the details: "in a red field a golden cross, on the bottom the silver half-moon with the inner side facing upwards, and on the top a six-cornered star of David." By 1847, the Jews who lived there increased to 521 people. According to the information provided in "Materials for Geography and Statistics of Russia," compiled by officers of the general headquarters of Chernigov

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<sup>13</sup> 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Gubernya, it was written that 1206 Jews lived in Konotop in 1861 – 566 males and 640 females. The population of Jews significantly increased in the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of the migration of Jews from the northwestern regions to the southeastern territories for permanent residence and achieved 4425 Jews (25.3% from the overall population in Konotop in 1897).<sup>14</sup>

Konotop was a typical town of the Pale of Settlement. Its social structure was defined by the lack of rights for the Jewish people. There were no peasants, predominantly merchants and craftsmen. Most of them used to live in poverty. The increase of the Jewish population occurred as a result of the building of the railway lines from Kiev to Moscow and from Kiev to Voronezh. Konotop was one of the main stations in this railway line. The economical relations with Eastern Prussia were conducted from that place from the west. Also, there were relations with the central regions of Russia in the north and with the southern regions of Russia.

There were a lot of fairs and markets. Gogol wrote about such fairs in Konotop in his novel "The Lost Deed." Jews played a main role in the trade life of Konotop. There were several Jewish firms. Among them the biggest firm was organized by the merchant of the second guild (whose name was German), who exported bran and other agricultural products (residue of sunflower oil and seeds) to Germany. The biggest textile shops belonged to **Novik and Cherkinsky**,<sup>15</sup> shoe stores- **Ainbinder**<sup>16</sup> and Feldman. Numerous food shops belonged to Rubin, Klichin, Nosovicky, Meskhin, and by other Jews. The majority were small shops and the owners of which barely made ends meet. Chemists<sup>17</sup> were organized by Logun, Bernstein, and Sheinikin. Factories, mills, oil producing, and grain production belonged to Alotin, Kozlovsky, Narinsky, and others. They processed grain, oil, seeds, and other raw materials, according to the orders of natural payments for their services. A lot of small trade agents were occupied in buying in villages the agricultural and food products for merchant-exporters and processing factories.

The famous historian, Y. Poletika, wrote about the life of the Jewish community in his memoirs, "The Seeing and the Emotional Experiences."

<sup>14</sup> Following the three Partitions of Poland (Grand Duchy of Lithuania-Republic of Poland) in 1772, 1794, and 1795, Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia, annexed a large portion of Eastern Lithuania-Poland. By so doing, Russia inherited 3.5 million Jews within its new territories. Imperial Ukases (Decrees) were issued that evicted Jews from the larger cities. This resulted in mass migration of the entire Jewish population in Russia. Most of the Jews had to relocate within the Pale of Settlement. Very likely our Cherkinsky ancestors were relocated to the Konotop district at that time.

<sup>15</sup> Ukrainian land records and merchant records from Konotop listed my 2<sup>nd</sup> Great Grandfather, Berko Ioselovich Cherkinsky. Apparently, he owned a farm in the region of Konotop Uyezd (district), which was managed by his son, Mordukh Berkovich Cherkinsky. Berko's father, Eselj (Iosel or Joesph) Cherkinsky lived on the farm with the grandson, Mordukh. Berko Ioselovich Cherkinsky also owned a hotel, a barbershop, a café, and fruit markets in Konotop.

<sup>16</sup> My granduncle, Louis Halperin, married Genesha (Jennie) Einbinder (Ainbinder) in Kozelets, Ukraine, which is located about 60 miles north of Kiev. Konotop is located about 60 miles east of Kiev. Both towns were also equidistant from Nezhin, which was apparently the center of the regional Jewish community. Possibly the Ainbinder individual identified in this history was related. Jews from the region identified themselves as "Nezhiniks." They said that they came from Nezhin Gubernya, however, there never had been a political region of Nezhin Gubernya. Very likely they were referring

<sup>17</sup> Pharmacists.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the population of the city was fifteen thousand people. Ukrainian merchants formed the largest part of its population, a few members were among the Russian officials, and forty workers worked in the railway workshops.

There was a big Jewish community in Konotop, nearly two or three thousand people lived there. That community lived separately from others. The greater part of the community was formed by the owners of the small shops, doctors, craftsmen, workers, merchant's employees (salesmen, shop assistants and shopmen), and poor people, who often didn't know how to feed their families. The community had a religious school, Heder, where Jewish boys were taught God's law, and the synagogue, where all of the people gathered to pray. Jews, who were more prosperous, sent their children, who graduated from Heder to study abroad.<sup>18</sup>

In spite of any animosity of Ukrainians towards Jews, Konotop's Jewish community used to live in relative peace. There were no pogroms (massacres), neither at the end of 19<sup>th</sup>, nor at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. There were some cases of hooliganism<sup>19</sup> exercised by market boys and schoolboys, who were not Jewish.<sup>20</sup> It was very popular to come into Heder or synagogue and scream wildly in order to interrupt the lessons or prayers. The fights between Jews and Ukrainian children were often. But Jewish youths could defend themselves.

A significant group of the Jewish population consisted of intelligentsia, such as the doctors, lawyers, and pharmacists. Most of the doctors were Jews, Marshov, Shapiro, Zimeev, and Apperbaum. Those were prosperous parents, who had the capability to give their children an education abroad. The Russian universities were closed to them. Jewish children didn't have the right to study in the universities. The same situation was applied to the lawyers, Paritskiy, Khrahovskiy, and Lazarev. Only Lazarev finished Odessa University and after that he was included in the rank of the honor citizen. In Konotop artists lived, worked, and contributed significant input to the cultural history of Ukraine: Alexander Imilievich Gofman (1861-1939) and Mark Grigorievich Vainshtein (1894-1952). But the majority of Jews were burgers [burghers].<sup>21</sup> Merchants were the exceptions. They and honor citizens (people, who graduated from Russian universities or institutes) were free from some of the nationalistic lawful limitations for the first time from the prohibition to live outside of the "Pale of Settlement."

The above-mentioned category of prosperous people was only a minority of the town's Jewish population. The majority were the poorer people: craftsmen, workers in small shops, helpers of qualified workers, and lesser merchants. There were people of air,<sup>22</sup> who didn't have stable earnings and they worked from time to time or resold the goods of

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<sup>18</sup> Under the Kahal system, girls were usually schooled at home by their mothers. Heder was for boys, who were taught religious subjects. The brightest of the boys were promoted to the Yeshivot.

<sup>19</sup> Anti-Jewish gangs or gangsters.

<sup>20</sup> Street kids.

<sup>21</sup> Burgher is an inhabitant of a borough or town; a member of the middle class; a prosperous and solid citizen.

<sup>22</sup> The use of the term, "air," was taken from the German word, "Luftmentch," which meant a man of the air without economic stability.

others. There also were the professional beggars.

The Jewish elementary education (literacy and knowledge of the Tanakh) was within everybody's reach. There were four Heders in the town, where the teacher (melamed) sometimes with assistants conducted the lessons from morning until evening prayer. The owner of the Heders, (Baransky, Slobodkin, Kalmanov, and Hazanov) were hard workers and desperately poor. They taught discipline, memory, and attention. One such teacher was Nahman Baransky. There were three Heders for thirteen boys, where melameds, Zalman Evselev Fainickly, Leiba Evselev Komisarov, and Kusiel Evdeev Zavadsky, taught school with certificates from the Jewish school's committee of Nezhin. And one school where twenty-five girls were educated and were taught by petit bourgeois, Donna Goldberg.<sup>23</sup> She had the certificate of the private elementary teacher from the Teacher's Council of Konotop's two-class town's college for teaching of the Jewish children. The Talmud-Torah school for fifty boys was taught by melameds: Movsha [Moishe] Leibow Kozlovsky, having a certificate from the Nezhin Jewish College Commission; and Izrail Aron Goldenfarb – certificate of elementary private teacher from the School Board of Konotop, two-class town's college.

The next stage of education including professional education was not accessible to the majority of Jews.

The so-called industrial proletariat was insignificant. Until the revolution,<sup>24</sup> there were workers in the factories that were owned by Jews, who hired them. In the other factories and government services, they were not allowed to work. Businessmen and workers were in opposition to each other only in small workshops. The so-called class fight, which tried to ignite in this environment was the Party "Bund." The class fight could not be achieved because of two reasons. First of all, the Jewish worker was interested in the stability of the factory, which because of economical weakness could suffer from any conflict, especially a strike. And secondly, in such a hostile environment, they only could hope for mutual aid and national solidarity, excluding any conflicts.

Such solidarity was shown even in paradoxical situations. For example, when the merchant or other entrepreneur became bankrupt, his colleagues, even competitors, gathered some money, which could help the businessman to overcome his difficulties without the need of returning any of the money. But if everything became normalized, that loan of mercy/charity, called "*dmilaskhesed*," was always repaid. It happened with the owner, who grew sugar beets. Due to bad weather conditions a part of the yield was destroyed and he couldn't pay his debts, which he had previously borrowed from the bank. Nine Jewish businessmen provided the money.

Charity for professional beggars was given in the form of excluding even a shadow of humiliation. Those were people with physical and psychological handicaps. There were twenty professional poor people that didn't ask for alms. Alms were given in such a way - the poor people visited every house of prosperous Jews once each week. Each

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<sup>23</sup> This was atypical and advanced for Jewish communities of that era for girls to receive an education outside of the home.

<sup>24</sup> Great Soviet October Revolution in 1917.

housekeeper established his own special day and she put some coins on a dish, 3 or 5 kopecks. The visitor took his coin without saying a word. The plate with money was at the entrance to the kitchen. Poor men could buy a French roll with the money. In one week he spent about a ruble. Others may have spent less, 60-80 kopecks. Once a strange act of charity happened. Among the poor people was a beautiful, but a blind girl, and a crippled man. Those heartfelt people decided to express their pity. They collected the money to buy a small dwelling and utensils, and celebrated their wedding. They delivered and brought up two sons.

As a rule, members of the community were moderately religious. The synagogue was being visited only during big holidays and fasts. Saturday liturgies were visited by only a few people. Of course, there were some atheists.

The cases when people converted to Christianity or other religions practically didn't have a place in the town. Even that act automatically freed them from lawful limitations. People didn't mention the fact that if they became Christians they automatically became free from any limitations that had restricted the Jews. Mixed marriages were prohibited, because it touched upon religious changes. The situation changed only after the Soviet revolution, but in the first years after the Revolution, they were still very seldom. For example, when a Jewish girl married with a Ukrainian boy, the whole [Jewish] community stopped any relationships with that family. It happened in 1921 and both young persons were members of the Komsomol organization. Another case happened in the same year. A Jewish girl married a Russian and she made him change his religion. He had to become a Jew and be circumcised. There were a lot of rich Jews at their marriage.

They followed the custom of circumcision. Seldom-cases of refusal were a sensation. Such a unique case took place in Konotop in 1923. One of the leaders of the town's party instead of circumcision arranged for arranged a so-called "Red Christians."<sup>25</sup> Without any intention for the circumcision, the man's penis became inflamed and there was a necessity for surgical circumcision, which was performed by a surgeon. Almost all the population, including Christians, gloated, seeing in this event "God's finger in it."

In 1922, during a bad harvest and hunger in part of Russia, the Jews from Konotop's community expressed solidarity towards the people of the same faith but different nationality. The group of Subotniks, i.e. Russian people, from Veronish Gubernya, came to Konotop. It meant Russian people following the Jewish religion. There were Russian peasants, but they had Jewish names. The youngest of them was Haim. Aron was the name of the ravine.<sup>26</sup> That ravine was given the right to hold some religious prayers in the synagogue and those people lived in the best Jewish houses and got one echelon of grain.

The Jewish community had legal status before the Communist revolution. That community had the elements of self-government. They had their own resources

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<sup>25</sup> After the Revolution, it was inappropriate to have a circumcision and follow any religious customs. So they arranged for a mixture of old tradition and Communism, by calling the cutting a "Red Christian."

<sup>26</sup> Rabbi.

developed by means of self-taxing. They enacted decrees of civil status, such as birth, death, marriage, and divorce. The heads of such communities were ravine [rabbi] and the civil governor, who was called a public ravine. The public ravine was elected by the community and was approved by the local power [Kahal authority]. The ravine was hired by the community from the number of persons receiving higher religious education (in Yeshivot).

Jews from the time of the 14<sup>th</sup> century didn't have centralized religious leadership, such as a patriarch or a senedrian. The "government" ravine usually was the most noble person in town. The spiritual ravine in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was Semanovich. A quiet man, kind and fair. In cases of conflict, people came to him as a public judge, even in cases when the conflict developed between Jews and Christians.

Another very distinguished personality was "Kazyoni"<sup>27</sup> Rabbi Aron Marshov, famous public figure and physician. He was an orphan and he was raised by the Jewish community. He achieved the highest Jewish education. He went through all stages of religious education, including Heder, Talmud-Torah, and Yeshivot, as per the established schedule and was preparing himself to become a spiritual ravine. But when his education was coming to the end, a rich Jew came to the Yeshivot in Konotop and asked the governors of the Yeshivot for the name of a groom for his daughter and he should be one of its best pupils. The future son-in-law was promised freedom in choosing his endeavors up to continuation the Talmud study. Marshov was recommended to be the groom. The marriage took place, but Marshov made a decision that was unexpected by the father-in-law. He started to study the course of sciences in the Gymnasium<sup>28</sup> with the goal to pass the examinations and receive his diploma as an external student (student, who was allowed to take the courses, but without the need to regularly attend the lectures).

Thanks to his natural abilities and outstanding memory allowed him to achieve this goal within three years. Later, he went to Germany for study at the University of Bonn and returned to Russia with a diploma of physician. He combined his professional work with public service and as head of the Jewish community in Konotop and leader of the Zionist organization. He became the most popular man in the town. During the civil war of 1918-1920, he conducted negotiations on the behalf of the town with multiple changing [political] powers taxing the community. During rigorous political discussions of that time, he invented the famous expression, "Bolshevism - this is the socialism of wild men." Bolsheviks didn't forgive him that expression and he was compelled to leave the town in 1924. Later, he moved to Palestine. The power in town changed many times during the war: Denikin's,<sup>29</sup> Petlura's,<sup>30</sup> Soviet power, German occupation troops, and Ukrainians, who were headed by Hetman Skoropadskiy.<sup>31</sup> There was a wave of robberies and small pogroms at that time. Fortunately, there were no massive killings.

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<sup>27</sup> In Russian, the word, "Kazyoni," refers to the concept of belonging to or in association with the government or public domain.

<sup>28</sup> Secular high school rather than the religious Yeshivot.

<sup>29</sup> General of White Russian Tsar.

<sup>30</sup> A bandit, anti-Semitic gangster, who killed Jews.

<sup>31</sup> Ukrainian leadership was called Hetman.

The most successful time for Jews was during the German (Kaiser) occupation. There were a lot of Jews, such as officers and Division Ravines [rabbis], in the German army.

Later, the Soviet power created conditions of safety for Jews, but from the economical point of view that was a hard time for Jews. Private enterprises were nationalized and trade was stopped. The attempts of illegal trade were cruelly punished and sometimes even the people were shot for such kinds of activity. One of the functions of the Cheka (Soviet police) of that time was the struggle with speculation, the meaning of which was stretched too far.

During the new economical program (NEP), they reestablished the economic activities of Jews (shops, rent of plants and factories, and tradesman), but on a lesser level than before. The main difficulties were the high repressive taxes. In 1923-1928, the illegal activities of Zionist's organizations were revived and the mass emigration to Palestine occurred during that time, which was organized by Gehalutca. In 1924, the Zionists-Socialist's Party (CZSP) and the Union of Youth (CC-Yugend Ferband) distributed leaflets calling for migration to Palestine.

At that time under the influence of the Jewish section of the Communist Party began the movement for the migration to Birobidjan.<sup>32</sup> And the first arresting of Zionists began. But the real economic catastrophe for Jews began in 1928-1930, when [Stalin] started to thwart the activities of the NEP. Private trade, industrial, and artisan's enterprises became bankrupt under the pressure of the high level of taxation. Their owners, who couldn't pay, ran away from the town. In 1929, tradesman, harness maker, and saddle maker, Gorinskiy, hung himself from the window of his shop. As a rule, Jews moved to Russia to their children and relatives living there. Numerically, the community shrank significantly. The composition changed as well, predominantly government clerks, factory workers, and poor people. The relationship with the synagogue weakened. The Jewish community received the final blow during the Second World War. Some part of the population moved to the other parts of the USSR.<sup>33</sup> The other part was killed. After the victory only a small segment of the Jews came back to their native town. The community fell to pieces. One of the three synagogues was occupied by town archives [a collection of records and documents]. Two others were given to the tailoring factories. A small group of Jews tried officially to organize the prayer house, but the local power forbade it. Then they gathered a sum of money and bought the house in the name of one of the active members and they began to gather together on Saturdays. However the fictitious owner decided himself to take advantage of his status and embezzled the house. The case was given to the local court. The Court decided that the house was without an owner and it was decided to confiscate the house. The surname of the man was consciously not recorded. That was the tragic end of the most powerful, numerous, and well organized Jewish community [of Konotop]. Filing a suit didn't have the expected outcome.

Furthermore, sometimes the events were developing by inertia. During this past long period of time, there were now changes in the life of the Jewish community. There were

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<sup>32</sup> Jewish Autonomic Region, where Stalin planned to relocate all Jews in the Soviet Union.

<sup>33</sup> Reuven Cherkinsky and his sister, Chana, migrated to Tashkent.

still religious old men, who gathered together in apartments for Sabbath prayer, the last of which took place in the home of Ziana Feldman's house in 1982. The last sheikhed<sup>34</sup> was Shapirkin Gilia, who had the special religious education. He died in 1976. The last britmilla<sup>35</sup> was made by Shapirkin in 1952. Hupa<sup>36</sup> also was in that year. The last funeral with old Jewish traditions was in 1965.

Only in the environment of democratic Ukraine after independence, Jews got the possibility of reviving their former traditions and language.<sup>37</sup>

In August 1990, the first Jewish family was able to move to Israel. In December 1991, an American genealogist, Miriam Weiner, visited our town. The result of that meeting was obtaining a census of the Jewish population. On 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 1993, there was a meeting, where the society "Lebn" was created. In 1994, during the holiday when people celebrated Pesakh,<sup>38</sup> the members of the Community got matzos. In June 1994, Israeli singer, Jenia Fireman, with her consort established the beginning of communication of Konotop people with citizens of Israel. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of December 1994, the first issue of the newspaper, "Lebn," was published. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of March 1995, the religious Community of Konotop was registered. The monument to Konotop's victims of the Holocaust was opened on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 1997. The Konotop Jewish Community welfare center, "Hesed Ester," was opened on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 1999. And, this center has become the real Jewish house.

### **KONOTOP COMMUNITY CENTER, "HESED ESTER"**

The Konotop town charity fund (Jewish Community Center, Ester) was founded on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 1999 with support from "claims conference" and American Jewish Distribution Committee "Joint." Beside them as co-founders were Konotop Jewish community Lebn and Konotop Judaic religious community. The Jewish community Ester represents a beam of light for all elderly Jews and is the center of Konotop's Jews and Jewish community life. This center provides all the needy with produce parcels, dinners at home, and in the canteen. This center helps with medical care, rehabilitation equipment and medicine, and everyday services. Many groups work there. Also, there are a lot of cultural and educational programs. But the main aim of this center is to remind the most vulnerable members of the community that they are not alone.

The Center is functioning in two big directions, social and community work. To the social programs belong the patronage programs of care under which there are forty invalids and single people. Pensioners in need of medicines are provided for free.

They give help in repair of shoes, clothes, watches, small repairs of household equipment, and provide barber services. Functioning SOS (Save Our Souls) is financed by personal resources of U.S.A. citizen, Leon Sragovich. Urgent help in outstanding cases is given,

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<sup>34</sup> The Russian or Ukrainian word for shochet, the person, who follows the rules of kashrut and performs the kosher slaughter of animals and fowl.

<sup>35</sup> The Russian or Ukrainian word for Jewish ritual circumcision.

<sup>36</sup> Marriage performed under the chupa or religious canopy.

<sup>37</sup> Yiddish.

<sup>38</sup> Pesach - Passover.

such as emergency operations, natural disaster, and etc. The special community distributes this help. And this help is given within forty-eight hours after the adoption of the decision.

The activities of the “Day center” and the “Warm house” are functions of the social program. Accordingly, the programs in the “Day center” are four times each week. They bring elderly people with difficulties in independent movement. They provide the conditions for communication and work (occupational) therapy. In the “Warm house,” they take care of elderly people living nearby and under different circumstances not having the possibility to attend the Community Center. Those people gather two or three times each week for two to three hours. There is a program called, “Mazel Tov.” This program is for mothers, who have children not older than three years and for pregnant women. The program of this club includes interaction and consultations with the doctors and the psychologist, and guarantee of children’s clothes, pampers, vitamins, providing of children’s bathes and beds etc. Great attention is paid to the revival of Jewish traditions in the family.

To community programs belong the following: class for Jewish traditions, class to study Yiddish and English, and the musical ensemble “Shtetl,” piano class, choreographic class, and class for handymen, club for veterans of the Great Father’s War (World War II), prisoners from concentrations camps and ghettos, youth’s and children’s clubs.

Every Friday in the center, members light Saturday night candles and all people, who want to can meet on Shabbat together.

The workers of this center see their task as to revive the Jewish traditions and not to live without attention to any single person. Every member of this center feels that he is needed by the community and can by active participation become useful to his comrades of the same age, children, and grandchildren. He is not a poor person. He doesn’t need to be given a handout. He receives what he deserves and the society expects from him help in establishing the community with rebuilt Jewish traditions, in developing a spiritual life for Jewish people in sovereign and independent Ukraine.

While reviving Jewish traditions, we don’t forget about the life of our native town. We have relationships with other social organizations and agencies of local self-government.

### **The Newspaper “Lebn”**

The Jewish community’s newspaper in Konotop is named “Lebn.” It means “life” and began to be published in December 1994. It is the first and only one public resource in the region of the national minorities, which is distributed free of charge in the cities and towns of the Sumska region.<sup>39</sup> This newspaper is read in the entire territory of the Ukraine,

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<sup>39</sup> Sumy oblast or province. Gubernya is the old term, which is no longer in use.

Israel, USA, Germany, Australia and in the CIS<sup>40</sup> countries. The newspaper is published in Russian and Ukrainian. The slogan of this newspaper is, "all people are brothers."

The published periodical of this newspaper has always tried to follow this slogan because it is promoting peace and mutual understanding in society. The information about Jewish life and the work of Hesed Ester are published in it.

We can also read about events in the region and in Ukraine. Also readers are informed from letters from former compatriots about how Jews live in Israel and other countries. Some common newspaper editions were published together with the old city newspaper, "Konotopsky Kray." This fact shows the cooperation between the Jewish community and local self-government agencies. In the newspaper there are columns, "Our Holy Places," "Conversation with Wise Men," "Famous Jews," "Creativity of Our Readers," "To Be Remembered," and others.

They describe the returning to the roots of our nation, about people, who were influential in the history of our town, and about people, who gave their lives in the First and Second World Wars. Readers liked the newspaper. This was shown by the great number of letters to the editor received. Thanks to its thematic diversity and attraction of a wide circle of readers, the newspaper, Lebn, has a consolidating character and organically fits informational space of Sumshene.<sup>41</sup>

### **TV Program, "Ale Eneinem"<sup>42</sup>**

Together with "Lebn," the public life of Jews in Konotop is described in the TV program "Ale Eneinem." This is a monthly program of the local television station. The main aim of this program is to describe the activity of the Jewish community "Hesed Ester," its clubs, about the leaders of the Jewish movement, and about the national religious holidays. The author of this program, Yulia [Julia] Glanz, together with cameraman, Dmitriy Glanz, familiarized the audience how Hanukah and Pesach were celebrated, about the visit of our friends from Skokie (near Chicago, Illinois), USA, to Konotop, and about the celebration of the Victory Day.<sup>43</sup> They were introduced to the board of the Center and they also informed the audience about the music group, "Shtetl."

The life of Jews in Konotop is widely described by this program. "Ale Eneinem" helps to revive the Jewish traditions.

### **The Music group "Shtetl"**

Together with the community "Lebn," the music group was organized. The aim of this group was to make Jewish music popular and to revive Jewish musical traditions. But as the group didn't have money for a building and was under the pressure for other reasons, it was closed.

In November 1999, with the help of the community and with the help of the

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<sup>40</sup> Union of Independent States of former USSR.

<sup>41</sup> Sumy oblast or province.

<sup>42</sup> Translates as "All Together."

<sup>43</sup> 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the victory after World War II.

representatives joined in Kharkov, this group got its second birth. This group was named with the nostalgic title, "Shtetl." In this ensemble came musicians, who accumulated enough performance mastery on an amateur scene. The members of the group are: drums, Dmitriy Glanz; the violin, Tatiana Raeva; the keyboard instrument, Igor Tabachov; clarinet and alto saxophone, Baleriy Sakun; bass guitar and bayan,<sup>44</sup> Dmitriy Zilbershtein (he is the leader of this group); and singers, Gregoriy Petrushenko and Svetlana Tabakova. The group diligently works on national Jewish repertoire. The group plays music from people around the world.

This group successfully performs on the stage of our native town, of the regional center in Sumy and other towns and cities of this region. At the first regional Jewish art festival, which took place in the city of Kharkov, this group became the laureate and the soloists became diplomants.<sup>45</sup>

We hope that our group, "Shtetl," will take over the glorious tradition of Klezmers of the past. Even as Shalom Alei hem in his novel, "Shtempenu," mentioned the talented musicians from Konotop. Shtempenu: in times Shtempenu defeated all other orchestras, Konotop musicians, who also were popular.

### **Let's Remember**

In Konotop as in any small or big town there is a place where every man involuntarily thinks about the sense of life, about the relationships among the people, about the human's memory, and the significance of which we leave after us on the earth.

The reader can guess that I mean cemetery. And every time when I come to this sacred place on Virovskiy Street, I remember people who found eternal peace here. I knew that the majority of the Jews from Konotop were buried here. He<sup>46</sup> knew almost a thousand, who were buried on the Jewish map. About many of them, I heard different life stories, interesting "maise."<sup>47</sup> With many of them I was very close. Each of them in his time was his own unique and unrepeatable life.

On Yom Kippur, according to the tradition, at my parent's grave we came to put a stone on the tombstone monument of the person with whom we had been friends for more than forty years. From the photo, I saw my dear friend, Efim Bunich looking at me. He was a great life lover, humorist, a man with encyclopedic knowledge, talented engineer physicist. He was telling me, "tell everybody living now about us. Let them remember about us. We loved our town; we used to live in it." And I felt obligated to remember and tell the story.

I must remember David Gregorovich Udler. He was a teacher from God, a real teacher, who never felt angry even when the life was harsh for him. He always found words for everybody who was in trouble and who really needed them and needed his support.

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<sup>44</sup> Russian instrument similar to harmonica.

<sup>45</sup> Winners of the festival contest, who received diplomas and different degrees.

<sup>46</sup> The author.

<sup>47</sup> The word, "maise," was taken from the old Yiddish word, "Bubbamaise," which meant something like "tales from the grandmother."

How many Konotopians taught for decades working in school number 4, this real "Tsaddik." And, Olga Matveevna Braginskaya, gave her whole life to the Jewish school. She was the first, who began to find information about the Heroes of the USSR, Ephim Zitovskiy and Nadezhda Volkova. Just to mention, parents of both heroes were buried on Konotop soil. And, about Volkova's mother, Sofia Lvovna<sup>48</sup> Silina, a whole novel could be written about her life. She deeply believed in the communist idea. She also was impressed by her meeting with Lenin and she had been all her life a member of the Communist party starting before the October revolution. We must mention popular historians, Jakov Zelinskiy and Semen Belinskiy. They fought during the Second World War. They worked for our country and had a great influence in the town.

It is impossible speaking about teachers not to mention Methodist historian, Yakov Zilberstein and Semeona Belenkogo. They fought bravely on the front, where they damaged their health. They honestly worked and enjoyed their deserved respect by many many Konotopians. I am asking for an apology from the reader for a lot of names, which are a small part of the people who deserve to be written about.

I will continue my list, reminisces by professions, physicians and medical workers. Now let's speak about doctors. I want to know, who didn't know the doctors: Sagalevich, Valavik, Pevsner, Narinskiy, and Spivak. I must mention the military doctor, Maria Gregorievna Aizenshtadt. When she was a prisoner of war in the concentration camp, she helped wounded people and she remained faithful to the Hippocratic Oath. Before the Second World War doctor assistant, Isay Krasovitzki, began his work in our city. He was a doctor assistant with a kind heart and the knowledge of a professor.

I walked slowly along the graves looking at the photographs and remember, remember, remember...yarmulka, yarmulka, and the beard of Isosif Volovika, and the grave of Berinski, directed my remembrances to those old Jews, who even in difficult times remained loyal to ancient Jewish traditions, respected the Torah, prayed, used only Kosher food, and communicated in the mother's tongue.<sup>49</sup> In spite of the building of three synagogues that were confiscated - one hundred year old Rabbi Tilman, Moshe Luboshitz, Zama Elinson, Lev Feller, Zama Feldman, and obviously all of the minion coming together at Shlensky's, where the shammes was Hersh Tzitovskiy, or at Zama Feldman and Ermonenka's place and felt themselves to be Jews. At the same time, they had a lot of friends of different nationalities with whom they lived heart to heart and respected each other. Those wise elders taught us how to be a man and how to be a Jew.

I want to remember some leaders of industry, brothers Anatoliy and Alexandr Zvenyiatzky, Mikhail Perelubskiy, Anatoly Glanz, Zinoviy Yudovich; workers of the biggest factory, KEMF,<sup>50</sup> Semona Seraykova, Mordkhay Poliakov, Isaak Erenburg, and Felix Milshtein; and some good women: Alfimov and Furman.

And what about Jewish women! What beautiful women were Sara Shalita and Liza

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<sup>48</sup> Lvovna was named after the father. It means Leo. Similarly, Lvov, the town, was named after King Leo.

<sup>49</sup> Yiddish.

<sup>50</sup> KEMF, possibly Konotop Electromotor factory.

Strelnik. They died so young. What respect is deserved by the small frail old woman, Mondrus, who lost three sons during WWII, Elya, Zinovi, Naom, and Gregori, who became an invalid.

Simple Jewish women and men, young and old, of different professions, barbers, plumbers, engineers, salesmen, believers in atheism... The first member of the Komsomol was Mikhail Galperin and the first vendor of the cinema from Chernigov Gubernya, who died when he was 91.<sup>51</sup> The baker, Solomon Zhesmer, and the cameraman, Lev Rudnik, book specialist Isral Pritikin, and photographer, Leib Glozshtan, and lawyers, Pismenny and Shargorodsky.

Some people can still remember what it meant, "Judovich shop," such as "At Maniak," and "At Gutman." But those were not their private shops in Konotop. Those people put their love and heart into their work.

Do you remember the restaurant "Uncle Misha," the owner of which was Mikhail Hotin or Moishe Raeva, when I was a boy, who told me about the speaking mastery of Trotsky, which he heard many times in the far past. And what about the tailors: Solomon Raev, Tzaley Vinigradov, and Moisei Raibenbakh. They were famous people of Konotop. I would like to name all of them by name, but it is impossible. Let's remember Mendl Sterenzon. He was a very skillful mechanic. What a kind person was Avraam Atkin. We must remember two brothers, twins, named Bogachki living through German capture in 1914, Levitan and Felzenshtain, running away from fascists in Austria, and Robert Leer. With difficult lives, Jan Hubner and fiddler virtuoso, Lev Levantovskiy, and other musicians, Iosif Apterman. Lea Zolotarova didn't learn how to speak Russian. She, trying to escape the pogroms of Denikin<sup>52</sup> and ended up in Konotop. Those kinds of people used to live in our town.

I was walking along the graves and when I saw unknown ones. I suddenly remembered that in Israel there are no graves of unknown soldiers...

A married couple, who came from Germany, was standing near one grave. When I saw them I remembered that thousands of people came from Australia, America, Canada, and Israel to that place. I was thinking about how in the past, a big Sumska' Jewish community of Konotop became smaller and smaller. A lot of people moved all over the world, but graves were still here...

I walked along the whole Jewish cemetery. The monuments with notes in Jewish ended. And the monuments with stars and crosses began...

All those monuments reminded us of who lived in our native Konotop, worked here, fell in love, joyful, created and dreamed, disappointed, and hoped for a better life, and believed...

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<sup>51</sup> Possibly Mikhail Galperin was related to the Halperin ancestors of Robert Sherins' grandmother, Nechie Halperin (Ghalperin). Mikhail Galperin was probably born before 1900, in time to join the newly formed Komsomol about 1930.

<sup>52</sup> Denikin was a general of Tzar's army, who used to fight Communists during the civil war in the 1920's. At the same time he created pogroms to kill Jews.

Let God be with them! We must remember them because while we remember, we are living...

### **From “Lebn” to “Ester”**

The 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 1993 is a special day in the history of the Jewish community in Konotop. That day in the house number 47 on Volochaevska Street, apartment 3, the family of Sofia Abramovna Raibenbakh the people gathered for whom the destiny of Konotop's Jews was not indifferent. Those people still remembered that time when everyone could hear Jewish language, the Jewish holidays were celebrated, religious people could pray, matzos were prepared on Pasakh, and Jews knew very well what was a mitzvah, tzadeka, and tallis. On that day seventy people gathered for the purpose of uniting the community in order to help each other in difficult times, to study their ancient history, and languages, Hebrew and Yiddish, to revive our great culture and spirituality.

The initiators of this unification deserve to be mentioned here. First of all they were old persons: Mikhail Fedorovich Kerelikh, Semen Mikhailovich Peisakhovich, Alexander Ilich Pundik, David Naunovich Plaper. Elected to the first governing board of the community named, “Lebn,” were Arkadiy Sorin (religious affairs), Viacheslav Karpachevskiy (youth affairs), and Mark Karlin (general affairs), vice-chairman of this council were Gregoriy Petrushenko. Gregory Aizenshtat was elected as chairman of the board.

It is necessary to mention one more name, Leonid Volovik. He used to be the chairman of the board of the Jewish Community of Orla, a former inhabitant of Konotop, who shared his experience, which was very useful for us in our work.

It is a pity that life gave its own order and many of them are no longer with us in Konotop. The Kelerekh family moved to the USA, the Pesakhovich family went to Australia, Plapers moved to Russia, and the Sorins, Karlins and Karpachevski families moved to Israel, where five hundred Jews from Konotop are still living. But even from abroad all those people continue to be interested in the life of Jews here in Konotop. They write letters, call us, and visit and help us. They help us as much possible as they can.

Each year new active people were involved, who helped to revive the Jewish life in the town. Among them, the first chairman of the Jewish religious community, Robert Semenovich Agranovskiy. He was one of the initiators to immortalize the memory of the Konotopian victims of the Holocaust, first Hebrew teacher in Konotop's ulpan.<sup>53</sup> After his immigration to Israel, Arkadiy Veniaminovich Koniavskiy became the president of the Jewish community. He took the responsibility to put the cemetery in order, which he successfully accomplished. Nowadays he combines the community's principle responsibilities with the work for coordination of the social programs in the community center “Ester.”

Emilia Azenshtat brings to people the knowledge of Jewish traditions and history. Esfir

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<sup>53</sup> Ulpan Akiva is a non-profit Educational Center, where modern Hebrew is taught to new immigrants.

Rozenfeld was a teacher of the Yiddish class where members of the class try to revive their knowledge of our forgotten language. A lot of energy was given to the community, Lebn, and continue working successfully at the center, Ester, such as spouses Bella and Ruvim Bomshtein. Former chairman of the trustee council, Alexandr Levita, exercised a great deal of care for the people. Unfortunately, he died.

The director of the center, "Ester," tries to involve young people who, as he hopes, will continue the noble cause of revival of Jewish life in Konotop. One of them is Yuriy Golubkov, the head of religious programs, who is studying ancient Jewish religion and wants to bring it to others; and Margareta Stoyanova successfully manages patronage services.

Especially, we want to stress the new programs in the center, "Ester." The programs are: "Warm house" under the guidance of Mark Levita and "Day center" headed by Acia Levit. Acia Levit, even before the opening of the community center, granted her house for the needs of Konotop's Jews. Her house is very old, one hundred years, and it is situated on Shevchenko Street, where, the parcels had been distributed. In this house the guests, who visited the town, were accommodated and the board of the "Lebn" community met and conducted Shabbat services.

After six years from the time of the creation of the community "Lebn," the Jews of Konotop have established the house-community center, "Ester," where it is always warm and quiet for those who come to visit. Jewish life never stops over here.

There were...us, and there are...us.

At the beginning of XIX [19<sup>th</sup>] century there were living several Jews in Konotop. In 1847, 521 people lived in Konotop. In Konotop's Uyezd,<sup>54</sup> in 1861, had been living 1206 Jews, 566 men and 640 women. According to the census in 1897 among the 18,770 population in Konotop, there were 4425 Jews (25.3%). After the end of the Second World War, more than 2500; 1989, about 900; 1992, 750; 1995, 550; and 1999, about 300.

**In Konotop I Saw Love** [Translation from Hebrew by Khia Ori, Israel,]

Konotop met me by sunny streets and nothing beckoned about what would happen after several minutes.

A special little walking excursion to the notable places of the town was organized for me. I saw a green park, streets that were asphalted and not asphalted as well, modern and decrepit houses. Even signs on the walls, posters, and street banners, were talking with me.

On one of the streets, where on both sides were standing one-story houses, stooped from age, wrinkles on the walls, strange things began to happen. Something hit me on the head. At the beginning, I thought something was falling from the mulberry trees growing on both sides of the road. But the hits became more frequent and it happened that it was hail accompanying the drizzle. We couldn't run anywhere and that's why we stood

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<sup>54</sup> District.

under the tree, which sheltered us from the hail, but not from rain. That rain added the sweet taste of mulberry to the taste of rainwater.

Soon the rain was over and the sky became clear. Everywhere was flooded with the streams of the sunshine. We were standing wet as if we took a bath in the river and the moisture on our faces was sweet.

I was taken to the building, which in a month was going to be a new community center. You ought to have a good imagination for seeing ulpan classes full of life where there was now only noise and dust of the construction.

When I came for the second time, some weeks later, the house was almost ready. One of the classrooms was ready to greet pupils. Other rooms were light and clean. And you didn't need any imagination to see that place full of people, young and old, who came there to study and have a rest, to get a consultation, and to be entertained, people arguing and listening. You know my heart is with them. I saw them all, although they hadn't come yet, because the building, which was being repaired for them, would be officially opened in only two weeks when I would be so far from that place.

And my heart was turned towards the people, who came to open the new classroom of ulpan. I was treated in their houses and they accompanied me to the places of the former pain and sorrow of the Jews of their town.

I saw two monuments to people killed by Nazis. Both of them were located on the territory of the military unit. We were followed by a Ukrainian officer. I saw stones that were crying. On the one of them I read the name in Hebrew of a Jewish woman, who died a long time ago. But that gravestone became the monument to all those who were killed. I couldn't find another one. I saw another stone full of silence. It was also a monument on an old grave maybe from some cemetery, which was destroyed by people and time. It was without a note. I saw the monument to all who were killed during the war on the territory of the aviation base.

A great dinner was prepared for us. Outside that house looked like a man with flabby shoulders and blind eyes, but inside it was full of light and love.

I had been in Konotop two times, but at the same time I felt that I had always been there. I felt myself as if I were at home, although I didn't know the language and was not acquainted with the people in an unfamiliar city. The air around me was full of love. I experienced everything in my life: sorrow, merriment, and fear of the unknown disturbed me also. In that cemetery my ancestors were in peace. In those ditches of death were killed my relatives. And that loss was mine, too.

My parents, who belonged to the Zionist youth of the beginning of the century, left their houses and their families. They created the State of Israel for me. This was my own personal happiness. I didn't choose it. It chose me. It fell upon me from the hands of the sky. I thought I could have been born in Konotop, because I saw myself looking at the faces which were around me. Because I saw love there.

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***Righteous of the World, Tetera, Melania Alexyevna.***

On 26 June 2000, the decision of the special commission of the "Righteous of the World" of the Institute of Yad Vashem.

The decision of Yad Vashem, our countryman, Melania Alexyevna Tetera, as a sign of deepest gratitude for the health and for the help to Jewish people during the years of the Second World War, given the honorable title, "Righteous of the World" posthumously. In the period of the occupation of Konotop by German fascistic forces, she saved the life of two boys born of Jewish women. The mother of those Jewish children was shot by the fascists.

Page 4

Page 5: Building of the former synagogue on Yarmarochna Street. There is a department of the standardization and metrology nowadays.

Photo, which was made in Konotop in 1920. Second from the right side is Sima Denkovska, who is living in Chicago now. She is 90 years old.

Page 6: Pupils of the Jewish school No.5 in Konotop - one of the last graduations. There was a school No. 4 in that building after 1938.

Page 7: School No. 4. There the Jewish school No. 5 had been built by 1938

Page 9: Konotop's family of Slabodkin

Page 10: This building is called "Palestine." After the War it became a shelter for 400 Jews. There are only three of them living.

Page 12: Heads and participants of the program, "Day center"

Page 14: The director of the Community Center, Gregoriy Petrushenko, the coordinator of the social programs, the head of the board of Jewish religious community, Arkadiy Koniavskiy, and the head of the community programs, Ruvim Bomshtein, (from right to left) with Hanuksha, the present from the friends of Konotop's community, Temple Beth Israel synagogue in Chicago.

Page 15: Our holidays:

***Candles light in our center weekly & talk a blessing above the wine & chal.  
We meet Shabbat.***

In the photo: the teacher of the Jewish traditions, Emilia Aizenshtat, and the head of the religious programs, Yuriy Golubkov.

We celebrate the Jewish holidays Purim, Ahashverosh, and Ester

Often the representatives of Lubovich's Rebe attend our community. For two years Konotop's Jewish community has supported the friendship's ties with Temple Beth Israel synagogue, (Skokie, Illinois, USA). Ravine Michael Vainberg presents to Konotop's Mayor, G. Vasilenko, the message from the Mayor of Skokie.

Page 21-22: **Partisans and Under-grounders:**

Soldiers, who were killed during the liberation of Konotop and buried in the brotherly grave (423 people) in the Virovske cemetery.

Soldiers, who were killed in the concentration camp and buried in the brotherly grave in the Uspensko-Troicka St.

The Jews of Konotop, who were killed by fascists during the occupation.

The Jews who were killed by fascists and buried in the Virovskoe cemetery.

Jews who outlived the occupation.

Heroes of the Soviet Union.

Every year on the Victory Day the delegation of Municipal Council pays a tribute of respect to the victims of catastrophe.

Kaddish to the killed read by the main [rabbi of Kiev's synagogue] ravine of Kyiv's synagogue, Brodskly Moshe - Reuven Asman.

Page 21: Uspensko-Troicka Street. One of the sacred places in Konotop, grave and the monument to 257 Jews, who were brought from the other places and killed during the period of occupation. The monument was erected by the relatives just after the ending of the war. There is only one exact surname, Levitan, daughter of ravine [rabbi].

Page 23: Cemetery on the Virovska Street. Jewish map. The representative of "Joint" from Jerusalem, Doctor Aron Vais, (the third from the right) during the visit to the Jewish cemetery.

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