

A Brief History of Judaism in the Somali Peninsula

Aweis A. Ali

Introduction

While Christianity in the Somali peninsula was in the past marginally examined, Judaism in this world area received far less attention. This negligence is surprising given the recorded history of Jews peacefully living among Somalis for centuries. Some of the Jewry in question were open about their faith, while others were crypto-Jews who practiced their faith in covert ways for fear of persecution. Many of the Jews who lived or simply traversed in the Somali peninsula as merchants and religious service providers, like circumcision and kosher slaughter of animals, were Adenite and Yemenite Jews. Some other Jews came from the Iberian Peninsula or even directly from modern-day Israel. The purpose of this paper is to document the often-ignored deep roots of Judaism in the Somali peninsula.

Ethiopian Judaism entered the Somali peninsula through Somaliland while southern Arabia Judaism entered the peninsula primarily through southern Somalia and also through Somaliland albeit with limited arrivals. While there is no strong evidence of any Somali clans embracing Judaism during the pre-Islamic era, the conversion of individuals and families cannot be ruled out. The Hebrew heritage of the marginalized Somali clans including the Yibir is an ancient one which goes back to the Beta-Israel, Ethiopian Jews. Somalis were, at least nominally, entirely Islamized by the beginning of the 16th century.¹ Islam remained very shallow in the interiors of the Somali peninsula until the 1800s.² Since 1500, no large scale of indigenous Somalis practicing a religion other than Islam has been reported.

The Greater Ethiopia Influence

One of the five Somali inhabited regions in the Somali peninsula is part of modern-day Ethiopia. While the population of this Somali region is a negligible 6,000,000 people compared to the overall Ethiopian population of 110,000,000, the landmass of this Somali region is about 1/3rd of the total Ethiopian landmass. It should be noted however, under its old name of Abyssinia, Ethiopia had ruled much of modern-day Somaliland, including sections of the semi-autonomous region of Puntland.³ Zeila town in Somaliland was ruled by the Axumite Kingdom as early as the 900s before losing the strategic town to local Muslims and their Arab co-religionists. The Axumite

¹ Ali Abdirahman Hersi, *The Arab Factor in Somali History: The Origins and the Development of Arab Enterprise and Cultural Influence in the Somali Peninsula*. University of California, Los Angeles: Ph.D. Dissertation, 1977, 141.

² Abdi Mohamed Kusow, *The Genesis of the Somali Civil War: A New Perspective*. In *Proceedings of the Sixth Michigan State University Conference on Northeast Africa*. Edited by John Hinnant & B. Fine. East Lansing, MI, USA: (Michigan State University, 1992), 189.

³ Ali Abdirahman Hersi, *The Arab Factor in Somali History*. 117.

Kingdom reconquered Zeila in the early 15th century.⁴ The Ethiopian rule in most of Somaliland seems to have concluded by the 13th century.⁵

Ethiopia, with its famous indigenous Jewish community, Beta-Israel,⁶ took with it its brand of Orthodox Christianity and elements of Judaism wherever it ruled, including Somaliland.⁷ Ethiopia, which was traditionally ruled by the northern Orthodox clans of the Amhara and the Tigray, was also once ruled with an iron fist by Queen Gudit, who was an Ethiopian Jew.⁸ The Jewish faith of the Queen is affirmed by ancient Ge'ez manuscripts.⁹ This Damot Kingdom, which laid the southwest of Axumite Kingdom, targeted the Ethiopian Orthodox Church with a vengeance.¹⁰ The Queen eventually ransacked Axum in 979.¹¹ While the exact seat of the Damot Kingdom may be disputed, its reach and rule are not. For example, Paul Balisky is of the opinion that the seat of the Damot Kingdom was near the Gibe River Valley, currently inhabited by the Gurage and the Oromo people groups.¹²

It is not surprising that the Somali peninsula, especially areas still ruled or once ruled by Ethiopia, is littered with Jewish archeological evidence. The Dhubato village in the Hargeisa region, Somaliland, has ancient cemeteries embossed with the Star of David.¹³ Dire Dawa, part of the Somali peninsula in Ethiopia, also has a long history of a thriving Jewish community of Adenite and Yemenite extraction.¹⁴ Some of the Jews reportedly hailed from India and Greece. However, their ancestry could still have been Adenite or Yemenite. With its metal door embossed with the Star of David, one of the city's synagogues now operates as a cafeteria. This ex-synagogue is located in the Dire Dawa neighborhood of Dechatu.

⁴ David Levine, *Greater Ethiopia*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1974), 71

⁵ Timothy Insoll, *The Archaeology of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa*. (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 59.

⁶ The Ethiopian Jewish community calls itself as Beta-Israel. Some outsiders call them Falasha, which is a derogatory term.

⁷ Sada Mire, *Mapping the Archaeology of Somaliland: Religion, Art, Script, Time, Urbanism, Trade and Empire*. *Afr Archaeol Rev* 32, 111–136, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10437-015-9184-9> (accessed 08 March 2021).

⁸ J. Spencer Trimingham, *Islam in Ethiopia*. (London: Oxford University Press 1952), 52

⁹ Sergew Hable Selassie. *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270*. Addis Abeba. (Haile Selassie I University, 1972), 225-232.

¹⁰ Belaynesh Michael, "The decline of Aksumite Empire and the Rise of Warrior Queen Yodit (አሳድ) The Fire." *Addis Herald*, 24 July 2019.

<https://www.addisherald.com/the-decline-of-aksumite-empire-and-the-rise-of-warrior-queen-yodit-%E1%8A%A5%E1%88%B3%E1%89%B6-the-fire/> (accessed 08 March 2021)

¹¹ Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia*. In *Oxford Studies in African Affairs*. General Editors John D. Hargreaves and George Shepperson. Oxford. (Clarendon Press, 1972), 40-43.

¹² Paul E. Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists: A Study of Religious Innovations in Southern Ethiopia*, 1937-1975. PhD. Thesis, Scotland. (University of Aberdeen, 1997), 8-9.

¹³ Sada Mire, *Mapping the Archaeology of Somaliland*, 124.

¹⁴ Oxford African American Studies Center. "Isaac, Ephraim." 31 May 2013.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780195301731.013.38569> (accessed 11 March 2021).

The Jews of Djibouti

The Jews of Djibouti belong to the influential Adenite and Yemenite Jewish diaspora, just like the Jewish communities in the rest of the Somali peninsula and Eritrea. While Jews initially settled in Obock, a small port town in the northern part of the Gulf of Tadjoura, they later moved to Djibouti City after the British handed the Gulf of Tadjoura over to the French in 1884.¹⁵

The first documented significant Jewish presence in Djibouti was in the 1800s, which coincides with the French development of Djibouti's port city in the latter years of the 19th century. Djibouti was at this time known as the *Côte Française des Somalis*.¹⁶ The Jewish community played a significant role in the development of Djibouti City. These professional Jews emigrated from Aden. However, it is unknown whether these Jews were indeed from the Adenite community or were Baladi (from the north) who simply passed through Aden. Both communities share *minhag*.¹⁷

There were 50 Jewish families in Djibouti in 1901 and 111 in 1921.¹⁸ Many of the Jews were traders, craftsmen, and jewelers. The several synagogues they frequented included the grand synagogue in the heart of the city in Rue de Rome. The Jews of Djibouti were known as expert *Hahamim*;¹⁹ they were renowned for their superior *halakhic* knowledge.²⁰ The most prominent of the last few Rabbis of Djibouti was the prominent Haham Yoseph Moshe, who also ministered to the Jews of Asmara and Addis Ababa as a skilled *mohe* performing Jewish rituals, including circumcisions.²¹

As the number of Jews in Djibouti dwindled in the 20th century, two phenomena were evident: increased intermarriage between the Jews and natives and the latter's conversion to Judaism. Both anomalies vanished from 1948 -1950 when the majority of the Jews made *aliyah* to Israel. Operation Magic Carpet, which the new State of Israel organized in 1949, evacuated 45,000 Yemenite Jews to Israel. This group included 200 Jews from Djibouti who were also threatened by political unrest. A member of the Jews of Djibouti, Moshe Sion, later recalled, "a plane came from

¹⁵ Alain Rouaud, "Pour une histoire des Arabes de Djibouti, 1896-1977". Cahiers d'études africaines. 1997, 37: 319–334.

¹⁶ "French Coast of the Somalis" Somali: *Dhulka Soomaaliyeed ee Faransiiska*. France later renamed this territory the French Somaliland.

¹⁷ Hebrew: מנהגים, "motsuc", is an accepted Jewish tradition or group of traditions.

¹⁸ Gabriel Angoulvant and Sylvain Vignéras, Djibouti, Mer Rouge, Abyssinie. Paris. 1902, 415.

¹⁹ Hahamim, pl of Hakham is a term in Judaism, meaning a sage or skillful, wise man; it is often used for gifted Torah scholars.

²⁰ *Halakha* is the collective body of Jewish religious laws, practices, and piety.

²¹ ZivotofskyAri and Ari Greenspan, "No Vital Signs In Djibouti" (PDF). Mishpacha. 391: 56–62. January 2012.

<http://halachicadventures.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/djibouti-mishpacha.pdf> (accessed 07 March 2021).

Aden, and we all got on and flew to Israel.”²² While in Djibouti, Moshe’s father ministered as a *mohel*, *hazzan*, *posek*, and *sofer*.

The Jewish Telegraphic Agency report nonchalantly states, “All but three Jews of the Jewish community in French Somaliland [Djibouti] have immigrated to Israel, according to information received here by the organization department of the World Jewish Congress.”²³ The report adds, “A letter written by one of the three Jews remaining in French Somaliland to Dr. I. Schwarzbart, director of the W.J.C. organization department, reveals that the three have stayed in Djibouti in order to liquidate the affairs of their co-religionists after all other members of the community left for Israel.”²⁴ The Jews living in Djibouti today are expatriates with Jewish roots as well as “just a few isolated, unaffiliated Jews.”²⁵

The Jews of Somalia

There are records which indicate that 100-200 Jews moved to Somalia as traders around 1900.²⁶ Some of these entrepreneuring Jews may have settled the port town of Berbera “where Arab, Indian and Jewish trading communities once lived.”²⁷ Other Somali coastal towns of Yemenite Jewish presence included Zeila, Mogadishu, and Brava. Hussein A. Bulhan asserts that “there are indications that Jewish merchants traded in seaports along the Red Sea and established pockets of small communities wherever commerce and peace prevailed.”²⁸ Oral tradition has it that the “last Jewish family left Berbera in 1951 and headed for Djibouti.”²⁹ A debilitated synagogue still defies anti-Semitism in Berbera.³⁰ The Jewish neighborhood of Berbera still retains

²² Zivotofsky; Ari Greenspan. “Out Of Africa.” Jewish Action, 2011.
https://jewishaction.com/jewish-world/travel/out_of_africa/ (accessed 07 March 2021)

²³ Jewish Telegraphic Agency, “Only Three Jews Remain in Somaliland; All Other Members of Community Went to Israel.” 15 August 1949.
<https://www.jta.org/1949/08/15/archive/only-three-jews-remain-in-somaliland-all-other-members-of-community-went-to-israel> (accessed 07 March 2021).

²⁴ Jewish Telegraphic Agency, “Only Three Jews Remain in Somaliland; All Other Members of Community Went to Israel.” 15 August 1949.
<https://www.jta.org/1949/08/15/archive/only-three-jews-remain-in-somaliland-all-other-members-of-community-went-to-israel> (accessed 07 March 2021)

²⁵ Zivotofsky, Ari; Greenspan, Ari, “No Vital Signs In Djibouti.” Mishpacha. January 2012, 391: 56–62.
<http://halachicadventures.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/djibouti-mishpacha.pdf> (accessed 07 March 2021).

²⁶ Nancy Hartevelt Kobrin, *The Last Two Jews of Mogadishu: Living Under Al Shabaab’s Fire*. New Rochelle, NY. (MultiEducator, 2017), 17.

²⁷ “In Pictures: Berbera Builds Future from Crumbling Past.” BBC, 04 June 2015
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-32978845> (accessed 08 March 2021)

²⁸ Hussein A. Bulhan, *In-Between Three Civilizations: Archeology of Social Amnesia and Triple Heritage of Somali*. Volume 1. Bethesda, Maryland. (Tayosan International Publishing, 2013), 159.

²⁹ “The Berbera Synagogue and the Jewish Presence in Somalia.” Somalipost, 11 February 2018.
<https://www.somalispot.com/threads/the-berbera-synagogue-and-the-jewish-presence-in-somalia.37613/> (accessed 08 March 2021).

³⁰ “The Berbera Synagogue and the Jewish Presence in Somalia.” Somalipost, 11 February 2018.

its name, *Sakatul Yuhuud*.³¹ Apparently, Somalia's current hateful anti-Semitism is a new phenomenon that came to Somalia with the mother of radical Islam, the Muslim Brotherhood, in the 1970s.

A report by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) published in 1949 states, "...there are no Jews left in Italian and British Somaliland, according to information received here by the organization department of the World Jewish Congress."³² Italian Somali Somaliland and British Somaliland united in 1960 to form the Republic of Somalia. Despite the JTA's pessimistic view of the existence of Somalia Jewry post-1949, there is indisputable evidence that both traditional (publicly known) and crypto-Jews resided in Somalia well after 1949. Up until the 19th century, "Somalia was home to a diverse trading network, which extended from New York to Yemen to Somalia and continued all the way to Indonesia."³³ However, a significant Somalia Jewish community resided in Somalia until shortly before Somalia's independence in 1960. Interestingly enough, Israel was the first country to recognize Somalia's independence from Great Britain and Italy. Somalia did not return that favor but instead dispossessed and deported Jews from Somalia in 1967 in response to the Six-Day Arab-Israeli War.³⁴

While people know about the traditional (publicly known) Jewry in Somalia, little is known of the crypto-Jews who appear like any other Somali Muslim but practice their faith discreetly. Nancy Hartevelt Kobrin corresponded with two crypto-Jews of Yemenite descent in Mogadishu from 2007-2010. Kobrin exchanged more than 300 emails with the mom, Ashira Haybi, and her adult son, Rami. Rami's dad, Shamul, was killed in the civil war that toppled the Somali government in 1991. This Jewish family has roots in Somalia that exceed a century. Rami's dad traces his ancestry to Aden, and his mom to Ta'iz, both in Yemen. Ashira was a successful textile businesswoman before the civil war. "She kept a kosher home, was Shabbat observant and raised Rami to continue the tradition. They fought vigorously to

<https://www.somalispot.com/threads/the-berbera-synagogue-and-the-jewish-presence-in-somalia.37613/> (accessed 08 March 2021).

³¹ Abdirahman M. Diriye, "Jews' Historic Presence in Somaliland." The Times of Israel. 26 April 2019

<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/jews-historic-presence-in-somaliland/> (accessed 08 March 2021)

³² Jewish Telegraphic Agency, "Only Three Jews Remain in Somaliland; All Other Members of Community Went to Israel." 15 August 1949.

<https://www.jta.org/1949/08/15/archive/only-three-jews-remain-in-somaliland-all-other-members-of-community-went-to-israel> (accessed 07 March 2021).

³³ Nancy Hartevelt Kobrin, "Ilhan Omar Controversy: Where Does She Get Her Views?" Clarion Project, 18 November 2018.

https://www.academia.edu/37798893/Ilhan_Omar_Controversy_Where_Does_She_Get_Her_VIEWS_Clarion_Project (accessed 08 March 2021).

³⁴ Nancy Hartevelt Kobrin, "Ilhan Omar Controversy: Where Does She Get Her Views?" Clarion Project, 18 November 2018.

https://www.academia.edu/37798893/Ilhan_Omar_Controversy_Where_Does_She_Get_Her_VIEWS_Clarion_Project (accessed 08 March 2021).

preserve their Judaism under extreme duress.”³⁵ Kobrin received the last email in 2010 and has no idea what happened to the mother and her son.

The most challenging group of the Somalia Jews to document is the crypto-Jews, most of whom are of Adenite or Yemenite origin. These are Jews who practice Judaism discreetly but outwardly appear to be practicing Muslims. A prominent wealthy business family from Mogadishu is often rumored to be “Yemeni Jews,” but the family denies this by claiming to be Ashraaf, descendants of Prophet Muhammad. The home of the late patriarch of this family was looted in 1991 after the collapse of Somalia’s central government. According to multiple sources, the looted goods including “Jewish scriptures and other religious books, were hidden away in a secret basement.”³⁶ According to Nancy Kobrin, it “was common for Yemenite Jews for families to own their own Torah scroll. Rami talked about how they had such an old Torah that they could no longer read the letters but they knew it was sacrilegious to write or fill in the faded inked letters.”³⁷ This “crypto-Jewish” family cannot be named in this paper for their own safety.

The Yibir Clan

The Yibir, the most loathed among the despised Somali minority clans, is probably of an Ethiopian Jewish heritage.³⁸ The Yibir clan’s ancestral home appears to be either Harar or Jigjiga.³⁹ Both cities are located in eastern Ethiopia and are in close proximity. Xantaale, the wife of a powerful Yibir King, Bu’ur Ba’ayr, who ruled parts of northern Somalia around the 12th century, is buried in Harar. However, some think her actual resting place might be in Jigjiga. Xantaale’s alleged tomb in Harar attracts a steady stream of Yibir pilgrims.⁴⁰ The Yibir are known as ritual specialists with mighty magical powers, thus the fear and suspicion most Somalis harbor against them.⁴¹ It is noteworthy that the libire clan of the Rendille in North-East Kenya, close cousins of the Somalis, are also ritual specialists with alleged powerful curses. However, the libire are honored among the Rendille and are not thus despised. “libire” and “Yibir” belong to the same etymological root. In fact, F.L. James, a 19th-century British explorer who visited Somaliland, spelled “Yibir” as “Ebiri” in his book, *The Unknown Horn of Africa*.⁴²

³⁵ Nancy Hartevelt Kobrin, “What? There Were Jews in Somalia?!” *The Jerusalem Post*. 28 January 2018.
<https://www.jpost.com/opinion/what-there-were-jews-in-somalia-540076> (accessed 08 March 2021).

³⁶ Abdul Mohamed, phone conversation with the author, 08 March 2021.

³⁷ Nancy Kobrin, “Wonderful Article.” Message to Aweis A. Ali. 12 March 2021. Email.

³⁸ “Yibir” is a Somali corruption of “Hebrew.”

³⁹ Ben I. Aram, “Somalia’s Judeo-Christian Heritage: A Preliminary Survey.” *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*. 2003, 18-19.

⁴⁰ I. M. Lewis. *Peoples of the Horn of Africa: Somali, Afar, and Saho*. Ethnographic Survey of Africa, North-Eastern Africa. Part I. ed. D. Ford. London: (International African Institute, 1969), 54-55.

⁴¹ G. Schlee. *Identities on the Move: Clanship and Pastoralism in Northern Kenya*. Nairobi, Kenya: (Gideon S. Were Press, 1994), 10-11, 241-242.

⁴² F.L. James. *The Unknown Horn of Africa*. (London: G. Philip & Son. 1888), 70.

King Bu'ur Ba'ayr, who also served as the High Priest, was eventually dethroned by a Somali Muslim preacher, Sheikh Aw-Barkhadle, also known as Sheikh Yusuf Ahmad Kawneyn. Sheikh Aw-Barkhadle was a prominent Somali Muslim scholar,⁴³ whose native pedigree has been confirmed by competent authorities, including H. Altenmüller,⁴⁴ Richard Bulliet,⁴⁵ and the Royal Geographical Society.⁴⁶ The power encounter between the two men is immortalized in the Somali psyche.⁴⁷ The King and his subjects practiced at the time a pre-Islamic religion.⁴⁸ The Yibir seem to have practiced a syncretic form of Judaism and traditional religion. The Yibir to this day harbor persistent resentment against Islam.⁴⁹ The Yibir today are between a rock and a hard place. The fact that fellow Somalis marginalize them because of their supposed clan inferiority is bad enough. However, their Hebraic heritage is also used against them by some Somali Muslims.⁵⁰ Some members of the Yibir clan coined various names for their clan to get rid of the name Yibir because of its Hebrew origin. The alternative names minted include "Anaas." No Somali would call a Yibir "Anaas." The Yibir to this day collect payments, known as "samanyo" from dominant clans during weddings or when a baby boy is born.⁵¹ If they are denied the age-old payment, they supposedly use their magical powers to harm those who denied them the traditional payment.⁵²

During the power encounter between the Muslim preacher and the King-High Priest, Bu'ur Ba'ar, the King went through a mountain multiple times until Kawneyn begged Allah to imprison the King in the mountain. In one version of the legend, the King's sons later demanded from Kawneyn the blood money of their murdered dad. Kawneyn "asked them whether they wanted an immediate payment or preferred to be paid in the future for every newborn boy and for every marriage; they opted for the second, and this is the explanation for the "samanyo" paid by the Somalis to the

⁴³ I. M. Lewis, *Saints and Somalis: Popular Islam in a Clan-based Society*. (Red Sea Press. 1998), 89.

⁴⁴ H. Altenmüller, J. O., Hunwick, R.S. O'Fahey, and B. Spuler. *The Writings of the Muslim Peoples of Northeastern Africa*, Part 1, Volume 13. Leiden [u.a.]: (Brill, 2003), 174.

⁴⁵ Richard Bulliet, *History of the World to 1500 CE* (Session 22). Tropical Africa and Asia. Youtube.com. 23 November 2010. Retrieved 23 September 2013.

⁴⁶ Royal Geographical Society. "The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society." Volume 19, 1849, 61.

⁴⁷ Sada Mire, Wagar, Fertility and Phallic Stelae: Cushitic Sky-God Belief and the Site of Saint Aw-Barkhadle, Somaliland. 22 March 2015, 103.

file:///Users/nomadmac/Downloads/Wagar_Fertility_and_Phhallic_Stelae_Cushitic_Sky-Go.pdf (accessed 21 January 2021).

⁴⁸ The King-High Priest was later given the Muslim name, Mohamed Hanif after his death by the Yibir, who later converted to Islam. The name change was probably an attempt by the Yibir to remove their clan from the stigma of the anti-Islam Jewish King.

⁴⁹ Ben I. Aram, "Somalia's Judeo-Christian Heritage: A Preliminary Survey." *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*. 2003, 19.

⁵⁰ Elia Vitturini, *The Gaboye of Somaliland: Legacies of Marginality, Trajectories of Emancipation*. University of Milan-Bicocca. "Riccardo Massa" Department of Human Sciences for Education. Doctoral Programme in Cultural and Social Anthropology. PhD Thesis, 2017, 53.

⁵¹ The Yibir term for "samanyo" is "anasnimo."

⁵² Elia Vitturini, *The Gaboye of Somaliland: Legacies of Marginality*, 25.

Yibir.⁵³

The New York Times published in 2000 a widely circulated article titled, “Djibouti Journal; Somalia’s ‘Hebrews’ See a Better Day.”⁵⁴ The author eloquently puts the challenges the Hebraic Yibir clan faces:

The sultan of the Jews in Somalia is a handsome, silver-haired man named Ahmed Jama Hersi who does not know the first thing about Judaism. He is a Muslim, as were his ancestors back at least 800 years. But he and his people are treated badly, cursed as descendants of Israelites. The name of the tribe is Yibir, or Hebrew.⁵⁵

While the Yibir clan’s Jewish origin is a widely accepted view among Somalis, there are few other marginalized Somali clans with alleged Jewish ancestry.

The Tumaal, for example, is another ostracized Somali clan “thought to have a Hebrew origin.”⁵⁶ The Tumaal are traditionally known as a talented blacksmith. Other minority clans of alleged Jewish ancestry include the Madhiban and the Gaboye,

Conclusion

Historically, there were Jews in the Somali peninsula and therefore the likelihood of practicing Jews residing today in this strategic Horn of Africa is very high.

Throughout time Jews have shown great tenacity to survive or even thrive in hostile environments. The Jews suffered pain, discrimination, and dispossession throughout history. The very fact that throughout the world there are practicing Jews speaking Hebrew defies human logic. Not even the Holocaust, in which 6,000,000 Jews were exterminated, could rob them of their dignity, faith, and language.

Most of the Jews, who lived in the Somali peninsula, including Somalia and Somaliland, were of Adenite and Yemenite ancestry. There were undoubtedly other Jews from far-flung areas like India and Greece. Some Jews were also from Palestine before the rebirth of the State of Israel, but it seems these none-Adenite and none-Yemenite Jews were in the minority. In fact, most of the Jews Somalis know about are from these two latter groups.

The Yibir Somali clan is not the only “native” people group with Hebrew ancestry. There are other despised minority clans, including the Tumaal, Madhiban, and the Gaboye, which some Somalis view suspiciously because of their rumored Hebrew roots. All these clans are today practicing Muslims. The Yibir is the last Islamized clan of these cohorts of minority clans. Unlike any other Somali clan, these minority

⁵³ J.W.C. Kirk, “The Yibirs and Midgans of Somaliland, Their Traditions and Dialects.” *Journal of the Royal African Society* 4 (13), 98-99.

⁵⁴ Ian Fisher, “Djibouti Journal; Somalia ‘Hebrews’ See a Better Day.” *New York Times*. 15 August 2000. <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/08/15/world/djibouti-journal-somalia-s-hebrews-see-a-better-day.html> (accessed 21 January 2021).

⁵⁵ Ian Fisher, “Djibouti Journal; Somalia ‘Hebrews’ See a Better Day.”

⁵⁶ Sada Mire, “Mapping the Archaeology of Somaliland: Religion, Art, Script, Time, Urbanism, Trade and Empire.” *African Archaeological Review*. 32, March 2015, 124.

clans reside in the five regions of the Somali peninsula: Somalia, Somaliland, Djibouti, Eastern Ethiopia, and Northeast Kenya.

Bibliography

Altenmüller, H., J. O., Hunwick, R.S. O'Fahey, and B. Spuler. The Writings of the Muslim Peoples of Northeastern Africa, Part 1, Volume 13. Leiden [u.a.]. (Brill, 2003), 174.

Angoulvant, Gabriel and Sylvain Vignéras. Djibouti, Mer Rouge, Abyssinie. Paris. 1902, 415.

Aram, Ben I. "Somalia's Judeo-Christian Heritage: A Preliminary Survey." *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*. 2003, 18-19.

Balisky, Paul E. Wolaitta Evangelists: A Study of Religious Innovations in Southern Ethiopia, 1937-1975. PhD. Thesis, Scotland. (University of Aberdeen, 1997), 8-9.

Bulhan, Hussein A. In-Between Three Civilizations: Archeology of Social Amnesia and Triple Heritage of Somali. Volume 1. Bethesda, Maryland. (Tayosan International Publishing, 2013), 159.

Buliet, Richard. History of the World to 1500 CE (Session 22). Tropical Africa and Asia. Youtube.com. 23 November 2010. (Accessed 23 September 2013).

Diriye, Abdirahman M. "Jews' Historic Presence in Somaliland." The Times of Israel. 26 April 2019.
<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/jews-historic-presence-in-somaliland/>
(accessed 08 March 2021).

Fisher, Ian. "Djibouti Journal; Somalia 'Hebrews' See a Better Day." New York Times. 15 August 2000.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2000/08/15/world/djibouti-journal-somalia-s-hebrews-see-a-better-day.html> (accessed 21 January 2021)

Hable Selassie, Sergew. Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270. Addis Abeba. (Haile Selassie I University, 1972), 225-232.

Hersi, Ali Abdirahman. The Arab Factor in Somali History: The Origins and the Development of Arab Enterprise and Cultural Influence in the Somali Peninsula. University of California, Los Angeles: Ph.D. Dissertation, 1977, 141.

James, F.L. The Unknown Horn of Africa. London. (G. Philip & Son. 1888), 70.

- Insoll, Timothy. *The Archaeology of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa*. (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 59.
- “In Pictures: Berbera Builds Future from Crumbling Past.” BBC, 04 June 2015.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-32978845> (accessed 08 March 2021)
- Jewish Telegraphic Agency, “Only Three Jews Remain in Somaliland; All Other Members of Community Went to Israel.” 15 August 1949.
<https://www.jta.org/1949/08/15/archive/only-three-jews-remain-in-somaliland-all-other-members-of-community-went-to-israel> (accessed 07 March 2021).
- Kirk, J.W.C. “The Yibirs and Midgàns of Somaliland, Their Traditions and Dialects.” *Journal of the Royal African Society* 4 (13), 98-99.
- Kobrin, Nancy Hartevelt. *The Last Two Jews of Mogadishu: Living Under Al Shabaab’s Fire*. New Rochelle, NY. (MultiEducator, 2017), 17.
- Korbin, Nancy Hartevelt Kobrin. “Ilhan Omar Controversy: Where Does She Get Her Views?” Clarion Project, 18 November 2018.
https://www.academia.edu/37798893/Ilhan_Omar_Controversy_Where_Does_She_Get_Her_Views_Clarion_Project (accessed 08 March 2021).
- Kobrin, Nancy Hartevelt. What? There Were Jews in Somalia?!” *The Jerusalem Post*. 28 January 2018.
<https://www.jpost.com/opinion/what-there-were-jews-in-somalia-540076> (accessed 08 March 2021).
- Kusow, Abdi Mohamed. *The Genesis of the Somali Civil War: A New Perspective*. In *Proceedings of the Sixth Michigan State University Conference on Northeast Africa*. Edited by John Hinnant & B. Fine. East Lansing, MI, USA. (Michigan State University, 1992), 189.
- Lewis, I. M. *Peoples of the Horn of Africa: Somali, Afar, and Saho*. *Ethnographic Survey of Africa, North Eastern Africa*. Part I. ed. D. Ford. London. (International African Institute. 1969), 54-55.
- Lewis, I. M. *Saints and Somalis: Popular Islam in a Clan-based Society*. (Red Sea Press. 1998), 89.
- Levine, David. *Greater Ethiopia*. Chicago. (University of Chicago Press 1974), 71.
- Michael, Belaynesh. “The decline of Aksumite Empire and the Rise of Warrior Queen Yodit (እዮዲት) The Fire.” *Addis Herald*, 24 July 2019.
<https://www.addisherald.com/the-decline-of-aksumite-empire-and-the-rise-of-warrior-queen-yodit-%E1%8A%A5%E1%88%B3%E1%89%B6-the-fire/> (accessed 08 March 2021).

- Mire, Sada. Mapping the Archaeology of Somaliland: Religion, Art, Script, Time, Urbanism, Trade and Empire. *Afr Archaeol Rev* 32, 111–136, 2015.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10437-015-9184-9> (accessed 08 March 2021).
- Mire, Sada. Wagar, Fertility and Phallic Stelae: Cushitic Sky-God Belief and the Site of Saint Aw-Barkhadle, Somaliland. 22 March 2015, 103.
file:///Users/nomadmac/Downloads/Wagar_Fertility_and_Phhallic_Stelae_Cushitic_Sky-Go.pdf (accessed 21 January 2021).
- Oxford African American Studies Center. "Isaac, Ephraim." 31 May 2013.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780195301731.013.38569> (accessed 11 March 2021).
- Rouaud, Alain. "Pour Une Histoire des Arabes de Djibouti, 1896-1977". *Cahiers D'études Africaines*. 1997, 37: 319–334.
- Royal Geographical Society. "The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society." Volume 19, 1849, 61.
- Schlee, G. Identities on the Move: Clanship and Pastoralism in Northern Kenya. Nairobi, Kenya. (Gideon S. Were Press, 1994), 10-11, 241-242.
- Tamrat, Taddesse. Church and State in Ethiopia. In *Oxford Studies in African Affairs*. General Editors John D. Hargreaves and George Sherperson. Oxford. (Clarendon Press, 1972), 40-43.
- "The Berbera Synagogue and the Jewish Presence in Somalia." *Somalipost*, 11 February 2018.
<https://www.somalispot.com/threads/the-berbera-synagogue-and-the-jewish-presence-in-somalia.37613/> (accessed 08 March 2021)
- Trimingham, J. Spencer. *Islam in Ethiopia*. London. (Oxford University Press 1952), 52.
- Vitturini, Elia. The Gaboye of Somaliland: Legacies of Marginality, Trajectories of Emancipation. University of Milan-Bicocca. "Riccardo Massa" Department of Human Sciences for Education. Doctoral Programme in Cultural and Social Anthropology. PhD Thesis, 2017, 53.
- Zivotofsky, Ari and Ari Greenspan, "No Vital Signs In Djibouti." *Mishpacha*. 391: 56–62. January 2012.
<http://halachicadventures.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/djibouti-mishpacha.pdf> (accessed 07 March 2021).
- Zivotofsky, Ari Greenspan. "Out Of Africa". *Jewish Action*, 2011.
https://jewishaction.com/jewish-world/travel/out_of_africa/ (accessed 07 March 2021).

About the author

Aweis A. Ali, PhD, is a missiologist and an authority on the persecuted church in the Muslim world with special expertise on the Somali Church. Aweis, an ordained elder, has been ministering in the Muslim world since 1993; he has lived and served in world areas that include the Horn of Africa, East Africa, West Africa and the United States. Aweis earned a B.Th. from the Evangelical Theological College in Addis Ababa; an M.Div. from Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri; and a PhD from Africa Nazarene University in Nairobi. Dr. Aweis can be reached at amazingwisdom@gmail.com.