

RARE DOCUMENTARY EXHIBIT ON THE JEWS OF CHINA MAKES U. S. PREMIERE IN SAN FRANCISCO

A rare pictorial exhibit documenting the thousand-year history of what was once China's largest Jewish settlement will be seen for the first time in the United States beginning in the fall of 1985 and continuing on tour until June, 1988.

Entitled THE JEWS OF KAIFENG, the exhibit depicts the life of a Jewish community that once flourished on the Yellow River in Central China. Accompanied by narrative text, maps and a 30-minute documentary film, the exhibit includes 130 framed photographs as well as arts objects and artifacts. With its San Francisco premiere, THE JEWS OF KAIFENG, which originated in Israel at Tel Aviv University's Beth Hatefutsoth (Museum of the Diaspora) in April, 1984, begins a three-year American tour.

Sponsored in this country by the National Foundation for Jewish Culture in association with the Council of American Jewish Museums, THE JEWS OF KAIFENG will be on

display as follows:

SAN FRANCISCO, Jewish Community Museum
September 5, 1985 - December 29, 1985

MIAMI BEACH, Temple Beth Shalom
January, 1986 - February, 1986

NEW YORK CITY, Jewish Museum
March 4, 1985 - July 5, 1986

CHICAGO, Spertus Museum of Judaica
September 1, 1986 - January 9, 1987

NEWTON, MA (BOSTON), Leventhal Sidman
Jewish Community Center
February, 1987 - March, 1987

WASHINGTON, D.C., B. B. Klutznik Museum
April, 1987 - September, 1987

LOS ANGELES, Hebrew College Skirball
Museum
September, 1987 - December, 1987

PHOENIX, Judaica Museum of
Greater Phoenix
January, 1988 - February, 1988

CLEVELAND, Cleveland College of
Jewish Studies
March, 1988 - June, 1988

ATLANTA, Jewish Federation
November, 1988 - December, 1988

From the exhibit: A drawing made by the Jesuit Fr. Domenge in 1722 depicting "A Kaifeng Jew reading the Torah which is placed on the seat of Moses, with two prompters." Standing on the left is a fellow Jew holding a parasha, a sectional book written phonetically to help the Torah reader in his pronunciation.



Join The Sino-Judaic Institute

The Sino-Judaic Institute was founded on June 27, 1985, in Palo Alto, California, by an international group of Jewish scholars and activists. The purpose of the Institute is to work with the Chinese Government and the Kaifeng Jews in the study and preservation of Chinese Jewish life, culture and artifacts.

At this initial meeting, the Institute adopted the following goals and purposes:

- 1) To support the establishment of a Judaica section in the new Kaifeng museum.
- 2) To assist and promote scholarship and research regarding the history of, contacts with, and the contemporary experience of the Chinese Jews.
- 3) To serve as a briefing and information center for those interested in the subject and for travelers to Kaifeng.
- 4) To publish information and scholarly material on the Jews of China.
- 5) To promote friendship with and understanding of the Jews of China.
- 6) To develop close cooperation with Chinese and Jewish groups on matters of mutual interest.

Membership in the Institute is open and we cordially invite you to join in supporting our endeavor, the first such effort since 1924. Our annual dues structure is as follows:

Senior citizens and students	\$20	Corporate/organizational	\$ 250
Regular membership	\$50	Benefactor	\$1,000

I wish to become a member of the Sino-Judaic Institute and to receive Points East. Enclosed is my cheque for \$ _____.

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POINTS EAST

An occasional publication of The Sino-Judaic Institute

VOL. I, NO. 1

JANUARY, 1986

HOW THE SINO-JUDAIC INSTITUTE BEGAN

In December of 1984, I received a letter from Professor Louis Schwartz who was spending an academic year teaching in Beijing. Professor Schwartz had heard of a colony of Jews who once lived in Kaifeng and wondered if there were Jewish descendants who still acknowledged their heritage.

Little did I realize that my reply would cause Louis to unleash a charge that was to galvanize to action scholars from Australia, Hong Kong and the United States.

Louis not only made contact with the descendants of the Chinese Jews, but his contacts were historic. He established close relations with Jewish families, visited their homes on frequent occasions, and conducted many interviews.

I do not use the word "historic" lightly in describing these relations. To my knowledge, the only other Westerner who approached these

relations in recent times, was Marjorie Soroka in 1947. Ms. Soroka was employed by UNRAA and spent a number of months in Kaifeng. Her letters to her family regarding her contacts with these Jews are interesting and of value. She kept copies of these letters and some six months ago mailed them to Michael Pollak who forwarded copies to me.

Ms. Soroka sent Hebrew books to Mr. Chae Ching Huan, (perhaps Zhao Ping-yu's father). But relations with these Jews ceased soon after Soroka's return to the States.

In the case of Professor Schwartz, an idea was slowly germinating. Not only did he visit with the Chinese Jews, but he made friendly contact with Kaifeng's Mayor; the Curator of the Kaifeng Museum; the Manager of Kaifeng's C.I.T.S.; University people, and a number of Chinese scholars.

Louis noted, as had all of us, that these Jews knew nothing of Jewish history, tradition or religion, though some clung to the notion that they were Jews and had derived from a

people different from other Chinese. He wondered if he should attempt to introduce them to Judaism, but restrained himself, as he did not want to be considered a proselytiser by the authorities. After many discussions with Chinese Jews as well as Chinese non-Jews, the concept was born of a Judaica Museum in Kaifeng.

With the energy and enthusiasm I soon learned was contagious, Louis embarked on a correspondence with me and others that stimulated us all to action. Unable to compress his exciting thoughts into letters he sent numerous tapes around the country. There was no one so important that Louis would not try to involve in his plans, including the Chinese Prime Minister.

As a result of Louis' historic efforts, a number of Jewish scholars, with Louis present, officially formed "The Sino-Judaic Institute" in Palo Alto, California on June 27, 1985.

Louis Schwartz is now back in the States. His enthusiasm and counsel will now be available on behalf of

by Leo Gabow

IN THEIR OWN WORDS I AM A CHINESE JEW

From June 17 to 23 last year I attended the First National Symposium on Nationalities of the World. Though a Hui, I knew very little about the Moslems. So I joined the sessions of the West Asian and African section.

Discussions were animated as soon as they began, with delegates addressing the meeting one after another. The issue of national sentiment attracted lively comment. Comrade Yang Zhaojun, Professor of History at Yunnan University, talked about his own experience. He said he was a Hui but had "long ceased to observe the teachings of the Hui religion (Islam), living very much like a Han, except that my feelings and sentiments are still on the side of the Hui. Of the four basic attributes of a nationality as defined by Stalin, namely, a common speech, a common geo-

graphical area, a common economic life and a common psychological quality often expressed in culture, I have already lost three retaining only the fourth — a common national sentiment." "Among the Huis in China," he added, "there are not just Moslems, but also some Jews as well. This is especially true in Kaifeng, Henan province, where there are quite a number of Jews among Huis. In Kaifeng, there is a street called Jiao Jing Hutong (Canon-Teaching Lane), where many residents have features unlike those of the Huis elsewhere, and are generally called 'Blue-Capped Huis.'" He said he had known two professors by the name of Jin, who were brothers and Jews.

As I listened I became curious. When Professor Yang finished speaking, I went up to him. "My ancestors who lived in Kaifeng, Henan, were also named Jin. What are the full names of the two professors you just mentioned?" He gave their names and I exclaimed: "Oh, they were my second and sixth uncles!" The audience was

Jews," some comrades commented. At this, everyone laughed. The discussion became even livelier.

In August the same year, I attended the First National Symposium on Theories of Nationalities. I joined several discussion groups, wishing to know more comrades and friends. On the second day of the Symposium I came to the study session of the No. 3 group. As soon as I sat down I heard Comrade Huo Liu (Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee, People's Congress of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region) addressing the group: "There are Jews among Huis. A Professor Jin whom I knew was a Jew." This again drew my attention. I asked him what the professor's name was. Again it was my uncle. So I put a few questions to him (I had not known him before). First I asked him how he had come to know my uncle was a Jew. "He told me himself," he said. "When did he tell you this?" I asked. "It was during the 50's," he replied. "I was in Mecca as head of a pilgrims' delegation when I met him.

(continued on page 4)

From the Editor:

Over sixty years have passed since the last organized effort was initiated to sustain the Chinese Jewish community of Kaifeng. At that time, in 1924, the occidental Jewish community of Shanghai briefly resurrected the "Shanghai Society for the Rescue of the Chinese Jews," but its efforts soon ended in failure.

The founding of the Sino-Judaic Institute in June of 1985 represents a new chapter in the saga of contacts between the Chinese Jews and the West. Never before has a truly international body been formed to study and possibly assist the Chinese Jews. Ours is the last generation that may be able to do work in this field while those who identify themselves as Jews still survive.

Points East, our occasional newsletter, will seek to cover the diverse interests and concerns of the Sino-Judaic Institute. Each issue hopefully will include something by a Chinese Jew or by a Chinese scholar on the subject; accounts of visits to China and to Kaifeng specifically; scholarly research and summaries of related activities. Your contributions and comments are hereby solicited.

Anson Laytner

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An Occasional Publication of the Sino-Judaic Institute

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LOOKING FOR LOST BOOKS

According to an entry inscribed in 1663 on the stone monument erected in the courtyard of the Kaifeng synagogue, two outstanding members of the congregation, the brothers Zhao Yingcheng and Zhao Yingdou, each wrote a tractate, in Chinese, devoted to the subject of Judaism. Jesuit sources of the early 18th century mention the existence at that time of a printed work, presumably Yingdou's book, copies of which were given by the Jews to the authorities for the purpose of averting potential misunderstandings with regard to what Judaism taught and what its adherents believed.

Regrettably, neither work has yet been found. Hence the recent and surprisingly casual inclusion of the two Zhao texts in a listing by Sidney Shapiro of the several items of Judaica currently in the possession of the Kaifeng Museum, was, to say the least, highly intriguing.*

I was able to get in touch with Mr. Shapiro while he was in the United States last fall (1984) and ask him to confirm the presence of the two books in the Museum. In a review of the book in which Mr. Shapiro had made this claim (*Congress Monthly*, April 1985), I urged that the two works be published as soon as possible — if, that is, they really were what they were purported to be. I have since received a letter from Mr. Shapiro, dated Beijing, May 5, 1985, which states that Mr. Wang Yisha, formerly curator of the Museum and also the source of the information from which Mr. Shapiro constructed his brief bibliographical list, now says that the museum people "didn't actually have them (the two books), only that they knew of them and were hoping to find them 'soon'."

In connection with Judaic documentation presumptively still in existence in Kaifeng, here is a tidbit of "evidence" suggesting that there is reason to keep searching for them:

Several years ago, I was the guest, here in Dallas, of a Chinese physician who lived a mile or two from my home. This lady, who was born and reared in Kaifeng, had only a few weeks previously brought her father, then about 85 years old, from her native city to Dallas. It turned out, to my astonishment, that the old gentleman had been secretary of the Kaifeng YMCA in the 1930s. I learned, moreover, that in the course of his employment he was assigned by Bishop Charles White to guide an American Jewish visitor

around town, and to take him to a number of Jewish homes. My informant did not remember the name of the visitor, but the circumstances and dating which he did recall suggest that the visitor was David Brown, whose published report concerning his experiences in Kaifeng is well known to all readers of works dealing with Kaifeng Jewry. My informant also stated that he had many close friends among the Kaifeng Jews, and that his next door neighbor had been a Jewish lady, whose name he gave as Lotus Shi. (This was confirmed by his daughter, who remembered Lotus Shi with great nostalgia.) Of interest here is that the man insisted that his Jewish friends had on several occasions told him that works of Judaic content were still being held by various Kaifeng Jewish families. He promised to write to his Jewish contacts in Kaifeng for further details. Unfortunately, at least from our point of view, his daughter very soon afterward (as I was told by a member of the Dallas Chinese community) received a tempting offer of employment in a Canadian medical center, and moved with her father, to Canada.

So, here too the spoor has grown cold . . .

* — *Jews in Old China: Studies by Chinese Scholars*. Translated, compiled, and edited by Sidney Shapiro. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1984. The name of Zhao Yingdou is misprinted as Li Yingdou, and Yingcheng's book is described as consisting of "over two hundred scrolls" (p.185). The latter error is no doubt the result of a misreading of a Kaifeng gazetteer which mentions an entirely different work by Yingcheng (one having nothing to do with Judaism) containing 240 chapters.

by Michael Pollack



"This card was designed & distributed by SJI Board member, Wendy Abraham in honor of the first commemoration of Rosh Hashanah in Kaifeng in over one hundred years."

Eastern Europe, and more than five million Jews in the U.S. Secondly, the beliefs and customs of Judaism are very similar to those of Islam, so most Jews in China became converted to the Hui religion (Islam today). And since Islam is a national religion, combining both religion and nationality, Jews converted to the religion of Islam naturally became the Hui nationality. In the old society, when minority nationalities were subjected to discrimination and national oppression by the ruling classes, it was inevitable for the tiny minority of Jews either to be assimilated by the Han people or attach themselves to a bigger minority nationality. My ancestors probably chose the latter course. That is why I have always registered by nationality as Hui, although I should actually be a Jew.¹

. . . Both Judaism and Islam are monotheistic religions believing in one God, Judaism calling its God Jehovah, Islam calling its God Allah (Arabic) or Huda (Persian used by people in Xinjiang) or True Lord (Han and Hui). Their believers do not eat pork, practice the rite of circumcision, and observe Sabbath and fast day. Their workshop ceremonies are similar, all conducted in the spirit of atoning their sins to God. Judaism also stipulates that when eating beef and mutton, the tendons must be removed. So in China, Judaism is also called the tendon-removing religion. In the synagogues, an area is set aside for re-

slaughtered. During the Qing dynasty, in Kaifeng there was a street named Tendon-Removing Faith Hutong (re-named Preach Scripture Hutong after the establishment of the republic). In Judaism the priests in charge are called *man la* (rabbi), in Islam they are called ahung (imam). In China such differences had disappeared after the Jews adopted the Hui faith . . .

Our family has preserved the traditional custom of addressing people of our own clan or hometown as Lao Biao. On the eve of liberation, as my father was being transferred to another post, our whole family moved with him from Chengdu in Sichuan province to Xian. While going through the Daba and Qinling mountains, the train stopped at small towns for meals (there was yet no Chengdu-Chungqing line). Everywhere the local Lao Biao prepared Muslim food for us. It is said that the Jews in Kaifeng have preserved this form of address. Not long ago when the responsible comrade from the Kaifeng Museum came to in-

terview me, he gave me some materials which show that when Jewish people marry off daughters, relatives congratulate them by holding both hands palm up and addressing them as Lao Biao. These fine differences were the only vestiges of Judaism kept by the Chinese Jews after they adopted another faith.

To sum up, the Jews in China either became assimilated by the Hans, a process accelerated by intermarriage with Hans, or adopted Islam to become Huis or other Muslim nationalities, such as the Uighurs, Kazakhs, Tartars, Tajiks, Uzbiks, Tungxiangs, Bao-ans and Salas. As far as I know, except for the close to 200 who live in communities in Kaifeng, Henan today, the rest of the Chinese Jews are distributed in over a dozen cities throughout the country, and in the northwest (including Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang), the southwest (Sichuan and Yunnan), the northeast, and Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces. Yangzhou (in Jiangsu province) is the second largest point of concentration. As for members of my clan, they are distributed in eight cities, namely, Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Chengdu, Kunming, Xian, Lanzhou, and Luoyang.²

by Jin Xiaojing

¹Pan Guangdan: "Some Historical Facts About Jews in China," *Chinese Social Sciences*, No. 3, 1980, pp. 171-186.

²(From *Encyclopedic Knowledge*, No. 4, 1981.)

³From the No. 4, 1981 issue of *Social Sciences Battlefront*, pp. 234-240.

THE HONG KONG JEWISH CONNECTION

Early in 1984, members and friends of the Jewish Community of Hong Kong established a Society to promote increased knowledge of the Jewish historical experience in Hong Kong and China. This effort marked a more formal organization of various Hong Kong-based activities in Sino-Judaic studies which began with the "open door" created by China's Four Modernizations policy.

The Jewish Historical Society of Hong Kong is creating a centre which will not only maximize effective utilization of local human resources, but also cooperate with overseas and Chinese scholars and organizations in promoting research in this area. Many of the resident Jewish community have historical connections with pre-World War Two Jewish life in China. More recent community members, some with sinological training, travel

throughout China on a regular basis as part of their routine professional affairs, facilitating contact with Chinese scholars and activists with similar interests.

Organized as a division of the Jewish Recreation Club of Hong Kong (President, Mark I. Ejlenberg), the Society is currently creating a library facility which will include a basic Judaica collection as a service to the local community, and a reference collection to support Sino-Judaic research. Publishing activities have begun with a small booklet introducing the Jewish Community of Hong Kong and its historical connections with the ancient Chinese Jews, the Sephardic commercial pioneers of the 19th century, and the Ashkenazi refugees of the 20th century.

Publication of a Monograph Series on Sino-Judaic topics will commence this year with work done by its own membership. Manuscripts by overseas scholars are welcome for possible publication in this Series, and should be addressed to Dennis A. Leventhal, Chairman, Jewish Historical Society of Hong Kong, 70 Robinson Road, Hong Kong.

Relevant news items and short articles utilize the *Hong Kong Jewish Chronicle*, a journal published eight times per year. The *Chronicle*, established in 1977, is the official communications vehicle of Hong Kong's Jewish community. The Society also is examining the possibility of establishing a museum-type exhibit within the club facilities of Ohel Leah Synagogue.

Scholarly communications with The Sino-Judaic Institute have already begun. Both the Society and the Institute have initiated activities to assist with the establishment of a Jewish exhibit in the Kaifeng Museum. Local Hong Kong resources have been enlisted in the Institute's search for the original Deed of Transfer which turned the Kaifeng synagogue site over to Bishop White's Mission. Also, a commitment to share publications has been made.

The Jewish Historical Society welcomes correspondence with Institute members. Such dialogue will bring common research interests to light and, hopefully, generate cooperative efforts which will enhance substantive progress in the field of Sino-Judaic studies.

by D. A. Leventhal
Chairman, Jewish Historical Society of Hong Kong

WESTERNERS WRITE

AN AMERICAN JEW VISITS KAIFENG

My personal experiences in China, as a Jew, have been varied. I have found that most Chinese here know little, if anything, about Jews, Judaism and Israel.

At this point, all of my students as well as the leaders of the major offices here know that I am Jewish because I have given many lectures in class about my family background, Jewish holidays, the Bible, etc. Often, they still have a hard time grasping the fact that I am not Christian, or that there is a difference between Judaism and Christianity. As a result, I am still asked what my family does to celebrate Christmas and other Christian holidays.

It has been encouraging to find some of my students approaching me and asking serious, intelligent questions about Jews and Israel, although it has been frightening to hear the students tell me about the racist things they studied as children, and even recently, about the Jews.

Since I've been in China, I have asked many Chinese if and where there are Chinese Jews, but on the whole, the people have known nothing about Jews here, past or present. It is very difficult to know the real number of Jews in China for several reasons, although in any case, the total is certainly very small. As I have said earlier, impressions and understandings of Jews here is very limited, and in a country where religious practice has often been discouraged in the past, the risks, either now or later, of disclosing one's Jewish identity probably outweigh the benefits. Also, the extent and importance of their own personal Judaism is often so little that it is not a major factor in their lives, with the possible exception of the abstinence from pork.

In early April, I decided to celebrate Passover by travelling to the city of the ancient Chinese Jews - Kaifeng. From reading previous articles, I knew that there were some Chinese Jews remaining in Kaifeng, and I knew where the old Jewish district of the city was, although I was not sure how many, or how much these Jews practiced. From the information I had gathered, I knew that there were only about three prominent Jews in Kaifeng, prominent in the sense that they admit they are Jewish and are willing to discuss their past and the past of other Jews in China. In particular, I was looking for Zhao Pingyu or Shi Zhongyu, two

Chinese Jews who are currently members of a firm called the Peace Economic Construction Development Co. Ltd. that is trying to develop a place where information and materials about Chinese Jews will be stored. I found their office on Nan Jiao Jing (South Scripture Lane), located in the old Jewish area of Kaifeng. As I found out from Zhao, the history of the Jews in China is a long one.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the Kaifeng Jewish community retained only two traditional Jewish practices: abstaining from pork and drawing the sinew away from the meat when eating lamb. The Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976 brought more threats to the Jews. Zhao, who had already begun to collect materials for a study of the Jews in China, had his papers destroyed or stolen by the Red Guards at the time.

Despite Zhao's intentions to set up a place to store information about the Chinese Jews, he knows very little about the Bible and had never seen a menorah until I brought one to show him. Zhao said that he only knows a handful of Kaifeng Jews personally and that he is not familiar with the religious degree or practices of the rest of the Jews.

When I asked Zhao if he knew that it was Passover, he didn't seem to. He said that he celebrates it during the Chinese New Year's instead since it is a general holiday time in China. During that time he makes matzah (unleavened bread) and he spreads the blood of a lamb on his door.

When I gave Zhao my Jewish calendar that I have brought from America, he was very pleased. He said that he would have it translated into Chinese. I also showed him some Hebrew writing which he seemed to vaguely recognize. When I told him I could bring him some Jewish prayer books, history books, Bibles and other materials, he was very happy, since he seemed quite interested in learning more about Jewish culture. As I promised, I will return to Kaifeng next year and give him some materials and also see how his research institute is doing.

April, 1985

by *Martin Eskenazi*
a Visiting Instructor at
Taiyuan Gongye Daxue in
Taiyuan, Shanxi
People's Republic of China

A CONVERSATION IN BEIJING

In May, I had occasion to be in China to lecture at the Chinese Academy of the Social Sciences, an official government research institute that combines the functions of the Brookings Institution with those of government-sponsored centers for research into matters of policy concern. This gave me an opportunity to meet with Professor Gao Wangezhi, the head of the Christianity section of that Institute, under which the study of Judaism is subsumed. His own principal interest is Jewish studies, especially the study of the Jews in China.

Beginning with the settlement of Jews in Shanghai, Canton, and Hong Kong in the nineteenth century, some efforts were made to bring the Jews of Kaifeng back into the Jewish fold, but all of these came to naught. In my opinion, based upon the experiences of similar Jewish populations in other parts of the world which had also acquired an indigenous cast over the centuries and appeared racially different, these local Jews, living in a xenophobic environment, were afraid to identify with any foreigners. As a result, the Jews themselves hastened the process of their assimilation into the general society. Still the facts of their assimilation are murky. Some became "simply Chinese," others became "Chinese Muslims," but most became "white Moslems," who did not eat pork but did not practice traditional Islam either. To avoid pork in China is to set oneself truly apart and, in a civilization where organized religion is virtually unknown, this leaves many questions unanswered.

In any case, it would be hard to claim the Chinese of Jewish descent in Kaifeng today as Jews. At the same time, as the result of their new contacts with Western Jewry, there has been a revival of local interest in their own heritage. Two of the senior members of the community are now seeking to establish a museum of Chinese Jewish history in Kaifeng. Since there are virtually no Jewish artifacts or documents remaining in the city, even if they are successful, they will have to rely upon facsimiles of the originals now spread around the world.

They do have the enthusiastic backing of the Kaifeng municipal government, whose leaders envision such a museum as a major tourist attraction. The Chinese have caught on to the

high percentage of Jewish tourists in China and have noticed that the American Jewish Congress is a major sponsor of China tours. It is not unreasonable for the people of Kaifeng to expect that a substantial portion of the Jewish tourists would come to Kaifeng to see a Jewish museum. On the other hand, they still have not received the necessary clearance from the central government which is acting very cautiously, perhaps out of fear of offending the Arabs, nor do they have any funds. They are attempting to raise some money with the help of an American Jew temporarily residing in China as an English teacher, but have apparently made no real progress.

The museum is the only plan they have for reviving a formal Jewish presence in Kaifeng. There are no plans to rebuild the synagogue, since the site is otherwise occupied. At the same time, they are seeking recognition for the Jews as China's ninety-seventh recognized nationality, which would bring them many benefits, not the least of which would be an exemption from the severe restrictions on childbearing, which allow Han Chinese (the group which comprises 93 percent of the Chinese population) couples only one child.

Despite all of these obstacles, this observer would hazard a guess that some of these 500 Kaifeng Jews will indeed become Jewish over the next

the West will make them into Jews. Once discovered, they will be pursued in one way or another until they and their neighbors become so conscious of their "Jewishness" that the deed will be done even if it will not be halakhically recognized.

While in China, I heard from Professor Gao that Rabbi Joshua Stampfer of Portland, Oregon, had brought one of the girls of Kaifeng to Portland to study and return to Judaism; a report subsequently confirmed in the *New York Times* in June of this year. In the meantime, there are at least some people in China who want to study the historical records of Jews who settled in the country prior to modern times. There is likely to be more of that as well.

by Daniel J. Elazar

President of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, recently completed a month long journey in the Far East where he lectured in China, The Phillipines, and Australia. (reprinted from the *Jerusalem Letter*: 1 September 1985)

I AM A CHINESE JEW

(continued from page 1)

He was at that time lecturing abroad." Then I told him, "I am his niece." "His blood niece?" he asked back. "Yes." Another round of animated comment from the conference participants.

Since my ancestors have been identified as Jewish by experts at both Symposia, many comrades and friends often asked me with concern what nationality I should write when filling our forms. I am not sure myself, because I've never heard my parents or uncles talk about it. I only remember that when I was studying at Hua Mei Girls' Middle School (a missionary school) in Chengdu, two teachers once asked me: "Are you a Jew? Your family must be Jewish" At home I asked my father the same question the teachers put to me. "Our ancestors came from the Arab land," he told me. "But we have always called ourselves Huis." When I was in college, because I was attending the Institute of Nationalities, plus I had fair complexion and light hair, and the fact that I had meals at the Hui dining hall, both my teachers and my fellow students at first thought I had come from a minority nationality in Xinjiang because I didn't look like a Hui.

After these symposia, some interested experts, professors and comrades often talked to me about Jews in China, sometimes with direct reference to my ancestors. Not long ago, an associate

of the Academy of Social Sciences told me he had a teacher who was Jewish. I asked him to tell me the name. He did, and it was my uncle again. Increasingly I felt I needed to know more about my ancestors. Too bad my father and all my uncles had died and couldn't tell me anything.

Last October I attended the First National Symposium on Nationality Studies in Guiyang. I took the opportunity to make a side trip back to Chengdu to visit with my aged mother (86 years old). She recalled the time 66 years back when she had just married my father. My mother is a native of Luoyang, Henan, and my father was a native of Kaifeng, Henan. She told me that before she was married, she had heard her father talk about my great grandfather Jin Shide in Kaifeng and about his family. Her father had told her that Great Grandfather Jin Shide had come to Kaifeng, Henan, from Arab lands during the early Qing dynasty by way of the Silk Road. At first he travelled back and forth but later settled down in Kaifeng.

She also told me that his family worshipped in a somewhat different way from the local people (meaning the Huis in Kaifeng), that is, in covering their faces with both hands at the end of an Islamic service, the Huis usually had both palms turned toward the face, whereas my great grandfather and great granduncles had their right palm turned toward the face and the left palm turned outward. My mother also told me that it was our ancestors' habit to wear a black or blue cap when worshipping, unlike the Huis who wore white caps when worshipping. My father had told my mother that when my great grandfather died, a monument with inscriptions on it was built to commemorate him. Unfortunately that monument can no longer be found.

I have also read an article* on Chinese Jews by the late sociologist Professor Pan Guangdan. According to his findings, of the Jews migrating to China from Palestine in West Asia, most arrived in Kaifeng in the second year of the Reign of Ming Dynasty Emperor Hong Zhi (1489). There were local stone tablets to record the fact in which they called their religion "Yi-shi-le-ye", transliteration of what is now called "Israel".

But why did Jewish people like my ancestors later turn into Huis? I believe there were two reasons. First, because the Jews who settled down in China were few and scattered, it was hard for them to retain their own language, culture, religion, and customs. Even

during the peak of their migration to China during the Ming dynasty, the inscriptions on the monuments they built had already referred to Noah as Nu-wa, and Abraham as A-lao-luo-han. They had already regarded Judaism as "not much different" from Confucianism, "its teachings including obeying the laws of heaven, revering one's ancestors, observing the relations between sovereign and subject, fulfilling filial duties to one's parents, being loving to one's wife and children, observing the distinction between the superior and the inferior, and making friends with people — quite similar to the five cardinal human relationships of Confucianism." So it can be seen that they were already on their way to becoming assimilated by the Han people. Inter-marriage with the Han people had further accelerated this process. This is different from Jews migrating in large numbers to Western Europe, Eastern Europe and the Arab countries. Today there are more than three million Jews in Europe, over two million Jews in the Soviet Union and