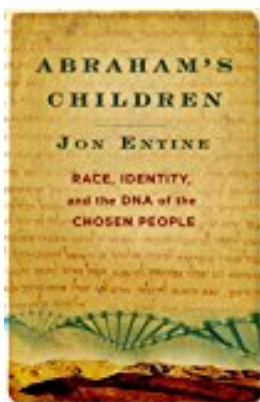


# [PDF] Abraham's Children: Race, Identity, And The DNA Of The Chosen People

Jon Entine - pdf download free book

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**Books Details:**

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**Description:**

**From Publishers Weekly** Jewish law is quite clear on the question "Who is a Jew?" (anyone whose mother is Jewish), yet the question remains vexing, calling up issues of religion, history, culture and sometimes politics. In his second foray into the world of genetics and race, Entine (an American Enterprise Institute fellow and author of *Taboo: Why Black Athletes Dominate Sports and Why We're Afraid to Talk About It*) shows the degree to which genetics has been thrown into the mix. He

presents fascinating evidence from DNA studies: the genes of Jewish males around the world can be traced back to the ancient Middle East; the genes of Jewish women cannot. Among Africans who claim Jewish ancestry, the Falashas of Ethiopia do not have Jewish genetic markers; but the less well known Lemba of South Africa do. A majority of cohanim, or priests, have a common genetic marker, but Levites (of whom priests are supposedly a subset) do not. But Entine can be sloppy (his grasp on the respective roles of high priests, priests and Levites is shaky; he seems unclear whether the Pilgrims were Quakers or Puritans), and he digresses from science to potted history, myths about the 10 Lost Tribes and an account of his trip to the West Bank. More problematic, his account of genetic science and DNA analysis is vague. Entine's final chapters broach the contentious topics of whether one can speak genetically of race and whether "Jewish genes" confer intellectual superiority on Ashkenazi Jews. While he cites scientists, some of the assumptions and conclusions (such as that medieval Jews' role as moneylenders contributed to a high IQ) are speculative.

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**Review** Entine (*Taboo: Why Black Athletes Dominate Sports and Why We're Afraid to Talk About It*, 2000) tackles the thorny matter of Jewish identity. Some of his conclusions may be surprising.

The author, a secular Jew and an adjunct fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, has been driven by family health crises to seek out the genetics of Judaism. In doing so, he unravels an epic tale of "The Chosen People." DNA acts as a starting point for discussion of Jewish origins--Chapter 1 is entitled, "The Dead Sea Scrolls of DNA"--as Entine explains how it is now possible through genetic testing for apparent non-Jews to discover Jewish ancestry, and for Jews (and others) to learn more about their origins. The author disputes conventional wisdom, which cautious scientists have advanced recently, that genetic differences between individuals are minute and superficial. Instead, he embraces genetics as a method of discovering more about the diverse breadth of humanity. Nevertheless, Entine realizes that Jewish DNA does not necessarily make a Jew. To explore the question of Jewish origins, Entine takes the reader on a global tour, exploring both mythic and factual migrations of Jews across Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia and finally into the Americas. DNA testing has allowed scientists to explore the validity of direct ancestry claims for far-flung Jewish communities in such places as South Africa and India, while it has also identified hidden enclaves of "crypto-Jews" in places such as the American Southwest. Entine goes on to discuss the touchy subject of race, and how Jewish identity has been perceived by both Jews and non-Jews through recent history and into the present. He also bluntly approaches modern (and historic) stereotypes of Jews and offers possible reasons for their formation, as well as their potential validity in certain cases. Because the author's approach is broad and inclusive, the book is sure to cause controversy, but it serves as an excellent catalyst for discussion as many continue to ask the question, "What does it mean to be Jewish?"

Engaging and informative reading for Jews and non-Jews alike. -- *Kirkus Reviews*

This book informs us of who we are, how we got here, and, why we do what we do. New methods of genetic study turn up fascinating connections and differences between the Ashkenazim and Sephardim, not only in language and customs, but also in DNA. For example, studies of women's diseases show that one group has a higher incidence of breast cancer, and the other, a higher incidence of cervical cancer. Maps detail migration routes, and chapters discuss the history and rituals of various tribes and families. The book is full of information and it is a fascinating popular read. Highly recommended. -- *Association of Jewish Libraries Newsletter, September/October.*

*Reviewed by Lee Wixman*

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