

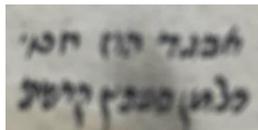
An answer to the questions compiled by Dr. Arian Sajed

By Ben-Zion Yehoshua

The article is a contribution to the modern history of the Jews of Afghanistan, aspects of social and religious transformation. The Garji family is a documented example of community leaders, preachers, educators who had an impact on their community. They wrote down their books in Hebrew.

The Hebrew language spoken by the Afghan Jews – It's should be divided into two periods –

1. Ancient Hebrew, which was called *Leshon Ha-Kodesh* ('the sacred language'), was mainly used for Jewish religious worship. The ancient Hebrew was taken from the Bible, the Mishna and the Sages and Midrashic Literature and especially the prayers books for the days of the week, Holidays and fasting days. It was liturgical Hebrew, which trained the child to read the prayer books and the Torah in the synagogue. Women and girls, who were exempt from fulfilling religious duties, did not study in an educational setting and many of them could not read and write. They were taught only the woman's duty and their spoken language was Judeo-Dari.



An Oriental Hebrew script

In connection with the Muslim society they spoke Dari. Only a few could read and write in Arabic letters.

2. The Modern Hebrew, which operated alongside ancient Hebrew, was from 1928-1930, years in which the teacher from the Land of Israel Naftali Abrahamoff lived and worked. From then until the emigration of the last Jews from Afghanistan, the Jewish Agency sent textbooks in Modern Hebrew to Afghanistan. We will expand on the topic later.

Languages

Jews spoke to each other in the 'Herati' or 'Yazdi' dialect. The former martyrs of Mashhad preferred to speak 'Giliki', (Gilaki), which they brought with them from their former place of residence in Gilan, the southern coast of the Caspian Sea, province of Mazandaran.

At the *Midrash* they were prepared to observe the laws of the Jewish religion and they had to be able to read Hebrew from the prayer book or the Pentateuch, even if they did not understand the meaning of the words. The teacher's job was to teach simultaneous translation: Ancient Hebrew was translated into Judeo-Dari, almost word by word,

At home on Shabbat, the father of the family would tell the women of the home Torah stories with legends in Judeo-Dari.

As for Aramaic - few outside the rabbis - studied Talmud in the original language Aramaic, but on Friday before the beginning of Shabbat they used to read the verses of the weekly Torah Portion: twice each verse in the original Hebrew language and once in the Aramice Onkelos translation. It was a halachic rule that they made sure to follow.

They preferred to write their works in Judeo-Dari. In the 'dastak' that everyone had, they copied Holy songs in both Dari and Hebrew - always in Hebrew-Oriental letters.

Kurt-dialects – Zevulun Kort, *Yazdi or Mashhdi, Yeda'-'am*, vol. 18 (1977), pp. 44-43. Hebrew.

My book *'From the Lost Tribes in Afghanistan to the Mashhad Jewish converts of Iran'* (Hebrew), deals with all the topics among the Jews of Afghanistan, including the languages.

A series of interviews I did with informants.

The languages of speech, study and creation among the Jews of Afghanistan

The Jewish society in Afghanistan, which was even more closed than the Muslim society, did not seek points of contact with non-Jews. The Jews had almost no knowledge of the Pashto language, which is one of the national languages of Afghanistan. In daily life, two dialects of Persian-Jewish prevailed (Persian combined with Hebrew and written in the Oriental Hebrew script):

1. Herati or Yazdi (Judeo-Dari), which was prevalent among the Jews of Herat before the Martyrs arrived there from Mashhad and they returned to Judaism (1840);
2. Gilki, the language of Mashhadi Jews, which originally came from Gilan, the south cost of the Caspian Sea.
3. Among the Jewish merchants, the language 'La Torai' (Hebrew-Persian that is not of the Torah) is prevalent. This language was based on the purity of the biblical language, with the Hebrew words castrated in their structure and intonation and given Persian syntax and grammar. A Jew could roll in this language with his fellow Jews in the formulas of the Muslim, who would feel the sound of the spoken Persian, without understanding what was said. Its included biblical idioms combined with the Persian language or biblical words that received a Persian verb form such as: '*Kasher kardan*' (to prepare the meat according the Jewish Law). *Berakha kardan* (bless the food). *Vayivrah kon* (Leave immediately).

Boy learned biblical Hebrew, which he used in prayer and sacred studies, which he memorized. Learning the letters and reading in score (*Chidoreh*). At this stage they learned the syllables and the words (*Kalimeh*). The reading was mechanical without understanding. The teacher would interpret in Persian the chapter learned before, translate it into Persian - Jewish and assigns his pupils to memorize the chapter by heart. After the teacher came back from lunch break he demanded one of the to translate and interpret the chapter in Judeo-Persian.

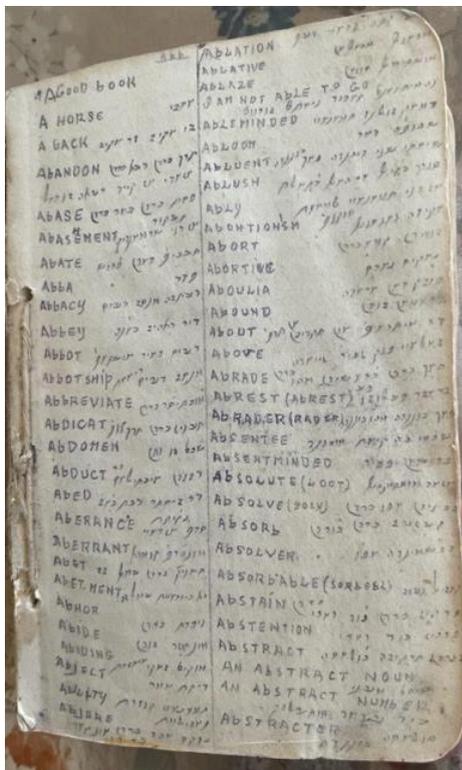
The studies were conducted in a hall where about 200 boys sitting on carpets in groups of 10 pupils. These made noise in the study of the

Torah, some in the study of the prophets, some in prayers and holy poets. The boys who showed proficiency were transferred to a more advanced group regardless of age. They added lessons in Bible interpretations and Mishna. When they learned a word like 'hitim' (wheat) the teacher translated: *Gandom*. The teacher Mullah Yehoshua Amram would also draw the item being studied.

The teaching method resulted in the Afghan child knowing by heart the Pentateuch and passages from the Bible and especially the Book of Psalms.

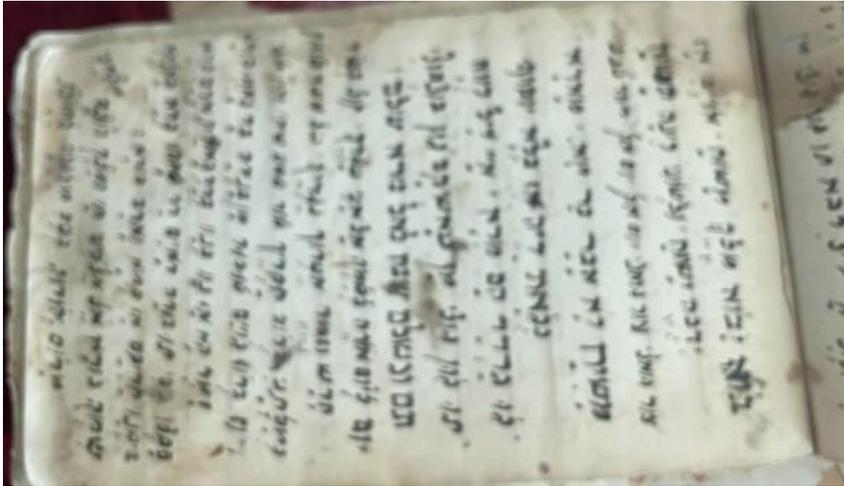
A boy who knew the prayers and melodies was taught to write, including writing letters in Judeo-Persian. For sample: *Azizam, mikhostam biyom bedidanet, dastem na resid* (My dear, I really wanted to come see you, but I couldn't).

Shmuel Shabtai Dadash gave me the manuscript of his Judeo-Dari-English dictionary. The interpretation in Dari appears in Hebrew-Oriental letters. This dictionary can serve as a basis for a comprehensive study of the Daric language spoken by the Afghan Jews before their immigration to Israel.



Judeo-Dari-English dictionary by Shmuel Shabtai Dadash

An important source for learning the Daric-Jewish language, at its high level, which is widespread among the Jews of Afghanistan, was the *Dastak*, the notebook in which they copied from childhood to old age poems in the Hebrew source or a Hebrew source, learned to translate into Judeo-Persian.



A page of *Dastak*, Herat, Afghanistan

Zeev Gol quotes from the book published in memory of Agjan Reuven Cohen:

In one large hall in the courtyard of the Garji Synagogue, groups of children of different ages studied at the same time. The children sat on rugs or mats. Despite the intense cold the hall was not heated.

When child reached the age of three, he was brought to the *Beit Midrash*. To calm the child, sweets were distributed to the pupils in the group. As a virtue for success, the Mullah wrote on a hard-boiled egg verses from the Bible related to learning. The boy ate the egg and expected to succeed in his studies.

After morning's prayer they ate breakfast which included a slice of bread and a cup of tea. Study in classes began. At 12 noon, the municipal cannon fired to announce lunch time and the residents and pupils went out for lunch. When the shadow moved to a certain line, classes resumed until four o'clock. The pupils went to pray in synagogue the evening prayers and then they went home.

At the end of each stage of the studies, the parents brought a gift to the teacher and sweets to the children of the group.

After the great immigration of the community to Israel, few remained in the community. The teachers were Binyamin Gul and Simcha Garji. The teaching method remains as before. In the absence of many, the parents allowed themselves to bring Muslim teachers to teach the children the languages of the state.

Teacher Aghajan Batzal was one of the teachers. He taught in the forenoon and in the afternoon worked for his living in a trading house.

The last Jews remained in Herat until the Russian invasion in 1979. Some immigrated to Israel and some moved to Kabul.

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Avraham Kohen, *Kuntres Zikhron 'Olam* (Memorial Pamphlet) to the Memory of Aghajan Reuven Kohen, Jerusalem 1934.

Zeev Gul, *the Herat community in Afghanistan (1839-1976)* thesis. Efal 1984. 90 pages.

The phase of the Modern Hebrew dates back to the arrival in Afghanistan of the Hebrew teacher and educator Naftali Abrahamoff (1928-1930), who came to Afghanistan following the reform that King Amanullah Khan tried to do. Avrahamoff's motives were not religious but Zionist and the Modern Hebrew he taught came to prepare the hearts for the immigration to the Land of Israel.

Naftali Abrahamoff left us full documentation and a snapshot in his diary, which was previously published in a series of articles in the 'Yarden' newspaper. Ben-Zion Yehoshua Raz received the manuscript of the diary from Liora Bernstein, Avrahamoff's daughter, and published the memoirs with notes and an introduction in his book:

. Benzion D. Yehoshua, *Behind the Silk Curtain (Nations and Jewish Communities in Central Asia: Iran, Bukhara, Afghanistan)*, Jerusalem 2013, 624 pp. The diary in pages 238-270.

Naftali Abrahamoff (1905-1968) was born in the city of Herat in Afghanistan to his father Ya'akov and his mother Sara David. As a child, his family immigrated to Marv in Turkmenistan. In 1913, the family immigrated to Israel and Naftali was educated in Jerusalem and qualified as a teacher at the David Yelin Seminary.

According to the definition of his pupils in Herat, he succeeded in translating for them the heavenly 'Jerusalem' [the name of the land of Israel in the mouth of the Afghan Jews], to which they prayed and longed for the Land of Israel, a pioneer that builds wasteland and waits for the Jews to come to its gates and build it. They learned Modern Hebrew from him, Zionism and learned to sing the songs of the Land of Israel. His influence was enormous.

Abrahamoff's diary is an important authentic document of an eyewitness and auditory witness, capable of analysis. He was at the center of events during the fateful years in the history of the Jews of Afghanistan.

Naftali Abrahamoff, A diary –

Naftali Abrahamoff, *Two Years in Afghanistan (1928-1930)*, *Ha-Yarden* (Newspaper), numbers: 234 (14.2.1935); 236 (17.2.1935); 238 (19.2.1935); 240 (21.2.1935); 244 (26.2.1935); 247 (1.3.1935); 255 (11.3.1935); 259 (15.3.1935); 284 (15.4.1935).

Abrahamoff describes in his diary: events, customs, traditions, daily life, beliefs, Jewish-Muslim relations, etc.

Due to Abrahamoff's criticism of the British, the censor forbade the publication of his diary. From this time he stopped writing the diary. His daughter, Liora Bernstein, handed me the manuscript of the diary at the time. I brought the diary in my book with an introduction and interpretations.

Benzion David Yehoshua-Raz, *Behind the Silk Curtain - Nations and Jewish communities in Central Asia - Iran, Afghanistan, Bukhara*, Jerusalem 2013. The Diary of Abrahamof in pages 237-270. Hebrew.

Siman Tov Melamed חייאת אלרוח Hayat al Rukh

Siman Tov Melamed embodies within himself the unity of the Persian-Jewish culture in the geographical space where he lived and worked. He was born in the middle of the eighteenth century in the city of Yazd in central Persia, lived in Herat in Afghanistan and later was the spiritual leader in Mashhad and had connections with Bukhara. Relations between Yazd and Mashhad were close and a number of correspondences brought by Yitzhak Ben-Zvi indicate material and spiritual relations between the two communities (see [Ben-Zvi, studies p. 297 ff.](#)). Rabbis from Yazd taught Torah in Mashhad and Bukhara. At an unknown time, Siman-Tov moved his residence to Herat, as he testifies in preface of his book *Hayat al-Rukh*. In Herat he became a teacher and *Dayan* (a religious judge). In Mashhad he became a religious leader. (Evidence for this is given by [Ya'ari, Bukhara, p. 283 ff.](#)). Mullah Mattatya Garji states that Siman-Tov died in Mashhad in 1800 ([Garji, Ong le-Shabbat, part III: Beit Hamikdash p. 35, 2](#))

His literary work included three great works: *Hayat al-Rukh*, *Azaroth*, *Tafsir for 'Pirkei Avot'* and a large number of poems in Persian and Hebrew. *Hayat al-Rukh* is his most important work. His works were copied and distributed among the Jews of Persia, Afghanistan and Bukhara. He composed *Piyutim* (Sacred songs) in Judeo-Persian and Hebrew, which they sang in synagogues and in private homes at family events – weddings and circumcisions.

Hayat al-Rukh was completed before 1778, while he was still in Herat, according to the opinion of Prof. Amnon Netzer. The book was printed and published in Jerusalem at 1898 by the Gol-Shauloff brothers. In his book, there is a collection of morals, some philosophical explanations according to the Rabbinical Teacher and the Obligations of the Hearts by Bahya ben Joseph ibn Paquda. Through these books, he showed a good sign about the nothingness of man in the face of death and the Day of

Judgment. The pursuit of material brings unhappiness and not happiness. His linguistic sources are taken from the Bible, Targum Onkelos, Babylonian Talmud, Midrash Raba, Alpha Beta de-Ben Sira. Siman-Tov does not always reveal its origins. He also quotes a verse from the Koran in the Arabic language (116b) and words taken from Dari.

In *Hayat al-Rukh*. There are about 180 poems in Hebrew and Persian. About 150 lyrical stanzas were written by him and 30 stanzas from the works of Persian poets whose names he did not mention.

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Ben-Zvi, *Studies* – Y. Ben-Zvi, *Studies and Sources*, Jerusalem 1969. Hebrew

Garji, *Ong le-Shabbat*, part III: *Beit Ha-Mikdash*, Jerusalem 1913, p. 35, 2)

Netzer, Siman - Amnon Netzer, Siman Tov Melamed - a Persian-Afghan scholar and his book *Hayat Al-Rukh, Pe'amim*, *Studies in Oriental Jewry*, ..Vol. 79 (Spring 1999), pp. 56-95. A rich bibliography. Hebrew

Ya'ari, Bukhara –A. Ya'ari, *Kiryat-Sefer*, Vol. 18-19 (1972), pp. 282-393, .134-135. Hebrew

Raphael Chaim Ha-Cohen (1884-1955)

One of the first printers in Jerusalem and a public activist. He was born on November 25, 1884 in Shiraz to Khanum and Mullah Aharon son of Moshe Ha-Cohen. He was educated by his father and later by private tutors. In 1890 he immigrated to the land of Israel and settled in Jerusalem. At 1904 he married Bolisa (Amira) daughter of Raphael Gozlan, a Sephardi family.

In his youth he learned the profession of printing in the printing house of Avraham Moshe Lunz and he was one of the founders of the Association of Printing Workers in Jerusalem. In 1913 he founded a private printing house in Jerusalem where important and valuable books were printed, and was the first pioneer to print a daily calendar.

Public activity: member of the elected assemblies and the national committee, judge of the Hebrew Magistrate's Court and president of the committee of the Persian community in Jerusalem. In 1903 he founded

in Jerusalem together with his brother and others the association of the Zionist-Persian community "Lovers of Zion", which worked to improve the spiritual and material condition of the members of his community in the city. The association also worked and founded several institutions, including a synagogue and a Talmud Torah "Orach Chaim" after his death the place was named 'Raphael Chaim'.

During his life in Jerusalem, he was the president of the Persian community in the city on the side of managing his printing house.

He died on December 29, 1954. After his death, a square in Jerusalem was called to his memory.

Rafael Chaim Ha-Kohen, *Avanim ba-Choma* (Stones in the Wall), Jerusalem 1970, 2000. Hebrew. Hannina Mizrahi, *Yehudei Paras* (The Persian Jews), Tel Aviv 1959, p. 220-223; Wikipedia).

Moran Bash - Her words about Siman-Tov Melamed are probably taken from Prof. Amnon Netzer's comprehensive article:

Amnon Netzer, Siman Tov Melamed - a Persian-Afghan scholar and his book *Hayat Al-Rukh, Pe'amim*, Studies in Oriental Jewry, Vol. 79 (Spring 1999), pp. 56-95. A rich bibliography. Hebrew.

Maymaneh, Maimana - near Balkh there, was a Jewish settlement before the arrival of Islam. The place was called *El Yehudia, El Yehudan Kubra* (the Great Jewry). After the Muslim conquest was called Maimana - the city of justice, or truth. [B. Dinur (*Israel in exile* 1(1), p. 292, quoting Yakut, vol. 2, p. 168. See Yehoshua, *Menidhei Yisrael*, p. 42. On March 14 1876, 40 Jewish merchants from Herat stayed in the trading city of Maymana. The city passed to the Afghans under British-Russian patronage. Following an Uzbek rebellion in 1876, Sher Ali Khan executed all the men in Maymana, including 13 Jews. In the colophon to the book 'Hanukat Zion' by Mullah

Yehezkel Garji The following document is cited:
 In the year 5636 [1876], the city of Maimana came under siege, and there were forty men there from the people of the Herat congregation who were looking for their livelihood. In our many crimes, the city was captured on the 17th day of the month of Adar [March 14, 1876] and they looted and killed many of the city's people, and they also killed 13 People from our community: 3 old men and the rest young.

The bad news came to Herat.... there was great mourning and weeping and eulogy for the Jews.

The event mention shortly also in the chronicle of **Mullah Matatya Garji**, "*Korot Zemanim*".

Ben-Zion Dinur, Israel in exile from the days of the occupation of the Land of Israel by the Arabs until the Crusades. Second edition. Tel Aviv 1958. Hebrew.

Yehezkel Garji, 'Hanukat Zion', Jerusalem 1914, 57 double pages.

An addition to the Garji family:

The surname Garji indicates the family's origin from Georgia. It seems that the family was exiled in 1610 (along with Jews, Sunni Kurds and Christian Armenians) to Qazvin, Gilan and other places in Persia. These minorities were transferred from the southern shore of the Caspian Sea to Mashhad by Nadir Shah in 1746. They brought with them the Giliki dialect that was prevalent in their age and surroundings.

Mullah Yosef Melamed Garji

In the preface to the second edition of 'Edut bi-Yehosef' by Mullah Yosef Melamed Garji, his son Mullah Binyamin describes his father's path as an educator: "As a teacher and as an educator, father loved his pupils very much... how much trouble and investment he put in until the child understood the basics of reading And the writing. His hands would hold the hands of the young pupils and he would ennoble his great personality in the minds of the children."

About his father's activities in the city of Marv in Turkmenistan, his son Mullah Binyamin writes that the Bukhari rabbis in the city of Marv begged his father to stay in the city and serve as a chief rabbi and spiritual leader (1903-1910). For seven years he taught Torah and religious laws, educated pupils and when rabbis arrived from Israel or the Diaspora. They demanded their sermons in Hebrew to the audience and he simultaneously translated into Jewish Persian.

Mullah Asher Garji (1882-1961)

Mullah Asher, son of Mullah Mattatiya Garji, born in Herat on 22.1.1882. He made a pilgrimage to the Land of Israel in the company of his father and helped him publish the 'Azharot' of Rabbi Siman-Tov Melamed. In the age of Seventeen he married a wife. After his father immigrated to the Land of Israel, he was appointed at the age of 26 as the head and the rabbi of the community and held this position for 40 years until his immigration to Israel. Like his ancestors before him, he served as a teacher and educator and spiritual leader, ritual slaughterer, circumciser and a cantor. His rulings in the law of appointees were accepted without appeal. Mullah Asher composed a poem dedicated to David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister. Mullah Asher died in Jerusalem on 10.9.1961.

Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (born **Eliezer Yitzhak Perlman**; 7 January 1858 – 16 December 1922)[[]was a Russian-Jewish linguist, lexicographer, and journalist. He is renowned as the lexicographer of the first Hebrew dictionary and also was the editor of Jerusalem-Newspaper *Ha-Zvi*, one of the first Hebrew newspapers published in the Land of Israel. Ben-Yehuda was the primary driving force behind the revival of the Hebrew language.

I brought Eliezer Ben Yehuda, who is called 'the Revival of the Hebrew language' because he was a legend already in his lifetime and ignored the Hebrew that existed among Oriental Jews many years before he was born. I tried to imply that. [Wikipedia](#).

[Mullah Yosef Melamed Garji, 'Edut bi-Yehosef, Second Edition, Jerusalem 1972, pp. 11-13.](#)

The class – Aharon Bezalel

Aharon Bezalel (Herat 1926-Jerusalem 2012). At the year 1938 he immigrated to Eretz Israel. Later he was known as an artist and sculptor in Israel and abroad. In 2009, his book '*Lehaniyach Bracha*' (To leave a Blessing).¹ The book describes memories of his family life and the Jewish community in Herat and his early years in Jerusalem. The History chapters were copied from my book 'From the lost Tribes'.

He describes his studies with the 'Mullah': "There were in Herat two such classrooms - one of Mullah Asher Garji and the other of Mullah Yehoshua Amram. He writes [pp. 42-48]: 'When I was four years old I was sent to the mullah... my parents hired an adult boy to accompany me to

¹ Aharon Bezalel, '*Lehaniach Bracha*' (To leave a Blessing) - Memories of a Jewish Boy from Herat in Afghanistan' was published by Yad Ben-Zvi and the Hebrew University, Jerusalem 2009, 206 pp.

class and back. He would load me on his shoulders and I would rebel and cry...

The class of Mullah Asher Garji was a large and long room and he called it *Beit Midrash*. When we arrived, we took off our shoes and put them in the hallway, at the other end of which was a restroom and since we didn't have to ask permission to go there, they served as a city of refuge for many of us. Mullah Yehoshua was sitting on a high chair with a stick in his hand. Mullah Asher was sitting on a cushion with a small table in front of him, from which he controlled what was happening. He was a handsome man and very authoritative man and to this day when I describe God I see before my eyes Mullah Asher.

The pupils sat on the wall to wall's carpets... We sat in groups according to our age. Each group had a *Khalifa* (young teacher) and he would read the chapter that the group would learn that day. There were groups that learn the Alef-Beit letters, others studied the Bible or *Tafsir* (translation into Persian). The books of prophets and scriptures we studied in Judeo-Persian only. Advanced groups studied *Mishnah*. In the end of the day Mullah Asher examined each group separately.

During the day there was a lot of commotion in the hall. The children memorized their chapters loudly and in the process ran up and down the hall. The little children mainly memorized verses in Hebrew. The Khalifeh would say out loud the verse - 'Hear Israel', the blessing for the laying on of hands, the blessing of the fruit of the tree, the blessing of the fruit of the earth, the Torah commanded us Moses - and we would repeat after him [also at home] our father made sure that we memorized the important verses. My sister Rachel says that my grandfather, Mullah

Moshe, would gather his three older grandchildren and would memorize verses with them, and she, who was exempt from studying, would stand on the sidelines and listen. To this day she remembers these verses..."

Bezalel says that after they learned to write and pronounce the letters, they began to study the book of Leviticus and then Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. "After we learned to write letters and words, we learned to write a letter to father [the ancestors engaged in trade in distant cities]. At the top of the letter we wrote the Hebrew date and the letter was in Hebrew: 'My father, my lord, crown my head'. Later we switched to Persian in Hebrew script and we would ask father for various requests. All the letters were in the same wording.

"Poor children usually dropped out in the middle of studying the prophets. Although Mullah Asher did not charge tuition fees from poor children, the children had to help support the family... Few pupils made it to the last stage of learning slaughtering techniques. At the end of their studies, they were required to slaughter a chicken in front of several sages and so they got proximity to the slaughter.

For studying writing, we had a special *Dastak* notebook, in which we wrote Shabbat songs and holiday songs... When Asher Mullah Asher came back from the lunch break, he would invite the different groups to read to him the chapter that was learned today...

The mullah had a variety of punishments, lighter and heavier, and a cabinet where the 'punishment instruments' were kept: *Chub* - a stick to hit the palm of the hand; *Falak* - blows on the feet. The children brought the sticks to carry out the punishments from the thatch covering the sukkah.

Attempts to reform Jewish education

In the late 20s of the 20th century, a more advanced educational institution than the education that existed up to that time was opened, which broke the monopoly that the members of the Gerge family had. It was the 'midrash' of Mullah Yehoshua Amram. In this institution, in addition to sacred studies, they also studied arithmetic, singing and drawing. The singing instructor was the blind Mullah Yosef Bakhchi, who accompanied himself with an accordion-like harmonium. The establishment of this institution caused conflicts in her community, after parents moved their children from Rabbi Gerji's Beit Midrash to Yehoshua Amram's Beit Midrash. It is doubtful whether Amram's institution was a financial success, because he had to earn his living by selling spices in his shop.

Avraham Emmanueli Filosof (1895-1945) wrote in his article in 1929 that the Afghan Jews lived a relatively prosperous life and could send their children to study abroad. The Afghan government was ready to establish modern schools for Jews, but the devout among the Jews opposed their establishment, fearing assimilation. He also points out that the opposition also comes from the circles of Muslims who demanded that their children turn their backs on Islam [Emanuali, Afghanistan, p. 69, Abba Naamat-interview].

Amanullah Khan's ascension to power brought about a change not only among the Muslims but also among the Jews. Three young Jews traveled to the Soviet Union and studied there in special educational institutions for foreigners and a university for laborers, upon their return to

Afghanistan they were accused of espionage and thrown into prison. Shmuel Shabtai Dadash spent 14 years in prison. There was great resistance among the community for fear that the pupils would assimilate, be recruited into the Afghan army and the social structure of the community might be undermined [Shabtai, interview].

[Reuven Kashani Afghanistan] tells about the attempts of the Alliance in Paris to introduce French-Jewish education in Afghanistan, but there was strong opposition to this both from the authorities who feared Western intrusion into Afghanistan and from the community. In the letter I received from Mr. Y. Weil of the Alliance in Paris, it was said that they were not aware of such an attempt (letter dated GW/yl-B458 12/15/1976). Zeta was probably an initiative of the Alliance branch in Iran.

Abba Namad was an eyewitness to a dramatic meeting between the officials of the Afghan Ministry of Education and the representatives of the Jews of Herat. Mr. Sarjuki, the director of the Ministry of Education, asked in 1927 to register the Jewish children to the Buddhists who were gathered in the Great Synagogue and heard from Mr. Sarjuki about the importance of modern education - government books. On that day, the pupils were released from their studies in the 'midrash' and Rabbis Yaakov Gerji and Yaakov Siman-Tov argued with Mr. Sarjuki. The Jewish women demonstrated near the synagogue, dressed in black and with a black rope around their necks. Only three parents were willing to enroll their children in the state school. A commotion arose and a scuffle broke out. The crowd attacked the three, who damaged the solidarity of the community.

Due to the angry reaction of the community, the people of the Afghan Ministry of Education left the place, seeing that the Jews are not yet ready to send their children to a modern education [Abba Na'amat, interview]

A second attempt to impose secular state education on Jewish children was made in early 1936, 8 years after the previous failed attempt. In the news published in the Davar newspaper (March 20, 1936) from a special informant. The Jews are worried about the turn of the authorities in matters of education. The authorities are persuading the Jews to send their children to government schools, where they can learn the native language and foreign languages as well as various subjects. The opening of a special Sith Zafar for Jews sounds like a new decree in the eyes of the 400 Jewish families in Kabul. The Jews expressed their fear that they would force their children to convert to Islam and conscript them into the Afghan army. This time, too, the Jews repeated the protest action they took during the days of Amanullah Khan and announced a public fast, in order to pass the evil of Kazara. It seems that as a result of pressure exerted by Jewish organizations in Europe on the Afghan government, they stopped pressuring the Jews in this matter.

Avraham Emmanueli filosof, *A collection of articles*. Edited by Aharon Pinhassi, Jerusalem 1960.

Reuven Kashani, *The Jews of Afghanistan*, Jerusalem 1975. 64 p.

The reform of the messenger from Israel

Naftali Abrahamoff arrived in Afghanistan (1928-1930) as part of the reform brought about by Amanullah Khan, who invited teachers around the world to come to Afghanistan and promote the level of education of the Afghan people. Abrahamoff was designed to change Jewish education.

Although he received the backing of the governor of Herat to take over the entire Jewish education, he preferred to leave the decision in the hands of the parents.

In the relatively short time he was in Afghanistan and had to leave following an attempted coup in the country, his influence was great. [See the diary of Naftali Abrahamoff]

Abba Naamat speaks admiringly of the teacher Abrahamoff who brought his pupils closer to the love of the Land of Israel. Their slogan was: 'We are Hebrew, we will speak Hebrew and we will learn Hebrew'. They studied sacred studies, prayer poetry in the style of the Sephardim in the Land of Israel, spoken Hebrew, arithmetic, English and native songs, including 'Hatikvah', the national anthem. They had exercise classes and breaks between classes, which was a novelty in Afghanistan. His innovations upset many parents.

Girls' education and woman's status

There was no educational framework for girls and there were few fathers who taught their daughters to read and write. The daughter was educated to fulfill her duties as a Jewish wife and mother. She learned from her grandmother and mother the ritual purity after menstruation,

the laws of kosher food. Upon receiving her first period, they brought her to a man to keep her alive.

Amanullah Khan's reforms were not as successful as they were in the reform of Ata Turk, which served as an example for the Afghan government. The king claimed that "a veiled woman can commit adultery to her heart's content and no one, including her husband, will be able to recognize her when she comes and goes out of her lover's house. A pearl-faced woman will not be able to hide her identity." The Afghan king did not impose his attempt to reform the status of women on Jewish society. There was no difference between Muslims and Jews in the field of girls' education and the status of women. After his visit to Europe, the king sent 200 of the girls of the nobility in his country to Turkey, so that they could be educated in a modern education and trained as teachers. Indeed, on their return to their country they were very successful. Under the pressure of Muslim clerics who incited in the mosques, the king was forced to surrender. [Abrahamoff, diary]

In my book 'From the lost tribes' (pages 430-444) there is a special chapter dedicated to Jewish education in which there is a discussion on: the state of general education in Afghanistan, the social framework for Jewish education, the status of the teacher, the state of the student, the languages of speech and learning, the curriculum, attempts to reform Jewish education, the reform of the apostle from Israel, girls' education, parents as educators, methods of punishment.

L. Dupree, *Afghanistan*, Princeton 1980, 597 ff.

Missions à buts éducatifs-IV; Rapport de la mission en Afghanistan, UNESCO (May 1952).

I. Mishael, *Between Afghanistan and Land of Israel (Memoirs of the president of the community in northern Afghanistan)*, Jerusalem 1981.

A. Neumark, *A Journey in the Orient Land (Ya'ari Edition)* Jerusalem 1947.

Interviews: R. Kashani; Sh. Dadash; A. Na'amat.

Naftali Abrahamoff, A diary –

Naftali Abrahamoff, *Two Years in Afghanistan (1928-1930)*, *Ha-Yarden* (Newspaper), numbers: 234 (14.2.1935); 236 (17.2.1935); 238 (19.2.1935); 240 (21.2.1935); 244 (26.2.1935); 247 (1.3.1935); 255 (11.3.1935); 259 (15.3.1935); 284 (15.4.1935).

Abrahamoff describes in his diary: events, customs, traditions, daily life, beliefs, Jewish-Muslim relations, etc.

Due to Abrahamoff's criticism of the British, the censor forbade the publication of his diary. Because of this he stopped writing the diary. His daughter Liora Bernstein handed me the manuscript of the diary at the time. I brought the diary in my book with an introduction and interpretations².

In the preface to the second edition of 'Edut bi-Yehosef' by Mullah Yosef Melamed Garji, his son Mullah Binyamin describes his father's path as an educator: "As a teacher and as an educator, father loved his pupils very much... how much trouble and investment he put in until the child

² Benzion David Yehoshua-Raz, *Behind the Silk Curtain - Nations and Jewish communities in Central Asia - Iran, Afghanistan, Bukhara*, Jerusalem 2013, pages 237-270. Hebrew.

understood the basics of reading And the writing. His hands would hold the hands of the young pupils and he would ennoble his great personality in the minds of the children.

About his father's activities in the city of Marv in Turkmenistan, his son Mullah Binyamin writes that the Bukhari rabbis in the city of Marv begged his father to stay in the city and serve as a chief rabbi and spiritual leader (1903-1910). For seven years he taught Torah and religious laws, educated pupils and when rabbis arrived from Israel or the Diaspora. They demanded their sermons in Hebrew to the audience and he simultaneously translated into Jewish Persian.

Rabbi Nachman Betito (Morocco 1845-Jerusalem 1915), one of the leaders of the North African community in Jerusalem and in 1909 was appointed by the Ottoman government to be The *Hachem Bashi*, chief rabbi of the Sephardic Jews in the Land of Israel.

As was the custom in those days at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the rabbis went to diaspora to collect donations for the benefit of the many poor people who were then in the Land of Israel. Rabbi Betito and **Chief Rabbi Raphael Meir ben Yehuda Panigel** (1804–1893) was the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, Ottoman Empire.

They arrived, among other places, in Marv in Turkmenistan and Mullah Yosef Garji translated their words for the Jewish community from Hebrew to Persian.



The seal and signature of Rabbi Nachman Betito.

The Talmud Torah Benei-Zion

Established at 1894 by Rabbi Avraham Aminoff Talmudi, One of the leaders of the Bukhari community in Jerusalem. The school was located in the Bukarian neighborhood in Jerusalem. In 1919, following the First World War, the Talmud Torah ran into financial difficulties and was facing closure, the institution turned to the Ashkenazi Agudath Israel, which would provide its patronage and they accepted the request. Therefore, the management belonged to the Ashkenazi *Agudath Israel*, but almost all the teachers and pupils were Oriental Jews. Some of the teachers were of Afghan and Persian origin. Along 90 years the three generations of the Garji family taught here in Hebrew language: Mullah Mattatya, Mullah Yosef and Mullah Binyamin. Some of the greatest Oriental Rabbis in Israel studied here.

Personal confession: I studied in Talmud-Torah Benei-Zion in the ages four to ten. [Wikipedia](#), [Memoirs of Ben-Zion Yehoshua](#).

Table 1: Five generations of rabbis and Hebrew educators

Name	Generation	Location	Activity
Mullah Abraham Lived and taught) (in the 19 th century	1th	,Mashhad Herat (since (1840	A founder and teacher in Herat's <i>Midrash</i> Famous for singing psalms throughout the night
Mullah Mordechai Lived and taught in) (the 19 th century	2th	Mashhad, Herat (since (1840	Taught sacred studies in Herat's <i>Midrash</i>
Mullah Mattatya (1854-1917)	3th	,Herat Jerusalem	Chief Rabbi and A teacher of sacred in Herat's <i>Midrash</i>

			Wrote holy books and chronicle
Mullah Yehezkel (1875-1953)	4 th	Herat, Afghanistan	Rabbi, teacher of sacred .studies Wrote holy book
Mullah Yosef Melamed (1869-1936)	4 th	Herat, Afghanistan, Marv, Turkmenistan Jerusalem	Rabbi, teacher of sacred .studies Wrote holy book
Mullah Asher (1882-1961)	4 th	Herat, Afghanistan Jerusalem	Chief Rabbi and .a teacher of sacred studies
Mullah Shmuel (cousin of Mullah (Mattatya No birth and death) (dates	4 th	Herat, Afghanistan, Marv, Turkemanistan	Rabbi. Wrote holy book. Bookseller of Hebrew books
Mullah Binyamin Son of Mullah (Yosef (1902-1974)	5 th	Jerusalem	Rabbi, teacher of sacred .studies

1.1.Mullah Abraham Garji (The 19th century)

Lived and taught in the 19th century in Mashhad. In 1840 he escaped from Mashhad to Herat. A founder and teacher in Herat's *Midrash*

2.1 Mullah Mordechai Garji (The 19th century)

Son of Mullah Abraham Garji. He Lived and taught in the 19th century. In 1840 he escaped from Mashhad to Herat. Taught sacred studies in Herat's *Midrash*. From a pamphlet published in the memory of Aghajan Reuven Cohen, who was a *Vakil* (the representative of the Jews before the Afghan authorities in Herat), we can learn about the educational framework that was used in the 19th century. This framework was brought with them by Mashhad martyrs who returned to their Judaism in Herat, .Afghanistan

Aghajan Reuven Cohen studied in the Beit midrash of Mullah Mordechai Garji who was a rabbi in Herat. The studies took place in the hall in the courtyard of the Garji Synagogue. He was admitted to 'Mullah' at the age of three and at the age of five he already knew how to read the Torah.

3.1. Mullah Mattatya Garji (1845-1917)

Son of Mullah Mordechai Garji. He was born in Herat in.

