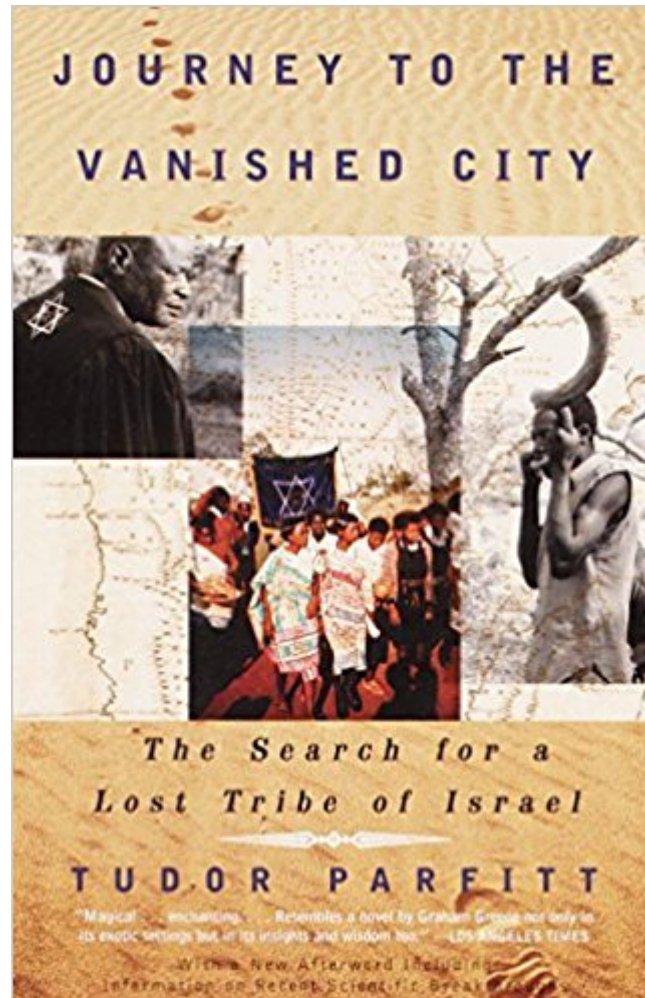




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Journey To The Vanished City



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Synopsis

In a mixture of travel, adventure, and scholarship, historian Tudor Parfitt sets out in search of answers to a fascinating ethnological puzzle: is the Lemba tribe of Southern Africa really one of the lost tribes of Israel, descended from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba? Beginning in the Lemba villages in South Africa, where he witnesses customs such as food taboos and circumcision rites that seem part of Jewish tradition, Parfitt retraces the supposed path of the Lembas' through Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Tanzania, taking in sights like Zanzibar and the remains of the stone city Great Zimbabwe. The story of his eccentric travels, a blend of the ancient allure of King Solomon's mines and Prester John with contemporary Africa in all its beauty and brutality, makes for an irresistible glimpse at a various and rapidly changing continent. And in a new epilogue, Parfitt discusses recent DNA evidence that, amazingly, lends credence to the Lemba's tribal myth.

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Customer Reviews

"Parfitt...is a British Indiana Jones seeking the lost tribes of Israel." -The Wall Street Journal
"Lucidly written and exhibiting all the craftsmanship of a first-rate detective novel." -Daily Telegraph (London)
"Magical...enchanted...Resembles a novel by Graham Greene not only in its exotic settings and characters, but in its insight and wisdom, too." --Los Angeles Times

In a mixture of travel, adventure, and scholarship, historian Tudor Parfitt sets out in search of

answers to a fascinating ethnological puzzle: is the Lemba tribe of Southern Africa really one of the lost tribes of Israel, descended from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba? Beginning in the Lemba villages in South Africa, where he witnesses customs such as food taboos and circumcision rites that seem part of Jewish tradition, Parfitt retraces the supposed path of the Lembas' through Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Tanzania, taking in sights like Zanzibar and the remains of the stone city Great Zimbabwe. The story of his eccentric travels, a blend of the ancient allure of King Solomon's mines and Prester John with contemporary Africa in all its beauty and brutality, makes for an irresistible glimpse at a various and rapidly changing continent. And in a new epilogue, Parfitt discusses recent DNA evidence that, amazingly, lends credence to the Lemba's tribal myth.

Great book.

I had this book for about a year when I was going book crazy in preparation for co-writing a book about the Jewish communities in Nigeria. I finally got around to reading this book, while being delayed on a flight. I found the book to be one of those that is hard to put down. I like the fact that the book is told from the perspective of someone searching for the answer to a question and giving details of fortunes and misfortunes along the way. I normally am not good at reading books all the way through because of my hectic schedule. The information in this book is both enlightening and tragic in another. Of course the research points out that the Lemba have DNA that is of the Kohen Model type, and at the same time to see how much they have lost in terms of this heritage is the sad part. Yet, the book is truly a must and another one that I think should be a part of every Jewish library and Yeshivah.

received in better condition than promised

If you are the least bit interested in the history related to the Hebrew/Christian Old Testament, this is one of the most fascinating journeys trying to follow a Tribal traditional legend back in time. What the author finds seems to underwrite its veracity.

The author's quest for the origins of the Lemba, a Southern Africa tribe with certain Semitic customs and a folk memory of Jewish origins, took him from Johannesburg via the Limpopo province of South Africa, through Zimbabwe and Malawi to Tanzania and ultimately to the Hadramaut in South Arabia. In Johannesburg's Soweto township he encounters his first Lemba people and researches

the tribe in Wits University library. Then he takes the train to Pietersburg where he visits Lemba scholar Professor Mathiva at the University of the North and makes excursions into the surrounding areas of the Venda and Lobedu tribes where he encounters Mojaji, the famous Rain Queen. The known history of the area, including the colorful figure of Joao Albasini, spices up the narrative. In Zimbabwe his journeys take him to Bulawayo, the Matopo Hills, Mberengwe and Dumghe Mountains, Masvingo and the ruins of Great Zimbabwe. On the way he takes part in a Lemba tribal assembly. The next stage takes him to Malawi and a short way into Mozambique where he sees the town of Sena from afar. In Tanzania he visits Dar es Salaam, Bagamoyo and Tumbatu, concluding the African leg of his journey. His research finally leads him to Yemen where he visits Sanaa, Aden and the Hadramaut towns of Habban, Terim, and ultimately, the town of Sena on the Wadi Masila, where he discovers that the Lemba clan names are familiar to the area. Along the way he has funny encounters with a wide variety of interesting people. The travelogue is interspersed with relevant quotes from an impressive array of explorers, missionaries, scholars and ethnographers, including Joao de Barros, Livingstone, Junod, Mauch, Schlomann, Schapera, Van Warmelo, Jacques, Von Sicard and Roger Summers. Their observations - including the legend of Monomotapa - are engagingly woven into his always arresting travelogue. The Afterword contains the results of genetic research conducted in 1996/97 that shows a significant similarity in DNA between Jewish groups, the Lemba and the Hadrami of Terim and Sena. For more detailed and up-to-date information, please consult "DNA and Tradition" by Rabbi Yaakov Kleiman. The Buba clan of the Lemba has a high frequency of the Y-Chromosome type called the "Cohen Modal Haplotype" which is known to be characteristic of the paternally inherited Jewish priesthood. For a very thorough ethnographic study of the Lemba, I recommend "The Lemba: A Lost Tribe of Israel in Southern Africa" by Magdel le Roux. It is a selective comparison between the social and religious practices of early Israel and the Lemba of today. Journey To The Vanished City contains plates with black & white photographs, maps of Africa and Yemen, 18 pages of notes arranged by chapter and an index. The book is a most engaging read on account of the author's humour, wit and flowing narrative style. There is not one boring moment in this fascinating account of a journey in search of lost origins.

I think that this book is very important because it preserves the legacy of the Lemba on paper, a legacy that for centuries, has relied mainly on oral traditions. The Lemba tribe, who presently reside in various parts of Southern Africa, have kept a tradition for hundreds of years that they are Jews, and Parfitt takes the journey to explore these claims. The author, Tudor Parfitt, starts off in the

northern parts of South Africa in Vendaland, where many Lemba reside today. From here he goes to the Zimbabwe ruins, then to Malawi, briefly to war-torn Mozambique, up to the east coast, and off to Yemen in search of "Sena," where the Lemba attest that they came from. In all these areas he finds interesting facts through his research about the Lemba and their history. There is no doubt that the Lemba contributed to the building and livelihood of the Great Zimbabwe civilization that flourished in the 14th century, but the big question here is just how big was their role? With the history of the Lemba becoming more popular, I think this debate is going to resurface once again as to who built the ruins. This book relies on earlier descriptions of the Lemba by mostly European and Arab explorers. Parfitt really makes good use of these. The book also highlights the indelible influence that colonialism has had not just on the Lemba, but on all African societies. It also underscores the prevailing attitudes that many "white Africans" today have on black Africans. The genetic evidence presented in the afterword makes for a good ending to strengthen the core theme in the book. I highly recommend *Journey to The Vanished City* and I think it's an excellent, scholarly work.

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