



TURKS AND JEWS: HISTORICAL, LINGUISTIC, AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

Mukhayyo Sobirjanova

Introduction

Turks and Jews are two ancient peoples whose contributions have profoundly shaped human civilization. Despite their geographic and historical differences, their languages, cultures, and values reveal deep connections rooted in shared philosophical, religious, and cultural frameworks. Unlike Arabs, Turks, including modern Uzbeks, use the term Ilohim alongside Allah when referring to God, a practice that underscores their unique cultural and linguistic affinity with Jewish traditions.

This paper explores these connections through historical, linguistic, and cultural lenses, examining common values such as justice, gender equality, and the pursuit of knowledge, which unite these two civilizations.

Shared Religious Foundations: Tangri and Elohim

One of the most striking parallels between Turks and Jews lies in their shared monotheistic foundations and terminology for God.

1. The Turkic Concept of Tangri

- Tangri, the central deity in ancient Turkic belief systems, symbolizes the sky and universal power. This concept reflects a monotheistic worldview deeply embedded in Turkic culture [1,2].
- The Karaite Jews, who lived among the Turks, continue to use the term Tangri to refer to God, demonstrating cultural and linguistic exchanges between these communities [3].



2. **Elohim in Jewish Tradition**

- Elohim, one of the names of God in Judaism, closely parallels the Turkic Tangri. Moreover, in modern Uzbek, the term Ilohim—a derivative of Elohim—is still used in prayers and blessings, such as “Ilohim, help us!” [4].

3. **Distinct from Arab Influence**

- Arabs exclusively use Allah to refer to God, whereas Turks and Jews employ terms that reflect a broader, more inclusive monotheistic tradition. This linguistic and conceptual distinction highlights the shared religious roots of Turks and Jews, which differ significantly from Arab traditions [5].

These connections suggest a shared spiritual heritage that transcends geographical and historical boundaries.

Samarkand and Symbols of Science

Samarkand, a historic center of learning and culture, serves as a testament to the scientific and cultural connections between Turks and Jews.

1. **The Six-Pointed Star**

- The Ulugh Beg Madrasa in Samarkand features geometric patterns reminiscent of the six-pointed star, a prominent symbol in Jewish culture [6].
- Similar symbols are found in Mughal architecture in India, reflecting the Turkic influence on Jewish cultural heritage [7].

2. **The Snake and the Symbol of Knowledge**

- In Turkic and Jewish traditions, the snake symbolizes wisdom and life. At the Ulugh Beg Madrasa, depictions of snakes



represent the pursuit of science and knowledge, paralleling the Jewish Tree of Knowledge [8].

These shared symbols emphasize the centrality of knowledge and science in both cultures, reinforcing their historical and intellectual connections.

Gender Equality: Sultan Razia and Queen Esther

Turkic and Jewish traditions both highlight the significant roles of women in leadership and governance.

1. Sultan Razia: A Turkic Example of Gender Equality

- In the 13th century, Sultan Iltutmish of Delhi appointed his daughter, Razia, as his successor, recognizing her leadership abilities over her brothers. Despite her success as a ruler, she was eventually overthrown due to pressure from Arab-influenced factions, illustrating the erosion of Turkic values under Arab influence [9].

2. Queen Esther: A Jewish Example of Female Leadership

- Esther, a central figure in Jewish history, saved her people from genocide through courage and political acumen. Her story reflects the importance of women in Jewish culture and governance [10].

These historical examples underscore the shared emphasis on gender equality in Turkic and Jewish cultures, contrasting sharply with Arab traditions.

Linguistic Parallels

The theory of “Odam Tili” (Human Language) posits that language reflects natural phenomena and shared human experiences. Turkic and Jewish languages demonstrate numerous phonetic and semantic similarities:



1. **Greetings**

- Turkic: Salom
- Hebrew: Shalom Both words signify peace and respect, accompanied by gestures such as bowing, reflecting the natural contraction of the body, a symbolic echo of shared linguistic roots [11].

2. **Time and Space**

- Turkic: Zamon (time), Olam (universe)
- Hebrew: Zman (time), Olam (universe) [12].

3. **Law and Justice**

- Turkic: To'ra (law), Soat (clock)
- Hebrew: Torah (law), Saat (clock) [13].

These linguistic parallels provide compelling evidence of a shared cultural and intellectual heritage.

Nomadism and the Philosophy of Knowledge

Nomadism was central to Turkic life, not only as a means of survival but as a strategy for acquiring and disseminating knowledge.

1. **Adaptation to Nature**

- Turkic nomads explored diverse environments, including deserts, forests, mountains, and seas, gathering knowledge about flora, fauna, and geography. This adaptability allowed them to develop advanced technologies and systems for survival [14].

2. **The Jewish Tradition of Sukkot**

- The Jewish festival of Sukkot, which involves building temporary shelters (sukkah), parallels the Turkic practice of constructing portable yurts. Both traditions emphasize the importance



of movement, adaptability, and a connection to nature as sources of resilience and wisdom [15].

The Loss of Turkic Values Under Arab Influence

The arrival of Arab influence disrupted many Turkic values, including gender equality and the succession system.

1. Polygamy and Dynastic Struggles

- Arab practices such as polygamy introduced dynastic conflicts, weakening Turkic states as rival heirs vied for power.

2. Preservation in Jewish Culture

- Unlike the Turks, who were partially assimilated under Arab influence, the Jews preserved core values such as justice, equality, and knowledge, contributing to their survival and success.

Turkic Contributions to Europe and America

In 1492, the fall of Andalusian libraries exposed Europe to Turkic knowledge, catalyzing the Renaissance.

1. Impact on Europe

- Turkic principles of equality and systematic knowledge influenced European political and scientific advancements.

2. Influence on the United States

- These values also shaped American democratic ideals, with Jewish communities playing a key role in transmitting Turkic intellectual heritage.



Conclusion

The historical, linguistic, and cultural connections between Turks and Jews reveal a shared legacy of monotheism, scientific inquiry, and societal values. From the shared use of terms like Ilohim and Tangri to common architectural and philosophical traditions, their intertwined histories offer profound insights into the development of human civilization.

The “Odam Tili” theory underscores the natural, interconnected origins of human language and culture, further illuminating the enduring bonds between these two peoples. This shared heritage continues to shape the modern world, providing a foundation for understanding and collaboration across cultures.

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