

Jewish Presence in Egypt

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According to the Bible the connection between the Jewish people and Egypt goes a long way back. Abraham sojourned there and Jews lived in great numbers (about 1500 BCE) until the Exodus (about 1280 BCE). The earliest archaeologically proven existence of Jews in Egypt was in Elephantine Island where a community of Jewish warriors was established (about 650 BCE) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephantine_papyri. From then on Jewish presence fluctuated with circumstances but there was always a strong connection between the Jews and Egypt.

The latest episode resulting in the almost complete annihilation of the Jewish Communities in Egypt started around 1800 CE. At that time there were only a few thousand Jews in Egypt but their numbers increased considerably with the advent of the Mohammed Ali Dynasty. His program of modernisation and the building of the Suez Canal swelled the Jewish communities to more than 75,000 (some experts even say 100,000) after WW2.

During the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century Jews made substantial contributions to the establishment of Egypt as a modern state. They were pioneers in many areas and were active in most realms of industry, commerce, the law, real estate, agriculture, medicine, the arts, social institutions, etc., far beyond their relatively small numbers. www.sephardicstudies.org/contributions-jews-egypt.html.
http://www.hsje.org/coments_on_the_jews_of_egyp.htm#_edn1.