

Kaifeng Jews

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Arrival in China (click [Here](#) for paper)

- After the destruction of the Second Temple, Jews left the land of Israel and traveled out in all directions. Many of them traveled east, and many of these became traveling merchants. When the Silk Road became a primary trading route between Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, Jews flocked to it
- Though small and isolated, this Jewish community managed to survive for centuries afterward.
- Over the course of several centuries, the Jewish community in Kaifeng slowly started to disappear.
- Judaism is not one of the five religions officially tolerated in China, so many Jews living there currently are forced to practice their religion in secret.
- The building of the synagogue was warmly welcomed by the Emperor and many Jews attained high ranks in Chinese governments. Today, however, almost no one from the community is left.

Unique Cultural Norms



Their synagogue, which resembled a Chinese temple, was originally founded in 1163.

The Kaifeng Jews spoke Mandarin Chinese, the only Jewish group to speak this language

Li	李
Shi (Shih) ("Stone")	石
Zhao (Chao)	趙
Jin (Chin) ("Gold")	金
Ai	愛
Zhang (Chang)	張
Gao (Kao) ("Tall")	高

While the Kaifeng Jews gave their kids traditional Jewish names, They were given 7 special surnames (family names) by the emperor.

Unique Cultural Norms

Incense bowls were placed to commemorate the patriarchs and outstanding figures of the Law, as well as various holy men. This was similar to Chinese rites regarding ancestors.



Why not book all or part of Kaifeng for
your next Simcha?

We can accommodate up to 100 people in the restaurant
or we can send food to your home or venue.

Please ask about our Barmitzvah,
Sheva Brochot and Shabbos menus.



The Place for a Simcha

Kaifeng restaurant in London- a kosher chinese restaurant run by Kaifeng jews- They made traditional chinese dishes comply with kashrut laws. specifically, not serving pork dishes.

Challenges of the Kaifeng Jews

1. The first synagogue was swept away by floods in 1461 and rebuilt, only to be destroyed by fire in 1600. A deliberate rupture of the Yellow River to end a siege of the city by rebel forces led to the third synagogue being flooded in 1642.
2. Judaism is not one of the five officially tolerated religions in China- the chinese authorities Banned Jewish services in public. Prohibited Passover Seders. Removed signs that describe the site of an old synagogue, and buried the ruins of another. Closing the Jewish community groups.
3. Over the years, Kaifeng's Jews married their neighboring Han Chinese neighbors, assimilating into wider Chinese culture. only a few elderly Jews in the city were still able to read the Hebrew text



Kaifeng today

Although the descendants of Kaifeng's Jews stopped practicing Judaism, for years some families kept the memory of their Jewish heritage alive, telling children for instance that it was their family custom not to eat pork.

There is estimated to be between 500-1000 jews living in Kaifeng and about 20 living in israel today

