

Who were the Hagarites / Hagrites / Hagarenes?

The Bible's first mention of the Arab tribes known as Hagrites is in 1 Chronicles 5:10: "And in the days of Saul they made war with the Hagarites, who fell by their hand: and they dwelt in their tents throughout all the east land of Gilead" (KJV). Hagarite is an alternate spelling of Hagrite, and they are also called Hagarenes. The they in this verse refers to the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. This war against the Hagrites occurred during Saul's time.

During David's reign, some Hagrites, also called Hagarenes (KJV), may have assimilated into Jewish society—possibly from those captured in the war. First Chronicles 11:38 mentions a mighty warrior named "Mihbar the son of Haggeri" (KJV). In 1 Chronicles 27:31, another Hagrite named Jaziz was put in charge of David's flocks. The final biblical reference to the Hagrites is found in Psalm 83:6, where they join an alliance against Israel.

Little is known about the Hagrites, but it can be inferred that they were nomads and pastoral (this might explain why Jaziz took care of flocks). They resided east of Gilead and were renowned as formidable warriors, horsemen, and archers. Their defeat at the hands of the Israelites must not have been total, considering the recorded alliance in the book of Psalms.

The Hagrites are associated with Hagar, Sarah's bondservant who bore Ishmael for Abraham and was later sent away. The details of Hagar's life after that time are a bit muddled. Some sources suggest that Hagar had other children with someone else, while others trace the Hagrites back to Ishmael. In either case, the Hagrites are related to the Ishmaelites.

A few extrabiblical mentions of the Hagrites provide more information on the Arabian tribe. One example is in the records of the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 BC), a powerful conqueror who defeated the Hagrites, similar to how the Israelites had.

The Hagrites seem to have disappeared from history, either wiped out after a military defeat or assimilated into another culture. Their descendants could still be dispersed throughout Arab regions, but there is no present-day nationality bearing the name Hagrite or Hagarene. This tribe—or confederacy of tribes—provides ample room for further studies, and future discoveries may offer additional insights into the nomadic Hagrite people.