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Elements in New Religious Movements

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BLACK HEBREW ISRAELITES

Michael T. Miller

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-48698-9 — Black Hebrew Israelites
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Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009486989

DOI: 10.1017/9781009400107

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When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009400107

First published 2024

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-009-48698-9 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-009-40008-4 Paperback
ISSN 2635-232X (online)
ISSN 2635-2311 (print)

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Black Hebrew Israelites

Elements in New Religious Movements

DOI: 10.1017/9781009400107
First published online: January 2024

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Abstract: The Black Hebrew Israelite (BHI) movement claims that African Americans are descendants of the ancient Israelites and it has slowly become a significant force in African American religion. This Element provides a general overview of the BHI movement, its diverse history/ies, ideologies, and practices. The Element shows how different factions and trends have taken the forefront at different periods over its 140-year history, leading to the current situation where diverse iterations of the movement exist alongside each other, sharing some core concepts while differing widely. In particular, the questions of how and why BHI has become a potent and attractive movement in recent years are addressed, arguing that it fulfills a specific religious need to do with identity and teleology, and represents a new and persistent form of Abrahamic religion.

Keywords: African American Religion, Black Judaism, American religions, Black Religion, Abrahamic religion

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ISBNs: 9781009486989 (HB), 9781009400084 (PB), 9781009400107 (OC)
ISSNs: 2635-232X (online), 2635-2311 (print)

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