

# My Homeland, My Diaspora: Iranian Jewish Identity in Modern Times

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ز پوچ جهان هیچ اگر دوست دارم  
تو را، ای کهن بوم و بر دوست دارم

تو را، ای کهن - پیر - جاوید - برنا  
تو را دوست دارم، اگر دوست دارم

تو را، ای گرانمایه، دیرینه ایران  
را ای گرامی گهر (وطن) دوست دارم تو

From all meaningless earthly possessions, if I acclaim  
Thee oh ancient land, I adore  
Thee oh ancient eternal great  
If I adore any, thee I adore  
Thee oh priceless ancient Iran  
Thee oh valuable jewel, I adore<sup>1</sup>

In a gathering of Iranian Jews in Shiraz at the end of 2002, one of the leaders of the Jewish community spoke of the 13 Jews recently released from prison after being accused of spying for Israel, saying:

Our community needs to be united more. We need to take advantage of every opportunity to bond tighter. We are not the same subdued people as before. We are alive, joyful, active and Iran-lovers. We've been inhabitants of Iran for the past 2,700 years . . . and Iran is our native country. We are essentially Iranians first and then Jews. We are proud to be Iranians. Long live Iran. Long live Iranians Jews.<sup>2</sup>

## I. INTRODUCTION

One of the essential questions arising from the plurality of ethnic and religious groups in the Middle East, and specifically Iran, concerns the relationship between “diaspora” and “homeland.” What do these two concepts signify? What criteria define these terms? Do these concepts have permanent, uniform criteria? Who determines these criteria? Furthermore, can religious, ethnic, linguistic, and/or national criteria define the identity of

one group for the geographic region considered that group's "homeland" or "diaspora"?

These questions become even more problematic if one group (group A, in this case study Iranian Jews) sees itself as residing in its homeland, while another group (group B, in this case study Iranian Muslims) in the same area perceives the former as not belonging to that "homeland." How will the perceptions and images generated by group B regarding group A affect group A's own perceptions of itself? Will group A's self-image change as a result of the perception of group B?

I will seek answers for these questions based on the case of Iranian Jews under the Iranian Islamic Republic in terms of their attitude toward Iran and their immigration outside of Iran (Israel, Europe, and the USA): Did their Jewish identity negate their Iranian identity? Can Iranian Jews carry multiple, non-contradicting identities? That is to say, are they Jews first and Iranians second? Or, alternatively, are they Iranians who, incidentally, are also Jews?

The prevailing narrative regarding Iranian Jewry, the Israeli and Western one, has a tendency to conceive of Iranian Jews as living under a tyrannical regime that makes their lives so miserable that they are forced to seek refuge abroad, as I will portray in the first part of this narrative.

In the second part of my study, I plan to refute these sweeping claims and to assert, instead, that the relationship between Iran's Jews and its government and culture constitutes a dialectic far more complex than the superficial picture presented thus far. It is not simply that issues of "diaspora" and "homeland" are topics of discussion among the Jews of Iran, but that non-Jewish Iranians themselves also take part in such conversations, especially in the wake of the 1979 revolution. This study will also touch on the methods of representation used by Iranian Jews outside Iran that stem from erroneous attitudes toward Iranian Jews in Israel and the West. It is impossible to distinguish arbitrarily between the Israeli/Western discourse regarding Iran and the important internal developments in Israeli/Western society, since they are interwoven.

On the basis of the research I have conducted, applying theories of diaspora and homeland to the Iranian case, it has come to light that at least some Iranian Jews traditionally have seen themselves as autochthonous Iranians residing in their homeland. No less important, however, is to understand the perceptions of Iranian Muslims regarding Iranian Jews: that is, do Iranian Jews appear in the eyes of Iranian Muslims as native sons of the Iranian soil and heritage, or as a group living in exile that is not part of the Iranian nationality? In order to clarify this point, we should keep in mind that most theories of nationalism recognize the presence of the "other" and its significant role in forging and defining national identity.<sup>3</sup> Therefore,

in the third part of my paper I will also try to gauge the “otherness” of Iranian Jews and see whether they play a role of the “other” in shaping the Iranian nationality upon which Muslim Iranians construct their Iranian identity.

## II. “REDEMPTION OR DESTRUCTION”

Let us begin by analyzing the prevalent narrative regarding the place of native Jews in Iranian society. Zionist and western historiography has generally subordinated the history of Iranian Jewry to the Zionist master-narrative through a binary separation of the following concepts: West versus East, the Western/Israeli/Zionist sphere versus that of Iran, homeland versus diaspora, Jewishness versus Iranianness.

This separation falls in line with the national logic of situating ethnic belonging, a symbolic construction of a collective consciousness based on ethnic identity,<sup>4</sup> as part and parcel of an ideology that seeks to assimilate all the groups constituting the nation as a homogenous collective (Shenhav, 2003, p. 18). Iranian Jews were thus perceived and imagined as part of the teleological Zionist order, disconnected from the Iranian national timeline and their own history in the Iranian sphere (Ram, 2005). In the West, especially in Israel, the national history of Iranian Jewry was constructed as an unchanging, coherent story, situated within the boundaries of Zionist discourse; the origin of Iran’s Jews lies in the tribe of Judah, to which they must return. Iranian Jews were thus removed from their national, Iranian context, only to be identified as organically belonging to Zionist nationalism. The idea of national purity resulted in the separation of identities: Iranianness and Jewishness were presented as polar opposites incapable of overlapping.

The presence of 30,000 Jews currently living in Iran as the largest Jewish community in the Middle East outside of Israel, however, undermines the Zionist-Israeli narrative and its claim that the natural affinity of Iran’s Jews belongs to Zionist nationalism and that they naturally belong in the Western camp. In his new book, *Iranophobia: The Logic of an Israeli Obsession* (2010), Haggai Ram demonstrates that the Iranian revolution did not lead either to the destruction of Iranian Jewry or to its ultimate redemption in the state of Israel. According to Ram, the case of Iran’s Jews proved to the Israeli establishment that Jews are capable of sustaining themselves outside of the sovereign, Jewish state and the Israeli “melting pot.” This possibility contradicted the Zionist master-narrative, according to which Jewish existence is possible only within the State of Israel, lest diaspora Jews once again fall victim to holocaust and destruction (see also Ram, 2005; Ram, 2008).

The difficulty of situating Iran's Jews in the Iranian sphere is not only a result of the Israeli national narrative, but also of that of the Western, especially American, narrative. The following paragraph comes from a letter from a correspondent named "Nariman N." posted on [www.iranian.com](http://www.iranian.com), a well-known site in which Iranians who live outside of Iran express their views about and nostalgia for their homeland, in 1998. This anonymous voice serves to illuminate the above-mentioned phenomenon.

Iranian Jews are IRANIANS

I would like to add that many American Jewish leaders like to look upon Iran's Jews as this small oppressed minority, who don't have anything in common with the Muslim population—almost as if they were foreigners living in a foreign country. To them, Iranian Jews really aren't Iranian but rather just Jewish; they try to somehow disassociate their Iranian-ness from their Jewishness, in the process just ignoring the fact that they're Iranian as much as they're Jewish. I believe this reflects these Jewish Americans' own prejudices and ignorance about Iran, and that's just too bad.<sup>5</sup>

This post, probably by an Iranian Jewish woman who lives in the U.S., corresponds with the master-narrative of the Israeli/Western sphere. The voice of Nariman shows the common argument, which the poster rejects, consisting of the common assumption that Iranian Jews are foreigners and outsiders in Iran. As Stuart Hall, a cultural theorist and sociologist, explained in his 2006 article "Cultural Identity and Diaspora": "In Said's 'Orientalist' sense, we were constructed as different and other within the categories of knowledge of the West by those regimes. They had the power to make us see and experience *ourselves* as 'Other'" (p. 225). According to Hall, the image of Iran in the West derives from inner-interests and discourses of Western regimes.<sup>6</sup> This article will suggest a contra-picture from the one that prevails in the West: one of Jews who are integral components of the Iranian surroundings, who negotiate their Iranian identity, who respond to different historical circumstances, and who undergo transformation as a result.

III. "WE'VE BEEN INHABITANTS OF IRAN FOR THE PAST 2,700 YEARS"

In this section, I will try to contextualize Iranian Jews in the Iranian sphere and place Iranian Jews once again within Iranian-national historiography. I will attempt to penetrate the binary characters and imaginary, homogenous spaces to show that between Jews and Iranians there exist numerous overlapping points, examining whether the criteria that define "Iranian identity" are valid as well for Iranian Jewry. I will demonstrate that

the identity of Iran's Jews intersects with central components required for the establishment of Iranian identity, especially language, territory, historiography, and culture.

Introducing his entry on "Iranian Identity" in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Ahmad Ashraf defines these aforementioned criteria as follows:

A collective feeling by Iranian people of belonging to the historic lands of Iran. This sense of identity defined both historically and territorially, evolved from a common historical experience and cultural tradition among the people who lived in *Irān zamīn*, and shared in Iranian mythologies and legends as well as in its history. It was further defined and made distinctive by drawing boundaries between Iranians (the in-group) and the 'others' (out-groups). (Ashraf, 2006, p. 501)

If this is the case, Iranian identity comprises shared historical experience, affinity for territory, cultural tradition, and a feeling of cohesion vis-à-vis the "other" that defines the "self." We will now examine this definition as it pertains to the case of Iranian Jewry: How do these criteria apply to their situation?<sup>7</sup>

#### IV. TERRITORIAL AND HISTORICAL COMMONALITY

The Jews of Iran have seen themselves as denizens of Iranian territory for the 2,700 years since the Assyrian exile (722 BC).<sup>8</sup> Numerous Jewish-Iranian public figures often repeat that Judaism constitutes the oldest religious minority in Iran, and one that settled there a millennium before the rise of Islam. Nevertheless, this fact does not dull the common historical memory shared by Iranian Jews and other Iranians. The late researcher of Iranian Jewry, Amnon Netzer, provided some clarification on the common historical memory shared by Iranian Jews and other Iranians:

The Jewish minority in Iran is that country's oldest religious minority. Even despite the rather difficult entanglements of Jewish existence, there is still a positive historical memory of the distant past. Consciousness of the exile, the place of Cyrus in Jewish history, and *Megillath Ester*—the story of Purim—all constitute milestones in this historical memory. The Jewish community attributes its beginnings to the Babylonian exile. The end to a Jewish presence in *Eretz Yisrael*—the biblical land of Israel, was accompanied by the historical memory of integration into Iranian society, economic prosperity, and cultural flourishing. Consciousness of the positive past of Jewish presence in [Iran] was not at all undermined by the difficulties of the Khomeini period. (2005a, p. 9)

Many Jews view Iran's distant, royal past as an integral part of Jewish his-

tory. The attempt to establish this link found special success during the Pahlavi period. Father and son attempted to revive what they have seen as secular Iranian nationalism that thrived with the rule of Cyrus the Great, founder of the Achaemenid Iranian Empire, constituting a source of pride and inspiration. They worked to establish continuity between the pre-Islamic period and their own with regard to conceptions of the monarchy, symbols, and cultural values.<sup>9</sup> Jews identified with the nationalist aspirations and values of a revived Iran due to social and economic reasons and integrated them into their Iranian, Jewish identity.<sup>10</sup> One of the more important connections is found in the story of Cyrus, often represented as no less than the messiah, savior of the Jewish people, and even, in the Judeo-Persian literary tradition (Shahīn's<sup>11</sup> *Ardashīr-nāmeḥ*),<sup>12</sup> a Jew himself. The story of Cyrus is well ingrained in the collective memory of all Iranians, Jews and Muslims alike.

The emphasis placed on Iranian Jewry's solid historical connection to Iran's past by way of Cyrus the Great is by no means unique to the Pahlavi era. Even today, in the days of the Islamic Republic, the memory of Cyrus still blazes in the minds of Iranians, as seen in a story told by a former Israeli representative to Iran, Meir Ezri. Ezri was told by an Iranian-Muslim professor he met at UCLA that on visits to Iran, Iranians say to him: "Once Cyrus saved the Jews, now it's your [the Jews'] turn to come and save us Iranians."<sup>13</sup>

A prevalent tale among Iranian Jews that links the two components of their identity—Jewish and Iranian—is the story of the settling of the exiles in Iran. According to this myth, preserved especially by the Jews of Isfahan, the first exiles who fled Nebuchadnezzar brought with them water and soil from Jerusalem. Anytime they would stop in a place, they would check its soil and water and compare it with that which they carried. When they arrived in Isfahan, examining the water and mud, they found that it was equal to that of Jerusalem, and immediately settled there, building homes and begetting their offspring. For this very reason, they named the place "Yahūdīye," which means "place of the Jews" (Fischel, 1935, pp. 523-526).

Iranian Jews frequently stress the collective, historical memory they possess in common with the imagined Iranian nation and their continued presence in Iran as a means of generating a sense of belonging to the Iranian homeland. The leaders of the Jewish community in Iran claim their community has deep roots in Iran, more so than those of other Jewish communities in the Middle East, and emphasize the unbreakable connection that started in the days of the bible with the story of Cyrus and the Book of Esther. They emphasize their long history in Iran, which includes 2,700 years and 1300 years before the arrival of Islam in Iran and the composition of the Biblical Talmud under the Iranian Sassanid dynasty, respectively.

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Similarly to the Pahlavis' agenda, Iranian Jews stressed the pre-Islamic history and enjoyed the modernization and secularization process in Iran, which allowed them to assimilate into Iranian society more effectively. Following the accession to power of Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1925, the authority of religious officials diminished and the Jews were granted legal equality, which was implemented mainly in the urban areas of the country and especially in Tehran, where modernization and secularization were prominent.

Michael Zand, a scholar of Iranian studies, discusses the decreased social import that the concept of Jewish "impurity" (*nejāsāt*)<sup>14</sup> began to play in the 1930s in Iran. Zand writes,

The processes of Westernization and secularization and its effect on the thinking of Iranian intellectuals and of the political establishment, helped bring about, if not the abolishment of the concept of "impure infidels," then at least a lessening of the stigma of that label. This was especially true among the new urban middle classes, especially in Tehran. In this way, by the 1930's the Jewish image lost some of the stigma of impurity, both in the eyes of the ruling elite and in the eyes of the intellectual elite, and to a high degree in the eyes of the Iranian urban middle classes.<sup>15</sup>

This atmosphere under the Pahlavis allowed the Jews to differ from the traditional concepts. In a leading article from the Jewish Iranian magazine *'Alam-e Yahūd* [Pers. The Jewish World] (February 26, 1946, no. 27), the author raised open questions, asking why the offspring of the Arabs and Mongols who attacked Iran and destroyed it are still considered Iranian, while the Jews, who have lived there since the days of Cyrus, are considered foreigners and impure. The author also emphasized that the Jew in Iran is first Iranian and then Jewish and asked how it is possible that Jews serve in the army<sup>16</sup> for twenty years, yet there isn't one officer among them. In another article in the same magazine (April 2, 1946, no. 30), the author stressed that many crimes were executed during the Iranian history against the Jewish minority, even though its sons kept their loyalty to the country and their love for their homeland (as cited in Netzer, 2005b, p. 150).

## V. LANGUAGE

Language is a powerful symbol of national and ethnic identity. Using certain language or a linguistic register is a means by which we can present our own identity and the group to which we belong (Spolsky, 1999, p. 181). Iran's Jews are connected to Iran not merely through history and territory, but also as speakers of the Persian language. By using the mother tongue of Persian, Iranian Jews draw the line of belonging to the native speakers of Persian. This is unlike other minorities in Iran, such as the Armenians and

Assyrians, who preserved their original language both as their spoken language and as the language of cultural creativity (Netzer, 1980, pp. 26-27). Thamar Gindin, a researcher of Jewish-Iranian languages, asserts that

the Jewish community of Iran, one of the oldest in the world, dates back to the eighth century B.C.E. While adhering to their religious tenets even under severe persecution, Iranian Jews readily adopted Iranian culture and literature and regarded them as their own. Like their brethren in other diasporas, Jews in Iran adopted the common vernacular for everyday life, while retaining the use of Hebrew predominantly as a sacred language, in order to survive as a religion and a nation, and to communicate with other Jewish communities in the world. Naturally, some Hebrew and Aramaic words and calques found their way into the Jewish variety of the local language. (2010, para. 2)

The majority of Iranian Jews speak or spoke Persian or other, related dialects, and, as is well-known, language plays a meaningful role in their sense of belonging.

However, “like other minority groups [such as other Jewish communities in the diaspora],” Gindin asserts,

Most Iranian Jews were at least bilingual, speaking the local Jewish dialect at home, and using the common vernacular—usually (Muslim) Persian—with the authorities and with their non-Jewish neighbors. Judeo-Persian<sup>17</sup> was used for communication between communities in Persia, tafsir (Bible translation and commentary), synagogue sermons, and official documents, such as legal treatises. (2010, para. 3)

Nevertheless, Iranian Jews translated some of their prayers into the local language, which shows the prominence of the language in their identity. For example, on the eve of the Passover Seder, Jews would render passages from the *Haggadah* into Persian after declaiming the original Hebrew. Additionally, certain traditional blessings were recited in Persian, and if they were read in Hebrew or Aramaic, the traditional response would come in Persian (Gindin, 2005, p. 108).

Thus, Jewish cultural intercourse was conducted through the hybrid form of Judeo-Persian. Nahid Pirnazar, the researcher of Judeo-Persian literature, claims that Judeo-Persian literature represents the cultural heritage of Iranian Jewry and serves as a living document that speaks to the love and connection between Iranian Jews and Iran’s culture and literature (Pirnazar, 2005, p. 37).

The prominent Judeo-Persian researcher David Yerushalmi also stresses this Jewish-Muslim symbiosis, seen in the Judeo-Persian literary repertoire:

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Most original compositions were written in Judeo-Persian, with only a small number in Hebrew. . . . These compositions are firmly planted in the Jewish religious/literary tradition that developed among Iranian Jews residing in the Persian cultural-linguistic sphere beginning in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and perhaps even earlier. . . . This religious, literary tradition was influenced by the widespread aesthetics and linguistic and literary conventions of classical Persian literature, especially with regards to epic, romantic, and mystical poetry. (Yerushalmi, 2005, pp. 130-131)

Jewish authors interspersed their stories with literary motifs and devices borrowed from classical Persian literature, as Vera B. Moreen, the scholar of Judaeo-Persian literature, shows regarding Shāhīn's manuscripts.<sup>18</sup> One of the most outstanding examples of this cultural diffusion is Shāhīn's *Ardeshīr-nāmeḥ*, an epic poem completed in the year 1333 that involves the Jewish Purim narrative, *Megillat Esther*. Shāhīn borrows the meter from "Leyli and Majnūn," composed by his Persian contemporary Nizāmī. In the *Ardeshīr-nāmeḥ*, which stands at over six thousand stanzas, Shāhīn follows in the footsteps of the illustrious 10th century Persian poet Ferdowsī, producing an epic that revolves around King Ardeshir (Ahasuerus in *Megillat Esther*). Shāhīn paints spectacular portraits of love and vengeance, nature and the hunt, battlefields and royal sporting contests, all scenes reminiscent of the mythical world described in the *Shāh-nameḥ*. Shāhīn's borrowings and literary kinship to Nizāmī and Ferdowsī are consistent with Ashraf's aforementioned definition, which posits shared mythology as a central component of Iranian identity.

Jewish Iranians, however, do not regard the Judeo-Persian literary oeuvre as their sole literary heritage, and consider well-known Iranian poets to be theirs as well. A magazine printed in 1980 by the umbrella organization of Iranian Jews in Israel gives us a glimpse into this strong tendency of Iranian Jews:

We Iranians have Khayyāms, Hāfezes, and Mūlawīs. We have a rich and ancient culture, just as westerners have their Goethes, Shakespeares, and Victor Hugos in whom they take pride. Why should we not also take pride in our poets and writers whose works have enriched our very souls, on whose poems we were nurtured, and with whose words we have spent many generations.<sup>19</sup>

The Jewish-Iranian symbiosis does not manifest itself only in the world of letters, but also in the visual arts. The 2005 film *The Jews of Iran*, directed by the Iranian-Dutch filmmaker Ramin Farahani, presents the Jewish artist Sassoon at an exhibit introducing his work, which combines motifs bor-

rowed from the Iranian artistic heritage and elements of Jewish culture. According to Sassoon:

I've always been drawn to *our* traditional Iranian art and culture, especially since my father was an antique dealer. As a child I was always around Iranian antiques and crafts. So I developed a passion for ethnic and ancient Iranian art forms, such as miniatures, architecture and handicrafts. These objects and designs have unconsciously influenced my work. As you can see, this painting was inspired by traditional Jewish forms from Isfahan and Iranian religious motifs such as the Ten Commandments; this candlelight [referring to the Jewish seven-branched candelabrum]; Moses, the name of the prophet Moses; this design in the middle contains David's prayers; the Grand name of God. The rabbis of Isfahan used to hand draw and color these designs in the past. (*Jews of Iran*, Isfahan 1, 28, pp. 20-29, 55)

Other examples of these mutual influences of Muslims on Jews and vice versa are manifested in additional aspects of Jewish religious life: The Jewish educational institution in Iran is called the *Mūlla-Khāneh* or *Maktab-Khāneh*, where the Torah is taught by a teacher known as *Khākhām* (Hebrew for wise man) or *Mūlla*; the title of his counterpart in the Iranian Islamic is *Maktab* (Ram, 2008, pp. 8-9; Rahimiyan, 2005, p. 82). Jewish emissaries in Iran in the early 20th century reported that synagogues were devoid of furnishings, covered instead in rugs according to local custom, with worshippers sitting on pillows placed along the walls (Levy, 1986, p. 19). Furthermore, Jews customarily removed their shoes upon entering the synagogue, much like Muslims in a mosque (Kopellowitz, 1930, p. 49).

## VI. CULTURE

Furthermore, Iranian Jews listen to Iranian music, take Iranian names, and enthusiastically celebrate Iranian holidays, including the Iranian New Year, *Nowrūz*. In her autobiography, Iranian Jewish author Roya Hakakian—who left the country in 1985—describes the level acculturation attained by her uncle, Ardi, in 1970s Iranian society:

He was the Jew who had shed the “ghetto” speech, Persian peppered with Hebrew. Even Jews mistook him for a Muslim and behaved as they did in the company of one. They offered him the best seat in the house and waited cheerfully on him. They watched their manners and spoke flawless Persian, even quoted passages from the holy Koran . . . Everything about him was Iranian, even his name: Ardi, short for Ardeshir, the king of the ancient Persian Empire. (Hakakian, 2004, pp. 50-51)

Poignant examples of the reciprocal ties between Jews and Muslims in Iran

can be found in many areas and appear to be firmly rooted in Iranian culture, as Jewish-Iranian identity was established through constant links with the cultural and geographical sphere of Iran. Studies on diasporic discourse demonstrate that this synthesis between Jewish and local culture—in this instance, Iranian—was a necessary factor in the survival of the entire diaspora community. As Boyarin and Boyarin observed:

Within conditions of Diaspora, tendencies towards nativism were also materially discouraged. Diaspora culture and identity allows (and has historically allowed in the best circumstances, such in Muslim Spain) for a time that the same people participate fully in the common cultural life of their surroundings . . . Diasporic cultural identity teaches us that cultures are not preserved by being protected from “mixing” but probably can only continue to exist as a product of such “mixing.” (2003, p. 108)

To paraphrase the Boyarins, it seems that the Iranian Jewish identity answers the required criteria of Iranian identity: a sense of identity defined both historically and territorially, common historical experience, and cultural tradition shared in Iranian mythologies and legends as well as in its history. It thus appears that Iranian Jews did not constitute a separate and foreign entity in the Iranian environment, but an Iranian group of foreign origin (Semites) with a steadfast connection to Iran, the country they viewed as their homeland (*vatan*) in the second half of the twentieth century. It is clear, therefore, that the Iranian Jews feel a deep affinity toward their place of birth, so much so that they love its scent, as described by Manūchehr Eliyāsī, the former Jewish representative in the Iranian parliament (as cited in Greenberger, 1980, p. 79).

## VII. THE “SELF” VERSUS THE “OTHER”

Eliyāsī’s statement brings us to the last ingredient of Iranian national identity, which in my opinion is one of the most important: the feeling of belonging to one group instead of another. Similarly, sentiments of not-belonging, transience, and exile are contingent on the state of one’s consciousness. As Shuval put it, “Diaspora is a social construct founded on feeling, consciousness, memory, mythology, history, meaningful narratives, group identity, longings, dreams, allegorical and virtual elements, all of which play a role in establishing a Diaspora reality” (2000, p. 43).

Homi Bhaba, one of the most important figures in contemporary post-colonial studies, asserts that national ideology aspires to transform the heterogeneous nation into one people and to instill an impression of a united nationality. It is for this reason that nationalist ideology is given to distorting the internal contradictions and conflicts among the different groups

constituting the nation and between the individual and the collective. Nationalist ideology attempts to create distinct boundaries of belonging vis-à-vis foreignness. Bhaba adds, however, that beneath the cloak of homogeneity woven by the super-narrative lie latent tensions, contradictions, and fractures (1994, pp. 145-148).

Critical historiographical research demonstrates how historical writing is clearly tied to the manner in which nations construct identities through selective historical memory, the overlooking and even intentional suppression of historical events and figures. According to Rubie Watson, the past is viewed from the perspective of the present; but, just as the present changes, so too does the past (1994, p. 1).

It thus follows that not only must the Iranian identity of Jews be examined with respect to present circumstances, but that we must also analyze the role of the Jew in the ongoing ambivalence of Iranian identity. Is the Jew the “other,” set apart from the majority, a kind of marker indicating the boundaries of Iranian nationalistic identity against which the subjectivity of the Iranian collective is built? Or, alternatively, is he an active participant in the construction of this identity?<sup>20</sup>

Anna Triandafyllidou (1998) demonstrates that most prominent theories of nationalism recognize the “other” and its fundamental role in the creation and definition of national identity. The nationalist experience supposes, *a priori*, the existence of “others,” who simultaneously belong and do not belong to the national community, whose members define themselves as distinct from these “others.” Triandafyllidou claims that national consciousness is not defined only by the positive characteristics of a certain culture—for example, its language, origin, and territory—but also by its awareness of “the others.” In the case of Iran, the position of “the other” is filled by the Jew, with his distinct (“Semitic”) origin, different speech (Judeo-Persian), separate values, and unique culture (Judaism).

One of Triandafyllidou’s (1998) particular contributions to ethnic studies is her coining of the phrase “Significant Other,” by which she means the other nation or ethnic group, residing in close territorial proximity to the national community (or even in its midst), that threatens or is perceived as threatening either the nation’s freedom or its ethnic and/or cultural purity. The presence of this “Significant Other” is all the more conspicuous in times of crisis—especially of nationalist ferment like the Islamic revolution—in a way that defines how the “imagined community” of the nation finds lasting expression in the rhetoric of peril (McAlister, 2001, p. 6). The tension that stems from the conflict is likely to increase the tendency to emphasize the foreignness of the “other” and set it as the negative polar opposite of the national collective, through an emphasis on social, cultural, religious, and even physical differences (Triandafyllidou, 1998).

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As mentioned, throughout the Pahlavi dynasty, Iranian Jewry felt an inseparable connection to Iranian nationalism. In the introduction to his book *The Comprehensive History of the Jews of Iran*, first published in Tehran in 1960, Habib Levy, a Jewish Iranian community activist, explains one of his reasons for writing this book:

Rather unfortunately, we must confess that the Iranians, our countrymen, still do not recognize the legitimacy of the Jews who have lived as their neighbors for 27 centuries. In other words, our Iranian Muslim compatriots do not view Judaism as worthy, with its heavenly book and people, the first to travel the path of monotheism . . . . These dwellers of water and earth of every class must therefore stand as united allies, striving as one for the glorification and flourishing of this, our country, in which we all rejoice. This collaborative effort will be on the right track when Iranians begin to understand each other, knowing that the members of the Iranian nation of every race and religion, wherever they may be, desire happiness and prosperity for their land in which their descendants shall continue living. Iranians of every race and religion were born in this country, and it is in this country that they shall be laid to rest.

In principle, Islam and Judaism are not in conflict; they are both founded on the oneness of God, purity, holiness, and the path of righteousness. The Jew was the first monotheist, and consequently, the morals-instructor of mankind, traveling upon a lonely road for many a dark century, surrounded by profligacy and idolatry. *Of all places the Jew has come to live, he sincerely loves Iran, the land of Cyrus and Darius who protected his forefathers.*

The Jew lost his freedom and independence for the past 19 centuries because he fought against the Emperors of Rome, those enemies of Iran. Mankind must decide how to reward its morals-instructor and compensate him for his troubles. If only God would reveal his intention by making the Jews familiar with their own history, drawing them closer to the Iranian nation.” (pp. 3-4) (emphasis added)

Levy thus attempts to place Jews along with fellow Iranians as partners in a common struggle. Reading into his words, one can discern the purging mechanisms that serve the creation of a sense of common national identity. Levy sets down distinct boundaries of belonging versus foreignness, while constructing a common, albeit “imagined,” past. Also finding expression in this quotation is the Jewish concept Eldad Pardo terms “Universal Judaism”—the idea that Judaism’s role is to serve as “a light unto the nations” that serves as a model for correcting injustice in the world (Pardo, 2004).

This conception also suits the fact that Israel in the 1960s served as an example for Iran, as a state opposed to Western imperialism. Burgeoning Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel constituted a critical juncture that brought about a new discourse in the perception of Israel and

the Jews. Erudite Iranians of the left viewed the new Israeli state as a political model worthy of imitation. The creation of the “New Jew” in the spirit of the Zionist vision introduced a new and important element into the world of representations of the Jew.

On this subject, we look to the words of the most prominent Iranian leftist thinker of the day, Jalāl Al-e Ahmad,<sup>21</sup> writing about Iranian Jews in his travel log after his visit to Israel in 1963:

I am the son of the East, a Persian speaker—from the bottom of history—I am connected to Judaism. In the period of Darius and Ahasuerus—I crowned Esther and appointed Mordecai as a minister and ordered the temple rebuilt. Although in the alleys of Ray and Nayshābour sometimes due to inciting and wickedness on the part of one governor or the interests of one ruler, I had a hand in Jew killing, the tomb of Daniel the prophet in Susa still initiates miracles and the Esther and Mordecai tombs in Hamedān are no less important than the tombs of the holy son of the Imam. (Al-e Ahmad, 1964, p. 382)

Al-e Ahmad presents the common historical destiny of Jews and Iranians as a component of the purging and hybridizing mechanisms of the Iranian national project. A close reading of Al-e Ahmad, however, reveals contradictions and divisions, as in certain circumstances, Iranian Jewry was excluded and even separated from the rest of society.

The Six-Day War of 1967 served as a catalyst for anti-Israeli trends in Iran, as it turned the tables on Israel’s once-glamorous image. Israel was now perceived as a colonial power opposing the anti-colonial ideals of the third world with which Iran identified. The most prominent example of this change of heart on the part of Iranians regarding Israel is the 1968 AFC Asian Cup final soccer match between Israel and Iran.<sup>22</sup>

The unruly behavior of the Iranian crowd throughout the game was indeed a sign of hatred towards Israel, but also, simultaneously, a veiled expression of negative feelings toward Iran’s Jews. The soccer game constituted a device for cultivating the solidarity of internal Iranian society, and thereby creating a distinction between the “good guys” (the Iranian team) and the “bad guys” (the Israeli team). In this dichotomous framework, Iranian Jews were identified with Israelis as the “bad guys.” The game thus served as a means for excluding Jews from participating in the Iranian national project. This example demonstrates that “we must therefore rid ourselves of simplistic dichotomies . . . . A complex system of variegated circumstances, dependent on local conditions has created a heterogeneous, multi-faceted picture of life full of contradictions” (Gruen, 2004, pp. 17-18). Hence, although it appeared that Iranian Jews were well integrated in

Pahlavi-era Iranian society, in reality, this integration was somewhat superficial.

### VIII. IRANIAN JEWS AFTER THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION

This complicated picture from the days of the Shah—who strove to create a secular Iran with a Western orientation and without Islam—has continued in the Islamic Republic, despite attempts to present post-Pahlavi Iran in a one-dimensional light. Researchers of Iranian Jewry have found puzzling the prospect that Jews could feel “at home” in a religious, Islamic, and Eastern-oriented Iran. Regarding Jewish participation in Iranian nationalism after the Islamic Revolution, Netzer claimed, “It is indeed inconceivable that religious Iranian nationalism in its Shi’ite variant will prove tolerant towards the Jews that are considered in their eyes as a foreign sapling that must be uprooted, or whose development at the very least must be restricted within the country” (1979, p. 73).

When Ayatollah Khomeini, the senior Shi’ite cleric and future Supreme Leader of the country, returned to Iran on the February 1, 1979, five thousand Jews, led by Iranian Chief Rabbi Yedīdyā Shofet, were among those welcoming him. Some of them held pictures of Khomeini and signs proclaiming: “Jews and Muslims are brothers.” But beneath the surface of this attempt to create a uniform national identity, there were also rifts which labeled the Jew as the “other” over the course of the revolution and the initial years of the Islamic Republic.

During the revolution itself, a wave of anti-Israel sentiment swept over Iran, affecting the Jewish community. Private wealth was confiscated on a large scale, sending thousands of affluent Jews fleeing to the United States or Israel. On May 14, 1979, five days after the execution of Jewish community head Habīb Elqānayān, who was accused of Zionist espionage and activities, a delegation of Jewish leaders set out for Qom to meet with Khomeini, who allayed their fears with the following words:

We make a distinction between the Jewish community and the Zionists—and we know that these are two different things. We are against [the Zionists] because they are not Jews, but politicians . . . but as for the Jewish community and the rest of the [minority] communities in Iran—they are members of this nation. Islam will treat them in the same manner as it does all other sectors of society. (Radio Tehran, May 15, 1979)

Despite the fact that Khomeini propounded a distinction between Iranian Jews and Zionist Israelis, the lines were often blurred. Harangues took place not only against Israel and Zionism in the Iranian media, but often

against the Jews as well. In the 2005 film *The Jews of Iran*, a Muslim student is asked if she spends time outside of school with her Jewish classmates. She responds that she prefers not to, and that “because of the atmosphere that Israel has created, I am not fond of Jews.” The director prods his subject and points out that Iranian Jews are not Israelis, to which she answers that it also because of their religion and that the Jews also keep to themselves.

This blurring of identities befits Triandafyllidou’s (1998) theory, according to which the presence of the “significant other” finds prominence in times of national crisis and nation-shaping. Iranian Jews were thus forced to redefine their place in the post-revolutionary period, emphasizing their Iranian identity. We can learn much about this phase from the pen of Hārūn Yeshāyā’ī, a leader of The Organization of Iranian Jewish Intellectuals<sup>23</sup> and editor of its magazine, *Tamuz*:

Yes! I am God’s servant; I am an Iranian and a Jew . . . I feel myself inside the eternal tapestry of this [Iranian] nation. This feeling permeates my entire body and flows into my veins. My ears know the calls of Allahu Akbar that erupt from the minarets of the mosques under blue skies, yet cannot identify the sounds of Big Ben in London. In times of joy I have laughed with the Muslims of my homeland, and in times of sorrow I have cried with them. My mother wept in the days of the ‘Ashūra next to the mosque over the tragedy which befell Hossein and his companions. I counted the days so that I too would have a part in the ‘Ashūra ceremonies. I am a *dhimmī* and must pay *jīzya*. This is all true . . . I recognize this law. (*Tamuz*, November 26, 1985)

Roya Hakakian expresses her feelings in the wake of revolutionary anti-Jewish acts in a pained, sardonic monologue:

Was it not your beautiful handwriting on the wall across our door, “*Johouds* [derogatory term for Jews] go Home”? My real homeland is Israel. True, I wasn’t born there, went there as a child once, can’t carry on a conversation in Hebrew, don’t write in it, or speak it with my family. (2004, p. 222)

Reading Yeshāyā’ī and Hakakian, it is not difficult to sense the searing insult Iranian Jews felt when excluded from the national Iranian project. Unlike the Pahlavi regime, which gave highest priority to the principle of nationality and viewed Jews as equals, the Islamic doctrine of the Islamic Republic of Iran embraced religious values, which inevitably resulted in perceptions of the inferiority of the Jews and the superiority of the Muslim majority. The doctrine of Ayatollah Khomeini, leader of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which was created before the Islamic revolution, emphasized

the Shi'ite tenet of the impurity of non-Muslims (*nejāsat*) discussed above. This perception of impurity significantly affected the lives of the Jews and their daily interaction with the surrounding Shi'ite society (Menashri, 2002, pp. 399-400).

It seems that the love of Iran did not survive the test of the Islamic revolution, on the eve of which thousands of Jews cut the thick chains that tied them to their homeland (as was the case for many Muslim Iranians); they felt like the “other” and unwelcome, whereupon they emigrated from their home. Many of Iran's Jews avoided wrestling with the national conflict entirely when they emigrated. Those who remained stressed their firm connection with the Iranian homeland while emphasizing their weak link to the state of Israel and world Jewry. Furthermore, Iranian Jews felt the need to demonstrate their loyalty to Iranian nationalism more strongly in light of the transformation of Jewish identity into a national one with the advent of Zionism.

#### IX. LIP SERVICE OR SINCERE DECLARATIONS OF LOYALTY?

Iranian Jews continue to believe that their allegiance to the homeland is cast in doubt by their very existence as Jews, despite their upholding the practices of Iranian nationalism in addition to those of religious Judaism. Shuval (2000, p. 45) observed, “Diaspora communities make it clear that identity with a political or geographical entity does not need to be binary—in the sense of all or nothing—but can involve *loyalty to more than one such entity*” (emphasis added).

But this allegiance many Iranian Jews pledge to their homeland has stood strong, notwithstanding the 1979 revolution, and is coupled with an emphasis on displaying Jewish-Iranian fealty to the Iranian nation to avoid harassment. In an interview I conducted with a recent Iranian immigrant to the United States in her twenties (April 2, 2007), my subject reported instances in which she was labeled with the derogatory epithet “Zionist” despite living in Islamic Republican Iran. She would respond that she was a non-Zionist Jew, and that calling her a Zionist was similar to calling an Iranian an Arab. She would explain to her Iranian interlocutor that being Jewish did not necessarily make her a Zionist, just as an Iranian who adheres to Islam does not immediately become an Arab. This anecdote suggests that Jews in Iran insist on this separation between Judaism, on one hand, and Zionism and Israeliness, on the other.

Additionally, Iran's Jews often take ardent public stances against Israel, and many Jews join the Iranian masses in protesting the State of Israel on the annual “Rūz-e Qods” (Jerusalem Day). On the website of the central committee of the Iranian Jewish Community ([www.iranjewish.com](http://www.iranjewish.com)).

com), myriad expressions of opposition to Israeli policy in the Palestinian territories and in Lebanon are present. For example, during the Second Lebanon War of August 2006, the community website featured an article disparaging Israel entitled "The Jewish Community Condemns the Brutal Massacre of Lebanese at Qānā." The piece's authors, the community's official leadership, wrote, "Israeli soldiers have violated every last letter of international law and human rights, massacring women and children in Qānā." They added that "the Israeli attack on Qānā and various locales in Palestine and Lebanon contradict the Jewish faith and the Torah of Moses."

One of the central claims regarding Iranian Jews during the Islamic Republic that arises again and again is that Iranian Jewish demonstrations of loyalty to Iran and the regime are nothing but the lip service of an oppressed minority. Some have compared this phenomenon with the Shi'ite concept of *'taqīyah'*<sup>24</sup> Jews have supposedly adopted in order to continue living securely in Shi'ite Iran (Ram, 2008, p. 16). Nevertheless, the Western observer has a tendency to conceive of Iranian Jews as living under a tyrannical regime that makes their lives so miserable that they are forced to seek refuge abroad. This viewpoint holds that the declarations of Iranian Jews are products of their fear that they will be associated with Israel, leading to repeat occurrences of events similar to the aforementioned arrest of 13 Iranian Jews on spying charges; such events cast doubt upon the allegiance of Jews to the Islamic Republic and threaten their security.

In recent documentaries, Jews have told journalists and filmmakers that they have a good life in Iran, possess ritual freedom, and can live however they wish. Nevertheless, filmmaker Ramin Farahani found most Jews too afraid to be open, saying: "The Jews' fear of freely expressing themselves in front of the camera, and, incidentally, in front of others who may see the film, is apparent throughout the film."<sup>25</sup>

Some explain the declarations and parades supporting the Islamic Republican regime as a means by which the Jewish community can achieve freedom of religious practice and breathing space by proving its loyalty to the regime, given the fact that in the past the Jews were faithful to the Shah's regime (thus earning Khomeini's scorn) and that with the success of the revolution, Iranian Jewry turned to explicit support of the Islamic government (Menashri, 2005, p. 67). Iran's Jews deny any connection to Israel, as Zionism and a connection to Israel are considered in the Islamic Republic to be serious crimes for any Iranian citizen, regardless of religion. Because of their Jewish identity, sometimes mistakenly tied to that of Israel and Zionism, Iranian Jews are suspected of constituting a fifth column.

Another opinion holds that these expressions demonstrate the rootedness and self-confidence of Iranian Jews as an integral component of Iranian society, not just in the Pahlavi period, but in the Islamic Republic as

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well. I interpret this Iranian-Jewish practice as one that characterizes complex, hybrid identities:

Whenever any group is called to answer charges of contradicting identities, it is obligated to adopt a different, quantal appearance which must express one component of its identity while concealing contradictory elements. This is not a theoretical position: it is the theatrical praxis of life, which occurs against its will, aims at gaining visibility in the public sphere, which ties the option of visibility with axioms, fantasies and narratives that are individually connected to every contradictory aspect of identity. (Shemeolof, Gorfinkel, & Herzog, 2007, pp. 6-7)

The aforementioned quotation may teach us something regarding Iranian Jews under the Islamic Republic: They are forced to maneuver between two intertwined identities, each of which is expressed publicly in different socio-political contexts. Iranian Jews demonstrate their Iranian identity to the outside world, but stress their Jewish identity when it comes to intra-communal interaction.

It was for this reason that in 1981 (in the 61st issue of *Tamuz*, September 25, 1981) the Organization of Iranian Jewish Intellectuals substituted the more Islamic term *Kalīmī* (Jew) for the original *Yahūdī* in the group's title.<sup>26</sup> The term *Kalīmī* derives from the title of *Mūsā Kalīm-Allāh*, Moses, who speaks to Allah, and is also recognized by Islam as a prophet. This quality is attributed to Moses in the Koran because he is the only one of the prophets who has actually spoken to God directly. The use of the term *Kalīmī* by the organization is meant to emphasize the shared historical connection between Iran's Jews and Muslims.

In a protest by Tehran's Jewish community against Israel's military offensive in Lebanon in 1982, a banner could be seen bearing the slogan "The actions of Zionists go against the sublime and humanistic teaching of the Prophet Moses," signed by "The Jews of Iran." In this banner, Moses is referred to by his Islamic name: *Mūsā Kalīm-Allāh* (Moses who speaks to Allah). The use of Moses's Islamic name has an obvious resonance within the context of the demonstration and Iran's political atmosphere.

This sense of partnership has continued until today, when, despite all the difficulties, Jews still feel a part of the Islamic Republic. A BBC team that was dispatched to gauge the status of Iran's Jews reported that most of the community was determined to remain in Iran regardless of any pressure applied by the regime. According to the BBC, the members of the community—25,000 strong—are just as proud of their Iranian culture as of their Judaism.<sup>27</sup>

In summer 2007, the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* published an article on a special fund offering sixty thousand dollars to any Iranian-Jewish fam-

ily willing to immigrate to Israel. The Iranian news site *Asr-e Iran* published an article according to which “the attempts of the Zionists who live in American and Europe” to summon Iran’s Jews to leave the country resulted in abject failure: “It must be noted that not long ago the Western media uncovered a program to bribe [Iranian] Jews into leaving for the Israeli regime in exchange for an enormous sum of money. The program met a resounding defeat as Iranian Jews were by no means ready to leave this country and immigrate to occupied territory.” The article reported that Iranian Jews received letters sowing fear among them and urging them to emigrate:

Recently a large number of letters were sent to Jews residing in Iran from abroad. These letters requested that the receiving families leave Iran within the following two months, as quickly as possible, and move to Israel or anywhere else. According to *Jāhān*, these letters announced, under the heading “danger-danger-danger” that anyone who did not flee should expect worrisome events.<sup>28</sup>

Only 40 Jews answered this call, arriving in Israel at the end of December, 2007.<sup>29</sup> The proposal was strongly spurned by those Jews who prefer to stay in Iran, and the official website of the community ([http://www.iranjewish.com/News\\_e/Iranian.htm](http://www.iranjewish.com/News_e/Iranian.htm)) condemned the initiative, asserting that “Iranian Jews’ identity is not exchangeable for money” (para. 2).<sup>30</sup> On the site, community leaders demanded that Iranian Jewry be left alone and that others not interfere in the internal affairs of Iran and the Jewish community. Their statement went so far as to deny all published reports relating to Iranian Jewry in the foreign press, stressing that they did not assist in organized Jewish emigration and viewed the enemies of the Iranian nation as their own.<sup>31</sup>

Shuval observes, “Diaspora discourse reflects a sense of being part of an ongoing transnational network that includes a homeland. It is characterized by a sense of living in one place while simultaneously remembering and/or desiring and yearning for another place” (2000, p. 44). This description does not seem valid in the case of Iranian Jews, the majority of whom chose and continue choosing to remain in “exile” in Iran. Some visit Israel, however, but return to Iran. They express longing and love for Zion, in a messianic vein or on a personal level. *Eretz Yisrael* and Jerusalem represent potent ideals for Iranian Jews. Judaism is part of their identity, but it does not contradict their Iranianness, and they view Iran as their home.

The lack of desire on the part of Iran’s Jews to abandon the country is viewed with amazement in Israel and the West, especially in light of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s declarations regarding the authenticity of the Holocaust, the elimination of Israel, or the offer to relocate it to Europe

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or Alaska. One would be mistaken to assume that the Jews of Iran remain aloof in such instances; they express their opinions on these matters like any Iranian citizen.

In January 2006, in response to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's critical tone and his frequent inflammatory statements regarding the Holocaust, Hārūn Yeshāyā'ī, the head of Iran's Jewish community, sent a letter complaining to Ahmadinejad about his Holocaust denial comments. Yeshāyā'ī reported that the remarks shocked the international community and struck fear within Iran's small Jewish community. He described the Holocaust as one of the 20th century's "most obvious and saddest events" and asked: "How is it possible to ignore all the undeniable evidence existing for the killing and exile of the Jews in Europe during World War II?" Yeshāyā'ī's remarks, although stemming from personal offense and a sense of betrayal, provide further evidence that the Jewish community feels secure in its homeland. Although no response to the letter was made by Iranian officials, this rebuke joins a long line of statements made by community leaders whenever they felt their safety as Jews had been undermined.

Many Jews in Iran today choose to remain there, since they consider it their homeland (*vatan*) and its culture, their culture. Iranian Jews stress that they feel part of Iranian society and emphasize the distant past shared by the Iranian and Jewish peoples. Hārūn Yeshāyā'ī said in a statement to the Iranian press that "the hardships minorities suffer in many countries are the isolation forced upon them by the majority; this situation does not exist in Iran. Nothing isolates the Jews in Iranian society. What is available in Iran is available to all Iranians."<sup>32</sup>

Yet, it would not be right to provide an explanation for this phenomenon only in the cultural context. Other factors besides feeling connected to the country explain the reluctance of Iranian Jews to emigrate:

- Good financial and social status—"According to most of the information accumulated in the past few years, it appears that the majority of the Jewish community enjoys an average standard of living compared to the rest of the Iranian population" (Peskin, 2009, para. 4). Iranian Jews do not want to part with the possessions they worked so hard to accumulate, and some are waiting for the moment when they can take at least some of it with them. Shīrīn Tāleh, who left Iran with her family in 2001 for California, pointed out that "Jews stay in Iran because they have their work, their life, and they love the country" (Greenberger, 2006, p. 78).
- The inability to take possessions and money out of Iran.
- The value of Iranian currency (Tomān). It is low compared to that of

the dollar, so the initial sum an Iranian takes out of the country is not sufficient for a fresh beginning in a new country.<sup>33</sup>

- Messages of the Islamic Republic regime to the Jews. These messages convey that Jews are safe as long as they behave according to their minority status in a Muslim country, meaning that they stay out of politics and do not speak in favor of Israel.
- The objective difficulty of beginning a new life and acclimating oneself in a new country and to a new language, especially for the elderly population. Iranian Jews' emigration levels in the past few years are very low. This may be the result of their fear of the authorities' attitude towards those left behind, or the fact that the Jewish community in the country is growing old and prefers what it has in Tehran over the unknown in Israel (Peskin, 2009; Perelman, 2007).
- One more reason for the decline in the rate of immigration to Israel from Iran is the two-way traffic of Iranian Jews visiting Israel and vice-versa. To be sure, in the 1980s Iranian Jews had great difficulty acquiring a passport and exiting the Iranian borders, but today the Iranian government looks the other way when Iranian Jews visit Israel via a third country. They meet their families and return to Iran. Beyond this traffic of family visitations between Iran and Israel, Iranian Jews who have emigrated are able to come to visit their families in Iran. Theoretically, they can go to Iranian consulates around the world, receive Iranian identification documents, and then visit Iran without any problems. If they wish, Iranian Jews theoretically can even return to settle in Iran again. Yet, many Jews are afraid and few take such action. These possibilities make it easier for Iranian Jews to maintain contact with their families and, in contrast to what prevailed earlier, do not even require them to take advantage of emigration and family reunion.

Other reasons help us understand why the destination of Jews who choose to immigrate is not Israel, but rather European countries and particularly the United States:

- The security situation in Israel raises concerns among Iranian Jews.
- Iranian Jews do not wish to be supported by welfare in Israel, which they do not consider to be sufficiently stable financially.
- They fear that they will have difficulty in finding work in Israel (Protocol no. 171, 2001). Iranian Jews are mainly owners of small businesses, since they are not able to obtain government and clerical positions owing to their status as a minority. When they arrive in Israel, they cannot always manage to open an independent business, which means that immigration to Israel sometimes necessitates learning a new profession and filling in technological gaps.

- The image of the Iranian Jews in Iran is more positive than in Israel.<sup>34</sup> In the opinion of Sorour Suroudi, not only teenagers but also the other Iranian Jews feel alienated in Israeli society and find it difficult to be absorbed into it (Netzer, 1980, pp. 35-36). While Iranians in Israel are trying to conceal their Iranian identity because of the negative stereotypes that haunt them, Iranians who were absorbed in the United States are happy to emphasize their Iranian identity, mainly due to their financial achievements there.<sup>35</sup>
- Iranian Jews went through secularization and modernization processes during the period of the Shah that weakened their sense of Jewishness and their affinity with Israel.
- During the years of the White Revolution, Iranian Jews improved their financial situation significantly and attained higher education, which increased their chances for settling in Western Europe and the United States rather than in Israel. The young country did not attract thousands of the educated, wealthy Jews who controlled the carpet, gold, jewelry, and textile trade, and the pharmacies (Gawdat, 2003, p. 521).
- When they arrive in Israel, Iranian Jews are compelled to waive their Iranian citizenship (a regulation already imposed in the Pahlavi era).<sup>36</sup> In an article published in the sixteenth issue of *Tamuz*, the magazine mentioned previously, on December 6, 1979, a Jew by the name of Mūkhbān complains that the Iranian citizenship of Iranian immigrants to Israel is being revoked (Netzer, 1986, p. 50). Some preferred, however, to keep their Iranian citizenship and retain the possibility of returning to their country of origin.

In the film *Jews of Iran*, we find two trends: on one hand, we have the story of Parandis, the girl who left Iran with her family, although she says decisively that “we love Iran. It’s our country. But we are forced to leave. We don’t want to leave.” She concludes by saying, “I will miss everything [in Iran], even the bumps on the road” (*Jews of Iran*, 08:13-09:05). On the other hand, we have the other story of Mr. Sasson. Even though he had encountered difficulties, he decided to stay in Iran with his family, saying: “I had a few jobs that I didn’t want to lose by leaving Iran. And the love and attachment that my whole family has for Iran, made us stay here” (*Jews of Iran*, 38:10-38:24). Although these two Iranian Jews chose different paths, the connecting thread is the love for Iran that they share.

## X. CONCLUSION

Contrary to the perception of one-dimensional national identity, this article presents the tensions Iranian Jews experience between feelings of

belonging and feelings of foreignness. This pendulum represents a stage in the establishment of national identity. Although nationalist discourse aims to build nations through ideals of purity—belonging versus foreignness, majority versus minority—it also creates contradictions and tensions that combine with existing complexities in the personal and public realms. While this narrative imagines the nation as a complete, homogeneous unit, it also represses the diverse elements that refute this ostensible uniformity.

This study allows us to examine the wider issue of diaspora and homeland from a more theoretical point of view. It casts doubt on a clear-cut division between the two concepts and considers the validity of preferring the homeland over the diaspora, and vice-versa. Have Iran's Jews themselves made this decision? From what we have seen above, they do not appear either to have severed their ties to Jewish identity or to believe themselves to be disconnected from their roots. They find no contradiction between the respect and awe they feel toward the Holy Land, on the one hand, and their obligation to the local community, the land of their birth, and its government, on the other. *Eretz Israel* and Jerusalem have remained powerful symbols in the consciousness of Iranian Jews, but does this awareness reveal a strong desire to pack their suitcases and return to the biblical homeland? It does not seem that Iran's Jews today wish to leave their home. While Judaism remains an essential component of their identity, this does not contradict their Iranianness; Iran remains their homeland. The Jews of Iran have built strong communities and participated in the social, economic, and even political life of Iran—not only in the Pahlavi era, but also during the Islamic Republic. The Iranian Jewish community thus represents a complex model in which Jews keep their national, Iranian identity without forfeiting their Jewish one, to which they steadfastly cling despite its being identified with the Zionist enemy and all the accompanying challenges this association provides in today's Iran. They neither lament their fate nor yearn to flee their homeland. They feel no need to apologize for living in Iran and sense no obligation to reconcile contradictions where they see none.

Moreover, Iran's Jews have enigmatically sought to preserve some aspects of Iranian identity that other Iranians have long since abandoned. The hybrid space occupied by the Jews of Iran is one in which they can attempt to maintain their "Iranianness" more than any other Iranian. Here they can keep their Iranian identity intact, just as they insisted on maintaining now-lost elements of ancient Persian in their Judeo-Persian dialects. In the Passover Seder a few months ago, Iranian Jews read aloud from the Haggadah, saying, "This year here, the next year at home in the land of Israel"; yet they were by no means tempted to make haste and pack their bags to leave the land of their birth.

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## APPENDIX – “A TASTE OF IRAN” (BBC, 2009), PART 6 – SHIRAZ, 5:59-8:39

Below is an excerpt from an interview between The BBC journalist Sadeq Saba, who traveled around his home country of Iran, and Mershad Mehrabi, an engineer and an activist in the Jewish community of Shiraz.

Mershad: There are Jews all over Iran, but since very few emigrated from Shiraz, there are more here [i.e. in Shiraz], which means our religion is stronger here.

Q: So people like you prefer to stay here rather than move abroad like many others who've gone to America or Europe?

A: I really love Shiraz. Maybe it's in my blood.

Q: So do you describe yourself Jewish, Iranian, or Shirazi?

A: I say that I am an Iranian Jew.

Q: And what about Shiraz?

A: I put that in brackets at the end. (*laughing*)

Q: So it doesn't matter then?

A: People ask where you're from. They don't ask about your religion. We all believe in God. Nobody says God is this or God is that. . . We all believe in one God.

## NOTES

1. Mehdi Akhavan Sales, “O You Ancient Land, I Love Thee” (Torā Ay Kohan Boom o Bar Doost Dāram, 1989, *تورا ای کهن بوم و بر دوست دارم* [2008, August 24]). Translator: Ahreeman X. (<http://iranpoliticsclub.net/poetry/ancient-land/index.htm>). This article is dedicated to my mother, Shahnaz Rahimian, who after so many years in Israel still misses her childhood's landscapes of Iran.

2. Ramin Farahani, *Jews of Iran* (film, 2005). The same perceptions can be found in a discussion that appeared in the 2009 BBC's documentary film *A Taste of Iran*. The BBC journalist Sadeq Saba, who traveled around his home country of Iran, met Mershad Mehrabi, an engineer and an activist in the Jewish community of Shiraz, which numbered approximately 6,000 Jews as of 2009, and discussed with him his Jewish Iranian Shirazi identity (see appendix).

3. For the manner in which the “other” has an important role in forging the “self” nationality, see Anna Triandafyllidou (1998), “National Identity and the ‘Other,’” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21(4), 592-612. For the manner in which the “other” was constructed vis-a-vis Jewish-Nationalist-Israeli identity, see Yaacov Yadgar (2003, spring), “Between ‘the Arab’ and ‘the Religious Rightist’: ‘Significant Others’ in Construction of Jewish-Israeli National Identity,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 9(1), 52-74.

4. The phrase “ethnic identity” is used as a categorization for groups of people to

describe their cultural characteristics, such as country of origin, common history and heritage, religion, and race. Some researchers see this identity not as a closed category, but as social constrictions, colonial conquests, a site of struggle of power and politics and social networks. For an extensive discussion of this term see Shenhav, pp. 50-54.

5. <http://www.iranian.com/Times/June98/Tehran/497k.html#letters>.

6. Shakman-Hurd depicts the common attitude toward Iran in the United States as being that in order to preserve the U.S. as a secular and democratic, it is important to oppose the Islamic Republic of Iran, which imposes religious tyranny. In order to do so, the image of Iran in the eyes of many Americans should be preserved as a mirror image of the United States (Elizabeth Shakman Hurd [2004], "The International Politics of Secularism: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Alternatives*, 29, 115-138).

7. It should be stated that the followed categorical division into "Territorial and Historical Commonality," "Culture," and "Language" is artificial, since in one's identity these categories are indivisible. I used this categorization due to formative logic.

8. Another legend dates their arrival in Iran to the exodus from Egypt. According to this legend Serah Bat Asher, granddaughter of Jacob, had arrived with the exiles of Yehuda Tribe to Isfahān (Soroudi, 1979, p. 257). I want to thank Professor Galit Hazan-Rokem for this comment.

9. For the usage made by Mohammed Reza Pahlavi of pre-Islamic past, see Ervand Abrahamian (2008), *A History of Modern Iran* (UK: Cambridge University Press); Nikki R. Keddie (1981), *Roots of Revolution: An Interpretive History of Modern Iran* (New Haven: Yale University Press); David Menashri (1996), *Iran: Ben Islam ve-Ma'arav* (Tel Aviv: Matōkal/Ketsin hinukh rashi/Gale Tsahal, Misrad ha-bitōahon), 123-124; Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet (2002), "Cultures of Iranianness: The Evolving Polemic of Iranian Nationalism," in Nikki R. Keddie & Ruddy Mathee (eds.), *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press), 162-181. On this topic see also Menahem Merhavi (2010), "Iranian Sites of Memory: The Case of Persepolis," *Ha-Mizrah Ha-Hadash (The New East)*, 49, 114-133, which is part of his unpublished dissertation of Menahem Merhavi that examines the dynamics of indoctrination in Iran in the period above-mentioned in the uses of history by the regime, in search of legitimacy. The research is part of a body of research literature on historical myths and the central role they play in the modern Middle East for a dual purpose: to assert claims for the legitimacy of the powers-that-be from within, while confronting neighboring countries and their own myths in the region.

10. Under Pahlavi rule, especially that of Muhammad Reza Shah, the economic status of Iranian Jews improved greatly. Iran's economy began to soar in the mid-20th century, especially following implementation of the "White Revolution." In one generation, Iranian Jewry made impressive strides, in large part due to its dynamic urban nature, which enabled it to participate fully in Iran's economic growth. Many Jews took advantage of this window of opportunity, abandoned their traditional crafts, and integrated into new branches of the economy. The improvement in Jewish life prompted many Jews to leave the Jewish sections and move to integrated neighborhoods (the rich Jews moved to Tehran's southern suburbs). The assimilation of the members of the Iranian Jewish community, together with increasing secularization and Iranization, weakened Jewish values (Rahimiyan, *Iranica*).

11. Mowlānā Shāhīn-i Shīrāzī (Our Master the Royal Falcon of Shiraz) was the earliest and most accomplished poet of the Judeo-Persian literary tradition. Shāhīn's *Bereshit-nāmeḥ* (The Book of Genesis) and *Mūsā-nāmeḥ* (The Book of Moses) set into classical Persian verse some portions of the Pentateuch, while his *Ardashīr-nāmeḥ* (The Book of Ardashīr [Ahasuerus]) and *Ezra-nāmeḥ* (The Book of Ezra) versify selected episodes from the biblical books of Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah (Vera B. Moreen, "Mowlānā Shāhīn-i Shīrāzī," in Norman A. Stillman (Ed.) (2010), *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill).

12. *Ardashīr-nāmeḥ* (The Book of Ardashīr/Ahasuerus) by Mowlānā Shāhīn-i Shīrāzī

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(Jud./Pers. Our Master, the Royal Falcon of Shiraz), the “father” of Judeo-Persian belles-lettres (fl. 14th century), is a versification of the biblical Book of Esther recast as a Persian epic romance that resembles the works of the classical Persian poet Nizāmī (d. 1209). The content of *Ardashīr-nāme* is not limited to the narrative of the Book of Esther. It is richly amplified by details supplied by the poet’s imagination. Vera B. Moreen, “Ardashīr-nāma,” in Norman A. Stillman (Ed.) (2010), *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill).

13. Meir Ezri, “Israel-Iran Relations During the Reign of the Shah of Iran,” *International Conference on Iranian Jewry: History, Society and Cultural Achievements*, Dahan Center, Faculty of Jewish Studies, Bar-Ilan University, June 16, 2005. The story was also verified to me in person by Nahid Pirnazar, who teaches at UCLA.

14. The concept “impurity” (*nejāsāt*) is part of the Shiite religious laws and has been prominent in Iran since the rule of the Safavid Dynasty in the beginning of the 17th century. Writings by theologians and Shiite religious officials in the 17th and 18th centuries indicate that the Jews, like other minorities, are spiritually impure (*najes*). The Jews, therefore, lived according to a long list of regulations. For example, we have evidence that during the 19th and the beginning and middle of the 20th centuries, whenever it snowed or rained, Jews could not leave their homes, lest their impurity be transferred through water to others: Jews were not allowed to use public water sources or public baths; Jews could not sell meat slaughtered according to Jewish ritual to Muslims, touch goods in the market (if a Jew touched a fruit with his hand he was required to pay for it because he had sullied it by contact), or speak loudly in public. Shiites’ contact with non-Muslims or with clothes, food, or dishes touched by them leads to ritual impurity. This idea created a situation in which Jews, like other non-Muslims, were not allowed in the neighborhood when it snowed or rained, since the water might carry the impurity of Jews to the Shiite Muslims. When Jews and Muslims traded, it was only in dry goods, such as different types of fibers, for only such goods were allowed to be handled by non-Muslims. In addition, the Jews were mocked and abused in public in various ways. For more on the status of Jews in Imami Shiā, see Meir Bar-Asher (1994), ‘*Al Makom ha-Yahadut ve-ha-Yehudim ba-Sifrut ja-Datit shel ha-Sh?ia ha-Kedumah* [The Place of Judaism and Jews in the Religious Literature of Ancient Shia], *Pe’amim*, 61, 16-36; on the status of Jews in Shiite Iran during the nineteenth century, see David Yeroushalmi (2009), *The Jews of Iran in the Nineteenth Century: Aspects of History, Community, and Culture* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill), Daniel Tsadik, “The Legal Status of Religious Minorities: Imāmī Shī’ī Law and Iran’s Constitutional Revolution,” *Islamic Law and Society*, 10(3), 376-408; on the issue of impurity of Jews as reflected in the Persian and Judeo-Persian sources and on the practical meaning of the status of Jewish Iranians according to religious laws in everyday life, see Sorour (Sarah) Soroudi (1993), “The Concept of Jewish Impurity and Its Reflection in Persian and Judeo-Persian Traditions,” *Irano-Judaica* (Eds. Shaul Shaked & Amnon Netzer), vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1993), pp. 142-170, especially 154-165.

15. Michael Zand (1986), “The Image of the Jews in the Eyes of the Iranians After World War II (1945-1979),” *Pe’amim*, no. 29, p. 110 [Hebrew]. See also: Houman Sarshar (Ed.) (2002), *Esther’s Children: A Portrait of Iranian Jews* (Beverly Hills, CA; Philadelphia, PA: Centre for Iranian Jewish Oral History; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society), p. XX.

16. Jews have served in the Iranian army from the beginning of the Pahlavi reign to this day.

17. Judeo-Persian language is a large group of similar and usually mutually intelligible dialects of Persian spoken or written by Iranian Jews. Most Jewish languages use the Hebrew alphabet for writing and contain Hebrew and Aramaic components.

18. Vera B. Moreen, “The ‘Iranization’ of Biblical Heroes in Judeo-Persian Epics: Shahin’s (1996, Summer) *Ardashir-namah* and ‘*Ezra-namah*,” *Iranian Studies*, 29(3 & 4), 321-338.

19. *Meser Journal*, February 1980, p. 11, quoted in Netzer, *Yehude iran be-Yamenu*, 27.

20. Regarding the method Iranians use to define themselves vis-à-vis the Arab “other,” see Joya Blondel Saad (1996), *The Image of Arabs in Modern Persian Literature* (Maryland: University Press of America).

21. Jalāl Al-e Ahmad (1923-1969) was a prominent Iranian writer, thinker, and social/political critic, and one of the harbingers of the Islamic ideology in Iran. Al-e-Ahmad is perhaps most famous for coining the term *Gharbzadegi*—variously translated in English as westernstruck, westoxification, and Occidentosis. He visited Israel in February 1963; see Pardo, 2004, pp. 1-29).

22. On the 1968 AFC Asian Cup final soccer match between Israel and Iran, see Houshang-Esfandiari Chehabi (2000, Winter), Jews and Sport in Modern Iran. In Homa Sarshar (Ed.), *The History of Contemporary Iranian Jews, vol. IV* (Los Angeles: Center for Iranian Jewish Oral History), pp. 3-24; Orly R. Rahimiyan (2007), ‘In Tehran’s Hell We Were Beaten 2:1’: The Soccer Game Between Iran and Israel (1968), *HaKivon Mizrach*, 13, 22-28 [Hebrew].

23. *Jāme-yi Rowshanfīkrān-i Yahūd-i Irān* (Pers. The Organization of Iranian Jewish Intellectuals, JRYI), a body that deals with Iranian Jewish communal matters, was founded in March 1978 when the new generation of progressive Jewish Iranian intellectuals succeeded for the first time in supplanting the established Jewish communal organization, Anjumān-i Kalīmān. The political platform of JRYI, which functions alongside Anjumān-i Kalīmān, supports the Islamic Revolution of 1979, calls for a religious and cultural revival within the Jewish community, and seeks to defend the Jewish community. Since 1979, JRYI has been publishing a monthly newspaper called *Tamuz* (Heb., the name of the tenth month of the Hebrew calendar) that expresses some of its political views.

24. *taqiyah*’ is a term in the Shia theology that refers to a dispensation allowing believers to conceal their faith when under threat, persecution, or compulsion.

25. Nirit Anderman. (November 16, 2006). Interview with Ramin Farhani. *Ha’arets*, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=788625>.

26. There are some positive terms that denote a “Jew” in Persian, such as *Kalīmī* and *Mūsavī*, both of which have a more positive connotation. These terms owe their etymologic origin to the name of Moses: Musavī comes from Musa or Moses, who is viewed in Islam as *Kalīm-Allāh*, the one who spoke with Allah and who is recognized as a prophet. These terms were usually used in official documents. There is also the expression *Johoud*, which is the derogatory term for Jews that has negative and humiliating associations.

27. Since the establishment of the State of Israel we have witnessed two large immigration waves of Jews from Iran: The first took place during the early years of the state, between 1950 and 1953, and the second came after the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran. From 1948 until the beginning of 1978, approximately 70,000 people emigrated to Israel from Iran. Most of them came with the mass emigration of 1950-1953. As early as 1953, there also began a wave of reverse immigration (called *yerida* in Hebrew) of Iranian Jews. No precise data is available on the number of Iranian Jews who emigrated from Israel, but it is estimated that between the years 1953 and 1957 it came to some 5,000. According to the 1966 general census, the Jewish community in Iran comprised 60,683 members, but the Jewish community estimates put the figure at more than 70,000. It seems that despite the emigration from Iran, the number of between 80,000 and 100,000 Iranian Jews did not change significantly until the 1970s. In the 1980s that number declined drastically following the founding of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

From early 1978 to 2008 over 60,000 Jews left Iran, particularly from Tehran. The emigrants included the majority of the community’s leaders, philanthropists, and professionals. According to an unofficial survey, between 30,000 and 40,000 immigrated to the United States, about 20,000 arrived in Israel, and 10,000 went to Europe, mainly England, France, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland. Of those who immigrated to the United States, some 25,000 people live in California, out of which 20,000 settled in Los Angeles;

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8,000 in New York on Long Island; and more in other cities, mainly Boston, Baltimore, Washington, Detroit, and Chicago. Currently, the remaining Jews of Iran live in three major cities: Tehran, Isfahan, and Shiraz. The other towns and villages, such as Hamadan, Kermanshah, Kashan, and Sanandaj, once populated by thousands of Jews now have one or two Jewish families, or none.

The number of Jews still living in the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2008 has been estimated at about 25,000. According to the official numbers from the last two censuses reported by the Iran Center for Statistics (Markaz-e āmār-e Irān), there were 12,737 Jews living in Iran in 1996, while in November 2006 there were only 9,252 Jewish inhabitants in Iran (<http://www.sci.org.ir>). For more information about the immigration of Iranian Jews, see Rahimiyan (2009b), "Entre chiisme et khomeynisme."

28. "The Jews of Iran and the Letters Reporting Danger," *Asar-e Iran*, <http://www.asriran.com/view.php?id=27345> [Persian].

29. During the first decade following the Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979-1989), 8,487 people emigrated to Israel. The Israel Central Bureau of Statistics does not provide data regarding the second decade (the 1990s). Between 2006 and 2008, 1,408 people emigrated to Israel from Iran. See *The Statistical Abstract of Israel* (2007), no. 58, chapter 4, p. 231.

30. For Iranian Jewry's refusal of the offer, see Yossi Melman (2006, July 15), "Jews of Iran: We Will Not Move to Israel for Monetary Incentives," *Ha'aretz Online*, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/spages/881712.html>.

31. Official internet site of Tehran's Jewish community. Retrieved from [http://www.iranjewish.com/News\\_f/news\\_33\\_eteraz.htm](http://www.iranjewish.com/News_f/news_33_eteraz.htm).

32. *Salām* (October 22, 1996); *Hamashari* (June 21, 1996), as quoted in Granmayer (2004), p. 58.

33. At the beginning of the revolution, 7 Tomān, the Iranian currency, equaled 1 US dollar. In 2001, as a result of the inflation in Iran, 1 US dollar equaled 950-1000 Tomān.

34. On the absorption of Iranian Jewry in the 1970s and the definition of their identity, see Judith L. Goldstein (1989 Fall), "The Rise of Iranian Ethnicity in Israel," *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 29, 38-53; idem, "Iranian Ethnicity in Israel: The Performance of Identity," in Alex Weingrod (Ed.), (1985), *Studies in Israeli Ethnicity: After the Ingathering* (New York, NY: Gordon and Breach Science), 237-257.

35. About the immigration of Iranian Jews to the United States and their initial integration there, see Amnon Netzer (1984), "Yehudei Iran be-Artzot ha-Brit" [The Iranian Jews in the United States], in *Gesher*, 30, 79-90; Anne Rabinowitz (1984), "Matsavam Ha-Mishpati shel Yehudei Iran be-Artzot ha-Brit ve-ha-Efsharut le-Kabbalat Ha-tavot Memshaltiot" [The Legal State of Iranian Jews in the United States and the Possibility to Receive Benefits from the Government], *Tfutzot Israel*, 22, 193-195; Edith Weiner (1984), "Yehudei Iran be-Shikago: Sherut al Yedei Tzevet Kehilati" [Iranian Jews in Chicago: Service by a Community Team], *Tfutzot Israel*, 22, 139-147; Amnon Netzer (1992), "Immigration, Iranian," in J. Fishel & S. Pinsker (Eds.), *Jewish-American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia* (pp. 265-267). New York and London: Garland; David Mladinov (1980, Fall), "Iranian Jewish Organization: the Integration of an Émigre Group into the American Community," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, 57, 245-248; Bruce Phillips & Mirta Kahrizi Khalili (1995, Winter-Spring), "The Iranian Jewish Family in Transition," in *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, 71(1), 192-198.

36. See the discussion held regarding Iranian immigrants' renouncing their Iranian citizenships upon their arrival in Israel, as it appears in documents in the *Israel State Archives*, especially file no. 5317.20.

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