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WATCHING WHITENESS WORK: THE RACIALIZATION OF JEWISH WOMEN IN IRAQ

AND ISRAEL/PALESTINE

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Contents

Abstract

"Watching Whiteness Work: The Racialization of Jewish Women in Iraq and Israel/Palestine," intervenes in scholarship on Jewish belonging in Iraq, Iraqi Jewish belonging in Israel, and studies of race in the modern Middle East. It reveals that multiple conceptions of racialization existed in the worldview of Iraqi Jews which were then carried with them upon the community's mass immigration to Israel in the early 1950s. Of the roughly 150,000 Jews residing in Iraq by the mid-twentieth century, 123,000 would immigrate to Israel. Half of these Jews were women, and this dissertation focuses on their racialization in particular, due to the fact that racialization is always gendered, and women are often subordinated in most other histories of Iraqi Jews.

This dissertation departs from Iraqi histories that commonly explain Jewish belonging in the region through lenses of religion or nationalism. It also departs from Israeli histories that view Iraqi Jewish and more broadly Mizrahi (Eastern) Jewish problems with acclimation in the Ashkenazi (Western) dominant Israeli state as mostly an ethnic issue. In contrast, my work shows the range of mutually constituted gender and race logics that informed Iraqi Jewish women's worldview and insists that because Jews were racialized differently according to Zionist, Communist, Iraqi nationalist, and Arab nationalist dictates in Iraq, this impeded their path to full belonging in Israel because there they encountered racialization that was much more restrictive. My work also proves that experiences of belonging on the one hand and discrimination on the other were not ephemeral or singular, but systemic and deeply personal. I base my findings on memoirs, Israeli state collected oral histories, medical reports compiled when Iraqi Jews immigrated to Israel, personal letters and interviews with political dissidents in Iraq, British Foreign Office documents, and political biographies.

Introduction

Jews born in Iraq belonged there—their country of origin, but not in Israel—their country of migration. This contrast of inclusion and exclusion is a fulcrum of Iraqi Jews in Arab Jewish and Mizrahi Studies. Despite its centrality and explanatory power, the contrast is taken for granted more often than it is deciphered. This dissertation offers a way into specifying Iraqi Jews' inclusion and exclusion by way of a focus on suppressed, under explored, and intersecting social differences.

Iraq's Jews are commonly engaged with from non-race standpoints. Their identities are discussed as mediated primarily by religion, gender, and ethnicity, and the societies to which they have belonged, described in a way that is color-blind. I insist that their racialization must be explored as well. Such exploration offers an understanding of why Jews felt like they belonged in their Iraqi homeland and why they felt like they did not belong in Israel after the community's mass immigration there in the 1950s when more than 150,000 Jews left.

Previous scholarship, discussed below, has established a stasis of belonging or non-belonging, but it is an intersecting race-gender lens that does more to unravel why Jews were so rooted in Iraq and why Israeli marginalization was so alienating. Because a race analysis encourages attention paid to how categories are constructed, it positions belonging (or lack thereof), as needing to be constituted and reconstituted rather than erroneously considered natural via the existence of immutable difference (as, for example, ethnicity is often considered). I focus on women's racialization in particular in this dissertation due to the fact that racialization is always gendered and in order to increase historical descriptions of Iraqi Jewish women on their own terms.

Although women constituted nearly half of the Jews who emigrated from Iraq to Israel as part of the community's mass migration, they are less likely to have their interior lives explored in scholarship on their own terms. I privilege women's voices by way of Hebrew authored memoirs in this dissertation. Chapters One and Two both prove how this medium choice positions dominant narratives to be read against the grain, as well as explain how these personal narratives speak within and against the registers of the societies they discuss. These memoirs from Tikva Agasi, Shoshana Almoslino, Louise Cohen, Nuzhat Katsab, Esperance Cohen and Shoshana Levy, typically follow the women, born in many different Iraqi cities and holding varying political persuasions, from childhood until the time of their writing in Israel. Although stitched together as written reflections years after seemingly traumatic events like emigration and resettlement occurred, the memoirs express a certain divergence due to the acquired positionality of each writer. More expressly than the other women for instance, Esperance Cohen is committed to advancing a kind of Arab Jewish culture with her defense of Arab literature written by Jews. Ideologically Shoshana Levy begins from a place of aspirational neutrality which ultimately leaves much of her explicit assessments to be reflective of a Zionist status quo, whereas Louise Cohen is decidedly an outspoken, critical feminist. Politically, Nuzhat Katzab and Shoshana Almoslino would go on to serve terms in Israel's parliament, rendering themselves as kinds of success stories, and Tikva Agassi acted as an extension of the Israeli trade union institution known as the Histadrut in Arab villages.[1] Supplementary primary sources used include Israeli state collected oral histories, medical reports compiled when Iraqi Jews immigrated to Israel, personal letters and interviews with political dissidents in Iraq, British

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[1] Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel*, 1st edition (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017), 200.

Foreign Office documents, political biographies and two literary sources: Eli Amir's 1984 novel *Scapegoat* and three short stories from Esperance Cohen, Anwar Shaul, and Yaqub Balbul. Through this constellation of primary sources, women's individuality is foregrounded in a more singular way than ever before, and contextualized with governmental, colonial, and international perspectives.

The works capture not only different Iraqi geographies, but also varied social classes and reasons for moving to Iraq, ranging from Zionist illegal immigration to those prompted by Iraq's 1950 Denationalization Law.[2] Despite women's presence—in actuality and in sources—dominant narratives surrounding Arab Jews and Mizrahim (terms that I define more below) are somewhat gender neutral with respect to analysis, and do not often center women, with respect to content. In the wake of this lacuna, Shir Alon's formulation that, "…adding gender to the nationalism-ethnicity-religion triangle within which the history of Arab-Jews has so far been told must challenge us to rethink some fundamental assumptions about traditionalism, modernization, or cross-denominational alliances," is emboldening in terms of not only remedying women's relative absence but also in terms of deeply impacting the founding principles of the stories told about Arab Jews and Mizrahim generally.[3]

The main argument advanced in this dissertation is that Jewish belonging in Iraq and marginalization in Israel must be examined not only relationally but with explicit attunement to how Iraqi Jewish women negotiated life in both spheres where race and gender discourses intersected. By doing so, I prove that singular ethnicity frameworks are insufficient for

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[2] I define and discuss this in Chapter Three "Zionist Racism from the Standpoint of its Jewish Victims: Iraqi Jews, Israeli Immigration Camps, and the Construction of Racial Difference."
[3] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 66.

describing both the complexity of Iraqi Jewish life as well as the systemic nature of Iraqi Jewish women's discrimination in Israel.

My dissertation departs from Iraqi histories that commonly treat Jewish existence in the region by considering religion or nationalism. It also departs from Israeli histories that view Iraqi Jewish and more broadly Mizrahi (Eastern) Jewish problems with acclimation as mostly an ethnic issue. In contrast, my work shows the range of mutually constituted gender and race logics that informed Iraqi Jewish women's worldview and insists that because Jews were racialized differently according to Zionist, Communist, Iraqi nationalist, and Arab nationalist dictates in Iraq, this impeded their path to full belonging in Israel because there they encountered racialization that was much more restrictive. My work also proves that experiences of belonging on the one hand and discrimination on the other were not ephemeral or singular, but systemic and deeply personal. The four chapters of this dissertation leave readers with the understanding that Jewish women were exposed to a multiplicity of the impact of social differences as well as race logics in Iraq that they carried with them to Israel which hindered their acclimation there, a place where race logics were narrowed. In the remainder of this introduction, I will discuss existing literature related to Iraqi Jewish women's belonging and racialization. This will be done to provide context on history, Arab Jewish and Mizrahi Studies, as well as race and Middle Eastern history.

History in the Literature: Iraqi Jews Before Immigration

By the 1940s which would be Jews' last decade in Iraq, they were ethnically and culturally Arab, well assimilated into Iraq and supportive of Iraqi nationalism.[4] Jews' affinity for

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[4] Ibid., 2.

Iraqi culture did not negate their connection to European culture. This was due to Britain's presence in Iraq, first as a mandatory power following WWI until Iraq gained independence in 1932 and following this in a colonial adjacent way as Britain still held influence in the region. Although many Iraqi Jews were comfortable with British culture, this did not prevent many from joining their fellow country people in opposing British encroachment and supporting the desire for Iraq to be completely free.

While most Jews lived in Iraq's capital Baghdad, Jews were in fact found throughout the expanse of the country. Although the Iraqi constitution designated Islam as the official state religion, it insisted that other religions had complete freedom of belief and practice. Like many other Iraqi Muslims and Christians, Jews in Iraq spoke mostly Arabic and English. Hebrew, at least by the 1940s, was mostly reserved for the synagogue and was not spoken.[5] The vast majority of Iraq's Jews would not learn conversational Hebrew until they moved to Israel where it was insisted upon as the only language to be spoken in the name of creating and maintaining Jewish ethno-nationalism.[6]

Until the twentieth century, Iraqi Jews lived in their own quarters as did Muslims and Christians, but all of these communities eventually integrated to live side by side as they were brought together by economic and educational opportunities.[7] In terms of education, the Jews of Iraq had abundant access to it which they utilized to its fullest extent. Many often had their choice to attend not just Jewish affiliated schools, but also state schools, as well as schools

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[5] Ibid., 81.

[6] Sasson Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday: The Making of an Arab Jew* (Jerusalem: Ibis Editions, 2007), 181.

[7] Abbas Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews: A History of Mass Exodus* (London: Saqi, 2005), 35.

sponsored by the British or the French.[8] These educational opportunities also applied to Jewish women. As women's education became a hallmark of modernity, many Jewish women would attend mixed gender high schools and even colleges.[9] Much of this integration contributed to Jews eventually adopting the term Arab Jew as an identity descriptor.[10]

As discourses of secularization became increasingly prominent in Iraq and Jews started to see the benefits of a secular education for obtaining stable governments jobs, many Jews participated in secularizing debates and spent more of their leisure time outside of their religious community.[11] While they still wholly identified as Jewish, possessed a Jewish religious education, and upheld Jewish food laws, many Jewish Iraqis were enamored with and would take on Iraq's secular Arab culture. As public spaces flourished in the 1940s, particularly cafes and literary salons, Jews spent more and more time debating and engaging with Arab identity via their fellow country people.[12]

These public spaces helped foster what is perhaps the most discussed and researched aspect of Arab Jewish life in Iraq: Jewish engagement with and contributions to modern Arabic literature and culture. Several Jews gained notoriety for their Arabic poetry, journal articles, and stories. Love of Arabic literature was just one aspect of Arab Jewishness however. As more and more Jews came to identify with the term Arab Jew, this identity marker also spoke to their love

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[8] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 60.

[9] Aziza Khazzoom, "Inadvertent Traditionalism: Orientalism and the Self-Presentations of Polish Jewish Women Immigrants to Israel in the 1950s," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 15, no. 1 (March 26, 2019): 27.

[10] Abbas Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews: A History of Mass Exodus* (London: Saqi, 2005), 27.

[11] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 62.

[12] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 24.

of Iraq—an Arab country—as well as Arabic movies and music. As part of this phenomenon, Jewish women writers were also able to, "…claim a place for themselves in the national discourse."[13]

While maintaining a love for Arabic literature, Arab Jewish writers would end up switching to Hebrew to continue their literary careers once they immigrated to Israel in the 1950s. As Israel's inception in 1948 displaced Palestinians indigenous to the land and required that all new immigrants speak only Hebrew while subscribing to a Western like culture that Israel's European Jewish founders believed would help the global community view it more favorably, simultaneous Jewishness and Arabness became difficult for Iraqi Jews to maintain.[14] As many Jews from Arab countries who immigrated to Israel after its establishment faced material difficulty given that they arrived penniless and Israel did not have enough resources to support them, they also faced cultural hardship as their Iraqi-Arab culture was portrayed as too oriental to belong in Israel and as backward.[15]

Literature was just one aspect of Arab Jewish identity. As discussed in Chapter One "Some of Us Are Both: Jewish Women and Coalitions in 1940s Iraq," Arab Jewishness was also political, modernizing, and anti-colonial. Its political intonation stemmed from the way Arabness was racially othered in the Ottoman Empire, which was not forgotten in Iraq.[16] This prior

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[13] Ibid., 93.

[14] Liora Halperin, *Babel in Zion: Jews, Nationalism, and Language Diversity in Palestine, 1920-1948* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 7.

[15] Aziza. Khazzoom, *Shifting Ethnic Boundaries and Inequality in Israel: Or, How the Polish Peddler Became a German Intellectual*, Studies in Social Inequality (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008), 10; Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017), 14.

[16] Ussama Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (June 1, 2002): 770.

othering leant Arab identity and thus Arab Jewishness a staunchness and pride. In terms of being modern, Arab Jews informed by the nineteenth and early twentieth century Arab literature and culture revival known as the Nahda, were simultaneously furthering the boundaries of Arab modernity.[17] Finally, as a firmly Arab nation state product, Arab Jewishness was also always independence minded and in favor of complete autonomy by way of ridding, in Iraq's case, the nation of British influence.

It is imperative to know the history of Arab Jews and Jews in the Middle East is because of how integral they were to the entire region. Yet, their study has not always been well integrated into Middle Eastern Studies. As Alma Heckman writes, "Until relatively recently, the trend in both Jewish and MENA historiographical circles was to segment Jews from Muslims (not to mention other minorities), reproducing colonial political strategy in narrative form. One cannot simply "add Jews and stir" to the narrative of the Middle East, just as one cannot "add women and stir" or any other population (incorrectly) deemed ancillary to major story lines and themes.[18] In this way, discussing Iraqi and Arab Jewish belonging or lack thereof is necessary in order to truly comprehend the history of twentieth century Iraq.

Belonging in the Literature: Arab Jewish and Mizrahi Studies

Belonging is central to my argument. Thus, how Arab Jews (Jews with origins in Arab majority lands) and Mizrahim (Jews deemed "Eastern" along an East-West binary where Ashkenazim are "Western) in general and Iraqi Jews in specific were unable to belong in Israel is

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[17] Abdulrazzak Patel, *The Arab Naḥḍah: The Making of the Intellectual and Humanist Movement*, Edinburgh Studies in Modern Arabic Literature (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), x, 15.

[18] Alma Rachel Heckman, "Nuancing the Narrative: Teaching the Jewish Modern Middle East," in *Understanding and Teaching the Modern Middle East*, ed. Omnia El Shakry, 283.

the focus of this section. This focus will come by way of highlighting scholarship that discusses Arab Jewish marginalization by way of Zionist ideology, Zionist practice, and Zionist culture. The tendency in Arab Jewish and Mizrahi Studies to not utilize a race analysis as explanatory, is paralleled by the general wariness with naming race as an existing and vivid category of difference in Middle Eastern societies. Given this wariness and its reinforcement, the following section of this introduction will provide a historiographic snapshot of Middle East history's engagement or lack thereof with race, as well as how this dynamic is shifting. Providing this stasis, the stakes of my argument will be better understood.

I trace the specificities of Iraqi Arab Jewishness in Chapter One. Definitionally however, the term Arab Jews has a somewhat immutable core (no matter differences of nation) articulated by Ella Shohat as, "The Arabness of Jews was for over a millennium the taken-for-granted designation for people whose religion was Jewish but whose culture was Arabic, without the two seen as a contradiction."[19] Shohat, a scholar of culture and media as well as an Arab Jew herself, has since the 1980s, extraordinarily influenced English language histories of Arab Jews and Mizrahim. Her work, including the many articles contained in *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*, as well as the articles "Reflections by an Arab Jew," "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims," and "The Invention of the Mizrahim," with their critiques of Zionist European supremacy and their issuing rejoinders to this hegemony in the name of articulating Arab-Jewish identity, while not solely interested in mapping out a historical continuity or addressing gender per se, are an indispensable catalyst for this dissertation.

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[19] Ella Shohat, *On the Arab-Jew, Palestine, and Other Displacements: Selected Writings* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 10.

This provoking quality partially has to do with the fact that the concept of the Arab Jew, as Shohat articulates cogently, is inherently about belonging. She writes, "Both "Palestine" and "the Arab-Jew" in this sense are not only tropes of loss and mourning but also figures of inclusivity. Even in the face of present calamity, the concepts evoke the memory of a shared past while also pointing to a possible future of re/conciliation."[20] In light of research that focuses more on the "loss" or "impossibility" of Arab Jews in a way that considers Arab Jewish existence settled, my work demonstrates that by re-orienting toward a lens of belonging and lack of belonging, further analysis is possible.

The fact that the Arabness of Iraqi Jews (and other Mizrahim) was pointed to as backward and found to be in opposition to the Jewish nationalist (political Zionist) project in Israel, in the context of nation states being founded in the wake of colonialist legacies, is a phenomenon first articulated in English by Shohat in "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of its Jewish Victims," where she writes,

> The Oriental Jew clearly represents a problematic entity for European hegemony in Israel. Although Zionism collapses the Sephardim and Ashkenazim into the single category of "one people," at the same time the Sephardi's Oriental "difference" threatens the European ideal-ego which phantasizes Israel as a prolongation of Europe "in" the Middle East, but not "of" it.[21]

Specifying this phenomenon further, Shohat demonstrated the extent to which Mizrahi Arabness was racialized in a later article, writing,

> Mizrahim in Israel were made to feel ashamed of their dark, olive skin, of their guttural language, of the winding quarter tones of their music, even of their traditions of hospitality. Children, trying desperately to conform to an elusive Euro-Israeli Sabra norm, were made to feel ashamed of their parents and their Arab countries or origin. At times Mizrahim were mistaken for Palestinians and arrested or beaten.[22]

Informed by Shohat herself, Bashkin has most recently corroborated the racialization thesis, saying, "The Arab culture of Iraqi Jews, as well as that of Jews from other Middle Eastern

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Ella Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of its Jewish Victims," *Social Text* no. 19/20 (Autumn, 1988): 23.

[22] Ibid., 15.

countries, was perceived as primitive and degenerate. In addition, it was racialized: these Jews were sometimes called *kushim*, *shhorim*, and *schwartzes* (derogatory term meaning "black") to signify their foreign and non-European racial identity."[23] Within this context, we can begin to see how the aforementioned recognition of shared oppression based on blackness was laid. Shohat's words support this contention,

> Since Arabness led only to rejection, many Mizrahim became self-hating. In a classic play of colonial specularity, the East came to view itself through the West's distorting mirror. Indeed, if it is true, as Malcolm X said, that the white man's worst crime was to make the black man hate himself, then Mizrahi internalized self-hatred means that the Establishment of Israel has much to answer for.[24]

Many understand the culmination of this recognition of mutual oppression to be the 1971 formulation of the Israeli Black Panthers and their expressed influence from the U.S. Black Panthers and identification with their struggle for black freedom from white supremacy.[25] Yet, Bryan Roby has shown that these recognitions can be traced back much earlier. Already in 1950s Israel, Mizrahim began to denote the oppression they faced at the hands of Ashkenazim in the language of American racial formations and racism.[26] Furthermore, some recognized their struggles under Zionism as inextricably linked to struggles Palestinians faced.[27]

Bashkin has referred to the Iraqi Jews who immigrated to Israel as migrant citizens because, although they were granted de facto citizenship as Jews in Israel, their status and rights were mitigated given how backward their home country configured in the Zionist imagination.[28] These immigrants began their time in Israel in transit camps that lacked a great deal of the

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[23] Ibid., 6.

[24] Ibid., 15.

[25] Alex Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation: The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 135.

[26] Bryan K. Roby, *The Mizrahi Era of Rebellion: Israel's Forgotten Civil Rights Struggle, 1948-1966* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2015), 158.

[27] Alex Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation: The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 77.

[28] Ibid., 22.

infrastructure they were used to in Iraq and that was necessary to begin processes of upward

mobility in their new home. Placed in this situation by the Ashkenazi architects of the state,

Iraqis, along with other Mizrahim, were often blamed for their own impoverished station in life.

In the wake of critical Mizrahi discourse and post-Zionist research many scholars admit

that the State's architects, the Ashkenazi Jewish hegemony, poorly accommodated Mizrahi Jews,

in particular. Detailing this particular discrimination Tom Segev's *1949: The First Israelis* states

that executives in the Jewish Agency, the body responsible for Israel's immigration, thought

priority should be given to Eastern European Jews because, "They might not always be allowed

to leave."[29] The line of thinking that privileged Eastern European Jewish immigration rendered

Jews from Arab countries as literal and figurative afterthoughts and encouraged a hierarchical

divide between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim.[30] Ideologically conceptualized as not a priority for

the state, Mizrahim were then structurally oppressed. For instance, influential figures in the

Jewish Agency understood Mizrahim as necessary to absorb so that they might be saved from

their home countries and so that they could be the 'human material' necessary to settle and build

the country.[31] Yet, the perceived backwardness of the Mizrahim still worried the Jewish Agency,

along with many of the country's leading politicians and intellectuals.

To label Mizrahim backward, the Ashkenazi hegemony relied on a binary that privileged

what they called European culture, over 'Eastern' culture.[32] Ashkenazi political Zionism

considered an autonomous, ethnically majority Jewish state in Palestine as the solution to Jewish

persecution. By way of Britain aligning itself with Ashkeanzi political Zionists during the British

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[29] Tom Segev, *1949: The First Israelis* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 1998), 167.
[30] Ibid., 168.
[31] Ibid., 172.
[32] Ibid., 158.

Mandate in order to gain influence in the Middle East, this form of Zionism was heavily indebted to Jews appearing culturally European enough to be worthy of autonomy. For Mizrahim such as the Jews of Iraq, whose first language was Arabic and who were Arab through an upbringing in an Arab society, Ashkenazi political Zionism's relationship with Europe meant that they were either assumed to lack European culture or constructed as such to justify their exploitation. In Hebrew, the actions that took place in the name of privileging European culture and condemning while attempting rectify Mizrahi were called the *mizug hagaluyot* (melting pot) policy.[33] *Mizug hagaluyot* was an attempt to assimilate Mizrahim by ridding them of their homeland's culture. It was undertaken, despite Ashkenazi Zionists still wanting to perpetuate institutionalized Mizrahi discrimination because the perceived backwardness of Mizrahim was assumed to be a threat to Jewish autonomy in the region. Under the guise of absorption through settlement and education, as this policy unfolded, it did little more than marginalize Mizrahim.

If Shohat advances understandings of Arab Jewish marginalization by highlighting Zionist ideology's role in the suppression, sociologist Yehouda Shenhav, furthers her methodology. In *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity*, Shenhav writes, "I also maintain that it is impossible to understand the construction of the identity of the Arab Jews in Israel without closely tracing the colonial roots of these social processes. The formative stage of "discovery" of the Arab Jews by the Zionist movement and its attempt to transform them into objects of migration are deeply embedded in a colonial context."[34] He goes on to demonstrate that as Zionist Ashkenazi Jews encountered Arab Jews

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[33] Bryan K. Roby, *The Mizrahi Era of Rebellion: Israel's Forgotten Civil Rights Struggle, 1948-1966* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2015), 1.
[34] Yehouda A Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: a postcolonial reading of nationalism, religion, and ethnicity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 14.

beginning in the nineteenth century, it was mainly through colonial adjacent forums such as

Zionist recruitment via emissary and the Alliance Israélite Universelle French school network for

Jews of the Middle East which I discuss more in Chapter Three "Zionist Racism from the

Standpoint of its Jewish Victims: Iraqi Jews, Israeli Immigration Camps, and the Construction of

Racial Difference."[35] These kinds of meetings were in keeping with the crucible and tone of

Zionism, because, as Shenhav also puts it, "Zionism is the offspring of European nationalism,

and its proponents identified themselves as promulgators of European utopian thought. Jewish

national historiography arose in the mid-nineteenth century as a branch of modern European—

and particularly—German historiography."[36] Based on the linkages Shenhav makes, he insists

that emissaries began orientalizing Iraqi Jews in Iraq, by painting them as backward via their

constructed religiosity in contrast with more secular, Western non-Arab Jews.

Processes of orientalizing are central to the construction of Arab Jews as well as their

marginalization. Scholars like Aziza Khazzoom and Sami Shalom Chetrit demonstrate this by

way of discussing Zionist practice. As Khazzoom showed in *Shifting Ethnic Boundaries and*

Inequality in Israel: Or, How the Polish Peddler Became a German Intellectual, Ashkenazi

Israeli gatekeepers wanted to orientalize Arab Jews in order to hoard resources due to scarcity,

manufactured or otherwise. She writes, "…gatekeepers frequently linked the construction of

Mizrahim as eastern, primitive, and uneducated to the notion that they needed "less," that is, less

pay, fewer immigrant or social work benefits, or less attention paid to the quality of their

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[35] Ibid., 27.

[36] Yehouda Shenhav, "Modernity and the Hybridization of Nationalism and Religion: Zionism and the Jews of the Middle East as a Heuristic Case," *Theory and Society* 36, no. 1 (March 1, 2007): 10.

housing."[37] The especially noteworthy effect of this Zionist practice to paint Arab Jews as

backward in order to garner nearly all early state resources, is that it marginalized Arab Jews not

just momentarily but systemically. Sami Shalom Chetrit corroborates that deficiencies

encouraged at Israel's inception for Arab Jews, were meant to be long lasting. In *Intra-Jewish*

Conflict: White Jews, black Jews, he writes, "A close examination of the socioeconomic situation

during the state's first years reveals the roots of economic oppression relations between

Ashkenazim and Mizrahim. Justification for this system was provided by "modernization" theory

in academia, and by official immigrant absorption approach that supported a class-ethnic

structure and justified it with cultural excuses."[38] Khazzoom and Chetrit's analysis concerning

Zionist practice's marginalization efforts, when coupled with aforementioned discussions of

Zionist ideologies' effects, showcases just how inescapable this reality was for Arab Jews.

A final pillar of Arab Jewish and Mizrahi marginalization was enacted through Zionist

culture. Lital Levy, discussing literature from Arab Jews, has noted her awareness of those who

first generated the concept of the Arab Jew. Citing many of the aforementioned scholars, Levy

has summarized, "The term ''Arab Jew'' was in fact reclaimed by scholars such Ella Shohat,

Sami Shalom Chetrit, and Yehouda Shenhav as part of a political project of intervention into the

normative terms of Zionist discourse."[39] She then reasons that this first wave of scholars was

mostly concerned with Arab Jewishness as it related to Israel-Palestine. In order to remedy this

orientation in the name of more fully discussing Arab Jewishness, she insists, "Scholars of

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[37] Aziza. Khazzoom, *Shifting Ethnic Boundaries and Inequality in Israel: Or, How the Polish Peddler Became a German Intellectual*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008), 52.
[38] Sami Shalom Chetrit, *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews*, 1st edition (London: Routledge, 2013), 43.
[39] Lital Levy, "Historicizing the Concept of Arab Jews in the Mashriq," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 98, no. 4 (September 22, 2008): 454.

literature and culture might question the utility of historicizing the Arab Jew. After all, the

symbolic potential of the Arab Jew to disrupt the ideology of separation between Jew and Arab

has been amply demonstrated in literary studies."[40] While not precisely following Levy's call to

discuss Arab Jewish literature outside of an Israel-Palestine framework, others have discussed

Arab Jewish culture in a way that lends gravity to the identity's marginalization.

Reuven Snir has written about how Zionist Hebrew culture shocked Arab Jews,

especially those like Iraqis, whose place in Iraq depended so much on taking part in a shared

Arab culture with Muslims and Christians.[41] A hallmark of Zionist culture was the degradation

of Arab in the name of exalting Hebrew. Snir traces the ways this was hard for Arab Jews,

writing, "Instead of the Arabic language which permitted complicated, multi-layered national,

religious, and ethnic identities, Jewish-Arab immigrants faced a new linguistic situation in which

the Hebrew language that was forced upon them was limited to only one religion, one nation and

one ethnic entity."[42] Yet, the story of Zionist marginalization of Arab Jews is not one of

passivity. While the realm of politics is often discussed as a site of resistance, the realm of

culture also demonstrates how Jews resisted. As Ammiel Alcalay highlights in his discussions of

Arab culture and Arabic literature in Israel in *After Jews and Arab: Remaking Levantine Culture*,

when Arab Jews were able to resist being broken up by the Ashkenazi establishment and remain

together in neighborhoods, Arab culture was able to flourish. Through music, acting, and

political writing, Jews tried to cling to Arab culture, at least through the 1950s, which, "…ran

contrary to the racist assumptions of an establishment that expected all of these "primitive" Jews

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[40] Ibid., 456.
[41] Reuven Snir, "'Arabs of the Mosaic Faith' : Chronicle of a Cultural Extinction Foretold," *Die Welt Des Islams* 46, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 56.
[42] Ibid.

to be "traditional," with no experience in expressing themselves in secular terms."[43] All in all, just as culture advances the scope of Arab Jewish identity and marginalization, so too does this dissertation advance the scope of how to conceptualize Iraqi Jews belonging, migration, and discrimination. One of the ways it does this is from the standpoint of race. While not the least contentious vantage point as the following section will show, it is nevertheless innovative.

Race in the Literature: Race Analyses and Middle Eastern History

The tendency of those analyzing Middle Eastern societies to prefer ethnicity as a descriptor, arises from its rendering as neutral and primordial. Generally speaking, ethnicity is not necessarily any less inherently fraught or any more inherently rarified. As W.J.T Mitchell describes in *Seeing Through Race*—his critique of color-blind and post-race tendencies through various examples (including ones in Israel-Palestine)—"Ethnicity is a colonial term deployed to make distinctions among various "subject races" and might be seen as a symptom of racism rather than an alternative for it."[44] Defaulting to ethnicity, or explicitly preferring it as supposedly more benign than race is not merely a humanistic predilection, but a tendency rooted in scientific inquiry as well.

In *Genetic Crossroads: The Middle East, and the Science of Human Heredity*, Elise Burton's study of the history of genetic research in the Middle East, Burton insists that by the 1950s, "…'race' as a scientific term had become so fraught that many biologists did increasingly

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[43] Ammiel Alcalay, *After Jews and Arabs*, First edition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 224.
[44] W. J. T. Mitchell, *Seeing through Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 69-70.

employ terms like 'ethnic group' or the particularly neutral-sounding 'population.'"[45] This move came after geneticists interested in Middle East populations (at the very least from the time of the work's commencement following WWI) claimed a need for stability and coherence in the populations they studied and terms they used. Following such essentialism, "…genetic researchers in the Middle East effectively transformed religious, linguistic, and other social identities into ethnicities."[46] With roots in colonialism and scientific positivism, ethnicity is revealed as the constructed category it is and lacking contention only contextually.

Even as historians of the Middle East have insisted on studying or pointing to ethnicity as a process and even took up ethnicity as race, race as an operative term and focal has a history of being elided. As I discuss in depth in Chapter One and touch on in Chapter Two, 'Semite' was a focal point coined and studied (at least since the eighteenth century) that slipped between ethnicity and race.[47] Initially evocative of groupness, by the nineteenth century, Jews became aware of 'Semite' scholars who, "…made use of race as a chronotope to mobilize a scientific vocabulary of racial-cultural division to promote equality and inclusion within the project of modernity," and began engaging with the scientific racism of their 'Semiteness' to counter its discrimination, only to have this category ethnicized once more by Zionism in order to insist upon a Jewish cohesion to stake a claim to Palestine.[48]

Despite these antecedents, as I touch on throughout this introduction, one of the reasons I wanted to further specify Iraqi women's belonging in their homeland and Israel by way of

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[45] Elise K. Burton, *Genetic Crossroads: The Middle East and the Science of Human Heredity*, edition (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2021), 97.
[46] Ibid., 7.
[47] Yoni Furas, "We the Semites: Reading Ancient History in Mandate Palestine," *Contemporary Levant*, n.d., 1, 2.
[48] Ibid., 1, 3.

racialization has to do with the tendency of discourses about Jews to center and explore their minority and oppressed aspects.[49] The standpoint of race seemed illustrative because it did not automatically predispose Jews to be further minoritized or suppressed in Iraq. Nor did this standpoint allow for Iraqi Jewish women's discrimination in Israel to be compartmentalized either into the broader Iraqi immigrant community or temporally. I touch on these motivations more below in

Understanding race as historically contingent and called upon to turn biological and cultural qualities into static differences that matter, I've found it to be a productive vantage point from which to examine Jewish life in Iraq and later Iraqi Jews in Israel. As I am now delineating, I've arrived at this productivity amidst wider scholarly debate about the analytic's usefulness in analyzing Middle East societies. The inclination within modern Middle East histories to not consider race as distinct from ethnicity but simultaneously operative enough to be dismissed for more seemingly revelatory categories such as national origin, class, or gender, adds further exploratory gravity to the vantage point of race. The purported vagueness of race, coupled with apparent localized features when it does appear, renders the category dismissible for some. However, other scholars invested in broadening understandings of manifestations of race and racism, such as anthropologist and attorney Darryl Li, have insisted that it's also possible to consider race as at once global and specific.[50] In fact, doing so is a crucial step in not only allowing for race to operate as an evocative category of analysis in regions where it is commonly elided into ethnicity and nationality but also a step towards disentangling race from other

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[49] Orit Bashkin, "The Colonized Semites and the Infectious Disease: Theorizing and Narrativizing Anti-Semitism in the Levant, 1870–1914," *Critical Inquiry* 47, no. 2 (December 22, 2020): 195.
[50] Darryl Li, "Genres of Universalism: Reading Race Into International Law, With Help From Sylvia Wynter," UCLA Law Review, May 3, 2021, 1689.

categories of social difference.[51] Still, remaining hesitations with applying a race analysis to Middle East populations have resonances.

In *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* Sarah Gualtieri traces the racialization of Syrian immigrants in the United States during the early twentieth century and provides a piercing summation for the indispensability of a race analysis, stating, "Throughout this study, I consider race a historically contingent category that acquires meaning within specific relations of power. Since the early modern era, race has been used to mark groups of people as different on the basis of presumed fixed biological or cultural traits."[52] Understanding race as historically and geographically specific, but relevant nevertheless is a primary motivator of this dissertation. Contextually engaging with race in Middle Eastern societies is not without its difficulties and detractors, however. In terms of difficulties in the Arab Middle East, Ghenwa Hayek has characterized them well. Agreeing that race is situated and discussing it as such in the context of Arab societies via modern Arabic literature, Hayek succinctly notes, "The subject of race in the Arabic language and Arab culture is a contentious one, made more complex by the different geographic, historical, and sociopolitical circumstances of different Arab countries, which are often understood as one culture."[53] Phantom constructs interrupt much of the race scholarship on Middle Eastern societies. As Hayek foregrounds, on the one hand difficulties of analysis arise not only from the collapsing of the Middle East into a single observable unit and from the remarkable nature of each of the individual states actually contained in the Middle East, but also the tension created between these two realities. On the

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[51] Ibid., 1700.
[52] Sarah M.A Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 5.
[53] Ghenwa Hayek, "Whitewashing Arabic for Global Consumption: Translating Race in The Story of Zahra," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 20, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 93.

other hand, phantom constructs supposedly dismissive of a race analysis take the form of detractors as well.

In a sense, preeminent historian of the Modern Middle East, Eve Troutt Powell has articulated some of the ur examples and insights on scholars' and observers' reticence to consider race applicable to the Middle East. *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan,* discusses Egyptian nationalists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries struggling for independence from British rule as they ironically simultaneously insisted on their claim to controlling the Sudan. While doing so, and in order to mount a defense of the applicability of race to Middle Eastern contexts despite arguments from detractors, she interrogates Benedict Anderson's narrow handling of race in *Imagined Communities.*[54] Troutt Powell illustrates Anderson as limited in his conception of how nation states conceive and make use of social difference through the medium of the constructed other. Rendering Anderson's scholarly engagement with race as an example to avoid, she demonstrates how he collapses race into racism. He does so, Troutt Powell puts forth, by insisting that nation states are more heavily indebted to the effect of communal love than the feelings of separation and discrimination instigated through meaningful social difference. By only looking for race through the lens of racism in an attempt to foreground communal love and disempower negativity or divisiveness that could stem from the existence of race and racism, Anderson has trouble locating this difference and this prejudice, outside of or prior to European colonialism.

For Troutt Powell's purposes, Anderson forecloses the possibility of local racisms or racial logics in a place like Egypt, despite the fact that Egyptian colonization of the Sudan,

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[54] Eve Troutt. Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan*, vol. 2, Colonialisms ; (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 14.

predicated partially on the use of race-based idioms and signifiers, was a part of Egyptian nationalism. Pondering the limits of Anderson's conceptualizations of race and racism further, Troutt Powell asks, "Is this level of inquiry into the presence of racism anachronistic…? Does the very term itself seen too rooted in images of the Ku Klux Klan or the Nazis?"[55] As a rejoinder to herself she underscores the absurdity of thinking that race consciousness was imposed entirely on Egypt through European colonialism, rather than the more realistic fact that these concepts were "…accepted, denied, translated, or redirected…" based on what race configurations were indigenous to the region.[56]

Troutt Powell's excavation of indigenous race consciousness in a place where some have denied it, are eye opening as we think through what analytics, topics, and theories are considered permissible within a field of study. Despite the example set by Troutt Powell and a few other Middle East historians having followed in her stead, using race analytically has the precedent of being arguably contentious within the field of Middle East history broadly. Given the prominence of biological understandings of race and scientific racism that arose in places like Europe and the United States, race is often insisted to be too foreign, anachronistic, or convoluted a category to be productively and responsibly applied to modern Middle Eastern history. However, to eschew a category so fundamental to modernity not only renders historically incomplete pictures; it is also at once a symptom and generative of a curtailment of thought.

In terms of distortions surrounding race as a category of analysis, in the article "Histories of Race, Slavery, and Emancipation in the Middle East," Erin Pettigrew, insists, "Not only do

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[55] Ibid., 16.
[56] Ibid., 17.

concepts of human difference have their own and sometimes divergent histories in the Middle East but contemporary politics of identity and citizenship in the region preclude an interrogation of race and status within American frameworks."[57] This harks back to previous mention made of race being too foreign a concept to be applicable to Middle East historical contexts. The comments from Pettigrew encapsulate one of the main sticking points of exploring race in the Middle East. The specter of race and racism in the United States as well as colonial Europe looms large. There is an assumption that researchers writing in English outside of the region will bring only the frameworks and racial logics of the societies in which they are steeped. This assumption, or anxieties about this possibility, often stymie if not a great deal of conversation, at least a great deal of published research. Context specific and localized applications of race analysis are swept up in this restrictive effect.

Despite all of the aforementioned context and caveats, race as germane to the construction of modern Middle Eastern societies and as a useful analytic, is becoming more and more accepted. In addition to previously noted examples from Egypt, Middle Eastern diasporic communities, and across the Middle East via scientific racism, a race analysis has also been taken up in extraordinary ways in literature on North Africa and Iran. For the purposes of this introduction, as the subject matter is somewhat adjacent, it is worth noting that another focus in Modern Middle East studies where race has been engaged with amenably is in studies of Palestine and specifically Palestinian liberation.

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[57] Erin Pettigrew, "Histories of Race, Slavery, and Emancipation in the Middle East," *Mediterranean Politics* 25, no. 4 (August 7, 2020): 2.

In summer 2019, the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, published a special issue on "Black-

Palestinian Transnational Solidarity." In their introductory essay for this issue, Noura Erakat and

Mark Lamont Hill discussed some of the foundations for this solidarity. They wrote,

> Black solidarity with the Palestinian struggle crystallized during the anti-colonial turn and particularly after the 1967 war. Elements of the Black radical tradition that allied with the Palestinian struggle understood it not only as a principled response to a specific historical injustice, but also as the signpost of an analytical understanding of imperialism, colonialism, and white supremacy as global phenomena that subsume the Black American condition.[58]

Black experiences in the U.S. as points of reference, along with specific actions taken to forge

solidarity between Black activists and Palestinians have offered a productive way in to

considering the place of race in the Middle East and Middle East studies. In this same issue,

while keenly stating that black solidarity's object of contention was not Jews but Zionism,

Russell Rickford, adds further texture to what solidarity meant. He notes,

> Black Power readings of Palestine were neither superficial nor gratuitous. Contemporary Third Worldism helped African Americans reopen crucial geopolitical vistas. The idea that zones of struggle were indivisible enabled radically subversive remappings of Blackness, fostering meaningful ties to subject peoples within and beyond the United States. Most African American progressives who embraced Palestine did so not because they regarded Palestinians as distant racial cousins. Rather, their aim was to repudiate settler colonialism and to reject depictions of Israel as an oasis of liberal democracy amid a backward Arab wilderness.[59]

Specifically, as Alex Lubin delineates in his exploration of solidarity among U.S. black

individuals committed to liberation, and Palestinians and Mizrahi Jews in Israel/Palestine, this

was a political consciousness that,

> ...led late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Caribbean intellectuals to see in the history of Palestine an analog for black liberation in the Americas, or that led black Americans in the 1950s to view the Egyptian nationalist movement as a useful model of politics in the U.S., or that led Arab, Mizrahi Jews in Israel in the 1970s to see possibilities for decolonial politics in the U.S. Black Panther Party.[60]

Per this logic, violence against the marginalized, whether in the U.S., Israel/Palestine, Egypt or

elsewhere while not mimetically the same (in content, scope, or severity), was similar in its

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[58] Noura Erakat and Marc Lamont Hill, "Black-Palestinian Transnational Solidarity: Renewals, Returns, and Practice," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 48, no. 4 (August 1, 2019): 8.
[59] Russell Rickford, "'To Build a New World': Black American Internationalism and Palestine Solidarity," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 48, no. 4 (August 1, 2019): 61, 62.
[60] Alex Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation: The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 8.

effects, origins, and in the hegemonic structures that perpetuated it. Maha Nassar has further

contextualized this type of global solidarity making while writing about Palestinians between

1960 and 1967 whose political actions, poetic articulations, and intellectual output aligned them

with global solidarities and Afro-Asian decolonization movements.[61] Nassar qualifies these

individuals as taking part in narratives "…whereby nationalist leaders and intellectuals

reimagine[d] the geographies imposed on them by outside forces."[62] This localized example is

demonstrative of the reach of such solidary making.

As Keith Feldman highlights in *A Shadow Over Palestine: The Imperial Life of Race in
America,* solidarities were also recognized in black internationalist feminism.[63] This type of

feminism understood the value of recognizing the common struggles of all oppressed individuals

in the world. In this logic the distance between all subalterns was narrowed as people realized

just how much they were all fighting against the same white and colonialist supremacy

throughout the world. The methodology of recognizing relationality was similarly present in

woman of color feminism in the U.S. which was invested in showing how "…processes of

racialization were always already gendered and sexualized."[64] While Black Power organizations

in the 1960s and 1970s U.S. were not monolithic, with some also supporting Israel's right to

sovereignty, usually due to generational differences, as Michael Fischbach suggests in *Black
Power and Palestine: Transnational Countries of Color*, those who did support Palestinians, did

so, Fischbach also reasons, because, "…Palestine's proximity to Africa, the fact that Palestinians

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[61] Maha Nassar, "'My Struggle Embraces Every Struggle': Palestinians in Israel and Solidarity with Afro-Asian Liberation Movements," *Arab Studies Journal* 22:1 (2014): 75.
[62] Ibid., 76.
[63] Keith P. Feldman, *A Shadow Over Palestine: The Imperial Life of Race in America* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 186.
[64] Ibid.,191, 192.

were Muslims as some American blacks were, and the fact that they were struggling against a country aided by the United States all served to make the Palestinians' cause near and dear to the hearts of many Black Power advocates."[65] Finally, this internationalist vantage point, also immediately affected Arab Jews in Israel. Of course, this influence is referring to the formation of the Israeli Black Panthers, which Lubin has said occurred because, "The Mizrahi activists built a social movement among Arab Jewish citizens of Israel which they named the Israeli Black Panthers in an effort to form solidarity with the U.S. Black Panther movement as well as to frame their exclusion from Israeli society in terms of the U.S. Panthers' understanding of racial capitalism and anti-imperialism."[66] Coalescing in the 1970s, the Israeli Black Panthers are just further proof that race is applicable in Middle East contexts. In a cursory way, the final section of this introduction will reaffirm just that, as I discuss my findings and sources.

A New Literature: Findings and Sources in this Dissertation

The four chapters of this dissertation capture Iraqi Jewish women's lives from roughly the last ten years of the community's existence in Iraq until their first few years in Israel. The first two chapters take place in Iraq and explore how social differences like race, gender, and social class were configured differently according to Arab and Iraqi nationalism, British colonialism, Communism, and Zionism. This multiplicity engendered a situation wherein Jews could belong even in spite of watershed events and political disputes. The final two chapters take

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[65] Michael R. Fischbach, *Black Power and Palestine: Transnational Countries of Color*, 1st edition (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2018), 4,5.
[66] Alex Lubin, "Black Panther Palestine," *Studies in American Jewish Literature (1981-)* 35, no. 1 (2016): 79.

place in Israel. Exploring racialization in these two sites is then not only intriguing on its own

terms, but for the comparison it is able to solicit.

Chapter One "Some of Us Are Both: Jewish Women and Coalitions in 1940s Iraq," puts

forth the premise that present explanations of religious pluralism and coexistence do not fully

capture why Jews felt a deep affinity for and rootedness in Iraq until roughly 1951.

Conventionally, Jewish existence in Iraqi has been packaged with the sentiment, "Tolerance and

pluralism were also meaningful modes for advancing a shared coexistence."[67] Despite striking

the right tone, especially in the face of more neo-lachrymose or Zionist histories that attempt to

portray Jewish existence in Arab lands as one of totalizing suffering, coexistence in and of itself

does not fully capture Jews' place in Iraq be their emigration. One reason for this is that Jews

had an affinity despite watershed moments like the 1941 pogrom known as the Farhud. Chapter

One's analysis is centered around the pogrom because its violence, which lasted several days,

killing 179 Jews and injuring between 200 to 400, could have been a catalyst of departure.

Mitigating its effects by way of explaining it as aberrational or focusing primarily on the non-

Jews who protected Jews during the violence privileges a coexistence narrative over explanations

that are perhaps less straightforward but are potentially more explanatory.

Rather than privileging similarities between Jews and their fellow country people in order

to discern coexistence as an explanation for how Jews made their way in 1940s Iraq, Chapter

One insists that Jews belonged in Iraq coalitionally. Identity seen through a coalitional lens is a

hallmark of intersectionality. This lens allows for a focus on how marginalized groups in

societies do not need to rely on identity politics that emphasize essentialized sameness and

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[67] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 236-237.

monolithic unity. Within coalitions, power differentials can be recognized, and social differences such as religion, race, gender, and social class can be made necessary rather than suppressed. This kind of analysis is informed by recent trends in Iraqi history, from the likes of Arbella Bet-Shlimon, that do not emphasize over simplified identity formation in the name of pluralism, but rather discuss how social differences came to matter and how distinctions not productive of unity per se, were not wholly disruptive.[68]

Apparent mostly in memoirs from Tikva Agassi, Shoshana Almoslino, Louise Cohen, Nuzhat Katsab, and Shoshana Levy, but also news articles and British government documents, coalitions mattered during the Farhud, as the veneer of pluralism was shattered. As non-Jewish Iraqis assumed their Jewish country people did not want freedom from the British as much as they did and responded violently, peaceable coexistence based on shared similarities was tough to depend on as a coalescing force. This forced many Jewish women in particular to survive the Farhud by strategically engaging not just with similarities but with differences. As non-Jews helped protect Jews during the violence and Jews relied on them, as well as when they remained in Iraq after, this recognition was not based merely on hospitality or decency. Rather, in particular for Jewish women since they were numerously marginalized and extending to all those facing sidelining for their gender, social, class, religion, skin color, or relationship to Arabness, recognition was encouraged via these differences and by way of intention. This kind of coalitional belonging was an agentive choosing of Iraq and remaining there, rather than the more passive coda often applied to explain Jews' existence.

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[68] Arbella Bet-Shlimon, *City of Black Gold: Oil, Ethnicity, and the Making of Modern Kirkuk* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), 9.

Following the pogrom, Jewish women were wholly aware that they could not totally find solace and protection in the Iraqi government, the British, or even Zionist emissaries who were only really interested in Iraq's Jews after they thought they could exploit the Farhud for support. Knowing that the Iraqi government let the Farhud happen, the British let it continue, and Zionists only wanted to exploit it, Jewish women were left to discern a place for themselves through their intimate partnerships rather than grand gestures. Now fully cognizant of just how undeniable and instrumental social differences were to Iraqi life, Jewish women found their security in within quotidian aspects of life, neighborhoods, social and gender expectations, and Arab culture.

As Chapter One demonstrates just how meaningful social differences were in Iraq, it also does not take them for granted as primordial. Stemming from prior research from Bashkin that detailed Arab ethnicization in Iraq in order to describe Arab Jewishness, the chapter also details how Arabness was racialized. Buttressing this epistemology, Chapter Two "'What Kind of Agreement Was Even Possible': The Battle Between Zionist Imperial Whiteness and The Iraqi Communist Party," also discusses racialization in Iraq as the phenomenon was treated and mattered to the opposing political predilections of Zionism and Communism. In so doing, the chapter not only further reveals the range of racializations operative in Iraq that, along with other forms of social difference, allowed for Jews to exist more comfortably within multiplicity, but also highlights the instrumental nature of a race framework for strengthening analysis more generally. In fact, the precise race-gender lens utilized in Chapter Two provides readers with an understanding of just how oppositional Zionism and Communism were to each other.

Chapter Two analyzes Zionist letters from, among others: Carmela Sasson, and Esther Darwish-Tzurani; as well as political biographies and police testimony from Ellen Yaakov Darwish, Doris, Amuma, Saida Sasson Mishal, Amuma Meir Misri, and Marilyn Meir Ezer;

British Foreign Office documents; and memoirs from: Shoshana Almoslino, Shoshana Levy, Tikva Agassi. Based on this analysis, the chapter delineates the ways Zionism and Communism respectively engaged understood and engaged with race. I show through a parallel study of Jewish women's participation in the illegal Zionist and Communist movements of Iraq that multiple racializations, rather than a single racialization, occurred within the community during the early to mid-twentieth century. Along with the argument put forth that the different understandings of race encouraged by each movement not only spoke to their opposition but also the range of belonging possible for Jews in Iraq, Chapter Two also provides an overview of both movements and Iraqi Jews' place in them.

The highest recorded number for Zionist participation was 2,000 and the highest for Jewish participation in Communism was around 200. The Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) was founded in 1934, with Jewish participation mainly taking place from 1941 until the majority of the community departed.[69] Zionism took root in Iraq as Ashkenazi Jewish emissaries were sent there beginning in the early 1940s.[70] Participation in both movements was illegal in Iraq.

As opposing descriptions of Zionist and Communist participation show, British imperial whiteness, longed for by Iraqi Zionists and eschewed by Communists, stood out in Iraq's race constellation. The Zionist take on race and racialization in Iraq was informed by imperial whiteness, which began with European Jews and was passed along to the Zionist emissaries Iraqi Jews encountered. The concept of imperial whiteness speaks to a reality wherein Zionists were indebted to nineteenth- and twentieth century discourses of scientific racism as well as to British

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[69] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 142.

[70] Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country: Jews in Iraq in the 1940s* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 8.

imperial assistance to actualize their stated goal of a racially homogeneous national homeland. The omnipresence of whiteness is never explicitly stated, yet it buoyed Iraqi Zionism.

The chapter then insists that Communist Jews implicitly denounced such whiteness and the divisiveness of race overall through their commitment to the movement 's accounting for human difference in a nondiscriminatory way. As Communist Jewish women were educated in the movement, participated in activities for it, and were often arrested for their allegiance, they inherently expressed their commitment to an Iraq based on non-hierarchical social differences. This expression by extension revealed one of the biggest differences between Zionists and Communists: one group saw the Jewish future as flourishing outside of Iraq while the other did not. Nevertheless, especially considering many Zionist Jews did not want to emigrate, the fact that such bifurcated conceptions of racialization were able to exist simultaneously reveals that Iraq's racial logics did not hinder Jews as much as Israel's would. Furthermore, focusing on Jewish women's education and activity in both Communism and Zionism, the chapter was able foreground them as subjects where they are usually thought of us objects these movements spoke for and attempted to utilize to bolster their legitimacy as modern.

The second part of my dissertation shifts to Israel. Following Iraqi Jewish women to Israel and using a race analysis, I discuss how early Israeli immigration sites like the transit camp and the kibbutz, while purportedly meant to acclimate Iraqi Jews and other Mizrahim, actually acted as a crucible for their discrimination. Most commonly, when these early immigration sites are discussed, attempts at foregrounding them as homogenizing, necessary, and cursory proliferate. The racial conceptions fomented in them as well as the racist othering they encouraged are discussed using "anything but race" explanations. This term, from the work of Neda Maghbouleh suppresses race-based explanations for othering in the name of other ethnic,

cultural, or religious explanations.[71] While these non-race based explanations serve a purpose, for the case of Iraqi Jewish women, they have not always fully revealed the systemic nature of the racism and marginalized they faced.

Chapter Three "Zionist Racism from the Standpoint of its Jewish Victims: Iraqi Jews, Israeli Immigration Camps, and the Construction of Racial Difference," is based on memoirs from Esperance Cohen, Nuzhat Katzab, Tikva Agassi, and Louise Cohen, oral history interviews conducted specifically about transit camp life, testimonies gathered about the Yemenite, Mizrahi, and Balkan Children's Affair, assessments made in Israeli state sponsored social service reports, and international reports on the conditions of the camps from the Joint Distribution Committee. In my analysis of Iraqi Jewish women's lives in transit camps, I show race as constructed via their relationship with three kinds of social capital: socio-economic, medical, and educational. This reveals the ways in which these women's racial imaginations (based on their Iraqi upbringing) were not commensurate with the racial logics they came up against in Israel, which were more confining.

While it is often proffered that Iraqi Jews generally had a hard time belonging in Israel because they had access to a better station in life in Iraq, this analysis is not specific enough. A focus on how race was constructed, is demonstrative of just how systemic Iraqi women's non-belonging in Israel was. For instance, while nearly all Iraqi Jewish women were made penniless upon arrival to Israel since they were not permitted to bring their wealth, a socio-economic lens reveals the way this condition was furthered as their impoverished conditions were contrasted with wealthier ones that were off limits and it became clear they could not escape the poverty

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[71] Neda Maghbouleh, *The Limits of Whiteness: Iranian Americans and the Everyday Politics of Race*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017), 74.

they had been thrust into. Their depressed status was reinforced with the knowledge that their mind and bodies were not free of medical issues and medical attacks. One of the ways this was accomplished was through the targeting of children through abduction and erroneous medical diagnoses. Women were also further pathologized as mentally affected by their migration. Finally, ways out were limited as Iraqi Jewish women were told they should pursue education to redeem themselves but were not allowed to do so.

In terms of the transit camp, it was a kind of settlement where a greater number of Iraqi Jews and other Mizrahim as opposed to Ashkenazim were forced to reside despite their protests and lack of consent. Located in literal peripheries, transit camps housed and contained new immigrants in order to settle land. Ideologues of the transit camps espoused that in their rarified form, the camps were meant to be a temporary housing solution for new immigrants before more permanent housing could be located. The "transit" aspect of transit camps as a misnomer is a point of departure in much hitherto scholarship discussing Mizrahi immigration. The irony of the camps is that they hindered upward mobility rather than promoting it. The reality of their relative permanence is all the more insidious given that the camps were saturated with over-population, inadequate housing, state controlled insufficient resources, unemployment, and mistreatment. In this way, the camps became not only somewhat physically permanent, but mentally so. As Iraqi Jewish women carried the racialization they encountered with them in the transit camp and beyond, I not only prove that it is worthwhile to think in terms of race and not just ethnicity in early state Israel, but I also show why it was so difficult for Jews to simply forget Iraq and acclimate to their new country.

In Chapter Four "The Evidence of Racialized Experience: Kibbutzim and Israeli Immigration Sites as Crucibles of Discrimination," I utilize memoirs from Shoshana Levy,

Shoshana Almoslino, Tikva Agassi, Louise Cohen, Gideon Shamash, and Yehoshua Yahav along with oral history interviews and Eli Amir's 1984 novel *Scapegoat*. Although the only novel discussed in this dissertation, Amir's work is applicable due to it partially being inspired by the author's time in the same kibbutz as Shoshana Levy where he experienced blatant racism. Through these sources and building off of Chapter Three, in this chapter I show how Iraqi Jews experienced their racialization as: disorienting, disappointing, and mobilizing, in the uniquely Israeli site of the kibbutz.

In terms of the kibbutz, I show how Iraqi Jews experienced their racialization as: disorienting, disappointing, and mobilizing, in this uniquely Israeli site which was—a cooperative living arrangement where society was promised (ultimately erroneously) to function per egalitarian principles and where equity would be delivered. Facing racist discrimination in the kibbutz, Iraqi Jewish women recalled their previously non-exclusively racially subordinate status in their Iraqi homeland where racialization was not entirely a discrimination tactic in order to demonstrate their worthiness as equal Israeli citizens. This argument reveals why Jews were so rooted in Iraq and why Israeli marginalization was so alienating. Such a cataclysmic predicament is owed in part to the fact that it was the precise acclimation sites that were meant to protect and prepare new migrants that in actuality acted as crucibles of marginalization in their singularity, persistence, and dominance. Migrants like Iraqi Jews thus could not have avoided discrimination because taking part in these sites was essentially mandatory. Additionally, what is at stake is the proof that experiences of belonging on the one hand and discrimination on the other were not ephemeral or singular, but systemic and deeply personal.

Because Iraq had not totally racially subordinated them and kibbutzim were seen as initiating sites meant to enshrine citizenship, Iraqi women genuinely expected to find solace in

this site. The fact that the kibbutz in particular was an idealized site, where at the very least gender equality was supposed to be ensured, was an insurmountable let down. Encountering racism, was thus disorienting, disappointing, and mobilizing of a Mizrahi identity.

Iraqi Jewish women were first disoriented in kibbutzim. Encountering Ashkenazi old-timers, who either helped found the country or were just more entrenched, they learned that they were seen as backward, even by other women. Oftentimes, this disorientation as these women were separated from their families in order to live in kibbutzim. This separation, coupled with the separation that was the by-product of kibbutz racism, left them in limbo. Making matters worse, Iraqi Jewish women also experienced disappointment. Such disillusionment was oriented not just toward the institution of the kibbutz, but fellow Israelis, themselves and their perceived backwardness, and their Iraqi families' ostensible inability to acclimate. Activated by these feelings of disorientation and disappointment, Iraqi Jewish women were then mobilized towards a Mizrahi consciousness. Such consciousness is significant because it shows that Mizrahi identity coalesced as early as the 1950s in Israel. For Iraqi women in kibbutzim, their Mizrahiness came by way of pride in the Arabic language, being advocates for themselves and other Jews from Eastern countries and resisting threats of marginalization.

All four chapters, when taken together, offer a new way to consider not just belonging for Iraqi Jews in their home country and Israel, but also a way to conceptualize their migration. The affective dimension of Jews' belonging to Iraq has hitherto been more focused on and it is largely asserted that they missed Iraq for its culture, neighborly relations, and Jews' longevity in the region. This dissertation also shows however, that a bridge between Iraq and Israel was constituted by Jews remembering how social differences were not exclusively employed to hierarchize individuals in Iraq, a reality that was not replicated in Israel. In particular, as these

Jews faced racism in Israel, but not Iraq, their epistemology for encountering it was partially

influenced by their Iraqi past and not entirely a knee-jerk reaction to their present circumstances.

With this analysis, not only is a great link between Iraq and Israel forged. A more agentive take

on Iraqi Jews' discrimination is also offered, along with great explanation of how their Iraqi

discrimination was in fact systemic.

Chapter One

Some of Us Are Both: Jewish Women and Coalitions in 1940s Iraq

If various forces like colonialism, Nazism, and Zionism were successful, Jews should have left Iraq at least ten years before they actually did. Coalitional identity groups with their fellow country people prevented this. Iraq of the 1940s—the last decade in which the majority of Iraqi Jews would reside in their homeland—is often discussed as pluralistic because within the nation's largest cities and among its majority religions, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religious differences were not barriers to belonging in light of a shared Arab culture and patriotism to Iraq. Yet, pluralistic explanations of this sort do not always fully account for a multiplicity of differences as well as differences within each religion. Furthermore, these pluralistic explanations oftentimes depend on the negation of difference in the name of something monolithic which obscures less obvious but still relevant circumstances and similarities.

Conceiving of identity groups as coalitions rather, allows us to, "…grasp the social totality and lived experiences of multiple oppressions in a non-fragmented way."[1] Thinking coalitionally offers a fuller illumination of why Jews belonged in Iraq during peaceable times as well as watershed moments—beyond instances of coexistence and mere awareness of difference. Following genealogically from Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw's insistence that by way of intersectionality we can see identity coalitionally, a coalitional stance on Iraqi Jewish belonging foregrounds difference and the individual while not needing to entirely decenter Iraq.[2] Often used to discuss political alliances, a coalitional model is illustrative if instead of alliances per say we focus on belonging and instead of activists we focus on Iraqi Jewish subjects. In so doing

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[1] Anna Carastathis, "Identity Categories as Potential Coalitions," *Signs* 38, no. 4 (2013): 961.
[2] Ibid.

analysis can begin with the understanding that individuals, "…from social identity groups that have historically been denied social, economic and/or political power find innovative ways to transcend simple identity politics by recognizing multiplicity within these categories and working to address the divisiveness of power differentials within their alliances."[3] Narrowing focus to Iraqi Jews and Iraqi individuals of other religion rather than a simple Iraqi group identity, while simultaneously not exalting only vivid differences that eventually assimilate even if precariously, conceptualizes Jewish belonging more complexly than a coexistence narrative.

Descriptions of the ethnicization of Iraq's Jews, particularly their Arabness, have gone some way towards explaining belonging. Yet, there is still a void when it comes to how ethnicity intersected with other categories of difference such as gender and how Arabness was not just ethnicized but racialized which demonstrates that difference did not matter singularly or straightforwardly in Iraq.[4] What is at stake is increased understanding of how survivability in Iraq was indebted to social differences rather than hindered by them. This relationship to difference is crucial to spell out in Iraq as belonging and acceptance were entirely different for Iraqi women once they immigrated to Israel.

Jews had it impressed upon them to belong to Iraq coalitionally—not only by not balking at difference and not only relying on obvious similarities—but as a strategic choice. Jewish women in particular, facing numerous marginalizations, had to discern belonging intentionally. Coalitional belonging as a strategic resort came to be, because outside entities who had a disproportionate effect on Jews were ultimately so concerned with self-protection that they

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[3] Elizabeth R. Cole, "Coalitions as a Model for Intersectionality: From Practice to Theory," *Sex Roles* 59, no. 5 (September 1, 2008): 444.
[4] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 3.

complicated identity-based, group level recognition. For instance, in September 1941, the British

Embassy in Baghdad came to the following conclusion about Zionism's treatment of Iraqi Jews,

"…not only is Zionism in great measure responsible for the present difficulties of the Jewish

community, but it also makes it vitally necessary for us to be most careful how we assist the

community, if both helper and helped are not to be involved in a common charge of being

Zionist agents."[5] As will be discussed later, this calculus, which arose out of the British self-

interest to not appear as supporters of Zionism, came only a few months after anti-Jewish riots in

Iraq known as the Farhud.

After the Farhud and given their colonial adjacent presence in Iraq, the British had ample

evidence to discern the precarious place of Jews in Iraq given in particular the influence of

Zionism. In the aforementioned British Embassy report the spokesperson also noted, "[Iraqi

Jews] are naturally bitter at the attitude of the Zionists towards them. While I was in Palestine,

the "Palestine Post" reported that three Iraqi Jewesses had been fined for demonstrating outside

the premises of the Jewish Agency, when the Agency had refused them immigration

certificates."[6] The British Embassy's assertions from their position in Palestine (but speaking

about Iraqi Jews) when taken together, reveal that even when a precarious side of Jewish

belonging in Iraq had a light shone upon it, recognition for Jews by Zionists, their fellow Iraqis,

and the British was still fraught. Put differently, this statement illuminates that at various turns

Iraqi Jews had to be flexible in what they depended on to ensure belonging—as Iraqis and even

as part of the global Jewish community—because recognition of difference and sameness was

not always straightforward. Thus, this chapter argues that Jews strategically chose to depend on

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[5] British Embassy, FO_371_27116, (Baghdad: Iraq, September 25, 1941), 1.
[6] Ibid.

individual and complex coalitions to belong to Iraq rather than powerful entities who were unable to fulfill promises of group belonging. With the Farhud as a potentially watershed moment highlighted, the chapter will focus on how coalitional belonging was discerned in its presence and in its wake, which will set up a number of generalized examples of coalitional belonging that followed the Farhud and are in the realm of the more quotidian.

As Arabness was racialized in 1930s and 1940s Iraq, there is all the more reason to specify how Jews could continue to belong in the presence of these discourses. Inspired by Rogers Brubaker, Orit Bashkin has cautioned against understanding Arabness as a fixed ethnic category, insisting that the process by which Arabness became an ethnicity in Iraq be studied.[7] So too should the process of racialized Arabness be studied. Racialized Arabness is not primordial and the process by which Iraqis came to racialize Arab identity in order to better fit into the Iraqi nation is consequential. This chapter will not explore the existence of races in Iraq however. Depending on such an existence would go against Brubaker's astute observation which calls for, "…thinking of ethnicity, race and nation not in terms of substantial groups or entities but in terms of *practical categories*, *cultural idioms*, *cognitive schemas*, *discursive frames*, *organizational routines*, *institutional forms, political projects* and *contingent events*."[8] In order to examine the practicality of racialized Arabness, specifically how it affected Jews in 1940s Iraq, I'll provide a brief history of its operating discourses.

With Chapter Two of this dissertation offering an analysis of how two groups of Jews—Zionists and Communists—engaged with racialization in order to bolster their group identity and oppose one another, this current chapter will employ a race analysis more broadly. Writing from

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[7] Ibid., 3.

[8] Rogers Brubaker, "Ethnicity without Groups," *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 43, no. 2 (August 2002): 167.

the standpoint of race is instrumentally useful as a conduit for revealing how British colonial influence, Nazism, and Pan-Arabism converged in Iraq. With all of these influences offering racialized conceptions of Arabness in subtle and not so subtle ways, 1930s and 1940s Iraq was an environment marked by multiplicity. Despite on the one hand such multiplicity allowing for the 1941 anti-Jewish pogrom known as the Farhud (defined more below) to come about, on the other hand, the multiplicity allowed for belonging to be less restrictive. With fewer restrictions, coalitional belonging for Jews was able to flourish.

Contrary to notions of Jewish existence in Iraq that posit them as objects of either Iraqi state actors, Zionist emissaries, or British interlopers, Jews' intervention in their Iraqi belonging was strategic and not passive. Memoirs from Iraqi Jewish women, given their subjective revelations, exemplify this strategic belonging. My most comprehensive primary sources for this chapter are thus Hebrew memoirs from the Iraqi Jewish women: Tikva Agassi, Shoshana Almoslino, Louise Cohen, Nuzhat Katsab, and Shoshana Levy.[9] These women were born in many different Iraqi cities and holding varying political persuasions, from birth until the time of their writing in Israel.

In my formulation, a memoir is an account of one's life, where the self is not the focus per se, but rather acts as focal point from which other events can be truthfully narrated.[10] Leigh

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[9] Shoshana Almoslino, *me-ha-Mahteret be-Bavel le-Memshelet Yisrael* (From the Underground of Babylon to the Government of Israel), (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibutz ha-Me'uhad, 1998); Shoshana Levy, *al-Em ha-Derech* (In the Middle of the Road), (Tel Aviv: Sh. Levy, 2001); Tikva Agassi, *me-Baghad le-Yisrael* (From Baghdad to Israel), (Ramat Gan: Tikva Agassi, 2001); Louise Cohen, *ha-Avak Higbia Uf* (The Dust Flies Up), (Tel Aviv: Kedma Books, 2011); Nuzhat Katzab, *Harbingers of Peace: With The Arab and The Druze Women in Israel,* (Or Yehuda, Israel: Ma'ariv Book Guild).

[10] Ben Yagoda, *Memoir: A History* (New York, NY: Riverhead Books, 2009), 3; Marry Jean Corbett, "Literary Domesticity and Women Writers' Subjectivites" in *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson eds. (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 262.

Gilmore corroborates this sentiment well by asserting, "Memoir makes a claim on history, even if, in the assertion of subjective privilege, it seems to align more with the fluidity of imagination and memory."[11] Functionally speaking, women's memoirs have been chosen for the platform they give to women's experience. Furthermore, memoirs help redress the somewhat tacit gender-blindness endemic to studies of Iraqi and other Arab Jews. Shir Alon has specified that as a category, Arab Jews (including Iraqi Jews) are posited as gender neutral and Zionist narratives have had the tendency to, "…cast Jewish Middle Eastern women, as depoliticized folkloric subjects."[12] In this way, Iraqi Jewish women's memoirs, although all authored years later in Israel, inherently write against the grain of dominant Zionist narratives due to their centering of women subjects.

Iraqi Jews had to be thoughtful, intentional, and agentive because no power holding aspect of Iraqi society accepted and protected them wholeheartedly. As exemplified in the aforementioned quote from the British emissary, Iraqi state actors, Zionist emissaries, or British interlopers often allowed Jews a measure of belonging while simultaneously causing difficulties for them and not always following through with protection and reassurance when necessary. Because ruptures foreground the logics of belonging operative in a society given the way they heighten and exaggerate life in the society as the citizens know it, the anti-Jewish riots known as the Farhud will commence this chapter. With the Farhud highlighting not only the presence of anti-British sentiment as a barometer of Iraqi identity but also the weaponizing of Arab

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[11] Leigh Gilmore, *Tainted Witness: Why We Doubt What Women Say About Their Lives* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2017), 81.
[12] Shir Alon, "Gendering the Arab-Jew: Feminism and Jewish Studies after Ella Shohat," *Jewish Social Studies* 24, no. 2 (January 1, 2019): 64.

nationalism in potentially exclusionary ways, it is a perfect origin point.[13] Taking the Farhud as a

microcosm of the kind of strategic, coalitional belonging Jews in Iraq leveraged, this chapter will

demonstrate how Jews belonged in Iraq by discerning and depending on similarities with other

individual identities when they could and by otherwise not relying on total sameness which was

elusive. This demonstration also necessitates a look at less obvious examples where Jews

belonged in their communities until the disruption of authorities which is how the chapter will

conclude. Before delving into these examples, the chapter will commence by offering some

context on the constellation of social difference in 1940s Iraq from the standpoint of race as well

as some background on the conditions that instigated the Farhud.

Ungrouped Race: Historical Context

In 1918, Britain occupied the three Ottoman provinces of Baghdad, Basra, Mosul in order

to protect their interests in the Persian Gulf.[14] Following the end of WWI and fulfilling the

stipulations of the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, the League of Nations award the three

aforementioned provinces that would come to constitute Iraq to Britain in 1920. In 1932, with

the British supported King Faisal I at the helm, Iraq became the first League of Nations mandate

to gain independence.[15] Thus began Iraq's Hashemite Monarchy which lasted from 1932 to

1958. Yet, British presence in and control of Iraq was still substantial which led to political

instability. Following King Faisal I's death from illness in 1933, his son Ghazi took over. When

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[13] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 139.
[14] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 31.
[15] Ibid., 73.

King Ghazi was killed in a 1939 car crash, his son King Faisal II was just an infant and a regent by the name of Abd al-Ilah (an uncle) was appointed.[16]

Even though Arabness was eventually racialized within a British influenced Iraqi state, it was not inherently exclusionary of Jews. In fact, its expansiveness encouraged some Jews in Iraq to adopt the epithet of Arab Jew. In practice this meant that, "…liberal and capitalist Iraqi Jews, as well as radical Jewish leftists all employed the term *Arab Jew*," a range of employment that speaks to not just Jews' affinity for Arabness, but their inseparability from it.[17] As Arab states were assembled from the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire following WWI, Jews were familiar both with forged solidarities despite difference (having lived alongside and close to members of varying religions) and with Arab identity as at once galvanizing interpersonally but under attack politically.[18] Arab identity as expressed in post-WWI Arab states was antagonistic insofar as it carried with it a remaining awareness that the Ottoman Empire had ideologically segregated and racially othered Arab provinces from the Turkish Ottoman center in the name of modernity.[19]

Buttressing the notion of Arab expansiveness is the category of the Semite. As Jonathan Marc Gribetz has shown in his discussion of how Arab and Jew became bifurcated by the Israel-Palestine conflict, vantage point matters for terminology and groupness. He writes, "For a time, some perceived three groups—Jews, Christians, and Muslims—while others actually saw just one group—Semites."[20] Lital Levy points us to the unity that once was by way of the Semite.

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[16] Ibid., 96.

[17] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 6.

[18] Michelle U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2011), 11.

[19] Ussama Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (June 1, 2002): 770.

[20] Jonathan Marc Gribetz, *Defining Neighbors: Religion, Race, and the Early Zionist-Arab Encounter*, (Princeton University Press, 2016), 7.

Discussing how the category of the Arab Jew was disrupted and had to be reconstituted in the

wake of the creation of the state of Israel she says,

> These were indigenous communities (in some cases, present in area for millennia) whose unique, syncretic cultures have since been completely expunged as a result of emigration—whether to Israel, where they were subjected to a systematic program of deracination and resocialization, or to the West, where in most places ''Jewish'' was more or less synonymous with ''Ashkenazi'' and the concept of Jews from the Arab world was (and remains) little known or understood.[21]

Indeed, the notion of the Semite, as Bashkin reasons, shared responsibility in facilitating Jews'

exposure to Arab identity, or as she puts it, "Arab intellectuals during the Nahda were interested

in Jewish culture and history as well as in the history of various peoples categorized as

Semites."[22] The Nahda (the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Arabic literary movement

referred to as a renaissance) is a touchstone because Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Arabs

contributed to it, but also because it generated a shared modern, Arab culture.[23] All in all, before

colonialism and ethnonationalism had their influence, Jews in Iraq had the ability to sense

themselves as Arab first and foremost.

More than being accessible, Arabness would have been desirable to Jews, as it was a

coalescing force in Iraqi society from the monarchic period onward. Bashkin captures the

progressiveness and exalted nature inherent in Iraqi Arabness saying, "Arab national narrative,

the Hashemite in particular, contended that the Arab world was going through a period of revival

or awakening, signified by the word al-nahda. This word signified not only the Arab cultural

revival of the late nineteenth century, but also the achievements of Arab nationalism and the

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[21] Lital Levy, "Historicizing the Concept of Arab Jews in the Mashriq," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 98, no. 4 (September 22, 2008): 452.
[22] Orit Bashkin, "The Colonized Semites and the Infectious Disease: Theorizing and Narrativizing Anti-Semitism in the Levant, 1870–1914," *Critical Inquiry* 47, no. 2 (December 22, 2020): 194.
[23] Abdulrazzak Patel, *The Arab Naḥḍah: The Making of the Intellectual and Humanist Movement*, Edinburgh Studies in Modern Arabic Literature (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), x, 15.

Arab Revolt."[24] By this time, Jews would identify with or be called Arab Jews. Ella Shohat has

described the identity Arab Jew as an ethnic/ religious concept.[25] As Reuven Snir has observed,

the Arab Jew was not just possible in Iraq, but rather was an identity possible since the pre-

Islamic period for those who were "…Jewish in their religion and Arab in their culture."[26]

Culture, it should be noted, is an enviable inspiring source as it could not only refer to life forms

with aesthetic or pleasurable aims outside of the political, but also specifically language use,

language implementation, and neighborly and social relations based on shared cultural

commitments.[27]

Arabness encountered racialization in Iraq due in part to influences from British

colonialism, fascist propaganda, and pan-Arab ideology. An understanding that race could matter

in Iraqi society was present, at least as a zygote, sometime before the birth of the state. Iraq's

"Request for Admissions to the League of Nations," of that year guarantees, "Full and complete

protection of life and liberty will be assured to all inhabitants of Iraq without distinction of birth,

nationality, language, race or religion."[28] Race also becomes more apparent when the extensive

and foundational presence of the British is noted in light of the ways race (specifically the

racialization of Britain as white in opposition to its colonies) operated since the nineteenth

century in its colonial logic. This logic sheds light on how Iraq became an "Arab state," a

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[24] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 25-26.

[25] Ella Shohat, "The Question of Judeo-Arabic," *The Arab Studies Journal* 23, no. 1 (October 1, 2015): 14.

[26] Reuven Snir, "'Arabs of the Mosaic Faith' : Chronicle of a Cultural Extinction Foretold," *Die Welt Des Islams* 46, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 48.

[27] Ibid.; Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 2.

[28] Chapter 1 Article 2, *Iraq Admission to the League of Nations.* May 30, 1932. *http://www.atour.com/government/un/20000609a.html.*

construction that, "…was the work of both British and Iraqi officials and was consistent with the emerging interwar concept of nation-state as a territorial entity inhabited by one "majority race" and flexible number of "minority races."[29] While this relationship will be drawn on much further in Chapter Two of this dissertation, when influential in Iraq, it is provocative due to the fact that, as Zainab Saleh surmises, "The British colonial legacy persisted in the postcolonial state. Though Iraqi officials perceived their political projects as breaking with the colonial past, they nonetheless reproduced colonial state practices."[30] Colonial remnants, while in their first instance are intriguing for how they forced a racialized, narrow, and encompassing notion of Arabness, are also useful for our present purposes as they catalyzed independent minded Iraqis away from the British and sometimes into the influence of other, more fascist elements.

British imposition in Iraq was certainly influential, but this does not mean it entirely eclipsed other operative notions of difference in Iraq. Arbella Bet-Shlimon threads the needle of British, indigenous, and other outside influences well when she writes, "Although racial, ethnic, and sectarian divisions in many parts of the world can often be traced to a colonial encounter, it is usually *not* the case that colonialists directly create identity-based disputes among the colonized."[31] In terms of influences beyond the British, fascist elements began to take root in 1930s Iraq, as some Iraqis, although certainly not all, were influenced by German propaganda offering support for Arab Iraqis as well as a beacon to look to in the face of British colonialism

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[29] Sara Pursley, *Familiar Futures: Time, Selfhood, and Sovereignty in Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), 60.
[30] Zainab Saleh, "On Iraqi Nationality: Law, Citizenship, and Exclusion," *Arab Studies Journal* 21: 1 (Spring 2013), 50.
[31] Arbella Bet-Shlimon, *City of Black Gold: Oil, Ethnicity, and the Making of Modern Kirkuk* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), 72.

given their modernizing, independent prowess.[32] By the early 1940s, German influence in Iraq prompted Iraqi Jews to denounce Nazi influence through newspapers and in schools.[33] Coupled with Jews' quick responses, fascism had difficulty rooting in Iraq for a number of reasons.

Nazi race laws, for instance, made many Iraqis uncomfortable. The racial superiority aspects of fascism and authoritarianism are denied to have been embraced at all in Iraq, with Peter Wien further clarifying with respect to Jews specifically, "Anti-Jewism was a political rather than a racial issue at the time," this time being roughly around the 1941 Farhud.[34] Some of Bashkin's work reveals how the topic of race was raised in Iraq at the level of intellectuals and in terms of objections to nationalisms informed by racial supremacy, scientific racism and eugenics. Discussing the leftist intellectual Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim's "Introduction to Sociology," (1939) a work that insisted social democracy was fundamental to the success of the Iraqi nation state, Bashkin notes that Ibrahim expresses unequivocal contempt for nationalisms based on racial supremacy and informed by eugenics, facets of which he finds in Nazi Germany and the United States.[35] Bashkin has also highlighted the role Islam played in countervailing Nazism, writing, "Islam made no distinction between blacks and whites or Persian and Arabs, whereas Nazism privileged the Germanic races and considered Arabs, Jews, and blacks to be inferior races."[36]

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[32] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 106.
[33] Ibid., 108.
[34] Peter Wien, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism: Authoritarian, Totalitarian, and Pro-Fascist Inclinations, 1932-1941* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 115.
[35] Orit Bashkin "Iraqi Democracy and the Democratic Vision of 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim," in *Iraq Between Occupations: Perspectives from 1920 to the Present* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 109; Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 132.
[36] Orit Bashkin, "The Barbarism from Within--Discourses about Fascism amongst Iraqi and Iraqi-Jewish Communists, 1942-1955," *Welt Des Islams* 52, no. 3/4 (November 2012): 416.

While these mentions of race take the form of denying its clout, they also foreground it as a topic of concern.

Even though Arabness was not exclusionary of Jews per se, as I've begun to show in part through discussions of its racialization, this does not mean it was unrestrictedly inclusive. As an outgrowth of the Arab dominated, Baghdad government of the British Mandate era, with Iraq gaining its independence it also stricter identification with linguistic-communal Arabness.[37] Bet-Shlimon has delineated how this phenomenon excluded Kurds while it simultaneously strengthened their own ethnic identity, and it also excluded Armenians and Assyrians, as well as Persians who Saleh notes became "aliens" by way of the Iraqi Nationality Law."[38] In demonstrating that a more racist Arab identification existed alongside one that purported to by more inclusive, it's important to realize that coupled with statehood suggesting the need for coherence in terms of identification, this variation of gatekeeping was buttressed by the consolidation and growth of elites. Westernized in education and dress and possessing roughly a middle-class dimension even if they were not totally conscious of this fact, Iraq's effendiya stood for a cohesive and definable Arab identity to which potential Iraqi nation members were measured against.[39] Then, by the end of the 1930s, "…the large cities of Iraq were characterized by growing Arab nationalist sentiments, accompanied by the reinforcement of anti-British and pro-German trends."[40] While I touch on fascist influences in Iraq more in the following section,

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[37] Arbella Bet-Shlimon, *City of Black Gold: Oil, Ethnicity, and the Making of Modern Kirkuk* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), 73.
[38] Zainab Saleh, "On Iraqi Nationality: Law, Citizenship, and Exclusion," *Arab Studies Journal* 21: 1 (Spring 2013), 63.
[39] Michael Eppel, "The Elite, the Effendiyya, and the Growth of Nationalism and Pan-Arabism in Hashemite Iraq, 1921-1958," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 30, no. 2 (1998): 229, 232.
[40] Ibid., 239.

suffice it to say, these ultra-nationalists turned to the effendiya for support. Michael Eppel has

summarized this well saying, "This nationalist extremism reflected the increasing power of the

effendiya as a political and social force and had a reciprocal effect on the rise of the Pan-Arab

nationalist officers."[41] To be sure, as fascist influence found sympathy in Iraq and helped create a

less open-ended Arab identification, exclusion of the aforementioned ethnic groups was not

necessarily accidental, given that, as Wien has pointed out, this kind of political ideology needs a

defined, separate, and suppressed other.[42]

Furthermore, discussions of Pan-Arabism in Iraq were variously informed by an

awareness of race. As Ernest Dawn has noted while discussing the formation of Pan-Arab

ideology in Iraq, Palestine, and Syria in the interwar years, Arab people, with territory taking

secondary importance, were the crucial elements of Pan-Arabism.[43] Eric Davis refines this fact

by pointing out that in 1930s and 1940s Iraq, younger Pan-Arabists who were less established

than the more previously dominant Pan-Arabists, from more modest backgrounds, and who were

more radical in their positions—such as never cooperating with the British—instigated a more

limited view of sectarianism.[44] Within this new paradigm, an emphasis was placed on, "…ethnic

purity and vilification of the Other…The focus on ethnic purity, which was the core component

of the radical Pan-Arabism that emerged during the 1930s, was tied to a spirit or Zeitgeist that

claimed to provide the cement that held societies together."[45] Moreover, these Pan-Arabists

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[41] Ibid.
[42] Peter Wien, "Arabs and Fascism: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives," *Die Welt Des Islams* 52, no. 3/4 (2012): 341.
[43] Ernest Dawn, "The Formation of Pan-Arab Ideology in the Interwar Years," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (Feb., 1988): 69.
[44] Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq* (London, England: University of California Press, 2005), 77.
[45] Ibid.

harnessed a Golden Age of Arab history in order to play to peoples' sense of nostalgia for the reestablishment of an epic past.[46]

Complicating Iraqi Pan-Arabism further, Bashkin's exploration of Dhu Nun Ayyub's novel *Doctor Ibrahim* demonstrates some of the opprobrium leveled at the more previously dominant and established Pan-Arabists for their ties to British colonizers. The novel follows Ibrahim who studies for a doctorate in London, marries a British woman, and returns to Iraq in the 1930s to be a bureaucrat. A central trope of the novel is Ibrahim's affinity for and desire to mimic the British given that they have provided him with a doctorate and job in Iraq. This is despite the racism he faces from them for his dark skin, as well as the essentialism he encounters for being Arab.[47] Despite that after returning to Iraq Ibrahim argues for Pan-Arabism along ethnically pure lines and calls for Iraqi independence, the fact is his story, "… alludes to long term effects of the mandate. Although the British had officially "left" Iraq, their psychological impact is still strong, and Iraqis still feel inferior and incompetent in comparison."[48] His marriage to his British wife Jenny is another act of self-promotion and self-positioning along modernist western lines. She is admired by many Iraqis in Ibrahim's bureaucratic circles for what she signifies in terms of progress, civilization and modernity.[49] The novel makes it clear that Ibrahim functions to provide the British stereotyped stories about the East that they would recognize, in the name of maintaining proximity and constantly being able to reconstitute himself as westernized and civilized in Iraq.[50]

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[46] Ibid., 6.
[47] Orit Bashkin, "'Out of Place': Home and Empire in the Works of Mahmud Ahmad al-Sayyid and Dhu Nun Ayyub," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 28:3 (2008): 436.
[48] Ibid., 437.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., 439.

To offer a complete picture, it's necessary to mention that alongside wariness with British control, the relative openness of racialization, and the desiring of an Arab identity, Iraqi Jews, and Iraqi Jewish women also possessed a working relationship with British culture. This added to the fluidity and multiplicity of their racializations in their homeland. This working relationship among Jewish women was led mostly by those part of the middle and upper class who adopted British style dress.[51] As Somekh has noted, European clothing allowed women to be both secular but still modest and had the effect of blurring other social differences by way of uniformity.[52] All in all, given the ever pervasive nature of British colonialism as well as Pan-Arabism's relationship to ethnic purity for some, race awareness cannot be denied in the formation and unfolding of the Iraqi nation state. In light of Iraq's complex understanding of social differences like race and despite all potential catalysts of departure that occurred within a ten-year period, Iraq's twenty-five-hundred-year-old Jewish community would remain essentially until the rupture that was the creation of the state of Israel.[53] I'll now turn to reasoning how this could be the case.

A Breakdown that was not the Breaking Point: Jewish Responses to the Farhud

As WWII broke out, Britain tried to assert direct influence on Iraq. Mainly, supported by Foreign Minister and former Prime Minister Nuri al-Said and at least passively by Regent Abd al-Ilah, they wanted Iraq to declare a diplomatic cutting of ties with Germany.[54] Current Prime

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[51] Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010), 89.
[52] Sasson Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday: The Making of an Arab Jew* (Jerusalem: Ibis Editions, 2007), 158.
[53] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 228.
[54] Ibid., 97.

Minister Rashid Ali al-Kailani (serving in this instance from April to May 1941) did not agree with unquestionably complying with British edicts. Al-Kailani viewed not denouncing the Allied powers in the war could be a way to end British de-facto occupation in Iraq.[55] Having gained support for this stance, Rashid al-Kailani was able to stage a coup in 1941 and become regent himself.

Despite the Iraqi populace's reticence with the hierarchical and racist aspects of German propaganda in the region, more benevolent pro-German views circulated and affected Iraqi society. Specifically, according to Zvi Yehuda, "…the Arab intelligentsia in Iraq was generally supportive of Nazi Germany and hostile to the Jews because they believed that a strong Germany would constitute an obstacle to the British and French policy of repression against the Arab peoples."[56] Moreover, from the vantage point of letters published by the German envoy to Iraq around the time of the Farhud, also analyzed by Yehuda, the pogrom was an outgrowth of Jewish action foregrounded by Nazi propaganda along with the dissemination of German policies. The German envoy insisted that, "…the Jews, who enjoy great economic and political influence—are aiding the British to consolidate their rule in Iraq through the suppression of the domestic national elements. Hence, it is understandable that the Arabs in Iraq accuse the Jews of assisting the British."[57] Even though adoration with Germany's fascism and modernization were not seen as the only way out by all anti-British Iraqi officials, their influence percolated in Iraq from 1936 to 1941.[58]

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[55] Ibid., 99.
[56] Zvi Yehuda, "The Pogrom (Farhud) of 1941 in light of New Sources," in *Al-Farhūd: The 1941 Pogrom in Iraq*, ed. Shmuel. Moreh and Zvi. Yehuda (Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, 2010), 12.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 9.

Beyond sentiments, influences, and feelings, a few pointed actions sparked the actual outbreak of violence that came to be known as the Farhud. Disagreeing wholeheartedly with al-Kailani, Britain stationed troops in Iraq.[59] Although Iraqi troops attempted to ward off their encroachment on Baghdad, they were simply less powerful.[60] Beginning on June 1, 1941 and lasting for a few days, a series of riots broke out in Baghdad due to a power vacuum.[61] This vacuum formed as Iraqi troops were subdued by British and as Rashid Ali al-Kailani fled. In this liminal space, the Farhud took place. Although contained to Baghdad, Jewish accounts demonstrate that the reverberations of the Farhud were felt in cities such as Mosul as well. Generally speaking, the pogrom was carried out by youths, the impoverished, and soldiers. Atrocities have been enumerated as the following, "…dozens of Jews were killed; hundreds were injured; women were raped in front of their relatives; babies were crushed, and many houses were set on fire."[62] More precise details of how the Farhud unfolded are contained in women's accounts below.

Literally, Farhud has been translated as a, "breakdown of law and order," as well as, "pursuing things to excess and violent dispossession."[63] When the violence was over, roughly 179 Jews lost their lives, between 200 to 400 were injured and rectification took the form of payments to Jewish victims and the hanging of four perpetrators.[64] Exacerbating the situation,

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[59] Ibid.,101.
[60] Ibid., 102.
[61] Abbas Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews: A History of Mass Exodus* (London: Saqi, 2005), 71.
[62] Hayyim J Cohen, "The Anti-Jewish Farhud in Baghdad, 1941," in *Al-Farhūd: The 1941 Pogrom in Iraq*, ed. Shmuel. Moreh and Zvi. Yehuda (Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, 2010), 167.
[63] Ibid.; Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 103.
[64] Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010), 188.

Britain did not stop the violence (which was fully in their power) as quickly as possible.[65] The

reason such loss did not constitute a full break with Iraq is that while difference was used to

target Jews in the Farhud, it was also called upon by Jews' coalitions with their neighbors,

acquaintances, strangers, and near-strangers, to not only save them but reaffirm their undeniable

place in Iraq.

The Farhud is commonly referenced relationally. By this I mean that when many

historians address the Farhud, they seem to be doing so in a way that either denies or supports,

using Mark Cohen's coinage, "the neo-lachrymose conception of Jewish-Arab history."[66]

According to such a conception, Jewish life in Arab lands was a largely persecutory affair akin to

the difficulties faced by Jews historically in Europe. Analyzing historiography on the Farhud

himself, Yehouda Shenhav adds the factor of a Zionist positionality to this conception,

suggesting, "Zionist historiography treats the Farhud as a watershed event in the history of Iraqi

Jews that occurred within the framework of the European Holocaust. It is cited as proof that the

life of the Jews in Iraq was intolerable, that they were persecuted by Muslims, and that their

inevitable result was their immigration to Israel."[67] Shenhav clarifies that the impetus for such a

reading is a hegemonic, "Preconceived Zionist-European metanarrative in Israeli society," and it

is this narrative, "…that accounts for the negation of the memory of Iraqi Jewry."[68] In the name

of doing due diligence to Iraqis, their memories deserve to be foregrounded, an act that would

also lead to greater specification as to their status of belonging in the presence of difference.

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[65] Ibid., 188.
[66] Mark R. Cohen, "Mark R. Cohen, 'The Neo-Lachrymose Conception of Jewish-Arab History,' Tikkun 6:3 (May-June 1991): 55.
[67] Yehouda A Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: a postcolonial reading of nationalism, religion, and ethnicity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 140.
[68] Ibid., 141.

A feature common to discussions of the Farhud is that mention is often made of just how much non-Jews put their bodies and safety on the line to save their fellow Jewish Iraqi citizens. Discussing Muslims specifically, Bashkin has noted how some Muslims' defense tactics resulted in their death and, "Many testimonies given by Jews about the Farhud mention a Muslim neighbor or a friend who protected them."[69] In other words, non-Jews were both perpetrators and saviors and because their actions were so selfless, their significance is often implied when it is mentioned. Readers are left to assume the precise moral to deduce. However, upon returning again to Iraqi memories, the significance of these non-Jewish saviors can actually be more determined.

A notable feature of the Farhud, but one that is sometimes lost in discussions of the pogrom's violence, is that the outbreak was continued for a second day, partially due to the actions of poorer Iraqis who wanted to loot, not kill.[70] Sasson Somekh offers that Jews most vividly affected by the Farhud included those who lived in homogenous, less affluent Jewish quarters which was not representative of the entirety of the community, as some Jews by the 1940s had already began living in more prosperous, mixed neighborhoods. Somekh's own family occupied the fortunate position of observers of the Farhud which he described as,

> My family escaped unscathed because we, along with our extended family, lived in one of those newer quarters. I was seven years old and the only thing I remember is that we stood behind a screen at a window overlooking our street and watched the Bedouin carrying furniture of every description—from kitchen stoves to heavy radios, stolen from the Jewish neighborhoods—back to the flimsy huts where they lived.[71]

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[69] Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2010), 188.

[70] Hayyim J Cohen, "The Anti-Jewish Farhud in Baghdad, 1941," in *Al-Farhūd: The 1941 Pogrom in Iraq*, ed. Shmuel. Moreh and Zvi. Yehuda (Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, 2010), 167.

[71] Sasson Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday: The Making of an Arab Jew* (Jerusalem, Israel: Ibis Editions, 2007), 130.

Even though Somkeh and his family were physically unscathed, the totality of his description, especially when compared to less affluent families, foregrounds intriguing takeaways. Unlike families living closer to the razor's edge, the Somekh's privilege insulated them from the Farhud, which simultaneously not necessarily allowing them an opportunity to connect deeper with fellow non-Jewish Iraqis during a moment of tumult.

Somekh's derisive assessment of the absconding Bedouins, while not the main focus of his Farhud memory, is consequential. In a removed way, Somekh's description is plainly correct. Hayyim J. Cohen for instance, assess most of the Farhud's perpetrators as such,

> It is fairly certain that most of those who took part in the slaughter of the Jews were young men influenced by Nazi propaganda, especially soldiers, officers, policemen, and members of the para-military groups. The looters and thieves, however, were mainly the uneducated, illiterate masses, who neither read books and newspapers nor had radio sets so as to be influenced by Nazi propaganda.[72]

Somekh's vantage point, not only corroborates this technical description, but renders it more meaningful. What he unintentionally suggests is that wealthier Jews, particularly those with only a bird's eye view of the Farhud, inherited more distance from their fellow country people by way of the Farhud. The Bedouin in Somekh's description are wholly opportunistic and indigent. This description demonstrates the possibility for some Iraqi Jews to have a discriminatory relationship to social differences. A discriminatory or pointedly racist valence did not always follow from a sustained awareness of social differences and their effects. Yet, for Jews like Somekh, who could unselfconsciously malign Bedouins, it was often times a wedge between them and unmitigated Iraqi belonging, even one as imperceptible and seemingly benign as relative accumulated wealth and status, that prejudiced their gaze. As Somekh's family is a microcosm of, living separately from most other Iraqis due to wealth or becoming imbued with discerning tastes by way of

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[72] Hayyim J Cohen, "The Anti-Jewish Farhud in Baghdad, 1941," in *Al-Farhūd: The 1941 Pogrom in Iraq*, ed. Shmuel. Moreh and Zvi. Yehuda (Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, 2010), 167-8.

modernizing, European influenced Arab culture generated Jews who could be described as "colonial citizens."[73] Sarah Stein has discussed an example of these colonial citizens via Baghdadi Jewish diasporas, who were noteworthy due to their adherence to a civilizing ideal and the influence afforded to them by wealth.[74] In a subtler way, Jews still in Iraq could emulate this discriminatory attitude, depending on the causes and conditions of their belonging. Somekh reminds readers that some Jews only survived with outside help, but his family and those like them, don't necessarily get the chance to establish this kind of bond. In their experience and for wealthier Jews like them, the Farhud did not disrupt their belonging because it was not able to touch them due to their privilege. In the end however, it might have attenuated belonging due to their passive observational role.

Women at a Crossroads: Jewish Women and the Farhud

The Farhud was unequivocally terrorizing. Those individuals containing more precarity, such as the aforementioned impoverished, and women, were even more numerously affected. Some, such as a woman cook for a Jewish family escaped immediate death by lying about her religion on the day of the Farhud before she could find safety.[75] In *Memories of Eden: A Journey Through Jewish Baghdad*, Violette Shamash specifies the Farhud's impact, especially for women, from her vantage point,

> Women were raped. Infants were killed in front of their terrified parents…Targeting homes where they knew pretty Jewish girls lived, soldiers beat up guards employed by the householders. The menfolk mobilized to help save their daughters by throwing the girls over the back balconies into the waiting arms of friends and neighbors, or the girls escaped themselves to neighbors…[76]

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[73] Sarah Stein, "Protected Persons? The Baghdadi Jewish Diaspora, the British State, and the Persistence of Empire," *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 1 (2011): 84.
[74] Ibid., 86.
[75] Lyn Julius, "The Farhud: A Slaughter in Iraq," *The Jewish Chronicle*, (May 31, 2011). Link.
[76] Violette Shamash, Mira Rocca, and Tony. Rocca, *Memories of Eden: A Journey through Jewish Baghdad* (London: Forum, 2008), 183.

In certain instances, women were tortured and mutilated before being killed.[77] For instance, Chafika Akerib, a widow able to spare her nine children from the Farhud's violence, was devastated when she learned her best friend Sabiha, who lived just a short distance away, was mutilated during her murder.[78] Daniel Sasson corroborates and adds to this detailed violence stating, "Over 200 Jews were slaughtered in Iraq that day, with thousands more injured and raped. Their businesses were demolished, their property plundered, shops set on fire and ransacked."[79] When the dust of the destruction settled, several Jewish women lost their lives. Among the murdered were: Habiba Abdu, Hnini wife of Shimun Abu al-Fiusa, Sister of Shimun Abu al-Fiusa, Naima Murdukh Abu al-Msaghin, Misuda daughter of Abu al-Pacha, Daughter of Misuda daughter of Abu al-Pacha, Aziza daughter of Abu al-Samak, Bertin Dillal daughter of Khela Hisqel Horesh, Daughter of Sio Jamal Dillal, Khela Dillall, daughter of Hisqel Horesh, Farha Hagla, Mazli daughter of Haguli, Daughter of Halima, Wife of Hisqel, Farha daughter of Khela Hisqel Horesh, Simha Abudi Horesh mother of Khela Dillall, Estegh Mdallal, Misuda Mikhael, Mittana Salih Nijjagh, Hnini Ezra Qighin wife of Sasson Shimun, Farha Salih, Estegh Samra wife of Moshi Halima, Wife of Eliyahu Samra, Farha daughter of Mnahem Dahud Shimmah, Misuda Simantob daughter of Abraham Mani, Berta Sion, Salha Sion daughter of Abraham, Rima Dahud Tutunchi, Latifa Yaqub, Khatun daughter of Yosef, and Salha Yosef.[80]

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[77] Sarah Ehrlich, "Farhud Memories: Baghdad's 1941 Slaughter of the Jews," *BBC News*, (June 1, 2011). Link.

[78] Mike Cohen, "On Fire in Baghdad," *Ami Magazine.* (August 3, 2011). Link.

[79] Lynette Hacopian, "85-year-old Israeli testifies to Nazi-inspired pogrom that massacred Iraqi Jewry," *The Times of Israel.* (March 3, 2021). Link.

[80] Zvi Yehuda, "List of Victims of the Farhud," in *Al-Farhūd: The 1941 Pogrom in Iraq*, ed. Shmuel. Moreh and Zvi. Yehuda (Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, 2010), 251-254.

As the descriptions above and the list of victims shows, the brutality of the Farhud is undeniable. Noteworthy still, are the stories of just how valiantly Jews were saved. In particular, women with numerous intersecting differences were saviors of each other, a fact that disrupts patriarchal tendencies of Farhud accounts that privilege male rescuers. For instance, Nuzhat Katzab, recalling a story from her mother about the protection her family received during the Farhud, writes,

> According to my mom, our family, much to our luck, were not confronted with the pogrom. When the mob came to break down the door of our house and enter it in order to take revenge, Azi Dadi, the *kushit*[81] woman who used to help out my mom in the house, a broad and strong woman, propped herself up against the door while her shouts reached out all over the neighborhood. The neighbors closest to our house came over to our roof and signaled for us to cautiously and quietly come over to their houses. These were Muslims, the father of the house was the president of the court of Iraq, they brought us to the roof of their house and sheltered us in a room on their roof…when we left from the tiny room and heard about the abuse of the mob on Jews and saw the destruction, especially in Baghdad itself, and mind you we lived in the Al At'mia neighborhood, we were reluctant to continue living on our own, without an older man and the noise of a family in the house.[82]

By way of her mother's retelling, what Katzab begins saying here is that her family was fortunate enough to not experience the full force of the pogrom. While the aberrational event left a mark on their minds, because they were spared physical violence, it did not do so on their bodies. While the bodies of Katzab's family did not face violence, there were indeed bodies that absorbed this violence.

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[81] Kushi is a derogatory term for black people. While *kush* is the name for Ethiopia in the Bible and can technically be used to refer to black Africans in a non-derogatory way, within Israeli society it is used to emphasize difference in a way that is racist. This was the case even from Israel's inception given that, as Bashkin notes about Iraqi Jews first arriving to Israel, "The Arab culture of Iraqi Jews, as well as that of Jews from other Middle Eastern countries, was perceived as primitive and degenerate. In addition, it was racialized: these Jews were sometimes called *kushim*, *shhorim*, and *schwartzes* (derogatory terms meaning "black") to signify their foreign and non-European racial identity." Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), 6; Philogos, "Is 'Kushim' a Racist Israeli Term for Blacks?," The Forward, accessed February 2, 2021, https://forward.com/culture/199824/is-kushim-a-racist-israeli-term-for-blacks/.

[82] Nuzhat Katzab, *Harbingers of Peace: With The Arab and The Druze Women in Israel,* (Or Yehuda, Israel: Ma'ariv Book Guild), 16.

An often-mentioned feature of the Farhud is that Jewish lives were saved by the benevolence and protection of non-Jewish Iraqis. When recalling the Farhud for example, Agnes Dellal of Baghdad remembers, "…the just Moslem neighbor who took in her whole family and protected them as the mobs ran through the streets that night."[83] Even more affecting, there were Muslim neighbors and friends to Jews who lost their lives as they attempted to save those they were bonded to.[84] If not for their caretaker, Azi Dadi, Katzab's family might have counted themselves among the wounded. This anecdote highlights the imperfections—or at least the complexities—of coexistence. A coexistence lens might leave readers wondering why such a reality did not prevent violence against Jews in the first place. Furthermore, as Katzab's fortunate feelings regarding her family's safety reveal, such a coexistence lens raises the question as to why solidarity and protection were not necessarily expected but appreciated. Instances of coexistence do not totally explain the Farhud because they emphasize differences in essentializing and static ways that make them seem entrenched and needing to be overcome.[85] Viewing things coalitionally rather, demonstrates that the Farhud did not immediately catalyze Jews' departure or make them lose faith in Iraq because Jews, as a non-dominant population of Iraq were able to view difference as facilitating connection rather than as abrogating it.[86] In particular for Jewish women, difference had to be viewed in all its complexity given that it was a reality that was not only present via them and non-Jews but also them and Jewish men.

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[83] William Dellal, "The Dellal and Ardy Families," in *Remembering Baghdad: Iraqi Jewish Heritage at Shearith Israel*, (December 16, 2018), 35.

[84] Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 188.

[85] Elizabeth R. Cole, "Coalitions as a Model for Intersectionality: From Practice to Theory," *Sex Roles* 59, no. 5 (September 1, 2008): 449.

[86] Ibid.

Coalitionally speaking, that Katzab's feminine dominated family was saved first and foremost by another woman and also by a woman occupying a subordinated class and racial status in Iraq speaks to the complexity of the encounter. Katzab concludes her summary of the Farhud by mentioning that without men present, the family felt even more endangered. Recounting her mother's experience during the Farhud, Rachel Wahba furthers the narrative that male intervention was sought after by other women too. She writes,

> "The screams kept getting louder and louder, punctuated by gunshots. My sixteen-year-old mother ran with her family from rooftop to rooftop, until they reached the house of a cousin. 'There were men in that household, so we felt it would be safer,' she explained. My mother, her mother, grandmother, and siblings were spared the rampaging mobs but not the trauma. She slept with her shoes on for the next two weeks."[87]

The Katzab family being saved by a woman is all the more necessary to highlight for the complexity it adds to how protection was sought versus how it was delivered and which identity factors all of this were based on. Azi Dadi did not merely feel a sensibility toward the Katzab's because they were all Iraqi or humans deserving of safety, but because they all occupied multiple subordinated identities within the state. While the Katzab's were Jewish women, Azi Dadi was a maid likely of lower economic status, possessing a darker complexion. It is crucial to interrogate this coalitional identification as well as the role difference played rather than assuming these factors are intuitively understood.

Noticeably, Katzab's mother referring to Azi Dadi as a *kushit* (feminine version of a derogatory term for black person) is a reminder that no differential identity is static, and analysis must always attune to how individual difference is constructed and reconstituted. In this instance, it is difficult to know definitively if Katzab's mother or Katzab's translation says more about racist Israeli conventions or Iraqi ones. Given the integral role Azi Dadi played in Katzab's family, there is reason to believe that her mother was not using the racist term to signify

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[87] Rachel Wahba, "Farhud Day: Remembering the Screams," *The Times of Israel*, (June 1, 2020). Link.

benevolently or maliciously in Iraq, but rather descriptively. Yet, present intent does not negate

racist outcomes. The fact that the phrase is not benign in Israel, speaks to a reality wherein

Katzab and her mother seem to have internalized a taxonomy of racial difference and suggests to

the fact that even if Azi Dadi was not considered wholly racially subordinated in Iraq, she was

likely considered racially different. Racial difference might not have been codified as

hierarchical in Iraq, but cognizance of it was influential. For instance, Ruth Pearl surmises that

her family had her go shopping in public as the Farhud was winding down because due to her

self-described "dark complex" she, "was the only member of the family able to shop at the

market amidst the chaos."[88] Furthermore in terms of Azi Dadi, even though descriptions of her

powerful body and voice were in some sense instrumentalized to convey how her presence saved

the Katzab's, they also evoke racist stereotypes. Katzab's descriptions of Azi Dadi as her

family's maid, as well as how she described her magnitude along with the strength of her body

and voice, are all descriptions reminiscent of the mammy—an essentialized black maid—

stereotype.[89] The trouble with these stereotypes beyond their immediate racism is that their

portrayals have the potential to circulate and cause harm in perpetuity if not explicitly eradicated.

      When it comes to Azi Dadi's intervention, a shared Iraqi identity fails to tell the whole

story as to why Jews were saved during the pogrom, because certain Iraqis also instigated the

pogrom. Noticing an overlooked similarity of Azi Dadi and the Katzab women coalitionally

belonging to one another because of their relative subordination is more clarifying. Yet,

difference here is still complex which does not necessarily mean that it needed to be overcome.

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[88] "Ruth Pearl (Daniel's Mother) Recalls Jewish Baghdad," *Diarna*, (October 2013). Link.
[89] Tanya Maria Golash-Boza, *Race & Racisms: A Critical Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 97.

When attention is turned to the Muslim head of household who keeps the Katzab's safe until the

mobs are subdued, we see not only recognition but also a level of patronizing benevolence at

work. In terms of recognition, the fact that the father was the president of the court of Iraq is

noteworthy. His position in the upper echelons of Iraqi society—particularly as a justice

keeper—positions him as someone invested in upholding an ideal and peaceable Iraq. Jewish

neighbors who can be saved, grateful, and still upstanding members of Iraqi society assist in

bolstering this ideal. In terms of benevolence not dependent on mutuality, the Muslim father is

the ultimate although discrete savior of the Katzab women. While Azi Dadi risks her entire body

to save the family she works for, the unnamed neighbor simply has to whisper and hide the

Katzab's on his roof. Thus, the lesson Katzab and her mother learn from the pogrom is not to

rebuke Iraq per se, but their own failing for not recognizing sooner that they need male guidance.

The Katzab's experience with the Farhud was without a doubt marked by violence, yet

this does not mean that such vivid violence was eclipsing. Moreover, similar to the

aforementioned Somekh at least in outcome, affective commitments allowed Tikva Agassi to

come away from the Farhud without total disillusionment. In the only mention made of the

Farhud in her memoir, Agassi is not haunted by it. About this potential rupture she writes,

> I want to mention only one thing, when the pro-Nazi Rashid Ali al-Kailani carried out his revolution in
> May 1941 and the King and Abd al-Ilah fled, despite it all I loved and missed them, and the truth is I loved
> the whole Hashemite royal household. I nevertheless loved to sing and did not stop learning the first song
> that was written in praise of Rashid Ali because it had a beautiful melody, and artistic senses usually win
> out over other senses.[90]

Projections about a picturesque Iraq captivate Agassi and ultimately save Iraq in her eyes. She

doesn't actually name the Farhud or dwell on it. Rather, Agassi foregrounds the catalyst of the

power vacuum that started the Farhud and leaves it up to informed readers to discern the gravity

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[90] Tikva Agassi, *me-Baghad le-Yisrael* (From Baghdad to Israel), (Ramat Gan: Tikva Agassi, 2001), 150.

of al-Kailani's revolution beyond mere mention of its occurrence. The affinity she has for and faith she places in all of Iraq's rulers, no matter their differences in politics, is demonstrative of Jews' epistemology of belonging in Iraq. To be sure, it was not entirely foolish for Agassi to place her faith in Iraqi politicians because even though she describes al-Kailani as pro-Nazi, Bashkin has also insisted, "Kaylani himself was adamant about maintaining order and did not allow any harm to come to the Jews in Baghdad."[91] As cloying as Agassi's appeal to the artistic senses might seem, it reveals the extent to which some Jews would go to belong in Iraq. Within this particular calculus of belonging, recognition did not rely on relations being perfect and sameness being vivid and unmistakable. Rather, less obvious avenues of recognition were sometimes sought out in the name of being able to remain a part of Iraq.

Possessing neither the wealth of the Somekh family, nor Agassi's romanticism, Shoshana Levy's memory of the Farhud is somewhat more circumscribed. Occurring when she was just four years old, Levy is able to describe the events of the Farhud but does not provide the most vivid account. Levy recalls that the conversations she heard from the adults in her life imparted her with the fear that the Farhud meant Muslims were coming to murder her and her family.[92] In contrast to previous accounts, the Levy family was not saved by fellow country people of different faith traditions. Rather, along with other families who also resided in the alleyway in which they lived, the Levy's sought shelter on the roof of a neighbor's house that was particularly well protected.[93] As the night wore on, inscribing memories of gunshots and screaming in Levy's mind's eye, the families sheltering together were eventually freed when

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[91] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 113.
[92] Shoshana Levy, *al-Em ha-Derech* (In the Middle of the Road), (Tel Aviv: Sh. Levy, 2001), 30.
[93] Ibid.

they heard word that the British had stopped the violence.[94] Levy's account is crucial in the way that it challenges insistences that the Farhud be read simple as a remarkable opportunity for coexistence to actualize. Even though the Levy family did not owe their lives to the courage of non-Jewish Iraqis per se, their story does not negate belonging remaining outright.

Adding more intrigue, Shoshana Almoslino's experience with the Farhud was marked by more ambiguity than any account so far. Part of the reason for this is that although the Farhud unfolded in Baghdad, Almoslino claims that "…it's thundering echo also arrived to Mosul," where her and her family resided.[95] Almoslino had ventured out with some friends to play on the morning of what would be the Farhud when mid-way through their excursion she noticed people running. Caught up in the momentum of the crowd, she began running as well while she asked those around her for an explanation. When a woman finally answered her, Almoslino was told to rush home because, "…soon the Arabs will attack and slaughter us."[96] As she ran home, she saw the fellow Jews in her neighborhood locking their doors which her family was just about to do for good until they saw her. As her mother anxiously pulled Almoslino inside the house, she locked the door behind her as she was the last member of her family to arrive home.

Interestingly, Almoslino's vantage point corroborates an aspect of Katzab's which was women's agentive role. While Almoslino's mom was worried but composed and able to protect her daughter by barricading their family home once she arrived and making sure Almoslino got safely up to their family's roof, Almoslino's father was more distraught. When she made her way up to her house's roof where her whole family would wait out the Farhud, she encountered her

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[94] Ibid., 31.
[95] Shoshana Almoslino, *me-ha-Mahteret be-Bavel le-Memshelet Yisrael* (From the Underground of Babylon to the Government of Israel), (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibutz ha-Me'uhad, 1998), 20.
[96] Ibid., 27.

father, crouched and trembling. When Almoslino asked her dad what their family would do to protect themselves, he was unable to assuage his worry and answered, "What will all Jews do?," "That's what we'll do as well. We don't have any weapons to defend ourselves, so we'll continue to pray that nothing will happen to us. God is with us."[97] The Farhud by its very nature was an outbreak no one could have prepared for, Almoslino's father included. His resignation is noteworthy when compared to Almoslino and her mother, who at least considered the possibility of action. The Almoslino's sleeplessly awaited news of the end of the Farhud on their roof. No one came to save them because Mosul was not physically touched in the way Baghdad was, but the absence of fellow Iraqis' benevolence is noticeable in Almoslino's description. In some sense, Almoslino's Farhud retelling—although not marked by the kind of physical violence that the Jews of Baghdad experienced—is the closest to supporting what some have called the Farhudization of Iraqi Jewish history. Not only did her family wait in terror with little help, Almoslino also insists that the Farhud attracted Zionist emissaries to Iraq and catalyzed her to be amenable to their message and later join the Zionist movement in Iraq.[98] Taken at face value, especially given the inaction of Almoslino's dad, the Almoslino family's experience of the Farhud almost justifies tracing it as yet another pogrom that supports the debasement of Jewish life in exile.

The trouble with this framework is that Almoslino and her mother's actions, although subtle, tell a more nuanced story. The two women, perhaps because they were decentered not only as Jews but as women, needed to be attuned to finding belonging where they could. As Almoslino's mom waits to barricade their family until Almoslino returns and Almoslino hopes

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[97] Ibid.

[98] Ibid., 22, 28; Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 138.

that her father will have a solution to the violence, they are demonstrating their ability as Jewish

women to strategically and coalitionally belong to Iraq. Whereas the common summation of the

Farhud has been,

> The Farhud also testified to the resilience of certain norms of coexistence that typified interwar Baghdad. The victims of the violence often suffered at the hands of anonymous attackers, whereas those who survived the riots mention the names of familiar individuals who came to protect them. Friends, business partners, and neighbors were aware of religious differences between themselves and their Jewish neighbors, yet they felt the need to offer help and support,[99]

the lived experiences contained in this section, particularly those of Jewish women, suggest that

focus should not only be on the non-Jews who leant a helping hand, but the Jews who grasped

for it despite its imperfection as a lifeline.

Bitter Honey: The Quotidian Belonging of Iraqi Jews

The Farhud taught Jews not to depend on singular, mighty forces for conferred and

promised safety in perpetuity, but to seek out security via intimate connection with their fellow

country people on a reconstituted basis. Reasons this change of heart occurred were due to how

much the British failed Jews during the pogrom, how much Zionist emissaries saw the pogrom as

something to capitalize on in terms of expanding its membership, and how much the Iraqi

government began to paint all Jews with broad brush strokes as Zionists.

Jews were most disappointed with the British following the Farhud given that they were

the element most capable of stopping the violence immediately being done to them following the

overall lawlessness inspired by the failed coup. Social perception that the Jewish community

were actively welcoming British troops back to Iraq when the community was likely just

celebrating Shavuot has historically been proffered as one of the igniters of the Farhud. Yet, this

catalyst is not the only reason Jews became disillusioned. The fact is, "Military intervention

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[99] Ibid., 125.

could have put an end to the rioting as soon as it broke out."[100] British passivity catalyzed

wholesale distrust on the part of Jews. Despite disappointment with the British, economic

matters provided a countervailing force that very practically secured Jews to Iraq and specifically

their fellow Iraqis. Not only did economic opportunity increase in Iraq following WWII which

made Jews extremely wary of leaving for the unknown, this prosperity was acutely felt by those

most affected by the Farhud who according to Somekh moved to newly established, integrated

neighborhoods in southern Baghdad where Jews and Muslims had a vested interest in working

together to maintain Iraq's growing economy.[101]

Paralleling the co-arising forces of British disappointment and economic prosperity in

post-pogrom Iraq was the co-arising forces of increased Zionist presence and increased Iraqi

reaction against Zionism. As Esther Meir-Glitzenstein puts it, "In the scholarly literature on the

Jews of Iraq in the 1940s and their emigration to Israel, the Farhud is seen as a crucial crossroads

in the history of Iraqi Jewry, one which would lead it to an encounter with the Zionist movement

and eventually, early in the 1950s, to the mass emigration of Iraqi Jews to Israel."[102] As I discuss

more in Chapter Two, European Zionist emissaries saw all Iraqi Jews as potentially susceptible

to Zionist messaging following the Farhud. Somewhat unthoughtfully, or at least possessed by

different concerns, Iraqi authorities, eventually (by roughly 1948) adopted a version of this

position wherein skepticism of Zionism had the potential to implicate many Jews. Specifically,

"With the outbreak of the war in Palestine, Iraq authorities became concerned about the weapons

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[100] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 117.

[101] Ibid., 138; Sasson Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday: The Making of an Arab Jew* (Jerusalem, Israel: Ibis Editions, 2007), 132-133.

[102] Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, "The Baghdad Pogrom and Zionist Policy," in *Al-Farhūd: The 1941 Pogrom in Iraq*, ed. Shmuel. Moreh and Zvi. Yehuda (Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, 2010), 186.

in Iraqi Jewish hands, and initiated an anti-Zionist campaign that reached its peak in October

1949, when the Jewish underground was discovered by police."[103] A phenomenon that captures

well, how Jews were somewhat trapped among Zionist, Iraqi, and British rhetoric is a series of

bombings the community faced in the 1950s.

While Louise Cohen's son was still an infant, several bombings were "…dropped on the

Jews of Iraq."[104] She insists Zionists were behind these bombs in order to encourage Jewish

immigration. If Zionists were the perpetrators and immigration was their goal, they were

successful in catalyzing several members of Cohen's family to depart for Israel, apart from her

and her husband themselves, she notes. The bombings, occurring at different Jewish centers and

typically accomplished through hand grenades occurred on the following dates: April 8 in 1950

and January 14, March 14, May 10, June 5-6 in 1951.[105]

The five bombings of Iraqi Jewish centers that Cohen is referring to are somewhat

haunting in the telling of why Jews left Iraq, in particular because one of them took place at a

synagogue and killed five people. When these bombings happened in the early 1950s, there was

much finger pointing and no entity: Zionist, Iraqi, or British, would take responsibility. For this

reason, Bashkin has insisted, "The debate as to who bombed the Jewish centers has persisted into

the present," and she ultimately reasons that Zionists seem to be the most plausible

perpetrators.[106] The question of whether or not Zionists engaged in direct action that resulted in

Jewish deaths in order to hasten their goal of Jewish immigration has long plagued studies of

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[103] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 204.
[104] Louise Cohen, *ha-Avak Higbia Uf* (The Dust Flies Up), (Tel Aviv: Kedma Books, 2011), 38.
[105] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 206.
[106] Ibid., 207.

Iraq's Jews. Yet, the bombings are rendered less confusing and the need to determine precise answers is mitigated when it is remembered that the spectacle of the bombings perfectly encapsulates the way individual Iraqis were positioned in Iraq.

At the very least, the ambiguity of the Zionist bombings is less outrageous when it is remembered that the often focused on actors in 1940s Iraq: the British, Iraqi government officials, and dissident Jewish political actors like Zionists, do not allow for historians to properly capture the complexity of how Jews belonged and why they stayed. With Jews belonging in Iraq strategically and coalitionally, as this chapter shows, the conundrums of their Iraqi Jewish life decrease in charge. The kind of belonging Jews experienced in Iraq is also intriguing because it was in their Iraqi homeland that they learned that belonging did not always have to be unidimensional, oppositional, or hierarchical. As will be shown later in this dissertation, this more expansive feeling of belonging was not supported when Iraqi Jews moved to Israel.

As memories from women's lives below will show, coalitional belonging worked so well for Iraqi Jewish women because it was predicated on elements of their identity that were both at home and not at home in Iraq.[107] Jewish women encountered neighbors, acquaintances, strangers, and near-strangers, in a number of ways. Certainly, as young girls walked to school together or enjoyed the same Arab music, they bonded over something shared. Yet, if these girls happened to be of different faiths, they were also organizing coalitionally in the presence of their differences.

Before her family's departure to Israel, Katzab compared the quality of her Iraqi life to honey given how pleasant relations between her and her neighbors were, but disappointingly

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[107] Anna Carastathis, "Identity Categories as Potential Coalitions," *Signs* 38, no. 4 (2013): 945.

concluded that this honey, "…after the period of persecution and nightmares, became bitter."[108]

To be sure, according to Katzab herself, the period that led to bitterness contained a multitude of factors. As outside entities like the British tried to reduce Jewish experience to the Farhud, Jews themselves knew better. Roughly three years after the Farhud, the British were becoming increasingly skeptical of Jewish sentiment toward them. In a British Embassy report they write, "There is no doubt that the attitude of the Jews towards Great Britain has deteriorated consistently since the events of June 1941. Many are now definitely and openly anti-British and are responsible for a considerable amount of anti-British propaganda. This propaganda is not pro-Nazi, nor is it pro-German; it is purely and solely anti-British and the following lines have been reported."[109] Considering only the positionality of the British, in its reductive nature, does a disservice to how Jews belonging before, beyond, and despite the Farhud.

All in all, the Farhud is not singled out as what transformed Katzab's relationship with Iraq into one of bitterness. Rather, she enumerates targeted policing, increasing Zionist activity, a militarized presence that did not end until 1949, and finally the 1950 passage of the Denationalization Law. Ultimately, what Katzab's story of amenable but spoiled Iraqi belonging instigates, and stories from others corroborate, is that despite individual affection and coalitional belonging, power holders eventually stymied and prevented this kind of strategic recognition. In order to demonstrate this paradigm, the remainder of this chapter will highlight instances where Iraqi Jewish women revealed the intimate ways they belonged to Iraq and their fellow Iraqis, before they were eventually spoiled.

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[108] Nuzhat Katzab, *Harbingers of Peace: With The Arab and The Druze Women in Israel,* (Or Yehuda, Israel: Ma'ariv Book Guild), 23.
[109] British Embassy, FO_371_40090, (Baghdad: Iraq, April 15, 1944), 2.

As the Katzab family's wealth increased in the mid-1940s, they moved from the city center to a more affluent suburb in Basra populated by Muslims, Christians and Jews. Katzab would also attend a large government run school with Muslims and Christians where both Arabic and English were emphasized.[110] The family was immensely close to the very affluent Muslim family living next door. In fact, Katzab was not only best friends with this family's daughter, but also Inaam the daughter of another high-ranking Muslim family in her neighborhood. These relationships were essential for Katzab, as they grounded her in her new neighborhood and school. As a corroborating aside, communal closeness between women as speaking to coalitional belonging is also noticeable in the story of Louise Cohen's birth to her third child. Residing with her husband Dr. Cohen, as the only Jews in a predominately Muslim village, at nine months pregnant she was preparing to go to a Baghdad hospital one night when she began to have intense contractions. Recognizing she would give birth imminently a Muslim midwife was called to their house to assist. When Dr. Cohen mistakenly thought Louise had given birth to another girl, he was upset and stormed off.[111] In this instance, the midwife witnessed not only Cohen's birth but the dysfunction of her family. She was also the person to correct Dr. Cohen and inform him his wife had in fact given birth to their first boy. Despite being just an anecdote in Cohen's memoir, the birth of son Yaakov, aided by a Muslim midwife, is illustrative of the intimacy existing, particularly among women, in 1940s Iraq.

More conceptually, women's intimacy based on shared marginalized status in Iraq had been a circulating trope in Arab Jewish literature since at least the 1930s. For instance, Yaqub Balbul's 1938 short story "True Copy," discusses a Muslim woman's murder by her brothers due

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[110] Nuzhat Katzab, *Harbingers of Peace: With The Arab and The Druze Women in Israel,* (Or Yehuda, Israel: Ma'ariv Book Guild), 21.
[111] Louise Cohen, *ha-Avak Higbia Uf* (The Dust Flies Up), (Tel Aviv: Kedma Books, 2011), 37.

to an implied unwanted pregnancy that is confirmed by a midwife who has been abducted and

forced to examine the woman.[112] Following the midwife's confirmation that the young woman is

in fact pregnant, presumably not under acceptable conditions, an unrelenting description of her

murder at the hands of her brothers occurs. The impact of the story is felt as readers'

expectations that the young pregnant woman might be saved are suspended and then dashed by

an unflinching description of her killing.[113] Folded into the more apparent moral of the story, this

being that women are only temporarily and nominally safe, is the less stated but felt sense that

men are inherently ignorant vis-à-vis more actualized, intuitive, and knowing women. Paralleling

Cohen's birth wherein her turbulent husband possesses no equanimity and little interiority while

Louise and her midwife are subconsciously wise, the brothers in "True Copy" are shackled to

their rage so much so that they become murderers who are always separated from those different

than them, while the women possess societal awareness beyond words. In both instances, social

difference hierarchies don't really allow anyone to triumph, but the women demonstrate a

capacity to coalitionally belong via their self and societal awareness.

Returning to Katzab, left to themselves, the girls' relationship was impenetrable, apart

from, as she notes, the disruptive influence of Iraqi, "…authorities beginning to suffocatingly

trap Jews and haunt them."[114] The disproportionate response on the part of Iraqi authorities was

prompted by the rise of minor Zionist training groups in Basra. Katzab imparts that due to

Zionist suspicions and the situation in Palestine, Iraqi authorities started to arrest Jews arbitrarily.

Commensurate with the possibility that individual Jews were affected even more so by what was

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[112] Yaqub Balbul, "True Copy," in *Arab-Jewish Literature*, by Reuven Snir, trans. Reuven Snir (Leiden ; Boston: BRILL, 2019), 212.
[113] Ibid., 214.
[114] Nuzhat Katzab, *Harbingers of Peace: With The Arab and The Druze Women in Israel,* (Or Yehuda, Israel: Ma'ariv Book Guild), 22.

close to them, Katzab suggests that she was frightened by the hanging of Jewish businessman

Shafiq Addas not just because his dissident charges of supporting Israel were untrue but also

because he lived just a few neighborhoods away from her.[115] An atmosphere of terror swirled

around Jews until the passage of the Denationalization Law in 1950, after which Katzab and her

family departed for Israel. Generated by authorial figures in Iraq, this punitive atmosphere

worried Jews despite the fact that the fact that they individually and routinely wanted to belong

to their fellow Iraqis.

Further buttressing the point that Jews were at home in Iraq in a quotidian way, Shoshana

Levy's story about how the women figures in her life related to the abaya illustrates the kind of

respect Jews had for Iraqi culture.

> As a girl of about 9 or 10 I remember that when I'd stand next to my aunt wrapped in her black abaya, the familiar sudden desire arose in me to appear to go out wrapped in an abaya like my aunt and mother. For some reason the abaya signified maturity in my eyes—the passage from girlhood to womanhood—and I really longed to feel like I was already an adult. Because there were two women in the house, my mom and aunt, each had her own distinct abaya, and they used to hang them on a hook next to each other. One day I decided to realize my dream. I took one of the abayas and wrapped myself in it to go walk around outside. And it just so happened that a family friend saw me and informed my mom and aunt. My mom and aunt scolded me and forbade me from going outside in an abaya. I didn't know why they scolded me like that. They didn't explain it to me and just claimed it was inappropriate and not nice. Up until today I still don't understand what's inappropriate or not nice about going out in abaya as the both of them would only go out if they were wrapped in one.[116]

Indeed, although by the 1940s an overwhelming number of Jewish women had adopted Western

clothing as the norm, the abaya or black cloak, was still worn when venturing out into Iraq's

streets, in particular for activities like shopping and strolling.[117] Like the adult Levy women, in

the graphic novel *The Wolf of Baghdad: Memoir of a Lost Homeland* Baghdadi Jew Claire Isaacs

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[115] Ibid., 23.

[116] Shoshana Levy, *al-Em ha-Derech* (In the Middle of the Road), (Tel Aviv: Sh. Levy, 2001), 40.

[117] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 89.

notes that her mother always veiled when out in public.[118] Despite the fact that Levy's mother

and aunt do not want her to veil, their reaction arises from their reverence from the garment, not

from a desire to dissuade. Furthermore, because the veil was dismissed by more progressive

Muslim women as well as affluent Jewish women, in a changing Iraq where signaling adherence

to modern British norms was crucial, the Levy family's reverence for the garment demonstrates

their commitment to an unchanging Iraq and those most left behind in Iraq's machinations.[119]

Levy's story is intriguing for foregrounding the unique ways women were one with Iraq

as opposed to men. As women of a certain age typically took on the abaya in public, they were

able to outwardly display their compliance with and affinity for Iraqi customs. Men did not

always adhere to this standard with their clothing choices or via single garment. For instance,

Levy also delineated the dress of her grandfather, who was quite religious and committed to Iraq.

According to her, he never wore a dishdasha (robe) to venture outdoors the way the women in

her family wore abayas. Her grandfather also never had a beard and usually wore what she called

Western clothes such as jackets and pants.[120] As Somekh corroborates in his memoir, many

Jewish men wore Western style suits, with women wearing Western style dress as well, all of

which could have the effect of obscuring class and age differences.[121] In no way does the dress of

Levy's grandfather or Jewish men in general suggest that they were at a distance from their

fellow Iraqi brethren, but the subtle alliances offered by women's garments is noteworthy. Levy

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[118] Carol Isaacs, *The Wolf of Baghdad: Memoir of a Lost Homeland* (London, England: Myriad Editions, 2020), 26.

[119] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 89.

[120] Shoshana Levy, *al-Em ha-Derech* (In the Middle of the Road), (Tel Aviv: Sh. Levy, 2001), 44.

[121] Sasson Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday: The Making of an Arab Jew* (Jerusalem, Israel: Ibis Editions, 2007), 158.

mentions that not only did many Iraqi women wear the abaya, but also that it symbolized a passage from girlhood to womanhood for her. In this way, the garment binds her to other Iraqi women not just momentarily through its use, but continuously through its associations, particularly its associations with significant aspects of life such as maturity.

As mentioned earlier with her love of political anthems, Tikva Agassi's commitment to power and the arts, strengthened her relationship to Iraq even in the face of the unpredictability of life. In a chapter from her memoir called East and West Agassi begins by writing, "It is noted that the English novelist Rudyard Kipling once said: 'East is East, West is West, and never the twain shall meet.'" Given that Kipling's ties to British colonialism are well known, it is sufficient to say that whether Agassi became aware of his work in Iraq or Israel, anchoring an analysis with it demonstrates an intimacy with, at the very least, how colonial discourses circulate. In the conclusion of this chapter, she analyzes the fact that her current country of residence, Israel, purportedly wanted to exist as crucible of East and West that could lead to their forging. In Agassi's estimation, Israel has fallen short which she reveals by way of a story from her Iraqi life. In this story, canonical Arab singer Umm Kulthum visits Iraq and Agassi is awestruck. As will be shown below, Umm Kulthum's visit to Iraq seems to suggest that a blend East and West could be found peaceably in Iraq, in direct contrast to Israel.

Agassi commences her story with, "It was the birthday of King Faisal the II, and as was customary Prince Abdullah, the Crown Prince, threw him a party on this occasion in his palace that was called—Al-Rahab Palace—but this time was special. The star of the East Umm Kulthum respectfully would sing on the stage of the palace."[122] These details reveal Agassi's

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[122] Tikva Agassi, *me-Baghad le-Yisrael* (From Baghdad to Israel), (Ramat Gan: Tikva Agassi, 2001), 139.

Arabness. As we later learn, the birthday of Iraq's King Faisal II was not just an anecdote passed

down to her, but rather an event she took part in with seemingly the majority of Iraq at the time.

Umm Kalthum, it turns out, is the center of her anecdote in some ways. By highlighting one of

the most famous modern Arab artists of all time—especially one who, by the mid-1940s, sung in

a style she described as appealing to the religious sensibilities of her audience and encapsulating

"…essential components of the Arabic literary and musical heritage,"—Agassi is demonstrating

her familiarity with Arab culture through the figure of a woman.[123] Adding further details to her

anecdote, Agassi writes,

> Her performance would be broadcast live on the radio. Coffee houses filled up as evening approached.
> Since it was summer arrangements were made in houses that had radios, and that were quite large, to go up
> onto the roof or out into the garden. Dishes, appetizers, and drinks were prepared. Among those invited to
> the palace were my grandfather Avraham Haim and my grandmother as well as my aunt Esterina and her
> husband Anwar. The rest of the family, large and small, gathered in my grandfather's house. The radio was
> moved to the roof, and the festive table was set with all kinds of Iraqi dishes and desserts. The doors of the
> houses did not close on that night. Any fan of Umm Kulthum was able to join in. Baghdad was a city of
> lights and joy that night.[124]

It is King Faisal the II's birthday, but Umm Kulthum's performance reads as more noteworthy. In

this story, the figure of an Arab woman brings an entire city together for one night and displaces

the figure of Iraq's leader. Details about food, sense of community, and spatial configurations

further reveal Baghdad and Agassi and her family's place in it. The ease of her description

suggests that her and her family fit right in and that music acted as a conduit for this. Indeed, the

musical arts and Jews' interaction with them, bonded Iraqis, giving some individuals the

opportunity to not only pursue their passion, but bolster Iraqi identity.[125] For example, during the

concert Agassi was likely reminded of Iraq's own complementary to Kulthum, the Jewish

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[123] Virginia Danielson, *The Voice of Egypt: Umm Kulthūm, Arabic Song, and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 121.
[124] Tikva Agassi, *me-Baghad le-Yisrael* (From Baghdad to Israel), (Ramat Gan: Tikva Agassi, 2001), 139.
[125] Yeheskel Kojaman, "Jewish Role in Iraqi Music," *The Scribe.*
http://www.dangoor.com/72page42.html

vocalist Salima Murad who has been described as, "…one of the greatest talents in the country and in the entire Arab world."[126] The gravity of Agassi's anecdote shines through even more so when this musical context is considered.

> Concluding her story, Agassi says,
>
> Umm Kulthum finished a little before morning. We laid down in our clothes anywhere. My grandfather and grandmother returned. We went back to our house to change clothes and go to school. That night we ran back to my grandfather's house to hear how the beloved Umm Kulthum was. "Grandfather, were there Europeans? Were they impressed with her?" My grandfather didn't answer, he got up out of his chair and went over to the telephone "I too want to know if they were impressed, I'll call the British Ambassador." Everything went well with the ambassador, the palace, the Crown Prince, the food, the atmosphere and the joy, but without any trace of Umm Kulthum. To the best of my memory, when my grandfather answered he said, "Yes, there was a woman on stage, she yelled a little."[127] [Her grandfather is relaying what the ambassador said and this last sentence is in English in the memoir.]

By the end, the story takes an unexpected turn, insofar as it had previously unfolded seamlessly with Umm Kulthum as the inevitable beloved center. While Agassi runs to her grandfather's house to ask him about Umm Kulthum, her first question, at least according to this formulation of the story, concerns European perceptions of Umm Kulthum. It appears that her grandfather is rather familiar with the British ambassador to Iraq to the extent that it is acceptable for him to ask him about the concert after the fact. The ambassador lacks any of the enthusiasm for Umm Kulthum that the native Iraqi population has, given his referring to her as "a woman" and saying that she "yelled." Placed in more context, this might be an example of a British official defining himself vis-à-vis another. Given the fact that he appears to be cordial with a Jewish man, the fact that this other is an Arab Egyptian woman is significant. While it is possible to suggest that the grandfather and Agassi are not impressed with the ambassador's answer, the fact that she was initially so interested in it is important to note. For Agassi, the fact that the eminent Arab singer Umm Kulthum could bring all facets of the Iraqi nation together for her performance speaks to

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[126] Eness Elias, "Iraq Still Honors This Jewish Star Known as the 'Voice of Baghdad,'" *Rozenberg Quarterly Magazine.* Link.

[127] Tikva Agassi, *me-Baghad le-Yisrael* (From Baghdad to Israel), (Ramat Gan: Tikva Agassi, 2001), 139.

not just the perfect merging of East and West, but her hope that belonging stems from this kind of merging being possible, which it was in Iraq. She concludes her chapter with the declaration that until an Israeli singer can declare themselves a great Arab singer, Israel will never truly fuse East and West. Without this paradigm, which according to Agassi's experience existed in Iraq and not Israel, Jews like her will never truly belong in the country they immigrated to.

Conclusion

In her study of the politics of identity in Kirkuk, Arbella Bet-Shlimon raises one of the reasons I consider it so important to explore Jews in Iraq coalitionally, as she writes,

> Altogether, scholars writing on the topic of Iraqi identity have thus far usually focused on conceptualizing identities that are coterminous, whether harmoniously or contentiously, within the boundaries of the nation-state. Although they do look at identity-based fault lines and "othering" within Iraqi society, they tend to conclude that even these divided and divisive group identities formed a cohesive, yet complex, Iraqi whole in some form…[128]

What this insightful estimation encourages is exploration of Iraqi life forms that don't presuppose coexistence. As Iraqi Jewish women's commitment to remaining in Iraq during and after the Farhud demonstrates, difference wasn't just allowed, it was needed. In this way, how Jews negotiated difference in 1940s Iraq seems paradoxical.

Jews were able to survive in Iraq even in the midst of violence and as powerful entities in the country took them for granted, due to the fact that their security did not depend on sameness, but a unique constellation and bonding in light of differences. As those most marginalized in Iraq for their gender, social class, religion, skin color, or relationship to Arabness faced insecurity they bonded coalitionally through their differences. With the Farhud highlighting the least powerful aspects of individuals, certain Iraqi country people were able to belong to each other

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[128] Arbella Bet-Shlimon, *City of Black Gold: Oil, Ethnicity, and the Making of Modern Kirkuk* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), 9.

based on these differences and thus in ways they never had before. In particular, Jewish women were forced to be discerning in their search for safety and they often found the most useful alliances with other women, particularly ones containing multiple suppressed identities themselves. In the aftermath of the Farhud, having been informed by it, these women intimately knew they could place little faith in the British, the Iraqi government, or even in Zionists. With an awareness of their multiple differences still present, women again found security with one another via daily life, neighborhoods, social and gender expectations, and Arab culture.

It's necessary to articulate this kind of coalitional belonging because it demonstrates a more flexible route towards survivability as well as recognizes the undeniable fact that identities are never static to begin with.[129] Most importantly, because Iraqi society in the 1940s is often discussed in a way that not only fixes identities but that is color blind, it was simultaneously crucial to foreground instances of racialization. Although Arab racialization did not take hold in Iraq in a way that was hierarchical, its logics were still internalized by Iraqi Jewish women. Such discussions, along with the taking up of coalitional belonging not only helps explains Iraqi Jewish women's livelihoods in the 1940s but could act to reformulate these theories as they travel to places where they are less often used.[130] For this reason, a race analysis will also be used to explore racialized aspects of political belonging in Chapter Two.

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[129] Devon W. Carbado, "Colorblind Intersectionality," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38, no. 4 (June 1, 2013): 813.
[130] Ibid., 812.

Chapter Two

"What Kind of Agreement Was Even Possible?": The Battle Between Zionist Imperial Whiteness and The Iraqi Communist Party

A battle seethed between Jews of bifurcated political affiliations in 1940s Iraq. Pitting Communists against Zionists, this battle reached a conceptual crescendo with Communist Jews and Zionists imagining wholly different futures for them and their co-religionists. Despite the presence of such a discernable and sustained disagreement in the rhetoric, devising, and calculations of both movements, several mitigating factors (both historical and historiographic) have obscured the precise fierceness of this battle, mistakenly rendering it a disagreement rather than an expressed and sustained opposition. This chapter foregrounds this gravity of this Communist-Zionist battle by way of a race-gender lens.

Zionist and Communist Jews were numerically minoritized and their activity in Iraq was succinct. They numbered just about 2,000 and several hundred respectively, and adherents to both ideologies were active for less than ten years each. Furthermore, the milieu of which they were a part was certainly one where political predilections proliferated. It was an environment that began in the 1930s, instigated by broader Middle East radicalization stemming from economic depression and the increased density of public places to cultivate political efflorescence. Young, educated, increasingly non-elite individuals populated such spheres with not only their bodies, but with their differing ideas and commitments.[1] In such a heady atmosphere, there was perhaps a certain banality to the pitting of disparate political orientations against one another. Finally, emigration created a rupture between these groups. Historiographically, scholars have faced the dual task of not only writing a variegated Iraqi

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[1] Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 54, 55.

Jewish history, but one that is interrogative.[2] Practically, this has meant that most scholars have placed more attention on either group and less attention on how the groups interacted.

What then can be made of the gulf between Communism and Zionism as well as the rhetoric, idioms, and summations that were used to articulate this gulf? In answering these questions, a contention of this present chapter is that what characterized the divide between the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) and Zionists in Iraq was not hollow hyperbole or superficial quibbling. Examining Jewish participation in Communism and Zionism once more, now with a co-constitutive lens of race and gender in mind and within a multi-cited primary source constellation with greater attention paid to memoirs, interpersonal accounts and state documents highlighting the personal, reveals that the aforementioned mitigating factors obscure attention to and treatment of the Communist-Zionist battle. Moreover, while the likes of Esther Meir-Glitzenstein and Orit Bashkin have foregrounded how both political commitments advocated for women's liberation this chapter interrogates nuances and differing approaches each took. In an attempt to redirect focus, this chapter will dwell mainly on the battle with its racial and gendered implications, rather than offer an extensive reiteration of what it looked like to be Communist or Zionist per se. Reading anew, the direct address and dismissal the movements had for each other is leant greater gravity. In order to convey exactly why the deployment of a co-constitutive lens of race and gender is not only revelatory, but indispensable, it is illustrative to begin by speaking in terms of an example that typifies the Zionist-Communist divide.

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[2] Some existing works that treat Communism and Zionism include: Orit Bashkin's *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq*, Esther Meir-Glitzenstein's *Zionism in an Arab Country: Jews in Iraq in the 1940s*, Abbas Shiblak's *The Lure of Zion: The Case of the Iraqi Jews*, Yosef Meir's be-Ikar ba-Mahteret: Yehudim u-Folitikah be-Irak (Mainly in the Underground: Jews and Politics in Iraq), Yehouda Shenhav's *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity*.

Beginning in 1942, Enzo Sereni, one of the leading European Zionist emissaries working in Iraq was certain that the ICP posed a dangerous threat to the dissemination of Zionism in the country. Sereni, who came to Iraq as one of the movement's first three Zionist emissaries to the country in 1942 is quoted as insisting, "With the increase of Communist propaganda, it is essential that we find literary material of the finest quality, without which it is difficult to withstand the battle."[3] Per this logic, such literature would educate Jews on and convert them wholeheartedly to Zionism. In addition to characterizing the interplay between Zionism and Communism as a battle, Sereni and emissaries like him, commonly referred to Communism as a danger to Jewish unity. In 1943, Sereni again portrayed Communism pejoratively. He insisted that Jews did not comprehend the ideology in a sophisticated manner and were merely attracted to the ICP for providing facile solutions to concerns about their role in Iraq's fluid social and political landscape.[4] Sereni's devaluation of Iraqi Jews, as Yehouda Shenhav's analysis shines a light on, might have at least partially been a product of his consideration that he and his fellow emissaries self-styled and identified as white Europeans.[5] As Shenhav even more astutely pieces together, Sereni's colonialist worldview dictated that even those Iraqi Jews who chose Zionism, while they were not as irrevocably "other" as non-Jewish Arabs, they were different and "…not exactly 'like us (the emissaries)'" in perpetuity.[6]

According to their official publications, the ICP was a danger to Zionism. It unequivocally denounced and correlated Zionism with imperialism, giving Sereni the appellation

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[3] Yosef Meir, *be-Ikar ba-Mmahteret: Yehudim u-Folitikah be-Irak* (Mainly in the Underground: Jews and Politics in Iraq), (Tel Aviv, Israel: Naharayim, 1993), 171.
[4] Ibid., 172.
[5] Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2006), 58.
[6] Ibid., 76.

"British imperialist agent."[7] Bestowed with this epithet, Sereni served as an archetype. At a time when young Jewish radicals in Iraq were deeply invested with severing their country's ties to British influence, and when the majority desired integration in Iraqi society, any suspiciously or definitively pro-imperial Jews and other Iraqis were viewed with derision.

Practically speaking, according to Yosef Meir writing in his compendium on Jews in the Iraqi Communist Party, "There was no cooperation between the two underground [movements], and [collaboration] did not come to mind for either side."[8] It would seem that many Communists and Zionists were more likely to quarrel than they were to notice any possible instances of mutuality, even when it came to matters that affected all Jews in Iraq.

When the Zionist description of the ICP as a "danger" is unpacked alongside the ICP description of Zionism as an "imperialist tool" and an analytic of race is applied, the revelation made apparent is that the British imperial *whiteness* longed for by Zionists in the country and eschewed by Communists, offers a more precise framework to account for their divide than does relying indiscriminately on the specter of imperialism or political difference. Imperial whiteness (defined preliminarily here, but extensively below in the section "Women and Zionist Whiteness in the Iraqi Milieu") began with European Jews and was passed along to the emissaries Iraqi Jews encountered. Conceptually, it speaks to a reality wherein Zionists were indebted to nineteenth and twentieth century discourses of scientific racism as well as British imperial assistance to actualize their stated goal of a racially homogenous national homeland. Iraqi Jewish elites positioned themselves alongside British whiteness and imperialism too by reading British publications and working for their companies for example, with some even seeking British

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[7] Yosef Meir, *be-Ikar ba-Mmahteret: Yehudim u-Folitikah be-Irak* (Mainly in the Underground: Jews and Politics in Iraq), (Tel Aviv, Israel: Naharayim, 1993), 219.
[8] Ibid.

protection at the end of World War I. Still, Zionism offered another kind of whiteness, which I explore in this chapter.

In terms of a gender analysis, with respect to Jewish women specifically, mention should be made of the fact that both movements criticized the condition of women in the country as poor but differed in their conception of exactly what was the crucible for this condition. Zionists understood the impoverished state of Jewish women as arising from the patriarchal nature of Iraqi Jewish society and diasporic Jewish degeneration, whereas Communists blamed this condition overall (and by extension the state of Iraqi Jewish women) on imperialism.[9] Considering the influence racial logics had on the entire divide between Zionists and Communists, as this chapter will do, also brings reproductive and regenerative meaning to bear on why Communists and Zionists each insisted upon the anxious, critical conclusions that they did vis-à-vis women. In this formulation how women themselves perpetuated these characterizations proves consequential.

To read the memoirs, letters, biographies, and British Foreign Office documents of this chapter with a lens of race and gender in mind is not to over determine them. Without didactically saying so, the texts offer gender and race as meaningful categories of social difference because Iraq as a burgeoning nation state in the shadow of semi-colonial rule did. Affirming this potential, Valentine Moghadam has written, "State-building has been a highly gendered phenomenon, in that notions of gender—of masculinities, femininities, and appropriate roles for women and men—are often central to state building projects and to constructions of

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[9] I discuss the purported matter of Jewish degeneration at greater length in this chapter's section "Women and Zionist Whiteness in the Iraqi Milieu."

national identity."[10] Yet, Mohgadam notes that gender is not the only "fault line" along which nation state building occurs and is careful to name this social difference's intersection with class, ethnicity, religion and age as crucial. For current purposes, these fault lines were not only called upon by endowed state-building projects, but also eventual ones (Zionism) and movements that reconceptualized states and offered a universalist, class-based ideology (Communism).

Given that race is another "fault line" along which nation state building occurred, the gravity of its analytic usefulness is highlighted along with the need to specify its operation in each specific context. In this context, an undertaking of nation-building, Israel, is at least partially shaped in a land that engaged in its own national project, Iraq, with each nation proffering enunciations whiteness and Semiticness. In terms of exactly how appropriate an analysis of race can be in a variety of contexts, Eve Troutt Powell has done masterful work. Her research has demonstrated not only the complexity of colonial relationships where colonizing behavior becomes inherited and consciously reenacted, but the potentiality for the existence of race consciousness even within societies where race discourses were not initially articulated. Troutt Powell writes of nineteenth century Egypt as a place where those colonized by British imperialism directly and Orientalist imaginations more broadly, came to enact their own unique colonialism in the Sudan and with black Sudanese bodies.

Applying intricate levels of analysis, Troutt Powell is able to reason that those who might say it is anachronistic to label this particular situation of colonization in Egypt racist are unaware that racisms are multiple and localized.[11] In this same vein, even if an awareness of race did not

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[10] Valentine M. Moghadam, *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2013), 25.
[11] Eve Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain and the Mastery of the Sudan* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 16.

lend itself to discriminatory applications, scholars cannot assume an idea or awareness of race

did not exist. As I show throughout this chapter, Zionist expression, rhetoric, and ideology were

often imbued with an awareness of difference via discriminatory race based identities wherein

whiteness dominated.[12] In particular, the women I feature including Shoshana Almoslino,

Shoshana Levy, Carmela Sasson, and Esther Darwish-Tzurani express these sentiments when

discussing the need for further Zionist education, the difference between Iraqi Zionists and

Zionists in Europe and Palestine, and the saving grace Zionism was anticipated to offer.

Furthermore, Communists, particularly when rebuking Zionism, demonstrate an

awareness of racial purity as instrumentalized by Jewish nationalists and Nazis. Born in Baghdad

in 1921, Communist activist and one time leader of the League for the Struggle Against Zionism,

Yusuf Zilkha, exemplifies this awareness in his 1946 pamphlet "Zionism Against Arabs and

Jews." Speaking to anti-Zionist activists, imparting them with the task of disabusing those who

conflate Zionism and Judaism, Zilkha describes Zionism as, "…a racist movement designed to

dominate Arab Palestine, evacuate its indigenous population, and form a Zionist government."[13]

Of note is not merely the fact that Zilkha unreservedly calls Zionism racist, but that he does so

on the grounds that the movement and ideology dominate, ethnically cleanse, and work towards

exclusivity.

Later addressing all Jews proscriptively, speaking to their need to fight for equality in

Zionism's wake, Zilkha insists that Jews need to, "…denounce[e] Nazism and anti-Semitism as

well as racist movements (including Zionism). They must struggle for the welfare of the people,

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[12] Shelly Tochluk, *Witnessing Whiteness: First Steps Toward An Antiracist Practice and Culture* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2008), 77.

[13] Moshe Bahar and Zvi Ben-Dor Benite (eds.) *Modern Middle Eastern Jewish Thought: Writings on Identity, Politics, and Culture 1893-1958* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2013), 146.

no matter what their religion, race, or nationality, and by fighting for freedom for people of every

class: workers, farmers, and intellectuals."[14] With this call to action, Zilkha denounces all

ideologies grounded in constructions of racial purity. He is simultaneously insisting that because

Jews have faced anti-Semitism and some have taken part in constructing their own form of racist

discrimination, they are all implicated in working toward freedom no matter racial, religious, or

national difference. It would seem that Zilkha's rebuke of Zionism provides him with his

awareness of race and racism. Similarly, the Communist Jewish women denounce Zionism for

its supremacist tendencies and remain non-discriminatory no matter the social difference. Troutt

Powell's reasoning about race consciousness is imminently applicable to all of the Zionist and

Communist calculus on race currently cited here. The reasoning serves as a reminder about race

consciousness's validity and irrespective of any similarities or differences to other kinds of racial

logics.

Specifically, regarding Iraq, political Zionism as it will be discussed in this current

chapter, is deeply informed by an awareness of whiteness.[15] In the vein of Radhika Mohanram's

work, this particular kind of informative whiteness can be referred to as imperial whiteness.[16]

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[14] Ibid., 160.

[15] The Political Zionism (as discussed in more detail in the section "Women and Zionist
Whiteness in the Iraqi Milieu") of the likes of Theodor Herzl and Max Nordau is an ideology and
movement that arose in the late nineteenth century "…under the modern conditions of secularism
and liberalism." Articulated first by European Jews, it insists that anti-Semitism is endemic to
their societies of birth and thus that Jews need autonomy and their own state. Its founders were
secular and not focused on Judaism in the religious sense as was say, the spiritual Zionism of
Ahad Ha-Am. Shlomo Avineri *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the
Jewish State* (New York: Basic Books, 2017) 12 (quoted text); Arthur Hertzberg *The Zionist
Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (Lincoln, NE: The Jewish Publication Society, 2014) 51,
52.

[16] Radhika Mohanram, *Imperial White: Race, Diaspora, and the British Empire* (Minneapolis,
MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xx. In Mohanram's conception, the British
constructed themselves as white in the presence of Empire and through interaction with
colonized subjects as different and other.

While the omnipresence of whiteness is never explicitly stated, it buoys Iraqi Zionism. By this it is meant that Zionist expression from the women whose lives I explore below, is saturated with white supremacist sentiments. This includes, for instance, labeling Iraqi Jews as weak, mentally arrested, and dark in the name of establishing them as degenerate and in need of whiteness as a refuge.[17] The impetus for such an understanding, as expressed by Jewish activists like race scientists in Europe during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was that Jewish attempts at assimilation due to anti-Semitism, encouraged a decay that could only be remedied with Jewish autonomy, of which constituting a single race was a part.[18] A nuanced look at political Zionist imperial whiteness is possible because, "As a product of enterprise and imperialism, whiteness is of course always already predicated on racial difference, interaction and domination, but that is true of all texts, not just those that take such matters as their explicit subject matter."[19] If there is always domination in Iraq, the Zionist movement generally speaking, and Israel-Palestine due to imperialism and its reverberations, there is, likely, by extension something to be said in the name of racial difference being made to matter and whiteness working.

To construct women's positionality Tikva Agassi's, Shoshana Almoslino's, and Shoshana Levy's published memoirs are a rich source, particularly when read alongside other Zionist women such as Carmela Sasson and Esther Darwish Tzurani through their personal letters. Moreover, the memoirs, although not written by Communist women, are not silent about

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[17] As I demonstrate when articulating the relationship between imperial whiteness and Jewish regenerative discourses, such language is reminiscent of constructions put forth by the likes of Max Nordau and his ruminations on 'Muscular Judaism.'

[18] John M Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-siecle Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 164.

[19] Richard Dyer, "Matters of Whiteness," *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader* (New York: New York: Routledge, 2000), 544.

Communist Jews. Through the activities of Communist women like Ellen Yaakov Darwish, Doris, Amuma, Saida Sasson Mishal, Amuma Meir Misri, and Marilyn Meir Ezer particularly based on information delivered from the Iraqi police, a woman focused Communist account is discernable. What stands out from all their experience is not just the exact way the Zionist-Communist division hinged in part on meaningful racial distinctions, but how women of each movement were never confronted with political expectations in a single axis way. Given the overwhelming demands of constructing and upholding imperial whiteness and the overwhelming demands of being a functioning member in the illegal ICP, just how much more was demanded of female members of the movements, cannot be understood unless looked and multiplicitously.

A potential peculiarity—at least with respect to other sources used in this chapter—of the memoirs cited here from Shoshana Almoslino, Shoshana Levy, and Tikva Agassi is the milieu of their conception and intended audience.[20] All were published for Hebrew reading audiences, in Israel, nearly 50 years after the women first went to the country. Readers might assume these memoirs were crafted as firm redemption narratives and odes to political Zionism. Yet, as I state in Chapter One of this dissertation, the registers of Iraqi Jewish women's memoirs are multiple. In so being, while their narrative arch might conclude with Zionism's triumph, their rich descriptions of Iraqi Jewish life offer detours of analysis on topics including the banality of daily existence, gender relations, political leanings beyond Communism and Zionism like Iraqi nationalism and Arab nationalism, and Jewish relations with Iraqi citizens of differing faiths. The memoirs reflect the fact, as underscored by Lital Levy writing about Baghdadi Jewish memoirs, that Iraqi Jewish memoirs and autobiographies broadly speaking, contain multitudes. Levy writes that Baghdadi Jewish memoir, as a "literature of exile," came to "…emphasize both inclusion

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[20] Dates listed are publication dates.

and difference, belonging and unbelonging…" and although it is not the case that all of the three above-mentioned women hailed from Baghdad, it is the case that the accounts of their Iraq contain similar multiplicities.[21] Writing in Israel, years after emigrating, Iraq is still a first homeland that is spoken of with fondness and precision, before it is spoken of with the shock and confusion of migration. To match the variation with which they were written, the memoirs can be read in as multivocal of a way.

Through my analysis of Jewish women authored documents as well as documents about Jewish women, this chapter suggests that Communist and Zionist Jews chose their political proclivities intentionally and ultimately came to diametrically oppose each other. Understanding what animated them offers more precision in terms of the racial logics they participated in and inherited from Iraqi society. This present chapter, following a study of Jewish women's participation in the illegal Zionist and Communist movements of Iraq affirms assertions made in Chapter One, mainly that racializations, rather than a single racialization occurred within the community during the early twentieth century. This multiplicity of racializations insofar as it sustained a social hierarchy where Jews were not necessarily otherized as racially inferior, allowed them to exist in Iraq without facing the exact, sustained, and pointed racism they would encounter in Israel. However, the racism adopted by some national elites during the 1930s and early 1940s and their espousal of Arab ethnic supremacy which excluded Jews was a force that propelled younger generations to search for alternative options. In detailing imperial whiteness, this chapter will also introduce how it was longed for.

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[21] Lital Levy, "Self and the City: Literary Representations of Jewish Baghdad," Prooftexts 20 (2006), 171.

The chapter first provides a context for the origins of Jewish participation in Communism and Zionism. I then offer a narrative of women's racialized and gendered participation in these political movements in a way that privileges an interplay between narrative and theoretical grounding. In this section, political Zionism's relationship to race and imperial whiteness specifically will be discussed at length. The words of Zionist women will be shown to demonstrate that imperial whiteness took root in the country along with Zionism and was longed for. Communist women's articulations and actions will then be used to showcase the ways that they and Communists broadly rejected imperialism and imperial whiteness.

Historical Origins: The Foundations of Iraqi Communism and Zionism and the Roles of Women in Each

The Iraqi Communist Party was established in 1934 and was once the largest Communist party in the Middle East.[22] Following WWII, Iraq was ripe for the flourishing of political parties as Iraqis tried to foist off colonial control.[23] In this milieu, political persuasions were at first, deeply ideological. In this vein, many of Iraq's first, prewar Communists were intellectuals.[24] Coming of age during the 1920s, these individuals had access to increased educational opportunities, along with the expansion of a nationalist press and public spaces of gathering and discussion such as coffeeshops.[25] This crucible fomented more radical politics. These communist and social-democratic intellectuals were initially more familiar with political debate than

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[22] Peter Slugglet, "The Iraqi Communist Party, 1934-79," *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 12:2 (June 2018), 103.
[23] Ibid., 102.
[24] Johan Franzén, *Red Star Over Iraq: Iraqi Communism Before Saddam* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011), 34.
[25] Ibid., 20-23.

clandestine work.[26] Their ideological commitment did not however, remain confined narrowly to overthrowing colonial rule. It encompassed individuals' feelings about the future of the Iraqi state, a citizen's place in it, and how individual citizenship was refracted through socially constituted and enforced differences such as religion, gender, and ethnicity.

Within this paradigm, devoted overwhelmingly to theorizing, intentional effort was needed to transform ideology into action. Yusuf Salman Yusuf, born in a town near Mosul in 1901, educated in Communism in The School of the Toilers of the East and also known as Comrade Fahad, is the person said to have transformed Iraqi Communism in such a way.[27] Yusuf was dynamic and strategic in his leadership of the Party. Under his advisement, the ICP used the socioeconomic turmoil of the Iraq of 1945-1947, typified by strikes, demonstrations and protests of workers, to their advantage.[28] Traditionally an urban centered movement, the Party also began to intentionally grapple with the plight of rural workers and landowners, incorporating peasants and their concerns into their platform. Beginning in the 1940s, but expanding primarily in the 1950s, the ICP advocated for peasants' rights vis-à-vis landowners, an issue that was of primary importance in rural regions.[29] Organized into cells in various Iraqi cities, hallmark activities of the Party included, meeting at least once a month in a member's house for discussion, through these discussions determining possible activities to spread Communism throughout the country and the likelihood of their success, debriefing on accomplishments, publishing several

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[26] Ibid., 34.

[27] Hana Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (London, England: SAQI Books, 2004), 485.

[28] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 143.

[29] Aziz Sbahi, "The Communist Party's Activities Among the Peasantry," *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 12:2 (June 2018): 114.

newspapers, and studying the history of the Party's foundations in Russia along with the ideologies of Marxism and Leninism.

Bashkin places Jewish participation in Iraqi Communism as spanning from 1941-1951.[30] It was both the ideological and actionable aspects of Iraqi Communism that attracted Jews. Several scholars note that the role the Soviet Union played in defeating Nazism increased Jewish sympathies for Communism.[31] Similarly often mentioned as influential by scholars is the fact that many Jews held generally leftist beliefs and wanted to see their country rid of British colonial influence.[32] This included freedom from domination within an international capitalist system, one that many Iraqis felt Britain had ushered them into.[33] Related to this and more practically speaking, Communism was also a way for Jews to stake their claim in Iraq's future. Despite the Party's origins lying with many intellectuals, a substantial number of Jews who joined were workers.[34]

Meir estimates that the city most populated by Jewish Communists was Baghdad where there were several hundred. Between thirty and fifty Jewish Communists could be found in Iraq's southern cities such as Basra, Amarah, Kut, and Nasiriyah. Only a few Jews participated in Communist activity in Iraq's northern cities.[35] Referencing Jewish women in particular, Meir asserts that there were fewer Jewish women than Muslim, but more Jewish woman than

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[30] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 142.
[31] Nancy Berg, *More and More Equal: The Literary Works of Sami Michael* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2005), 5.
[32] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 145.
[33] Ibid., 143.
[34] Ibid., 146.
[35] Yosef Meir, *be-Ikar ba-Mmahteret: Yehudim u-Folitikah be-Irak* (Mainly in the Underground: Jews and Politics in Iraq), (Tel Aviv, Israel: Naharayim, 1993), 101.

Christian. The respectively smaller numbers of Jewish participation are not an indication of their influence in the Party. A greater number of Jews were committed to working within the Iraqi state rather than in opposition to it. Still, drawing from the analysis of preeminent historian of Iraq Hanna Batatu, Meir reiterates that the quality of Jews in the Party is more representative of their place and impact in it than their quantity. In this way, Jews are determined to not have had major influence on the Party's founding in 1935 but did take on larger roles in the 1940s. In particular, Jews left their mark in the Party in the League for Combatting Zionism and in the women's sector.[36] Broadly speaking, the types of actions Jewish women took part in in the Party, included establishing and maintaining women's cells, serving on women's committees, and acting as couriers to distribute literature and money. They also suffered imprisonment for their Communist activities.[37]

For a kind of bridge between detailing the history of Communism and Zionism, it is worth noting the realities that might have led some to not recognize their divide as a foregone conclusion. Communism and Zionism were variously illegal, ideological, captivating, and future focused. In this way, Jews of these two commitments not only sometimes lived side by side, but also found themselves in the same prison cells and in the same critical eye of state authorities. For instance, in her memoir, Shoshana Levy, who spent her childhood in Baghdad prior to her immigration as an adolescent on April 16, 1951 characterizes her purely Jewish neighborhood as containing multitudes in terms of political participation. In her descriptions of this childhood neighborhood, the political categories of Communism and Zionism stand out as defining of individuals' identities. While many of the roughly ten families that populated Levy's

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[36] Ibid., 103.
[37] Secretary of State, FO_371_75131, (London, England, August 1949), 1.

neighborhood are identified by their occupations and number of children, their affiliations as either Communist or Zionist are expressly mentioned.

Conceptually, both Communist and Zionist Jews might have found common ground in their felt need to find political answers for themselves as Jews in an ever-changing modern country like Iraq. For example, as previously established, both movements valorized women's action insofar as its expansion and progression could be seen as a barometer of a changing Iraqi society and ever evolving movements within Iraq. In so doing, Communism and Zionism positioned women as vanguards of change in lockstep with greater Iraqi society. The journey to take women's actions and feelings seriously was reflected in Arab Jewish literature as well. In Anwar Shaul's "Violette," a young woman wants to marry based on her feelings while her family wants her to marry a person of their choosing for tradition and status.[38] Violette's brother foreshadows a phenomenon that will be explained more below, wherein Iraqis possess at least a vague awareness of (white) European ideals by which they measure themselves, consciously or not, when he asks of his sister's desire, "We are not London or Paris, but shouldn't we consider the girl's feelings?"[39] In the end, Shaul allows Violette's desires, and perhaps simultaneously a certain amount of modernizing, European ideals, to be realized. As will be further shown, these idealized inserted themselves to varying degrees, within Zionism and Communism as well.

Where Communist and Zionist families and individuals certainly diverged is in regard to the future they envisioned for Jews in the country after the end of the influence of the British and their mandate (which lasted from 1921 to 1932) and the Farhud (the anti-Jewish pogrom that took place on June 1-2, 1941), following WWII, and in the wake of the watershed moment that

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[38] Anwar Shaul, "Violette," in *Arab-Jewish Literature*, by Reuven Snir, trans. Reuven Snir and Maha Awda (Leiden ; Boston: BRILL, 2019), 209.
[39] Ibid., 210.

was the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Ultimately, Zionists drew closer to British imperial whiteness because it was a part of the regenerative discourses they inherited from the introduction of political Zionism into mandatory Palestine and establishing their reason for being there. Within this logic, renewal of the Jewish mind and body was a necessary response to the problems of anti-Semitism and attempts at assimilation.[40] Communist Jews implicitly denounced such whiteness and the divisiveness of race overall through their commitment to the Movement's insistence on accounting for human difference in a non-discriminatory way. Moreover, interlocking global communist sympathies with colonized peoples throughout Asia and Africa rendered whiteness an irrelevant category within these spheres.

Although some pro-Zionist organizations in Iraq were active during the years of the mandate when Zionism was legal, Zionist activity began in earnest in Iraq in the 1940s as emissaries were sent there to encourage its growth.[41] Among the most prominent emissaries, including Shemariah Guttman, Yehoshua Givoni, and Yehoshua Baharav, all were of Eastern or Central European extraction and had previously lived in Palestine for a number of years. Clothed in European suits and mostly ignorant of religious laws and tradition, the emissaries were intriguing figures for Iraqi Jewish youth.[42] Even the Iraqi born emissaries, Ezra Khadoorie and Shlomo Hillel, had lived in Palestine before returning to Iraq, become imbued with European ideals and political Zionism while there, as was the Egyptian Matilda Musseri. The eminence of Khadoorie and Hillel arises from their having lived in Palestine since their youth which mitigated Iraqis understanding them as thoroughly Eastern as well as the pride they had in gifting Western

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[40] John M Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-siecle Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 150.

[41] Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country: Jews in Iraq in the 1940s* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 8.

[42] Ibid., 64.

ideology unto their Eastern Iraqi co-religionists.[43] This Palestinian background, Meir-

Glitzenstein insists, "…gave them a Western aura."[44] Jewish youth idealized these figures

because they

> …represented the Jewish youngsters' dual cultural world on the border between old and new, between
> religion and secularism, between tradition and modernity, between East and West. Moreover, they gave
> these youngsters a new ideology and new social and cultural values and filled the vacuum created in the
> 1940s by the dilemma of Iraqi patriotism and growing anti-Semitic nationalism.[45]

The modern, Westernized context and in particular the political Zionism that informed the

emissaries from Palestine was responsible for the racialized tones noticeable in Iraqi Zionist

articulations. Due to this reality, Zionist acculturation was not divorceable from a longing for

imperial whiteness. Even though the emissaries were men, due to the mixed gender nature of

Zionist education, women were undoubtedly implicated in the narrative of imperial whiteness.

This manifested itself in, among other ways, Zionist women recognizing the emissaries and their

ilk as kinds of white saviors.

The Zionist movement in Iraq was always miniscule. Its members were not often in the

political, communal or socio-economic mainstream. Around 2,000 Jews participated in Zionist

activity at its height in the 1940s. Letters from members in HeHalutz Movement (the Pioneer

Movement), the more youth and adolescent oriented wing of the Movement corroborate the

reality that Zionist participation numbers were not substantial relative to the population. In letters

referencing gatherings, mention is made that all HeHalutz members in a city were present, which

resulted in numbers of seven or eight with visitation from members in other cities numbering in

the low teens. Roughly one third of Iraq's Zionists were women.[46] Many of these women joined

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[43] Ibid., 66.
[44] Ibid., 64.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., 116.

for the egalitarian and social justice message the movement espoused.[47] Particularly for women of lower socioeconomic status, Zionism encouraged the opportunity for work outside the home and mixed gender socialization.[48] Shoshana Arbelli Almoslino, who was born to a poorer family in Mosul, testified, "I didn't know how to read Hebrew. Again and again it was said to me that girls weren't [supposed to] learn the Torah."[49] The patriarchal worldview that dictated girls should be prevented from learning Hebrew and the Torah was of course markedly different from the Zionist worldview where all genders learned Hebrew in the name of encouraging community.

While many of these Zionist Jewish women might have felt it imperative to leave Iraq and settle in the Land of Israel, few of their non-Zionist, male and female counterparts did in any consistent way.[50] Even though the peaceable nature of Jewish cohabitation in Iraq was variously interrupted given semi-fascist and colonialist influence, a sustained and comprehensive effort to leave the country did not arise until the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948.[51] When the Iraqi nation officially aligned itself with Palestinians in the conflict and, along with Egypt and Syria, went to war with Israel on May 15, 1948, life became increasingly precarious for many Jews in the country. They began to face unemployment, threats to their physical security, and a lack of educational opportunities. Even though anti-Zionism can be found in Iraq as early as the 1920s, this sentiment did not always implicate individual Jews and for this reason, there was not always a sustained Zionist effort to leave the country.[52] What this historical rendering raises in

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[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., 117.
[49] Shoshana Almoslino, *me-ha-Mahteret be-Bavel le-Memshelet Yisrael* (From the Underground of Babylon to the Government of Israel), (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibutz haMe'uhad, 1998), 19.
[50] Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), 24.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 103.

the context of this chapter, but has not yet clarified, is Zionism's and Communism's

aforementioned battle. While the movements are clearly divided from one another conceptually,

what the basic contours of Zionism and Communism in Iraq cannot reveal is just how

oppositional the movements were and why. Using a co-constitutive lens of race and gender

however, can bring this battle to the fore due to how it draws attention to expressions indebted to

sites of power not only previously elided singularly, but in conjunction.

<u>Women and Zionist Whiteness in the Iraqi Milieu</u>

Iraqi women's participation in Zionism should not be taken for granted. At every turn,

their continued participation necessitated going against every expectation placed upon them as

Jewish women. For instance, while parents worried about boys' participation because of police

surveillance, women were additionally fretted over simply because their activity required them to

be out of the house for long periods.[53] Gossip about Zionist women losing their traditional values

caused some to be secretive about their actions. Yet, women did not shy away from difficult,

forward facing activities. For example, they whole heartedly took on roles to relocate fellow

Zionists to Palestine and sometimes engaged in this illegal journey themselves.[54] Given Hebrew

and a Zionist education was in a co-ed setting in the Movement, most women came to the

Movement with a stasis of non-Zionist education already. Thus, while parents and community

members worried for their safety (most of the women being in their late teens and early twenties)

they were relatively well educated in governmental or Jewish schools.[55]

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[53] Ibid., 205.
[54] Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country: Jews in Iraq in the 1940s* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 123.
[55] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 279.

About the connection between her turn toward Zionism and the Farhud, a young

HeHalutz member by the name of Carmela Sasson, who was born in Baghdad, spent some of her

childhood in Basra and ultimately came of age under the guidance of her single mother back in

Baghdad after her father died unexpectedly wrote,

> How did I used to feel before joining the Movement? I clearly remember my feelings while hearing the far away screams of my Jewish sisters during the night of Shavuot. However, these feelings quickly passed since I thought there was no hope for Jews in a world full of deception; a world where the strong swallows the weak.[56]

In this conception, the violence and betrayal of the Farhud was evocative of not just trauma, but

despondency. The pogrom did not merely strip Carmela of her sense of security in the state. It

also confirmed her suspicions and assessment of Jews' place in the world and thus Iraq. In her

introspection as to why she joined Iraq's Zionist movement, Carmela continued,

> I thought that all Jews in the world were like the Jews in Baghdad—egoistic and weak. I was certain that I wasn't the only one who felt this, but that it was also felt by all young, self-respecting Jews…Then our brothers from the Land of Israel came to rescue us from subjugation and to tell us about the Zionist idea, including the difference between Jews in the diaspora and Jews in the Land of Israel.[57]

Carmela's conception of the Iraqi Jewish people is parochial and pejorative. She follows the

classical Zionist taxonomy of Jews in the diaspora (including herself) as different and oppressed

vis-à-vis the superior and rescued Jews in Israel. The distinction she employs between the Jews

of Baghdad and the "brothers form the land of Israel" is in a sense artificial. These "brothers"

were not likely indigenous members of Palestine's Jewish community, but rather European born

Jews who had spent formative years in Palestine engaged in Zionist activity. It is, in actuality,

their fluency with Zionism that sets them apart.

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[56] Carmela Sasson, "Our Movement in Iraq Jewry, date unknown" in Mordechai Bibi's *ha-mahteret ha-siyyonit halutz be-Iraq* (Zionist Pioneer Underground Movement in Iraq) (Jerusalem, Israel: Yad Ben Tzvi, 1988), 403; Carmela Sasson, "The Story of Carmela Sasson From Iraq," *Jewish Memories from Arab Countries*, website.

[57] Esther Darwish, "The Girl in the Movement, 1945" in Mordechai Bibi's *ha-Mahteret ha-Siyyonit Halutz be-Iraq* (Zionist Pioneer Underground Movement in Iraq), (Jerusalem, Israel: Yad Ben Tzvi, 1988), 404.

The Zionist movement in Iraq worked to engender a prideful and cohesive sense of Jewish identity through the study of Hebrew, Jewish history and Jewish colonization in Palestine. Yet, Carmela's opinions did not place her in conceptual or literal opposition to the Movement. In fact, it was likely her critique of middle- and upper-class Jews, who upheld gender hierarchies and reaped rewards from Iraq's socioeconomic stratification, in her view, that political Zionist thought utilized to encourage her membership. This is because "egoistic and weak" was, in so many words, how political Zionism portrayed Jews generally, and Zionist emissaries understood Jews in Iraq specifically. When mentioning the Zionist education being disseminated and specifically its emphasis on, "…the difference between Jews in the Diaspora and Jews in the Land of Israel," Carmela references the discourses that spawned these possible "egoistic and weak" conceptions. Carmela's linkage between her perception of Jewish inferiority, particularly in relation to a traumatic event like the Farhud and seeing Zionism as the answer was not a uniquely Iraqi Jewish phenomenon of course. This calculus was exemplary of political Zionist thought generally and was indebted to racial logics. In other words, Carmela's descriptions, in the way that they homogenized Jews according to seemingly immutable and inherited qualities, was indicative of Jewish racialization—a process adopted by Jews themselves beginning in the early twentieth century that was in genealogical relation to sciences of race and racialization constructed by non-Jewish Europeans beginning in the nineteenth century.[58] Before turning to further examples of this kind of racialization employed by other Jewish women in Iraq, the contours of it will be laid out.

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[58] John M Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-siecle Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 126.

That there are biological markers which are distinct, identifiable, and inheritable enough to taxonomize individuals into hierarchized groups was an insistence born out of nineteenth century non-Jewish European thought, that European Jews and specifically political Zionists, internalized. To understand the discourses certain Jews were now subscribing to and propagating, it is first necessary to comprehend that scientific (or pseudoscientific) conceptions of race developed towards racist ends. Within this nineteenth century European paradigm, and, as Tanya Maria Golash-Boza writes, in "…an age of emancipation from slavery and liberation from colonial powers," as well as the rise of industrial capitalism, scientific racism emerged. Golash-Boza defines scientific racism as, "…the use of science or pseudoscience to reproduce and/ or justify racial inequalities," and it was this facet of race that Jews encountered and took up.

As Nadia Abu El-Haj has detailed, the discourses and methodologies of "racial science" constructed first by European Christians towards anti-Semitic classificatory ends, were harnessed by certain Jewish Europeans for two reasons. First, as a response to and denunciation of this particular kind of anti-Semitism, although not the kind of response that would genuinely challenge the biological determinism that "race science" was indebted to.[59] Second, as a way to bolster burgeoning Jewish nationalism, inspired by Jews supposed distinctiveness all via "…biological-cum-racial terms."[60] Most important for current purposes then, are the specific Zionist Jewish nationalists who assimilated the concept of race into their ideology. Abu El-Haj, speaking about this political Zionist ideology clarifies,

> …one powerful stream within it became increasingly invested in the concept—if not always the science—
> of race. As Zionist activists sought to realize Jewish settlement in Palestine, many came to articulate a

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[59] Nadia Abu El Haj, *The Genealogical Science: The Search for Jewish Origins and the Politics of Epistemology* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 68.
[60] Ibid., 69.

racial self-definition of the Jews. By the early decades of the twentieth century, the link between biology, national self, and soil in Jewish national thought became ever more influential and robust.[61]

Currents of these Zionists' conception of race rippled outside of Palestine and could even be found in Iraq. A discernable current within their racial conceptions that merits foregrounding and interrogation is an indebtedness to imperial whiteness. Imperial whiteness, as employed here, is informed by Mohanram's delineation of how during the nineteenth century, Britain constructed itself as white within a culture of imperialism, vis-à-vis their imperial subjects in places like India.[62] In the colonial adjacent site of Iraq, this process would be replicated not only along a British-Iraqi axis, but also a British influenced Zionist/non-Zionist axis.

Because political Zionism was implicated in British colonialist projects, as will be shown below, it was also implicated in their racial logics. While Jews had a long-standing warmth towards British culture, now, the mere fact of being Jewish correlated Jews in Iraq with whiteness. The political Zionism Jews encountered in Iraq, brought with it an awareness of an idealized and constructed archetype of white racial identity that was constructed and reconstituted vis-à-vis a perceived other. Given this aspect of reconstitution in particular, imperial whiteness is always a kind of longing for whiteness that contains variations of being not quite white. Especially instructive for the race consciousness of these political Zionists that it lays bare, Daniel Boyarin's *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* deftly interrogates this kind of, what he refers to as, semi-colonialist Zionist logic along with its longing for imperial whiteness. In his formulation, British colonizers were not just meant to be emulated. They were meant to be replicated in kind. This replication included reproducing "their" whiteness—how they established their dominance via constructing

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[61] Ibid., 67.

[62] Radhika Mohanram, *Imperial White: Race, Diaspora, and the British Empire* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xx.

a white racial identity in contradistinction to those they colonized, rendering other and non-white.

Paralleling Abu El-Haj's delineation of the tie that bound European Christian conceptions of race and Jewish identity, Boyarin asserts that Zionism shares a lineage with liberal European Christianity's thoughts on Jewish emancipation wherein the Jewish problem is not biological. It is, rather, circumstantial, lived, and reconstituted through oppressive Christian dictate and a refusal by Jews to abandon a primitive and "Oriental" lifestyle.[63] Furthering his argument as well as the connection between Christian and Jewish Zionisms as well as Zionism and colonialism, Boyarin insists that it was the Christian Zionist assessment of Jews that captured the attention and sympathy of Theodor Herzl, a and the founder of the Zionist movement. Per the characterization of Boyarin, through a study of his diaries and texts like *The Jewish State* Herzl, argued that Jewish alterity lay in their environment, understood himself to be part of a Jewish civilizing mission.[64] Although he first suggested this mission would be best executed through conversion, it was the colonization of either Africa, or South America and finally Palestine that he eventually determined to be most effective for becoming like other peoples. One of the specific sought after hallmarks of these other peoples was whiteness. To put the finest point possible on such a suggestion "...Herzlian Zionism imagined itself as colonialism because such a representation was pivotal to the entire project of becoming 'white men.'"[65]

Max Nordau, a close associate of Herzl, added further texture to the condemnation of diasporic Jews with his notion of muscular Judaism. Per his calculus, the diasporic Jew of the

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[63] Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 279.
[64] Ibid., 280.
[65] Ibid., 302.

ghetto was effeminate, unhealthy, anemic, and suffering from degeneration. Nordau had, "…internalized the negative and pathologizing interpretation of Jewish manhood of the anti-Semites and thus saw Zionism as the solution."[66] An enlivened, more "muscular," Jew was Nordau's ideal archetype.[67] Such idealization was in line with the political Zionism of the time, in particular Herzl's thought processes as well, because it saw one of the Movement's goals as "…the corporeal rebirth of the Jewish people."[68] Although this particular archetype trafficked heavily in the masculine and was male centric, as the previous articulations show and further examples below will also unpack, the concept of degeneration and Zionism as a conduit for regeneration and redemption was taken part in by women too. Redeeming the degenerating Jewish body had not only do with masculinizing it, but also whitening it. Women, as agentive actors committed to Zionism, as well as agents of reproduction, encouraged both.

The whiteness of the British, Boyarin suggests, constituted a beacon insofar as Zionism was not always a kind of colonialism with an immediate single state that it was exploiting another geography in the name of wealth for. Rather, Britain was fashioned as a sponsor so that Zionists could have colonies elsewhere. Within this configuration, the idea and expectation was that the colonial mimicry would be so efficient that Zionists would "…exceed the intentions of their British patrons," and "…turn white in blood and color as well."[69]

While Herzl's words have been centered by Boyarin here so far, the paradigm to which they speak does not start and stop with him. Indeed, the entirety of the State of Israel's Ashkenazi

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[66] Ibid., 277.

[67] Ibid., 77.

[68] Todd Samuel Presner, *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration* (London: Routledge, 2010), 1.

[69] Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 305, 308.

founders' relationship to Britain and tactics in Palestine is a replication of this exact theorizing. Dafna Hirsch, writing about Jews in Palestine during the British Mandate, further suggested that while race might not have constituted a "primary signifier of Jewish collective identity in Palestine" given that many of the most powerful and influential Jews at that time were from Eastern Europe where other factors such as religion and territorial concentration engendered Jewish national consciousness, "…nevertheless, the language of race was not uncommon in the Yishuv."[70] Indeed, these Jews were influenced by race science and burgeoning eugenics discourses wherein, "…'race' served different purposes, according to the context in question. In some contexts 'race' was mainly used to establish Jewish unity, while in others it was used to establish diversity and hierarchy among Jews."[71] In terms of this latter mentioned diversity and hierarchy, it was with the immigration of many European Jews to Palestine and the concentration of social and political power into their hands, that allowed for the portrayal of Mizrahi communities, including Iraqi Jews, as variously, "…primitive, superstitious, ignorant, neglectful of their children, passive, lacking drive and the will change—in general, as an essentially different type, physically and mentally, from the immigrants from Europe."[72] Iraqi Jews encountered all of this multifaceted race discourse through the Zionist emissaries they met, the Zionist education they had, and then finally upon their arrival to the pre- or early state Israel.

It is the paradigm of political Zionism as *inheritor* of a Western whiteness which was so tied to a European Christian self- and British imperialist interests that the previously quoted text from Carmela (where Eastern and diasporic Jews are deemed egoistic, weak, sometimes lacking

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[70] Dafna Hirsch "Zionist Eugenics, Mixed Marriage, and the Creation of a 'New Jewish Type,'" *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* Vol. 15 No. 3 (Sep 2009), 598.
[71] Ibid., 593.
[72] Ibid., 601.

self-respect, subjugated, and diasporic) harks back to. This is the case even though Carmela herself could have only personified a Christian Zionist stance given that an exclusively Christian Zionist identity was not instigated or embodied by individual Iraqi Jews. When the events of the Farhud catalyzed for Carmela her worst judgments and fears of Jews not just in Iraq but beyond, she was as critical in tone and content, as the Zionism Boyarin describes and Herzl espoused. Furthermore, how she resolves such feelings and the trauma of the pogrom for herself is revealing. When she says that she thinks Zionism and her brothers in Israel will save Jews in Iraq, she is placing a difference between these two "types" of Jews. This dichotomization foregrounds the possibility that aspects of Herzilian Zionism came to fruition in Israel. The Ashkenazi Jews there are seen not only as white, but as white saviors by Carmela.

To connect Carmela's words to Boyarin's descriptions of Herzlian Zionism, they suggest that some of the hopes of white saviorship were already coming to fruition. The Zionist emissaries (most of whom were Ashkenazi) were Jewish and white. This is noticeable when Carmela says that her brothers from the Land of Israel would come to Iraq and save Iraqi Jews from their subjugation by telling them about the Zionist idea. Per this logic, Iraqi Jews themselves are not yet quite white, but have the potential to be so.

Jewish Zionists thus positioned a new type of difference within the local Iraqi community. If previous generations of Iraqi Jewish elites emphasized that Iraqi Jews were Semites, Arab Jewish Zionism whitened Iraqi Jews. Zionism was the gateway to progress, European values, and a way out of diasporic existence. In a further fulfillment of Herzilian Zionism this process is also gendered given that Carmela specifically says "our brothers" will save Iraqi Jews. According to her calculus, Ashkenazi men are the conduit for the whiteness of, in this case, Iraqi Jewish men and women. Thus, Jewish identification with Zionism was also an

identification with a kind of whiteness and white racialization. The prototype of this whiteness might have initially been male, but its orbit was meant to encompass women, albeit anxiously. The anxious quality was a function of women's status as literal progenerators (and thus progenerators of whiteness) which circumscribed their racial status.[73] To treat this, an awareness of women's proximity to men and their whiteness loomed large. In whiteness's construction and reconstruction, individuals were considered preeminently within a constellation.

Recalling definitions of racialization offered in Chapter One, in this chapter, when racialization is discussed, it is still within the paradigm of "…the historical emergence of the idea of "race" and to its subsequent reproduction and application."[74] Reconstitution of political Zionism's racial logics was precarious; a process that needed to occur in perpetuity in order for race to matter. Letters and memoirs from Zionist women suggest how this happened. For instance, in a letter titled "The Girl in the Movement," Esther Darwish-Tzurani summarized what she considered the plight of Jewish women in Iraq, how the Zionist movement offered respite from this, and what women did in the Movement.[75] Esther immediately sets the stakes of her assessment high, with her insistence that the situation for Jewish women in Iraq is dire. She qualifies this with the assertions that Jewish girls have circumscribed access to education and work, cannot have an active social life, are forced into a life of banality and only granted the ability to be interested in superficial matters, and are subject to the dictates of their parents and often times, eldest brother. To further detail aspects of this latter condition, Esther adds that girls

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[73] Radhika Mohanram, *Imperial White: Race, Diaspora, and the British Empire* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 27.

[74] Nira Yuval-Davis *Gender & Nation* (London, England: SAGE Publications, 2008), 11.
[75] Esther Darwish, "The Girl in the Movement, 1945" in Mordechai Bibi's *ha-mahteret ha-siyyonit halutz be-Iraq* (Jerusalem, Israel: Yad Ben Tzvi 1988), 404.

are expected to wait for the arrival of their sixteenth birthdays where their parents will discuss and arrange marriage, with little input from the young woman herself.[76]

In terms of what is at stake with these conditions exemplifying the life of Jewish girls and women in Iraq, Esther insists that although the Iraqi Jewish girl has dreams she would like to achieve and a self she would like to actualize, the patriarchal, circumscribing, and degenerating nature of Iraq's Jewish community and Iraqi society at large, circumvent her best intentions. The dynamic Esther speaks to, while at once multifaceted and evocative, was not a construction without intention, influence, and a genealogy. What Esther is doing with her critique of Jewish women's existence in Iraq is a variation on what Carmela did: specifying Jewish women as in need of saving, redemption, and progressivism. Her remedies for the unfortunate situation of Iraqi Jewish women she described make this known. Through participation in the Zionist movement, Esther insisted, Jewish girls and women could find a safe harbor. They would then emerge from the "narrow frameworks" life in Iraq placed them in where they were unable to "believe in [their] power."[77] In the Zionist movement girls saw a flame that they were drawn to in part because "…the Movement had ideas that were of greater seriousness than concerns about clothes or the internal and private dynamics of the household."[78] In the Movement, Esther enumerates, women can find a saving grace not just for her, but for the entire Jewish nation, equality with men, and the ability to express and realize her dreams. By having access and choosing to participate in Zionist education, community, and activity, Zionism could remedy the oppressive and limiting qualities of Iraqi Jewish society.

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[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid, 405.
[78] Ibid.

In a separate, later letter also authored by Esther where she references a number of people transitioning out of Youth Pioneers, a precursor to HeHalutz, she refers to these individuals as, "…people of dark allies, people of poverty and stress, youth who have not gotten to taste free life."[79] Without the expressed mention of race, Esther's prose reveals a worldview that was stratified, hierarchized, indebted to power, and exclusionary. In this conception, "the free life" must be a Zionist education. While it was certainly commonplace to refer to individuals who lacked Zionist knowledge in topics such as the Land of Israel or Hebrew as ignorant without simultaneously suggesting they actually lacked state or communal education or were economically impoverished, the pointedness of the abovementioned descriptors suggests that Esther was referring to these youths' station in life, rather than their relationship to Zionist knowledge. Her mentioning the teens not yet getting to taste the "free life," with its implied knowledge of not only "free life," but also its opposite, is suggestive of the author's own kind of close relationship to such an existence. In this way, Esther's summations show that there were degrees of proximity to whiteness. Esther is not just speaking of all Jews pejoratively, but explicitly more economically marginalized Jews. Making mention of their age, poverty, and ignorance in an attempt to situate them vis-à-vis Zionism, also does so vis-à-vis imperial whiteness. In doing this, Esther reveals her own positionality.

Trusting the veracity of her account, it can be gleaned that Esther might not quite be white, but she is whiter than the youth she is describing. This is understood from her position as a representative and explicit educator of them as well as someone who can make an authoritative claim on the free life, presumably based on some at least perceived proximity to it. Race, as something inessential and unstable, is imposed from the outside and must be reconstituted.

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[79] Ibid., 727.

Esther's emphasis on learning and the authoritative way she describes those who are not quite as white or Zionist as her, echoes this reality. Her words also reveal an anxiousness with respect to imperial whiteness wherein gradations of whiteness pose a threat to its ultimate actualized status and must be reckoned with.

Two months after May 14, 1948 when Israel declared its own statehood, Iraq's Government declared Zionism illegal. Practice of it, sympathy for it, or suspicion of either came with the possibility of interrogation, imprisonment, death or hard labor.[80] Generally speaking, simply the suspicion of Zionist activity was grounds for arrest. Some Jews came to see this as a form of persecution.[81] In the atmosphere of increased suspicion encouraged by Israel's declaration of statehood in 1948, letters from that region, addressed to Jews in Iraq were evidence enough to call these Jews' loyalty to Iraq into question. Even Jews who had nothing to do with Zionism were marked by the state as Zionists. Shoshana Levy devotes considerable space to an interrogation her father and grandfather experienced as well as the paranoia this instance catalyzed for the rest of her family in Iraq are revelatory of such a circumstance. According to Levy, her father and grandfather were taken in for harsh questioning and detained by Iraqi authorities, due to letters addressed to her father and sent to his place of work from his brother Rachamim.[82] Rachamim had immigrated to Palestine several years prior and lived in the kibbutz Mishmar HaEmek.

The effects of this questioning were not isolated to Levy's father and grandfather, however. Rather, they rippled through the family and took on gendered dimensions. While Levy's father and grandfather faced police interrogation, her mother, encouraged by rumors

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[80] Secretary of State, FO_371_75131, (London, England, August 1949), 1.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Shoshana Levy, *al-Em ha-Derech* (In the Middle of the Road), (Tel Aviv: Sh. Levy, 2001), 67.

circulating in their Jewish neighborhood, began purging the family home of all paraphernalia that could possibly register as Zionist, even though it might have just been Jewish. This cleansing included removing Stars of David from prayer shawls, literature from the underground Zionist movement Tenua (literally Movement) which Levy's aunt Lulu was a part of, letters from Lulu's Zionist friends in Palestine, pictures of and letters from her uncle Rachamim, as well as materials that could be put toward violent ends such as her uncle's gun and ingredients for Molotov cocktails.[83] Following their interrogation about the content of various letters from Palestine, Levy's father and grandfather were sent to a detention center. On this same day, the instincts of Levy's mother were proven deft, as police were sent to thoroughly search the family home.[84] What this experience in its aggregate did for the family was increase their feelings of persecution and Zionist group solidarity. In effect, the instance shows how individual Zionists implicated and promulgated the Movement and its whiteness to their family members—sometimes intentionally and sometimes optically or in the eyes of authorities. If this example is one of a mostly external imposition, other illustrations from Levy can reveal how Zionist imperial whiteness was more consciously accumulated.

Generally, Shoshana Levy's coming of age in a Baghdad neighborhood sheds light on the struggle I have depicted. Levy begins the description of her childhood neighborhood by differentiating between Jewish families who had Zionist and Communist members. She notes that the Shahrabani family was Zionist with the sons being members of the Zionist Underground in Baghdad. Next to the Shahrabani's were the Communist, Ezer family. Levy points to the fact that the father of this family was a tailor in the Muslim sector of the city and draw the conclusion

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[83] Ibid., 66.
[84] Ibid., 67.

that, "Perhaps because of his closeness to Muslims, he was an ardent advocate of coexistence with Arabs."[85] As this chapter's section on Communism will show, closeness with other Arabs, especially Muslims is often portrayed as a harbinger of Communist sympathies. In both of these examples, it is striking that it is the family unit where Zionism and Communism are generated and passed down. This is in fact the case with Levy and her family as well. After narrating the families in her neighborhood Levy muses, "I think I was already a Zionist at that point. I believed in the merit of it," and she continues to describe how she learned of the Movement from her aunt who cohabitated in her house. About this aunt and the Zionists she associated with, Levy says, "My aunt Lulu was a member of the Tenua i.e., the underground Zionist movement in Baghdad. She would bring members of the Movement to our house where together they would learn and sing songs in Hebrew."[86] Lulu's turning toward Zionism is made all the more interesting when coupled with the information that her relatively impoverished immediate family, especially her father, did not take her education seriously and she had to fight mightily to acquire knowledge.[87] By way of Levy's continued description of her Zionist aunt and this aunt's cohort, she provides an account of not only socialization into Zionism but the process of acquiring whiteness by extension. Referring still to the Hebrew songs she writes, "I loved these songs and even knew how to sing some of them," which reveals that even in her observational stance, she was no passive bystander. Through observations and mimicry Levy was imprinted with Zionism. It is not only Lulu and the other Tenua members who are forging their Zionist identities. Levy too is socialized into Zionism. As she describes this process, she further

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[85] Ibid., 62.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid., 41.

underscores the aforementioned possibility that there was a learning curve and hierarchy to Zionism.

While the texts do not explicitly say it was whiteness that was sought after, they do not have to. Their references, vocabulary, and idioms are evocative of whiteness in and of themselves due to the fact that they are race affirming and, as has been shown, imperial whiteness loomed large within the details of Zionist racial logic. For instance, in the same descriptions of Zionist aunt and friends Levy also notes, "I used to [hang around] the room they met in and listen to them reading Hebrew texts—a language that was not foreign to me despite the fact that I didn't understand its words."[88] Her insistence that as a Jew her knowledge of Hebrew is inextricable to her constitution in a way that attaches her to the Zionist Jews she observes is a variation on the calculus of nineteenth and early twentieth century Zionists and specifically the anthropologists among them who, "…could detect in the Jewish race a purity and perfectionism brought about by the laws of racial heredity."[89] Her purported innate intimacy with Hebrew despite her literal paucity bespeaks discourses of Jewish homogeneity wherein certain common denominators are the birthright of all Jews.

Not singularly race affirming for its own sake, this language contained the Zionist prescriptions of restoration through the imperial whiteness of a national homeland. Levy herself underscores this reality through the reverence with which she speaks about Zionism in Palestine. She waxes, "I'd hear the words of the guides about the Land of Israel and kibbutzim. These words touched my heart, after all my uncle Rachamim had immigrated to Israel before I was

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[88] Ibid.

[89] John M Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-siecle Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 173.

born and in his letters he would also tell us about life in the Kibbutz that he lived."[90] Such words

and associations were not fleeting for Levy. Personalizing and internalizing the guides' words

about Israel and specifically the Zionist kibbutz settlements there put her in communion with

what Zionist race theorists took to be the coda of their race affirmations: the primacy of a

national homeland.[91] Indeed, following the late nineteenth century "…the terms and concepts of

'race' and 'nation' were often used interchangeably, for Zionists, the notion that the Jews were a

race had significant implications for the perceived legitimacy of their nationalist movement."[92]

In this way, Zionism's insistence on a homeland in perpetuity is always racialized. It is racialized

imperially white because it is simulacrum of British imperial efforts that were methodologically

indebted to whiteness.

The snapshot Levy provides of her Zionist aunt and fellow Tenua members distills the

processes of Zionist and imperial whiteness acculturation. In her description, it is not only Lulu

and the other Tenua members who learn Hebrew and read Zionist literature together. Levy too is

socialized into Zionism and as she describes this process, she further underscores the

aforementioned possibility that there was a learning curve and hierarchy to Zionism.

Furthermore, the process of becoming Zionist i.e., aligning oneself with whiteness that was

bound up with Westernness and progressivism, once taken on by a few family members (in this

case, Lulu and Rachamim to start) goes on to speak for the entire family. This circumstance was

both imposed by the state and fostered through family relations. It included not only explicit

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[90] Shoshana Levy, *al-Em ha-Derech* (In the Middle of the Road), (Tel Aviv: Sh. Levy, 2001), 62.
[91] John M Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-siecle Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 173.
[92] Jonathan Marc Gribetz "'Their Blood is Eastern': Shahin Makaryus and *Fin de Siecle* Arab Pride in the Jewish 'Race'," *Middle Eastern Studies* 49:2 (2013), 144.

Zionist education but also relationality: adopting Zionism through community. This new racial discourse has been obscured by the fact that the process was never meant to be recognizable; it was meant to be taken granted, unquestioned, and naturalized as is the want of racial construction.

Even though the examples mentioned until now come from the Baghdad context and Baghdad was indeed the epicenter of Zionist life in Iraq, Jews in other Iraqi cities were brought into the Zionist fold as well. For instance, Almoslino, who was born in Mosul and joined Zionist circles there starting in her teens insists in her memoir that although the Farhud broke out in Baghdad, its effects were felt in her hometown too. The Farhud certainly did not encourage all Jews to become Zionists, but it is noteworthy that at least according to Almoslino's recollection, the gravity of it resonated beyond Baghdad. For Almoslino, the Farhud was a watershed moment. In this moment she claims to have realized that the Jews were not as secure in Iraq as she once thought. Following the Farhud and feeling unaccepted by her non-Jewish classmates, Almoslino narrowed the scope of her social interactions; a choice she says allowed Zionism to flourish within her.[93]

Like the other women cited, Almoslino she turns away from majority Iraqi society and towards a more insular community of Jewish Zionists is her first step toward a process of racialization. It is also not coincidental that years later while penning her memoir as member of the Labor Party in Israel she wrote, "The Zionist spirit was in the blood [of Mosul's Jews]. They thought a lot about the land of Israel and in every house there was a donation box for the Jewish

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[93] Shoshana Almoslino, *me-ha-Mahteret be-Bavel le-Memshelet Yisrael* (From the Underground of Babylon to the Government of Israel), (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibutz ha-Me'uhad, 1998), 21-22.

National Fund."[94] The emphasized connection between inherited homogeneity and Zionism as a relation that is blood bound is not accidental or benign. Indeed, it recalls the goal of racializing Jews monolithically: to actualize Zionism as a state building project. Such a worldview was not only meant to bolster Zionism. It also further divided Zionists from other Iraqi Jews. Despite any and all staunch insistence for a defense of political Zionism and by extension imperial whiteness, many Iraqi Jews resisted such dictates. It is to the Communists among them that this chapter will now turn.

The Women who Choose Communism: Rejections of Whiteness and Embracing an Iraqi Jewish Future

As already mentioned in the "Historical Origins" section of this chapter, Jewish Communist women commonly: recruited other women, served on in particular women's committees and acted clandestinely as couriers. Like their fellow non-Jewish Communist women, they participated in anti-British protests and the League Against Nazism and Fascism.[95] According to her memoir in the winter of 1948, after the U.N. resolution to partition Palestine and during the grassroots uprising known as the Wathba (Leap), Tikva Agassi, a second-year law student, took part in elections at her college to name a student council. As she recalls the events from the day these elections took place, she foregrounds the apprehension felt by Jewish students in her cohort. According to Agassi, many Jewish students were concerned that members of the right-wing Istiqlal (Independence) Party might obtain all seats on the student council. Their

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[94] Ibid., 18.
[95] Noga Efrati, *Women in Iraq: Past Meets Present* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012), 126.

anxieties were stoked by assumptions that as a right leaning party, they would be hostile toward Jewish students and eventually force Jews to leave the college.

While Agassi herself was initially skeptical that the Istiqlal Party possessed such an oppositional attitude toward Jews, she soon obtained a pamphlet from this party that stated one of their goals as to, "Encourage and disseminate Islamic and Christian education,"—"not Jewish", Agassi adds. Agassi considered the omission of Jews from the Party's platform to be intentional and worrisome. When leftists won the majority of student council seats, Agassi is relieved, but not before she reveals the conundrum she faced with leftist politics in Iraq generally. While mulling over her voting options, Agassi feels trapped. She worries that if the right wing party wins and her Jewish classmates are correct in their assessment, Jews at the college will be in danger. Yet, she also worries about voting for the leftist student council members because, as she writes, "I'm against the Right, so I need to support the Left, which is represented by Communist candidates, and I'm not Communist."[96] Her collapsing Leftist with Communist was a thought pattern engendered during the Wathba. Demonstrations, all of which were meant to oppose Iraq signing a treaty with Britain, which suggested continued British influence, comprised the Wathba. While many leftists took part in these protests, Sasson Somekh has said that Communist leftists specifically led many of the protests and Bashkin has noted that this leadership role demonstrated the power Communists had.[97] If Agassi had already learned of this newly arising impact of Communists in Iraq as her words suggest, it could likely be part of the reason she felt her choice to be so bifurcated.

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[96] Tikva Agassi, *me-Baghad le-Yisrael* (From Baghdad to Israel), (Ramat Gan: Tikva Agassi, 2001), 7.
[97] Sasson Somekh, *Baghdad Yesterday: The Making of An Arab Jew* (Jerusalem, Israel: Ibis Editions, 2001), 134; *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 14.

Agassi continues her reasoning and in so doing reveals that her personal loyalties are not all that are on her mind. She adds, "And if I wasn't already a Communist, why would I cause trouble for my grandfather, who was a member of the Iraqi Parliament and sympathetic to the royal family and regime, if he were to [have to] say that his granddaughter is a member of an illegal party?"[98] Agassi's calculus is noteworthy because it is representative of those younger Jews who were deeply committed to Iraq and their place in it, but could not find simple solace in subscribing wholesale to bifurcated political decisions. Because of her grandfather's close relationship with the British and Iraq's ruling monarchy Agassi was forced to support the status quo by default. This support, however, was not without a kind of agony due to the fact that her Jewish peers were sure there were elements in the country that did not care to envision a future with Jews in it. Agassi eventually comes to terms with this herself and is more able to accept the student council returns when mostly leftists win, only when she gets a copy of the Istiqlal Party pamphlet as noted above.

Parallel to the Zionist process containing a racial logic that was indebted to whiteness and propagating this through proximity and exposure to this whiteness, the Jews of the Iraqi Communist Party were exposed to racial logics in a similar fashion, but to different ends. Their increased participation in the Iraqi public sphere and interactions with Muslims and Christians solidified them as Iraqis and tied them to Iraq to an extent that their Zionist coreligionists could not have experienced in as an unmediated way. In fact, by the very nature of the goals of Communism and Zionism—one positionality understanding the Iraqi Jewish future as being comprised of a proletariat and non-British ruled Iraq and the other seeing the Jewish future lying in the perceived security provided by the imperial whiteness of Zionism and the fulfillment of

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[98] Ibid.

Zionist ideals in Israel—Jews of these separate affiliations would not have found themselves on the same trajectory. Given that the ICP, "…adjusted to the Iraqi milieu by advocating an anti-sectarian and anti-tribal vision and a struggle shared by all religions and ethnicities," it would not have had a commitment to racialization as encouraging group solidarity and acting as a beacon in the way Zionism did. Furthermore, while certain essentializing characteristics were expressed by Arab Nationalism prior to the Farhud—such as an Arab essence rather than a more malleable and approachable culture and language basis—Communism did not take such an approach.

The ICP's lack of a commitment to an affinity for an expressed racial analysis says something about the Jews who joined.[99] In its rejection of British imperialism, its characterizing of Zionists as "agents of reaction and imperialism,"[100] and its attempts to at least not make religion or ethnicity a barrier for entry to the Party, the ICP can be understood as it was idealized by the Jews of Iraq: as striving to end capitalist exploitation and imperialism specifically for non-elites, irrespective of any social differences. Jews with an affinity for the Party would not have then possessed the Zionist longing for British imperial whiteness.

Proximities as catalysts for engendering political affinities and racialization were not only made use of within the realm of Zionism. It was previously mentioned that Levy considered one of her neighbors to have Communist sympathies due to his work in the Muslim sector of Baghdad. The intimacy Levy suggests in such a situation reads as implicitly responsible for engendering affiliations throughout the Communist Party in more cases than one. For instance, testimonies taken from Jewish women Communists, often written or transcribed by the Iraqi

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[99] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 143.
[100] Yosef Meir, *be-Ikar ba-Mmahteret: Yehudim u-Folitikah be-Irak* (Mainly in the Underground: Jews and Politics in Iraq), (Tel Aviv, Israel: Naharayim, 1993), 227.

police following arrest and acquittal on charges of Communism, reveal interpersonal dynamics that stoked the Movement's spread.

Born in the southern Iraqi city of Amarah, Doris Sha'ul moved to Baghdad at around 13 years of age to live with her older sister Anisa. In her own words, she identifies as sympathetic to Communism and she detailed some of her experiences in the Party. Both Anisa and Doris's niece Saida—who later converted to Islam—acted as conduits for her Communism. Per Doris's distinction, it was Saida that imbued her with Communist rhetoric and Anisa who taught her Communist teachings more proscriptively. Perhaps because she herself could not read well during her introduction to Communism, Doris comes across as a faithful interlocutor to her sister and niece. Listening intently, she absorbed the messages Saida passionately espoused such as, "The status of workers and the fellahin affects the country so we have to address it," and regarding her role within the Movement, "Your behavior should be good and you should learn well because a girl is measured by her behavior."[101] Situated into Communism in this way, Doris is burdened co-constitutively. Her responsibility lies not only with all workers (an expectation of all Communists) but with herself as a woman—an expectation faced particularly by those gendered female. This double burden was not especially Doris's, nor was it one imparted exclusively between women. While in Doris's case it was primarily the women of her family who were conduits of Communism, brothers and husbands acted in this capacity for other women.

In 1947, at 26 years old, Amuma—who also later converted to Islam—was put on trial for Communist activity in a wave of arrests directed against Comrade Fahad and his associates. Although she was eventually acquitted, she admitted to being a Communist during her

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[101] Ibid., 276.

interrogation after her arrest in a Baghdad apartment alongside her brother and other members of the Party. Before she was arrested, it was her job to cook and launder for the inhabitants of this apartment. In advocating for herself, she reveals that the dwelling was a kind of center for the printing and distribution of Communist material which she denies taking part in. Given that her interlocutor was a police officer, there is some likelihood that her deployment of this sort of gendered division of labor was an obfuscating tactic. For instance, she clearly knows to protect the names of all who passed through the apartment by stating that she never learned them. This tactic, however, does not negate that she was physically present at a central location of Communist literature production.

Another prominent member was Ellen Yaakov Darwish, who was married to aa fellow Party member. Ellen was acquitted after an appeal and served no jail time for Communist activity, there are discussions of her visiting her husband Avraham, also a Communist member, in jail. During Ellen's interrogations she is questioned about whether or not she transported letters for her husband and other Party members. Although she admits to taking letters from some Communist prisoners to their family members, she denies ever doing so for Comrade Fahad himself or his closest associates.[102] Despite her denials, authorities thought she was guilty of this latter accusation.[103] Both Amuma and Ellen's testimonies show how crucial were networks and interpersonal relationships as well as how committed and like-minded Party members were.

The intimacy of Communist relationships as well as the extent to which some Jewish Communist women would implicitly denounce the imperial white future (by way of Iraqi

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[102] Ibid., 263.
[103] Ibid., 265.

Communism's decidedly anti-imperialist and specifically anti-British policies) promised for them by Zionism take on new dimensions when it is considered that three out of the five Communist women who have dedicated profiles in Meir's detailed history and biographical dictionary of Iraqi Jewish Communism converted to Islam. Saida Sasson Mishal, Amuma Meir Mistri, and Marilyn Meir Ezer who all joined the ICP in the 1940s, eventually converted. According to descriptions of these women, their conversions were inextricably tied to their participation in the Communist Party. Saida a Baghdad born, former teacher in training, for instance, was once engaged to a Jewish man who was later executed. She then converted to Islam after being sent to prison for Communist activity in 1949 and married a high ranking ICP member by the name of Zaki Khairy. Following this marriage and conversion she changed her name to Sa'ad Khairy. Amuma, born in the primarily Kurdish region of Mandali, also converted to Islam and changed her name to Amida Mistri after escaping a twenty-year prison sentence following the coup led by Abdul Karim al-Qasim in 1958. Finally, Marilyn, after becoming involved with one-time ICP First Secretary Baha al-Din Nuri, gave birth to his son in prison and converted to Islam, marrying Baha al-Din Nuri upon her release.[104]

Given that Muslims participated in Communism in the highest numbers, the fact that commitment to the Party included conversion for some is not entirely unexpected. Many of the women's brothers or fiancés recruited them into the Movement. Much of their actions in the Party were controlled by what more established, male Party members asked of them. Finding partnership with Muslim men and converting to Islam, although perhaps a coerced action was a relatively agentive act generally and an act of rebuke vis-à-vis Zionism and British imperial whiteness. Madeline Ezer and Sa'ida Masha'al converted as well, partially as a practical matter in

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[104] Ibid., 100.

order to avoid denationalization and deportation to Israel. While other Jewish communist female members, like Ellen Darwish, did not convert, the act makes sense given that the ICP rejected the British and by extension their imperial whiteness all along. Moreover, similar to how Judaism was perceived to be closely linked to Zionism in some people's conceptions, Islam as well sometimes had a cultural perception. Even though the ICP was careful to maintain a horizontal structure ideologically when it came to religion for much of the 1940s, given that several Jewish women converted to Islam after imprisonment and the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948, these ideals could only be protected so much from the rift that Israel's statehood would cause. Finally, Meir made careful mention of Jewish women's participation in the ICP as being more pronounced than Christian women.[105] This is despite the fact, he analyzes, that Christian women were thought of as having a freer participation in Iraqi public life than Jewish women.

With the existence of the Anti-Zionist League alongside and sometimes operating in conjunction with the Communist Party since September 1944 it is no surprise that Communist and Zionist Jews would have divergent opinions.[106] In particular, the Anti-Zionist League mirrored and assisted the ICP in activities such as demonstrations against British influence in Iraq and strikes, such as one mentioned in a Foreign Office document on an oilfield in Kirkuk.[107] Levy highlights some specific disagreements when discussing fights she witnessed between her neighbors. In her memoirs she notes,

> The frequent protests that were conducted in the streets of Baghdad against the division of the Land of Israel raised my awareness of the political and ideological discussions that were being undertaken in out neighborhood, even if I didn't fully understand them. Concurrently, the main arguments took place between Zionists and Communists. Everyone in the neighborhood knew precisely whom among the residents was a

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[105] Yosef Meir, *be-Ikar ba-Mmahteret: Yehudim u-Folitikah be-Irak* (Mainly in the Underground: Jews and Politics in Iraq), (Tel Aviv, Israel: Naharayim, 1993), 103.
[106] The Iraqi Communist Party and the League of Iraqi Communists, FO_371_68481 (London, England, 1948), 3.
[107] Ibid.

Communist and which was an active Zionist and who was only sympathetic or neutral to [one of these two options].[108]

Levy's characterization of relations between Communists and Zionists underscores the divide between the two movements even more so. It shows that especially around exceptional moments like the division of Palestine, political affiliations became even more pronounced, bifurcated, and a formative part of individual's subjectivity. Even though Communists and Zionists could live side by side, they still quarreled. Echoing Agassi's previously mentioned conundrum, this situation was difficult for the likes of Levy who, although an admitted Zionist, also doubted her faculties to fully contend with two of the major political options she faced.

Much of the division between Communists and Zionists was actualized through argumentation, according to Levy. Her words lend credence to the precise depth and derisive character that this division took while showing that imperial whiteness, by way of British influence and imperialism, was a fault line. About these arguments she writes, "Most of the arguments didn't begin inside houses, rather [they began outside] in the alleyways next to one of the houses,"[109] which reveals that no matter how close in proximity neighbors lived to one another, political ideologies still caused rifts. These rifts were, as Levy explicitly notes, public and performative. Levy illustrates the particularities of these disagreements adding,

> The arguments would always start the same way: One of the younger neighbors would by chance meet with another young neighbor from the neighborhood in the alleyway. After greeting [each other] one would ask the other for his opinion on this or that or on an event or about news of any kind that had been published that day or week.[110]

These arguments did not take place outside coincidentally. Rather, the setting of the public sphere was fundamental to the arguments themselves. It was through performative argumentation where a projection and accusation of another was simultaneously a reconstitution of one's self

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[108] Shoshana Levy, *Al Em ha-Derech* (In the Middle of the Road), (Tel Aviv: Sh. Levy, 2001), 64.
[109] Ibid., 63.
[110] Ibid.

and personal political affiliation. Explicit in these exchanges was the fear of being a pawn, tool, or sellout. As Levy describes it, "The dialogue would begin in low tones, but most often quickly rose up to higher tones [with one of them] trying to prove that his friend is wrong or serving a foreign interest, or being used as a naïve tool by others—arguments that would not always end in agreement.[111]" This fear of serving a foreign interest specifically reflects the aforementioned fact that people were paranoid about continued British influence and even, though not explicitly articulated, British imperial whiteness. Furthermore, if underlying racial tensions can be deduced from Levy's snapshot, so too can the way she as a woman was subject simultaneously to not only the demands of politics, but patriarchy.

In the scenario laid out above, the arguments take place between two younger men, with Levy as a bystander. In this way, Levy is subordinated to power not only by having to grapple with her own political affiliations and those of others, but also being seemingly not in a position to articulate how she feels in such a public setting as a neighborhood argument. Perhaps it was this kind of limitation on her articulation that stoked her complicated and unsettled political feelings. In this light, Levy's insistence that she cannot fully understand the political and ideological discussions being undertaken in her neighborhood is a function of her lack of space to interrogatively process her experience and get distance from it. One then wonders if Agassi's having to triangulate between her experience, the feelings of her mostly male classmates, and her grandfather's expectations similarly stemmed from any limitation placed on her processing. Under the duress of these limitations, the fact that both Levy and Agassi find greater resolution in Zionism takes on new dimensions. Zionism, with its dependency on British support and whiteness, signaled a kind of straightforward resolution that Communism did not.

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[111] Ibid., 63.

Finally, Levy reveals the exact crux of the rift between Zionists and Communists with the following words,

> And what kind of agreement was [even] possible between a Zionist who said that the Iraq in which many generations had lived is not his country and that his homeland is Israel and that he needs to immigrate there, and between a Communist who sees Iraq as his real homeland, Arabs as his brothers, and all that is needed is to overthrow the reactionary regime in Iraq and replace it with the Communist regime where there won't be discrimination between Muslims and Jews and exploitation of workers.[112]

With the futures envisioned by Communists and Zionists diverging so distinctly, how could their opposition to one another be at all surmountable? The Zionists Levy speaks of, in their longing for imperial whiteness, had absolved themselves of a fracturing country including any potential to find solace with Iraq's non-Jewish citizens in either their shared Arabness or Iraqiness. The Communists were hopeful in the exact opposite. The insistence on a Communist regime dedicated to workers was so devoid of an engagement with specific social differences such as gender and race as to be potentially stymied by its own lack of sustained and reiterated analysis. Yet, it was not similarly dependent on exclusion in the name of imperial whiteness in the way that Zionism was. Ultimately, the lack of pointed gender or racial critical engagement in the ICP and the heightened awareness of the privileges of imperial whiteness in Zionism and women's place in it, complicated Iraqi Jews' sense of social differences by driving an insurmountable wedge between Jews who sought solace in the potential for racial superiority and those who did not.

Conclusion

Adding further complexity to the notion that Iraqi Jewish women came up against various narratives about race, both the ideologies and proponents of Zionism and Communism discussed here make known that these two dissident movements can be seen as points of reference for each

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[112] Ibid., 65.

other. Differing in their relationship to imperialism, their conception of the Iraqi Jewish future, and their understanding of their place in nation state formation, but nevertheless still informed by the social differences that were fundamental to these phenomena, Iraqi Zionism and Communism dealt with race and gender uniquely. Not grappling with this uniqueness and ultimately with what it says about Iraqi Jewish society and Iraqi society at large and composing a narrative of Jewish women's lives in Iraq, but not noting the multiple, intricate, and inescapable ways that logics of race and gender affected them would be to generate a history without greater depth.

While the racial implications of the many quoted statements from Zionist and Communist women are implicit, particularly when considered co-constitutively with gender, they foreground a division and identity construction that might not have been as immediately legible in previous scholarship but is no less operative. Take for instance, Levy's recently quoted text that demonstrates just how much the movements differed in the future they saw for Iraqi Jews. If read without a racialized gendered lens, the mention of, "…a Communist who sees Iraq as his real homeland, Arabs as his brothers," would likely be taken to demarcate a largely undefined nationalist dispute.[113] Indeed, the primacy of autonomy and self-determination in a post-WWI Middle East is discernable from Levy's statement. Yet, so too is the fact that this autonomy was sometimes racial in its justification. This is seen in particular when the former mention of a Communist's idea of homeland is contrasted with "…a Zionist who said that the Iraq in which many generations had lived is not his country and that his homeland is Israel."[114] In this instance, the archetypal Zionist must be indebted to the regenerative and imperial white discourses detailed in this Chapter extensively in order to turn on Iraq and take solace in his new, not just

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[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.

country, but homeland of Israel. Read shallowly, the Zionist is merely a dissenter, perhaps one that is opportunist and naïve. What is then missed is the more substantive motivation and catalyst that Zionists were so ultimately dismissive because their regenerative and race affirming influences called for it.

To recognize race and gender as operative categories is to do a particular kind of history making and analytic exercise where it is understood that these categories provide integral rather than aberrational knowledge on Iraqi Jewish society throughout the twentieth century. Doing so means not merely writing Jewish women into Iraqi Jewish history specifically and Iraqi history more generally. Such a history would have little analytic commitment, not advance the field of gendered and raced histories, and in its lack of interrogation and introspection, would be bereft of the most possible value. Rather, this chapter and dissertation more broadly takes race and gender into account as inextricable to society building in order to help shed light on still unanswered or insufficiently addressed historical moments or conundrums. The first of these being Jewish women's place in the evolving Iraqi nation state and how racial and gender logics affected their belonging. The second being understanding that the racial conceptions Iraqi Jewish women inherited from their homeland affected how they processed the racism they felt as a racially oppressed group in the state of Israel. Broadly speaking, and mostly by way of example, this chapter and dissertation also demonstrate that race is germane to Middle Eastern societies in the early to mid-twentieth century—not a foreign import or anachronism.

In terms of Jewish place in Iraq, the worldviews that Zionism and Communism encouraged Jews and Jewish women to have either separated them further or brought them closer to their fellow Iraqi Arab citizens. Jewish proximity to other Iraqi Arabs and Arabness mattered because although Iraq was a nation that also contained, and persecuted, Assyrians and Kurds for

instance, the primacy of Arabness was a key component for it to coalesce around. While

Arabness was hegemonic in Iraq, its hegemony, at least according to progressive, and Arabic

speaking minorities, was not forged in the same exact kinds of invocations of imperial whiteness

that created Zionism's appeal for some Jews. Comprised of Semiticness, it tied bound together

Jews and Muslims alike. British influence certainly insisted on a need for Arab primacy in order

to perpetuate itself, but it wasn't the case that all Arab identified individuals wanted to be

imperial white. Conversely, in articulations and action, Zionist Jews were calling on the exact

imperial whiteness that would in their minds displace and save them from an uncertain, but

ultimately definitively Arab centric future. As many of the quotations from Zionist women in

this chapter demonstrate, they were all variously motivated by a combination of uncertainty and

fear.

For Jewish Communists, their denunciation of Zionist imperial whiteness and embrace of

an Iraqi future with themselves in it, ultimately bolstered Arab hegemony. Certainly the ICP

meant to only have one's class status matter. Within the Iraqi context however, where many of

the members were ethnically Arab and Arabness was so foundational, its predominance in even

an ideal, imagined future was difficult to eschew. The conversion of some Communist Jewish

women to Islam (the majority religion in the country) suggests that a displacement of one's

Jewishness felt necessary for some, in order for them to live more comfortably in Iraq. The fact

that many of these conversions and what they signaled occurred close to or after the

establishment of Israel in 1948 was not by coincidence.

In terms of immigration to Israel, even though many have written about the

discrimination faced by Iraqi Jewish immigrants and the cognitive dissonance provoked within

them because of it, the need for specificity still remains. For instance, Bashkin has written that

the subalternity foisted upon Iraqi Jews was particularly challenging for them due to the fact that many carried with them Iraqi memories of being middle to upper class with gainful employment.[115] An unresolved issue presented with the mention of terms like middle and upper class is that they are, in and of themselves, imprecise. They are symptoms of a condition and not conditions fundamentally. They essentially suggest a kind of privilege, but do not name it. Furthermore, to say that Iraqi Jewish acclimation or lack thereof in Israel was influenced by middle classness and upper classness, ignores that privileges advantage people differently.

When further gravity is leant to Iraqi Jews' emigration though a suggestion that an upper-class Jew from Baghdad was aggrieved with her station in Israel because her immigration meant the collision of opposing worldviews, it is crucial to be more precise and note explicitly how the range of possible racial and gender realities collapsed in Israel. This meant, at least, that racial and gender logics were no longer working as Iraqi Jews were accustomed to. Women were most affected in this scenario as multiple sites of power infringed upon their accustomed to worldview. What the analysis in this current chapter and the former suggests is that the terms often used to specify the dissonance Iraqi Jews experienced in Israel are born out of particular kinds of race and gender logics in Iraq. In this worldview, due to racializations being multiple and some Jews being able to take part in dominant forms of racialization, such as longing for imperial whiteness in the way Zionists did or attempting to eschew the centrality of race to the Iraqi future as Communist Jews did by rejecting imperial whiteness, Iraq's racial logics did not pose as much of a barrier to belonging as did Israel's. As Chapter Three will show, some of Israel's most eminent and expansive immigration sites—such as the transit camp—immediately

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[115] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 65.

demonstrated for Iraqi women that they did not belong. Facing a more narrow and binary racial construction where Ashkenazim were white vis-à-vis non-white others, although Iraqi Jewish women had tools to make sense of societies, their Iraqi racial logics did not alleviate their painful Israeli immigration. This standpoint of race thus reveals not only the structure of how discrimination was engendered but the gravity and impact of imposed and meaningful social differences.

Chapter Three

Zionist Racism from the Standpoint of its Jewish Victims: Iraqi Jews, Israeli Immigration Camps, and the Construction of Racial Difference

"Anything but race"[1] explanations, while certainly not the exclusively proffered analyses, nevertheless dominate scholarly critique of mid-twentieth century Israel as Iraqi Jews immigrated and faced hostility due to Ashkenazi-centrism. These explanations insist that Mizrahi marginalization was a function of ethnic belonging (East vs. West) or cultural commitments (Oriental vs. European), without explicitly mentioning race. As encapsulated in Ella Shohat's insistence, "Ethnic discrimination against Sephardim began with their initial settling," non-Ashkenazi Jews were apparently doomed from the start of the project for Israel's statehood.[2]

While ethnic and cultural frameworks are necessary to lay bare Mizrahi discrimination, marginalization, and difference making in terms of ideology, they leave a gap where material reality is concerned. They foreclose expression that a goal inextricable to the new Jewish state was for Ashkenazim (in the name of concretizing their hegemony) to racialize themselves as white partially by racially othering Iraqi Jews and other Mizrahim as non-white. Only the standpoint of race shows that Iraqi Jews had their equality withheld not based on the notion of abstract culture or communal ethnicity, but on the basis of them as people. Difference making

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[1] This term is borrowed from Neda Maghbouleh's *The Limits of Whiteness: Iranian Americans and the Everyday Politics of Race* which explains that to categorize Iranian Americans according to only ethnic, cultural, religious, or immigrant difference is to miss the "…everyday politics that provoke racial claims to an "other" identity among legally white Iranian Americans." (74) I like this framing because it does not eschew ethnic or cultural explanations as useless, but suggests they are only so powerful and there is more to be said if we are able to confront race. Given that the memoirs and accounts of my primary sources detail the "everyday" a great deal, they are potentially ripe for a more race-based analysis.

[2] Ella Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims," *Social Text*, no. 19/20 (1988): 19.

and mattering was thus deeply personal. In order to capture this, attention should orient more toward what a race analysis offers.

Several Israeli scholars have used race as a category of analysis within sociology, literary analysis, or media studies to interrogate Israel's Mizrahi-Ashkenazi divide—some even with attention paid to historical developments. Fewer *historians* have used race and racialization, particularly within the perimeters of specific immigration sites, to historicize the genesis of Mizrahi discrimination.[3] Because ethnic belonging and culture are often seen as immutable, non-race standpoints make situations like migration and subsequent discrimination seem inexplicable. The possibility of discrimination occurring intentionally and proactively—with both intended and unintended effects—is then elided. This chapter and the following thus join a relatively still-developing body of literature that examines Mizrahi in early state Israel immigration sites through the standpoint of race.

A race standpoint is intriguing in terms of implications beyond the chapter as well, as it allows for a reexamination of themes previous considered settled. For example, in Esperance Cohen's short story "Chivalry," a woman is visiting her husband at a prison in Jaffa.[4] In addition to this primary distress, the woman is also antagonized by her mother-in-law who accompanies her and is anxious about whether or not her newborn son will be allowed into the prison to meet with his father as well. Despite these factors being the catalyst for the short story, its biggest

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[3] To say that a race analysis is crucial, is not to say that ethnic lenses are not. Mostly, I would like it noted that exploring race has something to offer and ethnicity isn't necessarily any more of a "natural" or all-encompassing viewpoint. The lineage of works discussing Mizrahim and Ashkenazim in Israel, whether via mostly ethnicity and to a lesser extent race include (but are not limited to): Ella Shohat, Eitan Bar-Yosef and Sami Shalom Chetrit (scholars of film and literature); Yehouda Shenhav, Hanna Herzog, and Aziza Khazzoom (sociology); Bryan Roby, Orit Bashkin (history).

[4] Esperance Cohen, "Chivalry," in *Arab-Jewish Literature*, by Reuven Snir, trans. Reuven Snir and Aviva Butt (Leiden ; Boston: BRILL, 2019), 238.

moral comes as the woman is forced to confront her own racism after a Bedouin guard who she was previously afraid of due to his dark complexion, is the only reason her son could visit his father in prison, while the white European guards at the prison tried to prevent this. Despite the fact that the woman names her distrust of the Bedouin guard as stemming from his dark complexion and savagery, the scholarly tendency might have previously been to label this as a sort of urban versus rural prejudice.[5] A race standpoint on the other hand, provides an interrogative opportunity to show how the discrimination that took place was not just ethnic in origin, but racist.

Using a race analysis is feasible not merely because the Ashkenazi political Zionist project was indebted to whiteness. Indeed, examining race is also feasible because Iraqi Jews did not leave Iraq glibly, but rather, while always looking back. These migrants thus remained deeply aware of Iraq and by extension the multiple racializations stemming from national and political directions that the country exposed them to.

While an ethos of departure certainly touched many of Iraq's Jews in the early 1950s, leaving remained fraught. When Tikva Balash left Mosul her "…Muslim neighbors pleaded through tears for [her family] to stay."[6] Balash was only four and her parents had not explained the circumstances, reasons, or potential outcomes of departure. Seeing through the confusion of her leaving, she was however able to discern that her immediate neighbors wanted them to remain. She might have left, but because of her rootedness in the country, Iraq remained in her mind's eye.

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[5] Ibid., 240.
[6] Tikva Balash, "My Amazingly Beautiful Childhood," *Stories of the Ma'abara in Ramat ha-Sharaon* (Israel: Serfaty Publishers, 2007), 29.

As much of their written ruminations on leaving Iraq show, all Iraqi Jews remained in Iraq in some way. They embodied Iraq, all while encountering their new Israeli surroundings. They held Iraq with them despite, or perhaps because of the new Israeli sites that absorbed them. After an initial stay in the immigration absorption camp, the transit camp (ma'abara, pl. ma'abarot) was the first of such new Israeli sites. The ma'abara was a kind of settlement where most Iraqi Jews and other Mizrahim were forced to reside despite their protests and lack of consent. Located in literal peripheries, ma'abarot held new immigrants captive in order to settle land. The camps were overcrowded and lacking in resources as well as free movement.[7] Ideologues of the transit camps espoused that in their rarified form, the camps were meant to be a temporary housing solution for new immigrants (many of them from Middle Eastern countries like Iraq) before more permanent housing could be located. This intent was meant to justify Israel's lack of quality housing and resources.

Because of the kind of the crucible they formed, transit camps constitute a necessary site of analysis when exploring the function of race in early state Israel. In order to discuss Jews leaving Iraq and being cloistered in transit camps, as well as to show how race was constructed for Iraqi Jewish women in these camps, this chapter will draw on memoirs from Esperance Cohen, Nuzhat Katzab, Tikva Agassi, and Louise Cohen. These memoirs will be supported by oral history interviews conducted specifically about transit camp life as well as testimonies gathered about the Yemenite, Mizrahi, and Balkan Children's Affair. Lastly, the chapter will draw on assessments made in Israeli state sponsored social service reports and international reports on the conditions of the camps from the Joint Distribution Committee.

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[7] Aziza Khazzoom, *Shifting Ethnic Boundaries and Inequality in Israel: Or, How the Polish Peddler Became a German Intellectual*, Studies in Social Inequality (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008), 23.

The "transit" aspect of transit camps as a misnomer is a point of departure in much hitherto scholarship discussing Mizrahi immigration. The irony of the camps, as Bryan Roby puts it was that, "These "transitory" camps, albeit devised as a temporary solution to the fast growth in the Jewish population, continued to exist well into the 1960s."[8] The reality of their relative permanence is all the more insidious given that the camps were saturated with over-population, inadequate housing, state controlled insufficient resources, unemployment, and mistreatment. In this way, the camps became not only physically permanent, but mentally so. To underscore the gravity of such mental scarring, Orit Bashkin has suggested that Iraqi Jews were *particularly* wounded by aspects of their arrival to Israel like the transit camps because,

> …their arrival in Israel was not an "ascent"—the meaning of the word Aliyah—but rather a "descent." Iraqi men and women suffered from a particular state of subalternity, in that they had memories of different times and places in which they belonged to the upper and middle classes, to times they had homes and permanent jobs.[9]

Within this predicament, what exactly rendered their subalternity "particular?" Bashkin suggests that the "memories of different times and places" set Iraqi Jews apart in their subalternity because they constituted an imagined sense of social capital. While immigration was a descent for Iraqi Jews especially because of their double bind, it was this imagined "social capital" that allowed for the salvaging of their "human dignity."[10]

What remains murky within the particular decent of Iraqi Jewish immigration is how social capital constituted human dignity and why was it precisely human dignity that was at stake with immigration. Bashkin and Aziza Khazzoom, have insisted that what was at play was a desire on the part of Ashkenazim to bolster their Western identity vis-à-vis a Mizrahi Eastern

[8] Bryan K. Roby, *The Mizrahi Era of Rebellion: Israel's Forgotten Civil Rights Struggle, 1948-1966*, First edition., Contemporary Issues in the Middle East (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2015), 87.

[9] Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), 65.

[10] Ibid.

one. Such bolstering was enacted in the name of portraying the latter as subaltern and subject to state dictate and whim, so that Israel could be enshrined as Western via Ashkenazi domination and influence.[11] Within the predominantly ethnic West-East paradigm however, little is specified about social capital. Without a more detailed parsing, only assumptions are left about what logics social capital harked back to, what it signified for Iraqis, and what exactly was their say in the matter of their decent.

As offered at the end of Chapter Two in this dissertation, understanding the Iraqi Jewish response to their immigration to Israel (which began in the transit camps) has racial implications. These racial implications are an outgrowth of the racial logics all Jews brought with them from their homeland when they left. I contend that a race analysis is indispensable in order to fully grasp the possibility of discrimination occurring intentionally, to fully contextualize the gravity of aforementioned idioms such as "upper class," "permanent jobs," and "social capital," as well as acts as a reminder that attention must be paid to how these hallmarks affected women uniquely. This chapter will thus discuss how Iraqi Jewish women first encountered different racial logics in the Israeli ma'abarot than they were used to in Iraq. The chapter will reveal that their preoccupation with social capital was not only a response to their new surroundings, but a response to how what they knew about race no longer worked. I argue that race was constructed via Iraqi Jewish women's relationship with three kinds of social capital: medical, socio-economic, and educational.

Showing race as constructed via Iraqi Jewish women's relationship with three kinds of social capital: socio-economic, medical, and educational reveals the ways in which these

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[11] Ibid., 64; Aziza Khazzoom, *Shifting Ethnic Boundaries and Inequality in Israel: Or, How the Polish Peddler Became a German Intellectual*, Studies in Social Inequality (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2008), 57.

women's racial imaginations (based on their Iraqi upbringing) were not commensurate with the racial logics they came up against in Israel, which were more confining. Such analysis not only proves that it is worthwhile to think in terms of race and not just ethnicity in early state Israel, but also shows why it was so difficult for Jews to simply forget Iraq and acclimate to their new country. In order to do so the chapter will first say more about the bond between Jews and Iraq, before it moves to highlighting how logics of race were constructed for Iraqi Jews in one of the most formative sites of immigration integration: the transit camp.

Leaving and Not Leaving Iraq

What can be made of the willingness on the part of the majority of Iraq's Jews—around 150,000 in total—to leave their country for Israel when offered the opportunity to do so in the 1950s? Did the quantity of this departure suggest an overwhelming willingness and fatigue with Iraq along with a desire to unreservedly acclimate to Israel? More specifically, if Iraq was meant to be eschewed, would its resonance, including its processes and logics of racialization, have been abandoned by new Iraqi-Israelis as well? No matter the watershed moment leaving Iraq was, in reality it did not spark a case of collective amnesia for Iraqi Jewish immigrants. For instance, the pleas and tears of Balash's aforementioned Muslim neighbors are suggestive of the fact that the story of Iraq's Jewish migration is not straightforward. Rather than being consciously calculated and populist, the migration was rather ambiguous, as exemplified in Bashkin's assessment, "The emigration of Iraqi Jews was a result of many misunderstandings, vicious circles, bad calculations on the part of the Iraqi political elites, and Israeli and Iraqi

moves that turned Iraqi Jews into mere pawns."[12] Being made into mere pawns, meant that while

there were structural catalysts that dislocated Jews from the Iraqi nation state, individual intimate

connection to the region as well as Muslim and Christian neighbors was not so easily severed.

To insist that Jews were inextricably and quite affectively bound to Iraq is simultaneously

to insist that motivations of their departure cannot be neatly categorized. Despite Zionism

technically attracting small numbers in Iraq, in the wake of Israel's establishment in 1948, an

Iraqi state that became fearful of it, targeted Zionism so sweepingly, it targeted all Jews by

extension.[13] Because of Jews' extensive ties to Iraq, and because a measure of their departure is

owed to the illustration of them as Zionists whose "…lives and […] property were now

connected to the future of the Palestinian refugees," an amount of haphazardness must be

allowed for in order to stay true to what Jews went through.[14] For instance, some Jews registered

to leave Iraq with the passage of the denaturalization law, there was ever present confusion as to

whether or not all of them would actually leave in the end. An April 1950 British embassy letter

notes that while 40,000 Jews had presently registered to depart at that time, there was little faith

that nearly that many would follow through.[15] This means that registration numbers and initial

acquiescence are not necessarily reliable signals that Jews were committed to leaving.

Furthermore, on the part of the Iraqi state, it is not entirely clear that it was

wholeheartedly desirous for Jews to leave either. Illegal emigration had increased after martial

law was lifted. It then became more difficult to deal with those who were leaving illegally. In

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[12] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 228.
[13] Ibid., 226.
[14] Ibid., 200.
[15] British Embassy, FO_371_82480, (Baghdad: Iraq, April 13, 1950), 1.

this way, denaturalization might have been a more straightforward kind of response.[16] Reasoning

from Basra born, Nuzhat Katzab corroborates a reality where denaturalization was a legal way to

deal with Jews who felt that they had suffered under martial law and wanted to leave the country

after it was lifted. She writes that Jews were relieved not only when in 1949, martial law was

cancelled in Iraq, but also in March 1950 when they were finally allowed to leave legally.[17] This

stopped the Zionist underground from having to smuggle Jews out of the country and led to her

family emigrating in 1951. She concludes by insisting that their leaving did not necessitate their

forgetting the "…beautiful and good years we lived together in a good neighborhood with good

relations with our Arab neighbors," the difficulties Jews faced leading up to their departure

threatened to tarnish this.[18] Furthermore, as nearly all Jews left, their Iraqi assets were frozen and

they arrived to Israeli transit camps completely bereft.[19]

Memories from Iraqi Jewish women attest to the fact that their personal ties to the

country and its people, meant that departure was ultimately more physical than it was conceptual.

Before Haviva Goma immigrated to Israel at 18, her Muslim neighbors urged her to stay. "You'll

starve there," they said anxiously.[20] Intimacy of such an immediate and heightened nature

suggests that Iraq's Jewish mass migration was never completely foretold. Delving into Jewish

attachment, specifically to individual Iraqis and the region itself, goes a long way toward

revealing that Jewish migration was in fact begrudging and self-conscious. Katzab details her

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[16] Embassy, FO_371_82478, (Baghdad: Iraq, March 7, 1950), 3.
[17] Nuzhat Katzab, *Harbingers of Peace: With The Arab and The Druze Women in Israel,* (Or Yehuda, Israel: Ma'ariv Book Guild), 23.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 228.
[20] Haviva Goma, "Villa and not a Tent," *Stories of the Ma'abara in Ramat ha-Sharaon* (Israel: Serfaty Publishers, 2007), 46.

and her family's personal friendships with non-Jewish neighbors as, "In front of [my family's house], in a building that was like a palace, lived a Muslim family…and among us a great friendship flourished. Their youngest daughter was not only my neighbor, but my very close friend."[21] She mentions that this friendship was strengthened through studying together and walking along the river together. Only Iraqi authorities attempting to monitor Jews, and specifically, the Zionist underground movements of Basra, threatened to disrupt their friendship.

Expressing her kinship more broadly, Tikva Agassi, makes her affinity known by writing, "I loved Arab and Muslim history, thinking I was a part of it and it a part of me,"[22] thus rendering connection among Jews and other Iraqis timeless. Not confining herself only to humanity, but place as well, Agassi also offers, "It wasn't just that I loved Baghdad, but rather that I was in love with both Baghdad and her river, the Tigris."[23] Underscoring her connection to Baghdad and its resources, Agassi concretizes her rootedness. Agassi's words confirm that Jewish ties to Iraq exist at multiple registers. The affective dimensions of Jews' irrevocable place in Iraq are, in a sense, well-worn topics. These dimensions bear repeating though because while they are often used to discuss the cultural ties Jews possessed to Iraq by way of Arabness that transcended religious bounds, they also point to inherited logics such as racialization that are less discussed, but still operative after Jews left Iraq. Similar to how confrontation with Orientalist Ashkenazi norms and expectations have acted as an impetus to discuss Iraqi Jewish Arabness, case studies and narratives dealing with Iraqi Jewish women reveal how race in Israel was

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[21] Nuzhat Katzab, *Harbingers of Peace: With The Arab and The Druze Women in Israel,* (Or Yehuda, Israel: Ma'ariv Book Guild), 22.
[22] Tikva Agassi, *me-Baghad le-Yisrael* (From Baghdad to Israel), (Ramat Gan: Tikva Agassi, 2001), 2.
[23] Ibid.

constructed partially by way of positioning adequate education, good medical health, and financial security, as forms of social capital to obtain.

Narratives of Social Capital: The Economic Axis

Leaving Iraq was not an exclusively agentive, uncomplicated act for Iraqi Jewish women; their entry into Israel was correspondingly prescriptive. Due to confining dictates and expectations of their new nation state which, as Bashkin puts it, "…saw Iraqi women as desperately in need of education and discipline," Iraqi Jewish women had little say in their acclimation.[24] One of the frameworks that was called upon to express Ashkenazi supremacy was socio-economic in nature. Numerous sources reveal that Iraqi families faced depressed economic conditions upon immigration. They were forced to live in tents, with food ration cards, limited supplies, and stymied economic positions due to a lack of jobs. Iraqi women responded to these depressed circumstances by working the only low paying jobs they were allowed and rejecting their traditionally feminine roles in order to appear less "Eastern" and more "Western."[25]

A case in point is the transit camp of Ramat ha-Sharaon. In it, the ten-person family of Tikva Balash is said to have lived in a single tent, that did not sufficiently protect them from the rain, with bedding rationed to them per family member.[26] To make matters worse for the Balash family, the communal bathrooms and showers at Ramat ha-Sharaon as well as the only source of clean drinking water was very far away. In addition to finding their living situation cramped,

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[24] Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017), 55.

[25] Ibid., 56; Aziza Khazzoom, "Inadvertent Traditionalism: Orientalism and the Self-Presentations of Polish Jewish Women Immigrants to Israel in the 1950s," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 15, no. 1 (March 26, 2019): 26.

[26] Tikva Balash, "My Amazingly Beautiful Childhood," *Stories of the Ma'abara in Ramat ha-Sharaon* (Israel: Serfaty Publishers, 2007), 29.

dirty and inconvenient, the Balash family also quickly realized that since they had no money, many of the older family members would soon be forced to get jobs. While her sisters went to work in agriculture, her father became a construction worker despite the fact that in Iraq, her sisters did not work, and her father was not trained as a construction worker. Having left Iraq only allowed one suitcase each, they had few supplies of their own.[27] Tikva's circumstances, although exceptional, were not unique. Unrequited hope, dashed expectations, and banal realities were commonplace for Iraqi Jewish immigrants. As reinforcement would have it, what Tikva's story, and experiences like hers underscore about economic need among Iraqi Jewish women immigrants speaks to racialization in Israel as well.

Despite the disappointment of their living conditions, the Balash family tried to make the best of their circumstances. They bought furniture, cultivated a garden near their tent, and some members married. The Balash's were also aspirational in their intentions. Through his work in construction, Tikva's father helped build homes in the nearby affluent Tzahala neighborhood of Tel Aviv. Reverently, Tikva notes that the military leader Moshe Dayan lived in Tzahala and her father helped build his very home. The Tzahala neighborhood was not the only place outside of Ramat ha-Sharaon that Tikva spoke of longingly. Across from her ma'abara was a more cultivated agricultural village called ha-Kfar ha-Yarok. "They didn't want us, but it was the dream of every child to go there," Tikva wrote wistfully.[28] Kfar Yarok had a swimming pool and playground, but its gates were always locked to residents of ha-Sharaon. "So we behaved like children all over the world behave when they crave something," Tikva coyly suggests while alluding to how herself and her cohort would try to sneak onto Kfar Yarok's grounds.[29] Iraqi

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[27] Ibid., 29
[28] Ibid., 30
[29] Ibid

Jewish immigrants Brata Bason and Haviva Goma, who were also residents of the Ramat Szold Ma'abara, similarly discuss being barred from ha-Kfar ha-Yarok but uniquely finding a way in by acquiring jobs at the kibbutz.[30]

The objects of longing for Tikva, Brata, and Haviva were, not coincidently, affluently coded. For Iraqi Jews, being present in their new reality as migrants to Israel meant acknowledging their bleak circumstances, vis-à-vis those Jews with greater access to the new country's limited resources. The impetus to determine what the seemingly banal realities of migrant life signified beyond the literal arises from just how descriptive Iraqi immigrants were about these details. As the history of Jews in Iraq establishes though, relative affluence was not a condition Jewish Iraqis were always bereft of. At least while still residing in their country of origin, most Jews were contained in an ethos of communal and economic security and were exposed to fair and rigorous educational standards. This security fed into their racial conceptions insofar as the privilege of taken for granted security helped maintain the status quo of multiple racial avenues coexisting in Iraq. Furthermore, if it was particularly difficult for Iraqi Jews to immigrate to Israel because they were middle and upper class in Iraq, as previous scholarship has stated, is not it warranted to further detail the effects of this situation? Given the difference in socio-economic circumstances and thus their signification between Iraq and Israel, economic precarity and ameliorative aspirations are worth examining as potential facets of how racialization worked differently in the two countries.

It was not lost on Iraqi Jewish immigrants that the precarity and scarcity they encountered upon arrival were not ephemeral, but rather, enshrined. They dealt with food shortages, over-crowding, a lack of sanitation, and a lack of jobs, due both to Israel's own shortcomings and the

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[30] Ibid., 37

state's desire to control and settle Mizrahim.[31] Louise Cohen, for instance, speaks with certainty about how the forced impoverishment upon arrival was a tactic to marginalize future generations of Mizrahi youth. She writes, "My children—just like tens of thousands of Mizrahim—went through painstaking immigration camp traumas…institutionalized systemic and criminal discrimination that has lasted for three generations in Israel."[32] Attempting to process her present materiality, Cohen calls upon her Iraqi station of life to reason that her family be spared unjust treatment.

Specifically, one of the ways she insists that her family should not have faced such sustained impoverished is because of her husband's occupation. For instance, after spending two months in the absorption camp Sha'ar Aliyah, Cohen and her family were moved to the transit camp Makor Haim. Dissatisfied with the conditions of life at Makor Haim, Cohen's family unit was visited by a rabbi offering pastoral care. Cohen expresses her hurt and contempt by noting that her family didn't even have a chair for the rabbi to sit in and by foregrounding the rabbi's confusion and his question, "Why can't a doctor's family at least not have to worry about their living situation?"[33] Per this analysis, poverty is egregious for the Cohen family not just because it debases their humanity, but because it does not correlate with their perceived class. Cohen writes confidently in alignment with the rabbi's reasoning. To analyze that Cohen and immigrants like her looked for a way out of their current circumstances via a constructed and foregone class status that itself was colored by hierarchies, is not to ridicule. Rather, spelling out the cognitive dissonance possessed by immigrants like Cohen, who believed based on prior lived experiences

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[31] Aziza Khazzoom, *Shifting Ethnic Boundaries and Inequality in Israel: Or, How the Polish Peddler Became a German Intellectual*, Studies in Social Inequality (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008), 23, 24.

[32] Louise Cohen, *ha-Avak Higbia Uf* (The Dust Flies Up), (Tel Aviv: Kedma Books, 2011), 18.

[33] Ibid., 25.

that they were better than the realities Israel forced onto them is suggestive of the manipulative and unfair logic forced upon new immigrants in dire straits.

Because such manipulative and unfair logic was part of a racialization tactic that would always marginalize Iraqi Jewish women, it could not be harnessed by these same women. Attempts to do so were nearly always futile and disappointment ensued. The flaws in the calculus of longing for desirous affluent objects that were deemed such by the whitened Ashkenazi hegemony is encapsulated well in the narrative "A Cloth Schoolbag." In this story Sara Dagmi, who was born in Baghdad in 1940 and who immigrated to Israel with her family in 1951 relays the anecdote of her mother's attempts to cheer her up.[34] The impetus for this action was her family's difficult immigration. Sara notes that she had to sit on the floor of the plane when flying to Israel. When they first arrived in the country they were sprayed with DDT and she says that many people who were sprayed with this chemical later developed ringworm. Like all other Iraqi families the Dagmi's were forced into a single tent. This tent included her parents, sisters and grandfather. The family was served food they were very unaccustomed to and hand to stand in line for.

Following this difficult transition, Sara's mother believed that providing her daughter with a used leather bag for school would lift her spirits and better prepare her for life in a new country. In order to do so, she writes, they went to the market in Jaffa. She says that she was very happy to receive the cloth schoolbag because it made her feel like a student. Yet this attempt at appeasement was marked by tragedy. When her and her mother arrived home, they found the huts next to theirs burning. There was a baby inside one of them and the parents were hysterically crying outside as the hut burned. This was until a brave young man went in and saved the baby.

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[34] Sara Dagmi, "A Cloth Schoolbag," *Stories of the Ma'abara in Ramat ha-Sharaon,* (Israel: Serfaty Publishers, 2007), 64.

Despite the tragedy of the events just delineated, Sara belies the gravity of her experience by quickly switching topics to describe how the ma'abara would prepare for shabbat and how exciting this time was for everyone. Her stories are marked distinctly by the interplay between disappointment and attempts to ally. She relays how her family would have festive dinners and go sit outside of the cinema. "We didn't have money though, so of course we didn't go in," she concludes. Like many others, she writes about wanting to visit the aforementioned and relatively palatial Kfar Yarok, which as just right across the street from her ma'abara but concludes that people like her were not welcome. Another cheerful incident she offers is when her sister is married in the ma'abara. Yet, she also writes of a dispiriting story where her mom went to the market once, carrying not only the family saving but all of the money her sister recently earned from her job, and then lost the purse.

Reminiscing about Iraq was a common assuaging technique. They were not merely reminiscing though; they were also recalling their former racially non-minoritized status. For instance, Sara spoke of her former life in Iraq fondly. The family used to prepare large feasts and decorations days in the advance of holidays, she writes. She also writes of Zionist emissaries going to Baghdad's main synagogue to encourage people to immigrate to Israel. Another woman, Tipcha, who immigrated to Israel in 1949 at age 28 with her husband and three children insists that they were happy to leave, but foregrounds the fact that, "Like everyone else, we faced economic difficulties [in Israel]."[35] This was in contrast to their life in Iraq where they lived in a comfortable, multi-storied house. "We arrived to the ma'abara on a Sunday," she writes, "The sites around us were harsh and unfamiliar and I wanted to go back to Iraq."[36] The family was issued a single tent

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[35] Tipcha Shimon Zeda, "Eybrow Plucking for Three Cents," *Stories of the Ma'abara in Ramat ha-Sharaon,* (Israel: Serfaty Publishers, 2007), 69.
[36] Ibid

to live in and Tipcha wondered how living in such cramped quarters was even possible. Tipcha's problems multiplied further when, "One winter night there was a storm," she writes, "…all of the tents collapsed, and they had to build new huts for us."[37] She characterizes it as unbearably hot during the summer and always inconvenient because the bathrooms were located at a distance. Tipcha had four more children while living in the transit camp which she insists increased the economic pressure her family was under. All in all, Iraqi women did not only know that they were economically marginalized in Israel through comparisons to Ashkenazim, but also through comparisons to their former life in Iraq. By recalling the safety of their Iraqi past they were simultaneously lamenting the loss of their formerly racially safe status. Their progeny, as extensions of their lineage and potentially their newly supplanted racial status, figured prominently in their worries. It is to the education of this progeny, as well as the youngest Iraqi Jewish women immigrants that we will now turn.

Narratives of Social Capital: The Medical Axis

Yet another way Iraqi women's narratives express cognizance that Israeli racial logics were different than Iraq is through a medical lens. From the beginning of their time in Israel and the transit camps, Iraqi women had the expansiveness of their lives curtailed by controlling and austerity minded pre-state "veterans" who had built Israel's institutions and were thus able to weaponize them.[38] In addition to coming up against the corruption of power, Iraqi women, along with many new immigrants of the 1950s, faced austerity measures whose goal, "…was to enable

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Aziza Khazzoom, "Inadvertent Traditionalism: Orientalism and the Self-Presentations of Polish Jewish Women Immigrants to Israel in the 1950s," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 15, no. 1 (March 26, 2019): 29.

the state to absorb the immigrants—refugees from Europe and the Islamic world, most of whom arrived with few possessions and who, following their arrival, endured substandard nourishment, housing, and health services."[39] Rendered entirely dependent on the state as they arrived with little to no wealth while they simultaneously had any educational or employment qualifications from Iraq nullified, Iraqi women set out to navigate an immigration and early state system that wanted to limit them at every turn. The transit camps were constructed as a response to overcrowding in reception camps (former British army bases) and moshavim (small agricultural settlement).[40] As Deborah HaKohen notes, Iraqis, arriving in the 1950s, couldn't escape the transit camps due in part to the haphazard way they left Iraq which left them entirely dependent on Israel's benevolence.[41]

As discussed in Chapter Two, by the late nineteenth century, European Jews began trafficking in the realms of race science. In order to heal the degenerating Jewish body via whiteness, medicalization entered the picture. According to the analysis of Nadav Davidovitch and Avital Margalit, this medical turn took place because, "In many instances, racial minorities were preoccupied with race medicine in order to promote the health of their own

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[39] Orit. Rozin and Haim. Watzman, *The Rise of the Individual in 1950s Israel: A Challenge to Collectivism*, The Schusterman Series in Israel Studies (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 3.

[40] Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, trans. Haim Watzman, The S. Mark Taper Foundation Imprint in Jewish Studies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 297; 142 rozin

[41] Devorah Hakohen, *Olim bi-Searah: ha-Aliyah ha-Gedolah u-Kelitatah be-Yisrael, 1948-1953* (Immigrants in a Storm: The Great Aliyah and Its Absorption in Israel), (Jerusalem, Israel: Yad Ben Tzvi, 1994), 298.

communities."[42] This obsession with health was meant to not only assist Jews biologically but nationalistically too.

One such incident where a "health crisis" was dealt with towards racist ends is the Ringworm Affair. According to Davidovitch and Margalit, in pre-state Israel, scalp-based ringworm was deemed a public health crisis affecting primarily Eastern European Jews who were labelled as possessing particularly degenerating Jewish bodies by their Western European counterparts. Treating the ringworm supposedly plaguing the Eastern European immigrants to pre-state Israel was meant to reform. However, in the 1950s, as many more Jews from Middle Eastern countries immigrated to Israel than the state could handle, they were then deemed the problematic population in need of redemption. As Middle Eastern Jews became constructed as the primary hosts of ringworm, they suffered somatically through treatment.[43] Middle Eastern Jews then became the population to receive the highest treatments for ringworm, primarily at the hands of Ashkenazi scientists and doctors.

The Ringworm Affair, itself and its legacy, is an example of how medicine was weaponized towards racist ends. While the unethical and racist actions undertaken by the state under the guise of public health were only officially recognized in 1994 with the establishment of the "National Center for Compensation for Victims of Ringworm," and victims' compensation only arrived in 2009, they took place much earlier, from 1948-1960.[44] It is estimated that anywhere from 20,000 to 200,000 new migrants to Israel were exposed to dangerous radiation as

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[42] Nadav Davidovitch and Avital Margalit, "Public Health, Racial Tensions, and Body Politic: Mass Ringworm Irradiation in Israel, 1949–1960," *The Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* 36, no. 3 (August 1, 2008): 522.
[43] Ibid., 523.
[44] Ministry of Health, "National Center for Compensation for Victims of Ringworm," (Tel Hashomer, Israel), https://www.gov.il/he/Departments/Units/tinea_capitis_compensation_unit.

treatment for their supposed condition. Treatment for ringworm of the head often began at the

first site all new immigrants had to pass through, the absorption camp and processing center

Sha'ar Aliyah, which made children extremely vulnerable.[45]

"Ringworm of the scalp, or tinea capitis, is a fungal infection that primarily affects

children," and its stigmatization along with its portrayal as a public health issue and insistence on

its eradication was a facet of Israel's dedication to not just a physically healthy populace, but to

projecting a façade of a healthy and thus modern state.[46] Furthermore, public health obsessions

as vehicles for racism in early state Israel were not just limited to the Ringworm affair.

Eradication of the eye disease trachoma which was said to be a "blinding scourge of the Orient,"

also preoccupied Israeli doctors, allowing for the racial animus Israeli veterans had for Mizrahim

to be channeled through concerns about public safety and Israel's acceptance by Western

nations.[47] Such ailments were understood to be rampant and the product of poor hygiene.

Positioned as irrevocably different from Israel's inception, Mizrahim were then more easily

portrayed as the perfect hosts upon which such a calamity would fall. Enunciated vividly by

Inbal Blau, Mizrahim were easily victimized in the Ringworm Affair as the "old Ashkenazi

community" perceived them as lowly, unhygienic, and backward.[48] Such assessments formed a

constellation of prejudices that contributed to the phenomenon of disgust Rozin writes about

wherein Ashkenazi "old-timers" were revolted by immigrants from the Middle East and North

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[45] Rhona D. Seidelman, S. Ilan Troen, and Shifra Shvarts, "'Healing' the Bodies and Souls of Immigrant Children: The Ringworm and Trachoma Institute, Sha'ar Ha-Aliyah, 1952–1960," *Journal of Israeli History* 29, no. 2 (September 2010): 192.
[46] Ibid., 194.
[47] Anat Mooreville, "Oculists in the Orient: A History of Trachoma, Zionism, and Global Health, 1882-1973" (Ph.D., United States -- California, University of California, Los Angeles, 2015), 6.
[48] Inbal Blau, "Lost Identity: Between Law and Society in the Group of Sufferers from Ringworm Treatment," (Tel Aviv University Law Review, 2013), 60.

Africa.[49] Disgust has a corollary in racism as both draw on purported, offensive, and distinct intrinsic that in reality must be taught to be seen as meaningfully and disparagingly different.

The Ringworm Affair was so formative, that Iraqi Jew Louise Cohen, who calls it The Yemenite, Mizrahi and Balkan Children Affair, devotes a chapter to it. In her mind's eye, the Affair was explicitly racialized.[50] She insists that around 100,000 mostly North African and some Iraqi individuals between the ages of 2 and 17 were targeted by doctors who believed in Ashkenazi supremacy. While Cohen's own children were not immediately touched by the affair, her perspective as a native historian of a racist phenomenon is indispensable.

Cohen discusses how Mizrahi children were exposed to gratuitous radiation and had their hair ripped out. She thinks this happened to children who did not even have Ringworm. She names some of the long-lasting effects as leukemia, mental health issues, epilepsy, and early death. Cohen's dedication to detailing the Affair reveals its impact. It is remembered as something that enshrined racial difference by separating healthy and unhealthy bodies and extended this difference through long lasting side effects.

Made anxious by the discrimination she experienced and witnessed in the transit camps Cohen is also a native historian of another early state act of public health racism: the Yemenite Babies Affair. She writes that when her daughter fell ill with a fever in the ma'abara, the family did not want to take her to the hospital because stories of Yemeni children being take from their parents in hospitals loomed over them.[51] Although Cohen's calculus in this instance correlational her daughter's even casual link to the Affair opens up greater analysis. Moreover, Cohen's fears

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[49] Orit Rozin, *The Rise of the Individual in 1950s Israel: A Challenge to Collectivism*, trans. Haim Watzman, The Schusterman Series in Israel Studies (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 140.
[50] Louise Cohen, *ha-Avak Higbia Uf* (The Dust Flies Up), (Tel Aviv: Kedma Books, 2011), 23.
[51] Ibid., 24.

about her children's safety were not unparalleled. Esperance Cohen who was living in ma'abara

Saqiya with her husband and two sons after leaving Baghdad at the age of 18 also had

premonitions about her children's safety. One night when her children were crying unrelentingly

and she had nothing to feed them she was approached by two women who offered to relieve her

by taking her children presumably to go be fed. While the women promised to return her sons,

Cohen discloses that something within her broke and she was inspired as a mother to yell at these

women and tell them they could not take her kids.[52] The similar fears of Louise and Esperance

Cohen shine a light on how the medical field is implicated in the racializing of Mizrahim like

Iraqi Jews in Israel and how these Jews responded to such an occurrence. According to non-

Israeli state sponsored oral interviews conducted by the NGO AMRAM, mostly in the 1950s

while Mizrahi Jews were still in transit camps, hundreds of infants were taken from their families

never to return. Most of them (roughly two-thirds) were Yemeni while some were from other

Arab countries, and fewer were from the Balkans.[53]

Shoshana Madmoni-Gerber describes the Yemenite Babies Affair as taking place during

the mass immigrations of the late 1940s and early 1950s when thousands of Yemeni and other

non-European babies were taken either from hospitals where their parents were told to bring

them even if they were well or forcefully from transit camps and given to Israeli state institutions

and defines it as an example of "intra-Jewish racism in Israel."[54] Officials were sometimes so

emboldened, they abducted children with little explanation. For instance, when Simcha Moshe

gave birth to her first son in late 1952 after living in a transit camp since her arrival in Iraq in

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[52] Ibid., 37.

[53] Amram, "The Affair" https://www.edut-amram.org/en/the-kidnappings/.

[54] Shoshana Madmoni-Gerber, *Israeli Media and the Framing of Internal Conflict: The Yemenite Babies Affair* (Springer, 2009), xiii, 2.

1950, she only spent several days with him before she was cavalierly informed that her son had died after a nurse dropped him while he was being bathed. Simcha and her husband Nachum were never shown a body or death certificate.[55]

Most often, children were absconded by medical officials and sometimes social workers under the pretext of receiving greater care than could be accessed in the camps. Soon after this initial separation, parents were told their children had died. In fact, as many first-hand accounts and released state documents show, the children remained alive but relocated to Ashkenazi families in Israel and the U.S. via adoption. The story of Lulu and Yizhak Hadad's newborn Shoshana aligns with this narrative. In 1951, after the family had immigrated from Iraq in 1950, due to the destitute nature of transit camp life, specifically the inadequate shelter provided via tents, Shoshana had become feverish as was taken to a hospital where doctors told Lulu to leave her for several days to recover. Upon returning, the family was told Shoshana had passed, but they were never shown a body or death certificates. The deceit of the abducting doctors and nurses was aided not only by their ability to lie to a family that barely spoke Hebrew, but also by Israel's geography that put the family at a great distance from the hospital due to their provincial ma'abara.[56] Like many Mizrahi families, the Hadad's would never have their loss or confusion assuaged as their story was continuously rejected by, "doctors, nurses, social workers, government officials, and people with connections in the government."[57]

Madmoni-Gerber's research is significant for characterizing the incident explicitly as racist and for foregrounding the Israeli media's investment in denying its existence in the first place.

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[55] Amram, "Simcha and Nahum Moshe," https://www.edut-amram.org/en/testimonies/simcha-moshe/.

[56] Amram, "Lulu and Yizhak Hadad," https://www.edut-amram.org/en/testimonies/lulu-izhak-hadad/.

[57] Ibid.

Madmoni-Gerber writes that one of the ways Israeli media has historically attempted to discredit the existence of the Affair is by disavowing protest work encouraged by activists such as Rabbi Uzi Meshulam, whose awareness work about the abduction of Mizrahi children was denounced was denounced even after his death in 2013.[58] This death inspired the creation of AMRAM and their drive to collect stories of abducted children and publicize them widely, which Israeli media still objects to.[59]

AMRAM is explicit in connecting the Yemenite, Mizrahi, and Balkan Children's Affair to others around the world just like it. Canada, Australia, and Switzerland are listed as other places where children "…were taken out of families perceived as "backward," and given [up for] adoption…as part of a policy of "assimilation" designed to reeducate those groups and eliminate their spiritual and cultural existence."[60] Not mincing words, AMRAM labels such instances as "crimes of racism and patronizing," wherein families located at the top of a nation's hierarchy (in Israel's case, Ashkenazim who fomented and shaped political Zionism and the state of Israel for their own ends along with their ilk) are deemed more deserving of raising children than families labeled inferior. In Israel, these latter families were primarily Mizrahi due to the constructed inferiority of their Arab culture and their forced poverty.

For instance, this constructed inferiority is at the heart of the disappearance of Kaduri and Hatun Reuven's newborn Sasson in 1952. Nearly three months after the Iraqi born couple had given birth to Sasson in Israel he developed a stomach bug and authorities encouraged the Reuven's to leave him at a local hospital. While Hatun had continued going to the hospital to

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[58] Shoshana Madmoni-Gerber, *Israeli Media and the Framing of Internal Conflict: The Yemenite Babies Affair* (Springer, 2009), xi.
[59] Amram, "About Us," https://www.edut-amram.org/en/about/.
[60] Ibid.

feed Sasson she asked if he was well enough to be taken home after several days because it seemed as if his condition had improved. When she asked this, doctors questioned her, "They asked her how many children she had at home. After saying that she had six children they told her that Sasson did not survive his "disease." She returned home in tears and mourning the son she thought has passed away."[61] The large and unruly families Mizrahim were supposedly wont to have was a pejorative characteristic weaponized against them. Using racism to construct nationhood, this was Israel's particular iteration of the racist and patronizing crime of separating children from parents per constructed notions of worthiness.

The racism that animated the individuals responsible for separating Iraqi families was not lost on the family members who have told the stories of their missing loved ones. For instance, when the recounting the 1955 abduction of Esther Binyamin, her sister said that their mother Leah was always certain that Binyamin was abducted, perhaps at least partially because of her unique blue eyes that the hospital officials who Binyamin was last seen with had remarked upon. Contextualizing her coda with the fact that she has now lived outside of Israel for many years, the sister ends her account with, "After I got to know the Europeans, I realized how easy it is. For money many of them do not care about anything else."[62] In this single summation, the sister distills the origins, motives, and sustenance of the Yemenite, Mizrahi and Balkan Children Affair. One of the intended effects of this is sustained aftershocks. As iterated by the grandchildren of Tchakhla Eintchi, in 1952 after Eintchi gave birth to a girl she died just a few days later. When Eintchi's sister and daughter went to the hospital to retrieve the newborn girl, they were told she was dead and were not shown any body or a grave. As Eintchi's daughter

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[61] Amram, "Kaduri and Hatun Reuven," https://www.edut-amram.org/en/testimonies/reuven/.
[62] Amram, "Shlomo and Leah Binyamin," https://www.edut-amram.org/en/testimonies/shlomo-lea-binyamin/.

mourned both her mother and sister, she became traumatized by their deaths, passing this trauma one to her own daughters who in their testimony said, "In fact, all us grandchildren grew up in the shadow of this story, including the loss, frustration, exploitation, and mistrust of the establishment. And this story is significant for all of them."[63] The analysis of the daughters and granddaughters lays bare one of the ways Israeli racialization was made systemic. In this way, racialization was perpetuated familially with the racialization of some members acting as a conduit for others via narration. Growing up "in the shadow" of a story of racial supremacy where, as a minoritized race, the family was exploited by "the establishment" racially subordinated the family generationally.

Besides somatic instances like the Ringworm Affair, medical expressions of racial imaginaries also took on psychological iterations. In 1956, Israeli anthropologist Phyllis Palgi compiled the work "Patterns of Withdrawal from the Female Role: Implications of the Cultural Background Seen in Certain Iraqi Women," a kind of descriptive coda to the transformation through which Iraqi women had gone since the community's mass migration in 1951. The name of the slim medical report is suggestive of its derisive cadence. It was written in order to definitively pathologize Iraqi women who it deemed were not fulfilling their prescribed roles in society after having immigrated to Israel. Palgi's report might read as unremarkable to those who are familiar with Iraqi Jewish immigration to Israel from an anything but race standpoint. That hegemonic Ashkeanzi state actors attempted to characterize most Mizrahim with an eye toward discrimination is well accounted for. What makes the report stand out despite all antecedent analysis is the scientific racism that imbues it.

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[63] Amram, "Tchakhla and Eliahu Eintchi," https://www.edut-amram.org/en/testimonies/sabiha-george-zilof/.

"Patterns of Withdrawal from the Female Role: Implications of the Cultural Background Seen in Certain Iraqi Women," reveals what state authorities and extensions of them (medical professionals in this case) wanted to enshrine about Iraqi Jewish women. The report mentions that certain women were referred to this particular clinic for depression and that after examination of these women, a further study with more Iraqi women was commissioned. Doctors came to their conclusions in Palgi's report based on tests, but it is assumed that readers of the report know what these tests are because they are mostly only mentioned by name and not delineated, rationalized, or defined. The tests are listed as: personality evaluation based on Rorschach, TAT, Wechsler-Bellevue Adult Intelligence Scale (Partial) and Draw a Person.

The report states that the women's depression was sparked due to "…[their] life situation."[64] While not explicitly stated as the defining impetus, the report, it would seem, tries to give the impression that one of the primary instigators for the study was economic in nature. Readers get this impression based on the continued refrain that these women had a fraught relationship with the waged work and stagnant economic mobility—circumstances that were thrust upon them given the demands of immigration. Furthermore, their disappointment was not only contained to themselves. The women are also discussed as being disappointed in their fathers, having lowered expectations vis-à-vis finding a partner, and being subject to increased family strife in general.

Even when a woman has an issue with her husband it is seen as due to her hatred for her job. Even when the text describes female students being unhappy, it relates this discontent back to economic expectations and anxieties. An example of this can be found with, "Most of our

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[64] Phyllis Palgi, *Patterns of Withdrawal From the Female Role,* (Israel: Division of Health Ministry, 1956), 1.

cases are suffering from a considerable lowering of their economic status," which is then immediately followed by mention made of the women's resistance to work, distain for vocational work, and judgement of their co-workers. Indeed, of these Iraqi women the report says, "They found it difficult to get along with the other employees whom they regarded as common, cheap, and lightminded."[65] It would seem that Iraqi women came to these assumptions based on the fact they deemed these women differently motivated and ambitious. Read with Bashkin's analysis of Iraqi Jews immigrating with "memories of different times and places" in mind, judgements of this nature hark back to Iraqi Jewish women's status as highly productive individuals from economically sound and secure families in Iraq.

The effects on the lives of these women were numerous. These circumstances made them suffer from "…weeping spells of self-pity and somatic complaints," as well as thoughts of suicide.[66] Little mention is made concerning what exactly it could have been about how difficult the move was that might have prompted melancholy in the women. It says the social and economic hardships of moving but doesn't define this. As previously alluded to sudden loss of a former not completely oppressed racial status was informative. Palgi's report gives few details about exactly how depressing their new circumstances were. This was perhaps done to obfuscate and even blame these women for their own behavior, which was classified as failing. Bashkin corroborates this hypothesis generally, writing, "…the nurses and female social workers sent to the camps did not think that the blame for the hunger, disorder, and malaise in the transit camps lay with the state, but rather with Iraqi mothers because of their primitive background."[67] In

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[65] Ibid., 6.
[66] Ibid., 2.
[67] Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), 55.

keeping with the thrust of this chapter, it is crucial to underscore that the logic encouraging

apparatuses of the state cite Iraqi women's "primitive background," were not just cultural, but

race based in nature. This is has begun to be shown with the hitherto delineation of how

medicine and scientific racism were taken up and how this was done in consort with economic

reference. That these social capital axes are interlocking and in fact impossible to pull apart is

further suggestive of their racial tenor. It is to the educational axis that we will now turn.

Narratives of Social Capital: The Education Axis

      Educational opportunities were attainable and often encouraged for Jewish women in

Iraq. Khazzoom contextualizes their existence by noting, "Among Iraqi Jews, for example, the

period between the First and Second World Wars saw the establishment of women's educational

institutions in the name of making the community more European."[68] Iraqi circumstances led

Iraqi Jewish women to expect a university education or at least vocational education training in

Israel. Examining their rates of satisfaction years later, Khazzoom learned that Iraqi Jewish

women were quite perturbed that Israel did not guarantee them the educational advancements for

which they were fit.[69] In terms of how impediments to education affected Iraqi women

structurally, often times, only women with incredibly developed language skills or a background

in teaching saw their Iraqi educations have purchase in Israel, allowing them to find work in the

transit camp for instance.[70]

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[68] Aziza Khazzoom, "Inadvertent Traditionalism: Orientalism and the Self-Presentations of Polish Jewish Women Immigrants to Israel in the 1950s," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 15, no. 1 (March 26, 2019): 27.

[69] Aziza Khazzoom, "The Kibbutz in Immigration Narratives of Bourgeois Iraqi and Polish Jews Who Immigrated to Israel in the 1950s," *Israel Studies* 19, no. 2 (January 1, 2014): 79.

[70] Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), 57.

Iraqi women's disappointment with Israeli education was not just a personal grievance.

Education was avowed, beginning in pre-state Israel, for its perceived ability to transform Jews.

The logic of this transformation dictated, sometimes simultaneously, that Jews needed to

modernize and Westernize in order to be rid of their degeneration, prove their citizenship

capabilities, and earn acceptance as part of a Westernized nation. Due to the premium the

burgeoning state of Israel had placed on educational advancements, becoming an educated

citizen was an expectation that was created and set but that Iraqi women were not given the

ability to fulfil. It has been asserted that many veteran or "old-timer" Israelis, those European

Jews that moved to Palestine before 1948 and were especially represented in agricultural sectors,

were not especially educated themselves by their home countries.[71] Yet, pre- and early state

Israeli officials were preoccupied with education as a conduit for Jewish improvement and

perfection.

One of the ways this predilection for improvement and perfection manifested in

education was by way of the French Alliance Israélite Universelle. The Alliance, "was a French

Jewish philanthropic educational network founded in 1860 to help Jews of the Middle East and

North Africa, as well as European Ottoman lands, 'regenerate.'"[72] The Alliance took roots in

Ottoman Palestine, influencing education guided by the primacy of French culture thereafter.[73]

Predicated on the belief that Jews were backward and stagnant and needed to be ushered into

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[71] Etan Bloom, *Arthur Ruppin and the Production of Pre-Israeli Culture*, vol. v. 31, Studies in Jewish History and Culture; (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 184.

[72] Alma Rachel Heckman, "Nuancing the Narrative: Teaching the Jewish Modern Middle East," in *Understanding and Teaching the Modern Middle East*, ed. Omnia El Shakry (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2020), 288.

[73] Arieh Bruce Saposnik, *Becoming Hebrew: The Creation of a Jewish National Culture in Ottoman Palestine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 26.

modernity, the Alliance's epistemology of regenerations is reminiscent of racist discourse that

parochializes people in order to argue for their necessary improvement. While pre- and early

state Zionists owed at least some of their institutions' funding to the Alliance they were not

always pleased that its regenerating message was French focused.[74] Its demand for improvement

however, was not understood as much of a problem as Zionists themselves encouraged Hebrew

language education as necessary for a modern Israeli citizen and labeled any lack of pure

commitment to Hebrew, lazy.[75]

Yet, commitments to "regeneration," "perfectionism," and "improvement were no more

racially coded manifested no better than from education discourses influenced by German race

scientists. As Etan Bloom discusses in *Arthur Ruppin and the Production of Pre-Israeli Culture*,

one of Israel's architects of education, the Polish born Ruppin, who established the Palestine

Office in Jaffa in 1908 and was initially motivated by purchasing land in Palestine, was an

enthusiast of education being the method by which Jews would modernize themselves and gain

Western acceptance. His enthusiasm is crucial because, "According to historians of education, it

was actually Ruppin who established the pre-state of Israel's system of education."[76] A German

trained sociologist, Ruppin not only wanted to belong to Germany as a Jew, he wanted Jews to

belong to European culture more broadly. What was at stake for Ruppin and those of his German

Zionist ilk was the "human dignity" that was meant to come by way of education in Hebrew,

nationalism, and physical fitness.[77]

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[74] Ibid., 68.

[75] Liora Halperin, *Babel in Zion: Jews, Nationalism, and Language Diversity in Palestine, 1920-1948* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 27.

[76] Etan Bloom, *Arthur Ruppin and the Production of Pre-Israeli Culture*, vol. v. 31, Studies in Jewish History and Culture; (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 4.

[77] Ibid., 126.

While much of the hitherto historical information about Israeli education referenced the pre-stare period, what it captures is the educational ethos that extended into Israel's early state period and thus into the transit camp as well. What was at stake in Iraqis not having access to school or only to overcrowded, poorly run schools in transit camps was that it diminished their chances of obtaining the aforementioned human dignity.[78] Furthermore, Iraqis in transit camps were not ignorant of the racism that underpinned government officials' treatment of them with respect to education. Bashkin elucidates just how cognizant Iraqis were of racism when she writes, "In 1954, twenty-four couples arranged a strike in a transit camp because they did not want to send their children to religious schools. Moreover, they contended that their children were not accepted to high school because of sectarian and racial discrimination."[79] Despite governmental efforts to deceive and placate Iraqi Jews, their cognizance of their place and educational schemes as well as the reasons for this was always quite developed.

The aforementioned Palgi report heavily relies on appeals to education in order to pathologize Iraqi Jewish women. The report insists, "The educational standards and approach to learning are quite different in Israel [than in Iraq]. This, added to the language difficulty, made it hard for the Iraqi woman to keep up with the other students."[80] Palgi's work goes to great lengths to establish its own version of what Jewish education looked like in Iraq, later using this construct to blame Iraqi Jews for their supposed lack of preparedness for schooling in Israel. Essentially, the report is an example of gaslighting i.e., a tactic employed by the Israeli establishment wherein Iraqi Jews were erroneously made to believe their Iraqi education was

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[78] Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017), 74.
[79] Ibid., 153.
[80] Phyllis Palgi, *Patterns of Withdrawal From the Female Role* (Israel: Division of Health Ministry, 1956), 1.

inadequate for their new surroundings but were often withheld the possibility of attainting

"proper" education in their new home. The intention of gaslighting was to foment self-doubt,

demoralize and increase paranoia. This is known because Iraqi women's own accounts reveal

just how committed to education they actually were and the extent to which Mizrahi

marginalization in education was rooted in the falsified notion of their race's ill-fit.

The gulf between Israel's stated commitment to education for Mizrahim and the

resources actually provided for it is locatable via a range of sources. The Joint Distribution

Committee's 1958 "The Other Side of the Coin…A Report to American Jewry," enumerated and

critiqued the failures of Israel's transit camps mainly for Jews of Muslim lands and Eastern

Europe. It surmised, "'Our children are our future,' says Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, and the

future couldn't be in brighter hands. But many of these kids of Israel desperately need

educational, vocational, and other facilities."[81] Structurally however, the Israeli government

failed to move beyond rhetoric. For instance, education that provided some immigrants with the

hope of genuinely improving their station in life was often out of reach monetarily. While

women like Esperance Cohen might have had high hopes for their children's education,

delivering on their dreams revealed their family's great precarity.

In the first place, quality primary school education was hard to come by for transit camp

children like her own. Cohen writes that she sent her children to a primary school that was a

magnet for transit camp children.[82] She seems displeased with the fact that there was only one

teacher for many students and particularly upset when this teacher flippantly mocks her son's

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[81] The United Jewish Appeal to Israel, Europe and Moslem Lands, "The Other Side of the Coin…A Report to American Jewry," (United Jewish Appeal Study Mission, October 29-November 9, 1958), 18.
[82] Esperance Cohen, *From the Shores of Tigris to the Banks of the Yakron*, (Jerusalem, Israel: Association for Jewish Academics from Iraq, 2006), 42.

desire to one day be a doctor. Education deficiencies for Mizrahim and transit camp children affected the Cohen family even as they aged and moved on from the camp. When Cohen's husband decided their son attending medical school was in fact the ticket to the family's success, Esperance was worried about application fees considering that the family had living expenses and an apartment mortgage. After being rejected from several universities, Esperance's son was finally accepted the to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.[83] Most educational decisions, paths, and outcomes for Iraqi women and their families were similarly fraught. In the end, despite enunciations from the likes of Ben-Gurion, Israel would never truly invest in its Iraqi and more broadly Mizrahi children, because they were more invested in systematically marginalizing them.

According to the Palgi report, women in Iraq had access to education, but it never paid dividends. The report notes that the French Alliance schools made its way into Iraq in the nineteenth century, but then attempts to nullify this potentially progressive move by insisting, "They brought, however, little change in the life of the Jews of Baghdad."[84] Palgi's report hedges that changes might have started to come to the Jewish community of Iraq with the 1921 British Mandate, but at the same time concludes, "Each year more and more girls attended school. As the idea of formal education was in no way associated with a fundamental change in the philosophy of life and values in the minds of the older generation, they did not fear this innovation."[85] If the Palgi report is to be believed, Iraqi education was simultaneously an innovation for the Jewish community and completely ineffective, particularly for women. This

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[83] Ibid., 29.
[84] Phyllis Palgi, *Patterns of Withdrawal From the Female Role* (Israel: Division of Health Ministry, 1956), 3.
[85] Ibid., 4.

summation is indicative of the trap the report consistently places Iraqi Jewish women in. Spelling out the supposed pervasiveness of this trap, the report offers, "The women in the group tested were well-educated, above average in intelligence and maintained high intellectual goals…[Yet], the women that were students generally found themselves inadequate and unhappy in the role. This made them critical of Israel schools, people and customs."[86] In this way, the report attempts to build the argument that no matter one's best intentions "ineffective" education in Iraq set Iraqi women up for failure in Israel as well.

The failure trap offered by the Palgi report is not however fully supported by women's lived experiences. According to Katzab's assessment, Iraqi Jewish students were not just naively determined. When describing her time at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem she details how much schooling she undertook each day and how committed she was to her lessons. In so doing, she also reveals that she was not an aberration among Iraqi Jews writing, "Even though we were a big group of students who had left Iraq, we were close. All of us had left Iraq in 1950-1951, and there were some of us that went on to live in ma'abarot with large families, who faced economic and societal distress that was very difficult."[87] In Katzab's opinion, Iraqi Jews were extensively educated in Iraq and showcased a propensity for greater education. She thus could not understand why Israel did not see their value and forced them into challenging social and economic situations.[88] Katzab's confusion shows that she had absorbed Israel's racial logics i.e., she came to attach her and other Iraqi Jews value as proportional to how educated they were.

Furthermore, Katzab's continued ruminations on her and her Iraqi cohort's education

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[86] Ibid., 1.
[87] Nuzhat Katzab, *Harbingers of Peace: With The Arab and The Druze Women in Israel,* (Or Yehuda, Israel: Ma'ariv Book Guild), 53.
[88] Ibid., 54.

reveal a particular conundrum they faced vis-à-vis education. According to Katzab, her family as well as all of the families of the other Iraqi Jews at Hebrew University struggled immensely economically. Katzab was her family's only hope in terms of study, since all of her older siblings had to leave school preemptively and work to earn money for the family. As the youngest, Katzab was given the opportunity to pursue education. Although she wanted to study medicine, she had reservations about her Hebrew.[89] She spent a lot of time wondering if she should study Middle Eastern Studies because although the subject is important to her, she worries the subject does not provide stable jobs.[90] Many of Katzab's friends were similarly burdened with needing to help their families, not possessing all of the skills Israel constructed as necessary for study, and unsure about their precise educational paths. In order to racially minoritize Iraqi Jews, Israel mythologized education. The state made educational attainment a laurel of human value as well as an illusory key to escape the ma'abara and obtain economic security.

Cohen, just as she was cognizant of the sinister intentions of Israel's constructed Ringworm Affair knows that the state used education to racially minoritize Iraqi Jews like herself. She states that beginning as early as the 1940s, Israel's Ashkenazi establishment discussed how to track Mizrahi Jews into professional schools rather than allowing them to freely obtain all higher education.[91] She believes that Israel's education policies prompted Iraqis to go from one of the most educated immigrant groups to the least.[92] Finally, by noting that when Israeli education policy dictated schools not be built near the development towns Iraqi Jews were moved to after the ma'abarot, Iraqis fate as "improperly" educated was sealed.[93] The systemic

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[89] Ibid., 55.
[90] Ibid., 56.
[91] Louise Cohen, *The Dust Flies Up,* (Tel Aviv: Kedma Books, 2011), 113.
[92] Ibid., 111.
[93] Ibid., 117.

nature of Iraqi Jewish struggle with education further proves how the axis was used racially. Given just how interlocking the medical, socio-economic, and educational axes of racialization can be seen to be, "anything but race" explanations for the challenges Iraqi women faced while immigrating to Israel prove are shown as all the more insufficient.

Conclusion

This chapter showed how race was constructed for Iraqi Jewish migrant women in Israeli transit camps based on their relationship with three kinds of social capital: socio-economic, medical, and educational. I took a non-teleologic vantage point in order to reveal that the racialization that occurred for Iraqi women in Israeli transit camps was so offending because they had not forgotten the racialization they experienced in Iraq. In Israel, the racialization for Iraqi women was more finite, confined, and pejorative, whereas possibilities for racial belonging in Iraq were more multiple. The multiplicity of racializations for Iraqi Jews in their homeland facilitated a belonging that was not possible in Israel.

Race, not just ethnic, claims were explicitly employed to otherize Iraqi Jewish women. A race analysis, as opposed to one that is just ethnic, foregrounds the reality that belonging was constructed. Iraqi Jews were not inherently and irredeemably excludable, they had to be made so. Space is then opened to explore the qualities of the Ashkenazi-Mizrahi citizenship divide as well as how entrenched it was. A race analysis also better speaks to what took place in early state Israel where Ashkenazim attempted to racialize themselves as white by racially otherizing Mizrahim as non-white.

Exposing the socio-economic, medical, and educational underpinnings of how race worked in early state Israel points to the gravity of the situation. Iraqi women were certainly

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second-class citizens in early state Israel, but as each of these axes operated simultaneously to marginalize Iraqi women, their constellation speaks to the depth at which belonging was withheld. In terms of economic status, Iraqi women were not just rendered impoverished upon arrival, they had this poverty further entrenched. Lack became a part of their psyche as they experienced the harsh reality of living without necessities that they could take for granted in Iraq and with little chance of upward mobility. Fear and anxiety was instilled in Iraqi women as they came to terms with the reality that they and their families could be confronted with life changing medical emergencies at any moment. Whether it be a mental health epidemic, exposure to unnecessary medical treatments that would traumatize generations, or attempted eradication of their race through child abduction, Iraqi women not only learn to continuously brace themselves for an array of medical emergencies but also that doctors could not be trusted. Finally, Iraqi women felt the hopelessness of their situation because, being prevented from attaining equal education, learning was withheld as a potential escape route.

That the transit camp was the crucible for such racism exposes how foundational race is to the fabric of belonging in early state Israel and belong. As an immigration site that was inescapable, the fact that the transit camp engendered separation when it was supposed to acclimate is particularly pernicious. To further demonstrate the failure of Israel's early state institutions and specifically to reveal their racism, the final chapter of this dissertation will focus on another immigration site: the kibbutz. While the existence of the transit camp was motivated by goals of buttressing the Israeli state, it was not as intentionally guided or ideologically motivated as the kibbutz. Such a mindfully constructed site provides a useful counterpoint to the transit camp insofar as it relied on race frameworks to operate as well.

Chapter Four

The Evidence of Racialized Experience: Kibbutzim and Israeli Immigration Sites as Crucibles of Discrimination

Migrant life in early state Israel centered around sites that purported to acclimate Iraqi

Jews to Israel, but actually demarcated their discrimination. Their primacy arises from them

being relatively universally experienced and perceived as foundational. Considering that these

sites often operated counter to their stated humanitarian philosophy, there is reason to revisit

them with a focus on the material reality that a race analysis offers. What is at stake is the proof

that experiences of belonging on the one hand and discrimination on the other were not

ephemeral or singular, but systemic and deeply personal.

As the story goes, the new state of Israel had very few resources and Mizrahi migrants'

ways of being were supposedly mutually exclusive from the Ashkenazim who founded the state.

Orit Rozin defines the taxonomy of immigrants to pre- and early state Israel well when she

writes, "The ethnic parsing of the Yishuv into its Ashkenazi and Mizrahi components became

prevalent in Zionist public discourse in the 1920s and would later be salient during the state of

Israel's early years."[1] According to Yehouda Shenhav, Holocaust survivors and those perceived

as inclined to the diaspora such as Yiddish speakers were also disparaged as inadequate "human

material" for settling Israel and carrying out Zionism. Yet, Arab Jews and other Mizrahim were

especially fixated on as, "…the category of the Arab Jew was particularly troubling, because it

posed a threat to the purity of the Zionist project—as Western and modern—and to the "great

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[1] Orit Rozin, *A Home for All Jews: Citizenship, Rights, and National Identity in the New Israeli State*, trans. Haim Watzman, The Schusterman Series in Israel Studies (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2016), 22.

divide" that Zionism attempted to carve out between Jews and Arabs."[2] Within this constructed

reality, discrimination was positioned as unintentional at best and unavoidable at worst.

To dispel the notion that discrimination in early state Israel was accidental and nearly

unavoidable it is useful to consider the situation from the standpoint of race. To consider

something from the standpoint of race forces a narrowing in on the scaffolding of how

immigration and initiation unfolded. A race analysis cuts through the generality of just an ethnic

or culture framework wherein discrimination can be portrayed as accidental or of a by-gone era,

with minuscule and minimal remaining side effects. In fact, race shows that sites like the

ma'abara and the topic of this current chapter: the kibbutz, were bound to encourage

discrimination by design.

In this chapter I show how Iraqi Jews experienced their racialization as: disorienting,

disappointing, and mobilizing, in the uniquely Israeli site of the kibbutz—a cooperative living

arrangement where society was promised (ultimately erroneously) to function per egalitarian

principles and where equity would be delivered.[3] Facing racist discrimination in the kibbutz,

Iraqi Jewish women recalled their previously non-exclusively racially subordinate status in their

Iraqi homeland where racialization was not entirely a discrimination tactic in order to

demonstrate their worthiness as equal Israeli citizens. This argument reveals why Jews were so

rooted in Iraq and why Israeli marginalization was so alienating. Such a cataclysmic predicament

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[2] Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 65, 193.

[3] In viewing kibbutz experiences through the analytic of race and focusing on how this was felt by Iraqi Jewish women, I was inspired by Aziza Khazzoom's artile, "The Kibbutz in Immigration Narratives of Bourgeois Iraqi and Polish Jews Who Immigrated to Israel in the 1950s." Her discussion of Polish women as feeling betrayed by the kibbutz made me want to discern the feelings of Iraqi women. In a departure from her article, this chapter finds Iraqi kibbutz women to be rather affective in their response to kibbutz life.

is owed in part to the fact that it was the acclimation sites that were meant to protect and prepare new migrants that in actuality acted as crucibles of marginalization in their singularity, persistence, and dominance. Migrants like Iraqi Jews thus could not have avoided discrimination because taking part in these sites was essentially mandatory. With this paradigm in mind, the

This chapter rests on a number of sources from Iraqi Jewish women or where Iraqi Jewish women figure prominently, wherein kibbutz lore was a smokescreen that only the lived experience of actual kibbutz life could lift. Memoirs from Shoshana Levy, Shoshana Almoslino, Tikva Agassi, Louise Cohen, Gideon Shamash, and Yehoshua Yahav are analyzed because they contain first-hand, sometimes sustained experiences with kibbutz life that are particularly vivid for showcasing the outsized difficulties Iraqi woman faced compared to other kibbutz members, particularly those of Ashkenazi descent.[4] These memoirs will be supported by family or state authored oral history interviews and letters from Iraqi Jewish women. Finally, although offered through the medium of a novel, Eli Amir's 1984 *Scapegoat*, which is inspired partially by the author's own time in the same kibbutz youth group as Shoshana Levy, will be discussed in this chapter's final section for the liberties it is able to take in showcasing kibbutz racism and thus the affect it is able to impart.

Rather than enumerating individual racist kibbutz incidents, this chapter focuses on the experience of racism and how it was compounded via comparison to prior race associations Iraqi

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[4] Shoshana Almoslino, *me-ha-Mahteret be-Bavel le-Memshelet Yisrael* (From the Underground of Babylon to the Government of Israel), (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibutz ha-Me'uhad, 1998); Shoshana Levy, *al-Em ha-Derech* (In the Middle of the Road), (Tel Aviv: Sh. Levy, 2001); Tikva Agassi, *me-Baghad le-Yisrael* (From Baghdad to Israel), (Ramat Gan: Tikva Agassi, 2001); Louise Cohen, *ha-Avak Higbia Uf* (The Dust Flies Up), (Tel Aviv: Kedma Books, 2011); Gideon Shamash, *Masot Chai be-Eretz ha-Naharim ve-be-Yisrael* (Journeys of My Life in the Land of Rivers and in Israel), (Jerusalem, Israel: Association for Jewish Academics from Iraq, 2011); Yehoshua Yahav, *ha-Yeled me-Eretz ha-Dekelim* (The Boy from the Land of Palm Trees), (Israel: Self Published, 2017).

Jewish women brought with them from their homeland. For the remainder of the chapter, I will

first provide a history of the kibbutz and its purported ethos. Along with this general historical

discussion, context about how Iraqis related to the kibbutz ideal will be offered. I will then argue

that Iraqi women experienced racialization in the kibbutz as disorienting, disappointing, and

mobilizing which reveals the extent to which their Iraqi racialization affected their identity

formation in Israel given that in Iraq, racial difference was not always experienced as

pejoratively.

A History of the Kibbutz Movement and the Failure of Idealism

In so far as the kibbutz (more literally: commune) movement that materialized in Israel

was against the notion of a commodified society populated by the individually minded and in

favor of non-egoic collectivism, it was positioned from its origin to be a revolutionary space.[5]

Arising as a Jewish response to Russian czarist aggression, the movement, at its most general

and definitional was, "…a community-based socialism with direct and participative democracy

and a healthy respect for individual development."[6] In terms of the general movement's desire to

settle land in Palestine via innovative agricultural methods, the kibbutz was not unlike the

moshav, although it valued conviviality and communality to a much greater extent.[7]

Encompassed within the umbrella of the kibbutz movement were two main federations,

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[5] Christopher Warhurst, "The Kibbutz Movement: A History," *Utopian Studies* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 1999):105; Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, trans. Haim Watzman, The S. Mark Taper Foundation Imprint in Jewish Studies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 297.

[6] Christopher Warhurst, "The Kibbutz Movement: A History," *Utopian Studies* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 1999): 106.

[7] Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, trans. Haim Watzman, The S. Mark Taper Foundation Imprint in Jewish Studies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), xiii.

differentiated in part by political party affiliation. These federations were Kibbutz HaMeuchad which was Mapai aligned, founded in 1927 with the unification of one large kibbutz and several smaller, and said to be somewhat more of an upstart with members sometimes splitting off to accomplish political goals, and Kibbutz Artzi (affiliated with Mapam), also founded in 1927 by graduates of ha-Shomer ha-Tzair ('The Young Guard' defined below) which is said to have been more stridently political from the beginning.[8] Both the United Workers Party (Mapam) and Party of the Workers of the Land of Israel (Mapai) were instrumental in early state Israel, were leftist, and accepted Iraqi youth to the kibbutzim they were affiliated with even though the old guard of both parties was not Mizrahi and did not treat Iraqis equally.[9]

During the second major phenomenon of migration to Palestine (commonly referred to as the Second Aliya, 1904-1914) the first kibbutz site, Degania Aleph, was established in 1909, and further kibbutzim appeared along with land acquisition throughout this period and during the period of the third major phenomenon of migration (the "Third Aliya" 1919-1923).[10] The motivation of kibbutzim in pre-state Israel was land settlement by Jews who were Zionist and committed to socialism. By Israel's early state period, the kibbutzim were stridently sites where the ideals of Zionism and the kibbutz movement could be enacted, which included: replacing the nuclear family with the kibbutz family, assimilating new Jews to the nation and the broader

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[8] Eliezer Ben-Rafael, "The Kibbutz in the 1950s; A Transformation of Identity," in *Israel: The First Decade of Independence*, ed. S. Ilan Troen and Noah. Lucas (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 267; Henry Near, *The Kibbutz Movement: A History.*, The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), 412.
[9] Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017), 116-117.
[10] Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, trans. Haim Watzman, The S. Mark Taper Foundation Imprint in Jewish Studies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), xiii.

kibbutz movement, cultivating the land, and settling far-flung reaches of the state.[11] By 1948 roughly 7.2% of Israel's Jewish population were kibbutzniks, a number that would soon dwindle to 5% in 1952 as greater numbers of Mizrahim migrated.[12] In terms of Iraqis specifically residing in kibbutzim, one of the larger demographics were children and teenagers whose totals numbered roughly seventeen hundred.[13] Yet, by about 1955, scant numbers of all the Iraqis who initially joined kibbutzim remained.[14]

As captured by the aforementioned defining features, the kibbutz was an ideal but it was also, of course, a literal site responsible for the role of acclimating new Israeli migrants.[15] In this vein, as Devorah HaCohen highlights, Israeli state founders like the state's first prime minister David Ben Gurion, insisted the kibbutz movement help with immigrant absorption not only in order to increase Jewish density in the region, but to do so in a way that was economical since the dominant view of the kibbutz was that it was self-sustaining.[16]

Kibbutzim took their role as educators of children very seriously as it was also a conduit to wrest these young people from their families and tie them even more to the movement and state. They often had their own pre- and adolescent schools. As for high schoolers, HaShomer

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[11] Ibid., 22, 227.

[12] Eliezer Ben-Rafael, "The Kibbutz in the 1950s; A Transformation of Identity," in *Israel: The First Decade of Independence*, ed. S. Ilan Troen and Noah. Lucas (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 270.

[13] Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017), 95.

[14] Esther Meir Glitzenstein, "Ethnic and Gender Identity of Iraqi Women Immigrants in the Kibbutz in the 1940s," in *Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel: Life History, Politics, and Culture*, ed. Ruth. Kark, Margalit. Shilo, and Galit. Hasan-Rokem, 1st ed. (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2008), 84.

[15] Aziza Khazzoom, "The Kibbutz in Immigration Narratives of Bourgeois Iraqi and Polish Jews Who Immigrated to Israel in the 1950s," *Israel Studies* 19, no. 2 (January 1, 2014): 71.

[16] Devorah Hakohen, *'Olim bi-seʿarah: ha-ʿaliyah ha-gedolah u-ḳeliṭatah be-Yiśraʾel, 1948-1953* (Yerushalayim: Yad Yitsḥaḳ Ben-Tsevi, 1994), 129.

HaTzair, which was a Poland born Zionist youth movement that then become one of the major kibbutz movements in Palestine, developed a boarding school of sorts where teens from many different kibbutzim congregated.[17] The singularity of such a parochial education is expressed well by Oz Almog, writing, "These unique institutions, which created an almost autonomous society of children, provided the three primary psychological influences on kibbutz children—a powerful emotional attachment to their fellows, conformism, and dependence on the group."[18] This kind of pedagogy not only educated, but engendered within kibbutz children and teens, a deep co-dependency and need for acceptance on and among their peers.[19] As will later be shown, the gulf between this want and what proved possible for Iraqi Jewish women would prove particularly jarring.

One of the more specific ideals that was meant to actualize by way of kibbutz life was gender equity wherein the confines of gender roles would be lifted through a life where work, child-rearing, and household responsibilities were shared, and economic dependence was nullified.[20] Desiring gender equity came about with seemingly the same genuineness and single pointed focus as the kibbutz projects more general socialist sentiments did. Lineages of gender equity by way of "liberal and socialist feminists, Russian feminist literature, and other works," constituted aspects of the movement from its foundation.[21] Because gender equity was as

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[17] Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, trans. Haim Watzman, The S. Mark Taper Foundation Imprint in Jewish Studies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 229, 296.

[18] Ibid., 229.

[19] Ibid., 230.

[20] Sylvie Fogiel-Bijaoui, "Women in the Kibbutz: The 'Mixed Blessing' of Neo-Liberalism," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues*, no. 13 (2007): 102, 103.

[21] Henry Near, "What Troubled Them? Women in Kibbutz and Moshav in the Mandatory Period," in *Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel: Life History, Politics, and Culture*, ed. Ruth Kark, Margalit Shilo, and Galit Hasan-Rokem, (Waltham, MA.: Brandeis University Press, 2008), 123.

idealized of a facet as the entire kibbutz project, the deficiencies in its actualization are also particularly noticeable. In contrast to stated commitments, women writing in kibbutz periodicals often revealed that they were not treated fairly in the jobs they were assigned, in the way their work was evaluated, and the way their grievances were addressed.[22] As this chapter will foreground, the unfairness faced by Iraqi women was compounded by their race. All in all, the Jews who sparked the general kibbutz movement were characterized by highly idealistic and hopeful sentiments. Ultimately, these sanguine sentiments proved initiatory, if not fully actualizable or sustainable.

The kibbutz's broken promises were of a piece of Israel's greater inadequacies with sustaining its fulcrum of collectivism. Orit Rozin has diagnosed these early state deficiencies as a product of pre-state "old-timers" whose state building capacities were generative enough to establish Israel but were not malleable enough to properly absorb new immigrants. Rozin asserts that while these old-timers espoused collectivism, once they perceived the socio-economic and cultural differences early state immigrants (such as Iraqis) brought with them, "…a huge gap opened between theory and practice."[23] The void between collectivist theory and incorporative practice generally, was paralleled specifically at the level of the kibbutz. At this level it is noticeable that the perceived differences of new immigrants aren't blameworthy in and of themselves. Rather, the collectivist theory, utopian visions, and kibbutz aspirations that were parochial at their core brought about the void that would disappoint so many.

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[22] Ibid., 125.

[23] Orit Rozin, *A Home for All Jews: Citizenship, Rights, and National Identity in the New Israeli State*, trans. Haim Watzman, The Schusterman Series in Israel Studies (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2016), 192.

Etan Bloom's work has demonstrated just how fragile the ideal of communal co-existence that simultaneously valued the individual was and thus how difficult it was to actually enact. As Bloom shows in *Arthur Ruppin and the Production of Pre-Israeli Culture* this fragility stemmed from the precarious righteousness upon which both the inspiration for and practices of the kibbutz rested. Exposing Ruppin, who was born in Poland and who in 1908 established the Palestine Office in Jaffa in order to disseminate the postulates of the World Zionist Organization and shape pre-state culture according to the WZO, as foundational to Israeli culture, Bloom in so doing, is able to expose the unstable façade of the kibbutz project. Speaking to this precarity, he writes,

> …the cohesiveness of the groups existed only when the "pioneers" believed, with "religious devotion," in cooperation. When the act of cooperation lost its religious aspect, the belief in its righteousness began to erode. From that moment, the Kibbutz became similar to any temporary, secular commune.[24]

Underscoring just how central fervidity was to the kibbutz's pioneers, Bloom lays bare the kibbutz movement's faulty foundations. Furthermore, the precarity of kibbutz infrastructure was not just of issue for the pioneers who imagined it or the majority Ashkenazi members who attempted to live within it. Any faultiness was also exacerbated by the kibbutz's monolithic tone. In tending not just toward instability but also exclusion, the kibbutz was not an institution capable of sustainably holding the Jews who so enthusiastically originally imagined it, let alone the Mizrahi Jews who mostly did not. Kibbutz pioneers generated a lore of conviviality via the valuing of all unique persons. Yet, individuals like Iraqi Jews who were deemed too racially different were numerously dissatisfied. Not only did race matter differently in Israel, but it mattered so much so as to blight the utopian ideal of kibbutz life. Before delving specifically into this dissatisfaction, which I argue is noteworthy when Iraqi women experience the kibbutz as

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[24] Etan Bloom, *Arthur Ruppin and the Production of Pre-Israeli Culture*, vol. v. 31, Studies in Jewish History and Culture; (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 193.

disorienting, disappointing, and mobilizing, context will be provided as to the general trajectory of Iraqis in early Israel kibbutzim.

A History of Iraqis in the Kibbutz Movement and the Failure of Egalitarianism

In the article "The Kibbutz in Immigration Narratives of Bourgeois Iraqi and Polish Jews Who Immigrated to Israel in the 1950s," Aziza Khazzoom offers a summation of just how allegedly incongruous Iraqi Jewish immigrants were positioned to be for the kibbutz, stating,

> This role as the absorber of immigrants is in some ways ironic, given the attitude many kibbutz members expressed toward Holocaust survivors and Middle Eastern Jews. That Middle Eastern Jews were considered non-modern and uneducated, and therefore unlikely to be attracted by the radical ideology of the kibbutz, is well known.[25]

The purported bias that Mizrahim like Iraqi Jews were ill-suited for kibbutz life due to excuses that were not necessarily factually evident or within their control was not a latent assumption. Insisted upon incompatibility came to fruition. Certainly, many Iraqi Jews, including Iraqi Jewish women, were relatively well educated and thus might not have been captured by the aforementioned educational bias. Yet, the kind of exclusionary thinking that contributed to the assumption in the first place, ultimately wounded Iraqi Jewish women who were bereft in ways not limited to education.

Kibbutz founders, guides, and leadership theoretically should have understood the collectivist aspirations of the kibbutz as a lifeline for those immigrants who arrived in Israel most marginalized, such as those with unconventional family structures. Whether it be individuals who arrived with no immediate family or too many family members which made living in a transit camp challenging, some Iraqi Jewish women were well positioned to be amenable to

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[25]Aziza Khazzoom, "The Kibbutz in Immigration Narratives of Bourgeois Iraqi and Polish Jews Who Immigrated to Israel in the 1950s," *Israel Studies* 19, no. 2 (January 1, 2014): 75.

kibbutz life. Many Iraqi women were also perfectly willing to ingratiate themselves to their

kibbutz communities in the name of companionship and recognition with and by their peers, both

because they believed in the kibbutz and because of developmental factors of their adolescents.[26]

Reality was often far starker than theory. Rather than a seamlessly upheld expectation of a

mutual recognition, many Iraqi Jewish women encountered disarray from the beginning of their

kibbutz life.

Many youths were funneled into kibbutzim via the policy of Aliyat HaNoar (youth

absorption/ aliyah). Originally established as a remedy for displaced youth of Nazi-occupied

Europe, with Israel's inception newly arrived adolescents such as Iraqis were absorbed into

kibbutzim as well and assigned the collective nomenclature of Babylonians.[27] The number of

these "Babylonians" residing in about 30 kibbutzim throughout Israel in 1950 was roughly

1260.[28] Yet, by about 1955, scant numbers of all the Iraqis who initially joined kibbutzim

remained.[29] By 1961 the adolescent Babylonians who were still kibbutzniks was 821.[30] As

potentially obvious from these demographics and previously cited features of kibbutz life,

kibbutzim in the mid-twentieth century were comprised predominantly of young individuals,

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[26] Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, trans. Haim Watzman, The S. Mark Taper Foundation Imprint in Jewish Studies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 230; Aziza Khazzoom, "The Kibbutz in Immigration Narratives of Bourgeois Iraqi and Polish Jews Who Immigrated to Israel in the 1950s," *Israel Studies* 19, no. 2 (January 1, 2014): 71.

[27] Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017), 94.

[28] Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, *Ben Bagdad le-Ramat Gan: Yots'e 'Iraḳ be-Yiśra'el* (Yerushalayim: Yad Yitsḥaḳ Ben-Tsevi, 2008), 209.

[29] Esther Meir Glitzenstein, "Ethnic and Gender Identity of Iraqi Women Immigrants in the Kibbutz in the 1940s," in *Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel: Life History, Politics, and Culture*, ed. Ruth. Kark, Margalit. Shilo, and Galit. Hasan-Rokem, 1st ed. (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2008), 84.

[30] Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, *Ben Bagdad le-Ramat Gan: Yots'e 'Iraḳ be-Yiśra'el* (Between Baghdad and Ramat Gan: Iraqi Immigrants in Israel), (Yerushalayim: Yad Yitsḥaḳ Ben-Tsevi, 2008), 209.

separated from their parents, and encouraged to be more loyal to the collective than to their biological families.

Iraqi adolescents in kibbutzim were not joined by their parents, sometimes because they had remained in Iraq, because kibbutzim did not have the space to lodge them, or because their parents were still housed in the transit camps and not a concern given that they might complicate communal aspirations.[31] Absentee parents or not, kibbutzim considered all youths to be the responsibility of the commune which meant that intimate familial bonds were dissolved.[32] Not being empty vessels, Iraqi youths responded to this paradigm affectively while still trying to remain good kibbutz citizens. About some of their responses, Bashkin has said, "…Iraqi teenagers resented the fact that their parents, whom they witnessed decline in status from respectability to poverty, were rejected by the kibbutzim."[33] Even though it is the case that kibbutz ideology requested the dissolution of family bonds from everyone, this situation was compounded for Iraqis as it was congruent with their general racial marginalization by the Israeli state. Furthermore, as they were separated from their families and immersed in a different culture, because the dominant culture of kibbutzim was Ashkenazi normative, they did not simply have their Iraqi culture replaced with a communal kibbutz one, but rather an exclusive Ashkenazi one. All in all, Iraqis might have anticipated family separation, but this did not mean they were prepared for or willing to accept all of its consequences. This gulf between anticipation and acceptance is noticeable in other realms of kibbutz life.

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[31] Ibid., 206.

[32] Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, trans. Haim Watzman, The S. Mark Taper Foundation Imprint in Jewish Studies (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 228.

[33] Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), 97.

A vivid and demonstrative example wherein Iraqi expectations were not commensurate with the reality of kibbutz life centered around gender. Khazzoom reasons that there existed a tension for Iraqi women because, "Zionism and specifically the kibbutz are what opened them up to the possibility of nontraditional gender roles," but ultimately it was the kibbutz lifestyle that was, "out of line with their bourgeois liberal methods for attaining greater inequality."[34] One of the precise instances where facets of the kibbutz lifestyle caused friction for expected Iraqi methods had to do with dress. More precisely, while many Iraqi women wanted to appear no different than their kibbutz counterparts, the revealing nature of the clothing they were given caused pause. The kibbutz in essence had a genderless uniform for all members. The uniform was meant to not only ensure conformity but functionality. Aspects of this uniform were difficult for Iraqi women because, "The shorts troubled and confused the young women who, on the one hand, wanted with all their might to look like kibbutz members, and yet, on the other, were aghast at the extreme abrogation of the rules of modesty in which they had been raised."[35] Despite this setback, Iraqi women's modesty position proved mutable. Ultimately, outside influences helped soften their opinions. While initially embarrassed to reveal their legs, Iraqi kibbutz women embraced their new attire when they saw others doing so.

More pointedly then dress, the gendered reality of kibbutz life that would prove most difficult for Iraqi women was the fact that gender equity never came to fruition. Khazzoom elucidates that, "Beginning as early as 1948 and due to the pressures of nation-building and an

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[34] Aziza Khazzoom, "The Kibbutz in Immigration Narratives of Bourgeois Iraqi and Polish Jews Who Immigrated to Israel in the 1950s," *Israel Studies* 19, no. 2 (January 1, 2014): 73.
[35] Esther Meir Glitzenstein, "Ethnic and Gender Identity of Iraqi Women Immigrants in the Kibbutz in the 1940s," in *Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel: Life History, Politics, and Culture*, ed. Ruth Kark, Margalit Shilo, and Galit Hasan-Rokem, 1st ed. (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2008), 93.

increasingly capitalist ethos," kibbutzim reasoned to abandon some of their core principles and

as such the protection of gender equality was weakened.[36] Non-gendered work roles had been

difficult to maintain for some time given that, "The men did not mind if the women stepped into

the 'masculine' jobs, but they were opposed to doing their part in the areas defined as

'feminine.'"[37] Again, this was despite the fact that Iraqi women were very willing to engage in

traditionally masculine labor despite its challenges.

Another instance where anticipation did not properly prepare Iraqis for reality had to do

with the fact that while Iraqis that joined kibbutzim might not have been uncompromisingly

devout and were likely aware of the secular stance kibbutzim took, confrontation with this reality

was another matter. The religiosity of Iraqis was certainly not as unthoughtful and traditional as

Ashkanzi orientalizing projects insisted insofar as many had went to non-religious schools, taken

part in secularizing Iraqi nationalist projects, and had proclivities for secular European culture.[38]

Yet, in Iraq, religion was more of a personal matter that did not interfere with public

engagement.[39] Thus, the enforced and policed secularism of the kibbutz was not jarring because

it meant a loss of religion for Iraqis, but rather a loss of yet another lifeform from their

homeland.[40] Furthermore, any religious fervor in the kibbutz was redirected through Zionism and

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[36] Aziza Khazzoom, "The Kibbutz in Immigration Narratives of Bourgeois Iraqi and Polish Jews Who Immigrated to Israel in the 1950s," *Israel Studies* 19, no. 2 (January 1, 2014): 71.

[37] Esther Meir Glitzenstein, "Ethnic and Gender Identity of Iraqi Women Immigrants in the Kibbutz in the 1940s," in *Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel: Life History, Politics, and Culture*, ed. Ruth Kark, Margalit Shilo, and Galit Hasan-Rokem, 1st ed. (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2008), 89.

[38] Aziza Khazzoom, *Shifting Ethnic Boundaries and Inequality in Israel: Or, How the Polish Peddler Became a German Intellectual*, Studies in Social Inequality (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008), 116.

[39] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 63.

[40] Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017), 99.

work rather than Judaism per se.[41] This is not to say however, that such secular commitments made the kibbutz a meritocracy wherein Mizrahim like Iraqis simply needed to prove themselves through their work ethic or Zionist sentiments. Moreover, it was again not the case that Iraqis were simply not familiar with Zionism and had trouble accepting it as a quasi-religion. Rather, some Iraqi youths were intimately dependent on Zionism and the arising issue was actually the "…mundane reality in the kibbutz [which] was far less heroic than it had appeared in Iraq."[42] Again, now with the case of kibbutz secularism, Iraqis were cognizant and willing but the precise implementation of such a dictate, proved troublesome.

Religious culture was not the only form of culture under attack for Iraqis in kibbutzim. As early state Israel generally eschewed Mizrahi culture in order to maintain Ashkenazi, an analogous process took place in kibbutzim. This was because,

> When the State of Israel was established, Ashkenazim comprised 85 percent of the Jewish population in Palestine. This demographic preeminence reduced but did not eliminate the Ashkenazi elite's need, and urge, to defend its political and cultural hegemony with ethnic status symbols. The need intensified, however, with the mass immigration of Jews from the Muslim world after the establishment of the state, for within just a few years the Ashkenazim were only 60 percent of the population.[43]

Thus, during Iraqi youths' formative young years and right after the upheaval of migration, they had their culture maligned and were forced to recalibrate. Iraqis clung to their homeland's culture at their own risk, as nearly no aspect of it was safe from Ashkenazi ridicule. Ashkenazi expectations were sometimes astonishing. For instance Iraqi kibbutz youths were asked to adopt

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[41] Eliezer Ben-Rafael, "The Kibbutz in the 1950s; A Transformation of Identity," in *Israel: The First Decade of Independence*, ed. S. Ilan Troen and Noah. Lucas (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 266; Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, trans. Haim Watzman, The S. Mark Taper Foundation Imprint in Jewish Studies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 22.

[42] Esther Meir Glitzenstein, "Ethnic and Gender Identity of Iraqi Women Immigrants in the Kibbutz in the 1940s," in *Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel: Life History, Politics, and Culture*, ed. Ruth Kark, Margalit Shilo, and Galit Hasan-Rokem, 1st ed. (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2008), 84.

[43] Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, trans. Haim Watzman, The S. Mark Taper Foundation Imprint in Jewish Studies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 96.

Hebrew names as a denunciation of their Arab culture.[44] These expectations were also sometimes trenchant. For instance, Iraqi kibbutz youth's love for the Arabic music of their homeland was disparaged and likened to "wailing and yelling."[45] Overall, Ashkenazi kibbutz leaders and members were relatively uncompromising in their cultural critiques and demands for conformity.

Perhaps because of the demands from Ashkenazim and all of their unrequited anticipation, several Iraqis settled kibbutz Neve Ur—the first kibbutz comprised of mostly Iraqi immigrants—in 1949.[46] Iraqi individuals, including the women, who settled this kibbutz were expressing their deep commitment. Esther Meir-Glitzenstein asserts, "A portion of these young women did develop a deep sense of belonging and obligation to the kibbutz way. And from among them came the founding women of Neveh-Ur."[47] Helping settle this kibbutz, which was located along the Jordanian border, was an expression of responsibility to Israel's security and faith in the kibbutz mission. These Iraqis believed that the pioneering spirit of kibbutzim would deliver security and settlement to the new Israeli state as well as help them acclimate.[48] Yet, the kibbutz ethos would not prove galvanizing for many Iraqis which left Iraqi kibbutzniks beholden to Ashkenazi supremacy. Many Iraqis who came to Israel after the establishment of Neve Ur did

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[44] Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, *Ben Bagdad le-Ramat Gan: Yots'e 'Iraḳ be-Yiśra'el* (Between Baghdad and Ramat Gan: Iraqi Immigrants in Israel), (Yerushalayim: Yad Yitsḥaḳ Ben-Tsevi, 2008), 207.

[45] Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017), 99.

[46] Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, *Ben Bagdad le-Ramat Gan: Yots'e 'Iraḳ be-Yiśra'el* (Yerushalayim: Yad Yitsḥaḳ Ben-Tsevi, 2008), 206.

[47] Esther Meir Glitzenstein, "Ethnic and Gender Identity of Iraqi Women Immigrants in the Kibbutz in the 1940s," in *Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel: Life History, Politics, and Culture*, ed. Ruth Kark, Margalit Shilo, and Galit Hasan-Rokem, 1st ed. (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2008), 99.

[48] Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, *Ben Bagdad le-Ramat Gan: Yots'e 'Iraḳ be-Yiśra'el* (Yerushalayim: Yad Yitsḥaḳ Ben-Tsevi, 2008), 207.

not find favor with the parochial nature of the kibbutz and the kibbutz's emphasis on free labor.[49]

Furthermore, due to family demands, Glitzenstein reveals that not all Iraqis were privileged enough to remain in Neve Ur. She writes, "A few years later, they had to leave the kibbutz, the same as their male colleagues, to help in the absorption of their family members who arrived in the mass immigration."[50] Ultimately, due to Neve Ur's difficult border placement, inability to attract many new immigrants, and lack of support from the Israeli state, Iraqis were forced to abandon their unique settlement of it.[51] Having specified Iraqis' particular historical relationship to kibbutzim, one could begin to imagine how Iraqi women would have understood their experience as disorienting, disappointing, and mobilizing.

Disorientation: The Anxiety Ridden Reality of Rhetoric, Micro-aggressions, and Misrecognition

Perhaps most dispelling of the kibbutz's idealized façade and the most illustrative example of its racism, is that kibbutz treatment did not just undo and dissuade the reluctant or wary, but rather the most well-suited and enthusiastic migrants as well. As previously noted, Iraqis and other Mizrahim often approached the kibbutz with enthusiasm, as it was an opportunity for community for those who arrived without nuclear families and an opportunity for growth for those not wanting to be confined to the transit camp. Coupled with this reality, Iraqi migrants also demonstrated an eagerness to attempt kibbutz life.

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[49] Ibid., 207.

[50] Esther Meir Glitzenstein, "Ethnic and Gender Identity of Iraqi Women Immigrants in the Kibbutz in the 1940s," in *Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel: Life History, Politics, and Culture*, ed. Ruth Kark, Margalit Shilo, and Galit Hasan-Rokem, 1st ed. (Waltham, MA.: Brandeis University Press, 2008), 99.

[51] Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, *Ben Bagdad le-Ramat Gan: Yots'e 'Iraḳ be-Yiśra'el* (Yerushalayim: Yad Yitsḥaḳ Ben-Tsevi, 2008), 208.

In fact, sources corroborate than many Iraqi children for instance, were excited to try kibbutz life. Yehoshua Yahav, who immigrated with his family from Basra in 1951 at 14, and who had been housed in Ma'abara Zichron Yaakov determined as much, insisting,

> We children in the ma'abara had heard about kibbutz life from older kids. We really wanted to join a kibbutz and then we got lucky and emissaries from Aliyat HaNoar came to gather wayward children. We didn't know much Hebrew then, when a man and woman from Aliyat HaNoar approached us while we were playing, and we jumped for joy. The emissaries asked us where our parents were, saying that we needed to obtain consent.[52]

Yahav told the emissaries that his mother was in the hospital and his dad was working until nine at night.[53] His grandmother was the only family member present and the emissaries took her signature as consent. Yahav, along with seven other Iraqi children who all mostly spoke Arabic were then sent to Kibbutz Mishmar HaNegev while his sister Shoshana was sent to Kibbutz Maagan Michal.[54] In Yahav's case, while he and the other Iraqi youth he is speaking for were excited, it is difficult to ignore the fact that the emissaries were somewhat negligent in obtaining consent and family separation was further encouraged as him and his sister were split up.

Yet, Yahav's family separation was not unique. When Dalia Selah moved to Israel from Basra at the age of 17 in 1949 accompanied only by her sister Nitza, they wanted to be housed together in Ma'abara Pardes Hanna, because they had extended family there. Saleh and her sister however were inexplicably housed in separate kibbutzim for two years.[55] Hannah Shachar arrived in Israel unaccompanied by her parents when she was nine years old. Her family was aware that adolescents, roughly 16 to 17, were migrating to Israel before 1948 via the Zionist

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[52] Yehoshua Yahav, *ha-Yeled me-Eretz ha-Dekelim* (The Boy from the Land of Palm Trees), (Israel: Self Published, 2017), 68.
[53] Ibid., 69.
[54] Ibid., 72.
[55] Dalia Selah, "Derision and Hideouts," *Stories of the Ma'abara in Ramat ha-Sharaon* (Israel: Serfaty Publishers, 2007), 130.

Youth Pioneers. Yet, as Shachar was only 9, her family opted to transport her to Israel with close family friends who had obtained passports and were willing to pretend Shachar was their daughter.[56] While the majority of this section focuses on disorientation experienced as misrecognition through the mediums of rhetoric and microaggressions, Yahav's, Selah's, and Shachar's cases highlight another, more material, and still crucial aspect of disorientation: the reality that kibbutz life was predicated on family separation.

When Shachar made her way to Israel, she was placed in Kibbutz Ashdot Yaakov while her 16-year-old brother was taken up by a youth group and placed in Kibbutz Galil Yam which was located very far away from Ashdot Yaakov. Shachar's lack of close family was then compounded by feelings of lack and comparison stemming from her job in Ashdot Yaakov as a children's caretaker, children she sometimes saw with their parents. In response to all of these developments, Shachar explains, "…I felt severe loneliness and had a hard time getting used to this new situation."[57] Shacher's experience of being unmoored taking the form of loneliness is illustrative of the fact that Mizrahim—given that (to the extent that the kibbutz paradigm considered them at all) they were viewed as instrumental to settling absconded kibbutz land— were uniquely destabilized as their desire for family connection was rebuffed. Arriving to kibbutzim with little to no speaking Hebrew, often without parents, and usually separated from family they did have in the country, Iraqi Jews had little opportunity to begin kibbutz life on solid footing. In this instance, separation encouraged by kibbutzim was the first harbinger of sustained disillusionment with immigration.

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[56] Hannah Shachar, "Hannah Shachar's Immigration From Iraq to Israel," *Heritage Stories Database* (February 9, 2020), website.
[57] Ibid.

A woman who arrived in Israel as a similarly young girl with little family connections, was Shoshana Almoslino. Almoslino was first initiated into kibbutz life when she arrived in Israel with her Zionist Pioneer group, rather than her family, in 1947.[58] The Iraqi Zionist Pioneer group that brought her to Israel was a family of sorts, but Almoslino lacked the intimacy had by many Iraqi Jewish immigrants who arrived in Israel supported by nuclear families. As Almoslino and the previously mentioned Shachar elucidate, Zionism's Pioneer Movement (HeHalutz) (which had a juvenile counterpart: the Zionist Youth Movement) played a part in bringing Iraqi teenagers to pre-state Israel. Iraq's Pioneer Movement was initiated by emissary Enzo Sereni in 1942 based on an anxiety he had that youth in the country were not receiving Zionist education.[59] Paradoxically, had Almoslino's kibbutz been responsibly initiatory and not racist, she would have been an archetypical member. Without family ties in Israel and given her introduction to collectivism via her Zionist Pioneer group experiences, Almoslino was materially and ideologically commensurate.

As laid out in Chapter Two, Almoslino, who was born and raised in Mosul, joined her local chapter of the Zionist Pioneer Youth Movement after the Farhud. In the wake of this pogrom, she felt it necessary to retreat into her Jewish community in the name of safety and insularity. Agentive steps such as Almoslino's, characterize broader catalysts for Iraqi women's attraction to Zionism. Meir-Glitzenstein evidences that many Jewish women joined Iraq's Zionist movement partially because they saw it as a conduit for women's liberation.[60] Furthermore, in wanting to emigrate to Palestine, many of these same women enthusiastically wanted to join

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[58] Shoshana Almoslino, *me-ha-Mahteret be-Bavel le-Memshelet Yisrael* (From the Underground of Babylon to the Government of Israel), (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibutz ha-Me'uhad, 1998), 52.
[59] Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country: Jews in Iraq in the 1940s* (London: Routledge, 2004), 85.
[60] Ibid., 125.

kibbutzim, fully aware of their liberatory nature.[61] Almoslino's account suggests however, that

any aligned qualities possessed by Iraqi Jewish women were not enough to ensure equality in the

face of constructed difference.

Despite being decisively progressive according to kibbutz standards, Almoslino was

othered by Ashkenazi kibbutz inhabitants who racially profiled her. Echoing Rozin's critique of

"old-timers," it was "veteran kibbutz members" who instigated Almoslino's profiling which

often took the form of interrogation, suspicion, and reliance on unthoughtful, racist caricatures.

Almoslino might have arrived to her first Israeli home, the well-respected kibbutz Sde Nachum

which was established in 1937 and populated mostly by Ashkenazim, with some trepidation

given that there were, "…rumors of discrimination by kibbutz members against the oriental

immigrants."[62] I have also written elsewhere about her and her Iraqi cohort's kibbutz welcome

being less than unconditionally accepting.[63] What remains important to underscore, is that

Almoslino's arrival was not only blighted, but racist. Before settling in, Almoslino and her Iraqi

cohort were interrogated by Ashkenazi kibbutz members who wondered if in Iraq they knew,

"…what electricity and radios were, if there were universities, and if there were segregated

theatres."[64] This interrogation was racist in the way that it homogenized and set apart Iraqi

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[61] Ibid.

[62] Esther. Meir-Glitzenstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country: Jews in Iraq in the 1940s* (London: Routledge, 2004), 125; Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017), 95.

[63] Chelsie May, "'Girls of the Eastern Communities': The Intersectionality of Iraqi-Jewish Immigrants in Israel/Palestine, 1947–1960," *Journal of Jewish Identities* 11, no. 2 (2018): 245–66.

[64] Shoshana Almoslino, *me-ha-Mahteret be-Bavel le-Memshelet Yisrael* (From the Underground of Babylon to the Government of Israel), (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibutz ha-Me'uhad, 1998), 52.

immigrants. Difference was not only assumed, it was assigned a value judgment and thought of as all-encompassing.

Seeing Iraqis as unmodern and uneducated did not just mark them as different; it also subordinated them intractably. The incredulous reactions of the Iraqis in this case further underscores the presence of racism. Almoslino writes,

> After we got over such foolish [questions], we marveled at the ignorance, and here and there we returned the insults in kind, saying for example: that in some parts of Iraq one could still encounter small tribes of cannibals, and naturally we broke out in laughter when one of the kibbutz members asked us if we ourselves had ever met and laid eyes on such creatures.[65]

The rhetoric of the Iraqi's rebuttal not only matches their interlocutors but exaggerates it. Intuiting the fundamental challenge to their unequivocal belonging from their new kibbutz members, they attempt to assuage directly and establish common ground via racist tropes similar to those of their fellow country people, in the name of indirectly proffering equality. Using these tropes, they demonstrate a fluency with beliefs of difference as a kind of meaningful separateness.

Initially unsettled by their interlocutors' ignorance and foolishness, Almoslino and her cohort attempted to recalibrate but ultimately furthered disorientation. As demonstrated in Chapter Two of this dissertation, Almoslino and those who had just immigrated with her, given their Zionist education and activity, would not have had a neutral or benign view of difference. Their Zionism taught them that Jews were outliers in their societies because they were weak and that only through Zionist practice could they be normalized. Understanding Zionism as an equalizer, confrontation with those who implied otherwise would have been unsettling. In the face of such upset, Almoslino and her fellow Youth Pioneers handled any allegation that they

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[65] Ibid., 52; In addition to my analysis here, this vivid enunciation is also used to provide context in Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), 98.

were different and less than by illustrating the allegation's absurdity. Their instinct was not to deny their difference outright, but to say, "…that in some parts of Iraq one could still encounter small tribes of cannibals," in order to demonstrate mutuality through similar rhetorical devices and simultaneously foreground how unconscionable it was for them to have to engage in such a defense at all. Seemingly, the Iraqi's instincts proved productive, as their Ashkenazi interlocutors were not alerted by their hyperbole but captivated enough to further the heightened discourse by absurdly asking if the Iraqis themselves had interacted with cannibals. With Almoslino and the other Iraqi immigrants' adeptness at mimicking the Ashkenazi kibbutz members racist rhetoric, their chances of assimilating into equity might seem promising. In fact, as the Ashkenazim are not roused from their racist orientation, but further it, the disorientation and discrimination of the incident continues.

As Almoslino's incident shows, disorientation was not squarely suffered by racism's victims. Racism similarly disorients the agent, as accounts from Tikva Agassi, who had immigrated from Baghdad, also demonstrate. Agassi had not only attended a law college in Baghdad, she also previously taught at a Jewish school there.[66] Serving primarily in the role of teacher in kibbutzim rather than summoned there purely ideologically, Agassi had a different vantage point than other Iraqi women.[67] In her memoir she writes, "It's worth noting that ever since I came to Israel, I haven't seen attitudes of the sort that I would refer to as discriminatory, racist, or patronizing, rather just ignorant, poorly educated, and disoriented on the part of the

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[66] Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), 79.
[67] Ibid., 80.

other side."[68] The disorientation Agassi refers to here is likely the instability that arose from Israel's newly minted citizens not seeing each other as equals.

Furthermore, Agassi's summation shows that racism had to be learned and her further explanations show that indeed it was. While relaying a tour her and fellow Iraqi migrants from her ma'abara had taken, which included a stop at a kibbutz where she was shown the Jordan River (which she and the other Iraqi immigrants with her were unimpressed by) Agassi offers this anecdote,

> The Ashkenazi guide began explaining to [me] a 'lowly Iraqi girl' and her friends that they didn't know this river and the meaning of the word river. But we were quick to reply, '[Even] the *smallest* stream that leaves the Tigris and Euphrates is bigger than this river.' The disappointed guide was silent and spoke with less enthusiasm for the rest of the tour. He also learned a geography lesson he could have never gotten in school.[69]

Agassi's word choice is intentional. Categorizing herself as a "lowly Iraqi girl" who was upbraided by an Ashkenazi guide from the kibbutz, suggests a felt memory of discrimination. The Ashkenazi guide is a gatekeeper. To his entitled mind, he knows more about the country than the women on the tour who are supposed to be at a lower station than him because they are new, because they are Mizrahi, and because of their gender.

The cadence of the Ashkenazi guide is assured and covertly racist rather than overt. As Agassi mentioned in her assessment of discriminatory and racist intent, the new citizens of Israel did not always make difference matter in a premeditated, coherent way. What is worth speculating is that passive reliance on difference grounded in race-based rhetoric, assumptions, and confinements is racist whether it is intentionally so or not. That the Ashkenazi guide was silenced when confronted with an assessment of Israel that did not comport with the idealized façade he had gleaned (likely through education as Agassi puts it) and given the responsibility to

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[68] Tikva Agassi, *me-Baghad le-Yisrael* (From Baghdad to Israel), (Ramat Gan: Tikva Agassi, 2001), 144.

[69] Ibid.

pass on, suggests more confusion than thoughtfulness. That the picturesque veneer the Ashkenazi guide earnestly and unquestionably believed was not faultless and was even incomparable to geographies familiar to Iraqi Jews, stands out as remarkable because his reeducation was not only personally destabilizing, but systemically so, given that it came at the hands of a Mizrahi woman.

As the Jordan River story reveals, gender was a point of friction in the kibbutz. Even though gender equity was an espoused building block of the Israeli kibbutz, it did not prove an ideal actualized especially effectively. When Agassi first arrived at the absorption camp Sha'ar Aliyah she was, within a few days, taken to inspect the conditions in a kibbutz in order to see if she might move there. During this inspection, she is guided by a man who she presumes is a kibbutz secretary. With their encounter winding down, she muses that the secretary noticed, "Signs of distortion on [my] face," which he questioned. As Agassi blushed and stammered, the man eventually determined her problem: "He pulled me by the hand, opened the door to the bathroom, [and said], 'here, I'll be waiting for you right outside.'" "From then on," Agassi concludes, "I learned that it wasn't embarrassing to ask a man where the bathroom was."[70] What this aside about Agassi's embarrassment elucidates is the possibility that if gender difference was difficult to deal with in the kibbutz, other vectors of difference would certainly be so as well. While kibbutz life provided the terrain wherein individuals of different genders could cohabitate, it did not necessarily provide scripts for genuine recognition to occur. Much was left unsaid between Agassi and the kibbutz secretary. While the kibbutz secretary ultimately recognized Agassi's need and Agassi gained confidence, given the dynamics of the situation, with her dependent on his recognition and learning by way of intimation, it's challenging to extrapolate

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[70] Ibid., 124.

and know for certain if seemingly minor flashpoints such as these could have been tangible enough to use to espouse gender ideals, let alone ideals relating to other differences.

Shoshana Levy, who arrived to Israel from Baghdad in 1951, was quickly taken, along with her brother, to kibbutz Mishmar HaEmek, a kibbutz established in 1926 by the previously mentioned European youth Zionist HaShomer HaTzair, to live with her uncle Rachmim. Because Rachmim had already emigrated from Iraq, it was thought that his and his kibbutz's stability could be a positive influence on Levy. In practice, this meant that as Rachmim imparted his positionality on the kibbutz to his niece, she gleaned frameworks through which she viewed all of kibbutz life for years to come. Depending on the situation Levy found herself in, these frameworks did not always prove elucidating.

Levy had only heard the word kibbutz uttered in Iraq, but never in a way that was explanatory. In this way, Rachmim's explanations of the kibbutz project informed Levy's entire conception. Within moments of arriving at Mishmar HaEmek, Rachmim began to explain to Levy and her brother what a kibbutz was. "This is a collective," he says, confusing Levy who responds, "What is a *colleceev*?," mispronouncing the unfamiliar word. After correcting Levy's pronunciation, Rachmim continues,

> This is a village with houses, stalls, chicken coops, orchards, and fields, that belong to all who live here. No one is the private owner of a house or anything. Every kibbutz member does whatever work is thrown at him, but no one receives any money. He [the kibbutz member] eats and drinks, he sleeps in an apartment or room, and when they stage a performance at the kibbutz, he goes to see it—and all of this is free.[71]

The calculus of kibbutz existence, as described by Rachmim, is one wherein it is assumed that all members are materially cared for in exchange for labor and participation. Yet, Rachmim could rest assured that his assessment was logical for him, because he had lived experience in Mishmar HaEmek for some time, whereas Levy had not.

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[71] Shoshana Levy, *al-Em ha-Derech* (In the Middle of the Road), (Tel Aviv: Sh. Levy, 2001), 78.

As Levy continued her questioning, it was not because she was ignorant or too

uneducated to comprehend, but, as she determines, because she needed to experience the kibbutz

for herself. After her uncle's spiel, Levy notes,

> The whole explanation seemed clear and logical to me: if a man was not given money, certainly he would
> not be expected to spend it. Yet, I was still puzzled: if this was the case, where do you get money to buy
> food and other things? I didn't ask. The entire matter of the kibbutz was beyond me. I waited to arrive and
> see for myself.[72]

Levy's questions and curiosity are only natural. In fact, they are echoed by other new Iraqi

migrants such as Margalit Akirav-Cohen. Akirav-Cohen was a member of Kibbutz Na'an who

wrote about introductory seminars she and other new Mizrahi kibbutz members attended when

they arrived to Israel. Put on by emissaries from Kibbutz HaMeuchad, Akirav-Cohen entered the

seminars open-mindedly, but was confused by the great deal of rhetoric and Hebrew.[73]

Frustrated, she admits, "In the beginning it was hard for me to understand the lectures well and I

also wasn't able to take notes. I wasn't able to continue like this for very long and I stopped."[74]

While she was able to ask those around her for help, she also expresses self-consciousness and

questions if she is the only one who doesn't understand everything being taught. Like Levy,

Akirav-Cohen's misunderstandings were natural and due to circumstance, but she was not

always reassured of this.

Despite insufficient explanations and faith, Levy was not implacably inquisitive or

incapable of settling into kibbutz life, as aforementioned racist rhetoric about Mizrahim and Iraqi

Jews would have alleged. If anything, the fact that she placed faith in a kibbutz ethos that was

unfamiliar to her suggests a genuine desire to belong and be cared for. Moreover, after

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[72] Ibid.

[73] Margalit Akirav Cohen, "About the Emissaries' Seminar of the Kibbutz, 1944" in Mordechai
Bibi's *ha-Mahteret ha-Siyyonit Halutz be-Iraq* (Zionist Pioneer Underground Movement in Iraq)
(Jerusalem, Israel: Yad Ben Tzvi, 1988), 731.

[74] Ibid., 732.

experiencing the anemic life of the transit camp, Levy is particularly impressed by the fact that unlike in the camps, in the kibbutz, she, "…ate until [she] felt full. This was the first thing I liked: You could eat without a limit."[75] It was not uncommon for newly arrived immigrants to express gratitude for the kibbutz, especially in contrast to the transit camp. In 1951, when Eve Baba was nine, she immigrated to Israel from Iraq. While she and her family were first assigned an over-crowded transit camp tent, she soon moved into a kibbutz, about which she insists, "The kibbutz was wonderful. It had everything and lacked nothing. There were guides, caregivers, and teachers. Everyone was like a parent to me."[76] Like Levy observed, Baba also points out that there was no money in the kibbutz and everyone was expected to work and study according to their age and ability. This way of life was seemingly not as confusing for Baba as it was Levy. Yet, even for Levy, in the name of, at the very least, material support, she clearly wanted to make the kibbutz her home. Her desire was only stymied by predominant assumptions that she was an incommensurate outsider because of her background (which was ultimately predicated on racial difference) and because of the disarray she was left in that stemmed from insufficient kibbutz explanations and treatment that did not align with assurances of equity.

Levy's kibbutz initiation was particularly disorienting when her frameworks came up against mistreatment. Indeed, when Rachmim's Eastern European wife, who could not communicate with Levy in her Arabic native-tongue, used Levy's clothes and cleanliness to harshly judge her level of culture and wealth, Levy was likely all the more befuddled, as it was not only her aunt, but fellow kibbutz member rebuffing her. As Levy's aunt takes her to the kibbutz showers for her to wash up—her first time doing so since arriving to Israel which was

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[75] Shoshana Levy, *al-Em ha-Derech* (In the Middle of the Road), (Tel Aviv: Sh. Levy, 2001), 78.
[76] Eve Baba, "Childhood Memories From Iraq," *Heritage Stories Database* (August 9, 2014), website.

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likely the only reason she looked disheveled in the first place—Levy is relieved to wash away not only literal dirt, but what she describes as the metaphorical dirt of shame and embarrassment.[77] Thrust into a new reality wherein her existence depended on trusting in and relying on fellow kibbutz members Levy earnestly wanted to assimilate but had the tools to do so withheld from her. Not only was the ethos of the kibbutz at once comforting and confusing, it was also insufficient to address the actual discriminatory treatment she would receive there. This left Levy not only wanting to wash her difference—which had transformed into shame and embarrassment—away, but believing she had. Certainly, immigrating itself was inherently disorienting for Almoslino, Agassi, and Levy. Yet, this disorientation could have been as ephemeral for Iraqi Jews as it was for many Ashkenazim. It was made an entrenched part of the Iraqi Jewish psyche because of racist attitudes that valued Ashkenazi dominance over Iraqi Jewish belonging, acceptance, and security. This situation was worsened, as Levy and Almoslino committed themselves in kibbutz life, often to disappointing ends.

Disappointment: Broken Promises and Unfulfilled Expectations

Despite the dominant narrative that Iraqi Jews and Mizrahim were wholly ignorant of the kibbutz as an entity and unable to acclimate due to their own deficiencies, Iraqi Jews certainly did acquire expectations for kibbutz life. Louise Cohen, who immigrated with her husband and children from Baghdad to a transit camp, reveals, "I was under the assumption that those village girls who served households in Baghdad would at least improve their fate and enjoy their life in the kibbutz," and in this hopeful sentiment, she was not alone.[78] Whether the kibbutz was first

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[77] Shoshana Levy, *al-Em ha-Derech* (In the Middle of the Road), (Tel Aviv: Sh. Levy, 2001), 79.
[78] Louise Cohen, *ha-Avak Higbia Uf* (The Dust Flies Up), (Tel Aviv: Kedma Books, 2011), 81.

encountered through Zionist learning in Iraq, while touring Israel, or upon moving there, the idealized ethos of the kibbutz and all that it promised had not gone unnoticed by Iraqi Jews.

The dashed expectations Iraqi Jewish women had, which would ultimately be undermined by racial prejudice, could be more affecting than their disorientation. Disorientation was shockingly unpleasant and foreshadowed disaffection with kibbutz life. Following disorientation, disappointment ensured separateness but brought clarity. This disappointment was the necessary subsequent progression that would solidify for Iraqi women their internalized separate place in Israel.

As previously noted, family separation was disorienting because Iraqi women were not necessarily equipped to be without their families in a new land. Yet, this separation also encouraged a self-reflexive disappointment given that it made the women shameful of their family's circumstance and culture. Carmela Night, who immigrated to Israel in 1951 from Baghdad at the age of 16, enthusiastically wanted to attempt kibbutz life, because, in her words, "I was happy that I didn't need to be in the transit camp."[79] After being invited to join Kibbutz Gan Shmuel by an Iraqi friend already in Israel, Carmela would remain there six years. When her parents finally arrived in Israel, she left her kibbutz to live with them in a transit camp which likely informed Night's view of kibbutz life generally, given that she summarized, "I did not want to stay in the transit camp because the conditions were difficult."[80] The difficulty of the transit camps worsened family separation because often times, when children wanted to be reunited with family members, it meant returning to transit camps. This was an issue insofar as it

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[79] Carmela Night, "My First Years in the Country," *Heritage Story Database* (March 19, 2015), website.
[80] Ibid.

reinforced the conception that the camps, and by extension the women's Iraqi families were a last resort, shameful, and best moved on from.

Because many Iraqis and other Mizrahim were so densely concentrated in transit camps for many years, Iraqi kibbutz children were put in the position of associating their parents with precarity, lack, and stagnation. These negative feelings were likely stoked by the fact that many Iraqi parents were not encouraged to visit their children in kibbutzim. In fact, Baghdad born David Mutzafi, who was a member of Kibbutz Maoz Haim as a youth, was only permitted to go visit his parents' transit camp once every six months and his parents were not encouraged to come to his kibbutz at all, prompting him to summarize, "My real parents had no impact or connection on my life and there was no communication between us."[81] Nearly all of the women in this chapter, had little to no contact with their parents for years and when they did, it was through chosen reunification in transit camps. This paradigm not only drove them away from their families but also their Iraqi culture in a pejorative way.

While the previous examples center the youths' feelings of separation, parents were also disappointed with their children's time in kibbutzim. When Zamira Aloni who immigrated from Baghdad was 11, her mother sent her to live in Kibbutz Ga'aton while the remainder of the family stayed in a transit camp. After several years in this kibbutz, Aloni's mother came for a visit and informed her that she would be moved to live with a single aunt in Tel Aviv. This was because Aloni's mother did not like the way the kibbutz had affected her daughter's gratitude, humbleness, and religious commitment.[82] In fact, many Iraqi children would choose to reunite

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[81] David Mutzafi, "The History of David Mutzafi," *Heritage Stories Database* (February 24, 2020), website.
[82] Zamira Aloni, "My Life in the Wonderful Land of Israel," Heritage Stories Database (January 19, 2019), website.

with their families, even in transit camps, after sustained periods in kibbutzim. As examples

below will demonstrate, for those who spent more time in kibbutzim, the disappointment of their

thwarted expectations would complicate their Israeli reality even further.

Almoslino's journey from disorientation to disappointment arose when she noticed other

Zionist Pioneer youth groups joining Sde Nachum soon after her group had joined. In particular,

when she observed the ease with which a Bulgarian group cheerfully shouldered the burden of

integration Almoslino became jealous. She drew a quick contrast between this Bulgarian group

and her Babylonian group, who, to her mind, lacked any sort of similar blitheness or harmonious

aptitude.[83] Yet, the carefree nature of the Bulgarian group was likely not merely a factor of their

own constitution. As Almoslino reveals elsewhere, Iraqis were preferred by veteran kibbutz

members when they divined that they must go above and beyond in their attempts to assimilate.

Almoslino admits that years later, with hindsight provided by diaries from veteran kibbutzniks,

she learned that when new kibbutz members like her and her fellow Iraqis were being absorbed,

they were viewed with less suspicion when they established a fund for their kibbutz, into which

they deposited all of the personal money they had brought with them to Israel. According to

these diaries, this act was exalted as the "…clearest signal of our integration," writes Almoslino

who adds that the calculus of veteran kibbutz members was, "If they were able to give up private

money, it was of course viewed as a sign that they [the Iraqis] weren't so terrible and could

perhaps build up the kibbutz."[84] Even if the veteran kibbutzniks used these donations as a step

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[83] Shoshana Almoslino, *me-ha-Mahteret be-Bavel le-Memshelet Yisrael* (From the Underground of Babylon to the Government of Israel), (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibutz ha-Me'uhad, 1998), 53; As mentioned in this chapter's section "A History of Iraqis in the Kibbutz Movement and the. Failure of Egalitarianism," 'Babylonian' was the general epithet given to adolescent Iraqis absorbed by kibbutzim.
[84] Ibid., 52.

toward disabusing their prejudices, it is transparent that such reasoning is discriminatory and might have left Almoslino uneasy when she first arrived.

Because Almoslino herself was unable to donate to the kibbutz fund like her fellow Iraqis, she was perhaps more sensitive to the unspoken judgement of veteran kibbutz members. She admits, "I myself was not able to give the collective fund a single penny. Everything that I brought with me from my savings, I gave to [Zionist] members in Baghdad who were organizing for immigration to Israel."[85] Almoslino was so committed to the kibbutz project that she wanted even more Jews to join, but kibbutz logic did not necessarily capture this. No matter her earnest intent and commitment, full acceptance and integration was not fully in her control nor was she entirely cognizant of the metric by which she was being judged.

In addition to disappointment, she felt from veteran kibbutz members whom she engaged with peripherally, Almoslino's more sustained interactions with fellow kibbutz members, even ones encouraged by the kibbutz itself, created the possibility for further disillusionment. Only a few months after she had arrived at Sde Nachum, Almoslino was offered a position teaching English at the kibbutz's school. The principal of the school heard she had taught English in Iraq and believed her to be suitable. Almoslino was nervous to undertake such a responsibility but did so enthusiastically. What she was met with did not align with her expectations.

The pedagogy Almoslino was exposed to in Iraq was one that valued sincere, sustained commitment from students and where deference to teachers was expected. She was curious to encounter students in the kibbutz who did not fully respect her authority. Given little context about education in the kibbutz, she was even more befuddled as to whether this treatment

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[85] Shoshana Almoslino, *me-ha-Mahteret be-Bavel le-Memshelet Yisrael* (From the Underground of Babylon to the Government of Israel), (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibutz ha-Me'uhad, 1998), 52.

occurred in all Israeli schools or was a phenomenon specific to the kibbutz. Despite the bleakness of her teaching circumstances, Almoslino forged ahead with her English instruction. In doing so, she would face similar unmet expectations. Not only did kibbutz students seem apathetic about learning, they were particularly nonchalant and noncommitted to learning English. This surprised Almoslino because, according to her, "Every excellent student in Iraq strove to learn English with the knowledge that the language opens up paths for further study, to status in society, and to senior positions in state institutions. In just a short time, I realized that the study of English in the kibbutz was considered to be a burden."[86] This reality was concerning for Almoslino. She learned to later appreciate the changes she inspired in her students, but while in the kibbutz, she remembers feeling, "I was nearly automatically anxious at the relationship that formed between the harsh indigenous Israelis and [me] this new female teacher who didn't know Hebrew that well."[87] Not only was Almoslino downcast to learn that she was yet again different than her fellow kibbutz members and that this difference was in part due to aspects of her station such as her gender and country origin that she could not change. She also was forced to reckon with the reality that her new country people did not value a language that Zionism and her proximity to whiteness in Iraq had taught her was a lifeline.

"I felt the emptiness of the promise of equality in the kibbutz," Levy sighs in defeat as she experiences for the first time what she called cracks in identification with the kibbutz ethos.[88] Like Almoslino, she too found the work she was asked to do demoralizing and foregrounding of her difference as an Iraqi woman. Levy reached the breaking point where this realization crystalized for her, when she was forced to work in the dining hall of the educational institute at

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[86] Ibid., 54.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Shoshana Levy, *al-Em ha-Derech* (In the Middle of the Road), (Tel Aviv: Sh. Levy, 2001), 90.

Mishmar HaEmek where she was forced to interact with spoiled children of veteran kibbutz members.

While working in the dining hall of the educational institute, Levy saw first-hand how the spoiled children of more entrenched kibbutz members were unfairly treated differently. With an exasperated cadence, speaking for her and other Jews at the kibbutz who were from, as she puts it "Islamic countries," she asks: "Why did we have to sacrifice four and a half hours for work when they only had to do two? Why did they receive more hours of education than us? Whatever happened to the principle that everyone is expected to work to his ability and receive according to his needs?"[89] Levy is particularly disappointed because not only had she joined the kibbutz, but also a youth group with fellow kibbutz members that was meant to be a further equalizer.[90] The youth group, called "Amir," features in the novel *Scapegoat* discussed in this chapter's final section.

Levy is thoughtful in her observation that the kibbutz youth group members with more institutionalized parents were dismissive of Jews from Islamic countries. They thought of themselves as more adept at studying, working, and in their commitment to community. Despite any rhetoric of equality, Levy felt that, "At every step we were made to believe that we didn't belong, that more or less we were the youth who came from backward Islamic societies."[91] As will be shown below, experiencing her difference in such a racist, disappointing way, rather than pacifying Levy, activated her.

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[89] Shoshana Levy, *al-Em ha-Derech* (In the Middle of the Road), (Tel Aviv: Sh. Levy, 2001), 91.
[90] Orit Bashkin, "An Autobiographical Perspective: Schools, Jails, and Cemeteries in Shoshanna Levy's Life Story," in *Gender in Judaism and Islam: Common Lives, Uncommon Heritage*, ed. Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet and Beth S. Wenger (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 286.
[91] Shoshana Levy, *Al Em ha-Derech* (Tel Aviv: Sh. Levy, 2001), 90.

<u>Mobilizing: Manifestations of Early Mizrahi Subjectivity in the Face of Racism</u>

Bryan Roby has taken the crucial step of proving that Mizrahi consciousness, agency, and radicalization occurred quite early in Israel's statehood. He insists, "…the Mizrahi struggle for equality was a viable social justice struggle that emerged and was persistently fought from the 1950s on."[92] In this vein, while disoriented and disappointed Iraqi Jewish women suffering racist treatment in kibbutzim might not have become immediately radicalized, they, at the very least had a consciousness activated. In other words, discriminatory experience, contained within a particular site, and coupled with remembrance of prior racialization in Iraq, helped Iraqi Jewish women crystalize a Mizrahi identity.

One of the initial and most universals way racist discrimination shaped Mizrahi identity for Iraqi kibbutz children, including girls, was the devaluation of Arabic. Certainly, the devaluation of all non-Hebrew languages as well as the reality wherein immigrants dissented and spoke their native languages when possible, is a well noted facet of Israel's inception. Liora Halperin aptly describes the paradigm of suppressing diasporic languages as "official rhetoric" that was not entirely reflected in "lived practice."[93] Bashkin describes "official rhetoric" being particularly hostile toward Arabic as, "The Arabic of the newcomers was suppressed. Children and grownups were asked to change their names either in Sha'ar ha-Aliyah or by teachers and guides in the transit camps.[94] After entering Israel's initial absorption site and the transit camps,

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[92] Bryan K. Roby, *The Mizrahi Era of Rebellion: Israel's Forgotten Civil Rights Struggle, 1948-1966*, First edition., Contemporary Issues in the Middle East (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2015), 12.

[93] Liora Halperin, *Babel in Zion: Jews, Nationalism, and Language Diversity in Palestine, 1920-1948* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 5.

[94] Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017), 194.

Arabic suppression was furthered in kibbutzim in order to facilitate communication between for example, Iraqi youth and predominately Ashkenazi guides who didn't speak Arabic.[95] Iraqi kibbutz youths also could not speak Arabic among each other however, and were discouraged from doing so via racist discrimination.

When Gideon Shamash arrived to Kibbutz Galil Yam after leaving Iraq in 1946 inspired by his sister Rachel he left abruptly with her husband in 1944, he was accompanied by 13 other Iraqi boys and 16 Iraqi girls. Although Shamash's parents were still in Iraq and he was separated from his sister Rachel who was like a second mother to him, Shamash felt positive about joining Galil Yam.[96] Less positive than Shamash's outlook was his confrontation with Arabic denunciation. In a section of his memoir titled "Speaking Arabic is Forbidden," Shamash details just stridently native Arabic speakers, like his Iraqi cohort, were discouraged from speaking their native language. Censuring the Iraqi girls and boys from speaking Arabic among themselves and at all was a policy enforced most harshly by Shamash's male teacher Moshe. In contrast he describes his teacher Tamar in more maternal terms while noting how much he appreciated her guidance. According to Shamash, Moshe's uncompromising discipline extended to his treatment of Arabic wherein he would fly into a rage at the mere utterance of Arabic.[97] Despite continuing to speak Yiddish himself, Moshe was uncompromising when Arabic was spoken which led Shamash to believe that he just didn't like Mizrahim very much.[98]

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[95] Ibid., 97.
[96] Gideon Shamash, *Masot Chai be-Eretz ha-Naharim ve-be-Yisrael* (Journeys of My Life in the Land of Rivers and in Israel), (Jerusalem, Israel: Association for Jewish Academics from Iraq, 2011); 28.
[97] Ibid., 60.
[98] Ibid.

Years later, Shamash is reflective and disappointed that more Jewish Israelis don't speak Arabic. Upon contemplation, Shamash realizes that Arabic could have been a bridge between Jews, including Mizrahim, and non-Jewish Arabs.[99] To the extent that Shamash is indicative of his Iraqi cohort, it seems likely that while they were deeply aware of racism toward Mizrahim as it is refracted through language, they did not necessarily fully internalize this shame as an all-encompassing part of his Mizrahi identity.

For some Iraqi Jewish women, like Almoslino, racist kibbutz experiences were a catalyst to constitute a Mizrahi identity that would seek a kind of righteous recognition through Israeli state channels. Her enunciation of Mizrahi identity was righteous and centered around recognition, because she was ultimately outraged that her fellow kibbutz members did not recognize themselves in her.

As a Zionist in Iraq, Almoslino learned that through Zionist commitment and betterment, she could gain salvation. No longer was she forced to be a powerless, parochial diasporic Jew; she was now agentive and purposeful. While the Iraqi state might have condemned Zionism, it did not condemn all Jews uniformly, thus making it difficult to discern Jews monolithically. However, in Israel, Almoslino was marginalized entirely due to her Iraqi identity, as were those in her Pioneer Youth group. Not only would this have been stigmatizing, it must also have been jarring. Almoslino's Israeli peers did not view her equally as Zionism promised. Yet, the promise still held, and she was forced to reckon with the recognition she was met with.

Almoslino's recognition of how she was seen in the kibbutz was not constituted entirely by her alone. Throughout her time in kibbutzim, she often notes how her trajectory was shaped by how veteran Israelis (Mizrahim and Ashkenazim) viewed her and the roles they wanted her to

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[99] Ibid.

fill. In this way, her subjectivity owed itself not only to her own conceptions and remembrances, but also the imposition of others. Not only was Almoslino instructed that her time teaching English prepared her to teach English in the kibbutz, she was also later told that she would make a good bookkeeper in kibbutz Neve Ur.[100] Before undergo training for this position, someone else intervened with their conception of her and redirected her life.

Almoslino was intimately tied to kibbutz Neve Ur having helped found it. In this way, requests from fellow founders for her to receive bookkeeping training and take on this position in the kibbutz demonstrated not just their faith in her but their expectations of her. This makes the new redirection she was about to receive all the more value laden. With this new redirection, Almoslino would have her Mizrahi subjectivity shaped by political forces that influenced her, mainly the United Workers' Party (Mapam) and Party member Avraham Abbas specifically. In order to convince Almoslino to take a position in the Party's Bureau of Labor, Abbas persuaded her with a particular take on Mizrahi existence in Israel. Almoslino reveals how through long dialogues she, "…heard about the problems of Mizrahi Jews and about the discrimination that existed in Israeli society. He pridefully highlighted that Mapam—and the Division of Unity and Labor within it—are at the forefront of the campaign to eliminate manifestations of discrimination and again called on me to do my part."[101] Abbas specifically wanted Almoslino to work for the Department of Oriental Communities in the bureau. With this framing Abbas draws on the undeniably true reality that Mizrahim face discrimination from dominant Israeli society thus implying that Mizrahim face a double burden: both, being responsible for their discrimination and in charge of addressing it.

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[100] Shoshana Almoslino, *me-ha-Mahteret be-Bavel le-Memshelet Yisrael* (From the Underground of Babylon to the Government of Israel), (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibutz ha-Me'uhad, 1998), 57.
[101] Ibid., 58.

Almoslino was certainly not without her own agency. She mentions being interested in

kibbutz politics for quite some time for instance.[102] Yet, perhaps catalyzed by her time the

kibbutz where she came to understand her Mizrahi identity vis-à-vis Ashkenazim, take orders

from Ashkenazi kibbutz leaders, and interact with powerful individuals who reinforced her

subjectivity as a marginalized Mizrahi woman, Almoslino had her political and most public

facing identity solidified through the direct guidance and example of others. She would go on to

work at the Department of Oriental Communities, advocating mostly for Iraqis. Furthermore, she

speaks of being drawn to political speeches from Ruth Haktin who was active the Kibbutz

HaMeuhad federation (defined previously and also supported the continuous growth of

kibbutzim) who would visit her kibbutz.[103] Alsmolino was also later inspired by Haktin's

political career in the Israeli Parliament. All in all, Almoslino's kibbutz experience encouraged

her to have a consuming awareness of her now Mizrahi identity. Because race was such a potent

category of difference in Israel, she was required to be aware of her racial identity in ways she

was not in Iraq.

As for Levy, even though she would never become a radical Mizrahi activist, she would

have her Mizrahi subjectivity shaped by outrage at her treatment and a distinct feeling that it was

unfair. In response to the aforementioned mistreatment as part of her youth group Levy discerns,

"It was here for the first time that I felt the difference of my standing and that the concept 'class

warfare,' which we had heard utterances of, received a tangible meaning."[104] Encumbered by a

greater workload, less assumed worth, and less education vis-à-vis her more privileged

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[102] Ibid.

[103] Henry Near, *The Kibbutz Movement: A History.*, The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), 412.

[104] Shoshana Levy, *al-Em ha-Derech* (In the Middle of the Road), (Tel Aviv: Sh. Levy, 2001), 91.

Ashkenazi youth group members, Levy feels the weight of her standing as a raced Mizrahi woman. Levy never had reason to internalize this kind of difference as negative or all-consuming while in Iraq. When confronted with a different conception of race than ever before she was shocked and hurt for herself, but she did not assume fault or responsibility. In contrast to Almoslino, Levy's response was more depersonalized. Both women recognized discrimination in the kibbutz and how it made them feel about themselves, but while Levy was more immediately affronted, Almoslino was more ultimately destabilized. Such difference in reaction might stem from the fact that not only was Almoslino older, she had also participated in much more formal Zionism for longer. Per Zionist metric, she should have been marginalized and per Zionist calculus the means to address this included personalization and working within the system to gain acceptance into dominant society.

All in all, Levy actually does not denounce her kibbutz experience. Her coda before leaving kibbutz life to join her parents states in part, "Nevertheless, the three years I spent in Kibbutz Mishmar HaEmek were the happiest and most pleasant of my life."[105] Ultimately, Levy does not begrudge the kibbutz, only the way her youth group treated Iraqis while in it. Her conclusion comes despite the fact that her kibbutz did not support her dreams of becoming a teacher because, as she puts it, "…I was not indigenous to the economy, which meant that I supposedly was an inferior person."[106] Levy's continued awareness that the kibbutz desires to curtail her education as an Iraqi woman in particular, suggests an awareness of how just pervasive their mistreatment is. There is a constant tension present in Levy's feelings about her treatment in the kibbutz. She clearly wants to see it as a refuge, but the institution will not allow

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[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.

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her to do so. That she remains so indignant in the face of mistreatment is suggestive of her

certainty that her race should not be a factor of discrimination. Given her ability to hold

simultaneously her awareness that she does not deserve her kibbutz's treatment and that this

treatment isn't personal, she could have a decisive critique of the kibbutz if not for her hope.

As previously mentioned, Levy, along with other Iraqi teens, was a member of a youth

group that was artistically enshrined in the novel *Scapegoat* by her cohort member Eli Amir.[107]

Scapegoat (first published in Hebrew in 1983 and later in English in 1987) is an embellished,

literary version of Amir's own immigration story. It follows the story of teenage Nuri who

arrived from Iraq to a transit camp and auditions to be part of a kibbutz. Nuri, assigned the

Hebrew name Nimrod when he first arrives to the kibbutz, attempts to acclimate but suffers

setbacks due to missing his family, friction with his youth group and kibbutz lifestyle, and shame

of his time in the ma'abara.

Similar to Levy, Amir's Nuri endeavors towards a kibbutz life while holding the tension

of being confused by it,

> Why hadn't we stayed in Baghdad? And what was going to happen to me now? Out of the blue—a kibbutz!
> And as if that wasn't enough—in a group of boys…and girls. The woman from the Youth Aliyah who
> came to the ma'abara once a month and always had so many people to see her talked on and one about the
> communal life on the kibbutz, and it seemed to me that I understood something or other but I wasn't quite
> sure what.[108]

Echoing Yahav, Nuri was recruited into the kibbutz by a Youth Aliyah representative and like

Levy he was largely left perplexed upon his arrival. Commensurate with nearly all Iraqi women

and youth mentioned in this chapter, his kibbutz life meant a painful separation from his family,

which he discloses by saying, "And now I was being sent [to the kibbutz], alone and already I

was full of longing for my family and a wild desire to run back to them."[109] What makes the

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[107] Eli Amir, *Scapegoat* (Tel Aviv, Israel: Am Oved Publishers, 2009), 43.
[108] Ibid., 10.
[109] Ibid.

sterility and separation of the kibbutz particularly pernicious is that it was in contrast to Iraqi

families that would have provided this belonging and warmth otherwise.

Furthermore, Amir dramatizes disappointment experienced by Iraqi youth with the transit

camp and their Iraqi parents. In a nearly paragraph long passage Nuri emotes,

> An hour's walk separated the kibbutz from the ma'abara, a remote and lonely island, another world. The
> dark side of our lives. The nightmares from which we tried to escape. The dirt, the hunger and all the rest.
> When we approached it on our Gadna cadet training runs we would turn our backs on it. Quickly, quickly
> back to the kibbutz. All we wanted was not to smell its smells, not to know that it existed. But it was in our
> souls. It looked down on us from its hill as we ran along the road, taking its revenge on us simply by being
> there, breathing down our necks refusing to let go, so far away and yet so powerful, drawing us toward it
> again and again.[110]

Through his artistic liberty, Amir is able to express not only the Iraqi kibbutz youth's literal

feelings of disappointment with their transit camp "origins" but how these feelings took on a life

of their own. By extension, he is thus able to foreground an aspect of Iraqi Mizrahi

consciousness. Via Amir's personification of the ma'abara as something that is within Nuri and

his Iraqi cohort, something that stalks them, and something that suffocates them, he positions the

ma'abara as a representative of Iraqi parents still in the transit camps or really any Iraqis not

endeavoring to acclimate properly in Israel. In this way, according to Amir, Mizrahim were

made to not only feel shameful, but like this shame was inescapable.

Amir's Nuri is preoccupied throughout *Scapegoat* with the "regionals" of Israel. Referred

to as "old-timers" by Rozin and "veterans" by Almoslino, Nuri is at once fascinated with,

intimidated by, and envious of the Ashkenazim who spearheaded Israeli statehood causing him

to lament, "What harm had the kibbutzniks done me? How was the kibbutz to blame? Why was I

mad at them and the 'regionals'? My father could have come here thirty years ago and

established himself, like them, and I could have been a 'regional'."[111] According to Nuri's

calculus as it was shaped by his time in the kibbutz, Iraqis and other Mizrahim share a kind of

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[110] Ibid., 157.
[111] Ibid., 161.

ambivalence about the regionals. As Iraqis and emerging Mizrahim they see themselves as separate and clearly desiring of regional status, yet they know of its illusiveness—a status that would have needed to have impossibly materialized 30 years ago if it could at all.

Yet, those like Nuri are not passive receptacles with a myopic view of Iraq. At one point Nuri is sent by his kibbutz to a ma'abara to help educate children. His reluctant journey back, which was not without great coaxing from his kibbutz guide Sonia, both encapsulates migrant Mizrahi hope and shame. While back in the ma'abara he encounters his former Iraqi neighbors Salima and Yehoda. To an extent, Salima and Yehoda view the kibbutz from which Nuri comes as cautiously aspirational and a conduit for critiquing Iraqis still in ma'abarot. Commencing a story, Yehoda shouts:

> 'Wife! Those boys are savages. Two weeks ago, a girl, perhaps from your kibbutz, walked down the street here in short trousers. The whole ma'abara ran after her, the hooligans made obscene gestures with their hands, the men and women threw stones at her and spat. We had our work cut out to rescue her, I can tell you.'
> 'A girl has no business walking around in short trousers,' pronounced Salima.[112]

Yet, Salima and Yehoda's story, which also contains a kind of critique of the kibbutz, is demonstrative of their liminality. They are separate enough from other, likely Iraqis, in the ma'abara to critique them, close enough to "regional" attitudes to want to save a girl from harassment, and judgmental enough to criticize kibbutz adherents. They are aware of the ease of regional status but are unable or unwilling to give up on the value judgements and the ethos of their Iraqi life.

While contextualizing *Scapegoat* and praising its contributions, Ranen Omer-Sherman describes ambivalent Mizrahi consciousness as a rebellion, asserting,

> The youths are hurt and enraged when they overhear themselves repeatedly dismissed as "savages," "Asiatics," or primitives (as if Baghdad was not then perhaps the most cosmopolitan and sophisticated city in the Middle East). Fighting against the forces of indoctrination, these children from the *ma'abarot*, like so

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[112] Ibid.,164.

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many immigrants in other times and places struggling between worlds, between disparate ways of being, naturally rebel...[113]

Indeed, Salima and Yehoda reveal their complicated feelings for their Iraqi homeland in the following exchange:

’Nuri, it’s wonderful to see you. You remind me of the good old days,’ said Salima.

‘The good old days are over and done. This is the end,’ said Yehuda.[114]

Even through Salima and Yehoda were not kibbutz members, the exchange Nuri witnesses between them elucidates the aspect of Mizrahi consciousness that concerns the conundrum of how can one acclimate if present traumas encourage nostalgia as well as the disappointing coping mechanism of fading hope. As Nuri leaves the ma’abara and returns to the kibbutz, he exhibits similar conundrums and coping mechanisms.

“I won’t do it…I won’t be a youth leader in the ma’abara,”[115] Nuri insists upon leaving Salima and Yehoda and returning to the kibbutz. Nuri is not only frustrated by the feelings of shame activated from confronting those with his history in the ma’abara. He is also frustrated because he feels like his assigned goal of attracting more children to the kibbutz is undermined by conversations he is forced to have with parents. Due to his complaints, Nuri is able to garner help from other kibbutz members and a promise that kibbutz drafting from the ma’abara will take place through discussions with parents and children present. Yet, this new tactic raised its own issues.

As a cohort from the kibbutz made their way to the ma’abara to interface with its inhabitants, at once, the drafting began to look like a confrontation that hinged on cultural difference. As the kibbutz cohort, including Nuri, approached the parents and children of the ma’abara, their posture was almost confrontational,

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[113] Ranen Omer-Sherman. “At the Periphery of the Kibbutz: Palestinian and Mizrahi Interlopers in Utopia.” 2013. Frankel Institute Annual. Volume 2013: 36, 38.

[114] Eli Amir, *Scapegoat* (Tel Aviv, Israel: Am Oved Publishers, 2009), 165.

[115] Ibid., 166, 7.

> One afternoon the local leadership of the movement flooded the hilltop ma'abara with tousled mops of curls, the briefest of short pants, and short-sleeved blue shirts and movement badges pinned on to them. The 'regionals' chattered and giggled all the way there.

> When we approached the ma'abara I saw them already standing next to the tin shack which was the local clubhouse. Big and small, all ages. Suddenly we were standing in front of them, two camps confronting each other. We in our blue movement shirts, and they in a hodgepodge of patch clothes.

The kibbutz-ma'abara encounter, which is an encounter between regionals and new migrants, as well as the assimilable and those deemed too Oriental, reveals the uncompromising stance kibbutzim took on difference. Through their demeanor, clothing, and approach, the kibbutz members do not seem concerned with overcoming differences in order to appeal to potential members but desire to exacerbate difference in order to irrevocably separate.

As for the Iraqis in this confrontation, they are clear-sighted and staunch. Their critique of the egoistic kibbutz members is based both in culture and confusion. In terms of culture, they see the kibbutz members as a corrupting force. As Nuri describes it, 'Girls in short trousers! Shame on them!' hissed a woman in Arabic. 'Get them out of here, they'll ruin our daughters,' screamed the woman.[116] Despite being a seemingly superficial difference, the kibbutz members dress, cadence, and projection, not only because they are unyielding but because they are taken for granted as understandable, present a barrier. As previously mentioned, kibbutz members were often so idealistic they took their ethos for granted. Making matters worse, they were not only opaque about matters such as dress, but even about fundamental kibbutz matters. Like Levy experienced when her uncle introduced her to kibbutz life, Nuri highlights how his fellow kibbutz members failed to relate to the ma'abara members they were trying to influence,

> …the familiar words, so alien to this place, buzzed in the depths of my ears: 'pioneering,' 'socialism,' 'solidarity,' 'one nation,' 'our movement.' The silence didn't last long. Mutters, noises and, in the end, shouts, which became increasingly rude and explicit:

> 'What's he on about? What's all this rubbish?' And they rose impatiently to their feet.[117]

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[116] Ibid., 169.
[117] Ibid.

The failure of kibbutz members, time and again, even when it comes to the foundations of their lifestyle, is that not only are they insensitive to ignorance, they are insensitive to innocent confusion. Kibbutz elitists were so blinded by the supremacy of their commitments, they were not able to be compassionate about the stretching it would take for Iraqis in ma'abarot to reject the ways of belonging from their homeland in order to adopt ones commensurate with the kibbutz.

The confrontation between kibbutz leaders and Iraqis in the ma'abara took place not just because of Nuri's complaints, but because of help received from his Ashkenazi kibbutz guide Sonia. Throughout the work, Nuri's relationship with Sonia mirrors a trope also insisted upon by Shamash with his guide Tamar: that Ashkenazi women kibbutz guides are more amenable (at least to men and groups) then male kibbutz guides. When Nuri returns from his visit with Salima and Yehoda he is called to meet with Nahche, one of the individuals in charge of the youth movement. Nuri is able to voice his frustration about being forced to draft from the ma'abara to Nahche but admits that Sonia's beauty and presence silences him. Following this assertion, Nuri concludes, "Nahche looked helplessly at Sonia, who withheld her special smile and did not hide her satisfaction with my obstinacy. In the end we both gave in to her. She decided that we should hold a meeting with the parents and children in the ma'abara first, and only after that invite the children to the kibbutz."[118] Yet, this instance isn't even the most vivid example of Nuri generating a narrative wherein despite the racism and discrimination of the kibbutz, Ashkenazi women are a kind of savior or intermediary.

Closer to his arrival in the kibbutz, Nuri and fellow Iraqi youth, while partying raucously in their kibbutz's clubhouse following an Iraqi wedding, were accosted by male Ashkenazi

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[118] Ibid., 167.

members of the kibbutz. As men and women danced together and Iraqi music was loudly played, a male "regional" frustrated by the party hissed, "We wanted to turn them into human beings and just listen to them: howling like a pack of jackals."[119] Predictably racist in its stereotyping and essentializing, in this instant, the Iraqis are stubborn in their response. A young woman named Rina in particular screamed, "Damn them and all the "regionals!," before rushing, "…to the middle of the dance floor, this time in a belly-dance, and not one of her favorite folk dances."[120] While the male villain in this anecdote racially profiled the Iraqis, they are defiant in protecting their culture.

Given the persistent nature of the discrimination Iraqis faced in the kibbutz, their responses were not always so definitive. Nuri reveals that sometimes the discrimination did provoke a kind of cognitive dissonance, one that mirrors treatment Iraqis would receive from different kinds of guards. Discussing Iraqis' reaction to being mocked by Ashkenazi kibbutz members Nuri expresses, "We felt a nagging need to examine ourselves and come to terms with something we did not really understand. A sense of sin oppressed our souls, as if we were outcasts."[121] Yet, Nuri concludes the conundrum of how to address Iraqis' place in kibbutz culture with the summation, "We closed ranks and doors, we became a tight, defiant group standing our ground and fighting for our lives against our persecutors."[122] He then proceeds to suggest that some measure of the Iraqis' strength to stand up for themselves came from Sonia's interventions.

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[119] Ibid., 118.
[120] Ibid., 118.
[121] Ibid., 119.
[122] Ibid.

Describing a fight between the same regional man who previously criticized the Iraqis' party and Sonia, Nuri writes,

> 'Do something about your bloody little Arabs do you hear? Do something! Their caterwauling is unbearable! Nobody can get a night's sleep anymore!' Sonia went white with anger and answered him on the spot:

> 'You won't insult them or the Arabs either. What do you mean "bloody" Arabs"? Is that what you learnt in the movement?'[123]

Through this exchange, Nuri reveals that the dominant culture message in the kibbutz is somewhat inconsistent, at least as he experiences. Ashkenazi male kibbutz guides are the most rigid in upholding kibbutz culture as separate and better than Iraqi culture. Women guides on the other hand, are supposedly more thoughtful, protective, and able to occupy the role of the moral compass. While the women authored memoirs of this chapter don't mirror Nuri's construct, it is elucidating, nevertheless. When Sonia retorts not only by defending Arabs but asking accusingly if it's the movement that taught her interlocutor to be so hateful, she is embodying the kibbutz ideal and upholding its purity. The kibbutz movement itself and the regional interlocutor might not be as pure, but Sonia represents the possibility that the hope of the kibbutz is not lost. In so doing, her actions suggest that the Iraqi kibbutz youth, even as they face racist setbacks, just need to try harder to conform.

In the end, *Scapegoat* contributes to a Mizrahi consciousness that has been unsettled by the kibbutz. In the face of racism, Nuri strives to assimilate while also being defiant. He is ashamed of his ma'abara and Iraqi past while he's also defensive of it. He is critical of the regionals, but he also takes solace in some of them and yearns for their ease. In the novel's final scene, Nuri returns to his family who is still in a ma'abara. He learns that his brother and sister are listless. With access to only limited and insufficient education in the transit camp, the

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[123] Ibid., 119-120.

siblings are uncertain and unexcited about their futures.[124] Incredulous at their apathy, Nuri yells

at his family, asking why they are not trying harder to remedy their ills. His father yells, "There

aren't proper classes here, my son! Not like in Baghdad," and Nuri cries, "On the kibbutz we

have committees for everything—social problems, education, work," to which his father

responds, "This is a ma'abara my son!"[125] All at once, Nuri's frameworks (the Iraqi and the

kibbutz) fail him. He is not naïve or unmoved, just ill-equipped. Nuri's circumstances highlight

once more, that kibbutz life not only racially oppressed Iraqi Jews, it also continuously made

them reconfront the trauma of their migration, reject the notions of belonging that worked for

them in Iraq, and left them unmoored in Israel.

Conclusion

　　　　Earnestly believing that kibbutz idealism included them and responding incredulously

when racism interrupted this belief, stemmed from Iraqi women's experiences of not being

racially marginalized in their country of origin. Among other things, Iraqi women variously

thought that their nationalism, Zionism, and amenability in the face of difficult migratory

circumstances, would ensure a racial framework that gave them something akin to equity. The

kibbutz, as an initiatory site of migration, provides an instructive window for viewing Iraqi

women due to the way it incubated racist behavior toward new migrants. Furthermore, the

kibbutz's failure to deliver on its promises underscores the limits of parochial idealism. That an

idealized society failed to incorporate Iraqi Jewish women further demonstrates the insufficiency

of explanations that depend on culture to justify exclusion. The systemic nature of discrimination

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[124] Ibid., 216.
[125] Ibid., 217.

grounded in social difference, an insight that is a quality of a race analysis however, encapsulates not only marginalization, but its intricacies and effects.

The systemic racist treatment of Iraqi Jewish women was perpetuated in kibbutzim, first, as Iraqi women became disoriented in kibbutzim as they were separated from their families, interacted with as if they were racially inferior because of their purported backwardness, and learned that belonging was only especially ensured for Ashkenazi males and "old-timers." To compound this initial experienced, the women were then disappointed. Their disappointment began to calcify an internalized question of their racial inferiority. In kibbutzim, Iraqi women became disappointed in their parents and their impoverished circumstances as well as in the promise that kibbutz life would allow them to assimilate along with their Ashkenazi counterparts. Finally, due to the groundwork laid by disorientation and the racially oppressed subjectivity cemented by disappointment, Iraqi women formulated a Mizrahi consciousness. The kibbutz did not necessarily encourage the women in this chapter to have a radical Mizrahi consciousness that was oppositional to the state. Rather, their Mizrahi consciousness took the shape of being defensive of their Arabic but not shameful of it, becoming advocates for Mizrahim as racial minorities, and maintaining enough outrage to articulate mistreatment for posterity.

Because these racial divisions were encouraged in such foundational sites as the kibbutz and the transit camp, Iraqi Jewish women developed an embodied sense of non-belonging. Racializations they had previously learned as operative in Iraq no longer held purchase and they were left somewhat unmoored. Their Mizrahi consciousness, no matter the actions it inspired, was shaped their knowledge that Iraqi society did not racially exclude them while Israeli society did.

Conclusion

The summer of 2020 proved to be a tipping point for the treatment of race in modern Middle East Studies and modern Middle East history. Inspired by the organizing of black activists and support from allies and accomplices during the protests touched off by the murder of George Floyd, a black man, by a white police officer, as well as general police brutality primarily against black people and people of color in the United States, hesitancies about addressing race in Middle East Studies were vividly challenged like never before. Inspired further by the recognition of our need to intentionally connect due to the social isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the access to one another across space and time facilitated by online platforms, panels sponsored by universities brought scholars together virtually to discuss topics like racialization, racism, anti-blackness, and intersectional uprisings in Middle East contexts. With the values of justice, timeliness, and connectedness foregrounded, scholars were able to discuss race in the Middle East in more unencumbered ways.

In one such virtual panel titled "Racialization and Racism in the Middle East: Historical Perspectives," hosted by Brown University, anthropologist of women's activism in the Middle East Nadje Al-Ali, introduced the event by stating that the discussions it was touching on were long overdue and that inspiration for the panel came from summer 2020 events as well as solidarity with the Black Lives Matter Movement. Al-Ali also thoughtfully offered that while it's relatively easy to express solidarity by way of signatures on petitions, it is more difficult to do so "at home," referring to the Middle East and its diasporas.[1] She concluded by saying that a panel like the present one was just the beginning.

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[1] Nadje Al-Ali, "Racialization and Racism in the Middle East: Historical Perspectives," (online discussion, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Brown University, November 17, 2020). Link.

New Explorations and Evidence

Al-Ali's message that exploring race, racialization, and racism is multi-dimensional and unending is a point well taken by this dissertation. In this work, I've been motivated by the possibility that consideration from the standpoint of race can generate new questions about modern Middle East history generally and Jews in the Middle East specifically, reawaken questions seemingly settled, and offer new perspectives on answers given to these questions. I made women's memoirs the fulcrum of my dissertation for two main reasons. First, so that they would not be thought of as afterthoughts or appendages to the story of Iraqi Jewish belonging and racialization, as they are often treated in hitherto histories. Second, gender analytics have taught me to consider the process of making social categories rather than considering them essentially. Moreover, the study of gender in modern Middle Eastern history has evolved in a way that studying race has not. While gender was once synonymous with women, gender is now understood analytically wherein it assists scholars in seeing power imbalances based on constructed sexual difference in all aspects of life. The study of race, however, has not consistently or for a long period of time benefitted from the same sort of sustained trajectory. For all of these reasons, women's memoires, letters, interviews, testimonies, and biographical sketches offered not only vivid examples to analyze, but exemplary methodologies for me to follow.

These new perspectives, along with the evidence I use, speak to this dissertation's implications. Regarding the aforementioned "new questions that could be generated or reawakened," my dissertation was concerned with a number that began with Iraqi women's discrimination in Israel. I wondered if their systemic marginalization as Mizrahi women could be understood beyond "anything but race" frameworks and single-axis difference explanations. If

so, I was curious to know how race might have affected their belonging in Iraq. Attempting to articulate Iraqi women's belonging in Iraq beyond coexistence narratives and their lack of acclimation in Israel beyond accidental, momentary, or unavoidable discrimination by way of migration, also motivated me. Finally, I wanted to know if a link between Iraq and Israel could be established beyond previous narratives that foreground culture or nostalgia. The answers I found were multiple and lengthy but summaries of them are possible. The contentions of this dissertation are essentially three-fold. First, social difference, specifically racialization, mattered differently in Iraq than in Israel. Second, Iraqi Jewish women brought the race and gender logics they inherited in Iraq with them to Israel. Third, interlocking systems of race and gender suppression allow for topics once considered to be settled, such as Jews' coexistence in Iraq, Iraqi Jews treatment as migrants to Israel, to be reexamined and further specified. I will elaborate on each of these contentions below.

Contentions

As was shown in Chapter One "Some of Us Are Both: Jewish Women and Coalitions in 1940s Iraq," and Chapter Two "'What Kind of Agreement Was Even Possible': The Battle Between Zionist Imperial Whiteness and The Iraqi Communist Party," Jews not only belonged in Iraq coalitionally, they were also exposed to multiple avenues of racialization by way of colonialism, religion, Iraqi and Arab nationalism, Zionism, and Communism. As exploration of the anti-Jewish pogrom known as the Farhud showed, Iraqi Jewish women remained in Iraq after 1941, not because of vague coexistence commitments, but because their survivability depended on them recognizing social differences as necessary for bonding rather than something to be gotten over. While Iraqi society fomented the Farhud, it did also foment the possibility of this

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coalitional belonging. When it came to Zionism and Communism, adherents to both possessed particular awarenesses of race. Even though Communists did not favor racial belonging in the name of belonging to the proletariat, Jewish women still possessed the ability to hold many differences at once. Those who were more rejecting, sometimes converted and sometimes remained in Iraq after 1951. The Iraqi Zionist movement showed the extent to which racial hierarchies could be transported in the name of national cohesiveness. As both of these movements came up against the end of the 1940s and the increasing shadow of the Israeli state which was attempting to speak for all Jews, the aforementioned coalitional identity became harder to actualize in Iraq, although not completely forgotten in Israel.

Iraqi Jewish women brought their understandings of race and difference with them to Israel as I show in Chapter Three "Zionist Racism from the Standpoint of its Jewish Victims: Iraqi Jews, Israeli Immigration Camps, and the Construction of Racial Difference." In one of the sites that was supposed to welcome them and incorporate them into Israeli life, the transit camp, Iraqi women faced racism and racialization. The way race was formed and offered in the camps centered around socio-economic status, medical concerns, and education. These concerns narrowed racialization and difference possibilities to the point where Iraqi women were now excluded in ways they were never in Iraq. They had left Iraq somewhat randomly and never forgetting many parts of it. Finally, in Chapter Four "The Evidence of Racialized Experience: Kibbutzim and Israeli Immigration Sites as Crucibles of Discrimination," Iraqi Jewish women experience the racism of living in the kibbutz as shocking not just because the site should have incorporated them but did the opposite, but also because it was supposed to be an idealized, perfected site by design. Despite the kibbutz being disappointing and disorienting, it was also

mobilizing of a Mizrahi identity. We know this identity to now be true, but its story, in particular its historical gender dimensions, remains worthy of articulation, as the chapter demonstrates.

<u>Wider Relevance and Implications</u>

In terms of how this dissertation fits into existing scholarly literature, its broad value lies in being able to cross the boundaries of Middle East Studies and Jewish Studies. Stitching these two fields together is made possible not just through the study of Arab Jews, but a race analysis as well. As Alma Heckman has suggested, Jews might be one of the only minorities to have extended across the expanse of the modern Middle East, from Morocco to Iran.[2] Their presence warrants their study, but so too does their existence as minorities given that so much of the scholarship of modern Middle Eastern nation states centers around how much they were able to incorporate and balance different identity elements that were sometimes at odds, in the name of a larger subjectivity and for their survivability. While both Middle East and Jewish Studies might have historically felt like scholars momentarily projected as belonging to one or the other were exclusively committed and taken care of there, this assumption is hopefully changing. A possible way forward for this change, could be found in the link that the exploration of race, racism, and racialization provides.

Paralleling those Middle East Studies scholars and institutions that engaged with race beyond doubt following the events of the summer of 2020, Jewish Studies scholars and centers were motivated towards a similar exploration. "A Teach-In on Jewish Studies, Race, and Anti-Racism," hosted online by UCLA and bringing together various Jewish Studies scholars,

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[2] Alma Rachel Heckman, "Nuancing the Narrative: Teaching the Jewish Modern Middle East," in *Understanding and Teaching the Modern Middle East*, ed. Omnia El Shakry (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2020), 283.

exemplified this. Historian of Sephardic Jewry, Sarah Abrevaya Stein opened the discussion by insisting that the event was prompted by the recognition that as racism and anti-blackness are structural, Jewish Studies scholars have an obligation to work against these occurrences in scholarship and the classroom.[3] With both Jewish and Middle Eastern Studies having now stated a commitment to exploring race close to home and in perpetuity, they are perhaps joined now methodologically in new and promising way.

My dissertation demonstrates this potential promise by encapsulating the methodology. In my work, I was motivated by a nagging feeling that Iraqi Jewish women were racialized subjects in Israel, but they weren't being discussed as such. The gravity of this void, I've demonstrated, was that systemic discrimination against Iraqi Jewish women had not been properly contextualized. It was then necessary to ask if racialization occurred in Iraq as well, which seemed likely given the presence of colonial power and nationalism. Showing that many of the differences held by Jewish women in Iraq did not totally isolate them there, then provided a noteworthy contrast with Israel. In this way, not only was systemic belonging or non-belonging by way of race explanations explored, but so too was Jewishness, gender, Arab nationalism, Iraqi nationalism, and Zionism—all topics that are or have the potential to imminently present in both Jewish and Middle East Studies.

If the broadest implication of this work is that two fields could be linked by way of a race analysis, then a way forward is to sharpen this analysis. Beyond the continued honing of my scholarship, which this dissertation is an example of, it's also important to not forget discussions where theories originate and how they travel. By way of Critical Race Studies, I have understood

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[3] Sarah Abrevaya Stein, "A Teach-In on Jewish Studies, Race, and Anti-Racism," (online discussion, Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies, UCLA, October 6, 2020). Link.

that racialization needs to be constituted in a specific time and place and must be understood as a

reconstituted process rather than essentialized. Noting this origin continuously is a first step.

Secondly, it should also be noted that in contrast to some that assert that when theory travels it is

blunted and its analytic usefulness devalued, I agree that, "…rather than domesticating or

enervating theories, movement might radicalize and reinvigorate them."[4] Thus, as theories of

race, racialization, and racism, that are perhaps borrowed, are used within Middle East and

Jewish Studies, there is reason to be hopeful and propelled, rather than anxious and

downtrodden. In a small way, this dissertation exemplifies the hope of theory traveling in a

multitude of ways.

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[4] Devon W. Carbado, "Colorblind Intersectionality," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38, no. 4 (June 1, 2013): 812.

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