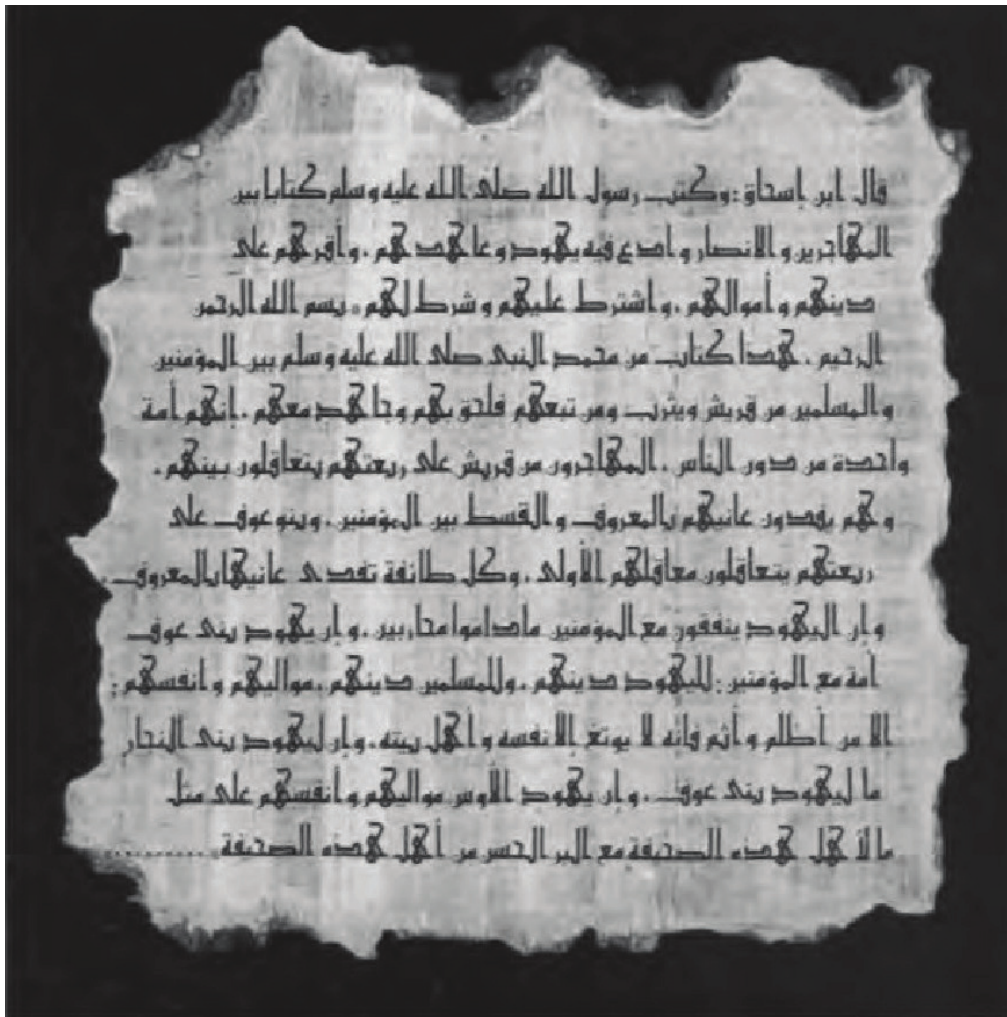


# DISCORD IN ZION

CONFLICT BETWEEN ASHKENAZI &  
SEPHARDI JEWS IN ISRAEL

G. N. GILADI



This book, by a native Sephardi Jew from Israel, details the sad story of the internal conflict in that country between the two great branches of Jewry: the Sephardim, principally from the region of Islam, and the Ashkenazim, Jews who originate from Eastern Europe and who are the main proponents of Zionism. Mr Giladi details the harmony which generally was a feature of the Sephardi community under the protection of Islam through the ages and reviews the great contributions of Jewish medieval thought and scholarship from this period. He suggests that a solution to the present impasse is that the Sephardi Jews should reassert their ancient pact with their Muslim neighbours, whose history and homeland they share, in order to establish a just peace in the Middle East. The argument is advanced to show how, within modern Israel, the ruling Zionist elite has sought and maintained control of the country to the detriment of native Arab Jews, and how the aspirations of Sephardi newcomers were neglected. The author details how they form the bulk of the population, how they have been denied proper representation and equal opportunities in education, housing, employment, the state institutions, and how they have been culturally oppressed. Frequently impassioned, this is a carefully researched and annotated study, which brings to a generally heedless Western audience the class and racial contradictions within modern Israel. This work will demand the attention of Jew and Arab and all interested in the society, history and future of the Holy Land. As a child and young man Gideon N Giladi lived and worked on a number of kibbutzim and has witnessed the events of Palestine since the time of the British Mandate. He was educated at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem where he gained an MA in Middle Eastern Studies. He has worked as a full-time Middle East correspondent on various Hebrew- and Arabic-language newspapers in Israel with many research-based articles specialising in the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinians in Israel. He continued his research work as head of history in various British institutions. He now lives in England, teaching and writing.

The front jacket illustration is a modern interpretation of the 'ahd (covenant) of the Prophet Muhammad, which guaranteed the status of the Jewish community in Islam.



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## Foreword

I am a Sephardi Israeli whose family has lived in the Middle East from time immemorial. In my youth I belonged to the most 'pioneering' section of the Jewish community and lived on various kibbutzim which were the power base of the Israeli Labour Party. Although I suffered occasional racial discrimination, I was led to believe that we were gradually building a just and caring society based on human and Jewish brotherhood. I even neglected my Arabic language and Middle Eastern culture for the sake of 'unity' and in the desire to be 'accepted' or 'included'. I was wrong.

My first doubts started in 1948 when I witnessed the mass expulsion of Palestinians, men, women and children, most of whom did not take part in the fighting. I also saw the last living inhabitants of Deir Yasin, paraded along Jaffa Street in Jerusalem, before they were shot.

The next shock occurred in the early 1950s when Israel reduced hundreds of thousands of Sephardim from neighbouring countries to utter destitution in terrible camp conditions, while Ashkenazi immigrants from Europe were given comfortable accommodation and jobs.

As a student of Arabic studies of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, I was appointed special correspondent on the daily Hebrew newspaper Al-Hamishmar and the Arabic weekly Al-Mirsad. This work enabled me to talk to many Palestinians, citizens of Israel, who were ruined by the laws which confiscated most of their property and put them under military rule.

Continual research since then and the collection of a large number of documents have propelled me to the conclusion that Sephardi

Jews and Palestinians share not only the same language, culture and background, but also the fate of being wronged by the Zionist settlement of Palestine.

Israeli propaganda repeatedly harps upon the acquisition of consumer goods by Sephardim and Ashkenazim (and Palestinians) in Israel but forgets to note that Ashkenazim from poverty stricken eastern European ghettos have fared far better in relative terms and that the material gap between previously comfortably off natives and the incoming settlers is widening constantly. There is never a positive reference to the world we have lost.

This study will show that the preferential treatment which the Russian immigrants are now (1990) receiving in housing and employment at the material level, and an instant acceptance of their outlook and values on the cultural plane is nothing new: it has been institutionalised since the beginning of Zionist activities in Palestine in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and always at the expense of Sephardim and Palestinians. Its complement is the systematic denigration and degradation of the local peoples and this book attempts to provide a record of this.

Gideon N Giladi  
London, 1990

## Introduction

The Jews of Israel can be divided into two ethnic groups. The first is the Ashkenazi community, made up of the Zionist colonist minority who emigrated to Palestine mainly from Eastern Europe, and also from Central and Western Europe and America. This community represents the summit of the Zionist ruling establishment's hierarchy, the overwhelming majority in the Cabinet, Parliament, the top civil service and the upper echelons of the trade unions, private and public capital, the Jewish Agency, the military establishment, the cultural elite, the leadership of the police and secret services, the media etc. As a society, this community may be seen to be arrogant, believing in its qualitative and cultural superiority to the Palestinian Arab people and the Arab Islamic Community, including those Jews who came from the Arab countries. Even the 'progressives' who oppose racism can be characterised by their paternalistic attitude towards the inhabitants of the area. The second community is that of the Arab and Islamic Jews or 'Sephardim', representing the majority of Israelis. Some of them are the original inhabitants of Palestine. Religion apart, this community forms an integral part of the Arab nation in its culture and language, ethics, literary models, traditions, homeland and history. Members of this community had lived since antiquity in the region which was to become Dar al-Islam<sup>1</sup> for hundreds of years before the Muslim conquests which liberated them from the burden of the Sasanid and Byzantine empires. In the Arabian Peninsula, and particularly the Yemen, Jews had lived with Arabs since the dawn of history, becoming Arabised.

This community had evolved a highly developed and prosperous



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urban social structure consisting of powerful merchants, professionals, traders and a large stratum of artisans. The Ashkenazi settlers reduced the bulk of this community to a pool of cheap labour. Subsequently the lot of their children and grandchildren, who were born in Israel, has worsened economically and culturally. The ruling establishment has managed to destroy the social cohesion and ethical values of this community, having already eliminated Arab/Islamic culture and the use of classical Arabic. This was effected by means of a policy seen as built on racism, malevolence, hypocrisy and exploitation of religious sensitivities. Since this community has no homeland except the Islamic homeland, its fate is inexorably tied to the fate of the Islamic community.

Thousands of books have been written about the Palestinian problem and Zionist oppression but the world knows little about the policy of racial discrimination against the Sephardim in Israel because of Zionism's pervading influence. The establishment knew that the dissemination of the facts of the case would damage its reputation in liberal, humanist circles in the West and would block the flow of contributions from Sephardi Jews now living in the West, of whom there are 300,000 in France alone. Zionist spokesmen created the image that the Jews of the Arab world emigrated to Israel because of Arab 'anti-semitism', and that the state now spends billions on 'educating and civilising' since they lived in 'savage and primitive countries.'

The Arab countries generally overlook the problem since they are largely unaware of the cultural differences between the Arab Jews and the Ashkenazis. Sectarian Arabs say 'they are all Jews, and they are all enemies', thereby thinking to have dealt with the problem. At a time when Israel spends millions on intelligence operations to study the sectarian contradictions in the Middle East so that she may exploit them at will, as happened for example in Lebanon and in northern Iraq, the Arab intelligence agencies do not pay much attention to what is happening in Israeli society. Perhaps this is due to a lack of acknowledgement that the majority of the Jews of Israel are not 'foreign settlers', but from the Islamic world. It is my belief that understanding of Israel's sectarian conflict, acknowledgement of the existence of these wronged neighbours and the support of their struggle can bring only credit to the Palestinian people and the Arab nation.

The main subject of this study is the racial discrimination which Sephardim suffer in their employment, housing, education, parliamentary representation, health and social services etc, which

has led to popular uprisings and to growing identification with the Palestinian struggle for self-determination.

One of the first problems is what to call this Jewish society which lived, and still lives, in the Islamic world. Israel and its media call it 'the oriental sects' (note the plural). Israel does not recognise the unity of culture of these Jews any more than it recognises the unity of the 'Arab Nation' or the 'Islamic Umma'.<sup>2</sup> They also use the term 'oriental' to imply their 'Western' 'superiority', although most of them originated from Eastern Europe. We have used a term familiar in the Arab countries, 'Arab Jews', even though there are many Jews who immigrated from Islamic countries which are not Arab, such as Iran and Turkey. There are others who came from Arab Spain after the fall of the Arab state (1492) when they were expelled along with their Muslim brethren. The Ottoman state took them in and settled them in the Balkans and Turkey (and in Palestine and Syria). These Spanish Jews from the Balkans no longer spoke Arabic, but their culture remained Arab. Therefore, we prefer to term all the Jews from the Arab, Islamic and Balkan countries 'the Jews of Islam'. There is another major reason: starting with the founding of the first Islamic state in Madina and the promulgation of the 'Community Covenant'<sup>3</sup> by the Prophet himself and up until the fall of the Ottoman state, these communities were considered part and parcel of the Islamic Umma (see chapter one). In Israel most of the Arab Jews called themselves 'Sephardim', i.e. Spanish Jews, for the Spanish Jewish community in Palestine before the Zionist immigration represented the strongest community of the Arab Jews. The Europeans used the same term to describe them since the Spanish Jews were the main Jewish group to have contact with Europeans during the Middle Ages.

The second problem is that of the exact proportion of Sephardim. Worldwide they are approximately 20 percent of Jews.<sup>4</sup> In Palestine, according to documents used by Eliahu Eliachar, one of the leaders of the community, they represented the majority of the Jews in Palestine before the Ashkenazi Zionist immigration, but in the face of Ashkenazi immigration from 1881 on, they dropped to 30 percent by the end of the British Mandate in 1948.<sup>5</sup> However, immigration of Jews from the Arab and Islamic countries since 1948 increased their number to 65 percent of the Jewish population in the 1970s.<sup>6</sup> This statistic accords with that published in Sartre's magazine, *Les Temps Modernes*.<sup>7</sup>

Since the seventies Sephardim numbers have increased to the point where they are now 70 percent. This is supported by two

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factors. Firstly their rate of natural increase is two and a half times greater than that of the Ashkenazis, and secondly the rate of emigration of Ashkenazis from Israel to the West and particularly to the United States. The number of 'descenders', as those who emigrate are called in Israel, is one of the security secrets of the state. However, Jewish Agency sources and the Israeli press have estimated them to number at least half a million since 1948, and Yasser Arafat has estimated there to be 800,000 of them in America alone - compared with a population of 3.5 million Israeli Jews.

Israel recognises that the Sephardim form the majority, but they do not disseminate the exact official numbers for 'security' reasons, due to the fact that the figure 70 percent might encourage these people to assert their rights. For this reason government statisticians have presented a picture which is deceptive and confusing. They have divided Jews as follows:

1. Those born in Israel to a father born in Israel. In 1985 these were 18.5 percent of the total Jewish population. This group contains both Ashkenazim and Sephardim.
2. Those born in Asia (that is the Arab and Islamic countries of Asia) and their children - 21.3 percent.
3. Those born in Africa (countries of the Maghreb and Egypt) and their children - 22 percent.
4. Those born in Europe and America and their children (this group contains Ashkenazim, Sephardim from the Balkans and Ashkenazi Jews from South Africa) - 38.2 percent.<sup>9</sup>

The official statistics estimate that in the academic year 1969-70, the percentage of Sephardi pupils in elementary school was 61 percent, that of those with a father born in Palestine was 11.9 percent. This latter group is a mix of both communities.<sup>10</sup> If we take into account that a section of the Sephardi pupils generally truanted (see chapter seven), Ashkenazi emigration from Israel and the natural rate of increase of the Sephardim, we can conclude that they may well exceed 70 percent of the total Jewish population. If we add together the numbers of Palestinians in the territories incorporated in 1948, which is 17 percent, the inhabitants of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan, occupied Arab Jerusalem and south Lebanon, the percentage of Ashkenazi settlers and their children who were born in Palestine is similar to the percentage of white settlers in South Africa. This means that the overwhelming majority is Arab in culture.

Official policy has claimed that it is transforming the hotch-potch of Jews into one society, racially and culturally. However, the

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practice continues to strengthen the European settlers at the expense of the Palestinians and the native Jews and is epitomized by the suppression of Arab culture and the extirpation of the Classical Arabic language. In addition, the Ashkenazi community as a whole has opposed integration, believing in their racial and cultural superiority, and 80 percent reject mixed marriages. This has led to a polarisation of the two communities. The Jews from Russia, Poland and Hungary etc. have fused together to form one community, and the Jews who immigrated from Iran in the east to Morocco in the west form the other community - as they did in the era of the Islamic Empires. Despite the fact that the generation which has studied in Zionist schools cannot read or write Arabic (see chapter seven), colloquial Arabic is still alive, especially in the home. To summarise this point, integration can only take place between groups who have equal rights and duties, thereby allowing mutual respect and tolerance to prevail. This integration formerly existed in the Islamic world.

Finally there is an obvious parallel between the cultural and economic schisms. The prevailing colour in the capitalist class is that of the white European, whereas the prevailing colour in the working and poorer classes is that of the dark Arab. The combination of the ethnic and economic gaps leads to increasing polarisation from one generation to the next and pushes Israel towards disintegration and a social explosion.

This study is divided into ten chapters, the first one comprising a summary of the amicable relations between the Arab nation and the Sephardim, AM al-Dhimmah,<sup>11</sup> since the era of the Prophet, apart from some anomalous events. The creative cultural, economic, social, political and even military cooperation are emphasised. We also allude to the influence of Islamic civilisation and religion on Judaism and Hebrew literature in the lands of Islam. We try to refute the Zionist claims about 'oppression' of the Jews which have been nothing short of character assassination of Arabs and Muslims, and also disprove extremist sectarian Arab charges that the Jews in the Arab world are 'a foreign Zionist enemy group'. The second chapter covers the first clash between Palestinian Jews and the Ashkenazi settlers (1881-1918), with particular reference to the isolation of these settlers from the rest of Palestinian Jewish society, and how their monopolisation of Jewish financial resources for Zionist colonisation led to a deterioration of the economic situation in the community of local Jews. Additionally the matter of the immigration and exploitation of the Jewish Yemenis and the



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contempt with which they were treated by the settlers is considered. The third chapter summarises the founding of Zionist autonomy with the aid of the British Mandate and how this autonomy prevailed over the native Jews in Palestine. We have tried to analyse the reasons for the failure of the traditional leadership of the Palestinian Jews. In the fourth chapter Jewish resistance to the Zionist Movement in the Arab countries and participation in liberation movements is examined. Factors which led to mass emigration are analysed. We have summarised the sectarian troubles which have facilitated immigration into Israel. These have been exploited to shift the balance of forces in the Middle East in favour of the Zionist entity. Mention is made in this connection of the methods the Israelis used, such as smuggling, terrorism, bribery, deceit and imposture etc. We describe the catastrophic conditions in the displaced persons camps in Aden, Marseilles and Morocco. Chapter five, one of the larger chapters, takes up the tragic conditions of the immigrants in Israeli camps, 'development towns', moshavim [cooperative villages] and the 'black belt' - that is in the slum neighbourhoods of the cities - which has led to their being transformed into a 'working class', and manpower for the army. The sixth chapter tackles the absence of representation for the Sephardi Jews in parliament, the cabinet, the upper echelons of government and trade union, economic and military establishments. This chapter makes clear that the few members of parliament and ministers that this community boasts have been appointed by Ashkenazi settlers and do not represent their community. Chapter seven analyses the policy of de-education and de-skilling, and the extirpation of this community's Arab culture. The eighth chapter looks at the racist viewpoints which are hostile to the Sephardi Jews, considering them 'a primitive, savage and base group'. These opinions find their origin in the blind hatred of anything Arab or Islamic. It also discusses the opinion of the extreme left and the communists in the Ashkenazi settler community. Chapter nine describes the speedy economic development in Israel, founded on the exploitation of these immigrants and the confiscation of Palestinian property. It also deals with the socio-economic polarisation between the settlers and the native Jews (and the Palestinian people). Finally, chapter ten details the popular uprisings and the bloody clashes between the native Jews and the Israeli forces of repression, and the appearance of consciousness groups who are joining the Arab Palestinian people and the Palestine Liberation Organization in support of its rights, particularly that of self-

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determination and the setting up of an independent state. They call for a joint struggle in a common cause.

Some British documents have been used, but we have depended especially on Zionist documentation, Zionist books in Hebrew, Israeli periodicals, mentioned either in this work or its bibliography, and last but not least, we have made use of personal experience and that of friends and relatives.

## NOTES

- 1 The term generally used for those lands where Islam is the preponderant religion, literally meaning 'the abode of Islam'.
- 2 The Umma is the supra-national concept of the spiritual unity of the community of believers.
- 3 A social contract setting down the forms for human relations.
- 4 Smooha, 1978, 281.
- 5 Eliachar, 1980, 291 and *Les Temps Modernes* (Arabic translation 1981), Albaz, 192.
- 6 Eliachar, 1980, 460.
- 7 S. Trigano, 10.
- 8 Haaretz, 3 July 1987.
- 9 Statistical Abstract of Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1986, 65.
- 10 Statistical Abstract of Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1980, 595.
- 11 People of the covenant or obligation, a term first applied only to Ahl al-Kitab, i.e. the Jews, Christians and Sabians, and later interpreted to include Zoroastrians and others.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Historical Harmony Between Jews And Muslims

In the political struggle between Zionism and Arabs, the former exploit the Prophet's quarrel with some of the Jewish tribes of Madina as well as some of the grievances of the Jews in certain parts of the Arab world. Thus we must begin this study with a brief review of the history of Jews within the Islamic community. Harmony and good-neighbourliness had prevailed in the relations between Muslims and Jews (and Christians) in the Islamic world ever since the Islamic conquests. If there were sectarian grievances, they only occurred on the fringes of the Arab world. It is impossible to appreciate the tolerance of Islam toward the 'people of the book' (the Jews and Christians) unless one contrasts the lot of the Jews under the aegis of Islam to that of the Ashkenazi Jews under the Christian states from the Middle Ages until the fall of Nazi Germany. Despite Ashkenazi Jews' pride in being Europeans, Christian Europe dealt harshly with them, oppressed them, drove them from one country to another and finally built death camps for them. This animosity was not just religious but racial, for the Nazis even killed Jews who had embraced Christianity.

#### THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

In spite of its religious overtones, the quarrel between the Jews of Madina and the Prophet was political and economic, and was local rather than universal; it only concerned the Jews of Madina. It was of a temporary nature and ended with the defeat of the Jewish tribe Banu Qurayza and the exile of the Jewish tribes of Banu Nadir and

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al-Qaynuqa' from Madina. The Jewish leadership in Madina was quite affluent, owning fertile land suitable for wheat, barley, vegetables and date palms. In addition, it had great political sway in the balance of power between the two squabbling tribes of Madina, the Aws and the Khazraj. Since most of the Jews had fought on their side, the Aws had previously defeated the Khazraj. Thus, when the Prophet reached Madina surrounded by the poor Emigrants (orphans and widows), the Jewish leadership feared for its wealth and power. This was the basis of the quarrel which ended in victory for the Prophet.

In 628 the Prophet conquered Khaybar, made peace with the Jews there and offered them security. Thereafter no dispute occurred between them. He also offered security to the Jews of Wadi al-Qura and Tayma. They joined the Islamic community with equal rights and obligations according to the Community Covenant, 'Ahd al-Umma. The historian al-Maqdisi who visited this area in the tenth century tells us that most of its inhabitants were still Jews.

In October 630 the Muslims advanced towards Tabuk to confront the Byzantines. As the conquering Muslim forces passed by Wadi al-Qura, they were greeted by the Jews and provided with water and provisions. Subsequently the Prophet expressed his gratitude to them and offered them special privileges, including a yearly stipend. When he reached Tabuk the Prophet concluded various treaties with the Jewish and Christians inhabitants of al-Jawf, some of whom embraced Islam. The Prophet offered security to Yuhanna, the Christian King of Aylah, and to three Jewish villages, al-Jarba, Adhruh (in eastern Jordan) and Maqna on the Red Sea coast. Then he sent letters to the Yemen and Oman granting security to the Jews and he advised his messengers not to force Islam upon them.

There was no religious dispute in principle, for the Quran recognises the sanctity of the Torah, and equality between Muslims and the People of the Book, since they all believe in God, do good works and receive their recompense from Him. It recognises the right of the protected communities to security: 'Lo! those who believe (in that which is revealed unto thee, Muhammad), and those who are Jews and Christians and Sabaeans - whosoever believeth in Allah and the Last Day and doeth right - surely their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve' (sura II, 62 and V, 69). This verse was revealed twice in almost identical terms because of its importance in the cause of tolerance towards the revealed religions and the rejection of blind sectarianism. For this reason the Prophet and the caliphs



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did not compel the Jews and Christians to embrace Islam.

It is true that most of the Jews in the realms of Islam did not embrace Islam, but they did apparently recognise the mission of the Prophet. Among the intellectuals who supported this mission was Abu 'Isa al-Isfahani, who was known in Hebrew as Yitzhak Ben Ya'akov. He lived in the time of Caliph 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. Abu 'Isa said that Muhammad and Jesus were the true prophets and he urged the Jews to study the Quran and the Gospels. Rabbi Shim'on Bar Yohai, who lived at the end of the Umayyad Caliphate said 'Muhammad is the true prophet of God. He was sent out of pity for the Arabs.' The same position was taken by Arab Jewish philosophers such as Ibn Kammuna and Natan'el ibn al-Fayyumi.

The Qaraites (who rejected the Talmud) wrote all their studies in Arabic and their ideas and expression were influenced by Islam. All Jewish philosophy written in the Islamic world was in Arabic, and it constitutes an inseparable part of Islamic philosophy.

The graves of Jewish holy men and prophets are still sacred to both Muslims and Arab Jews. In Morocco it is commonplace to find native Jews visiting the graves of Muslim saints and asking them for favours, and vice versa. In Iraq, ships make a stop out of respect at the grave of Ezra in the south.

It was the Prophet himself who laid the foundation stone of the economic and political relations in the 'Community Covenant', which became a basic law in all Islamic states. According to Ibn Hisham's Biography of the Prophet,<sup>1</sup> where he quotes the text of the Covenant from Muhammad Ibn Ishaq's Biography of the Prophet, the Jews and the Muslims and their followers constitute one community, each section of which is free to practise its own religion and enjoy protection of life and property. Criminals were excepted from this.

Thus the Islamic state whose basis, from its inception, was not purely religious but also political, encompassed all monotheistic believers. It offered them physical and economic security as well as religious freedom, a form of tolerance that did not occur in Christian European states until the nineteenth century. Catholicism in the Middle Ages believed that Hell was the lot of those who did not grow up in the Church, and for this reason the Christian states did not grant civil rights to members of other religions. In some parts of Europe this state of affairs last until this century.

It should be noted that the Community Covenant does not compel the assimilation of the Muslim and Jewish tribes, but allows

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each tribe to preserve its essence, leadership, organizations and administration. In this way the Islamic state up to 1918 was decentralised, offering autonomy to all its communities but internally united against crime, murder and plunder and against anti-Islamic hostility from the outside. While Jews were not obliged to join Holy Wars (jihad), Islam did impose the jizya, or community tax, to cover some of the expenses of security. Arab Jews refused to refute this tax since it gave them rights of safety.

The Quran says that the Jews broke the contract. Some Muslims assume this contract to be the Community Covenant. Others say that it was a contract concluded between God and the Jews of yore. We have already seen that all the agreements completed between the Prophet and the Jews of various towns were based on the principle of the Community Covenant and no Muslim sources claim that Jews (outside Madina) broke it. This applied to the Jews of Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, North Africa and Spain. All the Jews of these areas welcomed the Islamic revolution which liberated them from Sasanid, Byzantine oppression and that of the Visigoths of Spain.

### THE JEWS AND THE ISLAMIC CONQUESTS

In Iraq the large Jewish community represented a spiritual centre for all the Jews of the world for many centuries until the fall of Baghdad to Hulagu<sup>2</sup> in 1258. This community helped the conquering Islamic armies. After the conquest, Islamic rule abolished all the burdens imposed by the Sasanids on the Jews. The exilarch at the time was named al-Bustani. Yazdagird III, the Sasanid king, removed him from office and sentenced him to death, but he was rescued by Islamic troops and restored. His grandchildren stayed in power until the position was finally abolished four hundred years later. As a result of the conquest, Jewish seminaries such as those of Sura and Pumbeditha were reopened. Sura lay to the north of Babylon and Pumbeditha to the south-west of contemporary Baghdad, near the Euphrates. They constituted the most important religious and educational centres for the Jews of the world. The position of gaon, the spiritual leader of world Jewry, was also strengthened. He exerted his authority over Jews of the world by means of responsa,<sup>3</sup> whereby the Jewish communities would send him questions about various religious, social and educational problems and he would write a long response which in itself became

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a whole literature. These responsa were generally written in Arabic after the accession of Islam. The exilarch was the head of the autonomous administration granted to the Jews in Iraq and the Islamic world in general. His authority increased after Baghdad became the capital of the Islamic empire and the two seminaries were transferred to Baghdad, the capital of the Jewish religion in the Islamic world.

It is indeed strange that not a word came out of this great spiritual centre about the quarrel between the Prophet and the Jews of Madina, all material about which has come to us from Islamic sources. It is probable that Jewish intellectuals in the Fertile Crescent did not accord it any significance. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, a geniza, a hidden storeroom, was uncovered in the synagogue in Fustat (Cairo) which contained thousands of Jewish documents, mostly in Arabic. From these emerged some stories about the Prophet, including 'The Prophet's Covenant of Protection' in which the Prophet said that the Jews were his relatives since he was their son-in-law. The Prophet did marry a beautiful Jewish woman from Khaybar called Safiya. Hence, according to the story, 'the Jews fight alongside the Prophet'.

The Geniza documents show that the Jews of Syria and Palestine welcomed the Muslim conquerors. At Hims in Syria they helped the Islamic army openly and after the liberation of Jerusalem 70 Jewish families were moved there from Tiberias, then the centre of the Palestinian Jews. For the first time in five hundred years, there were Jews in Jerusalem. The same sources say that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph, visited Jerusalem accompanied by some Rabbis. The position of Jews in Palestine improved immediately after the conquest. Rabbi Yehudai recounted that 'when the Ishmaelites [i.e. the Muslims] came, they allowed the Jews to study the Torah.'<sup>4</sup> The popular Jewish holy man, Rabbi Shim'on Bar Yohai, in his Nistaroth observed that "Umar ibn al-Khattab loved the Jews. The angel Metatron reassured him saying "Fear not, O son of Adam, for God Almighty has established the state of Ishmael (i.e. of Islam) to aid you against the sinners."<sup>5</sup> The same source quotes Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer that 'Bar Yohai confirms the similarity of Jewish and Muslim belief in God and from amongst the seventy peoples that God Almighty has created, He has set his name on two and they are the children of Israel and Ishmael' [i.e. both names end in el which means 'God' in Hebrew]. There are other Jewish stories which praise 'Umar ibn al-Khattab in spite of the fact that non-Jewish sources inform us that he exiled the Jews

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of Khaybar. We have already mentioned that Jews remained in Khaybar until the tenth century. In any case, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab settled some Jews of Khaybar in Kufa, to further the development of trade in this new military town.<sup>6</sup>

In Spain the Jews had suffered such miseries under Visigoth rule that they emigrated to North Africa. Thus they cooperated with Tariq ibn Ziyad.<sup>7</sup> The Spanish writer, F.T.B. de Quiros (p. 17), comments that Tariq ibn Ziyad was a Muslim of Jewish origin, and that many Jews returned to Spain after the Muslim conquest. Cooperation between Arab Jews and Muslims reached its zenith in Andalusia where Jews were prominent in the highest public offices, in poetry, philosophy and trade. They paid the price for this after the fall of the Muslim state in Spain when church, state oppression and torture caused them to leave finally with their Muslim brethren in 1492 and to take refuge in the Ottoman Muslim Empire (especially the Balkans) and North Africa.

In the first century after Mohammad, when northern Syria was exposed to attacks by the Byzantine fleet, the caliphs transferred many Jews from Palestine to Syria and settled them there, depending on the Jews' loyalty against their Byzantine enemies.

When the city of Qayrawan was founded in Tunisia in 670, the ruler of Egypt was ordered to send one thousand Jewish and Christian families in the hope of stimulating its economic development.

When Jerusalem fell at the hands of the Crusaders in 1099, its Jewish and Muslim inhabitants were slaughtered. Geniza sources say that Saladin had an entourage of Jewish advisors with him when he conquered Jerusalem and that he ordered the synagogues of the city to be rebuilt at his expense. They also claim that Richard the Lionheart asked Musa ibn Maymun (Maimonides), who was Saladin's personal physician, to go with him to England as his doctor. Maimonides turned down the offer.

During Ottoman times, the authorities would transfer Jews, particularly those exiles from Spain, to the Christian cities of the Balkans as they conquered them, hoping to use the Jews in their government.

In this fashion, the Arab Jews joined their fate politically to that of the Islam, and thus they flourished, declined and perished together - as was the case in Spain.

In addition to persecution, before Islam, Jews had suffered from political, cultural and economic disruption. After the conquest, the Islamic state united economically and culturally all these countries



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thereby enabling their Jewish communities to unite and to form one community, that of the 'Jews of Islam', now termed 'Sephardim'.

## JEWISH AUTONOMY

Jews in the realms of Islam were granted autonomy in religious, community, cultural and legal affairs as well as the setting and collection of tax. The exilarch in Baghdad represented his people at court, appointed community officials, set taxes and appointed judges. He executed the judgements of the courts against transgressors and criminals, received a weekly stipend which came out of the taxes levied on the markets as well as from Jewish communities inside and outside Iraq. When Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib welcomed the gaon, Rab Ishaq, in 655, this latter spiritual leader was at the head of a procession of 90,000 Jews who had come to greet the Imam.<sup>8</sup> The office of gaon existed from 589 until 1038 when the exilarch made it part of his office. The rise and fall of this Jewish spiritual centre was synchronous with the rise and fall of the 'Abbasid Caliphate.

In 1168, Benjamin of Tudela visited Baghdad and witnessed that the Jewish population of Baghdad had reached 40,000 and that they led secure and prosperous lives under the rule of the great caliph, al-Mustanjid. The Muslims called the exilarch Daniel 'Our Master Ibn Da'ud' (the son of King David). He had been appointed by the caliph as the head of all the Jewish communities. The 'Abbasid caliphate favoured the exilarch over Christian notables, and the caliph set up a special office for him at his court. In his book, *Travels of Rabbi Benjamin* (1173), this Spanish traveller describes how the caliph would receive the exilarch. "The procession of the exilarch wound its way through the festive streets of Baghdad. The community leader wore embroidered silk clothing, with a white jewel-encrusted turban. He had an entourage of horsemen and at a front of the procession was a crier shouting "Clear a path for the master, son of David." When the procession reached the court, the caliph would be standing to receive the exilarch, and would seat him on a throne in front of the caliphal throne. The princes would remain standing in his honour.'

Every Islamic province had its head of Jewish communal affairs, the nagid, or prince, just as every Jewish congregation was headed by a muqaddam. During the Crusades Arab Jews collected donations

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to help refugees from Palestine and Syria who had lost everything. Jewish charitable foundations in the Islamic world were organized across the empire, along the lines of Islamic charities.

### PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT

Jews were active in the Islamic government apparatus, especially in the financial, commercial and diplomatic departments and, in Spain, also in the military leadership. One of the advantages of Islamic power and government was that the conquering Muslims neither destroyed cultures nor the administration and social apparatus in the countries they conquered, but absorbed them and fashioned them in accordance with their own culture and establishments. Thus Islamic culture flourished. The caliphs allowed Christian and Jewish to continue their work using their own languages such as Greek, and only gradually was the bureaucracy Arabised. Such tolerance was not however purely religious in nature, but represented great political foresight, since the Muslim rulers still formed a minority at that stage.

In his book, *Jews in the Economic and Political Life of Islam in the Middle Ages*,<sup>10</sup> Fischel writes that one caliph in the tenth century changed his vizier fifteen times, but kept the same Jewish treasurer throughout his reign. At that time, most of the bankers in Syria and Egypt were Arab Jews. One of the most important Jewish ministers was Hasdai ibn Shaprut who worked in Andalusia as a physician and general inspector of customs in the service of 'Abd al-Rahman III (912-961) and al-Hakam II (961-976). He also carried out secret diplomatic negotiations for the caliph, then became director of customs in Cordova, foreign minister and special advisor to the caliph. The Andalusian Jewish poet, Ibn Nagrila (or Samuel Hanagid) (993-1056), was also famous. He started off as a keeper of a spice stall in Malaga in Andalusia and used to write the letters of the vizier's slave-girl. The vizier was impressed by his style and appointed him his secretary. Prior to his death he recommended that Ibn Nagrila succeed him, and thus Ibn Nagrila governed Grenada and led its army in numerous wars. He was later termed in Hebrew nagid, that is 'prince', and worked as the head of the Jewish educational institute because of his religious and secular knowledge. He was one of the greatest Jewish poets in Andalusia. He carried out important correspondence with the leading personages in Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Morocco.

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Jews were able to exert influence over the government through their doctors who worked in the palaces of the caliphs, viziers and sultans. Ottoman rule was kind to native Jews, granting them diplomatic posts by reason of their knowledge of European languages. The Ottoman government trusted the Jews and settled them in Constantinople, Salonika, Cyprus and Rhodes for economic and security reasons.

In 1733 the Jews defended Baghdad against an Iranian siege. In 1775 they defended Basra when it was besieged for 13 months. The banker, Jacob ibn Harun Gabbai, helped the Ottoman government to fund this defensive war, becoming later the head (nasi) of the Jewish community of Basra.

In 1900, the Ottoman government changed the jizya tax to one 'in lieu of military service', but this was abolished in 1909 and military service was imposed on the Jews. In the First World War thousands of native Jews fell with their Muslim brethren. The Ottoman authorities strengthened Jewish autonomy in Constantinople under the aegis of the chief rabbi. Jewish deputies were appointed to Parliament (1876, 1908) and to the courts. Jews were granted the right to open French Alliance Israelite schools in all parts of the empire to teach a contemporary curriculum and foreign languages, which helped the Jews to gain government employment and to participate in the economic developments.

## IN THE SERVICE OF THE ISLAMIC ECONOMY

Jews provided a very important service for the economy. The Prophet and the first Muslims lived by commerce, and thus it was one of the 'respected' occupations. The Islamic state encouraged trade in word and deed, through the abolition of arbitrary strictures, control over organization and security and an active fight against crime - especially through political and economic union of all the Islamic provinces.

The integrity of the Islamic empire at its height helped the Jews to participate actively in the bourgeois mercantile revolution which blossomed in the realm of Islam. Thus they helped reinforce the economic base of the Islamic state and of Islamic civilisation, and their caravans from Andalusia to India carried the imports and exports of the Muslim world as the wealth of the state and the living standard therein increased. The Geniza documents indicate that the commercial activities of the Sephardim were helped on by

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the safety of the highways, the freedom of movement and the reinforcement of the religious, cultural and family ties between the Jews of the various provinces. In every Muslim city Jewish traders had an agent, responsible for the safety of their caravans, who represented their interests to the local authorities and who concerned himself with receiving, warehousing and marketing their goods. Among his principal duties, he was also a money-changer and responsible for the post. Such empire-wide security led to the development of commercial banks whereby a merchant could draw a cheque in Baghdad and get his money in the furthest reaches of the Arab West. It also helped to disseminate learning, and intellectuals were in the habit of moving from one province to another in search of learning. The Jews adopted this practice too, causing the Jewish seminaries in Baghdad to flourish. This economic success emphasized the deepening of the economic gulf between East and West, for the former had an industrial, bourgeois economy whereas that of Europe was feudal-agricultural.

The result of economic affluence can be seen in the report of the Jewish traveller Menahem Hayyim of Volterra. When he visited Damascus in 1481, he found 400 Jewish families, all of them were wealthy and respectable merchants and the head of the community was a physician.<sup>11</sup> Fifty years later, the traveller Obadiah Bertinoro visited Damascus and wrote about the beautiful Jewish houses and gardens there.<sup>12</sup> The aforementioned Benjamin of Tudela described the Great Synagogue of Baghdad as follows: 'In the Synagogue there are columns of variegated marble encrusted with gold and silver, upon which are written in golden letters verses from the Book of Psalms. In front of the ark (where the Torah is kept) are ten marble steps, above which is the throne of the exilarch and seats for the princes of the House of David (that is, his sons).'<sup>13</sup>

During the Ottoman era, the Sephardim became known for their trade between Europe, the Ottoman Empire, India and China. They were prominent in fabric manufacture, collection of taxes and import duties, banking and armaments. Jewish banks helped to fund the state apparatus, as well as providing the army with weapons.

During the Ottoman period Khoja Jacob and Adon Abd Alla became known in Basra as the two chief bankers and advisers to the government. Sasson Ibn Salih, head of the Sasson family lately of India, prospered in Baghdad as did the bankers Ishaq and Menahem Eini.

This Jewish activity should be emphasised, for some Arab leaders,

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such as Nuri Said, were not aware of the significance of Jews in the Arab economy when they cooperated with the Zionists to transfer them to Israel after 1948 (see chapter four).

## THE ARABISATION OF JEWS UNDER ISLAM

Whereas the Jews of the Fertile Crescent and North Africa had spoken various languages before the Islamic conquest, particularly Aramaic and Greek, they became arabised along with the rest of the population after the conquest. They used Arabic in their speech, writings and even for religious matters. Generally they wrote Arabic in Hebrew letters. They adopted Islamic culture in an area which had known the Babylonian, Persian, Hellenistic and Roman civilisations amongst others. The influence of Islam upon Judaism was apparent in philosophy, linguistics, medicine and mathematics, astrology, popular mythology and religious studies.

The Jews of the Middle East had also categorically rejected Hellenism and Hellenistic philosophy. Many of them had been martyred resisting Hellenism. After the Islamic conquest, however, they started to study the new culture assiduously with Muslim teachers. The reason for this change of stance can only be attributed to the tolerance of Islam, which also led many Jews and Christians to embrace it.

The pioneer of Jewish intellectuals in this field was Sa'adia Gaon or Sa'id Yusuf al-Fayyumi (882-942). He was born in Egypt, emigrated to Iraq and became the head of the Academy of Sura. Sa'adia wrote a number of books in Arabic, such as Responsa to Anan (who had founded the Qaraite sect), The Book of Discernment, The Book of Inheritance Trusts, and The Book of Documents and Deeds. He translated the Bible into Arabic as well as writing an extensive commentary, and compiled an Arabic-Hebrew dictionary called Ha-Agron. But his most famous book is The Book of Beliefs and Convictions in which he enumerated the virtues of intellect with reference to memory and prediction, how to master animals, the powers of nature, the construction of buildings, clothes-making, cookery, the organization of military camps, political rule and organization, culture and astrology. Sa'adia opposed the hypothesis that the scientific renaissance would lead to godlessness. His philosophy is seated in the Quran, Mu'tazila [rationalist] and Hellenistic philosophy.<sup>14</sup>

Sherira Gaon, the head of the academy of Pumbeditha from 968-

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998, wrote the extensive Epistle of Rabbi Sherira about the history of Jewish Halakha (Law) after the Bible. He was succeeded by his son, Rabbi Hai Gaon, who wrote a number of books in Arabic, such as The Book of Law and Sale, The Book of Faith, The Book of the Magician and The Treatise on Judicial Judgements. Rabbi Hai neither believed in legends and miracles, nor in jinnis, being under the influence of the rational philosophy developed by the philosophers of Islam. In Malaga, in Andalusia, one of the outstanding Jewish philosophers and poets was Sulaiman ibn Gabirol (1022-1070). He composed a book of proverbs called The Choice Jewels, and philosophical works called The Improvement of Moral Qualities, and The Book of the Source of Life. He was influenced by al-Mutanabbi and Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri.

Samu'el Ben-Hofni lived at the beginning of the eleventh century and became the head of the academy of Sura. His whole output, including Introduction to the Talmud, The Book of Precepts, and The Book of Abrogation of Law, the Sources and Branches of Religion was in Arabic. He believed in the intellect, rejected irrational accretions and carried out research in fields as varied as commerce, heredity and rivers, as well as religion. Professor Assaf, in one of his lectures at Jerusalem University, said that Ben-Hofni's output was greater and more multifarious than that of any other Jewish intellectual.

Maimonides (Musa ibn Maymun) (1135-1204) was the most brilliant of the Arab Jewish philosophers. He was born in Cordova, but emigrated to Egypt where he became the physician of Saladin. His works in medicine were translated and studied until the end of the sixteenth century. He wrote his famous philosophical work, The Guide to the Perplexed, in which he was influenced by Aristotle and Ibn Sina (Avicenna), in Arabic. Thus he created the intellectual foundation of Judaism. One of his teachings was that a Jew ought to accept death rather than embrace Christianity, but that he could embrace Islam rather than death.

Ibn Kammuna (thirteenth century) was also an excellent philosopher who composed a study on Islam, Christianity and Judaism, as was Abu al-Barakat ibn Malka (twelfth century), Ibn Gabirol al-Andalusi, and Bahye ben Paquda, who wrote Duties of the Heart in Arabic. This book represents the first work on Islamic asceticism to enter Judaism (1070). Abraham Ben Maymun (Maimonides' son), head of the Jewish community in Egypt, composed an important work entitled A Comprehensive Guide to the Worship of God, which was translated into English by Professor Samuel Rosenblatt as Highways of Perfection.<sup>15</sup> The author observed



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that the Muslim Sufis (mystics) had preserved the ideas of the prophets better than the Jews themselves. He then attempted to introduce some Muslim practices into Jewish worship, such as prostration, but failed. However, on Yom Kippur Iraqi Jews do prostrate in prayer. Thus we see that Sufism, as a comprehensive philosophical and ethical system, influenced Jewish philosophers and poets, just as the Hellenistic sciences and modes of thought had seeped into Jewish intellectual life via the Muslim teachers who developed methodical scientific thought. Professor Goitein, Head of the Oriental Studies Department at Jerusalem University, notes that the 'vice' of homosexuality among the Sufis 'sometimes penetrated into Oriental Jewish circles.'<sup>16</sup> This is only one of the anti-Sephardi and anti-Arab comments one may hear from Zionist professors.

Hebrew poetry did not exist before Islam, except for the Bible and some non-metrical religious poetry in Palestine. Hence, metrical Hebrew poetry composed in the Middle Ages was part of Arabic poetry in its contents and stylistics. No one who studies the Hebrew and Arabic poetry of this period can fail to see that the Hebrew imitated the Arabic. Jewish poets spoke Arabic, studied Arabic literature, their culture was Arabic, they versified in Arabic, and admired Arabic poetry to the extent that they wanted to capture its beauty in Hebrew. They started to versify in Biblical Hebrew, translating verbatim many Arabic terms and expressions. They borrowed Arabic rhetoric and stylistics such as the simile, metaphor, allusion, analogy etc. They also used the metres and subject matter of Arabic verse such as the love poetry of the ghazal, eulogy and Sufi poetry. When the poet's emotions ran away with him, he would often add verses in Arabic. There were scores of Arab Jewish poets, the most famous being Sulaiman ibn Gabirol, Musa ibn Ezra, Yehuda Halevi, Samu'el ibn Nagrila, Ibrahim ibn Ezra, and Yehuda al-Harizi who used the form established by the great Arab writer, al-Hariri's Maqamat, in his book Tahkemoni.

The poet Donash was the first to introduce Arabic poetic metres into Hebrew verse in the tenth century. Yehuda Halevi (Abu al-Hasan), who was born in 1086, lived in Toledo and is counted amongst the greatest poets of Andalusia who versified in both Hebrew and Arabic. He was a physician and a philosopher. His most important book on religious philosophy is The Book of Khazari which was written in Arabic in the form of questions and answers. Of the poets who embraced Islam, the best known is Ibrahim ibn Sahl al-Ishbili (d.1260) who studied the Quran and composed a



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famous collection of poems.

In the Arabian peninsula in the pre-Islamic period, the Jews had always used Arabic as their chief language, and recited poetry like their Arab brethren. In this connection we should mention al-Samawal ibn 'Adia' (d.560) who owned a famous fortress, al-Ablaq. Here he set an example of good faith; he chose his own son's death, when his son was taken hostage by Umru al-Qays' enemies, rather than betray the trust that Umru al-Qays had placed in him when he went to Syria. The opening verse of one of his famous odes begins:

'If a man's honour be not soiled by baseness which befalls him  
then any garment he wears is beautiful.'

Before the rise of Islam, Jewish intellectuals did not study linguistics. However, when they started to study Arabic after the rise of Islam they learnt grammar and rhetoric. Then they started to study linguistics with regard to Hebrew, applying the methods they had learnt from their teachers, the Arabic grammarians. Da'ud ibn Ibrahim al-Fasi compiled a dictionary of Biblical Hebrew in the tenth century. In the thirteenth century, Tanhum Yerushalmi also wrote a Hebrew dictionary of post-Biblical Hebrew sources. Ibn Jinah discovered that Hebrew words (as in Arabic) were derived from three-letter roots. Throughout the tenth to thirteenth centuries, Hebrew grammarians together with their Muslim counterparts continued to study the grammar of Arabic, Hebrew and Aramean, considering that these three languages were originally a single language.

Muslim, Jewish and Christian intellectuals began in the Umayyad era to undertake a far-reaching cultural endeavour: the translation the Hellenistic corpus of knowledge from Greek or Syriac. Amongst these translators was a Jew who lived in Basra in the time of 'Umar II called Masarjawaih, who translated books on medicine from the Syriac, although the most famous translator was the Christian Hunain ibn Ishaq (809-877).

In the thirteenth century a large group of Spanish Jewish scholars, particularly those settled in Provence, undertook the translation of Islamic philosophy and sciences from Arabic to Hebrew, and then into Latin thereby enabling the diffusion of the Islamic cultural heritage throughout Europe where it became part of the basis of Western civilisation. Outstanding amongst these translators were the families of Tivon and Qimhi.

Before we turn to popular culture, it is apposite to give a brief account of the curriculum in Jewish educational institutions in the

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Islamic world in the twelfth century based on the book *Medicine of Souls* by Yusuf ibn Yehuda Aqnin. In addition to the Torah and the Talmud, Arab Jews studied poetry, philosophy, mathematics, engineering, logic, optics, astrology, the natural sciences, music, religious and abstract philosophy and mechanics. In the thirteenth century Yehuda ibn Samu'el ibn 'Abbas said that the first part of the curriculum mentioned in the *Medicine of Souls* included translation of the Torah into Arabic, the historical sections of the Bible, the rules of Hebrew grammar, Talmud and ethics. In the second part of the curriculum, the student would study medicine, arithmetic and music. In the third part they would study Aristotle and Averrois (Ibn Rushd), then finally the natural sciences and abstract philosophy.<sup>17</sup> It appears that, apart from the Jewish subjects, this curriculum was based upon that of the Islamic schools.

Popular culture, meaning here popular myths and stories, in the Islamic world was common to Muslim, Christian and Jewish communities. Out of the four hundred stories in *The Thousand and One Nights*, forty-five are Jewish stories. In the eleventh century, Nissim Ibn Ya'qub ibn Shahin collected Arab-Jewish tales which had been generally written down in colloquial Arabic in Hebrew characters. At weddings and parties, Jewish singers would sing Arabic poetry, some of which would be made up of alternating Hebrew and Arabic verses. At weddings in Israel currently, singers omit the verses in classical Arabic, since the new generation does not understand this language due to its cultural suppression, but the music of the Arab Jews is completely Arabic, even in the synagogue. In the Islamic world there is no difference between Jewish and Islamic arts of goldsmithing and calligraphy or any of the other handicrafts. In March 1987 at the National Film Theatre in London there was a Zionist film about Yemenite popular art, which Zionists described as 'Jewish-Yemenite', and acknowledged that this art has disappeared among Yemenite Jews since their immigration to Israel.

Thus, the Jewish cultural heritage since the Arab conquest was an integral part of Islamic civilisation, mostly written in Arabic under Islamic hegemony. Ashkenazi culture, on the other hand, did not come into prominence until the eighteenth century in Germany and later in Eastern Europe. Whereas Arab Jews represented the majority of world Jewry in the Islamic period, they are now 20 percent, but 70 percent of the Jewish population of Israel.

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### ISLAMIC TOLERANCE

This cultural interaction between the conquering Muslims and the Jews and Christians took place in an atmosphere of tolerance and good-neighbourliness. Jewish sources recount that 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (reg. 685-705) appointed a Jew to clean the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, and also to make the lanterns and light them. The Jews of Jerusalem at that time believed that this was the beginning of salvation. Prior to that time, Mu'awiyah (reg. 661-680) had built a synagogue in Jerusalem.

Arab Jews did not confront the option of Jews in Christian Europe, of conversion or death, for the Quran advises 'There is no compulsion in religion', and also 'Ye have your religion and I have mine.' Moreover the attitude of Islam towards the Jews cannot be characterised, as hatred, fear and racism which existed and is still prevalent in Europe. In the minds of the Christian Europeans the Jew, Satan and all non-Christians were part aspects of the anti-Christ. This was a real fear, and provided the basis for modern-day anti-semitism and racism. However, if a Jew embraced Islam, all differences crumbled away and he became like any other Muslim. In this manner, Islam absorbed the peoples of the Fertile Crescent, Africa and Asia.

Generally, Islam imposed no hindrances on Jews and Christians as to their type of work or place of residence. All citizens were free to live wherever they so desired and to work at whatever craft they chose. Islam did not grant privileges to a particular class of people, as happened in feudal Europe, or within the caste system in India.

In Europe in the Middle Ages, the Church eliminated all those who transgressed against Christianity. Islam, on the other hand, allowed repentance for those of the People of the Book who committed a crime such as slander against Islam and the Prophet, as well as allowing them to defend their religion orally and in writing.

The Jews welcomed the jizya tax, since it provided them with the right to Islamic protection. When the 'Abbasid caliph, al-Mu'atadid (reg. 892-902), wished to abolish the jizya, his Jewish treasurer opposed him.<sup>18</sup> Landshut writes<sup>19</sup> that during the Umayyad (661-750) and the 'Abbasid (750-1258) eras there is no recorded Jewish complaint of oppression or maltreatment.

The Islamic state opened up all sources of support to Jews and Christians, even land-ownership which was banned to Jews in Europe. The Fatimid caliphs of North Africa and Egypt (909-1171),

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for example, contributed financial support to the Jewish academy in Jerusalem. In 1020 the caliph, al-Hakim, saved the lives of 200 Jews from Muslim fanatics who wanted to kill them. Historians believe that this caliph's subsequent oppression of the 'People of the Book' was a result of mental illness.

The vizier, al-Khaqani, wrote to the 'Abbasid caliph, al-Mu'atadid, that he was employing Jews and Christians in the state apparatus, as their loyalty to the 'Abbasid caliphate was greater than that of the Muslims themselves. This exaggeration shows how much the People of the Book were trusted. Two renowned Jewish bankers of the time, Harun ibn 'Umran and Yusuf ibn Pinhas, provided loans to equip the Islamic armies.

The firman which the Ottoman sultan, Muhammad III, issued in March 1602 states that protection of the dhimmi (the non-Muslim citizen) was an obligation for all Muslims, their kings and governors. Islam respected Judaism and disapproved of laxity in religious observance. The aforementioned gaon, Hai, wrote in the eleventh century that the Islamic courts would not accept the evidence of a Jew or a Christian unless he was 'a peer', that is someone who fulfilled his religious obligations.<sup>20</sup>

The attitude of Islamic clerics and laity towards Arab Jews was moderate and positive, as related in *The Book of Preparation* by al-Baqillani in Baghdad in the tenth century. Intellectual, Sufi and bourgeois circles all had an empathy with Jews. Sa'd al-Andalusi, for example, eulogises Arab Jews for their assiduous studies in the divine law and the lives of the prophets. Ibn Sa'd lists in his *Classes of the Nations* the names of the nations who have helped disseminate knowledge in the world: the Indians, Iranians, Chaldeans, Greeks, Byzantines, Egyptians, Arabs and Jews. Ibn Sa'd stated that Judaism was the cradle of prophecy, and that most of the prophets were Jews. The author then discusses the history of Jewish scholars in the Islamic world, an area also covered by Rashid al-Din (1247-1318) and Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406). There is also a single rare hostile study by Ibn Hazm (994-1064) which resulted from his hostility to the Jew, Ibn Nagrila, who had reached the summit of the government pyramid in Andalusia.

When the Ottoman sultan, Sulaiman al-Qanuni decided to build the Sulaimaniya Mosque, his plan was hampered by a Jew who refused to sell a piece of his land. The sultan's advisors suggested that he confiscate the land or buy it compulsorily. The sultan, however, rejected this suggestion on the basis that it contradicted Islamic law.

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There are similar stories about the second caliph, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, and the fourth 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, the first Imam of the Shi'ah. The twelfth century Atabeg prince, 'Imad al-Din Zangi, who governed Iraq and northern Syria stated that even if the wronged party is a Jew and the accused is the son of the prince himself, justice must be done.

Just as Sephardi Judaism was affected by tolerance in the realms of Islam, so its Ashkenazi counterpart was affected by the fanaticism which prevailed in the Europe of the Middle Ages. This is seen by those who have come up against Ashkenazi religious fanatics in Israel such as the American Rabbi Kahane and Rabbi Levinger, members of the terrorist gang who carried out hostilities against the heads of the municipalities on the West Bank, and members of Gush Emunim and other settlers on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. Even those Ashkenazi Israelis who have neglected their religion and become secular, or more specifically atheists, have generally been affected by European nationalist fanaticism, such as Ariel Sharon, Raphael Eytan, Menahem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir, David Ben Gurion, Golda Meir, Yigal Allon and Yigal Yadin. Ashkenazi leaders, whether they be of the Labour Party on the left or of the Likud on the right, have been affected.

However, there is a similarity between the Sunni Muslim and Jewish cleric. Neither of them believes that priests may act as intermediaries between God Almighty and man, as is the case in Catholicism. There exist in Judaism and Islam no sacramental rites, nor are there any occupations which the cleric may fulfil but which are forbidden to the rest of the believers. The Muslim and Jewish cleric both achieve their ranks through deep religious study and social acceptance. The certificate of semikha for a rabbi is similar to the ijazah awarded to the Muslim cleric by his teacher. There is also a similarity between the Muslim shari'ah law and the Jewish halakha - both words meaning 'path'. In both religions the basis is in the Bible or the Quran and the Hadith (Traditions). The Talmud, which was compiled in Iraq (in 500 AD) is the Jewish equivalent of the sunna (custom of the Prophet) or Hadith of Muslims.

Jewish jurisprudence was affected by Islam in its subdivisions, formation and terminology. There is a similarity between the Islamic fatwa (religious decree) and the Responsa literature which arose in Iraq under Islamic rule and was recorded by the heads of the Iraqi Jewish community. Islam also affected Jewish laws of marriage, the construction of places of worship, discussion and precision in the holy texts, the text of the prayers, religious

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philosophy, and dietary restrictions (the ban on pork, for example). We should note that Sunni Islam allows the Muslim to eat kosher meat. Muslims did not consider the Jewish religion to be dangerous to Islam, since Jews did not constitute a political state. They were a small minority, whereas Christianity was the religion of powerful states which had fought against Arab and Muslim states ever since the Islamic conquests. Christianity had expelled Islam from Andalusia, from southern Italy and most of the Balkans, and finally dismantled the last Islamic empire in 1918.<sup>21</sup> All this shows that the present hostility between Jews and Arabs does not have its roots in the history of Islam, but that it arose as a result of Zionism.

This analysis does not mean that there were never grievances, acts of violence or arbitrary restrictions on Jews, for example, in clothing, or the construction of synagogues and homes. Zionist historians disseminate the details of these events, although they were unusual in the Islamic world. In the central Sunni regions, the Jewish community flourished. Any discriminatory regulations of the Muslims were often theoretical and not applied. Conflicts between Muslim sects were much worse than those between Jews and Muslims.

## MODERN TIMES

### Morocco

Although the general harmony of Jews in Islam is well established, Israeli schools continue to incite pupils against the Arab and Islamic world. Zionist teachers claim that Jews in the Arab countries suffered from oppression, poverty and contagious diseases, that residence in special ghettos was obligatory and that their children were deprived of general education. Due to political oppression they had no opportunity to be economically active; they were forced to walk barefoot and whenever they met a Muslim they had to step aside and bow to him and Muslims exposed them to scorn and beatings.<sup>22</sup> Zionists who portray the conditions of Arab Jews in the Islamic world in this way are all Ashkenazi settlers who immigrated from Europe and America. The Sephardim are not allowed to speak about themselves since they have no access to the media.

In an article in the newspaper, *Yedi'ot Aharonot* (23 July 1976), the progressive journalist, Barukh Nadel, replied to these fallacious



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claims. 'Every Jewish community in Morocco', he wrote, 'had its own Jewish leadership consisting of its cultural and executive elite. Often Jews carried out services for the state, as counsellors, physicians, interpreters, scribes, diplomats and bankers. In Morocco, Jews worked in the shipping administration, and produced excellent poets. Muslims worked in Jewish establishments and vice versa. Massacres of Jews were almost unheard of. Jews were responsible for the mint. Mistra Musa was renowned as the king's private physician, and was succeeded by Yosef Valensa. Shmuel Halash was a signatory to the first treaty concluded between Morocco and a Christian state - Holland - and was appointed Moroccan ambassador to Amsterdam (1610). Halash was a minister of external affairs and privy counsellor to four sultans. Sultan Rashid appointed a Jew as his counsellor and minister of finance. Sultan Sidi ibn 'Abd Allah preferred to have Jewish participation in every commercial transaction and in all negotiations with Europe.'

From 1610 until 1828 Jews served as ambassadors in various European capitals. From the time of Moulai 'Abd al-Rahman (1822-1859) Jews in Morocco became more active in the economy and the field of diplomacy. The families of al-Teras, Ibn Khaymul and Ibn Sur became well-known. Some of the Western states granted nationality to a section of the Jews, hoping to be gain entree into domestic affairs of Muslim states. This policy led to hostilities against the Jews, such as the massacre of 30 March 1912 in Fez when sixty Jews were killed and fifty others were wounded.<sup>23</sup>

On 23 July 1986, the Financial Times wrote that 'the Moroccan Jewish community has for many centuries played an important role in the political, economic and cultural life of the country. To this day, King Hassan's eldest son, Sidi Mohammed, pays a visit to the Rabat synagogue on the eve of the Yom Kippur festival. The protection traditionally afforded to the King's Jewish subjects was upheld during the Second World War when Sultan Mohammed V, King Hassan's father, told the French governor-general that he would never allow the Vichy colonial authorities to force the Jews to wear the yellow Star of David but provide census lists.' The newspaper added that 'the Jewish community has today dwindled from 300,000 when Morocco became independent in 1957, to around 10,000, but many of its members still play a prominent role. The head of the community, Mr David Ammar, once an illiterate young man from the small town of Bereshid now runs Omnium Nord Africain, one of the kingdom's largest companies, which he jointly owns with the monarch. Mr Ammar, like other Moroccan



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Jews who are now prominent in business in France, Canada and the US, has played a wider role. He has been dispatched to the US to lobby among Jewish congressmen and other groups to try to reduce Jewish opposition to US arms sales to some Arab countries.' The publication of these facts had a great significance for Moroccan Jews, who suffer most from discrimination under Ashkenazi Zionist rule.

## Tunisia

The American Consul, M. Noah, wrote in 1814 that 'with all the apparent oppression, the Jews are the leading men; they are in Barbary the principal mechanics, they are at the head of the customhouse, they farm the revenues; the exportation of various articles, and the monopoly of various merchandise, are secured to them by purchase; they control the mint and regulate the coinage of money; they keep the Bey's jewels and valuable articles, and are his treasurers, secretaries and interpreters; the little known of arts, science and medicine is confined to the Jews . . . they are ever in the presence of the Bey, every minister has two or three Jewish agents . . .'<sup>24</sup> In 1855 Mohammed Pasha abolished all theoretical impediments imposed on the Jews and granted them complete equality.

## Algeria

Even though Jews in the Western and socialist countries enjoy complete equality, they do not enjoy the autonomy which Islam granted to them, as we have previously mentioned. Within this autonomy, the Jews of Algeria preserved their identity from the time of the Islamic conquests until the establishment of French colonial rule between 1834-1851. French language and culture were imposed upon them, against the wishes of their leaders. Only the Jews of Constantine and the southern oases have remained true to their Jewishness. A number of families migrated to Tunis in order not to lose their identity. Young people who stayed behind started to be ashamed of their background. This did not happen under Islamic rule.<sup>25</sup> During times of unrest, the Jews of Algeria would flee to the mosques for protection. In 1902, the Algerian people rejected anti-Jewish agitation and the agitators were defeated.<sup>26</sup>

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French colonialism finally managed to separate Algerian Jews from their homeland and people and when it bestowed independence on Algeria and Algerian Jews chose to move to France. They did not immigrate to Israel, however, disdaining to be 'third class' citizens. During the Second World War, the Nazis knew that the Arabs would not tolerate the mass extermination of their own neighbours, and the North African Jews were almost the only Jews who lived under German occupation without being sent to the gas chambers. Their children in Israel hang on their walls the pictures of King Hassan II of Morocco and his father in gratitude.

### Iraq

Baruch Nadel wrote in his previously mentioned article that 'when this community lived in Iraq, the proportion of doctors was four times higher than among the pre-1948 Ashkenazi Jews in Palestine. 36 percent of Iraqi Jews were involved in the liberal professions. They were a part of the governmental economic administration, directors of the railways and banks, merchants, lawyers and accountants. There were also the poor, but they were a smaller proportion than the Ashkenazi poor in Poland. The general standard of education at Iraqi Jewish schools was outstanding, with Jews studying English and French in their secondary schools, such as the French Alliance schools. Jews excelled at contemporary Arabic poetry, and the Arabic novel.' Arabic was the language of instruction. The school taught an Iraqi national curriculum, but in the religious education lessons, pupils read the Torah and translated it into Arabic.

In his book *The Jews of the Middle East*,<sup>27</sup> H.J. Cohen writes that the number of Jewish schools in Baghdad increased from eight in 1920 to twenty by 1948. The head of the Organization of Iraqis in Israel adds that the community abandoned thirty-seven educational institutes in Baghdad alone.<sup>28</sup> In addition to regular schools, the Jews had special institutions for the blind and orphans, a conservatoire for music and vocation schools, even though many Jewish students were enrolled in the free government (secondary schools). After completing their secondary school education, Jewish students would enrol in state higher education institutions, or European and Arab universities. Ishaqi stated that half of the students who studied abroad on Iraqi government stipends were Jews. In the first half of this century, 1,000 Iraqi Jewish students

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completed higher education, studying primarily law and medicine, followed by pharmacology, engineering and economics. A number also studied at the Teacher Training College.<sup>29</sup>

As already mentioned, Iraqi Jews enjoyed autonomy which was embodied in two assemblies: the lay assembly and the spiritual assembly which regulated religious life. The former looked after educational, health, charitable and financial affairs. The administration of the community levied various taxes, such as a tax on meat, to fund its activities. Jews were active in the fields of literature and journalism, anti-Zionism, music, art and all aspects of Iraqi cultural life together with their Muslim and Christian brethren (see chapter four). The Shoet Report (1910) presented to the British Consul in Baghdad stated that the Jews monopolised domestic commerce and that Muslims and Christians were unable to compete with them.<sup>30</sup> It divides the Jewish community as follows: 5 percent wealthy merchants and bankers 30 percent middle class - petty traders 60 percent poor (i.e. artisans) 5 percent beggars

Following the economic and educational developments which occurred under the British Mandate, the number of wealthy merchants in 1938-1939 in the Baghdad Chamber of Commerce reached 39, amongst whom were 10 Jewish members rising later to be 43 percent of the total. Moreover, Jews were employed by the Mandate government in all its offices, particularly the ministry of finance. They were the majority in the railways administration, the port of Basra and the Iraq Petroleum Company. The best-known of these was Sasson Hezkiel, the first minister of finance in the first Iraqi government (1921). The main reasons for such advancement were the standard of Jewish education, their knowledge of foreign languages, family ties with other countries, the fact that they were concentrated in the metropolitan areas such as Baghdad, Basra and Mosul, their energy and enthusiasm, their traditional commercial skills, and, last but not least, the fraternal relations which prevailed with the Muslim community on both official and popular levels. This situation led to the development of a new class of Muslim merchants and an intelligentsia which started in the thirties to compete with the Jews in all fields. This competition was one of the reasons for subsequent sectarianism and emigration in addition to more significant factors: Zionism, Nazi propaganda and Western intervention (see chapter four). The appearance of this competition did not mean that the volume of

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Jewish trade decreased, rather, during the thirties and forties, the number of Jewish merchants increased.<sup>31</sup> They continued to have a proportionally large presence in trading activities, until they were displaced in 1950-1 (see chapters four and five).

### ANTI-ARAB PROPAGANDA

Despite the evidence of historical facts, Zionist propaganda in the domestic and foreign media continues to nourish the legend of Muslim oppression of Jews in the Islamic world. The aims of this bizarre attempt are as follows:

1. the Israeli people is a divided people. Behind the curtain of 'Jewish National Unity', the slums and the so-called 'development towns' are in a state of permanent ferment by reason of the grievous conditions arising from sectarian exploitation. The ruling establishment has directed these grievances against the Arab and Islamic peoples, telling the Sephardim 'You should be grateful. We have saved you from Islamic oppression.' Some Sephardim believe this fiction, having been born in Palestine and not having lived in any other Arab country.
2. an unsuccessful attempt to disrupt the progressive current of thought which calls for a common effort between the Palestinian people and native Jews against Zionism.
3. to incite all Israelis and prepare them for wars of expansion.
4. as many Sephardim long to return to their countries of origin, Zionism tries to convince them of the principle of 'no return to Arab or Islamic countries'. Moreover, Israeli law bans travel to the Arab countries, except Egypt and except for spying and terrorism. When Israel conspired over Jewish emigration with Iraq under Nuri Sa'id, for example, it tried to have their Iraqi nationality withdrawn before they left to prevent them ever returning to their homeland.
5. To justify the crimes that Zionism committed against these Jews in the process of immigration and 'absorption' (see chapters four and five).
6. To bring the Arab nation and the Islamic world into disrepute in the eyes of the Western world. In this respect, Zionist historians and journalists have acted energetically.
7. The Palestinian cause is not only a political, nationalist cause, it is a cause of people who have lost everything, their homes and lands, indeed everything down to their clothing. Hence the Zionist establishment tries to justify its pillage of the Palestinians by

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inventing stories of the spoliation of Jews in Arab countries. The freezing of the assets of Iraqi Jews who left their country only occurred with the collusion of Israel, for the clique of Nuri Sa'id which governed Iraq at the time was pro-Western and could not have frozen Jewish assets without Western permission. This freezing of assets provided Israel with a pretext to pursue its long-standing policy of confiscation of Arab property and land.

### NOTES

- 1 Ibn Hisham, Sirah, 119-123.
- 2 Grandson of Chingiz Khan (Ghengis Khan).
- 3 The Latin term usually used to describe a literature genre which means 'Questions and Answers'.
- 4 Rejwan, 121.
- 5 Baron, 93.
- 6 Rejwan, 81-84.
- 7 Berber freedman of Musa ibn Nusayr, governor of North Africa under the Umayyads. His first landing in Spain was near the mighty rock which has since immortalized his name, Jabal (mount of) Tariq (Gibraltar). Hitti, History of the Arabs, 493.
- 8 Letter of Sherira Gaon.
- 9 Adler, 39-42.
- 10 London, 1937.
- 11 The Jewish Encyclopaedia, New York 1925, vol 4, 417-418.
- 12 *ibid.*
- 13 Travels of Benjamin of Tudela.
- 14 Encyclopaedia Britannica.
- 15 Baltimore, 1927 and 1938.
- 16 Jews and Arabs, 153-154.
- 17 Rejwan, 144.
- 18 Rejwan, 88-89.
- 19 P. 8.
- 20 Sassoon, Daud, 7-15.
- 21 Lewis, 79-86.
- 22 See Kirschenbaum, S, Jewish History in Modern Times, used in Israeli secondary schools.
- 23 Chouraqui, 173.
- 24 Noah, M, 306.
- 25 Les Temps Modernes de Sartre, Richard Ayoun, 67-71.
- 26 Chouraqui, 152-153.
- 27 Cohen, H.J., The Jews of the Middle East, 1860-1972, 1973, 123.
- 28 Twena, A.H.,(ed), Dispersion & Liberation, vol. 5, Jewish Education in Baghdad, Geoula Synagogue Committee, Ramlat, 1975, 173.
- 29 Cohen, *op. cit.*, 124-125.
- 30 Kedourie, Elie, 'The Jews of Baghdad in 1910', Middle Eastern Studies, vol. 7, no. 3, October 1971, 355-361.
- 31 Shiblak, 23-36.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The First Clash Between Zionism And Jewish Palestinians 1881-1918

#### THE STATE OF THE COMMUNITIES BEFORE ZIONISM

After the liberation of Jerusalem at the hands of Saladin and the subsequent defeat of the Crusaders, Jews living in the lands of Islam returned to Palestine and Jerusalem in particular. This Jewish community developed gradually to the point where it became a Palestinian community, Jewish in religion, and Arab/Islamic in language and culture. After the fall of the Arab/Muslim state in Andalusia, the Spanish Jews were driven out and emigrated to the countries of the Arab Maghrib (west) and provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Some of them reached Palestine where they mixed with the Palestinian Jews. Jewish groups in 'Dar al-Islam'<sup>1</sup> sent financial contributions to the Palestinian Jewish community which used them to support religious and cultural institutions and the poor.<sup>2</sup> In spite of the emigration of some religious Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe, the Sephardim remained the majority.<sup>3</sup> As the migration of the religious Ashkenazis continued, the proportion of Arab Jews declined by 1875 to 60 percent of the Jewish population. However, the autonomy granted to the Jews in Palestine remained in the hands of the native Jews since they held Ottoman nationality. The Ashkenazi Jews were of various European nationalities and thus they were protected under the Capitulations by foreign consuls, especially those of Britain and France. Jewish autonomy was under the leadership of the Sephardi chief rabbi who was chosen by the other rabbis and who was recognised by the sultan in a special firman (decree), and 'crowned' in a special ceremony in Jerusalem.



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This rabbi had a special position in the religious affairs of world Jewry. The Palestinian Jews formed a special committee called 'Knesset Yisrael' to run the affairs of the community and the Ottoman authorities granted it the right to mint coins for the community. There is a Jewish legend which relates that when God called a sultan to Him, the gates of Jerusalem were shut in mourning for the spirit of the deceased. The keys were then sent to the chief rabbi to be blessed, indicating that the new sultan was to enjoy the support of the Jewish community. This story shows the spirit of brotherhood and amity which obtained in the relations between the Palestinian Jews and the Ottoman Islamic authorities. The former were occupied in manual labour, such as goldsmithing, carpentry, food manufacture and as barbers etc. Some were merchants, doctors and tax collectors, and some became renowned men of science, politicians, writers and officers in the armed forces. Some native Jews acquired higher scientific learning, among them Nissim Behar who founded and directed the Alliance School in Jerusalem, and Yoseph Seby, who studied in France, Professor Ariel Ben Siyoon who emigrated to Germany and wrote on Jewish religion in the East, Professor Ibrahim Salem Yehuda a specialist in Arab affairs and a famed linguist, Daoud (David) Yellin, Yoseph Barein Meyuhaas, and Ishaq Hesqiel Yehuda, who wrote a book on Arab proverbs, Yaqub ben Attar, Avraham Almaliah, and Yehuda Burla. The community founded the Misgav Laddakh foundlings' shelter on the Jaffa Road in Jerusalem, and an old age home. It also elected members to the council which ran their affairs, and the Ottoman authorities tried to strengthen the two communities, the Jewish and the Islamic, fearful of European Christian penetration. These Ottoman or Palestinian Jews assisted Ottoman armies, participating in various wars as soldiers and doctors and furnishing the military units with provisions and ammunition.

The Andalusian (Sephardi) Jews who had settled in Jerusalem, Hebron, Tiberias and Safad set up religious high schools. Their greatest intellectual was Yosef Caro who wrote the Shulhan Arukh (one of the most revered religious texts after the Talmud), and Yisrael Najjara. The Palestinian Jews thus opened schools, built law courts and appointed judges, collected taxes and elected their religious and temporal leaders.

However, the Ashkenazi immigrants rejected autonomous Palestinian 'authority' and set about dismantling it. The Ashkenazi rabbi, Menahem Mendel Mishkleff, was the first to set up an isolationist community (1816) which started collecting donations

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from abroad for its aims. This secession led to the economic weakening of the Palestinian Jewish community.<sup>4</sup> The Ashkenazis kept themselves apart from the Palestinian Arabs and the Jews, setting up for themselves ghettos similar to those they had left in Eastern Europe, with special schools for their children, moreover they refused to use Arabic or Turkish as a means of communication.

Whilst Ashkenazi Jews were dissociating themselves from secular studies, Palestinian Jewish clerics were helping to found modern schools such as the Lemel School in Jerusalem. Since 1860, the French Alliance Israelite Society had been founding new schools for Jews in the Middle East and North Africa, and with tuition in these schools being free, or at very reduced rates, the Jews could acquire a level of education superior to that of the Ashkenazis in Eastern Europe.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, additional native schools were set up in the Arab countries. After the First World War, Arabs and Jews started to send their children to the free state schools in the Arab countries as well but not in Palestine, (see discussion in chapter four).

Relations between Palestinian Jews and Arabs were good. Jews participated in the local councils with Muslims and Christians. Ishaq 'Abadi observes in his article on Jerusalem, 'I do not remember any incident of incitement against the Jews on the Temple Mount during the Turkish period.'<sup>6</sup> It was common for a Jewish woman to enter her Muslim or Christian neighbour's house to borrow some little item, and vice versa. There were amicable intercommunal family meetings. Jewish children would play with Muslim and Christian children in the street, and the Jews spoke Arabic. Prior to the first Zionist Aliya (1881)<sup>7</sup> some of the religious Ashkenazim would marry Arab Jews. In economic life there was harmony and cooperation among all groups, including the religious Ashkenazis. Native Jews would offer necessary loans to Arab villages, and then distribute the harvest. Some Muslim students, such as the children of the Khalidi family, enrolled in Jewish schools (the Lemel or Alliance School).

Eliahu Eliachar, one of the leaders of the Jewish Palestinians, says in his Hebrew book, *Life with the Jews*, that when Raphael Eliachar died at an early age, his partner, Abdul Dajani, cared for his widow and her children. One of the children, later Colonel Y.R. Eliachar of New York, returned the favour by helping Dajani's grandchildren with their studies in America. Local Jews wore Arab clothing and one could hardly distinguish them from a Muslim or Christian. At Passover, the Muslims would send around trays with

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bread, and ghee and honey as a present for their Jewish neighbours, and the Jews would then place on the same trays jam, matzah and other presents in return. Speaking of his military service, Eliachar says that he was appointed as a military doctor (kucuk zabit) during the First World War and was posted to Nazareth where he was billeted in the house of Nasir Musa al-Hakim. He worked there in the Russian Hospital (the Moskobiya), and had excellent relations with the inhabitants. He remembers one of his friends, Tawfiq al-Husseini, who was a cavalry officer. There were commercial relations between Eliahu's father and Tewfiq's uncle, who was a regular visitor to Eliahu's house in Jerusalem. After the war Tawfiq became a high-ranking official in the government immigration office. Warm relations with the Eliachar family lasted up to the foundation of the state of Israel. Eliachar remembers that although he suffered poverty and hunger when the British occupied Jerusalem, his Arab landlord refused to take any rent and gave him food and drink. This friendship lasted until the end of his life.

All of this happened either before the arrival of Ashkenazi Zionism or outside its domain. We shall see how the Zionists poisoned the atmosphere of Palestine and the Middle East with their divisive sectarianism.<sup>8</sup>

## ASHKENAZI SEPARATISM

In 1882 the first Ashkenazi Zionists arrived from Russia, calling themselves Biluim,<sup>9</sup> or 'the First Aliya', as if no one had ever immigrated to Palestine before them. This stems from the fact that the Zionists disregard the history of the Jews and Palestine from the period of the destruction of the second temple in 70 AD until their pioneers reached Palestine to build the 'Ashkenazi National Home'. In 1904 more waves arrived in what was termed the 'Second Aliya', followed by more nationalist groups. The First Aliya owed its origins to the Hovevei Tzion Movement, the first Zionist organization and the forerunner of the World Zionist Organization which was founded towards the end of the century. Its first act in Palestine was the creation of a sectarian isolationist unit called Hayishuv Hehadash (the New Settlement) in contradistinction to the indigenous Jewish population which they termed the Old Settlement. The difference between the two communities - in their opinion - was not just temporary, but qualitative for they had emigrated to Palestine to set up the agricultural production which

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would help build the Zionist national entity economically and politically, whereas the Old Settlement lived by 'begging', that is by donations from world Jewry. In fact Palestinian Jews lived by manual crafts and commerce etc, and such financial help as reached Palestine was spent by them on charitable works. The Ashkenazi Zionist pioneers, however, built their settlements with cheap Arab, and then cheap Jewish Yemeni labour and with financial support which they received from world Jewry through their Zionist organizations. This indicates the isolationist mentality which prevailed from the beginning, not only with regard to the Palestinian Arab population, but also to the indigenous Jews and even extending to the non-Zionist Ashkenazis. The roots of this isolationism go back to the ghettos in Eastern Europe, and even the kibbutz might be considered a sort of regenerated 'Ashkenazi ghetto' in that it often only accepts Jews, particularly Ashkenazis. This sectarianism combined with extremist nationalist views borrowed from the nationalist movements which flourished in Europe in the nineteenth century. None of these perspectives have any connection with the Jewish religion, for the overwhelming majority of Zionists were and still are non-practising and non-believing Jews.<sup>10</sup>

The Sephardim received their first financial shock when religious Ashkenazis seceded from the community (in 1816) and a second shock when the Zionists set up their own society collecting funds to build settlements and to cement political, cultural and economic control in their own hands. This led to the drying up of sources of income of local Jews who were obliged to give up collecting funds from abroad. This was the most important reason for the economic, political, organisational and cultural evanescence of the Palestinian and other Arab Jews who had joined.

During the First World War, hunger, poverty and contagious diseases were widespread within the Old Settlement whereas the Ashkenazi settlements were receiving financial support via Germany, Turkey's ally. They then distributed this aid amongst their own in settlements loyal to the World Zionist Organization. We shall see that the tragedy of the Palestinian Arab people paralleled the destruction and dispersal of Arab Jews at the hands of Zionists and their supporters.

Relations between Zionists and Palestinians were bad as the settlers were buying up land from absentee landowners who lived in the large cities in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. The peasants were driven off the land and colonies were set up. The newcomers used these peasants as agricultural workers, subjecting them to

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rough treatment. The Russian Jewish writer, Ahad Ha'am, saw this treatment and criticized it in his essay, 'The Truth from the Land of Israel' (1891). 'Really, we could have learnt from our past and present history that we should not arouse the anger of the natives of the country through atrocious deeds. We must also be wary in our dealings with the foreign people among whose ranks we have started to renew our life. We must forge relations with them based on love, honour, correctness and justice. But what are our brethren doing in the Land of Israel? The complete opposite. They were slaves in exile and suddenly they have found themselves living a life of absolute freedom, the barbarous freedom that could only exist in the Ottoman Empire. This sudden change gave birth in them to the tendency to tyranny which is what happens usually with the slave who becomes king. They deal with the Arabs with an unjustified excess of harshness and hatred. They beat them and despise them for no reason whatsoever, and are, moreover, proud of it. There is no one to challenge these base and dangerous tendencies . . . and if [the Palestinian people] remain silent and patient for long it is because their anger is bricked up in their hearts for they are a people characterised by revenge - more than any other people.' Ahad Ha'am believed in spiritual, not political, Zionism, and his essays, except for this one, are studied in Israeli schools.

Zionist historians disregard these facts, and describe the Arabs as 'gangs of primitive murderers' and claim that Palestine was an arid desert or swampland. Zionist historians also disregard any modern economic developments by the Arabs which took place in Palestine before Zionist immigration, such as the development of trade and the new ports in Jaffa and Haifa. The same goes for the building of new commercial quarters in the cities, and new residential districts outside the old cities. For the Zionists saw themselves as the harbingers of innovation particularly in agriculture and Hebrew labour. They also discount the participation of Palestinian Jews with their Muslim and Christian brethren in the cultural, trade, and economic developments which took place prior to their arrival. Y.Bartel remarks that the majority of English tourists who visited Palestine in the Ottoman era praised the Palestinian Jews, describing them in a positive light and preferring them to the Ashkenazis by dint of their customs and tolerance of cultural changes.<sup>11</sup>



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### THE EXPLOITATION OF YEMENITE LABOUR

Sephardim then received a third shock when Zionist policy started to transform them into cheap labour due to the Zionist collectives' aversion to Arab labour. This policy was highly successful not only in relation to the Palestinian Jews, but to those from the Yemen and other Middle Eastern countries who were dislodged within Dar al-Islam and brought to Palestine, both prior to and after the foundation of the state of Israel. However, developments in the Israeli economy after the war of 1967 necessitated the proletarianization of the bulk of the inhabitants of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as well.

From its very inception Zionism has faced a paradox: firstly, the principle of an improved standard of living. Herzl (the founder of the Zionist movement) promised poor European immigrants that they would experience an amelioration of their social situation in Palestine. Zionist emissaries promised the Jews a life of abundance in the 'Promised Land'. Most of the immigrants after 1881, having a Zionist outlook, managed to improve their standard of living in Palestine by means of the exploitation of cheap Arab labour and subsidies from overseas.

Secondly, the principle of 'Hebrew labour' which says that the Zionists would not be able to occupy Palestine as long as agricultural and manufacturing labour remained in the hands of the 'foreigner', that is the Palestinian, for 'he who ploughs the earth is its owner and master.' The Zionist socialist immigrants who arrived after 1904, in what was termed the Second Aliya, believed in this principle. They were the first Zionists to found agricultural cooperatives, and they started to found kibbutzim and labour unions, and after the First World War they set up the Histadrut. What was immediately apparent from the application of this principle was that young immigrants knew little about agricultural labour and that they were much inferior to Arab labourers who were also the former landholders. This led the Zionist movement to bring in Yemenites as a cheap workforce to replace Arabs. Thus, on the one hand the Ashkenazi agronomist could continue making a profit, and on the other hand the Zionist Left would be happy since the land was still in Jewish Ashkenazi hands, as long as the Yemenis did not show too much initiative.

Like Jews elsewhere in Islam, the Yemenites enjoyed self-rule. Their economic situation was good enough for them to own their own houses, and they lived through their handiwork as goldsmiths,



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metalworkers, and armourers etc.

After the foundation of Hovevei Tsion in Russia in 1882 news spread to the Yemen that rich Russian Jews had bought Palestine from the Turkish sultan and that the long-awaited Jewish Messiah had come to set up His divine world state centred in Jerusalem. Seven Yemenite families emigrated as a result, but when they reached Jerusalem they were surprised that the Jews there neither rejoiced to see them nor welcomed them since they would now have to distribute their funds amongst more people. They suffered severe hunger and disease and one of the families was forced to return to the Yemen via Cairo, from where the head of the family, Ibrahim al Sheikh, sent a letter warning the Yemenites that they would find neither help nor succour in Jerusalem and that the Yemen was a thousand times better than Palestine. This had a negative effect on the flow of emigration from San'a'.

In 1882 the Yemeni rabbi, Yoseph ben Shlomo Mas'ud, placed a notice in the Havatselet newspaper describing the wretched conditions of the immigrants in Jerusalem and asking for donations. The rabbi said that two hundred Jews of San'a' who had lately emigrated were living rough in the streets, and that none of their fellow Jews were showing as much pity as to give them shelter. They were reduced to begging for bread.<sup>12</sup> The press of the time was replete with the hardships of the Yemenites, and the lack of help offered by the Ashkenazis, and even that offered by the Palestinian Jews did not keep them from hunger. The Ashkenazi press could have called upon the Jews of the world to help. It was up to Israel Frumkin, who had set up a society called Ezrat Nidahim to combat Christian missionaries, to help set up the first Yemenite village at Kufir Silwan. A Yemenite elder described their condition thus: they were living without any shelter, suffering from the heat of the sun by day and from the cold by night, begging bread from passers-by to no avail. They were sleeping under trees and dying of hunger and disease among the garbage heaps of Jerusalem. Then some Christians from the American Colony found them, heard their story and started to help them with food and housing, to the disgruntlement of Jewish religious circles who accused the Americans of attempted proselytizing. The head of the Americans was Horatio Spafford whose daughter, Bertha, wrote about this in her book, *Our Jerusalem* (1951). The accusations were unfounded and amicable relations between the Yemenites and the Americans lasted until 1948. Jewish sources indicate that many Yemenites lived as beggars in the large cities such as Jerusalem, Safad and Tiberias.

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In 1883 the Yemenite community in Jerusalem sent back to the Yemen two emissaries - Salim Hamdi and Yoseph Naddaf - to collect monies, but the community there refused to contribute since Rabbi Sulaiman al-Qara, the head of the community and judge of the religious court in San'a', withheld his consent to emigration for reasons both economic and religious. The Jewish Messiah had not yet come and the economic situation in Jerusalem did not allow for the absorption of immigrants. The religious authorities of the Arab Jews in Jerusalem and Alexandria had recommended the Yemenites not to emigrate, and thus Sulaiman al-Qara refused to make any donation and requested the emissaries to return whence they came. The rabbi had another reason, which was that the economic situation in San'a' had deteriorated as a result of the emigration while the amount jizya tax which was payable to the Ottoman sultan had not diminished, meaning that each Jewish family had to pay more. A portion of the emigrants had to return to the Yemen between 1882 and 1895, while the rest joined the Sephardi community in Palestine.

Living six to a room, in insanitary conditions with a meagre diet, disease spread among the emigrants. The child mortality rate went up with some families losing all their children. But the Ashkenazi Zionist community, the New Yishuv, refused to help the Yemenites, considering them part of the dwindling Old Yishuv.

In 1895 thirteen Yemeni families attempted to set up a moshav at Bani Samu'il near Jerusalem. They bought a 600 dunam plot of land helped by a Jewish society in Poland and the afore-mentioned Frumkin. Arab peasants came to help them, and together they sowed 150 dunams of wheat and planted 7,000 seedlings while living in caves. Conditions obliged them to turn to the Zionist organisation, Hovevei Tsion, for help, but they were turned down. Subsequently a quarrel between the Yemenites and their Arab neighbours resulted in the abandonment of Bani Samu'il.

The Yemenites made various attempts at agricultural self-sufficiency through smallholdings. In 1904 they tried to set up an agricultural village in the Jordan Valley, then at Har Tuv, but all their attempts failed. We shall see that prior to 1948, almost all Palestinian and Arab Jews' attempts in this domain failed since all Jewish funds were being spent on founding Ashkenazi Zionist settlements which were considered to be 'pioneer work' and kept 'pure' Ashkenazi with national, security and economic significance. They thus had a monopoly over the foundation of kibbutzim and moshavim and the role set aside for the Arab Jews was that of cheap

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hired labour. However, the number of Yemenite immigrants was only 1000 between 1882-1904 while the number of Ashkenazi immigrants was 24,000.<sup>13</sup>

The second chapter in the Yemenis' sad history - their immigration and employment (more specifically their exploitation) in Palestine - happened during 1910-14 and was orchestrated by the secular Zionist movement. In this period the number of Yemenite immigrants reached 2,000 (opposed to 38,000 Ashkenazi immigrants). In 1908 Dr Ya'akov Thon, a specialist with the Zionist organization in Palestine, declared the necessity of creating a Jewish workforce able to compete with the Arab labourers on Jewish settlements. Thon suggested using the Arab Jews, particularly the Yemenites and the Iranians, since their 'cultural level', according to him, was that of the Arab peasants. He suggested employing the wives and daughters in the homes of the Ashkenazi farmowners in place of Arab women. He got over the problem of accommodation for the Yemenite workers on the settlements by demanding that they return to their families at the end of their seasonal employment, and during their employment they could sleep on the ground in the fields! Thon divided the workers into two - the Ashkenazis from Russia were the 'elite' and the Arab Jews the 'rabble', adding that the Russian Jews being culturally more refined than the Yemenites could not take the place of the Arab workers. Alex Bein, who quoted these facts in his book, *Return to the Land* (pp. 97-101), remarked further that the eastern Jews had few needs and could therefore compete with the Arabs, and if the Yemenite Jews who had already been employed on the settlement were to be kept there permanently they would not lack work.

In the same year (1908), a veteran settler wrote an article in the newspaper *Hatsvi* in which he mentioned that although the Ashkenazi Jews had fought for equality in Russia, they were suppressing the rights of others and that he opposed the concept of 'Hebrew work' on principle.

The party of Hapo'el Hatza'ir (later named Mapai and then the Labour Party) was the first Zionist organization to have the Yemenites work on Ashkenazi settlements. In its 1908 conference, this socialist party passed a resolution stating the necessity for Jewish employers to exploit the Jews from Islamic countries to do the work of the 'foreigners' (i.e. Palestinians).<sup>14</sup> The resolution also speaks of the need for an active propaganda effort to get these Jews to immigrate to Palestine and of the necessity for 'the conquest of

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labour'.<sup>15</sup> In 1910 the Yemenite worker started competing with the Ashkenazi, leading one of the leaders of Hapo'el Hatz'a'ir, Yosef Aharonovitch, to warn that 'we have created a competitor more dangerous than the Arab worker, who will make the life of the Ashkenazi youth impossible.' He added, 'in spite of all that, we can in no way fight him, but at the same time we shall commit a crime against the Yemenite by leaving him in his degenerate state of physical and intellectual development to be cheap enough labour to compete with similar servants . . .'<sup>16</sup>

Thus the Zionists dealt with the problem. They used Yemenite workers against Arab workers and when the Yemenites started to compete with them, they said 'How wrong we were to exploit the Yemenite and use him for such work' (which meant his dismissal!). In spite of this, and in accordance with Thon's resolution, the Zionist organization in Palestine decided to import more Yemenites by sending to the Yemen a member of the (socialist!) Hapo'el Hatz'a'ir party, Samuel Yavni'eli, ne Warshavsky. Once there he took on the name of Eliezer ben Yoseph, making out that he was a great rabbi sent by the sages of Jerusalem, and carrying with him forged documents to that effect. The Zionist agent spoke and acted like a Yemenite whilst he informed them of the imminent coming of the Messiah and the Day of Resurrection. He told them that the time had come to emigrate to the Promised Land and furthermore promised them a life of luxury in the land of milk and honey - but not everyone could go. He chose 1,500 able-bodied people and started to transport them. However in April 1912 the Zionist organization sent him a telegram demanding him to cease because the Ashkenazi workers feared the competition. Yavni'eli tried to stop the transports, but the Yemenites objected, fearing that a delay would keep them in the Yemen on the Day of Resurrection. 500 of them emigrated to Palestine without his permission.<sup>17</sup> In his book,<sup>18</sup> the Zionist emissary recounted how his conscience troubled him as he demanded that the Yemenites leave their property, comforts and decent economic and social conditions in order to be labourers for the settlements. Upon reaching Palestine, they were not granted accommodation and were obliged to live in the streets and the fields, constructing huts from branches. With the arrival of the rains and the cold of winter, they called on their Ashkenazi 'brethren' and asked for mercy. One of the settlers allowed three families to live in a cowshed. Then every family tried to find a stable or a cowshed for the winter months. This was the situation in Rehovoth, Hadera, Zichron Ya'akov and Petah Tikvah among

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others. These conditions worsened during the First World War.<sup>19</sup> The child mortality rate increased in these insanitary living conditions. In her thesis on this subject, Nitsa Druian states 'The prevailing belief during those days was that the Yemenite child born in Palestine would die, and if he arrived in Palestine under three years old, he was not expected to survive.'

Moreover, the settlers treated their Yemenite workers so despicably that one of the Yemenites, who returned home described the life of those in Palestine as 'exile upon exile'. The contempt directed towards them was worse than that of some of the Muslim extremists in the Yemen. The Ashkenazis would inflict beatings upon them and refer to them as 'donkey, son of donkey',<sup>20</sup> 'dirty Arab', 'barbarian' and 'lousy Yemenite', and were taken aback when a Yemenite tried to defend himself. In Rehovoth, for example, some Yemenite women were collecting dry twigs from the ground in one of the orchards when the Ashkenazi owner pounced upon them and beat them viciously, tied them to the tail of his donkey and rode back to the settlement with the donkey dragging the women along the ground behind it. This event, called the Makov Incident after the name of the brutal Yonatan Makov, was the cause of much complaint in the Yemenite community. A similar incident happened in Petah Tikvah where Hayyim Kossovsky fell upon a Yemenite Woman, beating her about the ribs and arms even as the woman screamed and begged for mercy. In Haderah the guard of a settlement savagely attacked Yemenite workers as they slept. The case was taken up by the Ashkenazi administration of the settlement, but Zionist justice was denied the victims. Berl Katznelson, one of the leaders of the Zionist Labour Movement disapproved of this and criticized the exploitative and disdainful treatment meted out, calling for a curb on these barbaric impulses.

Katznelson warned against forcing the Yemenites to believe that there was no hope of justice in the Zionist community.<sup>21</sup> He remarked that the settlers treated the Yemenites like slaves. They were forced to leave the settlement of Milhamiya because of harsh treatment, and generally ended up moving from one settlement to another in search of work. They were expelled from Migdal because their employer claimed they were not employable. They were, however, allowed to stay permanently on settlements in the south, on condition that they erected their quarters outside the settlements. The principle of 'Hebrew Labour' was failing, since the settlers could not do without skilled, cheap Arab labour. In 1913 another 30 families returned to the Yemen and letters from the Yemenites



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sent from Palestine hardly encouraged their relatives to emigrate.

Even the humanist, Ahad Ha'am, in an essay published in 1912, said that 'Yemenite immigration affects the nature of the Zionist settlement by dint of their different culture and mentality'.<sup>22</sup> This outlook remains deeply entrenched and is a major factor in the crusade to bring in Russian Jews today, so that they may 'ameliorate' the make-up of Israeli society and dilute the majority of 'native Jews' (see chapter four).

Haim Arlozoroff, one of the leaders of the Zionist Labour Movement, wrote 'It appears that the case of labour in South Africa is almost the only situation which has a bearing on the conditions here.'<sup>23</sup> Katznelson avers that he saw 'innocent souls being beaten for no crime, the corruption of justice which was the lot of those beaten by the elected officials of the 'chosen people' in the chosen land'.<sup>24</sup> The Yemenites then started to struggle for an end to the discrimination, injustice and contempt heaped upon them. In 1913 they issued a communique condemning the policy of discrimination directed against them, and the duplicity which had been employed in bringing them to Palestine. Addressed to the Ashkenazis, the communique, inter alia, stated 'In your opinion we are insignificant and filthy dogs . . . We are despised by all for our poverty, but as God is our witness we only came from the Yemen on your advice.'<sup>25</sup>

The newspaper *Ahdut*, which appeared between 1913-14, informs us that the wages earned by the Yemenites were less than those of the Palestinians labourers. The same newspaper published a letter written by a Yemenite labourer, condemning the low wages and the scorn of the Ashkenazis who called the Yemenites 'gentile dogs'.

Unable to change jobs without their employer's permission, Yemenites were scarcely even 'free' labour. Forbidden to live inside settlements, they constructed their own poor quarters outside. Some of these, Mahaneh Yehuda, near Petah Tikvah, for instance, still exist. By 1918 there were 5,000 Yemenites, 10 percent of the Jewish population of Palestine.<sup>26</sup> Mikhael Albas, a Sephardi intellectual, writes that researchers ascribe the exploitation and oppression of the Yemenite immigrants to rich Jewish farmers rather than to the socialist settlements. In fact, he maintains, the latter were more to blame since it was they who sent the emissary Yavni'eli to bring them, who went to great lengths to limit their ownership of land and who deliberately established their low living standards.<sup>27</sup>

In 1944 the veterans from the Ashkenazi settlements gathered at a graveside to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Berl Katznelson, the Zionist socialist intellectual. One of the 'comrades' eulogized 'If we had to study history through commemorative



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monuments, there would be no better one than this grave for the study of the history of that period, particularly the security situation and the health and social conditions, the life of the masses and the ethical level of the individual.' This woman, Aliza Shidlovsky, digressed to mention 'In this cemetery there is a special corner for graves of the Yemenites who came to Palestine following the mission of S. Yavni'eli. Family after family succumbed to malaria and other diseases. They went down like flies. There are no monuments on their graves, except for that of the rabbi's family which was completely wiped out.<sup>28</sup> This 'comrade' made no mention of how her 'socialist' comrades treated the Yemenites.

During this period (1881-1918) the conditions of all the Sephardim in Palestine deteriorated owing to the Zionists' monopoly of all Jewish financial resources. They made use of the Arab Jews, including the Yemenites, for hard physical labour such as quarrying, road building and household service. Even today Ashkenazi women are not to be found as servants. In this manner most of the Arab Jews were transformed into an exploited working class, like their Palestinian Arab Muslim and Christian brothers. We shall see how this era determined the role of the Sephardim during the British Mandate and after the founding of the state of Israel in 1948 when Zionist crimes against the Yemenites reached the zenith.

## NOTES

- 1 The term generally used for those lands where Islam is the preponderant religion, literally meaning 'the realm of Islam'.
- 2 Shevet va'am, 1954.
- 3 Smooha, 1978, 281.
- 4 Eliachar, Shevet va'am, 1970.
- 5 Eliachar, Life with the Jews, 1980.
- 6 Shevet va'am, 1970, 34.
- 7 The Zionist term for immigration to the Holy Land, meaning literally 'ascent'.
- 8 Eliahu Eliachar's memoirs reminded me of the story of the Muslim 'Pasha' who was a friend of my father, and owned tracts of land with herds of sheep and cattle. Every spring he would present us with a sheep, saying: take this as a present for the New Year and the Day of Atonement and when you go to the synagogue pray God to grant me forgiveness. We would raise the sheep through the summer, feeding and washing it, and playing with it until it became one of the family. On the Day of Atonement, my father entreated God to forgive the sins of his friend. God would be entreated to pardon the Pasha and we would eat kebab throughout the successive festivals - Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and Sukkot. This went on year after year until that lifestyle was destroyed and we were scattered around the world. May God have mercy upon the Pasha.
- 9 An acronym from the initial letters of the Hebrew for Isaiah II, 5 ('O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord').
- 10 I have lived on six different secular kibbutzim which are the majority and have not seen a single member who believed in God (except for some parents of the members). As for the 'religious' minority, except for Neturei Karta who are

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anti-Zionist, they exploit religion for political and colonialist purposes distancing themselves from Judaism since the Torah says: 'Thou shalt love the stranger, for thou wast a stranger in Egypt . . . '

- 11 Cathedra, November 1976.
- 12 Nini, 1977, 34.
- 13 Smooha, 281.
- 14 Proceedings of Hapo'el Hatza'ir, 226.
- 15 Kibbush ha avodah - the Zionist term implies the exclusion of Arabs from the employment market.
- 16 Hapo'el hatza'ir, no. 4, quoted by Nini, 1977.
- 17 Nahum Menahem, 108.
- 18 Journey to the Yemen, 1952.
- 19 Nini, 1977, 78.
- 20 The 'son of formula is typical of an Arabic curse.
- 21 Nini, Cathedra, 1977.
- 22 Collected Works, 1947, 426.
- 23 A. Muharib, Palestinian Affairs, August 1973.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 N. Menahem, 109-110.
- 27 Les Temps Modernes (Arabic translation 1981), Albaz, 103.
- 28 Hayyim Hannegbi, Bamerhav, 20 May 1986 - Ha'aretz, 20 May 1986.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Under Zionist Autonomy 1918-1948

After the British gained control of Palestine in the First World War, they helped the Zionist organization create an autonomy and rule over the native Jews of Palestine. Simultaneously the British Mandate, having little sympathy with Palestinian Jewish leaders, and considering them a part of the enemy Ottoman system, kept them out of government, and weakened the influence of their chief rabbi by appointing an Ashkenazi chief rabbi as well as a rabbinical committee made up of equal numbers of Ashkenazi and native Jews. This policy led to:

1. Closer cooperation between foreign rule and the settlers.
2. The implementation of the Balfour Declaration and the eventual formation of a 'homeland' state for Ashkenazi Jews at the expense of the Palestinian population Christian, Muslim and Jewish. Native Jews were placed under the aegis of the Zionists since they had no representation in the world Zionist establishment. Clearly Ashkenazi Zionist domination did not start in 1948 with the founding of the state of Israel but began with the British Mandate. It is worth mentioning that Ashkenazi anti-Zionist religious establishments were placed outside this autonomy.

The most important institutions of the autonomy were: 1. The World Zionist Organization. In 1929 the Jewish Agency was founded to represent world Zionism in Palestine and to constitute its executive arm under article IV of the Mandate which called for the government of Palestine to recognise a 'Jewish Agency' and also an elected body to cooperate in the economic and social administration of Palestine, and, inter alia, to pave the way for self-determination.

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2. The National Council (Hava'ad Haleumi), which resembled a cabinet.

3. The Jewish National Fund (Keren Kayyemet Leyisrael), whose purpose was to buy up Arab lands and settle Zionists on them, provided that the lands were never to be sold nor worked by non-Jews.

4. The Assembly of Deputies

5. The Foundation Fund (Keren Hayesod), which funded and equipped the settlements with agricultural machinery and livestock etc.

6. The Hagana, the secret army run by the Jewish Agency. The British pretended to know nothing about this army. In the Second World War the Hagana set up special commando units, called Palmach (Palmah), made up mainly of left-wing settlers and kibbutz members, particularly those belonging to the Ahdut Ha'avoda party, which later joined the Labour Party. Palmach also had members from the Labour Party, Mapam and some city-dwellers. In addition the Hagana set up Shay, or the Intelligence Service, which after the foundation of the state became the Shin Bet<sup>1</sup> domestic intelligence service, and Mossad which specialised in foreign intelligence and spy operations.

7. The Histadrut (General Trade Union) and its components; the settlement organizations (kibbutzim and moshavim), marketing and banking organizations, the Sick Fund (Kuppat Holim) and the socialist schools, factories etc. The Histadrut is an empire with its most important economic posts in the hands of 'Socialist' Ashkenazi Zionists,

During the British Mandate this governing apparatus was termed 'Establishments of the Settler Community' (Mosdot Hayishuv), or the 'State-to-be' (Ha-medina Badderekh). In 1948 this very apparatus took on the name 'the State of Israel' and the head of the Jewish Agency, David Ben Gurion, became the Prime Minister of the Government of Israel. The Hagana became the Israeli Defence Force. The National Council became the Government of Israel and the Assembly of Deputies became the Knesset, i.e. the Parliament, and so on.

In addition to setting up this governing apparatus, the British Mandate appointed some British Jews to high government posts in Palestine, such as Norman Bentwich as attorney-general and chief legislator of Palestine law, Ralph Harari as Director of the Office of Trade and Industry, Max Nuruck as first secretary at the main secretariat, Albert M. Hyamson as Director of the Office of

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Immigration, etc. Nor must we overlook the fact that the British Government appointed the British Zionist, Herbert Samuel, as High Commissioner.<sup>2</sup>

This apparatus received financial and political support from the World Zionist Organization, enabling it to control the Sephardi Jews in Palestine and to transform them into second class citizens, (as it did to the Arabs in 1948) using the following methods.

## PARTY LISTS

These were imposed in 1944 as opposed to voting for individuals. Under this system, the elector votes for this or that party, then the leaders of the party appoint the 'delegates'. However, all the parties in Palestine, before and after the founding of the state, are Ashkenazi parties, generally founded, and still in existence, abroad. They are funded by world Zionism and no Sephardi grouping has managed to obtain enough parliamentary power to represent their own interests or numerical power. Consequently Sephardim boycotted the election of 1945 (see chapter six). In addition, all the newspapers and organs of propaganda remain under Ashkenazi control and the governing apparatus has continuously fought off any attempt at political organization by Sephardim. Those who struggle for their oppressed community have been accused of treason, sectarianism, opportunism and exploitation of their community's plight and have lost their jobs. In spite of greatly increased Ashkenazi immigration during the Mandate, Sephardim constituted one third of the Jewish community in Palestine in 1948. However, if we take the Jewish Agency which wielded greater power, we note that its leaders were appointed by the World Zionist Organization which included no Sephardim on its higher bodies.

Even municipal elections took place along party list lines with the result that the interests of native Jews in the slum neighbourhoods were ignored, especially with regard to education, employment, housing, delinquency etc. In Jerusalem in 1938, for example, the 'Sephardi Community Council' won four out of a total of forty seats in spite of the fact that the majority of Jews in Jerusalem were Sephardim. For this reason the leaders of the Sephardi Community Council boycotted the elections and demanded individual elections along the British model so that a Sephardi could vote for his representative directly. The Ashkenazis, however, rejected this suggestion and this situation continued until

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1945 when the two sides made a compromise. The party list system would remain on condition that Ashkenazi and native Jewish candidates alternated, leading Sephardim to achieve an overwhelming majority - 19 out of 30 seats. Panic started to spread amongst the ranks of the Ashkenazi settlers and the National Council (i.e. the Ashkenazi 'government') decided to annul the elections as one of their parties (the religious Hapo'el Hamizrahi) rigged the results. They then abolished the principal of alternation, and by means of various stratagems and ploys they managed to fragment the unity of Sephardi Jews and have the municipality abolished in 1948. David Ben Gurion then appointed a known opponent of the Sephardim, Dov Joseph, military governor of Jerusalem (see chapter seven).

## FINANCE AND SETTLEMENTS

Contributions from world Jewry were monopolized and diverted for the benefit of Ashkenazi Zionist colonisation. We have already mentioned this point in the previous chapter, but the changes during the mandate period were qualitative not quantitative and led to the widening of the economic and educational gap between Ashkenazim and Sephardim. Having previously been a small minority in Jewish communities, the Zionists were now gaining ground, especially after Nazi Germany started to oppress the Jews. Inside Nazi Germany the Zionist Party was the only political movement, except for the National Socialists, allowed to carry out political activity. The Zionists set up trade relations with Nazi Germany and brought out some of the German Jews' capital in the form of goods.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, Sephardim were not allowed to collect donations for their community in Palestine. Funds accumulating in Zionist banks were used to ship Ashkenazi immigrants to Palestine and settle them there. These immigrants founded many of the kibbutzim and moshavim which became a political and military pillar of Zionist colonisation. They also made arms purchases, set up the Palmach or offensive units of the Hagana and established marine units (Palyam). They distributed funds to Ashkenazi parties under the guise of 'Zionist Education' and published Zionist newspapers and books etc. The interests of local Jews in the cities were ignored to such an extent that their neighbourhoods became deplorable slums. Most of the Sephardim who came to Israel after 1948 did not realise that the cultural and economic gulf did not only occur after 1948 but has been entrenched since the start of Zionist colonisation. Some



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Arab Jews tried to settle some of the poor in rural areas to live off the land like their Palestinian neighbours, but the Zionist leadership insisted that agriculture remain in the hands of the Ashkenazi settlers and that native Jews be hired labourers. Out of the eighty settlements set up prior to 1926, not one was for local Jews, except Har-Tuv, which was founded in 1895 and financed by the Sephardim in Bulgaria; the Zionist establishment refused thereafter to extend any financial help to this village. Eliachar<sup>4</sup> observed that all Sephardi attempts in this domain failed. The advertisement placed by the office of Zionist agricultural settlement is most instructive on this subject. Regarding Yemenite Jews it was stated 'We are pleased to inform you that we have work for some families in the areas of water-transport, laundry and other domestic jobs.'<sup>5</sup>

At the fifteenth Zionist Congress in 1927, Eliahu Eliachar raised this matter. The head of the American Delegation, Steven Wise, expressed his interest in it to the anger of Chaim Weizmann, Chairman of the World Zionist Federation. Addressing Eliachar, he advised him not to arouse dangerous resentment amongst the various Jewish groups. He then ordered him to 'Go back to your city, and I will clarify the problem.'<sup>6</sup> If a leader of Sephardi Jews was treated so contemptuously, we can surmise just how the rest of the community or the Palestinians were treated. Eliachar states that even though Chaim Weizmann encouraged Sephardim to set up their own world organization, he exploited their leaders to secure his own position and did nothing solve the ethnic problem which was starting to get out of control. Weizmann expressed annoyance whenever the subject was raised. Celebrations for the founding of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1925 were attended by Hajj Amin al-Husseini, considered at that time a moderate nationalist. Weizmann was asked to greet the Hajj and shake his hand - he refused. On 24 June 1919, Musa Kasim Pasha, the Mayor of Jerusalem, welcomed the Zionist leader, Menahem Ussishkin, upon his arrival in Jerusalem. The latter started criticising the municipality and intimidating the Arabs with talk of the 'Jews' strength and their arms'. (For details of the conversation see Nahum Menahem, 349-354.)

In 1925 native Jews attempted to lease a piece of government land in the Jericho area and to settle 500 families there. The British government agreed, but the Zionist establishment under the leadership of Menahem Ussishkin thwarted the plan on the pretext that government land leases were the prerogative of the Zionist Organization alone. The role of Sephardi Jews was to be that of

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servants, hired labourers in the settlements and quarries, newsvendors and shoe-blacks, not that of farmers mingling with the Palestinian Arab people near Jericho. The Yemenite tragedy played on throughout the Mandate (and still does), and the 'humanist' Zionist Moshe Smilansky published an essay in Ha'aretz (6 January 1927) in which he wrote that the Yemenite Question was a stain on the conscience of the Zionist Organization, and that 300 Yemenite families still lived in harsh conditions next to Ashkenazi colonies. Despite the fact that they included skilled farmers, the Zionist Organization gave them promise after promise, but no concrete help. Eventually some Sephardi Jews managed to set up the village of Hittin near Tiberias in 1944 with the help of Sephardim abroad. Hittin suffered from a shortage of water and a paucity of funds and housing. The agricultural lands they received were poor and most of the inhabitants lived, not from the land, but from their work outside the settlement.

At the same time as the Zionist Organization refused to help Sephardim, it was sending its emissaries to Arab and Islamic countries to exploit the Jews' religious feelings and to collect money for its Ashkenazi Zionist settlers. Those Jews who contributed, thought it was for 'the Holy Land'. Between 1920-1925, for example, 4,060 dinars (the equivalent of the same amount in sterling) were collected from Jews in Iraq for the Foundation Fund in addition to the contributions of Hezekiel Sasson, the minister of finance of Iraq. During 1920-1922 a total of 32,187 dinars was raised for the Jewish National Fund, and in 1921 Hezekiel Sasson donated 36,500 dinars. In 1920 Elie Kedourie of Shanghai gave 10,000 dinars to found a National Library on Har Hatzofim in Jerusalem, as well as donating a sum to found the Kedourie Arab and Kedourie Zionist Schools, at which latter school all the pupils were Ashkenazi. Donations from Iraq were, relatively, double those from the Jews of Poland. In 1920-1923 the Zionist Organization used the Iraqi donations to buy 76,000 dunams in Marj Ibn 'Amir (Emeq Yizra'el) between 'Afula and Beisan where they set up a number of settlements which count amongst the richest kibbutzim, such as Geva, 'Ein Harod, Tel Yoseph, Beit Hashitta and Kfar Yehesqel. In 1923 the Zionists managed to gain control over most of the lands adjoining the Haifa-Damascus and Haifa-Nazareth roads. Zionist documentation shows that contributions from the Jews of Egypt surpassed pro rata those of the Jews of Eastern and Western Europe. In 1921 alone the Zionists managed to collect 67,800 Italian lira from Tripoli (Libya). During the French Mandate in Syria and

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Lebanon, the Zionist Organization set up Jewish youth organizations such as the scouts and the sports association (Makkabi HeHalutz), and sent the children out to collect donations for the Jewish National Fund. On 8 July 1926 they sent 1,200 collection boxes out and ordered the community to collect £200 annually. In the twenties the contributions of Syrian and Lebanese Jews reached £6,000,<sup>7</sup> which was spent on land purchases. The Zionist Organization demanded that the Jews of Marrakesh increase their donations, and the Zionist emissary, Tortus, wrote in an article that 'we don't just want American gold but Marrakesh gold too.' This comment aroused strong resentment from Moroccan Jews who started to feel that the Zionists wished to exploit them economically.<sup>8</sup> In the meantime, native Jews in Palestine were writing to their kin in Arab countries warning them not to give to Ashkenazi Zionists and detailing Ashkenazi arrogance and discrimination, but the Zionist Organization was stronger. How could the writers hope to defeat Zionist hegemony when the security apparatus and governments of Arab and Islamic countries failed to prevent funds pouring into Zionist settlement? At a time when children in the Islamic world were dying, year after year, from poverty and disease, Arab funds were being used to build kibbutzim whose members and children ran the Zionist military, economic and political establishment in the Zionist entity. Part of Arab Jewry was rich, and the state of Jews in general was better than that of the Muslims. Most Jews in the Islamic world in general, and in Palestine in particular, were poor and these funds should have been used to ameliorate the conditions of all citizens in the Arab world, not for Zionist colonists. The Zionists continue to employ deceitful methods against the Arab world: there is an Arab boycott of Israeli goods, but even so Israeli goods reach Arab countries with the place of origin concealed.

Even though the settlements in Emeq Yizra'el were built with Iraqi Jewish funds, Iraqis owned only the name of the Ashkenazi settlement 'Kefar Yehesqel' (called after the Iraqi Jewish minister mentioned above). For example, 'Na'im', who grew up in Iraq and Palestine, was surprised because he had not heard about it. 'At the start of the forties,' Nairn said, 'I went to kibbutz Geva in Emeq Yizra'el to study agriculture. There were only 150 Ashkenazim on the kibbutz including women and children. The percentage of those in high positions in the Zionist establishment was very large, as in the rest of the kibbutzim.' Then he started to name the members and their jobs in the Zionist establishment:

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Yehudit Simhoni: head of the Woman's Organization in the Histadrut. Her son lived on the next kibbutz and was an senior army commander during the Sinai War in 1956.

Yosef Efrati: one of the heads of the Agricultural Bureau of the Zionist Organization and a minister after the founding of the state.

Yosef Gurion: chairman of Tenuva, the marketing company of the Histadrut.

Moshe Hofman: a leading member of the Hever Hakvutzot, the main coordinating organisation of Mapai kibbutzim.

Shaul Rosenfeld: head of the Armed Youth Detachments (Gadna').

Nahman Rezhik (now Nahman Raz): a leading member of the Workers Youth Organization, Hano'ar H'oved, in the Histadrut. In the 1980s he was chairman of the Educational and Cultural Committee in parliament.

Mikha - son of the aforementioned Efrati - became in the 1980s one of the heads of the Kibbutz League and the National Bank of Israel.

Since the forties, the number of members who have reached the top has doubled through cheap Arab and Sephardi labour. 'I went to that kibbutz,' Na'im continued, 'to study applied agriculture but they started to use me for the arduous and unskilled jobs. I told them "I want to learn about agricultural machinery." When I complained, Nahman Rezhik who was in charge of my squad said, "You just want to ride the tractor", and then "You work for your food" (meaning - you don't work for nothing). Of course we received no wages from the kibbutz, but the kibbutz members were paid, with education for them and their children, with comfortable apartments, and so on. They lodged us on top of the cowshed and when the bugs bit us then gave us a tent to live in - three of us to one small tent. In this way the kibbutz exploited many groups of youths who came from the cities for a two-year stint.' I asked Na'im whether he had finally learnt anything about agricultural machinery. 'Nothing,' he replied. 'After two years they finally told me, "Look, we won't teach you that." They didn't give any reasons but a friend said to me "Your origin is the reason." The kibbutz member, Nahman Rezhik, who as Nahman Raz became head of the Educational and Cultural Affairs Committee in the Israeli parliament said "Their treatment was disgusting", but he didn't help me. When they gave me their final "no", I was very ill for a few weeks and then I left. My back still gives me trouble. I have read lately that one of their children, Amnon Yadin, who became one of the heads of the Kibbutz Organization and who spent millions

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buying shares for the "Socialist" kibbutzim, committed suicide when the market crashed and that the kibbutzim lost huge amounts of money. They are building on sand. As children of the Arab world, we know that Arab sands are fickle.' The Iraqi Na'im did not benefit from the Iraqi funds which were used for Nahman Raz and other Russian settlers.

## SEPHARDI PORTERS

Discrimination against the immigrants from the Arab and Islamic countries was rife. Apart from a few thousand Sephardim, the Zionist movement did not concern itself with bringing in Arab Jews until it became clear that most of the Jews of Europe had been slaughtered at the hands of the Nazis. We have already mentioned the 2,000 Jews who had been brought over from the Yemen in 1911-1912 to compete with Arab labour. During the British Mandate a few thousand Jews were brought over from Kurdistan and Iran to work in the quarries and do other menial jobs. Additionally, a limited number of Arab Jews immigrated to Palestine during this period. They became 10 percent of the immigrant total and they came for religious reasons. We should mention that thousands of Arab Jews had immigrated to Palestine during the eras of the Islamic Caliphate and the Ottoman Empire and that no one objected to them - precisely because they had come for religious reasons.<sup>9</sup> While the Zionist autonomy during the Mandate absorbed 382,000 Ashkenazi Jews,<sup>10</sup> and spent millions to get them there and to employ and house them, they completely overlooked the Sephardi religious immigrants. These latter joined what is known as the 'Black Belt', the slum areas around the large towns, which only deepened the gulf between the Ashkenazi and native Jewish community. Amongst the Jews who immigrated after the First World War were some Sephardim from Salonika (a community which originated in Arab Andalusia). They were skilled merchants and sailors and wished to use their talents in Palestine. Maurice Raphael and the Sarfati family attempted to found a marine engineering company, but the Zionist establishment decided that the role these Jews were to play was not that of merchants, but that of unskilled port workers. It transformed them into dockers and porters and the Ashkenazi community nicknamed them 'Horanim', meaning 'riff-raff in Hebrew. 'Salonikan' came to mean 'porter',<sup>11</sup> and 'Kurd' came to mean 'quarry-worker'. 'Yemenite



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woman' meant 'servant' and 'shvartse' ('black' in Yiddish) meant 'Sephardi Jew' or 'Arab'. One of the Yemenite leaders at the Eighteenth Zionist Congress in 1933 declared that his brethren were considered third class citizens, like the non-Aryans in Germany.<sup>12</sup>

### EDUCATION

Native Jews were stultified. After the foundation of Zionist autonomy, education in the Jewish community in Palestine fell under the authority of the ruling Zionist establishment. All the Jewish philanthropic societies which funded and ran educational programmes in Arab countries before the First World War had ceased their activities in Palestine. These societies told the Zionist establishment that, while they had to help with education in Arab countries since the Jews there were receiving no funding from world Jewry, the Zionist authorities ought to use some of their Jewish funds to finance Jewish schools in Palestine. The governing Zionist establishment in Palestine decided to pay no attention to native Jews and moreover hinder them in getting an education by imposing school fees. Since most Palestinian Jews were impecunious, they were compelled to leave school. Additionally many children had to go out to work to help their large families, joining the large army of newspaper-vendors, matchsellers and shoe-blacks, or the army of maids in Ashkenazi homes. Ignorance was prevalent in the streets of the 'Black Belt' and it begot poverty, crime, debauchery and drug-abuse. The Zionist Professor R. Backi admitted in a study he made in 1943 that 67 percent of native Jews did not even earn £2 a month, the wage of an Sephardi Jew was less than that of an Ashkenazi and that most of the Arab Jews were menial workers.<sup>13</sup> Naturally they could not afford their children's school fees and after three years 25 percent of children had already dropped out in the large town. A mere 11 percent of Sephardim completed their elementary schooling. Consequently more than 95 percent of university students were Ashkenazi. Many members of the community sent their children to religious schools which were more like prison camps.

On 21 November 1945, the magazine Hed Hamizrah sent a detailed report to the British Committee of Enquiry which was studying Jewish education in Palestine. The manifesto contained the aforementioned facts, and the magazine demanded Sephardi participation on governmental education committees.<sup>14</sup> On the



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other hand, in Arab countries, Jewish children were studying free at Alliance, parochial or government schools. When these Jews reached Israel after 1948, the superiority of their education was apparent.<sup>15</sup>

After a monumental struggle by the Sephardi leaders, the Jewish Agency decided in 1948 to establish a bureau of Sephardi affairs, headed (of course) by an Ashkenazi Jew, Y. Zerubabel. In an article entitled 'Observations on Political and Social Problems with regard to the Eastern Communities',<sup>16</sup> the Ashkenazi Professor Eisenstadt demanded the establishment of organizations to enable Sephardim to assimilate Ashkenazi values, on condition that they enjoyed autonomy in these organizations. The professor warned against eliminating the spirit of self-confidence and enterprise in Sephardi society. This sociologist from Jerusalem University did not see the contradiction in his opinion. How could native Jews recover their self-confidence and spirit of enterprise when they were being told to abandon their culture? The outcome for Sephardim was cultural nihilism (see chapter seven).

Na'im was asked how he got to university. He replied, 'When it became obvious to me that the kibbutz would not allow me to study agriculture, I left. I started work as a labourer raising cattle. It was really tough work, starting at two in the morning and finishing in the evening. After a year I found some light work elsewhere and I studied day and night preparing for university entrance examinations.'

## THE WEAKNESS OF THE PALESTINIAN JEWS

How did the native Jewish community face up to this challenge? Did they fight, comply or surrender?

Due to the fact that the clash took place between two unequal forces, the reaction of the majority was a mixture of discord and adjustment. The confrontation ended with Zionist victory in 1948, as happened to the Palestinian Arab people despite the help they received from the peoples of the Arab and Islamic world. The Palestinians were united, and Muslims and Christians fought as one. They had a firm economic base in the land and agriculture, a developed national bourgeoisie and a common language and culture. They had lived on this land, not for hundreds but thousands of years. In 1918 they constituted the overwhelming majority - over 95 percent. In spite of these factors, the Zionists won in 1948,

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destroyed hundreds of Arab villages and put most of the Arab inhabitants to flight. If the Palestinian people failed, then how could the small weak Sephardi community succeed?

The Ashkenazi settlers adopted the policy of divide and rule towards the Sephardi Community Council of Jerusalem. As a result, a number of leaders of the organization split away and formed sectarian groups based on their Arab roots. Even those leaders who stayed with the organization were divided into two groups. The first, headed by Abu al-'Afia, supported the Zionist party list elections and demanded that only Spanish Jews be allowed to join this organization - a view always supported by the Zionist Movement which stated that Spanish Jews were 'Europeans'. Nevertheless, Arab Jews who had lived in the realms of Islam from Central Asia to Spain considered themselves a single community brought together by a common culture. The Zionists were the first to divide them into what was termed 'the Eastern communities', and the Andalusians (Sephardim). The second group was headed by Eliahu Eliachar and supported the conventional view that the Jews of Islam were one community. This section supported the adoption of the British electoral system rather than the party lists approach. They boycotted the Zionist elections. In 1946 the Committee decided to remove David Abu al-'Afia from his post, and Eliahu Eliachar was elected as his replacement on 20 February 1947. Finances were bad, as the Committee's debts reached £3,000. Eliachar started to improve the economic situation. He paid off the debts and renewed relations with Sephardi Jews throughout the world via the World Organization of Arab Jewry, and convened a World Conference of Sephardim. The Zionist establishment opposed this Conference being convened in Jerusalem, lest facts about racial discrimination be revealed to delegations from all over the world. David Ben Gurion called Eliahu Eliachar 'Enemy Number One' for encouraging Arab Jews to defend their rights, and argued that, if he succeeded, the Mapai Party<sup>17</sup> would lose many votes in that constituency. Ben Gurion also said that if an organization arose to bring together all the individuals of that community, he and his associates would need that organization's endorsement. He added that the Sephardi community would not be able to take on responsibility concomitant with their electoral power.<sup>18</sup> (See chapter eight for Ben Gurion's views on Sephardim.) As a result of this Zionist pressure, Eliachar handed his administrative duties over to Meir Moshe Levi and David Sitton.

After the British occupied Jerusalem in 1917, Sephardim set up

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the Organization of Sephardi Youth, which soon became the Organization of Eastern Pioneers. It looked after economic and cultural affairs in the community, but suffered through lack of financial resources, being the only Jewish organization without financial help from the ruling Zionist establishment and consequently it ended its activity in 1929.

The native Jewish leadership tried asking for help from Sephardim throughout the world and to this end they convened a world conference in Vienna in 1925. They demanded the participation of native Jews in the cultural and economic development of Palestine. Delegations from around the world, except Arab and Islamic countries, attended the conference. The conference resolved to found a world organization for Sephardi Jewry, and we shall see how the Zionists later took it over. After this conference, the Fourteenth World Zionist Conference also took place in Vienna (1925). Eliahu Eliachar, Rabbi Uzi'el, and Zekharia Gluska all attended to demand rights for Sephardi Jews in Palestine. Eliachar commented that help offered by the organs of the Zionist movement to the Sephardi Organization had been minimal. 'Zionist leaders such as Weizmann and Ussishkin have praised Sephardi delegates and encouraged them to organize, but in reality they have helped very little. Sometimes we found them opposing this community's organization, after having made promises to it.'<sup>19</sup>

Zionist leaders claimed that Sephardi unity would cause the fragmentation of the Jewish community in Palestine. These claims were supported by some native Jewish opportunists who had left their community to join the Ashkenazi party organizations. The truth is that the Jewish community in Palestine was, and still is, divided. They feared the political organization of Sephardi Jewry, since this threatened Zionist Ashkenazi domination.

Even in the Histadrut, the General Federation of Labour, discrimination was rife. Whenever Arab or native Jews asked for work, Histadrut officials would palm them off with one excuse after another. Palestinian Jews thus decided to found their own trade union, 'The Union of Sephardi Workers', in Jerusalem in 1941. Amongst the founder members were Ishaq al-Iskandari, Secretary of the World Organization of Sephardi Jewry, Ya'qob El'Azar, Ya'qob Mizrahi, Yehuda Habshush, Y. Yafe, and Nahum Chucha. After protracted negotiations between the union and the Histadrut, the latter agreed to grant 16 percent of jobs to Sephardim despite their being the majority of Jews in Jerusalem. Another workers union was later formed in Tel Aviv.

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Subsequently the Histadrut decided to destroy the Sephardi Union by paying to some of its leading members 'bursaries' (i.e. bribes) which totalled £1,775. Some were offered positions in the Histadrut (such as Ya'qob El'Azar, Ya'qob Mizrahi and Ishaq al-Iskandari). Moreover, anyone who tried to extricate himself from Ashkenazi patronage was subjected to intimidation and job loss. These Sephardi unions thus died away ° and Sephardi workers were left with no union representation. In June 1948 Hanukka Mizrahi from Petah Tikvah sent a letter to the newspaper Kol Ha'am describing the Histadrut's policy of racial discrimination practised against Arab Jewish workers. He said that throughout his life he had felt that he was a second class citizen, that the Histadrut only gave him menial and low paid work. When he started to do night-work in a factory the Histadrut gave him no help in obtaining the proper pay and the factory owner actually lowered his wages. The Histadrut acceded to this and the union subscription was still taken out of his wages at the higher rate. His family's access to Histadrut health services was limited. After he was badly burned at work, he received payments for only four months although he needed medical treatment for a whole year. His doctor recommended that he do light work, but he remained unemployed and without Histadrut unemployment support. No longer able to afford his Histadrut dues, his medical treatment stopped and he was expelled from the union. Mizrahi added that Ashkenazi officials looked after their own and rejected work applications from the so-called 'Orientals'.

When the Labour Exchange Offices were formed, workers were promised equality, but they quickly became centres of discrimination which ignored the rights of Sephardi workers. Many from this community left the Histadrut unions, but others stayed in them since they needed the medical service which was, and still is, a part of the Histadrut. There is no equivalent of a National Health Service. Forty years after the appearance of that letter, the newspaper Zu Haderekh republished it on 25 June 1987. The Histadrut's policy alienated many Sephardi Jews from the Zionist 'Left'. The Zionist right exploited 'Socialist' discrimination, hoping to gain the votes of this down-trodden group. Arguably this laid the foundations of the rise of the Zionist Right.

In the field of journalism, the Hassolel Group arose in Jerusalem and published a weekly Arabic magazine called 'The Daily Post' (Barid Al-Yawm) which appealed for fraternal relations with the Palestinian Arab people. Sephardi leaders demanded Arabic language, history and culture to be taught at Jewish but

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the Ashkenazi Zionist leadership thwarted this. In 1942 Moshe Levi Nahum published the magazine *Al-Sharq* with Eliahu Eliachar as editor. They produced thirteen issues until Eliachar managed to publish *Hed Hamizrah* as its official editor on 15 January 1943. The magazine continued to appear until 9 August 1946, then ceased publication until 12 November 1948 when it restarted. In 1950 it folded due to lack of funds. David Sitton and Abraham al-Malih were also on the editorial board. David Sitton then became editor of the magazine *Bama'arakha* which was the organ of the Sephardi community. These Sephardi magazines covered Sephardi Arab culture and community problems on the principle of intercommunal harmony and cultural cooperation. The rest of the daily, weekly and monthly newspapers, the radio (and television later) were, and still are, controlled by a handful of Ashkenazi settlers and funded by World Zionism.

As we have seen, the leadership of the native Jews failed in its struggle for equality during the Mandate period. The causes of this failure can be divided into two main categories.

### a. Ashkenazi Zionist Strength

1. The help given by the British Mandate which enabled Ashkenazi Zionists to gain control over all Jews in Palestine (followed by American support after the founding of the state).
2. The efficiency of the World Zionist Organization, the fact that it was Ashkenazi, and its status in Jewish society in Europe and America which is overwhelmingly Ashkenazi.
3. the success of the Zionist establishment in monopolising the contributions of world Jewry, including those from the Arab world.
4. The strength of the Ashkenazi community which developed as a result of centuries-long European oppression.
5. The strength of Ashkenazi party organization which developed before the immigrations to Palestine and the Labour Party's control, both before and after the founding of the state, over the government, the Histadrut and the Jewish Agency. This party fought any independent Sephardi identity and organisation.
6. Despite the native Jews having formed a majority of the Jews in Palestine in the nineteenth century, they dwindled to 30 percent by 1948 due to increased Ashkenazi immigration during the Mandate.
7. Some Ashkenazi settlers formed a wealthy bourgeois class which used its money for its own ascendancy during the Mandate.



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8. The use of bribery based on the principle of divide and rule to destroy the unity of native Jews and those Arab Jews who joined with them, and the use of the secret services to crush any Sephardi opposition after the founding of the state.

### b. The Weakness of Sephardi Jews

1. Party political organization was more or less non-existent in the Arab world. Thus Sephardi Jews did not have sufficient political experience to found political parties to defend their interests. At the same time Zionism managed to divide them up according to their countries of origin and bribe some of their leaders.

2. The paucity of financial resources for political work. The overwhelming majority of Arab Jews lived below the poverty level, and the racist employment policy aggravated this situation. One of the reasons for the success of the Palestinian revolution since 1965 has been the abundance of funds for revolutionary work.

The bourgeois class of native Jews in Palestine was very weak, and the wealthy class very small and not too concerned at the fate of the toiling masses. A large part of this class emigrated to the countries of Europe and South America as did some wealthy Jews from Arab countries, preferring Europe and America over Israel.

3. Due to the curtailment of free education, ignorance was widespread amongst this community and no new educated generation grew up to defend its interests and those of the community.

4. The political naivete of Arab Jews. They believed in the religious unity of all Jews, not realising that the majority of Ashkenazis were non-religious. The liberal democratic principles common in Western Europe were almost non-existent amongst the Ashkenazi settlers, especially toward the native populations, be they Muslim, Christian or Jewish, since the Ashkenazi settlers had been born and educated in the shadow of authoritarian states such as Czarist Russia, Poland and Nazi Germany and other authoritarian Eastern European regimes. Most Zionist leaders had neither secondary nor university education, but still reached the top through party channels. Consequently their political vision was, and still is, necessarily short-sighted. Arab Jews had lived in peace for centuries with their Muslim and Christian brethren and all three denominations, as is the case with the Palestinians, were predisposed towards tolerance. Thus they were not on their guard and could



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not prepare themselves quickly enough to confront the colonialist challenge.

Sephardi leaders did not mobilise the masses. They held discussions on the situation in the framework of their Jewish and humanist values. These means had worked in the Arab world for hundreds of years enabling Jewish leaders to safeguard their honoured position up until the twentieth century. However, the Ashkenazi Zionist establishment was not moved by these diplomatic methods and considered those who employed them to be naive and weak. In addition, most of the Sephardi leaders were from traditional wealthy and aristocratic families and mass struggle did not form part of their class mentality.

Sephardi Jews, along with Islamic society, including Muslims, Christians and Jews, had no notion of the racist nature of Ashkenazi Zionist nationalism, since racist opinions and nationalist ideas were alien to their way of thinking. This made it easier for Zionism to dupe Sephardi Jews, exploit their religious feelings over Jerusalem and the Holy Land and dominate them.

## NOTES

- 1 This stands for the two initial letters of the Hebrew words sherut bitahon - security service.
- 2 Shevet va'am, 1970.
- 3 Lenny Brenner, Zionism in the Age of the Dictators.
- 4 Life with the Jews, 179.
- 5 Gluska, 454.
- 6 Life with the Jews, 184.
- 7 Menahem, 114-121.
- 8 See M. Abu Tbul, 'Zionism in North Africa', Pe'amim Magazine, 1979, 65-91; quoted by Nahum Menahem.
- 9 Smooha, 281.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Eliachar, 1980, 204.
- 12 Laqueur, History of Zionism, 1972.
- 13 Eliachar, 1980, 493.
- 14 Red Hamizrah, 1 December 1946, Eliachar, 1980, 492-501.
- 15 In 1951 a large number of Iraqi Jews joined the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The government felt these students might change the ethnic composition of the elite. Therefore most of them were immediately conscripted. (Personal communication, 1952, from Dr Yitzhak Shamush of the Hebrew University.)
- 16 Appeared in Yalkut, February 1949.
- 17 Labour Party.
- 18 Eliachar, 1980, 125-126.
- 19 Eliachar, 1980, 146.
- 20 Eliachar, 1980, 273-275.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Jewish Exodus From The World Of Islam

#### SEPHARDIM REJECT ZIONISM AND COLONIALISM

The Zionist movement claims that it is the 'National Liberation Movement of the Jewish People', but in reality it is an Ashkenazi nationalist movement which has attempted to solve the Jewish problem in Europe through the colonisation of Palestine.

The non-participation of Sephardim in the Zionist Organization can be ascribed to many reasons, the most important of which are as follows:

1. Sephardim did not suffer racist oppression, except for some isolated incidents in the long history of the Islamic world (see chapter one).
2. the nationalist and racist ideologies widespread in Europe in the nineteenth century were and still are alien to people living in Dar al-Islam, including the Jews, as we have previously explained. Even though the concept of nationalism was exported to the Arab world in the last century, this cannot belie the fact that the roots of Islam are much deeper than those of Arab nationalism, and we do not mean Islam from the purely religious point of view, but its totality as a way of life which unites all those living under it regardless of religion or race. On the other hand, Zionists always refer to Saladin as 'the Kurdish leader', reflecting their own nationalist extremism and their exploitation of the Kurdish movement in Iraq. Saladin however, did not see himself as a Kurdish, but rather an Islamic leader. He did not fight for Kurdish nationalism, but for the glory of the whole Islamic community. Jews in the Islamic empire saw

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themselves as a religious and a cultural community, a part of the Islamic community, and they had preserved their religious feelings for Jerusalem, which was to be the centre of the heavenly kingdom on the Day of Judgement. Justice, truth and peace would reign there amongst all peoples, great and small. None of this applies to the Israeli state which has destroyed the Palestinian people and attacked Egypt, Syria and Lebanon amongst others.

3. the Zionist movement is an overwhelmingly non-religious organization. There are indeed some small religious parties, representing 15 percent of the population, but they exploit religion for political ends. Since 1967 groups of American Jews have been arriving in Israel such as Rabbi Martin Kahane and the Ashkenazi terrorist bands on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. They have been influenced by the born-again Christian religious movements, which have recently appeared in the United States, and encouraged by the Zionist establishment to vindicate its occupation of the West Bank which was the centre of the Jewish state millennia ago. Israeli leaders' display of religion, particularly when they go to the West to collect donations from religious Jews, is good for business. Moreover, since the founding of the state no party has ever been able to form a government without having the religious minority tip the balance (in spite of all this, Arabs in general emphasise the religious character of Zionism and Israel). The irreverence of the Zionists who eat pork and have discarded all their Jewish traditions has, since the inception of the Zionist movement, been alienating Sephardim who, like the rest of the Muslims and Christians in the Middle East, are a traditional society.

4. the Zionist movement believes in the emigration of all or most Jews to Palestine as a political solution to the Jewish problem. Mass emigration is not a concept alien to the Ashkenazim, since the history of European Jewry is replete with oppression and dispersal, as they were displaced from one country to another. These migrations caused Europeans to see Ashkenazi Jews as rootless foreigners. Finally a great number of them emigrated to America. Many Ashkenazi Jews also lived in ghettos, cut off from the surrounding population and ignorant of their language and customs. They did not dress like their neighbours or eat the same food. This situation continued into the nineteenth century, and in some areas until the twentieth. On the other hand, the concept of mass emigration was alien to Sephardim, since they had not been expelled from any Arab or Islamic state (except by the Christians after the fall of Muslim Spain). They did not live in ghettos, but sometimes

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in homogeneous or sometimes in mixed quarters. They spoke the same language and shared the culture of the Islamic community, following the same traditions and wearing the same clothing. They ate the same type of food and shared the same values. My father refused to change his traditional Arab clothing. He refused to wear a European suit and carried on wearing a tarbush in summer and a kaffiya in winter. He refused to trim his long moustache and used to say 'A man's moustache is a sign of his honour and manhood.' He was proud to go out wearing his silver-embroidered abaya<sup>1</sup> and derided the younger generation which aped the Europeans. He absolutely refused to speak Hebrew and steadfastly spoke Arabic until the day he died.

Sephardi Jews' roots go very deep in the land of Islam, and when they did move around it was always to another Islamic country. Sephardim were treated as fellow citizens by Muslims. Jews in the Arabian Peninsula, and particularly in the Yemen, became Arabised over time. Thus Jews had lived securely in the Arab world since the dawn of history, that is, until they were transported to Israel after 1948. The native Jew felt that he was one of the oldest inhabitants of the region and very often would look upon the country-folk who came to the cities, where he generally lived, as outsiders. Sephardim, specifically those from Iraq, the Yemen and Morocco, use the classical Quranic pronunciation of the consonants even when speaking colloquial Arabic. The Spanish Jews who were expelled along with their Muslim brethren and went to Turkey, the Balkans (and North Africa), are not 'European', as Zionist historians (such as Bernard Lewis) term them, but Middle Eastern. 5. Zionism is a colonialist movement which represses the native population. Sephardim used to hear reports of arrogance and racial discrimination by Ashkenazi Zionists from their cousins, the Palestinian Jews, and from other Sephardim who had emigrated to Palestine and then went home. Sephardim had observed that all leaders of the Zionist movement were Ashkenazi. Discrimination excluded Sephardim from Zionist programmes. Moreover, those Sephardim who had insight took part in the struggle against Zionism along with Muslims and Christians. In Egypt an Ashkenazi member of Hovevei Tsion wrote a letter on 31 December 1910 to the Zionist Office in Cologne. He described Egyptian Jews' opposition to Zionist ideas. The writer said that they were the overwhelming majority of the Egyptian Jewish Community. The only pro-Zionists were the minority who had emigrated there from Europe over the previous thirty years and were unable to infiltrate

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the native community. He continued that the head of the Egyptian Jewish community, Monsieur Cattani, had poured scorn on Herzl's scheme.<sup>2</sup> Many Jewish intellectuals, with Ya'qub Sanuwa' (or Abu-Nadarah) at the forefront, joined the popular struggle against foreign rule. Sanuwa' was a playwright and journalist who set up the first Egyptian theatre in 1870. Some people called him 'the Egyptian Moliere'. Under the name of Abu-Nadarah, he also published the first humorous magazine in the Arab world containing cartoons in 1876. The British exiled him to Paris where he continued his writings against colonialism. He was one of the pioneers of the doctrine of 'Egypt for the Egyptians' and 'Egypt for all Egyptians', which slogan was raised at popular meetings in front of the pyramids. In Cairo the anti-Zionist party rallied around the head of the Jewish community and a Christian was appointed to run the community's schools and to stop Zionist propaganda in the schools. The Ashkenazi Zionists were determined to get funds for Palestine, but Egyptian Jews countered that this would doom them to poverty and disintegration. The Ashkenazim were a community apart from Egyptian Jews, not only because of their Zionism but also their impiety. Since political Zionism was secular, the Ashkenazi Zionists were foreign to the Egyptian Jews. In Zionist circles, talk was mainly of European Jews, as if Sephardim did not exist. 'What could Zionism, expressed in terms of Russian thinking, mean to those who were imbued with the philosophy of the East and who were only affected superficially by Western values. What were the solutions which Zionism had to offer to their problems.'<sup>3</sup> In May 1938, during the Palestinian Rebellion, as some of the 'Azaris were demonstrating against 'the Jews', and the Egyptian Parliament was demanding measures against Jewish financiers, the Egyptian chief rabbi, Hayyim Nahum Effendi, called upon his community to defend their country against Zionism and urged them to contribute for the relief of Palestinian refugees. This call proved the claim of Chaim Weizmann that 'Zionism does not exist in Egypt.' In the forties, many Jews were involved in the Egyptian Communist Party, or the MDLN Organization for National Liberation. The Qaraites formed their own communist organization in Cairo (the Red Star) to fight Zionism and imperialism. In spite of this, sectarian Muslim circles in Cairo accused all the Jews of being 'Zionists' and with 'helping imperialism'. After the founding of Israel, and particularly after Suez (1956), Egyptian Jews were practically forced to leave the country they had lived in for more than two thousand years. Out of the 79,000 Jews there in 1946,

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only 2,000 remained. Two thirds of the emigrants went to the West. The other third being too poor to go to the West had to go to Israel. Anwar Sadat knew what a mistake the Egyptian Government had made and called upon Egyptian Jews in Israel to 'return as first class citizens,' - a wry comment on their second class status in Israel.<sup>5</sup>

In Algeria the Zionists failed in their attempts to get Jews to go to Palestine. 150,000 Algerian Jews (99 percent) emigrated to France, and from Tunis 60 percent of the Jews went to France and other European countries.<sup>6</sup>

In Iraq, Jews participated in the cultural, social and political life of the country, and many were radicals. There were famous Jewish literati such as Meer Basri, the poets Anwar Shaul, Murad Mikha'il, Ya'qob Balbul, the brothers Salim and Salman Darwish, Ibrahim Ya'qob, Obeida and Salim al-Katib and Salim Qatan. Jewish writers were among the first to translate works from European languages into Arabic. They published various periodicals such as Al-Haris (1920), Al-Misbah (1924-1929), Al-Hasd (1929-1937), Al-Bustan (1929-1938) and Al-Barid Al-Yawmi (1948) - all of which were in Arabic - and were active on other Iraqi periodicals. From the twenties Jews had stood out in modern Iraqi theatre and particularly in the field of Arab and Iraqi music. See the list of Jewish Iraqi musicians in the work of Y. Kojman (1978).<sup>7</sup>

Some extreme nationalistic circles accuse Iraqi Jews of 'having cooperated with imperialism'. This accusation was based on the opposition of some Jewish notables to Iraqi independence, but this same stance was taken by some Middle Eastern Muslims and Christians as seen in the statement made by the British High Commissioner in Iraq on 11 June 1921 to the Minister for the Colonies.<sup>8</sup> Many Jews considered that the division of the Middle East into small states and regional governments under leaders from one community or another would be detrimental to religious minorities and would encourage sectarian and regional chauvinism. Some, however, wanted just that, and in Lebanon the results are seen. Some Jewish leaders sent telegrams to the newspapers Iraq and Al-Nahda on 1 September 1918, expressing their support for Arab opposition to the Balfour Declaration.<sup>9</sup> On 13 September 1929 Jews participated in the National Rally at the Haydar-Khana Mosque, with Ja'far Abu al-Timman and others giving speeches. The Jewish poet, Anwar Sha'ul, blamed British imperialism in Palestine and said that the Balfour Declaration was to serve colonialist aspirations,<sup>10</sup> and in his book, 'Zionist Activity in Iraq,



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H.J. Cohen writes that the British presence was the most important factor for Zionism in Iraq. Indeed, in March 1921 the British allowed the Mesopotamian Zionist Organization to operate in Iraq. Two years later permission was withdrawn, but this did not prevent a handful of foreign Ashkenazi Jews from continuing their Zionist fund-raising and 'representing' Iraqi Jews at the World Zionist Conferences. Despite British help for the Zionist emissaries, the native Jews of Iraq were indifferent or hostile to Zionism. When the 'Zionist Council' was allowed to carry on political activity, the British High Commissioner received a delegation of Jews who expressed their opposition. The Zionists thus failed to win over any important personage except for the man known as 'Hamore', whose real name was Harun Sasson. On the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, Sir Arnold Wilson wrote to the Colonial Office that the Declaration had aroused no interest in Iraq. He added that he had discussed the matter with Jewish personages, but they had expressed their sense of belonging to Iraq, which they described as a paradise compared to the poverty of Palestine.<sup>11</sup> This too was the position of Menahem Salih Daniyal, one of the Jewish leaders of Baghdad and a large landholder. He sent a letter to the World Zionist Organisation warning of the havoc Zionism could wreak for the Jews of Iraq, and that Zionism could alienate Jews from Iraqis and damage inter-communal relations. He continued that every Arab felt Zionism infringed upon his rights and that it was thus incumbent upon him to spare no effort to fight it. 'Any sign of sympathy for Zionism', he added, 'will be taken as a betrayal of the Arab cause.' The author relates this to the sensitive situation Iraqi Jewry found itself in due to its economic power and government posts, particularly in Baghdad where Jews formed one third of the population.<sup>12</sup> One of the most eminent Jewish lawyers of Baghdad also found fault with Zionism. In the English-language Iraq Times of 5 November 1938, Yusuf al-Kabir wrote that the Balfour Declaration was a dangerous and foolhardy policy and pointed out the folly of the historic fallacy that Zionists used to link their 'rights' to a Hebrew state which disappeared two thousand years previously. After the Second World War, the Zionist Organization sent delegations to the Arab countries to smuggle Jews to Palestine. However, native Jews challenged these attempts and the number who left Iraq, for example, between 1946-1948 was just 65.<sup>13</sup> Many of these immigrants relate that they were children at that time and that Zionist agents tricked them into leaving Iraq with neither the knowledge nor agreement of families. People started leaving Iraq

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at the beginning of the Second World War, particularly after mob violence, known as al-Farhud, and the Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani Movement in 1941 which encompassed Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and other countries. It was a disaster for the parents of those children. Some of them went to the Iraqi Ambassador in Jerusalem and wept as they begged him to send them back home. Dan Ram, one of the Zionist emissaries, informed Yigal Allon - chief of external operations of the Hagana - in a letter dated 9 October 1945, that Zionist activity in Iraq was devoid of results and suggested that the Ashkenazi emissaries return to Palestine.<sup>4</sup> Enzo Sereni, head of the secret Zionist mission in Iraq, wrote a letter to the Jewish Agency in which he opined that the Zionist movement had failed 'due to native Jewish apathy'.<sup>15</sup> Even after the attacks and killings which occurred in the Iraqi Farhud, the Jews still did not evince any support for the idea of emigration. Sereni attributes this to Jewish readiness to forget what had happened and get on with their lives, and as well as to the swift economic development which resulted from the war and the compensation paid by the government to the victims.<sup>16</sup>

The Jewish emissary to Syria and Lebanon, Munya M. Mardor, also wrote that the native Jews were not interested in emigration, and the secret Zionist organization directed its efforts only at the youth.<sup>17</sup> When Ruth Klieger arrived in Egypt to organize the emigration of the Jews and collect donations from the well-to-do, Katani Pasha, head of the Jewish community, declared that he would set his dogs on her and any other Zionist emissary.<sup>18</sup>

When they arrived in Tunis after the Second World War, Zionist emissaries found that Tunisian Jews had no dislike of the Germans. Tunisian Jews could not believe that a holocaust had taken place in Europe, since the Muslim Pasha of Tunis had guaranteed their safety in a private meeting in his palace attended by the heads of the Jewish community and the leaders of the Muslims. The Pasha promised his Jewish citizens that he would protect them for they were dhimmis. When the influence of the Zionist emissaries grew after the war, the leaders of the Tunisian community demanded their expulsion. They went to the Tunisian authorities with a letter from the Jewish community objecting to their activities - and they were indeed expelled.<sup>19</sup>

In 1948 Iraqi Jews participated with their Muslim and Christian neighbours in the struggle against the pro-British Salih Jabr and the Portsmouth Treaty. When the Jewish activist, Shamran 'Alwan, was killed by the police, the right-wing "nationalist newspaper,

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Al-Yaqza, in its edition of 5 February 1948 eulogised him as a martyr of the Iraqi people in its struggle for freedom. It also published the names of Jews who contributed to the Palestinian Arab people's cause.<sup>20</sup>

In 1946 Iraqi Jews, Muslims and Christians had formed 'The Anti-Zionist League' to oppose Zionist plots and the smuggling of Jews to Palestine as well as to preserve their Iraqi identity. According to Ma'arakhot (1969), 'Whereas the secret Zionist meetings were attended by approximately thirty-six people in 1948, the League's newspaper ('Usbah) came out daily in 6,000 copies.' In October 1949 the police arrested forty-eight suspected Zionists and Cohen comments on this event that 'those arrests finished off the Zionist movement in Iraq.'<sup>21</sup>

The Israeli politician, Eliahu Elat, averred that 'Sephardim do not desire to transfer their allegiance to Israel,<sup>22</sup> and during the Zionist propaganda onslaught, the chief rabbi, Sasson Kedourie, pronounced that 'the responsible leaders of Iraqi Jewry believe that this country is their homeland through thick and thin' and the leadership, according to the chief rabbi, believed that the difficult times would soon pass.<sup>23</sup> On 11 December 1949, Sasson Kedourie resigned his position as head of the Jewish Community because of the strictures imposed upon the Jews as a consequence of the Palestine war. In its issue of 30 December, 1949 the British newspaper, The Jewish Chronicle, commented that 'the Chief Rabbi and Iraqi Jews do not like Zionism since it has caused difficulties for them. They prefer to stay in Iraq and live under the patronage of Islam and its tolerance. They are attached to their houses and traditions, and to the graves of their prophets in Iraq. They have no desire to leave their country and live in refugee camps in Israel. They believe that people there are not too friendly towards oriental Jews.'<sup>24</sup> Sephardi Jews in Turkey joined in the anti-Zionist movement also. Between 1897 and 1919 they published a newspaper called Al-Masirant which warned all Jews against Zionism.<sup>25</sup>

Even though they had had French nationality and culture imposed on them, educated Jews in Algeria joined the National Resistance - especially the revolt of Jawzi Abu Al-Khair on 8 November, 1942. The revolt paved the way for the American Army to liberate the Maghreb from the Germans. When the Jews ascertained that the French had destroyed Jewish/Muslim relations, they did not emigrate to Israel, rather to France. In Syria the majority of the Jews voted with their feet! Even though there were 29,770 Jews there according to the 1943 census, 22,000 went to the United States

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in the middle of the forties.<sup>26</sup>

To sum up, the overwhelming majority of Sephardim either resisted Zionism or were just not interested in it. They naturally attempted to stay in their respective Arab-Muslim countries. The minority who cooperated with the Zionists did not grasp actually the import of Zionism until they came up against racist discrimination in the labour camps in Israel. Most looked back with regret.

### ZIONISM REJECTS THE SEPHARDIM

As well as Sephardi opposition to Zionism, this reticence was mutual. The Zionist movement refused to bring these Jews over to Palestine or to let them participate in their settlement programmes. That is, except for a couple of thousand Yemenites, Kurds and Iranians, who had been shipped to Palestine to do the menial jobs which Ashkenazim did not want to do. The most important reasons for this policy were as follows:

1. The Zionist movement, being a European Ashkenazi movement, was only concerned with Ashkenazi Jews.
2. Having lived in ghettos for hundreds of years, the Ashkenazim constituted a closed community and rejected anyone from outside.
3. Believing themselves to be the elite of the Jewish people, they considered Sephardim to be inferior and incapable of carrying out pioneer work (see chapter eight - Ashkenazi views on Sephardim). Since they had nothing but contempt for the Arabs, the Ashkenazim viewed Jews who had lived with Arabs in the same light (see Kedourie, 1970, 310-311). Moreover, their arrogance would not let them admit to an unconscious fear of Arabs and Sephardim.
4. As donations from world Jewry were divided amongst Zionist programmes and Zionist parties, the participation of Sephardim would have meant a diminution of funds for the Ashkenazim.

### REASONS FOR EMIGRATION

After the foundation of the state of Israel, most Jews from Arab and Islamic countries emigrated to Israel. Historians disagree over the exact reasons for this. Zionist historians ascribe it to 'Muslim and Arab oppression of Jews', but anti-Zionist historians agree that it was a result of a Zionist plot.

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After the Second World War, the Zionist establishment decided to bring over all the 'Sephardim', although this decision alone was not enough to get Jews from Arab and Islamic countries to leave and come to Israel. All the means employed by the Zionists such as deceit, terrorism, bribery and pressure on the Arab government were of no avail. For this reason the Zionists had need of another factor to push Sephardim into emigrating. This factor was the sectarianism whose seeds colonialism had sown, and which had been nurtured by the Arab-Zionist conflict and the catastrophe of the Palestinian people. One must, however, avoid generalising, since the factors involved differed from place to place and according to class and society. This also applies to the motives of Arab and Islamic governments in allowing the Jews to emigrate to Israel.

During the Second World War it became apparent to the Zionist establishment that Nazi Germany had destroyed the reservoir of Jewish immigration from Europe. Moreover, American and British Jews showed no desire to emigrate to Palestine, nor did the majority of Ashkenazim in the Soviet Union, thus the Zionist establishment changed its stance on Sephardi immigration from Arab and Islamic countries. Between 1948 and 1975, the authorities managed to bring in 819,000 Ashkenazim (especially from socialist countries), but the Zionist establishment was still not satisfied since most of them were averse to doing manual labour and some were using Israel as a halfway house for America. So it was decided to bring over Sephardim as cheap labour and for military service. Ben Gurion often declared that 'it is immigration which strengthens the security of the state more than anything else,' and that 'the fate of the country depends on immigration.' Shimon Peres, later head of the Labour Party, stated at the end of the fifties that sustained immigration would enable Israel to have a million-strong army which in turn would help Israel to impose its hegemony over the Middle East, a statement rejected by Ben Gurion, then Prime Minister, for tactical reasons. Peres, considered one of the Labour Party hawks, was Director of the Ministry of Defence, had changed his Polish name 'Persky' to the Hebrew for vulture. Israel also intended to settle all the Arab territories it had occupied and whose Palestinian inhabitants it had expelled to prevent their return and to vindicate its claims that what had happened there was simply a 'population exchange' between Israel and the Arab countries. During this period the number of 'Sephardim' who reached Israel was 751,000, or 48 percent of the total influx of 1,570,000. The catastrophe of Palestine, the Arabs and Islam is that the enormous manpower that shifted the balance

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of power in favour of Israel was not from enemy countries, but had come from those very Arab, Islamic, and socialist countries. This diplomatic, or nationalist, failure requires very careful study. We can gauge the economic and military developments which occurred in Israel as a consequence of this mass immigration if we bear in mind that the total number of Jews in Palestine at the time of the foundation of the state was only 630,000, constituting a third of the population. The matter also demands a study of the economic development which occurred as a result of the importation of cheap labour into Israel (see chapter nine). In addition, we must compare this influx with the Jewish immigration which had taken place since the beginning of Zionist settlement in order to extract the proportion of the Jews of Islam.

### Jewish Immigration to Palestine and the Proportion of Immigrants from the Realms of Islam (1882-1975)<sup>27</sup>

Aliyah (Immigration)	Date	Total number immigrants	No. from of Islamic countries	Proportion of Sephardim
First Aliyah	1882-1903	25,000	1,000	4%
Second Aliyah	1904-1914	40,000	2,000	5%
Third Aliyah	1919-1923	35,000	2,400	7%
Fourth Aliyah	1924-1931	82,000	9,800	12%
Fifth Aliyah	1932-1948	265,000	36,200	10%
Post founding of Israel	1948-1975	1,570,000	751,000	48%

Israel managed to double its population within the first three years from its founding. The 559,675 immigrants who arrived between 1948-1951 can be divided as follows: 271,188 from Eastern Europe 241,870 from Dar al-Islam 46,617 from Western Europe, America and other countries.<sup>28</sup>

By 1954 the number of immigrants since the founding of the state reached 725,000, divided as follows: From Arab and Islamic states<sup>29</sup>

Iraq	125,000
Yemen and Aden	49,000
Morocco/Tunisia	90,000
Turkey	35,000
Iran	27,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>326,000</b>



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From Eastern Europe (i.e. Ashkenazim, except for the Bulgarian Sephardim):

Bulgaria	38,000
Hungary	15,000
Rumania	122,000
Poland	107,000
Other countries	117,000
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 725,000

By 1954 the proportion of Palestinians had gone down from 70 percent to 11 percent due to their expulsion and Jewish immigration. During the same period 50,000 Jews representing 7 percent of the total of immigrants and mostly Sephardim, left the country.<sup>30</sup>

In 1958 Abraham Abbas, a Syrian Jew who belonged to Ahdut Ha'avodah (the Socialist Zionist party) wrote that the number of Sephardim had immigrated since 1948 was 600,000 (out of a total of 900,000 immigrants during the same period). He broke down their countries of origin as follows:<sup>31</sup>

North Africa	150,000
Iraq	125,000
Yemen	50,000
Libya	40,000
Egypt	40,000
Iran	35,000
Turkey	40,000
Bulgaria	40,000
Greece and Yugoslavia	10,000
India	10,000
Other countries	60,000
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 600,000

The story of Jewish immigration from Arab and Islamic states to Israel after 1948 is a bizarre tale. It highlights not only the Zionist establishment's devious activities but also the backwardness of the political structure of Arab and Islamic world and the naivete and weakness of the Jews of Islam in confronting Zionism and Western influence. Arabs or Muslims reading the facts about anti-Sephardi discrimination in Israel may not be too sympathetic and they might well say that it is their own fault for going to live there in the first place. Undoubtedly the major factor in this catastrophe is Zionist intrigue, but this alone could not have succeeded if the soil in which

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it was planted in had not been fertilised by colonialism and the Palestinian tragedy of 1948.

Arab nationalist sources state that the British and French favoured Jews in the Arab countries and helped them into high government posts as well as encouraging their financial and commercial endeavours. If this is true for the twentieth century, it still does not adequately reveal how ever deepening Western involvement in the Arab and Islamic world had been damaging the position of the Jews since the eighteenth century.

We have described above how the Islamic state preferred Jews to Christians in matters of the state and economy. However, the European states tried, from the eighteenth century, to strengthen their influence in the Ottoman Empire by interfering in internal affairs and protecting 'the interests of Christians' by means of the Capitulations. Christians also enjoyed the protection of the Church and European Christian missions and they received help from European traders. We should also mention that trade was monopolised by the British in one half of the Ottoman Empire and by the French in the other. It was a British trading firm, the Levant Company, which banned the use of Jewish translators in Greater Syria. Arab Christians started sending their children to Europe for their education and when they came back they would get the government jobs which previously went to Jews. Simultaneously, European anti-semites (diplomats and clerics) exported the myth that the Jews killed Christian children to use their blood for the baking of matzah. In Europe this fuelled anti-Jewish pogroms over hundreds of years. There had not been any such accusations of ritual murder in the Islamic world until the nineteenth century. The best known case in the Middle East was the disappearance of Father Tomaso in Damascus in 1840 when the French Consul, Ratti Menton, whipped up anti-Jewish sentiment. Anti-semitism was thus imported into the Middle East, and particularly into Christian circles, by European colonialists who exploited the competition between the communities in trade and government employment to further sectarian chauvinism.

Inside the Muslim community, from the eighteenth century on, the realm of Islam had been subjected to fierce encroachments on the economic, military and cultural fronts which reached their peak in 1918 with their complete subjugation to European control. During this period of defeat Muslims started to voice their grievances over non-Muslim communities, particularly the Christians. Notwithstanding the protection granted to Jews by the

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authorities, their position weakened with respect to their compatriots. This was not a financial deterioration, since after the First World War they participated in economic developments and became affluent, but this was paralleled by deterioration in community relations caused by the following factors:

1. The British and French authorities after 1918 favoured non-Muslims in their political and economic systems in the Arab countries. There were various reasons for this, such as the policy of sectarian differentiation, the imperialists' suspicion of Islam, and the professional qualifications which the minorities were gaining in their modern schools (see chapter one). All of this led to the growth of intercommunal envy.
2. The upsetting of the intercommunal equilibrium as a result of the establishment of regional Arab states.
3. Anti-Jewish Nazi propaganda in the thirties and during the Second World War, including Yunis Bahri's Arabic programme 'This is Berlin'.
4. Ashkenazi Zionist settlement at the expense of the Palestinian peasantry, the founding of the state of Israel, the destruction of hundreds of Palestinian towns and villages, the expulsion of most native Palestinians and the expropriation of their property and lands, martial law after 1948 for all those Palestinians remaining inside the Zionist entity, the appropriation of more than 80 percent of the lands of this minority in addition to the refugees' lands.

In addition to all this there was the blood - the blood which flowed between Zionism and Arabism, the bloodshed of Deir Yassin, Kafr Qasim and Eyn Zeitun amongst others. Then came the Tripartite War against Egypt in 1956.

5. Zionist anti-Arab propaganda in Europe and America which exploited the Sephardim's predicament in order to get them to immigrate to Israel.

There is no doubt that the Jews benefitted from the modern political and economic systems which had been set up in Arab countries after the Great War. They opened many schools and educational institutes, developed their commerce and accepted government positions. The British High Commissioner to Iraq stated in 1918, for example, that the Jewish community in Baghdad was to be encouraged.<sup>3</sup> The progress of the Jews was not due to the British or the French alone, but due to other historical reasons: 1. The majority of Jews were city-dwellers whereas the majority of Muslims lived in the country.

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2. Since the Jews were not part of the military or political elite in Dar al-Islam, they had for some hundreds of years concentrated on commercial and financial activity. Their relations with world Jewry helped them in this and when the doors to progress were opened they were quicker off the mark than their Muslim brethren.

In the thirties there arose a new class of Muslim employees and intellectuals which found that the proportion of Jews in the upper and middle classes was relatively greater than that of Muslims. This paradox had also occurred in Europe, America and previously in the Islamic state. In Germany, the Nazi party exploited this to come to power and reinforce its influence both in Germany and later in all the countries it occupied.

In the Western capitalist and socialist countries, the ruling elites decided to exploit Jewish industry to prop up capitalist and communist rule respectively, just as in the past the Islamic state had made use of Jewish activity to reinforce Islam, especially in Muslim Spain.

In the modern Arab states traditional circles, as well as clerics and the democratic nationalist leaderships, tried to preserve equality, tolerance and just competition amongst the communities. All the left wing groups, such as that of Ja'far Abu al-Timman in Iraq, proclaimed the necessity of non-denominational national unity to confront imperialism and reaction. However, extreme rightist circles were influenced by Nazi propaganda and believed in the principle of 'my enemy's enemy is my friend', hoping to rid themselves of British and French imperialism with the help of Nazi Germany. These groups did not realise that Nazi German imperialism was much worse than the British variety. They were also influenced by Nazi anti-Semitism. Despite the slight support that these groups received amongst the upper and middle classes, they gained a large popular following by exploiting popular hostility to colonialism and mass sympathy with the Palestinian rebellion in the thirties.<sup>33</sup> Some Syrian and Palestinian exiles tagged along, inciting their Muslim brethren in Arab countries against their Jewish compatriots.<sup>34</sup>

The root cause of this problem is that extremist sectarian circles could not differentiate between the foreign Zionist and the local Jews who had, for millennia, been an intrinsic part of Dar al-Islam. Besides, it was much easier to turn against one's weak Jewish compatriot than to go off and liberate Palestine by force. This was the greatest mistake that nationalist Arabs made in the twentieth century. The tragedy of Palestine in 1948 was enormous, but the

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emigration of the Jews of Islam to Israel was even greater, not just for the Jews involved but for Palestine and the whole Islamic community. It tilted the balance of power in Israel's favour.

The Islamic, and even the Ottoman state, had preserved intercommunal equilibrium throughout its provinces while they remained united under a single government. After the division of the Islamic state into a number of statelets, there were endless bloody intercommunal feuds.

The other factor which undermined the position of Jews in Islamic society was the setting up of armed secret Zionist cells inside Arab countries. In spite of the fact that these organisations were established by Ashkenazi spies sent from Palestine and that they failed completely to get a large number of Jews to emigrate, they did manage to sow doubts and suspicions in the minds of Muslims about the loyalty of their Jewish compatriots.

Furthermore, Zionist anti-Arab propaganda in America and Europe, together with the demonstrations organised by Israeli agents, castigated Arabs and Muslims over Jews in Arab countries. These Zionist activities abroad only worsened the situation of Jews in Dar al-Islam.<sup>35</sup>

The Iraqi government ultimately had another reason for supporting the Exodus of Jews: to get rid of Jewish Radicals and communists. The Shah of Iran also encouraged 3,000 Jewish communists to emigrate to Israel.

The prevailing belief in the Middle East is that the Western nations advised Arab governments to ease Jewish emigration in exchange for resettling Palestinian refugees. Those who hold that opinion point out that the leaders of the Arab states at that time were extremely pro-Western and that the confiscation of Jewish property by some Arab states was a part of a conspiracy aimed at 'justifying' the expropriation of Palestinian property in Israel. This opinion is backed up by a memorandum from the British Foreign Office on 5 September 1949 about the resettlement of 100,000 Palestinian refugees in Iraq in exchange for the export of 100,000 Iraqi Jews to Israel.<sup>36</sup> After the Iraqi government declared in March 1951 that it was freezing the assets of Jews who had chosen to renounce their citizenship and emigrate to Israel, Lord Samuel, the British Zionist, proposed to King Abdallah of Jordan the expulsion of Iraqi Jews and confiscation of their property as a quid pro quo for what happened to the Palestinians. This view was supported in the Iraqi Senate by Muzahim al-Pachachi on the basis of a suggestion by an American Zionist writer.<sup>37</sup> At the same time it was reported in The

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Scribe, London, June 1990, that the Israeli foreign minister, Moshe Sharett, made it clear that in any future settlement of Palestinian frozen property a set-off will be made of frozen Jewish assets in Iraq.

Israeli diplomats were already active in Washington, Paris and London trying to arrange the emigration of Jews from Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, Iran and the Yemen, which entailed the Western powers putting pressure on the governments of Arab and Islamic states. Of course, the theory of 'population exchange' was baseless since the populations involved, Jews and Palestinians, had not agreed to such an exchange. The Palestinians did not receive Jewish assets, nor vice versa, but both groups lost everything. The British Consulate in Jerusalem commented that Israel would welcome the immigrants who would form a cheap workforce and that Israel would demand that Iraq absorb the Palestinian refugees to take the place of the Jews who had left.<sup>38</sup> The Israeli historian Segev says that 'Israel was in urgent need of these immigrants,' and Ha'aretz wrote on 13 April 1949 that 'many saw them as cannon fodder'.<sup>39</sup> Israel and the World Zionist Organisation used all types of pressure and propaganda to force Arab governments to squeeze out their Jewish populations. In March 1949 Zionist propaganda claimed that Iraq had hanged seven Jews for Zionist activity. The truth is that these seven had already fled Iraq before their trial. Israel went to great lengths to try and prevent the World Bank from granting a loan to Iraq, organising demonstrations in front of Iraqi embassies around the world and harassing the Iraqi ambassador to the United Nations whenever he went into the building or came out. Israel turned to the United Nations and to Eleanor Roosevelt with its threats to crack down on Arabs inside Israel and to organise a secret movement against Nuri Said inside Iraq.<sup>40</sup>

With regard to the Jews of the Yemen, the British authorities, at the outbreak of the Palestine War of 1948, prevented Jews from leaving Aden. The Zionist Organization used diplomatic pressures to get this ban rescinded. A representative of the World Jewish Congress, Leon Kobovitsky, met Muhammad Jibli, a representative of the Imam, to discuss the question of Jewish emigration from the Yemen and the areas under British protection. Jibli agreed to persuade the Imam. After the Egyptians signed an armistice with Israel, the Imam agreed to the emigration programme.<sup>41</sup> An emissary of the Jewish Agency, Yosef Tsadok, actually met the Imam and an emissary of the Ministry of Immigration, Ovadiah Tuviah, met Sultan al-'Awadhli.<sup>42</sup> They managed to transfer 50,000 Jews from the Yemen and Aden in operation 'Magic Carpet', in



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addition to the 35,000 Yemenites who had previously immigrated to Palestine, but these Jews paid the price in property and dignity as we shall see later.

## SECTARIAN HARASSMENT

The six factors we have discussed created an anti-Jewish atmosphere in Arab countries and there were some instances of anti-Jewish disturbances, attacks and killings which helped Israel to transfer most of the Jews to Israel. The rest emigrated to Western countries (the number of Jews still living in Arab countries is 63,000, mostly in Morocco. Researchers at a symposium at Baghdad University estimated there to be 21,000).<sup>43</sup> The following is a precis of those disastrous events.

### Iraq

In September 1934 the Minister of the Economy and Communications sacked scores of non-Muslim employees. After protests from the Jewish community, some were reinstated. A year later the Minister of Information sent secret instructions to secondary schools and institutes of higher education calling for a numerus clausus and ordering the Jewish schools to cease teaching Hebrew as a language, except for religious purposes. In September 1936 the 'Committee for the Defence of Palestine' accused Iraqi Jews of supporting Zionism. Then some unknown assailants opened fire on two Jews and killed them. The following day, unknown assailants again attacked two Jews, killing one and seriously wounding the other. On 27 September 1936 a grenade was thrown at a synagogue, but did not explode. It was only too apparent that the attackers did not know the difference between their Jewish compatriots and the Ashkenazi Zionist settlers who were emigrating from Europe. The head of the community, Sasson Khedourie, and the community leadership therefore declared their abhorrence of Zionism. A school headmaster and famous writer, Ezra Haddad, wrote in an article in the newspaper Al-Bilad that 'we are Arabs first, Jews second'. Ya'qob Balbul stated in Al-Akhbar of 21 July 1938, that 'Jewish youth see in Zionism nothing more than colonialism and domination.' In July 1937 two Jews were killed in a demonstration against the government of Hikmat Suleiman, and,

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during demonstrations resulting from the Palestinian uprising, street attacks on Jewish citizens continued. In August 1938 thirty-three Iraqi Jewish leaders sent a telegram to the Colonial Office in London and to the League of Nations expressing their opposition to Zionism and their devotion to their true homeland. At the same time Jewish writers and journalists were expressing their loathing of Zionist operations and settlement designs in Palestine. In October of 1938 the Iraqi government undertook various measures intended to quell any further sectarian agitation.

In May 1941, during the Iraqi-British War which followed the coup d'etat of Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani, some hostile incidents were directed by sectarian nationalists against Jews in the streets. They charged that the Jews had distributed pro-British pamphlets or simply read the pamphlets which British aircraft had dropped on Baghdad. Jews were also accused of using mirrors to send secret signals to the aircraft as well as other fraudulent charges. Thirteen Jews were killed, ten of whom were from the northern village of Sandur. German military support was insufficient to beat the British, and Iraq lost the war. At the beginning of June 1941, after al-Gailani's government fell and he fled to Iran, mob violence was unleashed. Many Jewish homes and shops were looted, a large number were injured and 170-180 Jews were killed. A greater number of Muslims were killed, some of them rioters and some who had been protecting their innocent Jewish compatriots. Had the Jews not been protected by their Muslims neighbours, the number of victims would have been many thousands. We should mention here the leader of the Shi'ites in Baghdad, Abu al-Hasan al-Musawi, who refused to issue a fatwa against the Jews and ordered the Shi'ites not to take part in the massacre. The British forces which reached the vicinity of Baghdad refused to intervene to stop the bloodshed, fearing to undermine the new pro-British government. The British role in these events seems suspect, particularly since the British have decided to seal one of their documents until 1992,<sup>44</sup> and another until 2017.<sup>45</sup> David Kimche, the director of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, said that British units (Gurkhas and Assyrians) participated in the anti-Jewish riots in May 1941.<sup>46</sup>

These events, manipulated by the German ambassador, Dr Fritz Grobba, and his wife, had a profound effect on Iraqi Jews. Their confidence was shaken by the killings and they were worried about their future in Iraq.<sup>47</sup> After the Second World War, constraints were placed on foreign trade and the number of Jews in state secondary

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schools and institutions of higher education was reduced: The Ministry of Information imposed Muslim teachers on Jewish schools to teach various subjects. The number of Jewish teachers in higher education was reduced, and the School of Law had only nine Jewish students out of a student body of three hundred. These steps were taken by a pro-British government to satisfy sectarian nationalists and to prove its nationalistic credentials. Meanwhile, the Zionist movement started its secret activities and succeeded in poisoning the atmosphere against Jews, particularly in right-wing circles. The director of the Foreign Ministry, Dr Muhammad Fadil al-Jamali, admitted this in his testimony before the Anglo-American Delegation in Cairo (March 1946). He described the difficulties faced by his government in trying to keep peace between the Jews and the Muslims. Two years later al-Jamali said that 'the fate of the Jews in Islamic countries depends on developments in Palestine.' Nuri Said in turn stated that 'the Jews of Islam are "hostages" of the Islamic states.' And thus the Arabs fell into the Zionist trap.

In 1948 Jews took part in the riots against the pro-British Portsmouth Treaty, trying to prove their nationalism and loyalty to Iraq, but this aroused the ire of the British and their clients in the Iraqi regime. On 27 April 1948 the government was finished off by the Battle of Jisr in which a large number of police and demonstrators were killed. The demonstrators took over the streets and rioting spread to Suleimaniya, Arbil, Kirkuk and Mosul. Nuri Said disappeared, Salih Jabr fled to Cairo, and Fadil al-Jamali did not leave his house - the three of them licked their wounds and started plotting to come back to power. Later on many were taken to court and thrown into prison. Others, including Jews, were hanged. Doubtless one of the reasons for the mass emigration was the elimination of radical Jews.

When the United Nations voted for the partition of Palestine on 29 November 1947, the head of the Jewish community declared his rejection of Zionism and his support for the rights of the Palestinian people. In spite of this demonstrators took up the slogan of 'Death to the Jews' after the killing of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husaini in the Battle of Castel, near Jerusalem. On 27 April 1948 one of the synagogues in Baghdad was burnt down. Jews then became actively involved in the anti-Zionist League which organised demonstrations against imperialism and Zionism. After the founding of Israel a state of emergency was imposed, and Muzahim al-Pachachi declared that 'the harsh measures being taken are directed solely against the Jews.' The government dismissed a large number of its Jewish

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employees, including Ibrahim al-Kabir, director of the Ministry of Finance. The sackings reached their peak in October 1948 when almost all Jewish employees were fired and Jewish banks were banned from dealing with foreign banks. The government arrested many innocent Jews, Christians and Muslims.

The Iraqi army had been packed off to save Palestine, but it hardly took part in any battles and did not occupy a single Zionist settlement. When the Iraqi army withdrew, the Umm al-Fahm Triangle was handed over to Israel under the Rhodes Agreement between Israel and Jordan. In Iraq, the anti-Jewish trials continued with fines of twenty million dinars (dinar = £ sterling) being imposed to be paid to the Ministry of Defence to cover the expenses of the 'fierce battles' fought to 'liberate' Palestine. The most notorious of these trials was that of Shafiq Adas, a Jewish businessman from Basra, who in 1946 had sold British war materiel to the Italians, materiel which later turned up in the hands of the Zionists. Even though the court could not prove any connection, he was sentenced to death and his fortune of 5,000,000 dinars was confiscated. His Muslim partners were not sentenced. Adas was hanged in public on 27 September 1948. In July 1948 forty of the most eminent Jewish merchants were tried by a military court on charges of trading with the Soviet Union. Although their deals had been concluded in accordance with the Iraqi-Soviet trade agreement, they were each fined 10,000 dinars. No Muslim who carried on business with the Soviet Union was tried. In September Ezra Menahem Daniyal gave a speech in the senate in which he drew attention to the historic ties between Iraq and its Jewish citizens and called for an end to harassment. The government promised him that it would safeguard the rights of his co-religionists and indeed their situation showed some improvement until October of that year when the government confiscated the assets of Iraqi Jews abroad if they had not returned by a specific date. Then the Ministry of Health refused to certify any new Jewish doctors and would not renew the licences of practising Jewish doctors. At the beginning of the academic year 1948/49 the headmasters of state schools informed their Jewish pupils that they could not guarantee their safety in the face of Muslim students' hostility. During this campaign aimed at the 'Salvation of Palestine', the group of Salih Jabr redoubled its activities and paved the way for Nuri Said to form a new government in January 1949. In the summer of the same year the police arrested some Zionists, but the leaders of the underground managed to flee to Iran. Disturbances broke out again

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and there were renewed arrests of innocent victims. Israeli agents accused the head of the community, the anti-Zionist Sasson Khedurie, of cowardice. They forced his resignation and by devious means managed to get Hesqel Shemtov appointed, and began using him for their interests. Thus the anti-Jewish measures helped the Zionist clique to dictate its rule both directly and indirectly. When the state of emergency was lifted they started smuggling Jews to Palestine via Iran. On 2 March 1950 Salih Jabr presented a bill which would allow Iraqi Jews to emigrate, provided they renounced their nationality. The bill was passed by a majority. In March 1951, after an overwhelming majority of Jews had given up their nationality, Nuri Said's government froze Jewish assets.<sup>48</sup>

## Morocco

Even though the authorities in Marrakesh refused to implement the Vichy government's policy of racial discrimination and saved its Jewish citizens from destruction, the establishment of the state of Israel aroused the anger of Muslims in Auja where, on 7 June 1948, they attacked the Jewish district killing five people, wounding thirty-seven and destroyed a number of houses and shops. On the same night disturbances broke out in Jarada where thirty-nine Jews were killed. When the authorities finally managed to restore order they arrested some of the rioters, tried them and two were sentenced to death.<sup>49</sup>

## Aden

On 2 December 1947, Muslim nationalists announced a three-day general strike in protest at the Resolution to partition Palestine. They attacked their Jewish compatriots, killing one and wounding 20. There were subsequent bloody strikes during which 122 people were killed and a large number wounded. Many homes and stores were looted. The security forces, which were under British leadership, participated in the disturbances in which eighty-two Jews and thirty-eight Muslims were killed.<sup>50</sup> The unanswered question is just why the British authorities allowed the security forces to take part in this carnage.

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### Syria

On 18 November 1945 sectarians in the city of Aleppo carried out an attack on the Grand Synagogue. They smashed the menorahs (candelabras) and assaulted the old men during their prayers. Sectarian provocation spread, leading to the killing of Jack Franco, deputy headmaster of the Alliance school in Damascus. After the Resolution to partition Palestine, sectarians burned down 18 synagogues in Aleppo on 2 December 1947, destroyed 150 houses and killed a number of Jews. Following the declaration of the state of Israel on 15 May 1948 all relations between Syrian Jews and the world outside were cut and Jewish foreign trade ceased. On 5 August 1949 a grenade was thrown into a synagogue in Damascus killing 12 Jews and wounding 26 others. President Husni al-Za'im ordered the execution of those accused, but a few days later the coup of Colonel Sami Hinnawi took place and al-Za'im himself was executed.<sup>51</sup>

### Egypt

On 2 November 1945 members of Misr al-Fatat<sup>51</sup> carried out anti-Jewish riots in Cairo which resulted in the burning of a synagogue, the destruction of a hospital, a home for the elderly and a number of Jewish shops. After the foundation of Israel a state of emergency was declared, and the government confiscated the assets of scores of mostly Jewish individuals and companies. The police also arrested a number of Jews. Between June and November 1948 a number of anti-Jewish riots took place with some Jews being injured and killed. In 1949 scores of detainees were set free, their assets returned to them and they were allowed to leave Egypt. Some Jews were accused of Zionism even though it was legal. When the Wafd came to power at the beginning of 1950, the rest of the detainees (except the Communists) were released. During the Tripartite Aggression against Egypt in 1956 all but 2,000 Egyptian Jews were expelled or 'encouraged' to leave.

The latest Arab mistake in this respect was when the Muslim 'Organisation of the Oppressed on Earth' tortured and then killed several poor Lebanese Jews,<sup>53</sup> in 1989.



## THE UPROOTING OF THE JEWS OF ISLAM

When Israel saw that neither diplomatic manoeuvres in Western capitals, nor anti-Jewish harassment had succeeded in uprooting these Jewish communities, it started to use other methods: (anti-Jewish) terrorism, bribery, smuggling, cheating and deception. 1. Israeli terrorism: Yitzhak Menahem, one of the Israeli agents abroad, wrote that 'far reaching emigration will only occur due to extreme hardship. This is the bitter truth, unpalatable as it may be. We must study the possibility of manufacturing this hardship ourselves. We must give the impetus and be the catalyst in the various Jewish diasporas . . . for the Jews need to be pushed involuntarily into leaving their places of residence. We must give them a shock and rouse them from their indolence as the poet [Hayyim Nahman Bialik] wrote:

It (the Jewish people) will not wake unless woken by the whip  
It will not stir unless stirred up by attack.<sup>54</sup>

The chairman of the executive committee of the Zionist Organisation, Berl Locker, said at one of the committee's meetings on the Jews of the Yemen that 'even the Jews who do not want to emigrate will have to.'<sup>55</sup> Yitzhak Rafael, head of the Immigration Department of the Jewish Agency, indicated that, with regard to the Jews of the Yemen, Zionist agents had hired Arabs to 'speed up' the departure of the remaining Yemenite Jews, but he did not clarify exactly how this took place. Yemenite Jews have stated in this respect that Arab hirelings used to attack them and beat them up as well as harassing them in their day to day work. Moreover, the emissary of the Jewish Agency in Aden, Shlomo Schmidt, demanded that he be allowed to petition the government of the Yemen to issue a proclamation expelling the remaining Jews from the Yemen.<sup>56</sup>

When the Iraqi government announced in March 1950 that Jews were free to emigrate the offer was taken up by just 4,000 out of a total of 130,000. Israeli agents started employing terror to arouse hysteria amongst the Jews. On 8 April 1950 a bomb exploded in the Dar al-Baida' Cafe which was full of Jews, wounding four -Akram Ezra, Murad Khedouri, Sha'ul and Elias Yosef. The police arrested three suspects, but the Jews were afraid that the Muslims

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would attempt to kill them as had happened in the rioting of 1941 and they started applying to emigrate. When the flow of emigrants ebbed another bomb went off on 14 January 1951 in the Mas'uda Shemtov Synagogue, killing four including a child and wounding twenty. On 14 March 1951 another bomb was detonated in the American Cultural Centre in Baghdad wounding some of the Jewish intellectuals who were using the library. On 10 May 1951 bombs went off at the Jewish car company, Beit Lawi. On 5 June a bomb exploded at the Jewish Stanley Shasha Trading Company. Following this terror, all except 5,000 Jews applied to emigrate. Then the government decided to confiscate their assets and arrested some of the Zionists who had been involved in these terrorist operations. Two were executed. But Israel succeeded in transferring this whole community and lashing it to the wheel of Zionist colonialism since they were forced to go to Israel and Israel alone. The British government had ordered its embassy in Baghdad not to grant any visas for Britain.<sup>57</sup> In 1951, as the Israeli spies set off their bombs in Baghdad, pamphlets were distributed calling upon the Jews to send their children to Israel.<sup>58</sup>

2. Bribery: in addition to terror, Israeli agents used bribery to 'purchase' Jews from various states. They paid \$50 for each Bulgarian Jew, 100 dollars for each youth and \$300 for each Zionist detainee in Bulgaria. The Israeli emissary, Ephraim Shilo, handed over a down-payment three million dollars to the Bulgarian authorities, to be followed by more payments by other emissaries. They managed to persuade the socialist countries that immigration into Palestine and arms purchases would help the struggle against British imperialism, since Israel was fighting pro-British Arab states.<sup>59</sup> The Lebanese Chief of Police accepted 25-30 Lebanese liras for each Jew provided that between 150-200 Jews were smuggled out each week.<sup>60</sup> Shlomo Zalman Shragay stated that Moroccan ministers were paid off via Swiss bank accounts. According to a report in *The Guardian* on 29 December 1988, '\$500,000 [was paid] to Moroccan police and security officials, who agreed to turn a blind eye to the Israeli networks . . . [and] the assistance of the fascist regime in Madrid had allowed Mossad agents to smuggle 76,000 Moroccan Jews into the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, and then to mainland Spain and France on their way to Israel.' The Yemeni authorities demanded to be paid cash. Emigration from Iraq was to the benefit of the Iraqi Prime Minister, Tawfiq al-Suweidi, who was also the director of the Iraq Tours travel company. The bribe paid to the rulers of the Yemen included the

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property of Yemenite Jews, as well as 'protection fees', removal tax, a poll tax, the usual bribe and various presents.<sup>61</sup>

Bribes were paid, and not just to the Imam, but also to the local rulers. Yosef Tsadok said that 'when we parted, I offered Sultan al-'Awadhli presents of blankets and carpets which made a great impression on him!'<sup>62</sup> In this way certain Arab rulers sold off the Sephardim and Palestine at the same time.

3. Smuggling: the Zionist establishment set up a special organisation called Mossad La'aliyah or 'the foundation for the immigration and smuggling of Jews into Palestine'. Zionists smuggled Jews from Morocco to Algeria, from Libya to Malta, from the Yemen to Aden, from Iraq to the Shah's Iran, from Hungary to Austria, and from the Soviet sector in Vienna to the American and thence to Palestine. In March 1949, by means of a secret agreement between Israel and the Lebanese Chief of Police, extensive smuggling operations took place in Syria and Lebanon - via Beirut and then by car to the mountainous border regions, then on foot to kibbutz Kfar Giladi. According to informants, smuggling operations from Syria and Lebanon had already started at the beginning of the Second World War. The agents in each country had a code name, such as Maxi for Egypt, Berman for Iraq, Goldman for Iran and Barukh for Bulgaria. They had wireless sets and sometimes received their instructions from the Hebrew songs on the Listeners' Requests programme of Radio Israel. The Zionist emissaries paid off customs inspectors, border police, the secret police, officers, the consuls of foreign countries and even ministers. They had meetings with Nuri Said, the Shah of Iran and Rakoczi, the Jewish Communist leader in Hungary. In July 1949, Jack Gershoni, a representative of the Jewish Agency reached an agreement with the French Governor in Rabat about the quiet and orderly departure of Jews from Marrakesh to Marseilles.<sup>63</sup> Iraqis who fled via Syria and Lebanon told me 'the Zionists relied upon Syrians and Lebanese who made a living from smuggling'.<sup>64</sup> But it was the Jewish fugitives who had to come up with the money to pay them off.

4. Cheating and deception: Zionist propaganda methods included cheating, deception, intimidation and provocation. Jews were warned of the danger of mass extermination and they were promised luxury and happiness in Israel. Any letters describing the hardships of the transit camps inside Israel were intercepted. The Immigration Mosad spent untold millions and an inspector at the Jewish Agency pointed out that prior to the establishment of the state no proper books were kept, and even after the foundation of the state this

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'Mosad' avoided proper control over its books. In 1948 it set up a shipping company to transport the immigrants, and with the forty dollars paid for each one by the American Joint Distribution Committee, the Immigration Mosad amassed millions. Among those who benefitted from these stolen funds were the Zionist parties inside Israel. The controller of the Jewish Agency accused this foundation of exploiting the immigrants and making exorbitant profits from overcrowding and inhuman conditions on board the ships. The Mosad doubled the number of immigrants in each ship in order to double its profits.<sup>65</sup> Before the Yemenites boarded the planes, all their valuables, including ancient Hebrew bibles, religious artifacts, jewelry, embroideries, gold and silver objects, old books and manuscripts were taken by the Mosad and the immigrants were assured that these belongings would be sent on by ship, but a large part was stolen en route, and another part reached tourist trinket shops.<sup>66</sup> A string of Israeli investigations uncovered many such cases.<sup>67</sup> Later, hundreds of the immigrants' babies were stolen and sold on the black market. The Zionists later stole ancient books and historic artifacts from the the Jews of Ethiopia, the Falashas.<sup>68</sup> When the immigrants reached Israel, they were shared out amongst the Ashkenazi political parties even though they had no knowledge or understanding of their theories or manifestos. The parties then cut deals to get the immigrants' votes and to win over their rabbis and notables. In one of the files of the Ashkenazi religious party, Hamizrahi, there is a note sent by Y. Weinstein to Shlomo Schmidt, in which he wrote the following, 'Please give Rabbi Badihi a small amount of pocket money each month.'<sup>69</sup> In Marrakesh, for example, this party made the emigrants pay an amount equivalent to 20,000 francs for an exit permit, 50,000 francs for a passport with an exit permit, and 100,000 francs to emigrate directly to Palestine without having to pass through a transit camp in Marseilles.<sup>70</sup> Tsvi Hermon of the Absorption Office of the Zionist Executive Council said on 21 March 1949 that 'Immigration Mosad is sending to Israel inferior elements.' On 6 October 1949 he said that there was no messianic movement in Tunis, and so they organised one. Yosef Tsadok had letters distributed amongst Yemenite Jewish notables proclaiming the Day of Judgement and urging them to go to Aden.<sup>71</sup>

Due to the friendly relations between Israel, the Shah's Iran and America, 50,000 Iranian Jews were transferred in the 1950s. Between 1960 and 1975 Israel transferred 70,000. However the new immigrants refused to be cheap labour like the Iranians who had

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arrived previously, and many of them went on to the West. Shortly before the Islamic Revolution, secret agents distributed leaflets, which they signed 'Muslim Revolutionaries', threatening Iranian Jews with death if they stayed in Iran. This caused between 30,000 and 50,000 Iranian Jews to emigrate. Ha'aretz on 4 April 1980 estimated this number to be 30,000, of whom only 6,000 stayed on in Israel. Ha'aretz' weekly supplement on 9 April 1982 estimated the number to have reached 50,000 by 1979 of whom only 15,000 remained in Israel waiting to return to Iran or to go to the West. The other 35,000 returned to Iran or went on to Europe and America. The majority refused to stay in Israel for two reasons: firstly, the efforts of the PLO in Tehran to encourage Iranian Jews to return home, creating an atmosphere which favoured their return; secondly, the catastrophic state of those Iranian Jews who immigrated in the fifties. The newcomers could not believe the poverty and degradation they saw in the black belt and the development towns where Iranian Jews lived with their Sephardi cousins. Turkish Jews were similarly shocked when they saw how their relatives were living and promptly returned to Turkey. Moreover, these short-term Iranian immigrants, who lived in hotels, complained about the way the Israeli authorities and Israeli society treated them with regard to work and housing. Ashkenazi Jews called them 'Khomeinists', 'Primitives', 'Persians' and 'Levantines'. This group of Iranians was mostly made up of the affluent, merchants, professionals and intellectuals. Approximately 500 of them entered Israeli universities. Following discussions between representatives of the PLO and the Iranian authorities in Teheran, relatives among the 50,000 Jews who had stayed in Iran started to telephone and advise them to return to Iran where they would be warmly received. As a result, a large number did go back to Iran, and most of the others chose to go to the West for economic reasons.<sup>72</sup>

In the seventies Israel managed to dupe Sephardim in the Caucasus in the southern Soviet Union into immigrating in their thousands. Israel then settled them in the development towns with other Sephardim where they suffered racial prejudice in employment and housing and were the butt of a newspaper campaign which termed them 'drunken criminals'. Gideon Eilon wrote in Ha'aretz on 15 February 1980 that fifty Georgian families out of a total of 33,000 had left Israel, and that Ben Tsiyon Yakovshvili, one of their leaders, had stated 'We shall never come back to Israel.' It is worth pointing out that 20 percent of these immigrants were professionals in the



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USSR and 70 percent were skilled workers. Once in Israel, they could not afford to leave for the West. When the Soviet Union refused to repatriate them, Georgian Jews who arrived in Vienna staged rowdy demonstrations. Hanna Kalderon, correspondent for Ha'aretz, wrote on 17 October 1986 that the Caucasian Jews had led traditional lives. In Israel they had been settled in Pardes Hanna, Or Yehuda and Or Akiva where they were left to their own devices. The environment was hostile towards them and various factors, such as low wages and poor housing, turned Georgian youths in just a short time into thieves and robbers. They were generally subjected to derision such as 'dirty Georgian', or 'thieving Caucasian', and hence they preferred not to assimilate. They started to watch Soviet rather than Israeli television programmes and the young people preferred the education they received at home over that in Israeli schools. 'It's chaos here. There everyone had a house. Everyone was the equivalent of a mayor here.'

### TRANSIT CAMPS ABROAD

The Zionist establishment realised that the Jews of Islam would not accept the low status assigned them in Israeli society. Hence, they had to be degraded and their identity and dignity destroyed to make them so desperate for work that they would be grateful to the establishment for giving them menial jobs. Transitional 'laboratories' were set up for them and the Sephardim would enter them as merchants or professionals or craftsmen and come out a few years later as highly mobile cheap labour for the capitalist and 'socialist' labour market.

These laboratories were the immigration camps outside and inside Israel, then the ma'barot, the harsher forms of transit camps in Israel. When the immigrants had been refashioned they were placed in 'development towns', 'cooperatives' and in the 'black belt'. This was generally how the Sephardi immigrants were absorbed, but in the case of the Iraqi Jews, for example, they were sent directly to ma'barot. Zionist historians and their allies blatantly lie by claiming that Ashkenazim suffered the same hardships. Only a small number of them entered these camps and they were granted many privileges. Moreover, their stay in the camps was very short indeed, and they were then placed in the large towns or on Ashkenazi settlements where they were given jobs commensurate with their qualifications as well as comfortable dwellings. They assimilated quickly into



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Ashkenazi Zionist colonist society. The establishment, however, continued to refer to the Sephardim and even their children and grandchildren as 'immigrants', or by the euphemisms 'distressed populations', 'development town dwellers', 'inhabitants of the neighbourhoods' (i.e. the slum neighbourhoods) or the 'second Israel'. Their children were referred to as 'in need of care' meaning 'remedial' or 'backward'. Actually, for many years the adjective 'backward' used to be attached to peoples of the third world in the Israeli media. The Zionist establishment thus divided the Jews into two inimical factions, and the gap between them widens and deepens from one generation to another.

The common denominator in all of these camps is the crudest living conditions which deprive the inmates of the simplest rights and dignity. The transit camps which were established abroad for the North Africans and Yemenites can be summed up thus: in February 1949 the Jewish Agency sent Iris Lewis to the transit camp in Algeria. After she returned she wrote in her report that 'people are living like animals in overcrowded conditions in a narrow street behind the buildings of the Alliance school . . . they are subsisting without food, dying from disease, reproducing and dying . . . men and women, young and old. More than 50 live in one room whose area measures between four and five square metres.'<sup>73</sup> Heda Grossman, a Zionist youth leader, wrote that 'all the children came from large families, and immigration caused the breakdown of family ties. Tenderness and passion for their families as well as anguish over their fate continually upset these children, and, at the beginning, caused hysteria, crying and screaming throughout the night. The youth from the town of Jabas were generally calmer and more under control. Although relationships between children of the same sex are generally physical, there were also cases when these relationships were abnormal. Naturally this problem will cause complications. For example, in the group in question there was not a single girl.'<sup>74</sup> The Immigration Mosad preferred to transfer boys to Israel so they could go straight into the army. H. Artzieli, the emissary of the Jewish Agency in Libya, described Moroccan Jews as if he were a horse trader. 'Their bodies are slender and their appearance is handsome, but I have difficulty distinguishing them from an outstanding Arab type.'<sup>75</sup> One of the doctors in the transit camp in Marseilles wrote to the Immigration Department in Israel that 'the North African immigrants reach Marseilles in a state of deprivation . . . they have almost no clothes and have had nothing to eat during the three-day journey by ship.

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Conditions on board are horrific. They sleep on the ground with the barest of covering to protect them from the elements. On 23 September 1948 a child died on board ship and the French authorities ruled that it had died of hypothermia and hunger. I demand that the appropriate authorities be contacted to correct this situation... There is a great lack of blankets in the two camps in Marseilles. The immigrants sleep on military beds with not a shred of covering in huts with wooden roofs. As a result of the dreadful living conditions and the deterioration in the standard of nourishment lately, twelve children have died . . . There is also a lack of soap and clothing ... I fail to understand why clothing is distributed to all European immigrants, whereas nothing goes to the North Africans?<sup>76</sup> At one of the sessions of the Jewish Agency's Executive Council, Dr Yisrael Goldstein warned of discrimination in the camps against the Jews of North Africa.<sup>77</sup> On 31 July 1949, at a session of the Zionist Executive Council, Eliahu Dubkin admitted that there existed the 'phenomenon of a lack of desire to travel'. Elie Peleg said in his report on 24 July 1949 that 'these people had to be taken by force to board the ship.'<sup>78</sup> The Zionist establishment destroyed the unity of the Moroccan families by choosing the strong and the young and taking them to Israel while leaving the old and infirm to die slowly in the transit camps in France. The Zionists used the same methods regarding the Falashas, the Jews of Ethiopia, in 1974 and 1975. This also happened in Morocco before they even left for France. Zionist emissaries pressurised Moroccan Jews from the countryside. They forced them to abandon their houses and work and go to Casablanca, where they were ignored. For a long while they waited there, suffering from hunger and disease while Zionist emissaries were busy sifting out the 'sound ones' for emigration.

In one of the files of the Immigration Department there is an undated document, written by a doctor who worked for about a year and half in a transit camp for Moroccans in Marseilles. 'The immigrants from North Africa,' he wrote, 'will provide Israel with cheap and unskilled labour in place of the Arab workers who used to do this type of work before the war of independence [sic]. The standard of living of the North Africans is no higher than that of the Arabs, and they will be better off than ever in Israel even if they do not achieve the European standard of living which the Ashkenazim enjoy. The North African immigrants will have no difficulties adapting to this situation...'<sup>79</sup>

In October 1948 Berl Locker said to the wealthy American Jewish

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politician Henry Morgenthau that 'it is our view that the Sephardim and the Yemenites will have to play a large part in building the country.'<sup>80</sup>

During that period many immigrants from Islamic countries, particularly those with higher academic qualifications, were marginalised socially or forced to emigrate to France, America and Britain. Selim Ruben, for example, lived in the Kfar Ana camp near Tel Aviv. He had worked in the upper echelons of the Iraqi Railways Administration, having been the director of the main stations in Baghdad, Kirkuk, Mosul and Khaniqin. When he came to Israel, the authorities refused to employ him in his profession and he remained unemployed, cursing Israel from his poverty. In 1962 a Moroccan leader commended on this phenomenon that 'there are more Moroccan professors at the Sorbonne than Moroccan students at Jerusalem university.' Notwithstanding these facts, the progressive historian, Tom Segev, states that the Sephardim 'were marginalised because they did not bring with them the requisite skills to be able to compete freely for status in Israeli society . . . or because they cannot speak Hebrew well enough.'<sup>81</sup> (It is important to note that the Ashkenazi immigrants did not know Hebrew. If this was the stance of a progressive historian, we can imagine how it was seen by a reactionary - see chapter eight.)

In spite of the secret agreement between the Zionists and the Imam of the Yemen, the transfer operation was not overt, out of fear of Arab public opinion, and it was decided to send the Jews first to Aden. There they had to sit it out in a sandy waste called 'Redemption Camp' until planes were ready to take them to Israel. Dr Yosef Meir described the arrival of the Yemenites at this camp as follows: 'Fifteen trucks arrived, carrying 313 naked or semi-naked bodies. Whether it was due to the summer heat, or it was their custom, or due to a lack of clothing, they were sitting packed together, filthy, their bodies covered with sores, their faces staring out and silent. Even after they were greeted it was difficult to talk with them. It might have been shyness; it was said that they had been walking for the last fifteen days, or it could have been unconcern, or distress, or fear of what they were about to embark upon. Some of them asked us "Are you English?" even though we spoke Hebrew and were trying to establish a rapport with them. They started getting out of the trucks, one by one, very slowly and calmly. There was hardly the sound of a baby crying. The image is that of a flock of sheep being led from a field at evening, one head following the other's tail, until they reach the shady field

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where they can all huddle together. The first night they get bread, water and dates. This first night is a historic meeting between an ancient Hebrew group and Jewish groups from Europe and the Middle East. Their faces showed no signs of happiness, emotion or any indication that they were aware of salvation and an end to their trials. I will say it bluntly, they have quite animal features although we know that they have a very high level of intelligence and intellectual capacity . . .<sup>82</sup>

This camp was set up to process five hundred Yemenites, but the total number there reached twelve thousand. There were no tents - they simply lay down to sleep on the sand at night. They defecated in the sand inside the camp perimeters or nearby. Sometimes sandstorms would blow over the camp, or torrential rains would almost drown the refugees and carry off their belongings.<sup>83</sup> Dr Meir added that 'no one knew how many sick there were in the camp, or where they were. Some managed to make it to the clinic to get bandages or a penicillin injection. Others were breathing their last wherever they lay, particularly the old men and women.' Women were giving birth on the sand, and the nurse would only get to them in time to cut the umbilical cord. When the women came to the clinic or the sick room, they would slump onto the ground with their children nearby showing no sign of joy or excitement. The dead were buried in the sand unaccompanied by sounds of weeping (according to the report of Dr Meir). When the Yemenites arrived at the camp, all their clothes were taken from them and burnt and they were given European clothes instead - a first stage in the destruction of their identity. The women felt naked as they put on modern dresses, since they had been used to wearing baggy trousers down to their ankles underneath their dresses. Yemenites had new Hebrew names imposed on them to replace their traditional Arab or Muslim names. In the files of the Jewish Agency there are many complaints about the beatings, derision and brutality to which Agency officials subjected the Yemenites.

In Israel there was discussion about the transfer of the Yemenites. Yitzhak Greenbaum, Minister of the Interior asked 'why are we trying to make the community in Yemen disappear and to bring here people who are more harmful than beneficial for us? When we transfer 70 percent of the sick, we are hurting both ourselves and them . . .' Yitzhak Rafael, head of the Immigration Department, tried to placate his colleagues in the Agency's Executive Council by stating on 5 June 1949 that 'there are not many sick amongst the