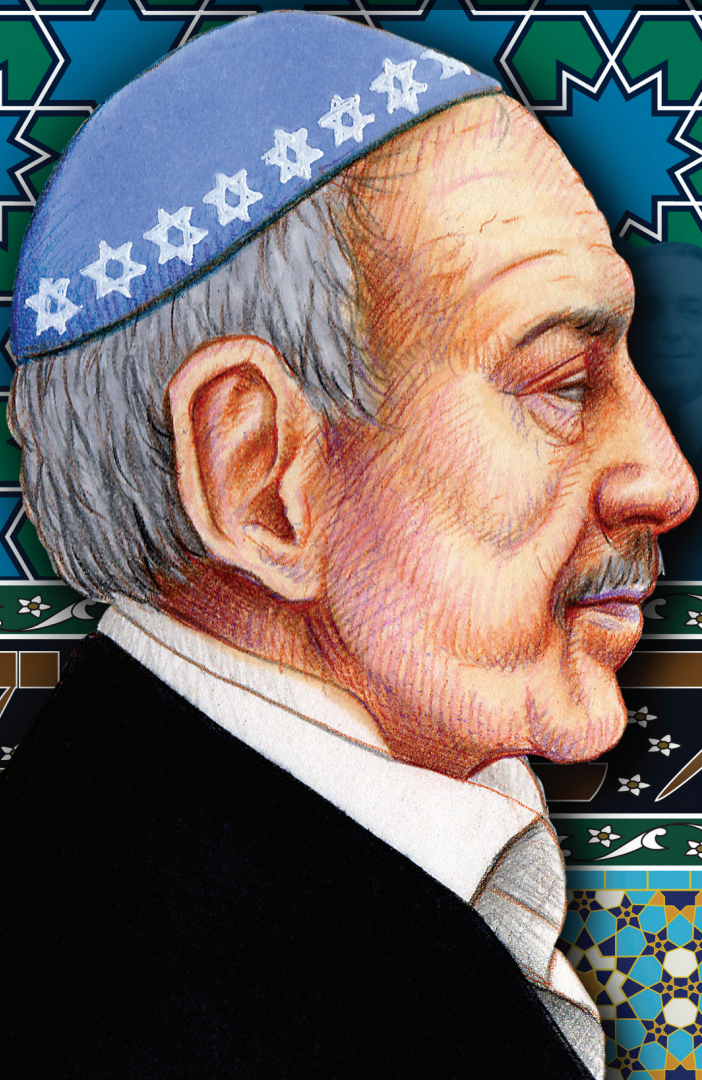


IN THE LAND OF THE SHAHS:
JEWISH LIVES IN PERSIA/IRAN



תבנית אבן ישראל





Main Jewish population sites: The capital city of Tehran, Hamadan, Shiraz, Isfahan, Kermanshah, Yazd, Kerman, Rafsanjan, Borujerd, Samandaj, Tabriz and Urmia. The official 2011 census recorded 8,756 Jews in Iran out of a total population of 76 million.

IN THE LAND OF THE SHAHS: JEWISH LIVES IN PERSIA/IRAN

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INTRODUCTION

MENTION “PERSIA” and many Jews will probably associate the name with the saga recorded in the biblical Book of Esther. It tells of Haman, whose plot to annihilate all the Jews of the Persian Empire, was successfully thwarted by the efforts of Queen Esther and her uncle Mordechai. To this day, Jews celebrate their rescue from this mass killing during the festival of Purim. “Persia” may also bring to mind the last two books of the Hebrew Bible, Ezra and Nehemiah, which record the decision of King Cyrus the Great to allow the Jewish exiles of the Babylonian exodus (538 BCE) to return to their ancestral land and to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem destroyed by the Babylonians decades earlier (586 BCE). Lesser known is yet another Jewish biblical connection with ancient Persia: according to some traditions, Daniel—popularly famous for being thrown “into the lion’s den,” (Daniel 6:17)—was born in Shushan (Susa) and buried in the same city on the banks of the Karkheh River.

But say “Iran”—the same territory whose name change occurred in 1935 through a decree issued by the then ruler Reza Shah—and most people will probably think of the Islamic Republic, the Ayatollah Khomeini, the siege of the American embassy in Tehran, President Ahmadinejad and his campaign to deny the Holocaust, and the relentless decades-old enmity between Iran and the United States and the State of Israel.

In between the centuries separating biblical Persia from contemporary Iran, a very rich, multi-faceted Jewish presence lasting about 2,700 years, flourished in Persia/Iran, beginning centuries before the advent of Islam and continuing through the decades to the rule of the Pahlavi Monarchy. As was the case with other diaspora Jewish communities, Persian Jews were much influenced by their surrounding milieu, while at the same time keeping up their religious practices, traditions, and creativity. They built synagogues with their own distinct architecture, worshipped following particular ritual traditions, while dressed in the styles of most Persians. They also created an indigenous literature, adhered to the Zionist pursuits, prospered under the administration of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, and steadily declined following Khomeini’s Islamic Revolution.

Our exhibit will review the history of Persian Jews while mostly focusing on the last eighty years of the Persian/Iranian Jewish community, including the role of Iran during the Second World War, the transport of the so-called “Tehran Children” to Palestine, the prosperous years under the Shah, the decline of the community since the Islamic Revolution, and the Holocaust denial campaign instigated by the regime.

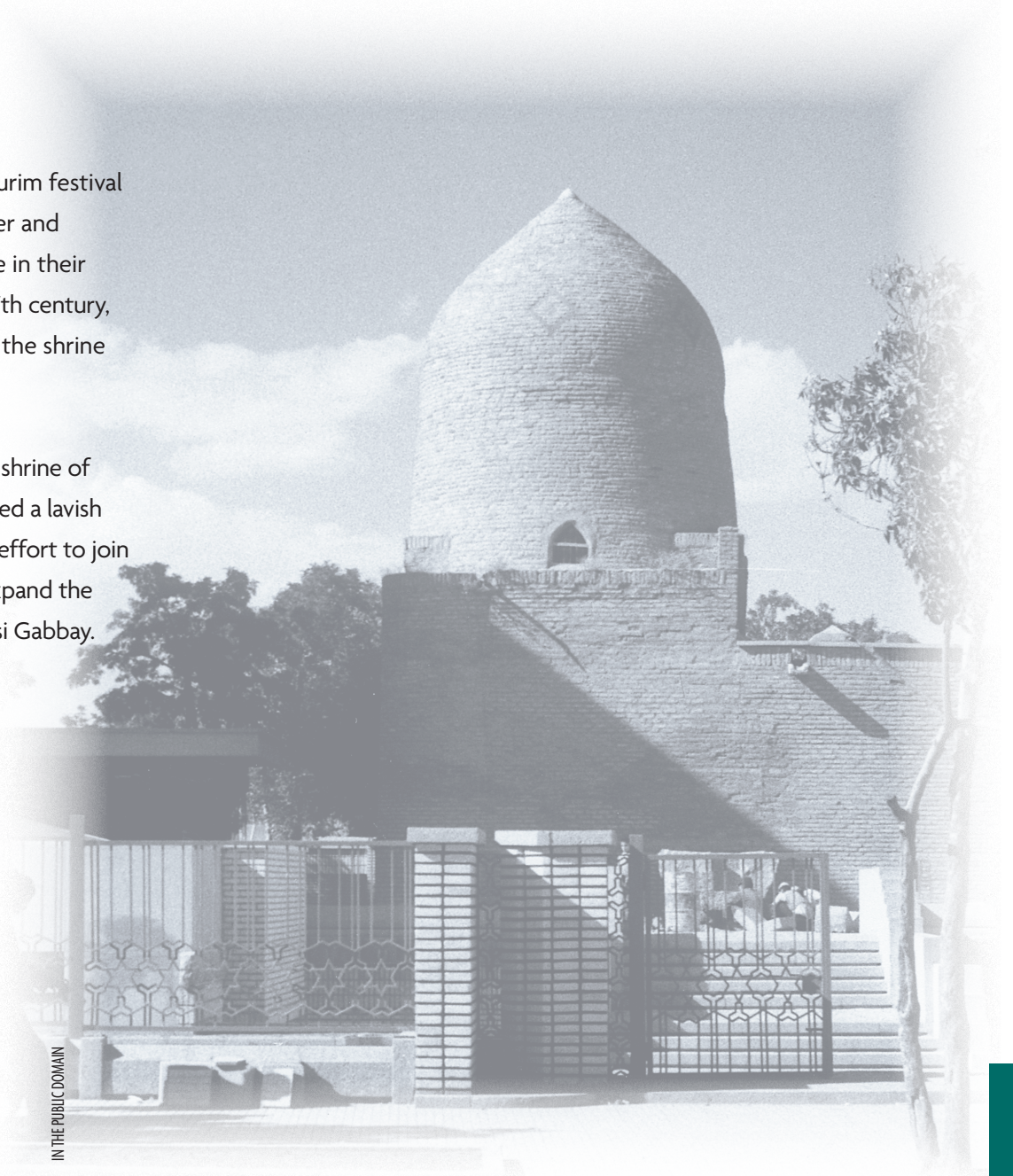
PERSIAN JEWS IN BIBLICAL TIMES

WHILE MANY Jews throughout the world celebrate the Purim festival with much merry-making, few think of the saga of Esther and Mordechai as having taken place in Iran. In fact, there is a shrine in their honor in the city of Hamadan (Ecbatana), probably built in the 17th century, housing their alleged tombs. For centuries, Persian Jews visited the shrine during Purim.

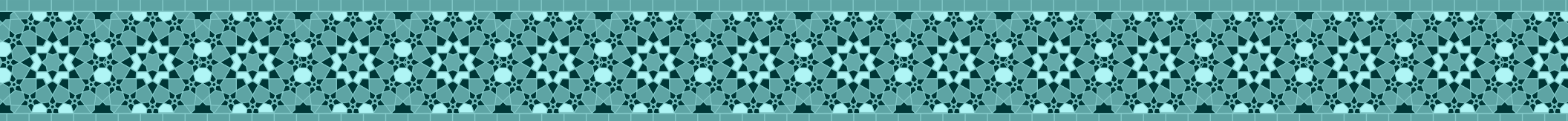
The shrine's architecture follows the model of an *emamzadeh*, a shrine of an Islamic religious leader. In the course of 1970-1971, Iran organized a lavish festival to commemorate 2,500 years of Iranian monarchy. In an effort to join the festivity, the Iranian Jewish Society chose to renovate and expand the shrine, a project headed by the Jewish-Iranian architect Elias Yassi Gabbay.



COURTESY ELIAS YASSI GABBAY AND EC, P. 27. IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN.

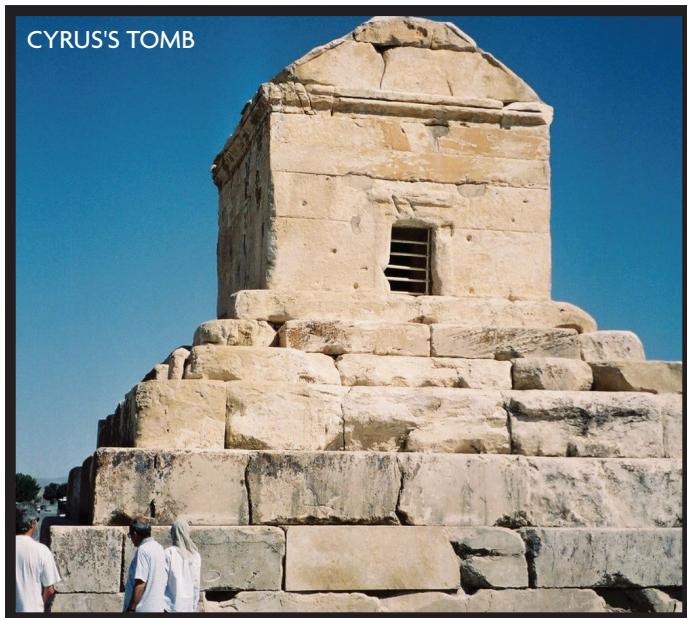


IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN



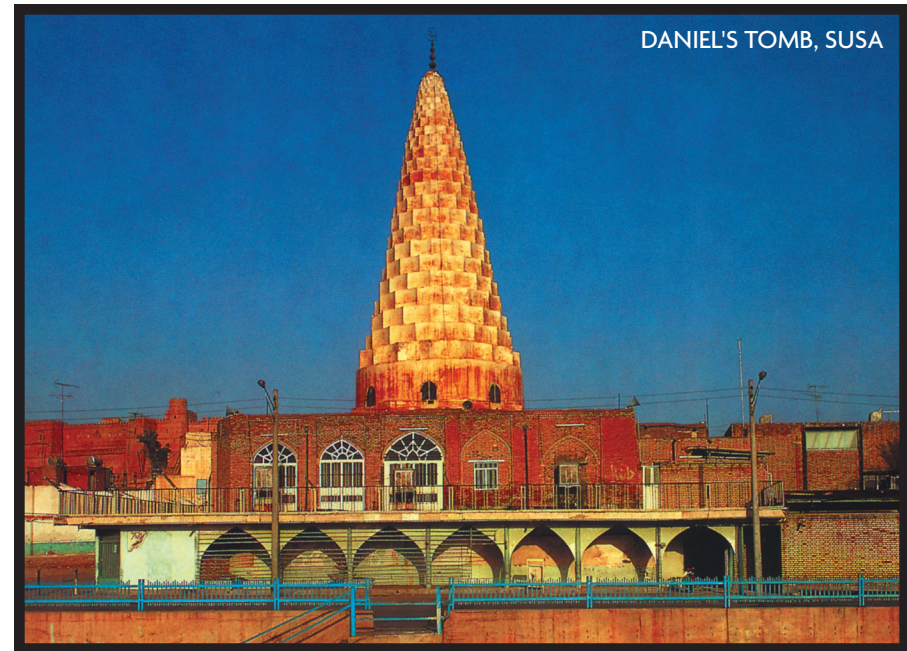
There are two other biblically-related shrines in Iran connected to ancient Persia:

One is Cyrus's tomb located in south central Iran, near Shiraz, the capital city where he reigned from 559-530 BCE. Like other such sites in the Middle East there is no evidence identifying the tomb as that of Cyrus. During the Islamic conquest of Iran in the 7th century CE, Arab armies sought to destroy the shrine which they saw as a violation of Islamic tenets. The shrine's guards succeeded in persuading the Arab command that the tomb was not built to honor Cyrus but rather the mother of King Solomon, also venerated by Muslims. Consequently, the inscription on the tomb was replaced by a verse of the Qur'an and the shrine became known as the "tomb of Solomon's mother," a name still prevalent today. The tomb is today an empty shell.



CYRUS'S TOMB

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HENRI STERLIN. COURTESY OF AGENCE INTERNATIONALE D'EDITION JEAN-FRANCOIS GONTHIER AND ESTHER'S CHILDREN: A PORTRAIT OF IRANIAN/IRVINS. ED. HOUMAN SAKSHAR, PH.D. P. 9, AND FURTHER REFERRED AS E.C. IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN.



DANIEL'S TOMB, SUSA

COURTESY OF E.C. IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN.

The other figure connected to Persian shrines is the biblical Daniel. The eminent scholar Elias Bickerman wrote a volume entitled *Four Strange Books of the Bible* (Schocken Books, NY 1967). One of the four is the Book of Daniel, and it is "strange." It is twelve chapters long, partly in Hebrew and partly in Aramaic, and it delivers a biographical introduction to Daniel, two examples of God's miraculous interventions, and three stories proving Daniel's superior wisdom. Scholars date his prophecies from about 545-535 BCE.

While Daniel is not mentioned in the Qur'an, he is venerated as a prophet in the Muslim tradition. Daniel's tomb in Iran was probably built in the 12th century, destroyed by a flood in 1869 and the current dome built in its place.

PERSIAN JEWS FROM THE 16TH TO THE 19TH CENTURIES: CREATIVITY AND PERSECUTION

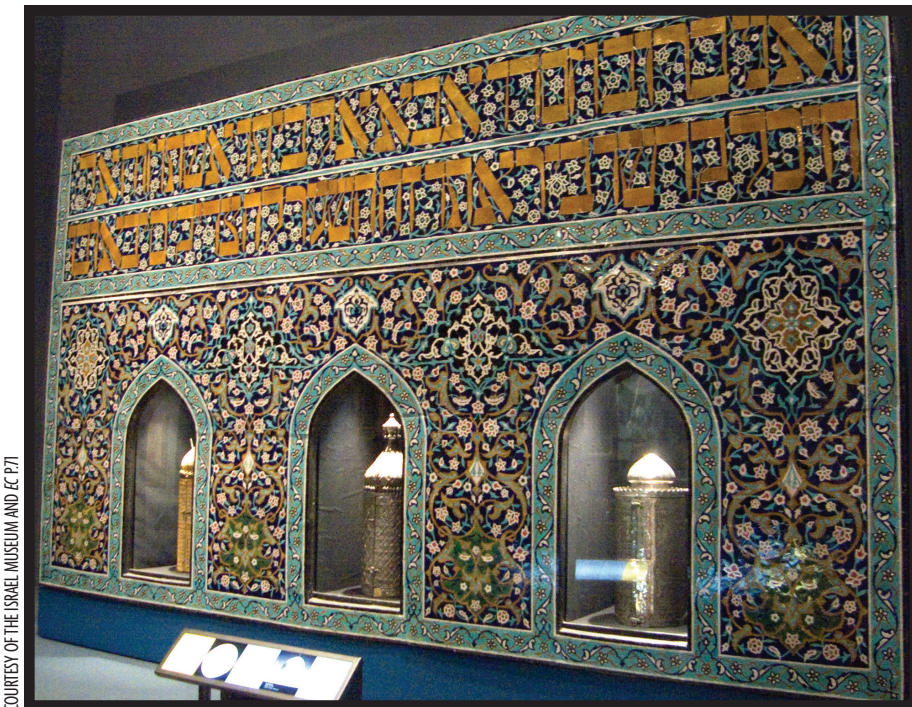
UNTIL THE 16th century little is known about Jewish life in Persia. From then on until the 19th century, “Jewish existence in Iran was especially characterized by deprivation, persecution, and subjection to arbitrary decrees, but during the same period, it was also remarkable for its incredibly rich cultural life and achievements” (Orit Engelberg-Baram and Hagai Segev, “Revealing the Face of Iranian Jewry: The Story of Light and Shadows,” in David Yeroushalmi, ed. *Light and Shadows: The Story of Iranian Jews*, p. 17).



PROF. DAVID YERUSHALMI, ISRAEL / PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE, TEL AVIV

▲ THIS PHOTO IS OF AN ILLUSTRATION INCLUDED IN THE BOOK WRITTEN BY THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY NAPIER MALCOLM *FIVE YEARS IN A PERSIAN TOWN (YEZD)*, 1905. THERE ARE SEVERAL INDIVIDUALS IN THIS ILLUSTRATION BY THE PERSIAN PAINTER ABU EL-QASEM. THE FIFTH FROM THE LEFT IS A JEW AND A CHILD HOLDING ON TO HIM. HE IS DISTINGUISHABLE FROM THE OTHER MEN: THE JEW IS WEARING NON-MATCHING SHOES. THIS WAS ONE OF THE MANY HUMILIATING PROHIBITIONS IMPOSED UPON JEWS AT THE TIME, REMAINING IN FORCE IN CERTAIN CITIES UNTIL THE LATE EIGHTEEN HUNDREDS.

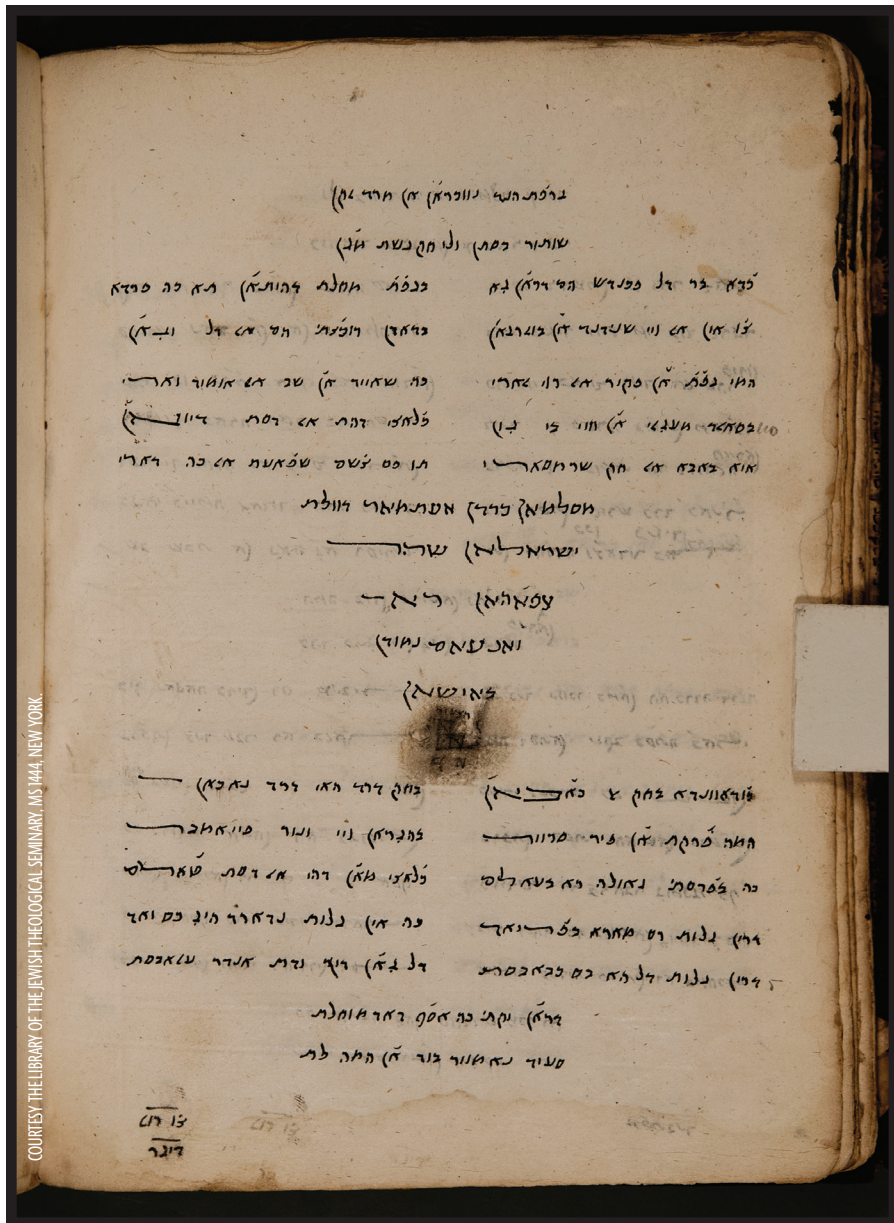
◀ PORTION OF A RICHLY DECORATED 16TH CENTURY ISHAFAN SYNAGOGUE WALL, INCLUDING THE NICHES WHERE THE TORAH SCROLLS REST. ON THE TOP OF THE WALL, THE HEBREW LETTERING IS A QUOTE OF THE WORDS RECITED UPON ENTERING A SYNAGOGUE “BY THY ABUNDANT GRACE I ENTER THY HOUSE...I WILL WORSHIP AND BOW DOWN.” (PSALM 5:8; 26:8).



COURTESY OF THE ISRAEL MUSEUM AND EC 171

The 1391 to 1492 bloody persecutions and forced attempts to convert Jews in Spain eventually leading to the massive expulsion of Spanish Jews is a better known event in Jewish history than the Iranian Safavid rulers' Shah Abbas I (1571-1629) and Shah Abbas II (1642-1666) intermittent persecutions and forced conversions of their Jewish subjects. Due to a much larger and more influential Jewish population, the events in Spain gained greater exposure and research in Jewish history than the persecutions in Iran. Particularly Shah Abbas's II grand vizier Mohammad Beg—at times compared by Iranian Jews to Haman—presented Iranian Jews with the choice of expulsion or conversion. We are fortunate that documentation of the fate of the Jews from the first Judeo-Persian chronicle has come to light. The *Ketab-e anusi* (The Book of a Forced Convert) by Babai ibn Lutf deals with these events, and he “seems to count himself among the *anusim* (Hebrew for forced converts) who continued to adhere to Judaism in secret” (Vera B. Moreen, “The Safavid Era” in *EC*, p. 64). But, as Moreen notes in her own volume “There can be little doubt that the seeds of intolerance against various religious minorities were planted at the beginning of the Safavid regime, during the reign of Shah Isma'il. His goal of nationalization did indeed require religious uniformity...his primary goal was to obtain the allegiance of the larger, Muslim segment of the population” (*Iranian Jewry's Hour of Peril and Heroism: A Study of Babai ibn Lutf's Chronicle*, p. 159).

◀ THE KETAB-E ANUSI BY BABAI IBN LUTF.



COURTESY THE LIBRARY OF THE JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, MS 1444, NEW YORK.

Despite the events recorded by Babai ibn Lutf, “the Safavid era cannot be considered only as a time of disaster for Iranian Jewry. Along with the disturbances there were numerous Jewish communities throughout the kingdom that thrived under fairly vigorous and autonomous communal structures.” Enough material from the time has survived “to indicate that Iranian Jews were aware of and involved in the cultural and artistic trends of their environment” (Vera B. Moreen, “The Safavid Era,” in *EC*, p. 73), bequeathing a rich cultural life and achievements.

- **MUSA NAMEH (THE BOOK OF MOSES) WAS WRITTEN IN JUDEO-PERSIAN BY THE MOST PROMINENT JEWISH POET OF MEDIEVAL PERSIA, MULANA SHAHIN SHIRAZI, AND COPIED IN 1686 BY THE SCRIBE NEHEMIAH BEN AMSHAL OF TABRIZ ABOUT WHOM NO INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE. THE BOOK IS A POETIC COMPILATION OF EXODUS, LEVITICUS, NUMBERS, AND DEUTERONOMY. MELDING JEWISH, MUSLIM, AND PERSIAN LEGENDS, THE TEXT FOCUSES ON THE MAIN EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF MOSES. “AFRAID OF PHARAOH’S MEN (TOP LEFT) MOSES’S MOTHER CASTS THE BABY MOSES INTO A FLAMING OVEN. MOSES’S SISTER MIRIAM IS SHOWN DESPAIRING IN THE LEFT CORNER.” (EC, P. 80) THE STORY HAS NO FOUNDATION IN JEWISH SOURCES AND IS OF MUSLIM ORIGIN.**



COURTESY OF THE ISRAEL MUSEUM AND EC, P. 84

RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

WHILE JEWISH creativity and religious practices were by and large always present during the centuries-long Jewish presence in Iran, they were always accompanied by discrimination. Rulers as early as 'Umar II (717-720) already imposed the inferiority restrictive laws of *dhimmis*, “denying social and political equality to believers whose holy book was not the Koran.” These laws would become ever harsher. By the time of the Safavids and, perhaps, inflamed by the Spanish Christian doctrine of *Limpieza de Sangre*—“Purity of Blood” when newly converted Spanish Jews to Christianity were still considered to have impure blood, Iranian Jews also began to be considered “impure,” leading to a progressively wretched life. The prejudicial measures taken against Jews included not being allowed to have shops in the bazaar, not opening shops on city streets, wearing a red patch on

their garments and a special cap, hanging rags over their doors—to make sure that everyone identified them as Jews—and not going out on rainy days “because water was believed to be a transmitter of *nejasat*=impurity, and should not be splashed by accident by a Jew on a passing Muslim.

“With the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the belief in the impurity of Jews was officially reiterated by the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini when, in regard to the status of *Ahl-e ketab* (People of the Book—i.e. Jews and Christians) and the issue of purity, he declared that “non-Muslims of any religion or creed are *najes*”=impure (Hooshang Ebrami, “The Impure Jew,” *EC*. P. 97-102).



▲ PHARMACIST LICENSE ISSUED TO SHEMU'IL KALIMI NAZARIAN, TEHRAN, 1921. “KALIMI” (JEWISH) IS NOT PART OF THE LICENSEE'S PROPER NAME. RATHER, IT IS SPECIFICALLY INCLUDED IN HIS PHARMACEUTICAL LICENSE AS AN INTENTIONAL DISCLOSURE OF HIS JEWISH HERITAGE SO THAT THOSE MUSLIM PATRONS CONCERNED WITH ISSUES OF *NEJASAT* WOULD KNOW TO GO ELSEWHERE TO PROCURE THEIR MEDICINE (*EC*, P. 102). THE NAZIS ALSO TOOK SIMILAR MEASURES BEGINNING IN 1933 WHEN JEWISH PHYSICIANS HAD TO ADD THE WORD “ISRAEL” AND A STAR OF DAVID ON THEIR EXTERNAL OFFICE SIGNS, TO BE PUBLICLY IDENTIFIED AS JEWISH.



COURTESY EC

COURTESY OF THE LEO BAECKE INSTITUTE

Jews and minorities that settle throughout the world are inclined to concentrate in a given neighborhood. In Iran these Jewish demographic concentrations became known as *mahalleh*, carrying no negative implication in the Persian language, although in time “the word had gradually taken on increasingly humiliating connotations, because—like its Western counterpart ‘ghetto’—it carried with it the weight of a long history of discrimination, marginalization, and disenfranchisement” dating back to the Safavids: “Issues of *nejasat* and other socio-economic restrictions were therefore significant factors compelling Jews to live in the *mahalleh*.” Contrary to the restrictive regulations against Jews in European ghettos, living in the *mahalleh* was voluntary. By 1906, following the Constitutional Revolution and the changing status of Iranian Jews, many started leaving the *mahalleh* and settled in other quarters (Houman Sarshar, *EC*, p. 104-105).

► TEHRAN MAHALLEH, C. 1928.



COURTESY OF THE HABIB CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION AND EC, P. 108

In the northwestern Iranian holy city of Mashhad, near the border of Turkmenistan, a unique event took place right before the Pesach festival on March 26, 1839: like their coreligionists in Spain and Portugal, Mashhad's Jews were faced with one choice: slaughter or conversion. A pogrom followed, involving looting and rape, leading to the death of 30 Jews and the flight of many survivors. Unlike their coreligionists in other parts of Persia, the Mashhadi Jews chose to renounce their Judaism. Most Jews became Muslims, and came to be known as *Jadid al Islams* or simply *jadidis*, that is, "new Muslims." Whoever would be found returning to Judaism was condemned to death. The 2,400 member community ceased to exist. Yet, as was the case with Spanish and Portuguese Jews three centuries earlier, and in spite of the potential dangers, many *jadidis* became underground Jews. After World War II, most Mashhadi Jews left Iran for Israel, some legally and some by illegal means, returning to their ancestral faith (Haim Sadok, *The Jews in Iran During the Shah Pahlavi Era*, in Hebrew, p. 25 and 367).



▲ YAGHOUB DILMANIAN (1902-1988) WAS BORN IN MASHHAD AND BECAME A BUSINESSMAN. AT THE AGE OF 32 HE TOOK IT UPON HIMSELF TO GATHER ALL THE MEMORIES OF MASHHAD ELDERS AND RECORDED THE EVENTS THAT LED TO HIS COMMUNITY'S FORCED CONVERSION. HIS 1957 MANUSCRIPT WAS PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH THANKS TO YAGHOUB'S SON'S EFFORT: *HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF MASHHAD (SIC) 1746-1946. FROM THEIR ENTRANCE TO MASHHAD AT THE TIME OF NADER SHAH AFSHAR UNTIL THEIR MIGRATION FROM MASHHAD TO TEHRAN*. NEW YORK, 2000. (IRAN, [IN HEBREW] HAIM SAADOUN, ED., P. 70)



COURTESY OF THE GLOBAL MASHADI JEWISH FEDERATION

◀ MINIATURE PHYLACTERIES, MASHHAD, MID-19TH CENTURY, LEATHER AND VELLUM, 1.9X1.9 CM, COURTESY OF YAGHOUB NAMDAR, USA. KEEPING JEWISH PRACTICES SECRET MASHHAD JEWS USED SUCH PHYLACTERIES DURING PRAYER WHICH COULD BE CONCEALED UNDER HEADADDRESSES. THESE PHYLACTERIES BELONGED TO MOUSSA NAMDAR.

“Walter Fischel, the foremost scholar of the Jews of Iran in the twentieth century has argued: ‘The Safavid rulers made the conception of the ritual uncleanliness of the non-believers one of the principal cornerstones of their inter-confessional relationship. Under no other Persian dynasty was the hatred against non-believers more intense. The conception of the ritual uncleanliness of non-Muslims led to innumerable restrictions upon the daily life of all non-believers and aimed at their ultimate elimination from Persian soil’” (Janet Afary, “From Outcasts to Citizens: Jews in Qajar Iran,” in *EC*, p. 139).

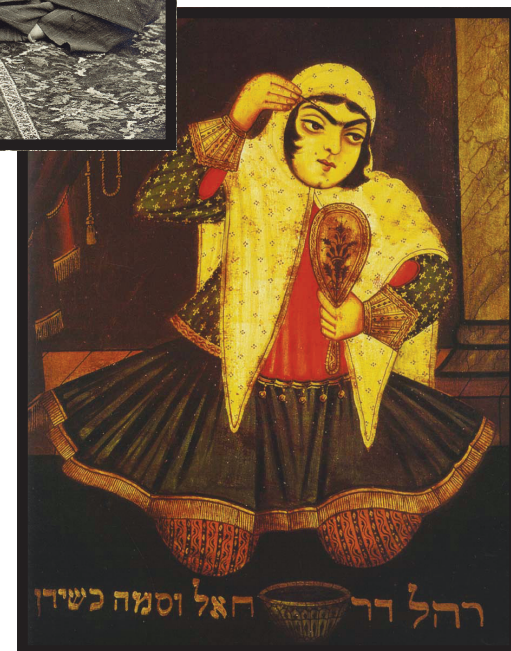
The conditions of Iranian Jews under the Qajar dynasty (1785-1925) that followed the Safavids, “continued the earlier Safavid policy of intolerance towards non-Muslims. Iran’s Jews were subjected to an endless series of persecutions that lasted through the twentieth century.” For example, from 1790 to 1797 the Jews of Tabriz endured persecution at the hands of their Muslim neighbors, in 1860 and in 1892 the Jews of Hamadan equally suffered threats of massacres: the Jews of Barforush were forcibly converted in 1866, and only allowed to revert to Judaism thanks to the intervention by the French and British ambassadors. Regardless, a mob still murdered 18 Jews, burning two of them alive.

As was the case in previous centuries, along with unabated discrimination, there were pockets of Iranian Jews who prospered in business and achieved intellectual accomplishments.



◀ HAKIM NASIR FARHUMAND FAMILY. HAMADAN, 1924.

▶ QAJAR PAINTING: RAHEL DAR HAL-E VASHEM KESHIDAN (RACHEL PUTTING ON EYEBROW LINER). OIL ON CANVAS. IRAN, C. 1846.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID HARRIS. COURTESY OF MIRIAM ROSEN AYALON AND EC P. 195

THE PAHLAVIS: EQUALITY AND PROSPERITY



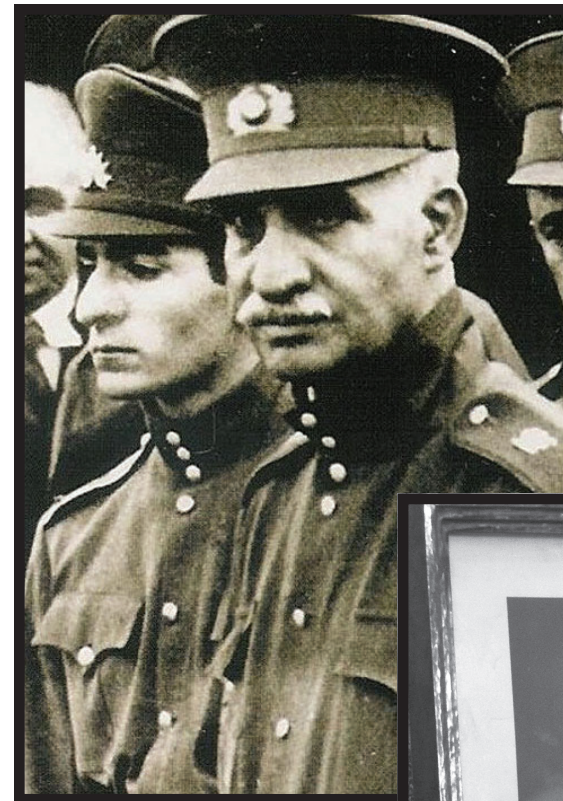
COURTESY, E.C. P. 385

▲ REPRESENTATIVES OF THE IRANIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY AT REZA SHAH PAHLAVI'S FUNERAL.

A RADICAL change following centuries of persecution, discrimination, prejudice and killings arrived with the coming to power of the Pahlavi dynasty, and particularly so, under the rule of the Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (1941-1979). Even earlier, his father Reza Shah Pahlavi (1925-1941), was determined to build Iran into a strong nation-state based on a Western model and to transform national identity into a catalyst for social unification, rather than resorting to the glue of Islamic ideology. He prohibited mass conversion of Jews, eliminated the Shiite principle of ritual uncleanness of non-Muslims, allowed Hebrew to be taught in Jewish schools, and even allowed Jews to hold government jobs. Many Jews also left the *mahallehs* during the years of his rule.

At the same time that Reza Shah was fostering these modernizing trends in Iran, he also stood for the strengthening of ties between Germany and Iran during the 1930s, prompting new expressions of antisemitism. “Unlike the previous religiously motivated prejudice, such sentiments ‘acquired an ethno-national character, a direct import from Germany’. This time, some individuals with new (Western) ‘education led the move, viewing themselves as the ‘superior Aryans’ and ‘genuine Aryans’” (David Menashri, “The Pahlavi Monarchy and the Islamic Revolution” in *EC*, p. 386). Reza Shah became seduced by Hitler’s concept of racial purity, underlining the fact that both Germans and Persians were from the same Aryan stock. In 1935 he went as far as renaming Persia as Iran, considering “Iran” a cognate of “Aryan.” In 1936 the Reich cabinet issued a special decree exempting Iranians from the restrictions of the Nuremberg Racial Laws.

With the outbreak of World War II, Reza Shah refused to break relations with Nazi Germany. Following the German attack on the Soviet Union, British and Soviet troops jointly occupied Iran and, in August 1941, forced the abdication of Reza Shah Pahlavi, naming his son to take his place. The new Shah adopted a more cooperative attitude toward the Allies. In 1943, Iran joined the Allies against Germany but did not participate in the war.



IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

◀ REZA SHAH AND HIS SUCCESSOR SON MOHAMMAD REZA SHAH



▶ HITLER'S AUTOGRAPHED PHOTO TO REZA SHAH

Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi assumed power in Iran on September 16, 1941, coming to limited power under British and Russian occupation. He progressively went on to gain absolute power until his overthrow by the Islamic Revolution on February 11, 1979.

The approximately 38 years of the Shah's rule (he became known as "The Shah," that is, "king") coincided with the time when the Jews of Iran experienced the most enlightened and prosperous era in their many centuries of life in this country. The decades of the Shah's rule reached their apex of prosperity during the period of the White Revolution, as it became known, starting in the 1960's. It was a period of economic, social, and political reforms geared to transform Iran into a world power. "Jews came to enjoy almost absolute cultural-religious autonomy, enjoyed unequaled prosperity and shared in the same political rights granted to the Islamic community...Jewish support and admiration for the Shah became so strong that among themselves Jews came to call him 'Papa Levi,' " a play on the name Pahlavi (Haim Saadoun, ed., *Iran*, (in Hebrew), p. 60-63).



▲ THE SHAH WITH LEADERS OF THE IRANIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY, C. 1970, PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION OF MEIR EZRI, GIVAT SHMUEL, ISRAEL. AMONG THOSE FEATURED WITH THE SHAH ARE THE JEWISH REPRESENTATIVES IN THE IRANIAN PARLIAMENT AND CHIEF RABBI OF IRAN YEDIDIA SHOFET.

MEIR EZRI COLLECTION, ISRAEL / PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE, TEL AVIV

THE TEHRAN CHILDREN



COURTESY YAD VASHEM PHOTO ARCHIVE

◀ DURING THEIR JOURNEY THE CHILDREN LIVED IN TENT CITIES SUCH AS THIS ONE IN TEHRAN.

IT WAS DURING THE very early years of the Shah's rule that an extraordinary chapter of hope embraced a few hundred Jewish children while their brethren were being decimated by the criminal forces of Nazi Germany. A group of Polish Jewish children, mainly orphans, had found temporary shelter in the Soviet Union. They were later evacuated with several hundred adults to Tehran, before finally reaching Palestine in 1943.

These children's saga began on September 1, 1939 following Germany's invasion of Poland. As a result of the invasion, hundreds of thousands of Jews fled across Poland's eastern border into the Soviet Union, where they were joined by over a million Christian Poles who were deported from

early 1940 to mid-1941, the result of a Soviet campaign of mass arrests and expulsions of Polish citizens to Siberia and Central Asia. In the midst of this chaos, many Polish children were separated from their parents and placed in shelters throughout the USSR.

In 1942, Soviet authorities authorized the resettlement of 24, 000 Polish civilians from the USSR to Iran. Among them were about 800 Jewish children, the majority of them orphans. This was the group that became known as the "Tehran Children." Once in Iran, they lived in tents on the grounds of Dustan Tappeh, a former military barracks of the Iranian Air Force outside Tehran.



COURTESY YAD VASHEM PHOTO ARCHIVE

◀ SOME OF THE YOUNGER TEHRAN CHILDREN IN KARACHI WITH THEIR COUNSELORS. THE CHILDREN WERE GIVEN TROPICAL HELMETS AND CLEAN, THOUGH ILL-FITTING, CLOTHES.

The children ranged from 1-18 years of age; most were ages 7-12. As a result of negotiations between the Jewish Agency—the largest non-profit Jewish organization—and the British administration of Palestine, the children were permitted to immigrate. But their transfer took a roundabout route. On January 3, 1941, after 716 children eventually received certificates permitting their immigration to Palestine, they traveled by truck to Bandar Shahpour on the Persian Gulf, and from there on a freighter to Karachi, Pakistan.

From Karachi, the refugees traveled by boat around the Arabian Peninsula and through the Red Sea to the Egyptian city of Suez. The children then crossed the Sinai Desert by train, arriving at the Atlit refugee camp in northern Palestine on February 18, 1943, where the Yishuv, the Jewish community in Palestine welcomed them. A second transport of 110 children arrived overland via Iraq on August 28, 1943, in all, some 870 children. They were settled in *kibbutzim* (collective farms) and *moshavim* (cooperative farming villages).

Baltimore-born Henrietta Szold (1860-1945), became one of the foremost Jewish Zionist leaders and the founder of *Hadassah*, the Women's Zionist Organization of America. Together with other Zionist leaders such as David Ben Gurion and Eliahu Dobkin, they were instrumental in facilitating the care of the "Tehran Children" while in Tehran, and during their transportation and settlement in Palestine. In a letter written from Jerusalem and dated February 27, 1943, Szold wrote: "Here is a precious fragment snatched from destruction and consigned to the care of the Child and Youth Immigration Department of the Jewish Agency...Their trials have not caused a breach in their soundness of spirit. It is for us who have hitherto been spared the extreme horrors of war to demonstrate that we are equal to the task of saving the remnants" (Original letter in archive of the KHRCA).



COURTESY YAD VASHEM PHOTO ARCHIVE

▲ THE PRESIDENT OF ALIYAT HANOAR (CHILD AND YOUTH IMMIGRATION AGENCY) HENRIETTA SZOLD (FAR LEFT) WELCOMES THE TEHRAN CHILDREN TO PALESTINE.

► THE TEHRAN CHILDREN'S ARRIVAL IN PALESTINE. OVERWHELMED, THE CHILDREN CLUTCH EACH OTHER'S HANDS.



COURTESY YAD VASHEM PHOTO ARCHIVE

THE 1979 IRANIAN REVOLUTION AND THE DECLINE OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

WITH THE OUTBREAK of opposition to the absolute rule of the Shah in the autumn of 1977, the benefits that the Jewish community had gained during his administration became a liability. Its public support of the Shah, and the Shah's ties with the State of Israel and "American Imperialism" now came to haunt Iran's Jews. At the same time, the Jewish community itself became fractured with younger members of the community expressing anti-government and anti-Zionist positions. During this period of upheaval and budding of the Islamic Revolution, Jews again began to experience the old-time antagonism of their Muslim neighbors. There were spontaneous outbursts rather than organized manifestations of antisemitism. Threats became more pronounced following "Black Friday" (Sept. 8, 1978), so named due to the many victims that fell in fights between government forces and opposition groups. The community rabbis declared a day of fasting and prayer for the peace of Iran (Nov. 6, 1978), and went even further with a public march on December 11 while the Shah was still in Iran. They also went as far as establishing contact with Khomeini in Paris. On Feb. 13, 1979, the day after the change in government, Jews again went out in support of the new government while many others fled the country. Those who stayed vowed to support the new regime (*Iran*, p. 62-63).

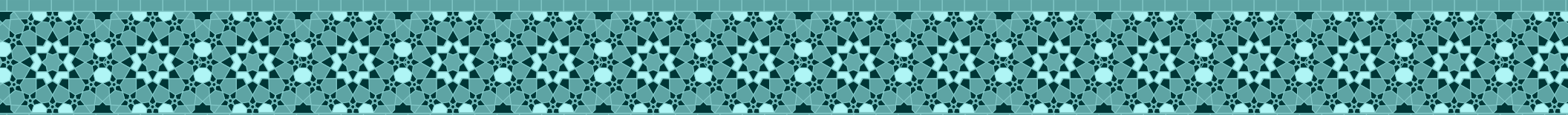


COURTESY/EC

▲ IRANIAN JEWS PARTICIPATING IN THE GENERAL DEMONSTRATIONS LEADING UP TO THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION IN IRAN, TEHRAN, 1979. THE BANNER READS: "OUR BOND WITH THE PEOPLE OF IRAN IS UNSEVERABLE."

▶ CHIEF RABBI YEDIDIAH SHOFET (FAR RIGHT) PARTICIPATING IN THE DEMONSTRATIONS.





COURTESY OF THE ARTIST HASAN SARBAKSHIAN



- ▲ MEMBERS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF SHIRAZ, IRAN, FEBRUARY 22, 2008. AT THE RIGHT OF THE PHOTOGRAPH IS A PORTRAIT OF THE LEADER OF THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION, AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI.
- ▶ ENTRANCE TO THE ABRISHAMI SYNAGOGUE ON THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION, TEHRAN 1981. THE BANNER OVER THE DOORWAY READS: "THE JEWS OF IRAN CONGRATULATE THE SUPREME LEADER IMAM KHOMEINI ON THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF IRANIANS' GLORIOUS ISLAMIC REVOLUTION. THE IRANIAN JEWISH SOCIETY."

It soon became clear that winds in Iran had changed course radically. The freedom previously enjoyed by the Jews reversed to patterns of the deeply-rooted prejudices known before the Pahlavi's rule. "The fears experienced by the Jews were not unfounded. Ayatollah Khomeini's prerevolutionary declarations expressed hostility toward Jews, Israel, and Zionism. His book *Al-hokumat al-islamiyah* (Islamic Government) opens with an accusation directed against the Jews for their supposed hostility toward Islam..." and his book

Towzih al-masa'el (Elucidating the Problems), a guide for Muslim daily life, again revives the Shi'a principle between pure and impure non-Muslims (*najis*). Khomeini further prohibited Muslims to work for Jews, and if someone had to work under a Jewish superior, he considered this a "disgrace" (*Light and Shadows*, p. 100).

Following the revolution's success a more pragmatic approach came to guide the regime's policies, including those vis-à-vis Jews.



COURTESY EC



COURTESY, IFC

► TEHRAN'S JEWISH COMMUNITY IN A PROTEST DEMONSTRATION AGAINST ISRAEL'S MILITARY OFFENSIVE ON LEBANON. TEHRAN, 1982. THE FIRST BANNER READS: "WE DISTINGUISH BETWEEN JEWS AND ZIONISTS. IMAM KHOMEINI. THE SECOND BANNER READS: "THE ACTIONS OF ZIONISTS GO AGAINST THE SUBLIME AND HUMANISTIC TEACHINGS OF THE PROPHET MOSES. THE JEWS OF IRAN." THE THIRD BANNER, IN ENGLISH, READS: "PROGRESSIVE JEWS SUPPORT PALESTINIAN PEOPLE'S JUST STRUGGLE."

Early on in his administration Khomeini adopted a formula: "We distinguish between Jews and Zionists," a policy that ostensibly has held to this very day. Jewish worship was not curtailed and synagogues remained open. But tolerance—not to be equated with freedom—did not stop acts of harassment and cruelty toward individuals, placing Jews on the edge of fear. Habib Elghanayan (together with a Muslim businessman) was the first private citizen—i.e., not a military or government official—to be executed on May 9, 1979.



COURTESY OF HABIB ELGHANAYAN'S DAUGHTER, MAHNAZ ELGHANAYAN FOULADIAN

▲ IN A PICTURE TAKEN IN THE LATE 50S, ELGHANAYAN, IS SEEN GIVING THE SHAH A TOUR OF THE FAMILY'S PLASCOKAR FACTORY, THE COUNTRY'S FIRST PLASTICS FACTORY.

Elghanayan had been a prominent member of the Jewish community and president of the Jewish Society in the 1970s. He was charged with "friendship with the enemies of God," "warring with God and his emissaries," and "economic imperialism."

In 1999, thirteen Jews were arrested in Shiraz on charges of spying for Israel and their conviction in 2000, only served to raise the sense of insecurity within the ranks of the dwindling Jewish Iranian community.

While it should be kept in mind that the Iranian Islamic regime also executed Muslims for a variety of crimes, the Jewish minority felt particularly vulnerable when one of their own met the same fate. The community had sufficient reason to believe that their kinsmen were accused of unwarranted charges.

Successive Iranian presidents, from Ali Khomeini (1985-1989) to Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005), held similar attitudes vis-à-vis Iranian Jews. These leaders continued pressing the idea that Zionism, not Jews, was the enemy. And yet, intermittently, they each engaged in anti-Jewish tirades.

Even under what was considered the more enlightened administration of Mohammad Khatami, the conservative press did not refrain from attacking Jews. During the Iran-Iraq war that broke out in February 1984, the regime chose the code name *Khaybar* for its war against Iraq. From all the possible terms that the Iranians could have chosen, *Khaybar* surely echoed in the mind of every Muslim. It went back to the Battle of *Khaybar* in 629 referring to a Muslim attack against Jews, when the Jews were defeated and forced to pay a tax to their Muslim conquerors. In case the name was not clear to some, President Ali Khomeini expanded during a Friday sermon in Tehran that the name was chosen “in memory of the great victories of the Islamic forces in the days of the Prophet against the Jews of his days... for they stood against him as the Zionists stand today” (*Iran*, p. 66-67).



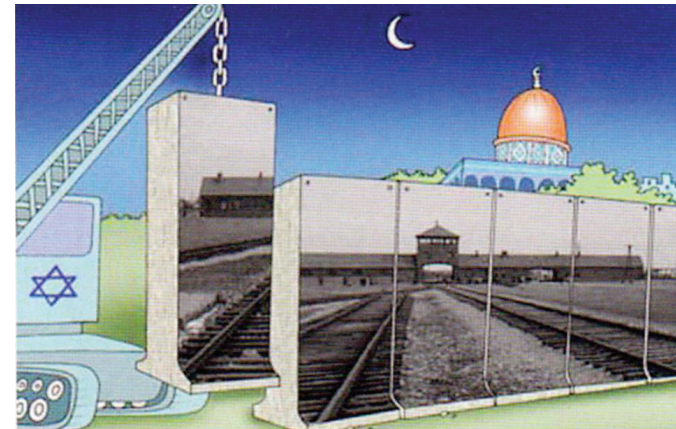
▲ PRESIDENT MOHAMMAD KHATAMI VISITED THE YOSEF-ABAD SYNAGOGUE IN TEHRAN ON FEBRUARY 8, 2003. HE IS PHOTOGRAPHED WITH RABBI YOSEF HAMDANI-COHEN STANDING IN FRONT OF AN OPEN TORAH SCROLL.

Public anti-Jewish propaganda—often dressed in anti-Zionist garb—reached its apex during Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s administration (2005-2013). “In February 2006 *Hamshahri*, Iran’s largest circulation newspaper announced a competition of cartoons about the Holocaust in response to the publication of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in European papers. The first question is why choose the Shoah to respond to a series of cartoons published in a Christian country and/or to test the limits of freedom of expression? The Danish cartoon affair has nothing whatsoever to do with Israel, the Jewish people, let alone the Holocaust. Wouldn’t it be more logical to test the limits of freedom of expression by mocking the Danish Royal family for example, or Christianity as such? There are endless possibilities, from Jesus to the Pope!” Obviously the Shoah was not chosen by chance (Joël Kotek, *Cartoons and Extremism: Israel and the Jews in Arab and Western Media*, p. 186).

750 cartoons from all over the world were submitted. More than 200 images went on public display at Tehran’s Palestine

Contemporary Museum. The central theme of the cartoons was that the Shoah’s death toll is an exaggeration, and compares the Nazi’s behavior to Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians.

In February 2015, it was announced that Iran’s House of Cartoon and the Sarcheshmeh Cultural Complex are launching the second international Holocaust Cartoons Contest focused on Holocaust denial. The contest is in response to the controversial depictions of the Prophet Muhammad in the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* (“The Times of Israel,” 2/5/15).



▲ THE FIRST PRIZE WAS AWARDED TO DERKAOUI ABDELLAH FROM MOROCCO. THE IMAGE IS OF THE WALL THAT ISRAEL BUILT SEPARATING ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN AREAS. THE WALL WAS ERECTED ONLY AFTER MULTIPLE PALESTINIANS BLEW THEMSELVES UP, MURDERING HUNDREDS OF ISRAELI CIVILIANS, TO KEEP SUCH TERRORISTS FROM ENTERING ISRAEL FROM TERRITORIES UNDER PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY CONTROL. BUT DERAKAOUI ABDELLAH SAW THE SAME WALL UNDER A DIFFERENT LIGHT: HE PAINTED THE ISRAELI CRANE (SEE ON IT THE STAR OF DAVID) PLACING A SECTION OF THE WALL ON WHICH IS REPRESENTED THE ICONIC RAILROAD ENTRANCE TO AUSCHWITZ, WHILE BEHIND IT IS THE GOLDEN CUPOLA OF THE AL-AQSA MOSQUE. THE MESSAGE WAS CLEAR: IT IS THE ISRAELIS WHO NOW KEEP PALESTINIANS IN A CONCENTRATION CAMP.

◀ THE SECOND PRIZE IN THE CARTOON EXHIBIT WENT TO CARLOS LATUFF FROM BRAZIL. LATUFF PAINTED AN ARAB DRESSED IN A GERMAN CONCENTRATION STRIPED PRISONER’S GARB, A NUMBER SEWN ON THE JACKET UNDER AN ISLAMIC HALF-MOON, AND THE LETTER “P”=PALESTINIAN. IN THE BACKGROUND IS A WALL AND GUARD-TOWER AS WAS THE NORM IN NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMPS.

Ahmadinejad's anti-Jewish policies didn't limit themselves to the cartoons exhibit. The First International Biennial Islamic Posters competition that he promoted was supposedly about art, religions and beliefs, but it attracted crude antisemitic figures in the guise of anti-Zionism.

The Iranian post office was also recruited to disseminate similar ideas. Numerous stamps were issued through the years with anti-Israel themes, but many other stamps had a clear anti-Jewish message.



◀ ONE SUCH STAMP WAS ISSUED IN 1991. FLAUNTING INTERNATIONAL POSTAL CONVENTIONS, IRAN ISSUED A STAMP DEPICTING A SMALL CHILD HURLING A STONE THROUGH A SHEET OF BLUE GLASS INSCRIBED WITH THE STAR OF DAVID. THIS WAS IRAN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE CELEBRATION OF THE UN'S INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE CHILD. REP. WAYNE OWENS (D-UT) AND 65 COLLEAGUES SENT A LETTER TO SECRETARY OF STATE JAMES BAKER EXPRESSING OUTRAGE OVER IRAN'S CONTRIBUTION AND ASKING HIM TO "BAN THE IRANIAN STAMP OR PLACE LIMITATIONS ON ITS DISTRIBUTION" (NEAR EAST REPORT, VOL. 36, #7, 2/17/92).

▶ THE TOP LEFT STAMP PORTRAYS A SLINGSHOT HURLING A STONE AND IN THE BACKGROUND THE WORD "PALESTINE." THE ALLUSION IS TO THE PALESTINIAN YOUTHS WHO OCCASIONALLY ATTACK ISRAELI CITIZENS IN SUCH A MANNER.



FROM THE JUDACA STAMP COLLECTION OF RABBI SIDORO ANZENBERG

The most egregious antisemitic manifestation instigated by President Ahmadinejad was the December 11, 2006 opening of the state-sponsored two-day conference held in Tehran: “International Conference to Review the Global Vision of the Holocaust,” which senior officials portrayed as scientific scholarship (A year earlier Ahmadinejad had supported a research mission to Poland to investigate whether millions of Jews could have died in Auschwitz. Poland’s foreign ministry turned down the request for the mission’s visit). An international cast of established Holocaust deniers and implacable foes of Israel were given an open forum at the conference. The pretensions of scholastic objectivity were undermined by the background of some among the 67 foreign visitors from 30 countries. They included: David Duke, a former imperial wizard of the Ku Klux Klan; Robert Faurisson, a French lecturer stripped of his academic tenure for his anti-Holocaust opinions; and Michele Renouf, a London-based associate of the British author David Irving, who was, at the time, serving a jail sentence for Holocaust denial in Austria.



▲ THE DAIS OF THE CONFERENCE. IN THE FRONT ROW ARE SEATED FIVE HASIDIC-CLAD INDIVIDUALS INTENTIONALLY GIVEN A PROMINENT ROLE, ADHERENTS OF THE RADICAL ANTI-ZIONIST “JEWS UNITED AGAINST ISRAEL” WHO OPPOSE THE EXISTENCE OF ISRAEL ON RELIGIOUS GROUNDS. BUT BORIS MOTAMED, IRAN’S SOLE JEWISH MP, LABELLED THE GATHERING A “HUGE INSULT.”

A series of posters carried the words “myth” and “truth” juxtaposed. Under “myth” were widely accepted verities of the Holocaust while under “truth” were listed opposing contentions. A video referred to the “supposed gas chambers” and the “alleged final solution.”

Ahmadinejad's Holocaust-denial conference had plenty of company. In December 2013 Iran's Supreme leader Ali Khamenei sent out a tweet praising the deceased French convert-to-Islam-Holocaust-denier and antisemite Roger Garaudy, and at the same time comparing Israel to Nazi Germany. The current Iranian President, Hassan Rouhani, viewed as a more conciliatory leader, was ostensibly not as direct in denying the Holocaust as his predecessor Ahmadinejad. To quote Rouhani: "I've said before that I am not a historian and that when it comes to speaking of the dimensions of the Holocaust, it is the historians that should reflect on it." Such a statement was "softer" than Ahmadinejad's pronouncements, but it is also Holocaust denial.

Why such a persistent drive to deny the Holocaust? As Reuel Marc Gerecht, a former Iranian-targets officer of the Central Intelligence Agency, and a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies wrote: "If they [the Iranians] can assert that Hitler did not kill six million Jews, the Holocaust can be labeled a narrative spun by Jews to engender guilt and special advantages over Muslims and others. In that light, Holocaust denial is both morally and politically essential. The second main reason for denying the Holocaust: Doing so implicitly negates the need for Israel's existence" (<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304640104579489>).

"In recent years, new forms of antisemitism have emerged: anti-Zionism and Holocaust denial or, more insidiously, Holocaust minimization" (*United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Magazine*, Fall 2014, p. 2).



▲ LAST SEPTEMBER 2013 ISRAELIS AND JEWS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD WERE SURPRISED TO RECEIVE A TWEET FROM PRESIDENT HASSAN ROUHANI AND HIS THEN NEWLY APPOINTED FOREIGN MINISTER JAVAD ZARIF, WISHING ALL JEWS WELL RIGHT BEFORE THE JEWISH NEW YEAR, ROSH HASHANAH. THE IRANIAN GOVERNMENT SOON DENIED THE VERACITY OF THE TWEET AND THE REPORT.

AN IRANIAN SCHINDLER?

AT THE SAME TIME THAT President Ahmadinejad was making his Holocaust denial statements, a thirty-episode Farsi-language film started being broadcast on the flagship Iranian state television station IRIB1. Various translations as *Degree Turn* or *Zero Point Orbit*, it revolves around a Romeo and Juliet plot of illicit romance with a distinct twist: Romeo is Habib Parsa, a Muslim Iranian studying in France, while Juliet is a Jewish classmate with whom he falls in love. The historical fiction is set during World War Two, during the course of which Habib saves Sarah, facilitating their escape from France and Nazi persecution with Iranian passports.

Why would such a film have been allowed to be made and even more so, broadcast by the regime's tightly controlled media? Why indeed? As it turns out, enforced monolingualism has not made the entire film viewable for non-Farsi-speaking audiences, making it difficult to judge its merits outside Iran. In addition, "Sarah's Zionist uncle Theodor (clearly named after Theodor Herzl), opposes Sarah's and Habib's love while colluding with the Nazis to facilitate the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. In this way the series attempts to disaggregate antisemitism and anti-Zionism, and thus disconnect recognition of the Holocaust from recognition of Israel" (Justin Neuman, "Beyond Denial," <http://blogs.sscr.org/tif/2011/06/01/beyond-denial/>).



▲ STAR ACTOR SHAHAB HOSSEINI WHO PLAYED THE ROLE OF THE IRANIAN STUDENT NAMED HABIB PARSA.

There is a scene in *Zero Point Orbit* where an Iranian Palestinian Muslim man helps the French Jewish lover by providing forged passports. Jews are shown as giving bribes and at least one Iranian diplomat—probably identified with Abdol-Hossein Sardari, an Iranian diplomat in France during World War Two— accepting them in order to provide false papers.

Under the dire circumstances, when the very life of Jews was on the line, any bribes could be judged as acceptable. And yet, Fariborz Mokhtari, a professor of Eastern studies at the University of Vermont, and author of *In the Lion's Shadow*, the first and only comprehensive history about Sardari, denies that the Iranian diplomat ever took bribes. According to Mokhtari, Sardari was there to extend his help to anyone, Christian, Jewish, or Muslim.



▲ ABDOL-HOSSEIN SARDARI, SECOND FROM RIGHT, IN CHARGE OF THE IRANIAN LEGATION IN PARIS, WHEN THE EMBASSY WAS MOVED TO VICHY.

COURTESY FARIBORZ MOKHTARI

Elaine Senahi Cohanim was seven years old when she fled France with her family. Now in California, the 81-year-old grandmother has no doubt to whom she and her younger brother Claude owe their lives. “I remember my father always telling that it was thanks to Mr. Sardari that we could come out...I think he was like Schindler, at that time, helping the Jews in Paris.”

Sardari was an unlikely hero: a bachelor and bon vivant, he found himself as head of Iran’s legation at the start of the war. Using his status and German contacts, fanned further by Iran’s desire to keep up its strong trading relationship with Germany and the Nazi propaganda machine declaring Iranians as Aryans and racially akin to Germans, he succeeded in helping many Iranians, including Jews, to return to Tehran. When Britain and Russia invaded Iran in September 1941, Sardari was ordered back to Tehran. But, despite being stripped of his diplomatic

immunity and status, he decided to remain in France and to continue rescuing Jews at great risk of his own safety.



▲ THE SENEHI AND MORADY FAMILIES WERE SUCCESSFUL IRANIAN JEWISH FAMILIES LIVING IN PARIS. WHEN WAR BROKE OUT AND THE NAZI THREAT LOOMED, GEORGE MORADY DECIDED TO TAKE HIS FAMILY BACK TO IRAN. SARDARI PROVIDED THE INDISPENSABLE TRAVEL DOCUMENTS. AFTER A HARROWING, MONTH-LONG JOURNEY FULL OF CHECKPOINTS, THE SENEHI FAMILY REACHED SAFELY IN TEHRAN.

“If the Iranian Jews were to be saved,” he thought, “they had to be distinct from all others. Thus emerged the argument that Iranian Jews were not Semites but of Iranian Aryan stock...That Iranian passports did not refer to race or religion supported his [Sardari’s] observation that Iranians were not divided by racial distinctions...German archival documents suggest that Sardari managed to exempt 2400 Jews from Nazi racial laws” (*In The Lion’s Shadow*, p. 13-16).

Sardari thus joined the distinct group of humanitarian diplomats from Europe, Latin America, and Japan who, many times disobeying their government’s instructions, rescued Jews from under the Nazis’ paws.

THE RECENT PAST

EXCEPT FOR THE few decades under the rule of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi when Iranian Jews prospered and felt free to live as Jews, the long history of the Jewish presence in Iran has been a mixed bag with echoes going back to the days of Esther and Mordechai.

Then, too, Jews lived freely in a kingdom of “over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces from India to Nubia.” (Esther 1:1) that is, until King Ahasuerus promoted Haman to be his top officer. Soon after, Haman pointed out, the Jews “whose laws are different from those of any other people and who do not obey the king’s laws” and, therefore, shouldn’t be tolerated and destroyed. (Esther 3:8-9) Haman’s accusation was false and Persia’s Jews survived the genocide he designed. Unintentionally, the ancient story became a blueprint for Jewish life in Persia for centuries to come. Persia’s Jews went on to live, create a community, and a particular culture in this ancient land, but were intermittently prone to discrimination, forced conversions, false accusations, and even executions.



▲ NOVEMBER 20, 2014, IRANIAN JEWS WORSHIP IN THE MOLLA AGHA BABA SYNAGOGUE IN THE CITY OF YAZD, 420 MILES SOUTH OF TEHRAN. JEWS RESIDING IN IRAN TODAY CLAIM TO HAVE RECEIVED GREATER SUPPORT FROM PRESIDENT HASSAN ROUHANI.



As an expression of the government's recognition of the Jewish role in Iran's life, a monument honoring Iranian-Jewish soldiers who died in action during the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s was recently unveiled. Located in Tehran's Jewish cemetery the unveiling ceremony on December 15, 2014, was attended by some of Iran's highest officials. Photos of the ceremony were published by Iran's IRNA news agency, showing members of the Jewish community and Iranian officials praying together and placing wreaths on the graves of the soldiers, who were hailed as "martyrs." Such deference, however, does not negate the publicly declared Iranian threat to annihilate the state of Israel where more than seven million Jews live. Along with this recognition a UK-based satellite station recently broadcasted footage shot by an Iranian crew at Auschwitz in a program covering the history leading to the Final Solution. This was the first time that many Iranian viewers were exposed to the atrocities and mass-murders committed by the Nazis

◀ THE HEBREW WORD ON THE MONUMENT SAYS "SHALOM OLAM," ETERNAL PEACE, THE WORD "SHALOM" MADE TO LOOK LIKE A SEVEN-BRANCHED MENORAH.

against the Jews. The showing of the film coincided with the UN's Holocaust Memorial Day (January 27) and the 70th anniversary of the camp's liberation by the Soviet army. How the images of this film can be reconciled with Holocaust denial is difficult to ascertain.



As this exhibit goes into production, the organizers of the Second International Holocaust [denial] Cartoon Contest announced that "312 artists had submitted works to the contest, 104 from Iran and 208 from other countries." Top works will be displayed at the Palestine Museum of Contemporary Art in Tehran ("The Times of Israel," www.timesofisrael.com, 4/7/15). ■



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This book uses as its foundation the biographical sketches of David and Rachel Laor, two young Jews who gave their all to making possible the transfer of the “Tehran Children” to Palestine. Many more documents and testimonies are also included, as well as several pages of photos of the children in their different stations of refuge until they were welcomed in Palestine. The book reads like a riveting novel.

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This 457 page tome is a must for anyone interested in delving into Persian/Iranian Jewish history, language, life events, sports, clothing, and political life, all covered by a number of scholars with different areas of expertise. Multiple photos illustrate the book. A thirteen-page “Selected Bibliography” includes references to journals in English, French, and German, as well as a wealth of book titles about every possible reference to Iranian Jews. One wishes for an addenda to this volume dealing with the last twelve years of Jewish life in Iran.

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This book is a worthy addition to Devora Omer's volume, also delving into the rescue of the “Tehran Children.” Dr. Whiteman herself escaped Nazi-occupied Vienna in 1939. Through lengthy interviews with one of the former “Tehran Children,” Eliott “Lonek” Jaroslawicz, in addition to extensive documentation and photos, she, too, adds a valuable chapter to Holocaust history.

Yeroushalmi, David, ed. *Light and Shadows: The Story of Iranian Jews*. 2012-2013.

This volume is a good addition to *Esther's Children*. It was originally published in 2010 along with the opening of an exhibit devoted to the Jews of Iran at Beit Hatfutzot—Tel-Aviv's Museum of the Jewish People. From Oct. 2012-March 2013, the exhibit was shown at UCLA's Fowler Museum. This book, too, includes very unique and beautiful photography.

Hebrew readers may also find interest in Haim Sadok's *Yahadut Iran b'tkufat ha'shushalet ha'Palavit*, (*The Jews in Iran During the Shah Pahlavi Era*), 1991, and Haim Saadoun's ed. *Iran*, 2005, a shorter attempt than Sarchar's volume to tell the story of Iran's Jews through a collection of scholarly articles and multiple photos.

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