Zionism and Its Variations

In order to study the impact of Zionism in Iran, the definition and the major variations of Zionism need to be clarified. Zionist ideas, as a European movement, evolved over time and were influenced by circumstances as well as by social and cultural movements popular at different times and the country of origin of the thinkers and intellectuals. The term Zionism derived its name from Zion, the name of a hill in Jerusalem where Solomon built his temple and was coined in 1891 by the Austrian publicist Nathan Birnbaum, to describe the ideology that “Jews as a nation and people” should gather together in a single

1This article is dedicated to the memory of my teacher and mentor, Professor Hossein Ziai, who encouraged the publication of this article, originally presented as a lecture for the Jahan-gir and Eleanor Amuzegar Chair of Iranian Studies Lecture Series at UCLA in April 2011. The intent of this study is to describe the impact of Zionism on Iranian Jewry from a socio-cultural and historical perspective. In order to provide the necessary background for this study, a brief description of Zionism, a historical background of the territory, and a brief look at Jewish life in Iran, particularly during the twentieth century, is given to assist the reader in understanding the course of events as described in this study.
homeland. Among the original variations of Zionism were Cultural Zionism, which believed that a successful establishment of a Jewish state required the revitalization of Jewish culture and the Hebrew language; Socialist Zionism, or Labor Zionism, which strove to fuse Zionism with socialism for the creation of a Jewish state; Religious Zionism, which was supported by a fraction of Orthodox Jews and justified Zionist efforts as a means and stage to build a Jewish state “based on biblical Judaism” at a later time; and Christian Zionism, which is applied to Evangelical Christians who believe that the return of Jews to an established Jewish state will hasten the second coming of the Messiah. The last of all the variations, Political Zionism, was first introduced by Theodore Herzl, supporting the self-determination of the Jewish people in a sovereign Jewish national homeland.

Political Zionism, hereafter referred to in this article as Zionism, was initiated as a reaction to the waves of anti-Semitism in the French press following the Dreyfus Affair. Political Zionism is not a religious movement, although it certainly was meant to include religious Jews. As nonobservant Jews, the founders and leaders of this movement approached Zionism as a “national” issue rather than a “religious” one, intending to establish a national home for world Jewry within the biblical land. Finally, it should be realized that Zionists are not always Jewish, nor are all Jews necessarily Zionists. The common element among all is concern regarding the impact of anti-Semitism worldwide and Israel’s role as the voice of and a safe refuge for Jews wherever in the world they may choose to live.

The Impact of World War I on Palestine

The territory of Palestine, captured from the Ottoman Empire by the Allies during the First World War, was administrated by the British army until 1920.

For causes of the rise of Zionism in modern times, see Michael A. Myers, Jewish Identity in the Modern World (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), 59–82.


Eventually, in July 1920, Sir Herbert Samuel, the first high commissioner for Palestine (including the territory to the east of Jordan River) initiated civilian control on the area. Whereas, during the final years of the war, as attested in the correspondence between Sharif Husain, the Ottoman cogovernor of Mecca, and Sir Henry McMahon, the high British commissioner for Egypt and Sudan, the British had supported the establishment of an independent Arab state under Hashemite rule. In the meantime, in response to the endeavors of the Zionist Organization, a letter known as the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, approved by the cabinet, was sent to Lord Rothschild. In this letter the British government viewed “with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”


Period of the British Mandate for Palestine

The principal Allied Powers, other than the United States, held a conference in San Remo, Italy, from April 19 to 26, 1920. On April 24, 1920, the conference resolved to assign the Mandate for Palestine under the League of Nations to Britain. The terms of the mandate were also discussed with the United States, although it was not a member of the league. This mandate, “which incorporated the historic association of the Jewish people with Palestine,” was approved by the League of Nations on July 24, 1922, dividing the land into two national communities—Zionist Jews on the one hand and Palestinian Muslims and Christian Arabs on the other.

At the same time, as “promised” before, the administration of the territory east of the Jordan River, named Transjordan, was granted to the son of Sherif Hussein of Mecca, Prince Abd Allah in 1921. Thus, in 1922 the League of Nations Council exempted Transjordan from the mandate of Palestine, particularly in respect to the Balfour Declaration and Zionist settlement. Nevertheless, Britain remained in control in many ways. The mandate was finally confirmed by the Council of the League of Nations on June 24, 1922, and came into operation when Turkey accepted the terms of the September 29, 1923 Treaty.

In addition, once France gained control over Syria, the Arabs of Palestine who “initially considered their land to be part of Syria” leaned toward the aspirations of “the eventual Arab national state.” They became the voice of the Muslim and Christian Arab population in Palestine, who went “for a local patriotism added to Pan-Arab nationalism.” Following a large Arab

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congress in December 1920, the Arab Executive was born with Musa Kazim al-Husaini, former mayor of Palestine, as its first chairman. Although the Arab Executive attempted to parallel the activities of the Zionist executive, it never had the Zionists’ resources or personnel.  

The challenging task of governing the Mandate for Palestine was to face all the conflicts among the variety of its population in terms of religious, national, and socio-political aspirations and ideologies. Thus, on February 14, 1947, the British Foreign Secretary announced that “Britain could not reconcile the interests of the different peoples residing in Palestine and had therefore ‘decided to refer the whole problem to the United Nations.’” As a result, on November 29, 1947, the UN Assembly approved the partition of the Palestine Mandate into two states by a majority of thirty-three to thirteen, with eleven abstentions. According to this vote, Britain had to pull out its troops by August 1, 1948. On May 14, 1948, a day prior to the termination of the British Mandate, David Ben-Gurion and his fellow ministers of the national council proclaimed the establishment of the Jewish State of Israel in Palestine. Following that proclamation on May 15, 1948, the Arab League,

12 Ochsenwalrd and Nettleton Fisher, Middle East, 448-449,
having previously declared that it would not recognize the state of Israel, was “encouraged to intervene in Palestine” and started the war against Israel.\footnote{Ettinger, “Modern Period,” 1052; Ochsenwald and Nettleton Fisher, Middle East, 449–450, 537–539.}

**Historical Background of Jewish Life in Iran**

The roots of Jewish life in Iran and the relation between the Iranian Empire and Judea are documented in the Bible and in the Edict of Cyrus as early as the rise of the Achaemenid Empire. Acheamenid tolerance, and their effort for the reconstruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem, resulted in naming the era (559–331 BCE) the “Persian Period” in Jewish history.\footnote{Hayim Tadmor, “The Babylonian Exile and the Restoration,” Hayim H. Ben-Saason (ed.), in History of Jewish People (Cambridge, MA, 1976), 166–172; Jon D. Berquist, Judaism in Persia’s Shadow (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), 48–65.}


Friendly relations between the Sasanid Empire (225–651 CE) and Jews continued during the early half of that dynasty, resulting in the compilation of the Babylonian Talmud (which should have been called the Iranian Talmud) by the Jewish academies located in Iran. The support of the Jews against the Romans in the conquest of Jerusalem (614–628 CE) by Khosrow Parviz marks the latest pre-Islamic collaboration between the two and another instance of Jewish migration to Iran.\footnote{S. Stern, “The Jewish Diaspora in the Second Temple Era,” Hayim H. Ben-Sasson (ed.), in History of Jewish People (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1976), 281; Netzer, “Tarikh-e Yahud-e Iran,” 28, 35–36.}

In Islamic Iran up to the turn of the twentieth century, Jews, recognized as the “People of the Book,” lived under the “Protection of Islam.”\footnote{Sorour Soroudi, “Jews in Islamic Iran,” in Jerusalem Quarterly, 21 (Fall 1981); 101.} Their spiritual connection to the biblical land, like other Jews in the Diaspora, was mostly biblical and spiritual. However, at the dawn of the twentieth century...
century, the Iranian Constitution (1906–09) brought citizenship and civil protection to religious minorities, including the Jews (this privilege was not extended to the followers of Bahai faith). Their emancipation in accord with the constitution allowed them to have one representative in the National Assembly.18

As a result of the adoption of the Iranian Constitution a new page was turned and the religious minorities of Iran found a new socio-economic life. Although the concept of “impurity” within the Shi’ite tradition still dominated many Muslim Iranians, especially in the provinces, the socio-economic condition of Iranian Jews began to improve.19 Jews, who up to that time had been traders and peddlers, now held positions in the state apparatus. Gradually the stereotypical image of Jews, and even their own self-image, changed. The attraction of young Jews to positions in the government increased their desire for further education in existing non-Jewish institutions such as Dar al-Fonun, the polytechnic school of Tehran, which fulfilled the role of a university at the time.20 Some Jewish youths who had the financial ability to do so even traveled to Europe to establish foreign trade relations or attended universities, mainly in various fields of medicine.21

From among this group emerged the later reformists and Zionist activists, including Dr. Habib Levy, a dentist, and Dr. Morteza Yehudayan (Mo’alem), a physician. As Levy remarks, the socio-educational opportunities for Jews resulted in decreased religious interest in general, as well as an abrupt decline of volunteer conversions to other faiths.22

With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, in spite of the economic crisis, the French school system established by Alliance Israelite in Iran

20Levy, Comprehensive, 489.
21Levy, Comprehensive, 489–490.
22Levy, Comprehensive, 490.
since 1898 continued its generous support and kept its schools in Iran open.\textsuperscript{23} It was during this era of a Jewish progressive movement that three stages of enlightenment developed for Iranian Jews in the intervals of 1915–25, 1941–53, and 1953–78. The publication of Shalom newspaper under the management of Mordecai Morad with editorial assistance from his brother Asher Morad in March 1915 was the first step toward this development.\textsuperscript{24}

Zionism and Zionist Aspirations in Iran

The political concept of Zionism, culturally a Western movement, was introduced to Iran through the Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917. This event was the next leap along the path to enlightenment for Iranian Jews. The Balfour Declaration in Iran served as a cohesive means to gather the intellectuals and created social awareness among youth.\textsuperscript{25}

The Balfour Declaration, and its express support for the establishment of a national homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine, aroused feelings of
pride and a sense of self-esteem among Iranian Jewry following centuries of suppression. The first goal of those Iranian Jews was to promote knowledge of the Hebrew language and Jewish awareness, which had faded away except among members of the observant community. The very first assembly of elite Jewish leaders and intellectuals met on December 18, 1917. Upon establishment, the organization named itself the Association for the Empowerment of the Hebrew Language and planned to revive its community’s Jewish identity by learning Hebrew as the first step. However, within a year’s time, in order to create closer ties and to be in direct contact with world Jewry and broaden their objectives, the group renamed itself the “Iranian Zionist Association.” As documents show, the association was not established as an underground movement but rather as an overt transparent movement that was permitted to continue by the Iranian government.

26 Levy, Comprehensive.
27 Levy, Comprehensive.
28 Levy, Comprehensive, 513.
The initial activities of the organization included teaching Hebrew and publishing the first textbook in Hebrew, as well as the Persian translation of Theodore Herzl’s pamphlet, “The Jewish State,” in History of the Zionist Movement, written in Judeo-Persian in 1919. The book on Zionism, written in 1920 by ‘Aziz Allah ben Yona Na‘im, gave a survey of the Zionist movement and the organizations and colonies in Palestine. References made to numerous biblical quotations from Isaiah and Psalms indicated the strong religious and messianic character of the Persian Jewry’s conception of Zionism.30 Among other publications of the organization was the weekly Judeo-Persian paper Ha-Geulah, (Redemption), which was published from December 1920 to June 1923 as the first link between the community and events then current in world Jewry.31

Zionist aspirations were also seen among women in some cities. Iranian Jewish women’s Zionist associations were organized in Hamedan and Tehran. The association in Hamedan, founded independently in 1920, was under the leadership of Khanom-e Kokhabi, known as “Arous Khanom,” who named the association Hadassah. The association held weekly cultural activities for women.32 In Fall 1921, Anjoman-e Siyonist-e Nesvan-e Yahudi-ye Iran, (the Iranian Jewish Women’s Zionist Association) was organized in Tehran under the honorary leadership of Hajieh Şenobar, monitored and advised by one of the Men’s Association board members, ‘Aziz Allah Na‘im.33 By 1922, the Zionist Association, having had branches in various cities drafted a new charter in order to unify its newer branches.34

From the day of its establishment in Tehran and the provinces, the Zionist Association sought relief for whoever would turn to them for aid, especially

33Levy, Comprehensive, 518.
34Levy, Comprehensive, 519.
from the state authorities. One such case is the report and the request for help from Tabriz on June 28, 1922, regarding the pogrom of Sa’ın Ql ‘eh.\textsuperscript{35}

The association was so active in raising the standard of living and education of its community that frequently its Zionist goals were called into question. Nevertheless, it did not refrain from its activities, establishing foreign ties and propagating Zionism.\textsuperscript{36}

Among their specific Zionist activities was the celebration of the San Remo Resolution. Upon the receipt of the resolution made by the principal Allied Powers and the support of the Untied States, the first reaction of the association was to mail letters of appreciation to Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, the US Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, on May 15, 1922, thanking him and US President Warren Harding for their support of the Balfour Declaration. In Tehran, this letter was handed to the US Ambassador, Joseph Kornfeld (1921–24), who was also a Jewish rabbi and a friend of President Harding. The same gesture is reported to have been made by the Tehran Women’s Zionist Committee as well. After the final confirmation of the Council of the League of Nations (June 24, 1922), the motion supporting the San Remo Resolution was finally passed by the US Congress and signed by President Harding on September 11, 1922.\textsuperscript{37}

The largest and most widespread Zionist activity of the association was the celebration of the international endorsement of the San Remo Resolution by the League of Nations, approved on 24 June 1922.

In spite of the request received from London to have a week of celebration in all cities, the board members did not consider the time and the atmosphere ready for such celebration and voted to postpone the event. Nevertheless, as recommended by their Jewish congressman, Dr. Loghman Nehoray,


\textsuperscript{36}Pirnazar, “Minutes,” 19 July 1919.

permission was requested from the incumbent prime minister, Ahmad Qavam, and granted.\textsuperscript{38}

According to the “Minutes of the Association,’ two separate celebrations were held. The first was a communal event held on July 26, 1922 (1 Av 5682) at the private home of the president of the association, Soleyman Kohan Sedegh. On that occasion, the president announced a nationwide Jewish celebration scheduled for August 9, 1922 (15 Av 5682).\textsuperscript{39}

The second celebration was held for two nights, on August 9–10, 1922 (15–16 Av 5682) at the site of Alliance Israelite School, with entertainment provided by a military band. Official invitations for the first night were sent to a select guest list including cabinet members, assembly delegates, foreign ambassadors, leading merchants, journalists, and Islamic clerics. Based on the “Minutes of the Organization,” the guest list included Reza Khan, then Sardar Sepah, Minister of Defense, and later founder of the Pahlavi Dynasty, representing the incumbent prime minister Ahmad Qavam. According to Habib Levy, an active member of the organization, “General Reza Khan had attended the event.” At the event several statesmen and Iranian dignitaries delivered speeches in support of the occasion. The second night was open to the members of the Jewish community.\textsuperscript{40}

During the 1920s, the greatest difficulty the Zionist Association in Tehran encountered with the World Zionist Organization was a general lack of communication. It is clear from their documents that the primary concern of the London and Jerusalem Zionist Organizations was the incorporation of the Iranian Jewish community into the activities of the World Zionist Organization. One such activity was the selling of Zionist shekels in order to be represented in the organization.\textsuperscript{41} However, selling shekels and formal or

\textsuperscript{38}Nahid Pirnazar, “Minutes of Zionist Organization,” 28 April, 1920: During Ahmad Qavam’s second term of service as Prime Minister (11 June 1922–30 January 1923).

\textsuperscript{39}Levy, Comprehensive, 530–31. See n. 28. This date has wrongfully been reported as August 19, 1921.

\textsuperscript{40}Levy, Comprehensive, 531–532.
regular representation at world conferences was not feasible for the Iranian Jewish community due to traveling difficulties, cost, and lack of qualified representatives to attend.\textsuperscript{42} Another expected role of the association was to facilitate voluntary emigration to the Holy Land. Whereas, at the time, the motivation for most emigrants was to escape their severely difficult economic, social, and legal status in Iran, the World Zionist Organization would only grant permission to professionals in the arts and sciences to emigrate to Jerusalem. Such restrictions turned away tradesmen such as tailors, shoemakers, or carpenters. Thus, few Iranian Jews would fit the criteria of the Zionist Organization for emigration.\textsuperscript{43} Nevertheless, from 1923–25, approximately fifteen hundred individuals are reported to have emigrated from Iran. Some of the local news papers in Tehran, including Shafaq-e Sorkh, (Red Twilight), wrote harsh articles against Jewish emigration, although with little impact.\textsuperscript{44}

In the following years, many emigrants chose to return to Iran because of the uprisings of those Palestinian residents that had rejected the San Remo Resolution. The resentment against Jewish emigrants resulted in the killing of Jews in the 1920s in Hebron given the lack of security and protection from the British authorities then ruling Palestine.\textsuperscript{45}

As records show, the ties of the Iranian Jewish community to the World Zionist Organization were not limited to the central association in Tehran. There were also individuals who had direct, personal contact with the organization sending shekels either as membership dues or as subscriptions to the Hebrew monthly publications of the World Zionist Organization.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{41}The term Zionist shekel is based on the currency of biblical times known as the shekel. The number of shekels sold in every country was an indicator of the number of delegates to be sent from that country.

\textsuperscript{42}Netzer, “Zionist Activity in Iran,” 237–250.

\textsuperscript{43}Levy, \textit{Comprehensive}, 521.

\textsuperscript{44}Habib Levy, \textit{Khaterat-e Man (My Memoirs)}, (Los Angeles, 2002), 199.

\textsuperscript{45}Nina Aharoni Springer, \textit{Biography of Moshe Cohen Yazdi-Haroni} (Jerusalem, 2010).

\textsuperscript{46}Netzer, “Zionist Activity in Iran,” 237–250.
Reza Shah Pahalvi (1925-41): Decline of Zionism in Iran

The rise of the Pahlavi Dynasty in 1925 led to a prohibition of all organized political parties and all activities connected to foreign organizations. Although Reza Shah primarily targeted communists and groups opposing his reign, Zionist activity was affected as well. As a result, despite the initial enthusiasm, the Zionist Association of Iran was not able to pursue its activities or maintain its ties with the World Zionist Organization. This break was due first to the internal policies of Reza Shah and second to the division among members of the community regarding the 5th parliamentary election competition between the two candidates, Dr. Legman Nehoray from Tehran and Mr. Shemuel Haim from Kermanshah.

The prohibitions on communal activities also led to the demise of intellectual activities at the communal level. Nevertheless, it is during this period that the result of the Jewish emancipation and enlightenment started to bloom. The eminent Jews of this era are Soleyman Haim (1897–1969), one of the founders of the Zionist Association and later compiler of the series of Haim’s English, French, and Hebrew Dictionaries, Rabi’ Moshfegh Hamedani (1912–2009), journalist and translator, and Habib Levy (1896–1984), dentist, military officer, and compiler of the three-volume History of Iranian Jews.

Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi’s Reign

By the 1940s, the need of the Allies to supply aid to the Soviet army led to the invasion of Iran for the use of the newly built Iranian railroad connecting the Persian Gulf to the borders of the Soviet Union, as it provided the shortest route. The invasion of September 1941 ended with the exile of Reza Shah to Johannesburg and the establishment of the reign of his son, Crown Prince Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. During this period, Zionist activities resumed

with the formation of the Sokhnut, the “Jewish Agency” that helped Polish Jews, including children, escape from Nazi-occupied Poland to Israel via Iran. These refugees came to be known as the “Children of Tehran.” Among those who should be acknowledged for having saved lives during the Holocaust is Abdol-Hossein Sardari Qajar, the Iranian diplomat stationed in Paris, who saved approximately 1,500 to 2,000 individuals, Jews and non-Jews, Iranian and non-Iranian, by having Iranian passports issued to them.50

As early as 1943, groups of young intellectuals, including high-school students and those in liberal professions, had formed Kanun-e Javanane Iran, the “Iranian Youth Club,” led by Mussa Kermanian. The same year saw the foundation of the “Society of the Sons of Zion,” Bashgah-e Baradaran, and later Bashgah-e Khaharan for the female members, who would arrange seminars and communal activities for Jewish youth.51

Following the early years of the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahalvi, the notions of equality found in communist ideology attracted many Jewish youths away from Zionist activities toward communist causes. This trend presented a direct threat to the spread of Zionism in Iran. Nevertheless, due to the government’s concerns about the spread of communism, the Jewish community, in spite of possible local resentment, was able to receive permission to renew Zionist activities under the name ha Khalutz, the “Pioneers.”

Finally, in early 1944 Sazman-e Khalutz-e Javanane, the “Union of Young Pioneers” was founded by a number of individuals, Jacob Melamed among them. These movements and groups were united early on in 1945 as Jonbesh-e Javanane Yahudi, the “Movement of Hebrew Youth,” but failed to make any


large-scale impact on their target group.\textsuperscript{52} The founding of the state of Israel in 1948 inspired the Young Pioneers and thousands of other Jews to organize a series of conferences and activities. Their most important activity was the third national conference held in 1949. One hundred twenty-seven delegates representing Tehran and provincial cities alike and three hundred invited guests attended the opening ceremony.\textsuperscript{53}

In 1917, Zionism had been viewed as more of a religious and cultural movement for Iranian Jews; by the 1940s, however, both the country and the Jewish community had grown more secular and Zionism was interpreted more politically. This change in conceptualization was reflective of the modern and nonreligious education of the Alliance Israelite Schools as well as the Pahlavis’ secular-nationalistic doctrine. Interest in Zionism gradually diminished due to the rapid modernization of Iran and because of the Iranian government’s concerns not to inflame the Iranian and Arab Muslim clergy with the emigration of Iranian Jews to Palestine.\textsuperscript{54} As noted by the envoy of the National Jewish Agency in the 1940s, the Iranian parliamentary representatives were more concerned about the condition of Iranian Jewry than the State of Israel or helping with emigration to Palestine.\textsuperscript{55}

By the 1950s, stronger ties and deeper involvement were seen between the Jewish community representatives and the State of Israel. The apogee of this symbiotic relationship between Israel and the Iranian Jewish community, as well as with the Iranian government, is seen in the de facto recognition of the Jewish State of Israel by Iran in 1950, marked by the diplomatic mission of Meir Ezri, the Iranian-born Israeli, first as a journalist in 1958 and later as Consul General to Iran in 1960.\textsuperscript{56} The friendly relationship between the two governments was not openly publicized to the Iranian public due to the existing resentment toward the statehood of Israel.

\textsuperscript{52}Ezri, Legacy, 48–49.
\textsuperscript{53}Ezri, Legacy, 52–53.
\textsuperscript{54}Moshe Yishy, “An Envoy without Title” in Padyavand (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1999), vol. 3, 127.
\textsuperscript{55}Yishy, “An Envoy without Title,” 127.
\textsuperscript{56}Ezri, Legacy, 79-81.
Period of Israel’s Independence

The United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was formed on April 27, 1947. This committee was comprised of eleven members, among them, the Iranian representative Nasrollah Entezam.\textsuperscript{57} In its report published in August 1947, the Special Committee, based on the previous resolutions of the San Remo Conference and the Council of the League of Nations, recommended that Palestine, already divided into two countries of Palestine and Transjordan, be divided again into two independent states, Jewish and Arab. David Ben Gurion and his partners took this opportunity and accepted the suggestion of UNSCOP and, on May 14, 1948, announced the independence of the Jewish state, named Israel.\textsuperscript{58} Following this date, referred to nakbah (“disaster”) by the Palestinians, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq immediately declared war on the State of Israel. In this war, some local Palestinians chose to stay while others decided to leave as refugees in the hope of returning soon upon the defeat of Israel by its Arab neighbors. Although Iran was neither an Arab country nor a neighbor to confront Israel, uproar broke out domestically. The Iranian press attacked the dowlat-e pushali (“puppet state”) of Israel as the crisis took on an Islamic tone in support of Arab countries. At the Friday Prayer on May 21, 1948, at Shah Mosque in Tehran, Ayatollah Kashani gave a sermon against the UN resolution and, encouraging Iranians to stand with their fellow Muslim brethren, asked for financial support.\textsuperscript{59} But the uproar died down owing to the intervention of the Iranian government as well as a number of Muslim clergy, and the diplomacy of the incumbent Jewish representative to the National Assembly, Morad Arieh.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{59}Donyay-e Islam, ed. Abu al-Qasem Mar’ashi, special flier published as attachment. No date is seen on the attached flier, but the content reports on the event on May 21, 1948.
\textsuperscript{60}Levy, Comprehensive, 549.
In March 1949, the Cabinet of Mohammad Sa’ed sent a representative to Israel to adjudicate “property claims of Iranian subjects in Palestine” and a year later granted it de facto recognition but would not agree to receive a delegation from Israel in return because of an expected disapproval by certain Iranian groups. In July 1951, Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, hoping to gain the support of the Arab countries for the nationalization of the oil industry, recalled the Iranian representative to Israel. In so doing, he also pleased domestic sectarians, who at that time had once again entered the political arena. But Iran’s failure to gain support from the Arab countries for its struggle against Britain and against Egypt’s anti-Iranian activities in the Persian Gulf led the Iranian government to review its relations with Israel later on. Nevertheless, due to fear of the Arab countries and some Iranians, Iran avoided establishing full diplomatic relations and the details of the diplomatic relations were kept classified.

In the summer of 1956 Dr. Zvi Doriel was sent to Iran, officially as the representative of a Tel- Aviv trade office charged with establishing a commercial bridge with Iran; he also had another important role, which

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61 Levy, Comprehensive, 550.
62 Abdolrahman Ahmadi, Savak and Intelligence Service of Israel (Tehran: PSRI, 2008), 148. This book is mainly valued for the original, not revised documents and correspondence.
was to assess the prospects of promoting diplomatic relations with Iran and guarantee a regular supply of oil from Iran to Israel later on, even if only tacitly.\textsuperscript{63} Meir Ezri was sent on his first diplomatic mission to Iran in April 1958, in the guise of the editor of a Persian newspaper published in Israel named Setare-ye Sharq (“Star of the East”) to bring back to Iran news of the Iranian expatriates and of Israeli government policies.\textsuperscript{64} Another medium for influencing Iranian public opinion, especially in the educated circles, was Radio Seday-e Israel, broadcasting in Persian from Jerusalem, launched in April 1956.\textsuperscript{65}

As for the links between SAVAK, Iran’s secret service, and Israel’s Mossad, the first contact was established at the instigation of Iran with the encouragement of the United States in September 1957, long before the establishment of political or economic relations, when General Teymur Bakhtiar travelled to Paris and asked to meet Yaakov Zur, the Israeli ambassador to France.\textsuperscript{66} The request was conveyed to Zur by Dr. Mohammad Sadriyeh, first secretary at the Iranian embassy in Paris and Iran’s future diplomat in Israel.\textsuperscript{67} With the skill of the Israel Defense Force (IDF) demonstrated in the Suez Campaign

\textsuperscript{63}Ezri, Legacy, 78, 81.
\textsuperscript{64}Ezri, Legacy, 75–76.
\textsuperscript{65}Ezri, Legacy, 77.
\textsuperscript{66}Ezri, Legacy, 90.
\textsuperscript{67}Ezri, Legacy, 90; Ahmadi, Savak, 149-150
of 1956, and in the name of the Shah, Bakhtiar offered cooperation in information exchange and analysis of “Nasserisms” in the region, as well as the Soviet threat. As stated by Ezri as well as the intelligence provided by SAVAK archives, there were also advantages for Israel in cooperating with a non-Arab Muslim state, one of the most important in the Middle East, the channel for most of Israel’s oil supplies.

In October 1957, a meeting was held in Rome between Teymur Bakhtiar and Issar Har’el, head of the Mossad, and Yaakov Karuz, who paid his first visit to Tehran in December 1957. Thus the practical foundations of a strategic cooperation between the two states was laid. Teymur Bakhtiar and Issar Har’el and their successors maintained a close working relationship and kept up the program through reciprocal visits. The principal area of cooperation was the exchange of information and assessments, which continued until the fall of the monarchy.

In an effort to develop mutual relations between Iran and Israel, numerous Iranian journalists, educators, and distinguished figures visited Israel in 1956–57, including the editor of the weekly Tehran Mossavvar, Abdollah Valla, then–Tehran University Professor Mansour Ekhtiar, and Abbas Shahandeh, editor of Farman newspaper. Among the journalists opposing Israel was ‘Abd al-Rahman Faramarzi, chief editor of Keyhan daily newspaper, whose editorials castigated Israel as the servant of imperialism, especially of the United States.

On August 15, 1960, as reported in Savak archives, the mission statement and the goals of collaboration between the two states was discussed and finalized in

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68 Ezri, Legacy, 90; Ahmadi, Savak, 149 (original: 470–71).
69 Ezri, Legacy, 90; Ahmadi, Savak, 379: One example was the request made by Israelis to borrow a film of a military parade shown on Baghdad television on May, 4, 1975 (original: 542–442); Ahmadi, Savak, 67–69: Savak extended assistance toward saving the Israeli oil tanker “Omega,” stuck in mud in the sea of ‘Amman, followed by the thank-you note sent by General Khofi of Israel to Savak authorities (original: 459–460).
70 Ezri, Legacy, 90–91.
71 Ezri, Legacy, Ahmadi, Savak, 149 (original: 470–471).
72 Ezri, Legacy, 78.
73 Ezri, Legacy, 211.
a meeting that included Teymur Bakhtiar, Issar Har’el, Yaakov Karuz, General Hassan Pakravan, and General Hassan ‘Alavikia. It is in this agreement that Issar Har’el elaborates on the common interests of the two countries and the position of Iran in the region, expecting neither reciprocation nor immediate and full diplomatic relations between Iran and Israel.\footnote{Ahmadi, \textit{Savak}, 150–156 (original: 469–71).}

Upon the establishment of an intelligence relationship between the two states, General Haj-Ali Kia, head of the “2nd bureau” of the Iranian military general staff, organized the cooperation between Israel and Iran, followed by General Mehdiqoli ‘Alavi Moghaddam, Chief of Police.\footnote{Ezri, \textit{Legacy}, 140–169; Ahmadi, \textit{Savak}, 60–61 (original: 472–480).}

Throughout the years, relations between the two countries grew in the areas of security and intelligence, media, the campaign against illiteracy, medical assistance, modernization of agriculture,\footnote{Ezri, \textit{Legacy}, 408–426; Levy, \textit{Comprehensive}, 550.} tourism, combat against drug addiction, cooperation in botanical research, and infrastructure development. One of the most important of these activities was the partial rebuilding of the city of Qazvin following the large earthquake of September 1962 in Bo’in Zahra.\footnote{Ezri, \textit{Legacy}, 395–407.}

In November 1966, General Hassan Toufanian, an air force pilot in charge of purchasing for Iran’s military industry, visited Israel together with Chief of Staff Fereydu Jam. They received a warm welcome from then–Israeli Chief of Staff General Yitzhak Rabin.\footnote{Ezri, \textit{Legacy}, 156.} Among other authorities who visited Israel in that era were General Ne‘matollah Nassiri, Chief of SAVAK, who visited Israel in January 1966,\footnote{Ezri, \textit{Legacy}, 134.} General ‘Aziz-Allah Palizban, head of Iran’s military intelligence, and Captain ‘Ali-pour, ranked a private in the military.

In 1966, SAVAK and Mossad developed a collaborative relationship in regard to intelligence on Iraq, Syria, and Egypt, titled “Crystal Operation.”\footnote{Ahmadi, \textit{Savak}, 157–192 (original: 472–480).}
The first transaction involving military weapons started with the purchase of Uzi rifles from Israel upon the request of the Iranian Police Department in March 1965. The transaction went through, in spite of Golda Meir’s initial apprehension about Israeli weapons falling into the hands of opposition forces in case of a regime change.\(^{81}\) This relationship was expanded to other military, police, and intelligence areas.\(^{82}\) Dariush Homayoon, editor of the daily newspaper Ayandegan, visited Israel during the Six Day War in June 1967.\(^{83}\)

The Marvdasht Project undertaken by Israeli technicians in Shiraz marked the beginning of agricultural innovations in Iran.\(^{84}\) The Israeli national air carrier, El-Al, had regularly scheduled flights to Tehran.\(^{85}\) Other projects completed in Iran by Israeli experts included providing an agricultural irrigation system for the cotton fields in Khorasan, construction of the Sad-e Tarik dam on Sefid Rud near the city of Fuman by the Caspian Sea,\(^{86}\) canal digging and drainage work for Isfahan’s sewage system,\(^{87}\) and the construction of the Dariush dam on the River Kor in Marvdasht, west of Shiraz (1971).\(^{88}\)

Among the top Iranian military officials who had close relations with the Israeli government, some of whom visited Israel, were General Mohammad Khatami, head of the Iranian Air Force (Khatami was the Shah’s brother-in-law whose wedding General Herzog, Israel’s Chief of Army Intelligence, had attended); General Fereydun Jam, head of the Iranian Military Forces;\(^{89}\) and his successor General Gholamreza Azhari, who briefly served as Iran’s Prime Minister later in 1978.\(^{90}\)

Other dignitaries who visited Israel as guests of the State included academicians, intellectuals, journalists, and musicians. The list of visitors

\(^{82}\) Ahmadi, *Savak*, 467 (original: 467).
\(^{83}\) Ibid., 53 (original: 458–459).
includes prominent Iranian scholar, literary writer, and bibliographer Professor Sa’eed Nafisi, in 1957;\(^{91}\) Professor Abdul Hossein Hashtrudi, Dean of the Faculty of Sciences, Tehran University, in 1958; Badi’olzaman Frouzanfar, distinguished scholar of Persian literature, linguistics, and culture, in 1958;\(^{92}\) Professor Ebrahim Pur-Davoud, expert on pre-Islamic Iranian languages, literature, and history, in the fall of 1958;\(^{93}\) and Professor Ali-Asghar Azad, head of the Department of Nuclear Science at Tehran University. Professor Azad headed a delegation of Iranian scientists visiting Israel to participate in a tour arranged by the Israeli Foreign Ministry.\(^{94}\) Among others who later visited Israel were engineer Abdollah Riazi, later Speaker of the National Assembly;\(^{95}\) Professor Davood Behnam, Chair of Literature and History, Tehran University, who visited Israel in 1962;\(^{96}\) Dr. Ahmad Farhad, Chancellor of Tehran University, who did in 1963;\(^{97}\) Professor Farhang Mehr, the Chancellor of Pahlavi University in Shiraz, in 1964;\(^{98}\) and Professor Sajjadi, of the School of Medicine at Tehran University, in July 1967, immediately after the Six Day War.\(^{99}\)

In subsequent years, in addition to the heads of the Mossad, some cabinet members and even Israeli heads of state visited or attempted to visit Iran. Except Moshe Dayan’s first trip, which was publicly announced, such trips were not shared with the public. Moshe Dayan visited Iran and met with the Shah twice, first as the minister of agriculture in 1955 to set up the basis of diplomatic relations, and the second time in 1977, for twenty-four hours, accompanied by General Khofi, head of Mossad.\(^{100}\)

Golda Meir, Prime Minister of Israel, visited Iran and met with the Shah in May 1972, for a few hours when she flew to Tehran in her special plane

\(^{91}\) Ezri, Legacy, 308.  
\(^{92}\) Ezri, Legacy.  
\(^{93}\) Ezri, Legacy, 308–310.  
\(^{94}\) Ezri, Legacy, 309.  
\(^{95}\) Ezri, Legacy.  
\(^{96}\) Ezri, Legacy.  
\(^{97}\) Ezri, Legacy, 310.  
\(^{98}\) Ezri, Legacy, 311.  
\(^{99}\) Ezri, Legacy, 315.  
\(^{100}\) Ahmadi, Savak, 386–392, 529 (originals: 456–457, 548).
and was received by General Nassiri and Meir Ezri. She met the Shah at the official guest residence at the airport and they spoke about “East-West relations” and regional problems. As Ezri reports, the Shah had urged Golda Meir to demonstrate flexibility and moderation toward Anwar Sadat, the Egyptian president, with whom he had excellent amiable relations.  

General Yitzhak Rabin visited Tehran in 1976 as Prime Minister. In his thank-you note to the Shah, Rabin examines the situation of the Middle East, especially the impact of Syria’s interference in the ongoing Lebanese civil war, requesting the Shah to discuss and evaluate the situation with President Sadat in his upcoming visit to Iran. Uri Lubrani, head of the diplomatic mission in Iran in his last visit with the Shah in the rank of ambassador (1973–78), and introducing Yossef Harmelin as his successor, delivered two messages from Menachim Begin at Camp David, sent on September 16 and 18, 1978; the first note expressed concern about the upheavals in Tehran and the second expressed condolences for the recent earthquake in the eastern parts of Iran.

On September 27, 1978, Menachim Begin requested a date for a private visit with the Shah through his diplomatic corps to report on the Camp David negotiations. The response to this request, due to the upheavals in Iran, was that the date “shall be announced later.”

According to Meir Ezri, in spite of all the propaganda around the nature of intelligence collaboration between Mossad and Savak, Mossad never offered Iranians training in techniques of interrogation, the use of torture included. In fact, no indication of Israeli training has yet been found either in records of prosecutions mounted against numerous SAVAK personnel published since 1978, or in any other documentation of the activities of SAVAK. Furthermore, according to the SAVAK archive, edited by Mr.

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101 Ezri, Legacy, 137.
102 Ahmadi, Savak, 393–395 (original: 542–43).
103 Ahmadi, Savak, 395–396 (original: 550).
104 Ahmadi, Savak, 391–392 (original: 551).
105 Ezri, Legacy, 93.
Abdolrahman Ahmadi, throughout years of collaboration, “no indication of any anti-Iranian activity by the Mossad has been reported.”

The de facto recognition of Israel by Iran in 1948 allowed and encouraged mass emigration of Iranian Jews to Israel, mostly among the middle and lower classes in the provinces with a low standard of living. Between 1948 and 1951, thirty thousand Iranian Jews voluntarily emigrated and an estimated forty-seven thousand Iraqi Jews left for Israel via Iran. Among this wave of emigrants were the families of Moshe Katsav, Israel’s past president; Meir Ezri, the Ambassador to Iran; Amnon Netzer, Professor of Hebrew University; David Menasheri, a professor formerly at Tel Aviv University and presently at the Academic Center of Law and Business in Ramat Gan; Lt. General Shaul Mofaz, who served in the capacities of Minister of Defense, Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of Transportation and Roads Safety; Eyton Ben Eliahou, Major General in the Israel Defense Forces; Menashe Amir, political commentator; and contemporary poet Masroor Kermanshahi.

However, emigration later slowed due to the impact of the liquidation of Jewish assets in the Iranian economy, the improvement of diplomatic relations between the two countries, and the sudden rise of the socio-economic status of Iranian Jews in the 1950s through the late 1970s.

**Status of the Iranian Jewish Community Post 1948**

While in the 1920s the Iranian Jewish community felt responsible for celebrating Zionist occasions, in the 1960s and 1970s this responsibility was passed on to the Israeli consulate and the diplomats. The rebirth of the State of Israel was celebrated at the Israeli Consulate in Tehran with the attendance of Iranian dignitaries at different diplomatic, journalistic, and academic levels, as well as military personnel and cabinet members.

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108 Various pictures and reports in Ezri’s *Yad-nameh* and *Legacy of Cyrus* document such diplomatic, cultural, economic, and agricultural
Unlike Jews who had come out of Tehran’s Jewish ghetto at the turn of the century and whose support for Judaism and Zionism were inseparable, by the early 1950s some elite, modernized Jews had begun to deviate from the older Jewish generation. By that time the urban Jewish community had started to divide into three different groups in their views regarding Zionism: first, the majority of the community, with a messianic concept of Zionism; second, the intellectual Zionists interested in the political nature of Zionism; and third, the intellectual leftist Jews, interested in the socialist and Marxist aspects of Zionism. Many Iranian Jews with communist inclinations, like other Iranians, found themselves in jail with the banning of the communist Tudeh party in the late 1940s. It is at this point that the intercession of the incumbent parliamentary representative Morad Aryeh, with the state authorities, helped free the leftist Iranian Jews from jail. Thus, political activities diminished in Iranian Jewish communities from the early 1950s for a decade.

The economic, cultural, civil, and social benefits available to Jews in Iran in the late 1950s not only left little incentive for emigration to Israel, but even caused some past émigrés to return. Also, life in the early years of the State of Israel as it struggled to provide new immigrants with livelihood was not easy, whereas Iran offered better opportunities for socio-economic growth. The two decades of the 1960s and 1970s brought great advances in modernizing Iran in the areas of commerce, foreign trade, industry and infrastructure.

Attachment to a national Iranian identity was another aspect of society that blossomed at this time. Following their social and cultural emancipation—although not benefiting from all privileges of citizenship, such as appointment to high posts in the military and judicial and political positions—Iranian relations, as well as urban planning and infrastructural services rendered by Israeli experts in the 1960s and 1970s.

Jews found themselves equal to others in acquiring positions in the civil, socio-academic, and cultural domains. Even within the restricted domains, however, there were exceptions: Dr. Habib Levy served as the personal dentist to Reza Shah as a military officer, and Dr. Shokrollah Amini, a physician and later graduate of the Iranian Military Academy, was elevated to the rank of Major General and served as the head of military hospitals in different parts of Iran.\(^{110}\)

The rapid impact of acculturation to Iranian identity, especially upon the younger generation—university students, young professionals, and intellectuals—created a sense of social solidarity and ideological empathy among Jewish and non-Jewish Iranian intellectuals, including those sympathetic to Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh and his party, Jebhe-y-e Melli (“National Front”). The draw of Iranian nationalism was such that from the 1950s to 1970s many Iranian Jews began to change their Jewish names to names of Iranian origin in an effort to fit in more closely with the larger Iranian society. For example, the Jewish family name Cohen would be pronounced Cohan, meaning “ancient” in Persian, or the suffix Kalimi, meaning “Jew,” following many family names, was changed to Hakimi, meaning “scholar.”

At the same time, anti-Zionist sentiments began growing among some members of the younger Jewish generation. In fact, it was considered to be “sophisticated” and “intellectual” to join the “anti-Shah” and “anti-Zionist” voice or be a member of “leftist Iranian” groups rather than appear involved in Jewish social groups and activities. Following the nationwide suppression of communist sympathizers after the fall of Mohammad Mossadegh in 1953, the political leanings of a limited number of Iranian Jewish youth were for the first time moved toward Zionism and the development of ha Khaluts (“Youth Scouts”)—activities whose effort was focused on emigration to Israel.

Among the first generation of intellectuals who opposed the government during the 1930s through the mid-1950s, the foremost was Rabi’ Moshfegh-e Hamedani. In addition to his position as a journalist and daily news translator for Reza Shah during World War II, he was the founding chief editor of the leftist magazine Kaveh and, for seven years, chief editor of the Keyhan daily newspaper. Moshfegh was a publisher, owner of Nashr-e Ṣafi ‘Ali Shah, as well as a translator of Western classical literature such as the works of Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Leo Tolstoy, and Lawrence Lockhart. Accused as a supporter of Mohammad Mossadegh, Moshfegh chose self-exile in Italy in 1953. While there, he learned Italian and was engaged in translating Italian literature and motion pictures into Persian until he immigrated to Los Angeles in 1979, where he died in 2009.

From the mid-1960s, a new generation of university students in Tehran developed a student association. The group with no organized or political ties with active nationalists and antiregime ideologies, sought a democratic government without feeling any conflict between their Zionism and Iranian nationalism. The Sazman-e Daneshjuyan-e Yahud-e Iran (Iranian Jewish Students Association), which included many male and female members from Tehran University and other institutions of higher education, was officially registered in 1963 as a nonpolitical organization, with educational, literary, scientific, and Judaic studies committees. Among this group were some leftist ideologists such as Parviz (Haroun) Yashayaee, then a student of philosophy at Tehran University and later a film producer and community activist. ‘Azizollah Daneshrad was another activist in this group; he

111 Lawrence Lockhart was the scholar and photographer of Iran who was an employee of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company: www.iraniacaonline.org/articles/lockhart-laurence (accessed December 23, 2013).
114 Parviz Yashayaee chose to use his Jewish name Haroun after the Islamic Revolution in official publications and media.
later became a professor at the Polytechnic School, now called Amir Kabir University. He also served as chief executive officer during the construction of the Isfahan Steel Mill Plant.\textsuperscript{115}

Kanoon-e Pishbord (The Center for the Advancement of Iranian Jews) was founded as a branch of the Iranian Jewish Students Association in the mid-1970s. The new group was set up in a more exclusive environment in northern Tehran by a younger generation of university students such as Hamid Sabi, son of a pioneering and prominent Iranian Jewish attorney Musa Sabi, and Albert Dardashti. This group had greater social and secular leanings. They therefore chose to remain independent and were not affiliated with the older Jewish organizations of the community.\textsuperscript{116}

The infamous 1968 Asian Cup soccer tournament, held in Tehran, was a turning point in the modern history of Iranian Jewry. The public demonstrations and chanted slogans on the streets of Tehran after the final round between the defending champion, Israel, and the host country, Iran, revealed the lower middle class’s anti-Jewish feelings. Such a development in the aftermath of the Six Day War of June 1967 was elicited by the frustration many Iranian Muslims felt at the outcome of the war and also reflected intolerance of the minorities by the mob.\textsuperscript{117}

The mob’s anticipation of the result of the soccer game served as a warning. Coupled with other political, social, and economic factors, this event was incentive enough for the Iranian Jewish community to contemplate alternative places to live, this time not necessarily in Israel. Although the total number of families who voluntarily left Iran did not exceed a couple of hundred, for the first time many intellectuals and affluent Jews, including physicians, other professionals, and owners of large industries and trades, considered departure. Some decided to liquidate their assets and leave the


\textsuperscript{116}Hamid Sabi, “The Center for Advancement of Iranian Jews,” interview by Pirmazar, April 2012.

\textsuperscript{117}Hamid Sabi, “The Center for Advancement of Iranian Jews,” interview by Pirmazar, April 2012.
country, mostly heading to Europe and the United States, with a low number of 2 or 3 percent moving to Israel. Others elected to sell their interests in their businesses to foreigners, purchase property outside Iran, and establish overseas bank accounts, all in preparation for the day when they might have to leave Iran. The cause of emigration this time was not Zionism, but primarily fears of an unknown future involving bigotry, loss of security, and, for some, a lack of political freedom. Nevertheless, the comfortable and booming economic conditions in Iran prevailed and, for most families with business attachments, life continued half in Iran and half in their second residence of choice elsewhere.

The long list of individuals who left Iran in the years before and after 1979 includes Jewish academicians and intellectuals such as Professor Mussa Broukhim, Chair of the French Department at the School of Humanities at Tehran University and also chief editor of the daily French newspaper Journal de Tehran. In the areas of science and medicine the list includes Professor Shamuel Rahbar, M.D. and Ph.D. in Immunology, Head of the Department of Applied Biology at the Tehran University School of Medicine, the world renowned immunologist and hemoglobin molecular researcher whose work has had global impacts in the field of diabetes medicine, and a member of Iran’s Royal Academy; Professor Iraj Lalehzari, Dean of the School of Pharmacology at Tehran University, renowned pharmacologist and organic chemist.\(^{118}\)

Professor Jaccob Aynehchi, Head of the Department of Pharmacology, Tehran University; Professor Iraj Tabibzadeh, Director General of “Malaria Eradication,” at the Ministry of Health; Professor Hushang Amini, Tehran University School of Dentistry; and Dr. Isaac Noormahmoodi, Head of the Department of Textile Industries, Polytechnic School of Tehran (Amir Kabir University) are some other names in this long list.

Following the close economic, agricultural, intelligence, and academic relations developed in the 1950s–1960s with the State of Israel, the camaraderie between Iranian Jews and Muslims was developed in different areas and fields. Having had the same educational and social opportunities, the younger generation of Iranian Jews, especially after the 1960s, felt comfortable participating in nontraditional social and political activities. Such relationships brought about tolerance and friendship among Jews and non-Jews at different levels such as among merchants, governmental professionals, and academicians. Relations between classmates, members of certain professions, and even occasional cases of intermarriage reflect this atmosphere. The same solidarity was also seen, if not on a large scale, among some university students opposing the government who demanded a more democratic regime. Such activities put Parviz Yashayaee in prison together with some Islamic antiregime opponents such as Ayatollah Taleghani in the early 1960s. This companionship played an integral role in the destiny of Iranian Jews in general, and some individuals in particular, as friends of the future leaders of the Islamic Republic.

One of the major results of unity and friendship among Iranian Jews and some of their Muslim counterparts in 1978 is demonstrated by the role of Kurosh Kabir Hospital, named after Cyrus the Great, founded in 1949 by Kanoon-e Kheryrkah (the Benevolent Society), mainly funded by the Iranian Jewish community and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The hospital, under the presidency of Dr. Kamran Broukhim in 1976 (who at the same time held an executive position in preventative medicine at the Isfahan steel mill), underwent a thorough renovation using loans from the government and the financial help of some of the affluent people in the Jewish community. Among those who participated in the renovation project was Parviz Yashayaee, who helped upgrade the hospital.

\[118^{\text{Hmadan viii. Jewish Community," Encyclopaedia Iranica.}}\]

\[119^{\text{This is a worldwide Jewish relief organization, established in 1914 with its headquarters in New York.}}\]
with modern facilities, including four surgery rooms. In May 1978, when a student cleric was killed in Qom in front of Ayatollah Shari’at Madari’s house, some of the wounded were sent to Kurosh Kabir hospital, which did not release their identities to the government, thus creating an atmosphere of trust and goodwill between the hospital and the opposition group.\footnote{Broukhim, “Kurosh Kabir Hospital,” interview by Pirnazari, April 2012; Joseph Cohen, \textit{Reports and Memoirs} (Los Angeles: Joseph Cohen Found, 1993), 312.}

Immediately after the change of regime, in early 1979, the opposition wished to change the name of the hospital from that of the ancient Persian emperor Shahid Khosrow Golsorkhi, an activist executed at the time of the Shah and considered a martyr by the opposition. Thanks to prompt action by the Benevolent Society, the name was changed overnight to that of Dr. Ruhollah Sapir, one of the founding physicians of the hospital, who had lost his life treating typhoid patients there.\footnote{Broukhim, “Name Change of Hospital,” interview by Pirnazari, April 2012.}

Through Ayatollah Taleghani’s headquarters and based on an old friendship with Parviz Yashayaee, who still shared the same antigovernment visions, Sapir Hospital became a safe haven for the treatment of the wounded who did not wish the government to learn their identity. The four surgery rooms of Sapir Hospital and its medical staff were at the service of the people injured on September 15, 1978, known as Black Friday. The hospital was able to save the lives of all the patients brought in by the opposition. As a token of
appreciation, an elaborate flower arrangement was sent to the hospital from Taleghani’s headquarters while he himself was in jail. From then on, ties between Taleghani’s headquarters and some of his Jewish comrades were strengthened. Those who expanded relations with the Jewish community included individuals like Ahmad-Ali Baba’i, Taher Ahmadzadeh, the first governor of the Islamic Republic in Khorasan, Haj Agha Shanehchi, and some members of Ayatollah Taleghani’s family, including Mehdi Taleghani and his daughter A’zam Taleghani, a pharmacist.\textsuperscript{122}

From December 1978 through February 1979, many Iranian Jews, filled with fear of the unknown like the majority of Iranians, left the country temporarily. For the first time since the independence of Israel and the mass emigration of the lower economic classes, thousands of Iranian Jewish families were flown to Israel, for free, by El Al airlines.

As early as October 1978, since many members of Tehran’s Jewish community were leaving the country, the leadership of the group was left in the hands of Dr. ‘Azizollah Daneshrad, as President of Anjoman-e Kalimian (The Iranian Jewish Association), and Dr. Heshmatollah Kermanshahchi, one of the elder board members and a socio-political and Zionist activist since 1940. Daneshrad, in private consultation with Rabbi Yedidia Shofet, represented Jewish laws and traditions in Majles-e Khobregan (the Assembly of Experts) that drafted the Islamic Republic’s constitution. This group met regularly to consult on emergency issues when they arose. Later, Hamid Sabi, who was then a successful young attorney representing foreign diplomats and clients, joined the group. With his legal knowledge and sophisticated command of English, Hamid Sabi acted as one of the group’s spokespersons with the foreign media.\textsuperscript{123} With regard to policy, the community also benefited from continuous consultation with Rabbis Yedidia Shofet and Uriel Davidi.\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{122}Broukhim, “Relations with Taleghani’s supporters,” interview by Pirnazar, April 2012.

\textsuperscript{123}Sabi, Broukhim and Hushang Melamed, M.D., “Relations with the new leadership,” interview by Pirnazar, April 2012.
By mid-November, the office of Ayatollah Taleghani placed a request to Parviz Yashayaee through Ahmad-Ali Babai to encourage Jewish community members to join the anti-Shah demonstrations as a group. Upon Ayatollah Taleghani’s release from prison, some of the supporters of the opposition, headed by Parviz Yashayaee and accompanied by Dr. Kamran Broukhim and Dr. Hushang Melamed, went to visit him. At this meeting, Ayatollah Taleghani expressed his appreciation for the cooperation of Sapir Hospital.

Ayatollah Taleghani’s headquarters requested the Jewish community to participate in the pro-Ayatollah Khomeini demonstrations on December 11, 1978, on the occasion of Ashura, the martyrdom of the Shi’ite Imam Hossein. The leadership of the Jewish community knew that not many people would join the demonstration without the participation of Rabbi Yedidia Shofet. When presented with this request, Rabbi Shofet found himself before a difficult decision. However, for the sake of the community’s safety and despite the loyalty both he and his son, Rabbi David Shofet, felt toward the Shah, they agreed to participate in the Ashura demonstrations, on condition of the absence of anti-Zionist banners or slogans. Owing to the Shofet family’s participation, about two thousand Jews gathered within twenty-four hours to join the demonstration. The walk started from Abrishami Synagogue, on then Kahkh-e Shomali Avenue, through Elizabeth Boulevard to Soheil Avenue, and eventually joined the main stream of the demonstration on then Shah Reza Boulevard, marching toward Shahyad (now Azadi) Square. The banners read Peyvand-ma ba Nehzat-e Mellat-e Iran Na-gossastani Ast, “Our tie with the movement of the Iranian nation is unbreakable.” Jewish participation was joyously welcomed by other participants, who tried to open the way and place them ahead of the line as they chanted “Yahudi, Mosalman, Payvandetan Mobarak, “Jews and Muslims, congratulations on your unity.”

126The day of Ashura, on the tenth of Moharram of the Islamic calendar, marks the martyrdom of Hossein ibn Ali, the grandson of Mohammad, and the Battle of Karbala.
With Parviz Yashayaee’s mediation on behalf of the Jewish community with Mohsen Rezai and others at the opposition headquarters, a close personal relationship developed between Rabbi Shofet and Ayatollah Taleghani. The extent of this relationship was so close that upon the death of Ayatollah Taleghani’s wife, Rabbi Yedidia Shofet attended the memorial service held in the mosque to extend his personal condolences. Their friendship was further extended to the point that Rabbi Shofet visited him once before the Friday sermon at Tehran University, asking him not to antagonize the people against Zionism. The other cleric who showed tolerance toward the Jews was Ayatollah Makarem-e Shirazi. Rabbi Yedidia Shofet visited him also at the Friday prayer at Tehran University and asked for reassurances regarding the Jewish community of Iran.

Upon the arrival of Ayatollah Khomeini in Tehran, the Jewish delegates who welcomed him at Mehrabad Airport were Rabbi Yedidia Shofet, Rabbi Uriel Davidi, Haghnazr Farahnik, Dr. Kamran Broukhim, Parviz Yashayaee, and Hamid Sabi, all in the very first row of the welcoming groups. Two days after the arrival of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran on Thursday, February 1, 1979, a ten-thousand-strong silent demonstration was again arranged to march along the same route as on December 11. From that date on, chants of “Death to Israel” marked a turning point in the history of Zionism in Iran.

**Conclusion**

The Zionist Association of Iran was a publicly recognized organization since its inception in 1917, as historically recorded; however, for religious, political, cultural, and socio-economic reasons the notion was not fully embraced at the time, either by Iranian Jews or by other Iranians and members of government.

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127 Rabbi David Shofet, Sabi, Broukhim and Melamed, “Participation in demonstrations,” interview by Pirnazar, April 2012.
However, with the establishment of the Islamic Republic, Iranian Jews were forced to choose between Zionism and their Iranian nationality, a choice they had never had to make in the past. To date, those who have remained in Iran use every occasion to distance themselves from Israel and Zionism. Most of those who left Iran for Israel after 1978 were driven by fear of the unknown rather than because of Zionist aspirations. As history has demonstrated, neither the Balfour Declaration of 1917 nor the independence of Israel in 1948 was a strong motivation for most Iranian Jews to depart.

During the time that diplomatic relations were in effect between Iran and Israel, many non-Jewish Iranian scholars praised and valued the relation and found it beneficial for both countries in spite of the opposition expressed by clerics and some Iranians. Among such scholars and intellectuals were the likes of Sa’eed Nafisi, the renowned professor at Tehran University, Dean of Humanities, poet and writer, who in his visit to Jerusalem in 1957 spoke of “the enduring relationship between Iran and the Land of Israel.”\textsuperscript{130} Professor Farhang Mehr, Chancellor of Pahlavi University in Shiraz in 1964, in one of his speeches in reference to finding a means for development and modernization in Iran, stated: “What could be better than Israel?”\textsuperscript{131} The friendly relations may not have been supported by all Iranians, yet between the two governments, the relation was based on mutual respect and interest in the areas of agriculture, irrigation, infrastructure, and illiteracy, as well as the sale of military supplies. The exchange of intelligence services, as was originally requested by the Iranian government, always served as a block against outside opponents, including the pro-Soviet Nasser regime in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and the Communist Soviet Union in the north. What has remained untouched are the ties of Iranian Jews, whether living in Iran or abroad, with Iran and Iranians in terms of their Iranian identity, heritage, language and culture.

\textsuperscript{130} Ezri, \textit{Legacy}, 307.
\textsuperscript{131} Ezri, \textit{Legacy}, 311.