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BEYOND KLEZMER AND KNEIDLACH:
A CURRICULUM ON NON-ASHKENAZI JEWISH CULTURES AND CUSTOMS IN CONGREGATIONAL ADULT EDUCATION

SUZANNE C. HAMSTRA

Senior Project Senior Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Cantorial Ordination
and Master of Sacred Music Degree

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music
New York, New York

Written Project Advisor: Rabbi Lisa Grant, PhD.
Recital Advisor: Cantor Joshua Breitzer

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Curriculum Rationale

Despite the fact that the first Jews to immigrate to the United States were Sefardi, their story is little known in comparison to the large waves of Ashkenazi immigration from Central and Eastern Europe between the late 1800s through shortly after World War II. While there have always been Jews from other parts of the globe in America, this wave of immigration was so large and unified that it came to define American Jewish culture. However, in recent decades, American Jewry has continued to grow in diversity, and the Ashkenazi norm that has developed in this country doesn't necessarily represent the full rainbow of Jewish backgrounds, cultures, and colors of our mixed multitudes.

While URJ congregations all express a commitment to welcome Jews of all races and backgrounds, we do not always live up to our aspirations. The reality is that Reform Jewish practice has its origin in Ashkenazi tradition and according to the 2020 Pew Report on Jewish Americans, 71% American Reform Jews are of Ashkenazi descent.[1] Given that kind of cultural dominance, it is understandable that "ashke-normativity" is the standard in the majority of URJ affiliated congregations. Most Jews learn about Judaism from their families and in their synagogues. So, naturally, if one's family traditions are all Ashkenazi because of their heritage and one's synagogue only offers Ashkenazi traditions and perspectives in its programming, where do we expect such a Jew to learn about the incredible richness and vast array of Jewish traditions from across the globe? Moreover, if we allow the voice of our congregational programming to become narrowed to only ashke-normativity, how can we expect Jews from

[1] "Jewish Americans in 2020," Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, November 15, 2021, https://www.pewforum.org/2021/05/11/jewish-americans-in-2020/.

other backgrounds to feel at home either in prayer or community without holding any space for the voices of their heritages?

Accordingly, as houses of worship, as places of community, and as representatives of Judaism to our communities at large, it behooves URJ congregations to do more to educate our communities about the many *eidot* that make up the global diaspora of *Am Yisrael*. I offer this adult education curriculum on three culturally rich and distinct *eidot* as a step in that direction. In this exploration of Persian, Turkish, and Moroccan Jewish customs, history, ritual, and more, learners will have the opportunity to explore aspects of Judaism that may not have been accessible to them in the past. In each region, each of these groups interacted with different majority populations and cultures, experienced distinct political climates, and developed unique customs and cultures over time, as have all Jewish populations. And yet, we remain one Jewish people.

Unit I: Persian Jewry

Outcomes and Desired Understandings

Enduring Understandings

- Persia is home to the oldest Diaspora community and the birthplace of the kernels of modern Judaism
- Persian Jews have rich religious and cultural heritage shaped by the many religions, languages, cultures around which it evolved
- Persian Jewish art (literature, music, etc) is heavily influenced by but distinct from mainstream Persian art
- There are many ways to look, sound, and be Jewish

Essential Questions

- What does Persian Judaism sound like? What does Persian Judaism look like? What does Persian Judaism taste like?
- What is the significance of the fact that this is the oldest continuous Diaspora community?
- How has Persian Jewish culture and practice been influenced by the surrounding cultures and many religions?

Learner Outcomes

Knowing: Learners will be able to identify major moments in Mediterranean and Middle Eastern Jewish history and recognize characteristic elements of the language, food, music, and religious practices of different Jewish communities. They will understand the ways in which each Jewish community has been shaped by surrounding cultures and historical trends surrounding them.

Doing: Learners will engage with unfamiliar Jewish traditions and perspectives, expanding their

understanding of how a person can live Jewishly.

Believing: Learners will be able to conceptualize their role in the broader Jewish world and imagine what it would have been to be part of another diaspora and what that means for sustaining culture and heritage.

Belonging: By developing a deeper understanding of with Jews of different backgrounds, learners will strengthen their connection to their Jewish community and the entirety of the Jewish people in all its complexity.

Evidence of Learning

Learners will be encouraged to take notes in the form of Know-Want to Know-Learned (KWL) in a chart. This way they can easily jot down their thoughts in an organized way and later come back to those notes at the end of each lesson as a reflection. That reflection will allow for questions such as: What questions do you have? What else would you like to know?

Example KWL chart:

Know	Want to Know	Learned

Content Description

Topic	Lesson Objectives	Core Concepts
The History of Persian Jewry	Establish a general understanding of Persian Jewish history in broad brushstrokes as the oldest diaspora community. Learners should take away an appreciation of the strength of the community's ties to Persia, their uniqueness among the eidot, and their historical significance to all of modern Jewry.	As the oldest diaspora community, Persian Jews hold a unique place of influence in the development of global Jewish culture while at the same time have a culture and a history completely unique to themselves and their own experience.
Life Cycle Events for Persian Jews	Learners will come to understand some of the rich celebratory traditions of Persian Jewish life cycle events. They are deeply rooted in Jewish tradition with practices observed by Jews around the world. However, they also include practices unique to the Jews of Iran, with origins in Persian folk traditions, Zoroastrianism, and regional superstitions.	Religious life holds its sanctity, retaining its practices based in Jewish text, but Jewish celebrations can also incorporate non-Jewish, regional traditions from the dominant culture.
Sounds of Persian Jewry	Persian Jewish music and poetry are closely tied, often using music to highlight poetry, both for sacred and secular texts. And because music's morality was questioned by many Persian Muslim dynasties, the great Persian musicians were often Jewish and the sounds of Muslim and Jewish Persian music are inextricably linked.	In the interplay between dominant and minority cultures, Persian music and Jewish Perisian music are inextricably linked with each other. Neither would be what it is today without the influence of the other over the course of history.
A Taste of Persia	Cooking and eating the food from another culture while learning about it makes it more tangible and immediate. Cooking and tasting Persian Jewish cuisine will invite predominantly Ashkenazi learners to broaden their perspective on what constitutes traditional Jewish food.	Minority cultures tend to adopt the culinary practices of the majority cultures in which they live, adapting them to suit their own cultural, religious, and dietary needs.
Persian Jews Outside of Iran	The majority of Persian Jews now live outside of Iran, most in Israel, Los Angeles, or Long Island. Yet many who initially left Iran because of the Islamic Revolution intended to return and still feel a deep sense	Identity inherently changes when shifting from a united minority in one country to a diaspora minority within other groups. Persian Jewish identity is not the same in Israel as

	of longing for their homeland. Do their children and grandchildren feel the same way? Does Persian Jewish identity hold the same potency for third and fourth generation Americans or Israelis as it did for their immigrant predecessors? How does Zionism fit into this?	it is in Los Angeles, nor is it the same in Los Angeles as it is in a city such as Chicago with a large Jewish population, but a small Persian Jewish population.

Introduction

It is nearly impossible to discuss the Jews of Persia with any kind of brevity: they are the original diaspora community, dating back to before the destruction of the first Temple and the Babylonian Exile in 586 BCE. Since that time, Persian Jews have been one of the most historically significant and the Jewish community with the longest continuous presence anywhere in the world. Because of this, arguably more than any other *eida* of the global diaspora, Persian Jewry has baked into its traditions a deep connection to their homeland as much as or possibly even more so than to the land of Israel. From biblical references to the many dynasties they survived to their religious and cultural innovations to the still strong although somewhat scattered community today, Persian Jewish culture and history represent a spirit of innovation, tradition, and resilience.

History

Jewish settlement in Persian lands is chronicled in the Bible, and can be traced back almost 3,000 years. In 2 Kings 17 and 18, we read of King Sargon II requiring conquered Israelites to move to areas now in the north and west of modern Iran, estimated to have occurred around 721 BCE. A much greater number of Jews migrated to Persia by choice, however, after

King Cyrus II the Great conquered the Babylonians and granted the Israelites the freedom to return to their homeland, build the Second Temple, and worship freely. This event in 539 BCE had such significance that it bore retelling in the books of Ezra and Chronicles.[2] And yet, while many chose to return to Israel to rebuild the Temple and restore the worship and ritual that entailed, many were happy with the lives they had created in exile, electing to stay in Babylonia. Still others found Cyrus II's kindly policy towards them appealing and moved east into the land of Persia.

Little evidence exists of Jewish life under Achaemenid rule (599-330 BCE) inside of Persia, but the biblical accounts of Ezra and Nehemiah's positions of significant political influence would suggest that Jews lived quite freely and well in this period of Persian history. Also some evidence indicates that Jews in this period interacted broadly with non-Jews in Persia. For example, plenty of non-Jews had the name "Shabbetai", a name clearly derived from "Shabbat" and the name "Mordecai" is derived from the Assyro-Babylonian god Marduk.[3] From the end of the Achaemenid era to the Parthian period (roughly 240 BCE-226 CE), external historical evidence of Jews becomes even more limited. As the Persian empire began to grow, it appears that Jews were more spread out in farms and villages across the Middle East than any other minority group under Persian reign.[4]

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[2] Houman Sarshar, "Judeo Persian Communities i. Introduction," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, (New York: Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation, Inc., 2012), pp. 89-90, accessed online at https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/judeo-persian-communities-of-iran-i-introduction.
[3] Mayer I. Gruber, "Judeo Persian Communities ii. Achaemenid Period," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (New York: Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation, Inc., 2012), pp. 90-96, accessed online at https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/judeo-persian-communities-ii-achaemenid-period.
[4] Jacob Neusner, "Judeo Persian Communities iii. Parthian and Sasanian Periods," in *Encyclopædia Iranica* (New York: Encyclopædia Iranica Foundation, Inc, 2012), pp. 96-103, accessed online at https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/judeo-persian-communities-iii-parthian-and-sasanian-periods.

The first time Jewish autonomy as a minority in Persia was threatened as a religious minority was under Sasanian rule (226-634 CE). As soon as they came to power, the Sasanians declared Zoroastrianism the official religion of Persia and sought its revival. This effort was likely aimed towards the new Christian religion of their rival empire, Rome, but all of the religious minorities within Persia (including Jews, Christians, Bhuddists, Hindus, and anyone otherwise considered a heretic by Sasanian Zoroastrianism) felt its effects. Eventually, thanks to friendships between some of the great rabbis of the Babylonian Talmud and later Sasanian rulers, namely Shapur I and Shapur II, many of the restrictions against the Jews specifically were lifted. It did not protect them, however, from the political instability of the reigns of those two kings. The last three decades of Shapur II's reign in particular included war every year.[5]

The landscape of Persia and the entire surrounding area changed forever in the mid-7th century with the dawning of Islam. As Islam quickly took hold across the Middle East, a set of laws attributed to the Prophet Mohammad's successor, Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, deeply impacted the lives of religious minorities throughout the Muslim world: The Pact of 'Umar. The agreement stipulates that those categorized as *dhimmi* under Islamic law, non-Muslims which the Prophet Mohammad considered recipients of divinely revealed scripture (namely Jews and Christians), agree to many regulations in exchange for protection.[6] Zoroastrians posed a problem in the newly Islamic Persia as they were not a "People of the Book", but for the Jews of Persia, evidence indicates the transition was smooth.

No one knows whether they welcomed the Muslim conquest after the persecutions of the Sasanians, but despite being subjected to the *jizya* (the poll-tax paid by all *dhimmi*) among other

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[5] Ibid.
[6] Mark R. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 52-55.

things, the Jewish population remained strong throughout Persia. It appears that during both the Umayyad and the ‘Abbasid caliphates, Persian Jews had a great deal of religious autonomy and it is probable that the farther they lived from Baghdad, the less strictly the restrictive *dhimmi* laws were enforced.[7] Persian Jews maintained strong ties with the Rabbinic academies of Babylonia (the sources of the Babylonian Talmud), and Persia was a similarly fertile region for religious creativity and life at this time. However, while that may have been the dominant practice, the Karaite movement (the greatest challenge to Rabbinic Judaism) grew significantly popular in Persia at this time as well.[8]

The Mongol conquest that followed is not terribly well documented as regards Jewish life. Their reign was short lived, lasting just over a century (1256-1370). It is clear, however, that at least a few Jews held a great deal of political power within the Mongol capital of Tabriz. It was also a great period in the history of Persian Jewish literature, which indicates that the Jews and Mongols had a symbiotic relationship.[9] Unfortunately, no information currently exists about Jewish life under the following two periods of Iranian history, Timurid and Qarā Qoyunlu-Āq Qoyunlu. However, with the establishment of the Safavid dynasty in 1502, that begins to change.

Shah Esmā’il I founded the Safavid dynasty and first began the campaign to compel all of Persia to become Shi’ite. While he did not hold any sympathy for Jews, his priorities sat with Sunni Muslims and with military threats such as the Āq Qoyunlu he had just overthrown and the Ottomans. Once the dynasty was established and the dominance of Shi’ite Islam secure, many of his successors chose to target the Jews, who experienced intermittent times of persecution. One

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[7] Vera Basch Moreen, “Judeo-Persian Communities iv. Medieval to Late 18th Century,” in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, pp. 103-108, accessed online at, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/judeo-persian-communities-iv-medieval-to-late-18th-century.
[8] Ibid., accessed online.
[9] Ibid.

of the most egregious occurred under Shah ‘Abbās II, whose grand vizier attempted to forcibly convert the entire Jewish population of Persia between 1656 and 1662. Most of the population publicly converted and practiced Judaism in secret. The Grand Vizier’s efforts were ultimately his downfall and his orders were revoked by the Shah.[10] In another instance, Shi’ite theologians blamed Jews and their prayers for a drought, resulting in the execution of a rabbi and two other prominent community members in Isfahan. Jews were certainly not alone in experiencing persecution as a religious minority in Persia at this time. Zoroastrians, Christian Armenians, and Sufis all knew similar intolerance under the Safavids.[11] Unsurprisingly, along with this period of religious persecution, Jews were also much less financially secure than they had been in the middle ages, having declined from commercial trade to the working class.[12] While the *jizya* did not waver, keeping Jews economically strained, the religious freedom and protection it was meant to purchase them as *dhimmi* lost much of their meaning under Safavid rule.

Another gap in specific references to Jewish Persian life exists from the Afshar (1736-1795) and Zand (1750-1796) dynasties in their respective parts of Persia, but the production of Judeo-Persian literature of this period suggests some improvement in their status, despite the period being one of significant social and political instability.[13] Details of Jewish history return with the Qajar dynasty (1779-1924), one which until the 1860s maintained the same harsh policies towards Jews held by the Safavids. Internal problems within the empire grew as Persia experienced famines, fiscal struggles, military territory losses to Russia in 1820 and

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[10] Vera Basch Moreen, “The Jews in Iran,” in *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations from the Origins to the Present Day*, ed. Abdelwahab Meddeb, Benjamin Stora, Jane Marie Todd, and Michael B. Smith, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 239-247, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fgz64.19, 240-1.
[11] Vera Basch Moreen, “Judeo-Persian Communities iv. Medieval to Late 18th Century,” in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, accessed online.
[12] Vera Basch Moreen, “The Jews in Iran,” in *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations from the Origins to the Present Day*, 241.
[13] Ibid., 242.

1860, failures in diplomatic dealings with the British in Afghanistan, and more.[14] It led to widespread displeasure among the populace and, as it often does in times of such hardship, antisimitic scapegoating and violence rose sharply. Not only were Persian Jews likely facing their greatest financial constraints yet, they also faced violent mobs, blood libel accusations, forced conversions, and, in many communities, near or actual annihilation. Between the 1790s and 1860s these kinds of persecutions happened in Tabriz, Shiraz, Mashhad, Barfurush, and several others.[15] In every way, this was the nadir of Judeo-Persian history.

The situation of the Jews began to shift somewhat after the establishment of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) in 1860, a French organization that provided financial, political, and social aid to Jews in various parts of the world. In 1898 the AIU established schools, as well, providing modern, western education to Persian Jews, which made them valuable to Persia in foreign business and diplomacy by the early 20th century.[16] Then the greatest change yet came in the form of the Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911). Prior to the revolution, Jews had virtually no legal protections or rights. They could not be witnesses in Muslim courts, the blood price for a murdered Jew was 10% of that for a murdered Muslim, a Muslim could inherit from a Jew but not the other way around, and so on. However, under the constitution, a new level of equality existed for religious minorities. The *jizya* was eliminated and taxation made equal regardless of religion as were general legal rights. However, certain matters, like holding the office of Minister, remained the privilege of Muslims only.[17] And although the constitution did improve Jewish legal status in Iran and establish a certain level of equality for religious minorities in general, the

[14] Ibid., 242.
[15] Ibid., 242.
[16] Daniel Tsadik, "Encyclopædia Iranica," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, pp. 108-112, accessed December 2021, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/judeo-persian-communities-v-qajar-period.
[17] Ibid.

Judeo-Persian community still struggled. It did not end the centuries-old anti-Jewish sentiments that surrounded them, nor the violence, generational poverty, and other hardships that entailed. At this point, the time of the Second Aliyah, a great number of Persian Jews fled Iran for Ottoman controlled Palestine. Some went to escape the continued persecution they experienced despite the would-be protections of the constitution, others out of Zionist enthusiasm and belief.[18]

This wave of emmigration, however, ended under the reign of Reza Shah (1925-1941). He held a strong nationalist ideology to unite and modernize Iran after World War I, looking to foster a common Persian identity from before the establishment of Islam. He was staunchly anti-communist and anti-Zionist, and blocked Judeo-Persian attempts at Aliyah during his reign. He went so far as to arrest and eventually execute Šemuʾel Ḥaim, the head of the Iranian Zionist organization.[19] On the other hand, Reza Shah's policies were particularly favorable to Zoroastrianism because of his interest in pre-Islamic Persian identity, and other religious minorities benefited from his policies indirectly. He enforced the laws of religious equality established under the Constitutional Revolution and repealed all of the discriminatory laws against Jews, allowing them to matriculate into schools, a broader variety of jobs, and society at large. While many cities had long each had their respective Jewish quarter, or *mehallah*, many Jews chose to now move out of the *mehallah* and live within broader Persian society.[20]

The Shah's focus on pre-Islamic Persian culture stirred pride in Judeo-Persian identity and brought the vast majority of Jews in Iran to his side in his nationalist endeavors. The biblical narrative of Persia and the Jews, dating back to Cyrus the great, tells of opportunity, prosperity,

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[18] Ibid.
[19] Orly R Rahimiyan, "Encyclopædia Iranica," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, pp. 124-132, accessed December 2021, www.iranicaonline.org/articles/judeo-persian-vi-the-pahlavi-era-1925-1979.
[20] Ibid.

and fair minded rulers. Yet the Shah's nationalism held within it an element of Aryan race theory and eugenics, as well, holding strong ties with Nazi Germany which fanned a new kind of racial anti-Semitism in Iran.[21] So, when Allied forces began occupying Iran and Mohammad Reza Shah succeeded his father's reign in 1941, political foment followed. Some 20 political parties formed and many newspapers began circulating appealing to those various political interest groups. The new Shah, who still held power despite western occupiers, was primarily interested in severing any remaining Nazi ties, but they brought with them an unprecedented freedom of the press. Among the Jews, some remained loyal to Persia, while others resumed their Zionist activities. Three of the 15 branches of Ha-Khalutz, the movement of kibbutz settlers, were in Tehran by 1947. In the 1950s, they were responsible for the immigration of thousands of Iranian Jews to the new State of Israel.[22]

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 created a precarious situation for the of Jews in Iran, as the Shah and his government did not support it, nor did Iranian Muslims or their clerics. The Judeo-Persian population of roughly 90,000-100,000, with some 30,000 residing in Tehran shrank by one third by 1953 through migration to Israel. With the approval of the Shah, Iran also assisted many Iraqi Jews fleeing to Israel. Despite their issues with Israel and continuing internal anti-Jewish sentiments, the Iranian government decided to officially recognize the State of Israel in 1950. By the mid-1950s, Iranian-Israeli relations were strong, as were Iranian-Western ties in general. In 1963 Mohammad Reza Shah declared the White Revolution, introducing major reforms intended to overhaul and modernize Iranian society, promising massive opportunities for Iranian Jews and women in particular.[23] For Persian Jewry, this was

[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

considered the golden age. They had more rights and liberties than ever before, their economic statuses improved, they had pride in their identities as Jews and as Iranians, and took advantage of the rapidly changing urban landscape and new economy jobs. They became key players in finance, trade, pharmaceuticals, textiles, shipping and imports, and more largely because they lived in cities already and moved quickly into these commercial businesses as they became available.

However, for the religious establishment in Iran, the Shah's reforms were unacceptable. Tensions mounting since 1963 and a movement with strong anti-Israel rhetoric and sentiments lead by Ayatollah Ruḥ-Allāh Musawi Ḵomeyni resulted in the Islamic Revolution of 1979. In the aftermath of the revolution, 60,000 of Iran's roughly 80,000 Jews fled, most to the United States or Israel, some to Europe.[24] Ayatollah Ḵomeyni did try to assuage the fears of the Jews who did stay, issuing a fatwa that distinguished Jews from Zionists and stating that Jews were still protected by the Iranian government as People of the Book.

In 2019, the Jewish population of Iran was 8,300. The country still has 100 synagogues, 30 of which are in Tehran, but only 20 are active and there has not been a rabbi or functioning beit din in Iran since 1994. Hebrew is forbidden as a language of Jewish instruction and Jewish students are taught an Islamic curriculum. Only once a week do they study Hebrew and they must attend school on Saturdays as Shabbat has no legal recognition.[25] And so, while a small Jewish community still exists in Iran, the great Judeo-Persian tradition now carries on primarily in its new population centers of Israel, Los Angeles, and Long Island as the yoke of the Islamic

[24] Ibid.
[25] "Jews of Iran," 2021. https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jews-of-iran, accessed December 2021.

Republic is too heavy for religious minorities to sustain much tradition however nominally they posses the right of religious freedom.

Language

Judeo-Persian has always had many regional dialects. Like most Jewish languages, it is characterized by the fact that it is spoken solely by Jews and is written in Hebrew characters. A great deal of Aramaic was also spoken in the earliest era of Judeo-Persian history, but the Jews of Persia quickly adapted their own form of Farsi. It is unique among the Jewish languages of the word in that it has relatively few Hebrew words, staying more closely a dialect of Farsi than an amalgamation of Farsi and Hebrew. Judeo-Persian speakers call their language Farsi (it may have been Parsi in Early Judeo-Persian), while non-Jews refer to it with the slur "*jidi"* ("Jewish"). In the 20th century, during the Pahlavi dynasty, as Jews became increasingly integrated into normative Persian society and received general education instead of Jewish, Judeo-Persian became less and less common and Jews began to adopt standard Farsi as their own.[26]

Religious Practices Life and Cycle Customs

Persian Jewish life cycle observances included customs both from Jewish tradition and the many non-Jewish traditions which surrounded them. The practices were not well documented historically, but were passed from generation to generation through practice and tradition, and

[26] Thamar E. Gindin, "Encyclopædia Iranica," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, accessed December 2021, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/judeo-persian-viii-judeo-persian-language.

shared between Jewish communities throughout Iran by word of mouth. More recently these observances have been put in writing for posterity.[27]

A significant holiday celebrated by people of many faiths throughout the Middle East and central Asia in regions that were once the Persian Empire, and in the Jewish world only celebrated by those of Persian descent, is Nowruz: the Persian new year. It is celebrated on the Spring equinox (March 21 on the Gregorian calendar). It is a several day celebration with picnics, music in the streets, social gatherings, and visits to friends and neighbors to wish them blessings in the coming year. On the eve of Nowruz, people celebrate with special foods, family gatherings and celebrations, bonfires, and more. Some of those ceremonial foods include fruits and nuts, special sweets including cookies made with chickpea flour flavored with cardamom and pistachios and almond cookies flavored with rosewater to name just a couple. The main course is typically fish served with rice pilaf, as well as a cheese or yogurt, and there are also special breads for the holiday. Many people of various religions believe that the dead can return to their loved ones on Nowruz.[28]

Part of the celebration on the eve of Nowruz is the *Haft-seen* table. *Haft-sin* meaning literally "seven-S", the number seven and the Farsi letter *seen* having to do with the Zoroastrian origins of the holiday. In modern celebration, *Haft-seen* now more simply refers to the table laid with seven specific items that begin in Farsi with said letter: sprouted greens in a dish, symbolizing renewal; a sweet wheat germ pudding called *samanu*, symbolizing strength and justice; Persian olive or dried oleaster berries, symbolizing wisdom; vinegar, symbolizing patience; apple, symbolizing beauty; garlic, symbolizing the cleansing of body and environment;

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[27] Donna Mashadi Azu (2010), 46.
[28] A. Shapur Shahbazi, "NOWRUZ ii. In the Islamic Period," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2016, available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/nowruz-ii (Accessed 5 January 2022).

and sumac, symbolizing sunrise.[29] Some families also include an egg for fertility, a mirror for reflection, and a holy book (such as a siddur or a book of Psalms in a Jewish household, or a Quran in a Muslim one, for example).

Birth

Among the Jews of Iran, pregnancy is a time of great family support and togetherness, and upon the birth of the baby, a most joyous celebration follows. On the first Shabbat following the birth, special prayers are recited in the *kenisa* (synagogue) and the father is invited to have the honor of an Aliyah (to read from the Torah). Baby girls would receive their name during services on that Shabbat.[30] Similar to many other Jewish communities, the ceremony of *brit milah* (circumcision) would take place eight days after birth of a boy in the parents' home. The ritual, associated with the prophet Elijah, who was believed to guard children, included ritual objects such as *sandali-ye elyahu hannavi* (the prophet Elijah's chair) to invite Elijah so that he come and protect the baby and the staff of Elija to rest by the cradle for a few weeks to ward off the evil eye.[31] The rabbi or *mollah* (religious leader) performed the ritual while the father and one other man held the baby, and while the prayers were said the women would ululate *kels* (a high pitched, guttural call of ki-li-li-li) whenever they heard the baby's name. All the guests were provided with fruits and nuts and rose water so that they could each say the appropriate blessings, and the ceremony was followed by a celebration with food, music, and dancing.[32]

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[29] Aylin Sedighi-Gabbaizadeh, "For Persian Jews, Passover Isn't the Only Major Spring Holiday," Kveller, March 19, 2021, https://www.kveller.com/for-persian-jews-passover-isnt-the-only-major-spring-holiday/.
[30] Ibid., 47-48.
[31] Ibid., 47.
[32] Ibid., 48.

After the birth of a baby of either sex, Persian Jews followed a mainstream Persian custom and superstition called *shab-e shishi* (sixth night). It required that a midwife take a skewer or other flat blade and draw an imaginary line around the walls of the room three times in order to protect both mother and baby from the evil doer known as *Al*, believed to snatch new babies and cause death to new mothers. Superstition dictated that without this ritual, the mother would become violently ill and die. The midwife would also use water dyed with turmeric to paint a dot on the ankles and wrists of mother and baby and family and friends would bring gifts of gold and clothing for the baby.[33]

Bar Mitzvah

Jewish boys in most parts of the world traditionally celebrate becoming *bar mitzvah* at the age of 13. However, in Iran, it was not uncommon for boys to learn and recite the blessings for before and the reading of a Torah portion at the age of six or seven, celebrating his first *aliyah l'Torah* (going up to the Torah) on the occasion of wrapping *tefillin* (phylacteries worn on the forehead and left arm during morning prayer) for the first time. The right of passage, known as *tefillin-bandan*, was less age specific than *bar mitzvah*, however. Some families waited until the age of 13 for this ceremony, while others waited until their sons reached their mid-teens.[34]

Tefillin-bandan typically happened on a Monday or Thursday, days that Torah is traditionally read. The night before, friends and family would gather in the parents' home, eating sweets, drinking tea, and studying the Torah portion all night long. Then at dawn, the boy would go to the *kenisa* with everyone gathered, wrap his *tefillin* for the first time and do his first *aliyah*.

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[33] Ibid., 48.
[34] Sara S. Soroudi, "'The Life Cycle,'" in *Iran*, ed. Haim Saadoun (Tel Aviv: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2005), pp. 219-232, 224.

The next Shabbat morning, he would go to the *kenisa* again, this time to chant the Haftarah, a selection from the Prophets and women would throw candies and nuts down from their section in the balcony when he finished.[35] That evening, the family would host a dinner open to anyone in the community and those who chose to attend were expected to bring modest gifts for the boy in celebration.

For most of Judeo-Persian history, girls had no parallel coming of age celebration or ceremony. However, during the Pahlavi dynasty, as religious equality and gender equality were both among the reforms of interest in the 20th century, some Jewish schools were established in Tehran, and some of those had a program for girls between the ages of 12 and 13. It gave them the opportunity to stand up in front of their parents and peers, sing a few songs, and receive a small gift to mark their coming of age as well.[36]

Marriage

Well into the 20th century, most often Jewish parents in Iran arranged their children's marriages. A girl could be betrothed as young as nine or ten, but needed to be betrothed by 15. A girl not yet betrothed at 16 was considered *torshid-eh* (spoiled). Meanwhile, boys were generally betrothed in their late teens or early twenties.[37] Parents tried to match their children with spouses from families of similar financial status to their own, although exceptions could be made for a particularly well educated boy or a particularly beautiful girl. Only in particularly difficult cases

[35] Ibid., 224.
[36] Mashadi Azu, 50.
[37] Soroudi, "'The Life Cycle,'" 224.

would parents seek a matchmaker, otherwise they went through their own social networks, and left it to their own discretion whether or not to take their chilrens' opinions into consideration.[38]

Upon making a match, each family would scrutinize the other to make sure the match was agreeable, down to observing a potential wife in the public bath to make sure she was healthy. If they chose to proceed, they drew up a dowry contract called a *shattar*, sometimes stipulating protections for the bride in case of divorce.[39] [It is worth noting that evidence exists from the Elephantine Papyri from the Achaemenid period of *ketubot* (Jewish marriage contracts) which allow women and men alike to initiate divorce, so this kind of gendered protection goes very far back in Judeo-Persian history and culture.[40]] With the business completed, the bride's parents would give an engagement celebration called *Shirini-Khoran* (the eating of sweetmeats). It would begin in the afternoon with just the women, involving a great deal of dancing around the bride, the two families coming together, with joyful *kels* and clapping. In the evening the men would join the celebration for dinner, at which point he would receive gifts from the bride's family.[41]

A typical engagement lasted as long as two years, during which time the bride's family would prepare the household supplies that the young couple would need and the two families could get to know each other. The groom would visit the bride and her family each Saturday evening and most holidays.[42] When the time of the wedding came, the celebration lasted five or six days, starting on Monday (made sacred by the reading of Torah) and ending on Shabbat. First the bride with female friends and relatives would visit the *hammam* (public bath), then have a

[38] Ibid., 225.
[39] Ibid., 225.
[40] Mayer I. Gruber, "Judeo Persian Communities ii. Achaemenid Period," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica, 95.*
[41] Ibid., 226.
[42] Ibid., 226.

henna party that evening at the bride's home, called a *hana-bandan*, in which they would decorate the bride's hands, feet, and forehead as well as cover her hair with henna. They would then return to the *hammam* the next day to wash the henna from her hair while musicians entertained them.[43]

Jews in the city of Mashhad had a unique custom. That day, they had a Muslim wedding ceremony with a marriage contract in Farsi and then a Jewish ceremony the next day with a *ketubah* in Hebrew and only family present.[44] For most Persian Jews, however, the Jewish wedding ceremony took place that evening in the bride's family home. During the ceremony, four male relatives or friends would hold the *chuppah* (wedding canopy) and a few children would stand behind the wedding couple rubbing sugar cones together so as to make crystals fall on them and bring them a sweet life together.[45] There also were many superstitions for warding off the evil eye in this wedding tradition. One member of the family would open and close a pair of scissors throughout the ceremony to keep the evil eye away. Another opened and closed a lock with a key to ensure the quality of the bride and groom's sexual relations.[46] However, despite the fact that they were now married, they could not yet be alone together, so after that evening's celebrations the bride would stay at her home and the groom would return to his.

The next day the bride would go back to the *hammam*, returning this time heavily made up and dressed in white tulle adorned with silver or gold embroidery. A group of people would process with the groom at sunset from his house to hers to escort her by candlelight to her new home for that evening's gala. Upon their arrival at the groom's house, the *molla* would sacrifice a

[43] Mashadi-Azu, 53.
[44] Soroudi, "'The Life Cycle,'" 227.
[45] Mashadi-Azu., 53.
[46] Soroudi, "'The Life Cycle,'" 227.

sheep at the threshold of the house so that the bride could step over its blood for good luck, but first the groom would go up to the roof and throw a few apples towards her. Upon entering the house, the bride would be greeted by one of her new husband's male relatives to her new home. The bride and groom would then be seated side by side, and the bride's right hand and foot placed atop the groom's left hand and foot respectively, and their intertwined limbs are ritually washed. While this happens, the mother of the bride ties a small bundle of bread, cheese, and herbs around her daughter's waist.[47] When the ritual is complete, the newlyweds are finally alone together for the first time in the bridal chamber. However, the bride's family waits nearby all night because in the morning the wedding couple must provide proof of the bride's virginity until that night in the form of a bloodied bedsheet.[48]

That Friday evening, the bride's family brought her dowry and gifts for the groom to her new home where they were set on display. That Shabbat was known as *Shabbat Chatan* (the groom's Shabbat), and in the morning the whole family would go together to the *kenisa*. The groom was called to the Torah for an *aliyah* and the bride wore an embroidered *charghad* (a special headscarf) given to her as a gift from her new mother-in-law.[49] Sweets were served all day, especially *noghl*, a candy made of ground nuts, sugar, and egg whites. The groom's parents hosted a large shabbat meal for up to 100 people going late into the afternoon, with entertainment from musicians and dancers, gifts of gold and money for the wedding couple, and large amounts of food and *arak* (a strong anise drink) for all.

In modern Iran, aspects of this elaborate wedding ritual are still observed, but the celebration has been shortened. The bride now carries a bouquet of flowers and wears a short veil

[47] Mashadi-Azu, 55.
[48] Soroudi, "'The Life Cycle,'" 228.
[49] Ibid., 228.

during the dinner. The sheep sacrifice still happens, but most couples now spend their first few nights of marriage in a hotel rather than the family home and the bridal sheet tradition is less strictly observed than it once was.[50]

Death

The rituals around death and mourning in Iran may be the most closely related to all other Jewish rituals around the same life cycle event. It is observed according to *halakha* (Jewish law) with very little external cultural influence. Each Jewish community across Iran had its own cemetery with all of the graves positioned so that the heads of the deceased face Jerusalem. Burial generally took place the day after death, with all of the rituals (washing and shrouding the body) taking place at the cemetery. The body was then placed in an open box and carried to the grave while Psalms were read until the body was lowered into the earth and the grave was filled. The men then recited the mourner's *kaddish* and rose water was sprinkled over the grave.[51]

After the burial, a *molla* would come to the house of the mourners each day during the period of *shiva* in Hebrew or *haft ruz* in Farsi, the first seven days of mourning, to read psalms. During this period mourners wore black and sat on mattresses on the floor and did nothing. A candle called a *ner neshama* (light of the soul) burned the entire time in their home. They drank coffee instead of tea and ate no sweets. Food was provided for them by the community and people would visit each day in numbers easily enough to form a *minyan* or *asara* in Farsi, the necessary quorum of 10 Jewish adult men *halakhically* required for prayers.[52] On the final day of *shiva*, mourners left their home for the first time since the burial to return to the cemetery and

[50] Mashadi-Azu, 56.
[51] Soroudi, "'The Life Cycle,'" 230.
[52] Ibid., 230.

visit the grave. Upon leaving they washed their hands and faces, praying. They then went to the *hammam* to bathe, which was meant to help cleanse them of their grief.[53]

During the period of *shloshim*, the first 30 days of mourning, male mourners did not shave. Some Judeo-Persian communities adopted the Muslim custom of a 40 day mourning period, extending the observance of *shloshim* restrictions by 10 days. At the end of *shloshim*, the mourners would return to the grave to unveil it. For the first year, women wore only black and none of the family attended celebrations (particularly ones where there would be music or other entertainment). The annual memorial of a loved one's death is known as *zakharun* or *sal*. On the first *sal*, the family would gather once more at the grave to place a flat stone marker at the head of the grave, after which they returned home to recite *kaddish* and the *molla* joined them to read psalms and other Jewish texts in both Hebrew and Farsi. That evening, the year of grieving would finally end with a celebratory, social, colorful dinner and the mourners would resume a full, normal life without the restrictions of mourning.

Music

One cannot easily separate Judeo-Persian music from the larger genre of secular Persian music as the two are intrinsically linked, having influenced each other for centuries. In millennia long traditions passed down entirely by oral tradition, coexisting cultures cannot help but impact one another. While perhaps sacred Judeo-Persian music is somewhat more removed from the rest of Persian music, because of the Shi'ite restrictions against Muslim participating in the performing arts, through much of Persian history Jews were among the most important musicians throughout the land and helped to form the Persian classical music tradition. The transliterations

[53] Mashadi-Azu, 58.

to Judeo-Persian of the works of the great Persian poets of the middle ages suggest that Jewish musicians participated in their musical performance dating back to as early as the 14th century. iIt also is clear that the rise of Shi'a Islam under the Safavids gave rise to the number of professional Jewish musicians in Persia. Shirazi Jews in particular have long been considered by many the greatest musicians in Iran.[54]

Professional Music

Jewish musicians most often played in ensembles. Historically, these were relatively large, comprising six to nine musicians. They called for: "one or two *tar* (lute) players, one or two *kemanje* (spiked fiddle), one or two *zarb* (single-headed drum), one dohol (double-headed drum), one *di'ira* (frame drum), and either a *setar* (small three-stringed lute) or *nay* (flute)."[55] Most of these musicians were multi-instrumentalists and at least one had to be a vocalist as well. By the mid-20th century, the ensembles were generally smaller (often four musicians), and the *kemanje* had been replaced by the violin.[56]

The professional musical tradition of the Jews of Shiraz was colloquially synonymous with the word *motreb* (musician) until the 1950s. At the beginning of the 20th century, 60 professional musicians called Shiraz home, all of whom were Jewish. By comparison, the capital city of Tehran with a much larger Jewish population, was home to 30 or 40. The *motreb* generally trained within their own families, father to son and nephew and son-in-law (women were excluded from such training). Outsiders seldom asked to be let into these musical dynasties,

[54] Laurence D. Loeb, "The Jewish Musician and the Music of Fars," *Asian Music* 4, no. 1 (1972): pp. 3-14, https://doi.org/10.2307/834137, 5.
[55] Ibid., 6.
[56] Ibid., 6.

because much as they were central to social life and the work was lucrative, musicians were looked down upon and the lifestyle was dangerous. It involved a great deal of intra-city travel in an era when travel was highly unsafe, especially for a Jew, not to mention living at the whim of the Shah and his officials, being required to play at public executions and all kinds of other unsavory events.[57] And yet, the *motrebs* were in constant demand.

> No Persian could entertain guests, whether at home or in a garden, without a musical performance. No celebration, Jewish or non-Jewish, was complete without music. Music and poetry were intellectual stimuli to the Persian, turning his thoughts from the mundane to the philosophic. But music, accompanied by dance, frequently acted as sexual stimulus as well, sometimes causing private gatherings to be transformed into sexual orgies.[58]

Given the atmosphere and the high social pressure on sexual propriety, it is no wonder that music was so necessary but being a musician was considered so demeaning. It should not, however, be taken as a reflection of the *motreb*'s musical ability or skill. On the contrary, before radios and gramophones became common household appliances in Iran in the mid-20th century, all of Persian society depended on the *motreb* for the continuation of Persian musical tradition.[59]

Synagogue Music

The sacred music of Persian Jews remained much more protected from external musical influences. A.Z. Idelsohn, the first musicologist to collect and analyze Persian Jewish synagogue music, characterized it as similar in quality and form to that of Yemenite Jews, arguing that the

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[57] Ibid., 7-8.
[58] Ibid., 8.
[59] Houman Sarshar, "Encyclopædia Iranica," in *Encyclopædia Iranica* (Encyclopædia Iranica Foundation, Inc., April 17, 2012), https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/judeo-persian-xi-1-a-general-survey-of-persian-jewish-music.

music has a quality of sadness, pain, and mourning, particularly in reference to the music of *Slichot* and lamentations.[60] But, of course, synagogue music includes all liturgical chanting for Shabbat and holidays, Torah and Haftarah chanting, and more. This music is always a cappella, predominantly monophonic, and occasionally responsorial. It can be led by a *chazzan* (cantor), a rabbi, or any Jewish man with a pleasant voice and a working knowledge of the prayer service.

The *chazzan* generally chants within a tetrachord scale based around one of the *dastgah*, the modes of classical Persian music, some of which include quarter tones. While the *chazzan* may move from one mode to another, he must stay within a modest range of less than an octave, and is not meant to incorporate the *taḥrir* (yodeling) vocal technique or known melodies (*gushes*) from the standard canon of classical Persian repertoire.[61] The chanting is rhythmically free and unmetered, and even songs that are considered more metrical tend to change meter and tempo frequently. These songs are generally written with syllabic melodies allowing for a melismatic improvisation toward the end of the phrase, resolving to the *finalis* (the *dastgah* modal equivalent of a tonic in Western music theory). In this phrase, the *chazzan* has the opportunity to be freely expressive in the musical prayer.[62]

Para-liturgical music, poems for Shabbat and holidays sung mostly outside of but occasionally in the synagogue, does not adhere to such strict rules. Many borrow the *gushe* (melodies) of the *dastgah* system of classical Persian music. However, since few people had musical training and therefore did not know the details of the *dastgah* system, melodies often shifted, as they tend to do in folk and oral traditions, perhaps adhering to the singer's

[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.

interpretation rather than the original form of the melody.[63] While the vocal range is similarly narrow to that of synagogue music, staying largely within the tetrachord range, the greatest difference between synagogue and para-liturgical music is the use of instrumental accompaniment. Drums such as the *tombak* and *daf* were particularly popular for amateur musicians at any joyful occasion.[64]

Secular Jewish Song

Secular song is one of the places where the work of Persian Jewish poets has been able to shine. Without connection to the synagogue, but often used in connection to *smachot* (joyous life cycle events), there are songs sung at weddings, holidays, circumcisions, and more without specific religious significance. They have kept alive the works of great poets such as Shahin, ʻEmrāni, Aminā, and Simān-Tov Melammed.[65] Unfortunately, secular music is the most likely of these traditional musics to disappear, especially if no musicologists make an effort soon to collect it. Other secular music can easily replace this traditional Jewish secular music if no one makes it a priority and among younger Iranian Jews associate it with life in the *mehallah*, which they think of as the ghetto. They want to keep moving upwards socially, not move backwards, and so they prefer to listen to music that they don't associate with past struggles.[66]

[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.

Cuisine

Judeo-Persian cuisine holds characteristics of the culinary traditions from the diverse regions of Persia blended together as the Jews moved frequently, whether to pursue opportunity or flee persecution. When they moved, they carried with them the cuisines of where they had been and adopted the new traditions of where they went. Persian food, unlike most Middle Eastern cuisines, is not heavy with garlic, pepper, and heat, but rather full of herbs like cilantro, mint, chives, tarragon, and parsley. The flavor palette is characterized by a frequent combination of sweet, sour, and savory flavors, such as meat, sour fresh fruits, sweet dried fruits, nuts, and vegetables all in one dish. Turmeric is also a common flavor in Persian cooking, but the most important spice in a Persian kitchen, Jewish or otherwise, is saffron, used in both sweet and savory dishes. It can flavor rice or meat, or go into deserts, paired with other flavors like rose water, honey, or pistachio.[67]

By and large, the Persian diet comprises bread, rice, cheese, yogurt, eggs, vegetables, fresh and dried fruits, nuts, fish, meat, and a wide variety of herbs.[68] Some of the most popular traditional dishes include *dolmas* (grape leaves stuffed with rice, meat, herbs, preserves, or stews), *chelow-kabab* (broiled rice with roasted meat), *abgoosht* (a lamb stew with chickpeas, potatoes, dried limes, and spices), *fessenjan* (a chicken stew with walnuts and pomegranate served over rice).[69] While traditional non-Jewish Persian cuisine typically calls for cooking with animal fats, most Judeo-Persian food traditionally calls for vegetable oil exclusively for purposes

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[67] Faye Levy, *Feast from the Mideast: 250 Sun-Drenched Dishes from the Lands of the Bible* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2003), 6.
[68] Ibid., 6.
[69] Mukesh Kumar Sinha, *The Persian World: Understanding People, Polity, and Life in Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan* (Shandra, Delhi: Nagri Printers, 2005), 51.

of kashrut. For the same reason, the other major difference between Jewish and non-Jewish Persian food is that in most non-Jewish cooking, yogurt and meat often go together.

Culturally, hospitality is significant in all Jewish traditions, and food and hospitality go hand in hand. Of course it is a mitzvah for a Jew to invite guests into one's home and offer them the best one can. But shared meals were a way of sustaining family, community, and tradition, particularly living surrounded by Muslim society. Social gatherings centered around food. For the host, the more variety of food his wife could serve, the higher his status and the more his wife could show her skills.[70] For the Jews of Iran, food has always been about much more than physical sustenance.

[70] Hamstra, Suzanne. Interview: Cantor Donna Mashadi-Azu on Persian Jews in the US. Personal, April 22, 2021.

Lesson Outlines

Lesson 1: The History of Persian Jewry (scripted)

> Core Concept: As the oldest diaspora community, Persian Jews hold a unique place of influence in the development of global Jewish culture while at the same time have a culture and a history completely unique to themselves and their own experience.

Introductions (10 minutes)

- Learners share names, pronouns, why you decided to take this class
- Introduce concept of KWL notes - how and why

Ancient History (10 minutes)

- 2 Kings 17 & 18 - 718 BCE first Jews in Persia
- Destruction of the First Temple 586 BCE, Babylonian Exile
- Cyrus the Great
- Accounts in Ezra & Nehemia
- Origins of the Book of Esther

Sasanian Period (5 minutes)

- Zoroastrianism became the official religion of Persia
    - Dualistic religion (light vs. darkness)
    - Many religious minorities (Bhudists, Christians, Hindus) suffered under Sasanian rule, likely because of the rivalry between the Persian and Holy Roman Empires
    - Jews spared many of the worst indignities later on because of friendships between Jewish leaders and later Sasanian rulers

Early Islamic Period (5 minutes)

- Islamic Conquest - 7th century
    - Islam overtakes Zoroastrianism, although the earlier religion still colors Persian culture
    - PACT OF UMAR - *dhimma* status of Jews & Christians - *jizya,* restrictions, protections
    - Jews continued to be financially successful in Persia

Jewish Life is poorly documented for much of the middle ages, but mention the Mongol period and such

Safavid Period (5 minutes)

- Shi'ite dynasty, interested in specifically Shi'ite Islamisation of religious minorities, including Suni Muslims
- Jews, Zoroastrians, Christian Armenians, and Sufis alike endured violence, forced conversions, & generalized intolerance from citizens and government
- Financial status of Jews dropped under Safavids to working class (had been in commercial trade previously)
    - *Jizya* under Safavids becomes punitively harsh and stops affording Jews the protection it is supposed to buy

Afshar and Zand Dynasties
Almost no evidence of Jewish life, but Judeo-Persian literature from the late 18th & early 19th centuries indicate some improvement in financial status of Jews despite turbulent times in the Empire

Qajar dynasty (10 minutes)

- Upheld the Safavid's harsh policies towards Jews until 1860
- Period of upheaval in Persia - military & territorial losses to Russia, failures of diplomacy with Europe, financial struggles, & famines
    - struggles lead to a sharp increase in anti-Jewish sentiment, scapegoating, and violence
    - Jew face blood libels, violent mobs, forced conversions, and massacres 1790-1860
        - Absolute low point in Judeo-Persian history
- Situation begins to improve thanks to the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU), est. 1860, a French organization that provided financial, political, and social aid to Jews in various parts of the world
    - Establishes Jewish schools 1898 - western educated Persian Jews have value to Persia in foreign business and diplomacy by the early 20th c
- Constitutional Revolution 1906-1911
    - End of *jizya* & *dhimmi* status
    - Jews are not fully equal citizens, and anti-Jewish sentiments are still strong, but they have many more legal rights and more parity under the law

Pahlavi dynasty (10 minutes)

- Reza Shah: nationalist, anti-Zionist, pro-religious equality
    - Focused on pre-Islamic national Persian identity, which was Zoroastrian, and his friendliness to Zoroastrians made his policies kind to other religious minorities as well

    - However, this nationalism also included elements of Aryan race theory and eugenics as well

- Mohammad Reza Shah
    - Succeeded his father at the beginning of WWII
    - Persia also occupied by Allied forces, mostly present to sever ties with Nazi Germany
    - Huge period of political foment with 20 political parties and at least as many newspapers - both unprecedented in the empire
    - Upon the establishment of the State of Israel, huge numbers of Persian Jews made aliyah and Iran was also an important place of passage for Iraqi Jews making aliyah
    - 1963 - White Revolution - modernizing reforms from the Shah
        - Huge financial and social opportunity for Jews, of which they quickly took advantage
        - Political blowback from the religious establishment in Iran lead to the Islamic Revolution lead by Ayatollah K̲omeyni in 1979

Islamic Republic (5 minutes)

- After the revolution 60,000 of Iran's roughly 80,000 Jews fled, most to the United States or Israel, some to Europe
- K̲homeyni issued fatwa that distinguished Jews from Zionists and stating that Jews were still protected by the Iranian government as People of the Book attempting to assuage the fears of Jews in Iran
- 2019: the Jewish population of Iran was 8,300
- Iran still has 100 synagogues, 30 in Tehran
    - only 20 are active
    - there has not been a rabbi or functioning beit din in Iran since 1994

If any time remains, invite questions from notes:

What was completely unfamiliar?

What do you want to know more about?

Provide opportunities for followup on those questions (reading, resources, etc.)

Lesson 2: Life Cycle Events for Persian Jews

Core Concept: Religious life holds its sanctity, retaining its practices based in Jewish text, but Jewish celebrations can also incorporate non-Jewish, regional traditions from the dominant culture.

Introduction: (15 minutes)

- Nowruz - Share segment of B'chol Lashon Kabbalat Shabbat/Nowruz live streamed program from 2021 (with permission) about how Nowruz is secular, celebrated by all Persians, and adaptable to the many religions of many Persians
- Discuss

Holiday Observances (20 minutes)

- Introduce particularities of holiday celebrations to Persian Jews, such as:
    - What cookies do Persian Jews eat at Purim rather than Hamentashen?
    - The role of green onions during a Persian Passover seder
    - What is zulubia and what holiday did Persian Jews adapt it to?
- Discussion - Suggested small group conversation topics: Have you ever encountered any of these traditions or ways of celebrating Jewish holidays among your extended Jewish community? What do you imagine it's like to be a Persian Jew in the US and encounter all of the Ashkenazi traditions that are so different from your own holiday practices? Life Cycle Observances (30 minutes)
- All have elements of both Jewish tradition and surrounding Persian culture

Divide class into 4 groups. Assign each a life cycle event. Give each person a short reading on that ritual/celebration/observance. Groups have 15 minutes to read their materials and work together to prepare a short teaching for their peers on the event. Presentations - 15 minutes

- Birth
    - *brit milah*/baby naming
    - special aliyah for the new father
    - ritual objects at brit associated with the prophet Elijah
    - Persian tradition & superstition of *shab-e shishi*
- B'nai Mitzvah
    - Less formally at age 13 than for most other eidot
    - Equally or more important: *tefillin-bandan*, often done in combination with a boy's first aliyah l'torah (anywhere between the ages of 8 and 18 depending on the family)

    - Beginning in the 20th c, some girls got a group coming of age celebration in school, age 12-13
- Marriage
    - Matches mostly made by parents
    - Girls betrothed between ages 9 and 15, boys in late teens or early 20s, engagement 2 months-2 years
    - Wedding is a weeklong celebration
        - Henna ceremonies
        - Ritual baths
        - Festive meals
        - Some just a Jewish wedding ceremony, some a public secular ceremony and a private Jewish ceremony
        - Processionals between the bride and groom's family homes
        - "Bridal sheet" ritual on wedding night
        - Shabbat HaChatan
- Mourning
    - Shiva/*haft ruz*
    - Ritual bathing at the end of shiva after visiting the grave
    - Some adopted the Muslim ritual of 40 days of grieving instead of the standard Jewish practice of *shloshim* (the first 30 days of grieving)
    - The first year of mourning ends with a celebration to force the mourners back into full life

If any time remains, invite questions from notes:

What was completely unfamiliar?

What do you want to know more about?

Provide opportunities for followup on those questions (reading, resources, etc.)

Lesson 3: Sounds of Persian Jewry (scripted)

> Core Concept: In the interplay between dominant and minority cultures, Persian music and Jewish Perisian music are inextricably linked with each other. Neither would be what it is today without the influence of the other over the course of history.

Introduction (10 minutes)

- Framing Discussion:
    - What makes music Jewish?
    - How does Jewish music differ from the music of the surrounding culture? How does it draw from that music?
- Brief explanation of Persian classical music system (*gushe* & *dastgah*)

Persian Synagogue Music (15 minutes)

- Suggested musical examples:
    Tzur Mishelo: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_tNwLHemDU
    Ki Eshmera Shabbat: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_HNGXlMRt3c
- Discussion points
    - No one knows how old these pieces are because this repertoire is shared entirely by oral tradition
    - Narrow vocal range - standard for sacred song/prayer
    - Simply sung - not a lot of vocal ornamentation - that is the appropriate vocal style for liturgical & paraliturgical [sacred, but not part of the service] repertoire
    - These are both paraliturgical songs, strictly liturgical pieces (pieces from prayer services) would be arhythmic, sung strictly a cappella & would not be sung by women
    - Impressions of the piece?

Judeo-Persian Folk Music (15 minutes)

- Suggested musical example:
    Gole Gandom: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2v1GbKB0bY
    (provide translation for learners to follow along while they listen)
- Discussion points
    - *Dastgah* with quarter-tones
    - Great tradition of Persian Jewish poetry in folk music
    - Role of poetry in folk music
    - Role of folk music in life - storytelling, life cycle events, cycle of the year (this is a harvest song and a love song), etc.

- Impressions of the piece?

Persian Popular Music and its Jewish nature (15 minutes)

- Context -
  - Professional musicians before Iranian Revolution were Jews because Shi'ite Islam looks down on professional musicians, but Persian society has always required music for social gatherings
  - This popular music, written, co-written, often performed by Jews (because it was such a low-status job) defined Iranian popular culture in the 1970s and are still some of the most beloved Farsi-language songs today
- Suggested musical example:
  Jan-e Maryam: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hty8gIpEsSs
  (provide translation for learners to follow along while they listen)
  Offer multiple listening options (Monika Jalili, Mohammed Noori, Sara Naeni)
- Discussion questions:
  - What strikes you about this?
  - How is it different from the other music we heard?
  - How is it similar?
  - Do you think that this is Jewish music? What about the folk songs? What about the liturgical music? Where does that line fall and how?

If any time remains, invite questions from notes:

What was completely unfamiliar?

What do you want to know more about?

Provide opportunities for followup on those questions (reading, resources, etc.)

Lesson 4: Persian Jews Outside of Iran

> Core Concept: Identity inherently changes when shifting from a united minority in one country to a diaspora minority within other groups. Persian Jewish identity is not the same in Israel as it is in Los Angeles, nor is it the same in Los Angeles as it is in a city such as Chicago with a large Jewish population, but a small Persian Jewish population.

Introduction (10 minutes)

- Framing questions:
    - What is the Judeo-Persian diaspora?
    - What does it mean for the oldest continuous original diaspora community to now be in its own diaspora?
- Where do most Persian Jews live now?
    - Israel, Los Angeles, New York
- Generations who fled the Islamic Revolution (longing for homeland and return) vs. their children and grandchildren (Israelis and Americans if Iranian descent)

Modern situation in Iran (10 minutes)

- Full of paradoxes about Jews
    - anti-Zionist, but has a relatively stable relationship with Israel
    - Islamic Republic leadership differentiates between Jews and Zionists
    - Jewish population was 25K in 2013, but there hasn't been a rabbi or functioning beit din in the country since 1996 and population dwindling

Persian Jews in Israel (20 minutes)

- Waves of aliyah from Iran and their reasons
- Relationship between Persian Jews and Zionism
    - Are Persian Jews settled in Israel or waiting to go home?
    - Ambiguous relationship with homeland and exile
- Status of Mizrachi Jews in general and Persian Jews specifically in Israel

Persian Jews in the US

- Most in two major population centers
    - Tightly knit communities
- Maintaining culture and tradition in diaspora
    - Stronger need to maintain minority culture because they have always been a minority?

Lesson 5: A Taste of Persia

Core Concept: Minority cultures tend to adopt the culinary practices of the majority cultures in which they live, adapting them to suit their own cultural, religious, and dietary needs.

Prepare Kuku Sabzi step by step together

- Background on the dish: popular for many occasions, but a traditional for Jewish Nowruz (Persian New Year) celebrations and *shiva* & memorial meals (eggs and other round foods are symbolic of the cycle of life)
- Fresh green herbs, lots of leek, walnuts and barberries are all very popular and common in Persian Jewish cooking

While dishes bake, discuss other traditional Persian? Jewish dishes and flavor combinations

Suggested food topics:

- Tahdig
- Aashe Reshteh
- Fesenjan
- Chelo Kabob
- Chelo Abgooshte Gondi
- Zulubia
- Halva

When food is ready, enjoy together!

This class is also a great opportunity to revisit any other topics that learners want to know more about. Learners are encouraged in advance to bring their questions and their appetites. Instructor is encouraged to bring their notes and a playlist of Persian Jewish music to listen to while cooking and talking.

Unit II: Turkish Jewry

Outcomes and Desired Understandings

Enduring Understandings

- The productivity and creativity of Sefardic Jews in Turkey reflects the symbiotic relationship between the Turks and the Jews early on
- The culture of Turkish Jewry (food, music, art, and more) show the regularity and positivity of interactions between them and their Turkish, Balkan, Greek, and Armenian neighbors
- The narrative of one minority can be used to whitewash and undermine the narrative of another
- There are many ways to look, sound, and be Jewish

Essential Questions

- What does Turkish Judaism sound like? What does Turkish Judaism look like? What does Turkish Judaism taste like?
- How has Turkish Jewish culture and practice been influenced by the surrounding cultures and many religions?
- How is my Jewish practice similar or dissimilar to Turkish Jewish practice?

Learner Outcomes

Knowing: Learners will be able to identify major moments in Mediterranean and Middle Eastern Jewish history and recognize characteristic elements of the language, food, music, and religious practices of different Jewish communities. They will understand the ways in which each Jewish community has been shaped by surrounding cultures and historical trends surrounding them.

Doing: Learners will engage with unfamiliar Jewish traditions and perspectives, expanding their

understanding of how a person can live Jewishly.

Believing: Learners will be able to conceptualize their role in the broader Jewish world and imagine what it would have been to be part of another diaspora and what that means for sustaining culture and heritage.

Belonging: By developing a deeper understanding of with Jews of different backgrounds, learners will strengthen their connection to their Jewish community and the entirety of the Jewish people in all its complexity.

Evidence of Learning

Learners will be encouraged to take notes in the form of Know-Want to Know-Learned (KWL) in a chart. This way they can easily jot down their thoughts in an organized way and later come back to those notes at the end of each lesson as a reflection. That reflection will allow for questions such as: What questions do you have? What else would you like to know?

Example KWL chart:

Know	Want to Know	Learned

Lesson Content

Lesson Topic	Lesson Objectives	Core Concepts
The History of Turkish Jewry	Establish a general understanding of the broad overview of Turkish Jewish history with an eye to the relationship between the Jewish minority and Muslim majority and the dynamics of life on the border between Europe and the Middle East.	In the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey, Jews have always been one of many significant minority groups, influenced by the surrounding cultures, political and economic trends, and the government's relationships with the broader world. All these elements have shaped the Jewish culture of Turkey.
Religious Practices of Turkish Jews Then and Now	The religious practices and life cycle observances of Turkish Jews have developed over time. As one of the few robust Jewish communities in the Middle East outside of and within Israel, we explore how Turkish Jewish religious practices in Ottoman history and in modernity.	Jewish observance in Turkey has roots in Spanish tradition, influence from within the Ottoman Empire. Turkish Jewry has both held tightly to tradition and remained open to new ideas throughout its history, mostly to the community's benefit, but occasionally to its detriment.
The Sounds of Turkish Jewry	Turkish Sefardic music fits largely into two categories: Kantikas (folk songs) and liturgical songs. While Kantikas have maintained more of the Iberian musical roots of the Sefardim, Turkish synagogue music has fully adopted the Turkish classical style. This lesson will provide an introduction to both.	The influence of Turkish and Balkan music in Turkish Sefardic music shows the integration of Jew into broader Turkish society throughout history. The ways in which it retains its uniquely Jewish character in both folk and sacred music traditions shows the ways in which Jews in Turkey preserved their own culture while also acculturating.
The Armenian Genocide and The Holocaust	During WWI, The Ottoman Empire engaged in vicious ethnic cleansing, targeting the Christians within their borders, particularly the Armenians and also the Greeks. Of the nearly 2 million killed, approximately 1.5 million were Armenians. Jews with connections to the Holocaust might think this gives the two minorities an inherent connection, but that is not entirely the case. History	When one genocide is aknowledged and another is not, tension, resentment, and even guilt develop between the two victimized communities. They become divided, unable to come together to commiserate, share, or heal over their similar communal traumas.

	has treated the two genocides very differently, as have the purpetrators.	
A Taste of Turkish Jewry	Students will make and eat almodrote, a garlic-cheese sauce over an eggplant casserole. While the dish bakes, they will learn about its Sefardic origins and how it has become part of standard Turkish cuisine, while also learning about other typical Turkish and Sefardi flavors and dishes.	Turkish Jewish cuisine is a synthesis of the culinary palates brought over by the Jews of Spain in the late 15th century, the dominant Muslim culture, and the many other Mediterranean influences in and around the region of Anatolia.

Introduction

Turkey has one of the few robust Jewish communities outside of Israel in the Middle East in the 21st century. The majority still in Turkey live in Istanbul, where they have their own schools, chief rabbi, and beit din. The community has assimilated in many ways to modern Turkish culture, most now speaking Turkish as their first language, but they also keep Ladino (or Judeo-Spanish) alive amongst themselves. The language serves as one of many critical ties to their Sefardic cultural history and heritage, dating back to the Iberian Peninsula before the expulsion of the Jews in 1492. Following the expulsion, the Ottoman Empire arguably provided the friendliest refuge to the Sefardim seeking a new home in the 15th and 16 centuries, setting the stage for what became the now vibrant Turkish Sefardic history and culture to flourish.

History

Jews lived in Anatolia, the territory of Turkey and the former Ottoman Empire, dating back to the 4th century BCE. The Romaniote (Greek speaking) Jewish community descended from that early history were heavily oppressed under Byzantine rule. s By the time the Ottomans

conquered the Byzantine Empire, the remnant of the Romaniote Jewish community was quickly absorbed into the Sefardi immigrant population.[71] Unlike Spain and much of the rest of Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries, where Jews were expelled, forcibly converted, and otherwise persecuted, the Ottomans sought out Jews and invited them into their lands. While one historical narrative has indicated that this was done out of a heroic Ottoman love for the Jews, evidence points more strongly towards economic pragmatism, with an interest in the economic advantage of embracing the expelled Jews.

The accepted narrative by many historians has been that in response to the events of 1492 in the Iberian Peninsula, Sultan Bayazid II ordered his governors to not only accept Jews in their territories, but offer them aid. Muslims and Jews alike considered him a hero for rescuing the Jews, eagerly ascribing the sultan and his successors altruistic motives in offering aid and support to the Sefardic refugees. He is even quoted as having said that "the Catholic King Ferdinand was wrongly considered as wise, since he impoverished Spain by the expulsion of the Jews, and enriched Turkey."[72] Today, many challenge this idealized narrative, as no evidence exists for such an overarching statement from the sultan. However evidence does exist for such statements from Sultan Bayazid II regarding particularly wealthy Jews.[73] It appears that while the sultan's actions did benefit the Jewish population expelled from Spain, his motives were not altruistic but economic. In the middle of the 16th century, Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent had only to write to Pope Paul IV to free Jews from papal captivity, declaring them Ottoman citizens. Turkey became the place to go for Jews fleeing persecution in Europe and the Ottomans welcomed them

[71] "Turkey Virtual Jewish History Tour," Jewish Virtual Library (American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise), accessed February 8, 2022, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/turkey-virtual-jewish-history-tour.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Gilles Veinstein, "Jews and Muslims in the Ottoman Empire," in *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations from the Origins to the Present Day*, ed. Abdelwahab Meddeb et al. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 171-202, 177.

with open arms. No matter their country of origin, they were quickly absorbed into the now dominant Sefardi Jewish culture.[74]

Even before Sultan Bayazid II, his father Sultan Mehmed II had sought out and brought Jewish doctors and businessmen to his new Ottoman capital of Istanbul. Bayazid II and his successors expanded on that practice by bringing skilled, educated, and wealthy Jews to cities and territories all over the empire. While Jews were valued for their wealth and economic contributions, they were not treated as equals to Muslim Ottomans. Sometimes, Jewish families were forcibly relocated within the empire for so called utilitarian purposes, whether to spread wealth, to break up a monopoly in a certain region (such as the manufacturing of woolen textiles, which was well established in Spain and new to the Ottoman Empire), or because a skill was needed in a newly conquered territory.[75] On a simpler level, Jews were financially valuable to the Ottomans because of the *jizya* (or *djizye* in Turkish), the per capita tax levied on all *dhimmi* citizens of every Islamic nation, which both kept them from ever becoming too wealthy as a group and also provided a steady income for the Ottomans who allowed them room for financial success.

Jews participated in all kinds of work alongside Christians and Muslims and occupied all financial strata, free from the restrictions to certain trades that their counterparts lived with in Europe. Among other things, Sefardic Jews played a particularly significant role in international trade throughout the 16th century, bringing both capital and trade networks throughout the Mediterranean and Europe to the Ottoman Empire and advancing the systems of trade and commerce.[76] Some Jews rose so high in status as to have roles in the sultan's court; mostly

[74] "Turkey Virtual Jewish History Tour," Jewish Virtual Library.
[75] Veinstein, "Jews and Muslims in the Ottoman Empire," 178-9.
[76] Ibid., 182-3.

physicians and diplomats. There was precedent before the Sefardic emigration of such court Jews in Anatolia, but they became even more important given the diplomats' and businessmen's understanding of both European and Ottoman business and politics, not to mention their knowledge of many languages, and the physicians' ability to integrate the latest European and Ottoman medical ideas.[77]

It was not only the men, either. Jewish women also held status in court, serving the princesses and the sultans' wives. Muslim women had significantly less mobility in society than Jewish women and remained more confined to the house, or in the case of royalty, palace. Accordingly, Jewish women in high ranking families could take advantage of their positions functioning much like ladies in waiting with the Greek title *kira*, bringing the royal women news of the world outside the palace, acquiring objects they desired for them, and performing other such tasks that they were forbidden to do themselves.[78]

However, even though Jews served these court functions in diplomacy, they never held official court positions. Though they frequently functioned as translators at Ottoman embassies and consulates, only Muslims or occasionally Christians held these positions in the court of the Sultan. Somehow, for no reason clear to historians today, Jews were legally classified as *yehudi* (Jews) rather than *dhimmi* (non-Muslim people of the book) in the Ottoman Empire. Functionally, it meant that the Jews were exempted from extra taxation that applied to Christains, but it does not necessarily mean that Jews were in any way preferred by the Muslim majority.[79] These taxes were aimed at the more agrarian lifestyle of the majority of Christians under Ottoman rule, while most Jews lived in cities and so perhaps it would not have been profitable to

[77] Ibid., 183.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid., 186.

levy such taxes against Jews. In fact, a great deal of evidence suggests that Jews were in fact the more despised of the two minority groups, considered fanatical and narrow minded (largely because of their adherence to the laws of *kashrut*), assigned popular distrust because of their exemption from *devshirme* (forced Islamization compulsory service to the sultan imposed upon boys from other *dhimma* groups), and more. Moreover, the Christians under Ottoman rule were guaranteed a certain level of protection by the agreements between the Ottoman Empire and European states whose local representatives held the Ottomans accountable. Jews, on the other hand, were protectees of the sultan, so their security depended entirely upon the mood and views of whoever sat upon the throne.[80]

Many of the 15th and 16th century sultans would regularly sit in the court when disputes involving Jewish tributaries came before Muslim tribunals. The sultan would ritually repeat that his "Jewish tributaries were his tributaries, just like his other tributaries"[81] to make it clear why he needed to be present. But for the most part, Jews had the autonomy to resolve their own disputes. The Jews of the Ottoman Empire, thanks to their differentiated *dhimma* status, effectively governed themselves *kahal* (community) by *kahal*. Each *kahal* had a delegation of taxpayers, committee of *hombres buenos* or notables, a number of civil servants including a rabbi, and a *beit din* (a Jewish court) among other things.[82] The Turks only engaged in internal Jewish affairs when they caused broader public disturbances. The Turks also protected the Jews' hereditary right to property, even if their property had to be moved because their synagogue stood too close to a newly constructed mosque. Although sharia law banned the building of new synagogues, it did allow for repairs and it also allowed for this kind of protection, and the Turks

[80] Ibid., 186-7.
[81] Ibid., 187.
[82] Ibid., 189.

protected that right to rebuild elsewhere. Other such loopholes were allowed for the building of new synagogues as the Jewish community grew, particularly through immigration.[83]

By and large the 16th century in Turkey was a golden age for Jews. Many considered it the continuation of the Sefardi golden age experienced on the Iberian peninsula. Creatively, politically, financially, and religiously, Jews under Ottoman rule thrived so much so that a narrative of the Ottomans saving the Jews and their sultans playing a role in realizing Messianic prophecy took hold among even the most powerful, educated, and influential Jews in Turkey. Unfortunately, in the 17th century, that golden age came to an end.[84] Christian Greeks and Armenians now had access to European language and education much more than the Jews who no longer had ties to Europe. They were increasingly replaced in trade and as physicians by the Greeks and Armenians who now spoke the right languages, had connections through religion, and had the most current European medical training.[85] The situation of the Jews was not yet dire; many still had connections to the Janissaries until they were abolished in 1826 and certain families had close ties to the sultan, but only those who converted to Islam could remain court physicians.[86] But it was part of a larger downward movement for the Ottoman Jews. These newly empowered Christians carried deep-seeded anti-Jewish sentiments dating back to Byzantine roots and used their influence with European merchants and diplomats to push Jews out of their positions of favor or power and replace them with Christians.

This atmosphere of upheaval gave rise to the famous false messiah, Shabbatai Tzvi, who divided the Ottoman Jewish community. Born in Smyrna (now Ismir) in 1626, he devoted

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[83] Ibid., 188.
[84] Ibid.,193.
[85] Lucien Gubbay, "The Rise, Decline and Attempted Regeneration of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire," *European Judaism* 33, no. 1 (January 2000): pp. 59-69, https://doi.org/10.3167/ej.2000.330110, 64.
[86] Veinstein, "Jews and Muslims in the Ottoman Empire,"193.

himself to studying both Talmud (rabbinic literature) and Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism). He traveled widely and quickly became known for his erratic behavior, wild mystical ideas, and messianic fantasies, and yet he also became a respected teacher of Kabbalah. A certain interpretation of a passage from the Zohar, an important Kabbalistic text, indicated that the Messiah would redeem the people of Israel in 1648, which was the year that Shabbatai Tzvi first began to claim his own messianism. One of his followers, Nathan of Gaza, declared him so in 1665, upon which he began appointing followers as apostles, requiring an almost militant following. Messianic news and fervor spread like wildfire across the Jewish world, dividing communities everywhere it reached.[87]

And upon return to Turkey, Sultan Mehmed IV summoned Shabbatai to his court in 1666 where he was given three options: impalement, a trial of his divinity by archery (should the royal archers miss, his divinity would be proven), or conversion to Islam. He had caused too much discord among the Jewish community within the empire and held too much power, which the sultan could no longer abide. Shabbatai chose conversion which shattered his followers. Some refused to believe it and continued to follow the Sabbatean cult. Others tried to erase him and his messianism from their history, destroying documents and removing pages from ledgers. And yet, the messianic movement that he sparked colored the messianic fervor of the Jewish world well into the 18th century, particularly in times of struggle.[88]

Sabbateanism saw a particular spike in popularity at the beginning of the 18th century. Some of Shabbatai Tzvi's followers in Turkey believed that he would return 40 years after his

[87] "Jewish Virtual Library," in *Jewish Virtual Library* (American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise), accessed February 20, 2022, jewishvirtuallibrary.org/shabbetai-zvi.
[88] "Jewish Virtual Library," in *Jewish Virtual Library* (American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise), accessed February 20, 2022, jewishvirtuallibrary.org/shabbetai-zvi.

conversion to Islam. Others claimed that he was still alive and would return after 45 years in hiding to redeem his people. Others claiming to be the messiah continued to crop up all over the Ottoman Empire.[89] There was still a great deal of energy behind the Sabbatean movement and people who claimed to be prophets in Turkey had as much support as Shabbatai Tzvi himself ever had. This entire episode speaks to a time of difficulty and turmoil in the Jewish community of the Ottoman Empire (and, in truth, was part of a larger trend throughout Europe, the Mediterranean, and the entire Middle East).

Although Turkish Jews were not actively persecuted in the 17th and 18th centuries the way that European Jews were, they were in a time of decline socially and financially. They no longer had anyone to remind the sultan of their interests or concerns, and so lost their protection against tyranny. As the power of the central government declined, the local governors often became greedy, taking advantage of the populous, and the unprotected Jews suffered most of all. At the same time, while the Muslim majority suffered under unjust rulers, their intolerance for the *dhimma* minorities among them grew.[90] The fair minded Turkish implementation of taxation and restrictions against *dhimmi* in exchange for protection in this period turned to punitive taxation and humiliating implementation of restrictions, although physical violence remained rare. Christians fared better as they were protected by powerful European governments who the Turks could not afford to anger. But those same European governments' consuls spread stories to the Turks of blood libels and other anti-Jewish sentiments from Europe in the early 19th century, when the quality of life for Jews in Turkey had already reached its lowest point.[91]

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[89] Popkin, Richard H., and Stephanie Chasin. "The Sabbatian Movement in Turkey (1703-1708) and Reverberations in Northern Europe." *Jewish Quarterly Review* 94, no. 2 (2004): 300–317. https://doi.org/10.1353/jqr.2004.0039, 301.
[90] Gubbay, "The Rise, Decline and Attempted Regeneration of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire," 65.
[91] Ibid., 65-6.

Similar to changes taking place throughout Europe, things began to improve by the middle of the 19th century with a series of modernizing reforms. In 1856, Sultan Abdulmejid I abolished *dhimmi* status and the restrictions that went with it, making all citizens of the Ottoman Empire equal under the law. This reform met resistance on all fronts; Muslims were affronted by the move away from sharia law; Christians feared losing their advantages over Jews; Jews simply feared change, especially change in the direction of modernity (particularly if it meant giving up their own courts and schools). These changes began slowly for the Jews as the centralized Ottoman government began to regain control of its various regional governments, cracking down on corruption and exploitation.[92]

The real change for Jewish Ottoman citizens came through the help of the *Alliance Israelite Universelle* (AIU), a French Jewish charity whose schools throughout the Middle East and northern Africa allowed the Sefardi Jews access to European education. Although the ideals behind the AIU stemmed from well intentioned European colonial philosophy, the secular, western education it provided gave the Jews of the Ottoman Empire a new chance. With this education and their newfound connections to acculturated French Jews, they could once again compete with the Christians and their western access and education in trade, politics, and medicine.[93] However, relatively few families could afford to send their children to school for more than a few years. Fewer still sent their children to high school, let alone university. And conservative religious communities held deep disdain for AIU schools whose secular education which included girls and women and idealized all things French and European challenged and even threatened their traditional, pious way of life.[94]

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[92] Ibid., 66.
[93] Ibid., 67.
[94] Ibid., 68.

Through all of this foment where east and west met, there was another layer of complication for the Jews of Turkey. As the Ottoman Empire weakened and the Zionist movement formed and grew there emerged a pull to side with either Zionism or Ottomanism. In the zeitgeist of nationalism, people felt pressure to choose: were they Jews first or Turks first? People felt strongly about both causes, such that many made aliyah and organized to enable others to do so, while other Jews were among the founders of the Young Turks (the revolutionaries who in their early stages fought for a Turkish constitution).[95]

At the same time as this tension internal to the Jewish community, the Ottoman Empire at large faced struggles as well. They were losing territory and military conflicts and feared for the empire itself. Among other actions in the name of protecting the empire, during World War I, the Turks engaged in a systematic ethnic cleansing effort, justified by unfounded fears of separationist factions among certain minority groups. The most impacted of these groups was the Armenians, who lived mostly in northeastern Anatolia, considered to be the heartland of the Ottoman Empire.[96] Most able bodied Armenian men were conscripted into army service, but disarmed and sent into labor battalions under the guise of doing work like road repair. In reality, most were shot before they could fight back against what was to come.[97] In 1915-1916, children, women, the infirm, and the elderly were sent on death marches into the Syrian desert. They were starved, robbed, raped, and massacred on the way. Those who survived were sent to labor camps. This was all done under the guise of deportations and relocations, but in reality as many

[95] Leyla Neyzi, "Strong as Steel, Fragile as a Rose: A Turkish Jewish Witness to the Twentieth Century," Jewish Social Studies 12, no. 1 (2005): pp. 167-189, https://doi.org/10.1353/jss.2006.0006, 170.
[96] Wolfgang Gust, ed., "Overview of the Armenian Genocide," in *The Armenian Genocide Evidence from the German Foreign Office Archives, 1915-1916* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, Incorporated, 2013), pp. 1-126, 6.
[97] Ibid., 13.

as 1.5 million were murdered in the Armenian Genocide.[98] The Ottoman Turks killed as many as half a million others in this ethnic cleansing attempt as well.

Ultimately, these cruel efforts failed to save the empire. With the loss of WWI, the Ottoman Empire fell, its territories were partitioned between the French and the British, and the Turkish Republic was formed in 1923. Despite its foundation on denial of the genocide, minorities became scapegoats for the new republic and the fall of the empire. The Turkish Republic prioritized building a Muslim Turkish economy and many minorities chose to leave. For Turkish Jews, the emigration country of choice was clear: Israel.[99] For those who stayed, things became more difficult during WWII, because despite Turkey's official neutrality, the nation maintained strong ties to Nazi Germany. Government officials would make it as easy for Nazis to capture Turkish Jews, despite isolated (and likely fictitious) stories of Muslim Turkish heroism for the sake of Jewish countrymen. (Ironically the modern Turkish government uses a fiction that Turkey protected and rescued Jews as part of their narrative of Armenian Genocide denial.)[100]

After 1946, when the Turkish Republic became notably more democratic and the era of a single-party ended, life became much better for Jews in Turkey. The Democratic Party allowed for much more religious freedom and equality for religious minorities. Jews could now hold public office, become military officers, have their own newspapers, provide religious education in their schools (not only in their synagogues), and live in mixed neighborhoods, not only in Jewish quarters.[101] It was a new era of personal and economic opportunity. However, as tensions rose

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[98] Eldad Ben Aharon, "How Do We Remember the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust?: A Global View of an Integrated Memory of Perpetrators, Victims and Third-Party Countries," 2020, http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep28484.8, 11.
[99] Leyla Neyzi, "Strong as Steel, Fragile as a Rose: A Turkish Jewish Witness to the Twentieth Century," 172.
[100] Marc David Baer, *Sultanic Saviors and Tolerant Turks: Writing Ottoman Jewish History, Denying the Armenian Genocide* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2020), 200.
[101] Leyla Neyzi, "Strong as Steel, Fragile as a Rose: A Turkish Jewish Witness to the Twentieth Century," 173.

between Turkey and Greece in 1955, violence against minorities broke out once more, and Turkey saw another large wave of Jewish emigration to Israel. Since then, there have been ups and down, but Turkish Jews have become more and more acculturated within Turkish democracy. And while the population is gradually declining, and most Jews in Turkey express ambivalence about their Jewish identity, it is one of the few remaining large Jewish populations in the Middle East outside of Israel today.[102]

Language

While most Jews in Turkey had to speak at least some amount of Turkish throughout history, because the dominant Jewish culture in Turkey was Sefardic, the dominant Jewish language was Ladino. Ladino, also known as Judezmo, Judeo-Spanish, Espanioliko, and more, emerged among the Jews of medieval Spain, derived primarily from Old Castilian and influenced by Ibero-Arabic. It spread to everywhere Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula went after 1492 maintaining various regional dialects in some places and developing new ones in others.[103] Because that Sefardi population so quickly subsumed the Jewish populations that had existed in the Ottoman Empire prior to their arrival, Ladino became the Jewish language of the Turkish Jews. In time it came to be known by many as Judezmo, meaning "Jewish language", or even simply Judió/Jidió [depending on the dialect], meaning "Jewish": the linguistic parallel to the name *Yiddish* for Ashkenazi Jews in Europe.[104]

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[102] Ibid., 173-4.
[103] David M. Bunis, "Judezmo: The Jewish Language of the Ottoman Sephardim," *European Judaism* 44, no. 1 (January 2011): pp. 22-35, https://doi.org/10.3167/ej.2011.44.01.05, 23-4.
[104] Ibid., 24

As with any other Jewish language, Ladino is traditionally written in Hebrew characters, which posed some challenges given Ladino's Castilian origins. Thus, they developed ways of writing the sounds such as /tʃ/, /dʒ/, and /ʒ/ with diacritic accents over the appropriate letters. The longer the writing style existed, the more it became distinctive, with most books printed in a derivative of Rashi script, with a cursive form known as *soletreo* that was most often used for writing manuscripts.[105]

As Turkey and the Ottoman Empire were so often the place where east met west from the Middle Ages on, the Turkish dialect of Ladino developed with the many languages with which the Turkish Sefardic community had contact, the polyglot Jewish community amalgamated the many languages it spoke and heard into its own language.

> The result is that, in modern Judezmo of the former Ottoman regions, it is not unusual to hear a sentence such as 'El haham estambolí se akavida de meldar a lo manko un jurnal europeo kádal día de alhaď (An Istanbul rabbi takes care to read at least one European newspaper every Sunday) - with 'haham' derived from Hebrew, 'estambolí' from Turkish, 'se akavida' perhaps from Portuguese, 'meldar' from Jewish Greek, 'a lo manko' from Italian, 'jurnal' from French, 'kádal día' and 'europeo' from Castilian and 'alhaď from Jewish Arabic.[106]

This kind of fusion seems emblematic of Diaspora Jewry, not only linguistically, but culturally, musically, artistically, culinarily. Everywhere Jews have gone, we have taken with us inherent Jewish elements of our own and blended them with the cultures we have encountered. While this sentence may take the concept to an extreme, it demonstrates through language both the adaptive

[105] Ibid., 25.
[106] Ibid., 26.

skill and the dedication to preservation that the Jews have required throughout the millennia in order to survive and thrive for so long as a Diasporic people.

Religious Practices

Many Turkish-Sefardic religious practices are considered the "standard" Sefardic practice, partially because of the size and duration of the Ottoman Empire's reign and partially because of the high status of Turkish Sefardim among other Sefardi Jews. That being said, each Sefardi community has developed its own customs over time, and those of the Turkish Jews developed out of a synthesis between medieval Sefardi minhag brought over from the Iberian Peninsula and the surrounding Turkish culture. One such custom is having a Chief Rabbi, or Haham Bashi, as the position is known in Turkey. The position has existed through every form of Ottoman or Turkish government since the mid-15th century, even before the Expulsion, and at the height of the Ottoman Empire the Haham Bashi was the most powerful Jew in the world. In modern day Turkey, the Chief Rabbi is assisted by his own Beit Din (a committee of other highly respected rabbis) in religious matters and Advisory Committee (a group of 50 lay leaders) on non-religious matters internal to the Jewish community of Turkey.[107]

As the Jewish vernacular for most of Turkish history after the Expulsion was Ladino, one common minhag was to pray in Ladino (albeit a highly antiquated form) instead of Aramaic, the vernacular of its time. While Turkish Sefardim would not translate prayers traditionally in Hebrew to Ladino, they felt that any prayer originally prayed in the vernacular should still be prayed that way so that people could understand their prayers in a full and immediate way. This

[107] Karen Gerson Şarhon, "History of Istanbul," in *History of Istanbul* (Turkiye Dianet Foundation Centre for Islamic Studies, 2015), https://istanbultarihi.ist/522-jewish-life-in-istanbul-from-the-ottomans-to-modern-times.

custom is still in practice in Turkey today. In that same vein, women, who historically had no formal Hebrew education, most often prayed entirely in Ladino. They actually printed women's *siddurim* (prayer books) specifically in Ladino instead of Hebrew so that they could pray with full comprehension.[108] Also to serve this purpose, certain texts are read publicly "en lashon i en ladino"[109], or in Hebrew and in Ladino, such as the Haggadah, Megillat Esther, and Pirkei Avot. The translation style is extremely literal, staying true to the Hebrew syntax at the expense of fluidity in the Ladino.[110]

Lifecycle

Looking at the life cycle rituals of Turkish Sefardim, some will sound slightly familiar based on having read about the practices of Persian Jewry, but they are more unique than they are similar. They are similarly dissimilar in many ways from Ashkenazi minhag. The custom that is entirely unique to Turkish Jewry is that of the "Kortada de Fashadura" or "Fashadura" for short. This may come as a surprise to Jews of Ashkenazi descent, who consider celebrating a baby before the birth bad luck, but it is effectively a baby shower. The Fashadura happens in either the 5th or 7th month of a pregnancy, once the risk of miscarriage has passed. During the day, women celebrate alone, and in the evening men join them for a celebratory meal. While the women are alone, they choose one person to cut a piece of muslin that has been purchased in advance. Both of her parents must still be alive as a sign of good luck and longevity for the new parents. They cut the cloth lengthwise to symbolize long life for the baby, then spread gold coins and sugar over it for a happy, full life. The person selected to cut the cloth makes it into a onesie for the

[108] Bunis, "Judezmo: The Jewish Language of the Ottoman Sephardim," 25.
[109] Ibid, 25.
[110] Ibid, 25-26.

baby that will be the baby's first outfit and any remaining cloth is used for handkerchiefs and diapers for the baby. Other guests bring gifts as well.[111] Once this celebration is done, then it is considered appropriate for the expectant parents to start preparing for the baby and buying anything else they may need.[112]

When the baby arrives, if it is a boy, today the *brit milah* is performed by a mohel, but most often in a hospital with a medical professional present, even if there are guests. If the baby is a girl, she has a naming ceremony called a *vijola*, which is an old tradition, but has become much more popular in recent history.[113] This may be because of the growing importance of gender parity, or perhaps due to the fact that families generally have fewer children than they used to. Either way, the result that daughters have greater value to their families than they once did means that this ritual became a standard expectation among Turkish Sefardi families in the 20th century. When a firstborn is a son, however, Turkish Sefardim still observe the practice of *pidyon aben*; "ransoming" him. That is to say, biblically speaking, first born sons were expected to serve God, either as priests or servants in the Temple, but could be "bought back" with silver coins. The practice in Turkey came to be that when a first born son of a woman who had never miscarried reached 30 days, the "ransom" of five silver spoons would be paid, and it could not be paid in cash. In some communities, this custom is still observed.[114]

When children reach the age of b'nai mitzvah, both male and female celebrate in Turkey, but parity does not yet exist between the two. Boys celebrate individually at age 13 by being called to read from the Torah and to give a short speech. Girls celebrate at age 12 in a group.

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[111] Merve Baran, "Anatolian Sephardic Traditions through the Eyes of a Jewish Woman," Daily Sabah (Daily Sabah, December 22, 2015), https://www.dailysabah.com/feature/2015/12/23/anatolian-sephardic-traditions-through-the-eyes-of-a-jewish-woman.
[112] Karen Gerson Şarhon, "History of Istanbul."
[113] Merve Baran, "Anatolian Sephardic Traditions through the Eyes of a Jewish Woman."
[114] Ibid.

They all wear white, process into the synagogue together arm in arm with their fathers, sing and pray together, and most often have a communal, celebratory meal afterwards. That being said, women having a place in the synagogue at all is still a big step forward in most parts of the Middle East.[115]

Traditionally, the age of betrothal is not much later for girls (although it has gotten later in the last century). Until recently, girls were expected to marry shortly after reaching puberty. Matchmakers called *kazamentra* existed, but they were mostly only called in for girls who had trouble finding a match on their own, which was typically because they were not good looking or didn't have a sufficient *dota*, or dowry.[116] When it came time for the wedding, there was, and still is, a henna ceremony for both the bride and groom. Unlike an Ashkenazi wedding, a Sefardi couple in Turkey would never fast on the wedding day and similarly have no custom of *yichud* (being alone together between the wedding ceremony and the celebration), as that is traditionally when an Ashkenazi couple would break their fast. There is also no bedeken, no chuppah, and neither the bride nor the groom circles the other. They instead stand together under the groom's tallit for the wedding ceremony, which most often happens on a Friday afternoon, so that the wedding night can happen on Shabbat. And, like most Sefardi cultures, the Shabbat following the wedding is known as Shabbat Chatan, during which the groom has a special *aliyah* during the Torah service.[117]

[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.

Music

Turkish Jewish music largely fits into two categories: *kantikas* (folks songs) and liturgical music. Most of it has been passed down by oral tradition, so much in both categories has been lost, but more so for the liturgical songs than kantikas. While kantikas were transmitted largely from mother to daughter, as was the playing of instruments for folk music purposes, liturgical music was passed from master hazan (cantor) to student. With such a small group of people who could sing all of the repertoire and no system of musical notation, much more of it has been lost over time. However, it is important to note that while the folk tradition has generally been associated with women and the liturgical tradition with men, particularly in academia, we must understand that nothing is ever so black and white. There are Hebrew liturgical and biblical phrases in folk songs and Ladino melodies borrowed in the liturgical repertoire.[118] The two have never existed in separate universes, so while it may be convenient to define liturgical music as male and folk music as female, the lines are not so clearly defined. There exists a gray zone both between the musical categories and the gender lines that supposedly divide them.

Kantikas

Kantikas began from the tradition of Romanzas dating back to Spain. Romanzas are narrative songs. They originally told stories of knights and nobility in Spain, but over the years, people began to add their own verses and write new songs as well.[119] They were stories for entertainment, often about women and from the perspective of women since these were so often women's songs. Over the years, the musical style of the Sefardim in Turkey incorporated more

[118] Maureen Jackson, "The Girl in the Tree: Gender, Istanbul Soundscapes, and Synagogue Song," *Jewish Social Studies* 17, no. 1 (2010): pp. 31-66, https://doi.org/10.2979/jewisocistud.17.1.31, 37.
[119] Karen Gerson Şarhon, "History of Istanbul."

and more of the local Turkish and Balkan influence. Not only did they start writing Kantikas in the Turkish *maqamat* (musical modes), but they also adopted the local taste for tragedy, writing songs of woe, sorrow, and heartbreak. However, these were still songs for entertainment, and some were simply silly or funny.[120] They truly covered the full range of life's experiences and stories, as many folk traditions do. The repertoire also includes para-liturgical songs for life cycle events such as births, weddings, and funerals.[121] And while the Turkish musical influence grew, the lyrics always remained in Ladino.

There have been various efforts to collect and preserve this repertoire. One of the most significant to date comes from a group called Los Pasharos Sefaradis, based out of Turkey. They have collected hundreds of songs since 1978 and recorded eight albums thus far. They are considered by experts in Ladino folk song to be the greatest example for accurately representing the genre and interpreting the repertoire with stylistic integrity.[122]

Liturgical Music

While Kantikas carried some influence of Turkish Jewish music, the Turkish classical idiom came to completely dominate the local style of synagogue music. There was so much overlap between synagogue and mosque liturgical music in Turkey that hazanim and imams would often train together.[123] The liturgical music requires great technical skill and musical knowledge beyond the capacity of most lay leaders, and so some of the great hazanim of the 18th and 19th centuries were also performers and composers of Turkish secular music, thanks to their

[120] Ibid.
[121] Maureen Jackson, "The Girl in the Tree: Gender, Istanbul Soundscapes, and Synagogue Song," 36.
[122] Karen Gerson Şarhon, "History of Istanbul."
[123] Ibid.

expertise in the Turkish classical style.[124] Most neighborhoods where Jews resided in cities such as Istanbul, until the time of World War I and even up until World War II, were diverse. They were filled with Greeks, Armenians, Gypsies, and Muslims as well as Jews, so it served everyone to have regular cultural and economic exchanges.[125]

A special group of hymns unique to Turkey, composed with Turkish *maqamat*, are the maftirim, which originated in Edirne in the 16th century. Hazanim, choirs, or both sing them after Shabbat morning prayers finish until sundown that evening. These hymns originally focused primarily on highlighting the texts, comprising mostly poems praising God and lauding Jerusalem. However, over time, the hazanim obtained greater and greater mastery of the Turkish classical style and the focus shifted from the text to the music. Sometimes the local Sufis would even join them in making music together.[126] The role of the choir was also critical in these hymns. Senior choir members trained the newer choir members who would gradually work their way up to senior positions. At one point, the Jewish society of Edirne published a book of 500 maftirim texts, but sadly the music is lost. After a series of pogroms in 1934, the choir dispersed when the majority of Jews in the region fled the country.[127] Never documented until recently, only taught by oral tradition from master to student

> [t]his remained the case until the album published by the group Los Pasharos Sefaradis, entitled Zemirot: Turkish-Sephardic Synagogue Hymns, and the album published by the Yako Taragano Synagogue Hymns Choir, called Zemirot II: Turkish-Sephardic

[124] Maureen Jackson, "The Girl in the Tree: Gender, Istanbul Soundscapes, and Synagogue Song," 38.
[125] Ibid., 40.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Merve Baran, "Anatolian Sephardic Traditions through the Eyes of a Jewish Woman."

Synagogue Hymns. Because these hymns were only documented quite recently, as with all oral cultures the actual losses in cultural elements over time have been quite large."[128] Only 63 maftirim have been preserved, thanks to this recording from the early 1980s.

Cuisine

When Sefardic Jews arrived in Turkey, they found an already closely related flavor palate courtesy of the shared roots between the two culinary styles in the early Muslim expansion. Both already favored the eggplant as the king among vegetables, used chickpeas regularly, liked both sweet and sour flavors (in combination and separately), and so on. The adjustment from cooking on the Iberian Peninsula to cooking on Turkey posed no great challenge to the newly arrived immigrants.[129] To this day, using sugar in vegetable and meat dishes, particularly adding some sugar to cold olive oil dishes, is characteristic of both Turkish and Sefardi Turkish cooking. Salt, black pepper, lemon, sugar and olive oil are the most important ingredients in a Turkish Jewish kitchen. Similarly, no modern Turkish Sefardic kitchen is without a recipe for *gaya kon avramila*, fish with sour plum sauce.[130] Gaya fish traditionally is particularly popular for Shabbat dinner among Turkish Jewry.

Certain popular foods in Turkey also came to the Ottoman Empire because of the Jews. For example, the cheese, kashal, known in the Balkans as kashkaval was introduced in Anatolia by the Sefardim. The cheese is both kosher and halal and stays fresh for a long time, and actually has its origins in Spain, where it is known as queso manchego. Similarly, the sponge cake unique

[128] Karen Gerson Şarhon, "History of Istanbul."
[129] Aylin Öney Tan, "Digesting Change?: Westernization and Aliyah as Challenges to the Food Traditions of the OttomanTurkish Sephardic Community in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries ," in *From Kebab to Ćevapčići: Foodways in (Post-)Ottoman Europe*, ed. Arkadiusz Blaszczyk and Stefan Rohdewald, 1st ed. (Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018), pp. 188-204, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvcm4ftx.13, 190.
[130] Ibid., 190-1.

to Izmir known as boyoz has Sefardic origins and a name derived from the word bourekas. This cake and the Sefardic use of almonds in baking profoundly influenced the pastry style throughout Anatolia.[131]

Historically, Turkish Sefardic Jews were quite adventurous culinarily. Given their role in trade, they were often the first to encounter and then incorporate new ingredients as they arrived in the Ottoman Empire, such as potatoes, tomatoes, beans, and leeks.[132] The traditional foods include versions of many of the traditional middle eastern dishes associated with any Turkish or former Ottoman Empire culture such as stuffed grape leaves, hummus, flatbreads, and so on. But there are also the uniquely Jewish dishes, such as bourekas (a savory filled pastry), kaşkarikas (zucchini skins with tomato, fresh cheese, and matzo meal), and many others, including those which inspired a very old Ladino folk song expounding on 36 ways to cook an eggplant.[133]

[131] Merve Baran, "Anatolian Sephardic Traditions through the Eyes of a Jewish Woman."
[132] Aylin Öney Tan, "Digesting Change?: Westernization and Aliyah as Challenges to the Food Traditions of the OttomanTurkish Sephardic Community in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries ," 194.
[133] Ibid., 199.

Lesson Outlines

Lesson I: The History of Turkish Jewry

> Core Concept: In the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey, Jews have always been one of many minority groups, influenced by the surrounding cultures, political and economic trends, and the government's relationships with the broader world. All these elements have shaped the Jewish culture of Turkey.

Introductions: (5-10 minutes)

- Names, pronouns, why you are in this class (if any new students)
- Reminder about notes - familiar, want to know more, questions

Background: (7 minutes)

- Golden Age of the Jews in Spain
- Expulsion of 1492
- Existence of Romaniote Jews in Ottoman Empire prior to 1492
- Reasons why the Turkish sultans wanted the Jews

Ottoman Jewish Golden Age: (10 minutes)

- Life for the Jews in 15th and 16th c. Ottoman Empire
    - Business
    - Finance
    - Politics
    - Medicine
    - Arts
    - Religion
    - Exchanges with Muslims and Christians
- Upsides and downsides
- Relationship between the Jews and the Sultans (savior narrative and reality)

Shift in Status (5 minutes)

- 17th c. general economic downturn and economic downturn for the Jews specifically
- Rise in status of Christians (trading places with the Jews) in 17th and 18th c.
    - Political relationships with Europe protects Christian minorities, but no such protection exists for Ottoman Jews

Modernization (10 minutes)

- 1856 abolition of *dhimmi* status making all citizens equal under the law

- Alliance Israelite Universelle (AIU) comes to Ottoman Empire
- Early 19th c. - Zionism vs. Ottomanism
    - Are you a Jew first or a Turk first?
    - One of the founding members of the Young Turks, Emmanuel Carasso, was Jewish
- Turkish Jewish population declines by default as Ottoman Empire begins to lose territory

WWI & The Fall of the Ottoman Empire (7 minutes)

- Ottoman Empire engages in ethnic cleansing: Armenian Genocide
- Young Turk Revolution
    - Democratization of Turkey
- Loss of WWI and partition of remaining Ottoman territories in 1922

The Turkish Republic (10 minutes)

- Struggles in the early republic
    - Racist “wealth tax” levied heavily against Jews in particular, causing many to emigrate
- WWII - Turkey officially neutral, but maintained strong diplomatic ties with Nazi Germany
- Many waves of immigration to Israel between 1923 and 1951
- The Jewish population in Turkey today
    - Concentrated primarily in Istanbul
    - Shrinking significantly, due to emigration, acculturation and intermarriage, and a significant decrease in birthrate

Any remaining time: invite questions from notes

What was completely unfamiliar?

What do you want to know more about?

Provide opportunities for followup on those questions (reading, resources, etc.)

Lesson 2: Religious Practices of Turkish Sefardim Then and Now

> Core Concept: Jewish observance in Turkey has roots in Spanish tradition, influence from within the Ottoman Empire. Turkish Jewry has both held tightly to tradition and remained open to new ideas throughout its history, mostly to the community's benefit, but occasionally to its detriment.

Background: (5 minutes)

- The teachings of the Golden Age of Spain
    - Rashi, Maimonides, Nachmanides, etc. [share an excerpt from Mishneh Torah]
    - What about this sounds familiar? What kinds of teachings do the Sefardim carry with them from Spain/Portugal into Turkey

Important Jewish Writers & Works Under the Ottomans (15 minutes)

- Joseph Caro and the Shulchan Aruch [share an excerpt]
- Shlomo Alkabetz and other important Kabbalists (Ottoman controlled Palestine)
    - Share L'cha Dodi text (maybe you didn't know that you know his work!)
    - The development of the Tu BiShvat Seder in Izmir in the 17th c.
    - Modeled after that of Isaac Luria and the Kabbalists of Tzfat in the 16th c.)

Haham Bashi (Chief Rabbi) (7 minutes)

- Chief Rabbi as political figure (then and now)
- As spiritual leader
- Rabbinical and lay leader support (beit din and advisory committee)

Sabbateanism (10 minutes)

- Messianism in Turkish Jewish life and times of struggle
- Rise & fall of Shabbtai Tzvi
- Division of Turkish Jewry
- Shabbtai's conversion & the Döhnme
    - Is there anything in modern contexts that this reminds you of?

Returning to mainstream Judaism…

Life Cycle Observances & Celebrations (20)

- Themes to highlight
    - Gender roles/norms

    - Role of language & music (Hebrew & Ladino - liturgical & paraliturgical music)
    - How has this changed over time?
    - How is this similar or dissimilar to Ashkenazi tradition?
        - Explain the customs then ask learners if they can discern any of these things themselves before explaining it to them
- Pregnancy/Birth/Babies:
    - Kortada de Fashadura
    - Brit milah/vijola
    - pidyon aben
- B'nai Mitzvah (boys individually called to Torah, group celebration for girls)
- Betrothal/Marriage

Any remaining time: invite questions from notes

What was completely unfamiliar?

What do you want to know more about?

Provide opportunities for followup on those questions (reading, resources, etc.)

Lesson 3: The Sounds of Turkish Jewry (scripted)

Core Concept: The influence of Turkish and Balkan music in Turkish Sefardic music shows the integration of Jews into broader Turkish society throughout history. The ways in which it retains its uniquely Jewish character in both folk and sacred traditions shows the ways in which Jews in Turkey preserved their own culture while also acculturating.

First Musical Example: (15 minutes)

Durme, Durme: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BP790OZ5BI4

- Without hearing a translation or knowing anything about this, what does it sound like to you?
    - (looking for answers like modality, a capella, woman's voice, maybe someone picks up on the word "durme" - sounds familiar)
- Share the translation, and discuss further
    - Now that you know the translation, is this what you expected?
    - Does this sound like a lullaby to you? Why or why not?
- Talk about the Turkish/Balkan influence on Kantikas (Turkish Ladino folk songs) and how the style of Al-Andaluz and the local music from the region of Anatolia blended together to form this musical genre
    - maqam(at) - Turkish mode(s)
- Share the significance/popularity of this lullaby and if time allows, share another example or two of versions of Durme, Durme Querido Ijico

Second Musical Example: (10 minutes)

La Galana Y El Mar (recording by Al Andaluz Project, 2007)

- Give learners lyrics to follow along while they listen (Ladino and translation)
- Would anyone like to share first impressions?
- This is a more traditionally "Al-Andaluz" sounding song and it is a Romanza
    - A romanza is a narrative story song, originally in Spain they tended to be about royalty or nights
    - This one as you can hear, is less in the Turkish musical style and more in the "Al-Andaluz" style
        - Provide a lite musical analysis of the specifics (tonality, rhythm, etc.)
        - Don't let the conversation get caught in instrumentation

Discussion the tradition of romanzas and folk music in the home - (5 minutes)

- Predominantly women's music
- Romanzas - stories for entertainment

- Most common folk instruments (especially the oud) were considered women's instruments - to play was a mark of education and sophistication
- Songs for every occasion, story and situation
- Paraliturgical songs for life cycle celebrations

Overlap between Kantikas and Liturgical song (5 minutes)

- Just as we have paraliturgical songs, we also have moments of Hebrew in folk songs, and we have contrafacta - the borrowing of folk melodies for sacred uses.
    - One of the most famous is Cuando El Rey Nimrod/Mi Chamocha (sing a bit to demonstrate)

Liturgical Music Introduction (5 minutes)

- Turkish synagogue music is entirely in the Turkish classical music style
    - Hazzanim and Imams in Turkey would actually train together
    - Much of the tradition has been lost because it is so highly specialized and was only ever taught by oral tradition, never notated and seldom recorded
- On Saturday afternoons it was common in certain cities for hazzanim and their choirs to join with Sufis in singing hymns called Maftirim, which are unique to the Jews of Turkey
    - The texts for shabbat afternoon praise God and glorify Jerusalem
    - 63 of these have been preserved thanks to a recording project in the 80s when at least 400 existed in the past

Musical example 3 & 4: (15 minutes)

Mizmor Şir Leyom Aşabat & Hadeş Kekedem (recording from Maftirim: Unutulan Yahudi-Sufi Geleneği, 2001)

- Before listening:
    - Give lyrics (Hebrew & English) to follow along while listening
    - Instructions: As we listen to these two Maftirim, take notes on a few things you notice
- After listening:
    - What did you notice? What stood out to you?
    - If you hadn't had context for it already, would you have realized that it was Jewish music?
    - Do you find it a moving way of hearing these texts (one of which is likely familiar to you, one of which is likely brand new to you)?

Any remaining time reserved for questions from learners. Provide opportunities for followup on those questions (reading, recordings, resources, etc.)

Lesson 4: The Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust (scripted)

> Core Concept: When one genocide is aknowledged and another is not, tension, resentment, and even guilt develop between two victimized communities. They become divided, unable to come together to commiserate, share, or heal over their similar communal traumas.

Framing (5)
Opening Questions:
By show of hands, who learned about the Holocaust _____

- from relatives?
- in religious school?
- in middle school?
- in high school?
- in college?

Again, by show of hands only, who learned about the Armenian Genocide _____

- from relatives?
- in religious school?
- in middle school?
- in high school?
- in college?

And there begins our trouble. Now of course, we didn't learn about it in religious school if we grew up Jewish. And maybe if it didn't impact our relatives, they didn't have a reason to tell us about it when we were young. But what about our entire education system? We may have trouble within American education with getting the Holocaust taught properly, but at least the German government acknowledges that it happened. The Turkish government still denies the up to 2 million lives it took, roughly 1.5 million of which were Armenian, in direct actions of ethnic cleansing at the beginning of WWI.

So let's begin with what we know. What do we in this room know about the Armenian Genocide? (20 minutes)

- Collect information from learners
- Supplement what what they may not know:
    - Show former Ottoman Empire territories, modern Turkey, Armenian regions of Anatolia, and Balkan territories on a map
    - Ottomans, desperate to hold onto their empire, thought Armenians might seek independence in eastern Anatolia. Those fears increased after the Turks lost the Balkan territories in 1913, despite the total lack of evidence of an Armenian rebellion

    - Massacres and mass deportations lead up to the genocide, justified by scapegoating the Armenians for Ottoman military failures early in WWI with which they had nothing to do
    - 1915-16: an estimated 800,000 to 1.2 million Armenian women, children, and elderly or infirm people (most able bodied men had been conscripted into military service) were sent on death marches to the Syrian Desert
        - Another 200K in late 1916
        - Subjected to starvation, rape, robbery, and massacre
        - Those who survived the death marches sent to concentration camps
    - 100,000-200,000 Armenian women and children were forcibly converted to Islam and integrated into Muslim households
    - To avoid taking responsibility, the Turkish government blamed a small group of Turkish revolutionaries, the leaders of the Committee of Union And Progress (a group which managed to rebrand itself as the Turkish nationalist movement, fighting the Turkish War of Independence with the support of those who had perpetrated and profited from the genocide). The government at the same time claims that they did not commit genocide, but acted in a legitimate relocation of Armenians.
- What was the goal of all of this?
    - permanently restructure the demographics of Anatolia through elimination of Armenians and resettlement of Muslims in their lands
    - Armenian homes, businesses, and land allocated to Muslims from outside the empire, nomads, and the estimated 800,000 (largely Kurdish) Ottoman subjects displaced because of war with Russia
    - Resettled Muslims were spread out (generally 10% in any area at most) among larger Turkish populations so they would lose their distinctive characteristics {i.e. such as non-Turkish languages or nomadism}
    - The ethnic cleansing of Anatolia—the Armenian genocide, Assyrian genocide, and expulsion of Greeks after World War I—paved the way for the formation of an ethno-national Turkish state as it exists today

Discuss in small groups (3-4 people): (10 minutes)

- Why do you think the Jews were spared in action of ethnic cleansing?
- What about this is familiar/similar to the Holocaust?
- What about this is dissimilar to the Holocaust?
- Why is it so important to the Turkish government to still deny this when it is all accepted fact in the understanding of 31 nations and the vast majority of historians?

Ask groups to share from their discussions (5 minutes)

But how do the Jews in Turkey actually fit into all of this?
Sefardi Jews and "Sultainic Saviors" (10 minutes)

- A narrative for Turkish Jews dating back to the beginning of the 16th century about Turkish leadership, specifically Ottoman sultans as the saviors of the Jews has a strong hold
    - It emerged with such intensity as to take on messianic language (as in the expulsion from Spain had to happen so that the Turks could save us and open our path to the promised land and bring about the age of the messiah"
- In exchange, for much of Ottoman/Turkish history, much as Asians are the "idealized" minority in the USA, Jews have been the "idealized" minority in much of Turkish history
    - This does not protect either group from aggression or bigotry, but they are considered valuable (in the sense that both minority groups in their respective times and places are considered industrious, smart, good in business, and other such stereotypes)
- This narrative holds to this day, such that Turkish Jews often will not speak out against the Turkish government or speak out about the antisemitism they encounter within Turkey
- It is not only because of the power of the narrative today (although it does still have power) - it is also fear of things getting worse if they do speak out now

Jews and the Turkish Narrative about the Genocide (5 minutes)

- The modern Turkish narrative of denial actually uses its Jewish citizens
    - Invented/exaggerated claims of Turkish heroism during the Holocaust to rescue Turkish Jews from the Nazis play a role in their argument that Turks would never commit such an atrocity
    - Parts of the Turkish Jewish community have promoted these fictions
- Turkey also used its Jewish citizens (threatening to deny them permission to emigrate to Israel) to coerce Israeli politicians, including Shimon Perez, into supporting their fictions as well.
- The truth is, Turkish citizens who criticize the government's denial of the genocide have faced criminal prosecution.

Discussion (15 minutes)
Starting question: What would you do in the position of a Turkish Jew whose safety depended on upholding this narrative?
Open up to questions. Provide opportunities for followup on those questions (reading, resources, etc.)

Lesson 5: A Taste of Turkish Jewry

> Turkish Jewish cuisine is a synthesis of the culinary palates brought over by the Jews of Spain in the late 15th century, the dominant Muslim culture, and the many other Mediterranean influences in and around the region of Anatolia.

Prepare almodrote step by step together

- Originated in Spain, modified in Turkey
- Influence of Turkish cuisine on Sefardi cooking and visa versa
- The importance of eggplant (share kantika about 36 ways to cook eggplant)

While dishes bake, discuss other traditional Turkish Jewish dishes and flavor combinations

Suggested food topics:

- Kashal/kashkaval cheese
- Bourekas
- Gaya kon avramilam (Gaya [fish] with sour plum sauce)
- Boyoz
- Kaşkarikas
- Hummus
- Stuffed grape leaves

When food is ready, enjoy together!

This class is also a great opportunity to revisit any other topics that learners want to know more about. Learners are encouraged in advance to bring their questions and their appetites. Instructor is encouraged to bring their notes and a playlist of Turkish Jewish music to listen to while cooking and talking.

Unit III: Moroccan Jewry

Outcomes and Desired Understandings

Enduring Understandings

- The Moroccan Jewish community contains inherent internal diversity, speaking may Jewish languages and drawing from many Jewish backgrounds, while historically being surrounded by one external majority culture
- Minhag Morocco is built upon simultaneous unity and multiplicity; a community and religious practice that is both together and separate
- Jews were the only religious minority in Morocco
- There are many ways to look, sound, and be Jewish

Essential Questions

- What does Moroccan Judaism sound like? What does Moroccan Judaism look like? What does Moroccan Judaism taste like?
- What defines "Moroccan Jewry" when it comprises such diverse groups, backgrounds, and languages?
- What is the role of language in identity and community? What is the role of shared narrative?

Learner Outcomes

Knowing: Learners will be able to identify major moments in Mediterranean and Middle Eastern Jewish history and recognize characteristic elements of the language, food, music, and religious practices of different Jewish communities. They will understand the ways in which each Jewish community has been shaped by surrounding cultures and historical trends surrounding them.

Doing: Learners will engage with unfamiliar Jewish traditions and perspectives, expanding their

understanding of how a person can live Jewishly.

Believing: Learners will be able to conceptualize their role in the broader Jewish world and imagine what it would have been to be part of another diaspora and what that means for sustaining culture and heritage.

Belonging: By developing a deeper understanding of with Jews of different backgrounds, learners will strengthen their connection to their Jewish community and the entirety of the Jewish people in all its complexity.

Evidence of Learning

Learners will be encouraged to take notes in the form of Know-Want to Know-Learned (KWL) in a chart. This way they can easily jot down their thoughts in an organized way and later come back to those notes at the end of each lesson as a reflection. That reflection will allow for questions such as: What questions do you have? What else would you like to know?

Example KWL chart:

Know	Want to Know	Learned

Content Description

Topic	**Lesson Objectives**	**Core Concepts**
The History of Moroccan Jewry	Establish a general understanding of the broad overview of Moroccan Jewish history and the major cultural trends that history formed for Jews of Maghreb.	Moroccan Jewish history is a confluence of indigenous and immigrant cultures, both regarding the Jewish minority and the once Berber and now Arabized majority, as well as French colonial forces for a time, creating a multifaceted history which yields a complex cultural mosaic throughout.
A Legal Map of the Mellah of Fez	To demonstrate the complexity and fluidity of life in and around the Jewish quarter (*mellah*) of a Moroccan city, we examine the map of Fez's complex legal system through the lens of a prominent Jewish family's private archives.	Politics and legal systems shape the culture of how minority and majority groups interact with one another and visa versa.
Sounds of Morocco	Just as there are many cultural subgroups of Moroccan Jewry, so too are there many musical subcategories of Moroccan Jewish music. This lesson offers a sampling of them, divided into three major categories: music of the synagogue, music of the home, and popular music.	As Moroccan Jewish culture is a polyglot amalgamation of its many cultural influences, so too is Moroccan Jewish music. The music of Moroccan Jewry incorporates elements of the many voices of the various waves of Jewish immigration (particularly the sounds of al-Andaluz), Berber tradition, and the dominant Moroccan Muslim culture.
Minhag Morocco	Minhag, or custom, in this case refers to religious customs. Moroccan Jewry has its own character within the larger Jewish world that brings together, among other things, mysticism and rationalism in a unique way.	Religious life holds its sanctity, retaining practices based in Jewish text, but it can also incorporate practices which stem from the dominant local culture with origins in another religion.
A Taste of Mimouna	Students will cook and eat mofletta (a sweet pancake traditionally served on Mimouna) together while learning about the holiday of Mimouna, and other traditional Moroccan Jewish dishes and flavors.	Minority cultures tend to adopt the culinary practices of the majority cultures in which they live, adapting them to suit their own cultural, religious, and dietary needs.

	*note - do not schedule this lesson during Pesach	

Introduction

Moroccan Jewry is a mixed multitude and has been for centuries. They are a polyglot *eida* descended from many traditions and places who managed to create a unique and shared identity while also maintaining distinct customs and cultures. They comprise Jews of both Berber (native North African) and Sefardi (Spanish/Portuguese) backgrounds. Their languages, religious practices, musical sonorities, culinary traditions, and more reflect both of those heritages as well as their Moroccan Muslim surroundings. While in large part, Moroccan Jews managed to keep the distinct traditions and languages of their various heritages, families, and cities, they also developed a united regional Jewish practice and identity unique to itself, distinct from the other *eidot* of the global diaspora and from other Maghrebi (North African) Jewish subgroups as well.

History

The first Jews in Morocco settled on the coasts after the siege of Carthage during the Punic wars in the 2nd century BCE, and some successful proselytization led to Berber Jewish communities soon thereafter, which established inland in the mountains.[134] The Berbers, largely nomadic, tribal people, had their own kingdom in Antiquity in what is now modern Morocco, but existed as part of the Roman and then Egyptian empires. The Maghrebi Jewish population diminished during the early centuries of the Common Era, but was bolstered in the 7th century by its first wave of immigration of Jews fleeing persecution in Spain, this time by the

[134] Anny Wynchank, "Consequences of French Colonization for North African Jews: The Division of a Cohesive Minority," French Colonial History 2, no. 1 (2002): pp. 145-157, https://doi.org/10.1353/fch.2011.0017, 146.

Visigoths.[135] Under the several Berber dynasties of the middle ages, the Jews fared well overall, holding prominent roles in politics and economics, even as the Berbers became Arabized.

The process of Islamisation or Arabization was gradual in the Maghreb, taking full hold relatively late in the history of the Arab conquest. Once completed around the 12th century, Jews, who were already the only significant religious minority in Morocco, became *dhimmi* under Islamic law, which is to say that they were protected but second class citizens. *Dhimmi* status applies to Jews and Christians under Islamic law by virtue of being cousins of Islam, as all three are Abrahamic faiths. It comes with certain prohibitions and added taxes but also comes with a status of protection from the Caliphate. In the case of Moroccan Jews, it also allowed a certain degree of autonomy that allowed them to flourish. While there were periods of exploitation, violence, or oppression for Jews in Moroccan history, their experience as a minority was a relatively safe and prosperous one.

Given the relative autonomy and success, both politically and financially, it makes sense that there were four major waves of immigration from Spain from 1285 to 1391 CE during the *Reconquista* of the Iberian Peninsula. And, of course, the biggest and final wave of Sefardi immigration came with the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492.[136] During this period, the established Moroccan Jews, whether of Berber descent or of the earliest Sefardi immigration, lived mostly inland and in the mountains. They lived in cities such as Fez, where they could hold financial and political ties to the Caliphate. Many newer Sefardi immigrants, however, settled mostly in coastal cities. Their knowledge of both European language and life paired with their residence in Northern Africa made them valuable for trade with Europe. Suddenly, the people

[135] Ibid., 147.
[136] Ibid., 147.

that the Europeans had not wanted were acceptable business associates as incredibly helpful middlemen in trade with Africa. Meanwhile, the entire Marinid kingdom benefited from the increase in trade and therefore wealth.[137] Whether business with this new influx of Jews was seen as a true benefit to society or a necessary evil varied from city to city, but by and large, the impact was the same: coastal trade cities grew in size, wealth, and influence in Moroccan society and politics.

While this clearly impacted Moroccan and Maghrebi society at large, it also internally impacted the Jews of the region. And while many immigrants of the 15th and 16th centuries chose coastal cities, an estimated 20,000 Jews settled in Fez in 1492. As Daniel J. Schroeter describes it, Fez became the single largest Jewish community in the Maghreb and an internal cultural hierarchy developed among the rabbis which had a ripple effect throughout the entire region. While Schroeter offers no explanation of why Fez attracted so many of the expelled Sefardi Jews, no shortage of likely reasons exists; the already large and thriving Jewish population there, the court of the Sultan with policies friendly to Jews, and the strong economy with plenty of opportunities must have been appealing to Jews fleeing the hostile Spanish government. Those recently expelled from Spain, those with the closest ties to the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry (an era in the Middle Ages of great philosophy and poetry while the Iberian peninsula was under Muslim control, including the work of Maimonedes, Nachmanedes, and Ibn Ezra, to name a few of the most notable thinkers of the age) considered themselves culturally superior to those who claimed a Berber-Jewish identity or those who knew their ancestors had

[137]Jane Marie Todd, Emily Benichou Gottreich, and Michael B Smith, "In Emergent Morocco.," in *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations: From the Origins to the Present Day*, ed. Abdelwahab Meddeb and Benjamin Stora (Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 223-238, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fgz64.18, 225-6.

left Spain during Visigoth reign. The former referred to themselves in rabbinic literature as *megorashim*, “exiles", and the latter as *toshavim*, “natives.”[138]

The *toshavim* had their own customs and rituals and called the *megorashim* “*rumis*,” an Arabic word for European Christians. The *megorashim*, on the other hand, considered the *toshavim* backwards, calling them “*forasteros”* -- foreigners or outsiders.[139] They had both cultural and linguistic barriers between them, and late as the 20th century, Moroccan *ketubot* indicated either *minhag hamegorashim* or *minhag hatoshavim*, indicating just how deep and lasting this separation of customs remained. But beyond that, the various *megorashim* maintained multiple Sefardi identities depending on their place of origin on the Iberian peninsula, such as Portugal, Castíl, or Andalúzia. According to many scholars, it really wasn’t until the French colonized Morocco that the Sefardi Moroccan Jews created a unified identity.[140]

As the *mellah*, or designated Jewish quarter, arose in more and more Moroccan cities, these separate groups managed to maintain their distinct identities. The *mellah* was not closed like the ghettos of Europe. While it was a walled district, the gates were only closed at night, and as far as legal and business dealings were concerned, those walls were quite porous. While Jews had their homes, schools, synagogues, businesses, and courts within the confines of the *mellah*, they were not confined to that small world. They did business with Muslims in and outside of the *mellah*, had access to the Islamic courts when a legal matter involved a non-Jew, shopped in the Muslim markets, and so on, which allowe for a great deal of cultural exchange of the course of all of the business exchanges.[141] At the same time, within the confines of the *mellah*, where life

[138]Daniel J. Schroeter, “The Shifting Boundaries of Moroccan Jewish Identities.” *Jewish Social Studies* 15, no. 1 (2008). http://www.jstor.org/stable/40207038, 151.
[139] Ibid., 150.
[140] Ibid., 151.
[141] Jessica M. Marglin, “The Legal World of Moroccan Jews.” In Across Legal Lines: Jews and Muslims in Modern Morocco, Yale University Press, 2016. 28-34.

ran on a Jewish calendar and Jewish time, Castilian families maintained their Castilian identities, as did families from Cordoba, as did the self-identified Berber Jews.

A unified identity developed in contrast to Algerian Jews when France colonized Algeria before Morocco and the Algerian Jews became fully emancipated French citizens. On the one hand, they lost the internal autonomy that their previous *dhimmi* status had afforded them. On the other hand, they now had access to the full French legal and educational system, and all the rights and privileges of French citizenship - something no Maghrebi Jewish population had ever known before.[142] Moroccan Jews hoped to see the same kind of French colonial government and policy enacted on their soil as well, but it never came to be. Although France did colonize Morocco, they did not take political power from the Sultan the way that Jews had hoped, and so the population remained second class citizens and protectees of a Sultan who could not be trusted to protect them. In the new development of modern nations and borders at this point in history, these colonial politics established a tangible division between Moroccan and Algerian Jews as opposed to Maghrebi Jews. It differed from the more cultural, less political divisions that had previously existed between the Maghrebi Jews of one city or another, not to mention those between Berber and Sefardi Maghrebi Jews. And while the remaining identities of *megorashim* and *toshavim* still mattered, the political realities of the massive difference in status between Jews with French citizenship and Jews who were still second class citizens of Morocco created a new division in North African Jewry and a new unity in Moroccan Jewry.[143]

The biggest changes for Moroccan Jews under the Treaty of Fez of 1912, when Morocco became a protectorate of France came in emancipation from the *mellah*. And while the law no

[142] Anny Wynchank, "Consequences of French Colonization for North African Jews: The Division of a Cohesive Minority," 153
[143] Ibid., 155.

longer granted them the full protections they had as *dhimmi*, they also now had increased social mobility. Paired with their familiarity with French society thanks to the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU), a school system established by French Jews in the Maghreb decades before, Jews were suddenly highly appealing employees to the French colonialists.[144] This, of course, all came to an abrupt end when France fell to Germany in WWII and as went France, so did its colonies.

In the 1940s, after the war, after France regained control of its Protectorate government in Morocco, tensions continued to rise between the Jewish and Arab Muslim populations in Morocco because of mounting tensions around the establishment of the State of Israel. Pan-Arabism grew increasingly popular among Morocco's Arab Muslims while Morocco's Jews supported the efforts of the Palmach.[145] With the Israeli War of Independence in 1948 followed by the successful overthrow of the French Protectorate in Morocco in March of 1956, even though most Jews supported King Mohammed V and Moroccan independence, the situation only grew more dangerous for them. Finally, just six months later with the Sinai War, it became clear to the Jews of Morocco that after 2,000 years of residence, the country was no longer a safe place for them.[146] The population dropped from approximately 250,000 in 1951 to almost zero through emigration by the mid-1960s. The largest Moroccan Jewish population now exists in Israel. Other major population centers exist in France and Quebec because of the AIU and the upward mobility Jews experienced during the French Protectorate in Morocco. And finally, many now live in the United States, particularly in Brooklyn, a major center of Jewish life.[147]

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[144] Samuel R. Thomas, "Redefining Diaspora Consciousness: Musical Practices of Moroccan Jews in Brooklyn," ed. Stephen Blum and Jane Sugarman (dissertation, 2014), 66-67.
[145] Ibid., 67
[146] Ibid., 67-68.
[147] Ibid., 68-69.

Language

To understand the complexity of the internal dynamics of the Moroccan Jewish community, one must understand the sheer number of languages spoken by the various subgroups of the community. The *toshavim* historically spoke Judeo-Amazigh (or Judeo-Berber), and some in the most rural villages either southeast, far into the mountains, or both, even spoke another Amazigh dialect, Tashelhit. The *megorashim*, on the other hand, spoke primarily Haketía, the Maghrebi dialect of Ladino.[148] However, the common language of the vast majority of Maghrebi Jews was, by default, Judeo-Arabic, as it became the common language of Morocco with the Arabization of Maghreb. Last but not least, the universal Jewish language is and was Hebrew, although Hebrew was largely a language of the learned, such as Rabbis and scribes. Later, as the French colonized Northern Africa, French also became a useful business language and a language of the academic elite, which did include some privileged Jews, but was never a Jewish language per se in Morocco.[149] Now in the diaspora, the major languages are becoming Hebrew, French, and English while the Jewish languages of Morocco are fading out of use, changing the character of the culture and community irrevocably.[150]

Religious Practices

While the Moroccan siddur may not look particularly different from any other Sefardi siddur, *Minhag Morocco* has its own vibrant character, sounds, and customs. As a location

[148] Daniel J. Schroeter, "The Shifting Boundaries of Moroccan Jewish Identities", 150.
[149] Susan Gilson Miller, "Moïse Nahon and the Invention of the Modern Maghrebi Jew." In French Mediterraneans: Transnational and Imperial Histories, edited by Patricia M. E. Lorcin and Todd Shepard, University of Nebraska Press, 2016, 300.
[150] Samuel R. Thomas, "Redefining Diaspora Consciousness: Musical Practices of Moroccan Jews in Brooklyn," 71.

deeply rooted in Mediterranean and Maghrebi tradition, with strong ties to Spain, and having close contact to Europe in general through trade over the centuries, the religious observances that have developed hold some elements of each of these places and their traditions. Moroccan Jewish *nusach* (music for chanting prayer) has a distinctly Adalusian, Sefardi sound, unique from other Mediterranean and Middle Eastern Jewish *nusachim*. Moroccan synagogues use Torah scrolls with both Sefardi and Ashkenazi covers depending on various factors. Many observe a custom called *hillula* (pl. *hillulot),* adapted from the local Arab population of saint veneration, of making pilgrimages to visit the graves of great rabbis on the anniversaries of their deaths.[151] And all the while, as late as the early 20th century, the difference between *megorashim* and *toshavim* remained significant among the Jews of Morocco. The evidence resides in things like *ketubot* (Jewish marriage licenses) which state *Minhag haMegorashim* (tradition of the exiles) or *Minhag haToshavim* (tradition of the natives).[152] The sheer variety of influences on Moroccan Jewry, both internal and external give the community its rich religious traditions.

One of the defining characteristics of *Minhag Morocco* is the way it holds together so many seemingly opposing customs and ideas, as with *Minhag haMegorashim* and *Minhag haToshavim*. Another such example is how the Moroccan rabbis handled the messianic and mystical cult of Sabbateanism in the 17th and 18th centuries. Shabbtai Tzvi, the Jewish self proclaimed messiah who developed a large following (Sabbateans), was forced by the Ottoman Empire to convert to Islam in 1666.[153] When that failed to stop the foment he incited, the Ottomans put him to death. This still did not stop his followers, who spread Sabbateanism all

[151]Jane Marie Todd, Emily Benichou Gottreich, and Michael B Smith, "In Emergent Morocco.," in A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations: From the Origins to the Present Day, ed. Abdelwahab Meddeb and Benjamin Stora (Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 223-238, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fgz64.18, 228.
[152] Daniel J. Schroeter, "The Shifting Boundaries of Moroccan Jewish Identities." 151-2.
[153] Jane Marie Todd, Emily Benichou Gottreich, and Michael B Smith, "In Emergent Morocco.," in A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations: From the Origins to the Present Day, 227.

over the Jewish world, which gained massive popularity at a time of great upheaval and unrest. It found success when it reached Morocco, particularly among the descendants of *conversos* (Jews who had been forced to convert to Christianity in Spain and practiced Judaism only in secret) for whom Sabbatean messianism had an especially strong appeal.

In other diaspora communities, the spread of Sabbateanism and this historical period of upheaval led to irreparable rifts between rationalism and mysticism, enlightenment and hasidism, modernity and tradition. In Morocco, the rabbis, who still to this day look to the rationalist Maimonides as the ultimate authority on Jewish law, refused to see the community bifurcated. They found ways to incorporate elements of Sabbateanism, particularly some of the mysticism and its strong messianic yearning, largely in the form of liturgy, to be added to normative Moroccan Jewish observance.[154] While some Sabbatean cultic practices lingered in Morocco into the mid-19th century, they became more and more rare. The rabbinic response to compromise and embrace some acceptable elements of the cult's practice allowed them to reunite and strengthen the community.

And, of course, one of the most important distinguishing factors of Moroccan Jewry is a holiday only celebrated by Maghrebi Jews: Mimouna. It is celebrated at the end of Passover and is particularly notable for its inherent interfaith nature. It does not have any significant liturgy, but is a celebration of spring, and blessings for a good and verdant year. In pre-colonial Morocco, Jews would often picnic on Mimouna in the fields of nearby Muslim landowners who believed it would bring them luck for a good harvest that year. Similarly, Muslims would bring wheat, dairy products, eggs, cakes, and fruit to help Jews with their celebrations, demonstrating not only the trust required for sharing food, but also the understanding of the dietary restrictions of Passover.

[154] Ibid., 227-8.

Jews would even take this one day of the year to wear brightly colored clothes like Muslims, when the rest of the year they were required to wear only dark clothes to publicly demonstrate their *dhimmi* status.[155] While the origins of Mimouna are unclear, the holiday itself demonstrates a great deal about the Moroccan Jewish community, how they interacted with their Muslim neighbors historically, and how those relationships inevitably must have influenced more parts of Moroccan Jewish life than this one festival.

Music

Moroccan Jewish music is often described as having an Andalusian aesthetic whether or not it is explicitly Sefardic. The Andalusian influence is evident in both Jewish and Muslim Maghrebi music as both Muslims and Jews left al-Andalus (the Iberian peninsula) for Northern Africa; accordingly reveals itself in sacred and secular Maghrebi Jewish music. The music has its own traditional style of song suites, called *nubah* in Arabic (pl. *nubat*) distinct from either Turkish or Persian modal systems, without quarter tones and with its own set of scalar constructions and musical idioms.[156] The sound is thereby more similar to European music than other Middle Eastern and North African music, but rhythmically, texturally, and instrumentally is much more closely related to the latter. Each *nubah* uses one *tab'* (pl. *tubu*), or melodic mode, and sequences through different texts and *mawazine*, or rhythmic patterns.[157] This is the modality

[155] André Levy. "Happy Mimouna: On a Mechanism for Marginalizing Moroccan Israelis." Israel Studies 23, no. 2 (2018): 1–24. https://doi.org/10.2979/israelstudies.23.2.01, 4-6.

[156] Jonathan H. Shannon, "Performing Al-Andalus, Remembering Al-Andalus: Mediterranean Soundings from Mashriq to Maghrib," *Journal of American Folklore* 120, no. 477 (2007): p. 308, https://doi.org/10.2307/20487557, 233.

[157] Samuel R. Thomas, "Redefining Diaspora Consciousness: Musical Practices of Moroccan Jews in Brooklyn," 88.

for a great deal of secular Moroccan music, and it is also used for Moroccan Jewish liturgical and para-liturgical music.

In looking at music of the synagogue, that is traditionally a male domain. The same restrictions against women's voices and instrumental accompaniment that exist in Moroccan Jewish minhag as in all orthodox practices, thus traditional liturgical music is sung only by men and always a cappella. Historically, the role of *shaliach tzibbur* belonged to the rabbi in Moroccan congregations, while the music specialist was known as a *paytan* (pl. *paytanim*), really a poet singer. The term comes from the word *piyyut*, a liturgical poem and one of the most significant forms of para-liturgical Jewish music. The *paytan* had a central role in communal life, leading life cycle events, parties, *hillulot*, but not worship in the synagogue.[158] However, prayer practices today rely heavily on the chazzan, or cantor, as both prayer leader and as someone to bring the connection between the music and the liturgical text to life for the congregation. But unlike Ashkenazi practice, in which the chazzan leads most or all of the liturgy, in Moroccan congregations with a chazzan, they tend to follow Sefardi custom wherein lay leaders chant the first half of the service and the chazzan chants the second half. It keeps the nusach (the mode of chanting prayer) alive and well in the community and keeps the community engaged in prayer through lay leadership. And by the same token, now, as a diaspora community yet again, Moroccan Jews are more determined than ever to preserve their musical prayer traditions, thus a skilled chazzan who truly knows the Moroccan nusach is of particular value to these communities outside of Morocco today.[159]

[158] Ibid., 190.
[159] Ibid., 189--90.

On the other hand, interested musicologists are working to collect and preserve the secular music of Moroccan Jews before it is forgotten. While much of the sacred music is kept alive in Moroccan synagogues in cities like Jerusalem, Brooklyn, and Montreal, with significant Moroccan Jewish populations, much of the secular folk music is being lost. As the distinct communities that existed for so long in Morocco have lost their specific character and what was carried on within them by oral tradition for centuries is now at risk of disappearing forever. One musicologist doing this work of preservation is Vanessa Paloma Elbaz who found that the Judeo-Spanish music of Northern Morocco which has been treated by so many musicologists as proof of a longing for life in Spain before the expulsion has actually been a means of drawing boundaries against assimilation into mainstream Moroccan culture. Music is a way of expressing identity, and for this group of Jews in particular, the music that is considered their core repertoire they refer to as "*lo nuestro,*" "ours". Any music from outside of those liturgical songs, romanzas, coplas, or life cycle songs cross a border. Music from the broader Jewish world is held more closely, and music from the broader Moroccan world and elsewhere in general is considered farther afield, although contrafacta using borrowed melodies from secular music have become part of *lo nuestro*.[160]

Among the Judeo-Spanish women of Northern Morocco, music of the home has been a way to celebrate communal continuity, fertility, and lifecycle events. One striking and particularly musical home ritual called *Noche de Berberisca* occurs the night before a wedding. The bride becomes an embodiment of Torah through special garments and treatment in a Kabbalistic fertility celebration. The bride, as the Tree of Life, becomes the embodiment of the

[160] Vanessa Paloma Elbaz, "Jewish Music in Northern Morocco and the Building of Sonic Identity Boundaries," *The Journal of North African Studies*, February 18, 2021, pp. 1-33, https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2021.1884855, 14-15.

feminine and masculine of Torah together, and the women surround her and sing songs to her in Ladino and Haketía of sanctification and fidelity and fertility. Some of the songs are overtly suggestive and sexual, celebrating the bride's sexuality and wishing her and her groom fertility. They do *hakafot* around the groom's house like the Torah around the synagogue. This ritual is still practiced in some communities descended from Northern Moroccan Jewry, and in many ways is now the key remaining moment of transmission for all of this music and tradition from the older generation to the younger.[161]

Cuisine

The culinary exchanges between Jews and Muslims throughout the Mediterranean is similar in Morocco to what is evident in Turkish and Persian cuisine as well. Each region has its own variations on dishes, and each has clearly influenced the other. The primary discrepancies between Jewish and Muslim Maghrebi cooking lie in the use of dairy and meat as the Islamic and Jewish religious restrictions around these differ. Generally Moroccan Muslim savory recipes use butter and oil interchangeably and bake with butter, while the Jewish recipes do not. Similarly, while neither religion allows the consumption of pork and blood, the other rules diverge from each other significantly. Otherwise, however, whether Jewish or Muslim, the Maghrebi diet generally includes legumes, grains, meats, a full range of Mediterranean fruits and vegetables, olive and peanut oil, and aromatic spices and herbs like cumin, coriander, saffron, clove, mint, and parsley. [162]

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[161] Ibid., 16-20.

[162] Jane Marie Todd, Joëlle Bahloul, and Michael B. Smith. "Flavors and Memories of Shared Culinary Spaces in the Maghreb." In A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations: From the Origins to the Present Day, edited by Abdelwahab Meddeb and Benjamin Stora, Princeton University Press, 2013, 1055-7.

A major staple of Moroccan cuisine is couscous. In Maghrebi Muslim tradition it symbolizes good fortune and appears on most holiday tables. It also appears in the typical Maghrebi shabbat dinners, full of all kinds of vegetables, and most often served with beef. Couscous is such a staple of the Maghrebi Jewish diet that there is even a form made of crushed matzah for passover. Another traditional Moroccan Shabbat dish, often served for lunch after cooking overnight (much the Maghrebi parallel of an Ashkenazi cholent) is a stew called *t'fina* or *dafina*, often made with cardoons, turnips, white beans, garlic and other aromatics, swiss chard, and large pieces of meat.[163] Other dishes common to all Moroccans are things like a dish known to have originated in Medieval Spain known as *pastilla*, *b'stilla*, or *bestel*. It is a puff pastry stuffed with meat (beef, lamb, poultry of all sorts, or occasionally fish) appears to have originated in, and likely made its way with Sefardi Jews all over the Maghreb. And, of course, at the end of Pesach, Jews in Morocco would often celebrate Mimouna with their Muslim neighbors and pastries sweetened with sugar and honey, leavened flatbreads, and various other leavened treats often baked and brought over by those same interfaith neighbors and friends.[164]

[163] Ibid., 1056.
[164] Ibid., 1053-8.

Lesson Outlines

Lesson 1: The History of Moroccan Jewry (scripted)

> Core Concept: Moroccan Jewish history is a confluence of indigenous and immigrant cultures, both regarding the Jewish minority and the once Berber and now Arabized majority, as well as French colonial forces for a time, creating a multifaceted history which yields a complex cultural mosaic throughout.

Introduction (12 minutes)

- If any new learners present, names, pronouns, why are you taking this class?
- Refresher on KWL notes
- Moroccan Jewish history is almost as long as Persian Jewish history - this is a broad overview
- Context: Moroccan Jewry is a mixed multitude full of many internal subcultures, influences, and languages

Early History (10 minutes)

- First Jews in Maghreb 2nd c. BCE (Punic Wars)
- Prosthelezation inland lead to Berber Jews in the mountains
- 1st wave of Jewish immigration from Spain: 7th c. CE
    - Jews fleeing Visigoths

Middle Ages (10 minutes)

- Arabization of Maghreb completed by 12th c.
    - Jews only population to whom *dhimmi* status applies in Islamic Morocco (no significant Christian population)
    - Jews fared well overall (socially, politically, & economically)
- 1285 to 1391 - 4 major waves of Jewish immigration from Spain
    - Reconquista
    - New Jewish communities emerge in coastal cities, pre-existing Jewish populations closer to the Caliphate in Fez
        - Jewish communities maintain distinct identities
- Huge Jewish population influx 1492 - Expulsion of the Jews from Spain (shortly followed by Portugal)
- Sefardi Jews in Morocco and trade with Europe
    - Coastal cities grow

    - Tradespeople drawn to coastal cities, rabbis & people with political aspirations drawn to Fez

Life Among the Moroccan Jews (10 minutes)

- Life inside the *mellah* - together but separate
- Social hierarchy emerges - *megorashim* and *toshavim*
- Linguistics
- Interactions between Muslims & Jews inside and outside the *mellah*

19th and 20th centuries (10 minutes)

- Tensions between Moroccan and Algerian Jews after the French colonize Algeria and make all residents French citizens
    - More unified Moroccan Jewish identity begins to form in their unfulfilled desire for full emancipation and French citizenship
- AIU presence and schools in Morocco
- Treaty of Fez of 1912
    - Morocco becomes a French protectorate
    - Emancipation of the *mellah*, end of *dhimmi* status
- Post WWII, Pan-Arabism and Zionism both on the rise in Morocco, causing tension that the French are not equipped to handle
- March, 1956 - Morocco regains independence
    - Most Moroccan Jews supported King Mohammed V and the independence movement
    - Despite that, things were not safe for Jews without the French (especially following the Sinai War/Suez Crisis)
- Jewish Population of Morocco 1951:250,000

  1965: almost zero

Any remaining time: invite questions from notes

What was completely unfamiliar?

What do you want to know more about?

Provide opportunities for followup on those questions (reading, resources, etc.)

Lesson 2: A Legal Map of the Mellah of Fez

> Core Concept: Politics and legal systems shape the culture of how minority and majority groups interact with one another and visa versa.

See appendix for map

Introduction (10 minutes)

- Complexities of the Moroccan legal systems and their poor documentation
- Context on Dar Assaraf and the Assaraf family
    - What is this family's archive and what does its contents mean for us

Layout of the Map (5 minutes)

- Orient ourselves - *Mellah*, Dar Assaraf, Royal palace, major Muslim legal landmarks of Old Fez
- Name the various courts, their respective scribes, and where to find them
    - Find them on your own maps

Description of the Jewish Legal System in Morocco (15 minutes)

- Who does it apply to?
    - In what situations?
- When is it best to use this situation?
- What calls for a scribe and what calls for a beit din?
- Give scenarios that learners can play out within the *mellah*

Description of the Sharia Legal System in Morocco (15 minutes)

- Who does it apply to?
    - In what situations?
- When is it best to use this situation?
- What calls for a scribe and what calls for the court?
- When in court, what can and can't a Jew do and how is that different from a Jew in other Muslim countries?
- Give scenarios that learners can play out outside of the *mellah*

But wait - there's more! (10 minutes)

- What if you need to go over the head of the Sharia court straight to the King?
- What if you have so much influence you can go over the head of the King to an international court?

- How did anyone ever learn how to navigate all of this?
- What were the benefits and what were the drawbacks of this flexible, complex, poorly regulated amalgamation of a court system?

Any remaining time: invite questions from notes

What was completely unfamiliar?

What do you want to know more about?

Provide opportunities for followup on those questions (reading, resources, etc.)

Lesson 3: Sounds of Morocco (scripted)

> Core Concept: As Moroccan Jewish culture is a polyglot amalgamation of its many cultural influences, so too is Moroccan Jewish music. The music of Moroccan Jewry incorporates elements of the many voices of the various waves of Jewish immigration (particularly the sounds of al-Andaluz), Berber tradition, and the dominant Moroccan Muslim culture.

Introduction (15 minutes)

- Begin class with the first musical example - LaMoledet Shuvi Roni, recorded by Orit Atar (Ya'alat Chen, 2017) or Lior Elmaleh https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3wlKL3c4vs
    - Everyone has access to Hebrew and translation while listening
- Opening discussion
    - Sharing thoughts?
    - We know enough to know now that those odd sounding notes were not out of tune but quartertones.
    - How did it sound similar or different to Persian or Turkish Jewish music to you?
    - Would you have guessed that this was Jewish music if you had heard it in a different context and hadn't had Hebrew text in front of you?

Information on Maghrebi Jewish Music (7 minutes)

- Maghrebi music is built on its own traditional style of song suites, called *nubah* in Arabic (pl. *nubat*)
    - Largely without quarter tones
    - Sounds more European than other middle eastern & North African music
- Each *nubah* uses one *tab'* (pl. *tubu*), or melodic mode
- The rhythmic patterns in this system are referred to as *mawazine*
- This is the modality for a great deal of secular Moroccan music, and it is also used for Moroccan Jewish liturgical and para-liturgical music.

Sacred Music (20 Minutes)
Second Listening Example: Yedid Nefesh https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RQvcc-LvO0

- Introduce the concept of a *taksim* (similar to a *geveyn* in Klezmer) after hearing the example of the one that opens this performance of the piyyut
- Talk about Moroccan paytanim and great tradition of musical prayer leading
    - Equal importance of great vocalism and serving the text (much like the Ashkenazi hazonic tradition)

- Highlight interplay between *mawazine* and how this *nubah* sounds both major and minor to our western ears
- Allow time for discussion and questions

Folk Music (10 minutes)
Third Listening Example: Scalerica de oro,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1tLwuFFMIgg&list=PLMenxKt_nrYMvM0XATL8Cd0rQ3iWAjWoN&index=15

- Learners will listen with the text and translation in front of them
- Point out the brief *taksim* in the form
- Wedding song - what is the function of this kind of wedding song?
    - *Noche de Berberisca* - women's kabbalistic ritual the night before a wedding, bride becomes like the Torah, wishing good fortune and fertility for the new couple
- What do we notice about the musical style?

(3 minutes)
Closing Listening Example: Kuando el Rey Nimrod,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2TkG16T4lk

- Many assume this song dates back to Al-Andaluz, but in fact, it seems that it originated in Morocco sometime in the late 19th and, despite the Moroccan Jews being largely isolated from the rest of the Jewish world, became one of the most popular songs in the Ladino repertoire
- Invite people to sing along with the chorus as they catch on

Lesson 4: ***Minhag Morocco***

> Core Concept: Religious life holds its sanctity, retaining practices based in Jewish text, but it can also incorporate practices which stem from the dominant local culture with origins in another religion.

Introduction: (15 minutes)

- Just like everything else on Moroccan Jewish life, religious practices vary
- *Minhag Morocco* is a Sefardic siddur, but not exactly the same as the standard sefardi siddur
- Moroccan Rabbis learned how to hold together seemingly opposing traditions within one larger tradition
    - Prioritized Jewish unity over the values of any one faction
    - Some communities use Sefardic Torah scrolls, others use Ashkenazi
    - Differences between *Minhag haMegorashim and Minhag haToshavim* evident into the 20th c.

How the Moroccan Rabbis Dealt with Sabbateanism (10 minutes)

- Late 17th c. into 18th c. - time of massive upheaval
- Sabbateanism and its messianism held popular appeal for people seeking answers in a difficult time
    - Particularly appealing to the descendants of *conversos* in Morocco
- While it split other Jewish communities (i.e. Haskalah vs. Hassididut or losing Jews in large numbers to Döhnme conversion like in Turkey), the rabbis compromised to keep everyone together and ultimately strengthened the community
    - Basis of Moroccan Jewish practice and principle is still rationalism based on Maimonedes
    - Siddur now includes certain pieces of Sabbatean liturgy with strong elements of mysticism and messianic longing

Hillula (pl. *hillulot*) (15 minutes)

- Custom akin to saint veneration
    - adapted from dominant Muslim culture
    - Jews make (or made) annual pilgrimages to the gravesites of great rabbis on the anniversary of their deaths
    - This is a joyful, social occasion with singing, prayer, and food
- Share JTA news clip: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uemHPeVXJmE
- Open for discussion - thoughts, questions, comments

Life Cycle Events (15 minutes)

- Maintaining Jewish culture and adopting elements of dominant Arab culture
    - Many celebrations include henna ceremonies (like weddings and b'nei mitzvah)
- Birth rituals are halachically the same as any other orthodox practice, but there are special customs as well
    - Chasing Lilith (blessing said to protect the baby from Lilith - ancient tradition maintained by no other communities anymore)
    - Jacob's Blessing to Ephraim
    - Many specific superstitions drawn from the book of Genesis
    - Pidyon Haben - different name for the same ritual of ransoming the firstborn son, here on the 31st day after birth and with any metal coin
- Bar Mitzvah
    - Usually at age 13, but can happen as young as 7 (once child knows all of Torah and one section of Talmud)
    - Rituals include wrapping tefillin and wearing a tallit for the first time, reading from Torah, giving multiple drashot (speeches on Torah and Talmud), giving to charity, processions, henna (likely adopted from local Berber tradition), piyyutim, etc)
- Burial Societies/ Hevrah Kadisha
    - Crucial to the functioning of the Jewish community
    - All volunteer work (usually by older people) and dependent upon the charity of the community
    - Responsible for visiting the sick, cleaning and preparing bodies, burial, grave digging, cemetery maintenance and more

Any remaining time: invite questions from notes

What was completely unfamiliar?

What do you want to know more about?

Provide opportunities for followup on those questions (reading, resources, etc.)

Lesson 5: A Taste of Mimouna

> Core Concept: Minority cultures tend to adopt the culinary practices of the majority cultures in which they live, adapting them to suit their own cultural, religious, and dietary needs.

A quick lesson on Mimouna! (15 minutes)

- Moroccan Pesach traditions
- Interfaith cooperation (selling/buying back chametz and preparing this celebration)
- How the holiday is celebrated

Prepare mofletta step by step together

While eating, discuss other traditional Moroccan Jewish dishes and flavor combinations

Suggested food topics:

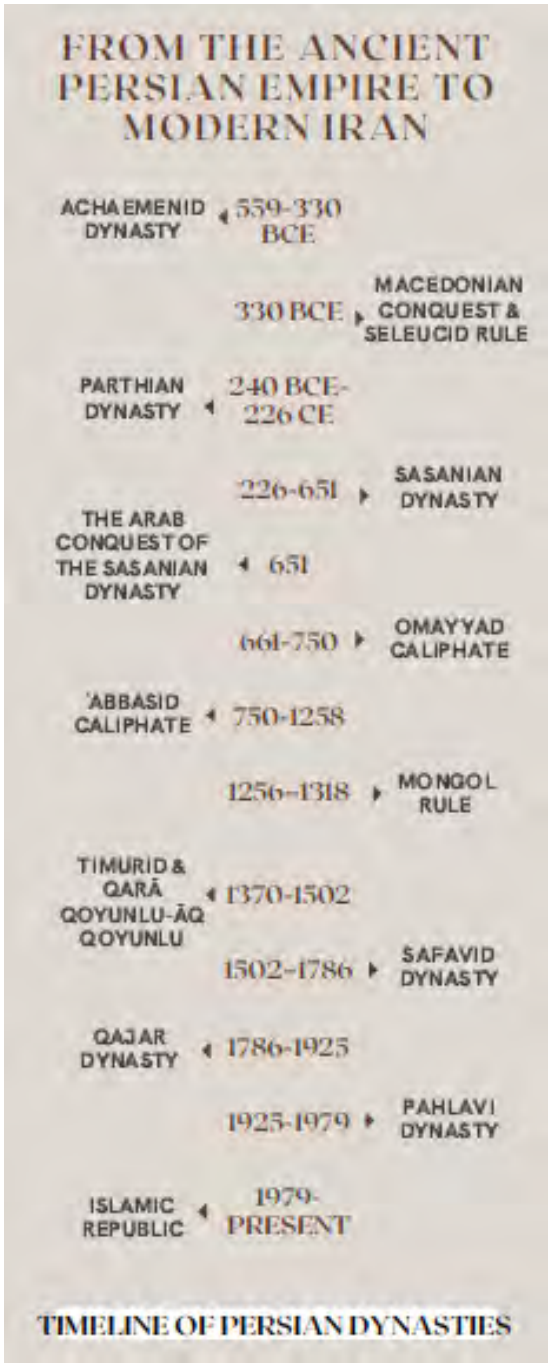
- Pastilla/b'stilla/bestel
- Mahia
- Couscous
- Dafina/t'fina
- Skhina
- Fazuelos

When food is ready, enjoy together!

This class is also a great opportunity to revisit any other topics that learners want to know more about. Learners are encouraged in advance to bring their questions and their appetites. Instructor is encouraged to bring their notes and a playlist of Moroccan Jewish music to listen to while cooking and talking.

Appendix

Lesson material made for Unit I, Lesson 1



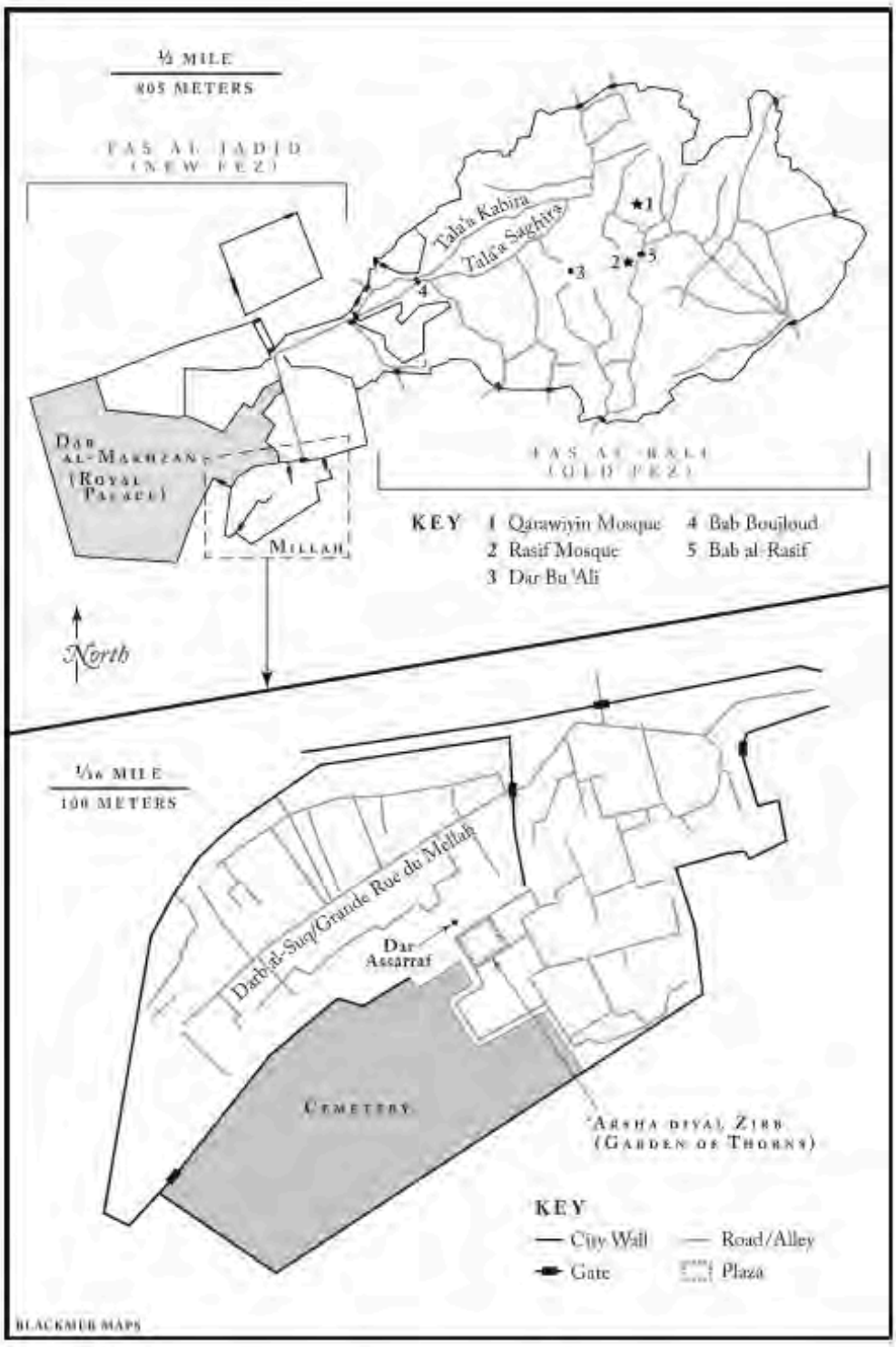
Lesson material for Unit I, Lesson 4
Infographic sourced from: Internal Ethnicity: Iranians in Los Angeles

TABLE 2
Selected Indicators of Ethnicity in the United States: Armenian, Bahai, Jewish, and Muslim Iranians in Los Angeles

	Percent Distribution[1]			
Indicators of Ethnicity	*Armenians (N195)*	*Bahais (N87)*	*Jews (N188)*	*Muslims (N201)*
Ethno-religious identity[2]	97.0	73.5	78.0	28.0
Iranian only identity	0.5	23.0	19.3	66.5
Religious observance:				
Always and often	38.5	69.0	63.8	5.0
Occasionally and never	61.5	31.0	36.2	95.0
Endogamy	87.0	71.4	95.6	74.5
Close relatives in neighborhood[3]	61.5	49.3	63.8	42.3
Close friends are mostly Iranian coreligionists	83.1	42.5	68.1	47.3
Pleople at social gatherings are mostly Iranian coreligionists	87.0	41.9	85.1	46.7
Participate in organizations	56.4	58.6	33.5	31.4
Members of organization are mostly Iranian coreligionists[4]	80.9	23.5	41.3	17.2
Prefer to participate in Iranian coreligionist organizations	48.7	24.1	42.0	8.0

Lesson material for Unit II, Lessons 1 and 4
Image Source: Encyclopedia Britannica Online

Lesson material for Unit III, Lesson 2
Source: Jessica M. Marglin. The Legal World of Moroccan Jews.



Map of Fez

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