Sephardic/Mizrahi/Arab-Jews: Reflections on Critical Sociology and the Study of Middle Eastern Jewries within the Context of Israeli Society

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Israeli society has undergone extensive changes since May 1948, and there have also been significant shifts and debates regarding the ways in which people understand these developments. Differing currents appear in public discourse, historical writings, and in the work of social scientists. This essay, undertaken by two anthropologists, assesses the contribution of ''critical sociology'' to the understanding of those aspects of Israeli Jewish society and culture that have their historical roots in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. We focus on the interaction between the historical and cultural identities of specific immigrant groups and their descendants, on the one hand, and the negative stereotyping of these groups—in particular, their being lumped together in a single overarching category as a prelude to processes of social, political, and cultural exclusion—on the other. Our analysis offers an understanding of the experiences of Middle Eastern Jews in Israel that takes the varying research traditions into account.[1]

As is well known, the thinking of Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt dominated the sociological analysis of Israeli society for the first two decades after the establishment of the state.[2] He analyzed, for example, the far-reaching implications of creating a state (with its coercive and bureaucratic functions) for a Jewish population that hitherto had been voluntarily organized. In examining Israel's large immigration intake after 1948, Eisenstadt and others gave little weight to the significance of historical-cultural differences between the various groups.[3] Whereas an early paper of his had focused on ''Oriental Jews,''[4] the subsequent predominant analysis involved the formulation of general variables that were then applied to all immigrant populations. Eisenstadt adopted mid-20th-century American sociology's dominant modernization

paradigm that viewed whole societies as either "traditional" or "modern." Applying this dichotomous model to Israeli society, he introduced a third type of society, "transitional." While this category bridged the pasts of many Jews from Muslim countries and their expectations regarding the future Israeli society, it did not deal in depth with the particularities of culture or identity.[5] Underlying Eisenstadt's triadic classification was the desire to understand factors that encouraged or impeded "absorption" into the new society, which was envisioned as being built upon the values of modernity common to contemporary western nation-states, and led mainly by Jews of European origin.

Although greatly influenced by American sociology, early Israeli sociology did not take up the former's intense interest in issues of discrimination and prejudice. Thus it largely overlooked the manifestations in Israel of ethnic stereotyping and its impact on individuals, as well as outright discrimination and formal and informal discourse that devalued Middle Eastern culture.[6] Neither did it relate explicitly to the linkages between ethnic origins and access to power and resources. Instead, it offered a semantically flat and ostensibly neutral theoretical notion of "institutional dispersion"—the unskewed economic and political distribution of immigrants from different backgrounds—as the measure of successful integration.

By the 1970s, however, the validity of Eisenstadt's modernization model was widely questioned by social scientists. Challenges and alternative approaches that coalesced under the heading of "critical sociology" highlighted a number of themes. Functionalism (which Eisenstadt had adopted) was criticized for assuming consensus and ignoring conflict within society.[7] "Dependency theory" was invoked as a means of both better understanding Israel's ties with global economic and political forces, and of characterizing relations between stronger and weaker groups within the society.[8] Critical sociologists also argued that there was a tight fit between sociological perspectives and prevailing assumptions of the dominant agenda-setting forces within the society.

Active for more than a generation, critical sociologists have created a field that has entered the mainstream of sociological scholarship. Within it, over time, different theoretical strands—and disagreements—have emerged.[9] For example, Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled welcome the contribution of Sammy Smooha, whose model of society takes account of conflict, but criticize him for not attempting to place his later work on Palestinians in Israel within the same analytic framework as Middle Eastern Jews.[10] Hannan Hever, Yehouda Shenhav, and Pnina Motzafi-Haller, the editors of *Mizraḥim beyisrael* (Mizrahim in Israel) point out that critical "post-Zionist" analysis has ignored questions of Mizrahi ethnicity.[11] In general, that book and Shenhav's *Hayehudim haʾaravim* (The Arab-Jews) emphasize links between culture, power, and identity, focusing on processes of inclusion and exclusion in Israeli society. These writers insist that Zionist ideology both created "Eastern ethnicity" and simultaneously devalued and limited it. They also highlight cultural matters and "alternative voices," both of which, in their view, received only limited attention in earlier critical writings.[12]

While we value these approaches, we would argue that they have not gone far enough. Thus, for example, the questions of precisely how much and to what extent

power plays a role in everyday practice and discourse need to be determined by scientific investigation and empirical examination.

The burden of this essay, therefore, resides in the following interrelated themes:

1. Critical approaches to the study of Israeli society have emphasized the role of ''the political'' and the state in explaining issues of ethnic stratification and ethnic identity. While it is important to ''bring the state back in''[13] to social research, this emphasis sometimes blurs the analytic distinction between state and society. It assumes that what happens at the highest political levels is reproduced automatically in local situations, without taking note of processes of interaction and variation that might be revealed by empirical examination.

2. One indication of the way in which assumptions about power continue to infuse social analysis is the persistence of binary modes of discourse, whether expressed in the categorization of groups or in analytic concepts that evoke bipolar images such as ''hegemony'' and ''resistance.'' It is at least as important to be aware of what binary terminology and modes of analysis overlook as to understand what they help reveal. As Roland Calori notes, binary reasoning tends to ''think about change as the replacement of one truth by a new truth, in terms of either . . . or,'' rather than seeking insight from difference, diversity, complexity, and tensions.[14]

3. Critical analysis has emphasized the significance of the factors of exclusion in shaping an inclusive ''Mizrahi'' ethnic category in Israeli society. It is now widely recognized that Mizrahim do not constitute a monolithic category and hence that the term is inadequate. Nevertheless, it continues to appear. As a result, the existence of more particular identities alongside or within a broader Mizrahi identity is obscured, and investigation of the often intricate relations between these identity levels is overlooked.

4. In addition to missing or ignoring segments of Israeli society and culture that do not fit neatly into the Mizrahi or Ashkenazic classification, the recourse to binary thinking irons out differences in the histories of the various Middle Eastern groups, both in their countries of origin and in their subsequent experiences in the Yishuv and Israel.

To concretize our points, our discussion is divided into three parts. We first explore the evolution of terms referring to ethnic groups in Israel—whether ''Mizrahim'' versus ''Ashkenazim,'' particular identities such as ''Kurdish'' or ''Bukharan'' Jews, or broader terminology referring to ''communities of origin'' (*'edot*). Next we examine the maintenance of binary assumptions even by those who claim to critique them, bringing examples from the historical analysis of Zionism among Middle Eastern Jews (which often ignores the movement's variable forms and each Jewry's particular Zionist perspective). Third, we show how, in the analysis of Israeli society, the emphasis given to the mechanisms of hegemonic power results in a situation in which manifestations of pluralism are overlooked or discounted—in particular, the varying ways in which people from Middle Eastern backgrounds interact with, and influence, powerful institutions. In conclusion, we briefly discuss theoretical, methodological, and analytical issues relating to the further exploration of how ethnicity actually works—that is, how it is manifested ''on the ground'' in Israeli society.

Evolving Ethnic Categories

The various terms utilized to discuss "Sephardic" or "Mizrahi" groups, and their linkage to issues of power, have changed over time. Several points emerge from a historical purview. For one thing, the emphasis on power differentials, which underlies the binary distinction made between (powerless) Middle Eastern Jews and (powerful) European Jews, tends to overlook the historical origins of a plurality of Middle Eastern identities as well as the role played by even relatively "powerless" groups in shaping ethnic discourse. It is therefore useful to adopt a perspective in which popular ethnic categorizations, "official definitions" such as census categories, and social science concepts are all examined.

Historically, Sephardic traditions gained a foothold both outside and within the Middle East. While there emerged an overlap between the notions of "Sephardic" and Middle Eastern Jewry,[15] the two identities remained partially distinct. Thus, Jews residing in the Middle East who maintained Judeo-Spanish speech and held collective memories of an Iberian past distinguished themselves from local Jews who spoke Arabic and reflected the surrounding culture—even if the latter had also absorbed some Sephardic cultural influence. For instance, during the 17th-19th centuries in Aleppo, Jews originating in Europe referred to the local Jews as *mustaʾarabim* and adopted the term *francos* in reference to themselves.[16] Both in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th, when Jews from Europe came into contact with Jews from the Middle East in Ottoman and Mandate Palestine, "Sephardic" and "Ashkenazic" did not become, as might have been expected, blanket terms synonymous with "East" and "West." Instead, groups from Middle Eastern countries continued to identify themselves, and be identified by others, in specific communal terms (for instance, "Mugrabi" "Urfeli," "Halebi," "Yazdi," and the like).

Only with the large-scale immigration to Israel after 1948 did the binary division with an orientalist flavor begin to emerge. At the level of daily interaction, it became increasingly common to categorize persons on the basis of their country rather than their community of origin (as, for instance, "Moroccans" or "Iraqis"), a practice that lumped together individuals from very different backgrounds (for instance, Casablanca and the Atlas Mountains in Morocco; or Kurdistan and Baghdad in Iraq). As Dorothy Willner noted at the time, the Israeli tendency to assign identity by country of origin could be attributed to cognitive overload: the need to deal with extreme social complexity seemed to call for such shorthand labels.[17] Social scientists did not generally question this mode of classification, although Efrat Rosen-Lapidot's recent ethnographic work in France indicates that at least one group, Tunisian Jews, tend to adopt identities based upon their specific community of origin, rather than on their "Tunisian-ness."[18]

At the governmental level, immigration officials classified immigrants by country of origin, and the Central Bureau of Statistics subsequently broadened the term into "continent of origin." The latter classification soon became the basic element in demographic and sociological analysis that facilitated discussion of the differences between European and Middle Eastern Jews.[19] Obviously, such categories were at best rough approximations of social realities. For example, the "Africa" category

often covered individuals both from North and South Africa, with the latter being English-speaking immigrants mainly of East European origin (in popular ethnic terminology, they were known as *Anglosaksim*, along with Jews from England and America). Similarly, countries that bridge Europe and Asia, such as Turkey and the former Soviet Union, also generated problems of classification.

Dvora Yanow provides a useful perspective on census-taking and public policy issues when she notes that scholars "argue that 'race' and 'ethnicity' and their associated categories are created by states and societies to establish and reinforce a hierarchy of population groups with attendant power and status."[20] However, her assumption that "states" and "societies" are always in tandem may be too simplistic. For one thing, ethnic labeling does not always begin at the state level; for another, several ethnic labels for the same group may coexist or overlap. Finally, the question of how the spread of ethnic labels and images within society affects the way in which such labels are used within state bureaucracies requires empirical investigation.[21] For example, Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union were at first categorized by the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics as coming from Europe. Later, as different governmental bodies confronted the diversity among ex-Soviet immigrants, they distinguished between the Asiatic and European parts of the former empire—which in itself was more a reflection of popular images than of careful ethnographic-historical research.[22] In sum, ethnic categorizations, which have profound policy implications, are often the outcome of a complex interaction between popular labels and official classifications.

More generally, the terms used in discussing ethnic phenomena have varied and have been subject to debate. Whereas romantic reference was once made to the in-gathering of the "tribes" of Israel, the term that eventually became common was *ʾedot* ("communities"). Typically, this was a shorthand for *ʾedot hamizraḥ* (the Eastern communities), for in the post-state period there was almost no reference to European *ʾedot*.[23] This terminological imbalance has been variously interpreted.

Smooha argues that this usage refers to an "ethnoclass" rather than to a place of origin. As such, he maintains, the term *ʾedot* allows unexamined assumptions about differences in class and status to remain in place.[24] Both he and Shlomo Swirski, who emphasizes power differentials, prefer the term *Mizraḥim* (Easterners) because it highlights the issue of social power and emphasizes that these differences are anchored in the disadvantaged situation of Mizrahim within Israeli society rather than in their immigrant past.[25] From this perspective, the term *ʾedot hamizraḥ* also serves to mask (and thus perpetuate) power differentials between ethnic groups. Furthermore, it assumes or implies that Middle Eastern immigrants are "traditional" as compared with Europeans, who are "modern," as well as drawing (negative) attention to the linkages between them and "Arabs."[26]

It is beyond doubt that this ethnic classification involved stereotypes that affected the immigrants' economic status, social prestige, and access to power, as did educators' expectations and social workers' assumptions about the norms of family life. Nevertheless, discarding the term *ʾedot* and replacing it with another global category such as "Mizrahim" also highlights certain social processes while obscuring others. Thus, according to Yehouda Shenhav, the term *ʾedot hamizraḥ* represented the

(once) hegemonic discourse imposed from above, whereas "Mizrahim" reflected the politics of identity emanating from below.[27] In our view, however, both terms suppress a pluralist view of Mizrahi/Middle Eastern communities.

It is not necessary to defend the usage of the term *ʾedot hamizraḥ* to recognize that, historically, it offered a plural view of these groups that represented a commonsense response to reality. For at least one generation after statehood, immigrants to Israel from Europe consisted mainly of the remnants of families and communities that had survived the Second World War, while those from Middle Eastern countries came as families, whole communities, or total populations. In the latter case, preexisting ties were maintained or re-constituted after arrival, often reinforced by processes of geographic concentration and segregation in peripheral regions and depressed urban neighborhoods (which reflected a combination of policy decisions, resource differentials, immigrant choice, and unintended consequences). This situation enhanced the possibility of maintaining cultural continuity via the organization of local community synagogues, festival celebrations, and the conduct of religious life adapted to the new and changed surroundings. In the area of religious terminology, *ʾedot hamizraḥ* became an accepted way of defining the liturgical tradition and order of synagogue services and rituals, as set down in prayer books printed in accordance with "Nusaḥ *sefarad* veʾedot hamizraḥ." Equally important, such expressions of ethnocultural continuity and variation were considered legitimate within a setting that otherwise stressed nation-building and homogeneity. These factors, along with the preexisting historical diversity among groups generally thought of as "Sephardic" or "Oriental," justified the language of plurality with reference to Jews from Middle Eastern countries, despite the invidious meanings often attributed to terms like *ʾedot*.[28] It is important therefore to distinguish between the mobilization of terminology to reinforce social stratification and the terms accepted as meaningful or legitimate by the groups in question.

The same warning may be applied to the succeeding common label—Mizrahim. In contrast with *ʾedot hamizraḥ*, it connotes ethnic differences that overlap with class, political protest, and socialization in Israel, involving varying degrees and forms of social and cultural exclusion. A few critical researchers have examined empirically the socioeconomic differences between various groups within the broad Asia-Africa category.[29] Similarly, some groups maintain that grouping all "Easterners" in a single category is not consistent with their sense of self-identity and devalues their particular heritage and social standing; hence, they continue to distinguish, both publicly and in academic research, between Sephardim and Orientals.[30] So, too, Jews from Turkey insist that they are Sephardic but not Mizrahi, and Jews from Iran prefer to be viewed separately as the *ʾedah iranit* rather than be placed under the general rubric of "Oriental Jews."[31] Conversely, Jews from Bulgaria report that Israelis of European origin tend not to regard them as Sephardim because they seem to be "Europeans like themselves."[32] In sum, all these examples suggest that the category of "Mizrahim" requires further clarification, and its relationship with other classification practices needs to be examined in a situational context.

As noted, the use of the term Mizrahim was advocated by Shlomo Swirski as early as 1981, leading Shafir and Peled to credit him with having "pioneered the study of

the Mizrachim from their own point of view, rather than that of the Ashkenazi elite."[33] Baruch Kimmerling, however, views Swirsky's book very differently, suggesting that it was a "political manifesto" that first influenced young Mizrahi intellectuals and later percolated more widely.[34] Kimmerling points out that Swirski criticized "the plural form of the term *Mizraḥiyim* and made a claim for the unity among emigrants from different Eastern countries." This, he argues, is far from the study of "the Mizrahim from their own point of view," being rather the imposition of an external interpretation upon a social category that might be accepted by some within it but rejected by others.

There is something to be said for both these readings of the significance of Swirski's book. Clearly it represented a new analytic approach that also resonated with political perceptions and feelings increasingly common among many younger Mizrahim.[35] Neither is it an either/or issue whether "Eastern" Jews should be characterized globally as opposed to having their diversity emphasized (consider the differences between Jews from Yemen, Iraq, and "Bukhara"—all in Asia, for example). That is to say, accepting insights linked to the term "Mizrahim" does not require the abandonment of a research approach highlighting ethnic specificity. In our view, overarching categories that highlight the Mizrahi/Ashkenazic divide, may exist simultaneously with approaches that accord significance to the plurality of groups and the differences within them.[36]

It should also be noted that the "power to define" lies partly with the weaker social groups. Thus, "Ashkenazim" is largely an artifact created by the term's being paired with (or juxtaposed against) the Mizrahim.[37] Israelis of European background who grew up around the time of statehood have often claimed that, as children, they did not realize that they were Ashkenazim, nor were they aware of a Sephardic/Ashkenazic dichotomy even when they lived in manifestly mixed neighborhoods. In conversations with us, they insisted that they saw themselves as *Israelis*.

There are various ways in which the emergence of *Ashkenaziyut* is reflected in the quotidian use of terminology. Those who did recognize the Ashkenazic category as relevant in the generation after statehood associated it with the traditional religious life of their European parents or grandparents. This may be echoed in everyday Arabic speech in Jerusalem, which refers to ultra-Orthodox Jews dressed in "typical" garb as *siknaj*.[38] Another indication that "Ashkenazic" takes on meaning according to historical context is the way it is used by recent immigrants from the region of the Caucasus. To them, the term refers specifically to Russian or Ukrainian Jews (who often look down upon them), rather than to Israelis of European background. Thus, the current contrast between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim is a (re)invention reflecting emerging ethnic stratification in Israel.

The reemergence of the Ashkenazic category in the ethnic lexicon, which probably took root sometime in the 1970s, may be read as attesting to the success of Middle Eastern Jews in converting what once was simply assumed to be the (Jewish) Israeli standard into only one of a number of normative ways of being Israeli. If "hyphenation" is required to distinguish between different "kinds of" Israelis, clearly the Ashkenazic option is not the only, and hence not necessarily the normative, one. Gil Eyal (citing Tom Segev's documentation of an early statement by Zalman Aranne) interprets Aranne as being aware that the use of these global

classifications would eventually highlight the fact that the state is no more than the rule of one group over the other.[39] An insistence on the term ''Ashkenazic,'' then, underlines how, in the course of two to three decades, Middle Eastern Jews ''Ashkenazified'' the Ashkenazim, and in so doing called their hegemony into question.[40] It is not only the creation of a new distinct category of ''Ashkenazic Israelis,'' parallel to the ethnicization of the term ''WASP'' in the United States, that is noteworthy, but the success in making ''Ashkenazic'' a commonsense way of attributing identity to a large sector of Israeli society.

In recent years, the complexity of the discourse of ethnic classification has been brought to the fore by the (re)introduction into social science discussion of the term ''Arab-Jews,'' as exemplified in Shenhav's book of that name (*Hayehudim haʾaravim*). A study of Mizrahi experiences in Zionist and Israeli contexts, *The Arab-Jews* utilizes the terms both descriptively, to refer to Jews from Middle Eastern countries, and as a means of accentuating dilemmas they encountered in the intertwined spheres of nationalism, religion, and ethnicity.

An analysis of the Arab linguistic and cultural background of many of its members is indeed necessary for an understanding of Israeli society. However, the global characterization of Mizrahim as *Arab* excludes Jews from non-Arab Middle Eastern countries such as Turkey and Iran,[41] marginalizes Jews living in areas in which Greek, Turkish, or Arabic was the lingua franca, yet whose primary language was Judeo-Spanish, and ignores those living in territories of the former Soviet Union, variously labeled ''Bukharan Jews,'' ''Jews of the Caucasus,'' ''Georgian Jews,'' and ''Krymchaks.''[42] But beyond the questions of the extent to which a chosen label fits the targeted population, and whether it is economical, is the issue of its biases and attendant connotations. Many uses of the term ''Arab Jews'' (with or without a hyphen), both by critical sociologists and others, are intended for rhetorical purposes. The idea that ''being Jewish'' and ''being Arab'' can overlap is not surprising to anyone familiar with the Jewish Middle Ages, nor is the adoption of Arabic speech by a large segment of the Jewish world, which led to the creation of various versions of Judeo-Arabic language and culture, both oral and written. This notion was succinctly put in the oft-cited statement of S.D. Goitein that Jews in Yemen were ''the most Jewish and most Arab of all Jews.''[43] Only when the clashing nationalisms of the modern world serve as the primary point of reference does the idea of someone being both Arab and Jewish become an ''impossibility'' that must be dislodged.

It is more than a little ironic that two very different scholarly works feature ''Arab Jews'' in their titles. *The Last Arab Jews*, by Abraham Udovitch and Lucette Valensi, focuses on the Jews of Djerba, who were (and are) known for their tenacious observance of Judaism and its local customs.[44] Shenhav, however, chooses this term, among other reasons, because it highlights the ''secular'' aspects of Jewish life in Iraq that, for ideological reasons, were not recognized by the Zionist emissaries (*sheliḥim*) sent by the Yishuv.[45] This difference correlates with these books' varying goals. Whereas *The Last Arab Jews* provides a detailed account of the history, social structure, and daily life in Djerba, the analysis in *The Arab-Jews* is aimed primarily at exposing the biases and obfuscations of regnant *discourse about* Jewish life in Arab lands, particularly Iraq. This comes through clearly in an extensive footnote critiquing a comment made by Albert Memmi.[46]

We do not take issue with the legitimacy of the term "Arab-Jews" or its perspective on Jewish life in Arabic lands. Indeed, we agree that the question of how Jews in the Middle East integrated into (and/or were in friction with) local society, culture, and sense of nationhood needs greater attention and understanding.[47] However, we do have serious reservations about the employment of such terms and labels when they override or discount the complexity and diversity of Jewish life in Middle Eastern settings—placing all Middle Eastern Jews into a single homogenizing category that precludes appreciation of their historic variability and potential for plural identities in the contemporary world.

Consider, for instance, the Jews of Iraq, who once constituted one of the largest Jewish communities in the Middle East. One outstanding feature of life in Iraq in the first half of the 20th century was the Jews' active participation in modern Arabic literature. A recent study by Reuven Snir examines this development and explores how it has been used in ideological debates. Snir shows that Arabic literary activity among Jews was not a common phenomenon.[48] While this fact does not detract from the historical and theoretical importance of Iraqi Jewish writing in Arabic, it does underscore the need to uncover a variety of socio-historical contexts before moving toward generalizations.

The homogenization of a multiplicity of "non-Ashkenazic" categories in the single term "Arab-Jews" is also surprising, given recent efforts by critical analysts to unpack or disaggregate the simple Mizrahim/Ashkenazim dichotomy.[49] The latter would pave the way to recognizing notions like "mizraḥiyut" or "Arab Jews" as part of the current vocabulary of Israeli culture, while at the same time permitting an empirical examination of the behavior of those who, to some degree and in various contexts, both identify themselves in these terms while also giving expression to other, more particular identifications.[50] In our view, although critical analysis recognizes the weakness of simple binary contrasts, it continues to perpetuate some of the very notions it seeks to deconstruct, as is evident in its persistent recourse to binary models. This has profound implications for the analysis of Israeli society and for the understanding of Middle Eastern Jewish communities in the pre-state period.

Mechanisms of Binarism and Its Expression in History

To some degree or another, all social scientists employ (and thus reinforce) concepts that are established by officials, that appeal to common sense, and/or are popularized by the media. Thus, Israeli social discourse has internalized the "given-ness" of a society divided into two separate homogenous rubrics of "Easterners" and "Europeans," despite considerable empirical evidence to the contrary. Critical sociology does not constitute an exception to the rule, and theories emanating from it have not succeeded in escaping the inherent blinders of existing categories.

At times, to be sure, it may be necessary to use binary categorizations because these represent the observed phenomena and capture the trends in areas such as economics, education, residence, and political participation.[51] But the documentation and analysis of the ongoing (and widening) social gaps that determine individuals' location in the social structure are insufficient in the realms of identity and

culture. The latter are not independent of the processes of stratification, but neither are they merely a reflection of them. Of equal significance are the various categories that the *actors themselves apply* in ordering and interpreting their situation and experiences. In not admitting these considerations, critical sociologists remain over-reliant on binary categories.

We begin by illustrating how binarism is reproduced through language. Some biases built into language are found on the opening pages of *Mizraḥim beyisrael*, which seeks explicitly to break out of the straightjacket of prior discussions of ethnic divisions in Israel. On the one hand, the collection is titled "Mizrahim in Israel," not "The Mizrahim . . . ," which reflects its claim that "there is no single clearly distinguished Mizrahi identity, but rather many identities taking shape simultaneously, growing out of complex relationships of inclusion and exclusion."[52] On the other hand, from the beginning of the first substantive chapter, the focus is on rescuing "*the* Mizrahi subject from the framework of hegemonic discourse in Israel,"[53] and phrases with a definite article (*ha* in Hebrew) appear frequently (albeit not consistently) throughout the succeeding pages.[54] The use of the Hebrew definite article conveys a sense that there exist given social categories that are self-explanatory.[55]

Nor is the sense of a fixed Mizrahi category confined to *Mizraḥim beyisrael*. Shafir and Peled's book includes a chapter titled "Mizrachim and Women," which employs a Mizrahi-Ashkenazic opposition to describe the ethnic divide. Although well aware of this binary term's history and of the fact that there is variation within each category, Shafir and Peled still fall victim to a kind of "double-think." While claiming at one point that "[t]he widely used Ashkenazi-Mizrachi distinction is an Israeli social construct that reflects ambivalent attitudes and disguises important differences between the Mizrachim themselves," Shafir and Peled go on to generalize about "the two Jewish ethnic groups."[56] Moreover, part of the variation between Mizrahim is attributed to economics: "About one-third of Mizrachim can now be classified as belonging to the middle class."[57] In this way, the authors acknowledge that their generalizations selectively ignore one third of a social category; this is especially surprising, given the importance of social class in their analysis.

The chapter titled "Mizrachim and Women" may encode a message at other levels, suggesting the unchanging nature of an East-West dichotomy, notwithstanding current insights regarding the ways in which gender roles are constructed categories.[58] Social science has not always easily drawn parallels between gender and other forms of inequality and domination (such as class and race); the tendency became widespread after the social protests of the 1960s. These parallels carry a certain historic irony with regard to Jews from Middle Eastern backgrounds, where in some instances Muslim discourse compared Jews to women, implying an "essential" but limited place for them in society.[59]

Beyond the ways in which binary categories shape perceptions of Israeli society today, they also bias the attempts of critical sociology to examine the past, as is exemplified by studies of Middle Eastern Jews in the Yishuv and of the history of Jews in Middle Eastern countries in the modern era. Consider, for example, the Jews from Yemen, who began immigrating in significant numbers after 1881, and who attained symbolic significance during the period of the Yishuv. Recent research has revealed the problematic nature of their treatment by the European Zionist leader-

ship, as well as the complex relationships between them and other groups, particularly Sephardim and Mughrabim.[60] Critical sociologists view the history of Yemenite Jews in Palestine as emblematic of Mizrahi-Ashkenazic relationships in general. Shafir and Peled, for instance, assert that the experience of Yemenite Jews is "the most revealing case" of Mizrahi-Ashkenazic relationships.[61] *Mizraḥim beyisrael* explicitly adopts the strategy of taking one episode to represent the whole, namely, Yehudah Nini's historical study of ten Yemenite families who, after having lived for almost 20 years in Kinneret, a collective settlement (*moshava*), were expelled to make room for newcomers from Europe and resettled elsewhere.[62] Thus, in its conclusion, Nini is criticized for presenting his study as a "historical miniature" and as a marginal episode from which it was not possible to generalize.[63] What is striking in both Shafir and Peled's book and in *Mizraḥim beyisrael* is the resort to the synechdoche: making one group—Yemenites—stand for "the whole" Mizrahi experience, rather than addressing a diversity of historical circumstances and developments in which varying forms of Eastern-ness are also evident.

It is noteworthy that critical sociologists have not studied the Sephardic entrepreneurial families that formed an economic elite in Palestine early in the 19th century.[64] Although their prominence declined somewhat as European migration increased and the labor movement's influence grew, they continued to play an important economic role—for instance, in banking—throughout the Mandate period. Also ignored is the role played by Bukharan Jewish merchants and traders in the development of Jerusalem (their activities came to an end when the new Soviet regime confiscated their wealth). Clearly, a part-for-whole argument focusing only on these established "Mizrahim" would produce a very different analysis from that derived from the Yemenite case. The latter, to be sure, is of historical importance for any discussion of the emergence of hegemonic patterns and orientalist attitudes in the Zionist project, but discussions of Zionism and Jews in the Middle East cannot rest solely on it. Rather, they must examine the issue at all levels and in all its complexity, cover all cases, and take into account contrary examples, instead of using synechdochic logic that ignores or discounts them to arrive at global assessments.

In *The Arab-Jews*, Yehouda Shenhav rethinks some basic issues connected with the encounter of European Zionism with Middle Eastern Jews.[65] While the book as a whole is intended to portray *mizraḥiyut* as a diverse phenomenon with "broad margins," its first chapter offers a method for using one case as a paradigmatic historical episode enabling generalization. This chapter focuses on a series of events and developments in Iraq and Iran during the Second World War, using these as the "methodological" and "theoretical" baseline for studying the attitudes and the relationships of Zionism and the incipient Israeli state both to Eastern Jews and to the "Arab-ness" of their history, culture, and identities. Shenhav claims that here, for the first time, there was an organized attempt by Zionist emissaries to recruit Jews in an Arab region for Zionist immigration, following the Yishuv leadership's adoption of a policy aimed at bringing about large-scale Jewish migration to Palestine from Middle Eastern lands. Shenhav takes this as his "zero-point" because it relates to a specific Eastern group before global categories such as "*'edot ha-mizraḥ*" were established by the homogenizing discourse and practices of state bureaucracies. The emissaries' activities in educating and recruiting Jews (mostly

Iraqi) for Zionist emigration were facilitated by the involvement of Solel Boneh, a Histadrut company, in the erection and running of oil refineries in Abadan, Iran, as part of the Yishuv's support for the British war effort.

Shenhav's discussion situates the emissaries on a shifting boundary between colonialism and nationalism. Their capacity to act was dependent on British rule, and they enjoyed primacy vis-à-vis local Jews because of their link to the imperial power. From the perspective of Zionist ideology, they sought to fulfill its elevated goal of incorporating Iraqi Jews into a new collectivity that gave expression to their shared Jewish identity. An analysis of the emissaries' reports and letters reveals the conceptual and value struggles that the presumed hegemonic *sheliḥim* encountered in seeking the re-creation, in the Zionist image, of local Jews who were deeply engaged in an Arab milieu.

Significantly, Shenhav's analysis of the Abadan endeavor treats Jews in Iran and in Iraq as a single entity. Not only does this approach incorporate from the outset a concept that it seeks to interrogate—namely, the creation of a broad category of "Easterners"—it also ignores the very different histories and cultures of these two Jewish populations. In fact, although the events under discussion are centered in Abadan, Shenhav gives very little specific information about the Jews of Iran. We will return to the question of how his analysis tends to merge groups and categories. First, however, we indicate a reservation about assigning prototypical status to this particular historical episode.

While the Abadan-emissary project was the first instance of a new Zionist policy, it was soon followed, as will be seen, by meetings between Libyan Jews and Palestinian Jewish soldiers participating in the British conquest of Libya from Axis forces. First broached in the summer of 1942, the idea of recruiting Solel Boneh workers for the oil refineries in Abadan took shape over the ensuing months. In addition to the British concern over the shortage of oil from Asia that led to increased production in Abadan, there was the fact that German and Italian forces led by Fieldmarshal Erwin Rommel were advancing from Libya into Egypt, coming within 100 kilometers of Cairo. Only in late October 1942 did the British forces succeed in breaking through the Axis lines, thus finally reversing the direction of the war in North Africa. Meanwhile, the leadership of the Yishuv, increasingly aware of the multidimensional uncertainties facing it, strongly encouraged Jews to enlist in the British armed forces: among its concerns was the possibility that Britain would retreat from Palestine, regroup elsewhere, and leave the Yishuv to its fate. This seeming convergence of Jewish, Zionist, and British colonialist interests could not have been taken fully for granted when the Abadan project was first envisioned. Furthermore, the perceptible divergences in these interests may well have been significant both in the substance of the Yishuv's decisions and in their timing. The assumed link between British imperial and Zionist interests, and the assumption that the latter was an arm of the colonialist enterprise (which permeates Shenhav's data) is far from being proven.

In his analysis, Shenhav brings to light the complexity and paradoxes of the situation, emphasizing the diverse backgrounds of the *sheliḥim* and the fluidity of their discourse and practice, which varied "according to interests, partners, and the circumstances in which they operated."[66] Yet in contrast with this sensitivity toward

context, the ''European-ness'' of the Zionist project is taken as a given, and the ethnic backgrounds and experiences of the emissaries are left unexplored.[67] While in principle one may analyze texts in isolation from individual biographies, an examination of individual emissaries and *their* ethnic trajectories, in our view, is capable of adding both color and additional levels of meaning to the story.

In the case of the emissaries to Abadan, at least three were neither European nor Ashkenazic. Hai Yissakharov (mentioned in *The Arab Jews*) probably was of Bukharan origin, whereas Rashi Yissakharov and another emissary, Yerahmiel Asa (also mentioned in the book), came from families originating in the Caucasus that, in the 1920s, settled in an area of Tel Aviv near the site of the old central bus station.[68] From his early teenage years, Asa belonged to Hanoar Haʾoved, a Zionist socialist youth movement. Together with two other youngsters of Caucasian background, he was part of a collective (*garʾin*) that settled in the Galilee, where it first reconstructed the site of Tel Hai and then founded Kibbutz Hulata. This part of his biography—together with the astonishment shown by members of a Baghdadi synagogue at his secular appearance and mien[69]—would seem to attest to his ''assimilation'' into European *halutzic* culture. However, judging by the experience of Rashi Yissakharov, who grew up in the same Tel Aviv neighborhood, the reality may have been more complex. Rashi, unlike Asa, continued to live in Tel Aviv, where he eventually became a manager in Solel Boneh. He was a central figure in the local Caucasian synagogue and was active in Caucasian communal organizations. Then, as now, ''Caucasian Jew'' was an ambiguous category—as reported in interviews with Rashi, many East European Jews expressed surprise when learning of his origin (''But you're not a *frenk*; you're one of us, aren't you?''). At his funeral in 2003, his son noted that Rashi frequently referred to his Caucasian roots, even though he had never visited the Caucasus.

Thus, while Yerahmiel Asa and some like him moved firmly into the Zionist establishment, other Caucasian Jews took different routes. In general, relationships between Caucasian Jews and the Zionist movement were shot through with ambivalence, as became evident, for example, with regard to the individuals who sought to emigrate to Palestine after 1918 and to those who, a decade later, wished to be accepted in agricultural settlements, but were told to wait for settlements meant especially for '' ʾedot mizrahiyot.''[70] Given their later voluntary activities among Caucasian newcomers in the 1970s and 1990s that firmly ''reconnected'' them to their particular past, it is highly unlikely that such ambivalence was foreign to Asa and Rashi Yissakharov. The latter maintained close ties with the new immigrants who, in the 1990s, became members of the Caucasian synagogue in south Tel Aviv that he headed, and with whom he communicated in Juhuri (Judeo-Tat), their spoken language.

Moreover, the hypothesis that, decades earlier, these individuals were conscious of their non-European past cannot be gainsaid. Indeed, during his term as a member of Knesset representing the Ahdut Haʾavodah party (1958–1959),[71] Asa proposed a policy of *shizur tarbuyot* (the interweaving of cultures, as in a carpet) in place of the dominant ''melting pot'' model.[72] Finally, with regard to Hai Yissakharov, Shenhav describes an incident where the ethnic/national characteristics of the Palestinian Jews were compared to other groups in Abadan and reports Yissakharov's response:

"He as a Jew demands the same conditions as the English do as Englishmen." One can only wonder whether Hai Yissakharov's sensitivity to ethnic issues in the Yishuv prompted this remark.[73] In any event, close examination of the orientations and activities of these non-Ashkenazic emissaries in Abadan and elsewhere not only brings to light data that challenge the binary conception of ethnic difference, but also uncovers the roots of alternative conceptions of group diversity in the Zionist/Israeli context.

Shenhav's analysis of the situation at Abadan also focuses attention on an emissary of far different origins—Enzo Sereni, who came from a very established Italian Jewish family.[74] Like his fellow *shelihim*, Sereni found himself in a conceptual bind. On the one hand was the recognition that, linguistically and culturally, the Jews of Baghdad were part of the local Arab(ic) culture and language. On the other hand, the emissaries were committed to values that emphasized the community's Jewishness and Zionist potential. Citing Homi K. Bhaba, Shenhav insists that such ambivalence and internal contradictions are characteristic of colonialist discourse, and he uses this theoretical focus to portray Sereni's difficulties in seeking to isolate definitive elements of Jewish identity and "difference" in the local Arab Jewish world. Unable to distinguish physically between Jews, Muslims, and Christians, Sereni found more subtle evidence of difference, such as the local Jews' ability to identify members of the three religious communities on the basis of speech. Left unexplored by Shenhav is an analysis of Baghdadi Jews' sociolinguistic practices and what implications these had for their identities. For this, other sources of information and methods of study are required.[75]

To analyze such situations solely via the prism of colonialist theory's tortured conceptualizations of ambivalences, contradictions, and "boundaries" (both repressed and vacillating) is to fail adequately to take note of and account for their intricacy. Relating to the speech of Jews in Baghdad only as revealed in documents in Zionist archives, and seeking to understand it in terms of theory anchored in other climes, comes at the cost of ignoring available evidence provided by Iraqi Jews themselves. Put generally, critical analysis, representing theoretical emphases that privilege certain issues, does not necessarily open the door to understanding past or present "Mizrahi" experiences at the level of actual individuals. Paradoxically, the attempt to reveal the meanings imposed on others by hegemonic discourse has resulted in a resort to the same kinds of generalization that the critical analyst sought to discredit and discard.

More broadly, in the case of Zionism, critical theory's eagerness to uncover the hidden assumptions of dominant social groups results in their terms of reference being taken as the starting point. This, in turn, may amount to a certain complicity in the suppression of alternative points of view. A significant example is assigning Zionism wholly to European Jewry. Thus, Shafir and Peled begin their discussion with the simple assertion that "[t]he Zionist movement was a European movement," and Shenhav offers an analysis of what he calls "the first practical encounter between the Zionist movement and the Jews of Arab lands."[76] There can be no doubt that Zionism developed primarily in Europe and that for many years its most significant political activities (outside of Palestine) were conducted in the European

arena. So, too, there are useful insights to be had by teasing out, as does Shenhav, both the colonialist and nationalist drives among the emissaries in Abadan, and by examining the ideas that emerged among Zionist activists in that setting.[77] What we do call into question, however, is this discourse's wholesale dismissal of Zionism as a meaningful development in Jewish life in Middle Eastern and Asian countries, about which there is now a considerable literature.[78]

It is a truism that Zionism appeared first in Europe and only later in the Middle East (and that it was not a major factor there). However, this does not justify *excluding* this part of the world from Zionist history. In fact, when Zionism did develop in Middle Eastern countries, it had a real social base, such as the aspirations of Jews for fuller societal participation (often stimulated by education in Alliance Israélite Universelle schools), which largely were blocked because neither local Muslims nor colonizing Europeans easily accepted upward Jewish social (and political) mobility. It also manifested a degree of cultural creativity, most prominently with regard to the Hebrew language; so, too, Zionist-sponsored sports flourished, in part because it was exempt from the legal restrictions on political activity that were commonly found in colonial situations. Those Zionist-inspired developments are not uniform, but rather exhibit interesting variations that reflect the different challenges facing Jews in each country. Although such phenomena may appear to be relatively minor elements in the "big picture," to remove them from scholarly purview is to adopt the Eurocentric lenses that critical theory seeks to replace. In our view, a historical examination of Zionism among the Jews of Libya, to take but one example, is sufficient to undermine the claim made in *The Arab-Jews* that its analysis of the experiences of the Zionist emissaries in Iraq and Iran offers a general model applicable to all other settings, irrespective of their particular conditions and contexts.

As noted, the success of the Eighth Army in pushing back the Axis forces in Libya brought about direct contact between Jewish soldiers from Palestine and Jewish communities in both Cyrenaica and Tripolitania in late 1942 and early 1943. These events have been partially described and analyzed, and we have no doubt that a "critical" study would enrich an understanding of them. But one comparative point needs emphasizing. Zionism had already begun to have a significant impact among Libyan Jews in the period just before the Second World War, and perhaps even earlier.[79] To be sure, the extent of that impact has often been exaggerated, partly due to a popular tendency to overestimate the strength and contribution of Zionism, following the immigration of whole Jewish communities, or large portions of them, to Israel. An example of such exaggeration is the now oft-repeated statement that the soldiers arriving in Tripoli from Palestine met a "community that spoke Hebrew."[80] This claim is not entirely baseless, however, as systematic efforts to teach modern Hebrew began in the 1930s in Tripolitania (a study of the revival of Hebrew in Israel in the 1950s ranked Libyan Jews as one of the immigrant groups among whom the use of the language was most widespread).[81] Moreover, in contrast with the situation in Baghdad, Zionism was the only nationalist option available to Libyan Jews, who were caught between a Fascism turned antisemitic and a Muslim environment in which nationalism was both weak and severely repressed by Italian colonial rule.

Furthermore, in Libya, unlike Iraq, Arabic was not part of the educational curriculum of Jewish youth. In brief, soldiers from the Yishuv who interacted with Libyan Jewry faced practical and conceptual challenges that were very different from those encountered by the Zionist emissaries in Iraq and Iran. To be sure, individual elements of these situations were similar, but their overall constellations varied significantly.

Curiously, the notion that Zionism is an entirely European phenomenon and movement resonates with another view that most critical sociologists reject strongly, namely, the classic distinction in Zionist historiography between those who, over the centuries, came to live in the land of Israel for religious reasons and those who were inspired by Zionism. As noted, Eisenstadt had used this notion to differentiate between "Oriental Jews," whose immigration "into Palestine did not imply a break with their traditional social and cultural structures," and the pre-state, ideologically motivated halutzim, or pioneers, from Europe.[82] The distinction between "Old" and "New" Yishuv that most likely inspired this subsequent sociological contrast along ethnic lines has been scrutinized and questioned from several quarters.[83] It is therefore surprising that a "critical" perspective easily continues a differential view of Zionism along a simple East/West line.

What seems to us not only more appropriate but also necessary is an open-ended examination of how the idea of Zionism was interpreted and became significant in different sectors of Jewry. As a corollary, one must go beyond the simple division between West and East. The claim that coming to Palestine was envisioned as an ordinary move "within the region" that demanded little cultural adjustment may be relevant with regard to immigrants from Arabic-speaking Aleppo or Baghdad. However, there is no prima facie reason for assuming that Palestine was more "natural" a setting for Jews from Kurdistan or Afghanistan than for those from Galicia or Volhynia. In sum, we must be wary of the simplified and often orientalist images affecting all theoretical schools that have characterized the discourse on Zionism. Similarly, it must be recognized that all-encompassing schemes have a tendency to prejudge (and misinterpret) the histories of a number of specific Middle Eastern communities, and in doing so have failed to take into account significant particular and plural "Mizrahi" experiences.

The Search for Plurality

The previous section illustrated how analysis based on explicit and implicit binary models skews the understanding of some historical developments. Several biases are thereby perpetuated. Theory is privileged over the complexity and plurality of ethnic identifications. State power is placed center stage, while society is relegated to the background. Even the growing trend of revealing "resistance" to hegemony retains the centrality of issues regarding power and the state. While some critical sociologists have been surprised by their unexpectedly "discovering" social life "on-the-ground," or "from below," one is tempted to suggest that attention to plurality, and an interest in phenomena far removed from the arenas of power, would have uncovered and dealt with its presence from the outset. This is not to call for abandoning

one approach and replacing it with the other, but rather to propose the undertaking of additional ethnographic research capable of revealing the complex interplay among the various factors, which critical approaches have undervalued.

Some of these points are taken up in Adrianna Kemp's study of "resistance" on the part of immigrants in *moshavei 'olim* in the early 1950s, which appears in *Mizraḥim beyisrael*.[84] Kemp applies the notion of resistance to settlers who tried (often successfully) to leave a moshav, as well as to those who opposed signing formal contracts outlining their obligations to the cooperative settlement institutions that had set them up in the new villages. She argues that resistance to "control" is often a subtle matter manifested in mundane, everyday activities and in itself is worthy of attention above and beyond the now familiar tale of Mizrahi public protest. The data that she interprets in the light of this theoretical approach are taken from Knesset records, Zionist archives, and the daily press.

In her analysis, Kemp takes for granted what has become "canonized" knowledge—namely, that immigrants from Middle Eastern countries were forced into peripheral areas. While not disputing this view as an overall first assessment, we would suggest that Kemp's "discovery" of acts of resistance presumes a monolithic settlement process. It is noteworthy that she does not refer to the extensive anthropological literature on these very issues, such as the moshav studies of Dorothy Willner or Alex Weingrod.[85] This omission is puzzling, given the use (in quotation marks) of the phrase "ḥaluẓim ba'al korḥam," which is virtually a translation of Weingrod's title, *Reluctant Pioneers*.[86]

Willner's book, in particular, deals with these matters at length, providing historical background and analysis of the relevant ideological and institutional factors.[87] Willner distinguishes a phase in the process, termed the "rationalization" of settlement procedures, which follows an improvisation phase. Rationalization is concerned with "the land settlement agencies' legal authority to effect settler compliance in the absence of consensus." Willner also points to the contextual variation of this process, noting that the new policy of "ship to village" settlement (which depended, at least formally, on immigrants agreeing to be sent to the designated village), was instituted in response to the social and economic difficulties of the transit camps (*ma'abarot*).[88] She claims that this policy, which resulted in the scattering of the immigrants in many small and distant villages, weakened their restricted (but still real) bargaining power by cutting them off from the flow of information that reached the vast mass of diverse immigrants in the larger and more centrally located transit camps. Her ethnography explains the administrators' motivations and intentions but also records the cajoling, at times deception, and even coercion that manifested themselves in relations between bureaucrats and moshav settlers. Based on contemporary field observations, Willner's account is consistent with the picture drawn by Kemp, except for Kemp's portrayal of a uni-directional and monochromic "control" (*shelitah*). Although Willner's account takes note of power differentials, it also provides a nuanced sense of interactions between those in power and those subject to it, demonstrating that negotiation, as well as "control" or "resistance," is a significant factor worthy of study.

Esther Meir-Glitzenstein's subsequent historical study of immigrants from Iraq after their arrival in 1950–1951 supports Willner's analysis.[89] Originally sent to

peripheral areas, many of these Iraqi immigrants forced their way into maʾabarot in the center of the country—although, as she also points out, the "ship to village" policy made it relatively difficult for immigrants to circumvent the planning authorities. Another field study from the 1960s shows that immigrants from Iraq and Libya in three maʾabarot (which eventually became the town of Or Yehudah) overcame attempts to "scatter" them in outlying rural settlements.[90] These points fit in with Gil Eyal's recent observation that some groups of early immigrants remained in "no-man's-land" in rundown and often abandoned housing, alongside Arab populations on the seams of the poorest urban areas, simply because they lacked the resources to move out.[91] In Eyal's account, the interaction between authorities and settlers forms part of what is shown to be a highly complex situation.

Ethnographic accounts of moshav settlement also reveal the presence of both consensual and coercive processes. Immigrants from rural Tripolitania who established a village in the Sharon plain in 1950, and who were interviewed in 1964, gave several reasons why they had found the moshav option attractive.[92] These included the opportunity to get out of the maʾabarah, their desire to remain with people they knew, the ease with which they could maintain a religious lifestyle, and their lack of urban employment skills. More recent work by Esther Schely-Newman has shown the power of moshav women from Tunisia to fashion and refashion the significance of their settlement experiences by means of storytelling, a perspective on moshav life ignored by all previous accounts.[93] While these accounts do not undermine the general framework of limited choice that such settlers faced, they do suggest that recognizing from the outset the possibility of interaction between immigrants and authorities, and of plural situations and paths, is a more useful starting point for research than a governing theoretical notion that initially obscures settler initiatives and varied responses—only later to "discover" them.[94]

Significantly, these former Tripolitanian villagers did not see themselves in broad ethnic terms as either Sephardim or Mizrahim.[95] For them, as for others, the consolidation of these terms as widely meaningful and applicable took place over time. Similarly, the meaning of these terms in the Israeli ethnic lexicon—their social connotations and applications—continued to evolve without necessarily erasing the significance of more particular identifications. This may be seen especially in the political sphere, where the emergence of Shas looms large, but it is also manifest in other realms.

The Shas party offers an instructive example. While it claims to raise a single "Sephardic" banner, it is based culturally on a far from seamless integration of various ethnic identities and religious modes. Although it has structured itself around salient figures who highlight the constituencies of Jews from Iraq and Morocco, it also makes provision for representation of a number of different particular ethnic communities on its Knesset list (for instance, from the Bukharan community).[96] At a cultural level, the movement sought to link the rationalist halakhic worldview of Ovadia Yosef and the ecstatic devotion to *zadikim* that continues to be an important element among Jews from Moroccan backgrounds.[97]

Moreover, the electoral rise of the party has not led to religious unification. The relationship between the overall and particular identities is shifting and dynamic. Notwithstanding the boost they have enjoyed from Shas' success, rabbis repre-

senting different communities have expressed their objections to Ovadia Yosef's attempts to institute a single Sephardic halakhic standard.[98] This is well illustrated in the case of Levi Nahum, born in Tripoli but educated in yeshivot in Israel, who has undertaken the initial publication and reissue of books written by rabbis in Tripoli.[99] One of these, published in 1987, included a *haskamah* (statement of approval) from Ovadia Yosef. More recently, he published a siddur that followed the liturgical tradition (*nusaḥ*) of Tripoli. Based upon the well-known tradition of Leghorn (a community in Italy that influenced many North African communities), it includes liturgical commentary and rulings by R. Yaakov Raqah, a 19th-century Tripolitan scholar, as well as the contemporary prayer for the state of Israel. Significantly, in its preface, Nahum cites a passage by the renowned kabbalist Isaac Luria to the effect that each "tribe" in Israel should remain loyal to its own *nusaḥ*. While not explicit, his disagreement with Yosef's position is manifest. More broadly, Nahum's story is that of an ongoing search for an ethno-religious "home" that adequately conveys his particular identity and commitments. Similar developments appear in other communities; for example, a new set of *maḥzorim* (High Holiday prayer books) called *Nusaḥ Kavkaz*[100] was published in 2003 and distributed at the opening of a magnificent synagogue in the town of Tirat Hacarmel. What these cases indicate is that the matrix within which these searches have proceeded is "Mizrahi," but that they involve shifts between broad and local ethnic categories and reflect both European and Eastern religious traditions.

The plurality and negotiation of ethnic categories is not confined to relatively unknown figures like Levi Nahum or other barely visible phenomena. It also takes place in the Israeli public sphere, even if not always recognized as such. A good case in point is the popular singer Sarit Haddad. Interviews reveal that many Israelis assume she is "Moroccan," but in fact her background is more complex. Haddad was born into a family from the Caucasus named Hoddedatov that moved to Hadera in the 1970s. Given binary assumptions of hegemony, one might have assumed that the logical move would have been to "Ashkenazify" in order to become more "fully Israeli." Nevertheless, Haddad chose a "Mizrahi" option; the name Haddad, Arabic for blacksmith, was found among Jews (and Christians, but usually not Muslims) in many Middle Eastern settings. The choice is not surprising if one views Mizrahi music as having become one of Israel's mainstream traditions. Moreover, such a choice can signify the downplaying of the traditions of a specific group.[101] In general, then, it demonstrates not only that individuals can move between and seek to change categories, but also that historical developments may shift the center of gravity of such categories, even while an illusion that they are "given" is maintained.

What such processes reveal, we suspect, is the gradual acceptance of "Middle Eastern-ness" as part of Israeli life, accompanied by "resistance" to such acceptance, on the one hand, by those who see it as threatening and, on the other hand, by those who have a political stake in retaining *mizraḥiyut* as a distinct category.[102] Both because of the manipulation of binary categories and the presence of plural identifications, the study of ethnic perceptions and actions is a fluid field full of paradoxes. For example, binarism, and the "success" of the Mizrahi category, may result in the marginalizing of groups that do not easily fit into it. Thus, in small towns in Israel, one can observe how Caucasian Jews are subject to exclusionary practices

by those of North African origins.[103] At a more formal level, certain developments and phenomena are characterized precisely by their undefinedness, their fluidity, and their openness to choices made by individuals and families. Consequently, the meeting of "East and West" in Israel has given rise to many social and cultural manifestations that have not received adequate scholarly attention.

The term "hybridity" (an outgrowth of post-colonial theory) is now used commonly to refer to processes whereby elements from diverse traditions are combined, often in novel ways. That term deserves to be treated with caution, however, because of its connotation of being able to identify the original cultural elements from which hybrid forms emerge, which in many cases is a difficult if not impossible task. It is also necessary to take into account more labile structures, experimentation, and creativity. At a social level, for example, there now may be residential areas that reflect so much marriage across categories that it is meaningless to place them in any accepted grouping. In the realm of culture, the variety of forms of folk dancing currently exhibit "mixtures upon mixtures," including the mobilization of global trends into local trends (or vice versa). These phenomena often defy easy labeling and call for more descriptive or ethnographic work to begin to grasp their social and cultural significance.

Given that ethnicity is clearly linked to stratification in Israeli society, there has been surprisingly little research on patterns of interethnic marriage and their implications.[104] A recent study by Barbara Okun that examines education as a major influence on marriage choices partly fills the gap.[105] She points to the decreasing significance of social hierarchy as a factor determining the scope of interethnic marriages, but notes as well the continuing relevance of a European/Mizrahi dichotomy. Focusing on marriage patterns among Israeli offspring of "mixed" Mizrahi-European marriages (who, in the 1995 census, were relatively few in number), Okun found that when such individuals chose spouses who were born to "non-mixed" parents, the choice was related to education—that is, the more educated were more likely to find partners with solely European ancestry, whereas the less educated tended to choose a spouse of wholly Mizrahi origin.[106] In short, marriage alone does not entirely overcome the stratificational consequences of the ethnic divide.

These findings lend weight to the argument that the disappearance of ethnic differences via interethnic marriage, as epitomized by the "happy ending" of Ephraim Kishon's film, *Salah Shabati*, reflects a hegemonic worldview.[107] Beyond such a critique, however, it is necessary to explore the significant empirical questions regarding "mixed" marriages, which over time have become increasingly common. For instance, to what extent do mixed couples explicitly identify with one group rather than another? Do they seek either to integrate their different traditions; to cut themselves off completely from the past by stressing their "Israeli-ness"; or to create a "multicultural" mode of being Israeli that allows for expression both of their different backgrounds and the other cultural influences to which they have been exposed? And how do such phenomena mesh with (or strain against) other social processes and choices, such as the move to new neighborhoods with greater ethnic mixing;[108] the selection of schools; the maintenance of ties with members of extended families who are to various degrees "religious," "traditional," or "sec-

ular";[109] and individuals' needs to express their identity in the course of life-cycle developments?

So, too, an examination of such aspects of everyday life may reveal self-perceptions that not only reflect different levels and sources of ethnic identification, but also illuminate the links between ethnicity and other social forces such as class or religion. This does not imply abandoning one conceptual paradigm (ethnicity) and replacing it with another, but rather the adoption of a research orientation capable of dealing with the variety of social and ideational factors at work "on the ground." In our view, considerable progress in understanding ethnicity in Israeli society can be made by determining which elements and categories of ethnicity are meaningful to which "sorts" of people, and by delineating the conditions in which they become salient or, alternatively, attenuated.

Conclusion

This essay has assessed aspects of the ways in which critical sociology has shaped the understanding of the experiences of Jews from Middle Eastern lands in Israeli society. Our arguments should not be taken as a challenge to the whole edifice. Rather, in criticizing some features of critical sociology's methods and conclusions, our main intent has been to characterize both its strengths and weaknesses. These can be summed up in two related claims. Critical approaches have provided useful insights into how hegemonic structures have excluded Jews defined as "Eastern," but have been less successful in documenting and grasping developments reflecting the distinctiveness and creative adaptations of those groups themselves. As a corollary, analysis based on binary categories and assumptions, which has been a major feature of this approach, has greatly hindered comprehension of both the histories and the empirical experiences of "Eastern" groups in Israel. Unfortunately, critical sociology did not follow its success in revealing how binary thinking was constructed by showing how to disentangle from its undesirable consequences.

Indeed, we would argue that critical sociology has maintained some of the assumptions of the earlier canonical approach. Not unlike the title of Joseph Ben-David's article in the early 1950s, which implied that one had to choose between "ethnic differences *or* social change,"[110] some of the works discussed here imply that a focus on Mizrahim or Arab-Jews necessarily *replaces* research that highlights individual ethnic identities. Our claim is that an emphasis on particular identities, as viewed by participants, should be *added to* the paradigm of critical research, because broad and specific identifications may both exist simultaneously and interact in varied ways.

Closely related to our urging greater attention to the plurality of ethnic expressions is a call for research to take a step back from issues of politics and the state, and from other matters that involve striving toward "the center." No one can deny the pervasiveness of the political and the dominant role of the center within Israeli life. This does not preclude considerable variation in the manner in which politics is conducted—at the center and at the local level, and in relations between them. Particularly important from our present perspective is the need for a detailed

empirical examination of the variety of forms that politics assumes at diverse local levels. We therefore urge investigating the various situations in which state-hegemonic and broad political forces interact with a plurality of local institutions, actors, and identities (including cases in which the last appear to be neutralized or submerged in the background) in order to bring to light the whole range of Mizrahi ethnic and religious expressions.

These substantive claims lead to two more points that situate critical sociology vis-à-vis other research thrusts. One by-product of the critical approach has been to downplay ethnography and dismiss its contribution to the recording and interpretation of the variety of experiences of Middle Eastern Jews. This, in our view, is based on a very partial reading of the discipline of anthropology, in general, and Israeli research literature, in particular.[111] While ethnographic research often has overlooked power when making explicit formulations, the implicit assumption in both anthropology and folklore is that "significant human contact and creativity flowed from the margins to the centers more often than the reverse."[112] Applying this to our present concerns, and given the diversity that exists within Israeli society, we believe that one simply cannot know in advance which "peripheral" feature of society or culture might be found to be central. The social sciences cannot afford to abandon its methodological commitment to explore social life without theoretical dictates, since such dictates often work to exclude various fields or aspects of social life as "irrelevant."

Moreover, while theory is crucial, its drawbacks as well as its power must be kept in mind. Critical theory has furthered the understanding of Israeli society but—like other theories—has led to a situation in which areas close to those it has illuminated have been made invisible by its glare.[113] Shenhav, for instance, characterizes the story of the emissaries in Abadan as a "laboratory for [the study of] the hybridization of ethnic identities"[114]—using a scientific image that was also popular among first-generation Israeli social scientists. Not surprisingly, the insights derived from Shenhav's analysis represent a continuation of a tendency to "sociologize history" that characterized the pre-critical approach.[115] A complementary approach, stemming from the natural history background of anthropology, emphasizes gathering data in the field. When Franz Boas, at the turn of the 20th century, formulated his ideas about culture and conducted fieldwork in accordance with them, he insisted that the more varied and analytically complex a phenomenon (like culture), the more it had to be studied as a product of history. In our view, to the extent that researchers prove capable of integrating varied theoretical insights and of taking complexity and plurality into account, both empirically and theoretically, we will learn that much more about Israeli—or indeed any—society.

Notes

1. The term ''Middle Eastern'' is used here inclusively to refer to Southwest Asia and North Africa. It does not help to insist on strict geographic definitions. Jews from Turkey may not see themselves as ''Middle Easterners'' even though they come from the region, whereas the activities of Jews from Iraq who moved, say, to India continued to be relevant to those still residing in Baghdad. Not all Jews of the Persian cultural sphere (for instance, those in Central Asia or the Jews in the Caucasus) reside in the Middle East in a narrow sense. Interestingly, western specialists in Middle Eastern studies have only recently expanded their purview to include those areas, in contrast to scholars of Jewry in the Middle East, who have always viewed ''Bukharan'' Jews as an example of ''Eastern'' Jewry. Our discussions of terminology should make clear that each term or phrase delineating cultural or ethnic phenomena has its advantages and drawbacks.

2. For the most comprehensive source, see Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, *The Absorption of Immigrants: A Comparative Study Based Mainly on the Jewish Community in Palestine and the State of Israel* (London: 1954).

3. Joseph Ben-David, ''Ethnic Differences or Social Change?,'' in *Integration and Development in Israel*, ed. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, Rivkah Bar-Yosef, and Chaim Adler (Jerusalem: 1970), 368–387 (originally published in Hebrew in *Megamot* 3 [1952], 171–183); Harvey Goldberg, ''Historical and Cultural Dimensions of Ethnic Phenomena in Israel,'' in *Studies in Israeli Ethnicity: After the Ingathering*, ed. Alex Weingrod (New York: 1985), 179–200; Harvey E. Goldberg and Hagar Salamon, ''From Laboratory to Field: Notes on Studying Diversity in Israeli Society,'' *Hagar: International Social Science Review* 3 (2002), 123–137.

4. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, ''The Oriental Jews in Palestine (A Report on a Preliminary Study in Culture-Contacts),'' *Jewish Social Studies* 12 (1950), 199–222.

5. Daniel Lerner's *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (Glencoe: 1958) was one of the first social science works to deal with the notion of a ''traditional'' society. At the time, much of the emphasis was on the rural sector of ''developing'' societies, despite the fact that most Jewish immigrants to Israel did not come directly from rural settings. Their classification into ''traditional'' and ''transitional'' sectors appears in Eisenstadt, *The Absorption of Immigrants*, 118–124; the link with modernization theory appeared somewhat later. See also Henriette Dahan-Kalev, '' ʾAdatiyut beyisrael— nekudat mabat post-modernit,'' in *Moderniyut, post-moderniyut veḥinukh*, ed. Ilan Gur Zeev (Tel Aviv: 1999), 197–231, and the discussion below.

6. See, for instance, Theodor Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson, and Nevitt R. Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: 1950); and Gordon Alport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1954). Some researchers from the United States did attend to these issues, for instance, Judith T. Shuval, ''Patterns of Inter-group Tension and Affinity,'' *International Social Science Bulletin* 8 (1956), 75–123, and Walter P. Zenner, ''Ambivalence and Self-Image among Oriental Jews in Israel,'' *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 5 (1963), 214–223.

7. Sammy Smooha, *Israel: Pluralism and Conflict* (London: 1978).

8. Shlomo Swirski and Deborah Bernstein, ''Mi ʾavad bemah, ʾavur mi utemurat mah? Hapituaḥ hakalkali shel yisrael vehithavut ḥalukat haʾavodah haʾadatit,'' *Maḥbarot lemeḥkar ulevikoret* 4 (1980), 5–66.

9. Overviews of, and specific perspectives within, critical analysis appear in recent publications that address questions relating to Jews from the Middle East. See Hannan Hever, Yehouda Shenhav, and Pnina Motzafi-Haller, (eds.), *Mizraḥim beyisrael: ʾiyun bikorti meḥudash* (Jerusalem: 2002); Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (Cambridge: 2002); Yehouda Shenhav, *Hayehudim haʾaravim: leumiyut, dat veetniyut* (Tel Aviv: 2003); Baruch Kimmerling, *Mehagrim, mityashvim, yelidim: hamedinah vehaḥevrah beyisrael bein ribui tarbuyot lemilḥamot tarbut* (Tel Aviv: 2004);

Yossi Yonah and Yehuda Goodman (eds.), *Ma'arbolet hazehuyot: diyun bikorti bedatiyut uveḥiloniyut beyisrael* (Jerusalem: 2004); Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "The Zionist Return to the West and the Mizrahi Jewish Perspective," in *Orientalism and the Jews*, ed. Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar (Waltham: 2005), 162–181; Gil Eyal, *Hasarat hakesem min hamizraḥ: toledot hamizraḥanut be'idan hamizraḥiyut* (Jerusalem: 1995), 108. (An English version has recently been published as *The Disenchantment of the Orient: Expertise in Arab Affairs and the Israeli State* [Stanford: 2006], but page citations refer here to the Hebrew version.) The current spate of books presenting overall political and cultural perspectives on Israeli society was noted by Alex Weingrod ("Habrerah haantropologit," paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Israel Anthropological Association, Sederot, May 2005).

10. Shafir and Peled, *Being Israeli*, 32–33. We agree that a major challenge in the study of Israeli society is not to "ghettoize" the topic of Arab groups within it (see Goldberg and Salamon, "From Laboratory to Field").

11. Hever, Shenhav, and Motzafi-Haller (eds.), *Mizraḥim beyisrael*, 24–25.

12. See also Ella Shohat, *Zikhronot asurim: likrat maḥshavah ravtarbutit* (Tel Aviv: 2001); idem, "The Invention of the Mizrahim," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29 (1999), 5–20; Dahan-Kalev, " 'Adatiyut beyisrael."

13. Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In," *Items* 36 (1982), 1–8. An overview of the complexity of state-society relations in Israel is found in Baruch Kimmerling, "State Building, State Autonomy, and the Identity of Society: The Case of the Israeli State," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 6 (1993), 397–429.

14. Roland Calori, "Learning from Diversity: Philosophical Perspectives," *International Review of Sociology* 13 (2003), 591–605, esp. 597–598.

15. Harvey Goldberg, "Introduction: Culture and Ethnicity in the Study of Israeli Society," *Ethnic Groups* 1 (1978), 163–186.

16. In a historical development that is not clear, the term was transmuted in (Palestinian) Yiddish into *frenk*, and it became a pejorative way of referring to all "Sephardim." See Zenner, "Ambivalence and Self-Image among Oriental Jews in Israel."

17. Dorothy Willner, *Nation-Building and Community in Israel* (Princeton: 1969), 200.

18. Efrat Rosen-Lapidot, "Défrancophonisme in Israel: Bizertine Jews, Tunisian Jews," in *Homelands and Diasporas: Holy Lands and Other Places*, ed. André Levy and Alex Weingrod (Stanford: 2005), 270–295.

19. Anat Liebler, "Hastatistikah kearkhitekturah ḥevratit—'al kinunah shel halishkah hamerkazit lestatistikah kemosad apoliti" (Master's thesis, Tel Aviv University, 1998); Calvin Goldscheider, "Ethnic Categorization in Censuses: Comparing Observations from Israel, Canada and the United States," in *Census and Identity: The Politics of Race, Ethnicity, and Language in National Censuses*, ed. David I. Kertzer and Dominique Arel (Cambridge: 2001), 76–77.

20. Dvora Yanow, "From what *Edah* are You?" Israeli and American Meanings of 'Race-Ethnicity' in Social Policy Practices," *Israel Affairs* 5 (1999), 184. Terminological development is also discussed in Hanna Herzog, *'Adatiyut politit: dimui mul meẓiut* (Tel Aviv: 1986) and Zvi Ben-Dor, "Hahistoriyah hamuflaah shel hamizraḥiyim," in *Hamahapekha hamizraḥit: shalosh masot 'al haẓiyonut vehamizraḥim*, ed. Inbal Perlson (Jerusalem: 1999), 87–106.

21. Michael Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-state* (New York: 1997).

22. Chen Bram, "Visibility in Immigration: The Case of Caucasus Jews," paper presented at the Van Leer Workshop on Immigration, Jerusalem, February 2005.

23. This is a simplification, as evidenced by those ultra-Orthodox Ashkenazim who were known as the *'edah ḥaredit* or by the title *Edot* that was given to the folklore and ethnology journal published in the late 1940s by Raphael Patai, which featured articles on European and Middle Eastern groups. Virginia Dominguez's *People as Subject, People as Object: Selfhood and Peoplehood in Contemporary Israel* (Madison: 1989), discusses more recent usages of the term.

24. Sammy Smooha, "Bikoret 'al girsah mimsadit 'adkanit shel hagishah hatarbutit besoẓiologiyah shel yaḥasei 'edot beyisrael," *Megamot* 29 (1985), 73–92, which relates to

Eliezer Ben-Rafael's *The Emergence of Ethnicity: Cultural Groups and Social Conflict in Israel* (Westport: 1982); see Ben-Rafael's reply, "ʾAdatiyut: teoriyah umitos," *Megamot* 29 (1985), 190–205. See also Smooha's *Social Research on Jewish Ethnicity in Israel, 1948–1986* (Haifa: 1987).

25. Shlomo Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority* (London: 1989), Eng. version of *Lo neḥshalim ela menuḥshalim* (Haifa: 1981), 1, 60–61.

26. Joëlle Bahloul, "The Sephardic Jew as Mediterranean: A View from Kinship and Gender," *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 4 (1994), 197–207; Goldberg, "Historical and Cultural Dimensions of Ethnic Phenomena in Israel."

27. Shenhav, *Hayehudim haʾaravim*, 26.

28. The situation was variable: Jews from Iraq distanced themselves from the term *ʾedot hamizraḥ* even as Baghdadi Jews drew a distinction between themselves and the northern Kurdish Jews. See Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, "ʿOlei ʾirak beyisrael: hamaavak veha-hishtalvut," in *ʾEdot—ʾedut leyisrael: galut, ʾaliyot, kelitah, terumah, umizug*, ed. Avshalom Mizrahi and Aharon Ben-David (Netanya: 2001), 509, 519; see also n. 31.

29. On differences between Jews from Africa and Asia during the early years of immigration, see Shafir and Peled, *Being Israeli*, 78; a more extended discussion is found in Karin Amit, "Mizraḥim leʾumat ashkenazim: haḥalukah haetnit hadikhotomit vehaẕlaḥatam shel benei hador harishon vehasheni beshuk haʾavodah hayisreeli" (Ph.D. diss., Tel Aviv University, 2001).

30. See, for example, Issachar Ben-Ami (ed.), *The Sepharadi and Oriental Jewish Heritage: Studies* (Jerusalem: 1982).

31. Walter Weiker, *The Unseen Israelis: The Jews from Turkey in Israel* (Lanham: 1988), 1–2; Judith Goldstein, "Iranian Ethnicity in Israel: The Performance of Identity," in Weingrod (ed.), *Studies in Israeli Ethnicity*, 237–258. See also Haggai Ram, "Lo mizraḥ velo maʾarav, lo ḥurban velo geulah: haẕiyonut vihudei iran," *Teoriyah uvikoret* 26 (2005), 149–75. Ram argues that the case of the Jews of Iran challenges conventional dichotomies.

32. Guy Haskell, *From Sofia to Jaffa: The Jews of Bulgaria and Israel* (Detroit: 1994), 140–141.

33. Shafir and Peled, *Being Israeli*, 32.

34. Kimmerling, *Mehagrim, mityashvim, yelidim*, 323, n 2.

35. See, for example, Yigal Nizri (ed.), *Ḥazut mizraḥit: hoveh hanʾa bisvakh ʾavaro haʾaravi* (Tel Aviv: 2004).

36. An example is the way in which people from three different regions in Tunisia—Djerba; the town of Sfax in central Tunisia; and Bizerte in the north, have preserved and reworked their traditions in Israel. See Shlomo Deshen, "Ritualization of Literacy: The Works of Tunisian Scholars in Israel," *American Ethnologist* 2 (1975), 251–259; Esther Schely-Newman, *Our Lives Are But Stories: Narratives of Tunisian-Israeli Women* (Detroit: 2002); Rosen-Lapidot, "Défrancophonisme."

37. See, for example, Shafir and Peled, *Being Israeli*, 74; cf. Hever, Shenhav, and Motzafi-Haller (eds.), *Mizraḥim beyisrael*, 17, where there is an explicit attempt to avoid highlighting this contrast.

38. There may or may not be a connection between *siknaj* and Nathan Alterman's term *shiknozi*, which he placed in the mouth of Yemenite domestic helpers in Tel Aviv ("the rag is Yemenite and the boss is *shiknozi*") in his "Shir Hateimaniyot" (Song of the Yemenites [female domestic helpers]), in his *Pizmonim veshirei zemer*, part 1 (Tel Aviv: 1977), 31. Another example of how European Jews and their cultural patterns were coded by Middle Easterners is the emergence (and passing?) of the term *vusvus* (from the Yiddish "what? what?") as an appellation for Ashkenazim.

39. Eyal, *Hasarat hakesem min hamizraḥ*, 105. Aranne is cited by Tom Segev in his *1949: The First Israelis* (New York: 1986), 174.

40. Cf. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: 1978), ch. 2, on the theme of "orientalizing the oriental." The input of Mizrahi speech to the emergence of a new meaning of "Ashkenazic" was only one factor at work. See Dahan-Kalev, "ʾAdatiyut beyisrael," 211, 224–225, which also stresses the emergent nature of the term.

41. *Hayehudim ḥaʾaravim*, which discusses an important episode in Iran (see below), cites many references to Jews in Iraq, but few on Jews in the former country.

42. Michael Zand, "Notes on the Culture of the Non-Ashkenazi Jewish Communities under Soviet Rule," *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 16 (1986), 379–442; Chen Bram, "Hakarah, heʾader hakarah vehakarah sheguyah bikvuẓot bekerev ʾolei ḥever haʾamim," in *Rav tarbu-tiyut barei hayisreeli*, ed. Ohad Nahtomi (Jerusalem: 2003), 163–191; Anatoly Khazanov, *The Krymchaks: A Vanishing Group in the Soviet Union* (Jerusalem: 1989).

43. See the autobiographical sketch of Goitein in Robert Attal, *A Bibliography of the Writings of Shelomo Dov Goitein* (Jerusalem: 1975), xxiii.

44. Abraham L. Udovitch and Lucette Valensi, *The Last Arab Jews: The Communities of Jerba, Tunisia* (Chur: 1984).

45. A review by Yitzhak Dahan ("Waters of Babylon," *Azure* 19 [2005], 164–171) characterizes this picture as a generalization. Another review suggests that the book generalizes from its view of Iraqi Jewish experience to all Middle Eastern groups. See Galit Hasan-Rokem, "Haim mitaḥat lekhol ḥasifah mistateret hakhḥashah ḥadashah?" *Haaretz* literary supplement (4 April 2004). Cf. Shohat, "Invention of the Mizrahim," which offers a different assessment of Jewishness among Jews in Iraq.

46. Shenhav, *Hayehudim ḥaʾaravim*, 267, nn. 62–63. Responding to Muammar Ghaddafi's call to Jews to return to their Arab homeland, Memmi had written an essay, which appeared in *Haaretz* on September 27, 1974, in which he outlined five factors that contributed to an inaccurate, idealized view of Jewish life in Arab lands. According to Shenhav, "Memmi forgets to place his position in the setting of current politics." Shenhav's point is questionable not only because Memmi himself indicates that he is no stranger to the idea that thought is shaped by politics (see his *Dominated Man* [Boston: 1969]), but perhaps even more so on epistemological grounds—attributing political motives to the historian's analysis and assessments is no substitute for evaluating them scientifically in terms of methods, evidence, and coherence.

47. Ammiel Alcalay, *After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture* (Minneapolis: 1993). On Iraq, in particular, see Nissim Qazzaz, *Hayehudim beʾirak bemeah haʾesrim* (Jersualem: 1991); Bram, "Hakarah, heʾader hakarah vehakarah sheguyah bikvuẓot bekerev ʾolei ḥever haʾamim"; and Nancy Berg, *Exile from Exile: Israeli Writers from Iraq* (Albany: 1996). For a critical view of how Zionism and Egyptian nationalism alike read the history of Jews in Egypt through ideological lenses, see Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* (Berkeley: 1998).

48. Reuven Snir, *ʾAraviyut, yahadut, ẓiyonut: maavak zehuyot biẓiratam shel yehudei ʾirak* (Jerusalem: 2005).

49. Hever, Shenhav, and Motzafi-Haller (eds.), *Mizraḥim beyisrael*, 17.

50. Dahan-Kalev, "ʾAdatiyut beyisrael," stresses the importance of a contextual approach in studying ethnicity in Israel.

51. Hever, Shenhav, and Motzafi-Haller (eds.), *Mizraḥim beyisrael*, 17.

52. Ibid., 9–10.

53. It is possible to read "the *Mizrahi* subject" as referring to a topic of discourse, in which case use of a definite article is reasonable. The sentence, however, is followed by a quote from W.E.B. DuBois discussing "How does it feel to be a problem?," and the next paragraph refers to Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?," which makes it appear that the text is emphasizing actors, not "topics."

54. See ibid., 16, where the definite article appears three times: on lines 4 ("lisheelat hazehut hamizraḥit"), 14 ("hagdarat hazehut hamizraḥit"), and 18 ("hamizraḥiyut"), even as the discussion depicts how the category is socially constructed ("mizrahiyut" without a definite article also appears on the page). The inconstancy also appears on the next page (17), which opens with the claim that Mizrahi identity is fluid, insists toward the end of the page that the plural form is appropriate to the topic, but at the end of the second paragraph emphasizes the intention of the volume to "examine anew *the* Mizrahi topic" in Israel— expressed as "hasugiyah hamizraḥit," though it would have been possible to write "sugiyot hakeshurot lemizraḥiyut" (topics concerning Eastern-ness, or other related formulations).

We invite the Hebrew reader to peruse that chapter, along with the final one in the volume, and to judge to what extent the definite article *ha* might have been dropped from other phrases containing the term Mizrahi without affecting the meaning of the sentence.

55. The use of the Hebrew definite article in reinforcing unquestioned homogeneity appears in other central spheres of Israeli life, notably religion. Thus, "Judaism" becomes "hayahadut" and Jewish law is presented as "hahalakhah." On the importance of studying religion and ethnicity in Israel together, see Harvey E. Goldberg, "Ethnic and Religious Dilemmas of a Jewish State: A Cultural and Historical Perspective," in *State Formation and Ethnic Relations in the Middle East*, ed. Akira Usuki (Osaka: 2001), 47–64. This is also a theme in Shenhav, *Hayehudim haʾaravim* and in his "Haglimah, hakluv veʾarafel hakedushah: hashelihut haẓiyonit bamizrah kepraktikah gevulit bein ʿleumiyut hilonit' leʿteshukah datit'," in Yonah and Goodman (eds.), *Maʿarbolet hazehuyot*, 46–73. Penina Motzafi-Haller, "Datiyut, migdar umaʾamad beʾayara midbarit," in ibid., 316–345, also examines the topics together. Other examples appear in this paper, but without extended discussion of the point.

56. Shafir and Peled, *Being Israeli,* 74 (n. 1), 78, 82. The phrase "the two groups" appears a second time on page 82, as does "the two ethnic groups" in material that they quote. Binary categorization is a conscious choice, because after pointing to different statistics concerning people from "Asia" as compared to "Africa," Shafir and Peled state that "the significant social reality is that both groups have been viewed as a uniform Mizrachi population" (ibid., 79). Our question is: viewed by whom, in which contexts, and based on what evidence?

57. Ibid., 78.

58. Ibid., ch. 3; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: 1999).

59. See Harvey E. Goldberg, *Jewish Life in Muslim Libya* (Chicago: 1990), ch. 5.

60. Nitza Druyan, *Beain marvad-kesamim: ʾolei teiman beereẓ yisrael,1881–1914* (Jerusalem: 1981); Yehudah Nini, *Teiman veẓiyon: harekaʾ hamedini, hahevrati, veharuhani laʾaliyot harishonot meteiman*, *1800–1914* (Jerusalem: 1982). See also notes 64 and 78.

61. Shafir and Peled, *Being Israeli*, 75–76.

62. Yehudah Nini, *Hehayit o halamti halom: teimanei kineret—parashat hityashvutam veʾakiratam, 1912–1930* (Tel Aviv: 1996).

63. This critique is misplaced, as it ignores both Nini's aim of elucidating the Kinneret affair's historical complexity as well as his reference to it as a "metaphor" (*mashal*) that has wider implications for the understanding of Israeli society. See Hever, Shenhav, and Motzafi-Haller (eds.), *Mizrahim beyisrael*, 299; cf. Nini, *Hehayit o halamti halom*, 15–17.

64. Joseph Glass and Ruth Kark, *Sephardi Entrepreneurs in Eretz Israel: The Amzalek Family, 1816–1918* (Jerusalem: 1991).

65. Shenhav, *Hayehudim haʾaravim*.

66. Ibid., 48.

67. Ibid., 43.

68. On Hai Yissakharov, see ibid., 42, 58, and 61; on Yerahmiel Asa (formerly Isaiylov), see ibid., 100. Data on Rashi Yissakharov are from interviews by Chen Bram. See his "ʿMitnagdim anu lehityashvut meyuhedet shel ʾedot mizrahiyot,' yehudei hahar mekavkaz: ʾal hakarah, hishtalvut vezehut," in Mizrahi and Ben-David (eds.), *ʾEdot—ʾedut leyisrael*, 547–571. Various terms have been applied to Caucasus Jews. They are at times referred to as "Caucasian Jews," sometimes as "Mountain Jews" (*heharariyim* or *yehudei hahar*), and now are often called *Kavkazim*.

69. Shenhav, *Hayehudim haʾaravim*, 100.

70. Mordechai Altshuler, *Yehudei mizrah kavkaz: toledot hayehudim heharariyim mereishit hameah hateshaʾ ʾesrei* (Jerusalem: 1990), 506–509, 512; Bram, "Mitnagdim anu lehityashvut meyuhedet shel ʾedot mizrahiyot."

71. Asa replaced another member of Knesset, Avraham Abas, and for this reason served for only two years. As Esther Meir has shown, relations between Mapai and leaders of "Mizrahi" origin were not merely a matter of the former co-opting the latter. See her article "Mehuyavuyot mitnagshot: hamanhigut hamizrahit beMapaʾi bishnotehah harishonot shel hamedinah," *Yisrael* 5 (2004), 63–97. Meir does not include Asa in her discussion. The fact

that Asa was considered by members of his party to represent ''Sephardim'' (and replaced another MK representing this sector) can also be inferred from his position on the board of the Federation of Sephardic Communities. In addition to being an emissary in Abadan, Asa was sent on state missions to Iran, Iraq, and Turkey in 1954 and 1955.

72. Bram, ''Mitnagdim anu lehityashvut meyuḥedet shel ʾedot mizraḥiyot,'' 555.

73. Shenhav, *Hayehudim haʾaravim*, 58; we offer this as a *possible* interpretation.

74. We are grateful to Sergio DellaPergola for pointing this out to us. Sereni's father was a noted physician, and he himself earned a doctoral degree.

75. In this regard, see Haim Blanc, *Communal Dialects in Baghdad* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1964), which is based on field research among immigrants in Israel in the 1950s and on the speech of Muslims and Christians whom Blanc interviewed elsewhere. This monograph is a pioneer effort in conceptualizing the realm of ''communal dialects,'' a sociolinguistic phenomenon that is by no means peripheral (cf. David M. Bunis, Joseph Chetrit, and Haideh Sahim, ''Jewish Languages Enter the Modern Era,'' in *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times*, ed. Reeva Spector Simon, Michael M. Laskier, and Sara Reguer [New York: 2003], 113–141). While the Jews spoke a Judeo-Arabic dialect, to what extent and in which ways it differed from the speech of Muslim (or Christian) groups was everywhere an empirical question. The hyphenated term Judeo-Arabic has long been used to describe an empirical linguistic phenomenon that is one aspect of an ongoing social involvement, along with the maintenance of difference, that characterized Jewish life in Muslim settings for centuries (Goldberg, *Jewish Life in Muslim Libya*).

76. Shafir and Peled, *Being Israeli*, 74; Shenhav, *Hayehudim haʾaravim*, 26–27. Shohat (''Sephardim in Israel'') was influential in arguing that there was no resonance between Zionism and the experience of Jews in the Middle East.

77. See Amnon Netzer, ''Persian Jewry and Literature: A Sociocultural View,'' in *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries: History and Culture in the Modern Era*, ed. Harvey E. Goldberg (Bloomington: 1996), 240–255. The experiences of the Zionist emissaries in Iraq might also be fruitfully compared with the encounter of Jewish Palestinian soldiers in the British Eighth Army with Libyan Jews. See Yoav Gelber, *Toledot hahitnadvut*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem: 1983), 95–131. See also Maurice Roumani, ''Zionism and Social Change in Libya at the Turn of the Century,'' *Studies in Zionism* 8 (1987), 1–24. The Libyan case is discussed below.

78. For a brief but cogent statement, see Zvi Yehudah, ''Diyun'' in Yehudah Nini, *Yaḥasan shel Ḥibat Ẓiyon vehatenuʾah haẓiyonit leʾaliyah meteiman* (Jerusalem: 1977), 42–45. Specific studies are cited in Goldberg (ed.), *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries*, 25–26. Regarding Jews in the Caucasus, see Yisrael Kloizner, ''Hatenuʾah haẓiyonit bekavkaz bereishitah,'' *Shvut* 8 (1981), 86–98; Bram, '' 'Mitnagdim anu lehityashvut meyuḥedet shel ʾedot mizraḥiyot.''

79. Early developments are described in Roumani, ''Zionism and Social Change in Libya at the Turn of the Century.'' For overviews, see Renzo De Felice, *Jews in an Arab Land: Libya, 1835–1870*, trans. Judith Roumani (Austin: 1985), and Yaakov Hajjaj-Liluf, *Toledot yehudei luv* (n. p.: 2000). For the perspectives of two Zionist emissaries and one local leader, see Ben-Zion Rubin (ed.) *Luv—hedim min hayoman* (Netanya: 1988).

80. Amishadai Guweta, ''Irgun 'Ben-Yehudah' uveit hasefer 'Hatikvah,' '' in *Sefer yahadut luv*, ed. Frija Zuarets, Amishadai Guweta, Zuriel Shaked, Gavriel Arviv, and Frija Tayar (Tel Aviv: 1960), 144.

81. Roberto Bachi, ''A Statistical Analysis of the Revival of Hebrew in Israel,'' *Scripta Hieroslymitana* 3 (1956), 229.

82. Eisenstadt, ''The Oriental Jews in Palestine,'' 202.

83. Gur Alroey, *Imigrantim: hahagirah hayehudit leereẓ yisrael bereishit hamaeh haʾesrim* (Jerusalem: 2004), 32–33; Hanna Herzog, ''Hamusagim 'yishuv yashan' ve 'yishuv ḥadash' beheʾarah soẓiologit,'' *Cathedra* 32 (1984), 99–109; Shenhav, *Hayehudim haʾaravim*, 78–84.

84. Adriana Kemp, '' 'Nedidat ʾamim' o 'habeʾerah hagedolah': shelitah medinatit vehitnagdut bisfar hayisreeli,'' in Hever, Shenhav, and Motzafi-Haller (eds.), *Mizraḥim beyisrael*, 36–67.

85. Willner, *Nation-building and Community in Israel*; Alex Weingrod, *Reluctant Pioneers: Village Development in Israel* (Ithaca: 1966).

86. Kemp, " 'Nedidat ʾamim' o 'habeʿerah hagedolah'," 39.

87. Willner, *Nation-building and Community in Israel*, 169–199.

88. Ibid., 190.

89. Meir-Glitzenstein, " ʿOlei ʾirak beyisrael."

90. Erik Cohen and Yosef Katan, *Kehilah ketanah bemerḥav metropolitani: meḥkar kehilati ʾal or yehudah beezor tel aviv* (Jerusalem: 1966).

91. Eyal, *Hasarat hakesem min hamizraḥ*, 108.

92. Harvey E. Goldberg, *Cave Dwellers and Citrus Growers: A Jewish Community in Libya and Israel* (Cambridge: 1972), 54–56.

93. Schely-Newman, *Our Lives Are But Stories*.

94. Such a research orientation also was formulated early on in anthropological research. See Alex Weingrod, "Reciprocal Change: A Case Study of a Moroccan Immigrant Village in Israel," *American Anthropologist* 64 (1962), 115–131.

95. Goldberg, *Cave Dwellers and Citrus Growers*, 86. This statement refers to people considered adults upon settling on the moshav in the early 1950s. Younger people were sensitive to ethnic categories in contexts outside of the moshav.

96. For example, Knesset members Raphael Pinhasi from the veteran Bukharan community, or Amnon Cohen from the Bukharan immigrant community of the 1970s. By contrast, no subgroup affiliated with the party is from a family originating in the Caucasus. Perhaps because the "ethnic" aspect of Shas seems so obvious, it has prompted little research. One of the few studies to date is that of Anat Feldman, "Hakamat tenuʾat Sha''s: matarot vedarkhei peʿulah," in *Sha''s: hebetim tarbutiyim veraʾyoniyim*, ed. Aviezer Ravitzky (Tel Aviv: 2006), 428.

97. Yoram Bilu, "Personal Motivation and Social Meaning in the Revival of Hagiolatric Traditions among Moroccan Jews in Israel," in *Tradition, Innovation, Conflict—Jewishness and Judaism in Israel*, ed. Zvi Sobel and Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi (Albany: 1991), 47–69. Field research by André Levy, while not directly concerned with Shas but reflecting the period during which that movement grew, shows the intricate and creative processes involved in such an incremental confluence of different religious cultures. See André Levy, "Hilula rabah veʾaẓeret teshuvah: nituaḥ mikreh," in *Meḥkarim betarbutam shel yehudei ẓefon afrikah*, ed. Issahar Ben-Ami (Jerusalem: 1991), 167–179. See also the essays by Kimmy Caplan and Nissim Leon in this volume.

98. Zvi Zohar, " 'Lehaḥazir ʾatarah leyoshenah'—ḥazono shel harav ʿOvadyah," in *Sha''s: etgar hayisreeliyut*, ed. Yoav Peled (Tel Aviv: 2001), 159–209. See also Nissim Leon's essay in this volume.

99. Cf. Shlomo Deshen, "Ritualization of Literacy."

100. *Nusaḥ yehudei kavkaz* appeared on the cover, but the first page also carried a subtitle: *Keminhag hasefaradim uvnei ʾedot hamizraḥ yoẓei kavkaz* [According to the custom of the Sephardim and ʾedot hamizraḥ from the Caucasus].

101. Motti Regev and Edwin Seroussi, *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel* (Berkeley: 2004), 191–247. A discussion of Haddad's music (pp. 233–235) contains no reference to her background, but Chen Bram has witnessed Caucasus Jews commenting on her omission of their music in a performance. A discussion of social messages in Haddad's songs would also be interesting; some lyrics challenge patriarchal power. Whereas one might label this as especially "Mizrahi" or else as equally relevant to Israeli society generally, some young women from the Caucasus express the view that it relates specifically to their situation.

102. See, for example, Hagar Salamon, "The Ambivalence over the Levantinization of Israel: 'David Levi' Jokes," *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research* (forthcoming).

103. Bram, "Visibility in Immigration."

104. Yochanan Peres, *Yaḥasei ʾedot beyisrael* (Tel Aviv: 1976), provided a view of the situation until the early 1970s. For a generation after statehood there was a slow but steady increase in the rate of marriages crossing the European-Middle Eastern divide, reaching the

level of about one-fourth of all marriages. In social class terms, rates were low in the extremes of the socioeconomic scale but higher in the middling ranges where cross-ʾedah marriages did not entail major shifts of status for either partner. The broad estimation of one-fourth of all marriages crossing the Asia-Africa/Europe-America rubrics was still in place in the 1980s. See Uziel O. Schmelz, Sergio DellaPergola, and Uri Avner, *Ethnic Differences among Israeli Jews: A New Look* (Jewish Population Studies, No. 22) (Jerusalem: 1990), 37–50. Neither of these studies examined possible interesting patterns of endogamy within and "marriage exchange" among specific country-of-origin groups. See, however, Sergio Della-Pergola essay in this volume, esp. 24–25.

105. Barbara S. Okun, "The Effects of Ethnicity and Educational Attainment on Jewish Marriage Patterns: Changes in Israel, 1957–1995," *Population Studies* 55 (2001), 49–64; idem, "Insight into Ethnic Flux: Marriage Patterns among Jews of Mixed Ancestry in Israel," *Demography* 41 (2004), 173–187; Binyamin Gshur and Barbara S. Okun, "Generational Effects on Marriage Patterns: Jewish Immigrants and Their Descendants in Israel," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 65 (2003), 287–310.

106. Okun, "Insight into Ethnic Flux." On the general importance of generational differences when studying ethnic-related trends, see Amit, *Mizraḥiyim leʾumat ashkenazim*, 100–111.

107. Hever, Shenhav, and Motzafi-Haller (eds.), *Mizraḥim beyisrael*, 300–301. On cultural analysis of *Salah Shabati* and its reception in different audiences, see Goldberg and Salamon, "From Laboratory to Field," 127.

108. Schmelz, DellaPergola, and Avner (eds.), *Ethnic Differences among Israeli Jews*, 34–37.

109. One could obviously expand the list of categories here. On "traditionality," see Yaakov Yadgar and Yishayahu [Charles] Liebman, "Meʾever ledikhotomiyah 'dati-ḥiloni': hamasoratim beyisrael," in *Yisrael vehamoderniyut: leMoshe Lissak beyovlo*, ed. Uri Cohen, Eliezer Ben-Rafael, Avi Bareli, and Efraim Yaʾar (Jerusalem: 2007), 337–366.

110. Ben-David, "Ethnic Differences or Social Change?" (emphasis added). See also Harvey Goldberg, "The Changing Meaning of Ethnic Affiliation," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 44 (1987), 39–50.

111. Hever, Shenhav, and Motzafi-Haller (eds.), *Mizraḥim beyisrael*, 292–294 (emphasis added). Space does not permit further discussion here.

112. Renato Resaldo, Smadar Lavie, and Kirin Narayan, "Introduction," in Smadar Lavie, Kirin Narayan, and Renato Rosaldo, *Creativity / Anthropology* (Ithaca: 1993), 2. This statement reflects upon the work of anthropologist Victor Turner, and it would also hold true for one of the people who influenced him, French ethnographer Arnold Van Gennep.

113. The image is taken from Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action* (Glencoe, Ill.: 1949), 17.

114. Shenhav, *Hayehudim haʾaravim*, 48.

115. Goldberg and Salamon, "From Laboratory to Field"; Goldberg, "Introduction: Culture and Ethnicity in the Study of Israeli Society," 166.