



JUDEO-PERSIAN COMMUNITIES VI. THE PAHLAVI ERA (1925-1979)

JUDEO-PERSIAN COMMUNITIES OF IRAN

vi. The Pahlavi Era (1925-1979)

UNDER REZA SHAH (1925-41)

Reza Shah's (r. 1925-41) rise to power ushered in a new era for the Iranian people. The shah was not motivated by a positive attitude towards religious minorities (except Zoroastrians), but all minorities indirectly benefited from his reforms. He favored a modern Iran, free of foreign influence, united, and strong militarily. He opposed a nation of tribal groups and wanted one people, a people with a well-developed historical and national consciousness founded on a culture whose sources lay mainly in pre-Islamic Iran. He tolerated no political activity or ideology with any associations with a foreign country or groups outside of Iran. As a result, communist and Zionist activities were outlawed in Iran under his rule, albeit for different reasons (Netzer, 1980, pp. 16-17; idem, 2005, p. 17).

During this period, the government obstructed Jewish emigration to then Palestine. Zionist institutions in London and the Iranian Foreign Ministry



engaged in heated arguments over the total ban on emigration to Palestine and on the use of Iranian soil by Russian Jews as a transit station on their way to Palestine. However, despite these difficulties, Iranian Jewish immigration never ceased (Netzer, 1980, p. 17).

In September 1926, Reza Shah ordered the arrest of Šemu'el Ḥaim, the head of the Iranian Zionist organization, who strongly motivated Iranian Jews to emigrate to Palestine. Along with several officers in the Iranian army, he was accused of being a British spy and of involvement in a failed coup d'état. He was tried, spent about seven years in prison, and was executed by firing squad on 15 December 1931 (Netzer, 1980, p. 17; Sanasarian, p. 46, no. 61; Adhami, pp. 149-341, esp. pp. 300-303; Levy, III, pp. 947, 951, tr., p. 538; Ṭolu'i, pp. 256-58).

Under Reza Shah, the equal rights that were granted to members of the religious minorities by the [Constitutional Revolution of 1906-09](#) were enforced. The ensuing social changes enabled Jews to rise in status and become more assimilated within the broader society. Despite the statutory change, the Muslim majority (except for a minority of westernized Iranians) continued to have a negative view of Iranian Jewry. The Reza Shah era witnessed the repeal of all of the discriminatory laws applying to Jews. Jews were accorded the right to serve in the military and to enroll in state schools (in the late 1920s, Reza Shah subjected the Jewish schools to the general education system, to have governmental license and an Iranian name (Cohen, p. 118; for photographs of Jewish schools and their students, see Figures 1-4, below; see also [ALLIANCE ISRAÉLITE UNIVERSELLE](#)). Jews started to leave the Jewish quarter (maḥalla) and reside wherever they wished. They had the right to hold government jobs and keep shops in the bazaars. They took advantage of the opportunity and opened shops in commercial areas outside of the Jewish quarters. Previously, a small number of Jews had opened their shops outside of their quarter in Tehran and in several provincial towns. Under Reza Shah, the trend gained greater momentum, leading to an improvement in the economic situation of Jews. Yet, despite the changes, when Reza Shah's reign ended, the majority of Iranian Jews were still poor (Mizraḥi, pp. 74-75; Netzer, 2005, pp. 18-19).

[Figure 1](#). Students, teachers, and school directors, Hamadan, 1927.

[Figure 2](#). Boys' school Gym class, Jewish students with school uniform and Pahlavi cap, Yazd, 1931.



Figure 3. Girls' school celebration, Isfahan, 1936.

Figure 4. Reza Shah visiting the students and teachers of Hamadan schools, 1936.

The new national identity had a profound impact on Jewish identity. While retaining their Jewish religious affiliation and identity, the Jews of Iran wished to be perceived as Iranians and found it easier to assimilate in society, which emphasized secular-nationalist pursuits, values, and symbols, namely Persian music, poetry, and literature, Iranian national holidays, Iranian names, and glorification of Iran's pre-Islamic past (Netzer, 1980, p. 17; idem, 2005, p. 18).

Iranian Jewry sought to become part of the Iranian national stream, the inspiration for which lay in pre-Islamic Iran. Many Iranian Jews see themselves as denizens of Iranian territory for the 2,700 years since the Assyrian exile (722 BCE). Numerous Jewish-Iranian public figures often repeat that Judaism constitutes the oldest religious minority in Iran, and one that settled there a millennium before the rise of Islam. It must also be noted that among the religious minorities currently residing in Iran, the Jews are the only minority of non-Iranian origin. Nevertheless, this fact does not dull the common historical memory shared by Iranian Jews and other Iranians. Many Iranian Jews emphasized Iran's majestic, distant past as an integral part of Jewish history. The link was achieved, to a large extent, during the Pahlavi period. Both Reza Shah and Mohammad Reza Shah, tried to revive secular, Iranian nationalism by pointing to its ancient glory that began with the rise of [Cyrus the Great](#), the founder of the Achaemenid empire, thereby constituting a source of national pride and inspiration. They both worked to project continuity between the pre-Islamic period and their own reigns with regards to conceptions of the monarchy, symbols, and cultural values (Netzer, 1980, p. 17; idem, 2005, p. 18). Moreover, unlike other peoples and conquerors, Iran's two ancient empires (Persian and Median) are viewed positively in the Bible and the Talmud. Jewish secular-nationalist Iranians labored to establish continuity between the pre-Islamic period and that of their own from the perspective of the monarchy, symbols, and cultural values (Netzer, 2005, p. 9).

Jews identified with the nationalist aspirations and values of an invigorated Iran, and integrated them into their Iranian, Jewish identity. One of the more important links is found in the story of Cyrus, often represented as the Messiah, the savior of the Jewish people, and even a Jew in the Judeo-Persian literary tradition. In the [Ardašir-nāma](#) (comp. 773/1333), a Judeo-Persian epic



in the *matnawi* form by the Jewish poet Šāhin Širāzi, Cyrus the Great is represented as a Jewish king born of Queen Esther (for a drawing from an illuminated *Ardašir-nāma* MS depicting Queen Esther giving birth to Cyrus, see Sarshar, 2002, p. 91).

The new national identity was a two-edged sword, given that the government's nationalistic policies generated xenophobic, and at times even anti-Semitic sentiments. Following the vicissitudes in Iranian politics and opinion that punctuated the twentieth century, some of Iran's modern, secular intellectuals were active in reconstructing a national Iranian identity based on the history of the Aryan race of ancient Iran. They introduced secular components that originated in the "Aryan hypothesis" and in the universalistic philological research that began at the end of the eighteenth century, as an offshoot of European eugenics (Ram, pp. 159-61). For this reason, some intellectuals denigrated the Semitic race, attacking both Arabs and Iranian Jews. Jews, who comprised Iran's oldest religious minority, were not considered ethnic Iranians (Soroudi, 1998, pp. 149-70). This brand of national consciousness created problems and tension between the Jews and the racially conscious community in which they lived. Clearly, Iran's relations with Germany, which reached their peak during the Nazi period, helped cultivate a new attitude towards Jews, based on racial perceptions. Politics, specifically Iran's relations with the Soviet Union and Great Britain, led Reza Shah to strengthen his ties with Nazi Germany during the 1930s. Commercial and cultural intercourse between the two countries grew. There was a large influx of German engineers and technicians into Iran. Nazi radio and newspaper propaganda emphasized the "common Aryan origin" of the two peoples, while classifying the Jews as "an inferior race and parasites on humanity." Many pan-Iranianists cooperated with the Nazis, creating even greater tension between Jews and non-Jews (Pirnażar, 1996, pp. 93-105; Netzer, 1986, pp. 5-31; Greenberger, pp. 44-45, 74, 78-82).

The German invasion of Russia and the German army's advance along the southern Russian front pleased the Iranian fascists, who wished to rid Iran of Jews while availing themselves of Jewish property (Netzer, 1986, pp. 13-14; Sa'idi, p. 34). 'Abbāsqli Golšā'iān, who was Reza Shah's finance minister during this period, writes that the lightning advance of the German army across Russia and the Soviet defeat were taken as a "good omen" (*fāl-e nik*) and cause for celebration in Iran (Golšā'iān, I, p. 416, cf. I, p. 456). Anti-Jewish articles were published in the Iranian media. Anti-Jewish sentiments went



beyond religious prejudice and took on racist characteristics (Sanasarian, pp. 46-47; Netzer, 1986, pp. 5-31; Pirnazar, 1996, pp. 93-105; Levy, III, pp. 969-71).

UNDER MOHAMMAD REZA SHAH (1941-78)

During 1941-48. Upon the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941 and the military occupation of Iran by the Allies, his son, Mohammad Reza Shah, was crowned (r. 1941-79). During the occupation (1941-46), Iran experienced an especially dynamic political period. Over twenty political parties were founded, representing a broad spectrum of opinions and ideologies, ranging from the extreme left to the extreme right and including the various religious groups. In Tehran and in the provinces, dozens of newspapers and weeklies appeared in which political opinions were freely expressed. This freedom of the press enabled Jews to renew their Zionist activities. They founded clubs for cultural and pioneering activity, organized training and preparation for immigration to Palestine, and established newspapers and weeklies of their own, such as *Ālam-e yahud* (1945-55), edited by Yunes Bustāni et al.; *Esrā'īl* (Israel, 1945-55), edited by Raḥim Kohan; *Nisān* (1948-53), edited by Šemu'el Anwar; *Sinā* (1949-50), edited by Āqā Khan Ṭub; *Bani ādam* (1951-52), edited by Loqmān Šāleḥ; *Dāniāl* (1952), edited by Ya'qub Oriān; and *Donyā-ye yahud* (1951-52) edited by Majid Nehurāy, which continues to appear in Los Angeles under Bāruḳ Beruḳim's editorship (Netzer, 2005, pp. 139-56; Pirnazar, 2000, pp. 13-46; Barzin, pp. 74, 91, 189, 289-90, 349, 420).

Iranian Jews were also active in the Zionist organization that was established in Iran in the beginning of the 1940s. The movement accepted Jewish youth who wanted to immigrate to Palestine and join the kibbutzim. Following the conference, Ha-Khalutz opened branches outside of Tehran. In 1947, there were fifteen branches of the movement, three of them in Tehran. Some two thousand youths were members of the movement. The movement laid the foundation for the emigration of thousands of Jews from Iran in the 1950s. Ha-Khalutz prevented many Jewish youths and other Jews from converting to the Bahai faith and from joining the communist movement (Sa'idi, pp. 48-162; Sasson, 2005, pp. 157-72; Davidi, pp. 238-58; Ḥanāsāb, pp. 3-12).

The Jewish Agency opened a branch in Tehran to aid Jewish refugees from Poland (Yishai, pp. 7-22). Iranian Jews came into contact with Jewish Agency staff and Jewish soldiers serving in the Allied forces, which bolstered Iranian Jews' community activity and self-confidence. Many Iranian Jews extended aid to the "Tehran Children" (*Farzandān-e Tehrān*) and to Jewish refugees from



Russian and Poland on their way to Palestine (Netzer, 1996-97, pp. II, 139-78).

Despite the political ferment that characterized Iran during this period, Jews generally refrained from joining political parties. An exception was the ideologically freewheeling communist Tudeh party (see [COMMUNISM ii](#)), which attracted several hundred Jewish intellectuals from across the country. These intellectuals published a number of Jewish, communist-oriented periodicals, such as the two weekly papers *Nisān*, which was replaced by other papers after it was banned, and *Bani ādam* (Barzin, pp. 91, 420). Some participated in underground meetings and public demonstrations, clashing at times with the police. A number of Jewish demonstrators participating in a violent protest on 19 July 1952 were arrested and given prison sentences of various lengths. These leftist Jews were also involved in Zionist activities; they saw no contradiction between the Jewish people's national aspirations and party ideology, which, in those days, supported the establishment of the State of Israel (Daghighian, pp. 259-73; Netzer, 2005, pp. 18-19).

During 1948-1978. Israel's independence in 1948 created a delicate situation for Iranian Jewry. The Iranian government opposed the partition plan, as did Iranian Muslims who were influenced by the clerics, headed by Ayatollah Sayyed Abu'l-Qāsem Kāšāni (1882-1962; Sasson, 2005, p. 168; Sadok, p. 62; Netzer, 1979, pp. 76-77). Ayatollah Kāšāni tried to recruit volunteers from among the Iranian population to join the Arab armies who waged war against Israel, but the government refused to be directly involved in any war efforts. Posters in the Tehran bazaar called on Iranians not to buy from Jewish merchants (Sanasarian, p. 47; Yazdāni, pp. 100, 251). Iran's state-run radio broadcast anti-Israeli reports and referred to the State of Israel as *dawlat-e pušāli-e yahud* (flimsy Jewish state; *Eṭṭelā'āt-e haftagi*, 7 Kordād 1327/1 June 1948; Ezri, p. 355). The Iranian press, except for the communist papers, was for the most part anti-Israeli and at times anti-Semitic (Netzer, 1979, p. 77).

In 1948, the Iranian Jewish community numbered about 90,000 to 100,000 persons, with some 30 percent living in Tehran. The founding of the State of Israel led to an increase in the emigration of Jews from Iran. Between 1948 and 1953, almost 31,000, approximately one-third of the total Jewish population in the country, left Iran (*Statistical Abstract of Israel*, p. 49). It should be noted, however, that there was also the reverse immigration among Iranian Jews who had migrated to Israel before 1953. It is estimated that from 1953 to 1975 five thousands Jews returned to Iran (Netzer, 1981, p. 11; Sadok, pp. 250-51, 255).



Iran was also a transit station for many Iraqi Jews (Sasson, 2005, p. 168). The Iranian government, acting with the approval of the shah, assisted Iraqi Jews in fleeing Iraq for Iran (Netzer, 1994, p. 661; Bialer, pp. 292-315). Most of the immigrant Jews who left Iran to settle in Israel in this wave were members of the lower classes and came from the provinces (Sasson, 1999, pp. 112-28; Yeroushalmi, 2001, pp. 27-52).

With the signing of the cease-fire between Israel and the neighboring Arab countries in 1949, there were signs of a change for the better in the attitudes of the government and media toward Israel. The changes resulted from internal, regional, and global factors. In March 1950, the Iranian government, headed by Moḥammad Sā'ed Marāḡa'i (1883-1973), unanimously decided to grant the State of Israel de facto recognition (Parsi, pp. 19-28; Bialer, pp. 292-315). Iran's diplomatic recognition of Israel had a major impact on Iranian Jews both in terms of their own self-image and in terms of the attitude of other Iranians toward them (Netzer, 1980, p. 18; Menashri, 1991, p. 357)

Nevertheless, the premiership of Moḥammad Moṣaddeq in the early 1950s brought another rise of anti-Jewish and anti-Israel sentiment. During the oil crisis of 1950-53, the government was more attuned with the sentiments of the majority of the population who considered Israel as a creation of Western imperialism and, therefore, illegitimate (Soroudi, 1981, p. 109; Sadok, pp. 76-77). After the [Coup d'état of 1332 Š./1953](#) there was the rumor that the Jewish delegate in the Majles, Morād Arieḥ (1900-80), had funds delivered to Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi during his brief exile in Rome. These funds allowed the royal family to remain in Italy until they could safely return to Iran (Sarshar, 2002, p. 382).

The shah trusted the loyalty of Iranian Jews, and “the covenant” between the shah and his Jewish subjects was reinforced. The new political atmosphere created a potential boon for Jewish prosperity and freedom, but it also posed risks, given the community's dependence on a single individual. To aggravate matters, after the shah returned to power, he ruled with an iron fist and suppressed the opposition. The formation of a highly centralized government enabled government control of the periphery and prevented local incitement against Jews (Menashri, 1991, p. 357). It must also be pointed out that the increasing co-operation between the secret services of the two countries (MOSSAD and SAVAK), both in training and in their close co-operation against Egypt, particularly after the Suez Crisis of 1956, had a lastingly detrimental impact on the perception of many Iranians, both secular and religious,



regarding Israel, and, to some extent, some members of the Jewish community with close attachments to the State of Israel (Zāre‘, pp. 55-88; Parsi, 2007, passim).

Iranian-Israeli relations were strong by the mid-1950s, and Pahlavi ties with the West gave the Iranian Jewish community a sense of security and freedom (see [ISRAEL i. RELATIONS WITH IRAN](#)). These ties enabled a closer connection between Iranian Jewry and Jewish organizations, such as the American Joint Distribution Committee, Otzar Hatorah (an American-based Jewish Orthodox institution), ORT (which began operations in Iran in 1950), and Israeli organizations, among them The Jewish Agency for Israel. These organizations offered economic and cultural support. For example, the American Joint Distribution provided education, medical services, sanitation, and meals programs for Iranian Jewish children (Spicehandler, pp. 24-25; Joint, pp. 17-18; Mizrahi, pp. 72-73). Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) remained active in the country. Otzar Hatorah founded schools in cities that lacked Alliance schools and in new neighborhoods of cities in which Alliance operated in the early 1940s (Cohen, pp. 114-22).

The years of the Pahlavi dynasty, in particular the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah, are often considered as a golden age for the Iranian Jewry. The Israel-shah-Jewish triangle reached its pinnacle of goodwill in January 1963, when the shah declared his so-called White Revolution (*Enqelāb-e safid*) reform plan (1963-79) and began to introduce far-reaching reforms aimed at changing Iranian society (see Amuzgar, pp. 217-29). The White Revolution’s rapid modernization framework offered exceptional opportunities for Iran’s Jewish community.

The reforms impinged on pious endowments (*waqf*), which antagonized the religious establishment. The granting of civil rights to women also enraged the clerics. The reforms aroused the strong criticism of the Muslim clerics, headed by Ayatollah Ruḥ-Allāh Musawī Komeyni (Ruhollah Khomeini, 1902-89), against the regime itself. In every anti-regime demonstration, the name of Israel was repeatedly raised, blaming it for aiding “the shah’s dictatorial and oppressive regime.” Anti-Jewish proclamations often accompanied the demonstrations. Jewish institutions in Tehran and in the provinces were attacked (Soroudi, 1981, p. 109; *The Israeli State Archive*, file no. 442/20; Netzer, 1979, p. 78; idem, 2005, p. 21; Menashri, 2002, p. 391; “Yehude Iran haim. . .”).

The Six-Day War (1967) strained relations even further between Muslims and



Jews in Iran. The tense atmosphere during the Iran-Israel soccer game in the Asian Nations Cup in Tehran in May 1968 and afterwards left an impact on the Muslim-Jewish relations in the country (Chehabi, 2000, pp. 16-24; Rahimiyan, 2007, pp. 22-28; Israeli State Archive, file no. 4174/4).

Another crisis that aroused anti-Jewish hostility and tension, which usually remained beneath the surface during the shah's regime, erupted following Arab military achievements during the Yom Kippur War (1973). Soroudi claims that some of the religiously oriented bazaars linked, in part due to economic rivalry, Jewish destiny in Iran with the fall of Israel. Liberal Muslims, it has been noted, offered shelter for their Jewish friends in times of crisis (Soroudi, 1981, p. 110). Mikhael Zand argues that Westernization and secularization, on the one hand, and imitation of members of the establishment and intellectuals class, on the other hand, led the new urban middle class in the main cities of the country, especially in Tehran, to question the concept of impurity of infidels, if not to deny it altogether. The Jew was no longer viewed as an infidel, either by the ruling elite or the intellectuals, or, to a great extent, by the middle class (Zand, 1986, p. 110).

Under Pahlavi rule, especially that of Mohammad Reza Shah, the economic status of Iranian Jews improved greatly. Iran's economy was booming in the mid-twentieth century, especially after the 1973 oil crisis. In one generation, Iranian Jewry made impressive strides, in large part due to its dynamic urban nature, which enabled it to participate fully in Iran's economic growth. Many Jews took advantage of this window of opportunity, abandoned their traditional crafts, and integrated in new branches of the economy.

On the eve of the Revolution of 1978-79, the Jews were a force in the Iranian economy far greater than their numbers would dictate. Some became involved in international trade, introducing new products to the Iranian public: electric appliances, pharmaceuticals, and other staple commodities. The concentration of Jews in urban areas and in certain occupations, compared to Muslims, led to a Jewish dominance in those occupations. Jews worked principally in trade, industry, and crafts, but engaged also in real estate. Numerous members of the Jewish community made quick fortunes as economic activity accelerated. Many became leading figures in "banking, insurance, textile, plastics, paper, pharmaceuticals, aluminum production, liquor distillery and distribution, shipping, imports, industrial machinery, and tile manufacturing" (Sarshar, ed., 2002, p. xix; see also: Taheri; Tsadik, pp. 50-54; The Israeli State Archive, file no. 3435/6, 6.5.1962). Many Jewish businesses were monopolies owned by



one family, or, usually, one man. Examples of successful businesspeople are the Elqāniān brothers, who brought the plastics industry to Iran and built the first Iranian skyscraper (Kadisha, p. 423); and the Nahā'i brothers, who founded the first privately owned insurance company in Iran in 1946 and Alborz Insurance Company in 1965, which became one of Iran's largest privately owned insurance carriers (Kadisha, p. 425).

Furthermore, after 1948, Israel absorbed large numbers of Iranian Jews from the lower economic classes, relieving the Iranian Jewish community of the burden of caring for them (Netzer 1980, 19; Menashri, 1991, p. 357; Sadok, p. 42). In addition, since the end of World War II, the Iranian Jewish community has enjoyed the generous support of international Jewish organizations, which have been active primarily in general education, occupational training, and health matters (Netzer, 1980, p. 19; Spicehandler, 1970, pp. 24-25; Sadok, pp. 38, 40).

On a per capita basis, by 1968, the Iranian Jewish community had become the wealthiest Jewish community in Asia and Africa (Haddad, p. 50) and, some contended, the richest Jewish community in the world (Menashri, 1991, p. 358). The Jewish community prospered under Mohammad Reza Shah's regime not only in economic terms. The community's educational and cultural life flourished. It had schools, ran social and cultural organizations, synagogues, and communal associations at the local and national levels, and offered Hebrew courses and lectures. According to Amir Taheri, "there were over 150 synagogues in Iran, mainly in Tehran and Shiraz" since August 1969.

The Jewish Council (*Anjoman-e kalimiān*), which represented the Iranian Jewish community, was recognized by the government. *Anjoman-e Kalimiān* operated by means of committees and in concert with other Jewish organizations. Among these committees and organizations were the neighborhood committee, the Koreš School committee, the community hospital committee, the Women's Social Aid Organization, the Joint Distribution Committee, ORT, the Jewish National Fund, and the World Zionist Organization. Community institutions, such as the rabbinical court, synagogues, cemeteries, the hospital in Tehran and its two branches, the home for the elderly, the neighborhood kindergarten, women's committees, and cultural clubs, were all affiliated with it. *Sāzmān-e danešjuyān-e yahud-e Irān* (The Iranian Jewish Student's Association) was the only legal student organization that could act freely. The women's organizations, mainly *Sāzmān-e bānovān-e yahud-e Irān* (The Organization of Jewish Iranian Women) was



active in the community. The Jewish Agency engaged in communal, social, and cultural activities and supported the community's youth clubs, such as the *Kuroš-e kabir* club (Rahimiyan, 2005, pp. 88-95; Menashri, 1991, p. 358).

The improvement in Jewish life prompted many Jews to leave the Jewish sections and move to integrated neighborhoods (the rich Jews moved to Tehran's northern suburbs). The assimilation of the members of the Iranian Jewish community, together with increasing secularization, weakened Jewish values (Netzer, 1979, pp. 69-83; Taheri). Some researchers contended that Jewish identity was strengthened among the young generation, as a result of ties between Iran's Jewish community and Jewish communities in Europe and the United States. Intermarriages with Muslims increased in the 1970s, but still remained a rarity (Spicehandler, 1970, p. 41; Taheri).

Iran's Jewish population in early 1976 stood at about 62,000, of whom 42,000 lived in Tehran on the eve of Revolution (Statistical Center of Iran, 1980, p. 78), making it the largest Jewish community in Asia and Africa, except for South Africa. These 62,000 Jews constituted less than 0.25 percent of Iran's total population of 35 million, but the Jews' presence in the economic sphere, in the professional domain, and in Iran's cultural life was disproportionately large. About ten percent of the Jews were extremely wealthy; a similar percentage lived in poverty. The remaining eighty percent enjoyed a high standard of living (Netzer, 1981, p. 12; idem, 2005, p. 21).

According to the unofficial estimate of *Anjoman-e kalimiān*, about eighty Jewish professors and lecturers—that is, two percent of the country's 4,000 professors and lecturers—taught in Iranian universities and other institutions of higher learning. There were approximately 600 Jewish physicians, constituting six percent of Iran's 10,000 physicians. Of the 150,000 students in institutions of higher learning, 4,000 were Jewish, many of whom studied in the most prestigious institutions and faculties, and many Iranian Jews attended boarding schools and colleges in Europe and the United States (Netzer, 1979, pp. 69-83; idem, 2005, p. 21; Sitton, 1985, p. 184). Based on a representative sample taken in 1978, the literacy rate among Iranian Jewish males aged 6-50 was over 90 percent. The rate among females was 70 percent. These figures were much higher than the overall Iranian literacy rate (Netzer, 1979, p. 79; idem, 1981, p. 12; *Sāl-nāma-ye āmāri-e kešvari*, as cited in Netzer, 1979, p. 79, n. 59).

Some prominent examples of Jews with notable attainments are Šelemu



(Samuel) Rahbar (b. Hamadān, 1929), who discovered in the 1967 HbA1C, a form of hemoglobin used primarily to identify plasma glucose concentration over time. It is still the most important means to measure the blood-sugar level in diabetic patients. Iraj Lālazāri (b. 1930) was the dean of the College of Pharmacy, Tehran University. He earned the Queen Farah Science Prize (1972) and the Crown Decoration for Scientific Research (1965). Homā Saršār (b. 1946) was a staff writer for *Zan-e ruz* weekly magazine and the *Kayhān* daily newspaper, eventually becoming one of Iran's leading journalists and television talk-show hosts (see figs. in Sarshar, ed., 2002, pp. 392-93; *EIr.* XI, p. 622). Few Jews rose to important position in the government, such as the attorney Yusof Kohan (1927-81), who had been a member in Tehran's City Council (*Anjoman-e Šahr-e Tehrān*) since 1972 and later became the Jewish representative in the Twenty-Fifth Majles.

Iranian Jews contributed the Iranian cultural life as well. **Solaymān Ḥaim** (1886-1970), a lexicographer, compiled a series of bilingual dictionaries that are still considered authoritative. He also wrote theatre plays based on biblical stories. A number of Jewish musicians, such as the master *tār* player and composer Mortazā Neydāwud (1900-90) and the vocalist Yona Dardašti (1907-90), made significant contributions to the preservation and development of Persian music (Netzer, 1984, p. 163-81; Loeb, 2000, pp. 25-38). Some Jews were employed in the Iranian cinema industry and were film producers (e.g., Zvoluni brothers, Raḥimzāda brothers). There were also a few Jewish athletes who performed at the highest national level, like Hušang Raḥimiān, a boxing champion at the end of the 1940s, and Žānet Kohanšedq (1945-72), the illustrious national track and field champion (Sarshar, 2002, p. 377, 424; Chehabi, 2002, pp. 373-78; Netzer, 2005, pp. 19-20).

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