



Report on the Jews of Iraq

Historical and Economic Analysis



Disclaimer

This Report on Iraq is part of a series on the history and economic losses when Jews were displaced from 10 Arab countries and Iran. Every attempt was made to locate all relevant statistical data. Although archival research was conducted in six countries, this Report should not be seen as definitive. Research was adversely affected by the fact that this mass displacement of Jews occurred more than 75 years ago and there is no central repository where records of these losses were maintained. It is hoped that additional research will be conducted in the future which would expand upon and refine the financial projections contained in this Report.

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Cover Photo: *The family of Abraham Saul Tvana, Baghdad, Iraq 1924*

Source: Museum of the Jewish People - Beit Hatfutsot.

Jews are an indigenous people of the Middle East having lived in the region continuously for millennia, fully one thousand years before the advent of Islam.

In the 20th century, the breadth and scale of the near-total displacement of Jews from eleven Muslim countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf region ranks among the more significant cases of mass displacement in modern history.

For over 75 years, the world has ignored the uprooting of Jews from the Arab totalitarian regimes, dictatorships and monarchies. Under Muslim rule, Jews were subjected to a widespread pattern of persecution. Official decrees enacted by Arab regimes denied human and civil rights to Jews and other minorities; expropriated their property; stripped them of their citizenship; and means of livelihood. Jews were often victims of murder; arbitrary arrest and detention; torture; and expulsions.

From the 1,000,000 Jews in 1948 based in 10 Arab countries plus Iran, to-day, less than 1% remain. Most fled to Israel, the ancestral homeland of the Jewish people for millennia.

The legitimate call to secure rights and redress for Jewish refugees from Arab countries is not to negate the suffering or the rights of Palestinian refugees. Their claims, however, do not supersede the fact that Palestinians were not the only Middle East refugees.

For peace in the Middle East, truth and justice must prevail.

To that end, eleven Country Reports have been prepared to document the history and heritage, as well as the individual and communal assets lost by Jews displaced from 10 Arab countries and Iran. This second Report is on the Jews of Iraq.

In the spirit of the Abraham Accords, at a time of historic breakthroughs in political and economic ties between Muslim countries and Israel/Jews, the time has come for nations to unite in promoting peace and reconciliation among all peoples in the Region.

History of the Jewish Community of Iraq

Jewish settlement in Mesopotamia dates back to 586 BCE, following the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem. Over centuries, Babylonian Jews played a central role in Judaism, producing the Babylonian Talmud and influencing Jewish communities worldwide.

Under Ottoman rule (1831–1917), Jews faced fluctuating conditions, from oppression to limited reforms under the *Tanzimat*. Despite some economic success, they remained vulnerable to discrimination and violence. British rule (1917–1932) brought economic prosperity and political inclusion, with Jews holding key roles in banking, commerce, and government.

With Iraq's independence in 1932, Arab nationalism and Nazi influence intensified anti-Jewish sentiment. The 1941 *Farhud* pogrom, incited by pro-Nazi Iraqi leaders and the

Jerusalem mufti, resulted in widespread murder, rape, and looting. Following Israel's establishment in 1948, systematic persecution—including arrests, economic restrictions, and executions—escalated.

In 1950–1951, over 100,000 Jews emigrated in *Operation Ezra and Nehemiah* after the Iraqi government allowed them to leave under the condition of renouncing citizenship. The remaining Jews faced increasing oppression under the Baath regime, culminating in public executions in 1969. By the early 1970s, nearly all Iraqi Jews had fled, marking the end of a 2,500-year-old Jewish presence.

Economic Analysis of The Jews of Iraq

One purpose of this project is to provide a detailed and comprehensive appraisal and valuation of individual and communal property left behind by Jews displaced from Arab countries.

JJAC compiled the best evidence available on the scope of lost Jewish assets. This process included a thorough and comprehensive review of available documentation, discussions with community leaders and subject-matter experts, the collection of testimonial data, an analysis of each Jewish community's place within their respective country, and a consideration of previous valuation attempts.

This project's goal was to consider the totality of Iraqi Jews' financial losses, including their rural assets, urban assets, employment losses, moveable assets and private property, business losses and communal losses. The final result below is an aggregate valuation of Jewish individual and community losses from the Jewish community of Iraq:

Total Value per Asset Type According to Valuation Base Year (\$,1948)

Asset Type	Total Value
Rural Assets	2,906,148
Urban Assets	302,179,511
Employment Losses	23,218,650
Moveable Assets & Private Property	139,486,354
Business Losses	173,299,125
Communal Losses	15,521,264
Total	656,611,052

Using a detailed, multi-step methodology involving, among other factors, inflation, interest rates, currency exchange, etc., the Jewish losses were actualized to show a present day value of all assets under consideration, reflected in 2024 US dollars (USDs).

On the basis of the combined total value of each asset category under consideration and the application of the methodology, the total value for all assets as of December 31, 2024 USD equals **\$34,239,408,861**.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction: Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries - Legal and Political Context

When the term ‘refugees’ is mentioned in the context of the Middle East, the international community’s singular focus has been on Palestinian refugees.

Yet, within the last 75 years, the world has ignored the mass displacement of some 1,000,000 Jews from the totalitarian regimes, dictatorships and monarchies of Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco Yemen and Aden, as well as Iran.

Neither the mass violations of the human rights of Jews in Arab countries, nor their uprooting from their ancestral countries of birth, has ever been appropriately addressed by the international community.

In reality, as a result of the longstanding conflict in the Middle East, two populations of refugees emerged – Arabs as well as Jews from Arab countries. In fact, there were more Jews displaced from Arab countries (856,000 plus Iran)¹ than there were Palestinians who became refugees as a result of the 1948 Arab Israeli war (726,000)²

Asserting rights and redress for Jewish refugees is intended neither to argue against any claimed Palestinian refugee rights nor to negate any suffering. It is a legitimate call to recognize that Jews from Arab countries also became refugees as a result of that same Middle East conflict, and still possess rights even today.

Jews as an Indigenous People of the Middle East

Jews are an indigenous people of the Middle East having lived in the region continuously from pre-historic times to the present. Jews and Jewish communities proliferated throughout parts of the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf region for more than 2,500 years, fully one thousand years before the advent of Islam.

Table 1 - Early Jewish Presence in the Middle East and North Africa

Country/Region	Date of Jewish Community
Iraq	6th century BCE
Yemen	3rd century BCE
Lebanon	1 st century BCE
Libya	3 rd century BCE
Morocco	1 st century CE
Syria	1 st century CE
Algeria	1 st - 2 nd century CE
Tunisia	3 rd century CE

Source: Compiled from the works of Goldschmid A.; Lewis B.; Newby, G.D.

Throughout the millennia, the Jewish presence endured despite various empires ruling the region, including the Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Ottomans, and British. Notwithstanding some periods of exile, descendants of the Jewish people, maintained their

¹ Roumani, *The Case 2; WOJAC'S Voice* Vol.1, No.1

² United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine p. 18; United Nations, *Annual Report of the Director General of UNRWA*, Doc 5224/5223, 25 Nov. 1952 *First estimate as September 1949*

unbroken lineage in the Middle East, stretching across millennia.

Longstanding Jewish Presence in the Region

The ancient Israelites were among the first inhabitants of the region. Their illustrious history is detailed in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls. The uninterrupted historical presence of Jews in the Middle East can then be characterized into six periods:

Period One: Ancient Israelite History (See Appendix A)

Period Two: Destruction of the First Temple to The Rise of Islam (See Appendix B)

Period Three: Prophet Muhammed To Colonialism

Period Four: Colonial Period

Period Five: The Rise of Jewish and Arab Nationalism

Period Six: The Founding of The State of Israel

Period Three: Prophet Muhammed To Colonialism.

With the birth of Mohammed in 570, and the advent of Islam, the region was transformed. Starting in the seventh century, pan-Arab imperialism foisted the Arabic language and culture on indigenous peoples like Assyrians, Berbers, Kurds, Zoroastrians, Maronites, Egyptian Copts and Jews.

Following the Muslim conquest of the region, from the 7th century onward, Jews were ruled by Muslims for years under the Pact of Umar, attributed to the Second Caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab (634-644 CE). Enacted in 637 CE, the Pact of Umar was a bilateral agreement of limitations and privileges between conquering Muslims and conquered non-Muslims who were declared “dhimmi”. The term *dhimmi*, ‘protected,’ was a diminished status assigned to Christians and Jews, among others, who were considered a ‘People of the Book’ (as opposed to atheists or polytheists) and therefore extended some degree of legal protection, while relegated to second-class status³

The most concrete law to which *dhimmis* were subjected was the need to pay a special tax known as ‘*jizya*.’ The origins of this tax is contained in the Qur’an which states: “*Fight against those who have been given the scripture until they pay the due tax [jizya], willingly or unwillingly.*”⁴

By paying the *jizya*, Jews and Christians were allowed to practice their faith, maintain personal security and were permitted limited religious, educational, professional and business opportunities. They were also subject to discriminatory restraints.

Restrictions for the *dhimmi* under the Pact of Umar prohibited Jews and other religious minorities from holding public religious ceremonies; and the legal exclusion of Jews from holding public office. The *dhimmi* could not raise himself above the Muslim nor could his synagogue be higher than the mosques. Non-Muslims could not ride horses, only donkeys and were required to dismount if he passed a Muslim. The Jew was tolerated but barely so⁵

These practices were not uniform within the Arab world and there were even differences in individual countries.⁶

³ Cohen,, *Crescent* p. 52-53

⁴ Quaran, *Sura 9*:

⁵ Cohen, *Crescent* 65

⁶ Yeor, *Islam and Dhimmitude*; Yeor, *The Dhimmi*; Deshem and Zenner; Stillman, *Jews of Arab Land*

Throughout the countries colonized by the Muslim conquest, non-Arab and non-Muslim minorities, among the indigenous inhabitants in those regions, remained as minorities in their ancestral places of birth.

Period Four: Colonial Period

European colonialism in the Arab world was partially spurred by the British conquest of India, which led Napoleon to invade Egypt in 1798, in part to disrupt British trade routes. Although the French occupation of Egypt was short-lived, it was not long before the European presence in the Arab world grew. France's colonization of Algeria began in 1830, of Tunisia in 1881, and of Morocco in 1912. Meanwhile, Britain colonized Egypt in 1882, and also took control of Sudan in 1899. And in 1911, Italy colonized Libya.⁷

After World War I and with the fall of the Ottoman Empire, control over the Middle East fell into the hands of France and Great Britain.

Jews fared well under secular, colonial 'European' rule. This period witnessed a gradual erosion of the dhimmi system and a growing integration of Jewish and other communities into the broader societies in which they lived.

Many Jews experienced increased prosperity and opportunities during this era, contributing significantly to many fields such as education, finance, culture, politics, and administration.

Period Five: The Rise of Jewish and Arab Nationalism

Arab nationalism emerged in the early 20th century in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, as an opposition movement to European imperialism, later evolving into the overwhelmingly dominant ideological force in the Arab world.

It started out as a political ideology asserting that Arabs constitute a single nation. As a traditional nationalist ideology, it promotes Arab culture and civilization, celebrates Arab history, the Arabic language and Arabic literature. It often also calls for unification of Arab society.⁸

Zionism, or Jewish nationalism, is a modern political movement. Its core beliefs are that all Jews constitute one nation (not simply a religious or ethnic community) and that the only solution to anti-Semitism is the concentration of as many Jews as possible in the biblical land of Israel, and the establishment of a Jewish state in their ancestral homeland.

Most associate Theodor Herzl with the founding of the Zionist movement in 1897. While Herzl succeeded in bringing together virtually all Zionist groups under one organizational roof, there was significant Zionist activity before Herzl came onto the scene.

The history of Zionism began earlier and is intertwined with Jewish history and Judaism.⁹ More than 20 new Jewish settlements were established in Palestine between 1870 and 1897 (the year

⁷ Arab Center, "The Colonial Legacy in the Arab World: Health, Education, and Politics", Washington DC., Accessed Nov. 10, 2024

<https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-colonial-legacy-in-the-arab-world-health-education-and-politics/>

⁸ Dawisha, Aheed, "Requiem for Arab Nationalism", *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2003. Accessed Nov. 10, 2024 <https://www.meforum.org/middle-east-quarterly/requiem-for-arab-nationalism>

⁹ University of Michigan College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, accessed Nov. 10, 2024

https://lsa.umich.edu/content/dam/cmenas-assets/cmenas-documents/unit-of-israel-Palestine/Section1_Zionism.pdf

of the first Zionist Congress).¹⁰

Arab nationalists predominantly perceived Zionism as a threat to their own aspirations. Beginning with the Balfour Declaration in 1917 and intensifying in the 1930s during the Arab Revolt, tensions between Arab nationalism and Jewish nationalism escalated. From as early as 1922 and into the 1960s, all of the North African states gained independence from their colonial European rulers.

In the aftermath of World War II, many regions transitioned from imperial rule to nation-states. Countries like Jordan and Iraq emerged in the wake of colonialism's decline. The Middle East became a focal point for political realignment, with borders redrawn and new Arab governments established. The evolution of Arab, Muslim states did not bode well for its Jewish inhabitants.

The Arab League and Jewish Refugees

To promote Arab unity, the Arab League was established by Pact on March 22, 1945, initially composed of Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Transjordan, Saudi-Arabia, and Yemen. According to the Pact, the League has as its purpose to strengthen relations between the member-states, to coordinate their policies in order to achieve cooperation between them, and to safeguard their independence and sovereignty.¹¹

Over time, these Arab League member states colluded in, and coordinated, a shared pattern of conduct that appeared intended to coerce Jews to leave, or to use them as weapons in their struggle against first Zionism and then the State of Israel. This is evidenced even before 1948 from: (a) reports on multilateral meetings of the Arab League; (b) statements and threats made by delegates of Arab countries at the U.N.; and c) and strikingly similar legislation and discriminatory decrees, enacted by numerous Arab governments, that violated the fundamental rights and freedoms of Jews resident in Arab countries.¹²

The danger to Jews was well known and even declared publicly in threats made against their Jewish populations by Arab regime officials at the United Nations.

- In a key address to the Political Committee of the U.N. General Assembly on the morning of November 24, 1947, just five days before that body voted on the partition plan for Palestine, Heykal Pasha, an Egyptian delegate, made the following statement:

*“The United Nations ... should not lose sight of the fact that the proposed solution might endanger a million Jews living in the Moslem countries. ... If the United Nations decided to partition Palestine, they might be responsible for very grave disorders and for the massacre of a large number of Jews.”*¹³

¹⁰ Snitkoff, Rabbi Ed "[Secular Zionism](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/israel/Jewish_Thought/Modern/Secular_Zionism.shtml)". My Jewish Learning. Accessed on Nov. 11, 2024

¹¹ The Avalon Project "[Pact of the League of Arab States, 22 March 1945](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/arableag.asp)". Yale Law School. 1998. Accessed on Nov. 10, 2024, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/arableag.asp

¹² The Text of Law Drafted by the Political Committee of the Arab League was reported on in a front page, May 16, 1948 New York Times article headlined: "Jews in Grave Danger in All Moslem Lands"

¹³ U.N. General Assembly, Second Session, Official Records, Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestinian Question, Summary Record of the Thirteenth Meeting, Lake Success, N.Y., November 24, 1947 (A/AC.14/SR.30). This comment was made at 10:30am.

- In an afternoon session of the Political Committee of the U.N. General Assembly on November 24, 1947, the Palestinian delegate to the UN, Jamal Husseini, representing the *Arab Higher Committee of Palestine* to the UN General Assembly, made the following threat:

*"It should be remembered that there were as many Jews in the Arab world as there are in Palestine whose positions might become very precarious."*¹⁴

- On November 28, 1947 Iraq's Foreign Minister Fadil Jamali, at the 126th Plenary Meeting of the UN General Assembly stated:

*"Not only the uprising of the Arabs in Palestine is to be expected but the masses in the Arab world cannot be restrained. The Arab-Jewish relationship in the Arab world will greatly deteriorate."*¹⁵

Words were followed by actions.

In 1947, the Political Committee of the Arab League (League of Arab States) drafted a law that was to govern the legal status of Jewish residents in all Arab League countries. Entitled: Text of Law Drafted by the Political Committee of the Arab League, it provided that "...all Jews – with the exception of citizens of non-Arab countries – were to be considered members of the Jewish ‘minority state of Palestine’; that their bank accounts would be frozen and used to finance resistance to ‘Zionist ambitions in Palestine’; Jews believed to be active Zionists would be interned as political prisoners and their assets confiscated; only Jews who accept active service in Arab armies or place themselves at the disposal of these armies would be considered ‘Arabs.’¹⁶

The draft law was a prediction of what was to happen to Jews in the region. It became a blueprint, in country after country, for the laws which were eventually enacted against Jews - denationalizations; freezing of Jewish bank accounts; diverting funds of frozen Jewish bank accounts to pay for the Arab wars against Israel; confiscation of property of "active Zionists"; and Zionism became a criminal offence throughout the region, in some cases punishable by death. Property confiscation of Jews was widespread¹⁷. The Arab League had accomplished its goal.

Period six: Jewish refugees and the founding of the State of Israel

There were many factors that finally influenced virtually all Jews resident in North Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf Region to leave: the rise of Arab nationalism; after the European colonialists left, the establishment of sovereign Arab, Islamic states; discriminatory decrees adopted by Arab regimes; the UN moving towards partition; the outbreak of war in 1948; etc. These factors convinced Jews resident in Arab countries that their situation had become dangerously untenable and that it was time to leave.

¹⁴ U.N. General Assembly, Second Session, Official Records, Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestinian Question, Summary Record of the Thirty-First Meeting, Lake Success, N.Y., November 24, 1947 (A/AC.14/SR.31) This comment was made at 2:30pm.

¹⁵ U.N. General Assembly, Second Session, Official Records, Verbatim Record of the 126th Plenary Meeting, November 28, 1947, p. 1391.

¹⁶ The Text of Law Drafted by the Political Committee of the Arab League was reported on in a front page, May 16, 1948 New York Times article headlined: "Jews in Grave Danger in All Moslem Lands"

¹⁷ Ibid

Following the UN vote on the partition plan in November 1947, and the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948, the status of Jews in Arab countries changed dramatically as six Arab countries – Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Saudi Arabia – as well as the Palestinians, declared war, or backed the war against Israel. This rejection by the Arab world of a Jewish state in the Middle East triggered hostile reactions to Jews by Arab regimes and most of their peoples. Jewish populations in Muslim countries were suspected of dual loyalties and were under assault. For example: After the 1947 United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 (Partition Plan), rioters, joined by the local police force, engaged in a bloody pogrom in Aden that killed 82 Jews and destroyed hundreds of Jewish homes.¹⁸

➤ In Syria, during November 1947 there were pogroms in several cities; synagogues were burned and Jews were arrested.¹⁹

➤ Between June and November 1948, bombs set off in the Jewish Quarter of Cairo killed more than 70 Jews and wounded nearly 200.²⁰

In the immediate aftermath of the 1948 War of Independence, hundreds of thousands of Jews were either uprooted from their countries of residence or became subjugated, political hostages of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Displacement of Jews from Arab Countries

In reality, the displacement of Jews began even before the founding of the State of Israel. It accelerated in the twentieth century when, under Muslim rule, Jews were subjected to a widespread pattern of persecution. Official decrees and legislation enacted by Arab regimes denied human and civil rights to Jews and other minorities; expropriated their property; stripped them of their citizenship; and other means of livelihood. Jews were often victims of murder; arbitrary arrest and detention; torture; and expulsions.

As a result of these twentieth century developments, post-World War II life for Jews in Arab countries became dangerous and untenable. Leaving was not always easy – the difficulty varied from country to country. In some countries, Jews were forbidden to leave (e.g., Syria); in others, Jews were displaced *en masse* (e.g., Iraq); in some places, Jews lived in relative peace under the protection of Muslim rulers (e.g., Tunisia, Morocco); while in other states, they were expelled (e.g., Egypt) or had their citizenship revoked (e.g. Libya).

However, the final result was the same - the mass displacement - the ethnic cleansing - of some 856,000 Jews from some ten Arab countries – in a region overwhelmingly hostile to Jews.

As noted in the Table below, the mass displacement of Jews from Arab countries coincided with major conflicts in the Middle East (e.g. 1948 War; 1956 War; 1967 War; etc.) Each conflict led to major displacements of Jews from Arab countries. The cumulative result was that, over a seventy-five-year period from 1948- until today approximately 99% of all Jews resident in Arab countries and Iran have been displaced.

¹⁸ Sachar, *A History of Israel*, p. 397-398.

¹⁹ Trigano, Samuel, “*Elimination of Israelite Communities in Arab and Islamic Countries*”, Outline Presentation, p. 9

²⁰ Sachar, p. 401

Table 2 - Country of Origin and Jewish Population Compiled by Justice for Jews from Arab Countries

Country or Territory	1948 Jewish population	1958 Jewish population ²¹	1968 Jewish population ²²	1976 Jewish population ²³	2001 Jewish population ²⁴	2024 Estimates
Aden	8,000	800	0	0	0	0
Algeria	140,000	130,000	3,000	1,000	0	0
Egypt	75,000	40,000	2,500	400	100	15
Iraq	135,000	6,000	2,500	350	100	5
Lebanon	5,000	6,000	3,000	400	100	50
Libya	38,000	3,750	500	40	0	0
Morocco	265,000	200,000	50,000	18,000	5,700	2,500
Syria	30,000	5,000	4,000	4,500	100	3
Tunisia	105,000	80,000	10,000	7,000	1,500	1,500
Yemen	55,000	3,500	500	500	200 ²⁵	1
Subtotal	856,000 ²⁶	475,050	76,000	32,190	7,800	4,074 ²⁷
Iran	100,000+	-	-	-	8,756 ²⁸	

What led to this mass exit and displacement of was a wide-spread pattern Arab regimes instituted legal, economic, political and behavioral processes aimed at isolating and persecuting Jews in their countries. These measures can be categorized as follows:²⁹

- A) Denial of Citizenship**
- B) Quarantine and Detention of People**
- C) Legal Restrictions**
- D) Economic Decrees/Sanctions**
- E) Socioeconomic Discrimination**
- F) Pogroms**

The examples listed below are a mere sampling of the actual and extensive discriminatory measures and decrees enacted by Arab regimes against their Jewish populations.

A) Denial of Citizenship

Egypt:

- According to the first Nationality Code promulgated by Egypt on May 26, 1926, a person born in Egypt of a ‘foreign’ father, (who himself was also born in Egypt), was entitled to

²¹ American Jewish Yearbook (AJY) v.58 American Jewish Committee.

²² AJY v.68; AJY v.71

²³ AJY v.78

²⁴ AJY v.101

²⁵ AJY v.102

²⁶ Roumani, The Case 2; WOJAC’S Voice Vol.1, No.1

²⁷ Estimates derived in discussions with the recognized leadership of the World Organizations representing Sephardi/Mizrahi communities from these respective countries.

²⁸ Official Census in Iran; As of 2012

²⁹ Trigano, p. 2

Egyptian nationality only if the foreign father “belonged racially to the majority of the population of a country whose language is Arabic or whose religion is Islam.”³⁰

- A mass departure of Jews was sparked in 1956 when Egypt amended the original Egyptian Nationality Law of 1926. Article 1 of the Law of November 22, 1956, stipulated that “Zionists” were barred from being Egyptian nationals. Article 18 of the 1956 law asserted that “Egyptian nationality may be declared forfeited by order of the Ministry of Interior in the case of persons classified as Zionists.” Moreover, the term “Zionist” was never defined, leaving Egyptian authorities free to interpret the law as broadly as they wished.³¹

Iraq:

- Law No. 1 of 1950, entitled “Supplement to Ordinance Canceling Iraqi Nationality,” in fact deprived Jews of their Iraqi nationality. Section 1 stipulated that “*the Council of Ministers may cancel the Iraqi nationality of the Iraqi Jew who willingly desires to leave Iraq for good*” (official Iraqi English translation).³²

Libya:

- The Citizenship Act of June 12, 1951, (Section 11/27) places restrictions on the status of non-Muslims (e.g. Jews were not allowed to vote or play any political role).³³
- On August 8, 1962, the Council of Ministers announced a Royal Decree amending Article 10 of the Citizenship Act, which provided, *inter alia*, that a Libyan national forfeited his nationality if he had had any contact with Zionism. The retroactive effect of this provision, commencing with Libyan independence on December 24, 1951, enabled the authorities to deprive Jews of Libyan nationality at will.³⁴

B) Quarantine and Detention of People

Yemen:

- In 1949, Jews were officially banned from leaving the country. This injunction still exists today.³⁵

Libya:

- Law No.62 of March 1957, Article 1 of which provided, *inter alia*, that physical persons or corporations were prohibited from entering directly or indirectly into contracts of any nature whatsoever with organizations or persons domiciled in Israel, with Israel citizens or with persons acting on behalf of Israel, or with their representatives.³⁶

³⁰ Article 10(4) of the Code. See : Maurice de Wee, La Nationalite Egptienne, Commentaire de la loi du mai 1926, p. 35.

³¹ Law No. 391 of 1956, Section 1(a), *Revue Egyptienne de Droit International*, vol. 12, 1956, p. 80.

³² Law No. 1 of 1950, entitled “Supplement to Ordinance Canceling Iraqi Nationality,” *Official Iraqi Gazette*, March 9, 1950.

³³ Trigano, p.3

³⁴ UNHCR Archives, Confidential memorandum to Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, dated May 8, 1970.

³⁵ Trigano, p. 3

³⁶ Gruen, “*Libya and the Arab League*”, p. 11

Syria:

- In 1973, communication with the outside world was banned³⁷
Many other measures were imposed in Iraq; Tunisia; Morocco; Iran and Egypt³⁸

C) Legal Restrictions

Egypt:

- Promulgation in 1957 of Army Order No. 4 relating to those who administer the property of the so-called people and associations (“Zionist” i.e. Jewish) are subject to imprisonment or supervision.³⁹

Libya:

- Law of Dec 31,1958, a decree issued by the President of the Executive Council of Tripolitania, ordered the dissolution of the Jewish Community Council and the appointment of a Moslem commissioner nominated by the Government.⁴⁰

Many other legal restrictions against Jews were imposed in Iraq, Lebanon, Iran, Yemen; Syria; Morocco; and Tunisia;⁴¹

D) Economic Sanctions

Syria:

- In April of 1950, a ‘Jewish property foreclosure Law” allowed authorities to seize Jewish houses, land, and shops in the cities of Aleppo and Qamishli. Palestinian refugees were then allowed to settle in these formerly Jewish neighborhoods. A ransom had to be paid for every Jew leaving the country.⁴²

Egypt:

- Law No. 26 of 1952 obligated all corporations to employ certain prescribed percentages of “Egyptians.” A great number of Jewish salaried employees lost their jobs, and could not obtain similar ones, because they did not belong to the category of Jews with Egyptian nationality.⁴³

Iraq:

- Law No. 5 of 1951, entitled “A law for the Supervision and Administration of the Property of Jews who have Forfeited Iraqi Nationality,” also deprived them of their property. Section 2(a) “freezes” Jewish property.⁴⁴
- There were a series of laws that subsequently expanded on the confiscation of assets and property of Jews who “forfeited Iraqi nationality”. These included Law No. 12 of 1951⁴⁵ as well

³⁷ Trigano, p.3

³⁸ Trigano, p. 3-4

³⁹ *Egyptian Official Gazette, No. 88, November 1, 1957*

⁴⁰ UNHCR Archives, Confidential memorandum to Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, dated May 8, 1970.

⁴¹ Trigano, p. 4

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 6

⁴³ Laskier, “Egyptian Jewry”

⁴⁴ Law No. 5 of 1951, entitled “A Law for the Supervision and Administration of the Property of Jews who have Forfeited Iraqi Nationality,” *Official Iraqi Gazette*, March 10, 1951 (English version), p. 17.

⁴⁵ Law No. 12 of 1951, supplementary to Law No. 5 (*Official Gazette*, English version, 27 January 1952, p.32)

as Law No. 64 of 1967 (relating to ownership of shares in commercial companies) and Law No. 10 of 1968 (relating to banking restrictions).

Other economic sanctions were imposed in Iran, Yemen; Libya; Morocco and Tunisia.⁴⁶

E) Socioeconomic Discrimination

Egypt:

- On July 29, 1947, an amendment was introduced to the Egyptian Companies Law which required at least 75% of the administrative employees of a company to be Egyptian nationals and 90% of employees in general. This resulted in the dismissal and loss of livelihood for many Jews since only 15% had been granted Egyptian citizenship.⁴⁷

Iraq:

- In Iraq, no Jew is permitted to leave the country unless he deposits £5,000 (\$20,000) with the Government to guarantee his return. No foreign Jew is allowed to enter Iraq, even in transit.

⁴⁸

Libya:

- On May 24, 1961, a law was promulgated which provided that only Libyan citizens could own and transfer property. Conclusive proof of the possession of Libyan citizenship was required to be evidenced by a special permit that was reported to have been issued to only six Jews in all.⁴⁹

Other such socioeconomic discriminatory measures were imposed on the Jews in Yemen; Syria; Libya; Morocco; Egypt and, Tunisia⁵⁰;

F) Pogroms

Morocco:

- In Morocco, On June 7 and 8, 1948, there were riots against Jews in Ojeda and Jareda.⁵¹

Egypt:

- In 1954, upon the Proclamation of a State of Siege in Egypt, the Military Governor of Egypt was authorized “to order the arrest and apprehension of suspects and those who prejudice public order and security.” At least 900 Jews, without charges being laid against them, were detained, imprisoned or otherwise deprived of their liberty.⁵²

Iraq:

- At the end of 1968, scores were jailed upon the discovery of a local “spy ring” composed of Jewish businessmen. Fourteen men, eleven of them Jews, were sentenced to death in staged trials and hanged in the public squares of Baghdad; others died of torture.⁵³

⁴⁶ Trigano, p. 5

⁴⁷ Cohen, H.J., p. 88

⁴⁸ *New York Times*, May 16, 1948, front page

⁴⁹ UNHCR Archives, Confidential memorandum to Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, May 8, 1970.

⁵⁰ Trigano, p. 6-7

⁵¹ Trigano, p. 9

⁵² Article 3, Paragraph 7 of Emergency Law No. 5333 of 1954.

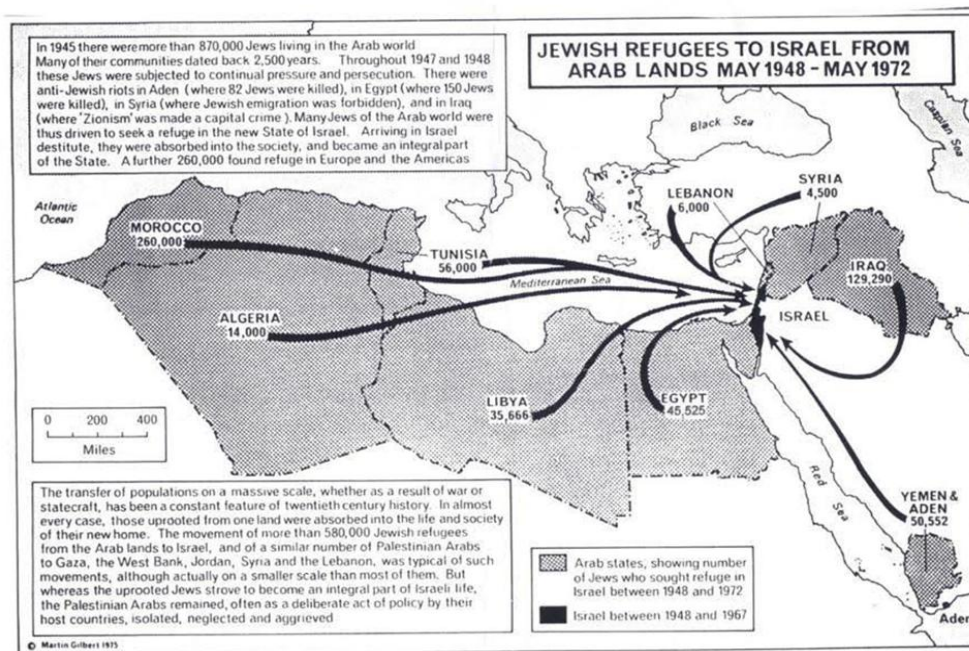
⁵³ Judith Miller and Laurie Mylroie, *Saddam Hussein and the Crisis in the Gulf*, p. 34.

Other pogroms and violence against Jews occurred in, Libya; Lebanon, Iran, Yemen; Syria; Tunisia; and Algeria;⁵⁴

Jews who left Arab countries were not voluntary migrants. They left their home countries neither for economic reasons nor solely for religious freedom. They suffered from harassment and discrimination. They were driven from their homes as a result of the persecution they suffered.

Over 2/3 of all Jews displaced from Arab countries – roughly 650,000 - emigrated to Israel:

Map 1– Jewish Refugees to Israel from Arab lands May 1948 – May 1972



Source: Martin Gilbert, *Jews of Arab Lands*, p.16 (Egyptian Jewish community leaders claim the number fleeing from Egypt to Israel was significantly higher).

While Zionism motivated most to settle in Israel, an estimated 260,000 people⁵⁵ – or about one third - of all Jewish refugees immigrated to other countries (e.g. Britain, France, USA, Canada, etc.). In virtually all cases, as Jews left their homes and their countries of birth, individual and communal properties were confiscated without compensation.

Were Jews Displaced from Arab Countries Legally Refugees

The internationally accepted definition for the term “refugee” derives from the Statute of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that was established by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 319 (IV) on December 3, 1949. The Convention Relating to the

⁵⁴ Trigano, p. 7-10

⁵⁵ Gilbert, *Atlas of the Arab-Israeli conflict*. p. 48

Status of Refugees was adopted on July 28, 1951, by the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, which was convened under General Assembly Resolution 429 (V) of December 14, 1950, and entered into force on April 22, 1954. Article 1 of the *1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* states the following: *For the purposes of the present Convention, the term “refugee” shall apply to any person who: ... (2) As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it. ...*

This internationally accepted definition of “refugees” applied to many Jews who fled Arab countries who clearly had, a “*well-founded fear of being persecuted.*”

The plight of Jewish refugees displaced from Jews in Arab countries was finally and formally recognized when, on two separate occasions, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) specifically declared that Jews fleeing from Arab countries were indeed refugees “who fall under the mandate” of the UNHCR. The first recognition pertained to Jews fleeing Egypt. In a 1957 statement to the UNREF Executive Committee, Mr. Auguste Lindt, UN High Commissioner for Refugees stated:

*“Another emergency problem is now arising: that of refugees from Egypt. There is no doubt in my mind that those refugees from Egypt who are not able, or not willing to avail themselves of the protection of the Government of their nationality fall under the mandate of my office.”*⁵⁶

The second recognition by the UNHCR that Jews fleeing Arab countries were indeed refugees came in 11 years later in a letter released by the Office of the UN High Commissioner:

*“I refer to our recent discussion concerning Jews from Middle Eastern and North African countries in consequence of recent events. I am now able to inform you that such persons may be considered prima facie within the mandate of this Office.”*⁵⁷

The significance of this second ruling was twofold:

- 1) Unlike the first statement by the High Commissioner that merely referred to “*refugees from Egypt*” - the vast majority of whom were Jews - this letter referred specifically to “*Jews*”; and
- 2) Unlike the first determination that limited UNHCR involvement to “*refugees from Egypt*”, this statement constituted a ruling that Jews who had left *any* of the “*Middle Eastern and North African countries*” - namely: Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, and Tunisia – all fell within the mandate of the Office of the UNHCR.

Do These Former Jewish Refugees Still Possess Rights To-day?

The statute of limitations does not apply to the right of refugees to petition for rights and redress. This principle is enshrined in the “*Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy*

⁵⁶ Mr. Auguste Lindt, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Report of the UNREF Executive Committee, Fourth Session – Geneva 29 January to 4 February 1957.

⁵⁷ Dr. E. Jahn, Office of the UN High Commissioner, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Document No. 7/2/3/Libya, July 6, 1967.

and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law”, adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly on December 16, 2005. It states, in part:

6... statutes of limitations shall not apply to gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law which constitute crimes under international law.

The passage of time does not negate the right of refugees to petition for redress for the mass violations of their human rights as well as for the personal losses. If a refugee left behind assets, including bank accounts and pension plans, they do not lose their rights to these assets, notwithstanding how many years have passed. Therefore, former Jewish refugees have the legal right, under international law – even today - to petition for rights and redress.

United Nation and Middle East Refugees

So, in fact, both Palestinians and Jews from Arab countries were recognized as *bona fide* refugees by the relevant UN Agencies.

The declaration that Palestinians were refugees was made by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and accepted by the international community. The designation by the UNHCR that Jews fleeing Arab countries were indeed refugees was less known and not publicized.

From the mid 1940’s onward, the United Nations was faced with two refugee populations; both emerging from the same conflict; in comparable numbers, both recognized by the UN as *bona fide* refugees; with both still possessing rights today. Nonetheless, there are startling differences in the treatment, by the United Nations, of Arab refugees compared to Jewish refugees. For example:

With respect to Security Council resolutions, from 1946 – 2024 inclusive, there were a total of 338 Security Council resolutions on the Middle East in general, and 9 resolutions on Palestinian refugees in particular. During that same time period, there was not one Resolution dealing with Jewish refugees.⁵⁸

UN Security Council Resolutions on Middle East Refugees			
	Resolutions on the Middle East	Resolutions on Palestinian Refugees	Resolutions on Jewish Refugees
SECURITY COUNCIL	338	9	0

With respect to Resolutions of the UN General Assembly,⁵⁹ from 1949 to 2024 inclusive, the General Assembly focused much greater attention on the issue of Palestinian refugees – over

⁵⁸ Urman, Dr. Stanley A., *The United Nations and Middle East Refugees: The Differing Treatment of Palestinians and Jews*; Rutgers University, 2010. Page 134. Analysis derived from United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), Statistics updated to 2024 from UNISPAL on Nov. 2. 2024. <https://www.un.org/unispal/data-collection/>

⁵⁹ Ibid, Page 137. Statistics updated to 2024 from UNISPAL on Nov. 2. 2024. <https://www.un.org/unispal/data-collection/>

21 % of its resolutions – more than on any other Middle East issue.

UN General Assembly Resolutions on Middle East Refugees			
	Resolutions on Middle East	Resolutions on Palestinian Refugees	Resolutions on Jewish Refugees
GENERAL ASSEMBLY	976	208	0

In contrast to Palestinian refugees, General Assembly resolutions never specifically addressed the issue of Jewish refugees, nor were there any resolutions on other topics that mentioned Jewish refugees from Arab countries.

However, there is one UN Resolution that does refer to Jewish refugees from Arab countries obliquely, while still not mentioning their plight directly.

UN Security Council Resolution 242

On November 22nd, 1967, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 242, which laid down the principles for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East.

Still considered the primary vehicle for resolving the Arab-Israel conflict, Resolution 242, stipulates that a comprehensive peace settlement should necessarily include “*a just settlement of the refugee problem*”. No distinction is made between Arab refugees and Jewish refugees. This was the intent of the Resolution’s drafters and sponsors.

On Thursday, November 16, 1967 the United Kingdom submitted their draft of Resolution 242 [S/8247] to the UN Security Council. The UK version of 242 was not exclusive, and called for a just settlement of “the refugee problem.” Just four days after the United Kingdom submission, the Soviet Union’s U.N. delegation submitted their own draft Resolution 242 to the Security Council [S/8253] restricting the just settlement only to “Palestinian refugees” [Para. 3 (c)].

On Wednesday, November 22, 1967, the Security Council gathered for its 1382nd meeting in New York at which time, the United Kingdom’s draft of Resolution 242 was voted on and unanimously approved.⁶⁰ Immediately after the UK’s version of 242 was adopted, the Soviet delegation advised the Security Council, that “*it will not insist, at the present stage of our consideration of the situation in the Near East, on a vote on the draft Resolution submitted by the Soviet Union*” which would have limited 242 to Palestinian refugees only.⁶¹ Even so, Ambassador Kuznetsov of the Soviet Union later stated: “The Soviet Government would have preferred the Security Council to adopt the Soviet draft Resolution...”⁶²

Thus, the attempt by the Soviets to restrict the “just settlement of the refugee problem” merely to “Palestinian refugees” was not successful. The international community adoption of the UK’s inclusive version signaled a desire for 242 to seek a just solution for all – including Jewish refugees.

Moreover, Justice Arthur J. Goldberg, the US Ambassador to the United Nations who was

⁶⁰ Security Council Official Records - November 22, 1967 - S/PV.1382 - Paragraph 67

⁶¹ Security Council Official Records - November 22, 1967 - S/PV.1382 - Paragraph 117

⁶² Security Council Official Records - November 22, 1967 - S/PV.1382 - Paragraph 117

seminally involved in drafting⁶³ the unanimously adopted Resolution, told The Chicago Tribune that the Soviet version of Resolution 242 was “not even-handed.”⁶⁴

He went further, in pointing out that:

*“A notable omission in 242 is any reference to Palestinians, a Palestinian state on the West Bank or the PLO. The resolution addresses the objective of ‘achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem.’ This language presumably refers both to Arab and Jewish refugees, for about an equal number of each abandoned their homes as a result of the several wars....”*⁶⁵

So, it is clear that the intent of UN Resolution 242 requires a “just settlement of the refugee problem” that includes Jewish refugees, as equally as Palestinian refugees.

Other international Agreements and entities have recognized the rights of Jewish refugees from Arab countries.

Multilateral Initiatives

- The Madrid Conference, which was first convened in October 1991, launched historic, direct negotiations between Israel and many of her Arab neighbors. In his opening remarks at a conference convened to launch the multilateral process held in Moscow in January 1992, then-U.S. Secretary of State James Baker made no distinction between Palestinian refugees and Jewish refugees in articulating the mandate of the Refugee Working Group as follows: *“The refugee group will consider practical ways of improving the lot of people throughout the region who have been displaced from their homes.”*⁶⁶

No distinction is made between Arab and Jewish refugees.

- The Road Map to Middle East Peace, advanced in 2002 by the Quartet (the U.N., EU, U.S., and Russia) also refers in Phase III to an *“agreed, just, fair and realistic solution to the refugee issue”*, language applicable both to Palestinian and Jewish refugees.

Bilateral Arab-Israeli Agreements

Israeli agreements with her Arab neighbors allow for a case to be made that Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinians have affirmed that a comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict will require a *“just settlement”* of the *“refugee problem”* that will include recognition of the rights and claims of all Middle East refugees:

Israel – Egypt Agreements 1978 and 1979

The *Camp David Framework for Peace in the Middle East* of 1978 (the “Camp David Accords”) includes, in paragraph A(1)(f), a commitment by Egypt and Israel to *“work with each other and with other interested parties to establish agreed procedures for a prompt, just and*

⁶³ Transcript, Arthur J. Goldberg Oral History Interview I, 3/23/83, by Ted Gittinger; Lyndon B. Johnson Library. March 23, 1983; Pg I-10

⁶⁴ “Russia stalls UN Action on Middle East.” The Chicago Tribune. November 21, 1967 pg. B9

⁶⁵ Goldberg, Arthur J., “Resolution 242: After 20 Years.” The Middle East: Islamic Law and Peace (U.S. Resolution 242: Origin, Meaning and Significance.) National Committee on American Foreign Policy; April 2002. (Originally written by Arthur J. Goldberg for the American Foreign Policy Interests on the occasion of its twentieth anniversary in 1988.)

⁶⁶ Remarks by Secretary of State James A. Baker, III before the Organizational Meeting for Multilateral Negotiations on the Middle East, House of Unions, Moscow, January 28, 1992.

permanent resolution of the implementation of the refugee problem.”

Article 8 of the *Israel – Egypt Peace Treaty* of 1979 provides that the “*Parties agree to establish a claims commission for the mutual settlement of all financial claims.*” Those claims were to include those of former Jewish refugees displaced from Egypt.

Israel – Jordan Peace Treaty, 1994

Article 8 of the *Israel – Jordan Peace Treaty*, entitled “*Refugees and Displaced Persons*” recognizes, in paragraph 1, “*the massive human problems caused to both Parties by the conflict in the Middle East*”. Reference to massive human problems in a broad manner suggests that the plight of all refugees of “*the conflict in the Middle East*” includes Jewish refugees from Arab countries.

Israeli Palestinian Agreements, 1993-

Almost every reference to the refugee issue in Israeli-Palestinian agreements, talks about “*refugees*”, without qualifying which refugee community is at issue, including the *Declaration of Principles of 13 September 1993* {Article V (3)}, and the *Interim Agreement of September 1995* {Articles XXXI (5)}, both of which refer to “*refugees*” as a subject for permanent status negotiations, without qualifications.

Recognition by Political Leaders of Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries

Recognition by political leaders has enhanced the credibility of Jewish refugees from Arab countries and strengthened the legitimacy of their claims for rights and redress.

- U.S. President Jimmy Carter, after successfully brokering the Camp David Accords and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, stated in a press conference on Oct. 27, 1977:

“Palestinians have rights... obviously there are Jewish refugees...they have the same rights as others do.”

- Former U.S. President Bill Clinton made the following assertion after the rights of Jews displaced from Arab countries were discussed at ‘Camp David II’ in July, 2000.⁶⁷

There will have to be some sort of international fund set up for the refugees. There is, I think, some interest, interestingly enough, on both sides, in also having a fund which compensates the Israelis who were made refugees by the war, which occurred after the birth of the State of Israel. Israel is full of people, Jewish people, who lived in predominantly Arab countries who came to Israel because they were made refugees in their own land.

- Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin recognized Jewish refugees in a June 3rd, 2005 interview with the Canadian Jewish News which he later reaffirmed in a July 14, 2005 letter:

A refugee is a refugee and that the situation of Jewish refugees from Arab lands must be recognized. All refugees deserve our consideration as they have lost both physical property and historical connections. I did not imply that the claims of Jewish refugees are less legitimate or

⁶⁷ From White House Transcript of Israeli television interview

merit less attention than those of Palestinian refugees.

- British Prime Minister Theresa May spoke at a dinner in London marking the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, on November 2nd, 2017:

We must recognize how difficult at times this journey has been – from the Jews forced out of their homes in Arab countries in 1948 to the suffering of Palestinians affected and dislodged by Israel’s birth – both completely contrary to the intention of Balfour to safeguard all of these communities.

Legislation Recognizing Rights for Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries

Unanimously adopted by the **United States** Congress on April 1, 2008, House Resolution 185 affirms that all victims of the Arab-Israeli conflict must be recognized and urges the President and US officials participating in any Middle East negotiations to ensure: “... *that any explicit reference to Palestinian refugees is matched by a similar explicit reference to Jewish and other refugees, as a matter of law and equity.*”

On March 5, 2014, **Canada** formally recognized the plight of Jewish refugees from Arab lands. The Canadian Cabinet and Parliament accepted a committee recommendation that the federal government *officially recognize the experience of Jewish refugees who were displaced from states in the Middle East and North Africa after 1948.*”

The Knesset of **Israel** adopted two Bills, in 2008 and again in 2010, confirming rights - including compensation - for Jews displaced from Arab countries and that their rights must be addressed in any Middle East peace negotiations.

Jewish Refugees and Palestinian Refugees

Emanating as a result of the 1948 conflict in the Middle East, Palestinians are considered as the world’s longest-standing refugee population who continue to require significant international protection as well as material and financial assistance.

Their continuing needs, however, do not supersede the fact that, Palestinians were not the only Middle East refugees. During the twentieth century, two refugee populations emerged as a result of the conflict in the Middle East – Arabs as well as Jews.

There is no parallel history, geography, nor demography that could allow for any just comparison between the fate of Palestinian refugees and the plight of Jewish refugees from Arab countries. Moreover, there is a fundamental distinction in the way the two crises were dealt with:

- The newly established state of Israel, under attack from six Arab armies, with scant and scarce resources, opened its doors to hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees displaced from Arab countries, granted them citizenship, and tried, under very difficult circumstances, to absorb them into Israeli society.
- By contrast, the Arab world, with the sole exception of Jordan, turned their backs on displaced Palestinian Arabs, sequestering them in refugee camps to be used as a political weapon against the state of Israel for the last seventy-five plus years.

So, while there is no symmetry between these two narratives, there is one important factor that applies to both: namely, the moral imperative to ensure that all *bona fide* refugees receive equal

treatment under international law.

It would constitute an injustice, were the international community to recognize rights for one victim population – Arab Palestinians - without recognizing equal rights for other victims of the same Middle East conflict – Jewish refugees from Arab countries.

The legitimate call to secure rights and redress for Jewish refugees from Arab countries is not to negate any rights claimed by Palestinian refugees. In any Middle East peace proposals, the rights and claims of Palestinian refugees will certainly be addressed. What is important is to ensure that the rights and claims of hundreds of thousands of Jews displaced from Arab countries are similarly recognized and addressed.

In the spirit of the Abraham Accords, at a time of historic breakthroughs in political and financial ties between Muslim countries and Israel/Jews, the time has come for nations to unite in promoting peace and reconciliation among all peoples in the Region.

Chapter 2 - Project Overview: Scope and Methodology

The purpose of this project is to provide a detailed and comprehensive appraisal and valuation of property left behind by Jews displaced from Arab countries in the years following the founding of the State of Israel as well as post-Revolution Iran. The breadth and scale of the near-total displacement of Jews from eleven Muslim countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf region ranks among the more significant cases of mass displacement in modern history. Moreover, this massive civilizational presence was uprooted over only the course of just more than half a century and transformed into an enormous flow of refugees headed to Israel, Europe, North and South America, Australia and other locations. This report seeks to document this historical injustice and to produce a valuation of assets left behind by Jewish refugees in Arab countries and Iran.

The scope of this project encompasses the Jewish communities of the following ten Arab countries.

- Aden
- Algeria
- Egypt
- Iraq
- Lebanon
- Libya
- Morocco
- Syria
- Tunisia
- Yemen

Also included is Iran.

This Report will deal only with the Jews of Iraq.

This project will bring to light the best evidence available on the scope of lost Jewish individual and communal assets, apply an orderly methodology on the data collected, and arrive at an aggregate valuation of the assets that belonged to Jewish refugees from Iraq. This process included a thorough and comprehensive review of available documentation, the collection of testimonial data, an analysis of the Jewish community's place within their respective country, and a consideration of previous valuation attempts where such attempts have been made. The final result will be an aggregate valuation of Jewish individual and community assets from Iraq.

Section 1 - Technical Premises

For the purposes of this report’s valuation exercise, the assumption was that all Jewish assets that belonged to Jews in Iraq were lost over the course of each Jewish community’s displacement, unless otherwise noted.

As this valuation report represents a comprehensive effort to collect information on all types of assets that belonged to Jews and the Jewish community of Iraq, whose subsequent governments can be said to be generally hostile to this particular demographic group and the State of Israel, the amount and quality of information available for such an effort was limited.

Section 2 - Loss Types Under Review

This project considers losses suffered by Jews as individual members of Jewish households, as well as assets that belonged to the Jewish community. These losses include urban and rural land, urban and rural immovable property, personal property and moveable assets, financial assets, employment losses, business losses, and communal losses.

Table 3 - Loss Categories and Types - Valuation Methodology

Loss Category	Loss Type
Individual	Urban and Rural Land
	Property – Immoveable assets: Urban and rural buildings, houses
	Property – moveable assets: Household and personal items, furniture etc.
	Financial assets: Bank accounts and other securities
Business	Business assets: Overall business value, including real estate, inventory, and commercial holdings
Communal	Communally-owned assets: All land and property communally owned by the Jewish community, including synagogues, cemeteries, mikvahs etc.

The report does not attempt to account for non-pecuniary damages, such as pain & suffering, personal injury or death. However, in rare cases some of the claim forms filed by displaced Jews and analyzed for the report did include monetary valuations for time spent incarcerated and other such losses associated with mistreatment and expulsion. In these instances, the valuations were included as part of individual losses calculated in the movable assets category.

Section 3 - Methodology: Principles and Rationale

The methodology implemented in this report consists of both preliminary research and a subsequent valuation. The research phase relies on general research and analysis approaches which have been further adjusted to fit the circumstances of Iraq, as well as the amount and quality of information available.

Furthermore, a significant aspect of the research and valuation methodology consists of information collected and analyzed from first-hand testimonials given by Jews displaced from Iraq throughout the relevant time period. This aspect of the research and valuation methodology will also be described in greater detail below.

Research Methodology

The scope of this project requires an assessment of the present value of all individual and communal assets left behind by Jewish refugees from Arab countries and Iran. This task requires a particular methodology both for compiling all the relevant research materials available and for converting those materials into a professional, present-day valuation. Therefore, a research methodology was devised to collect all primary materials that are relevant and available to assessing the particular assets that belonged to Jews and their respective communities in the countries under consideration, as well as supplementary overarching country research, meant to fill the missing pieces in each country.

Considering that no full material accounting of all Jewish property was kept on record, a research methodology based solely on either one of the aforementioned approaches would be incomplete. There is neither a comprehensive, primary accounting of all Jewish property left behind by Jewish refugees from Arab countries and Iran, nor a reliable approach that is able to reflect the particular nuances of Jewish property-ownership in every country under consideration. In light of this complex scenario, it was decided the optimal research methodology would be to combine a number of approaches in order to paint the fullest picture of Jewish property left behind in each country.

Primary research included a preliminary audit of relevant archives and visits to those archives that were likely to contain relevant information. This research phase also included meetings with community leaders from all the relevant countries and subject-matter experts in order to clarify any questions, to pursue further detail in regard to other primary documents uncovered, to ask for any primary materials these community leaders or experts might possess, and to ask for further guidance where necessary. Finally, use was made of a wide selection of secondary sources, including books, journal articles, reports, websites, heritage/cultural centers, etc. for any other relevant materials that helped produce as comprehensive and detailed an evidence-based assessment of Jewish property that belonged to Jews from the countries under consideration.

The next step of the research methodology seeks to supplement the assessment of Jewish property ownership, to the extent necessary, with a series of calculations taking into consideration the size and relative position of the Jewish community in each country, as well as other factors as the situation demands. There are a number of reasons why the evidence-based picture emerging out of any country will be less than complete, including the fact that these events took place over 75 years ago, some of them in places where government administration was in flux and in places that are inaccessible today. Other rationales include differing colonial administrative practices, as explained below. From this research, reasonable conclusions are drawn from the available information.

Historical Note on Mandatory/Colonial Administrative Practices

This valuation report ultimately rests on the best information and evidence currently available based on multiple sources, including the primary administrative materials collected by the colonial/mandatory powers that directly or indirectly ruled many of the countries under consideration. As such, the administrative habits practiced by these powers (i.e. Great Britain, France, and Italy) ought to be considered for the purpose of illuminating any differences in administrative methods that may have had consequences for the amount and type of information and data available.

As far as the research phase of this project is concerned, the administrative habits exercised by Great Britain during its Mandate over Palestine from 1920 through 1948 ought to be juxtaposed with the administrative habits exercised by French authorities in its role as colonial/mandatory/protectorate authority in several of the countries under consideration (Italy ruled as a colonial administrator in Libya for a shorter amount of time that is relevant to this project). The British administrative record in Mandatory Palestine is interesting in particular, as these administrative habits produced the type of detailed information against which this valuation report must contend as an historical comparison. The historical record on this matter shows a starkly different approach to gathering and recording materials amongst the British and the French that are of major significance to this project.

The historical motives and interests that characterized the British presence in Palestine at the time were such that British authorities had reason to keep meticulous records of developments in Palestine. British authorities were well aware of their commitments to both Jewish and Arab nationalist aspirations in Mandatory Palestine and were sensitive to a future contest for land between Jews and Arabs in Palestine. This reality coincided with Britain's larger geo-political interests in maintaining a stable, long-term presence in part of Mandatory Palestine. The situation required a well-run administration capable of producing and maintaining detailed administrative records for the sake of controlling the eventual clash between Jewish and Arab communities, and for securing the long-term British presence in Palestine. This attitude was reflected in various British policies, including attempts at land reform, tax reform, registration

of private and state land, aerial documentation of land throughout the territory etc. All of these efforts combined produced a detailed accounting of the kind of material that can serve as primary evidence for this sort of valuation project. And indeed, British land records, such as the '1945 Village Statistics' document, served as the basis for various Palestinian valuation reports.

From further research, it is apparent that French administrative habits were different to those of the British, for various reasons. To begin with, French authorities had a different 'ideological' outlook to the British, and this difference animated their administrative habits. French authorities were more determined to disregard the sociological divisions present in the populations they ruled, in an attempt to have their vision of an egalitarian society benevolently ruled by Frenchmen reflected in their administrative records. To this end, French administrative records show less distinctions among the populations over which they ruled, a practice which, for example, makes distinguishing Jewish and Muslim land records, much more difficult.

More importantly, however, is the fact that the French had no overriding interest in maintaining detailed records of the Jewish communities that were part of the territories they controlled. Unlike the British, who were in part dedicated to promoting the collective interest of the Jewish community in Mandatory Palestine and of safeguarding the rights of Mandatory Palestine's Arab residents as well, a situation which forced British authorities to act as a neutral referee of sorts, French records were mainly concerned with recording narrower French interests, to cement their control of lands and economic interests in the territories they ruled. These differences between British and French interests and mindsets were reflected in their different administrative practices. These, in turn, produced different levels of detail and scope regarding the type of documentation necessary for a valuation project of this sort.

[Testimonials by Jews Displaced from Arab Countries and Iran](#)

In addition to research materials collected and reasonable assessments deduced per the research methodology described above, information collected from first-hand testimonials by Jews displaced from Arab countries and Iran was utilized and analyzed. Details of the testimonial collection campaign and analysis can be found in Section 2.6.

The Israeli Government, under the auspices of the registrar of foreign claims department in the Ministry of Finance, began collecting claims of property losses by Jews from Arab countries as early as 1949. By 1950, the registrar had collected claims totaling \$54,032,576, as detailed below:

Table 4 - Value of Jewish Property Losses in Arab Countries (including debts owed by Palestinian refugees), Recorded by Israel Registrar of Foreign Claims, 1949-1950

Country	No. of Claimants	No. of Claims	Amount (currency)	Total Amount (\$,1950)
Libya	203	203	£Lib. 629,636,340	1,065,927
			£Egypt 19,135	
			FF 1,248,620	
Egypt	153	153	£Egypt 619,473	1,977,856
			£Pal. 17,901	
			£UK 45,287	
			Rupees 74,357	
			\$US 3,025	
			FF 107,500	
Iraq	1,619	50	Iraqi dinars 709,955	1,997,184
			£UK 3,525	
Yemen	15	15	£Pal. 15,000	85,512
			Riyals 167,024	
			Rupees 116,217	
Syria	121	121	£Syr. 2,453,090	1,410,467
			£Pal. 100,902	
			Gold pounds 4,608	
			Ottoman pounds 34	
Lebanon	74	74	£Leb. 289,946	390,981
			£Pal. 90,417	
			£Syr. 2,459	
			£UK 1,667	
			\$US 253	
Jordan	38	38	£Pal. 3,509,180	9,826,590
			£Syr. 1,950	
West Bank	1,414	1,284	£Pal. 3,094,294	36,664,023
Palestinian refugees*	111	111	£Pal. 219,015	616,036
			£UK 998	
Total	3,748	2,049	-	54,032,576

* Debts owed to Jews by Palestinian refugees

Source: ISA (130) 1848/hts/9, "Overall Summary of the Work of the Foreign Claims Registration Office as of December 31, 1950."

Subsequently, efforts to document property losses suffered by Jews displaced from Arab countries resumed in the aftermath of new waves of mass displacement. Notably, an effort to document property losses suffered by Egyptian Jews was initiated by the Organization of Victims of anti-Jewish Persecution in Egypt (Association des ex-Victimes des Persécutions Anti-Juives en Egypte) in the wake of the expulsion of Egyptian Jews after the Suez Crisis in 1956. Similarly, following a renewed wave of mass displacement of Jews from Arab countries after the 1967 war, the Israeli Government signed Government Decision number 34 on September 28, 1969, directing the renewed efforts by the Department for the Rights of Jews from Arab Countries, under the auspices of the Head of Legal Assistance at the Ministry of Justice, to register the claims of lost property by Jews displaced from Arab countries (this particular effort concentrated on Jewish property losses in four Arab countries: Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Yemen).

This responsibility was renewed and expanded both in March 2002, in Government Decision number 1544 relating to the "Registration of claims of Jews from Arab Countries" (expanding the registration efforts to include all Jews displaced from all relevant Arab countries and Iran), as well as on December 28, 2003 in Government Decision 1250 pertaining to the "Rights of Jews from Arab Lands". Following this renewed emphasis on the matter, testimonial forms were made available for Jews displaced from Arab countries and Iran to document their stories and register any lost property. Later on, in 2009, the responsibility for these efforts was transferred from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of Senior Citizens, which was subsequently renamed the Ministry for Social Equality.⁶⁸

Methodological Principles Guiding the Report Preparation

As mentioned above, this valuation report is based on information that is decades old. In addition, the historical circumstances are such that the existing evidence often provides only an incomplete assessment of the property that used to belong to Jews and the Jewish communities in the countries under consideration. That said, the methodological principles that guide the analysis are as follows:

1. Transparency: The fact that the events in question took place so long ago, the difficulty with accessing potentially-useful sources of information, the lack of data and/or the existence of contradictory information in some cases – all of these factors lend themselves to the necessity to delineate what is known and what cannot be known; what sources were available and which were not, and for the report to be transparent in all of its limitations, assumptions and consequent calculations.

2. Professionalism and practicality: In undertaking the project, we were guided by high professional standards at every step, including the research and valuation efforts.

3. Simplicity and consistency: This project comprises eleven separate country reports. The sources of information, the cooperation of community leaders, the administrative legacies in each country – all of these presented a complex informational web that had to be standardized for the purposes of this project. Throughout, we strove for consistency in style, structure, scope, and methodology.

4. Multidisciplinary: The particular circumstances of this project demand a multidisciplinary approach that combines historical research, knowledge of the Jewish community in several countries over a lengthy timespan, familiarity with political, social, and economic trends at the time, as well as professional financial valuation expertise and strategic consulting insights that contributed to the problem-solving and analysis aspects of this project. We were guided by the need to fuse these disciplines in a coherent and direct manner.

5. Trustworthiness: We have referenced and documented all relevant sources of information and which led us to the assumptions, methodological judgments, and final products in this project.

⁶⁸ Israeli Ministry of Justice website

Section 4 - Level of Evidence

As mentioned above, this project entails an inquiry into the value of assets owned by Jews and the Jewish communities in eleven different countries, over half a century ago. As such, a comprehensive and detailed accounting of all manner of assets is virtually impossible. The testimonials cannot purport to serve as a representative sample of Jews leaving all Arab countries – in this case, Iraq. They do, nonetheless, provide informative and useful data in portraying an uprooted Jewish community and its lost wealth.

In addition to the testimonials, data was derived from a variety of sources including archives, books and interviews. Research was based on the best documentation available, and this evidence was supplemented with the most appropriate and reasonable analysis that could be made on the basis of the available evidence.

Archives in numerous countries were visited and research was conducted seeking relevant files and data:

Israel

- Israel State Archives (ISA)
- Central Zionist Archives (CZA)
- Israeli Ministry of Justice archives
- Israeli Ministry of Social Equality archives
- Yad Ben Zvi Institute
- Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)
- Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hatfutsot
- World Jewish Congress, Israel Archives

Canada

- Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa

France

- Alliance Israelite Universelle, Paris
- Archives Nationale – France
- i) Paris Branch
- ii) Pierrefitte Branch
- iii) Centre des Archives diplomatiques de la Courneuve

Switzerland

- National Archives, Bern
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva

United Kingdom

- London Metropolitan Archives
- National Archives of the U.K.

United States

- American Jewish Committee, New York
- Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) – New York
- National Archives & Records, College Park, Maryland
- World Jewish Archives, New York

In addition, Jewish community leaders and academic experts from numerous countries were consulted for all the reports.

Section 5 – Methodology for gathering, processing and analysis of testimonials

In order to organize and standardize the information derived from over 12,000 testimonials processed, a number of procedures were followed.

The testimonial methodology entailed filling out the following information: relevant country, year of displacement, family size, city of origin, year in which the testimonial was given, information relating to lost assets and their value (organized according to asset category: real estate, land, moveable assets, and business losses) and any other relevant information gleaned from narrative accounts written in individual testimonials.

An array of factors influenced the precision of these types of testimonials, and a measure of bias is usually an inseparable aspect of such methodologies. These factors include the following:

1. In many cases, 50 years or more had passed between the events and sums in questions and the recording of testimony/lost property.
2. A lack of representation of the impact of inflationary effects and other macro- economic conditions that might have influenced the real value of property under consideration
3. The age of respondents at the time the testimony was collected (many were children at the time of displacement and only documented their testimony at a much older age).
4. A lack of proper supervision during the documentation of testimony – in some cases, dependents filled out the forms for the relevant respondents.

The following details the testimonial methodology for use in the project, starting with the gathering of testimonials through to their analysis and the adjusted calculation of their values by class group.

The testimonial claims forms for this project were received from three sources:

- a. Scanned copies of testimonials collected by the Israeli government and various NGOs.
- b. Handwritten testimonials from the Israeli Ministry of Social Equality’s “*And you said to your children*” project.
- c. Handwritten testimonials from the Israeli Ministry of Justice and Israel State Archives.

The process of analyzing the testimonials was comprised of three stages:

- a. Reception and cataloguing of testimonials.
- b. Manual entry of all testimonials deemed relevant, i.e. containing financial information, into a country-specific Excel spreadsheet for the purpose of data calculation.
- c. Testimonials underwent full processing, from reception to final analysis as laid out below.



Standard Testimonial Methodology

1. The testimonial documents came in different versions and included 10 different form types.

2. All versions of the testimonials were useful for the purposes of this project, with two exceptions:
 - a. Some claimants were not instructed to detail their assets in a number of the categories crucial to this project, resulting in a failure to report full holdings.
 - b. Some claimants were asked to report the value of their assets in a convoluted manner, which made it impossible to extract reliable data.
3. The following chart indicates the testimonials processed and entered:

Country	Testimonials Processed from All Sources	Testimonials Entered for Calculation
Aden	2	0
Algeria	57	22
Egypt	5,563	676
Iran	223	92
Iraq	5,503	1903
Lebanon	96	0
Libya	233	129
Morocco	328	112
Syria	229	102
Yemen	85	20
Tunisia	175	76
TOTALS	12,494	3,132

Stage 1 - Reception and Cataloguing of Testimonials

All testimonials were classified as “Processed” or “Unprocessed” and catalogued into the categories detailed below.

Processed

All processed testimonials were classified and filed as follows:

Entered: Testimonials which were entered into the spreadsheet for the relevant country. These testimonials were analyzed in order to calculate the average holdings of each class group.

Not Entered: Testimonials which were not entered into the spreadsheet for the relevant country for the following reasons:

- a. Testimonials included information on movable assets alone
- b. Duplicate versions of testimonial forms already processed
- c. Testimonials included communal property alone and as a result, were irrelevant to the calculation of individual holdings but were used elsewhere to calculate communal losses
- d. Testimonials that were not relevant to this project were categorized as “NR”. Testimonials were entered into this category if they met one or more of the following criteria:

- The form was empty or illegible
- The form did not include information regarding assets in the Movable, Business or Real Estate categories
- There was no currency type was listed (for example: “Home worth 1,500”)
- The information contained in the form did not include monetary values (e.g., “We were quite wealthy”)
- The phrasing of the form itself did not allow for the extraction of reliable data (e.g., “Were it in Israel today, what would be the value in shekels of the property left behind?”)

Stage 2 – Entering Testimonial Data

Testimonials were entered into a country-specific Excel spreadsheet created in tandem with the structure of the testimonial forms and the needs of the project, according to the following parameters:

- a. Personal Information
- b. Real Estate
- c. Business
- d. Movable
- e. Rural Land

Claimants were instructed to list the value of their assets in the year in which the assets were abandoned. Therefore, as a rule, values were entered into the spreadsheet according to the currency used in the testimonial and the value of that currency in the year in which the claimant left their country of origin.

Exceptional to this are any testimonials for which the analyst was able to conclude that the values were not listed in regard to the year in which the claimant left their country of origin. This was the case in the following circumstances:

- a. The form itself instructed claimants to report values for a particular year, regardless of when they left their country of origin (for example: one version of the forms instructed all claimants to list the value of their assets as of 1949).
- b. The claimant listed values in a currency which was not in circulation at the time in which they left their country of origin (for example: a testimonial which reports values in NIS or EUR, despite the fact that the claimant left their country of origin in 1952).
- c. The claimant explicitly wrote that the values were reported in regard to a different year.
- d. In the analyst’s judgement, it is not reasonable for the values listed to reflect the year in which the claimant was displaced.
- e. Any other circumstance in which the analyst concluded that a year other than the year of displacement should be used.

Stage 3 – Analysis of Testimonial Data

To effectively and efficiently analyze the testimonial data, the following procedures were followed:

Historical exchange rates for the testimonial currencies were identified in the following sources:

- a. IMF Tables: “Exchange Rates Selected Indicators.” IMF data. Accessed August 28, 2024. <https://data.imf.org/regular.aspx?key=61545850>
- b. IFS – IMF 1950: International Financial Statistics: International Financial Statistics, December 1950. Washington, D.C: International Monetary Fund, 1950, p. 34 & 54
- c. Pacific Exchange Rates: Antweiler, Werner. “Foreign Currency Units per 1 U.S Dollar, 1948-2015.” PACIFIC Exchange Rate Service, 2016. <https://web.archive.org/web/20150512095429/http://fx.sauder.ubc.ca/etc/USDpages.pdf>.

It should be noted that the world exchange rate mechanism from 1944 until 1973 was operated under the auspices of the Bretton Wood agreement. Under this agreement, exchange rates were determined by pegging the countries rates to the gold standard and movements between major currencies were comparatively rare. Changes had to be formally implemented only after an application to the IMF/World bank. There were no constant hourly or daily changes as there are today – indeed rates could remain unchanged for years.

Because different testimonials were submitted at different times, individuals left their country of origin at different times, and values were listed using different currencies, a “base year” was identified and defined as the year in which the testimonial loss values are stated. A “valuation start year” was also identified, based on the circumstances governing each country. In each asset category, the relevant valuation start year is used as a benchmark. Testimonial data for each country was then converted to the valuation start year in two steps.

- a. Base year values for each loss category in the testimonial files were converted from the testimonial currency to USD in the base year using the exchange rate,
- b. The base year value in USD was then converted to the country’s “valuation start year” in USD using the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Inflation Calculator ([Inflation Calculator | Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis \(minneapolisfed.org\)](https://www.minneapolisfed.org/inflation-calculator))

It should be noted that testimonials given in NIS were not used due to the assumed difficulty in recalling and converting values in these cases which would call into question their reliability.

Relevant population data and socioeconomic breakdowns of classes for each country were determined through primary and secondary research materials. Testimonial data was then divided into social classes based on the percent of population per socioeconomic breakdown, using the available data from relevant research materials. Social classes were consolidated into three groups:

- a. Wealthy and Upper Middle
- b. Middle
- c. Lower Middle and Poor

The summary of each country-specific testimonial data yielded a series of values per socioeconomic class. The median of the data in each social class was then calculated and multiplied by the number of households per class to determine the total asset value per class.

Due to the small number of testimonials in several of the categories, the following adjustments were made:

- a. The median calculation for each group includes the highest value of the class immediately below. For example: the range for the wealthy and upper middle class begins at the highest value of the middle class and extends to the highest value in the wealthy and upper-middle class group, thus creating a continuous range for calculations
- b. In cases where there were less than 10 testimonials in total in a given loss category, the median of all of the data in the category was used rather than dividing the data into the three classes above. The median was multiplied by the total number of households to arrive at a total loss value for the category

Section 6 - Methodology for present day valuation

The above steps are meant to document Jewish refugees' losses, which include the assets' market value at the relevant benchmark year (or a substitute value based on the best evidence available), plus interest. The final figures should reflect the actualized, present-day valuation of all assets under consideration, reflected in 2024 US dollars (USDs).

Due to the high number of countries under consideration, a preference emerged for a single standard with which to measure all principal amounts. In addition, the fact that the testimonial data had been converted into USDs for base year values and valuation start year values supports the decision to rely on a rate of interest measured in USDs. The choices available are therefore between relying on either nominal or real inflation rates, the US consumer price index inflation rate, or some other relatively risk-free rate, in order to actualize the valuation principles in the most substantive and appropriate manner possible. Judgement was that the latter inflation rates are too reliant on particular economic trends in the United States and are not the best determinants of an interest rate that fully actualizes the value of the assets under consideration. And while there is no internationally recognized, absolutely risk-free rate, it was decided to use the 10-year US Treasury Yield Rate.

Furthermore, it was resolved that a compound interest formula is the most appropriate formula for calculating actualized value plus interest, instead of simple interest, in order to show the present market value of the assets under consideration in addition to compounded interest rates on those assets. $FV = PV (1+i/n)^{nt}$. This formula takes into account both inflationary and interest on value effects and thus reflects the most substantial actualized value of the original assets. The compound interest formula was applied on a yearly compounding basis, projected to December 31, 2024.

Chapter 3 – Iraq

Section 1 – Historical Background

The origins of the Jewish community

The antiquity of the Jewish community in Iraq played a pivotal role in shaping its identity. The biblical prophets Ezekiel, Ezra, and Jonah are buried in Iraq, and a Jewish community had existed in the region for more than a millennium prior to the Muslim conquest. According to biblical tradition, it was from Ur, located in southeastern Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq), that the Patriarch Abraham journeyed to the land of Canaan. The Jewish community's roots can be traced back to the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem in 586 BC, making it the first substantial diaspora in the world⁶⁹.

From Babylon emerged *Shivat Zion* ("Return to Zion") movement, which revived the Jewish autonomy in the former Kingdom of Judea and was responsible for the construction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. The majority of Babylonian Jews, however, chose to remain there at the time, leading to the development of cities such as Nehardea. The enduring connection between Babylon and the Land of Israel was evident through continuous emigration, pilgrimages, and charitable contributions⁷⁰.

For centuries, the Jewish community flourished culturally. Starting in the third century AD, renowned yeshivas like Sura and Pumbedita were active, and by the sixth century, the Babylonian Talmud⁷¹, a cornerstone of Jewish spirituality, was finalized there. The community was led by the Exilarch, alongside the yeshiva heads called *Geonim*⁷².

The *Geonim* period of the Babylonian Jewish community lasted until the end of the eleventh century, during which Babylon served as the epicenter of the Jewish world. This period greatly influenced the organizational structure of Jewish communities outside the Land of Israel, their connection to the homeland, and the centralized character of the Jewish Diaspora's leadership. During this period, Jews shifted from rural life to urban centers, and adopted Arabic as their primary language⁷³.

⁶⁹ Meir, Esther. Iraq and the Jews of Iraq – a General Survey. In Haim Saadoun (Ed.), *Iraq* (Ben-Zvi Institute, 2002), pp. 11-12. [Hebrew]; Alstola, Tero. *Judeans in Babylonia*. Brill, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004365421>.

⁷⁰ Meir, General Survey, pp. 11-12; Japhet, Sara. *Collected Studies on the Restoration Period: History, Literature, Language, World View and Religion*. Bialik Institute, 2017. [Hebrew]

⁷¹ Meir, General Survey, pp. 11-12; Wald, Stephen G. Talmud, Babylonian. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed., vol. 19, Macmillan Reference USA, 2007, pp. 470-481. Gale eBooks, <https://go-gale-com.bengurionu.idm.oclc.org/ps/i.do?p=GVRL&u=bengurion&id=GALE|CX2587519543&v=2.1&it=r&sid=bookmark-GVRL&asid=ba18512d>.

⁷² Meir, General Survey, pp. 11-12.

⁷³ Meir, General Survey, pp. 11-12; Brody, Robert. *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture*. Yale University Press, 1998.

Map 2– Jewish Communities in Iraq Before 1948



Source: Gilbert, Maps

Following the Mongol invasion in the 13th century, the Jewish population in central and southern Iraq declined, prompting a migration towards the northern region of Kurdistan. By the 18th century, the Jewish community of Baghdad experienced a revival as a spiritual and cultural hub. The leadership role transitioned to the community president, often also serving as the *Sarraf Bashi* (chief banker). The Ottoman conquest in 1831 marked the beginning of the modern era for the Jewish community in Babylon⁷⁴.

Ottoman period

Iraq was conquered in 1831 by the Ottomans, and the conditions of the Jews during the Empire's rule fluctuated greatly. Across much of Iraq, the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims was tense throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, marked by frequent anti-Jewish

⁷⁴ Meir, General Survey, pp. 11-12; Ben-Yaacov, Abraham. *The Jews of Babylon from the end of the Geonim period to our times*. Sivan Press, 1979. [Hebrew]

riots, varying in scale⁷⁵.

In the province of Baghdad, the Jewish community faced official oppression under the governance of Da'ud Pasha (1816/7-1831). As the latter's despotic reign neared its end, many Jews fled the province, seeking sanctuary in Iran, India, and even Australia, including members of the prominent Sassoon clan⁷⁶.

Particularly dire was the situation in the northern Mosul district, where Jews (along with Christians) faced physical abuse from Turks, Arabs, and Kurds. In 1841, the British consul in Mosul depicted the Jews there as enduring "the worst kind" of tyranny in a communication to the nation's ambassador in Constantinople⁷⁷.

Both Jews and Christians were particularly susceptible to accusations of blaspheming against Muhammad or apostatizing after converting to Islam. These offenses carried the penalty of capital punishment. Iraq witnessed numerous instances of Jews facing such charges during the latter half of the 19th century. While some sympathetic governors, fair judges, and British consuls intervened to ensure justice, as late as 1876, a Jew was beaten and hanged outside the city gates on charges of blasphemy⁷⁸. These plots became so pervasive that by 1880, several Jews tragically took their own lives because of them. In response to this escalating crisis, rabbis across Baghdad declared a prohibition against taking one's own life, emphasizing the sanctity of life⁷⁹.

During the Ottoman rule over Iraq, the status of Jews was defined by Sharia law as dhimmis. In the nineteenth century, however, the Ottoman government initiated sweeping reforms known as the Tanzimat, granting equal rights to all subjects regardless of religion or caste⁸⁰. Jews were no longer required to pay the *jizya* (poll tax), and in 1909, like other citizens of the empire, they were obligated to serve in the army⁸¹.

⁷⁵ Stillman, 1979, pp. 102-103.

⁷⁶ Stillman, 1979, pp. 102-103.

⁷⁷ Stillman, Norman A. *The Jews of Arab Lands* (The Jewish Publication Society, 1979), pp. 102-103.

⁷⁸ Stillman, 1979, pp. 102-103.

⁷⁹ Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 19-20; Ben-Yaacov, 1979, p. 143.

⁸⁰ Kazzaz, Nissim. The Jews in their environment. In Haim Saadoun (Ed.), *Iraq* (Ben-Zvi Institute, 2002), pp. 19-20. [Hebrew]

⁸¹ Cohen, Hayyim J. *The Jews in the Middle Eastern Countries (1860-1971)* (Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1972), pp. 30-31. [Hebrew]

Figure 1 - Iraqi Jews such as these merchants were prominent in the economy. The photo was taken in Baghdad circa 1910



Source: Julius, pg. 134

Jews started holding positions in government courts, district and city councils, and some were appointed as civil servants. Many young Jews were eager to attend officer schools in Baghdad, but the number of Jews admitted to these schools was limited. When the first Ottoman parliament opened in Istanbul in 1876, the Jews of Baghdad were represented by one of their own. They regained representation when parliamentary life resumed in 1908. Some Jews ventured to live in new settlements they hadn't inhabited before. Starting in 1909, Jews in Baghdad began moving out of the Jewish neighborhood to live in mixed areas⁸².

However, the position of the Jews depended very much on the identity of the Ottoman governor in place. Between 1838 and 1917, Iraq saw the rule of 42 Ottoman governors, some of whom were more favorable to Jews than others. Governors like Midhat Pasha (1869-1872) and Hussain Nadim Pasha (1910-1911) were viewed positively by the Jewish community. Midhat Pasha was even referred to by Jews as "the father of peace." He implemented comprehensive equality of rights throughout Iraq, appointed fair justices and safeguarded Jews from harm by Muslims. Conversely, some governors exhibited harsh and oppressive attitudes towards Jews⁸³.

Within the Jewish community itself, there was a deep-seated fear of Muslims, to the extent that Jewish parents would use the threat of "The Muslim is coming" to instill obedience in their children. Over generations, they had become accustomed to a sense of helplessness and reliance on the mercy of those in authority. English engineer William Willcocks, who resided in

⁸² Cohen, 1972, pp. 30-31.

⁸³ Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 19-20; Ben-Yaacov, 1979, p. 145.

Baghdad from 1909 to 1911, documented these sentiments in his writings:

*"Though the wealthy members of the [Jewish] community are some of the most important notables of...[Baghdad], the ordinary Jews are as a rule treated contemptuously by the Moslems. Owing to their rough treatment they have ceased being martial altogether. Travelling to Aleppo on one occasion, two Arab coachmen fell on good stand-up fight. On my asking one of them the cause of the strife, he replied that the other had struck him as though he had been a Jew."*⁸⁴

One of the heads of the Jewish community in Iraq in the beginning of the 20th century and a member of a notable family, Yehezkel Elkabir, explained why the Jews refrained from defending themselves:

*"The Sunni Arabs who rule the country are hot-tempered and quick-witted, quick to pull out a knife. Therefore, we had to handle them carefully. As a small minority we knew that a reaction on our part could quickly develop into a war against us and the government would support the Arabs. That's why we tried to cut off any quarrel with enmity and since we didn't fight and fight, we were considered by the Arabs to be cowards who don't know how to stand up for themselves."*⁸⁵

While the Tanzimat reforms had some positive influence on the Jewish community in Iraq, European travelers' accounts from the nineteenth century suggest that many Jews continued to live in apprehension due to the prevailing hostile attitudes from both authorities and the populace. Despite improvements in the social and economic conditions of Jews from the mid-nineteenth century until World War I, their physical safety remained tenuous, with incidents of violence, robbery, and murder occurring from time to time⁸⁶.

At times, when faced with dire circumstances, Baghdad's Jews sought intervention from Jewish leaders in Europe. One notable instance was in 1860, when Governor Mustafa Nuri Pasha (1860-1861) attempted to confiscate the burial site of the prophet Ezekiel in Kifl, with intentions to convert it into a mosque. The Jews appealed to authorities in Istanbul and sought assistance from Jewish organizations and individuals (such as the British philanthropist Moses Montefiore), who successfully intervened to thwart the governor's plans⁸⁷.

In 1908, a constitutionalist revolution took place in Istanbul against the despotic reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II⁸⁸. The Young Turks movement, who initiated the revolution, promised to enforce equality between Muslims, Jews and Christians⁸⁹. It was greeted, however, with shock and dismay by the Arab population in the empire, for whom the idea of political equality with non-Muslims was anathema. Such a development seriously compromised the Islamic

⁸⁴ Kazzaz, Nissim. *The Jews in Iraq in the twentieth century* (Ben-Zvi Institute, 1991), pp. 159-160.

[Hebrew]; Willcocks, William. Two and half years in Mesopotamia. *Blackwood's Magazine*, London, March 1916, p. 320.

⁸⁵ Kazzaz, 1991, pp. 159-160.

⁸⁶ Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 19-20; Kazzaz, 1991, pp. 159-160.

⁸⁷ Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 19-20

⁸⁸ Deny, J. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II. In P. Bearman (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition Online (EI-2 English)*, (Brill, 2012) https://doi-org.bengurionu.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0004.

⁸⁹ Hanioglu, M. Sukru. *Preparation for a revolution: the Young Turks, 1902-1908*. Oxford University Press, 2001.

legitimacy of the Ottoman rule. This is why, according to the testimony of the director of Alliance school in Mosul in 1908,

*"Our brave Jews... strongly recommend to each other in our synagogues to never even pronounce the words 'constitution' or 'liberty,'... they are always declaring when they are in the presence of Muslims that the constitution is disorder, anarchy, that the Young Turks are misguided individuals who must be set aright."*⁹⁰

On October 15, 1908, a Muslim mob in Baghdad attacked Jews, who were accused of having desecrated the mosque by their presence, and who were suspected of sympathy for the Young Turks. The British consul-general reported that "demonstrators arrived from the five quarters of the town... The crowd attacked nearly every Jew who was seen and no-one seems to have interfered with them for many hours." The British diplomat estimated that the mob's purpose was "to reduce the Jews to a respectful attitude". The consul went on to explain that the Muslim population believed that,

*"Jews had abused Muhammadans and had even met violence with violence, and that in cases of altercation they had claimed absolute equality with Muhammadans. Such things were never dreamt of in Baghdad and it caused the more conservative people to think that the Muhammadan supremacy might be in danger from the Young Turks."*⁹¹

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 brought a challenging period for the Jews, lasting until the British finalized their occupation of the land in November 1918. Many Jews were conscripted into the Ottoman army and sent to the front lines. Others were extorted for money, sometimes under torture, to finance the army's needs. Those caught evading conscription were hanged. Hundreds of Jewish conscripts never returned from the front. Both Jews and non-Jews in Baghdad and northern Iraq fled southward.

When the British entered Baghdad in March 1917, the Jews viewed the day of the occupation as a miracle⁹².

British Rule

Great Britain occupied Iraq in World War I and imposed a mandatory regime on the country. The Iraqi society was already undergoing changes by then, and a burgeoning Iraqi national movement emerged. Faced with mounting pressure from this national movement, direct British governance in Iraq was short-lived, lasting only about a decade⁹³.

While the British occupation was met with sympathy within the Jewish community, the Muslim population held a contrasting view, desiring independence. The Jewish community expressed gratitude towards the British for liberating them from the oppressive Ottoman authorities during the war, who had exploited them for financial gain. They anticipated that under British rule, security would improve across Iraq, paving the way for trade and economic prosperity. Additionally, they hoped for genuine civil and political equality, transcending the mere

⁹⁰ Stillman, Norman A. *The Jews of Arab Lands in modern times* (The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), p. 227.

⁹¹ Kedourie, Elie. *Arabic political memoirs and other studies* (Frank Cass, 1974), pp. 140-142.

⁹² Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 19-20; Cohen, pp. 30-31.

⁹³ Meir, General Survey, pp. 11, 15.

theoretical promises of the past. They hoped that their Jewish identity would serve no more as a reason for discrimination and persecution⁹⁴.

On 18th of November 1918, just after the final British battle against the Ottomans, the heads of the Jewish community in Iraq wrote to the British authorities, asking them to not declare an independent Iraq, and instead to grant the Jews with British citizenship. They wrote,

"As far as Mesopotamia is concerned, the Allied policy... will be to promote indigenous government and encourage the establishment of an autonomous administration. This scheme is excellent in principle... But its immediate execution is coupled with such difficulties as render it hardly recommendable.

A local government in accord with the desire of the local majority cannot but bear a very strong theocratical character due to the dominance of religious feelings which are unconciliabile with the idea of giving to alien confessions any sort of privilege or rights...

*The Jews of Baghdad... wish to submit through the undersigned a request that they may be graciously taken under the shield of the British Government and considered true subjects of His Majesty, holding themselves prepared to accept all obligations and rights of true citizens."*⁹⁵

Figure 2 - Triumphal arch erected by the Jewish community in honor of King Faisal I in 1928, Baghdad, Iraq



Source: Meddeb and Stora, pg. 310

⁹⁴ Gat, Moshe. Iraq and its Jewish minority: From the establishment of the state to the great Jewish immigration 1921-1951. *Israel Affairs* 30.2 (2024): 201-219; Meir, General Survey, pp. 11, 15.

⁹⁵ Stillman, 1991, pp. 256-257.

With the British mandate established in Iraq in 1921, Faisal I ascended to the throne under British guidance. Recognizing this constitutional monarchy as the nearest substitute for direct British rule, the Jewish community embraced it, actively participating in the formation of the new state and aligning themselves with the king and the Hashemite royal house⁹⁶.

The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1922 and the ratified Iraqi constitution of 1924 enshrined the principle of equality before the law irrespective of religion or race. These foundational documents also safeguarded the rights of minorities, ensuring the preservation of their cultural and religious identity. For Iraqi Jews, the era of British oversight is remembered as a "golden age," permeating all facets of life—demographic, political, economic, social, and cultural⁹⁷.

During this period, the Jewish population in Iraq burgeoned from approximately 88,000 in 1919 to around 118,000 by 1947. Notably, Baghdad's Jewish community swelled to roughly 77,000, while Basra counted around 10,000 inhabitants. Northern Iraq saw an influx of Kurdish Jews, numbering close to 20,000. This demographic upsurge was propelled by advancements in healthcare, sanitation, and overall living standards. At some points during this period, Jews constituted over a quarter of Baghdad's population⁹⁸.

Table 5 - Jewish Population of Baghdad

Year	Estimated Population of Baghdad	Estimated Jewish Population	Percentage of Population of Baghdad
1794	80,000	2,500	3.3
1830	80,000	10,000	12.5
1877	70,000	18,000	25.7
1893	145,000	51,905	35.8
1908	150,000	53,000	35.3
1947	515,459	77,417	15.0

Source: Batatu, pg. 248

Societal shifts were also evident. With improved stability following British intervention, Iraqi Jews experienced geographical dispersion and urbanization. Families resettled in villages and towns nationwide, engaging in trade and mediation. Meanwhile, urban areas saw Jewish migration from segregated quarters to Muslim neighborhoods, enjoying enhanced living conditions⁹⁹.

Occupationally, there was a transformation as well. Historically concentrated in crafts, peddling, and small-scale trade, Iraqi Jews now diversified into various sectors. A cadre of affluent individuals emerged, including money changers and merchants involved in international trade. British authorities, valuing Jewish loyalty and skills, facilitated their

⁹⁶ Meir, General Survey, pp. 15-17.

⁹⁷ Meir, General Survey, pp. 15-17.

⁹⁸ Meir, General Survey, pp. 15-17.

⁹⁹ Meir, General Survey, pp. 15-17.

integration into government bureaucracy and vital sectors such as finance, transportation, and infrastructure¹⁰⁰.

Table 6 - Population Distribution According to Rural and Urban Locations, Iraq, 1947

Denomination	(in 000's)					
	Urban	%	Rural	%	Total	%
Muslims	1,390	86.7	2,868	96.9	4,258	93.3
Christians	94	5.9	55	1.8	149	3.1
Jews	113	7.0	4	0.2	117	2.6
Yazidis and Shabaks	2	0.1	31	1.0	33	0.8
Sabeans	5	0.3	2	0.1	7	0.2
Total	1,604	100.0	2960	100.0	4,564	100.0

Source: Batatu, pg. 40. “Estimate based on figures given in Iraq, Ministry of Social Affairs, Census of Iraq—1947 (Baghdad, 1954).”

Key Jewish figures occupied prominent positions in governance and administration, but also in private enterprises, notably in banking and the oil industry (see more below). Male illiteracy rates dwindled, and women's education progressed, with increasing numbers pursuing higher studies abroad. Jewish intellectuals contributed greatly to Iraqi literature and society. This era marked a transformative chapter in Iraqi Jewish history, characterized by prosperity, integration, and intellectual enlightenment under British patronage¹⁰¹.

Independent Iraq

In anticipation of Iraq's declaration of independence in 1932, Britain committed to ensuring that the emerging Iraqi state would uphold the rights of its minority populations in accordance with established legal and moral principles. Iraq, in response to the League of Nations' request, formally pledged within its constitution to safeguard the rights of minorities, promising justice, equality, religious and cultural freedom, as well as independent education¹⁰².

This commitment, however, was not honored. The constitution also proclaimed Iraq as an Islamic state, resulting in the emergence of an Iraqi state that strongly emphasized its Islamic Arab identity, leaving practically no room for Jews and other minorities to take part in it as equal citizens¹⁰³.

Shortly after Iraq's admission to the League of Nations, violent clashes erupted between the Christian Assyrians, seeking autonomy, and the Iraqi military. In August 1933, the Iraqi forces brutally massacred hundreds of Assyrians men and raped countless Assyrian women in northern Iraq, with local Kurds and Arabs aiding in the violence. This horrific event forced

¹⁰⁰ Meir, General Survey, pp. 15-17.

¹⁰¹ Meir, General Survey, pp. 15-17.

¹⁰² Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 20-22.

¹⁰³ Stillman, 1991, pp. 56-57.

many Assyrian survivors to flee Iraq¹⁰⁴.

The Assyrian massacre not only shocked global public opinion but also spotlighted the precarious position of minorities within the nascent Arab state, illustrating the peril they faced. It acted as a warning to all non-Muslim minorities in Iraq, signaling the consequences of not submitting to the country's Muslim rulers. The Jewish community found itself marginalized: no longer officially considered dhimmis, but in fact relegated to second-class citizenship¹⁰⁵.

The predominance of Muslim-Arab nationalism in Iraq further marginalized Jews. As early as 1934, and again in 1936, hundreds of high-ranking Jewish officials in government ministries were dismissed. Jewish enrollment in certain higher education institutions, such as medicine, engineering, and pharmacology, was restricted. The acceptance and promotion of Jews were entirely controlled by government ministers, making it extremely difficult for Jews to secure positions in the Iraqi administration¹⁰⁶.

Another significant factor was the Shia community's attitude towards Jews. Despite constituting a majority in Iraq, the Arabic-speaking Shia felt marginalized, stemming from their historical subjugation under the Sunni Ottoman Empire. As Shia participation in government increased, so did their hostility towards Jews, aligning with the nationalist fervor prevalent in Iraq¹⁰⁷.

Shiite religious leaders, known for their staunch anti-Jewish stance, further fueled hostility towards Jews. For instance, in 1946, a prominent Shiite leader issued a fatwa banning land sales to Jews across Arab countries. Subsequently, during the mass exodus from Iraq, financial transactions with departing Jews were forbidden by Shiite leaders, portraying such actions as aiding in perceived crimes against Muslims¹⁰⁸.

Nazi Influence and the Conflict over Eretz Israel

One of the reasons for the surge in anti-Jewish sentiment in Iraq in the 1930s was the rise of European Fascism and Nazism, particularly following Adolf Hitler's ascent to power in Germany in 1933. The German embassy in Baghdad, led by Fritz Grobba, invested heavily in advancing German interests and disseminating Nazi propaganda¹⁰⁹. Grobba and his associates actively propagated anti-Jewish sentiments among Iraqi Arab youth, leveraging channels such as the newspaper *al-Alam al-Arabi* (The Arab World), which they acquired and utilized as a platform for their toxic messaging. Notably, in October 1933, the newspaper commenced publishing Arabic translations of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁴ Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 20-22; Kedourie, Elie. *The Chatham House version and other Middle Eastern studies* (Ivan R. Dee Publishing, 2004), pp. 305-306.

¹⁰⁵ Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 20-22.

¹⁰⁶ Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 20-22; Kazzaz, 1991, pp. 84-86.

¹⁰⁷ Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 20-22.

¹⁰⁸ Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 20-22.

¹⁰⁹ Dieterich, Renate. Germany's relations with Iraq and Transjordan from the Weimar Republic to the end of the Second World War. *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2005, pp. 463-79. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4284383>. Accessed 17 May 2024.

¹¹⁰ Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 22-24.

In a bid to emulate European fascist regimes, Iraq established the semi-military youth organization *al-Futuwwah* in October 1935. This organization aimed to provide military training to high school, professional school, and teacher seminary students, fostering discipline and endurance among its members¹¹¹.

Initially voluntary, a decree in May 1939 mandated the enrollment and military training of high school, higher education, and teachers' seminary students according to a curriculum set by the Ministry of Defense. Delegates from the organization even attended the Nazi Party conference in Nuremberg in May 1938, and by the late 1930s, its membership swelled to approximately 63,000¹¹².

The Iraqi Ministry of Education frequently voiced antisemitic views, categorizing enemies of the Arab nation into internal and external adversaries. Openly expressing disdain for Jews, such declarations were made as "the Jew is in love with gold and has no existence without it", citing Jewish involvement in usury, which is prohibited in the Quran. Arab nationalists frequently drew from Islamic sources to justify their antisemitic and Nazi-aligned propaganda efforts¹¹³.

Another factor that influenced the Jewish community was the brewing conflict between Arabs and Jews in Mandatory Palestine. Already following the issuance of the Balfour Declaration in November 1917, protests erupted within Iraqi national circles. Articles denouncing Zionism and its objectives began to surface in the Iraqi press during the early 1920s. Initially, a distinction between Zionism and Judaism was recognized among the Arab population. However, as Iraqi national consciousness intensified and the conflict in Mandatory Palestine escalated, this distinction gradually blurred¹¹⁴.

The Iraqi public responded to the events unfolding in Eretz Israel in 1929 by staging business closures and organizing mass gatherings. Anxiety gripped the Jewish community in Baghdad, prompting many to shutter their businesses for a period of two weeks. Consequently, the city's commercial activity came to a standstill, and the country's economy suffered. Authorities took measures to safeguard the peace and property of the Jewish population, deploying armed police at intersections leading to Jewish homes¹¹⁵.

The situation for Jews deteriorated further with the escalation of events in Eretz Israel in 1936. Iraq not only provided material, moral, and political support to Arab rebels in Palestine, but also dispatched around 100 irregular Iraqi volunteers, with the government's consent, to join the forces of the anti-British Arab nationalist Fawzi al-Qawuqji in Palestine. Moreover, the Iraqi government supplied arms, ammunition, and transportation vehicles for

¹¹¹ Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 22-24; Nasser, Saman. Arab nationalism in interwar period Iraq: A descriptive analysis of Sami Shawkat's *al-Futuwwah* youth movement. (2018). *Masters Theses*. 587. <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/master201019/587>.

¹¹² Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 22-24.

¹¹³ Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 22-24.

¹¹⁴ Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 22-24.

¹¹⁵ Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 22-24.

these volunteers¹¹⁶.

In April 1936, leaders of the Jewish community petitioned the government to curb incitement and quell anti-Jewish sentiments. The British ambassador in Baghdad also intervened, citing concerns about the British-Iraqi relationship, urging the government to restrain the press and halt provocative publications. Despite these efforts, anti-Jewish incitement persisted, resulting in the murder of five Jews in Baghdad within a span of a month and a half from mid-September to late October 1936; five more Jews were murdered by 1938¹¹⁷. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported that one of the Jewish victims, a government official, was decapitated by his assailant¹¹⁸.

Demonstrations and attacks on Jews resurged in Baghdad in December 1937 and January 1938. In June 1938, a hand grenade was lobbed into the Laura Kadoorie Jewish club, claiming the life of a young Jewish man and injuring two children. The following day, an unexploded bomb was discovered at another Jewish club, the al-Rashid club, prompting Jews to confine themselves indoors in the evenings¹¹⁹.

Nationalist circles exerted pressure on community leaders to issue statements denouncing Zionism and supporting the Arab struggle in Palestine, even though Zionism at this stage among Iraqi Jews was a marginal and insignificant phenomenon. Responding to this pressure, head of the Baghdadi Jewish community Rabbi Sassoon Khaḍḍuri and additional 33 Jewish dignitaries issued a statement in solidarity with this stance. However, these statements failed to stem the tide of violence and hostility toward Jews, with street harassment and hatred intensifying¹²⁰.

The Jerusalem Mufti and the 1941 *Farhud* Pogrom

In October 1939, the Jerusalem mufti, Haj Amin al-Husseini, was smuggled from British Mandatory Palestine to Iraq, where he quickly began vigorous political activity. His residence in Baghdad soon became a hub for nationalist and pro-Nazi circles. Ministers, legislative leaders, and heads of nationalist institutions and organizations held festive dinners in his honor. The local press in Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul welcomed him enthusiastically¹²¹.

The mufti was universally accepted in Iraq as a Muslim warrior leader and as the head of the struggle for the Arabs of Palestine against their enemies—the British and the Jews. The American envoy in Baghdad reported to his superiors that the mufti was the most important and influential figure in Iraq, both in religious and political spheres¹²².

¹¹⁶ Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 22-24; Parsons, Laila. Soldiering for Arab nationalism: Fawzi al-Qawuqji in Palestine. *Journal of Palestine Studies* 36.4 (2007): 33-48.

¹¹⁷ Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 22-24; Ben-Yaacov, 1979, p. 249.

¹¹⁸ Bagdad Jews killed after 'peace' order. *JTA*, 29 October 1936.

¹¹⁹ Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 22-24.

¹²⁰ Kazzaz, 2002, pp. 22-24; Snir, Reuven. Khaḍḍūrī, Sassoon. In *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World Online*, (Brill, 2010) https://doi-org.bengurionu.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/1878-9781_ejiw_SIM_0012840.

¹²¹ Kazzaz, 1991, pp. 204-209.

¹²² Kazzaz, 1991, pp. 204-209.

In the vigorous propaganda conducted by the mufti and his supporters, no distinction was made between Judaism and Zionism. A review of the Iraqi press from October 1939 to June 1941, when the mufti fled the country, shows that he became the dominant personality among nationalist and political circles in Iraq, keeping the issue of the conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine at the forefront of the agenda¹²³.

The mufti's anti-British and pro-German activities significantly strengthened the nationalist and anti-Jewish sentiment in Iraq. His nineteen and a half months in Iraq were marked by constant and growing incitement against the Jews, which reached a peak in May 1941. During this month, attacks on Jews were frequent and culminated in the pogrom in Baghdad's Jewish community on June 1-2, 1941. The mufti directly contributed to this incitement through a speech broadcast on Baghdad radio on May 9, 1941, where he openly called for *jihād* against Britain and the enemies of Islam¹²⁴.

During April-May 1941, the Iraqi government was overtaken by Rashid Ali al-Gaylani, known to be extremely anti-British and sympathetic to the Nazis. The British, who could not afford such a development, decided to conquer Iraq in response. Both Rashid Ali and the mufti fled the country on May 29 as British forces approached Baghdad.

The Jews of Baghdad thought that the danger of the pro-Nazi government was lifted, and felt joyous, as news spread of the impending return of an anti-German government under the auspices of the entering British forces. However, between the flight of Rashid Ali and the re-entry of the pro-British government, the *Farhud* (“pogrom” or “violent dispossession”) took place on 1-2 June, the two days of the Jewish holy festival of Shavuot¹²⁵.

¹²³ Kazzaz, 1991, pp. 204-209.

¹²⁴ Kazzaz, 1991, pp. 204-209.

¹²⁵ On the Farhud, see Meir-Glitzenstein, Esther. The Baghdad Pogrom – June 1-2, 1941. *Pe'amim: Studies in the Cultural Heritage of Oriental Jewry* 8 (1981), pp. 21-37 [Hebrew]; Tsimhoni, Daphne. The Pogrom (Farhud) against the Jews of Baghdad in 1941. In John K. Roth and Elisabeth Maxwell (Eds.), *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), pp. 570-588; Simon, Reeva Spector. Farhūd. *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World Online*. Brill, 2010. https://doi-org.bengurionu.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/1878-9781_ejiw_COM_0007660 Web; Cohen, Hayyim J. The Anti-Jewish ‘Farhūd’ in Baghdad, 1941. *Middle Eastern Studies* 3, no. 1 (1966), pp. 2-17.

Figure 3 - Nazi-inspired pogroms, known as the Farhud. 180 Jews were killed. Baghdad, June 1941



Source: Remember Baghdad

During the two days of violence, rioters murdered between 179 Jews, injured 600 others, and raped an undetermined number of women. They also looted some 1,500 stores and homes. The community leaders estimated that about 2,500 families (15 percent of the Jewish community in Baghdad) suffered directly from the pogrom¹²⁶.

The pogrom began when Iraqi soldiers attacked a group of Jews in the street. Unaware of these morning attacks, Jews throughout the city went to visit family and friends in the afternoon, only to be victims of killing on a much larger scale. Jews sitting in cars and buses were forcibly removed, beaten to death, and slaughtered with swords and daggers in front of everyone. Bus drivers trampled over the bodies of the dead, joined by city dignitaries, school students, government officials, and civil and military police¹²⁷.

The attackers divided the city into zones, launching a campaign of robbery and murder. Some were armed with rifles and pistols, while others wielded swords, daggers, knives, hatchets, bayonets, and various destructive tools. The mass slaughter engulfed all Jewish neighborhoods, especially the main streets of Baghdad, home to many Jews¹²⁸.

The rioters did not stop at murder; they also inflicted severe torture. Girls and women were attacked, raped in front of the men, and subsequently abused. Alongside the killings, widespread robbery and looting ensued. Most Jewish homes and shops were emptied, having been marked with a red sign beforehand, ensuring non-Jewish properties were spared¹²⁹.

¹²⁶ Meir-Glitzenstein, Esther. The Farhud. *Holocaust Encyclopedia*.

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-farhud> Accessed on 19 May, 2024.

¹²⁷ Ben-Yaacov, 1979, pp. 250-254.

¹²⁸ Ben-Yaacov, 1979, pp. 250-254.

¹²⁹ Ben-Yaacov, 1979, pp. 250-254.

Leading the robbers were military and police personnel who incited the mob to commit these heinous acts. Senior police officers even brought trucks to haul away the looted property from Jewish homes and shops. In several instances, the robbers opened water taps to flood Jewish homes. Muslim women stripped clothes from the dead bodies to take for themselves. The rioters also rampaged through Jewish synagogues, desecrating them. Torah books were thrown out, and ceremonial bags adorned with silver and gold were stolen¹³⁰.

The massacre's aftermath was horrific. Jewish streets were strewn with dead bodies, many people were left homeless, and once-affluent Jews were rendered destitute. When Jews returned to their homes, they found the doors broken, windows shattered, and the houses ransacked¹³¹. Despite the turmoil, neither the Iraqi authorities nor the British forces intervened. Perpetrators largely evaded capture and punishment, and while the government offered minimal compensation, only a fraction of the stolen property was recovered¹³².

The *Farhud* pogrom inflicted profound trauma upon Iraqi Jewry at every echelon of society. It shattered Iraqi Jewry's confidence in their ability to lead normal lives in Iraq. Some in the community, including those who sought integration, expressed a desire to leave the country¹³³.

Anwar Shaul, the most prominent Jewish writer in Arabic in Iraq, wrote in his memoirs:

"No doubt this was a disaster for the Jewish community in Iraq that deeply shook the community to the extent that some of the spectators considered it as the beginning of the end of the large Jewish community that had lived in Mesopotamia for over two thousand years. They [the Jews] worked faithfully and devotedly for the people of Iraq with whom they had lived in the country throughout the period. Is this the beginning of the end or what?"¹³⁴

Jewish Contribution to Iraq

Jews had a considerable influence on public life in Iraq in the first half of the 20th century in a wide variety of fields: journalism and culture, administration and finances, commerce and law.

By the mid-1930s, Jews made up nearly half of the members of the Baghdad Chamber of Commerce, forming the city's most significant mercantile group. Jewish merchants were involved in trading a wide range of goods, including groceries, drugs, iron, coffee, tin, sugar, and copper, and were notable dealers in precious stones and jewelry. The growing urbanization of Baghdad led to a rising demand for American and British automobiles, foodstuffs, machine-made textiles, and manufactured household goods among the residents

¹³⁰ Ben-Yaacov, 1979, pp. 250-254.

¹³¹ Ben-Yaacov, 1979, pp. 250-254.

¹³² Simon, Farhūd.

¹³³ Kazzaz, 2002, p. 24.

¹³⁴ Tsimhoni, 2001, p. 582.

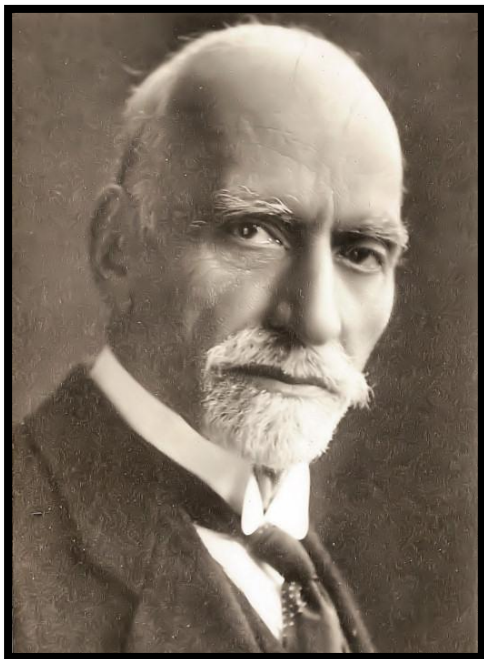
of the city's new suburban neighborhoods¹³⁵.

Such families as the **Adases**, **Rajwans**, **Sassoons**, **Nathaniels**, **Zilkhas**, **Lawis**, **Shammashes**, and **Aboodies** dealt in insurance, tea, travel, and transport. Jews owned the new movie theaters and acted as agents for foreign automobile companies¹³⁶.

By 1950, 86 percent of Baghdad's Jewish population was employed in commerce, government, and municipal services. They accounted for 50 percent of importers, retailers, and wholesalers of imported goods and played a significant role in financing small businesses and internal trade. Due to their education and linguistic skills, many Jews secured civil service positions created by the British mandatory authorities. They served as senior clerks for British advisers and held prominent roles in the treasury, banks, foreign companies, railways, and the port of Basra¹³⁷.

One of the most remarkable Jewish figures contributing to Iraq's economic and administrative growth during the early 1920s was **Sassoon Heskell** (1860-1932). Serving as Minister of Finance and holding a parliamentary seat for twelve years, Heskell stood as one of Baghdad's foremost leaders. His journey began even before the British occupation of Iraq, as he was elected as one of the Deputies of the district of Baghdad in the parliament in Istanbul after the 1908 revolution¹³⁸.

Figure 4 Sassoon Heskell (1860-1932)



Upon returning from Istanbul to Baghdad in 1920, Heskell assumed the pivotal role of

¹³⁵ Simon, Reeva Spector. Iraq. In Reeva Spector Simon, Michael Menachem Laskier, and Sara Reguer (Eds.), *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in modern times* (Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 363.

¹³⁶ Simon, Iraq, p. 363.

¹³⁷ Simon, Iraq, p. 363.

¹³⁸ Rejwan, Nissim. *The Jews of Iraq: 3000 years of history and culture* (Westview Press, 1985), pp. 215-216.

Minister of Finance, a position that thrust him into the heart of the British-led Cairo Conference in March 1921. This historic conference laid the groundwork for establishing the Kingdom of Iraq, with the Hashemite Faisal as its inaugural monarch. As the inaugural Minister of Finance, Heskell undertook the arduous task of building the ministry from the ground up, establishing departments, committees, and protocols. Yet, his most enduring legacy lies in his establishment of a structured budgetary system, delineating rules for income and expenditure, and enacting vital tax legislation¹³⁹.

Heskell's unwavering commitment to fiscal responsibility was further demonstrated during negotiations with the British Petroleum Company, where he insisted on oil revenue calculations based on the gold standard. Despite initial resistance, Heskell's persistence paid off, securing Iraq substantial additional revenue when Britain later abandoned the gold standard. Through his foresight and steadfast leadership, Heskell played a pivotal role in shaping Iraq's economic trajectory during a transformative period in its history¹⁴⁰.

Additional prominent Jewish figures include **Menahem Saleh Daniel** (1846-1940), who was Deputy for Baghdad to the first Ottoman Parliament in Istanbul and later Senator of the Kingdom of Iraq¹⁴¹. His son **Ezra Menahem Daniel** (1874-1952) succeeded him as member of the Senate and was a well-known philanthropist¹⁴². **David Samra** (1877-1960) served as vice president of the Iraqi Supreme Court and lecturer at the Law College. He served as judge during the Turkish and the Iraqi periods¹⁴³. **Abraham Elkabir** (1885-1973) was for many years Accountant-General and Director-General of Finance. He represented Iraq at the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944, meant to agree upon a series of new rules for the post-WWII international monetary system, and many other financial conferences in Istanbul, Geneva, and the USA¹⁴⁴.

Salman Shina (1899-1978) was a lawyer and journalist, who served in the parliament from 1947 to 1951¹⁴⁵. **Meir (Mir) Basri** (1911-2006) served for many years in the Iraqi administration, including as deputy supervisor of the Stock Exchange and member of the Administrative Board of the District of Baghdad. He was also a prolific author¹⁴⁶. **Anwar**

¹³⁹ Rejwan, pp. 215-216.

¹⁴⁰ Rejwan, pp. 215-216.

¹⁴¹ Wien, Peter. Daniel, Menahem Šāliḥ. In *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World Online*, (Brill, 2010) https://doi-org.bengurionu.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/1878-9781_ejiw_SIM_0006210.

¹⁴² Wien, Peter. Daniel, Ezra Menahem. In *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World Online*, (Brill, 2010) https://doi-org.bengurionu.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/1878-9781_ejiw_SIM_0006190.

¹⁴³ Cohen, Haim J. Samra, David. In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 749. Vol. 17. Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. *Gale eBooks* (accessed May 18, 2024). <https://link-gale-com.bengurionu.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/CX2587517401/GVRL?u=bengurion&sid=bookmark-GVRL&xid=2192a73c>.

¹⁴⁴ Cohen, Hayyim J. Kabīr, Abraham Šāliḥ al-. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed., vol. 11, Macmillan Reference USA, 2007, pp. 692-693. *Gale eBooks*, [link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX2587510517/GVRL?u=bengurion&sid=bookmark-GVRL&xid=1d851c05](https://link-gale-com.bengurionu.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/CX2587510517/GVRL?u=bengurion&sid=bookmark-GVRL&xid=1d851c05). Accessed 18 May 2024.

¹⁴⁵ Bashkin, Orit. Shīna, Salmān. *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World Online*. Brill, 2010. https://doi-org.bengurionu.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/1878-9781_ejiw_SIM_0020160 Web.

¹⁴⁶ Moreh, Shmuel. Bašrī, Me'ir (Mīr). *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World Online*. Brill, 2010. https://doi-org.bengurionu.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/1878-9781_ejiw_SIM_0003310 Web.

Shaul (1904-1984) was an important Iraqi poet, short story writer, playwright, journalist, lexicographer, and translator¹⁴⁷. **Shalom Darwish** (1913-1997) is seen as one of the pioneers of modern Iraqi literature¹⁴⁸.

Figure 5 - The band of Baghdad Broadcasting House (one Muslim and five Jews in addition to the singer), 1938



Source: Julius, pg. 65

Figure 6 - Jewish life in Iraq's 'Golden Era'



Source: Remember Baghdad

¹⁴⁷ Snir, Reuven. Shā'ul, Anwar. *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World Online*. Brill, 2010. https://doi-org.bengurionu.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/1878-9781_ejiw_COM_0020040 Web.

¹⁴⁸ Berg, Nancy E. Darwish, Shalom. *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World Online*. Brill, 2010. https://doi-org.bengurionu.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/1878-9781_ejiw_COM_0006290 Web.

Towards the End: The 1948 war and the trial of Shafiq Adas

Anti-Jewish sentiment in Iraq intensified again in anticipation of the United Nations recommendation to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. Following that resolution in November 1947, protests erupted in Iraq against the decision. Demonstrations were organized, funds were raised to support Arab efforts in Palestine, and even Jewish leaders were coerced into making statements in favor of Arab claims to the land¹⁴⁹.

Developments leading to the Israeli declaration of independence in May 1948, including Israeli gains in the war, further fueled anti-Jewish fervor, with chants of "Death to the Jews" echoing in Iraqi demonstrations. School students staged strikes to pressure the government to send troops to aid Arabs in their war against Israel. Violence escalated on April 27, 1948, when a Jewish synagogue in Baghdad was attacked and its sacred items desecrated¹⁵⁰.

Figure 7 - The Dangoor family from Shanghai during a visit in Baghdad, Iraq 1946



Source: Beit Hatfutsot

At this stage, a series of measures—legal, economic, and political—were taken to isolate the Jewish community. The Iraqi government imposed martial law, banning gatherings and weapon possession, as well as the possibility to leave the country. In the aftermath of Israel's founding, Jews faced heightened persecution. Merely receiving greetings from acquaintances in Israel or possessing Hebrew materials became grounds for arrest and military tribunal hearings. Police raids on Jewish homes intensified, leading many to destroy Hebrew items and symbols to avoid persecution¹⁵¹.

¹⁴⁹ Cohen, 1972, pp. 37-39.

¹⁵⁰ Cohen, 1972, pp. 37-39.

¹⁵¹ Cohen, 1972, pp. 37-39.

In July 1948, the criminalization of Zionism intensified with its addition to Section 51 of the criminal law, previously targeting communists. Punishments now included lengthy imprisonments and even death sentences for those accused of Zionism, making it easy to incriminate Jews. Many faced trials, fines, imprisonment, or exile without due process. Economic restrictions on Jews further exacerbated their plight, with licenses and banking activities curtailed, leading to increased vulnerability and hardship¹⁵².

In October 1948, the government revoked the import and export licenses held by Jews, transferring them to Muslims and tightening the supervision of Jewish merchants. The Iraqi parliament approved a bill that classified any Zionist activity within the country as a crime, punishable by a minimum of seven years in prison and a maximum of death. Jewish banks were prohibited from making money transfers to prevent the transfer of capital abroad. Additionally, Jews were restricted from selling property exceeding two thousand pounds at any one time. Jewish schools were reduced in number, with many closing, and Jews were barred from entering government educational institutions¹⁵³.

By far the most tragic and influential event in this period was the trial and public hanging of Shafiq Adas, a wealthy and well-connected Jew from Basra. The saga unfolded in late July 1948 when the editor of "A-Nas," the mouthpiece of Basra's nationalist and anti-Jewish party "Istiklal," demanded from Adas a thousand dinars in cash, a trend emerging in Iraq where Jewish businessmen were coerced into funding the military under the guise of supporting the Arabs in Palestine¹⁵⁴.

Fueled by Iraqi patriotism and overconfidence in his standing, Adas refused to pay. The editor departed incensed, igniting a propaganda blitz accusing Adas of espionage for Zionism and arms dealing. Calls for his arrest reverberated through Baghdad, prompting friends to urge his immediate departure from Iraq. However, Adas refused to leave, and on August 5 was arrested in Basra¹⁵⁵.

Thrown into the abyss of the legal system, Adas found himself in a farcical military trial presided over by a pro-Nazi nationalist. Rejected by prominent lawyers, he stood alone against absurd accusations, from communism to Zionism and creating chaos. Adas stood accused of selling decommissioned ex-British military gear from the Second World War to Iraq's sworn enemy: Israel. Witnesses, coerced into falsehoods, painted a damning picture, alleging clandestine arms shipments to Israel¹⁵⁶.

In his defense, Adas vehemently refuted the allegations, citing lawful transactions of surplus British equipment. Yet, the kangaroo trial, taking place in a martial court, with no defense

¹⁵² Cohen, 1972, pp. 37-39.

¹⁵³ Ben-Yaacov, 1979, pp. 257-260.

¹⁵⁴ On the Adas affair, see Shochet, Nir. *The Story of an Exile* (Association for the Promotion of Research and Literature of Iraqi Jewish Immigrants in Israel, 1981), p. 208 [Hebrew]; Danani, Max. The Hanging of Shafiq Adas. *Herut*, 24 April 1950, p. 2 [Hebrew]; Shaharabani, Asher. *Escape from Basra* (Modi'in, 2008), pp. 135-140 [Hebrew]; Meir, Yosef. *Jews Under Iraqi Rule in the Twentieth Century* (Tel Aviv, 2008), p. 196 [Hebrew].

¹⁵⁵ Schwartz, Adi. The Adas Affair. *Tablet*. December 9, 2022.

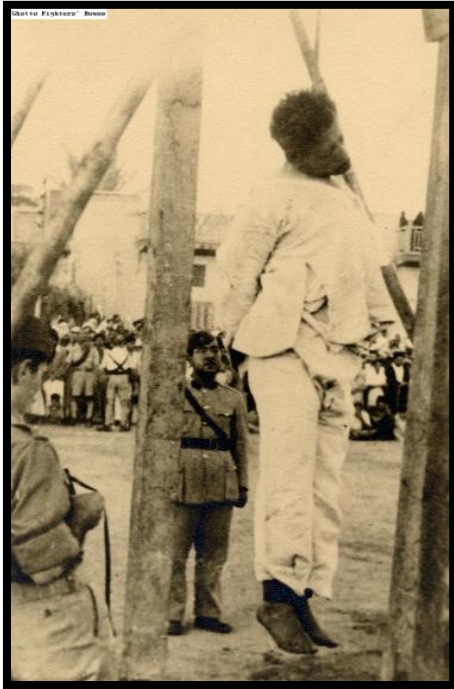
<https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/history/articles/adas-affair-jews-iraq>.

¹⁵⁶ Schwartz, Adas.

witnesses and in hurried three-day hearings, left him no hope. The verdict, delivered amidst a jubilant crowd, sealed his fate—death by hanging and exorbitant compensation¹⁵⁷.

The trial sent shockwaves through the Jewish community of Iraq. Adas, once a relatively obscure figure to many, became a symbol of their collective plight overnight. Despite conducting most of his business with Iraqi Muslims, and despite his known distance from Zionism, the spotlight thrust upon him made it clear to every Jew in Iraq that his fate now intertwined with theirs, dividing their lives into a stark before and after Adas's trial¹⁵⁸.

Figure 8 - The public execution of Shafiq Adas, September 1948



(Photo: Ghetto Fighters' House)

Some Jews held onto hope that the Iraqi state's motivations were purely monetary and that Adas's life could be spared with a hefty ransom. However, as the days passed and the fervor of anti-Jewish sentiment intensified in the streets, hope waned into despair. If a man of Adas's wealth and influence could plummet from power to a condemned prisoner in mere weeks, then the fate of every Jew in Iraq seemed sealed¹⁵⁹.

The global Jewish community rallied to Adas's defense, with newspapers from Sydney to London likening his plight to that of Alfred Dreyfus. Leaders of American Jewry urgently petitioned international authorities, seeking intervention to halt the injustice unfolding in Iraq. Yet, despite these efforts, Adas's fate was sealed. The Baghdad radio eventually broadcast his death sentence, casting a dark shadow over Iraqi Jewry¹⁶⁰.

Before dawn on September 23, 1948, Basra bore witness to a grim spectacle—the execution

¹⁵⁷ Schwartz, Adas.

¹⁵⁸ Schwartz, Adas.

¹⁵⁹ Schwartz, Adas.

¹⁶⁰ Schwartz, Adas.

of Shafiq Adas in front of his house. Surrounded by a frenzied mob, he faced the gallows, his final moments haunted by the silent condemnation of thousands. His death sent shockwaves through Basra's Jewish community, leaving an indelible mark on its psyche¹⁶¹.

The Mass Exodus: March 1950 – March 1951

In early March 1950, the Iraqi government proposed legislation in Parliament allowing Jews to renounce their Iraqi citizenship and leave the country permanently. This bill, which was supposed to be in effect for 12 months, also outlined measures for denaturalizing Jews who had already departed. By letting the Jews leave, the Iraqi government wanted to quell social unrest and eliminate one of the key sources of instability in the country¹⁶².

During parliamentary discussions, the Jewish Senator Ezra Menahem Daniel urged the government to ease the restrictions and discrimination faced by Jews who wished to stay in Iraq. Iraqi officials estimated that around 10,000 Jews, primarily from poorer backgrounds, would utilize the new law¹⁶³.

Near East Transport company, in collaboration with the Iraqi government, organized an airlift for Jews wanting to leave. Some 47,000 individuals—about a third of the entire Jewish community in Iraq—registered for emigration within less than two months. By January 1951, approximately 86,000 Iraqi Jews, constituting two-thirds of the community, had registered to move to Israel. However, due to logistical challenges, only around 23,000 had been flown out under Operation Ezra and Nehemiah by that time¹⁶⁴.

This mass exodus was driven by the economic collapse, experienced by many in the Jewish community, and by a political and ideological rupture within the Jewish society. Jews concluded that political stability in Iraq was no longer possible, that equality was not guaranteed for the Jewish community, and that their very existence was at risk. There were also grave concerns about the future of the younger generation in Iraq. Iraqi Jews feared the exclusionary nature of the Iraqi national movement and the intensifying Arab-Israeli conflict. Under these circumstances, leaving Iraq was seen as a window of opportunity that might never return¹⁶⁵.

The Iraqi government under Nuri Said intensified its pressure, threatening to force stateless Jews into neighboring Kuwait if they remained beyond the 12-month deadline, due to expire in March 1951. Tensions escalated after a grenade attack at a synagogue in Baghdad on January 14, 1951, resulting in fatalities and injuries¹⁶⁶. In the weeks leading to the registration deadline, some 20,000 Jews signed up for leaving, prompting an acceleration in

¹⁶¹ Schwartz, Adas.

¹⁶² Gat, Moshe. *The Jewish Exodus from Iraq, 1948-1951*. Routledge, 2013; Meir-Glitzenstein, Esther. The end of Babylon, the scourge of nationalism in Iraq. In Shmuel Trigano (Ed.), *The end of Judaism in Muslim lands* (Carmel, 2018), pp. 72-73.

¹⁶³ Stillman, 1991, pp. 160-165.

¹⁶⁴ Stillman, 1991, pp. 160-165.

¹⁶⁵ Meir, 2018, p. 78.

¹⁶⁶ Gat, Moshe. The Connection between the bombings in Baghdad and the emigration of the Jews from Iraq: 1950-51. *Middle Eastern Studies* 24.3 (1988): 312-329.

the airlift¹⁶⁷.

A severe blow came in March 1951, a year after the law allowing Iraqi Jews to leave the country was enacted. While 64,000 people were still waiting to depart from Iraq, the Iraqi parliament enacted a law that froze the assets of Jews who had renounced their citizenship. Shop doors were sealed, bank accounts were frozen, and overnight the community was impoverished. Once considered one of the most established communities in the Middle East, Iraqi Jewry was reduced to desolate poverty¹⁶⁸.

Iraqi Jews had assumed they would be allowed to gradually liquidate their property, sell it at any price, and transfer the proceeds to Israel. Many Jews entrusted their property to relatives and acquaintances who chose to stay in Iraq, expecting them to manage its gradual liquidation. Instead, they were left destitute, with their remaining funds consumed by the cost of living in Iraq until their departure¹⁶⁹.

This draconian law worsened the treatment of departing Jews by Iraqi officials. One of them reported, "At the airport, customs police robbed our few belongings. Happy was the man who had only 50% of his belongings stolen, who was not beaten, cursed, spit on, or kicked." A few days later, two more Jews reported, "The peak of brutality came today when the police started beating us with a whip. The sighs of the whipped adults mingled with the screams and cries of toddlers crying from hunger and thirst. They are not allowed to take any money at all. Not to mention the theft of personal belongings."¹⁷⁰

The authorization to take fifty dinars per person was also canceled and reduced to only five dinars. This policy particularly devastated the middle and upper-class members of the community, who were the last to register and thus had no time to sell even part of their property. Furthermore, it became clear that enrollment for departure was irreversible. Those who regretted their decision and asked to withdraw were forced by the police, with threats and sometimes violence, to join the departures¹⁷¹.

By the end of 1951, only 6,000 Jews remained in Iraq, with Operation Ezra and Nehemiah facilitating the evacuation of about 106,000 people, while another 15,000 left illegally¹⁷². Thus, more than 90 percent of the Jewish community in Iraq left the country.

Epilogue

The Jews who remained in Iraq after the massive departure of 1950-1951 experienced initially a period of relative stability: their confiscated property was returned, they were permitted to oversee their businesses and community institutions, and some were even granted permission to obtain Iraqi passports and leave the country. With the overthrow of the monarchy and the ascension of Abd al-Karim Qasim to power (1958-1963), Jewish

¹⁶⁷ Stillman, 1991, pp. 160-165.

¹⁶⁸ Meir, 2018, p. 82.

¹⁶⁹ Meir, 2018, p. 82.

¹⁷⁰ Meir, 2018, p. 82.

¹⁷¹ Meir, 2018, p. 82.

¹⁷² Stillman, 1991, pp. 160-165.

individuals accused of communist or Zionist affiliations were released from imprisonment and allowed to leave Iraq¹⁷³.

In February 1963, the Baath Party seized power, initiating nine months of political upheaval that significantly worsened conditions for the Jewish community. Traveling abroad, even for medical reasons, became nearly impossible. Jewish students were largely barred from universities. Much of their individual and communal property was confiscated. Baghdad's thousand-year-old Jewish cemetery was demolished. Additionally, Jews were required to carry special yellow identity cards¹⁷⁴.

Following the Six-Day War, Jews across Iraq faced arrest, torture, and extortion. The Ministry of Defense confiscated Jewish sports facilities, absurdly alleging they were used for anti-Iraqi conspiracies, and repurposed them for the Iraqi Army. A new law allowed the state to seize and manage Jewish property. Mosque preachers depicted Jews as harmful germs needing eradication. Iraqi television aired comedies featuring traitors with traditional Jewish names like Heskell, Shaul, Moshe, Ezra, Zion, and Shalom. Jews were frequently stopped and searched by police in the streets¹⁷⁵.

In July 1967, Jewish students at Al-Hikma University were attacked and beaten by Muslim students. Jewish schoolchildren who completed secondary education were denied university admission. Jewish traders were refused new import licenses unless they paid exorbitant taxes. Muslim traders who owed money to Jews often refused to pay, knowing Jews feared for their lives and wouldn't complain¹⁷⁶.

On March 3, 1968, new laws and regulations were implemented that plunged Jews into poverty. They were prohibited from selling their cars or furniture. Jewish pharmacists lost their licenses and were forced to close their pharmacies within fifteen days. All commercial offices in Baghdad had to fire their Jewish employees, and Muslim-owned businesses were warned against cooperating with Jews. The remaining Jews in Iraq were left in a state of poverty, isolation, and fear¹⁷⁷.

Later that year, numerous Jews were arrested on espionage charges, with nine of them subsequently executed in a public hanging on January 27, 1969, to the apparent delight of onlookers. Two additional Jews were hanged later that August, and many others perished due to torture while in Iraqi custody¹⁷⁸.

This is how one of the characters in the semi-autobiographical novel, *When the Grey Beetles Took Over Baghdad*, described the scene of the 1969 hanging:

[T]he square was packed with unions and associations – the teachers, the workers, the scouts, the soldiers, the students – all roaring victory and carrying banners... masses of Bedouins and peasants... kept spilling into the square. Illiterate as they are,

¹⁷³ Cohen, 1972, p. 41.

¹⁷⁴ Gilbert, p. 380 (epub version)

¹⁷⁵ Gilbert, pp. 406-407 (epub version).

¹⁷⁶ Gilbert, pp. 406-407 (epub version).

¹⁷⁷ Gilbert, pp. 406-407 (epub version).

¹⁷⁸ Cohen, 1972, p. 41.

they carried no banners... only food baskets for the picnic in the capital.

The crowds were dancing under the corpses, swinging them, hitting them with sticks and palm branches. Boys my age were catapulting stones at them – the way they sling them at birds and pigeons. I saw men, city men in shirts and trousers... jump in the air to touch the toe or to tickle the sole of a hanged man's foot. Just for fun, for the sake of boasting to their wives and amusing their children... The [bodies'] heads were twisted. Because their necks were broken. Because their tongues were sticking out, like idiots in an asylum. Because their faces were deep blue... Because their eyes were bursting out, about to pounce on you any moment.¹⁷⁹

Only in 1971, following mounting pressure from international public opinion and various foreign entities, did Iraqi authorities begin to ease restrictions on Jews. However, departure from the country was contingent upon relinquishing all assets and wealth in Iraq. Despite these conditions, many Jews seized the opportunity to leave, resulting in a significant decline in the Jewish population by the end of 1971, estimated at only 1,000 to 1,500 individuals remaining along the Euphrates River¹⁸⁰.

¹⁷⁹ Yahia, Mona. *When the Grey Beetles Took Over Baghdad* (Halban, 2003), Kindle Edition, pp. 279-282.

¹⁸⁰ Cohen, 1972, p. 41.

Chapter 4 - Economic Analysis of Losses

Section 1 – Methodological Benchmarks

Based on the information presented above regarding the makeup of the Jewish community in Iraq in 1948, the following dates and figures will serve as a methodological benchmark for different points of analysis regarding the breakdown of different categories of Jewish assets:

Valuation Start Year:

The year 1948 represents a reasonable benchmark regarding the beginning of the Jewish community's gradual departure from Iraq, as well as a reasonable year from which to assess property values, as it predates the downward price-spiral associated with larger waves of Jewish departure in the years following.

Conversion to present day valuation: The methodology for the conversion of value from a base year of 1948 to December 31, 2024 is explained in Section 11.

Size of the Jewish community:

For the purposes of this report, a total Jewish Iraqi population of 135,000¹⁸¹ Jews, as supported by the historical examination by Roumani, Meir-Glitzstein and JJAC, will be used to value Jewish property.

Distribution of Jewish population:

Based on the information presented below in detail, the Iraqi Jewish population was calculated to be 5% rural and a 95% urban.

The distinction between rural and urban communities allows one to draw a simple distinction between vastly different types of communities (in terms of geography, literacy rates and type of education and employment, average size and value of land and property etc.)

Urban areas are widely recognized as larger metropolitan centers and their immediate environs/hinterlands, while rural communities are characterized by their distance from urban centers, their relatively smaller numbers, and an agriculture-centric way of life.

Jewish demographics:

As mentioned in detail below, the average size of a Jewish family being utilized for the relevant period covered, is 4.

¹⁸¹ Meir-Glitzstein, pg. 67; Roumani, The Case 2; WOJAC'S Voice Vol.1, No.1.

Section 2 – Economic Indicators

The following section is meant to describe the types of activities and occupations that characterized Jewish economic life in Iraq in the time-period under consideration. The data and conclusions from this section will serve as a point of departure for further analyses regarding the Jewish community’s economic strength in Iraq.

Population Statistics

Available statistics show that “[i]n 1919 Iraqi Jews numbered 87,488 in a population of 2.8 million...By the end of 1949, a British account estimated the number of Jews at 180,000.”¹⁸² According to Iraqi census figures taken in 1947, “the Jewish community numbered 118,000, or 2.6% of the total population of 4.5 million...” though other unofficial sources estimated that the real number of Jews in Iraq in the late 1940s was likely “ten to twenty thousand higher than the official figure.”¹⁸³ Other sources, such as scholar of Iraqi Jewish life Zvi Yehuda, noted that the Jewish population in Iraq in 1947 amounted to 125,000.¹⁸⁴ Fischbach noted that a final tally of the number of Jews who left for Israel between 1948 and 1972 amounted to a total of 129,292 Iraqi Jews.¹⁸⁵ Other sources note that at its peak, before the mass departure of Jews from Iraq, “the number of Jews in Iraq was reported to be 135,000 or 3% of a total population of 4,500,000 persons.”¹⁸⁶ As described in the sources mentioned, estimations of the size of the Jewish community in Iraq circa 1948 range between 118,000 to 180,000 Jews. This report will rely on the figure of 135,000 as it is better supported by the evidence.

Table 7 - Country of Origin and Jewish Population

Country or Territory	1948 Jewish population ¹⁸⁷	1958 Jewish population ¹⁸⁸	1968 Jewish population ¹⁸⁹	1976 Jewish population ¹⁹⁰	2001 Jewish population ¹⁹¹	2024 Estimates
Iraq	135,000	6,000	2,500	350	100	5

Jewish Settlement Patterns: Urban vs. Rural

Broadly speaking, the Jewish community in Iraq was concentrated in three separate geographical divisions, each of which also had its main urban centers. Likewise, the Jews in each area were characterized by different cultural and economic patterns:

¹⁸² Bashkin, pg. 22.

¹⁸³ Shiblak, pg. 18

¹⁸⁴ Yehuda, pg. 50

¹⁸⁵ Fischbach, pg. 56

¹⁸⁶ Meir-Glitzstein, pg. 67; Roumani, The Case 2; WOJAC’S Voice Vol.1, No.1.

¹⁸⁷ Meir-Glitzstein, pg. 67; Roumani, The Case 2; WOJAC’S Voice Vol.1, No.1.

¹⁸⁸ American Jewish Yearbook (AJY) v.58 American Jewish Committee.

¹⁸⁹ AJY v.68; AJY v.71.

¹⁹⁰ AJY v.78.

¹⁹¹ AJY v.101.

*The Jews of central and southern Iraq, most of whom lived in Baghdad, Basra, and Hilla, had a more cosmopolitan outlook than the isolated Jews of Kurdistan. Mosul's Jews, on the other hand, exhibited a mixture of northern and central cultural elements, as their level of education and involvement in trade were similar to that of Baghdadi and Basran Jews. The central and southern Jews, especially those who lived in Baghdad, were more educated and were directly affected by Ottoman reform efforts... During the nineteenth century, Iraqi Jewish elites spoke a local dialect of Arabic, wrote in Hebrew, Arabic, and Ottoman Turkish, and used both Hebrew and Aramaic as liturgical languages. The Jews of Kurdistan by contrast were far less educated, and among themselves spoke an Aramaic dialect containing some Arabic, Kurdish, and Turkish words, although most of them could speak some Kurdish, Turkish, and Arabic as well. This mountainous community was more agricultural in nature, with its members working as sheep shearers, shopkeepers, weavers, and goldsmiths.*¹⁹²

Despite the geographical dispersion of Iraqi Jews in different parts of the country, the Jewish community in Iraq was largely an urban community. Different sources note similar distributions of the Jewish community. For example, Meir-Glitzstein mentions that roughly 80% of Jews lived in the major cities, with the rest dispersed in smaller towns across Iraq and in more rural villages in predominantly Kurdish areas in the north of the country. Altogether, she writes,

*[a]bout 90,000 Jews lived in the capital city of Baghdad, where they were one-fifth of the population. In the port city of Basra there lived 10,000 Jews and in Mosul in the north there were approximately 6,000 Jewish residents. Small concentrations numbering in the hundreds or thousands of Jews were present in the cities of Amara, Hila, Nassariyya and others. In the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq there was a Kurdish Jewish community that included 10% of all Iraqi Jews, in tens of villages in the Kurdish mountains and in the cities of Kirkuk and Mosul.*¹⁹³

Abbas Shiblak, a Palestinian academic and historian who wrote of the exodus of Iraqi Jews, also discusses demographic trends and the distribution of Jews in Iraq between urban and rural areas. Shiblak notes that economic opportunities (mostly due to the rerouting of commercial trade routes and the rise of the oil industry in the south) and rapid urbanization led more Jews to move from northern cities and villages to central and southern urban locations, mostly Baghdad and Basra.¹⁹⁴ According to census figures collected by the Ministry of Social Affairs in Iraq, which recorded the distribution of Iraq's various ethnic and religious groups according to urban and rural dwelling, Jews were overwhelmingly concentrated in urban areas. The figures collected showed that close to 97% of Jews lived in urban locations, while a little over 3% of Jews were recorded as living in rural areas.¹⁹⁵

Based on the former estimate above that suggests that part of the 10% of Iraqi Jews who lived in the Kurdish region lived in the cities of Kirkuk and Mosul (thereby reducing the percentage of Jews in the Kurdish region who lived in rural locations), and the latter estimate suggesting that around 3% of all of Iraqi Jews lived in rural locations, it was resolved to take

¹⁹² Bashkin, pgs. 19, 20.

¹⁹³ Meir-Glitzstein, pg. 65

¹⁹⁴ Shiblak, pg. 21

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., pg. 19

the middle course and proceed on the basis of an overall 5% rural distribution of Jews in Iraq in 1948, thereby concluding an overall 5% rural and 95% urban distribution.

Regarding the size of the average Jewish family in Iraq, an examination of several sources that discussed the overall Jewish population, the estimated number of Jewish families in Iraq in 1948 and immigration statistics of Iraqi Jews arriving in Israel between 1948–1951 was undertaken. Broadly speaking, Israeli immigration officials, assisted by unofficial estimates given by Iraqi Jews, estimated that of the total Iraqi Jewish population, there numbered approximately 30,000 Jewish families.¹⁹⁶ This rough estimate suggests a demographic of 4.5 persons per household. More reliable data was retrieved from immigration registries documenting the arrival of Jewish families leaving Iraq for Israel. From these registries, the average size of a Jewish family in Iraq in the early 1950s was 4.4 persons per household.¹⁹⁷ Still, other data collected by Israeli immigration officials in 1952 suggested a total of 37,124 Jewish families, representing a figure of 3.6 persons per household.

Notwithstanding the fact that at least ten thousand Jews remained in the country after the mass departure of the Jewish community between 1948-1951, based on the figures above, it was resolved to proceed according to an average Iraqi Jewish household consisting of four persons per household as this represents a compromise figure based on the different demographic sources discussed above. A total Jewish population of 135,000, distributed based on an average of four persons per household yields a total of 33,750 Jewish households in Iraq in 1948. Furthermore, the distribution of rural and urban Jewish households in Iraq in 1948 would be as follows:

Table 8 - Distribution of Jewish Households per Urban, Rural Types, Iraq, 1948

Household Type	Percentage of Jewish Households	Total No. of Households per Household Type
Urban	95%	32,063
Rural	5%	1,687
Total	100%	33,750

Previous Valuation Attempts

Over the years, several assessments of the scope and value of lost Jewish assets in Iraq have been noted. Most of these assessments were not concluded on the basis of a thorough examination of the historical record but were common sense estimates of one kind or another. At least two known assessments were conducted on the basis of testimonials collected from Iraqi Jews upon their arrival in Israel. These previous valuation efforts are documented below.

¹⁹⁶ CZA, S20/583. “Moving Jewish property abroad (1949 – 1951).” “Notarized Assessment of Total Iraqi Jewish Property, 21/10/1949” (translated from Hebrew.)

¹⁹⁷ ISA, MFA 2387/6 – ית. Iraqi Jewry – Seminar Paper by Yakir Yair, pg. 34

The first known estimate of the total value of Iraqi Jewish wealth was given during the 1948 war between Israel and her Arab neighbors. The description of these estimates is noted by Fischbach:

In addition to the money they lost in fines, Iraq's Jews found themselves facing other property restrictions during the war. Various estimates were floated at the time about the total value of Jewish assets in Iraq. Yusuf al-Kabir, a lawyer and respected figure among Iraqi Jews, estimated the wealth of Iraq's Jews at £UK90 million. S.P. Sasson of the Sephardic Association of Tel Aviv gave a figure of £76,150,000 in land, homes, and communal property. The AJC gave a figure of £55 million (about \$220 million¹⁹⁸).¹⁹⁹

The AJC report on the conditions of the Jewish community in Iraq mentioned above estimated the total capital of the Jews in Iraq as follows:

Table 9 - General Estimate of the Capital of Jews in Iraq (Pound Sterling, 1949)

Type of Capital	Value (Pound Sterling, 1949)
Goods in stock	5,000,000
Margins paid on L/C2 for goods	3,000,000
Capital of small local dealers	2,000,000
Credit accounts in favor of Jews with Banks, and local bankers (current account)	4,000,000
Mortgages	1,000,000
Government loans	1,000,000
Shares with trading corporations	500,000
Cash	500,000
Jewelry, mostly gold	3,500,000
Furniture and fittings	4,000,000
Constructed buildings	24,000,000
Lands	3,000,000
Agricultural lands and orchards	1,500,000
Factories	500,000
General property of Jewish community, such as hospitals, schools etc.	1,500,000
Total	55,000,000

Source: AJCA, “A General Report on the Conditions of the Jewish Community in Iraq.” Undated but enclosed to P.184 on 18/11/49.

As Itamar Levin, author of *Locked Doors: The Seizure of Jewish Property in Arab Countries* recounts, in October 1949,

¹⁹⁸ This figure is an approximation directly from the source.

¹⁹⁹ Fischbach, pg. 53

*Minister of Minority Affairs Behor Shitrit assessed the value of Iraqi Jewish property as at least 156 million Israeli pounds (IL), according to the following breakdown: 15,000 families with an averaged capital of IL 2,00 each; 9,000 families with IL 750 each; 4,000 families with IL 7,500 each; 300 families with IL 75,000 each; 100 families with IL 150,000 each; and the fifty wealthiest families with IL 300,000 each; land value was set at IL 5 million and community property was valued at IL 2 million.*²⁰⁰

Levin continues, noting other attempts by the Israeli government to estimate the value of Jewish property left behind in Iraq:

The following month, two different estimates were made regarding the amount of Jewish property in Iraq. In an internal document, Israel's government set the property value between £50 and 150 million, while a letter to the New York Times from Moshe Keren, of the Israeli Embassy in Washington D.C., claims that property value was \$250 million...also at that time, Ezra Danin, of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed the figure was £60 million.

*In the early 1950s, at the height of immigration to Israel from Iraq, attempts were again made to estimate property values. An internal Mossad le-Aliyah Bet memo from January 1951 sets property values between 150 and 200 million dinars, equal in value to the same sum in pound sterling, or \$450 million and 600 million.*²⁰¹

After the confiscation of Jewish property was completed in the early 1950s, several sources floated estimations of the total scope and value of Jewish assets confiscated from Jews by the Iraqi government. Orit Bashkin, a professor of Modern Middle East History at the University of Chicago and an expert on Iraqi Jewry, lists several sources whose estimate of the total value of Jewish assets frozen by the Iraqi government amounted to between \$150–200 million U.S. dollars.²⁰² Fischbach also notes a U.S. State Department estimate of Jewish losses, conducted in 1956, reached a figure of \$1.2 billion, as given by the chief rabbi of Iraq.²⁰³

In 1955, the office of R.W. Munro, First Secretary of the British Embassy in Baghdad, also tried to estimate the total value of Iraqi Jewish property in the country. The correspondence noted that the British Embassy was in touch with American Embassy officials in an attempt to “get estimates by round-about means” including “working through the three British banks here and the American Embassy gathering information from the Jewish Rabbi and from certain Jewish citizens who are on the immigration lists for the United States.”²⁰⁴ After noting that estimates from various sources “differ considerably,” they state the combined estimates as follows:

²⁰⁰ Levin, pg. 10

²⁰¹ Levin, pg. 10

²⁰² Bashkin, pg. 192 - Me'ir-Glitzenstein, Ben Bagdad le-Ramat Gan, 49; Haim, “Aspects of Jewish Life,” 200–201; FO 371/91635, 15 January 1951, from Sir A. Kirkbride (Amman) to Foreign Office (a report on Nuri Sa'id's visit to Jordan).

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ C.S. 3571/10/55. Memo from R.W. Munro, First Commercial Secretary at the British Embassy to the Levant Department at the British Foreign Ministry. April 13, 1955.

- Between 600,000 to 1,100,000 Iraqi Dinar (ID) in bank assets
- Between ID 4 million to ID 5 million (in 1951 values, according to bank estimates) and between ID 12 million to ID 15 million (according to statements of Jewish citizens) in immoveable property
- Between ID 1 to ID 2 million (according to bank estimates), or between ID 3 to ID 6 million (according to statements of Jewish citizens) in moveable property

Thus, given the above, the conservative total estimate of the value of Jewish property in Iraq in 1951, as assembled by the British Embassy in 1955, was between ID 5,600,000 and ID 8,100,000, while the estimate relying on statements given by Jewish citizens was between ID 15,600,000 to ID 22,100,000.

The previous valuation estimate that relies on the largest collection of empirical evidence collected at the time concerns the Israeli government's efforts to document Iraqi Jews' testimonials of lost property upon their arrival in Israel from late 1949 through the end of 1951. Up to that point, "1,619 claimants filed a total of 50 claims for \$1,997,184 in property lost in Iraq."²⁰⁵

Levin posits that the claims process conducted between November 1949 and August 1952, relying on the registered claims of 2,150 Iraqi Jews, produced a total lost property value of \$35,814,576. According to Levin's calculations, these declared property claims represented only 6% of Iraqi families, so that the overall value of lost property in Iraq was approximately \$560 million in 1950's dollar terms.²⁰⁶

A summary of the property losses registered under the aforementioned 2,220 claims is presented below:²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Fischbach, pg. 66

²⁰⁶ Levin, pg. 10

²⁰⁷ ISA "Transfer of Wealth from Iraq (1791 - 1 (MFA))." Total of 2300 Declarations (Comprising 5017 Lawsuits) Received by our Offices for Documenting Foreign Lawsuits by Iraqi Olim by 1/8/52 (7/8/52)

Table 10 - Claims Totals Collected by Israeli Finance Ministry (Iraqi Dinars, 1949)²⁰⁸

Type of Claim	Value (Iraqi Dinar, 1949)	Total Value (Iraqi Dinar, 1949)
Real Estate		
Homes	4,417,470	6,585,935
Urban Properties	1,454,355	
Agricultural Land	714,110	
Moveable Property		688,135
Factories:		
Commercial	2,810,945	3,192,515
Industrial	381,570	
Confiscated Inventory		124,260
Bank Assets		411,880
Securities		93,860
Mortgages		168,075
Commercial Contracts		1,203,235
Insurance		21,960
Punishment for Zionist activity, monies confiscated		187,740
Salaries:		
Private	3,720	4,290
Government	300	
Iraqi Train Company	270	
Pensions and provident funds:		
Private	31,965	55,400
Government	17,985	
Iraqi Train Company	5,450	
Other Claims		53,635
Total		12,790,920

Source: ISA “Transfer of Wealth from Iraq (1791 - 1 (MFA)).” Total of 2300 Declarations (Comprising 5017 Lawsuits) Received by our Offices for Documenting Foreign Lawsuits by Iraqi Olim by 1/8/52 (7/8/52)

Other valuation attempts include an unofficial estimate given by Teddy Kollek, who in 1950, at the time the Iraqi confiscation legislation was passed, was serving as Director of the US division in the Israeli Foreign Ministry. Kollek wrote to Phillip Ehrlich, then the legal advisor at Bank of America, in an attempt to find a solution to this issue. Kollek wrote that “[t]here are at least 120,000 Jews living in Iraq. A conservative estimate of the property

²⁰⁸ Fischbach Page 137

they possess stands at several hundred million Dinars (1 Dinar is equivalent to 1 pound Sterling).”²⁰⁹

The valuation attempts described above reflect either common sense assessment or partial initiatives to document the total scope and value of Jewish assets left behind in Iraq. None of these efforts, however, can be said to be comprehensive and final. The two most empirically-based valuation attempts, i.e. the lost property claims collection efforts described above, were based on no more than 2,300 claimants.

In the course of this project, over 8,000 lost property claims that had been filed by Iraqi Jews with the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Social Equality were obtained. These included many of the lost property claims which served as the basis for the property valuation attempts described above, as well as additional lost property claims collected in later years. These testimonials currently belong to the Israeli Ministry for Social Equality. It was possible to access these claims for the purposes of enhancing the empirical claims data upon which the valuation attempts described below will rely on. For this reason, the report compilers employed their own testimonial methodology for arriving at a detailed and comprehensive valuation of lost Jewish assets in Iraq as opposed to simply extrapolation from past efforts conducted using similar claims. It is thus the position that relying on the categorization and analysis methodology developed, a total valuation can be calculated that better reflects the reality of Jewish property-ownership in Iraq in 1948 than current records allow.

Jewish Participation in the Iraqi Economy

The history of Jewish participation in economic activities in what is modern-day Iraq is well documented. Having abandoned their part in agricultural activities after the Muslim conquest in the 7th century, Jews resorted to other economic activities. Most were employed as artisans of all sorts. Later on, as the Ottoman Empire came to dominate the region, many took positions in civil administration. As trade links with far-flung regions became more robust, often through reliance on British trading networks, Jews became heavily involved in international trade and finance. During the eighteenth century, for example, Jews “served as the bankers of the governors of the Ottoman provinces of Mesopotamia”.²¹⁰ As described in the section above, Jewish migration patterns established commercial links between Jewish communities in India, Iraq and Great Britain, allowing Jews in Iraq to dominate trading based in the Tigris-Euphrates valley. Similarly, “[t]he rise of the Jewish merchants of Baghdad and Basra was enabled by the end of the commercial monopoly of the British East India Company in 1813, the expansion of the port of Basra, and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.”²¹¹

The predominance of Jewish merchants in Iraq spawned a number of powerful Jewish families, foremost among them the Sassoons, who were known as “the Rothschilds of the East.” The Sassoons “maintained a far-flung commercial, agricultural, and textile-manufacturing network with interests in India, Iran, China, Japan, and England, in addition

²⁰⁹ ISA. “Transfer of Wealth from Iraq (1791 - 1 (MFA)).” *Correspondence: From Teddy Kollek to Phillip Ehrlich at Bank of America (April 12, 1950)*.

²¹⁰ Rejawan, xii

²¹¹ Ibid.

to Iraq.”²¹² By the turn of the century, these wealthy Jewish families constituted as much as 5% of the Jewish community.²¹³

In Baghdad, where most of the Jewish population was concentrated at the time, a relatively prosperous Jewish community developed. By 1824, there were approximately 1,500 Jewish families in the city, who were said to own most of the city’s commercial institutions. “The majority of them were relatively well-off, with some being wealthy and a small number being poor.”²¹⁴

Altogether, as was the case with many Jewish communities in the Middle East and North Africa, the Jewish community in Iraq was able to take advantage of the economic opportunities offered by the modernization of Iraq, by establishing international trading networks and acting as intermediaries between the local population and international markets. Bashkin, describing the Jewish community in Iraq on the cusp of British-induced modernity and the strong economic ties that Iraqi Jews established in India and other international trading stations, writes as follows:

*The integration of Iraq into the modern economy in the nineteenth century brought new opportunities for Iraqi Jews—the Baghdadis and Basrans in particular. British trade provided the network through which they subsequently established satellite communities in Bombay, Calcutta, Shanghai, Rangoon, and Hong Kong. Affluent families from these Indian communities made financial contributions to support various synagogues and schools in Baghdad. The Indian Iraqi community also established a print industry that published books and journals in Judeo-Arabic (Arabic written in Hebrew characters) for a Baghdadi Jewish readership. In addition, Jews benefited from the constitutional, administrative, and legal reforms undertaken by the Ottomans. They were appointed to new administrative councils in the province of Baghdad and represented Iraq in the Ottoman parliament. The substantial domestic migration of Iraqis to Baghdad included Jews, whose numbers increased from 3 percent of the city’s population in the beginning of the century to 35 percent at its end.*²¹⁵

Thus, the relatively successful integration of the Jewish community in Iraq to the economic, educational, and cultural aspects of a creeping modernity placed the community in a rising position compared to many of their Muslim compatriots in the country. A report describing the condition of the Jewish community of Baghdad in 1910, written by a translator working for the British Consulate in Baghdad, noted the socioeconomic breakdown of the Jewish community in the city as follows: “5 per cent rich and well-off classes (consisting almost entirely of merchants and bankers), 30 per cent middle class (consisting of petty traders, retail dealers, and employees), 60 per cent poor and 5 per cent beggars.”²¹⁶

The economic position of the Jews in Iraq became clearer as British Mandatory authorities, who had taken over the administrative responsibilities in the country following the

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Alexander, pg. 20.

²¹⁵ Bashkin, pg. 20.

²¹⁶ Shiblak, pg. 32.

imposition of the British Mandate in the early 1920s, recorded the levels of Jewish participation in the economy. For example,

[t]he extent of Jewish commercial dominance [was] expressed by their preponderant presence in Baghdad's leading commercial and financial institutions. In 1938–1939 ten of the twenty-five 'first class' members of the Baghdad Chamber of Commerce were Jews, and Jews comprised 43.2 percent of the chamber's 498 members. In 1936, thirty-five of the thirty-nine bankers and money changers in Baghdad were Jews.²¹⁷

Another description by Michael Eppel, Professor Emeritus of Middle Eastern history at the University of Haifa, describes the strength of Jewish participation in the Iraqi economy in the 1930s and 1940s:

The Jews had a tremendous impact on the Iraqi economy. They owned 75 percent of import companies, and in the 1930s, the biggest transport and trucking firm in Iraq was Jewish-owned. Three banks owned by Jews fulfilled a critical role in the country's finances. Until 1939, most of the board of directors of the Baghdad Chamber of Commerce were Jewish. Even in 1948, of the fifteen board members, six were Jewish; of 2,450 Chamber of Commerce members, 826 were Jewish. The first Iraqi minister of finance, Yehezkiel Sasson, was Jewish. Many Jews worked in the Ministry of Finance, the majority in the currency department. The director of the National Bank of Iraq was Jewish. Jews held pivotal positions in the Iraqi Railroad Company, particularly as members of the board of directors.²¹⁸

Meir-Glitzstein likewise describes the immense changes in the socioeconomic position of the Jews during the Mandatory period, noting Jews' strong representation in the state bureaucracy, the free professions, finance, and the import-export trade:

The structure of economic life also saw significant changes. Besides traditional occupations as artisans, grocers, retail trade and interest-loans, and in the Kurdistan region in agriculture, the government sector opened up to the Jews due to their loyalty to the regime and because of their administrative talents: a modern education and knowledge of English. Many were accepted to the offices of the Treasury, Law, Transportation and Public Works. Others worked as managers of trains, customs, mail and telegraph services – sensitive strategic assets that guaranteed British interests in Iraq. It is also noteworthy to mention the high number of Jews who worked for private companies, especially oil companies, for banks and the free professions: there were many judges, lawyers, doctors, pharmacists and more. More can be gleaned from the scope of Jewish employment in this area from statistics recorded in Israel by Jewish Iraqis: a quarter of all Jews who arrived from Iraq were employed in bureaucracy, management and the free professions.

The Jewish traders also improved their position. They supplied food and equipment to the British army and expanded trading relationships with member-countries of the British Empire. The accelerated economic development taking place in Iraq brought about an

²¹⁷ Rejwan, xii.

²¹⁸ Eppel, pgs. 89,90.

*increase in imports, an expanded variety of imported goods and the prosperity of the financial system, in which Jewish bankers and money-changers played a central role.*²¹⁹

The Jewish community continued to fare quite well once the British Mandate came to an official end and a quasi-independent Iraqi monarchy came to power. Indeed, the general economic conditions in Iraq underwent immense improvement. “Under the monarchy (1932- 58) Iraq saw a rapid growth in the size of the middle class. Indicative of this is the rising number of traders with annual incomes of more than 150 dinars (from 1,862 in 1932-33 to 5,445 in 1942-42).”²²⁰

Nissim Rejwan, who grew up in Baghdad as a young Jewish boy, described how the market would empty out when the Jews did not open their shops on the Sabbath and during Jewish holidays:

*The world outside the home was brought to a virtual standstill on Saturdays and on Jewish holidays. The bazaars were practically empty, and all commercial activity in the city’s main street ceased, with only a few scattered shops open. Not only did the Jews, who owned the overwhelming majority of shops and stores, close their business premises and refrain from doing any shopping themselves; non-Jews too followed suit, refusing to make purchases on Jewish holidays lest the owners of the few shops open take advantage of the situation and overcharge them for the goods they bought. There were also many cases of non-Jewish shop owners closing on these days, for lack of customers. This was the position so far as the large bazaars and the main street were concerned. In those neighborhoods in which Jews predominated numerically—although no single neighborhood was ever exclusively Jewish—business life tended to come to a total standstill, what with non-Jews closing their shops, peddlers refraining from business, and petty farmers staying home rather than bring their fresh fruit and vegetables to bazaars where no “serious” buyers were to be found.*²²¹

Moshe Gat, a scholar of the Iraqi Jewish community, also describes the economic situation of the Jews in Iraq around the early 1940s:

*This prosperous community was active in industry commerce and government services, which together accounted for 86 per cent of Jewish occupations. According to reports sent by the US and British embassies in that period, close to 75 per cent of the importers, retailers and wholesalers of imported goods were Jewish. Small businesses and internal trade were financed by the sarrafim (moneylenders), most of whom were Jews. Striking evidence of the important role of the Jews in commerce can be found in the publications of the Iraqi Bureau of Commerce in those years. Of 2,430 registered members of the Bureau 826 were Jews. Of these, 46 were classified as having assets of more than 50,000 dinars, 143 between 5,000-15,000 and the remained between 1,000-5,000 dinars. In addition, most of the local merchants, who were not registered in the Bureau (some 4,500 to 5,000) were Jews.*²²²

By the late 1940s, circa Iraqi Jews’ peak economic performance before the beginning of its mass departure from Iraq, their economic position was partly described by US Department

²¹⁹ Meir-Glitzstein, pg. 67.

²²⁰ Shiblak, pg. 32.

²²¹ Rejwan, pgs. 2,3.

²²² Gat, pg. 74.

of State officials as follows: “A high proportion (estimated at 75 percent) of Iraq’s import trade is in the hands of Jewish firms...since a high proportion (estimated at 50 percent) of importers, wholesalers and shopkeepers dealing in imported goods are Jews.”²²³ And “[a] high proportion of Baghdad’s more modern residential dwellings and business buildings are owned by Jews.”²²⁴ A British Foreign Office report noted that most of the bankers in Iraq in 1947 were Jews,²²⁵ while Sassoon notes that “about 85% of discount houses were owned by Jews.”²²⁶ Fischbach describes the economic success of the Jews in the country as follows: “...The urban Iraqi Jewish bourgeoisie was quite prosperous, having generated wealth from trading and banking. Jews were also very well represented within the professions and other sections of the middle classes.”²²⁷

By 1948, with the beginning of a series of economic sanctions and prohibitions on the Jewish community and Jewish-owned enterprises, “businesses owned by Jews were paralyzed; Jews were living on their savings alone.”²²⁸ As described above in Section 1 the Iraqi government’s actions to deport Jews from the country led to the eventual departure of over 90% of the Jewish community within three years. Poorer Jews and the middle class were the first to leave, having less to lose and feeling the burden of economic prohibitions and a broader unease about a future in Iraq. Israeli immigration officials, noting the demographic and economic data on Iraqi Jews arriving in the country documented Iraqi Jews’ class structure as follows: “about 70% are petit traders and persons without a profession, 15% were craftsmen...10% were administrators and practitioners of the free professions, 5% were property-owners of some sort.”²²⁹

Given the above, it is possible to ascertain the socioeconomic distribution of the Jewish community in 1948. By relying on the data collected by Israeli immigration officials, one can reach the following conclusions: 5% can be said to belong to the “Wealthy Class” of property-owners and otherwise large owners of capital and other assets; 10% to the “Upper-Middle Class” as members of the civil service and practitioners of a free profession; 15% to the “Middle Class” as craftsmen, artisans and merchants of different kinds; and 70% as “petit traders and persons without a profession,” to the “Lower-Middle Class” and “Poor Class”, due to the lack of a documented distinction.

Based on the socioeconomic breakdown above, together with the aforementioned conclusions on the size of the average household (4 persons) and the urban-rural divide (95% vs. 5%), the following table was assembled showing the distribution of Jewish households in Iraq according to class and location in 1948. Given, however, that no evidence was discovered of a class breakdown of the specifically-rural Jewish population in Iraq, it was resolved to allocate 100% of Jewish rural households to the Lower-Middle & Poor Class

²²³ Department of State, Division of Communications and Records, Telegraph Branch Airgram from Division of Near Eastern Affairs, March 3, 1949. Baghdad. Pg. 3

²²⁴ Department of State, Division of Communications and Records, Telegraph Branch Airgram from Division of Near Eastern Affairs, March 3, 1949. Baghdad. Pg. 4

²²⁵ Report on Economic Conditions in Iraq for Oct. 1947. FO 371/61661, E 10869/641/93.

²²⁶ Sassoon, pg. 108.

²²⁷ Fischbach, pg. 52.

²²⁸ ISA, MFA 2387/6 – ין. Iraqi Jewry – Seminar Paper by Yakir Yair, pg. 15

²²⁹ Eppel, pg. 13.

based on the understanding that rural Jews were mostly engaged in agriculture and other low-income occupations.

Table 11 - Jewish Socioeconomic Breakdown in Iraq, Distribution of Households per Class, 1948

Socioeconomic Class	Percentage of Jewish Households	Total No. of Households per Class	No. of Urban Households per Class	No. of Rural Households per Class
Wealthy & Upper-Middle²³⁰	15%	5,063	5,063	-
Middle	15%	5,063	5,063	-
Lower-Middle & Poor²³¹	70%	23,625	21,938	1,688
Total	100%	33,750	32,063	1,688

²³⁰ Wealthy and upper middle classes are assumed to represent 5% and 10% of the Jewish population, respectively.

²³¹ Lower middle and poor classes are assumed to 70 percent of the total Jewish population combined, due to a lack of documented distinction.

Section 3 – Land Distribution

This section will discuss the Iraqi land tenure system and its relevance to Jewish landownership in Iraq.

Iraqi Land Tenure System

The Ottoman land tenure system in the Mesopotamian provinces that today make up the country of Iraq consisted of three categories of land registration common in rural areas²³²:

- *Mulk*, or private (freehold) property, was land to which an individual held full rights of ownership and usufruct as a result of succession, sale, donation, or development
- *Waqf* was generally constituted from mulk as a permanent endowment to an Islamic religious foundation such as a mosque, a shrine, or one of the Holy Cities of Islam
- *Miri* was land to which the state held domanial rights and also direct control of usufruct

In 1858, the Ottoman Land Law, an Ottoman reform aimed at wresting control of landholdings away from tribal leaders and empowering the imperial bureaucracy, was instituted in parts of the imperial domain, including the Mesopotamian provinces (though the law would only take effect in the Mesopotamian provinces around 1872). The law was meant to weaken the tribes that controlled a large swath of fertile land and to consolidate a more independent and powerful peasantry with more control over their own landholdings. These changes, however, were only partly successful:

Implementation of the law, together with the changes in economic conditions which resulted from the expansion of trade and the growth of the market economy, contributed to the weakening and eventual crumbling of the tribal federations and gave the Ottoman rule and the city a position of supremacy over the tribes. However, notwithstanding the expectations of the Ottoman rulers, they did not succeed in establishing a strong, independent peasantry. The implementation of the law and the changeover to a market economy were exploited by traditional urban notables, who had found their place in the new Ottoman bureaucracy and had developed trade relations with the West, as well as by tribal notables, who sought to take over the lands of their tribes. This process, which continued into the first half of the twentieth century, gradually transformed the tribesmen into fellahin—landless or nearly landless serfs, while the tribal notables became major landowners with a guaranteed source of income: production for markets.²³³

Such was the condition of landownership in Iraq at the end of Ottoman rule. When the British assumed direct administrative control over all government functions in Iraq under the British Mandate in the early 1920s, they mostly kept the pre-existing land tenure system in place, though they did go about more meticulously surveying the land and registering it according to ownership.²³⁴ Later on, in the 1930s, two land reform initiatives were implemented, with the overall effect of strengthening tribal leaders' control over much of

²³² Batatu, pg. 74.

²³³ Eppel, pg. 5.

²³⁴ Al-Ossmi and Vian Ahmed, pg. 8.

Iraq's rural land, alongside the ability to register some lands as privately held land, "Tapu", or as "Lamza," which meant privately held land granted to those who might be able to cultivate the land for a period of at least 15 years. "In practice, within this short period, the Iraqi land system was slightly changed while most of the land regulations [remained] influenced by the old policy of feudalism and tribalism".²³⁵

The broader political strategy the British employed in their land registration scheme was to win over the loyalty of tribal sheiks, the main rationale being "the unwritten alliance between the sheikhs and the politicians, and the fact that tribal leaders were entering into partnership with politicians and urban merchants to develop their lands."²³⁶ Over time, this policy helped cement a deeply unequal system of land ownership in the country.²³⁷

Nevertheless, despite the efforts by the British to register all privately and publicly owned land in Iraq, "after eighteen years the cadastral survey – the cornerstone of the land settlement efforts – had covered only 54% of the area of Iraq's fourteen provinces and 29% of its total area."²³⁸

Table 12 - Area of Land Settled by the Cadastral Survey 1933–50, by Type of Tenure (Dunams)

Year	Mulk	Matruka	Waqf	Miri Granted in Tapu	Lazma	Miri Sif
1933	13,497	8,703	1,635	143,397	275,020	84,359
1934	4,236	16,916	-	316,400	374,390	334,502
1935	22,108	24,547	58,188	246,514	605,132	1,139,931
1936	10,424	7,655	43,866	112,626	290,373	437,905
1937	2,161	7,606	25,160	271,748	117,056	302,668
1938	520	22,414	17,772	290,408	556,406	1,064,678
1939	4,954	20,481	26,010	354,000	719,698	1,040,914
1940	11,579	61,937	9,622	405,665	579,410	1,183,141
1941	14,635	89,132	22,996	394,357	436,693	1,057,223
1942	18,342	113,009	90,637	484,030	585,369	2,115,684
1943	6,120	192,518	18,686	614,483	353,280	3,422,365
1944	8,223	148,709	14,104	409,535	439,420	3,049,647
1945	1,577	103,972	16,712	309,516	382,527	923,091
1946	6,622	174,830	39,855	1,059,573	401,663	1,442,041
1947	4,897	176,754	30,403	930,955	344,263	2,898,550
1948	5,998	117,060	67,323	687,737	354,087	7,086,542
Total	135,893	1,286,243	482,969	7,030,944	6,814,787	27,583,241

Source: Sassoon, pg. 160 – Derived from Statistical Abstract 1951, p. 133.

²³⁵ Ibid. pg. 9.

²³⁶ Sassoon, pg. 162.

²³⁷ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, pg. 502.

²³⁸ Sassoon, pg. 162.

By 1958, the total number of registered dunams considered privately-held land had doubled. The distribution, according to number of holders and the average area per holding, is shown below. The table shows that the condition of drastic inequality in landholding had not significantly changed since the end of the British Mandate (indeed, significant land reform would only be implemented after the overthrow of the Iraqi Monarchy in July, 1958).

Table 13 - Distribution of Privately Held Agricultural Land before the July 1958 Revolution

Size group (dunams)	Holders		Area		Average Area (dunams)
	Number	%	Dunams	%	
< 1	23,089	9.12	8,599	0.03	0.73
1 - 4	50,021	19.75	93,722	0.29	1.87
4 - 10	40,475	15.98	243,004	0.76	6.00
10 - 50	71,049	28.05	1,671,484	5.20	23.52
50 - 100	29,884	11.80	2,055,856	6.39	68.79
100 - 500	31,508	12.44	5,799,012	18.03	184.04
500 - 1,000	2,916	1.15	1,992,431	6.20	683.27
1,000 - 2,000	1,832	0.72	2,560,190	7.96	1,397.48
2,000 - 10,000	2,128	0.84	8,550,322	26.59	4,018.01
10,000 - 20,000	224	0.09	3,030,773	9.43	13,530.24
20,000 - 50,000	95	0.04	2,998,607	9.33	31,564.28
50,000 - 100,000	25	0.01	1,725,988	5.37	69,039.52
> 100,000	8	0.003	1,424,825	4.43	178,103.12
Total	253,254	100.00	32,154,813	100.00	-

Source: Batatu, pg. 54: "Iraq, Ministry of Agrarian Reform, February, 1964.

Jews and Rural Land Distribution

As was the case in Muslim lands where Jews were previously more engaged with agricultural pursuits, once Muslim rule was instituted, Jews were mostly prohibited from owning land and most deserted working with the land in favor of more artisanal occupations.

Given that the Ottoman administrative state did not successfully impose its laws and was at best a weak guarantor of security in the countryside, Jews did not bother to speculate in land in the Iraqi provinces, though there were, of course, exceptions. For example -

Manahim Daniel and other members of his family, who belonged to the "elite" of Baghdad Jewish society, owned large tracts of country round Hillah, in the Nasiriyyah district, and on the Gharraf. Their holdings were said in 1910 to be worth about 400,000 Turkish pounds. Eliahu Dannus, the banker of the British Residency for thirty years, and Shaul Sha 'shu 'ah,

an important sarraf, had considerable immovable property in and around Baghdad. Sha'shu'ah owned real estate also at Basrah and Karbala'. Moreover, the period immediately following the conquest of the country by Britain was marked by a vigorous advance in the acquisition of landed and house property by Jews and Christians, at least in Basrah... According to the British political officer of Basrah, the marked increase in Christian and Jewish holdings was "in keeping with the political situation." It was also apparently induced by a general expectation of a rapid rise in the price of property. All the same, the links of the Jewish merchants with the land remained relatively weak, and their role in the date and grain trade rather modest: in 1936, out of 104 concerns exporting dates, only 15 were Jewish, 211 and out of 79 concerns exporting or dealing wholesale in grain, only 11 were Jewish—and none of these was of major significance. The Moslem concerns numbered 57 and 43, respectively.²³⁹

Altogether, though it is known that a few Iraqi Jews owned land in Iraq circa 1948, more specific and comprehensive evidence of the scope and value of such holdings were not available at the time of the completion of this report.

²³⁹ Batatu, pgs. 260,261.

Section 4 – Valuation of Rural Assets

4.1 Objectives and Scope of Work

In this section, the condition of rural land and property ownership by Jews in Iraq is discussed.

4.2 Research Analytical Conclusions

Despite the fact that a detailed and comprehensive assessment of Jewish-ownership of rural land is not available, it is important to note the source material which touched on the existence of Jewish-owned rural land in Iraq.

As described in ‘Previous Valuation Attempts’ under Section 3 above, several of the previous valuation attempts which estimated the total scope and value of Jewish property in Iraq in 1948 specifically mentioned ownership of land as a separate category with its own valuation.

For example, the assessment by Minister of Minority Affairs Behor Shitrit in October 1949 estimated the total value of land owned by Jews in Iraq at 5,000,000 Israeli Liras.²⁴⁰ Another example, an AJC report on the general condition of Jews in Iraq in 1949 estimated the total value of Jewish-owned agricultural land and orchards at £1,500,000.²⁴¹

Evidence of Jewish ownership over agricultural lands is also present in the lost property claims collected by the Israeli Finance Ministry. The claims document, completed on the basis of 2,300 claimants (which yielded 5,017 property claims), showed losses of Jewish ownership over agricultural land in the amount of 714,110 Iraqi dinars.²⁴²

Evidence of Jewish landownership in Iraq also exists after the mass departure of Iraqi Jews from 1948-1951. Hanna Batatu, a Palestinian academic and the author of *The old social classes and the revolutionary movements of Iraq: A study of Iraq's old landed and commercial classes and of its communists, Ba'thists, and free officers*, listed the largest landowners in Iraq in 1958: “In 1958, out of Iraq’s seven biggest landowners, that is, owners of over 100,000 dunums of land, six were Shiites. In the same year, of the total of 49 families owning more than 30,000 dunums or an aggregate of 5,457,354 dunums, 23 were Shiite Arab, 14 Sunni Arab, 11 Kurdish, and 1 Jewish. The Shiite families alone possessed 44.3 percent of the whole area. The others held 30.8 percent, 24.1 percent, and 0.8 percent respectively.”²⁴³ Thus, on the basis of this fact alone, Jews owned at least 43,658.8 dunams of rural land in Iraq, albeit in 1958. This is the extent of relevant evidence that directly ties Jewish ownership to rural assets in Iraq.

²⁴⁰ CZA, S20/583. “Moving Jewish property abroad (1949 – 1951).” “Notarized Assessment of Total Iraqi Jewish Property, 21/10/1949” (translated from Hebrew.)

²⁴¹ AJCA, “A General Report on the Conditions of the Jewish Community in Iraq.” Undated but enclosed to P.184 on 18/11/49.

²⁴² “Transfer of Wealth from Iraq (1791 - 1 (MFA)).” Total of 2300 Declarations (Comprising 5017 Lawsuits) Received by our Offices for Documenting Foreign Lawsuits by Iraqi Olim by 1/8/52 (7/8/52).

²⁴³ Batatu, pg. 49.

Despite these assessments not providing a comprehensive assessment of specifically Jewish landownership, they do provide historical documentation of Jewish ownership over agricultural lands as of 1949. For the purpose of this report, the value of rural assets owned by Jews in Iraq in 1948 will be drawn from the 2,300 claimants collected by the Israeli Finance Ministry, which quantifies the 1949 value of Agricultural Land lost at 714,110 Iraqi Dinar.²⁴⁴ This document provides the best available historical information at this time.

Table 14 - Value of Jewish-Owned Rural Assets in Iraq, (\$, 1948)

Value of Agricultural Land Claim (Iraqi Dinar, 1949)²⁴⁵	Value of Agricultural Land Claim (USD, 1949)²⁴⁶	Total Value of Agricultural Land Claim (USD, 1948)²⁴⁷
714,110	2,877,863	2,906,148

²⁴⁴ ISA “Transfer of Wealth from Iraq (1791 - 1 (MFA)).” Total of 2300 Declarations (Comprising 5017 Lawsuits) Received by our Offices for Documenting Foreign Lawsuits by Iraqi Olim by 1/8/52 (7/8/52)

²⁴⁵ ISA “Transfer of Wealth from Iraq (1791 - 1 (MFA)).” Total of 2300 Declarations (Comprising 5017 Lawsuits) Received by our Offices for Documenting Foreign Lawsuits by Iraqi Olim by 1/8/52 (7/8/52)

²⁴⁶ Based on the 1949 exchange rate of 4.03 USD to 1 Iraqi Dinar ; “Exchange Rates Selected Indicators.” IMF data. Accessed August 28, 2024. <https://data.imf.org/regular.aspx?key=61545850>.

²⁴⁷ <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/about-us/monetary-policy/inflation-calculator>

Section 5 – Valuation of Urban Assets

5.1 Objectives and Scope of Work

This section will carry out a valuation of urban land and urban property owned by Jews in Iraq.

5.2 Research Analytical Conclusions

Section 3 described the economic condition of the Jewish community in Iraq in the second half of the twentieth century. The disproportionately strong economic presence of the Jewish community, combined with the fact that Jews were overwhelmingly an urban community, lends itself to the conclusion that Jews must have constituted a strong economic force in urban affairs, including ownership of urban real estate. Indeed, US Department of State officials even mentioned that “[a] high proportion of Baghdad’s more modern residential dwellings and business buildings are owned by Jews.”²⁴⁸

In addition, as described in ‘Previous Valuation Attempts’ under Chapter 3 Section 3 above, several of the previous valuation attempts which estimated the total scope and value of Jewish property in Iraq in 1948 specifically mentioned ownership of real estate, or urban assets, as a separate category with its own valuation.

For example, an AJC report on the general condition of Jews in Iraq in 1949 estimated the total value of Jewish-owned urban assets at £27,000,000.²⁴⁹ An assessment by officials at the British Embassy in Baghdad, based on data obtained from three British banks and from Jewish sources in Iraq (i.e. “from the Jewish Rabbi and from certain Jewish citizens”), notes two estimates of the value of Jewish real estate ownership in Iraq: the former estimated the total value of Jewish-owned immovable property in Iraq at 4-5 million Iraqi Dinars while Jewish sources put the value of Jewish-owned immovable property in Iraq at 12-15 million Iraqi Dinars.²⁵⁰

These mentions, however helpful they may be to trying to piece together a plausible assessment of Jewish ownership of urban assets in Iraq in the late 1940s, do not amount to a substantive estimate of these assets. For this reason, the report will rely on evidence collected to assess the scope and value of urban assets owned by Jews in Iraq in 1948.

Evidence of Jewish ownership over urban assets is present in the lost property claims collected by the Israeli Finance Ministry. The claims document, completed on the basis of 2,300 claimants (which yielded 5,017 property claims), showed losses of Jewish ownership over urban assets in the amount of 5,871,825 Iraqi dinars.²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ Department of State, Division of Communications and Records, Telegraph Branch Airgram from Division of Near Eastern Affairs, March 3, 1949. Baghdad. Pg. 4.

²⁴⁹ AJCA, “A General Report on the Conditions of the Jewish Community in Iraq.” Undated but enclosed to P.184 on 18/11/49 –Including constructed buildings and lands

²⁵⁰ C.S. 3571/10/55. Memo from R.W. Munro, First Commercial Secretary at the British Embassy to the Levant Department at the British Foreign Ministry. April 13, 1955.

²⁵¹ “Transfer of Wealth from Iraq (1791 - 1 (MFA)).” Total of 2300 Declarations (Comprising 5017

The combination of the estimates given in the past and the total value posed by the claims process of the early 1950s produce partial results that are beneficial to understanding the development of the process of registering Jewish property losses in Iraq. They do not, however, represent a detailed and comprehensive assessment of lost Jewish assets in the country.

For this purpose, the most relevant and comprehensive information regarding the scope and value of urban assets owned by Jews in Iraq in 1948 is drawn from testimonial data collected from Jewish refugees from Iraq over a larger number of years than the claims report discussed above. As mentioned in Chapter 2 these testimonials were drawn from Jews fleeing from Iraq beginning in 1948 and were collected both in the period of mass departure and many years afterwards as well. The average value of urban assets per class is drawn from the data based on the aforementioned testimonial methodology described in Chapter 2 of this report. The summarized data is presented below:

Table 15 –Value of Jewish-Owned Urban Assets in Iraq, (\$, 1948)²⁵²

Socioeconomic Class	Median Value of Urban Assets	No. of Urban Households per Class	Total Value per Class
Wealthy & Upper Middle	25,933	5,063	131,287,230
Middle	12,967	5,063	65,643,615
Lower Middle & Poor	4,798	21,938	105,248,666
Total	43,698	32,063	302,179,511

The weighted average value of urban assets per Jewish household across all socioeconomic classes as per the data analyzed is \$9,425.

Lawsuits)Received by our Offices for Documenting Foreign Lawsuits by Iraqi Olim by 1/8/52 (7/8/52).

²⁵² Source: Testimonial Data.

Section 6 – Valuation of the Loss of Employment

6.1 Objectives and Scope of Work

In this section a valuation of the total employment losses of employed Jews in Iraq was provided, proceeding from the premise that employed Jews in Iraq are entitled to compensation for lost income based on their yearly wages for a determinate amount of time of three years after a baseline date.

6.2 Research Analytical Conclusions

As described in Section 3 above, several sources listed the occupational distribution of Jews in Iraq circa the late 1940s. For example, the assessment by Minister of Minority Affairs Behor Shitrit in October 1949 listed the distribution of employed Iraqi Jews as follows: “Light industry and store-owners (12,000); Civil servants and administrators (6,000); Merchants (2,500); Independent Employment such as: doctors, pharmacists, lawyers, engineers (1,000); Lower economic strata: Household work, portage (8,500); Total (30,000).”²⁵³

What is missing from this assessment, however, is information regarding the income generated by these types of occupations. For both a more detailed distribution of occupations and a general income per capita for all Iraqis’ information presented in the section below was relied on.

Shiblak and Yehuda both collected Israeli immigration statistics to present a distribution of occupation amongst Iraqi Jews who arrived in Israel in 1950-51. These figures reflect a center of gravity around what would be considered to include “Upper-Middle Class” occupations (professional and technical occupations), “Middle Class” occupations (administrative and clerical, commerce and transport occupations), and “Lower-Middle Class” occupations (crafts and industry, building, agriculture). To this extent, the occupational distribution shown below does not overlap with the socioeconomic distribution of the entire Jewish population of Iraq described above in Section 3, but it does reflect the strongest empirical evidence collected on the matter.

²⁵³ CZA, S20/583. “Moving Jewish property abroad (1949 – 1951).” “Notarized Assessment of Total Iraqi Jewish Property, 21/10/1949” (translated from Hebrew.)

Table 16 - Distribution of Occupation Amongst Iraqi Jews Who Arrived in Israel, 1950/51

Occupation	Male	Female	Percentage of Total
Professional and Technical	1,018	272	5.13%
Medicine	221	138	1.43%
Education	365	130	1.96%
Engineering	148	-	0.59%
Administrative and Clerical	3,383	64	13.70%
Commerce	6,180	34	24.70%
Agriculture	688	39	2.89%
Transport	469	1	1.87%
Crafts and Industry	5,747	922	26.50%
Clothing	1,368	887	8.96%
Unskilled Workers	1,621	33	6.57%
Building	299	2	1.20%
Personal Services	743	277	4.05%
Not Specified	105	7	0.45%
Total	22,355	2,806	100%

Source: Shiblak, pg. 34; Yehuda, pg. 55

Regarding the correspondent level of income per occupation, no relevant materials were discovered at this time that could help shed light on the relative income for Iraqi Jews per occupation. Instead, data was found showing the average annual per capita income in Iraq in 1949. This amounts to \$85 per capita.²⁵⁴ For context, this figure is lower than the average annual per capita income in neighboring Syria (\$100) and Lebanon (\$125) in 1949. Part of the reason for this low figure concerns the fact that Iraq had a very young population at the time, depressing the average figure. It can also be fairly assumed, judging by the aforementioned accounts of the relatively enhanced socioeconomic position enjoyed by the Jewish community compared to the majority Arab population in Iraq, that this figure is not very representative of the Jewish average annual income per capita. Therefore, it was resolved not to use this figure in its calculations of lost Jewish income.

Absent an income distribution that correlates to the specific occupational distribution among Iraqi Jews, and absent further information on consumption indices indicative of the cost of living in Iraq at the time, it was resolved to proceed with the valuation of loss of employment on the basis of the average GDP per capita in Iraq at the time. This figure accounts for the productivity level per capita; so, while it is neither representative of income nor of the cost of living, it does give a sense of each person's contribution to the economy. The closest GDP per capita figure in Iraq that was discovered was for 1950. In this year, the GDP per capita was \$191.30.255 Using the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis' Inflation Calculator, the

²⁵⁴ Sassoon, pg. 18 – Based on United Nations, *Final Report of the United Nations Economic Survey Mission for the Middle East* (UN 1949), part i, p.43.

²⁵⁵ Alnasrawi, pg. 152.

1948 USD value was \$191.10.²⁵⁶ Without more accurate information for the year 1948, this figure will be applied to the 135,000 Jews living in Iraq at the time and more specifically to approximately 30%²⁵⁷ who were employed.

As with previous iterations of this section in previous country reports, in order to complete the valuation of lost employment, losses are calculated for a period of three years by multiplying the total employment losses as of 1948 (\$7,739,550²⁵⁸) by 3 for a total of **\$23,218,650**.

²⁵⁶ <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/about-us/monetary-policy/inflation-calculator>

²⁵⁷ Based on best estimates.

²⁵⁸ Calculated by multiplying 40,500 (30% of 135,000) the 1948 USD value of GDP per capita of \$191.10.

Section 7 – Valuation of Personal Property & Moveable Assets

7.1 Objectives and Scope of Work

As part of the aggregate valuation of all Jewish-owned assets in Iraq in 1948, a valuation was conducted of the total scope of personal property and moveable assets that were owned by Jews in Iraq. For the purposes of this report, personal property and moveable assets include cash, gold and silver, jewelry, private vehicles, commodity stocks, financial assets, clothing, household goods and furniture.

7.2 Research Analytical Conclusions

With regard to the private property and moveable assets of Jews in Iraq, few sources discuss in any level of detail the scope or value of different types of moveable assets that Jews owned at the time. As with other categories of lost property, however, this property type was mentioned in previous assessments of lost Jewish property in Iraq. As described in ‘Previous Valuation Attempts’ under Chapter 3, Section 1 above, several of the previous valuation attempts which estimated the total scope and value of Jewish property in Iraq in 1948 specifically mentioned ownership of moveable assets as a separate category with its own valuation.

An AJC report on the general condition of Jews in Iraq in 1949 estimated the total value of Jewish-owned private property and moveable assets at £13,000,000.²⁵⁹ An assessment by officials at the British Embassy in Baghdad, as mentioned above, based on data obtained from three British banks and from Jewish sources in Iraq, notes two estimates of the value of Jewish moveable assets in Iraq: the former estimated the total value of Jewish-owned moveable assets in Iraq at 1-2 million Iraqi Dinars while Jewish sources put the value of Jewish-owned moveable assets in Iraq at 3-6 million Iraqi Dinars.²⁶⁰

These assessments, however, are incomplete, and ought to be augmented by the data compiled and analyzed in the many property claims processed for the purposes of this report, as shown below.

Evidence of Jewish ownership of moveable assets is present in the lost property claims collected by the Israeli Finance Ministry. The claims document, completed on the basis of 2,300 claimants (which yielded 5,017 property claims), showed losses of Jewish-owned moveable assets, including private property, bank assets, securities, mortgages, commercial contracts, insurance contracts, confiscated monies, pensions and provident funds, in the amount of 2,830,285 Iraqi Dinars.²⁶¹

The combination of the estimates given in the past and the total value posed by the claims process of the early 1950s produce partial results that are beneficial to understanding the

²⁵⁹ AJCA, “A General Report on the Conditions of the Jewish Community in Iraq.” Undated but enclosed to P.184 on 18/11/49 – Including Credit accounts, mortgages, cash, jewelry and gold, furniture and fittings.

²⁶⁰ C.S. 3571/10/55. Memo from R.W. Munro, First Commercial Secretary at the British Embassy to the Levant Department at the British Foreign Ministry. April 13, 1955.

²⁶¹ “Transfer of Wealth from Iraq (1791 - 1 (MFA)).” Total of 2300 Declarations (Comprising 5017 Lawsuits). Received by our Offices for Documenting Foreign Lawsuits by Iraqi Olim by 1/8/52 (7/8/52)

development of the process of registering Jewish property losses in Iraq. They do not, however, represent a detailed and comprehensive assessment of lost Jewish assets in the country.

For this purpose, the most relevant and comprehensive information regarding the scope and value of moveable assets owned by Jews in Iraq in 1948 is drawn from testimonial data collected from Jewish refugees from Iraq over a larger number of years than the claims report shown above. As mentioned in Chapter 2, these testimonials were drawn from Jews fleeing from Iraq beginning in 1948 and were collected both in the period of mass departure and many years afterwards as well. The average value of moveable assets per class is drawn from the data based on the aforementioned testimonial methodology described in Chapter 2 of this report. The summarized data from these claims is presented below:

Table 17 - Value of Jewish-Owned Moveable Assets in Iraq (\$, 1948)²⁶²

Socioeconomic Class	Median Value of Moveable Assets	No. of Households per Class	Total Value per Class
Wealthy & Upper-Middle	15,871	5,063	80,349,368
Middle	5,630	5,063	28,503,394
Lower Middle & Poor	1,297	23,625	30,633,593
Total	22,798	33,750	139,486,354

The analysis of moveable assets across all socioeconomic classes per Jewish household shows a weighted average value of moveable assets per household of \$4,133.

²⁶² Source: Testimonial Data.

Figure 9 - Example of Evidence for Moveable Assets That was Found Not as Part of Official Claim

List of Insurance Policies found in Archives of Joint Distribution Committee

Name	Surname	Country	Company	Value	Remarks
Benjamin	Abouharoun	France	Helvetia-Vie	110	Paid up premiums (in daughter's name)
Isaac	Benchitrit	France	Helvetia-Vie	500	
Andre	Guened	France	Helvetia-Vie	150	
Maurice	Levi	France	Helvetia-Vie		2 policies
Jacques	Pesach	France	Helvetia	700	
Marie Josephine	Salanta	France	Helvetia-Vie	200	
Elie	Tayeb	France	Helvetia-Vie	1550	Various policies
Joseph Adolphe	Bianco	England	Helvetia-Vie	1550	
Robert Aubert	Joory	Brazil	Helvetia-Vie		
Felix	Barazani	Brazil	Helvetia-Vie	84	Premiums paid -- 2 policies
Salomon	Schouchana	Brazil	Helvetia-Vie	200	4 policies
Mayer	Gian	Brazil	Helvetia-Vie	169,500 (?)	

Name	Surname	Country	Company	Value	Remarks
Saay	Ariew	France	Prudential	400	
Benjamin	Benderley	France	Prudential	600	Children in England looking after it
Ernest	Chonchol	France	Prudential	396	
Elie	Eman	France	Prudential	1500	
Jacques	Pessach	France	Prudential	700	
Elie	Sasson	France	Prudential	500	
Maurice N.S.	Franco	Brazil	Prudential	1700	2 policies
Moise Isaac	Daiva	Brazil	Prudential	500	
Samuel	Benveniste	Kenya	Prudential	1600	2 policies

Name	Surname	Country	Company	Value	Remarks
Ezekiel	Barouk	France	Sun Life	5500	3 policies
Isidore	Bentata	France	Sun Life	3000	2 policies
Leopold	Cohen	France	Sun Life		Group insurance
David Leon	Mizrahi	France	Sun Life	1000	3 policies
Lebech	Saldinger	France	Sun Life	1300	
David	Yerouchaimi	France	Sun Life	870	
Haim	Zerwal	France	Sun Life	500	400 paid-Swiss consulate
Marie	Chamia	France	Sun Life	365	Paid premiums
Joseph Adolphe	Bianco	England	Sun Life	3000	
Joseph	Sattiel	Holland	Sun Life	195	

Name	Surname	Country	Company	Value	Remarks
Isaac	Bitran	France	Genevoise	215	110 paid-up premiums
Maurice N.S.	Franco	Brazil	La Genevoise	1700	

Name	Surname	Country	Company	Value	Remarks
Leon	Coehen	France	Alexandria Insurance	150	3 policies

Name	Surname	Country	Company	Value	Remarks
Emile	Harari	France	Misir Ass.	800	Matured
Roger	Israel	France	Misir Ass.	500	
Marco	Khairy	France	Misir Ass.	1500	
Maurice	Khoraief	France	Misir Ass.		
Charles	Zayan	France	Misir Life Ins.	2500	Premiums paid
Samuel	Benveniste	Kenya	Misir Ins. (Gresham)	500	

Name	Surname	Country	Company	Value	Remarks
Leon	Saig	France	Gresham	1000	At Swiss consulate
Mourad	Esses	England	Gresham	611,904 (?)	
Raoul	Levy-Carasso	England	Gresham	266,430 (?)	Premiums paid
Donald	Tammam	England	Gresham	500	2 policies

Name	Surname	Country	Company	Value	Remarks
David Leon	Mizrahi	France	Manufacturers	600	2 policies
Albert	Nissim	France	Manufacturers	5000	1500 paid premiums
Elie	Sasson	France	Manufacturers	1000	
Lebech	Saldinger	France	Manufacturers	1300	1150 paid premiums
Marie	Chamla	France	Manufacturers	310	Paid premiums
Joseph	Sofais	England	Manufacturers	2050	3 policies
Maurice	Banoun	Italy	Manufacturers		
Maurizio	Riches	Italy	Manufacturers		
Alberto Naftali	Ogiaivo	Italy	Manufacturers	600	
Jose	Capuano	Greece	Manufacturers	1000	2 policies

Name	Surname	Country	Company	Value	Remarks
Lebech	Saldinger	France	Pearl	1300	
I.J.	Carolla	Brazil	Pearl		

Name	Surname	Country	Company	Value	Remarks
Joseph	Sofais	England	Union Vie	2050	3 policies
I.J.	Carolla	Brazil	Union Vie		
Joseph Raphael	Mizrahi	Brazil	Union Vie	1600	3 policies
Joseph	Saltiel	Holland	Union de Paris	55	

Name	Surname	Country	Company	Value	Remarks
Abramino S.	Levy	Brazil	National	500	
I.J.	Carolla	Brazil	National		
Moise Isaac	Dalva	Brazil	National	500	

Name	Surname	Country	Company	Value	Remarks
Abramino S.	Levy	Brazil	Colonial	500	
Joseph	Saltiel	Holland	Colonial Ass.	75	

Name	Surname	Country	Company	Value	Remarks
Victor	Ninio	Brazil	Scottish Widows Fund	1700	

Name	Surname	Country	Company	Value	Remarks
Samuel	Benveniste	Kenya	Alexandria	100	2 policies

Name	Surname	Country	Company	Value	Remarks
Samuel	Benveniste	Kenya	Egyptian Insurance	200	3 policies

Notes:

The currency is most likely pounds sterling.

The value marked may reflect a combination of policies.

Source: MOJ/ WOJAC

Section 8 – Valuation of Business Losses

8.1 Objectives and Scope of Work

This section carries out a valuation of the business losses suffered by Jews in Iraq. For the purposes of this project, business losses will rely on the overall value of each business, as specific revenue streams are currently unavailable.

8.2 Research Analytical Conclusions

Section 3 described the outsized role that Jews played in the Iraqi economy throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Various sources noted their disproportionate ownership share in the import-export businesses, mercantile houses, as wholesalers and shopkeepers and their strong presence in Iraq's banks and financial industry. US Department of State officials even mentioned that "[a] high proportion of Baghdad's more modern residential dwellings and business buildings are owned by Jews."²⁶³ A British Foreign Office report noted that most of the bankers in Iraq in 1947 were Jews;²⁶⁴ Sassoon wrote that "about 85% of discount houses were owned by Jews."²⁶⁵ Thus, it is no stretch of reality to suggest a large loss of business assets among Iraqi Jews. However, most of the source material consulted does not peripherally or directly confront the question of the scope and/or value of business assets owned by Jews in Iraq. Most of the material that does touch on the issue mentions the Jewish community's primary role in the economy and a few standout firms and families are mentioned repeatedly, but little analysis of the total scope of Jewish businesses in Iraq at the time seems to exist.

As with other property categories, previous valuation attempts concerning the lost property of Jews in Iraq directly address the question of business losses. For example, an AJC report on the general condition of Jews in Iraq in 1949 estimated the total value of Jewish-owned businesses and capital lost in 1948 at £12,000,000.²⁶⁶ But this is not sufficient.

Evidence of Jewish-owned businesses is present in the lost property claims collected by the Israeli Finance Ministry. The claims document, completed on the basis of 2,300 claimants (which yielded 5,017 property claims), showed Jewish-owned business losses, including lost commercial and industrial factories and confiscated business inventory, in the amount of 3,316,775 Iraqi Dinars.²⁶⁷

The combination of the estimates given in the past and the total value posed by the claims process of the early 1950s produce partial results that are beneficial to understanding the development of the process of registering Jewish property losses in Iraq. They do not,

²⁶³ Department of State, Division of Communications and Records, Telegraph Branch Airgram from Division of Near Eastern Affairs, March 3, 1949. Baghdad. Pg. 4.

²⁶⁴ Report on Economic Conditions in Iraq for Oct. 1947. FO 371/61661, E 10869/641/93.

²⁶⁵ Sassoon, pg. 108.

²⁶⁶ AJCA, "A General Report on the Conditions of the Jewish Community in Iraq." Undated but enclosed to P.184 on 18/11/49 – Including goods in stock, margins paid on L/Cs for goods, capital of small local dealers, government loans, shares with trading corporations, and factories.

²⁶⁷ "Transfer of Wealth from Iraq (1791 - 1 (MFA))." Total of 2300 Declarations (Comprising 5017 Lawsuits) Received by our Offices for Documenting Foreign Lawsuits by Iraqi Olim by 1/8/52 (7/8/52).

however, represent a detailed and comprehensive assessment of lost Jewish assets in the country.

For this purpose, the most relevant and comprehensive information regarding the scope and value of urban assets owned by Jews in Iraq in 1948 is drawn from testimonial data collected from Jewish refugees from Iraq over a larger number of years than the claims report shown above. As mentioned in Section 2, these testimonials were drawn from Jews fleeing from Iraq beginning in 1948 and were collected both in the period of mass departure and many years afterwards. For the purpose of valuing this section, reliance was based on data collected from the aforementioned testimonials:

Table 18 - Value of Jewish Businesses Lost per Class in Iraq (\$, 1948)²⁶⁸

Socioeconomic Class	Median Value of Business Losses	No. of Households per Class	Total Value per Class
Wealthy & Upper-Middle	20,747	5,063	105,029,764
Middle	7,780	5,063	39,386,149
Lower Middle	2,593	11,138	28,883,213
Total	31,120	21,263	173,299,125

The analysis of business losses across all socioeconomic classes per Jewish household shows a weighted average value of business losses per household in the sum of \$8,150.

²⁶⁸ Source: Testimonial Data. Note that there is no “Poor” category, as it was assumed that the poor did not own businesses and in accordance with the Testimonial Data.

Section 9 – Communal Losses

9.1 Objectives and Scope of Work

In addition to private ownership by Jewish individuals throughout Iraq, the various Jewish communities in the country owned communal assets that belonged to the Jewish community as a whole. This section is meant to assess the extent and value of assets owned by the Jewish communities in Iraq. Such assets include synagogues, cemetery land, other communal assets such as mikvahs, schools, hospitals, community centers, Zionist organizations, as well as holy books and other moveable assets. Similar to other sections, the extent and value of Jewish communal property in Iraq will be calculated on the best evidence available.

9.2 Research Analytical Conclusions

In the course of researching the matter of lost Jewish communal property in Iraq, two assessments were encountered that touched on the issue of communal assets. The first, an assessment by Minister of Minority Affairs Behor Shitrit, assessed the value of Jewish public property, synagogues, schools, etc. at IL 2 million,²⁶⁹ though the basis for this estimation is unknown. Another estimate, conducted by the AJC in a report on the general condition of Jews in Iraq in 1949 estimated the total value of Jewish-owned community assets at £1,500,000.²⁷⁰ These estimates, however, are general in scope and low in their estimation of the value of all Jewish communal assets in Iraq. More detailed information regarding the scope and value of Jewish owned assets in Iraq is shown below.

From the general background information discussed in the sections above regarding the Jewish community in Iraq during the first half of the twentieth century, it is evident that the Jewish community in the country was robust and rooted in its surroundings. For the most part it maintained autonomous control over relevant community functions, such as education and religious congregation, and also invested in other public facilities such as hospitals. The source material consulted for the purposes of valuating the scope and value of Jewish communal property in Iraq in 1948 leaves no doubt that community property was substantial at the time.

Regarding Jewish educational facilities owned by the Jewish community, there is evidence to suggest Jewish ownership of at least 15 Jewish schools in Iraq up until the 1920s. As described in Chapter 2, the leaders of the Jewish community recognized the importance of a modern education and the utility of knowing European languages. This led to a request to the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* to open a modern Jewish school in Bagdad. “Between 1864 - 1914, 15 schools for boys and girls were opened in Iraq and in the 1920s, ownership of the schools passed into the hands of the Jewish community.”²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ CZA, S20/583. “Moving Jewish property abroad (1949 – 1951).” “Notarized Assessment of Total Iraqi Jewish Property, 21/10/1949” (translated from Hebrew.)

²⁷⁰ AJCA, “A General Report on the Conditions of the Jewish Community in Iraq.” Undated but enclosed to P.184 on 18/11/49.

²⁷¹ Meir-Glitzstein, pg. 66.

Table 16 - Schools Supervised by the Jewish Community in Baghdad

Year	No. of Schools	No. of Pupils	Budget in Iraqi Dinar
1920	8	5,511	-
1930	11	7,182	22,900.00
1935	12	7,911	19,700.00
1945	14	10,021	57,500.00
1949	20	10,391	80,300.00

Source: Shiblak, pg. 24

Evidence of more widespread Jewish ownership of schools is documented in a seminar paper on Iraqi Jewry, completed in 1955 by Yakir Yair. The paper shows the full extent of Jewish schools owned and operated by the Jewish community in 1950. In Baghdad alone, Yair lists a total of 16 educational facilities supported by the Jewish community, 10 private Jewish schools and 6 vocational schools. In other Iraqi cities, the total number of schools amounts to another 10 schools owned by the Jewish community in Iraq.²⁷²

²⁷² ISA, MFA 2387/6 – ףן. Iraqi Jewry – Seminar Paper by Yakir Yair, pgs. 39, 40

Figure 10 - Sample List of Jewish-Owned Educational Facilities in Iraq, 1950

שנה	מס' חדרים	מס' בנים	מס' בנות	שם המוסד	שנת הקמה	מס' חדרים	מס' בנים	מס' בנות
א. בתי ספר יסודיים								
1100	34	22	8	ע עממי דתי	1822	1100	34	22
300	20	14	6	"	1907	300	20	14
988	25	20	8	תיכון	1934	988	25	20
1888	38	29	9	"	1933	1888	38	29
719	25	15	10	גמנסיה	1928	719	25	15
549	15	11	4	עממי	1923	549	15	11
399	16	11	5	"	1909	399	16	11
393	12	9	3	"	1920	393	12	9
1177	35	25	10	"	1925	1177	35	25
532	15	10	5	גמנסיה	1949	532	15	10
309	10	6	4	"	1941	309	10	6
452	12	9	3	עממי	1928	452	12	9
435	12	8	4	גן-ידידים	1946	435	12	8
354	10	8	2	עממי	1948	354	10	8
266	10	8	2	"	1902	266	10	8
228	10	6	4	תיכון	1924	228	10	6
10458	399	313				10458	399	313
ב. בתי ספר פרטיים								
430	15	11	4	עממי	1909	430	15	11
380	12	10	2	"	1919	380	12	10
250	8	6	2	"	1942	250	8	6
120	6	4	2	"	1946	120	6	4
230	8	6	2	"	1946	230	8	6
160	6	4	2	"	1943	160	6	4
120	4	3	1	גן-ידידים	1947	120	4	3
250	8	6	2	עממי	1946	250	8	6
250	8	6	2	"	1946	250	8	6
150	6	4	2	"	1946	150	6	4
ג. בתי ספר פאנצ'וריים ובהם גם לימודי חשבון								
350	10	10	0	עממי	1939	350	10	10
120	4	4	0	תיכון	1910	120	4	4
100	6	4	0	גבוה	1941	100	6	4
13448	400	321				13448	400	321
ד. בתי ספר חקלאיים								
300	10	5	5	עממי דתי	1900	300	10	5
450	12	6	6	"	1905	450	12	6

Source: ISA, MFA 2387/6 – ת.ח. Iraqi Jewry – Seminar Paper by Yakir Yair, pg. 39

In what appears to be the most comprehensive and detailed account of Jewish ownership of communal property in Baghdad, an Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs document lists all known communal properties in the city, including hospitals schools, synagogues, cemeteries and the like. The compilation of these materials was directed by Mordechai Ben-Porat, then a representative of the Mossad le-Aliyah Bet operating in Iraq.²⁷³ The valuation took into consideration relevant information about each building, including surface area and building works, on the basis of prices in 1947/48. The total is shown below:

²⁷³ Interview, Mordechai-Ben Porat.

Table 19 - Jewish Communal Property in Baghdad, 1947/48

Location/Property	Value (Iraqi dinars, 1947/48)	Value (\$, 1947/48) ²⁷⁴
Baghdad		
Hospitals	350,220	1,411,387
Menahem Dani'el Family Waqf	832,000	3,352,960
Schools	481,000	1,938,430
Waqf in the name of the Lay Council	45,000	181,350
Rivka Nura'il Waqf	233,200	939,796
No'am and Tuba Nura'il Waqf	100,000	403,000
Synagogues	154,500	622,635
Midrash	60,000	241,800
Old and new cemeteries	290,500	1,170,715
Subtotal	2,546,420	10,262,073
al-Hindiyya, al-Hilla, and al-Kifl		
Menahem Dani'el Family Waqf	21,200	85,436
Societies with Waqf for which no information could be obtained		
Hevra Kadisha	-	-
Dorshei Torah	-	-
Tomkhei Torah	-	-
Total	2,567,620	10,347,509

Source: ISA (130) 2563/6, Jewish Inalienable Properties in Baghdad (March 7, 1951).

Nevertheless, the table above does not represent a comprehensive list of all Jewish communal property in Iraq, but those in Baghdad only. A comprehensive listing of Jewish communal property in Jewish population centers outside of Baghdad was not located. To supplement this partial listing of Jewish communal property in Iraq, the report proceeded on the basis of a population model. In 1948, the Jewish population in Baghdad, which amounted to approximately 90,000 Jews²⁷⁵, representing approximately two thirds of the total Jewish population in the country. On this basis, without a more concrete reference point, one third of the total value listed above was added to the value of Jewish communal property in Iraq in 1948.

²⁷⁴ Based on the 1948 exchange rate of 4.03 USD to 1 Iraqi Dinar; "Exchange Rates Selected Indicators." IMF data. Accessed August 28, 2024. <https://data.imf.org/regular.aspx?key=61545850>.

²⁷⁵ Meir-Glitzstein, pg. 65

Table 20 - Total Value of Jewish-Owned Communal Property in Iraq, (\$, 1948)

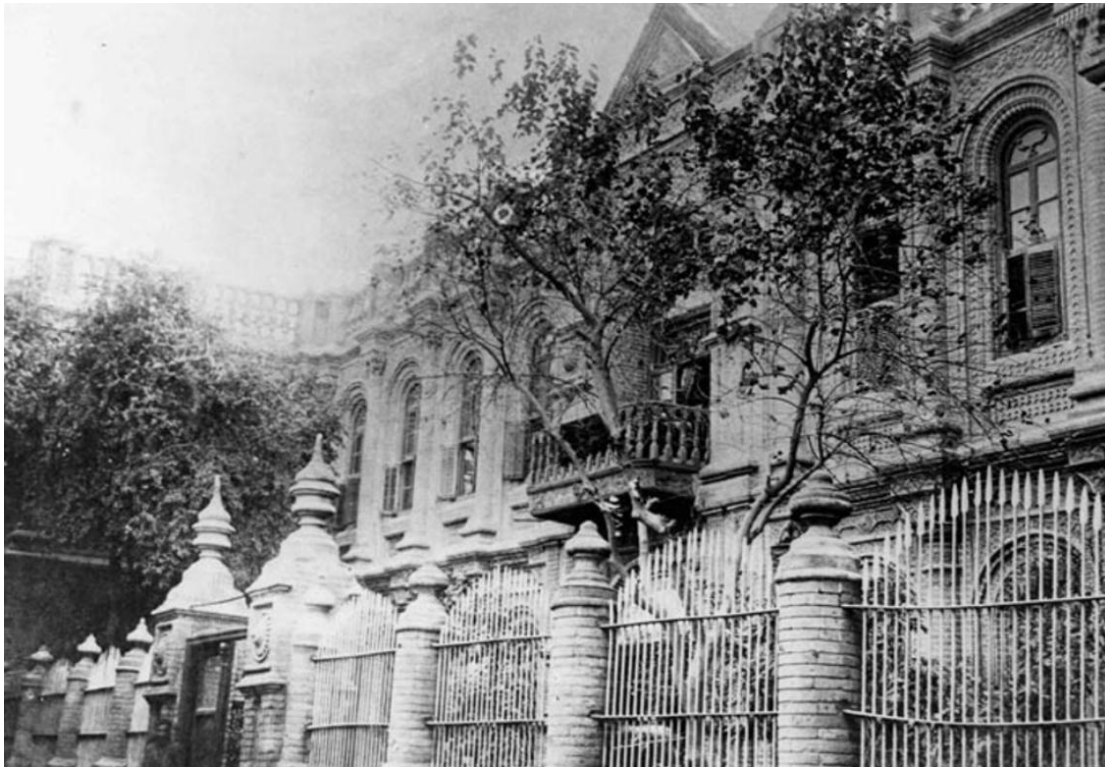
Location	Approximate Share of Jewish Communal Property in Iraq	Value of Jewish Communal Property
Baghdad	66.7%	10,347,509
Rest of Iraq	33.3%	5,173,755
Total	100.0%	15,521,264

Figure 11 - Remains of the burned down David Sasson synagogue in Hilla, Iraq, 1950s



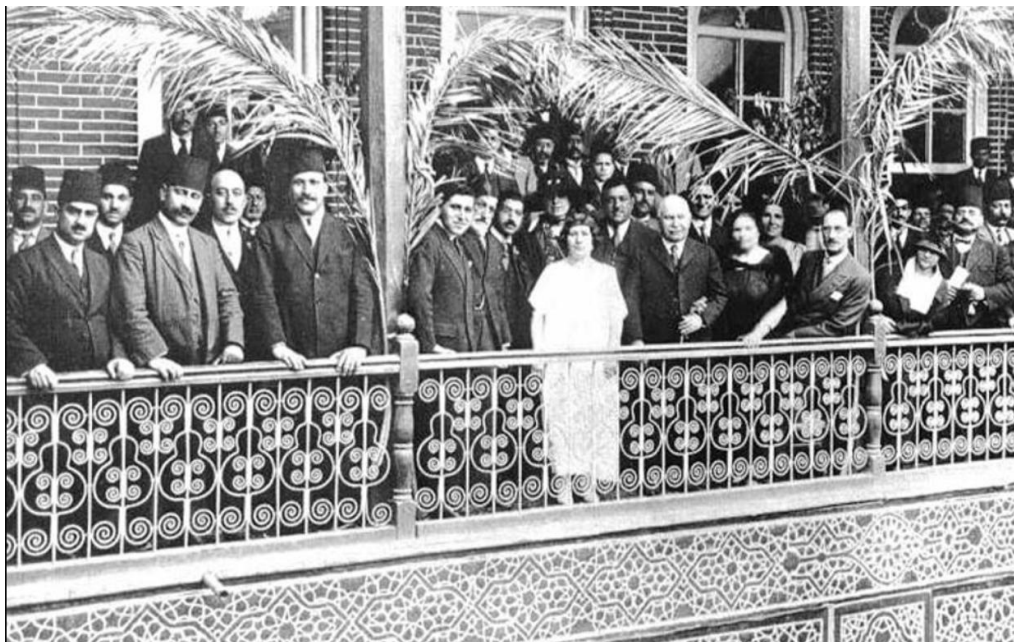
Source: Beit Hatfutsot

Figure 12 - The Laurie Kadoorie School for girls, Baghdad, year unknown



Source: Diarna

Figure 13 - Faculty at The Laurie Kadoorie School for girls, Baghdad, year unknown



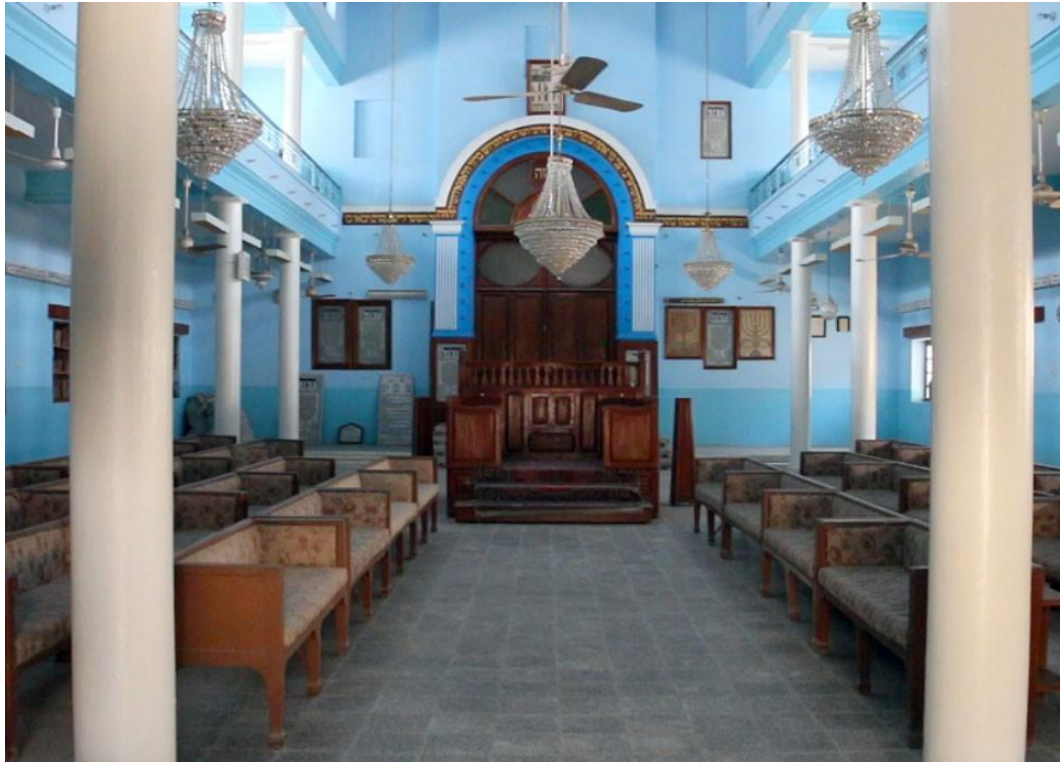
Source: Diarna

Figure 14 - A Jewish cemetery of at least 4,000 graves in Baghdad's Sadr City



Source: Remember Baghdad

Figure 15 - Meir Tweg, the last synagogue left standing in Baghdad, which closed in 2003



Source: Remember Baghdad

Furthermore, a list was obtained of Jewish holy sites in Iraq, submitted by Professor Shmuel Moreh, Chairman of the Association of Jewish Academics from Iraq in June 2014 to UNESCO, which sheds light on other Jewish sites of immense importance to the Jewish community, but for which a final value could not be determined.²⁷⁶ These include:

- The Shrine of the prophet Ezekiel at al-Kifl, on the western branch of the Euphrates, south of Baghdad
- The Shrine of 'Ezra the Scribe
- The Shrine of Joshua' the son of Yehosadaq, the High Priest, located on the Western side of Baghdad near the Jewish quarter
- The Tomb of Sheikh Ishaq Gaon in the Jewish quarter of Baghdad
- The shrine of the Prophet Daniel and his three companions
- The Shrine of the prophet Jonah, located in a pre-Islamic Church in Mosul
- The Shrine of the Prophet Nahum and his sister Sarah who are buried in the Christian city of Al-Qoosh

Figure 16 - The Tomb of Prophet Ezekiel



Source: Jewish Holy Sites in Iraq

²⁷⁶ Moreh, Jewish Holy Sites in Iraq

Figure 17 - The Tomb of Prophet Ezekiel as it exists in the present



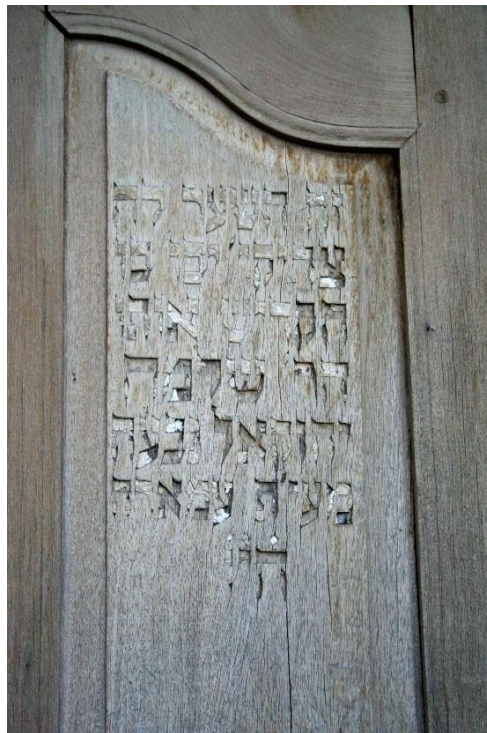
Source: Jewish Holy Sites in Iraq

Figure 18 - Aerial view of Ezekiel's shrine at Kifl



Source: Julius, pg. 2

Figure 19 - Inscription at the site of the Tomb of Prophet Ezekiel



Source: Jewish Holy Sites in Iraq

Figure 20 - Site of the Tomb of Joshua ‘



Source: Jewish Holy Sites in Iraq

Figure 21 - Inscription over the entrance to the Tomb of the Prophet Nahum of Elkosh




Source: Jewish Holy Sites in Iraq

Figure 22- Erbil (North Iraq) Jewish Communal Assets

עמותת מורשת יהודי ארביל

(ע.ר. 7-378-035-58)




גם כאן נותרו ספרי תורה שלא ניתן היה להוציאם. שני בתי הכנסת, גם הגדול וגם הקטן משמשים כיום כמסגרים.

5. מבנה בית המדרש. מבנה בן 6 חדרים גדולים, ש-4 מהם שימשו ככיתות לימוד לרדוקים. חדר אחד שימש את רב הישיבה וכביה הדין של הקהילה, וחדר נוסף שימש כביה כנסת. גם בבית הכנסת זה נותרו ספרי תורה. גודל המבנה כ-900 מ"ר.

יצוין כי על פי בקשת משרד המשפטים שלוחה הקהילה בתאריך 24 לאפריל 2004 את תביעותיה בעבור רכוש הקהילה. אנו מבקשים את התערבות כבודו בפני רשות האוטונומיה הורדית בבקשה לפצות את יוצאי הקהילה על אובדנו של רכוש זה.


לקהילת יוצאי ארביל עמותה השומרת על קשר עם רבות מהמשפחות, מארגנת עבורם מפגשים תופתיים ושוקדת על כתיבתו של ספר להצגת תולדותיה של הקהילה.

הצחק:
מר מרדכי בן פורת – יו"ר מרכז מורשת יהדות בביל.



עמותת מורשת יהודי ארביל

(ע.ר. 7-378-035-58)



כ"ב סיון התשס"ז
8 ביוני 2007

משרד המשפטים - לעמדת הש"ס
דואר נכנס
17-06-2007
5016

פרו"ם דניאל פרידמן
שר המשפטים
משרד המשפטים
ירושלים

א.ג.

הנדון: פיצוי עבור רכוש הקהילה היהודית בארביל – אצפון עיראק

בארביל השוכנת בצפון עיראק, ומשמשת כבירתה של האוטונומיה הורדית, שכנה קהילה יהודית שמקורותיה בגלות אשור בשנת 722 לפנה"ס.

ב-10 למרס 1951, כשעליית יהודי עיראק בחוכם בעיצומה, הכריזה הממשלה העיראקית על הלאמה כללית של רכוש היהודים.

לקהילה היהודית בארביל שאחזו בנייה על ארצה ביולי 1951, לא היו המון התחזמנות לטפל ברכושם הפריס וברכוש הקהילה, שברובו הגדול היווה כמוסדות דת ושממילא איש לא יכול היה רגשית למכור אותם.

המוסדות שעמדו לרשות הקהילה כללו:

1. בית עלמין בשטח של כ-50 דונם.
- בית העלמין היה ממוקם בשטח שמדרום העיר, על הדרך לעיר הנפט כרכון. בית העלמין התחרב ונצל לצורך הרחבת העיר.
2. בית הכנסת ב'קלעה'.
- הקלעה הייתה למעשה כל העיר עד לפני כ-300 שנה, וכן הסתם שכנו בה גם היהודים שחיו בעיר. במסגרת חידום במקום, הקימו היהודים כמה בתי כנסת, שכולם למעט אחד נלקחו מהם, נת מדרשו בתחילת לפי כ-200 שנה לעזוב את המבצר. היהודים שירדו מן המבצר ובנו את שכונותיהם מדרומו, והסיפו להחזיק בבית הכנסת הגדול שהלק מיוסדותיו בני יותר מ-800 שנה. בית הכנסת שימש את היהודים עד עלייתם ארצה, אך שהיהודים לא נרו בקרבנו.
- בצמוד לבית הכנסת גרה משפחה יהודית שחייתה אחראית להחזקו.
- בית הכנסת היה גדול ומפואר והכיל ספרי תורה רבים. מעדותותיהם של במקרים שביקרו במקום בשנים האחרונות, מצא שהמקום הפך למזוהא.
- השטח הנביר של בית הכנסת השתרע על כ-1050 מ"ר.
3. בית הכנסת הגדול (צאלת ובה).
- בית הכנסת היה ממוקם בשכונה היהודית שכעיר התחתית. מבנה בית הכנסת היה מפואר וגבו היה מעוטר בכיפה גדולה שנראתה למרוחק. בית הכנסת שבנה על כ-1800 מ"ר, הכיל ספרי תורה רבים ששאריו במקום.
4. בית הכנסת 'אסתאד יאן'.

בית הכנסת היה צמוד לבית הכנסת הגדול, אלא שהבנייה אליו הייתה משכונה אחרת. היה קטן בעצם מבית הכנסת הגדול, גודל המבנה השתרע על כ-1500 מ"ר.

Section 10 – Present Day Valuation

Over 75 years have passed since the baseline date for evaluating the property left behind by Jews in Iraq. As mentioned in our methodology in Chapter 2 of this report, we argue that a truly compensatory approach to valuating the aggregate assets left behind by Jews demands that this value be actualized to reflect present-day value. Thus, we rely on a compound interest formula which makes use of the principal amount, an interest rate based on ten-year averages of the ten-year yields on US treasury bonds, over a total compound period of 76 years, from January 1st, 1949 through December 31st, 2024:

$$FV = PV (1+i/n)^{nt}$$

10.1 Benchmark Values

As mentioned above, 1948 represents a reasonable benchmark regarding the beginning of the Jewish community's gradual departure from Iraq. The present-day valuation will assume a valuation start year of 1948.

10.2 Application of Compound Interest Formula

The compound interest formula, $FV = PV (1+i/n)^{nt}$ was applied on the basis of a combined set of total values per asset category, all valued in 1948 USD, for a period of 76 years.

The formula is analyzed as follows:

FV = Future Value

PV = Present Value

i = Interest rate

n = Number of periods

t = Number of years in the period

The formula was applied using ten-year units with corresponding ten-year US treasury bond average yields. This methodology yielded the results as outlined in Section 11 below.

Section 11– Summary of Aggregate Values

11.1 Summary of Findings

Table 21 - Total Value per Asset Type According to Valuation Base Date (\$,1948)

Asset Type	Total Value
Rural Assets	2,906,148
Urban Assets	302,179,511
Employment Losses	23,218,650
Moveable Assets & Private Property	139,486,354
Business Losses	173,299,125
Communal Losses	15,521,264
Total	656,611,052

Table 22 – Periodic Compounding Table for Iraq, (\$) ²⁷⁷

Year	LT Govt Bond Yields: 10-Year for US (FRED) + 10-Year Treasury [RLONG] (Robert Shiller)	Balance (\$)	Year	LT Govt Bond Yields: 10-Year for US (FRED) + 10-Year Treasury [RLONG] (Robert Shiller)	Balance (\$)
1947			1986	7.68%	6,272,197,202
1948		656,611,052	1987	8.38%	6,798,068,669
1949	2.31%	671,778,767	1988	8.85%	7,399,414,493
1950	2.32%	687,364,035	1989	8.50%	8,028,241,402
1951	2.57%	705,029,290	1990	8.55%	8,714,656,042
1952	2.68%	723,924,075	1991	7.86%	9,399,482,762
1953	2.83%	744,411,127	1992	7.01%	10,058,386,504
1954	2.40%	762,289,401	1993	5.87%	10,649,149,071
1955	2.82%	783,760,552	1994	7.08%	11,403,108,826
1956	3.18%	808,703,732	1995	6.58%	12,153,433,386
1957	3.65%	838,201,200	1996	6.44%	12,935,911,939
1958	3.32%	865,994,555	1997	6.35%	13,757,665,745
1959	4.33%	903,520,986	1998	5.26%	14,481,892,199
1960	4.12%	940,715,933	1999	5.64%	15,298,188,190
1961	3.88%	977,239,229	2000	6.03%	16,220,541,453
1962	3.95%	1,015,799,460	2001	5.02%	17,034,407,120
1963	4.00%	1,056,456,834	2002	4.61%	17,819,835,242
1964	4.19%	1,100,687,160	2003	4.02%	18,535,301,626
1965	4.28%	1,147,824,087	2004	4.27%	19,327,531,310
1966	4.92%	1,204,335,293	2005	4.29%	20,156,682,403
1967	5.07%	1,265,435,237	2006	4.79%	21,122,523,435
1968	5.65%	1,336,879,602	2007	4.63%	22,100,320,249
1969	6.67%	1,426,060,612	2008	3.67%	22,910,665,325
1970	7.35%	1,530,852,299	2009	3.26%	23,656,789,326
1971	6.16%	1,625,140,044	2010	3.21%	24,417,157,963
1972	6.21%	1,726,061,240	2011	2.79%	25,097,379,288
1973	6.84%	1,844,166,981	2012	1.80%	25,549,759,550
1974	7.56%	1,983,539,900	2013	2.35%	26,150,391,814
1975	7.99%	2,141,975,150	2014	2.54%	26,814,829,686
1976	7.61%	2,305,015,158	2015	2.14%	27,387,549,757
1977	7.42%	2,476,028,075	2016	1.84%	27,891,937,131
1978	8.41%	2,684,262,036	2017	2.33%	28,541,819,267
1979	9.44%	2,937,723,478	2018	2.91%	29,372,386,207
1980	11.46%	3,274,386,589	2019	2.14%	30,002,179,122
1981	13.91%	3,729,881,050	2020	0.89%	30,270,448,607
1982	13.00%	4,214,827,751	2021	1.44%	30,707,099,828
1983	11.11%	4,682,884,373	2022	2.95%	31,613,471,058
1984	12.44%	5,265,357,141	2023	3.96%	32,864,574,175
1985	10.62%	5,824,713,581	2024	4.18%	34,239,408,861

²⁷⁷ Rates from 2024 to 1954 are from “Interest Rates: Long-Term Government Bond Yields: 10-Year.” Federal Reserve Economic Data. 2024 rate represents average interest rate through September 30, 2024 based on available data. Retrieved from <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/graph/?id=IRLTLT01USQ156N> ; Rates from 1954 to 1948 are from “An Update of Data shown in Chapter 26 of Market Volatility.” R. Shiller, Princeton 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.econ.yale.edu/~shiller/data.htm>. R. Shiller notes that pre-1953 rates are government bond yields from Sidney Homer A History of Interest Rates.

11.2 Final Tally of Losses by Iraqi Jewry

On the basis of the combined total value of each asset category under consideration for Jews in Iraq and the application of the aforementioned periodic compounding formula, the total value for all assets at December 31, 2024 USD equals **\$34,239,408,861**.

Appendix A: Period One: Ancient Israelite History²⁷⁸

The illustrious history of the Jewish people in the region is detailed in the Bible and in the Dead Sea Scrolls. These dates are derived from Biblical references.

YEARS – BCE	NOTES
2000-1750	Old Babylonian period
1813-1452	The life of Abraham; begins period of Jewish forefathers
1280- 1240	Exodus from Egypt, Entry into the Land of Israel
1200-1050/1000	Period of the Judges in Israel
1000-587	Monarchical period in Israel
900-612	Neo-Assyrian period
722/721	Northern Kingdom (Israel) destroyed by Assyrians; 10 tribes exiled
587/586	Southern Kingdom (Judah) and First Temple destroyed

²⁷⁸ Jewish Virtual Library, “Timeline for the History of Judaism: Ancient Israelites” accessed on Nov. 6, 2024

<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/timeline-for-the-history-of-judaism>

Appendix B: Period Two: From the destruction of the first Jewish temple to the rise of Islam 587 – BCE – 683 CE

In the years after the destruction of the Jewish Temple, the “Babylonian Exile” dispersed the Jews throughout the region. During this period, Mesopotamia became the preeminent center of Jewish life between the third and sixth centuries C.E. the Jewish communities in exile played a pivotal role in the development of Judaism. A prime example is the Babylonian Talmud, a foundational text of Rabbinic Judaism, composed between the 3rd and 5th centuries in present-day Iraq. This work, second only to the Hebrew Bible, serves as the primary source of Jewish law (halakha) and theology.

The Sages of Babylon also established the tradition of reading the Torah in an annual cycle, a departure from the triennial cycle practiced in ancient Israel.

Throughout the period of exile, there always remained a presence of Jews in the land of Israel.

PERIOD TWO: FIRST TEMPLE TO THE RISE OF ISLAM²⁷⁹	
YEARS – BCE	NOTES
541	First Jews return from Babylon to rebuild the city
538-333	Persian Period.
520-515	Jerusalem ("Second") Temple rebuilt.
333-63	Hellenistic (Greek) period.
63	Rome (Pompey) annexes the land of Israel.
YEARS – C.E.	COMMON ERA
70	Destruction of Jerusalem and the second Temple.
132-135	Bar Kokhba rebellion (Second Jewish Revolt
368/426	Jerusalem Talmud compiled. Babylonian Talmud compiled.
570	Birth of Prophet Muhammad

²⁷⁹ Jewish Virtual Library, “Timeline for the History of Judaism: Ancient Israelites” accessed on Nov. 6, 2024

<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/timeline-for-the-history-of-judaism>

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Archives and Institutions

AJCA American Jewish Committee Archives

BJHC Babylon Jewry Heritage
Center

CZA Central Zionist Archives

DIARNA The Geo-Museum of North African and Middle Eastern Jewish Life
ISA Israel State Archives

JJAC Justice for Jews from Arab Countries
Remember Baghdad: Photo
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