

RADICAL JEWISH POLITICS



A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE



Edited by

**NATHANIEL DEUTSCH,
ALMA RACHEL HECKMAN,
and
TONY MICHELS**

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*For Maya Karin Peterson (1980–2021), a dear friend and
a brilliant colleague.*

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Radical Jewish Politics



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Panthers and Leashes

A HISTORY OF MIZRAHI RADICALISM

Dario Miccoli

"We have to organize a protest," Herzl said, and he lay down next to me on the grass, at the foot of my favorite palm tree. "We have to, do you understand?" "Do me a favor, just shut up," I told him, holding my intertwined hands under my head and looking at the silver moon. "My head hurts just listening to you." "We cannot do without a protest," Herzl said, "Impossible."

—Eli Amir, *Tarnegol kapparot (Scapegoat)*

These lines open a chapter of a 1984 novel by the Baghdad-born Israeli Eli Amir.¹ While in a kibbutz, where the parents agreed to send them so that the two could leave the *ma'abarah* (transit camp) and hopefully integrate into the new country, the protagonist Nuri and his friend Herzl—originally from Iraq—experience the cultural disorientation that many of their peers also felt upon their arrival in Israel in the 1950s. Herzl even thinks of organizing a protest against the Ashkenazi veterans of the kibbutz and the discriminatory attitude they have toward the Middle Eastern and North African young immigrants: Protesting seems to him the only way to make his voice heard.

Even though the story of the protest of Nuri and Herzl is fictional and based on the imagination of the novel's author Eli Amir, it reflects in quite a realistic manner the experience of social, cultural, and political marginalization of North African and Middle Eastern Jews during the process of *'aliyah ve-qlitah* (immigration and absorption) in Israel during the 1950s and 1960s, as well as some of the tactics that they put in place to subvert the situation or at least rebel against it.² To make sense of the reality in which Nuri and Herzl's protest developed, this chapter reconstructs the history of *Mizrahi* (lit. "Eastern") radicalism and political activism, by which I mean a set of practices that aim at transforming the status of *Mizrahim*—the Israeli Jews of Middle Eastern and North African origin—in Israeli society,

while striving for inclusion in it too.³ Mizrahi radicalism is to be regarded as a shifting cultural and political framework in which different ideas and political movements can be found: from the street riots of Wadi Salib in 1959 and the leftist and anti-establishment stances of *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim* (The Black Panthers) of the early 1970s, to the Sephardi religious party *Shas* (acronym of *Shomrei Torah sfaradim*; Sephardi Guardians of the Torah) of the 1980s, to more recent social movements like *Ha-qeshet ha-demoqratis ha-mizrahit* (Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow). Being radical and Mizrahi, in other words, meant and still means many different things, depending on context and contingency. However, what binds together these movements is the desire—as it happens in all cases of (Jewish) radicalism—to fundamentally change society.⁴ Mizrahi radicalism wishes to construct another kind of Israel in which the rifts between sectors of the population—firstly between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, but sometimes also between Israelis and Palestinians—will disappear. It is a broad political landscape in which global notions of Jewishness and internationalism can be debated and intersect with local discussions on Israeliness and *mizrahiyut* (“Eastern-ness”). For this reason, the case of the Mizrahim may help us see Jewish radicalism as a malleable political tool that has influenced both leftist and rightist movements.

Before I start to delve into the history of Mizrahi radicalism, it is important to note that the Jews of the Middle East and North Africa underwent significant changes during the late Ottoman and post-Ottoman periods, and up to the mass migrations of the 1950s and 1960s. Many took part in their countries’ nationalist revivals—for example the Jews of Iraq and their involvement in politics and culture.⁵ On the other hand, Zionism only marginally concerned most of them.⁶ When Israel was founded in 1948, about 800,000 Jews lived in the Middle East and in North Africa.⁷ After the 1948 Arab-Israeli War that led to the establishment of the modern State of Israel, as well as because of decolonization and the diffusion of more exclusionary forms of Arab nationalism, vast numbers of Jews left the region for Israel, European nations, the United States, and elsewhere.⁸ Between 1948 and the late 1960s, Israel saw the arrival of hundreds of thousands of *‘olim hadashim* (new immigrants). These new immigrants found themselves in a nation-state characterized by socialist Zionism, led by an elite of European (primarily Ashkenazi) origin. From a Zionist perspective, the migration of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) constituted another step toward the realization of the *kibbutz galuyiot* (ingathering of exiles), where Diaspora Jews would fuse with one another in the *kor ha-hitukh* (melting pot), giving life to a rejuvenated and united Jewish people.⁹

But the *‘aliyot* from the Middle East and North Africa region complicated the pristine ideological vision of Israeli history, highlighting the ideological limits of the Zionist establishment.¹⁰ Despite the fact that, as *Ba-ma’arakhah* (In Battle)—a journal published by the Sephardi Community Council of Jerusalem—argued already in 1962, “it is hard to include the exiles from the Lands of Islam and the East in a common denominator” given the heterogeneity of these diasporas, at the beginning the Israeli state classified the *‘olim* as *‘edot ha-mizrah* (Eastern

ethnicities/tribes), and later as Mizrahim.¹¹ The definition soon gained a derogatory, Orientalist meaning and implied that the Jews of the Middle East and North Africa—as opposed to those of Europe who were the majority of the Zionist pioneers—belonged to backward environments and were religiously conservative and detached from Zionism.¹² Some scholars now suggest that it is more appropriate to utilize the category *Arab Jew*, as it underlines the identity and history that these men and women shared with their Arab neighbors.¹³ That said, currently Mizrahi has become a label that even Israelis of Middle Eastern and North African origin utilize to self-identify and that has lost much of its derogatoriness and in some cases has even been politically reclaimed. However, the cleavages between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim have not entirely vanished.¹⁴ But then, what did the Mizrahim do to address these issues, and how did notions of “Israeliness” and Zionism affect them?

TIN SHACKS AND DREAMS: THE BEGINNINGS OF MIZRAHI RADICALISM, 1950S–1970S

To answer this question, one needs to go back to the space where everything began: the transit camp. This is where *Sallah Shabati*, one of the most famous Israeli movies on the Mizrahim, directed in 1964 by Efraim Kishon, is set. The movie tells the story of a Mizrahi immigrant and his family, from the first months spent in a far-away *ma'abarah* up to the tragicomic attempts to get a flat in a *shikun* (housing project), where “every room has a window . . . for the air!”—a modest dream that seems unrealizable due to the family’s social disorientation and lack of economic resources. As the recent documentaries *Sallah, poh zeh Eretz Israel* (Sallah, This Is the Land of Israel) and *Ma'abarot* (Transit Camps) show, the story of Sallah Shabati in the eponymous film symbolizes that of many immigrants trapped in what proved to be inconsistent state policies, aimed at populating the periphery of Israel through the founding of new settlements, which never reached the results the state had hoped for in terms of economic and industrial development.¹⁵ Upon leaving the *ma'abarot*, many settled nearby in *'ayarot pituah* (development towns) built in areas like northern Galilee and the Negev.¹⁶ In the 1950s about 30 percent of the Iraqi immigrants and 60 percent of the Moroccans were living in peripheral localities that did not exist before 1948. On the other hand, many *'olim* from Europe were able to leave the transit camps more rapidly to settle in central areas, like the Tel Aviv region, that were and remained the more developed ones in terms of job and educational opportunities. In other words, the hopes and expectations that the immigrants had before their migration clashed with a much harder reality: For many, Israel was not a land of rebirth and a place to build a better life, but—at least in the immediate aftermath—a place of alienation and socioeconomic downgrading.¹⁷

Therefore, the period extending from the mid-1950s to the early 1970s saw the emergence of a multifaceted Mizrahi social and political identity through protests, acts of resistance, and activism. This mirrored a preexisting context in which one finds Jews involved in the development of Arab communism and socialism, as well as in the anti-colonial struggle and Zionism—as other chapters in this volume

explain in detail.¹⁸ Mizrahi activism included a myriad of other things: from writing a novel like Shimon Ballas did with *Ha-ma'abarah* in 1964, to working for Arabic broadcasts on Israeli national radio.¹⁹ Be it the strike of the dockers of Ashdod in 1964 or the Hatiqvah uprising of 1965, when Mizrahi youth reacted against the poverty of their neighborhood, these acts intended to highlight the needs and everyday problems of people for whom—as the novelist Ronit Matalon, born in Ganei Tiqvah in 1959 in an Egyptian Jewish family, said many years later—there were “neither gardens [*ganei*] nor hope [*tiqvah*].”²⁰ They came to construct a network of informal actions that consolidated a new feeling of *mizrahiyut*, destined to become a central component of the political discourse.²¹

The famous Wadi Salib revolt, which erupted in 1959 in the eponymous quarter of Haifa, was rooted in the feeling of being marginalized and given fewer, if any, opportunities to improve one's status. The revolt, long considered the earliest case of Mizrahi radicalism, broke out when a policeman shot a man who had vandalized a coffeeshop while drunk. As rumors had it that the man had died in hospital, crowds of mostly North African *'olim* gathered in the streets and attacked police cars and shops. Dozens of people were hurt and others arrested.²² Even though Ben-Gurion's government blamed the revolt on the rightist party *Herut* and organizations close to it, Wadi Salib constituted a rather spontaneous act of protest and sanctioned the self-awareness of the Mizrahim as “an oppressed majority of the Israeli Jewish society.”²³ It should be read as one of the first “sites of [Mizrahi] contestation in which bodies, symbols, identities, and discourses [were] used to pursue . . . changes in institutionalized power relations.”²⁴ While the media and political establishment discussed the protesters' demands, they neglected the ethnic and racialized elements of their discontent.²⁵ This does not mean that the political parties—especially opposition ones like the leftist *Mapam* and *Maki* and the rightist *Herut*—were ignoring the migrants from the Arab world. However, if it is true that even the *Histadrut*, the Israeli general trade union, and *Mapai* opened their ranks to the newcomers, it occurred only as long as they accepted “the Zionist parameters of the state, its ideology, and its ruling bodies.”²⁶ This principle, which in many ways was the *raison d'être* of Zionist institutions and parties in general, had a profound impact on the evolution of Mizrahi radicalism and the ways in which its demands were to be framed if they wanted to be included in the national agenda.

From this perspective, the emergence of *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim* in 1971 represents the outcome of a preexisting history of radical activism, moving from the transit camp to the city. Initially a rather unorganized group of youths of Moroccan origin from the Jerusalem neighborhood of Musrara, *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim* became popular thanks to effective slogans shouted in demonstrations that eventually attracted thousands of people: “We want our share of the cake—and if not, there won't be a cake.”²⁷ As a member of the movement recalled, everything started as “a huge explosion of popular discontent” of common people “mobilized against the conditions in which they were living, their housing, wages, education.”²⁸ *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim* protested in very effective and original ways against the cleavages between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim, for example taking milk bottles

from the doorsteps of houses in the middle-class Jerusalem neighborhood of Rehavia and redistributing them to poor Mizrahi families. Blending the model of the American Black Panthers and civil rights' movement with notions of Sephardi pride, *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim* were also among the first Israelis to meet with the PLO leader Yasser Arafat and assert the existence of a link between the pursuit of Israeli social equality and peace with the Palestinians.²⁹ "There will be no equality and no chance for the Mizrahim"—Reuven Abergel, one of the founders of *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim*, argued—"as long as there's occupation and a national struggle, and on the other hand, the national struggle will not be over so long as the Mizrahim are at the bottom of the ladder."³⁰

Even though the labor prime minister Golda Meir dismissed the protesters as *lo' nehmadiim* (not nice [people]) and the Mizrahim as Jews that until the *'aliyah* had lived "in caves . . . many did not know what a bed sheet or pajamas were," this did not stop *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim* from running for the elections of the *Histadrut* and for the parliamentary elections of 1973, but without gaining any seats.³¹ One of the leaders of *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim*, Charlie Biton, was then elected to the Knesset in 1977 on the list of the communist party *Hadash*. In the 1980s, other members were to join new Sephardi political formations, several of which I will later talk about, like *Tami* (acronym for *Thu'at masoret Israel*; Movement for the Tradition of Israel) and *Shas*. All this, together with the popular perception of *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim* as a noisy, semi-delinquent youth gang close to anti-Zionist organizations like *Matzpen*—and lastly the focus on security and defense more than social issues that followed the 1973 Yom Kippur War—led to the decline and breakup of the group in the late 1970s.³² Nonetheless, the young men from Musrara were able to draw public attention to important social issues, showing to what extent poverty and inequality in Israel also had an ethnic dimension that could no longer be ignored.

FROM RADICALISM TO POPULISM?: THE MIZRAHIM AFTER 1977

Dissatisfied with *Ha-'Avodah*, the labor coalition founded in 1968 from the merging of *Mapai* with smaller left-wing parties, some Mizrahim started to see in *Likud*, a nationalist rightist movement established in 1973 by Menachem Begin and Ariel Sharon, a possibility for modifying the status quo. 1977 was the year of the *mahapakh* (upheaval), in which a right-wing party came to power for the first time since 1948, largely thanks to the vote of the Mizrahim. This change was brought about "not [by] a bitter and repressed population, but . . . a group that demanded a genuinely equal partnership and rejected the option of self-segregation and alienation, as well as the revolutionary methods of the Black Panthers."³³ Begin's *Likud* presented itself as "an inclusive populist movement that mobilized mass support," but—as opposed to *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim*—it offered an institutional response to the anger felt against the Israeli Left.³⁴

However, as time went by, the political recipe of *Likud* proved to be not as successful as hoped. The early 1980s saw the formation of parties—like *Tami* and

Shas—that took upon themselves the task of representing the Mizrahim through an approach that combined a reappraisal of ethnicity with Sephardi Jewish religiosity and populism.³⁵ “Haredim of Eastern origin are preparing a list for the Knesset, inspired by Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef,” the daily *Ma’ariv* wrote in February 1984.³⁶ For the party’s former spokesman Itzik Suderi, *Shas* “was born from a scream . . . against the system in which the Ashkenazim were the rulers and the Sephardim were the black slaves.”³⁷ Defining *Shas* is not easy, as in the course of time it evolved from a more traditional ultra-Orthodox party to a radical populist one with a Sephardi religious core.³⁸ Since 1984, it has co-opted a great number of Mizrahi voters thanks to an integrative message based upon a redefinition of Israeli Jewishness in a Sephardi ultra-Orthodox, yet not anti-Zionist, direction. The party envisions Israel as a Jewish state that needs to recuperate its religious tradition, and the Mizrahim as a group of *shqufim* (invisibles) despised by the establishment who need to fight *le-hahzir ’atarah le-yoshnah* (to restore the crown [of the Torah] to its ancient glory).³⁹ This redefinition would have practical effects too, first and foremost the improvement of the socioeconomic status of the Mizrahim.⁴⁰ Could *Shas* constitute another facet of Mizrahi radicalism and—as Sa’adiah Marciano, one of *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim*’s founders, said—be “the continuation of *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim*” as well as a response to the limited success of the solutions proposed by *Likud*?⁴¹

Shas can be inscribed in a larger scenario that, in the 1980s and even more so in the 1990s and early 2000s, has been characterized by a sort of populist radicalism, especially for the Right.⁴² At the same time, those years witnessed the emergence of new leftist movements fighting against inequality. One of these is *Ha-qeshet ha-demoqratic ha-mizrahit* (Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow), founded in 1997 by second- and third-generation Mizrahim as an “apolitical, non-parliamentary social movement . . . with the aim of bringing a radical change into Israeli society as a whole and to its institutions. The organization is mizrahi . . . in its goals, universal in its beliefs.”⁴³ In the early 2000s, *Ha-qeshet* was able to negotiate between the ethnic identity of its members and generalist demands of social justice and economic improvement—for example the successful land and housing campaign, which aimed to reduce disparities among Israeli citizens in land allocation and housing. But as opposed to earlier cases of Mizrahi leftist radicalism, like *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim*, in order to do so it embraced a Zionist national discourse that rarely included non-Jewish citizens of the state.⁴⁴

An attempt to promote a more universal, and less particularistic, approach to the Mizrahi cause could be seen in the 1990s with the emergence of Mizrahi feminism. Viky Shiran is one example—one of the founders of the group *Ahoti* (My Sister), who fought against the effects of globalization on lower-class Israeli women, and for whom being a feminist began by acknowledging that Mizrahi women are discriminated against “on the basis of [their] gender, ethnicity, and often also socioeconomic status.”⁴⁵ Mizrahi feminism is one of the spaces where an intersectional approach—which sees the marginal status of the Mizrahim in conjunction with that of the Palestinians and with the Arab-Israeli conflict—is apparent. Accord-

ing to members of *Ahoti*, Mizrahi women should fight for the improvement of their status and find an alternative path to their social and cultural emancipation, in tune with their history and identity.

Mizrahi social and political platforms have begun to engage this discourse in recent years, framing the demands of the groups that they represent in ways that overcome a clear-cut opposition between Left and Right. One can mention the short-lived *Tor ha-zahav* (The Golden Age), founded in 2016 by young Mizrahim of different political backgrounds: Some of its members come from the youth movements of *Shas* and *Likud*, others from center-leftist parties, while still others do not have a previous political affiliation. The members of *Tor ha-zahav* are convinced that “‘social justice’ . . . is not just the keyword of some people from Rothschild [Boulevard, i.e. from central Tel Aviv] . . . Judaism should unite and not divide us . . . Zionism is not only the *kibbutzim* and the *Palmah* but also Netivot and Beit She’an.”⁴⁶ Here, whereas the *kibbutzim* and the *Palmah* (acronym for *Plugot mahatz*: “Smite troops,” an elite unit of the pre-1948 Jewish defense forces that conducted underground attacks in British Palestine) symbolize the Ashkenazi elite and the Israeli establishment, the two towns of Netivot and Beit She’an—situated respectively in the south and north of the country—stand as metaphor for poorer Mizrahi Israelis.

By calling for a kind of Zionism other than that of the *kibbutzim* and a Jewish religiosity that is respectful of tradition without becoming ultra-Orthodox, *Tor ha-zahav* proposes an alternative to the “melting pot”: “The melting pot is dead. I went to its funeral. Or better to say, the party. Since then, we can take a deep breath and are slowly freed from the petrifying image of the *sabra*: the new Jew, the Western *hiloni* [non-religious, secular], that forcedly ruled over here for many years.”⁴⁷ A middle ground approach, rooted in Middle Eastern and North African Jewish history and that the anthropologist Harvey Goldberg resumed in the image of “a male attending synagogue on *Shabbat* morning and going to a soccer match in the afternoon,”⁴⁸ would constitute the solution for downplaying the rifts between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, *datim* (religious) and *hilonim*, periphery and center. On the other hand, as opposed to the Mizrahi political movements of the 1970s, *Tor ha-zahav* refrained from expressing definitive opinions on the occupied Palestinian territories or on relations with the Palestinians—these are treated as secondary aspects that do not impact on the daily life of many Israelis—and preferred to focus on social and economic issues.⁴⁹

Mizrahit meshutefet (Mizrahi-Palestinian Partnership), a joint Mizrahi-Palestinian coalition founded in 2016, opted for a more radical path: “We invite all the oppressed groups in Israeli society to join hands and walk together: Palestinians, Mizrahim, Ethiopians, Russian-speakers, the people who are living in conditions of poverty, everyone that is pushed to the periphery and the social margins.”⁵⁰ While based upon the work of the Arab Joint List, *Mizrahit meshutefet* evokes the Moroccan-born Rabbi Meir Buzaglo, so as not to “forget the Jewish affinity to this country and the fact that love and longing for Zion have always been a central part of Jewish identity” and to “permit Jewish religious language to shake

off the burden of Zionist secular thought and undermine the concept of exclusive rigid national sovereignty.”⁵¹ Even though, for the time being, they did not enter the Israeli electoral competition, these movements testify to the existence of a Mizrahi sociopolitical sphere, which includes groups like the successful literary collective *‘Ars Po’etiqah*—founded in Tel Aviv in 2013 by the poetess Adi Keissar, in an attempt to show the possibility of combining high culture and the literary dimension with the popular world of the *‘arsim* (pl. of *‘ars*, lit. “pimp,” a term used to indicate Mizrahi men lacking education)—and a number of blogs, social network pages, and magazines.⁵²

(UN)LEASHED PANTHERS

In March 2016, the weekly magazine *Yediot ‘Aharonot* published a portrait of the *Likud* parliamentarian and then Minister of Culture Miri Regev (who is of Moroccan ancestry) firmly holding the leashes of three black panthers. The title read: “A culture war? This is the Mizrahi War of Independence!”⁵³

Explicitly evoking *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim*, Regev presented herself as one of the faces of a new Mizrahi political culture, far from the elite and close to those peripheral zones where many Mizrahim still live: “I am Miryam Sibonyi Regev from Qiriyat Gat, I have never read Chekov . . . I used to listen to Jo Amar and Spanish songs and I do not feel less cultivated than the consumers of Western culture.”⁵⁴ Apparently, Regev wished to counter some of the stereotypes about the Mizrahim and transform them into aspects of an identity of which she feels proud. However, her line of thought—which echoes that of contemporary populist and anti-establishment groups like the Italian Five Star Movement or Donald Trump’s Republican Party—goes in the direction of a populist radicalism of sorts that in the end strengthens those same stereotypes and negates the possibility of being, for example, both a reader of Chekov and a fan of Jo Amar. This is what the poetess Adi Keissar writes in one of her best-known poems, *Ani ha-mizrahit* (I am the Easterner), where she describes a more multidimensional Mizrahi woman than that of Regev: “I am the Easterner/we forget about/who can recite/all the songs/of Zohar Argov/and reads Albert Camus/and Bulgakov.”⁵⁵

It is clear that Mizrahi radicalism has been able to fit into different groups, both on the left and right side of the sociopolitical spectrum, depending on context and contingency. In recent years, the mass-protests of *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim* and the street riots of Wadi Salib were substituted with the poetry events of *‘Ars Po’etiqah*.⁵⁶ But next to this, a more ambivalent yet politically appealing form of radicalism emerged: first with *Shas* and more recently with exponents of *Likud* like Regev. Seen from Israel and the perspective of the Mizrahim, radicalism is to be viewed as a malleable political framework whose ultimate goal is to achieve substantial political, cultural, and economic changes within (Israeli Jewish) society. This malleability may help us acknowledging how Jewish radicalism more generally has never been a homogeneous ideology but a set of “ideologies rooted in,

stimulated by, applied to or perceived through, the particular sets of conditions and traditions of . . . societies and cultures.”⁵⁷

As regards the Mizrahim, it is worth noting that the transnational influences that could be traced at the beginning—from the legacy of Arab communism present in intellectuals like Shimon Ballas,⁵⁸ who after the migration to Israel continued to write in Arabic and collaborated with the Arabic newspaper of the Israeli Communist Party *Al-Jadid*, directed by the Palestinian intellectual Emile Habibi, up to the approach to the Palestinian issue of *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim*—have been abandoned in favor of an Israeli-centered scenario, dominated by a particularistic and at times populist identity. This confirms that the state’s Jewish character, together with the preservation of one’s ethnocultural background, are of utmost importance for most of them. They are—as the short-lived experience of *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim* on the one hand, and the success of *Shas* on the other, testify—a *conditio sine qua non* that one has to agree upon.⁵⁹ Such a trend seems to have increased even more in post-October 7, 2023, Israel, where political and cultural dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians has become extremely difficult against the background of Hamas’s terrorist attacks, the war in Gaza, and an almost generalized shift of the Israeli public toward more nationalist positions. That said, if Mizrahi radicalism proper is less visible than in the 1970s, its foundational goals—from social justice to the end of ethnic discrimination—remain very relevant today for all the political movements and actors that emerged in the last decades. The panthers have been leashed, but their roaring can still be heard.

NOTES

1. Eli Amir, *Tarnegol kapparat* [Scapegoat] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1984), 69.
2. Nancy Berg, “Sephardi Writing: From the Margins to the Mainstream,” in *The Boom in Contemporary Hebrew Literature*, ed. Alan Mintz (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1997), 114–142; Adia Mendelson-Maoz, *Multiculturalism in Israel: Literary Perspectives* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2014), 76–84; Yochai Oppenheimer, *Mi-rehov Ben-Gurion le-shari’a al-Rashid* [From Ben-Gurion Street to Shari’a al-Rashid] (Jerusalem: Ben-Tzvi Institute, 2014). See also Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017); Bryan K. Roby, *The Mizrahi Era of Rebellion: Israel’s Forgotten Civil Rights Struggle, 1948–1966* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015); Yehudah Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Ella Shohat, “The Invention of the Mizrahim,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29, no. 1 (Autumn 1999): 5–20.
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4. Sebastian Kunze and Frank Jacob, “Introduction: Thoughts on Jewish Radicalism as a Phenomenon of Global Modernity,” in *Jewish Radicalisms: Historical Perspectives on a Phenomenon of Global Modernity*, ed. Frank Jacob and Sebastian Kunze (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 23–74.
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Simon, Michael Laskier, and Sara Reguer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 165–179.

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15. David Deri, *Salah, poh zeh Eretz Israel* [Salah, This Is the Land of Israel], a four-part documentary broadcast at the beginning of 2018 on the Israeli TV channel Reshet 13: <http://reshet.tv/vod/sallah/>, and Dinah Zvi-Riklis, *Ma’abarot* [Transit Camps], broadcast in February/March 2019 on the public TV channel Kan: https://www.kan.org.il/page.aspx?landingpageid=1107#. For a less critical approach, see Avi Picard, “Unsung Heroes: North African Immigrants in Development Towns,” *Segula*, April 2019, 52–65.

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17. Sami Shalom Chetrit, *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews* (London: Routledge, 2010), 54; Aziza Khazoom, “Did the Israeli State Engineer Segregation? On the Placement of Jewish Immigrants in Development Towns in the 1950s,” *Social Forces* 84, no. 1 (2005): 115–134; Yaron Tsur, “Carnival Fears: Moroccan Immigrants and the Ethnic Problem in the Young State of Israel,” *Journal of Israeli History* 18, no. 1 (1999): 73–103.

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niale. *Trajectoires dissidentes (1934–1965)* (Rennes, France: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2016); Rami Ginat, *A History of Egyptian Communism: Jews and Their Compatriots in Quest of Revolution* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2011); Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 143–178; Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 141–182; Lior B. Sternfeld, *Between Iran and Zion: Jewish Histories of Twentieth-Century Iran* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 40–62; Alma R. Heckman, “Fissures and Fusions: Moroccan Jewish Communists and World War II,” in *The Holocaust and North Africa*, ed. Aomar Boum and Sarah A. Stein (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 185–204.

19. Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus*, 201.

20. Ronit Matalon, “Al-ha-ke’ev ba-sifrut” [Of pain in literature], lecture given at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, February 6, 2011, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-N6tT4ZjnHM>. The quote plays with the name of Matalon’s birthplace Ganei Tikvah (lit. “Gardens of hope”).

21. Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), esp. 20–29; Roby, *The Mizrahi Era of Rebellion*.

22. Ehud Sprinzak, *Brother Against Brother: Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics from Altalena to the Rabin Assassination* (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 129–131.

23. Roby, *The Mizrahi Era of Rebellion*, 152.

24. Verta Taylor and Nella Van Dyke, “‘Get Up, Stand Up’: Tactical Repertoires of Social Movements,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, ed. David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 268.

25. Sammy Smooha, *Israel: Pluralism and Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 211.

26. Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus*, 149.

27. Deborah Bernstein, “Conflict and Protest in Israeli Society: The Case of the Black Panthers of Israel,” *Youth & Society* 16, no. 129 (1984), 138. See also the catalogue of the exhibition by the Jerusalem School of Photography of Musrara, *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim* [The Black Panthers] (Jerusalem: Beit ha-sefer le-tzilum Musrara, 1997), and Asaf Elia-Shalev, *Israel’s Black Panthers: The Radicals Who Punctured a Nation’s Founding Myth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2024).

28. Shalom Cohen and Kokhavi Shemesh, “The Origin and Development of the Israeli Black Panther Movement,” *MERIP Reports*, no. 49 (1976), 19.

29. Oz Frankel, “The Black Panthers of Israel and the Politics of the Radical Analogy,” in *Black Power Beyond Borders: The Global Dimensions of the Black Power Movement*, ed. Nico Slate (London: Palgrave, 2012), 81–106; Ktzia Alon, “Sihah ‘im David Me’iri” [A conversation with David Me’iri], *Ha-kivun mizrah*, 6 (2003–2002): 39–43. Ha-panterim ha-shehorim were in contact with European radical leftist groups too, like the Italian *Lotta Continua*, as recalled by the Italian journalist Gad Lerner in *Scintille* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2009), 153.

30. Jaclynn Ashli, “When Israel’s Black Panthers Found Common Cause with Palestinians,” *The Electronic Intifada*, March 7, 2019, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/when-israels-black-panthers-found-common-cause-palestinians/26821>.

31. André Fontaine, “Le test’ étant la signature de la paix: ‘Il serait ridicule de demander aux Arabes la reconnaissance de la légitimité de l’État d’Israël,’ nous déclare Mme Golda Méir,” *Le Monde*, October 15, 1971. See also As’ad Ghanem, *Ethnic Politics in Israel: The Margins and the Ashkenazi Centre* (London: Routledge, 2010), 69–71; Alex Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation: The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 140–141.

32. Tali Lev and Yehuda Shenhav, “Kinnuno shel ha-’oyev mi-bifnim: Ha-panterim ha-shehorim ke-musa’ shel paniqah musarit” [The social construction of the enemy from within: Israeli Black Panthers as a target of moral panic], *Sotziologiyah Israelit* 12, no. 1 (2010): 135–158.

33. Uri Cohen and Nissim Leon, “The Mahapach and Yitzhak Samir’s Quiet Revolution: Mizrahim and the Herut Movement,” *Israel Studies Review* 29, no. 1 (2014), 36–37.

34. Amir Goldstein, "Partial Establishment: Menachem Begin, Gahal and the Black Panthers," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 17, no. 2 (2018): 236–251; Uri Cohen and Nissim Leon, "Merkaz tnu'at Herut ve-ha-mizrahim, 1965–1977: Mi-shutafut 'adnutit la-shutafut taharutit" [Herut's central committee and the Mizrahim, 1965–1977: From patronizing partnership to competitive partnership], *The Israel Democracy Institute*, Policy Paper no. 88, 2011; Yonathan Shapiro, *The Road to Power: Herut Party in Israel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).

35. *Tami* was founded in 1981 by Rabbi Aharon Abuhatzira. The birth of *Shas* in 1984 led to its rapid decline and merging into *Likud*.

36. "Haredim mi-'edot ha-mizrah meqimim reshimah la-Knesset" [Ultra-Orthodox of eastern origin found a list for the Knesset], *Ma'ariv*, February 6, 1984, 2. Ovadiah Yosef—who was born in Baghdad in 1920 and died in Jerusalem in 2013—was a rabbi and religious scholar and, until his death, the undisputed spiritual leader of *Shas*. He served as Sephardi chief rabbi of Israel from 1973 to 1983. Although considered a controversial figure in Israeli society, Rabbi Yosef was universally praised for his knowledge of Jewish law and is considered to have been one of the most important halachic authorities of the twentieth century.

37. Itzik Suderi, cited by Nancy J. Davis and Robert V. Robinson, *Claiming Society for God: Religious Movements and Social Welfare* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 64.

38. David Lehmann and Batia Siebzehner, *Remaking Israeli Judaism: The Challenge of Shas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 160–168.

39. Yaakov Yadgar, "Shas as a Struggle to Create a New Field: A Bourdieuan Perspective of an Israeli Phenomenon," *Sociology of Religion* 64, no. 2 (2003): 223–246; Shlomo Deshen, "Shorashim historyim ve-hoveh 'israeli ba-datiyut shel-yehudei-ha-mizrah" [Historical roots and Israeli present in the religiosity of the Eastern Jews], in *Shas: Hebetim tarbutiyim ve-re'ayoniyim* [Shas: Cultural and ideological perspectives], ed. Aviezer Ravitzki (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2006), 15–40.

40. Yoav Peled, "Roar of the Lion: Shas and the Challenge to Israeli Identity," *Israel Studies Bulletin* 16, no. 2 (2001), 11.

41. I am quoting Marciano from the 2003 documentary by Elie Hamo and Sami Shalom-Chetrit, *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim medabrim* [The Black Panthers speak]. Others, like Shalom-Chetrit himself, are more skeptical of the reading of *Shas* as a radical movement; see Sami Shalom-Chetrit, "Milkud 17: Beyin harediyut le-mizrahiyut" [Trap 17: Between Haredism and Mizrahi identity], in *Shas: 'Etgar ha-israeliyut* [Shas: The challenge of Israeliness], ed. Yoav Peled (Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, 2001), esp. 39–42.

42. Dani Filc and Udi Lebel, "The Post-Oslo Israeli Populist Radical Right in Comparative Perspective: Leadership, Voter Characteristics and Political Discourse," *Mediterranean Politics* 10, no. 1 (2005): 85–97.

43. From the manifesto of *Ha-qeshet ha-demoqratic ha-mizrahit* cited by Ofir Abu, "Citizenship, Identity, and Ethnic Mobilization in Israel: The Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow Between Universalism and Particularism," in *The Contradictions of Israeli Citizenship: Land, Religion and State*, ed. Guy Ben-Porat and Bryan Turner (London: Routledge, 2011), 111.

44. Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 87–95.

45. Viki Shiran, "Lifneah 'et-ha-koah, livro 'olam hadash" [Deciphering the strength, building a new world], *Panim* 2 (2002), accessed May 27, 2024, at <http://www.itu.org.il/?CategoryID=521&ArticleID=1415&Page=1>. See also Henriette Dahan-Kalev, "Tensions in Israeli Feminism: The Mizrahi Ashkenazi Rift," *Women's Studies International Forum* 24, no. 6 (2001): 669–684; Dahan-Kalev "Mizrahi Feminism in Israel," *The Shalvi/Hyman Encyclopedia of Jewish Women*, *Jewish Women's Archive*, last updated June 23, 2021, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/mizrahi-feminism-in-israel>; Smadar Lavie, "Mizrahi Feminism and the Question of Palestine," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 7, no. 2 (2011): 56–88.

46. From the homepage of *Tor ha-zahav's* website, accessed (May 27, 2020) at <https://www.tor-hazahav.org>.

47. Ofir Touboul, "Ha-masortiyut tahlif 'et-kor-ha-hitukh" [Traditionalism will change the melting pot], *Maqor rishon*, January 28, 2018, <https://www.makorrishon.co.il/opinion/11809/>.

The term *sabra* (lit. “prickly pear cactus”) indicates the quintessential native Israeli, stubborn and straightforward on the outside but soft on the inside. This cultural archetype was constructed already before 1948 to describe the traits of the first Jewish immigrants to Palestine, represented as farmers and soldiers that had left the Eastern European Jewish villages (*shtetls*) to construct a Jewish state in the land of their forefathers. See Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

48. Harvey Goldberg, “The Ethnographic Challenge of *Masorti* Religiosity Among Israeli Jews,” *Ethnologie française* 4, no. 43 (2013), 584.

49. See the interview of *Tor ha-zahav*’s activist Carmen Elmakyies-Amos: David Rosenberg, “Social Justice: Israel’s Newest Political Party—for Sephardim,” *Arutzsheva* 7, February 17, 2016, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/208207>.

50. “Open Call: An Eastern Joint Initiative—Mizrahi-Palestinian Partnership,” <https://mizrahipalestinianpartnership.wordpress.com>.

51. “Open Call.” The 2015 Joint List resulted from the alliance between four Arab-dominated parties: *Hadash*, the *United Arab List*, *Balad*, and *Ta’al*.

52. On *’Ars Po’etiqah*, see Dario Miccoli, *La letteratura israeliana mizrahi* (Florence: Giuntina, 2016), 83–96; Esther Schely-Newman, “Poetics of Identity: Mizrahi Poets Between Here and There, Then and Now,” *Quest—Issues in Contemporary Jewish History* 16 (December 2019): 111–132.

53. Raz Shechnik, Yehuda Nuriel and Raviv Golan, “Milhemet tarbut? Zo milhemet ha-’atzma’ut ha-mizrahi!” [Culture war? This is the Mizrahi War of Independence!], *Sheva’ leilot—Yediot ’Aharonot*, March 10, 2016, available at: https://www.yediot.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4776622,00.html#google_vignette.

54. Na’ama Lansky, “Atem lo’ taktivu li mah nahon u-mah lo’ nahon” [You are not going to tell me what is right and wrong], *Israel Ha-yom*, September 11, 2015, <http://www.israelhayom.co.il/article/313067>. Jo Amar (1930–2009) was a renowned Israeli singer of Moroccan Jewish origin and one of the founding fathers of Mizrahi music. On Miri Regev, see Omri Ben Yehuda, “Miri (Sibonyi) Regev: Masah ‘al-ha-politqah shel-ha-guf” [Miri (Sibonyi) Regev: An essay on body politics], in *Off Foto: Ha-tzad ha-ahori shel-ha-tzilum ha-’israeli* [Off photo: The other side of Israeli photography], ed. Ktzia Alon (Tel Aviv: Gama, 2017), 165–190.

55. Adi Keissar, *Shahor ‘al-gabey shahor* [Black on black] (Tel Aviv: Hotza’at Tangir, 2014), 66. Zohar Argov was another famous Mizrahi singer of the 1970s and early 1980s, born into a Yemenite Jewish family.

56. Giulia Daniele, “Political and Social Protests from the Margins: The Role of Mizrahi Jews in Israeli Grassroots Activism,” *Etnografica* 23, no. 1 (2019): 201–220.

57. Jaff Schatz, “The Riddle of Jewish Radicalism,” *Nordisk Judaistik* 11, no. 1–2 (1990), 5.

58. See Re’uven Snir, “‘Till Spring Comes’: Arabic and Hebrew Literary Debates Among Iraqi-Jews in Israel (1950–2000),” *Shofar* 24, no. 2 (2006): 92–123.

59. Here I follow Nissim Mizrahi, “Sociology in the Garden: Beyond the Liberal Grammar of Contemporary Sociology,” *Israel Studies Review* 31, no. 1 (2016): 36–65.