

---

# Homelands

*Reflections on The Jews of Islamic Lands*

---

---

# Homelands

---

**Curator** Meirav Balas, Ph.D.

**Creator/Producer** Lenore Mizrachi-Cohen

**Catalog Design** Lenore Mizrachi-Cohen

**Catalog Sponsors**

Moshe & Raquel Laniado

Joseph & Esther Jerome

**Participating Artists**

Shy Abady

Ghiora Aharoni

Fortune Chalme

Neta Elkayam

Adele Esses

Camille Fox

Tal Gartenberg

Irene Mamiye

Babette Marciano

Lida Sharet Massad

Lenore Mizrachi-Cohen

Florence Nasar

Zion Ozeri

Anne Sassoon

**Supporting Organizations**

The Jerusalem Biennale

The Sephardic Community Alliance

The American Sefardi Federation

Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa

**Translating**

Rabbi and Mrs. Ephraim and Shalhevet Gabbai

---

# Homelands

*Reflections on The Jews of Islamic Lands*

---

**The effects of the refugee experience  
on individuals and communities**

14 artists

6 countries

Countless untold stories

הביאנלה של  
Jerusalem • של  
Biennale ירושלים



---

## Foreword

---

### *There and Now: The Watershed Moment of Jews From Islamic Countries*

Dr. Meirav Balas

My home is in the East, my gaze \ backwards towards Iberia

On the meadows of the kibbutz my body rests \ my spirit is gone to Granada

Andalusia is in my bones \ whence my mother's family voyaged

[...]

The home of my father and mother in \ Aleppo was majestic

My home like a father, in a Galilean village \ is on a vastly different land

My grand-daughter and my mother have \ but only changed their cloaks

Or perhaps, the essentials were uprooted \ and the lands\* are not of equal worth

{Amnon Chammoche, *Sephardic Dīwān* (Massada Press: 1981) excerpt from the poem *Gift*}

\* (Israel and Aleppo)

In Professor Samuel Trigano's article, presented in this catalog, it is argued that similar circumstances led to the emptying of the Islamic countries from their Jewish communities. Generalizations can be made. According to him, the political, sociological and historical process that led to this can be described uniformly.

*Homelands*, on the other hand, abandons the inclusive approach and the summarizing reflection. It prefers to freeze a moment in time: the moment when individuals are standing with their back to their past and their community, and their face is gazing toward their future. At this point, what do these individuals who were uprooted from their past see? And what will their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren see when they look to the past and look at that moment?

This exhibition examines the person who looks back, toward the moment of individual departure (be it an expulsion, an immigration or a spiritual ascendance). It rejects any generalization. This moment, that is also a place in time, represents the communal 'there' that continues and dissolves, which has become 'now.' One moment is interpreted and examined through a certain perspective. Examination of the watershed of the moment of displacement is like a prism that breaks the beams of light into a wide spectrum of wavelengths. The "uniform narrative" splits into the "now" that is made of countless experiences, like the number of those uprooted.

This experience changes shape and reveals different perspectives over the years. Even the subsequent generation that had no contact with the diaspora community still preserves some quality that is transmitted from the immigrant generation. What kind of "genome" transmits this quality? What parts of the language and the tone are transmitted? What are the communal ties and the family discourse that have survived? What are the daily and sensual practices of this (inherited) quality?

The works presented in the exhibition linger at different points on the continuum of the memory of the past. Sometimes the focus is on the intergenerational, and sometimes on the contemporary identity that was born of this history. On this continuum we can identify two repetitive actions: the attempt to blur and the attempt to extract. In the first case, the language of origin is suppressed, the customs become dulled, the signs of the place are erased. In the second case, a search was conducted for a thread that would evoke dormant memories, perhaps as an expression of the definition of identity or a desire to belong to a group, a place or a culture.

Many displaced peoples have chosen to blur the past by looking forward to the future, while their offspring do the opposite. The subsequent generation looks back to salvage pieces of the erased past. Ghiora Aharoni's work points to the blurring line between Jews in their communities and their ethnic surroundings. He also points to the language as a tool for separating what is left behind, symbolized by Arabic. It is one of the sharpest expressions of assimilation: the adoption of the Hebrew language over the mother tongue of the displaced people. Lida Sharet Massad sees the language as a barrier between "there" and "now." The artist cuts into a section of the wall a single word in Farsi that tries to cling to it, sometimes successfully, and in some places, very loosely. One word in the language of origin that was revealed, in this case, exposes what was blurred and repressed and attests to its existence as another layer in the current identity; both for the user of the word and the one to which it is directed and understood.

In the work of Lenore Mizrachi-Cohen, language points to the sisyphian attempt to obscure memory. The work creates a mirage between a traditional wedding photograph and a photograph that was created 60 years later, both from the same family. The word *qalb*, "change," which appears in Arabic and comes out of the photographs, raises the question of what has actually changed over the generations. Do rituals that mark different stations in the life cycle, which have been engraved in the community memory for hundreds of years, undergo a transformation with the displacement to another place, at another time?

The attempt to retrieve what is left behind is expressed in Irene Mamiye's video work. In a gentle, slow motion that asks for permission, she removes veils, in order to reveal a silenced and hidden identity. Other artists look for the thread connecting them with their ancestors by other means. For example, through a representative object, as in the video work by Fortune Chalme, which breathes life into a colander brought by her great-grandmother from Syria. Adele Esses and Camille Fox base their paintings on a loose thread of memory before disappearing into oblivion. These traces are precious pieces of life that testify to a vanished world, the homeland of another time.

The exhibition presents a number of works that contrast between the background and the image, the *there* and the *now*, the past and the present. All of these themes flow into each other until discerning the separation between them becomes impossible. The separation between the language of origin and the spoken language, between the "old" identity and the "new" identity, between the memory-- old memories spanning generations--and the moments that follow is subtle. Babette Marciano and Anne Sasoon, as well as Tāl Gartenberg, point to the inability to draw the line that marks the end of the old world and the beginning of a new one. Néta Elkayam's paintings illustrate that even if we were to gaze towards the distant horizon, from the present moment, we will there find our past gazing back at us.

---

*Dr. Meirav Balas is an independent curator whose work centers on historical, ethnographic, social and artistic subjects.*



---

## Acknowledgements

---

*We would like to thank our Catalog Sponsors*

Moshe & Raquel Laniado

Joseph & Esther Jerome

*And our essay contributors*

Professor Andre Aciman

Professor Sara Reuger

Mr. David Suissa

Professor Shmuel Trigano

---

# Essays

---

---

# The Disappearance of Jewish Communities From Islamic Countries

*Professor Shmuel Trigano*

---

Between 1940 and 1970, a Jewish population of approximately 900,000 were settled in ten countries. Jews were living there long before the invasion of Islam in the seventh century. From Iran to Morocco, what determined their fate was their belonging to the Jewish people and their presence within countries ruled by Islam. This was especially the case for the Jews living in Arab countries. These countries had recently been liberated from the burden of colonialism after the Second World War.

There was one common feature to these Jewish communities: the uniformity of the political framework that emanated from the centuries-long domination of the Ottoman Empire. This was followed by the colonial powers, namely France and Britain, who were struggling in two wars against their common foe, Germany, in 1914-1918 and 1939-1945. Belonging to the Arab Nation (*umma*) crossed ethnic boundaries that energized the rebellion against the colonial powers. The reason for their resistance was not because the Arabs were oppressed. (The proof for that is that Arabs did not revolt against the Ottoman Empire, the seat of the caliphate.) The reason for the revolt was because of the Christian identity of these colonial powers. The decisive turning point for this environment was the awakening of nationalism. The Islamic Nation (*umma*) then split into several nation-states. Two currents, the pan-Arabism and subsequent pan-Islamism, accompanied this development and ensured their continuity indirectly.

The situation created by colonialism, on one hand, and nationalism, on the other, was joined by another factor: The establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine under a British Mandate, based on the Balfour Declaration (1917). At that time, the Arab states that had never existed before were in the process of being established. The idea of establishing a Jewish home in the Land of Israel was not accepted any more than the Armenian liberation movement. For Muslims, this meant the rebellion of the non-Muslim minority (*dhimmi*) population against Islam. Such a rebellion led to justifying the massacres perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire and the genocide initiated by its heirs, namely, the Turkish state of the Young Turks. From that standpoint, Zionism sparked a fervent resistance and provoked the Muslim community, especially upsetting the national (pan-Arab/pan-Islam) movements. Thus, one can point here at the root-cause that resulted in the expulsion and obliteration of Jews in these countries within the coming decades. The expulsion of the Christian Arab communities today shows that the exclusion of the Jews was only the first stage in a broad trend of exclusion by pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism.

## *Non-Muslims as a Protected Class*

During the colonial period, the Jews were liberated by the European powers from the status of *dhimmi*, i.e., the status that the Islamic law places upon 'unbelievers.' This status is imposed on Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians, being the only three non-Muslim religious groups that were allowed to live within an Islamic society. The Pact of 'Umar (seventh century) imposed an inferior status and humiliating laws [against members of these protected religious groups]. Islamic society was rigorously compartmentalized. Non-Muslims had the status of ruled peoples and were separated into their own neighborhoods. They had to wear certain items of clothing that would make them distinguishable to others. They had communal self-autonomy [but were] subject to Muslim rule. Individual non-Muslims were not allowed to leave their community to marry or join another religion. The *dhimmi* had the right to exist as second-class citizens and were required to pay a poll tax (*jizya*) and land tax

(*kharāj*). This payment essentially prevented a death penalty that was otherwise deemed mandatory for those who refused to accept the true religion, Islam. [Editor's note: Many of Islam's adherents claim that Islam is the only valid system intended by God to be followed by all of humanity.] The Islamic conquest dispossessed these religious groups of their lands. The Islamic Nation, *umma*, became the legitimate landowner and was authorized to administer their lands for them. The *dhimmi* thus became a foreigner in his own home.

The Ottoman Empire was forced, under the pressure of European Christian powers, to change the status of the *dhimmi*. The reforms known as the *Tanzīmāt* of the Sultan Abdülmegid I in 1839, and the more detailed decree *Hatt-ı Hümayûn* of 1856, instituted equal rights among all the inhabitants of the empire. They did so regardless of religion, but maintained the communal division based on religion known as the Turkish "Millet" system. The Ottomans changed the administrative system and hierarchy (Greeks, Armenians, and Jews at the bottom of the scale) that existed hitherto. This reform changed the arrangements that existed vis-à-vis the non-Muslim communities. It liberated members of these communities from the burden of control that was placed on them. For the Muslims, losing superiority was traumatic. They were made equal with all others by Christian forces. They perceived these changes as surrender and renunciation of Islam's legitimacy. The *Tanzīmāt* inspired hope for the *dhimmi*. The people under colonialism started to hope for independence. It was within this environment that Zionism began to operate, aiming for national liberation through the realization of a sovereign state. The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire by the Western powers opened a window of opportunity for freedom.

The reaction of the Arab national liberation movements and that of the newly established Arab states to Israel's establishment was very significant. They did not see the state as an external entity but as a representation of all Arab Jews. In most of the Arab countries, riots broke out against the local Jews, who were perceived as "responsible" for the rebellion of "Israel" and identified them with the State of Israel. This is typical of the classical anti-Semitism. Guilt for a conflict is assigned to the Jewish group and to all the individuals in that group, without specific reason.

#### *End of the Jewish Communities in Islamic Countries*

The end of the Jewish communities can be attributed to the new Arab nationalism. Arab nationalism does not express a disconnection from Islam. It is also possible that the very concept of nation-states is a mere illusion concealing the reality of the resurging Islamic *umma*. The retreat of nationalism vis-à-vis Islamism since the Iranian revolution proves that the era of nationalism was a passing episode, at least in terms of sweeping masses and slogans. It was only on the basis of the assumption that Arab nationalism was being introduced that some Jews, mostly Communists, believed that they would be able to exist in independent Arab states. This indeed took place in Iraq, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. It soon became apparent to these Jews that they would not be part of the state. It was especially evident during the fervor of nationalism that was ignited by Nasserism. These Jews were suspected of being sympathetic to the absolute enemy, Israel, or too close to the West and to despicable colonialism. The expansion of Arab nationalism thus explains the end of Judaism in these countries, in which the Jew bore the heavy burden of his image as a *dhimmi* in the eyes of Islam.

The Jews also had another feature that made their assimilation difficult: they enjoyed the period of colonial rule, which for them was a golden age. During that period, they had made unprecedented progress when they were emancipated from the shackles of *dhimmitude*. This irked the previous ruling class, who were not similarly liberated with such achievements. "The move to the West," as André Chouraqui defined it, separated the Jews from a society in which they were always outcast and rejected. This transformation (of the Arab Jew) must be evaluated, not in relation to the outcome (assimilation to the West) but in relation to its starting point (the *dhimmi* status). The adoption of Western lifestyles by the Jews was inspired by the Jews of Europe (a crucial role in this process was led by the Alliance Israélite Universelle). It was not so much a detachment, but rather, a departure from the social order in which they endured. Their social advancement, their role as a transmission between colonial rule and the new order, subjected them to envy and even hostility, sometimes from both sides. They chose, in spontaneous political reckoning, the best path to secure freedom and progress. Thus, the decolonization process left the Jews exposed to the revenge feelings of the victims of colonialism and at the same time fearing a possible return of the former *dhimmi* model. This was further complicated with a hatred

toward (the nascent) Israel, and, in some instances, also by the hesitant recognition (of Israel) by Europeans. Israel opened a third alternative.

### *The Final Process*

The similarities between the fate of the various Jewish communities in these countries are based not only on the trajectory of the Jews, but also on the overall behavior of the Arab states. Beyond the boundaries between them, one can discern the repeated legal, economic and behavioral processes. These components can yield a possible model [that invites such a generalization].

The legal process is almost identical in many countries. It begins with the separation of the Jews, which leads gradually to the revocation of their citizenship and later to their deportation or ostracism. The ideological approach behind this process usually refers to the Jews as a group. It does not define itself as “anti-Semitic,” but rather as “anti-Zionist,” thereby turning Zionism into a crime (in Iraq, Egypt, and Syria it became an official crime). The entire Jewish community was hurt, even the few Jews who held nationalist and anti-Zionist views (communists, *etc.*). Thus, the ostracism was an anti-Semitic practice, accusing the Jews of responsibility for the war (which the Arab states launched against Israel). There was a premeditated plan to blame the Jews collectively.

The revocation of citizenship from the Jews in Egypt, Iraq, Libya and Yemen speaks for itself. Restrictions were imposed on the freedom of movement of Jews. Postal relations with Israel were outlawed due to the boycott imposed by the Arab League. The non-issuance of passports came together with the taking of hostages from the family of those who had received passports. All this was done together with the freezing of assets and bank accounts. The aforementioned description reflects the laws that were legislated in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Tunisia and Morocco. This was accompanied by legal restrictions, as was done in Turkey after the revolution of the Young Turks. In Turkey, “labor battalions” were also established in the army for non-Muslim recruits. Syria enacted a tax on capital, which was applied only to the Jews, and forbade them to engage in agriculture. In Libya, Jews were forbidden to work in oil companies. In all these countries, Jews were forbidden to work in government jobs. The special laws against the Jews also included the closure of Jewish organizations and the appointment of guardians to charitable societies and community organizations.

The economic sanctions that were imposed against the Jews were highly significant because of the Jews’ great economic success within these countries. These sanctions were forced on all the Jewish communities. With the pretext of struggling against Zionism, many Jewish assets were sequestered by an extensive system of laws (in Egypt, Iraq, Libya, and Syria). Every Jew’s departure led to the immediate nationalization of his property. When these Jews would leave these countries with few of their remaining assets, their jewelry as well as their liquid assets were confiscated aggressively from them at the border crossings or customs (Iraq, Egypt, Yemen, Syria). Another, more insidious procedure was based on “becoming a cooperative.” Jewish business owners were forced to choose a Muslim “partner” (this serves as a proof that *real* citizenship was ultimately determined by religion) so that they could continue to run the business. Gradually, the business-owner became a salaried worker (in their own business). Eventually, the Jewish business-owner was forced out without any compensation.

A similar process occurred in public administration, government offices, and the professional fields. This was done because the knowledge of the Jews who worked in these places was necessary to arrange for the transfer of power after independence. This happened in Tunisia after its independence, in Iraq, and, in certain areas (in the administration) in Morocco. The transformation of the Egyptian, Tunisian, and other governmental systems was part of the national plan of the new countries.

In two cases, global Jewish institutions were forced to literally “buy” the right of Jews to leave the country: in Morocco (\$200 per head) in the 1960s and in Syria in 1975, after the Yom Kippur War [October 1973]. These amounts were considered compensation for the Jews to pay to the land they left.

Of course, such a plan of eliminating the Jewish communities was accompanied by acts of physical and verbal aggression. In an atmosphere in which these matters and incidents took place, they were not limited to the

formal realm alone. In each of the above-mentioned countries, pogroms or acts resembling pogroms, riots, murders or incarceration of Jews were perpetrated, intended to serve as a warning, intimidation or threat to all Jews.

In **Egypt**, there were riots and looting on 2 and 3 November 1945, on 2 November 1948, on the *Black Sabbath* of 26 November 1952 (against Jews, Greeks and Armenians). Then there was the Egyptian imprisonment of 1,000 Jews in May 1948 for past Zionist activity. In **Iraq**, the pogrom (known as the *Farhūd*) of 1 and 2 [June] 1941 in Baghdad [and throughout Iraq], which cost 180 dead and 600 wounded. There was an official wave of persecution against the Jews in 1948 [in Iraq]. There were pogroms in 1947 in **Syria**. There was also an outbreak of anti-Semitism in **Iran** in 1968 and the execution of one of the Jewish community leaders. Pogroms took place in Thrace (*Turkish* Trakya Olayları) in **Turkey** in June-July 1934. There were also pogroms in **Libya** in 1945 (130 killed). There were riots up to 1948 (against Libyan Jewry) and in 1967 ten Jews were killed.

There was an attempt to perpetrate a pogrom in Tunis in the Jewish quarter (*Hārātu-l-Yahūd'*) in 1952. The Great Synagogue of **Tunisia** was attacked in 1960. In **Algeria**, riots took place against the Jews after the (Algerian) battles against the French (occupiers) in Bizerte in 1961. The pogrom in Constantine started on 5 August 1934 and lasted for two days. The Great Synagogue of Algiers was destroyed on 12 December 1960. In **Morocco**, Anti-Jewish riots in Oujda and Jerada took place on 7 and 8 June 1948. The murders in Sidi Kacem took place on 3 August 1954. There were the riots (known as the “Black Days”) in 1961 when Nasser visited Morocco. The execution of the president of the Jewish community in **Iran** took place on 9 May 1979. And there are more such events [rendering this list is incomplete].

In many cases, the police of the Arab countries took part in or ignored the acts of violence at the beginning of the events. At times a third party, namely colonial rule, was in control when hostilities took place against the Jews. For example, Britain was the occupying power during the *Farhūd* in Iraq and in Libya in 1945. France was in charge of Constantine in Algeria and Oujda in Morocco. The same indifference usually occurred at the beginning of the riots: the Jews served as a safety valve to release the pressure from the “natives.” In other places, the situation reflected the policies of the French Vichy regime against the Jews during the Nazi period. The “laws of Jewish status” were aimed against Jews throughout history in the Arab and Muslim countries, with different intensities at different times.

### *Expulsion and Ostracism*

In this landscape, multifaceted but coherent and structured, we can distinguish between two types of disappearance of Jewish communities. They were either exposed to expulsion or exposed to ostracism. The term “expulsion” covers the violent forms of liquidation: legal, political, practical. This category includes Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Iraq. In these countries the native Jewish communities were removed (so to speak) after being isolated and discriminated against. It is possible to add to them Syria after 1947. Ostracism, less violent but no less decisive, forced Jews to leave their countries of origin by means of a range of humiliating, legal, ideological and political, but mostly economic measures (also imposed in cases of expulsion). This type belongs to Tunisia after its independence, Turkey (1923-1945), Morocco (1956-1961), Syria (as of 1947) and Iran (in the 1950s and 1970s).

*Shmuel Trigano is professor emeritus of sociology at Paris Nanterre University. Born in Algeria, he has authored 25 books on the philosophy, politics, and history of the Jewish people.*

*Based on the upcoming book authored by Professor Trigano, The End of Judaism in Islamic Countries, published by Carmel in the coming months (Jerusalem).*

---

# Negotiating Exile:

## *An Arab Jew in America*

*Mr. David Suissa*

---

The words are the same, but the melodies are foreign. They have a German-Yiddish slant. Many of them are slow, meandering, and sorrowful. I don't feel quite at home. I am in a synagogue in Los Angeles for Ashkenazy Jews whose origins are the winter ghettos of Eastern Europe, and I am a Sephardic Jew whose ancestors come from the desert lands of Morocco.

I grew up in the mellah of Casablanca. Mellah is Arab slang for ghetto. It's where the Jews huddled for centuries in Arabian lands, most of us refugees from the Spanish Inquisition of 1492. It is in these Jewish neighborhoods that we held on tight to our Jewish rituals but also embraced Arab customs, especially the music. How could we not? Arab music hypnotizes. It is the sound of the desert, the seduction of the sun.

Arab melodies were not written by people shivering in a Polish winter. They were written by romantics who saw the eternity of the sand . . . and dreamed.

These Arabian melodies, which also drew from Andalusian and Berber influences, infiltrated the Moroccan synagogue. I grew up with them. They're bold and gentle at the same time. Sung by a master, they compete with God for your attention, and often win. With such beauty, who can absorb anything else? When a melody fills you completely, what else is there room for?

More than anything, it is these desert melodies that I took with me into exile when we packed our bags for the arctic winters of Canada in the 1960s.

Exile in the Jewish tradition is a complicated word. There is, first, the overarching experience of biblical exile to which we are obligated. This is the exile that Jews learn about in Hebrew school, at Shabbat tables, and at summer camps—our people were dispersed for nineteen centuries after the destruction of the Second Temple, and during that time, they wandered, struggled, built communities, adapted, suffered the darkest moment of their history, survived, and, through it all, prayed that one day they would return home to Zion.

Since the miraculous rebirth of Israel in 1948, Jews of the Diaspora are obligated, in theory at least, to feel a certain emptiness in their souls if they haven't journeyed back to their biblical home. Beneath this biblical exile, however, there are sub-exiles that are no less important. These are exiles where, for instance, one might live in Canada and miss the beaches of Casablanca, or one might live in France and miss the desert sands of Algeria.

The Jewish story, a long, complex story of a wandering and nomadic people, is very much about negotiating exiles, of living with the tension of competing exiles—big ones, biblical ones, personal ones. The most eventful of these exiles is undoubtedly the exile in America—the one nation that has dared to compete with Zion for the ingathering of the exiles. In its innocent and disarming way, but with New York-stylechutzpah, America has thrown a wrinkle in the Great Jewish Story by providing a harbor safe enough for Jews to live with a vengeance.

The scholar Micah Goodman has said that Jews nurtured two great dreams over the nearly two millennia of their exile. One was the biblical yearning to return to Zion, the other was the yearning to find a place—any place—that would accept them as Jews. As it turns out, both dreams were realized in the same century: America and Israel. What makes the exile in America so poignant is how brilliantly it has managed to compete with the exile of obligation—with the dream of returning home. Here is a clash of biblical proportions: Israel as the

supreme statement of particularity, America as the supreme statement of universality. How Jews negotiate the clash between these two great ideals will determine much of the Jewish narrative over the next century.

Ask any fervent Zionist and he or she will tell you that American Jews, however free and liberated they might be, ought to feel a sense of betrayal to Zion. After all, the dream of finding a place that would accept us was always meant to be temporary; it was never meant to be the end point. For most American Jews, however, the intoxicating brew of freedom and acceptance has made America the final destination. In a clash of best friend versus brother, the best friend has won.

In my case, I can't say that yet. I still yearn to return to my biblical home. My American best friend might be charming, funny, successful, generous, loyal, and considerate, but my Israeli brother is still my brother. It's hard for me to dismiss the image I have painted in my mind of 100 grandfathers and 100 grandmothers holding hands in a windy desert, all of them my immediate family, all of them looking at me, all of them thinking of how lucky I am to have been born in the generation that came home to Zion.

Who am I to turn down this gift of which they dreamed for so long? Who am I to turn down my biblical destiny?

My life in America is really a double exile—the exile from the childhood memories of Morocco, which comes and goes, and the biblical exile to which I am obligated, which never leaves me. And yet, when I strip away the gravitational pull of exiles, transient and permanent, I'm left with the naked confession that America has strengthened my Jewish identity. How can that be?

I can understand why my ancestors in Morocco nurtured a deep Jewish identity—they had no choice. They were *dhimmi*s (second-class citizens) in a foreign and often hostile land. What else could they lean on in their Jewish ghettos if not the comfort foods of Jewish rituals and tribal connection?

I am not a second-class citizen in America. No one is coming after me because I'm Jewish. No one will arrest me for criticizing the president. I am free and safe, whether I am Jewish or not. Like millions of Jews, I have discovered in America the freedom to not be Jewish. Some Jews have run with it; others have resisted. Count me in as a resistor.

There's no easy answer for why I have resisted assimilation, but the melodies of my childhood are a good place to start. In particular, I remember a certain melody on *Yom Kippur*, the holiest day of the Jewish year. At the culmination of the day, during the sunset prayer of *Ne'ila*, I would hold my father's hand as all the men would gather in front of the holy ark, our prayer shawls covering our heads, stomachs empty from 24 hours of fasting, souls overflowing with emotion, all of us singing in unison to open the gates of heaven.

Through the hippie days of the late 1960s, the disco days of the '70s, the yuppie era of the '80s, the money-making era of the '90s, the insecure era around the turn of the millennium, and all my adventures in between visiting Zen camps and other places of youthful exploration, I never forgot that Arabian-tinged melody of *Ne'ila*, when I held my father's hand and we sang our hearts out.

As I got older and learned more about my history, I came to understand that I was holding more than my father's hand. I was also holding the hand he held when he was my age, and the hands of my 100 grandfathers going back to the destruction of the Second Temple. Later, when I held my own son's hand at that exact same moment of *Ne'ila*, I understood that I was also holding his son's hand and those of future generations.

Human beings love drama. A great novel can't exist without it; neither can a great film or poem or children's story. The Jewish story is arguably the greatest drama in human history. Of everything I love about my tradition—philosophy, culture, rituals, values—the story itself moves my soul like nothing else. That may explain a key difference between the insular ghetto of my ancestors and the wide-open freedom I have in America. The Casablanca ghetto already had its own built-in drama. It was a drama of daily survival endured by second-class citizens in a foreign land. In the open and blank canvas that is America, I had to find my own drama, and what greater drama than the incredible story of my people? The irony, of course, is that it is an

Arabian exile that helped connect me to my Jewish exile.

Maybe, in an odd way, I am just emulating my ancestors who fought for survival, only I am engaged in a survival of a different sort—a survival of meaning. The biggest fear that humans have, a rabbi once told me, is that their lives have no meaning. A blank canvas has no meaning; it is an invitation to start painting. The melody of *Ne'ila* helped me paint my way back to the story of my people. That melody was the river of meaning that flowed through me and through all of my wanderings and eventually led me to embrace an ancient story and make it mine.

Will the melody be strong enough to lead me back to Zion?

Would I have reconnected with my Judaism to the same extent had I made the biblical return to the immense Jewish neighborhood that is Israel? Would I have sought out the great drama of my people if I were already living in its place of destiny?

There are no ready answers, just intriguing questions.

What makes the American-Israel clash of exiles especially poignant is that they are both deeply Jewish. The American idea of a continuous work in progress, of an idea that never ends, of an idea “we turn and turn” and never stop turning even when we think we got it right, is an eternal Jewish idea. It is the never-ending journey of *Talmud* and *Midrash*. But the messianic idea represented by the return to Zion is also an eternal Jewish idea—the notion that we are working toward the spiritual perfection of humanity, that there is a happy ending after all, an ending when goodness will rule the world. We are obligated as Jews to yearn for that day and to believe in it. It is the never-ending journey of the Prophets.

The reconciling of these clashing exiles may well come from another Jewish idea—the idea that exile, at its deepest level, is a state of mind. The Jews who have returned home to Zion must carry in their minds the humbling ethos of exile, lest they erode the Jewish ideals of empathy and gratitude. The Jews who remain in America have a different challenge. They must carry in their minds the drama of unfinished business, of seeing their 100 grandfathers and grandmothers holding hands in a desert field, yearning not just to come home but to continue the chain.

What melodies and memories will help American Jews negotiate their exile and continue that chain? If we don't have easy answers, we owe it to our ancestors to keep asking the question. In my case, I was fortunate to have a childhood melody that came with the warm hand of a father and the seductive sounds of the Arabian desert. The memory of *Ne'ila* was strong and sweet enough to help me continue the chain, hold tightly to my son's hand, and pray silently that when his turn comes, he will do the same.

*David Suissa is a branding and advertising consultant, as well as a popular columnist and eloquent Israel advocate. He is the founder of OLAM magazine and Meals4Israel.com and founder and CEO of Suissa Miller Advertising, USA Today's Agency of the Year. He is also president of TRIBE Media Corp/The Jewish Journal and writes frequently on Israeli and American Jewish affairs.*

*Suissa, D. (2015). Negotiating Exile: An Arab Jew in America. In H. Levitsky, M. Osborne, & S. Setka (Eds.), Literature of Exile and Displacement: American Identity in a Time of Crisis. San Diego, CA: Cognella. Reprinted with permission.*

---

# Memory

*Professor Sara Reuger*

---

We all have selective memory. Even when we try to recover an experience, memory and imagination are linked. Many of the artists participating in the *Homelands* Art Show manifest this human reality, idealizing the memories of 'the old country'. For example, Camille Fox's "Hope and Celebration" depicts the 'charmed life' in the 1930's of Alexandria, Egypt.

Was life really that wonderful in the Middle East and North Africa? Sometimes. But almost every Jewish community in almost every country also experienced bad things. World War II saw anti-Jewish activities in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Turkey, and, of course, there was the *farhud* (pogrom) in Baghdad. A second source of anti-Jewish activities was connected to the creation of the State of Israel and the various Arab-Israeli wars. Syria led the way by holding its Jewish community hostage. Lebanon was safe for a while. As dictators took over some countries, life became precarious for Jews, for example Gamal 'Abd-Al-Nasser in Egypt, Mu'ammarr Qaddafi in Libya, and the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran.

But no one wants to focus on the bad things of the past. Also, as one ages, one filters out the bad experiences, and one tells stories to grandchildren about the joy of preparing for holidays in Aleppo, Basra, Cairo, Tunis, Casablanca, San'a, Istanbul. The stress is also on similarities with the larger community. An example is Lenore Mizrachi-Cohen's Arabic calligraphy juxtaposed on photographs. Another is Tal Gartenberg's florals and tiles, so typical of Middle Eastern artistic motifs.

As terrible as the uprooting was of these Jewish communities, by getting out, they saved themselves. Can you imagine what would have happened to the Jews inside today's Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Libya? This way the memories of the 'good life', as selective as they are, have been preserved and passed on to the next generation, as expressed in the *Homelands* Art Show.

*Sara Reuger has been Chair of the Department of Judaic Studies at Brooklyn College for 30 years. She has published "The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa" (with Reeva Simon and Michael Laskier), "The Most Tenacious of Minorities: the Jews of Italy", and "My Father's Journey: a Memoir of Lost Worlds of Jewish Lithuania". Her newest book, "Opinionated: the World View of a Jewish Woman" was published in August, 2017.*

---

# In Double Exile

*Professor Andre Aciman*

---

There comes the time at every Passover *seder* when someone will open a door to let in the prophet Elijah. At that moment, something like a spell invariably descends over the celebrants, and everyone stares into the doorway, trying to make out the quiet movements of the prophet as he glides his way in and takes the empty seat among us.

But by then my mind has already drifted many, many times, and like all disbelievers who find themselves wondering why they are attending a seder after last year's resolution, I begin to think of how little this ritual means to me -- recalling the 10 plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea, manna from heaven. All of it keenly arranged to let every kind of Jew find something to celebrate.

For the religious, Passover is the grateful remembrance of a homeward journey after years of suffering.

For those who believe in the spirit more than in the letter of the occasion, the holiday celebrates survival and deliverance from all forms of tyranny -- survival after Auschwitz, freedom from anti-Semitism in Russia, Ethiopia and Syria.

For yet others, Passover is an occasion to gather around a table and link arms with Jews from everywhere and all times.

I don't know Hebrew. Nor do I know any of the songs or prayers. I can't even tell when the *seder* is officially over. Often I suspect the whole ceremony has petered out or has been cut short for my benefit -- or been drawn out to prove a point. I always attend with misgivings, which I communicate to others at the table, and try to atone for by reading aloud when my turn comes, only to resent having been asked to read.

And as I sit and stew, feeling ever more trapped among the observant, I too begin to think of Egypt, of this Egypt everyone will invoke at sundown tomorrow night and which symbolizes suffering, exile and captivity, and suddenly appears in our dining room like a mummy whose sleep has been disturbed: unreal, mythic, faraway Egypt, which everyone calls by its Hebrew name, *Mizrajim*; in Arabic, it is *Misr*. They are the same words but eons apart.

Then, as happens every year, I begin to think of another Egypt, the one I was born in and knew and got to love and would never have left had a modern Pharaoh -- President Gamal Abdel Nasser -- not forced me out for being Jewish. This was an Egypt many of us would have stayed in, even as the last Jews of the land, which we nearly were, even if we had to beg to stay, which we did indeed.

Often in those years in Alexandria, when I was growing up, Passover coincided with Easter and *Ramadan*. During *Ramadan*, we would be let out of school at about noon every day, because Muslims, who fasted all day, needed to rest in the afternoon before breaking their fast at sunset.

To those of us who did not have to nap, these were the most magical hours of the year. The city was always quiet then, there was hardly any homework and summer was only a few weeks away.

At the *seder*, the men in my family would spar, my father begging my uncle to speed it up, my uncle deferring to tradition instead, everyone more or less giggling, including the one or two Christians who were visiting that evening and were hauled in to a dinner that reminded them so much of the last supper, they said, everyone

garbling everything in a blithe chorus of lead us out of Egypt and next year in Jerusalem, until we heard the cannon of *Ramadan* announce it was time for devout Muslims to eat.

It never occurred to us that a seder in Egypt was a contradiction in terms.

Now, when everyone speaks of Pharaoh at Passover, I think back to my very last *seder* in Egypt, on the eve of our departure for Italy in 1965, not under Ramses but under Nasser -- a long, mirthless, desultory affair, celebrated with weak lights and all the shutters drawn so that no one in the street might suspect what we were up to that night.

After almost three centuries of religious tolerance, we found ourselves celebrating Passover the way our Marrano ancestors had done under the Spanish Inquisition: in secret, verging on shame, without conviction, in great haste and certainly without a clear notion of what we were celebrating. Was it the first exodus from Egypt? Or maybe the second from Spain? Or the third from Turkey? Or the fourth, when my family members fled Italy just before the Nazis took over?

Or were we celebrating the many exoduses that went unrecorded but that every Jew knows he can remember if he tries hard enough, for each one of us is a dislodged citizen of a country that was never really his but that he has learned to long for and cannot forget. The fault lines of exile and diaspora always run deep, and we are always from elsewhere, and from elsewhere before that.

Everything in history happens twice, wrote Marx, the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. He forgot to add that Jewish history is repetition, the history of repetition.

Caught in these loops and coils, my family forgot to remember the obvious -- that Egypt was never our home, that we should never have come back after Moses, that we didn't even know where our home was, much less which language was ours. We had borrowed everyone else's. Some of us forgot we were Jews. Alexandria was our mirage -- in the desert, we dreamed a while longer.

In the end, Egyptian nationalism drove us all away. Today, religious intolerance wants to finish the job for everyone who remains, not just Jews. Copts -- Christians who are thought to be among the most direct descendants of the ancient Egyptians -- and westernized Egyptians are watching the clouds darken around the country. Will Egypt drown again? In 1981, the assassination of President Anwar el-Sadat, in recent years the killings of tourists and Egyptian intellectuals, and in October the stabbing of the writer and Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz -- are these the new plagues? And must I worry and remember for Egypt as well now?

Tomorrow night is the night for it. For on that night all Jews remember the night when Jewish memory began. That night each one of us thinks back to that private Egypt we each carry with us wherever we are. We may not always know what to remember, but we know we must remember.

In my case, I remember a city called Alexandria, a city as remote to me now as Egypt is to my American friends who will celebrate Passover, a city that was never mine, that no longer exists as I knew it but that rushes into the room each time they open the door for Elijah to remind me that I will never say next year in Jerusalem in Alexandria again.

*André Aciman is Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature at the Graduate Center, CUNY and the director of both The Center for the Humanities and The Writers' Institute. He is also the author of Out of Egypt: A Memoir, False Papers, Alibis, and four novels: Call Me by Your Name, Eight White Nights, Harvard Square, and Enigma Variations. He is the co-author and editor of Letters of Transit and of The Proust Project. Aciman is the recipient of a Whiting Writers' Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship as well as a fellowship from The New York Public Library's Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers. A contributor to The New York Times, The New Yorker, The New Republic, The New York Review of Books, he has also appeared in several volumes of Best American Essays. He is currently working on a novel and a collection of essays.*

*This article originally appeared in print in The New York Times on April 13, 1995. Reprinted with permission of the author.*



---

# Artworks

---

# Shy Abady

---

Shy Abady is an Israeli artist, born in Jerusalem, living and creating today in Tel Aviv. He completed his B.A. at Hamidrasha Art College and his M.A. in History of Art at Tel Aviv University. Abady has presented his art in solo and group exhibitions in galleries and museums in Israel and internationally. During the past decade, his work has addressed German-Jewish culture and history. More recently, Abady began the series *Back to the Levant*, which deals with the Middle East and its history. The series opens a conversation between the multilayered and sensitive regional history and the personal family history of the artist.

*Back to the Levant* blends the personal with the public and the political, blurring the boundaries between Jewish and Arab identities. In *Racial Profiling*, a work from the series, Abady paints the portrait of Gamal Abdel Nasser. A previous Egyptian president, he is perceived by Israelis as a hostile figure. The portrait is juxtaposed with those of Shy's own family members, all of whom were born in the region and lived for many years among Muslims in Jerusalem, Aleppo, and Cairo. In this work Abady highlights the physical resemblance between Muslim and Jewish Arabs. Abady uses the term "Racial Profiling" following his experience in airports, especially in Israel, where he is often stopped and interrogated due to his physical appearance.

---





*Racial Profiling (or Uncle Ezra, Father and Gamal Abdel Nasser), Mixed Media on Plywood, 2016, 61x150cm*

# Shy Abady

---

Shy Abady's grandfather served as a police officer in the British Mandatory Police, known at the time (1920-1948) as the Palestine Police. In this police force, Britons, Muslims and Jews served together, all wearing the uniform of the English Royal Crown. The artwork depicts Abady's grandfather in uniform, and includes the inscription Palestine Police in Arabic, an identifier that is associated today with the Palestinian Authority Police. The work captures the frailty of political and ethical identities as well as the shared lives of Muslims and Jews during that period.

---



---

*My Grandfather - A Palestinian Policeman, Mixed Media on Plywood, 2016, 83X82.5 cm*

---

# Ghiora Aharoni

---

Ghiora Aharoni, a native of Israel, founded his multi-disciplinary studio in New York City in 2004. A graduate of Yale University, his work is in the permanent collection of The Pompidou Center in Paris, has been exhibited internationally, and is in collections in the U.S., Europe, Canada and India. Aharoni's artworks involve traditional text, objects or symbols that have been recontextualized and imbued with meaning that asks the viewer to question or reconsider their conventional social and cultural significance.

[www.ghiora-aharoni.com](http://www.ghiora-aharoni.com)

*GER/The Stranger* examines the duality created by the identification of “the other”—exploring this complex, symbiotic relationship and the potential for intercultural compassion. With sacred text in Hebrabic/Arabrew© (an overlay of Hebrew and Arabic created by the artist) that advocates compassion and humility as the reconciler of co-existence, “The stranger shall not lodge in the street: I will open my doors to the traveler” and “Love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt,” the sculpture invites us to consider the dynamic of otherness—an inherent state of humanity that transcends time, cultures and geography—in relation to ourselves as well as our perception of those who are, in some respect, different from us.

---





---

*GER/The Stranger, Assemblage Sculpture, 2016, 117x76x84 cm*

---

# Fortune Chalme

---

Fortune Chalme is a Multidisciplinary Artist and Designer. Fortune resides in New York City, where she creates videos, performances and drawings. In her video and performance pieces, Fortune explores her identity through meditative repetitive actions. Fortune holds a Bachelors in Fine Arts from the School of Visual Arts. She has studied Fine Arts at Bezalel Academy, Jerusalem, Israel. Fortune has performed and exhibited in a number of locations including: Recession Art, Culture Fix, Bazaar, Figment, Muchmore's, Beth Torah Gallery, Visual Arts Gallery and the New York University Gallery.

The Colander used in this performance belonged to Fortune's Great, Great Grandmother, Farha. Farha emigrated from Syria to the U.S. The two never met and all Fortune knows of her are two possessions that came with Farha when she moved: a colander and a wooden baking mold with a Jewish star carved into it. Why were these possessions important, so important that they were kept for so many generations? In this video/performance piece, Fortune dips the colander in the fountain at Madison Square Park, straining the water 6 times to represent 6 generations that came from Farha. This brings something from Syria to modern-day New York City, contrasting the two and keeping memories alive.

---





---

*Sitoh's Colander, Video, 2016*

---

# Neta Elkayam

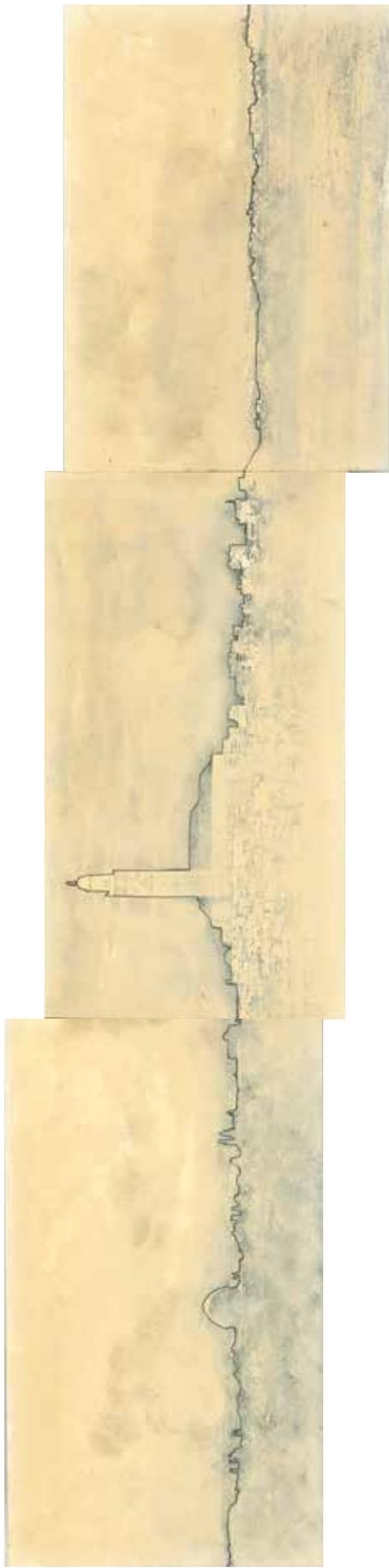
---

Neta Elkayam is a multidisciplinary artist and singer who lives and works in Jerusalem. Neta studied at the Kaye Academic College of Art, Beer Sheva, at Kalisher, Tel Aviv, and at the Performance art platform in Tel Aviv. Through her work, she gives expression to the daily life of the supplanted Jewish Moroccan culture in Israel. Her work encompasses paintings, drawings, embroidery, animations, sculpture and video works. She has exhibited in solo and group shows, notably the Crane festival in Paris, Neukölln art festival, Berlin & the Manofim Festival in Jerusalem. Neta was chief curator of the festival *Create Reality*, the first international film festival challenging the perception of disability, at the Jerusalem Cinematheque. She tours internationally with her show, *Hawa J'ani*, created with fellow musician Amit Hai Cohen. The show makes use of her knowledge of Arabic language and music, inherited from her family. It provides a contemporary interpretation of music brought to Israel by Jews from Morocco. Currently she is working on her first music album.

How many horizons can a person have? Some are a physical part of one's life and others are horizons that connect through identity, travel, memories or ideas. In the series *Life Lines* Neta creates links between impossible horizons.

---





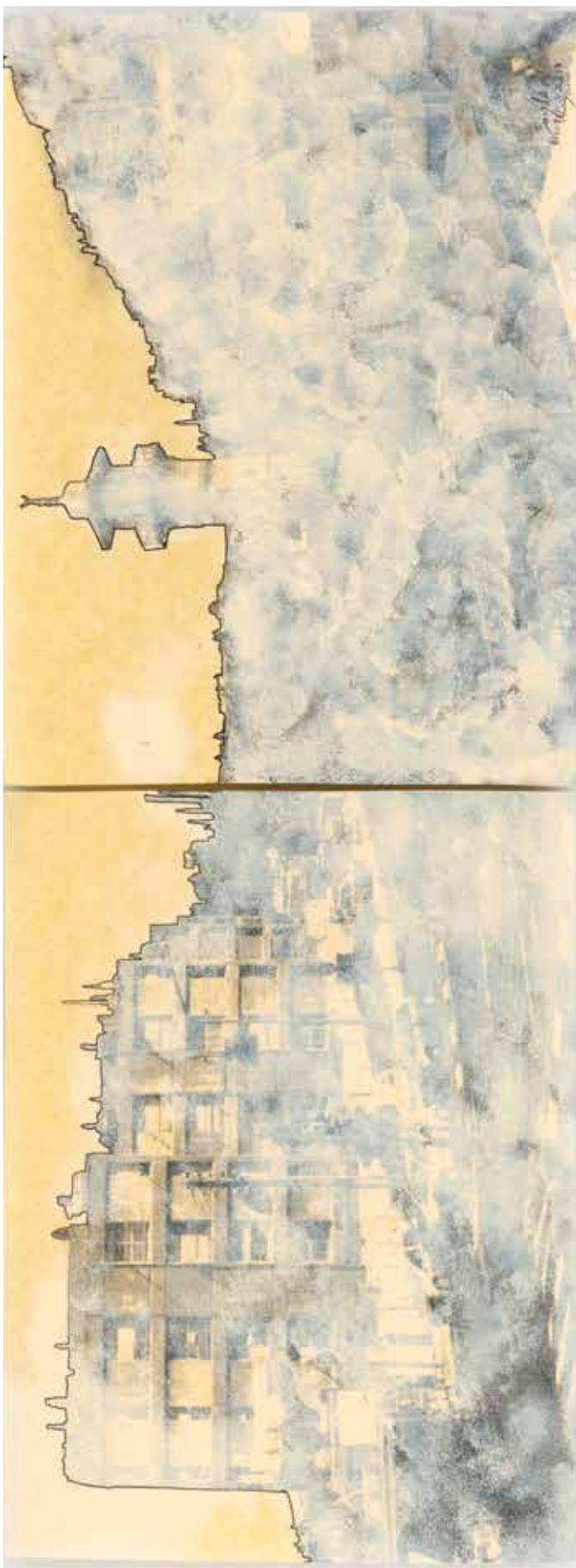
---

*Grandpa's Life Line | of the series "Life Lines" 2017, Print and Sketch on Paper, 92x28 cm*

---

# Neta Eikaujam

---



*East West Jerusalem, Print and Sketch on Paper, 2017, 63x35 cm*

# Adele ESSES

---

Adele Esses is a Brooklyn based early career artist. She received an undergraduate degree in Psychology, yet felt drawn to a career in art. She subsequently completed a B.A. in Studio Art from Brooklyn College, where she discovered her passion for painting.

Adele's great-grandmother grew up in Syria and left for Israel as a teenager. There, she raised a family under the British Mandate and through Israel's subsequent independence. Savta did whatever it took to get her children the best education and opportunities possible, despite discrimination against Sepharadim. She moved to America later in life. This artwork stems from a family observation, that as a girl drawing water from a well in Syria, Savta would never have imagined herself speaking with her sister face-to-face across an ocean.

---



*Savta and Doda Shibolet*, Acrylic on Canvas, 2016, 50.8x40.64 cm

# Camille Fox

---

Camille was born in Alexandria, Egypt. Her family was expelled from Egypt along with 900,000 Jews from Muslim lands. They found refuge in Israel, where they lived for several years. She now lives in Sydney, Australia, where she paints full time while maintaining a strong connection to Israel. Her pictures depict a bygone era which now exists only in memory; memories of a charmed life in Egypt.

This painting depicts a wedding party in the gardens of the Eliyahu Hanavi Synagogue in Alexandria, Egypt, during the “Golden Era” of the 1930s. This painting is inspired by many of Camille’s families’ weddings. Her family remains connected to Egypt, whether by writing books, painting memories or cooking a pot of Molokheya-- the community left Egypt, but Egypt did not leave them.

---





*Hope and Celebration, Oil on Canvas, 2015, 154x112 cm*

# Tal Gartenberg

---

Tal Gartenberg lives in Tel Aviv and holds a bachelor degree in Music Performance. Tal studied painting techniques with various leading artists. Her work has been published in design magazines and acquired by private collectors.

Living and painting in Jaffa, Tel Aviv, Tal found eastern aesthetics engaging and was drawn to experiment with this language. In her works, Tal sustains tension between embracing familiar comforting elements in the background and resists separation from the known. Letting go results in the estranged and naive intertwining in the background and foreground.

---





---

*Untitled, Acrylic and Chalk on Canvas, 2016, 100x100 cm*

---

---

# Tal

# Gartenberg

---



---

*Untitled*, Acrylic and Chalk on Canvas, 2016, 100x100 cm

---

# Irene Mamiye

---

Irene Mamiye is a New York-based artist whose work incorporates photography, video, and digital imaging techniques. Her work was included in the Museum of Art and Design's *Multiple Exposures: Jewelry and Photography* (2014) and in the landmark exhibition *The Edge of Vision* (2009), mounted by the Aperture Foundation. She holds an MFA in Lens Arts from the School of Visual Arts in New York.

Through the virtual world, Irene challenges traditional expectations of the photographic image as a link between memory and experience. Instead of a document, *Veils* comprises a digital installation projecting fantasy and selfhood as neither fixed nor inherent but in continual flux. Building on themes of personal identity, this series of self-portraits was inspired by Irene's experience as a transplanted European Jew of Egyptian background.





---

*Veils*, Wall and Floor Video Projected on Fabric, 4:38 min Two Channel Video, 2014

---

# Babette Marciano

---

Babette Marciano is a recognized artist and educator based in New York City. Born in Los Angeles, Babette studied painting at the School of Visual Arts and Slade School of Fine Arts. The images included here are part of her new collection based on Moroccan Jewry, exploring themes and ideas informed by the vastly underexposed and rich Moroccan-Jewish culture. When discussing world Jewry of the mid-twentieth century, much attention has been focused on Western and Eastern-European Jewish Culture. Especially in America, there is far less emphasis placed on the study and appreciation of North African and Sephardic Jewry. Babette is using historical timelines to narrate her series, thereby engaging with various ideas emerging from Moroccan Jewish culture, and concomitantly reversing and addressing the weighty absence of Sephardic culture in American thought and art.

Rav Abouhasara, one of the most prominent Moroccan rabbinical figures, starts the collection. Moving from dark to light, this triptych illustrates an ancient Kabbalistic idea of the transition from the physical to the spiritual.





---

*Rav Abouchasara*, Mixed Media on Canvas Triptych, 2015, 76.2x60.96 cm

---

# Babette Marciano

---

*Alps*, a painting of Babette's grandparents, depicts the pilgrimage taken from Morocco to Israel via France. This migration represents the beginning of the end of Moroccan Jewry. A world steeped in traditions stemming from the second temple, this once thriving Jewish community has all but vanished.

---



---

*Alps*, Mixed Media on Canvas Diptych, 2015, 157.48x71.12 cm

---

# Lida Sharet Massad

---

Lida immigrated to Israel from Iran as a child with her parents. Her father encouraged them to speak Hebrew, knowing that this way they would be able to adjust better to Israeli society. Still, occasionally, her parents would use words and phrases in Pharsi, their language from Iran, that better expressed what they wanted to say.

Over the last few years, with longing and affection, Lida returns to words and expressions in Pharsi and to artifacts that her parents brought from Iran. These reminded them of the culture they left behind and characterized their home. The Pharsi word *gozasht* means “to let go” and was often used by her parents to achieve peace and quiet in the home, to calm the family members. To build the *Gozasht* wall sculpture, Lida used around 20,000 nails, screws and tacks in various shades of gold, silver and bronze and hammered them into a plaster wall.

---





---

*Gozasht (Let it Go)*, Nails, Tacks and Screws on Plaster Board, 2014, 260X270 cm

---

# Lenore Mizrachi-Cohen

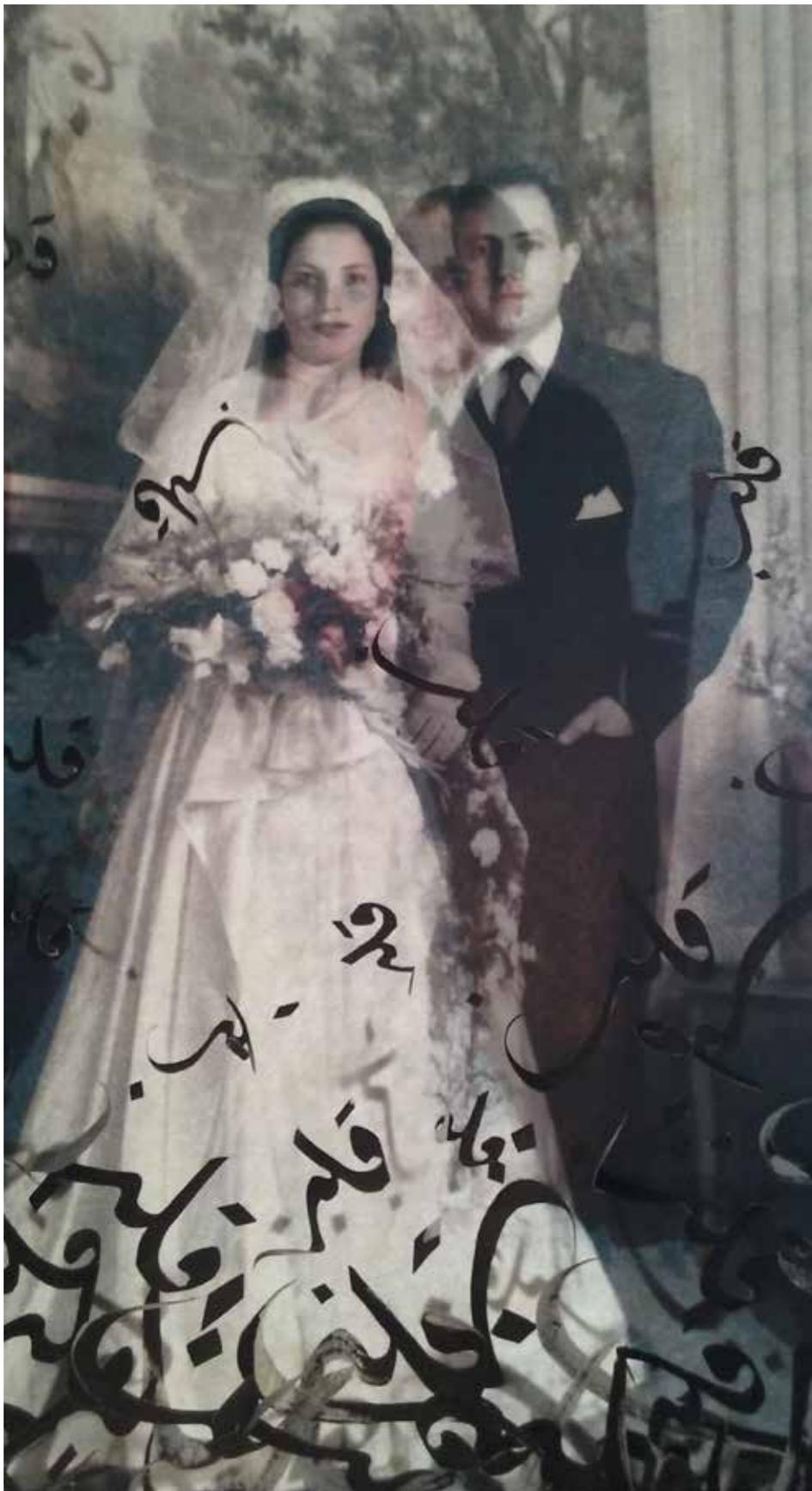
---

Lenore is a New York based artist and the creator/producer of *Homelands*. Much of her current work explores her Syrian heritage through the use of photography and Arabic calligraphy. Her past work includes curatorial and community outreach projects as well as a range of multimedia works exhibited and collected in the US, Canada and Israel.

[www.LenoreCohen.com](http://www.LenoreCohen.com)

*Heart/Turn* is a two-sided work, part of a series highlighting the drastic cultural shift experienced by the Jews of Islamic countries as they moved to new environments. Two wedding portraits from the same family, 60 years apart, are layered on one another in this image. The first photograph is from Egypt and the second from New York. When illuminated, the artwork becomes transparent and both couples are visible at once. The Arabic word *Qalb* means “heart” and is also a synonym for “to turn” or “change”. The calligraphy dissapates, mimicking the process that culture and memory undergo as people move from place to place.





*Heart/Turned*, قلب, Collage, Paper Cut and Calligraphy, 2017, 35.56x27.94 cm

---

# Lenore Mizrachi-Cohen

---

*La Yu'akhs/Irreversible* is a two-sided work, part of a series highlighting the drastic cultural shift experienced by the Jews of Islamic countries as they moved to new environments. Two portraits, a man and his great grandfather, are layered on one another in this image. The older photograph is from Syria and the second from New York. When illuminated, the artwork becomes transparent and both men are visible at once.

---



*Irreversible*, لا يعكس, Collage, Paper Cut and Calligraphy, 2017, 35.56x27.94 cm

# Florence Nasar

---

Florence Nasar is a New York based artist, choreographer, and writer. Her work draws inspiration from her Syrian-Jewish background and seeks connections between movement, tradition and social change. She is known for dance pieces that weave together cultural and religious imagery, text, and movement into participatory experiences. Florence has performed and taught internationally in the US, Europe, Israel and, most recently, led dance classes at Syrian refugee camps in Berlin.

*Leaves* is a performance that began as a retracing of the Florence's ancestors' steps out of Aleppo, to Jerusalem, to Brooklyn, and back again. It explores ideas of movement, migration and memory and seeks to understand the things that stay when we are forced to leave. Perhaps the memories of our lost homelands are contained within our movement, as a physical echo in the body. Movements that traveled across oceans, stored in the fingertips of our grandmothers, carried on their husband's backs away from home. In this work, family members act as performers. A woman prepares grape leaves in the distance, while others are carried across the space, from one place to another. A story inspired by the artist's grandmother, who in her last moments, awoke and began rolling imagined grape leaves stuffed with rice.

---





---

*Leaves, Performance, 2015*

---

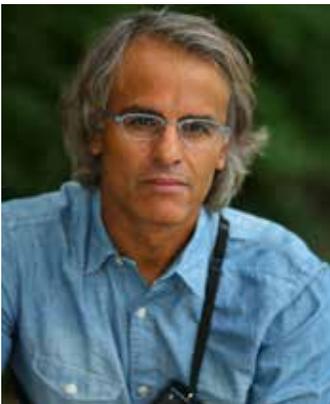
# Zion Ozeri

---

Zion Ozeri is one of the world's leading photographers exploring the Jewish experience. His photographs are widely published in books & museum exhibitions. Ozeri is the recipient of the Covenant award in 2013. His innovative curricula, *The Jewish Lens* and *Diversity Lens*, are in many schools worldwide.

[www.ZionOzeri.com](http://www.ZionOzeri.com) & [www.JewishLens.org](http://www.JewishLens.org)

This photograph of a physician with passion for painting illustrates the tension of many in the Jewish world, who on one hand love their homes and the country in which they live, yet pray and wish for “Next Year in Jerusalem”.





---

*Painted Homelands, Mar Del Plata, Argentina, Photograph, 2002, 60.96x40.64 cm*

# Anne Sassoon

---

Anne Sassoon grew up with the sense of a Paradise lost because of the way her father, an aunt, and many uncles spoke about Baghdad, where they were born. She saw the effects of the Farhud long before finding out about it, when meeting dispossessed relatives who had fled to Israel. Born in Wales, Anne has lived in Johannesburg, Boston and London, and now lives in Jerusalem. She has had solo exhibitions in Jerusalem, London, Berlin, Maine USA, Johannesburg and Cape Town, and her work is in public collections in South Africa, UK and Israel. Anne has BA (Hons) in Fine Art from Middlesex University, London. She is a reviewer for Artcritical, New York.

The characters in this painting are taken in part from old photographs of Baghdad, in part from stencil graffiti found on Jerusalem walls; they relate also to people described in published memoirs of Jewish life in Baghdad. The palm leaves are drawn from a tree outside Anne's apartment, so that there is a combining of the real, the borrowed, and the imagined.

---





*Genetic Memory*, Acrylic and Ink on Paper, 2016, 110x75 cm

---

## Producer's Note

---

After discovering the Jerusalem Biennale for Contemporary Jewish Art in the Fall of 2014, I started considering “Jewish Art” and what that term meant to me. I realized that there existed a large, unmined source of material in my own background which could contribute to celebrating, educating about and expressing a culture that has, for many years, been waiting in the wings.

Once I began working on these themes I sought out others who shared a similar passion for furthering appreciation of the unique stories of the Jewish communities from Islamic lands. Thus, the idea to create *Homelands* was born.

*Homelands* stands at a crossroads between art, culture and history. It allows us to celebrate this rich heritage in a unique way, through the eyes of its modern day heirs. It represents the value of appreciating the cultures of others and how they contribute to the mosaic of Jewish life around the world.

There are many who assisted in forming *Homelands*. To our donors I give my utmost thanks and appreciation. I would like to acknowledge JIMENA for connecting me with likeminded artists around the globe, in particular Zion Ozeri. The many stages of bringing this together were navigated largely because of his guidance and help. My gratitude also extends to our talented curator, Meirav Balas, who took on this project before we knew whether the show would even be staged. Thanks to her dedication and professionalism, we were accepted to the 2017 Jerusalem Biennale. This opportunity brought us full circle and helped make *Homelands* a reality. For this, I must finally acknowledge the Biennale founder, Ram Ozeri. His ideas helped inspire the creation of the show, and his dedication to its message of celebration, introspection and learning helped put us on the world stage.

It is my hope that *Homelands* will continue to inspire ideas and conversations, and contribute in its way to the ongoing, renewed dialogue about these communities.

**Lenore Mizrachi-Cohen**

**October 2017**

*If you would like to support Homelands in traveling to future venues please contact [Lenore@Lenorecohen.com](mailto:Lenore@Lenorecohen.com).*