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Iraqi Jews and Heritage under Threat: Negotiating and Managing an Identity from Afar

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This article looks at the case of Ezekiel's shrine in Kifl, Iraq. The shrine houses the grave of the Jewish prophet Ezekiel and originally consisted of a synagogue and associated buildings. Shiʿa Muslims claim it is a holy site for Muslims. Since Iraq's Jews largely left Iraq after 1950 as a result of government repression, it is now controlled by the Iraqi Shiʿa Waqf. It has been largely changed into a mosque, with many Jewish elements having been removed. Too few Jews are left in Iraq to challenge this. This article asks how changes to this site play into notions of belonging and identity for Iraqi Jews today, as well as how the effects of pressure from dominant Jewish identities and a general ignorance of Arab Jewish identity interacts with this important site of memory. An analysis of the relationship between the site and Iraqi Jewish identity is conducted via on-site work and thirteen interviews with Iraqi Jews from around the world. It argues for the importance of the site and that heritage sites such as Ezekiel's shrine are powerful sites for anchoring diasporic identities mnemonically. In the case where those identities are under strain, these sites serve a role to further strengthen and provide historical weight to claims of belonging. However, this relationship changes through generations because of internal and external identity and political pressures. Unchallengeable pressures increase the likelihood that memories are not passed on. The article argues for a dynamic understanding between site, politics, and identity.

Keywords: *heritage, identity, Iraq, Iraqi Jews, Mizrahi, preservation, religious shrines*

Introduction

This article looks at the case of Ezekiel's shrine[1] in Kifl, Iraq, and asks how this site plays into notions of belonging and identity for Iraqi

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Jews today. Ezekiel's shrine houses the grave of the Jewish prophet Ezekiel; it originally consisted of a synagogue and associated structures. The site has been contested by Iraq's Shiʿa Muslims, who claim it is a holy site for Muslims, visited by Imam Ali, and it is the resting place of the Islamic prophet Dhul-Kifl, who has been identified with Ezekiel. Since Iraq's Jews largely left Iraq after 1950 because of government repression, the site is now controlled by the Shiʿa Waqf and has been largely changed into a mosque. Today, only 430 Jewish families reside in the Kurdistan region and around 9 Jewish adults live in Baghdad (U.S. Department of State 2018). As such, there is little Jewish influence in Iraq to protect Jewish heritage, and so Ezekiel's shrine, like other Jewish heritage sites and Jewish property more widely, is under threat of destruction. Iraqi Jews, now largely residing in Israel, the United States, and Europe, are also under pressure from dominant Jewish identities *vis-à-vis* Ashkenazi cultural dominance in Israel and a general ignorance of Arab Jewish existence outside of Israel. A site of memory under threat might further this pressure.

Drawing on work completed at the site and thirteen interviews with Iraqi Jews from around the world, this article seeks to understand how an identity under pressure copes as the sites that figure into its self-concept change or are destroyed. It also looks at how this is intertwined with wider political changes. I begin with a theoretical discussion of the links between heritage and identity. I go on to discuss the vicissitudes of Jewish and Iraqi Jewish identity before giving an overview of the work done on-site and the current state of the site. I then offer an analysis of the interviews, and the article ends with a brief discussion of the uses of such research for preservation work. I argue that heritage sites such as Ezekiel's shrine are powerful sites for anchoring diasporic identities and that in the cases where those identities are under strain, these sites serve a role to strengthen and provide historical weight to those claims of belonging. Note, however, that this relationship changes through the generations, and strong memories of place are not always passed on when those sites, and the identities they sustain, are under a threat that cannot be effectively challenged. I further argue that preservation work needs to understand and engage with these issues and that restoration done in the framework of a dialogue—much like how identity can be understood as a negotiation—with recognition of suffering as a part of that, can be a good starting point for rekindling positive community relations.

Theoretical Frameworks

Grounding and Bounding—The Political Uses of Heritage

While material heritage is normally thought of and codified into "sites," these objects are only as important as the process of social

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production that places meaning and representation upon them (Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge 2007). Therefore, while *heritage* is, in the public realm, associated with those "old things" that provide cultural and historical weight to our identity, especially in a way that allows us to see and present ourselves to others in a coherent manner, it is best thought of as something political: "the use of the past as a cultural, political, and economic resource for the present" (Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge 2007, 2–3), which is "selected according to the demands of the present and, in turn, bequeathed to an imagined future." (Graham and Howard 2012, 2). Accordingly, heritage is not necessarily an object, despite its frequent manifestation in material objects, but rather an activity that encompasses "heritage spaces"—a cultural process that is engaged in meaning and memory work in relation to ourselves, on a group level (Smith 2006).

Heritage is then intimately intertwined with politics and identity. What becomes heritage and what does not is a political act in that it gives symbolic weight to things that perhaps did not have one before, or raises them above other, similar items and objects in symbolic quality. The choice to make something "heritage" and another thing not is related to a calculation about who we want to be—and who we do not want to be. Vygotsky (2011) argues that attaching one's self to a monument turns ephemeral psychic memory into something that lasts; similarly, Bastide (2011) argues that because memories are immaterial, they "must attach themselves to something durable" (161). Heritage in this understanding is something done to prevent a loss. Deacon and Smeets (2013) make this case well; they argue that naming a heritage is a metacultural act in that "it posits values, a threat to this value, and a moral obligation to address it" (132). Frequently, heritages are chosen to give historical weight to a political claim—whether a claim that a nation is "timeless," or that a people has always been somewhere, or that there is some kind of "proud tradition" or "national struggle" that gives actions and identities meaning beyond the present. As such, Raphael Samuel (2012) refers to heritage as a "theater of memory," a performative memory place. It is through heritage that we perform who we are, as well as who we are not.

Nora (1989) has argued that the "acceleration of history" has, through "a movement toward democratization and mass culture on a global scale," created an "increasingly rapid slippage of the present into a historical past that is gone for good" (7) that has turned heritage sites, among other things, into what he terms "*lieux de memoire*" (sites of memory). These sites have increased in importance, as we no longer produce memories. These places become a symbolic archive of memory in which groups or people invest their identity/memory (Carrier 2000). As Samuel (2012) points out, heritage is something used by states to *ground* the historical fiction of the nation, in the sense that it provides a linearity to the story and that it is tangible. The increasing necessity of

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some kind of primordial narrative for nation-states further increases the value of heritage in this regard. As globalization marches on and space-time is continually shrunk, and as traditions are increasingly challenged by new identity forms, the value in finding a concrete, grounded reality subsequently increases. For newer nations and states, this need for finding evidence or grounding a primordial narrative is arguably greater (Anderson 2016). Likewise, nations and social groups under threat of dislocation would likely find value in the grounding and bounding of identity that heritage provides (Vinitzky-Seroussi, Schuman, and Vinokur 2003). While this process points toward an ossification of heritage, we must recognize that this ossification masks the facts that identities—and as such, heritages—are "never unified, and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured" (Hall 1996, 4). As such, these grounding/bounding moves are always open to contestation. Likewise, because societies are not homogenous, heritage is additionally something that needs to be produced intertextually, in conflict or in negotiation with others.

Jewish Plural Identities and Identity Tensions

Shreiber (1998) notes that exile and diaspora have long given meaning to a Jewish identity. She quotes Psalm 137, "how can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" (273) as being key to this understanding and as something that shows the roots of the meaning of diaspora to Jewishness. Likewise, Cohen (2008) points to the "destruction of Jerusalem and razing of the walls of its Temple in 586 BC [that] created the central folk memory of the pessimistic, victim diaspora tradition" (22). One of the core "meanings" of Jewishness is identified in their exile from a homeland and the covenant with God that preceded it. What exactly to do with this meaning is another question; while Bundism embraced diaspora (Laqueur 2003), mainstream Zionism, dealing with the return of Jews to Jerusalem and Israel, evidently understands this diaspora as a negative condition of Judaism, with a core longing to return being part of that identity: "According to traditional Zionist ideology, exile is an unnatural condition that cannot (and must not) last forever" (Safran 2005, 54). According to Safran (2005), this idea developed into "a set of institutions, social patterns, and ethnonational and/or religious symbols" (36) that held community together across space and time and, in the case of the Zionists, sought to bring the community back together permanently with a homeland in Israel.

However, Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin (1993) argue that the Zionist interpretation of diaspora is incorrect. They argue that Zionism, in its desire to demonstrate Jewish attachment to the land of Israel, has somewhat warped the idea of diaspora in Jewish identity, changing it from something denoting a spread of people to a certain idea that one is never fully whole, or always in some transitory state, with *Aliyah*

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(immigration to Israel) being the fulfillment of that missing part. In doing so, Zionist ideology "forgot" about previous attachments that Jews might have had—to Germany, to Poland, to France, to Iraq (Ricœur 2010). As such, Daniel Boyarin (2015) then argues that we should understand that there is not one Jewish diaspora, but many—Spanish, Iranian, Iraqi, and German diasporas, and so on. A tension can then be identified between different positions—between Israeli attempts to create a single Jewish-Israeli identity, largely based on European Ashkenazi aesthetics (Dardashiti 2008), and resistances to this narrative that have come in the form of identity claims to Arab-Jewishness, national belonging to states other than Israel, and demands to recognize a plurality of identities in Israel and in other states (Fonrobert and Shemtov 2005; Roby 2015; Shohat 2017). We can also add to this tension the external factors that seek to force Jews to identify away from the various places in which they might be attached to by birth or heritage. Usually this comes in the form of anti-Semitic ideas about an ultimate loyalty to Israel that Jews might have, but it also can be identified in pervasive stereotypes about the homeless "wandering Jew" who really belongs nowhere (Lipphardt, Brauch, and Nocke 2008), as well as in Zionist ideas that Jews really *do* belong, truly, in Israel.[2] This third tension is identified in the Jewish exodus from Iraq, explored below. Suffice it to say, when the Jewish diaspora comes together, another is created from what is left behind. Some would deny this second diaspora, and some would see it as central. It is this dialectic that is being investigated, as well as how the dynamic relates to heritage sites that can anchor identity in spaces left behind.

Historical Context

The Jews of Iraq

There have always been Jews in Mesopotamia (Robertson 2016). The modern state of Iraq, formed in 1921, encompasses much of this area and sought to create a European-style nation-state out of the diverse peoples that resided there (Shohat 2017). Orit Bashkin (2012) argues that this was done in the Jewish case through the Arab-Jew/Iraqi-Jew hyphenated identity, which sought to "forge a relationship with the cultural and historical framework of the Arab majority community by claiming Arab ethnicity as its own." (3) They were received in this context as "'Iraqis,' 'citizens,' 'Iraqis of the Jewish faith,' 'Arab Jews,' 'Zionists,' and 'people of the book,' depending on the socio-political and sociocultural orientation of those that described them" (3). Therefore, the Iraqi Jewish identity as forged in the modern Iraqi state is understood here as one that is fully politicized; it was something done with the full knowledge of what the "nation" was, in the European sense, and with the intention of joining the emerging Iraqi national-political

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community as formed post–World War I. This move was initially successful, and Jews rose in political, economic, and social standing as they enthusiastically took part in the making of the new nation-state (Bashkin 2012; Cole 2009).

However, conditions for Jews in Iraq gradually worsened from the late 1920s. Bashkin (2012) places this in the context of the conflict in Palestine: Iraqi Jewish support for the Palestinians, coming from the intelligentsia, journalists, the chief rabbi, and poets, and Prime Minister Nuri Sa'id's promise to protect the Jewish population, ended up not being enough to insulate the Iraqi Jews from growing anti-Semitism and their assumed association with Zionism. In 1941, the Iraqi Jews in Baghdad suffered the Farhud, a pogrom in which some hundreds were killed or injured (Yehuda 2017). With the establishment of Israel, Zionist agitation in the country, and rising anti-Semitism, the government enacted laws between 1950 and 1952 that would prove devastating to the Jewish community: the Supplement to Ordinance Cancelling Iraqi Nationality, Law 1/1950, and the Control and Administration of Property of Jews Deprived of Iraqi Nationality, Law 5/1951, which would strip property and nationality from Iraqi Jews who emigrated to Israel. The intolerable conditions under which the Iraqi Jews now lived—being banned from banking; import and export; holding public office; and working on the railways, in the post office, and in the telegraph department—meant that by the end of the 1950s, the vast majority of Iraq's 180,000 Jews had left the country as émigrés and, upon leaving, became exiles (Bashkin 2017). Operation Ezra and Nehemiah, organized by the new Israeli government, airlifted between 120,000 and 130,000 Iraqi Jews to Israel from Iraq between 1951 and 1952 (Jewish Virtual Library n.d.), with only a handful remaining (U.S. Department of State 2018).

The Jews of Iraq Post-1950

Those Jews who left Iraq ended up in a variety of countries. The majority ended up in Israel, where they found themselves living for many years in desert camps and facing racism within their new society (Bashkin 2017). Their problematic reception in the new Jewish state can be attributed in part to the founding Zionist ideology, which presented itself as a project exporting European "civilization" to the Middle East, and in part to the dominance of the European Ashkenazi, who imported Orientalist ideas about Arabs:

> In the view of many Zionists, the Mizrahim became suspect because of their association with the Arab world. Shenhav describes how, in the formative encounter in Abadan, the local Iraqi Jews were described by Zionists in terms typical of the Orientalist discourses identified by Edward Said, as a backward people lacking in (European) culture. (Eastwood 2019, 62)

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These Orientalist discourses about "Arab backwardness" could be found across the early Israeli state, coming from sources as high as Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, who described Sephardi (which included Moroccan, Algerian, Egyptian, Iraqi, Iranian, and Indian) immigrants as lacking even "the most elementary knowledge" or "a trace of Jewish or human education." Furthermore, he said, "We do not want Israelis to become Arabs. We are bound by duty to fight against the spirit of the Levant that corrupts individuals and society" (Shohat 1988, 4).[3]

One only needs to hunt a little to find anti-Arab racism in early Israeli discourse. The rejection felt by the Arab Jews—and the material and political results of this rejection—was eventually politicized by the Israeli Black Panther movement and the various movements for Mizrahi civil rights in the 1970s and 1980s (Picard 2017). However, the Iraqi Jews by this time were thought to be among the best integrated and most successful of the immigrants from Islamic countries, although those who rose largely did so at the price of cultural loss—they "had long since given up most of their unique cultural markers . . . They dressed like middle-class Israelis, they spoke Hebrew, many of them did not observe religious and traditional customs, and they had even adopted the Eurocentric hierarchy and advocated the melting-pot policy" (Meir-Glitzenstein 2002, 170). While the Israeli Black Panthers represented the Arab Jewish disadvantaged and lower classes more broadly, Iraqi Jewish middle classes sought to reclaim lost identities with new centers and movements such as the World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries (WOJAC) and the Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center (BJHC) (Meir-Glitzenstein 2002). These organizations sought to reclaim a place for Arab and Iraqi Jews in the Israeli narrative, although from different places. The BJHC claimed Zionism and framed their narrative around incorporating Iraqi Jews into the Zionist story; WOJAC presented Iraqi Jews and other Arab Jews as refugees with differentiating rights and desires to the mainstream story of a "Zionist rescue" (Meir-Glitzenstein 2002). Since that time, a number of interest groups have arisen that seek to maintain the Iraqi Jewish identity (or a wider Arab Jewish identity) and their related heritage, as well as advocating for justice from Iraq and other Arab countries. Alongside the BJHC and WOJAC, the latter of which has now closed, we can count organizations such as Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa, Harif, the Exilarch's Foundation, and numerous other smaller establishments.

Despite this advocacy for Iraqi and Arab Jews, Arab Jews still face discrimination and racism within Israeli society today. Although there has been a movement away from the 1950s' "melting pot" ideology and toward acceptance of the diversity of Jewish culture and ethnicity in Israel (Hercbergs 2016), Shohat (2017) argues that this has come at the cost of Arab Jews losing the "Arab" form of their identity, which remains the language and ethnicity of the "enemy." This is encapsulated in the way that Arab Jews are sought after for army intelligence, with

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Arab Jewish children being exceptionally selected to sit intelligence exams and to learn to identify Arabic phrases such as "a bomb exploded" (Ben Dor 2004). Shenhav and Hever (2012) argue that there is in Israel an "ardent desire is to live in a Jewish state cleansed of Arabs or of Arab culture, of any kind" (102); hence Arabic and Arab identities become securitized in this way. Shohat (2017) also argues that a further injustice can be found in the lumping of all Arab Jews into the category of "Mizrahim," which collapses all cultural and national differences between Arab Jews into a homogenous category. Reuven Snir (2015) describes the results of this history:

> After they had experienced the tribulations of a collective exclusion in their beloved Arab homelands, followed by their collective uprooting from their soil, mostly against their will, they witnessed a hasty immigration to the Promised Land—the new-born State of the Jews—only to face another collective exclusion whose perpetrators sometimes hastened to ascribe derogatory collective identities to them. Following this double exclusion, both before and after their immigration, and after adjusting to the new Israeli-Hebrew society, many of them found themselves, separately rather than collectively, preferring to distance themselves from any stable collectivity and instead assert their own singularities and, at the same time, reject any essential identity. (299)

This uprooting from the Arab and Israeli identities is of course intertwined with the anti-Semitism that Jews face worldwide, especially in the form of denial of personhood. Thus, an Arab Jew can find an additional layer of rejection outside of the context of Israeli-Arab politics, perhaps in the context of denial in whatever place they reside (Britain, the United States, etc.) or via the general social ignorance that Jews from Arab countries actually exist (Snir 2015). These layers remind us that while there is an overarching debate normally associated with Jewish politics (Israel, anti-Semitism, religious practice, etc.), there is also an intersectional element that cannot be ignored that comes in the form of class, gender, nationality, and ethnicity, to name a few (Crenshaw 1993).[4] While the Iraqi intelligentsia has begun to revisit the history of the Jews of Iraq (Zeidel 2018), the country retains discriminatory laws and is dangerous for Jews (U.S. Department of State 2018).

Methodology

The work here is part of a larger project, funded by the Nahrein Network between 2018 and 2019, that looks at Ezekiel's shrine in Iraq. The project consisted of documentary and interview work on-site and interviews with members of the Iraqi Jewish diaspora. The study intended to investigate not only changes to the site but also how these changes affect the Iraqi Jewish identity and how they are dealt with by the

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community. The site was chosen for its archaeological heritage as well as its importance to Iraqi Jewish history, both of which are explored in the following section (Ezekiel's Shrine: A Short History of Ezekiel's Shrine).

The on-site work consisted of a series of visits to the site to collect data on the historic changes to the site and its current architectural condition. Interviews were conducted with relevant officials and locals. All Iraqi contacts and participants remain anonymous in this article for safety purposes. Additionally, archival data were collected. At the moment, the majority of the archival and site data is impounded.[5] These data are discussed in brief in the section pertaining to the current status of Ezekiel's shrine (Ezekiel's Shrine: The Current Status of Ezekiel's Shrine).

To understand how the site figures into the modern Iraqi Jewish identity, a grounded theory methodology was used. The study draws on interviews with thirteen persons, conducted between October 2018 and March 2019, and ongoing conversations, analyzed in the form of research notes, with further members of the Iraqi Jewish diaspora as part of the project work. One of these respondents is from the Jewish community in Iraq. Data are also drawn from wider informal conversations with the small community in Iraq, who were unable to give longer interviews. The study does not look to generalize this data but rather to use grounded theory methodology to move from particular data to a more abstract and theoretical frame that may be considered general but is more exploratory than generalizable (Charmaz 2014). The interviews were largely unstructured, but they did begin with an overview of the project through the provision of a project brief, including the results of the site survey, in order to prime respondents to respond about the site specifically rather than Iraqi Jewish identity generally.

Following each interview, participants' responses were coded, and a new participant was sought following theoretical sampling procedures. Participants were also asked if they wished to recommend someone to be interviewed. After coding, some respondents were spoken to repeatedly to follow up on new codes and categories that were revealed during subsequent interviews, and these conversations were added to the interview database. Research notes were also taken throughout the project and were analyzed alongside the interview transcripts. The sample consisted of persons of Iraqi Jewish heritage from around the world, from various age groups, and from both sexes. It included Jews currently living in Iraq; members of Iraqi Jewish interest groups; first-, second-, and third-generation Iraqi Jews; Iraqi Jews living in Israel; and Iraqi Jews living outside of Israel. A breakdown of the sample, denoting respondent number, sex, generation in relation to emigration, and the location the respondent emigrated from or was born in, is available in Table 1. Information on the respondent in Iraq is fully redacted as the community is so small.

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Table 1. Respondent Breakdown

Respondent Number	Emigrant Generation	Sex	Location of Emigration or Birth
1	First	Male	Israel
2	Second	Female	Europe
3	First	Male	Australia
4	Second	Female	Europe
5	First	Female	United States
6	Third	Male	United States
7	First	Male	Israel
8	First	Male	Israel
9	First	Male	Europe
10	Third	Female	Europe
11	First	Male	Israel
12	N/A	N/A	Iraq
13	Third	Female	Israel

Ezekiel's Shrine

A Short History of Ezekiel's Shrine

Ezekiel appears in the Hebrew Bible as the author of the Book of Ezekiel. Ezekiel also appears in the Bible in Ezekiel 37 and the Qur'an, identified there as Dhul-Kifl (Meri 2012). While little is apparently known about Ezekiel himself, the dates given in the Book of Ezekiel imply that he was active as a prophet between 593 and 571 BC and was exiled from Jerusalem during the Babylonian Exile. According to Ehrlich (1999), Ezekiel should be considered one of Judaism's most important figures, being a "prophet of exile" and a figure who allowed Judaism to survive as a diaspora religion. Ezekiel's message, which in part "de-legitimates the community in Jerusalem, accusing them with various cultic sins . . . that estrange them from the land" (Rom-Shiloni 2006, 20), turned the exile on its head, casting those in Babylon as faithful to God and those that remained in Jerusalem as illegitimate. Where a community might thus be vulnerable to conversion when exiled from their homeland, Ezekiel's prophecy allowed the exiled Jews to understand that "they were the true Israel and . . . at the centre of history. It is this knowledge which has enabled Judaism, thanks to Ezekiel, to have survived for so long" (Ehrlich 1999, 128). Thus, the work of Ezekiel can be understood to constitute "an exilic ideology which enables continuity of national existence in exile and promises restoration to the Exiles" (Rom-Shiloni 2006, 43).

Ezekiel's shrine in Kifl, Iraq, is most famous as the grave site of Ezekiel. Alongside this, the graves of five ancient Jewish leaders and Menahem Ṣāliḥ Daniel are housed at the site. The site is one of a number of Jewish holy sites and shrines that have come under threat since the majority of Iraq's Jews left following the 1950s.[6]

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One of the first mentions of Ezekiel's shrine is from the tenth century, in the epistle of Sherira Gaon: it is described as a pilgrimage site for Jews wishing to visit the grave of Ezekiel (Stillman 2010). An account of Ezekiel's shrine appears in 1170 in the writing of R. Benjamin of Tuleda, who described the "Synagogue of Ezekiel" as such: "It is fronted by sixty turrets, and between each turret there is a minor Synagogue, and in the court of the Synagogue is the ark, and at the back of the Synagogue is the sepulchre of Ezekiel. It is surmounted by a large cupola, and it is a very handsome structure" (Yehuda 2017, 169). Today, the tomb of Ezekiel, the dome, the synagogue courtyard, and the ark can still be seen at the site. The site is architecturally important, as the prominent dome is "the first example of Iraqi architecture having an outside shell independent from the internal one" (Archnet n.d.). However, since R. Benjamin of Tuleda's time, records show that the site has undergone a number of changes, largely as a result of political conflicts in the region. In 1316, the Mongol ruler Öljeitü seized the site from the local Jews, built a mosque adjacent to the synagogue, and handed over control to the local Muslim population (Meri 2012). By the beginning of the thirteenth century, the site had also been claimed as a grave site of Dhul-Kifl. Zvi Yehuda (2017) attests that this "provided the site with a Muslim identity, in line with the Muslim tendency to adopt the holy sites of other nations" (162).

Ezekiel's shrine appears prominently in several books about Iraqi Jews, including academic texts and memoirs. Haddad, in his Arabic translation of Benjamin of Tuleda's travels, describes the site as "one of the most important and sacred sites for the Jewish community in Iraq" (quoted in Bashkin 2012, 52). Yehuda's (2017) study of Iraqi Jewish history begins with the story of the Jewish community in Iraq regaining possession of the tomb after five hundred years, placing the tomb front and center in historical memory (1). Yehuda later argues, in a chapter dedicated to the struggle between Muslims and Jews to control the tomb, that the "tomb of the prophet Ezekiel was one of the most important shrines on the itinerary of visitors and travellers to central and southern Iraq" and that "students of the history of Iraqi Jewry in the Muslim period can judge the community's socioeconomic situation at any given time by the measure of control that it had over [the tomb]" (168). Violette Shamash (2008) writes about how at the festival of Shabout (Shavuoth or the Pentecost), many Jews would make a pilgrimage to the shrine at Kifl to pay respects to the grave of Ezekiel. According to David Martin Gitlitz and Linda Kay Davidson (2006), during Passover, visitors to the tomb at Kifl would number around five thousand. Outside Jerusalem, this was one of the largest sites of Jewish pilgrimage. "Sara," an Iraqi Jewish woman from Kifl who later emigrated to the United Kingdom, offers Tim Judah (2003) a similar figure; Judah states that

> until 1951 about five thousand Jews used to come to Al-Kifl during Passover week. And people still came after 1951, at least until 1967,

> after which it grew too dangerous. Then in 1984 a group of twenty Jews had come from Baghdad and in 1989 Sara, her family and another family had come, but no Jews to her knowledge had made the pilgrimage since then.

Yehuda (2017) writes that during the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, the "scant reports we possess about Kifl and the tomb . . . make it impossible to determine who was in control" (173). However, we do know that the site has been at the center of a power struggle, changing hands and having undergone work to make the site "Muslim" or "Jewish" in character a number of times. In each case, a change in confessional ownership resulted in changes to the character of the site, with Jewish artifacts being removed and Muslim ones put in their place, and vice versa. Records show that the site was in the hands of the Jewish population at the start of the 1840s (Yehuda 2017) and was renovated or changed in the 1850s, in 1898, and again in the 1920s, and that the status of the site as Jewish or Muslim was challenged at least four times in that period (Stillman 2010). These changes in status and control can be largely attributed to political changes and changes in the "Jews' political and economic power in Iraq" (Yehuda 2017, 179). It is of little surprise, then, that the site is now under the jurisdiction of the Shiʿa Waqf, with the oversight of the Ministry of Culture and Antiquities, as post-Saddam Iraq has become increasingly sectarian (Robertson 2016). The small town of Kifl lies just thirty kilometers north of Najaf, the center of Shiʿa political power in Iraq, and the shrine is used by the Shiʿa endowment to bolster arguments about a timeless Shiʿa presence in the area. Iraqi Jews have had little say in the changes to the site, although organizations dedicated to Iraqi or Arab Jews have campaigned to protect the site, and it seems that the resulting international pressure has had some previous effect (Point of No Return: Jewish Refugees from Arab and Muslim Countries 2010).[7] However, the voice of Iraqi Jews in regard to such changes will be limited as long as Article 19 of the Iraqi constitution remains, which exclusively denies the Iraqi Jews who lost their citizenship when leaving Iraq the right to have it restored. As such, the shrine itself can be understood as one of the places that "tells the story of a nation" by looking back into the past and providing an imagined window into that time, as well as reflecting changes in the present (Harvey 2001). That the site is under threat of erasure means that its contribution to the collective Iraqi Jewish identity can be theorized to be even more profound (Holtorf 2015).

The Current Status of Ezekiel's Shrine

As noted, the shrine is currently under the jurisdiction of the Shiʿa Waqf as a Shiʿa site, with the oversight of the Ministry of Culture and Antiquities. Under the purview of the Waqf, the shrine has undergone

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significant changes. After most of Iraq's Jews left in the 1950s, the site was abandoned for a short period. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Iraqi government carried out archaeological excavations. In 2003, the Shiʿa Waqf revived contestation over the site, claiming that it was originally a Shiʿa mosque, and suggested that the Jewish community was trying to demolish or hide any Islamic architecture on the site to strengthen the claim that it is a synagogue. Consequently, the Waqf began a substantial plan to demolish any Jewish heritage in the shrine and reshape the site into a mosque.

Since 2012, the site has undergone major work, including reshaping and demolition, carried out by an Iranian company under the instruction of the Waqf. This work has included significant changes to the site, including the displacement of grave sites, the demolition of internal walls and structures, and the construction of a new Shiʿa place of worship. Externally, a dome has been added alongside walls and tower structures (Figure 1). These new structures include Arabic scripture tiling, giving the site characteristics more associated with a mosque. These works have resulted in at least 80% of the ancient and original building foundations being demolished. Only the grave of Ezekiel and the dome of the building remain in their original condition. These works have fueled alarm about the ongoing safety of the site's Jewish character; the Waqf describes the site as an Islamic Shiite shrine and have published a report stating that "before their migration from Iraq in 1941, Iraqi Jews tried to obliterate Islamic writings from the mosque located in the same place to replace them with Hebrew phrases" (Zeed 2015). Hence, the works the site is undergoing currently are in the vein of "restoring" the site to an Islamic one.

As such, these works, through the removal, deterioration, and demolition of Hebrew inscriptions, have caused significant damage to the Jewish character of the site, as well as extensive damage to the site itself. In 2010, workers erased a Hebrew inscription as part of work on the mosque (Haaretz Service 2010). The Torah scroll from the site was stolen in 2003 and has not yet been recovered. Continuing works have seen either further damage to the Jewish heritage of the site or an increased emphasis on the Islamic character of the site. There is no separate entrance for non-Muslims, and non-Muslim entrance is endangered by a *fatwa* stating that it is not preferable to allow non-Muslims to enter the mosque. Items of value to the shrine's character that are hundreds of years old, including doors, tiling, and pillars, have been removed.

A site assessment by an engineer has determined that the room housing Ezekiel's grave has damage described as critical; there is a possibility that part of the site could collapse in the next three to four years.[8] It is likely that the vibration of heavy trucks used in construction and rainfall were among the causes of cracks and damage to paint and plaster. Conversations with persons knowledgeable about the site and the works indicate that the deterioration of the site's Jewish heritage is

Figure 1: Iraqi Jews outside Ezekiel's Shrine in 1932, showing the dome and entrance to the shrine. Pictures of the site taken in 2018–19 are available upon request from the author.

Source: American Colony (Jerusalem), Photo Dept. (1932) "Iraq. Kifl. Native Moslem [i.e., Muslim] village with a Jewish shrine to the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel's tomb with rabbi caretakers". https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/mpc2010001634/PP/

purposeful (anonymous sources, Iraq, 2018). Such changes are in violation of Law No. 55 for The Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq (2002), which forbids the changing of heritage sites and the removal of heritage items. However, the authorities evidently have little will to enforce this

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law. The volumes of religious tourists visiting Iraq each year, particularly from Iran, only further weaken opposition to such action, as these tourists bring a significant amount of income to the country. Religious tourism or pilgrimage has always been important to Ezekiel's shrine, and to Kifl, and efforts to maximize this profit are unsurprising (Porter 2019). Conversations with the local community indicate that the changes made to the site do not have local support and that the Jewish character of the site is essential to its heritage. However, many people in the area do not want to make a public protest about this because of the precarious security situation and the sectarian tensions existing in the country.

Interview Data

Is the Shrine Significant to Iraqi Jews?

A constant theme in all the interviews was that of the overall significance of Jewish heritage in Iraq to Iraqi Jewish identity. However, not all of the participants had heard of the shrine at the time of contact, but they were generally aware of Jewish heritage in the country. In this data set, first-generation emigrants had good and sometimes first-hand knowledge of the shrine, depending on age; the second generation knew significantly less detail; and the third generation had little to no knowledge. One third-generation participant said that while he lacked awareness of the shrine, he had knowledge of Jewish heritage in the country from his own research. This had come from his "own personal quest for bits of knowledge about [his] ancestry," which had stemmed from "internal struggles with [his] cultural background as a Jewish-American with roots in the Iraqi Jewish community," as the interviewee felt that his identity as an Iraqi Jew was not well understood—it was a "mystery" (Respondent 6). All participants agreed that Jewish heritage is significant in that it is a physical symbol of Iraqi Jews' culture, something that allows pride in their "mysterious" identity to flourish and be more than an aberration or an identity of difference—that is, it "grounds" the identity and gives it historical weight. As one participant put it, "It would mean a part of myself remains there. A part of the history is there" (Respondent 1).

Participants with more knowledge of the shrine tended to go beyond a link between the shrine and individual identity, linking the shrine to Jewish identity as a whole; one participant stated that the shrine was significant "because it epitomizes Jewish continuity since biblical times in Mesopotamia" and that it was "as if there [were] an unbroken thread linking the prophet Ezekiel with Jews living today" (Respondent 2). Another participant stated that the shrine is "extremely important because it shows the importance of Iraq. Iraq is the most—to me, is the most important country to the Jews in the world after Israel" (Respondent 8).

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The significance of the shrine alone seems to drop as participants get younger, however. The significance of heritage for the third generation was related to Jewish heritage in Iraq in general, but it lacked in specificity. Older participants from the first and second generations noted that the younger third-generation individuals show less interest in their Iraqi heritage, as they are mostly integrated into their new homes. They also noted that they did not engage their children as much with their heritage in Iraq. While third-generation Iraqi Jews were more likely to accept the invitation to take part in the research, they found it difficult to understand the relevance of their opinion in relation to the site. As one participant put it, "I don't know if I could help you with this project; my grandparents were from Baghdad and were forced to leave. But unfortunately, they passed away almost two years ago. Your project sounds very interesting, but I don't know if I could actually help you and answering your questions, since they're gone." The same interviewee later said the following:

> I'm really interested in the Jewish heritage in Iraq. It's part of the history of my family, I grew up hearing a lot of stories and eating Jewish Iraqi food, going to Iraqi synagogues, and I feel like it's part [of] my identity. I watched movies and read books and I personally find it very interesting. If I could have the option, I would love to see Baghdad myself, see what my grandparents told me about, but it's not possible unfortunately . . . About the shrine, I don't know. I would like [it] to be preserved or [to] move some part of it to Israel in case they'll decide to ruin it. (Respondent 13)

It is clear that the interviewee, as a third-generation Iraqi Jew, felt that she had lost her connection to Iraq when she lost her grandparents, and while that connection still lingers as part of her identity, it is in a more nostalgic form, one that is personal and cannot be recovered.

The question of why first-generation Iraqi Jews do not engage their children so much with their heritage appears repeatedly. One respondent put it simply down to the fragmentation of their community after leaving Iraq, as well as the pressures associated with integrating into new homes. With this integration came new connections with other groups and identities, which meant that fully exploring an Iraqi Jewish identity became harder:

> I used to feel much more Iraqi—when both my parents were alive and I moved in Iraqi Jewish circles. However, since 1986 I have lived and worked in Tuscany and France where I have had zero contact with the community. It is a long time. Also, my husband . . . does not have the same heritage . . . I still love conversing in Judeo-Arabic but I am finding harder to find anyone to speak that language too. (Respondent 4)

Another reason given for the lack of engagement was that many in the first generation thought that life in Iraq was behind them and could not

be recovered: "They closed that chapter . . . because of the political and military situation and the danger that people can face there" (Respondent 8). Thus, while it is preferable to keep the memory alive, this memory is again confined to the first and sometimes second generations. Members of the third generation might or might not undertake a personal search to find details of their identity and heritage, but it is not something that is carried with them. External pressures to conform to dominant identities and a weaker Iraqi identity have contributed to this. A "forgetting" also emerged at this point as a danger in the future: almost all the participants were aware of a forgetting of their identity in some way, whether in the form of it being neglected or it being sidelined by more dominant forms of identity. This came through in the form of a hostility in Iraq (explored in the next section), a lack of awareness of or engagement with Iraqi Jewish identity from others, and the difficulty associated with a painful exploration of nostalgic attachments to place.

This is perhaps to be expected. Not only does the diaspora have to struggle with the fact that their children will be raised in a new environment, and that they will more likely identify with that environment over time, but Iraq itself has also changed beyond recognition from those days. What exists more than ever are memories: "Today it is totally different to Iraq or Baghdad that I remember some seventy years ago. So nothing is left from the Jewish quarter, the synagogue, the memorials and important places" (Respondent 1). Even if there was an increased interest in Iraq, it would be in the "old" Iraq. Conversely, this makes heritage all the more powerful, as it is the last remaining remnant of Jewish life in the country. For the first generation, the shrine is something to be maintained as a monument; to the third generation, it serves a similar purpose, but only if it is sought out, and exists as part of a general Iraqi Jewish heritage.

A Return to Iraq?

While some of the participants wanted to return to Iraq, only one wanted to reclaim citizenship. To the others, the prospect of this garnered the response: What is the point? "As for me, to go visit and claim citizenship is far-fetched. We had a very hard time there, we had so much fear, and when my parents decided to leave, leaving behind everything they owned, it was the best thing that ever happened to us . . . So why would we want to go back?" (Respondent 5). Others did, however, acknowledge the symbolic value of Iraqi citizenship, especially those from the first generation. There was also an occasional wish to visit, linked to a desire to further understand one's identity and place in the world—linked to a heritage in the genealogical sense, one participant asked, "Is there any future hope for people like myself to be able to visit the country our grandparents fled from?" (Respondent 6). This wish was prevalent mostly in those who were not born in Iraq but in a new country of settlement.

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One participant who had visited Iraq explained that "if you visit Iraq, it's hard to show yourself that you are an Iraqi Jew and so on" (Respondent 8). A general feeling existed that Jews would not really be welcome, even if they were allowed to return. This culminated in one participant stating, "I have beautiful memories from Kifl, but I do not want to visit it" (Respondent 11). One participant went further, likening a Jew visiting Iraq as an enemy invading a country, as Iraq "took our citizenship . . . and this was the condition, according that we have to leave and are not entitled to go back" (Respondent 1). This notion adds to the symbolic power of the shrine, as it is a part of the community that remains after exile.

Management of the Shrine, Management of the Conflict

Most participants expressed a wish for the shrine to be restored to some state previous to the changes made under the Shiʿa Waqf. The majority of the participants also drew on their understanding of the shrine's importance to Iraqi Jewish identity in expressing this wish. One participant responded that "the site has been important to my culture for thousands of years, before our Zionist ambitions bore fruit. Before other monotheistic religions came to be. It would be nice to see the site returned to its Jewish state" (Respondent 6). The latter wish was echoed across most of the sample, with participants using a variety of phrases, such as the following: "I would like the shrine to be well kept and taken care of as a Jewish place" (Respondent 5); "I would like to rebuild it again. It is a holy place. Iraq should be proud that she has that!" (Respondent 1); "I would have liked to have seen the Jewish character preserved and the tombs of the Geonim restored. No Jews will return to Iraq but it could have been a monument to the Jews who once lived there" (Respondent 2). The rebuilding of the shrine in all these instances is likened to the *significance* of the shrine to Iraqi Jewish identity; it is described as holy, as a monument to the Jews, and as a thing that existed before "Others." There is a sense of pride that comes through, and an association that places those persons within the history of the site. Restoration would seem to be an act of affirmation as much as anything else.

All participants expressed distain at the Shiʿa Waqf's handling of the site to date, placing it in the context of wider Jewish-Muslim conflicts, especially in the context of the state of Israel: "For me, when I bring up restoration, I specifically mean that it would be nice to see it again as a Jewish site. Islam has a history of 'Islamifying' holy sites . . . My view on this is that in Israel, Muslims have a right to worship freely" (Respondent 6). This association was ubiquitous. It was not, however, entirely pessimistic. While many participants associated mismanagement of the shrine with a Muslim anti-Semitism, others recognized the political conflict inherent in shrine management in Iraq:

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> My request is to ensure that the tomb will be accessible to Jews as it [was] for hundreds of years when the tomb was controlled by the Shiite Arabs. Those responsible for the tomb today must take into account that the political situation will change and the tomb will once again be a place for a visit by many Jews from all over the world, and the region will enjoy economic prosperity, as Jews will come to visit and be in friendship and brotherhood with the Shiite Arabs as in the past. (Respondent 7)

Within those who made this association, there was a universal recognition of the political difficulties facing Iraq and that anti-Semitism was not some essential feature of Iraqi life. This view was most commonly associated with those who had a lot of knowledge of Iraq, either as first-generation émigrés or as activists or scholars.

However, this view is tempered by the associated understanding that while a future Iraq might be peaceful and just, the *current* Iraq is far from this. Jewish persons living in Iraq today who responded noted a particular fear of *any* government involvement in Jewish affairs, to the point where Jewish heritage that remains Jewish property is kept hidden, even at the cost of irreversible degradation. The logic is twofold: it is both about personal safety and a gambit with time. While time may degrade, it may also reveal opportunities. Working with the government is, in the mind of the Jewish community in Iraq, highly likely to result in Jewish property expropriated and destroyed (Respondent 12). It does, however, take every effort to act as a custodian of the Jewish property that remains in its possession, including religious sites. The “lesson of Kifl” (Respondent 12) is taken into account in this case, meaning that the government cannot be trusted. Ezekiel’s shrine is significant as a reiteration that it is not safe to be Jewish in Iraq. This was repeated by a first-generation émigré, who left Iraq in the 1970s: “When I grew up [in Iraq] in the fifties and sixties, they [the local Jewish community] never got involved in anything synagogue-related—related to preservation of these places—which I assume is out of fear of being involved in anything that has to do with the places that are also revered to by the Muslims” (Respondent 8).

The only acceptable custodian for those who share this fear seems to be UNESCO. Indeed, any Jewish involvement, whether from Israel or from international nongovernmental organizations associated with Jewish persons, was seen by some as a danger, as it would open the project to being discredited as being funded by “Zionists” (Respondent 9). The local Muslim community in Iraq likewise shied away from being involved in “Jewish” affairs for the same reason. The local Jewish community in Iraq hide the fact that they are Jewish in public life as much as possible for reasons of safety. However, UNESCO was tentatively accepted as a possible solution to safely managing and restoring Jewish property in Iraq by the local Iraqi Jewish community (Respondent 12). UNESCO management would, in the minds of the participants, allow

for a neutral arbiter to look after the site, removing it from the politics and corruption that has led to the current state. There is, however, little confidence that UNESCO would actually be able to impose its will in Iraq and take over the site. This wish is a *wish* in the fullest sense, in that it is not believed possible to come true. Two participants did, however, want an "international Jewish body" to take over the site as the only *true* way of preserving its Jewish character (Respondents 1 and 2). This was linked to the idea of restoration being a *full* restoration to the state of the site as it was in the early 1800s.

However, even some of those who would see UNESCO take control of the site remain fearful of repercussions on Jewish persons. One participant could not see a solution to the problem at Ezekiel's shrine without taking into account debates within Israel about heritage. A resolution in Iraq could lead to demands that heritage be a basis for land or citizenship claims in Israel by Palestinians (Respondent 10). This issue was one that arose in interviews as a stopping point several times; it came as a reminder that one can no longer deal with "Jewish issues" without reference to Israel. As one participant put it, "without solving the Israeli-Arab disputes under the Israeli-Palestinian issue, no Iraqi Jewish person will ever visit Iraq" (Respondent 8). Israel appears as a stopping point in interviews not only from the perspective of Arab intransigence but also regarding the view of Israeli primacy. Narrating his attempts to save the tomb by contacting people in Israel, one participant said, "I know people there, and I did, I did give a lot of evidence that it's, that the tomb, it's gonna be a mosque, and no one did anything, they said, don't worry about it. We should worry about what's happening here [in Israel]" (Respondent 3).

Other participants from the first and third generations spoke of the struggle to maintain their identity in Israel, in that there was not much interest or opportunity in mainstream Israeli society to understand Iraqi Jewish identity, especially since the airlift of the Iraqi Jews in the 1950s is presented as something that was good and right—a "coming home" of the Jews (Respondent 9). Those outside of Israel spoke more of a general ignorance of Jews from Arab countries in general being something that got in the way of fully understanding and exploring their identity, especially in relation with others (Respondents 6 and 10).

A further pessimistic view was that the shrine is simply doomed. An emotional participant, when asked about the future of the shrine, replied as follows:

> But to be honest, you are, you are wasting your time. I will tell you why. In 2010 I got from the locals pictures. They were digging out the tomb. Iraqis. I sent this picture to Israel to do something about it to stop them . . . and nothing happened, no one did anything. Nothing. I was only by myself running there and doing that . . . No, I got no support whatsoever . . . nothing. Today it is a big mosque . . . And I have

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> all the evidence and all the pictures . . . It is finished . . . it is under the Shiʿa now and they built a big mosque and . . . you are not going to save it. (Respondent 3)

In this participant's view, the damage done has been so severe, and the political climate so corrupt, that the shrine simply can no longer be saved. This is linked in other accounts to the exodus of the Jews post-1950 and is considered the final act in the removal of the Jews from Iraq:

> It is sad that every last trace of a 2,700-year-presence has been wiped out, to rub salt in the wounds of a community "ethnically cleansed." I have seen photos of the enormous Shiʿa mosque erected on the site—Ezekiel's shrine has been swallowed into a corner of it and is likely to have been altered beyond recognition. (Respondent 2)

The destruction of the shrine, in this account, is entirely political. However, this does not mean that the shrine is necessarily lost forever; for the first generation, while the building (site) is gone, the memory (place) remains:

> The whole world knows the history, that tombs . . . they were all Jewish prophets . . . So even if they make it a mosque, prophet Jonah is prophet Jonah! They cannot change it. You know it's like with . . . prophet Ezra. It's a mosque now. But still it's prophet Ezra. It's not . . . they cannot change it. (Respondent 3)

Discussion—A Note on the Future

The idea that heritage is central to identity appeared throughout the interviews, and in the form of the concreteness that tangible heritage provides, situating the individual in a more timeless mode of being. The final quote of the previous section—"But still it's prophet Ezra. It's not . . . they cannot change it" (Respondent 3)—raises an interesting question. As the significance of heritage sites is linked to the intangible lightness of being, can sites turn from tangible to intangible and still be valuable? If the shrine is one day razed, will the site where it once stood—perhaps, the empty ground where it once was—still be understood as heritage?

This view is interesting and certainly shows the adaptability of an identity under pressure. As little influence can be had over the future of the site, this participant has emphasized the spiritual/intangible element of the heritage, which, as Smith (2006) argues, is actually the core of the heritage. As the interviewee states, this cannot be destroyed, though it can be forgotten. However, this view was a minority: all other participants wanted the shrine to return to a previous state and for it to remain that way. This points to a desire to reclaim and perhaps ossify the site, cementing a Jewish presence in Iraq, a place where Jews are unlikely to have a significant presence. As they can no longer take part in managing

the heritage and adapting it to the present in a way that changes the site according to community and national needs, it is preferred that the site be turned into a monument that grounds Jewishness in the country.

The site has also served as a testament to the history of the Jews in the region—a powerful counterpoint to any centralizing narratives of Judaism that locates the correct Jew in the Zionist narrative, which has historically been Eurocentric. The presence of such heritage is also an insurance against forgetting. Again, this is especially important when Iraqi Jews cannot return to Iraq, and even more so when there is little interest in reclaiming citizenship, an attitude especially prevalent in the new generation. This generation is interested in their history, and they seek out that information, but within a context of someone fully "Othered." Seeking out identity here is looking to the past—not to the future. When that past is erased, it is likely that part of the link to the past will be severed, further pushing the Iraqi Jews toward an Israeli (or British-Jewish, American-Jewish, etc.) identity form. Older generations remained "Iraqi Jewish" but lamented the weakening of social ties underpinning this identity. For them, their powerful memories of the shrine served a purpose of maintaining this identity and the pride once associated with it, again in the face of social forces that might unravel it. There was, however, a form of forgetting present in that the older generations did not fully pass on their Iraqi Jewish heritage to later generations.

The wider aim of the project beyond this article is not just to interrogate identity and how it intersects with heritage; while that is the aim of this article, I look to a future where Jewish heritage in Iraq (and specifically Ezekiel's shrine) can be protected. However, what exactly "protection" looks like at a site so thoroughly contested and adjusted is contentious. Evidently, the participants spoke of a future where the shrine is *restored* to a former state, one in which the Jewishness of the place remains. The history of the site as one of contestation and exclusion, however, needs to be avoided in the future if any future is to be sustainable. Some participants looked beyond this dichotomy. Indeed, many spoke fondly of memories they had of Kifl, where the local Muslim population would offer their homes to pilgrims and maintain the site in good faith. Other participants were pessimistic about the future of the shrine and located the destructive changes in a certain Muslim religious aggressiveness, where other religions were not tolerated. Many participants also identified Israeli-Muslim relations as a stopping point that would prevent any restoration to the shrine. Intransigence in Israel in relation to Jewish sites in Iraq was also identified as something that prevents positive action at the site.

So, is there anything to be done? Some positives can be taken away. There was an almost universal acceptance of UNESCO as a body that may be a neutral arbiter in the dispute. Iraqi Jews do not necessarily want to exclude the Muslims from the site, and some have good memories of the local population. Iraqi politics is also identified as a culprit

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in the changes the site has experienced and may one day offer some respite. Finally, recognition of suffering seems to be important to the community and can offer an opportunity for dialogue based on human rights rather than prosecution. Restoration, while being a wish of the community, can then be understood in the framework of dialogue rather than competition. Starting with the community that is well remembered in Kifl might be a starting point for this, but only while those who remember are still with us.

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Notes

1. The Ezekiel's shrine site has many names, reflecting the different claims of ownership over the site. Others include Dhul-Kifl and Al-Kifl. This article will refer to the site as Ezekiel's shrine throughout.

2. For example, after a 74% increase in anti-Jewish offenses in France, the Israeli immigration minister Yaov Gallant said, "I firmly condemn the anti-Semitism in France and call on the Jews—come home; immigrate to Israel" (*Al-Jazeera* 2019).

3. Shohat (1988) lists a number of examples in the referenced work, which deals extensively with this issue.

4. That this article analyzes Iraqi Jewish perspectives from a national/ethnic perspective does not mean that there is not a problem to be addressed in those other spheres. While sex is included in the respondent data, an analysis of this is beyond the scope of this paper.

5. It is unclear when or if this data will be released. As far as data from the site goes, this article draws on the research notes taken on-site, which are adequate for its purposes.

6. Other shrines and holy sites include the Tomb of Joshua, the Tomb of the Scribe Ezra, and the Shrine of Jonah, among others. For a discussion of Jewish shrines in Iraq, see the *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* (Stillman 2010). The entries by Kosansky (2010a, 2010b) and Cassuto and Gharipour (2010) are good starting points.

7. For examples, see work done by Harif (2017b), Justice for Jews from Arab Countries (n.d.), the Iraqi Jewish Association of Ontario (2019), the Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center (n.d.), the Board of Deputies of British Jews (2014; 2017, 19), and the European Jewish Congress (2019). A petition (Sadka n.d.) has been circulated by Harif (2017a).

8. This assessment was carried out as part of the site work in 2018. A report is not available, as site assessments were impounded.

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