Beyond Israel: The State of Persian Jews in Iran and Their Relationship with Zionism | Lily McGrail | COL ’21

Research Questions:

1. How do Persian Jews understand their relationship with Israel and Zionism?

2. Does Iran’s oppression of Persian Jews violate Islam’s teachings on religious freedom?

Methods:

- **Political:** I will evaluate how Iranian laws censoring Judaic practices square with theories of religious freedom in Islam.

- **Sociocultural:** I will look for elements of Zionist thought in Persian Jewish literature and will analyze Persian Jewish emigration patterns.

Findings:

Even though there is a perceived incompatibility between Persian and Zionist identities, there are elements of Zionism in the Persian Jewish community in Iran. However, it is not very strong given the increasing financial constraints on Persian Jews hoping to immigrate to Israel.

Additionally, the Iranian government’s tenuous relationship with Israel has exacerbated antisemitism in the country and has led to a decline in religious and civil freedoms for Persian Jews, which goes against principles of religious freedom in Islam.