

Scholars Circle Resource Guide

From Bukhara to Jerusalem, Part II: Israel After 10/7 Through a Sephardic Lens



MANASHE KHAIMOV

Expert on Sephardic and Mizrahi history and Founder and CEO of SAMi

About Manashe Khaimov

Manashe Khaimov is the Founder and CEO of SAMi (Sephardic American Mizrahi Initiative), which is dedicated to fostering the Sephardic and Mizrahi ecosystem on college campuses nationwide. He's an adjunct professor teaching Bukharian Jewish History and Culture at Queens College, with roots tracing back to Samarkand, Uzbekistan, where his ancestors lived for over 2,000 years. A fourth-generation community organizer, serial entrepreneur, and social innovator he founded the Bukharian Jewish Union, AskBobo.ai, and The Jewish Silk Road Tours™ in NYC. Recognized for his contributions, he received the "Person of the Year Award" by the Bukharian Jewish Congress of USA and Canada, NY Jewish Week's "36 Under 36", and the TimesLedger Newspapers "Queens Impact Award".



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Common Q&A's

Were there Zionists before Herzl, and what did early Sephardic and Mizrahi Zionism look like?

Absolutely. Long before Herzl, Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews actively expressed a longing for Zion through prayer, religious leadership, poetry, and community action. For centuries, Jews from Baghdad, Aleppo, Fez, Salonika, Bukhara, and beyond sent money to Jerusalem, purchased land, built homes, and established neighborhoods. Their Zionism was lived, spiritual, and continuous – rooted in the everyday practice of remembering Jerusalem.

How does viewing Israel through a Sephardic lens shift our understanding, especially after 10/7?

The Sephardic lens highlights resilience, indigenous Middle Eastern identity, and centuries of navigating coexistence. It broadens Israel's story beyond the European narrative and centers the voices of Jews whose traditions, languages, and history developed in the same region where modern conflict unfolds. Post-10/7, this perspective becomes essential for helping students reclaim pride and nuance in how they relate to Israel.

What changed on college campuses after October 7, and why does Sephardic representation matter?

After 10/7, campuses became more polarized, and many Jewish students felt vulnerable or erased. Sephardic and Mizrahi students – who often don't fit the stereotypical image of "what a Jew looks like" – faced additional invisibility. Their presence and stories are crucial: they disrupt simplistic narratives, strengthen Jewish diversity, and help students claim their authentic identity with confidence.

Key Takeaways

Zionism through a Sephardic lens doesn't begin in the 19th century – it begins in 586 BCE.

The longing for Zion emerged the moment Jews were exiled from Jerusalem, making Sephardic-rooted Zionism among the oldest continuous expressions of Jewish identity.

The Sephardic story reshapes how we see Israel today.

It centers Middle Eastern identity, cultural continuity, and centuries of spiritual and physical connection to the land.

Post-10/7 campuses urgently need Sephardic and Mizrahi voices.

Their stories strengthen Jewish belonging, counter erasure, and help students navigate a challenging environment with pride and clarity.

The views expressed by the speaker don't necessarily reflect Chai Mitzvah's official position.

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