

## Being a Yekke is a really big deal for my mum! On the intergenerational transmission of Germanness amongst German Jews in Israel

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Throughout history, Germans<sup>1</sup> have left German territory<sup>2</sup> for different destinations worldwide, including: Eastern Europe; the United States; Australia, Africa and South America. Germans now constitute a global diaspora (cf. Schulze et. al. 2008). The vast majority of emigrants left German territory to seek a better life abroad. The new destinations attracted German emigrants with a mix of push and pull factors, with pull factors dominating.

In the case of German emigrants there are sources depicting the maintenance and the transmission of Germanness, yet one group remains under-researched in this respect. This group is that of the German Jews.<sup>3</sup> This article offers an in-depth, cross-generational case study of the transmission of Germanness of these 'other Germans' in the British mandate of Palestine and later Israel. While many German Jews left for the same destinations as other – non-Jewish - German emigrants, only a small number emigrated to the British mandate of Palestine (Rosenstock 1956, Stone 1997, Wormann 1970). By and large the vast bulk of all Jews from Germany fled to the British mandate as an effect of Nazi terror. Unlike previous waves of emigration, this move was forced upon them. It caused trauma (Viest 1977: 56) because it was determined by push factors, not by pull factors. This means that the vast majority of all German Jews who came to the British mandate of Palestine were refugees (Gelber & Goldstern 1988; Sela-Sheffy 2006, 2011; Viest 1977).

The present study focuses on these German Jewish refugees as opposed to those German Jewish Zionists who chose to emigrate to Palestine for ideological reasons (Michels 2010). As with any group of refugees, the homeland is temporarily or permanently out of reach as a return option. In this case, the inaccessibility of the homeland provided a setting for specific identity configurations for these refugees, it underpinned specific identity negotiations in situ (Sela-Sheffy 2013), and it supported specific forms of transmission of (German) identity to the next generation. Another particularity of this group of German Jews was their struggle for recognition as Germans in Germany in the past. They fought time and again against their depiction as alien Asiatic people (Bodemann 2006; Hauschild 1997). This issue sets them apart from all other non-Jewish emigrant groups whose Germanness had never been cast doubt upon.

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<sup>1</sup> 'German' is of course a rather problematic term. Some of its problematic undercurrent will seep through chapter, other issues such as the idea of 'ethnic Germans' as opposed to 'German speakers' are beyond its scope.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term 'German territory', because the borders of Germany, and German speaking lands, have been changing frequently, the last change of the borders came with the German reunification in 1990. I acknowledge that these borders are not, and have never been non-contentious.

<sup>3</sup> Hasia Diner argued in her paper at the Annual Meeting of the German Studies Association (October 5, 2012) that only specific aspects of German Jewish identity have been researched in the US, and that in fact any research on second, or third generations as well as the transmission of German Jewish identity has been completely neglected to date.

My contribution is based on ethnographic data, collected between 2003 and the present.<sup>4</sup> The findings demonstrate that the German Jewish diaspora in Israel has maintained strong attachment to their 'Germanness'. The title of the paper is a direct quote from one of my research participants. While it expresses the opinion of one individual, comments with similar content have been common throughout my fieldwork. Strikingly, the strong attachment of German Jews<sup>5</sup> to their Germanness has so far been overlooked in favour of trauma and loss. The transmission of Germanness remains well researched only for those Jews who fled Germany in the 1930s, even the major publication *German Diasporic Experiences* (Schulze et. al. 2008) does not contain a single chapter on the transmission of Germanness amongst German Jews, but one single chapter on emigration and restitution. For these first generations the maintenance of Germanness is depicted in a great number of publications ranging from the academic to the popular, but not for their descendants who, as this chapter will show, maintain their Germanness.

In summary, this article will unravel the processes that lead to the maintenance, and morphing of Germanness amongst this group of Germans, and analyse the underlying processes of identity transmission. To do so, it will trace self-identification amongst first, second and third generation German Jews in Israel. To allow for a depiction of the differences within the Yekke group, I will introduce a select number of individuals. All of them identify as Yekkes or as being of Yekke descent, yet, all of them live it out in individual nuances, which draw on their specific ideas of Germanness. In Israel, German Jews forcefully displaced from Germany have been referred to as 'Yekkes', which literally means "jacket" in Yiddish and plays on their stiff – German – behaviour that was – allegedly – expressed by way of an attire that is unsuitable for the Middle Eastern climate as well as their – alleged – inability to become part of the Jewish mainstream (Goldstern & Gelber 1988; Michels 2009; Rosenstock 1956; Stone 1997; Viest 1977; Worman 1970). Furthermore, they are a group whose Germanness has been doubted throughout history by non-Jewish Germans (Bodemann 2006; Hauschild 1997). It should be noted that expressions of Germanness vary as much as ideas of the interplay of Germanness, Israeliness, and/or Jewishness amongst Yekkes, they are the result of complex identity negotiations (cf. Sela-Sheffy 2013). The multi-generational focus of this contribution is crucial to understand the family- and association-based transmission of Germanness, the transmission of German citizenship as part of the family-based identity, as well as specific dynamics of Israeli society that have played into the maintenance of inner-ethnic group identities amongst Israeli Jews (cf. Weingrod 1985). The article also considers the societal specifics in Israel, as well as German/Israeli relationships because identities are shaped by a multitude of parameters. Restricting the approach to just the inner-familial processes, and disregarding all other factors would create a lopsided, and incorrect depiction of the process associated with German identity within the Israeli context. In order to understand these interlocking mechanisms, I will begin with an overview of the 'emigration' of German Jews to Palestine, and then move to introducing the activities

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<sup>4</sup> I have been conducting interviews with Yekkes and their descendants since 2003. Furthermore, I had hundreds of fieldwork conversations with them, which have all been recorded in fieldnotes. Other conversation consists of personal emails, instant messenger chats, phone calls or communication via social network sites. All quotes in this chapter come from formal interviews, fieldwork conversations, emails, chats, or phone conversations. Thus, the data has been generated by way of applying the philosophy of a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995).

<sup>5</sup> The Yekkes in this chapter self-identify as Yekkes. My working definition of Yekke is based on self-identification. Most second generations I researched had two German Jewish parents, while third generations commonly had at least two German Jewish grandparents.

in Israel of the first, the immigrants', generation, the second, the children's generation, and the third, the grandchildren's generation. In order to allow an in-depth understanding of the specifics of being a German Jew, or the descendant of German Jews in Israel, I will highlight the specifics of the country which set German Jews in Israel notably apart from, for example, German Jews and their descendants in the US (Diner 2012; Gerson 2001; Lowenstein 1985). Unlike Israel, the US does not have a society with a Jewish majority. Instead, it constitutes a multi-ethnic and multi-religious immigrant society. Of course, immigrants in the US are subject to specific societal dynamics (Portes et. al. 2008), and differences exist between generations in general (Bruner 1987). There are also differences between ethnic groups in a given location (Gilbertson 1995). Consequently, some of the issues that I will raise fit within the general research on migration, intergenerational dynamics, acculturation, and assimilation into a new host society. Other issues call for the emigration of German Jews to Palestine to be regarded as a special case, based on the specifics of German as well as of Palestinian/Israeli history, society, and of the way German Jews entered the country. While German Jews had a limited choices of destination countries in the 1930s, Palestine, and later Israel constitutes an oddity amongst the emigration countries: it is defined as the ancestral Jewish homeland, it was to become the only 'Jewish state', it is the only country where Jews form the majority of the population. It is the country with the most significant Holocaust survivor population, and a country where expressions of Germanness have triggered various, negative reactions by the surrounding society (Kranz forthcoming) because Germany, and German language have an inextricable link with the Holocaust. Yet, despite these adverse factors, Germanness came to be maintained.

The title-giving quote is an example of this maintenance of German identity. It comes from Liora.<sup>6</sup> Her mother is a self-ascribed Yekke, she takes part in various activities of the association of Yekkes in Israel, and she is part of a very lively social network of Jews of German descent. Like her mother, Liora is a German citizen, but unlike her mother she and her brother are actively thinking about moving to Germany. Strikingly, neither Liora, nor her brother, and neither their mother were born in Germany, they are the daughter, and grandchildren of Yekkes who fled Germany in the 1930s. Neither of them speaks German properly, her mother is trying to learn it, Liora has not yet made that step. Yet, despite the displacement of their ancestors, and against the grain of Israeli policy and parts of the popular discourse, individuals like Liora and her family express a strong investment in their own Germanness, its upholding, and the pursuit of a possible life in Germany itself.

### **Upholding Germanness Through Associations**

Like so many German Jews, Liora's grandparents came to Palestine in the 1930s. They were not amongst the earlier Zionistically driven small amount of Yekke immigrants who sought a better future in Palestine, and who came with the mission to shape the country (Stone 1997), but arrived alongside thousands of refugees from Nazi Germany. Before 1933, between 2,000 and 3,000 Yekkes had immigrated to the British mandate Palestine (Worman 1970: 76). According to Goldstern & Gelber (1988: 54) by 1941 55,000 German Jews had arrived in Palestine. Erel (1983: 48) puts the number of incoming German Jews between 1933 and 1940 at 60,784 alone,

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<sup>6</sup> All names are aliases.

while Rosenstock (1956: 373) and Worman (1970: 75) put their total number at 90,000 to 115,000 by 1954 for Israel.<sup>7</sup> This vast majority came to the Mandate of Palestine to save their lives, having been forced to leave their often comfortable, assimilated, middle-class lives in Germany behind (Rosenthal 2005; Sela-Sheffy 2006, 2011; Westheimer 2005). Also, like many German Jews who came in the 1930 they were ill prepared for emigration, they lacked any knowledge of Hebrew, and more than rudimentary knowledge of the Promised Land. Indeed, to many German Jews this Promised Land was hard to get used to, the different climate (Helman 2003), the economic state of the country, the different food and the very different culture (Miron 2009) constituted what in today's discourse on migration is defined as a culture shock, and led to specific expressions of, and attachments to Germanness (Sela-Sheffy 2006, 2011; Viest 1977).

In the case of German Jews this culture shock might have been experienced more strongly as many of the arrivals had been an assimilated part of German mainstream society before they were displaced from what they perceived as their homeland, with the homeland being out of reach. Unlike Eastern European Jews, they shared their native language, German, with the 'other' Germans, indicating that, literally, one shared the same native language. Refugees, like German Jews in the 1930s are uprooted groups of people (Viest 1977; Westheimer 2005). In order to cope with the uprootedness and the loss of home, refugees cluster geographically, and linguistically, and furthermore they set up associations for practical help but, equally important, to combat homesickness, and to be together with individuals with whom they share a common history. Yet, a similar pattern can be observed amongst 'normal immigrants' who cluster based on language, religious affiliation, and ethnic subgroups, to name just the most overarching features (cf. Miller McPherson et. al. 2001), which point again at the importance of sharing a common history.

Concerning Germans, the Dutch historian Marlou Schrover (2006) found that they set up associations wherever they settled. Indeed, their love for associations went so far that the following joke came along: "How do you recognise a German? If there are two, they set up an organisation, if there is a third, there are two organisations." (Schrover 2006: 847), indicating the proclivity to self-organise, as well as the stratification amongst the Germans to uphold specific expressions of Germannesses. Interestingly, the associations of her case study in the Netherlands included German Jews and non-Jews, reflecting that culturally and linguistically the assimilated German Jews fit in with their non-Jewish co-nationals. Furthermore, the New Zealand trained German historian Tanja Buelmann (2012) confirmed this pattern for New Zealand. The title of her contribution tellingly translates into 'organised sociality'<sup>8</sup> (*Organisierte Geselligkeit*), bearing witness to both, the German cultural expression of setting up organisations, and the need for sociality in an immigration country.

With the vast amount of arrivals of Jews from Germany, these followed a similar pattern in Palestine, and began to self-organise into associations. In 1932 they set up *Hitachdut Olej Germania* (Association of German Immigrants, hereafter *Hitachdut*). This association became their cultural and social centre, as well as serving as a help desk at the same time. However, while Jews fled Europe in general, other Jewish groups took more time to set up 'their' national or linguistic associations. These other refugees from Europe turned instead to the regular help

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<sup>7</sup> All of these numbers should be seen as indicative of the size of the migration, because due to the lack of papers, different recording techniques, self-classifications, and the upheaval in Palestine/Israeli at this time it is simply not possible to claim that absolute and exact figures exist.

<sup>8</sup> All translations are my translations.

groups on the spot. The set up of Hitachdut by Yekkes indicates that even though they were refugees, psychologically Yekkes were so anchored in their German Jewish identity that they needed their own association to help them arrive, settle, and deal with everyday life in the new country. Given the acute state of crisis that prefigured the arrival of all Jewish refugees in the 1930s the reliance of new arrivals upon other Yekkes and not just other Jews bears witness to the strength of their identification as German Jews, and not just Jews, because only Yekkes set up an association that early: other Jewish subgroups would only set up similar associations in the 1970s (Neeman 1990; Neeman & Rubin 1996), when Israeli Jewry started to re-ethnicise on the basis of descent based subgroups (cf. Weingrod 1985). By the same token, specific societal configurations of pre-state Jewish society played into this set up as well, because the longer established Eastern European Jews of the Yishuv were suspicious of the newcomers who had looked down upon them in Europe (Miron 2009; Sela-Sheffy 2006; 2011), and with whom they did not share a language (cf. Sela-Sheffy 2013). This created an odd mix of Yekkes wanting, and needing an association of their own, and at the same manifested in the conduct of Yekkes to turn their seeming disadvantage of being from Germany, into symbolic capital of being Germans (Sela-Sheffy 2006), and a source of pride by putting positive connotations (Sela-Sheffy 2011) in form of strategic essentialism to it (Gerson 2001: 1993). These strategic essentialisms are condensed ideas concerning 'positive' aspects of Germanness, and cover, but are not limited to punctuality, professionalism, perfectionism, timeliness, politeness, to specific dietary habits, manners, and conduct, transmitted down the generations beyond German language, and allowing expressing, and sharing Germanness across generations.

However, to step back to the 1930s, based on the situation of Jews in Germany, Hitachdut was swamped with refugees, and its practical services were in high demand. This meant in turn that any cultural or social functions to maintain Germanness were on the backburner, and Germanness had to be maintained privately. This did not constitute a problem for the Yekkes, who privately organised events, such as German dances, to keep their German culture alive (Aldor 2005; Kadman 2005). What certainly supported the pursuit of Germanness in the private sphere was that Yekkes had arrived as families (Viest 1977)<sup>9</sup>, allowing them to run a German home; or they met other Yekkes by way of Hitachdut, or through shared contacts. In the case of a German Jewish couple, this meant that any child of the household would be a Yekke too, making the transmission of Germanness in these unquiet times seemingly uncomplicated. Another issue that led the Yekkes to hold on to their culture was based on the issue that the future had become an unpredictable unknown, it was a reaction to being uprooted, and traumatised. It is therefore questionable, whether Yekkes consciously wanted to set themselves apart from other Jews, or if they just lived out cultural patterns that they were used to, and which by way of familiarity offered them security. It might well be the case that the conscious planning to maintain Yekke identity did only go so far as to set up an association that could function as a reference point, and that the planning did not yet go so far as to engage with how to live out Germanness in a future that had to be mastered outside of Germany.

Nevertheless, the point when the maintenance of Germanness became a conscious effort was not far off, and occurred when it became clear through newly arrived refugees (The Vrba Wetzler Report 1944) that Germany, and Europe as such, might never be a return option again. This new knowledge led to increased

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<sup>9</sup> Viest (1977: 54) outlines that the arrival as family units made the assimilation into Jewish society more difficult, but at the same time it facilitated the maintenance of Germanness.

tensions within the Hitachdut, as a significant amount of members began to demand political participation in Palestine. In 1942 Hitachdut split up into Irgun Olej Merkas Europa (Association of Israelis of Middle European Origin, hereafter Irgun<sup>10</sup>) and Aliyah Hadashah (New Immigration), on the basis of the vote of the national assembly of Hitachdut (Viest 1977: 52). The former aimed at offering a cultural and social association for German Jews, it was to be an apolitical entity.<sup>11</sup> The latter was a political entity. The split of Hitachdut in two associations reflected the differences that existed amongst the Yekkes, and it depicts the reorientation that came with the realisation even amongst those who had not come driven by Zionism that one was in Palestine for an unprecedented amount of time. In effect, some Yekkes wanted to remain German-speaking Jews and aimed at maintaining their Germanness by way of a social and cultural association, while others wanted to integrate in the nascent Jewish state, and wished to join forces with other Jews to set up such a state, although they aimed at superimposing their ideas, shaped by their own German Jewish experience, and incompatible with vast parts of the Yishuv upon this society (Viest 1977). For the first group, the maintenance of Germanness became a major issue, for the latter it started to belong to the past that one had to move beyond because it held no future promise.<sup>12</sup>

The group of Yekkes for whom German Jewishness remained their core identity invested strongly in their association. On the one hand, Aliyah Hadasha collapsed rather fast because its political aims were not practical at all (Viest 1977). The investment into Irgun on the other hand becomes in particularly obvious after the main waves of refugees subsided, and the State of Israel had been founded. Yet, this is not to say that Irgun did 'only' soft cultural and social work. Irgun fought for restitution for its members once the Material Claims conference had been founded in 1953. However, the major focus of Irgun lay with offering a space for the cultural and social needs of its members, who were faced with an increasingly Hebrewising country, and at the same time with strong criticism from other Jews who could not believe that German Jews clung on to their Germanness and that they based their identity on German culture, and German language, which they spoke publicly, without shame (Sela-Sheffy 2013), and that indeed they were – consciously or not – busy creating a Yekke myth that dwelled on all the positive connotations they had of themselves, and which was to take on a life of its own (Sela-Sheffy 2006). Yet, to these other Jews anything related to Germany had a direct Shoah connection, and why another Jew wanted to hold on to such thing with such connotations was not only incomprehensible, but beyond the pale. That the holding on to German culture and language was a coping mechanism to deal with the trauma of being displaced from a society one had been a part of (cf. Viest 1977: 56), was not yet part of Israeli discourse. Any such discourses started to gain force when the Shoah entered the public discussion in the 1960s.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The Irgun of this paper bears no relation to the paramilitary Irgun Zevai Leumi.

<sup>11</sup> The new name dropped 'Germania' and replaced it with the less charged 'Merkas Europa.' This indicates that Germanness was being deterritorialised and related to culture and language, and that being outright German had been made impossible through the Shoah.

<sup>12</sup> In regard to the intergenerational transmission of Germanness it is worth noting the descendants of both groups have a sense of Germanness, and that some kind of Yekke identity was conveyed to them. The transmission of identity, as well as trauma is a partly non-verbal, and unconscious process (cf. Grünberg 1988; 2000).

<sup>13</sup> The Eichman Trial in 1961 can be seen as the turning point in Israeli discussions of the Shoah. Prior to this trial, the horrors of the Shoah were not publicly discussed by survivors, and their survival was often connected with shame, because they had allowed themselves to become victims. This

Accordingly, intergroup conflict was rife, and the Yekkes offered an ideal surface for projections about what Jewish immigrants should not be. Particularly their slow pick up of Hebrew (Sheffi 2005), and the unwillingness to contribute to the nascent Jewish state were main points of criticisms. While these claims were widely overstated, and Yekkes did indeed rise to the highest levels pre- (Stone 1997) and post-state foundation (Sela-Sheffy 2011), Yekkes were well aware of these criticisms. Problematically, the Yekke myth that they had been busy in creating did not always have positive effects on them (ibid.). The German historian Klaus Keppler (2002) found that Yekkes stress that they did contribute to the nascent state, even though they did it their way, and even though they held on to specific values, mannerism, and conducts that they deemed German, indicating that the criticism labelled at them left scars. Keppler interviewed twelve company owners from Nahariya, in the North of Israel. Nahariya was one of the major settlements of Yekkes. Their density in this city was so high that it became an island of German language, and even to date the German influence in Nahariya remains visible in city: cafes, which offer German-style 'Kaffee und Kuchen' (coffee and cake) do still exist (ibid.).<sup>14</sup> However, while German Jewishness remained the core identity of those Jews who had fled Germany under the Nazis, and they maintained it by way of Irgun, inner-familial practice, as well as privately held and organised events time did not stand still in Israel. The children of these first generation immigrants were born and raised in Israel, they learned Hebrew in kindergarten, attended Israeli schools and went to the army. In other words they encountered a primary socialisation that was based on German culture at home, and a secondary socialisation through Israeli institutions. Furthermore, while they were aware that they were Yekkes this did not come with good connotations for the second generations. The letters of the Hebrew term, יקה, (YKH), which originally stood for the Yiddish term of jacket, came to stand as an acronym for 'Yehudi Kshe Havanah' (Greif 2000), meaning a Jew having trouble understanding, indicating the failure of the first generation Yekkes to understand Hebrew, and learning being Israeli. In other words, the Yekke myth that they had helped to create might have worked in favour of creating symbolic capital for the first generation (Sela-Sheffy 2006, 2011), but it backfired for the second generation. Jokes about Yekkes were overabundant (Schifman & Katz 2005; Sela-Sheffy 2006, 2011), and the Yiddish meaning of the term Yekke, which means jacket, referring to the climatically unsuitable clothing habits of Yekkes, which they refused to drop (cf. Miron 2009), paired with their rather stiff, and formal – German - conduct underlines the widely held prejudice once more but it shows the increasing dislike and understanding of vast parts of Jewish society for the Yekke attachment to Germaness. This means that even before the horrors of the Shoah became commonly known in Palestine/Israel the acting out of Germanness was perceived negatively by the majority of other Jews (Sela-Sheffy 2006, 2011; Viest 1977).

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phenomenon is underpinned by the Zionist discourse, which depicts Israelis as the new, strong Jews, and Diaspora Jews as weak.

<sup>14</sup> This stereotypical depiction of Germanness is again a strategic essentialism that Yekkes use in their favour, as Comaroff & Comaroff (2009) argued: ethnicity sells.

### **Attempting to Continue Yekkishkeit, Attempting to Become Israeli**

With many first generation Yekkes hanging on to their German Jewish roots, conflicts with the second generation were rife. Many of the second generation children felt a sense of embarrassment at their parents' bad Hebrew, and their hanging on to their 'native' culture. While these intergenerational conflicts are well documented for various migrant groups across various countries (Portes et. al. 2009), in Israel they took a specific turn, because of the direct relation of anything German with the Shoah. The second generation children criticised their parents outright, some of them refused to speak in German, but replied in Hebrew despite knowing German, others forbade their parents to speak any German with their grandchildren, and only a small fraction felt as comfortable as my interview partner Ron.

Ron was born in Israel in 1950. He recalled that his parents spoke German with each other, but that they could speak, read, and write Hebrew too. According to him, they read Hebrew language newspapers, and did not stay within a Yekke bubble: "They were quite young when they came to Israel." His parents were able to lead a double life allowing them to be Yekkes with each other, and in the house, while functioning as Israelis to the outside. Yet there is another reason why German remained the language of the home. Ron's grandmother did not speak any Hebrew. Ron recalls that with *Oma* (granny) he and his siblings had to speak German. With his experiences of being a Yekke in Israel, Ron is on the end of a spectrum, as he does not remember any discrimination based on him, or his family being Yekkes. Indeed, similarly to his parents he embraced being a Yekke: in the early 1970s, he chose to come to Germany to train in his profession, because the education he was looking for was not available in Israel at that point in time. I asked him in the interview if his family was 'alright' with him emigrating. According to him, this was not an issue. Indeed, his grandmother helped him to improve his German prior to departure, as she realised that he was mixing in Hebrew terms, and that Ron was not familiar with the concept of addressing an interlocutor appropriately by distinguishing between the informal 'Du' (you, second person singular), which is used if one is on first name terms, and the formal 'Sie' that German speakers employ in formal settings, when an individual is unfamiliar, or to express hierarchy-based deference. This concept was alien to Ron, Hebrew language does not have such a distinction, leading Ron to use the formal 'Sie' with the verb form of the informal 'Du.' When telling me this episode of getting to know German culture as applied in German, Ron laughed. For him this ethnographic detail demonstrated how he is both Yekke and Israeli, and how these identities are entwined rather than polar opposites. Since his return migration to Germany, Ron has married a German non-Jewish woman who converted to Judaism, and he has three grown-up children. His children do not speak much Hebrew, which he regrets – but German was the language of his home in Germany too, and overruled Hebrew. Ron was an exception amongst my interview partners. Not only was he at ease with being a Yekke, but he was at ease as well with having left Israel at a point in time when emigration was frowned on in Israel (Magat 1997; Shokeid 1988). He had made Germany so much his home that he is still living there post-retirement.

Leah is another second generation Yekke. She did not feel that much at ease with her Yekke parents, or with being a Yekke. Her parents were a source of embarrassment to her while she was growing up. Their bad Hebrew and publicly spoken German caused her embarrassment. Leah wished to be Israeli, and Israeli only, an endeavour that was supported and socially engineered by Israeli immigration



and absorption policy. Leah had no wish to come to Germany to visit, let alone live there. Remaining in Israel enabled her to drown out her Yekke descent for a while: she did not pass on any German language to her children and she did not marry a Yekke, let alone a German convert to Judaism. Nevertheless, the identity construct of Leah as an Israeli only became brittle with change in Israeli society from the late 1960s onwards.

Until that point in time, Jews of European descent (Ashkenazim) held hegemonic and actual power in Israel, they dominated other Jewish groups culturally, as well as politically (Khazzoom 2003; 2005; 2012; Yaish 2001). However, the second generation of these other Jewish groups, that is Mizrahim (Jews from Arabic speaking countries and the far east), and Sepharadim (Jews originating from Spain who had fled Spain in the wake of the Inquisition, and mainly settled in countries around the Mediterranean) challenged Ashkenazi hegemony, because they as well had been raised in the Israeli idiom that all Jews in Israel are equals, and that one is first and foremost an Israeli Jew. The second generation of Sepharadim and Mizrahim challenged the Ashkenazi notion of cultural superiority: why should Ashkenazim be Israelis, yet hold on to their cultural values and traditions, superimpose them on Sepharadim and Mizrahim, who should give up on their values and traditions? With this challenge the soul searching of the second generation of Ashkenazim, Yekkes and non-Yekkes alike, began. How should they position themselves? What could they fall back on, and where did their values and traditions actually come from? These questions were, and at times remain, uncomfortable in Israel because they clearly underline that Israel was not founded as a tabula rasa (Rebhun & Waxman 2003), but that Jews have a long and diasporic history which colours their experiences and underpins their very identities as Israelis to date.

Leah is no exception to being subjected to these societal forces. Her soul-searching led to a rather interesting trip: she went to Germany. She did not outline the actual trigger, and why at that point in time. Its date in the late 1960s starts only to make sense when filtering in the societal dynamics of Israel, which had taken on a dynamic in which she needed to reposition herself as an Israeli, as an Ashkenazi, and as an individual of Yekke descent. The trip to Germany led to the outcome that Leah did not like it in Germany at all, her anchoring remained in Israel, she remained stoutly Israeli, avoiding German language. Yet, the story does not end there. Despite her rather strong statement “I did not like Germany at all”, Leah returned to Germany a couple of years later. This time around, she went with her husband, who is an Ashkenazi but not a Yekke.<sup>15</sup> The strange thing happened. Leah liked Germany, and recategorised ‘other Germans’ as being of her “tribe.” Of particular interest of this statement of hers is the idiom “my tribe”, which was part of the German Jewish discourse pre-Shoah. While one was a tribe, one was part of a specific German and Jewish tribe. Since this second visit to Israel Leah’s identity changed, she overcame her resentment of her parents publicly displayed Yekkishkeit (Germanness of German Jews), and she has developed a new appreciation for her Yekke roots. Despite her rather late interest in Germanness, and while her children do not speak any German, at least one of her children holds a token which is popular with third generations: a German passport.

By way of depicting two second generation Yekkes in some depth, it is clear that the way they structured their identities could take different turns, despite their parents having come from the same country, having been displaced, and having

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<sup>15</sup> Inner-Jewish intermarriage remains relatively rare (Lomsky-Feder & Rapaport 2009). The majority of Israelis marry within their own overarching ethnic in-group; the second generations of this chapter are no exception. They are all married to other Ashkenazim though not necessarily to other Yekkes.

maintained Germanness. My choice of Ron and Leah is based on the fact that they occupy different poles of expressing, reassessing or coming to terms with their Yekke roots. The vast majority of second generation Yekkes acted along similar lines to Leah, yet not all were so verbally adverse to Germany and Germanness. However, regardless of the level of rejection, the vast majority of all Yekke descendants of the second generation only began to deal with their Yekke background when societal pressures in Israel forced them re-position themselves in Israeli society. Unlike their first generation parents (Sela-Sheffy 2006, 2011), they did not experience their Germanness as a symbolic capital in their Israeli surrounding. Inasmuch, individuals like Ron were the odd ones out, which in turn meant that first generation Yekkes stayed amongst themselves in their Yekkishkeit until the mid-1980s because the majority of the second generation did not more than merely tolerate their own Yekkishkeit, but they did not embrace it. In order to have an outlet for this Yekkishkeit, the first generation put a lot of effort into their organisation, Irgun, which allowed having a space where they could be Yekkes without fear of criticism from their children, or their Israeli surrounding. For Irgun, this meant that they were dealing with an aging membership, whose children, like Leah, Sarah, or Avraham, who are other second generations I interviewed had no interest in the events for a long time. Yet the societal dynamics that led to their soul searching resulted in a renewed interest in Irgun, and foreclosed its dying with its initial membership.

Despite the soul searching and the renewed interest it took until 1993, when Irgun ran a first event that appreciated Yekkes as contributing to Israeli society, called 'Die Jeckes in der Fünften Alija' (The Yekkes in the Fifth Aliyah). It moved Yekkes away from the stereotype of being homesick refugees, who did not want to integrate into Israeli society (cf. Stone 1997). This interest of the second generation in their roots needs be appreciated with two more factors in mind, besides the challenge to Ashkenazi dominance. The first was them becoming parents themselves, and the second the so-called 'Roots Project', introduced in the 1980s in the Israeli school curriculum.<sup>16</sup> Both issues are inter-related. The first refers to the parenting practices of Second Generation Yekkes, which were based on what they themselves had experienced as children, that is to say they had received a German socialisation by their own parents, which they now replicated in parts with their own children. The second issue refers to the public sphere: in order to appreciate the difference within Israeli society, grant Israelis of all backgrounds the chance to appreciate their ancestry, and as a result of Mizrahi and Sepharadi pressure, the Roots Project was introduced into the school curriculum. This project allowed pupils to explore their ancestry, and to learn about the ancestry of other (Jewish) Israelis. Its aim is to appreciate the differences amongst Israelis, and to create a specific narrative that connects Israelis with one another (cf. Noy 2007). By way of this project, second generations faced a lot of questions from their third generation children, which increased the pressure to face their own descent.

### **Blending Israeliness with Yekkishkeit**

'Der Apfel fällt nicht weit von seinem Stamm' (The apple does not fall far from its stem) is an idiom known to German speakers, including Yekkes. It reflects the common sense knowledge that the familial heritage is an integral part of ones

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<sup>16</sup> All interview partners of the third generation remember the project. Going by their narratives, the project was done in different grades in different schools.

identity, and functions as a resource to draw upon. In terms of child raising practices this holds particularly true, and it has been researched across various immigrants and refugee groups, including Israelis in the diaspora (Gold 2002; Korazim 1985), and Israeli Ashkenazim in Israel (Harpaz 2009; Kranz forthcoming). As regards Jews in Israel, the general child rearing practices of Ashkenazim are relevant for this matter. The Israeli sociologist Yossi Harpaz (2009) researched the European passport phenomenon of Israelis, and asked why third generation Israelis wanted a European passport, if most of them had no intention of emigrating. Conducting ethnographic research and interviews, Harpaz found that this phenomenon could not be understood without looking at the Ashkenazi family in an intergenerational fashion, without appreciating the dynamics of Israeli society, and Ashkenazi history. Within Ashkenazi families, bestowing a European passport functions as an intergenerational gift, a sign of distinction within Israeli society, and a security measure should things go wrong in Israel (Harpaz 2009; 2012). While Ashkenazim might have lost some of their hegemonic and actual power, post-colonial structures seep through all levels of Israeli society (Khazzoom 2003; 2012, Tzfadia 2007; Yiftachel & Tzfadia 2004). Being an Ashkenazi holds specific connotations in regard to one's position in Israeli society, but first and foremost being Ashkenazi relates to coming from a cultured European background, which is being constructed in opposition to being of Sephardic or Mizrahic descent.

However, this background does not come without catches: Europe was at the heart of the Holocaust, and while camps existed in North Africa, and non-Ashkenazim suffered during the Shoah as well (Goodman & Mizrachi 2008) the majority of the Jews murdered were Ashkenazim. This makes for a double helix of Ashkenazi identity, one part referring to culture, education, and coming from the first world of Europe, the other part referring to annihilation, trauma, and genocide. Both parts are inextricably linked and by this token feed back into child-rearing practices: while the institutional Jewish community was weak, and regularly subject to persecutions, the Jewish family functioned as a safe haven (Harpaz 2009), a place of retreat, and the place of social as well as biological perpetuation. Especially the latter issues are of importance to understand the run for European passports of third generation Israelis. The Shoah is a cultural trauma that is deeply ingrained in the psyche of second and third generations (Harpaz 2009; Kidron 2004; Kranz forthcoming, Hirsch & Lazar 2011). The second generation learned from their parents that having the right papers means survival, a lesson passed on to the third generation. For the third generation this is ingrained in their identity too, but, at the same time, third generation Israelis are more likely than the generation before them to emigrate, and to partake in the global market place by way of temporary or permanent sojourn abroad. A European passport, which comes with the entitlement to reside and work in the EU countries is a very handy tool for that pursuit. Furthermore, an EU passport allows to travel to the US without visa, an issue raised in interviews by third generations (Harpaz 2009; Kranz forthcoming). Another issue to obtain the passport was that EU citizens pay – allegedly - lower tuition fees (Harpaz 2009). However, behind the seemingly rational reasons lurk other reasons: an EU passport acts psychologically as an escape route out of Israel in case anything happens. Yet, as much as tuition fees are based on EU residence and not on citizenship, the EU passport does not guarantee exit from Israel in case of a war, because if an individual holds dual nationality the laws of the country they are in are binding. This means that, for example, a dual German Israeli citizen will not be evacuated alongside mono-national German citizens because while in Israel, the German embassy is not responsible for such a dual citizen. Hence, the EU passport

phenomenon is another indicator of the resilience of trauma, but as well the resilience of Ashkenazi identity. The question is now, where does that leave the Yekkes of the third generation?

Harpaz study refers to Ashkenazim in general. However, Ashkenazim lived under very different circumstances in Europe prior to the Shoah. The integration into the surrounding non-Jewish society was much less poignant for Jews in Eastern Europe than in Western Europe, and it was not that uncommon that Eastern European Jews only spoke Yiddish as their everyday language, and barely the language of their surrounding. This phenomenon led the German Israeli historian Dan Diner (2008) to state that one could travel from one Jewish settlement in Eastern Europe to the other without speaking any other language but Yiddish. Yet, while this allowed for a high inner-Jewish cohesion and a strong ethnic bind, on the downside, the barrier to the outside world was strong, at times insurmountable, in other words, Eastern European Jews were marginalised, they did not belong to the mainstream society.

Yekkes on the other hand were German native speakers. Beginning with the argumentation of Moses Mendelson in favour of the Haskalah (Enlightenment) Jews who resided on German territory began to assimilate increasingly into German-speaking society. Yiddish became the language of their lesser educated, and ill-integrated, Eastern European brethren, whom they allegedly looked down upon (Miron 2009; Sela-Sheffy 2006, 2011). With the acquisition of German as their native language came more changes: higher numbers of German Jews attended regular university, and not 'only' yeshiva (religious school). A disproportionate number of Yekkes entered the so-called free professions, and they became lawyers (Sela-Sheffy 2006, 2011), doctors, and journalists, while other became engineers (Gelber & Goldstein 1988). Intermarriage rates rose (Meiering 1998). The accomplishments of these well-integrated, if not assimilated, Germans of Jewish faith is well documented, and their business success has not yet been rivalled by any other group (Windolf 2011), although the Germanness of these 'other' Germans, who were fallaciously defined as 'immigrants' (Kranz 2012) remained in question for non-Jewish Germans (Hauschild 1997). However, despite questions if and how far they were Germans, the experience of assimilation into the mainstream society, alongside the fact that German Jews had been German citizens since the reunification of Germany under Bismarck (1871) provided for very specific identities (Michels 2009; Viest 1977), which lead Yekkes to diverge from the general data that Harpaz (2009) collected in Ashkenazim. While trauma and distinction within Israeli society certainly play into the identities of second as well as third generation Yekkes, more is at issue.

### **Embodying Germanness**

Like most Yekkes of the third generation, Liora does not speak German, but she holds German citizenship. The children of Leah do not speak German either, but at least one of them holds German citizenship. The children of Ron who were born and raised in Germany are German native speakers and German citizens. However, cases such as Ron's who 'returned' to Germany are rare, most descendants of Yekkes whose families had fled Germany did not return. In that sense, cases like Liora or Leah's children comprise the majority of Yekkes in present day Israel. Being faced with a surrounding in Israel that outright rejected Germanness, and which aimed at assimilating all immigrants in, the scope of transmission of Germanness

was limited to the family home as well as Irgun. Now, second generations like Leah did not want anything to do with Irgun for a very long time, they wanted to be Israelis. Liora's mother, while less averse to Germany than Leah nevertheless did not speak any German with her children – she herself does not speak German actively, but only understands it; Avraham whom I mentioned in passing exhibited a similar take on his Germanness. He himself did not want to speak German, and replied in Hebrew to his parents. Not passing on German language was a conscious decision for some second generations, while others simply lacked the ability to do so.

Besides these two polar opposites lies the group of individuals like Sarah. While she only learned German at home, and her parents never learned Hebrew to an extent to resume their post-Shoah careers or to integrate into Israeli society, Sarah's choice to not pass on German was partly based on practicalities: "My native language changed to Hebrew. I became a Hebrew speaker", was one issue that she recounted to me during a conversation. The conversation took place in German. Like with Leah, our interactions are in German.<sup>17</sup> Underneath this change of language lies another issue that Sarah did not tell me about, but that her daughter revealed. When her mother had started school, she did not speak anything but German: "My mum felt lonely in school. She did not want us to go through that." The language of communication with Sarah's daughter was English. Despite best efforts, she never managed to acquire German beyond a beginners' level.<sup>18</sup> With language not being passed on under whatever circumstances, how do third generation Yekkes relate to being Yekkes? The answer to this question lies beyond the level of language, it lies within the area of embodiment, and acting out specific ideas of Germanness in form of strategic essentialisms (Gerson 2001) that dwell on their ideas, and imaginations of Germanness, as well the myth of Yekkishness that the first generation had helped create in the 1930s (Sela-Sheffy 2006, 2011).

Of the three children of Sarah, only her youngest son holds German citizenship. This is not because his older siblings did not want German citizenship. They could not obtain it anymore, because Sarah had missed a crucial deadline. While the German Basic Law had previously allowed for the re-naturalisation of all those who had been stripped of their German citizenship for racial or religious reasons between 1933 and 1945, the citizenship law has undergone a number of changes, and has specific conditions (Kranz & Margalith 2012). In order to be eligible for German citizenship, an individual needed to be of patrilineal German descent until January 1, 1975. Only since then have German mothers and fathers alike been able to pass on German citizenship. However, as the former patrilineal condition of the citizenship law violated the Basic Law, which enshrines the equality of men and women, German women who resided abroad and whose children had non-German fathers could register their foreign born children until January 1, 1979 with any German embassy in order to naturalise their offspring as German citizens. The

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<sup>17</sup> It is of course worth considering if Leah and Sarah spoke German with me because like them I am a native speaker, and thus I bear the same stigma (Goffman 1968).

<sup>18</sup> While English is neither the native language of Sarah's daughter nor my own, communication in English never constituted a problem. Complying to the idea of the intergenerational transfer of cultural and social capital of Bourdieu, the second and the third generations are skilled, or highly skilled, their English is sophisticated, and they are extremely geared at speaking English. By the same token fieldwork access to Yekkes has been easy throughout, and issues such as during fieldwork with Jews in Germany (Kranz 2009), or with non-Jewish spouses in Israel (Kranz 2013) did not surface. If anything, I was interesting, I speak Hebrew "with the same accent as my [Yekke] grandparents", I was regularly asked concerning studying or relocating to Germany, and on occasion it was tested if I would eat non-kosher, German style, foods, and told repeatedly that I do not qualify as a Yekke, while my daughter clearly does.

German state did not perceive it as its responsibility to inform German citizens residing abroad of this change in the law. Sarah was completely surprised when I asked her if she had ever heard of it. She did not, the same applies to Leah, and the other second generations I interviewed. Sarah remains irritated about what she perceives as an unfair, and discriminatory policy against women. She broached the issue that her parents were forcefully stripped of their citizenship without being consulted; indeed the issue comes up time and again in conversations.

Problematically, at the time of the ruling, the third generation children were fairly young, Sarah and Leah and their contemporaries were settled in Israel, resentment of Germanness was strong, and the second generation of Yekkes were still in a phase in their life when they wanted to be Israelis only. The Ashkenazi hegemony was already under fire, yet it had not broken down, and Yekkes as well as other Ashkenazim remained transparent Israelis (Harpaz 2009) who did not want an ethnic identity (Sasson-Levy 2008). By virtue of this combination of factors, second generation Yekkes missed the deadline that could have bestowed the symbolic, sometimes even fetishised, token of Yekke descent: the German passport. Being left without the passport, as well as without language skills, individuals like Sarah's daughter can only reside to upholding Germanness by way of embodiment and symbolism (cf. Gans 1979, 1994) as well as strategic, highly condensed essentialisms (cf. Gerson 2002) of what she perceives as Germanness. In her case, this refers to politeness, and dietary habits.

These phenomena are well-established for various immigrant as well as refugee communities. The symbolic upholding can take different shapes. In one case, researched by the American anthropologist Rakhmiel Peltz (1998) Yiddish became the marker of ethnic distinction in south Philadelphia. However, the upholding, or revival of a language is rare, more common are symbolic expressions such as food choices (Bernstein 2008; Brown & Mussel 1986; Kranz 2009; Long, 2004; Sered 1988) or specific habits (Gans 1979, 2004). Due to specific habits within the family, the specifics of the time of the migration, and possibly the lack of the ancestral language, immigrants and their descendants employ the use of strategic essentialisms to embody, or perform their identity, at times in ways that seem stereotypical. Interestingly in regard to the Yekkes and their descendants is that the first generation who created the Yekked myth transmitted this to the second generation, and both of these generations to the third generation, which is often bereft of the language, but apt to fill specific strategic essentialisms with life. Due to the dynamics of Israeli society, global streams of migration, and German/Israeli relationships third generations at present benefit from their positioning as Yekkes as much as their first generation grandparents. Being a Yekke is again bestowed with a specific symbolic capital that strongly dwells on ideas, concepts, images as well as fantasies of present day Germany in the world.

Nevertheless, these essentialisms are as well filled with life in the Israeli surrounding. The daughter of Sarah does not keep kosher, and replicates the diet learned in her parental home. Furthermore, she is married to another Yekke, who grew up with similar foodstuff, and who, like her, does not speak German, but who does position himself as a Yekke. Yet Sarah's youngest son remains the most Yekke of her three children. Not only does he hold German citizenship and is proud to be Yekke, he immigrated to Germany for a couple of years in his twenties. While he returned to Israel, he brought back knowledge of German, contacts to Germans, and like his sister and mother upholds a German-influenced diet: Sarah loves liver sausage, her son loves smoked ham. As much as upholding Germanness, their food choices reflect a rejection of religious orthodoxy, which all three resent deeply.

However, even before his sojourn in Germany, and his acquisition of German language, Ben, Sarah's son, embodied a specific trait of character, which he directly relates to his Germanness: perfectionism. If Ben does things, he does them with what Germans call 'Detailverliebtheit', meaning 'being in love with details.' Blending into German society was nothing that he found difficult, on the opposite: he found he came home to Germany, where people according to him are polite, which for him constitutes another specific trait of being a Yekke, and which positively sets him apart from other, allegedly rude, Israelis.

Nati is another third generation Yekke who is proud to be a Yekke, and who mentioned just like Ben that he "is perfect", meaning he is a perfectionist, and that he will do things in great detail, and to the dot. Yet, unlike Ben who learned German during his time in Germany, Nati has a different family constellation, which exposed him to German language from birth onwards. His father is a second generation Yekke who was born and raised in Nahariya ("Where else?"), then one of the islands of German language in Israel (Keppler 2002). Being a German native speaker, it was not hard for Nati's father to make contact with Nati's mother to be, because she was an Austrian volunteer in Israel. They met at the airport when she was leaving the country again, and remained in touch. While travelling through Europe in the 1970s, they met in her hometown, Vienna, fell and love, married, and had three children. The family moved between Nahariya and Vienna until Nati was five, and finally settled in Israel. All three siblings are native German speakers. However, while Nati feels a deep connection to Germany – not Austria – his older sisters do not. Similarly to Ben, but with the add-on of being a German native speaker, Nati employs specific strategic essentialisms to display his ideas of Germanness. Food choices are such an expression for him too: he likes smoked ham too. Then there is the issue of time, Nati is proud to be on time, and resents that other, non-Yekke Israelis are not. Being on time, and food choices ran through the data of third generation Yekkes, they were used as expressions of ideas of Germanness. Gal, another third generation Yekke who like Ben did not learn any German at home, but feels strongly about being a Yekke, recalled how his German grandfather needed a watch "to know when he is hungry." Seemingly telling me an ethnic joke (Shifman & Katz 2005), Gal was in dire straits a couple of days later when his own wristwatch broke. He sorted its repair out immediately, he needed his watch. His mobile phone, which would have given him the time, did not suffice (Kranz forthcoming). While third generations like Ben and Gal form the majority of all third generations, cases like Nati's reveal yet a different layer to the transmission of Germanness: mobility.

### **Yekkishkeit 2.1 – or the increase of mobility and transnationalism**

While most second generation parents were anchored in Israel (Harpaz 2009; Kranz forthcoming), and parental constellations like Nati's form the minority, the mobility of third generation Yekkes increased dramatically. Despite the attempts to undo Ashkenazi hegemony in Israel, Yekkes and other Ashkenazim occupy a disproportionate amount of power positions. They tend to be better off, and furthermore, they still tend to be higher educated than Sephardim or Mizrahim. Their level of education, paired with access to an EU passport, family in countries outside of Israel, their cultural capital in another culture but Israeli culture, and the decreasing stigma of leaving Israel (Harris 2012; Rebhun & Lev Ari 2010) have played positively into the mobility of Yekkes, who have a very specific relationship to being Yekkes

and to somehow belonging to German culture. While the US remains the main destination for all Israel emigrants (Rebhun & Lev Ari 2010), Germany has been increasing in popularity. Especially Berlin is popular with Israelis, at present an estimated 18,000 (Seidt 2012) live there. That does not mean that anti-German resentment is a thing of the past in Israel. Nati is convinced that vast parts of Israeli society remain anti-German, he himself was called a Nazi more than once.<sup>19</sup> Ben recounts as well that his stout alignment as a Yekke made for criticisms, and the expressions of his ideas of Germanness made for snide comments. Gal remembers such incidents too. Yet, despite these sentiments in Israeli society, young Israelis do visit Germany, some remain in the country for longer sojourns, other, like Ben, 're-migrate' temporarily; Nati is thinking of doing a post-graduate degree in Germany. This is to say that 'going back to Germany' is still a relatively small phenomenon amongst Yekke descendants, yet, it is growing in importance. Another phenomenon that has been growing in importance is the renaturalisation of the descendants of Yekkes. As with the transmission of Germanness, their renaturalisation or the passing on of German citizenship diverges from the patterns of other Ashkenazim.

### **The official token of Yekkishness: German citizenship**

In the early 2000s the run for EU passports started in Israel. Harpaz dealt with the phenomenon in detail (Harpaz 2009; 2012), and at the core of his argument lies the point that Israelis get an EU passport for rather rational reasons on the surface, yet underneath one can find the issues raised above. Having collected data from Israeli statistical offices, EU embassies and their corresponding national statistical offices, Harpaz created a database that gives a numerical overview over the amount of renaturalisations. He found that German citizenship is the citizenship most commonly reinstated. My own data corroborates his findings (Kranz forthcoming). The question is why this should be the case. The descendant groups of Romanian Jews and Yekkes are of roughly the same size, but Yekke descendants renaturalise at a much higher rate. Indeed, 73,000 German Jews and their descendants renaturalised, compared to 6,000 Romanian Jews and their descendants between 2000 and 2007 (Harpaz 2012: 22).<sup>20</sup> My argument is that the way of the integration of Yekkes in Germany, and the way of the ancestry of Yekkes into the Mandate/Israel lies at the heart of this question: Germanness was strongly conveyed in Yekke families, it remains at the core of the family identity, and influences attitudes as well as the habitus of third generation Yekkes as a positive marker of distinction within Israeli society. Furthermore, while the run for EU passports started in the early 2000s, and Yekke descendants such as Gal and his three siblings joined in, Ben already held German citizenship through his mother, who had her German passport issued as soon as she was legally able to. Leah, despite her resentment of Germany, had been a German citizen as well since she was able to. Neither of their parents had ever wished to renounce their German citizenship. Sarah showed me her father's German passport, still issued in Leipzig, which he refused to return even despite being stripped of German citizenship in 1941. Leah's father hung on to his just the same, it bears the Nazi stamp "J" for Jude (Jew). In other cases, descendants of the second

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<sup>19</sup> Other third generation Yekkes remember similar incidents to the three third generations I introduced in this chapter. Especially the insult 'Nazi' was a recurrent topic in interviews and fieldwork conversations.

<sup>20</sup> Comprehensive statistics, which allow for comparisons are only available until 2007.



and third generation were not even aware that their parent, and grandparents, respectively, had renaturalised all along because they had kept silent about their own Germanness as an effect of the hostility towards them in Israel. According to the lawyer and notary Alexandra Margalith who is an expert on matters of German citizenship: “In legal practice, it is not uncommon that descendants do not know that they are already Germans, and that they have been Germans all along but did just not have passports issued. [...] It is also not uncommon that third generations tell me how they are always on time, when they come to me in order to initiate renaturalisation – for them this a key indicator that they are indeed Germans.” Thus, I argue that by virtue of this multitude of Germanness supporting factors it is possible to assert that Yekkes identity in its resilience makes for a specific case of Germanness beyond Germany.

### **Conclusion: and more support for Germanness**

With flights to Germany being relatively cheap, educational exchange programs to Germany being common, Germany and Israel having strong economic links, e-communication and social networks common in Germany and Israel, a new curiosity about Germany, paired with a lesser stigma to travel, or move to Germany, third generation Yekkes have a relatively easy ride to reconnect with their German roots, to get to know Germany, and where the opportunity arises make friends and remain in touch with (non-Jewish) Germans, marry German Jews or intermarry with German non-Jews. All of this is of course helped by the inner familial transmission of Germanness, and the Germanness of the, at times reluctant, Yekkes of the second generation who wished to forget their Yekke roots but who nevertheless perpetuated them. Going by the amount of Israeli network and community building activity in Germany on the whole and in Berlin in particular, Israelis are developing a different relationship to Germany, despite the resentment that Nati, Ben, and Gal mentioned. While inner-familial transmissions of Germanness, the strength of the association Irgun, and societal dynamics in Israel made for specific expressions of the Germanness that certainly play into the resilience of Germanness amongst Yekkes and their descendants, this still is not all there is.

Unlike Ashkenazim of Eastern European descent, Yekkes and their descendants could renaturalise as German citizens since 1949, an option that Eastern European Jews did not have. The latter could not travel at ease to these, previous, ancestral lands, whose language neither they, nor their grandparents spoke. Technically, Gal could have renaturalised as a Romanian citizen too, the same goes for Liora. Both chose German citizenship over Romanian. Harpaz (2009) came across that issue as well: EU passports have a ranking, with the German passport being the crown jewel. In Nati's words: “That is a strong passport! I mean, Shmueli [a friend of his] and his Polish passport? What does he want with *that* passport?” In as much, the reproach that Yekkes looking down at Eastern European Jews might not miss the mark all that much. The choice of a German over another EU passport certainly reflects the perception of the value of the German compared to Eastern European passports, but it reflects as well wider attitudes towards the different inner-Ashkenazic groups in Israel. Gal in particular reacted puzzled, when I asked if he wanted to visit Romania. He was not interested, but he wanted to visit Germany. Similarly Ben showed no interest in visiting Lithuania or Belarus, where his paternal, Zionist, grandparents come from. Germany, on the other hand, remains the country

where he feels at home. Furthermore, the diplomatic relations between Germany and Israel helped these Yekke descendants to express their Germanness, because access to Germany, and to categorical Germanness was easy, it helped to maintain their own positive ideas of Germanness. At the same time, the diplomatic relationships that were established in 1965 also brought German volunteers into the country, exposing Yekkes and their descendants to 'other' Germans, thus keeping Germanness alive. Other Ashkenazim did not enjoy the contact to 'co-nationals' because during the time of the Eastern Bloc, Eastern European countries sided with Arab countries.

The emigration of Jews from Germany to Israel contributed as well to this phenomenon. While not necessarily of Yekke descent, these 'new German Jews' brought knowledge of present day Germany with them, and they joined Irgun, while they also founded some more organisations. At present, any of these organisations, groups, and organisations are organised by using various means of contacting members or potentially interested individuals, ranging from regular print newsletter to social networks sites (SNS), maximising their exposure, and pulling as well interested Yekke descendants in. The activities offered are multi-faceted and range from Irgun to the official German Israeli Society (Deutsch-Israelische Gesellschaft) and a regulars' table for German 'girls' (Deutscher Mädels Stammtisch). In that sense, it has become increasingly easy to be a Yekke in Israel, despite all sorts of stigma attached to it. For the Yekkes themselves being a Yekke has become, or remained a positively connoted identity (cf. Diner 2005), and third generation Yekkes perpetuate and capitalise on the mythological Yekkishkeit that Rakefet Sela-Sheffy (2006, 2011) depicted for the first generation (cf. Comaroff & Comaroff 2009 for a general discussion of the capitalisation of strategic ethnic capital).

The Germanness of Yekkes and their descendants in Israel has been maintained, and supported by a multitude of factors and by way of different means for the different generations, although the key lies with the myth that the first generation created, the self-organisation by way of Irgun, and the strong inner-familial transmission. Yekkes faced different obstacles in Israel to maintaining their Germanness which do not properly compare to Germans in other countries, yet, despite the efforts of the Israeli state to assimilate all immigrants in, and despite the resentment of Germanness, Yekkes maintained their Germanness. Beginning with the effort to self-organise to diplomatic relations, inner-familial dynamics as well as dynamics of Israeli society, the factors that supported the Germanness of Yekkes outweigh the forces that worked against it. At present, this maintenance is being helped by the increased mobility between Germany and Israel, resulting in yet more flows of people, knowledge and culture between Germany and Israel. It remains to be seen what kind of Germanness the children of Liora, Ben, Nati, and Gal will develop – and in which country this Germanness will develop.

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