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Rakefet J. Zalashik received her Ph. D. in history from Tel-Aviv University, with a dissertation on the development of psychiatry in Palestine and Israel, 1892-1960. Her work focuses on Israeli identity formation, immigrant absorption and the integration of Holocaust Survivors into Israeli society, and the relationship between mental health and gender. She is currently teaching at New York University.

Other research interests are: Modern Jewish History, German History, Sociology, Race and Racism, Eugenics, Mental Hygiene, History of Zionist Thought, the History of the OZE (Obshchestvo okhraneniia zdrovia evreiskogo naselenia) and "Wiedergutmachung." [German Reparations].

Among her publications are:

Psychoanalysis and Colonialism – The Case of Wulf Sachs (1893-1949), Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für Deutsche Geschichte; 2004; XXXII: 93-106;

Psychiatry, Ethnicity and Migration: The Case of Palestine

1920-1948, Dynamis; 2005; 25: 403-422

Last Resort? Lobotomy Operations in Israel, 1946-1960, Journal for the History of Psychiatry, 2006; 17:91-106.

The Development of Psychiatry in Palestine and Israel, 1892-1960

This thesis addresses the development of psychiatry in Eretz Israel from the end of the nineteenth century through the 1960s, and reconstructs its history along two axes: one chronological, the other thematic.

Initially, the thesis examines the discourse on the psychopathology of the »new Jew« in medical and Zionist circles in fin-de-siècle Europe, and its implications for the Jewish Zionist project in Palestine. By analyzing the publications of the Zionist psychiatrist Raphael Becker, the work reviews definitions of mental health and illness, reactions towards the claim that Jews were more prone to insanity than gentiles, and the explanations offered for it. For many Zionist psychiatrists, the distinct »psychopathology« of the Jew proved that Diaspora Jewry was suffering from degeneration as a consequence of its stateless existence. Thus, they assumed that a homeland in Palestine was needed to overcome this unique pathology.

After addressing this discourse, the thesis concentrates on the practical side of this subject, exploring psychiatric activity in Palestine in the 1920s, in order to ascertain whether European conceptions of mental health and diseases among the Jews continued to influence psychiatry in the Yishuv. Since one of the solutions for psychological problems among Jews was emigration to the Jewish homeland, it is important to see how cases of newcomers suffering from mental disorders were explained by the Zionist psychiatrists who treated them.

This thesis argues that the European discourse on the psychopathological distinctiveness of the Jews persisted in the Yishuv, yet assumed a different form. Since the arrival of Zionists in Palestine, new claims surfaced about the Jews' biological/genetic origins. In this context, the psychopathology of the Jews in Palestine, and particularly that of the Zionist newcomer, became a means of emphasizing Jewish exclusiveness, and contrasting them with indigenous Jews and Arabs. The local version of the psychopathological distinctiveness of the »new Jew« was constructed by the abolition of the traditional distinction between Western and Eastern European Jews, and their amalgamation into one, new category of »native Europeans«; by the constitution of distinctive categories of Jewish Zionist immigrants on the one hand, and the Jews from the old Yishuv on the other; and by stressing commonalities of psychopathological features among indigenous Jewish and Arab populations. In Palestine, the mental morbidity of the Zionist newcomer was seen as rooted in his or her European background. Whereas, in European discourse, the psychopathology of the Jews was »evidence« of their inferiority in comparison to gentiles, in Palestine it was seen as indicative of their superiority over the local population.

In addition, this study addresses the emigration of Jewish psychiatrists from Germany and Central Europe in the 1930s.

This section examines the socioeconomic profile of the refugee psychiatrists, and the special difficulties that confronted them due to the uniqueness of their medical

discipline. Most of the psychiatrists arriving in Palestine during this period were either at the start, or towards the end, of their professional careers. Compared with other medical fields, their professional prospects were poor, in large part because of the lack of psychiatric institutions in Palestine at that time.

This thesis highlights the enormous contribution of these refugees to the development of a psychiatric community in Palestine, which would later become the foundation for mental health services in Israel. One of the most important organizations was the Neuro-Psychiatric Society, whose existence and activities were made possible only by the arrival of the new psychiatrists and neurologists in the 1930s. Another outcome of this wave of immigration was the foundation of the Mental Hygiene Society. Jewish psychiatrists in Palestine adopted concepts of mental hygiene, and strove to apply eugenic measures, which they considered a progressive and essential means of creating a healthy Jewish society. Following the contributions of psychiatrists to the field of mental health in the 1930s and 1940s, the thesis analyzes the conditions and circumstances that enabled the introduction of somatic therapies such as insulin shock, Cardiazol and Electro-Convulsive Therapy in Palestine. Medical treatments are a manifestation of abstract, theoretical scientific knowledge from every medical discipline in the form of concrete actions. The application of somatic therapies in psychiatric practice in Palestine affected both the interaction between the patient and the psychiatrist, and the professional identity of the psychiatrists themselves, since it widened the therapeutic repertoire and enabled active intervention. Nevertheless, whereas in Europe and U.S. these changes usually occurred in a professional community with a long-standing scientific tradition, in Palestine they took place in an early phase of the psychiatric field's development. Secondly, whereas in some countries somatic therapies aimed to lessen the financial burden of government psychiatric hospitals, in Palestine the application of somatic therapies was delayed or stopped soon after it began, due to budgetary problems shared by government asylums. Thus, the adoption of somatic therapies took place in private asylums around the country, since their for-profit orientation enabled them to access and finance these therapies. In addition, not only did the introduction of somatic therapies to the psychiatric practice in Palestine occur later than in other countries, but they also remained as a central means of treatment in Israeli government hospitals, years after they were discontinued in hospitals abroad. While psychopharmacology led to a reduction in the use of somatic therapies worldwide in the 1950s, in Israel they lingered as central methods of psychiatric treatment until the 1970s.

The study also reviews the changes and developments in the field of psychiatry in the first decade following the foundation of the State of Israel, the establishment of the

Israeli Ministry of Health, and the opening of a Department for Mental Health within the Ministry. The thesis discusses psychiatric bodies and hospitals founded after 1948, legislation in the field of mental health, and the rise of professional education for psychiatrists and psychiatric nurses. In addition, the thesis discusses the introduction of psychotropic medications in Israeli psychiatric hospitals starting at the end of the 1950s, and examines their influence on the psychiatric hospitalization system and the development of attitudes favoring deinstitutionalization.

The fledgling State of Israel had to absorb enormous waves of immigration in the 1950s. This thesis analyzes the attitude of Israeli psychiatrists towards

Holocaust survivors who arrived in the country, starting from the end of the Second World War, up until the Eichmann Trial. Most of the existing research addresses the topic of Holocaust survivors through one prism only – the attempt to determine whether there was a »conspiracy of silence« vis-à-vis Holocaust-related trauma, and discover the reasons for it. In almost all sources, the Eichmann Trial is perceived as a turning point in the attitude of Israeli society and psychiatrists towards traumatized Holocaust survivors. This thesis abandons this perspective, and instead analyzes the attitudes of psychiatrists towards survivors prior to their arrival in the country, relating to medical services given by Jewish organizations in the D.P. camps and the activities of a mental hygiene delegation sent to the detainee camps in Cyprus. The thesis discusses the Israeli psychiatric literature on the topic of trauma among Holocaust survivors, and takes it to be a manifestation of the treatment of this group by mental health services in Israel. It then compares this with the scientific discourse in Europe and the Untied States of that time, in order to ascertain whether the attitudes of Israeli psychiatrists towards survivors had unique or special characteristics. Holocaust survivors who arrived in Israel were not given special treatment, even when they clearly suffered from mental imbalance. Unlike physical disabilities, which were treated by medical professionals, mental problems were completely neglected for many years. Through the end of the 1950s, survivors' psychological problems were seen as mere absorption and adjustment difficulties, rather than a result of any unique trauma. This attitude was combined with the optimism presented in reports about the survivors, which were written and published in the 1940s. Later, when literature on psychological problems among survivors began to appear outside of Israel, Israeli psychiatrists continued to shun the available knowledge about post-trauma and its treatment. This thesis shows that the Eichmann Trial had no significant impact on local psychiatrists or their attitudes towards mentally ill survivors. The number of psychiatric publications addressing to the problem of trauma did not increase. However, the research studies conducted after the trial offered a deeper and more focused analysis, based on the assumption that the

Holocaust had mental and emotional ramifications for survivors. This development may have been the outcome of a process connected to factors such as Israeli medical evaluations for survivors claiming compensation for psychological damage, growing interaction between the mental health services and survivors, and exposure to new psychiatric concepts outside of Israel.

Another group of immigrants with which Israeli psychiatry had to deal was Jews from Arab countries. The attitude of Israeli psychiatrists towards mentally ill immigrants from the Arab world has not yet been investigated by historians; whatever psychiatric and anthropological literature exists has focused mainly on the patients, and not the psychiatrists who treated them. This focus on mentally ill immigrants from Arab countries and the lack of research on Israeli psychiatrists places the patient as the subject of examination, while the therapist is conceived as static, objective, scientific and rational. The thesis examines the concepts of Israeli psychiatrists regarding these immigrants, touching upon such questions as: what the mental diseases they were diagnosed as suffering from were, what the explanations given for these manifestations were, and how they were treated by the Israeli mental health services. The thesis claims that the attitude towards mentally ill immigrants from the Arab world in the 1950s can be characterized as anachronistic, prejudiced, and even racist. Mizrahim treated by mental services were almost invariably labeled as »primitive.« Moreover, the attitude of Jewish psychiatrists towards non-Ashkenazic Jews and Arabs in the pre-state period influenced these psychiatrists' conceptions of the immigrants from Arab countries who came to Israel in the 1950s in various ways. The psychiatrists tended to ignore the mental morbidity of both groups, claiming that their tendency to such diseases was low, and that the differences between them and the Ashkenazic group were mainly in the manifestation of the mental illness. Not unlike in the period before 1948, psychiatrists reported difficulty in diagnosing psychological disorders among non-Ashkenazic patients. Although most of the psychiatrists arrived in the country twenty years prior to the new wave of Mizrahi immigration, the segregation between Jews and Arabs in the medical system resulted in minimal contact between Jewish psychiatrists and non-Ashkenazic or Arab patients. For these psychiatrists, who mostly treated Jewish immigrants from Europe, and were themselves of European origin, the »normal« and the »pathological« of Mizrahi Jew or Arab did not parallel the Western »normal« and »pathological« with which they were familiar. The problem of diagnosing and treating Mizrahi Jews was not only indicative of cultural differences or the existence of East/West dichotomies. It also manifested itself in the refusal of psychiatrists to accept and acknowledge the internal world of their Mizrahi patients. However, despite the cultural and external similarities between Mizrahim and Arabs (which led to the stereotyping of this group of immigrants), one may detect a crucial difference in the

attitude of psychiatrists towards the non-Ashkenazic population before and after 1948. By the 1950s, the racial component which characterized the earlier psychiatric discourse had vanished, and this thesis claims that the absence of such a discourse vis-à-vis these immigrants was essential to the construction of the then-touted »Ingathering of the Exiles« ideology, and served as a justification for the immigration from Arab countries.