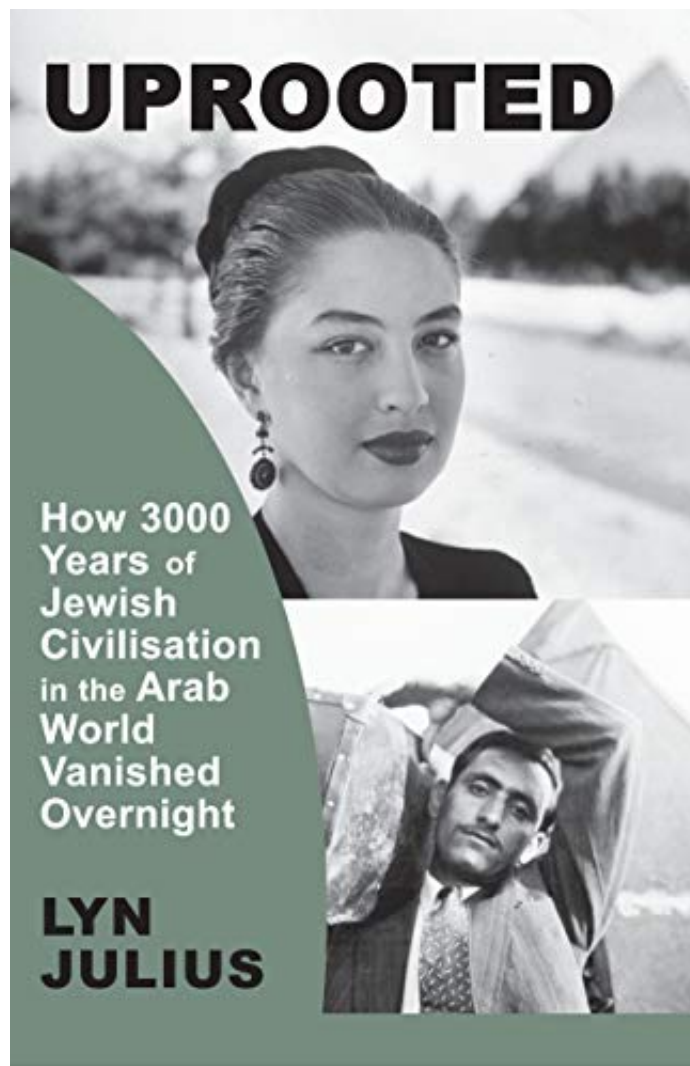


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Uprooted: How 3000 Years of Jewish Civilization in the Arab World Vanished Overnight

by
E.A. Koetting



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Synopsis

Who are the Jews from Arab countries? What were relations with Muslims like? What made Jews leave countries where they had been settled for thousands of years? What lessons can we learn from the mass exodus of minorities from the Middle East? Lyn Julius undertakes to answer all these questions and more in *Uprooted*, the culmination of ten years of work studying these issues. Jews lived continuously in the Middle East and North Africa for almost 3,000 years. Yet, in just 50 years, their indigenous communities outside Palestine almost totally disappeared as more than 99 percent of the Jewish population fled. Those with foreign passports and connections generally left for Europe, Australia, or the Americas. Some 650,000—including a minority of ideological Zionists—went to Israel. Before the Holocaust they constituted ten percent of the world's Jewish population, and now over 50 percent of Israel's Jews are refugees from Arab and Muslim countries, or their descendants. This same process is now repeating in Christian and other minority communities across the Middle East. This book also assesses how well these Jews have integrated into Israel and how their struggles have been politicized. It charts the growing clamour for recognition, redress and memorialization for these Jewish refugees, and looks at how their cause can contribute to peace and reconciliation between Israel and the Muslim world. *** "Lyn Julius provides a riveting account of a fascinating, but disgracefully overlooked subject. Anyone who really wants to understand the Middle East, Israel and world history, should read it." --Tom Gross, former Middle East correspondent, Sunday Telegraph; contributor to The Guardian and Wall Street Journal[Subject: Middle East Studies, Jewish Studies, History, Sociology, Politics]

Sort review

"*Uprooted* will surely not be the last historical examination of the Arab world's exiled Jews, but it is among the first to launch a frontal assault on the myths and preconceptions associated with their plight. For that alone, its value will endure." —Ben Cohen, Commentary
"In *Uprooted: How 3,000 Years of Civilisation in the Arab World Vanished Overnight*, Lyn Julius recounts how almost the entire Jewish populations of North Africa and the Middle East were ethnically cleansed, partly in retaliation for the creation of Israel, even though they had been settled for thousands of years." —The Telegraph
Interview: --This text refers to the paperback edition.

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Look inside the book

UPROOTED Uprooted How 3,000 Years of Jewish Civilisation in the Arab World Vanished Overnight
Lyn Julius First published in 2018 by Vallentine Mitchell Catalyst House, 920 NE 58th Avenue, Suite 300720 Centennial Court, Portland, Oregon, Centennial Park, Elstree WD6 3SY, UK 97213-3786 USA Copyright © 2018 Lyn Julius Foreword © 2018 Tom Gross British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data: An entry can be found on request Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data: An entry can be found on request All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, reading or otherwise, without the prior permission of Vallentine Mitchell & Co. Ltd. Printed by Edwards Brothers Malloy Inc, Ann Arbor, MI
Toleration is not the opposite of Intoleration, but is the counterfeit of it. Both are despotisms. Thomas Paine, The Rights of Man
Dedicated to my parents, Bertha Bekhor and the late Maurice Bekhor, Jewish refugees from Iraq, and to the memory of my friend Névine Rose (née Savdié), a Jewish refugee from Egypt.
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A Note on Terminology
Ashkenazi: Jews from medieval Germany and northern France. The term has now come to refer to Jews of central and eastern European descent. Mizrahi: modern Hebrew term deriving from Edot Ha'Mizrah, Jews from the East. It denotes 'eastern' or 'oriental' Jews who have been settled in the Middle East and North Africa since Biblical times. It also refers to the Jews of the greater Babylonian diaspora (present-day Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran and the southern ex-Soviet republics). Nowadays it also encompasses Jews from Yemen, the Indian subcontinent and Ethiopia – any Jew who is not Ashkenazi. This book uses 'Mizrahi' as a catch-all, although the term is technically inaccurate when describing North African (Maghrebi) communities since these are geographically westerly (Morocco is to the west of much of western Europe).
Sephardi: literally, Spanish. Jews expelled from Spain (Sefarad) and Portugal after 1492. Most Middle Eastern and North African communities are now mixed Sephardi and Mizrahi. The term is often used to describe any community that is not Ashkenazi. 'Sephardi' also means following the broad traditions of Sephardi Judaism.
Foreword
A People Ignored
It is not surprising, given the sheer scale of the Holocaust and its sadism, that it has dominated contemporary discourse among Jews and others. But while the extermination of European Jews has rightfully (though belatedly) generated a great deal of study and research, the ethnic cleansing of the Jews of the Arab world has been all but ignored. This ignorance extends to policymakers at the highest level. Some journalists at leading news outlets, as well as politicians I have spoken to, have expressed surprise when I have even mentioned that Jews lived in sizeable numbers in the Middle East before Israel's independence. In fact Jews have lived in what is now the Arab world for over 2,600 years, a millennium before Islam was founded, and centuries before the Arab conquest of many of those territories. In pre-Islamic times, whole Jewish kingdoms existed, for example Himyar in Yemen. Up until the seventeenth century, there were more Jews in the Arab and wider Muslim world than in Europe. In Baghdad, in 1939, 33 per cent of the population were Jews making it at the time, proportionately more Jewish than Warsaw (29 per cent) and New York (27 per cent). Jews had lived in Baghdad since the destruction of the first temple in Jerusalem in 586 BCE. Today only

five Jews reportedly remain there. Before they were driven out en masse, the Jews of the Arab world, like Jews in Europe, were often important figures in their societies. The first novel to be published in Iraq was written by a Jew. Iraq's first finance minister was a Jew, Sir Sasson Heskell. The founder of Egypt's first national theatre in Cairo, in 1870, was a Jew, Jacob Sanua. Egypt's first opera was written in 1919 by a Jew. Many of the classics of Egyptian cinema were directed by Jews and featured Jewish actors. The pioneer of Tunisian cinema was also Jewish (he was one of the first in the world to film underwater sequences), as was Tunisia's leading female singer. The world bantamweight boxing champion was also a Tunisian Jew and so were many other leading boxers and swimmers – including Alfred Nakache, the Algerian swimming champion who later survived Auschwitz. (Hundreds of Jews died in Nazi camps set up in Libya and some other Libyan Jews were deported to Bergen-Belsen.) Even the less prominent Jews were often interwoven into the wider societies. As a Moroccan proverb put it, 'A market without Jews is like bread without salt.' (In the West, there are many prominent Jews with roots in the Arab world. The American comedian Jerry Seinfeld has a Syrian Jewish mother; Bernard-Henri Levy's parents were Algerian Jews, and so on.) In Israel, 160,000 Arabs stayed after the country's rebirth in 1948 and took Israeli citizenship. (That number is now 1.7 million, representing over 20 per cent of Israel's population, and Israeli Arabs serve in posts ranging from Supreme Court justices to Israeli diplomats). And when Israel declared independence following the UN partition plan, many of the Palestinian Arabs who departed were not pushed out, but left on the orders of their own leadership so as to stay out of the way when several Arab armies marched in with the aim of wiping out the Jews. In sharp contrast, the ethnic cleansing of hundreds of thousands of Jews from the Arab world in the mid-twentieth century was systematic, absolute and unprovoked. There were 38,000 Jews in western Libya before 1945. Now there are none, forty-seven synagogues are gone and a highway runs through Libya's main Jewish cemetery. In Algeria there were 140,000 Jews. Now there are none. In Iraq, there were about 150,000 Jews. Five remain. There were 80,000 Jews in Egypt. Almost all are gone. Many Jewish refugees still suffer the trauma of armed men arriving at their door, and being marched away without explanation and without being able to take their possessions. Unlike Palestinian refugees who left in smaller numbers (between 1948 and 1951, according to UN statistics, 711,000 Palestinian Arabs left what became Israel although many historians put the numbers at fewer than this) the 856,000 Jews who were made refugees from Arab countries have never received any proper recognition or international financial help. Instead, there is wilful ignorance. So for example, in Cairo today, the Swiss, German, Canadian, Dutch, South Korean and Pakistani embassies all occupy the stolen homes of wealthy expelled Jews. Similar situations exist in some other Arab capitals. Adding to the injustice, some Middle East commentators like to propagate the myth that the Jews of the Arab world were never discriminated against or persecuted or attacked. Not only were Jews often treated as second-class citizens with discriminatory laws and additional taxes imposed on them, but many were killed or injured in pogroms: for example, in Fez in Morocco, 45 Jews were killed in 1912; in Constantine in Algeria in 1934; in Rabat in Morocco in 1934; in Gabès in Tunisia in 1941; in Aden in 1947, when 87 Jews were killed and hundreds of shops destroyed; in Iraq in 1941, when at least 180 Jews were murdered and many others raped and injured and thousands of homes looted; in Libya in 1945, when 130 Jews were killed; in Aleppo in 1947, when as many as 75 Jews were said to have lost their lives. In 1939, bombs were planted at a Cairo synagogue. Nor can such attacks be excused as somehow being merely in reaction to Zionism. There were many attacks before this period. In 1807, in Casablanca, there was a massacre of Jews. In 1840, the infamous Damascus blood libel led to the kidnapping and

torture of dozens of Jewish children. (As late as 1986, the Syrian Defence Minister, Mustafa Talas, published a book, *The Matzah of Zion*, in which he claimed that the Jews did indeed use the blood of a Christian monk to bake matzah, and therefore he said the 1840 pogrom was justified.) In 1857, an innocent Tunisian Jew, Batto Sfez, was beheaded and his head was tossed around like a football by a mob, leading the French authorities to intervene. Other pogroms occurred in Aleppo in 1850 and 1875, in Damascus in 1848 and 1890, in Beirut in 1862 and 1874. In Cairo, Jews were set upon by mobs in 1844, 1890, and 1901–2, and in Alexandria in 1870, 1882 and 1901–7. In Morocco, as far back as the eighth century, whole communities were wiped out by Idris the First. In 1033, about 6,000 Jews were murdered in Fez by a Muslim mob. In 1465, another massacre took place in Fez, which spread to other cities in Morocco. There were pogroms in Tetuan in 1790 and 1792, in which many children were murdered. Between 1864 and 1880, there was a series of attacks on the Jews of Marrakesh, and hundreds died. In 1903, there were pogroms in Taza and Settat, in which over forty Jews were killed. In 1907, in Casablanca thirty Jews were killed and many women raped. There was also a series of massacres in Algeria in 1805, 1815 and 1830, and in Libya in 1785. And so on. By the 1880s the situation for Yemeni Jews was so bad, that many started to walk to Palestine to join European Jews there and 15,000 Yemeni Jews had arrived by the late 1930s. Today the only Middle Eastern state where Jews and Arabs cohabit in any numbers is Israel. (Indeed the Arab population in Israel is now much larger than it was during the British mandate period.) Some Arab reformers have lamented the loss of Jews, giving it as key a reason why the Arab world is now in such disarray. The Egyptian-born journalist Magdi Allam says that 'by losing their Jews the Arabs have lost their roots and have ended up losing themselves.' All this and more is explored by Lyn Julius in this significant new book. A deeper understanding about the fate of the Jews of the Arab world is not just important because a great injustice has been done to them, but because by ignoring their plight, and history, and concentrating only on the Palestinian Arabs who in 1947–8 were made refugees from Israel, policy makers from US Secretary of States downwards have formed a lopsided view of the conflict. If it were better understood that there were two sets of suffering here – Jewish and Arab – then grievances surrounding the Palestinian question could be more easily reconciled and a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict made less hard to achieve. Tom Gross Former Middle East correspondent, *Sunday Telegraph*; contributor to *The Guardian* and *Wall Street Journal* Introduction The issue of Jewish refugees from Arab countries pursued me, the daughter of Jewish refugees from Iraq, throughout my childhood. In adulthood, 9/11 jolted me back to the observation of just how dysfunctional certain parts of the Arab and Muslim world could be. Now, though, the threat which had begun with the destruction of Middle Eastern minorities has gone global. It could target Madrid commuters, passengers on a London bus, revellers in a Bali disco or rock fans in a French music hall. Back in 1969, as a schoolgirl, I remember attending a very emotional vigil outside the Iraqi embassy in London just after nine Jews had been executed in Liberation Square in Baghdad. It was addressed by Percy Gorgey MBE, who fought like a lion all his life to raise awareness of the plight of Jews from Arab countries. The fate of Iraq's remaining 3,000 Jews was a source of great personal anxiety to my family: my four grandparents and several cousins and aunts were trapped in Baghdad under Saddam Hussein's reign of terror. In England, my father, who had fled Iraq in 1950 as a refugee with his new wife, my mother, acted as guardian to the three children of his absent sister. Widowed at thirty-five, my aunt had returned to Iraq in 1964 to sell some property, but had ended up unable to leave the country, a helpless hostage of the Ba'ath regime. In those dark days after the Baghdad hangings, my father devoted much energy to trying to secure the

release of Aunt Marcelle, my grandparents Baba and Nana and great-uncle Amou Sasson. He went to see MPs – or anyone he thought might listen – and wrote frantic letters to the French senator Alain Poher, who headed a human rights committee. Eventually my Aunt Marcelle was smuggled by Kurds out of northern Iraq into then-friendly Iran; she was disguised in an abaya as a Muslim called Khadija. After six long years, she was reunited with her family in London. She had missed the wedding of her eldest son by four months. Baba, Nana and Amou managed to secure passports, hitherto rarely granted to Jews. They gained admission to England helped by Joan Stiebel, a non-Jewish heroine of the Central British Fund, now known as World Jewish Relief. At about the same time, cousins on my mother's side of the family also escaped Baghdad for Canada, and my parents acted as surrogates until my cousins were reunited with their parents twenty years later. In typical oriental style, the whole hamula was resettled with us – my grandparents and great-uncle on the ground floor of our London home, and my aunt and her children next door. Reams have been written about the Arab-Israeli conflict, but the story of the Jews from Arab and Muslim countries remains shockingly neglected. Yet there have been more Jewish refugees from Arab countries than Arab refugees from Palestine. Most of these Jews resettled in Israel. Although they comprised only 10 per cent of the worldwide Jewish population before the Holocaust, Jews from Arab and Muslim countries and their descendants comprise just over half of Israel's six million-strong Jewish population today.¹ The reasons for such neglect are complex. Few Jewish refugees have wanted to talk about their past experiences, being too busy adapting to their new lands. Israel has failed to mention their plight. Arab historians have avoided mentioning their flight. Eurocentric Jews have rarely discussed Jewish refugees from Arab lands too, their story being crushed under the weight of the Holocaust. Finally, the problem appeared to have been solved: whereas Palestinian refugees still languish in camps, not a single Jew still claims to be a refugee. Moreover, too many interests are vested in denial. Myths abound: no Jews ever lived in the Muslim world; the 'ethnic cleansing' didn't happen; if it did happen, outside factors – the Zionists, the colonial powers, even the Jews themselves – are to blame. The story of the displacement of Jews from the Middle East drew renewed attention with the flight of Christians from the Middle East in the wake of the 2011 Arab Spring. The mass departure of almost a million Jews – also known as the Jewish Nakba (catastrophe) – preceded the Christian exodus. As the Islamist saying goes, 'First the Saturday people, then the Sunday people.'² In other words, first rid these countries of Jews and next, drive out the Christians. The public debate about Israel never seems to pan outwards from a narrow focus on the ongoing dispute with the Palestinians. Yet the plight of Jewish refugees from Arab lands is an unresolved injustice. It is also central to an understanding of the Arab and Islamist struggle against Israel and Jews, and minorities in general. It constitutes a vital context capable of transforming opinion. The issue of the Jewish refugees has been gathering momentum in recent years and came blinking out of the darkness of oblivion on 30 November 2014. This was the date designated by the Israeli Knesset as the Day of Remembrance for Jewish refugees from Arab Countries and Iran.³ Henceforth, this date, which coincides with the anniversary of the outbreak of vicious riots in Arab countries against Jewish communities following the approval of the 1947 UN Partition Plan for Palestine, will memorialise the near-total extinction of an ancient civilisation. It will provide a focus in Israel and across the world for telling a hitherto untold story. It has long been necessary to put Jewish refugees on the map. And this book is the result of that need. The importance of exploding certain myths has crystallised out of material I have collected for my blog, Point of No Return,⁴ which, in 2015, marked its tenth birthday. Who are the Jews from Arab countries? What were relations with the Muslims like? What made the Jews leave

countries where they had been settled for thousands of years? What became of the majority who settled in Israel, and how can their cause contribute to peace and reconciliation? What lessons can we learn from the mass exodus of minorities from the Middle East? Although Jews have been displaced as a result of anti-Semitism in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and even Turkey (countries where religious diversity is much diminished), I have chosen mainly to focus on Arab countries.⁵ This is because the bulk of displaced Jews from Muslim countries came from the Arab world. In 1948, Iran was still an ally of Israel: it was not until 1979 that the Islamic revolution precipitated the exodus of four-fifths of Iran's Jews. There have, of course, been several academic histories of Jews in Arab lands, and I do not intend to compete with them. I make no secret of the fact that I have been advocating for the rights of Jews from Arab lands through Harif, the UK Association of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa. Readers will, I hope, find useful a reference section of maps, tables, testimonies and timelines. My main motivation is to tell the truth, and to equip others with the knowledge to tell the truth, in the hope that truth will lead to greater understanding, even reconciliation. I would like to acknowledge those who have read all or parts of the manuscript: Dr Edy Cohen, Dr Henry Green, Dr Stan Urman, and Nathan Weinstock (any errors are all my own). Special thanks go to Tom Gross for writing the Foreword and for his advice and encouragement, and to Levana Zamir for her wisdom and patient assistance. Thanks too go to Michelle Huberman for her inspiration, Lisette Shashoua Ades, Niran Bassoon-Timan, Lily Amior and Ralph Assor for their help, and the staff at Vallentine Mitchell. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to those friends of the Jewish people who are striving to preserve its memory in the Middle East, often at personal risk. I am indebted to Joseph Alexander Norland for starting me off on this eventful journey by setting up my blog Point of No Return. I have learned much along the way, not least from my regular commenters. I should like to thank my family and especially my son Gideon for his help with footnotes and sources. Last but not least, this book would not have seen the light of day without the steadfast and dedicated support of my husband Laurence.

Notes

1. 50.2 per cent according to the Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2009, Central Bureau of Statistics. 'Table 2.24 – Jews, by country of origin and age' (PDF).
2. 'After Saturday comes Sunday' is an expression commonly heard in the Arab world or scrawled as graffiti. It is referenced in Bernard Lewis's prescient essay, 'The Return of Islam', Commentary, 1 January 1976.
3. 'For the first time, Israel marks day for Jewish refugees from Arab lands'. i24 news, 30 November 2014 at . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).
4. Point of No Return: Jewish Refugees from Arab countries at . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).
5. I have not treated Sudan separately as it was effectively administered by Egypt with British approval. I have not mentioned the communities in Bahrain, Asmara or other Red Sea or Gulf ports. This book does not cover the Jewish communities of India, Pakistan, Singapore, Burma, Hong Kong and Shanghai founded by Baghdadi and Aleppan Jews.

Preface

First the Saturday People

Suppose a man leaps out of a burning building ... and lands on a bystander in the street below. The burning building is supposed to be Europe, the jumper is the Jew, and the unfortunate bystander the Palestinian Arab. This metaphor for the Arab-Israeli conflict was apparently coined by writer Jeffrey Goldberg and has been approvingly cited by the late polemicist and author Christopher Hitchens.

1 Whilst it is a striking image, this analogy is, of course, inherently problematic. It propagates the assumption that Jews came from Europe to displace innocent natives. Now try a different analogy. Imagine that the building is actually situated in the Middle East, a short distance from a homestead by the sea originally settled by the Jew. Some 3,000 years ago and until recent times, the Jew inhabited the main house alongside other indigenous residents of the Middle East. The homestead was seized by the Romans in 70 CE and most of its residents

dispersed. An occupier arrived in the seventh century, and took over the whole region. In the twentieth century, arsonists set fire to the main building, forcing the Jew to jump out of the window. 'First the Saturday people, then the Sunday people': Armenians, Assyrians, Chaldean Christians, Maronites, Copts also jumped for their lives. And not just the Sunday people: Mandaeans, Yazidis and 'heretical' and sectarian Muslims have been jumping out of the windows too. The difference is that the Jew found refuge in the embattled homestead, his original abode. Populating it continuously through 2,000 years, Jews had never surrendered its title. More than 99 per cent of Jewish residents have fled from the Arab world in the last sixty years. Some 650,000 went to Israel and 200,000 to the West.² Their exodus took two forms: those better equipped with foreign passports and connections generally engineered their private exits, mainly to Europe, Australia or the Americas. Together with a minority of ideological Zionists, the rest went to Israel. Although the diaspora remains overwhelmingly Ashkenazi, over 50 per cent of Israel's Jews today are Mizrahi or Sephardi refugees from Arab and Muslim countries or their descendants.³ Mass refugee movements have been a feature of conflicts in the first half of the twentieth century: upwards of fifty-two million people have been displaced.⁴ The Arab-Israeli conflict is no exception. However, the root causes of the mass displacement of the Jews predate the Arab-Israeli conflict, and it may be argued that the inability of Arabs and Muslims to accept Israel belongs in deep-seated cultural, religious and ideological prejudice. The twentieth century produced 135 million refugees⁵ as a consequence of the self-determination of peoples through violence. Population exchanges were common in the twentieth century – roughly equal numbers of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa, and Palestinian Arabs swapped places. There were also exchanges of refugees between Greece and Turkey, India and Pakistan, and Greek and Turkish Cyprus, not forgetting the mass migration of ethnic Germans and others in the wake of the Second World War. However, while all these refugee populations have been absorbed in their new countries, only the Palestinian Arabs are still, according to the UN, considered refugees and allowed to pass on their refugee status to succeeding generations ad infinitum.⁶ Their leaders have constantly kindled the vain hope of a 'Right of Return' to Palestine in their hearts, even though most were not born there and some had been resident for no more than two years. Arguably, these refugees have been deliberately deprived of civil rights in their adopted countries in order to remain a standing reproach to Israel and a weapon in the decades-long Arab and Muslim struggle against the Jewish state. Although two refugee populations exchanged places, the circumstances of their displacement were very different. Palestinian Arab refugees were caught up in a war zone in 1948. Many chose to flee but expulsions did take place, for instance at Ramle and Lydda,⁷ but the fact that 160,000 Arabs out of about 870,000 in western Palestine⁸ chose to stay indicates that the newly-proclaimed Israeli state had no systematic policy of 'ethnic cleansing'.⁹ By contrast, Jordan, which took over territory after the 1948 war, 'ethnically cleansed' the West Bank of Jordan (Judea and Samaria) and the Old City of Jerusalem, where the Jews had been the largest constituent group; every last Jewish inhabitant was displaced.¹⁰ Almost a million Middle Eastern and North African Jews, hundreds or thousands of miles from the theatre of battle, on the other hand, were singled out for persecution and dispossession because they were Jews. While Palestinian refugees were internally displaced a few miles or relocated to countries which, like the great majority of them, were Sunni Muslim and Arabic-speaking, Jews were forced to abandon their age-old heritage, languages and culture, and start afresh. Jews pour out of the Old City of Jerusalem in 1948. Every last Jew was expelled following the Arab conquest. On 29 November 1947, the United Nations passed UNGA resolution 181, approving the Partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. The Arabs fiercely rejected the plan;

anti-Jewish riots broke out in Syria, Bahrain and Aden. The five Arab League countries – Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq and Jordan – which had launched the 1948 war against Israel (Yemen and Saudi Arabia sent expeditionary forces) waged a second war against their own non-combatant Jewish citizens, whom they referred to as the Jewish ‘minority of Palestine’.¹¹ They lost the war against Israel, but won the war decisively against their own Jews. Except when they were treated as hostages and forbidden to leave the country, these Jews had no alternative but to move away. Four generations of the Jewish Habbani tribe from the Arabian peninsula, Ein Shemer camp, Israel, 1950 (Fritz Cohen/Israel Government Press Office) In 1948, the countries of the Maghreb, including Morocco, home to the largest population of Jews in the Arab world, were not yet members of the Arab League and were still under the colonial yoke, having not yet achieved independence. These countries were not contiguous with Palestine and their governments not at war with Israel, but their populations were, nevertheless, swept up in a powerful wave of anti-Jewish hostility. Most of Libya was under British control but the 1945 Tripoli riots had displaced thousands of Jews, already traumatised, exhausted and decimated by the Second World War. Angered by a wave of Moroccan Jews streaming into Algeria on their way to Palestine, professional agitators instigated rioting against the border Jewish communities of Oujda and Jerrada (and forty-four Jews were killed).¹² These pogroms, the worst since the Fez Trifl of 1912, had a grave psychological effect: Jews questioned if they had a future in Morocco now that they had an alternative in Israel. Whilst Jews fleeing Nazi Germany found the gates to most countries shut in their faces, the establishment of Israel gave Jews fleeing the Arab and Muslim world – usually the poorest, sickest and most vulnerable – somewhere secure to go. As soon as Israel was born, the Zionist underground and the American Joint Distribution Committee, determined after the Holocaust never again to leave Jews in the diaspora to their fate, rescued great numbers of refugees in some of the largest airlifts in history. Operation Magic Carpet (Wings of Eagles) in Yemen, Operation Ezra and Nehemiah in Iraq, and Operations Mural and Yakhin in Morocco, shifted tens of thousands of Jews to Israel.¹³ Yemenite Jews arriving in Israel (Fritz Cohen/ Israel Government Press Office) Child at the Caesarea Ma’abara, 1954 (Fritz Cohen/Israel Government Press Office) The Jews of Arab lands faced two sorts of ‘ethnic cleansing’. Yemen, Syria, Libya, Iraq, post-Suez Egypt and Algeria disgorged the majority of their Jews in one precipitous go. In Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia, Jews were ushered over a longer period towards the exit, their flight peaking at periods of heightened tension in the Israeli-Arab conflict. All these countries criminalised Zionism, exposing their Jewish minorities to accusations of being a fifth column. Jews who stayed on frequently became prisoners in their countries of birth, where discriminatory travel bans operated. When the pressure for emigration became unbearable, Yemen and Iraq made a deal with the Israeli Mossad to allow their Jews to leave. Their liberation by airlift was achieved with hard cash. In effect, Israel paid a ransom for each Jew, paying to transport them out of the country. Iraqi officials had to be bribed to the tune of several times their monthly salaries.¹⁴ It cost £12 a head (equivalent to £400 today) to fly each and every passenger to safety. When a five-year Moroccan emigration ban on Jewish families was lifted, an agreement was reached in 1961 whereby the World Jewish Congress paid a ransom of up to \$250 a head secretly to transport Jews out of the country in the early sixties, equivalent to \$1,600 today. The total cost of the indemnities paid to the Moroccan authorities was somewhere between \$5 million and \$20 million.¹⁵ ‘Those Zionists were delegated by the Messiah. They saved thousands of lives’, said Penina Elbaz, who witnessed how Zionist operatives came to collect poor Jews from the southern town of Safi in Morocco.¹⁶ The Iraqi government agreed to release its Jews because it thought that thousands of destitute Jews

arriving on Israel's doorstep with little more than the shirts on their backs would lead to economic collapse.¹⁷ The airlifts were lucrative for the governments and civil servants of these countries who received generous bribes. Arabs were sometimes major shareholders in the transport companies. At the end of the day, Arab states and individuals reaped a short-term bonanza in Jewish assets seized and property deemed to have been abandoned or sold for peanuts. The long-term costs to the economy and culture of Arab states are unquantifiable. The mass airlifts to Israel were unprecedented. The nightmare journey in a ramshackle cargo plane huddled with other air-sick passengers began for these Jews well before they stepped on board. Jews in Yemen made a long and risky trek on foot down to the British crown colony of Aden: emissaries paid various Yemeni tribal chiefs a head tax to permit Jewish refugees to pass through the country.¹⁸ They arrived half-starved and destitute and spent weeks in makeshift camps in the heat and dust. Some 150 died on the way and 700 perished in the camps.¹⁹ Egyptian Jews arriving by ship in Greece on their way to Israel. In total, 4,000 of the 38,000 Jews in Libya had been made homeless by lethal riots in 1945 and had been sleeping in the synagogues.²⁰ Some 120,000 Jews leaving Iraq were stripped by decree of their citizenship in 1950, and later of their property by a parliamentary law passed in secret session.²¹ Jews in Egypt – the community numbered 80,000 – left in two main waves: 20,000, including communists and Zionists, in 1948; 25,000, comprising the middle classes, summarily expelled in 1956 and given just hours to leave with only 50 dinars in their pockets.²² All but 5,000 of the 30,000 Jews of Syria fled violent riots in 1947.²³ Many were marked for life by the trauma of their uprooting. Heads of families had had their work permits rescinded. Egyptian Jews remained haunted by the abusive or obscene phone calls they had received or calls with no-one at the other end of the line, the threatening letters received, the bribes demanded, the ominous knock at three in the morning, the shock of armed men at the front door, male relatives taken away without explanation. Plans for leaving had to be made in secret, without the usual goodbyes, especially if the final destination was Israel – which some Egyptian Jews called 'chez nous'. When the time came for their hurried departure, Egyptian Jews would have their passports confiscated and replaced with a laissez-passer marked with the words: 'one way – no return'. Jews were stripped of their citizenship in Iraq and permitted to leave with 50 dinars (\$80 today), one suit, a wedding ring, a cherished bracelet, a watch and one suitcase. There was no guarantee that those suitcases would arrive at their destination. The Mossad emissary Mordechai Ben-Porat discovered a porters' racket at Baghdad airport to spirit the suitcases off the passenger buses.²⁴ Departing Jews complained that malicious customs men would confiscate a last piece of jewellery, ransack their bags or ruin the contents. Having reached safety, the refugees faced the challenge of building their lives all over again. The mental and physical cost was considerable. 'Exile broke him', writes Raphael Luzon of his father in his autobiography *Libyan Twilight*.²⁵ 'The mourning for a lost life never left him, so he remained what he had always been – a Libyan Jew.' There is anecdotal evidence that a shocking number died soon after displacement, unable to cope with the trauma of uprooting and stress of providing for their families. City dwellers had to rebuild their lives in the country. Camille Fox, from a wealthy Egyptian family, describes how she exchanged the fragrance of Chanel for the stench of the cowshed on a moshav (cooperative farm) in the south of Israel. The refugee generation was known as the 'desert generation' – it did not possess the language or professional skills to prosper in its adopted country. Fathers especially found their authority suddenly eroded in a society less patriarchal than the one they had come from. The Iraq-born author Eli Amir describes the dashed expectations of his father, who had a dream to plant rice-fields in Israel's Hula Valley. Men who were merchants or administrators in their

country of birth took off their suits and joined construction gangs. Women went out to work for the first time and were often more resilient to change. Relationships were turned upside down, with children taking responsibility for their disorientated parents. Israel paid special attention to the children, sending them to youth villages and kibbutzim in order to prepare them for life in the Jewish state. Refugee families were atomised and siblings dispersed across the globe. At one stage, my mother in England had a sister in Iraq (until 1991), a brother in Iran,²⁶ a sister in France, a sister in the US and a brother in Canada. Naturally, the harsh conditions awaiting the 650,000 Jews who went to Israel – the stinking ma'abarot (transit camps), the shortage of food and jobs, and the alien language and culture – were hardly encouraging. Israel was struggling to cope with an influx of refugees and Holocaust survivors which doubled its 600,000-strong population overnight.²⁷ In the chaos of the camps there were stories of babies and children stolen and never seen again.²⁸ Some refugees remained in the tin shacks and wooden huts of the ma'abarot for up to thirteen years. These were often on the country's northern and southern borders. The camps slowly turned into permanent towns and cities. The border town of Sderot, a notorious target for Hamas short-range missiles, began life as the ma'abara of Gevim-Dorot. It housed Kurdish, Iranian and North African Jews. The new state did not always show sensitivity to the needs of these immigrants. Yiddish was a prerequisite for some jobs. New accommodation in Israel was not designed for large families. The state had little use for dozens of shoemakers and shopkeepers. Jobs had to be invented for Moroccan immigrants with little education and no transferable skills: for instance, carting grass from a neighbouring kibbutz to Ashdod beach.²⁹ In spite of the hardships and suffering of the early years, these Jews had escaped anti-Jewish riots, synagogue burnings, kidnappings, internment and executions. But conditions in Israel for the new arrivals were dire. The few thousand Jews, usually the wealthier ones, who stayed behind in Arab countries, congratulated themselves at the time that they had not joined the mass exodus. For a short time they continued to live calm and comfortable lives. But even worse torment and terror lay in store for them: Jews in Egypt were brutally expelled after 1956, the few thousand Jews remaining in Iraq and Syria, who had to carry special identity cards, were stripped of their rights and livelihoods in the 1950s and 1960s. Until 1961, Jews were banned from leaving Morocco. All that Jews who chose to stay behind in Arab countries were doing was postponing their inevitable departure. In Iraq, desperate conditions demanded desperate measures, and after 1970, following the horrific hangings of nine Jews in Baghdad's main square and the disappearance of scores more, 1,900 Jews were smuggled Kachagh (illegally) through Kurdistan with the complicity of the Israeli authorities. Syrian Jews were virtual prisoners, restricted in their movements with their every move watched by the secret police. Those who could, risked the treacherous smugglers' route to Israel – some of them on foot – until 2,000 were liberated as a result of international pressure in the 1990s. In Morocco, poverty could also trap those Jews who did not join the mass emigrations. The last Jews of Meknes were compelled to pay \$125 for a passport: many could not afford both a passport and an airplane ticket.³⁰ A common government ruse in other countries was to allow foreign travel for one member of a family, with the others being forced to remain behind as hostages. If hundreds of thousands of Jews had not been transported to Israel, what would have happened to them? It is highly likely they would have remained at the mercy of their host countries, vulnerable to episodes of mob violence, arbitrary arrests and rampant injustice. If Jews had remained in the areas of Syria and Iraq occupied by Da'esh (Islamic State) they would have met a similar fate to Yazidis and Assyrian Christians: executed, with their women and children raped and sold as slaves. At the very least, many would have languished, vulnerable to pogroms, struggling to feed their children, deprived of jobs and

livelihoods by state-sanctioned and more subtle discrimination. It is undeniable that some of these Jews encountered prejudice on arrival in Israel and were isolated in remote development towns; however, Israel accepted these dispossessed and huddled masses unconditionally – on the basis that they were Jews. It gave them citizenship. It gave them freedom. It cured them of tuberculosis and trachoma. Above all, it gave them the safe haven and political ability to defend themselves, which minorities in Arab countries sorely lack. Until the mass flight of Middle Eastern Christians after the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the largest number of non-Muslim refugees in the Middle East and North Africa was Jewish.³¹ They outnumbered Palestinian Arab refugees from what is now Israel.³² The vast majority are unequivocally thankful that they got out and rebuilt their lives in the free world: ‘They took everything, but the one thing they could not take was inside our heads’, Maurice Mizrahi, an Egyptian Jew who became a Pentagon engineer, said of the Egyptian authorities.³³ Many are, however, increasingly frustrated that their story has been neglected or forgotten. In the twentieth century, the Jewish refugees in Arab lands were among the first victims of totalitarianism, its seeds planted in the 1930s, its tendrils still wrapping themselves around the Arab and Muslim world today. The world has ignored the Jewish refugee story and the Jewish quest for justice. But the scope of this book extends far into the past, contextualising the Jewish story of minority submission. If we are ever to reach a point of understanding and even reconciliation, it is essential to look more closely at the plight of the Jews from Arab countries and bust the myths that have been allowed to take root during decades of silence. The existence of pre-Islamic Jewish communities has been erased, or their history rewritten and distorted to fit post-modern agendas. Too many people are in denial about Arab and Muslim anti-Semitism and bigotry, the engine of ‘ethnic cleansing’ within the region. The story is not just a niche Sephardi or Mizrahi one – it is more relevant than ever to an understanding of the Arab/Islamist struggle against Israel and the non-Muslim Other. This book takes a closer look at Mizrahi integration into Israel and at the politicisation of their struggle. It charts the growing clamour for recognition, redress and memorialisation for Jewish refugees.

Notes

1. Benny Morris, ‘No love for Muslims, unless they are Palestinians’, Haaretz, 29 September 2010 at . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).
2. Maurice Roumani, *The Jews from Arab Countries: A Neglected Issue* (Tel Aviv: World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries (WOJAC), 1983), p.2.
3. Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2009, CBS. ‘Table 2.24 – Jews, by country of origin and age’ (PDF).
4. Ben-Dror Yemini, ‘Why do Palestinian refugees get so much more attention than others?’ Ynet News, 4 December 2015, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).
5. Eli Hertz, *Arab and Jewish Refugees – the Contrast, Myths and Facts*, 2007, p.37.
6. Daniel Pipes, ‘Eventually, all Humans will be Palestinian Refugees’, Washington Times, 21 February 2012, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).
7. Benny Morris, ‘Israel conducted no ethnic cleansing in 1948’, Haaretz, 10 October 2016, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).
8. UNWRA was responding to the needs of about 750,000 refugees in 1950. (www.unwra.org).
9. Ibid.
10. See Michael J. Totten, ‘Between the Green line and the Blue line’, City Journal, summer 2011, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).
11. Political committee of the Arab League, Draft Law regarding Jewish Residents, 1947, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).
12. David B. Green, ‘This Day in Jewish History: Anti Jewish Rioting in Morocco Leaves 44 Dead’, Haaretz, 8 June 2014, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).
13. Israeli Ministry of Aliyah and Immigrant Absorption, . In the 1990s, the Israeli government continued to pursue its policy of rescuing Jews in distress by airlifting thousands of Ethiopian Jews in Operations Moses and Solomon.
14. Mordechai Ben-Porat, *To Baghdad and Back* (Gefen, 1998), p.122.
15. Xavier Cornut, ‘The Moroccan Connection’, Jerusalem Post, 22 June 2009, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).
16. ‘The truth about Morocco: fear made Jews leave’, Point of No Return, 11 September 2016, . (Last accessed 26 April

2017).¹⁷See Elie Kedourie's essay, 'The Break between Arabs and Jews', in Mark R. Cohen and Abraham L. Udovitch (eds), *Jews Among Arabs* (Darwin, 1989).¹⁸Joe Spier, 'Alaska Airlines and the Jews of Yemen', *San Diego Jewish World*, 1 May 2015.¹⁹Vered Lee, 'The Frayed Truth of Operation Magic Carpet', *Haaretz*, 28 May 2012, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).²⁰Shmuel Trigano, '1920–1970: A History of Ongoing Cruelty and Discrimination', *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (JCPA)*, 4 November 2010, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).²¹Itamar Levin, *Confiscated wealth: the fate of Jewish property in Arab lands*, Policy Forum 22, Institute of the World Jewish Congress, 2000, p.11.²²Michael Laskier, *Jews of Egypt* (New York: NY University Press, 1992), p.144.²³Itamar Levin, *Locked Doors* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), p.173.²⁴See Ben-Porat, *To Baghdad and Back*, (Jerusalem: Gefen, 1998), p.122.²⁵Raphael Luzon, *Libyan Twilight* (London: Darf, 2016), p.26.²⁶He had to flee a second time from the Islamic revolution in 1979.²⁷Jonathan Kaplan, 'The Mass Migration of the 1950s', *Jewish Agency for Israel*, 27 April 2015, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).²⁸The Yemenite Children Affair (not all were Yemenite, some were Iraqi and some even Ashkenazi) concerns children who were taken away alive from their parents. Parents were told they had died, but this was not always the case. The Affair has been the subject of three Israeli official inquiries. A 2001 probe examined more than 1,000 cases and concluded that most of the children in question had died natural deaths. While it stated that some of the remaining ones were probably adopted — and did not reach conclusions in a number of cases — it found no evidence of kidnapping or an organised conspiracy. In 2016, the government ordered files which had been sealed until 2071 to be declassified. In 2017, revelations that unauthorised tests had been carried out on Yemenite children caused an outcry.²⁹Simon Skira interviewed in the film: *Les destins contrariés* by Younes Laghrari (2015).³⁰D. Sitton, *Sephardi Communities Today*, (Jerusalem: Council of Sephardi and Oriental Communities, 1985), p.166.³¹Eliza Griswold, 'Is this the end of Christianity in the Middle East?', *New York Times*, 22 July 2015, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).Griswold notes that over a million Christians have left the Arab world since 2003 – slightly more than the Jewish exodus of 850,000.³²Bernard Lewis quotes the 30 September 1949 UN Economic Survey for the Middle East figure of 726,000 Palestinian refugees in *Semites and Anti-Semites* (Norton, 1999), p.184.³³Elliot Malki (producer) & Ruggero Gabbai (director), *Starting Over Again*, 2015.¹Over a Millennium before IslamEach year for the Feast of the Sacrifice (Eid al-Adha), Umm Mariam visits the Mashhad al-Shams shrine at Kifl near the town of Hillah in southern Iraq to decorate its walls with henna. She is one of dozens of pilgrims packing the grassy, palm-fringed courtyard in the shadow of a ziggurat and newly-restored, ornate minaret. She tells the Arabic electronic medium *Al-Monitor* that the shrine cured her daughter of a chronic illness after she slept there for one night. Some believe the shrine also has the power to make infertile women bear children.¹ The site is resplendent with carved colonnades and opulent marble, reminiscent of many Shi'a mosques in the region. There are mosaic domes with Qur'anic inscriptions. Nothing would suggest that this place has ever been other than a Muslim place of pilgrimage.Yet the pan-Arab publication *Al-Monitor* admits that Kifl has not always been Islamic. Before Islam, we are told, it was associated with the Babylonian sun god Shams. The newly-renovated shrine, under the control of the Shi'a Wakf (Endowment) is lined with photos of Shi'ite Imams and inscriptions indicating that the Fourth Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib had prayed and stayed there in the seventh century: 'The space's sacredness derives from this Islamic event and has superseded its importance as a historic Babylonian monument.'²Courtyard of the refurbished shrine of Ezekiel.Unbeknown to Umm Mariam, her fellow pilgrims and most readers of *Al-Monitor*, before it was re-invented as Mashhad al Shams, Kifl was the shrine of

Ezekiel, one of six Jewish prophets' shrines in Iraq. By one stroke of his pen, the Al-Monitor reporter had elided 2,700 years of Jewish history. Benjamin of Tudela visited the site in 1170, and described seeing a synagogue, a tebah (reading platform) and a room filled with books dating back to the First and Second Temples. Until their mass flight in 1951, the local Jews, and some from as far afield as Persia and India, converged on the tomb – especially between New Year and the Day of Atonement when the book of Ezekiel was read.³View of Ezekiel's shrine before Islamisation.Aerial view of Ezekiel's shrine at Kifl today.The renovated shrine of Ezekiel has been transformed into a classic Shi'a holy site.Ezekiel, whose name, Yehéziq'el, signifies 'strong as God' or 'whom God makes strong', was the son of Buzi. He was one of the priests who, in the year 598 BCE, was deported, together with King Jehoiachin, as a prisoner from Jerusalem. He seems to have spent the rest of his life in Babylon. Ezekiel foretold the complete destruction of the Kingdom of Judah. After his prophecies were fulfilled, he was commanded to announce that the people would return from exile to their ancestral land, and the coming of the Messiah.So important was Ezekiel the prophet to the Jews of Iraq that Yehéziq'el was traditionally the most popular name for Jewish boys. For Muslims in Iraq, Heskell became a generic name for 'Jew'.Ezekiel's tomb became a favourite place of pilgrimage with Muslims, being on the route of the Hajj to Mecca. It is thought to have become a Jewish centre after the Muslim conquest and the cult of the Shi'ite saints in Islam took hold. Before the latest renovation by the Shi'a Wakf, Muslims referred to Ezekiel's shrine as the tomb of Dhu al-Kifl, a minor character in the Qur'an. He has now been demoted in importance as the Wakf inflates the connection of the site with Imam Ali, to reinforce the legitimacy of Shi'a Islam.Some 5,000 Jewish pilgrims used to visit the prophet's tomb at Shavu'oth (Pentecost). They would stay in accommodation adjoining the shrine. Thousands of Jews lived and owned land in the town of Hillah. On a visit to the tomb in 1910,⁴ David Solomon Sassoon, grandson of the great entrepreneur and philanthropist David Sassoon, kept a diary in Hebrew. 'Hillah is a very small town surrounded by a wall built not in very good fashion from bricks taken from the ruins of ancient Babylon', he wrote. 'The colour of the water is so bad that one is frightened to drink. To the north and south, the city is surrounded by date palms.'⁵David Sassoon Junior found the Jews of Hillah oppressed by the local sheikhs. They had rigorously applied the strictures of dhimmitude (including the Shi'a idea that a Jew was 'unclean' or najas) until a few years before. He wrote in his diary:The lovely building over the grave is extremely old, built from very big stones said to be the work of King Jehoiachin. Above the doorway was a plaque dated 1809/10, which has inscribed on it – 'this is the tomb of our master Yehezkel the prophet, the son of Buzi the Kohen, may his merit shield us and all Israel. Amen.'⁶The room with the grave is very high and has flowers painted on the walls and the names of important visitors to the grave. It is mentioned that my grandfather David Sassoon repaired the building in 1859. The grave is very large: 12 feet 9 inches long, 5 feet 3 inches wide and 5 feet 1 inch high. It is covered with a decorated parochet (curtain) which was sent by David Sassoon from Bombay. It is also written on the walls of the visit of Menahem Saleh Daniel to the grave in 1897/8; and his donation to redecorate the grave. Nearby, another room has five tombs of Geonim (Sages).⁷We do not know the post-makeover fate of the tombs of the Geonim, nor do we know if the floral decoration and Hebrew inscriptions will survive. A green covering embroidered with Arabic script, denoting the tomb of Dhu al-Kifl, has replaced the parochet. In any event, David Sassoon would hardly recognise the shrine today.The tomb of Ezekiel, with its Hebrew inscriptions still visible on the walls, is draped in green to signify its importance to Muslims.Today, no Jews remain in Kifl, and only five reside in the whole of Iraq⁸. In the space of one generation, the Jewish community has become extinct. History has been rewritten to

wipe out the Jewish presence from Iraq's past altogether. An Uprooting without Precedent

In 1945, 856,000 Jews lived in the Middle East and North Africa.⁹ Only about 4,500 remain – almost all of them in Morocco and Tunisia. The numbers of Jews in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Bahrain and Iraq may be counted on the fingers of one or two hands. In Libya and Algeria there are none at all.¹⁰ More than 99 per cent of Jews who once lived in the Arab countries have left them.¹¹ According to the historian Nathan Weinstock: 'there is no precedent for so dramatic an elimination of Jewish communities around the world, even when compared with the flight of the Jews from Tsarist Russia, Germany in the Thirties or massive immigration from Eastern Europe after World War II.'¹² People in the West tend to apply a common misconception to all Jews, borrowing the European Christian notion that Jews have been guests, wandering from land to land throughout history, with no country to call their own. It is a misunderstanding: not only have Jews always lived in the patch of land in the Mediterranean which the Romans named Palestine, they have had an unbroken presence in the Middle East and North Africa for over 2,000 years, predating Islam and the Arab conquest by at least a millennium.¹³ Until their expulsion fifty years ago, Jews had been settled in Iraq since the Babylonians had exiled Jews from Jerusalem and Judea to the land of the two rivers in 586 BCE. In the early twentieth century, Baghdad was amongst the most Jewish cities in the world. Comprising up to 40 per cent of the city's population, Jews constituted the largest single ethnic group: even the market shut down on the Sabbath.¹⁴ There were five exiles from the land of Israel to Mesopotamia, and the Babylonian exile led to the foundation of the world's oldest diaspora. Jews were taken from Jerusalem to captivity in Babylon in 586 BCE. They wept on the banks of the Tigris 'when they remembered Zion'.¹⁵ A sizeable minority chose to remain there after the Persian King Cyrus defeated the Babylonians and declared that the Jews were free to return to Jerusalem to rebuild their Temple. The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa belonged to an indigenous patchwork of ethnicities, languages and communities. In pre-Islamic times, the Jewish kingdom of Himyar existed in Yemen, where Christians and Jews were powerful and influential. In Egypt, at the time of the Pharaohs, there was a wealthy and well-established Jewish garrison on the island of Elephantine. History recounts that the High Priest Omias fled to Egypt and constructed a Temple identical in every way to the one in Jerusalem. The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus records that a million Jews lived in Egypt 2,000 years ago, before they were decimated by the Romans. Over the centuries, large numbers of non-Muslims adopted Islam: Berbers in North Africa, Copts in Egypt, Byzantine Orthodox in Syria, Zoroastrians in Persia and Hindus in India. It is said that, until the fifteenth century Spanish Inquisition, 90 per cent of Jewry lived under Muslim rule.¹⁶ Following the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Spain, large numbers of Sephardi Jews went east and south as well as west and north, and reinforced the existing Jewish communities around the Mediterranean basin, bringing with them their own distinctive traditions, intellectual vitality and medieval Spanish dialects. Islam married religious universalism with political imperialism. From the seventh century, Muslim conquerors burst forth from the Arabian Peninsula and set about imposing a new order on the Christians, Jews and pagans of the Middle East and North Africa. The Arab conquest subjugated indigenous peoples, colonised their lands and expropriated their wealth. Under the Pact of Omar, modelled on Byzantine Christian rules, Jews, Christians and Mandaean became dhimmis.¹⁷ This term, meaning 'protected ones', originates from the Qur'an, but was later refined and developed to have a precise meaning in Islamic jurisprudence. To be a dhimmi was not a privilege; in effect, non-Muslim monotheists subcontracted their right to self-defence to the Muslim authorities by paying a 'protection' tax. It begs the question: protection from whom? The dhimma system, the historian Darío Fernández-

Morera asserts, was a gangster-like protection racket profitable to the Muslim rulers.¹⁸ The non-Muslim had to be continuously reminded that he was the defeated party in jihad – to give just a few examples, he had to wear special clothing and badges (the yellow patch, later to be obligatory in the sixteenth century Venice ghetto and the ancestor of the Nazi yellow star, was mandated by the Caliph al-Mutawakkil),¹⁹ and step aside for Muslims on the street. In addition, he could not build synagogues or homes higher than the Muslim, nor testify against him in court, nor marry a Muslim woman, nor ride a horse, nor make a show of himself. Conditions for Jews under Byzantine and Visigoth rule, however, were often worse, and Jews sided with their Muslim conquerors. Arabs were also pragmatists, and especially in the early centuries of the Arab conquest, were outnumbered by the peoples they had conquered. They were far less interested in the mass conversion of vanquished peoples than securing their tribute.²⁰ The ninth century was a time of tolerance because the Arab rulers represented a minority. In the Middle Ages, Barbarians and non-Arabs took military control of Muslim lands, spreading mayhem; but non-Muslims remained legal and social inferiors. Abbasid Baghdad became a centre of science, philosophy and culture. It ushered in a dazzling period of Muslim-Jewish cross-fertilisation and fruition. The Arabs revived the position of Exilarch, the honorific title given to the leader of the Babylonian-Jewish community. Exilarchs continued to be appointed until the eleventh century and were treated with great pomp and circumstance. The Arab conquerors allowed their subjugated peoples freedom to practise their skills and talents under their rule. They exploited their skills and labour. Muslim rulers welcomed Jews into their domains, not because they loved them, but because they needed them to do the jobs they would not, or could not, do. Very soon Jews and other minorities left agriculture to escape poll and land taxes. They became the economic backbone of society: craftsmen, artisans, traders and middlemen. (The great international trade represented by polyglot Jewish merchants such as the Radhanites, predates Islam and even the Babylonian exile, going back to the silk trade at the time of King Solomon.)²¹ Jews were 'despised but indispensable'.²² As the Moroccan proverb states: 'A market without Jews is like bread without salt.'²³ Institutionalised inequality put non-Muslims at an economic disadvantage and placed them under pressure to convert in order to avoid paying the dreaded Jizya and other taxes. Only through conversion could they become fully socially accepted. It was always a one-way street: apostasy from Islam was punishable by death. Muslim men could take non-Muslim wives and convert them to Islam. The reverse did not apply. On this uneven playing field, pagan, Christian and Jewish majorities became minorities. In North Africa, Christianity was wiped out altogether. It could be argued that it is a tribute to Muslim 'tolerance' in the Middle East that a kaleidoscope of ancient religions and non-Muslim communities survived for so long. On the other hand, they survived in much reduced numbers. There were times when Jews flourished: the rules of dhimmitude were more honoured in the breach than the observance. Jews and Christians became physicians in violation of a Muslim prohibition.²⁴ Although the Jews were allowed no political power, they were appointed to government posts because there were no suitable Muslim candidates.²⁵ Jews were employed because of their extreme vulnerability and dependability for the same reason that Muslim rulers depended on Turkish guards, black slaves and eunuchs.²⁶ Jews were prohibited from carrying arms, putting their safety entirely in the hands of the dominant Muslims. There were, however, exceptions: Jews in Muslim Spain were often armed. Jews in the (Berber) Rif and Atlas mountains (Morocco) could be armed, ride horses and be exempt from jizya, alongside other Jews who were serfs of their Muslim masters.²⁷ The Jews of Daghestan were respected by their Muslim neighbours as fierce warriors. They even carried weapons when sleeping.²⁸ In the twentieth century, the Hashemite King Abdullah of Jordan

trusted only Circassian bodyguards or guards from the Jewish Habbani warrior tribe of southern Yemen.²⁹ An enlightened ruler who treated his Jewish subjects well could be out of step with his deeply religious Muslim population. It was for the Jews' own protection that the Jews of Fez were locked up in their own ghetto in 1438.³⁰ (Naturally, their concentrated numbers also made them especially vulnerable to mob violence.) Nevertheless, Jews had few rights and occupied a place near the bottom of the social ladder. The Pentagon adviser and Islamic specialist Harold Rhode has an arresting metaphor to describe the treatment of Jewish dhimmis by Islam by reference to the manure market in Isfahan in central Iran: There are different types of manure available for sale – actually different qualities – each used for different purposes. There are different grades/levels, but no matter how one defines it, it is manure. Which roughly corresponds to the way non-Muslims were treated in the Muslim world – a higher level than in the Christian world, but in the end, they were treated as inferiors or worse.³¹ On top of the usual dhimmi disabilities, Shi'a Islam added an obsession with ritual purity. Jews were najas or impure. When conditions were good, both rulers and ruled benefited. The regime's legitimacy was bolstered by its commitment to protecting its minorities. When things were bad, they could be terrible. Life for vulnerable minorities was always precarious if not dangerous, especially in times of trouble or turmoil. Although expulsions were rare, pogroms erupted when an interregnum power vacuum arose, at times of drought or starvation, or when the regime was weak, insecure, economically shaky or driven to impose heavy taxes to pay for its wars. In Yemen, Kurdistan and the Berber lands, Jews were considered 'tribal protégés': the system imposed on tribesmen, as a matter of honour, the protection of the 'weak'. A feudal relationship governed nineteenth century relations between Jewish serfs and Muslim lords in the lawless bilad al-siba of Berber Morocco.³² Often Jews were little more than unpaid labourers or slaves to the tribal chieftains;³³ in Tripolitania they were serfs, passed on to a master's heirs following his death.³⁴ Some chiefs sold Jews or gave them away as gifts. The existence of Kurds with Jewish grandmothers seems to testify to great numbers of Jewish girls sold or abducted.³⁵

Shapers of Judaism

The Jews are a unique people, one of the few to have preserved their identity and language since ancient times. Although there have always been Jews in Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed and Tiberias in Palestine, their mass return in the twentieth century from 120 countries to their ancestral homeland has no precedent. In spite of being scattered to the four corners of the globe, diaspora Jewish communities maintained continuity and links with each other and with the small numbers in Eretz Yisrael. History shows that when Jews in one corner of the world are oppressed, Jews in the opposite corner hasten to show solidarity. Jews living under Muslim rule shaped Judaism as we know it. With few exceptions, Jewish communities both East and West formally accepted the Babylonian Talmud as binding, written in the pre-Islamic academies of present-day Iraq; indeed, modern Jewish practice follows the Babylonian Talmud. For centuries, Babylon was the spiritual and religious hub of Judaism. When the tenth century ended, other centres sprang up: Jerusalem, Fostat, Córdoba. In North Africa, the city of Kairouan was an important centre for medieval Talmudic scholarship until fundamentalists turned it into a Holy City of Islam, from which Jews were banned. Except when 300 Ashkenazi rabbis arrived in 1210–11 from France and England – to settle the city of Acre in order to help reconstruct Jewish life after the ravages caused by the Crusaders, oriental and Sephardi Jews were the mainstay of the Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael. The communities of Tiberias and Safed, which experienced a sixteenth century revival under the Ottomans, remained under the Sephardi rabbinical authorities and followed Sephardi halacha (Jewish practice).³⁶ Sephardi thinkers pioneered 'Zionist' thought even before this movement appeared in eastern and western Europe, namely, Joseph Levy of Adrianople,

Turkey; Rabbi Yehuda Bibas of Gibraltar; Marko Baruch of Sofia and Rabbi Yehuda Alcalay of Sarajevo.³⁷ Eastern Jews belong to ancient communities predating the Arab conquest by a millennium or more. Nevertheless, Israel's opponents, often abetted by the Western media, are wont to deny the 'rootedness' that Jews feel after at least 2,000 years in the Middle East and North Africa. These Jews were Middle Eastern and North African long before they, along with other indigenous peoples, were 'arabised' in terms of language and culture. Yet it is the Arabs who claim to be indigenous – in Palestine 'since time immemorial'. So widespread is this misconception that, when reporting the terrorist attack on the ancient synagogue in Djerba, Tunisia, in 2002, the French media spoke of the Jewish 'settlement' of Djerba, although the Jews preceded the Arabs on the island by 1,000 years.³⁸ Jews underwent a gradual process of linguistic assimilation and cultural synthesis representing what the great historian Bernard Lewis has termed the Judeo-Islamic tradition. The much-vaunted Golden Age of cultural flowering in Jewish philosophy and poetry in medieval Spain was a succession of mini-Golden Ages. Hasdai ibn Shaprut, Solomon Ibn Gabirol, Judah Halevi, Samuel Hanagid, as well as the great Maimonides, contributed to a period of intellectual interplay and spiritual collaboration. From such fertile soil sprang Jewish geographers, cartographers and mathematicians.³⁹ The medieval philosopher and rabbi Moses Maimonides became private physician to the Viceroy of Ayyubid Egypt. His prominence was less a sign that Jews could attain the very highest office under Muslim rule – it demonstrated that the community as a whole was hostage to the good behaviour of these individual Jews: Jews could be trusted not to poison or betray their masters, otherwise they risked unleashing a massacre of their co-religionists. During the centuries when both Muslim and Christian states existed in the Iberian peninsula, there were times and places, as in Maimonides' own birthplace, when it was the Muslims who persecuted the Jews and the Christians who offered refuge.⁴⁰ The thirteenth century Mongols waived the dhimmi rules, but proceeded to massacre tens of thousands, if not millions. It is not clear how Jews survived these dark times. Arabic replaced local languages and place names. It became the lingua franca. However, 30 million non-Arab Kurds have clung on to their language, culture and identity. Amazighen (Berbers) seek to revive their tongue and identity in Algeria and Morocco. Arabic never replaced Farsi and Turkish in the mountainous regions of Persia and Turkey. Until recently, Jews from the relatively isolated Kurdish mountains might have spoken Aramaic.⁴¹ The rugged Berber hinterland helped preserve the Tamazight language. Even where Arabic was their native tongue, it was not the only language Jews knew. Hebrew was the language of prayer. Until the end of Ottoman rule, the Alliance Israélite Universelle school system taught Turkish as well as European languages and Arabic. Even before Arabic became dominant, Jews in Arab countries spoke Qiltu, an Arabic predating the Mongol invasion and unadulterated by the Gilit dialect spoken by the waves of Bedouin immigrants who poured into the cities from the desert. So autonomous were the communities that each developed a distinct dialect and accent. The Judeo-Arabic dialect became replete with Hebrew, Persian and Turkish words (and in modern times, even French, English and other European languages) and was written in Hebrew characters. A small number of Jews could rise to become advisers to the ruling sultans and, in turn, enjoyed their protection. In later centuries, thanks to their trading contacts and mastery of foreign languages, Jews of Sephardi origin became ideal intermediaries with the European powers. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire pitted the tyranny of the Muslim majority against minorities, who hitherto had gained a degree of protection from the self-contained Ottoman millet system. Anti-Zionists reproach Zionism for creating a dichotomy between 'Jews' and 'Arabs': in the Ottoman Empire, people defined themselves as Ottoman subjects belonging to a faith community – as Jews, Muslims and Christians. Until the rise of

nationalism, however, each community governed itself. The Jewish community had its own Haham Bashi (chief rabbi) and Beth Din courts. Jews married among themselves and voluntary conversions to Islam were rare. Communities were segregated but Jews and Muslims mixed in the world of work. In North Africa and Persia, Jews lived in their own ghettos. Nonetheless, the Jews had a sense of belonging to a distinct tribal-ethnic group (often politely known as 'Israelite' in the colonial era) with its own values, culture, dialect, accent, customs and festivals.

A Plurality without Pluralism

The twentieth century Syrian ultra-nationalist Sati al-Husri once said, 'Every person who speaks Arabic is an Arab!' His dictum became an article of faith for Arab nationalists.⁴² His disciple Michel Aflaq (1910–89), founder of the Ba'ath Party, advocated violence and cruelty against those Arabic speakers who refused to conform to his prescribed, all-encompassing, Arab identity.

The twentieth century experiment by pan-Arabists to forge a single nation, based on a common language, from a delicate ecosystem of different ethnic groups and religions, coexisting in multi-ethnic empires, has been a catastrophe. The Middle East and North Africa are a plurality without pluralism. Although non-Muslims were in the forefront of its construction, a further factor caused non-Muslims to be excluded from the Arab national project. Islam is inextricable from Arab nationalism. It is the bedrock of Arab identity. Islam is a source of Arab constitutional law in all modern Arab states today, hence the difficulty that Christians, and even Jews who declared themselves patriots, have had in being accepted. Leading Christian Arab nationalists, like Michel Aflaq, have ended up converting to Islam.

Pan-Arabism died out with the failure of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser to forge a United Arab Republic and the Arab defeat by Israel in 1967. The Western-educated 'secular' elite, with its colonial connections, had already been driven from power. The rise of political Islam has supplanted nationalism with a purely religious identity, propagating the idea that borders will collapse as the Islamist utopia takes shape according to the slogan: 'One God, One Caliph, One Umma (nation).'⁴³ However, even at its most tolerant, Islam believes it is the ultimate revealed religion: non-Muslims suffer a constant reminder that humiliation is the price they must pay for not following the true path. On the other hand, Islam is Judaism's younger brother and the two faiths share a kindred approach to prayer, charity, permitted foods, ritual slaughter, burial (with none of Christianity's theological hostility to Jews as Christ killers). Judaism and Islam have many affinities, and overlap linguistically and culturally. The Geniza store of ancient documents found in a Cairo synagogue attic testifies to the vast amount of fruitful interaction between Jews and Muslims in medieval times.⁴⁴ One scholar writes: 'Jews and Muslims had lived in proximity for so long that they shared a religious ambience even when members of one group knew relatively little about the precise behaviour and beliefs of the other'.⁴⁵ As a mark of respect for Judaism, Muslim notables in Tunisia and Algeria would attend the synagogue service on the Jewish festival of Shavu'oth in order to hear Sa'adia Gaon's commentary on the Ten Commandments in Arabic.⁴⁶ And, as examples of cultural symbiosis, hardly a Jewish shrine or holy place exists that is not also considered sacred to Muslims. Thirty-one saints' tombs in North Africa are revered by both Jews and Muslims.

However, the conviction that Islam is the ultimate revelation impels it to become supercessionist and thereby 'colonise' Jewish religious sites, appropriate them as Muslim sites, and even deny, at times in collusion with bodies such as UNESCO,⁴⁷ that the Jews have ever had any connection with them. The Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron (now the Ibrahimi mosque), the Tomb of Rachel (renamed Bilal ibn-Rabah) and Temple Mount (known to Muslims as the Haram al-Sharif) in Jerusalem are the obvious examples. This same appropriation applies to Christian, Zoroastrian and Hindu sites.

The Jewish History of Iraq – the Biblical Mesopotamia – is almost as rich in Jewish history and landmarks as the Land of

Israel. Here Abraham first discovered the one God, and the Biblical prophets Ezra, Nehemiah, Nahum, Jonah and Ezekiel walked the dusty land of the two rivers. In neighbouring Iran, Jewish shrines include the tombs of Habakkuk, Daniel, Esther and Mordechai. The shrine most closely associated with the Jews of Iraq was the tomb of Ezekiel at Kifl, some two hours' drive south of Baghdad. I have described it earlier in this chapter but let us return, for a moment, to its story. On the face of it, Ezekiel's shrine constitutes a 'shared Jewish-Muslim heritage'.⁴⁸ Throughout its history, however, the shrine conceals a bitter struggle for control. The synagogue at Ezekiel's tomb became significant as a symbol of national identification under the Abbasids, when the Jews of the lands of Islam united under the leadership of the Jews of Babylonia. The growing importance of the site aroused Muslim envy. Some Muslim writers attributed the burial place of the prophet Ezekiel to their 'mysterious and controversial' Qur'anic prophet Dhu-al-Kifl. Under the fourteenth century Mongol sultan Oljeitu the Muslims took over the synagogue of the prophet Ezekiel and turned it into a Muslim prayer house. Oljeitu also began to build a mosque, later ruined by flooding, but its minaret exists to this day.⁴⁹ For five centuries, not much was heard about the synagogue at Ezekiel's tomb, but it is assumed that control of it and the access yards to the tomb itself were in Muslim hands. Around 1778, when the mosque was destroyed by floodwater, the local Muslims tried to turn the outer yard into a mosque. Until the 1820s the Jews were banned from passing through the yard – now converted into a mosque – to the tomb. In the 1840s, the Jews managed to regain control of the synagogue next to Ezekiel's tomb.⁵⁰ At the time, the Turkish authorities needed the Jews to pay for repairs to the outer yard. In spite of protests by the Shi'ite Muslims who controlled the tomb precincts, the Jews seized the opportunity to remove the Muslim symbols and ritual items from the outer yard and turn it into a synagogue again. The Turks (allegedly plied with generous Jewish bribes) expelled the Shi'ite caretakers and allowed the Jews to erect new buildings. To reinforce their hold on the site, the Jews set up a yeshiva staffed by scholars from Baghdad and their families. Jewish traders and craftsmen from Hillah, Baghdad and elsewhere went to settle in Kifl. In the 1850s, the Turks expelled the last of the Shi'ite caretakers. The Jewish official now in charge was elevated to the same status as the keepers of the Shi'ite shrines. Jewish control was complete. The Muslims made two more attempts to wrest control of Ezekiel's yards – in 1860 and in the 1930s when they took over the synagogue for prayers. After a few months, the occupation of the synagogue ended. Until their mass departure for Israel in 1951, the Jews of Kifl continued to maintain the yards of the prophet Ezekiel's tomb. With no Jews left in the area to preserve the shrine, the site has been converted into a mosque on the orders of the Shi'a Wakf. Qur'anic inscriptions now adorn it. The unique Hebrew inscriptions are in jeopardy. After 2010 the Iraqi ministry of Heritage and Tourism lost its battle with the Shi'a Wakf to restore the original character of the shrine and its adjoining town of Kifl as a Jewish tourist destination.⁵¹ However, the emergence in Iraq and Syria of the jihadists of Islamic State (Da'esh) presented a still greater threat: this group would destroy all religious heritage – including Shi'a Muslim shrines and mosques – as symbols of idol worship. Their aim was to wipe out the cultural identity of all those who did not accept the new caliphate which they intended to establish on the ruins of nation states. Da'esh blew up parts of the ancient Assyrian site of Nimrud, the Roman heritage site at Palmyra and the shrines of Jonah and Seth. The Erasure of Jewish Heritage History suggests that 'ethnic cleansers' never stop at eradicating the physical presence of a group: they are not satisfied until every last vestige of that group's religious heritage is wiped out – so much so that people will say that Jews never lived in, much less made their mark, on the Arab Middle East and North Africa. In Tunisia there are six synagogues worth preserving, three rabbis' mausoleums, three cemeteries, and of course, the

fifth century mosaic floor at Kelibia, attesting to the 2,000-year-old Jewish presence. In Syria, the fate of the twenty-four Damascus synagogues recorded as standing in 1990 is unknown, although the spectacular murals of the ancient synagogue of Dura-Europos are preserved in the national museum.⁵² The Jobar synagogue, the site of the shrine of the Prophet Elijah, was largely destroyed by bombing during the civil war. The Franji synagogue is the only one still in use. The Aleppo Great synagogue was looted and burnt in the 1947 riots, and it is not known if the building survives in 2016. The Ezra synagogue at Tedef, once a place of pilgrimage, is in ruins.⁵³ Mural of Samuel crowning David at Dura Europos, one of Syria's earliest synagogues. (Lucien Gubbay) The Franji Synagogue, Damascus (Lucien Gubbay) Of sixty synagogues in Egypt, sixteen are still standing (the Rambam synagogue has been renovated), four of which are in good order – the rest are crumbling to dust or have been converted to other uses. Sewage flows through the Bassatine cemetery in Cairo (whose marble headstones have been pillaged); three cemeteries in Alexandria also suffer from neglect. Of fifty synagogues in Baghdad only one working synagogue, Meir Tweg, remains. It is almost permanently shut. In Libya, very few of the seventy-four synagogues are still recognisable, while a highway runs through the main Tripoli cemetery.⁵⁴ Service at the Eliyahu Hanavi (Nebi Daniel) Synagogue, in the heyday of the Alexandria community (Nebi Daniel Association) The only bright spot in this bleak picture has been in Morocco, where the government has invested heavily in restoring Jewish quarters, synagogues and 167 cemeteries. Cynics would say that memorialising the Jews is in Morocco's own interest, since these sites attract tourism. Unfortunately, the synagogues will not be more than empty buildings as barely 1 per cent of Morocco's post-War Jewish population remains. Morocco has restored 167 Jewish cemeteries. Tomb of Rabbi Moshe Meir Hai Eliyakim, Bab Marrakesh, Casablanca. The expulsion of the Jews proved to be a portent of other calamities to come: more than half of the Christians of the Middle East have been forced to flee.⁵⁵ The Muslim world has unravelled into its tribal components. Islam, in turn, is riven with sectarian conflicts. The Kurds have turned their back on Iraq in an attempt to assert their independence by setting up their own state. A Mutilated Identity The Arab world losing its Jewish and other minorities is like a person with an amputated limb who still feels its ghostly presence. Soon after seeing the film *Silent Exodus*, the Egyptian-born Italian journalist and Euro-MP Magdi Cristiano Allam reflected on the Arab world's truncated identity: In a flash of insight I could see that the tragedy of the Jews and the catastrophe of the Arabs are two facets of the same coin. By expelling the Jews who were settled on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean centuries before they were Arabised and Islamised, the Arabs have in fact begun the lethal process of mutilating their own identity and despoiling their own history. By losing their Jews the Arabs have lost their roots and have ended up by losing themselves. As has often happened in history, the Jews were the first victims of hatred and intolerance. All the 'others' had their turn soon enough, specifically the Christians and those who do not fit exactly into the ideological framework of the extreme nationalists and Islamists. There has not been a single instance in this murky period of our history when the Arab states have been ready to condemn the steady exodus of Christians, ethnic-religious minorities, enlightened and ordinary Muslims, while Muslims plain and simple have become the primary victims of Islamic terror.⁵⁶ Since the 2011 Arab Spring, Arabs have been lamenting their loss of the Jews and the enormous cost to their countries. More than twenty novels have been published which feature Jewish characters.⁵⁷ Arab intellectuals, especially in Iraq and Egypt, are beginning to recognise the wrongs done to their Jewish minorities. Film directors are making nostalgic forays into the pluralistic past. In 2015, protesters in Baghdad held placards commending Iraq's first finance minister, the Jew Sir Sasson Heskell, for his loyalty and

accomplishments in the 1920s: he conceived of tying Iraq's oil revenues to the Gold Standard.⁵⁸ The finance ministers since 2003, on the other hand, have been rated 'zero' for achievement. Sir Sasson Heskell, Iraq's Jewish finance minister, in state uniform. In 2015 Baghdad demonstrators held placards giving full marks to Sir Sasson Heskell, Iraq's 1920s Jewish finance minister, while those since 2003 rated zero for achievement. With its Jews driven to extinction, Islam's colonisation of the Middle East and North Africa, beginning with Muhammad's conquest, is almost complete – but it has been achieved at the cost of cultural richness and diversity. Something miraculous has come out of this tragedy: the Jews have flourished in the tiny corner of the region on the Mediterranean coast to which they have been driven, where they have proclaimed their sovereignty. But that sovereignty has been continuously challenged and is dangerously fragile. Hebrew inscription at the crumbling tomb of the Prophet Nahum, Al-Kosh, northern Iraq (Edwin Shuker) Twenty years after he published the first novel of his Alexandria Quartet in 1957, Lawrence Durrell returned to find Alexandria 'listless', and 'depressing beyond endurance'.⁵⁹ Had he returned in the early twenty-first century, Durrell would have found Alexandria even more dull and monochromatic. He would no longer recognise the city, devoid of its Greeks, Armenians and assorted Europeans, and with its few Jews, where once religions and cultures flourished to create a rich and lively mix. As the columnist Mark Steyn once put it, 'Islam is king on a field of corpses'.⁶⁰ Scribes at the shrine of Ezekiel, 1930s. The Hebrew inscriptions of the shrine of Joshua the High Priest in Baghdad have now been painted over (Scribe Journal) Notes 1. Adnan Abu Zeed, 'Babylonian temple now Islamic healing shrine', Al-Monitor, 18 January 2016, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017). 2. Ibid. 3. See Zvi Yehuda, 'The synagogue at the Tomb of the Prophet Ezekiel' in Zvi Yehuda (ed.) Tombs of Saints and Synagogues in Babylonia (Or Yehuda: The Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center, 2006), pp. 33–46. 4. The Scribe, Issue 75, Autumn 2002. 5. Ibid. 6. Ibid. 7. Ibid. 8. James Glanz and Irit Pazner Garshowitz, 'In Israel, Iraqi Jews reflect on Baghdad Heritage', New York Times, 27 April 2015. 9. Maurice Roumani, The Jews from Arab Countries: A Neglected Issue (Tel Aviv: World Organisation of Jews from Arab Countries (WOJAC), 1983) and WOJAC'S Voice, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1978. 10. Ibid. 11. Ibid. 12. Nathan Weinstock, Une si Longue Présence: Comment le Monde arabe a perdu ses juifs 1947–1967 (Paris: Plon, 2008), p. 10. 13. Legend has it that Jews arrived in Yemen at the time of King Solomon in 900 BCE. Biblical-era Israelites travelling with Phoenician traders established Jewish communities in the Maghreb. The Jews of modern-day Iraq and Iran trace their ancestry back to the destruction of the first Biblical Temple. In 2014, researchers found inscriptions in Saudi Arabia testifying to the region's pre-Islamic Jewish and Christian roots in 470 CE. See Ariel David, 'Before Islam: When Saudi Arabia was a Jewish kingdom', Haaretz, 15 March 2016. 14. Daniel Khazzoom, The Journey of a Jew from Baghdad, Part One (2010). 15. Book of Psalms, 137:1. 16. Sarina Roffé, 'A History of Italian Jewry', JewishGen Sephardic Genealogy Website, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017). 17. 'Pact of Umar', available on Fordham University website, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017). 18. Darío Fernández-Morera, The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise (Wilmington, DE: ISI, 2016), p. 21. 19. Georges Bensoussan, Juifs en pays arabes: le grand déracinement 1850–1975 (Paris: Tallandier, 2012), p. 236. 20. Efraim Karsh, Islamic Imperialism (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 21. 21. S. D. Goiten, Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts Through the Ages (New York: Schocken, 1974), p. 107. 22. Paul Fenton lecture at The Jews of Morocco conference, UCL, 20–22 June 2011, reported in Point of No Return, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017). 23. Aomar Boum quoted in 'Remembrance of things past: Moroccans talk about the Jews who once lived among them', Vox Tablet, 16 March 2013. 24. See Goiten, Jews and Arabs, p. 70. 25. Ibid., p. 69. 26. Norman A.

Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book*, Vol.1 (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), p.179.27. See Weinstock, *Une si longue présence*, p. 125.28. Martin Gilbert, In *Ishmael's House* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), p.124.29. 'Habbani Jews', Wikipedia, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).30. See Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, Vol.1, p. 79.31. Harold Rhode, 'Minorities in the Muslim World', Fall 2015, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).32. Michel Abitbol, *Le passé d'une discorde: Juifs et Arabes depuis le VIIe siècle* (Paris: Perrin, 2003), p. 206.33. See Gilbert, In *Ishmael's House*, p.119.34. Bat Ye'or, 'The Dhimmi factor in the Exodus of Jews from Arab Countries' in Malka Hillel Shulewitz (ed.), *The Forgotten Millions* (London: Continuum, 2000), p. 41.35. Judit Neurink, 'Iraq under my skin', blog, 29 October 2015, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).36. 'De-legitimizing Israel: an outsider perspective', Fernando blog, 1 January 2011, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).37. Ibid.38. Alexandre del Valle, 'Preface' in Moïse Rahmani, *L' exode oublié: Juifs des pays arabes* (Paris: Raphaël, 2003), p. 17.39. David de Sola Pool, *Old Faith in the New World: Portrait of Shearith Israel 1654–1954* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), pp.487–8.40. Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), p.106.41. See Ariel Sabar, *My Father's Paradise* (Algonquin, 2009) for an account of the life of his father, one of the last Aramaic-speaking Kurdish Jews.42. Franck Salameh, 'Does anyone speak Arabic?' *Middle East Quarterly*, Fall 2011, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).43. A slogan quoted by Islamic fundamentalists. See for example Hizb ut Tahrir video, (Last accessed 26 April 2017).44. Malka Hillel Shulewitz, 'Introduction' in *The Forgotten Millions*.45. Harvey E. Goldberg, *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries: History and Culture in the Modern Era* (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 20.46. Harvey E. Goldberg, 'Ritual Mutuality in North Africa: Jews and Muslims listen to the Ten Commandments in Synagogue', lecture, 15 September 2014, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).47. Samuel Osborne, 'Temple Mount: Jerusalem's most holy site has nothing to do with Judaism, UNESCO rules', *The Independent*, 14 October 2016, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).48. Peter Ford, 'In Iraq, Reverence for Ancient Tomb of a Jewish Prophet', *Christian Science Monitor*, 2 June 2003, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).49. See Yehuda, *Tombs of Saints and Synagogues in Babylonia*, p. 34.50. Ibid., p.36.51. Steven Lee Myers, 'Crossroads of antiquity can't decide on a new path', *New York Times*, 19 October 2010, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).52. 'National Museum, Damascus', Wikipedia, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).53. Robert Lyons, 'Silent Sacred Spaces: selected photographs of Syrian Synagogues' (pdf), . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).54. Justice for Jews from Arab Countries (JJAC), Document presented to UNESCO, June 2014.55. Eliza Griswold, 'Is This the End of Christianity in the Middle East?', *New York Times*, 22 July 2015, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).56. 'Arabs without Jews: Roots of a Tragedy', *Point of No Return*, 24 July 2013, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).57. Marcia Lynx Qualey, 'True Histories: The Renaissance of Arab Jews in Arabic Novels', *The Guardian*, 29 October 2014, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).58. 'Sir Sasson Heskell tops loyalty list', *Point of No Return*, 17 August 2015, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).59. Mark Steyn, *National Review*, 25 February 2013, . (Last accessed 26 April 2017).60. Ibid.2

The Myth of Peaceful Coexistence
J'ai quitté mon pays, j'ai quitté ma maison
Ma vie, ma triste vie se traîne sans raison
J'ai quitté mon soleil, j'ai quitté ma mer bleue
Leurs souvenirs se réveillent, bien après mon adieu
Soleil, soleil de mon pays perdu****
I left my country, I left my home
My life drags on sadly as I am left to roam
I left my sun, I left blue sea and sky
Their memory awakens long after I said goodbye
Sun, sun of my lost country

Enrico Macias
1 On 13 February 2015, the city of Algiers witnessed a strange spectacle: the burial in the Jewish cemetery of St Eugene (Bologhine) of the famous French actor Roger Hanin, star of TV, film and stage.
2 Hanin, who died at the age of eighty-nine, was

laid in the ground not far from his father. He was the first Jew to be buried in the cemetery since the funeral of Freha Touboul in 2001. Unlike Freha Touboul's, Roger Hanin's funeral was a celebrity affair, with a guard of honour from the Algerian state, the French ambassador and the Algerian president and minister of culture attending his funeral. What makes a Jew want to be buried in a country he hasn't lived in for forty years? In a country where there are officially no Jews left of the original community of 130,000? In a cemetery whose tombstones have been vandalised and spray-painted with graffiti? Where his French-based family will not easily be able to visit? Hanin's decision to choose Algiers as his last resting place is the 'expression of his attachment to his native land; many Jews feel a similar attachment to Algeria and a deep sense of familial belonging', the president of CRIF (the representative body of French Jewry) Joel Mergui proclaimed at Hanin's funeral.³ The Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika paid homage to the actor, 'a symbol of the friendship between the Algerian and French peoples'.⁴ Hanin was not the only one to want his last resting place to be in the country of his birth. The singer Georges Moustaki also entertained a last wish to be buried in his native Alexandria,⁵ where five Jews remain, but the idea was abandoned. Hanin embodies the answer to the question 'Why?' in his very name: Hanin means 'nostalgia' in Arabic. Nostalgia is a recurrent theme amongst Jews born in Arab countries. How often have you heard Jews lament, with tears in their eyes, the gardens filled with orange blossom, the samak masgouf carp, charcoal-grilled on the banks of the river Tigris, the softly flowing waters of the Nile...? A group of Iraqi Jews, some ex-communists, think of themselves as exiles in Israel and have dedicated their life's work to writing about their country of birth. Authors Sami Michael and Sasson Somekh define themselves as 'Arab Jews'. One, the late Samir Naqqash, continued to write in Arabic. The younger generation, born in Israel, is also rediscovering its roots: over 40,000 have joined the Facebook page entitled: Preserving the Iraqi-Jewish Language. So powerful a sentiment is nostalgia that Jews who were not even born in Arab countries experience it. Author of *How to be a Heroine* Samantha Ellis, for example: For as long as I remember I've been homesick for a place I've never seen. My parents are Iraqi Jews. I was born in London, but my past was quite literally another country. At four, my party trick was to say, in imperfect Judeo-Arabic, 'You can put the curly tail of the dog inside a sugar cane tube for forty days and forty nights and when you take it out, it will still be curly'.⁶ Memory: A Mechanism for Forgetting It's a well-worn paradox: one day, a Jew from an Arab country swears that he lived happily alongside Arabs. He paints a picture of harmony and coexistence. Another day, he might say life was awful. So which is the truth? Eli Mayo remembers his Egyptian childhood in Port Said as 'wonderful', at least until 1948: My father owned a large shop and was one of the most respected men in the city. He was sometimes invited to events at the home of the governor of Egypt. My best friend was a Muslim named Jamal. Our families got along well. But when the War of Independence broke out, Jamal was the first to throw rocks at my house and shout, 'Death to the Jews'.⁷

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uprooted how 3000 years, how is the tree uprooted, how to save an uprooted plant, nail uprooted from dirt location, how to save a partially uprooted tree, how to deal with uprooted tree, how to fix a partially uprooted tree, uprooted how many syllables, how can i turn 3000 into 10000, tree uprooted how to fix, how to grow 3000 dollars, how to cut an uprooted tree, how to uproot a large bush, how to get blackhat badger to move, 3000 dalasi in pounds

When We Were Arabs: A Jewish Family's Forgotten History, The Massacre That Never Was: The Myth of Deir Yassin and the Creation of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, Israel: A Simple Guide to the Most Misunderstood Country on Earth, Sledgehammer: How Breaking with the Past Brought Peace to the Middle East, Gaza Conflict 2021, Uprooted, Red Sea Spies: The True Story of Mossad's Fake Diving Resort, People Love Dead Jews: Reports from a Haunted Present, The War of Return: How Western Indulgence of the Palestinian Dream Has Obstructed the Path to Peace, In Ishmael's House: A History of Jews in Muslim Lands, Jews Don't Count: A Times Book of the Year 2021, Industry of Lies: Media, Academia, and the Israeli-Arab Conflict, Spies of No Country: Israel's Secret Agents at the Birth of the Mossad, Israel's Moment: International Support for and Opposition to Establishing the Jewish State, 1945–1949, The Jewish World of Alexander Hamilton, The Jews Should Keep Quiet: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, and the Holocaust

What people say about this book

Sorek, "Lucid, well-researched, and a much-needed corrective. This was a well-referenced work, rich in detail and texture, which explores the tragic expulsion of over 800,000 Mizrahi Jews from Arab/Islamic countries from Morocco to Iran in the middle of the 20th century. The story of these refugees has often been ignored or suppressed or distorted for a number of reasons, which the author explores in detail. This work will be of particular interest to those confronted by the propaganda and mendacity of the far Left, the "anti-Zionist" progressives, and their ilk, provided robust and defensible ammunition against the opponents of Israel and the Jewish people. Highly recommended."

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Ebook Tops Reader, "Well written. Excellent, well-written, and a very detailed account of Jewish life in Iraq"

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Legal Vampire, "The story of Jewish refugees from Muslim lands changes the whole argument. Very good book about an often forgotten but important aspect of Middle East history. Anyone who cares about the Arab-Israeli conflict should read this. We hear a lot about the Palestinian Arabs displaced at the foundation of the modern state of Israel, but often forget the even larger number of Jewish refugees driven out of Arab countries and Iran around the same time. Most fled to Israel, some elsewhere. The authoress Lynn Julius's parents went from Iraq to Britain. Examples of points she makes in this book: -Jehan Sadat, widow of President Sadat of Egypt, giving a talk in New York, met a lady from the Castro family of Jews, once prominent in business in Egypt, who had to leave the country when Nasser's government began expelling Jews and seizing their businesses and properties. Madame Sadat told her 'but you must come back to visit Egypt' adding the customary Arab phrase 'Beti betak' meaning 'My house is your house', not realising the irony. Jehan Sadat's home in Cairo actually was the Castro family's old house, seized by Nasser's government and subsequently provided to Sadat's widow. -An Iraqi Jewish businessman, forced to abandon his home and business and flee as a penniless refugee to Israel, tried to start again there. However, being used to trading in a country where the answer to all government regulations was to bribe an official or to cultivate friends in high places who could get him exempted, he was totally thrown by the unaccustomed practice expected of businesses in Israel of actually obeying regulations. -When Algeria became independent from France in 1962 there were 160,000 Jews there, having a continuous history in the country going back 2,000 years, since before Islam existed. Yet when Algeria became independent its Jews were denied citizenship and all but 4,000 of them left at once. By 1971 there were less than 1,000, by 1992 less than 50. By the beginning of 2011 there was only 1 left. Later that year he died, so there were none. The story in most Middle East countries is similar. -Morocco, unusually for an Arab country, still has a significant, although much reduced, Jewish population, around 2,000 out of more than 100,000 living there in 1948. One Moroccan Jew explained 'The King protects us', but added more quietly 'and we all have our bags packed'. -In the first half of the 20th Century, Jews were prominent in founding film and other modern industries in many Arab countries, also (partly because stricter Muslims believe their religion forbids them from playing musical instruments) in popular music, as athletes, writers and even in early national independence movements. In Yemen, most of the ancient Jewish community fled from Anti-Jewish violence to Israel after that country was established. However, so that crafts that only they knew could carry on, many Jews were not allowed to leave until they had trained Arab replacements. [As I write, the slogan of the Iranian backed Houthi rebels in Yemen 'Curse the Jews' has caused fear among the around 50 Jews still left in that country, out of the tens of thousands who lived there within living memory]. -The Reverend JW Brooks 'History of the Hebrew Nation' published in 1841 gave a long list of examples of oppression of Jews in the Muslim World. E.g. in 1823 in Damascus 'all Jews suspected of having property were thrown in prison' and required to pay a large ransom or be beheaded. 'Throughout the East they are obliged to affect poverty in order to conceal their wealth, the rulers in those countries making no scruple of seizing what they can discover.' -Ms Julius writes 'Even under the French protectorate in Tunisia, every Jew could expect to be hit on the head by every passing Muslim, a ritual which even had a name, the chtaka'. There were Jewish communities all over the Middle East since before Islam and Arabic arrived in the 7th Century. Why after more than a thousand years did the co-existence end? Well, the situation of Jews under

centuries of Muslim rule was often miserable, a despised minority that it was customary to throw stones at, maltreat and humiliate with near impunity. Consequently, despite occasional massacres, their existence was usually tolerated as they seemed no threat to Muslims. This age old pattern was disrupted first by 19th and early 20th Century European Colonial powers, who, while not always free of anti-Semitism themselves, allowed Jews more equal rights. The Jews, who had always particularly valued literacy, were often quicker and more adaptable in taking advantage of the new commercial opportunities and fashions that Western technology and culture brought. Some successful Jewish families even employed Muslim maids, which shocked and offended other Muslims. When the despised Jews, in the form of Israel, had the presumption to defeat Muslim Arab armies in 1948, the old balance by which Jews were looked down on but tolerated as harmless was upset; Jews were now dangerous. Nazi anti-Jewish propaganda between 1933 and 1945 was eagerly received in the Arab World, while in Iran Hitler was acclaimed as the 12th Shia Imam. In subsequent years, all over the Middle East, Jews were either formally dispossessed and expelled or driven to flee violence and discrimination. On arrival as refugees in Israel, they often had a hard time at first, but in due course were absorbed into the Israeli economy and society. They and their descendants are not now festering in refugee camps as many Palestinian Arabs still are, due to the failure of Arab countries to offer them citizenship and integrate them, as Israel has done for Jewish refugees. The Arab countries prefer to keep the Palestinian grievance alive for political and religious reasons. They also prefer to keep their Palestinian 'brother' Muslims and Arabs impoverished, stateless refugees, rather than share with them citizenship, oil wealth or the homes and businesses taken from their own former Jewish minorities. Lynn Julius spends some time discussing why Israel failed to make more of the wrongs done to the Jews forced to flee Muslim lands in the 20th century and their need for Israel as a refuge, to balance complaints about the situation of dispossessed Palestinians. I think it changes the whole argument. As I often find myself saying, if Amazon star ratings allowed more flexibility I would give this book between 4 and 5 stars. As they do not, 5 stars is nearest. I have only given a sample of the many interesting and important points Ms Julius makes. You can read the book for the others."

grrodgers, "The forgotten given a voice. Gives a much needed account and history of the Jewish refugees from Arab countries many of whom suffered as a direct result of the UN endorsing the state of Israel in 1948. These victims and their loss of life and property are very rarely mentioned. It is almost as though they have been airbrushed out of history. Hopefully this book by Lyn Julie will do something to redress this appalling situation."

Elizabeth S, "Essential reading. For those whose knowledge of Jewish history is based on the European and Western viewpoint, this history gives a completely different perspective, and is one that needs to be told."

Anthony, "A terrific book. An important subject, fully researched and told with the controlled sense of outrage that the subject warrants. An excellent companion to Sir Martin Gilbert's similarly outstanding 'In Ishmael's House' (2010) and one which brings the story right up to date."

Ephy Chesler, "How to survive not being a refugee.. Excellent view of the cataclysm that befell Jewish history in the Moslem world, and how Jews coped with being refugees for only a relatively brief period, as distinct from the perpetual refugees adjoining Israel."

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