

Ari Alexander ~ The Jews Of Baghdad And Zionism: 1920-1948



The Old Jewish Quarter of Baghdad

Introduction

The Jewish community in Baghdad virtually disappeared with the mass exodus of 120,000 Iraqi Jews to Israel between 1949-1951. This Jewish community lived in Iraq for approximately 2,500 years and my thesis looks closely at the years between 1920- 1948 in order to gain as much insight as possible into the complex set of economic, political and religious factors that coalesce to form the lived experience of Baghdadi Jews during this period. It is my contention that during this time, an historic and thus far irreversible break in Arab-Jewish relations occurred, and that Baghdad is a crucial arena to observe this shift as it unfolds. This thesis is a study of the impact of anti-Zionism, anti-Semitism and anti-imperial 'Britishism' on the Baghdadi Jewish community.

Aside from the obvious hatred sown by the conflict between Palestinians and Jews in Palestine, the relationship between Muslim, Christian and Jewish Arabs more generally was destructively altered by the Zionist project. This thesis aims to contribute to a body of literature that illuminates what went wrong in relations between Arabs and Jews in the modern Middle East. It is framed by the contemporary question of whether or not Zionism alone accounts for the deep-seated hostility towards Jews that is currently so widespread in the Arab-Muslim world. This question is of relevance to Zionist historiography, which is notably narrow in its interest in the subject. And it is also of interest to the uninformed

public, which tends to hold an opinion—either that Arabs pathologically hate Jews or that Zionists are to blame for all of the troubles in the region.

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The complete thesis: <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~metheses/Alexander.pdf>

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree of Masters of Philosophy in
Modern Middle Eastern Studies

Faculty of Oriental Studies - University of Oxford - 2004