

# Violette Shamash ~ Memories Of Eden. When Baghdad Was Beautiful

Imagine a world with no running water or electricity, scorching heat and the constant fear of cholera. Imagine a warren of alleys no wider than a cart. Cows are being milked on doorsteps, street barbers are giving shaves, pulling teeth and lancing boils. Barefoot water-sellers are bent double under their heavy goatskins.

It is 1912 and we are in old Baghdad. To us it sounds like hell. Yet Violette Shamash, born into an affluent family, adored its positive side: sleeping under the stars, hearing the call of the nightingale, smelling scents of gardenias and spices, riding to school on donkey-back. For her it was a kind of Eden. Violette was a privileged witness to a time when nearly 40% of Baghdad was Jewish and Jews, Moslems and Christians embraced each other's differences. Her insights into domestic life, and a society coming to terms with the 20th century, are candid, entertaining, and often very amusing. However, in 1941, disaster struck the oldest community in the Diaspora. A brutal massacre took place over two days of rioting and sounded the death-knell for the Jews of Babylon.

This slideshow contains images from Violette's book, [\*Memories of Eden\*](#), which not only provides a unique insight into the culture and customs of the Jews of Iraq, but also shows everyday life as experienced by everyone at a time when Baghdadians lived together side by side, in mutual respect, irrespective of religion. William Shawcross has called it "an astonishing record, telling the story of a cultivated and well integrated Jewish community in the heart of Muslim Arabia during the end of the Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate. A superb account of a long forgotten time which is barely imaginable now." Further reviews and comments from academics and literary critics can be seen on our website. We would very much welcome your views and opinions via our blog: <http://memoriesofeden.wordpress.com>

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## מרכז מורשת יהדות בבל [?] סרטון תדמית

*The Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center* was established in 1973 to preserve the history of the Jewish community in Iraq and to ensure that it remains part of the future narrative of the Jewish nation. To this end, the Center fosters research, preservation and publication of the culture and folklore of Iraqi Jewry.

Adjacent to the Center is the Museum of Babylonian Jewry, opened to the public in 1988 and exhibiting chapters from the history of Babylonian Jewry throughout the generations over the course of more than 2,600 years.

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## The Jews Of Baghdad

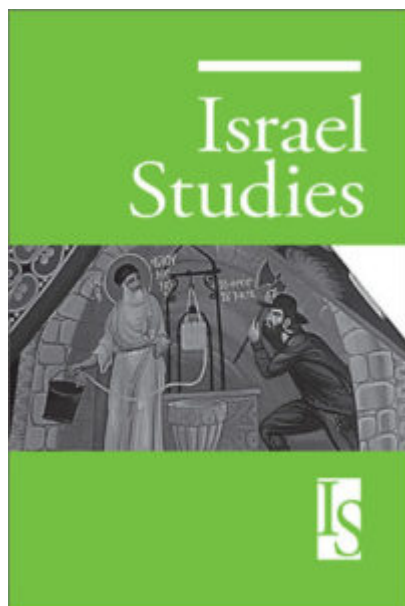
Iraqi Jews had a significant role in the country's contemporary history until the infamous "Farhood" ; AKA the Jewish Exodus from Iraq.

This brief video reminds us of some contributions to Iraq's social and cultural spheres made by its Jewish community.

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## Avi Picard ~ Like A Phoenix: The Renaissance Of Sephardic/Mizrahi

# Identity In Israel In The 1970s and 1980s



## *Abstract*

During Israel's first decades, conflict between immigrants from Islamic countries and the Israeli establishment focused on questions regarding equality. The immigrants protested against discrimination in the labor market, against poor housing conditions, and against police brutality. The question of Mizrahi culture and identity was barely mentioned. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, the ethnic discourse in Israel shifted from economic issues to cultural issues. Different groups challenged the school curriculum, asking for more attention to the history and literature of Jews from Islamic countries. Mizrahi music started to develop on the fringe of the Israeli musical scene and moved slowly into the mainstream. Political parties (Tami and Shas) identified with Mizrahi identity and emphasizing it, started to appear and to achieve success. This article provides examples of the expression of identity and culture in different fields and analyzes the causes of this change.

The paper online (PDF-Format): [https://www.researchgate.net/Like\\_a\\_Phoenix](https://www.researchgate.net/Like_a_Phoenix)

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## **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  
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# **Jordan Salama ~ From Exile To Exodus: The Story Of The Jews Of Iraq**