

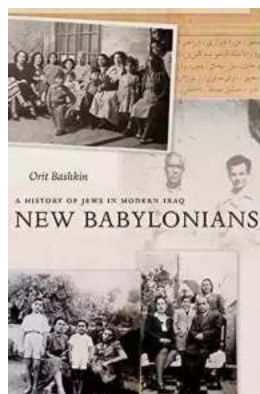
# The Untold Story: The Fascinating History of Jews in Modern Iraq

Throughout history, the Jewish people have faced various hardships and challenges. From their exile in Egypt to the atrocities of the Holocaust, their resilience and determination to preserve their identity have shaped their remarkable history. One such chapter that often goes unnoticed is the story of Jews in modern Iraq.

Unknown to many, Iraq was once home to a thriving Jewish community, dating back thousands of years. This article delves into the deep-rooted history of Jews in modern Iraq, shedding light on a lesser-known narrative of a resilient community that has endured both triumph and tragedy.

## Ancient Beginnings

The presence of Jews in Iraq can be traced back to ancient times. Babylon, the capital city of ancient Mesopotamia, was home to a significant Jewish population. Scholars believe that the Babylonian exile in 586 BCE marked the beginning of Jewish settlement in the region.



## New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern

**Iraq** by Orit Bashkin(1st Edition, Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 2545 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Print length : 326 pages



Following the fall of the Babylonian Empire, Jews continued to live in the area under various foreign dominations, including the Seleucid dynasty and the Roman Empire. During this period, Jewish communities flourished, contributing to the cultural and intellectual fabric of Mesopotamia.

## **The Golden Era**

One of the most critical periods in the history of Jews in Iraq is the Islamic Golden Age. Between the 8th and 13th centuries, Iraq witnessed a remarkable cultural, intellectual, and artistic renaissance. While the majority of the population was Muslim, Jews played an integral role in shaping this thriving society.

During this time, Jewish scholars made significant strides, particularly in the fields of philosophy, medicine, and mathematics. Prominent figures like Saadia Gaon and Maimonides emerged from the Jewish community in Iraq, leaving an indelible mark on Jewish intellectual history.

## **The Struggles of Modernity**

The 20th century brought immense political and social change to Iraq, greatly impacting the Jewish community. After the First World War, Iraq gained independence from British rule, leading to a rise in nationalism and anti-Semitic sentiments.

In the 1940s, tensions grew between Iraqi Jews and the Arab nationalist government. Multiple acts of violence ensued, including the Farhud of 1941 - a devastating pogrom that resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Jews and the destruction of their properties.

As Israel gained independence in 1948, anti-Jewish sentiment in Iraq escalated further. In the following years, the Iraqi government imposed restrictive laws on the Jewish community, seizing property and freezing bank accounts, leading to the mass exodus of Jews.

## **The End of an Era**

By the early 1970s, only a few thousand Jews remained in Iraq. However, with the rise of Saddam Hussein's regime, their situation became even more precarious. Persecution and discrimination intensified, leading to further emigration.

In 2003, with the American invasion of Iraq, the remaining Jewish community faced renewed threats, leading to the near extinction of Jews in Iraq. Today, only a handful of Jews remain, struggling to preserve their heritage and identity.

## **Preserving a Rich Heritage**

Despite their dispersal and the tremendous challenges they faced, the legacy of Iraqi Jews endures. Many Iraqi Jews settled in Israel and other parts of the world, where they continue to contribute to diverse fields, including academia, arts, and politics.

Efforts are also underway to document and preserve the rich cultural heritage of Iraqi Jews. Organizations like the Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center strive to collect artifacts, manuscripts, and personal testimonies, providing future generations with a glimpse into the lives of their ancestors.

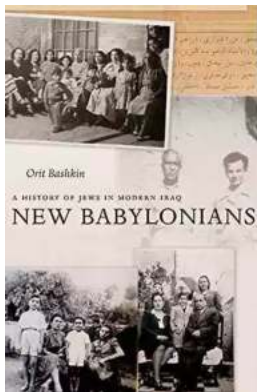
## **A History Worth Remembering**

The history of Jews in modern Iraq is a testament to the remarkable resilience and determination of a community that has faced countless challenges. From

their ancient beginnings in Babylon to the struggles of modernity, their story deserves recognition and remembrance.

By shedding light on this often-overlooked chapter of Jewish history, we can deepen our understanding of the human experience and celebrate the endurance of a people forever linked to the land they once called home.

So, next time you hear the name Iraq, remember the untold story of the Jewish community that flourished there, leaving an indelible mark on the cultural, intellectual, and social fabric of a country they once called their own.



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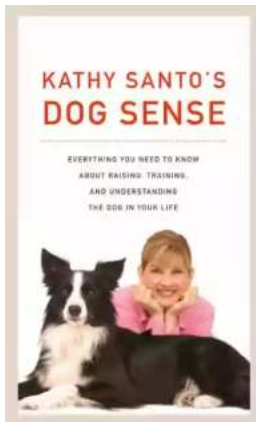
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Although Iraqi Jews saw themselves as Iraqi patriots, their community—which had existed in Iraq for more than 2,500 years—was displaced following the establishment of the state of Israel. *New Babylonians* chronicles the lives of these Jews, their urban Arab culture, and their hopes for a democratic nation-state. It studies their ideas about Judaism, Islam, secularism, modernity, and reform, focusing on Iraqi Jews who internalized narratives of Arab and Iraqi nationalisms and on those who turned to communism in the 1940s.

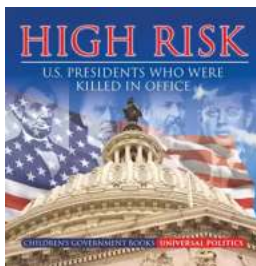
As the book reveals, the ultimate displacement of this community was not the

result of a perpetual persecution on the part of their Iraqi compatriots, but rather the outcome of misguided state policies during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Sadly, from a dominant mood of coexistence, friendship, and partnership, the impossibility of Arab-Jewish coexistence became the prevailing narrative in the region—and the dominant narrative we have come to know today.



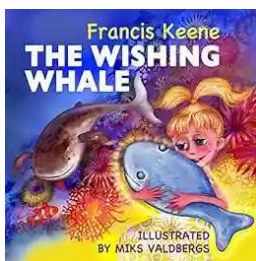
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