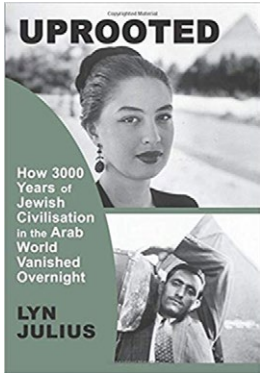




Uprooted: How 3000 Years of Jewish Civilization in the Arab World Vanished Overnight



Lyn Julius (Ed.)

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British-born Julius is the daughter of Iraqi-Jewish refugees and currently a journalist and cofounder of Harif, an association of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa, now residing in the United Kingdom. The gravamen of *Uprooted* is the extraordinary historical fact that within 50 years, close to the entire Jewish population living in the Arab World that had a three millennia presence was subjected to expulsion, with their property confiscated, effectively removing a peoples' mark on the globe.

Julius, whose background serves as the impetus for her narrative, carefully details much of the Oriental Jewish culture with memorabilia and photos of families and places.

The ancient Hebrews certainly predated the Muslim World in which they developed their distinctive culture. The Jewish presence in Babylon — then Mesopotamia, today's Iraq — whether forced or as a product of migration, resulted in the creation of a major liturgical statement of Jewish tradition, the Babylonian *Talmud*. Jewish merchants and traders could be found vending their wares throughout the region, certainly before the presence of Mohammed the Prophet appeared with his message.

Following the dispersion of the Hebrews from Judea after the destruction of their temple in Jerusalem by the occupying Roman authorities, a Jewish presence in Syria and Persia, in addition to Babylon, was well established. Following the establishment of Islam as the region's primary governing system, Jews and other non-Muslim communities were placed in a peculiar class system, *dhimmitude*, allowing for their continued presence; but under a set of restrictions to include a distinctive tax. Widespread Judeophobic sentiment then set the stage for an ever-present climate of



fear for Jewish communities, despite the entrepreneurial success of many families and the professional services provided at the highest levels of governing bodies.

Jewish tribes in Arabia that interacted — often in a hostile manner — with the Prophet's family and his allies, soon thereafter either disappeared or reestablished themselves in southern Arabia, the Yemen. It was there that they would, although facing an ever present Muslim ire, establish a religious community and a distinctive craft market.

Following the forced expulsion of Jews from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492, an historic migration led to a need to find new homes in North Africa, the Balkans, and Turkey. The presence of Jewish communities throughout North Africa has been a subject well documented, complicated somewhat by its identification and integration with European colonizers, later to add to Arab nationalistic anger.

With the Hebrew biblical review of Jews in Egypt, their presence is well covered, although as the story is told, they left for the Promised Land, Cairo becoming home for many Jews. In Libya, the Jewish presence dates at least to the Hellenistic rule in the fourth century BCE. Moving onto Tunisia, there is a clear historic presence with ancient synagogues in a number of locations, and can be dated to the Punic era but heightened after the community's expulsion from Spain and Portugal. Algeria is complicated by the presence of the *pied-noires* and a strong French cultural influence. Morocco was, perhaps, the outlier case where the Jewish community felt most welcomed and for many years maintained a cordial relationship with the monarchy. But Morocco is a signatory to the Arab League and the country's royalty does not necessarily represent the masses.

The creation of the Jewish state of Israel in 1948, in the midst of the far geographically wider Arab World, incurred the wrath and issued the spark for anti-Semitic outbursts often taking on the character of anti-Zionist or anti-Israeli foment. Julius thus carves out the history of the region, the outward expulsion of Jewish communities, or at least the establishment of such social injustices that left no other alternatives for Jews who had earned or been granted Arab national citizenship and memorable family histories to find the means to migrate to Israel and connect to ethnic brethren, or seek refuge elsewhere in the world. It should be kept in mind when often the Palestinians refugee situation is juxtaposed to that of Mizrahi Jewry, the latter were subject to extensive discrimination in a peacetime situation. The explanation most often provided for by Arab governments was the perceived mistreatment of Palestinian Arabs or the expropriation of Arab Palestine for the creation of an exclusively Jewish state, though accepting the worst, must be placed in the context of open warfare.

Uprooted... would be most accepted by audiences interested either in religious sociology of the region or general history.

