

Episode 16: Flight and Expulsion of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa

Guest: Prof. Dr. Norman Stillman, Emeritus of Judaic History at the University of Oklahoma

Hosts: Yusuf & Efe

Bio: Prof. Norman A. Stillman is a world-leading historian of Jewish life in the Islamic world. He is Professor Emeritus of Judaic History at the University of Oklahoma and the author of seminal works such as *The Jews of Arab Lands* and *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*. Prof. Stillman also served as founding editor of the *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, the most comprehensive reference on the subject. His scholarship spans Muslim–Jewish relations, Judeo-Arabic culture, and Sephardic history, shaping generations of students and researchers.

In this episode: We examine the dramatic flight and expulsion of roughly 850,000 Jews from the Middle East and North Africa between the 1940s and 1970s. Professor Norman Stillman outlines the rising tensions preceding 1948, including antisemitism, the reverberations of European fascism in the Arab world, the Farhud pogrom in Baghdad, and the broader impact of global events such as the Holocaust. He details the exodus from countries including Iraq, Egypt, Yemen, and Morocco, exploring the complex interplay of push and pull factors, political pressures, government policies, and violence that drove these departures. Topics include the challenges faced by Jewish refugees in Israel, issues of integration and cultural adaptation, and the memory and political framing of the exodus. This episode provides listeners with a foundational understanding of one of the most consequential demographic shifts in modern Middle Eastern history—often overlooked yet pivotal in shaping the demographic makeup of today’s Israel, where nearly half of the Jewish population traces its roots to the Middle East and North Africa.

Links:

Prof. Dr. Norman Stillman: <https://marquistopeducators.com/2024/05/10/norman-stillman/> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Stillman, Norman A. *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1979. <https://www.zvab.com/9780827601987/Jews-Arab-Lands-History-Source-0827601980/plp> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Stillman, Norman A. *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003. <https://www.zvab.com/Jews-Arab-Lands-Modern-Times-Stillman/32274722665/bd> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Stillman, Norman A., ed. *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*. Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2010. <https://referenceworks.brill.com/display/db/ejio> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Stillman, Norman A., and others, eds. *Antisemitism: A Historical Encyclopedia of Prejudice and Persecution*. 2 vols. Santa Barbara (CA): ABC-CLIO / Bloomsbury Academic, 2005. <https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/antisemitism-9781851094394/> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Academia.edu: <https://shorturl.at/y9hNG> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Artistic Reflections of the Exodus of Jews from North Africa and the Middle East:

Memmi, Albert. *The Pillar of Salt*. Beacon Press, 1992. https://www.ibs.it/pillar-of-salt-libro-inglese-albert-memmi/e/9780807083277?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Memmi, Albert. *Die Salzsäule*. Translated by Norbert Juraschitz, Reclam Verlag, 1995. https://babelwerk.de/babel/die-salzsaeule-roman/?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Amir, Eli. *The Dove Flyer*. Translated by Hillel Halkin, NYRB Lit, 2014. https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-dove-flyer-eli-amir/1113594204?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Amir, Eli. *Jasmin*. Übersetzt von Barbara Linner, btb Verlag, 2009. https://www.zvab.com/buch-suchen/textsuche/eli-amir-jasmin/buch/?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Farewell Bagdad (Movie rendition of Amir's novel) https://jewishfilmfestivals.org/films/2013/farewell-baghdad/?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Please also check out our other episodes to explore multiple perspectives.

On Jews in the Arab World: Norman Stillman (Episode 7)

On the Holocaust and the foundation of the State of Israel: Michael Brenner, Derek Penslar, Anita Haviv

On the Nakba / War of Independence: Adel Mana, Derek Penslar, Muriel Asseburg, Gudrun Krämer

On the History of Zionism: Simon Fuchs, Norman Stillman (Episode 7), Michael Brenner, Awad Halabi, Victor Kattan, Oren Kessler, Muriel Asseburg, Gudrun Krämer

Dedication:

We dedicate this Podcast to all victims and survivors of October 7, the hostages and their families, to all innocent civilians killed and injured in Gaza and their grieving families and friends. To our dear guests Udi Goren, Khalil Sayegh, Sima and Mai who shared their losses so powerfully with us. To their families: Tal's wife Ella Haimi, their children Nir, Einav, Udi and Lotan, who never got the chance to meet his father. To Khalil Sayegh's mother and siblings, to Mai's and Sima's family, to her mother Bushra.

To the blessed memory of: Tal Haimi, Lara Sayegh, Jeris Sayegh, Mahmoud, Danny Darlington and Haim Perry.

Disclaimer:

In each episode of this podcast, the invited guests speak on their own behalf. They share their experiences, assessments, and expert perspectives. These contributions are central to the multiperspectivity of the project but do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial team or producers.

Legal & Historical Anchor Episodes:

This podcast may include controversial legal terms of specific technical significance. Their legal applicability requires a thorough expert contextualization; for this, we refer to our legal chapter. All relevant terms of international law, its institutions, current controversies, and the state of jurisprudence are explained in the anchor episode with Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Claus Kreß LL.M. (Cambridge) (Episode 36). He is co-author of the Rome Statute, Special Advisor to the International Criminal Court, and Judge at the International Court of Justice in the parallel Gambia vs. Myanmar genocide case.

Historical matters are discussed from multiple perspectives in this podcast. Please check the cross-references in the shownotes of the respective episodes for details. All historically contested issues are addressed in the history anchor episode with Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Gudrun Krämer (Episode 21), author of the comprehensive work *A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel* (Princeton 2008), a standard reference in the field. For her scholarly achievements as a historian, she was awarded the *Preis des Historischen Kollegs* in 2025, the highest distinction in her discipline in Germany.