

Episode 7: The Long History of Jewish-Muslim Relations in the Arab World

Guest: Prof. Dr. Norman Stillman, Professor Emeritus of Judaic Studies, University of Oklahoma

Hosts: Yusuf & Efe

Bio: Prof. Norman A. Stillman is a world-leading authority on 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 ever assembled on the subject. His scholarship spans Muslim–Jewish relations, Judeo-Arabic culture, and Sephardic history, shaping generations of students and researchers.

In this episode: This episode explores the long history of Jewish life in the Middle East and North Africa, tracing communities that existed for over two millennia across cities like Baghdad, Cairo, Tunis, Aleppo, and Sana’a. Professor Norman Stillman provides an overview of Jewish-Muslim relations from the emergence of Islam through the early modern period, highlighting the legal, social, and cultural frameworks that shaped daily life. Topics include the dhimmi system, traditions of Muslim anti-Judaism, and periods of coexistence and cultural flourishing—most notably the **House of Wisdom in Baghdad**, an intellectual center where Muslims, Jews, and Christians translated, preserved, and advanced knowledge in philosophy, science, medicine, and mathematics, profoundly shaping world civilization. At its high points, Jewish life in the Muslim world was safer and far more vibrant than in contemporary Christian Europe. Professor Stillman also examines the effects of European colonialism, Arab nationalism, and early Zionist movements on regional Jewish communities. This episode provides listeners with a foundational understanding of the historical, cultural, and religious contexts that framed centuries of complex Jewish-Muslim interactions in the Arab world.

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)

Please also explore our other episodes to explore multiple perspectives.

On Palestinian Identity and Life under Ottoman rule and during the British Mandate: Simon Fuchs, Awad Halabi, Victor Kattan, Oren Kessler, Michael Brenner, Derek Penslar, Muriel Asseburg, Gudrun Krämer

On the flight and expulsion of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa: Norman Stillman, Muriel Asseburg

On the history of Zionism: Simon Fuchs, Michael Brenner, Oren Kessler, Derek Penslar, Gudrun Krämer, Victor Kattan, Awad Halabi

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.