

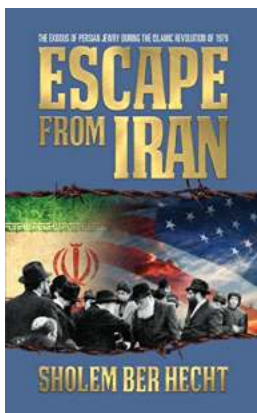
# The Untold Story: The Exodus Of Persian Jewry During The Islamic Revolution Of 1979

It was a tumultuous time in Iranian history. The Islamic Revolution of 1979 brought significant political and social changes, impacting various religious and ethnic communities within the country. Despite the widespread coverage of the revolution, one particular group's narrative often goes overlooked – the Persian Jews who found themselves caught in the crossfire.

This article aims to shed light on the untold story of the exodus of Persian Jewry during the Islamic Revolution. It explores the challenges they faced, the reasons behind their departure, and the impact their migration had on both the Persian Jewish community and the countries that became their new homes.

## The Pre-Revolution Status of Persian Jews

Before delving into the exodus itself, it is crucial to understand the historical context in which Persian Jews existed prior to the Islamic Revolution. For centuries, Jews had lived among their Muslim neighbors in Iran, with some occupying prominent positions in society.



## Escape From Iran: The Exodus of Persian Jewry During the Islamic Revolution of 1979

by Karen Wheeler (Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 8551 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 282 pages



Under the rule of the Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Jewish community enjoyed a degree of religious freedom and protection. While discrimination and occasional outbreaks of violence were not unheard of, Persian Jews were relatively free to practice their faith, pursue education, and establish successful businesses.

## **The Road to Revolution**

Although the revolution began as a popular movement to overthrow the Shah and establish an Islamic republic, its nature and trajectory took a turn that created uncertainty and fear among various minority groups, including Persian Jews.

As Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini rose to power, his anti-Western rhetoric and hostile stance towards non-Muslims raised concerns within the Jewish community. The implementation of Islamic law, including strict regulations on dress code and religious practices, further fueled anxieties among Persian Jews about their future in the new Iran.

## **Escaping Iran: The Exodus Begins**

Amidst the growing unrest and anticipation of worsening conditions, Persian Jews started fleeing the country in search of safety and stability. Their exodus was not an organized mass migration but rather a combination of individual decisions made by families and individuals who feared for their lives and future.

Most Persian Jews initially sought refuge in neighboring countries such as Turkey, where they could apply for visas to continue their journey elsewhere.

However, due to the overwhelming number of refugees, particularly from Iran, processing times were extensive, leaving many in limbo.

Other countries, including the United States, Israel, and Europe, became the final destinations for Persian Jewish refugees. These countries had historical ties with the Jewish community and offered promises of freedom, prosperity, and a chance to rebuild their lives.

## **The Challenges of Resettlement**

Although the exodus provided many Persian Jews with safety and a fresh start, numerous challenges awaited them in their new homes. The language barrier, cultural differences, and the need to establish new social and professional networks posed significant obstacles for these refugees.

Additionally, leaving behind their homes, businesses, and belongings meant starting from scratch. Many Persian Jews faced financial hardships while adapting to a new country's economic landscape. Education and employment opportunities also became critical aspects of their successful integration.

## **The Impact on Persian Jewry**

The exodus of Persian Jewry had a profound impact on the community, resulting in a significant decrease in Iran's Jewish population. Once a vibrant and flourishing community, its absence left a void that would take years to fill.

The departure of skilled professionals, valuable contributors to society, and cultural heritage bearers left an intellectual and cultural void within Iran. It also disrupted familial and social ties, as separated families struggled to reunite across borders.

## **The Legacy**

The exodus of Persian Jewry serves as a testament to the far-reaching consequences of political turmoil on religious and ethnic minorities. The stories of those who endured the journey continue to shape the collective memory of Persian Jews, reminding future generations of the trials and resilience of their community.

Although the Islamic Revolution of 1979 brought about significant changes, the contributions of Persian Jews to Iranian society should never be forgotten. Their legacy continues to enrich the diverse fabric of nations that opened their doors to them.

## In

The exodus of Persian Jewry during the Islamic Revolution of 1979 is an overlooked chapter in Iranian history. This article aimed to shed light on this untold story, exploring the challenges faced by Persian Jews, the reasons behind their departure, and the impact their migration had on both the community and their new homes.

By understanding and acknowledging the experiences of Persian Jews during this tumultuous time, we can contribute to a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of the Islamic Revolution's consequences. It is through such narratives that we ensure the preservation of history and the cultivation of empathy and compassion for communities affected by political upheaval.

## **Escape From Iran: The Exodus of Persian Jewry During the Islamic Revolution of 1979**

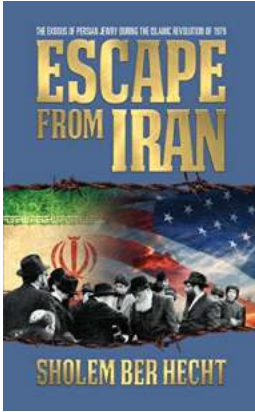
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For 2,500 years the Jews of Persia, banished from their homeland, built a civilization in exile.

Their fortunes rose and fell, from the glory of their ancestral traditions to persecution, suppression, and the brutality of conquering armies. By the mid20th Century the Jewish community of modern-day Iran had achieved a measure of success—until the Islamic Revolution of 1979 threatened once again to plunge Persian Jewry into darkness.

This is the story of the dramatic rescue and emigration of thousands of Iranian Jewish students to America, and the miraculous rebirth of an ancient civilization in a brand new world.

“...My deepest thanks for the work you have done on behalf of Persian Jewry. Before the Islamic Revolution you came to Iran and worked tirelessly to help the youth of Iran escape to a safe haven. I remember your acts of self-sacrifice in your rescue efforts to bring them to safety in the United States. On that Yom Kippur in Machane Mordechai, I remember the heartrending prayers of the students and their profound worry and concern over the wellbeing of their families who remained in Iran...You cared for our children, providing food, schooling and

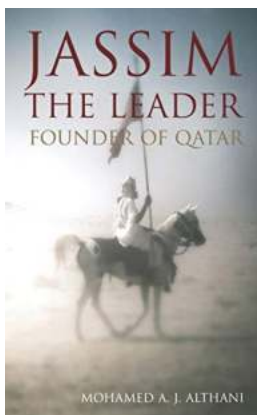
housing. We must express our deepest appreciation for your heroic efforts on behalf of the Jews of Iran.” - Excerpt from the commendation letter of Rabbi Eliyahu Ben-Hayim, Senior Rav and Dayan of the Persian Jewish Community of New York

SHOLEM BER HECHT was there each step of the way, overseeing every facet of the operation under the direction of his illustrious father, Rabbi Jacob J. Hecht o.b.m., and the visionary guidance of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. A noted educator and spiritual leader, he is CEO of the National Committee for Furtherance of Jewish Education, Rabbi of the Sephardic Jewish Congregation of Queens, Senior Chabad Emissary in Queens, and Senior Rabbi of the Sephardic Community of Queens since 1974. In this remarkable book he weaves together the thrilling tale of the escape from Iran with his penetrating insight into its history-making significance.



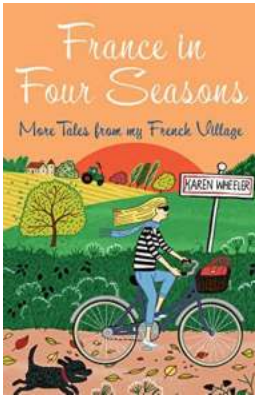
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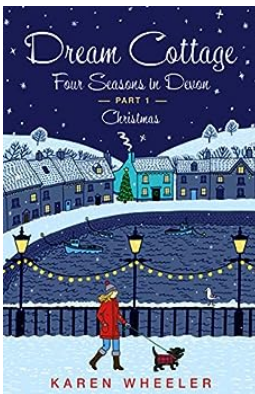
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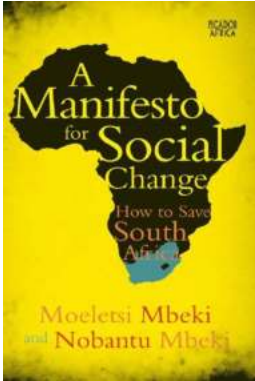
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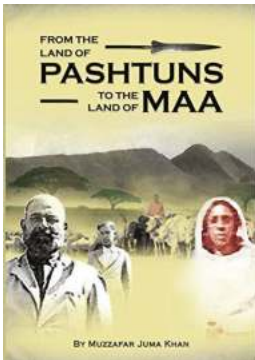
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