

English Abstract

Messianism and Zionism in the Aliya of Iraqi Jews to Israel

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Babylonian Jewry is the oldest exile in history. Even before the destruction of the First Temple, the Jews lived in Babylon. For a very long period of time, Babylon was considered the center of the Jewish people. Here the Babylonian Talmud was written and the extensive Gaonic literature. The Babylonian Jews considered Babylon as the seat of the Shekhina who went into exile together with them. Accordingly, their attitude to a massive emigration of Jews to Israel was not seen in a positive light. They believed that the Jews should not emigrate to Israel before the coming of the Messiah, for in doing so, they would leave the Shekhina behind. Despite this, there were individuals and some families that went on Aliyah to Israel throughout the years, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries. Their Aliyah was usually the result of Messianic predictions that were disseminated among them.

It would seem that the establishment of the State of Israel was understood as one of the necessary steps on the road to Redemption, which caused a change among the Babylonian Jews' attitude. From the beginning of the State of Israel, there were illegal movements and Aliyah, especially through Iran. The activities of the Underground in Iraq strengthened this belief and the trickle became a flood of mass emigration in "Operation Ezra and Nehemiah". Iraq was emptied of its Jewish residents.