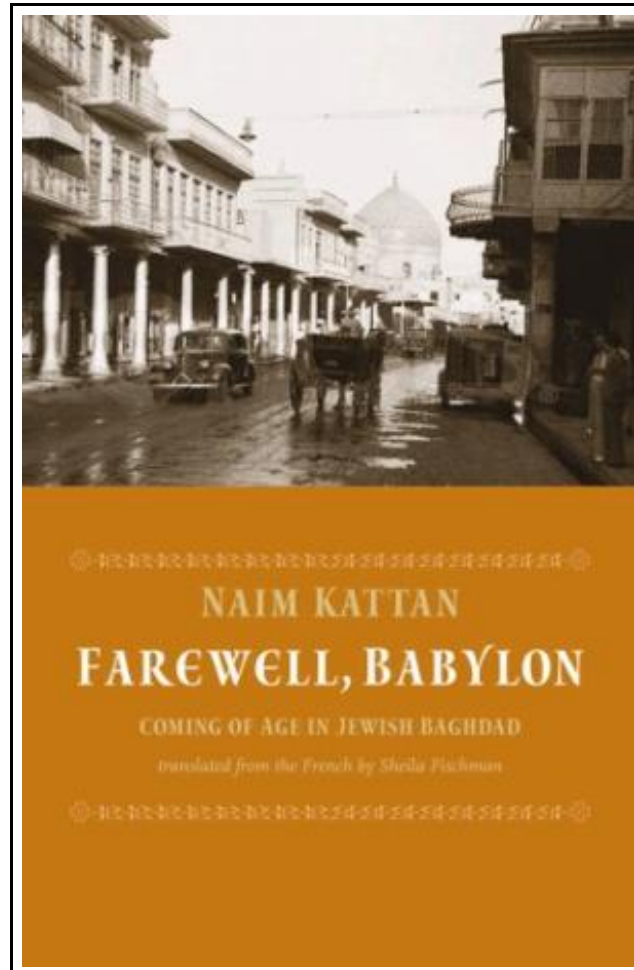


Farewell, Babylon: Coming of Age in Jewish Baghdad



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Reviews

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FAREWELL, BABYLON: COMING OF AGE IN JEWISH BAGHDAD



David R. Godine, USA, 2007. Paperback. Book Condition: New. 1st Edition. 199pp Illustrated. [In stock in Australia, for immediate delivery] From the melting pot that was Iraqi society comes a tale, recounted by a grand old man of Canadian letters, of growing up as a Jewish boy in Baghdad in the 1940s. Naim Kattan was born into an intellectual Jewish family in Baghdad in 1928. He, his brother, and his friend Nessim were the only Jews in a group of young men who met every evening in a cafe to talk passionately about creating a national Iraqi literature in their newly independent country. They had good reason, for although the Jewish community in Iraq dated back 2500 years, and Jews were among the best Arabic scholars in the country, they were never considered equals by the Muslim majority. In 1941, after British forces defeated the German-backed Iraqi insurgents, angry Bedouins entered Baghdad before it could be secured and began the Farhoud, the massacre of Jews in the city. The violence stopped just short of the Kattans' house, but the family immediately began the long application process for visas. Kattan began selling stories to literary magazines and speculating about the role of women in a country where even Jewish women wore veils. He eventually won a scholarship to the Sorbonne and left his family, not to be reunited with them until five years later, when he found them in a settlement camp in Israel. This is a memoir of identity, of growing up in a tumultuous polyglot society, of change both personal and societal, of finding one's place in life. Here is a fascinating portrait of a people, a city, a state, and a culture that are as troubled today as Kattan found them 60 years ago. A fine portrait of...



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