

# BIG STORY

## big story

# 'I'm a proud Bahraini Jew'

Retracing the past glory of Bahraini Jews, who were once an integral part of the local society

● Manama was one of the most sought-after places for the members of the Jewish community in the region, which contributed to the creation of intellectual and cultural affinity between the Islamic and Jewish religions.

● While Jewish men worked in the various industries sectors of the Kingdom including shipping, Jewish women were mainly employed as teachers and nurses here.

TDI | Manama  
Sarain Al Mahadeen



A file picture showing Salman Sweiry, a prominent Bahraini businessman and member of the Jewish community with Royal Family members.



A file picture shows Salman Sweiry greeting His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

The Jewish community, which once flourished in the Kingdom bears testimony to the greatness of the land of tolerance.

Two centuries ago, Jews were an integral part of the Bahraini society contributing immensely towards its economy, trade and banking sector.

Out of 500 Bahraini Jews, only 37 now live in the Kingdom, but the community has a significant presence in the social scene.

Houda Nonoo, a prominent member of the community was the former Kingdom's envoy to the US, while Nancy Khedouri, another Bahraini Jew is a member of the Shura Council.

Speaking to Tribune, Moses Sweiry, a Bahraini Jew now residing in the UK, said the Kingdom has always remained a land of religious coexistence and tolerance.

"My father was a well-known businessman in the Kingdom. We migrated to the UK after his health worsened. I was the only Jew at school but never suffered any discrimination at the hands of my friends or classmates.

"Everyone in the Kingdom I know accepted our religion and we were very much part of the

“As a Bahraini Jew, I am proud of my identity and feel fortunate to have my freedom of worship and my ability to preserve my tradition here.”

MS KHEDOURI

Bahraini society. I continue to visit the Kingdom as I have a large number of friends there.”

Sweiry family is one of the Bahraini Jewish families which migrated to the West before the emergence of the Zionist state in Palestine.

Dr Youssef Al Mutairi, author of

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Bahraini Jews live in the Kingdom, as of today.

"The Jews in the Gulf" asserts that there were no Jews in the region after the First World War, except in Bahrain.

Manama was one of the most sought-after places for the members of the Jewish community in the region, which contributed to the creation of intellectual and cultural affinity between the Islamic and Jewish religions.

"There is a common cultural and linguistic background, and that is why the Jews did not live in their own neighbourhoods. The American Mission schools in the Gulf, i.e. the missionary centers, accepted students from all religions, thus contributing to the integration of Jews into the Gulf society," Dr Youssef had observed.

Ms Khedouri, a member of the Shura Council, stressed that the Jewish community is very well integrated into the Bahraini society.

"Throughout my life in Bahrain, I have never had any bad situations. On the contrary, I have grown up and dealt with my Bahraini friends from all religions. We still have friendly relations. We join together in joys and sorrows, and I thank God for this blessing.

"As a Bahraini Jew, I am proud of my identity and feel fortunate to have freedom of worship and my ability to preserve my tradition and culture amid Bahrain's religious diversity. Despite religious differences, we stand united in the name of Bahrain."

These days not many Bahrainis know about the presence of



A document showing the ownership over the Kingdom's Jewish Synagogue.

“I was the only Jew at school but never suffered any discrimination at the hands of my friends or classmates in the name of religion.”

MR MOSES

Jews in the Kingdom. But decades before, this was not the case. Bahraini Bahja Al Haddad recalled her Jewish friend Umm Ashour who once lived in her neighbourhood. "Umm was like

our relative. She shared with us our Shi'ite festivals and traditions including ma'atam. Jewish women were good in stitching garments and we used to buy garments from them in return for

money, eggs or spices." While Jewish men worked in the various industries sectors of the Kingdom including shipping, Jewish women were mainly employed as teachers and nurses here.

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