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"In remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt", we say repeatedly in our prayers. After their liberation our people moved to the Promised Land, were deported to Babylon, allowed to return, then again dispersed throughout Europe, Asia, Africa...

My family somehow got to Spain and are therefore known as Sephardim. In 1942 came another major expulsion and scattering to many lands. My father was born in Turkey and, via Rhodes, moved to Egypt, thus completing a 3,500-year circle. There he met and married my mother who emigrated with her family from Salonika. He was one of eleven children; she one of seven. So my aunts, uncles and cousins add up to a considerable number which I have never been able to accurately count, living in many different countries.

I was born the youngest of four daughters in Alexandria, one of the finest cities in the world. It was Egypt's main port and a vibrant commercial and cultural centre with a cosmopolitan population of one and a half million. The 20,000 Jews played a vital role as merchants, lawyers, doctors, architects, engineers, etc. We had synagogues, schools, clubs, youth groups and self-help charities.

Life was unfettered and easy, without trace of our unhappy history, and no hint of the darkness that was to descend. I was educated at a French school, our family spoke Ladino and I naturally picked up Arabic, Italian and Greek which were spoken all around me. I belonged to Chalutz Hatzair, a Zionist youth group, and we were free to parade through the streets at Purim and other special occasions. Later I joined Maccabi, the worldwide sports and social organisation.

In the grimmest days of the Second World War as the German army advanced across the Western Desert of North Africa we suffered the insults and sneers of our neighbours: "Dirty Jews, when the Germans come we're going to kill you all and take your homes." Thankfully the British forces were able to turn the tide with the 1943 victory at El Alamein - a mere 70 miles down the road, with nothing in between! After the war our fickle neighbours loved us again and we



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enjoyed a sweet life. I worked for a while as a primary school teacher.

In 1948 with the establishment of the State of Israel a number of my friends made allyah. Others were arrested as suspected Zionists, then expelled.

Again life returned to normal and we could enjoy all the vibrance of our city with it's 12 mile comiche, beach picnics, swimming, sailing, luxury cinemas, dancing...

King Farouk was deposed and exiled in 1952 and Egypt became a republic. In 1956 there was a dramatic turn of events when President Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal and Britain and France attacked Egypt to reclaim it. Their official justification was to separate the warring Israeli and Egyptian forces, but this military adventure failed. With air raid warnings, bombings and anti-aircraft fire the civilian population lived in terror.

My personal world fell apart. I had been corresponding secretly via an accommodation address in Greece with a friend in Israel. An Egyptian officer with whom I was friendly tipped me off that I was on the black list and could be arrested at any time. I decided to leave immediately but I had a major problem: I was stateless without a passport and had nowhere to go apart from Israel, which I did not fancy at that time.

With special pleading I persuaded the Swiss consul, then looking after British interests as diplomatic relations had been cut, to issue me with a laissez-passer (temporary travel document). I had, and still have, a sister living in Exeter who, in 1945 married a man in the Royal Air Force. But to gain my freedom I had to pay a very high price: leaving my parents, sisters, brothers-in-law and their children, all my friends at 24 hours' notice. I had already lost my job as a gas showroom adviser under the official policy of employing only Arabs. Above all, I was engaged to be married and had to leave my fiance. My life was shattered.

My papers were stamped "Allez sans retour" (re-entry forbidden). All I could take were two suitcases, the clothes I wore, a watch, handful of photographs and £5 in cash. The lining of my coat was ripped to check that I was not



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concealing valuables.

Many others were in a similar plight, but most had British or French status. 800 of us, another Jewish expulsion, were crowded into a ship meant for 500.

Later my sisters and their families left for Brazil and my parents went to Israel. After Papa died in 1960 Mama came to live with us. She died in 1967 and is buried at Kinson, Bournemouth.

On arrival at Dover I was told that I could stay for only three days and was sent to a refugee transit camp. It was snowing and I had never seen such weather before! Happily my brother-in-law's guarantee convinced the Home Office and I was allowed to go to Exeter where I met another novel weather experience - fog.

My family welcomed me with joy but the only permitted work was domestic so I started at an hotel for three days. I hated the work and my aunt in Derby offered me a home. The city's largest department store took me on as a sales assistant because of my languages, although English was the weakest. I was successfully selling top quality china and glassware.

I moved back to Exeter to my sister when I was offered a job with Hoover Ltd as a demonstrator in the electricity board showroom. I became their top saleswoman, winning many competitions.

I was on the verge of going to live in Brazil with my other two sisters and their families when I met a young man who was working in Exeter as a journalist. He must have been the only Jew in town. As we got to know each other I realised that I had to break with my fiance who had by this time moved to Italy.

Martyn and I married in London in March 1959 and subsequently had a daughter, Michele, who has blessed us with a grandson, Daniel, now 18, and granddaughter, Rachel, almost 5.

In 1974 we went on a pilot tour of Israel and learned in detail about many



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aspects of life there. It was a fascinating experience but we decided at that time that we could not easily live there. We thought about it a lot and after two more holiday visits to Israel decided to settle there in spring, 1983. We sold our house and furniture and gave up our jobs, Martyn as chief sub-editor at the Bournemouth Evening Echo and myself as a part-time French teacher at Wentworth Milton Mount girls' public school.

We had a wonderful farewell party at the Bournemouth Reform Synagogue and were happy and excited at the thought of starting a new life. We bought a left-hand drive car, loaded it up with all our essentials and travelled through Europe: France, Monaco, Italy and Greece. After three weeks we finally arrived in Haifa where we were welcomed by friends and stayed with them for a couple of days. In Jerusalem we were provided with accommodation at an absorption centre along with immigrants from twenty different countries and started to learn to speak Hebrew, which was not easy.

We were lucky to find work within three months of arrival, Martyn as a sub-editor on the Jerusalem Post and I in an art gallery at the Cardo in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City.

Unfortunately, although we had a reasonable income, the economic situation was horrendous. Inflation was a nightmare 12 per cent a MONTH (it's just 21/2 per cent a YEAR in the UK at present) and everyone was running to the bank every day. There were always queues and it was common practice to buy dollars for security, often on the unofficial market.

We found a furnished flat but as the rent was quoted in dollars it cost us more and more shekels every month. We were forced to move several times, making us feel quite insecure. We did not have the confidence to buy a property because they were very expensive and poor value. I became increasingly unhappy at having to go through the Arab Quarter to get to work. It reminded me so much of the dark time before I left Egypt.

Apart from this there were aspects of life we enjoyed. We were able to travel extensively through the country and discover fascinating places. Most people were friendly and many welcomed us into their homes. From time to time



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friends and family from Britain came to visit and we were proud to show them the positive aspects of the country. However, we finally came to the conclusion that there was no realistic future for us there and decided to return to Bournemouth, to our friends and the community.

I am now retired from teaching and Martyn works at the Southampton Daily Echo. I am looking forward to his retirement in a couple of years.