

My Father's Paradise: A Son's Search for His Family's Past

By Ariel Sabar

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In a remote corner of the world, forgotten for nearly three thousand years, lived an enclave of Kurdish Jews so isolated that they still spoke Aramaic, the language of Jesus. Mostly illiterate, they were self-made mystics and gifted storytellers and humble peddlers who dwelt in harmony with their Muslim and Christian neighbors in the mountains of northern Iraq. To these descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel, Yona Sabar was born.

Yona's son Ariel grew up in Los Angeles, where Yona had become an esteemed professor, dedicating his career to preserving his people’s traditions. Ariel wanted nothing to do with his father’s strange immigrant heritage?until he had a son of his own.

Ariel Sabar brings to life the ancient town of Zakho, discovering his family’s place in the sweeping saga of Middle-Eastern history. This powerful book is an improbable story of tolerance and hope set in what today is the very center of the world’s attention.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Starred Review. For his first 31 years Sabar considered his father, Yona, an embarrassing anachronism. Ours was a clash of civilizations, writ small. He was ancient Kurdistan. I was 1980s L.A. Yona was a UCLA professor whose passion was his native language, Aramaic. Ariel was an aspiring rock-and-roll drummer. The birth of Sabar's own son in 2002 was a turning point, prompting Sabar to try to understand his father on his own terms. Readers can only be grateful to him for unearthing the history of a family, a people and a very different image of Iraq. Sabar vividly depicts daily life in the remote village of Zahko, where Muslims, Jews and Christians banded together to ensure prosperity and survival, and in Israel (after the Jews' 1951 expulsion from Iraq), where Kurdish Jews were stereotyped as backward and simple. Sabar's career as an investigative reporter at the *Baltimore Sun* and elsewhere serves him well, particularly in his attempt to track down his father's oldest sister, who was kidnapped as an infant. Sabar offers something rare and precious—a tale of hope and continuity that can be passed on for generations. Photos. *(Sept. 16)*
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From Booklist
For almost 3,000 years, a tiny Jewish enclave existed in what is now the autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq. The Jews and their Christian and Muslim neighbors spoke the ancient tongue of Aramaic, which had once been the lingua franca of the Middle East and was spoken by Jesus. Sabar’s father, Yona, was born in that enclave but immigrated to the U.S. when the creation of the state of Israel created hostile conditions for Iraqi Jews in the 1950s. Yona, however, maintained strong emotional ties to his native language and culture even as he ascended to a prominent academic position at UCLA. Meanwhile, Sabar showed virtually no interest in his father’s background; however, after the birth of his own son, he felt a desire to reconnect with his father and their shared cultural heritage. Their joint visit to their ancestral town of Zakho rekindles memories of the ancient community while strengthening the ties between father and son. An involving memoir that works as both a family saga and an examination of a lost but treasured community. --Jay Freeman

Review
Winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for Autobiography.

"A biography, a memoir, a meticulously reconstructed history of a largely vanished people and place. ... Transcending mere reportage, it acquires a novel-like warp and weft." --Los Angeles Times

"A wonderful, enlightening journey, a voyage with the power to move readers deeply even as it stretches across differences of culture, family, and memory." --Christian Science Monitor

"Sabar offers something rare and precious - a tale of hope and continuity that can be passed on for generations." --Publishers Weekly (Starred Review)

"A remarkable new memoir." --Philadelphia Inquirer

"Graceful and resonant." --New York Times Sunday Book Review

"Excellent…A compelling read…Told with novelistic attention to narrative and detail, but its heart is Ariel's

heart, that of a son searching with love for the meaning of his relationship with his father." —*The Providence (RI) Journal*

(*The Providence (RI) Journal*)

"A powerful story of the meaning of family and tradition inside a little-known culture." —*San Francisco Chronicle*

(*San Francisco Chronicle*)

"Remarkable...A moving story about the near-death of an ancient language and the tiny flicker of life that remains in it." —*The Washington Post Book World*
(*The Washington Post Book World*)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

John Wannamaker:

Have you spare time for a day? What do you do when you have a lot more or little spare time? Yep, you can choose the suitable activity intended for spend your time. Any person spent their particular spare time to take a move, shopping, or went to the particular Mall. How about open or even read a book titled My Father's Paradise: A Son's Search for His Family's Past? Maybe it is being best activity for you. You already know beside you can spend your time along with your favorite's book, you can smarter than before. Do you agree with it has the opinion or you have additional opinion?

Clinton Perez:

Reading a guide tends to be new life style in this era globalization. With reading you can get a lot of information that will give you benefit in your life. With book everyone in this world can share their idea. Ebooks can also inspire a lot of people. Many author can inspire their very own reader with their story or maybe their experience. Not only the storyline that share in the publications. But also they write about the knowledge about something that you need case in point. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your sons or daughters, there are many kinds of book that exist now. The authors on earth always try to improve their expertise in writing, they also doing some analysis before they write to their book. One of them is this My Father's Paradise: A Son's Search for His Family's Past.

Cheryl Burnett:

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