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## Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World

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### **Katav, Shalom (Salīm al-Kātib)** (391 words)

Shalom Katav was born Salīm al-Kātib in [Baghdad](#) in 1931. As a youth he attended the [Alliance Israélite Universelle](#) School there and became a member of the Zionist underground movement (He-Halutz). He began publishing in Arabic in Iraq and continued to do so after he immigrated to Israel in 1950, but in time he shifted mainly to Hebrew. In Israel, he was a teacher, elementary school principal, and school district superintendent. From 1969 to 1972 he was the World Zionist Organization's educational and cultural director for southern France.

Katav's first book, *Muwākib al-Ḥirmān* (Caravans of Deprivation), was published in [Beirut](#) in 1949. Many of his Arabic poems have nationalistic and Zionist themes. His second collection in Arabic, *Washwashāt al-Fajr* (Whispers of Dawn), published in 1958, includes poems he had written since 1949 on national Jewish and universal themes. They express a desire for peace and brotherhood, and sorrow for the devastation and death of war.

As a poet Katav has been inspired by a range of Jewish sources, including the Bible, commentaries, law, legends, mysticism, and tales of Jewish martyrdom as well as by life in Israel in his own time. The poetic speaker in many of his Hebrew poems identifies with the suffering and hopes of the Jewish people. Katav writes about his love of Jerusalem, his longing for Zion, the Holocaust, Jewish redemption and tradition, the ravages of the pogroms, his belief that the return of the Jews to their homeland is eternal, and many other themes.

Some of his poems are specifically about the Jews of Babylon (Iraq), their pioneers, ways of life, public figures, and more. He glorifies the accomplishments of Israel; but in his *'Et Liqqye Me'orot* (Time of Eclipses), published in 1978, he bitterly and resentfully protests the socially, morally, and culturally humiliating and discriminatory way Israeli society has treated Near Eastern Jews. In addition to the works mentioned above, his published writings include *Lo'a Rash Me'od* (1972), *'Al Gedot ha-Naharayim: Shirim u-Po'emot me-Ḥayye Yehude 'Iraq* (1973), *Lo'a Raq be-Mira'eh Zohar* (1984), *Or š el ha-Yona* (1985), and *Shorshe ha-Ner* (1986).

[Lev Hakak](#)

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